NOTE TO USERS

Information Technology as a Democratizing Agent: a Case Study on the 1999 Elections in Malaysia.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Arts at George Mason University

By

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Doctor of Arts
George Mason University, 2004

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Fall Semester 2004
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Arts
Community College Education

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Date: 12/8/04

Fall Semester 2004
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Edgar Sibley for taking me under his wing and providing tremendous support, and Susan Tolchin for giving me the opportunity to go to Malaysia, which led to this dissertation topic, and for providing encouragement and friendship throughout my studies. Special thanks also goes to Gail Kettlewell for her direction and enthusiasm, and to Victoria Salmon, Brenda Noel, and Dee Holisky for all of their commitment and hard work on the DACCE program. My deepest appreciation goes to my editor.

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ABSTRACT

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AS A DEMOCRATIZING AGENT:

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This dissertation explores the impact of information technology (IT) on Malaysia's November 1999 parliamentary elections. The research examines a topic that has remained largely under-studied, namely, whether information technology, primarily the Internet, fosters a consolidation towards democracy in semi-democracies or authoritarian regimes.

Many scholars have assumed that as access to IT becomes more widely available, citizens in semi-democracies will use it successfully to press for democratization. However, an examination of the current conditions in many of these nations does not fully support this assumption. Accordingly, the hypothesis of this thesis is that, although IT is believed to be a powerful democratizing agent, it is not strong enough, by itself, to bring about significant political change.

The results of this thesis appear to support the hypothesis. It turns out that while the Malaysian elections were affected, to some extent, by the use of the Internet by dissatisfied voters, the election results nevertheless show that IT was not a strong enough factor to counter all the powerful tools a ruling party holds in a semi-democracy, at least in the short term.

The data regarding the margin of votes reveals that many of the parliamentary seats were more closely contested than in previous elections—when Internet use was not as prevalent. This is especially true of states with the highest level of Internet penetration. Information technology thus aided the opposition movement and provided a platform for the first alternative media in Malaysia, but not enough to oust the ruling party and prime minister.

The findings offer a theoretical foundation on how information technology, and especially the Internet, might be able to influence the democratization process. This may help prodemocracy leaders in the future to determine how best to use the power of this technology to bring about change in a semi-democratic regime, especially during election cycles.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The last two decades of the 20th century were marked with some of the most dramatic political and technological changes in history. In 1989 citizens chipped away at the Berlin Wall, marking the end of the Cold War. This same year hundreds of Chinese pro-democracy demonstrators at Tiananmen Square stood up against one of the strongest Communist regimes in the world. By December 1991, the USSR dissolved into independent republics under pressure from its own citizens.

Along with these changes in the political landscape, technological advances were transforming the way people communicated. IBM introduced the first personal computer in 1981. By the end of the next decade, miniaturization of batteries and computer components made computers both portable and affordable, and people worldwide quickly incorporated these technologies into their professional and personal lives.

When U.S. President Bill Clinton took office in 1992, there were only 50 Web sites worldwide (Daley, 1998). In the late 1990s, information technology (IT) referred to pagers, cellular telephones, facsimiles, and information available via computers, such as e-mails, bulletin boards, and the World Wide Web, was limited mostly to dialing regular telephone lines for Internet access. Increased availability and access to IT, especially at reasonable prices, helped to fuel the exponential growth of the number of users. Today,

citizens worldwide are accessing the Internet through modems over high-speed DSL, cable lines, or wireless applications, and using mobile phones to take photographs, text message, and listen to music from MP3 files.

This technological revolution, which is still continuing, can provide tremendous opportunities for political participation. Information technology gives citizens an avenue to share and deliberate viewpoints with others. It also provides access to previously unavailable information, such as independent news, which is typically otherwise unavailable in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian nations that control their media.

Need for the Study

There is a common presumption among social scientists, politicians, and human rights groups worldwide, that the use of information technology by citizens would lead to the demise of rulers in non- or semi-democracies. There appears to be little basis for this assumption. In short, all of our thinking has been based on this particular assumption which may turn out to be false. Only a deeper examination of a few cases will establish the truth.

The topic of IT, especially the role of the Internet, as a democratizing agent has remained largely under-studied. "Despite the prevalence of popular punditry on the Internet's democratization effects, little attention has been paid to the issue in academia" (Kalathil & Boas, 2003, p. 3). What limited research exists fails to answer whether IT does have an impact, and if so, how long the process takes and under what political, economic, and social conditions it can be effective.

It is important to attempt to document, analyze, and draw lessons on IT effects as it moved from its infancy in the 1980s to its essentially global adaptation by the late 1990s. This study attempts to answer the question: Is there a relationship between access to IT and movement towards democracy in semi-democracies? The material presented in this dissertation may help establish benchmarks of how IT, and especially the Internet, may impact or function within semi-democracies. This may be helpful especially as current technology improves and IT is more widely accessible to citizens.

Hypotheses and Research Questions to be Investigated

This dissertation explores whether information technology fosters a consolidation towards democracy in semi-democracies[1] or authoritarian regimes. In attempting to address this, the study investigates the impact of information technology, primarily the Internet, had on Malaysia's November 1999 federal parliamentary elections.

Many scholars have assumed that, as access to information technology becomes more widely available, citizens in semi-democracies will use it successfully to press for democratization. However, existing research and current conditions in many of these nations do not fully support this assumption.

Accordingly, my thesis is that, although information technology is believed to be a powerful democratizing agent, it is not strong enough by itself to bring about significant political change in semi-democracies.

Is the conventional wisdom of social scientists that citizens' access to IT leads to the eventual shift towards democracy in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes

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[1] A semi-democracy is a nation that has the framework and institutions of a democracy, but the

valid? Or is it true that the Internet is an unstoppable phenomenon impacting society so profoundly that it will lead to democracy as an unstoppable outcome? Understanding which theory is correct is critical to those promoting or hindering democratic movements, and the question has hardly been answered.

In examining the 1999 Malaysian elections, this thesis tested the common assumption that citizens' use of information technology, especially the Internet, would press for political change and thereby cause the loss of the ruling government's power. However, after more than a decade since the introduction of IT, and the recent popularity of Internet usage, Malaysia is still a semi-democracy, and the power of IT as a democratizing agent has not appeared to live up to expectations. It is evident that the ruling governments have many tools available to help them remain in power, and that IT alone will not bring about dramatic changes.

Why Malaysia Was Selected for This Case Study

Malaysia was selected to test whether IT had a democratizing effect on it as a semi-democratic nation for five major reasons, with some other interesting factors:

1. Malaysia was the first semi-democracy to hold a national election where the Internet was widely used by its citizens, political parties, and the media. The 1999 parliamentary election was held during a tense political climate that began in 1998, following the arrest and trial of Mahathir's (now former) Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. His arrest led to civilian protests demanding political and judicial reforms, and led to the creation of new opposition parties and a new

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government or ruler imposes restrictions that limit freedoms and ensure they remain in power.

opposition coalition, the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA).

2. The country is a fair representation of the political climate of Southeast Asia. Malaysia, like many of its neighbors, although not completely free, has elements of democratic governance. It has a vibrant political structure, including over 20 political parties participating in state and national elections. Yet, because of the political structure and some authoritarian rules, such as restraining the media and controlling election rules, the ruling coalition has many advantages.
3. Malaysia's standard-of-living is above average for the region, with an emerging middle-class. A middle-class is important to this dissertation because they are a sufficiently large group and individuals within it are more likely to use IT. In addition, political-economic theory suggests that when there are higher living standards, the middle class typically advocates more democracy.
4. The government has been actively building a world-class IT infrastructure in order to have a strong economy. Under Mahathir, Malaysia also created a $20 billion mega-project, the Multi-media Super Corridor (MSC) to attract IT manufacturers, researchers, and developers to Malaysia. By 1998, Malaysia was among the leading producers of computer chips in the world and was ranked as having one of the highest number of Internet users per capita in Southeast Asia, with 1 person out of every 45 using the Internet. By 2000, the number of online users jumped to one out of every twelve (Netto, 2000).
5. Malaysia's major exports are electronics, primarily computer parts. Like its

ASEAN[2] partners, it is an emerging market, dependent on exports and trade, especially with APEC[3] nations. What is true of the study on Malaysia may also be true of other ASEAN members, especially because their economies are closely linked.

It should be noted this dissertation examines Malaysia's 1999 parliamentary election, although an election was held in spring 2004, as required by the constitution (elections must be held every five years), but the impact of IT in the 2004 election was not as significant as it was in 1999. The results are discussed in the epilogue in chapter 6.

Limitations of the Study

There were three primary limitations for the dissertation. First is the lack of earlier research and data from the academic community. Second, much of the research collected on Malaysia cannot be measured and contrasted to actual data. Third are three reasons that all relate to the powers of the incumbent party in Malaysia.

The first limitation is due to the power of the current regime itself. Governments, and the support that they receive from the elites, are much more powerful than that of the indifferentiated mass population. The extraordinary power of governments makes it easy for them to control how IT will be used, who will have access to it, how much it will cost, and what is not allowed. The government in power can also easily and quickly change the rules and punish those who do not comply.

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[2] ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a trade and economic organization with five members, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, and Philippines. APEC is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

[3] APEC has 21 member nations, including China and most Asian nations, the United States, Canada, and Russia. Trade within APEC member's accounts for almost one-half of world trade.

The second limitation is due to the possibility of the power of government intimidation. Malaysia's government has habitually used repressive laws to arrest and bring lawsuits for defamation and slander to intimidate citizens. This creates an environment of self-censorship and limits political debate, and makes it difficult to gauge how citizens truly feel about their government when analyzing literature from Malaysia. However, this should not pose a problem in this dissertation because most of the research is by Western democratization scholars. However this, in itself, can be a drawback too because it lacks the perspective from Malaysian scholars and citizens'.

The third limitation is the power of governmental intelligence. Every government has a duty to protect national security. Although Malaysia's government may say they do not monitor IT, the nature of national intelligence makes it impossible to verify that it is keeping its promise. Malaysian citizens assume their government is monitoring their Web usage and communications and therefore are somewhat self-censoring. The government has warned citizens that they will be held accountable for anything that incites rioting or rumor-mongering. This can diminish the democratization potential of IT.

Framework

This dissertation is split into five chapters. The first provides an introduction to the relationship between information technology and democratization and the need for investigating the correlation and potential impacts.

Chapter 2 discusses the current mainstream literature on the relationships between consolidation towards democracy, economic development, and information technology. It explores the division between social scientists as to whether IT is a democratizing agent.

This scholarship is used as a model to test and explain if IT is an important factor in elections and in moving a nation towards democracy.

Chapter 3 provides an introduction to Malaysia's political, economic, and social structure, and the government IT policies. It provides an overview of the tensions during 1998–1999 and explains how these events relate to the 1999 elections.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research methodology.

Chapter 5 is a quantitative analysis of Malaysia's national November 1999 federal elections. The assumption is that because the nation has a tense political environment, coupled with a high level of IT access and a growing middle class, many voters would elect opposition party candidates. But are these variables strong enough to unseat the current regime? Election data was compared against the number of Internet subscribers to test whether this seemed to occur. The results were compared to the leading scholarship on IT as a variable for political change in semi-democracies.

Chapter 6 concludes with an overview of the contributions of this research to new knowledge and makes some suggestions about the importance of further studies relating to elections and IT.

Assuming that the trend of countries moving progressively towards democracy continues, understanding if and how information technology, especially the Internet, can help advance the process can be helpful to citizens promoting consolidation towards democracy in semi-democracies or authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Developments in information technology (IT) have brought monumental changes to society. The telegraph and the telephone allowed commerce and communication across vast distances; radio and television brought news into everyone's homes and transformed the way politicians campaigned. Social scientists anticipated that this new technology would help to bring political transformations to many nations, in part because IT would provide access to news and information previously unavailable to citizens about their governments.

As stated in chapter 1, this study was an attempt to determine whether IT has a democratizing influence on elections in a semi-democracy, using Malaysia as a case study. The timing of this research is important, because IT is still in its infancy in most nations. Thus the short- and long-term impacts of IT on the election process is unknown. Specifically, it is unclear what the effect of IT on elections held in semi-democracies is . Moreover, there is limited research on this topic. It becomes more timely and important to study this phenomenon because, by the end of 2002, despite different penetration levels, every nation in the world had some access to the Internet, (even though the percentage of the population with access to IT was often low) (Wilson, 2002).

There are tremendous benefits for people who have access to IT; they have the opportunity to communicate and share information quickly and relatively inexpensively, depending on the regulatory and infrastructure costs. Many scholars have predicted that the use of the Internet will decrease a government's ability to restrict political dissent. In turn, this may cause political changes that will lead to more democratization. However, the degree of change that IT can bring is unclear, as is also the question of how and under what specific conditions change may occur. My research will attempt to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge.

There has been no attempt to identify and measure how the unrestricted use of the Internet can act as a catalyst towards democratization in semi-democracies: it would be difficult, if not impossible at present. There are many factors that affect the democratization process and the impact such factors may be different for each nation. Measuring IT's impact and creating operational models is complex, because the effect that technology has on its citizens depends on an immense range of variables involving political institutions, economic factors, and civil society; again, the impacts may work differently for each government. Consequently, social scientists must be cautious when assuming that the results in one country will be reproduced in another. It is for such reasons that most current literature on IT as a democratizing agent is based on anecdotal evidence and case studies. There are several examples over the past decade where social movements used IT to help move their country towards democracy (See Appendix A).

This chapter asks and attempts to answer the question whether IT is a critical factor in democratization. In order to do so, "semi-democracy" must first be defined.

Second, an overview of the current scholarship about the relationship between politics, economics, civil society, and information technology must be examined.

The Characteristics of a Semi-Democracy

There are many types of governments in the world. Constitutional democracies are on one end of the spectrum and "closed regimes," or "authoritarian governments" are on the other. In a representative democracy there is a pluralistic role for individuals and mass political participation in political parties and elections with freedom of expression (Norris, in press, p. 3). In contrast, closed regimes do not allow political dissent and the dictator typically runs unopposed in any election.

There are many names and types of regimes that fall between these two extremes. Political scientists have many labels for these "partly free" forms of governments, including "hybrid regime," "semi-authoritarianism," "semi-dictatorship," "soft authoritarianism," and "illiberal democracy" (Levitsky & Way, 2002, p. 1). Semi-democracies are basically governments that have the trappings of democracy, such as a constitution guaranteeing basic rights, frequent elections with more than one political party, a judicial system, and a civic society engaged in political or social causes. In reality, the ruling party controls the political institutions and often also the business sectors; there are typically high levels of cronyism and corruption, and journalists and politicians critical of the government often thrown into prison on trumped-up charges. Semi-democratic governments can be found on almost every continent, in a variety of religious, political, and cultural backgrounds. Examples include Egypt in the Middle East, Uganda in Africa, Venezuela in South America, Kazakhstan of the former Soviet

Union, and Singapore and Malaysia in Asia.

Semi-democracies represent an interesting case study for the impact of IT on democratic transition for three reasons. First, despite the third wave of democratization, semi-and full-authoritarian regimes outnumbered liberal democracies at the end of the 1990s (Peerenboom, 2004, p. 2). For the years 1998–1999, Freedom House determined that 51 nations were not free and 52 nations were partly free when measuring political rights and civil liberties out of 190 nations (Freedom House, 2000, p. 2).[1] Even though access to the Internet has grown substantially in recent years, the number of nations that slide away from democracy is almost equal to the number that advanced towards it (p. 1).[2] By 2004 there appears to have been little change, by many semi-democracies have had some experience with democracy and failed.[3] Third, semi-democracies are more likely to move towards democracy than autocratic regimes, especially as their standard of living increases and middle-class grows (Kirkman, Osorio, & Sachs, 2002, p. 21). Asian scholar William Case (2001) classifies Malaysia as a "pseudo-," "quasi-," or "semi-

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1 In the Asian region alone, "Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, Laos, Maldives, North Korea, Pakistan, and Vietnam, were listed as 'Not Free' by Freedom House. Malaysia and Singapore received a rating of 'partly free' and the only 'free' nation was Taiwan" (Freedom House, 2000, p. 90).

2 Five nations advanced from "not free" to "partly free": Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Niger, Togo, and Yugoslavia; four nations moved from "partly free" to "free": East Timor, Croatia, Gabon, and Suriname. However, the rates of freedom declined in Central America and the Caribbean. Five nations moved from "free" to "partly free": Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Malawi, and Senegal. Three nations moved from "partly free" to "not free": Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Kazak Republic (Freedom House, 2000, p. 1).

3 For example, "Indonesia [became democratic] independence from the Dutch between 1950 and 1957. Thailand has gone through numerous cycles of democratic elections followed by military-led coups—since 1932 there have been 17 coup attempts. South Korea held elections in the 1960s and early 1970s before returning to authoritarian rule . . . [In] the Philippines [democratization lasted] from 1935 until . . . 1972," but the country is once again democratic (Peerenboom, 2004).

democracy" (p. 1). For simplicity and consistency, the term "semi-democratic" will be used throughout this dissertation. (Also, although not all citizens want democracy as their form of government, for analytical purposes, this work is based on the guiding principles of United Nations's documents which state that democracy is the best form of governance to enhance economic and social development, as well as peace and security for the world's citizens.[4]) The term describes Malaysia's government well, because the formal structure and rules are democratic but the ruling government controls how these rules are enforced. Malaysia's constitution guarantees basic civil and human rights and multiparty elections are held frequently. However, Malaysia's government has many ways to keep itself in power. According to Levitsky and Way (2002) this includes "incumbents [that] abuse state resources, restrict the media, manipulate electoral results, and journalists and opposition politicians are frequently subject to surveillance, harassment, and occasionally, arrest" (pp. 4–5).

How does a semi-democratic nation like Malaysia move towards democracy? What influence does IT have and under what conditions? The answers to these questions could help to explain how and why Malaysia's semi-democratic ruling coalition won the 1999 elections even though the country had one of the highest Internet penetration levels in Southeast Asia.

Factors for Consolidation Towards Democracy: The Relationship Between IT and

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4 The reasons are: 1) democracy is a universal right and 2) the Internet has the potential to help people living in semi-authoritarian regimes to achieve democracy. This is based on the United Nations's Charter, the Declaration of Human Rights, and the "World Development Report 2002 by the World Bank." The guiding principle is that democracy is the best form of governance to enhance economic and social development, as well as peace and security for the world's citizens. (Hoffman, 2002, p. 3).

Democratization

Semi-democracies usually have weak political institutions and are run by strong, tenured leaders. The rulers typically want to remain in power, and therefore semi-democracies should not be viewed as "halfway houses to democracy" (Levitsky & Way, 2002, p. 45). If its leaders do not want to change towards democracy, how does a nation change?

This question has dominated political science research, especially following World War II and again after the end of the Cold War. Some scholars examined theoretical approaches, whereas others provided empirical case studies, primarily based on the development of democratic regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Best known are the works of contemporary comparative political scientists Dahl (1971), Diamond (1999), Fukuyama (1993), Huntington (1991), Linz and Stepan (1996), Schmitter et al. (1986), and Whitehead (2002). Their research on democratic consolidation provides a theoretical foundation, but the factors for democratization are still considered controversial. There are serious questions about which variables are most necessary for political transition in the three critical areas of political institutions, economic factors, and civil society.

These theories provide a foundation for exploring the relationship of information technology as a "motivator" for semi-democratic transformation. In the 1990s, studies attempting to measure the impact of the Internet on democratic change, and especially the study of IT's impact on elections in semi-democracies, were minimal. By the early 2000s, more scholarly literature on the democratic potential of IT was available, if

understudied, and scientists knowledgeable in this area were still undecided.

