DEMOCRACY IN MALAYSIA

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies
DEMOCRACY IN ASIA series

Series Editors: *Tak-Wing Ngo* (Sinological Institute, Leiden University) and *Hans Antlov* (Program on Governance & Civil Society, Ford Foundation, Jakarta).

Indonesia and the 'Third Wave of Democratization'
The Indonesian Pro-Democracy Movement in a Changing World
Anders Uhlin

The Cultural Construction of Politics in Asia
Edited by Hans Antlöv and Tak-Wing Ngo

Democracy and Authority in Korea
The Cultural Dimension in Korean Politics
Geir Helgesen

Authoritarian Imperatives
The Political Economy of State and Democratization in Indonesia
Jón O. Halldorsson

Democracy in Malaysia
Discourses and Practices
Edited by Francis Loh Kok Wah and Khoo Boo Teik

Human Rights and Asian Values
Contesting National Identities and Cultural Representations in Asia
Edited by Michael Jacobsen and Ole Bruun

Elections in Indonesia
The New Order and Beyond
Edited by Hans Antlov and Sven Cederroth

Democracy, Development and Decentralization in Provincial Thailand
Daniel Arghiros

In recent years an often acrimonious East–West debate has arisen on issues of democracy, human rights, good governance, etc. One aim of this series is to augment traditional political studies with more culturally sensitive treatments so that our knowledge of local interpretations of democracy and political legitimacy is improved. Accordingly, welcome additions to the series will be studies of local political structures and political cultures (and their operation within national political processes), new avenues of transnational interaction, and the meeting between what governments interpret as democracy and local cultural and political realities. In so doing, the series will contribute to the discussion about democracy, democratization and democratic alternatives in Asia, and provide a natural meeting place for scholars working in this field.

DEMOCRACY IN MALAYSIA

DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES

EDITED BY

FRANCIS LOH KOK WAH
AND KHOO BOO TEIK

CURZON

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies
DEMOCRACY IN ASIA series, no. 5

First published in 2002
by Curzon Press
Richmond, Surrey

Typeset in ITC Galliard by NIAS Publishing
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Democracy in Malaysia : discourses and practices. -
(Democracy in Asia series ; 5)
1.Democracy - Malaysia 2.Malaysia - Politics and government
I.Loh Kok Wah, Francis II.Khoo, Boo Teik, 1955-
320.9'595

ISBN 0-7007-1160-0 (hardback)
ISBN 0-7007-1161-9 (paperback)

Contents

TABLES

FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book forms part of the research output planned by the 'Discourses and Practices of Democracy in Southeast Asia Project' which is funded by Sida/Sarec, Sweden. We sincerely thank Sida/Sarec for its generous support which facilitated the research and other activities that made the production of this book possible.

The project brought together the Centre for East and South East Asian Studies (GESEAS) of Göteborg University, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Cambodian Researchers for Development (CRD), Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Research and Education for Peace Unit (REPUSM) of Universiti Sains Malaysia.

We would especially like to record our gratitude to Sven Cederroth and Joakim Öjendal from GESEAS, who, despite having to coordinate the project over vast distances and under considerable pressures, were unfailing in giving assistance, advice and good cheer.

We would also like to thank Thommy Svensson (then Director of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen) and Hans Antlöv (then GESEAS Director) who very kindly invited our participation in the project and helped us in many ways during its initial phase. At Universiti Sains Malaysia, our involvement received much encouragement from Johan Saravanamuttu and Syed Ahmad Hussein, respectively the former and present deans of the School of Social Sciences, and Latif Kamaluddin, former REPUSM Coordinator. In the management of our project responsibilities, we could never have done without the generous support of our team members, Chan Chee Khoon, Mustafa Kamal Anuar, Syed Ahmad Hussein and Zaharom Nain, or the splendid assistance of Letchimi Devee.

It has been a privilege for us to work with all our co-researchers. The time we have spent has been made memorable by their cooperation, critical comments and camaraderie, and in this regard we would like to give special recognition to the efforts of Sven Cederroth, Taufik

Abdullah, Pichara Leang and Rashila Ramli in extending warm hospitality to us from their respective institutions.

We very much appreciate the assistance of Liz Bramsen of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, and Teh Gaik Lan of the School of Social Sciences, USM, in the preparation of this volume for publication.

We are indebted to all our contributors for their commitment and excellent work.

Francis Loh Kok Wah
Khoo Boo Teik

List of Contributors

Khoo Boo Teik, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and a Fellow of the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, is the author of *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad* (1995).

Lim Hong Hai, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He teaches mainly in the School's MPA programme. His main interests are political institutions and processes, management theory and practices, and ethical issues that affect the performance of public administration in democratic government.

Francis Loh Kok Wah is Professor of Politics at Universiti Sains Malaysia. He obtained his PhD from Cornell University in Politics and Southeast Asian Studies. He is the editor of *Sabah and Sarawak: The Politics of Development and Federalism* (1997) and coordinator of the USM research team in the Sida-funded *Democracy in Southeast Asia* project.

Maznah Mohamed is Associate Professor in Development Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and currently (2001) holds the position of annual Visiting Chair in ASEAN and International Studies at the Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, Canada. She has published widely on gender studies and recently edited *Muslim Women and Access To Justice* (2000). She is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Women's Rights Action Watch of the Asia-Pacific (IWRAW), a regional non-governmental body set up to monitor the implementation of CEDAW.

Mustafa K. Anuar is Associate Professor, Universiti Sains Malaysia, where he teaches Communication Studies. His research interests are in journalism, popular culture, information and communication technology, media representation, democracy and human rights. He has written extensively

in international and local journals and magazines. He also writes a fortnightly media watch column for Malaysia's first online daily newspaper, *Malaysiakini*.

Saliha Hassan is lecturer in Political Science, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and an Associate of the university's Centre for International and Malaysian Studies. Her main research interest is NGOs in Malaysia's political system. Her published articles include 'Peranan Badan Bukan Kerajaan dalam Pembentukan Masyarakat Madani' [NGOs in the Formation of a Madani Society in Malaysia]' (1998) and 'NGO, Masyarakat Sivil dan Demokrasi' [NGOs, civil society and democracy in Malaysia]' (2000).

Syed Ahmad Hussein is Professor and Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, and a co-chairman of the Asia-Pacific Civic Educators Consortium (APCEC). He obtained his PhD from Yale University and pursues his interests in Southeast Asian politics, democratization, Muslim politics, civics and citizenship education.

Zaharom Nain lectures in Communication Studies in the School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He has authored numerous journal articles and book chapters on the political economy of national and international communications and has been a Fulbright Visiting Professor at the University of California, San Diego, and a Visiting Fellow at Sophia University, Tokyo.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)
ALIRAN	Aliran Kesedaran Negara (National Consciousness Movement)
API	Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (Conscious Youth Movement)
ARQAM	Darul Arqam (House of Arqam)
AWAM	All Women's Action Society Malaysia
AWAS	Angkatan Wanita Sedar (Conscious Women's Movement)
AWL	Association of Women Lawyers
BA	Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front)
BMF	Bumiputra Malaysia Finance
BN	Barisan Nasional (National Front)
CAP	Consumers' Association of Penang
CARPA	Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia
CENPEACE	Centre for Peace Initiative
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DJZ	Dongjiaozong (United Chinese School Committees' Association Malaysia and United Chinese School Teachers' Association Malaysia)
DTC	deposit-taking cooperative
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
FINAS	Perbadanan Filem Nasional (National Film Development Corporation)
FMS	Federated Malay States
GERAK	Majlis Gerakan Keadilan Nasional (Council of the National Justice Movement)
HAWA	Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Wanita (Department of Women's Affairs)

ICA	Industrial Coordination Act
IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia)
ISA	Internal Security Act
JAGAVAW	Joint-Action-Group Against Violence Against Women
JIM	Jemaah Islah Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Reform Group)
KeADILan	Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party)
KEMAS	Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (Department of Community Development)
KI	Kaum Ibu (Mothers' Association)
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
KLSE	Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange
KTAR	Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman (Tunku Abdul Rahman College)
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Council of Trust for the Indigenous People)
MAS	Malaysian Airline System
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCCBCHS	Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MISC	Malaysian International Shipping Corporation
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MRCB	Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
NACIWID	National Council for the Integration of Women in Development
NCWO	National Council of Women's Organizations
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NIE	Newly Industrialized Economy
NOC	National Operations Council
NST	*New Straits Times*
NSTP	New Straits Times Press
OSA	Official Secrets Act

PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Islamic Party of Malaysia)
PBDS	Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (Dayak People's Party of Sarawak)
PBS	Parti Bersatu Sabah
PKPIM	Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Pelajar-pelajar Islam Malaysia (National Association of Muslim Students of Malaysia)
POL	Pupil's Own Language
PPP	People's Progressive Party of Malaysia
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Party)
RTM	Radio dan Televisyen Malaysia (Radio and Television Malaysia)
SAG	Social Action Group
SAPP	Sabah Progressive Party
SAWO	Sabah Women's Action Resource Group
SIS	Sisters in Islam
SUARAM	Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Voice)
SUHAKAM	Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia (National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia)
SWWS	Sarawak Women for Women Society
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
VAW	Violence Against Women
WAC	Women's Agenda for Change
WAO	Women's Aid Organization
WCC	Women's Crisis Centre

INTRODUCTION

Khoo Boo Teik and Francis Loh Kok Wah

From the mid- to late 1980s, popular uprisings in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America overthrew several authoritarian regimes or military juntas and replaced them with democratic governments. In Asia alone, the military, martial-law or one-party regimes of the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan were toppled, and decades of authoritarian rule gave way to new forms of multi-party political competition and electoral government. Elsewhere, notably in China and Burma, popular assaults upon authoritarian rule were mounted but failed in the face of determined state repression.

As these international political developments compelled the academic world to catch up with the real world, so to speak, an extensive literature in political science and political economy developed around many important debates on democracy and democratization which were conducted along a broad theoretical spectrum. Given the specific focus of this book, it is not feasible to provide a systematic review of the voluminous literature 'on democracy' that has been generated. For the purposes of this volume, however, it is pertinent to recall that some social scientists seized upon the 'pro-democracy' uprisings, and the varied experiences of political competition that resulted from them, to advance rather triumphalist visions of democratization, especially visions that were offered as being consonant with capitalist economic growth in East Asia, or, alternatively, communist economic collapse in Eastern Europe. In short, there was a virtual celebration of ideas heralding the advent of a 'third wave of democratization' (Huntington 1991), a 'global resurgence of democracy' (Diamond and Plattner 1992) or the affirmation of the victory of Western liberal democracy as the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1989).

Against this seemingly globalizing 'Western liberal democratic triumphalism', one notable barrier was raised, not by the former communist countries which were undergoing a socially and politically severe 'transition to capitalism', but ironically by some of the economically most vigorous East and Southeast Asian developmental states or newly industrialized economies which had been linked to Western strategic interests throughout the Cold War. By the early 1990s, a peculiar 'eastern' reluctance to embrace Western liberal democracy had arisen which was expressed in an ideological mobilization around the so-called 'Asian values' propagated by certain Asian state elites and their ideologues in think-tanks, academic institutions or the mass media.

THE 'ASIAN VALUES' DEBATE

The subsequent 'Asian values' debate was likewise extensive (see Chapter 3 in this volume). But, briefly, the proponents of 'Asian values' argued that Asians demonstrated a cultural predisposition towards stable leadership and continuity in government. They suggested, too, that Asians, being communitarian and not individualist, placed the collective welfare over individual rights, had an intuitive respect for authority and social harmony, and thus showed a proclivity to consensus rather than a tendency towards dissent or confrontation. The point was extended to assert that Asians accepted a strong, even harsh, government so long as its policies and actions delivered economic prosperity. These supposedly 'Asian' values scarcely seemed to support the pluralism and respect for individual rights and civil liberties customarily associated with 'democracy'. Yet, in their most strident form, 'Asian values' even became the legitimating code for an 'Asian democracy' (Chan 1993; Committee for a New Asia 1994) that many opponents or critics of authoritarian regimes considered to be neither immanently Asian nor fundamentally democratic (Ghai 1998; Robison 1996a; Rodan and Hewison 1996).

However, even if the concept of 'Asian values' was ideationally flawed and 'Asian democracy' was more than likely to be a euphemism for rule under illiberal regimes, as the 'Asian values' debate quickly revealed, their appeal or relevance to many Asians could not be so easily dismissed in the heyday of the 'East Asian miracle' (Chua 1995; Harper 1998; Khoo 1999). Indeed, some among the elites who governed the East Asian 'tiger economies' quite readily promoted 'Asian values', and 'Asian democracy', not just defensively as a logical 'value-attitudinal-spiritual' corollary to *dirigiste* 'Asian capitalism', as it were, but more

ambitiously as East Asia's developmental, cultural and political alternatives – and superior alternatives at that – to the neo-liberal agendas of 'Western capitalism' and the problems of 'Western liberal democracy' (Mahathir 1995; Zakaria 1994).

For some non-Asians, for that matter, 'Asian values' seemed to capture a kind of winning combination of economic dynamism, political stability, social discipline and cultural conservatism which the 'west' needed to arrest its 'decline' or to achieve 'economic prosperity without social disharmony' (Rodan 1996). Certain social and political conservatives – for whom 'the major problem in the West is social disintegration and the overwhelming of the social interest by liberal individualism' (Robison 1996b: 15) – evinced a degree of 'enthusiasm for Asian authoritarianism and its assumption that a good dose of the same medicine would benefit the West' (Robison 1996b: 16). Hence there existed ideological affinities between a supposed Asian commitment to 'Asian values' and some 'Western' promotion of a variety of 'family values' or 'shared values'.

In this milieu Malaysia stood in an unusual position. Its prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, had emerged as one of the most forceful proponents of 'Asian values' (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995). Mahathir's diplomatic, almost personal achievement (though not in this 'Asian values' debate alone) was out of proportion to his country's generally uninfluential position in the region or the world. Malaysia itself was never the exemplar of the 'East Asian model of development' mostly because it never scaled the heights of late industrialization, unlike, say, South Korea or Taiwan, but partly because its class and ethnic complexities were largely alien to other Asian newly industrialized economies. Malaysia was also not an all-out authoritarian or martial-law state, unlike some Asian states prior to their 'transition to democracy'. But by the 1990s, an industrialized and more prosperous Malaysia had actually undergone something of a transition *from* democracy (Khoo 1997a). How then should one grapple with Malaysia's experience with democratic politics since independence in 1957? The situation was, after all, riddled with ambiguities that were difficult to reconcile with the expectations of theoretical orthodoxy that states should become more democratic with rapid economic growth and industrial transformation.

PROBLEMS OF MALAYSIAN DEMOCRACY

Up to the 1970s, much academic writing on Malaysian politics stressed two major, arguably contrary, themes in the Malaysian experience with

democracy: the ethnically divisive tendencies of Malaysia's plural society, and the consociationalism of the Alliance coalition (of the United Malays National Organization, Malaysian Chinese Association and Malaysian Indian Congress) (Ratnam 1965; Means 1970; Milne 1977; Vasil 1971). The principal analytical concern of such writing was the danger that inter-ethnic tensions posed for political stability and 'nation-building'. Another equally important concern was the viability of a 'parliamentary democracy' that rested upon the political compromises that were struck by the ruling ethnic elites but were continually subjected to 'communalist demands'. These concerns were perhaps best captured by von Vorys's depiction of the Alliance-ruled political system as a 'democracy without consensus' wherein elite solidarity overcame mass polarization (von Vorys 1976). But any optimism that the Alliance's consociationalism was the bedrock of Malaysian democracy vanished in the inter-ethnic violence of 13 May 1969. After that came a two-year suspension of parliament and an emergency rule by the National Operations Council (NOC). In March 1971, parliament was restored, but only with the precondition that the scope of democratic politics would be reduced by legislative and administrative strictures.

From 1974 on, with the Barisan Nasional (BN, or National Front) replacing the Alliance as the ruling coalition, and UMNO's dominance superseding the Alliance's consociationalism, the ambiguities of Malaysian democracy deepened. Some studies of Malaysian politics reflected those ambiguities by variously characterizing the political system as a 'quasi democracy' (Zakaria 1989), 'semi-democracy' (Case 1993) or 'modified democracy' (Crouch 1993). Whatever their theoretical assumptions, these characterizations implied that the political system was now perched uneasily between democracy and authoritarianism. Less ambiguous was the trend towards authoritarian rule. Yet successive regimes in Malaysia drew considerable flexibility and stability from the political system's admixture of democratic procedures and coercive practices, subsequently theorized in different ways as the features of a 'repressive-responsive regime' (Crouch 1996) or a 'syncretic state' (Jesudason 1996). The Malaysian trend towards authoritarianism – unlike trends elsewhere in Asia, for example – was routinely justified by the ruling coalition as essential to the containment of inter-ethnic tensions, especially those associated with disputes over the New Economic Policy (NEP). But the political crises of the 1980s – the constitutional crisis (1983–84), turmoil in Sabah (1984–86), violence at Memali (1985), financial scandals (1984–86), UMNO's split and BN's disunity (1986–

87), and the crisis of the judiciary (1988) – showed that the 'pro-authoritarian trend' could not be adequately explained by recourse to a 'politics of ethnicity'. Consequently the problems of democracy in Malaysia were increasingly posed in different terms.

One important area of analysis covered various forms of executive aggrandizement vis-à-vis the monarchy (Kershaw 1993) and the judiciary (Hickling and Wishart 1988–89; Ho 1992; Khoo 1999; Rais 1995) which led to the loss of checks and balances within the system of government. At the same time, other studies surveyed the 'non-level playing field' which the ruling coalition imposed upon its challengers by altering the 'rules of the electoral game' via gerrymandering, coercion and repression (Barraclough 1985; Chandra 1986; Sothi 1980). Another set of analyses grounded the 'pro-authoritarian' trend in the social stresses and political crises emerging within the rapidly transforming Malaysian political economy of the 1980s (Khoo 1997a; Saravanamuttu 1987; Tan 1990). Closely related to this latter approach were studies of an accelerating pattern of 'money politics' which gave undue power to shifting coalitions of politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen (Gomez 1990, 1991; Mehmet 1986), particularly as the 'redistribution of wealth' justified by the NEP made way for 'privatization' under Mahathir. In short, and in contrast to the theoretical predilections of an earlier body of academic writing, it was not Malaysia's plural society but its ruling elite which was assumed to pose the greatest threat to the preservation of a meaningful Malaysian democracy.

Accompanying this significant shift in perception as to who bore the burden of Malaysian democracy was the effort made by a collection of essays to problematize not only the growing authoritarianism but also increasing political and cultural fragmentation in relation to Malaysia's modernity (Kahn and Loh 1992). This authoritative volume offered a reformulation of political discourses and practices which analysed the conflicts and splits within the ruling elite, the break-up of the old left, the Islamic resurgence and its competing strands, cultural revivalism and inventions of tradition, Malay and non-Malay redefinitions of ethnicity, Malay peasant resistance to proletarianization, awareness of gender, regionalism, and even new artistic expressions. While political ferment was clearly present among the new middle classes spawned by a decade of economic growth, so, too, was a fragmented vision of Malaysia's modernity, especially for those social forces and groups which challenged the hegemony of the BN elite. This reformulation of the basic issues of democracy in Malaysia was critical to many subsequent studies of Malaysian politics.

A widespread expectation that the political ferment would lead to dramatic change was not realized in the 1990 general election when BN retained its customary dominance in parliament despite suffering a significant decline in the popular vote. Thereafter, buoyed by the rapid economic growth in the early to mid-1990s, which resolved many of the economic problems of the 1980s, BN once again consolidated its power. The relations between state and civil society were refashioned according to *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020) – Mahathir's vision of modernity for Malaysia. Indeed, BN's landslide victory in the general election of April 1995 confirmed not only the practical strengths but also the ideological depth of the refashioned Mahathir regime.

The accompanying erosion of the position of the combined opposition exposed a broader failure of the 1980s dissent to establish a lasting Malaysian equivalent of the so-called Asian 'pro-democracy movements' of the period. If anything, as the Malaysian political system became less democratic, the regime appeared to have become more popular. One indication of this growing popularity was the virtually undisputed receptivity to *Wawasan 2020* and the National Development Policy that replaced the New Economic Policy (NEP) when these were announced in early 1991. The scale of BN's 1995 triumph was facilitated by a strong swing of support to the regime from the customary opposition strongholds of the urban non-Malay constituencies. Perhaps more than anything else, this change in political attitude among BN's erstwhile staunchest opponents suggested that Malaysian society – now less riven by inter-ethnic competition (see Chapter 2 in this volume), and more driven by a sense of nationalist purpose, perhaps for the first time – was quite different from what it was in the preceding three decades.

In 1996, when the research associated with this volume of essays was mooted as part of a multi-country project, 'Discourses and Practices of Democracy in Southeast Asia' (involving Indonesia and Cambodia as well), the present editors thought it appropriate to suggest that the contemporary political milieu in Malaysia, in conjunction with some of the far-reaching socio-political changes briefly noted above, had raised many complex questions regarding the country's state of politics and democracy. To begin with, why had those socio-political changes taken place? How and to what extent were these changes related to the rapid economic growth of the 1990s? What was their cumulative impact on the traditional parameters of Malaysian politics, even if those changes had not led to an immediate regime change? In what ways were those changes influenced by prevailing regional and

international political discourses? How in turn did those changes inform domestic discourses and actual political practices, and with what kinds of implications for democracy in Malaysia? What did the defeat of the dissent of the 1980s portend for civil society in Malaysia? Was the Mahathirist achievement of 'less democracy and more stability' a vindication of Mahathir's espousal of 'Asian values' and a 'not so liberal' 'Asian democracy'? Finally, what lessons could an updated examination of Malaysia's political system, civil society, public institutions and dominant discourses provide for a comparative understanding of 'discourses and practices of democracy' in Southeast Asia?

THE BOOK

The essays in this volume originate in a collective attempt to address these questions and related issues in order to provide a rounded analysis of politics, organized around the theme of democracy, in Malaysia from the early to mid-1990s. As the preceding survey of the changing foci in academic writings on Malaysian politics over that period suggests, the prospects for Malaysian democracy in the mid-1990s seemed less threatened by ethnic polarization than a sure, if creeping, authoritarianism, reflected in the loss or decline of certain institutional checks and balances upon the conduct of those in power. Simultaneously, Malaysian society appeared to have discovered a new range of discourses and practices, serving both as the requirements and possibilities, for democratic politics. These included the emergence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a force in popular political participation, Islam's 'compatibility' with secular, democratic government, and various kinds of strictures upon women's role in politics.

Two general comments on these essays should be made at the outset. First, the organization of the volume in two parts also reflects the bifocal thematic concerns (with 'discourses and practices') of the multi-country research project to which this volume belongs. Although this volume stands alone in its coverage of Malaysia, it is the overall plan of the project to allow this volume, together with separate volumes on Indonesian and Cambodian politics, to generate a comparative understanding of democracy in Southeast Asia. Second, this organization has nevertheless been useful in directing attention to how detailed changes in Malaysian politics since the 1990s have been conceived and debated, implemented and contested, or institutionalized and adapted. In any case, the division of the volume into two parts does not imply a rigid delineation between 'ideas' and 'realities', or between 'discourse' and

'practice', as it were. In almost all cases, these essays have had to deal with both discursive elements (such as traditional conceptions, reigning ideology and contested arguments) and practical matters (for example, structural limitations, institutional adaptations and power shifts), without which no discussion of politics can really be satisfactory.

Part One focuses on *discourses* and contains three chapters. In Chapter 2, Francis Loh Kok Wah tracks a discursive shift that is as important as it was unexpected. He discerns in the political consciousness of not just the burgeoning Malaysian business and middle classes but, critically, among the politicians of the ruling coalition as well, a shift from a pronounced pre-1990s preoccupation with exclusivist ethnic issues and inter-ethnic competition to rather more common socio-economic concerns raised by rapid growth and mass consumerism.

Loh argues that a discourse of developmentalism now dominates among certain critical groups in Malaysia. This discourse valorizes sustained economic growth that facilitates an improvement in material standards of living but results in the spread of consumerist habits. Its corollary is an appreciation of the value of political stability that many Malaysians now believe can only be sustained by a strong BN-governed state. Significantly, this sentiment is widely shared by non-Malays who were previously opposed to BN and especially critical of its pro-Malay affirmative action policies. The discourse of developmentalism came into its own in the 1990s, when the economic liberalization associated with rapid economic growth produced, largely for utilitarian reasons, various measures of cultural liberalization. For example, the most important emblems of Malay identity – the Malay rulers, Malay language and culture, and Islam – which were hitherto promoted as the central attributes of the Malaysian nation-state, were de-emphasized or redefined by UMNO leaders themselves. In response, UMNO's non-Malay counterparts in BN disengaged themselves from 'sensitive' (that is, controversial) ethnic and cultural ones. The non-Malay leaders in BN generally recast themselves as purveyors of development and providers of social services.

In Malaysian politics, therefore, Loh suggests that developmentalism may be seen as the cultural by-product of an economic *dirigisme* successfully undertaken by a developmental state. At the same time, the mass consumerism which forms part of developmentalism has pushed forth a 'discourse of the individual' as certain groups of individuals increasingly withdraw from the social and public sphere into their private spaces. For Loh, issues of ethnicity and even freedom may no longer even be pursued in the public arena. Instead these issues have been so

'privatized' and marginalized by narrower concerns with individualist achievements and personalized expressions of identity. For many citizens, the result is a self-limiting perception of political participation so that business and middle classes, to take notable examples, do not protest the authoritarian tendencies of the ruling elite but rather rally behind the ruling coalition.

Khoo Boo Teik's essay in Chapter 3 relates Mahathir's entry into the 'Asian values' debate to the changes in Malaysian capitalism and nationalism signalled by the course of economic development which Mahathir has directed since 1981. The essay critically explores Mahathir's worldview to demonstrate how it has changed from being preoccupied with 'worthy values' for Malay economic success to being enamoured of the 'Asian values' supposedly underlying the 'East Asian miracle'. Khoo argues that while promoting a capitalist-nationalist project under a *dirigiste* regime, Mahathir refashioned an older, somewhat defensive, Malaysian elite argument for limiting the scope of democracy into a newer, more strident 'East Asian' elite rejection of Western liberal democracy.

Khoo's examination of Mahathir's domestic and international concerns matches Mahathir's truncation of democracy with the authoritarian-communitarian goals of the Asian elites who sought to restrict mass political participation within their own states while seeking a stronger voice for Asia within the community of nations. The elites wanted less democracy at home but more democracy abroad. The ideological character of this project was ill-disguised but its viability has become suspect in the wake of the 'East Asian financial crisis' of July 1997. There was an apparent lack of consensus among Asian elites as to how their states could overcome the crisis. However, the protesting masses in South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia who forced a change of regime in each of these countries, as well as the more limited post-1998 *reformasi* movement in Malaysia, have shown scant regard for any supposed Asian predisposition towards 'social harmony'.

During the 1990s, scholars of Muslim politics in the Middle East and North Africa were increasingly intrigued by significant shifts made by both dissident Islamists and the regimes they were challenging. The dissidents began to move in the direction of championing democracy and popular participation, while the regimes appeared to move in the direction of Islamization. In Chapter 4, Syed Ahmad Hussein explores Muslim politics in Malaysia in the light of these broader shifts towards democratization and Islamization. Ahmad discusses how UMNO, under Mahathir's leadership, steadily 'Islamized' its politics in response to pressures that came from a domestic and international Islamic resurgence.

Simultaneously, UMNO's principal opponent, Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, or the Islamic Party) appeared to be progressively 'democratizing' its Islam.

In the case of PAS, Ahmad attributes this political shift to the party's long-term participation in Malaysia's parliamentary system. Rather than endangering democracy, the continued participation of an avowedly 'Islamic party' in mainstream politics encouraged PAS leaders to be more tolerant, to seek compromises, and to play by the 'rules of democracy'. In the process PAS leaders have had to search deeper into Islam for an 'authentically democratic spirit' and religious tenets compatible with democracy. Thus a moderate PAS leadership attempted to steer public debate and attention in the 1990s to issues of social justice and democratic reforms, albeit expressed within an Islamic paradigm. PAS's new democratic inclination emerged quite forcefully after Mahathir's dismissal of his deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, in September 1998.

As a result, the Islamists readily cooperated with non-Muslim opposition parties, NGOs and Anwar supporters to protest against Anwar's unjust treatment, to demand the repeal of draconian laws and to urge a return to the rule of law. The high point of this cooperation was reached when PAS participated in the formation of a new opposition coalition which offered itself as an alternative to BN in the November 1999 general election. Ahmad concludes that the politics of Malaysia's dominant Malay-Muslim community may have begun to exhibit a gradual convergence – in arguments, claims and practices – of the concerns of political Islam with the concerns of democratization. This convergence denotes a very different trend from the divergence between (if not dichotomization of) Islam and democracy which mainstream political theory and analysts of Malaysian politics have previously or typically assumed.

Part Two of this volume contains five chapters which focus on the *practices* of democracy. Zaharom Nain's essay in Chapter 5 situates a political economy of the media within Malaysia's broader political framework. Its analysis of the structure, expansion and evolution of the media industry is followed by an engagement with theoretical issues in communications and cultural studies. Zaharom shows that the state's powerful matrix of security, developmental and commercial concerns, pursued over four decades, has ensured its control over the Malaysian media industry and has moulded it into a bastion of social and political conservatism.

The fragmentation of the state's monopoly over the media, following privatization and the introduction of satellite television, has not

led to a democratized media. Instead, there is an interlocking ownership of different forms of media by the government, and by individuals and companies closely associated with BN parties. Given this process of 'regulated deregulation', economic liberalization has not been accompanied by any genuine relaxation of state control over the media. Zaharom argues, in contradistinction to advocates of the 'dominant ideology' thesis, that the persistence of state control does not mean that the Malaysian audiences are automatically influenced by the 'news' they receive. But Zaharom also differs with those who argue for 'semiotic democracy' by conducting reception studies and cultural analyses of audiences and texts without referring to the structure of institutional power and domination or incorporating insights into the political economy of mass media.

Zaharom's political economy of the media is complemented by Mustafa Kamal Anuar's investigation, in Chapter 6, of the constraints continually placed on the mainstream press by political, legal and economic developments. Mustafa analyses major legislation related to the press, and its frequent amendments, to show how the state has steadily exercised and expanded its control over the press for a long period – from the early days of the press in British Malaya to the present. The result is not just a compliant press, but one in which the editors and journalists eschew investigative reporting and critical comment in observance of a culture of 'responsible journalism'.

While the ownership of the major press has been transferred to BN-linked parties and individuals as a form of political control, the press proprietors' own commercial considerations have led them to revamp their products to make them more attractive to readers and advertisers. The major newspapers have been segmented into seem-ingly more marketable news, business, sports and entertainment sections. They have taken on a more professional gloss in order to cater to an expanding middle-class readership with a consumerist interest in such matters as travel, education, dining, books, films and artistic perform-ances, or even a social interest in 'not so controversial' issues such as gender and the environment.

Editorial policy, chiefly on overtly political areas, never changed, however, as the 'old' culture of 'responsible journalism' prevailed. There was a studious avoidance of controversial issues such as the influence of money politics in BN, the erosion of the rule of law, and the absence of transparency in government – all matters highlighted by the political opposition and many NGOs. At their worst, the press became

BN's instruments of propaganda and their contents were transformed into 'advertising copy' for BN, as Mustafa shows in his discussion of press conduct in the 1990 and 1995 general elections, and the Sabah state election of 1994. At such politically critical moments, the mainstream press were chiefly used for three purposes: to give relentless coverage of BN's electoral campaigns, to endorse BN candidates, and to either black out or run down the opposition's campaigns. That the mainstream press perform a propagandistic role – essential to helping the state to limit the parameters of democracy – was confirmed by their biased coverage of the 'Anwar Ibrahim affair'.

In a democracy, government accountability must be institutionalized in standards of public administration subject to effective popular control. Given Malaysia's parliamentary system, Lim Hong Hai argues in Chapter 7, the theoretical chain of command in public administration has civil servants answering to ministers, ministers answering to parliament, and the elected representatives answering to the electorate. Lim's study stresses the importance of distinguishing between the bureaucracy, always considered part of the executive, and the ministers who make up the political executive. But the power of the bureaucracy has grown tremendously because of an expansion of the state, especially after NEP's introduction, while the Malaysian parliament has long been dominated by the same ruling coalition. Consequently, parliament's ability or willingness to enforce mechanisms of scrutiny of ministerial conduct and performance has been weakened by BN's two-thirds majority, a centralization of power and strict enforcement of party discipline, as well as the severe limits, in debating time and opportunity, imposed upon the opposition. With the judiciary, extra-parliamentary 'watchdog' agencies, and groups in civil society being unable to exert any stricter control, Lim contends, the major obstacle to rendering Malaysia's public administration accountable is not any ministerial inability to control the bureaucracy, but the ineffectiveness of political control over the ministers themselves.

The consequence for Malaysian public administration is its 'weak accountability'. Lim discusses in some detail how different manifestations of weak accountability, such as 'slack' (the main cause of poor performance) and 'indulgence' (the main source of impropriety now more frequently criticised as 'corruption, nepotism and cronyism') – begin at the level of ministers and percolate down to that of civil servants. Lim links his analysis to studies of 'money politics', maladministration and the decline in the civil service performance, and concludes that what is criti-

cally needed is a reform of the political system, and not, say, privatization or the introduction of new management techniques.

In Chapter 8, Saliha Hassan discusses the discourses and goals, organizational structure and activities of 'political' non-governmental organizations, and examines their responses to the 'dominant discourses' of the regime. Previous studies of Malaysian NGOs typically directed their attention to public interest and human rights groups such as Aliran Kesedaran Negara (ALIRAN, or National Consciousness Movement), Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM, or Malaysian People's Voice) and Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP). Saliha's analysis, however, includes Islamic NGOs, such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM, or Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement) and Al-Arqam (House of Arqam), which have usually been regarded as part of the Islamic resurgence, as well as Dongjiaozong, the Chinese education movement typically considered in relation to Chinese society and politics. Hence, Saliha captures a broader range of social groups and organizations involved in expanding the role of civil society through their advocacy of civil liberties and human rights, concern with environmental issues, opposition to corruption, and insistence on monitoring governmental development policies.

Not only does Saliha show a richer variety of NGOs; she also points out the heterogeneity of their causes and objectives. Although the NGOs often cooperate over immediate and particular issues, their long-term goals can differ quite considerably. For example, ABIM's Islamic goals, already not the same as the middle-class liberal or social democratic visions of ALIRAN and SUARAM, or Dongjiaozong's principal concerns over Chinese language, culture and education in Malaysia, or CAP's focus on consumer rights, are in fact quite dissimilar to Al-Arqam's 'similarly Islamic' goals. Likewise, she distinguishes between ALIRAN, SUARAM and CAP which do not have a mass base and the Islamic groups and Dongjiaozong which do. While some analysts tend to assume the presence of a divide between NGOs and the regime, Saliha argues that many NGOs are not opposed to the regime's dominant discourses. Such NGOs consider that their basic agreement with dominant discourses and the constitutional framework does not prevent them from being active in civil society. Indeed, some NGOs have cooperated with the regime to redress particular social problems. Yet, for Saliha, this many-sided heterogeneity, if not fragmentation, will be a major limit on the NGOs' drive towards a stronger civil society. She wonders whether the NGOs themselves – as they get stronger and pur-

sue their long-term visions and goals more vigorously – will set off fissiparous tendencies. One critical question that she raises is: shouldn't the NGOs who are pushing for a stronger civil society show a common commitment to democratic principles and understand the limitations of state–society relations in a multi-ethnic setting?

In Chapter 9, the final chapter, Maznah Mohamad considers the contributions of the women's movements towards the democratization of Malaysian society which again captures the variety of civil society. Maznah problematizes a 'discourse of gender' that has been routinely neglected in Malaysian mainstream politics despite a long history of women's involvement in politics. She offers a critical insight into Malaysian women's history when she shows how the fledging women's movement, which developed during the anti-colonial phase, broke up and assumed a dualistic character of a 'women's movement in the centre' (which was associated with the ruling parties), and another 'women's movement at the periphery' (which was left-wing, labour and feminist). As a number of left-wing political groups were defeated, so was the women's movement at the periphery. But, the women's movement in the centre was also marginalized in power terms as it evolved into an appendage of the male-dominated ruling parties. Thus the 'women's wing' of UMNO, for instance, was central to getting electoral support for the party, but its leaders were dependent on the support of UMNO's male power-brokers to secure their nominations to contest (both party and national) elections or to ascend the party hierarchy. Outside the political parties, small women's groups, largely upper- and middle-class in orientation, have concentrated on lobbying, with some success, for women's education, gainful employment and equal pay by working closely with the powers-that-be.

For the women's movement, Maznah argues that the 1980s, with the growing worldwide consciousness about feminism, sexual oppression and violence against women, were a turning point for the women's movement in Malaysia. New women's organizations with new goals, approaches and styles of decision-making were formed which made a serious effort to mobilize women of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Maznah suggests that these new groups have made the most significant contributions towards the women's cause and democratization. In one historic moment, women 'in the centre' and 'at the periphery' collaborated in an anti-Violence Against Women (VAW) effort that successfully campaigned for the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA).

The precise gains from that landmark legislation were the source of much debate, especially between 'feminists' and an 'Islamic faction', and

later efforts to broaden the scope of women's cooperation faltered. But Maznah maintains that the process of collaboration had furthered the women's cause and pluralist democracy so that when Malaysia's *reformasi* emerged in the wake of the 'Anwar Ibrahim affair', a 'Women's Agenda for Change' (WAC) quickly formed part of *reformasi*'s wider demands for social and political reforms. For the first time in Malaysian politics, the 'women's movement at the periphery' raised a 'Women's Candidacy Initiative' which sponsored a candidate to contest the November 1999 election on a women's rights ticket. Other developments, including the emergence of Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (Anwar Ibrahim's wife) as a leading icon of the opposition, helped to politicize gender and move women voters, women's causes and the women's movement from the margins of electoral politics. More than ever before, Maznah concludes, there is enormous potential for the growth of a democratic, ideologically pluralist, women's movement.

One final comment on this volume, specifically on its relevance to contemporary politics, should be offered. It was probably no accident that studies of the Malaysian political system that focused on the adaptability and durability of a 'repressive-responsive' ruling elite superintending a 'syncretic state' emerged around the peak of Mahathirist achievement in 1995, when observers of Malaysian politics could not but be struck by the almost intrinsic stability of the regime. After 1990, and especially after 1995, the absence of any serious challenge to the regime up to 1997 appeared to be matched by a lack of interest in political actors other than the elite. Instead, much attention was drawn to questions of UMNO's factionalism and Mahathir's succession. Or else, the general economic success of the mid-1990s generated debates in political economy, often over rentierism and the character of Malaysian capitalism (Gomez and Jomo 1997; Searle 1999). Although this volume had its genesis in the thematic concerns of the multi-country research project, mentioned above, the unifying premise of the essays has always been that the Malaysian political system in the 1990s was undergoing important changes, many of which were as yet not properly understood. In grappling with these often subtle changes – in dominant ideology, Islamic debates on democracy, shifts from ethnic consciousness, gender politics, NGOs and participatory democracy, resistance to public administration reform – and exploring their implications for Malaysian politics, the essays in this volume may perhaps fill more than one gap in the academic literature on contemporary Malaysian politics.

By documenting and discussing these changes, the studies in this volume provide tentative answers as to how the Mahathir regime re-

constituted itself – after the democratic challenges and splits within the regime itself in the mid- and late 1980s – and, through various discourses and practices, reasserted its hegemony over civil society in the 1990s. That the regime has continued to rely on a battery of draconian legislation and repressive tactics to do so has been obvious to all. Yet the regime's economic and cultural liberalization, its shift from a dependence on ethnic politicking to developmentalism, its promotion of Asian values and Asian democracy as part of its nationalist-capitalist project, and its Islamization underscored the regime's pragmatism and ability, enhanced by its mode of public administration and control over the mass media, to defer demands for democratization.

PART ONE

DISCOURSES

Developmentalism and the Limits of Democratic Discourse

Francis Loh Kok Wah

Malaysia, like the other countries in East and Southeast Asia, experienced an economic meltdown beginning from mid-1997. The meltdown was immediately caused by the sharp devaluation of the region's currencies principally due to speculation by hedge-fund investors. It also exposed the weaknesses of many of these economies that had become overly dependent on international finance capital and on so-called 'directly unproductive' profit-seeking activities, specifically state-created rent. Deregulation of the region's economies and privatization polices during the 1990s facilitated this dependence. However, it has been argued that the costs of seeking, capturing and transferring rent, under conditions of uneven influence or control over the state (as was the case in most of these authoritarian or quasi-democratic countries), may not have been completely dissipated by unproductive activity. They may have contributed to capital accumulation besides inducing desirable productive investments (Gomez and Jomo 1997: 6–7). Hence, in spite of over-dependence on finance capital and rent-based activities, the region's economies still experienced rapid growth during the 1990s. Whatever the case, patronage characterized these economies. Consequently, as bankruptcies became widespread, privatized projects halted, and bail-outs were attempted after mid-1997, the collusion between the political and economic elites was revealed. In the midst of the economic meltdown, the people, hitherto relatively docile because of repression, called for the removal of their erstwhile leaders and for an end to 'corruption, nepotism and cronyism'. In Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia reform-minded leaders have since replaced the authoritarian ones tainted by cronyism and nepotism.

In Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, the finance minister cum deputy prime minister, attempted to conduct internal reforms initially. Government expenditure was cut, interest rates allowed to float upwards, privatized 'mega-projects' were shelved, and calls to bail out Malaysian companies facing bankruptcies were rejected. His allies in UMNO, the dominant party in the ruling coalition, then called for an end to nepotism within the party. Shortly thereafter, in September 1998, he was sacked from the cabinet as well as from UMNO.

His subsequent arrest on charges of corruption and sodomy, the sentencing of him to six years of imprisonment after a prolonged trial, the conduct of which has been severely criticized by local and foreign legal experts, and the beating inflicted upon him by the inspector-general of police while under detention galvanized his UMNO supporters, opposition parties, NGOs and many ordinary Malaysians into a mass movement demanding *reformasi*. Huge public rallies and street demonstrations in support of Anwar have occurred. There has also been widespread criticism of Anwar's treatment and of the abuse of power by the ruling regime in publications, cassettes, video-tapes and on the Internet. The demand of the *reformasi* movement has gone beyond concern for Anwar's well-being. Its demands now include: the reinstatement of rule of law and separation of powers; the repeal of the Internal Security Act (ISA, which allows for detention without trial) and other coercive laws which undermine civil liberties; transparency in decision-making and government accountability; an end to corruption, nepotism and cronyism; and ultimately, a change of government. Put another way, the discourse of democracy, previously attributed to small groups of middle-class (Western-) educated Malaysians and frequently overwhelmed by other dominant discourses, has now developed into a significant counter-discourse and been positioned centre-stage. This demand for *reformasi* links the present movement to the burgeoning popular movement in the mid-1980s, which similarly called for 'rule of law', 'participatory democracy' and 'accountability' on the part of government during an earlier period of economic recession. That momentum was nipped in the bud when mass arrests were conducted under the ISA in 1987 (Crouch 1992; Saravanamuttu 1992). Indeed, these democratic demands had been foreshadowed by the radical wing of the independence movement in the 1940s and 1950s, and by the leftist opposition parties in the 1960s.

This chapter is not a discussion of the current *reformasi* movement, nor does it explore its earlier counterparts, except in passing. Instead,

this chapter explores the dominant discourse of the politics of ethnicism from the period of independence, through the New Economic Policy (NEP) years, to the mid-1980s. It was this politics of ethnicism that set limits on the discourse of democracy in Malaysia initially. However, it is argued that a shift away from the politics of ethnicism towards a politics of developmentalism occurred during the early 1990s, a period characterized by economic liberalization that promoted double-digit economic growth rates. Cultural liberalization accompanied this shift as the politics of ethnicism was sidelined, and the question of ethnicity generally 'privatized'. However, political liberalization did not follow. The liberal momentum was redirected towards the pursuit of one's own freedom, individual achievement and expression of one's identity. In other words, freedom was 'privatized'. No doubt a strong state armed with coercive laws was, and still is, in place. But the lag in the struggle for democracy, at least until Anwar's sacking, was also due to the discourse of developmentalism gaining ground, especially among the business and middle classes.

This new political culture valorizes rapid growth, rising living standards and the resultant consumerist habits, and the political stability offered by Barisan Nasional rule, even when authoritarian means are resorted to. Developmentalism, therefore, is the cultural consequence of the *dirigiste* developmentalist state, when citizens begin to enjoy improved living conditions as a result of the economic growth the state has brought about. It was this discourse of developmentalism, no longer that of ethnicism, which immediately set limits to the discourse of democracy in the early 1990s.

In this regard it is significant that the dual economic and political crises confronting Malaysia since 1997 have not resulted in ethnic conflagration, as has occurred elsewhere. It is further significant that Anwar Ibrahim's followers launched the new multi-ethnic Parti KeADILan Nasional as their chosen vehicle for contesting the upcoming elections and for bringing about change. And it is noteworthy that KeADILan joined hands with the other opposition parties, including the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Malay-Muslim-based Parti Islam to forge a multi-ethnic opposition coalition, the Barisan Alternatif (BA). These developments suggest that the discourse of ethnicism might indeed have been overtaken by a discourse of developmentalism. If that is the case, developmentalism might yet pose limits to the counter-discourse of democracy in the future, too, the projection of the democratic counter-discourse to centre-stage notwithstanding.

THE DISCOURSE OF ETHNICISM, 1957–69: BETWEEN THE ETHNIC AND CIVIC NATIONS

Following Anthony Smith (1986: 125–129), who distinguished between the genealogical 'ethnic nation' (based upon specific myths of ancestry, historical memories, cultural symbols and emblems associated with the land in question) and the civic 'territorial nation' (based on universal citizenship rights regardless of status, age, gender, ethnic origin or religious affiliation), it can be argued that the indigenous Malay nationalists sought to project the genealogical ethnic Malay nation on to the modern state in the struggle for independence. Such a nation-state which gave pre-eminence to Malay cultural attributes like Islam, the Malay language and the traditional rulers, would allow for a continuity of the new nation-state with the Malay past with which the country/land was originally associated. In Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, however, the promotion of this genealogical ethnic nation based on Malay cultural myths, memories and emblems ran up against the demand for a civic territorial nation (based on common citizenship rights) which the non-Malay immigrant leaders believed would better protect the interests of their communities. Apart from the competition for political power and economic wealth, this dissonance on the ideational attributes which the nation, or 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) should have, led to heightening ethnic tensions just prior to independence in 1957. The 'Emergency' (1948–60), an armed insurrection by the communists, who were largely recruited from the Chinese community, further threatened the political and ethnic situation. Through expansion of the security-cum-administrative instruments, the introduction of a wide range of repressive measures – including resettlement of almost one million rural dwellers behind barbed wire, dusk-to-dawn curfews and food rationing – and social and political reforms (including the introduction of elections and subsequently independence itself), the communists were ultimately defeated.

Amidst these differences, rising tensions and the Emergency, a bargain was struck among the English-educated would-be Malayan leaders who apparently shared a commitment to a more universalist and modernist discourse. Their separate ethnic parties – the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) – formed a coalition, the Alliance. At the apex of the Alliance, its leaders agreed to acknowledge Islam as the official religion, Malay as the national language, the traditional Malay rulers as heads of states, and to grant some special rights to the

Malays in view of their disadvantaged economic position and status as the indigenous people. In return, non-Malays were accorded citizenship on rather liberal terms but were not required to assume a Malay cultural identity. As Malaysian citizens, the non-Malays had the right to use and promote their languages, religions and cultures and to acquire wealth and property. Their extant economic interests would also be protected. On the basis of such a 'package deal', the Alliance leaders successfully negotiated with the British for independence, formed a coalition government from 1957 to 1969 and shared political power, though not equally.

The consociational approach,[1] which focuses on the moderate, responsible and even altruistic roles attributed to the Alliance elite, has been used by many researchers to elucidate the process of forming the Malaysian nation-state in 1957, a time which otherwise saw wide differences and rising tensions among the masses. In fact, curbs on civil liberties and repressive measures were also instrumental in the formation of the new nation that was simultaneously the consolidation of the modern state in Malaysia.

The compromise reached by the Alliance leaders lay in between the genealogical-ethnic and the civic-territorial polarities. But many Malaysians, Malay as well as non-Malay, members of the opposition as well as members of the Alliance component parties, challenged the terms of the Alliance bargain. At one extreme there were some Malays who continued to insist on *Ketuanan Melayu* (or Malay supremacy) as the defining feature of the imagined political community. This 'supremacy' would include a Malay cultural identity for all, more restricted citizenship rights for non-Malays, and for some the creation of an Islamic nation-state as well. At the other extreme certain non-Malays insisted on a 'Malaysian Malaysia', and demanded equal rights for their languages, cultures and religions, refusing to acknowledge the political claims of Malay indigeneity. These claims and challenges characterized mainstream political discourses and practices in the immediate post-independence era (see various essays in Kahn and Loh 1992). The ab-

1. Consociational theorists like Lijphart (1969) generally assume that each ethnic group is cohesive, enjoys common leadership and is represented by a single ethnic party. In fact, however, as in Malaysia's case, ethnic groups and their leadership can be divided, and opposition parties based on the same ethnic groups may be formed. For criticism of these consociational assumptions, see Horowitz (1985: 574–576).

sence of consensus outside the Alliance over 'the terms of governance' plus the subsequent manipulation of ethnic emblems during the 1960s partly contributed to worsening ethnic relations that culminated in the May 1969 ethnic riots (von Vorys 1976). The consociational arrangements and efforts to promote national identity and integration proved inadequate. More than that, parliamentary rule was temporarily suspended for almost two years following the outbreak of communal violence. Several amendments to the consociational framework were proposed.

TOWARDS THE ETHNIC NATION AND THE STRONG STATE, 1970–90

First, when comparing the legislative to the administrative elite, some observers have argued that consociational attitudes and practices were more widespread among the latter. As ethnic relations deteriorated at the mass level, often exacerbated by chauvinistic opposition parties, second-echelon Alliance politicians were inclined to break the rules of the consociational game in order to gain electoral support (Case 1991; Leo 1975: 148ff.; von Vorys 1976: 285). Consequently, after 1969, the management of inter-communal conflict required the inclusion of the erstwhile opposition into an expanded ruling coalition (renamed the Barisan Nasional or BN). At the same time, there occurred a shift from *participative* to *executive* institutions (Esman 1972: 6).[2]

Second, the political process, already a modified version of Westminster democracy, was further delimited so that certain 'sensitive issues' were declared to lie beyond the bounds of public discourse. These issues included the special rights of the Malays, the position of the traditional Malay rulers as heads of state, Malay as the national language, and Islam as the official religion on the one hand, and the citizenship rights of the non-Malays on the other. This delimitation was achieved by the Sedition Act, 1971 (Ong 1990; von Vorys 1976).

Third, the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1971–90) was formulated to redress the ethnic socio-economic imbalance in the country (identified

2. In his study of the political culture of top administrators, Scott (1968: 200ff.) showed that their support for democracy was largely formalistic, seen in sharp relief whenever they came into conflict with central beliefs like elitism and the need for stability. He also noted that they considered the masses to be democratically irresponsible. Accordingly, the top administrators expressed support for an 'administrative state'.

as a key factor contributing to the 1969 communal riots). It laid down affirmative action policies in favour of the Malays and other indigenous peoples and was pushed through by UMNO before parliament was reconvened in 1971. Under the NEP, the government involved itself in the economy in unprecedented ways. It increased public expenditure in the five-year development plans in order to 'eradicate poverty irrespective of race' and to 'restructure the economy' so as to 'abolish the identification of race with economic functions'. It also set up thousands of public enterprises and trust agencies, the latter engaged in purchasing and holding corporate equity on behalf of the ***bumiputera*** (literally, 'sons of the soil') community; and enforced quotas in business licensing, ownership structure, employment and educational opportunities, etc.

For some, these developments facilitated the growth of an 'administrative state' which would enhance the pursuit of development goals as well as the management of ethnic conflict. The view of Malaysian democracy that was increasingly presented was one that amounted to the regular holding of elections and that of a government responsive to development pressures (Esman 1972; Mauzy 1982). It coincides with the argument presented by the government itself, whose ideologues forcefully argued the inappropriateness of Westminster-style democracy for Malaysia.[3] At times the theorists as well as some Malaysian political leaders admitted that a form of 'soft authoritarianism' had resulted, but they viewed this to be a justifiable response by the top to rising ethnic tensions from below and the need to maintain stability for the purposes of pursuing development and implementing the goals of the NEP.

There is acknowledgement, too, that certain post-1969 arrangements led towards greater Malay pre-eminence in the political system. These arrangements included the NEP, the National Cultural Policy, 1971 (which emphasised Islam and Malay culture as the essential bases of 'national culture'), and the concerted implementation of the National Language Act and National Educational Policy. In the case of the last item, Malay was progressively introduced from 1971 as the sole medium of instruction in secondary schools and universities. Hence the attri-

3. One of the principal ideologues, Ghazali Shafie, elaborated on his ideas some 20 years later in a presentation in the 'Workshop on Conflict Management and Resolution' in Kuala Lumpur, 7–8 August 1993. The text is reproduced in *The Star*, 19 and 20 August 1993.

butes of a genealogical ethnic Malay nation began to shape that ('imagined') political community.

The replacement of the Alliance by a more inclusive Barisan Nasional enhanced UMNO's dominance over its partners since there were now several competing non-Malay parties. The Islamic resurgence movement and the government's own Islamization policies beginning from the late 1970s further contributed towards Malay cultural pre-eminence (Chandra 1987). Nowadays UMNO leaders often regard Malaysia as an Islamic country and their party as an Islamic one too.

Major decisions affecting the future direction of the country are first discussed in the UMNO Supreme Council, then presented to the Barisan cabinet, before being tabled in parliament for approval with hardly any debate. Even those researchers still subscribing to the consociational model nowadays describe the Malaysian political system as 'a hegemonial transactional model' (Chee 1991a) or a 'system of bargaining within the context of [Malay] hegemony' (Milne 1988). A study by Means (1991: 286–287) asserts that elite bargaining within the ruling coalition continues, not in its previous form of intra-Alliance multilateral consultations but as a 'fragmented series of bilateral negotiations between the [UMNO] prime minister and the leaders of constituent parties'. This has led to 'enhanced executive prerogatives and to an exponential growth in dispensable patronage', in other words, the supremacy of the prime minister's role specifically, UMNO's role more generally. When one considers the economic interests of UMNO, as well as those of other Malay individuals and groups in the post-NEP era, it is clear that the terms of governance had changed by the 1970s and 1980s. UMNO's successful control over the political structures and processes has not only given its leaders greater executive powers (and as a result of the NEP, economic wealth as well) as individuals, but has also given UMNO hegemonic sway over the definition of the nation. The civic territorial nation was eclipsed as UMNO pushed the terms of governance further towards the genealogical ethnic Malay nation.

The early 1970s witnessed an attempt by a group of MCA 'Young Turks' to reform the party and unite the Chinese in response to UMNO's growing pre-eminence. However, this attempt quickly petered out when it incited the wrath of both UMNO leaders and the MCA 'Old Guard' (Loh 1982). There also occurred a resurgence of the Chinese education movement led by the Dongjiaozong in the 1970s. Enrolments in the independent Chinese secondary schools increased as the Dongjiaozong launched an alternative educational system with its

own books, curriculum and examinations in an effort to safeguard the Chinese language and culture. This culminated in a struggle to establish a private university, the Merdeka University, which was not granted a permit by the government; the government's decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1983. After the Merdeka University setback, and perhaps more importantly after key leaders of the movement joined the Barisan component-party GERAKAN just prior to the 1982 elections (leading to the election of two Dongjiaozong leaders as successful BN candidates), the movement fell into disarray in the mid-1980s (Tan Liok Ee 1992). Likewise, an attempt by several major Chinese and Indian organizations to demand that their respective cultures be recognized as part and parcel of a 'national culture' failed in 1983–84.

All this did not mean that Chinese and Indian cultures had withered away, as might be implied abstractly by the notion of a 'genealogical ethnic Malay nation'. In fact, there was much financial support for these cultural activities since, in spite of the NEP, non-Malay businesses continued to prosper. Even less does it suggest that ethnic identities were on the wane. Rather, UMNO's political and cultural pre-eminence forced the marginalization of the political struggle to retain the attributes of the 'civic territorial nation' within the popular imagination, and concomitantly the marginalization of the struggle for civil liberties in its fuller meaning. At any rate, the dominant discourse through this period was based on ethnicism, both in terms of government policies to promote a more ethnic Malay nation, as well as the responses by disaffected groups who unsuccessfully attempted to maintain semblances of the civic nation.

Indeed, even as the struggles of the disaffected groups were petering out in the Peninsula, Kadazan and Dayak ethno-nationalist movements burst forth in Sabah and Sarawak respectively. Contrary to their peninsula-based counterparts, these movements persisted into the 1990s. This difference was due to two major factors: the different ethnic make-up and historical experiences there, and the limited penetration by the federal state instruments as a result of greater autonomy granted to the two states in 1963 when Malaysia was formed (on Sabah, see Loh 1996; on Sarawak, see Leigh 1991). The following sections which discuss cultural liberalization and the 'privatization' of ethnicity refer specifically to developments in the Peninsula.

'CULTURAL LIBERALIZATION' AND UTILITARIAN GOALS IN THE 1990S

The Barisan government under Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad appears to have introduced a series of policies leading towards 'cultural liberalization' in the 1990s, especially when viewed from the perspective of non-Malays. Specifically, UMNO leaders appear to have de-emphasized or redefined the political significance of the most important emblems of Malay identity – the Malay rulers, Malay language and culture, and Islam – hitherto considered central attributes in the push towards the genealogical ethnic Malay nation. Accordingly, the new policies marked a shift from a more exclusive to a more inclusive notion of nationhood.

The symbolic and actual powers of the Malay rulers have been redefined and curtailed. The UMNO leaders' challenge to the traditional rulers first took place in 1983–84, when Dr Mahathir amended the Constitution to 'clarify' the role of the traditional rulers. He then proposed that parliamentary bills that failed to secure royal assent after 15 days were to be gazetted all the same. In addition, the power to declare a state of emergency was to be transferred from the *Agong* (the king) to the prime minister without any reference to parliament. In effect, the proposed amendments curtailed both the symbolic and actual powers of the *Agong* while enhancing the powers of the prime minister. In the conflict that ensued, Dr Mahathir mobilized the party in favour of the amendments through a series of rallies throughout the country which were highlighted in the media. Because the Malay community and UMNO leaders themselves were split over the proposed amendments, a watered-down version of the amendments was ultimately adopted.

Over the next ten years, relations between the rulers and Dr Mahathir's UMNO worsened. In 1990, for the first time ever, UMNO debated the role of the sultans critically, setting the stage for the next move. In 1994, following the assault of a citizen by the sultan of Johore, an unprecedented exposé of the 'wrong-doings' and business dealings of the traditional rulers was conducted in the media, clearly egged on by UMNO leaders. In contrast to 1983–84, UMNO leadership was united and Malay opinion was overwhelmingly against the rulers this time. Before the year was up, yet another constitutional amendment was introduced, as a result of which the rulers are no longer accorded immunity from criminal prosecution. Consequently, the traditional rulers are no longer viewed as an important emblem of

Malay identity, especially among the urban Malay business and middle classes (Husin Ali 1993; Means 1991: 113–119).

Meanwhile, although reaffirming the status of Malay or Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, Dr Mahathir and other UMNO leaders began to stress the necessity for Malaysians, especially the Malays, to master the use of the English language on utilitarian grounds. In the early 1990s, English began to be used as the medium of instruction for certain subjects in the local universities, a move that partially reversed the policy of using Malay as the sole medium, which had been introduced in 1971. The Education Act of 1996 formally empowers the education minister to exempt the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction for certain purposes deemed necessary, such as the teaching of subjects like science, mathematics and technology even in schools.

Private 'twinning colleges' (linked to foreign universities) which conduct their classes and examinations in English also appeared in the major towns from the late 1980s. Together with the expansion of the MCA-sponsored Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman (discussed in the next section), these colleges provided opportunities for qualified non-*bumiputera* students in particular to continue their tertiary-level education which had been restricted due to the NEP quota system used in admitting students to local universities.[4] But the state's previous monopoly of higher education in the country – once considered crucial for producing civic-minded and loyal Malaysians proficient in Malay, and for engendering national unity and therein, nation-building – was also being dismantled. The 1996 amendments to the University and University Colleges Act and the Higher Education Act paved the way for the 'corporatization' of the state universities, while the new Private Higher Educational Institution Act 1996 led to the establishment of private universities and branch campuses of foreign universities in the country. Some of the twinning colleges have also been granted '3+0' status, meaning that their students were no longer required to go overseas to complete their university education. Since most of these institutions emphasize the instruction of business and managerial, com-

4 In 1985 an estimated 60,000 Malaysians were enrolled in foreign educational institutions. This dropped to 52,000 by 1990 (Malaysia 1991: 163) apparently because of rising tuition fees especially in British, Canadian and Australian universities. Hence access to higher education became that much more acute, especially for non-Malay students whose parents found it difficult to continue to finance their children's education overseas.

puter and other technical studies, and have foreign staff members as well as students, the medium of instruction used in them is English. Moreover, a number of private schools which conduct most of their classes in English have also sprung up, especially in Kuala Lumpur, and although expensive, are becoming popular among middle-class Malaysians. There was also a proposal by the education department to teach the Chinese and Tamil languages as regular subjects in the national primary schools, starting from 1996.[5] When fully implemented, this proposal would constitute a very significant departure from the past.

It is significant that Utusan Melayu Bhd, owned by UMNO interests, which publishes the dailies *Utusan Melayu* and *Utusan Malaysia*, and which was the major organ of Malay nationalism in the 1950s, itself launched an English newspaper (*The Leader*) in the early 1990s, although this has since folded after several years of losses. Noticeably, many more locally produced programmes are aired over the radio and television in English nowadays; so too are Chinese language programmes, especially over the privatized television channels. With the availability of the privatized satellite network Astro, non-Malay programmes are even more easily accessed (see Chapter 5 of this volume).

There were some queries and criticisms of these cases of *volte face* in following UMNO general assemblies. But once the prime minister and his then deputy had ensured that the position of Malay as the national language remained unchanged, and that the use of English was being promoted in order to facilitate rapid development and the achievement of 'Vision 2020' (i.e. achieving Developed Nation status by the year 2020), the changes were no longer debated within UMNO openly. Those Malays who persisted in public criticism of this liberalization were sometimes taken to task by the prime minister himself. Neither were these issues harped upon during the heated contest between Anwar Ibrahim and Ghafar Baba for the deputy presidency of UMNO in the 1993 party elections. (Then, the issue was which of them better exemplified the 'New Malay' and would facilitate achievement of 'Vision 2020' goals.) Likewise, these matters did not feature in the battle for vice-presidential and Supreme Council positions in the UMNO party

5. These languages are taught during the Pupil's Own Language (POL) classes by part-time teachers outside regular class hours. At least 15 students must formally apply to learn the language concerned. Organized in such a manner, the POL programme proved inefficient and was rightly criticized by non-Malay parents. Due to a shortage of teachers and a lack of funds, progress on the new initiative has been slow.

elections of 1996. (Here the issue was 'money politics', specifically vote-buying.)

Whereas the question of 'national culture' contributed to much debate, controversy and inevitably its politicization in the 1970s and 1980s (Kahn 1992; Kua 1987; Tan Sooi Beng 1992), it has no longer attracted the same kind of attention let alone acrimony since the 1990s. In fact, with its de-emotionalization, it appears that the commercialization of culture is under way. Cultural affairs are now administratively linked to tourism, and together come under the portfolio of the minister of culture, arts and tourism. Significantly, the various cultures of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society have been promoted by the new ministry in its tourism brochures as a principal reason why tourists should visit Malaysia. Indeed, non-Malay dances and other cultural performances are regularly featured together with Malay dances and other cultural performances in National Day celebrations, during the Penang Pesta, the Malaysia Fest, and Visit Malaysia Year campaigns, ostensibly because all these cultural expressions are part of the Malaysian heritage but more pertinently perhaps because it has been so packaged to attract the tourist dollar. The use of English (in addition to Malay) in the TV2 live commentary of the National Day parade at least since 1995 (if not earlier) has been explained in just these terms, i.e. to cater for the tourists present on those occasions.

