

# Malaysia

## Beyond Communal Politics

Goh Cheng Teik



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## Preface

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"THERE is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune," wrote William Shakespeare. There is now such a flood tide in the history of independent Malaysia. If it is taken, it is likely to result in a breakthrough in the solution to the ethnic problem in the country and steer the people in the direction of a truly Malaysian Malaysia.

Shakespeare also warned us of the consequences of ignoring this tide. "Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries." Should the present generation of Malaysians miss this tide, succeeding generations may have to paddle their way through the rocks of ethnicity and the rapids of tension and violence. Once ethnicity is permitted, tolerated and then legitimized, it may not be possible at a later stage to phase it out. As the present conflicts amongst the Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs and Slovenians clearly demonstrate, ethnicity that does not go extinct can erupt and wreak havoc at a time that is least expected.

I am most anxious to write about this crucial stage of my country's political evolution. Given my academic background in the science of politics and my present first-hand experience of practical politics, I believe I can combine analytical skill and inside knowledge to bring into focus the crucial issues of the times and to encourage sober and rational discussion of them by concerned citizens of all races.

Unfortunately, time is a constraint. No politician is in complete control of his time. He has to be at the beck and call of his constituents. Nevertheless, I managed to take two weeks' leave last autumn and spend them at Wolfson College in Cambridge. That was the time I began writing this short monograph. Since then I have used every spare moment to try and finish it. Needless to say, the finished product does not meet the rigorous requirements of scholarship but I do hope that full-time scholars will continue to pursue this subject with greater depth.

Let me thank Professor Sir David Williams, Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge; the President and Fellows of Wolfson College, including Dr. Derek Nicholls and Dr. Jack King; and Dr. S. Murk Jansen, Fellow of Newnham College, for making my sojourn at Cambridge both pleasant and fruitful. I am also grateful to Tan Sook Ping of Bank Negara Malaysia for her help in obtaining statistical data and my staff, Karen Thong and Tan Keng Luan, for meticulously typing the manuscript.

Goh Cheng Teik,  
Penang, 1994.

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## A Plea for Sobriety

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LIKE other citizens who have travelled abroad, I have heard my own country, Malaysia, praised as a developmental success and hailed as a model for other Third World states. These compliments have come not only from visiting dignitaries, diplomats, traders and consultants but also from travellers, writers and scholars.

A rapid overview of the achievements that Malaysia has chalked up since 1957, the year independence was granted, should convince even sceptics that these foreigners do not compliment us merely out of politeness. They have solid grounds for thinking highly of us, especially when they compare our record with that of other decolonized territories in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Firstly, political stability. At the time of decolonization, grave doubts about the survival of this new state existed. In fact, they were openly expressed, particularly in Britain. The Malays, Chinese and Indians were as different from each other

in race, language, customs and religion as one could possibly imagine. Irreconcilable communal differences would shatter the peace eventually, it was presumed. Yet by the 1990s the nation is not only still intact but is actually thriving and flourishing. There were occasional breakdowns of law and order (for example, Kuala Lumpur in May 1969) but violence has been an exception rather than the rule for the past three-and-a-half decades. The amount of foreign investment that has flowed in reflects the level of confidence that the external private sector has in our country's political stability.

Secondly, representative government. Soon after independence, outside observers, like Rupert Emerson of Harvard University, predicted that Malaysia would slide down the slippery road travelled by Indonesia and Lebanon. Internal strife would result in either a military takeover or the rise of a dictator.<sup>1</sup> History has not proven them right so far. Despite a shooting guerrilla war, military confrontation with Indonesia and a serious interracial clash, general elections have been held at regular intervals—in 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1982, 1986 and 1990. Political power has never slipped away from the hands of elected civilians. Even when democracy was suspended for twenty-one months (May 1969-February 1971), power was firmly held by Abdul Razak bin Hussein, a civilian.

Thirdly, economic development. At independence, the economy rested on two pillars, tin and rubber. This heavy dependence on a few primary commodities subjected the economy to the vicissitudes of the world commodity markets. For example, news of a release from the US Stockpile would—literally—rattle the market and everything else in Kuala Lumpur. Over the years, the economy has been steadily diversi-

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, R. Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples*, Boston, 1962, p. 278.

fied. The eggs have been spread over several baskets. By 1993, tin and rubber accounted for merely 2.2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). The other contributors were palm oil (6.2 per cent), manufacturing (30.1 per cent), oil and gas (7.3 per cent) and construction (4.0 per cent). At the same time, the GDP has been growing. It rose from RM5.9 billion in 1960 to RM166.8 billion in 1993. Per capita income has also increased from RM817 in 1960 to RM8,350 in 1993. More significantly, the incidence of poverty has sharply declined—from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 15.0 per cent in 1990.

Fourthly, rural modernization. The elected, post-colonial government set itself an ambitious task, namely, to beef up backward rural districts so that they could be on par with urban areas, at least, as far as basic amenities and facilities were concerned. The results are astonishing. Roads have been built. Irrigation and drainage canals have been dug. Water pipes have been laid. Power cables and telephone lines have been installed. Agricultural extension services have been provided. Schools, clinics, community halls and places of worship, like *suraus*, mosques, churches and temples, have been constructed. Not only do newly-opened land settlements enjoy modern amenities but many traditional villages have access to them as well. Never in the history of Third World countries has so much been done by a popularly-elected government to ensure that rural inhabitants obtain opportunities that are as equal as possible to their urban counterparts!

Fifthly, literacy. In 1957, there wasn't a single Malay-language high school. Even primary schools using the Malay medium of instruction were few. The post-colonial government embarked on a massive educational programme—building new schools where they were needed and launching college after college to train the additional teachers required. By the 1990s, over four million pupils attend government or govern-



ment-aided schools throughout the country. In response to the need to train skilled labour and the demand for higher education, schools, polytechnics, colleges and universities have been opened. Besides, tens of thousands of government-sponsored students have been sent overseas, principally to English-language colleges and universities in the United States and Commonwealth countries. The net result is that Malaysia now enjoys one of the highest literacy rates amongst Third World states.

And sixthly, the middle class. During the colonial era, there wasn't any local middle class of any size to speak of. Only the Malay princes, a handful of high-ranking Asians in the colonial service and a small number of Chinese miners, plantation-owners and merchants had wealth. Since independence, however, Malaysians of humble origins have seized the opportunities availed by the government to advance into every sector of the economy, including those dominated by the Europeans, like the import-export trade, banking, finance, stockbroking and shipping. They have also ventured into new fields like manufacturing, construction and oil and gas exploration and production. As a result, upward social mobility has taken place and the middle class has grown considerably. These *nouveau riche* inhabitants can be found in the modern suburbs of old cities and the new townships that have mushroomed everywhere. In the 1950s and 1960s, few Malays belonged to the middle class. Since the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), this imbalance has been rectified. Large numbers of Malays have swelled the ranks of the middle class. In fact, the leading Malay taipans of the 1990s like Daim Zainuddin are catching up fast with Lim Goh Tong, Robert Kuok and Loh Boon Siew.

Of course, I rejoice in the string of successes that this country has scored. Fellow countrymen would, I am sure, join

me in giving credit where credit is due. At the same time, let us not get carried away. Let us be truthful enough to admit that Malaysia is not yet out of the woods! The great strides and advances notwithstanding, our people have not yet become a "Bangsa Malaysia" or Malaysian Race—a people infused with a sense of nationhood, a people sharing a common sense of destiny, a people prepared to sink and swim together. We are Malaysians on the surface. We behave courteously towards each other. Yet deep in our heart of hearts, we are still ethnic. We are Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Melanaus, Kadazans or Bajaus, not Malaysians.

The raging civil war in the former republic of Yugoslavia greatly troubles me. When Marshall Josip Tito was in power, the outside world scarcely heard about the Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs or Slovenians. Either we assumed that all of them had become Yugoslavs, the bitter history of the Balkans notwithstanding, or else we only believed what the Titoists wanted us to. Tito's break with Stalin, Yugoslavia's trail-blazing path in socialist development, Yugoslavia's leadership of the non-aligned world—these captured the world's headlines. I remember attending international conferences and hearing Yugoslavia praised not merely by the representatives of Third World governments but also by liberal-minded Western politicians and scholars.