Studies on IT and Democratization

The discussion of IT's influence as a democratizing agent is growing and yet inconclusive. Many scientists, especially in the early and mid-1990s, were optimistic about IT's potential while other researchers were pessimistic and some were undecided.

One of the first studies on interconnectivity[5] and democratization was conducted by the Rand Corporation (Kedzie, Bison, Law, & Mitchell, 1995, p. 5). The study has often been used as a benchmark in later studies. Their analysis showed that "interconnectivity and democracy are correlated with a greater than 99.9 percent certainty." Kedzie's study of causality shows there is a strong correlation that "interconnectivity does indeed influence democratization, even after factoring out schooling, GDP, life expectancy, ethnicity, and population" (Chapter 6, p. 1). Moreover, "a single point increase on the interconnectivity scale corresponds to an increase of five points in democracy rating" (p. 1). Although the data establishes the correlation, even in countries in which the government restricts IT, it does not explain the reason for the relationship between democracy and interconnectivity.[6]

The optimistic scholars researching information technology as a democratizing agent have included Allison (2002); Cairncross (2001); Davis, Elin, and Reecher (2002);

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5 Interconnectivity is measured by the nodes per capita per nation and democracy as ranked by using the annual reports of the Freedom House.

6 For an extensive list of indicators for measuring the impact of the Internet see the study "Internet Counts: Measuring the Impacts of the Internet" (National Research Council, 1998, Appendix C) and "Networked Readiness Index," complied by Harvard's Center for International Development and the World Economic Forum (Kirkman, Osorio, & Sachs, 2002, pp. 26–28). Also see studies by Kalathil and Boas (2003).

De Sola Pool (1998); Rheingold (2002); Rosenau and Singh (2002); Toffler (1991); and Wilson (2003), in addition to the other authors mentioned in this chapter. "Many experts recognize that political activists in various countries may have affected political developments by using Web sites and e-mail lists to communicate and organize" (Kalathil, 2001, p. 1). Prior to the Internet, communication was limited to such media as flyers, the telephone, and faxes.

Conversely, other studies have considered the aspects of the IT revolution in developing nations and have found that there is little evidence that the Internet promotes more open and democratic societies. "The Internet has not met the expectations of bringing about a flourishing democracy" (Davis, 1999; Shapiro, 1999; Wilhelm, 2000). "The institutions of power have adapted to the Internet fairly quickly to ensure that it would not challenge the legitimacy of their domination" (Vegh, 2003, pp. 31–32). Although the Internet has facilitated the creation of new networks of nongovernmental organization activists and regional political linkages, governments find ways to assert control over communications, including implementing restrictive laws, restrictive licensing requirements, and even banning encryption. Kalathil and Boas (2003) conducted eight case studies on authoritarian regimes and showed that leaders learned quickly how to control and use the Internet for their own purposes. They stated, however, that the government's restrictions on IT may not be necessary because "The Internet is challenging and helping to transform authoritarianism but that IT alone is unlikely to bring about the demise of these leaders" (pp. ix–x).

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Literature Review

Even though IT is relatively new,[7] some would argue that the initial euphoria about the Internet's democratizing potential has worn off. Social scientists are in doubt about the appropriate variables, including IT, that influence the changes towards democratization. They also cannot agree on any single model that best describes the process.

The difference of scholarly opinion may be either because of the youthfulness of the Internet or because adequate samples do not yet exist, or even because definitive research has not yet been attempted on this topic.

Therefore, the research discussed in this dissertation, first concentrates on studies that have focused on the broad, primary factors that can lead to political changes within a nation. These factors are (1) the political structure, (2) the economic status of a country, and (3) the role that civil society plays within the nation. It is necessary to explore each of these variables individually, because each factor is powerful, especially in the influence that IT can play in the transformation process.

Political Structure

The first major factor considered by social scientists for democratization is the political structure. Levitsky and Way (2002) stressed the importance of political structure and the role elites play within the party. Regime change towards democracy occurs when "the opposition party gains elite support, especially when the party (state and federal) is

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7 Most people in developing nations did not have access to the Internet until the mid-1990s. It was not until 2000 that the Internet was available in every nation in the world.

weak and/or opposition parties are strong, and if there are strong ties to the West" (pp. 44–45) Although their study does not focus on IT, it recognizes that information technology has the potential to significantly impact regimes. "Information technology flows directly to citizens and is difficult for leaders to stop. Where IT flows are high, it is often difficult for leaders to achieve an elite or mass-level consensus around authoritarian measures. Also, the presence within the government of Western-educated technocrats may provide an additional source of resistance to overtly authoritarian acts . . . and this resistance may promote socialization to democratic norms" (pp. 11–12).

If Levitsky and Way's study is accurate, it means that Malaysia was ripe for political change in 1999 because their Internet penetration was one of the highest in Southeast Asia; a large number of their students had studied in the United States, Australia, and England; and most important, the middle class had become disenchanted with its government after the arrest of the (now former) Deputy Prime Minister Anwar, which led to the creation of popular opposition parties.

In a different study, Jason Brownlee (2003a) also found that the role of the elites[8] was critical in moving a nation towards democratization. He examined four semi-democracies, one of which was Malaysia, to explain why some leaders remain in power whereas other rulers are run out of office. He found that "without elite defection, there will not be any political change" (p. 2).

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8 Elites refers to politicians and military leaders active with the ruling party, owners of corporations, financial, and media institutions, upper-class influential societal figures, and people usually related to or well-connected with those in power. Typically, the elite want to remain in their dominant position.

To test his hypothesis, Brownlee (2003a) created a table, "Alternative Explanations for Regime Change and Endurance," using leading scholars'9 suppositions on reasons for democratization (Table 2, pp. 18–19). Six explanations (cultural-historical, political-economic, state strength, elite level, societal, and institutional) were tested against his hypothesis of "party institutions supporting elite cohesion" (p. 18).

Brownlee's research did not examine the role of IT as a democratizing agent. However, his study was important to this dissertation because his work demonstrates how influential the role of elites and the government were in influencing political change, and outweighs other influential variables because they are in the position of power. Brownlee concluded that Malaysia was an "enduring state" because there was elite cohesion, even though the nation had seven factors that theoretically supported regime change, while only three supported its endurance.[10] (I agree with his rankings.) Brownlee's elitist-based theory stated that political change towards democracy will occur "first from [the elites] within the authoritarian system and, in combination with the presence of a popular alternative faction. Simply turning out voters and protestors is not enough. Elite allies must erode the structural barriers from within the party, with some soft-liners that are willing to reach out to opposition groups. When these soft-liners defect, the election might become a real contest" (Brownlee, 2003b, pp. 7–8).

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9 The research used leading social scientist in comparative democratization theory, such as Samuel, Linz and Stepan, and Huntington.

10 Factors that "[indicate] theorized support for change" are "extensive prior experience with democracy; mid-high economic development; and economic crisis"; factors that "[indicate] theorized support for endurance" are "elite settlements; active civil society [and] freedom to associate, mass-based opposition, and rule of law [with] significant independence of judiciary" "(Brownlee, Table 2, 2003a, pp. 18-19.)

Brownlee's table on factors that support regime change or continuing endurance is one of the most inclusive studies that summarizes the key variables that can bring regime change in semi-democracies and authoritarian regimes. Adding IT as an eighth independent factor to Brownlee's model might be a good method of determining how strong Internet penetration must be to a nation before IT has a democratizing influence.

The process of political change is different for each nation and so is access to the Internet, and IT's potential influence. Helen Milner (2003) studied 200 countries between 1990 and 2001 and found that all democracies, regardless of income levels, had higher levels of Internet users than authoritarian regimes (pp. 7–8). The number of per capita Internet users in 2000 was compared to poor, middle-income, and rich democracies against the number of Internet users in poor, middle-income, and rich autocracies. "Poor democracies had 0.5% of their population as Internet users, middle-income had 6%, and rich 30%. Poor autocracies averaged 0.3%, middle-income 2%, and rich 17%" (pp. 7–8). The relationship between governance structure and Internet users is not necessarily cause and effect, but Milner found out that Internet diffusion "is influenced most by political regime, even when controlling for other economic, technological, political and sociological factors" (Milner, p. 2).

Such a situation arises because, as Kalathil and Boas (2003) suggest: "States still call the shots. Authoritarian regimes can guide the development of the Internet so it serves state-defined goals and priorities" (pp. 136–137). Many leaders, especially in countries where there seems to be a probability that they could lose power, try to restrict IT access, block Web pages, and monitor Internet communications. They may also "try to

use political institutions to enact polices that block the spread of the Internet" (Milner, 2003, p. 2). For example, some governments limit the diffusion of IT through "licensing, regulating, taxing, subsidizing, restricting access, establishing standards, and controlling foreign and infrastructure investments" (pp. 15–16). They can also ban encryption software and regulate or close Internet cafes (Franda, 2002, p. 6). Sussman (2002) noted that "45 countries now restrict Internet access on the pretext of protecting the public from subversive ideas or a violation of national security—code words used by censors since the sixteenth century" (p. 1).

A study by Hachigian and Wu (2003), which analyzed IT's influence on politics in eleven Asian nations, found that if there is tight control of the Internet, little discourse will take place" (pp. 71–72). Three critical factors were postulated as being necessary to allow for political transitions towards democracy: "First, there must be some sort of political tension before IT can have an effect on changing politics. Second, there must be some degree of Internet penetration, at least among the middle-class who use IT as a channel for political change. Last, the government control of IT influences political activity" (pp. 72–73). They state that nations that have "little government control of the Internet and have both high political tensions and technology penetration, at least among the middle-class, there is a likelihood that political change will occur . . . in countries such as China and Malaysia (pp. 72–73).[11] Yet political change has not occurred in either country, both of which are among the fastest growing economies in the region. The reasons will be examined in later chapters, but some exploration is first needed of the

important relationship between economic growth and political stability in democratic transformation.

Economic Status

The increased relationship between economic growth and democratization occurs when nations prosper economically: they tend to become more politically stable and can move more easily towards democracy. This may be because "wealthier [citizens] have more incentives and wherewithal to demand civil rights and political liberties" (Kedzie et al., 1995, p. 5). If a country is going through a period of economic stagnation or decline, this usually leads to political instability (e.g., during times of slower economic growth or economic collapse) (Ali, 1999, pp. 74–75) and "authoritarian regimes are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns" (Peerenboom, 2004, p. 2). It is also interesting to note that "Regime type is not as important as the stability of the regime. . . . Authoritarian regimes tend to outperform democratic regimes at low levels of economic development. [But] market-oriented regimes, dominated by technocrats, and relatively free from corruption are more likely to be successful" (p. 2). These facts relate to Malaysia, especially since former Prime Minister Mahathir had successfully guided the country through the Asian financial crisis right before the 1999 election.

A leader's economic influence often depends upon the level of economic development in their nation and basically there are two conflicting views on the relationship between economic development and authoritarianism. Supporters of democracy typically believe economic growth occurs best in a free marketplace, where

the private firms attempt to meet the market forces of supply and demand. Therefore it is businesses, not governments, that drive the economic growth of a nation. Others, such as "Bardhan, Weede, and Przeworksi and Limongi suggest that authoritarian regimes can be for the economic good of a nation because the leaders have a high degree of insulation from short-term political pressures and can make political and economic decisions that can lead their nation to prosperity. In fact, economic growth is easier in an insulated, nondemocratic regime, especially at the earliest stages of economic development" (quoted in Ali, 1999, p. 15). Most leaders in semi-authoritarian and authoritarian regimes also believe that the media and access to IT should be controlled to protect their citizens. Freedom of information can allow rebel groups (or freedom fighters, depending on which side one supports) to spread disinformation and propaganda. This can lead to political chaos, ethnic violence, or civil war and can economically cripple a nation. Urbanization is influential too, because the rising number of the urban middle-class and "more dense populations support more [IT and political] interaction," which may lead to regime change (Milner, 2003, p. 9).

Malaysia is a good example of the second theory, where a tightly controlled, government-financed economic development strategy can be successful. Mahathir was able to transform his nation into a high-tech, wired nation within a few decades. This has led to a fast-growing urban middle class. But the question arises: will being a semi-democracy hurt Malaysia's economic development in the long run, especially if investors can locate in nearby Singapore, which does not have any capital controls on foreign investments, or in India, the world's largest democracy?

Mahathir understood that Malaysia could prosper economically by becoming a Mecca for IT manufacturing. He aggressively planned and implemented the Multi-Media Super Corridor (Malaysia's "Silicon Valley") and promised not to censor the Internet in order to attract foreign IT manufacturers. The nation prospered and so did the newly emerging middle class.

Research by Samuel Huntington (1991) suggested that "nations with a per capita GNP between $1,000 and 3,000 were likely to become involved in democratic transitions. Malaysia's per capita GNP, measured in terms of purchasing power ($1,937), shows that the nation fits the transitional zone model for the past three decades," yet the move towards democracy has not occurred (quoted in Case, 2001, p. 2). This is interesting, especially when combined with the high IT penetration of the nation, and indicates Malaysia has several factors present for consolidating towards democracy.

Herein lies the paradox. Semi-authoritarian rulers create economic growth that helps them remain in power. The economic growth creates a middle class that may, in time, mobilize society to move towards democracy and regime change. "Governments that squelch the new information technologies to protect their monopoly on power do so essentially at the peril of economic growth" because nations need to be competitive in the Internet revolution to be economically competitive. (Kedzie et al., 1995, p. 9). "The Internet and IT . . . offer enticing commercial advantages yet can empower dissent and threaten regimes by giving citizens access to new information and a platform for discussion. Controls that limit the Internet's political potential also reduce its commercial value" (Hachigian & Wu, 2003, p. 57). Kedzie et al. (1995) believes that "governments

[that allow IT] will lose significant control over economic, cultural, and eventually political events in their countries" (p. 9).

However, as this case study may demonstrate, the conventional perception is incorrect, at least in the short run. A semi-authoritarian leader can push their country to be an IT hub with a large percentage of Internet users and still win reelection because the party in power controls everything.

Civil Society

The role of civil society is as important as the political and economic variables discussed earlier, because populations tend to organize themselves. Larry Diamond (1999) states that, "civil society—workers, women, business, churches, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—play a pivotal role in moving a nation towards democracy" (pp. 234–235). Civil society can be the gatekeeper, the independent observer free and willing to air the weaknesses, and to challenge the government's actions in nation's where the media, judges, legislators, and businessmen have a powerful grip.

Information technology can make it easier for fringe political parties, NGOs, or dissenters, formally organized or not, to challenge a ruling party or a given policy by distributing messages broadly and by allowing supporters to organize easily. Many scholars believe that the Internet has a dominant role in affecting the internal politics of a state's civil society in several ways. For example, Hachigian and Wu (2003) believe that "when information flows more freely citizens can easily gather facts with which to hold leaders accountable, particularly when the traditional media will not challenge the government. When an opposition group harnesses its transfer power, IT can actually

assist in regime change by facilitating the distribution of criticisms and protest venues" (p. 56).

However, other scholars do not believe that IT is the most significant factor. The three basic factors that accelerate the change towards democracy occur when "1) there is an active civil society; 2) the citizens are dissatisfied with the current regime; and, 3) citizens have access to a free media" (Breaking, 2003). Information technology can play a crucial role in a country where the media is not free; however, without a disgruntled and active civil society, IT's impact will be marginalized. These many theories lead to the conclusion that Malaysia is ready for political transformation. This will be examined more carefully in chapter 3.

Pippi Norris (in press) suggested that civil society must be the driver for democratisation, not information technology. "The Internet can be expected to have the most impact in leveling the playing field, not completely but at least partially . . . and the Internet does not drive these movements—but it facilitates their organization, mobilization and expression" (p. 15). Perhaps IT's greatest contribution is not in aiding political discourse, but in making business and government more efficient and in some countries, more transparent. However, IT is "unlikely to change the nature of politics" (Hill & Hughes, 1998). This has so far proven to be true in the case of Malaysia, which is a world IT leader, including its high-tech capitol and MSC.

Preliminary Conclusion

New technologies such as the World Wide Web and Internet may bring changes to political, economic, and social structures. Although a connection between the spread

of information technology and democracy has long been posited, the role of the Internet on democratization, and more specifically on IT's impact on elections in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian countries has not been proven.

The Internet, according to optimists, "will facilitate the increased participation and deeper engagement of citizens in the political sphere . . . delivering low-cost participation, that is direct, immediate and interactive" (Ferdinand, 2001, p. 76). A more skeptical view suggests that the Internet will reinforce the position of already dominant social groups and political interests (Norris, in press, p. 15). Other social scientists straddle the middle ground. "IT is never the sole motivator for political flux, but a medium by which it occurs. Nevertheless, technology is one of the most significant causes of social and political change. For example, IT can make it easier for fringe political parties, NGOs, or dissenters, whether formally organized or not, to challenge a ruling party or a given policy by distributing messages broadly and by allowing supporters to organize easily" (Hachigian & Wu, 2003, p. 56).

In sum, social scientists appear to have no consensus on whether there is a clear-cut mechanism that connects the Internet with democratic transitions around the world. How information technology can accelerate agents of change is still unknown. How fast and deep an impact IT can bring is also unanswered. Scholars need to link the variables, quantify, and build models of IT's impact on the democratization process. My study of Malaysia should therefore contribute to a better understanding whether and how IT can be influential for political purposes during elections in semi-democracies.

Chapter 3

Overview of Malaysia: Information Technology and Political Events

The People

Malaysia has an estimated population of 25 million people, composed primarily of three ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese, and Indian. The Malays are the majority, representing slightly over half (50.3%) of the population. The Chinese make up 24% of the population and have historically played a dominant role as business owners and leaders in trade. Indians comprise approximately 7% of the population; these are working class and small business owners. The indigenous population is 10.9%, non-Malaysians 6.3%, and others make up the remaining 1.3% (U.S. Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 2003, p. 1). Relations between these three communities are uneasy beneath the surface, with the Malay resenting the economic status of the Chinese and, to a lesser extent, the Indians. Overall, the people in Malaysia enjoy a stable economy with a semi-democracy government.

The Economy

Malaysia's economy was based on tin and rubber at the time of its independence from Great Britain in 1957. Subsequently, it has increasingly shifted from commodities to a knowledge-based economy. Manufacturing tripled since 1970, whereas agriculture and mining dropped four-fold. Malaysia's economic growth in the past 40 years has been one

of the best in Asia and today this country is one of the world's largest exporters of semiconductors, software, and electrical goods.

This is primarily the result of the (former) Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir's policy to make Malaysia a major participant in the Information Revolution. This was done by attracting foreign direct investment and creating several large-scale projects. Most significant was the investment of US$5 billion in the Multimedia Supercorridor (MSC), known as Malaysia's "Silicon Valley." It is in an area, just a bit smaller than Manhattan island (700 square kilometers), stretching from the center of Kuala Lumpur to the new international airport 60 kilometers away. In critical areas, such as telemedicine, electronic government, and hardware and software, firms are given financial incentives to locate in the MSC. "By 2000, over 250 firms have located here, including foreign technology giants such as Microsoft, Oracle, and Sun Microsystems" (Wong, 2000, p. 25). Also, two new cities were created inside this large area. One is called Cyberjaya, an IT-wired city promoting itself as the "world's first fully-intelligent city" housing some of the world's largest IT firms. The second city is Putrajaya, constructed for the federal administration. Both cities have a 2.5–19 gigabits per second fiber optic network and a fully integrated broadband network with high-speed Internet access and interactive community services for the 200,000 residents (Wong, 2000, p. 26; p. 30). Additionally, the government provided Internet access to all colleges and pushed students to earn computer and engineering degrees so that they could work for manufacturing plants, corporations, and the governments in the MSC and other locations. Such strategies helped

propel the country to become a global leader in IT manufacturing and penetration levels.[1]

Information Technology Access

Malaysia has a high percentage of Internet subscribers to Internet service providers (ISPs). In 1992 there were 28 Internet subscribers to the first national ISP (Jaring, 2004). By the end of 1999 "nationwide, the penetration rate was 12% with the number of users at 2.8 million" out of population of 22 million in 1999 (International Telecommunications Union, 2001, p. 19).[2] Malaysian's adapted quickly to information technology because English, the primary language used on the Internet, is common in Malaysia given their colonial history with Great Britain.

