RETHINKING ETHNICITY
AND NATION-BUILDING
**Malaysia, Sri Lanka & Fiji
in Comparative Perspective**

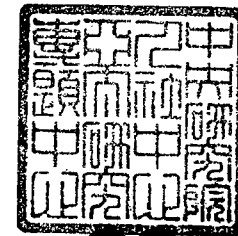# RETHINKING ETHNICITY AND NATION-BUILDING
Malaysia, Sri Lanka & Fiji in Comparative Perspective

edited by
Abdul Rahman Embong

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIM	Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (an NGO based on the concept of Grameen Bank)
APDC	Asia-Pacific Development Centre
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
Felda	Federal Land Development Authority
GCC	Great Council of Chiefs
IADP	Integrated Agriculture Development Projects
ICT	information communication technology
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
JHEOA	Jabatan Hal-ehwal Orang Asli (Department of Orang Asli Affairs)
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MP	Member of Parliament
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NLC	National Land Commission
NVP	National Vision Policy
PLI	poverty line income
PUTERA-AMCJA	Pusat Tenaga Rakyat-All Malaya Council of Joint Action
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNP	United National Party
UPAM	United Plantation Association of Malaysia
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
WTO	World Trade Organization
YBK	Yayasan Basmi Kemiskinan (Poverty Eradication Foundation)
YPEIM	Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Economic Development Foundation)

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PREFACE

This idea of this book originated in Bangkok when I – in my capacity as the President of the Malaysian Social Science Association – was attending the UNESCO's Regional Consultation on Social Science Issues in Asia-Pacific on 10-12 December 2001. At that meeting, it was decided that UNESCO should "encourage comparative research on local processes, structures and public policies in areas such as education, language, and social policies which engender harmony and disharmony in multiethnic societies in the Asia-Pacific region." It was on the sidelines of this meeting that the three of us, viz., my two distinguished friends, Professor Siri Hettige from Sri Lanka, and Professor Brij Lal from Fiji (currently teaching at the ANU) and myself from Malaysia, discussed the need for collaborative endeavour to seriously study in a comparative manner, issues of ethnicity and nation-building involving our three countries. With that as our agenda, we immediately approached Dr Malama Maleisea who was then UNESCO's Regional Advisor on social and human sciences in Asia-Pacific who was very supportive of the idea.

It was these moves that subsequently gave birth to our collaboration in the form of a three-day conference-cum-book project organised in Malaysia on 26-28 February 2003. The Malaysian Social Science Association took the lead, working in close collaboration with the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo; and the Department of History, Australian National University to organize the conference on the theme, "Rethinking Ethnicity and Nation Building: Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Fiji In Comparative Perspective". The conference was supported by UNESCO Bangkok Office as well as the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Bangkok.

In my opening address at the conference, I stressed that while colonialism was instrumental in transforming the demographic composition of the region it colonised, it did not put the task of transforming the diverse society into a unified polity in these countries on its agenda, thus leaving the unenviable task to the nationalist elites who took over the reins of power with the dismantling of colonial rule. Nevertheless, lacking not only in vital resources such as capital and technology, the newly independent states were also short of their own social science experts who could independently formulate theories to advance critical and constructive scholarship as well as to help craft policies to build the new

nation. This task was thus taken over by foreign experts. The study of ethnicity and nationhood in those years became the sole prerogative or monopoly of foreign scholars who no doubt have contributed significantly to the corpus of knowledge as well as to policy advice to the policy-makers of these countries regarding the possible path to take and the road map to the future. The contribution of these foreign scholars should be warmly welcome.

However, while having its strength, this somewhat 'top-down' or 'foreign experts' approach should be complemented by an approach from 'below', a local perspective from within the countries and region itself. My position is not predicated upon sentiments of academic nationalism, but one of critical academic and policy imperatives for the countries concerned, i.e. the imperatives of building and sustaining high calibre national and regional capacities among the societies and peoples in the region to delve into issues that are very critical and urgent to their lives and the future of their nation-states. The model advocated here is one of global conversation or dialogue, initiated and directed by those most directly involved in the issues at hand. In the final analysis, it is the people in these countries and regions, including their scholars, who have to bear the consequences of any set of theories and policy actions devised to address the problem.

It is in keeping with this spirit that the Malaysian Social Science Association has as one of its principal tasks, the intellectual capacity building to enhance our ability to study, conceptualise and think afresh various issues afflicting our society and nation, and collaborate with institutions and scholars from within and outside the region for that purpose. This conference and the book are a modest step in that direction. I take note with gratitude that UNESCO, Friedrich Naumann Foundation and our academic colleagues from outside the region, represented by distinguished scholars such as Prof. Donald Horowitz from Duke University, the United States, recognise the significance of an approach based on local perspectives in building and sustaining such capacities and have been very supportive of moves of this nature. Hence their enthusiastic support and participation in this initiative by their presence and participation at the conference, and Prof. Horowitz's contribution to the book.

This book is based on the papers delivered at the conference. All the chapters, except for Chapter 9, consist of the papers that have been revised by taking into account comments and inputs by conference participants. Chapter 9 by Ong Puay Liu entitled "Identity Matters: Ethnic Salience and Perceptions in Malaysia", however, was originally presented at the 4th International Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC4), organised by the Malaysian Social Science Association in August 2004. As the paper addresses the key issue of reimagining the nation, namely the contestations in nation-building in Malaysia, it is also included in this volume after the necessary revision and addition have been made.

This book was initially planned to be published much earlier, but due to unforeseen circumstances, it is only now that it is able to see the light of day. Whilst the delay is regretted, it does not affect the substantive arguments of the book since they were as relevant then as they are today.

I must emphasise that this book would not have been possible without the support of many parties whose names are too numerous to enumerate. However, we would like to place on record our special thanks and appreciation to UNESCO, especially to the then Regional Advisor on Social and Human Sciences in Asia-Pacific, Dr Malama Maleisea and to his colleague, Mr Naren Prasad, also from UNESCO, Bangkok; to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, especially to Mr Rainer Heufers, the Bangkok-based Project Director for Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam; and to Professor Don Horowitz, an expert in the field of ethnicity and inter-ethnic accommodation particularly on this part of the world. The chapter entitled "Approaches to Inter-ethnic Accommodation: A Comparative Perspective" published in this volume was originally presented as the keynote address at the conference. Also, our thanks to our partners, the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), UKM, the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo, and the Department of History, Australian National University for their enthusiastic collaboration. Last but not least, I would to record my thanks to all the volume contributors for their cooperation and patience.

It is sincerely hoped that this volume will provoke further thought and research on the subject of ethnicity and nation-building, and will be another contribution to the corpus of knowledge and to policy inputs for managing ethnicity and nation building particularly in Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Fiji. More specifically, it is hoped the three case studies will contribute towards a deeper understanding of these issues from the perspective of the Asia-Pacific region contributed principally by scholars and researchers from the region itself.

Abdul Rahman Embong
Editor
May 2007

Introduction

Rethinking Ethnicity and Nation-Building

Abdul Rahman Embong

Writings on developing countries since the end of the Second World War right through the 1960s and, to some extent, even today have, in the main, been done from the modernisation perspective. At least two strands of argument from this perspective are pertinent to our discussion here. On one hand, this perspective holds the view that as societies industrialise, modernise and move up the development ladder like what the developed societies of the West have done over the last two centuries, their members are said to be more and more universalistic and democratic in their outlook, leaving behind particularism and affectivity. Universalism and democracy in this regard are seen as a necessary by-product of industrialisation and modernisation. On the other hand, for post-colonial societies in which there exist various ethnic groups, a variant of this perspective tends to characterise them as "ethnically divided" or "fractured" societies, fraught with ethnic strife and even violence as their members are said to retain strong attachments to ethnic identity and primordial loyalty. It is argued that in such a society, democracy would find it difficult to take root as ethnic divisions would undermine it; instead, it is believed that such a society would create conditions for authoritarian rule which is regarded necessary to hold the fractured society together and maintain social order.

At the risk of over-simplifying the modernisation thesis, we can argue that while the first view tends to privilege the developed West as the citadel of modernity and civilisation showing the future for the developing world, implicit in the second view is the underlying belief that multiethnic societies, being conflict-ridden, would be torn apart, and that their states would potentially be failed authoritarian states. Either way, the post-colonial societies would stand to lose.

A brief look at various societies around the world, however, gives us a far more mixed and complex picture. The universalism and democracy thesis is undoubtedly true to some extent though the kind of democracy espoused may not necessarily be the same as Western liberal democracy.

There is also some kind of convergence of values especially with regard to consumption culture and lifestyles among the middle classes of these countries due to the rapid processes of globalisation. However, it does not necessarily follow that 'particularism' in the form of racism, prejudices and bigotry are the monopoly of post-colonial societies as though they cannot be found in Western developed societies. History has shown that racism, stereotypes, prejudices and bigotry arising from social misunderstanding and the politicisation of ethnicity and religion feature significantly not only in multiethnic and multireligious post-colonial societies, but also in industrialised developed societies of the West. A look at how certain sections of the population in the United States, Britain and France react to large inflows of migrants especially from their former colonies and also to Muslims indicates the persistence of these problems.

For multiethnic post-colonial societies, ethnicity, nations, and nation-building are undoubtedly key questions that keep on recurring in their political and socio-economic landscape, and have become a major component of the discourse among their leaders and the masses. These questions emerge not only in their review of their past, but also in managing their present, and their envisioning of their future.

However, while the question of ethnicity and ethnic identity and their politicisation are fairly universal, it is not the same for nations and nation-building. For developed societies, nations and nation-building are regarded as things of the past, but for post-colonial societies, both are extremely relevant. Being newly independent nations, their leaders have made nation-building an important agenda. Nation-building is conceived not only as an outcome but more as a process — a long and complicated one at that. It is also an unfinished agenda, more so because they have to engage with different ethnic groups and religions to strengthen ethnic relations and foster national unity. Perhaps this is the reason why some scholars (see for example, Horowitz in this volume) opt for the term "inter-ethnic accommodation" instead of "nation-building" when they refer to such issues. Inter-ethnic accommodation is regarded as a more modest goal while nation-building is far more ambitious and less readily achievable.

We agree that nation-building is ambitious and that it faces tremendous difficulties and challenges while inter-ethnic accommodation is more specific and focused. However, for post-colonial societies, the challenges they have to address are not about managing ethnic diversity or inter-ethnic accommodation per se. They have to address ethnic questions in the course of their building the economy and the market, promoting economic growth, launching development programmes to uplift people's living standards, providing education for skilled human resource, consolidating existing state institutions and building new ones, while at the same time, educating members of their society or their citizenry on the

need for unity and acceptance of each other so that they would gradually internalise the idea of being a part of the same nation. In all these endeavours, ethnic considerations play a significant role. As these states became independent only in recent decades, mostly after the Second World War, different ideas about envisioning the nation and the state at the time of independence are still fresh in the minds of the older generation, and feature significantly in the current discourse on shaping the nation's future. At the same time, new ideas and imaginings have emerged especially among younger generations regarding the future of their nation-state, and how they could contribute towards building its future. All these constitute part and parcel of nation-building. Thus, for purposes of understanding and analysing these countries, it will be more appropriate to address them from the standpoint of nation-building while the question of inter-ethnic accommodation or managing ethnic diversity is placed as a major component within it.

The important question here is how we should view ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity should be viewed as an asset, but it is an asset that cannot be taken for granted. Ethnicity is nothing inherent as it is a social construction though, of course, it is a construction that has become in Durkheimian term, a "social fact". People trust each other and will develop a sense of pluralist acceptance of the other in the process of them living and working together on the basis of equality and mutual assistance. Coupled with appropriate institutions, approaches, policies and programmes, the people's potentials for deeper understanding and cooperation with each other can be further enhanced. This is not a romantic view of the problem and of human nature; neither is it an over-simplification of ethnic diversity. This view is based on actual historical experience of diverse ethnic groups living side by side with each other, and in the process, developing a sense of cosmopolitanism and pluralist acceptance of the other. Thus for scholars and policy-makers alike, the problem is not about accomodation per se. It is about how ethnic diversity should be viewed and managed to harness the potentials of various ethnic groups to build the society and the nation.

Some Important Questions

This volume attempts to engage the problematic of ethnicity and nation-building by using both historical and comparative perspectives. Taking the three former British colonies in the Asia-Pacific region — Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Fiji – which have their own specific problems in managing ethnic diversity and nation-building as its case study, this volume attempts to address three inter-related questions. First, what was the nature of the envisioning of the nation at the time of independence? What were the forces and thinking behind such envisioning, and their implications for the

post-independence era? Second, what are the implications of various public policies that have been put in place in crafting the nation and building the state during the post-independence era? Third, what are the new reimaginings of the nation among various groups, expressed in various forms of contestations and attempts at accommodation or reconciliation? What are their possible impacts upon the future of these nations? The analysis of the first set of questions attempts to provide the historical context for nation-building during the post-independence period and the new imaginings, while discussion of the second and third sets of questions attempts to address post-independence problems and challenges for the future.

To facilitate in-depth discussion of each question, this book is divided into four parts comprising 11 chapters. The first chapter by Horowitz gives a broad comparative perspective of all the three countries surveyed and provides approaches to inter-ethnic accommodation. The other chapters, however, are country-specific. Chapters 2, 5, 8 and 9 deal with Malaysia, chapters 3, 6 and 10 are on Sri Lanka, while chapters 4, 7 and 11 on Fiji. All these chapters take a common approach, viz. the first set of chapters deals with the historical background of each country, followed by specific chapters on public policies that have impacts on ethnic relations, and finally, the specific chapters on the new envisioning regarding the future of these nations.

Writing on the historical maneuverings and envisioning of the nation at the time of independence in Malaysia, Cheah Boon Kheng in Chapter 2 shows that nation-building in the then Malaya involved inter-ethnic bargaining between the major ethnic groups – Malays, Chinese and Indians — through which a "social contract" was agreed upon and became enshrined in the Federal Constitution, which continues to this day. In Chapter 5 by Sulochana Nair which discusses poverty eradication policies in Malaysia and their implications for ethnic unity and accommodation, she argues that while development policies under the New Economic Policy had a positive impact on reducing absolute levels of poverty, their impact on ethnic relations is difficult to ascertain. Shamsul in Chapter 8, argues that while there is one Malaysian state, there are several contending "nations" within the state, and that since it is impossible for the state to impose its authority-defined identity on the various ethnic groups, it is more useful analytically to put forward the notion of the "nation-of-intent" rather than the state's definition of the nation. The last chapter on Malaysia, the one by Ong Puay Liu, examines ethnic salience and perceptions as well as the "special rights" discourse in the country, drawing attention to the possibility for "a more inclusive, equal and just representation in policies and decision making".

Writing on Sri Lanka, Michael Roberts in Chapter 3 takes note of the presence of the Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, and the Burghers (Euro-Ceylonese) in the country, and then goes on to discuss the relevance of the pragmatic principle of "firstness" as a basis for legitimate claims. The second chapter (Chapter 6) by Yuvi Thangarajah and S.T. Hettige discusses the conflict between the Sri Lankan state and the nation, and focuses on state policies as "active technologies of power" including defining the nation by exclusion. The final Sri Lankan chapter (Chapter 10) is by K.T. Silva which examines the politicisation of ethnicity and the antagonistic nationalist reimaginings of the nation by the two major contending groups (the Sinhalese and the Tamils), and explores the transformation of ethnicity from a "primarily cultural logic" to become an increasingly "political logic".

The chapters on Fiji present a mixed and troubling picture for the small country that became independent in 1970 after 100 years of colonial rule. Brij Lal's chapter is sombre, likening the situation of Fiji to that "between the rock and the hard place", and that Fiji's "ill-fated past" and "fractured history" is made worse by the fact that the country "failed to come to terms with the rapidly changing realities of the post-colonial era." Alumita Duratalo in Chapter 7 takes the position that "people can only learn from history" and that history cannot be "re-lived"; the solution to Fiji's ethnic problems thus "lies within Fiji itself" by "harnessing the strengths of each ethnic group" which can serve as "the most powerful tool for socio-political and economic advancement" of the country. Finally, Tevita Baleiwaqa in Chapter 11 maintains that Fijians should negotiate their common future, and argues that Fijian institutions, especially the Great Council of Chiefs, have the authority to produce something real and practical, as opposed to political parties and NGOs.

Three Countries Compared

It can be said that Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Fiji have several things in common. They all had the British as their colonial master for a century or more. Thus, some of their institutions and cultural legacies are similar. They are also similar in many ways in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity. Malaysia, a country with a population of 26 million people, has 65% Malays and other Bumiputera, 25% Chinese, 7% Indian, and 3% other minority groups. Sri Lanka has a population of slightly more than 20 million, made up of Sinhalese (73.8%), Tamils (8.4%), Sri Lankan Moors (7.2%) and others (10.5%) while Fiji has almost a million population comprising ethnic Fijians (51%), Indians (44%), while Europeans, other Pacific islanders and Chinese make up the remaining 5%.

But there are several important differences. As shown by Horowitz, while for Malaysia and Fiji, migrant inflows – Chinese and Indians into Malaysia (then Malaya) and Indians into Fiji — were mainly a result of the British colonial policy of engaging foreign labour in their economic enterprises which were developed only in the last one century or so, in Sri Lanka, the Tamils had been part of the society living side by side with the Sinhalese for more than one thousand years and were already citizens at the time of independence after the Second World War.

Also, the fate of these countries differs. While on the eve of Malaysia's independence in 1957, many expected the country to be riddled with worse ethnic problems than Sri Lanka, what happened in the subsequent decades has proven otherwise. Malaysia not only has far better ethnic relations and success in nation-building but has also become an economic tiger after the East Asian tigers while Sri Lanka has to deal with an internal war for more than 20 years between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers who want a separate state. In that country, the conflict has serious costs and is badly affecting economic development, resulting in the gross domestic product (GDP) growing only at 3.5% per annum between 1991 and 2002. Poverty thus could not be effectively addressed and has been made worse by the 2004 tsunami disaster. As for Fiji, she too has been riddled with ethnic conflicts and has had four military coups (with the latest one taking place in December 2006). Despite the promulgation of three constitutions thus far, none has really been able to effectively mobilise her resources for development and bring about inter-ethnic peace and political stability.

So, what is the future for the three countries? Horowitz sums it this way: "It will be difficult for Fiji or Sri Lanka to get a fresh start. All of this means that most divided societies will not be able to find a magic formula that will transform their conflict into something resembling inter-ethnic harmony. The best most such countries can hope for is incremental change." For Malaysia, things are comparatively much better, but she too has her problems and challenges in managing diversity and nation-building.

Conclusion

This volume shows the different standpoints of the contributors regarding ethnic diversity and nation-building in the respective countries. Such diversity of views goes to demonstrate the complexity of the problem as well as the debates on it. However, one thing is common. The contributors all recognise that ethnic diversity and nation-building has to be managed with care and sensitivity, and that appropriate institutions, approaches, policies and programmes need to be put in place to ensure that a workable and more durable relationship between the ethnic groups can be realised. One thing that seems to be common throughout the countries surveyed is that ethnicity and ethnic consciousness are not a given factor that cannot

be changed. What this book has shown is that the politicisation of ethnicity has turned different ethnic groups against each other and undermined the nation. In our view, the solution lies in de-politicising ethnicity and emphasising approaches and policies that regard people as people rather than by looking at them based on their origin and creed, though, of course, due regard must be given to their specific histories. To de-politicise ethnicity and facilitate nation-building, it is important that the interests of the various ethnic groups be placed within the framework of the nation as a whole and viewed from a national perspective.

PART I

APPROACHES

Chapter 1

Approaches to Inter-Ethnic Accommodation: A Comparative Perspective

Donald L. Horowitz

My theme concerns institutions and methods for achieving inter-ethnic accommodation. This is a term I prefer to nation building, because nation building always seems to me a very ambitious project, and it is possible to fall short very easily, whereas inter-ethnic accommodation seems to me a more modest goal and therefore a bit more readily achievable.

I would like to make two overall points at the outset. In the first place, the choice of institution and methods for achieving inter-ethnic accommodation is important. But, secondly, so is timing. Timing is a terrifically important factor when explaining one outcome as against others. I hope to make that point more graphically later. Sequencing is generally an underrated factor in social life.

I am going to deal with two main approaches to inter-ethnic accommodation in severely divided societies, but a disclaimer is in order at the outset. Modesty requires me to state that certainty in this field is really elusive. In social science, there are many approaches but few arrivals.

Small Countries and Large

I am not going to deal much with the deep sources of conflict in divided societies. I have written a lot about that, and you can find that elsewhere. But I want to say one thing about the relationship between conflict and state size.

Why is it that many small countries have some of the most severe ethnic conflict? You can count them on the fingers of your hands: Guiana, Trinidad, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Macedonia, Cyprus, and a number of African states. Those states all have a disproportionate share of inter-ethnic conflict. And I think the reason actually is staring us in the face. In such countries, the confrontation between two or among three groups is often direct and stark. So if you have two groups, one of which has 49 percent of the population and the other has 51 percent of the population, the 49s fear that the 51s will seize all power and dominate them. There are a great many laboratory studies showing how easy it is to produce such bipolar opposition even among subjects randomly gathered together in a laboratory experiment. And tripolar, that is three way conflicts, can and have rather easily turned bipolar. It is bipolarity that is one of the major sources of difficulty. Bipolarity is much easier to achieve in a small country. Large countries tend to have a different set of problems. They tend to fall apart along the lines of center-periphery tensions, so that around the periphery you tend to get separatism, because of alienation from the center.

The point I was making about large countries as against small countries is just probabilistic, not absolute. But if I am right about this, that stark bipolar opposition is more likely to be present in a small country than in a large country, that is one reason why secession and partition are so rarely good solutions to the problems of ethnic conflict. If you partition a state which is very deeply divided, partition does not usually eliminate ethnic cleavage in any of the successor states, but rather, on the contrary, tends to make confrontations more stark.

Now, to illustrate this more graphically, just take a look and think about Yugoslavia before the wars of secession and irredentism that plagued Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Yugoslavia had six or seven main groups, no one of which could really dominate the others. But after the secessions occurred, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro all had direct confrontations of just two or three groups. And they were more stark: there was much more zero-sum confrontation than would have been possible had Yugoslavia stayed together. So this is one of many reasons that partitionist solutions are illusory. They seem attractive at the outset, but actually they can produce much worse situations than the day before.

What this means is that a lot of people are stuck together in the same state and should be stuck together in the same state and should not think the answers to their problems lie in departing from the state. Rather, the objective has got to be to find ways of achieving accommodation within the confines of the undivided state.

Conflict and Conciliation

There are, of course, plenty of places where two or more proto-societies are stuck in a single territory, struggling to capture it and making mutually exclusive claims and demands. If they are going to live together, which they

must since there are not any good alternatives, they will need to find ways to compromise the uncompromiseable and to be satisfied with much less than they would like to obtain. If this suggests that such societies even at peace are not truly happy places, I think this is often the case.

Over the long haul, such societies can become happier, indeed much happier, and here I would like to draw attention to, among other countries, Taiwan. There, mainlanders and Taiwanese, who killed each other in very large numbers in 1947, and whose conflict had within it an issue of the legitimacy of the island state, resembling the issue of Northern Ireland, have nevertheless managed to achieve a good deal of inter-ethnic accommodation.

Severely divided societies, if they stay peaceful, spend a great deal of time reconciling the irreconcilable: producing incoherent compromises between claims to exclude and claims to be included, splitting symbols, and recasting a zero-sum game into something else—or trying to do so.

The reason that this is such a challenging exercise is that in severely divided societies, birth-based cleavages are deeply felt. They are sharpened by antipathy and invidious stereotypes, and they are exhaustive—that is to say, unrelieved because of the absence of large numbers of uncommitted, floating people between the two groups. You are either an A, or you are a B. There are some people who are neither, but for the most part in such societies people are categorized as being in one or the other group. Of course, the struggles in such societies tend to involve the fundamental issue of who properly constitutes the community and sometimes also what state properly encapsulates it.

Since kinship is an ancient basis of community, in contrast to territorial proximity, it has a powerful hold. In many societies, communities end at group boundaries. The ineffable conclusion is that *we* would prefer that *they* not make claims that can only be made by those who have a proper bond of community to *us*. Indeed, *we* would prefer that *they* not be present in the environment at all—the more so as *our* antipathy often makes *us* recoil at *their* company. In the most seriously divided societies, violence often takes a homogenising, expulsionist, and occasionally even genocidal form.

The whole matter is made much worse by the configuration of politics in such societies. All of them are aware of the incompatibility of their exclusivist homogenising impulses with quite the different, egalitarian, universalistic standards that have roots in several religious traditions and have gained a strong foothold in the modern world. This is one source, but only one source, of the distinction between those political leaders who are inclined to do the hard, practical work of negotiating, compromising, and accommodating group claims, and those who are inclined to make their political life difficult by reminding them of their group membership, their obligations to the community narrowly defined, the nature and intensity of

group grievances and aspirations and the political consequences of neglecting them.

Hence, this is the intractable core of divided societies and the more elastic political form their everyday struggles take. Left to their own devices, groups in such societies will tend to form ethnically based political parties, which will seek to capture the whole state by gaining a parliamentary majority and permanently entrenching themselves. The absence of floating voters, whose fluctuating preferences determine electoral outcome at other systems, implies that the capture of the whole state by a part of the society might be permanent.

Two Approaches

Efforts to ameliorate conflicts in such a state revolve around ways to prevent such zero-sum outcomes. There are really two general approaches to this problem of inter-group conciliation that run along democratic lines. One approach is for those ethnically-based political parties most willing to compromise to join together and by joining, to fend off the uncompromising extremes. The other approach is to include the extremes in a dispensation that aims to sap the conflict of its vitality by providing an opportunity for those who have been opposed to the prevailing system of ethnic politics to participate in transforming it.

The first approach attempts to marginalise the extremes by displaying to the public the benefits of compromise. The second aims to co-opt the extremes and include them as participants in, and beneficiaries of, compromise. The inclusive second approach—that is the one that takes the extremes in—is more ambitious than the first because it is premised on the desire to put the conflict to rest, if not to end it all together. For this, the participation of those who pursue the conflict most vigorously, and often by force of arms, is judged to be necessary. By contrast, the approach of the compromising middle usually assumes that progress on the conflict will be incremental and that the continuing appeal and opposition of the extremes will be a constraint on the ability of each side in the middle to compromise. This approach aims at multiethnic government without sacrificing the principle of majority rule. The point is that it will not be ethnically based majority rule, but that it will be majority rule.

The more inclusive approach aims at a multiethnic regime by dispensing with the idea of government on one side and opposition on the other. I shall say more about both of these soon. You can recognise countries that have followed one or the other. The inclusive approach was most prominently adopted by Northern Ireland at the time of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The very objective was to bring everybody in, including those who were attached to people involved in violence; Sinn Féin on one side, with its

connections to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and, on the other side, the loyalist parties with their attachments to the loyalist para-military groups.

These two approaches are not just different but are actually at odds with each other. The incentives approach tries to foster the creation of a moderate middle, and it relies on pre-election coalition building. The other approach, the consociational approach, tries to foster proportionate inclusion and inter-group equality, and it relies on post-electoral coalitions. The incentives approach is majoritarian, but it seeks an inter-ethnic majority, whereas the consociational approach is anti-majoritarian.

The institutions that are prescribed by these two approaches are therefore different, and it is hard to mix them together. But, again, think about the problem this way: suppose a society is divided between the As and the Bs. The As are 60 percent and the Bs are 40 percent, but each group has two political parties competing for its support: the A party and the A_1 party on the one side, the B party and the B_1 party on the other side. Since members of the A group will not vote for the B party, and the Bs will not vote for the A party, there is what you might want to call a segmented electoral market. Here, there is intra-ethnic competition for the support of the As and intra-ethnic competition for the electoral support of the Bs. This intra-ethnic competition between the A party and the A_1 party on the one hand, and the B party and the B_1 party on the other hand, can be quite intense. There is therefore, paradoxically, a certain tranquility in the relations between the A and B parties. Insofar as they do not and cannot compete for the same pool of voters, they are fishing in different pools, as it were.

The Incentives View

Now suppose we build on this competitive configuration. Ordinarily, it would be dangerous for the A party to take a conciliatory position towards the claims of the Bs, even if the A party leadership sensed the dangers of unremitting inter-group hostility for everyone. The reason is straightforward. Given group sentiment, the A party risks a loss. The A_1 party will gain support from the A party by pointing out that the A party is soft in the pursuit of the interests of the As, and the same also goes for the B parties. They have a competition about who can be more diligent in pursuing the interest of their respective groups. But what if the conciliatory A party could offset the losses among the As that result from conciliation by gaining the support of the moderate Bs obtained by the intermediation of the B party? You might say at first that this would be a losing trade, but consider that an A-B coalition, if it could be formed, would have an enormous advantage over A_1 and B_1 competitors, because while the conciliators can agree in the middle, albeit with difficulty, their opponents, who are consigned to the sell-out argument, cannot agree because their positions are the precise negation of each other.

And so, in such circumstances, if you can get such an agreement going, you would anticipate the spectrum divided into three parts; the conciliators in the middle and their opponents on each side always reminding them of the electoral price of compromise but unable to dislodge them if they are alert to the dangers on their flanks.

Such arrangements might survive even without deliberate institutional support, that is to say without any institutions designed to foster that kind of compromise. But they would be much more likely to prove durable in an institutional environment that offers rewards for moderation. Among the relevant institutions, the electoral system is the most powerful, and so, for example, in Lebanon, the peace was kept most improbably for more than three decades by an electoral system involving the following elements: multi-member constituencies, ethnically reserved seats, but common roll voting. So, in a five-member constituency, there might be five seats reserved: one for a Maronite Christian, one for a Sunni Muslim, one for a Shia Muslim, one for a Druze, one Greek Orthodox, and so on. Candidates of those ethnic identities identity stand for election, and they quickly realise that all voters get to vote for each of those seats, so they cannot win on the votes of their own group alone. If you are a Maronite candidate, you say, "Well, I have a lot of support from the Maronites," but you look around and you see the Maronites are only one-fifth of the voters in that constituency. "I had better have some support from the Sunni, and from the Shia, and from the Druze and the Greek Orthodox as well." Likewise, the other candidates look around and they say, "I can't win on my own group's votes alone. I had better get some support from outside my group." So quite spontaneously, in response to this situation, a mixed ticket grows up. That is to say, no candidates simply ran on their own; all ran in conjunction with candidates of the other groups. In that system, moderation resulted from the election of candidates on the basis of votes of groups other than their own. If they wished to be reelected, they had to take account of the interest of those other groups. The nice thing about politicians is that they like to be re-elected.

Analytically, you could say that this system flourished because it did two things: it fostered inter-group cooperation which was not otherwise present in Lebanon, and it also fostered intra-group division. Lebanon was amply endowed with intra-group divisions, but it was not very well endowed with inter-group cooperation until the implications of this system became clear to politicians of all groups.

Now there are other systems that can do the same thing. The alternative vote, a preferential system requiring 50 percent plus 1 to win a seat, is a majoritarian system that can also be conducive to conciliation. Voters list their preferred candidates in order of preference, and in three- or four-way

contests victory is determined by the ability of candidates to attract second and third preferences, and across the country by the ability of the A and B parties to exchange second preferences in constituencies that they cannot win alone.

The exchange cannot be consummated without compromise on contentious group issues and so there are rewards for moderation. Consider the two groups: the As and the Bs. The As are represented by two parties, the A and the A_1 party, and the Bs are represented by one party. The As are an 80-percent majority and the Bs are a 20-percent minority. It turns out that the A party is a more moderate party on issues that concern the Bs. The A and B parties have made a deal to exchange preferences. The way in which the system works is that the party with the fewest first preferences get dropped out, and then there is essentially a run-off, between the two top parties, the A and the A_1 party. If the A party has made a deal with the B party to exchange preferences all around the country, most of the Bs' preferences go with the As, and therefore the A candidate is able to win with more than 50 percent of the vote. As in Lebanon, the basic mechanism is that politicians get together to pool votes across group lines. Hence it is a pre-electoral coalition, not a post-electoral one.

Now, a third example would be a system that was just adopted in Indonesia recently. I shall approach it by means of a specific case where this device was adopted earlier.

In Nigeria in 1978, when the Nigerians, after a dozen years of military rule, first went back to civilian rule, they had a constitutional convention. I was there at the time. It was a very impressive meeting, and there was a consensus that they wanted to abandon the parliamentary system. They thought that the parliamentary system allowed any ethnic group that was able to get 51 percent of the seats to dominate. They began to think about the attractiveness of the separation-of-powers system with an American-style president, so as to counterbalance what might happen in case one group managed to get 50 percent of the parliamentary seats. And then they said, "How should we elect this president?" Finally, after much deliberation, they decided to elect the president on the following formula. That person would be elected president who received the largest number of votes in the country (plurality, not majority), plus no fewer than 25 percent of the voters in at least two thirds of the 19 states in Negeria of that time. The notion was to prevent any of the three main groups that comprised more than 60 percent of the population from being able to elect the president by themselves. In fact, no two of those groups could, under this formula, elect a president.

The idea was to bring all the minorities in, and indeed the first candidate who was elected president was Shehu Shagari, who figured out what this system demanded. He went all over the country, made deals with politicians representing minority groups all around the country, and indeed he did get enough support to win the election. This is what I would call plurality plus distribution, where territory is a proxy for ethnicity. You put a distribution requirement in and without mentioning the words ethnicity or anybody in any group, you have induced the politicians to go around to seek the support of members of groups other than their own.

The Indonesian system was actually borrowed from the Nigerian system. For the first time, Indonesia had a directly elected president in 2004. The formula is as follows: to be elected president of Indonesia, you have to have a majority of 50 percent plus 1, plus distribution: 20 percent of the vote in half of the provinces. Then you say, "Wait a minute, Indonesia has a fragmented party system. How will anyone get a majority?" But coalitions manage to put up tickets because the vice president and president may come from different parties. Yet there may still be more than two tickets competing, in which case nobody will get a majority.

The Indonesians may have set the threshold too high, but they do have a fall-back provision: a run-off. Unfortunately, the fall-back does not have any distribution feature. But the system is the Nigerian one: majority or plurality plus distribution, where territory is a proxy for ethnicity.

The examples I have provided might very well be labelled illustrations of the incentives view of inter-group conciliation. This is not a formula; it is a mechanism. It contains no guarantees, and sometimes it will not work. But, of course, if there were a formula that would work every time, we would not need to worry about these problems. Although there is no certainty in any of this, at least it is a very good attempt. Today, there is a creeping appreciation for the incentives approach. It has been recommended as a way of transforming the hard structure of Bosnian politics, and it also had some success in creating a multi-ethnic government in Fiji until that government was overthrown by force in 2000.

Controlled Comparisons

Do incentives work for moderation? Yes, and in fact I want to come as close as we can come in social science to proving this by providing two pretty well controlled comparisons.

The first is between Malaysia and Sri Lanka. The second is between Malaysia and Fiji. I shall try to demonstrate what part incentives played and what part institutions played in producing outcomes.

A long time ago I published an article in the *Third World Quarterly* comparing Malaysia and Sri Lanka on the dimensions of inter-ethnic conflict (Horowitz 1989: 18-35). The question was framed as follows: if you look at Malaysia and Sri Lanka on the eve of independence, which country would at Malaysia and Sri Lanka on the eve of independence, which country would

be likely to have the worse ethnic conflict? Five factors might have shaped your judgment.

In the first place, the Sri Lankan Tamils were a small minority. One would have thought that their aspirations could be accomodated rather easily. On the other hand, the minority population in Malaysia was close to half of the population and I think it is fair to say that in those days the Malays felt much less secure in the economy than the Sinhalese did on the eve of their independence.

Second, the Sri Lankan Tamils arrived about a thousand years ago in Sri Lanka. They were all citizens by the time of independence. They were all legitimate participants in the political system, whereas the Chinese and Indians were not quite fully legitimate participants in the political system in Malaya on the eve of independence. There was even some talk of returning the Chinese to China around 1956. There was also a very big contrast based on indigenousness versus immigrant status. Again, on this score, Malaysia would have seemed the more problematic case.

Third, recent history. During World War II, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) was a largely Chinese force and after the war there was a tremendous amount of fighting up and down the Peninsula in 1945-46. Even after the fighting subsided, and the British returned, there was of course the Emergency (1948-60), in which largely Chinese guerrillas confronted largely Malay troops. It could be said that the Emergency was beginning to undermine the political position of the Chinese in Malaya. The same period of pre-independence Sri Lanka was entirely peaceful. There were Sinhalese and Tamils in the Ceylon Defense Force during World War II, and in the Ceylon Army afterwards. Tamils were represented in the cabinet at independence, so here too, the recent history would have led you to say that Malaysia was more problematic than Sri Lanka.

Fourth, consider leadership. Malay and Chinese elites were educated separately. They had a thin basis of mutual understanding, whereas the Sri Lankan elite had all been educated together, and knew each other well. They shared a number of common values. Once again, Malaysia looks like the more problematic story.

Finally, the fifth factor was that some Malaysian elites put a premium on personal relations. They would not deal with just anybody on the other side of the ethnic boundary. There were some other important criteria to be met before there could be serious negotiation. I went from a year in Malaysia to a couple of months of research in Sri Lanka in the late 1960s, and I was astounded by the political discourse among politicians in Sri Lanka, after having spent a year in Malaysia. The phrase I kept hearing again and again

as politicians recounted their dealings with members of the other group was: "I said to him, 'What are your terms?'" The language was the language of bargaining, the language of the marketplace. Politicians would deal with anybody. A Sinhalese politician would deal with any Tamil politician, and vice versa. There was a long history of dealing with each other.

So, on every count, I think you would have predicted that an independent Sri Lanka had easier problems and the better conditions, and Malaysia had the harder problems and the worse conditions. How wrong such a forecast would have turned out to be. It would have been right at the time but wrong in fact, because there were other things that the forecast did not take into account. What then accounted the differences?

The first place to look is the party system. The major parties in Sri Lanka were all ethnically based. On the Sinhalese side, two main parties usually competed for the Sinhalese vote, and the competition usually revolved around ethnic issues. Rebuffed at the polls, Sinhalese opposition parties responded with increased ethnic exclusivity, and every time the Sri Lankan government tried to make concessions to the Tamils (I have some specific points in mind in 1957, 1968, 1980), Sinhalese opposition parties roused Sinhalese opinion against them as a sell-out. The governing Sinhalese party had no alternative but to concede to the extremes, or at least not to pursue conciliatory policies.

These ethnically-based party institutions were a prescription for the exclusion of Tamils, and that is exactly what they led to: a secessionist movement by some of the world's most reluctant secessionists, who on many occasions would have easily settled for much less than might be needed to bring an end to the insurgency today.

How then has Malaysia been different? Only a few differences stand out, but they are very, very important. Like Sri Lanka, Malaysia had (and has) plurality elections. So, this was not different. Malaysia also had (and has) party competition revolving around mutually exclusive ethnic claims and demands. But, unlike Sri Lanka, inter-ethnic cooperation also had a claim on party attention in Malaysia, and moderation, as well as extremism, had claims on politicians' attention.

Why this different balance of incentives? And notice here I want to use the word incentives, because I think that is exactly what was going on in Malaysia.

For Malaysia, incentives is a positive word, because it means that the politicians do not act merely on the basis of raw inter-ethnic sentiments—of hostility or resentment—but on the basis of political advantage. Fortunately, for divided societies, these are not the same thing. Ethnic politics is not a perfect reflection of group sentiment, and this is a very good thing.

The first major difference between the two countries is timing. Malaysia began working on accommodation early in relation to independence. Malaysians had a bitter taste of the violence during and after the war, but even so their work on institutions of accommodation was not entirely deliberate. The politicians fell into these arrangements in the early 1950s, but it was fortunate that they fell into them, and then built on them. By contrast, Sri Lankans changed some institutions only in 1978 to make conflict reduction a little more feasible, but it was very late in the day. Here, I want to underscore the question of the sequencing, as early is much, much better.

The second difference relates to the composition of parliamentary constituencies, which were far more heterogeneous in Malaysia than they were in Sri Lanka. They were not heterogeneous in the 1955 election, but by the 1959 election, they were very heterogeneous. If you look at the Sri Lankan numbers, in fewer than 10 percent of Sri Lankan constituencies were the Sri Lankan Tamils anywhere between 10 and 50 percent of the electorate. In other words, either the Sri Lankan Tamil minority was a very tiny minority in the south or it was an overwhelming majority in the north. For the rest, there were very few constituencies that were truly ethnically mixed. This was not the Malaysian story, although from the 1960s onwards constituency delimitations reduced the number of heterogeneous constituencies. Not only were the Sri Lankan Tamils less numerous than the Malaysian Chinese and Indians, but they were far more regionally concentrated.

So, if two Sinhalese parties competed for votes, the Tamils who could make a difference in the outcome were so few that they exercised no restraint at all on the behavior of politicians. In Malaysia, by contrast, Malay and Chinese politicians could exchange votes profitably and behave moderately in order to make that exchange work. Early on, this prospect mainly benefited Chinese politicians who were getting elected on Malay votes. Recently we have seen that it cuts both ways. And so, while many things have changed in Malaysia, there are still a few important traces of the earlier accommodative arrangements. Those traces are easily overlooked today.

The third contrast relates to the arrangements that followed from the first two contrasts: the permanent multi-ethnic coalition established in Malaysia before independence occupied the center of the ethnic spectrum and was impelled by the logic of its position to behave moderately, at least most of the time. When I say the logic of its position, I mean electoral logic, because the very formation of the Alliance was a function of that logic in the Kuala Lumpur Town Council election of 1952. In that election, neither Malay votes nor Chinese votes alone were sufficient to guarantee victory when the

opponent was from Dato' Onn's multi-ethnic Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). Had it not been for that history and the consequent creation of the coalition, Malaysian politics, in my view, would have resembled Sri Lankan politics, with a wholly ethnic-based party system, lots of centrifugal competition, little centripetal competition, and very likely some disastrous results.

Instead, Malay and Chinese ethnic parties lined up on the flanks, and they ended up locking the Alliance in the middle position. For the coalition partners in the Alliance (UMNO, MCA, and MIC), all alternatives looked worse. They did not always like their partnership, but kept it all the same to avoid the alternatives. So the exchange of votes, together with the resulting experience of bargaining, provided the basis for compromise. Of course, this was an unsatisfactory compromise for both the Malay and non-Malay sides, but given divergent interests and perspectives, what else could it have been? The middle is never happy with the outcomes because they are compromises. It is much more satisfying to have your own way than to compromise. The point I want to make is that this produced peace, when peace could not otherwise be guaranteed.

Now, another quick comparison: between Malaysia and Fiji. Fiji had many features in common with Malaysia at independence. It had a great divide between those who saw themselves, as indigenous and those people who saw themselves, and were seen by others, as immigrant. It had some of the same ideological baggage if you like. There was a son-of-the-soil ideology in Fiji. And there were, on the other side, people demanding instant and complete equality. These two sides—Fijians and Indians—were almost equal in numbers. There was also the British colonial inheritance, with parliamentary institutions and first-past-the-post elections. There too was an Alliance Party modelled explicitly on the Malaysian Alliance Party. It was a multi-ethnic coalition, flanked by Fijian parties on one side and Indian parties on the other. Alas, Fiji lacked a feature that Malaysia had that turned out to be crucial: heterogeneous constituencies. Instead Fiji had ethnically reserved seats mostly elected on communal rolls. There were some cross-voting seats from time to time, but for the most part a Fijian running in a Fijian seat would be elected by a wholly Fijian electorate, and an Indian running in an Indian seat would be elected by a wholly Indian electorate. So, there was no opportunity to pool votes across these lines because these were reserved seats on communal rolls.

If ever there was a controlled comparison, this was it. The Malaysia-Fiji comparison is actually a beautiful one. There is only one thing that is different, and it happens to be the thing we are interested in, namely the composition of the constituencies. Whereas the parties in the interethnic coalition in Malaysia could pool votes across group lines because of

heterogeneous constituencies, the Fijian Alliance partners could not do so, and thus there was no electoral reason for moderate political behavior. There was nothing to counter ethnic claims.

For this reason, over time, Indo-Fijian support for the Alliance Party eroded, and it essentially became a Fijian party in a system comprising other Fijian and Indian parties. The results were unhappy. By contrast, moderation and compromise continued to pay some rewards in Malaysia. So the message here is that electoral incentives matter.

The Consociational Approach

The main alternative to the incentives approach goes by the name of consociational democracy. It is preeminently a system of guarantees. The consociational prescription involves the proportional representation of ethnically-based parties in the legislature. In order to achieve this, list-system proportional representation is the recommended electoral system. Consociational lists also require proportional representation in the cabinet of those parties who are represented in the legislature. This produces a grand coalition. In addition, there is to be proportional allocation of government positions and financial allocations to the various groups. A very important element in the consociational prescription is mutual group vetoes on all important ethnic issues, so the minority veto is written into the consociational arrangements. Finally, there is group cultural autonomy on education, religion, language, and other such matters.

You can readily see that this is a formula easily remembered and, therefore, easily invoked. There are many reasons why consociational schemes, however, are not adopted wholesale even if particular features are adopted from time to time. Permit me to provide a quick critique of consociational theory.

In the first place, I would say that consociational theory is motivationally challenged. If the motivation for politicians and political leaders to adopt consociational schemes is statesmanship—that is, "I want to compromise and make this arrangement because otherwise I fear my country will dissolve in flames"—if that is the motivation, it assumes that leaders are actually less ethnocentric than their followers are. I have actually been through the research on this question, and the research does not show leaders in severely divided societies to be uniformly more moderate or less ethnocentric than their followers. In some countries, they are; in some countries they are not. In others, they are for some groups, but not for others. Some countries, demonstrate a direct correlation between education, which I take to be a proxy for elite status, and ethnic hostility. For example,the more education you have in Romania, the more likely you are to be hostile, if you are a Romanian, to the Hungarians and the Roma (Gypsies). So, the assumption that the elites are less ethnocentric is just that: it is an unproved assumption. If, on the other hand, the motivation for consociation is the desire to avoid

the danger of mutual destruction, many leaders are willing to risk mutual destruction, thinking it will not happen during their time in office. The time horizon of leaders is a very important thing. Then, again, the motive to opt for a consociational regime could be a desire to enter into a coalition. That is a plausible motive for a minority party, but it is not a plausible motive for a majority group because it can form the government without a coalition. In societies with no majority but several minorities it still does not suspend the desire to form a coalition with 51 percent of the seats rather than 100 percent that the grand coalition requires.

Some people are familiar with William Riker's Law of the Minimum Winning Coalition. Riker noticed that coalitions are formed around the 51 percent or the 60 percent level, not the 90 or 100 percent level. "Why is that?" he asked. It is a matter of distribution. If you form a coalition of 90 or 95 percent of the members of parliament, then you have a distributive problem. Whatever you have to distribute you have to distribute to all of your supporters, and each gets less. If, on the other hand, you form a 51-percent coalition, each gets twice as much. So, for distributive purposes, the minimum winning coalition is far more likely than the grand coalition that consociational theory postulates. Related to this is the challenge to majoritarian institutions when a grand coalition does manage to bring everybody into government. There are still rewards for parties to oppose what the government does, and the centripetal assumptions of consociational democracy do not necessarily pre-empt the rewards for centrifugal political behavior in divided societies. So, there will be opposition on the flanks, no matter what consociational theorists say about the formation of the grand coalition.

There is a big difference between pre-electoral and post-electoral coalitions. Consociational theory postulates that post-electoral coalitions produce compromising behavior. But, with list-system proportional representation, parties do not need to appeal to voters other than their own. On the other hand, pre-electoral coalitions require parties entering into them to take moderate positions on ethnic issues to assist their partners to get elected. Parties that get elected on the votes of their own group alone behave accordingly.

Finally, the question of guarantees. Where the incentives view makes no firm promises, but creates rewards for parties to compromise, the consociational view provides certain guarantees, such as the minority veto without providing politicians rewards for honoring those guarantees.

Mixed Constitutions

Neither the incentives based view nor the consociational view tend to be widely adopted in whole. Rather, what you get is a little consociation, a few

incentives, and a large dose of majoritarian institutions. After all, guarantees are more attractive to minorities than to majorities. Majoritarian institutions are more attractive to majorities than to minorities. And incentives are more attractive to outside experts than anybody else. So the best that you usually get is an incoherent package.

The Fiji constitution of 1997 provides an excellent example of the mixed character of the constitutions likely to emerge from the interplay of majorities, minorities, and outsiders. The Fiji Constitution Review Commission essentially adopted an incentives-based view of inter-ethnic conciliation, and it recommended an incentives-based electoral system which was changed during the political process of adoption. Nevertheless the electoral system was reasonably conciliatory, but to it a requirement was added that parties with 10 percent of the seats in parliament be included in the cabinet. This is a consociational feature, and there was some doubt about how it would fit with the incentive-based institutions Fiji was adopting because it would have permitted even an extremist party to join a government of the middle. And it would have created very uneasy relations in the cabinet. There were no group vetoes adopted in Fiji, no proportional allocations, no cultural autonomy, and the dependence of the government on a majority of the house was provided. So there was essentially a conciliatory electoral system, a consociational feature for entry into the cabinet, and for the rest a residual majoritarianism: all in all, a mixed set of institutions. Despite this, two inter-ethnic coalitions were formed to contest the 1999 elections, and one of them won and formed a multi-ethnic government that was dislodged by force a year later.

There are many obstacles to the adoption of wholly consociational or fully incentive-based schemes. First of all, constitution making these days often involves international participation. Outsiders who are facilitating the negotiation of the constitution are often more interested in getting to an agreement than they are in the context of that agreement or in the content of these institutions. They want to, as the negotiation people say, "get to yes," any yes, not necessarily an apt yes.

In the second place, the process of constitutional adoption is usually one of bargaining, negotiation and exchange. So, I give you a little of what you want, and you give me a little of what I want. The result of course is, recalling the asymmetrical preferences of majorities and minorities, a little of this and a little of that, and is not likely to be a truly coherent document. It may be a document where various provisions work against each other, precisely because this was a kind of constitution made by a process of compromise.

Third, there is what I call model bias. What I mean by model bias is the following. Do you look for institutions to adopt from the most successful countries, from countries of cultural, or regional, or colonial affinity, or from single conspicuous examples, at the expense of a run of examples? Constitution makers do not look everywhere they should, and do not avoid looking where they should not. They have biases: they want the best institutions, they want British institutions, or, in a divided society, they want Swiss institutions. That does not mean that British, or French, or Swiss or American institutions are apt to their predicament. That is what I mean by model bias.

And then there is historical bias. What experience have you been through in your country? How is it filtered and interpreted? What do you remember of the lessons of that experience? Certain historical moments assume mythical status and are thought relevant to today's design problem. In Indonesia, for example, in 1999, with the adoption of the political party law, the drafters recalled the 1955 elections, Indonesia's only democratic election, which produced a fragmented parliament. To avoid that, in 1999 the drafters made the requirements for political parties to register truly onerous, in order to reduce the number of parties. Of course, they forgot that in Indonesia, fragmentation is not their only problem. Bifurcation, or bipolar opposition, was a big problem in 1965, but since that was not the result of an election, the drafters were not thinking of that historical period. I want to cite this as a case of historical bias. The result of all of this is a very great mixture of institutions around the world, and very few consistent schemes.

Northern Ireland breaks some but not all of those rules. The Good Friday Agreement is a thoroughly consociational document. It contemplates a grand coalition and executive constituted by list-PR, government on the basis of inter-group consensus mutual vetoes, and a certain degree of group autonomy. It is really a consistent design. It needs to be explained how they managed to do this in Northern Ireland where almost nowhere else has there been a consistent design.

Begin with the asymmetry of preferences between majorities and minorities: majorities want majority rule; minorities want guarantees. You can start with that premise; it was long true in Northern Ireland. But in Northern Ireland, the demography has been changing, and so have the voting patterns. Those who led the Protestant majority began to look around and say "We think of ourselves as majority, but we are not really more than 50 percent of this society. Those voting for Unionist parties are really only about 50 percent." Whereas Catholics had earlier demanded guarantees and were demanding them again in Belfast in 1998, suddenly Protestant politicians also acknowledged that guarantees might be good for Protestants, too. And so you have a unique moment when demography has created two minorities which together equal 100 percent. You might

say this is an arithmetic oxymoron, but nevertheless it is the case that both sides saw themselves as minorities, and therefore a consociational scheme was attractive to both. In any case, what I want to make clear is that this is not replicable because in most places there are certainly not two minorities and no majority.

There was also a great irony in Northern Ireland. There has been a considerable softening of attitude in Northern Ireland since 1974. We have a lot of survey data on inter-ethnic attitudes in Northern Ireland. When people of Northern Ireland are asked, "What do you think of the people on the other side?" they respond, "Oh they're people just like us." Question: "Would you like to get to know them better or not?" Answer: "Yes we'd like to get to know them better." Another question: "Are you a committed Unionist or a committed Nationalist?" Now, Unionist and Nationalist are the code words for strong ethnic sentiments on the part, respectively, of Protestants and Catholics. Only small minorities say that they are committed Unionists or committed Nationalists.

These are not the responses that you would get in Sri Lanka and Lebanon or in many other countries. Ironically, just as conditions were more propitious for a government of the moderate middle, the idea was regarded by the people who made the Belfast Agreement as a non-starter. The participants embraced the extremes in a consociational dispensation at the very time the public was repelled by the violence of the extremes.

There are then good reasons why most divided societies make only slow progress on their divisions, and why they proceed incrementally on matters of ethnic policy. Northern Ireland defied these reasons and struck out boldly for a new dawn even as others chart their course by stars they cannot see. With luck, with statesmanship, and with a steady decline of ethnocentrism among the rank-and-file, such a gamble might succeed in Northern Ireland—it might just. But most countries governed consociationally are able to proceed on this basis only because their segmental antipathies have already lost their salience—in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and so on. Most countries will not be able to adopt a coherent program of conciliatory institutions, whether of the consociational or incentives sort.

It is hard to design coherent packages of institutions and even harder to get a coherent design adopted. It is especially hard to do this after periods of severe conflict without a high likelihood of retrogression. It will be very difficult for Fiji or Sri Lanka to get a fresh start. All of this means that most divided societies will not be able to find a magic formula that will transform their conflict into something resembling inter-ethnic harmony. The best most such countries can hope for is incremental change.

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PART II

ENVISIONING
THE NATION
AT THE TIME OF
INDEPENDENCE

Chapter 2

Malaysia: Envisioning the Nation at the Time of Independence

Cheah Boon Kheng

Introduction

Multi-racial Malaysia's nation-building underwent a two-tiered process: first, in 1957, and, again, in 1963. When Malaysia was formed in 1963 as a federation comprising the states of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (later renamed Sabah), the peninsular state of Malaya was already an independent, sovereign and federal state since 1957. Known as the Federation of Malaya, the latter comprised 11 states, nine of which were kingdoms with Malay rulers and the remaining two, Malacca and Penang, were former British settlements, which had previously belonged to two Malay kingdoms. Like Malacca and Penang, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo were British colonies, which had also formerly belonged to Malay kingdoms. They became independent by joining with Malaya in the new, enlarged federation of Malaysia. Malaya inevitably became the dominant state within the new federation. But federal-state relations between Malaya and the three new states were shaky. In 1965, Singapore left the federation and became an independent, sovereign state.

In Malaya, the nation-building process had started before 1957, especially during the last 12 years of British rule. It is necessary to trace this historical development briefly to determine the roles of the British rulers and those of the different ethnic communities in the shaping of the future 'nation' or 'nation-state' up to the eve of Malaya's independence.

Ethnicity has played an important role in the nation-building of Malaya and later Malaysia. In Malaya, where there existed three major communities– Malays, Chinese and Indians–the various communal leaders chose to establish the veneer of a Malay 'nation-state', while attempting to foster multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism. In the case of Malaysia, four states–Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo–came together, and Malaya's earlier nation-building measures were extended and adopted throughout.

Much of the ideas and efforts that went into the making of Malaya as a nation, before and after 1957, have great relevance to the subsequent nation-building of Malaysia in 1963. It is, therefore, necessary to look at these two different stages of nationhood.

Brief Historical Background

A modern state and a plural society had emerged in Malaya largely in the British interests of opening up the country for commerce and industry. With regard to the various ethnic communities in Malaya, Britain, however, always accorded first place to the Malays, as the treaties with the Malay Rulers served as the basis for establishing British influence. By 1909 the whole of the Malay peninsula had come under British influence. Britain had acquired the island of Penang in 1786 and the island of Singapore in 1819 from the Malay kingdoms of Kedah and Johor, respectively. The port-city of Malacca, which had first fallen to Portuguese conquest in 1511, was acquired by the British in 1824. All these three territories were grouped together and administered as the British Crown colony of the Straits Settlements in 1826.

British intervention in the peninsular Malay states began in 1874 when the Malay kingdom of Perak was annexed, followed by the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang. These four states were then federated together as the Federated Malay States, or FMS, in short. This territorial name is important as it reflects the Malays' identity and proprietorship. British influence was later extended to the southernmost Malay state of Johor and the four northern Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu. But these Malay states refused to join the Federated Malay States, and were collectively known until the outbreak of the war in 1941 as the Unfederated Malay States.

The British authorities had thereby imposed three types of administration in Malaya: the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Malacca and Penang, whose populations became predominantly non-Malay; the four Federated Malay States, which also gradually became predominantly non-Malay due to large-scale non-Malay immigration; and the Unfederated Malay States, which were mostly inhabited by Malays. The idea of grouping all these territories under one single administration was raised and discussed before the Second World War, but nothing materialised till the end of the war when the Malayan Union proposal was introduced.

For mainly economic reasons, British policy had allowed uncontrolled immigration of Chinese and Indian labour between 1880s and 1930s. By the 1921 and 1931 censuses, the non-Malay immigrants had outnumbered the indigenous Malays in Malaya. The influx was temporarily checked by the

economic depression of 1932-1933, which saw the repatriation of large numbers of immigrants. Despite this, however, the 1947 census continued to show the preponderence of the non-Malay population over the indigenous Malays. In 1945 at the end with the Second World War, the population of Malaya, which then included predominantly-Chinese Singapore, comprised some 5.7 million, of which 2.5 million were Muslim Malays and others deemed indigenous, and the other 3.2 million were non-Malays (del Tufo 1949: 40,84-85).

Besides ethnic diversity, economic and cultural diversity, and diversity in the educational system, Malaya also manifested a diversity of nationalist movements. While most Chinese and Indian political organisations generally tended to look outwards towards politics in their homeland, only a minority of the local-born migrants had a Malaya-centric focus. The early Malay political and reformist movements themselves came under foreign political influences, frequently looking outwards towards the Middle East or to Indonesia for Islamic and nationalist inspiration and direction. A nascent Malay nationalist movement began first in the late 1930s in each of the nine Malay states, in the form of state associations, focused at uniting each state's Malay community as the basis of a Malay nation. It only gradually worked towards a larger Malaya-wide Malay unity or Malay nation, called Greater Malaysia. But a national peninsula wide Malay organisation was not successfully formed until after the war. This was the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which emerged in 1946. A young radical Malay nationalist movement, whose 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983: 15) was a Greater Indonesia encompassing all the Malay communities in the Malay or Indonesian archipelago tried to establish a union of Malaya and the former Dutch East Indies colonies, with Japanese support during the Second World War, but the plan failed.