Tito died in 1980, not so long ago, but the House that he built has collapsed. The Yugoslavian federation has disintegrated into several warring republics. Why has yesterday's Yugoslavia, which had won such high praises from the world, broken up so rapidly into multiple fragments? Because, contrary to what we presumed or were led to believe, the Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs and Slovenians had become Yugoslavs only superficially! In their heart of hearts, they had remained unrepentant ethnicists. And when the force that had

held them together disappeared, they went in separate directions.<sup>2</sup>

Let me hasten to acknowledge that Malaysia is not Yugoslavia and that whilst there are similarities, there are at the same time significant differences. For example, Kuala Lumpur has been far more successful than Belgrade ever was in easing inter-ethnic tension, resolving inter-ethnic problems, creating social cohesion and, above all, achieving a high rate of economic growth. The only lesson that I hope my fellow countrymen would be humble enough to learn from the tragedy of Yugoslavia is this: do not underestimate the tenacity of ethnicity. Racialism does not wither away so readily. Therefore, as far as Malaysia's present scenario is concerned, it is better for us to be realistic than euphoric. Things appear calm on the communal surface at the present moment but remember the old Malay proverb, *jika air tenang, jangan sangka tiada buaya*. When the water is calm, don't presume there are no crocodiles lurking beneath!

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<sup>2</sup> For an account of recent events, see Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.

## Persistence of Communal Politics

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SINCE Tunku Abdul Rahman's premiership, politicians from the governing parties have endeavoured to instil in the different races a common political consciousness, to integrate them into a single national community and to inculcate in them a sense of belonging to the motherland. They have embarked upon countless measures to persuade fellow citizens to live, work and play together as brothers and sisters.

Firstly, they have unified the country's educational system. Whether the language of instruction is Malay, Chinese or Tamil, all primary schools use common syllabuses and textbooks. Pupils from primary schools then proceed to secondary schools where they are taught in Malay, the national language. From secondary schools, selected pupils enter colleges and universities and obtain their higher education also in Malay or Bahasa Malaysia (or Bahasa Melayu, as it is known now).

Secondly, they have popularized Malay as the lingua franca of the nation. In the early years of independence, cam-

paings were launched to promote the study and usage of the national language amongst students and adults alike. The mass media—radio, television and newspapers—participated actively in them. On their part, government servants switched to Malay in their correspondence with members of the public whilst ministers and other politicians made a strenuous effort to speak as much Malay as possible, inside and outside the legislatures. No survey has been done but it would not be excessive to claim that, in general, the post-Merdeka generation of citizens do possess a working knowledge of the national language and can communicate with each other with it.

Thirdly, they have erased the identification of race with economic function. In colonial times, Malays were distinctly identified with padi-planting, fishing and government service; Chinese with tin-mining, rubber-tapping and shopkeeping; and Indians with manual labour. This gave rise to ethnic stereotyping. As a result of the New Economic Policy, almost all sectors of the economy have been multiracialized. There is Malay participation in tin-mining, rubber-planting, oil palm cultivation, retail trading, manufacturing, construction, banking, finance, insurance, stock-market operations, etc. Even in the fields of medicine and engineering (which caused a lot of concern at one time), the Malays have performed satisfactorily. As for the Indians, they are no longer merely manual labourers. Quite a few of them have become technicians, supervisors, managers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, developers, manufacturers, etc.

Fourthly, they have redressed the imbalance in wealth distribution by race. In the past, wealth was concentrated in the hands of the Europeans and Chinese. As a result of a vigorous drive initiated by the government over a period of many years, the picture has altered. Who owns how much is not easy to determine with accuracy (even the Inland Revenue Department

is unsure), but judging from the number of Malay taipans who are making waves in the share market and the quantities of riches they are known to have accumulated, it is obvious to well-informed members of the business community that wealth imbalance by race has ceased to be a problem. (Whether intra-racial imbalance has emerged as a new problem or not is another matter though.)

The above and other measures introduced by government politicians since 1957 have achieved some of the results desired by the founding fathers. It cannot be denied that now the different races intermingle with each other in a more relaxed and congenial atmosphere than they did in the past. Nevertheless, I venture to assert that racial harmony would have reached a higher level by the 1990s had most of these same politicians not negated some of their achievements by their own lapses into communalism.

Let me explain this argument of mine.

Most leaders and members of communal parties such as UMNO, MCA, MIC, Parti Pesaka-Bumiputera Bersatu and PBDS are enlightened and forward-looking. I can vouch for this on the basis of personal knowledge and information. They accept Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's "Vision 2020", an ambitious blueprint to make Malaysia an industrialized nation and to transform the people into a new "Bangsa Malaysia". Unfortunately, they are prisoners of their own political environment. They belong to parties which restrict membership to persons of particular racial origins. They are, therefore, obliged to be faithful to the aims and objects stated in their party constitutions and to champion the rights and interests of the communities their parties formally represent, regardless of whether they believe in that or not.

I am not saying that these politicians do not try to break out of the confines of their environment. They do. They make

efforts to rise above race, to be broadminded and big-hearted and to make decisions in the larger national interest. There is, unfortunately, a very definite limitation. When they participate in their respective internal party elections, they have to draw the line. They have to be communal! They cannot afford not to do so. The heart of a particular politician from a communal party may incline him to be rational and statesmanlike but his head tells him that if he wants to win his party election and safeguard his personal political future, he has to play it communal and emotional. Indeed, if his opponent campaigns communally, he has no choice but to follow suit.

Let us examine the campaign tactics of Ghafar Baba and Anwar Ibrahim in the recent UMNO elections. Ghafar, a senior politician much respected for his broadmindedness, declared that he wanted UMNO to continue to champion the cause of rural Malays. He did not want UMNO to deviate from this objective. Why did he mention only the Malays? Had he forgotten that the Chinese and Indians also inhabit rural Malaysia? The explanation is obvious. Ghafar was fighting for his political life. He had to woo the votes of UMNO members and since, for all practical purposes, they were Malays, he had to send the right message to the right audience.

Ghafar's rival, Anwar, was equally known for his racial tolerance. Nevertheless, he had to counter Ghafar's appeal to the Malay masses. He could not afford to appear to be less Malay than Ghafar in the eyes of UMNO members. In answer to Ghafar's "Melayu Kampung" slogan, Anwar launched his "Melayu Baru" theme. He wanted the Malays to forge ahead, to arm themselves with new knowledge and skills and to brace themselves for the challenges of modernity but without sacrificing their traditional virtues and religious beliefs. Why didn't Anwar talk about *Malaysia Baru*, since this message is also relevant to the Chinese, Indians and others? Because non-Malays had few votes, if any, in his party election!

As a politician myself, I have seen—from the inside—how politicians from communal parties are pressured at times to play to the gallery. During general elections, they express the most liberal views pleasing to the ears of voters of all races. Why? Because the national electorate is multiracial. Every vote counts. Victory or defeat can be decided by a single vote. They would not want to alienate any voter unnecessarily. During party elections, however, they tend to become communal and demagogic, especially when the contests are very stiff. Why? Because the party electorate is more or less mono-racial.

Critics can criticize these politicians for playing with fire, but as down-to-earth politicians, they realize they have to get their priorities right. First, they have to survive politically. They may be ardent liberals at heart but what does it profit a politician from a communal party if he gains the respect of all the other races but suffers the loss of his own party post?

The task of nation-building in Malaysia can be compared to a game of snakes-and-ladders. The good policies of government and the hard work put in by ministers, civil servants, community leaders and social workers do result in improved race relations. Accordingly, racial harmony takes a ladder and climbs up. Then come party elections. Communal demagoguery takes over—for a while, at least. Racial harmony enters the mouth of a snake and tumbles down.

Happily, there has been more climbing up than tumbling down since 1957. This is why on balance there is political progress. All the same, this wastage of time and energy must not be allowed to go on indefinitely.



## A Case for Decommunalizing Political Parties

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COMMUNAL parties are so established in this country that many young Malaysians may not realize that at one time in the nation's history communal politics was actually frowned upon and that a gallant effort was made by none other than the founder of UMNO, Onn Jaafar, to blaze the trail for non-communal parties. Onn had rallied the Malays from all walks of life in March 1946 to oppose the Malayan Union. He formed UMNO in May 1946 to unite the Malays and to save them from extinction. Within a short span of time, however, he had managed to achieve most of what he had originally set out to do. The Malayan Union, which was based on the principle of equality for all races, was abandoned. The new Federation of Malaya, established in February 1948, required its executive head of government, the high commissioner, to safeguard and guarantee the special position of the Malays.