As a result of these effects, Kuala Lumpur placed fourth in the "Top Internet City Asia-Pacific 1999," tying with Singapore (Kelly, 2000, p. 15).[3] By 2001, Malaysia ranked 36th in the world for Information Technology Readiness. South-East Asian nations higher on the list are Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, ranking 8th, 13th, and 20th respectively" (Kirkman, Osorio, & Sachs, 2002, pp. 10-11).[4] Internet connections were

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[1] In 1996, Malaysia became the first nation to offer lower dial-up Internet rates per minute than voice telephone (around US7¢ per minute). They were second in Southeast Asia, just above Singapore, with the largest number of dial-up users in 2001 (International Telecommunications Union, 2001, pp 21–22).

[2] By 2002, the percentage of Internet users per 100 inhabitants increased to almost 16%. The monthly cost for 20 hours of Internet access was US$16.00, which is high considering the GDP per capital (PPP) was US$8,924 (Kirkman, Osorio, & Sachs, 2002, p. 243).

[3] The first three cities were Tokyo, Sydney, and Auckland (p. 15).

[4] Networked Readiness is the ranking of nation's "IT networks and their potential to exploit those network capacities. The index measures the extent of current network connectivity, and Enabling Factors. The factors are IT access, government policy, society (IT opportunities, social capital, and networked learning), and the readiness of e-commerce and e-government. Malaysia earned an overall score of 3.82. The highest score was the United States with a ranking of 6.05" (p. 10, 13).

(and still are) concentrated in urban areas, with over half of the Internet subscribers living in the largest city, Kuala Lumpur (See Appendix B.)

Government Structure

Malaysia has 13 states and 3 federal territories. It is considered a semi-democracy headed by a nominal king but the prime minister wields the real power. "The king or *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* ("paramount ruler") is elected for 5-year terms from among the nine sultans of the peninsular Malaysian states. He is also the leader of the Islamic faith in Malaysia" (U.S. Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, p. 1). The Malaysia parliamentary system is bicameral, and the lower house (the *Dewan Rakyat*) selects the prime minister. (The constitution stipulates that the prime minister must be a member of the lower house of Parliament.[5]) The 192 members are elected by direct representation to serve a five-year term.[6] The upper house, *Dewan Negara,* has 69 members that serve for six-year terms. The 13 state assemblies elect 26 members and the King appoints 43.

Parliamentary elections are multiparty and they have been held regularly every five or so years since independence in 1957, (for more analysis on the Malaysian elections, see Brownlee [2003a and 2003b], Case [2001], and Weiss [2000b]). Malaysian citizens are eligible to vote once they turn 21 years of age and have completed a

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[5] The term "parliament," as used in this dissertation, refers to this lower chamber. Mahathir was prime minister during the 1999 election. He served as prime minister from 1981–2003, making him the longest serving leader in Southeast Asia. However, on October 31, 2003 he stepped down voluntarily after 22 years in power, and handed over to his successor, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. Officially, Badawi was the "acting new prime minister" until the next UMNO General Assembly held in 2004 when he was elected president of UMNO, which gave him the mandate to be prime minister.

[6] This was the number of seats in 1999. The number of seats increased by two to a total of 194 for the 2004 election following the reapportionment done each decade to reflect the increased number of voters per state.

registration application and submitted it to the election commission at least six month's prior to an election.[7]

The prime minister has the sole power to determine when to hold parliamentary elections, which constitutionally must be held every five years. Historically, the prime minister builds suspense for an upcoming election by not announcing the election date until the last minute. The process for parliamentary elections involves two steps. First, the prime minister dissolves Parliament. Shortly thereafter, he announces the date that campaigning can begin and sets an election date for Peninsular Malaysia. (The governments of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo [Eastern Malaysia] hold elections on a different date.) The election is usually held within 10–14 days after Parliament is dissolved—which does not give opposition parties much time to campaign.

The Political Parties

There were two coalitions in the 1999 elections: the *Barisan Nasional* (BN or the "National Front"), which was (and remains) the party in power and the newly formed coalition *Barisan Alteratif* (BA or the "Alternative Front"). The BN has been the ruling coalition since 1969. The coalition consisted of 14 parties during the 1999 elections. The largest party within BN's coalition is the United Malays National Organization (UNMO), the party of the former and current prime minister. In 1999, UMNO represented over 2.4 million citizens, or approximately 40% of the adult population (Case, 2001, p. 7). The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) is the second largest party behind UMNO, with

[7] Voters do not declare which party they support. Because polls are not allowed, it is unknown how many registered voters identify with which party, other than analyzing election data.

over one million members. Gerakan (Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) make up the majority of the rest of the BNs coalition.

The *Barisan Alternatif* was created in 1999 to challenge the BN. It consists of four main parties. From largest to smallest, they are PAS, KeADILan, DAP, and PRM. PAS, or the Islamic Party of Malaysia (also *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* in Bahasa) is the conservative, rural party that has a strong base of support in the northern and eastern heartland and university students.[8] DAP (Democratic Action Party) is mostly urban Chinese urban supporters, headed by veteran opposition leader Lim Kit Siang, himself twice jailed under the Internal Security Act. KeADILan (National Justice Party or *Parti KeADILan Nasional*) was founded in early 1999 after the arrest of Anwar (acting deputy prime minister at the time) to demand *Reformasi* (political and judicial reform). The party was led by Wan Azizah Ismail, the wife of Anwar. The PRM (Malaysian People's Party) is one of the few multiethnic parties. Although PRM has been a vocal party, they have never won a parliamentary seat.

Ethnicity plays a major role in party politics. Most of the parties are divided along ethnic lines, and this also means that they are divided along income lines and geographic regions. Chinese voters have several parties from which to choose. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia are members of the BN, whereas the DAP is the Chinese opposition party, which was a member of BA's coalition in the 1999 election.[9] Muslims are represented in the ruling coalition (BN) by UMNO

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[8] PAS is the only opposition party in the 1995 election to have won control of the state government of Kelantan, a state predominantly Muslim, located on the rural east coast.

and by PAS in the opposition coalition (BA). Indians are represented in the BN by the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). There is not an Indian opposition party in the BA, although Indians sometimes vote for individual candidates ruling on a multiethnic opposition party ticket, such as KeADILan.

Economically, Chinese and Indian citizens are typically the shop owners, the businessmen, and the middle class, whereas the ethnic-Malay/Muslim and indigenous are the working class and poor. These three ethnic groups appear outwardly to get along and the government constantly encourages social cohesion for the good of Malaysia. In reality, the ethnic Malays and the indigenous peoples (collectively known as "Bumiputeras" in Bahasa Malaysia) are frustrated over the financial success of the Chinese. This has led to ethnic riots against the Malay-Chinese, in fact, on May 13, 1969 a riot left more than 200 dead. The government responded with "draconian constitutional amendments, media controls, and enactment of sedition laws" (Case, 2003, p. 44). The government did, however, take action to enhance the Bumiputeras's economic status and decrease ethnic tensions by creating preferential treatment to the Bumiputeras's in education, housing, and civil service jobs. Three decades of special rights for them are paying off. Today there is a growing, educated, Malay middle class.

Geographically, the Muslim community is divided between the north (BA) and south (BN). The northern Peninsular Malay generally vote for PAS, the fundamental Muslim opposition party. The southern end of the country is also Islamic, but they are

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[9] DAP withdrew from the *Barisan Alteratif* in 2004 because of PAS's promise to turn Malaysia into an Islamic state. DAP now runs as an independent opposition party.

more liberal and tend to vote mostly for UNMO candidates. The Chinese and Indian majorities typically are located in urban areas and their votes go to parties in the BN.

Faced with this ethnic structure, Mahathir proved to be an excellent leader at balancing the needs of the ethnic Malay-Muslim majority, while keeping the business community happy (primarily the ethnic Chinese). He consolidated his power by awarding government contracts and projects to typically poor, rural state and local governments that voted for his ruling coalition. It is rumored that businessmen active in the BN do not have any problems in getting their business licenses renewed every year. This rewarding of supporters is what Malays call "the race card," which means balancing the needs yet at the same time playing off the tensions between the ethnic groups to keep the BN in power. Economist Paul Krugman explained the race card rather harshly, "To keep the economy growing, Mahathir allows the Chinese minority to prosper, but to ward off ethnic tensions he throws favors, real and rhetorical, to the Malays. This carefully managed cronyism holds his system together" (2003).

These tactics make it difficult for opposition parties to win seats on the state and national level. First, they would have to compete with the long-entrenched ruling coalition. As in the previous examples, government contracts are often announced right before an election (the implication being "there is more money later if you continue to support the BN"). Second, the opposition typically loses any legal challenge, and opposition leaders are, on occasion, arrested and sued. Although the judiciary is constitutionally supposed to be independent, judges are subject to government pressures and controls that undermine their rulings and decisions. Finally, opposition parties face

many obstacles under existing laws and conditions that restrict the mainstream media and citizens from freedom of expression and association.

Repressive Laws

Four laws in particular are most repressive, hindering the ability of political leaders and opposition parties to move their semi-democracy towards a more democratic form of government. Of these four, three in particular allow the government to detain suspects without judicial review or filing of formal charges: the Sedition Act,[10] Illegal Assembly Act,[11] and the Internal Security Act (ISA).[12] These laws are used frequently to restrict opposition parties, citizens, and foreign and domestic media and NGOs from meeting or speaking against the government. This creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation and leads to citizens practicing self-censorship.

The fourth law, the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPA), restricts the media. This law gives the Ministry of Home Affairs authority to approve or revoke annual licenses for all domestic and foreign print media, including the printers of the publications. The decision to revoke or restrict publications is final; there is no review

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[10] The Sedition Act criminalizes "seditious words" and acts with a "seditious tendency." This includes political parties that raise sensitive issues and threaten national security (U.S. Bureau of Human Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2003, p. 8.)

[11] Malaysia's "Police Act" requires that a request for a police permit must be filed 14 days in advance of any gatherings of three or more people. Meetings held without a permit, including inside buildings, are illegal and attendees are subject to arrest for unlawful assembly. The police routinely deny requests for permits, especially for opposition party events, without having to state the reason why the request is denied. The "Penal Code" is used to arrest alleged rioters.

[12] "The ISA and the Official Secrets Act (OSA) are wide reaching laws that give carte blanche to the police force. Both give police the authority to detain or arrest anyone that they have reason to believe has acted or is likely to act in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia. Suspects can be detained for up to two years without the need any charges filed against them.

court to overrule decisions. For example, popular pro-reform bimonthly magazine *Detik* was not granted renewal of its publishing permit in December 1999 because the "original permit was handed over to another party" without advanced notice (Gan, 2000a). Print and broadcast journalists, including foreign journalists, are held individually accountable for stories they report.[13] This creates a self-censoring environment for publishers, printers, and journalists, because they can be sent to jail and sued in civil court for printing slanderous or seditious news. This is the primary reason why opposition parties and candidates in Malaysia have had a difficult time getting their message to the voters.

Political party publications must also comply with the PPA. This includes limiting their distribution to member's only, restrictions on the number of publications that they are allowed to publish per year, and seeking renewal of printing permits annually. Opposition party publications became a popular alternative to the "official" government controlled media. For example, *Harakah*, the weekly PAS newspaper, hit a circulation of more than 380,000 before the government cracked down on its publication (Lin, 2002, p. 14).[14]

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[13] The chief executive officer of one of the largest Malaysian mainstream newspaper stated in May 1999 that "he was summoned for "interviews" with the secretive police intelligence service [. . .] and editors routinely receive phone calls from government officials, especially since the dismissal in September [1999] of Anwar, who advised them on what they should and should not publish" (Fuller, 1999).

[14] This was the official circulation, but unofficially, the readership was much higher, because people pass their newspaper on to others. *Harakah* was sold openly at newspaper stands, although circulation to nonparty members was considered illegal. Readership increased dramatically both in sales and in the sharing of the paper with others after Anwar's arrest until enforcement of the PPA forced *Harakah* to restrict its publication frequency to two issues a month, from the previous eight. Also sales from newsstands were banned (Gan, 2000b).

Radio and television have stricter controls that seldom have to be enforced by the government because the broadcast media and major newspapers are owned by individuals and companies with close ties to the ruling BN. There are four advertisement-supported television networks and two pay-television packages, two state-owned broadcaster, Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) which operates two stations (TV1 and TV 2). One station, TV3, is a leading private broadcaster owned indirectly through holding companies by UMNO interests. RTM has a virtual radio monopoly in addition to its two networks. (The exception is one private FM station, Time Highway Radio, which operates in the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur highway corridor area.)During election years, the mainstream media typically do not sell advertising time or space to the opposition. This happened in the 1999 elections. Therefore, alternative outlets became essential for the opposition groups during the 1999 elections (U.S. Bureau of Human Democracy, 2003, p. 11).

The Internet and Laws

The Printing and Publications Act does not extend to on-line newspapers, Internet television, or Internet radio. In order to attract foreign direct investment, Mahathir pledged, in 1996, that he would not restrict or censor the Internet. This included a commitment not to block foreign Web sites. The Parliament codified this promise in 1996 in the Multimedia Super Corridor "Bill of Guarantee." In principle, the government has maintained its no-censorship policy.

However, there have been several arrests of people charged with "rumor-mongering" over the Internet; (e.g., on August 7, 1998 when "news" appeared on the

Internet about riots in the Chow Kit area of Kuala Lumpur. This "news" set off panic-buying and traffic jams as people tried to flee the areas near the riots. Ten days later, four ethnic Chinese were arrested. The police located the four with the assistance of the government-owned Internet service provider (ISP), but charges were later dropped because prosecutors could not prove who actually wrote the messages.

Following this rumor-mongering event, the Communications and Multimedia Commission issued a code of Internet conduct to guide Malaysians on how to "behave properly" on the Internet. The commission promised that it did "not intend to impose controls on Internet use, just to punish offenders that misuse the Internet, or post defamatory and false information" (U.S. Bureau of Human Democracy, 2003, p. 11). However, this new code was not really necessary because anyone caught disseminating false information over the Internet could be charged under a number of existing laws, including the Communications and Multimedia Act, the Defamation Act, the Broadcasting Act, and the four previously mentioned laws. Because the language in the laws was, and is still not, clearly defined, police and judges have wide discretion in interpreting the laws.

Some Malaysian citizens, especially university students, are afraid to communicate candidly over the Internet because of these laws and other powers of the government. For example, university students and faculty are required to sign and comply with "the Malaysian Universities and University College Act," which forbids them from participating in any political organization and restricts political participation. Several faculty members and students have been arrested for "engaging in opposition political

activities" and have been fired or removed from the university. (U.S. Bureau of Human Democracy, 2003, p. 12).

If a student is found guilty of "defaming the government," though statements made at public gatherings or over the Internet, he or she will be permanently removed from the national university system. Once expelled, the student must repay the government thousands of dollars for their previous schooling expenses, because tuition, textbooks, and housing are paid by the government (U.S. Bureau of Human Democracy, 2003, p. 12).

Many citizens were clearly afraid to speak out openly against their own government. However, two closely related events changed this: the economic crisis and the arrest of the (then) Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. This spurred the creation of a new opposition political party and culminated in the November 1999 elections, which became one of the closest in the history of Malaysia.

Reformasi: **An IT Revolution**

The Economic Crisis

During 1997 and 1998, Southeast Asia was hit with a serious financial crisis dubbed "the Asian flu." The crisis led to the plummeting of the values of currencies, stock markets, and other assets in all countries in the region. The Asian flu also led to political upheaval culminating, most notably, in the resignations of President Suharto in Indonesia[15] and Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh in Thailand.[16]

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[15] President Suharto was forced to resign on May 20, 1998 after thousands of protestors took to the streets for almost a week, denouncing both the 32 years of rule by a corrupt government and the economic

The Malaysian stock market, like its neighbors, plunged as foreign investors cashed out of their Asian stocks. In September 1998, Mahathir attempted to stop the devaluation of Malaysia's currency, the ringgit; it had by then collapsed to about half of its former value. Going against the advice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mahathir introduced capital controls, froze foreign assets in Malaysian banks, and fixed the exchange rate of the currency (Weiss, 2000b, p. 7). The prime minister was later praised by his citizens and international scholars for establishing policies that led his country to economic recovery. Even the IMF would later acknowledge that Malaysia's economy recovered more rapidly than that of its neighbors because of the effective economic measures. However, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar, who was pro-IMF and free market, openly challenged Mahathir's economic strategy.

Arrest of Anwar

Mahathir and Anwar were long-time political allies. They were so close that Anwar viewed Mahathir as his mentor and the prime minister described Anwar "as close to him as his son" (Lin, 2002, p. 4). It was Mahathir who "lured Anwar to join UMNO in 1982 and from the next year onwards, Anwar was a member of the Cabinet. In 1993, Anwar was promoted to deputy prime minister and acting chairman of UMNO and Mahathir disclosed to the media that Anwar "would be his successor" (p. 4).

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crisis. Protestors used mobile phones and text messages to coordinate anti-government meeting locations and times.

[16] Thailand's prime minister resigned in November 1997 after days of protesters demanding his resignation as a result of the continuing economic freefall, which was not slowed by an IMF's $16 billion rescue package.

The Asian economic crisis would bring an end to their camaraderie. Anwar's criticism of the prime minister's handling of the economic crisis caused a great deal of tension between the two leaders. Many, including perhaps Mahathir himself, saw Anwar's outspokenness as a direct confrontation, and perhaps a signal that Anwar was going to run for the position of prime minister in the upcoming election.

On September 2, 1998, Anwar was removed from his position as deputy prime minister and charged with corruption and engaging in sodomy. This was the starting point of the political turmoil that is often called "the Anwar event."

The former deputy prime minister immediately called on the people to take to the streets demanding *Reformasi* ("reform") of the judicial system and greater government transparency and with less corruption. Thirty-five thousand of Anwar's supporters marched on the streets of Kuala Lumpur demanding Mahathir's resignation.[17] On September 20, Anwar was arrested at his home under the ISA and denied bail. Anwar is considered a political prisoner by many foreign governments, including the United States, and international organizations, namely Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.[18]

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[17] "Three foreign news stations protested the jamming of their broadcast signals that prevented them from relaying coverage during the September 1998 pro-Anwar demonstrations" (World Report 1999, p. 4). The impact of this on the local citizens is difficult to determine because it is unclear how many watch foreign news channels available through cable and satellite services.

[18] Anwar is still in jail. In 1999 and 2000, Anwar was convicted on two counts of corruption and sodomy and sentenced to four and nine years, to be served consecutively, "in separate trials that fell far short of international standards of due process. He has already served the four-year sentence for charges of corruption. In January 2004, Malaysia's Court of Appeal denied Anwar's appeal to be released on bail until he has a trail to contest his conviction of sodomy charges for which he was sentenced to nine years, although Malaysian courts usually grant bail as a matter of course in cases of sodomy" (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

The Malay community—and the international community—was outraged by the government's treatment of Anwar. Many of the charges Anwar faced appeared to be false, excessive, and politically motivated to destroy his career. Second, his constitutional rights were violated: he was beaten by the police while in custody and denied bail. Third, according to Asian values, swift, severe punishment is acceptable when a subordinate steps out of line, but this is supposed to be done privately, so that one does not lose face.