Ethnic Contest for Malaya: 1945-1948

The existence of three major communities in Malaya with conflicting interests and different viewpoints prevented the emergence of a united nationalist movement up to 1942. Clearly, no efforts had yet emerged among the various local ethnic leaders to attempt a dialogue or to transcend racial, political and economic differences. Each ethnic community tended to focus on its own interests and development.

Malay nationalism, however, had developed in strength during its formative years in the wake of the country's worst inter-racial conflicts between Malays and Chinese in 1945-46 during and after the period of the Japanese Occupation. In this first post-war contest for Malaya, Malays were the 'real victors'. They had successfully resisted and defeated a wartime armed, predominantly-Chinese communist movement which had

tried to seize power in many parts of the country when the Japanese Occupation ended. The second time, under the leadership of UMNO, they defeated the British Government's constitutional plan, the 'Malayan Union', which aimed to create a unitary state and make Malays and non-Malays share a common citizenship and equality of status.

Both the wartime and post-war inter-racial conflicts have left long-lasting repercussions on national politics today. The Malay-Chinese clashes demonstrated that Malays would resort to widespread extremist violence if pushed. The long-term implications of this extremism were very great: the overall Malayan polity might always be held subject to ultimate Malay recourse to mass bloodshed. If so, the Chinese would have to accept this threat perpetually and make concessions, or develop their own capability to blunt this threat. Otherwise, talk of pan-ethnic cooperation would usually be at Chinese expense. These conclusions are based on my study of the wartime and post-war period (Cheah Boon Kheng 1983).

In 1946 the post-war Labour Government in Britain inaugurated the Malayan Union plan by bringing together the nine Malay States and the settlements of Malacca and Penang, but excluded Singapore, which became a separate Crown Colony. The Malayan Union, which centralised all powers in the hands of a British Governor, terminated Malay sovereignty. The jurisdiction of the Malay Rulers was transferred to the British Crown. The British Parliament was empowered to legislate on behalf of the Malayan Union in all matters under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act. This arrangement amounted to an annexation of the Malay States, which before the Second World War had been governed as protectorates under treaties entered into separately between Britain and the Malay rulers.

Under the Malayan Union plan, Malays would automatically become Malayan Union citizens. Non-Malays were entitled to become citizens if they were British nationals who were born in Singapore, Penang or Malacca, or in the Malay States, or, who had resided for at least 15 years in Malaya before the war began in 1941. These measures were a radical departure from the pre-war British policies, which had regarded the Malay States as *Malay States,* especially as in the Federated Malay States, which were formed in 1896. This had also led to the British adopting the name of 'Malaya' which reflected the identity of the indigenous people of the country, as the word 'Malay' was incorporated in that country's name. Each of the Malay States had accepted either a British Adviser or Resident, whose advice had to be accepted on all matters except Islam and Malay customs. Foreign affairs and defence remained in British hands. In other words, Britain, by making these Malay States 'protectorates', had assumed responsibility for Malay welfare and Malay economic and political advancement.

The Malayan Union plan, however, was also intended to foster 'Malayan nationalism'. For the first time, Britain intended to foster a sense of national unity among the different races of Malaya – that they were 'Malayans'. Britain held out the possibility that a 'Malayan nationality' could later develop out of the 'Malayan Union citizenship'. The Malayan Union was a transitional phase to wean the non-Malays from their loyalties to their respective homelands and focus them towards the new centralised state, and to wean the Malays from their strong loyalties to their respective states and Sultans towards the Malayan Union. It was hoped that the Malays would agree to this, since predominantly-Chinese Singapore would be detached and administered separately as a British colony in order to inflate the size of the Malayan Union's Malay population. In short, the Malayan Union citizenship attempted to build a new loyalty and identity, and an emerging nation-state. One of its most liberal features was its offer of citizenship to non-Malays of *jus soli,* a right based on birth in the country.

The Malayan Union proposals, however, aroused strong Malay opposition, which received support in London from a large number of British Opposition Members of Parliament and former British proconsuls who had served in Malaya. The Malay campaign led to the birth of UMNO. On the other hand, non-Malay support for the Malayan Union was lukewarm. The first British Governor of the Malayan Union, Sir Edward Gent, whose inauguration ceremony was boycotted by all the Malay Rulers and UMNO representatives, advised the British Government in London to scrap the plan. This was eventually done. Gent initiated discussions with the Malay Rulers and UMNO representatives headed by their president, Dato' Onn Jaafar. It was agreed that Malay sovereignty would be restored to the Malay Rulers and that the Malays would be accorded a privileged special position.

The Federation of Malaya, 1948: The Basis of a 'Malay nation-state'
In reflecting on the social forces at work prior to Malaya's independence in 1957, it is undeniable that Malay nationalism emerged as a most powerful force in post-war Malaya, a force which not only the British Government but the other ethnic communities had to come to terms with. This was probably because unlike the other ethnic groups, the Malays had no other country to call their own other than Malaya. Due to its success in scuttling the Malayan Union plan, Malay nationalism succeeded in preventing Malaya from becoming a 'Malayan' rather than a 'Malay' nation-state.

The British Government restored Malay sovereignty and Malay proprietorship of the country, and thereby ensured that Malays would enjoy political primacy among the various races. The British Government, the Malay Rulers and representatives of UMNO also agreed that the Malayan Union would be replaced by a new political unit, the Federation of Malaya.

The new federation would similarly comprise the nine Malay states and the British settlements of Malacca and Penang, and again exclude Singapore. This Federation of Malaya Agreement was inaugurated on 1 February 1948.

In an explanatory text to the Agreement , the British Government acknowledged that "...these States are *Malay States* [my emphasis] ruled by Your Highnesses, [and] the subjects of Your Highnesses have no alternative allegiance, or other country which they can regard as their homeland, and they occupy a *special position* [my emphasis] which must be safeguarded (Federation of Malaya 1947:2). The Malay name for the Federation of Malaya in the Agreement was *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu.* The term, *Tanah Melayu,* literally 'Malay homeland' indicates Malay proprietorship of the Malay States.

Under the 1948 Agreement, the executive authority of each Malay State was to be exercised by the Ruler of that State. Article 88 stated: "All executive action of the Government of each Malay State shall be expressed to be taken in the name of His Highness the Ruler of that State." Assisting him would be a State Executive Council or, in Malay, *Majlis Mesyuarat Kerajaan* and a Council of State, *(Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri)* which would be presided by the *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) and be empowered to pass laws. Article 67 provided for the establishment of a Conference of Rulers *(Majlis Raja-Raja Negeri)* and the Rulers would express their assent to any Bill passed by the Federal Legislative Council through their representatives in a Standing Committee. Thus, each of the nine Malay States was structured as *Malay* 'nation-states', and the Federation of Malaya was also an embryonic 'Malay nation-state'.

Although the Federation government would come under the British High Commissioner, he would be assisted by an Executive Council, whose members would be styled Ministers. It would have a 96-member Legislative Council, of whom eleven would be State and Settlement Members, thirty-two would be appointed members and fifty-two elected members.[1] Elections to the Federal Legislative Council would not be held until 1955.

Under the 1948 Federation Agreement, a greater Malay representation occurred on the Council. Of the fourteen official members, nine were *Menteri Besar*, while of the sixty-one non-official members, thirty-one were Malays, fourteen Chinese, five Indians, seven Europeans, one Ceylonese, and one Eurasian. Clearly, the Federation of Malaya Agreement reflected a Malay dominance. The non-Malays were unable to halt or dismantle this political structure.

The British administrators together with representatives of the Malay Rulers and the UMNO nationalists worked out the legal framework for a modern administration, citizenship, the future basis for the construction of nationhood, and a brief, final and meaningful pattern of collaboration and partnership. This allowed the Malays to set the pace and agenda for the

creation of a new 'Malay' nation-state. In order to end colonial rule and achieve national independence for Malaya, the UMNO nationalists were compelled by the British officials to work out a formula of inter-racial cooperation, unity and harmony with the other ethnic groups in the country.

Independent Federation of Malaya, 1957: 'A Malay nation-state'

In 1956 the UMNO leaders negotiated a 'Social Contract' with the two major non-Malay political parties, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) on the basic principles for co-operation, partnership, and power-sharing in the administration of the future nation-state. The three parties achieved agreement on their own without the participation of the British. Their envisioning of the Federation of Malaya as a 'Malay nation' or 'Malay nation-state' is clearly reflected in the Draft Constitution of the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance, which was submitted to the Reid Constitutional Commission in 1956:

> While we accept that in independent Malaysia, [sic], all nationals should be accorded equal rights, privileges and opportunities and there must not be discrimination on grounds of race or creed, we recognize the fact that the Malays are *the original sons of the soil and that they have a special position arising from this fact, and also by virtue of the treaties made between the British Government and the various sovereign Malay States* (my emphasis). The Constitution should, therefore, provide that the Yang di-Pertuan Besar [sic] should have the special responsibility of safeguarding the *special position of the Malays* (my emphasis). In pursuance of this, the Constitution should give him powers to reserve for Malays a reasonable proportion of lands, posts in the public service, permits to engage in business or trade, where such permits are restricted and controlled by law, Government scholarships and such similar privileges accorded by the Government; but in pursuance of his further responsibility of safeguarding the legitimate interests of the other communities, the Constitution should also provide that any exercise of such powers should not in any way infringe the legitimate interests of the other communities or adversely affect or diminish the rights and opportunities at present enjoyed by them.[2]

A leading Malay jurist who subsequently became the head of Malaysia's judiciary, Tun Mohamed Suffian, commented in 1972 on the identical provisions which went into Malaya's and Malaysia's Constitutional agreements, "But each of these agreements in favour of Malays was balanced by liberal provisions in favour of non-Malays...The bargain that was arrived at as a result of the give and take and compromises of the representatives of the major communities during the talks leading to independence, was a solemn pact constituting the very foundation of the nation..."(Mohamad Suffian Hashim 1972:244).

In 1957, the Reid Constitutional Commission incorporated most of these objectives in its Draft Constitution. These were finally entrenched in the final Federation of Malaya Constitution and brought into effect on Independence Day – 31 August, 1957.

These documents proclaim the creation of a state called 'Federation of Malaya', in English, and *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*, in Malay, the latter literally meaning 'Federation of Malay homelands', along the same lines of the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement. The Malay title alludes to ownership of the country. Although UMNO had suggested the name of 'Malaysia' as the name of the state, the MCA had preferred the 'Federation of Malaya'. The Alliance Memorandum to the Reid Constitution stated: "The UMNO desires that the new State should be called MALAYSIA; the MCA would prefer the name MALAYA to be retained" (quoted in Stockwell 1995: 307). The latter title was, however, accepted by the Reid Constitutional Commission and adopted.

Other provisions in the Federal Constitution uphold the political dominance of the Malays and their rights, privileges and 'special position' [see Article 153. (1) of the 1957 Constitution]. Malay would become the 'national language' [Article 152.1] and Islam the official religion [Article 3.(1)]. Other provisions ensure that Malays would have 'reservation lands' [Articles 88 and 89] and quotas for public service jobs, licences, and scholarships [Article 153.(1)]. Once again in 1957, as in the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement, the sovereignty of the Malay Rulers and that of each of their respective states were reaffirmed. The Rulers would become constitutional monarchs and were further empowered to "safeguard the special position of the Malays" [Article 153.(1)] (see various articles in Sheridan 1961).

In describing the Federation of Malaya as a 'Malay nation-state', I have done so mainly on the basis of its main constitutional features. In securing exclusive rights and privileges, the sovereignty of the Malay Rulers, and political dominance, and a country named 'Malaya', the Malays had unmistakably established a *bangsa Melayu*, or Malay nation. Significantly, the Constitution went on to incorporate the definition of a Malay, but not that of the 'nation' or 'nation-state'. "A person shall be deemed to be a Malay, if (1) he practices the religion of Islam; (2) he habitually practices Malay Customs; (3) he habitually speaks the Malay language" (quoted in Stockwell 1995: 315). In spite of this, however, a *nationality* reflecting *Bangsa Melayu* or the Malay nation was not entrenched in the Constitution. Malaya's citizenship, however, was known only as Federal citizenship. Federal citizenship meant membership of a nation, like a membership of a club with rights and duties. Nationality, however, means a national identity, which is something more.

Since UMNO had objected to the use of the term 'Malayan' as the new nationality because it was associated with the detested Malayan Union, 'Malayan' became unacceptable as the national identity of Malaya's 'imagined multi-racial nation or community'. Although UMNO raised objections to the term 'Malayan', the terms 'Malayan race' and 'Malaysian' had been used in the pre-war State Enactments of Kelantan, Trengganu, Johor and the former *Federated Malay States*.[3] In addition, the leftwing PUTERA-AMCJA coalition of Malay and non-Malay parties had recommended in their proposed 'People's Constitution' in 1948 that a nationality called '*Melayu*' be adopted, but this proposal had been rejected by the British Government, the Malay Rulers and the UMNO representatives who instead preferred 'Federal citizenship' to be adopted in the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948. UMNO had by choice or default rejected *Bangsa Melayu* as a nationality for the Federation of Malaya. Having failed in its nomination of 'Malaysia' as the name of the state, UMNO had seemed unsure on what to call Malaya's "community of nation of various ethnic groups" and therefore had left it open and undefined.

The Problematic 'Nation' and 'Nationality'

It was, thus, left to the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and his government, and to the various ethnic communities in Malaya to build up a national feeling or national unity either from the centre, from top to bottom, or from the bottom up. The political elites and the citizens would have to develop an interactive relationship through the creation of such symbols as the national flag, the national anthem, the introduction of a national education system, or the homogenising tendency of a modern industrial society to overcome the ethnic divisions and particularistic identities which separate individuals and groups.

Gellner (1983) and Hugh Seton-Watson (1977) have demonstrated that states have emerged without the help of a nation, and nations have emerged without the blessing of their state. Anthony Smith (1989) has argued that while the state was necessary for the formation of national loyalties, its operations owed much to the presence of core ethnic communities around which these states were built up. Hill and Lian, however, contend that those states, which were a direct consequence of colonial rule, were imposed on peoples whose leaders, at the time of independence, were left solely with the infrastructure of a state. "Rarely was this accompanied by a common identity which could be utilized in the process of nation building, as Singapore amply demonstrates," they asserted. "Counter to Anthony Smith's argument that the state is built around an ethnic community, rather the development of nationhood had to contend with the presence of ethnic communities" (Hill & Lian 1995: 17).

At the time of Malaya's independence, a *bangsa Melayu* or Malay nation

existed, but a united, multi-racial *bangsa* did not, but was waiting to be created through the basis of citizenship. However, it may be pertinent to note that several writers on nationalism and nation building have emphasised that even such processes are, usually, fundamentally unfinished, disjointed and synthetic processes, "engineered by intellectual minorities, though aimed at the whole social group" (Hill & Lian 1995: 15).

Nonetheless, the constitutional contract for Malaya reflected the triumph of UMNO's major demands. To the MCA and to the MIC, it had made concessions on citizenship, language and religion. Already in 1952 under a new Federal citizenship ordinance and nine State Nationality Enactments, some 350,000 aliens, mostly Chinese and Indians, had become Federal citizens by naturalisation or registration, and who were required to renounce their foreign nationality. This move swelled the total number of Federal citizens of Chinese origin to 1,100,000 and that of Indian origin to180,000, while Malay citizens totaled 2,650,000 (Mills 1973, 83-84). From 31 August, 1957 (Independence Day), citizenship would be made further available to those non-Malays *born* in Malaya or who *qualified* on residential and other terms.

It should be noted that the willingness of Malays, as represented in the views of, first, PUTERA and, later, UMNO, to share citizenship with non-Malays in their new 'Malay nation-state' or 'Malay nation' marked a major shift towards an *inclusionary* multi-ethnic nationalist perspective. As political scientist K.J. Ratnam (1967: 83) observed, before the war, the Malays would probably have refused to entertain any possibility of such a concession.

The 1957 Constitution also contained guarantees that "no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching and learning, any other language" [152.(1)] and that "other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation" [Article 3.(1)]. It was also agreed that for a period of 10 years English would be used in the Parliament, in the law courts and for the drafting of legislation and for "all official purposes".

All the above terms constituted parts of what became known as the 'Social Contract' or the 'Historic Bargain'. The UMNO-MCA-MIC coalition won the country's first general elections to the Legislative Council in 1955, winning 51 of the 52 seats contested and formed the 'caretaker' government prior to independence. Two years later, after independence talks had been concluded in London, the British Government handed over power to the UMNO-MCA-MIC coalition government on 31 August 1957. Its 'Social Contract' constitution formed the basis for the future enlarged federation of present-day Malaysia in 1963.

The 1957 constitutional contract may also be said to mark a compromise. While the new state 'Federation of Malaya' was unmistakably a 'Malay

nation-state', its nationality or national identity remained undefined. Thus, despite their ethnic differences, pre-war Malaya's "three irreconcilable ideas of nationhood," observed Professor Wang Gungwu, in an analysis, in 1967, had been replaced by the unique growth of a multi-ethnic nationalism in 1957 when Malaya attained independence from colonial rule (Wang 1981: first published 1967). Wang described this nationalism as "a modified or attenuated Malay nationalism" consisting of two parts: "a nucleus of Malay nationalism enclosed by the idea of Malay-Chinese-Indian unity" (Wang 1981: 205). Although Wang used the term "*Malayan*" to describe this nationalism, he was aware that it was not acceptable to the UMNO but he used it for want of a better term to describe this multi-ethnic nationalism. Since the formation of Malaysia in 1963, political scientists Milne and Mauzy have acknowledged the validity of Wang's definition of this earlier nationalism, but which was now transformed into 'Malaysian nationalism'. Milne and Mauzy (1978: 366) modified it further by stating that "this outer ring would include contributions from Sarawak and Sabah."

Contesting Nationalisms

In my book, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation* (Cheah 2002), I have described how this 'Malaysian nationalism' is now locked in a contest with Malay ethno-nationalism in the making of the Malaysian nation. I also described how UMNO's moderate leaders have diluted and transformed its 'exclusivist' Malay nationalism into an 'inclusivist' multi-ethnic nationalism. Consequently, in the process, the original goals or objectives of Malay ethno-nationalism, i.e. 'Malaya for the Malays,' were compromised. This on-going struggle between the two forces, Malay ethno-nationalism and multi-ethnic nationalism, constituted the main theme of nation-building in Malaya from 1957 to 1963, and later in Malaysia from 1963 onwards up till today.

The Malay victory in securing the restoration of Malay sovereignty from the British Government under the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement and, again, in the 1957 constitutional contract would prove fatal to the non-Malays' future political status. After 1948, non-Malay struggles to achieve equality of status with Malays became more and more difficult. Initially, their struggles were concentrated on obtaining more liberal provisions of citizenship and guarantees in respect of the practice of their religion, language and customs. Then, from 1963 onwards, after the formation of Malaysia, predominantly Chinese Singapore's opposition to 'Malay rule' marked a high point in the open struggle for equality. Singapore had directly challenged the 'Social Contract' and Malay dominance. Singapore wanted the creation of a just and egalitarian 'Malaysian Malaysia'.

Between 1957 and 1963, the main features of a 'Malay nation-state' were framed by the Constitution, but not fully implemented by the administration of the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra. He began building a more 'pluralistic' and 'multi-cultural' Malaya in order to fulfil his immediate priority – national unity. He paid less attention to national culture and national identity, or nationality, as he thought these were divisive issues. He used citizenship as the basis of nation-building by allowing citizens, both Malays and non-Malays, to participate and exercise their civil, political and social rights in the public sphere. The nation-state that he strove to establish during this early period was based particularly on 'multi-lingualism' and 'multi-culturalism'. He delayed the implementation of Malay as the national language past the deadline set by the National Language Act in 1967 and allowed the English language to be used widely. This was in direct opposition to the 'exclusivist' agenda of a 'Malay nation-state'. The policy to continue 'multi-lingual' primary schools within Malaya's, and later Malaysia's, national education system was initiated under the Tunku's administration. This policy has been retained by succeeding Prime Ministers till today.

Consequently, in the eyes of the exclusivist Malay nationalists, within and without the UMNO party, his concessions to the non-Malays amounted to a betrayal of the Malay agenda. The exclusivists wanted him to meet every Malay demand in line with the concept of a Malay 'nation-state', i.e. 'Malaya for the Malays'. According to one Malay critic, Dato' Abdullah Ahmad (1985: 21-22), the Malay 'victory' of political primacy under the Tunku's regime was merely "all style and appearance": "The very name of the country emphasises this fact and the Malay orientation is clearly reflected in the country's constitution and the 'Malay' character of the nation."

It was not long, however, before Tunku Abdul Rahman had felt the need to succumb to Malay ethno-centric sentiments by describing Malays as *bumiputera* (literally 'sons of the soil'), over non-Malay opposition. This distinction chanelled the various ethnic communities in Malaya into two politically-constructed groups – *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputera*. The moral claim of *bumiputera* or 'indigenous peoples' is legitimacy. Malays, once labeled as 'indigenous' had claim to special consideration over others who were 'non-indigenous'. However, despite this official distinction, the Tunku went on to curb Malay ethno-nationalism and worked to promote a multi-ethnic nationalism and multi-culturalism.

Envisioning the Malaysian Nation, 1963

In the formation of Malaysia, one of the major considerations which led the Tunku to agree to its formation was the prospect that Singapore's predominantly Chinese population would offset the ethnic balance in which Malays and the 'indigenous races' in peninsular Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah

would remain the numerical majority. The other consideration was security, which caused the Tunku to fear a communist take-over of the Singapore government, which could subvert and threaten mainland Malaya. Britain was militarily losing its standing as a superpower and desired on security considerations to withdraw and accelerate the de-colonisation of its colonies of Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo. Britain aimed to entrust Malaya the responsibility of these territories through an enlarged federation. In this chapter I shall not touch on the wider geopolitics of the Malaysia Plan, originally a British plan which was subsequently adopted by the Tunku and which led to critics and opponents labeling it as a 'neo-colonialist plot'.

In terms of nation-building in Malaysia, however, the Tunku and his UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance government were keen to extend Malaya's informal 'historic bargain' for establishing national integration and ethnic harmony in peninsular Malaya to the ethnic communities in Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo. Because of the initial reluctance to accept the idea by Sarawak and North Borneo and also due to strong opposition by the left-wing labour and political movement in Singapore, concessions had to be made to these territories. Briefly, the Borneo States were given a wide variety of privileges, benefits, safeguards and autonomy, while Singapore was given autonomy in education and labour. The 'special rights' that gave preferential treatment to the Malays in Malaya were now extended to the 'natives of Borneo'. All the other major provisions upholding Malay political dominance in Malaya's Constitution continued to be entrenched in Malaysia's Constitution.

Initially, none of the leaders of these territories objected to Malay political dominance and to the dominant role of Malaya's ruling national leadership of UMNO-MCA-MIC in Malaysia. Nor did they object to the terms of the 'historic bargain', or to its constitutional contract, as embodied in Malaya's Constitution. In fact, Malaysia was brought about by amendment in Malaya's existing Constitution rather than the adoption of a new Constitution. But before long, Singapore had started to question Malay dominance and Malay rule, while accepting other aspects of the constitutional contract – Malay special rights, the Malay language as the national language of Malaysia and the need to alleviate Malay or *bumiputera* economic backwardness.

To the leaders of Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo, Malaysia was seen more as a federation merging four territories rather than bringing about the assimilation or integration of the different ethnic groups in the territories. Ethnic diversity was to be maintained, not abolished. The federation was not seen as a stumbling block to national unity. In fact, it was widely assumed that like in Indonesia, unity could be achieved within the ethnic diversity of

Malaysia, although very few leaders had thought out how to create this national unity. No group found the term 'Malaysian' objectionable as a national identity. It was this national identity that was to be fostered.

However, if we refer to the 'Historic Bargain' entrenched within Malaysia's Constitution, the Malay-defined identity privileged Malay political dominance and Islam as the 'core' of the Malaysian national identity while recognising, even if marginally, the cultures of other ethnic groups. This has led to the emergence of contesting nationalisms in Malaysia, in which each group is inclined towards creating its nation-state in its own image.

These contesting nationalisms have been well described by social scientist Shamsul A.B.,

> ...at the level of 'everyday social reality', the authority-defined national identity has been challenged by three groups, namely, the non-*bumiputera* [sic] group, led by the Chinese, and two *bumiputera* ones, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* group and the radical Islamic *bumiputera* group, each offering its own nation-of-content, i.e. its own vision of what the national identity should be, based on a particular ideological framework. The non-*bumiputera* reject the *bumiputera*-based and *bumiputera*-defined national identity in preference for a more 'pluralised' national identity, in which the culture of each ethnic group in Malaysia is accorded a position equal to that of the *bumiputera*. For instance, the Chinese suggest that Chinese language and rituals should be considered as an integral part of the national identity. Although both the non-Muslim *bumiputera* and the radical Islamic *bumiputera* accept the authority-defined *bumiputera*-based national identity, the former suggest that Christianity and 'native religions' be accorded equal status to that of Islam, as components within it; the latter, on the contrary, rejects what it sees as the secular, modernist Islamic component of the identity in preference for a 'truer and purer' Islam. The Kadazan of Sabah argue forcefully for the non-Muslim *bumiputera* case and the Parti Islam of Kelantan for the radical Islamic *bumiputera* group' (Shamsul 1996).

Conclusion

Clearly, these competing notions of what kind of a nation or "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) that Malaysia should be among the various ethnic communities form part of the nation-building process today. As I have demonstrated, the two-tiered development of Malaysian nationhood in 1957 and 1963 has yet to lead to the emergence of a 'nation' or 'nation-state'. This was clearly affirmed in 1991 when the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamed, announced his *Wawasan 2020,* or Vision for the year 2020, in which he hoped a modern, highly-developed "just and equal" *Bangsa Malaysia* or Malaysian Nation would be created. This vision implies that such a nation does not exist yet.

On 29 September 2001, however, he declared that Malaysia was already an 'Islamic state', but this was contested by the opposition Parti Islam (PAS) and the predominantly-Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP), and by some Catholic groups. The PAS leaders said that until the Islamic *syariah* and *hudud* laws were wholly incorporated into the Malaysian Constitution and implemented, Malaysia was still a secular state. A year later, on 16 September 2002, reflecting on his declaration a year earlier, Dr Mahathir admitted that it was not stated explicitly in Malaysia's Constitution that Malaysia was an "Islamic state" (*Malaysiakini*, 17 September 2002). While it is *not* explicitly stated as such in Malaysia's Constitution, the constitution of each of the nine Malay states in peninsular Malaya appears to incline these states towards the status of an 'Islamic state', as each State Constitution states clearly that Islam is the state religion, and allows the appointment of the Mufti, the setting up of the Islamic Religious Affairs Department and the collection of the religious tithes of *zakat* and *fitrah.* Sarawak is the only state whose Constitution does not define a state religion.

It is within these discrepancies that Malaysia's complex nation-building process takes place. These contesting communalisms and nationalisms in peninsular Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah represent a state of flux and an on-going discourse in the making of the Malaysian nation today.

Notes

1   See the articles in Part IX, "Malay States," and "The Legislative Council," in *The Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948,* (reprint), Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1956, pp.37-41 and 17-26 respectively.

2   See 'Political Testament of the Alliance,': Memorandum by Tunku Abdul Rahman for the Reid Constitution, enclosure dated 25 Sept. 1956, CO889/6, ff219-239, in A.J. Stockwell, ed., *Malaya: Part III The Alliance Route to Independence, 1953-1957,* British Documents on the End of Empire series, HMSO, Vol.3, London, 1995, p.315.

3   See the comments of Tun Suffian in discussing the definition of Malay in these enactments. "The Trengganu enactment (No.17 of 1360) defines a Malay as a person belonging to any Malayan race who habitually speaks the Malay language or any Malayan language and professes the Moslem religion," he wrote. While this was true, the Malayan Union controversy had caused the words "Malayan," " Malaya" and "Malaysia" to change in meaning. See Suffian, *An Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia,* p.248fn.

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Chapter 3

Firstness, History, Place and Legitimate Claim to Place-as-Homeland in Comparative Focus

Michael Roberts

The Story of Sri Lanka in Slanted Summary

To summarise the tale of modern Sri Lankan political conflict in a few words is impossible. The principal outlines have been set out in a number of publications (for example, Roberts 1978, de Silva 1986, Gunati-Ileke 2001, & Loganathan 1996) and Donald Horowitz has provided an instructive comparison of the divergent stories of accommodation in Malaysia and failure of coexistence in Sri Lanka (Horowitz 1993) in ways that cater to the thrust of this comparative exercise. Let me begin therefore with a specific twist upon a summary.

Once the formal administrative unification of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was completed by the conquering colonial power of Britain in the years 1815-1832, the nuts-and-bolts of this unification were established by the administrative framework of institutionalised capitalism, the expansion of a modern transport and communication system and the growth of market exchange. Though some regions remained as sparsely populated backwoods, regional exchanges and internal migration developed apace during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1] The English language became the dominant language because it was the media for high-level governance and the path to social mobility. The emergence of two overlapping social categories of locally-resident, non-White residents, namely, the bourgeoisie and the "middle class," consolidated this network of criss-crossing linkages that was at once spatial, social, economic and political. The concept "bourgeoisie" is used here in the standard Marxist sense of property-owners who employ labour; while "middle class" is a modification of the widely-used local vocabulary to mark a status group that was influential because of it's life style and command of the English language.[2]

It was from within the emerging middle class-cum-bourgeoisie that the first incipient political challenge to the British, as embodied in the concept 'Ceylonese,' appeared. This initial impetus can be seen in the journal *Young Ceylon* (1850-52) and the pages of the *Ceylon Examiner* from 1859 onwards. This strand of anti-colonial Ceylonese nationalism initially had a significant input from the 'Burghers' (Euro-Ceylonese). It was multi-ethnic in composition and attitude, all-island in orientation, and combined elitism with liberalism. From the 1880s onwards this strand of thinking began to challenge British racial policies by pressing for the 'Ceylonization' of the higher rungs of the administrative services. It was this body of activists that began exerting pressure for constitutional devolution from the 1900s onwards. Though inspired in substantial ways by the political developments in British India, these Ceylonese nationalists were also hoisting the British with their own petard: arguments drawn from British constitutional history and Enlightenment philosophy.

More or less at the same time anti-colonial reactions also emerged in the nineteenth century among Tamil and Sinhala-speakers who responded to the proselytisation work of Christians by developing counter movements of Hindu rejuvenation and Buddhist revivalism respectively. The Sinhalese response, however, had many strands: the work of religious revivalists interlaced with those Sinhala nationalists who focused on the decline in status of their language and the overwhelming diffusion of Westernised lifeways to the detriment of their *sirit virit* (customs) and *gunadharma* (virtue, ethics) (Roberts et al 1989, Amunugama 1979, Dharma-dasa 1972).

In summary, therefore, one can speak of five strands of political ideology running in parallel and interlacing at points in the period 1840s-to-1940s: that of Ceylonese nationalism, Sinhala nationalism, Buddhist revivalism, Hindu revivalism and Sri Lankan Tamil communitarianism. The latter, Sri Lankan Tamil communitarianism, did not utilise the concept of 'nation' (or 'nationality') in English-speak to describe its collectivity. But they had a clear understanding of their group identity in differentiation from the Sinhalese, Burghers, Muslims and named others. This foundation made it but a simple step for them to move towards describing themselves as a 'nationality' in 1949/51 after political differences sharpened and the Federal Party emerged as one of the Tamil parties in the political firmament. But, ironically, this step was initiated a few years earlier in 1944 by the Ceylon Communist Party, which used Stalin's famous words more or less verbatim to present a case for self-determination for both nationalities in the island, (Sri Lankan) Tamil as well as Sinhalese (Roberts 1999: 34-35).

In further summary one can say that the story of the latter half of the twentieth century is a tragic one, involving the upsurge of Sinhala linguistic nationalism in the 1950s,[3] the progressive decline of Ceylonese (multi-ethnic

Sri Lankan) nationalism and the sharpening of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism. The latter response has resulted in the jettisoning of their 'Sri Lankan-ness' (in its institutional sense) by a substantial body of Sri Lanka Tamils. Ever since the 1970s and the Vaddukoddai resolution of 1976, their principal associations have desired to set up an independent sovereign entity called *'Eelam'* or *Thamililam* (Wilson 2000; Schalk 2002; Roberts 2002a). In pressing for this breakaway, they nevertheless maintain their distinction from the Tamils of Tamilnadu. However much they may have profited from their irredentist situation, their goal is not irredentist merger.

Thus, from the 1950s Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) nationalism went into steep free-fall. As a force it was soon in tatters, shredded on the one hand by the assaults of Sinhala and Tamil extremists in conflict with each other and, on the other, by governments responding to the demands of Sinhala populism and nativism in a context in which the Sinhalese have made up some 69-74 per cent of the population between 1948 and the 1980s.[4] However, Sri Lankan nationalism survives as an ideological current because of the articulate voices of a small body of bilingual (English and vernacular) intellectuals. In the aftermath of the pogrom against Sri Lankan Tamils in July 1983 both liberals and socialist intellectuals developed an alliance that advocates a political structure that is liberal and confederative in order to maintain Sri Lanka as an institutional entity. (e. g. see CRD 1984). Thus, illustratively, the interventions of several NGOs (such as the National Peace Council, Centre for Policy and Research Alternatives, ICAS and SSA) and the project on *A History of Ethnic Conflict: Recollection, Reinterpretation & Reconciliation* initiated in 1999 by Godfrey Gunatilleke, have been some of the activities associated with such strands of conviction. As the war with the Tamils (now dominated by the LTTE) dragged on in the 1990s, and it became evident to all but the diehard Sinhala extremists that the hopes of a military victory were minimal, a broad band of popular support has emerged in more recent years in favour of 'peace' or even 'peace with devolution.' In effect, then, Sri Lankan nationalism has been given a refreshing injection in recent years, but it nevertheless remains fragile and at the mercy of volatile political winds.

Heritage and Roots in Nationalist Thought

Romanticism was a significant force in the upsurge of nationalism in Europe in the nineteenth century and after. Poets, folklorists, linguists, historians and ethnologists were among those who sponsored images of nativist wholeness or past achievements that contributed to a sense of differentiated collective identity. This influence was especially pronounced among the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. It has been argued that these peoples were cultural entities or nations-in-embryo that developed into 'nation-states'

in the modern sense of the concept, contrasting thereby with the original archetype of nationhood associated with England and France, where the temporal process is said to have involved a progression from 'state' to 'nation' because in each instance the dynastic state was the chrysalis within which a sense of nation-ness developed (For elaboration, see Strayer 1963: 23, Snyder 1968: 57-59, Pflanze 1966: 139-42). This historical interpretation is now questioned by scholars who trace the development of 'English nationalism' back into the late medieval period (e. g. Hastings 1997). Be that as it may, even in the English case there is no doubt that such Romanticists as Thomas Carlyle, Byron and Ruskin contributed to the sense of English/British patriotism in the nineteenth century.

With the implantation of Western education in British Ceylon the literature of the Romantics as well as the currents of 'liberalism' and 'nationalism' entered the circuits of the educated middle class (Roberts 1979b, 1999: 28-29; Roberts et al 1989:ch.4-5). In this context, subject as they were to the racial prejudices of the British ruling elements and the other indignities of colonial subordination, both the English-educated and the vernacular literati were quick to seize on the evidence that quickly emerged about the past civilisational greatness of the island peoples.

This history became more widely available in part because one of the major Sinhala chronicles, the *Mahâvamsa*, was translated by a scholar official, George Turnour in 1837. In effect, this book indicated that the Sinhala people had a continuous history tied to a state formation and a historical tradition that differed from the *puranic* history of India, (Chatterjee 1994), the latter a type of storytelling that was de-valued as 'myth' by the 'scientific' codes of the Western world (Rogers 1990). The re-discovery of ancient ruins in Anuradhapura, Polonnaruva, Sigiriya and other places in the course of the nineteenth century and their vivid depiction by painters and cameramen provided eye-capturing evidence of the capacities of the ancient civilisation (Raheem & Colin-Thome 2000). Surveyors and engineers quickly confirmed the skill levels in both the building work and the irrigation works associated with this state order.

This state civilisation, understood to date from about the second century B C, if not earlier, was also comprehended to be mostly the work of Sinhalese.[5] Since the island was, now in the nineteenth century, known as 'Ceylon' and the people as 'Ceylonese,' this evidence was comprehended as a mark of 'Ceylonese achievements' in the ancient past – at a period when the Anglo-Saxons, that is, the British, were non-entities. In this reading 'Ceylonese' and 'Sinhalese' shaded into each other. It was feasible for a Sri Lankan Tamil such as Ponnambalam Arunachalam to note to himself in his diary: "what a glorious thing it would be for Ceylon to emulate and excel her glorious past."[6] In brief, the colonial context ensured that pride in the capacities

of the ancient Sinhalese was interpreted as Ceylonese achievements by Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese residents alike, besides the British themselves.

My summary of these currents of thought comes from the world of English-speak. However, one must also attend to the oral, visual, performative and written traditions transmitted from generation to generation in the vernacular tongues Tamil and Sinhalese. These modes of transmission were lively and effective. Among the Sinhalese there can be little doubt that their literati and specialists conveyed themes drawn from the cultural productions of what I call the middle period (1232-1818) through *kâvya* stories, *sandçsa* (message) poems and ritual performances (Roberts 2002b).

Many of these tales were centred upon kingly figures. The Sinhala dynastic states of yesteryear were therefore kept in the forefront of popular consciousness. In these tales, moreover, the island was a singular entity known variously as *Tunsinhalaya, Tunrata, Sinhalç, Siri Laka*, et cetera. Though there had been a kingdom, known as *Yâlppânam*, in the northern segment of the island from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth, such presentations glossed over this 'fact' or treated the kingdom as a sub-kingdom encompassed by the aegis of the Sinhala Buddhist *cakravarti* figure that was head of state.[7]

As such, the Sinhala-speakers of British Ceylon had two streams of cultural production nourishing their sense of distinctiveness, thereby promoting their sense of self-worth and highlighting the contrast with their subordinate situation in the British era. One was made up of the various modalities of Sinhala storytelling and performance (including healing and protective rituals). The other was composed by the currents of idea and information borrowed from the Western world and English writings by those with bilingual capacities, especially the journalists. Needless to say, from the 1860s and especially in the twentieth century, print technology accentuated the influence of both processes.

Within the context of Buddhist revitalisation and the hostility to Westernisation that developed from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, therefore, the evidence of past greatness and independence inspired nationalist endeavour among Sinhala activists. Such a heritage could be used as an argument for Sinhalese to get over what Piyadasa Sirisena in 1910 said "their unfounded fears and a sense of inferiority" (quoted in Amunigama 1973: 211-12; see also Roberts 1979b: 223-27). In the thinking of some activists, moreover, the Sinhalese were 'sons of the soil' (Dharmapala 1965: 515). It was a simple step for such extremists to view all other island-inhabitants as outsiders in some sense, that is, as *para* (that is, 'alien,' but also carrying the implication 'vile' in the sense *nîca*).[8] Thus, one editor and activist complained that Sinhalese not only sided with *paradçsin* (aliens) against other Sinhalese, but also went so far as to marry "*lansi, demala,*

ingrîsi, german âdhi parajâtin" (Burghers, Tamils, English, German and other such alien-cum-vile races).[9]

Such a hardline current of thought, however, was just one strand among multiple streams of argument in opposition to British authority. For all the vitriol poured out by such propagandists as Dharmapala, the English-educated Ceylonese nationalists were at the forefront of the political challenges to the British in the first half of the twentieth century, an emphasis that was given even sharper edge with the emergence of a Left Movement led by Trotskyists in the 1930s.

Whether hardline Sinhala nationalist, moderate Sinhala nationalist or Ceylonese-cum-Sinhala nationalist, or a Burgher, Moor, Tamil who was for Ceylon's movement towards "dominion status," it is probable that in the early twentieth century many activists, as well as the middle class in general, accepted one historical finding: the Sinhalese people originated from a body of people under a leader known as Vijaya who migrated in the fifth century B.C. from some part of India. This is the mythic tale in the *Mahâvamsa* and *Dîpavamsa* (On the *vamsa* chronicles, see Mendis 1996, Perera 1961, Kemper 1991). In this story, significantly, there were wild forest people identified as Yakâs and Nâgas occupying the island at this point of time. In this reading, as much implicitly as explicitly, what Vijaya brought to Sri Lanka was "culture" and an idea of state, namely kingship.[10]

The fact that the Sinhalese were migrant people by origin in this popular reading of the ancient past does not make them 'non-indigenous.' The autochthonous *Vädda-* were (and are) marginalised by their lack of culture, that is, their inferiority. The Sinhalese, then, are seen as more-or-less indigenous because they have resided for twenty-odd centuries and been in possession of 'civilisation' (*shistâchâraya*) organised under a kingly state. However, we must remember that 'culture' (*sansktrutiya*) or 'civilisation'[11] is not just a matter of an educated ruling class, literacy, a capacity to build edifices and set up a state. 'Culture' also can refer to the culture/cultivation of food in settled villages on a sedentary basis. In my speculative interpretation, therefore, in this hierarchy of value within Sinhala historical traditions, one that is more implicit than 'said,' rice cultivation is a praiseworthy trade, whereas hunting and gathering are low in the scale of things.[12] Within such a perspective, then, the Sinhala rice cultivators of the past were undoubtedly and truly 'sons of the soil' or *bumiputra*.

Comparative Forays

Though I can hardly prove it, it would seem that in South and South East Asia settled agriculture was viewed as superior in evolutionary scale to swidden agriculture, while both were regarded as higher in status to hunting and

gathering in jungles. Most state formations seem to have been dominated by lineages that occupied valleys and practiced settled agriculture. Those victorious in war, perhaps a capacity that arose in part from their institutionalised ability to generate surplus through perennial agrarian production rather than tribute, appear to have called the shots in establishing 'ideological value'.[13]

Within the realm of specific agrarian settings, moreover, those lineages that converted a locality into a field of food production had a lien on that land. 'First cultivator = proprietor' was the principle at play. But it was not merely an issue of prescriptive land rights. The first lineages usually secured their position as local 'lords of the fields' in relation to subsequent in-migrant lineages (unless the latter had the backing of a marauding state or a warlord).

Over the long term an extended and generalised version of this principle seems to be at play in (a) the story of the Sinhalese in relation to the *Vädda* and (b) that of the in-migrant Malays (*Melayu*) in relation to those autochthonous lineages that are assembled together today under the label 'Orang Asli.' Over time the first people to develop agriculture become the local/regional lords. Culture (or civilisation) becomes superior to the wild. Here, then, one sees two principles of superiority combined in order to establish authority, that is, legitimised power. With necessary adjustments one can also say that these two principles came into force in the recent history of Australia.

Australian Aboriginality

As in parts of Asia the founding myths (or "stories of the Dreaming") among many Australian Aboriginal peoples clearly "argue that the first Beings came into each local area from elsewhere."[14] To those unfamiliar with the Aboriginal scene let me stress that these peoples have always been internally differentiated in kinship structure, speech, location and self-perception. However, most of them relied on hunting and gathering for their sustenance. As a broad generalisation one could say that in each locality or region the Aboriginal "political economy militated strongly against both a successful organised resistance and also against achieving a population density that might have represented a serious challenge to [the White settler] invaders" who penetrated the continent from the 1780s onwards.[15] The overwhelming military power of the European settlers was compounded by the latter's faith in the superiority of their civilisation, a mind-set that was bolstered in part by the values attached to settled agriculture.

Today the Australian Aboriginal peoples are roughly 2-3 percent of the total Australian population today of roughly 19 million or so. In 1996, they numbered 324,744 people or 2 percent of the total.[16] They have been subject to demographic and cultural decimation as a result of the actions of the

mostly White (Anglo-Celtic) settlers who not only assumed political dominance, but also brought diseases to which the Aborigines were vulnerable. So much so that in the early-mid twentieth century the Anglo-Celtic settlers and the new Australian state of 1901 assumed that they were a 'dying race.'

But many Aboriginal lineages and descent groups[17] survived. A 'typical' Aboriginal reading of their specific histories is embodied in the manner in which the storytellers of the people occupying the Victoria Rivers Downs region in the Northern Territory told Debbie Bird Rose about their subjection to "Captain Cook's law." In this reading Captain Cook is "an outlaw, morally speaking."[18]

The history of subjugation and discrimination has provided late-twentieth century and contemporary Aboriginal people with a measure of unity. With the support of White Australians of liberal humanist persuasion, their activists gained recognition in the census statistics in 1967. This was but one step in the series of measures that have dismantled most of the statutory forms of racial discrimination that existed previously, measures that were largely due to the initiative of public servants and politicians informed by more enlightened thinking.[19] As Peter Sutton suggested, active support from elements among White "middle class urbanites" have assisted the Aboriginal cause during the last fifty years or so.

The lobbying of Aboriginal activists and White supporters has also resulted in several symbolic gestures of recognition at mass public gatherings such as the Footie final, the Opening Ceremonies at the Olympics and the biennial Adelaide Festival. More critically, a series of measures by different state governments at various times began recognising native title. The capstone was provided by the Mabo decision reached by the High Court in 1992 and the legislation that followed under the Keating administration. These steps overturned the legal justification, the theory of *terra nullius*, supporting the non-recognition of Aboriginal claims to 'place' (my term) and consolidated the process enabling some pragmatic room for 'native land rights' within the considerable constraints of land already alienated as freehold.

A significant aspect of this debate was the use of the term 'First Australians' by Keating and other activists. This may not have been the first occasion that it received valued voice, but it now entered critical arenas and secured official recognition. The label has been adopted by ATSIC, the Council of Aboriginal leaders that is an official body overseeing Aboriginal affairs; its' website describing Aboriginal history has a sub-section entitled 'First Australians.' As such, this label jostles alongside the term 'Indigenous Australians' that is used, both by Aboriginal people and others, to refer to the original inhabitants of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. This term, 'Indigenous Australians,' however implies that the Anglo-Celtics, as well as the motley collection of more recent migrants, are not yet indigenous. Thus,

'First Australians' overcomes this problem by allowing that there are, so to speak, 'Subsequent Australians,' though that phrase is rarely used explicitly.

In summary overview, it could be said that the claims and rights espoused by Aboriginal activists and their supporters over the last half-century have rested primarily on two justificatory grounds that are intertwined: (a) The Aboriginal people have lived on the continent for many centuries and are truly autochthonous and aboriginal; and (b) these people, in all their variety, have an embodied and consubstantive attachment to their home locality and a relationship to 'place' that is as unique as sacred. The language of legitimation sometimes extends to (c) the idea for reparation for past injustices and horrors perpetrated on these men and women by the Anglo-Celtic settlers and successive Australian governments.[20] In my reading, however, this third ground of justification for special consideration towards the Aboriginal minority within Australia is distinctly secondary in the thinking of most Aboriginal activists.[21]

In the perceptions of those Aboriginal groups that have some links with their locality, that is, 'homeland' or 'sentimental place' in other words, it the stories of the Dreaming, as passed down the generations by their persons-with-knowledge, that confirm this sentimental connection. The Dreaming is their version of history, one that involves a conflation of time and the fusion of present and past in emotive and embodied ways. By way of example, take the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia. Their beliefs in ancestor spirits, sacred sites and connections with the 'country' are as profound as deep – in ways that render them 'consubstantive' with ancestral power.[22] The word the Yolngu use for 'house' or 'hut', namely, *wänga*, also has the following meanings: (a) place, camp; (b) home[land]; (c) nation, country[side], area; (d) [Extension] ovaries; (e) position, situation. And the related term *wänga-watangumirri* refers to "original inhabitants or their descendants, owner of land or territory," that is, to the possessors of territory.[23]

However, the contemporary fact is that the Aboriginal stories of their long-standing connections with specific places, and the overall picture of their occupation of the continent, is supported by 'modern science' in the form of the positivistic methods associated with archaeology, art history and conventional history. Artefacts from the past, whether rock paintings or Neolithic tools, provide ample testimony to long occupation of the land. Written accounts, sketches and paintings by Captain Cook's party and other early explorers, besides the documentation left by the earliest settlers, supply further evidence of their life-style and their existence. So, Aboriginal activists can hoist their Anglo-Celtic conquerors with their own instruments in legitimising their claims to homeland place. 'Time' in association with place becomes a measure of justificatory value.

The value of a collective label in association with place in the varying stories of Aboriginal 'rejuvenation' is revealed in the story of the Kaurna (pronounced Garna) people of the Adelaide plains (i. e. effectively Adelaide city). In the late 1970s they were not heard of – except among select specialists. They are few in number today and do not even reach four figures. But since the 1990s they have secured some prominence and are in the process of re-inventing their language with the help of White linguists and archival documents kept by the Lutherans and others. Nevertheless, the present-day Kaurna are emotionally attached to their distinctive identity as one segment of the wider Aboriginal people and articulate this claim vociferously.[24]

Moreover, the recent opening ceremonies of the Adelaide Festival have begun with a ritual dance and musical item that acknowledges the fact that the festivities are occurring in Kaurna territorial space (place). This, clearly, is a symbolic gesture. It does not translate into Kaurna control of the Adelaide City Council, let alone the government of South Australia. It is likely that most White and other recent migrants in Adelaide are not conscious of the Kaurna as a political entity and are wont, in keeping with standard prejudices and their profile of urban Aborigines, to see them as part of the down-and-out Aboriginal people who can be seen in the urban parklands among the 'winos' and tramps of all colours. Given such generalised perceptions and their de facto marginality, the symbolic gesture may not seem significant. But, and this is the point, it is valued by the Kaurna. From our perspective, therefore, even though they do not embody 'equality', such symbolic actions express some official commitment to 'multi-culturalism' and minority existence – as distinct from non-existence. In that relative sense, and in comparison with the recent past, it is an advancement for the Kaurna.

Firstness in Place: More Comparative Steps

In the history of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, as we know, their political and cultural subordination began with the occupation of large chunks of the continental space from the 1780s by waves of migrants who were mostly Anglo-Celtic. Not only did the Australian Aborigines lose land and clout, as time passed they were overwhelmed numerically. Though it occurred much further back in time and the details are fragmentary, this has also been the story of (1) the autochthonous Orang Asli of peninsular Malaya within the state of Malaysia and (2) those autochthonous forest people of Sri Lanka known as the Väddâ.

'Orang Asli' translates as 'the original people' and is a collective label that assembles together those communities with roots in the Austroasiatic-speaking peoples who moved into peninsular Malaya in the period 2000-1500 BC. Today, the Orang Asli are less than one per cent of the total population

of Malaysia and are conventionally subdivided by outsiders into three clusters, the Semang, the Senoi and the Orang Asli Melayu; but they themselves are likely to "regard themselves as 'leaves of the same tree'."[25] These indigenous peoples subsequently came into relationship with three waves of migrants who spoke Malayo-Polynesian (or Austronesian) languages. These in-migrant waves occurred in the early part of the first millennium BC, circa 100 BC and again in the fourteenth century. Their settlements were mostly confined to coastal areas. The last wave, involving the *Melayu* from Palembang, appears to have had the widest effect. Nevertheless, in the initial stages the demographic disparities were not great and the exchanges between the indigenous people of that era and the migrant *Melayu* involved reciprocities as well as acculturation and boundary-crossing in both directions.

As the demand for forest products in the regional trading pattern declined and as the Sultanate state system was consolidated, the relationship was transformed. Andaya summarises matters thus:

> As the Melayu grew in dominance, they marginalised the Orang Asli both as economic partners and as human beings. The shift in attitude was reflected in the increasing scorn and contempt with which the Melayu began to treat the Orang Asli. The refusal of the Orang Asli to embrace Islam and to abandon their foraging and shifting agricultural lifestyle confirmed the Melayu view that they lacked 'civilization'. The process can be detected as early as the seventeenth century in the *Sejarah Melayu*, but it is far more obvious in the various episodes recounted in Malay and foreign accounts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Andaya 2002: 39).

In the result, the process of acculturation appears to have shifted radically in favour of the *Melayu* (Malays). Following Benjamin, therefore, one could say that the present communities of Orang Asli represent those who made a "conscious choice [not to become] part of a state and hence were labelled as 'tribal'."[26] The pressures of political, demographic and 'civilisational' dominance upon the declining Orang Asli is reflected in the fact that the most 'Malayic' body of contemporary Orang Asli are identified by outsiders as "Orang Asli Melayu (Andaya 2002: 23, 42).[27]

This tale of the Orang Asli's decline and absorption by politically and numerically dominant sedentary cultivators armed with 'culture' or 'civilisation' is replicated in the story of the Väddâs of Sri Lanka. As we saw, Sinhala mythology recognises the fact that there were autochthonous inhabitants in the island when Vijaya, the eponymous ancestor of the Sinhalese, is said to have arrived in the fifth century BC. Subsequent Sinhala folklore refers to the Väddâ people and these folk are deemed to be the lineal descendants of the original autochthonous peoples. It would seem

that over the centuries these forest people lived in the hills and/or jungles on the edge of the various state centres and agrarian settlements (Meegaskumburra 1995). When the modernising colonial state of British Ceylon took form in the nineteenth century, the Väddâ could be found as a partially or wholly sedentary people in pockets of the malaria-ridden and sparsely populated jungles of the North Central and Eastern Provinces, and even in the Southern Province and Sabaragamuva (Seligmann 1993, Obeyesekere 1987: 13, 304-06; 2000, 2002). Despite their numerical insignificance, they remained a census category in British times and were counted: numbering 5,332 in 1911 and 2,361 in 1946, figures that could not even make up 0.0 percent of the population.[28] Since then their number has dwindled because the vast majority have become Sinhala-speakers and Buddhists (with a vestigial Väddâ awareness as "Kuveni's children" in some instances), while yet others in the Eastern Province (and Northern Province) have become Tamil and Tamil-speakers (Dart 1990; Brow 1978, 1990, 1996). The virtual disappearance of the Väddâs in modern times, that is, their numerical minuteness, renders them of little significance in the political engagements taking place today. This is in contrast to the Orang Asli, while being in marked contrast to the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples.

In overview, then, the Orang Asli, Väddâ and Australian Aborigines share one feature: they are widely recognised as the original autochthonous peoples of their respective lands. Taking my cue from Rod Lucas,[29] one can accent the category 'autochthonous' as 'being of the land' and proceed to the argument that the 'indigenousness' (and thus the 'firstness') of these peoples is one measure deeper than that of peoples who are merely 'indigenous' or those who possess migration myths marking their advent from other lands. In effect, I am drawing a classificatory distinction between the 'autochthonous indigenous' and those simply 'indigenous' by weight of time.

But, unlike the Aborigines, this 'ancientness' and autochthony does not give the Orang Asli and the Väddâ a high measure of symbolic value.[30] Their absence of 'culture' weighs against them in contexts where literate and poetic knowledge as well as high religion on the one hand, and settled agricultural activity on the other, had hegemonic force in the cultural order of evaluation. The contrast with the present-day status of Australian Aboriginal people is instructive. No longer can the latter be disparaged widely in public as 'primitive.'[31] The influence of liberal ideas in White Australian circles and the articulate expansion of activist Aboriginal voices have now captured the high moral ground in ways that, say, the Orang Asli and the Väddâ do not quite enjoy.

In their turn, each of these three differing cases, as a cluster, differs from the story of the relationship between a body of recent migrants entering lands with a settled population of long-resident, and thus 'indigenous,' people who had a state system of their own prior to their conquest by the British. This latter type embraces three cases that are within the parameters of the comparative exercise sponsored by the editors of this volume: namely, (i) the relationship between those known today as 'Indo-Fijians' and Fijians, that is, in what is my deliberate contrivance, 'Native Fijians,' and (ii) the relationship between those described as 'Chinese Malaysians' and Malays[32] and (iii) the relationship between the Sinhalese, Sri Lanka Tamils, and Mohammedan Moors[33] on the one hand and on the other, those known in British Ceylon as 'Indian Tamils,' that is, the *Malaiyaha* Tamils of the plantation districts of Sri Lanka.[34] In all these instances the migrants, whether plantation workers, labourers or traders, came across, or were brought across, in substantial numbers. Their numerical weight and relative proportions were of some consequence once the British left and a democratic form of government was in place.

Though the Indo-Fijians and the Chinese Malaysians have some demographic concentrations in a few territorial pockets, they do not have a substantial area where they are a majority, unlike the Sri Lankan Tamils (this has been stressed by Horowitz 1993) or even the Malaiyaha Tamils, who have been the single largest group in Nuwara Eliya District since the 1980s. In Fiji, moreover, they confront an indigenous body of people, who amidst significant internal island and class differentiation, seem to have a special affinity with their lineage or clan place and/or land. This attachment appears to be expressed in a complex and varied set of ways. A critical concept in this regard is the term *vanua*.

As Marshall Sahlins clarifies matters, *vanua* bears a multiplicity of meanings, some of which overlap, according to context of usage:

1. *vanua* = a land 'of itself,' i.e., with paramount chief and a complement of specialised clans (*mataqali*), and thus in this sense a political entity.
2. *vanua* = a place, [and thus] 2a. one's place, home or homeland; [or figuratively,] 2b an area of expertise.
3. As 'the *vanua*,' it = the underlying 'land people' (also *kai vanua*) of a place — a village, land or kingdom; they are original occupants, in that sense = *i taukei* or so-called owners.[35]

Vanua does not seem to have connotations of property because, says Sahlins, the term *qele* is deployed when references to soil are made. But its ramifying significance is indicated by the genitive 'of' that precedes it and the overlapping meanings that link it with clan, clan chief and home-place so to speak. As critical, too, is its connection with *i taukei*, namely 'native, first occupant'

(or 'indigenous owner').[36] Thus, the concepts *vanua* and *i taukei* point to those with original, and thus prime, links with a place (though not necessarily carrying the idea of property). This summary can hardly do justice to the complexity of the Fijian social structure and its conceptual order. Because most Fijian clans relate 'standard histories of moving from place to place for generations,'[37] it does not seem possible to conceptualise their relationship with land as a form of consubstantiality in the fashion associated with the Australian Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, the evidence points to links with 'place' that are profound and ramify into wider kin groups and the political-cum-cosmological order.

Since these suggestions are inspired by evidence *partly* garnered through latter-day anthropological researches, the question arises whether these attachments and practices are a product of British rule rather than hoary native tradition. It is well-known that it was the British Governor, Gordon, who secured native title for the Fijians as far back as the 1870s by decreeing that their lands were 'inalienable' and held in corporate units. This paternal and protective act may well have been an "invention of tradition" – in the sense that Gordon and his aides may have misinterpreted matters and/or read the practice of one part of Fiji in their own time to be a generalised pattern. In codifying and standardising the tenurial scheme in the fashion favoured by bureaucratic rationality, they may have both transformed and frozen a scheme of things that had been quite diverse and subject to considerable fluidity. This seems to be the crux of Peter France's review of the British intervention set against his interpretation of previous Fijian history in the immediate pre-colonial period. In his reading the pre-contact era was marked by "incessant inter-tribal skirmishing involving continuous migration and re-settlement" (France 1969: 13). Thus, he asserts that there was no common land tenure system and that a *mataqali* (a localised kin group which, with other *mataqali*, coalesced into a *yavusa*, a corporate body at a higher level) was not a proprietary unit (France 1969: 14, 136).