Spurred on by his swift successes, Onn decided to widen his terms of reference. In August 1949, he urged the Malays to be broadminded and to accept as citizens those Chinese, Indians and others who were prepared to be loyal to this country. By 1950, he was pressing for "Hidup Melayu" ("Long Live the Malays") to be replaced by "Merdeka" ("Freedom"). Shortly after, he advocated that the United Malays National Organization be transformed into the United *Malayan* National Organization and that non-Malays, who were federal citizens, be allowed admission into the party. He warned that if UMNO refused to endorse these proposals, he would form another political party, completely non-communal, to fight for an independent State of Malaya, inclusive of Singapore, arriving at the well-being and advancement of the people based on the equality of opportunities and of political, social and economic rights. When support was not forthcoming, he resigned from UMNO and formed the Independence of Malaya Party.<sup>3</sup>

Onn's non-communal party was launched amidst great fanfare in Kuala Lumpur in 1951. "One thousand people—representatives of every community—crowded the roof garden of Hotel Majestic and cheered spontaneously when the resolution which brought the party into existence was passed unanimously," reported *The Straits Times*. Its organizing committee members included Tan Cheng Lock, Yong Shook Lin, Khoo Teik Ee (from the MCA), P.P. Narayanan (from the trade union congress), Abdul Aziz bin Ishak, Saleha binte Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Sopiee, R. Ramani, E.C. Thuraising-

<sup>3</sup> See B. Simandjuntak, *Malayan Federalism, 1945-1963: A Study of Federal Problems in a Plural Society*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 64-67 and R.K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 39-50.

ham, F. Arulanandom and L.C. Hoffman. Three of the five cabinet members in the colonial government and thirty out of the 75 Federal Legislative Council members were members of the IMP.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, IMP failed to elicit popular support either from the Malay or Chinese community. Clear evidence of this emerged in the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections in February 1952. IMP fielded candidates in all the twelve wards. To their surprise, they were opposed by UMNO and MCA! That was not all. UMNO and MCA, two communal parties which had not agreed with each other on countless issues, entered into an electoral pact and agreed not to put up candidates against each other! To Onn, this electoral arrangement was nothing less than treachery as MCA leaders had encouraged him to form IMP. According to T.H. Tan, the contacts and negotiations were made by local political bosses, notably Yahaya Razak from the Kuala Lumpur UMNO and Ong Yoke Lin and H.S. Lee from the Selangor MCA, but both UMNO and MCA presided.<sup>5</sup>

What is important for the historian to note is that in this crucial encounter between a multiracial party (IMP) and an alliance of racial parties (UMNO and MCA) in the early 1950s, the Malay and Chinese masses voted with their feet for the interracial alliance! UMNO and MCA swept nine seats whilst IMP managed to win only one seat, the stature of Onn and other high-ranking leaders notwithstanding.

<sup>4</sup> Vasil, *op. cit.*, p. 50 and Khong Kim Hoong, *Merdeka! British Rule and the Struggle for Independence in Malaya, 1945-1957*, Petaling Jaya: Institute for Social Analysis, 1984, p. 170.

<sup>5</sup> See T.H. Tan, *The Prince and I*, Singapore: Sam Boyd Enterprise/Mini Media, 1979, pp. 25-27. A journalist by background, T.H. Tan was chief executive secretary of the MCA during Tan Cheng Lock's presidency.

After its taste of success in Kuala Lumpur, this concept of an alliance of racial parties gained popularity throughout the country. In subsequent local elections, the same formula was applied. There were no contest against each other's candidates. There was mutual assistance in campaigning. The results were also staggering. For example, of the 124 municipal and town council seats contested in the course of 1952 and 1953, the UMNO-MCA Alliance captured 94 seats.<sup>6</sup>

This massive upsurge of voter support persuaded Tan Cheng Lock and other MCA leaders who had supported Onn Jaafar in his multiracial venture earlier to back out and throw their weight completely behind the UMNO-MCA Alliance.

Onn felt betrayed. "I had to forego (the pleasure of being the leader of the Malays) because I was convinced in my own mind that there was no other course in this country. . . . Having left the UMNO, the present President of the MCA and I agreed to form a non-communal party which would take into its fold members of all races and of all communities. I have kept my part of the bargain." He tried to split the UMNO-MCA Alliance by accusing the MCA of wanting to turn Malaya into a province of China but in vain.<sup>7</sup> The idea of a racial alliance had gathered momentum. Discouraged and disillusioned, Onn turned his back on multiracialism. He withdrew into his old communal shell. He dissolved IMP, formed Parti Negara in March 1954 and tried to regain the Malay racial support he had once enjoyed.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See James P. Ongkili, *Nation-Building in Malaysia, 1946-1974*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Vasil, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>8</sup> Parti Negara disallowed membership to those non-Malays who had lived in the country for ten years but who were not citizens. It wanted stringent requirements to be imposed on non-Malays. See Khong, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

The 1955 Federal Elections of Malaya gave a definitive stamp of approval to the concept of an interracial coalition. The Alliance, which had enlarged into a tri-racial partnership with the admission of MIC in April 1955, won 51 of the 52 seats contested. Parti Negara failed to win a single seat. Onn himself was only able to obtain 2,802 votes in his home constituency of Johor Baru, compared with 8,745 votes won by the Alliance candidate.

Why did a nationalist leader as influential as Onn Jaafar fail to launch a multiracial party in the 1950s? With the benefit of hindsight, the answer is obvious. Onn Jaafar was ahead of his time. In fact, he himself realized it. Referring to his attempts to open membership of UMNO to the other races, he declared: "Unfortunately, the time was not ripe, the Malay mind had not been sufficiently tuned that there must be unity and unity in this land . . ."<sup>9</sup> The Peranakan Chinese leader, Cheng Lock was also ahead of his time. Ordinary Malay and Chinese voters made it abundantly clear—in the Kuala Lumpur local elections, in local elections held in other towns and in the nationwide federal elections—that they preferred to be represented by communal parties. Whether UMNO or MCA could deliver to the Malays or Chinese the goods it had promised them did not arise at that stage as the government was still in the hands of the colonialists.

It is said that every leader ought to lead but, as Richard Nixon (1913-1994) put it, "a leader can be out in front, ahead of public opinion, but not too far ahead".<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, he may lose public support. That was the political tragedy of Onn Jaa-

<sup>9</sup> Vasil, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> See Richard M. Nixon, *Leaders: Profiles and Reminiscences of Men Who Have Shaped the Modern World*, New York: Warner, 1983, pp. 341-342.

far. He disregarded the mood of his people. He acted merely on conviction. By the time he turned back to look, his flock had disappeared.

From 1955 until 1969, the interracial alliance prevailed. Tunku Abdul Rahman, Onn's successor as UMNO president and the acknowledged head of the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance, became Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya when independence was achieved in 1957. A Cambridge-educated lawyer, he was—personally—very liberal in his views but he realized that the various races were still racial in outlook and had to be led by racial parties. This explains why, on the one hand, the Tunku exhorted UMNO, MCA and MIC to represent their respective communal interests and appeared to sanction communal politics and, on the other hand, he deplored politicians, whether from within the coalition or outside it, who played politics with communalism and threatened to upset the political equilibrium.

A big setback for the Alliance occurred in 1959. Dr. Lim Chong Eu, who defeated Tan Cheng Lock back in 1958 and emerged as the new MCA president, insisted that the Chinese from his party be allowed to contest forty out of 104 constituencies under the Alliance symbol in the 1959 federal elections. This request was rejected by the Tunku and UMNO. When a letter which the new MCA president wrote to the Alliance chief and which contained this request was released to the press, a big uproar broke out. In the end, the Tunku had his way. Chong Eu resigned as president. His key supporters left MCA. Some of them ran as independents. Unlike in 1955 when it won 51 of the 52 seats, the Alliance merely won 74 of the 104 constituencies it contested in the 1959 general elections.

In 1964 the Alliance managed to recoup much of the ground it had lost. By then, the federation had been enlarged to include Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah. President Sukarno

of Indonesia objected to this merger and started confrontation against Malaysia. This undeclared war waged by Sukarno frightened the voters in Malaya, especially the Chinese, and caused them to swing in big numbers to the side of the government in the Malayan Elections. The Alliance won 89 of the 104 seats contested. More significantly, MCA won 27 of the 33 constituencies it contested.

By 1969, however, it became obvious that the strictly racial Alliance had ceased to be an adequate mechanism for governing Malaysia's multiracial society. In the polls held that year, the non-Malays in Peninsular Malaysia voted with their feet against racial parties. They deserted the Alliance *en masse* in both federal and state elections. Although the Alliance was returned to power at the federal level, it lost Penang and Kelantan to the opposition in the state elections and failed to obtain clear-cut majorities in Perak and Selangor. The MCA only won thirteen of the 33 parliamentary seats it contested. On the evening of May 13, three days after polling, interracial riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur. A state of emergency was declared. Democracy was suspended. The Tunku was sidelined. His deputy in the UMNO, Abdul Razak, headed an emergency government and emerged as the *de facto* power-holder of the country.

Razak reacted to the 1969 crisis with great realism and pragmatism. On the one hand, he proceeded—with the help of the National Language Policy, the National Education Policy, the New Economic Policy and so on—to reassure rank-and-file Malays that UMNO could safeguard their rights and interests at all times and to regain their support.

