

ETHNIC RELATIONS IN MALAYSIA IN HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES*

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Kertas ini membahaskan bahawa persaingan sosio-ekonomi dan nasionalisme komunal adalah dua prinsip struktur yang mempengaruhi sifat-sifat dan dinamik hubungan etnik di Malaysia. Penambahan ketegangan kaum selepas merdeka, terutamanya selepas 1969, memang banyak berkaitan dengan penambahan persaingan sosio-ekonomi di antara kaum Melayu dan kaum bukan Melayu. Selain dari itu, nasionalisme komunal Melayu memang mempengaruhi pembangunan negara dan hubungan etnik. Akan tetapi nasionalisme ini bersifat komunal dan ia tidak dapat menyatukan semua kaum di Malaysia. Sebenarnya di Malaysia yang merdeka, nasionalisme Melayu telah menggalakkan nasionalisme komunal Cina, nasionalisme komunal Kadazan, nasionalisme komunal Iban dan lain-lain. Masalahnya ialah kaum-kaum yang berbeza masih kekurangan satu fahaman yang bersama mengenai arah pembangunan negara -- satu "imaginasi" yang bersama mengenai Malaysia sebagai satu komuniti politik.

Selepas membincangkan faktor-faktor sosio-ekonomi, politik, budaya dan psikologi yang berkaitan dengan hubungan etnik di Malaysia, pengarang memberi pendapat bahawa adalah perlu mengikut pendekatan bukan-perkauman dalam pembangunan negara supaya ketegangan kaum dapat dikurangkan. Demokrasi harus dipertahankan juga kerana tanpa demokrasi penindasan politik di masyarakat yang berbilang bangsa ini mungkin mengambil bentuk etnik. Oleh itu pertubuhan-pertubuhan umum harus memainkan peranan untuk mempertahankan demokrasi dan mengurangkan ketegangan kaum.

This paper argues that socio-economic competition and communal nationalism are the two structural principles which influence the dynamics of ethnic relations in Malaysia. Mounting ethnic tension since Merdeka, especially after 1969, accounts for greater socio-economic competition between Malays and non-Malays.

In independent Malaysia, Malay nationalism has tended to reinforce Chinese communal nationalism, Kadazan communal nationalism, Iban communal nationalism and others. The crux of the problem is that various ethnic groups still lack a common perspective on nation-building a common imagination of Malaysia as a political community.

After discussing the socio-economic, political, cultural and psychological factors affecting ethnic relations, the author argues that a non-communal approach is germane to nation-building in Malaysia. Democracy should be defended

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particularly in a multi-ethnic society in which political repression may take on ethnic tones. Non-governmental organizations should play their part in upholding democracy and reducing ethnic tensions.

INTRODUCTION

Most Malaysians like to describe to foreign visitors the good relations which exist between all ethnic groups. Government leaders do this to stress the stability of the country. Ordinary citizens may say so too, despite instances of racial unrest and the fact that they themselves may have made complaints of a communal nature to their fellow ethnic members. Indeed Malaysians do interact with one another across ethnic boundaries. To understand this paradox, one must note that there are two levels of ethnic relations, the group level (structural relationship) and the individual level (interpersonal relationship). While there is considerable interaction, cooperation and solidarity at the individual level, there is undoubtedly tension in the structural relationship between Malays and other ethnic groups, especially the Chinese.

The concept *bumiputera* has become an important principle in the division of ethnic categories in Malaysia. Government policies are structured along this principle, resulting in greater communal tension and communal gap between the two major categories of people so classified. This is so because the application of the concept in the Malaysian political economy results in increasing ethnic competition along this classification. Since Malays and Chinese form the largest ethnic categories in the country and since historically both groups have feelings of insecurity vis-a-vis one another, Malay-Chinese relations are the major pattern of ethnic-group relations in Malaysia. In this article I shall focus mainly on this pattern of relations as an example of relations between *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputeras*.

It is pertinent to know the overall demographic structure of the country. According to the 1980 census, the total population of Malaysia is 13.7 million of which 11.4 million are in Peninsular Malaysia, 1.0 million in Sabah and 1.3 million in Sarawak.¹

Malays comprise 55.3% of the 1980 population of Peninsular Malaysia, while Chinese and Indians account for 33.8% and 10.2% respectively. Malays form the largest ethnic category in the country. They can claim a direct link to the past Malay polity and regard themselves as having a special status in the country. The dominant ruling party, United Malays National Organization (UMNO), is a Malay party.