But *vanua*, as we noted, is not about proprietorship *per* se. In any event, and significantly, France makes no reference to *vanua* or other critical indigenous concepts such as *i taukei, lewâ, masa, mana* or *tamata dina*.[38] These are worrying omissions. While allowing for the transformative effects of British codification practices, my experience of agrarian history in British colonies also indicates that, more often than not, the impact of British rule generated a re-working of tradition and some residual continuities. In effect, the transformations were often imbricated by elements of the past.

Be that as it may, Native Fijian understandings of their relationship today with land-as-place appear to be as profound as transcendental. As such, the legitimacy of their case appears to have a broad analogy to Australian Aboriginal land claims. To reiterate: the legitimacy of the Aboriginal demand for land

rights today does not rest either on the victimisation and degradation they suffered in the past, or their numerical weakness in the political order in recent times. It rests on a sacred and emotionally fulfilling relationship of consubstantiation with their places of the Dreaming (sometimes referred to as "the Law"[39] in modern times).

Where such profound emotional attachments exist, the empirical "truth" or historical depth of these kin group and/or familial connections to land-as-place is usually immaterial. Therefore, where the majority of those identifying with, say, the hypothetical place BeBeing believe in their Bebeing claims, we have then a powerful force that one cannot arrogantly dismiss through empirical, rational, secular reasoning. It is because they sympathize with such orientations among the Native Fijians, or segments thereof, that the leaders and people of virtually every micro-state in the Pacific appear to, as far as I know, support the Native Fijian insistence[40] that they should have a special status in the struggle for political rights in Fiji. In brief, on *a priori* grounds I support privileges being attached to those with the deepest indigeneity unless their numerical proportions are negligible. There is no doubt that such special pleading is of functional benefit to the indigenes. It helps them sustain their power and makes it harder for in-migrant peoples to maximise their freedoms and advantages as individuals regardless of ancestry. The crux of each situation, however, is the specific cluster of "privileges" that are recognised within the context of economic and political power. Here, the Baltic states provide pointers to a more accommodative and politically integrative socio-political process than that emerging in Fiji and Malaysia.

Latvia

In order to further deepen our comparative exploration and to work out 'pragmatic first principles,' I take a majestic leap across continents to the situation of Latvia in the 1990s and today in 2003. Yes, Latvia. Latvia because, together with the other two Baltic states, Estonia and Lithuania, it is a land that has been subject to large scale migration during the last sixty years. What is more, this migration stems from a big imperial neighbour, Russia, which occupied the country in 1940 and ruled it as an incorporated territory subject to Sovietization for some fifty years.

Ethno-nationalist movements of popular mobilisation emerged in all the Baltic states in the 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991 saw them emerge as independent entities. Thus, from the 1990s the Latvians have found themselves burdened with an irredentist situation of alarming proportions: of the population of some 2.5 million in Latvia today, 55% are Latvian, 32.5% are Russian, 4.05% Belorussian and the rest mostly Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian.[41] Many of the Russian settlers consider Latvia their home, but only a few seem to have been fully proficient in the Latvian language

in 1991. In the 1990s they held "basic civil rights, such as freedom of movement, expression, and religion, but not important political and social ones: the right to vote, hold civil service jobs, own shares in joint-stock companies, receive state benefits or possess weapons" (Verdery 1998: 295). With the enactment of a law that rendered Latvian the official state language, their position was further threatened (Melvin 1995: 38). In this sense they are what some voices today would call 'second-class citizens.' This was in effect the position adopted by Katherine Verdery during her Keynote Address at the Annual Conference of the American Ethnological Association in San Juan in 1996.

But such a verdict, such vocabulary, is premised on the democratic principle of equal rights and the ideals of liberal humanism associated with the Enlightenment and the American and French Revolutions. They do not take account of emotions linked to colonial subordination in the immediate past. The point is that most of the "Russians-in-Latvia" (my phrase) entered Latvia as one part of an invading force. Attuned as I am to the emotional circumstances arising out of colonial subordination, on hearing Verdery I assumed that there would be some Native Latvians who would resist the · naturalization of the Russians-in-Latvia and who would see the latter as a cancer within the body politic.[42] In *a priori* terms, therefore, these Native Latvians would have four possible 'solutions' to resolve the 'Russian problem.' In bald terms these 'Paths' would be:

A. To kill all the Russian Latvian residents, genocide on a Nazi scale.
B. To evict the Russian Latvians (e.g. as happened to the Indians in Burma, namely Myanmar).
C. To grant them qualified citizenship rights of some form, but to restrict the political ramifications in some way. There could be a whole range of permutations here, including 'positive discrimination' that weights the voting power of the majority community or those having 'more' homely belonging.[43]
D. To give them full 100% citizenship rights.

Speaking from the position of an 'outsider,' I would not, of course, condone the courses A and B. But even as an 'outsider' listening to Verdery's Keynote Speech it seemed to me understandable that a significant proportion of Native Latvians would be reluctant to adopt position D. If such antipathies command some numerical support and emotional commitment among the Native Latvians, how could (can) an 'outsider' advocate course D? To do so would be to encourage heightening conflict and the possibility of a Native Latvian movement (rather like the Taukei in Fiji?) towards B or A. Thus, in my view, the pragmatic *modus vivendi* in the 1990s would have been Path C, with a proviso to the effect that a shift to D could be anticipated over time as new

generations of Russians-in-Latvia adopted bilinguality and developed an attachment to their place of residence. It was in order to prevent a substantial minority of Native Latvians from pressing towards A or B that my response to Verdery's argument – before I had developed more detailed information on the Latvian situation – was to advocate course C as a first stage towards D.

Towards a Summing Up

I adopted this position when I heard Verdery at San Juan in 1996.[44] Since published (1998), Verdery's essay raises a series of highly pertinent issues in perceptive ways through her familiarity with the contemporary situation in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet bloc. However, her remarks on the nationality-issue in former Yugoslavia and the Baltic states indicate that she is committed to the secular, rational, democratic principles that have been institutionalized and naturalized in the West.

As we know, from the moment when the rationalist and capitalist framework of Europe moved into a position of world dominance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the political ideologies of the 'West' have assumed the cast of the 'universal.'[45] I have deliberately put within quotes the word 'Western' in order to avoid the oversimplified dichotomy associated with the image of 'the West versus the Rest.' The foundational premises of 'Western' philosophy and politics that I highlight here are not fully accepted in parts of South Eastern and Eastern Europe. To avoid this oversimplification I adopt another device, a synecdoche where the sign 'French' stands for 'Western.' This rendering is informed by the fact that the American and French Revolutions were key moments in the evolution of the political philosophy that I am targeting, with the latter being the foundational embodiment of a major process of transformation. Thus, in the 1790s it was feasible for Abbé Sieyes to follow the ideas formulated by Rousseau and other Enlightenment writers and to define the 'nation' as "a body of associates living under one common law and represented by the same legislature" (quoted in Hinsley 1973: 74). In France and in Britain, therefore, as Namier argues (1958) one saw the development of a (peculiar) territorial concept of nation-ness.

Verdery is clearly guided by this liberal 'French' philosophy when she implies that the Russian people in each Baltic state, residents now for some 50-odd years and including new generations whose home is Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia as the case may be, should have the same rights *tout court* as the native-speakers. On hearing her in 1996, my immediate reaction was amazement at her disregard for the emotional sentiments of colonial experience. It is her universalist inspiration and philosophy, together with its own 'imperialism of the mind,' that I challenge: for I consider it to be as naïve as perilous in certain contexts.

In circumstances where the bulk of the Russian population entered the land as part of an invading force in recent times, in my view, the political leanings displayed by Verdery spell extreme danger. Their very pureness of liberalism, their utopian cast, endangers the prospect of liberal institutions taking root in such lands. It amounts to an application of principles extended to migrants to Britain, USA and Australia quite blindly to political and societal conditions that are radically different.[46] Speaking from a position in the 'South' in today's global order, I regard Verdery's stance to be a classic instance of liberalism undermining itself. In effect, Verdery's 'French' programme asks the Latvians to extend the same rights to a conquering people who had dominated them recently, who had (mostly) not bothered to learn the Latvian language and who constituted a substantial and powerful minority within their new domain. To demand this, in my reading, is to ask for a great deal and not allow for the embodied experience of numerous Native Latvians in recent times. To demand this is to discount their experience of subordination.

The Latvian analogy, on the other hand, cannot be extended blindly to other 'like' situations because no two histories and circumstances are precisely similar. The comparative juxtapositions in this essay have a restricted purpose: they are meant to be sensitizing instruments that caution each other and bring the wholesale and blind application of 'French' political theory into question.

My argument, therefore, leans towards pragmatism, a modification of foundational principles in order to prevent a descent into reactionary excesses and to establish case-specific forms of *modus vivendi*. As such, it supports the strategic adjustments behind the constitutional or political compromises in Malaya/Malaysia (1957, 1965, 1969/71) and in Fiji (1970, 1990 and 1997) that pragmatically weighed the political scales heavily in favour of the Malays and the Native Fijians respectively.

For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the political history and constitutional order of these two states, let me indicate that the political negotiations leading to independence from Britain involved bargains that installed statutory discrimination in favour of Malays and (Native) Fijians in each of these countries. Spatial constraints do not permit me the luxury of a comprehensive summary, so let me provide some select details to underline this point.

The emergence of Malaya (as it was then called) as a nation state on 31 August 1957 was preceded by a local political 'bargain' in 1955 that informally recognised the principle of *Ketuanan Melayu*, or 'Malay Dominance' (Cheah Boon Kheng 2002: 237). In consequence the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya accorded the Malays a 'special position,' made Malay the official language and Islam the official religion. While the category 'Malay' was defined, it was left to the definition of 'Federal citizenship' for others to

secure citizenship rights. The secondary status of others was also marked by Article 153 (1), a clause that reserved quotas for Malays for public service jobs, licences and scholarships (Cheah Boon Kheng 2003). Evaluating the situation in 1972, Esman observed that in 1965 the quota system effectively secured a ratio of eight Malays to one non-Malay within the Malayan Home and Foreign Services. He added that this imbalance was "an aspect of hegemony in government to counterbalance Chinese predominance in the economic and political fields", and served as a "symbol of second-class citizenship" accorded to the various groups of non-Malay (Esman 1972: 75). His investigations also led him to the verdict that "communal issues in Malaysia are so salient, interwoven into every issue of public policy and public management, that they must be explicitly calculated in every policy decision" (Esman 1972: 4, Cheah Boon Kheng 2003: 9-10). In recent decades this principle has been even more sharply stressed by the deep currents of Islamic fundamentalism and the push to make Malaysia into "an Islamic state" of a theocratic character (Martinez 2002).

In summary view, therefore, in Malaysia today the *Melayu* or Malays constitute an apical and dominant *Core*, with the Chinese, Indians and others as Ancillaries, or what I would call the *Et cetera*, around the hierarchically located *Core*. Paraphrasing the words of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Cheah Boon Kheng (2002: 240) has recently noted that until the Malays are willing to give up their special privileges, "*Ketuanan Melayu* will remain part of the Malaysian political system and *Bangsa Malaysia* [the idea of a multi-ethnic Malaysian community] seems remote".[47]

Albeit in different manner, this situation also holds true of the political order installed in Fiji at the moment of independence in 1970 and reiterated forcefully by the events of the late 1980s, and then eventually embodied in the new constitution of 1997. In deliberately oversimplified terms one could say that the negotiations leading to Fijian independence in the 1960s involved four key sets of 'players': the Native Fijian leaders centred upon the Alliance Party, the spokesmen for the Indo-Fijians leading the Federation Party,[48] local European interests and the imperial British authorities who were ostensibly an impartial umpire, but in fact operating as a player within the local ferment. The constitution of 1970 was a compromise that set up a bicameral legislature with a Legislative Council that was largely chosen by separate ethnic constituencies. Critically, the colonial recognition of "Fijian paramountcy" was re-inscribed by the recognition of a Council of Chiefs as a "supreme advisory body" that could (a) nominate both the President and Vice-President of State and (b) nominate a few members to the Senate, members who had the power to veto legislation affecting Fijian land, customs, customary rights and institutions. In effect, the hegemony of the Native Fijians was secured by these arrangements. According to information I

receive from Brij Lal in 2003, the constitution of 1997 reiterated and thus entrenched these principles and procedures.

Even a cursory reading of the political history of the new states of Fiji and Malaysia indicates that the leaders of the non-indigenous ethnic groups made pragmatic compromises that installed the principal indigenous communities in dominant positions as the British vacated the position of imperial satrap. In brief, what occurred in both countries was my Position C.

The subsequent story of Fiji presents a potential challenge to my argument that such pragmatic adjustments prevent a slide into political excess of a violent kind. The *modus vivendi* adopted in Fiji in 1970 after political negotiations in the 1960s did not prevent military rule from 1987-1990 brought about by coup d'etat in 1987 (see Brij Lal 1988), nor did it prevent another political crisis centred on George Speight and his backers later on. These eruptions, however, emerged from the peculiarities of electoral outcomes that had not been anticipated by those constitution-makers seeking to institutionalise Native Fijian hegemony. These surprising results generated a right-wing backlash. These events display precisely the type of dangerous extremism that Path C is meant to obviate. The question at issue, therefore, is whether they negate my argument or whether they mark the failure of particular forms of Path C? Only a specialist in Fijian affairs can address this question. But the political set-up initiated in 1997 after the report of the Reeves Commission would suggest that pragmatic paths were deemed unavoidable.

'Pragmatism,' however, must cut both ways. Those who benefit from Path C, the Malays and Native Fijians,[49] must also step forth into the future with eyes on the horizon and with a good dose of self-reflexivity. The energies of the disadvantaged citizens within their nation state are surely resources that yield investments, both economic and beyond economics. For the Native Fijians to consider themselves superior because they possess the phenomenological advantage of height and bulky size, or because the Indo-Fijians were formerly described as 'coolies,' would be to implant attitudes of racism that are as detestable as those found among so many White settlers in the heyday of imperialism. To inscribe measures of discrimination into stone, to entrench hegemony, is to court debilitating futures. There are worrying signs in Malaysia even though electoral necessities encourage ruling parties to assuage the factions representing Chinese and Indian Malaysian interests. Despite the fact that Malays have secured a significant proportion of the high-prestige professional and administrative jobs, there seems to be a tightening of the screws in favour of Malay *bumiputera* as a result of the pressures mounted by fundamentalist Islamic forces.[50] This trend, moreover, is occurring in a context in which major demographic shift has been taking place because of the lower birth rate among Chinese Malaysians and the in-migration (legal and illegal) of peoples from Indonesia who speak dialects of

Malay and can easily intermarry or pass as Malay. The proportion of Chinese Malaysians appears to have declined from 37% to 25%, but this is difficult to chart because census operations are a political hot potato and subject to administrative occlusion.

Such trends can be counterproductive within any nation state. There must, in other words, be a readiness among dominant groups to jettison some facets of institutionalised privilege over the long run as circumstances change. In this regard the ongoing contemporary histories of Latvia and Estonia may provide welcome lessons.

Integrative Pragmatism in Latvia & Estonia

Though disenfranchised initially, it appears that the Russian settlers are in the process of being re-integrated into the new nation states, especially in Estonia. 'French' observers tend to take this rather for granted. But I wish to underline how remarkable a story it is for those with 'Southern eyes' so that observers can decipher the factors that have aided this process. My review of Melvin's early article on the subject (1995) indicates that the following facets have materially assisted the development of more inclusive political processes.

1. Because the migration was under the aegis of the Soviet Union there was "a strange admixture of Soviet and Russian culture" among the settlers. By the 1990s many Russians-in-Latvia and Estonia had lost their cultural roots so that "most Russian-speakers [had] great difficulty identifying themselves with any one particular culture." In other words, "a high degree of reverse Balticization" and "de-ethnicization" seems to have occurred among these immigrants (Melvin 1995: 27, 30).

2. Several "Russian speaking settlers emerged from the independence struggles of the 1980s "as the most market-oriented and democratic of the settler communities in the former Soviet Union" (Melvin 1995: 53, Plakans 1997: 246, 260). In my vocabulary, then, the process of embourgeoisement among the settlers has aligned them with modern trends and the principles of institutionalised democracy.

3. In Latvia there has been a propensity for intermarriage: "in 1988 33.1% of marriages involving Latvians were of mixed nationality" (Melvin 1995: 34). This is a stunning figure to my eyes – and surely stunning to all those in Sri Lanka, Fiji and Malaysia — and its influence cannot be underestimated.

4. Again, in Latvia, as a small but momentous beginning, "there has been a growing tendency among Russian parents to send their children ... to Latvian-language kindergartens and primary schools"

even though they have the option of sending them to Russian-media facilities (Plakans 1997: 284).

5. In both states, moreover, there has been the osmosis of values that hold the high moral ground in the European firmament; those identified in shorthand within this essay as "French." In a political context in which the Baltic states were (are) seeking "integration into international, especially European institutions" [such as the European Union], their leaders had to moderate the legislation discriminating against the recent migrants (Melvin 1995: 55, Plakans 1997: 285).

6. In the crucible years 1989-91 Russian-speakers in both Estonia and Latvia "demonstrated increasing support for Baltic independence." The election results in Latvia in the early 1990s indicate that some Russian-speakers voted for ethnic Latvians rather than Russian Latvian candidates, while sociological surveys indicate that nearly half the Russian-speakers in both countries did not consider themselves to be citizens of USSR (Melvin 1995: 35-36).

7. A law passed in Latvia in late 1993 enabled "400,000 of the 700,00 registered non-Latvian residents of Latvia to apply for naturalization" in a process that should see completion by the end of 2003 (Melvin 1995: 249, Plakans 1997: 249).

Melvin's brief review of the two countries suggests that by the mid-1990s the process of incorporation of the Russian settlers has proceeded furthest in Estonia where the Russian-speaking populations were developing "a new non-Soviet identity" and revealing "growing loyalty for Estonia" (Melvin 1995: 53, 55). In Latvia this trend is less advanced. The administrative services have been purged of Russian-speakers because of the requirement that bureaucrats be fluent in Latvian. In the result, the Russian-speakers are finding themselves "at the mercy of civil servants who are unaware of their problems or opposed to their presence in the country" (Melvin 1995: 54) (Note that in 1989, only 34, 249 out of a total of 279,000 non-Latvians, ie. 15.1 % spoke Latvian as their first language.) So the situation has not been without continuing tensions, not least the fear of "national endangerment" arising from tiny states sitting adjacent to a huge and powerful neighbour. But, for all that, the moderate and inclusive policies that are in process in Estonia and Latvia convey lessons of pragmatic re-adjustment for all of us in the global South. The most impressive aspect of these ongoing developments is the manner in which extremist forces within the hegemonic indigenous majority seem to have been contained so that integrative adjustments are stimulated within both sides of the ethnic divide.

Notes

1. Labourers also came across from Southern India under the "kangany system" to man the plantations in the Central Highlands and eventually became a more or less settled community comprising 603.000 or 13.4% of the population in 1921 and 780, 589 or 11.7% of the population in 1946. This body was identified as "Indian Tamils." Guess estimates suggest that today they are perhaps 8% of the population (Bass 2001: 1).

2. See Roberts *et al* 1989. Also see Roberts 1974 and 'Elite formation', 1979. Technically the local "bourgeoisie" included the British merchants and planters, but they were not normally considered "Ceylonese." Indeed, the Low Country Products Association was set up c. 1908 as a counter to the Chamber of Commerce; an outfit that was totally British.

3. Embodied in the Sinhala Only platform of the MEP coalition that swept to power in the elections of 1956, a turning point in Sri Lankan history. However, an undercurrent of Sinhala nationalist thinking had continued to express itself in the period 1920s to 1940s through such associations as the Sinhala Maha Sabha and within the Left Movement as well as the Ceylon National Congress. For aspects, see Roberts 1977. The major split in the LSSP in 1953 was due to the language of administration issue; and the eventual shift towards Sinhala chauvinism by Philip Gunawardena's wing of the Trotskyist thinking was an incipient dimension of the Left Movement from the 1930s. If one looks at the political biography of individuals such as Somaweera Chandrasiri this becomes apparent.

4. The proportion has increased because of the out-migration of Indian Tamils as well as Sri Lankan Tamils in a context that has also promoted considerable out-migration of families from all ethnic groups for economic reasons. About 400,000 "Indian Tamils" were repatriated in the 1960s after the Sirima-Shastri Pact (Bass 2001: 12).

5. It is my impression that this view was widely shared right through into the 1960s and believed by individuals from all communities. In recent decades, archaeology and history have become a battleground of politics as protagonists attempt to claim first occupation of the island. Thus, Sinhala and Tamil writers seek to out-*Ur* each other and present fabulous assertions spun from their own mind. In the meantime, emerging work by archaeologists from Germany and Sri Lanka is beginning to reveal that the civilisation in the first millennium BC was not as undeveloped as the Sinhala/Pali chronicles

imply. However, there is little doubt in my mind that by the early centuries AD most of the people in the main centres of civilisation in the north, east and south east of the island were speakers of *Sîhala* (that is, what we call proto-Sinhala). The evidence of the foreign monk scholar, Buddhaghôsa, in the 5th century and that of the source known as the *Dhampiyâ Atuvâ Gätapadaya* (probably 10th century A D) is quite explicit on this point (see Gunawardana 1995: 41-42 for quotation from the latter). Again, Indrapala's early work concludes that (a) the toponymic evidence involving over a thousand place names of distinctly Sinhalese origin "in Tamil garb" indicates that the settlers in the Jaffna Peninsula during the Anurâdhapura period were Sinhalese; and that (b) it seems unlikely that there were many Tamil settlers in the island other than the major ports and the capital city before the tenth century (1965: 273 & 282). Significantly, Indrapala's dissertation at the library of the University of London has disappeared since I studied it in 1995. As significantly, and quite poignantly, Indrapala, who is Sri Lankan Tamil by upbringing, retired prematurely from academia after rising to the position of Dean, Arts Faculty, at the University of Jaffna and has since become a recluse in Sydney. I suspect that pressures from Tamil activists have been such as to enforce these directions in his life-world.

6   Diary extract according to notes taken by James T. Rutnam.

7   Ideas of sovereignty in the pre-capitalist era in Sri Lanka differed from those familiar to us. I contend that the forms of allegiance can be described as "tributary overlordship" marked by rites of homage such as *däkum*. Thus, the Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom looked upon the Dutch as "their guardians of the seacoast," a conception that the Dutch catered to so that they could secure the commodity cinnamon. For aspects of this thinking, see Roberts 2002.

8   For example, *Sinhala Jâtiya*, 1 June 1913 & 30 March 1915 and *Sinhala Bauddhaya*, 2 Jan. 1915. Dharmapala even wrote a piece entitled "*kocci demalâ*" (*Sinhala Bauddhaya*). See Roberts *et al* 1989: 10-21.

9   Address to the Sinhala Sahodara Samitiya on 30th July 1910.

10   There is no independent confirmation that Vijaya ever existed (Mendis 1965). In my reading he represents an eponymous ancestor and the story is a genesis tale of the same order as that of Adam and Eve.

11   In many contexts of usage *shistâchâraya* and *sanskrutiya-* (culture) are more or less synonymous – not unlike the English words themselves.

12   The ethos of Buddhism, of course, underlined this devaluation of hunting (and fishing) because the trade involved the taking of life.

13   This section is informed by vestigial memories of past readings of Burton Stein, Conklin, Geertz, Leach, Boserup and Farmer. It is also underpinned by my previous engagements with the agrarian history of Sri Lanka and British India.

14   Memo from Peter Sutton, December 2003. In further clarification Sutton says: "Human beings came later, conceptually if not temporally. That is, most, if not all, Aboriginal historiography, classically speaking, claims immigrant status for those who discovered or left behind the world which is now held by those who belong to bits of it. However, the Dreaming period is usually thought of as just beyond living memory of the oldest kin — maybe 150 years ago at the most, in calendric terms. It is modern political discourse which emphasises 40-60,000 years of continuous occupation, and which thus recognises the role of science in these politics."

15   Memo from Peter Sutton, December 2003.

16   From ATSIC, 'Matter of Fact', website: www.atsic.gov.au. In addition there were 28,744 persons who defined themselves as Torres Strait Islanders. The latter are considered a distinct "people," but fall within the rubric "First Australians" together with the "Aboriginal people."

17   I do not use the term "descent groups" in the archetypical form deployed by early anthropologists so much as an approximation of the factors that bind localised and named groups together in differentiation from contiguous others. Some Aboriginal groups today refer to themselves as "tribes," but others resist such a label vehemently

18   Rose 1992: 187-89. Note that Cook never ventured into this inland region. But having grasped the importance of Captain Cook for the stories related by White Australians, the VRD elders clearly deployed him as a trope and totemic emblem for the White order they have been subject to (see Roberts, 'Histories', 1997: 373-75).

19   This note is informed by a Memo from Peter Sutton, who observes that, "as far as I know, only a part of the Native Title Act remains regarded as a form of statutory racial discrimination."

20   I recommend a viewing of the recent film *Rabbit Proof Fence* for a presentation of one such story from relatively recent times.

21   This verdict is the product of 'permeation,' the seeping in over the years of information through conversations with colleagues working on Aboriginal issues as well as the intermittent absorption of media

stories. More specifically, I have run this argument before Rod Lucas of the Dept of Anthropology, University of Adelaide and profited from his remarks. Guided by him, I refer to two publications that would provide outsiders with an introduction to the issues at stake: namely, D. Smyth 1994 and Isabel McBryde (ed.) 1985.

22 My initial comments in "Foundational Premises…" were informed by discussions with Fiona Magowan and Peter Sutton as well as the impressions I have gathered over the years from debates in Australian circles. In my first formulation I spoke of the Aboriginal connections with their land as being "intuitive." But Magowan has questioned this usage, while supporting the thrust of the argument: "I'm not sure that Yolngu would consider their connections with country intuitive; in fact they would name what we label 'intuitive response' quite firmly as ancestral power 'märr'. For them, the manifestation of spiritual presence or sentience is not an airy-fairy occurrence but a particular type of ancestral reality which can be prompted by human action and intervention. The problem with intuition is that in Western concepts human agency seems irrelevant and that we are unsuspecting recipients of some 'coincidental occurrence/feeling/whatever'. Therefore the idea of intuition is actually ours when we try to convey some parallel in Western terms. Intuition is consubstantive in Yolngu society" (McGowan's email memo, my emphasis). This kind of note should be mandatory reading for all political scientists.

23 Information conveyed via email by Fiona Magowan. Note that the concept of "ownership," as used by Aborigines and/or specialist investigators is not quite the same as "ownership" within a market system with property concepts.

24 Without specialist knowledge of local politics, my account of the recent emergence of Kaurna symbols is probably superficial. It does not, as Sutton notes in criticism, "go behind the scenes and recognise the competitive politics within Adelaide Aboriginal networks which energises such efforts, and the prizes of recognition and money that come from such recognition."

25 Andaya 2002: 23-24. The summary paraphrase that follows is based on this work. Note, however, that Andaya relies on such authorities as P. Bellwood and G. Benjamin for the archaeological and linguistic material.

26 Referring to a forthcoming article by Benjamin, entitled "On becoming tribal…." in a book edited by Benjamin and Cynthia Chou. Also see Laird 1979.

27 It is my speculation, a logical one on *a priori* grounds, that the Orang Asli were a forgotten people who lacked voice during the negotiations in the 1940s to 1960s leading to the constitutional reorganisations of that period. However, the prominent role accorded to the concept *bumiputera* in Malaysian politics has given them considerable mileage in recent times, while the global lobbies for indigenous peoples have encouraged them to claim a distinct ethnic space that could even extend to delimited pieces of territory (Andaya 2002: 25, 44).

28 *Census of Ceylon, 1946* (Colombo: Government Press, 1951) Table 28. It is possible, of course, that some Väddas were not reached by the enumerators, or that many classified themselves as Sinhalese or Tamil.

29 During a seminar at the Dept. of Anthropology, University of Adelaide on 27 May 2003 where I presented a version of the original UKM paper.

30 A caveat has to be inserted here for the Väddâ. The Sinhala worldview seems to accord them potency and the Väddâs were an important part of state rituals in the pre-modern period (e.g. that of the Kingdom of Kandy) and even today are figuratively represented in the Äsala Perahära and the Kataragama festival. But there are significant ambivalences because of their association with "wildness" (*val*) and lack of culture. For an illustration of disparagement, see Leonard Woolf's fictional *Village in the Jungle*, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, pp. 27-28 (originally 1913).

31 The older strands of racist pejoration still prevail in certain circles and are occasionally voiced on talkback radio for instance. But these voices are aware that what they say is not "proper" and are under challenge.

32 For the sake of simplicity, I leave out those identified as Indians, Ceylonese (Tamils), Sinhalese, et cetera in Malaysia.

33 In English-speak the term "Muslim" was only adopted in the 1930s. Till then "Mohammedan" was the label used. I adopt the term "Mohammedan Moor" in order to distinguish these Muslims (*yon*) from the Malays (*ja*), a distinction that is quite clear in the Sinhala language labels.

34 For facets of their lifeworld, see Bass 2001 and Daniel 1997. They numbered roughly 1.1 million or 6 per cent of the total population in 1981. Mostly disfranchised in 1948/49, they appear to have secured the vote in principle, and I believe mostly in fact, since governmental measures were initiated after 1977. Email note, 29 May 2003. As a proviso related to meaning 3, "namely, "the *vanua*," Sahlins added

this line: "Certain clans (heralds, notably) from such people. They are the elders. The chiefs come later, are gone, 'children'." Cf. the definition for *vanua* provided by Brij Lal: "land in both the physical and psychological sense of attachment to a place [and] a unit composed of several villages of a *yavusa,*" (1992: 379) – the *yavusa* being a corporate descent group that is the third level of a segmentary structure of lineages.

35   Email note, 29 May 2003. As a proviso related to meaning 3, "namely, 'the *vanua*', Sahlins added this line: "Certain clans (heralds, notably) from such people. They are the elders. The chiefs come later, are gone, 'children'." Cf. the definition for *vanua* provided by Brij Lal: "land in both the physical and psychological sense of attachment to a place [and] a unit composed of several villages of a *yavusa,*" (1992: 379) – the *yavusa* being a corporate descent group that is the third level of a segmentary structure of lineages.

36   Email note from Sahlins, 29 May 2003 and Sahlins 1985: 83, 86, 87, 95.

37   Second email note from Sahlins, June 2003.

38   Lewâ refers to "authority;" *masa* to "barkcloth;" *mana* to "god, spirit, potent power;" and *tamata dina* to "true people" in a manner that is synonymous with *i taukei* (Sahlins 1985: 95, 85, 83). Note that in another context, that of the Solomon Islands, *mana* means "personal power" or "spiritual power" and is thereby linked to "moral guardianship" (White 1991: 177, 107).

39   The emergence of this term, "the Law" written with a capital L, as a synonym of specific Dreaming stories is itself an interesting window on the history of Aboriginal relations with the state machinery of the White settler invaders. A tracing of its etymology and usages could be instructive.

40   The Native Fijians, as I have noted, are not united or homogeneous, but there is, I suspect, a broad band of support within this ethnic category for the privileges they have in relation to landed rights, that is, the lack of statutory equality in relation to property which disadvantages Indian Fijians.

41   Data from the internet and Verdery 1998: footnote. Note, too, that in 1989 "the Latvians were minorities in the seven largest cities of their country" (Melvin 1995: 31). Melvin's population figures for the year 1989 present the Russians-in-Latvia as 34% and the Latvians as 52%, while the Russians-in-Estonia were 30.3% and the Estonians were 61.3% (1995: 32-33).

42   This supposition was on *a priori* grounds. Melvin's essay indicates that my guesswork was on target. He speaks of "powerful ethno-

political impulse[s]" emerging in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the push for narrow definitions of citizenship as well as forces that saw the Russian-speakers as "the fifth column of Russian-Soviet influence" (1995: 25-26, 37-38). Though written in clinical style, tell-tale signs within Melvin's article indicate that his political persuasion is based on the same liberal "French" philosophy informing Katherine Verdery's comments.

43   Note that the constitution of Slovenia has a three-tiered system of privileges differentiating the (i) Slovenes, (ii) "autochthonous" Hungarians and Italians, and (iii) others (Verdery 1998: 295). Japan, too, has tiered citizenship that makes Koreans of long residence and Russians in the northernmost isles into "second-class citizens" (information from Felix Patrikeeff of the Department of Politics, Adelaide University). Relevant details for Malaysia and Fiji are provided in the main body of my article.

44   I initially penned a manuscript essay called "Foundational Premises…" on the basis of my recollections as a think-piece for the Marga Institute's deliberations on the Sri Lankan situation. Since then, Verdery's paper has appeared in print (1998).

45   This is a twist on Karl Marx, *German ideology*, London, 1938, p. 28.

46   Verdery is not entirely blind to the difference. She explains that she uses the term "ethno-national" for the peoples of East Europe "so as to emphasize that in this region the idea of 'nation' has long had primarily an *ethnic* sense rather than a political one more familiar to North Americans" (1998: 293).

47   This observation seems to undermine Cheah's earlier insistence that the "bonds of citizenship, the Malaysian Constitution and the sense of sharing one nation, of 'my country' among the various ethnic communities are increasingly evident in present-day Malaysia" (2002: 234). This latter position seems far too benign.

48   The Federation Party included some Native Fijian factions, while part-Europeans and Chinese were among the minor interest groups. For practical purposes the latter have been merged in recent decades with the "European" racial constituency.

49   I have not referred to the Sinhalese because the situation in Sri Lanka has moved beyond the stages one finds in Fiji and Malaysia. For one, the "Indian Tamils" of yesteryear have had the vote for two decades. For another, the peace negotiations now in progress are a salvage operation to keep the Sri Lanka Tamils within a confederation or federation of some sort. In this sense, the Sri Lankan Tamils have secured their rights by violent means—means

deemed legitimate by them (and some backers outside) in the face of both administrative discrimination and sporadic pogroms or riots.

50 Shamsul identifies two strands of thinking, namely, "the radical Islamic bumiputera group" and "the 'nationalist faction' within the bumiputera circle of bureaucratic intellectuals" (2003: 1 and 5). However, it would appear more meaningful to refer to the Parti Islam se Malaysia (or PAS), the principal opposition party, as the flag-bearer for these forces, widely supported by *ulama* as well as some regional parties in control of state governments. In the result, the ruling party, UMNO, has also watered down its secular veneer and adopted fundamentalist rhetoric (see Martinez 2002).

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Chapter 4

Between the Rock and the Hard Place
Fiji at Independence

Brij V. Lal

Three-legged Stool

The Union Jack came down for the last time in Fiji on 10 October 1970, exactly ninety-six years after Fiji had become a British Crown Colony. Prince Charles, representing the Queen, was on hand to deliver Fiji's constitutional documents to the new prime minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Foreign dignitaries from some thirty countries watched and applauded the new nation on its way, among them astronaut Michael Collins representing President Nixon, New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Keith Holyoke, and the leaders of Samoa, Tonga and the Cook islands. In Suva harbour, warships from four navies watched the unfolding proceedings. Throughout the country, school children flew the new miniature independence flag, navy blue with the Union Jack on the left top hand corner and Fiji's coat of arms on the right.

Independence was the continuation of the journey Fiji began at the time of Cession in 1874, Prime Minister Mara assured his guests and the nation. "We became dependent in a warm spirit of friendliness and trust and we become independent in the same warm spirit" (Mara 1970). "Nothing that is happening today," he continued, "can change the warm feelings of our people for the Crown, the United Kingdom and its people." In this respect, Fiji's experience of decolonisation resonated with the wider Pacific experience. Independence there came late, was orderly, peaceful and amicably negotiated, leaving largely intact the colonial structures and the ideological underpinnings which sustained them (Davidson 1971, Larmour 1983). The contrast with the experience of Southeast Asia, South Asia and most parts of Africa could not have been greater.

The peaceful transfer of power was welcome, not least because it had seemed a distant dream just a year before, but it left the major problems

facing Fiji unresolved. The consultations about independence were held in secrecy in Fiji, and the constitutional agreement reached in London was never subjected to public debate. Deeply held views about the structure of the electoral system, for instance, which had bedevilled Fiji politics throughout the 1960s, were shelved. The fears and anxieties of the different communities, their contested understanding of what the new independent state should be about, were camouflaged under a thin veneer of contrived national unity. Fiji at independence was not so much a cohesive multiracial nation as it was a wary coalition of ethnic groups each with their own distinctive, often divergent and sometimes diametrically opposed, understandings of their role and place in the national polity. Controversial issues were avoided, elided or silenced by self-censorship or threats of retribution. They would return to haunt the nation. The tragedy of Fiji at independence was that it was trapped by a failed past and unable to articulate an encompassing vision for its people that enlarged the common space of national citizenship.

Fiji's colonial self-image, and its self-image at the time of independence, was of a three-legged stool (Sukuna 1980). The three legs were the indigenous Fijian, the Indo-Fijian and the European communities. Each of them was seen as distinct and separate in their culture, history and economic position, largely homogenous in their own internal social and cultural configurations, but interlinked to the overarching national structure, making their unique contribution through their own separate channels. The indigenous Fijians provided the land for economic development, the Indo-Fijians provided the labour and Europeans the capital. Since the contribution of the three groups was deemed to be equally valid, no one group alone (except the indigenous Fijians, but more about that later) was to enjoy privileges and rights greater than others. Equality of group representation, irrespective of size, was to be the basis of political representation. And the colonial state positioned itself as the neutral, benevolent, disinterested arbiter of conflict.

This was a comforting metaphor for a complex, conflicted reality. None of the three ethnic groups was homogenous. Religious and cultural divisions racked the Indo-Fijian community. Europeans feared being swamped by Part-Europeans with whom they were lumped together for voting purposes. Class and regional differences divided the Fijians, as they do today. There was no equivalence – or balance, to use the colonial vocabulary – between Indo-Fijian labour on the one hand and European capital on the other. Nor was colonial rule as benevolent as its advocates argued. The metaphor served the interests of the colonial officialdom, but did disservice to Fiji's complex history. It is to the evolution of that complex history that I now turn.

The foundations of modern Fiji were laid when it became a British colony in 1874. Reluctantly acquired, Britain expected Fiji to become

economically self-sustaining in the quickest possible time. But the conditions for rapid economic development were absent. European planters, numbering around two thousand in the mid-1870s, were insolvent. Indigenous Fijians were dispirited and restless, having lost a third of the population to an epidemic of measles accidentally introduced from Australia. Large parts of fertile Fijian lands were being claimed by European settlers.

Fiji's first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, promulgated a set of policies which settled Fiji's future for more than a century. He began a system of 'indirect rule' designed, he said, to "seize the spirit in which native institutions had been framed, and develop to the utmost extent the capacities of the people for the management of their own affairs, without exciting their suspicions or destroying their self-respect" (Chapman 1964, Legge 1958, France 1969). To that end, he formalised a Council of Chiefs to advise him on Fijian matters. The Council, constitutionally entrenched in the 1997 constitution, retains its status as the supreme advisory body to government on matters affecting the Fijian community. It nominates the President and Vice President of the Republic, and its nominees in the Senate enjoy the power of veto over all legislation affecting Fijian land, customs and customary rights.

Second, Gordon's policies ensured that 83 percent of all land remained in Fijian hands in inalienable right. Today, as Crown land has come under the jurisdiction of the Native Land Trust Board, more than 90 percent of all land in Fiji is owned by the indigenous community. Gordon decreed that the Fijian people should be freed from the pressures of commercial employment and allowed to progress at their own pace in their own traditional surroundings, paying tax in kind rather than cash, and tending to their lifestyle in their age-old fashion. For nearly a century, the Fijians had their own separate court system, their own provincial administration, native regulations and strictly-observed schedule of work in the villages. Their isolation from the mainstream of colonial society was almost complete.

Gordon's policies were well-intentioned, but over time they became encrusted in orthodoxy (France 1969, Thomas 1990). A once fluid situation, represented by dynastic wars and warring chiefdoms, was frozen by fiat, uniform codes and practices imposed on a diverse and complex society where none had existed before, and certain collaborating regions privileged in leadership and social status over others. Chiefly hierarchy and privileges were entrenched and enforced at law. Gordon had intended his policies to be reviewed after twenty-five years-enough time, he felt, for a distressed community to achieve some stability. But when the moment came, officials baulked and the opportunity for review and reform was missed. Sadly, Fijians watched, cocooned in their subsistence sector, as the world around them changed and moved on.

From the very beginning, Fijians were led to believe that in the colony their interests would be 'paramount,' and the phrase 'paramountcy of Fijian interests,' mistakenly attributed to the Deed of Cession, was often invoked both by the Fijians themselves and by European settlers to block change. But the phrase was intended to be used in a protective sense. That is, in the management of Fijian affairs, the government would give 'paramount' importance to the views of the Fijian people and their leaders. Over the course of the 20th century, though, the phrase came to acquire another, more assertive, meaning – that in the broader scheme of things, Fijians would enjoy rights and privileges over and above those of their fellow citizens.

To solve the problem of capital, Gordon turned overseas. Having seen the success of plantation economies in the Caribbean and Mauritius – he had been governor of Trinidad and Mauritius before coming to Fiji – he chose the plantation economy as his preferred mode of economic development, and sugar cane as the plantation crop. He invited the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company to extend its operations in Fiji, which it did in 1882, and remained there until 1973 (Moynagh, 1980). To work the plantations, Gordon imported Indian indentured labour. Between 1879, when emigration began, and 1916 when it ended, more than 60,000 men and women and children arrived in the colony (Gillion 1962, Lal 2000). When their five year contracts expired, the government encouraged them to stay on. Most did. From the experience of indenture emerged a new society, more egalitarian, enterprising and driven by desperation, seeking, as WEH Stanner puts it 'peaceful seepage into every opening left unclosed and a tenacious defence of every position once occupied' (Stanner 1953: 179). Isolated, struggling, self-absorbed and vulnerable, the Indo-Fijian community was just as caught up in its own internal affairs, changing and adjusting to the requirements of their new adopted homeland, and just as myopic about its long term interests as the Fijian community.

Indentured emigration was sanctioned by the Government of India on the broad understanding that the indentured labourers who decided to settle in the colonies would enjoy rights equal to the other British subjects there. This assurance was periodically re-instated, as in 1910: "The whole tenor of the correspondence between India and the colony shows that it was on this condition that indentured immigration in Fiji has been allowed in the past, and any measures leading towards lowering the political status of the immigrants or reducing their economic freedom would, in our opinion, involve a breach of faith with those affected" (Lal 1997: 6). Throughout their political struggle in the 20th century, Indo-Fijian leaders would continue to cite the principle of parity in support of their cause.

After the end of their indentures, the freed Indians settled on leased land, and continued to work mainly in the sugar industry as growers and mill

workers, as their descendants did for several generations. The community diversified and grew, outnumbering the indigenous Fijians in the total population in the mid-1940s and spawning publicly aired and politically charged fears about 'Indian domination' (Gillion 1977). But while remaining on the land, the Indo-Fijians established schools, often without state assistance, seeing education as the way out of the vagaries of life on leased land. In time, most settlements had a primary and even a secondary school whose students filled the junior ranks of the civil service, and from the 1950s onwards, the professions as lawyers, doctors, nurses, and accountants. Fijians, too, had their own schools but their educational success was limited. Cultural factors, emphasising group solidarity and the virtue of subordinating individual interests to communal interests, rural isolation and poor educational facilities played a part. Moreover, Fijian leaders actively discouraged 'academic' education for ordinary Fijians. The few opportunities for higher education were reserved for people of chiefly rank. As the most stark example of this, the Great Council of Chiefs declined to offer a university scholarship to Rusiate Nayacakalou, a commoner who later emerged as the most brilliant Fiji-born social scientist of the 20th century (Firth & Tarte 2001: 131-2).

If the disparity in the educational opportunities for the two communities was one problem that would haunt Fiji in future, another was the mono-racial character of its schools. The Queen Victoria School was exclusively Fijian while most schools in the sugar cane belt were predominantly Indo-Fijian. Multiracial schools were mostly Christian and in urban areas. The children of the two communities, then, attending their own racially-oriented schools, and firmly tethered to their own cultural ethos and values, had no opportunity to acquire a knowledge of each others' culture and language, and of any understanding of the deeper impulses which drove them. And yet, students from these schools would be called upon later to play a vital role on the national stage, a task for which, by virtue of their cross-culturally limited education, they were spectacularly ill-suited. It is no wonder that Fiji has faltered in its post-independence journey. The tragedy is that little is being done even now to rectify the situation.

The tiny European population occupied the apex—the colonial social and economic pinnacle. They dominated the retail and wholesale commerce of the colony, owned copra plantations and shipping companies and occupied a pride of place in colonial administration. They had their own racially segregated clubs and exclusive voluntary associations and schools. In the 20th century, they began to move to urban towns and centres. The community was not homogenous, though, with fine lines of demarcation differentiating the various nationalities that comprised it. Europeans of all hues saw themselves as superior to Part-Europeans who, for political purposes, were

grouped with them. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some prominent Europeans, dissatisfied with the policies of the local government, tried to have Fiji annexed to New Zealand, but when that alternative vanished, they agitated for a privileged place in colonial politics. Paramountcy for Fijians, Parity for Indo-Fijians and Privilege for Europeans: these three conflicting ideas informed the political discourse in colonial Fiji.

Political Representation

From the very beginning, the electoral system in Fiji was race-based (Lal 1992, Ali 1977). The colonial government saw this as natural and desirable. In part, it reflected its own interests: with the three communities locked in their own separate compartments, the colonial government could play the role of an impartial referee. Certainly, the government did little to encourage the communities to forge common, multiracial links among themselves. Europeans were given the right of elected representation in 1904, Indo-Fijians in 1929 and indigenous Fijians in 1963. Before then, Fijian representatives in the Legislative Council were nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs. Each group had equal representation irrespective of population size. Under the Letters Patent of 1937, which remained in force until 1963, the three communities had five representatives each. Three of the five Indo-Fijians and Europeans were elected by their group and two nominated by the governor, while all five Fijians were nominated by the chiefs.

This arrangement was frequently questioned after World War II to make the political structure reflect more accurately the demographic, social and economic changes sweeping Fiji, as well as Whitehall's commitment to gradual self-government for the colonies. Specifically, advocates of constitutional change wanted elected representatives to be more directly involved in policy formulation. This agitation for constitutional change was led not by Indo-Fijians, but by a group of Europeans. Their goal was not to remove racial representation; they wanted that maintained. They wanted the system of nomination abolished for everyone, including the Fijians. Fijians were opposed to the extension of election. Why change the system of government when that system was working satisfactorily, they asked? A democratic system of government did not suit the Fijian people (Lal 1997b: 26-39). A universal franchise would be open to abuse and corruption and manipulation by selfish individuals. Chiefs were the natural leaders of their people and it was un-Fijian to trust critical decisions to commoners. Fijian fears about the security of their rights were exacerbated by the rapid increase in Indo-Fijian population, which exceeded the indigenous population for the first time, with the Fijian Affairs Board asking Whitehall to take a firmer line with Indo-Fijian politicians and others agitating for constitutional reform. Colonial rule had been good

for the indigenous community. It had preserved their social and cultural institutions, their way of life. They, therefore, saw no need for change.

Indo-Fijian leaders disagreed. They accepted that the rights and privileges of the indigenous community should not be questioned. Minority rights should be protected, but, as A.D. Patel, the Indo-Fijian member of the Legislative Council, put it in 1946, "minority communities had 'also to appreciate and realise the fact that you cannot expect or hope for privileges and rights in excess of those enjoyed by the majority." He continued to argue for a non-racial common roll form of voting. He had pursued this idea since the late 1920s, and would continue to do so throughout his political life. Common roll, he believed, was the only way forward for a racially divided society, the only way "a common denominator of a political outlook will be developed" (Lal 1997b: 29). But he agreed that a common roll could not be introduced unless everyone accepted the idea. His plea fell on deaf, indeed, hostile ears.

Murmuring of Change

Lack of a consensus about the pace and direction of constitutional change suited the colonial government, placing it in the happy position of not having to take a stand or propose initiatives on a controversial issue. Privately, though, its views were deeply divided. Among many there was sympathy for the Fijian position and a marked lack of it for Indo-Fijians. There was an understanding of the Fijian predicament leavened with a good deal of romanticism about the Fijian way of life (Roth 1953). The fact that Fijian leaders looked to Britain for guidance, after having reposed complete trust in her institutions and policies, increased the sense of obligation and responsibility correspondingly. The government had little understanding of the impulses which drove the Indo-Fijians, for whom colonial rule was not the solution but the cause of Fiji's problems. Remembering the hardship of indenture and acts of petty discrimination, they saw little of value but much to criticise in colonial rule. And they were not averse to airing their grievances outside the colony, much to the irritation of colonial officials.

There was an Indian problem, many agreed, but it could just as easily have been labelled a 'Fijian problem.' As Governor Grantham told London in 1946, "apart from the relative growth in population, it might be better termed the Fijian problem, since it is rather a question of raising the Fijian so that he is able to hold his own with the Indian in the modern world, than holding back the Indian so that he does not outstrip the more easy-going Fijian" (CO 83/252). Fijian interests should be protected, the Commissioner of Labour told the Legislative Council in 1946, but the Fijians had "reciprocal obligations to the other races in this colony to recognise their economic and political aspirations and facilitate their attainment." The Europeans and Indo-Fijians had made their contribution to the Colony "and they are entitled to be admitted

into full membership of the Colonial family." To be sure, there were divisions and distinctions, but the "interests of the three races are not as so many independent threads, but strands which are interwoven into one economic fabric; and each strand is essential to the strength of the whole." To those who invoked real or imagined promises to the Fijian people, he replied:

> The obligation of the Government to the Fijians can be stated comprehensively in a few sentences; we must preserve all that is good of their culture, but not outworn customs and ways of life; we must give them the opportunities and the means to expand that culture; we must protect them from exploitation and disease; and otherwise so govern and lead these people as ultimately to achieve their full integration into the political and economic life of a composite society comprising all the races of the Colony (Legislative Council Debate 1946).

In the 1950s, official sluggishness began to yield with the appointment of Sir Ronald Garvey as governor. Garvey, an old Pacific hand, was independent-minded, self-confident and acutely aware of the local realities. Garvey wanted to move the constitutional train along because he was convinced that "fairly steady progress is being made [towards common citizenship]. Both colour and social barriers are being broken down and the desirability and, indeed, inevitability of unity is taking shape. It is a policy which I constantly preach myself and it is having its imperceptible effect throughout the whole community" (CO 1036/9). In 1954, Garvey asked the Great Council of Chiefs to consider directly electing three of their five representatives to the Legislative Council to give the Fijians an experience of electoral politics. He told the chiefs that the "chiefly system on which so much depends should march with the times and should not ignore – for too long – the modern trend of democracy." To those who invoked the Deed of Cession in support of gradualism and permanent paramountcy of Fijian interests, Garvey responded with characteristic but unprecedented bluntness. He said in 1957:

> Surely the intention of this Deed, acknowledged and accepted by chiefs who were parties to it, was that Fiji should be developed so as to take a significant place in the affairs of the world but that, in the process, the rights and interests of the Fijian people should be respected. To read into the Deed more than that, to suggest, for instance, that the rights and interests of the Fijians should predominate over everything else, does no service either to the Fijian people or to their country. The view, for the Fijians, would mean complete protection and no self-respecting individual race wants that because, ultimately, it means that those subject to it will end up as museum pieces. The Indians are equally eligible to have their interests respected. By

their work and enterprise, the Indians in Fiji have made a great contribution to the development and prosperity of their country, and to the welfare of its people. They are an essential part of the community and it is unrealistic to suppose that they are not or to imagine that the position of Fijians in the world today would benefit by their absence (*Fiji Times*, 15 Oct. 1957).

Lull Before the Storm

Governor Garvey approached the Colonial Office in 1956 with fresh constitutional proposals. His ultimate goal was common Fijian citizenship, he said. Perhaps his most radical proposal was a 'Multi-Racial Bench' of four members, one each from the three main racial groups and one to represent 'other races' such as Chinese and other Pacific Islanders, all of them elected from a Colony-wide constituency. This was the first time that such a proposal had been made. But Garvey was not supported by his more cautious, conservative officers. The opponents argued that the concept of a multiracial bench would be opposed by the Europeans and Fijians who would see the proposal as 'the thin edge of the wedge' driving to a common roll, paving the way for reforms far too radical for the Colony to bear. And would not members not elected by their own group be seen as puppets of the group whose votes elected them? Garvey was undaunted, saying that "if we are aiming at a growth of a consciousness of Fijian citizenship overbidding differences of race and religion, I think it has considerable merit" (CO 1036/9). Maintaining the status quo was no solution to Fiji's political problems.

Garvey's proposal was discussed by the old colonial hands in London – the 'back room boys,' Garvey called them derisively – who raised all the tired of arguments about the need for Whitehall to 'keep a firm grip of the initiative,' and act 'just in advance of pressure, but only just.' The racial factor had to be taken into account. 'It is true that constitutional advance does not wait upon a country's demand, but the circumstances of Fiji are rather special and to go too fast would ...play into the hands of the Indians.' 'If there is no pressure for a change, we should be the last to stimulate it,' was the advice of one Colonial Office hand. Garvey's motive was questioned. Was he actuated by the desire to end his term of office by 'some significant advance?' The Secretary of State replied to Garvey's proposals on 20 March 1956:

> It seems very unwise to do anything to encourage it [constitutional reform] to grow more quickly unless we have some fairly clear idea where we are going. In some respects Fiji is a very difficult proposition from the point of view of constitutional advance. We are all, very naturally, inclined to think of such advance in terms of British institutions, leading in the direction of an elected assembly, universal adult suffrage, the party system, the vesting of

executive power in unofficial Ministers and so forth. Yet we are learning by experience elsewhere that the traditional British pattern, however suitable for places of a certain size, is difficult to work out in small territories, even where there is a homogenous and relatively well advanced population; it is still more difficult to apply in such a place as Fiji, where race means more than party, and where a dilemma is created by the numerical preponderance of the Indians on the one hand and our obligations to the Fijians on the other. It may well be that what we ought to aim at in Fiji is some form of constitution which is different from the traditional pattern. In this connection, you may like to look at the enclosed document about another of our problem areas – Mauritius – not because the ideas which are being tried out there are necessarily all applicable ...but as an illustration of the fact that new ways are being sought to establish forms of democracy and of representative institutions in places where the conditions favourable to the 'Westminster model' do not exist (CO 1036/10).

Garvey was disappointed but not surprised. The fears of the floodgates were, in truth, groundless, he said. In taking the initiative, he reminded the Colonial Office, he was 'not playing with a scorpion's tail.' His modest proposals would have resulted in 'some quickening of interest in a direction where we are failing to make progress even though we are far better equipped than many who have raced ahead of us'. If Fiji were to wait for integration to take place at the local government level, before proceeding to any constitutional change, "we shall have to wait a long time for progress in that direction". When recommending the appointment of a commissioner to advise on constitutional matters, Garvey said, he was not thinking of anyone entirely unfamiliar with Fiji. He had in mind Sir Arthur Richards, now Lord Milverton, a widely respected former governor, who had engineered the creation of the Native Land Trust Board.

By the late 1950s, Fiji was a very different place to what it had been at the beginning of the decade. The working class had begun to organise. A series of lightning strikes in the 1950s, culminating in the December 1959 riots shook Fiji. A crippling strike in the sugar industry was in prospect, after a peaceful interlude of nearly two decades. The population was increasing rapidly and becoming better informed about events in Fiji and overseas, thanks to a thriving print media and the advent of the radio. Fijian soldiers were returning to Fiji after four years of service in the Malayan jungles. Two major commissions of enquiry were under way, one by geographer O.H.K. Spate into the economic and social problems facing the Fijian people (Spate 1959) and another, by Sir Alan Burns, into the natural resources and population trends in the colony, both recommending a fundamental change of direction (Burns 1961).

The government could no longer afford to stall or stonewall. In his budget address to the Legislative Council in 1960, the new governor, Sir Kenneth Maddocks, tested the waters by suggesting the need for constitutional reform, hoping that the next election (in 1963) might be held under a new Letters Patent. The aim was to give more responsibility to unofficial members and pave the way for a ministerial system of government – called the Member System – under which unofficial members of the Legislative Council would be invited to undertake a supervisory role for a collection of government departments, contribute to policy formulation and oversee its implementation, all under the principle of collective, cabinet-type responsibility.

The government's constitutional proposals were debated in the April 1961 sitting of the Legislative Council, the motion introduced by the Acting Colonial Secretary. His tone is almost pleading, begging European and Fijian members to have an open mind on reform. For the first time, the government was taking the lead, somewhat along the lines Garvey had envisaged in the 1950s. He asked the members to "try and establish for ourselves a long term objective." The winds of decolonisation were moving closer to the Pacific. Samoa was on the verge of independence and Fiji could not afford to be indifferent. "I know it would be nice to consider Fiji in a vacuum and isolated and do as we wish, but unfortunately we cannot." He continued:

> We are part of the world and there are forces moving which, whether we like it or not – and I know many of us do not like it – are going to have a profound influence on us and on our future. We need to consider these forces; what they are and what steps are necessary to meet and mould them to our ends. We want to do it in our own unhurried time. We do not want to wait till the forces are built up against us and we have to do things as a matter of urgency. Let us think ahead, see what is coming, be ready for it and do all that we have to do in our own time, and by our own choosing...do not let us forget the forces outside. It is no good forgetting them; they are there and they are real (Legislative Council Debate April 1961).

By 'forces out there' the government meant the pressure from the United Nations' Committee on Decolonisation, which watched developments in Fiji closely, to the irritation of the colonial government as well as Fijians and Europeans.

Then the Colonial Secretary turned to those who always tried to clinch the no change argument by saying that the advocates of change were a minority, and that the majority of the people were satisfied with the status quo. He is worth quoting at length:

> [A]lmost everything starts with a minority. Minorities have a way of growing, and when minorities have a popular idea, any Government which ignores

such a minority does so at its peril. A minority can be likened to a small stream. It is there, something quite small and water is soft. It can be used for many purposes. If you dam the stream the waters build up behind the dam so you build a bigger dam, but one day you cannot go on and the burst comes. We do not want a burst here. What we want is to look together into the future and be sure that this stream of ideas, this minority perhaps, this thing called democracy is not dammed up or held back but is guided to our purpose. We want no burst dam (Legislative Council Debate April 1961).

Unsurprisingly, the Indo-Fijian members supported the motion while Europeans opposed it. But what mattered more now than ever before was the reaction of the Fijian leaders. Fijian opinion was not as solidly against change as in the past. Although the majority opposed the motion, they did so for quite different reasons. Among those who remained unconvinced of the government's policy was Ratu Kamisese Mara, the ascendant Fijian political leader and Fiji's first prime minister. The government's policy was ill-conceived and ill-timed, he said, because it ignored the spirit and implications of the Deed of Cession and the special place of the Fijian people in their own country. The chiefs had ceded Fiji 'to be part and partial of the United Kingdom,' in the same way that the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man were integral parts of the UK. That special relationship was recognised in the title Fijians used to refer to the Queen: *Radi ni Viti kei Peretania*, the Queen of Fiji and of Great Britain. Ratu Mara urged caution and gradualism. Constitutional development should follow, not precede, social and economic integration. Ratu Penaia, another high chief and future Governor General and President of Fiji, agreed: no constitution, no matter how good, would work unless 'we have a common background of accepted principles.'