On the other hand, he shed the Tunku's taboo and brought those parties which had hitherto opposed the Alliance, like SUPP, Gerakan, PPP, PAS and SNAP, into an enlarged party coalition, the National Front. This grand coalition scored a

landslide victory in 1974, winning 135 of the 154 federal seats contested.

Unlike the Alliance, the National Front does not have a preference for racial parties. For example, in Razak's time, whilst UMNO, MCA, MIC, PBB and USNO were racial parties and PAS was a religious party, Gerakan, PPP, SUPP and SNAP were multiracial and multi-religious parties. In fact, once the reluctance to bring in hitherto opposition parties was overcome, the National Front had become rather pragmatic in its practice of admitting new members. Sabah is a case in point. After Berjaya, a newly-formed multiracial party led by Fuad Stephens, defeated the ruling USNO in 1976 and formed the government, it was admitted into the National Front. When PBS, another new multiracial party, caused an upset and toppled the Berjaya government in 1985, there was—initially—strong resistance to its admission into the grand coalition. Eventually, the National Front overcame its reluctance and opened its doors to PBS.<sup>11</sup>

The success of the National Front concept has prompted other parties to think of forming their own coalitions. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, a former UMNO vice-president and National Front treasurer, tried—after he failed to defeat Mahathir Mohamad in the UMNO presidential election in 1987—to forge a grand opposition coalition comprising Semangat 46, PAS and Berjasa, a league of Muslim parties, on the one hand, and Semangat 46, DAP, Parti Rakyat and IPF, an assortment of racial and non-racial parties, on the other. Apart from capturing Kelantan and despite a last-minute support from PBS, this opposition coalition failed to shake the National Front's grip on the federal government in the 1990 general elections.

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<sup>11</sup> In the midst of the 1990 general elections, however, PBS pulled out of the National Front and angered its leaders.



The pertinent question to ask today is whether the time is opportune for politicians from the National Front to take the final step in the evolution of the country's party system since World War II, namely, to enact a federal law to require all political parties to open their doors to all citizens, regardless of race? Let me argue that the answer should be in the positive and that present UMNO leaders ought to complete the unfinished work of Onn Jaafar. I have alluded to some of the reasons for this but let me summarize all of them here.

Firstly, the successes of the Alliance-National Front governments have generated enough of a net increase in interracial harmony and solidarity to create a conducive atmosphere for citizens of all races to accept non-communal politics. Before independence, the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Kadazans and others inhabited the same territory but lived in separate worlds. According to J.S. Furnivall, they lived side by side but without mingling into one political unit.<sup>12</sup> A generation later, this society has undergone a significant change. The process of political socialization has taught today's adult Malaysians to appreciate the complicated texture of the social fabric and to respect the sensitivities of the different races. This is true not only of the cosmopolitan city dwellers but also of the village folks, who, in my view, are no less informed and enlightened.

Secondly, to persuade the politicians who are reluctant to go non-communal on their own volition, it is necessary to make it mandatory for all to do so. Politicians do compete against each other (though the degree of intensity may vary from case to case). This applies not only to politicians from ri-

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the plural society, see J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, Cambridge University Press, 1948.

val parties but also to those from the same party. No politician from a communal party will voluntarily eschew communal politics if he knows that there are competitors from his party who will not do so. He has to assure himself a level playing-field. A total ban against communal parties is the answer. Then the constraint is equally applied. Every politician will be constrained from hitting below the belt.

Thirdly, to internalize non-racialism, party politicians must be obliged to operate in an environment that favours national integration. In a party with mixed membership, it would be unpolitic for any member to speak or act against any particular race. Not only will he be violating the constitution of his party but fellow members belonging to that race in question can retaliate, for example, by backing his rivals in party elections. They may be few numerically but politicians know better than others that every vote counts. Protestations of party comradeship notwithstanding, a politician has few permanent friends or permanent enemies within his party, if any. He does not know when he needs help and from whom. Prudence dictates that he tries to make as few enemies as possible amongst his colleagues.

Fourthly, politicians have to be seen to practise what they preach. National Front politicians have exhorted, cajoled and even threatened businessmen to comply with the New Economic Policy and integrate. Segregation in any trade or occupation could not be tolerated. The identification of race with economic function had to be eradicated. Yet in their own domain, the political domain, many National Front politicians still practise racial exclusiveness. They bar persons of other races from joining their party organizations. Such double-standard behaviour has taken its toll on the respect that the common people have for politicians. It is imperative for politicians of all party affiliations to decide as soon as possible to wipe out the identification of race with political organization,

to make "leadership by example" a meaningful slogan and to regain the respect and confidence of the populace.

Fifthly, Malaysia's achievements are attracting the attentions of governments everywhere, not merely from Asia and Africa but also Latin America and Eastern Europe. They have heard that we have managed to enlarge our gross domestic product and raise the living standards of the common people despite severe multiracial handicaps. They are eager to know more about us and to learn from our experiences. Let us remove the remaining defect in our democratic party system, namely, the discriminatory membership rules imposed by certain parties, so that we can present ourselves to the outside world as a *bona fide* model for other multiracial states to follow.

Sixthly, the leading communal parties in the National Front, namely, UMNO and MCA, have begun the process of desegregation. UMNO has accepted Thais from Kedah and Kadazans from Sabah as full-fledged members. MCA has announced that any citizen who has Chinese ancestry, however little, can apply for membership. Removing the remaining restrictions to party membership is a logical consequence of the actions that UMNO and MCA have already initiated.

Last but not least, the present National Front leader, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, stated some years ago that he wanted a "Bangsa Malaysia" to emerge sometime in the future.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Onn, he is not impatient. He has not set himself a rigid time-frame. He does not want to make the mistake of

<sup>13</sup> This is stated in a paper entitled "Malaysia: The Way Forward" presented to the Malaysian Business Council on February 28, 1991. See also Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid (ed.), *Malaysia's Vision 2020: Understanding the Concept, Implications and Challenges*, Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1993, p. 404.

forcing the pace. He is prepared to wait for the process of change to run its normal course.

Now that so much change within Malaysia's economy and society has taken place, it is time for him to act. It is time for him to take the tide at its flood. Further racial segregation in the party system can stifle any remaining inclination to integrate. It is not automatic for a "Bangsa Malaysia" to come into existence. Already some of the policies and practices that were meant to be temporary have become entrenched. Unless statesmanlike decisions are made soon, the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans and Kadazans of Malaysia, like the Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs and Slovenians of the former Yugoslavia, may remain ethnic perpetually and never transform themselves into Malaysians.

## A Vision of the Future

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IT may appear to a politician from UMNO, MCA, MIC or another communal party that to invite him to consider accepting other races into the fold is tantamount to asking him to think the unthinkable. It will be a radical departure from what is written in his party constitution and what he has been used to until now.

Let me advise politicians from communal parties not to be afraid of thinking the unthinkable. Many politicians have thought of the unthinkable in recent years and they have not regretted it.

As an illustration, take the communists of China. At one time, it was heresy for any party cadre in that country to entertain the thought of introducing or re-introducing private enterprise into the economy. He would be attacked as a "capitalist roader" and might even end up in a labour camp. This is no longer the case in the China of today. The entire Communist Party has endorsed the programme of switching to a market-

driven economy. Are there regrets? Not at all. I have talked to grassroot party cadres in China during my visits to that country. They thank Deng Xiao-ping and the government for introducing economic reforms and improving the living standards of the common people!

Or look at the Palestinians. Not so long ago, it was unthinkable for Yasser Arafat and other PLO leaders to consider sitting down at the same table with the Israelis—prior to their withdrawal from all occupied territories. Of late, they thought about it. They held secret negotiations with the Israelis. Then they sat down in public with Israeli ministers. At long last, the world's most intractable conflict may be settled by peaceful negotiation.

Is it that dreadful for UMNO, MCA and MIC members, for example, to envisage a future without communal parties? If they sit down and ponder over it quietly, they will feel cheerful, not gloomy. After all, it is a result of successes in nation-building, not a consequence of its failures. The communal parties themselves have been primarily responsible for these successes. Had the policies and actions of the Alliance-National Front governments not reduced gaps, redressed imbalances and brought the different races closer together, the shortcomings and defects notwithstanding, we will not be having this luxury of discussing whether we should or should not take another step forward.

Moreover, the premium in Malaysia today is placed on politicians who have the vision, who can look beyond the horizon, who can see into the future. This is particularly so in UMNO. What better vision for an ambitious UMNO politician to have than Mahathir's vision of a new "Bangsa Malaysia"? Can "Bangsa Malaysia" ever see the light of day if politicians insist on segregating themselves by race and playing the age-old game of racial politics?