Outraged citizens quickly turned to information technology to disseminate information and engage in political criticisms. They "used news groups, mailing lists, and pro-Anwar Web sites to disseminate information and list organized protests. Within weeks, a few of these Web sites recorded more than a million "hits" or "visits" by Web surfers in addition to the countless personal Web pages and chat rooms that criticized the handling of the arrest of Anwar" (Netto, 1998).

The Internet was a useful tool to announce to thousands of protestors where the next events were going to take place. The rallies were peaceful, appearing more like a large outing, not a scene of thousands shouting angrily about overthrowing the government. Most of the protesters were middle-income urban Malay, including families with their children. One specific example of how IT helped to outmaneuver the police was by organizing "shopping protests." The police had previously disbanded gatherings with force, including arresting people and soaking protestors with fire hoses. In response, Anwar protestors organized a "shopping protest" via e-mails and listservs where tens of thousands would gather in one area of the capital at the same time, mingling among the

shoppers, causing traffic jams. The police were powerless, because they could not differentiate between the consumers and protestors.

The protesters and many other citizens wanted to know the number of injured or arrested protestors and provide balanced reporting of Anwar's detention, but the mainstream media could not be trusted to report accurately on any of this information. In response, dissent groups and NGOs helped to create dozens of Web sites and listservs to provide coverage that the mainstream media could or did not. These additions included nonpartisan sites, such as *saski.com* (which means "eyewitness" in Bahasa Malays);[19] "*malaysia.net*" also runs the list server, *Sang Kancil,* the oldest discussion forum which begun in 1996; also *Aliran,* the country's oldest human rights group, prints a monthly magazine and runs a Web site.

Opposition parties also created their own Web sites, providing up-to-the minute news about the rallies, Anwar's trial, and links to foreign newspapers. "The largest and most popular [Web site] during the months leading up to the election was PAS's *Harakahdaily,* receiving around 400,000 hits daily" (George, 2002). This involved a larger number of readers than the sale of their traditional newspaper. PAS also ran several other Web sites, including *mahazalim.net*, which averaged over 100,000 hits a day.

By early September 1999, the government was beginning to worry about the Internet's impact, especially in fostering political debates and mobilizing protestors. This led to an investigation by the UMNO antidefamation committee to locate "[Web sites]

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[19] The Web site had 20,000 hits a day during the period around Anwar's arrest. The Web site tried to provide balanced news, and "we don't glorify Anwar and we don't just know Mahathir," the Webmaster stated (Yee, 1999, p. 3).

that 'attacked and slandered' the government and its leaders. More than 40 [Web sites] were identified" ("Websites," 1999). It is interesting to note that UMNO, Mahathir's party, did not create its own news Web site, "e-umno," until March 2000; the government touted this as "the first Internet newspaper" in Malaysia" (Gan, 2000b).

The first on-line, independent, news outlet (also called a "news portal") in Malaysia began in November 1999, it was called *Malaysiakini*, which means "Malaysia Now" <http://www.malaysiakini.com>. The Web publication is a brainchild of former journalists Premesh Chandran and Steven Gan, then 31 and 36 years old respectively when they started the publication. They took advantage of the government's promise that the Internet cannot be censored[20] and the on-line paper did not fall under the Printing Presses and Publications Act.[21]

Journalists working for the bi-lingual (Bahasa and English) on-line paper wrote uncensored stories, a first for Malaysian media. Editorials were frank, fresh, and critical. Published letters to the editor were also candid because authors did not fear being arrested, although some preferred to remain anonymous. The on-line news portal "offer[s] aggressive reporting and diverse opinions in a country where newspapers rarely cross rulers" (Sipress, 2003, p. A15).

It became an overnight success and changed the media landscape of Malaysia. Proof of this has been the Web site's average of 100,000 readers per day in 1999-2000,

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[20] The Communications and Multimedia Act. Section 3(3) of the Act states that "Nothing in this Act shall be construed as permitting the censorship of the Internet."

[21] That 1984 law required annual relicensing of all publications by the government and empowers it to arrest anyone who violates the act.

and the numerous local, regional, and international awards it has earned. "*Malaysiakini* was able to publish news and views that had been marginalized by the mainstream press, and were doing so in real time. This gave news portals and Web sites an edge over mainstream media in presenting breaking news faster than the latter could ever dream of" (Anuar, 2003, p. 3).

"*Malaysiakini*'s stories embarrass the ruling coalition and [they fear they will] possibly erode support for the party" (Hachigian & Wu, 2003, p. 62). However, on-line newspapers and Web sites are not subject to any government licensing controls. The only restrictions Mahathir's party had over Internet publications and on-line news portals was in refusing to recognize on-line reporters and barring them from official functions and press conferences because they did not represent a government-licensed official publication.[22]

Malaysiakini.com and the numerous other Web sites covered the saga of Anwar's arrest, his being beaten in jail, and his calls for *Reformasi*. "Anwar captured the imagination especially of urban Malay youths [. . .] who initiated a series of demonstrations and anti-Anwar arrest protests, demanding *keadilan* (justice)" (Weiss,

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[22] By the end of 2003, the government began to allow *Malaysiakini* reporters into government-sponsored events. However, the government was expanding legal tools to on-line policies. For example, in 2000, the Energy Communications and Multimedia minister warned *Harakah* it would be punished if its Internet edition was uploaded more than twice a month, as required by its print edition (Gan, 2000b). In another case, police raided *Malaysiakini* headquarters in 2003, confiscating 15 computers and 4 servers. The raid was in response to a complaint filed with the police by the UMNO over a letter published on-line (penned under a pseudonym) attacking the affirmative action policies favoring majority Malay's over the Chinese and Indian minorities. The author compared the policies with the Ku Klux Klan. The editor, Stephen Gan, (as of April 2004) faces up to three years in prison (for sedition) for refusing to reveal the identity or e-mail address of the author. "All but two computers that might be used for evidence at a trial were returned. That same month, *Malaysiakini* was given notice it would be evicted from their leased building because their activities contravening with the laws of the land" (Sipress, 2003, p. A15).

2000b, p. 7). (KeADILan later became the name of a newly created opposition group heading by Anwar's wife, Datin Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.) "Unprecedented numbers of new members flocked to [the Islamic opposition party] PAS and to [join] various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and coalitions" (Weiss, 2000b, p. 7).

The 1999 Elections

The 1999 election was held at two levels: the federal parliamentary seats (the lower house) and the state seats in peninsular Malaysia. Despite the requests by opposition parties for a campaign period of at least three weeks, Prime Minister Mahathir called for nominations for candidates on November 20 and for the elections to be held on November 29, giving a campaign period of only eight days. The date of the election surprised most people, because Mahathir had until the end of June 2000 to meet the constitutionally required deadline for the general elections. The government's reason for selecting a date in early November was that they wanted to hold elections before the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan that began that year in December.

Mahathir called for early elections for several reasons. In 1998 and 1999, it appeared that the ruling BN party would face a difficult fight during the next election. Like many of their neighbors, they had suffered from the economic crisis and had witnessed their neighbors in Thailand and Indonesia remove their rulers. Some were suspicious that the ruling party wanted to capitalize on the only thing they had going for them—the adverse publicity of Anwar's trial. Moreover, by holding the elections in November the 680,000 newly registered voters would be excluded from voting because

their applications could not be added to the voter registration roles in time.[23] It was "generally presumed that the majority of the new voters would have supported the opposition and many speculated this is why Mahathir called the snap elections when he did" (Weiss, 2000b, p. 7). Finally, the newly created opposition party was caught off guard and hurt by not having more time to get organized and little time to campaign.

Voter turnout for the 1999 election was average, at 73%. Out of the 6.7 million voters who did cast their vote, 3.8 million (56.51%) voters went with the ruling party (BN) and 2.9 million (43.49%) citizens voted for the opposition ("Prof," 1999).[24]

The Barisan Nasional Suffers Setbacks

The most difficult race for the BN was the 1990 election. In 1987 UMNO party member Tengku Razaliegh challenged Mahathir for the post for UMNO party president. Narrowly defeated, Razaliegh formed a new party Spirit of '46 (*Semangat '46* in Bahasa—named for the year UMNO was founded). The Spirit of '46 joined opposition forces with PAS, DAP, and PBS in the 1990 election and gave the BN the closest race they ever experienced. The 1990 elections did not carry over to the 1995 elections because the "opposition was in [such] a pathetic state" (Kim, 2003, p. 16).

The 1999 election was the second most challenging race in Mahathir's career and a major setback for the *Barisan Nasional* (BN). Although the BN was able to retain its necessary two-thirds majority in Parliament during the 1999 election, enough to kept the

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[23] The Elections Commission claimed that they needed more time, possibly until February 2000, to process the new voters.

[24] In 1999, the *Barisan Nasional* won 3,763,003 (56.51%) of the votes. In 1995 they won 3,888,446 (65.14%). The *Barisan Alteratif* won 2,895,996 votes (43.49%) in 1999 compared with

prime minister in office; it was "the worst electoral set-back (his party) UMNO had ever experienced" (Funston, 2000, p. 51). More important, this was only the second time since Mahathir rejoined politics in 1972 that the percentage of parliamentary seats dropped below mid-80%. (The other time was in 1990.)

The BN won 146 seats out of a total of 193, only retaining 57% of the seats, down from the 65% they held in the 1995 election. (The BN held 166 seats going into the 1999 elections: the result of the 1995 election and interim elections.) UMNO, the biggest party in BN, suffered the greatest losses, decreasing their number of seats from 94 to 72, losing primarily to PAS and *KeADILan*. The most shocking was the unprecedented results that four UMNO cabinet ministers and five deputy ministers lost their seats. Ministers that did win were returned with reduced margins; this included the minister of education, Dato' Najib, who won by only 231 votes.

The newly created *Barisan Alteratif* (BA) opposition coalition won a total of 42 seats; this is remarkable given their short existence and the short electioneering time. Most significant is how close the margins were in many of the races; this is analyzed in the next chapter.

The BA won 43.5% of the total votes, up from 34.9% of the votes in the 1995 election ("Prof," 1999). Many of the contested races were close, especially in the states of Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, the Federal Territory, and Pahang. The gains were so significant and the margins so close that political scientist Meredith Weiss, who was studying in Malaysia during the election, commented, "Given this narrow margin of voter

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2,080,915 (34.86%) in 1995 ("Prof," 1999, p. 6).

support, one wonders how the opposition would do if elections were both free and fair" (Weiss, 2000b, p. 1).

KeADILan did remarkably well considering that they were formed only eight months prior to the election; they won five seats and an amazing 26.5% of the vote ("Prof," 1999). This is an impressive showing for a brand new party. Anwar's wife, Dr. Wan Azizah won her race, but it questionable whether KeADILan could have won without the "Anwar issue." Another big win was by Betty Chew, wife of Lim Guan Eng.[25]

Clearly, the Internet played a prominent role in KeADILan getting their message out to the voters. Anwar's arrest and trial was a motivating factor for people to turn to the Internet to seek out the latest news and gravitate towards alternative political parties.

The main opposition force, Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), increased their seats from 7 seats in 1995 to 27 seats. One of the state election most surprising to everyone was the win by PAS of UMNOs seat in the state of Terengganu, giving the Muslim opposition party two states. (PAS also retained control of the state of Kelantan) (Kim, 2003, p. 19).

The third primary member of the opposition party, DAP, the Chinese opposition party, did slightly better than in 1995, winning "ten seats, one more than in the 1995

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[25] Lim Guan Eng was a former member of Parliament and officer of the opposition DAP party. He was convicted in April 1997 under the Sedition Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act for publicly criticizing the government's handling of the case of an underaged Malay girl who alleged that she had been raped by the then Chief Minister of the State of Malacca (Weiss, 2000, p. 9). The government decided not to prosecute the case, and instead, took the teenage girl into protective custody until the courts transferred and detained her for three years her to a rehabilitation center for wayward girls, where she gave birth. Because of his conviction, Lim Guan Eng was disqualified from being a member of Parliament, and

elections, an 11% gain. However, longstanding opposition leaders Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh lost reelection" (Zakaria, 1999, p. 5). DAP used the Internet, but it is speculated that DAP hurt itself by joining forces with Islamic PAS. It is rumored that the Chinese "fear of an Islamic state" drove DAP voters to support parties in the ruling BA coalition.

The question that now has to be answered is whether IT made an impact on this election, especially with the quick rise and success of the opposition party. The November 1999 general election was held only months after Anwar's unpopular conviction. How could the ruling coalition and Mahathir remain in power, especially when there was a strong *Reformasi* movement and a strong alternative media that was clearly sought out by the citizens, particularly on the World Wide Web?

Conclusion

If IT had an impact, was this a trend that would increase or decrease in the future? Does this support the hypothesis that IT is not a strong enough agent for democratization? Does there need to be a minimum level of IT penetration before any change towards democracy can occur? Perhaps this implies that information technology can be just one of many variables that help move a nation towards democracy.

These questions are explored in the next chapter.

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barred from holding elective office or pursuing his profession as an accountant. He was given an 18-month sentence but was released in 1999 after serving 1 year (Repressive Laws, 2000).

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Definition of the Problem and Hypothesis

The question that is examined in this dissertation is whether use of information technology, especially the Internet, helps foster a transition towards democracy in semi-democracies or authoritarian regimes. Many social scientists have assumed that, as access to information technology becomes more widely available, citizens in semi-democracies will use IT successfully to press for democratization. However, existing research and current conditions in many of these nations do not fully support this assumption.

Accordingly, my thesis is:

> Although information technology is believed to be a powerful democratizing agent, it is not strong enough by itself to bring about significant political change in semi-democracies.

In attempting to demonstrate this, the study investigates the impact of information technology on Malaysia's November 1999 parliamentary elections.

The research in this dissertation first concentrated on literature by democratization scholars that focused on primary factors that can lead to political changes within a nation. The literature review focused on factors necessary for democratization. Also, anecdotal evidence of ITs impact on nations that became, or are moving towards democracy, was

used applied to the analysis of the problem and the research methodology in this dissertation. Although there are many such factors, the three most often considered responsible for political change are (1) the political structure, (2) the economic status of a country, and (3) the role that civil society plays within the nation.

The influence of each of these three variables, plus other factors is critical to whether or not a nation can make a transition towards democracy. It should be stated upfront that measuring the impact of IT has on consolidation to democracy, in general, or more specifically, on elections in semi- or non-democracies is complex, challenging, and unclear. This may be the first research that attempts to assess IT's influence, especially the Internet, on the election results of a semi-democratic nation.

The methodology used was basically to contrast the number of Internet users to the 1999 parliamentary election results per state in Malaysia to determine if states with higher Internet penetration levels voted against their current semi-democratic leader and party.

Data Collection and Treatment

The data collection and the final treatment for this dissertation was as follows:

(1) Researched periodicals, books, and Internet web sites and chat rooms as related to the period around Malaysia's 1999 election;

(2) Analyzed the number of the growth of Web sites for political parties, media, and individual listservs, which included the results from unofficial data comparing the number of readers of on-line newspapers compared with sales and/or subscriptions of mainstream newspapers;

(3) Contrasted the Internet penetration levels measured by using the number of subscribers by state to Malaysia's (then only) Internet Service Provider, Jaring.);

(4) Contrasted the number of Internet users per state to the election results to determine if states that have a high number of Internet subscribers won more votes for the pro-democracy opposition party;

(5) Examined the parliamentary election results more closely by looking at how closely the margins of the race were in 1999 compared to the 1995 election. This data was, again, compared to the number of IT users.

Next, these findings were summarized tested against the current literature on IT as a democratizing agent. The findings validated the hypothesis that, while information technology may have a democratizing influence on some nations, it is not strong enough to counter the influence of the party in power in Malaysia's 1999 election.

Although this dissertation is specifically on Malaysia, there is enough anecdotal evidence from these cases to suggest that IT has played—and can play in the future—an important role in the transition towards democracy.

Chapter 5

Information Technology's Impact on the 1999 Election

The end of World War II led to the end of more than a century of colonization. Some countries gained independence almost immediately after 1945; others had to wait for years to achieve that status. At the beginning of the postwar period, Malaysia began creating the rules and institutions necessary for the move towards democracy. By the early 1960s, almost all colonies, including Malaysia, achieved self-government. In 1957, Malaysia gained independence from Britain, which had begun colonizing the area in 1826.

The years between 1957 and 1974 were a difficult transition period. They were marked by a state of emergency that ended in 1960, followed by riots in 1969. By the time Mahathir became prime minister in 1981, the *Barisan Nasional*'s (BN) party structure was well entrenched, and Malaysia's governance structure was semi-democratic. There was a strong party in Parliament, with close ties to business leaders, who were controlled by a powerful prime minister; civil society and opposition groups were weak.

The postwar period was also a time of increased globalization of markets and culture. These affected all developing nations, including Malaysia. Like most nations in Southeast Asia, the country experienced extraordinary rates of economic growth in the

1980s and mid-1990s. Malaysia was transformed from a country exporting low-cost raw materials to a successful manufacturer and exporter of high-tech goods; today Malaysia is considered one of the top manufacturers in the world of IT products. This was also a period of political stability.

Many social scientists assumed that Malaysia, a nation with political and economic stability, an emerging middle class, and increased use of and access to information technology, would move towards democracy. However, after more than a decade later, Malaysia is still a semi-democracy, and the power of IT as a democratizing agent has not appeared to live up to expectations.

Many questions can be asked about the lack of democratization in a stable industrializing nation with high IT penetration. Has IT failed to live up to the expectations of scholars? Under what conditions is IT a democratizing agent? What other variables are necessary to combine with IT to move a nation towards democracy? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by examining Malaysia as a case study.

This chapter explores how political parties, the media, citizens, and civil society used IT during the year leading up to Malaysia's 1999 parliamentary election to determine whether the IT boom affected Malaysia's political system during this time. This information is compared to the election results and contrasted to the literature review.

IT Access in Malaysia

The first parameter examined was how many people had access to the Internet. Malaysia's Internet penetration nationwide in 1999 was an estimated 2.8 million users

(International Telecommunications Union, 2001, p. 19).[1] The actual number of users is believed to be two to three times larger, because many people share ISP accounts. It is impossible to actually measure how many of these individuals used IT in 1999 out of the estimated 9.69 million registered voters, especially because public opinion polling is not allowed in Malaysia.

However, there are several statistics that indicate the use of IT for political purposes. First, there was substantial increase in the number of list servers and Web sites in the late 1990s. Another indication of the number of citizens using the Internet for political purposes was the number of hits on political, civic and news Web sites. Also, a comparison of the number of hits[2] to on-line alternative news Web sites versus the circulation of print newspapers suggests the number of citizens who namely use IT for political purposes.

The Growth of IT in Malaysia

Since the 1990s, IT has been used extensively in Malaysia to exchange e-mails, read Web pages, and, especially for teenagers, to play on-line games. As technology and the Internet has grown, so has the number of Web sites, chat rooms, and listservs. Because the Internet was the only medium that Malaysia's government did not control, it became the preferred method for citizens to communicate political ideas. Around the same time, Internet cafes were springing up in most Malaysian cities and the costs were affordable for many—around seventy cents (U.S.) for one hour of Internet use. The Internet cafes became a place for people to meet friends, check e-mail, and log in to chat

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[1] No data is available on the age ranges of Internet users in 1999.

rooms to share opinions. Internet usage was usually free at universities and to users with IT access in the workplace.

Indicative of the impact of IT was the rapid growth in interest in all of these Web-based applications, most significantly after Anwar's arrest in September 1998. Dozens of Web sites sprang up immediately, posting the latest news and rumors and/or offering links to foreign news sources giving "Internet users over 30 *Reformasi* Web sites to view, and a number of list-servers" (Lin, n.d., p. 14). The most popular sites, such as *Malaysiakini, Reformasi, Reformasi Nasional,* and *freeMalaysia,* offered alternative information and coverage of the candidates and their platforms. The material was not always objective or correct and it increased the frustration among the middle-class Malaysians towards Mahathir and their government, but it was information heretofore not available.