The Chinese form the second largest ethnic category followed by the Indians. although some of their ancestors had already settled in Malaya as far back as the seventeenth century and even earlier, the majority came in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, encouraged by the British colonial government. As a group the Chinese have been economically influential. Both the Chinese and Indians are regarded as *non-bumiputera* and understandably they are the strongest opponents of the *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputera* categorization. Except for a very small minority, the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia are

today citizens of the country. At the individual level, Chinese and Indians can talk freely among themselves about the problems facing the non-Malays. But when the same individuals interact with Malays, they (and vice-versa) usually avoid talking about ethnic issues and if they do, it is usually not in any serious context. The approach at the interpersonal level is non-confrontational. After all, it is not a particular Chinese or Indian or Malay who creates ethnic problems, it is the structure of the society at large.

The orang Asli or the various groups of aboriginal people in Peninsular Malaysia are classified under the Malay category although they do not regard themselves as Malays. Their political marginality is indicated by their administration under the Department of Orang Asli Affairs, run largely by Malay officers. They first became of political interest to the British colonial government when the communists won a large proportion of them over to their side. This political significance marked the end of their autonomous existence. Since then they have been under the administration of the Department of Orang Asli Affairs, and many have been resettled. While the government has provided medical aid and introduced 'development' programmes, security is still a major concern, although unjustifiably so. Like many "tribal" groups elsewhere, the livelihood of the Orang Asli has been threatened by capitalist development, especially timber logging in their traditional territory which the modern land codes do not recognize.

Historically the relationship of the Orang Asli with the Malays has been rather asymmetrical. The settlement of the Malays in the coastal areas pushed the Orang Asli to the interior. There have been cases of enslavement of Orang Asli by Malays and even today many Orang Asli feel that local Malays have encroached on their land. The Malays regard the Orang Asli as knowledgeable about herbal roots and jungle products and perceive that their shamans are powerful. However they generally look down on the pagan Orang Asli.

On the other hand, the Chinese traders have a more harmonious relationship with the Orang Asli. This is not because the Chinese have a higher regard for Orang Asli, but because the historical pattern of asymmetrical relationship and sources of conflict do not exist between them. Furthermore the Chinese do not feel inhibited taking Orang Asli food. The Malays who are Muslims generally do not like to take food offered by the Orang Asli. Some Chinese even marry Orang Asli women.

There are various other groups in Peninsular Malaysia such as the Thai and various groups of Eurasians. While the Eurasians are clearly regarded as non-*bumiputera*, the status of the Thai in Kelantan and Perlis is rather ambiguous. The Thai have a long history in these areas and were subjects of the *Sultan*. However, in the increasing polarization of Malaysian society, *bumiputera* in Peninsular Malaysia tends to be associated with only the Malays who are Muslims. The Thai are not Malays nor are they Muslims. They are Buddhists, and they have much more interaction with the Chinese, many of whom sponsor the building and maintenance of Thai temples.

A recent paper by Roger Kershaw shows that the modern state system has put many a Thai in a dilemma.² After independence, many Kelantan Thai were

misled by some politicians that they need not receive any citizenship certificates. Because of their failure to do so, these Thai have become non-citizens and this causes many problems, including their claim to the land owned by their families for generations. However, the government has recently allowed the Thai to invest in *Amanah Saham Nasional* (ASN), which are shares for the *bumiputera* only, indicating that in certain contexts the Thai are treated as *bumiputera*.³

Other groups in Peninsular Malaysia like the *Baba* and the *Chitty* (Indian *Peranakan* in Melaka) although they speak Malay, are sub-ethnic groups of Chinese and Indians respectively. In the discussion here, I deal with autonomous ethnic groups. Thus we should bear in mind that the category "Chinese" comprises many speech groups such as Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese, Teochiu, Hainanese, Kwongsai, Hockchiu, Hockchia, Henghua and others. Similarly in the census, the category "Indian" includes Indian Tamil, Malayali, Telegu, Sikh, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lanka Tamil, other Punjabi, other Indian and other Sri Lankan. In fact the category "Malay" in the 1980 census includes not only Malays but also "Indonesian", "Negrito", "Jakun", "Semai", "Semelai", "Temiar", "other indigenous" and "other Malay race"; Negrito, Jakun, Semai, Semelai and Temiar refer to the Orang Asli.

The situation in East Malaysia is different. There the Malays do not form the majority and many of the indigenous groups are not Muslims, being followers of their traditional religions or Christianity. Thus, the concept of *bumiputera* does not have the same significance as in Peninsular Malaysia.