Let us grab the bull by its horns. Let us assume that the next General Assembly of UMNO resolves to transform the party into a United *Malaysian* National Organization, as it attempted to do back in 1951. What happens? Will the sky fall down? Will disaster strike?

Yes, overnight the party's doors are flung wide open. Citizens of other racial origins who can satisfy its conditions can just walk in. Some Malay members may complain of a loss in privacy. They may not be able to talk without inhibition about other races, because the newly-admitted Chinese, Indians and other members will be sitting in their midst. Fortunately, such a loss will be more imaginary than real. For many years now, UMNO's party activities have been extremely transparent. Speeches by its leaders at party functions are reported on radio, television and in the newspapers. UMNO's annual general meeting is open to the press. Every word uttered is heard by reporters from not only *Utusan Melayu* and *Berita Harian*, but also non-Malay newspapers such as *New Straits Times*, *The Star*, *The Sun*, *Kwong Wah Yit Poh*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, *Tong Bao*, *China Press*, *Tamil Nesan* and *Tamil Malai*. Of late, substantial portions of the proceedings have been broadcast live on radio and television. In other words, UMNO has been so transparent that there is very little privacy left to be lost.

Whether in the short- or long-term, UMNO will stand to gain from opening its doors to other races. According to current practice, UMNO's parliamentarians or state assemblymen have to approach their non-Malay constituents indirectly, that is, through component parties in the National Front. Its candidates in elections have to depend upon allied parties to deliver them the Chinese and Indian votes. Seasoned UMNO campaigners will agree with me that this arrangement has not only strengths but also weaknesses.

A Malaysian UMNO will no longer be obligated to seek the services of outsiders to canvass for their candidates in general elections or to assist their elected representatives discharge their constituency duties. When UMNO goes Malaysian, any Ali-Baba or Ali-Sami arrangement will become redundant. UMNO will be able to harness its internal resources (that is, its own Chinese and Indian members) to do whatever political work it has to do. In addition, UMNO Malay politicians can deal directly with Chinese and Indian voters. When racial suspicion was strong, reliance on political middlemen could be justified. In the present political climate, there is no necessity whatsoever. Look at a typical *penghulu*. He is Malay, yet he can deal directly and effectively with Chinese new villagers and Indian estate labourers. If a Malay *penghulu* can do it, there is no reason why a Malay politician cannot. I dare say he will find that his Chinese and Indian constituents would prefer to see him and obtain his services rather than to deal with his intermediaries.

A Malaysian UMNO will emerge as a truly national political party in Malaysia. At present, UMNO has spread its wings to Sabah. When it also extends into Sarawak, UMNO can claim to be national in the geographical sense, having then covered every district in the land. However, it will still not be truly national because it will not be able to claim to represent every race in the country. By admitting citizens, regardless of geography or race, UMNO will blossom—sooner than the present UMNO leaders can ever hope for—into a nationwide, multiracial party, capable of representing every district and community in the realm. Then UMNO can compare itself to the Congress Party of India, the Conservative Party of Britain or the Democratic Party of the United States.

I do not expect that a Malaysia without communal parties will be a win-win situation for everybody. There will be a



"shake-out", to use the jargon of the stock market. Some politicians may leave one party to join another. Certain parties may dissolve and merge. In the end, politicians and parties will, like water, find their own levels.

Those politicians who feel insecure will oppose the change. This would not come as a surprise to political insiders. These are politicians who have survived over the years not on the basis of performance but on a claim to ethnicity. They adorn the political stage as ethnic flowers and are rewarded for this service. They want the *status quo* to persist so that they can continue to claim their rewards forever and ever.

The nation's progress should not be held back by such political parasites. Since independence in 1957, Malaysia has succeeded in regulating and minimizing friction amongst the different communities, sustaining economic development and growth and inculcating a sense of nationhood amongst its citizens. What is needed at this crucial juncture is to effect the breakthrough that pioneer nationalists like Onn Jaafar and Tan Cheng Lock had striven for: the decommunalization of party politics in this country. By providing a healthy Malaysian environment for party politicians to operate in and requiring every elected representative to account directly to his Malaysian constituents, the political system will ensure that politicians act as Malaysians, not as Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Melanaus, Kadazans or Bajaus, and earn their rewards through merit, not on the basis of racial rhetoric.

Malaysia has registered impressive gains in the economic fields. Our rate of growth has become the envy of countless member-states of the Commonwealth and the United Nations. We must seize this opportunity to win the lasting respect and admiration of the international community. Let us, politicians of Malaysia, make a brave, historic decision. Deracialize political parties. Decommunalize party politics. Complement

economic advancement with political progress. Then both Malaysia's economy *and* polity can become worthy examples for other states in the world to emulate.

## Alliance-National Front: A Chronological History

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- **January 1952**

The Selangor branch of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), represented by H.S.Lee, Ong Yoke Lin and S.M. Yong, and the Kuala Lumpur branch of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) led by Yahaya bin Abdul Razak, a local chieftain, announced that they would co-operate with each other in the first-ever local authority elections of Kuala Lumpur. According to T.H. Tan, this electoral arrangement had the blessings of both Tunku Abdul Rahman, the President of UMNO, and Tan Cheng Lock, the President of MCA.

- **February 1952**

MCA and UMNO won 9 out of 12 seats in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council elections: MCA (6) and UMNO (3) while IMP won only 2. The last seat was won by an independent.

- **February 1953**

Top-level UMNO and MCA officials conferred in Kuala Lumpur. Those present were Tunku Abdul Rahman, Sardon bin Jubir, Bahaman bin Samsuddin, Dr. Ismail bin Abdul Rahman and Syed Nasir Ismail of UMNO and Tan Cheng Lock, H.S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, S.M. Yong, Ong Yoke Lin and T.H. Tan of MCA.

- **August 1953**

In order to counter the National Conference organized by IMP and the Menteris Besar, UMNO and MCA sponsored the National Convention. The Persatuan Melayu Semenanjung (Peninsular Malay Union), the Persatuan Islam Sa-Tanah Melayu (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party) and the Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Kelantan (Malay National Association of Kelantan) attended. The meeting called for federal elections to be held by 1954.

- **January 1954**

The Federal Election's Committee, headed by the Attorney-General, Michael Hogan, issued its report. A majority of its members recommended a Legislative Council of 92 with an elected minority of 44 and a "proper" date of election.

The minority, which included UMNO and MCA representatives, wanted a council of 100 with a three-fifths elected majority and November 1954 as the target date of elections.

- **April-May 1954**

A delegation from the UMNO-MCA Alliance led by Tunku Abdul Rahman visited London. Tunku and T.H. Tan left Singapore for London on April 21. Abdul Razak Hussein was in the United States on a travel grant and would join the delegation from there.

- **June 1954**

The UMNO-MCA Alliance decided to pull out its members, whether elected or appointed, from participating in federal, state and local governments.

- **July 1954**

A compromise was struck. Donald MacGillivray, the colonial High Commissioner of Malaya, agreed to 52 elected and 46 nominated members in the Federal Legislative Council. He would consult and act in agreement with the leader of the elected majority in filling 5 of the 7 "nominated reserve" seats. Elections in 1955.

- **April 1955**

After months of discussion and negotiations the MIC became a full-fledged partner of the Alliance.

- **August 1955**

The UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance won 51 of the 52 seats in the Federal Elections, losing only the Krian constituency in Perak to PAS (by 8,235 to 8,685 votes). It obtained 79.6 per cent of the votes cast. Onn Jaafar, the Parti Negara President, pooled 2,802 votes in his hometown, Johor Baru, compared with 8,745 votes cast for his Alliance (UMNO) candidate.

The Alliance formed a cabinet government with its leader, Tunku Abdul Rahman, appointed as the Chief Minister.

- **January-February 1956**

Representatives of the Alliance and the Malay Rulers held talks in London. Agreed that Malaya become an independent state within the Commonwealth by August 1957 and that a Constitutional Commission be appointed to draw up a draft constitution.

- **May 1956**

Lord Reid, the head of the Constitutional Commission, arrived in Malaya.

- **September 1956**

The UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance submitted its memorandum to the Reid Commission.

- **February 1957**

The Reid Report was published.

- **March-May 1957**

A working committee comprising four representatives of the Alliance Government, four representatives of the Malay Rulers and three colonial officials (High Commissioner, Chief Secretary and Attorney-General) revised the draft presented by the Reid Commission.

- **July-August 1957**

The Legislative Council ratified the revised draft by unanimous acclamation.

- **August 1957**

Independence for the Federation of Malaya was proclaimed. Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first Prime Minister of the independent Malaya while his cabinet colleagues became ministers.

- **March 1958**

Dr. Lim Chong Eu, 39, a doctor from Penang and the whip for the Alliance in the Legislative Council, defeated Tan Cheng Lock, 75, for the MCA presidency by 89 votes to 67.