The government listened politely, knowing that it had no alternative but to take the lead, though without embarrassing the Fijian members. It sought to allay their fears without compromising the principle of constitutional reform. Ratu Mara's contention about the Isle of Man was rejected. The two island groups had completely different histories and unique relationships with the United Kingdom. The government denied that its proposals detracted from the promises of the Deed of Cession, and assured the Fijian leaders that it would entrench provisions regarding the native ownership of land as well as others that touched upon customary matters. To the argument that social and economic integration should precede political reform, the government argued that "Unity does not have to grow from the bottom. In fact, when there are present communities speaking different languages, having different religions, living mostly in a different economy and having different customs," unity "can spread downwards." Suva was not doing anything that London itself had not adopted as official policy. The Colonial Secretary reminded the

Legislative Council that as early as 1943, the United Kingdom had pledged itself to "guide Colonial people along the road to self-government within the British Empire," adding that "It is no part of our policy to confer political advances which are unjustified by circumstances or to grant self-government to those who are not yet trained in its use." For Whitehall, though, the latter qualification had reached the end of its life.

In 1963, Fiji got new Letters Patent which provided for an enlarged Legislative Council, consisting of 19 official and 18 unofficial members (Mellor & Anthony 1968). The three main communities had six members each – the principle of parity was preserved – four elected from racial rolls and two nominated by the governor. Property qualification for voters was abolished, and for the first time, a universal franchise was extended to the Fijians. The issue after 1963 was not if self-government and independence would come to Fiji, but rather the terms and conditions upon which they would be acceptable to its various ethnic communities.

The Road to Independence

By the mid-1960s, the political landscape of Fiji had altered dramatically. Fijian fears, alluded to above, intensified. The industrial disputes of 1959 in Suva and in the sugar industry in 1960, aroused or, rather, reinforced the threat of Indo-Fijian domination. The calls for reform in the Fijian system of administration, for traditional structures to be loosened to enable greater personal enterprise among those Fijians who wanted it, for the natural resources of the country to be used in an economic way for the benefit of the country as a whole, for the system of Fijian Administration, which had kept the indigenous community isolated from the mainstream, to be overhauled, startled a people used to gentle counselling, flattery and effusive praise for their traditional way of life. Their leaders expressed their anger, and London listened. "I see no future in the Burns recommendation that the Fijian administration should be wound up as soon as possible," wrote Julian Amery, Under Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1960. "The Fijians are determined to resist any move in this direction. They realise that whatever its defects the tribal system does provide a leadership capable of defending the Fijian communal interest against what they regard as the Indian threat. Without their chiefs they would be leaderless" (CO 1036/612).

Still, Fijian leaders realised that they could not go on resisting whatever constitutional proposals the government presented. And so the Fijian Affairs Board, the executive arm of the Great Council of Chiefs, presented their views in a document that subsequently came to be known as the 'Wakaya Letter' (Lal 1992: 189). In it, they stated their preconditions for constitutional reform. Addressed to Nigel Fisher, the Parliamentary Under

Secretary of State for the Colonies, the letter reminded the Crown of the special significance of the Deed of Cession for the Fijians. It was the Fijian view that "the possibility of severance of this link with the Crown – a link forged in a spirit of mutual trust and goodwill – should never be contemplated." Before any further constitutional changes were considered, the letter stated, the terms of the relationship, which they mistakenly likened to the relationship between Britain and the Channel Islands, should be clarified and codified. The letter (Lal 1992: 189) went on:

> There would have to be a precise restatement of the guarantee on Fijian land ownership. We visualise that the Native Land Trust Legislation should not be changed or added to without the prior consent of the Sovereign and the agreement of the Council of Chiefs. We also stand by the expressed desire of the High Chiefs in the preamble to the Deed of Cession that Fiji should be a Christian state and that therefore no constitutional or administrative changes should take place that would deviate from that intention. The provision of the Fijian Affairs Ordinance that all legislation affecting Fijian rights and interests should be referred to the Fijian Affairs Board or, on the recommendation of the Board, to the Council of Chiefs, should be retained and likewise the Governor's direction to the Public Service Commission to work towards a balance of the races in the Civil Service.

If these concerns were addressed, the letter concluded, the Fijian chiefs would consider contemplating further constitutional changes.

The letter was a negotiating document, designed to extract the maximum concession from the governments in Suva and in London. The Colonial Office was sympathetic to Fijian concerns but firm about the need not to ignore the interests and concerns of the non-indigenous communities. The government in Suva privately assured the Fijian leaders that the special position of the indigenous community would be safeguarded, and not placed under 'the heels of an immigrant community,' in the words of Governor Derek Jakeway who was himself active behind the scenes helping the Fijians to organise politically.

Europeans, used to a privileged position in the Colony's affairs, felt insecure about their place in any future constitutional arrangement. The Suva riots, multiracial in character and overtly anti-European in intent, had shaken them as never before. Alone, they knew, they stood little chance of maintaining their disproportionate representation in the Legislative Council; and they had few friends in places where it really mattered, such as Whitehall. Hence, they sought closer alignment with the Fijian leadership. Understandably, it was an alliance of mutual convenience. The Europeans needed the political protection the Fijians could provide, and the Fijians, appreciating the

Europeans' vulnerability, knew they could always count on European support against the Indo-Fijians. This alliance of interest against the threat of a perceived common enemy would last the rest of the decade and, indeed, well into independent Fiji. It was formally institutionalised in the Fijian Association-backed Alliance Party that emerged in 1965.

The Indo-Fijian scene was energized by the return to the Legislative Council, after the absence of more than a decade, of A.D. Patel. Patel, India-born but a Fiji resident since 1928, was a leader of unequalled intellectual brilliance, a Gandhian at heart, a fierce and fearless critic of colonial rule and an untiring advocate of common roll (Lal 1997). He united the usually fractious Indo-Fijian community and formed Fiji's first political party, the Federation Party, in 1963. Two ideas lay at the heart of Patel's political vision. One was independence, or at least a large measure of internal self-government eventually leading to independence. If Samoa and the Cook Islands, small, vulnerable and resource-poor, could become independent, why not Fiji, he argued. Independence was a matter of time, Patel believed, not if but when it came, and he wanted Fiji to be prepared for it.

The other idea was common roll. He had been its advocate from the beginning. Communal roll, which Fijians and Europeans wanted, would be ruinous for the country. "Of all the people, Indians are bitterly opposed to communal representation because they have seen its painful result in the course of time. It may not be very serious now, but as time goes on, once people get used to the idea of racial separation, racial attitudes harden and people start thinking in racial terms and racial interests which leads not to one nation but, in the course of political developments, it leads to claims of several nations" (Lal 1997: 189ff). "Communal roll," he continued, "symbolises divided loyalties, and inhibits the formation of secular parties, with success in politics depending on reflecting communal interests and prejudices. Compromise will be rendered difficult and relative party strength may be frozen for long periods because a party can grow only with an increase in the size of the community upon which it is based." On the other hand, common roll would "encourage the citizens to organise political parties along national lines and in the long run compel everyone else to think in terms of his country rather than a particular race, community or religion." It was "only through making one nation out of Fiji that we can achieve the sort of future we want for everybody."

The passion with which Patel pursued the idea was reciprocated by the passion with which its opponents – which included all Fijian and European leaders – rejected it. The system of communal representation was well established in Fiji; it had worked well, they argued; a system of guaranteed racial representation produced no fears of any one group dominating others; it realistically accepted the differences of culture, language, custom and

religion. These two positions illustrate the two contrasting, even diametrically opposed, visions of Fiji; and they have continued to haunt Fiji's subsequent political history.

The Final Phase

In July 1965, the Colonial Office convened a constitutional conference, and invited the elected representatives of the three communities to London (Cmd Paper 1783; Davidson 1966: 165-68). All the established positions were expressed, with Europeans and Fijians agreeing only to limited internal self-government and the Indo-Fijian delegation hoping for a final blow to colonial rule in Fiji. Important advances were made. The Legislative Council was expanded to include 36 members: 14 Fijians (nine elected on communal roll, three on multiracial cross-voting and two nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs); 12 Indo-Fijians (nine communal and three cross-voting); and 10 Europeans (seven communal and three cross-voting). The system of cross-voting was seen as a limited concession to common roll in which multiracial electorates voted for seats reserved for candidates of different races. The Fijian and the European delegation were delighted with the outcome, and for good reason: the Europeans' privileged position was maintained, and the Fijians had, for the first time, got two additional seats. Fijian-European solidarity was consolidated.

The Indo-Fijians were disappointed with the outcome of the conference. They had lost parity with the indigenous Fijians (Lal 1992: 195-2000). The communal roll had been maintained, their plea for at least partial introduction of common roll falling on deaf ears. And the Indo-Fijian community was now more isolated than ever, electorally segregated from the other communities. The Fijian roll, for instance, was expanded to include all the other Pacific Islanders and the European roll enlarged to accommodate the Chinese. Why should the Chinese be on the European roll when they had culturally less in common with Europeans than the Indo-Fijians, Patel asked, but to no avail.

He accused the Colonial Office of not playing a fair mediating role at the conference (preoccupied as it was at the time with the crisis in Aden), by not persuading the Fijians and Europeans sufficiently enough to accept at least partial common roll by effectively capitulating to combined European and Fijian pressure. I am presently investigating the thinking of the Colonial Office, so can only provide a tentative assessment of the subject. But my overwhelming impression is that London had a deep sympathy for the Fijian people and was concerned not to let them end up in a secondary position in any future political arrangement. Their rhetorical advocacy of Westminster democracy was secondary to their concern for Fijian feelings. London also

had a prudent appreciation of its dependence on Fijian security forces to maintain law and order (Norton 2002).

Nor did London share the vision of Fiji as a cohesive multiracial nation. Julian Amery, reported confidentially to the Colonial Office in 1960 that "The Fijians and Indians are more distinct as communities than Jews and Arabs in Palestine, Greeks and Turks in Cyprus or even Europeans and Bantu in South and Central Africa" (CO 1036/612). Understandably, he did not add that London itself was partly responsible for this unfortunate state of affairs. It was "impracticable to think in terms of a single Fijian nation or of a common roll at any rate for the foreseeable future," he advised. The concept of a "single multiracial community as the goal towards which Fijians and Indians alike should strive" was illusory, he added. "The Fijians will no longer accept this; and the more we lay the emphasis on multi-racialism, the more suspicious they will become that we plan to sell them out to the Indians." Indeed, Amery recommended setting up a separate system of administration for Indo-Fijians, as a counterpart to the separate administration for the Fijians. In view of this, Patel's vision for Fiji was doomed from the start.

In September 1966, fifteen months after the constitutional conference, Fiji went through another election, for the first time on party lines: the Indo-Fijian-based Federation Party and the Fijian Association-backed, nominally multiracial Alliance Party. Both parties won handily in their constituencies, the Alliance winning two-thirds of the Fijian communal votes and the Federation a similar percentage among the Indo-Fijians. Ratu Mara became the Chief Minister. The 1965 constitution had produced the result both Suva and London wanted, and saw no reason to review the constitution which the Federation Party had accepted under protest. The new government jettisoned the bipartisan approach of the past. Patel feared that unless the constitution was reviewed, the entire Indo-Fijian community would be consigned to 'the wilderness of frustrated and possibly endless opposition.' And so, on September 1, 1967, the Federation Party walked out of the Legislative Council when its motion for constitutional change was defeated.

The ensuing by-election was fought in an intense atmosphere of great bitterness and tension (Anthony 1969). When the Federation Party won all the Indo-Fijian communal seats, and with increased majorities too, many hardline Fijians threatened violence, bringing the country to the edge of a potentially dangerous crisis. But cooler heads prevailed and emotions subsided, but the message was clear: the 1965 racially-unbalanced constitution would have to be re-examined, and the wishes of the Federation Party could not be ignored. Nor, on the other hand, could Fijian views be discounted. Apprehending the gravity of the situation, the Governor Jakeway urged Mara and Patel to resume dialogue. In August 1969, representatives of the two parties met in Suva for a series of confidential discussions. There each party

stated its views about the constitution and possible ways out of the current impasse. But Patel died in October, to the relief of both the government as well as to many in the Alliance party (Mara 1997: 97). His successor, Siddiq Koya, had neither the intellectual depth nor the commitment to the vision of Fiji as a genuinely non-racial society.

In the confidential discussions, common ground was reached on many issues. To allay Fijian fears about their rights, the Federation Party proposed an upper house – the Senate – where the nominees of the Great Council of Chiefs would have the power to veto any legislation that could, even remotely, affect Fijian interests. It also proposed to go into independence without election to avoid the acrimony that an election campaign would inevitably entail, because it felt that Ratu Mara, then widely popular, was the best leader to be at the helm to effect a smooth transition to independence, and because the Federation Party itself was diffident about the broad acceptability of its own leadership (FCO 32/405). In truth, they acknowledged that all the power was on the other side, and that they would have to accept the role of opposition for a long time into the future.

On one issue, though – the composition of the legislature and the method of election – the two parties disagreed. The Federation Party presented its case for a common roll, though without the conviction or authority of the past. Predictably, the Alliance opposed the idea, while promising an open mind on common roll as a long term objective. Both parties decided to defer the issue to the impending constitutional conference in London, with the Federation agreeing that, in the event of an impasse, it would accept a formula "approved and settled by the British Government." Lord Shepherd, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who was in Fiji to witness first hand the progress of the local negotiations, was clearly delighted by the Federations's concessions – as, of course, was the Alliance Party. He insisted that the consensus be formally recorded. The consensus was that "if no agreement was reached and circumstances remained as at present, it would be necessary that the constitutional instruments for independence should reflect, subject to any formal changes arising from independence, the provisions of the existing Constitution" (FCO 32/571). That is, the same constitution that the Federation Party had rejected in 1965 as 'undemocratic, unjust and iniquitous'! In their quest for an orderly transition to independence, the party leaders had sacrificed their long-held principles for political expediency.

The penultimate conference paving the way for Fiji's independence was held in London in April 1970. The result was a compromise – if not compromised – constitution. Fiji was to have a bicameral legislature with an appointed Upper house (Senate) and a fully elected Lower House (House of Representatives) of 52 seats, with 22 each reserved for Fijians and Indo-

Fijians and 8 for the General Electors (Europeans, Part-Europeans, Chinese, and Others). Of the 22 seats reserved for the Fijians and Indo-Fijians, 12 were to be contested on communal (racial) rolls and the remaining 10 on national (cross-voting) seats (which meant that candidates themselves were required to be Fijians, Indo-Fijians and General Electors, but they were elected by all registered voters). In the House of Representatives, then, Fijians and Indo-Fijians had *parity*. The Europeans' *privileged* position was also preserved: with only 4 percent of the population, they had 15.4 percent of the seats, whereas Fijians and Indo-Fijians had 42.3 percent of the seats each. European over-representation was accepted, indeed advocated, by the Fijian leaders who knew from experience that Europeans would always support them, as they had invariably done in the past. In the 22-member Senate, the principle of Fijian *paramountcy* was explicitly recognised by giving the eight nominees of the Great Council of Chiefs the power of veto over all legislation affecting Fijian interests and privileges.

The independence constitution, then, represented a continuity with Fiji's racially-divided past. It was based on the assumption that 'race' or ethnicity, was, and would long remain, the most important determinant of political behaviour of the people and that Fijians would control political power if they remained united and voted solidly as a racial group. And there was a tacit assumption among many leaders that, for their own physical safety, Indo-Fijians would not aspire to political leadership.

The tragedy of independent Fiji was that the assumptions upon which the constitution was based proved untenable. New forces of change came with urbanisation, a modern cash economy, internal and external migration, multiracial education and the media that questioned the primacy of race in the political system (Taylor 1987). The idea of ethnic solidarity that Fijian leaders had taken for granted at the time of independence began to fray as internal debates about the structure of power within the indigenous community spilled over into the public arena. A new generation was emerging for whom race had little to do with vagaries of daily life. Old, exhausted orthodoxies privileged in the new constitution had long outlived their usefulness. Hobbled by a fractured history, Fiji failed to come to terms with the rapidly changing realities of the post-colonial era. An ill-fated past had come home to roost.

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PART III

CRAFTING THE NATION, BUILDING THE STATE: PUBLIC POLICIES AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

Chapter 5

Fostering National Unity and Enhancing Ethnic Relations in Malaysia: The Role of Poverty Eradication Policies

Sulochana Nair

Introduction

Malaysia has explicitly identified national unity as its overriding development objective to be attained through various policies, strategies and programmes. However, the extent to which these efforts have been successful in containing ethnic tensions, enhancing inter-ethnic relations and fostering national unity is contingent not only upon the nature of the efforts per se but also upon changing socio-economic and political conditions as well the external environment. After more than four decades of concerted efforts to enhance national unity and integration there are concerns that inter-ethnic relations in the country have not improved significantly and in some instances have worsened . Ethnic polarisation in institutions of higher education, the delicate nature of inter-ethnic relations and worsening intra-ethnic relations arising from uneven development all warrant urgent policy attention. The impact of development policy on ethnic relations is examined using the poverty eradication strategy of the New Economic Policy (NEP) as a case in point. The chapter begins with an overview of the policies, programmes and strategies for poverty eradication, followed by an analysis of the impact of these policies on ethnic relations. In the concluding part the need for adopting a multi-ethnic approach to poverty eradication is highlighted

An Overview of Development Policies in Malaysia

The major focus of development policies in the pre-1969 period was on rural development– a policy stance resulting from the emergence of a competitive political system which had its balance of electoral power located amongst the rural Malays (Rudner 1975: 80-88). The development-oriented

Alliance government (precursor to Barisan Nasional) recognised the need to correct the imbalances between the predominantly Malay rural sector and the non-Malay urban sector. The roots of this imbalance were attributed to the colonial government's development policies which supported the urban plantation and tin mining sectors at the expense of the rural Malay sector. The rural Malays were encouraged and, in some instances, coerced to plant rice by the British, a policy designed to meet the growing demand for food from the urban sector and one that received support from the Malay elite as rice growing was seen as maintaining the cultural integrity of the rural Malays.

The First Five Year Plan (1956-1960), while according a nominal priority to agricultural development, had as its major emphasis the development of the urban sector and its backwash effects to the rural areas. The failure of this plan to improve the socio-economic conditions of the rural Malays led to an increased commitment to rural development under the Second Five Year Plan (1961-1965). This was exemplified by the incorporation of a National Rural Development Plan which had as one of its key features the Red Book Scheme designed for monitoring the progress of rural development at all levels of the administrative hierarchy. In addition, a National Rural Development Council and a Rural Executive Committee was established under the Ministry of National and Rural Development to formulate rural development policy and supervise its implementation. Due to its importance, the Ministry was held by none other than the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (Ness 1976).

The First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) broadened the scope of rural development from investment in social overhead capital to direct measures designed to enhance the productive capacity and income earning capacity of the rural producer. The focus of this Plan was on macroeconomic policies and programmes aimed at diversifying the economy, the provision of a favourable investment climate and the supply of manpower to support industry.

The racial riots of 1969 brought about fundamental political changes leading to the formulation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) with its twin objective of poverty eradication and societal restructuring. The first objective of the NEP was poverty eradication, aimed at increasing the access of the poor to land, physical capital, training and other public amenities. It was hoped that increasing the quality and quantity of the factors of production available to the poor would decrease the incidence of absolute poverty substantially. Using a minimum poverty line as a cut-off point, several groups were identified in the rural and urban sectors as target poverty groups.

Despite policy rhetoric and explicit reference to poverty eradication as a major prong of the NEP, it was observed that the emergence of poverty eradication as a major national planning objective was a gradual process

within the context of the new philosophy of the NEP. The main emphasis of development policy was the second prong of the NEP societal restructuring, with the poverty eradication objective receiving only cursory emphasis.

Increasing national concern for poverty emerged in 1974 following student demonstrations, which highlighted the plight of rubber smallholders in the face of falling rubber prices. Poverty emerged as a major issue in the Third and Fourth Malaysia Plans which incorporated statistics on the incidence of poverty in various sectors. In addition, target groups for poverty eradication programmes were identified and measures to improve the economic conditions of the poor were formulated.

The Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) marked the launching of the second perspective plan, the National Development Policy (NDP) (1991-2001), and under this Plan greater emphasis was given to eradication of hardcore poverty and to the reduction of relative poverty. At the same time, programmes for the eradication of general poverty continue to be implemented. Deliberate policy attempts were made to involve the poor, the disadvantaged and the Bumiputera in the process of development and the government accorded priority to income generating projects and provided improved infrastructure and amenities for the poor.

The focus of poverty eradication strategies under the NDP was the hardcore poor. A variety of programmes were implemented under the auspices of Development Programmes for the Hardcore Poor (Projek Pembangunan Rakyat Termiskin) better known by its Malay acronym, PPRT, a scheme launched in 1989 for the hardcore poor. The programme involved the creation of a register and profile of the hardcore poor and the delivery of appropriate projects to meet their specific needs. These projects included the provision of additional opportunities to increase employability and incomes, better housing, food supplements for children and educational assistance. The government also launched the Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB)- PPRT loan scheme in 1992 in order to enable Bumiputera hardcore poor households to obtain a RM5000 interest free loan to facilitate participation in the unit trust scheme of the ASB through the purchase of shares.

The government's poverty eradication efforts amongst the hardcore poor were complemented by those of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector. The two main NGOs - Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) and the state based Yayasan Basmi Kemiskinan (YBK) - supported by the private sector and the government aimed at increasing self-reliance amongst the hardcore poor. AIM provided interest free loans to the poor and hardcore poor to enable them to venture into income - generating activities while YBK provided business loans, skills training with guaranteed employment, educational support and improved housing.

Programmes were also implemented to improve the quality of life of the poor through the provision of basic amenities and services, especially in the rural areas. The programmes resulted in improved access to basic amenities for poor households in both the rural and urban sectors.

The Sixth Malaysia Plan also recognised the need to reduce relative poverty. Attempts were made to create opportunities for the low-income group and additional measures were undertaken to enhance skills and productivity. The Plan recognised the need to address problems of uneconomic-sized holdings and idle land, to establish rural industries and to provide modern services to the rural sector. In order to facilitate the modernisation of the rural sector, the growth of value added activities was promoted.

The NDP retained the conventional approaches to poverty measurement, using both absolute and relative poverty line incomes. Poverty is defined as the lack of income needed to acquire the minimum necessities of life and those who lack the resources to sustain life are considered poor. In the absolute approach, poverty is measured by taking a poverty line income and estimating the number of households or individuals below this line while in the relative approach poverty is measured by taking the average income of the bottom 40% of households. The focus of poverty eradication strategies under the NDP was the hardcore poor.

Efforts towards poverty eradication were intensified under the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) (7MP). The poverty eradication strategy under the 7MP was premised upon the continued rapid growth of the economy which in turn was expected to provide opportunities for the poor to increase incomes and move out of poverty. The 7MP also emphasised the development of human resources through education and skills training which will enable the poor to move into more productive and remunerative sectors.

Programmes for poverty eradication under the 7MP gave priority to the poorest states and districts as well as the Orang Asli community and the urban poor. The 7MP also emphasised the need to undertake efforts to reduce widening income disparities between ethnic groups, income groups and between sectors. Attempts were to be made to expand the size of the middle income group and improve incomes of rural households and the bottom 40% of the population.

Under the Third Outline Perspective Plan, OPP3 (2001-2010) which succeeded the NDP, the objectives of the distributional agenda are emphasised through the National Vision Policy (NVP). The main objectives of the NVP, formulated in the post 1997-98 Asian crisis period, are to ensure sustainable growth and enhance economic resilience. The NVP recognises that globalisation, liberalisation and the advent of ICT will pose critical challenges to the Malaysian economy. The ability to address these challenges is contingent

upon the country's potential to produce, acquire, utilise and disseminate knowledge. The emphasis on the knowledge economy, however, does not mean that the traditional factors of production are no longer critical and factors that determine access and control of these factors will also affect access and control of inputs in the knowledge economy. The NVP recognises the vulnerability of the economy to the forces of globalisation and advocates measures to cope with these challenges. At the same time the NVP highlights the social agenda of the nation and the objectives of the NEP and NDP continue to be given emphasis in development polices and programmes. The NVP essentially maintains the basic thrust of poverty eradication and societal restructuring of the NEP and that of balanced development of the NDP. Under the NVP, the focus of poverty eradication will be towards increasing income and the quality of life of the poor and low-income groups. The NVP aims to reduce poverty by focusing on pockets of poverty amongst target groups in remote areas, among the Orang Asli and other Bumiputera in Sabah and Sarawak. In addition, efforts are also geared towards the poverty problems in the urban areas and its peripheries. The NVP recognises the importance of reducing income inequalities by increasing the size of the middle income group and increasing the incomes and quality of life of the lowest 30 % of the population. The eligibility criteria for household to receive assistance is based on household incomes which are to be adjusted every three years and, at the outset, has been set at RM1200 per household per month.

Poverty Eradication Strategies, Policies and Programmes:
An Analysis of Impact

In this part, an analysis of the impact of poverty eradication policies is undertaken by critically examining the policies, strategies and programmes for poverty eradication under the NEP and the NDP.

At the outset of the NEP, poverty in Malaysia was widespread and pervasive, as evidenced by an overall poverty incidence of 49.3%. The incidence of poverty amongst Malay households was 65% while that of Indian and Chinese households was 39% and 26% respectively (Table 5.1). Of the total number of poor households in 1970 Malays accounted for 74% of the total households. Poverty was essentially a rural phenomenon with an overall rural poverty incidence of 58.8% and with poverty incidences as high as 88% amongst padi farmers and exceeding 50% in the rubber and coconut smallholding and fisheries sectors (Table 5.2). However, the concern was not just with poverty and income inequality but with the sensitive ethnic dimension of economic imbalances between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera. It was explicitly stated in the Second Malaysia Plan, for instance, that national unity would be unattainable without greater equity and balance

amongst social and ethnic groups in their participation in the country's development and in the sharing of the benefits of modernization and economic growth. The underlying rationale for the formulation of various development policies in Malaysia has been the recognition of the need to correct existing economic and social disparities amongst different ethnic groups in the country.

Table 5.1 Sectoral dimensions of poverty

	1970 (%)	1990 (%)
Overall	58.8	19.3
Paddy farmers	88.0	30.0
Rubber	64.7	24.0
Coconut	52.8	27.0
Fisheries	73.2	39.0
Estate workers	40.0	29.0

Table 5.2 Ethnic profile of poverty

	1969 (%)	1999 (%)
Overall	49.3	7.5
Malays / Bumiputera	65.0	10.3
Indian	39.0	2.9
Chinese	26.0	1.6

The official designation of one in two households as poor—with a preponderance of Malay households in traditional sectors in poverty— led to the promulgation of poverty eradication irrespective of race as a major objective of the NEP. Poverty under the NEP was defined as income poverty and measured using a poverty line income to demarcate poor and non-poor households. Despite policy rhetoric of eradicating poverty irrespective of race, poverty under the NEP was viewed in ethnic terms. It was rural Malay poverty, its causes and manifestations that provided the rationale for the various strategies and programmes for poverty eradication. Rural poverty was equated with low productivity and lack of access to factors of production. The NEP strategy of poverty eradication has been described by Mehmet (1988) as a top-down interventionist strategy using institution building, fiscal policy and large-scale land development and settlement as its major policy instruments.

The impact of the NEP strategy of poverty reduction is to a great extent contingent upon the various types of policy instruments used and their efficacy in reducing poverty levels. The institutional approach characteristic of the

NEP resulted in a proliferation of implementing agencies, all of which had poverty eradication as one of its many objectives. This resulted in an overlapping of functions, overgovernment and dilution of finance, and conflict between agencies and levels of implementation. The funds channeled for poverty eradication were used for development of infrastructure and basic services, both of which had marginal impact on poverty groups. The channeling of poverty eradication funds to the various ministries and their agencies coupled with the lack of clear identification of poverty groups resulted in the funds being siphoned off to the non-poor. In the Mid-Term Review of the Fifth Malaysia Plan, it was stated that of the total revised allocation for poverty eradication, only 40% was directly channeled to the poor through such programmes as input subsidies and basic amenities, while the rest was for indirect and supporting programmes which included the construction of office buildings and management costs.

The NEP also brought about significant political and administrative changes, the most significant of which was the expanded role of the state mechanism which played a critical role reshaping political control and redistributing socio-economic opportunities. The public sector commanded a sizeable share of the economy as evidenced by the proportion of total public expenditure to GNP, increasing public expenditure per capita from 36% to 56%, and public sector employment as a proportion of total employment. The commitment by the government to reduce the socioeconomic disparities between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera led to the emergence of a Bumiputera policy of development which resulted in major changes in administration of development at all levels, with politicians and technocrats having a greater control of the planning, implementation and distribution process at the state and district levels. While the politicization of rural development is not new in Malaysia, with the NEP it was given official sanction and institutionalized within the entire spectrum of the fight against rural poverty. The distribution of farm subsidies, credit and settler selection for Felda schemes was influenced by political factors. The whole process of NEP implementation was controlled and centralized from the top, not only though the government bureaucracy but also by the UMNO party machinery. The development input delivery mechanism was intertwined with the political activities of the UMNO, thus increasing the competition not only between UMNO and PAS but also between factions within UMNO. This resulted in the transformation of the village power structure, with village chiefs being appointed by UMNO. In addition, the" Wakil Rakyat" (Members of Parliament or State Assembly) were vested with political power and material support to channel NEP benefits to the chosen in the villages. The increased politicization of the delivery mechanism in the rural areas resulted in intra-ethnic divisions within and along party lines. Both UMNO and non-UMNO

members viewed NEP as UMNO's property and many of the rural poor, due to structural constraints and political connections, were excluded from the development process under the NEP.

Under the NEP, the programmes adopted by the Malaysian government to bring about rural development and eradicate rural poverty can broadly be classified into programmes that are directly geared towards increasing the productivity of the poor and programmes directed towards the problems of access to-and control over-productive assets.

The first group of programmes included the adoption of the 'Green Revolution' technology in the rice sector, replanting in the rubber sector and adoption of modern technology in the fisheries sector. The basic thrust of programmes to raise the productivity of the padi and fisheries sub-sectors has been the technological modernisation of these sectors. In the padi sector, there was massive investment in irrigation infrastructure to facilitate the adoption of the Green Revolution technology, while in the fisheries sector efforts were made to modernise fishing boats, engines, gear and net.

The major components of the second group of programmes were the land development and settlement programmes undertaken by the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda). Others included tenancy reform measures and the use of rural institutions to encourage the participation of the rural population in the development process. Felda's strategy has been described as a major redistributive instrument designed to improve rural living standards and as a major vehicle for rural poverty redressal.

The Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADPs) based on the concept of in-situ or area development represents another strategy used by the Malaysian government in its fight against rural poverty. The basis of the IADP strategy was the provision of an integrated package of inputs and technology, services and infrastructure to select areas chosen for development. These areas were those characterised by low-levels of productivity and a high incidence of poverty, and the objective of the IADP strategy was to focus development inputs in these areas through co-ordinated institutions.

An examination of the various policies and programmes for poverty eradication under the NEP indicates several shortcomings that have impinged upon their effectiveness in resolving the poverty problem. From the policy perspective, poverty eradication was only an indirect objective of the various strategies pursued under the NEP and the lack of emphasis on poverty led to the adoption of strategies that either excluded poverty groups or exacerbated poverty in these sectors.

The various programmes for poverty reduction in the rural sector were formulated without taking into account the structural constraints existing in the various sub-sectors of the rural economy. In the rice sector, the adoption

of the Green Revolution technology within the existing structure of land ownership resulted in poverty reproduction through increased landlessness resulting from the emergence of new tenurial systems and labour displacement arising from mechanisation of padi cultivation. The single most important reason for the persistence of poverty in the rice sector was the small, uneconomic sized farm holdings that were unable to produce sufficient incomes to move households above the poverty line. In addition, other programmes in the rice sector have had adverse impact on poverty groups and these include the price support, fertiliser and input subsidy schemes.

Rapid technological innovations in the fisheries sector have not contributed to significant reduction in poverty levels or improvements in the level of living of traditional small-scale fishermen. The introduction of trawlers has had detrimental effects on the incomes, output and employment of traditional fishermen, who due to lack of capital, have not been able to benefit from these technological innovations. The over exploitation of traditional fishing grounds, capital intensification of the industry and new entrants into the sector have aggravated the problems of unemployment and underemployment in the sector. The subsidy programmes in the fisheries sector had a minimal impact on poverty groups due to various problems. The large number of agencies servicing the sector resulted in inter-agency competition and duplication of services. The subsidy programmes were often managed by inexperienced personnel of the various agencies and this resulted in poor management and the eventual suspension of these programmes.

The Felda strategy of land development and settlement often described as the showpiece of Malaysia's rural development strategy has had differential impacts on poverty groups. In terms of its impact on incomes of settlers, it has been able to provide sellers with higher levels of incomes, ranging from three to ten times their original incomes. The Felda schemes, however, did not address problems of income instability arising from the vagaries of price fluctuations in the international markets. In addition, income differentials between settlers on rubber and oil palm schemes were not taken into account.

Felda's strategy of land development though enhancing the socio-economic status of the settlers has had adverse effects on income distribution patterns in the rural sector. Opportunities to earn higher incomes on Felda schemes are confined to a select group of people and the income gap between the settlers and others within the rural sector has widened. In addition, the Felda schemes have widened regional disparities in income distribution, with the majority of the schemes being located in the land-rich states of the West Coast . The regional bias–coupled with a settler selection policy favouring state nationals–had reduced Felda's impact on poverty levels in the poorer East Coast states. In 1986, more than fifty percent of the Felda settlers were from the land rich states of Johor and Pahang, which had poverty incidences

which were lower than the East Coast states. The influence of politicians and high ranking government officials in the settler selection process also diminished the impact of the scheme on poverty as political affiliation rather than poverty status was a determining factor for selection.

The Felda model of land development has given rise to various equity considerations arising from the high cost of settler placement and the small number of beneficiaries of the scheme. By the end of 1990, a total of 119,300 settler families comprising 715,800 people had been resettled on Felda schemes. The average settlement cost for a family on an oil palm scheme was RM40,500 while on a rubber scheme the cost was higher at RM57,400.

While the efficacy of Felda as a poverty eradication instrument is questionable, it has undoubtedly been a powerful political lobby designed to obtain the rural vote for the ruling party. Moreover, while Felda has been seen to benefit one generation of settlers, it also has been instrumental in preventing the inter-generational transfer of poverty, with many of the second generation from the Felda scheme moving out of the agricultural sector.

The various policies and programmes to eradicate poverty in the rubber smallholding sector also suffered from inherent weaknesses. The basic programme for poverty reduction was the replanting scheme and the efficacy of replanting as a poverty eradication instrument was constrained by institutional factors. A minimum holding size of three acres was necessary to breach poverty line incomes. The poverty problems of the rubber smallholder were further exacerbated by the regressive tax structure operating in the sector. Taxes in the form of research and replanting cesses imposed were disproportionate to incomes earned and biases in research and replanting efforts had detrimental effects, especially for the poor smallholders.

Programmes for poverty eradication under the NDP were those designed for eradicating hardcore poverty. Two programmes were implemented – the government's Development Programme for the Hardcore Poor, (PPRT) and the Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) programme of the non-governmental organisation.

Development Programme for the Hardcore Poor (PPRT)

Under the auspices of the Development Programme for the Hardcore Poor, or PPRT, the government launched a direct assault on the hardcore poor using a multi-pronged approach. The PPRT operated on the premise that poverty is multi-dimensional and its eradication therefore required a multi-faceted strategy. The objectives of the PPRT programmes are to provide support to hardcore poor household to enable them to move out of poverty and the programmes are to be extended to all hardcore poor households in the country. The programme content of the PPRT is premised on the assumption of a need for

a package of inputs to improve the socio-economic status of poor households. Priorities in the PPRT package are geared towards improving the health status of target groups, bringing about attitudinal change, improving housing conditions, increasing skill levels through training and education and the provision of economic (both agricultural and non-agricultural) and social projects like health, welfare, education and community development. Indirect benefits are to be derived by the hardcore poor through the provision of infrastructural and basic amenities projects and the reorganisation of traditional villages.

The government mechanism has been largely ineffective in addressing hardcore poverty due to weaknesses in project identification, planning and implementation and the major factor enabling households to move out of poverty is the availability of employment opportunities outside the PPRT programme. The success of PPRT programmes is contingent upon the ability of the projects to increase income and contribute to changes in standards of living of poverty households, sustainability of projects and attitude of participants. These factors are closely intertwined with the organisational structure, planning, implementation and management of the PPRT. Weaknesses and inefficiencies in these aspects at any level can affect programmes delivery and effectiveness and deprive intended beneficiaries from obtaining access to these programmes.

The PPRT programmes have been largely unsuccessful in attaining their intended objectives. Inefficiencies in project identification, planning and implementation have occurred at various levels. Project identification is left to the various state and district level machinery and approval is given on the assumption that these projects reflect the need of the hardcore poor. There are no checks to ensure that the projects are properly identified and this results in all kinds of projects which have no relevance for the hardcore poor being approved and receiving funding from the PPRT allocation meant for the hardcore poor. At the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) level, projects are approved subject to general criteria and are not specifically designed for hardcore poverty eradication

The implementation problems of PPRT projects are closely related to the organisational structure, planning and implementation process of the projects. There are no detailed guidelines on how the projects are to be implemented and are left to the discretion of the agencies concerned. The implementing agencies have numerous other projects that represent their main areas of activity and these tend to have priority over the PPRT projects. The lack of specific guidelines coupled with the various administrative levels that projects have to pass through results in ineffective project delivery. At the district level, for instance, project implementation relied heavily on informal mechanisms and the success of the PPRT projects depended on the dedication and commitment of the individuals concerned. The dependence on informal

mechanisms for project delivery can result in target groups missing out as other factors can influence decisions determining access to projects

Despite its policy emphasis on the hardcore poor, the government's attempt at poverty eradication does not differ significantly from past attempts and many of the features of pre-NDP poverty eradication strategies and programmes continue to be retained. Hardcore poverty eradication under the PPRT is the responsibility of numerous agencies and Ministries and, given their numerous functions and priorities, poverty eradication does not receive the attention it requires. A total of six Ministries and numerous agencies are responsible for the PPRT projects. The continued bureaucratisation of poverty eradication results not only in inter-agency conflicts, duplication of functions and reduced emphasis on poverty, but also wastage of finances intended for poverty eradication.

The lack of specific guidelines for project implementation and monitoring can also lead to politicisation of the poverty programmes at the grassroots level. Political connections rather than critical need are used as the criteria for identifying beneficiaries and the attitude that the way out of poverty is political connections rather than hard work and the development of self-reliance prevails as the overall norm. This also provides opportunities for manipulation by the political elite and the political mechanism is used to provide or deny access to development inputs. The poor who have no such connections will continue to be excluded from the development process and be further impoverished.

The PPRT in recent years has been the subject of public scrutiny due to allegations of misappropriation of funds allocated for poverty eradication. Two companies that were set up under the auspices of the PPRT lost to the tune of RM36.5million within a year of incorporation and several key personnel from critical ministries and key development agencies are being tried for corruption. The issues that have emerged from the PPRT scandal include the lack of transparency in allocation of projects and the failure to adhere to stringent guidelines in the choice of partners in carrying out development projects for the poor

Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM)

The Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) had its origins in a research project designed to test the replicability of a credit delivery scheme modelled on the highly successful Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. Projek Ikhtiar started in 1986 as a pilot project to provide credit to the hardcore poor in the Northwest Selangor region of Peninsular Malaysia. Its success in reaching out to the hardcore poor and its commendable credit recovery rate of 78% propelled the government to establish a private trust called the Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) to take over from the pilot project which was scheduled to end in

1988. The AIM was launched with support from the Malaysian Economic Development Foundation (YPEIM) which gave it an initial grant of RM120,000, the Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC) and the government of the state of Selangor. The objectives of AIM are to eradicate hardcore poverty in its areas of operation through the provision of benevolent loans designed to finance income-generating activities, and to attain financial viability through income generated from administrative charges.

The phenomenal success of AIM has been attributed to several factors, many of which are the same as those responsible for the success of the Grameen Bank. As observed by Gibbons and Shukor, AIM delivers something of considerable value to the very poor households, mostly represented by female members in a way they can participate and under conditions that make their participation worthwhile (Gibbons & Shukor Kassim 1991).

One major contributing factor to the success and sustainability of the AIM and the Grameen Bank is the nature of their clientele. In the case of AIM, women made up more than 90 % of the beneficiaries and both AIM and Grameen Bank see women to be more creditworthy than their male counterparts. Several reasons have been advocated for this, amongst which are the pressures of poverty are seen to be more deeply felt by women who experience its manifestations on the home front in the form of insufficient food for the family. Opportunities to be freed from the poverty trap are highly valued by women, who are more careful and diligent in investing the funds, more faithful in repayment and more likely to use the funds for projects to improve their standard of living. The AIM loans also provide opportunities for empowering women who—due to their ability to earn incomes—are able to improve their incomes and status. The availability of opportunities to earn cash incomes brought to their doorsteps are highly prized and quickly taken advantage of and put to good use. The improved status of women participation in these credit schemes has had a snowball effect on other women in the area, which enabled the scheme to expand its coverage.

The second reason is the value of credit to very poor households, who are often denied other forms of credit due to their lack of collateral. Both the Grameen Bank and AIM recognise the critical importance of credit, thus describing credit as a fundamental human right and an essential component of any poverty eradication programme. The provision of credit enables poor households to capitalise on their survival knowledge and skills to create additional self-employment, from which they can obtain reasonable returns as they then own the assets related to this employment. The provision of credit through schemes like AIM also helps to reduce the dependence of the poor on the informal credit sector. Another reason for the success of the AIM is the manner in which the credit is channelled to the hardcore poor. The credit delivery system, specially designed with exclusive targeting on

the very poor through a rigorous means test, is necessary to ensure that the target group is not missed and returns from a fixed and limited amount of resources is maximised. In order to ensure that only the very poor can participate in the programme, the AIM loan is given without any collateral or guarantors and without threat of legal action, should the borrowers default on the loans. Moreover, the loan is taken to the poor without going through any intermediaries and the process of loan application and approval is simplified to cater to illiterate borrowers. The loan given is in small amounts for income generating projects and require weekly repayments for periods not exceeding one year. This is to ensure that the poor are not unnecessarily burdened and the interval between subsequent loans is not too long. Potential borrowers have to form small groups to facilitate loan disbursement and the loan is to be used for self-chosen income generating activities. Borrowers assume collective responsibility for loan repayment and have to contribute to a compulsory group savings fund to meet exigencies.

The most powerful feature of the Grameen scheme is the promise of bigger loans upon complete repayment and denial of this privilege to defaulters and their group. Other factors contributing to the success of AIM are the supportive national framework and the favourable economic climate, which has contributed to the opening up of additional opportunities for the very poor to utilise their AIM loans. In addition, the AIM scheme is closely supervised and rigorous training is given for borrowers as well as field staff.

The provision of micro-credit to the poor and hardcore poor is lauded as one of the most successful attempts to eradicate poverty. AIM's internal impact evaluation studies have shown that the very poor have been reached and that they benefited substantially from the loans. A study in 1990 showed that 98% of the sampled borrowers reported receiving increases in net household incomes of RM1917 per annum, an increase of 72% compared to income levels prior to the loans. Furthermore, these studies showed that about two-thirds of the borrowers who were very poor prior to the loans were able to move out of poverty after one AIM loan. These findings are corroborated by those of the Socio Economic Research Unit (SERU) of the Prime Ministers Department, which concluded that AIM is a unique and effective poverty redressal mechanism, as 62% of first time borrowers had exited from poverty after the first year of borrowing and was worthy of continued government support.

Despite being a phenomenal success, there are indications of imminent changes in the prospects and future direction of AIM. As a result of its zealous efforts to reach the maximum number of poor, AIM's total operating expenditure increased by 166% between 1989 and 1990 and this resulted in a financial crisis for AIM leading to problems of cash flow and shortage of

funds. To help resolve its financial problems, AIM sought and received funding from the Government and the private sector, in particular, commercial banks. In addition to receiving significant financial assistance from the government, AIM has decided to consolidate some of its programmes for the hardcore poor with those of the PPRT and is currently in the process of identifying these programmes with the help of the Ministry of Rural development. In addition, there is also a recent decision to merge the AIM's list of hardcore poor with that of the Ministry's so that there is only one list of hardcore poor in the country.

These two decisions have important policy implications, which will undoubtedly impinge upon the fundamental philosophy and operations of AIM. The first issue that arises is the compatibility of these two approaches to poverty alleviation. AIM adopts a minimalist approach to poverty eradication by providing only credit to the hardcore poor . Its objectives are to reach large numbers of poor and its ultimate objective is to facilitate self-reliance and the development of survival knowledge and skills of the hardcore poor. The PPRT approach is integrative and essentially comprises handouts to the poor. In integrating both these approaches, it is necessary to reconcile these two fundamental contradictions.

The second issue relates to the impact of the intended collaboration with the Ministry on the principle of political neutrality adopted by AIM. AIM's success in reaching the hardcore poor can be largely attributed to its strict adherence to a rigorous means test to identify the hardcore poor and its neutrality in delivering credit to the needy. In the Malaysian context, the importance of political affiliation in determining access to development inputs is well documented. Under such circumstances, the decision to merge the government's poverty list with that of AIM will clearly contravene AIM's objective of extending credit to the hardcore poor irrespective of political affiliation. In the past, AIM has complied its own list to identify the hardcore poor.

The overdependence on government funding for financial viability can have important implications for AIM and its operational efficiency. Governments in developing countries are often uneasy about NGOs and their activities and attempt to control NGOs by providing or withholding financial support is not unusual. By providing substantial allocations to NGOs governments feel that they can institute control over NGOs, and dictate how and to whom funds are to be given. This has repercussions on the autonomy and independence of NGOs. In Malaysia, where the delivery of development inputs are already highly politicised, government provision of funding can impinge upon AIM's political neutrality and autonomy in credit delivery. In addition, there is also a danger of a friendly take-over by the government which will not only compromise AIM's effectiveness and efficiency in credit

delivery but also deprive the poor who support the opposition of a valuable source of credit.

The dependence on a single source for a substantial amount of funding can adversely affect operational efficiency of AIM, especially if the funds are delayed. In Malaysia, funds meant for AIM are channelled through another NGO and this has resulted in cash flow problems due to delays in receiving allocations. The ad hoc manner in which the government allocation has been channelled to AIM, the lack of proper guidelines on how and when the funds should be disbursed and the bureaucracy faced in obtaining these funds from YPEIM have affected AIM's efficiency and effectiveness in disbursing credit.

There are also indications that AIM is facing critical operational problems. The low level of borrowers taking up second and subsequent loans is one major problem. The first loan is heavily subsidised and AIM's financial viability is contingent upon the borrower taking up a second and subsequent higher value loans. A report by the Foundation of Development Cooperation (FDC) identified the low level of borrowers taking up second and third loans as one of AIM's pressing concerns as second loans only represented 24% of the total value of loans disbursed by AIM. AIM's own research showed that 60 % of those eligible for a second loan had not done so.

Another problem faced is the high dropout rate among borrowers which has had an impact on its sustainability. In 1995, the dropout rate was 10 % and this was higher than the acceptable rate, which varies between 4% -5%. The high dropout rates were due to social and economic reasons, including delays in obtaining loans from AIM. For new borrowers the waiting period for disbursement of loans which was between two to three weeks had increased to six to seven weeks. In the case of the second loan, the waiting period is between three to four months. The impact of this delay in loan disbursement is adverse, especially on the poor; borrowers withdraw their application as they abandon or delay projects and continue to remain in poverty. For AIM, it impinges on its sustainability and has the potential for perpetuating a crisis in loan repayment. The almost perfect record of loan recovery may not be maintained if there are delays in loan disbursement and thus the revolving fund may also be affected.

The strategy for poverty eradication under the NDP changed from a target group-based approach to a more direct approach based on the identification of the poor and hardcore poor. While this approach attempts to provide direct assistance to the poor in the form of income earning assets, skills and access to the public, it has also been argued that anti-poverty programmes create a complacency among policy planners and project implementers towards the much needed anti-poverty thrust in the mainstream of economic and social development. There tends to be a feeling that anti-

poverty programmes alone are sufficient to take care of poverty problems and the remaining programmes and resources can be then directed to the non-poor. This attitude—if entrenched in the minds of policy makers—can weaken the overall thrust of the implementation of institutional reforms and equity-oriented programmes, which in turn can contribute towards worsening the problems of relative poverty. The government's programmes for hardcore poverty eradication is seen not to be significantly different from the broad-based anti-poverty programmes that were in existence prior to the NDP. The programmes still constitute handouts in the form of economic and non-economic assistance. If the overall objective of poverty eradication is to encourage full participation of the poor in the process of their own development, then programmes for poverty eradication should be geared toward creating a sense of self reliance and not perpetuating continued dependence on the government. Self reliant programmes should emphasise increased participation of the poor in income generating projects to increase employment and productivity, and projects must be directed towards building the capabilities of the poor. The focus of poverty eradication should be human development encompassing attitudinal change, community development and enhancing self-help and diligence. The multi-faceted nature of poverty requires a multi-dimensional approach to poverty alleviation based on the development of human potential, creativity and resourcefulness of the poor and building upon their resources, capabilities and survival skills.

Development policies pursued under the auspices of both the NEP and NDP had significant ethnic overtones despite the policy proclamations of eradicating poverty irrespective of race. Given the high incidence of poverty in the rural areas, poverty eradication efforts targeted the rural poor and the identification of inequality in ethnic terms resulted in poverty being identified as rural Malay poverty (Lee Hock Guan 2000: 17-20). Poverty eradication programmes were formulated and implemented to benefit primarily the Malay poor in the rural areas. Other poverty groups, the non-Malay poor in the rural areas, namely the Indian estate workers and Chinese new villagers , the Orang Asli and the urban poor did not receive similar benefits. Even amongst the Malays, not all have benefited as political affiliation and institutional factors determined access to development inputs.

Poverty in Malaysia: The Need for New Approaches

The development strategy pursued by the Malaysian government, which emphasised redistribution through growth, had important implications for poverty in the country. Over the period 1971-1990, the Malaysian economy grew at the rate of 6.7% per annum while during the 1990-1995 period annual growth rates averaged 8.7%. The economy recorded an average growth of 4.7% per annum during the Seventh Malaysia Plan period (1996-

2000) and the real GDP expanded at an average rate of 8.7% per annum during the 1996-1997 period before registering a negative growth rate of 7.4% in 1998. The various measures undertaken to overcome the effects of the crisis succeeded in generating an average growth rate of 7.2% during the 1999-2000 period. The phenomenal growth rates that were attained prior to the crisis had undoubtedly contributed to poverty eradication efforts, with the overall incidence of poverty declining from 52.45 in 1970 to 8.1% in 1999.

There was considerable progress made towards poverty eradication during the tenure of the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) and Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000). The overall incidence of poverty declined from 17.1% to 9.5% while the poverty incidence amongst Malays declined from 16.5% to 8.9% during the Plan period. A similar pattern was observed when incidences of hardcore poverty, urban and rural poverty were examined. The overall incidence of poverty amongst the hardcore poor declined from 4.0% to 2.2% while in the rural and urban sectors the decline was from 21.8% to 16.1% and 7.5% to 4.1% respectively.

A closer examination of the poverty data indicated that despite a decrease in the poverty incidence in the urban sector, the absolute number of urban poor and hardcore poor households increased by 3.2% and 23.9% respectively. In addition, non-citizens as a proportion of total poor and hardcore poor increased from 7.2% to 11.3% and from 4.2% to 5.4%, respectively, during the Plan.[1]

The period of the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) showed mixed trends in the progress towards poverty eradication due to the economic crisis, which hampered poverty eradication efforts. The overall incidence of poverty declined from 9.3% to 6.8% between 1995 and 1999 while the incidence of poverty amongst Malaysian citizens declined from 8.7% to 6.1%. In the case of rural and urban poverty, the overall incidence of rural and urban poverty declined from 15.6% to 11.8% and 4.1% to 2.4%, respectively, over the same period. The incidence of rural poverty declined .from 14.9% to 10.9% for Malaysian citizens while the incidence of urban poverty declined from 3.6% to 2.1%. Hardcore poverty incidence also reflected a similar pattern, with declining trends observed for overall, rural and urban poverty as well as poverty amongst Malaysian citizens.

The number of non-citizens as a proportion of total poor households increased in both absolute and relative terms for both overall and urban poverty between 1995 and 1997. In 1997, the non-citizens represented 17.5 of overall poor households and 19.3% of urban poor households while in 1995 the proportions were 12.7% and 15.1% of overall and urban poor households. While there was a decline in the absolute number of non-citizens as a proportion of rural poor households from 15,500 to 12, 500, in percentage

terms there was an increase from 15.6% to 19.3% between 1995 and 1997. The non-citizens as a proportion of overall hardcore poor households, rural poor households and urban poor households increased from 5.9% to 7.5%, 7.8% to 13.1% and 5.4% to 6.3%, respectively, over the 1995-1997 period.

The effects of the economic crisis are reflected in increasing trends in the incidence of overall poverty to 8.1%, rural poverty to 13.2% and urban poverty to 3.8% in 1999. Poverty amongst Malaysian citizens also showed increasing trends, with the incidence of poverty amongst Malaysian households increasing to 7.5 % in 1999 while rural and urban poverty incidences were 12.4% and 3.4% respectively in 1999. The incidence of overall hardcore poverty and rural hardcore poverty remained unchanged while urban hardcore poverty increased marginally. In the case of Malaysian citizens, marginal increases in rural and urban hardcore poverty were observed in 1999.

Non-citizens as a proportion of total poor households declined to 14.2% in 1999 while non-citizens as a proportion of hard core poor households increased to 7% in 1999. Similar patterns are observed for non-citizens, poor and hardcore poor households in the rural and urban sectors.

An examination of the ethnic profile of poverty in the post NEP and NDP period shows that despite impressive decreases in the incidence of overall , rural and urban poverty from 49.3% to 7.5%, from 58.6% to 12.4% and 24.6% to 3.4% between 1970 and 1990, the ethnic dimensions of poverty were still significant. The Malays had a poverty incidence of 20.8% in 1990 compared to 5.7% % and 8.0% for the Chinese and Indians. The ethnic profile of poverty groups in 1995 and 1999 display a similar pattern with the Bumiputera households having the highest incidence of poverty at 12.2 % and 10.3%. Comparable figures for Chinese and Indian households were 2.1 % and 2.6% and 2.6% and 2.9%, respectively. The incidence of urban poverty was also highest for Bumiputera households at 4.4%, compared to 2.2% for Chinese and 1.7% for Indians in 1999.

The persistence of poverty amongst Bumiputera households in the rural sector, after several decades of policy attention, has been attributed to the inequality in earnings among the Bumiputera arising from the lack of productive assets and the continued dependence on low-wage agricultural and non-agricultural activities. In addition, development policies pursued have also had a negative impact on the rural and agricultural sectors. These sectors not only lagged behind in terms of productivity but there was also a marked decline in the small household units of production due largely to the inability of small units of production to sustain and reproduce the subsistence of its producers. The crisis of reproduction in the operation of smallholdings is related to the difficulties encountered, such as small and uneconomic-sized holdings on specialised units of production, under the threat of increased

division of labour brought about by the increased integration of Malaysian agriculture into the global markets. The increase in the area of idle, uncultivated land is a clear manifestation of the marked decline in the competitiveness of the units of production.

The out-migration of the better-educated youth from the rural and agricultural sectors also has important implications for the quality of labour. The labour force remaining in this sector faces problems as it is an ageing labour force that is less educated. This has important implications for technology transfer, productivity levels and risk taking amongst them, as the older and ageing labour force is likely to be more risk averse. This can result in an exacerbation of the poverty problems of the smallholding sector and has implications for poverty eradication measures in terms of its costs and effectiveness.

Poverty amongst estate workers and smallholders in the rubber sector as well as oil palm settlers and padi farmers exacerbated by the forces of globalisation (Malaysia 2001). Poverty in the rubber smallholding sector is the result of a wide variety of factors, the most important of which are the uneconomic size of land area owned and operated, low productivity of rubber holdings, and the price of rubber in the international market which has a significant impact on incomes. In the case of estate workers in the rubber sector, incomes are contingent upon international prices of rubber and the implementation of minimum wages are only operational for oil palm estates and have yet to be implemented for rubber estates.

In the oil palm sector, the income level of oil palm smallholders and workers is also influenced by the fluctuations in palm oil prices in the international market. During the height of the Asian financial crisis, the oil palm sector benefited as average prices of palm oil increased from RM 1358 per ton in 1997 to RM 2378 per ton in 1998. However, palm oil prices began a downswing in 1999 averaging RM 1459 per ton and the downslide in prices continued into the year 2000. This resulted in a sharp decline in incomes for settler families and oil palm smallholders.

In the padi sector, there are increasing concerns about the implications of trade liberalisation through the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). With the implementation of AFTA, countries in the region are required to reduce import duties and remove non-tariff barriers. The inflow of cheaper rice from neighbouring countries which have lower production costs will provide intense competition for Malaysian rice producers with their higher production costs. In addition, AFTA rules dictate that input and price subsidies have to be removed. While the government can continue to protect the padi sector through the imposition of a 20% import duty, it is questionable whether this is sufficient to protect the rice farmers against the impending competition.

Poverty in Malaysia continues to persist, retaining its ethnic and sectoral overtones with poverty levels remaining high in the rural areas, amongst Bumiputera households and in the less developed states of East Malaysia and in the Northern and Eastern states of Peninsular Malaysia. New forms of poverty have also emerged in the country as a result of rapid economic growth and the development process itself. The dynamic changes created by the process of economic transformation have resulted in social consequences and increasing poverty levels for vulnerable groups. These include single female headed households, migrant workers, unskilled workers, the 'Orang Asli' and other indigenous people of East Malaysia, the poor and elderly left behind in areas of significant out-migration. The underdevelopment of the rural areas and the growing privatisation of resources and commercialisation of activities impoverish certain groups and marginalise weaker sections in society, especially in the rural areas, who find their costs of living escalating. This applies, in particular, to common property resources where traditional claims to right have eroded in the face of increasing commercialisation.

Globalisation, liberalisation and Malaysia's current development polices pose numerous challenges, which have direct and indirect implications for poverty. Malaysia is poised to move into the information age with the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor, and émphasis on the k-economy. The information technology sector is pivotal in pushing Malaysia into the ranks of the developed countries by the year 2020. The restructuring of the Malaysian economy toward capital intensive and high value-added activities would increase the demand for knowledge and skilled human resources. The k-economy requires broad competencies, and access to these competencies has to be assured for all segments of society. Racial and regional disparities in academic performance in subjects critical to the k-economy have been observed. The performance of Bumiputera and rural students fall below that of the urban and non Bumiputera students. If remedial measures are not undertaken, the benefits of the k-economy will elude segments of the population and will widen racial inequality and increase the digital divide between the poor and non-poor.

The 1997/98 Asian crisis and the recent inter-ethnic conflict in 2001 in the poverty-stricken areas of the Klang Valley have had important implications for the poverty issue. The Asian crisis had adverse impacts on poverty reduction, with the overall incidence of poverty increasing from 6.8% to 8.5% between 1997-1998. The impact of the crisis was most critical in the urban areas where the majority of new households in poverty were located. The urban poor, the near-poor and migrant workers were affected by contraction in employment, resulting in unemployment and retrenchment. The Asian crisis has cast a shadow on the ability of the country to withstand the impact of external shocks. It is, therefore, necessary to institute various policies and measures to protect vulnerable groups, especially the poor, from the likely adverse effects of increasing globalisation and liberalisation.