The 1980 census classifies all indigenous people in Sabah as *pribumi* ("indigenous people"). These people comprise 82.9% of the state's population (1.0 million), followed by the Chinese (16.2%) and others (0.9%).⁴ This classification emphasizes the distinction of *bumiputera* versus non-*bumiputera* and does not tell us much about the ethnic complexity. Actually the largest ethnic category is Kadazan (184,512), followed by the Chinese (139,509), Bajau (77,271), Murut (31,299), Malays (18,365), and other indigenous groups.⁵ In Sarawak the largest ethnic category is Iban. According to the 1980 census, the Iban comprise 30.3% of the state's population (1.3 million), Chinese (29.5%), Malays (19.9%), Melanau (5.7%), Bidayuh (8.2%) and other groups have smaller numbers.

The main Muslim groups in Sabah are "Bajau" and "Malays" and in Sarawak, "Melanau" and "Malays".⁶ Due to historical reasons and the support of the federal government, the Malay and other Muslim elites have been politically dominant in Sarawak and Sabah, although the situation in Sabah has changed since April 1985, when the people voted in a newly-formed Kadazan-based party (Parti Bersatu Sabah) to form the state government.⁷ As the non-Muslim indigenous groups become more conscious politically and as their educated middle class grows, there is bound to be growing discontent about Malay dominance. Furthermore the communal politics of Peninsular Malaysia tends to be carried over to East Malaysia. There is therefore an underlying tension between the Malays and the non-Malay indigenous groups in Sabah and Sarawak.

It may be expected that as the non-Malay indigenous groups (especially the Iban) exert their influence, communal politics will also be on the rise in Sarawak. As for the relationship between the indigenous peoples and the Chinese of Sabah and Sarawak, there is bound to be considerable tension too as the indigenous groups try to improve their own economic situation. However, the issue here is not simply *bumiputera* versus non-*bumiputera*. The situation is complicated by the fact that Chinese and non-Muslim indigenous groups like Kadazan and Iban have fairly good relationships and there is considerable intermarriage too. In the context of political competition between Malay and non-Malay indigenous people (most of whom are not Muslims), the Chinese can play an influential role. Whichever side the Chinese are inclined to support will have effects on their relations with the other group.

Causes of Ethnic Tension

What are the causes of ethnic tension in Malaysia? The most crucial factors are economic and political; while the cultural factors, including the religious factor, are in fact very much linked to the political and economic structure. Of the economic basis of ethnic relation, Professor Wertheim has proposed that economic competition is the primary cause of ethnic conflict. According to him it is not cultural plurality which accounts for increasing tensions, "it is economic competition between adjoining social groups which lies at the root of the tensions, as they present themselves in the actual phase of world history".⁸ This is to my mind a very crucial factor which can account for much of the ethnic tension in colonial Malaya and especially the present era.

However, in post-independent Southeast Asian states, ethnic relations is a major issue in nation-building. In this process, the indigenous groups exert their will to create a nation which is meaningful in the context of their indigenous past. The political factor becomes very important in ethnic relations. Of the political component, indigenous communal nationalism has been very poorly understood. By this I do not mean the nationalism of the Malays against the colonial regime. I use this to describe the will and the effort of the indigenous people to foster a national identity which is in line with their indigenous past. I use the term communal nationalism which, though in itself seems paradoxical, enables us to differentiate it from the nationalism cultivated to fight colonialism or imperialism or to unite all citizens in a nation for a common cause. Of course the indigenous nationalism in Southeast Asia had a communal dimension in its opposition to the "trading minorities". In post-independent Malaysia today, any promotion of nationalism tends to lead to communal nationalism rather than to one which unites all ethnic groups. This is due to the communal nature of the society.

The communalism and ethnic tensions in Malaysia are brought about and perpetuated by a number of factors, namely socio-economic factors, political factors, religious factors, psychological factors and other cultural factors.

The present pattern of ethnic relations in Malaysia is very much a legacy of colonialism. By encouraging the immigration of a large number of immigrants, mainly Chinese and Indians, the demographic structure of the country was drastically changed from one which was essentially Malay,⁹ to one which was and has been more pluralistic. Indeed many urban centres

became rather un-Malay in outlook, settled mainly by Chinese and to some extent Indians, and developed largely by non-Malay commercial enterprises.

The British, in their own interest, kept the various ethnic groups apart economically. The Malay masses and other indigenous peoples were left alone to continue to engage largely in subsistence agriculture, especially rice cultivation. Most Chinese were originally encouraged to immigrate to provide cheap labour, but many of them eventually made their mark in the mining, commercial and financial sectors. The Indian coolies were engaged mainly in the plantation sector as well as in road-building. This separation of economic functions by ethnicity for a while kept the various ethnic groups apart economically and also reduced the chance of direct competition and conflict, although the system was to be a major source of communal (ethnic) tensions, especially in post-independent Malaysia.