There has been a resurgence of Islam and the introduction of Islamization policies by the government since the early 1980s. The emergence of *dakwah* missionary groups especially among the younger educated Malays in the urban areas, and the launching of various government projects such as Islamic banking and insurance schemes, the International Islamic University and other Islamic institutions, Quran reading competitions, etc. caused much anxiety among non-Muslims (and perhaps among some Muslims as well) initially. But non-Muslims have also been encouraged by the Barisan leaders and the government-controlled media to make a distinction between UMNO's purportedly more liberal interpretation of Islam and the opposition Parti Islam SeMalaysia's (or PAS's) more strident one. This was especially evident when the PAS government moved to introduce *hudud* laws in the state of Kelantan in the early 1990s. Non-Malay criticism of PAS's initiative was given wide media coverage. The prime minister himself voiced criticism but also clarified that such a change required amendment of the federal Constitution in addition to the amendment of Kelantan's. In the event, PAS did not introduce the required bill for deliberation at the federal parliament.

In 1994–95, there was yet another opportunity to compare UMNO's apparent moderation to Darul Arqam's apparent extremism.[6] Starting off as a *dakwah* missionary organization, Arqam grew into a mass movement in the rural and urban areas and established its own educational and religious institutions, rural development projects and various businesses and industries conducted in Malaysia as well as overseas. Emphasizing self-reliance rather than dependence on NEP handouts, Arqam attracted thousands of educated Malay youths to its cause. Its economic activities in particular enabled Arqam to establish its own financial base. It is significant that the BN government moved against Arqam as the movement began to explore its participation (as a bloc) in electoral politics. At any rate, Arqam leaders were accused of 'deviant teachings' thereby 'threatening national security'. On those grounds the BN government invoked the Internal Security Act and conducted mass arrests of Arqam leaders in 1994. This episode did not go unnoticed. The harsh treatment accorded to Arqam leaders did not seem to evoke a response from non-Muslims; it was only condemned by the usual human rights groups.

The government-sponsored Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) has also organized meetings with non-Muslims to stress the 'universality of Islamic values' as well as the universal values shared by Islam with other spiritual traditions. And in July 1996, after some criticisms by non-Muslims, the government quickly amended its plan requiring all university students to pass a compulsory course in 'Islamic Civilization' to the more inclusive 'Islamic and Asian Civilizations'. Again, these events were given wide coverage by the local media, enabling non-Muslims in particular to contrast the government's Islamization policies with the intended ones of other Islamic groups. As well, in contrast to PAS's desire to create an Islamic state, Dr Mahathir and other UMNO leaders have on several occasions categorically stated that there is no need, given the multi-religious Malaysian context, to create an Islamic state. Apparently, for them it is more important to promote Islamic values in the society writ large (Khoo 1996).

Perhaps capping these changes is Dr Mahathir's own campaign to realize a *Bangsa Malaysia*. This goal was first enunciated in 1991 as one

6. Then, Arqam was projected by the government-controlled media as a movement of fanatics comparable to the David Koresh and Jim Jones sects, which had caused the break-up of families, sexually abused the women in the movement, etc. For discussion of the Arqam episode, see *Aliran Monthly* (1994) vol. 14, no. 8, pp. 9–29.

of the nine challenges contained in his *Wawasan 2000* (Vision 2020). In the April 1995 general elections, it became a buzzword among non-Malay BN leaders during their campaigns. They further seized upon and projected the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia* during the 1995 National Day celebrations that had the theme *Jatidiri Penggerak Wawasan* (Our Self Identity – the Vision Mover). On that occasion, the MCA-controlled newspaper *The Star* (31 Aug. 1995) carried a lengthy supplement containing favourable features as well as comments by dignitaries as well as ordinary folk in support of the concept. In a dialogue with the Malaysian Students Executive Council of the United Kingdom in September 1995, Dr Mahathir further clarified (*The Star*, 11 Sept. 1995):

> *Bangsa Malaysia* means people who are able to identify themselves with the country, speak *Bahasa Malaysia* and accept the Constitution. To realize the goal of *Bangsa Malaysia*, the people should start accepting each other as they are, regardless of race and religion.

He elaborated that in future there would be no nation in the world that would have a single ethnic group as its citizens, perhaps with the exception of Japan and Korea. And it was increasingly clear too that 'while a citizen of a nation may associate himself with the country, he would not be readily prepared to give up his culture, religion or language'. Summing up Malaysia's past experience in promoting integration he stated:

> Previously, we tried to have a single entity but it caused a lot of tension and suspicions among the people because they thought the Government was trying to create a hybrid.
>
> There was fear among the people that they may have to give up their own cultures, values and religions. This could not work, and we believe that the *Bangsa Malaysia* is the answer.

By his own admission the idea is still controversial especially among Malays,[7] not least because it appears contrary to the Malay cause that

---

[7] In contrast to *The Star*'s focus, the Malay dailies did not make *Bangsa Malaysia* the theme of their National Day specials in August 1995. This was also the case for the English-daily *New Straits Times*, which is controlled by UMNO. The focus for them was more generally 'development'. However, the *Bangsa Malaysia* theme was given special attention later in the 10 October 1995 issue of the *New Straits Times*.

underlined Mahathir's own struggle in the 1960s and 1970s, to which many previously rallied. In this regard he stated to the students that he was then young and that his thoughts were those of an inexperienced politician(!) Since multiculturalism underscores the idea of a *Bangsa Malaysia*, predictably, non-Malays have welcomed the concept (see the surveys in *The Star*, 31 Aug. 1995, 12 and 17 Sept. 1995 and in *New Straits Times*, 10 Oct. 1995). Some Malay intellectuals have voiced concern that such a formulation might lead to a negative type of pluralism not sufficiently embedded in a common national identity. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (now back in UMNO but in 1995 leader of the opposition Semangat 46, now defunct), was more forthright: he criticized the concept as 'dangerous', threatening to put Malays, their language and culture 'in the backseat' (*The Star*, 24 Oct. 1995).

Hence, despite Malay political pre-eminence since the 1970s, UMNO leaders have taken the initiative to liberalize language, cultural and educational policies principally for utilitarian reasons. There has also been moderation in the implementation of Islamization policies. This was acknowledged by no less than Lim Kit Siang, leader of the opposition DAP. In an interview with the weekly *Massa* on 12 July 1997, Lim explained the poor performance of his party in the 1995 elections in these terms (my translation):

> Our defeat in the previous general election was not because the DAP did not call for reforms ... The Barisan Nasional's major victory was because the PM is now more liberal. Some of DAP's policies with regards to education, culture and language which we have struggled for in the past have now been accepted and implemented by the BN. This liberalization has attracted the voters to support the BN.

It appears, therefore, that attributes of multiculturalism associated with the civic territorial nation were reincorporated into the terms of governance just at the time when consolidation of the genealogical ethnic Malay nation project seemed to be occurring. There is a corollary to this.

WITHDRAWAL FROM PUBLIC DEBATE AND THE 'PRIVATIZATION' OF ETHNICITY

The liberalization of language, cultural and educational policies and the promotion of relatively moderate Islamization policies have been accompanied by a withdrawal of Chinese and Indian Barisan leaders from debates on national (and even international) issues, especially when

they are controversial and/or 'ethnically sensitive'. For instance, most non-Malay ministers did not participate in the 1993 debate on the constitutional amendments surrounding the removal of immunity for the Malay rulers; nor did they participate in the 1994 debate requiring the judiciary to be answerable to the executive in matters concerning the conduct of judges; nor in the 1997 debate pertaining to corruption and amendments to the Anti-Corruption Agency Act. It appears too that they have had little to say during public debates on democracy and human rights in Malaysia in the 1990s that the prime minister and other UMNO leaders insist should be based on a relativist rather than universalist set of principles (see Chapter 3, this volume).

Understandably, the non-Malay BN political leaders have shied away from most public discussion of the position and role of Islam in Malaysian society. Whereas several organizations representing non-Muslims like the MCCBCHS (Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism) protested against certain aspects of the government's Islamization policies which in some instances had impacted upon the practice of non-Islamic religions (Batumalai 1996; MCCBCHS 1984, 1990; Ramanathan 1996), the non-Muslim BN leaders were significantly silent, at least publicly.[8] They have only been eager to criticize the Islamization policies of the opposition Parti Islam, which has ruled the state of Kelantan since 1990, and to condemn the Chinese-based opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) for its alleged ties with PAS, especially as the 1990 and 1995 elections approached.

When language, culture and educational matters are discussed nowadays, it is often their utilitarianism and their relationship to development, indeed self-help development efforts, that are highlighted. In this regard, the MCA has focused attention on several of its own educational projects. These include the Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman (set up in the early 1970s) and its four branch campuses, which offer higher educational opportunities, and the Jayadiri Institute of Technology, which offers technical and vocational training. Both institutions are open to all qualified Malaysians but cater to Chinese youths in particular. Various campaigns to raise funds for these two institutions, the independent Chinese secondary schools and government Chinese pri-

8 Nowadays, the MCCBCHS takes up its grievances with the prime minister or his deputy directly, rather than working through the non-Muslim BN political parties. Consequently, religious-sensitive grievances are rarely given a public airing.

mary schools have also been undertaken.[9] Under the auspices of the Langkawi Project launched in 1993, the party has contributed towards the improvement of educational opportunities in the rural areas, especially in the Chinese new villages. In July 1998, the MCA president reiterated that his party would continue 'to focus most of its time and energy on education for the benefit of the Chinese community' (*The Star*, 7 July 1998). There is also an ongoing effort, first launched in the early 1980s, to pool the financial resources of Chinese associations and individuals by setting up 'deposit taking co-operatives' (DTCs) so as to participate in the corporate sector of the economy. After experiencing acute losses in the mid-1980s which led to a takeover by the central bank, these DTCs are now succeeding in their business endeavours. The MCA was also involved in the setting up of the holding company, Multipurpose Holdings Bhd, which like the DTCs was again operating profitably, at least until 1997, after experiencing losses in the 1980s (Heng 1992).

A Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society which sponsors and promotes cultural performances, competitions, training and exhibitions in the so-called Chinese arts was also established through the MCA's initiative, and together with the Chinese guilds, has sponsored efforts to preserve the 'Chinese heritage' in Malaysia by collecting relevant materials and housing them in archives, mini-libraries and museums. There was also

---

9. Working with the Dongjiaozong, itself a significant development since they were previously at loggerheads with one another (see Tan Liok Ee 1992), the MCA launched a fund-raising campaign for Chinese schools in May 1994. The first phase entailed raising RM10 each from the MCA's own 600,000 members to realize a target of RM6 million. Thereafter, funds were raised from the public (*The Star*, 30 April 1994; *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 20 May 1994). By mid-1994, some RM25 million had also been raised for the Langkawi Project that was supplemented by a RM5 million donation from the government. Yet another project successfully raised RM20 million within some five years to establish four branch campuses of KTAR (*Nanyang Siang Pau*, 20 May 1994; *The Star*, 28 June 1999). The government was also persuaded to provide grants for these various projects on a case-by-case ad hoc basis, especially as elections approached. In the Bagan (Penang) by-election in September 1995 for instance, the education minister announced a grant of RM200,000 for the Chung Ling High School and another grant of RM40,000 for its branch school located in Bagan constituency (*The Star*, 8 Sept. 1995).

an attempt by the MCA, apparently motivated by a desire to boost tourism, to develop a 'Chinatown' in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. In November 1996, a total of 69 Chinese associations, including 44 national-level bodies, endorsed the draft of a document 'Cultural Guidelines for all Chinese Guilds' which they hoped would be further endorsed by the 4,000-odd guilds and associations throughout the country. In contrast to the 1983 document, the 1996 one assumed a more accommodative stance vis-à-vis the National Cultural Policy. The president of the Federation of Chinese Assembly Halls, the sponsor of the draft document, suggested that change was necessary because of 'more liberal government policies towards Chinese education and cultural activities, improved inter-ethnic relations, and the new thrust to achieve the national goal of a developed nation by the year 2020', a point reiterated by Kerk Choo Ting, the deputy president of Parti Gerakan, who was present at the meeting.[10]

Be that as it may, this avoidance of sensitive and controversial political issues and the focus on specific development projects on the part of Barisan Chinese leaders (like Ling Liong Sik, Lim Ah Lek, Ting Chew Peh and their colleagues in the MCA; Lim Keng Yaik, Kerk Choo Ting, Koh Tsu Koon and others from Gerakan; and Samy Vellu, Subramaniam and others in the MIC) in the 1990s, contrasts sharply with the attitude of past Alliance leaders like Tan Cheng Lock, Lim Chong Eu and Tan Siew Sin in the 1950s and 1960s (and certainly that of past opposition leaders like Tan Chee Khoon and the Seenivasagam brothers), who readily and actively engaged in constitutional and other controversial debates (as evidenced in the *Hansard* records). It is only the likes of the opposition DAP leaders like Lim Kit Siang, Lim Guan Eng, Tan Seng Giaw and Karpal Singh (and their counterparts in PAS) who debate with UMNO leaders over a wide range of issues confronting Malaysian society.[11]

---

10. *Straits Times*, 18 Nov. 1996. Some controversy within the Chinese community itself occurred and Kerk himself was criticized.

11. Perhaps, whereas the older generation of non-Malay Barisan leaders considered themselves as co-equals with their UMNO counterparts in the shaping of the new nation-state during its formative years, the younger generation, in view of greater Malay pre-eminence in the post-1969 period, now consider themselves as representatives of 'minority' groups. And perhaps these opposition leaders still consider themselves as representatives of all Malaysians writ large.

Significantly, these opposition DAP leaders are often attacked by the Barisan leaders for being 'negative', 'unconstructive', 'out-of-date', 'all talk, no action' that is, 'simply criticizing for the sake of criticizing' but not embarking on any development project. This was clearly enunciated by MCA president Ling Liong Sik in his party's General Assembly held in Sept. 1995 and repeated in the following Assembly in June 1996.[12] Taken together, the cultural liberalization policies initiated by UMNO leaders, the 'privatization' of ethnicity and the withdrawal of non-Malay Barisan leaders from public debate of 'sensitive' and controversial issues, have contributed to the marginalization of the politics of ethnicism.[13] A discourse of developmentalism has displaced it.

FROM COUNTER-DISCOURSE TO CONSOLIDATION OF BARISAN RULE

For a while in the 1980s, there developed a momentum towards 'participatory democracy' and 'accountability of government' led by the new middle classes which had been spawned by the economic growth of the 1970s and early 1980s. As a result of the NEP, a Malay middle class had also emerged, a fraction of whom also contributed towards that new momentum. But this momentum towards a counter-discourse was halted in its stride in October 1987 as a result of *Operasi Lalang*, when 106 persons – representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), unionists, opposition leaders, educationists, church social activists, and even ordinary villagers – were detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA). In one fell swoop, the democratic space which had

---

12. *The Star*, 3 Sept. 1995 and 8 June 1996. Campaigning in the Bagan by-election in Penang in September 1995, Ling also claimed that his party had helped the Chinese community through many different efforts in the educational, cultural, religious and economic spheres. In contrast, he declared that 'the DAP's score is still zero ... the DAP has done nothing except criticise' (*The Star*, 8 Sept. 1995).

13. No doubt Barisan leaders continue to manipulate ethnic sentiments to enhance their own ambitions. Manipulation of ethnic sentiments is also evident as elections approach, as in the cases of the 1990 general elections (Chandra 1990; Tan Chee Beng 1990) and the 1994 Sabah elections (Loh 1994). During these periods, the government-controlled media, too, unabashedly manipulate ethnic sentiments (Mustafa 1994; Tan Chee Beng 1990). Nonetheless, these occasions must be located within the larger context of cultural liberalization and the privatization of ethnicity during the 1990s.

been patiently claimed by the burgeoning popular movement led by the NGOs in the 1980s, was usurped by the state. Two dailies and another two weeklies had their publishing licences revoked (Saravanamuttu 1992).

Following the tightening of various laws after *Operasi Lalang*, the government even initiated an assault on the conservative, but independent judiciary in 1988. The upshot was the removal of the lord president (the head of the Supreme Court) and the suspension of five other Supreme Court judges who questioned the removal of their superior. Although more than 1,000 lawyers protested and condemned the action of the government, their rearguard action did not affect the position of the executive (Lawyers Committee 1990).

Indeed, the political ferment and cultural fragmentation of the 1980s was an aberration which, in retrospect, was probably due to the recession of the mid-1980s. That short but severe recession brought to light many of the financial scandals and incidences of mismanagement involving politicians and public enterprises. Moreover it caused anxieties because of retrenchment, wage and job freezes, unemployment and withdrawal of subsidies, and it intensified competition and conflict among the elite, even within UMNO itself. Aberration or no, consolidation of Barisan rule occurred in the 1990s.

The Barisan Nasional ruling coalition performed very well in the 1995 general elections: it polled 66 per cent of the votes and won 162 out of 192 (more than four-fifths) seats in parliament. This performance reversed the trend of the previous decade when its share of votes had steadily declined in three consecutive general elections: in 1982 it polled 60.5 per cent of the votes for parliamentary seats, in 1986 it was reduced to 57.6 per cent, and in 1990 to 53.4 per cent.

A year earlier in the 1994 state elections in Sabah, the Barisan Nasional, specifically UMNO, had also performed very well in the polls. Significantly, the BN claimed that its promise to promote rapid development in a 'New Sabah' had been instrumental in its improved performance. Although the incumbent PBS emerged victorious due to a slim majority, within a month it was replaced by an UMNO-led Barisan government, reversing another trend which had seen the PBS win four successive state elections and holding power, admittedly amidst much political intrigue and instability in Sabah, for nine years (Loh 1996).

In Sarawak, the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) quit the Barisan coalition there in 1983 and mounted a challenge against its erstwhile partners in the 1987 and then the 1991 state elections as well. By 1994, however, the PBDS was back in the Barisan fold. This leap back into

the Barisan was explained in terms of facilitating development for the rural Dayaks who would otherwise be denied their due if the PBDS remained in opposition (Aeria 1997).

There was more. Semangat 46, the Malay opposition party which was created after the split right down the middle in UMNO in 1987/88, voted to dissolve itself in October 1996 after eight years of existence. Apparently, its attempt to highlight ethnic Malay issues had not gone down well, or at least was regarded as inadequate by the Malay electorate. Following their leaders, the members therefore joined UMNO. Meanwhile, just prior to the 1995 general elections, the Islamic movement Darul Arqam, which had been banned in 1994, was successfully disbanded. Its spectacular growth during the late 1980s and early 1990s, which had resulted in the creation of a popular movement in the rural areas possessing an independent source of income as a result of its development activities (Muhd Syukri 1992), was systematically dismantled.

However, it must be stressed that this consolidation of Barisan rule and the related successful management of ethnic relations in the 1990s were not due to altruism on the part of the Barisan leaders (as the consociationalists might suggest). The erosion of democracy[14] and the increasing involvement of ruling political parties and politicians in the economy, indeed the widening practice of 'money politics' in Malaysia (discussed in the following sections) caution against such an interpretation. A better explanation is to be found in the steady economic growth that occurred from 1970 to the mid-1980s, and the rapid growth which brought about widespread consumerism from the late 1980s to 1997.

---

14. Significantly, there has been little political liberalization. Instead, several authors have argued that the Malaysian political system became increasingly authoritarian since the 1980s (Crouch 1992; Gomez and Jomo 1997; Saravanamuttu *et al.* 1992). Although parliamentary rule had not been disrupted, more coercive laws were nonetheless introduced. This change has sometimes been described as a transition from the rule *of* law to the rule *by* law. The battery of coercive laws include the Internal Security Act (which allows for detention without trial), Sedition Act, Official Secrets Act, Printing Presses and Publication Act, Societies Act, Industrial Relations Act, Trade Unions Ordinance, Employment Act, Police Act, Broadcasting Act, Universities and University Colleges Act, and the Standing Orders for the proper conduct of government servants, parliamentarians when debating, etc., all of which have contributed to curbs on civil and political liberties (Saravanamuttu *et al.* 1992).

ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION, RAPID GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENTALISM IN THE 1990S

Malaysia's average real GDP growth was 7.6 per cent during 1970–80, slowing down to 5.1 per cent per annum during 1981–85. Hardly any growth occurred over the next two years. However, uninterrupted economic growth averaging over 8 per cent annually was registered over the next nine years. Employment expanded steadily, rising from 3.34 million in 1970 to 4.8 million in 1980 to 5.47 million in 1985. In particular, the manufacturing sector has grown: from 13.4 per cent of GDP in 1970, to 20 in 1980, 27 in 1990, 33 in 1995. Manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment has also increased from 11.1 per cent in 1970, to 15.7 in 1980, 19.5 in 1990, and 25 in 1995. The unemployment rate declined from 7.8 per cent in 1970 to 5.7 in 1980, rose to 8.6 in 1987, and then dropped to its lowest levels ever in the 1990s (Jomo 1990: 38–43, 70; Jomo *et al.* 1996: 75, 82; Mehmet 1986).

Due to the economic turnaround in the late 1980s, and the steady growth over the 1970s and early 1980s, the NEP was concluded on a high note. Official statistics indicated that the incidence of poverty had declined from 49 per cent in 1970 to about 17 in 1990, and to 11.1 in 1995. Increasing numbers of Malays had also moved out of low-paid into higher-paid employment. In part, this was facilitated by greater access to higher education through the provision of government scholarships and a system of quotas for entrance into tertiary-level institutions, higher rates of Malay concentration in urban areas, and an expansion of the public sector especially for the first 15 years of the NEP. Consequently there also occurred an increase in the *bumiputera* share of corporate equity: according to official estimates from 1.5 per cent in 1969 to 20.6 per cent in 1995 (Malaysia 1971: 40; Malaysia 1991; Malaysia 1996: 86).

The rapid growth and industrialization further resulted in the rise of the multi-ethnic business and middle classes. By adding the total numbers of people involved in professional and technical work, administration and management, sales and clerical work, and *half* of the total numbers engaged in services-related occupations, Saravanamuttu (1992: 48–49) estimated that the 'middle class' comprised just under 36 per cent of the total gainfully employed in 1988, up from 31 per cent in 1980. Using the same measurement basis, the middle class apparently comprises some 45 per cent of the total gainfully employed in 1995 (Malaysia 1996). Although one might dispute how Saravanamuttu defines his 'middle class' (for me, the middle and business classes) and his estimate

of its size, there is no disputing that a multi-ethnic middle class of substantial size has emerged (Abdul Rahman 1995; Halim Salleh *et al.* 1991; Mohd. Nor Nawawi 1991; Muhamad Ikmal 1996).

Ironically, the NEP, which was an ethnic-based affirmative action policy, facilitated the transition from the discourse of ethnicism to the discourse of developmentalism. For the new *bumiputera* middle and business classes developed an appreciation not only of the NEP developmentalist (interventionist) state, they began to valorize the sustained economic growth upon which the success of the NEP was predicated as well. Thus there was not too much cause for alarm when the government, in a bid to stimulate the economy after the short and severe recession of the mid-1980s, began to deregulate the economy and introduce privatization policies. Indeed, this turn to the market led to consolidation of that earlier phase of growth and to the further expansion of the middle and business classes, both *bumiputera* as well as non-*bumiputera*.

Just as the NEP facilitated the transition from ethnicism to developmentalism among business and middle-class *bumiputeras*, this turn to the market now facilitated a similar discursive turn among their non-*bumiputera* counterparts.

Significantly, the guidelines for foreign equity ownership in manufacturing were liberalized in July 1985. The Industrial Coordination Act (ICA) was amended in December 1985 to make it easier for industrialists to invest in new projects or to expand or diversify their existing investments.[15] In May 1986 the Promotion of Investments Act provided additional tax incentives for manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. In late 1986 even more liberal conditions for foreign equity and expatriate staffing were announced in an effort to attract new foreign direct investments. Another amendment to the ICA followed: this time

15. The introduction of the Industrial Coordination Act 1975, and the establishment of the Foreign Investment Committee, were to enable the federal government to regulate businesses, especially local Chinese enterprises and foreign companies, to ensure compliance of NEP quotas (30 per cent reservation for *bumiputeras*) in a determined way. To this end, the Minister of Trade and Industry was given discretionary powers over licensing, ownership structure, ethnic employment, production distribution quotas, local content and the pricing of products (Jesudason 1989: 135–140). Predictably, local Chinese businesses found the ICA irksome, especially since it originally applied to all manufacturing firms that had RM100,000 (after the 1978 amendment, RM250,000) or more in shareholder capital, or which employed more than 25 workers.

only firms having more than 75 (previously 25) workers or RM2.5 (previously RM1) million paid-up capital had to comply with NEP requirements. The local Chinese entrepreneurs were being courted to stimulate the economy (Jomo *et al.* 1996: 92–94).

Another aspect of deregulation was privatization, which the government hoped would further contribute towards growth.[16] Privatization began with new projects like the construction of the north–south toll highway and highway interchanges, and the first commercial television station, TV3. Older, relatively successful public enterprises like MAS (Malaysian Airlines System) and MISC (Malaysian International Shipping Corporation) were privatized next.

The National Development Policy (NDP, 1990–2000), which replaced the NEP, continued with the twin objectives of poverty eradication and restructuring within the context of economic growth. The goal of achieving at least 30 per cent *bumiputera* ownership and control of corporate equity associated with the earlier NEP remained, but no specific timeframe for its realization was set. Greater attention was focused on the qualitative aspects of *bumiputera* participation. Indeed, non-*bumiputera* corporations and entrepreneurs were encouraged to cooperate with their *bumiputera* counterparts. Continuing the strategy adopted for economic recovery and growth since the mid-1980s, the private sector was identified as the engine of economic growth for the duration of the NDP. Thus privatization was undertaken with even greater urgency in the 1990s.

Major infrastructural projects like the construction of the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), the new administrative centre in Putrajaya, the light rail rapid transit system in Kuala Lumpur, a new bridge link with Singapore, etc. were awarded to the private sector. Many statutory bodies providing basic services were also privatized: Telecoms Malaysia, the National Electricity Board, the Malayan Railways, and other bodies supplying water, treating sewage, collecting rubbish, etc. By 1995, the number of privatization projects that had been implemented totalled 374. The government claimed that these projects had saved it RM72.7 billion in capital expenditure and removed

16. Moreover, by awarding privatization projects to *bumiputera* individuals and businesses in particular, corporate equity ownership could also be transferred to *bumiputera* interests in accordance with NEP restructuring guidelines. Otherwise, due to deregulation policies, the NEP would have been held in complete abeyance in the late 1980s. That would not have been politically expedient.

almost 97,000 workers from the government payroll.[17] Privatization projects under the *Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996–2000)* included the Bakun Hydro-electric Power project, the money-losing Perwaja Steel Bhd, Bank Bumiputera (the second largest bank in the country), and several coastal highway projects, ports, and light rail rapid transit systems in other towns. Additionally, corporatization (a variation of the privatization theme which allows for administrative autonomy without sale of government assets) of the major hospitals, the state universities and the public works department was underway.

Fed up with the waste, inefficiency and corruption associated with the public sector, a large section of the Malaysian public, especially the middle classes, welcomed the policy shift. Anticipating opportunities for themselves, businessmen – *bumiputera*, local Chinese as well as foreigners – also welcomed privatization.[18] With such opportunities being made available to the private sector, and with such rapid growth occurring due to this turn to the market, the business and middle classes have become enamoured with both the market and the Barisan government.

The earlier discussions of cultural liberalization, the withdrawal from public debates of 'sensitive' issues, and the privatization of ethnicity, are to be located within this context of economic liberalization,

---

17. See the remarks by the senior director of the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department (*The Star*, 24 May 1996). According to him, a total of 204 privatization projects costing RM51.5 billion were conducted during the *Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991–95*.

18. Distribution of the benefits of privatization projects appears to have been awarded to a small group of *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera* individuals and companies possessing the right personal and political connections. This unhealthy development occurred because the open tender system was largely replaced by the so-called 'negotiated tender system'. Controversial award decisions have been explained in terms of a 'first-come, first-served' policy, i.e. in the favour of those who first identify 'viable' privatization proposals to the government (Gomez and Jomo 1997). Consequently, privatization has led to the deepening of the political patronage system, initially associated with the allocation of licences, government projects and soft loans to *bumiputeras* under the NEP guidelines. It now includes favoured non-*bumiputera* businessmen as well. Since many of them are related to the ruling elite and their political parties, it has further entrenched the involvement of Barisan parties and politicians in business (Gomez 1990; Gomez and Jomo 1997).

rapid growth and the replacement of the NEP with the NDP in the 1990s. Taken together, cultural and economic liberalization underscores the transition from the discourse of ethnicism to that of developmentalism. The following discussion of the 'discourse of the individual', which was given a fillip as a result of mass consumerism, attempts to show how developmentalism penetrated into the everyday lives of consuming individuals, and contributed towards 'privatized freedom'.

THE DISCOURSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL, MASS CONSUMERISM AND 'PRIVATIZED FREEDOM'

Thus far I have shown how developmentalism emerged as the cultural consequence of the *dirigiste* developmentalist state. I now wish to indicate how developmentalism penetrated into the popular imaginings and everyday lives of ordinary Malaysians. Critical to this penetration is the occurrence of mass consumerism. Ironically, the significance of mass consumption is the rise of the consuming *individual*, which in turn fosters the 'discourse of the individual'. For analytical purposes we need to distinguish between three aspects of the discourse of the individual – individuation, individuality and individualism. The distinctions made between individualism, individuation and individuality in this section are drawn from Abercrombie, *et al.* (1986: 2). They write:

> Individualism, properly so called, was in origin mainly a political and subsidiarily an economic doctrine relating to the rights and obligations of persons [with property] that are associated with the English political theory of the seventeenth century, which later heavily influenced British and American culture. Individuality is concerned with the education of inner feelings and subjectivity. By contrast, individuation is a bureaucratic procedure that uniquely identifies individuals for the purpose of social administration and control.[19]

---

19. In the volume, the authors explore the question of *individualism* as a defining feature of capitalism. They conclude that 'there is no necessary or inevitable linkage between the two. They simply relate to each other contingently'. For them, 'capitalism and *individualism* are related only in one historical epoch and only in the West'. Put another way, *individualism* was not 'causally important for capitalism'; it simply defined 'the form which capitalism took' (Abercrombie, *et al.* 1986: 1–3).

From very early days, the state had already initiated the *individuation* (or atomization) of civil society into independent subjects. The registration of births, marriages and deaths, of enrolment in schools, and of students partaking in examinations is nowadays commonplace. Through the issuance of personal identity cards, income tax payments, Employees Provident Fund contributions and savings, and of course the franchise, individuation has further proceeded. In dealings with the legal system and the courts, unavoidable at some point in one's life in modern society, the individuation process is also reinforced. The labour market which treats employees as individuals possessing particular skills or qualifications (and promotes them if, as individuals, they have performed well) furthers this person-centredness; likewise, with regard to one's dealings with banks and finance companies, and with organizations supplying essential utilities. But, above all, mass consumerism disaggregates the members of an ethnic group and of Malaysian society generally, into individuals. One consumes as an individual, not as groups or as communities.

The occurrence of mass consumerism is especially evident among the business and middle classes in urban areas. But urban workers and the rural folk have not been impervious to this aspect of developmentalism either. This consumerism is influenced by so-called 'Western' tastes and lifestyles as communicated to Malaysians through advertisements, the media and the entertainment industry. Globalization in the 1990s facilitated this consumerism. Evidence of this mass consumerism include the following factors:

- About 2 million out of some 7 million Malaysians gainfully employed possess credit cards and spent RM4.2 billion in 1995–96.
- Shopping malls with high-brow and fast-food restaurants, department stores and small boutiques specializing in designer products, amusement arcades, etc. are sprouting in all urban areas of the country.
- Travel, leisure and holidaying – theme parks, sports and recreational clubs, golf clubs (71 clubs with 41 others on the way as of 1992), marinas, hotels, time-sharing vacations, overseas tours – have turned into a major industry.
- The possession and constant upgrading of electronic equipment and household gadgets (personal computers – CD-ROMs, 'combo sets' and audio-systems, mobile phones, video and TV, and satellite and cable TV) has been phenomenal for a country with such a small population as Malaysia.

- Despite the escalating costs of cars, there has occurred high growth in the possession of motorcars, and with that worsening traffic jams in the cities.
- The high growth rate in the purchase of life insurance policies: from 1,342,246 in 1984 to 3,736,775 in 1994 to 5,650,654 in 1996.
- The enrolment of Malaysians in state universities as well as in private colleges is rising rapidly. (Often the purpose of higher education is simply to gain the skills and paper qualifications needed for well-paying jobs and career advancements. Less and less emphasis is given to seeking knowledge for its own sake, acquiring the values for leading meaningful lives, etc. An indication of this bias is the decreasing emphasis by institutions and students alike on the humanities, social sciences and pure sciences.)
- The rapid growth of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange and the increasing involvement of Malaysians of all ethnic groups and various classes in it.

In this regard the revamping of the major Malaysian newspapers, almost all controlled by the Barisan parties, in the early 1990s was no accident (Loh and Mustafa 1996). Segmentation of the newspapers occurred: in addition to the usual local, regional, international and sports mainstay, there are nowadays business sections with stockmarket and company reports (something altogether new for the Malay dailies), and a 'Life and Times', '*Seni dan Hiburan*' (Arts and Entertainment) or their equivalents essentially catering to the middle classes. In the latter may be found reviews of books, films/videos and performances, a page or two on travel and eating out, and even debates on environmental and gender issues. But above all, segmentation allows for efficient advertising. The publication of specialized weekly pullouts focusing on computers, on audio equipment, on higher education etc., caters to efficient advertising and appeals to the potential advertiser.

Much of the same has happened in television as well. All the stations report daily on the stockmarket and business developments in Malaysia. These are supplemented by the transmission of reports of business developments outside the country via arrangements with CNN, etc. on all weekdays. Advertisements are presented throughout the day. Moreover television shopping programmes like 'Smartshop', 'Home Shopping', etc. also broadcast the sale of items that may be ordered via the telephone and paid in instalments by use of credit cards. Hence Malaysian newspapers, and the mass media generally,

have become virtual organs of the government on the one hand, and of advertising copy on the other.

A second aspect of this discourse of the individual is *individuality*, by which is meant expression of one's own autonomy, freedom and identity usually related to one's achievement – perhaps in education and in one's career. Success fosters wealth and honours and allows one to enjoy a certain standard of living and lifestyle that one wishes to sustain. Political involvement can enhance or threaten this lifestyle. Equally likely, maintaining a certain lifestyle may cause the individual to accept a notion of personal achievement, freedom and identity which is not just materially determined, but also one which is personalized and private – even narcissistic, no longer social and public. Driving a particular fancy car, residing in a luxury condominium, wearing designer-brand apparel, or engaging in certain leisure activities can become emblems of achievement, identity, and even 'freedom'. In fact, such expressions of identity are often a function of marketing, telecommunications and advertising in the late twentieth century, and, not exclusively one's own but shared with others similarly seduced.

This brings us to the third aspect of the discourse: the discourse of the individual in Malaysia up until 1997 had not significantly resulted in *individualism* associated with a struggle for the individual's civil and political rights, and by extension liberal democracy. The state's recognition of the 'plebiscitarian' principle and its counterpart of 'functional representation' (the right to associate and to combine) as defining characteristics of citizenship in the Western industrialized countries was a result of political struggle by the new bourgeoisie as well as the labouring classes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bendix 1964: 74–75). Improved living standards and mass consumption subsequently followed. In the late industrializing countries like Malaysia, economic growth under the developmental state spawned the growth of the business and middle classes, which became imbued with developmentalism. No doubt, many Malaysians fear the coercive laws, especially the ISA. Nonetheless, an equally if not more compelling reason why the middle and business classes rallied behind the BN government, even when critical civil liberties and social rights were being denied them by the BN's developmental state, is because they valorize political stability nowadays. Given the lack of an alternative to the multi-ethnic BN coalition, at least until fairly recently, a vote for the BN was a vote for stability, for uninterrupted economic growth, for rising incomes, for maintaining certain standards of living

and consumerist lifestyles. The liberal momentum could be redirected towards expressing one's *individuality* and 'freedom' from a private and personalized point of view. It was only when the social issues directly impinged on the individual's economic well-being – for example, when hikes in highway tolls, electricity rates and telephone charges, or deterioration of the immediate environment occurred – that some measure of concern and intervention was evident among these middle and business classes. Otherwise, measures to combat political scandals, corruption, human rights abuses, media controls, etc. did not elicit sustained popular support.

It is this twist in the discourse of the individual in late modernity in Malaysia, principally associated with developmentalism and mass consumerism, that explains political developments in the 1990s: support for the Barisan Nasional, withdrawal from controversial and ethnically sensitive issues, and the privatization of freedom.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on politics in Malaysia prior to 1997 and traced its evolution from a discourse of ethnicism to a discourse of developmentalism. Economic and cultural liberalization occurred and political stability was maintained throughout this period. However, contrary to re-emergent modernization theorists like Fukuyama, economic development and market reforms, and the consolidation of the business and middle classes in Malaysia (and in Southeast Asia more generally), did not lead to political liberalization immediately. Asian leaders like Mahathir Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew, and a second school of scholars, in a re-hash of neo-modernization theories, argued that cultural factors had an important bearing on political development, that modernity and tradition as in orthodox modernization theories were misplaced polarities, and that the seemingly illiberal political systems in Asia had been inaccurately classified as 'undemocratic'. They merited reclassification as 'Asian variants' of democracy: variants which are in line with traditional 'Asian values' anchored around the family, placing the community's interests and the common good above that of the individual's, seeking consensual and eschewing competitive politics, and displaying respect rather than disrespect of authority.

The former group of re-emergent modernization theorists was too economistic. However, I do not agree with the premium placed on 'traditional Asian values' by the second group of scholars. The last part of this chapter highlighted the everyday realities of becoming and

being an *individual* in Malaysia. It was principally because the discourse of the individual had caught up with fast-growing Malaysia that all this rhetoric of Asian cultural essentialism became necessary. In fact 'Asian values' was a response on the part of the ruling elite to legitimize their authoritarian developmental states and downplay demands for liberal democracy. Theories suggesting that the strong post-colonial state imposes severe structural limits over civil society offer an important antidote to both re-emergent modernization theories as well as the neo-modernization ones. Over these structural arguments I have added a cultural gloss, reminding us of the human agency always involved, though not always turning out the way we want it. Malaysians, especially the middle and business classes, which became enamoured with developmentalism, privatized their freedom and got the government they desired. Ethnicism (though not ethnic identity) is on the wane. But the new dominant discourse of developmentalism will continue to impose limits on the emerging counter-discourse of democracy.

NATIONALISM, CAPITALISM AND 'ASIAN VALUES'

Khoo Boo Teik

In recent years, the ruling elites in some Asian states appeared to be striving for a regional consensus on what 'democracy' should mean in Asia. In political terms the elites and their intellectual supporters spurned 'Western liberal democracy' as a form of government worthy of emulation outside of the 'West'. In ideological terms, they expressed a preference for systems of government underpinned by moral values, social norms and cultural attitudes said to be derived from Asian philosophical traditions and historical experiences. Thus, many Asian politicians, ideologues and their intellectual supporters were wont to speak of traditional commonalities and shared attitudes presumed to reside in diverse 'Asian' moral and religious systems, ranging, for example, from Confucianism to Islam.

The search for, or the promotion of, 'Asian values' in contradistinction to 'Western values' (and their implications for politics, government and socio-economic development of Asian countries), was conducted in various ways. In Southeast Asia, for example, politicians such as Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore took the lead in differentiating between 'Asian' and 'Western' culture and values, criticizing the weaknesses of 'Western liberal democracy', and arguing its basic incompatibility with Asian culture and society (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 71–86, Zakaria 1994).

In parallel, certain Southeast Asian state apparatuses, 'think-tanks', universities and the mass media proferred their own formulations regarding Asian values and democracy. For example, the Committee for a New Asia, an ad hoc group sponsored principally by the Institute of

Strategic and International Studies (Malaysia), cautioned that 'if a democracy that is resilient and durable is to take strong and permanent root in Asian societies, it must be deeply embedded in Asian values and mores and embrace institutions and processes special to specific cultures' (Committee for a New Asia 1994: 35). The former director of the Institute of Southeast Studies, Singapore, considered it feasible to 'extrapolate certain characteristics common to all [Asian] countries' which made it 'possible to speak of a new variant of democracy, namely Asian democracy' (Chan 1993: 21).

The proponents of 'Asian values' as applied to politics variously framed those values in political discourse and academic debates. But a summary, though not exhaustive, list of their 'Asian values' would include a supposedly and distinctively 'Asian'

- predisposition towards strong and stable leadership rather than political pluralism;
- respect for social harmony and an inclination towards consensus as opposed to a tendency towards dissent or confrontation;
- acceptance of broad and penetrating state and bureaucratic intervention in social and economic affairs;
- concern with socio-economic well-being instead of civil liberties and human rights; and
- preference for the welfare and collective good of the community over individual rights.[1]

It was debatable just how immanently, uniquely or immutably 'Asian' each of these values (or their totality) was, as some opponents of 'Asian values' have countered (Ichiyo 1995; Kim 1994; Lummis 1995; Tønnesson 1996). But if philosophical or academic disagreement over the supposed Asian-ness of those values was all there was to the debates over 'Asian values', it was difficult to comprehend the intensity of those debates which were intermittently entangled with controversies ranging from trade disputes to the admittance of Myanmar into ASEAN. Many domestic and foreign critics of repressive Asian regimes had contended that 'Asian values', so formulated by ruling elites, were little more than an ideological construct used to legitimate authoritarian rule, especially by tarring domestic critics as disloyal followers who were purveyors of 'Western values'. Although true, this argument could not adequately

1. This 'core' of Asian values has been stated differently elsewhere, depending on whether social or political dimensions are stressed. See, for example, Robison (1996: 310–311).

grapple with the rejection of 'Western' values (and, in particular, 'Western' conceptions of democracy and human rights), that gained a wide currency in many Asian societies, as roughly indicated, for instance, by Asian reactions to Hong Kong's return to China, or Malaysia's call for a review of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

At least four concerns prompted the Asian ruling elites to propagate 'Asian values', and perhaps an 'Asian democracy' in the early 1990s, namely,

1. the need to respond to the various, so-called 'pro-democracy' uprisings against authoritarian or military rule in the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, China and Myanmar;
2. the need to respond to Western state and non-state criticisms of the Asian states' human rights records – criticisms which had been raised or been intensified since the collapse of communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe;
3. the tendency to contrast the so-called 'East Asian economic miracle' with the so-called 'economic decline of the West' in terms of uniquely 'Asian' qualities and strengths; and
4. the concern that the economic success of East Asia, if accompanied by a surge of 'Western liberalism, individualism, welfarism, and hedonism', would force Asian societies to yield to the social malaise and breakdown supposedly prevailing in several Western countries.

That such a stark division of selected geographical components of the world can enjoy a widening credence among 'Asia's intelligentsia' (and, it might as well be said here, 'Western intelligentsia', too) may be partly explained by global political and economic trends which seemingly pitted East Asia against the West in a number of ways (whether or not they conform closely to realities), chiefly:

- East Asian late industrialization versus Western de-industrialization;
- rising Asian competitiveness versus rising Western protectionism;
- Asian economic prosperity versus the dismantling of Western social democracy;
- the vulnerability of Asian states vis-à-vis the pronounced Western political and military dominance in a 'unipolar' post-Cold War world; and
- the relatively unintegrated character of East Asian economies versus the formal economic regionalization of Europe (via the European Union) and the Americas (via the North American Free Trade Area).

There is by now an extensive academic literature on the 'Asian values' debate (Ghai 1998; Harper 1997; Jayasuriya 1997; Khoo 1999; Robison

1996a). Instead of joining the debate from the perspective of understanding 'Asian values', cast broadly or comparatively, this chapter seeks to comprehend what 'Asian values' and 'Asian democracy' might mean in the specific case of Mahathir Mohamad's involvement in the controversy. It outlines the trajectory of Mahathir's ideological evolution to show that his usage of 'Asian values' and 'Asian democracy' was relatively recent, although he had long demonstrated a deep concern with 'values' and 'value systems', and their role in social and economic change. In so doing, this chapter hopes to provide some national flesh to the regional skeleton of 'Asian values' or 'Asian democracy', and thereby facilitate further comparisons or contrasts with 'Asian values' as they have been constructed and contested in other East Asian settings.[2]

THE CENTRALITY OF VALUES IN MAHATHIR'S WORLDVIEW

In his long political career, which spans half a century, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's prime minister since July 1981, has consistently expressed a firm conviction that the fortunes and fates of entire races and nations in history were centrally determined by their 'values' and 'value systems'. For him, civilizations and nations which 'grew rapidly and achieved greatness' at different times were able to do so precisely because 'they had certain set[s] of values which contributed towards [their] achievement' (Ahmad 1993: 7). Conversely, when empires and nations abandoned the values which previously ennobled them, they declined or were swept away by others which were equipped with superior value systems.

Mahathir typically employed the term 'values' in an embracing manner, to include individual, communal, social, ethnic and cultural (not to say national) values, norms, mores, attitudes, attributes, traits, qualities, beliefs, ethics and even customs. It would be irrelevant here to argue the lexical laxity of such a usage since Mahathir – in his various personae as an ideologue, a politician, national leader and an international spokesman – has never evinced an academic interest in such terms. Suffice it, therefore, to note that Mahathir has demonstrated an old and sustained preoccupation with values and value systems, and, more precisely, their replacement, transformation, absorption, subversion

2. An excellent treatment of the Singaporean experiment in fostering 'shared values' prior to the 'rise of Asian values' is given in Chua (1995: 28–37, 146–167).

and perversion of 'values' and 'value systems' within any community, society, nation or people, with laudable or undesirable consequences.

The centrality of values and value systems in Mahathir's worldview is evident in all his writings. Already as a University of Malaya medical student writing occasional articles under the pseudonym of C.H.E. Det for the *Sunday Times* between 1948 and 1950, Mahathir could be found expressing strong views on Malay values which he thought were pertinent to the social and political issues of the day, such as the Malay language, higher education, and the position of women in Malay society (Khoo 1995: 81–88). Much of *The Malay Dilemma* (Mahathir 1970), which remains the book for which Mahathir is best known, may be read as a manifesto for changing Malay values, attitudes and customs which, in his opinion, explained a large part of the economic backwardness of the Malays vis-à-vis the Chinese community in independent Malaysia. Even his *Guide for Small Businessmen* (Mahathir 1985) originally published in Malay in 1973, contained many maxims based on certain values and attitudes which he urged upon Malays wishing to make a modest start in the world of business. In his collection of essays, *The Challenge* (Mahathir 1986; first published in Malay in 1976), Mahathir repeatedly criticized the Malays for clinging to, imbibing, or practising all kinds of 'wrong' values, chiefly under Western cultural influence but also under the impact of 'deviant' Islamic groupings.

Likewise, when Mahathir became prime minister, he launched several policies and campaigns – 'Look East', *bersih, cekap dan amanah* ('clean, efficient and trustworthy'), *kepimpinan melalui teladan* ('leadership by example'), and *penyerapan nilai-nilai Islam* ('the assimilation of Islamic values') – which collectively constituted an attempt to reform and reorientate the values, attitudes and outlook of not only Malaysians in general and the Malays in particular, but also the politicians from the ruling coalition, bureaucrats and businessmen.

Mahathir, too, has been known to argue at international forums that the peoples of the developing countries could haul themselves out of underdevelopment into progress and prosperity if they practised 'good' values. In his evaluation of the world which he had held for over a decade (before the East Asian crisis of July 1997), the so-called 'East Asian miracle' was achieved because of a superior 'Eastern work ethic'. Simultaneously, Mahathir held that the Western economies had lost their competitiveness mainly because the values of their people had changed, for the worse. According to Mahathir's peculiar reading

of world history, nations were compelled to pass through a 'cycle of feebleness–progressivenes–feebleness' (Mahathir 1986: 3). Over the course of world history, for example, 'East' and 'West' confronted each other on the terrain of values, as it were, with the changing balance of power between them decided ultimately by the superiority of one 'value system' over another. In Mahathir's more recent anticipation of the next millennium, societies and peoples must fortify themselves with proper values if they are not to collapse before the borderless spread of unlimited and uncensored 'information', carrying with it all kinds of 'bad' values.

If one were to summarize the values that were important to Mahathir, or which suited his political purposes, they would include: an observance of orderliness and responsibility; a capacity for effort, industry and diligence; a habit of thrift; a striving for knowledge and achievement; a commitment to discipline and self-reliance; an ability to persevere under hardship and to adapt in the face of challenges; and a sense of spiritual piety. At the level of individuals, such values could collectively be regarded as the moral equipment that facilitated high attainment. At the same time, such values were, for Mahathir, the social prerequisites for genuine economic advancement which comprised the only sure safeguard of a respectable position for a community or nation relative to other communities and nations.

In contrast, Mahathir most abhorred any disinclination to work, an indifference to learning, a tendency to squander, a lack of adaptability, a proclivity towards permissiveness, and an attitude of dependence – all failings which rendered individuals helpless and made their communities vulnerable to the depredations of others.

THE AMBIVALENCE OF DEMOCRACY

Mahathir, however, held much more ambivalent positions on 'democracy' in the course of his political career. Long before it was fashionable for the mainstream 'international press' to hallow the dissent in the 'East' of the late 1980s with the term 'pro-democracy', Mahathir had concluded that the spectre which haunted newly independent countries was 'democracy'. Particularly during the 1960s, from his vantage point as a politician of the ruling party in a newly independent country, he viewed 'democracy' as a 'Western' form of government, installed by the Western powers as they departed their colonies. Indeed, Mahathir contended 20 years ago that 'the most effective pressure inflicted by the West on the East' came in the form of 'democratic

governments' which the West compelled their former colonies to accept 'as a condition of independence' (Mahathir 1986: 52–53).

Partly for that reason Mahathir resented the imposition of the 'complexity of a democratic government' upon formerly colonized people who were 'not skilled in or knowledgeable about democratic administration' (Mahathir 1986: 52–53), and who had had no experience of the forms of popular government, political institutions and electoral practices associated with democracy. Most recently, he made the same point, with its accompanying note of Western colonial conspiracy, when commenting on 'Britain's push for more democracy in Hong Kong before it returns the territory to China':

> I think it is the height of hypocrisy. For more than one hundred years, the British never thought of ruling Hong Kong as a democracy. Now, just before it has to hand Hong Kong back to China, it suddenly decides there must be democracy, and that it is going to defend democracy to the last drop of the Hong Kong people's blood (*Asiaweek*, 9 May 1997).

However, Mahathir was also not enamoured with democracy partly because it made for difficult government, since an elected government was forced to operate as much on popularity as efficiency.[3] For him, the experiences of many newly independent countries tragically confirmed that it was all too easy for an elected government to become unpopular because it became inefficient. Mahathir maintained that in a democracy, among other things, 'pressure groups' and 'systems of lobbies' made heavy demands on the government, while domestic and foreign criticisms undermined its authority. Consequently many democratically elected governments in those countries became authoritarian. But even if an authoritarian government were overthrown, there was little cause for rejoicing since it was likely to be replaced by a government that was neither less authoritarian nor more efficient. If anything, the overthrow of the previous authoritarian government would merely end in 'anarchy' (a condition as often exaggerated as abhorred by Mahathir), as Mahathir observed of the political turmoil

3. In a restatement of this point, Mahathir wrote: 'Democracy is not the easiest way to govern a country. More often than not it fails to bring about stability, much less prosperity. It is disruptive because it tends to encourage sudden changes in policies and directions with each change in government' (Mahathir 1995: 9).

in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism:

> It's not easy suddenly to switch from an autocratic government to a democratic government ... Look at what's happened in Albania. That's democracy gone crazy. We tell the people that you can demonstrate in the streets and you can bring down the government. So they demonstrated, brought down the government, and now what do they have? Anarchy. (*Asiaweek*, 9 May 1997).[4]

In the interest of political stability and efficiency of governance, therefore, Mahathir was not opposed in principle to 'some form of authoritarian rule' (Mahathir 1986: 3) even if 'the modern world is against autocracy' because he rationalized that majority rule under democracy left the electorate vulnerable to manipulation by 'opportunists, rogues and foreigners ... [and] frequently unscrupulous and ambitious politicians who may or may not be in league with various ideologies or agencies' (Mahathir 1986a). In Malaysia's experience, for example, Mahathir proclaimed in the aftermath of the inter-ethnic violence of 13 May 1969, that 'there is not going to be a democracy in Malaysia; there never was and there never will be' (Reece 1969). Certainly Mahathir did not balk at using authoritarian means to restore his control over mass dissension at a critical moment in October 1987, when a narrowly defeated challenge to his position and widespread disaffection with his administration became entangled in a potentially violent inter-ethnic quarrel. Then, in 1987, he professed to lament the irresponsiblity of 'misfits' who had abused his 'liberalism', not unlike how, after 13 May 1969, he spoke of the 'immaturity of the people' as an obstacle to the full practice of democracy.

Such pronouncements by Mahathir reaffirmed rather than pioneered an ideological tradition, – an elite discourse on Malaysian democracy, so to speak – which justified constrictions of the parameters of democratic practice in Malaysia on two principal grounds – of containing ethnic chauvinism and of combating communism. Especially during the 1970s, when the New Economic Policy (NEP) favouring the Malay community was implemented, various legislative and admin-

4. When Gorbachev was toppled in 1991, Mahathir said, 'To a certain extent, they [the Western powers] are to be blamed because they were intent on democracy rather than helping the Soviet Union get the benefit of a free market system' (*The Star*, 21 August 1991).

istrative controls over non-Malay criticisms and protests against the NEP were justified on grounds of containing ethnic chauvinism. The best known of those controls was the Sedition Act, passed in 1972, which made it an offence (even for elected representatives in parliament) to question constitutional provisions related to the position of the Malay rulers, the special privileges accorded to the Malay community, the rights of non-Malay citizens, and the adoption of the Malay language as the sole official language of the country. On the other hand, the Internal Security Act (ISA), which sanctioned detention without trial for indefinite periods, was initially defended as a prophylactic weapon against supporters of the insurgency led by the Communist Party of Malaya, which began in 1948, was largely defeated in the 1950s, lingered between the 1960s and 1970s, and was formally ended in 1989. But the use of the ISA by every administration throughout the first three decades of Malaysian independence soon targeted a widening range of non-communist opponents of the state, including peasant, labour and student leaders, academicians and educationists, social activists, and dissident Islamic groupings, as well as suspected criminals whom the state could not successfully prosecute for want of sufficient evidence.

IN DEFENCE OF 'MALAYSIAN DEMOCRACY'

Ideologically, Mahathir's heavily qualified pronouncements on the suitability or practicability of democracy for Malaysia, or for other newly independent, developing, or formerly autocratically ruled countries, implicitly carried a defensive and apologetic tone. It was as if democracy was still to be preferred but had to be deferred until the people were mature, the electorate was not illiterate, and the government could function efficiently. Judging by his more recent speeches, interviews and his latest publication, *The Malaysian System of Government*, Mahathir no longer retains any vestige of apology when discussing 'our unique system of government' (Mahathir 1995). The curbs and dilutions which have been forced upon the constitutional guarantees of the freedoms of speech, assembly and association have been imposed because 'we choose to place the rights of the people above those of the individual' (Mahathir 1995: 45).

More than that, Mahathir now claims that, 'except for the peculiarity in the treatment of racial problems', the system of government in Malaysia is 'as democratic as can be', albeit 'it is not a slavish copy of the kind of liberal democracy that has developed in the West in recent

years ... [which] worships individual and personal freedom as a fetish' (Mahathir 1995: 43). Mahathir's statement that the Malaysian political system is 'as democratic as can be' is at odds with the record of successive Malaysian governments which have progressively circumscribed the constitutional provisions, democratic forms and electoral practices that have characterized formal political contestation since 1957. Yet, it may be instructive not to dismiss the statement as just one of those defiant if not outlandish claims which Mahathir is fond of making when irked by domestic and foreign criticisms. A critical analysis of the reasons behind Mahathir's claim might shed light on the quality of democracy which he envisages for Malaysia, and perhaps for other Asian societies, too.

First, Mahathir defends the Malaysian political system as a democracy because the system abides by conventional tenets of democratic rule (Mahathir 1995: 22–25), namely,

1. direct representation of the people;
2. majority rule through a government of elected representatives;
3. periodic elections contested by a multitude of political parties, allowing for the replacement of individual representatives or a change in government;
4. separation between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government conferring institutional checks and balances upon one another; and
5. responsiveness of the elected representatives and the government to public opinion.

Observers of Malaysian politics would accept that the Malaysian political system has by and large adhered to the above tenets. Critics of the decline in Malaysian democracy should, however, be able to show that the system is flawed in practice. For instance, 'direct representation' and 'majority rule' have been progressively subverted by an ethnic form of gerrymandering that ensures a disproportionately high representation of the Malay electorate which is distributed over relatively sparsely populated rural constituencies, and a severe underrepresentation of non-Malay and especially Chinese voters, who are resident in very densely populated urban constituencies. The opposition parties have definitely defeated the ruling coalition candidates before, and sometimes significantly enough to capture the government in a few states. But it is a truism in Malaysian politics that the Barisan Nasional enjoys enormous advantages in every election while the opposition parties labour under severe handicaps. The 'separation of powers', too, may

not mean much in practice given the executive's historical domination of parliament, as Mahathir himself angrily observed in 1970 while he was out of parliament (Mahathir 1970). Twenty-eight years later Prime Minister Mahathir's assault on the judiciary left the latter's independence in tatters when the lord president and two other Supreme Court judges were impeached and dismissed under highly controversial circumstances (Lee 1995; Rais 1995).

Second, Mahathir extols the Malaysian system not only for its efficacy in managing the multi-ethnic character of Malaysian society, but, more pertinently, for extending representation in government and a share of political power to ethnic minorities in the country. This, he argues, has been achieved by the power-sharing arrangements of the Barisan Nasional, the ruling coalition. The Barisan Nasional's dominant (Malay) party, UMNO (United Malays National Organization), has yielded several Malay-majority constituencies to some of its coalition partners, such as the MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress), which would otherwise stand little chance of winning elections since no electoral constituency shows a majority of ethnic Indian voters. In exchange, UMNO receives the critical support of ethnic minority voters in Malay-majority constituencies where the challenge by other Malay parties (chiefly, PAS, or the Parti Islam SeMalaysia) may split the Malay vote.

That candidates of one ethnic origin can win elections in constituencies having a majority of voters of another ethnic origin (without the Barisan Nasional's trade in ethnic votes) – as the Seenivasagam brothers (of Sri Lankan Tamil descent) showed, for example, when they led their People's Progressive Party to famous victories in Chinese-majority constituencies in the 1960s – scarcely bothers Mahathir. That 'of course this [Barisan Nasional] arrangement is blatantly racial' also hardly troubles him, for 'the reality is that the average Malaysian still cannot overcome his race loyalties and fears not being represented in Parliament, and, more importantly, in the Government' and 'the coalition arrangement has enabled all the major races to be [accommodated] in every Alliance/National Front Government' (Mahathir 1995: 34–35).

Third, Mahathir defends Malaysia's record on other issues related to democratic practice – individual freedom, civil liberties and human rights – not by recourse to the subtleties of political philosophy, but by a 'pragmatic' splicing of two commonsensical strands of arguments: a rejection of 'absolute personal freedom' and an affirmation of the obligations of elected government.

Freedom, liberties and rights, in Mahathir's view, can only be exercised or enjoyed if restrained by a sense of personal responsibility, an

individual deference to communal considerations, and a respect for stability, law and order. The curbs on individual freedom and liberties were 'checks and balances ... maintained as between individual rights and public good' with 'the government of the moment determin[ing] what constitutes public good' (Mahathir 1995: 47). Thus, 'while a citizen is free ... the society must have the right to object to individuals who offend the sensitivities of the society' (Mahathir 1995: 92). The freedom of speech was protected but its exercise could not manifest in an unregulated and irresponsible press beholden only to 'media tycoons ... who want to control the media worldwide' (Mahathir 1995: 95), or 'the editor and sub-editors, or the reporters or sometimes the big advertisers, hav[ing] their own political views and agenda' (Mahathir 1995: 94). It was the function of the press to report, to inform, even to criticize, but it was essential to realize that the 'democratic principle about the need to know', 'the need for transparency' and the 'right to information' could just as well be the 'invention of those who want to make money from the information industry' (Mahathir 1993). The freedoms of association and assembly were respected, but they could not extend to racial provocations, incitements to violence, the use of the industrial strike 'as a political weapon, quite unconnected with the rights and welfare of workers in order to gain power' (Mahathir 1995: 61), or moves 'especially by foreigners and other non-governmental organizations' to 'agitate and threaten the Government with censure' (Mahathir 1995: 93).

Almost the only legitimate form of censure Mahathir finds acceptable for an elected government is its eventual replacement through defeat in a subsequent election. That is 'the most important feature of a democracy', almost the definition of democracy itself – that it is a 'means to choose a Government' (Mahathir 1995: 10) so that 'if [the people] prefer another government, they are welcome to it' (Mahathir 1995: 47). But Mahathir, who is surely not one of those 'diehard democrats [who] will not be happy if an election does not bring about a change in Government', stresses that if the electorate chooses to retain the government – 'eight times consecutively', in Malaysia's case – 'it is their democratic right to do so' (Mahathir 1995: 10). Until a majority of voters actually vote out the incumbent government, the minority, the opposition, the critics, and even those who 'support ... the economic policy but not the moral values of the Government ... have, colloquially, to lump it' (Mahathir 1995: 47).

Meanwhile, 'the Government' governs! From such a perspective there was nothing evidently undemocratic about the functioning of

the government in manifold ways, or its intervention in many fields. Economically, for example, there was every reason to be cheered by the prospect of a 'less-than-liberal democracy' headed by an enduring, stable government which alone can provide the 'political stability, long-range vision, and consistency' required for successful development.[5] Or, even if 'it may seem old fashioned for the Government to be the guardian of the people's morality ... an elected Government is more representative of the people's viewpoint than the intellectually progressive liberals [who] really represent only themselves' when they imagine that 'the people know what is good for them' (Mahathir 1995: 93). For that matter, there was nothing necessarily anti-democratic about the ISA since

> this government has gone to numerous elections where the ISA was an issue and the people voted for this government with a big majority which means that the people as a whole approve of the ISA ... [therefore] if democracy means majority opinion, then the majority supports the ISA, simply because the majority wants a stable and orderly society (Ahmad 1993: 21).

Such reasoning easily extended to most situations. By virtue of its being elected, the government held sway over all other non-representative institutions, including the judiciary, if this institution of unelected judges should pretend to a co-equal status with the executive and the legislature. In response to a judicial decision which went against the executive three months before the Malaysian judicial crisis of mid-1988, Mahathir insisted that 'judges must apply the laws made by Parliament and not make their own laws' (Suhaimi 1988b). He rejected any attempt by the judiciary to claim a constitutional right to an unrestricted judicial review of executive conduct. After various opponents of the government had resorted to a wave of court actions with varying degrees of success between 1986 and 1987, Mahathir warned that 'since anyone can sue the government, the government can no longer decide anything with certainty. Every decision can be

5. Thus Mahathir observed that, 'China and Vietnam look set to achieve considerable growth thanks to the combination of a less-than-liberal democracy and the government's role in the economy. It would be tragic if, in their fervour to proselytize, the advocates of Western-style democracy inflicted political and economic disaster upon these converts. Democracy and a free market are not cure-alls' (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 84).

challenged and perhaps overruled. Thus the government is no longer the executive. Others have taken over that function' (Suhaimi 1988a). Presently, and plainly, Mahathir maintains that

> Judicial review cannot be unlimited. If it is, then again it will not be the elected representatives who will govern, but the Judiciary. Since the Judiciary is not chosen by the people, then Government by the Judiciary will negate the democratic concept of Government by the People (Mahathir 1995: 23).[6]

The government was even less bound to heed the opinions of unelected groupings, non-governmental organizations, for example, should they assert a democratic right to monitor the conduct of government. In principle, such a majoritarian justification of the practically unlimited powers of elected government preempted any non-electoral demand for executive accountability, as witness: 'These people have political motives but they cannot form political parties and so they hide behind their organizations' (*The Star*, 8 Feb. 1986). In practice, in the mid-1980s, the Mahathir government adamantly refused to accede to popular demands for public enquiries into a spate of financial scandals involving figures close to the ruling coalition and the administration. As recently as December 1996, Mahathir went as far as to sanction the unlawful wrecking, by the youth wings of his ruling coalition, of the Second Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor, held in Kuala Lumpur, on grounds that the organizers had persisted in holding the international conference against the decision of the cabinet (Khoo 1997).