The pro-Anwar Web site *Mahazlim.net* won first place as the most popular Web site of the year for 1999 Web sites, according to a survey conducted by *Harakah. The Star* was the only mainstream newspaper to earn a spot on the top-ten list; it was ranked seventh.[3] *The Star* is a Chinese-owned newspaper, and they are generally able to be more critical of the government without suffering the consequences.

Measuring the impact of IT on the 1999 election would be difficult, especially without the availability of material on pre- and post-election polls. However, there are

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[2] The number of hits referrers to the number of times a Web site is viewed by someone.

[3] This unscientific survey was conducted with 1,631 people. The winning Web site—*Mahazlim.net*—won 35.9% of the vote; *Malayasiakin.comi* 35.6%; *Harakahdaily.com* 21.8%; *Mahafiraum.com* 19.1%; *Freemalaysia.com* 6%; *Utusan.com* 4.1%; *Thestar.com* 1.5%; *Theedge.com* 0.5% (Gan, 2000a).

several strong indicators that IT had a direct effect on the election. First, during the Anwar affair it was reported that e-mails, announcements of meetings and rallies, and foreign news articles were printed from the Web, photocopied, and spread quickly throughout the country, including the mosques where they were read at daily prayers. This led to massive anti-Mahathir demonstration rallies with thousands of protestors. Second, the Elections Commission (EC) voter registration drive from April–May 1999 "attracted 680,000 new voters, three times the usual number, many probably motivated by the Anwar affair in a nation historically known for large voter apathy" (Weiss, 2000b, p.15). Those motivated to register were possibly influenced by e-mails and listservs encouraging them to sign up. However, it turns out that these voters were not allowed to cast their ballot in the 1999 elections, because the EC did not have enough time to process the new names.[4] Third, opposition candidates and the parties in the BA could little or unfavorable coverage from the mainstream media, so they had to use information technology to get their message out to the people.

Political Parties, the Media, and Civil Society's Use of IT During the 1999 Elections

Political Parties

As a result of these factors, many citizens speculated that Prime Minister Mahathir was going to have to fight for his political life in the 1999 elections. However, his party, UMNO won the election, though they did not even create a Web site until after it. Most other BN coalition members created their own Web sites, although there were a

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[4] The Elections Commission claimed they needed until February 2000 to process all the names. A few of these new voters reported going to the polls and their names were on the registration list and they were able to vote (Weiss, 2000b, p.7).

few minor parties that did not. However, information on BN members' Web sites and in on-line mainstream newspapers duplicated the mainstream news, because media organizations were corporate entities linked to the political parties of the ruling coalition.

The first political party in Malaysia to go on-line was KeADILan, the opposition party created after Anwar's arrest. It was the party that formed the *Barisan Alteratif* (BA) opposition coalition. The opposition parties used IT as their primary method of getting out their message because they could post information on their political Web sites without fear of government retribution. The government still does not have any regulations limiting on-line publications, whereas the print media, television and radio stations must apply for licenses annually. Therefore, they do not report anything offensive or unfavorable, because their statements could result in the government revoking their licenses or merely failing to renew them.

Web sites recorded increased traffic as the election drew closer. This was especially noticeable for alternative news and those aligned with opposition political parties. Most Web sites offered party statements, press releases, letters, some photographs, and links to foreign news stories. E-mails were a popular tool for opposition parties and citizens in disseminating information about upcoming rallies and meetings. Newsgroups and listservs, such as <http://www.sangkancil.com> (the first political listserv, which began in 1996 and was still active in 2004), <http://www.geocities.com>, and <http://members.tripod.com> were popular places for citizens to vent their political views without fear of arrest. The postings were typically in English, Bahasa Malay, or Chinese, depending on the writer.

Despite the popularity of these IT tools, there were two primary drawbacks. First, it was assumed that police or government spies were participating and reading on-line exchanges, so some people were cautious about the information they posted on-line, although, overall, it was quite open. Second, because likeminded people tend to be attracted to groups that share their same ideology, it was assumed that pro-reform citizens went to opposition Web sites, and Mahathir supporters would view BN coalition members Web sites.

It should be noted that there are many more IT tools available today than in 1999. Search engines were primitive then, compared to what is now available. News search engines, such as Google, did not existent, hence the importance of posting links to news articles and press releases on individual Web sites. Other technologies, such as instant messaging, Web logs (blogging), and video streaming, were not available or were only just developing. Parties and candidates did not seek campaign contributions over the Internet, because encryption technology for secure financial transactions over the Internet were not fully available in Malaysia and few citizens own credit or debit cards to make on-line donations.

Malaysians and political parties quickly adopted the new technologies. For example, some political parties began their own daily Web-based news show once video streaming became available in the early 2000s. In addition, mobile phones had become were inexpensive and became popular—UMNO's campaign theme song recently became available as a downloadable ring tone for mobile phones and in 2004 voters could check their party registration status via mobile phones.

The Mainstream and Alternative Media

There is a close relationship between political parties and owners of mainstream media, such as television stations and newspapers in Malaysia. The major newspapers and television stations are either owned by the government or controlled by interests linked to Mahathir's coalition. This makes it difficult for *Barisan Alteratif* to get their message across in the news or to purchase advertising space in newspapers or time on television broadcasts.

The tightly controlled mainstream media locked out the opposition parties when elections were called. "Newspapers refused to run the BA's ads, while they blanketed full page ads by Mahathir's coalition and ran stories focusing on the BN" ("Malaysia's Opposition," 2000). For example, a survey of the leading newspapers six days prior to the election showed that opposition parties were not given equal or adequate coverage. "[Twelve] of 18 political stories on the first even pages of *The New Strait Times* offered the BN's point of view. Two focused on the opposition. The other four were on general political topics. In *The Star,* 11 of 15 political stories in the first four pages were devoted to the BN, with one on the opposition. The remaining three were on board political issues" ("Malaysia's Opposition," 2000). Although this simple survey measured the quantity of coverage, it failed to indicate whether the media were fair, accurate, and unbiased in their coverage of all the parties and candidates. Opposition leaders anywhere in the world often complain that the mainstream media does provide coverage on them or their opposition party, and that most reports are unfair, inaccurate, and biased.

Mahathir defended the local media's lack of coverage and unwillingness to sell advertising space by stating that, "It counterbalances foreign reports criticizing his coalition. Freedom of the press means freedom not to report what they do not want to report" ("Malaysia's Opposition," 2000). Foreign publications are sold legally in Malaysia; however, sales can be banned if the government is offended by a news story, although lawsuits against or arrest of the author are more typical. For example, *Far Eastern Economic Review* correspondent Murray Hiebert, a Canadian citizen, was sentenced to six weeks in jail for contempt of court in September 1999 for the January 23, 1997, article, "See You in Court," which discussed the growing number of lawsuits filed in Malaysia.

Foreign publications, foreign news Web sites, and Malaysian opposition political party publications are important in Malaysia because they typically are the only alternative news source there; even though satellite and cable television and foreign magazines are available in Malaysia, there is little domestic content. Most adults when queried about their Internet viewing habits in 1999–2000 stated that they first went to foreign news sites. The most often cited sources were BBC, CNN, *Financial Times,* and *Far Eastern Economic Review;* in them they read articles about Malaysia from uncensored sources.

New opportunities for domestic media coverage became available when *Malaysiakini.com*, the first independent on-line newspaper, went into business a few weeks before the election. They quickly earned a creditable reputation, even with members of the BN. It was known that members of Parliament and other government

leaders read *Malaysiakini.com* regularly, perhaps to find out what others were reading or to get another version of the news of the day. According to *Malaysiakini.com*'s own estimates, their readership rose from 25,000 hits a day up to 75,000 hits on election day (Gan, 2000a). The readership continued growing and by 2000 it had an "average of 100,000 hits a day, higher than the circulation of the two top daily newspapers, *The Sun* and *The Star,* and slightly lower than *The New Straits Times*" (Nain, 2000). By the time of the election, mainstream newspapers also had their own Web sites, but because they were considered redundant to the print version, such sites were not, and still are not, as popular.

There was a significant decline in sales of mainstream newspapers during the first year *Malaysiakini.com* went on-line. "The readership of *The New Straits Times* and that of *Utusan Malaysia* plunged 27% by September 2000. *Berita Harian's* readership dropped by 30%" (Netto, 2000, pp. 1–2). However, readership increased in 1999–2000 for two Chinese-owned papers. "*The Sun* [printed in English] had a 5% increase and Chinese-language *Guang Ming* a 12% growth" (Netto, 2000, p. 2). Their growth can be explained because Chinese-newspapers have been considered more balanced than the others. This is due, in part, to the government traditionally of being more lenient on Chinese publications, perhaps because the Chinese are a small minority, and generally closely aligned to the government[5].

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[5] Zaharom Nain, lecturer in Communication Studies at the Science University of Malaysia states, "Some people switched to *The Sun* after the sacking of Anwar out of disgust with the way things were depicted in the mainstream media. The credibility of the Malaysian media is at its lowest. Readers are very cynical and want more critical reports, analysis and transparency—not just toeing the government line" (Oorjitham, 2000).

Malaysiakini.com conducted a poll in 2000 asking Internet viewers to reply to an on-line survey asking, "which mainstream newspaper/s do you read regularly?" The English daily newspaper, *The Star,* won with 31.8% of the 2629 respondents, which *The Sun* and *New Strait Times* were virtually tied with 10.4% and 10.2% respectively. The Malay-language newspaper *Utusan Malaysia* was read regularly by 8.6% of the people, and the other Malay paper, *Berta Harain,* was read by 7.8%. It is even more interesting that 49.6% of the readers stated "none of the above" ("Poll Results," 2000).

This survey suggested that the one-half of those polled do not read mainstream newspapers but that they probably read news on-line, because they completed the survey. We may also infer that one reason for the decline in newspaper readership was because a large percentage of the population was not reading newspapers but were getting their news from the Internet. This data, coupled with the popularity of foreign Web sites for news and information, suggests that many Malaysians are dissatisfied the mainstream media and—perhaps—with governments policies towards the press. [Note: the decline may be due to the "free" news from television and other sources.]

Civil Society

Civil society (the workers, businesses, and nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]) is generally weak in Malaysia because there are many laws that make it difficult for groups to organize themselves. For example, volunteer and nonprofit organizations must register and receive permission from the government to create their groups, presumably because the government wants to dissuade their formation: "applications can

take a long time to process or many requests are denied without reason" (Case, 2003, p. 48).[6]

Despite the obstacles to establishing NGOs, things changed dramatically in the late 1990s. After Anwar's arrest, many people were determined to form NGOs and new political parties despite the many difficulties. NGOs "helped educate the public, encouraged citizens to press for *Reformasi* and democratization, and placed opposition candidates from NGOs and academia on the 1999 ballot" (Case, 2003, pp. 54–55). In working with opposition parties, NGOs helped them create "one of civil society's most potent new tools: the Internet newslists [listservs]" and Web pages (p. 54).

Weiss pointed out that "thanks largely to civil societal agitation, Malaysian's political norms have shifted . . . allowing usually polarized political parties to cooperate more substantively and enduringly than ever before in their pursuit of liberalization and regime change" (2001). In other words, civil society helped create serious competition in the 1999 election. If political parties and civil society continue to work together, they can become a strong force for political change, and IT can help get their message out.

IT Subscribers and the Election Results

The growth of IT and its increasing use by citizens also increased expectations of what IT could accomplish in the 1999 elections. It was thought that there was enough momentum for constituents to remove the ruling coalition from power, especially given

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[6] The Societies Act of 1966 requires government approval for organizations with seven or more persons.

the popularity of on-line news portals, opposition party Web sites, and listservs. However, this did not happen.

A look at election results since independence shows that Malaysia has a history of competitive elections (Appendix C). Elections are held at the same time on two levels—the national election for Parliament and the seats for state government in Peninsular Malaysia.[7] Candidates win by having the largest numbers of votes ("first-past-the-post").

Appendix C also shows that voters supported the ruling coalition BN during Mahathir's six elections (1974–1995), averaging 58.52% of the popular vote, which is about the percent that BN won in 1999. The closest race BN faced under Mahathir was in 1990 when the political party Spirit '46 (*Semangat 46)* switched to the opposition ticket, and Mahathir won with only 51.90% of the votes.

To test whether IT had an impact on this election, the national parliamentary election results were contrasted with the percent of Internet users per state. One would assume that if IT played a significant role, states with the highest percentage of Internet users would vote for the pro-reform opposition party (BA). As Appendix D reveals, the results appear to be the opposite. In the states of Selangor and Johor, with the highest and third highest Internet penetration respectively, the opposition did not win any seats. In fact, BA coalition party PAS won seats in states with the lowest Internet capacity.

The Muslim BA opposition party PAS won two rural states, Terengganu and Kelantan, but this is not unusual. "These northern states are by far the least multiethnic

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[7] The states of Sabah and Sarawak hold elections separately.

states overwhelming Malay and Muslim and is where PAS historically draws the bulk of its support from" (Abbott, 2000). These two states have the lowest number of Internet subscribers (2%), except the state of Perlis (0.4%). Therefore, the Internet had little impact on the races in these two states, except perhaps to the extent that material from Web pages and e-mails was distributed at meetings and passed around at mosques.

Overall, the election results on both the national and state levels were a disappointment to BN. "In a centralized federal setting such as Malaysia's, winning control of state governments is just as important as winning control of parliament" (Zakaria, 1998, p. 5). In the state elections, the opposition party did well, doubling their number of seats in the previous election from 56 to 113 seats, as Appendix E illustrates. Most of the gains were made by PAS, which tripled their number of seats, from 33 to 98. About two-thirds (69) of all the seats that BA won, were gained in two states alone: Kelantan and Terengganu.

Thus, the election results match the hypothesis that IT did not have a significant impact on Malaysia's election. Yet a closer examination of the election results demonstrates that there is a correlation between IT and the increased number of votes for pro-reform parties. If one looks beyond just which parties won parliamentary seats, it appears that the voters were either discontented with the ruling party or hoped for pro-democracy reforms, especially in states with high IT access and an emerging middle class. The evidence of this may be found in five key factors, which are explained next.

How IT Affected the Election

Overall, the Election was a Major Setback for the Ruling Coalition, especially in Light of How Close the Margins Were

The election hurt UMNO the most, giving their party their second worst showing in 30 years, 22 of which had been led by Mahathir. UMNO lost 16 seats, including the unprecedented defeat of 9 ministers and deputy ministers.

Appendix F illustrates how close many of the races were. For this dissertation, an election was considered "close" if it was decided by 5,000 or fewer votes. This decision was made for two reasons. First, the smallest parliamentary constituency in 1999 was 20,000 voters whereas the largest has 100,000, so 5,000 is a reasonable number. Second, comparing the parliamentary seats per state that were won by 999 or fewer votes did not reveal any information to support the hypothesis. The results of the 1995 election, a year in which the Internet was not widely available and there was little local content on-line, 13 seats in five states had won with less than 999 votes. The BN won 3 seats[8] and the opposition won 10.[9] In 1999, a year where Internet was widely available, there were 14 seats in eight states that were won with fewer than 999 votes, with each coalition winning seven seats. Thus, because the results from this data analysis were inclusive, a larger data range of 0–5,000 votes was used to compare the 1995 and 1999 elections.

The data analysis reveals there was unprecedented support for the opposition party in 1999 and the election was a "wake-up call" for the BN:

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[8] The BN won 1 seat in Perwak and 2 in Sabah.

[9] The opposition won 1 seat in Kelanten, 2 seats in Terengganu and Penang, and 5 seats in Sabah.

- In 1995, 46 parliamentary seats won by fewer than 5,000 votes. In 1999, this number increased to 75.
- Almost 50% of all seats in 8 states (out of 13 states and federal territories) were won by fewer than 5,000 votes.[10]
- In three states, one-third of the seats were won with close margins.[11]
- All of Persil's three seats were all won by fewer than 5,000 votes. In the previous election none of the seats were contested this closely.
- In contrast, only one small state, Malacca, won all of their three seats by more than 5,000 votes.

Another example of the small margins is best exemplified by examining two candidates that ran in the past two elections, each losing both times. KeADILan's youth leader, "Mohamad Ezam Mohd Nor narrowed UMNO's majority for the contested seat from 41,000 in 1995 to 1,140 in 1999. Activist and academic and KeADILan's deputy president, Chandra Muzaffar, narrowed the Malaysian Chinese Association's (MCA) voter margin from 14,735 in 1995 to 1,224 in 1999" (Weiss, 2000b, p. 8). Both candidates used the Internet to refute inaccurate mainstream news reports and make statements. They used their own Web sites, and even pro-Anwar Web sites, such as <http://pemantau.tripod.com/> and human rights groups, such as Aliran (<http://www.aliran.com/>).

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[10] These are Malacca, Pahang, Sabah, Perak, Penang, Johor, Federal Territory, and Selangor.

[11] The states are Kelantan, Kedah, and Negeri Sembilan.

The power of IT is also demonstrated by the defeat of several BN incumbents whose record was criticized by the opposition using the Internet. "Many of the top UMNO leaders targeted by the BA on the Internet lost their seats or gained a much-reduced majority. Those defeated included two ministers and one deputy minister" (Funston, 2000, p. 54).

The Closest Races Were in Areas with the Highest IT Penetration.

Appendix F shows that the closest races were where Internet penetration is the highest.The Federal Territory (Kuala Lumpur) and Selangor are both urban centers in the Klang Valley. Over half of all of Malaysia's Internet users and ISP connections are located in the Klang Valley. The opposition won only 4 out of 11 seats in the Federal Territory and how of Selangor's 17 seats. However, when looking at the margins of votes, the election results showed that the BA had the largest gain in the margins in these two states: these are the states with the highest Internet penetration in Malaysia.

Specifically, one-half of all of the seats contested in the Federal Territory and Selangor were won by fewer than 5,000 votes in 1999. Contrast this to 1995, when none of the seats were won by a close margin there. In the state of Johor, which had the third highest percent of Internet users in the country, 12 out of their 20 seats were won by fewer than 5,000 votes; in 1995 there were no seats won so closely.

The Internet may have helped in these areas because "voters in this region had the most widespread access to the Internet and other alternative media and so might have been less swayed by the BN-controlled mainstream media" (Weiss, 2000b, p. 6).

One-Half of the Ethnic Malay Vote Went to the Opposition

Traditionally the Malay vote for the UMNO. The UMNO considers itself the Malay party, the protector of the Bumiputera.[12] But in 1999, a shocking number of Malays voted for the opposition BA coalition.

"Roughly half of the Malay constituency voted for the opposition," thus destroying the customary UMNO support (Case, 2003, p. 52). The states that the PAS won were in rural Muslim territory—states that have the lowest number of Internet users. But these states are also the heartland: the pro-Anwar, pro-Islamic PAS supporters. Even though Internet usage was low, the PAS message was carried to them because people printed out e-mails and articles and these were circulated and read in the Mosques. The ethnic Malay regions also included a large number of urban, educated, middle-class voters who tended to live in Kuala Lumpur or Selangor. These where the people who protested Anwar's arrest, demanded *Reformasi,* and were most likely to use IT to obtain information and vote for opposition candidates.

The Internet was the Only Real Opportunity for the Opposition to Get Their Message Out to the Public

The Internet is the only uncensored and unregulated environment for political discourse and news in Malaysia. This is why readers turned to the alternative on-line news portals and *Haraka,* which led to the subsequent decline in readership of two of the most popular newspapers.

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[12] Mahathir publicly called the ethnic Malay people "ungrateful" because the protesting *bumiputeras* are where they are economically better off today because of UMNO's preferential treatment of them.