The crisis also pushed the issue of foreign workers to the forefront of policy debate for several reasons. The presence of migrant workers, their remittance abroad, perceived competition between local and migrant workers for employment and the anticipated influx of large numbers of foreigners from neighbouring countries caught up in severe turmoil, all emerged as pressing concerns.

Foreign workers account for about 20% of the labour force and this has important implications for poverty and human resource development. The tightening labour market of the 90s saw a large influx of foreign workers both legal and illegal, into the country. While their presence was initially seen as necessary input for attaining development goals, the current policy advocates a tightening of employment of foreign labour as the long term dependence on foreign labour, largely unskilled, is seen as an impediment toward achieving higher technology, skills, productivity and greater automation in the production process.

The increasing number of foreigners in poverty in the post-crisis period have contributed to the increasing incidence of poverty. The non-citizens as a proportion of poor household more than doubled between 1990 and 1997, from 7% to 15%. The presence of foreign workers exacerbates poverty problems, especially in the urban areas with demand on amenities like housing, health and education. In addition, the presence of foreign workers intensifies the competition for employment in the informal sector and for low-wage jobs. The easy availability of unskilled workers at low wage rates, intensified during the crisis, contributed to wage rates being depressed and a reluctance on the part of employers to increase wage rates, invest in capital intensification and human resource development, thus resulting in low productivity.

The crisis has also intensified the vulnerability of foreign workers and long terms solutions to resolving the foreign workers issues have to go beyond existing policies of regularisation and repatriation. These policies have to be formulated within the context of the various forces that impact upon labour mobility, and regional solutions which incorporate the human rights elements of foreign workers are needed.

The Kampung Medan riots in the Klang Valley of Peninsular Malaysia sent shock waves throughout the country. While several reasons have been advanced for its occurrence poverty has consistently been identified as a major cause. While in the past, rural poverty, especially amongst the Bumiputera, has been the major focus of poverty eradication efforts the ethnic conflict has brought relative and urban poverty to the forefront. Issues pertaining to relative and urban poverty have to be addressed within the

context of the delicate nature of ethnic relations in the country, and different policy prescriptions and programmes are needed to resolve poverty problems.

Poverty in Malaysia has generally been perceived as a rural problem, with more than half the rural households being classified as poor. Strategies, programmes and development expenditure allocation reflect strong policy commitment to eradicating rural poverty. A recent paper (Shamsul 2001) notes that since the Colonial era the discourse on the notion and perception of poverty in Malaysia was that of rural poverty, and because the Malays were dominant in the rural sector, poverty among the rural Malays shaped the official national level conceptualisation of poverty. The NEP focussed on eradicating mainly Malay poverty, so the policies and efforts for poverty eradication, became highly ethnicised.

Poverty in Malaysia can no longer be treated as a rural Malay problem. The recent ethnic conflict in the poverty-stricken neighbourhood of the capital is an indication that urgent measures are needed to address poverty irrespective of race. Deep rooted poverty arising from a host of factors like low educational and skill levels, low-status employment and low incomes, as well as poor housing and limited access to basic amenities all contribute to social and economic marginalisation of significant segments of the population in the urban areas and its peripheries. High levels of stress and the daily struggle to eke out a living can contribute to rising social tension which can escalate to ethnic conflicts with the slightest provocation. Policy efforts are, therefore, needed to address, seriously and responsibly, the underlying causes of poverty and neglect of marginalised communities so the development efforts do not continue to elude them.

The growing interest in urban poverty in developing countries has been brought about by various factors, the rural bias in past development strategies, rapid rates of urbanisation, rural-urban migration and the structural transformation of the economies of these countries (de Haan 1997). It is recognised that rural and urban poverty are interrelated and that the overall success of poverty eradication programmes requires a balanced approach.

While the incidence of poverty in the urban sector increased from 2.4 % to 3.8% between 1997 and 1999, the absolute number of urban poor households increased by 58.2% over this period. Rural-urban migration and the influx of foreign migrants, both legal and illegal, exacerbate the increase in the number of urban poor households. This has important policy implications, and resolving urban poverty problems requires approaches different from those adopted for the rural sector.

Poverty eradication efforts in the urban sector are hindered by the lack of information on urban poverty. While there is extensive documentation on the profile and intervention programmes for the rural poor, there is very little information on the urban poor despite the urban poor having been identified

as a target group for poverty eradication under the NEP. There is a need for basic information on urban poverty—its characteristics and determinants. Unlike rural poverty, which is highly correlated with ownership of land, urban poverty is more complex. The labour market is a central determinant of urban poverty and studies have shown a strong correlation between labour market status and poverty. Urban residents with steady jobs are less likely to be in poverty compared to those with unstable causal jobs. There is also the need to obtain insights into the response of urban labour markets to structural adjustment and economic growth. Decreasing employment opportunities in the urban formal sector due the rapid increase in the size of the urban population sector results in increasing numbers of entrants into the informal sector. The ability of the informal sector to respond to these pressures is also crucial in determining urban poverty. The urban poor are more vulnerable because of their insecure tenurial status, health-threatening environmental conditions, changes in prices of basic commodities, lack of social networks and susceptibility to violence and crime that is more pronounced in the urban areas. Unless this basic information is available, it would not be possible to formulate effective strategies for eradicating urban poverty.

In addition to urban poverty, poverty among Indians in the urban and plantation sectors warrant policy attention. Large segments of the Indian population experience high levels of poverty. The Indian community is largely poor, and in some cases very poor. The Indian community has not gained equitable access to economic opportunities under the NEP and the NDP, unlike the other ethnic groups in the country. The Malaysian Indians belong to the poorest groups in the plantations, villages and among the urban poor. The socio-economic position of the Indians lag behind the other ethnic groups and inadequate policy attention is accorded to this group in the government's development efforts. The high levels of poverty experienced by the Indian community has resulted in their social and economic marginalisation.

In response to the growing evidence of economic and social marginalisation of the Indian community, a study (SERI 1998) of the socio-economic problems of Indians in the state of Penang was recently undertaken. The problems were due to several factors. The majority of the Indians were engaged in relatively low-income employment involving minimum skills and educational requirements. The study showed little evidence of inter-generational occupational mobility amongst the Indians and they continue to be employed in low income jobs as plantation labourers, public sector manual workers and in low paying jobs in the private sector. The employment pattern also influenced income levels and Indian households with low income levels and large household size continued to be in poverty.

While other ethnic groups in the country have benefited from education, the Indian community, by and large due to educational underperformance,

has lagged behind. The socio-economic background of the children in Tamil schools, the lack of proper physical facilities in these schools and the quality of the teachers, as well as non-conducive home environments have all contributed to the poor academic performance of Indian students and high dropout rates which influence their future employment prospects. In addition, disciplinary problems amongst Indian students were found to be high.

Indians were also seen to be affected by poor health status as well as social dysfunction. Alcohol and drug abuse as well as incidence of domestic violence, suicide and child abuse was found to be disproportionately high in the community. In addition, Indians were also grossly over-represented in serious crime and gangsterism.

Poverty among Indians in the urban sector also has its roots in the plantation economy from which many Indians originate. The environment in the plantation is hardly conducive for attaining a decent education or acquiring critical skills that are needed in the modern sector of the economy. Poverty becomes a way of life and when the plantation economy gives way to development projects, the estate labour force is displaced and migrate to the urban areas, joining the ranks of the urban poor and living in squatter areas. These displaced people with low levels of education and skills are largely unemployable and find themselves competing with foreign workers for low-paying, dead-end type jobs, thus perpetuating their poverty. The majority find themselves alienated and excluded from market institutions that define legitimate career path and work functions. Escape from poverty take on the easiest but not necessarily the most legitimate form. The incidence of Indian involvement in organised and serious crime, drug racketeering and gambling has been on the increase. Recent statistics show alarming crime statistics involving the Indian community, with numbers disproportionate to their population composition. This results in the community being marginalised and socially stigmatised. The failure of effective community leadership and the poor performance of community-based organisations have contributed to the marginalisation of segments of the Indian community who have neither economic nor political clout. Solutions for the problems of the community should transcend narrow ethnic boundaries and be conceived as part of a comprehensive development effort.

Poverty problems of workers in the plantation sector only received some policy attention under the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) with estate workers being identified as a target group for poverty eradication programmes. In 1970, it was estimated that the incidence of poverty among estate workers was 40%, and 60% of these workers earned monthly cash incomes of RM100-RM200. Between 1980 and 1983, the poverty incidence

of estate workers increased significantly, from 35.1 % to 54.6%. Under the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990) the poverty estimates show a drastic decline in the poverty incidence of estate workers to 19.7% (Nair 1993). In spite of these policy concerns there were no concrete proposals or programmes to alleviate poverty and the government efforts have been conservative. The government felt that the employer should be responsible for resolving poverty problems in the sector and the government's role was to ensure that this was done. Despite the increasing incidence of poverty, subsequent development plans also failed to redress poverty in the plantation sector and rural poverty redress strategies were not extended to the plantation sector.

The obvious neglect of the plantation sector in development planning and programmes stems from the definition of a plantation. In economic terms a plantation comes under the rural sector but in terms of geographical classification it is neither rural nor urban. The area is categorised as private property. This definition has worked to the detriment of plantation workers who, despite being identified as a target poverty group, have been denied all access to basic amenities and other facilities enjoyed by rural Malaysians. The plantation sector comes under the purview of various Ministries, such as Human Resources, Health and Education and this has resulted in bureaucratic hindrances to poverty eradication efforts. The Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-95) recognised the neglect of the plantation sector and promised the implementation of specific strategies to improve housing so as to enhance the quality of life of estate workers, but at the same time reiterated the responsibility of employers to provide facilities to their workers. Poverty eradication efforts under the Sixth Plan also did not extend to the plantation sector. A Five-Year Plan has been formulated by the Ministry of Human Resource and the United Planting Association of Malaysia (UPAM) to improve the quality of basic facilities in the plantations.

Several reasons have been advanced for the poverty problems of estate workers, which include poor housing and infrastructural conditions, educational status and deterioration in social conditions. In addition, the wage structure prevailing in the estates as well as the failure to align productivity increases with wage increases have resulted in deterioration of the real income position of estate workers. Using various indicators, it is observed that conditions prevailing on estates are below minimum standards established for the industry. Housing, where provided is inadequate. While the majority of estate households have access to free basic amenities like water and electricity, the frequency and quality of supply is substandard. In several estates, water supply is of poor quality, not properly treated and provided on a communal basis and restricted in terms of supply and volume. This causes health problems and results in

the prevalence of water-related diseases on estates. The plantation sector also has poor access to sanitation and health facilities. The workers on estates also suffer from nutritional deficiencies like vitamin deficiencies and anemia with children of plantation workers suffering from malnutrition. The Applied Food and Nutritional Programmes that was designed to improve the nutritional status of the rural area has not been extended to the plantation sector. In the case of electricity, the duration of supply varies with the size and location of the estate.

The Workers Minimum Standard of Housing Act 1966 stipulates that child care facilities be provided for children of working mothers. A study in 1984 showed that less than 45% of the estates provided childcare facilities and only 2% had kindergartens. The facilities provided were sub-standard, overcrowded and run by unqualified personnel. While the crèche facilities were only for children under three years, children of all ages were sent to the crèche due to the lack of alternatives. This resulted in overcrowding which in addition to lack of proper food, resulted in children sent to these centers suffering from various illnesses. In many instances, mothers felt that the children were better off under the care of older siblings, thus encouraging high dropout rates from schools.

The estate sector is also characterised by high levels of illiteracy and the estate school system comprising the Tamil schools are recognised as the poorest in terms of academic achievement. These schools lack physical and educational facilities and have been described as mere apologies with inadequate rooms, untrained teaching personnel, high student-teacher ratios, and a single teacher minding multiple classes. This is reflected in the low level of educational attainment of children of estate workers. In 1985, 77.9% of estate school children did not complete primary education and the drop out rate at lower secondary level was 90 % among Indian children from the estate sector. The situation has not improved much today.

The persistence of poverty in the plantation sector has also been attributed to the lack of enforcement of the legislation that makes it compulsory for employers to provide basic needs and social amenities on plantations. The combination of exclusion from poverty eradication and lack of enforcement has resulted in the impoverished estate workers being pushed further into poverty. A recent study of the basic needs indicators and social amenities in the plantation sector indicated that the mean monthly income of all plantation workers surveyed was RM258 per month and well below the poverty line income (PLI). In addition, income of this group was also below that of workers in other sectors and industries performing comparable tasks. Between 1974-1989 it was noted that plantation workers wages increased at a slower rate (73%) compared with that of workers in other sectors like electronics, which increased at 255% and semi-skilled workers in the tin mining industry

whose wage rates were 176% higher than that earned in 1974. Despite having enjoyed increases in productivity and profits in the range of 225% and 100% respectively, this has not been reflected in increase in wage rates for rubber tappers in the rubber plantations. The relative ease with which foreign workers could be recruited to overcome labour shortages have depressed local wage rates and employers have been able to obtain the labour without having to pay increased wages.

Another factor that has contributed to the worsening of poverty conditions in the estate sector is the use of the PLI based on an average household size of 5.1 for Peninsular Malaysia. However, this definition does not take into account the fact that household size in the plantation sector is higher (at 6.1 persons) than the national average. Estate workers whose household incomes are above the PLI, despite their larger household size, are categorised as being above the PLI. However, these households are still considered to be in poverty in terms of per capita incomes and access to basic amenities. Despite attempts to institute a minimum wage of RM 7.90 for 10 kg of latex with the onus on the employer to provide suitable work for 24 days per month in 1990, incomes of rubber tappers remained below the PLI of RM68 per capita per month.

The failure of policies to address these problems has led to the continuation of cheap labour policies on the estates. These are aided by the weakened bargaining position of estate workers due to the availability of foreign workers and the impotence of estate trade unions. This has resulted in the out-migration of youth into the urban sector, leaving behind the women and aged to work in the plantations.

Other indicators of the impoverished status of the plantation sector are the poor quality and sub-standard housing provided by the employers and basic amenities which fall below legal standards. The Workers Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 stipulated the responsibility of estate owners to provide free housing, crèches and social amenities of a certain minimum standard for their workers. In addition, the voluntary house ownership scheme was implemented whereby estate owners developed and sold low-cost houses at RM25,000 each. Houses on plantations are generally overcrowded with only one or two rooms to accommodate an average of six persons despite the regulation which states that no dwelling should accommodate more than five persons, and for every additional adult, 40 square feet should be added. The houses are old and dilapidated and do not meet the minimum legal standards of housing.

Another problem that is related to housing is the status of workers who have retired from the estate sector, as the majority of the workers cannot afford to purchase houses due their low income levels and meagre savings. The options are to move in and stay with their children, either on or off the

plantations, or to move to squatter areas. The government tried to resolve this problem by setting up an estate workers' house ownership scheme in 1974. Under this scheme, estate employers are supposed to construct and sell houses to their workers. In 1997, it was noted that the scheme was only introduced in 33 estates and of this only 17 have been completed while 16 are still under construction. The delay in establishing these schemes has been due to the ineffectiveness of the taskforce to oversee and co-ordinate the project and to employers' objections to the project on grounds that once the workers have been able to acquire ownership of their house they will no longer be interested in working on the plantations and bureaucratic problems encountered in land conversion for housing projects.

Plantation workers are also at risk due to rapid industrialisation and development, which has increased the demand for land. As a result, a large number of plantations have been sold to make way for housing projects, townships, golf courses and other infrastructural projects. When an estate is sold, estate workers lose not only their jobs but also their homes and additional sources of income from farming and animal husbandry. The sale of the estate also results in the disruption of education for children of estate workers who go to nearby schools and in the breakdown of an entire community. Plantation workers who lose their jobs as a result of sale or acquisition of an estate are legally only entitled to receive termination benefits as provided in the Employment (Termination and Lay-off Benefits) Regulations 1980. Under these regulations, workers only receive a maximum of 20 days wages per year of service for those who have been in continuous employment for five years or more. These regulations were originally enacted to protect factory workers who lose their jobs due to the closure of factories due to business losses or bankruptcy. In the case of estates they are sold at exorbitant prices and the amount of compensation given is minuscule compared to the profits reaped. Thus, the minimum protection given to estate workers is inadequate and inappropriate. Moreover, there is no legal requirement to provide workers with alternative housing or land. Displaced plantation workers not only have to find new jobs and learn new skills but also have to find places to live and earn additional money to pay for increased expenses of housing relocation and cope with the psychological problem of being removed from a self-contained community. The problems of the estate workers are further reinforced by their lack of political clout and economic prowess.

The plantation workers who are largely Indian have become the only group whose lot has become progressively worse in the development process, and in some instances because of it. They have not been able to participate in the development process because of exclusion by definition and the restricted opportunity to move up the social ladder through education. While other groups in Malaysian society have been able to transcend class

and social barriers through education, the plantation workers are pushed further into poverty, and with little or no education, end up in low-end jobs, further perpetuating their poverty problems.

The Orang Asli have been identified as a target group for poverty eradication policies and programmes in numerous Malaysian development Plans. However, despite official concern and efforts to uplift their socio-economic status, the Orang Asli remains one of the poorest communities in the country and represent a classic case of being victimised by the overall development process. The plight of this group is further aggravated by the absence of a policy to preserve and develop their economic activities and enterprises and prevent their cultural extinction and cultural identity. The rapid expansion of development projects, especially infrastructural projects, have an impact not only on the material and ritual culture which are linked to the forest and ancestral land but also upon everyday forms of material culture of the community. There is growing concern that in the absence of a policy to protect material culture, living arts and skills, efforts to integrate the community into the national society would be at the expense of their cultural identities.

By the end of 1993 (Zawawi 1996) it was estimated that there was a total population of 93,0000 Orang Asli (0.5% of the total population) in Peninsular Malaysia. The Orang Asli are not a homogeneous ethnic community and are divided into three main groups—Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malays and 18 sub-groups and live in 778 settlements. The Orang Asli constitute one of the poorest and most marginalised community in the country and, despite policy attention, they have largely been neglected and in some instances further impoverished by the development process. Available estimates indicate that poverty levels among Orang Asli are high , with 3.5% reporting no income, 30.2 % less than RM100, 39.3% RM100-RM200 and 11.5% above RM350. In 1993, it was estimated that only 20.9% of the Orang Asli were above the PLI.

The Second Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2) 1991-2000 recognised the poverty problem among Orang Asli and under the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) they have been singled out as a group needing special attention. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs was allocated RM39.3 million for management and another RM. 24.8 million for development in 1994.

Poverty among the Orang Asli continues to receive policy attention. The Orang Asli have been singled out as one of the target groups for policy attention under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005). A comprehensive development plan for the Orang Asli is to be formulated to overcome the high incidence of poverty which in 1999 was 50.9%. Existing projects under the auspices of the Integrated Development of Remote Villages Programme for eradicating extreme poverty among the Orang Asli is to be continued

Policy responses to Orang Asli problems have ranged from protecting and isolating the community to integrating and assimilating them. Security consideration in the pre-Independence era saw the emergence of efforts to move this group into resettlement camps, while subsequent policies attempted to integrate the Orang Asli into the Malay community, first by converting them to Islam and then integrating them into the Malay community. This policy of integration currently exists in a wider context with policies to integrate them into the national society.

While some progress has been made in lowering infant and child mortality rates among the Orang Asli and increasing their educational levels, it is evident that despite almost four decades of government concern, the Orang Asli remain at the bottom of the social and economic ladder in the country. This has been brought about by the expansion of productive capital; and its attendant infrastructures have encroached into the rural interiors of Orang Asli habitat and territory which has made the Orang Asli's traditional setting and land increasingly vulnerable to encroachment by outsiders. In addition to replacing the forest and its jungle resources with plantation crops, the Orang Asli have become the target for dislocation as they are resettled into regroupment centers known as "Rancangan Penempatan Semula" as part of the overall top-down regional development strategies. Further encroachments into the landscapes of territory, social space and communities of Orang Asli in the name of development have occurred as Orang Asli habitats make way for mega infrastructural projects like the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), golf and tourist resorts and national highways. The everyday livelihood, status and identity of the community are in crisis as dispossession sets in. This includes not only loss of land but also a sense of denied belonging being disappropriated from their indigenuousness, which strikes at the soul of the Orang Asli.

The persistence of poverty among the Orang Asli is the result of the failure of specific policies and programmes designed for improvement of the socio-economic status of the group, as well as the development process that has encroached into the economic, social and cultural spheres of the community. In evaluating the effects of the development process on the Orang Asli community it is necessary to recognize that traditionally the Orang Asli were economically self sufficient; they had egalitarian systems designed to satisfy basic human needs on a sustainable basis. They are also small-scale, autonomous societies that controlled and managed their resources on a local, communal basis for long term sustained yields. As such, the Orang Asli have to be seen as a distinct people with special rights to their cultures, ancestral land and resources within them, and integrating them into the national society should not be at the expense of their cultural identity.

The Orang Asli community faces numerous problems resulting from government efforts to improve their status (Nicholas & Hunt 1996). The first of these is the loss of autonomy as a result of resettlement programmes. While the original motive for regrouping the Orang Asli was based on security considerations, subsequent justification was given on the grounds of facilitating and channeling development inputs in a concrete fashion. But, evidence has shown that despite the regrouping, the community still lacks access to basic amenities. The current trend is relocation when the traditional land is required for development purposes, particularly to make way for infrastrutural projects. The Orang Asli suffer losses on several counts; they lose much of their traditional lands and inadequate compensation is given. The relocation process is often into areas which are unsuitable for cultivation and not provided with basic amenities. The dispossed community also has to learn new systems of cultivation. Studies have shown a breakdown of socio-political and cultural institutions and increasing discontent in the community, which creates social tensions. The power of JHEOA is also eroded in these regroupment schemes and these communities have to contend with encroachment by outsiders.

The Aboriginal Peoples Act allows the Orang Asli to live off land gazetted as reserves but this does not provide individual titles, even on Orang Asli reserves and compensation is normally given only for the trees planted on the land but not for the land itself. The process of gazetting land as reserves is slow and tedious. Out of a total of 132,187.79 hectares of Orang Asli land only 17,903.61 hectares have been gazetted and this affects the security of tenure of the community. In some instances, in the last couple of years 2,764 hectares have been degazetted. This has worked to the detriment of the community. Encroachments have occurred in proposed reserves and this has contributed to the Orang Asli being dispossessed of land that they have had rights to for generations. The non-possession of valid land titles has led to claims upon land traditionally belonging to the Orang Asli. In cases where the land is required for infrastructural projects, land development activities begin before the Orang Asli have been rightly compensated or given alternatives. This also creates problems as the Orang Asli have to live alongside workers on the new projects and this encroachment not only impinges upon their space and territory but also contributes to a deterioration of the village environment.

In addition to loss of autonomy, the Orang Asli have to contend with diminishing control over traditional land and access to resources in it. Resource rights are crucial in that they allow the community to stay above subsistence levels. Resources with economic potential like timber and minerals are often given to non-Orang Asli, and the Orang Asli control and use of traditional land are also subject to control by other departments (like Forestry) and State governments. Access to basic amenities which are provided to other

poverty groups as part of poverty eradication efforts are sometimes given to the Orang Asli only in return for their land rights.

Integration and assimilation policies for the Orang Asli fall into two main categories. The first assumes the community to be made up of temporary societies in need of protection during the process of transformation into modern societies, while the second sees assimilation into the Malay community as the desired path to development. Both processes have repercussions on the identity of the community.

The strategies pursued in the interest of the Orang Asli are highly bureaucratic and top-down, with little or no consultation with the community. The Department of Orang Asli Affairs [Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA)] is vested with overall authority in all matters pertaining to Orang Asli interest and this has given rise to dependence on the JHEOA. Increasing discontent with the JHEOA has arisen as a result of its failure to incorporate Orang Asli demands into development policies, a tendency to be biased in favour of the authorities and agencies in disputes between the Orang Asli and the State and the exclusion of qualified Orang Asli from the JHEOA.

The current relationship between the JHEOA and the Orang Asli is observed to be uneasy, and even 'confrontational' due to increasing political conscientization and consciousness of the Orang Asli, and the impotence of the JHEOA to resolve dispossession issues has resulted in the Orang Asli seeking legal recourse. The future development of the Orang Asli requires not only legal reforms to ensure security of tenure over customary land and resource rights but also safeguards built into the Constitution to ensure that the Orang Asli enjoy rights equal to other Bumiputera. The JHEOA also needs to be reformed in order to ensure that Orang Asli interests are adequately represented and the Orang Asli have greater control and involvement in matters pertaining to them.

Conclusion

While development policies pursued under the auspices of the NEP and the NDP have had a positive impact on reducing the absolute levels of poverty, their impact on ethnic relations is difficult to ascertain. In fact, it can be argued that the NEP has complicated the ethnic equation by introducing new dimensions to the poverty problem. Inequities in the rural sector have been perpetuated by the various strategies and programmes undertaken to address poverty, while at the same time the politicisation of the poverty eradication mechanisms has resulted in new intra-ethnic cleavages in the rural sector between the different political factions. In addition, the poverty problem in the country has become more complex with the increasing importance of urban and relative poverty, poverty among foreign workers, the elderly and female headed households. The poverty problem is further complicated by

the worsening trends in inter- and intra-ethnic income distribution patterns than have characterised the post-1990s period.

Malaysia's elevation into the status of a developed country and its ability to face the challenges of globalization will be compromised if the problems of poverty are not adequately dealt with. Poverty in Malaysia can no longer be resolved without addressing the root causes of poverty and at the same time taking into account its multi-dimensional nature and manifestations.

All Malaysians, irrespective of ethnic origins and status, have the fundamental right to be free from poverty and deprivation. The exclusion of individuals and groups from the process of development can lead to feelings of frustration and hopelessness and the creation of an underclass, marginalized from the mainstream. This would provide the best breeding ground for religious and ethnic chauvinism which in turn could result in social and ethnic tensions that could potentially be very dangerous in a society fraught with fragile inter-ethnic relations.

Notes

1   The non-citizens constituted 7% of the total poor and 4% of the hardcore poor in 1990. By 1995 the non-citizens accounted for 11% and 6% of the overall and hardcore poor respectively.

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Chapter 6

Policy, State, Nation-State and Ethnicity in Sri Lanka

Yuvi Thangarajah & S.T.Hettige

Introduction

After agreeing to conduct discussions for a political settlement of the Sri Lankan conflict, in December 2002, the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE came to a remarkable arrangement of statecraft. Both sides agreed to create a body called the Sub-committee for Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs or SIHRN. The Sub-committee consisted of an equal number of persons representing both the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE. It was decided by both the government and the LTTE, that before substantial talk on the political process began, they have to re-establish a degree of social and economic progress and stability to the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka to elevate them on par with the other areas of the country not affected by the war. This committee was organized under a Director-General who is a Tamil from the Sri Lanka Administrative Service. In addition to the Director-General, there are two other Additional Directors, one Tamil and another Sinhalese. In addition, SIHRN also has district level committees with equal representation from the LTTE and the Sri Lankan state. The sub-committee, interestingly, functions in the administrative district of Kilinochchi, an area controlled by the LTTE. It was claimed by a more nationalistic section of the Sinhalese dominated press that SIHRN is basically a mechanism directly controlled by the LTTE and is only a façade for indirectly channelling funds to the LTTE by the government and the international community. In that respect, it was further argued, that it was an attempt by the international community headed by Norway engaged in mediating the conflict to give international legitimacy to a militant organisation.

Our interest in this chapter is not to analyse the truth-value of this claim. What is significant, however, is the fact that the state sub-committee functions in an LTTE-controlled area where until this time, the state could not establish its presence, at least even symbolically. From such a perspective, the state

could claim a certain degree of victory. Similarly, it was also a claim of victory for the LTTE that the state of Sri Lanka had agreed to work together within a unified administrative framework with a militant organization that it had been fighting a bitter war with for the last two decades, thus treating it as an equal partner with wide implications. This fact was certainly not missed by the more hardline segment of the Sinhala community. This arrangement also gained international legitimacy when the World Bank was appointed as the custodian of the funds for reconstruction pledged by the international community for the development programme decided by the SIHRN. Thus, the road towards accommodation and resolution from over two decades of a bitter and brutal war and conflict was widely perceived to be moving towards resolution.

It was also a significant shift in policy, both by the government and the LTTE, away from the contest over the concept of nation with each side attempting to annihilate the other, with the former challenging the claims for the Tamil nation staked by the LTTE on the one hand and the latter challenging the form and formation of the Sri Lankan nation as it exists presently. Thus reconfigured, the new approach also mutually influenced the issue of legitimacy within the context of the contest that had been going on not only for the last two decades between the two sides, but also on the political front since independence. Even though the SIHRN at the moment does not function due to the political stalemate that has since developed, the fact remains that a fundamental shift had taken place in terms of the position with regard to the Sri Lankan state *vis-à-vis* the LTTE.

In this chapter, we wish to discuss not the current peace process in Sri Lanka, but what had led to the conflict as a contest that emerged between the state and the nation in the context of a change in the arena of policy. We also explore how policy as a broad framework influences macro and micro situations to construct a particular kind of state, nation and subjects, discursively and otherwise, and conversely, how the state itself formulates policy influenced by the perceptions, real or imagined, by segments of the population.

Policy as a dynamic process

In our approach, we do not look at policy as a set of neutral words but as active technologies as suggested by Shore and Wright (1997: 4). Policies, far from docile documents, are incredibly powerful technologies of power, by definition. But, interestingly, the very people who are subject to the influence of this process have very little consciousness of it as it influences their behaviour, setting their norms and shaping their attitudes. Nor do the people have any control over them. The study of policies, as pointed out by Shore and Wright, are that of "norms and institutions; ideology and consciousness;

knowledge and power; rhetoric and discourse; meaning and interpretation; global and the local...." (Shore & Wright 1997: 4). This is what we attempt to trace through a historical trajectory. When states formulate policies they implicitly constitute and reconstitute subjectivities and recast existing ones into others. Policies do not necessarily function in one direction. As policies formulated by the state influence subjects and subjectivities, subjects particularly as a collective involve, interact, and influence formulation of policies with particular objectives in mind. While policies are formulated with a larger perspective, its effects on the ground may be contrary to the intentions. The very policies formulated to positively impact on a substantial segment of the population may be presented as discriminatory and rejected politically by the entire community if it does not benefit and indeed damage the elite (Thangarajah 2003). Following this approach, we look at the timing, events and incidents that has led to specific policies being formulated and how such policies, once formulated, actively constituted and shaped particular perceptions and influenced the outcome of others.

This chapter is organised in three sections where the intersection of policy, nation and state and subjectivities are traced. Historically, it traverses from the period of transition due to the impact of colonial policies and its interpretations in dynamic interaction with the local communities leading to particular formations of nation and state; the post-colonial period and the rise of ethnic politics; and finally the impact of political manipulations that ultimately led to the rise of youth violence in the contemporary period engaging in the responsibility of political and social restructuring. More specifically, section one looks at the post-colonial period of transition and how particular socio-economic conditions of the time necessitated certain policy orientations, which in turn acquired a dynamic of its own, impacting at the level of societies and subjectivities recasting and reorienting the actions and outcomes in totally unintended directions. In this section, focus is specifically on the issues of land colonisation, education and employment. The analysis looks at how, within the dynamic of the interaction between the policies and the outcomes, particular notions of nation, state and citizens, were constituted, deployed, denied, reconstituted and re-deployed. In the second section, we look at the same dynamics of the process of formulation of policies for purposes of nation-building and how particular processes of nation-building lead to specific formulation of policies at a micro level. By studying a fishing community closely and analysing the underlying social processes, an attempt is made to look at the interaction between nation-building and policy and how ethnic communities are constituted and deployed, and a particular notion of the nation-state reinforced in areas under question. In the third section, we look at the contemporary situation in terms of youth perceptions and attitudes as projected in the National Youth Survey conducted in 1999/2000

as an example of how the impact of policies from the colonial times through the post-colonial period led to a legacy of alienation, violence and insecurity with an explicit agenda to restructure the state and nation.

The narrative unity of society, history and policy

Paul Ricoeur (1984) in his seminal book *Time and Narrative* proposes a radical approach to history. As viewed by Ricoeur, history is not a simple and linear ordering of events neatly unfolding one after another. For him, history is similar to a narrative where a multitude of events is artificially organized around a common theme in a story. He calls this representation a 'reconfiguration' of otherwise disparate, dispersed and unconnected events. It is a deliberately particular ordering of events in a sequence to construct a story, which in that ordering gives it a 'narrative unity'. It is in this new ordering that the past events acquire a new meaning *post-facto*. It is similar to the function of a plot of a story in integrating disparate events. These new narrative configurations then re-orient towards a particular intended outcome in the form of a story within that context of a reconfigured narrative.

Applying this approach of narrative unity to the Sri Lankan historical context, we claim in this paper that, through the disparate events that took place during and after the period of transition to full independence, identities were negotiated and within such negotiations, notions of nation were framed and deployed leading to reassessment of existing subjects and subjectivities-in short citizens and citizenship. Inevitably, the constitution of identity is inherently and mutually related to state formation. In the cases to be cited in this paper, it applies to the reconstitution of the state itself. The legitimacy of a nation-state is predicated on the claim to the existence of a unified group of people willing to exist within such a formation. Thus, depending on the number of people who can be integrated within the state, the legitimacy of the state is determined and validated. Hence, we also document the ways in which accounts of political, historical and social events are unified within a commonly perceived theme of discrimination to challenge the claim of legitimacy of an existing nation-state. Linked to this perception of discrimination, real and imagined, is the capacity of the state to deploy and sustain violence in order to ensure internal pacification as legitimised instruments of terror. In that sense, the nation-state as an idea is itself predicated on violence (Tilly 1992). This is particularly so since the capitalist disciplinary and punishment regime is closest to that of a military organisation (Foucault 1979).

In the context of a global nation-state framework, subjectivities are constituted as citizens by the state in its larger project of constituting the nation-state through violence as a cultural and social phenomenon (Giddens 1987). Violence is generative and in that regard also has the capacity to

constitute. In the making of particular citizens as an inherent part of nations, nations are constituted through such violence.

Colonial predicament and perceptions of rights and privileges

In the case of the colonial Ceylon, the initial form of violence, visible or not, was the exclusion of the vernacular educated Sinhalese and the Tamils. Numerically, the vernacular educated Tamils were relatively less in number. Unlike conventional social hierarchy where the highest-ranking caste is numerically smaller, the situation in northern Sri Lanka was the reverse. That is, the Tamil *Vellala* caste, which is the highest in terms of caste ranking, dominated the social structure. While the Christian schools spearheaded education, the Hindu schools also reacted by creating similar westernised institutions dubbed 'protestant Hinduism'. The sum result was that the entire Tamil *Vellala* caste in the peninsular Jaffna became educationally advanced. But, this benefit did not accrue to the lower *Kudimai* or service castes within the peninsula. Here again, the Tamil nation that was to make its demand more vociferously with claims for 'all Tamils', whatever it may have meant, did not necessarily represent nor indeed include the rest of the Tamils living in the rest of the country.

Given this situation, the granting of universal suffrage was to topple this system of access of the privileged. With the granting of universal suffrage and the expansion of education, the urban-based Tamil and Sinhala elite lost out to the rural elite educated in the vernacular. Within the structure of the colonial state, this deprived segment of the vernacular-educated began to consolidate, based on their identity which remained within the fringes and were not fully integrated with access to benefits of it. It is our position in this chapter, that if a policy to give due recognition to the vernacular educated segment of the population had been followed and if they had genuinely become an integral part of the colonial state, they would have developed an inclusive identity. But the exclusion indeed reinforced the identity of this potential rural power-base. It was a matter of time before it emerged as a power block.

The deprivation and exclusion enhanced and consolidated that identity which in combination with the emerging Buddhist revivalism further strengthened this segment into a legitimate claimant as a cultural group based on the hitherto neglected Buddhist values relegated to play second fiddle within the colonial state formation. Once political power and dominance was a reality, this powerbase logically began to eye the economic privileges that it had been deprived of so far. With political power, therefore, also emerged the possibility of control of the economic realm. The economically limited opportunities also led to hostility towards other groups in the labour class (Jayawardena 1984:135-141).

As argued by some authors, having already defined itself in opposition to the elite Sinhalese and elite Tamils, this group of rural, vernacular-educated segment also turned its opposition to the working class Tamils of Indian origin, who were seen as the first line of enemies in the greater levelling of the playing field of the economy (Jayawardena 1984: 145-149). This potential tidal wave of the rural masses led to insecurity and anxiety on the part of the urban, westernised Tamil and indeed Sinhala elite, who favoured a slower process of the transition of power and eventual independence. This emerging reluctance to independence, particularly by the Tamil elite leadership, led them to propose a delay in the granting of total independence. Thus, both the elite and the lower classes of the Tamils were viewed as hostile to the broader interest of the Sinhalese.

But, the agricultural labourers segment in the north, the daily wage earners in the northeast, and even the Tamil petty land owners from the east called *podiyars* who resisted the British and waged rebellion against the colonial powers did not figure in this unified grand narrative. What was constructed and perceived within the emerging narrative in the perception of the emerging Sinhala ruling class with a very strong rural base, was a particular type of Tamil and Tamilness hostile to the larger interests of the Sinhalese. While the Tamil rural class continued to suffer by not gaining the privileges, they were also unified as one into the category of the enemy, in the eyes of the Sinhalese.

Discrimination, perceived and real

One of the problems in the analysis of the Sri Lankan socio-political history is the tendency to talk of unified identities of Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims. Despite many attempts to demythysise such categories, this has had very little impact (Thangarajah 1997, 2003). In the case of the colonial state, it has been argued that the British created categories and indeed policies that went to influence a particular type of Sinhalese society, as they were divided into 'low country' and 'hill country' Sinhalese (Wickremasinha 1994). Implicit in this argument was that the Sinhalese society was arbitrarily divided by the colonial state for political and administrative purposes.

Among the Sinhalese, the identity of Sinhalese as a unified group began to be addressed more and more with the invention of traditions in the process of gaining recognition in order to claim the nation-in-waiting. The claimants were unified along class lines. The situation was similar for the Tamil elite leadership. But be that as it may, at this historical juncture a set of issues converged to create the unification that was to reorient the newly emerging Sri Lankan state. Let us look at some of the factors.

Within the momentum of impending independence, a new concern—that of the potential citizen—began to emerge. Within this discourse, types of persons who could become citizens began to be identified. This was

done through an entire range of symbolic associations that had emerged with the increasing political power of the rural masses and the rural elite based on a new discourse of Buddhist values that had emerged in the historico-political context of over two centuries of colonial rule. The British considered the increasing emphasis on this newly emerging Buddhist values as deliberately articulated for mass electoral consumption and its link to the emerging nation-state as irrelevant (Wickremasingha 1994).

Policy as the foundation of ethnic politics during post-colonial transition

In 1927, the Colonial Office sent a Commission headed by Lord Donoughmore known as the Donoughmore Commission. The Commission made two recommendations: one in the area of franchise and the other in relation to the expansion of employment opportunities. It recommended the abolition of the existing communal representation and the extension of franchise to the Tamils in the plantations who were brought down from India as indentured labourers to work in the tea, rubber and coffee plantations. In the sphere of employment, the recommendation of the commission led to an increasing 'Ceylonization' of employment opportunities.

The first target of Ceylonisation was the prestigious civil service, the machinery that kept the nation-state ticking. The initial opening of the civil service to non-westerners admitted Europeans born in Sri Lanka. The local Tamils and Sinhalese joined the breed much later. Even this shift in policy favoured three particular segments of the Sri Lankan population—the Christian-educated Burghers, the English-educated Sinhala and the Tamil elite. Even among the civil servants, the proportion of the Tamil elite from the north was slightly higher since the *Vellala*-dominated regions of the Jaffna peninsula had a well-developed system of education with Christian mission supported schools.

In this context, if the granting of the franchise for all was not looked upon kindly by the Sinhalese, it was also received with hostility by the Tamil leadership in the pre-independence period. One respected Tamil leader, Sir Pon. Ramanathan, could not see the 'cultured' man of the village equated with the "common coolie who cannot read or write." Clearly, the Tamil elite leadership was equally hostile to the policy of granting citizenship to all Tamils.

Education as a source of discrimination

Interestingly, the elite nature of education and the restricted access to professions such as the civil service did not motivate the leaders of both communities to move for expanded English medium education to accommodate a greater number of people from the vernacular educated. English education was the forte of mission-run private schools. In 1870, there were 156 government schools and 229 private schools with equal

numbers of students (de Silva 1977: 404). By 1879, however, there had been a major transformation in the area of education. The numbers had significantly increased to 372 government schools with 19,120 students and 814 private schools with 55,994 students respectively. While the change in the overall numbers was positive, it also increased and reinforced territorial and class cleavages. For instance, of the total child population, only 25% was school going. Out of this, significantly, 65% was Christian and 27% Buddhist in a country where over 60% was Buddhist and less than 15% was Christian. The conclusion is simple: only a small percentage of Buddhist children went to school. Obviously, a radical change of policy in the realm of education was required to alter this imbalance. But it also had the possibility of altering the competitive balance in terms of the sub-groups that dominated English medium education, such as the Tamil and Sinhala elite. Education was not merely a privilege: it was also access to power. As a technology of power, Christianisation had already led to resentment towards the foreign religion and ethnic groups. Until then, the Tamils as a group were not considered aliens. The hostilities were directed against 'other' foreigners such as the Bohras, Sinhdis, Coast Moors, Malayalis and Christians (Jayawardena 1985). They were the main target of hostility.

For the predominantly Tamil north, however, the only avenue for employment and social mobility was through education. In fact, while one out of twelve Ceylonese lived in the northern province, one out of five English medium schools was in the north. The minorities were usually forced to compromise in terms of policies, particularly in relation to the powers-that-be and they quite often earned the wrath of the majority. In South Africa and other African countries, and recently in countries such as Fiji, we have seen that such a predicament raises the tension between the majority and the minority. Particularly, if the minority population are recent migrants, they are often accused as collaborators. For instance, in recent years the same predicament has befallen the Muslim community living in the northeast Sri Lanka, where they are forced to toe the line of majority, leading to accusations from other minority groups, i.e., the Tamils.

Land as an Area of Contestation and its Relation to Policy

In the area of land, the focus during the colonial period was on the plantation sector. The British had transformed large areas of land into plantations in the hill country. This deprived a large number of Kandyan peasants of their potential agricultural land. Notes Ponnambalam:

> Large areas of mid and up-country highlands, which were used by the Kandyan and low-country Sinhalese villagers for slash-and-burn cultivation, firewood collection and grazing land were declared as crown

land and sold to coffee planters. Being landless and deprived of their traditional means of production, the villagers became tenant cultivators or agricultural labourers." (Ponnambalam 1983:43).

An increasing number of Tamil indentured labourers were brought from India to work in the plantations. The deprivation of lands to the local people and the influx of alien labourers naturally led to anxiety and resentment among the peasants deprived of their lands.

The anger arising out of this situation was not directed at the British colonials, but at the hapless plantation labourers who were later projected as a threat. That perception led to the channelling of hostility towards the Tamil plantation workers.

On the urban front, the influence of the left movement of Kerala in Sri Lanka led to a continuous in-migration of Malayali workers into the urban areas such as Colombo. This again was due to a policy of bringing down cheap labour from India that was promoted by the companies. The influx of migrant labour depressed the wage level. Many Sinhala nationalist labour leaders, sensing the opportunity, also accused the Indian workers of undermining the wage level. Interestingly, very little account is available about the internal conflict and the solidarity of the Malayali workers with the Sinhalese (Jayawardena 1984:135-136). The general interpretation was that the left movement which was spearheaded by the Malayalis was seen as a threat to the capitalist mode of production, much of which was being controlled by the British and the capitalist class from the *karawa* caste.

This perception consolidated itself in the popular imagination and included the Indian plantation workers, the Malayalis, and the Tamils into the narrative unity of the popular imagination as enemies.

The argument so far is as follows: The Tamil and Sinhala elite are seen as collaborators in the eyes of the vernacular Sinhalese because of their access to the instruments of power, since education is concentrated among the Tamil and Sinhala-speaking Christian elite. The plantation labourers are seen to be inundating the traditional land in the hills where the Sinhalese have lived.

Three major situations converge at this juncture. The first one was the resentment by sections of the Sinhalese over the dominance of the elite in the affairs of the state. Secondly, the deprivation suffered by the vernacular-educated who resented the advantageous position of the English educated elite. Thirdly, the taking-over of lands of the indigenous population by the British and the hostility generated towards the Tamil plantation workers was easily linked to the urban workers to unify all Tamils into a unified group leading to the emergence of anti-Tamil sentiment.

Land policy, nation-building, and citizenship

The perception of 'threat' as articulated in the public discourse, particularly among the Sinhalese people in the hill country, was that of being overwhelmed by the Indian Tamil population (Ponnambalam 1983:43, Bandarage 1983:84-87). This was compounded by the political power they acquired after universal franchise. In contrast, the disadvantage in the realm of education to the large number of vernacular-educated Sinhalese, and the employment opportunities denied them due to the lack of English, in terms of policies inevitably generated demands for a dramatic change of course in the socio-political arena. It was inevitable that fundamental changes had to be made. But, when it came, the principle within which such changes were couched was ideologically exclusionary in character. The first major change in this direction was the deprivation of citizenship to the Tamil people in the hill country plantations.

Constituting the citizens, forming the nation

The Ceylon Citizenship Act No.18 introduced in 1948 raises many questions of inclusion and exclusion from the nation-in-waiting (Jayawardena 1984:151, Wilson 1994: 38-39). More significantly, it also shows the class basis through which one's citizenship was determined in the post-colonial Sri Lankan State. The Tamil and Sinhala elite were very much a product of the Victorian attitude and orientation of the colonial masters. They were influenced by the rational, moral considerations of the newly emerging culture of independent Sri Lanka. If the elite representatives of the nation that was emerging was Victorian in attitude, the nation-in-waiting represented by the rural vernacular educated Sinhala middle class was also equally Victorian, as influenced by the European invention of Buddhism through the likes of Olcott and Madam Blevetsky and modelled on the Protestant values as discovered by this very segment of the urban and emerging rural elite.

In 1948, all the anxieties and uncertainties of this Tamil threat, influenced by the emerging exclusionary Buddhist orientation, led to the passing of the Citizenship Act of 1948 by the United National Party government of D. S. Senanayake which came into power in control of the first post-colonial state. It deprived all the Tamils in the plantations of their citizenship in a single stroke (Wilson 1994:38).

In this instance of nation-building, arguments of ethnicity took a curious turn in a clear attempt to exclude a section of the Tamils. Here is an instance where the policy of the state, arguably derived from ethnic considerations of exclusion, was also supported by another minority segment. For the purpose of political expediency, the Tamil elite political leadership voted in favour of depriving the citizenship of the Tamils from the plantations.

The disturbing dimension of elite solidarity was the approach of the Tamil members in the then-Legislative Council. While many Sinhalese who were predominantly leftists along with the respected Tamil leader S.J.V. Chelvanayagam opposed the Citizenship Act of 1948, it was supported by another influential Tamil, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam and other Tamil MPs.

But the overall impact was that at the moment of decision the elite, including the Tamils, disenfranchised the citizens of the country—a segment of Tamils. This was done soon after Sri Lanka gained its Independence and while the United National Party was at the helm.

It was clearly a policy to define the nation by exclusion. In this exclusion of a segment of the Tamils, regrettably the Tamil elite of the then-Ceylon also collaborated. But interestingly, a politically astute leader of the Tamil Federal Party forewarned about the activities and intentions of the then-UNP government and what such a policy would mean for the Tamils in the future. Warned Mr. Chelvanayagam: "He (D.S.Senanayake) is not hitting us directly now. ..but when the language question comes up, which will be the next one to follow in this series of legislation, we will know where we stand (Wilson 1994:18). The deprivation of citizenship to the Tamils of Indian origin not only began a process of exclusion in the building of the post-colonial nation-state; it also signalled a momentum of ethnic uncertainty and the hardening of the attitude of moderate Tamil politicians because of its link to an overt or subtle ethno-cultural and religious ideology that underpinned such decisions.

Language policy as a tool of nation-building

As forewarned by the respected Mr. Chelvanayagam, the second element was the issue of language which was at one level intrinsically linked to the very practical issue of employment. In the period soon after independence, the dominance of the English educated elite continued in the sphere of employment. In that sphere, the share of the Tamils was higher. Using their numerical strength in the legislative council as a consequence of universal suffrage, the Sinhala constituency attempted to restructure the imbalance in the spheres of education and employment.

Thus, as in the case of suffrage, the elite preferred English as the state language. The meaning of 'state language' was distinctly different to the Sinhala and Tamil elite on the one hand, and the vernacular-educated Sinhalese on the other. But as the state language continued to be English, the vast majority of the vernacular-educated Sinhalese and Tamils continued to be denied opportunities in the sphere of employment, particularly in the state sector. Since the state was the largest source of employment, the opening up of this sphere would generate expanded potential for

employment. Here again, a change in policy to restructure the socio-economic situation was a matter of time.

Within the unified discourse of an emerging Sinhala leadership with a strong rural base and ideologically committed to explicit identities of Buddhism in the religious domain, the fissures and tensions within the Tamil community were lost. They did not perceive the internal structural imbalances based on caste, class, region and socio-economic differences. In reaction to the changes demanded by the Sinhala constituency, the Tamil political leadership became increasingly insecure. In fact, the Tamil elite leadership carefully avoided acknowledging these differences in order to project a unified Tamil front as a politico-cultural group.

Thus, when the issue of state language emerged, it was fought not in the realm of practical politics but at a symbolic level. The demand to make Sinhala a state language was articulated by a vocal Sinhala Buddhist constituency which raised the level of anxiety among the Tamil political leadership.

For instance, the policy of making Sinhala the language of the courts was an inevitable act since most of the clients were rural Sinhalese with very little access to the English language.

But, unfortunately, it was also a potential act with implications for the future character of the state and its different constituents, particularly the minorities. At this stage, the emphasis begins to shift from practical issues to the impact on the nature of the nation-state and the constituents of the nation-state.

This fear of the Tamils was compounded when language became a tool in the hands of the so called 'Sinhala only' movement in the 1950s and early 1960s, which went beyond the socio-economic, to define the campaign to establish an exclusively Sinhala Buddhist nation-state.

The demand, for instance, for transforming the University of Ceylon into a Sinhala medium institution and to confer university status to the two Buddhist pirivenas led to great fear of the much larger convergence of campaigns of 'Sinhalisation' of the entire language realm in an exercise of exclusion. This led to a demand for a Tamil university on the part of the Tamil leadership. The demand for greater space for Sinhala in the post-colonial state was seen as concurrently negatively impacting on the existing space of Tamil and minority rights.

With the gradual shifting of the language issue from the terrain of pragmatism to the level of the symbolic, it was effectively being integrated into a larger question of the Sinhala nation. Two key demands were important in this regard. One was that Sinhala be made the *only* official language and the other was that Sinhala be made the only language of higher instruction.

In the 1950s, there had already been attempts by Sinhala and Tamil nationalists to make Tamil and Sinhalese the medium of instruction in all secondary and tertiary educational institutions (de Silva 1988:106). This allowed a large number of Sinhala and Tamil-medium students to enter the university. This was a transformation from the earlier situation where only the elite could enter the university. This opening-up of tertiary education enabled a large number of not only Tamil but also rural Sinhala students to enter the university. Students from the urban areas, particularly along the maritime areas where there was an already well-developed system of education promoted by the missionaries, were able to secure places in the universities. This can be considered as the second phase of social movement for the *Karawa* caste who were dominating the field of business and commerce and were not able to enter the field of higher learning. The first generation who had made their money in such ventures as arrack renting, through commercial ventures linked to the British in the south and the landed gentry in the east were able to send their children to the university during this second phase of expansion.

But, the deprived communities all over the country with a less developed educational system were unable to compete with the more developed urban areas irrespective of their ethnic background. With the rise of Sinhala ethnic nationalism, particularly in the rural areas, a demand for employment opportunities for the rural youth began to emerge.

While there was a clear justification for the opening up of tertiary education for the less privileged youth, the argument was combined with ethnicity. The perception of the Sinhalese nationalists was that more Tamils were entering the universities. Instead of approaching the issue more rationally, the then-government introduced a weightage system based on ethnicity where university markings were standardised media-wise (Manogaran 1987, De Silva 1988). Though the impact on the number of Tamils were negligible, it was symbolically a very significant move since an ethnic basis had become a target in higher education, adversely affecting Tamils who were dependent on higher education for social mobility.

This change was followed by media-wise standardization introduced in 1973, where the entrants were regulated according to numbers qualifying from each medium. As a result, the number of Tamils entering the university dropped while the number of Sinhalese increased dramatically.

Third, a quota system was introduced in 1974. This led to an increase in the number of Sinhalese by over 80%, well over the national average, with a drastic impact on the number of Tamil students (ibid). At least that was the perception in the popular imagination. But, there was also a silver lining to this perceived anti-Tamil move.

While the total aggregate number of students from the educationally advanced areas decreased, the number of Tamil and Sinhalese and indeed Muslim students from deprived areas improved. But, within the unifying perception of an anti-Tamil movement, and the popular imagination driven by Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, the individual histories of the deprived classes of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims became forgotten. The hegemonic view of the majority perceived by the minority as discrimination persisted. The overall necessity for a policy to restructure higher education in view of the expanded opportunities in secondary education, with the recognition of the vernacular, was appropriated by nationalists on both sides to give it the narrative unity of a discriminatory trajectory, adding yet another 'feather to the cap' for ethnic state. Language and media became the focal point of this new trajectory. Thus, language and education were transformed from a policy of pragmatism in the perception of the minority leadership into a policy and tool of ethnic hegemony with long term implications for the Tamil community.

So far, we have traced the interaction of politics and policies and how the policies that were necessary came to be perceived and interpreted as ethnic. Similarly, ethnicity and perceptions of insider and outsider also led to specific policies being formulated. In the area of land, a similar dynamic can be seen to be shaping the policy and the nature of the state.

Agricultural policy as a tool of nation-building

The Gal-Oya scheme inaugurated in the East of the country was a major development programme that became the focus in the realm of land colonisation immediately in the post-independent Sri Lanka. The policy of land settlement for agricultural production was implicitly linked to notions of the nation-state in terms of the constituents of its citizens. This section clearly illustrates the linkage between the power from above, of the elite and the pressure from below, consequent to mass-based politics. Policy from above is equally vulnerable to pressure from below and vice-versa.

The dry zone of Sri Lanka had been constructed as the citadel of the Sinhala civilisation in the popular imagination and contemporary historiography contributed to this in no small measure (de Silva 1981). The British actively pursued colonisation between 1931-1951 (Farmer 1957). But, this period cannot be seen as successful. It seems that after independence, DS Senanayake realised the potential of colonisation schemes not only as a means of increasing food production but also its symbolic value of igniting the imagination in the minds of the Sinhala rural vote-bank.

He inaugurated one of the largest development schemes in the eastern province called the Gal-Oya development scheme with over 120,000 acres. It also saw an aggressive community building measure. When Buddhist

revivalism occured in the village, agricultural development schemes were also appropriated symbolically into this realm.

Tamil leaders warned of the long-term dangers of such a large scale settlement of Sinhala peasants, in the context of the larger changes in the political arena and in view of pressure from below.

If the development of state lands was the first stage, in the second phase during the 1970s, this was extended into acquiring lands owned by Tamils and Muslim farmers from the eastern province. This led to open hostilities between Tamil and Muslim farmers and the newly settled Sinhala farmers.

The introduction of this new type of farmer shows the close link between nation-building policy implicit in the development of policies and how the development policy eventually leads to notions of nation-building. The difference between the settlement of landless peasants and this new type of settlers is also linked to politicians with an explicit political agenda and a clear purpose of establishing a particular type of ethnic settlements. This was eventually to lead to a clear direction taken by the post-colonial Sri Lankan state, with a deliberate policy of establishing ethnic communities.

At a micro level, two segments of people were enlisted. This enlistment of people was through the disbursement of state resources to build ethnic communities in predominantly Tamil areas. The linkages are made between two distinctive groups of people - fishermen and paddy farmers. In eastern Sri Lanka, the two major livelihood activities are agriculture and fisheries. While nation-building was actively pursued in the sphere of land and agriculture further interior in the post-colonial period in the sixties and seventies, it was fought in the fisheries settlements along the coast. In the next section, I want to trace the transformation that took place in the case of a fishing village, if one could call it that, through the interaction of state policy on the one hand, and how, in competition for state resources, the community is transformed into two antagonistic groups, creating a permanent settlement of a synthetic Sinhalese community.

The Impact of Policy in a Welfare State on the Rise of Ethnic Consciousness

Quite often, it is the intervention of the state that inscribes a particular type of identity on a segment of the community. Smith (1981) has advanced ethnic campaigns as a phenomenon based on competition for resources. Again, in a similar argument, Brass shows how the elite uses culture and boundary marking as a means of attaining economic goals (1974). This agenda is linked appropriately to a glorious medieval past with appropriate symbols and traditions that are invented in the present (Hobsbawm). Similarly,

if the state itself becomes all-pervasive, it dominates all aspects of the civil society (Birdie and Birnbaum 1983:15).

The post-colonial Sri Lankan state had already been influenced by the World Bank policies in the early 1950s (Bastian 2003). Their advice to gradually close down state ventures and cut down on food subsidies led to widespread agitation against the government. This led to the resignation of the then pro-western United National Party (UNP) regime and the ascension to power of the more centre-left Peoples Front (PF) government led by the astute Mr. Bandaranayake, an Oxford-educated Christian, who changed his image to that of a champion of the neglected Buddhist values and appropriately shed western attire in favor of the local garb. The language question which had already been appropriated from the pragmatic realm of the structural changes required in the post-colonial polity to an emotive issue of ethnic dimension began to influence all spheres during this period.

The PF government rode the wave of the rising socio-economic discontent combined with the emerging Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. After the assassination of the incumbent Prime Minister, his widow, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake continued to follow the state-oriented policies with gusto and developed a close relationship with the socialist block, establishing large state-owned industries. With the establishment of many such ventures, the state became the largest employer. In a situation where the population was largely vernacular-educated, the expanding educational opportunities had to be confronted by the state and the manner in which it did was to make the state the largest employer. This enabled the vernacular-educated youth, particularly those from the rural areas, to secure employment opportunities,. The language issue was, hence inevitably linked to education and employment, contributing to an existing dimension of ethnicity. Since Sinhala was the official language, an overwhelming number of jobs as in the case of education went to the rural youth, which had been neglected since the colonial days. It also facilitated employment through political patronage for a certain percentage of rural, Tamil-speaking youth. The state became the single largest employer and a system of political patronage and party loyalty emerged. Thus, while political parties used patronage politics to garner support, people were vying for the patronage of the political parties for economic benefits in a system tightly regulated by the state in terms of resource distribution.

The nationalisation of industries, such as petroleum, was the precursor to this trend. Thus, any state department or agency was symbolic of ethnic loyalty. Proximity to the state was proximity to wealth and it was a near-exclusive forte of the Sinhalese, particularly the emerging rural middle-class.