Mahathir's majoritarian defence of elected government, with its almost reverential attitude towards 'good' government, implicitly suggests a populist approach to democracy that carries with it a profoundly elitist notion of what 'leadership' ought to be. Long an admirer of strong leaders, especially those who had successfully modernized their societies at some point in history – Peter the Great of Russia, or Japan's Meiji Emperor, for instance – Mahathir believed that genuine leaders should be possessed of 'initiatives and ideas that are not common'; anyone could perform the ceremonial functions of a prime minister, he liked to point out, but true leadership was the 'ability to provide guidance ... something *superior* to what your people can do by themselves' (Rehman 1986).

---

6. For a critique of Mahathir's views on the judiciary, especially with reference to the crisis of the Malaysian judiciary in 1988, see Hickling and Wishart 1988–89: 47–78.

This point was critical, since Mahathir thought that 'left to themselves', the people were 'more likely to subvert their own future than promote their well-being' (Mahathir 1985: 152). Hence, the leaders of developing countries, for example, must be prepared and must be able to 'influence the selection of systems and values of the people' (Rehman 1986). If one of the conventional assumptions of popular, democratic rule was that 'true leadership consists of being the embodiment of the hopes, dreams and aspirations of your people', as it was once suggested to him, Mahathir did not quite share it: 'Well, lots of people think they are such an embodiment; I don't really know whether my aspirations are the same' (Rehman 1986).

In the end, Mahathir's view of democratic participation in the social and political life of a society offers nothing broader than the severely truncated interpretation that the people must passively be confined to a periodic choice of who shall rule over them. It was more than sufficient that elected governments and chosen leaders would always know how the people feel, what they needed, and what was required of them. In short, Mahathir tacitly assumes of democratic government that the obverse of the passivity of the people (in between elections) would be the creative activity of their leaders. Indeed, such an attitude towards democratic participation would find it inapposite to inquire if 'leaving governance to the government' may not tantamount to giving licence to an elected government to behave in undemocratic ways.

THE REJECTION OF WESTERN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

If the constraints on individual and basic freedoms that have been discussed did not conform to the ideals of Western liberal democracy, or meet the standards by which the 'West' evaluated non-Western systems of government, Mahathir was not perturbed. 'Malaysian democracy', he insists, 'is not a liberal democracy' and 'not bound to accept every new interpretation of democracy in the West' (Mahathir 1995: 46), where 'democratic fanatics' have pushed 'devotion to a pedantic notion of democracy' to include 'the protection of neo-fascists, or the empowering of a vocal minority of political activists over the silent majority of ordinary citizens' (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 83). Whereas Western critics often decried the tendency of non-Western governments to be dominated by a single party over long periods of virtually unchallenged rule, Mahathir saw little virtue in the Western-style 'two-party system'.

The 'two-party' system, for him, was likely to produce a government with a slim majority that 'cannot be strong and decisive' and that

was always threatened with the 'defection' of some of its representatives (Mahathir 1995: 26). Besides, 'a two-party system denies the rights of the people whose opinions and interests differ from the two parties concerned' (Mahathir 1995: 26). Nor could 'proportional democratic elections' work effectively since their result would probably be 'weak minority or coalition governments' (Mahathir 1995: 27) which could only 'exist in fear of the "liberated" public and public institutions' (Mahathir 1995: 89). Such governments 'become hamstrung and are quite unable to enforce any law', more so as court judgments, once 'above criticism', are 'under attack now' with 'retrials and reversal of judgments ... getting more frequent' (Mahathir 1995: 89–90). And so, 'we come to the present state of affairs in the West which amounts almost to anarchy' (Mahathir 1995: 89).

Hence, Mahathir finds it incredulous that 'everyone must be democratic, but only according to the Western concept of democracy' or that 'no one can violate human rights, again according to [Westerners'] self-righteous interpretation of human rights' just because 'Westerners cannot seem to understand diversity, or that even in their own civilization values differed over time' (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 75). Over time, and over many issues, Mahathir has repeatedly attacked the hypocrisy, double standards, self-serving or self-aggrandizing character, racial prejudice, and the power dimensions of the criticisms of non-Western societies that originated from the governments, human rights activists, trade unionists, mass media, international agencies and non-governmental organizations located in the West.[7]

By now, Mahathir believes that Western liberal democracy is not worth emulating. One can only learn caution – and prevention – from the symptoms of the diseased political system which it has spawned:

---

7. In response, the mainstream international press tends to depict Mahathir as being xenophobic without answering his charges in any principled manner. I have argued elsewhere that Mahathir views the 'West' in monolithic terms (Khoo 1995). But, and with due respect to many selfless and honest 'Western' critics of Western states – who have carried out excellent and courageous work in supporting many causes in the 'East' – it should not be presumed that Mahathir's 'Occidentalist' lens, as it were, can see no 'truth' at all about the West. While Noam Chomsky's unparalleled work would be the single best antidote to both 'Orientalist' and 'Occidentalist' views of 'East–West' relations, here it might be useful to note that 'it is wise to doubt the sincerity of the Western propaganda machinery for human rights' (Janhunen 1997).

chronic instability (because of frequent changes of government), *paralysis* (of administrations bereft of genuine majority support), *infirmity* (of governments confronted by the power of the mass media, lobbies and pressure groups), *virtual anarchy* (arising from untrammeled individualism), and *helplessness* (of communities faced with the collapse of law enforcement). It is revealing of Mahathir's contempt for Western liberal democracy that 'I half jokingly said that in their more exuberant moments there are many Asian leaders who think they can solve the problems of Serbian atrocities in Bosnia, the problems of the Basques, of Northern Ireland, and the income inequalities between northern and southern Italy' (Mahathir 1996).

By now, it is not surprising to discover that according to Mahathir, the crux of the matter lay in the post-war 'transformation of values' or 'perversion of values' that has resulted in the collapse of the values which had brought the West success in the past.[8] In the now enfeebled West, in place of the observance of good old values, such as 'orderliness, discipline and firm social organization', the 'priority, devotion and adulation ... given to "basic rights"' sanctioned all kinds of objectionable social behaviour. Workers had turned the right to strike into a 'weapon used to oppress others', students engaged in unruly demonstrations 'whether or not the demonstrations are allowed by the laws of the country', women and homosexuals broke free of social and moral bonds, while, generally, 'too great a concern for minority rights in a democracy' encouraged 'the deviant behaviour of a minority ... gradually [to] grow in numbers' until permissiveness was rife and could not be controlled by law, government or community.

Mahathir's chronology was inexact. And, out of sympathy with the position of African-Americans in the USA, he always took care not to mention the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the same breath as the women's liberation and student anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s in the USA and Western Europe, which he deplored. But whereas others – and surely not necessarily 'liberals' – might have seen those movements as deepening the meaning of democratic participation (or engendering empowerment, to use a currently popular term), Mahathir could only see rebelliousness, licentiousness and anarchy.

Mahathir first publicized these observations about 20 years ago as a specific warning to the Malays to stop imitating the attitudes and

8. This analysis of Mahathir's views of Western values has been drawn from Khoo (1995: 42–47), which gives the full citations of the quotes, all from Mahathir 1986, used in this paragraph.

values of a West in decline. Since then his pronouncements on the social decay, moral decadence, economic enfeeblement and political disorder of the 'West' have become harsher. One speculates that they must have been partially fed by exactly the sensational Western media stories linked to alleged abuses of the welfare system, the breakdown of the 'Western family', the indiscipline of 'Western workers', the rampant crime in 'Western inner cities', and so on.

Those stories would only have confirmed Mahathir's gravest fears about Western society.[9] Or, they might have been nourished on the propaganda associated with the Reaganite, Thatcherist and other right-wing backlashes in USA, UK and parts of Western Europe which in one way or another spoke of a return to traditional, social or family values as the Western world's path to moral regeneration and economic recovery. The propaganda could only have strengthened Mahathir's belief that the 'good values' he needed must be sourced from elsewhere, not from the West.

MAHATHIRISM AND 'ASIAN VALUES'

Mahathir's insistence on the centrality of values in social change and progress, and his pronouncements on democracy, Malaysian or otherwise, were often simplistic, justificatory or defiant of external criticisms. By and large, however, they were not a caricature of what existed in Malaysia.[10] They were also not irrelevant to what was important in the political and academic discourse on democracy in Southeast Asia. They addressed such issues as mass participation under democracy, legitimacy, electoral processes, governance, leadership, civil liberties and, ultimately, what political systems could or could not do for economic success. Leaving aside Malaysia's distinctive multi-ethnic politics, these issues were not fundamentally different from those that other Southeast Asian states, politicians and intellectuals had had to contend with.

The core of Mahathir's ideas on values and democracy had been significantly shaped by Malaysia's post-colonial history and his personal experiences as a politician. Mahathir's own preference for certain values

---

9. Yet not just sensational stories, but serious social analyses, too, capture this bewildering picture of the degeneration of Western societies, as see the quote from Lasch (1995: 85), given under note 11, below.

10. In his exchange with Lummis (1995) and Ichiyo (1995), Chandra Muzaffar insisted, for example, that 'Malaysia ... is the only Newly Industrialising Economy (NIE) where a legitimate Parliamentary Opposition has always been part of the political landscape' (Chandra 1995: 24).

were tinged with a social Darwinist preoccupation with competition between civilizations and nations. His worldview was very much conditioned by his own multi-faceted identity – he being a Malay in the plural society of Malaysia, a Muslim in a Western-dominated world, and an Asian in a rising region of the globe. Ideologically, moreover, Mahathir's persistent concern with 'values' predated the comparatively recent emergence of academic debates and non-academic controversies over the so-called 'Asian values' as an important factor in international political and economic affairs.

For a long time, Mahathir did not refer to the values that he wanted to promote as 'Asian values'. Given his interpretation of history and and his insistence on the interchangeability of value systems, he did not consider that 'good' and 'worthy' values, or 'bad' and 'abhorrent' ones, were innately 'Asian' or 'Western', monopolized for all time by any one community, nation or people. Mahathir's views on democracy, too, were not originally associated with any Asian variant of democracy. For a long time he merely measured the difficulties of sustaining democratic government in practice against the ideals of democracy in newly independent countries. To that extent Mahathir had not yet offered any sense of an alternative, non-Western, form of democracy.

But now Mahathir would no longer accept a Western-style liberal democracy as the yardstick by which other 'democracies' should be judged. His recent praise of the Malaysian system of government as being worthy of evaluation on its own merits, as democracies go, showed that he had moved in the direction of defending Asian forms of 'less-than-liberal' democracies, and shifted towards those who believe that 'Asian democracy' constituted a democratic form of government in its own right. This ideological shift occurred amidst the popularization of various implicitly 'pro-Asian' and 'anti-Western' strands in contemporary political and academic discourse.

First, there was an attempt (partly undertaken by the Western academia and intelligentsia), starting in the mid- to late 1970s, to explain the economic success of Japan in terms of a uniquely Japanese culture translated into superior organizational, managerial and corporate practices. With the subsequent emergence of the original generation of the 'East Asian tigers', the attempt at providing cultural explanations of economic success was expanded to incorporate a more encompassing notion of 'Confucianist' or 'East Asian' ethics. Second, the political elite in Singapore had in the 1980s sought to propagate various paternalistic-authoritarian precepts among its ethnic Chinese

majority society. Those precepts, initially of Confucianist origin, were later replaced by 'shared values' associated with a less obviously Chinese, and more broadly 'East Asian' communitarianism (Chua 1995). Third, in the mid-1980s, Mahathir himself, upon becoming the prime minister of Malaysia, launched a 'Look East' policy that wanted Malaysians to adopt an 'Eastern work ethic' that, for him, had proven to be the basis of an unparalleled East Asian competitiveness. Fourth, the various uprisings against dictatorship and authoritarian rule in the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, China and Burma, commencing in the late 1980s, created considerable excitement, political and academic, both Eastern and Western, over the connections between economic transformation in East Asian and its 'wave' of 'pro-democracy' movements. Fifth, the collapse of Soviet communism occasioned some triumphalist visions of how the Cold War was won for Western liberal democracy, but, immediately thereafter, the Gulf War brought forth predictions of an impending clash between Western and, mostly, Islamic, civilizations. Sixth, the globalization of industrial production appeared to have purchased economic progress for capitalist Asia at the price of deindustrialization, the dismantling of the welfare state, and the end of the post-war social democratic accord in the 'West'. That development in its turn raised nightmarish visions of what liberal democracy could lead to in the 'East'.

This last concern, moreover, connected with the so-called 'family values' orientation which marked the right-wing resurgence in several Western societies, especially the USA and UK, beginning with the Reagan and Thatcher regimes respectively. In the latter, as in Asia, the sense of an erosion of 'core' values, coupled with a frustration over the apparent decline of the 'West', led to a right-wing search for 'social order' which apparently could no longer be guaranteed by 'liberal democracy' itself.[11]

Within such a global scenario, Mahathir – who can be characterized as either a nationalist with capitalist aspirations, or a capitalist with nationalist aspirations – found in East Asia's economic performance, on the eve of the twenty-first century, the historical culmination of what generations of Asian nationalists and Asian capitalists had been struggling for vis-à-vis the Western powers and Western capitalism (Khoo 1995: 70–71). Whether he subsequently spoke of an 'East Asian ethic' or 'Asian values', Mahathir conceived of them as practically the value-spiritual-attitudinal corollary of a transfer of capital and technology – specifically for the development of Malaysia. I have

suggested elsewhere that the collectivity of Mahathirist values can best be understood as the ruling ideas of a new class of national capitalists which the Malaysian state, under Mahathir's leadership, has closely nurtured. Mahathirism, with its capitalist and nationalistic impulses, exercised a hegemonic function vis-à-vis subordinate classes in Malaysian society. In that sense, Mahathirism as ideology, rather than the depth and subtlety of Mahathir's philosophical arguments about values and democracy, might be said to have made a distinctive contribution to the debate over 'Asian values' and 'Asian democracy'.

If the Malaysian case, and Mahathir's own example, could be extended to other Asian situations, then one might conclude that different configurations of 'Asian values' performed similar hegemonic functions within Asian societies. The more articulate of the Asian politicians, such as Mahathir, or Lee Kuan Yew, would think of 'Asian values' as prerequisites for imposing work discipline, fostering social harmony and imposing political order within their own societies in times of rapid industrialization. Their critics were predisposed to suspect a whole host of objectionable tendencies – including elitism, authoritarianism, and cultural relativism – in the construct of 'Asian values'. That 'Asian values' could be so proffered and contested merely stamped their collective character as ideology.

---

11. As the late American social historian Christopher Lasch observed: 'The mounting evidence of widespread inefficiency and corruption, the decline of American productivity, the pursuit of speculative profits at the expense of manufacturing, the deterioration of our country's material infrastructure, the squalid conditions in our crime-ridden cities, the alarming and disgraceful growth of poverty, and the widening disparity between poverty and wealth, which is morally obscene and politically explosive as well – these developments, the ominous import of which can no longer be ignored or concealed, have reopened the historic debate about democracy. At the moment of its dazzling triumph over communism, democracy is coming under heavy fire at home, and criticism is bound to increase if things continue to fall apart at the present rate. Formally democratic institutions do not guarantee a workable social order, as we know from the example of India and Latin America. As conditions in American cities begin to approach those of the Third World, democracy will have to prove itself all over again' (Lasch 1995: 85).

CRISES AND 'ASIAN VALUES'

'Asian values' and 'Asian democracy' represented an ideological project of the Asian elites who sought to restrict mass political participation within their own states while seeking a stronger voice for Asia within the community of states. They wanted less democracy at home but more democracy abroad.[12] For a while, this project seemed feasible. 'Asian values' appeared to share the capacity of ideologies 'to speak to enduring human needs and desires that [made them] compelling, even though their view of the world [was] necessarily blind to their own limitations' (Lasch 1995: 191). At any rate, they spoke to certain 'Asian needs and desires' that found no attraction in Western liberal democracy when 'still the champion of a kind of freedom, liberalism increasingly appear[ed] as an apologia for economic privilege and the concentration of political power in the advanced nations, and for superexploitation and dictatorship in the Third World' (Bowles and Gintis: 1986: 11).

During the heyday of the East Asian miracle, the commonality of economic success often served to disguise Asia's cultural and philosophical heterogeneity, the differing social, political and economic realities and priorities of Asian states, and countervailing opinion. But when 'miracle' turned to 'meltdown', Asians, and especially the elites among them, have scrambled to distinguish themselves from other Asians – not least in the eyes of a Western-dominated international money market.

Under conditions of crisis which began in July 1997, the consensus of the Asian state elites over critical issues – so to speak, a surrogate measure of 'Asian consensus' – has been nowhere in sight. In regional terms, for example, Japan could not or would not help East Asia to implement an 'Asian' monetary fund in the face of Western opposition. ASEAN showed an uncharacteristic lack of unanimity over Myanmar and other issues. Malaysia and Singapore, two neighbouring nations which supplied the leaders of the ideological battle for international recognition of 'Asian values', have been imbroiled in their most bitter disputes since 1965. Domestic politics, between 1997 and 1998, replaced the regimes in South Korea and Thailand relatively quickly, while the protesting Indonesian masses who overthrew

12. As Mahathir complained, 'whereas we are told that we must be democratic in the administration of our own people, nobody says that countries in relationship with each other should be democratic' (Mahathir 1989: 24).

Suharto had scant regard for any supposed Asian predisposition towards social harmony, consensus, or authoritarian rule. In Malaysia in September 1998 Mahathir, whose attachment to 'Asian values' was economically determined, and his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, whose hopes for an 'Asian Renaissance' were culturally defined, parted ways in a manner that should have been rejected as being un-Asian, to say nothing of their being un-Malay and un-Malaysian.

In discussing the East Asian crisis, certain Western commentators have mocked the hollowness, if not the culpability, of 'Asian values'. Actually it takes little to conclude that the 'meltdown' has shattered the appeal of that statist and elitist discourse, mislabelled as 'Asian values'. But, ironically, it may be too early to say that the contest over 'Asian' values is over. The domestic opponents of ruling Asian elites have employed a range of dissident discourses. Some of these discourses are premised upon contemporary ideas about governance, transparency and accountability, which, though universalist in argument, are familiarly 'Western' in origin and promotion. Other positions may be indigenist, but they may well demonstrate durability and strength, either by holding the Asian elites to the very 'Asian values' the latter claimed to promote (for example, of communitarian welfare and responsive government), rejecting them outright in favour of deeper social, political and institutional reforms, or adapting the meaning of 'Asian values' to populist purposes.

Much of this replay of a contestation over Asian values has been seen in Malaysia since September 1998. Many ordinary Malaysians have refused to defer to the prime minister's power or the authority of state institutions, or to acquiesce to Anwar's prosecution on highly contested charges, and conviction under unconvincing circumstances (Philip Khoo 1999). Instead they choose to support a reform movement (*reformasi*) that arose out of popular revulsion, partly against Mahathir's transgression of an old cultural code that forbade a ruler from shaming the ruled, and partly against the regime's failure to uphold the rule of law. *Reformasi* itself led to the formation of Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front), an opposition coalition whose four constituent members labour to construct a common platform – 'for justice' – out of their divergent dedication to Islam, multi-culturalism and social democracy (Khoo 1999b). While Barisan Alternatif subsequently lost the 1999 general election, its political success or failure is not yet assured. But there is nothing unAsian about its new discourse on democracy.

Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy[1]

Syed Ahmad Hussein

In 1982 Malaysia's leading Islamist Anwar Ibrahim was coopted into the government by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the promise of Islamization. When he was dismissed from Mahathir's cabinet in September 1998, his supporters took to the streets calling for democratic reforms and clean government rather than the Islamic state and *syariah* laws. In post-Suharto Indonesia, the two Islamist groups leading the *reformasi* movement for democratization – Abdurrachman Wahid's Nahdatul Ulama and Amien Rais's Muhammadiah – formed the National Awakening Party and the National Mandate Party respectively in late 1998 whose platforms made no mention of the Islamic state. In Iran, Khomeini's *fatwa* [legal opinion] in 1988 which empowered the Islamic government to suspend provisions of the *syariah* in the name of *maslaha* [public interest] 'has [since] been written into the Constitution and institutionalized, opening the gates wide for pragmatic legislation and policy' (Zubaida 1998: 1). In Egypt, the Ikhwan Muslimin under the leadership of Mustafa Masshur decided in 1998 to impose a term limit of five years to its *Murshid Am* [Advisor General] and to establish a political party tellingly named Al-Wasat (Centrist Party) (*Utusan Malaysia*, 15 Nov. 1998: 23).

---

1. This is a revised and expanded version of a paper originally presented at a workshop on 'Towards a Theory of Governance and Democracy in Asia: Indicators and Criteria for Research' organized by the European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels, 11–13 November 1999.

By the late 1980s, following two decades of 'Islamic fundamentalism', analysts had begun to detect changes in Muslim politics. Some have declared political Islam a failure (Roy 1996). Others talk about the 'normalization' of the literalist-fundamentalist style of Islam, it having moved from the periphery of twentieth-century Muslim discourse into the mainstream (Voll 1994: 323–325). Richard Khuri (1998) suggests how freedom, modernity and Islam can fuse towards a creative synthesis in a post-fundamentalist era. As analysts continue to speculate on future directions, Eickelman and Piscatori (1996: 5) remind us that Muslim politics – the 'contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions that produce and sustain them' and best represented by dissenting Islamists challenging the legitimacy of the Muslim elite in power – did not begin with the revivalism of the 1970s and 1980s; and neither will it cease, no matter what 're-direction' it takes in the future.

With the exception of Shiite Iran, the responses of the ruling Muslim elite in the 1980s, which oscillated between accommodation, cooptation and repression (Ghadbian 1997), have generally been effective in containing the Islamic defiance of its authority. The ruling elite also embarked on a series of state-sponsored Islamization programmes in an attempt to upgrade its Islamic credentials, while at the same time retaining the largely authoritarian and paternalistic character of its rule.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the declining influence of leftist ideas and the so-called 'crisis of authoritarianism' in Muslim Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia, democracy seems poised to offer itself as a viable alternative. By the early 1990s, terms such as *al-ta'addudiya* [pluralism], *mujtama' al-madani* [civil society], *huquq al-insan* [human rights], *hurriyah* [freedom] and *shafafiyya* [transparency] have become buzzwords in the discourse among scholars and activists alike (Haddad: 1995). Islamic activism too had shown signs of moving away from the radical 'fundamentalist' phase of the 1970s and 1980s to a 'participatory phase' characterized by a preference to work within the system and by a neo-reformism that questioned 'the traditional role of faith, its leadership, organization, priorities and interpretation' (Wright 1992: 33).

A parallel development was seen in the experiments with political liberalization made by the ruling elite, for example in Algeria, Yemen, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman (Ibrahim 1995). These two trends did not, as Ghadbian suggests, 'develop side by side on separate tracks and are coincidentally simultaneous' (1997: 43). The democratic experiments of the regime were

indicative of, and a response to, the shift in the orientation of Islamic activism. But the experiments were limited in nature and scope, and mainstream dissenting Islamists in the 1990s had increasingly taken on the role of championing democracy and checks on authoritarian tendencies (Kepel 1998: 25).

The general scenario then has been a series of shifts by both the dissident Islamists and the regimes they were challenging: the former in the direction of championing democracy and participation, the latter in the direction of Islamization. This chapter explores contemporary Muslim politics in Malaysia in the light of these developments. It focuses on the relationship between the two major competitors in Malay-Muslim politics, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the dominant component in the National Front coalition government, and the opposition Islamic Party (PAS), both operating in the socio-political reality of multi-ethnic Malaysia as well as in the 'unique Islamic experience' of its history (Esposito and Voll 1996: 124–149). It analyses these shifting trends and their implications for the future of Muslim politics and democracy in Malaysia.

DEMOCRACY AND MUSLIM POLITICS

Muslim politics involves the competition between dissenting Islamists and the Muslim elite in government in shaping the imagination of Muslims as well as to gain political power. Dissenting Islamists are activists demanding a state and society whose values and principles for social conduct and proper governance are based on the fundamentals of Islam. They can be divided between the minority 'militant-extremists' and the moderate mainstream majority who reject violent means. Ideologically, a key distinction revolves around the question of the *syariah* legal system: between those who insist that the mark of an Islamic state is the enforcement of the particulars of the *syariah* (hence the term fundamentalists) and those, sometimes referred to as liberal Islamists, who believe that Muslims, in different times and places, have the duty to determine the particularities on the basis of a set of constructed generalities. And there are those, in varying degrees, who could be placed in between these positions. A related distinction concerns the role of the *ulama* in government which divides the proponents of a direct executive role and the advocates of the *ulama*'s advisory function.

With its shift more towards Islam, the description of the ruling Muslim elite as 'secular, modernizing nationalists' has become mis-

leading. In Malaysia the ideological orientation of the current UMNO leaders can be loosely described as a pragmatic syncretism of developmentalism, Malay nationalism, controlled liberalism and what they term 'progressive Islam'. Generally, they do not adhere to a determinant role for the classical *syariah* – and the *ulama* – in public affairs; they see the *syariah* largely as spiritual legislation with limited connection to governance. They can be labelled Muslim liberals.

Democracy in the Schumpeterian sense is characterized by free and fair periodic elections, public participation and institutionalized competition between a plurality of political groups. Such a procedural perspective limits democracy to processes of selecting governments, particularly to what Dixon (1994: 15–16) calls 'bounded competition' (a formalized procedure of regular contests between groups) and 'contingent consent' (where losers accept the result of the competition as legal and winners do not prevent losers from competing again). Although confined to minimal institutional standards, procedural democracy does require some assurance of political and civil rights, some protection for freedom of speech, assembly and choice and some limitations on governmental power.

Islamists and Democracy

Those who see Islam as inherently hostile to democratic ideals assert that 'there is nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world – which are the traditions of Islam – which might make familiar, or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government' (Kedourie 1992: 15). Some analysts suggest that Islamists opt for democracy as a tactical move to gain power and to deny others thereafter (Esposito 1996: 123–125; Nasr 1995). Others cite the alleged 'Muslim exceptionalism' to the post-Cold War global trend towards democratization as proof of incompatibility (Tibi 1999; Waterbury 1994).

Islamists who reject democracy basically argue that democracy is a Western imperialist legacy and an extension of secularism (Moussali 1995: 88–99). Others reject democracy not so much for its structures and processes of governance as for its apparent inconsistency with the 'literalist' character of late twentieth century revivalism which insists on its own distinctive language of Islam (Haddad 1995: 18; Khalid 1977). Still others reject not the ideals of democratic procedures but the practice of a 'risk-free democracy' on the part of regimes that believe in having elections only if the opposition does not win (Esposito 1996: 123–124).

The proponents of Islamic democracy stress Islamic concepts such as *shura* [consultation], *ba'ya* [affirmation of community loyalty], *ijma'* [consensus], *ijtihad* [interpretation] and *maslaha* [public interest] to argue that Islam is not lacking in fundamental tenets compatible with democracy. They cite the legitimacy of *ikhtilaf* [divergence of opinion] and the ideals of *tawazun* [equilibrium] in Islam. They maintain that the idea of limited government is central to classical Islamic teachings; the ruler occupies a non-hereditary elective office equally subjected to the law. While Islamic governments can take differing forms, arbitrary rule cannot be Islamic. That most contemporary Muslim lands are not democratic, they would argue, is not a function of doctrine but of oppressive Muslim regimes. These regimes had either deprived Islamists of meaningful political participation or, as in the case of Algeria and Turkey, had denied triumphant Islamists the opportunity to govern (Ghadbian 1997: 70–82; Kramer 1993; Moussali 1995).

The consensus among Islamists has preponderantly been towards the compatibility thesis:

> Islamists of the 1990s who belong to the third generation of active Islamic reform see themselves as *tayyar al-wasat* (the moderate wave) ... [O]nce they got past the Western terminology and the Western models to the basic concepts, values and procedures of democracy, they find it entirely compatible with Islam, descriptive of beliefs they already hold and indeed capable of best expressing Islamic values in political life (Ghadbian 1997: 71–72).

Leaders of Islamist parties – Algeria's post-coup Movement of Society for Peace, Turkey's Refah, Tunisia's Al-Nahdah, Morocco's Al-Adl wal Ihsan, Malaysia's PAS and the diverse Islamic groups in Indonesia positioning themselves for the June 1999 elections following the demise of Suharto's 32-year rule – have consistently expressed their belief in democratic procedures and expectations, and their commitment to human rights, the independence of the judiciary, universal participation and the rotation of authority through honest elections (Davis 1997: 81–106; Wright 1996). They each described their party's choice of the democratic way as definitive, and not tactical and conjunctural (Kramer 1995: 123).

But compatibility does not mean identity (Filali-Ansary 1996; Kubba 1996; Salwa 1995). Islamists reject the notion of a hegemonic model of democracy. They reject secularism and the linking of democracy to secularism. They insist on cultural authenticity and religious guidance

as core values in Islamic governance. They see Islam's heritage of plurality and its historical capacity to fuse heterogeneous elements as an authentic source of democracy and pluralism.

Many of the cases of radicalism and militancy in the Islamic movement were clearly a product of oppressive regimes. The radicalization of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has been the consequence of the military coup following the FIS victory in the December 1991 elections, and continued rule by an unelected, unrepresentative and oppressive regime (Entelis 1996: 71–72). In Egypt, the repressive character of Gamal Abd al-Nasir's regime partly explained the transformation of Ikhwan Muslimin leader Sayyid Qutb 'from one of the most liberal writers of Egypt to its most radical thinker' (Moussalli 1995: 117). Indeed, there is merit in the generalization that Muslim countries whose governments allow Islamist participation in the electoral process are closer to democratization, and countries whose governments refused to do so saw the rise of Islamists who are correspondingly more radical (Ghadbian 1997: xiii).

In most Muslim countries, the only effective opposition to authoritarian regimes has been expressed by Islamists (Monshopouri 1997: 65). The shift towards a more 'participatory phase' has been more than participating in the electoral system; it has also been a shift where the central theme of Islamist discourse has increasingly been directed to issues of democracy and pluralism. Studies have shown that popular support for Islamists in Muslim countries has been as much a function of the political and economic circumstances of these countries as it is of the religious and cultural traditions of the populace (Tessler 1997). The move towards democratic openness in Iranian politics after the earlier era of war and 'Khomeini emotionalism' has partly been a result of internal demands based upon the promise of anti-authoritarianism of the 1978–79 Islamic revolution (Bayart 1994: 293–298). The democratic theme articulated by Islamists against oppressive rule could itself act as a deterrent against excessive authoritarian tendencies if they take over the reins of power.

In Muslim countries that allow political participation, Islamist involvement has not only helped consolidate democratic practice but seems also to have had quite the opposite effect from what the proponents of Islam's hostility to democracy suggest. The realities of political life produce pragmatists; being part of the democratic game has in fact 'democratized' Islamists (Nasr 1995). Far from endangering democracy, participation encourages tolerance and compromises and the accumulation of habits of democratic civility. In order to accom-

modate the diversity of opinions among Muslims, Islamists will have to learn to accept a system based on pluralism and the separation of public administration from theological institutions; a lesson, says Laith Kubba (1996: 89), that Islamic parties in Turkey and Malaysia seem to have learned. A fairly long apprenticeship of PAS as a participant in Malaysian democracy has given the party a period of habituation and experience increasingly to accept the realities of pluralistic politics. Participation has not only forced Islamists to play by the democratic rules, it has also encouraged them to look more deeply into Islam to discover the authentically democratic spirit and tenets within it and to thus focus on them. Such focusing, in turn, could encourage points of convergence and the search for a creative resolution of both the Islam-democracy and the Islamist-liberal divide in Muslim politics.

MALAY-MUSLIM POLITICS: THE BACKGROUND

ENTER ISLAM

Islam came to the Malay world rather late; mass conversion began around the late fourteenth century. Its entry via the royal courts of the Malay feudal states saw the emergence of an official Islam emanating from, and controlled by, the royal palaces. Also, Islam came into a Hindu-animist state and society already possessing dynamic institutions regulating an orderly existence and governance. The absorption of an external tradition inevitably involved the processes of localization; a distinguishing character of early Malay Islam was the syncretic parallelism of the new modernizing force and the pre-Islamic indigenous belief systems (S. Ahmad 1998).

With time, orthodoxy gained the upper hand. But the 'practical religion of the converted' – the interaction of a religion with the cultural milieu of the community of converts (Laitin 1978) – continued to have its effects on Malay society and politics. This partly explains the 'creative flexibility' and the 'pragmatic adaptationism' of the dominant style of Islamic experience of the Malays (Horowitz 1994b: 579; Voll 1994: 240, 348).

MUSLIM RESPONSE TO BRITISH RULE

British indirect rule in the Malay Peninsula kept intact the privileges of the nine traditional sultans and the aristocratic classes but stripped them of real power. As compensation, the sultans were given control over 'Malay culture and religion'. Official Islam under the patronage of the royal houses, with some powers over religious education, devo-

tional matters and a limited corpus of personal and family laws affecting Muslims, was thus institutionalized (Gullick 1987).

The British built schools in the urban centres to train children of the aristocracy. For the Malay peasants, some vernacular schools were established to provide rudimentary literacy. The religious councils of official Islam opened some religious schools but religious education was provided mainly by private individuals outside of the dominant state. Soon two classes of educated Malays – the English-educated, trained to become a part of the colonial bureaucracy, and the religious (and vernacular) educated, largely marginalized from colonial modernity – emerged to provide the leadership of competing groups in Malay-Muslim politics (Rosnani 1997).

Colonial domination of the economy saw not only a distinction between the depressed Malay-dominated peasant sector and the vibrant modern economy centred around rubber plantations and tin extraction, but also the consequent presence of non-Muslim Chinese and Indian migrant workers and entrepreneurs. On the eve of independence in 1957, the Chinese made up about one-third of the population and had a substantial control over the modern economy.

An early Malay response to colonial change took the form of the modernist-reformist movement that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. It was led by Muslim scholar-journalists who advocated ideas of reason and modernity against the conservatism and the docility of the traditionalists who dominated the official Islam of the colonial state (Roff 1967: ch. 3). This ***kaum muda*** [young faction] movement failed to dislodge the ***kaum tua*** [old faction] in the state Islamic bureaucracy. The movement was rendered ineffective by the actions of the authorities that ranged from physical force to official *fatwa*s that proscribed the ***kaum muda***'s ideas as 'deviationist'. The ***kaum muda***'s pan-Islamism failed to attract mass Malay support and its rejection of the Malay royalty, which symbolized Malay political claim on the now multi-ethnic country, exacerbated the feeling of insecurity among the Malays.

For all its failings, the modernist movement marked the beginning of organized Muslim politics among the Malays. It helped place Islam at the centre-stage of Malay politics. It brought substantive socio-political themes into public Islamic discourse beyond the traditional concern with personal piety. Its rise and decline also saw the emergence of elements of synthesis and symbiosis in Malay-Muslim politics. By the 1950s, the traditional palace Islam had become distinctly 'modernist'. Some of the key terms of Islamic modernism – reason, modern

education, economic development, constitutional government, Muslim unity – had become part and parcel of the official Islamic lexicon.

UMNO INHERITS POWER

On re-occupying Malaya after the Japanese surrender in 1945, the British introduced the Malayan Union, an arrangement that would further diminish the powers of the Malay sultans and provide easy citizenship to the Chinese and Indians (Stockwell 1979). A nationwide protest led by the Malay administrative-aristocratic elite forced the British to retract its Malayan Union project and placed the former as the leading contender to succeed British rule.

The mass movement transformed itself in 1946 into the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) with Datuk Onn Jaafar, a member of the Johore royal family and a district officer in the colonial administrative service, as its president. Disagreements over non-Malay participation in national politics led to Datuk Onn's resignation in 1951. He was succeeded by Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, brother of the then sultan of Kedah and also a member of the colonial administrative elite.

UMNO described itself as a liberal nationalist party dedicated to Malay political dominance but committed to democracy, the free market, inter-ethnic harmony and 'Western traditions of a secular state' (Funston 1980: 146). It forged an alliance with a Chinese businessman-dominated organization called the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), led mainly by Indian professionals to contest elections to the Federal Legislative Council in June 1955. This multi-ethnic Alliance won 51 of the 52 seats contested. It continued to stand for elections on a common platform of moderation, ethnic compromise and economic development, but with each component expected to mobilize support from its own ethnic constituency. In the first post-independence elections in 1959 (when the non-Malay electorate had increased from 16 per cent in 1955 to 43 per cent by virtue of their new citizenship) the Alliance won 74 of the 104 seats in the national parliament.

UMNO dominated this coalition. It held key ministries in the government; the prime minister, the deputy prime minister and senior ministers had been top UMNO leaders. UMNO would cite this dominance, alongside the Malay sultans and the Malay-dominated civil and military services, to dismiss PAS allegations that it had sold the country to the non-Malays.

It has been hypothesized that the presence of rival ethnic communities in Malaysia, each organized to advance its own interest, encourages governmental responsiveness and promotes intercommunal bargaining (Crouch 1996: 150). It also favours the ruling coalition. In an environment of institutionalized communalism, where the opposition parties offered themselves as protectors of their respective communities, the Alliance formula of a collection of ethnic parties which agreed to moderate their communal demands was most appealing to the cross-section of the multi-ethnic electorate. The Alliance, which changed its name in 1973 to the National Front, had won all the national elections held since independence.

The 1957 independent Constitution of Malaya (now referred to as Peninsular Malaysia following the entry of the British colonies of Sabah and Sarawak in 1963 into the larger Federation of Malaysia) called for a federation of the eleven states, a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy modelled after Britain. Although the Constitution contained all the expected ingredients of democratic governance – periodic elections, rule of law, equal citizenship, basic freedoms – it retained the restrictive Emergency Regulations originally passed to combat communist insurgency which empowered the government to detain indefinitely anyone suspected of threatening national security under what is now called the Internal Security Act (ISA).

The Constitution also safeguarded the position of the nine Malay sultans who would take turns to become the country's king for five-year periods. It provided for Malay as the national language, affirmative action privileges for Malays in education, employment and business opportunities, and prescribed Islam as the official religion. UMNO had insisted on these provisions as a 'compensation' for the 'Malay loss of exclusive nationhood'. Both UMNO and PAS, in varying degrees, had demanded that it must be the indigenous Malays who would determine the nature and future of the land (Lim 1997: Ch. II). The provision for Islam allowed state funds to be utilized for religious activities and for the *syariah* courts to enforce the limited body of personal and family laws applicable to Muslims. The UMNO leadership made it clear that the constitutional article on Islam as the religion of the federation did not in any way imply an Islamic state (Ahmad Ibrahim 1997: 3–18).

The evolution of UMNO as the leading component of the ruling party can be divided into three main eras. The first was between independence in 1957 and the racial riots following the May 1969 elections

under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman and 'an alliance between Malay aristocrats-bureaucrats and Chinese business in the context of an economy dominated by foreign capital' (Crouch 1996: 191). It can be described as a period of liberal democracy and continuity of the colonial structures. The second, between 1969 and 1981 and under Tun Razak and Hussein Onn, was an era of increasing authoritarianism, Malay economic nationalism, and the beginnings of what could be described as the 'retreat from the secular path'. The third period under Dr Mahathir Mohamad from 1981 onwards can be divided into an earlier period of liberalism and, beginning from the late 1980s, a period of 'modified authoritarianism' (Crouch 1992: 21–43). Currently entering its third decade, 'the era of Mahathirism' has also been characterized by impressive economic growth and by a purposeful identification with Islam.

PAS AND MUSLIM OPPOSITION

The Islamic Party (PAS) was launched in August 1951; its application for registration was approved one day before nominations closed for the June 1955 elections in which the party won the single opposition seat.

British support for the Malay administrative-aristocratic class went hand in hand with its repression of Malay leftist groups (Firdaus 1985). The British banned the radical Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) in 1948 and detained its key leaders. Also affected was the *Hizbul Muslimin*, whose formation in March 1948 was sponsored by the MNP but which operated independently under the leadership of Islamic scholars and religious teachers. *Hizbul* stood for national independence, economic progress of the Malays, and a democratic state based on the teachings of Islam. The party lasted for less than five months; the detention of seven of its leaders under the Emergency Regulations in August 1948 effectively ended its existence.

Former leaders of the *Hizbul Muslimin* were among the founders of PAS. Tracing its ancestry to the reformists of the 1930s, PAS endorsed democratic ideals as compatible with Islam and aimed 'to mobilize Muslims towards implementing the demands of Islam [to achieve] democracy, social justice and humanitarianism' (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 30). The party wanted to provide a common platform for the Islam-oriented to challenge the 'secular nationalist' UMNO. In this effort, the party needed the support of the traditional village functionaries, who were largely conservative and many of whom materially dependent on the religious apparatus of the state. It was partly to accommodate this important group in the rural Malay community that the first two

leaders of the party – Haji Ahmad Fuad Hasan (1951–53) and Dr Abbas Alias (1954–56) – were traditional *ulamas*. PAS took on a clear reformist (and Malay nationalist) line in the era of its third and arguably most dynamic leader Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmi, a graduate of the Aligarh University in India and former deputy president of the radical MNP, who was elected party president in December 1956.

In the formative years between 1951 and 1956, PAS was 'a political party in name only' (Funston 1980: 94). In the 1959 elections, the party won 13 parliamentary and 42 state seats and formed the government in the east-coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan. In the 1969 elections, the party won 12 parliamentary seats and 40 state seats but it secured nearly half of all the Malay votes at the expense of UMNO grassroots support (Ratnam and Milne 1970). PAS had become a serious rival to UMNO for the leadership of the Malays.

Dr Burhanuddin's idea of a synthesis of reformist Islam, democracy, nationalism and socialism dominated the ideological orientation of PAS for more than two decades (Kamarudin 1980). But in the reality of communal politics, the ethnic theme was overwhelming. Burhanuddin insisted that his 'Malay nationalism with Islamic ambitions' was a progressive and humanitarian nationalism compatible with Islam and for which the non-Malays should have no fear. Still, his was a nationalism that called for the recognition of Malay as defining the national identity and the Malay race as the 'legitimate owners of the land', where the non-Malays were welcomed to citizenry if they renounced their cultural and linguistic identity (W. Mohd. Azam 1997: 83–114). Such a platform could not attract non-Malay support and PAS concentrated its electoral efforts in the predominantly Malay-populated states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah.

Although PAS emphasized its Islamic roots and Islamic terminologies, and despite the fact that moral imperatives were always invoked in all its articulations, Islam as a system of governance was not placed at the forefront of the party's agenda in the first three decades of its existence. In fact, the party congress in 1954 rejected a motion seeking the immediate establishment of an Islamic state. The party's objective of Islamic governance was to be achieved incrementally through educating the public and nurturing an Islamic society, and through democratic means.

But PAS portrayed UMNO and the government it led as neither Islamic nor democratic; nor did it represent the interest of the Malay masses. It accused UMNO leaders and their non-Muslim coalition partners of promoting un-Islamic policies and encouraging decadent Western cultural influences. It condemned the foreign and Chinese

domination of the economy that benefited the privileged Malay classes at the expense of the Malay peasantry.

THE ISLAMIZATION OF UMNO

Even the 'secular' first generation leaders of UMNO were attentive to the symbols of Islam. The UMNO Constitution has as one of its objectives the defence and expansion of Islam. UMNO insisted on Islam as the official religion of the federation against the reservations of the Malay sultans fearful of losing their last bastion of power. To address this fear, Islam was constitutionally listed as the prerogative of the states and under the headship of the sultans. Still, the federal government's expenditure to support Islam-related activities – Quran-reading competitions, Islamic education, the construction of prayer houses, enforcement of the Muslim family laws and personal laws, subsidies for civil servants performing the *haj* – doubled in the first five years of independence (Means 1978; Mohd. Suffian 1963). Although UMNO leaders insisted that its interest in Islam was not based on political expediency, external pressures had clearly been a catalyst. Prime Minister Hussein Onn conceded, 'You may wonder why we spend so much on Islam ... [If we don't] Parti Islam will get at us' (*FEER*, 9 Feb. 1979: 23).

In the May 1969 elections, PAS won 12 parliamentary seats and 40 state seats but it secured nearly half of the Malay votes at the expense of UMNO grassroots support (Ratnam and Milne 1970). The 1969 elections were immediately followed by communal riots in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, and post-1969 Malaysia saw significant political and policy changes. Tun Abdul Razak, who replaced Tunku Abdul Rahman as prime minister and UMNO president, launched the New Economic Policy (NEP), which aimed to create a Malay commercial community, to oblige non-Malay and foreign-controlled companies to seek Malay partners and to employ Malay executives, and to increase state participation on behalf of the Malays (Faaland *et al.* 1990; Gomez and Jomo 1997). The Razak era also saw an unmistakable trend towards a tightening of the political arena and 'a more autocratic and centralized government' (Nagata 1980: 407). Tun Razak also convinced opposition parties, with the distinct exception of the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP), of the need for a larger 'national consensus'. By 1973, the three-party Alliance had become a National Front of nine communal parties. PAS was one of them.

In the mid-1970s, the Islamic revivalist movement began to surface, spearheaded by the moderate Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement

(ABIM) led by former student leader Anwar Ibrahim (Jomo and Ahmad Shabery 1992). The presence of PAS in the coalition government and the external pressure emanating from the emerging revivalist movement helped increase the involvement of the central government in Islamic affairs. In 1971, the Islamic Research Centre was established, followed in 1974 by the Institute of Islamic Mission and Training. The secretariat for the National Council of Islamic Affairs was elevated in 1974 to a full division of the Prime Minister's Department. Although these were mainly an exercise in upgrading existing arrangements, they nevertheless contributed significantly to the expansion of the Islamic sphere. It also marked the beginning of what would soon be a huge network of 'federal Islam' in Malaysia.

The annual UMNO general assembly debates too were dominated by the question of Islam throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Much of these were directed at attacking revivalist groups and urging action against them. But there were also unmistakable demands for more Islam that ranged from the call to implement the *syariah* and to increase public-funded Islamic activities to the proposal for UMNO to change the word 'Malay' in its name to 'Muslim' to better reflect an Islamic identification (UMNO 1980a, 1980b). These voices for more Islam from within UMNO increased accordingly when PAS left the coalition in 1979 to reassume, more radically than before, the role of Islamic opposition.

Mahathir and Islamization

The question of how to deal with the Islamists was uppermost in Dr Mahathir's political agenda when he took office in 1981. The previous use of threats and censorship and invoking the Internal Security Act to detain Islamic dissidents – including ABIM leader Anwar Ibrahim from 1974 to 1976 – had seemed only to intensify their defiance. Unlike his predecessors, Mahathir was more prepared to accommodate the dissenting Islamists. Even before assuming office, he had expressed a willingness to increase the role of Islam in society and governance. This helped persuade the ABIM leader to accept Mahathir's invitation to join UMNO just prior to the 1982 elections.

Mahathir's move was indeed a coup. It was no secret that PAS, too, had been eyeing the charismatic ABIM leader. Anwar brought with him a substantial number of 'Abimists' into UMNO, and ABIM itself was soon transformed to become generally supportive of UMNO's policies and programmes. Anwar stayed in UMNO for the next 16 years and, under Mahathir's patronage, rose to become the deputy

president of UMNO and the designated prime-minister-in-waiting before he was expelled from the cabinet and the party in September 1998, allegedly for sexual misconduct. His presence in UMNO during that period symbolized the party's new commitment to Islam. Anwar's entry, not unlike the earlier PAS admission into the ruling coalition in the 1970s, obliged the government to do more for Islam.

Among Mahathir's earliest policy statements as prime minister was one on the 'assimilation of Islamic values in the administration'. The policy was described as 'an effort to strike a balance between the spiritual and the material' which would proceed with 'incremental, moderate implementation ... taking into account the sensitivities of the non-Muslim population' (*New Straits Times*, 26 Feb. 1983: 2; *Utusan Malaysia*, 31 March 1983: editorial; *Utusan Malaysia*, 8 April 1983: editorial). It was not a radical policy redirection; it was not about creating an Islamic state or implementing the *syariah*. Nevertheless, the policy was the most purposeful expression of an Islamization process that UMNO had ever made.

The programmes were many and varied. Aware of the value of the 'politics of symbolic action', the emphasis on the symbolic – the use of Islamic terminologies and salutations, the building of Islamic complexes, international conferences, research institutes, Islamic programmes on radio and television, Islamic courses for the public – continued with increased vigour. But more substantive programmes were added to the list: the establishment of an international Islamic university; the introduction of Islamic securities, banking and insurance systems; amendments to the Constitution to give increased powers to Islamic legal authorities, reforms of Islamic administration, laws and courts; and serious efforts to promote uniformity and coordination between states. In the realm of law, the most contested terrain in Islamic politics, 'nowhere in Asia has the Islamization of law proceeded more methodically than in Malaysia ... dozens of new statutes and judicial decisions have clarified, expanded, and reformulated the law applicable to Muslims' (Horowitz 1994a: 236; Ahmad Ibrahim 1997).

By the early 1990s, short of *hudud* (laws and punishments pertaining to stealing and robbery, adultery, accusing others of adultery, consumption of alcoholic beverages and apostasy) and a formal declaration of an Islamic state, UMNO's claim that Malaysia had become Islamic as a result of its initiatives had increasingly gained credibility. Even its reluctance to enforce *hudud* laws by citing the multiplicity of interpretations and the Islamic concepts of *tawassut* [moderation] and *awlawiyyat* [prioritizing] was not without endorsement by respected

Islamic scholars worldwide. The accolades, both from scholars of Islam (for example, Hossein Nasr, Ismail Farouki, Fazlur Rahman and John Esposito) and men of religion (Sheikh Muhamad Al-Ghazali, Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi and the *Sheikh Al-Azhar* Mohamad Sayed Tantawi), were testimony to the international approval of Malaysia's approach to Islamization (*New Straits Times*, 24 March 1997: 1, 2; Tarmizi 1995: 131–33; *Utusan Malaysia*, 24–26 Aug. 1998: 6). Malaysia's ability 'to become Islamic without becoming an Islamic state' (Nagata 1994) had made it a rare example of a Muslim country with 'an adequate simultaneous grasp of Islam and modernity, and initiatives taken in that light' (Khuri 1998: 6).

Islamization amidst Authoritarianism

But while the achievements of the Mahathir government in Islamization (and economic growth) have been much acknowledged even by his detractors, the same cannot be said about democratization. By 1988, Mahathir had abandoned his earlier experiment with liberalization (Khoo 1995: 271–289) and the country had reverted to the post-1969 trend of replacing a 'modified democracy' with a 'modified authoritarianism' (Crouch 1992: 21–43). Throughout the 1990s, Mahathir had consistently expressed his preference for a strong government dedicated to economic growth, and for 'democracy and authoritarianism to live side by side' (Zainuddin 1994: 184). UMNO had moved further towards 'a significant closure of the party's democratic procedures' (Case 1997: 397–409); the National Front arrangement that it dominated had become a 'coercive consociationalism in an authoritarian state' (Mauzy 1993: 113). The UMNO-led ruling coalition continued to enjoy electoral support which peaked in the 1995 general elections when it received 65 per cent of the popular vote and captured four-fifths of the parliamentary seats, its best performance ever (Gomez 1996). Indeed, as Kaplan (1997: 69) has argued, 'hybrid regimes, no matter how illiberal, will still be treated as legitimate if they can provide security for their subjects and spark economic growth'. In the short term also, Mahathir's Islamization policy had been effective in its 'task ... to domesticate [the] assorted Islamic loyalties to its own purpose without losing its own moral or religious control' (Nagata 1997: 130). But the parallel tightening of the political arena had helped steer Islamists into new areas of dissent – that of social justice, clean government, democratic space, honest elections, rights and freedoms. To them, these were as central to the teachings of Islam as the Islamic programmes and institutions that UMNO had initiated.

PAS: FROM RADICAL ISLAM TO ISLAMIC DEMOCRACY

Reservations about participating in the electoral process had emerged periodically in PAS. Some wanted the party to confine itself to proselytizing; others doubted the validity from Islam's point of view of Western-style elections or its viability for achieving the party's political objective in multi-ethnic Malaysia. The most frequent reservation revolves around the Malaysian electoral system, where the opposition has to compete with an all-powerful National Front which allegedly makes all the rules, controls the resources and abuses the instruments of the state. But the party's position on electoral participation has held sway, even at the height of the influence of the radical faction in the mid-1980s.

THE COALITION EXPERIENCE

Haji Mohammad Asri took over the leadership of the party following the death of Dr Burhanuddin in 1969. A central issue in PAS in the early 1970s was one of participating in the coalition government.

The party leadership presented its case by citing the political reality of post-May 1969 Malaysia, the Malay-Islamic inclination of the Razak government and the opportunities for the party to expand its influence. A 22-point statement issued a day before the special party congress in December 1972 made references to the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet, authoritative classical Islamic sources and principles of Islamic jurisprudence to conclude that coalition 'is permissible according to Islamic law' (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 248–254).

The UMNO–PAS partnership lasted five years. After the 1974 general elections, National Front leader Tun Razak named PAS politician Mohamad Nasir as chief minister of Kelantan, sidelining a candidate recommended by PAS president Asri (Alias 1991: 31–40). Nasir's attempt to dismantle the patronage network of Asri loyalists led to a vote of no confidence against him in the state legislature which touched off a series of mass rallies in support of the beleaguered chief minister. Backed by UMNO and popular sentiment, Nasir refused to step down. The federal government cited 'public security' to bring Kelantan under federal rule through an emergency legislation passed in December 1977 pending a new state election. PAS's refusal to support the emergency bill effectively ended its membership of the National Front.

PAS – and Asri – paid dearly for the failure of the coalition experiment. The internal acrimony was followed by the disastrous performance in the March 1978 state elections when the party lost to UMNO

its stronghold state of Kelantan. In the national elections held five months later, PAS suffered 'a thrashing unknown in its twenty-seven year history' (Ismail 1978: 65). Asri was unceremoniously forced out of office during the party congress in October 1982.

But the coalition experiment provided a useful experience for PAS. The merger gave PAS first-hand exposure to the reality of national governance, the pragmatics of ethnic bargaining and the accommodation of diverse interests in multi-ethnic Malaysian politics. The arguments permitting the coalition based on authentic Islamic sources provided an important reference for similar experimentations in the future. Although, in retrospect, PAS would generally judge Asri's befriending UMNO in the 1970s a mistake dictated by naivety and greed, it would nevertheless cite the coalition to rebut UMNO's accusation that the party has been fanatic and extremist or that it lacked experience in national government (Tarmizi 1995).

The Radical Era

The failure of the coalition vindicated the faction in PAS which had argued against the partnership. The electoral losses, the sense of betrayal and the need to distinguish itself from an increasingly Islamizing UMNO, combined with the global Islamic resurgence and the victorious Khomeini revolution in Iran, provided a fertile soil for a radical brand of Islam to emerge in the deeply divided PAS. The defeat of Asri's top aides in the 1981 party elections signalled the rise in influence of the 'puritan radicals' who were 'prepared to adopt a more confrontational stance towards UMNO' (Case 1995: 75; Muhammad Ikmal 1996: 60–63). The new party president Haji Yusuf Rawa was widely seen 'as a middleman to avoid differences of opinion and tactics' (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 286). But for much of the following decade – appropriately described by a party analyst as 'an offensive era' (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 314–335) – PAS was dominated by the radicals.

An early indication of the rise of the radical faction was the party's identification with the Khomeini revolution. Haji Hadi Awang, Terengganu PAS chief and reputedly the leader of the radical faction who later became deputy president of the party, was among the earliest Malaysians to visit post-revolution Iran. The five years between 1982 and 1986 saw a wide distribution of recorded speeches by PAS leaders extolling Iran and espousing its Islamic state concept. They also denounced UMNO leaders in the harshest of terms, describing them variously as infidels, anti-Islam, corrupt and brutal, and judged support for UMNO as tantamount to apostasy. Also widely distributed

was the controversial poster entitled 'Message of Tuan Haji Guru Abdul Hadi Awang' which called for a *jihad* [holy war] and martyrdom against UMNO and the National Front (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 327–328; *Mingguan Malaysia*, 13 June 1999: 21, 27).

Throughout the 1980s a variety of 'extremist' groups emerged. They ranged from doctrinally deviationist groups to militants advocating the violent overthrow of the government. These groups were politically insignificant but UMNO leaders linked them to PAS and urged the government, often citing Hadi's 'message', to act against the party for instigating militancy. PAS denied any official linkage with them; in the case of the cult-oriented Al-Arqam, the party supported the government's harsh crackdown of the group in 1994 (Zabidi 1998).

But PAS did not deny its linkage with the group led by its own member Ibrahim Libya, whose oratorical skills and zealous advocation of *jihad* and martyrdom made him a popular young PAS leader in Kedah where he had opened a religious school in the rural district of Memali. In 1984, the government had issued a warrant to arrest him and several other radical young PAS leaders under the Internal Security Act for 'threatening Muslim unity and preaching extremism' (Malaysia 1986). Ibrahim refused to surrender, citing detention without trial as un-Islamic and unjust. In the police operations in November 1985, Ibrahim Libya and 13 of his followers were killed and 159 others arrested. The government justified its actions as defensive and described the episode as an example of radicalism dangerously transforming into militancy. PAS described Ibrahim and his followers as *asshahid* [martyrs] who were victims of a despicable act of a brutal, anti-Islam government (Afghani 1992).

In a move towards an '*ulama* leadership', an amendment to the party's Constitution was passed in 1983 to form the 15-member *Majlis Syura Ulama* (Ulama Consultative Council, whose chairman, titled *murshid 'am*, is elected amongst its members for a three-year term) (PAS 1994a: 5–6). In theory the Council is the most powerful body in the party. It has powers to interpret party policies, appoint members of the party's disciplinary committee and has the final say in all appeals to the committee's decisions.

A recurring theme of the new leadership – presented in contrast to both UMNO and the PAS of the past – revolved around a 'total, pristine and unadulterated' Islam as the guiding basis for society and governance. In the August 1986 election campaigns, which represented best the party in action under the influence of the radical faction, PAS

did emphasize the themes of social injustice and corruption that it accused the UMNO government of promoting. But apropos of its election slogan 'PAS the party of Allah', it focused attention on its version of the Islamic state and laws, including a pledge to introduce *hudud*, as an alternative to UMNO's 'secular nationalism' (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 289–303, 342–367; Yusof and Fadzil 1995: 43–78).

The radicalized PAS introduced several strategic initiatives. One was the expansion of its electoral contest to areas outside the Kelantan-Terengganu-Kedah circuit. PAS fielded the largest number of candidates in its history – 98 for the federal parliament and 265 for the state legislatures – in constituencies all over the country. Conceding that it could not possibly succeed nationally without non-Muslim support, PAS initiated the formation of a Chinese Consultative Committee through which the party hoped to mobilize non-Muslim votes (Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 345–356).

The 1986 elections, held in the midst of an economic recession, high unemployment and the government rocked by financial scandals, saw the Chinese-supported opposition DAP scoring its then best electoral performance ever with 24 parliamentary seats and 21 per cent of the popular vote. In contrast, it was PAS's worst. It won one parliamentary and 15 state seats, compared to the 5 and 18 respectively in the 1982 elections. The 15.5 per cent of its popular vote represented a one percentage point gain compared to 1982, but was far from commensurate with the 20 per cent increase in the number of candidates it fielded.

PAS efforts to outbid UMNO's Islamizing tendencies by its abstract and legalistic Islamic state concept did not attract the enthusiastic Malay support that the radicals had hoped for. This was made worse when, partly to attract non-Muslim votes, the party took to denouncing Malay nationalism as anti-Islamic and suggesting that the New Economic Policy was a form of *assabiah* [parochialism] that discriminated against the other races (Alias 1991: 83–84; Ibnu Hasyim 1993: 357). Such a position alienated the Malay voter, and it did not attract non-Muslim votes either.

The 1986 elections represented the radical influence at its peak; the disastrous performance of the party marked the beginning of its decline. In March 1989 Ustaz Fadhil Noor, leader of the moderate faction and a former deputy president of ABIM, took over the leadership of the party following the resignation of the ailing Yusuf Rawa. Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat, a soft-spoken and immensely respected moderate *ulama*, who incidentally was one of the key authors of the 22-point

December 1972 document legitimizing the UMNO–PAS partnership in the 1970s, was elected *mursyid 'am* of the party's Ulama Consultative Council.

PAS AND ISLAMIC DEMOCRACY IN THE 1990S

PAS would define the government's Islamization as 'cosmetics, long on symbolism but short on substance' (Esposito and Voll 1996: 149; Nagata 1994). But it could not ignore the Malay support for UMNO as reflected in the 1995 elections, where the party scored one of its best electoral victories on a platform of economic growth and Islamization. PAS also had to contend with the 'Anwar factor'. Even PAS leaders[2] conceded that the presence of the affable and popular Anwar in UMNO and his message of 'progressive Islam' had been crucial to the party's electoral victories and had helped enhance UMNO's legitimacy in the eyes of the Malays. In the 'politics of outbidding' between the two parties for the leadership of the Malay community, UMNO's Islamizing trend of the 1980s, not unlike the pro-Malay policies of the 1970s, had quite effectively pulled the rug from under PAS's feet.

PAS also could not fail to notice the government's readiness, as exemplified by Memali, to use force to stamp out radical Islam. Neither could it ignore the country's booming economy, the expanding Malay middle-class and Malaysia's success in fostering 'long-term inter-communal harmony' under UMNO's moderate leadership (Khuri 1998: 360). These, in addition to the global post-Cold War 'democratic wave' and the pro-democracy shift observable among Islamists throughout the Muslim world, contributed to the subsequent rise in influence of a more moderate approach in PAS. Also, the advent of 'Mahathirist authoritarianism' (Khoo 1997b) in the late 1980s provided the party with an opportunity to re-invent its Islamic opposition in the direction of championing reforms and good governance.

With the radicals discredited, party meetings beginning from the early 1990s were dominated by leaders advocating moderation and the need to portray to the electorate a tolerant and friendly face of PAS

---

2. References to the opinion of 'PAS leaders' in this section are derived from the survey of party literature, field observations and interviews with eight national leaders of the party, including its president, secretary general and a vice-president, conducted between May 1997 and June 1998. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of graduate student Mariam Haji Hassan.

focusing on issues of democracy and social justice. This did not mean that the question of Islamic state and laws was discarded. Indeed, after winning Kelantan in the 1990 elections, the party did fulfil its earlier pledge to introduce *hudud* legislation in the state legislature, although – some would say, because – it knew such laws were unenforceable without amendments to the federal Constitution (Jesudason 1996: 137). But Islamic governance was increasingly presented not in the dogmatic legalistic-institutional form of the mid-1980s but one highlighting the centrality in Islam of social justice, rights of the citizen, honest elections and clean government.

PAS campaigned in the 1990 and more so the 1995 general elections with much of its attention directed at the authoritarian tendencies and economic inequities of the Mahathir government. Its manifesto (entitled 'Progress with Islam' in both the elections) emphasized questions of greater egalitarianism, governmental transparency, the preservation of the environment, the repeal of unjust laws, and the establishment of an independent *hisbah* [ombudsman] to check the excesses of government (Ahmad Lutfi 1995; PAS 1994b). The radical advocacy of an immediate setting up of an Islamic state of the 1980s had been refined to a general and long-term goal of creating a just community and an efficient administration based on Islamic values and guided by the *syariah* through democratic and popular mandate.

The party pursued the idea of electoral pacts with groups opposing the National Front. Immediately before the October 1990 general elections, PAS and Tengku Razaleigh's Semangat 46 formed a coalition called the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (Ummah Solidarity Movement). Semangat, in turn, formed the Gagasan Rakyat (People's Front) with the DAP and the Sabah-based Parti Bersatu Sabah (United Sabah Party, PBS). PAS performed reasonably well in the 1990 elections compared to its 1986 performance: it stood in 30 parliamentary and 114 state constituencies and won 7 and 33 seats respectively with 6.7 per cent of the popular vote. Angkatan won all the 39 seats (24 to PAS and 15 to Semangat 46) in Kelantan to form the state government. The historic coming together of these opposition parties failed to defeat the National Front government. But the Gagasan had brought PAS into an indirect electoral pact with the Chinese-based DAP and the Christian-led PBS, which in effect helped de-communalize their public articulations and obliged them to be more accommodative of one another. It had, for the first time, presented the potential of an alternative multiracial coalition.

Prior to the 1995 elections there was a fallout between PAS and the DAP when the latter demanded that PAS dissociate itself from the Islamic state concept. The Angkatan coalition ended in October 1996 following the dissolution of Semangat 46 and its members returning *en masse* to UMNO. But the idea of an alternative coalition had taken root in PAS. So did the awareness that the party's national ambitions could not be realized without non-Malay support. There were renewed calls for negotiations with the Islamizing UMNO, indeed for rejoining the ruling Front (Tarmizi 1995: 121–137). More significantly, the leadership was urged to 'adjust to current realities' and consider leading a new multi-ethnic coalition. An article published by a PAS-associated magazine in support of the idea urged the party to emulate Tony Blair's Labour Party in Britain in separating the party's fundamental ideals from the pragmatism of democratic governance in a multi-religious Malaysia, a proposal tantamount to asking PAS to abandon its Islamic state objective (Zin 1997). That there was no overt negative reaction to the article was indicative that PAS in the 1990s seemed to have at least reconciled itself to the popular dictum that the only viable – and electable – alternative to the ruling Front would be another multi-ethnic alliance.