The growth of Web sites, chat rooms, and listservs, and the e-mails read at the mosques across the country after Anwar's arrest, demonstrates the power of the Internet. It is likely that the entire *Reformasi* movement would have died out within a few weeks or months without it. A Webmaster recounted in an interview with U.S.-based researcher Stan Sesser, "Without the Internet, we would be dead. There would be no protest movement" (Zeitlin, 1998).

As noted above, the opposition coalition had few ways of broadcasting their message to the public. The mainstream media hardly covered the BA and refused to carry their advertisements. The Internet allowed parties to publish on-line newspapers without having to comply with the Printing and Publications Act (PPA). The KeADILan party was so new that it did not have permission to publish printed material, as required under the PPA, so it had no other choice but to use the Internet to promote their party. The PAS began their on-line newspaper when the print edition of *Harakah* was ordered to reduce their number of printed editions to twice monthly instead of twice weekly and restrict sales to PAS party members only. The Internet allowed PAS to publish *Harakah* daily and it became one of the most popular Web sites in Malaysia.

KeADILan became one of the first political parties to use their Web site and e-mails to get their message out to the people. The party had been created only nine months before the election was called and they had limited finances, few trained volunteers, and limited mainstream publicity. However, their leaders were able to generate enough interest and to get enough candidates to contest one-third of the seats. The politicians all ran serious races, as shown by the fact that all of the losing contenders garnered the

minimum one-eighth of the votes in the constituency necessary to get back their deposits.[13]

The 680,000 Disenfranchised Citizens Could Have Changed the Election Had They Been Able to Vote in 1999

It can be suggested that the Anwar incident and the encouragement provided through the Internet for citizens to become involved helped increase the number of new voters. This is evident by the results of the registration drive that "generated three times the usual number of new voters" (Weiss, 2000, p. 7). If these new voters had been able to vote, it could have "increased the number of registered voters turning out to 80% or 82%, [from the 73% if voters who turned out to vote] which would have made it one of the highest ever in Malaysian election history" ("Gerrymandering," 2003).

According to the *Barisan Alteratif*'s estimates, "more than 70% of these people [the 680,000 disenfranchised voters were] barred from voting are their supporters. If this were true, this would have changed the results drastically, probably giving the BA an additional 30 to 40 parliamentary seats," in addition to the 42 seats the already won ("Gerrymandering," 2003). This would have been enough seats to remove the BN from their majority.[14]

It is difficult to prove or disprove the BA's estimates, but it is evident that young citizens were interested in the election. "According to the Election Commission, 95% of

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[13] Malaysia requires nonmainstream candidates to deposit 5,000 ringgit ($1,315 USD) to contest parliamentary seats; this is forfeited if the candidate does not receive one-eighth of the vote in the constituency. Candidates seeking state assembly seats must deposit 3,000 ringgit ($789 USD).

[14] The number of seats required for a coalition majority is two-thirds of the seats. In 1999 the number was 65 seats out of 193.

the voters that registered but were registered to vote but not processed were below the age of 30." ("Gerrymandering," 2003). Presumably these young voters would also be the most Internet literate because the government had been pushing IT training in high schools and colleges. Moreover, Internet cafes had become popular among teenagers. It was the youth who showed up at the protests, created Web sites, and posted political comments on listservs. These facts, especially when considered with the other four variables, illustrates IT's impact on Malaysia's 1999 election and calls for closer examination of the relationship between elections and IT.

The Findings Contrasted to the Literature Review

The three theories of how leaders in semi-democracies have been able to remain in power were examined in chapter 2. They were tested against the hypothesis and data. The first theory involves elitist and political party cohesion. Brownlee's (2003a and 2003b) theory is that without elite defection, regardless of IT, there will not be political change. Levitsky and Way (2002) agree and expand on this theory, stating that three variables keep a semi-democratic regime in power: a strong cohesive party and elite support, weak opposition parties, and weak ties to the West. The second theory, proposed by Milner (2003), is that politicians that believe they will lose power from the Internet's impact on their society will use political institutions to enact policies to block the spread of the Internet. Hachigian and Wu (2003) provide a third theory—IT can bring political changes in nondemocracies only if three variables are present: political tension, some level of Internet penetration, and little government control of the Internet.

Brownlee's and Levitsky and Way's publications used Malaysia in their case studies to examine what factors are necessary for democratization. Their research stresses the importance of elites in regime change: essentially, that change will only occur only after elites defect. Their premise proved to be correct in the Malaysia's 1999 election: the elite, and the middle-class business minorities, decided to stay the course and keep the BN in power.

Levitsky and Way (2002) stated that, "Malaysia's government won the campaign for reelection because it has a strong state-governing party, together with low Western influence and a weak and divided opposition" (p. 13). Specifically relating to IT, Mahathir's win was expected because, according to the authors, "there are only a limited number of Western-educated technocrats and little Western media coverage" (p. 17). The authors' opinion is that the BA could hardly be viewed as "weak and divided," there were (and still are) a large number of college students that studied in the West, and Anwar's arrest brought world-wide attention to Malaysia's election. However, Levitsky and Way were correct on one point: the BN remained in power.

Brownlee's (2003a and 2003b) analysis of Malaysia is more accurate. Brownlee challenges conventional literature by suggesting civil society mobilization, such as *Reformasi,* is not a critical enough variable for political transformation, with or without IT. Even though the public might be upset at the government, "Popular mobilization alone is insufficient for breaking incumbents' control over limited elections" (Brownlee, 2003b, p. 2). What is needed is political change from within the authoritarian system in combination with the presence of a popular alternative faction" (Brownlee, 2003a, p. 7).

Many thought that *Reformasi* rallies would create enough of a groundswell to help the opposition win. But this did not happen, perhaps because, as Brownlee suggests, the ruling coalition (BN) continued to have elitist support.

Helen Milner suggests that there are several factors that keep autocratic leaders in office. First, elites and the government enact rules to limit IT growth in order to remain in power (Milner, 2003, p. 13). Although Mahathir kept his promise not to control the Internet, he and his party had many tactics to control the message. This included using the Internet to spread rumors and false news reports and to attack Western influences (governments and media) for meddling in Malaysia's affairs. For example, Mahathir tried to discredit *Malaysiakini.com* by suggesting that financier George Soros, who is considered a villain in Malaysia for allegedly starting the Asian financial crisis, funded the on-line newspaper. Milner also suggests that leaders create policies to restrict IT because they "fear Western cultural imperialism" will negatively influence their own culture (Milner, 2003, p. 13). Mahathir believed restricting IT was necessary to maintain civic order and "Asian values," which puts the good of society above the rights of the individuals. Mahathir used this "Asian Values" platform to defend many of his policies, including arresting those who allegedly used the Internet for "rumor mongering."

Second, Milner states (2003), as does Ali (1999), that a stable economy is necessary for leaders to remain in office. "Leaders must pay keen attention to the state of the economy . . . for their survival . . . and to the economic fortunes of the groups that are their major supporters" (Milner, 2003, p. 7). Mahathir understood this as well as the fact that technological change means faster economic growth as shown by his successful

handling of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Moreover, Mahathir pushed for large government-funded projects, including building new universities, a new international airport, a new capitol city, and the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor MSC.

I also tested the election findings against Hachigian and Wu's (2003) theory that states that three factors must be present for IT to have a democratizing effect: political tension; high IT penetration, at least among the middle class; and little government control over the Internet. It appears that Malaysia has all three factors, so why did the election results not match Hachigian and Wu's prediction? This may be explained by using their statement that "in an illiberal democracy such as Singapore, where neither the regime nor the populace seems to crave change, IT will have little political movement" even if there is some underlying political flux, a large number of IT users, and an uncensored Internet (p. 71). This also appeared to hold true for Malaysia.

Thus apparently emerges the Internet is not an enabling tool for democratization. However, IT might be useful to citizens motivated to try to bring political changes in non- and semi-democracies.

Will More IT Access and Users Change Things in the Future?

Even though the BN was the ruling government's coalition, they had two powerful forces working against them going into the 1999 election. First, there was a tremendous amount of antigovernment rhetoric, with thousands of citizens demanding *Reformasi.* Second, there was widespread use of the Internet by voters, by the alternative media, and by opposition political parties. Given these two variables, how was it that the

BN was reelected? Would the election results have been different if the country had a higher Internet penetration level?

Mahathir remained in power because he *was* in power and controlled the "three Ms"—money, media, and machine. As mentioned previously, the ruling coalition was closely tied with the business elites, including ownership of media corporations. The machine kicked into full gear during election campaigns, when the BN offered financial rewards to states that voted for their candidates. Finally, the government had passed—and enforced—numerous repressive laws that restricted civil society from forming, as well as banning rallies and meetings. Outspoken politicians and journalists had lost their jobs, professional licenses, had been sued, detained, or sentenced to prison. This created an environment that promoted fear of the government and self-censorship. The government also limited the formation of NGOs, political parties, public forums, and dampened most efforts pushing for political change. All of these factors were present in 1999.

This leads to the second question. If more Malays would have had access to IT, would the 1999 election results have been different? Even if everyone in Malaysia had used the Internet for political purposes, the effects probably would not have been strong enough to counterbalance Mahathir's power. It should also be noted that although IT certainly has the potential to help push for democratization it did not mean that citizens would use it for political purposes. Users may have used the Internet only for games, e-mail, and tracking sport scores, instead of reading the news and engaging in political activities. This may also mean that more members of the existing political parties were on-line and typically, most people went to Web sites that accorded with their own

ideology. Therefore, BN voters would have joined BN listservs and read BN's Web site whereas BA voters would probably go on-line to read their own party's material.

Finally, the critical element that allowed the BN to win the election was that they had the support of both elites and minorities. Both the Chinese and Indian communities were concerned about their political and economic stability. Mahathir's ability to "play the race card" exacerbated their concerns for stability. He amplified and played on the fears of each ethnic group. For example, the media covered Mahathir's grave warnings that a vote for any opposition party member will be a vote for the Muslim opposition party PAS, and if the PAS should win they would create an Islamic state, which could lead to an increase in racial tension, and a repeat of the 1969 riots (Case, 2003, p. 42).

The May 13, 1969 riots were touched off by results of the fiercely contested parliamentary election. The Malay rioted against the Chinese citizens because of economic and racial tensions. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people died; most of them were Chinese. More recently, in 1998, Hindu temples and Muslim mosques in Penang were attacked; this led to the arrest of 200 rioters. That same year, it was the Chinese community that was attacked in neighboring Indonesia when President Suharto resigned. These "incidents of ethnic attacks were fresh on everyone minds" when it came time to vote (Yee, 1998, p. 4). It is thus likely that the BN won the vote from the ethnic minorities—and thus won the election.

Perhaps also the minorities aligned with BN out of economic interests. Traditionally, the Chinese and Indians are the middle class and they remained closely tied with the BN because the ruling party traditionally looked out for their economic

interests.[15] As long as the BN has the majority of the minority vote, half of the Bumiputera vote, and the support of the elites, voters would stay with the status quo, regardless of the increased number of IT users and IT applications.[16]

Conclusion

The reasons Mahathir and his party remained in power during the 1999 election are three-fold. First, the power of the Internet was not strong enough to compete with the government control of money, media, and machine. Second, the maintenance of social harmony was of paramount importance in this country. As long as PAS wanted to make Malaysia a Muslim state, the ruling coalition would continue to win as they did in 1999 and 2004. Finally, the citizens must truly want political transformation towards democracy before action can occur. Without this desire, information technology would be helpful but would not reach its full democratizing impact.

What is unclear, and is still undetermined after reviewing democratization literature and using Malaysia's 1999 election as a case study, is what factors bring consolidation towards democracy. How salient do these factors need to be? Are opposition parties necessary to bring democracy, or is change from within the ruling party more important? What percent of the population needs to be on-line before shifts toward democracy occur? The current literature does not answer this question, nor does this dissertation. What it does provide is some insight into how IT played a significant

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[15] According to economist and author Paul Krugman, to keep the economy growing, "Mahathir allows the Chinese minority to prosper, but to ward off ethnic tensions he throws favors, real and rhetorical, to the Malays. This carefully managed cronyism holds his system together." (Krugman, 2003).

[16] Chinese MCA won 28 seats of the 35 contested and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) won all 7 seats they entered.

role in the 1999 election, how voters used the Internet and the content, and how alternative media changed the news landscape of Malaysia.

The findings may diminish expectations that the Internet is a great mobilizing force towards democracy. This suggests that unrestricted use of information technology in a partly free nation does not itself bring about political change, at least not in the short term. The results may show that IT did have some impact. States that had high levels of Internet users voted more for the pro-democracy opposition party; however, the number of votes were not enough to remove the incumbent coalition from power. It is also evident that the use of IT did play a significant role in the elections, especially in helping the opposition coalition send their message to the voters and provide a medium for alternative news.

The margins between candidates narrowed considerably from those of past elections; some candidates won by only a few hundred votes. It is possible that the BA could have won more seats if the 680,000 disenfranchised voters had been able to vote, or had IT penetration been higher. This suggests that IT will provide the same, or greater role in the future, if the opposition can counter the power of the prime minister.

It seems too soon to draw any conclusions about IT's impact on elections in other semi-democracies because the Internet use only became significant relatively recently. Perhaps the Internet will not become the most important and appropriate technology for democratization. Mobile phones may have greater impact on society than computers or television and could also allow relatively cost-efficient accessibility and participation, including access to the Internet. Citizens have embraced the features of mobile phone

technologies in the past few years, including text messaging and digital cameras. Imagine the power of photographs taken during an event similar to the Tiananmen Square massacre[17] and forwarded electronically over the Internet from their mobile phones to media outlets.

Perhaps it is simply that the social scientists belief of the role IT plays in achieving political transformation was too optimistic. It is possible however that as technology evolves and citizens get access to IT in new and inexpensive ways, IT may become an unstoppable vehicle for democratization, if and when voters are ready for political change.

[17] The pro-democracy movement in Beijing, China led to a massive student demonstration on June 4, 1989. International television cameras captured the scene of the military tanks rolling over and crushing the students to their death, until the signals were cut. It is estimated several thousand may have died, and several thousand more were arrested, executed, or sent to reeducation camps.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The global information revolution took off in the mid-1990s. Many scholars were convinced that the information revolution could foster political transformation in semi- or non-democratic nations. However, even though the Internet is now accessible in every nation, the early hopes of IT's democratizing potential have not yet been substantiated.

This dissertation explored the question of whether IT, especially the Internet, has a demonstrable democratizing impact using Malaysia as a case study. The dissertation has an overview of the current literature on democratization, of Malaysia's history, people, and political structure, and an examination of the 1999 election results to statistics on the location and percentage of Internet users.

Malaysia, a semi-democracy, was selected for this research because it had many of the variables considered necessary for a consolidation towards democracy. This includes a large, educated, IT-literate, middle-class population, and a well-developed IT infrastructure with relatively inexpensive access to the Internet. The year preceding the 1999 election was a difficult political period in which Internet use and the amount of domestic content grew exponentially. The Internet was used by opposition parties to get their message out to voters in an election considered one of the most challenging for

(then) Prime Minister Mahathir and his ruling coalition. Thus, 1999 elections became a case study of the impact of IT on the democratization process.

Research Findings

Information technology did not appear to bring democracy to the country, but it did contribute significantly, especially the Internet, which provided a platform for the opposition movement and for alternative media in Malaysia. This validated the hypothesis that use of information technology in a partly free nation does not bring about political change, *at least not in the short term*. Although democratization has occurred in many developing nations, it has not happened in many semi-democracies, such as Malaysia, a nation with the high Internet penetration levels. These results may diminish expectations that the Internet is a critical instrument for the expansion of democracy.

However, even though the ruling government remained in power after the 1999 elections, it appears that IT had some degree of influence on the election. Specifically, it was one the largest losses in the history of the *Barisan Nasional* (BN) coalition which candidates and parties within the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA) opposition coalition discovered that the Internet was valuable in their campaign. The BA had a remarkable showing, doubling the number of seats it held from the previous election. Additionally, although the total number of seats won by opposition parties was small, the margin of the election results was significant, with many seats won by just a few hundred votes. Opposition parties could claim some measure of success because the ruling power candidates whom they had targeted won by narrow margins.

The growing educated middle-class pro-opposition supporters had unrestricted access to IT, and found it a convenient outlet to express their concerns and to organize rallies. However, all of the anger and all of the expanded use of the Internet was insufficient to unseat the current regime's control of the "3 Ms" (money, party machinery, and close connections with the mainstream media). The ruling party was able to maintain its political base of party members, the Malaysian elite, and minorities, and hold on to their power, regardless of the high domestic discontent and Internet penetration levels. It is possible that even if the majority of the population had used IT daily, the outcome of the election would not have been significantly different, because political change must come from within a society. Information technology, journalists, and nongovernmental organizations are merely tools that can assist in the process; it is the people that bring about democratization, typically through mass protests or the ballot box.

Limitations of the Study

The literature offering comparative analyses on the Internet's political impact is limited. This factor, plus the difficulty in identifying the determinants of change towards democracy, establishing correlations, and measuring the impact, makes it difficult to be accurate in determining IT's influence on the process. In addition, Malaysia's political system and Internet policies may turn out to be atypical. Malaysia's rapid and sustained economic growth, the Multi-media Supercorridor that brought IT jobs and the latest technology to the citizens, and the political stability since independence, does not conform with most other nations pattern of political and economic maturation. In 1999,

there was little literature available on IT and democratization. As of 2004, this topic has still received little scholarly attention, and therefore only limited material was available in this study. Current studies have explored some of the factors that aid a semi-democratic nation's move towards democracy, but they leave many questions unanswered. There is a need for a set of measurements that can accurately predict what essential factors must be present within a nation for it to move towards and to achieve democracy. There are many aspects of this consolidation towards democracy, such as why a person chooses to vote for a particular candidate or a party. Such factors are unclear and their strength to bring about political change unknown. This study did not measure all of the many potential factors; instead, it focused on three macro agents that influence democratization: the political structure, the economic status of a nation, and the influence and role that civil society provides within the country. The influence of information technology within these three spheres also has many variables. I limited my focus on a few observations—the number of Internet subscribers (according to ISP estimates), the election results, and evidence. These measurements are not enough to determine IT's influence or the direction and magnitude of the change.

Another challenge is that "political change" is subjective and thus, determining if it has occurred—and the nature of that change—is difficult. Once changes are identified, any correlation between IT and political outcomes must be found along with the changes and impact(s) IT had on the transformation processes.

Finally, the disadvantage of using a case study for comparison with other nations is that Malaysia may be an atypical semi-democracy. Other similar nations, such as those

identified by Huntington (1991) have moved closer to democracy. Malaysia may also be atypical "because while democratization may have taken place elsewhere in South-East Asia [where IT was less available], Malaysia actually has grown more authoritarian the past two decades" while becoming one of the most IT-savvy nations in the region (Case, "Thorns," 2003, p. 40). It is one of the few semi-democratic nations that allows uncensored use of IT. Finally, it is the only nation in which the government publicly promised unfettered use of IT, and for the most part, that promise was kept.

Implications

The results from this research are important. First, it can help resolve the debate among social scientists—IT is an effective instrument but has significant limitations. First, people must have access to it and be able to afford it. Specifically, to use the Internet, people must known how to read, and to read uncensored news usually requires strong language skills. Second, the results illustrate that people must be motivated and want political reform above anything else. In this case study, many Malaysians wanted *Reformasi* but ethnic and economic stability was more important, especially with the elites. Third, without elitist support, opposition parties will not gain enough strength to remove the ruling party from power (Brownlee 2003a; 2003b). Fourth, parties remain in power in semi-democracies because they control the rules. In Malaysia, the "3 Ms" (money, media, and [party] machine) are what keep incumbents in power. These are forces too powerful for IT to erode in the short term. Finally, the results demonstrated that IT had some impact, and helped the opposition party gain an unprecedented number of seats in 1999. Clearly, there is much more to say about this.