- **April 1959**

Tunku Abdul Rahman resigned as prime minister to devote his time and energy to prepare his party for the forthcoming general elections.

- **July 1959**

MCA requested 40 out of the 104 seats in the parliamentary elections. Dr. Lim's letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman was released to the press. UMNO accused MCA of stabbing it in the back. In the end, MCA's Central Working Committee voted by 89 votes to 60 to stay within the Alliance and abide by Tunku's terms. MCA dissidents led by Yong Pung How and Too Joon Hing resigned from the party.

Tunku Abdul Rahman allocated 31 seats to MCA and personally approved its list of candidates. Dr. Lim announced his resignation from the MCA presidency and his plan to go overseas for medical treatment. (Dr. Cheah Toon Lok of Kedah acted as MCA President until November 1961).

- **August 1959**

The Alliance managed to win 74 of the 104 parliamentary seats: UMNO (52), MCA (19) and MIC (3). Only 2 MCA rebels were elected. However, in terms of the popular vote, the Alliance won only 51.8 per cent.

Abdul Razak bin Hussein stepped down as prime minister and Tunku Abdul Rahman resumed the premiership.

- **May 1961**

Tunku Abdul Rahman proposed a closer relationship amongst the territories of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo.

- **August 1962**

A commission headed by Lord Cobbold of Britain found that a third of the population in North Borneo and Sarawak favoured Malaysia whilst a third also did so, provided there were safeguards.

- **September 1962**

The legislative councils of North Borneo and Sarawak unanimously welcomed the formation of Malaysia. A referendum organized by the PAP Government in Singapore produced a 71 per cent vote in favour of a merger with Malaya.

- **December 1962**

An unsuccessful uprising in Brunei. A.M. Azahari, the leader of Parti Rakyat, proclaimed independence for Kalimantan Utara from Manila and set up a government-in-exile under his premiership.

- **July 1963**

The Sultan of Brunei reversed his earlier decision and decided that his state would not join Malaysia after all.

- **September 1963**

The Federation of Malaysia, comprising the States of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah), was proclaimed. Malaya kept its 104 parliamentary seats. Singapore was allocated 15, Sarawak 24 and Sabah 16.

Recognizing the political backwardness of the Borneo territories, the Malaysia Agreement provided that their representatives to the Federal Parliament would be chosen by their respective legislatures. The members of these legislatures were picked by electors chosen by directly-elected local councillors.



Pro-Malaysia parties in Sarawak (BARJASA, SNAP, PESA and SCA) and Sabah (UNKO, USNO, Pasok Momogun and SCA) joined the Alliance headed by Tunku Abdul Rahman. The PAP in Singapore, although ardently pro-Malaysia, was not welcomed into the Alliance.

Snap elections to the Singapore Legislative Assembly were held. The Malayan Alliance, through its allies in Singapore, decided to participate in these elections. The PAP won 37 seats, the Socialist Front 13 and the United People's Party 1. The Alliance failed to win a single seat.

- **April 1964**

Elections to the 104 parliamentary seats allocated to the States of Malaya. Lee Kuan Yew's PAP decided on a token participation in these elections and fielded candidates in nine constituencies. Despite attracting large crowds to its rallies, PAP won only one seat, Bungsar.

The Alliance polled 58.4 per cent of the popular votes and captured 89 seats: UMNO (59), MCA (27) and MIC (3). PAS won 9, SF 2, PPP 2 and UDP 1.

- **July 1964**

Racial disturbances in Singapore.

- **September 1964**

More racial clashes in Singapore.

- **May 1965**

A new grouping of parties, the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC), came into existence. Led by the PAP, it included the UDP and PPP from the States of Malaya and the SUPP and MACHINDA from Sarawak.

- **August 1965**

Singapore separated from the Federation of Malaysia.

- **June 1966**

Crisis in the Sarawak Alliance. The Governor dismissed Stephen Kalong Ningkan as Chief Minister of Sarawak and replaced him with Tawi Sli.

- **September 1966**

Ningkan contested this dismissal in court. He won and was reinstated as Chief Minister. The Federal Government declared a state of emergency. Then the Federal Parliament amended the Constitution to give the Governor of Sarawak the power to summon the State Assembly to meet. Ningkan lost a vote of no-confidence and was again dismissed.

- **April 1967**

First direct state elections in Sabah were held. USNO won 14 seats, UPKO 12, SCA 5 and Independent 1.

- **May 1967**

With the support of SCA and USNO, Datu Mustapha bin Datu Harun became Chief Minister. UPKO was excluded from the government.

- **November 1967**

Racial riots in Penang.

- **December 1967**

UPKO, led by Donald Stephens, voted to dissolve itself and its members were urged to join USNO.

- **April 1969**

Nomination for the 1969 General Elections. Seats in the Malaysian Parliament and the State Assemblies, except the State Assembly of Sabah, were up for contest. The Labour Party and Parti Rakyat boycotted the polls.

- **May 1969**

When results in Peninsular Malaysia were known, the Alliance obtained only 48.4 per cent of the popular vote though it won 66 seats out of a total of 104. Even before the votes in East Malaysia were counted the Alliance had managed to secure a majority in the 144-member Parliament because it had won 11 unopposed seats in Sabah on Nomination Day. In the state elections, the Alliance was unable to recapture Kelantan; lost Penang to the Gerakan; won 19 out of 40 seats in Perak and 14 out of 28 seats in Selangor.

At 2:00 P.M. on May 13, the MCA announced that, owing to its poor performance in the elections, it would not participate in the new Federal Cabinet. However, it would remain in the Alliance. At about 6:00 P.M., violence broke out in the vicinity of the incumbent Selangor Menteri Besar's residence.

A state of emergency was declared. The uncompleted staggered elections in East Malaysia were postponed indefinitely. Power was concentrated in the hands of Abdul Razak bin Hussein, the deputy president of UMNO, in his capacity as Director of the National Operations Council (NOC). Tunku Abdul Rahman still continued as Prime Minister, at least in name.

- **June 1969**

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, an unsuccessful UMNO candidate in the Kota Star constituency, was expelled from UMNO for openly criticizing Tunku Abdul Rahman's leadership.

- **May 1970**

The Rukunegara was proclaimed. This statement of the national ideology was a product of deliberations in the National Consultative Council (NCC).

- **June 1970**

Elections to the remaining 5 parliamentary constituencies in Sabah (11 had been returned unopposed in 1969). The Alliance won all of them.

- **July 1970**

Elections in Sarawak for both parliamentary and state constituencies. The Alliance, comprising Parti Bumiputera and SCA, won 7 out of 24 parliamentary seats. Pesaka won 2, SNAP 9, SUPP 5 and Independent 1. The Alliance won 15 out of 47 state seats: Parti Bumiputera (12) and SCA (3). Balloting in the 48th seat of Bengoh was postponed. Pesaka won 9, SNAP 12 and SUPP 11. A coalition government headed by Rahman Yaakub of Parti Bumiputera was formed. The coalition comprised Parti Bumiputera (12), SUPP (11) and defectors from Pesaka (2). SUPP made history by being the first non-Alliance party to join in any coalition government led by the Alliance after 1969.

- **September 1970**

Tunku Abdul Rahman stepped down as Prime Minister. Abdul Razak Hussein succeeded him.

- **February 1971**

Parliament was recalled and democracy restored. Parliament approved a constitutional amendment entrenching provisions pertaining to citizenship, the special position of the Malays and other bumiputeras, the national language and the status of

the Malay Rulers. SUPP, Gerakan, PAS and SNAP voted for this amendment.

- **April 1971**

Crisis within Gerakan. As a result, the party in Penang was left with 12 assemblymen in the 24-member Assembly.

- **December 1971**

Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, a leader of the MCA Task Force in Perak, was appointed Senator and Minister.

- **February 1972**

Prime Minister Abdul Razak and Dr. Lim Chong Eu, Chief Minister of Penang, announced a coalition government in Penang between the Alliance and Gerakan.

- **April 1972**

The Alliance and PPP agreed on a coalition government in the State of Perak.

- **August 1972**

Premier Abdul Razak mentioned in public "the possibility of a national front among political parties to work together in facing national problems".

- **September 1972**

Another coalition was announced. PAS agreed to form a coalition with the Alliance at state and federal levels.

- **May 1973**

Parti Bumiputera and Pesaka, Alliance partners in Sarawak, merged to form Parti Pesaka-Bumiputera Bersatu.

- **June 1973**

A crisis within MCA. Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, the leader of the MCA Reformist Movement, was dismissed from the cabinet and expelled from MCA.

- **April 1974**

Tan Siew Sin retired as MCA President and resigned as Minister of Finance. Lee San Choon succeeded him as MCA head.