In the following section, we want to demonstrate the interaction between state, nation, community and ethnicity and how policy interacts in all these areas to mutually influence the outcome leading to a particular form of nation-

building. We also show how identities are constituted in relation to the state in order to secure resources from the state and how such policies are linked closely to ethnicity. By looking at the situation, we attempt to analyse the linkage between state policy and nation-building in a village at a micro level.

The case of the village of Punnai located in the eastern coast is interesting for many reasons. It demonstrates the close relationship between ethnicity, policy, and nation-building. It also goes to show that policies are not formulated and implemented in a vacuum. Nor are they static. Once a policy is made, implemented and its rules defined, it sets in motion a whole dynamic on all aspects and subjects linked not only directly but also indirectly. Policies are, thus, never static, nor are they neutral. "[S]ettings influence policies, which in turn influence group fears and political agendas...The most important...are the ways in which...ethnic groups become radicalized over time" (Brown & Ganguly 2002:15).

National governments such as India have managed to maintain a certain degree of integration of diverse and competing identities within the overarching goal of maintaining political unity and territorial integrity. But, the manner in which ethnic relations are structured differ greatly. In the case of Sri Lanka, the state had been progressively trying to forge an identity which had eventually become exclusionary. Attempting to forge a new post-colonial identity linked to notions of an imagined glorious past invented in the present, as justification for the over two centuries of neglect during the colonial rule, the initial enthusiasm was further augmented by the increasing influence of the rural middle class which was finding its voice increasingly vocal and politically powerful. As the largest provider of resources, the impact of state policies in the area dominated by the minorities led to the emergence of divisive tendencies among communities which did not have any consciousness of defining itself against an 'excluded other'. The dynamics that are played out and the ethnic divide that emerged in the village of Punnai, between the local community of Tamils and the seasonal migrants, through the intervention of state policies, gives us an opportunity to demonstrate the constitution of communities at the intersection of state and nation. Keane and others have proved how the distinction between state and civil society is made hazy and can even be obliterated within the command economy of a socialist system (Keane *et. al* 1988).

Punnai is significant in many respects. It is situated in the predominantly Tamil-speaking region in the eastern littoral. The increasingly exclusionary policies of the state, Sinhala-Buddhist dominated, had led to the Tamil leadership demanding greater autonomy be granted to the north-eastern region dominated by Tamils. The anxiety and suspicion of large-scale state-sponsored colonisation schemes that they were a tool to alter the ethnic balance of the Tamil dominated regions by settling Sinhalese had already been raised. Thus, when large amounts of resources were given to the migrant fishermen in the village of Punnai while

the local villagers are ignored, it set in motion a whole lot of other inter-group issues. The identity of the local Tamil villagers began to get defined in terms of the migrant fishermen's new power relations with what was seen as a Sinhala-Buddhist state. The ethnic distance between the migrants and the local villages began to get defined in terms of the 'other'. While the community of migrants altered through the introduction of other elements, the link to the state was primarily responsible. The agenda of the state was to create a synthetic community of Sinhalese with all of the traditional symbols. The intersection between state policies and ethnic community building, through the constituting of particular subjectivities, is clearly demonstrated in the rise of ethnic consciousness through state interventions in the case of Punnai.

Now for the story of the village of Punnai situated along the East Coast.

The migrant fishermen in the village of Punnai and the state of absence

In the early 1980s Punnai was a small village. At that time it was a bustling fishing village with lorries plying between the village and the nearby town. Quite a number of European and North American low-budget back-packers thronging the sheltered bay offered lucrative business to people who were inventive enough to cash in by renting *cabanas*.

Most of the people of Punnai were matrilineal Hindus. There had been a traditional community of indigenous *Vedda* people in the adjoining village a short distance south along the coast that also used to practice shallow water fishing. The traditional Amman typifies the Hinduism practised in the village of Punnai, mother-goddess cults in the annual temples officiated by a local village priest and not a Brahmin priest. But this had been changing with the creeping sanscritization. Most of the people of the village were engaged as agricultural coolies for part of the year.

Today, the village of Punnai is deserted, except for the occasional villager walking along and the lonely, nervous policeman passing by with an anxious nod.

Punnai is a good village for fishing since its sheltered bay offers year-round fishing possibilities when the rest of the coast turns inhospitably rough. The migrant fishermen from the south of the country visit the north-eastern coastal areas when the south-western monsoon sets in and the seas in the south turn turbulent making fishing impossible.

These migrant fishermen from the south used to set up little huts called *wadi* along the coast outside the village of Punnai. They practiced deep sea fishing.

Interestingly, at that time the villagers of Punnai were not engaged in deep sea fishing. They were only practicing cast-net and shallow water fishing in waters sheltered by the corals.

In the initial stages, there was very little interaction between the migrant fishermen and the villagers of Punnai. Says one informant:

"Initially, there was very little contact. Gradually, interaction began to increase. They had to get drinking water. They needed this and that. They also wanted people to help mend the nets; carpenters were needed to repair the boats. These were good opportunities for the people of the village to make some money. Gradually, they began to hire people to go along with them in the boats as helpers. They also needed more people for mending the nets etc. Hence, the thodarpu, linkages began to increase.

They began to visit our villages more and more often. In the earlier days, there was reluctance on the part of the villages to interact with the migrant fishermen.

In the former days, there was no reliable road transport. There were only few fishermen and the catch was small. Bullock carts were used for transporting fish which were sold in the nearby village market. There were also some traders who came in bicycles to buy the fish. Otherwise most of the fish were dried and were transported to Colombo from time to time. Thus, the interaction was minimal and there was limited economic relationship.

There are times when the fish catch is large. At that time, they would enlist the help of the women in the village to dry the fish since the fish would perish if they are not cleaned and dried soon".

Social integration without state intervention

As time went by, the people from the village also began to set out to the sea with the migrant fishermen. Until then they never practiced deep sea fishing in the village. Initially, men from the village got payment for going out to sea with the migrant fishermen. Once the village men began to familiarize themselves with fishing, the migrant fishermen began to take the village men in boats. So instead of many of them going out in one boat, they brought more boats and took some of the men from the village along. Later, they bought large trees from the village and nearby areas and dug out sea-going canoes using carpenters from their villages and some of locals. Later, village carpenters acquired great skill in making dug-out canoes.

The canoes were made seaworthy by fixing two washboards to two or three cross-joists to the hull, to increase the draft.

That way, their men were introduced to all aspects of deep-sea fishing, from the making of sea-going canoes to the skills of deep sea fishing.

At the end of the season, when they returned to the villages, they used to take all the boats and equipment back to their villages since they did not trust the villagers to take care of some of the things for four or five months. But later, after the people from this village became involved with the migrant fishermen, they left all the things back in the village.

Gradually, the number of migrant fishermen coming to the village increased. The migrants also began to have more connections with the village. Most of the people of the village began to work with them. It was not like now some low-level workers were being treated. They treated us with respect. Our village began to prosper due to the increasing fishing activity. There was regular employment for our people.

Later, the migrant fishermen began to get involved in the affairs of the village. They would usually worship at the local *Amman* temple in the village even though most of them were Christians. Continues the woman:

Gradually, there were marriages between migrant fishermen and village women. I also married a migrant fisherman. There were more than ten people from our village who married that way. My husband is from a village in the south. He was a *mandadi*. Usually, after marriage, the men would come to live in the compound of the woman. That way some Sinhalese fishermen started living in the village itself. There was no hostility between the fishermen and the people of the village. Women from this village who were married to the migrant fishermen and their families would visit villages in the south. We were treated with love and respect in the villages of our husbands in the south. But, later all that began to change.....

Changing character of fishing and the infusion of capital

After a while, the character of fishing changed from small-scale fishing to larger operations. The small-scale fishermen were in need of capital for expanding their activities. Fishing activity transformed from small-scale fishing to beach seine fishing. This needed more capital and more skill. Once again the absence of corals along the sea and the sheltered bay offered the possibility of seine fishing. But it needed a much larger capital outlay. There was also a very complicated system of ownership.

The seines are owned by the *mudalalis*. The term *mudalai* derives from the Tamil word *mudhal*, which means capital. Hence, *mudalali* means the person with capital. The *mudalali* may range from small-scale operators of a single beach seine (or padu) to one covering the entire range of operations including operations in other parts of the country to transport facilities, wholesale outlets in Colombo etc. The *mudalalis* may own the boats and/or they may advance money for the operational costs and some equipment not provided by the state. The fishermen who owned the boats would have a 'tied arrangement" where the *mudalali*, who may also be a merchant, will agree to purchase all the catch. This may be more than a commercial relationship where caste, kinship, and patronage considerations play a role.

In this narrative account, the narrator made a clear distinction between the initial stage of interaction with the small-scale fishermen and the larger operators.

Since there was the possibility of year-round fishing, the *mudalalis* made their stay permanent. Initially, they also brought their own people for seine-related work. After a while, the local people took over the ancillary work and the repair of equipment.

From the time of the arrival of the fishermen with their simple sea canoes to the introduction of the beach seine by the *mudalalis,* who began to establish themselves in the villages and started living permanently, there was no tension between the various groups.

Development policy and nation-building

After independence, it was the policy of the state to improve on fishing as a means of improving the food security situation. The aim of the post-colonial state was to modernize the fishing industry. The programme, which began as an attempt to improve local fishing-based economy, was to reorient state policy towards the construction of a particular type of nation-state. The link in this relationship and the access to state resources was the *mudalalis* and this altered the relationship to the state.

According to an Inspector of Fisheries, the Department of Fisheries was inaugurated in 1952 to improve the fisheries sector. Programmes were initiated to organize and train the fishermen in modern techniques of deep-sea fishing. In the east, the fishing grounds were not exploited since the Tamils in the east were not involved in deep-sea fishing. Thus, the department brought Sinhalese fishermen from the south so that they could make use of the underused resources while at the same time help the locals learn deep-sea fishing.

Initially, the Fisheries Department issued the migrant fishermen wadi permits (fishing hut permits). This was another step in the efforts of the state to control the *mudalali*. One would need to have influence with the party politician, the Minister of Fisheries and the ministry officials to obtain these permits. It was dependent on patronage by the state. That was the initial stage of assistance and direct involvement by the state. In a sense, according to the Fisheries Inspector, it was over the assistance by the state and competition for resources.

Impact of state patronage on ethnicity and nation-building

In fact, when the state began to assist the fishermen directly, the *mudalalis* were interested in getting the maximum assistance. The easiest path to state patronage was through politics. Since the state wanted to assist the fishermen, the *mudalalis* realized the potential benefit of getting involved in politics directly and they began to openly support the political party in power in

order to have access to subsidies for boats and fishing gear. Since they also had many people working under them, the *mudalalis* began to operate like an interest group supporting a particular political party in order to secure equipment and resources. At this point, with explicit political affinities, the *mudalalis* began to openly identify with the state and as Sinhalese.

During this period in the 1960s, the ascension to power of Mrs. Bandaranayake led to greater hardening of the Sinhala opinion against Tamil political rights. Here again, the disparate concerns over the demand for a separate state by the Tamil leadership in the absence of political devolution, and the subsequent demand for a Tamil homeland in the northeast of the country made the then-Sri Lankan State take countermeasures. The scheme for the welfare of fishermen gradually began to take on a nation-building dimension.

The Government had already established schemes to build houses for fishermen. Such schemes had been implemented in the north and the east as well. But in the case of the Sri Lankan state, the claim for a Tamil homeland also made the government make use of the fishermen to negate this claim by establishing Sinhalese communities in areas where the Tamils were living predominantly. One of the strategies used by the state was to build houses for these migrant fishermen to permanently settle them in the northeast, with a clear Sinhala identity.

Policy, hegemony, and nation-building

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party's rise to power in the mid-1950s reflected a total boost for Sinhala-Buddhist ideology. The group of migrant fishermen who had been living in a symbiotic relationship with the local Tamil villagers were effectively integrated into the local community and living harmoniously. The interventions of the state through its policies led to a transformation of the linkages and relationships between the migrants and the locals. The policies of the state were initially to increase fish production through state assistance. Given the fact that the state remained the singular provider of resources, both economic and symbolic, the fishermen inevitably attempted to link up with the state in order to obtain access to resources.

The state used its resource distribution/welfare state function to undermine the claim for a Tamil-dominated region. Here again, the state intention was directly linked to a community that hitherto did not have a negative identity despite being Sinhala and the gradual decline of goodwill towards it. But the policy of assistance to the fishermen began to be used by the state as a politico-military strategy. Their competition over access to resources was the weak link that was used by the state to constitute an ethnic community out of this group of migrant fishermen.

Further, when the state claimed land for housing schemes for a group seen as aligned to the state, which in turn is seen as hostile to the local

community, the hostility is consolidated and the community identity vis-à-vis the Sinhalese is defined in relation to the state. An explosive dimension was introduced into the equation when a scheme to build permanent houses for the migrant fishermen was proposed by the state.

The woman narrator said that the government took over a large coconut estate owned by a wealthy Tamil where a number of families from the village of Punnai were employed. It was rumoured that the purpose was to build a harbour. The people were very happy over this prospect since it would generate employment.

> But, later we heard that the fishermen were going to be given houses. What was worrying to us was that we later came to know it was only the migrant fishermen who were going to be given houses.

This rumour about privileged treatment for the migrant fishermen began to sow the seeds of discord with the Sinhalese keeping to themselves about many matters related to housing. With the return of the United National Party government in 1977, the situation continued to sustain itself along similar lines of ethnic community building. In fact, according to the local fishermen, there were a large number of people who were brought from the south and many, according to local villagers, were not fishermen and they did not practice any fishing.

Soon, major infrastructure such as a school, community hall and a Buddhist temple were constructed.

> The view of the villagers was that while the village Tamil school continued to suffer from a shortage of buildings and teachers, the newly established Sinhala school was fully staffed and equipped well", said the woman. "Even a Buddhist priest was supervising when the temple was being constructed. He had police guards with him. Later, a police post was established in the village for the protection of the migrant fishermen and all of the policemen were Sinhalese." The villagers resented this transformation and the establishment of an explicitly ethno-religious community.

> The establishment of the police post was very disturbing. What was the threat that these people were facing? Who were their enemies? In fact, there were only a few of the settlers who created trouble. They organized themselves along with the *mudalali* to get houses. After the police post was established, there was greater antagonism between the migrant fishermen and the people of Punnai. They were more secretive. Even those who were earlier getting along well were prevented by the others among the community, particularly the newcomers and the *mudalalis*, from moving closely with the people of Punnai.

We attempt to conclude this section by drawing attention to the salient features of our argument so far. The narrative of the transformation that had taken place in the village of Punnai clearly shows how the macro situations are perceived, deployed and articulated at the local level. It also focuses on the everyday processes within which the nation and the state are constituted and deployed in terms of popular symbols and activities through specific policies designed to achieve socio-economic goals.

This led to the rise of Tamil militancy, which sidelined the moderate democratic political leadership due to their non-accommodation by the majoritarian state. The *modus operandi* of the Tamil militant youth was to challenge the state and its presence in the Northeast of the country, initially symbolically and later by launching attacks on what was seen as the representations of the state. This finally exploded in the infamous violence against the Tamils in 1983. That year marked the beginning of a concerted effort by the state to engage in harsh counter-insurgency policies against the Tamils, leading to the alienation of Tamils and an emerging divide between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. The state used the militant campaign as an excuse to deny economic mismanagement. That eventually caused the alienation of the Sinhalese youth who were increasingly unable to find employment, except in the expanding military.

The initial programme to take over the state by the leftist-oriented Sinhala youth in 1971 was later reoriented to a new political order (Uyangoda 1992). The almost three decades of state policies had led to the alienation of the Sinhala and Tamil youth who should have been an integral part of nation-building and state formation. This, however, should not cloud us from the fact that the category of youth is not an undifferentiated mass but is constituted of specific segments who display considerable diversity (Hettige 2002, Thangarajah 2002). It is interesting to understand why the youth play the role that they do now.

Opportunities, Ethnicity and Youth

Clearly, then, Sri Lanka, which was being projected as a country of many different ethnic groups was gradually shifting towards mono-ethnic governance. The processes at the micro-level framed within the development strategy of an emerging nation-state were clearly bumpy, with the need for social, economic and political transformations. Policies that were designed to facilitate positive changes were appropriated and became tools of ethnic mobilization. Ethnic mobilization, in turn led to specific policies that influenced social discord. So far, we have seen the issue of education, employment and land acquire dynamic processes to constitute particular subjectivities and to frame the nation-state in a mutually influencing process.

The perception of exclusion and inclusion and the image of the state as an ethnically exclusive one had alienated the youth. The 1980s and 1990s saw a shift towards the youth, who became dominant players in the social and political fields.

In the next section, we trace some of the contemporary issues that have been identified in relation to the youth survey. Issues of exclusion and aspects of mono-ethnicity are some of the concerns that are addressed in this section.

The state domination in the economy in the 1970s was gradually opened up in the 1980s. The role of the private sector began to gradually increase. However, the transition from a state-dominated economy to one dominated by the private sector has not produced significant tangible benefits to disadvantaged, yet educated youth with aspirations for upward social mobility, even in the south, let alone the north and east of the country. This is no doubt a major factor contributing to the growing popularity of the JVP or the People's Liberation Front in the South. The above developments in the national economy, therefore, can hardly mean anything different to disadvantaged, educated yet equally monolingual, Tamil speaking youth in the north and the east with similar aspirations as their Sinhalese counterparts. When we look at the profiles, attributes, perceptions, ideas, preferences, aspirations, etc. of the vast majority of Tamil youth in the north and the east, the general tendency to be sympathetic towards militant anti-systemic movements is not incomprehensible. In fact, their social and cultural circumstances as well as lived experiences appear to constitute a more congenial environment for social and political discontent than elsewhere in the country. In the next few pages, an attempt is made to outline some of the circumstances and experiences in the light of some of the national youth survey data. The analysis is done under several sub-themes for convenience and clarity of presentation. They are:

1. Self-identity and language skills
2. Employment aspirations
3. Perceptions of the world around them
4. Ideological orientations and
5. Interest in public affairs

The focus of the present analysis is primarily on Tamil-speaking youth concentrated in the north and east of the country. But, to compare and contrast them with youth in two other provinces, namely, western and southern, the relevant data for these two provinces is also given in the tables. While the youth in the southern provinces are mostly Sinhala-speaking, the western provinces in which the largest urban conglomeration in the country is found, has the largest concentration of ethnically and socially differentiated youth population. Some of the tables give data by ethnicity so that a comparative understanding of youth belonging to different ethnic groups can be gained.

Linguistic Skills and Identity

Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 give data on the ability of youths in four different regions to speak the three main languages used in the country, namely Sinhalese, Tamil and English. As is evident from the data, while most of the youths in the north and the east are only able to speak Tamil, only a small number of youth there are effective speakers of Sinhalese. It is likely that many of them are Sinhalese living in these areas. On the other hand, most of the youths in the southern and western provinces speak Sinhalese, while a minority of youth speak Tamil, who are most likely to be members of the Tamil and Muslim communities there. It is noteworthy that very few youths in all provinces, except in the western province, have the ability to speak English effectively. Even in the western province, the proportion is not very large.

Table 6.1 Ability to Speak Tamil

Province	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Not at all (%)
North	93.9	4.9	0.6	0.6
East	85.6	7.7	6.7	0
South	8.6	2.6	7.2	81.7
West	5.6	0.3	4.6	89.5

Table 6.2 Ability to Speak Sinhalese

Province	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Not at all (%)
North	2.7	2.7	16.9	77.7
East	10.9	17.2	35.9	35.9
South	96.9	3.1	0	0
West	94.5	5	0.5	0

Table 6.3 Ability to Speak English

Province	Very Good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Not at all (%)
North	3.8	24.1	58.9	13.3
East	1.5	27.3	58.3	11.9
South	0.8	19.7	49.5	30
West	5.6	27	42.1	25.2

What is evident from the above data is that only a very small percentage of youth in the north and east, where the Tamil minority is largely concentrated, are in fact bilingual or trilingual. The picture in the predominantly Sinhalese southern province is very similar in the above regard. This is in

spite of very high levels of educational attainment among the youth there, in particular in the north and the south.

Table 6.4 provides some data on class self-identification of the youth in the four provinces. It should be noted at the outset that the data reflects their subjective feelings much more than their actual class position. This is particularly the case for those who identify themselves as 'middle class'. In other words, the data indicates the tendency on the part of a majority of youth to aspire for upward mobility. This is stronger in the northern, eastern and western provinces. As we have seen elsewhere (Hettige 2002), there is a strong association between class identification and educational attainment.

Table 6.4 Class Self-identification among youth

Province	Middle (%)	Working (%)	Upper (%)	Other (%)	Do not know (%)
North	72	18.9	4.3	1.2	3.7
East	69.6	25.8	3.1	0	1.5
South	60.3	33.1	2.8	1.8	2.1
West	67.1	25.5	2.3	1.2	4

On the other hand, when we look at self-identity of youths in the four provinces, there are some significant differences between the provinces. More youths in the north than in the south or the west tend to define their identity in terms of ethnicity and religion. The proportion of youths identifying themselves exclusively as Sri Lankan there is relatively small. However, it is noteworthy that a large majority of youths even in the north, tend to define their identity in terms of both ethnicity/religion and national citizenship. In the other provinces, the proportion of youths identifying themselves as Sri Lankans is much larger, the highest being recorded in the most urbanised and developed western province.

Table 6.5 Self-identity of Sri Lankan Youth

Province	Etnicity/religion (%)	Sri Lankan (%)	Both (%)	Other (%)
North	26.4	12.3	61.3	0
East	23.3	25.9	50.8	0
South	17.3	37.2	6.4	39
West	16.3	44.7	10.3	28.8

Employment Preferences of Youth

Table 6.6 gives data on the preferred sector of employment among youths. It is significant that the vast majority of youths in the north and the east

prefer public sector employment. A majority of youths in the south also prefer private sector employment. It is only in the western province that a minority of youths have a preference for public sector employment. Even here the proportion is substantial i.e. 40%. Here, about 29% of the youth interviewed have shown a preference for private sector jobs. In the other provinces, particularly in the north, youths that prefer the private sector are few and far between.

Table 6.6 Sector of employment preferred by youth

Province	Public sector (%)	Private sector (%)	Self employment (%)	Other (%)
North	75	5.5	19.5	0
East	72.2	11.9	16	0
South	57.7	18.4	23	1
West	40.5	28.8	28.8	2.6

The greater preference for private sector employment in the western province is not incomprehensible. Here, many youths have access to educational institutions, which provide English language instruction, and computer literacy training, both of which are demanded by large private sector firms. Moreover, being the most developed and urbanised region in the country, the western province has the highest concentration of private sector employment. The other three provinces are very different in this regard. So a strong preference for state sector employment there reflects not only the aspirations of youths but also the available opportunities. Since the availability of, and access to, public sector employment depend very much on the state and public policy, those who look for such employment tend to be more concerned about the political and public policy environment in the country. An unfavourable political and public policy environment can frustrate such youths much more than those who are less dependent on the state and public policy.

An issue related to private sector employment is the sense of discrimination, supposedly prevalent in the private sector. Table 6.6 provides some data on the issue. Here, the responses of the youth are classified by ethnicity. It is significant that a large majority of Sinhalese as well as Tamil youth state that the private sector discriminates. A majority of Muslim youths do not share this view. When the data is closely examined, it became evident that the sense of discrimination is highly associated with several other variables such as language skills, ideology and a sense of social injustice. Those who state that the private sector discriminates are mostly monolingual, and educated in their own native language. Most of the youths subscribing to the above view also felt that society is unjust and tended to be more inclined towards egalitarian ideologies.

Table 6.7 Sense of private sector discrimination among youth by ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Do not know (%)
Sinhalese	54.2	41.5	4.4
Tamils	61.9	33.2	4.9
Muslims	32.5	64.1	3.3

Perceptions of the Socio-cultural Environment

As regards the issue of whether the society is just or unjust, a majority of youths in all provinces, except the east, share the view that society is unjust. Ironically, the largest proportion of youth that shared the above view is reported from the western province. Being the region within which gross income inequalities are markedly visible and where much of the country's wealth is concentrated, this perception is not unrealistic.

Table 6.8 Is Society Just?

Province	Yes (%)	No (%)	Do not know (%)	Other (%)
North	20.9	59.8	20.1	0
East	47.9	41.2	10.8	0
South	17.9	75.4	5.9	0.3
West	13.9	78.7	6	1.4

On the issue of caste-based discrimination, perceptions vary widely across the four provinces. As Table 6.8 shows, the north stands out very clearly with the largest proportion of youths reporting discrimination based on caste there. Only a small minority of youths (16.5%) state that there is no such discrimination. Even in the south, a large proportion (39.3%) report caste discrimination in their areas. The lowest proportion is reported from the most urbanised, western province where it is only about 20%. In the east where the population is ethnically mixed, only about a third of the youth have stated that there is caste based discrimination in their local areas.

Table 6.9 Caste discrimination in the area

Province	Yes (%)	No (%)	Do not know (%)
North	83.5	16.5	0
East	33	67	0
South	39.3	60.7	0
West	19.9	79.7	0.4

Table 6.10, reports the perceptions of the youth, as to who benefits from the development process in the country. It is significant that the vast majority of youths, irrespective of their ethnic background, shared the view that it is the rich and the politically connected people who benefit most from development. This sense is more pronounced among the Sinhalese youth. Only 14% of them feel that the poor and the needy also benefit from development.

Table 6.10 Who Benefits Most from Development?

Ethnic Group	Rich people (%)	Politically connected (%)	Poor and needy (%)	Do not know (%)
Sinhalese	17.6	61.8	14	2.6
Tamils	20	42.1	27.5	7.2
Muslims	14.8	51.9	29.5	2.4

As regards equality of opportunity for youth, a majority of the Sinhalese and Muslim youth feel that there is equality of opportunity but only a minority of the Tamil youth subscribe to that view. In other words, a majority of Tamil youths do not share the view held by a majority of Sinhalese and Muslim youths in the country.

The discussion so far has pointed to, on the one hand, some shared perceptions of youth about the wider social and cultural environment, irrespective of their ethnicity and residence and, on the other, certain marked differences between diverse ethnic and regional groups. It is noteworthy that Tamil youths tend to stand out with respect to their sense of inequality of opportunity and caste discrimination.

Table 6.11 Equality of Opportunity for Youth

Ethnic Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Do not know (%)
Sinhalese	60.2	34.8	5
Tamils	40.6	51.7	7.7
Muslims	58.1	34.8	7.1

Ideological Orientations of Youth and Interest in Public Affairs

As Table 6.12 clearly shows, a majority of Sri Lankan youths embrace egalitarian ideologies much more than a free market, capitalist ideology. This ideological orientation is most pronounced among youth in the north and east. In the south and the west, there is not only a larger proportion than

elsewhere with a commitment to capitalist ideology; the proportion of youth with no particular ideological commitment is also large. On the other hand, the pattern in the north and east is quite different in this regard.

Table 6.11 Equality of Opportunity for Youth

Ethnic Group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Do not know (%)
Sinhalese	60.2	34.8	5
Tamils	40.6	51.7	7.7
Muslims	58.1	34.8	7.1

It is also significant that the overwhelming majority of youth, irrespective of their ethnicity, have demonstrated either a strong or at least some interest in public affairs in the country. This is even stronger among Tamil youth. This tendency appears to be reinforced by various circumstances already discussed such as a pervasive sense of social injustice, private sector discrimination, caste-based discrimination in their areas, and a widespread commitment to egalitarian ideologies.

Table 6.12 Ideological Commitment of Youth

Province	Capitalist (%)	Socialist (%)	Other (%)	No ideology (%)
North	17.1	71.3	5.5	6.1
East	7.7	86.1	2.1	4.1
South	13	53.6	6.4	27
West	10	57.4	6.8	25.8

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to prove the dynamic interaction between policies and reality and how both interact in a mutually constitutive way. The colonial predicament that created particular conditions had to undergo a radical transformation. But, within the dynamic of the social movements, interest groups appropriated, deployed and recast identities and nations in order to constitute particular states, in both senses of the term. The main argument in this chapter has been that the escalation of the on-going ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka over the last several decades can be fruitfully examined as part of the wider process of social structural change that began to unfold during the British colonial period under the influence of both the forces of modernisation as well as diverse interventions on the part of both the colonial and post-colonial states. The changes and the continuities have been the

result of the interplay between the forces of modernisation on the one hand, and the various pre-existing social structures and value systems, on the other.

The emergence of a native, yet westernised and privileged elite, on the one hand facilitated the emergence of a nationalist movement legitimating some aspects of native society and culture, and, on the other, created a wide gap between the new elite and the rest of the native population which remained encapsulated in traditional, rural economic pursuits. On the other hand, the latter also became a powerful reference group for the upwardly mobile members of the native communities. Being exposed to modern egalitarian values, both via modern, secular education and popular, democratic politics, successive generations of Sri Lankan youth began to demand social justice and equality of opportunity. Frustrations arising out of their lived experiences in the above regard encouraged many youths to sympathise with, or join violent, anti-systemic movements.

The changes that were implemented acquired a life of their own to reshape perspectives and perception among both Tamils and Sinhalese within the grand narrative where specific policies eventually led to the unifying of the narrative into the theme of ethnic discrimination, thereby constituting particular identities. As pointed out in the introductory section, policies are not neutral. They are "powerful technologies of power." These policies led to measures that were deliberately, and in terms of popular perception were, seen as either exclusive or inclusive, which led to other forms of emerging trends clashing with the social expectations of specific segments of the community with implications for nation-building. This is what we have attempted to prove in describing the situation from three phases of Sri Lankan historiography. We have used material from the colonial period to the present in three sections analysing the macro, meso and micro situations to demonstrate the dynamic interactions and to show that these are not neutral processes but dynamic and constitutive ones.

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Chapter 7

Crafting the Nation, Building the State: Ethnicity and Public Policies in Fiji

Alumita L Durutalo

Exploring the Boundaries of Ethnicity

The notion of ethnicity arises out of the correlation of physical and cultural characteristics of groups of people. Ethnicity refers to a set of theories which are based on the proposition that people can be classified into mutually exclusive bounded groups according to physical and behavioral differences. In this view, people appear as they are, that is, physically as well as behaviour-wise because they were born to be so. External circumstances can affect but not completely alter identity.

The underlying ideology in ethnicity revolves around the recognition of blood ties, biological reproduction and the transmission of learned behaviour through culture. Linnekin and Poyer (1990:2) argue that while it has been an anthropological truism that culture does not reside in the genes, still, the assumption that an ethnic group is a biologically self-perpetuating unit was and to some extent still is entrenched in the social-scientific view of ethnicity.

Ethnicity can be viewed through three theoretical developments. The primordialist paradigm promotes certain affiliations such as place, kin, language, religion and custom as fundamental to a group's cohesiveness and sense of identity. Such affiliations promote natural attachments and are similar to attachments within a kinship system. While on one hand, some writers have argued that ethnic boundaries do not rely on any measurable cultural content, on the other, others maintain that ethnicity is not only a fundamental reality of social life but that it can be found in all types of societies from industrial to non-industrial (Linnekin & Poyer 1990: 3).

The circumstantialist or instrumentalist theory of ethnicity views ethnic attachments as epiphenomenal and malleable. Ethnicity is viewed as a function of historically variable social and political conditions. This view has always been taken from a political economy approach where there is an exploration of the relationship between ethnicity and power relations within the context of conflict. Those who subscribe to the circumstantialist view regard ethnic identity as becoming prominent as a result of a number of factors such as interaction with other cultures, categorisation by the dominant group within a society, peripheral development and political mobilisation (Linnekin & Poyer 1990: 3).

The "modern synthesis" theory of ethnicity incorporates trends from the primordialist and circumstantialist theories. Some writers, while emphasising the strength of primodial ties, have also acknowledged situational factors as well as the cultural construction of ethnic categories. The main proposal within the modern synthesis is that ethnicity is grounded in differences between descent and origin (Linnekin & Poyer 1990: 4).

Another important development which needs discussion and recognition in terms of ethnicity is the role that colonialism has played in influencing the socio-political and economical dimensions of identity and ethnicity. In discussing contemporary Pacific Islands' identities and ethnicities, from the tribal, regional to the global contexts, the role and impact of modernity becomes fundamental. Jones (1993:21), explains that:

> economically, modernity involved the capitalistic characteristics of a market economy. It involved the growth of production for profit, wage labour as the principal form of employment, the development of industrial technology and the extension of the division of labour. Politically, modernity involved the consolidation of the centralized nation state and the extension of bureaucratic forms of administration, systematic forms of surveillance, and democratic political party systems. Culturally, modernity involved a challenge to tradition in the name of "rationality" and a stress on the virtues of scientific and technical knowledge.

Through contact with modernisation, relocated communities and migrant enclaves have been created in most Pacific Islands. This has not only given new ways in which the indigenous peoples of the Pacific as well as the migrant groups have added new characteristics to their identities, but most important is that ethnicity was politicised and used by the colonial governments as a means of governing and controlling people within a state. In the case of Fiji, the colonial state was founded and maintained through a 'divide and rule' strategy. This system of rule survived for the 96 years of colonial governance and was also maintained after political independence, although not to the extent that it was utilised during the colonial period.

Fiji: A Brief Historical Background

On 10 October, 1970, Fiji emerged as an independent country with a rich inheritance of colonial institutions which had succeeded in maintaining the different ethnic categories in the various socio-political and economic orders. Indigenous Fijians had been successfully united and governed through the system of Fijian Administration (formerly the Native Administration), which was created in 1875 by the first Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon. Prior to cession, Fijians lived in many independent *vanua*[1] which were under the control and leadership of chiefs.

The formation of the colonial state and the creation of the Fijian Administration as an institution of rule forced the unification of the many independent vanua through the system of indirect rule. The Fijian Administration acted as a 'state within a state'. For the 96 years of British colonial rule, the institution was successful in pacifying Fijians who once lived in independent vanua throughout the Fiji group to adhere to law and order through the chiefs who were employed in the system of indirect rule. Furthermore, the institution developed its own dynamics when those who were employed in the system of indirect rule, created and protected their own elite interests, first and foremost. The institution was most instrumental in the social construction of identities among Fijians themselves and between Fijians and other ethnic groups. The creation of new roles had also given rise to new types of authority and social order. It was through this invented institution that Fijians have come to create new forms of identities in their traditional groups. The institution also helps to shape how Fijians perceive other migrant groups who have settled in Fiji.

While the rest of the migrant groups in Fiji were directly governed by the colonial state, indigenous Fijians on the other hand were governed indirectly through their chiefs in the system of Fijian administration. Fiji, therefore, emerged as an independent state with deep structural divisions which later shaped the overall governing policies of the post-colonial state. Such colonial legacies not only posed the greatest challenge to leaders in the post-colonial period but the legacies have also exacerbated problems of underdevelopment which were inherited from the colonial era.

Economic Development (1970 – 1987)

Among the Pacific Island countries (PICs), Fiji has the most diversified and dynamic economy, in spite of its narrow economic base. Its land area of more than 18,000 sq. kilometers is relatively extensive for the region and the country is endowed with natural resources to support a population of approximately 800,000 people. Since political independence, Fiji's main exports have been sugar, tourism, gold, fisheries and manufacturing products. Being

the host country to one of only two regional universities in the world, the University of the South Pacific which was established in 1968, has over the years, contributed tremendously to human resource development in Fiji as well as in the eleven Pacific Island member countries.

When Fiji gained political independence in 1970, the economic situation that was inherited by the ruling Alliance Party had three major structural problems and these were "its dependence on one crop which was sugar; its dependence on the outside world for trade, capital and expertise; and the rigidity of its economic and ethnic divisions" (Fiji 1975: 1).

These three problems were colonial legacies which were to have a lasting impact in Fiji's struggle to become a united nation-state in the post-independence years.

Experimentation in the farming of sugar was started by European planters on small scale before the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia did it on a larger scale, with the importation of indentured labourers from India in 1879. From then on, cane farming, which was done on land that was leased from Fijians, was the major occupation of Fiji Indians throughout the colonial period and into the period after political independence. Fijian labour was used elsewhere, such as in gold mining and in the copra industry. The colonial state had exploited Fijian and Indian labour differently to enable the founding of colonial capitalism. The majority of Fijians were rural village dwellers at the time of independence and were involved mostly in subsistence or semi-subsistence farming.

Fiji's transnational model of development in the 1970s began with sectoral adjustment loans from the World Bank to finance major infrastructural development projects such as the Suva-Nadi highway; the Monasavu hydro-electric power project; the Fiji Pine scheme; and other agricultural projects such as the Seaqaqa cane scheme and the Uluisaivou and Yalavou cattle schemes. Prior to political independence, the colonial government's own capital expenditure was largely financed from overseas, in particular through Commonwealth Development and Welfare grants. However, since independence, overseas loan have increased in importance, and between 1974 and 1975 almost 80 percent of government's capital expenditure was financed through overseas loans (Fiji 1975: 3-5).

In the first decade of independence (1970–1980), Fiji's overall economic performance was satisfactory, with real gross domestic product (GDP) growing by 4.7 percent per annum. From 1970 to 1975 the economy grew at a higher rate of 5.8 percent. The main impetus to economic growth in the early 1970s was provided by the tourism industry, through an increase in the construction industry and the creation of other service facilities. This boom enabled the creation of jobs and helped to strengthen Fiji's balance of payments position (Fiji 1985: 1).

The period between 1976 and 1980 was marked by a lower average growth rate of 3.8 percent per annum and this could have been partly due to an increase in energy prices from 1973 to 1974. The tourist boom was adversely affected through increases in airfares as well as a world-wide recession. This led to a drastic cutback in private investment. However, in spite of this economic downturn, the government was still very active in its developmental role through social service and infrastructure development. While tourism and the building industry were at their low, the sugar industry was doing well and provided the incentive for economic growth (Fiji 1985: 2).

By 1980, economic growth had slowed down in Fiji and government economic planners blamed this on the general recessionary climate that had prevailed in the world economy. Natural disasters such as hurricanes were also blamed for the economic downturn. The gross domestic product growth rate from 1980 to 1985 averaged at 2.0 percent per annum compared to the 4.7 percent per annum target. By 1981, the Fiji economy had experienced severe strains which were realized in the widening deficits in the operating budget as well as an increase in debt servicing. The process of debt servicing occurred at a faster rate than incoming general revenue.

Since the beginning of the eighties, the Fiji economy had entered a period of recession. The recession period brought with it low and unstable economic growth, a growing debt servicing burden, and an increasing pressure on the balance of payments. The Fiji government's Central Planning Office blamed the economic downturn on factors which were beyond Fiji's control and these included a protracted world recession, a slump in commodity prices, and high international interest rates (Fiji 1985:7).

During this period, the public sector ability to play a more active role in stimulating the economy, like it had done since independence, was constrained by its tight financial position. On a similar footing, the private sector activity and investment remained sluggish and the Fiji government's central planning office equated these problems with depressed international and domestic economic conditions. Some direct consequences of these downturn in the economy were the rising unemployment rate and consequently an increase in crime rates (Fiji 1985: 7).

After 14 years of political independence, that is, around 1984/1985, the International Monetary Fund-required austerity measures began when a visiting IMF country mission recommended deregulation policies for Fiji. This included the restructuring of the labour market to make it globally competitive since wages were 15 percent too high in relation to comparable wages in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Indonesia, and other Third World countries. The size of the Fiji government was also to be reduced through a freeze on civil service posts, an imposition of a wage freeze and a move

towards the privatization of parastatals. Further to these measures was the removal of price control and subsidies and the introduction of other necessary elements to the structural adjustment policies (Durutalo 1995: 134-135).

In 1984, the Alliance government began the move towards structural adjustment with the imposition of a wage freeze and a direct result of this was the collapse of the 1979 Tripartite Forum which had been formed by the government, the employers and the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) to govern industrial relations in Fiji. The direct consequence of structural adjustment policies in Fiji was the formation of the Fiji Labour Party in 1985 by the Fiji Trades Union Congress.

The Fiji Labour Party was the first multiethnic political party in Fiji's political history and its formation shattered the bi-polar political dominance of the Fijian-dominated Alliance Party and the Indian-dominated National Federation Party. The formation of the Fiji Labour Party shook the foundation of ethnic politics in Fiji and the party's ability to attract workers of different ethnic groups was the beginning of the awakening of 'an exploited consciousness' across the ethnic labour divide. Multi-ethnic unity under the Fiji Labour Party brought to an end the 17-year political dominance of the Alliance Party.

The fall of the Alliance Party led to Fiji's first military coup in 1987. This resulted in the return of political control to Fijian elites as well as the full implementation of structural adjustment policies. Economic development through the government's development plans had been shattered during the two military coups in 1987 and the interim government tried desperately to keep the economy functioning in the light of ethnic tensions, capital flight and the increasing outward migration of professionals.

Political Development in the Post-Colonial Period (1970-1987)

While Fiji gained independence with a lot of pomp and ceremony, deep within the foundations of the new nation-state was an ethnically divided society. The roots of ethnic divisions which were sown during the colonial period had materialised in processes such as the constitutional entrenchment of the 1970 voting system whereby people voted according to their ethnic divisions. While there were cross-voting or multi-ethnic voting provisions in the 1970 Constitution, these were token provisions only to camouflage deep structural ethnic divisions. Such situations led to difficulties in the attempt to forge multi-ethnic political unity under the new nation-state. Further to this, ethnic politics was a political time bomb which could have been ignited by the slightest rekindling of nationalist feelings. In a multi-ethnic nation like Fiji, ethnicity could be easily evoked to incite racial conflicts and also used to camouflage the existence of class with its exploitative tendencies. Clapham (1985: 57-58), argues that:

From a political viewpoint, ethnicity may be seen as a means for giving a moral bond or cement to a clientelist network. The party leadership is placed under an obligation to look after the interest of its constituent race, tribe, caste or religious group; equally to the point, the leadership acquires a kind of legitimacy as the authentic representative of that group, regardless of the enormous differences of class and wealth, and in some respects of political interests, between it and its followers.

From 1970 to 1987, Fiji was ruled by the Alliance Party and also in the same period, the opposition was dominated by the National Federation Party. The National Federation Party (NFP) was dominated by Indians, though there were also a few Fijians and people of other ethnic categories who joined the NFP. This political impasse was broken by the formation of the Fiji Labour Party and the defeat of the Alliance party by the Fiji Labour Party/ National Federation Party Coalition during the 1987 General Elections. Following this political victory were the 1987 military coups which were executed by Major General Sitiveni Rabuka. Among the publicly stated reasons for the coups was the return of Fiji's political leadership to the Fijian chiefs and Fijian people. Two political precedents arose out of the 1987 military coups; that Fiji citizens were " politically unequals"; and that the votes of indigenous Fijians in non-Fijian parties carried less weighting than those who had voted for Fijian parties. It also widened the bipolar race debate in which the dominant ideology propelled by the Fijian nationalists was the maintenance of Fijian political supremacy.

The racially weighted 1990 Constitution was the direct outcome of the 1987 military coups. A cornerstone of the 1990 Constitution was the chapter on the protection and enhancement of Fijian and Rotuman[2] interests. It states that:

> Parliament shall, with the object of promoting and safeguarding the economic, social, educational and other interests of the Fijian and Rotuman people, enact laws for those objects and shall direct the government to adopt any programme or activity for the attainment of the said objects and the government shall duly comply with such directions (Fiji 1990: 31).

The 1990 Constitution strengthened ethnic politics in its continuing support of ethnic voting categories. This is stated as:

> For the purpose of electing the members of the House, voters shall be registered on one of the four separate rolls, that is to say – (a) a roll of voters who are Fijians; (b) a roll of voters who are Indians; (c) a roll of voters who are Rotumans; (d) a roll of voters who are neither Fijians, Indians nor

> Rotumans. Thirty seven members of the House shall be…Fijians. Twenty seven members shall be elected from…Indians. One member…shall be elected from…Rotumans. Five members shall be elected from voters who are neither Fijians, Indians, nor Rotumans (Fiji 1990: 41-42).

Furthermore, with the ethnic categorisation of the electoral system, within Fijian society, what has always been overlooked is the disparity in the internal allocation of the seats among the different constituencies and the ensuing political implications of these allocations. In the 1990 Constitution, out of the 37 Fijian seats, 32 seats were contested in the 14 provinces while only five seats were contested by Fijians in the urban centres who were the biggest taxpayers within Fijian society. Durutalo (2000: 81), argues that:

> Underlying the over-allocation of Fijian seats to the provincial constituencies was the belief that Fijians in the informal or rural sector of the Fijian society were still politically naïve and easier to control than those in the formal or urban sector.

This is one of the built-in weaknesses of the practice of ethnic politics; that is, that a certain group within an ethnic category, uses its power, customary or otherwise, to influence the election or political process to its own advantage.

In the case of Fiji, the practice of ethnic politics in its patron-client version has internal consequences within Fijian society itself, in that the majority of the voting population have been silent followers for a long time. The maintenance of ethnic politics conceals intra-ethnic exploitation. In my own province of Tailevu, certain chiefly elites from one part of the province have dominated provincial politics from 1874 until political destabilization in the year 2000. Support for George Speight – leader of the May 19, 2000 coup in Fiji - came mostly from some parts of Tailevu and other underdeveloped areas in other provinces. In patron-client politics, any promise given to people to better their lives is usually received with enthusiasm.

The support for such political uprisings is part of political dissent which is not new in Fijian political history. The variation in traditional socio-political practices throughout the group were exacerbated by colonial policies which elevated some groups or regions over others. The people of Navosa in the province of Nadroga and Navosa have always indicated their wish to break away and form their own province in the hope that government development plans will be extended to their *vanua*. Navosa is the underdeveloped part of that province of Nadroga.

In Fiji, ethnic politics conceals the real problems that confront different groups of people. It has a gender face in terms of the marginalisation of women as equal partners to men in the development of the nation state. The

lowly paid garment factory workers, for example, are mostly women from all ethnic groups. These are people who are powerless to fight the system which oppresses them. At another extreme, although there are many highly educated women in Fiji, there are very few who secure crucial government postings such as being Permanent Secretaries or being involved in diplomatic postings. The majority of Fiji's diplomats since the military coups of 1987 have been Fijian males, a number of whom have been former military officers. Ethnic politics, therefore, overlooks this glaring gender imbalance in the work force.

In the Government's third five year plan since independence, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, indicates concerns about the uneven social and economic development in post-colonial Fiji. In the plan (Fiji 1980) government aims at reducing disparities in the level of development between urban and rural areas; to achieve greater equity among the different regions and communities in sharing the benefits of development; to increase employment opportunities; and to promote economic growth.

The problems of development disparities in their social, political and economic contexts are dangerous to overlook in ethnically divided societies like Fiji. Over time, the problems lead to finger-pointing and scape-goating tendencies. In the case of Fiji, some Fijian nationalist groups equate Fijian underdevelopment with the presence of migrant races in the country. In an atmosphere where people are already segregated on the basis of ethnicity, it is quite simple to spark the ethnic flame for one's own gain. Destabilisations prior to the 1987 military coups and the 2000 George Speight civilian coup incited nationalist sentiments to achieve their goals.

The military coups of 1987 brought to a climax a period in Fiji's political history that began in the early 1800s when the impact of modernity first reached Fijian shores. The attempt to rebuild an image of peaceful Fiji has been an uphill battle ever since and this problem was exacerbated by the coup of May 2000. The events threw up commonly held beliefs about Fijian history itself and the internal traditional socio-political order that was created after the arrival of the first waves of Europeans, the weakness of the foundation of the modern state that was established by the colonisers, and the failures of development models and policies which were adopted after independence to address socio-political and economic problems according to the nature of Fiji's society.

Economic development in general has not addressed the realities among the different ethnic groups in Fiji. While the Fiji Indians had been directly introduced to the cash economy since 1879, Fiji's leaders, especially in the colonial period, were not far-sighted enough to do the same with Fijians. A lot of politico-economic problems could have been evaded with the direct involvement of Fijians in the cash economy (Spate 1959, Burns Watson & Peacock 1960).

Fiji's Political Economy (1988-2002)

The political and economic downturn of 1987 was followed by some strengthening of the Fiji economy until a crisis occurred again on 19th May, 2000. There was a diversification of the economy towards tourism and manufacturing beginning with the Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara-led interim government from 1987 to 1992; the SVT[3]-led government from June 1992 to May 1999; and the Fiji Labour Party Coalition government from May 1999 to May 2000. During these periods, Fiji embarked on an economic reform programme that was based on an open and competitive export-oriented strategy. The gross domestic product for 1999 was 7 percent and this was expected to grow by more than 4 percent in 2000. All this hard work was shattered by George Speight's May 2000 coup.

A major preoccupation of the various governments since 1987 has been the attempt to restructure the government as well as to keep the civil servants efficient and politically neutral. This is yet another weakness of formalizing ethnic politics within a state. People revolve around their ethnic and tribal enclaves regardless of the good governance demand for professionalism and transparency. The process of government reform has been very slow and added to this challenge has been the politically unstable nature of Fiji as an investment area.

In his 2002 Budget Address, the Minister of Finance, Ratu Jone Kubuabola (2001: 12-13) emphasised that:

> the Civil Service cannot afford to operate the way it currently does and the numerous citings in the Auditor General's reports bear these out. This will unfortunately continue unless we make changes to strengthen accountabilities and promote performance in government...in addition to changing purposes and systems,...the civil service must undergo a paradigm shift if it is to better deliver outputs and services

The need for public sector reform has been part of globalisation and the current trend towards good governance. Kubuobola indicated clearly in his budget speech that Fiji cannot isolate itself from the rest of the world when it comes to world trade since Fiji is now a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The move towards an integration of Fiji's economy into the world economy is not only crucial but also inevitable. *What do these big economic changes at the top imply at the grass-root level?* It implies that it is also crucial as well as inevitable to work towards permanent resolutions to Fiji's recurring political crisis. It will need re-knitting the fabrics of society from the grass root level to the top echelons of power in government. Good governance begins with individuals at home; it cannot be enforced to people in government offices who throughout their lives, have not only lived in

ethnic enclaves but have also developed an ethnic mindset because of government policies.

There are two major development problems that the government is trying to solve currently. The first is the reform of the sugar industry. Fiji's over-dependence on one export crop was highlighted at the time of independence as an inherited economic problem. This problem has been compounded by other problems, both internal and external in nature. An outside problem which has affected the sugar industry is the move towards globalisation and the phasing out of the preferential agreement on sugar with the European Union. Internally, the sugar industry needs to be restructured to enable it to compete at the world level. Restructuring may involve the adoption of modern farming methods as well as the diversification of sugar products.

The second problem has to do with land and land reform in Fiji. Over 80 percent of land in Fiji is owned by Fijians and the rest is freehold and crown land, while crown land has recently been returned to the Fijians. There are over 300 islands in the Fiji group and this makes up a total land area of more than 7,000 sq. miles or 18,0000 sq. kilometers. The military coups of 1987 and 2000 have brought up sensitive issues about land. This is not only between Fijians and those of other ethnic groups but also among Fijians themselves. Land boundaries has always been a subject of contest among Fijians ever since the sittings of the Native Lands Commission in the 1880s. The most imminent problem about land now is related to the non-renewal of agricultural leases, including sugarcane leases by the Fijian landowners. The leases were offered for a period of 30 years under the 1969 Landlords and Tenant Act (ALTA). These leases began expiring in 1997 and by the year 2000, most of the leases that had expired have not been renewed. The non-renewal of cane farm leases has also badly affected the performance of the sugar industry. Although the Fiji Government had already allocated $F10 million in 2002 to provide land, infrastructure development and farming assistance to both incoming and exiting farmers, in the long term, permanent solutions are needed to address the need for land use. This will also contribute to future economic and political stability in Fiji.

The non-renewal of agricultural leases by Fijian landowners have two main characteristics. There are those who need their land back as a result of the increase in *mataqali* members and land is needed for their survival. The second characteristic has to do with those who simply want their land back. Much of this land is now overgrown with weeds. Herein lies good leadership challenges for the Fiji Government, that is, on how to arrive at land use solutions which will satisfy both groups on the ethnic divide.

Rethinking Ethnicity: The Future to Fiji's Socio-Political and Economic Stability

While Fiji's public policies have been explicitly stated since political independence in 1970, what needs rethinking is the multiple realities in which such policies have been and will be implemented. Recurring political problems between 1987 and 2000 have pointed to the need for urgent measures that will prevent Fiji from being a permanent member of the Third World Coup Club.

A direct consequence of political instability since 1987 has been the high number of Fiji citizens leaving Fiji to settle abroad in neighbouring countries like New Zealand and Australia as well as far-away countries like the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The table below shows Fiji resident departures and countries of final destination between 1998 and 2001.

Table 7.1: Fiji Residents Departures 1998 - 2001

Period	Australia	New Zealand	U.S.A.	Canada	U.K.	Cont. Europe	Pac. Is	Others	Total
1998	28,269	18,846	10,078	3,250	886	691	9,933	6,488	78,441
1999	33,958	21,381	11,376	3,799	939	828	10,521	6,333	89,115
2000	29,136	20,200	10,024	2,919	1,548	642	10,823	7,396	82,688
2001	28,999	23,844	9,102	2,967	1,615	722	10,518	7,123	84,890

Source: Key Statistics January – June 2002: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics: 87

The migration of skilled people is a liability to any society or country. This is not only in terms of the economic cost to the country but an important aspect is the social impact on human relations. The experience is worse when people are forced to leave the only place they have known as home. For most families, the psychological trauma is the same for those who leave and for those who remain because of financial constraints. In Fiji, political instability and the fear of the unknown has been the main reason for emigration among Indians and Fijians as well since 1987. The consistent trend of outward migration from Fiji has resulted in a state where there are more males living in the country now than females (*The Daily Post*, Monday February 17, 2003). On the socio-political and economic front, the high migration rate among females may be a direct consequence of their desire to live in politically stable environments where they can easily get employment and have access to freedom of expression. This development will have other consequences on the nation as a whole in the future.

Ethnic legacies become security problems as well over time and when the security forces are part of the problem, then the threats are real and alarming. From the three military coups in Fiji and the Sandline Affairs in

Papua New Guinea, what emerges as the trend in the Pacific as a whole is that the security problems in Melanesia, especially Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, are internal and life-threatening to the ordinary civilian population.

In Fiji the internal security problem brings in a new dimension of looking at the maintenance of ethnic politics in a country where almost a hundred percent of its military force belong to one ethnic group. As was experienced in the 2000 coup in Fiji, perhaps the real threat did not come from the civilians who carried out the coup but the split of the military force to rally behind *vanua* or clan allegiances. The theft of military supplies in a country where it is illegal to own arms further aggravates the insecure disposition of the civilian population. The conflicting allegiance towards the *vanua* or clan and the modern state makes a mockery of the military as an institution of governance in the modern state in the Pacific and most Third World countries.

Leaders of all ethnic groups need to compromise on the rights and interests of each group and work out solutions that will be in the best interest of different ethnic groups, sub-groups as well as the nation. Various solutions can be worked out at both the national and local levels of governance. Perhaps a devolution of power from the national government to the provincial governments, as mini-states, and to include all ethnic groups living in it, could be a possible way of diluting the ethnic legacy. There are 14 provinces in Fiji and these provinces come under the jurisdiction of the Fijian Administration. A common form of governance will enable the realization of common values and goals amongst people of different ethnic groups.

Land usage could also be worked out in terms of share-cropping or to be used in other types of shared businesses amongst Fijians or between Fijians and other ethnic groups. The move towards globalisation and the need for the economic advancement of all citizens, including the Fijian landowners, may lie in land reform through mutual land-use arrangements.

Fiji's 1997 Constitution has already set Fiji on a spirit of reconciliation. However, any good Constitution becomes useless if people do not have the political will and the right spirit to put what is written into practice. Political instabilities and coups have diminished the quality of life for all ethnic groups. People cannot excel in a political economy which is founded on ethnic segregation.

Conclusion

The solution to Fiji's ethnic problems lies within Fiji itself; among all its citizens and their genuine commitment to get on with one another. Perhaps, the first step which needs to be taken is to recognise that people can only learn from history and there is nothing they can do to re-live history. The different ethnic groups have to recognise their common destiny in Fiji as

their country and build bridges to reach out and extend goodwill across the communities. There is a need to understand and respect the needs and aspirations of different ethnic groups to enable future political stability. Fijians have lived with other ethnic groups for over a century and in the case of Indians for about one hundred and twenty four years; harnessing the strengths of each ethnic group can be the most powerful tool for socio-political and economic advancement in Fiji.

Notes

1 Vanua is a geographical boundary which is under the control of a high chief. All the resources within a vanua boundary comes under the traditional jurisdiction of the vanua chief.

2 Rotuma is a Polynesian island to the north which is part of the Fiji group.

3 The SVT or the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei party and government was led by Sitiveni Rabuka, the executor of the 1987 military coups.

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PART IV

BACK TO THE FUTURE
PUBLIC RE-IMAGININGS
OF THE NATION

Chapter 8

Reconnecting 'the Nation' and 'the State': The Malaysian Experience

Shamsul A.B.

Introduction

We learnt from the post-colonial countries that, firstly, we cannot assume the term 'state' could be used interchangeably with the term 'nation-state' because the range of historical trajectories shaping the post-colonial countries is quite wide. Thus, secondly, the term 'nation-state' could be used in a number of different fashions. For example, we are aware of the existence of 'state-nation,' such as Singapore, in which the 'state,' instead of society, not only defines and engineers but also reinvents the 'nation' almost at will to suit the changing demand of the 'state.' In some other cases, there are 'nations-without-state', such as in the case of the Moros of the Southern Philippine, in which, it has a 'nation,' or a few competing 'nations-of-intent,' but is yet to successfully establish a full-fledged bona fide 'state'. Of course, there are also cases of 'states-without-nation.' Malaysia is one such case.

The existence of these variations has conceptual and empirical implications that we intend to address in this chapter. Conceptually, the 'state,' defined as "an entity that has a rule of a law, a territory and citizenship," especially in post-colonial countries, could be separated from the 'nation,' defined as "an imagined community imbued with a notion of a nation-of-intent," because the former has already existed during the colonial period fulfilling colonial needs. Once a country achieved its independence and despite the fact that the natives are at the helm, its main structure of governance remains the same as that of the colonial state.

Depending on how the independence was negotiated, the 'nation' or 'how the nation should be,' in most postcolonial countries, remain an unfinished agenda because the struggle for independence during the colonial era rarely takes a homogenous form, especially, in multi-ethnic or multi-cultural societies, such as Fiji, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nigeria and many more. In these countries, the 'state' exists for many decades after independence without an established nation. Sometimes, bloody civil wars, such as the Biafran war in Nigeria, broke out because different ethnic groups within a post-colonial country prefer to pursue their own nation-of-intent (see Shamsul 1992, 1996). In Asia, as in the case of India, the Muslim anti-colonial nationalist movement broke away to form its own state called Pakistan, consisting of West and East Pakistan. A few decades later East Pakistan broke away to form what we know today as Bangladesh.

We would like to argue, based upon the empirical evidence outlined above, that the 'modern states' and/or 'nation-states' in Asia, and other postcolonial countries, are a distinct lot, for historical and a host of other reasons, when compared to the European ones which have been for so long the main conceptual and empirical source, indeed benchmark, for theorisation in the construction of theories about 'the state' and 'nation-state' for the rest of the world.[1] Indeed, in many of the Asian cases, the 'state' and the 'nation' are two quite separate entities. The former is solidly established and usually promotes a version of the latter. The latter, on the other hand, is often being contested by different social groups, hence the proliferation of notions of the nation-of-intent.