This case study should be reassuring for leaders in semi- or nondemocracies who fear that IT will erode their political base. Malaysia's government did not limit the alternative media and opposition parties. Instead, the government tried to discredit the new on-line news portals and countered by putting their own political parties and mainstream newspapers on-line. Rulers who wish to regulate and restrict IT may therefore need to understand that blocking and monitoring on-line activity may not be worth the effort and cost.

My research may have significance for individuals, political parties, and organizations working to promote democracy in non-democratic nations. The study may assist them in planning and using information technology to their advantage. It may also help them predict how dramatic and deep political changes can be—and not to develop expectations that are too high.

Perhaps the Internet can eventually act as a catalyst towards democracy in semi-democracies. Information technology may be the best tool to help civil society, NGOs, and opposition parties counter repressive governments. IT can help move a nation towards democracy by supplying the tools for citizens to have a say in their government by "eroding some of the barriers to political participation and civic engagement" (Norris, in press, p. 2).

The consolidation process may also be aided by using the Internet as a medium to provide more transparency in government and to demand that governments strengthen weak political institutions, such as the judicial system and the election process. IT may help opposition parties promote their message, especially given the limited legal and

political constraints within which they must operate. This happened in Malaysia in 1998–1999.

Although it may turn out to be true in the long run, IT's power to aid in democratization is unclear. Further research is needed to identify the factors that IT can introduce to help move a nation towards democracy.

Opportunities for Replication

There is a need to learn about the role IT plays with the democratization process. Replicating this study in other semi-democracies would be easy, especially if one followed the nations during their election year. One possible method would be for college students studying introductory classes in social science classes, such as politics, economics, or communication, to undertake researching this topic (see Appendix G). Ideally, those repeating this study could try to further develop a list of IT tools that are commonly used, for what purposes, and contrast these data with the level of Internet penetration. Results from additional studies may be able to answer how high IT penetration needs to be for opposition parties in semi-democracies win.

Brownlee's table on factors that support regime change or continuing endurance is one of the most inclusive studies that summarizes the key variables that can bring regime change. Adding IT, and perhaps domestic alternative news, as an eighth independent factor to Brownlee's model might be a good method of determining how strong Internet penetration must be to a nation before IT has a democratizing influence.

The pioneering 1995 report by Kedzie et al. determined by comparing numerous variables that IT has a democratizing impact, even though the Internet was not widely

available at the time. It would be useful to duplicate the study to see if there is a difference in the results a decade later. It would also be useful to see how the results hold up in nations where the governments block and monitor on-line actions and where they have learned how to limit and control the way their citizens use IT.

Need for Future Scholarly Research

Obviously more research is needed in both the methodology and application of the Internet in determining social and political impacts. For example, in 1999, opposition groups in Malaysia used hyperlinks on their Web pages to display important news articles from around the world. News search engines, such as Google, were not available then. Such search engines also make it more difficult for governments to filter Web sites, because the same material can be found on many sites. There are also other new technologies that have also been adopted by society that were unavailable five years ago; these include instant messaging, Web cameras, Web logs (Blogs), and mobile telephone technology. Mobile telephones, may in fact, ultimately become more influential than the Internet. Features such as built-in Web browsers, text messaging, and cameras that send digital photographs via e-mail may defeat government controls. For example, citizens can capture incidents, such as abusive police tactics against demonstrators, and disseminate photographs to foreign media outlets instantly and inexpensively.

In addition, more research is needed on nations where the government limits on-line communication. For example, the governments in the Middle East, Singapore, Brunei, China, and Vietnam have some of the most repressive censorship laws in the

world. None of these countries are democracies and they would make interesting comparison case studies.

Conclusion

The Internet has undoubtedly changed the political dynamics in Malaysia but not the government in power. It helped foster the pro-reform movement and it became the only way for opposition parties and alternative media to reach their audience. Information technology will probably play a significant role in any political transitions that occur in semi-democracies, especially in the well-wired Asian nations. This may be especially true if nongovernmental organizations learn to use the Internet to pressure governments to force political change or gain international attention to specific issues, such as the arrest and trial of Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998.

Accordingly, Malaysia makes an interesting subject for analyzing which information technology and which specific conditions act as democratizing agents during election cycles. The findings offer a theoretical foundation on how information technology may, or may not, help the process of democratization.

This study may also provide a deeper understanding for opposition parties, interest groups, nongovernment organizations, and the media working to move their nation towards a more representative democracy. This may help pro-democracy leaders determine if there is a minimum level of IT access necessary to bring changes in a semi-democratic regime, and how best to use IT, especially the Internet, during election cycles. It may help to predict the length of time and factors necessary for political change in

dictatorial regimes and other semi-democracies. Finally, it might encourage governments in semi-democracies to ease current IT restrictions.

It should be clear that the power of information technology cannot be expected to undermine authoritarian regimes, at least not in the short term. "The Internet cannot become a substitute for more traditional forms of political mobilization and action" (Abbott, 2000, pp. 24–25). Governments, and ruling political parties particularly, have powerful tools at their disposal and these cannot be shaken easily. They can extend their power and patronage to telling effect, and can count on the apathy of large portions of their population. Thus, change can come only if the anger and frustration of the public reaches a critical level. Government leaders know this, and make sure that that point is not reached. As long as that does not happen, discontent remains under control, as demonstrated by Malaysia's reform movement of 1998 and 1999.

However, IT is here to stay and can become a powerful tool if an active group of citizens want to promote their candidates and parties during an election year. It can also be used to press for reform, transparency, and democracy within a repressive regime. Perhaps with new IT tools, their impact may become more pronounced.

Epilogue

On June 26, 2002, Prime Minister Mahathir shocked the nation and the world by announcing that he was retiring in October 2003 and that Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would be his successor as the nations fifth prime minister. Abdullah (he is commonly called Pak Lah) stated that the 76-year-old Mahathir believed that serving 21 years was long enough, and that this was the only reason he was stepping

down (Bonner, 2002, p. 3). Some speculate that Mahathir wanted to leave office while his popularity both home and abroad while his was at its higher (Bonner, 2002, p. 3). Others suspect it was to help build public confidence in Abdullah and to help UMNO retain their power in the next election, which was due as it is constitutionally required every five years.

The 2004 parliamentary election was held on March 21. The results were similar to previous elections, excluding the 1999 and 1990 elections. At stake were 505 state assembly member seats and 219 seats for members of Parliament, which formed the coalition to appoint the prime minister.

It was predicted earlier that the UMNO would face a more difficult fight from the PAS in this predominately Muslim nation. However, this did not happen. The results were a landslide for the ruling coalition with Abdullah's BN party winning 90.4% of parliament's seats. This assures Abdullah's continued position as prime minister, as well as the BN's continued hold on power, perhaps for decades more, especially because no other party has been in power since Malaysia's independence.

Abdullah has also proven to be popular among the people. He has created his own leadership style, which contrasts sharply to the feisty former prime minister. Within his first five months, Abdullah pushed for cooperation within the parties and to restore ties with Singapore. He scaled back some of Mahathir's large-scale public works projects, and called for more government transparency and reforms, including fighting corruption. These actions may have helped weaken the reform movement, because he—and thereby the UMNO—was directly addressing the opposition's electoral issues.

Overall, the *Reformasi* movement appears to have lost steam. Anwar is still in jail, and his 2004 court appearances appealing previous rulings did not generate much attention. The 2004 election results were a major setback for Islamic PAS and pro-reform KeADILan. The opposition coalition was weak and no longer united under the BA banner: the BA only won 20 parliamentary seats (down from 42) and 51 state seats (down from 113 in 1999). KeADILan lost all 5 of its parliamentary seats, including that of Anwar's wife. It appears Anwar and the *Reformasi* movement have lost the public's interest.

The PAS, which tripled its parliamentary seats and won power in two states in 1999, claimed that UMNO was not Islamic enough, and thus ran a campaign in 2004 to turn Malaysia into a strict Islamic state. Most people, including moderate pro-Anwar reform Muslims, found the platform extreme. This was also fodder for the BN, claiming that a vote for any opposition member is a vote for the extremist Muslim party. The PAS's stance was a principle reason that the Chinese opposition party (DAP) withdrew from the BA this election, further weakening the opposition coalition.

What impact, if any, did the Internet play in the 2004 election and what has happened to the democratization movement since 1999? As of February 2004, Malaysia ranks 19th in the world in terms of the number of Internet users (Internet World Statistics, 2004, p. 1). The Internet and on-line activities are uncensored, and opposition parties and alternative media still use the Internet as their primary vehicle for advertising their message to voters but the Internet had little impact on the election because the party in power had the ability to control many variables to their own advantage. So therefore, one

can assume that change will not occur if the people, especially the elite, do not want it, regardless of the number of IT users and Web sites.

The money, media control, and government machinery controlled by the BN insures their longevity. For example, after the embarrassing 1999 election, the government added 26 new seats to Parliament and 63 state seats in 2002. Moreover, the electoral boundaries were redrawn in 2003, in a method that favors the BN, for all of the new seats, including the two states that PAS won in 1999: Kedah and Terengganu. These moves thus benefited the BN: they won 25 out of the 26 new seats in 2004 (Loh, 2004, p. 4). Additionally, the government continued to use repressive laws and courts to curb the opposition, further reinforcing the motto that "elections in Malaysia are free but not fair."

Information technology is only one tool to help those who want to achieve democratization. If there is not a civil movement for change, IT resources and access will not bring democracy. If people value economic and political stability above freedom, democratization will not occur. Asian values reinforce the belief that the government's monitoring of one's behavior to ensure ethnic stability is critical for political stability. Likewise, if political, ethnic, and economic stability are the voters' primary concerns, especially among the business owners (who have close ties with the BN) and the urban middle class, the BN will stay in power.

Appendix A

Selective Anecdotal Evidence Specific Events in Which Technology was Used to Move Towards Democracy

NATION	YEAR	TECHNOLOGY	EVENT	IMPACT
China	1989	Fax messages, signs by demonstrators in English. Conklin says, "it relied solely on email, but later movements have used text messaging, chat, and the WWW" (Conklin, 2003, p. 2).	Tiananmen Square, prodemocracy rallies	Worldwide attention
Russia	1991	E-mail messages sent out via an ISP with a link to Finland. Cellular telephones, and faxes out of Russia, radio into Russia. Text messaging also used.	Coup (failed)	World wide attention
Yugosalvia	1992	E-mail, cellular telephones, & audio streaming of radio station B92 that broadcast over the Internet.	Bosnia seceded from Yugoslavia. This led to the Serbs' systematic expulsion and ethnic cleansing of Muslims and Croats from Serb areas.	Became know as "the first war fought over the Net." Information got out, but technology did not oust the current leader, Milosevic.
Thailand	1992	For the first time, cellular telephones were used in Asia to mobilize groups and organize street protests. (Hachigian and Wu, 2003, p. 57).	Protests against Thailand's military coup.	Military coup failed. Country moved towards democracy.
Mexico	1994	Web pages and e-mails to human rights groups. Often cited as "the first Internet revolution" of a group getting its anti-government message out to the world via the Internet.	Zapatistas urging the Mexican government to change policies relating to NAFTA and human rights abuses	Gained world opinion, which forced the Mexican government to soften its hard line against the Zapatistas.

NATION	YEAR	TECHNOLOGY	EVENT	IMPACT
Malaysia	1999	E-mail, Web pages, listservs, and printing of e-mails.	Anwar (Deputy Prime Minister) arrested	Rallies protested arrest and trail. Opposition parties and alternative media used the Internet.
USA	2001	Those planning the attacks used prepaid cellular telephones, the Internet, and instant messaging.	September 11, 2001. The World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in the Washington, DC are attacked by Al Queda operatives.	U.S. policy of unmonitored unregulated and unlimited access to IT changes. Government surveillance of web sites, e-mails, and cellular traffic increases.

SOURCES:

Conklin, D. B. (2003, August). The Internet, political dissent, & technological capabilities. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia Marriott Hotel, Philadelphia, PA, August 28.

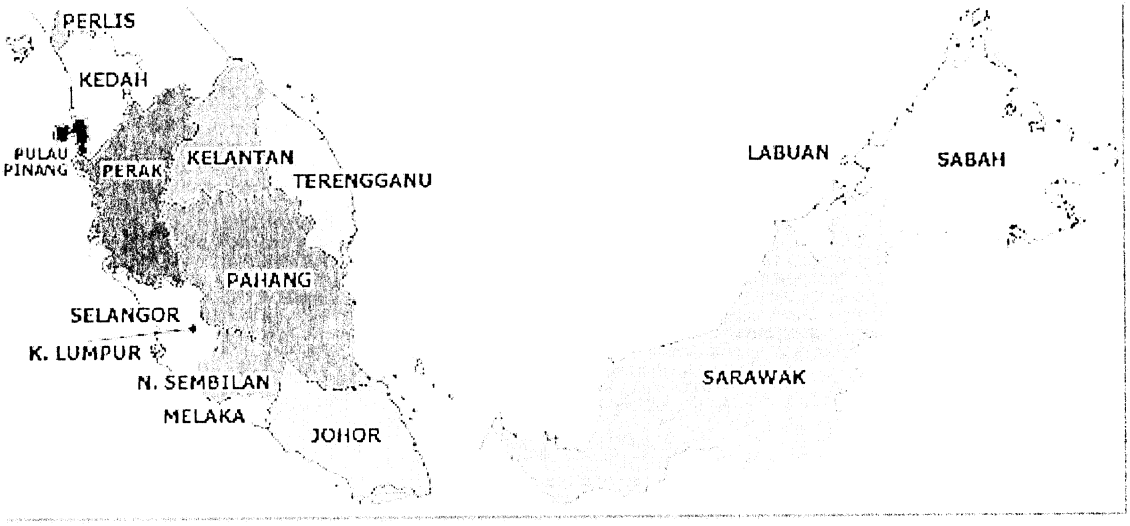
Hachigian, N., & Wu, L. (2003). The information revolution in Asia. Available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1719/>. Accessed June 19, 2003.

Kalathil, Shanthi. (2001, February). The Internet and Asia: Broadband or broad bans? Reprinted with permission from *Foreign Service Journal*, February 2001. Available at <http://www.ceip.org/files/publications/internet_asia.asp>. Last accessed December 20, 2003.

Marcus, D. L. (1998, June 15). Indonesia revolt was Net driven. *Boston Globe*. Available at <http://www.Boston.com/dailyglobe/globehtml/143/ Indonesian_revolt_was_Net_driven>. Last accessed October 19, 1999.

Appendix B

Malaysia



Source: UNDI Info. Available at <http://www.undi.info/>. Accessed May 13, 2004.

Appendix C

General Election Results 1959–1999

Election Year	Total Number of Parliament Seats	Ruling Coalition (BN)	Opposition Party*
1959	**104**	74 seats	30 seats
	Seats (%)	71.00%	29.00%
	Votes (%)	51.80%	48.20%
1964	**104**	89 seats	15 seats
	Seats (%)	86.00%	14.00%
	Votes (%)	58.50%	41.50%
1969–1970	**144**	92 seats	52 seats
	Seats (%)	64.00%	36.00%
	Votes (%)	47.40%	52.60%
1974	**154**	135 seats	19 seats
	Seats (%)	88.00%	12.00%
	Votes (%)	60.70%	39.30%
1978	**154**	130 seats	24 seats
	Seats (%)	84.00%	16.00%
	Votes (%)	57.20%	42.80%
1982	**154**	132 seats	22 seats
	Seats (%)	86.00%	14.00%
	Votes (%)	60.50%	39.50%

Election Year	Total Number of Parliament Seats	Ruling Coalition (BN)	Opposition Party*
1986	**177 seats**	148 seats	29 seats
	Seats (%)	84.00%	16.00%
	Votes (%)	55.80%	44.20%
1990	**180 seats**	127 seats	53 seats
	Seats (%)	71.00%	29.00%
	Votes (%)	51.90%	48.10%
1995	**192 seats**	162 seats	30 seats
	Seats (%)	84.00%	16%
	Votes (%)	65.00%	35%
1999	**193 seats**	148 seats	45 seats
	Seats (%)	76.70%	21.80%
	Votes (%)	56.50%	40.30%

* Opposition Coalition *Barisan Alternatif* is formed in the 1999 elections.

Source: Lin, J-Y. (n.d.). A structural analysis of the 1999 Malaysian general election: Changing voting preference of ethnic Chinese and Malay groups and party. Working paper. Available at <http://www.brookingsinstitutution.org/Fp/cnaps/papers/lin200212>. Last accessed October 13, 2003.

Appendix D

Parliamentary Election Results by State; Contrasted with the Percent of Internet Subscribers per State

(States are Ranked Lowest to Highest by Percent of Internet Users)

STATE	TOTAL SEATS	BN	BA	% of Internet Subscribers by State	Number of Seats BA PAS (Islamic) Won	Number of Seats BA KeADILan (Mixed) Won	Number of Seats BA DAP (Chinese) Won	Number of Seats Independent Party in Sabah State PBS Won	Number of Seats OTHER Parties (non-BN, BA or PBS) Won	Did the election support the Hypothesis that States with the Highest IT vote for the opposition Parties in BA? ("High IT" is when around 10% of the state population are IT users.)
Total Seats Contested	**193**	**193**	**166**	-	62	60	44	17	50	
Total Seats Won	**193**	**148**	**42**	-	27	5	10	3	0	
Perlis	3	3	0	0.40%	-	-	-	-	-	Yes – low IT, no BA wins
Kelantan	14	1	13	2.00%	10	3	-	-	-	No – Low IT, BA wins
Melaka	5	4	1	2.00%	-	-	1	-	-	No – Low IT, BA wins
Terengganu	8	-	8	2.00%	7	1	-	-	-	No – Low IT, BA wins
Kedah	15	7	8	3.00%	8	-	-	-	-	No – Low IT, BA wins
Pahang	11	11	0	3.00%	-	-	-	-	-	Yes – low IT, no BA wins
Negeri Sembilan	7	7	0	3.00%	-	-	-	-	-	Yes – low IT, no BA wins
Sabah	20	17	0	5.00%	-	-	-	3	-	No – low IT, BA wins
Sarawak	28	28	0	5.00%	-	-	-	-	-	Yes – low IT, no BA wins
Perak	23	20	3	6.00%	2	-	1	-	-	No – low IT, BA wins
Penang	11	6	5	7.00%	-	1	4	-	-	No – low IT, BA wins
Johor	20	20	0	9.00%	-	-	-	-	-	No – High IT, no BA
Federal Territory	11	7	4	15.00%	-	-	4	-	-	Yes – High IT, BA wins
Selangor	17	17	0	38.00%	-	-	-	-	-	No- no BA votes

Source for Election Results:

SADEC.com. Malaysian general Election 1999. 1999–2000. Available at <http://www.sadec.com/Election>. Last accessed October 12, 2003.

Source for Internet Subscribers:

International Telecommunication Union. (2001). *Multimedia Malaysia: Internet country case study*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author. Available at < http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/cs/malaysia/index.html>. Accessed October 27, 2003.

Source for size of states:

Khoo, K. K. (2000). Malaysian elections 1990-1999: A historical perspective. *Trends in Malaysia: Election Assessment 1*. Available at <http:seas.edu.sg/trends/20.pdf>. Last accessed October 13, 2003.