- **June 1974**

The National Front (Barisan Nasional) was formally registered. It comprised UMNO, MCA, MIC, PAS, PPP, Gerakan, SUPP, Parti Pesaka-Bumiputera Bersatu and the Sabah Alliance. Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, who had joined Gerakan, was elected its deputy president.

- **August 1974**

General Elections. The National Front polled 60.7 per cent of the popular vote and swept 135 out of 154 parliamentary seats. UMNO won 61 (out of 61); MCA 19 (out of 23); MIC 4 (out of 4); PAS 14 (out of 14); PPP 1 (out of 4); Gerakan 5 (out of 8); PBB 9 (out of 16); and SUPP 6 (out of 8).

- **September 1974**

Mustapha Harun, Chief Minister of Sabah, refused to accept a ministership in the Federal Cabinet. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who had been re-admitted to UMNO and had won a parliamentary seat, was appointed a minister.

- **June 1975**

UMNO party elections. Abdul Razak Hussein and Hussein Onn were returned unopposed as president and deputy presi-

dent respectively. Abdul Razak's candidates, Ghafar Baba, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, were elected vice-presidents. Harun Idris, the controversial Menteri Besar of Selangor, ran fourth and was not chosen.

- **July 1975**

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (Berjaya) was formed. Fuad (Donald) Stephens resigned as Governor of Sabah to head this new party.

- **August 1975**

National Front admitted Berjaya. The Sabah Alliance was deemed to have left the Front as it had not accepted its constitutional amendments.

- **January 1976**

Abdul Razak passed away suddenly. Hussein Onn was chosen to succeed him as the new Prime Minister of Malaysia.

- **March 1976**

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was appointed Deputy Prime Minister. Ghafar Baba refused to accept a ministership and stayed out of the cabinet.

- **April 1976**

State elections in Sabah called after the Assembly was dissolved by the Mustapha Government. Berjaya won 28 seats and USNO 20. Fuad Stephens of Berjaya became Chief Minister, a post he had held before.

- **June 1976**

The National Front confirmed Berjaya's membership and re-admitted USNO. It also admitted SNAP.

- **November 1977**

The King proclaimed a State of Emergency in Kelantan. Parliament passed a law suspending the State Assembly and placed all authority in the hands of a director of operations appointed by the Prime Minister. Most of PAS' MPs voted against this move. Asri Muda, PAS president, resigned his ministership.

- **December 1977**

The National Front expelled PAS.

- **February 1978**

Emergency rule in Kelantan ended. State elections were called for.

- **March 1978**

The National Front captured 23 seats. Its ally, Berjasa, a party formed by PAS members who disagreed with Asri, won 11. PAS managed to win only 2. The National Front formed a new state government in Kelantan.

- **July 1978**

General Elections. The National Front polled 57.5 per cent of the popular vote and won 131 out of 154 parliamentary constituencies: UMNO (69), MCA (17), MIC (3), Gerakan (4), PBB (8), SUPP (6), SNAP (9), Berjaya (9) and USNO (5). There was friction between MCA and Gerakan, particularly in Penang. Six MCA-inspired "independents" stood against Gerakan candidates in the state elections.

- **May 1980**

Berjasa joined the National Front.



• **June 1981**

UMNO party elections. Hussein Onn had resigned as UMNO president prior to his retirement from the premiership. Dr. Mahathir, the deputy, was returned unopposed for the presidency. Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam contested the No. 2 post. Tengku Razaleigh lost by 517 to 722 votes. However, he was retained as Minister of Finance.

• **April 1982**

General Elections. The National Front won 132 out of 154 parliamentary seats, polling 60.5 per cent of the popular vote. UMNO won 70, MCA 24, Gerakan 5, MIC 4, PBB 8, SUPP 5, SNAP 6 and Berjaya 10. Lee San Choon, the MCA President, stood against Dr. Chan Man Hin, the DAP Chairman in Seremban and won. Anwar Ibrahim, the head of Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), stood on the UMNO-National Front ticket in Permatang Pauh and won.

• **March 1983**

Lee San Choon resigned from the MCA presidency.

• **May 1983**

A tussle within MCA between Neo Yee Pan and Tan Koon Swan factions.

• **September 1983**

Leo Moggie and Daniel Tajem, two Dayak leaders who had resigned from SNAP, launched a new party, Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak.

• **December 1983**

Conflict between the Federal Government and the Malay Rulers on the question of royal assent. The National Front gave full backing to Dr. Mahathir's stance.

- **May 1984**

UMNO party election. Tengku Razaleigh again challenged Musa Hitam. Again lost by 501 to 744 votes. Razaleigh was still retained as minister but shifted from finance to trade.

- **December 1984**

By-election in Tambunan, Sabah. Joseph Pairin Kitingan was re-elected by a huge majority.

- **April 1985**

Harris Salleh, the Berjaya Chief Minister of Sabah, dissolved the State Assembly and called for a snap election. PBS, a new party formed by Pairin, won an upset victory with 25 out of 48 seats.

In a bizarre move, Mustapha, the leader of USNO, backed by Berjaya, took the oath of Chief Minister in the early hours of the morning. The next day the appointment was revoked and Pairin was duly sworn in as Sabah's new Chief Minister.

- **November 1985**

Tan Koon Swan's faction finally won in the MCA party election. However, soon after his victory, his business empire collapsed.

- **February 1986**

Musa Hitam suddenly submitted his resignation as Deputy Prime Minister.

- **May 1986**

Another state election in Sabah. PBS won 34 seats, thus giving it a stable majority in the 48-member chamber. USNO won 12 and Berjaya 1. The admission of PBS into the National Front followed suit.

- **August 1986**

General Elections. The National Front polled 55.8 per cent of the popular vote and won 148 out of 177 parliamentary seats. UMNO won 83, MCA 17, MIC 6, Gerakan 5, Hamim 1, Barisan Nasional Sarawak 21 and Barisan Nasional Sabah 15.

- **April 1987**

Crisis within BN Sarawak. Led by Rahman Yaakub, a veteran politician, a majority of state assemblymen called for Chief Minister Taib Mahmud's resignation. In the ensuing state election, BN led by Taib won 28 out of 48 seats. PBDS won 15 and Parmas 5. Rahman Yaakub himself was defeated.

UMNO party election. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Musa Hitam challenged Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Ghafar Baba (who had replaced Musa as Deputy Premier) for the No.1 and No. 2 posts. In this crucial election, Mahathir beat Razaleigh by 761 to 718, a majority of 43 votes, while Ghafar beat Musa by 739 to 699, a 40-vote margin.

- **June 1987**

Twelve UMNO members filed a suit in the High Court to declare the results of the party elections null and void.

- **October 1987**

A 2,000-person-gathering on Chinese education rights provoked a huge counter-rally organized by UMNO Youth. A mammoth rally was planned for November 1. To defuse the crisis, Dr. Mahathir stopped the forthcoming UMNO rally, on the one hand, and detained the key persons involved in the original rally, on the other. Three newspapers were banned—temporarily.

- **February 1988**

Justice Harun Hashim declared UMNO "an unlawful society". Dr. Mahathir and his allies registered a new party, Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (Baru) or United Malays National Organization (New). Tunku Abdul Rahman's application to register UMNO Malaysia was rejected.

- **May 1988**

Tun Salleh Abas, the Lord President, was suspended.

- **June 1988**

Tengku Razaleigh convened his Semangat 46 assembly.

- **August 1988**

A special tribunal recommended that Salleh Abbas be removed from the office of Lord President. Accordingly, he was dismissed. By-election in Johor Baru. Semangat 46 candidate, Shahrir Samad, won an upset victory.

- **September 1988**

Tengku Razaleigh and MPs aligned to him sat as independents in Parliament.

- **October 1988**

By-election in Parit Raja. UMNO Baru candidate, Yasin Kamari, managed a narrow win. UMNO Baru held its Delegates' Conference.

- **January 1989**

By-election in Ampang Jaya. An MCA candidate, Ong Tee Keat, managed to defeat the Semangat 46 strongman, Harun Idris, by 23,719 to 19,469 votes. Musa Hitam announced that he was joining UMNO Baru.

- **May 1989**

By-election in Bentong. Despite the support from Semangat 46, DAP was defeated by MCA by a wide margin.

By-election in Telok Pasu, Terengganu. PAS, backed by Semangat 46, won a narrow victory.

- **June 1989**

Semangat 46 registered as a political party.

- **July 1989**

By-election in Tambatan. Semangat 46 failed to win despite DAP's support.