Following the 1995 elections, where PAS performance remained at the 1990 levels, the party leadership conducted intensive discussions to consider its options. PAS leaders were cautiously optimistic about the potential of forging a coalition with Chinese political parties, expressed within the framework of Malay-Muslim political dominance in Malaysia. They believed that a PAS-led, multi-ethnic coalition might prove to be politically attractive to both Malays and non-Malays alike. Accordingly they pushed for the realization of the BA in 1999.

PAS leaders also have been unequivocal about Islam's (and PAS's) democratic essence. They quoted Quranic verses, the traditions of the Prophet, the practices of the early Muslim community and the pronouncements of respected *ulamas* to underscore the congruity between democracy and Islam. Party president Fadzil Noor has declared that 'PAS stands within the political system and only wants to replace the government ... not to destroy the country's institutions' (Vatikiotis 1996: 162). The party's history of uninterrupted participation in elections and the party's 'boom–bust' electoral experience in the last four decades in Kelantan and Terengganu have been cited as evidence of their commitment to the democratic system. Party leaders have also pointed out that intra-party elections have been democratic and not

lacking in intensity, yet without the corruption and 'money politics' of UMNO party elections. They dismissed as 'ridiculous' the suggestion that PAS is merely using the electoral process to gain power and that they would 'hijack' the democratic system thereafter. They stressed that the party itself has been in the forefront in the demand for democratic reforms and checks on authority. They visualize Malaysia under PAS rule as qualitatively and quantitatively more democratic and envision civil society and opposition political parties, including UMNO, being welcomed to play their legitimate roles. They also visualize a tolerant, moderate and pragmatic PAS-led multi-ethnic coalition government with non-Muslim cabinet ministers serving in a genuinely Islamic democratic governance (*Harakah*, 9 Nov. 1998: 40; 30 Nov. 1998: 17; 14 Dec. 1998: 40).

PAS leaders were acutely aware of the misgivings, especially among non-Muslims, about the party's concept of Islamic governance. They attributed this to 'non-Muslim misconceptions about Islam' and to Muslim 'secularists' and 'dogmatists'. More than anything else, they blamed UMNO propaganda which had never ceased to portray PAS as zealots out to chop off hands and to stone adulterers. PAS denounced this 'fear-mongering' as most unfair to it and to Islam (Tarmizi 1995). It went to great lengths to argue that the *hudud* laws are a minute aspect of the *syariah* and that the rules of evidence are so stringent that it would be almost impossible to convict. It would insist that this line of defence of the *hudud* was not an exercise in apologia but a statement of its spirit in delineating both the boundaries of a moral society and that of governmental authority. When PAS tabled the *hudud* legislation in Kelantan in 1992 – which was dismissed by UMNO as PAS laws rather than Islamic ones (Bahaeis 1994; Rose 1995) – it stressed that the laws would take effect only after society has fully understood them and when the underlying moral and ethical imperatives have taken root in a true Islamic social order. PAS would also reject the notion that an Islamic Malaysia would be a replica of Iran or of Taleban's Afghanistan. Citing Islam's general guidelines for governance that allow for differences between diverse cultures, the tolerant and compassionate predisposition of the Malay personality and more so the 'very moderate' approach of the party itself, PAS leaders were convinced that the Islamic democracy that they stood for would be acceptable to all Malaysians and exemplary for the Muslim world (*Harakah*, 3 Oct. 1997: 1; 28 Nov. 1998: 40).

PAS leaders were quite informed about the democratizing trend among Islamists elsewhere in the Muslim world. They supported Islamist groups participating in the democratic reform movement in neighbouring post-Suharto Indonesia. They were not unaware of the democratic themes of Mahfoud Nahnah's Movement of Society for Peace in Algeria, Tunisian Rashid al-Ghannusi's Nahdah or Mustafa Masshur's Ikhwan Muslimin in Egypt. They agreed that it was within the bounds of Islam Khomeini's ruling in 1988 to empower an Islamic government to suspend provisions of the *syariah* in the name of public interest. PAS literature gave wide and approving publicity to the democratic elections in Iran, the landslide victory in 1997 of the presidential candidate standing on the platform of liberalization, and the appointment of a woman vice-president of the Islamic Republic (*Harakah*, 15 Sept. 1997: 17, 19). PAS echoed the position taken by Indonesian reformists and Egypt's Ikhwan Muslimin to demand a term limit for the premiership in Malaysia as a way to check tyranny and abuse of power (*Harakah*, 29 May 1998: 39; PAS 1998: 3).

The party's democratic demands on the government not only would oblige it to fulfil them if it should come to power, but they also have a more immediate implication for the party's own structure and relationships. Party leaders interviewed reported that voices favouring women candidates (there were none in the 1990 and 1995 elections, although the appointed PAS representative from Kelantan to the federal Senate is a woman) have pressured the leadership to consider fielding women candidates in the future. Even the *ulama* leadership has been subjected to increased scrutiny; questions had begun to surface on the respective powers of, and the relationship between, the indirectly elected Ulama Consultative Council and the elected Central Executive Committee. The idea of a fully elected Ulama Council and even term limits for the party leadership had begun to emerge. During the May 1998 annual assembly, for example, a proposal requiring selection of election candidates based on 'piety' and 'knowledge of Islam' evoked debates that barely concealed the concern of many that such conditions would give unfair, and undemocratic, advantage to the religious-educated in the party.

There were other developments supportive of a democratizing and moderating trend in PAS. The era of cassette tapes of the 1980s had been replaced in the 1990s by a commercially run, twice-weekly tabloid – *Harakah* – and a professionally maintained website. Party leaders, particularly the *Murshid 'am* and Kelantan chief minister Nik

Aziz Nik Mat, repeatedly called upon party speakers to avoid the demagoguery and loud and harsh language characteristic of PAS public meetings in the recent past (*Harakah*, 26 June 1998: 13). The party, which in principle endorses a free market economy, had begun in the late 1980s to build its own network of enterprises that ranged from schools and convenience stores to supplying sand extracted from an Indonesian island to the construction industry in Singapore.

There has also been a qualitative change in the party's membership that stood at half a million in early 1999. The New Economic Policy and the consequent expansion of the Malay middle class saw a parallel increase in the number of urban professionals and businessmen in PAS. The alliance with – and the dissolution of – the nationalist Semangat 46 has helped PAS to recruit new supporters from social groups outside the traditional religious-educated sector. It also helped add members with state-bestowed honorific titles, for example the title *Dato'*, which further normalized the party's image. The annual party assembly in the late 1990s saw the parking bays of the new party headquarters in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur lined with Mercedes and BMWs – a far cry from the aged Toyotas and the bus-and-taxi mode of the old days. PAS had increasingly moved away from the image of a rural and religious school-based parochial grouping of men in white skull caps to become a diverse, commercially and technologically sophisticated mainstream political organization with substantial support from the urban Malay middle class.

The PAS response to the political upheaval following the dismissal of deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998 was demonstrative of its new orientation. The debates surrounding the 'Anwargate' (*Asiaweek*, 9 Oct. 1998: 18–26; *Time*, 14 Sept. 1998: 16–24; 5 Oct. 1998: 16–23; 16 Nov. 1998: 21–27) revolved almost exclusively around issues of corruption and oppressive laws and demands for democratic reforms. Anwar's subsequent trial – and conviction – for corruption, and the beatings he received while in police custody, prompted anti-government protests and similar demands for political reforms by NGO groups and opposition parties. PAS was among the most vociferous of them. But gone was the simplistic *fiqhi* [legal-jurisprudential] approach of instantly issuing *fatwa*s and invoking 'Islamic state' as the solution to anything and everything. Describing the political scene along the lines of a 'democracy under siege', the party went on a proactive campaign to mobilize support for democratic reforms. It initiated the Council of the National Justice Movement (GERAK) together with the DAP, the

socialist Malaysian People's Party (Parti Rakyat Malaysia, PRM) and eight NGO groups on a common platform calling for justice, the rule of law and the repeal of the Internal Security Act. PAS was also a co-sponsor of the NGO-initiated Coalition for People's Democracy. It expressed support for the Movement for Social Justice launched in November 1998 by Anwar's wife Wan Azizah Ismail and a group of pro-democracy activists. In April 1999, the movement registered itself as a political party called the National Justice Party (KeADILan) with Wan Azizah as president. KeADILan identified itself as a multi-ethnic party dedicated to social justice, democratic reforms and governmental accountability. PAS immediately welcomed the new party and pledged willingness to forge an electoral pact with it to challenge the National Front government.

There has been a surge in PAS popularity following 'Anwargate': fresh membership applications increased ten-fold between July and November 1998; the sales of *Harakah* jumped from 75,000 in July to 300,000 in December 1998 despite the restriction on its circulation to party members only (*FEER*, 10 Dec. 1998: 13; *Harakah*, 30 Nov. 1998: 19, 14 Dec. 1998: 27). This rejuvenation of support for PAS should not be seen as simply a reaction to the economic crisis or a registration of protest against injustice towards Anwar. It is indicative also of approval of a PAS championing democratic reforms.

In a political atmosphere seen by the party and its supporters as most opportune for it to lead Malaysia into a new era, PAS became more receptive to the revitalized calls for a pragmatic alliance with opposition Chinese parties (*Harakah*, 5 Oct. 1998: 21–22). By early 1999, PAS leaders had openly proposed an electoral alliance with the DAP, KeADILan and PRM. The party general assembly in late May 1999 duly endorsed the proposal; the dissenting voices expressed by a section of the delegates revolved mainly around seeking assurances that PAS would lead the alliance (*New Sunday Times*, 30 May 1999: 2; *Harakah*, 31 May 1999; *Utusan Malaysia*, 31 May 1999: 1–2). The leadership also announced the party's readiness to consider opening its membership to non-Muslims and having them stand for elections on its ticket. PAS president Fadzil Noor had earlier launched the party's Permanent Secretariat for Chinese Affairs (*Eksklusif*, 31 May 1999: 1).

PAS leaders are acutely aware of the hurdles the party has to face in selling its Islamic democracy platform. There are still pockets of 'purists' in the party who would resist digressions from the puritanical line and allying with Chinese parties. Issues on human and women

rights, limits of state authority and individual liberties need to be clarified and important sectors of the electorate need to be convinced. Most non-Muslims and liberal Muslims still look upon PAS as 'extremist' and are sceptical of the party's commitment to personal liberties and democratic principles and of its capability to administer the country. UMNO and the National Front would take every opportunity to discredit the party. Still, PAS leaders are convinced that most members of the party support the leadership's new Islamic-democratic orientation. They are equally optimistic that the party's reputation of a clean administration in Kelantan which PAS has ruled since 1990 and further dialogues and clarifications would help increase acceptance, among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, of the Islamic-democratic platform that PAS stands for.

Conclusion

The Islamic Party of Malaysia, in contrast to most other Islamic parties in the Muslim world, has since its inception participated in the Malaysian electoral process competing in a semi-democratic political system that heavily favours the UMNO-led coalition government. In the first decade following independence, PAS presented itself almost exclusively as a party defending Malay communal interests in contrast to an UMNO that it portrayed as having betrayed the Malay race. The pro-Malay policies of the Razak government, however, effectively negated PAS's communal demands and even pressured the party to abandon its oppositionist role and become a component party of the ruling establishment. It was an establishment, we may note, that initiated a discernible shift from the 'modified democracy' of the early independence years towards what has in the 1990s become an institutionalized 'modified authoritarianism'.

The Malay-Islamic oppositional space vacated by PAS was filled by an Islamic revivalism led by Anwar Ibrahim's ABIM, spearheading a nascent movement demanding Islamization and democratization. The dissolution of the PAS–UMNO partnership, followed by the co-option of Anwar Ibrahim (and ABIM) into the government, saw PAS reoccupying that space. It was a radicalized PAS influenced by the legalistic, fundamentalist-literalist brand of Islam which had dominated the global Islamic revivalism of the time and that contested UMNO largely on the platform of the Islamic state and the *syariah*.

PAS's puritan radicalism of the 1980s failed to inspire the imagination of the Malays. UMNO's pragmatic response, particularly its 'progressive' Islamization policy and the popular support for it, pressured PAS to

seek alternative strategies. Against the background of the global shift in Islamist orientation in the direction of pluralism and democracy, the continued 'modified authoritarianism' of the ruling party and an environment of 'crony capitalist' growth that exacerbated economic inequalities, an increasingly moderate PAS leadership began to steer attention in the 1990s to issues of social justice and democratic reforms, expressed within an Islamic paradigm and argued as a genuine heritage of the Islamic tradition. The party's public articulations – aimed at a national audience of both Malays and non-Malays – were heavily directed at the erosion of democratic rights and at presenting PAS and its Islamic democratic platform as a better alternative to UMNO to lead a multi-racial Malaysia into a new era.

Muslim politics in Malaysia in the 1990s saw a scenario of an Islamizing UMNO and a democratizing PAS. PAS leaders would disagree with Vatikiotis's observation (1996: 162) that 'it is not inconceivable that if PAS ever came to power in Malaysia they would behave much like the current ruling Malay elite, deploying a moderate Islamic agenda to shore up their legitimacy ... UMNO might in turn adopt the Islamic struggle to attack PAS.' They would reject any equation with UMNO. They would argue that PAS rule, unlike UMNO's, would be characterized not only by the conventional expectations of an honest democracy and a clean government but also one anchored in the moral, ethical and universal values of Islam. Nevertheless, Vatikiotis's observation reflects the emerging convergence in Muslim politics in Malaysia. Its implications on the future of Malay-Muslim politics, however, may be more far-reaching than simply an instrumentalist exploitation of Islam for purposes of legitimation.

The new democratic inclination of PAS emerged forcefully with the passionate demands for reforms that the party was deeply involved in alongside other democratic activists in the wake of Anwar's dismissal in September 1998. The party's shift to championing democracy-related issues, however, was not conceived during the moment of passion following 'Anwargate'. Its gestation dated back a decade with the declining influence of the radical faction in the party. But the Anwar episode, the resulting political dislocations within UMNO, the popular protests demanding democratic reforms and clean government, and an upcoming general election, provided PAS with an opportune setting to propagate its Islamic democracy platform. They also provided the catalyst to the party leadership to pursue vigorously its moderate pragmatist line that included building bridges with non-Muslim groups

and parties in an attempt to build an electable alternative to the National Front.

PAS did not succeed in dislodging the Front government in the 1999 general election, neither on its own nor in collaboration with other non-Malay opposition parties. But the outcome was uncertain beforehand; even UMNO leaders conceded that the National Front might not be able to repeat its 1995 achievement. Nor would it have been unexpected for PAS to improve on its performance or even capture another state or two. Problems with the economy and unemployment, issues of corruption and autocratic rule and PAS's own democratizing tendencies could all have helped the party to perform better. If this happened on a party platform that emphasized a moderate and democratic agenda, it would extend the apprenticeship of, and add experience to, PAS as a participant in a democratic process and expose it further to the practices and procedures of democratic politics. It also would help reinforce the emerging democratic tendencies and deepen the idea within both the party's leadership and the rank and file that moderation and democratization do pay in Malaysia's pluralistic setting. In an environment accustomed to overwhelming victories for the ruling coalition whose winning formula was to a considerable extent based on its claim to centrist tendencies, such an electoral improvement would further encourage PAS's accommodationist approach to Muslim and Malaysian politics in its ambition to lead Malaysia's future.

But the Front's 1999 victory was not unexpected. In Malaysia's multiracial socio-cultural and political context, UMNO leaders do not lack mastery of survival strategies that range from fallback finesse and damage control to nationalistic jingoism and symbolic manipulation to retain its relevance and effectively to weather internal and external attacks. As a political party, UMNO itself has demonstrated an impressive capacity for pragmatic and responsive adjustment to changing times and pressures. The pro-Malay policies of Tun Razak in the 1970s and Mahathir's Islamization in the 1980s are examples of UMNO responding to the demands of changing times. In both these cases, we may note, PAS played a central role in providing the external push. The dominant external pressure in the 1990s – and PAS has again been a prominent actor – revolves around issues of democracy and good governance, an issue area that has emerged since the early 1990s and reached its climax with the 1997 economic crisis and the Anwar episode in late 1998.

UMNO's Islamization initiatives would certainly proceed irrespective, if not because, of Anwar's dismissal from the party in September 1998. The appointment in January 1999 of foreign minister Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi as the new deputy prime minister to replace Anwar was indicative of this continuity. Ahmad Badawi has a reputation as 'Mr Clean' and hails from a well-known *ulama* family and is himself a graduate of the University of Malaya in Islamic studies. But UMNO can also be expected to pay more attention to issues of democratization. It will probably continue to employ the time-tested 'communal bogey' and 'foreign interference' to deal with this new challenge. The themes of indigenous democracy, inter-communal harmony and 'economics over political development' would probably remain in the party's political arsenal, and remain quite persuasive to justify limitations on 'excessive' freedoms. Aided by its extensive command over resources and patronage networks, these would continue to help sustain its power and control over political debate. It would be naïve to expect substantial political liberalization in the immediate future. Nevertheless, UMNO may have little choice; prudence and political pragmatism should persuade UMNO to take notice of and accommodate the growing domestic demand for democratic reforms. The relative success of the democratic experiments in Thailand and the Philippines, the reformation movement in Indonesia and the 'loosening up' of even the tightly controlled city-state of Singapore (*FEER*, 24 Dec. 1998: 10–15) would only add to the pressure for UMNO to enhance its democratic credentials and regain public confidence. Although its nature and scope would be difficult to predict, a movement in the direction of political reforms could be expected even during the tenureship of the current Prime Minister Mahathir and, more so, in a post-Mahathir era that is expected to commence in the not too distant future.

A trend is not a finished product, and political trends are notorious for sudden reversals. That notwithstanding, the shifting tendencies in Muslim politics in Malaysia in the final years of the twentieth century promise a new and potentially democratizing political setting within which the contest between competing Muslim groups would take place. The potential convergence between the two main contestants in the direction of Islamization and democratization could open up a fresh Muslim discourse to explore a creative and functional synthesis between modernity and Islam in the context of a multi-ethnic Malaysia. Equally significant, such a convergence could help develop a novel arena for the practice of Muslim politics that is not only authentically Islamic and legitimately democratic but also, as both PAS and UMNO would want it, widely acceptable to the diverse and pluralistic Malaysian populace in particular, and exemplary for the Muslim world in general.

Postscript

By the time Mahathir called for elections to be held on 29 November 1999, the major opposition parties – PAS, KeADILan, DAP and PRM – had already agreed to come together in an Alternative Front (Barisan Alternatif) to take on the National Front. Its joint manifesto called for a just and democratic Malaysia; conspicuously absent from the manifesto was PAS's concept of the Islamic state.

Throughout the campaign period, the National Front played on the themes of stability, growth and ethnic harmony and on the post-crisis economic recovery that would need a strong government in order to sustain it. It portrayed the Alternative Front as a fragile alliance of political opportunists. PAS was attacked for exploiting Islam and for its willingness to sacrifice its Islamic state objective in exchange for non-Muslim support. To the non-Muslim audience, PAS was pictured as an extremist party whose new moderate and democratic posture was a political charade to gain power, and to turn Malaysia into a theocratic state.

In the face of the economic crisis, the Alternative Front did campaign on economic-related issues, emphasizing wastage and corruption, the illusion of economic recovery, crony capitalism and the lack of transparency that had made Malaysia a pariah in the eyes of international investors. But PAS and KeADILan, in particular, placed an overwhelming emphasis on issues surrounding the Anwar affair and Mahathir's authoritarianism, and on demands for social justice, good governance and democratic reforms.

Although the Alternative Front failed to dislodge the National Government or even deny it its customary two-thirds majority, the electoral damage it caused to the ruling party was significant. Overall, the 14-party National Front won 148 parliamentary seats and 56.5 per cent of the popular vote compared to 162 and 65 per cent respectively in 1995. Its share of the 11 state assembly seats in Peninsular Malaysia declined from 338 to 281. More significant were the losses suffered by UMNO. The 94 parliamentary seats it held prior to the dissolution of the parliament was reduced to 72; the 231 seats in the state assemblies to 175. For the first time in history, UMNO seats in parliament numbered less than its coalition allies. UMNO also failed to regain Kelantan from PAS, and it lost the state of Terengganu to it. When measured by popular votes, UMNO seemed to have even lost the majority mandate of its core Malay constituency, the crucial source of its claim to leadership of the multi-ethnic ruling coalition. In the 'Malay heartland' states

of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah, UMNO's popular vote declined from an average of 57 per cent in 1995 to 45.5 per cent.

As a group, the parties of the Alternative Front more than doubled its parliamentary presence from 22 to 45. But PAS was the biggest winner. It won 27 parliamentary and 98 state assembly seats, compared to seven and 33 respectively in 1995. It retained Kelantan and wrested the oil-rich state of Terengganu from UMNO, winning 28 of the 32 state assembly seats and all the seven parliamentary seats. For the first time, PAS now has seats in all the state assemblies in Peninsular Malaysia except in the three traditional UMNO stronghold southern states of Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Johor. Among the Malay voters, PAS's popular vote probably surpassed that of UMNO. And befitting its position as the leading opposition party, PAS president Fadzil Noor took over from DAP's Lim Kit Siang as opposition leader in parliament.

The coming together of the ethnic-based opposition parties in the Alternative Front did not seem to have contributed significantly to its electoral performance. There was little indication of the grassroots and mutually supportive ethnic exchanges between the Malay-based PAS and the Chinese-based DAP that the coalition had hoped to secure. The PAS-led Alternative Front would have to strive hard even to maintain its existence as a political group after the elections. The ideological differences between PAS and the DAP are huge still, with the latter remaining unequivocal in its rejection of the Islamic state. Indeed, the underlying ideological differences between it and PAS erupted into a public quarrel immediately after the elections over a proposal by the new PAS chief minister of Terengganu – which was subsequently retracted – to impose a special community welfare tax on non-Muslims in the state to complement the *zakat* that the Muslims had to pay. For decades since the 1960s, PAS and the DAP had been bitter political enemies, and both were widely perceived as the extremist representatives of their respective ethnic constituencies. But that the two could agree to form an alliance and to begin negotiating and settling their differences was itself an outstanding achievement. Contesting the elections as partners had also obliged them to minimize divisive ethnic and religious issues – which both were notorious for exploiting in the past – in their public campaigns. The coalition has certainly had a moderating and centrist effect on both these ethnic-based parties.

Leaders of these parties had vowed to maintain the coalition and strive to narrow their differences through ongoing consultations, and

to provide Malaysians with a viable and democratic alternative to the National Front. Sustaining the coalition necessarily means continued compromises and accommodation, and a mutual movement towards the political centre. Boosted by its best-ever performance, PAS, in particular, seemed most keen to preserve the coalition. PAS can now claim that it has the majority support of the Malays, and thus, in the Malaysian political tradition that the non-Malays had long accepted, should legitimately lead the government. Its moderating tendencies and its emphasis on issues of social justice and good governance had been partly responsible for its increasing appeal to liberal Muslims and the urban Malay middle classes that had traditionally identified themselves with UMNO. The party seemed keen to extend such gains to include the non-Malay electorate to achieve its national ambition in the reality of Malaysia's pluralistic politics.

Expectedly, UMNO's initial reaction was to put the blame on others, particularly on PAS's exploitation of Islam. But before long, there were loud calls for reforms and the reinventing of the party. With Mahathir announcing this to be his last term – although he did not set a date for his exit – the focus centred on the question of succession and the contest for leadership posts in the party elections held in May 2000. But more than leadership changes and resolving the internal turmoil, UMNO cannot ignore the fact that Malay and Malaysian politics had changed dramatically and that it would risk a bigger defeat in the next elections if it did not adapt accordingly. The key to this adaptation would be issues of democracy and good governance that are central to contemporary political discourse. UMNO's capacity for pragmatic and responsive adjustments to changing times and pressures is being tested again. If history is any guide, one can expect UMNO – most probably in a post-Mahathir era – to initiate political reforms in that direction.

Part Two

PRACTICES

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

Zaharom Nain

> It could be argued that at the core of a democratic society is the presence of a public debate about the distribution and execution of power. It is crucial for democratic arrangements that choices made by the power holders are publicly scrutinised and contested. In the public debate, the informational and cultural products play a significant role. If the interests of the information and culture producers and the powers that be are intertwined, a society's capacity for democratic government is seriously undermined (Hamelink 1994: 92).

This chapter attempts to locate the development of the mainstream media of television broadcasting and the press within the wider context of post-colonial Malaysian development policies. It begins with an overview of the contemporary picture of the mainstream media and wider social policies and structures which have affected – and continue to affect – the media. Starting with the 'communist threat', through to the events of May 1969, the New Economic Policy and the substantial legislation, viz. the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Broadcasting Act, the Internal Security Act and the Official Secrets Act, this chapter traces the effects these historical developments have had on the media.

It is argued that the Mahathir era (1981 onwards) has seen significant qualitative and quantitative shifts taking place as regards media ownership,

control, content and direction. Crucial to this discussion is an analysis of policies and official exhortations, together with a review of newer legislations such as the Broadcasting Act (1988), and the recent amendments made to this Act.

THE MAINSTREAM PRINT AND BROADCAST INDUSTRIES: AN OVERVIEW[1]

THE PRESS

The mainstream press in Malaysia can be characterized as having gone through a major period of change, beginning in the early 1980s, coinciding with the period in which Mahathir Mohamad became prime minister. And this is apparently a trend that has extended into the 1990s. The early 1980s saw the emergence of new titles, signifying to many a liberalization of media policies, a relaxation of control. According to one source (*Information Malaysia*, 1980–81 and 1985), between 1981 and 1985 alone, the number of titles of local newspapers, magazines and journals in circulation increased from 56 to 102 – a remarkable increase of about 80 percent, made even more remarkable given the introduction of the Printing Presses and Publications Act in 1984 and the amendments made to it in 1987.

Going by crude quantitative indicators, it would appear that in the early 1990s Malaysians were spoilt for choice, being well-served by the media. As indicated in Table 1, in 1993, there were 39 dailies circulating in Malaysia, certainly more than those serving Singapore (8), Thailand (8) and the Philippines (25) (see Goonasekera and Holaday, 1993), and in the same period, as the figures in Table 5.2 indicate, Peninsular Malaysians also appeared to be well-served by weekly news publications, particularly by those in the national language.

Unfortunately, crude quantitative indicators, while seemingly impressive, have this nasty habit of cloaking some hard, cold facts; in this case, facts regarding concentration of ownership, elements of legal,

---

1. Radio in Malaysia has also expanded at a rapid rate, particularly in the 1990s. Introduced in 1946, there are currently more than 20 radio stations in the country, with more than 12 being regional stations. RTM dominates with six radio stations which have a peninsula-wide reach. In 1996, with the launch of Astro, eight more radio stations were provided by Astro through subscription. Radio is not included in this analysis for reasons of logistics.

Table 5.1: Malaysian newspapers (1993): dailies

	National Language	English	Chinese	Tamil	Total
Peninsular Malaysia	4	6*	6	3	19
Sabah	1†	1	7	0	9
Sarawak	0	3	7	0	10
Total	5	10*	20	3	38

Source: Adapted from *Information Malaysia (1992–93)*

* Includes the *Sun*, which does not publish on Saturday and Sunday. Excludes *Leader* which is a free paper for the Klang Valley region. The *Sun is* now published on Saturday and Sunday. The *Leader* has since stopped production.

† Includes the *Daily Express* which is a trilingual (Malay/English/Kadazanduson) daily.

political and economic control, and their implications for newspaper content and genuine variety of choices.

Indeed, for quite some time now, all of the four national language dailies published in Peninsular Malaysia, *Berita Harian*, *Harian Metro*, *Utusan Malaysia* and *Utusan Melayu* have been produced by just two local media giants, the New Straits Times Press (NSTP), which publishes *Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro*, and Utusan Melayu (Malaysia)

Table 5.2: Malaysian newspapers (1993): weeklies and bi-weeklies

	National Language	English	Chinese	Tamil	Total
Peninsular Malaysia	13*	4	3†	1	21
Sabah	0	0	0	0	0
Sarawak	0	0	1	0	1
Total	13*	4	4†	1	22

Source: Adapted from *Information Malaysia (1992–93)*

* Includes *Watan* which is a bi-weekly.

† Includes *New Life Post* which is a bi-weekly.

Table 5.3a: New Straits Times Press (NSTP)(1995) involvement in the media industry

	Subsidiary Companies	Associated Companies	Newspapers Published	Magazines Published
NSTP	**26** **Includes:** Berita Harian Sdn Bhd (100%) Berita Book Centre (100 %) Berita Publishing (100%) Marican (92.5%) American Malaysian Life Assurance (100%)	**4** **Includes:** Asia Magazine Ltd (26.9%) Kloffe Capital Sdn Bhd (22.2%) Commerce Asset Holdings Bhd (20.2 %)	**Dailies:** • *New Straits Times (E)* • *Berita Harian (M)* • *Malay Mail (E)* • *Business Times (E)* • *Shin Min Daily News(C)* • *Harian Metro (M)* **Weeklies:** • *New Sunday Times (E)* • *Berita Minggu (M)* • *Sunday Mail (E)*	• *Malaysian Business* • *Investors Digest* • *Her World* • *Jelita* • *Information Malaysia* • *Periodica Islamica* • *New Straits Times Annual* • *Her World Annual* • *Her World Cookbook* • *Her World Home Scene Annual* • *Sajian Jelita* • *Khidmat*

Notes:
E = English language newspapers
M = Malay or national language newspapers
C = Chinese language newspapers
Percentages refer to degree of ownership

Table 5.3b: Utusan Melayu (1996) involvement in the media industry

	Subsidiary Companies	Associated Companies	Newspapers Published	Magazines Published
Utusan Melayu (1996)	**14** **Includes:** Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd (100%) Utusan Melayu (Singapore) Pte Ltd (100%) Utusan Pearl & Dean (72.8%)	**9**[a] **Includes:** Swan Malaysia Sdn Bhd (40%) Electronic Data Interchange (25%) City Television Sdn Bhd (30%)	**Dailies:** • *Utusan Malaysia (M)* • *Utusan Melayu (M)* • *Leader (E)*[b] **Weeklies:** • *Mingguan Malaysia (M)* • *Utusan Zaman (M)*	• *Wanita* • *URTV* • *SAJI* • *Al-Islam* • *Mastika* • *MASSA* • *Mangga* • *Pemikir* • *Komik Kawan* • *Cerdas Pintar* • *Young Generation*

Notes:
E = English language newspapers
M = Malay or national language newspapers
C = Chinese language newspapers
Percentages refer to degree of ownership

a. In early 1994 the Utusan Group became part of a consortium of four companies which was awarded the tender by the government to operate the new commercial television station, *MetroVision*.
b. Publication of the *Leader*, a free newspaper for the Klang Valley region, has since ceased

Source: *The KLSE Annual Handbook, 1995 and 1996.*

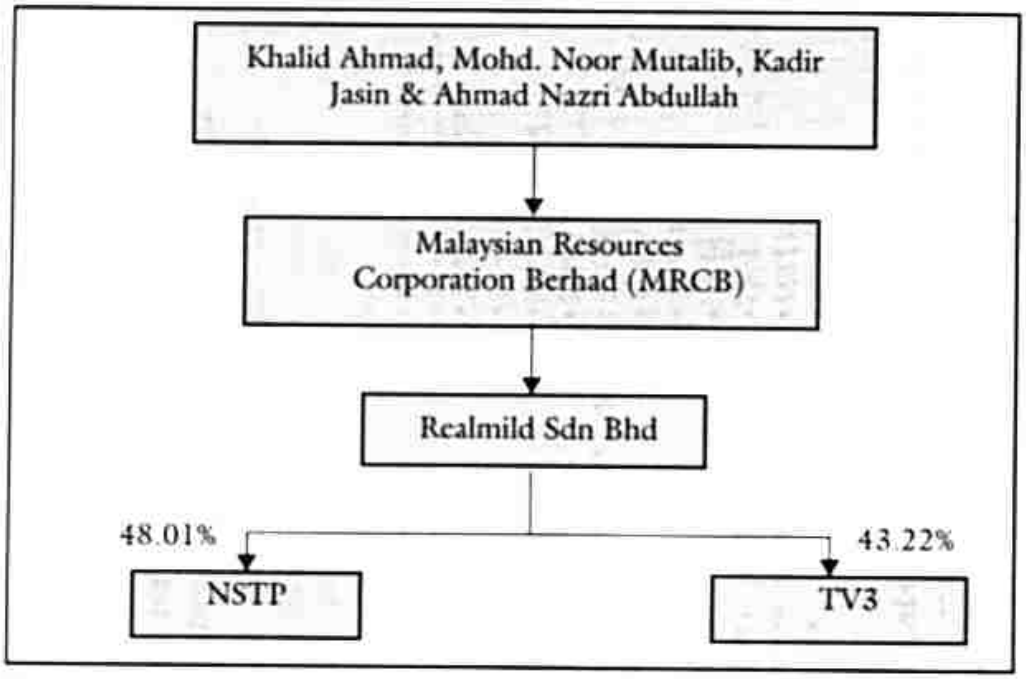

Figure 5.1: The MRCB group structure as it relates to NSTP and TV3 (31 August 1993)

Source: Gomez 1994: 136

Berhad, which publishes *Utusan Malaysia* and *Utusan Melayu*. The concentration becomes more evident when we consider the national language weeklies, since the two leading weeklies (in terms of circulation and readership), *Berita Mingguan* and *Mingguan Malaysia*, are also published by the same two companies (see Tables 5.3a and 5.3b).

This, of course, is merely the tip of the iceberg since, as has been illustrated more comprehensively elsewhere (see Cheong 1993; Gomez 1990, 1994), these companies have interests not only in other media-related activities such as distribution and other media such as broadcasting, but are also controlled by groups closely aligned to the political parties in the ruling coalition. For example, in January 1993 the local media empire comprising *Berita Harian*, *Berita Minggu*, *Harian Metro*, the English dailies *New Straits Times* and *Malay Mail*, the Chinese daily, *Shin Min Daily News* and TV3, Malaysia's first private television station, came under the control of Realmild Sdn Bhd, a private limited company which, in turn, was fully owned by a publicly listed company, Malaysian Resources Corporation Bhd (MRCB), effectively controlled by four individuals widely recognized as being close to UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), the dominant party in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition (see Figure 5.1).

The intricacies of this deal – described as 'the biggest management buyout (MBO) in the local corporate sector' (*Corporate World*, Feb. 1993) – are too extensive to go into in any great detail here. And it is, indeed, not our intention to replicate but rather merely to illustrate the fact that the major local press organizations, while seemingly increasing in number, nonetheless are controlled by the same few actors (institutions and individuals) invariably aligned to political parties and leaders. By looking at the majority share ownership of the two media giants, NSTP and Utusan Melayu, as examples (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3), we can see this pattern of concentration more clearly.

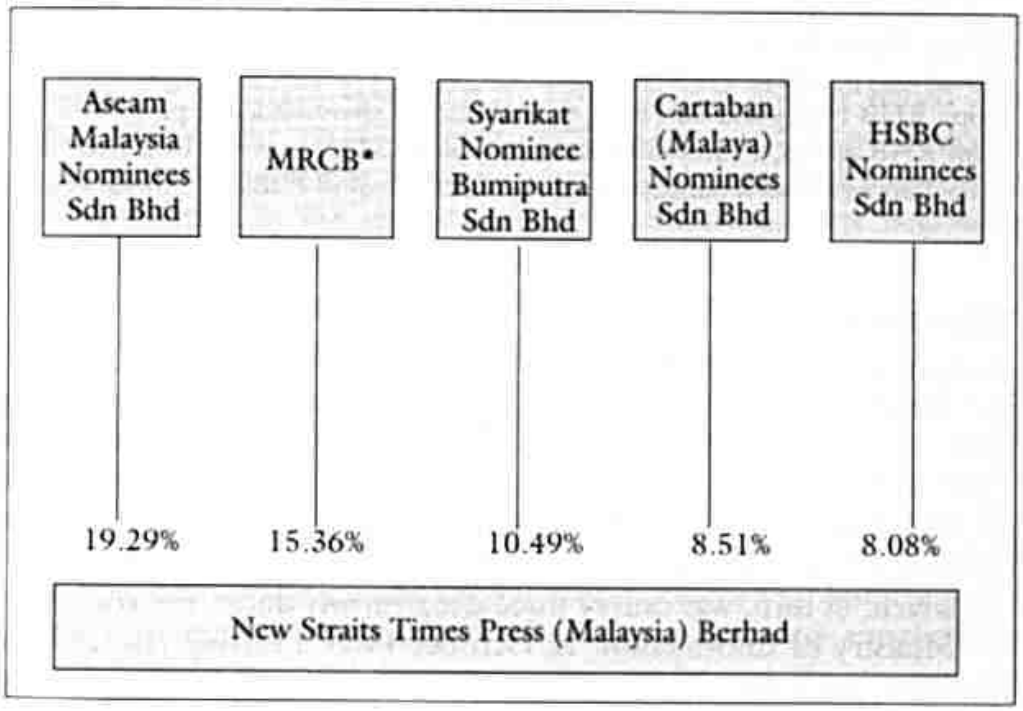

Figure 5.2: The five largest shareholders of NSTP (1995)

Source: Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (1995). *KLSE Annual Companies Handbook* (p. 482)

Note: *The figures indicating that MRCB only owns 15.36% of the shares are actually misleading because the KLSE report (1995) also states that MRCB does own 48.01% of the NST shares, implying that this latter percentage is made up of shares owned directly by MRCB and also indirectly through its subsidiaries and associates.

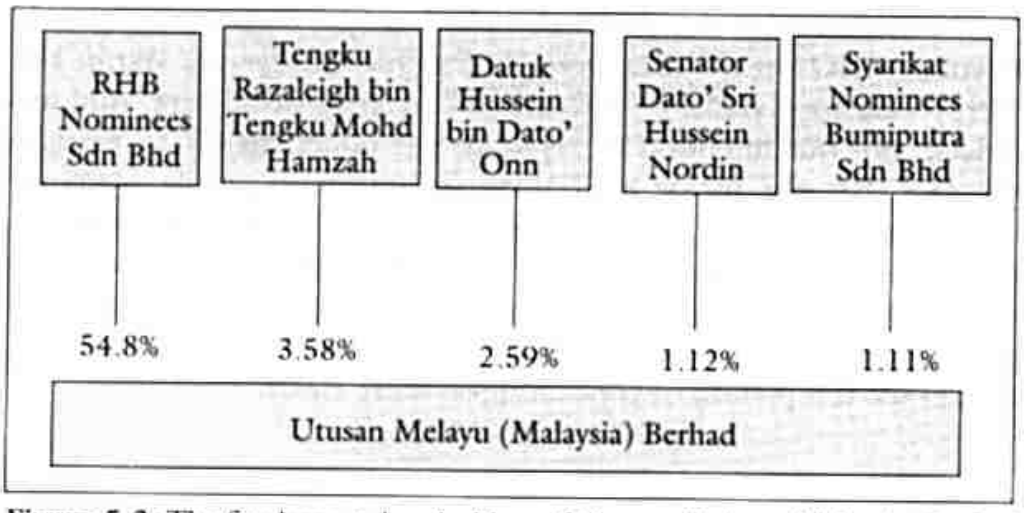

Figure 5.3: The five largest shareholders of Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad (1996)

Source: Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (1996). *KLSE Annual Companies Handbook* (p. 242)
Note: RHB Nominees Sdn Bhd, the substantial shareholder, is part of the giant RHB group, a substantial stake in which (32%) is owned by powerful Malaysian *bumiputra* banker and stockbroker, Rashid Hussain and his family.

TELEVISION

As it is with the local press, so, evidently, is it with local television. Indeed, like the press, television has seen apparently remarkable changes taking place over the past decade. Television was first introduced in December 1963 with the help of technical consultants from Canada. The initial set-up comprised a single channel national network, under the control of the Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) or the Department of Broadcasting which, in turn, was one of three departments under the control of the Ministry of Information. In October 1969 a second channel was launched, also under the direct control of the Ministry of Information, and guided by the same directives as those which governed the operations of the first channel (Karthigesu 1991). These directives, which have remained virtually unchanged and which have informed broadcasting policy, are:

1. to explain in depth and with the widest possible coverage the policies and the programmes of the government in order to ensure maximum understanding by the public;
2. to stimulate public interest and opinion in order to achieve changes in line with the requirement of the government;

3. to assist in promoting civic consciousness and fostering the development of Malaysian arts and culture;
4. to provide suitable elements of popular education, general information and entertainment;
5. to aid national integration efforts in a multi-ethnic society through the use of the national language. (Ministry of Information 1983).

What is certainly apparent is that television – and, more generally, broadcasting – in Malaysia was from its inception closely aligned to the government. Both the RTM channels, now called TV1 and TV2, were established not through an Act of Parliament or by a Royal Charter, but via decisions made by the then Alliance coalition government which, in turn, formulated the policies that would determine the role television would play. The latter practice continues, certainly with the RTM channels, to the present day.

After almost two decades of virtual state monopoly of the television airwaves, a commercial television station, TV3, was allowed by the government to begin operating in 1984. It was initially hailed as a station that would 'provide newer, better quality and better choice of programmes' (*Malaysian Business*, 1 June 1984), although subsequent developments, like the drastic increase in broadcast time beginning from 1 March 1994 and the emergence of MetroVision, also in 1994, indicate that the hunger for something that is ever new has remained unsatiated. These developments, of course, are related to the government's policy of 'privatization', particularly the privatization of what were once regarded as 'public services', broadcasting being one of them. And it is a development that is certainly not peculiar to Malaysia. Indeed, as far as television is concerned, many public broadcast systems, especially in Western Europe (see Blumler 1993; Venturelli 1993) have for some time now been designing and implementing policies to transform themselves into commercial entities. The option is often simplistically assumed to be between state-controlled media and the market, the latter seen as being more preferable based on the naive notion that the logic of the market inevitably will lead to plurality of choice, freedom and independence. This, as has been argued elsewhere (Loh and Mustafa 1996; Zaharom 1994, 1996), has unfortunately turned out to be untrue.

In quantitative terms, television in Malaysia currently appears to be undergoing profound changes. As indicated in Tables 5.4 and 5.5, the latter part of this decade sees television expanding quite rapidly, with more channel offerings and broadcast hours.

Table 5.4: The growth of television in Malaysia (1990s)

	1993	1994	1995	1996*
No. of broadcast channels	3	3	4	4
No. of cable channels	-	-	4	5
No. of satellite channels	-	-	-	15

* estimate

Source: *Malaysian Business*, 1 January 1995: 99.

Despite this expansion, however, the credibility of television as a source of information and its role as a 'purported tool for nation building' (Karthigesu 1991) are still very much open to question and debate. Often the criticisms and suggestions put across to those controlling television to democratize the industry in this fast-developing economy, allowing greater representation in terms of programming, opinions and ownership, unfortunately have fallen on deaf ears.

Instead, more recent developments illustrate the further concentration of media ownership. In early 1994, another local media giant closely aligned to UMNO, the Utusan Group, became part of a consortium of four companies that was awarded a tender by the government to operate Malaysia's second commercial television station, MetroVision (see Zaharom 1994). Yet another company in the same consortium is Melewar Corporation, controlled by Tunku Abdullah of the Negeri Sembilan royal house and a longtime close associate of Prime Minister Mahathir.

As for satellite broadcasting, on 13 January 1996, the Malaysia East Asia satellite, Measat-1, was launched from Kourou, French Guiana. Described by one newspaper as 'marking the country's historic entry into space technology' (*The New Straits Times*, 14 Jan. 1996), Measat-1 is owned by Binariang Sdn Bhd which, in turn, is owned by trusts associated with three Malaysians, the most prominent of whom is manufacturing and horse-racing tycoon, T. Ananda Krishnan. Ananda has been politely referred to by one Malaysian daily as 'a businessman who enjoys the confidence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad' (*The Star*, 9 Jan. 1996). And the chairman of Binariang's board of directors is the former inspector-general of the Malaysian police force, Hanif Mohamad Omar.

Some have naively entertained the notion that with the introduction of satellite broadcasting, the government was going to adopt an 'open

Table 5.5: Malaysian Terrestrial, Cable and Satellite Television Stations (April 1999)

Station	Ownership	Year Established	Availability	Language*	Frequency	Hours (daily)
TERRESTRIAL:						
TV1	Govt	1963	Nationwide	Malay/ English	Daily	19.25
TV2	Govt	1969	Nationwide	Malay/ English	Daily	11.00
TV3	Private	1984	Nationwide	Malay/ English	Daily	18.50
MetroVision†	Private	1995	Klang Valley	Malay/ English	Daily	16.50
NTV7	Private	1998	Nationwide	Malay/ English	Daily	15.25
CABLE TV:						
Mega	Private	1995	Subscription	English	Daily	24.00
SATELLITE TV:						
Astro	Private	1996	Subscription	English	Daily	24.00

* Language refers to the main medium of presentation. The national language (Malay) and English are the main languages used. However, programmes in other languages, such as Tamil, Hindi and the main Chinese dialects, are common features. Daily news programmes are broadcast in Mandarin Chinese over TV2 and NTV7, and in Tamil too over TV2.

† MetroVision stopped broadcasting in mid-1999. The official explanation given is that the station is undergoing a major technical overhaul, but other accounts indicate that it the reasons have more to do with a sharp fall in revenue.

sky' policy. However, the announcement by the minister of information in 1996 must have put paid to such a notion. Amendments to the 1988 Broadcasting Act to enable Measat to start its operations was tabled in Parliament on 14 October 1996. However, the amendments in no way have led to an open-sky policy; rather they have paved the way for tighter government control on signals reception, since under

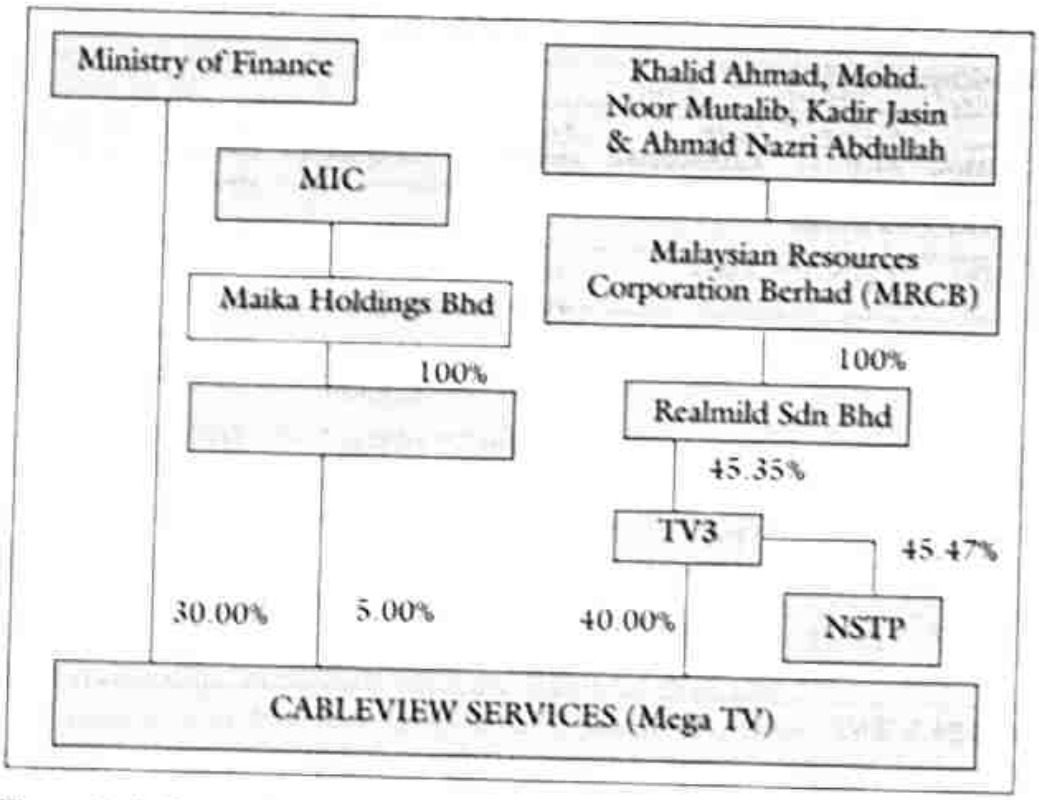

Figure 5.4: Ownership of Mega TV (1997)
Source: *New Straits Times* (24 October 1994, 19 July 1997) and Gomez (1994)

the amendments only 0.6 metre parabolic dishes can be used by consumers to receive signals from only the Measat satellite. Indeed, under the amendments to the Act, it is an offence for anyone to use bigger parabolic dishes. And the penalty for such an offence is certainly a hefty one – a fine of RM100,000 and/or a three-month jail sentence. This, according to the then minister – who is not really renowned for being deliberately ironic or for his intellect – is where Malaysia has 'a semi-open sky policy' (*The Star*, 12 Sept. 1996).

NTV7, the latest commercial television station to join the fray (in early 1998), is yet another company which has strong state links. Its CEO is the former director of State Economic Development Corporation of Sarawak – the timber-rich state in East Malaysia which is also controlled by the ruling coalition. (After the 1999 general election, the CEO was appointed federal minister of agriculture.)

Malaysia's first pay-TV or subscription service, Mega TV, which began operating in the third quarter of 1995, is also run by a consortium using the company name Cableview Services Sdn Bhd. The largest shareholder in the consortium, with a 40 per cent stake, is Sistem Television

Malaysia Berhad, or TV3. The Ministry of Finance has a 30 per cent stake, while Sri Utara Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Maika Holdings Bhd (the investment arm of the Malaysian Indian Congress [MIC], another component of the BN coalition) has a 5 per cent stake. (See Figure 5.4). This cable company has been quite active in extending its reach to the numerous 'well-off' areas or states in the peninsula. Having started off by providing cable facilities in the lucrative Klang Valley, Mega TV has since expanded to the rest of the peninsula.

Hence, as far as television – including cable and satellite – is concerned, what we have is a situation where the selective privatization exercise continues to extend the tentacles of the ruling coalition and its allies even more widely across the Malaysian economy, adding economic and cultural domination to what is already virtual political domination. To understand why the situation as regards the mainstream media in contemporary Malaysia is such, we need initially to locate the media's development within the wider contextual canvas of Malaysian development.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

THE COMMUNIST 'THREAT'

In 1948, with the outbreak of the Emergency (the euphemism used to describe the communist uprising), greater control had to be exercised by the British to ensure that their position and interests were not challenged and usurped by the communists and other political elements; this included a tight grip on the media at that time.

Such were the circumstances that gave birth to the Printing Presses Ordinance in 1948, a piece of legislation whose main aim was to exercise control over the ownership of printing presses and publications in the face of an increasing threat from the communists in Malaya (Mohd. Safar 1996: 222–224). Hence, in the name of national security, certain laws were subsequently promulgated to ensure the colonial government's greater control of the media, thus paving the direction for the future mainstream mass media.

The communist threat faced by the government over the years also helped bring into existence the Internal Security Act (ISA) of 1960. The ISA was introduced at the end of the Emergency as a catch-all, just in case other coercive laws should prove inadequate after Emergency rule was lifted. The Act empowers the home affairs minister to impose preventive detention without trial on anyone 'acting in a manner pre-

judicial to the security of Malaysia' (Means 1991: 142). Police are granted wide powers to arrest without warrant and detain almost anyone for a maximum of 60 days.

Over the years, the ISA has seen many people detained not necessarily because of communist connections or subversive activities. Those detained have indeed included people whose activities, although legitimate and democratic, could rock the boat, so to speak. In short, the Malaysian experience has shown that the ISA has been abused by certain people in power for their own ends (See, for example, Aliran 1988; CARPA 1988).

Following independence in 1957, the government leaders emphasized the need to channel all resources and energies towards improving the livelihood of the people, to promote nation-building, and to create a national identity. Such a perspective informed many of the mainstream mass media in the country. In the case of the press, journalists even now concentrate on what they call development journalism, largely highlighting the successes of some of the development projects which have taken place to the point of concealing certain weaknesses, if not wrongdoings, of the government.

THE MAY 1969 RIOTS

Another event that aided further control of the mainstream media was the ethnic riots of 13 May 1969. In the 1969 general election, the ruling Alliance coalition almost failed for the first time to gain a two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives). The opposition parties, on the other hand, managed to encroach into many Alliance strongholds (Lee 1995: 13). Indeed, the ruling party's popularity suffered a major setback, particularly that of its Chinese component party, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA). This development caused severe strains within the ruling Alliance coalition (Means 1991: 6–7), more so when two opposition parties, the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) as well as the multi-ethnic GERAKAN party, were able to gain more votes from the non-Malays.

What sparked off the ethnic riots, according to the government, was 'the inflammatory speeches made by political candidates from various parties during the election campaigns, and the victory processions staged by some opposition parties' (Lee 1995: 13). These events alarmed the government. To contain the situation, the king, on the advice of the government, declared a state of emergency for the whole of Malaysia. At the same time, the government decided to suspend the publication of all newspapers for two days starting from 16 May 1969 (Mohd.

Safar 1996: 272) supposedly to curb further spread of ethnic hatred. Subsequently, all the major papers were permitted to publish but on the proviso that the government had the right to censor items that were deemed 'dangerous to national security'.

The state of emergency that descended upon the country meant that the federal Constitution and the parliament were suspended, while elections in Sabah and Sarawak were postponed for a period of time. Technically, more than 30 years on, the country is still under a state of emergency, because the emergency order was never lifted. A new government was eventually formed and parliament was reconvened in 1971. But for a period, the real powers to administer the country lay in a newly established body, the National Operations Council (NOC), which was headed by Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein. In the interim, the role of Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was eclipsed.

The NOC was ostensibly entrusted to find ways and means to resuscitate parliamentary democracy, rebuild public confidence and engender ethnic harmony. One of the steps taken by the government which it saw as contributing towards political stability and harmonious relations between the ethnic groups in the country was the issuing of an emergency decree to amend the Sedition Ordinance (1948). This amendment, made in 1971, when parliament was reconvened, curbs freedom of speech and of the press, particularly as regards the (sensitive) issues of rights of citizenship, Malay special rights, the status and powers of the Malay rulers, the status of Islam, and the status of Malay as the sole national language. It also prohibits any act, speech or publication that has a tendency to bring about feelings of ill-will and enmity between the various ethnic groups.

It is often asserted that under certain trying circumstances the government had to issue emergency decrees to amend certain laws in order to attain political stability in the country. But what is evident is that the emergency period has also provided the opportunity for the ruling party, whose political support was eroded in the 1969 general election, to strengthen its position and, more importantly, enhance the powers of the executive (Means 1991: 16). The ruling Alliance, in the professed pursuit of national harmony and socio-economic development, managed to attract a number of oppositional political parties into its fold, thereby enabling it to form a larger political coalition called the Barisan Nasional or National Front.

The 1969 tragedy also ushered in an amendment made by the government to the Control of Imported Publications Act (1958) in

1972. This empowered the minister of home affairs 'to ban or censor any imported publication deemed prejudicial to public order, national interest, morality, or security' (Means 1991: 138). Critics have argued that this was a move to deny Malaysian citizens the right to access information about matters of public interest and importance from foreign publications. Be that as it may, the point is that existing legislations, such as the above Act, not only provide state control over locally produced material, but also allow for stringent controls over imported material. (Hence, foreign publications, such as *Asiaweek* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* are constantly monitored, with the occasional edition being banned or castigated. It is interesting to observe, though, that some foreign magazines and newspapers do get away with criticizing the government, policies and Malaysian politicians without being banned. However, this should not be seen as the Malaysian government being more tolerant of external criticism but reflects more on the government's awareness that their circulation and readership in Malaysia are extremely restricted.)

The political uncertainty and instability that prevailed after the ethnic riots of 1969 also provided some justification for the government to introduce the Official Secrets Act (OSA) in 1972. This law prohibits a person from getting information that is deemed an 'official secret' by the government and which, so goes the official argument, might be used by enemies of the country. In effect, the law has discouraged concerned and conscientious citizens from demanding their right to information, and it also casts doubts about the transparency of the government. (This is especially so when this same piece of legislation was further amended, and strengthened, in 1987 at a time when the government of the day was confronted with a crisis of confidence particularly before and after the big political clampdown of October 1987 called *Operasi Lalang* [see, for example, Singh K.S. 1987; CARPA 1988].) An equally serious repercussion of the OSA is the legal control imposed on investigative journalism in particular and press freedom in general.

In the case of radio and television in Malaysia, since 1969, both media have been expected to transmit programmes that reflect the aspirations of the government, i.e. to promote national harmony and integration, and also to encourage the people to appreciate the government's policies. This borders on providing programmes which chant the government's mantras.

THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Another outcome of the 13 May tragedy was the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971. This came about because the NOC felt that one of the reasons for the surge of ethnic suspicion and enmity in 1969 was the socio-economic imbalances between ethnic groups, in particular the gap between Malays and non-Malays. In other words, the NEP was to address the socio-economic problems faced by the ethnic groups in the country so that national development and harmony might ventually be achieved – and ethnic violence thwarted.

Under the NEP (1971–90), the government designed a series of five-year plans that coupled the pursuit of economic growth with the redistribution of economic opportunities to the Malays. The NEP had a two-pronged strategy: (a) to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty; and (b) to restructure society so that the identification of economic functions with ethnicity could be reduced and eliminated.

Through the rationale of the NEP, and the related desire to increase Malaysian participation in the national economy, the dominant political partners in the ruling coalition began to invest in the country's major newspapers, and take control or influence over the newspapers (Loh and Mustafa 1996: 101–104). For instance, the government-owned trading company Pernas acquired an 80 per cent stake in the *Straits Times* (Means 1991: 136), which was originally held by investors from Singapore. Later a majority of the shares were transferred to Fleet Holdings, an investment arm of the dominant partner in the Barisan Nasional coalition, United Malays National Organization (UMNO). The transfer of ownership was then followed by a change of name to the New Straits Times Press (NSTP). Fleet Holdings subsequently set up an investment company called Fleet Group that oversaw its subsidiaries such as the NSTP. Such a corporate move was of great political significance because the takeover involved major mainstream newspapers in the NSTP stable: *New Straits Times*, *New Sunday Times*, *Malay Mail*, *Sunday Mail*, *Berita Harian*, *Berita Minggu*, *Business Times*, *Shin Min Daily News*, *Her World*, *Malaysian Business*, *Jelita*, *Information Malaysia*, etc.

Prompted by the same rationale, UMNO assumed direct or indirect ownership of the Utusan Melayu newspaper group. The array of major newspapers under the Utusan Melayu stable has a wide appeal among the Malay-speaking readership, in particular UMNO constituencies. The involvement of another partner in the ruling coalition, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), in the newspaper industry soon fol-

lowed. It now has a major stake in the popular tabloid, *The Star* (Lent 1982: 262), a business rival of the established *New Straits Times*.

THE PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS ACT

The Printing Presses and Publications Act, a law that governs the press in Malaysia, was introduced and passed in 1984. Apart from providing powers to the home minister to grant or withdraw a printing licence or a publishing permit (which was also stipulated in its predecessor, the Printing Presses Ordinance of 1958), the new law also extended controls over foreign press in that it required foreign papers and journals to pay large deposits which would be forfeited if the publishers did not appear in court to face charges of publishing materials 'prejudicial to the national interest'. The Ministry officials were given powers to censor or ban the offending publications.

The Act was considered draconian by critics and human rights activists (see, for instance, Chandra 1986: 1–4). In contrast to the Printing Presses Act of 1971, the amended Act of 1984 prohibited an applicant of a printing licence or publishing permit, whose application had earlier been rejected by the home minister, from making an appeal to the king. In short, the Act disallowed judicial review and the home minister's decision was final. The amended law also differed from the old one in the sense that the previous law empowered the minister concerned to grant a permit of 12-month duration while the 1984 act gave the minister the power to grant a permit of much shorter duration if he so wished. All told, the 1984 Act further enhanced the power of the government to control the press in the country.

As if this was not enough, amendments were made to the Act in 1987. These amendments clearly illustrate the tightening hold the government has on the media. Under the amended Act, all mass circulation newspapers in Malaysia need to have a printing permit, granted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, before they can be published. A new permit needs to be applied for every year. Section 13A of the amended Act totally empowers the home minister to reject applications for a printing licence (popularly known as the 'KDN') and to revoke or suspend a permit. The minister's decision is final and cannot be challenged in a court of law. As stated under Section 13, sub-section (1) of the Act (emphasis added):

> Without prejudice to the powers of the Minister to revoke or suspend a licence or permit under any other provisions of this Act, *if the Minister is satisfied* that any printing press in

> respect of which the licence has been issued is used for printing of any publication which is prejudicial to public order or national security or that any newspaper in respect of which a permit has been issued contains anything which is prejudicial to public order or national security, he may revoke such licence or permit.

On top of this, Section 7 of the amended Act empowers the minister to prohibit the printing, sale, import, distribution or possession of a publication. The minister may do this if he believes that the contents of a publication threaten morality, public order, security, public or national interests, or if it conflicts with the law or contains provocative matters. Thus, the situation exists where the decisions of one minister are binding and, strictly speaking, the minister is under no obligation to explain these decisions.

THE BROADCASTING ACT (1988)

The Broadcasting Act 1988 continues to play a crucial role in the underdevelopment of Malaysian broadcasting. The Act as it stands is both stringent and inflexible, and bestows enormous powers on the government to determine the type of television made available to the Malaysian public. The introduction of the Act in 1988 was clearly in anticipation of the further commercialization of broadcasting, especially television. Indeed, in the midst of the supposed 'deregulation' of broadcasting, the Broadcasting Act now gives the minister of information virtually total powers to determine who will and who will not broadcast and the nature of the broadcast material. Under the Act, any potential broadcaster would need to apply for a licence from the minister beforehand. On paper, this means that one individual has the power to decide. Further, Part III, Section 10, Subsection (1) of the Act (emphasis added), states that 'It shall be the duty of the licensee to ensure that the broadcasting matter by him *complies with the direction given, from time to time, by the minister.*' The October 1996 amendments made to this already stringent piece of legislation were aimed at taking into account the introduction of new services, such as cable and satellite television, satellite radio, pay-TV and video-on-demand.

THE FINAS ACT

The National Film Development Corporation Act (FINAS) (1981) was amended in 1984 in response to technological changes that had taken place in the film industry. The amended Act, among other things, widens the definition of film to incorporate video tapes, video discs,

laser discs, and video compact discs. By so doing, officials of FINAS can exercise control over and act on people who are found contravening certain provisions of the Act. Under the Act, anyone who possesses three or more copies of the same film is deemed to be involved in film distribution, and therefore is required to apply for a distribution permit.

THE STATE, COMMERCIAL INTERESTS AND THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

The trends in the Malaysian media indicate two clear developments. First, there is little doubt that the government's privatization policy has resulted in greater commercialization of the media which, in turn, has resulted in more being offered. This has happened not by accident, but as part of the government's strategy. As Mahathir (1983: 277) himself announced in the early days of his administration, 'the government may be able to obtain substantial revenue from telecommunications, ports, radio and television, railways, etc ... In view of this possibility, there is a need to transfer several public services and government-owned businesses to the private sector.'

Second, this economic liberalization has not really resulted in a loosening of government control over the media, contrary to the initial beliefs of many. The reverse has in fact happened. The main forms of control over the media – legal, political and economic – have certainly been tightened since the 1980s.

Hence, the current situation vis-à-vis the media is one of 'regulated deregulation'. Within this type of environment, it is not surprising that what we really are getting is more of the same. And since the ownership and control of the media are in the hands of a few who are closely aligned to the government and who also wish to profit from the situation, there has been increasing emphasis on the production and importation of 'safe', often trivial, media artefacts. From the endless talk quiz shows on television to the once-popular crossword competitions in the press, the emphasis continues to be on content that is non-contentious and easily marketable – material that does not question, examine or challenge the official discourse (see Zaharom 1996). As Golding and Murdock (1991: 20) succinctly put it, when writing about commercial broadcasting:

> The economics of commercial broadcasting revolves around the exchange of audiences for advertising revenue. The price that corporations pay for advertising spots on particular programmes is determined by the size and social composition

> of the audience it attracts. And in prime-time, the premium prices are commanded by shows that can attract and hold the greatest number of viewers and provide a symbolic environment in tune with consumption. These needs inevitably tilt programming towards familiar and well-tested formulae and formats and away from risk and innovation, and anchor it in common-sense rather than alternative viewpoints.

BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS OF CONTROL AND 'SEMIOTIC DEMOCRACY'

It is, of course, one thing to suggest – as I have done – that the media institutions in Malaysia are tightly controlled by the government or even commercial entities. And that these parties, thinking only of their self-interest and conforming to the dictates of the market, will produce media artefacts that will maintain and reinforce their political and economic hegemony. It is quite another matter, however, to suggest, as does the 'dominant ideology thesis' that in this situation media-audience members will indubitably – and passively – accept the messages, the meanings, produced by the media.

Indeed, the dominant ideology thesis would prove extremely unhelpful in explaining why, despite winning the 1990 general election with an increased majority of seats, the BN coalition nonetheless suffered humiliating defeats in the states of Kelantan and Sabah, losing both states to opposition parties. This happened in spite of the total and unrelenting support provided to the BN by the press and broadcast media throughout the campaign and election period (see Mustafa 1990). The situation in 1990 was one where the media were certainly offering preferred readings regarding the political choices available to the people during the general election. It seemed a clear-cut situation where, according to a study conducted by Mustafa (1990), a dominant ideology (that of the BN) was put across by the media, clearly and explicitly. It was a situation where it could be easily argued that the hegemonic discourse was secure and complete. Yet the unthinkable for the BN happened – it was outvoted in Kelantan and Sabah. Of course the reasons why this happened in these two states differ. The above case alerts us to the very real complexities involved in analysing media-audience relationships, requiring us to move beyond the dominant ideology thesis to a perspective that acknowledges and interrogates this complexity.

In other words, stringent though the political and economic controls on the Malaysian media may be, raising vital questions about democratic

practices, nonetheless it would be rather premature to assert that media audiences are simply duped into accepting at face value what is produced by the controlled media. With this very much in mind, I feel that a brief discussion of the possible media–audience relationship in the context of Malaysia is in order in this final section. This is undertaken in the light of contemporary developments in media–audience research and in anticipation of future work in the area.

Media research in Malaysia generally – and research into the media–audience relationship specifically – is very much in its infancy. The bulk of media research that has been conducted thus far in Malaysian academia may be categorized as being: (a) positivist and quantitative in nature, (b) policy oriented – insofar as the aim is to examine the effectiveness of policy implementation, primarily by the state, (c) least concerned about the development of theory and largely concerned about the refinement of methods, and (d) blissfully unaware of the ideological nature of media artefacts. (See Bukhory Hj. Ismail 1992; Md. Salleh Hj. Hassan 1992; Mustafa Kamal Anuar 1992; Samsudin A. Rahim 1992.)

As for academic research into the media–audience relationship, the very little that has been done in Malaysia appears to have been caught up in a time-warp, circa 1940s and 1950s United States of America. The primary concern has been with looking at the 'effects' of the media (principally film and television) in its narrowest, behaviourist sense on the audience (principally the generalized categories of 'children' and 'youth' – the supposed 'impressionable' groups). The research methods employed for analysing media texts have been predominantly quantitative content analysis, while the analyses of audiences have been conducted principally through social surveys. In the rare instances when the complexity of what constitutes 'audiences' is acknowledged, these audiences are assumed to belong to particular social categories, invariably defined by what Ang (1991: 153–155) terms 'the institutional point of view'. Subsequently, there is little understanding that, as Hall (in Morley 1986: 10) put it when talking about television audiences:

> We are all in our heads, several different audiences at once, and can be constituted as such by different programmes. We have the capacity to deploy different levels and modes of attention, to mobilise different competences in our viewing. At different times of the day, for different family members, different patterns of viewing have different 'saliences'.

Underlying this local research and these concerns is the belief that the media is (or should be) reflective or expressive of an already

achieved consensus. The status quo orientation of this research is all too obvious. However, more recent, critical developments in media–audience research have raised new questions which I believe need to be addressed in the final section of this paper.

Coming initially out of the radical tradition in media research, particularly through the work conducted in the 1970s and 1980s by Stuart Hall and his associates at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England, what is now popularly called 'reception studies' have extended their influence further afield, especially to many communications departments in American universities.

Instead of dealing with questions of whether the media have 'effects' in a narrow, behaviourist sense, reception studies begin with a couple of fundamental assumptions. First, that there is no homogeneous 'media–audience', but that there are, instead, 'media audiences' belonging to different social groupings – including gender and class. Their location within this social structure, in turn, tends to determine the discourses available to them in their interaction with the media. That is to say, the range of 'readings' that audiences may derive from media texts depends, to a large extent, on where they are situated within the social structure.

Second, it is argued that media texts are seldom wholly open to an infinite variety of interpretations but, as Morley (1980) puts it, take the form of 'structured polysemy'. Media texts, in other words, are constructed in ways that will guide audience interpretations or 'readings' in certain preferred ways, although in some cases these may be rejected or negotiated.

With the development of reception studies, it is apparent that media–audience research moved away quite considerably from the simple 'effects' model made popular by behaviourist media researchers, mainly after the Second World War. However, important though reception studies may be for a more thorough understanding of media–audience relationships, what is equally important – certainly within the context of this discussion – is that such studies, and the underlying assumptions, are not all the same. As Curran (1990: 153–154), points out, there are at least two main variants of reception studies: 'one ... continues to situate cultural consumption in the broader context of social struggle ... [and another] is grounded in a less radical conception of society ... engaged in analysing cultural consumption and identity formation almost as an end in itself.' It is this second variant, with its optimistic, virtually celebratory, embracing of the 'power' of the 'active audience'

and the seemingly infinite variety of meanings the audience can 'read off' from the text, that poses a number of problems for an understanding of the media–audience relationship in the context of Malaysia.

Within this variant, as practised by those who would align themselves with what Morley (1992: 11) calls the '"don't worry, be happy" school of (principally American) cultural studies', there are three principal tendencies. First, there is the tendency for the researchers to 'read' media texts, often very cleverly, with the implicit assumption that all media audiences are equally capable of doing so. This tendency is inextricably linked to the second tendency, that of assuming that all audiences have virtually unrestricted access to a vocabulary of meanings, alternative forms of knowledge outside that provided by the dominant discourse of the media, thus enabling all to interpret media texts equally. Third is the tendency to assume this supposedly 'active' audience members to then be 'powerful' in a very real sense.

As Morley (1992: 31) comments on these researchers:

> [They] often make overblown claims that their perspective, in itself, involves an empowering of the audience, a privileging of the reader which is in fact quite illusory ... [T]he researcher is often presented as no longer a critical outsider but, rather, a fellow participant, a conscious fan, giving voice to and celebrating consumer cultural democracy.

There are certainly fundamental flaws in this view, not least of which being the fact, as Ang (1990: 274) puts it, that while 'audiences may be active, in myriad ways, in using and interpreting media ... it would be utterly out of perspective to cheerfully equate "active" with "powerful"'. Here, following Morley (1992: 31), what must indeed be recognized is 'the difference between having power over a text and having power over the agenda within which the text is constructed and presented'.

It is evident that this complexity of the process of audience–text interaction is often conveniently side-stepped by those espousing 'semiotic democracy' (Fiske 1987), namely those who believe – and assert – that because audiences can 'interpret' media messages in a variety of ways (and that the meanings of media messages are free-floating), it follows that much like the 'sovereign consumer', the audience is king. These are the same people who assume that 'people drawn from a vast shifting range of subcultures and groups construct their own meanings within an *autonomous* cultural economy' (Morley 1992: 26, emphasis added). By assuming thus, works of this nature not only overrate the decoding power of all audiences but, more dangerously,

tend to underemphasize questions of (media) institutional ownership and control. For Morley (1992: 26), these studies are 'readily subsumable within a conservative ideology of sovereign consumer pluralism'.

By the same token, these studies also run the risk of validating the domination and control of domestic media industries by the state and/or economic interests. And it is precisely this point that this chapter has tried to highlight within the context of Malaysia. There are certainly at least two related problems with this variant of reception studies, if utilized to study the media–audience relationship in Malaysia. First, it will ignore the very real question of differential access to alternative forms of explanation and knowledge needed to empower audience members, to make them 'active'. In an environment where the education system, for example, preaches conformity,[2] where alternative explanations are constantly being curbed, and where the dominant religious/value system is profoundly conservative, assumptions of a generalized 'active' media–audience would be rather premature, if not downright naive.

The second problem, of course, is that of shifting attention away from what seems to be more crucial issues of institutional power, control and exploitation, at best leaving these issues outside the frame of reference and analysis and at worst dismissing them as inconsequential. The preceding discussion on the central role played by the state and those closely associated with the ruling coalition in terms of control over media institutions has attempted to illustrate that ignoring these issues pertaining to power risks missing out altogether more fundamental problems regarding the availability of choices and how the range of choices produced is pre-determined.

What is certainly needed as regards a more comprehensive understanding of media text–audience–context relationships and the role these play for developing democracy in Malaysia, is for researchers 'to conceptualize the relationship between [the] two sides of the communications process – the material and the discursive, the economic and the cultural – without collapsing either one into the other' (Murdock 1989: 436). In effect, what this chapter deems crucial in Malaysia,

---

2. The problem of conformity in the Malaysian education system, at least at the tertiary level is one that has recently been debated, primarily in view of the corporatization of Malaysian universities. For a discussion of this problem, with specific reference to media education, see Zaharom Nain *et al.* (1995).

despite the ongoing antagonism between communication scholars adopting a cultural studies perspective and those informed by a critical political economy perspective,[3] is the incorporation of the necessary insights of political economy into cultural analyses of audiences and texts. As Murdock (quoted in Morley 1992: 32) aptly puts it:

> People playing adventure games on a home computer, ordering goods from a television shopping show, or responding to an electronic opinion poll certainly have choices, but they are carefully managed. Once again the crucial question to ask is not simply 'What kinds of pleasure do these technologies offer?' but 'Who has the power to control the terms on which interaction takes place?'

CONCLUSION

As far as the media are concerned, then, it needs to be stressed that democratic practices entail at least three related factors. First is the development of mechanisms that will break down the oligopolistic nature of media ownership and release the stranglehold on the media that the government and ruling political parties have. Second, there is a need to make available and genuinely develop a variety of choices in terms of media artefacts. The ever-tightening control by the state and market on the mainstream Malaysian media continues to marginalize alternative accounts and critical explanations and trivialize the roles of the media. Third, there is clearly a need to make available and develop a variety of avenues through which all citizens are able to voice their opinions about cultural, political and economic developments in society.

Admittedly, an alternative media system currently does exist side by side with the mainstream media in Malaysia and takes the forms of alternative print media (see Loh and Mustafa 1996: 107–111) and, more recently, web-based or Internet newspapers. But the existence of such alternatives must not be simply interpreted as the state being more accommodative and taking a more liberal stance. On the contrary, it would be more accurate to regard these alternatives as necessary irritants by the regime whose existence allows the regime continuously to assert that freedom of expression – hence democratic practices – does exist in Malaysia. And when the irritation proves to be a hindrance, the law has indeed been used to subdue and silence these alternatives.

---

3. For a sampling of the views from both sides, see the special Colloquy in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12 (March, 1995).

Such was the case after the November 1999 general election. One of the main outcomes of the election was that the opposition Islamic Party, PAS (Parti Islam SeMalaysia), made major inroads into what were previously UMNO strongholds. At the same time, the party's twice weekly newspaper, *Harakah*, was enjoying unparalleled expansion – it was boasting a circulation of more than 300,000 per issue, way ahead of the circulation rates of mainstream Malay newspapers *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*. Other, reform-minded newspapers, such as *Detik* and *Eksklusif* also emerged in this period. Soon after the general election, however, apart from seeing its editor and publisher arrested under the Sedition Act, *Harakah* had its printing permit initially delayed and later amended by the Ministry of Home Affairs which in effect reduced its frequency from twice a week to twice a month. *Detik* and *Eksklusif* suffered a worse fate – they had their permits revoked.

Thus far, the Net-based alternatives have not been censored by the government. But, again, this should not be seen simply as benevolence on the part of the regime. Instead, the freedom these alternatives currently enjoy owes more than a little to their relatively small audience, given the limited, and largely middle-class based, access to computers in Malaysia. The freedom enjoyed also needs to be seen within the context of the regime not wishing to discourage foreign investors from investing in the much-touted Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) (see Zaharom and Mustafa 1998).

Hence, in a media environment where political expediency and commercial logic appear to be the main determinants of what is produced by the media and what is not, existing alternatives, limited though they may be, should be seen as necessary counters to the dominant discourse. But this should not blind us to the fact that reform of the mainstream media must remain a top priority if ongoing public debate surrounding policies is to be encouraged and expanded and if, indeed, a well-informed and empowered public plus a more transparent and accountable government are what we seek.

Defining Democratic Discourses

The Mainstream Press

Mustafa K. Anuar

Democracy, in its ideal form, necessarily involves the active participation of citizens in a country's decision-making process. Such an involvement of the citizenry is made possible if citizens can exercise their inalienable right to information, consultation, intellectual exchange, and to making informed choices of government and policies.

Equally important in a democracy is the people's right to dissent and to criticize. It is only when the people are accorded sufficient opportunity or democratic space to assess critically the performance of a government that the latter will be compelled to be transparent and accountable in its day-to-day affairs. Besides, the idea of democracy is underpinned by the assumption that the existence and survival of a government derive from the legitimacy and support it secures from the people and on whose behalf it acts.

In this broad context of democracy, the mass media play an important role by supplying the people a platform where they can obtain information, exchange views, and at the same time give their feedback to the ruling elite. However, in Malaysia, as in many other places in the South, the media's role of channelling the people's feedback to the government is often overwhelmed by the state's official view that the media should function as an essential tool for promoting 'national development', 'national harmony' and 'national security'. This view was particularly prevalent soon after independence when, according to the official argument, a newly independent nation needed some 'time to develop and

the mass media must provide this time by not touching upon sensitive issues' (Lent 1982: 264).[1] It followed that the mass media needed to be 'guided' by the state to ensure that the objectives of national development and prosperity were not easily thwarted by what was considered to be unnecessary political bickering. In reality, this argument essentially calls for state-controlled media. Such a contradiction between democratically and officially defined media priorities, particularly in the developing world, has almost invariably led to the shrinking of democratic space for the people and the erosion of their freedom of expression.

This chapter examines the development of the mainstream press in Malaysia within the larger context of social, economic and political developments that occurred during British rule and after the country's independence. It aims to reveal how such development helped shape democratic discourses particularly since the 1990s. The first section briefly traces the history of the country's press before Malaysia (earlier Malaya) achieved independence from the British in 1957. Political expediency compelled the British in Malaysia to institute certain laws that in essence restricted the parameters within which the local press at that time operated, a situation that indeed had serious implications upon the country's latter-day mainstream journalism.

The second section looks at how the control of Malaysia's press was further consolidated after the country's independence through new patterns of media ownership and also via coercive legislation. Under the pretext of responding to calls for Malaysian ownership of the media industry, the dominant partners of the ruling coalition party, particularly the UMNO, made incursions into the local media industry through various means, resulting in their possessing major stakes in certain mainstream newspapers and other media organizations. Thus, control of the press via ownership was set in place. As if to strengthen its grip on the local mainstream press still further, the Malaysian government introduced new laws or tightened the old ones that impinged upon the development and freedom of the Malaysian press.

The third section assesses the performance of the mainstream press in the first half of the 1990s, particularly during the major elections

---

1. This contention is still being promoted by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who insisted that there was a need to police press freedom especially in less developed countries like Malaysia because 'Freedom is a heady brew and for those newly introduced to it: freedom tends to go to the head' (*New Straits Times*, 23 June 1999).

between 1990 and 1995. The manner in which the press covered these important political developments only reinforces the contention that media ownership and certain coercive laws have become a vital arsenal for the ruling party, especially at a time when its political hegemony was perceived, rightly or wrongly, as being jeopardized.

Finally, by way of conclusion, the chapter evaluates the status of the country's press especially after the ousting of the then Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on 2 September 1998. The social standing of the mainstream press was contrasted with the emerging pro-*reformasi* and independent websites.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PRESS

It has been widely acknowledged (see, for instance, Ahmat 1992; Khoo 1988; Lent 1982; Mohd. Safar, 1996) that the first newspaper to be published in what is now called Malaysia was the English language *Government Gazette*, later called the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* (*PWIG*). The *PWIG* started publication on 1 March 1806 on the island of Penang, then a presidency called Prince of Wales Island under the control of the British East India Company.[2] Owned by A.B. Bone, an entrepreneur from Madras, India, who had come to the island – complete with his printing press – to improve his lot, the *PWIG* was, perhaps not surprisingly, a commercial newspaper targeted not at the locals but at the colonialists. As Lent (1982: 253) puts it, the *PWIG* 'served as a house organ for the foreigners [the colonialists], advertising their wares, printing government notices and keeping them abreast of happenings in England'.

At that point in the early 1800s, there was no existing law in the Straits Settlements governing the issuance of newspaper licences. For reasons that have not been explained, the governor of Penang issued Bone with a licence. However, Bone himself requested that each issue

2. Later in this period (1826), Penang, together with the two other states of Malacca and Singapore, all three being key ports in the Straits of Malacca, became known as the Straits Settlements which came under the direct control of the British Government. Each state was headed by a Governor, with Singapore being the administrative centre. Interestingly enough, up until today, a Governor still represents the head of state in both Penang and Malacca. Of course, this is now a symbolic position since a Chief Minister or Menteri Besar presently leads the government in each of these – and the other 11 – states of Malaysia.

of the *PWIG* be censored by the government prior to publication, following of practice of the press during the period.[3] Thus, it could be argued, began the links between the state and the press in Malaysia. Indeed, as Lent (1982: 253) observes, 'All the early newspapers had one thing in common – they were subsidized. The *PWIG* received monthly subsidies in exchange for printing government announcements, and on a few occasions, was granted government loans which were to be paid in job printing.'

When Bone died in 1815, B.C. Henderson took over the *PWIG*, after seeking permission to do so from the Penang governor. Interestingly, the governor's permission, conveyed in a letter sent by the acting state secretary, James Cousens, made clear the government's approach to newspapers in its desire to control their contents. In his letter, Cousens stated that,

> The Hon'ble Governor in Council having sanctioned your establishing a printing press at this Presidency and the publication of a newspaper entitled the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* subject however to the following restriction – viz. That you will agree not to insert in your paper or otherwise to print and publish anything in the smallest degree obnoxious to the government and that previous to the publication of the paper you submit the copy sheet to the Secretary to Government any part which they might conceive to be improper for publication. [4]

The *PWIG* lasted 21 years, its last edition being printed on 21 July 1827. During that period, only a few other newspapers, including non-English language ones, had emerged, but these newspapers often disappeared as suddenly as they appeared. Available historical accounts of the growth of the press during this period (see Khoo 1988; Lent 1982; Mohd. Safar 1996; and Tang 1988) indicate that virtually all of the early newspapers, English language or otherwise, were produced in the three Straits Settlement states of Singapore, Penang and Malacca. They were published not for the local population but for the members of the colonial government, foreign merchants trading in the region, or even

---

3. Mohd. Safar (1996: 40–41) asserts that Bone, in requesting prior censorship of the *PWIG* by the government, had done so presumably because Bone had experienced – and had been comfortable with – the practice when he published in India.
4. Quoted in Mohd. Safar (1996: 61–62).

for overseas readers. For example, the first Chinese language newspaper, *The Chinese Monthly Magazine*, which started operations in August 1815 and lasted until March 1822, was the only vernacular (that is, non-English) newspaper available during this period, but it was not produced for the local population but for audiences in China. In fact, *The Chinese Monthly Magazine* was started up by an English missionary, William Milne, principally as a religious paper (Tang 1988) to help spread Christianity to audiences in China. According to Lent (1982: 255–256), 'Designed to proselytize for Protestantism in China, the *Chinese Monthly* would have appeared in China had there not been a ban on missionaries there.' Indeed, the bulk of the *Monthly* was shipped to China, with a few editions being distributed in Macau, Java, Singapore and Penang (Tang 1988: 95).

The lack of newspapers published for the local populace and in the Malay language during this period can be readily explained. First, the poor economic standing of the local (particularly Malay) community during this period made it uneconomical for any commercially motivated publisher to begin a paper in the Malay language. Second, formal education was still non-existent for much of the local population so that the number of those who could read was very small, thereby further restricting the market.[5]

Indeed, it was not until 1876 that the first Malay weekly, *Jawi Peranakan*, was published in Singapore (see Ahmat 1992; Lent 1982; Mohd. Safar 1996; Roff 1967). The *Jawi Peranakan* and a few other Malay publications such as *Al-Imam* (1906–08), *Utusan Melayu* (1907–21, and *Lembaga Melayu* (1914–31) significantly helped to provide intellectual, political and religious leadership in the Malay community by focusing on issues pertaining to the development of the Malay community.

In a parallel development, *Singai Warthamani*, the first Tamil newspaper published in British Malaya in 1875, joined subsequent publications in focusing on social issues that directly concerned the Indian

5. As Roff (1967: 23) puts its: 'The crux of the matter was, of course, appropriate education ... Sporadic attempts had been made from an early stage in the British connection with the peninsula to provide special elementary schooling for the sons of chiefs and rajas ... [However] a combination of lack of funds and malfeasance on the part of the administrators, and lack of interest on the part of the Malays, brought them to nought.'

community, particularly those working and living in rubber estates (Maniam 1988).

The controls on the press which had started with those imposed on the *PWIG* were not formalized for all of the Malay states until after 1874, when Britain extended its political and administrative control beyond the Straits Settlements. Subsequently, a variety of press-related Ordinances and Enactments[6] were introduced and formalized by the colonial government from 1886 to 1924, initially for the Straits Settlements but later for the Federated Malay States (FMS) as well. In his comprehensive survey of these colonial laws, Mohd. Safar (1996: 123–167) shows that they ranged from the Registration of Books Ordinance (or Ordinance XV 1886, which defined the terms 'books' and 'printed' and enjoined publishers to register their publications) to the Printing and Books Enactment of 1915 (which established similar controls over publications in the FMS), the Printers and Publishers Ordinance of 1921, and the Printing Presses Enactment of 1924, which required any owner of a printing press in the FMS to make a prior application for its use to the Resident who had the power to accept or reject the application.

These increasing controls over the press coincided with a variety of factors. First, this period saw an increase in the number of Chinese and Tamil newspapers in the Straits Settlements and the FMS coinciding with the increase in the numbers of the Chinese and Indians residing in British Malaya during this period, many of whom were brought in by the colonial government to work in the tin mining and plantation sectors. As outlined by Jomo:

> Early Chinese pioneers to Southeast Asia, who had generally financed their own emigration, went mainly into commerce or artisan production. However, the demand for labour, caused by the rapid expansion of tin mining and related developments, required a large labour force, which was met by the inflow of indentured labour ... British subjects, including Straits Chinese businessmen, could recruit as many workers as they wanted, who could subsequently be repatriated if and when Britain wished.
>
> [...]

6. The terms 'Ordinance' and 'Enactment' merely reflected where the laws were passed. Laws for the Straits Settlements were called ordinances and those which were for the FMS were called enactments (Mohd. Safar 1996: 21).

> The main source of labour for British interests in Malaya had been their colony, India ... Initially, employment for Indians in Malaya was primarily in the colonial government machinery where they occupied low, poorly paid positions as labourers, domestic servants, soldiers, policemen and clerks. Subsequently, as British agricultural enterprise became more important, Indian labour became identified with sugar-cane cultivation and then coffee growing ... With the rubber boom, it became imperative to have a considerably enlarged labour supply ... [therefore] in 1887, the government of the Straits Settlements and of several Malay States agreed to provide a steamship subsidy for transporting Indian labour immigrants. The colonial government in India was persuaded to encourage emigration to Malaya (Jomo 1988, 162–163, 187).

Second, the period also saw the emergence of Malay newspapers linked to an Islamic reformist movement among the Malays. In Singapore in 1906, for instance, four Arab-educated Malay scholars founded the journal *Al-Imam* (The Leader), the first Malay newspaper that contained ideas of social change and politics. The aim of *Al-Imam* was to awaken Malay society to its own backwardness in order to return to what its founders regarded as the true teachings of Islam (Muhd. Yusof 1988).

Thirdly, while this reformist movement was gaining support among young Malays, events in China, principally the growth of the anti-Manchu republican movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had a similar impact on the Chinese population in the region. Anti-Manchu newspapers such as the *Chong Shing Yit Pao* (1907–10), to which the most famous Chinese nationalist of the day, Dr Sun Yat-Sen, contributed, emerged alongside pro-Manchu newspapers, such as the *Tien Nan Shin Pao* (1898–1905) in Singapore and the *Penang Sin Poe* (1896–1936) in Penang (see Tang 1988). The combination of these events which heralded a growing press influence led to greater state awareness and control of the press during the colonial period right up to the eve of the Japanese Occupation (1942–45).

Indeed, further developments pertaining to the growth of vernacular press, as well as the British monitoring and control over the publications concerned, ground to a halt with the interlude of the Japanese Occupation in Malaysia. Right from the beginning of the three-and-a-half-year period of Japanese rule, the press was designated the main tool of Propaganda Department of the Japanese Military (Mohd. Safar 1996: 204). For instance, the *Syonan Times* ('Syonan'

being the Japanese name given to Malaya) was published under the directive of the Propaganda Department. In addition, local newspapers were expropriated and transformed into propaganda sheets with Japanese titles: *The Straits Times* became *Syonan Shimbun*; the *Malay Mail* in Kuala Lumpur became *Malai Shimbun*; and the *Malayan Tribune* in Perak became *Perak Shimbun* (Lent 1982: 254).

When the British regained control over Malaya in 1945, many of the newspapers outlawed by the Japanese, such as the *Utusan Melayu*, *The Straits Times* and the *Malay Mail*, made a comeback, while new ones, such as the *Suara Rakyat*, emerged. This took place at a time when Malay nationalism was advancing, especially triggered by the British proposal of the Malayan Union which was opposed vehemently by many Malays. The basic principles of the Malayan Union plan were: (a) a strong federal government would be established; and (b) Malayan citizenship would be opened to all ethnic groups who recognized Malaya as their homeland. Malay newspapers such as the *Utusan Melayu*, *Majlis* and *Warta Negara* played a major role in raising Malay consciousness pertaining to the hotly debated issue of Malayan Union (Mohd. Safar 1996: 213).

At about the same time, the colonial government had also to face an insurrection led by the Communist Party of Malaya. Under 'Emergency' rule, the colonial government enacted laws such as the Sedition Ordinance of 1948 and the Printing Presses Ordinance of 1948, which imposed strict controls over the press as one of the government's counter-insurgency measures.

The control of the local press by the British colonial government thus far constituted legal measures that by and large restricted press frreedom and freedom of expression for the citizenry. As we have seen, these were steps taken by the British, mindful of their vested interests and in response to the demographic, social and political changes that occurred at the time.

POST-INDEPENDENCE: CONSOLIDATION OF CONTROL THROUGH OWNERSHIP

Four years after Merdeka, an incident took place in the Malaysian press that had far-reaching consequences for press controls in Malaysia. In 1961, the Malay newspaper *Utusan Melayu* was embroiled in a fight between its journalists and other workers, on the one hand, and the ruling United Malays National Organization (UMNO), on the other, over press freedom. The newspaper workers called for editorial inde-

pendence that was in line with the newspaper's original philosophy of fighting for 'the race, religion and homeland', while UMNO insisted that the daily newspaper (which was highly influential among the Malays, particularly rural Malays) should consciously give full support to UMNO. The tension erupted in a 93-day strike that was staged by some 115 newspaper workers from 20 July 1961 (Mohd. Safar 1996: 247). Given its power, which derived from its majority share in the newspaper company, UMNO finally overcame the resistance and executed the takeover of *Utusan Melayu*, the first instance in Malaysian journalism since independence of a political party taking over a newspaper.

However, apart from this takeover of the *Utusan Melayu*, a number of other newspapers, such as the *Berita Harian*, which started two months before Malaysia's independence, the *Straits Times* and the *Malay Mail*, operated with some degree of freedom although they were all subjected to various stringent laws (Lent 1982: 252–260).

In the aftermath of the ethnic tragedy of 13 May 1969, press freedom in Malaysia was further restricted. As part of its endeavour to maintain social order, the government suspended the publication of all newspapers for two days starting from 16 May 1969. The government subsequently introduced a censorship law and banned the circulation of certain foreign magazines and newspapers that contained reports of the violence in Kuala Lumpur. The government's action obviously did not go down well with a number of editors and others in the press. For instance, the group editor-in-chief of the *Straits Times*, L.C. Hoffman, wrote to the acting minister of information, Hamzah Abu Samah, to protest against the suspension of newspaper publication. In response, Hamzah said that only newspapers which refused to subject themselves to pre-publication censorship – in order to spike reports that could arouse ethnic sentiments – would be suspended (Lent 1982: 272). Indeed, such legal and political stipulations ensured a strong state presence and intervention in Malaysian journalism.

A greater grip on the press was administered in 1972, when the Malaysian government decided to change the ownership structure of the press. This decision was effected in 1974 by an amendment to the Printing Presses Bill, which ensured that foreign ownership of Malaysian newspapers would end and that Malaysians would be the majority shareholders of local newspapers. On paper, such a move appeared laudable, given the desire of a relatively young nation to be in control of its media, which it viewed as important channels of information and ideology. In practice, however, it resulted in the monopolization of the

Malaysian press by ruling political parties and their economic allies. In other words, this development ushered in a new form of press control mounted by the government.

The economic policies of the government over this period have certainly had an influence over the direction taken by the mainstream press. For instance, the New Economic Policy (NEP),[7] which was created in the wake of the bloody 13 May 1969 ethnic riots, facilitated the active participation of *Bumiputeras* and component parties of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition[8] in the largely lucrative media industry. The primary contention of the government then was that locals should take control of the local media industry; hence the purchase of major stocks in the Straits Times Press Group by the government-owned Pernas in 1972. This government purchase of the leading newspaper group marked the beginning of a major change in the ownership and control structures of the mainstream media in Malaysia that soon involved major players from the component parties of the ruling coalition and/or their allies.

A brief account of media ownership restructuring in Malaysia will give us an indication of the degree of involvement of the various partners of the ruling coalition. The Straits Times Press Group, whose major shareholders were originally Singaporean, was initially bought by Pernas, and later transferred over to an UMNO investment company called Fleet Holdings. The process of changing ownership was completed in 1984 when the Singapore-based *Straits Times* sold off its last 20 per cent share of the company, which led to the name of the company being changed to the New Straits Times Press (NSTP). In June

---

7. The primary aim of the NEP, formulated in 1970, was to help *bumiputeras* and other economically disadvantaged and marginalized groups to gain a foothold in business and industry. The two-prong official objectives of the Policy were: (a) to eradicate poverty; and (b) to restructure society so that economic functions could not be identified with particular ethnic groups.

8. The Barisan Nasional coalition consists of the UMNO, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), People's Progressive Party of Malaysia (PPP), Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Sarawak National Party (SNAP), Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu Sarawak (PBB), Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (Berjaya), Parti Hisbul Muslimin Malaysia (HAMIM), Parti Bangsa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), and Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (AKAR) (*Information Malaysia* 1997: 585–587).

1985, the NSTP acquired a 70 per cent stake in Shin Min Daily News Sdn Bhd, which published the third largest Chinese language newspaper in the country. In December 1988, this stake was increased to almost 90 per cent (Gomez 1990: 62).

In April 1990, many of these media interests were transferred to Renong Bhd, the investment arm of UMNO (Gomez 1991). Consequently, and apart from possessing a major stake in the giant Utusan Melayu Press group, UMNO now owns a large stable of publications in the NSTP.

UMNO also made additional forays into the Chinese mainstream press. Through Hume Industries, the party has a measure of control over the Nanyang Press which publishes the *Nanyang Siang Pau*, one of the two major Chinese-language dailies.

Taking its cue from UMNO, another component party of the BN, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), also began to acquire various media interests. Back in 1979, through its investment arm, Huaren Holdings Sdn Bhd, the MCA acquired 67.35 per cent of Star Publications (M) Sdn Bhd which publishes the English daily, *The Star*, and other magazines. In 1981, it acquired the Chinese daily, *Malaya Tung Pao*, which was then renamed *Tong Pao*.

The ethnic Indian partner in the BN coalition, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), has likewise moved to garner significant control over the major Tamil-language dailies. For instance, *Tamil Nesan* is owned by Datin Indrani, wife of Datuk Samy Vellu, the MIC president, and their other family members (Ramanathan 1992: 11).[9]

Yet another form of government control of the press is the fostering and internalization of a culture of 'responsible development journalism'. The contention of the government as well as certain newspaper people is that the investigative, if not adversarial, journalism that is practised in the 'west' is not compatible with the needs and sensitivities of Asian people in general and Malaysians in particular.[10] The argument put forward is that investigative journalism of the Western variety would only divert people's attention away from the serious matter of socio-economic development of the country. It follows that the media, being 'responsible' and committed to 'national development', must give their undivided support to the government by publishing 'positive news'

9. For a detailed analysis of media ownership pattern in Malaysia, see Chapter 6 by Zaharom Nain.

10. See, for instance, A. Samad Ismail (in A. Karim Haji Abdullah 1991: 194–211).

about the government and its development policies and projects. In other words, 'bad news' and criticisms of the government are inimical to national development and, in some cases, harmful to 'national interests' (Loh and Mustafa 1996: 104–105; Oetama 1989: 144).

CONSOLIDATION OF CONTROL THROUGH COERCIVE LEGISLATION

The legislations aimed at controlling the press were, as intimated earlier, inherited from the colonial past, and have been enforced since the country's independence. Over the years, the relevant laws have been amended, each time resulting in stricter control of the press. Traditionally, the threats of communism and communalism provided the justification for these laws. Now, however, the rationale for retaining and applying these laws has been widened and, in some cases, made vague enough to leave a catch-all effect.

As far as press control is concerned, the principal law is the Printing Presses Ordinance of 1948, which was revised in 1971 and 1974 as the Printing Presses Act. This was further revised as the Printing Presses and Publications Act in 1984, and amended again in 1988 in the wake of the national political clampdown that was code-named *Operasi Lalang*.

In this major political swoop that was executed by the government on 27 October 1987, more than 100 people – including social activists, opposition politicians, academics, human rights activists and social workers – were detained, and three mainstream newspapers, namely, *The Star*, *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and *Watan*, had their publishing licences suspended for a while. Before its suspension, *The Star*, in particular, was noted for some degree of editorial independence, and also for the influential writings of its popular commentators, former prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, former opposition leader Dr Tan Chee Khoon, and former UMNO member of parliament, Mohamed Sopiee Sheikh Ibrahim. After its suspension was lifted, *The Star* never regained its old critical stance.

The suspension of these dailies meant 'good news' to the alternative press. Following *Operasi Lalang*, the circulation of political party organs such as the Parti Islam SeMalaysia's (PAS) *Harakah* and the Democratic Action Party's *Rocket*, as well as the independent magazine, *Aliran Monthly*, rose considerably because many Malaysians were then desperately seeking alternative channels of information and viewpoints.

The Printing Presses and Publications Act stipulates that, among other things, all newspapers and regular publications should possess a

publishing licence issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, which has to be re-applied for annually. The Act also empowers the minister to revoke the licence for a publication should he decide that the publication concerned had acted in a manner 'prejudicial to the nation's security'.

Prior to 1984, this Act gave the minister the power to grant a licence for a duration of a minimum of 12 months. Since its amendment in 1984, the minister has been empowered to grant a licence for a more limited duration if he deems fit.

In 1988, the Act was further amended to preclude any judicial review of the home minister's decision if the minister should revoke or suspend a publishing licence on the grounds that the publication was prejudicial to public order. Presently, the minister's decision is final and unchallengeable in any court of law, as stated under Section 13 Sub-section (1); Section 13A Sub-section (1), and Section 13B of the Act:

> 13(1) Without prejudice to the powers of the Minister to revoke or suspend a licence or permit under any other provisions of this Act, if the Minister is satisfied that any printing press in respect of which the licence has been issued is used for printing of any publication which is prejudicial to public order or national security or that any newspaper in respect of which a permit has been issued contains anything which is prejudicial to public order or national security, he may revoke such licence or permit.
>
> 13A(1) Any decision of the Minister to refuse to grant or to revoke or to suspend a licence or permit shall be final and shall not be called in question by any court on any ground whatsoever.
>
> 13B No person shall be given an opportunity to be heard with regard to his application for a licence or permit or relating to the revocation or suspension of the licence or permit granted to him under this Act.

Apart from this, Section 7(1) of the amended Act empowers the minister to prohibit the printing, sale, import, distribution or possession of a publication. The minister may do this if he believes that a publication can threaten morality, public order, security or national interest, conflicts with the law or contains provocative materials:

> If the Minister is satisfied that any publication contains any article, caricature, photograph, report, notes, writing, sound,

> music, statement or any other thing which is in any manner prejudicial to or likely to be prejudicial to public order, morality, security, the relationship with any foreign country or government, or which is likely to alarm public opinion, or which is or is likely to be contrary to any law or is otherwise prejudicial to or is likely to be prejudicial to public interest or national interest, he may in his absolute discretion by order published in the Gazette prohibit, either absolutely or subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, the printing, importation, production, reproduction, publishing, sale, issue, circulation, distribution or possession of that publication and future publications of the publisher concerned.

The Official Secrets Act (OSA) (1972) is yet another piece of legislation that has hampered the working of journalists and dampened the development of investigative journalism. Subsequent amendments to this Act have had the effect of making almost all official documents 'official secrets', thus virtually making it illegal for journalists to have access to them. As government critics have insisted, the OSA belies the government's professed desire to be transparent and accountable.

There are other laws, not directly related to the media, which can impinge – and have impinged – on the development of the local press. The powerful and notorious Internal Security Act (ISA) (1960) is one piece of legislation that can be used by the state against anyone, including journalists and editors,[11] deemed to have acted in a manner detrimental to the country's security and interest. The fact that a person detained under the ISA does not have legal recourse can create a climate of fear among people in the press and members of the general public, thereby reinforcing the position of the government. The ISA is particularly useful to the state when its political hegemony is perceived to be threatened or challenged.

The potent force of this law has more recently been demonstrated again. After Anwar Ibrahim was dismissed from his post of deputy prime minister in September 1998, a number of individuals who were identified as being aligned to, or supportive of, Anwar were summarily detained under ISA in the government's attempt to stifle criticisms and dissent in the country.

---

11. A number of people in the local press fell victim to the ISA. For instance, former editor-in-chief A. Samad Ismail, and former *Berita Harian* news editor, Samani Amin, were detained in the 1970s as they were suspected of having been involved in communist activities in the 1970s.

THE STATE AND THE MEDIA: 1990–95

Commercial control and legal restrictions on the media aside, Malaysia's impressive economic growth and the consequent burgeoning of its middle class in the early 1990s provided a golden opportunity for the profit-driven mainstream newspapers to attract more readers and, by extension, more advertisers by publishing reports and analyses that were politically safe and sanitized. In most instances, this meant that the press focused on the trivial, entertaining and money-making. Many of the newspapers, such as the *New Straits Times*, *The Star*, *Berita Harian*, *Utusan Malaysia*, *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, had undergone cosmetic changes in terms of format and the use of more colours as a way of making themselves visually more attractive. In terms of editorial content, the newspapers gave emphasis to business and economic news and information; reporting and commentaries on audio-visual equipment and musical instruments; computers and information technology; fashion; health; music; film and video; travel; and higher education. These changes made up for the newspapers' weaknesses in the crucial area of investigative journalism, and incisive and illuminating commentaries (Loh and Mustafa 1996: 111). In a sense, these editorial developments constituted a form of social control as they helped newspapers to divert themselves – and the public's attention – away from controversies, depoliticize issues, and displace people's right to political participation.

Even so, the mainstream press in particular and other mass media in general quite readily played a politically serious role by serving the BN's political and ideological interests. This penchant to serve dutifully is best illustrated by the unabashed support of the mainstream press for the ruling BN in major elections that occurred in Malaysia between 1990 and 1995.

THE 1990 GENERAL ELECTION

The 1990 general election was a particularly tense electoral contest because it happened when the UMNO Baru was still at its early stage of consolidation, having been formed after the original UMNO was declared illegal by the High Court on 4 February 1988. It was a keen competition that pitted Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the leader of UMNO Baru, against Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, leader of UMNO dissidents who formed a new party, Semangat 46 (Spirit of 46 Party) when they were precluded from joining UMNO Baru. Furthermore, Mahathir led the ruling coalition, while Razaleigh led an electoral alliance of several opposition parties (Gagasan Rakyat, or The People's Force). In

other words, the election was a trial of the political strength of UMNO Baru and the credibility of Mahathir's leadership.

As it turned out, the BN's component parties and their leaders gained prominent press coverage during the election campaign period.[12] For example, the BN's electoral manifesto that was announced by Mahathir was prominently covered and amply publicized by the mainstream dailies (*New Straits Times* and *The Star*, 5 October 1990). In contrast, there was a report of the Gagasan Rakyat's manifesto in *The Star* on 13 October 1990, but this was overshadowed by the reporting of the BN manifesto.

Most politicians and political parties, not least the ruling party, like to foster a public image of benevolence, social concern and unrelenting commitment to social justice, especially amidst the hustle and bustle of electoral campaigning. Here a number of high-ranking BN politicians enjoyed a definite advantage over their opponents during the campaigning period when certain salutary press reports unabashedly publicized the former's 'election promises' of promoting the people's socio-economic upliftment, and their effort to implement 'development projects'. For instance, the *Menteri Besar* (chief minister) of Selangor revealed that 'A Fisheries Master Plan has been drawn up to take Selangor to the forefront in the aquaculture industry' (*NST*, 5 Oct. 1990). Another press report carried a promise by the minister of energy, telecommunications and post, S. Samy Vellu, that 'About 90 per cent of rural areas in the country will have access to telephones by 1995' (*NST*, 5 Oct. 1990).

As indicated above, the dominant discourse in the mainstream press focused on how a ruling party, purportedly close to the people, was working with and for the people. Such press coverage consistently portrayed a government that was 'naturally inclined' to help the people. Its role in helping to blur the line between official government functions and partisan political activities provided an ample opportunity for the BN politicians to seize the limelight.

Hence, the politicians of the ruling coalition received wide and positive press coverage, while the opposition was likely to catch press attention only by way of an onslaught of press distortion tantamount to a public demonization of the opposition leaders. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who, like Mahathir, aspired to be the champion of the Malay community, fell victim to substantial press misrepresentation. To take a notorious example, the BN claimed that it would distribute cassette

12. For a comprehensive account of the media coverage of the 1990, see Mustafa (1990).

tapes which would reveal that Razaleigh was plotting to 'kill' his political allies, PAS and DAP. A report in *The Star* (3 Oct. 1990) had it that UMNO Baru would distribute the cassette tapes – that allegedly recorded Razaleigh saying he would destroy all opposition parties if he came to power – to its 9,000 branches in Kelantan (Razaleigh's home state). Razaleigh's denial of the allegation was only reported by the marginal *Watan* (4 Oct. 1990).

The election campaign and the mainstream media's savage onslaught against Razaleigh came to a climax when he, as leader of Gagasan Rakyat, visited Sabah on 18 October 1990, after the state's ruling party, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), indicated its desire to break away from the BN to join the opposition coalition. At his meeting with the PBS leader, Joseph Pairin Kitingan, Razaleigh wore an ethnic Kadazan headgear (*sigah*) that Pairin presented to him. The sight of Razaleigh wearing the *sigah* was to be vigorously exploited by the mainstream media.

According to the deliberate distortion in the press and other mass media, the Kadazan headgear which Razaleigh wore was made out to have a 'Christian cross' on it, thereby giving the Malaysian public, in particular the Malay-Muslim voters, the impression that Razaleigh was collaborating with a political party whose members were predominantly Christian. In other words, Razaleigh's 'ethnic-Malay commitment' and (Islamic) religiosity were put in doubt. The *Utusan Malaysia* (19 Oct. 1990) ran a front-page headline: '*Orang ramai marah Razaleigh pakai tengkolok bersalib*' ('The general public is furious over Razaleigh wearing a headgear with a cross'). The report, so headlined, created the impression that many people, particularly Malay-Muslims, were hurt by Razaleigh's 'insensitive' action.

Further evidence of the mainstream press's biased treatment of the opposition surfaced when the DAP deputy secretary-general and member of parliament for Bukit Bintang, Lee Lam Thye, unexpectedly announced his resignation from his party posts on 29 September 1990. The front page of *The Star* (3 Oct. 1990) was headlined, 'Lam Thye quits all posts'. On 5 October 1990, *The Star* ran another headline on page 3: 'Lam Thye's decision [to quit politics] a big blow to DAP. Party likely to be badly affected in general election'. The *New Straits Times* (5 Oct. 1990) carried a similarly slanted report with an accompanying picture of a weeping Lee Lam Thye on page 2. Press coverage of this nature, in newspapers that typically ignored the opposition, sought to depict the DAP as a party that was riddled with internal dissension and conflicts, something that voters should frown upon.

The Islamic party, PAS, too, was subjected to media distortion by certain quarters of the mainstream media which reported, for example, that PAS was willing to hold a reconciliatory dialogue with UMNO Baru 'for the sake of Malay unity'. But PAS denied making any press statement to that effect, and charged that such reports were invented as part of the ruling coalition's plan to sow confusion among PAS and Semangat 46 supporters.

In addition, the attempts by the Gagasan Rakyat seriously to debate issues of freedom and democracy were thwarted by the mainstream press, thereby depriving Malaysian voters of the opportunity to witness a less emotional and less racist level of electoral campaigning. To the extent that this form of coverage constituted the dominant discourse in the mainstream press, its underlying considerations were racist in that fanning a collective sense of insecurity within a particular ethnic community (the Malays) could very well heighten a narrow and bigoted sense of 'imagined community'.

The depiction of political parties in the opposition coalition as disparate and lacking both compatibility and direction, only reinforced the BN's stereotype of the opposition as being unreliable and unfit to govern the country. This implied that only the BN could provide the requisite moral and intellectual leadership, among other things, because it pragmatically kept its feet firmly planted on the ground throughout the election period. During the election period, this media misrepresentation of the opposition also helped the ruling coalition to spread its familiar theme of the BN representing 'strong government, political stability and high economic growth'.

THE SABAH STATE ELECTION OF 1994

This state election witnessed a fierce contest between Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and the BN after the former defected from the coalition just prior to the 1990 general election. As was the case of the 1990 general election, the mainstream press, based in Peninsular Malaysia, played their part in highlighting quite positively the BN's election campaign in Sabah. The BN invariably secured the front page and prominent coverage in the mainstream newspapers, whereas coverage of PBS, which had formed the government of Sabah since 1984, was systematically relegated to the inside pages (Mustafa 1994: 2).

The BN's message and promise of socio-economic development and progress for Sabahans were prominently reported by the peninsular press. This was critical to the BN's campaign to topple the PBS government in Sabah at a time when the state had been encountering

significant problems partly arising out of the hostility of the BN-ruled federal government to the state government.

The mainstream press reported the scurrying of the federal ministers in Sabah, pledging development projects and financial assistance to Sabahans – if voted in. For instance, the *NST* (10 Feb. 1994) reported that the land and cooperative development minister, Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai, pledged more aid for cooperatives in Sabah if the BN won the election. In the *Sunday Star* (13 Feb. 1994), readers were told that deputy education minister Dr Leo Michael Toyad gave away RM2 million in grants to the headmasters and representatives of 30 schools at the State Education Department.

Thus, a headline in *The Star* on 15 February 1994, for example, screamed: 'Vote BN for progress, says Anwar'. On page 4 of the same issue of *The Star*, UMNO Baru vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin was reported to have said that, 'The Chinese business community feels that only the Barisan Government can turn the economy around and inject a new spirit in Sabah.' And *The Star* on the next day reported Dr Mahathir's personal letter to all Sabahans that was advertised in Sabah's local papers, which, among other things, said that 'their [Sabahans'] votes could bring about another five years of economic stagnation or a future of economic dynamism'.

The defections of certain politicians from the PBS also attracted the attention of the mainstream press as this highlighted what was perceived as the weakness of the PBS. For example, Yong Teck Lee's resignation from the PBS leadership and party, and his subsequent founding of the Chinese-based Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP), gained a lot of media attention. Once the SAPP had declared its desire to join the BN in its fight against the PBS, Yong and his party were widely covered by the press (*The Star*, 15 February 1984: 8). Likewise, the withdrawal of founder-member Datuk Lee Sen from the PBS and his intention to join SAPP was fodder for the peninsular media. The *NST* on 17 February, for instance, ran a headline: 'Founder member Lee quits party to support Barisan'.

The peninsular press was also inclined to highlight, if not exaggerate, any split or problems that appeared within or around the PBS leadership, and the Kitingan family in particular. Thus, the front page of the *Sunday Star* (13 Feb. 1994) ran the headline: 'Jeffrey ready to take over', implying Dr Jeffrey Kitingan had differences with his brother, Joseph Pairin Kitingan, the PBS leader, and that the former, if elected, was ready to replace the latter. In a similar attempt to suggest

dissension within the PBS leadership, a headline in *The Star* (15 Feb. 1994) had it that 'Pairin's wife has a lot of clout in PBS, says Yong'.

What coverage the mainstream press in the peninsula gave of the PBS was buried in the inside pages as, for instance, when the *NST* (10 Feb. 1994) reported Pairin's explanation of a critical point, 'the need to protect the rights and interest of the State as enshrined in the Malaysian Agreement', which, Pairin argued – against BN insinuations – 'should not be misconstrued as an attempt to instigate anti-federal sentiments' (*NST*, 10 Feb. 1994).

The political situation, after the election results indicated a PBS electoral triumph, was adequately recorded by *The Star*. The front page of the paper's 21 February issue succinctly reflected the anxiety among Sabahans in particular and Malaysians in general: 'Sabah Waits', and this was accompanied by a picture of Pairin and Mustapha together waiting in the former's car outside the Istana. This contrasted with the *NST*'s front-page headline on the same day: 'PM: No coalition with PBS'; 'Next Government will be sworn in at 10 am today, says Yang di-Pertua'. A big picture of Pairin and Mustapha in the car accompanied the headline. In addition, another story on the same page was headlined, 'Parti Bersatu Sabah losing its grip'.

The next day (22 Feb. 1994), both *The Star* and the *NST* reported the swearing-in ceremony that occurred in the Istana. This happy occasion (for the PBS, at least), however, was 'tempered' with reports that had headlines such as 'Sakaran: We will ensure power is not abused' (*NST*); 'Sakaran leads Barisan winners to meet PM today' (*NST*); 'Anwar: We'll fight deviation in Sabah' (*NST*); 'Anwar: BN the people's champion' (*Star*); 'Sakaran: PBS rule won't be easy' (*Star*); 'More leaders laud BN's success' (*Star*); 'Ling: MCA has gained faith of Sabah Chinese' (*Star*); and 'Six reps to beef up PBS margin' (*Star*). In other words, the papers concerned were more inclined to project the 'moral victory' of the BN.

There are lessons to be learnt from this state election and the media coverage. For one thing, the peninsular media could only influence people, especially Sabahans, to a certain degree. This is particularly so when there were other important factors that came into play in this election, namely heightened parochialism/state nationalism and 'siege mentality' in 'Fortress Sabah' – in the face of what was generally felt to be the 'abandonment' of the overall welfare of Sabahans by federal government leaders after the PBS's withdrawal from the BN; and the active 'peninsular intervention' in local politics (like the involvement of UMNO Baru, MCA, and, to a lesser extent, PAS and DAP).

Second, the urban-bias and peninsula-centred nature of the mainstream media only isolated, if not alienated, themselves when they shifted their attention, albeit for a fleeting moment, to Sabah. For under normal circumstances, most of the news reported in the mainstream media in the peninsula has often been about the peninsular people, particularly those in positions of political and economic power in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, it was quite likely that some Sabahans would view this sudden 'concern' for Sabah by the peninsular media with some degree of cynicism, if not downright outrage. In short, the 'media marginality' of the Sabahans as a whole could not be simply wished away. In addition, this 'Sabah focus' could also be interpreted as a mere political ploy, especially to the Sabahans who had in the main considered themselves economically marginalized in the context of national development. Besides, that some coverage of the election was biased towards the BN would only worsen this perception.

Third, compared with their peninsular cousins, local papers in Sabah were a lot more vibrant. There were debates, and the contesting political parties received a fair amount of coverage. Besides, local political personalities – as opposed to peninsular bigwigs – were highlighted in a number of these papers; these were people who meant more to the ordinary Sabahans. In other words, in the eyes of the local Sabahans, the credibility of their media was relatively higher than that of the peninsular media.

Finally, for as long as there was the perception that most of the peninsula's mainstream media were closely associated with some of the BN component parties or groups or individuals supportive of the BN, the journalistic credibility of these media as a whole would be viewed with suspicion, particularly during political elections when the BN had its own interests to protect and promote.

THE 1995 GENERAL ELECTION

The 1995 general election once again bore witness to the unfaltering support of the mainstream mass media for the BN, and never more so than during the election campaign period.

It is instructive that many of the approaches and techniques applied by these media to lend political support to the coalition were influenced by those of the advertising industry. Put another way, much of the media coverage of the general election and the BN relied upon the 'attractive packaging' and the 'hard selling' of the ruling coalition and its candidates. Indeed, the BN had engaged the expertise and services of an advertising agency, TV AM Advertising, to help it in its election

campaign (*The Star*, 6 May 1995). It has even been estimated that advertising techniques, as methods of political persuasion, were so popular among almost all the political parties contesting the general election that the advertising industry gained at least some RM25 million from the political campaigning during the last general election (*New Sunday Times*, 23 April 1995).

Political Endorsement

The 1995 general election also revealed that Malaysian society has become accustomed to advertising blitz via the media and other means of mass communication, and that the endorsement of products and services as an advertising technique had become so commonplace that its extension to the political realm was easily acceptable. In other words, just as a beauty queen, a pop icon, or a well-known professional could 'endorse' a brand of detergent or a soft drink and thereby confer their 'stamp of approval' on the product, so could, and did, business organizations, professionals, associations and other members of the public in Malaysia unequivocally approve and endorse the BN during the campaign period.

Newspapers, too, made their position clear during general election, including those who under normal circumstances would be reticent about voicing opinions on many local issues. For example, *The Star*, which does not usually carry an editorial, was quite vocal in endorsing the BN. Headlined, 'In the name of freedom,' *The Star* (18 April 1995), gave full support to the BN in the following terms:

> The Press in a democracy has a right to decide and express a stand in an election. Some publications opt to support the BN; others, the opposition. Each is free to make the choice.
>
> We have made ours; for at this point in the history of our young nation, we need to ensure continued harmony, stability and growth.

In principle, *The Star* was not wrong: the press in a democracy has the right to choose which political party it wants to endorse. In Malaysia, however, media conditions were not really 'democratic' to start with. The mainstream media in Malaysia, for reasons of ownership and control, were not at liberty *not* to support, or to support any political party other than, the BN. There were only a few critical publications such as some weekly and monthly magazines with limited circulation, or party organs like the PAS's *Harakah* and DAP's *The Rocket*. Even then, a law was passed to forbid the open sale of those party organs and to restrict their circulation to party members.

In the newspapers, endorsement appeared in various forms, subtle and crass. At the beginning of the campaign, for example, a company took out a half-page advertisement in the *NST* (8 April 1995) merely to say '*Terima Kasih*' (Thank You) to the minister of international trade and industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz. While such an advertisement would be no more than an innocuous courtesy under normal circumstances, it can take on an extra meaning during a general election.

At times the forms of political endorsement could border on the incredulous: *The Star* (21 April 1990) prominently featured a fortune-teller's prediction of electoral victory for Koh Tsu Koon, the chief minister and the BN leader of Penang. On the same day and in the same newspaper, the Penang BN took out two pages of advertisements specifically to inform the people, particularly the voters in Penang, who the BN's candidates for parliamentary and state seats were. This advertisement reappeared a number of times in the same newspaper.

Applying advertising techniques employed by some business establishments, the BN also inserted small, daily advertisements in *The Star* that simply asked the reader, 'Why Risk?' This series of advertisements was the Penang BN's swift response to the DAP's declared aim of winning control of the state government of Penang. As the polling date drew nearer, the advertisement was modified to caution the reader not to 'risk' the 'good development' that Penang had enjoyed under the BN state government by voting for the DAP.

Misreporting and Ethics

As regards newspaper coverage, it was business as usual, as much of the mainstream press gave full and better coverage to the BN, with their front pages almost always filled with positive news of the coalition. On the other hand, the newspapers came close to 'blacking out' the opposition. If they had news of the opposition, that news was typically placed somewhere in the inside pages.

Stories that were likely to cast aspersion on or create a negative image of the BN were highly unlikely to be taken up by the mainstream press. Thus, it was small wonder that only the *Harakah* (21 April 1995) reported that the police had found a printing shop in Kuala Terengganu which printed leaflets that accused UMNO Baru members of being infidels. It was suspected that these leaflets were meant to create the suspicion that PAS was hurling wild accusations at the UMNO Baru.

Another way in which the mainstream press serviced the BN's campaign was its inclusion of political cartoons taken directly from the BN camp, particularly at the close of the campaign period. On the

normally staid editorial page of the *New Straits Times*, for instance, a cartoon appeared showing leaders of PAS, DAP and Semangat 46 queuing up to photocopy their respective manifestos, suggesting that these parties recycled their manifestos because they had nothing new to offer to the voters (*NST*, 18 April 1995).

On 22 April, 1995, the BN, presumably, took out two pages in the *New Straits Times* to display two different sets of cartoons. One set was captioned, 'In public, they are divorced. In private, still married', insinuating that there was an 'unholy alliance' between the two ideologically opposed opposition parties, DAP and PAS. The other set of cartoons (captioned, 'Promises'. 'Promises'. 'Promises'), showed DAP leader, Lim Kit Siang, making promises to quit if and when he lost his previous campaigns in Penang, popularly named 'Tanjung I, II and III'.

The coverage in the mainstream Malay dailies such as the *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* were in the main equally strident in their support for the BN and criticisms and attack against the opposition. For instance, both the Malay dailies emphasized and promoted the 'development success' of the BN, while denigrating opposition parties such as the Islamic party PAS.

In conclusion, the mainstream press was unwavering in its support of the BN during the major election campaign periods between 1990 and 1995. In addition, its preoccupation with publicizing the BN's supposed political virtues, and giving a negative portrayal of the opposition, effectively precluded any intelligent and rational discussions among concerned Malaysian citizens of substantive issues such as development, industrialization and Mahathir's Vision 2020. At the same time, the press often found itself pandering to the trivial, sensational and commercial.

CONCLUSION: 1998 AND BEYOND

Between 1990 and 1995, as has been discussed, the mainstream press as a whole was willing to cooperate with the state and place its resources, expertise and influence at the disposal of the BN, especially when the ideological and political battle between the ruling BN and the opposition became very intense and widespread. More recent events suggest that this fundamental attitude of the press has not changed.

In 1998, the political hegemony of the BN, particularly UMNO, was put to a severe test. This critical situation was brought about by Dr Mahathir Mohamad's sudden dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister

Anwar Ibrahim from the government on the evening of 2 September 1998. Accused of sexual misconduct that implicated the wife of his former secretary, other women, and other men as well, Anwar was expelled from UMNO the following day. Mahathir insisted that Anwar's alleged sexual misconduct made him unfit to be a future leader of a predominantly Muslim country.

The manner of Anwar's dismissal and the allegations made against him were highly controversial and generated confusion, anger, dissent and even a minor split within UMNO and the Malay community as a whole.[13] Perhaps unexpectedly UMNO, and to a lesser degree BN, discovered that a large segment of the population, particularly that which made up UMNO's traditionally loyal 'Malay heartland', were so alienated and antagonized by the 'Anwar affair' as to oppose Mahathir and UMNO.

The role of the mainstream press under the tense circumstances of September 1998 was unmistakably partisan. First, the unsubstantiated allegations against Anwar were sensationally and fully publicized in the mainstream press of all languages, without Anwar being given any chance for rebuttal. This clearly had the aim of securing a 'public conviction' of Anwar. Second, once Anwar's defiance had galvanized a significant level of support for him and provoked widespread opposition to the Mahathir camp and UMNO, the latter once again mobilized the mainstream press, this time to regain public confidence and support.

As an example, the public speeches hurriedly conducted by the deposed but defiant Anwar and the ensuing street protests staged by supporters of *reformasi* (the name of the reform movement which Anwar launched in response to his dismissal) in Kuala Lumpur were deliberately portrayed by the mainstream press as the acts of rabble-rousers that threatened 'national security' and political stability. These were people, according to the press, who could create unnecessary trouble and did not deserve the support and sympathy of right-thinking and patriotic Malaysians.

It is pertinent to note the mobilization of what turned out to be an avowedly anti-Anwar press was facilitated by the removal, in July 1998, of Johan Jaafar, editor-in-chief of *Utusan Malaysia*, and Nazri Abdullah, group editor of *Berita Harian*, both widely believed to be closely aligned to Anwar.

---

13. This was at a time when there was popular uprising in Indonesia – rallying around the call for *reformasi*, or social reforms – against the allegedly corrupt President Suharto.

The attempts by the press to smear and demonize Anwar were unrelenting, and continued right up to November 1998, when Anwar was first prosecuted on several charges of sexual misconduct and corruption. Front and inside pages of the mainstream dailies were filled with headlines and news stories of the crowd-pulling trial, crudely displaying words related to sexual acts, perversity and male genitalia. In short, the mainstream press had no compunction about its unrestricted use of vocabulary once considered taboo in Malaysian media practice, and still outright offensive to much of Malaysian society itself (Mustafa 1999).

Ironically, this biased press coverage of the Anwar trial reached saturation point. In the public perception, the mainstream press had engaged in a certain degree of spreading misinformation pertaining to issues of Anwar's sacking and the activities of the *reformasi* movement. Subsequently, much of the mainstream press became widely unpopular among many concerned Malaysians, particularly among the Malays. In response, *reformasi* activists, Anwar supporters and sympathizers organized a boycott of the leading Malay daily, *Utusan Malaysia*.

What followed was that many Malaysians, troubled by the seeming lack of credibility in the mainstream press, sought alternative media in search of accurate news, fair reporting and critical commentary. Alternative publications such as the PAS's *Harakah*, independent monthly magazines such as the *Aliran Monthly*, *Tamadun*, *Detik*, etc. enjoyed a tremendous boost in sales. The circulation of *Harakah* was estimated to have peaked at 300,000 copies at the height of the political crisis, but this figure dipped, especially after the government enforced a ruling that distribution of political organs such as the *Harakah* must be restricted to membership only.

In addition, the Internet has become a popular medium where the latest information, intellectual exchange, criticisms of the government and even gossip can be publicly obtained. In fact, observed Khoo (2000: 170–171), this is where various pro-*reformasi* and politically independent websites, such as *Laman Reformasi*, *Anwar Online*, *freemalaysia* and *Mahafiraun*, among others, mushroomed and made a considerable impact, especially on Malaysians who were desperately seeking alternative sources of information.

The battered credibility of the mainstream media, itself under severe strain of boycott and public contempt, played a significant role in provoking 581 Malaysian journalists from 11 press organizations to petition the Malaysian government for a repeal of the objectionable Print-

ing Presses and Publications Act 1984 on 3 May 1999, which also coincided with World Press Freedom Day. The journalists' memorandum,[14] which essentially sought greater press freedom, was submitted to Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was also the home minister. While the home minister might have given the impression that he was not necessarily opposed to the petition, Prime Minister Mahathir, in a gathering of media practitioners, chose to express his stance on this matter in no uncertain terms: press freedom in developing countries must be policed (*NST*, 23 June 1999).

Mahathir's position does not augur well for Malaysian journalism and freedom of the press and expression. It contains a violation of a human right to information and freedom of expression, as well as an assault on democracy. Despite this, the recent critical public responses to the Anwar affair and the servile role of the mainstream press demonstrate not only that freedom of expression and the press is not given on a silver platter, but that public struggles for that freedom can push its parameters beyond where the powers-that-be would wish them to be. If anything, the alternative media and the Internet perhaps provide the needed democratic space for freedom of expression and democracy to grow in Malaysia.

14. The memorandum was reprinted in the Commentary of the International Movement For a Just World, No. 24 (New Series), May 1999.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

THE EFFECTS OF EXECUTIVE DOMINANCE

Lim Hong Hai

The primary means of making public administration serve the ends of democratic government is to subject it to popular political control. Thus the dominant concern in the study and practice of public administration in democratic countries is the search for effective political control over those entrusted with its conduct, i.e. politicians in executive office and appointed civil servants. To be useful, public administration must also develop the capacity to attain goals. But political control is primary, for it determines for what purposes, for whom, and how well whatever available capacity is used. The effectiveness of political control also importantly determines whether needed capacity will be developed at all. Thus effective popular control is the fundamental condition for good public administration in a democracy, namely one that is responsive to the public and that both develops the requisite capacity and applies it effectively and efficiently to meet public wants.