This chapter is a modest attempt to 'reconnect' the 'nation' and the 'state' in the discourse on state formation in Malaysia. It is motivated by a deceptively simple idea put across by Gellner (1993: 1) which would describe Malaysian state formation as an attempt by Malaysians, of various ethnic and class backgrounds, to grasp 'the national principle' of seeking to make 'the cultural and the political unit congruent'. And that attempt, ontologically, has been articulated in the contestation of meanings or notions about different forms of what we would call 'nations-of-intent', informed by an epistemological understanding that the Malaysian state is a variant of a developmentalist capitalist state.

The presentation begins with an outline of Malaysia's effort to chart the trajectory of its modernisation project, particularly its unfinished political agenda, namely to create 'a united Malaysian nation-state', a *Bangsa Malaysia,* by the year 2020. Then we move on to discuss the ongoing debate amongst various social groups, both *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera,* regarding the kind of Malaysian nation-state that each is trying to promote. The origin and social roots of these nations-of-intent shall be discussed. Finally, the implications of the Malaysian case on the effort to theorize the modern state and nation-state shall be discussed.

The Unfinished Modernisation Project of Malaysia

The Malaysian case is also an interesting one to consider for our conceptual and empirical scrutiny (For useful and sociologically-informed historical accounts of Malaysia, see Andaya & Andaya 2001; Harper 1999. Also, see Shamsul 1997, 2000). It is made up of a two-tier federation. In the first tier is the Federation of Malaya which consists of 11 *negeri*, or provinces, that became independent in 1957. The second, the Federation of Malaysia, consists of the Federation of Malaya (physically located in the Malay peninsula) plus the provinces of Sabah and Sarawak (both located in the Borneo island) declared independent in 1963. Not only the issue of the 'nation' is separated from the 'state', even the existence of the state remains a conditional one, in terms of the rule of law and citizenship, and this is written into the Malaysian constitution (Federation of Malaysia 1995. For an informed analysis of the contradiction, see Suffian, Lee & Trindade 1978). For instance, Malaysians born in the Federation of Malaya have to have an international passport, or a special document, to enter Sabah and Sarawak. They can't stay more than three months without a special visa. Should they want to take up employment in Sabah and Sarawak, like other foreign workers, they have to obtain a work permit from the respective provincial or state governments.

At independence, Malaysian society comprised three major ethnic communities, namely, the indigenous community or *bumiputera* (lit. sons of the soil), who accounted for 50 per cent of the population, and two sizeable immigrant communities, one Chinese (37 per cent) and the other Indian (11 per cent). Since then, the Censuses of 1970, 1980 and 1990 have shown that, in spite of the general increase in the population, from about 10 to 18 million, the ethnic composition has not changed significantly. However, to most Malaysians, it is the *bumiputera and non-bumiputera* ethnic divide that is perceived as significant, used in official government documents as well as in the idiom of everyday interaction, despite the fact that there is heterogeneity within both. Nonetheless, colloquially, the public refers to this ethnic divide simply as *'bumi'* and non-*bumi,* reflecting the delicate demographic balance between the two categories, each constituting about 50 per cent of the population. This has important wider implications in the social life of Malaysians, especially in political terms (see Shamsul 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Hirschman 1986, 1987).

One of those involves the attempt to make 'the cultural principle' (read the different 'notions of nations') and the political unit (read 'the state') congruent. At the level of 'authority-defined social reality', which is *bumiputera*-dominated, the cultural principle question, or in popular idiom referred to as the issue of 'national identity', is perceived by the state as a non-issue because its basis and content has been spelt out in a number of policy documents within the framework of the Malaysian constitution. It is

a *bumiputera*-defined cultural principle that has privileged many aspects of *bumiputera* culture as the 'core' of the Malaysian national identity while recognising, if peripherally, the cultural symbols of other ethnic groups.

On the other hand, at the level of 'everyday social reality', the authority-defined cultural principle has been challenged by three groups, namely, the non-*bumiputera* group, led by the Chinese, and two *bumiputera* ones, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* group and the radical Islamic *bumiputera* group, each offering its own nation-of-intent, i.e. its own vision of what the cultural principle should be for the political unit (the state), based on a particular ideological framework. The non-*bumiputera* rejects the *bumiputera-based* and *bumiputera*-defined cultural principle in preference for a more 'pluralised' one, in which the culture of each ethnic group in Malaysia is accorded a position equal to that of the *bumiputera*. For instance, the Chinese suggest that Chinese language and rituals should be considered as an integral part of the cultural principle or national identity. (For a comparison of Malay and Chinese experiences of identity formation in Malaysia see Shamsul 1999). Although both the non-Muslim *bumiputera* and the radical Islamic *bumiputera* accept the authority-defined *bumiputera-based* cultural principle, the former suggest that Christianity and 'native religions' be accorded equal status to that of Islam, as components within it; the latter, on the contrary, rejects what it sees as the secular, modernist Islamic component of the identity in preference for a 'truer and purer' Islam, hence the idea of the Islamic state. The Kadazan of Sabah argue forcefully for the non-Muslim *bumiputera* case and the Parti Islam, whose core is in Kelantan, for the radical Islamic *bumiputera* group.

Those who believe that Malaysia is an authoritarian state, with *bumiputera* hegemony well-entrenched, view the opposition to the authority-defined cultural principle as an anomaly, a social aberration, or as minority voices, which the state allows as an act of benevolence or a form of 'social tokenism'. This view is informed, conceptually, by a 'benevolent state' thesis which stresses the fact that *bumiputera* dominance is a foregone conclusion. Hence dissenting voices find space at the behest of the *bumiputera* ruling class, who, in return, use this to demonstrate that 'democracy' is well and alive in Malaysia. We find that this approach, albeit unwittingly, favours a kind of master narrative that downplays and, in an ironic twist, belittles many of the oppositions and differences of human experience that characterise everyday human life in Malaysia. Their 'hegemonic developmentalist' approach ignores most of what is going on behind the public scene.

We thought it more instructive to give equal weight to the dominant and the dominated, each representing a different view or approach, and each articulating dissimilar interests. This opens the way for uncertainties, ruptures

and tensions. With such an approach we are in a better position to highlight the alternatives, their attendant differences, however slight, the distances between them and, most significantly, the dialogue between them, fruitful or futile, eventful or mundane. As one would have noticed from the above, this is the strategy of our presentation. It is an effort to make sense of dissenting voices in the Malaysian present-day social milieu with regard to the question of 'the cultural principle'. In doing so, we are offering a discourse analysis on the origin, social roots and bureaucratic management of contemporary contestation regarding Malaysia's cultural principle or national identity: a Malaysia which is in a hurry to realise its 'modernisation project'.

We have chosen this strategy for two main reasons. First, most analyses of Malaysia's modernisation project tend to emphasise the material process. Whereas this, of course, is necessary, we believe we should also try to grasp the ideological, and in many ways 'abstract' contestation that goes with modernisation. There is a need to explore what happens in the political space, beyond politics of parties and numbers, particularly in the realm of ideas, symbols and perceptions. Second, in so doing we have outlined some of the origins of the present 'abstract' ideological struggle over the definition of the cultural principle that should underpin the functioning of the political unit, both amongst the elites and non-elites. The latter are particularly concerned about the practical consequences of various concepts of community for their everyday lives and the future, such as their children's education, the usefulness of their mother tongue and other cultural practices. Such concerns, mundane as they seem, are closely linked to the larger issue of Malaysia's future as a nation-state.

Broadly speaking, Malaysia's 'modernisation project' has two interconnected main components, the economic and the political. If the economic component is driven by the need to industrialise, the political one is motivated by the need to realise a nation-state. To achieve both has been the central objective of Malaysia's modernisation project.

Politicians, policy-makers and most informed observers on Malaysia seem to hold the view that the economic component of Malaysia's modernization effort, as of the last decade, is not as problematic as the political one. Such a view has emerged against the background of Malaysia's spectacular economic growth, particularly from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. But we do know that the Malaysian economy, successful as it is, has a number of difficulties, as the 1997 economic crisis revealed. However, it has been argued that the political difficulties are more serious than the economic ones and they are perceived as obstacles to Malaysia's further economic success. In other words, Malaysia's achievement thus far has been perceived as one-sided, heavily economic, and not matched by a similar achievement in the political sphere (read state/nation formation).

Against such a perceived background as well as a concern for the long-term survival of the society, Malaysia's prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1991, introduced his famous *Wawasan 2020,* or Vision 2020, which simply means that in the year 2020 Mahathir hopes Malaysia to be an advanced industrialized country with an established nation-state, hence a fully modern society (Khoo Boo Teik 1995, 2003; In-Wong Hwang 2003; Welsh 2004). He lists a number of challenges and obstacles that Malaysia has to overcome in order to achieve this vision. It is quite clear that, to him, the political challenge of creating a united Malaysian nation, or a *Bangsa Malaysia,* is the greater and more critical one compared to the economic challenge of sustaining the current level of economic growth in Malaysia's efforts to become modern.

The fact that Mahathir emphasised the need to create a united Malaysian nation implies that Malaysia is still 'one state with several nations', meaning that in the broad economic sense it is a coherent variant of a capitalist entity but in the political and ideological sense it is still searching for a parallel coherence because there exist strong, competing nations-of-intent. The political struggle in Malaysia, if put in Gellnerian term, is over whether or not it is able to make 'the cultural and the political unit' congruent.

One State, Many Nations in Malaysia

By nation-of-intent we mean a more or less precisely defined idea of the form of a nation-state, i.e. its territory, population, language, culture, symbols and institutions. The idea must be shared by a number of people who perceive themselves as members of that nation, and who feel that it unites them. A nation-of-intent may imply a radical transformation of a given state, and the exclusion or inclusion of certain groups of people. It may also imply the creation of a new state, but it does not necessarily imply an aspiration for political self-rule on the part of the group of people who are advancing their nation-of-intent. It may be an inclusive construct, open to others, and which is employed as the basis for a political platform voicing dissent or a challenge to the established notion of nation. In any case, the concept nation-of-intent depicts an idea of a nation-state that still needs to be constructed or reconstructed. It promises the citizens (or some of them) an opportunity to participate in a 'grand project' which they can claim as theirs. It, therefore, bridges the authority-defined and the everyday-defined idea of a nation. In the Malaysian case, as admitted by Mahathir, the 'united Malaysian nation-state' is yet to be born. Hence, various social groups in Malaysia can still voice their different nations-of-intent.

In some aspects, conceptually, 'nation-of-intent' is not dissimilar to Anderson's concept of 'imagined political community' (Anderson 1983). By 'imagined', he does not necessarily mean 'invented', but rather the

members of the said community 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. However, nation-of-intent is more positive, proactive, non-deterministic and forward-looking. It has a programmatic plan of action articulated in *real politik* which has, in the Malaysian case, emerged not only from a historical context of anti-colonialism but also in the post-colonial era. In the latter, it serves as an alternative way of formulating political intentions even though, mostly, it remains at the discourse level. However, in a number of cases, especially in particular localities, the idea of advancing alternative nations-of-intent has found concrete expression, hence political space.

This is what has happened in the local provinces of Kelantan and Sabah. In both provinces, the local ruling party, which opposes the Malaysian Barisan Nasional (National Front)-dominated government, has made serious attempts not only to continue to articulate its own nation-of-intent but also to implement some aspects of it locally. Even though these attempts have met with limited success, they have demonstrated that it is possible to have and hold on to one's nation-of-intent and implement it within the so-called 'authoritarian' political context in Malaysia. It is in this sense that the Malaysian situation, in some ways, is not unlike the African one. If the latter has been complicated by 'tribal nationalism' thus giving rise to a situation described as 'one state, many nationalisms', the Malaysian case could be described as a situation of 'one state, several nations', or more precisely, nations-of-intent (Shamsul 1992).

The concept of a united Malaysian nation, proposed by Mahathir, could be interpreted in two ways: first, to mean 'the nation as a cultural community', a kind of political innovation which suggests the idea of rural and urban, intra- and inter-ethnic, and inter-class solidarity, (clearly, here Mahathir is not using the term 'nation' in the traditional 'aspiration for political self-rule' sense); and, second, to mean the construction of a 'national identity', hence 'national integration'. In fact, the latter has been the overriding, but as yet not realized, objective of the New Economic Policy, which was launched in 1971, implemented over two decades, and ended in 1990.

Some observers have said that Mahathir's concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is not really different from the one proposed by Lee Kuan Yew in 1963, namely a 'Malaysian Malaysia' nation, when he was chief minister of Singapore and Singapore was still in Malaysia. However, some Malay bureaucratic intellectuals have answered that Mahathir's concept is qualitatively different. Whereas Lee Kuan Yew argued for a nation-state in which everyone, irrespective of race, colour and creed, would enjoy equal status, Mahathir argues for a nation-state in which the constitutionally recognized *bumiputera's* special position, hence *bumiputera* political dominance, is retained and accepted by all Malaysians.

Therefore, it could be said that the shaping of the political agenda of Malaysia's modernisation project, as outlined by Mahathir, is contextualized within the existing legal-bureaucratic state structures, namely, the Malaysian Constitution and the federalist nature of the state. Lee Kuan Yew's 'Malaysian Malaysia' agenda, on the other hand, demands a radical constitutional reform and perhaps the formation of an 'absolutist' unitary state, such as the one in Singapore, which, according to many analysts, has not really been a 'Singaporean Singapore'. In spite of that, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the Chinese-controlled main opposition political party in Malaysia, has continued, from the late 1960s until the last general election of 2004, to call for a 'Malaysian Malaysia' as its nation-of-intent.

Since it is unlikely that a radical constitutional reform will take place in Malaysia, by implication the formation of a unitary state in the mould of 'Malaysian Malaysia' is improbable. But, in Mahathir's opinion, there is no reason why Malaysians should not strive to create a 'united Malaysia nation-state' and build their own 'national identity'. Ironically, it is this very suggestion that keeps the debate open, about what kind of *Bangsa Malaysia* we should have, or at least that is the perception of many social groups in contemporary Malaysia. Hence the dialogue between various nations-of-intent is alive and well in Malaysia at present, arguably, in a redefined political space. Therefore, it is not surprising that elites from various ethnic groups in Malaysia continue to articulate different nations-of-intent. These notions cannot be dismissed as wishful thinking, because some are actively articulated and operationalised in various institutional forms, such as through political parties, NGOs and cultural organisations.

Conclusion

This brief chapter has been a modest attempt to reconnect the discourse on 'state' and 'nation' in the context of Malaysian studies, motivated by the Gellnerian idea that state making in Malaysia is informed by an attempt to grasp 'the national principle' through making 'the cultural and the political unit congruent'. We have done this by locating this attempt in a wider sociological context, namely, 'the modernisation project' of developing countries (read Malaysia), in which, besides the economic programme, the political programme of nation-state building, hence the national identity issue, is a part.

Many studies have advanced the argument that the nationalist ideology often emerges as a reaction to industrialization and the fragmentation of society that it brings. The state realises that, on the one hand, kinship ideology, feudalism and religion are no longer capable of organising people, and yet, on the other, the relatively new industrial system of production urgently requires a kind of socio-cultural homogenisation of the population to prepare

on a large scale, a continuous pool of skilled workers. The success of the process of homogenisation is dependent on the success of a mass education system, which is supposed to introduce 'national consciousness', and create cohesion and loyalty amongst individuals involved in a densely populated social system. A 'nationalist ideology' or 'nationalism' is often seen, in this context, as being able to fulfill these cultural and political requirements for what is essentially a materialist objective.

It could be argued that a nationalist ideology is functional for the state for two main reasons; first, it recreates a sentiment of 'nationhood', that is, a feeling of wholeness and continuity with the past, and, second, it may come to terms with the negative consequences of modernity, particularly, the ruptured relationship between individual and society—hence alienation—resulting from industrialisation. 'Nationhood' begets 'national identity', which are both a political ideology and a faith for which previously people have been willing to sacrifice their lives. But, in the context of the newly emerging economies such as Malaysia, would the state expect its citizens to die for the sake of achieving a statistical target of 'economic growth'? Herein lies the problem which the state faces in introducing a relatively new nationalist ideology in the post-Cold War era in countries such as Malaysia, that are solely motivated by a modernisation project intent on transforming the country, through industrialisation, into a developed modern nation.

The proclamation by the Malaysian state that there is an urgent need to have created a 'united Malaysian nation-state' with a *Bangsa Malaysia* identity by the year 2020, is a conscious effort on its part to foster a new 'nationalist ideology' to pre-empt its transformation to an industrialised developed status which, it believes, is now well on its way. Interestingly, the realisation of this 'identity' has been put across by the state as the ultimate 'challenge' for all Malaysians; by implication, should this ideology introduced by the urban elites fail, the burden of the blame will fall on the mass of citizens. However, the real challenge is to seek a middle ground or a compromise between an authority-defined nation, framed within the context of *bumiputera* dominance (as articulated by a particular group within the *bumiputera*), and the everyday ideas about nations-of-intent propagated by both the various *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputera* groups. Some of the latter have their social roots deep in the past and others in the recent post-colonial circumstances.

The intervention by the 'new' middle class, in the form of perpetuating ethnicised social scientific knowledge framed in the nation-of-intent perspective, does not help this attempt to find a middle ground. The fact remains that irrespective of ethnic groups, what is being proposed and actively promoted has been a variety of nations-of intent that could form Malaysia's future 'nationalist ideology' and 'national identity.' The concept of nation-of-intent is analytically useful to understand the contradictions within the

general discourse on 'nationalism', 'nationalist ideology' and 'nationhood' in the societies of emerging industrial economies such as in the East Asian region, as is evident from the Malaysian case.

For instance, in Malaysia today the main problem in the *bumiputera*-defined nation-of-intent called *Bangsa Malaysia* is that it has been perceived by non-*bumiputera* as being imbued with strong 'acculturationist,' even 'assimilationist,' tendencies and the latter prefer the state to adopt a more accommodative position, thus proposing a 'pluralised' nation, where no one single ethnic community predominates. Political, economic and demographic factors allowed such a debate to proceed without circumstances within Malaysia creating open tension or enmity.

In a post-colonial society, such as the one in Malaysia, when modern institutions and practices have already become 'traditions', 'pillars of authority' and 'measurement of social authenticity', when time and space have been transformed by globalisation, creating macro large-scale systems and unleashing a host of contradictions at the micro-level, and when everyday 'transnationalist' existence continues to question and challenge the functionality of the state, it is impossible for the state and its authority-defined social reality to impose totally its presence on the more diffused and fragmented everyday social reality of the masses except in a draconian and authoritarian way. Within such a context, the contest may not be in the arena of *realpolitik* but at the discourse level, where concepts like nation-of-intent may become extremely useful not only to express dissent but also resistance in a subtle way.

Notes

1   Not only in theorising about the 'modern state' and 'nation-state', Europe and European thought has been influential in shaping ideas and explanations in many more spheres of non-European thought system. An Chicago-based Indian scholar asks: "Can European thought be dislodged from the center of the practice of history in a non-European place?" This was the question that was asked and answered in a most interesting book by Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2000.

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Chapter 9

Identity Matters: Ethnic Salience and Perception in Malaysia

Ong Puay Liu

Introduction

This chapter deals with an issue that is considered 'sensitive' and contentious – ethnic identity in the context of Malay/bumiputera special rights. Malaysia's New Economic Policy (1971-1990) and its replacement, the National Development Policy (1991-2000) emphasise the restructuring of wealth along ethnic lines to eliminate inter-ethnic disparities between Malays and Chinese in particular. Emphasis on ethnic restructuring accentuates the significance of ethnic classification and identification among the multi-ethnic population of Malaysia.

This chapter argues that the government's aspiration for national unity and the creation of a Malaysian Nation (*Bangsa* Malaysia) remains an illusion so long as ethnic identity continues to be a factor in the lives of Malaysians. Ethnic identity as a personal attribute makes us comfortable and connected with fellow ethnic members, past and contemporary. When political value is attached to ethnic identity, citizens of the country are not seen as Malaysians, or as individuals in their own right but as members of their respective ethnic groups. They are not man or woman, lecturer or teacher, but Malay, Chinese, Orang Asli, Indian, Iban etc. This chapter shows that in Malaysia, the policy of separating and treating Malaysians based on exclusive ethnic categories rather than inclusive citizenship status and/or economic criteria have far-reaching impact on the daily lives of all Malaysians. Under such circumstances, a Malaysian citizen's status is related to his/her ethnic group and treated en masse by policies. Ethnic identity therefore matters in the social life of Malaysians for, as members of their respective ethnic groups, they assume the publicly imposed political and economic statuses bestowed upon their ethnic groups.

Identity and Politics of Ethnicity

Identity is a central feature of human existence. It is a label acquired by an individual or group through the process of interaction. As a label, identity serves as a reference point for the individual and acts to differentiate self from others. Who we think we are and who others think we are provide the basis for us to develop a sense of who we are and who others are and act accordingly. Identity then is a product of the interplay between these insider and outsider perspectives. As identity is interactive and fluid, it is therefore necessary to view identity not as a static, unchanging entity, for example, who we think we are or how others think who we are, but as a process, that is, how individuals or groups come to acquire certain identities and how these identities are created, maintained and transformed (Spivak 2004). In other words, how a sense of identity is produced over time.

Identity and the politics of ethnicity in Malaysia offer an excellent opportunity for examining these processes. When ethnic identity is used as a political weapon for inter-ethnic claims and competition, it gives rise to ethnicity, that is, the degree of consciousness of the political value of one's ethnic identity and ethnic membership. There is often a utilitarian logic to ethnic identification. When it is advantageous to draw a boundary between one group of claimants to opportunities and resources against another group, the invocation of ethnic bonds can be a powerful call to unity. Ethnicity consequently is called into play in situations of competition over scarce resources: jobs, housing, school access, prestige, political power etc. (Cornell & Hartmann 1998: 97).

In addition to being a mobilising tool, ethnicity can also arise as a result of perceived threat. Hage (2004) explains the scenario: "when we perceive others as harmless, we give them a positive identity and view them as a friend. When conflict arises, we do not make high demands and willing to negotiate without pre-conditions. However, when we perceive others as harmful, we see them as threat. We give them a negative identity and regard them as foe. When conflict arises, we set conditions before negotiation."

Identity Matters and Special Rights Concerns

Through the use of ethnic characteristics (physical resemblance, common religion, language and shared cultural practices, belief in common descent and historical experiences), Malaysians are categorised as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Kadazan, Rungus, Orang Asli etc. These ethnic categories are further classified as indigenous 'sons of the soil' (*Bumiputera*) or non-indigenous 'immigrants' (*Non-Bumiputera*). Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak are identified as Bumiputeras while the Chinese, Indians and other non-Malays, as Non-Bumiputeras.

By virtue of being bumiputeras, Malays (and natives of Sabah and Sarawak) are bestowed a "special position" by the Federal Constitution (Article 153 [1]). The Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King as Head of State) is entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding the special position of Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak. This special position ensures the reservation of Malay or Native Customary Land (Article 89); quotas for admission to public service; issuing of permits or licences for operation of certain businesses; and scholarships, bursaries or other forms of aid for educational purposes. The rationale behind this special provision for the Malays was that if they were not specially favoured in government employment, provision of scholarships, etc., they would be completely overwhelmed by the other races (Kua 2000).

The Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, although considered the "original or first people," are excluded from the "special position" status granted to Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak in Articles 153 or 89. Subjected to a specific act called the *Orang Asli Act 1954*, the Orang Asli are not considered bumiputera but are seen as "wards" of their respective state governments. A special department, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (JHEOA) is established to protect and assist the Orang Asli, essentially a collective term to refer to the heterogeneous 18 ethnic subgroups officially classified for administrative purposes under three main categories - Negrito, Senoi and Aboriginal or Proto Malay (Nicholas 2000: 11).

In an ethnically-diversified country like Malaysia, the politicisation of ethnic identities based on claims of indigeneity and the application of such claims to policy making serves to highlight inter-ethnic differences and encourage negative inter-ethnic perceptions and fears. On the other hand, while intra-ethnic solidarity is enhanced, such claims tend to downplay intra-ethnic differences and disparities. The periodic controversies over the question of Malay special privileges and UMNO's threats of challenges to "Malay dominance" in Malaysian politics (Kua 2000; Nadarajah 2004: 58), the failure of a number of non-bumiputera top scorers to gain entry into public universities or securing government scholarships, and the debate on the National Service programme, among others, pose as testimony to the tenuous state of ethnic relations in Malaysia. This gives cause for us to examine the issues of Malay (and bumiputera) special position and special rights, the quota system and how they reconcile with the principle of ethnic equality (Kua 2000) and the building of a Malaysian nation.

Indigeneity carries a distinctive power by virtue of the primacy of this belief: our group was here first before all others. The ethnic identity, bumiputera, created by this claim is therefore incomparably resilient and enduring. The use of indigeneity as a basis for their claim to supremacy manifests the bumiputeras' attempt to legitimise their claim. Horowitz

(1985: 204) provides a rationale for this: "the moral basis of ethnic claims lies in group legitimacy within a territory. To perceive that one's claim of indigeneity and supremacy is legitimate provides assurance that the group has the legitimate right to be owner, the ruler, administrator, decision maker of the territory and the rest, to be ruled, subject to the power of the legitimate supreme group."

In the Malaysian context, when legitimacy is distributed unevenly among the population, then one group's claim to legitimacy and indigeneity provides a basis for the recurrent psychological denial that another group has an equal share in the land. There is much to gain if one's group is proclaimed as bumiputera. Bumiputeraism fosters an ideology that its members have a primordial attachment to the land, hence a legitimate claim for special position and preferential policies. Horowitz (1985: 204) provides a clear explanation: "It is not [so much] an objective question of who actually came first, or who is acknowledged to have come first that governs the strength of the claim to indigeneity. Rather it is the political context of such claims and the uses to which they can be put that matter."

The following statement by Ishak Hj Abdul Rahman and his co-authors (2004) illustrates Horowitz's contention above: *keperibadian bangsa Bumiputera di Malaysia tidak akan tercabut selagi mampu untuk terus mempertahankan kuasa politik yang kita miliki* (the character of the Bumiputera people in Malaysia will not be eliminated so long as we are able to defend the political power we possess).

Gomez (1999: 167) in his review of ethnic relations in Malaysia, contends that while cultural factors act as a source for ethnic tension in multi-ethnic Malaysia, the primary cause for such tension since the 1980s is economic factors, particularly those affecting the Bumiputeras (primarily the Malays) and the Chinese. Gomez further contends that the reason why economic competition precipitates ethnic tension is that ethnic identification is perpetuated by most political parties, which are based and run along ethnic lines.

Means (2003: 181) illustrates the role of the federal government in institutionalising ethnic issues in Malaysia: "Singapore's exit from the federation [in 1965] also changed the political calculus since Malaysia without Singapore reinforced the political dominance of the Malays and assured that federal policies would remain unchallenged. This was especially true for the formula of inter-ethnic relations – based on a system of Malay rights and privileges – that was being promoted by the Malay leaders in the federal government."

Malay rights and privileges were further entrenched through amendments to the Constitution. The Sedition Act, for example, was amended to make it unlawful for anyone, including Members of Parliament, to discuss or question "ethnically sensitive issues" such as the powers or status of Malay Rulers,

citizenship rights, Malay special rights, the status of Islam as the official religion, and Malay as the national language (Gomez & Jomo 1999: 22; Means 2003, 181-182).

An inquiry into the salience of ethnic identity and ethnic-based policies in Malaysia will ultimately concern the issue of citizenship and the question, "who is a Malaysian?" Spivak (2004) notes that "when we talk about identity, we want to understand how a sense of identity is produced rather than who you are, who is dominant, who gets included. Going beyond these questions, we want to understand how this group gets to be represented, how this included group acquire an identity that enable it to be included. When we talk about identity, we talk about representation and position." Hence, with regards to the question on who is a Malaysian, it is not only a matter of who is/are included or represented, but how some people *got to be* included or represented as "Malaysians," what sentiment, sense of identity and meaning are attached to "being Malaysian," and how such sentiment, sense and meaning are produced?

Nadarajah's personal anecdote provides some indication on this process of exclusion/inclusion: "I am a Malaysian citizen. But my ancestors belong to an ancient civilisation with a rich culture. My cultural roots lie undeniably in India. But the Indian civilisation, like the Chinese, has since long ago interacted with the culture of the Malay people and has produced distinctive and creative hybrids. I sincerely like to locate my ancestors and my culture in that process of hybridisation. But no …this nation has not made me feel comfortable or proud of that creative intermingling …" (2004: 15).

From his personal account, we can surmise that Nadarajah's dilemma is that while he sees himself and wants to be seen as an *Indian Malaysian*, the nation/state, however, sees him as a *Malaysian Indian* or an *Indian in Malaysia*. According to Nadarajah (2004, 92 & 93), this difference in the way Malaysians name themselves and are named by others, including the state, is a result of the lack of attention given to the difference between pluralism and multiculturalism, the former depicting unequal status among the different ethnic groups while the latter indicates equality among the ethnic groups.

The salience of ethnic identity and ethnicity whether in politics, economics, education, religion or social relations suggests that Malaysia remains a "plural society" as characterised by Furnivall (1956) rather than as a "multi-ethnic or multi-cultural society." A plural society, according to Furnivall (1956: 304) constitutes a medley of peoples – European, Chinese, Indian, and Native. They mix but do not combine, living side by side but separately, within the same political unit. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals, they meet but only in the market place. Even in the economic sphere, there is a

division of labour along racial lines. Natives, Chinese, Indians and Europeans all have different functions and within each major group, subsections have particular occupations.

Although there is a lack of social interaction and integration among the different ethnic groups, these different ethnic groups in a plural society "co-exist amicably and tolerate the presence of one another" (Nadarajah 2004: 92 & 93). Nadarajah adds one additional characteristic - in a plural society, there is no inference or indication of equal status among ethnic groups in the public domain.

Is this characterisation of a plural society consisting of different ethnic groups co-existing peacefully, performing different economic functions, and tolerating each other but perhaps "not living as equals in the public domain" (Nadarajah 2004: 93) representative of present-day Malaysia? Do Malaysians of different ethnic groups feel there is unequal status between their respective ethnic groups?

The best source of information for the questions listed above would be the Malaysian public themselves and to tap the views of the Malaysian public, the writer has chosen the online newspaper, *Malaysiakini.com*, in particular its Letters to the Editor column.

The Study: *Malaysiakini.com* as source of data

Sourcing the views of Malaysians on Malay special rights and ethnic-based policies is not an easy task as the federal government has "decreed it an act of sedition to even question such entitlements" (Cornell & Hartmann 1998, 2). Hence the launching of the *Malaysiakini.com* in 2001 (http://www.Malaysiakini.com) as the country's pioneer online newspaper, timely provides the opportunity for researchers to obtain the views of Malaysians as well as for the Malaysian public to express their views without fear. As an online newspaper that upholds the right to freedom of speech and expression for every citizen (Article 10 [1a], Malaysian Constitution) without fear or favour, *Malaysiakini.com* presents an alternative medium to Malaysians to write on matters mainstream media would be hesitant to publish. In this regard, *Malaysiakini.com* needs to be commended for providing the Malaysian public with a platform to air their ideas and grievances as well as a forum for the public to engage in meaningful discussions and argumentative debates without resorting to overt threats, hostility and violence.

One limitation of using the *Letters to the Editor* column as the source of data is that the personal profile of the letter writers is not known. For anonymity, many writers used pseudonyms or initials without making their ethnic identity explicitly known. However, in most cases, the writers' ethnic identity (in some cases, their occupation) could be ascertained from the contents of their letters and arguments forwarded.

This chapter focuses on letters written by Malaysians to the *Letters to the Editor* column of *Malaysiakini.com*'s website from May 2001 to July 2004. A total of 152 letters whose contents reflect the views and arguments of the letter writers on the issue of Malay/bumiputera special rights were collected. Although this subject matter may cause uneasiness among Malaysians, it nevertheless depicts the core of the state of ethnic relations in Malaysia. As a letter contributor to *Malaysiakini.com* writes, (Khoo Kay Peng 20 April 2004, *Lift barriers to civic public sphere*), "the letters on Malay special rights published in *Malaysiakini.com* display the long-contained grudges, tensions and uneasiness of some parts of the society."

The Analysis: Views and Arguments of Letter Writers

An examination of the 152 letters on special rights supports Khoo Kay Peng's observation of "long-contained grudges, tensions and uneasiness of some parts of the society" on the issue of Malay/bumiputera special rights. These letters reveal the notable divergence between Malay/bumiputera and non-Malay/non-bumiputera letter writers. Nevertheless, while ethnically-aligned views dominate the contents of these letters on special rights, there is a distinctive minority, in particular among the Malay letter writers, who expressed non-ethnically aligned views.

Ethnically-aligned views and contestations

Labelling. Malay or bumiputera letter writers generally favour the existence of special rights in Malaysia, which they regard as "affirmative action" or "positive discrimination." Non-Malay/non-bumiputera letter writers have an unfavourable view of special rights, which they perceive as "pro-Malay policies, preferential policies, racial discrimination and politics of privilege specifically for the Malays, rather than for the bumiputeras." Non-Malay writers regard special rights as exclusively for the Malays while the Malay writers see special rights as exclusively for Malays and bumiputeras of Sabah and Sarawak.

Ethnicity. The views expressed by Malaysian letter writers with regard to special rights illustrate how Malaysians come to possess their respective identities and how they acquire specific views and meanings regarding their identities. Their letters indicate a high level of ethnicity. This means that Malaysians are conscious of their ethnic identity, the status of their identity vis-à-vis Malaysians of other ethnic backgrounds and the significance of their ethnic identities in government policies. Both Malay/bumiputera and Non-Malay/non-bumiputera writers also share a common view, that is, special rights exist in Malaysia for the Malays and bumiputeras; that these special rights are institutionalised and translated into policies, affecting the everyday

lives of Malaysians. The writers differed, however, on the reasons why special rights exist.

Indigenous status and history. Malay letter writers use history to argue their support for [Malay] special rights. They write that at the time of independence, the Malays as original inhabitants of Malaysia consented to the citizenship terms for the non-Malays while the non-Malays, as immigrants, agreed to the granting of special position status to the Malays. These writers assert that the existence of special rights for Malays was the result of the social contract agreed upon by leaders of the respective ethnic groups of Peninsular Malaysia before independence. Special rights are thus an inherent right of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak in lieu of their special position as mentioned in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. These Malay letter writers attribute the 'special position' of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak to their indigenous status. Comments by Malay letter writers such as "Feizal" and "BlueRider" illustrate this trend of thought.

"Feizal" (16 August 2002, *Malays need rights as much as Dr M needs ISA*) states that Indians and Chinese have no right to challenge Malay rights at all as they were immigrants. According to Feizal, "Malays were the original people and were considerate enough to give Chinese and Indians a place in the country. These Chinese and Indians were needed then to develop our plantations and minefields when we invited them over. In return, we gave them residency in Malaysia, education, protection by our Malay soldiers and generally peace to continue practising their own cultures. The Malays were kind, generous, and considerate of the needs of other people. Malays need the privileges, quotas, discounts – "crutches" – to be successful like others."

"BlueRider" (24 March 2004, *Don't touch our special rights*) reminds the non-Malays of the social contract agreed upon independence between Malays and non-Malays. According to BlueRider, non-Malays should be grateful to the Malays for foiling PAS' bid to win the 2004 general elections and they should accept Malay special rights without dispute. BlueRider mentions the emotional attachment of the Malays towards their special position and their inherent right to special privileges. Consequently, non-Malays' continued disputation of Malay special rights would incur the wrath of the Malays who "were prepared to do anything to preserve their privileges and rights."

Equality and citizen status. Non-Malay/non-bumiputera writers, on the other hand, display a totally opposite view of special rights or NEP. The writers argue that the existence of pro-Malay/bumiputera policies means that the State does not recognise their status as citizens of Malaysia. They further argue that it is an inalienable right of every citizen to be treated equally and have equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of education, economy,

business, scholarships, training and housing, the freedom to live their way of life, practise their religion and speak their language. Several non-Malay writers also draw the attention of readers to the fact that special position, and not special rights, are mentioned in the Federal Constitution, Article 153 [1]. As one non-Malay letter writer observes, "Malaysia is the only country in the world where a special policy is applied to the dominant race" ("Telenews," 12 April 2004, *The elite has squeezed out the rest*).

The sense of inequality, real or perceived, by the non-Malays, is represented by this comment from "Resident" (3 May 2004, *Time for more equal racial system*): "to talk about having racial equality is a taboo that all Malaysians recognise. The issue has been discussed over and over though never openly. Why is the talk of having racial equality such a taboo"? Another writer, "Metis" (23 March 2004, *The big fat of 'ketuanan Melayu*) argues that Malaysians need to "stop using the divisive argument of whoever arriving first deserves more rights. It is not the way forward to build a *Bangsa* Malaysia." Ravi (7 March 2004; *Malay special rights and Saddam Hussein*) on the other hand, indicates that as a Malaysian, the Malay special rights did not bother him anymore: "if the Malays felt that they still needed the special rights after half a century of independence, then so be it. The Malays' claim to special rights meant that as non-Malay, I would have to work harder to progress in every aspect of life. If by working harder I became a better person, then it would be my gain as a human being. At the end of the day, I would go to bed proudly knowing that all my wealth was created by my own hands and not handed to me."

As a result of their perceived status inequality, these non-Malay writers feel that they are "second class citizens" and Malays/bumiputeras, "first class citizens." According to these non-Malay writers, the ethnic-based policy excludes deserving non-Malay/non-bumiputera citizens, hence the policy is also a human rights issue as it marginalises the poor non-Malays/non-bumiputeras. In addition, the original special preferences have expanded beyond recognition to become what one non-Malay letter writer describes as "super rights in perpetuity" (Yeoh YW 9 April 2004, *These 'rights' impoverished Malaysia*). Consequently, these non-Malay writers argue that the ethnic-based policy contradicts the State's aim to create a *Bangsa* Malaysia.

"Sarawakian in UK" (*Umno just wants to plunder Sarawak,* 26 March 2004) draws attention to the historical and social differences between Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia. Sarawakian in UK feels insulted by BlueRider's letter, which showed a lack of understanding of the situation and history of Sarawak. According to Sarawakian in UK, Malays are a minority group in Sarawak, and are not historically significant. Non-Malay Sarawakians, whether natives or Chinese, Muslims or non-Muslims, therefore feel insulted

by BlueRider's comment that "they should be thankful to the Malays (the Peninsular Malaysia's Malays in particular) for this and that."

Another non-Malay contributor, K. Narayanasamy (29 January 2004, *No equal stake in education*), describes the state of affairs in Malaysia as an extension of the colonial practice of divide and rule. Evidences of this divide and rule policy can be seen in the education system which he perceives as more disabling than enabling the process of social and national integration; the mindset of policy makers who see life in Malaysia through ethnic lens and ethnic fears; the differentiation of the citizenry through the practice of ethnic-based sponsorship and non-sponsorship. This practice further strengthens the stereotype that the sponsored and privileged Malays are incompetent and therefore need the handicap system or "crutches" and that the non-sponsored and non-privileged non-Malays are hardworking, materialistic and un-patriotic. Narayanasamy draws attention to the elusive definition of a *Malaysian*, and reiterates that the country needs statesmen (stateswomen) to build a true Malaysian nation-state where all or most of the citizens feel they are a part of.

Khoo Kay Peng (5 March 2004, *Stop seeing everything through racial lens*) shares a similar observation in that a truly Malaysian parliamentarian must uphold his/her pledge to serve all Malaysians regardless of race, creed or belief.

The voice of the orang asli is very rarely portrayed in the Letters to the Editor column of *Malaysiakini.com.* There is only one letter that draws attention to the plight of the orang asli of Peninsular Malaysia. Jacob George (5 March 2004, *Recognise indigenous people's right to land*), refers to the orang asli as the indigenous people of Malaysia. He applauds Suhakam's calls for the government to amend the Federal Constitution (in particular Article 153 [1]) so as to accord bumiputera status to the orang asli. Jacob George notes that more than 80% of the orang asli are poor and yet they are not the beneficiaries of the affirmative policies.

Disadvantaged socio-economic status of bumiputeras. Some bumiputera writers from Sarawak attribute their success in life to special rights or the NEP. Walter (14 June 2004, *Beyond meritocracy, bumi-bashing*) for example, declares himself a minority bumiputera from Sarawak and a successful bumiputera academic. As someone who benefited from the policy, Walter defends the pro-bumiputera policy because "Malays/bumiputeras are economically more disadvantaged than the non-Malays/non-bumiputeras." Consequently, according to Walter, the government's shift from quotas to meritocracy in higher education is not fair to the Malays and bumiputeras socio-economically as meritocracy is "a lazy and blind solution to these socio-economic problems." Walter then calls upon the non-Malays/non-bumiputeras "to stop Bumiputera bashing."

Pro-poor policy. While Malay/bumiputera letter writers perceive all Malays/bumiputeras to be economically disadvantaged, hence the need for an ethnic-based policy, non-Malay/non-bumiputera letter writers, on the other hand, stress the need for a non-ethnic-based policy, that is, a pro-poor policy to eradicate poverty irrespective of ethnic backgrounds. According to these non-Malay writers, rich and poor can be found in all ethnic groups. For example, "Mr Truth" (18 March 2004, *Vote with your hearts, non-Malays*) cites the housing issue to substantiate the inappropriateness of an ethnic-based special rights policy: "When all Malays are accorded rights and privileges because they are Malays, then we will have rich Malays granted 7% discount when buying luxury houses and middle class Malays granted 5% discount when buying houses."

Another contributor, Jeffery (*Meritocracy is the solution to our malaise*, 2 July 2003), states that "the government, through its affirmative policies, is only treating the symptoms instead of finding the real cure. The government is not creating a society in which advantage would go to the people who deserve it instead of to those who had been born into it. All Malaysians, not just the Malays, should be seen as national resource with human abilities to harness."

Sharing similar views on pro-poor policy, Peter Jesudason (23 April 2004, *Moral dimension for special rights*) questions the morality of bestowing special rights for a particular ethnic group. According to him, if redistribution and equality is the purpose of special rights, then special rights are a contradiction in terms. Undeserving members in the special rights group would gain from the policy while deserving members of the special rights group and non-special rights group might be excluded or marginalised.

The brain drain phenomenon. Many non-Malay writers draw attention to the brain drain phenomenon and the extent of emigration among non-Malays. Mr Wong for example (4 July 2003, *Pak Lah, assess real reasons for brain drain*), wonders if the government had ever thought of the very reasons "why people flee the country in the first instance." According to him, these people leave the country because of "the all-encompassing racially discriminatory policies that suck out the life of the citizens."

Kaoru (9 July 2003, *Abroad but still proud to be Malaysian*) writes that even though he has left Malaysia for 20 years, he still loves Malaysia. He went overseas because of discrimination – "it is the 'high standards' and rejections we faced at home that have made us stronger and more appreciative of what we have today in a foreign land. Had we been pampered and spoon-fed by the government, we would never have attained the kind of social status we have today."

Non-ethnically aligned views and the spirit of inclusion

Although ethnically-aligned views and contestations regarding special rights and the NEP are prominently displayed in the letters contributed by Malaysians, there are also letter writers who do not subscribe to the mainstream views of their respective ethnic groups. This pattern of non-alignment with the prevailing or mainstream views of their respective ethnic groups is, however, more prevalent among Malay/bumiputera letter writers. While there were several Malay/bumiputera letter writers who disassociated themselves from mainstream support and defence of special rights and NEP, there was only one non-Malay letter writer who showed support for the special rights and NEP. This lone non-Malay support for the NEP comes from a letter writer named Kenny Chee (22 March 2004, *Malays the 'eldest brother'*) who rationalises that Malays are entitled to special rights and NEP as "the Malays are the indigenous people of Malaysia, thus the eldest brother in the family of Bangsa Malaysia."

The group of Malay letter writers who displayed non-ethnically aligned views include Syed Husin Ali (30 September 2003), Farish Noor (11 March 2004), Azizi Khan (7 April 2004), "Anonymous" (5 May 2004), Farah Fahmy (10 June 2004), "Melayu Baru" (23 June 2004), and Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (24 June 2004) represent a group of inclusive-thinking, non-ethnically aligned Malay Malaysians.

Syed Husin Ali (30 September 2003, *Malaysia untuk semua*), a veteran politician representing 'the other side of Malaysian politics,' argues that a united Malaysian nation-state still does not exist, and the factors he cites highlight the role of ethnicity and ethnic-based policies: (i) structural factor where citizens of Malaysia are differentiated and have different rights, opportunities and positions in the country; (ii) psychological factor where as a result of the divisive nature of separation and differentiation, the citizens of Malaysia are not united, do not feel they are a part of and belong to the same country or nation, or that the country or nation is their own; (iii) social factor where interaction and relationships are formed along ethnic lines and bounded by the differentiation of rights, opportunities, positions and political representation between the different ethnic groups. These structural, psychological and social factors, according to Syed Husin Ali, encourage ethnic tension, corruption and abuse of special rights.

Farish Noor (3 November 2004, *Plural democracy's moment*) provides a revealing commentary on the nature of the official discourse on the state of ethnic relations in Malaysia. The official thesis, according to Farish is this: Malaysia is a plural nation of diverse communities and faith groups but to keep this balance in order and to prevent instability, we need to engineer a racial compromise between the ethnic groups and maintain laws like ISA ... Failure to do so ... would put the entire delicate balance in jeopardy. Minorities

would demand their rights to be given equal space in public representation, media, bureaucracy, allocation to universities etc. The Malays would lose their privileges and coveted position as natural 'masters' of the country; the non-Malays would be *kurang ajar* and make more and more demands on the Malays…"

This official discourse depicts structural deficiencies in the Malaysian model of development and nation building. Because of these deficiencies, Farish argues that there is a need for change and a new narrative: "All of us regardless of racial/ethnic, religious, class and linguistic backgrounds, share one thing in common: we are all Malaysian citizens and we call this country our home and care for its future. We dream of a future Malaysia that is equal to all, but takes into account our particular wants, needs and aspirations and at the same time, is able to cater to the needs of others according to an inclusive logic of equal representation and equal rights."

Azizi Khan (7 April 2004, *Special rights a debilitating drug*) introduces himself as a Malay migrant to Australia, and his experiences abroad has "opened his eyes to Malaysia". He now views Malay special rights as a form of racism and the Malays' claim for these rights likened to cripples needing crutches. In Australia, there are no Malay special rights and he, therefore, has to compete like everyone else. Azizi says that he could survive and succeed "without quotas, handouts, privileges and other cheap tricks that give Malays a false sense of achievement while holding back other races." According to him, Malays are hiding behind the veil of Malay special rights which is unfair and unIslamic and that the Malays' hold on special rights has made the non-Malays lose their respect for Malays. Azizi further asserts that he will not be a party to these Malay special rights.

"Anonymous" (5 May 2004, *Special rights: why waste our capability?*) admits that as a Malay, he sometimes "feels bad about what his Chinese and Indians friends have to endure." According to Anonymous, the people of Malaysia are Malaysians and not Chinese, Malays and Indians and that the Malays are enveloped by the fear factor, that they would be overwhelmed by non-Malays if they do not have special rights.

Farah Fahmy (10 June 2004, *A workable meritocratic system*) agrees that the present education system is unfair and biased. The government should get rid of NEP with regards to education so that Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras alike can benefit. A sole criterion for entry into institutions of higher learning is income, not race. Farah laments that "after more than 30 years, we Malays still need help in pulling ourselves up. There's something wrong with ourselves."

Similarly, "Melayu Baru" (23 June 2004, *Sediakan peluang sama bagi pelbagai kaum*) writes of the need to provide equal opportunities for all races/ethnic groups. He/she believes that the handicap system through the

NEP or National Development Policy should continue for the under-served or under-privileged irrespective of race, religion and creed. But the rich or well-to-do, irrespective of race, religion and creed should be excluded from these privileges. Melayu Baru cites his/her experience while studying overseas. He met many Malay students while overseas and found out that these Malay students enjoyed scholarships even though their parents were financially well off.

"Tun" (27 February 2003, *New Malays make it big on their own*) draws attention to the emerging "New Malays." Tun defines "New Malay" as a Malay who does not appreciate the stigma of being a crony or of having made it big allegedly because of Bumiputera privileges. Tun further states that "we should encourage these kinds of New Malays and we should be proud of them. These New Malays are survivors and fighters who are able to swim against the tide of mainstream defence of special rights."

The prevailing Malay and non-Malay views with regard to special rights and NEP indicate the state of ethnic relations in Malaysia – stable but sustained tension among the ethnic groups. Shamsul (2000: 20) surmises that Malaysia as a multi-ethnic society inevitably possesses a social structure that provides opportunities for conflict and tension. Nation building efforts have been carried out since before independence through a series of negotiations among the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Such opportunities for dialogue, and willingness to listen to the needs of others make possible what Shamsul (1998: 48) calls a "situation of stable tension." Nevertheless, I would like to extend Shamsul's characterisation of Malaysia's social structure as "stable tension" to include the word "sustained." This state of "stable but sustained tension" can be seen from three dimensions, as indicated by the contents of the letters:

1. Fragmented "Malaysian" identity

The constant questioning on who is a Malaysian and what it means to be a citizen, to be a Malay, Indian, orang asli, bumiputera, non-bumiputera illustrate the divisions among the ethnic groups and the "denial" of intra-group variations within each ethnic group.

2. Exclusivity and inclusivity

The importance attached to ethnic identities in State policies creates artificial boundaries of exclusivity and inclusivity. In a country with different ethnic groups as its citizens, such action engenders feelings of superiority and inferiority, marginalisation and deprivation, fears and suspicion.

3. A nation of ethnics rather than a nation of citizens

The defence and grievances, and the laws and regulations safeguarding special rights and "sensitive issues" relegate Malaysia to a "nation of ethnics" rather than a "nation of citizens." As a nation of ethnics in the context of economic growth and wealth redistribution at the local level, and globalisation at the international level, Malaysia's stability and sustainability is in question. Will "Malaysian ethnics" stand as "one people, one nation" when faced with internal or external disturbances?

Conclusion
Moving Towards a More Inclusive Perspective

The viewpoints of Malay and non-Malay letter writers illustrate the extent to which ethnic identity matters in the lives of Malaysians living in the country or elsewhere. Why ethnic identity assumes such political significance among Malaysians can be understood when we consider the processes that propel individuals or groups to acquire certain identities, to be represented and included or unrepresented and excluded in official definitions and policies. We can understand such processes at two different levels: individual and national.

At the individual level, each person regards himself/herself as a member of an ethnic group through the sharing of similar cultural practices, habits, customs, language, belief system and worldview. They are Kelantanese Malays, Hokkien Chinese, Bajau, Temuan, Semelai, etc. At the individual level, the individual concerned is an individual in his/her own right, and may willingly assume the identity of his/her respective ethnic group. He/she feels comfortable with the knowledge that he/she shares a common identity with fellow members. This knowledge also enables the individual to distinguish self from others of different ethnic identities. As part of his/her personal sphere of identification, the individual's ethnic identity does not assume public significance and become a matter for contestation.

At the national level, the individual's ethnic identity is imposed upon him/her by the state. Through state-engineered ideology and policies, an individual's ethnic identity becomes a matter of public mediation. At the national level, Malaysian citizens are no longer seen as individuals in their own right but as members of their respective ethnic groups. Malaysian citizens who "habitually speak the Malay language, profess the religion of Islam, and conform to Malay custom" are defined as Malays by the Federal Constitution (Article 160 [2]). Consequently, the Malay identity becomes both an inclusive and exclusive category. Malay identity is inclusive when it incorporates individuals coming from the "Malay world" – Malay, Javanese, Bugis, Suluk, Thai, Indian, Pakistani, Arab descent, and who habitually speak Malay, practise Malay customs and profess the religion of Islam. Malay identity is exclusive

when it excludes others not from the Malay world and who do not meet the three criteria above. These "other Malaysian citizens" are considered "Non-Malays" or "Orang Asli."

After the May 13, 1969 ethnic clashes and with the implementation of the New Economic Policy (1971-1990), Bumiputeraism – a state-engineered ideology and identity came to be institutionalised to strengthen the ethnic-based state policies (Gomez & Jomo 1999, 23; Ongkili 2003; Wan Zawawi Ibrahim 2004). Ethnic-based special rights and policies set in automatic mode the wheel of stereotyping: that Malays/bumiputeras need special rights because they are poor and underdeveloped, and that the non-Malays are rich and prosperous.

One major question arising from the fact that identity matters among Malaysians is this: are there spaces and opportunities for collaborative, inter-ethnic interaction and relationships? Gomez & Jomo's book (1999) provides incidences of such inter-ethnic collaborations but only among Malay and non-Malay capitalists or rent-seekers. For example, the government's interest to restructure the ownership and control of the economy based on the inter-ethnic formula has led many non-bumiputera businessmen to link up with politically influential Malays (Gomez & Jomo 1999: 88). But what about the masses - the Malaysian public?

Rehman Rashid (1993: 278) does not have a positive outlook on the Malaysian public. For example, responding to his own question, "what was wrong with Malaysia," Rehman indicates that the answer lies "in the way Malaysia sees itself," that is, not as a nation of citizen-Malaysians but as ethnic-Malays, Indians, Chinese, Ibans, orang asli, Eurasians, etc.

The perceptions and positioning of Malay and non-Malay letter writers portray this problem of a fragmented "Malay-sian" identity clearly. Who is a Malaysian? What exactly is the status of the multiethnic, multicultural people of Malaysia? Are they citizens, equal in status and rights, or are they members of ethnic groups, unequal in status and rights?

Hence, to "rebuild" a nation out of a plural society, consisting of fragmented and ethnic-minded individuals, we as citizens of a multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious Malaysia must begin with and address this root issue – the meaning of "Malaysia" and "being Malaysian." Such an effort requires breaking down existing mindsets that give priority to ethnic-based identity labels and the idea of Malaysia as a *nation of unequal ethnics* rather than a *nation of equal citizens*. This effort also calls for the need for the State and people of Malaysia to confront two pertinent questions. First, how do we transform Malaysia from a plural to a multi-ethnic society or nation? Second, how do we strike a balance between or reconcile historical reality (foundation of Malaysia as Malay country, rooted in Malay history) and contemporary reality (development of Malaysia into a multi-ethnic society,

rooted in colonial and post-colonial history). While on the one hand we cannot deny the Malay roots of Malaysia, on the other hand, we cannot negate the existence and contribution of non-Malays in the country (Abdul Rahman Embong 2000a; 2006; 2000b; Gomez 1999: 195). Reconciliation between these two realities will provide a strong foundation for the realisation of Vision 2020—to create a *bangsa* Malaysia out of unified, developed and progressive Malaysians, able to confront the challenges of a fast-changing world with confidence, dignity and integrity.

Perhaps, this rebuilding endeavour has begun in the minds of intellectuals, government leaders and policy makers. For example, in the wake of Malay politicians' grouses towards the meritocracy policy relating to the entrance of Malay/bumiputera students into tertiary institutions, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi steadfastly upheld his stand that meritocracy has its merits and will not lead to marginalisation of the Malays (Tan 2005: 21; Wong 2005: 28). So too is his guarantee that the New National Agenda and the Ninth Malaysia Plan "will give fair treatment to all races" (Ritkos 2005: 1 & 2). Such a standpoint depicts the making of what one of the letter writers called "New Malays" and in a broader context, "Towering Malaysians," which gives hope to the possibility for a more inclusive, equal and just representation in policies and decision making.

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Politicisation of Ethnicity, Ethnicisation of the Sri Lankan State, and Hegemony and Anti-hegemony in Antagonistic Nationalist Reimaginings

Kalinga Tudor Silva

Introduction

Following the seminal work of Benedict Anderson (1983), many researchers have investigated how far and under what circumstances nationalist imaginations become a strong ideological force shaping mass movements and political processes in society. While this approach is useful for understanding certain subjective dimensions of ethnicity and nationalism, it tends to overlook the material forces that impact on both ethnic identity formation and nationalist resurgence. Certain views on nationalism allow the "ideological pole" of the continuum to speak too loudly whereas others typically bend too much towards the "material pole" (Woost 1990). Moving away from both primordialist and subjective explanations of ethnicity and nationalism, this chapter examines the processes of reshaping and reimagining the nation at work in modern Sri Lankan politics, policy formulation and development practices and the dynamic interplay between ideological and material forces in producing violently contested images of the nation in contemporary Sri Lanka.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of ethnic composition in Sri Lanka. Then it reviews the process of ethnic identity formation and the relevant cultural dynamics that began to operate since the 19th Century. Third, the twin processes of politicisation of ethnicity and ethnicisation of politics are analysed also by considering the transformation of ethnicity from a primarily cultural logic to an increasingly political logic. Fourth, development policies and programmes of the state and the emerging activities of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are assessed in order to determine

how far and in what ways they are informed, and indeed driven by the respective nationalist imaginations. Finally, implications of these emerging trends for peace, stability and the future of Sri Lanka are sketched.

Ethnic Diversity in Sri Lanka Population

As an island nation situated in the centre of the principal oceanic trade route between the west and the east, throughout its known history Sri Lanka has been a meeting place and sometimes a home for people from different parts of the world. Except for the aboriginal Veddas, all other ethnic groups in the country believe that their original ancestors came to live on the island from outside, typically from various parts of India. The counting of population on the island began with census-taking by the British Raj in the 19th Century. The first modern census conducted in 1871 identified 24 races and 78 nationalities, indicating a degree of confusion about the various identities (caste, migrant status, regional identities, emerging ethnic differences etc.) that prevailed on the island at the time (Rajasingham-Senanayake 2002).

Certain culturally distinct smaller groups seem to have disappeared and certain other groups have merged with each other to form larger groups, following a process of hybridisation going deeply back into the history of the island (Obeyesekere 2002, Silva 2002). This, in turn, clearly indicates that identity formation is a dynamic process and not a frozen one as assumed in the currently fashionable primordial views. According to the 1981 census, the population of Sri Lanka consisted of six different ethnic groups, leaving aside the smallest of groups such as the Veddas, considered to be approaching extinction.

Table 10.1 Population of Sri Lankan by Ethnicity, 1981*

Ethnic group	Number	Percent
Sinhalese	10,979,561	74.0
Sri Lanka Tamil	1,886,872	12.7
Indian Tamil	818,656	5.5
Sri Lanka Moor	1,046,926	7.0
Burgher	39,374	0.3
Malay	46,963	0.3
Others	28,398	0.2
Total	14,846,750	100.0

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1981: General Report
*This analysis uses 1981 census results rather than the results of the latest census of 2001 in view of the incompleteness of the latter census, particularly in the coverage of the Northeast areas.

The 1981 Census classified the Sri Lankan population into six different ethnic groups with the majority ethnic group, the Sinhalese, comprising

74 percent of the population followed in terms of numerical strength by Sri Lanka Tamils, Sri Lanka Moors, Indian Tamils, Malays and the Burghers. Since 1963 Europeans and Veddas were included among the 'others' as their numbers had progressively dwindled due to emigration in the case of the Europeans and possibly due to increased merger with larger ethnic groups in the case of the Veddas. In determining the ethnicity of people, the census enumerators were guided by the self-identification of the people themselves.