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Appendix E

State Election Results

Malaysian Elections 1999: Results of the 394 Seats Contested

PARTY	1995	1999	Interim Elections (1995–1999)
BN (Ruling Coalition)—Total	**338**	**281**	**350**
UMNO	230	176	242
MCA	70	68	70
MIC	15	15	15
Gerakan	23	22	23
BA (Opposition Party)—Total	**56**	**113**	**42**
DAP	11	11	8
PAS	33	98	33
PBS*	12	-	-
KeADLINan	-	4	-
MDP*	-	-	1

* not part of the 1999 BA coalition

Source: Zakaria, Haji Ahmad. (1999). The 1999 elections: A preliminary overview. Working paper, p. 9.

Appendix F

Margin Analysis of State Parliamentary Elections: 1995–1999

Listed by State's Internet Subscribers per State, 1999 (Lowest to Highest)

STATE	TOTAL SEATS	1995 Total Seats Won by 5,000 or fewer votes	999 Total Seats Won by 5,000 or fewer votes	% of Internet Subscribers by State	1995 Approximate % of total seats won by less than 5,000 Votes	1999 Approximate % of total seats won by less than 5,000 Votes
Total Seats Won	**193**	**46**	**75**	-		
Perlis	3	0	3	0.40%	0.0%	100% of seats
Kelantan	14	7	5	2.00%	½ of seats	⅓ of seats
Malacca (Melaka)	5	1	0	2.00%	1/5 of seats	0.0%
Terengganu	8	3	4	2.00%	½ of seats	½ of seats
Kedah	15	7	6	3.00%	½ of seats	⅓ of seats
Pahang	11	0	5	3.00%	0.0%	½ of seats
Negeri Sembilan	7	1	2	3.00%	1/7 of seats	⅓ of seats
Sabah	20	14	11	5.00%	¾ of seats	½ of seats
Sarawak	28	6	7	5.00%	¼ of seats	¼ of seats
Perak	23	4	13	6.00%	1/6 of seats	½ of seats
Penang	11	3	7	7.00%	¼ of seats	½ of seats
Federal Territory	11	0	6	15.00%	0.0%	½ of seats
Selangor	17	0	9	38.00%	0.0%	½ of seats

Source for Election Results: SADEC.com. Malaysian General Election 1999. 1999-2000. Available at <http://www.sadec.com/Election>. Last accessed October 12, 2003.

Source for Internet Subscribers: International Telecommunication Union. Internet Country Case Study—Malaysia. (2001). Geneva, ITU. Available at <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/cs/malaysia/index.html>. Last accessed October 27, 2003.

Appendix G

Supplemental Module for Teaching an Introductory Community College Course "How Does Democratization Occur? Exploring the Relationship between Elections and Information Technology in Non- and Semi-Democracies"

What is this module?

The module explores how democratization occurs in non- or semi-democracies. In particular, the relationship and impact of Information Technology (IT) on elections in these countries is used as a benchmark to explore some of the many variables that influence the democratization process. The suggested program is written to help students learn why politics, economics, and basic rights matter and most importantly, how interrelated these factors are. The suggested outline is suitable for such introductory courses in government, international relations, communications, economics, journalism, or history. Each of the suggested lessons should take 20–30 minutes, and for those using this modules longer version, include an oral presentation by each student and a final paper.

Why is this exercise important?

Students studying a social science learn about a particular subject; however, the fields of study are not usually presented in a way that allows students to explore and understand the interconnections among the historical, economic, political, and sociological factors that are the unique characteristics of each nation. This module gives students, perhaps many studying a wide variety of social sciences, an opportunity to analyze the relationships and importance among the variables by using elections and political transformation in semi-democracies as case studies. The exploration of these variables and the role information technology (IT) plays, especially the Internet, they can help determine which factors are most influential on the outcome of elections in non- and semi-democracies.

Overview

At the beginning of the semester, the class will work together to define a "semi-democracy." Next, the students create a "Table of Factors for Democratization," ranking variables that are important for political transformation. (See "Suggested List of Factors for Democratization" below.) Special attention should be given to the perception of students on the role IT in political change and whether this proves to be true after they have completed their investigation.

Next, each student selects a non- or semi-democratic nation to examine throughout the course.[1] (A list of "Form of Government: World Countries" is provided at the end of this appendix.) A "non-democratic" regime is typically governed by a ruler

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1 Current lists of non-democratic nations is available at Freedom House's annual ranking of "Freedom in the World," available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org ratings/index.htm>. Country rankings are listed as "partly-free (semi-democratic) or "not-free" (communist or authoritarian government).

(single-party, theocratic, military, or royal family) where a "semi-democratic"[2] nation refers to a country that has many of the institutions of a democratic state but has limited liberties). Each student gives a presentation at the end of the semester on the nation they studied. They will look at recent or upcoming elections in that nation, and whether there are significant efforts to move the nation towards democracy. Students will pay particular attention to the role that information technology (IT) plays in the period leading up to an election and in facilitating political change, as applicable.

The findings of the students will vary dramatically. Some governments may not allow elections or any political debate whereas others may allow opposition parties and pro-democracy movements. Thus, students learn that there are many types of political regimes and each government functions in its own way. Special attention must be given to the role that IT plays in both elections and the transition towards democracy. For example, if there is not a fair and free media, IT can help fill that void. Also, by studying IT, students learn the ways that some governments fear the Internet or how it may cause political instability; thus, the regime may create regulations, monitor, restrict, or block access, or, in a few cases, ban IT to ensure its continued position of power.

Rationale

The study of democratization makes an interesting field of inquiry for any student interested in international relations, political science, international business, sociology, conflict resolution, or journalism. Today, about a quarter of the countries represented at

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2 Semi-democracies are often referred to as "transitional governments because they are not totalarian, single-party, communist states, nor they a constitutional monarchy or democratic representative. However, the term "transitional" is misleading because many leaders in semi-authoritarian regimes have no

the United Nations are ruled by dictators, royal families, or leaders selected through semi-competitive elections.

Elections in semi-democratic nations are interesting to study, because the ruling government controls the political system that keeps them in power. Electoral victories are guaranteed by limiting competition and restricting the media. Yet, in a few cases, opposition parties win. What helps the opposition party to win in these types of elections? Specifically, what are the factors that make semi-democracies move towards democracy or slide back towards a more repressive regime, such as military rule. Why do some nations move towards free and fair elections whereas others regress towards authoritarianism? What role does information technology play in the process? Because there are many factors, (see "Suggested List of Factors to Examine for Democratization" at the end of this chapter) and because the effects of the factors are different for each nation, social scientists still do not know the answers, especially concerning the influence of IT in elections. College students can understand such factors by investigating, analyzing, synthesizing and documenting political and social transformations on a specific nation, especially the much-understudied relationship between IT and political change. Such work can ultimately be most beneficial to scholars, non-profit agencies, and government organizations.

The Malaysian case study makes an interesting comparative study for student's work in their papers and presentations because Malaysia is an enduring semi-democracy, with a ruling party, UMNO (United Malays National Organization) that has dominated

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intention of moving towards democracy.

power for three decades. Former Prime Minister Mahathir ruled the country for two decades before handing over his office to his appointed choice in a peaceful transition in 2003. This study is important because it demonstrates how a leader and his party were able to win reelection, especially during a tense political period, even despite the powerful alternative media and widespread Internet campaigns against him and his coalition. This is important because it helps us understand how difficult it is to remove the party in power, and the complications of democratization, even with today's information technology that allows voters to receive international and local news and opinion that is not censored by their government.

Design and Pedagogy

This guide is designed to be incorporated into an introductory course, such as an "Introduction to International Politics" class. Such a module could be used for one class, in modules, or throughout an entire semester. Suggested methods on how to incorporate the module are listed under "Suggested Application of Modules".

Learning Objectives

- Explore the different factors that influence political regimes and elections;
- Develop research skills (on-line research of important annual reports);
- Develop strong research, analytical, and oral presentation skills;
- Form a deeper appreciation of the different types of freedoms and political regimes available in the world;
- Understand the influence the media and information technology have upon

individuals and a country;

- Learn how governmental, nongovernmental organizations, private voluntary organizations, and media publications influence governments and citizens;
- Learn the politics, geography, and culture of one country and be able to compare with other forms of governments after listening to other student presentations.

Suggested Readings

In addition to the main textbook (Grade level reading is introductory college level)

Dahl, R. A. (1971). Polyarchy: Participation and opposition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 1–16, 62–80.Diamond, L. (1999). Developing democracy: Toward consolidation. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 1–2, 24–63.

Huntington, S. P. (1991). The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, pp. 3–5, 12–26, 34–108.

Suggested Class Activities

Part A – Introduction to Political Regimes

Lesson 1 Introduction to the Module and Case Study

- Introduction to class
- Explain the required work for the class

Lesson 2 Class discussion: What is democracy?

- What are the Principles of Democracy?
- What are the various names for free states?
  - Republics, Parliaments, Democracies, etc.
- Name some states that have recently moved towards democracy.
- What is the best form of government, in your opinion?

* Each student selects a country to study. The student will write a paper on that country and make a class presentation.[3]

Lesson 3 Class discussion: What are different forms of political regimes?

- How many different types of political regimes are there in the world?
- What is the difference between a nondemocracy (totalitarian) and a semi-democracy? What is the difference between a semi-democracy and democracy?
  - Individually in class: have students write down their own

3 If students need help in deciding on a nation to study, suggest the following: countries where the government has restricted IT access or where significant movements have used the Internet against the government include China, Vietnam, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United States, Russia, Columbia, Mexico, Ecuador, and many countries in the former Soviet Union. Recent elections, where there may be enough data on to explore the relation between Internet use and elections, include Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Algeria, Georgia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. For a full list elections (1999–2004) and their election

definitions. Discuss in groups, listing the critical differences between these three types of governments. Conclude by discussing the answers with the class.

- What are some reasons semi- or non-democracies remain today?

Instructor: Give examples of different forms of transitions.

Part B Regime Change – How Democratization Occurs and ITs Influence

Lesson 4 Class discussion: "Modernization Theory"

- What is "regime change"?
- How does this change towards democracy occur?

Discuss the readings by Diamond and Huntington on "modernization theory," which propose that economic development leads to democratization. Do students agree or disagree? The students should be able to concisely summarize the argument and explain why this evidence is convincing or not.

* Confirm each student's choice of country for their paper.

Lesson 5 Class discussion: "Researching democratization, elections, and IT"

- Discuss research types, including the ones already discussed, and how to write research papers. Include the number of minimum primary sources (newspaper articles, government documents, or interviews), as well as secondary sources required for the paper. Review the list of suggested websites to help with the research.

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results, see <http:www.electionguide.org> (this Web site is on the list of suggested research links).

- Lecture and discussions – Different types of elections (presidential, parliamentary, federal and state) and how elections are held (campaign period, day(s) allowed to vote, foreign election monitors, rigged elections, how leaders silence the opposition, elections may be "free but not fair," and voting may be mandatory.
- Discuss the role of IT in non- and/or semi-democracies. How important is IT to citizens and government?
- Why do some governments limit IT use, such as blocking websites? Why are e-mails monitored in some nations but not text messaging on cell phones? How important is IT in the nations being studied for the paper?
    - Instructor: Point out the lack of research on the relationship between democratization and the influence of IT, especially on the relationship between elections and IT.

* Discuss Web sites and resources for studying material for the paper. (See

suggested list below.)

Lesson 6 Class discussion: "What Factors are Necessary for Democratization?"

- Students discuss and create a table of factors for analysis for their final presentation and paper (see suggested topics under "Suggested List of Factors to Examine for Democratization").
- New factors can be added to the "Suggested List of Factors to

Examine for Democratization." However, the list should be narrowed down to what students think are the most important factors overall, not necessarily for their specific nation, but for democratization. (Some students may have factors that are important to their nation, but do not pertain to the other nations.)

* Next week: class votes on the "Table for Factors for Democratization."

Lesson 7 Class discussion: Finalize "Table for Factors for Democratization."

- Continue the discussion on what factors are important to help move a nation towards democratization.
- Vote on the factors and complete the table.
- Discuss details about the paper and presentation.

Part C – Student Presentations

Lesson 8 – 12 End of semester. Student Presentations

- Student Presentations. Allow 10–15 minutes per student for presentation and questions and answers.
- Papers are due to the instructor.

Suggested Application of Parts A-C:

This module is a comprehensive module and is divided into three parts to be adaptable to different situations. Each part may be used in whole or part, depending on the community college schedules of classes, the number of classes, and the length of time allowed for the exercise per each class session. Some

colleges may prefer to make this entire module part of an introductory course or offer the module as a class, perhaps at the 200-level. Others might prefer to have one or more parts taught as a supplement, or separate module to an introductory class. Still others may be interested in offering the module as a non-credit, continuing education class.

Each part (A, B, and C) is designed to stand alone or in conjunction with the other parts and can take three or more weeks, depending on the discussions and number of students. Part A "Introduction to Political Regimes" is an historical overview of the different types of political regimes. If only Part A is going to be used, it is suggested that lesson 3 be divided into two lessons. Part B "Regime Change – How Democratization Occurs and ITs Influence" examines current political regimes and the influence, if any, of information technology on recent elections. Part B can be all class discussion without requiring each student to select a specific nation or give a presentation. In that case, discussions and lectures would center on how some nations have moved towards democracy; list nations that currently are not a democracy; and discuss and rank factors that move a nation towards democracy. Part C is the student presentations. It is possible to have students do the research and make presentations without covering the material under Part A and B in class.

Useful Web Sites:

- The CIA World Fact Book <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>
- U.S. State Department
  - Country Background Notes <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>
  - Annual Report to Congress on International Religious Freedom <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/>
  - Annual Human Rights Reports <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/c1470.htm>
- The Carter Center <http://www.cartercenter.org/>
- Election Guide - Worldwide from the International Foundation for Election Systems <http://www.electionguide.org>
- Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>
- Reporters without Borders http://www.rfs.org
- Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org>
- Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org>
- Global Corruption Report <http://www.globalcorruptionreport.org/>

Suggestions for Written Requirements

Long Paper/Oral Presentation

If this choice is selected by the instructor to be part of the required work for the course, it is suggested that each student selects a country to examine if the class is small enough to allow individual class presentations. If the class is large, the instructor may wish to assign teams of two or three students to make a presentation. The suggested format for oral presentations is as follows:

First, the student determines what type of governance the nation has, who rules it, and what type of body (Parliament, Congress, etc.) represents the public.

Second, the student provides an overview of the nation's history and the transformation to its current political structure (e.g., did it have a military coup, revolution, civil war, peaceful transition to democracy? Is it stable and peaceful right now? Or is it in a period of political crisis in which regime change may occur?).

Third, examine the nation's current political, social, and economic status.

Fourth, compare the "Suggested List of Factors to Examine for Democratization" and discuss in class what the most influential factors are in the nation being investigated. (Note: the master list is only a reference. Some nations will rank some factors higher than others, whereas other nations will have important factors that are not on this list.)

Fifth, examine the influence of IT on the nation and if IT may influence the regime in power in the short- and/or long run.

Finally, IT's impact should be compared to the election results to determine if IT had any impact. These results may be contrasted to the results of Malaysia's 1999 election.

(It is up to the instructor to determine what percentage the written paper and oral

presentation represent for their overall grade. Because this is an introductory course, it is suggested that the midterm and final examinations will count for 50% of the grade, the paper 20%, the oral presentation 20%, and class participation 10%.)

Suggested List of Factors to Examine for Democratization

There are many variables that influence the structure of a nation and its form of government. This list offers questions for the student to consider when researching the nation. The instructor can ask students to rank, 5 or 10 of the most influential factors for the paper and presentation. The factors may be different for each nation.

A. Civil Society

- Are labor organizations, nongovernmental agencies, especially foreign nongovernmental organizations, and civil organizations allowed in the nation?
- Is there a vibrant civil society?
- Do politicians work closely with civil society?
- Are prominent leaders punished or jailed for their actions?

B. Who are the Voters?

- What are the average ages of voters?
- Are they primarily urban or rural?
- Are they employed or unemployed?
- What is their education level?
- What is their party identification?

C. Political Issues

- Are the military and government separate from each other?
- Is there an independent judiciary system? For example, are judges allowed to rule freely or do have to be accountable to the party in power?
- Are elections free and fair? Or are they partly or completely controlled by the ruling party?
- Are voting irregularities common during elections?
- Are political parties, especially opposition parties, allowed?
- Does the government reward voters (cash, building projects, jobs)?

D. Human Rights

- Are people detained with evidence, know their charges, and given speedy and fair trials?
- Are basic human rights respected?
- Is there religious freedom?
- Does the government censor movies, videos, computer games, newspapers, etc.?
- Are polls allowed?

E. Economic Issues

- Who are the primary business owners? Are they political leaders?
- Are businesses required to obtain licenses annually from the government?
- Who comprise the elite?
- What percentages of the population are rich, middle class, or poor?

- Is there a middle class? Is this a newly emergent class?
- Do the poor have an opportunity to advance? Do they have any social protection? Do they get involved in politics? Do politicians court their vote?

F. Mainstream Media:

- Is the media (print, television, radio) free, regulated, or nonexistent?
- Who owns/runs the media sources? Government owned/supported?
- Does the country allow a free and independent media?
- Does the media provide adequate coverage of opposition parties?
- Can opposition parties buy advertising space in the mainstream media?
- Are foreign media allowed to operate in the nation?
- Are the media punished (expelled, arrested, sued, etc.) if they print (or broadcast) stories critical of the government?

G. Information Technology (IT):

- Who owns the Internet Service Providers? Are there direct links or ownership to the government?
- How expensive is it to go on-line for one hour? How does this compare a telephone call?
- Are Internet cafes widely available?
- Do schools and universities have access to computers?
- Does the government block Web pages?
- Are computer users required to register with the government?

- Have citizens been arrested for information sent or downloaded over the Internet?
- What type of IT do citizens use? (Internet? Pagers? Faxes? Mobile phones? Palm pilots and transfer documents?) What is most popular?
- What percent of citizens have Internet access? Mobile phones?
- What mobile phone features do citizens use? Text messaging? Photographs? Web browsing? Are telephones more important than Internet?

"Form of Government: World Countries*"

Communist:
- China
- Cuba
- Laos
- North Korea
- Viet Nam

Military:
- Burkina Faso
- Burma
- Democratic Republic of Congo (also transitional)
- Libya
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Sudan

Single Party Representative:
- Mali
- Syria
- Zambia

Theocratic:
- Iran

Transitional:
- Afghanistan
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Eritrea
- Iraq
- Kazakhstan
- Macedonia
- Mauritania
- Paraguay
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Togo

Monarchy:
- Bahrain

Belgium (Constitutional Monarchy)
Bhutan
Brunei (Constitutional Monarchy)
Denmark (Constitutional Monarchy)
Japan (Constitutional Monarchy)
Jordan (Constitutional Monarchy)
Kuwait (Constitutional Monarchy)
Liechtenstein (Constitutional Monarchy)
Luxembourg (Constitutional Monarchy)
Malaysia (Constitutional Monarchy)
Monaco (Constitutional Monarchy)
Norway (Constitutional Monarchy)
Oman
Qatar (also Transitional)
Saudi Arabia
St. Kitts/Nieves (Constitutional Monarchy)
Samoa (Constitutional Monarchy)
Spain (Constitutional Monarchy)
Swaziland
Switzerland (Constitutional Monarchy)
Thailand (Constitutional Monarchy)
Tonga (Constitutional Monarchy)
Tuvalu (Constitutional Monarchy)
United Arab Eremites

Republic, Federal Republic, Multi-party Republic, Parliamentary Democracy, and Parliamentary State.

Nations not listed above are most likely to be classified under this category.

It should also be noted that some countries may be classified as one of the above, but this does not mean the citizens have the tools of democracy, such as freedom of speech, association, free and fair elections, uncensored media, and an independent judiciary.

(Source for "Form of Government: World Countries": Allen, J. L. (2002). Student atlas of world politics. 5th ed., Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, pp. 107-111.)

* Note – some countries are listed by their common, informal name.

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