- **October 1990**

General Elections. The Opposition parties tried to form their own alliances. Semangat 46 formed an Islamic league with PAS, Barjasa and Hamim. At the same time, it formed an electoral alliance with DAP, Parti Rakyat and Indian Progressive Front (IPF). They campaigned for a change in government. Close to Polling Day, PBS withdrew from the National Front, thereby heightening the drama on Polling Day. Razaleigh flew to Sabah to welcome PBS but he was photographed wearing a traditional Kadazan headdress which was decorated with what looked like a cross. The National Front capitalized on this incident and managed to swing some Malay voters back to the side of the government at the last moment.

The National Front won 127 out of 180 parliamentary seats, polling 53.4 per cent of the popular vote. It lost Kelantan to PAS. Semangat 46 and other opposition parties and failed to retain its two-thirds' majority in Penang. Chief Minister Lim Chong Eu was defeated by the DAP leader, Lim Kit Siang. Nevertheless, Semangat 46 failed to make inroads into UMNO territory outside Kelantan and Terengganu.

## Glossary

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**Berjaya—Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah.** The prime mover behind Berjaya's formation in 1975 was Fuad (Donald) Stephens. Enjoyed the quiet backing of Premier Abdul Razak. Captured the state government of Sabah in 1976. Unfortunately, Fuad was killed in a plane crash shortly after.

**Berjasa—Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Se-Malaysia.** A splinter party of PAS. Came into existence in 1978. Led by Mohamed Nasir, a former Menteri Besar of Kelantan.

**DAP—Democratic Action Party.** After Singapore separated, the People's Action Party (PAP) was declared illegal in Malaysia because it had become a foreign political party. Consequently, its Malaysian members and supporters registered the Democratic Action Party in March 1966.

**Gerakan—Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia.** Launched as a multiracial party in March 1968 at the Mara Auditorium, Kuala Lumpur, by Wang Gungwu, Professor of History at the Univer-

sity of Malaya. Syed Hussein Alatas, another professor, was President. Dr. Lim Chong Eu dissolved his United Democratic Party and persuaded its members to join Gerakan. Dr. Tan Chee Khoo, Tan Phock Kin, V. Veerapan, V. David and others left the Labour Party and backed this new multiracial venture.

**IMP—Independence of Malaya Party.** A multiracial party launched in 1951 by Onn Jaafar after he failed to persuade UMNO to open its doors to other races. Had the initial support of Tan Cheng Lock, the MCA President, and most of MIC leaders. Could have taken off had it not prematurely suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of an *ad-hoc* UMNO-MCA alliance in the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections of February 1952.

**IPF—Indian Progressive Front.** A splinter party of MIC. Led by former MIC youth leader, M.G. Pandithan.

**MACHINDA.** A small multiracial party based in Sarawak. Came into existence in 1964. Claimed to represent Malays, Chinese, Indians and Dayaks.

**MCA—Malaysian Chinese Association.** Formed in 1949 after the insurgency began, a state of emergency declared and the combined protests against the reversal of the Malayan Union policy failed. The *Peranakan* leader from Malacca, Tan Cheng Lock, was its founder-president. Activists from the banned Kuomintang branch in Malaya were amongst its core supporters.

**MIC—Malaysian Indian Congress.** MIC was formed in 1946 following Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Malaya and with the blessing of the Indian Congress Party.

**Parmas—Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak.** The new party formed by Rahman Yaakub in 1987 to oppose Taib Mahmud's Parti Pesaka-Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB).

**Parti Bumiputera.** A merger of two Malay-Muslim parties, PANAS (Parti Negara Sarawak) and BARJASA (Barisan Ra'ayat Jati Sarawak). Came into existence in 1967. Led by Rahman Yaakub, the Chief Minister. It merged with Pesaka in May 1973 to form PBB, Parti Pesaka-Bumiputera Bersatu.

**Parti Negara.** A disillusioned Onn Jaafar withdrew into his communal shell and replaced IMP with Parti Negara in 1954. Although still multiracial in its membership policy, the new party "bears some resemblance to the old UMNO". Did not win any seat in 1955. Managed to win a few seats in Terengganu in 1959, including a parliamentary seat for Onn Jaafar there.

**Parti Rakyat.** Formed by Ahmad Boestamam, a leftist nationalist, in December 1955. Collaborated with the Labour Party to form the Socialist Front.

**PAS—Parti Islam Se-Tanah Melayu.** Was renamed Parti Islam Se Malaysia in 1973. Had its origins in a gathering of *ulamas* and Muslim politicians at Semanggol in Perak's Krian District in 1948. Its man in Krian, Ahmad bin Hussain, was the only non-Alliance candidate to win in the 1955 federal elections.

**Pasok Momogun.** United National Pasok Momogun Organization. Founded by the traditional chieftain G.S. Sundang. Merged with UNKO to become UPKO in 1904.

**PBDS—Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak.** A political party for the Dayaks formed in 1983 by Leo Moggie, Daniel Tajem and other Dayak leaders who were dissatisfied with SNAP's leadership.

**PBS—Parti Bersatu Sabah.** Joseph Pairin Kitingan was ousted from Berjaya. He formed PBS and led this party to a narrow victory in the 1985 snap state elections of Sabah.



**Pesaka—Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak.** A Dayak party formed by Temenggong Jugah in 1962. Opened its doors to Malays in 1966. Merged with Parti Bumiputera in 1973.

**PPP—People's Progressive Party.** Founded in January 1953 by two Ipoh-based lawyers of Ceylonese Tamil origin, D.R. Seenivasagam and S.P. Seenivasagam.

**SCA—Sabah Chinese Association.** An amalgamation of several parties. Came into existence formally in May 1965. Its leader, Peter Lo, was Sabah's Chief Minister for a brief period.

**SCA—Sarawak Chinese Association.** Formed in July 1962. Led by the Ling brothers, especially Ling Beng Siong and Ling Beng Siew. Faded away after it was excluded from the Rahman Yaakub Cabinet of 1970.

**Semangat 46.** Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and his allies failed to register UMNO Malaysia. They described themselves as a group committed to reviving an UMNO with the spirit of 1946; hence, Semangat 46 or the Spirit of 46. It was registered as a political party in June 1989. In 1994, it renamed itself Parti Melayu.

**SF—Socialist Front.** An alliance of the Labour Party of Malaya and Parti Rakyat Malaya. Began in 1957. Opposed the formation of Malaysia. Ceased to exist in 1966.

**SNAP—Sarawak National Party.** Founded by J.S. Tinker and Stephen Kalong Ningkan in April 1961. In the beginning, it was dominated by Ibans but its membership soon became more broad-based.

**SUPP—Sarawak United People's Party.** Formed in June 1959, prior to the Tunku's Malaysia proposal. Has managed to attract multiracial support—Chinese, Ibans, Bidayus and so on—from its very inception.

**UDP—United Democratic Party.** Formed by Dr. Lim Chong Eu in 1962. Dissolved in 1968. Members were urged to join Gerakan.

**UMNO—United Malays National Organization.** Formed in 1946 with Onn Jaafar as its founder and first president. Deregistered by the Registrar of Societies in 1988 following a High Court decision declaring it "an unlawful society".

**UMNO Baru.** A new party registered by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and his allies in 1988. It managed to win back a vast majority of UMNO's pre-deregistration members besides attracting new members.

**UNKO—United National Kadazan Organization.** Formed in August 1961 by Donald Stephens, who was then a newspaperman. Drew its strength from the Kadazans. Merged with Pasok Momogun to form UPKO in 1964.

**UPKO—United Pasok Momogun-Kadazan Organization.** Resulted from a merger of UNKO and Pasok Momogun in 1964. Led by Donald Stephens. Dissolved in December 1967 after it failed to prevent its members from defecting to USNO. Stephens himself joined USNO.

**USNO—United Sabah National Organization.** Came into existence in December 1961. Led by Mustapha Harun. Deregistered in 1994.

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## *About the Author*

BORN in Butterworth, Malaysia, Dr. Goh Cheng Teik studied politics at Harvard and Leiden. He was also a research fellow at Cambridge. He taught at the University of Malaya before entering politics full-time.

A member of Gerakan, he was the Member of Parliament for Nibong Tebal from 1974 to 1990. Since then, he has been serving as State Assemblyman for Sungai Bakap. When he was in Parliament, he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (1974-1976), Deputy Minister of Works and Utilities (1976-1978), Deputy Minister of Transport (1978-1981), Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (1981-1983), Deputy Minister of Agriculture (1983-1986) and Backbencher (1986-1990). At present, he is an Executive Councillor of Penang.

His previous books include *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia* (Oxford University Press, 1971); *Integration in a Plural Society: The Chinese in Malaysia* (Straits Echo Press, 1978); and *Racial Politics in Malaysia* (FEP International, 1989).

Dr. Goh is married with three children. A badminton enthusiast, he is a vice-president of the Penang Badminton Association. He is also president of the Oxford and Cambridge Society in Malaysia.