Popular control of public administration in a democracy is provided for through formal relations of political accountability that form an integral part of the system of government. In the parliamentary form of democratic government adopted in Malaysia, the bureaucracy (a collective term for appointed civil servants) is placed under the direct control of ministers, who collectively constitute the political executive. Civil servants are supposed to be politically neutral (or non-partisan) servants of their respective ministers and their actions are deemed to be actions of their minister. Next, mechanisms are provided for the popular control of ministers. That ministers are also elected is a primary but still insuf-

ficient means of democratic control over them. So, in addition to the distribution and limitation of powers in the constitution, ministers are held to be accountable or responsible to the elected lower house of parliament. Through the principle of ministerial responsibility, parliament holds ministers collectively accountable for their overall conduct of government and also individually accountable for their own actions and the actions of civil servants in their respective departments. This then is the formal chain of political control in parliamentary democracy: 'officials answer to ministers who answer to Parliament which answers to the electorate' (Turpin 1994: 127).

The growth in the scale and complexity of public administration in modern government has made political control increasingly problematic because of the disparity in expertise between politicians and bureaucrats and the severe limitations on the time or attention that politicians can realistically allocate to exercising oversight and control over the bureaucracy (Headey 1974: chs 2 and 4; Simon 1967). The acknowledged inadequacies of the primary chain of political control have led to increasing reliance on other, supplementary mechanisms of control in democratic systems (Self 1977: 277–289; Wirth 1985). Courts in many countries have increased the avenues and scope of judicial review of administrative actions, and formal machinery such as tribunals, ombudsmen and other agencies have been established to redress citizen's complaints about maladministration and to improve the public face of government. Probably more important is the expanding role of interest groups of various kinds and of the press or mass media in influencing, monitoring and providing feedback on public decisions. The activities of these non-governmental or informal controls are now universally regarded as indispensable to democratic government. Democracy is thus no longer seen in purely representative terms: responsibility and responsiveness, if not formal accountability, is multidirectional rather than unidirectional.

This chapter is concerned with external controls on public administration in Malaysia. It attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of external controls, identify the sources of weakness, and examine the resulting effects on performance. The importance and nature of reform may thus be better understood.

It is useful to highlight and clarify some key terms first, as they define the main concerns and scope of this essay. The term *control* refers generally to influence on the behaviour of officeholders. It involves three kinds of actions, namely actions to direct, to monitor and detect deviations, and to correct deviations. The term *accountability* is the obligation

to explain and to justify one's behaviour to a higher authority. The importance of accountability to effective control is shown by the following statement from H.J. Laski (cited in Turpin 1994: 136): 'A Government that is compelled to explain itself under cross-examination will do its best to avoid the grounds of complaint.' The democratic argument is that popular control is needed to ensure good public administration, as measured by generally accepted performance criteria or 'values'. The main ones are the political value of *responsiveness* to public wants, and the so-called 'machine' values of *effectiveness* and *efficiency*. Effectiveness measures the degree of success in meeting wants, while efficiency measures the amount of scarce resources expended in meeting wants.

MINISTERIAL CONTROL OF CIVIL SERVANTS

I begin with the relations between ministers and civil servants, the first link of the formal control chain. Despite its importance, ministerial ability to control civil servants has received little scholarly attention. Scholars of Malaysian politics and government almost always see the government or the executive branch in unitary terms, thus glossing over any consideration of the relations between its elective and appointive components. They generally find a strong or dominant government in Malaysia, but do not examine whether power resides mainly with ministers or civil servants. Surprisingly, this is true even of political scientists with a primary interest in public administration. Esman (1972: 62–66) describes Malaysia as an 'administrative state', i.e. 'one in which the state is the dominant institution in society, guiding and controlling more than it responds to societal pressures'. He sees ministers and civil servants as important partners in government but does not examine relations between them. Chee (1991b) also fails to examine minister–civil servant relations in his otherwise comprehensive survey of public accountability in Malaysia.

The only scholar who has remarked on the state of minister–civil servant relations in Malaysia is Puthucheary (1978a: 45), who argues that 'the bureaucracy, although enjoying considerable power, is still under the control of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet'. She also points to 'the strength of the ruling party which has been in power for more than twenty years and is likely to stay in power for some time' (Puthucheary 1987: 107). What exactly this control amounts to, however, is far from clear. This is especially so when Puthucheary (1978a: 120) also claims, rather curiously, that the 'failure to recognize the importance of external controls has resulted in the growth of a civil

service which to a large extent is only accountable to itself'. How can a civil service that is 'under the control' of ministers be at the same time 'only accountable to itself'? An examination of minister–civil servant relations is needed to establish more exactly the locus of power in the executive branch of government.

Puthucheary at least makes it clear that her notion of ministerial control is consistent with significant bureaucratic power or influence over policy. According to her, 'bureaucratic influence in the decision-making process is considerable. This does not mean, however, that the bureaucracy has usurped political power from the political leaders. At the national level the political leaders are very much in control' (Puthucheary 1978a: 44). Other writers besides Esman and Puthucheary have also attested to the considerable power of Malaysian civil servants. An investigation of the 'political ideology' of senior Malaysian civil servants shows that they 'see themselves as a paternal ruling group' and as full partners with elected politicians in governing the country (Scott 1968: 230). And a more recent study shows that 90 per cent of civil servants serving in two Malaysian states see themselves as fully involved in policy formulation and thus sharing responsibility with politicians for government policy (Yahaya bin Abdullah 1992: 85).

Increased bureaucratic power is the inescapable result of the growth of government activity in Malaysia. Estimates of public employees and expenditure in Malaysia may lack accuracy and terminological consistency, but they clearly establish the spectacular increase in the 'weight' of public administration since independence, especially after 1970 with the launch of the New Economic Policy and the rapid increase in the number and activities of public enterprises for achieving its objective of 'restructuring' society. This expansion has been capped since the economic recession in the early 1980s and the subsequent introduction of a sizeable programme of privatization. Public administration, however, remains large and limitations in ministerial attention, expertise and interest have inevitably resulted in civil servants having considerable initiative and discretion in their jobs. Puthucheary (1978a: 45), following the earlier work of Tilman (1964), suggests that bureaucratic power in Malaysia has also been enhanced by the close ties and resulting trust between the country's political and bureaucratic elites. These ties result from their close cooperation in winning independence and their common ethnic (i.e. Malay) and socio-economic (i.e. upper class or aristocratic) background. The common historical experience has almost faded away with time, and the similarity in socio-

economic background has also diminished somewhat, thanks to the increased access to higher education for Malays of all backgrounds under the NEP. However, the common ethnic background of ruling politicians and senior civil servants remains an important factor making for shared values, and hence increased trust and power for civil servants in Malaysia.

That civil servants possess considerable influence and discretion in contemporary big government is now surely part of the received wisdom among students of public administration. Democracy in this situation requires that ministers are able to circumscribe and direct the exercise of bureaucratic discretion. This in turn requires that ministers are at least able to impose their wishes on civil servants. This minimal condition appears largely to be fulfilled in Malaysia. Ministers limited by time, expertise and interest may leave departmental operations largely to civil servants; but when they do intervene and issue a clear order, civil servants generally comply. This is what Puthucheary probably means in holding that civil servants are effectively controlled by ministers in Malaysia. Such a reading is certainly consistent with the data she herself provides. Three-quarters of Puthucheary's sample of civil servants 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the following rather strong statement: 'Most politicians get what they want even though it is against existing policies and rules' (Puthucheary 1978a: 42). Like Puthucheary, Yahaya bin Abdullah (1992: ch. 6) finds that bureaucrats see ministers as powerful and ministerial control as legitimate, although they resent partisan and improper political interference. Their ruling ethos may dispose civil servants negatively towards control from other sources but not towards control by ministers – which to most civil servants is probably what democracy is virtually all about. As leaders of a well-entrenched ruling coalition, Malaysian ministers possess the ability to assert control and deal effectively with recalcitrant civil servants. Civil servants also see ministerial control as legitimate. It is thus rare for ministerial orders to be resisted, much less successfully, by civil servants.

Ministerial power to enforce bureaucratic compliance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective ministerial control. Ministers still need attention (or time) and expertise to translate their power into effective control of civil servants. Simon (1967) makes the important theoretical point that, while attention to establish control is serial and limited, it is also general, i.e. it can be directed to any relevant matter the controller chooses. By attending to strategic matters in policy formulation and performance-monitoring, ministers with sufficient ex-

perience and expertise, or provided with needed advice, can still achieve adequate 'thermostatic' control over departmental policy and functioning (Dunsire 1985). Meaningful control is thus attainable, but it requires that ministers able to secure bureaucratic compliance also devote enough attention and bring enough policy and management capabilities to the task. The real issue, in other words, is not whether ministers have the power but whether they also possess the capacity and the will, including the will to develop the needed capacity, to achieve effective control. To my knowledge, this question has not been seriously examined in Malaysia. Its importance, however, warrants a brief and tentative discussion.

The requirements of ministerial capacity will continue to challenge ministers in Malaysia (and elsewhere). Reducing the role of government by withdrawal or privatization and providing ministers with policy advisers will help to contain but not abolish the challenge. Meeting it will depend, as is increasingly recognized, on enhancing the quality of those holding ministerial office. This is a task that few governments have adequately faced up to, as 'defects of political leadership, in terms of their executive and administrative results, have deep roots within political systems' (Self 1977: 292). Improving the quality of ministers thus requires far-reaching reforms, including the criteria used in ministerial appointments, the experience of ministerial candidates in and out of government, and even the patterns of leadership selection and specialization within the major political parties (Headey 1974: ch. 12; Self 1977: 290–293).

In Malaysia, the continuous rule by the same coalition since independence in 1957 – a record seldom equalled in other competitive political systems – provides ample opportunity for planned ministerial preparation in terms of experience and expertise in specialized policy areas and departmental management. The extent to which this has been done awaits investigation, but the claim by one of its members that senior Malaysian bureaucrats have suffered a decline in policy influence as a result of 'the increasing technocratic skills of political leaders and thus the narrowing of the gap between the professional competence of Government political leaders and civil servants, over the years' (Navaratnam 1984: 55) does suggest that ability and expertise have not been ignored in ministerial appointments. Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the present prime minister, has not only prodded civil servants but also stressed the need for able and competent ministers for the country's continued development. However, the remarks by

Self (1977: 291) that 'a grave defect of British methods of political advancement is their discouragement of policy specialization even when this is construed, as certainly it should be, in broad terms' and that 'the erratic postings and frequent movements of ministers follow and compound the unspecialized character of their parliamentary apprenticeship' probably continue to apply to Malaysia as well. The country's top leadership realizes the need to improve the calibre of ministers but the ramifications of this task have yet to be grasped. Nor have government and party practices affecting ministerial preparation attracted much public concern or discussion.

However, there are signs that Malaysian ministers are devoting increasing attention to the task of controlling the civil service. A noteworthy development is the increasing use of alternative sources of policy advice by ministers. Think-tanks of varying capacities with ministers as their main clients have sprouted in Kuala Lumpur, indicating increased ministerial search for policy control – and perhaps also ministerial disillusionment with the policy skills, if not the values, of their bureaucratic advisers. A Cabinet Committee on Government Administration has been set up to improve ministerial oversight of civil servants. It was recently announced that a computerized 'Chief Executive Management Information System' would be set up in the Prime Minister's Department (*NST*, 5 April 1999). These actions are clearly prompted by the desire to enhance policy control and to improve bureaucratic performance, with which ministers often expressed dissatisfaction.

The effectiveness and adequacy of these efforts have yet to be systematically examined. However, there are indications that ministerial control may be more effective for some purposes than for others. The demonstrated ability of Abdul Razak and Mahathir – two of the four prime ministers the country has had so far – to redirect and restructure the bureaucracy to serve major policy changes argues strongly against any belief in a bureaucracy that is resistant to or able to resist the prime minister, and arguably other ministers in charge of particular departments, when they have clear policy preferences and are determined to enforce them. Mahathir's dominance of key policy initiatives under his administration is widely acknowledged by civil servants and by his supporters and detractors alike. This suggests that a broad distinction should at least be made between policy-making and policy implementation, and that Malaysian ministers are in sufficient control of the former. Or at least they feel that they are, judging by the rarity of complaints by them that civil servants have usurped their policy-making

role, although this may only mean that most ministers, as they appear to be, are content with their role as policy selectors rather than policy initiators. It is in the area of policy implementation and administration that ministers (and others) often complain of poor bureaucratic performance caused by incompetence and slack on the part of civil servants. This suggests persisting shortfalls in ministerial control in terms of managing the civil service or their departments and getting civil servants to implement their policies effectively and efficiently.

Deficiencies in departmental management have importantly to do with deficiencies in ministerial attention and capacity. Their persistence, however, begs the question, 'Why did ministers not devote enough attention and effort to departmental management, including developing the necessary capacity for the task?' Ministers have multiple roles and face many demands on their time. Their motivation and felt need to exert themselves to achieve effective control over their departments, compared to their other roles, cannot be assumed. This ministerial will, and deficiencies in it, are largely the result of the nature and adequacy of controls on ministers. In the remainder of my examination of external controls, I shall argue that it is the ineffectiveness of controls on ministers or the political executive, rather than ministerial inability to control civil servants, that constitutes the major threat to the democratic control and accountability of public administration in Malaysia.

PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OF MINISTERS

Parliamentary control of ministers in Malaysia, through the received convention of ministerial responsibility, cannot be compared to some theoretical ideal whereby ministers are fully answerable to the elected house of parliament for their own acts as well as those of their civil servants and should resign when mistakes have been made. Not only are conventions mutable, but also such an idealized notion has been violated so commonly and for so long in practice that it simply cannot be accepted as a correct description of the convention. As the operation of the convention in one country can be evaluated only in relation to practice elsewhere, I shall compare ministerial responsibility in Malaysia mainly with contemporary practice in Britain, where the convention has received its most thorough examination.

Parliamentary control of ministers suffers from many weaknesses in Malaysia. It must be stressed, however, that most of these weaknesses, including the most important ones, are shared by parliaments of other countries. Parliamentary control has been weakened everywhere and

largely for the same reasons. To begin with, parliamentary control is a misnomer, for it is not the elected house as a whole but only the opposition that controls ministers in parliament. Party competition continues in parliament and the observation of Malaysia that 'parliament tends to be seen as a continuing election platform, hence, the Opposition is to be denied any advantage that it can use for criticizing the government' (Chee 1991b: 110) applies to parliaments generally. The use of party discipline by the ruling party to maintain a solid majority against the opposition, and much lamented as the bane of parliamentary control in Malaysia (Ong 1980 1987; Puthucheary 1978b), is similarly a general practice. Sartori (1997: 193) concludes from his survey of parliamentary systems that 'if this is an evil, it is a necessary one' as 'parliament-dependent government implies party-supported government; a support that in turn requires voting discipline along party lines'.

That parliament is a house divided along party lines has impacted powerfully on the operation of ministerial responsibility. Ministerial answerability to parliamentary queries and maximum feasible disclosure of pertinent information by ministers – often called 'explanatory responsibility' – are widely regarded as the central core of ministerial responsibility. However, in practice ministers are understandably reluctant to divulge information that will expose them to partisan criticism. Puthucheary (1978b) shows that explanatory responsibility is not satisfactorily fulfilled by ministers in Malaysia. Likewise, in Britain 'the struggle to ensure explanatory accountability is unceasing, for information is not willingly disclosed if it provides ammunition for challenge' (Turpin 1994: 137). It is this problem of ministers being 'economical with the truth' that the Scott inquiry highlights as the main threat to ministerial responsibility and that Scott himself tries to address (Scott 1996). Malaysian ministers also do not resign when mistakes are committed by their department, or even by themselves (Puthucheary 1978b). However, it is so unrealistic to expect ministers to resign for departmental failures in modern big government, and ministerial resignation for departmental and personal errors is so infrequent in parliamentary systems, that the obligation to resign is now regarded as 'not an established feature' of the convention but as a general political liability that 'may be induced or avoided according to political circumstances' (Turpin 1994: 109).

It is recognized that the enforcement of ministerial responsibility does not depend entirely on the obligation to resign and that 'mere' answerability to, and criticism by, parliament is not innocuous or

entirely without effect. However, fearing that the baby has thus been thrown out with the bathwater, the view apparently still lingers that some stronger and more certain form of sanction, including the ultimate one of resignation in appropriate cases, is needed for the concept of ministerial responsibility to serve as a effective spur to ministerial and departmental performance. Turpin's analysis compels him to pronounce the obligation-to-resign component of ministerial responsibility as dead or, more accurately, stillborn; but he maintains that 'the sanction of resignation, however uncertain in practice, is still an informing idea of the constitution' (Turpin 1994: 110). While emphasizing full answerability and disclosure to parliament, Scott (1996) is careful not to rule out parliamentary use of the information obtained to apportion blame and to adjust its sanctions. In Malaysia, there is as yet little effort to clarify and reformulate the convention of ministerial responsibility but the need for some form of sanction also remains an 'informing idea' in opposition, academic and popular criticisms of the practice of ministerial responsibility.

While parliamentary control over ministers is generally considered inadequate for the above reasons, in Malaysia it is further weakened by the existence of a dominant and often domineering ruling party. The operation of the party and electoral system in the plural society has resulted in a 'permanent' ruling party continuously commanding more than a two-thirds majority in parliament. The opposition, upon which parliamentary control depends, is lacking not only in numbers but also in resources and often morale. The government's view of the opposition is highly negative and its treatment of it is cavalier and often derisive. The possibility of backbencher revolt and cross-voting that may cause the government to consider cogent opposition criticism is effectively ruled out by strict party discipline and centralization of power in the ruling party.

Together, the dominance and attitude of the government has had deleterious effects on the practice of ministerial responsibility. Ministers do not only give inadequate answers but frequently do not even attend parliamentary sittings, leaving questions to be replied by deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries (Kua 1993: 62–63). In line with practice elsewhere, ministers exposed for serious personal wrongdoing have been asked to leave when they become too much of a political liability to the government. This has happened to an education minister who lost a libel suit he brought against an opposition member for accusing him of corruption; a chief minister of Malacca for alleged

corruption and sexual misconduct; and most recently a chief minister of another state, Selangor, for being caught with a large amount of undeclared money in Australia. However, the ruling party in Malaysia enjoys an unusually strong position, and its security has generally enabled it to withstand public and parliamentary pressure merely to sanction, let alone remove, ministers tainted by widely publicized scandals. Particularly striking are the concerted efforts of the government to control and restrict the mechanisms of scrutiny in parliament so as to curb the voice of the opposition. Ong (1980, 1987) documents how the government has used its majority to amend and administer the rules or standing orders of parliament to reduce the number of parliamentary questions and to limit the opportunities and time available for opposition criticism. Contrary to common practice, the Public Accounts Committee, the main parliamentary mechanism for financial scrutiny, is chaired by a member of the ruling party. Not surprisingly, it has not been noted for vigilance (Abdullah bin Ayub 1978: 322–323; Puthucheary 1978b: 127–128).

The weakness of parliament has caused considerable concern and has led to various reforms for strengthening parliamentary scrutiny in many countries. In Britain, for example, these reforms include the parliamentary commissioner for administration, departmentally related select committees in parliament, and enhanced procedures and capacities for reviewing and auditing government expenditure (Norton 1994; White *et al.* 1994). These reforms also tacitly acknowledge that ministerial answerability alone is inadequate for effective parliamentary control of the bureaucracy. Civil servants now directly answer queries on operational matters by the parliamentary commissioner for administration and by the select committees in parliament. In Malaysia, the government has refrained from affording parliament any direct questioning of civil servants, although, as elsewhere, ministers are not averse to diverting blame to individual civil servants when failures occur. Opposition calls for parliamentary reform, including reviewing restrictive standing orders and ensuring greater impartiality by the Speaker, have been ignored. Instead of strengthening parliamentary control, the government has consistently acted to curtail it in Malaysia. This is perhaps the most telling contrast with Britain and other advanced parliamentary countries. Weakening parliamentary control obviously conduces to the security and comfort of ministers and civil servants, but it has all but removed a major constitutional spur to performance.

OTHER CONTROLS ON GOVERNMENT

Malaysia's judiciary has opted for judicial self-restraint since independence. Crouch (1996: 138–142) sees the judges as 'essentially conservative custodians of a political system dominated by the Malay elite to which most judges belong'. They 'shared the broad conservative outlook of the rest of the Malay elite' and 'rarely showed interest in reinterpreting the law in ways that might restrict the prerogatives of the government and its bureaucracy'. In the words of an optimistic reviewer (Jain 1986), Malaysian administrative law 'is as yet in its formative stages'. Nevertheless, in response to several decisions unfavourable to it, the government amended the federal Constitution in 1988 to enable it to determine the powers and jurisdiction of the courts through ordinary legislation. Misgivings about judicial handling of an important case involving UMNO resulted later in the year in what is widely seen as an 'assault on the judiciary' (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 1990; Lee 1995: ch. 3). This ended in the removal of the head of the judiciary and also two of the five senior judges embroiled in the controversial proceedings. These actions against the judiciary for displeasing the government can only have an intimidating effect on the judiciary and erode public confidence in its independence and impartiality, especially in important cases involving the government. This is clearly shown in the following remarks by an UMNO leader on the recent trial of Anwar Ibrahim after his dismissal as deputy prime minister in September 1998. 'I've people telling me', Sharizat Abdul Jalil, an UMNO Supreme Council member and parliamentary secretary, told the press, 'that when Justice Paul stands down, he is actually calling Dr Mahathir for instructions. I'm sick of this type of talk. The paranoia is incredible' (*NST*, 2 May 1999).

Increased government penetration in society and dissatisfaction with formal institutional controls have led to an increase in the number and activity of interest groups in Malaysia (Chee 1991b: 119–121; Crouch 1996: 196–218). Most are 'special' interest groups, so-called because they represent the particularistic interests of narrow groups in society. Others, known as 'public' interest groups (which include most NGOs), take up interests and concerns putatively shared by larger segments of society, such as consumer protection, healthcare, environmental protection, human rights and social justice (see Chapters 8 and 9 of this volume).

Interest groups suffer from various well-known limitations, including their class bias and their promotion of only specific interests and con-

cerns. Nevertheless, they can be a valuable supplement to more general mechanisms of representation and control, promoting greater government responsiveness to specific needs and generally inducing greater care in the exercise of government powers through negative feedback and persuasion, if not effective pressure. While seeing promise in the democratizing role of interest groups, most scholars also point to a combination of factors that dampen their contribution in Malaysia.

Ethnicity is a powerful divisive force within and among interest groups in Malaysia. Interest groups are often sites for ethnic competition; those led by non-Malays are prone to lose or face difficulty in gaining Malay support, and vice versa. Many special interest groups either begin as mono-ethnic entities or represent mono-ethnic breakaways from existing multi-ethnic groups. The existence of a Malay-controlled government and bureaucracy encourages Malays to form separate interest groups because of the perceived advantages this may confer.

The particularistic ends and strategies of special interest groups also diminish their contribution to the effective control of government. Instead of joining other interest groups to pursue common concerns about policy responsiveness and accountability in various public forums, most special interest groups rely on special connections to influential individuals and ruling parties to secure particularistic consideration and favours from the government. This applies generally to the business and capitalist groups, especially Malay ones dependent on government support and patronage. The public-benefiting spillover effects of their activity in terms of improving openness and accountability in government are thus limited. In addition, their 'private' methods of influence, which frequently must be hidden from public view to be effective, make them prone to capture by ruling politicians, promote clientelism and even corruption. Divided by ethnicity, vulnerable to capture by political patrons and, in any case, seeking particularistic favours from the system without reforming it, special interest groups in Malaysia – as Crouch (1996: 151) says of the important business and capitalist classes of all ethnic groups – 'have been inhibited as checks on government power and have not played a strong democratizing role'.

The governing style and attitude of the dominant-party government also limits the effectiveness of interest groups in Malaysia. The government has found it useful or necessary to incorporate influential interest groups into the policy process in certain areas. However, it

continues to see its role predominantly as governing and controlling rather than responding to societal demands (Esman 1972: 62), while it views interest groups as sources of problems rather than problem-solving, as sectional challenges to its electoral mandate, and even as anarchic threats to system stability (Mahathir 1986a, 2000). Under these circumstances, it is understandable that interest groups seek powerful patrons in the government and ruling party and that those that refrain or fail to do so are relegated to a 'disturbed-reactive' role in relation to government initiatives.

The mass media have attracted strong government control and regulation because of their importance in disseminating information and shaping public opinion (see Chapters 5 and 6 of this volume). The government has a monopoly over radio. Its monopoly over television ended in 1985 but all private licences are held by companies controlled by UMNO or by interests closely linked with it. The main newspapers are owned by the ruling parties or groups closely associated with them. In any case, the Printing Presses and Publications Act requires all newspapers to have their licences renewed annually and provides broad grounds for the revocation of licences. Chee (1991b: 118) notes that 'the suspension of four major newspapers from publication in October 1987, for five months, showed the press how limited the tolerance level of the government could be'. The same Act also confers upon the minister in charge wide powers of control that are exercisable at his or her 'absolute discretion'. The Official Secrets Act also restricts the press, as it provides a mandatory jail sentence for anyone convicted of possessing official secrets. As a result of their pro-government stance or their self-censorship induced by government controls, and the tight control of information by the government, the mass media in Malaysia are not perceived to be active and effective sentinels of the public.

The weakening of general control mechanisms to reduce their effectiveness in controlling ministers also has the effect, albeit unintended, of reducing their effectiveness in controlling civil servants. Realizing the need to control civil servants but unwilling to revitalize external control mechanisms that control both ministers and civil servants, the government has resorted to control agencies that target mainly the bureaucracy and, most importantly, that are under its control and direction. These 'executive-controlled mechanisms for bureaucratic accountability', as Chee (1991b: 113) aptly calls them, include the Anti-Corruption Agency and the Public Complaints Bureau, which was set up after the government rejected a proposal for an independent ombuds-

man in 1968. Both of these agencies are normally placed under the Prime Minister's Department.

The effectiveness of these executive agencies depends on the powers, resources and support provided them by their political masters. That such agencies are ineffectual in combatting abuses by politicians in power is clearly shown in the case of massive corruption known as *Hawala* in India (*Frontline*, 9 Feb. 1996). There, the Central Bureau of Investigation, an executive agency similar to the Anti-Corruption Agency in Malaysia and similarly placed under the prime minister, was easily controlled and manipulated by its political head, both to hide his own corrupt deeds and those of his family and allies, and to kill off his (no less corrupt) political rivals. The *Hawala* case would not have come to light were it not for the reporters who brought the case to court and the independent and activist Indian Supreme Court judges who overrode the executive and ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to continue investigations and to prosecute those involved. It thus clearly demonstrates the limitations of executive-directed control agencies and underlines the need for independent external controls on both ministers and civil servants. Moreover, the seriousness and incomplete prosecution of the case, even after it was exposed, suggest that the most fearful and virulent kind of corruption in any country derives from the political top – for which executive-controlled control agencies are poor antidotes – rather than from bureaucrats or the public below.

THE PROBLEM OF EXECUTIVE DOMINANCE

The foregoing discussion points strongly to a dominant and aggrandizing political executive as the central problem of government accountability in Malaysia. The real problem facing democratic public administration is not just a dominant government in relation to society, but a dominant political executive in a dominant government – or simply a dominant political executive, if the word 'dominant' is understood as characterizing the relations of the political executive with the governed as well as its relations with other government institutions, including the bureaucracy. Chee (1991b) also identifies executive dominance as the main threat to public accountability. However, it is important to establish more clearly than has been done that it is the political executive and not the bureaucracy that is dominant.

Executive dominance, as Self says of defects of political leadership above, has 'deep roots within political systems'. A full explanation of

executive dominance in Malaysia is beyond the scope of this essay. However, the search for an explanation may usefully begin by noting that executive dominance in Malaysia is the result of two main factors: the emergence of a dominant ruling party and the aggrandizing actions of the party-supported executive. These actions have increased the electoral advantage of the ruling party, the power of the executive in relation to other branches of government, and the power of government in relation to society.

In Malaysia, the dominant ruling party is the result of the operation of party competition and the electoral system in the ethnic-competitive polity. The primacy of ethnic competition and the Malay population majority has enabled UMNO to become the strongest political party in the country by championing the interests of the Malays. Its alliance with moderate parties representing other ethnic groups has resulted in a powerful UMNO-led 'centrist' coalition that has consistently won over half of the votes in every parliamentary election held thus far. The parliamentary strength of the ruling coalition is further enhanced by the adoption of the simple-plurality or 'first past the post' electoral system. Thanks to the 'big party bias' of this method of election, the coalition has always commanded the two-thirds majority in parliament needed for amending the Constitution, even though it has never won more than two-thirds of the total votes in any election.

The ruling coalition has used its two-thirds majority in parliament to curtail the opposition challenge to its dominant position. It has responded to opposition gains in the 1959 and 1969 elections by using its parliamentary majority to amend the Constitution and make important changes to the electoral system and other rules of political competition to safeguard its dominant position (Funston 1980: ch. 9; Ong 1990; Rachagan 1993). It has amended and used the electoral system to devalue the opposition-prone urban Chinese vote and, in East Malaysia, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* vote, thus enhancing the electoral importance of its own supporters, namely the mainly rural Malays in West Malaysia and Muslim *bumiputeras* in East Malaysia. The prohibition of political debate after 1971 on certain sensitive issues and increased resort to legal controls and sanctions have also handicapped the opposition parties, and facilitated their cooptation into an enlarged UMNO-led coalition known as the National Front or, in Malay, Barisan Nasional (BN). These changes have the effect of enhancing three things: Malay-Muslim political power in relation to other groups; the dominant position of the BN in relation to the

remaining opposition parties; and the dominant position of UMNO within the BN. The main opposition parties at the national level are the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Islamic Party of Malaysia (popularly known by its Malay acronym of PAS). The former is supported mainly by non-Malays while the latter draws its support almost exclusively from Malays.

Backed by a dominant ruling party, the executive in Malaysia has consistently acted to increase its own power in relation to other institutions of government, as noted in the earlier examination of external controls. Not only has it subordinated parliament to its will; it has also amended the Constitution to clarify and limit the powers of the judiciary and even the head of state (or *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*). It has also removed constitutional constraints and passed laws that expand its powers and discretion in relation to society. All these laws have as their core justification the safeguarding of national security and public order in the conflict-prone plural society. However, their frequent 'overkill' – in terms of scope, sanctions and inadequate provisions for preventing abuse – and especially the tendency of political leaders to conflate their own continued incumbency, or regime security, with national security in applying them, indicate the determination of the ruling elite to control dissent and prevent any challenge to its position. Besides providing a summary of these laws and their actual use and effects, Crouch (1996: 77–95) also surveys a battery of other laws and 'precautionary measures to prevent the emergence of potentially significant political forces' (ibid.: 88) among workers, peasants, students and the middle class.

Executive aggrandizement stems largely from the desire of ruling politicians to maintain themselves in power. In addition, increased powers are sought because they are believed to be needed for effective government. As I have shown elsewhere, Malaysia's first-generation political leaders believed that effective government in the country's plural society must be strong government, and government is only strong if it is armed with broad powers and subject to as few restraints as possible in the exercise of those powers (Lim Hong Hai 1989). Chee (1991b: 124) notes that 'the trend towards authoritarianism that many observers see in recent events' reflects 'Mahathir's leadership style as well as his philosophy of governance'. More articulate than his predecessors, Mahathir (1995) has made it clear that he sees democracy mainly in representative or electoral terms. To him, the fact that 'leaders can be removed through the ballot box' provides 'sufficient

guarantee' against the abuse of power (*NST*, 18 May 1999) and both constitutional restraints and non-electoral participatory mechanisms are of dubious value as they obstruct the government's effective exercise of its electoral mandate.

Another factor in explaining executive aggrandizement is the weakness of the deterrents to such behaviour that are normally to be found in electorally competitive political systems. The main deterrent, that power-holders may some day find themselves out of office and at the receiving end of power, has long been invoked in Malaysia, for example by Hickling (1962: 192) when he asks, 'What of tomorrow, when these powers may be in other hands?' However, this deterrent lacks force because power has never changed hands and appears unlikely to change hands anytime soon in Malaysia, especially for power-holders whose past success has made them highly confident of their ability to prevent just such an eventuality. This is not to deny the usefulness of elections as a check on power or the ineradicable vulnerability of those dependent on the people for their power. It is only to say that the ruling coalition, or UMNO in particular, feels highly secure in its power, having devised an effective formula for retaining power and successfully arrogating to itself the ability to align the 'rules of the game' to ensure the continued success of its formula.

The other deterrent, viz. public outrage and resistance, can operate even earlier and check *in limine* aggrandizing acts of the executive. But this too has been weak in Malaysia. The lack of effective public resistance has many sources, among them political apathy, cultural deference to authority, and the intimidating effect of existing laws and their use by those in power. To an important degree, it is also due to the effects of ethnic politics. Ethnic politics have exacerbated fears of instability and this encourages acceptance of strong government. Government leaders never seem to tire in reminding Malaysians of the precariousness of political stability and in using it to justify strong government. More importantly perhaps, ethnic calculations and solidarity have diluted or displaced concern with the control of the Malay-dominated government among the electorally crucial Malays. As a result of these factors, public feedback, including from elections, has not been effective in deterring acts of executive aggrandizement. This is not to say that Malaysians cannot or will not show their displeasure with executive aggrandizement in future elections, or that the managed electoral system is rendered incapable of signalling such displeasure. It is simply that Malaysians have not used their vote for this purpose in

sufficient numbers and this has allowed executive aggrandizement to proceed unchecked.

EFFECTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

I have argued thus far that the main problem facing democratic public administration in Malaysia is not so much ministerial inability to control civil servants as the weak control of ministers. The main problem, in other words, is not bureaucratic dominance but executive dominance. But why is executive dominance a problem for public administration? This question merits examination as the adverse effects of executive dominance on public administration appear to be insufficiently understood.

Executive dominance and weak accountability are opposite faces of the same coin. Weak accountability enhances the power and security of office-holders and encourages various kinds of negative ministerial and bureaucratic behaviour that damage the performance values of responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency. These predictable behaviours – which Finer (1965: 180) classifies into three kinds, namely non-performance of duties, unsatisfactory performance of duties, and actions beyond what law empowers or permits – have various sources, of which two broad ones may be identified, namely *slack* and *indulgence*. Slack is insufficient effort or diligence, both in developing needed capacity and in applying it to achieve goals. Indulgence is the improper use of the resources and powers of office for their own goals and interests by office-holders. Slack is the main cause of non-performance and poor performance, while indulgence is the main cause of improper and prohibited actions. Clearly, effective accountability promotes performance by limiting slack and indulgence and correcting them when they exceed acceptable bounds.

As the performance of public administration is importantly affected by ministerial behaviour, it is with the effect of executive dominance on ministers that this section must begin. Politicians in ministerial office are not only powerful but are also characterized by considerable conflicts of interest (Greene 1990). In an executive-dominated polity, the mechanisms of accountability are weak while ministers are powerful and secure. Under these conditions, the inhibitions against ministerial slack and indulgence are reduced.

Self-enrichment and the enrichment of family members and friends are among the most widely known and common forms of indulgence by powerful and secure ministers. The use of public power and resources

for personal and party political advantage is another. These abuses in ministerial decision-making are popularly epitomized in the phrase 'corruption, nepotism, and cronyism' in the wake of the recent economic crisis in Asia. Clearly, these abuses by ministers cast a baneful effect on public administration.

Ministerial indulgence in executive-dominated polities is not confined to their own decision-making in public administration. The pursuit of extraneous and self-regarding goals by ministers also leads them to penetrate and interfere in the institution through which the bulk of public resources is chanelled, namely the bureaucracy. This latter problem has been highlighted by Riggs (1970, 1971) in his analysis of 'unbalanced polities'. He identifies two polar types of such polities, namely the 'bureaucratic polity' dominated by bureaucrats and the 'party-run polity' dominated by ruling politicians. It is the party-run polity that is of interest here. Political leaders in a party-run polity are unlikely to appreciate the importance of a politically neutral civil service. They are also not adequately restrained from pursuing extraneous goals in and through the bureaucracy. Riggs thus sees the emergence of a politically partisan bureaucracy as the hallmark of a party-run polity. The dilution and displacement of merit and performance criteria by political ones in appointment and promotion lower the capacity and performance of such a bureaucracy. Moreover, the paramount concern of partisan bureaucrats is the protection and promotion of their careers through linkages with ruling politicians rather than the proper performance of their bureaucratic duties. A partisan bureaucracy therefore tends to perform poorly.

The Malaysian executive-dominated polity appears to be an intermediate type that is close to Riggs's party-run polity. Politicians who dominate the bureaucracy and are inadequately restrained by control mechanisms in an executive-dominated polity can be expected to interfere in and politicize bureaucratic decision-making for personal gain and partisan-political advantage, even before resorting to politicizing the civil service itself. Performance is usually compromised, not only directly through the displacement of rational-bureaucratic criteria by self-serving and partisan-political ones but also indirectly through the erosion of bureaucratic morale and professionalism.

Besides disciplining ministerial desires, effective accountability of ministers is needed for inducing greater ministerial efforts to ensure the performance of their bureaucratic charges. Even as they interfere in bureaucratic decision-making or the bureaucracy itself, dominant

ministers insulated from effective public pressure are also likely to be slack in overseeing the bureaucracy and demanding performance from it. While political interference constrains bureaucratic decision-making in some ways in affected areas, ministerial slack in controlling the bureaucracy enhances bureaucratic autonomy and discretion in other ways and in other areas. It is important to realize that this increase in bureaucratic power is the result not of ministerial powerlessness but of ministerial slack. Ministerial slack in extracting performance from the bureaucracy, together with the emasculation of other external controls by the dominant executive, produces lesser performance than bureaucrats are capable of, resulting in the increasing incidence of unsatisfactory performance. Worse, when external controls are weak and ruling politicians serve as common exemplars of indulgence and low standards of public conduct, bureaucrats are also likely to abuse their power for personal gain. Thus ministerial slack and indulgence permit and encourage inadequately controlled civil servants also to slack and indulge in an executive-dominated polity. Ministers do not desire these negative effects on the bureaucracy, but they are inevitable corollaries of their own behaviour.

Elections are valuable for ensuring that performance does not deteriorate below the level needed for maintaining sufficient public support and acquiescence. However, the discipline of elections is not only generally loose but is especially weak in the Malaysian executive-dominated polity. Considerable slack and indulgence by ministers and bureaucrats can therefore continue to exact a heavy price in performance, even when elections are regularly held.

While the above propositions of the effects of inadequate accountability under executive dominance may be derived with the help of extant public administration literature, the interesting question here is the extent to which these predicted effects are found in the executive-dominated Malaysian polity. The answer must await more systematic studies of ministerial and bureaucratic behaviour and assessments of public administration performance in Malaysia than are presently available. However, there is enough evidence from case studies of specific policy areas and media reports of public scandals and other problems to establish a strong *prima facie* case that these expected consequences of executive dominance and weak control on ministers and bureaucrats are already common occurrences in Malaysia.

To begin with indulgence, a 1998 corruption ranking by Transparency International places Malaysia in the 29th place among 85 countries (the lower the more corrupt), with a score of 5.3 against a

corruption-free score of 10, thus suggesting that Malaysia is an averagely corrupt country. Within ASEAN, only Singapore, with a seventh world placing of 9.1, has a better score than Malaysia. Though not rampant, corruption is nevertheless a persistent and worrisome problem. Civil servants regularly account for the majority of arrests by the Anti-Corruption Agency: in 1998, for example, 186 of the 300 cases, or 62 per cent, involved civil servants (*NST*, 4 June 1999). The disturbing frequency of public scandals involving politicians in office at both federal and state levels (some of which have been mentioned in the earlier discussion on ministerial responsibility) strongly suggests that corruption among ruling politicians is no less a problem than corruption among bureaucrats in Malaysia.

Such an impression is enhanced by the mutual accusations of corruption and abuse of power that occurred after Mahathir's dismissal of Anwar in September 1998. In a question and answer session with the press, Mahathir's reply to the query that 'Anwar has said he has evidence of corruption against you' was as follows:

> No. I am not going to ask him to prove the corruption. He can prove, he must remember that we also have a lot of proof about his own corruption. But that is something else. I am not interested in that. I am interested in these things which I cannot accept (*NST*, 23 Sept. 1998).

And when Anwar's allegations of Mahathir's nepotism and cronyism were aired over the American business channel CNBC, evidence of Anwar's nepotism and cronyism were splashed on the front pages of Malaysian newspapers (*NST*, 28 Sept. 1998). Details were later released in rapid succession on the corporate positions and holdings of Anwar's family members and political allies, leaving many wondering how large is the iceberg of indulgence within UMNO, and not just within Anwar's camp, that remains submerged (*NST*, 3, 8 and 10 Dec. 1998).

During his trial for abuse of power (of which he was found guilty), Anwar also levelled similar accusations against Mahathir. 'The prime minister', he alleged, 'uses the judicial system as a tool to exert political pressure. All the instruments of government including the attorney-general's office, the police and indeed the judiciary are under the prime minister's thumb.' To these charges, a newspaper columnist who took up the cudgel on Mahathir's behalf replied:

> Anwar was not as uninvolved as he wants the public to believe when it comes to using the 'system' when he was in power. ... It is no secret that a big section of the media and other

> key organs of politics, administration and business were under Anwar's thumb until his last days in the Government ... [Anwar] did not hesitate to hand out his share of plum government contracts to solidify his power base (*NST*, 18 and 25 April 1999: 11).

Again, the only 'defence' offered was 'you too'.

These revelations are especially troubling for Malaysians not only because they involve the country's top leaders but also because the accusations of wrong-doing were not always and not clearly denied by either of them. In fact, one is hard put to distinguish the repeated 'you-toos' from mutual guilt and admission, their denials on other occasions notwithstanding. Furthermore, when their acts of possible corruption are exposed, ministers often appear to rely on a collective insurance system by threatening, explicitly or implicitly, to expose others if action is taken against them. Even Anwar admitted invoking this defence when Mahathir believed Anwar was plotting against him and pressured him to resign. When asked in an interview after he was dismissed whether he would use the information he must have acquired when in office 'about a lot of people', Anwar replied:

> Well, that is why I told him (Mahathir): Don't threaten me and push me too far ... Don't forget the fact that, other than you, I know about this country: the deals, the contracts, the meetings and understandings with foreign governments. So don't play the game with me (Anwar Ibrahim 1998: 22).

Malaysians may thus be excused for fearing that corruption and abuse of power have reached the highest levels of their government.

Indulgence by ministers and other ruling party politicians have had deleterious effects on public administration. These effects merit closer examination. First, the indulgent pursuit of extraneous goals in ministerial decision-making is widely believed to pervade the implementation of the country's privatization programme. Crouch (1996: 39) notes that the privatization programme, started in 1983, opened 'a new field of patronage distribution'. State assets were frequently sold to politically favoured groups and individuals (Gomez and Jomo 1997). This may be a reason why these sales were often underpriced (Crouch 1996: 39) and why not enough attention has been given to ensuring either adequate competition or effective regulation that is widely believed to be necessary for maximizing social welfare. More blatantly, privatization has been used, along with other means, to build a vast business empire controlled by UMNO (Gomez 1990). An early case

that provoked considerable controversy was the award of a $3.4 billion contract to an UMNO-controlled company to build and collect toll from a new North–South Highway. Mahathir and other UMNO leaders openly defended the decision as a means for UMNO to obtain income to cover the costs of constructing its new headquarters building (Gomez 1990: 129). The important distinction between party and government was completely ignored.

Indulgence by dominant-party politicians has also resulted in widespread political interference in administrative decisions and the politicization of bureaucratic decision-making. While this is widely known to characterize land and forestry administration by state governments (Aeria 1997: 59; Cooke 1994; Crouch 1996: 39), it also appears to be common in the federal bureaucracy, especially when development projects are implemented at the state and district levels. A study of fishery development projects shows that politicians from the ruling party and their allies controlled allocation decisions for their own benefit (Gibbons 1976; 1979). Shamsul (1983; 1986: ch. 5) provides a detailed account of this in his study of development projects in a district in the state of Selangor. Decision-making on the allocation of development projects and the award of contracts in the various government committees was effectively controlled by UMNO politicians, who ensured that the lion's share of development funds goes to the areas that support UMNO at the expense of areas that support the opposition PAS. They also made sure that the big contracts were awarded to companies set up by themselves and their business partners and other influential UMNO politicians. Bureaucrats were induced to cooperate not only by the demonstrated ability of the politicians to have recalcitrant bureaucrats transferred out of the district but also by the opportunity to profit from the 'business' of development: many bureaucrats also set up their own companies which were awarded the smaller contracts. These examples of political interference in bureaucratic decision-making are not by ministers but by other politicians from the dominant ruling party. This too is a sign of executive dominance as it is the resulting weakness of accountability that allows ministers to indulge lower-level party colleagues and special interests and enable them to have their way with the bureaucracy.

Many other federal programmes also constitute highly politicized systems of patronage distribution. These include the allocation of shares in private companies reserved for Malays, the distribution of licences that are required for most areas of economic activity, the appointment

of directors in public enterprises and their subsidiaries, the selection of settlers in government land schemes, and the provision of loans by government agencies. In all these and other examples surveyed by Crouch (1996: 36–41), connections to UMNO and UMNO politicians greatly facilitate access to economic benefits distributed by the government. The government's increased involvement in the economy under the NEP has expanded opportunities for ruling politicians to strengthen their political support through the distribution of patronage.

Malaysia inherited a politically neutral civil service from colonial rule and the majority of civil servants continue to see themselves as non-partisan. However, as a result of pressure by the ruling coalition on civil servants to identify with its goals and policies, there is now considerable evidence of bureaucratic political involvement and bureaucratic partisanship that Riggs sees as the hallmark of party dominance. Crouch (1996: 133) notes that civil service regulations circumscribing political involvement by civil servants 'seem to have been implemented in a fairly relaxed way, especially when civil servants were active in government parties'. Civil servants frequently contest and hold positions in UMNO and other government parties, en route to becoming full-time politicians. To give a recent example, an officer in the Information Ministry was appointed to the Senate after heading a division of UMNO Women for over a decade (*NST*, 13 Aug. 1998). Crouch (1996: 62–63) also notes that lower-level civil servants were regularly mobilized for election campaigns, especially from the Community Development Programme (KEMAS) where 'workers were full-time propagandists for the government, and officers were normally party activists'. Political involvement and partisanship are also widespread among Malay teachers. Evidently, substantial changes have occurred since the 1970s, when Riggs (1970: 405) included Malaysia in his tentative list of balanced polities with non-partisan bureaucracies and Puthucheary (1978a: 47) found 'little political interference in the internal civil service system' and 'no attempt to infiltrate the civil service with political cadres'.

It was only during leadership splits within UMNO, such as happened in 1989 (Crouch 1996: 133) and in 1998 following Anwar's dismissal, that the political involvement and partisanship of civil servants were seen as a problem by government leaders – and this only because they supported their opponents within the party. Thus while Mahathir and other UMNO leaders expressed strong concern with the political involvement of civil servants when there were reports of anti-government

activities by teachers and other pro-Anwar civil servants, KEMAS personnel were used to collect ten thousand signatures in support of Mahathir (*NST*, 21 Nov. 1998).

Politicization has also affected the morale and professionalism of civil servants. At least one senior civil servant (now retired) has lamented that 'the higher echelons of the civil service ... seem to have lost out in our professional standing'. He believes that an important factor has been the blurring of 'the fine line separating politics from professional management' and the increasing politicization of the higher civil service (Navaratnam 1984: 57–58). Particularly worrying to many Malaysians is the state of professionalism within the country's police force. It is not just Anwar's famous 'black' eye inflicted by the country's chief of police, but also revelations about police behaviour during his trial that have awakened Malaysians to the depth of the problem. These revelations include details of Anwar's own interference in police investigations into allegations against him. Professing compliance with Anwar's instructions, the Special Branch of the police admitted departing from 'normal practice' and making 'no attempt to investigate or discover the truth of the allegations' in its investigations. To cap it all, its director, when testifying against Anwar, avowed that '"theoretically" and "depending on circumstances" he was prepared to break the law to follow an important person's instructions' – yes, in reply to the judge's specific query, including lying in court (*NST*, 6 and 26 Nov. 1998).

The above paragraphs have examined the effects of ministerial indulgence on the bureaucracy. The other main problem of executive dominance is that ministers tend to be slack in managing their departments, again with predictable effects on bureaucratic behaviour and performance.

Ministerial slack, combined with the absence of other effective controls in the executive-dominated polity, has given rise to a highly discretionary and personalized style of administration in Malaysia, as noted by Puthucheary (1978a: 89). Rules exist, often in abundance, but, in the absence of effective external monitoring, civil servants have managed to maintain their discretion, hence their power, by applying them in a selective and opportunistic manner. This suggests, contrary to the common public complaints against 'bureaucrats' and 'bureaucratic' rigidity, that a major problem with Malaysian public administration is that it is 'under-bureaucratized', i.e. not sufficiently governed and made predictable by formal rules, rather than overly so. This highly discretionary behaviour may help to explain Puthucheary's remark,

noted earlier, that civil servants in Malaysia are largely accountable only to themselves.

Increased de facto discretion and weak control foster other forms of bureaucratic indulgence. The worrisome incidence of bureaucratic corruption has already been noted. Shamsul's 1983 study described above shows indulgence by bureaucrats as well as politicians: unable to beat the politicians, many bureaucrats decided to join them by setting up their own companies to benefit from the 'business' generated by development projects. Bureaucratic indulgence is widespread in the more autonomous public enterprise sector. When he served as finance minister, Anwar complained that many public enterprises and their subsidiaries had 'used the freedom to spend as they liked, set up various posts and appointed their own board of directors, giving them all kinds of allowances' (*NST*, 16 Jan. 1996). The public enterprise sector has accounted for some of the country's biggest financial scandals, such as those involving the BMF (Bumiputra Malaysia Finance) and the national steel corporation, Perwaja.

Discretion and weak control have also allowed bureaucrats to indulge their own biases in public administration. Puthucheary (1978a: 89) detects a class bias when she notes that the behaviour of bureaucrats depends importantly on the social status of the persons they were dealing with. Another kind of bureaucratic bias is especially worth noting in the Malaysian context. Non-Malays, including politicians inside and outside the ruling coalition, often blame overzealous Malay bureaucrats for increasing the discriminatory effects of pro-Malay policies and for 'discriminatory implementation of the supposedly non-discriminatory prong of the NEP' (Lim Lin Lean 1988: 42). Shamsul (1996: 25) describes the bureaucracy as 'highly ethnicized' and 'pro-Malay'. 'Lower ranking Malay civil servants', he elaborates, 'have often been accused by the non-Malay public as practising "racial discrimination" in the way they discharged their duties *vis-à-vis* the non-Malays. Their usual respond [sic] to the criticism was "we are simply implementing national politics".' That reduced control and increased bureaucratic discretion have resulted in widespread ethnic bias is hardly surprising, given the predominantly Malay composition of the bureaucracy and the pro-Malay ethos of the government.

The most frequent complaints, however, concern bureaucratic slack and the resulting nonfeasance and malfeasance of bureaucratic duties. Malaysian newspapers provide an endless stream of such complaints, including those voiced by ministers. Recent examples include: failure

to maintain proper financial accounts; failure to use funds for their allotted purposes; the 'sorry state' of government property, including aircraft and ships, due to what Mahathir has called a 'lack of maintenance culture'; the 'geriatric pace' at which some services are carried out; and the continued existence of 'deadwood' within the civil service. It has been pointed out that poor performers were left to their errant ways and sometimes assessed highly and even promoted, thus suggesting that 'the civil service is teeming with ineffectual and weak department heads' (*NST*, 17 Nov. 1998; 8 and 13 Dec. 1998; 25 and 29 March 1999). Not surprisingly, senior government leaders are most prone to complain of bureaucratic slack – as well as slack by their ministerial colleagues – when problems unexpectedly occur or during periods of crisis. Two recent episodes suffice to indicate the extent of the problem.

In early 1996, MARA, a public enterprise carrying out wide-ranging activities for the economic advancement of Malays, ran out of money due to 'uncontrolled spending' and had to ask for fresh funds from the government to continue its programmes. Anwar, who was then deputy prime minister and finance minister, called it 'clearly a problem of management and administration'. 'MARA's rate of expenditure and conditions,' he explained, 'were too relaxed to the extent that the agency did not get the approval of central agencies [as required] before spending its money on any project.' Anwar made it clear that the problem was not confined to MARA when he stated that many other public enterprises and their subsidiaries have also 'put aside all administrative and financial regulations'. He then urged 'ministers and heads of department with agencies and subsidiaries to personally scrutinize the operations of these bodies from time to time' (*NST*, 13 and 16 Jan. 1996). The next example shows that ministerial and bureaucratic slack is not confined to the public enterprise sector.

The recent economic crisis has led Mahathir and the first finance minister, Daim Zainuddin, to express strong concern with ministerial and bureaucratic slack which has resulted in serious shortfalls in the implementation of projects intended for speeding up the country's economic recovery. 'Sixteen ministries and departments', Daim revealed in May 1999, 'experienced a 50 to 100 per cent shortfall in [development] expenditure during the first quarter of this year' and 'only 5.3 per cent of the amount allocated had been spent against 11.1 per cent for the same period in 1998'. 'If the shortfall in development expenditure is obvious while, on the other hand, there is no shortfall in the operating expenditure', he reasoned, 'this can only mean that the

civil servants concerned have become inefficient or they are not doing their jobs for which they are paid.' This led the government to order fortnightly progress reports on development projects and instruct ministers that they 'should meet senior ministry officials twice a week to go through the progress of projects and ensure that they are implemented according to schedule' (*NST*, 4 and 6 May 1999).

While civil servants, especially secretaries-general and department heads, were blamed for causing the delays, it was pointed out that the finance minister's remarks also show that 'ministerial responsibility among some ministers is found wanting' and thus constitute a 'sharp rebuke' for ministers as well. The second finance minister added that some ministers tend 'to take things for granted, and leave the day-to-day running of the Ministries to civil servants'. Ministers were reminded that they 'are responsible for their departments' commission or omission' and that 'they should take control of their departments and establish productive relations with their subordinates' (*NST*, 5, 8, 12 and 16 May 1999). This public airing of weaknesses was abruptly terminated when a few other ministers, while admitting the shortfall within their ministries, all pointed to the cumbersome procedures and the resulting delay in the release of funds by Daim's Finance Ministry itself as the main cause of the problem.

The above episode also provoked references to another and perhaps especially telling consequence of executive dominance, namely the lack of sustained effort and follow-through in overcoming problems and administrative weaknesses that have come to light. The above-mentioned directive on fortnightly progress reports was quickly met with the following comment:

> Unless strictly enforced, Thursday's order to State Governments, Federal Ministries and agencies to submit fortnightly progress reports on development projects issued by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi may once again fall on deaf ears. For over a year now we have heard government leaders urging the civil service to speed up the implementation of such projects, apparently with little effect (*NST*, 2 May 1999).

Another press comment added:

> We can quote many examples of the people's expectations being raised in the wake of announcements that improvements have been made to certain departments or systems. But when they present themselves at those places, they find

> to their utter dismay that things have not changed at all (*NST*, 20 May 1999).

A separate incident involving state governments drew a similar reaction:

> Therein lies our problem. After each incident, State Governments and local councils were quick to give assurances that precautionary measures would be taken to ensure similar incidents would not recur ... As soon as the heat is off, what was said or promised is just as quickly forgotten (*NST*, 26 May 1999).

This recurring pattern of attending to problems, often with much fanfare, after they have resulted in dire consequences and promising to overcome them but without serious follow-through or effective problem-solving, is not surprising in the absence of sustained popular and institutional pressure in an executive-dominated polity.

Reforms to reduce slack also suffer from slack in implementing them. The chief secretary to the government (the country's top civil servant) recently revealed that client charters, required since 1994, have yet to be promulgated in 20 per cent of government agencies and that even agencies with client charters often do not abide by them or monitor compliance. He also complained that the issuance of clear guidelines and circulars have not overcome poor telephone manners in government agencies (*NST*, 14 Aug. 2000).

Executive dominance in Malaysia is thus shown not only by the weakness of external controls but also by the combination of its expected effects – much as a doctor detects a disease by the concurrence of its known symptoms. Executive dominance makes for strong government. Arguably, this makes a non-spurious contribution to political stability, a precarious value in plural Malaysia. However, all the ministerial and bureaucratic omissions and commissions under executive dominance are necessarily at the expense of the performance values dependent on accountability. These include the machine values of effectiveness and efficiency and the political value of responsiveness – that is to say, responsiveness to the interests of the general public, as opposed to responsiveness to the interests of those who govern and special interests allied to them.

Performance values are not completely ignored by ruling politicians, especially in elective systems. 'The governments of East Asia', as Mahathir (1998: 21) has argued, 'are far from perfect, but no one can say they did not bring prosperity as well as real, tangible and personally felt benefits to their people.' He is right to contend that 'if a country

does well, the government cannot be totally corrupt and incompetent.' But equally, there is no denying that weak accountability under executive dominance entails a significant loss of administrative responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency for the Malaysian public. Executive dominance thus amounts to an important value choice by ruling politicians, in which accountability and its associated values are traded off for other values. Ostensibly at least, these include political stability, but executive dominance has been sought and used by ruling politicians to serve also the values of power, security, comfort (from slack) and indulgence for themselves and – albeit unintended – for bureaucrats as well. Clarifying the values involved and their trade-offs is a necessary first step to informed discussion and reconsideration.

BROADENING REFORM

Over the years, concern has been expressed with the declining performance of public administration in Malaysia and calls have been made to arrest it. As Navaratnam (1984: 56) notes:

> The relative decline in the strength of the whole civil service has been quiet and gradual and has been taking place somewhat unnoticed ... To delay remedial action would be disastrous, not only for the civil service itself but more importantly for the effective formulation and implementation of public policies.

Puthucheary (1978a: 120) observes that the lack of effective external control and feedback has resulted in 'a civil service functioning at less than maximum efficiency with the attendant evils of, among other things, wavering public confidence [and] ... delays in implementing government policies'.

The Malaysian government is not unconcerned with effective and efficient administrative performance, even, or especially, with low ratings by external evaluators because of the country's open economy and increasing globalization. Mahathir has stated that 'although the civil service was more efficient compared to those in other developing countries, there is still much room for improvement' (*NST*, 8 May 1999). 'As it was inevitable that the Malaysian civil service would be compared with those of neighbouring countries', the chief secretary to the government has emphasized, 'a credible performance was vital' (*NST*, 21 Nov. 1998).

The objective of no more than 'a credible performance' may indicate cognizance of the government's pursuit of other values that

compete with administrative performance. However, the previous section shows that the attainment of even this objective is problematic. A recent volume by senior civil servants notes 'the pervading view that the government was performing below par' and documents various reforms within the bureaucracy to improve performance (Muhammad Rais Abdul Karim 1999: 22). The government has launched an ambitious privatization programme aimed primarily at addressing the problems of the huge public enterprise sector. Within the remaining public sector, there have been frequent internal innovations to raise performance and perhaps even an uncritical receptiveness to new management methods, including those that have already begun to be discredited in the West, such as incentive pay for senior personnel (Ingraham 1993; Perry 1986).

Clearly, the government cannot be faulted for complacency or inaction in improving bureaucratic performance. Performance is seriously pursued, but within the imposed and unexamined constraint of executive dominance (as well as the constraint of Malay control of the bureaucracy not examined here). Further progress, however, would require reform of the larger political system, as has been pointed out by writers like Puthucheary (1978a: 119–120) and Chee (1991b: 123). The arguments and evidence presented in this chapter reinforce and lend urgency to the need for wider political reform in improving administrative performance. Stronger mechanisms of accountability and a more balanced polity are needed for putting more effective restraint, as well as pressure for performance, on ministers and not just bureaucrats. The chain of control in parliamentary government can only be as strong as its weakest link, which in executive-dominated Malaysia appears to be the control of ministers.

Calls for more fundamental political reform have hitherto been resisted. This is understandable because such reform entails the attenuation of importantly held elite values. It also appears that the costs of weak accountability, and thus the need for political reform, are 'insufficiently appreciated' (Chee 1991b: 123), or are seen as affordable. Responding to a question on the need for better corporate governance for Asian economic recovery, Mahathir has replied that 'these countries had been governed by the same government [with] the same policies all these years and they have developed very well. There are abuses, this of course I don't deny, but it has not prevented them from developing very, very fast' (*NST*, 10 June 1999).

However, pressures for better performance and for more fundamental reform are increasing. As the recent economic crisis has shown,

a considerably higher level of government performance may be needed to effectively cope within the highly competitive and challenging environment promised by the new millennium. Chee (1991b: 105) points out that 'the mounting uneasiness over seemingly repressive measures and the systematic weakening of controls over executive-style governance demonstrate a rising concern for greater public accountability and more responsible government'. The *reformasi* movement launched by Anwar after his dismissal from the government and the new National Justice Party (Parti KeADILan Nasional) formed in April 1999 to spearhead the cause of reform have found considerable support among the Malays, even though they continue to benefit from the 'inner' responsiveness of the Malay-controlled government and bureaucracy. It remains to be seen whether or when external and internal pressures will combine with the necessity of showing a credible performance to oblige the government to broaden its reform agenda so as to incorporate political reforms.

Political Non-Governmental Organizations

Ideals and Realities

Saliha Hassan

Considering the complexity of Malaysia's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, the Barisan Nasional (BN, or National Front) government represents a success story in political accommodation, survival and power sharing. Critics of BN have focused on its relativist interpretation of democracy and justification for limiting its scope. In response, however, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has contended that 'the duty of government is ensuring peace and harmony through political stability which also creates a conducive environment for economic prosperity' (*The Sun*, 18 April 1997). For Mahathir, democracy should not be treated as a religion.[1] The point is to maintain a 'realistic democracy'; hence,

> Malaysia is not over-zealous about the democratic system to the point where we accept without question everything that is done in the name of democracy. If the people and the country benefit, then we will accept practices which are said to be democratic. If the people and the nation get only the worst from any practice that is said to be democratic, we will give priority

1. 'It is clearly dangerous to make a religion of an ideology... the present malady assailing the Western nations, the weakness in their leadership in particular, is due to democratic extremism' (Mahathir, Speech to the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, October 1993, cited in Jesudason 1995: 339).

> to what is good for the country and the people, and put aside the questions of whether or not it is democratic *(Sunday Mail*, 12 May 1996).

As several scholars have observed, the Malaysian political system is neither truly democratic nor completely authoritarian in that BN has ensured economic advancement and social stability but maintained ideological dominance and consolidated executive power, albeit by operating within a constitutional framework (Case 1993; Crouch 1996; Jesudason 1995). The regime's 'statist democratic' feature lies in a willingness to hold regular elections, although the regime enjoys a high degree of leverage in determining the rules of political competition.

To the extent that BN continues to hold the support of voters, the election results may be taken as evidence of the people's endorsement of BN's policies, political values and mode of effective governance: specifically, the effectiveness of the government in maintaining law and order, achieving economic growth, and providing for the welfare of the citizens (Tandon 1996: 293). Malaysian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), however, tend to hold to a different conception of governance that supports 'a pluralist polity with a capacity to influence and check executive power and protect human rights' and an administrative apparatus based upon 'an open, efficient, accountable and audited public service which has the bureaucratic competence to help design and implement appropriate policies and manage [the] public sector' (Leftwich 1993: 607). Within this context of somewhat differing conceptions of democracy and governance, this chapter discusses the role and discourses of politically engaged NGOs or social action groups (SAGs) as a way to assess more accurately state-civil society relations, and the NGOs' ability to reshape those relations.

THE PARAMETERS OF DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Democratization is so pervasively accepted as the definitive political dimension of globalization that Mahathir has reportedly said: '[C]hallenge democracy and you will be branded as a heretic, an unbeliever, a renegade' (cited in Jesudason 1995: 339). In this context, 'Western liberal democracy', and often its American model, is offered as the standard system for the world. The parameters of this liberal democracy include an emphasis on equality of rights, a relatively weak state, a strong moralistic insistence on the accountability of leaders and governments, and a presumption that society is relatively more important than the political and administrative centre. Current discussions of civil society

– based on a concept of plurality that encompasses popular organizations not part of or controlled by the formal institutions of the government – have been mostly located within this ideal model of democratic polity. While such a conception of civil society is often taken to refer to NGOs, in fact it includes other organized groups such as political parties, media, interest associations, labour unions, co-operatives, religious organizations, fraternal societies, women's groups and credit unions. Civil society, thus, lies within a modernized society that practises democratic principles where important channels of communication are not monopolized by a dominant group, including the government (Lipset 1995: 240). Principles of accessibility to information and policy-making processes, and responsible exercise of public deliberation, underlie this idea of the fundamental links between state and civil society.