With the possible exception of Burghers and Malays, the members of the different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are hard to identify by physical appearances alone. The differences between ethnic groups are manifested through differences in names of individuals, language spoken, religious practices, dress in which they appear in public and some minor variations in diet. It is important to stress that each of these differences is culturally transmitted and socially determined rather than physically inherited. Where the different ethnic groups are in constant interaction with one another, as in major cities like Colombo or Kandy, the different ethnic groups participate in mainstream urban life without necessarily losing their ethnic identities or distinctive cultural traditions.

The Sinhalese, many of whom are Buddhist by religion, speak Sinhala, a language of the Indo-European family in contrast to the Sri Lanka Tamils, Indian Tamils and Sri Lanka Moors (Muslims) who speak slightly different dialects of Tamil, a language of the Dravidian family. In recent years, there have been some effort to unify Tamil-speaking populations socially and spatially distributed among the Sri Lanka Tamils, Indian Tamils and Sri Lanka Moors in order to advance their rights as minority ethnic groups, but so far a common identity among these ethnic minorities has not evolved largely in response to perceived differences in historical origin, quite apart from the significant differences in religion between the Tamil Hindus and the Moors and geographical distribution among all three Tamil-speaking groups. As descendants of indentured plantation labour brought into the island during the British period to work the plantations, Indian Tamils have little in common with the Sri Lanka Tamils in spite of a common language and a common religion. The Burghers are by and large English speakers while the Malays, at least occasionally, speak Malay.

Cross-cutting these ethnic differences, there exist common religious affiliations in the case of Roman Catholics and other Christian denominations who jointly account for about 8% of the population in the country. It is also important to note that English serves as a link language in the case of elite groups drawn from the different ethnic groups, while Sinhala-Tamil bilingualism is also common among people living in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods.

Process of Identity Formation

The notion of mutually exclusive monolithic ethnic identities that prevails among various groups in contemporary Sri Lanka is a relatively new development and has evolved through certain historical processes dating back to the 19th century. Five distinct influences on the development of identity can be identified.

1. Religious revival in the 19th century
2. Nationalist resurgence through print capitalism in the 20th century
3. South Indian and Middle-eastern cultural influences on Tamils and Muslims respectively
4. Increased politicisation of ethnic identities since 1930s
5. Competitive struggle for power and access to resources in the context of the nation state increasingly evident in the post-independence era.

In view of our focus on nationalist reimaginings, this chapter will primarily discuss the last two influences but we will briefly consider the first three influences in order to understand the historical setting in which identity formation occurred.

Religious Revival of the 19th Century and Awakening of Identities

Buddhist revival and its counterpart Hindu revival occurred in British Ceylon largely as an indigenous reaction against the rising influence of Christianity. Like other anti-colonial movements in the colonies elsewhere, these religious revivalisms had the effect of awakening cultural consciousness and improving self-respect among the colonised people. As elaborated in many studies, the revivalist leaders sought to demonstrate the greater rationality and intellectual superiority of the respective South Asian religions (Malalgoda 1976, Gombridge & Obeyesekere 1988). The ancient ideas such as Sri Lanka as Dhammadipa (island destined to preserve pure Buddhist doctrine) re-emerged in this era, paving the way for nationalist conceptualisations of later periods (Roberts 1979). While these conceptualisations affected certain sections of the Buddhist and Hindu literati, they did not lead to any political mobilisation of the masses at the time.

Nationalist Resurgence through Print Capitalism

Since the early part of the 20th century, Sinhala and Tamil authors contributed to vastly contested representations of the past where each group sought to trace its long presence in the island and highlight its past glories (Roberts 1979, Nissan & Stirrat 1990). In the Sinhala representations of the past Buddhist ruins and the remaining evidence of an ancient hydraulic civilisation

have been selectively used as evidence to prove that the island is truly theirs. The decline of the so-called Rajarata civilisation is typically attributed to South Indian invasions, thereby holding the Tamils responsible for the demise of the Sinhala civilisation. The Tamil representations of the past, of course, strongly contest these views and seek to highlight the continuity of Tamil presence and political independence of the Tamils, at least from the 12th Century.

External Cultural Influences on Tamil and Muslim Communities

Cultural awakening in Tamil Nadu, in South India, affected both the Sri Lanka and the Indian Tamil populations in the country. Apart from religious and scholarly influences, Tamil films have had a powerful influence on the identity and consciousness of both Sri Lanka and Indian Tamils. On the other hand, the Islamic revival in the Middle Eastern countries has had a considerable influence on the identity and practices of the local Muslim population (Dewaraja 1994).

The processes discussed so far are primarily cultural processes impacting the identities and consciousness of the peoples concerned. They do not necessarily indicate that the relevant identity formations actually had an impact on the economic and political behavior of the relevant people. We now examine how far, and in what ways, parallel processes operated in the political and economic spheres.

Politicisation of Ethnicity and Ethnicisation of Politics

Much of the political competition in British Ceylon and in the early period of independent Ceylon centered around a combination of factors, including ethnic, social class, regional and caste differences (Roberts 1979). The Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1915 signified an increased tendency towards ethnic tension. Even though the British introduced the principle of communal representation, which in some ways contributed to an initial politicisation of ethnicity, this principle was later abandoned in favor of universal franchise that in turn favoured the majority ethnic group (Rogers 1990).

The United National Party (UNP) that became the first ruling party in independent Ceylon was multi-ethnic in constituency, as were the leftist political parties (Communist Party and Troskyte Lanka Samasamaja Party) that constituted the main opposition parties. The UNP stood for free enterprise and a pro-western foreign policy and at the same time supported a class of property-owning small farmers. Even though the leadership of the party was firmly in the hands of certain political dynasties drawn from low country Sinhala families, ethnic minorities were well represented in the party, preventing any radicalisation of ethnic politics. One of the first acts passed by the UNP government, however, deprived Indian Tamils of the franchise.

It was argued that the Indian Tamils did not belong to Ceylon, where they were only temporary residents and not fully-fledged citizens of the country.

The progressive ethnicization of electoral party politics in independent Ceylon began with the sweeping electoral victory of a coalition led by the newly formed Sri Lanka Freedom Party on a campaign platform to restore Buddhism and Sinhala language to its rightful place. The cultural resurgence of 1956 and mass political mobilization around a Sinhala-nationalist agenda had direct links with antecedent events starting from early 20th Century, if not earlier (Roberts 1974). The move to institute the Sinhala language as the official language of the government, a move that indicated a gradual transformation of the Sinhala nationalism from an anti-hegemonic position of the subalterns to a hegemonic stance associated with the ruling state, sparked off widespread opposition from the Tamil political parties led by the Federal Party. This, in turn, led to a wave of communal disturbances in Colombo and certain outlying areas. Initially, Tamil political parties entered coalition governments with one or the other of two mainstream political parties, namely UNP and SLFP, in order to gain access to power and introduce some constitutional changes that would guarantee the political rights of the minorities. Since these arrangements did not lead to the expected results the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was formed in 1976 and stood in the 1977 election on a platform of total independence for the Tamil-speaking areas of Sri Lanka. In this election, the UNP won with a huge majority, but in most Tamil speaking areas in the Northeast the TULF was elected, indicating broad support for autonomy in these areas. Since 1975, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and other armed groups were formed in order to campaign militarily for an independent Tamil homeland (Eelam) in Northeast Sri Lanka. The LTTE struggle was anti-state and, therefore, anti-hegemonic in character. This, in turn, resulted in a nearly 20-year civil war between the security forces of the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE fighters, a civil war suspended due to a cease-fire reached in February 2002.

There was also a parallel trend towards ethnicisation of politics in the majority Sinhala ethnic group as well as among other minority ethnic groups, including the Muslims. Among the Sinhalese, the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna was formed in 1971 as a revolutionary nationalist movement led by Sinhala youth in deprived areas, aimed at capturing state power through an armed struggle. In more recent times, a plethora of Sinhala nationalist political organisations, including Sinhala Urumaya (lit. Sinhala Heritage) have been formed with the specific objective of campaigning to preserve the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. In 1988, the Muslims set up their own political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, in order to face the challenges of an increasingly ethnicised political environment.

Thus, mutually reinforcing processes of politicisation of ethnicity and ethnicisation of politics have been at work in Sri Lanka over the past several decades. This, in turn, has increasingly shaped and in turn been shaped by the development policies and programmes of the state throughout the post-independence era.

Sinhala-Buddhist Nationalism and Development Policies of the State

Anthropological research has highlighted the manner in which development policies and programmes have been guided and shaped by nationalist thinking. If the nationalist discourse provided a diagnosis of and a potent explanation for problems in the rural sector, the development efforts evolved a program of action designed to overcome the problems so identified. In many ways, the development discourse assigned a key responsibility and a mission to the Sri Lankan state as a primary actor entrusted with the task of the restoration of the Sinhala-Buddhist civilisation. As a part of this discourse a comprehensive program of state policies, projects and interventions were developed with a view to arrest ongoing processes of disintegration and degeneration attributed to rural society, particularly in light of its assumed subordination to the expanding estate sector, and restore the village community to its assumed past glory. A series of official inquiries instituted by the state to investigate causes of and remedies for problems in the rural sector such as the Kandyan Peasantry Commission of 1951, parallel diagnosis of rural problems in certain social science research such as "Disintegrating Village" by Sarkar and Tambiah (1957) and a set of corresponding legislation such as the Village Communities Ordinance of 1935, facilitated the shift from the nationalist to the development discourse and synthesis of nationalist concerns of the Sinhala elite and the developmental concerns of the Sri Lankan state (Meyer 1992, Samaraweera 1978, Woost 1990).

The resulting conceptualisation of an ideal Sinhala society included Buddhist thought and practices as the core of its spiritual life, paddy cultivation as the basis of its economic sustenance and social bonds of kinship as the basis of its unity and mutual support mechanisms (Seneviratne 1999, Spencer 1990, Woost 1990). Paddy field (*ketha*), village tank (*weva*) and Buddhist temple (often represented by *dagaba*) came to form a symbolic trio representative of an ideal Sinhala village characterised by prosperity, peace, spiritual well-being and perfect adaptation to the natural environment. Accordingly, the promotion of paddy cultivation and irrigation rehabilitation and development primarily geared to promote paddy cultivation and the promotion of village unity and cooperation became primary goals of government-initiated development programmes throughout the post-independence period. These ideas, in turn, constituted the main thrusts of the development discourse in Sri Lanka.

Having identified the ideological basis of the development policies and programs of the Sri Lankan state, anthropological research has so far progressed along two parallel paths. One examines the manner in which the formation of the Sri Lankan state and its progressive penetration into the countryside have been associated with the progress of the 'development' project. This, in turn, has enabled researchers to explore the hegemonic character of development policies and programs initiated by the state. Research on the Gam Udawa programme and its impact on the Vedda community in the periphery by James Brow (1988, 1990) and, the impact of the broad developmental thrust on a squatter settlement in the remote Monaragala District by Woost (1990) are examples of the relevant line of anthropological inquiry.

The next line of anthropological research relating to development discourse has focused on "rituals of development". Here, the emphasis has been on the manner in which rituals sponsored and often directly organized by the state serve to reinforce and disseminate the hegemonic conception of the development process. For instance, in a highly original research Serena Tennakoon (1988) examined the manner in which rituals organized by the state have been instrumental in contextualizing the Mahaweli Development Programme and the resulting human settlement efforts within the nationalist project.

Causal Linkages between Sinhala Nationalism and Development Practice

The assumed linkages between nationalism and development efforts presented in the preceding sections leaves certain important questions unanswered. Most importantly, some important questions regarding the relationship between ideology and interest remains unanalysed. Which interests of different social groups do the nationalist and development discourses noted above serve? The analysis presented so far only indicates that these parallel and mutually reinforcing discourses merely serve the hegemonic interests of the ruling classes. This then leaves us with the question as to why the subordinate social classes accept and conform to these discourses to the extent that they actually do so. If the relevant ideologies only serve the hegemonic interests of the dominant groups, any conformity to and acceptance of such ideologies by the subalterns can only be attributed to a 'false consciousness' of some kind. This is why it is so important to re-examine the whole question of the relationship between ideology and interest in relation to development discourse so as to determine not only how the ideology of development serves the hegemonic ambitions of the ruling classes, but also some of the important material interests of the subordinate social groups. One may argue that the hegemonic project can only be successful if there is a certain unity of interests and a corresponding ideological synthesis between the rulers and the ruled

with respect to a pattern or resource distribution, and ideas that justify that pattern of resource distribution (Silva 1982, 1992).

Here, it is important to understand that the post-independent state in Sri Lanka has been a primary agent of distribution of scarce resources such as land, irrigation water, educational opportunities and public sector employment (Silva 1982, Moore 1985). The nationalist and development ideologies may be seen as ideologies that call for and justify a given pattern of resource distribution by the state. It must be noted here that while these ideological systems guide a given pattern of resource distribution on the part of the state, the ideologies are also guided, and in some ways shaped, by the imperatives of the resource distribution system. Any ideologically driven system of resource distribution typically provides for inclusion and exclusion, or patronage and discrimination (Silva 1982, 1992) as a means of rewarding those more faithful to the given ideology. In other words, there is a two-way relationship between ideology and interest. While the interests shape ideology (e.g. it is in the interest of the Sinhalese to develop Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, which gives them privileged access to scarce resources channeled by the state), ideology also shapes interests insofar as a group develops its interests and demands in keeping with a certain ideology.

The relationship between ideology and interest identified in the preceding paragraphs raises some questions about the hegemonic significance of the ideologies in question. If there is an inherent tendency within nationalist and development discourses to provide for inclusion and exclusion as two important and contrasting aspects of the same process, one can then question if the ideologies in question play an effective hegemonic role. This is because those excluded will naturally turn against the system endangering the hegemonic process. This, in turn, implies that disagreement, dissent and even resistance are inevitable outcomes of the ideologically driven resource distribution systems. This is particularly so if the nationalist and development discourses only create spaces and opportunities for the majority ethnic group in the country, as appears to be the case in Sri Lanka. Even within the majority ethnic group only rural communities that conform to the ideal Sinhala village, as noted above, will truly qualify for mainstream rural development resources dispensed by the state. As will be explained later, only a small segment of rural communities in Sri Lanka can realistically project themselves to be in line with the construct of an ideal Sinhala village attributed to the development discourse. Unlike pure ideological processes where hegemonic manipulation may be possible by controlling and mobilizing the ideological apparatuses like media and 'rituals of development', apportionment and allocation of scarce resources of the state are fraught with tension, disillusionment and resentment. This, in turn, calls for a re-examination of the conventional analysis of development discourse within the framework of the hegemonic thesis.

The Sri Lanka State as Provider and Benefactor

When we critically examine the role of the Sri Lankan state in relation to hegemonic ideologies like Sinhala nationalism and the development discourse, we have to consider the manner in which the Sri Lankan state has penetrated into many aspects of rural life from "cradle to grave" (Moore 1985). Hardly any aspect of rural life remains untouched by "technologies of governmentality" (Foucault 1979). Apart from regular public servants like the *grama niladhari* (lit. village officer) who are constantly in contact with rural people, many government agencies providing services to rural people have established village-level organisations like "farmers organisation", "co-operative society", "rural development society", *praja mandalya* and "parent-teacher association", which in some ways replicate various arms of the state at the village level. In the rural areas, the state plays a critically important role in distributing vital resources like land, irrigation water, development aid, low-interest credit and welfare services of different kinds. Given the fact that much of the land and water resources in Sri Lanka are under state control, the state is involved in the regularisation of encroached crown lands and the nationalisation of typically private-owned estate land for distribution among peasants, to the distribution of land developed by the state under colonisation schemes. This reveals that the state is involved in both the provision of important services like extension services to the farmers, as well as critical inputs that shape the ideologies of the rural people.

In trying to understand the relationship between ideology and material interests in rural Sri Lanka three important assertions can be made on the basis of the available evidence. First, the nationalist and development discourses can be seen as means to guide the development policies and programmes and related provisioning by the state. Second, related development provisioning by the state serves the vital interests of rural people distributed in various parts of Sri Lanka. Third, instead of one privileged construct of the rural, there are multiple constructs of the rural, in nationalist and development discourses in Sri Lanka. The hegemonic potential of these discourses, in fact, rests on their ability and potential to accommodate various categories of disadvantaged rural people within their ideological fold.

The link between development ideology and resource distribution is illustrated by the fact that the discourses on development are prominent in highly powerful and well-funded government agencies like the Mahaweli authority of Sri Lanka responsible for land and water resource development and the resettlement of large numbers of rural people who are expected to benefit from the relevant developments covering a large extent of crown land. It is also important to note that state-sponsored human settlements programmes have been an important mechanism through which Sinhala frontiers have been

expanded into minority-Tamil areas, fueling their grievances and increasing their sense of exclusion from the benefits of development.

Similarly, development discourses have been quite prominent in highly politicised state-funded poverty alleviation programmes like the Janasaviya programme of the 1989-1994 UNP government and the Samurdhi Programme of the subsequent Peoples Alliance and UNP governments. It must be noted here that the Sarvodaya Movement, a relatively well-funded national level NGO of local origin, has also been influenced by a version of discourse that is both nationalist and development-oriented. On the other hand, more technically-oriented and more decentralized government development programmes like the Integrated Regional Development Programme (IRDPs) operating at the district level have been less characterised by the type of development discourses noted earlier.

The appeal of the development discourse to the rural people is not merely of an ideological nature. This discourse is also of special appeal to them insofar as it gives them privileged access to limited resources like land, irrigation water, rural credit, and other forms of development aid vis-a-vis their potential competitors. In this sense, it can be argued that they have a vested interest in re-affirming and maintaining nationalist and related development ideologies. As a result, they may not simply be passive recipients of the relevant discourses but also active participants in the development and propagation of the discursive practices in question. The widely acclaimed welfarist character of the Sri Lankan state and its reluctance to cut down subsidies in spite of increased donor pressure and severe budgetary constraints must be understood in the light of a firm commitment to a development ideology that binds the state, its ruling elite and a large section of its rural people primarily representing the majority ethnic group (Pieris 1977).

The nationalist and related development ideologies also involve multiple constructions of rural communities that accommodate various forms of rural life. Apart from the traditional Sinhalese villages with irrigated rice farming as their main source of livelihood, all types of rural social formations have been accommodated and have even found a meaning in nationalist/ development conceptualizations of one kind or another. For instance, 'hemmed in' villages in predominantly estate areas have had a tendency to attribute their landlessness, lack of space for expansion and many other problems they faced to the appropriation of land by the plantations set up in the colonial period (Mayer 1992). This, in turn, is an ideology that justifies the transfer of land and employment opportunities in the estates to the village communities, a process in some ways officially initiated by the Kandyan Peasantry Commission established in 1951. Here again, gains of impoverished Sinhala peasants constitute losses for Indian Tamil plantation workers, who enjoy minimal links with the state.

In a predominantly drummer-caste village where the author conducted field research in the 1970s, there was much enthusiasm for establishing 'art schools' (*kalayathana*) with government support. The main objective of such schools was to provide professional training in Kandyan dance, seen as a hereditary caste occupation of the drummers as well as an important heritage of Sinhala Buddhist civilisation. The latter idea, in turn, linked this village-level activity to the nationalist project of the state and the ruling Sinhala elite. The Gam Udawa Movement led by President Ranasinghe Premadasa in the 1990s had the objective of assisting rural people to improve their housing stock as well as to improve their social status. This programme was often targeted at so-called depressed low-caste communities in the rural areas. State assisted infra-structural improvement was accompanied by efforts to help them overcome inherited disadvantages by removing derogatory place names and replacing them with names of historical and cultural relevance (e.g. Samadhigama in place of a name revealing caste identity).

Similarly, most of the spontaneous and unlawful encroachment by Sinhala peasants on crown land in border areas as well as official settlement programmes carried out by the state are seen as patriotic, if not officially sanctioned, moves to expand the frontiers of Sinhala civilisation (De-Soyza 1994, Woost 1990). As a result, regularisation of encroachment has been an important mechanism for the distribution of crown land in various parts of Sri Lanka (Silva et al 1999, Woost 1990).

Thus various rural social formations have interpreted their situation and role in relation to nationalist development ideology in ways that best suit their different situations. It is important to note that they have tried to establish a certain meaning to their real life experiences in vastly different socio-economic settings using the dominant nationalist development ideology. This may be seen as a manifestation of the hegemonic success this ideology has attained both in terms of ideological synthesis and unity of interests linking dominant and subordinate social classes in Sinhala society.

The evidence presented so far indicates that the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism of the state has not remained a pure imagination, but turned into a reality, however inconsistent that reality may be with the grand ambitions of nationalist leaders. How far are similar processes at work on the LTTE side?

Turning Imaginations into Reality: The LTTE Achievements

The independent Tamil homeland (Eelam) imagined by the LTTE and increasingly favored by the Tamil Diaspora as also evident in their various web sites, is yet to be achieved. There are, however, important developments in the direction anticipated by its brand of militant Tamil nationalism. One aspect is the increased ethnic homogenisation of the Northern Province as

anticipated in the notion of Tamil homeland. Ethnic cleansing practiced by the LTTE against Muslims in Northern Province in 1995 and against Sinhala border villagers throughout areas adjacent to LTTE held territory have had the effect of ethnically homogenising parts of the areas claimed by the LTTE. With the exception of the predominantly Sinhalese government troops remaining in the Northern Province and some Muslim returnees, the area has become exclusively Tamil in ethnic composition, fulfilling the vision of LTTE. The war efforts of the government of Sri Lanka and the terror tactics employed by the LTTE have more or less totally eliminated any remnants of civil society, making the LTTE and its NGO ally Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) the only agencies operating in the respective areas (Silva 1999, 2003). The LTTE also had grand visions of eliminating the oppressive caste system and dowry system prevailing in Tamil society. How far the LTTE has been able to achieve these objectives are not clear from the available evidence.

The LTTE sponsored *Pongu Tamil* (lit. Tamil awakening) celebrations that were held in LTTE-controlled areas immediately after the beginning of the cease-fire may be seen as a mobilisation strategy aimed at the cultural and political awakening of the Tamil population affected by years of civil war. Implicitly or explicitly, it served to reaffirm the faith in a Tamil homeland despite the beginning of negotiations for peace.

The LTTE has been able to develop a skeleton administrative structure in the LTTE-controlled areas. It has instituted a complex system of law enforcement and revenue collection, inclusive of taxing of all economic activities, economic operations directly run by the LTTE cadres and remittances and contributions from members of the Tamil diaspora. For many purposes families connected with *mahavirs* (those who voluntarily sacrificed their lives for LTTE struggle) are treated as favoured citizens of Tamil Eelam. The civilians remaining in the conflict zone, however, have undergone numerous hardships, including repeated displacements, loss of family members, loss of assets and livelihoods and erosion of social capital (Goodhand, Hulme & Lewer 2000). These would-be citizens of Tamil Eelam may have considerable resilience and coping strategies that help them ease the numerous problems they face. On the other hand, as Valentine Daniel (1997) has reported in rich detail, those escaping 'the suffering nation' and headed for European destinations as refugees, students or illegal immigrants have so many tales to report about the human misery and suffering experienced at various points during their passage to and life in the so-called host countries. As in other cases, it is the innocent civilians who suffer the most from grand nationalist visions of leaders on either side of the ethnic divide.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has highlighted the ways in which mutually antagonistic nationalist reimaginings by Sinhala and Tamil leaders of the post independence era are shaped by their respective historical and cultural imaginations on the one hand, and competitive struggles for access to scarce resources channelled by the state on the other. In other words, the rival brands of Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms must be approached not merely within a cultural or religious logic, as for instance in the works of Tambiah (1992), Seneviratne (1999), and Wickramaratne (1995), or purely within a political logic as for instance in the works of Wriggins (1960) and Wilson (1999), but within a more inclusive socio-economic framework that also takes into account disparities in power and the competitive struggle for access to vital resources such as land, educational opportunities, employment and housing (Silva 1992, Shastri 1990). The hegemonic success of nationalist imaginations lies not only in their emotional and mass appeal to primordially defined groups, but also in that they provide tenable (though not always accurate) explanations regarding the problems faced by the masses, including poverty, unemployment, landlessness and powerlessness and indeed the promise of escaping the relevant problems through state interventions, development projects and the like (Silva 2003). On the other hand, the hegemonic significance of nationalist projects is constantly undermined by inclusion and exclusion that is inherent to these projects, and the resulting alienation of groups whether they are ethnic minorities, political opponents or simply moderates not convinced of the nationalist rhetoric. The social and political instability characteristic of Sri Lanka over the past several decades and the tendency for the rise of more militant and less compromising brands of nationalisms overshadowing the moderate positions must be understood in the light of such constant failures in the hegemonic promise of nationalisms.

In seeking solutions to the problems posed by rival nationalisms and related ethnic war which erupted from time to time, the Sri Lankan authorities have primarily considered various power sharing arrangements within a regional framework. As of now there is no mutual agreement as to the level of autonomy the Centre is willing to grant to the defiant Northeastern Provinces and the manner in which devolution is to be brought about. The spectrum of views range from total separation as anticipated by ardent Eelamists (advocates of an armed struggle for an independent Tamil homeland) to a demand for full use of force in order to reinforce the power and authority of the Centre. Many attempts to evolve a mutually acceptable formula for peaceful resolution of the conflict through the mediation of various internal and external actors and involving a variety of interim measures have brought about the current state of 'uneasy peace' without any apparent progress towards evolving a negotiated settlement of the differences or coming to an

agreement about the points of disagreement themselves. Bridging the wide gap between antagonistic nationalist reimaginings perhaps requires a substantial cooling off period, where a realistic appraisal of the ground situation proceeds hand in hand with trust-building measures, reconciliatory exercises and humanitarian activities (Goodhand, Hulme & Lewer 2000). While rapid economic growth and the resulting expansion of opportunities for all sections of the population is a prerequisite for addressing current grievances among the various constituencies, including ethnic minorities, educated youth, women, workers, and public servants, market logic alone will not be able to fix the 'failures of the state' and rival demands from various interest groups as is argued in certain neo-liberal explanations of the current crisis in Sri Lanka (World Bank 2000). An open, transparent and responsive state functioning side by side with an effective civil society is as necessary as an open economy able to overcome global challenges and take advantage of global opportunities in overcoming the current stalemate in Sri Lanka.

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Chapter 11

The Future of National Reconciliation in Fiji

Tevita Baleiwaqa

The need for national reconciliation in Fiji should surpass the urgency of the attention that the May 2000 crisis has been receiving. It is urgent for a simple reason. When land ownership is threatened, the risk of a more similar crisis increases to a maximum level. Land ownership is now based on law. When the law is changed, especially through the Constitution, native Fijians feel threatened regarding the issue of land. However, Fiji is too stuck on constitutional issues. These issues are mere reflections of political reality. These realities concern people, regardless of race, colour, tribe or faith. This nation has not, after 1874, talked from the heart about what kind of nation is preferred. The opportunity for that soul-searching exercise, as in 1874, was not provided for in 1965 and 1987. In 1965, Fiji's past made it hard to reconcile with the future, leading to a dominion status. In 1987, Fiji's future became irreconcilable with its past, leading to the birth of a republic. Out of this political experience, Fiji became a colony, a dominion, and a republic, experienced three coup d'tats [four coups up to 2006-Ed.] and three constitutions within thirty years. This general scenario is enough to support the claim that there are more community talks that need to be organized than those arguing about the Constitution. These would-be reconciliatory talks can pave the way towards understanding and reconciliation.

This reconciliation, where all the tribal, cultural and religious communities in Fiji have to be involved, is critical for social harmony and economic progress. It is necessary for the nation's health and prosperity. The Constitutions would not be a point of contention and political sickness if this reconciliatory talk had first taken place. Other original documents should be regarded as superior and the Constitution should be a mere reflection of these. The three Fiji Constitutions, drafted and implemented within a span of thirty years from 1970 to 1997, merely reflected earlier conciliatory talks, the resolutions of which form the contents of earlier documents such as the Deed of Cession and the Charter of Independence.

There are three such earlier documents: first, the Deed of Cession, second, the Charter of Independence, and third, the 1987 Declaration of the Republic of Fiji. The 1875 Charter, as well as the 1970, 1990 and the 1997 Constitutions merely reflected the understanding and goodwill between those reconciled communities, which, as a result, turned Fiji into a modern nation. The procedure first used in 1874 was to talk first, document those talks and then produce a working document that reflected the spirit and goodwill of those involved in the talks. After the political crisis of May 2000, which marred the image of Fiji as a nation, the need to have a critical analysis of the concept of nation in Fiji was being overlooked. This historical piece will pay a lot of attention to the 1970 Charter of Independence and the 1987 Declaration of the Republic of Fiji. However, for the sake of developing this argument on the points of contention and reconciliation, the 1874 Deed of Cession and the 1875 Charter to Erect the Colony of Fiji will be briefly assessed. It can be further argued that the modern nation, Fiji, originated from those two documents. This chapter, therefore, focuses on issues that are obstacles to these talks and reconciliation. These issues, fundamental to the public re-imagining of the nation, are found in the perspectives on politics, religion and land.

From Crown Colony to Dominion and Republic

Fiji became a modern nation, in the sense that her sovereignty was internationally recognised, through the Deed of Cession. Cession, and the introduction of a colonial form of government, was negotiated between thirteen chiefs, as representatives of their *matanitu*, or state, and the British Crown. These chiefs had a definite vision of nationhood when ceding Fiji to the British Crown, for in the vernacular version of the Deed, Clause7/1 says '...*kei na lewa vakatui ni Peritania vakamatanitu sa dau vakatura e na kena veivanua ki sau...*'. It simply meant that Fiji was to become a Crown Colony.

The thirteen signatory chiefs talked over the issue for nearly a year,[1] reaching a final decision on 20 March 1874 (Deryck 1980). In the following September and October, more intense discussions took place, finally leading to the drafting and signing of the Deed of Cession on 10 October 1874. The trust and faith that the thirteen chiefs had in the British Crown, to rule generously and graciously, are explicitly stated in the vernacular version. These 'trust and faith' values became the foundation on which the new Crown Colony of Fiji was erected.

Queen Victoria, through her representative in Fiji, issued a Charter for organising the Fiji Islands into a separate colony, to be called the colony of Fiji, and for providing for the government thereof on 1 September 1875. The Charter, which reflected the terms of the 1874 Deed, had fifteen articles pertaining to the government of the colony. Article 14 demanded loyalty to the Governor, requiring and "commanding all officers, civil and military, and all other inhabitants of Our said Colony, to be obedient… in the execution of this Our Commission and of the powers and authorities herein contained."

The last Article retained the spirit of the Deed of Cession, where the Crown reserved for Herself, "and Our Heirs, and successors, full power and authority from time to time, to revoke, alter and amend these Our Letters Patent as to us or them shall meet."

A Governor, Legislative Council, Executive Council, Public Seal and Judiciary were established under that Charter. Both documents guided Fiji's political progress until the 1960s.

By the 1960s, the fourth generation Fijian chiefs succeeding those who had signed the Deed of Cession were in full command of the Legislative Council. These fourth generation chiefs introduced a new form of public participation in the process of nation-building. In this form, new political groupings and institutions took over the government of the colony, sidelining the original thirteen chiefly houses that had spearheaded the 1874 cession talks from the negotiations leading to the establishment of the dominion in 1970. Political parties took over the talks on taking Fiji towards political independence.

This development became problematic. It was a problem of approach. How were the modern public and *vanua* involved in the talks leading to the dominion and the republic? Both, the 1970 Charter and the 1987 Declaration, failed to secure a strong mandate from the *vanua* and the modern Fiji public. This particular mandate should be the subject, and also the object, of reconciliation.

Reconciliation became a significant issue after the May 2000 crisis. The Labour-led coalition government was toppled and for fifty six days was held hostage within the Parliamentary complex. For the second time in a little more than ten years, the Labour Parliamentarians went through a coup d'etat experience. Fiji's Parliament was brought to two abrupt endings, on both occasions, through intruding military interventions. In each intrusion, there was Indo-Fijian political power at the helm of government.

The May 2000 political crisis demanded a more realistic and rational approach to the question of nationhood. It has now become a suppressed problem. The hurt and confusion inflicted by the violation of the Deed of Cession, especially by the Declaration of 1987, need to be healed via a process of national reconciliation. However, there are huge obstacles to this proposal. These obstacles are in the area of politics, land and the chiefly system.

The new political framework that the 1970 Charter of Independence and the Constitution of the Dominion of Fiji introduced became an obstacle to reconciliation in Fiji. The framework of Fiji's politics that replaced the Colony and its founding documents has to be recognised as the first problem for reconciliation. Within this new framework, two coup d'etats happened and three Constitutions were written, all within a span of thirty years of national independence. These events took place within the new political framework, making it inevitable to question the potential of Fiji's politics to imagining and building a nation.

The Importance of Fiji's *Turaga Bale* Institution

To make matters worse, the two major political systems in Fiji were dragged into a state of contest in the 1960s. The traditional Fijian chiefly system was up against the Western democratic system, both tussling it out within the perimeters of the new political framework. Fijians practice both Western democratic politics and the traditional chiefly system within the Fijian administration. Democratic politics often competed for the authority over the islands against traditional Fijian institutions, such as the Great Council of Chiefs, Provincial Councils and District Councils.

This contest grew out of proportion in the years 1966 to 1970, when the then Ratu Kamisese Kapaiwai Tuimacilai Mara was the Chief Minister of the Colony of Fiji. It was a critical point in Fiji's political experience, for when he became the Chief Minister, his father Roko Tevita Uluilakeba, the Tui Nayau, was still alive. Mara, at this point in time, did not have the traditional authority to lead the Fijian community, or even the people of Lau. On the other hand, Ratu Sir George Kadavulevu Cakobau was installed to be the Vunivalu of Bau, the highest title in the Fijian chiefly system, seven years earlier. Mara's political authority was up against the authority of the Vunivalu of Bau and the Tui Nayau of Lakeba. He had to find a way out of this traditional corner.

Mara confronted these authorities by becoming both, a Fijian *turaga bale* and a political leader. A story circulating through the *yaqona* clubs in Tubou, Lakeba, said that Mara, after becoming the Chief Minister of Fiji, requested his father, the Tui Nayau, to grant him the Tui Lau title. He reasoned with his father that the title Tui Lau was acknowledged in Buckingham Palace as the signitory of the Deed of Cession. He was successful; he became a *turaga bale,* even though the Tui Nayau was still alive, in his capacity as the Tui Lau.

Moreover, another significant feature of Mara's politics was his noble wife, Ro Lady Asenaca Lalabalavu Mara, who holds the title of Roko Tui Dreketi of Rewa. She is titled, ranked next to the Vunivalu of Bau and preceded Tui Cakau in the ranking of the three major chieftaincies of Fiji. Her authority

in the Fijian chiefly system is tremendous, which contributed immensely to Mara's political strength within the senior aristocratic circles in the 1960s.

From these political developments that took place in Mara's term as Chief Minister of the Colony of Fiji, modern politics became an obstacle to national reconciliation. Mara's emergence had far reaching consequences. The Deed of Cession harmonised the two systems, colonial and chiefly, of authority. Tui Lau's 1970 dominion Constitution unsettled this harmony. Western democratic politics suppressed the will of the people of Fiji as a nation through community talks. To create and conceive a nation was the prerogative of the *turaga bale* institution. By the 1960s, this particular prerogative was breached.

In spite of being sidelined in the 1960s, the *turaga bale* institution, through the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), or Bose Levu Vakaturaga, was still being recognised by all the communities that constitute the nation of Fiji as having the status and responsibility to serve as the face of the Fiji people. This status and responsibility are of national importance, as was evident when the GCC became the institution of national political authority for the nation during the 1987 and 2000 political crises. It was clear from the National Federation Party and the Fiji Labour Party's joint submission to the Reeves Commission that the Indo-Fijian community preferred the GCC to be neutral in politics.[2] There is a paradox in this suggestion since most of the *turaga bale* are politicians. How can a *turaga bale* and member of the GCC be politically neutral if he is the Prime Minister? The GCC is now applying neutrality upon itself by divorcing from the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei Party after the May 2000 crisis. The Indo-Fijian community believes that the GCC is the best and only institution that can facilitate national reconciliation, and in this capacity, the GCC is the best institution to lead the re-imagining of the nation of Fiji.

The GCC was forced to pick up the pieces, not taking the initiative as it was supposed to. In more ways than one, the forms of government Fiji used were obstacles to national reconciliation. It could be ascertained that this obstacle began during Mara's term as Chief Minister, when the Westminster system of government was introduced to govern Fiji as an independent nation. But the question remains whether he had other options. In 1966, as Tui Lau and Chief Minister of the Colony of Fiji, Mara had set a precedent by taking a high-risk political direction over the chiefly system. To strengthen this direction, Mara introduced the Westminster system of government. As a result, political parties were introduced into Fiji. Political parties were formed and took over from the chiefs in the process of creating Fiji as a dominion and an independent nation. In contrast to how the Colony was created, the Dominion was the work of political parties. The Colony, however, required only the *turaga bale* to decide its establishment.

The process of reconciliation and re-imagining of the nation has to consider the form of government that Fiji ought to take. Comparing how the independent Dominion and the Republic were declared, it is obvious that the *turaga bale's* authority was missing in the declaration of those two forms of government. Each of them had a coup d'etat staged against it. The major reason for these two crises is that the *turaga bale* institution was deprived of the opportunity to initiate the transitions from one form of government to another, from colony to dominion and then to republic. The Colony was negotiated between the British Crown and the *turaga bale* institution. Where was the *turaga bale* institution in the introduction of the Dominion and the Republic?

This was the first political mistake Fiji made. The introduction of colonial government was the chiefs' business. It required many rituals, both customary and legal, to be observed before the Colony was introduced in 1875. To change the colonial form of government and its replacement with the Dominion should again have been the business of the chiefs. Mara was Tui Lau, and in that capacity, a *turaga bale* when he became Chief Minister in 1966. Further, he was Tui Nayau by 1970 when he became Prime Minister of the Dominion of Fiji. The *turaga bale* of Fiji should have laid the Dominion and Republic's groundwork, but that was not to be. This Dominion lasted seventeen years before being replaced by the republic at midnight on 7 October 1987. I argue that politics has been a constraint to national reconciliation since 1965 because of the way that politicians became involved in the Charter of Independence and the Declaration of the Republic.

Land and Other Issues

Land was the central issue in the discussion leading to cession. It was not so in the talks leading to independence in 1970 and the Republic Declaration of 1987. It became obvious that land was the neglected subject of the 1997 constitution. In the commission that laid the foundation of the 1997 Constitution, Sir Paul Reeves, the Chairman of the Commission, identified the two types of land tenure, native and freehold, and measured them against the Bill of Rights. But he did not provide a new constitutional arrangement to cater for reconciliation through land and the Fijian *turaga bale* institution. With regards to the Fijian chiefly titles, the Native Land Commission (NLC) is to settle disputes that may arise over the question of *mataqali* or *tokatoka* headship. Reeves also noted that there was no provision for any appeal from such a decision, but the Act does not state that the decision is final.

However, the 1990 Constitution provided that the opinions and decisions of the NLC shall be final and conclusive and shall not be challenged in any court of law. Point 17.15 of the Commission raises two very sensitive, if not controversial issues; first, the review of NLC decisions, and second, a new

full-scale inquiry into ownership and the boundaries of native land. Reeves further suggested other detrimental factors that threaten the stability of the Fijian ethnic community. The first two came in Point 17.19, where "the right to be registered on a roll for a reserved seat constituency should not be determined by reference to the Vola ni Kawa Bula," and a censored authority on Fijian customs. The third detrimental suggestion is in Point 17.22, where "the decisions of the Appeals Tribunal should be final in the sense that there should be no right of appeal to the courts on the merits of the decision."

After the exhaustion of chances to appeal, a judicial review may follow to re-hear and re-determine the issue of conflict. Reeves thought that the need for finality and certainty outweighs the benefits of re-opening land transactions occurring before cession in 1874.

Reconciliation can be achieved only if certainty and security of land tenure is guaranteed to tenants. Reeves saw the significance of land to the question of reconciliation, but he did not take the suggestion to 'take politics out of land' seriously. This suggestion demonstrates my point about the reality of reconciliation and nation-building. Political parties have no right to be a party in land negotiations, because at their demise, they become accountable to no one. To allow reconciliation through land, Reeves suggested three options. The first is to amend entrenched legislation with the consent of the community concerned; the second, a better informed public regarding land policies; and the third, for political parties to be instrumental in striving for a broad agreement, through a constitutional compact to settle the land question for the Indo-Fijian community.

However, Fiji's native land tenure system is based on the chiefly system. This is a peculiar political system practiced only within the Fijian community. This type of cavernous politics has been criticized by a number of Fijian academics, especially by Asesela Ravuvu (1991), Asinate Mausio (2002) and Alumita Durutalo (2000). But their discussions are focused on issues secondary to the question of re-imagining the nation. It is after a nation has been conceived that the issues regarding governance and the electoral system can be discussed. The nation determines the electoral system, not the other way around. Fiji has to settle the question of nationhood first before discussing political power to govern the nation. How did Fiji become a nation? It was surely not through a referendum like East Timor, nor a vote like Australia. Most political theoreticians will seek to find the answer to this question in Fiji's colonial experience. However, this chapter intends to raise more questions due to the continual existence of key institutions that predated colonialism. The issues surrounding these key institutions, when seen from the angle of politics, has not been properly addressed, making the Crown a thorn in the Fiji Republic, and nationhood out of decolonization an experience of crisis upon crisis for Fiji.

'Crisis upon crisis' simply tells us the fact that the underlying realities controlling people's lives are not fully understood and respected by Fiji's political leaders. One of these realities is the Fijian chiefly system. This system was an institution of cession, but not of the Dominion and the Republic. In retrospect, for a nation to have three forms of government, three constitutions and three coup d'etats in a span of thirty years tells any historian or political scientist that Fiji's politics and its constitutional framework is up against some neglected fundamental realities. The changes in the forms of government, which resulted in the introduction of those constitutions, were forced upon the Fiji Islands by three coup d'etats [these do not include the December 2006 coup], two military and one civilian. The political crises of 1987 and that of 2000 have to be examined in the context of nation-building in order to find out where, why and when did Fiji take the wrong option in her political development as a nation. In the end, it is hoped that the question as to why coup d'etats happen so often in Fiji will be answered by studying issues relating to the national ethos. There are fundamental misconceptions, beginning from the period of decolonisation, regarding how the now Republic of the Fiji Islands was imagined and created as a nation.

The current situation in Fiji needs caution, patience and understanding due to the unstable nature of Fiji's political system. Re-imagining Fiji as a nation by the two major ethnic communities, the Fijian and Indo-Fijian, is critically needed to defuse the political tension existing between them. To complicate the problem of decolonisation, Fiji was offered to the British Crown and not to the British government. As Britain decolonised its vast colonial empire, Fiji was still emotionally attached to the British Crown (David 1998). This sentiment is rooted in Fijian traditional politics, a system of politics that regulates the subterranean undercurrents of modern Fijian politics.

The 1987 Constitution confronted the subterranean undercurrents of traditional Fijian politics since 1965. Fiji's political leaders thought that Fiji's status as a state can only be guaranteed by a Constitution. This was where more hassles developed. Three different stages of nation-building were confused into one. The chiefly talks of September 1987, the 7 October 1987 Declaration of the Republic and the 1997 Constitution were not reconciled. It just seems obvious for Fiji that when a nation is governed through democratic politics, then political parties take precedence in mapping the direction of nation-building. But political parties come and go, like Mara's Alliance Party and Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka's SVT Party. In Fiji's situation, it is tempting for any political party to create a nation and then decide what form of government should the nation of Fiji have, whether colonial, dominion or republic. The latest exhibit of this case is what Rabuka's SVT and Jai Ram Reddy's National Federation Party did while introducing the 1997

Constitution. According to the Commission, on which the 1997 Constitution is based, Fiji needed a new constitutional arrangement. In fact, the whole document focused on reconciliation, with a 'united future' as a common national goal (Reeves, Vakatora & Lal 1996).

The objectives of the 1997 Constitution were fair and clear, but the *turaga bale* institution was divided over its consent for the document. Take, for example, the view from the Province of Rewa, from which Tomasi Vakatora, a member of the CRC, comes from. Rewa accused the CRC of strengthening multi-ethnicity, and weakening the ethnic identities.[3] The Province of Cakaudrove, likewise, cautioned the CRC not to dilute the important values each community has within itself.[4]

Since the constitution reflects the imaginings of the nation, some political issues related to reconciliation that were highlighted by the CRC has to be taken seriously. The first is the Westminster form of government. Under the Westminster system of government applied here, political parties used ethnicity as an instrument of political power. The structure and application of the electoral system, according to Reeves, is the cause of Fiji's racial tension. To relax this tension, Reeves proposed a new 'constitutional arrangement' where ethnicity could be used as a force of reconciliation (Reeves 1996: 5). Ethnicity is the biggest constraint for nation-building, and requests all communities to 're-think their approach to their constitutional arrangements'. In that view, Fiji's constitutional arrangement had two major determinants, multi-ethnicity and the Westminster parliamentary system of government. To solve the problems of 1987, Reeves analyzed the 1970 Constitution, focusing on Fijian political paramountcy, communal representation, political parties and majority government (Reeves 1996). Hoping to produce a constitutional arrangement that will prevent a crisis similar to that of 1987, Reeves began with the 1970 Constitution, believing that combining 'the Westminster system with exclusively or mainly communal representation' to Parliament was the major weakness of the 1970 Constitution (Reeves 1996: 11).

Reeves thought that a 'multi-ethnic government' and 'multi-party participation in the parliamentary process' could remove this constraint. In Recommendation 1-4 in Chapter 2, he suggested that:

1   Fiji's new constitutional arrangement should encourage multi-ethnic government.
2   Adoption of the Westminster system of government.
3   Power-sharing through voluntary cooperation or political parties, or increased support for a genuinely multi-ethnic party.
4   Gradual and decisive elimination of communal parliamentary representation.

Fiji needs 'to make a fresh start' by drawing a 'new constitution when they want their country to be governed in a new way'.

The question, in regards to constitutional arrangement, is whether the Westminster model of governance is suitable for a Fiji republic. Why is it that, as a republic, Fiji continues to hang on to the Westminster system of government? How is a republic governed, and what is the function of political parties in a republic? What is the role of native Fiji institutions, especially the *turaga bale* institution, in a republic? What is the position and function of the aristocrats in a republic? Should there be a House of Representatives or does a republic need only a senate to govern it? How republican is it for the Prime Minister to be a member of both the legislative and the executive arm of government? How republican is it for the Attorney General to be a member of all three Westminster arms of government, the legislative, executive and judiciary? These are republican questions that the region, especially republics, and would-be republics, should be cautious of in their approach towards their own constitutional arrangements.

In relation to the above questions is that of the electoral system. The CRC believed that the key to building a stable multi-racial nation lay in reforming the voting system. A new system was designed, which Ben Riley (1997) argued could not work in Fiji. It was too much of a hybrid to suit Fiji's multi-ethnic population. Riley made an interesting suggestion as a remedy, recommending that the 'conventional alternative voting in single member districts' if ever Fiji's inter-ethnic mix is to find political harmony. Riley's idea should be taken seriously because of its district basis. But to re-imagine the nation through the electoral system is, in Fiji's case, dividing the booty before the war has even started. The concept and imagination of what the nation should be has to settled first before serious thought is given to how it should be governed, including its electoral system. This is why reconciliation is important to the success of any constitutional arrangement in Fiji.

Perhaps Fiji's national reconciliation, constrained by its politics and related issues, is so much centred on human rights. While applying international standards from the International Bill of Human Rights to Fiji's human rights practice, Reeves asserted that his Commission has to be "regarded as setting out generally accepted principles of international law binding on all states whether or not they have accepted a particular treaty". For instance, Fiji, in 1996, was not a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is critical therefore to ask whether the standardisation of rights will help reconciliation in Fiji. The standardisation of human rights in Fiji using international norms was timed too early, and produced a negative result in terms of attitude. But Reeves (1996: 39) saw that two of the challenges facing this fresh start on the constitutional arrangement are the 'internationally recognised principles and standards of individual and group rights.' Reeves

believed in the authority of international principles of personal and group rights to determine the new constitutional arrangement. These standards should have been applied after the ethnic communities had been reconciled, so they can become a measure of progress for the reconciled ethnic communities, and not for different ethnic communities to assert their distinctive identities and rights. Excessive pressure was applied on human tolerance where goodwill would have served better.

Alongside the issue of human rights, Reeves found 'no basis on which the paramountcy of Fijian interests or Fijian political paramountcy can be elevated into a right'. Fearing that this paramountcy would overshadow the other ethnic communities' rights, Reeves used international documents, concepts of sovereignty and self-determination to discredit Fijian political paramountcy. This ascendancy has been blown out of proportion up to the stage where the 1997 constitutional arrangement took it as a serious concern. Fijian political paramountcy is a tool of political propaganda and in that case, it is associated with the political parties. It should have been isolated from the normal direction of constitutional arrangement. There is a misconception in the terms 'Fijian rights' and 'Fijian political paramountcy'.

Further, Fijian political paramountcy has been over-stretched as an issue of the constitutional arrangement. It haunts the 1997 Constitution, being too major an assumption for the process of reconciliation to be bothered with. In retrospect, the Fijian chiefs took Fijians rights, not paramountcy, seriously during the cession negotiations in March and October 1874. Through the Native Land Commission, these rights to land were catered for. The rest is now native land and is the monument to Fijian rights in Fiji. Reeves had to be commended for suppressing the concept of Fijian political paramountcy from being a right, similar to communal rights. In fact, Fijian political paramountcy was a dominion issue, unlike rights, which was a colonial issue. It does not, and should not impose itself on the rights of other communities in Fiji. In the end, human right is negatively seen, as an obstacle to nation-building in Fiji.

The positioning of political parties in Fiji is a source of hindrance to the process of national reconciliation. They come and go, failing the test of accountability after their demise and when things go wrong. Mara's Alliance Party was mainly responsible for the 1970 Constitution, and was not there to account for the Constitutional chaos in 1987. The Alliance Party was not there to answer questions regarding that crisis on the 1970 Constitution. Rabuka's SVT Party was responsible for the 1997 Constitution. By 2000, it was gone, and seemed irresponsible to the community for the chaos that came about after its defeat. In similar vein was the Veitokani ni Lewe ni Vanua Va-Karisito and the Party of National Unity. It has ceased to exist, though it divided Fijian support for the SVT, resulting in the defeat of Rabuka's

government. These political parties come and go. The consequences of the constitutional arrangements that they introduced are being left behind to be borne by the ordinary people of Fiji. There is no accountability after a ruling party loses power. It is not the job of political parties to reconcile the two major ethnic communities in Fiji, negotiate its Compact and write its Constitutions. The two communities should deal with these three issues first before political parties are created to govern the nation.

For a future re-imagining of Fiji, it is hoped that the structure of party politics as an instrument of government should be regulated properly. People should be accountable, even after the demise of a political party. This is a Fijian problem, for their main political parties are more or less political movements. They have not produced, managed or sustained a political party, to be strictly based on political ideals like democracy, republicanism, conservatism, liberalism or nationalisation. The Alliance Party, SVT and SDL are more political movements than parties. Even the VLV was understood as a fellowship and not a party. This frailty in political ideals at the national level, further confuses the problem at the voters' level. Legislation is silent in the areas between the political party, the party member and the supporter-voter who voted the candidate into Parliament. How can the re-imagining of the nation be possible with these types of optional institutions? And what type of nation will these institutions produce? If more wisdom is allowed in the deliberations on the issue of common roll, then the problem of citizenship in a republican context can be utilised to shape the images of a nation. This will also be possible if a stable district boundary is used in the electoral system. A stable boundary will help evade the future dislocation of the republic and its citizens. It will help, in the future constitutional arrangements, to take into account seriously the approach from a citizen voter in re-imagining what the nation ought to be.

Issues of Religion

When the citizens are taken into account in the promotion of racial harmony, then religion cannot be ignored as a vital factor to national reconciliation. There are about five major Christian churches and three other major religions in Fiji. The largest of these are the Methodists, which numbered 280,628, then the Catholics, 69,320 and then the Muslims, 54,323 (Bhagwan). However, religion as a factor of constitution making has been largely ignored, in spite of the fact that only 5,132 citizens of Fiji declared that they are atheist (Douglas 2002: 11-14). Reeves, an Anglican clergyman himself, knew the importance of 'traditional and spiritual values' in terms of the history and identity of the various communities in Fiji, but he regarded them as being of less specific significance in terms of the constitutional arrangement. It was hoped that universal 'inter-faith' values would be highlighted to

encourage multi-racialism in Fiji. While addressing the 'full protection and promotion of the rights, interests and concerns of the indigenous Fijian and Rotuman people's, Reeves saw the concept of the Christian state as a special interest of those two communities. He isolated that special interest, saying that the proposal said more about the Fijian sense of identity than the constitutional effect of such a declaration. Another related issue was the so-called Sunday ban, where the Fijian Methodists closed parts of the main highway from Suva to Nausori on Sunday morning.

The two, church and state, should be separate, for a Christian state means the introduction of theocracy in Fiji and the ordained clergy will rule the country through either the Bible or Koran. A balanced proposal is in Point 3. 122, where Reeves asserted that:

> Church and state should each be free to carry out their roles with integrity and without risk of being drawn into an exploitive relationship. The preamble to the Constitution should, however, continue to reflect the importance of Christianity in Fiji, as well as the importance of Christianity in Fiji, as well as the universal love of God shared by people of all religious faith.

Religion has an important function in a multi-ethnic society such as Fiji, and probably the best institution for negotiating reconciliation due to its accountability to the people. The people's loyalty to their religion or denomination, and the way in which religion attracts a person's allegiance makes it a very strong foundation for reconciliation. Unlike political parties, which come and go, holding no responsibility for any chaos it might have created, religious institutions remain to face any music after the implementation of its constitutional suggestions.

The Republic of the Fiji Islands Constitutional suggestions must be based on the 7 October 1987 Republic Declaration. The Declaration had seven articles, the first calling for a Constitution, the second for the Constitution to enshrine the will of the people, the third for Fijian rights and land, the fourth for an inclusive Christian State and Republic, the fifth for the rule of law, the sixth for multi-racialism, and the last for freedom within moral values and the rule of law. These seven points are the points for reconciliation.

Where To From Here?

After all these discussions on the obstacles to reconciliation, it is important to ask, where do we go from here? What is of the future? What kind of nation should Fiji be and what form of government should be adopted.

Reconciliation is a concern for humanity. Reeves' Commission found out that there are two Fijis, existing side by side. They are the Fijian Fiji and the Indo-Fijian Fiji. In between is the General Voter's Fiji, which has been

closely affiliated with the Fijian Fiji. The Solomon Islanders, who were brought in during the labour in-migration, fit into this in-between category. The tension has been intense on the issue of governance; that idea of appreciating and celebrating the two Fijis has been inhumanely famished. The will of the two Fijis is critical for reconciliation. From this angle of the reconciliation process, political theories and agendas are best left aside, or better still, forgotten altogether. To make a fresh start in reshaping the ethos of a nation, we have to start from the will of the people rather than from the manifestoes of political parties.

This is where the Compact between the two major races in Fiji becomes a crucial document. There has never been a covenant between the citizens of the two Fijis to live together and become a nation. History and destiny brought them together. I think that history should be a part of this reconciliation. This history and destiny has shaped the present and future cosmos of the two Fijis. Understanding the other's history will elluminate the path for each community to reconcile with one another. The Compact, therefore, has to be a different document from the Constitution. The Constitution should refer to it as a vital source for its successful application.

Application is one thing, making it a reality another. For that reason, I think there should be a covenant between the Fijians and Indians in Fiji. There should be negotiations and settlements before a Compact is written. The Compact should be the result of these negotiations, and is not to be imposed on the major two communities. The question is, are they willing to negotiate their common future?

To prevent further political crisis, the true *turaga bale* institution of Fiji should initiate reconciliation, negotiate a compact and provide a new constitutional arrangement for Fiji. That is the best way to produce a new national ethos for all the ethnic communities in Fiji. Here is where the 1990 Constitution becomes unique. It is unique in the sense that no political party was involved in its production. Even though it was condemned for being biased, it held the nation together for seven years without a coup, unlike the 1970 and 1997 Constitutions. According to the argument in this chapter, re-imagining the nation of Fiji has to be accomplished by cautiously and patiently considering the mind of the *turaga bale* institution to determine the type of government Fiji ought to have.

The outbursts coming from the non-government organisations, self-proclaimed themselves as watchdogs of transparency and good governance will only muddy the source of the democratic spring. Their diatribe on the crisis and the healing they seek does not have any impact on domestic institutions. They may have an international audience, but for the nation's healing process, more caution should be exercised. In response, the SDL government is now intending to censor the activities of the Citizen's

Constitutional Forum and the Fiji Women's Crisis Center for its involvement in Fiji's politics. A point has been registered, though contrary to the stand taken in this chapter, that these NGOs do have influence over the way Fiji is governed. They should be introduced through healthy legislation and not howling out of their charitable organisations' 'kennels'. If they want to play politics, then proper legislation has to be introduced to accommodate their activities in the political playing field.

Concluding this analysis on reconciliation constraints in Fiji, the suggestion of facilitating the two covenants, the first on legislative power and the second on land is necessary for any future development in the re-imagining the nation. The question of what kind of home Fiji is to the two ethnic communities has to be answered for the sake of racial harmony. Lastly, land policies should never be formulated behind closed doors by political leaders. It will never work, for experts to act as facilitators or conciliators in helping political leaders reach an agreement. Political parties do not own land and do not last forever. They are not institutional, like the chiefly system, to be held accountable to the various ethnic communities in Fiji. New negotiations have to take out the tenant personality in the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Acts and replace it with a fellow citizen personality. This can only be achieved if a compact between the two ethnic communities is organised.

These developments reinforce the argument that nation-building is the responsibility of the *turaga bale* institution. Fijian institutions hold huge authority with respect to the reality of re-imagining the nation. This authority controls the undercurrents of traditional politics. It has to be taken seriously in the formulation of a new constitutional arrangement for reconciliation to be successful. These undercurrents, which stem from historical roots, have a powerful influence on the daily affairs of the nation as a whole. Fijians do have ancient traditional institutions and to restructure them for reconciliation purposes is nothing short of a revolution. On the other hand, there is a common need for peace and political stability, yet political and religious issues constrain the reconciliation efforts since Fiji became an independent nation in 1970.

This chapter argues that Fijian institutions, especially the Great Council of Chiefs, have the authority to produce something real and practical from the current images of what the nation of Fiji ought to be. The 1997 Constitution is probably the best Constitution Fiji has ever had, but depriving the *turaga bale* institution of their duty in the creation and founding of the nation will always be a destabilising factor. It is politics that has deprived the *turaga bale* institution of its responsibility as the nation's founder.

Notes

1   Dorothy Crozier, 'The Deed of Cession: The Evolution of a Fijian Myth,' Crozier Papers, Pacific Manuscript Bureau.
2   Towards Racial Harmony, The Joint National Federation and Labor Party Submission to the Reeves Commission, August 1995, p. 63.
3   Bose Levu Vakaturaga, 10 –11 Epereli, 1997, Vol V, p. 6
4   Bose Levu Vakaturaga, 10 –11 Epereli, 1997, Vol II, p. 12.

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