Malaysian democratic practices would fall short of such mainstream or universalist standards. The political NGOs have been critical of forms of democracy found since the 1970s. Their criticism, which intensified during the 1980s, can be clearly gauged from NGO publications produced, among others, by Aliran Kesedaran Negara (ALIRAN, or National Consciousness Movement), the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM, or Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement) and the Civil Rights Committee (CRC) of the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (Saliha 1991). The English daily, *The Star*, and the Malay tabloid, *Watan*, which enjoyed wide circulation then, provided a forum for NGO discourses, until both publications were banned during the mass arrests of October 1987 (better known by its police codename of *Operasi Lalang*). The NGOs had sought to provide a democratic conscientization of the public which was deemed to be politically apathetic or ignorant of their fundamental rights and duties. In particular the Malaysian public was urged to be 'more aware of how and why freedom is curtailed, whose interests are served by curbs upon freedom, what are the consequences of concentration of power with the executive, how people should respond to the emasculation of democracy and what alternatives are available to those of us who are committed to greater freedom and justice' (Chandra 1986: vi).

In response, government leaders defended some of its allegedly undemocratic practices by placing priority on the importance of socio-economic well-being and the necessary of keeping differences between 'Western' and 'our' political values. It was claimed that 'our' values had their roots in the traditional practices of despotism, feudalism and

authoritarianism. It was conceded that these traditions had contained elements of elite consultation and popular participation, but they were deemed to be limited and rare. Governments, according to traditional Chinese, Hindu and Malay polities, as well as the tribal communities of Sabah and Sarawak, were responsible for maintaining order, ensuring economic growth, safeguarding the welfare of the people and defending state sovereignty. In short the criteria of good governance were not those of liberal democratic states, but those of effective government. Or, as has been asserted, 'strong, stable governments prepared to make decisions which, though often unpopular, are nevertheless in the best interests of the nation, are a prerequisite for economic development' (Mahathir and Ishihara 1995: 82).

In fact, the Malaysian political leadership has long held that any political system, democratic or not, must win 'hearts and minds' to survive over the long term. Given the regular conduct of general elections, successive governments have been able to claim that Malaysia is a democracy albeit 'one [cast] in our own mould', as *demokrasi à la Malaysia*, according to Tun Abdul Razak, the second prime minister, who contended what was required was a democracy 'suitable for a developing country with different communities'.[2] Underlying this defence of a limited democracy was a political argument that the multiethnic political system, having neither democratic tradition nor values, but requiring constitutional provisions for the Malays' 'special position', needed to place more power in the hands of the executive than is usual in a democracy. Hence, the resulting political structure is a combination of strong central government, executive dominance and controlled democratic practices.

'Malaysian democracy', therefore, has restrictive laws (Gurmit Singh 1987) to regulate, monitor, depoliticize and if necessary, eliminate critics of government, especially since their opposition is regarded as a disruption of established political and development agendas (Crouch 1996). While Part II of the federal Constitution enshrines 'fundamental

2. Another prominent government leader, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, once declared that 'one of our major miscalculations at the time of Merdeka [Independence] was to welcome uncritically the concepts and precepts of a Westminster-type democracy. ... We did not realise how irrelevant it was to our society as it exists today ... Let us therefore admit that at this stage of our constitutional development to mimic the democracy of Westminster in 1957 without the comparative economic and social foundation is to court self-destruction' (cited in Chandra 1986: 279).

liberties', these liberties have been circumscribed in the interests of safeguarding ethnic harmony and political stability. For example, the right to freedom of speech does not include a right to discuss 'sensitive issues' – including matters relating to Islam as the official religion, Malay as the national language, the position of the Malay rulers, and the 'special position' of the Malays – not even by elected representatives in parliament. Another argument for circumscribing the scope of democracy thus was that Malaysians did not have the sense of broad equality and political effectiveness essential to meaningful popular political participation. In other words, the polity lacked 'the necessary social and economic infrastructure' for Western-style democracy, by which was meant the absence of an 'authentic' middle class as the basis of a viable civil society. In particular, the politically dominant Malay community controlled the state machinery, but had limited access to wealth (Abdul Rahman Embong 1995: 41–46). This led UMNO leaders to declare that they needed 'an industrialization and urbanization programme in order [to] build an authentic Malaysian middle class to sustain the kind of democracy we want' (cited in Chandra 1986: 279). That programme of industrialization and urbanization was incorporated into the New Economic Policy (NEP) and scheduled for implementation between 1970 and 1990.

There is, however, an additional, international dimension to this view of good government and effective governance which has resonances in the 'Asian values' debate of recent years (see Chapter 3, this volume). The government has sought to present Malaysia as the 'friendly face of Islam' as well as a stable, industrialized, prosperous, and information technology-savvy country profitably engaged with the global economy (Kamarudin and Hazami 1993; Mahathir 1991). This vision of Malaysian society having a forward looking agenda – *Wawasan 2020*, or Vision 2020 – incorporates the prospect of developing a 'mature consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that can be a model for ... developing countries' (Mahathir 1991: 2–4). This 'model' requires the dominant Malay community to accept technological advances, progressive aspects of economic development, and intellectual achievement while reforming Malay culture and society in conformity with Islamic teachings. To this end, Mahathir's policy of 'Islamization' had initiated a gradual and incremental assimilation by the system of administration of 'Islamic values' to ensure that leadership was based on good character, fairness, accountability and enlightened attitudes. For the then deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, the policy of Islamization was 'guided by moral precepts and faith reawakened' (Anwar

1997: 5) to create an ethical political system and ***masyarakat madani***, the latter being a civil society based on a greater scope for fundamental liberties and a broader role for citizens that was simultaneously responsive to the government's agenda.

Beyond that, the policy of Islamization was not intended to alter the secular structure and orientation of the existing polity, certainly not in the direction of establishing an Islamic state. The government promoted its 'Islamic values' as 'universal values' meant to accommodate the non-Malay and non-Muslim communities which constitute 45 per cent of the population, and whose values are derived mainly from Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism and other indigenous cultures and belief systems. To this end, the government had sponsored a series of academic 'civilisational dialogues', mainly between Islam and Confucianism, given some similarities in values between these two religions, an absence of clashes between them, and the importance of Confucianism to Chinese Malaysians.[3] In Mahathir's and Anwar's political thinking, these 'Asian' values were critical to building a 'democracy according to our own mould' that would be popularly accepted, legitimate, and safeguard Malaysia's intricate plural society.

However, this top-down definition of 'Malaysian democracy' and civil society has not gone unchallenged, not least by NGOs which have been critical of this state project and its circumscription of the scope for democratic participation in politics.

POLITICAL NGOS: PROFILES AND POSITIONS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Non-governmental organizations perform important functions in modern society, the complex problems of which are rarely capable of solution by isolated individuals. As a rule, the more open a society's political system is, the greater will be the chances for individuals to secure the implementation of their public intentions by merging together their expertise, voices and influence. Governments are often too preoccupied with their own agendas of managing balances

3. At one stage, serious consideration was given towards expanding and institutionalizing this dialogue. A Centre for Civilization Dialogue was set up in Universiti Malaya with Dr Chandra Muzaffar, a well-known Malaysian academic, social analyst and human right activist, as its director. The Centre was set up, in principle, because 'the Asian at heart is persona religious. Faith and religious practice, not confined to the individual, permeate the life of the community' (Anwar 1997: 4).

between those in power to be able to address local interests, marginal interests or alternative views that emerge at grassroots levels. Governments frequently exert pressure on NGO interests by asserting state interests, which they claim should subsume individual or minority interests, state interests being generally offered as being synonymous with the general good. Thus citizens' associations, people's organizations, interest groups, pressure groups, non-profit organizations, social action movements or simply NGOs can become effective alternative channels for collective action.

Under the impact of globalization, NGOs have been regarded by some quarters as constituting a third sector in society that can play an intervening role between the state and private enterprise. By the standards of liberal democracy, NGOs can mediate between the legitimate rights of the state and individual fundamental liberties. NGOs, too, provide a buffer between state power and authority and the human and civic rights of individuals; they thereby promote legitimate individual rights. In relation to democracy and the process of democratization, therefore, NGOs and grassroots organizations can form networks, coalitions and links with other societal elements to form what may loosely be termed social movements oriented towards change or reforms (Eldridge 1991; Johari 1993; Korten 1990; Lim 1995; Marcussen 1996; Saliha 2000).

In Malaysia, there are myriad NGOs promoting or espousing a wide range of social, economic, cultural and political causes, interests and agendas. There are three basic ways by which NGOs relate to the state. Many of the welfare and recreational types of NGOs complement the state's activities by providing welfare and social services. These NGOs tend to work closely with state agencies, for example, the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development. Other NGOs, however, challenge the government's ideals, whether these are set forth in concepts and policies such as 'Malaysia Inc.', Vision 2020, ethnic power sharing or 'democracy in our mould'. But even among them are NGOs that try to engage the state to negotiate points of difference by working with the grassroots to raise their concerns at state level, or with government agencies to improve policies, or by directly confronting the government with alternatives.

These NGOs engage in public debates and the dissemination of information related to civil liberties, democratic rights, good governance, bureaucratic transparency, executive accountability and people-oriented leadership – all these being issues central to civil society and democratic participation. These NGOs, concerned with popular

political participation in theory and practice, regard themselves as significant actors within an evolving modern civil society, even as the conscience of the state. They therefore offer themselves as democratic channels for the political participation of concerned citizens and constitutionally legitimate interests. They distance themselves from the ethnic preoccupations of the main political parties and seriously offer themselves as society's responses to ethnic polarization. In other words, central to these NGOs' discourses and activities is the issue of good governance and how they can contribute to its realization.[4]

These political NGOs include Aliran Kesedaran Negara (ALIRAN), Dongjiaozong (DJZ, or the coalition of Dong Zong, the Association of Chinese School Boards, and Jiao Zong, the United Chinese School Teachers Association), Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM, or Malaysian People's Voice), Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), Sisters in Islam, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Al-Arqam (House of Arqam). Together they have represented major strands of social action movements that attempt to engage the state in political discourse, to champion the causes of specific non-mainstream interests, and to provide alternative perspectives on human rights, civil society and social justice over the past 25 to 30 years. Other important NGOs are Tenaganita (headed by Irene Fernandez), the JUST World Trust (established and led by Chandra Muzaffar) and the Centre for Peace Initiative (CENPEACE) (set up by Fan Yew Teng and others). In addition there are university student organizations and youth associations of various persuasions.

Presently ABIM is the biggest and most influential grassroots Islamic NGO, or, by its preferred definition, *harakah* (that is, a movement). ABIM claims a membership of over 50,000 people who come from all walks of life, including a sizeable segment of the Malay middle class. It was founded on 6 August 1971. Only 20 activists attended its first ABIM Conference (*Muktamar*) in 1972, but since then, ABIM has placed itself at the forefront of the Islamic resurgence (Chandra 1987; Hussin 1993; Zainah 1987). ABIM maintains a special relationship with its 'brother movement' the Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM, or National Association of Muslim Students of

4. Tandon (1996: 293) considers such NGOs to be reflective yet activist, and in his words, 'organisations that sit back and reflect on what they are doing and how their particular activity is related to the broader issues related to state, society and development in the present international situation'.

Malaysia) and has been for two decades the dominant organization for Islamic activists. While ABIM's discourses, activism and grassroots programmes, aimed at democratic participation, civil rights and societal development, are understandably underpinned by Islamic principles, they all stress the principle of moderation (*kesederhanaan* in Malay or *wasatiyyah* in Arabic). In general ABIM has maintained a non-partisan stance. It has often seemed to share the government's promotion of a progressive, moderate and friendly Islam (Muhammad Nur Manuty 1996) even while it denigrated a corporate sub-culture that was so unabashedly materialistic, profit-driven, hedonistic and ridden with many un-Islamic practices (Siddiq Fadil 1982, 1983; Muhammad Nur Manuty 1997). However, since the emergence of the *reformasi* movement in September 1998, following Anwar Ibrahim's dismissal from government and expulsion from UMNO, many ABIM leaders and members have joined Parti KeADILan Nasional (KeADILan, or National Justice Party). Since then, ABIM has more vigorously pursued its struggle against 'cronyism, corruption and nepotism' and for social justice and human rights. (Be that as it may, many older ABIM members have become affluent corporate figures and influential members of UMNO.)

The Al-Arqam movement developed rather differently. In contrast to ABIM, Al-Arqam was self-reliant and stood apart from UMNO and the state. Twelve Muslims, led by Ashaari Muhammad, founded Al-Arqam or Darul Arqam in 1968. Following the example of the *Hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad (*saw*), Ashaari led his followers to Sungai Pencala, located on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, where they cleared eight acres of land, and set up homes, a mosque and a school. Al-Arqam adopted a bottom-up approach out of the conviction that a true Islamic community must be established prior to the establishment of an Islamic state. Al-Arqam criticized the Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, or Islamic Party) and ABIM for being rhetorical in approach and lacking a committed practical agenda. Al-Arqam denounced the Muslim-led government as a secular government and accused it of adopting Jewish and Christian practices. Instead Al-Arqam sought to offer a sample of a true Islamic alternative that should replace the existing Western-based political and economic systems (Jomo and Ahmad 1992: 80). However, in the late 1970s, Al-Arqam appeared to have withdrawn from public involvement and focused on internal matters. But by 1986, Ashaari's teachings and Arqam's cultist practices were subjected to charges of heresy. In 1988, the religious departments in several states pronounced Ashaari's teachings to be 'deviant' and banned Al-Arqam's publication, *Aurat Muhammadiah*. Al-Arqam was finally banned as an organization

in 1994, after the National Fatwa Council declared that Al-Arqam had deviated from the true teachings of Islam and Al-Arqam members were made to undergo government-sponsored Islamic rehabilitation programmes. Al-Arqam had been politically significant since it was prepared to challenge the state's secularist philosophy and policies at both discursive and practical levels. Its potential lay in its organizational discipline, economic independence and direct interaction with the grassroots, which was maintained through daily economic and social dealings. However, since banning Al-Arqam, the government has continued to monitor the movement of its ex-leaders and members who have generally been dispersed.

Such Islamic NGOs as ABIM and Al-Arqam have been the only NGOs that have addressed the role of Islam as a defining factor in the political life of the nation, a subject generally avoided by non-Islamic NGOs, as is common for non-Muslim Malaysians. Non-Islamic NGOs have collaborated with Islamic political NGOs wherever their positions on issues have found congruence, especially on human rights issues, but they have maintained their distance from issues directly involving the Muslim community. Nor have they questioned the political and constitutional position of Islam, or the increasing adoption of Islam and Islamic values as the moral underpinnings of the nation, mainly because 'a multi-ethnic society that is delicately balanced like ours has a greater tendency to persuade people to conform to the dominant political sentiment, if only because they do not want trouble' (Chandra 1986: 35).

A notable example of a non-Islamic political NGO is ALIRAN, that was launched on 12 August 1977 by Chandra Muzaffar and six other 'concerned individuals', namely, Gan Teik Chee, Ariffin Omar, S.P. Subramaniam, Siew Kam Poh, Ismail Hashim and Nor Rashid Ariffin. ALIRAN defines itself as a reform movement whose objective is to raise social consciousness and encourage social action that will lead to social justice in a multi-ethnic society that upholds equality, civil and democratic rights, and racial and religious tolerance. Its first public forum, officiated by the first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj, was devoted to a discussion of 'Democracy in Malaysia'. Its monthly publication, *Aliran Monthly* (previously the *Aliran Quarterly*) which was launched in 1982, continues to highlight issues pertaining to civil rights, political participation, judicial independence, democracy, executive accountability, responsible and people-oriented leadership, ethnic relations and religious tolerance. ALIRAN's positions on civil society and democratic processes coincide on many points with

the Western liberal democratic tradition that itself rests upon notions of fundamental liberties and the inherent rationality of mankind. With like-minded NGOs, including ABIM, ALIRAN continues to agitate for the repeal of the Internal Security Act (that allows detention without trial), Societies Act, Official Secrets Act, University and University Colleges Act, and other laws that limit the activities of political and non-political organizations while enhancing the powers of the executive. As can be judged from the contents of *Aliran Monthly* over the years, ALIRAN has held fast to its mission of building public awareness of the importance of human rights issues and social justice that it sees as being central to truly democratic parliamentary government (Saliha 1997, Goh G.P. 1998). ALIRAN's commitment to awakening ordinary citizens to the necessity of political participation in a parliamentary democracy has been summarized thus by its present president, P. Ramakrishnan (1989):

> Parliamentary democracy ... concerns the entire nation. Parliamentary democracy requires the participation of the people. Only then will people care for parliamentary democracy; only then will it be meaningful to them; only then would they want to defend it for they would see themselves as having a stake in parliamentary democracy.

In contrast with these relatively newly formed NGOs, Dongjiaozong has been operating in a localized and less formal form since Chinese schools were established during British colonial rule. DJZ was initially formed to undertake the organization, management and propagation of Chinese education that had always been important to Chinese immigrant communities. But in 1951, DJZ became an official organization at the national level at a time when the Chinese community was increasingly uneasy about the implications of colonial state policies for the future of Chinese education (Chua 1998; Tan 1992). Since then DJZ has worked closely with other Chinese associations that have expressed similar concerns over the Chinese community's civil rights in education and culture (Chua 1998; UCSTAM 1987). One such organization is the Civil Rights Committee (CRC) of the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (SCAH). DJZ has long been closely monitored by the government for posing a challenge to the government's Malay-based language and cultural policies, and its national education policy that adopts Malay as the sole medium of instruction. Instead, DJZ has promoted a 'pluralistic (*duoyuan*) approach to all aspects of cultural policy' (Tan 1992: 182). In fact, DJZ took the government to court

when the latter rejected an application made by certain segments of the Chinese community to establish a Chinese-medium Merdeka University. In the event, the court dismissed DJZ's suit and held the government's decision to be constitutional. Significantly, prominent DJZ leaders were subsequently detained under *Operasi Lalang* in 1987. Prior to that mass arrest of dissidents, DJZ, and especially the CRC, had begun to cooperate more and more with other NGOs over human rights and development controversies. Compared to its previous levels of activism, especially in the late 1980s, DJZ in the 1990s has maintained a lower public profile even though it remains very much in touch with Chinese politicians and Chinese based political parties.

In 1989, Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM; Malaysian People's Voice) crystallized as a formal organization out of the post-*Operasi Lalang* support group that was formed to assist the 106 detainees – of whom NGO leaders and social activists formed a large proportion – and their families (CARPA 1988). Currently SUARAM identifies itself as a human rights group, networks with national and international human rights organizations, and takes the lead in organizing activities that promote the protection of human rights. These activities have included providing legal aid and support services to individuals and groups whose human rights have been abused, and organizing public forums, seminars and talks on human rights issues. Some of the themes addressed by SUARAM have included housing for the poor, the abuse of power by the police and executive, the plight of indigenous and marginalized people dislocated by development projects, the rights of women, workers and urban squatters and ISA detainees. One of SUARAM's major achievements was bringing together more than 50 disparate organizations – of Islamists, socialists, liberals, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, feminists, indigenous peoples, academicians, unionists and the disabled – in a series of meetings in 1993–94 to formulate the *Malaysian Human Rights Charter* (1994). Under SUARAM's lead, several NGOs jointly published the *Malaysian Human Rights Report* (1998). In collaboration with some of the same NGOs, as well as with regional human rights groups, SUARAM played an instrumental role in setting up an ASEAN Human Rights mechanism. In adopting a universalist position on human rights, and drawing upon the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights, SUARAM has persistently challenged the government's relativist position on human rights which has been used to justify the use of the ISA and other coercive laws. Over the years, SUARAM has taken clear positions

on such domestic and international incidents or issues as the banning of Al-Arqam, the suffering of the people in Iraq as a result of the continuation of the USA-led embargo, the difficulties of electronic workers attempting to set up unions, the fate of the victims of Myanmar's military regime, cases of domestic violence, and the repeal of the ISA and other coercive laws in Malaysia. In 1999 SUARAM, together with NGOs such as the Persatuan Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia (HAKAM, or Malaysian Human Rights Association), Tenaganita (a women workers' support group), Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM, or Malaysian Islamic Reform Group), Sisters in Islam (SIS), PKPIM, ALIRAN and ABIM, actively contributed towards the debate on the establishment of Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia (SUHAKAM, or National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia), which was eventually established in July 1999. Still, while welcoming SUHAKAM's establishment by the government, SUARAM and other NGOs remain critical of the government's use of a limited definition of human rights, insisting that a human rights commission should be fully independent of government, and that the public should have a voice in the appointment of the commissioners.

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) had involved itself deeply in political discourses and activism related to the impact of development policies and projects on human welfare, society's collective well-being and the individual's rights. Based in Penang, CAP has played a prominent role in highlighting many development issues in the state, including opposing the state government's development projects for Penang Hill. Using its publication, *Utusan Konsumer*, CAP has often built an effective strategy of constructive engagement with the state with the aim of prodding the latter to show a greater responsiveness over consumer and environmental affairs and to undertake policy reforms. Much of CAP's energy and effort has been spent working out strategies to make itself acceptable to the government while promoting public awareness of its positions on social and economic rights. On a number of occasions CAP confronted the authorities by protesting against state-sponsored development projects that threatened sustainable development and ecological balance. Through networking with political NGOs, CAP has been more involved in political issues than other consumer groups, such as the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Association.

Sisters in Islam (SIS) was formed by a few Malay-Muslim women professionals in 1985, all close friends, but each having her own sphere of

influence in the legal, journalistic, social and academic fields. SIS focuses its attention and advocacy on areas concerned with policies that impact on Muslim women's domestic and legal rights and notions of democratic and Islamic states. SIS has carved for itself a niche in domestic and international arenas by drawing attention and discussion to

> the plight of womenfolk in Muslim society [which suffers from] a state of complete chaos, a hotchpotch of competing forces: the remaining Islamic influence, our inherited traditions, and extraneous influences which have crept into our life as a result of the enveloping wave of blind imitation of the west (Said Ramadan 1985: 332–335).

SIS persists in advocating greater intellectual and personal space for the Muslim women within the Quranic interpretation of human and civil rights, especially where they pertain to the status of women. Despite the expected opposition of the orthodox and traditionalist Muslim communities to SIS's cause, the government has been benevolent towards SIS since the group's existence and primarily intellectual activities have contributed considerably towards cultivating Malaysia's international image as a progressive, modernist and moderate Muslim country. Zainah Anwar, one of SIS's most prominent activists, was recently appointed as a member of SUHAKAM to represent NGO views in the commission.

Central to the discourses of political NGOs in the 1980s was how to delimit the boundaries of the state and create a more vibrant civil society. These discourses identified a broad set of issues and problems, including executive dominance, the erosion of the independence of the judiciary, a stronger opposition in parliament, greater executive accountability, social justice, guarantees for fundamental liberties, and greater participation in decision-making over development matters. In the 1990s, as rapid development occurred and consumerism became widespread, NGO discourses found newer issues such as rising authoritarianism, the politics of the new middle class, and the marginalization of certain social groups (Crouch 1992; Jesudason 1995; Mehmet 1986). Nowadays, the NGOs also regard the mainstream media as failing in their responsibility to the public. This criticism specifically targets the media's tendency to self-censor or abstain from critically analysing state policies and abuses that affect ordinary people. For example, it has been suggested that

> without such analysis it will not be possible to show how society is developing ... the major social trends of the eighties

> – ethnic polarisation, Islamic resurgence, the economic decline and the intensification of political competition – were hardly given any serious consideration by most newspaper minds in the seventies ... These newspapers failed, therefore, to fulfil one of the primary functions of any good newspaper: that of analysing social trends and changes (Chandra 1986: 46–47).

Hence, the discourse on civil society conducted by the political NGOs is targeted towards both government and citizens. While the NGOs strove to engage the government, they concentrated on disseminating their arguments among the public. Their collective objective, also an expression of their own involvement in democratic practice, has been to remove legal constraints, relax political controls and awaken the public to the need for wider political participation.

Yet the fact that these NGOs exist and operate, albeit under strict bureaucratic screening (Gurmit 1987: 8), is itself suggestive of a measure of democratic participation. Indeed, the overall aim of the NGOs is to redefine the limits and parameters of political activity so as to win greater freedom for themselves and the public. But this endeavour is marked by critical ideological differences, both between the political NGOs and the state, and among the NGOs themselves, particularly in terms of their varying interpretations of what 'good governance' should mean. Indeed, the political NGOs, by laying bare their own differences, often come to express political values and expectations that reflect a complex ethnic, religious and ideological mosaic. This is hardly surprising; the NGOs draw inspiration from different, and sometimes contradictory, ideological sources. The NGO movement is thus fragmented and even weak, certainly in contrast to the state, which has a clear position and acts firmly, even in an authoritarian manner, in delineating the boundaries of political space and setting the conditions of political participation.

POLITICAL NGOS AND THE STATE

Evidently the political NGOs are agreed that the state must be responsible for realizing social justice and developing a viable civil society. They also seem to view civil society as a separate sphere of interests existing outside the state wherein disparate interest groups, like themselves, jostle for political and manoeuvring space. The Malay-based economic, social and political configurations complicate the terrain upon which the NGOs operate. Thus, if the political NGOs are committed to building a vibrant civil society, one of their first tasks is to lay

down the 'necessary social and economic infrastructure' for this civil society, and to imbue it with the prerequisite 'democratic culture'. This task is vital since the transplantation of liberal democracy presupposes a transformation of culture, particularly at grassroots level. Undoubtedly, the Anwarist *reformasi* movement of 1998–99 has laid the necessary foundation for more genuine democratic practices. But *reformasi* has also shown that more than just social and economic infrastructure is needed to transplant liberal democracy. The process must also involve the transformation of a grassroots political culture that was previously rooted in a feudal and a colonial past and subsequently remoulded according to a so-called 'Asian values' model of democracy. Hence, the NGOs need urgently to address the Asian values found in Malaysian society in a responsible and accountable manner, as was perhaps shown by the energetic campaigns conducted by a coalition of political NGOs and opposition parties that addressed the realities and needs for political reforms and social justice prior to the November 1999 general election.

It should be noted that although the government does not adopt a liberal attitude towards the political NGOs, it has not tried to eliminate them altogether. The government monitors them closely and, on occasion, has taken repressive action against Al-Arqam (on grounds of its 'religious deviation' in 1994) and Al-Ma'unah (in 2000 for its alleged treason against the state). Yet the government has facilitated NGO activities that benefit its policies or give it political mileage domestically or internationally. Often, by being responsive to some of the NGOs' criticisms or opposition, the government neutralizes possible challenges to its power base. Hence, the government has occasionally encouraged NGOs to participate in state-sponsored forums to discuss specific public issues. To date, however, these forums have been limited to discussions of non-political matters, such as 'social ills', public health, prisoners' rehabilitation, drug addiction, alcoholism, promotion of healthy lifestyles, organization of youth activities and the promotion of Malaysian civic virtues.

But the government remains fundamentally wary of the political NGOs. Its attitude may be a legacy of colonial days when literary, religious and social organizations served as fronts for anti-colonial movements, or when organizations began as social, creative, welfare or religious associations only to turn political. In this context, Mahathir has best articulated the government's basic attitude towards the political NGOs:

> Most of these pressure groups [NGOs] are harmless and can be useful. But there are pressure groups that can adversely affect the government or the nation ... The views and the consensus of the majority guide a democracy. A pressure group is a minority [but] can cause anarchy and the breakdown of law. Therefore the activities of pressure groups in our country must be monitored by the Government (Mahathir 1986a: ch. 9).

The government's response to political NGOs has taken many forms. One type of response is to counter their criticisms by warning the public against being taken in by 'irresponsible NGOs' who allegedly plan to disrupt government programmes and policies being implemented for the people. Another response is to coopt political NGO leaders which, when successfully undertaken, effectively raises the stature of the state and gains it additional public endorsement. In practice, the government frequently encourages and patronizes NGOs that are 'moderate' and supportive of state policies and ideology. A more manipulative type of response is for the government to set up parallel agencies within its ministries to counter the influence of dissident NGOs and to appropriate their causes. As a final resort, the government has resorted to the use of the Internal Security Act or Societies Act to monitor, discipline and curb overly critical and potentially influential NGOs.

CONCLUSION

The future of the political NGOs will depend on domestic social change and the impact of global developments. In domestic terms, the prospects for political NGO activity and influence will generally be critically related to their legal, political and cultural legitimacy, the expansion of civil society, the emergence of a policy consensus within a pluralist setting, the state of inter-ethnic relations, the coherence of state strategy, and economic advance and transformation (Leftwich 1993: 619). Malaysian society today contains some of these general conditions and may even look forward to an expanding civil society, partly because of global democratizing trends and contemporary political awakening among the people. Consequently, many youthful groups and proponents now call for greater space and freedom of participation within a more liberal and open political system. If these conditions continue, the political NGOs are well placed to expand and invigorate civil society since they can quickly escalate their levels of

networking, cooperation and 'outreach' to promote local participation even in relatively remote areas, based in part on their capacity to operate on low costs, and be innovative, experimental, adaptive and flexible in empowering target groups (Marcussen 1996: 12).

It is instructive to note, too, that most of the NGO activists are urban professionals who exhibit diversity in their philosophy, organizational approaches and practice. Many prefer to maintain a non-political identity, non-ethnic bias and independence from foreign funding which suggests considerable room for them to explore their future relations between one another and between them and the state (Lopez 1997; Syed Adam Aljafri 1995). One weakness of the NGOs is obvious. Other than, say, ABIM or DJZ, most NGOs do not have a mass base, which leaves them with little bargaining power vis-à-vis the state, even if they are vocal and to some extent influential in their advocacy and dissemination of opinions over broad fields of legal and human rights.

It may be argued that the political NGOs can make an important contribution to modifying 'conceptions of the appropriate range of activities of the state, the degree of access that different sectors of society should have to political power, the nature of the links between the sectors, and the kinds of benefits that different sectors of society should receive' (Lipset 1995: 242). In Malaysia's case, the political NGOs will additionally need to wean themselves from any tendency to represent narrow and exclusive class, ethnic or religious interests at the expense of developing a common social framework for sharing power and wealth. Any such tendency would pose impediments to the re-structuring of the relations between civil society and the state, even to the extent of jeopardizing the continuity of constitutional-democratic regimes. Some of the NGOs may not realize that, paradoxically, strengthening civil society by extending political participation requires the precondition of strengthening the state (Marcussen 1996). From this point of view, because the Malaysian state continues its commitment of conducting regular general elections, the space available to NGOs and other political groups remains an important marker of possibilities for enhancing civil society.

AT THE CENTRE AND THE PERIPHERY

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS TO DEMOCRATIZATION[1]

Maznah Mohamad

In Malaysia, the accenting of any rights, be they ethnic, class or religious, is frequently attained through political bargaining and exchanges. However, unlike rights advanced on the basis of ethnic or religious lines, gender rights are not usually accomplished through the politics of electioneering. Women's issues have not been significantly aired in Malaysian electoral politics as women's votes have not been perceived to be able to tip the political equation in any consequential way. On the other hand, the issue had never been conceptually problematized, because in Malaysia, gender has been superseded by other identity markers, notably ethnicity. For example, political constituents are not profiled by gender but almost always by ethnicity. Thus, the absence of data on gender from election statistics is one reason why it is not easy to gauge the gender factor in the electoral process. However, as democratic processes are not just realized through elections and electioneering, the women's movement might still be able to play a crucial role in widening the

---

1. This chapter benefits from materials contained in Ng and Maznah (1986 and 1989). I am also indebted to the Women's Crisis Centre, Penang, for enabling me to use in this chapter parts of interview materials collected under its 10th Anniversary Book Project, for which I served as coordinator.

space for democratic reforms despite its insignificant profile in electoral politics. This chapter explores the role of the Malaysian women's movements in engendering a climate for democratization.

Indeed, women's seemingly limited role in electoral politics suggests that there is a dualistic side to the women's movement in Malaysia. Women either organize and seek their forms of feminism within the mainstream organizations and via the electoral process or they do so within the radical or marginal social and political space. It is argued here that the most significant contribution of gender politics towards democratization in this country has been achieved through the presence and prodding of marginal women's voices. Mainstream women's groups entrenched in formal politics have not contributed much because their roles have been not to challenge but to complement ruling structures. The analysis in this chapter will depart from the premise that one can distinguish mainstream women's groups, consisting of women in formal politics and organizations that are closely linked to the ruling elite ('women's movement at the centre') from those of the feminist-oriented, radical or left-of-centre organizations (or 'women's movement at the periphery'). While there is an ongoing contest between these two streams, there were also moments when they colluded for common gains. Malaysia's recent experience with the politics of reforms has also shown that gender politics had become a fluid variable that was not only used to challenge the authoritarian state but was ironically employed by the state itself to act as the bulwark against its own demise. Thus, there are multiple and complex sides to the women's movement, especially when its presence can be variously supported by the disparate contenders for political power.

EARLY EMANCIPATION THROUGH FORMAL EDUCATION: A TWO-EDGED SWORD

The dual character of the Malaysian women's movement was evident from the early twentieth century. Under colonial rule, one of the most important reforms sought for women was access to formal schooling. This demand was fashioned within the context of a modernizing colonial economy. The bureaucratic sector needed a trained and Westernized local ruling elite as well as native labour to fill lower-level administrative positions. Schooling for local women, especially in English schools, was encouraged by colonial authorities mainly because girls

from the upper classes could be trained to become suitable wives of the emerging local elite.[2]

Education for women was also encouraged by the local intelligentsia, who were educated in the Middle East and therefore greatly influenced by the Arab reform movements of the early twentieth century. Education for women, legal reforms and the rights of women to work as well as attacks on the practice of veiling were vibrantly promoted as progressive causes (Roff 1967: 79–85). Still, the purpose of education was not to undermine women's traditional roles in the home; rather, it was only to make them more efficient housekeepers and not to set the stage for their participation in public life (Manderson 1980: 21).

Nevertheless, formal schooling for women did pave the way for women's early presence in the then nascent civil society. Either directly or indirectly due to the formal schooling movement, several prominent women's organizations were established. Among Malay women almost all the early initiators of women's organizations were teachers. Among Chinese women, their schooling experience was modelled after the system in China, which played a role in influencing their political involvements. Some joined the Anarchist Movement and many more became members of the Malayan Communist Party (Khoo 1994: 1–2). Some of the most active Indian women who joined political movements had been educated in English schools. In 1941, when Chandra Bose formed the Indian Independence Movement and the Indian Independence Army, Indian women in Malaya were recruited to be part of the Rhani of Jansi Regiment of the Army, and travelled to Burma to make their way into India (Khoo 1994: 3). Formally educated local women completed the picture of a class of modernized local elites spawned by colonial administrators to carry forward their legacy of a modern nation-state. However, this culminated in a two-edged sword for the purveyors of colonial rule. Although educated women accepted the ethos of modernization, they were also involved in the widespread uprising against colonial rule.

---

2. 'It is not the intention of the Kelantan government to aim at any considerable extension of English education for Malay girls. This school is intended mainly for the daughters of the Ruling House and Malay officers ... The general intention is to train girls to be alert and quick-minded and suitable wives for Malay officers who have received higher education rather than seek any high standard of technical education' (Baker 1938: 45).

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AMIDST NATIONALIST AND LABOUR AWAKENINGS

The emancipation of women through Western-oriented schooling was based on a universalist principle which was accessible to an elite few. In contrast, early grassroots social movements were mainly organized along ethnic or religious lines. Women of the major ethnic groups who participated in anti-colonial struggles were mobilized separately and were never united in a multicultural gender movement. The foregrounding of gender or feminist politics was downplayed because women's participation was simply being used to muster support from other women.

Malay women's first involvement in a political cause came in the wake of the anti-Malayan Union struggle. The Persatuan Kaum Ibu Selangor or Kaum Ibu (The Mothers' Association of Selangor) became one of 36 Malay organizations which joined to form the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).[3] The Kaum Ibu (KI), originally a welfare-oriented women's group, took on a political character to counter the proposal for the Malayan Union (Manderson 1980: 56). At the height of mass protests against this proposal, UMNO depended heavily on their female supporters to add to the numbers in public demonstrations and rallies (Manderson 1980: 43).

The KI evolved to constitute the women's wing of UMNO and was renamed Wanita UMNO in 1971. It has grown to become the largest women's party auxilliary in the country. Since independence, Wanita UMNO has played the role of being the chief gatherers of votes during elections, rather than as leaders or vanguards of change within the party, unlike the UMNO Youth (Pemuda UMNO) which has taken the role of 'agitator' in the party.

The one person who challenged gender disparity within UMNO was Khatijah Sidek, elected leader of the KI in 1954. For doing so, she was expelled from the party. She agitated for greater female representation in the decision-making bodies of the party, an independent status for the women's section, a separate women's youth section, and

---

3. The Malayan Union was a proposal put forward by the British at the end of the Second World War to chart the shape of the new Malayan nation. This proposal, among others, would greatly curtail the powers of the Malay rulers and would relax constraints on the granting of citizenship rights to the immigrant population at that time. For one account of the episode, see Khong (1984).

the increased nomination of women to run in the national elections. She went as far as to suggest forming a separate party, the Kesatuan Wanita for women. She did not succeed in getting men within UMNO to agree on resolutions for gender equality within the party (Khatijah Sidek 1995: 154–155). Although it was said that she breached party discipline, challenging male dominance must have also constituted part of her 'indiscipline'.[4]

Women who were 'empowered' through harbouring nationalist sentiments later experienced dismal failures when it came to negotiating for more rights within Islam. For example, in 1973, Wanita UMNO's leader Aishah Ghani called for some regulation and reform of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Laws which she said were a 'thorn in the flesh' for Muslim women (Dancz 1987: 161). Her remark was greeted by public outcry. She subsequently disclaimed her statement by admitting that it was not Islamic laws that were at fault, but only their unjust interpretation. The reforms put forward by the women's wing were not only strongly opposed by the conservative Religious Council but by UMNO's Youth Wing as well.

In proposing greater female leadership presence, Malay women politicians were unsuccessful when the Islamic card was used against them. In 1976 Wanita UMNO called for the appointment of women as *Ketua Kampung* (village heads). This was overruled by the religious councils of two states as being contrary to Islamic laws. Prior to this, two women had been appointed village heads by the Negeri Sembilan government. The state government eventually gave in to religious opposition and withdrew the appointments of the two women (Dancz 1987: 163).

If Malay women nationalists experienced limited success in pursuing a feminist agenda, their Chinese and Indian counterparts were even worse off, in some ways. For one thing, Chinese and Indian women's groups of the right-wing nationalist tradition never had as much of a political headstart as the Wanita UMNO. The first women's section of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was set up in 1953 in Johore Bahru. The Wanita MIC (Malayan Indian Congress) of Selangor was inaugurated in 1955. Despite the rhetoric and proclaimed intention to promote women's causes, each of these women's wings of the three

4. Besides the *Memoir* by Khatijah Sidek herself, which describes in her own words the poignant struggles which she went through, see Manderson (1980: 112–113) and Anon (1980).

main component parties of the existing government have remained organizationally subordinate to the parent body. As shall be discussed later, the number of women candidates fielded by the parties and subsequently elected remains dismally small.

In contrast to the right-wing nationalist tradition, the left-wing tradition in the anti-colonial struggle was more strident in its recognition of women's rights, even though this was also subsumed under the hegemonic agenda of class and race mobilization. PUTERA was a parallel coalition of Malay left-wing groups, while the AMCJA was its non-Malay counterpart. These two organizations formed the PUTERA–AMCJA coalition, which drafted the 'People's Constitution' of 1947. This promised, among other things, equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of race, creed or sex (Hua 1983).

Both the AMCJA and PUTERA had their women's components. The women's component of AMCJA, the Women's Federation, consisted of 12 associations which raised the issue of women's representation and demanded suffrage for women (Dancz 1987: 101). The women's component of PUTERA was Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS or Conscious Women's Front) which was formed in 1945. Still, women's issues did not figure prominently in the anti-colonial agenda of these movements. Although they exhorted equal rights and women's emancipation from traditional bonds, they did not formally elaborate these calls in any of their written manifestos. Aishah Ghani, who was one of the leaders of AWAS, said that women were really brought in to 'add strength to the party in order to push for independence' (quoted in Dancz 1987: 86).

Nevertheless, leftist women did occasionally act independently and were less bound by directives from the centre. There were memorable incidents in which AWAS took the lead. In 1947, British authorities forbade the use of vehicles in the procession to celebrate the first anniversary of Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API, or the Youth Wing of the Malay Nationalist Party [MNP]). AWAS women reacted by marching for six miles (Ahmad Boestamam 1979: 61). During the same year, 200 AWAS members resolved to revolt if the Federation of Malaya plans were implemented. However, both the Women's Federation and AWAS had very short life spans. In 1948, the colonial government imposed emergency rule and banned all left-wing groups, including API and MNP, along with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). AWAS and the Women's Federation ceased to exist after this.

With the disbandment of AWAS, three of its most prominent women leaders separated to follow three different paths in politics.

Aishah Ghani, AWAS's first leader, joined the KI and became its fifth president and later a cabinet minister in the UMNO-led government. Sakinah Junid who led the six-mile protest march on the first anniversary of API, joined the Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS) and became president of its women's section. Shamsiah Fakih joined the CPM, carried on the struggle underground, went into exile in China, and was only allowed back into the country in the early 1990s.

Party politics that emphasized social issues that cut across ethnic concerns were unsuccessful in attracting adherents. The Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), set up in 1951 with its membership open to all races, specifically promised equal opportunities regardless of sex, but became defunct within a year. Another nominally multiracial party, the Parti Negara, was launched in 1954. It promised equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities as well as emancipation for women. Unfortunately it was unsuccessful in the country's first election. Another non-communal party, the Pan-Malayan Labour Party, which committed itself towards ensuring women's equality by including a proposal for a Women's Charter, also failed to make much of an impact.

Anti-colonial challenges and nationalism were not the only political agendas that successfully rallied women to take up active public roles. There were also women who were active and militant in the labour movement. Most of the prominent women labour leaders were Chinese and Indian (Ariffin 1994: 11). The extent of women's participation in labour struggles prior to independence is not adequately documented. However, women workers took part in labour protests in Ulu Langat, Negeri Sembilan and in Kuala Lumpur, for which they paid a heavy price (ibid.). In 1947 a judgment favouring the dismissal of three striking women tappers set the precedent for giving employers the right to dismiss strikers (Hua 1983). Significantly, one of the demands of the workers who went on strike in the Klang Estate in 1939 was an end to the sexual harassment of women. Apparently, Indian women working in rubber estates were constantly subjected to sexual assaults by their European bosses as well as by other men (Stenson 1980: 60).

Women from the working class also participated actively in post-independence political struggles for women's rights. From 1962 to 1965, the Labour Party would yearly commemorate International Women's Day on 8 March. On those occasions, it produced special booklets, passed resolutions demanding equal pay for women, and urged governmental recognition of International Women's Day. Women

in the Labour Party were primarily Chinese as they formed the majority of women industrial workers at that time.

By the mid-1970s and 1980s the ethnic composition of the labour force had taken a dramatic turn. With the opening up of the country to large-scale export-led industrialization, fuelled by multinational investments, mass recruitment of rural Malay female labour occurred. Thus, from being predominantly Chinese, the composition of the labouring class now became predominantly Malay and female, especially in the electronics industry sectors.[5] The past legacy of militancy among women workers, organized under the Labour Party, was clearly not carried through into the new phase of Malaysia's industrialization. The only significant incident of labour protest after 1969 occurred in 1985. When the country went through one of its worst recessions, several multinational companies started to lay off workers. In one electronics company, based in Penang, several hundred women workers went on strike in 1985.[6] Although significant, it was a short-lived demonstration of worker unrest. Apart from this incident, other cases of labour protests were few and far between.

To sum up, the early anti-colonial and nationalist struggles, as well as those championing labour rights, were all participatory democracies in the making. These movements also underscored the contributions of women towards the democratization of politics during a phase of political struggle in which the fledgling women's movement was sorting itself out. Although initially developing as a unitary force to

---

5. The industrial policy in the 1970s favouring export-oriented industries such as textiles, garments and electronics, hired thousands of female workers, not least for their so-called dexterity and docility. For example, the number of female workers in the manufacturing sector increased more than four times within 10 years (from 73,058 in 1970 to about 300,000 in 1980). The percentage of all women working in the manufacturing sector also increased from 29.5 per cent in 1990 to 30.1 per cent in 1995. See Malaysia (1996: 623, Table 20-2).
6. On 23 September 1985, 700 workers who had been laid off by the Mostek Electronics factory in the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in Penang demonstrated outside their factory gates to demand reinstatement or rightful compensation. The majority of them were women. Two days later, more than 1,000 workers, again primarily women, picketed outside the chief minister's office in the town centre to protest against their unjust dismissal. The month-long picketing outside the Mostek factory was supported by other FTZ workers.

counter establishment power (colonial rule and early capitalism), the women's movement divided into a movement at the centre on one level (ruling political parties) and a movement at the periphery (left-wing, labour and feminist groups) on another. Had the movement developed further and followed an unfettered democratic trajectory, without either cultural restraints or state oppression, the struggle for genuine gender equity might have taken root either organically or as a result of careful planning. Alas, this did not happen.

We have seen the limitations of the right-wing nationalist movement, in which the women's wings of political parties degenerated into appendages of male-entrenched and hierarchical party structures. Radical, left-wing or women's groups at the periphery were also closely guided by the central leadership, although demonstrating somewhat more autonomy than the mainstream groups. However, their political persuasions, not tolerated by the state, were denied a legalized existence. Women workers fighting for labour rights were also met with violent resistance from the patriarchal and authoritarian state at many junctures in history.[7] Thus, the absence of fundamental edifices for the practice of democracy and the lack of a social consciousness which could promote issues and needs beyond the concerns of race or religion, resulted in the underdevelopment of a meaningful women's thrust into politics.

POST-INDEPENDENCE: MAINSTREAM MOVEMENTS IN A NASCENT CIVIL SOCIETY

What followed from the post-nationalist struggle was a period of nation-building. Institutions such as the formal schooling laid down by colonial rule, were already widely accepted by the people and continued to expand. There was an official tolerance of women engaged in paid employment, perhaps because they were too few to constitute an issue. Consequently, the small numbers involved did not evoke displeasure from conservative social forces. Meanwhile, rural women continued to work in the fields but did not statistically count as working women.

The class of women who first benefited from formal schooling was also the first to enter the formal job market. Being exposed to wider horizons, and imbued with modern and liberal outlooks, they were

7. Women's participation in workers unions today is very low, and sexism still abounds among male labour leaders, despite their fight for overall equality and justice in society. See Rohana Ariffin (1994: 47–72).

also the ones who saw that it was necessary to protect and enhance their newfound status. Initially, the post-independent state did not have an overt policy of encouraging women to take up paid employment. Neither did it attempt to preclude the entry of women into the labour force, especially in the fields of nursing, teaching, administration and the clerical sector. However, although women were freely recruited into these sectors, their rights as employees were not automatically granted. They had to lobby for their rights through non-governmental organizations, political parties and other professional bodies. Consequently, the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) was set up in 1960 as an umbrella organization for these different groups.[8] One of the first issues which irked middle-class working women into an open demonstration of their frustration was the issue of unequal pay. F. R. Bhupalan, one of the NCWO's founding members, offered this rendition of the precipitating events that led to the founding of the NCWO:

> I think the most pertinent issue was the 'equal pay' issue. From 1957, among the teachers' organisations, the issue was being discussed. However, it was only after the formation of the Women Teachers' Union, Federation of Malaya in 1960, that the issue became a critical one and the public was alerted to the serious injustice being perpetuated against women.[9]

Apart from the equal pay issue, the impetus for the formation of the NCWO came from an overall global trend in the 1960s to gain recognition for the rights of working women. International bodies like the YWCA contributed significantly towards the formation of the NCWO.[10] In fact, it was at the YWCA's initiative that a conference of women's groups was organized in 1960 and the NCWO was subsequently formed.

---

8. Interview with F.R. Bhupalan, vice-president of NCWO, 12 May 1995 under the auspices of the Women's Crisis Centre, Penang. She said, 'The formation of the NCWO arose at the conference of the YWCA in August 1960 that drew together the non-political organizations. Initially, we worked together with about 10 organizations – YWCA of Malaysia, Women Teachers' Union, Selangor Indian Association, National Association of Women's Institute, Lee Chee Women's Association and a few others.'
9. Interview with F.R. Bhupalan, 12 May 1995.
10. Ibid.

From the start, there seemed to have been a conscious effort to keep the leadership of the NCWO multiracial. For example its pro-tem committee in 1960 included prominent women from the three main races.[11] Most of the women initiators were urban-based professionals who did not have any reservations about working with other communities. Generally, the issues they fought for centred around improving the legalistic and bureaucratic shortcomings of the emerging modernity in which they found themselves short-changed as women. For example, the NCWO fought to get better maintenance for divorced women, equal pay for equal work in the public sector, entry of women into the civil, diplomatic and legal services, as well as better income tax and pension arrangements for married women in the civil service. The NCWO also pushed for the appointment of women as jurors and to National Councils, State Islamic Boards and the National Council for Islamic Affairs. Some of these 'old issues' have remained unresolved up to this day, while some aspects of other issues are in need of follow-up actions. For example, while women are no longer barred from entering the public service, they lag far behind in promotions. While the appointment of women to State Islamic Boards is not obstructed, Muslim women are not allowed to become jurors in the *Syariah* courts.

Many of the above issues were the immediate concerns of middle- and upper-class women. Greater employment opportunities and better service conditions for women in the civil service had little relevance for the majority of women engaged in the peasant and plantation agricultural sectors. Likewise, the demand for equal wages was largely presented for the benefit of those employed in the white-collar professions and service sectors. In short, the NCWO did not extend its struggles and services to those women engaged in the informal sector, such as in the area of petty trading or in the farms. Later, in the 1970s, when the number of women working in the manufacturing sector had increased rapidly, the NCWO paid scant attention to this class of women. Yet these working-class women faced numerous problems. For instance, under the Industrial Investment Act which accommodated multinational investments in the area of export-led manufacturing,

---

11. Interview with F.R. Bhupalan, 12 May 1995. 'The pro-tem committee of NCWO which was initiated by YWCA in 1960, with Mrs F.R. Bhupalan as chairman, had as its members: Datin Kamsiah Ibrahim, Mrs Ruby Lee, Mrs Rani Elizir, Mrs Lakshimi Navaratnam and legal adviser, Miss P.G. Lim.'

industrial workers were prohibited from forming independent unions, and women were allowed to work in night-shifts whereas this had previously been prohibited under the labour laws. Apparently, negotiations or demands involving wage and working conditions were considered to be 'politically sensitive' and outside the purview of the NCWO. Instead, the NCWO leadership preferred so-called 'non-confrontational' approaches to further its struggles on behalf of women. Indeed, it focused its attention on winning the gradual support of high-level government representatives and appropriate cabinet ministers towards its cause.[12] No doubt, the NCWO was an important player in the history of women's struggle, but it was also a player in the centre that would not risk its comfortable standing by sponsoring issues arising from the periphery.

THE ELECTORAL DOMAIN AND LIMITS OF GENDER DEMOCRACY

For about two decades of the post-independence period, the struggle for gender equity took an ambivalent course, since mainstream organizations such as the NCWO avoided combative stances vis-à-vis the government. Women elected representatives, too, were careful to tread their political pathways with tactical moves that would not upset patriarchal power-bases or forces which had sponsored their entry into politics in the first place. Ultimately, women's presence in electoral politics is not a good measure of women's ability to test social limits or to challenge entrenched systems through parliamentary democracy. To begin with, it is to be expected that the number of women elected as representatives will be insignificant, since women's entry into the field is predetermined by male party leaders. One should also question the much touted views that first, women's desolate presence in parliament and state assemblies is a reflection of women's tendency to eschew politics and second, that women are not in electoral politics because they are economically, socially, educationally and culturally disadvantaged and have limited capacity to compete with men.[13] While those characteristics may describe the status of women in society, they cannot in themselves explain women's inability to make headway within their own parties.

---

12. At the moment the chairperson of the NCWO is the current minister of unity and social development.
13. See arguments put forward by Rashila Ramli (1998) and Toh and Leong (1994: 81).

Table 9.1: Comparison of election wins between male and female candidates (parliamentary seats)*

Election Year	No. of male candidates running	No. of male candidates who won	% of male candidates who won	No. of female candidates running	No. of female candidates who won	% of female candidates who won
1969	366	142	38.7	4	2	50.0
1974	319	149	46.7	8	5	62.5
1978	391	147	37.5	11	7	63.6
1982	371	146	39.3	8	8	100.0
1986	449	170	37.9	7	7	100.0
1990	384	169	44.0	14	11	78.5
1995	395	177	44.8	25	15	60.0
1999	-	-	-	30	20	67.0

* Source: Figures from 1969–95 are adapted from Rashila Ramli (1998: 66)

Observers tend to overlook the fact that ruling parties in the coalition government have always fielded very few of their women candidates in any elections.

In actual fact, and contrary to standard perceptions, Table 9.1 shows that relative to the number of male candidates fielded, women's

Table 9.2: Status of women in political parties

Parties	% of women members*	% of women in central committee*	No. of women elected member of parliament in 1995 election†
UMNO	44%	17% (5)	7
MIC	40%	(1)	1
MCA	31%	8% (3)	3
GERAKAN	22%	11% (3)	0
DAP	20%	(2)	0

* Source: Tan Poo Chang (1994: 38). Figures in parentheses are actual numbers.

† Source: 1995 Election Results

rate of success in getting elected has actually been much better than that of men. Furthermore, the number of women representatives at each party's central committee (Table 9.2) is evidence that gender discrimination begins 'at home'. Women's wings occupy a subordinate status within their parties. Hence, when women are elected, they tend to be more beholden to their patrons within the party than to their electorates.[14] In this theatre of *quid-pro-quo* deals, women politicians tread carefully between toeing dominant party lines and appeasing women's rights lobbyists, usually to the detriment of the latter. Such a compromising and wavering posture typically ends up with women politicians contributing very little towards the democratization of gender politics, within as well as outside their parties.

Internal party reforms in the form of substantial constitutional amendments are needed to break the vicious circle of inequality within party structures. However, and more importantly, the strength of women voters and votes allied to gender reforms must ultimately become the critical element that pushes for women's more meaningful representation in parliamentary democracies. The test would be to see whether a campaign running on a women's rights ticket would enhance the chance of a woman candidate being elected.

Women's issues have not been significant in elections and during the post-election interregnum they have been easily sidelined, as they neither ensure nor damage the staying power of the government. Consequently, there has been no urgency to draw up serious policies to advance or even placate the women's constituency. We have seen that the NCWO's office bearers comprised not only elite women but their interests were quite removed from those of the economically marginalized, such as industrial workers, the poor and indigenous women. There was no urgency to resolve pressing issues such as childcare provisions for these economically disadvantaged working women. The measured approach that women NGOs normally adopt, together with the limited role that elected women representatives play in bringing about gender equity, allows the government to be less harried about raising any controversial women's agenda.

This indifference towards the women's agenda was nevertheless feebly shaken after the launch of the United Nations Decade on Women in 1975. Although the government was not overly enthusiastic in pur-

---

14 For an insider account of this syndrome, see Kamilia Ibrahim (1998).

suing its commitment to the women's agenda, there were some prominent agencies formed such as the National Council for the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID) and the Women's Affairs Department (HAWA) to deal with the issues of women in/and development. Aid agencies such as the World Bank, anxious to promote its funds for the specific use of women in development, gave an added incentive for the official promotion of women's causes. Still it took 14 years after the launch of the UN Decade for Women before the Malaysian government could put together a National Policy on Women in 1989. In this regard the NCWO, in collaboration with other NGOs, played a frontal role in pushing for this policy to be adopted. The NCWO was also consulted closely for government preparations in anticipation of the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995 (Ng and Chee 1999: 177).

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AT THE PERIPHERY: CENTRING THE 'VIOLENCE-AGAINST-WOMEN' AGENDA

A turning point in the way women were galvanized occurred around the 1980s, amidst the enlarging consciousness about feminism, sexual oppression and violence against women. The issue of violence against women which had become a major concern elsewhere in the world struck a very strong chord among women in this country. The first women's organization which formally undertook to deal with the problems and issues of battered women and domestic violence was the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), set up in 1982. In 1985, several women's organization came together in a coalition to publicize the VAW (Violence Against Women) issue in a big way. They formed the Joint-Action-Group Against Violence-Against-Women or JAG, which was a coalition of five women's organizations. JAG was the umbrella body which commemorated the 1995 International Women's Day by holding a two-day workshop-cum-exhibition on VAW in March of that year (JAGAVAW 1985). The event saw the participation of thousands of people and received extensive media coverage. During the same year the Women's Crisis Centre was set up in Penang. Also established were the Sarawak Women for Women Society (SWWS) and the Sabah All-Women's Organization (SAWO). Soon after, in 1988, the All Women's Action Society Malaysia (or AWAM) was founded. Among its objectives was to advance the resolutions of the JAG gathering.

One could say that the 1980s were the critical years that saw the birth of several new women's organizations coalescing around the issue of VAW.

Additionally, these new organizations were founded by women who brought with them new styles of leadership and new approaches to running an organization. Generally the norm was to try to do away with hierarchical structures of leadership. Decision-making was to be conducted through a broad consensus, and there was much emphasis on putting democratic practices and processes in place. The new perspective on why violence against women occurred and the role that the new organizations ought to play were also presented. In the case of the latter, the new organizations clearly went beyond welfarism and simply providing a service to victimized women. Indeed, violence against women was treated as but one issue of inequity in society at large. For example, the Women's Crisis Centre in Penang, formed in 1985, posed the question:

> Is the Association to confine its role to merely operating a shelter to support and assist women and children in need? Or should it go beyond this and undertake the broader task of raising awareness of women and the rest of society of the inequities and discrimination facing them? (Editorial, 1986).

These new women's groups also succeeded in incorporating the participation of women of multiracial backgrounds, to some extent. For instance, a fair number of Muslim women worked with the Penang-based Women's Crisis Centre that handles legal, marital, incest and domestic violence cases involving Muslim women. As these women inevitably needed to seek recourse under the *Syariah* (Islamic Law), many Malay professional women volunteered their services to help either with counselling or with the administration of the centre. Sisters in Islam, a very small group of Muslim women concerned with infusing Islam with a progressive outlook, was formed in 1991. The group also dealt with the issue of violence against women by publishing two successful pamphlets on the question of wife-beating and on the issue of veiling among Muslim women. Sisters in Islam is a group which straddles both the centre and the periphery. Its small membership is composed of women with direct ties to elite quarters, including access to the mainstream media. Its opinions are often welcomed by a small,

scholarly group of progressive-liberal Muslims, but are sometimes found wanting, even alienating by the crowd of Muslim masses.

Overall though, the majority of Malay women were still drawn to Islamic-based movements rather than to organizations which projected a distinctive feminist outlook. Malay and Muslim women who were traditionally organized in large numbers under the dominant ruling political party did not participate fully in these relatively radical women's non-governmental organizations. It was only in the 1990s that increasingly more Malay-based NGOs were set up to deal with the grievances and problems women faced with regard to marital and family problems. The Persatuan Ibu Tunggal (Single Mothers' Association) based in Kuala Lumpur was one such group. Women's wings of Islamic NGOs such as the Jemaah Islah Malaysia (Islamic Reform Congregation of Malaysia), and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement) also began to take up more strident positions on women, albeit within a prescribed Islamic framework.

WOMEN AT THE CENTRE AND THE PERIPHERY WORKING TOGETHER: THE CASE OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

The above attempt to distinguish the women's movement of the mainstream variety from that of the margin does not preclude occasions when they acted together to further the cause of women's rights. For example, although VAW was stridently highlighted by the new women's organizations, the issue was readily accepted as a common social concern of all women. Thus, when the proposal for a Domestic Violence Bill was mooted in 1985, it was not difficult to elicit the consensus, support and participation of a wide-ranging number of women's groups, including women politicians. The process of lobbying for the bill was consultative in nature. The newer women's groups, namely WAO, AWAM and WCC, provided strong rationales and empirical evidence (from the VAW cases they handled) on the need for such legislation. The more established women's organizations, such as the Association for Women Lawyers (AWL), worked to draft the provisions of the proposed law and NCWO, having the most direct pipeline to the authorities, lent a legitimate stamp to the proposal. Official representatives from the government's Women's Affairs Department (HAWA), the Religious Department, as well as the police all provided inputs towards the drafting of the bill. Despite the seemingly ideal cooperation, it took ten years of 'working-together' before the bill was finally passed as law in 1994.

The final form also represented a compromise version that did not entirely satisfy many parties, particularly the feminist groups at one end and the Islamic faction on the other.

Among those representing the Islamic interest groups, the main source of dissatisfaction was in relation to the jurisdiction of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) itself. It was a piece of legislation that straddles the penal code as well as family law. And since it touched on the latter, some parties felt that as Muslims were governed by the *Syariah* family laws, there would arise contention as to how, and to what extent, the DVA should be applicable to Muslims.[15]

Among feminists, a clause in the DVA which left the definition of 'beating' open enough for it to be interpreted from a relative standpoint reflected the retrogressive slant of the legislation. The clause defines legal beating only when the act is not considered disputable and not attached to some other rights which allows for the action to be meted. The wording of the clause is convoluted but is flexible enough to not supersede Islamic provisions about the recognition of conditional wife-beating.[16] The implication is that a Muslim woman cannot refuse sex with her husband, and if she does and is beaten for it, then she has no right to seek redress under the DVA.

One could say that the exercise in cooperation was also an experiment in an extremely uneasy politics of accommodation and compromise. It was not a full and complete victory for feminism, and was an annoyance for Islamicists. However, the process of coming together and centring the VAW issue was about the best example of the workings of a pluralist democracy, between state and civil society, in the progress of the Malaysian women's movement.

THE WOMEN'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE AND THE POLITICS OF '*REFORMASI*'

Encouraged by the success of the VAW campaign, five of the new women's organizations attempted to widen the context of women's

---

15. See letters addressed to the editors, by Zaitoon Datuk Othman (*New Straits Times*, 27 April 1996) and Rahmah Hashim (*New Straits Times*, 11 May 1996).

16. In the DVA (1994), domestic violence is an act which compels, 'the victim by force or threat [to] engage in any conduct or act, sexually or otherwise, from which the victim has a right to abstain'.

rights to include issues beyond VAW concerns.[17] In 1995, as part of the year's International Women's Day celebrations, and to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the campaign on violence against women, a public forum was held to highlight the broader span of issues, and to launch related actions to deal with them. The rationale for looking at broader concerns was spelled out by the organizers of the event. They stressed the plights of indigenous women, domestic and immigrant workers, and linked the status of women to housing, land, environmental and health issues (Ng and Chee 1999: 186–187).

The above issues were articulated and undertaken by civil movements globally. Perhaps because of this enlarged or inclusive responsibility that the women's movement was trying to embrace, its agenda became indistinct and very soon dissipated into something that was non-achievable. Efforts to follow up the resolutions presented at the 1995 forum were not as forthcoming as was the case with the VAW agenda. From this point onwards the women's movement (at the periphery) started to wrestle with how and on what basis it would be able to reinvent or revitalize itself lest redundancy and fatigue were to set in. The answer to that came late in 1998, when the country, thrown into political turmoil with the 'Anwar Ibrahim crisis', began to recall its long overdue reform agenda.

Before the 'crisis' the 1990s had witnessed the broadening of civil society that was not unconnected to the country's rising economic fortunes. Owing to the general absence of mass disaffection towards the state because of favourable economic conditions, the state was both indifferent as well as tolerant of liberalism. Women's movements were considered the least threatening to the established order. Feminist groups or feminist elements within mainstream women's organizations which were liberal and secular, were still marginal from the point of view of being popularly acceptable and did not comprise a mass movement. However, feminists were not obstructed from carrying on their campaign for more gender equity. Groups like the NCWO collaborated with feminist organizations despite underlying tensions over differences in leadership styles and approaches. The NCWO presumed a more hierarchical style of leadership and was concerned

17. Women's Development Collective (WDC), Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), All-Women's Action Movement (AWAM), Sahabat Wanita (Friends of Women) and Women's Crisis Centre (WCC).

about maintaining its 'good relationship with the government' image. Furthermore, large sections of Malay women were only comfortable when organizing within Islamic-based organizations and preferred to grapple with gender through a non-ambivalent Islamized framework. Thus, while feminism was mildly encouraged by the state, it was also an isolated movement.[18]

Throughout the 1990s, an atmosphere of political pluralism tinged with shades of liberal and conservative perspectives was present, albeit within a fragile balance. However, the culmination of the Asian economic crisis at the end of 1998, which triggered the country's political crisis, checked any further movement towards liberalization and openness.[19] The regime's actions at constricting democratic spaces provided an opportunity for some of the women's groups (especially those at the periphery) to redefine their role.

The crisis came to the point where many non-governmental social activists felt that the only legitimate option left for social and political reforms was through their participation in electoral processes. Such a sentiment also determined the strategy of feminist women's groups

---

18 The prime minister himself is known to be a moderate Islamist and was not averse to women's liberation. However, he has not articulated any strong and strident policies in any of his speeches about women, except to attack the chief minister of Kelantan on his 'outmoded' views on pretty women not being encouraged to work. This was done in the election campaigning of 1999, as an attack on PAS's policies on women.

19. The sacking on 2 September 1998 of Anwar Ibrahim, the then deputy prime minister and finance minister of the country, was a watershed moment in Malaysian history, in the sense that all that was wrong with the system seemed to have reached its height at that juncture. There was widespread shock, but given the prime minister's control over some of the more vital institutions in this country, particularly the media and the judiciary, many felt that the Anwar Ibrahim episode would in no time fade away into the bookmarks of history. However, the sliding state of the economy and the ruthless way in which Anwar Ibrahim was removed, and was subsequently detained and assaulted on his first night in prison, gave rise to unprecedented incidences of street protests and demonstrations. Almost all NGOs ranging from the artists' community to human rights groups, took a definitive stand on the issue and became embroiled in the clamour for reforms. They opted for the politics of '*reformasi*'.

which needed to redefine their relevance amidst mainstream appropriation and re-fashioning of women's issues to be conflict-free and devoid of contention. By 1999, a few months after Anwar Ibrahim's sacking, detention and assault, seven women's groups[20] had worked on a Women's Agenda that specifically addressed the electoral gauntlet thrown down by the regime at its critics.

To gain maximum feedback, these groups organized a meeting on 9 and 10 January 1999 with the participation of representatives from 34 organizations. The objective was to debate the draft version of the document calling for reforms in light of the expected general election. On 23 May 1999 the Women's Agenda for Change (WAC) was officially launched. Eleven points were included in the document as requiring the attention of the next elected government. They ranged from land rights to rights on sexuality. One of the most controversial areas for debate was the section on homosexuality and the rights of sex-workers. Surprisingly, such an issue was not opposed by any of the endorsers, including Muslim women who represented their respective Islamic bodies.

The other strategy that emanated from the feminist quarter was the push for a woman candidate to contest the election on a gender-issues ticket. Explaining the mood for this decision, movers of the Women's Agenda for Change, one of whom was Cecilia Ng, stated that women activists had come to realize that it was always the NGOs that seriously articulated women's struggles, such as in pushing through the DVA or highlighting the issues of unionization (interview, 1999). Zaitun Kasim, another feminist activist who eventually stood for a parliamentary seat on a 'women's rights' ticket, considered it timely that a woman be endorsed by the women's movement to contest the election (interview, 1999).

More attention was focused on women's issues and women's votes in the country's tenth general election than in any previous one. This was understandable. The political crisis had presented the ruling party (the Barisan Nasional) with a most serious challenge in its attempt to

---

20. The Women's Development Collective, the MTUC Women's Section, the All Women Action Society (AWAM), Friends of Women, Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM), Sisters in Islam and the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall Women's Section as well as several key individuals. See document WAC (1999).

stay in power. Attacks on the government's gross violation of due processes, ranging from those linked to human rights to the independence of the judiciary, had led the government to mount a defence by all means, especially through the bellicose strategy of denigrating opposition political parties.

The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) happened to be the most vulnerable to such attacks. The party portrayed itself as the purveyor of pristine and fundamental Islam through principles that were stark and radical to the extent that the party frequently elicited diametrically opposite reactions from the public. Its insistence on establishing an Islamic state if it assumed government was widely promoted by the mainstream media to strike fear among non-Muslim voters. Yet such was the very platform that made PAS appealing to its Malay Islamic constituency. Another stance of the party that was easily denounced by the Barisan Nasional was its policy on women. Aside from not allowing its women members to be fielded as candidates for the elections, PAS leaders also upheld a conservative outlook on women's public roles in society. This situation in itself had not been a source of open criticism by government and media but took on a different light in the run-up to the election. Thus, when the chief minister of Kelantan (a PAS-ruled state) made a speech which seemingly cajoled women to go back to their homes to perform their traditional duties, the issue was exploited fully by the ruling parties and media. The slanted message that was sent out through pro-government newspapers was that the chief minister would be forcing women to stop working.[21]

In response to the above news, many women's groups condemned the party's stance on women. The disapproval shown by women, ranging from the NCWO to Sisters in Islam, towards the chief minister's alleged remarks, was given widespread coverage in the papers. The furore became a signal to the mainstream parties and organizations to take up women's issues more seriously in election campaigns. The Barisan Nasional's 'championing' of women's rights was one of the messages used in campaign advertisements in the printed media, but whether it succeeded in getting more women's votes is difficult to determine. Actually, the intended message was mainly to show that the Barisan Nasional was a 'better' party since it paid heed to women's

---

21 See Maznah Mohamad (1999: 24–27) for an explication of the controversy.

rights, which PAS was not prepared to do. This strategy had worked in demonizing PAS among liberals and non-Muslims, rather than in convincing feminists that Barisan Nasional was sincere in its plan to uplift women.

Something that had not been previously done was the case of male politicians jumping on to the bandwagon of the gender controversy. Tengku Razaleigh, a former leader of Semangat 46, which had joined UMNO, was given the task of wresting back the state of Kelantan from the PAS government. He planned a strategy to win women's support for UMNO by allocating a substantial amount of funds to women in business, given that Kelantan women were renowned entrepreneurs.[22] This strategy did not succeed in winning back the state for UMNO. The gender card worked better among Chinese voters, perhaps because women's rights as opposed to women's issues per se were associated with secular politics and therefore a bulwark against Islamic encroachment. It was significant that the contest for the leadership of the Wanita MCA (women's wing of the MCA), held a few months before the general election, had focused almost exclusively upon the two contenders' credentials and track records as champions of women's rights. This was an unusual development as the outgoing leader was not previously promoted as a woman's rights advocate.[23]

The run-up to the country's latest election saw the marked politicization of women's issues because of the entry of Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the wife of Anwar Ibrahim, as a leading icon of opposition forces. This stoked the imagination of the public about the importance of gender in politics. In the unexpected turn of events, women voters, women's causes and the women's movement at the periphery were shifted to centre-stage. In the November 1999 general election more women were elected into parliament than ever before. There are at present 20 women parliamentarians comprising 10.4 per cent of the House of Representatives, as compared to 7.8 per cent in 1995 and 6.1 per cent in 1990.

Zaitun Kasim stood as a Democratic Action Party (DAP) candidate but specifically on a 'women's rights' ticket. She did not win but man-

---

22. See Rose Ismail's interview with Tengku Razaleigh, 'United and Moving on the Right Track', *New Sunday Times*, 11 July 1999.

23. See *Sunday Star*, 11 July 1999, on write-ups of the two contenders for the post. For a post-polls commentary, see Heng (1999).

aged to reduce the incumbent's majority by 56 per cent.[24] The election also saw a larger number of women opposition parliamentarians compared to the previous election in 1995. The four women opposition leaders accounted for 9 per cent of the 45 opposition seats while government women representatives took 11 per cent of the 148 seats. These are marginal gains that prove that women's advancement in Malaysian electoral politics is still slow. Ultimately, the question that should be posed is: will feminist causes help to democratize Malaysian politics or will the nature of Malaysia's limited democracy eventually constrain the feminist agenda?

CLOSING NOTES: ENTERING THE FRAY

The advocacy of feminist ideas is still new to Malaysia, although it has gained much ground and following since the 1980s. This chapter has tried to trace the progression of the women's movement and assess its role in bringing about democratization in the country. There had always been contestations and conflicts among the different streams of women's groups, but there had also been instances when they were able to converge over issues and aims that were seemingly contention-free. Women in the centre, especially those with the backing of the power of the state, have actually been less successful at promoting gender democracy. The challenges provided by the movement at the periphery have invariably been more notable and in the long run more successful in promoting the democratization of Malaysian society.

At the moment, concerns for gender democracy are primarily articulated by urban, middle-class women, although variants of feminist ideas have started to assume an importance among seemingly conservative groups such as those within the ambit of the Islamic movement. Although women involved in concerns for feminist rights come from all ethnic groups, most Muslim women have remained non-committal in terms of reconciling women's liberation with the prevailing tenets of Islam. In the 'post-economic miracle' atmosphere of political turbulence, these ambiguities were rapidly being sorted out with perhaps the highest chance for a more democratized participatory space.

---

24 In the 1995 election the incumbent for the Selayang parliamentary seat obtained a 70 per cent majority of the votes. In the 1999 election the majority obtained by the incumbent was reduced to 14 per cent. Zaitun Kasim garnered 26,144 votes and the winner 34,979.

At that juncture, a radical agenda such as the VAW/DVA campaign was initially proposed from the periphery but was eventually embraced by institutions in the centre. At another level, electoral contests had for a long time been the undisputed domain of the mainstream. However, women at the periphery had attempted to appropriate this space for themselves. The recent electoral experience witnessed a competition for places: women in the periphery chose to enter mainstream politics through direct electoral participation. They did so with the hope that the democratization of politics will be the ultimate gain, no matter what the outcome of the elections was. Furthermore, the potential for the growth of a liberal-democratic women's movement incorporating plural elements such as Islam is more achievable now than could have been imagined a decade ago.

POSTSCRIPT

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The essays in this volume, though since revised, originated in the later 1990s. At that time, they never found in the changing politics of Malaysia sufficient grounds for sharing in the celebratory and triumphalist visions of democratization, Western or Eastern, foreign or indigenous. Still, it is necessary and humbling for the editors and the contributors to this volume to admit that none of them foresaw the July 1997 'East Asian meltdown', or the manner of Anwar Ibrahim's fall from power in September 1998. Between them, these economic and political crises, linking global and domestic developments, have forced analysts to rethink the basic stability of Mahathir's regime despite its return to power after the November 1999 election (Khoo 2000).

Today, as the prospects for democracy in Malaysia stand at a watershed – between a further decline and a timely revival – any serious analysis of Malaysian politics must illuminate two basic developments, among others. One development arose in the realm of discourse, where dissident ideas about democracy in Malaysia continue to be vigorously debated to incorporate novel views on leadership, Islam, ethnicity, gender, institutional reform and alternative media (Philip Khoo 1999). The other development encompasses experiments in political protest, organization and cooperation, which have linked divergent and seemingly opposed political parties with NGOs and individuals in a widening democratic movement that has openly proclaimed its readiness to form an alternative government.

These concerns point to some of the limitations of this volume. In retrospect, the differences between Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar

Ibrahim (Khoo 1998) should have been worked into the essays before Anwar's dismissal in September 1998. Loh's focus on developmentalism as an alternative to a pervasive discourse of ethnicity remains valid for understanding a large part of the political change that has taken place; however, it underestimated the regime's ability to link developmentalism itself to older ethnic anxieties, as the support for BN in November 1999 indicates. Khoo's essay on the nationalist-capitalist underpinnings of Mahathir's promotion of 'Asian values' tracked that ideological project at its triumphalist moment without anticipating what Asians themselves might do to posit 'other Asian values' at the point of the Asian elites' weakening. Likewise, the discussions of different and dissident discourses should have paid more attention to lines of convergence and potential for collaboration between the opposition parties. Paradoxically, Syed Ahmad's analysis of a potential UMNO–PAS convergence along a democracy–Islamization axis, accurate in its evaluation of PAS's attitudes to democracy, overlooked some of the most basic differences between UMNO and PAS within the context of Malay-Muslim politics in Malaysia. While Zaharom and Mustafa have together given a comprehensive account of the state of mass media, and touched upon the arrival of new forms of media, they did not foresee that Internet-based 'alternative media' would spring up so suddenly to become the liberating platform of a discourse of *reformasi*. Saliha's distinctions between various types of NGOs remain of value in showing the pitfalls of imagining 'NGOs as a whole' but one remarkable surprise of 1998–99 came from the determination of heterogeneous opposition and dissenting forces, including several NGOs, to overcome their seemingly irreconciliable differences. For women's movements, Maznah was also correct in stressing the breakthrough achieved by the Women's Agenda for Change, but the truth is that a large part of the 'women's movement in the centre' remained opposed to fundamental political reform.

Clearly it will require a different kind of book or volume of essays to deal more fully with Malaysian politics and the prospects for democracy subsequent to the economic crisis of July 1997, and particularly the political crisis of Anwar's sacking in September 1998. It is the hope of the editors and contributors that this volume will provide a map of the changed political terrain of the 1990s that can serve as a guide to future Malaysian politics.

REFERENCES

A. Samad Ismail (1991) 'Kebebasan Akhbar: Di Mana Kita?' [Press freedom: where are we?], in A. Karim Haji Abdullah (ed.), *A. Samad Ismail: Ketokohan dan Kewartawanan* [A. Samad Ismail: Leadership and Journalism]. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp. 194–211.

Abdul Rahman Embong (1995) 'Malaysian Middle Classes: Some Preliminary Observations', *Jurnal Antropologi dan Sosiologi*, no. 22, pp. 31–54.

Abdullah bin Ayub (1978) 'Financial Provisions of the Malaysian Constitution and their Operation in Practice', in Tun Mohamed Suffian, H.P. Lee and F.A. Trindade (eds), *The Constitution of Malaysia, Its Development: 1957–1977*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 304–327.

Abercrombie, N. S. Hill and B. Turner (1986) *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Acria, Andrew (1997) 'The Politics of Development and the 1996 Sarawak State Elections', in Francis Loh Kok Wah (ed.), *Sabah and Sarawak: The Politics of Development and Federalism. Kajian Malaysia Special Issue*. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia, vol. 15, nos 1 & 2 (June/December), pp. 57–83.

Afghani, C.N. (1992) *Menyingkap Keistimewaan Ibrahim Libya*: Merintis *Jihad Memali* [In memory of the exceptional qualities of Ibrahim Libya: Pioneering Memali's Jihad]. Alor Setar: Penerbitan Al-Jihadi.

Ahmad Boestamam, Datok (1979) *Carving the Path to the Summit*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

Ahmad Ibrahim (1997) *Pentadbiran Undang-Undang Islam Di Malaysia* [The Administration of Islamic laws in Malaysia]. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia.

Ahmad Lutfi Othman (1995) *Wajah Baru Politik Malaysia* [The new face of Malaysian politics]. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pemuda.

Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid (ed.) (1993) *Malaysia's Vision 2020: Understanding the Concept, Implications and Challenges*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

Ahmat, Adam (1992) *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu Abad Kesembilan Belas* [History and bibliography of Malay newspapers

and magazines in the nineteenth century]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press.

Alias Muhammad (1991) *Malaysia's Islamic Opposition – Past, Present and Future*. Kuala Lumpur: Gateway Publishing.

ALIRAN (1988) *ISA dan Keselamatan Negara* [ISA and national security]. Penang: ALIRAN.

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Ang, I. (1990) 'Culture and Communication'. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, nos 2 and 3, pp. 239–261.

Anon (1980) 'Ibu Khatijah Sidek: Pejuang Nasionalis Wanita' [Mother Khatijah Sidek: woman nationalist fighter]. *Nadi Insan*, no. 11, March, pp. 5–11.

Anwar Ibrahim (1997) 'Islamic Renaissance', *Islamic Herald*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 4–5.

—— (1998) Interview in *Time* magazine, 14 September, pp. 22–23.

Bahaeis (Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam Malaysia) (1994) *Penjelasan Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri Malaysia Mengenai Perlaksanaan Hukum Hudud Di Malaysia* [Clarification by the Prime Minister of Malaysia on the implementation of Hudud Law in Malaysia]. Kuala Lumpur: Bahaeis.

Baker, A.C. (1938) *Annual Report of Kelantan*. Kota Baru: Government Printers.

Barraclough, Simon (1985) 'The Dynamics of Coercion in the Malaysian Political Process'. *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4 (October), pp. 797–822.

Batumalai, S. (1996) *Islamisation in Malaysia: A Malaysian Christian Perspective*. Ipoh: St. John's Church.

Bayart, J.F. (1994) 'Republican Trajectories in Iran and Turkey: A Tocquevillian Reading', in Ghassan Salame (ed.), Democracy without *Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 282–299.

Bendix, R. (1964) *Nation Building and Citizenship*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Blumler, J.G. (1993) 'Meshing money with mission: purity versus pragmatism in public broadcasting'. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 403–424.

Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis (1986) *Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bukhory Hj. Ismail (1992) 'Penyelidikan komunikasi dari Kajian Sebaran Am Institut Teknologi Mara' [Communication research from the School of Mass Communication, Institut Teknologi Mara], in Mohd. Dhari Othman *et al.* (eds), *Pasca Sidang Seminar Penyelidikan Komunikasi* [Post-communication research seminar proceedings]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 1–9.

CARPA (1988) *Tangled Web: Dissent, Deterrence and the 27 October 1987 Crackdown in Malaysia*. Sydney: Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia.

Case, W. (1991) 'Revisiting a Consociational Democracy: Elite Relations and Regime Form in Malaysia'. PhD thesis, University of Texas, Houston.

—— (1993) 'Semi-Democracy in Malaysia. Withstanding the Pressures for Regime Change'. *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 2 (Summer), pp. 183–205.

—— (1995) 'Malaysia: Aspects and Audiences of Legitimacy', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: pp. 69–107.

—— (1996) *Elites and Regimes in Malaysia*. Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute.

—— (1997) 'The 1996 UMNO Party Election: Two for the Show'. *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 3 (Fall), pp. 393–411.

Castells, Manuel (1992) 'Four Asian Tigers with a Dragon Head: A Comparative Analysis of the State, Economy, and Society in the Asian Pacific Rim', in Richard P. Appelbaum and Jeffrey Henderson (eds), *States and Development in the Asian Pacific Rim*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 33–70.

Chan Heng Chee (1993) 'Democracy: Evolution and Implementation. An Asian Perspective', in Robert Bartley, Chan Heng Chee, Samuel P. Huntington and Shijuro Ogata (eds), Democracy and Capitalism: *Asian and American Perspectives*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 1–26.

Chandra Muzaffar (1986) *Freedom in Fetters: An Analysis of the State of Democracy in Malaysia*. Penang: Aliran Kesedaran Negara.

—— (1987) *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*. Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti.

—— (1995a) 'Human Rights: Western Standards versus Eastern Values'. *Communiqué*. (September–December), pp. 14–15.

—— (1995b) 'Human Rights, the State, and the Secular Challenge'. *Communiqué*. (September–December), pp. 24–31.

Chee, Stephen (1991a) 'Consociational Political Leadership and Conflict Regulation in Malaysia', in S. Chee (ed.), *Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 53–86.

—— (1991b) 'Public Accountability in Malaysia: Form and Substance', in G.B.N. Pradhan and Milo A. Reforma (eds), *Public Administration in the 1990s: Challenges and Opportunities*. Manila: Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration, pp. 105–126.

Cheong, Sally (1993) *Bumiputera Companies in the KLSE*. Petaling Jaya: Corporate Research Services.

Chua Beng-Huat (1995) *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*. London: Routledge.

Chua Keng Heng (1998) 'Pendidikan Cina Dari Perspektif Dong Jiao Zong'. [Chinese education from the perspective of Dong Jiao Zong]. Graduation Exercise, Jabatan Sains Politik, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi.

Committee for a New Asia (1994) *Towards a New Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies.

Cooke, Fadzilah Majid (1994) 'The Politics of Regulation: Enforcing Forestry Rules in Pahang'. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 425–440.

Critical Studies in Mass Communication (1995), vol. 12, no. 2 (March).

Crouch, Harold (1992) 'Authoritarian Trends, the UMNO Split and the Limits of State Power', in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds) *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, pp. 21–43.

—— (1993) 'Malaysia: Neither Authoritarian nor Democratic', in Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison and Garry Rodan (eds), *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy and Capitalism*. St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, pp. 135–158.

—— (1996) *Government and Society in Malaysia*. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Curran, J. (1990) 'The new revisionism in mass communications research'. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 5, nos 2 & 3, pp. 135–165.

Dancz, Virginia H. (1987) *Women and Party Politics in Peninsular Malaysia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Davis, J.M. (1997) *Between Jihad and Salaam: Profiles in Islam*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Diamond, Larry and Marc F. Plattner (eds) (1993) *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dixon, W.J. (1994) 'Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict'. American Political Science Review, vol. 88, no. 1, pp. 3–32.

Dunsire, Andrew (1985) 'A Cybernetic Model of Guidance, Control and Evaluation in the Public Sector', in F.X. Kaufmann, G. Majone and V. Ostrom (eds), *Guidance, Control and Evaluation in the Public Sector*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, pp. 327–346.

'Editorial' (1986) in *Herizons*, Newsletter of the Women's Crisis Centre, Penang, vol. 1, no. 2, May/June.

Eikelman, D.F. and J. Piscatori (1996) *Muslim Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Eldridge, Philip (1991) 'Reflections on Non-Governmental Organisations and Social Movements in Malaysia'. Paper presented at the 7th Malaysia Society Colloquium, Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 4–6 October.

Entelis, J.P. (1996) 'Civil Society and the Authoritarian Temptation in Algerian Politics: Islamic Democracy vs. the Centralized State', in A.R. Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. II. Leiden: E.J. Brill: pp. 45–86

Esman, Milton J. (1972) *Administration and Development in Malaysia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Esposito, J.L. (1996) 'Political Islam and U.S. Foreign Policy'. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 119–132.

—— and J.O. Voll (1996) *Islam and Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Faaland, J., J.R. Parkinan and Rais Saniman (1990) *Growth and Ethnic* Inequality – Malaysia's New Economic Policy. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Filali-Ansary, A. (1996) 'The Challenge of Secularization'. *The Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 2 (April), pp. 76–80.

Finer, Herman (1965) 'Administrative Responsibility in Democratic Government', in Francis E. Rourke (ed.), Bureaucratic Power in National *Politics*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, pp. 176–187.

Firdaus Abdullah (1985) *Radical Malay Politics: Its Origins and Development*. Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications.

Fiske, J. (1987) *Television Culture*. London: Routledge.

Fukuyama, Francis (1989) 'The End of History?' The National Interest, vol. 16, pp. 3–18.

Funston, J. (1980) *Malay Politics in Malaysia – A Study of PAS and UMNO*. Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann.

Ghadbian, N. (1997) *Democratization and the Islamist Challenge in the Arab World*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ghai, Yash (1998) 'Rights, Duties and Responsibilities', in Josiane Cauqueline, Paul Lim and Birgit Mayer-König (eds), *Asian Values: Encounters with Diversity*. Richmond: Curzon Press, pp. 20–42.

Gibbons, David S. (1976) 'Public Policy towards Fisheries Development in Peninsular Malaysia: A Critical Review Emphasizing Penang and Kedah'. *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, vol. 13, nos 1 & 2, pp. 89–121.

—— (1979) 'Politics within Bureaucracy in a Plural Society: The Implementation of Fisheries Development Policy in Malaysia', in *Politics within Bureaucracies*, Collected Seminar Papers no. 25, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, pp. 60–65.

Goh Gaik Peng (1998) 'Aliran Kesedaran Negara dalam Pemantapan Masyarakat Sivil di Malaysia' [Aliran Kesedaran Negara and the consolidation of civil society in Malaysia]. Graduation Exercise, Jabatan Sains Politik, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi.

Golding, P. and G. Murdock (1991) 'Culture, communications and political economy', in J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds), *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edward Arnold, pp. 15–32.

Gomez, Edmund T. (1990) *Politics in Business: UMNO's Corporate Investments*. Kuala Lumpur: Forum.

—— (1991) *Money Politics in the Barisan Nasional*. Kuala Lumpur: Forum.

—— (1994) *Political Business: Corporate Involvement of Malaysian Political Parties*. Townsville, Queensland: James Cook University of North Queensland.

—— (1996) *The 1995 Malaysian General Elections: A Report and Commentary*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

—— and K.S. Jomo (1997) *Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics, Patronage and Profits*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goonasekera, A. and D. Holaday (eds) (1993) *Asian Communication Handbook*. Singapore: Asian Mass Communications Research and Information Centre.

Government of Malaysia (1973) *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971–1975*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

—— (1984) *Printing Presses and Publications Act*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

—— (1986) *Peristiwa Memali* [The Memali incident]. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

—— (1988) *Broadcasting Act 1988*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

—— (1991) *Sixth Malaysia Plan 1991–1995*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

—— (1996) *Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996–2000*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

——, Ministry of Information (1983) *Radio and Television Malaysia Handbook*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.

Greene, Ian (1990) 'Conflict of Interest and the Canadian Constitution: An Analysis of Conflict of Interest Rules for Canadian Cabinet Ministers'. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 23, no.2, pp. 233–256.

Gullick, J.M. (1987) *Malay Society in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Gurmit Singh, K.S. (1987) *Malaysians Know Your Rights*. Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti.

Haddad, Y.Y. (1995) *Islamists and the Challenge of Pluralism*. Washington: Georgetown University.

Halim Salleh *et al.* (1991) 'Dasar Ekonomi Baru dan Persepsi Etnik di Kalangan Pemimpin Pertubuhan' [The New Economic Policy and ethnic perceptions of heads of organizations] in Khadijah Muhamed and Halimah Awang (eds), *Dasar Ekonomi Baru dan Masa Depannya* [The New Economic Policy and its future]. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia, pp. 93–139.

Hamelink, C.J. (1994) *Trends in World Communication: On Disempowerment and Self-Empowerment*. Penang: Southbound.

Harper, T. N. (1997) 'Asian Values and Southeast Asian Histories'. *Historical Journal*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 507–517.

Headey, Bruce (1974) *British Cabinet Ministers: The Roles of Politicians in Executive Office*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Heng Pek Koon (1992) 'The Chinese Business Elite of Malaysia', in R. McVey (ed.), *Southeast Asian Capitalists*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, pp. 127–144.

—— (1999) 'Dawn of a New Wanita MCA'. *The Star*, 23 July.

Hewison, Kevin, Richard Robison and Garry Rodan (eds) (1993) *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy and Capitalism*. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Hickling, R.H. (1962) 'The First Five Years of the Federation of Malaya Constitution'. *Malayan Law Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 183–204.

—— and David A. Wishart (1988–89) 'Malaysia: Dr Mahathir's Thinking on Constitutional Issues'. *Lawasia*, pp. 47–79.

Ho Khai Leong (1992) 'Aggrandizement of Prime Minister's Power: The Transformation of the Office of the Prime Minister in Malaysia'. *Internationales Asienforum*, vol. 23, nos 1 & 2, pp. 227–243.

Horowitz, D.L. (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

—— (1994a) 'The Quran and the Common Law: Islamic Law Reform and the Theory of Legal Change Pt. I', *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, vol. 42 (Spring), pp. 233–293.

—— (1994b) 'The Quran and the Common Law: Islamic Law Reform and the Theory of Legal Change Pt. II', The American Journal *of Comparative Law*, vol. 42 (Summer), pp. 543–580.

Hua Wu Yin (1983) *Class and Communalism in Malaysia*. London: Zed Press.

Huntington, Samuel (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Husin Ali, S. (1993) *Isu Raja dan Pindaan Perlembagaan* [The constitutional amendment and the issue of the rulers]. Kuala Lumpur: Syed Husin Ali.

Hussin Mutalib (1993) *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Ibnu Hasyim (1993) *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?* [PAS controls Malaysia?]. Kuala Lumpur: GG Edar.

Ibrahim, S.E. (1995) 'Civil Society and the Prospect for Democratization in the Arab World', in A.R. Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. I. Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 27–54.

Ichiyo, Muto (1995) 'Debates on Human Rights Must Remain Free of State Discourse'. Communiqué, (September–December), pp. 16–18.

Information Malaysia (various years). Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing.

Ingraham, Patricia W. (1993) 'Of Pigs in Pokes and Policy Diffusion: Another Look at Pay-for-Performance'. *Public Administration Review*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 348–356.

International Movement for a Just World (1999) 'Malaysian Journalists Call for Repeal of Act'. *Commentary*, no. 24 (New Series), May.

Interview with Cecilia Ng and Zaitun Kasim (1999) 'Women and Politics in Malaysia'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 36–39.

Ismail Kassim (1978) *The Politics of Accommodation: An Analysis of the* 1978 Malaysian General Elections. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

JAGAVAW (Joint-Action-Group Against Violence Against Women) (1985) *Proceedings of a Workshop-cum-Exhibition on Violence Against Women*. Kuala Lumpur, 23–24 March.

Jain, M.P. (1986) 'Administrative Law in Malaysia', in M.B. Hooker (ed.), *Malaysian Legal Essays*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Law Journal Sdn Bhd pp. 213–262.

Janhunen, Juha (1997) 'Human Rights and Ethnic Rights in Asia'. *NIASnytt*, no. 1 (April), pp. 10–12.

Jayasuriya, Kanishka (1997) 'Asian Values as Reactionary Modernization'. *NIASnytt*, no. 4 (December), pp. 19–27.

Jesudason, James (1989) *Ethnicity and the Economy: The State, Chinese Business and Multinationals in Malaysia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

—— (1995) 'Statist Democracy and the Limits to Civil Society in Malaysia'. *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, vol. 33, no. 3 (November), pp. 335–356.

—— (1996) 'The Syncretic State and the Structuring of Opposition Politics in Malaysia', in Garry Rodan (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*. London: Routledge, pp. 128–160.

Johari Bin Mat (1993) 'Peranan dan Tanggungjawab Pertubuhan-pertubuhan Bukan Kerajaan (NGOs) Dalam Mewujudkan Masyarakat Penyayang' [The role and responsibility of non-governmental organizations in creating a caring society]. Paper presented at Seminar Peranan Pertubuhan-pertubuhan Bukan Kerajaan (NGOs) Dalam Mewujudkan Masyarakat Penyayang, [Seminar on the role and responsibility of non-governmental organizations in creating a caring society]. Kuala Lumpur, 12 August.

Jomo, K.S. (1988) *A Question of Class: Capital, the State and Uneven Development in Malaysia*. New York and Manila: Monthly Review Press and Journal of Contemporary Asia.

—— (1990) *Growth and Structural Change in the Malaysian Economy*. London: Macmillan.

—— (ed.) (1995) *Privatising Malaysia: Rents, Rhetoric, Realities*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

—— and Ahmad Shabery Cheek (1992). 'Malaysia's Islamic Movements', in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, pp. 79–105.

——, Khoo Boo Teik and Chang Yii Tan (1996) 'Vision, Policy and Governance in Malaysia', in Leila Frischtak and Izak Atiyas (eds), *Governance, Leadership and Communication*, Washington, DC: World Bank, pp. 65–89.

Kahn, Joel S. and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds) (1992) *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Kamarudin Jaffar (1980) *Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy – Politik Melayu* dan Islam [Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy – Islam and Malay Politics]. Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Anda.

—— and Hazami Habib (ed.) (1993) *Wawasan 2020* [Vision 2020]. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kajian Dasar.

Kamilia Ibrahim (1998) 'Women's Involvement in Politics and the Need for a Paradigm Shift', in Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan (ed.), Malaysian Women in the Wake of Change, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, Gender Studies Programme, pp. 105–110.

Kaplan, R.D. (1997) 'Was Democracy Just a Moment?'. *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 280, no. 6 (December), pp. 55–80.

Karthigesu, R. (1991) 'Two Decades of Growth and Development of Malaysian Television and an Assessment of its Role in Nation Building'. PhD thesis, University of Leicester, UK.

Kedurie, E. (1992) *Democracy and Political Culture*. Washington, DC: Institute of Near East Policy.

Kepel, G. (1998) 'The Political Sociology of Islamism'. *ISIM Newsletter*, 25 October.

Kershaw, Roger (1993) 'Shattered Symbiosis: The Road to Conflict between Malay Nationalism and Monarchy'. *Internationales Asien-forum*, vol. 24, nos 3 & 4 (November), pp. 283–310.

Khalid, D.H. (1977) 'The Problem of Defining Islam and Modern Accentuations'. *Islamic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Autumn), pp. 217–281.

Khatijah Sidek (1995) *Memoir Khatijah Sidek: Puteri Kesatria Bangsa* [Memoirs of Khatijah Sidek: Warrior Princess of the Nation]. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Khong Kim Hoong (1984) *Merdeka! British Rule and the Struggle for Independence in Malaya, 1946–1957*. Petaling Jaya: Insan.

Khoo Boo Teik (1995) *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

—— (1997a) 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia since 1957: Class, Ethnicity and Changing Capitalism', in Anek Laothamatas (ed.), *Demo-*

cratization in Southeast and East Asia. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 46–76.

—— (1997b) 'Economic Vision and Political Opposition in Malaysia, 1981–96: The Politics of the Mahathir Era'. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, no. 12, pp. 9–34.

—— (1998) 'Reflections on the 1998 UMNO General Assembly'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 18, no. 6, pp. 2–7.

—— (1999) 'The Value(s) of a Miracle: Malaysian and Singaporean Elite Constructions of Asia'. *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (June), pp. 181–192.

—— (2000) 'Unfinished Crises: Malaysian Politics in 1999', in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2000*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 165–183.

Khoo Kay Kim (1988) 'English Newspapers in Malaya 1900–1941: History and Historiography', in Mohd. Sarim Hj. Mustajab *et al.* (eds), Akhbar dan Majalah di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Perkembangan [Newspapers and magazines in Malaysia: history and development]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 69–89.

—— (1994) 'Malaysian Women's Participation in Politics: A Historical Perspective', in Robert Haas and Rahmah Hashim (eds), *Malaysian Women Creating Their Political Awareness*. Kuala Lumpur: Friedrich Naumann Foundation/Asian Institute for Development Communication, pp. 1–7.

Khoo Khay Jin (1992) 'The Grand Vision: Mahathir and Modernisation', in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds), Fragmented *Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, pp. 44–76.

Khoo, Philip (1999) 'Thinking the Unthinkable'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 2–8.

Khuri, R.K. (1998) *Freedom, Modernity and Islam – Toward a Creative Synthesis*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Kim Dae Jung (1994) 'Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values'. *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 6 (November/December 1994), pp. 189–194.

KLSE Annual Companies Handbook (various years). Kuala Lumpur: Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange.

Korten, David C. (1990) *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Kramer G. (1993) 'Islamist Democracy'. *Middle East Report*, vol. 183, July–Aug., pp. 2–8.

—— (1995) 'Islam and Pluralism', in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korang and Paul Noble (eds), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, vol. 1. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, pp. 113–128.

Kua Kia Soong (1987) *Defining Malaysian Culture*. Petaling Jaya: K. Das Inc.

—— (1993) *Reforming Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oriengroup.

Kubba, L. (1996) 'Recognizing Pluralism'. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 2 (April), pp. 86–89.

Laitin, D.D. (1978) 'Religion, Political Culture and the Weberian Tradition'. *World Politics*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 563–592.

Lasch, Christopher (1995) *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (1990) *Malaysia: Assault on the Judiciary*. New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

Lee, H. P. (1995) *Constitutional Conflicts in Contemporary Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Leftwich, Adrian. (1993) 'Governance, Democracy and Development in the Third World'. *Third World Quarterly*, vol.14, no. 3, pp. 605–624.

Leigh, M. (1991) 'Money Politics and Dayak Nationalism', in Muhammad Ikmal Said and J. Saravanamuttu (eds), *Images of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia, pp. 180–202.

Lent, John A. (ed.) (1982) *Newspapers in Asia: Contemporary Trends and Problems*. Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Asia.

Leo Ah-Bang (1975) 'Elite Cooperation in Two Communal Societies: A Study of Peninsula Malaysia and Singapore'. PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Lijphart, A. (1969) 'Consociational Democracy'. *World Politics*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 207–225.

Lim Hong Hai (1989) 'The Eve-of-Independence Constitutional Debate on Fundamental Liberties and Judicial Review'. *Kajian Malaysia*, vol. 7, nos 1 & 2 (January/December), pp. 1–37.

—— (1997) 'The Malayan Electoral System: Its Formation and Change'. PhD dissertation, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Lim Lin Lean (1988) 'The Erosion of the Chinese Economic Position', in Ling Liong Sik et al. (eds), The Future of Malaysian Chinese. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Chinese Association, pp. 37–55.

Lim Teck Ghee (1995) 'Non-governmental Organisations in Malaysia and Regional Networking', in Tadashi Yamamoto (ed.), *Emerging Civil Society in the Asia Pacific Community*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 165–182.

Lipset, S.M. (1959) 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy'. *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 69–105.

—— (1995) *The Encyclopaedia of Democracy*, vol 1. London: Routledge; pp 240–242.

Loh Kok Wah, Francis (1982) *The Politics of Chinese Unity in Malaysia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

—— (1994) 'The Sabah State Elections 1994'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol 14, no. 2, pp. 2–5.

—— (1996) 'A New Sabah and the Spell of Development'. *Southeast Asian Research*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 63–83.

—— and Mustafa K. Anuar (1996) 'The Press in Malaysia in the early 1990s: Corporatisation, Technological Innovation and the Middle Class', in Muhammad Ikmal Said and Zahid Emby (eds), *Critical Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Syed Husin Ali*. Petaling Jaya: Malaysian Social Science Association, pp. 96–131.

Lopez, Carolina (1997) 'Integrated Ideological-Structural Analysis of Global Ideological Reproduction. The Case of Mexican Educational Policy'. PhD thesis, Northern Arizona State University, Flagstaff.

Lummis, Douglas (1995) 'Rethinking Human Rights'. *Communiqué*, (September–December), pp. 19–23.

Mahathir bin Mohamad (1970) *The Malay Dilemma*. Singapore: Donald Moore.

—— (1982) *Guide for Small Businessmen*. Petaling Jaya: Eastern Universities Press. Translated from *Panduan Peniaga Kecil*, 2nd edition, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (first published in 1973).

—— (1983) 'New Government Policies', in K.S. Jomo (ed.), *The Sun Also Sets: Lessons in Looking East*. Kuala Lumpur: Insan, pp. 276–278.

—— (1985) 'Whither Malaysia?', in Andrew J.L. Armour (ed.), *Asia and Japan*. London: Athlone, pp. 150–159.

—— (1986a) *The Challenge*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications. Translated from *Menghadapi Cabaran*. Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara (first published in 1976).

—— (1986b) Speech at the First ISIS National Conference on National Security, Kuala Lumpur, 15 July. Foreign Affairs Malaysia, vol. 19, no. 3 (September), pp. 1–5.

—— (1989) *Regionalism, Globalism and Spheres of Influence: ASEAN and the Challenge of Change into the 21st Century*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

—— (1991) 'Malaysia: The Way Forward.' Paper presented at the Inaugural Meeting of the Malaysian Business Council, Kuala Lumpur, 28 February.

—— (1993) Speech at the 48th United Nations General Assembly, 1 October 1993, reprinted as 'UN Veto Power Most Undemocratic', *New Straits Times*, 6 October.

—— (1995) *The Malaysian System of Government*. Kuala Lumpur: Prime Minister's Department.

—— (1996) Speech at the 29th International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council, Washington, 21 May 1996. Reprinted as 'It's time Asia be accorded due respect', *New Straits Times*, 22 May.

—— (1997) 'I Am Still Here'. Interview in Asiaweek magazine, 9 May. *http://pathfinder.com/@@...k/current/issue/cs3.html*.

—— (1997) 'Menebus Maruah Bangsa' [Redeem the dignity of the race]. Speech at the official opening of UMNO's 40th Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, 5 September.

—— (1998) 'Call Me a Heretic'. *Time*, 14 September, p. 21.

—— (2000), 'Dr Mahathir's World Analysis', reproduced in *New Straits Times*, 14 June.

—— and Shintaro Ishihara (1995) The Voice of Asia. Two Leaders Discuss the Coming Century. Tokyo: Kodansha Int Ltd and Kinokuniya Co. Ltd. Translated by Frank Baldwin.

Manderson, Lenore (1980) Women, *Politics and Change: The Kaum Ibu UMNO*, Malaysia, 1945–1972. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Maniam, K. (1988) 'Sejarah dan Perkembangan akhbar dan majalah India sebelum dan selepas Merdeka – sumbangan serta peranannya dalam masyarakat India' [The history and development of Indian newspapers and magazines before and after Independence – their contribution and role in Indian society],

in Mohd. Sarim Hj. Mustajab et al. (eds), *Akhbar dan Majalah di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Perkembangan* [Newspapers and magazines in Malaysia: history and development]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 188–204.

Marcussen, Henrik S. (1996) 'NGOs, the State and Civil Society'. *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 23, no. 69 (September), pp. 405–423.

Mauzy, D. (1983) *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Marican and Sons.

—— (1993) 'Malaysia: Malay Political Hegemony and Coercive Consociationalism', in John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*. London: Routledge, pp. 106–127.

Maznah Mohamad (1999) 'Men Foil, Women Toil'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 19, pp. 24–27.

—— and Wong Soak Koon (eds) (1994), Feminism: Malaysian Critique *and Experience*. Special issue of *Kajian Malaysia*, vol. 12, nos 1 & 2 (June/December).

MCCBCHS (Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism) (1984) *Contemporary Issues on Malaysian Religions*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

—— (1990) 'Why MCCBCHS Rejects the Application of *Syariah* on Non-Muslims' (pamphlet).

Md. Salleh Hj. Hassan (1992) 'Aktiviti penyelidikan Jabatan Komunikasi Pembangunan, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia' [Research activities of the Department of Development Communication, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia], in Mohd. Dhari Othman et al. (eds), Pasca Sidang *Seminar Penyelidikan Komunikasi* [Post-communication research seminar proceedings]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 35–44.

Means, Gordon (1970) *Malaysian Politics*. London: University of London Press.

—— (1991) *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Mehmet, Ozay (1986) *Development in Malaysia: Poverty, Wealth and Trusteeship*. London: Croom Helm.

Milne, R.S. (1977) 'Politics, Ethnicity and Class in Guyana and Malaysia'. *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 18–37.

—— (1988) 'Bicommunal Systems: Guyana, Malaysia, Fiji'. *Publius*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp.101–113.

—— and Mauzy, Diane K. (1980) *Politics and Government in Malaysia*. Singapore: Times Books International.

Mohd. Dhari Othman *et al.* (eds) (1992) *Pasca Sidang Seminar Penyelidikan Komunikasi* [Post-communication research seminar proceedings]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press.

Mohd. Nor Nawawi (1991) 'Dasar Ekonomi Baru, Perpaduan Nasional dan Kelas Menengah' [The New Economic Policy, national unity and the middle class], in Khadijah Muhamed and Halimah Awang (eds), *Dasar Ekonomi Baru dan Masa Depannya* [The New Economic Policy and its future]. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia: pp. 140–154.

Mohd. Safar Hasim (1996) *Akhbar dan Kuasa: Perkembangan Sistem Akhbar di Malaysia Sejak 1806* [The press and power: The development of the

press system in Malaysia since 1806]. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya Press.

Mohd. Sarim Hj. Mustajab *et al.* (eds) (1988) *Akhbar dan Majalah di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Perkembangan* [Newspapers and magazines in Malaysia: history and development]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press.

Mohd. Suffian Hashim (1963) 'The Relationship between Islam and the State in Malaya'. *Intisari*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 16–36.

Monshipouri, M. (1997) 'Islamism, Civil Society, and the Democracy Conundrum'. *The Muslim World*, vol. 87, no. 1 (January), pp. 54–66.

Morley, D. (1980) *The Nationwide Audience*. London: British Film Institute.

—— (1986) *Family Television: Domestic Leisure and Cultural Power*. London: Comedia.

—— (1992) *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

Moussali, A.S. (1995) 'Modern Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses on Civil Society, Pluralism and Democracy', in A.R. Morton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. 1, Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 79–119.

Muhammad Ikmal Said (1996) 'Malay Nationalism and National Identity', in Muhammad Ikmal Said and Zahid Emby (eds), *Malaysia Critical Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Syed Husin Ali*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Social Science Association, pp. 34–73.

Muhammad Nur Manuty (1996) 'Presidential Address' at ABIM's 25th Annual Assembly, September.

—— (1997) 'Presidential Address' at ABIM's 26th Annual Assembly, September.

Muhammad Rais Abdul Karim (1999) (ed.), *Reengineering the Public Service*. Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

Muhammed Syukri Abdullah (1992) *An Islamic Approach to Rural* Development: the Arqam Way. London: ASOIB Books International.

Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim (1988) 'Akhbar dan majalah ditinjau dari sudut pensejarahan Melayu' [Newspapers and magazines from the perspective of Malay history], in Mohd. Sarim Hj. Mustajab et al. (eds), *Akhbar dan Majalah di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Perkembangan* [Newspapers and magazines in Malaysia: history and development]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 17–28.

Murdock, G. (1989) 'Cultural Studies: Missing Links'. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, vol. 6, no. 4 (December), pp. 436–440.

Mustafa K. Anuar (1990) 'The Malaysian 1990 General Election: The Role of the BN Mass Media', *Kajian Malaysia*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 82–102.

—— (1992) 'Perkembangan penyelidikan komunikasi di Rancangan Komunikasi' [The development of research communication in the Communication Section], in Mohd. Dhari Othman *et al.* (eds), *Pasca Sidang Seminar Penyelidikan Komunikasi* [Post-communication research seminar proceedings]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 11–21.

—— (1994) 'Peninsular Mainstream Media's Coverage'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 7–9.

—— (1999) 'Turning Over?' *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 28–31.

Nagata, J. (1980) 'Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia'. *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 53, no. 3 (Fall), pp. 405–439.

—— (1994) 'How to Be Islamic without Being an Islamic State: Contested Models of Development in Malaysia', in Akber S. Ahmed and Hasting Donnan (eds), *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*. New York: Routledge, pp. 63–90.

—— (1997) 'Islam Ethnonationalism versus Religious Transnationalism: Nation-Building and Islam in Malaysia'. *The Muslim World*, vol. 87, no. 2 (April), pp. 129–150.

Nasr, S.V.R. (1995) 'Democracy and Islamic Revivalism'. *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 261–285.

Navaratnam, R.V. (1984) 'The Changing Role of the PTD in an Era of New Developments'. *Malaysian Management Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 55–60.

Ng, Cecilia and Chee Heng Leng (1999) 'Women's Movement and Struggles', in Cecilia Ng (ed.), *Positioning Women in Malaysia: Class and Gender in an Industrializing State*. London: Macmillan.

Ng, Cecilia and Maznah Mohamad (1986) 'Protest, Resistance and Women's Movements in Malaysia'. Paper presented at the 12th International Sociological Association Congress, 18–24 August, New Delhi.

—— (1989) 'Pergerakan Wanita di Malaysia: Emansipasi atau Pembebasan?' [The women's movement in Malaysia: Emancipation or liberation?], in Ahmad Shabery Cheek (ed.), *Cabaran Malaysia Tahun Lapan Puluhan* [Challenges for Malaysia in the 1980s]. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Social Science Association, pp. 220–234.

Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (1995) *Kelantan: Universiti Politik Terbuka* [Kelantan: The university of open politics]. Nilam Puri: Maahad ad-Dakwah wal-Imamah.

Norani Othman (ed.) (1994), *Shari'a Law and the Modern Nation-State*. Kuala Lumpur: Sisters in Islam Forum.

Norton, Philip (1994) 'Parliament I: the House of Commons', in Bill Jones *et al.* (eds), *Politics UK*, 2nd edn. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 327–348.

Oetama, Jakob (1989) 'The Press And Society', in Achal Mehra (ed.), *Press Systems in ASEAN States*. Singapore: Asian Mass Communications Research and Information Centre.

Ong, Michael (1980) 'The Adequacy of Parliamentary Control over the Bureaucracy'. Paper presented at the Consumer Association of Penang Seminar on Economics, Development and the Consumer, 17–20 November.

—— (1987) 'Government and Opposition in Parliament', in Zakaria Haji Ahmad (ed.), *Government and Politics of Malaysia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, pp. 40–55.

—— (1990) 'Malaysia: Communalism and the Political System'. *Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 73–95.

PAS (1994a) *Perlembagaan Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) Pindaan 1993* [The Constitution of Parti Islam SeMalaysia, 1993 amendment]. Kuala Lumpur.

—— (1994b) *Membangun Bersama Islam* [Development with Islam]. Kuala Lumpur.

—— (1998) *Kenyataan Ketua Dewan Pemuda PAS Pusat, Dec. 12, 1998* [Statement by the leader of National PAS Youth]. Kuala Lumpur.

Pathmanathan, M. and Robert Haas (eds) (1995) *Political Culture: The Challenge of Modernisation*. Petaling Jaya: Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Perry, James L. (1986) 'Merit Pay in the Public Sector: The Case for a Failure of Theory'. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Fall), pp. 261–278.

Puthucheary, Mavis (1978a) *The Politics of Administration: The Malaysian Experience*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

—— (1978b) 'Ministerial Responsibility in Malaysia', in Tun Mohamed Suffian, H.P. Lee and F.A. Trindade (eds), *The Constitution of Malaysia, Its Development: 1957–1977*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 123–135.

—— (1987) 'The Administrative Elite', in Zakaria Haji Ahmad (ed.), *Government and Politics of Malaysia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, pp. 94–110.

Rahmah Hashim (1996) 'Consider Complexities before Implementing Act, Says Group'. *New Straits Times*, 11 May.

Rais Yatim (1995) *Freedom under Executive Power in Malaysia: A Study of Executive Supremacy*. Kuala Lumpur: Endowment.

Ramakrishnan, P. (1989) 'Democracy and the Civil Law (Amendment) Bill', in ALIRAN, *Issues of the Mahathir Years*, Penang: ALIRAN, pp. 42–44.

Ramanathan, K. (1992) 'The Tamil Press in Malaysia'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp.10–13.

—— (1996) 'Hinduism in a Muslim State: The Case of Malaysia'. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 42–62.

Rashila Ramli (1998) 'Democratisation in Malaysia: Toward Gender Parity in Political Participation'. *Akademika*. July, pp. 61–76.

Ratnam, K.J. (1965) *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*. Singapore: University of Malaya Press.

—— and R.S. Milne (1970) 'The 1969 Parliamentary Elections in West Malaysia'. Pacific Affairs, vol. 43, no. 2 (Summer), pp. 203–226.

Reece, Bob (1969) 'Crimes for Democracy?' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 September, p. 688.

Rehman Rashid (1986) 'Why I Took to Politics'. *New Straits Times*, 5 July.

Riggs, Fred W. (1970) Administrative Reform and Political Responsiveness: *A Theory of Dynamic Balancing*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

—— (1971) 'Bureaucratic Politics in Comparative Perspective', in Fred W. Riggs (ed.), *The Frontiers of Development Administration*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 375–414.

Robison, Richard (1996a) 'The Politics of "Asian Values"'. *Pacific Review*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 309–327.

—— (1996b) 'Looking North: Myths and Strategies', in Richard Robison (ed.), *Pathways to Asia: The Politics of Engagement*. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, pp. 3–28.

Rodan, Garry (1996) 'The Internationalization of Ideological Conflict: Asia's New Significance'. *Pacific Review*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 328–351.

—— and Kevin Hewison (1996) 'A "Clash of Cultures" or Convergence of Political Ideology', in Richard Robison (ed.), *Pathways to Asia: The Politics of Engagement*. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, pp. 29–55.

Roff, W.R. (1967) *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

Rohana Ariffin (1994) 'Assessing Patriarchy in Labour Organisations', in Maznah Mohamad and Wong Soak Koon (eds), *Feminism: Malaysian Critique and Experience*. Special issue of Kajian Malaysia, vol. 12, nos 1 & 2, June/December, pp. 47–72.

Rose Ismail (ed.) (1995) *Hudud in Malaysia – The Issues at Stake*. Kuala Lumpur: Sisters in Islam Forum.

Rosnani Hashim (1997) *Educational Dualism in Malaysia – Implications for Theory and Practice*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Roy, O. (1996) *The Failure of Political Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rustam Sani (1993) *Politik dan Polemik Bahasa Melayu* [The politics and polemics on the Malay language]. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications.

S. Ahmad Hussein (1998) *Muslim Politics in Malaysia: Origins and Evolution of Competing Traditions in Malay Islam*. Braamfontein, South Africa: Foundation for Global Dialogue, occasional paper No. 15.

Said Ramadan (1985) 'Three Major Problems Confronting the World of Islam', in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique aand Yasmin Hussain (eds) *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 329–336.

Saliha Hassan (1991) 'Peranan Badan Bukan Kerajaan Dalam Sistem Politik Malaysia' [The role of non-governmental organizations in Malaysia's political system], in Hairany Naffis (ed.), *Politik Malaysia Dekad 1990an. Prosiding Seminar Politik Malaysia ke IV* [Malaysian politics in the 1990s. Proceedings of the 4th Malaysian Politics Seminar]. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, pp. 51–75.

—— (1997) 'Malaysian NGO Discourses on Democracy in the 1980s'. Paper presented at Second International Workshop on Discourses and Practices of Democracy in Southeast Asia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, 3–8 March.

—— (1998) 'Peranan Badan Bukan Kerajaan Dalam Pembentukan Masyarakat Madani', in Minds (ed.), *Masyarakat Madani: Satu Tinjauan Awal* [The role of non-governmental organizations in the formation of a civil society: A preliminary exploration]. Kuala Lumpur: Minds, pp. 77–87.

—— (2000) 'NGO, Masyarakat Sivil dan Demokrasi' [NGO, civil society and democracy], in Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.), *Negara, Pasaran dan Pemodenan Malaysia* [The state, market and modernization in Malaysia]. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, pp. 214–243.

Salwa Ismail (1995) 'Democracy in Contemporary Arab Intellectual Discourse', in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany and Paul Noble (eds), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, vol. 1, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, pp. 93–111.

Samsudin A. Rahim (1992) 'Perkembangan penyelidikan komunikasi di Jabatan Komunikasi UKM' [The development of communication research in the Communications Department, UKM], in Mohd. Dhari Othman *et al.* (eds), *Pasca Sidang Seminar Penyelidikan Komunikasi* [Post-communication research seminar proceedings]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 23–33.

Saravanamuttu, Johan (1987) 'The State, Authoritarianism and Industrialisation: Reflections on the Malaysian Case'. *Kajian Malaysia*, vol. 5, no. 2 (December), pp. 43–75.

—— (1992) 'The State, Ethnicity and the Middle Class Factor: Democratic Change in Malaysia', in K. Rupesinghe (ed.), *Internal Conflict and Governance*. New York: St Martin's Press, pp. 44–64.

—— *et al.* (1992) 'The Pitfalls of NICdom'. Asian Exchange, vol. 8, nos 1 & 2, pp. 13–48.

Sartori, Giovanni (1997) *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*. New York: New York University Press.

Scott, James C. (1968) Political Ideology in Malaysia. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Scott, Sir Richard (1996) 'Ministerial Accountability'. *Public Law*, (Autumn), pp. 410–426.

Searle, Peter (1999) *The Riddle of Malaysian Capitalism: Rent-seekers or Real Capitalists?* St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Self, Peter (1977) *Administrative Theories and Politics*, 2nd edn. London: Allen & Unwin.

Shamsul, A.B. (1986) *From British to Bumiputra Rule: Local Politics* and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

—— (1996) 'The Construction and Transformation of a Social Identity: Malayness and Bumiputraness Re-examined'. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 52, pp. 15–33.

Siddiq Fadil (1982) 'Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Perjuangan Ucapan Dasar Pemangku Presiden ABIM' [General guidelines of the direction of the struggle, policy speech by the acting president]. ABIM's 11th Annual Assembly, 3–5 September.

—— (1983) 'Menyahut Cabaran Abad Kebangunan' – Ucapan Dasar Pemangku Presiden ABIM' [Responding to the challenges of the development century – Keynote Address by the Acting ABIM President]. ABIM's 12th Annual Assembly, 30 July–1 August.

Simon, Herbert A. (1967) 'The Changing Theory and Changing Practice of Public Administration', in Ithiel de Sola Pool (ed.), *Political Science: Toward Empirical Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 86–120.

Sisters in Islam (1993) *Islam, Gender and Women's Rights*. Kuala Lumpur: Sisters in Islam Forum.

Smith, Anthony (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sothi Rachagan (1980) 'The Development of the Electoral System', in Harold Crouch, Lee Kam Hing and Michael Ong (eds), *Malaysian Politics and the 1978 Election*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 255–292.

Stenson, Michael (1980) *Class, Race and Colonialism in West Malaysia*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Stockwell, A.J. (1979) *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment 1942–1946*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, monograph no. 8.

Suhaini Aznam (1998a) 'A Judicial Shake-up'. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 January, p. 27.

—— (1998b) 'The Tilt of Power'. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 31 March, p. 15.

Syed Adam Aljafri (1995) 'The Corporate Dimension', in M. Pathmanathan and Robert Haas (eds), *Political Culture: The Challenge of Modernization*. Petaling Jaya: Friedrich Naumann Foundation, pp. 123–162.

Tan Chee Beng (1990) 'Resorting to Ethnic Games (Again)'. *Aliran Monthly*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 20–24.

Tan Liok Ee (1992) 'Dongjiaozong and the Challenge to Cultural Hegemony 1951–1987', in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, pp. 282–305.

Tan Poo Chang (1994) 'Women Power in Elections and Political Change: A Potential Resource', in Robert Haas and Rahmah Hashim (eds), *Malaysian Women Creating Their Political Awareness*. Kuala Lumpur: Friedrich Naumann Foundation & Asian Institute for Development Communication, pp. 37–46.

Tan Sooi Beng (1992) 'Counterpoints in the Performing Arts of Malaysia', in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, pp. 282–305.

Tan, Simon (1990) 'The Rise of State Authoritarianism in Malaysia'. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 22, no. 3 (July–September), pp. 32–42.

Tandon, Yash (1996) 'Reclaiming Africa's Agenda: Good Governance and the Role of the NGOs in the African Context'. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp 293–303.

Tang Eng Teik (1988) 'Perkembangan Akhbar-akhbar Cina di Malaysia' [The development of Chinese newspapers in Malaysia], in Mohd. Sarim Hj. Mustajab *et al.* (eds), *Akhbar dan Majalah di Malaysia:* Sejarah dan Perkembangan [Newspapers and magazines in Malaysia: history and development]. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, pp. 90–113.

Tarmizi Mohd. Jam (1993) *Kelantan Digugat dan Digigit* [Kelantan threatened and exploited]. Kuala Lumpur: Minda Siasah.

—— (1995) *Ketahanan PAS Ancam Masa Depan UMNO* [PAS resilience threatens UMNO's future]. Kuala Lumpur: Rangkaian Minda Publishing.

Tessler, M. (1997) 'The Origins of Popular Support for Islamist Movements: A Political Economy Analysis', in John P. Antelis (ed.), *Islam, Democracy and the State in North Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 93–126.

Tibi, B. (1999) 'The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Secular Order in the Middle East'. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 191–210.

Tilman, Robert O. (1964) Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Toh Kin Woon and Surin Leong (1994) 'Ethnicity, Political Awareness and Participation', in Robert Haas and Rahmah Hashim (eds), *Malaysian Women Creating Their Political Awareness*. Kuala Lumpur: Friedrich Naumann Foundation & Asian Institute for Development Communication, pp. 78–86.

Tonnesson, Stein (1996) 'Do Human Rights and Asian Values Go Together?' *NIASnytt*, no. 4 (December), pp. 8–12.

Turpin, Colin (1994) 'Ministerial Responsibility', in Jeffrey Jowell and Dawn Oliver (eds), *The Changing Constitution*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 109–151.

United Chinese School Teachers' Association Malaysia (1987) *UCSTAM 33 Tahun 1951–85* (Translation). Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit UCSTAM.

UMNO (1980a) *Jawapan Usul-Usul Perhimpunan Agung UMNO Malaysia Yang Ke-30 1978–1979* [Response to the resolutions of the 30th UMNO general assembly, 1978–1979]. Kuala Lumpur.

—— (1980b) *Usul-Usul Persidangan UMNO Ke-31 4–6 Julai 1980* [Resolutions of the 31st UMNO general assembly, 4–6 July]. Kuala Lumpur.

Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Sendirian Berhad Annual Report 1995, Kuala Lumpur.

Vasil, R.K. (1971) *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Vatikiotis, M.R.J. (1996) *Political Change in Southeast Asia – Trimming the Banyan Tree*. London: Routledge.

Venturelli, S. (1993) 'The Imagined Transnational Public Sphere in the European Community's Broadcast Policy: Implications for Democracy'. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 491–518.

Voll, O.J. (1994) *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Muslim World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

von Vorys, Karl (1976) *Democracy without Consensus*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

W. Mohd. Azam Amin (1997) *Antara Assabiyyah dan Nasionalisme Menurut Pandangan Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy* [Between chauvinism and nationalism according to Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy]. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Baiduri.

Waterbury, J. (1994) 'Democracy without Democrats? The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East', in Ghassan Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 23–47.

White, Fidelma, Ian Harden and Katy Donnelly (1994) 'Audit, Accounting Officers and Accountability: The Pergau Dam Affair'. *Public Law*. (Winter), pp. 526–534.

Wirth, Wolfgang (1985) 'Control in Public Administration: Plurality, Selectivity and Redundancy', in F.X. Kaufmann *et al.* (eds), *Guidance, Control and Evaluation in the Public Sector*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, pp. 595–624.

Women's Agenda for Change (1999) *Women's Agenda for Change*. Kuala Lumpur.

Wright, R. (1992) 'Islam, Democracy and the West'. *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 3, pp. 131–145.

—— (1996) 'Two Visions of Reformation'. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 64–75.

Yahaya bin Abdullah (1992) 'Perhuhungan Antara Ahli Politik dan Pentadbir pada Peringkat Negeri di Semenanjung Malaysia' [The relations between politicians and administrators at the state level in Peninsular Malaysia]. M.Soc.Sc. thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

Yong, C.F. and R.B. Mckenna (1990) *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya 1912–1949*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Yusof Rawa and Fadzil Mohd. Noor (1995) *Membina Ketahanan Ummah* [Building the defence of the community]. Penang: Dewan Muslimat.

Zabidi Mohamed (1998) Arqam: Tersungkur Di Pintu Syurga [Arqam: tripping at the gates of heaven]. Kuala Lumpur: Zabidi Publications.

Zaharom Nain (1991) 'Politics, economics and the media in Malaysia'. *Media Development*, vol. 38, no. 3, (September), pp. 39–42.

—— (1994) 'Commercialization and Control in a "Caring Society": Malaysian Media "Towards 2020"'. *Sojourn*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 178–199.

—— (1996) 'The Impact of the International Marketplace on the Organisation of Malaysian Television', in D. French and M. Richards (eds), *Contemporary Television: Eastern Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 157–180.

—— and Mustafa K. Anuar (1998) 'IT strategies in Malaysia: The Multimedia Super Corridor'. Paper presented at the International Conference on Information Technologies and Social Development. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 22–24 June.

—— *et al.* (1995) 'Communications, Curricula and Conformity: Of National Needs and Market Forces'. *Pendidik dan Pendidikan*, vol. 14, pp. 103–124.

Zainah Anwar (1987) *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the Students*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

Zainuddin Maidin (1994) *Mahathir Di Sebalik Tabir* [Mahathir behind the scenes]. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan.

Zaitoon Datuk Othman (1996) 'Constitution Supersedes Proposed Family Violence Act'. *New Straits Times*, 27 April.

Zakaria Ahmad (1989) 'Malaysia: Quasi Democracy in a Divided Society', in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, vol. 3. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, pp. 347–381.

Zakaria, Fareed (1994) 'Culture is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew'. *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 2 (March/April), pp. 109–126.

Zin Mahmud (1997) 'Electable Alternative Kepada UMNO' [Electable alternative to UMNO]. *Tamadun*, June, pp. 24–28.

Zubaida, S. (1998) 'Muslim Societies: Unity or Diversity?' *ISIM Newsletter*. 1 October.

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Aliran Monthly, Penang
Asiaweek, Hong Kong
Berita Harian, Kuala Lumpur
Eksklusif, Kuala Lumpur
Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), Hong Kong
Frontline, New Delhi
Harakah, Kuala Lumpur
Malay Mail, Kuala Lumpur
Malaysian Business, Kuala Lumpur
Mingguan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur
New Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur
New Sunday Times, Kuala Lumpur
Sunday Mail, Kuala Lumpur
The Star, Kuala Lumpur
The Sun, Kuala Lumpur
Time (Asia), New York
Utusan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

INDEX

The Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) is funded by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden via the Nordic Council of Ministers, and works to encourage and support Asian studies in the Nordic countries. In so doing, NIAS has been publishing books since 1969, with more than one hundred titles produced in the last ten years, most of them in cooperation with Curzon Press.

Nordic Council of Ministers