Generally, there was not much overt ethnic conflict in the nineteenth century. This does not mean that there were no cases of conflict during the colonial period. The British were quick to suppress any trouble or any move which might threaten their rather easy divide and rule policy. For example, T. Braddel reported Malays pillaging Chinese mines in Melaka.¹⁰ Obviously the taking over of the mining sector by the British and the Chinese must have caused frustrations among those indigenous people who were miners, though using simple mining methods, before the encroachment of the British and the Chinese. More research into the social and economic history of the different ethnic groups in Malaysia and their contacts across ethnic boundaries will undoubtedly shed more light on the interaction and relationship of the various ethnic groups before and during the period of British direct and indirect rule.

Colonial rule had other serious consequences on ethnic relations, for then the immigrant communities had to deal with the British authority rather than the Malay ruling elite. They had to cooperate with the British and not with the Malay chiefs. Furthermore the need for upward mobility encouraged the Chinese and Indians to identify with the British rather than the Malays¹¹ and this is especially so after the introduction of English education. Thus in the case of ethnic relations between Malays and Chinese, for example, the historical development was not towards building up a basis of economic and political co-operation and mutual adjustment. It was a divergent process in which the Malays and Chinese went in different directions economically, politically and socially. The middlemen role of Chinese merchants and the eventual domination of the Chinese in the commercial and financial sectors further widened the social gulf between the Malays and the Chinese. More and more the Chinese, who were more visible than the British, were seen as economic exploiters. This view was of course encouraged too by the British to mask their own exploitation of Malaya. The situation is well described by Khoo Kay Kim, as follows:

Malay attitude towards the Chinese in the twentieth century may be said to have developed from a feeling of neglect and despair. Political power had been transferred to the British; the Chinese appeared to have overall control of the economy, especially in urban centres such as Singapore and Penang where the Malay

population was outnumbered; the Chinese had been able to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to advance themselves professionally; with their wealth and education; many of the Chinese adopted a life-style of that of the Europeans, thereby occupying a social position superior to that of the other Asians. These impressions, basically accurate although generalized, prompted the Kaum Muda in the Straits Settlements to try to redeem the position of the Malays. They called for greater Malayo-Muslim unity and more serious efforts to enhance educational opportunities for themselves.¹²

Thus the development of Malay nationalism in the twentieth century was aimed at reviving Malay rights and interests. It was also anti-Chinese in sentiments. The historical development made communal nationalism inevitable. The anti-Chinese sentiment was worsened by certain political developments. Not only did the British not try to foster Malay-Chinese solidarity, they allowed political activists from China and their sympathisers in Malaya to campaign and bring about the political orientation of a large number of Chinese in Malaya towards China and thus, the development of Chinese nationalism in Malaya. The Malay leaders watched this development helplessly but this certainly intensified their communal nationalism against the Chinese. As the British reacted to Malay nationalism by introducing some "pro-Malay" policies, the local-born Straits Chinese demanded equal rights and were vocal against what they perceived as pro-Malay policies. Indeed the pattern of Malay-Chinese tension was already formed in the two or three decades before the Second World War. Then both the communities made their communal demands to the British colonial government. Today the Chinese and Malays have to deal with each other directly and in fact the Chinese have to deal with a politically dominant Malay elite.

The Japanese Occupation saw the deterioration of Chinese-Malay relations. The People's anti-Japanese Army formed by the Malayan Communist Party was largely Chinese. On the other hand the 'pro-Malay' policies (in contrast to the suppression of Chinese) of the Japanese and especially the recruitment of Malays into the Japanese local military units ensured more direct Chinese-Malay conflict. Immediately after the war, that is, during 1945-46, racial riots broke out in Johor and various parts of Malaya.¹³ The high-handed measures of the communists against Japanese collaborators and pro-Japanese suspects (including Malays of course) certainly heightened the anti-Chinese sentiment. Furthermore, faced with an organised Chinese military force in the country, the Malay fear of Chinese economic and political domination was intensified. Not surprisingly during this period, we saw the emergence of an anti-communist and anti-Chinese Malay movement, i.e. the Sabilillah Movement, led by Kiyai Salleh.¹⁴ Although the post-war riots were eventually brought under control, the tension between Chinese and Malays continued to persist.

In the face of Malay nationalism against the British, especially after the 1946 Malay Union experiment and in view of the continuous struggle of the Malayan Communist Party of Malaya (the first political party in Malaya) for an independent Malaya, the British granted independence to the Alliance Party in 1957. The Alliance Party comprised the three communal parties,

namely United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), the elites of which were from the royal, business and professional classes which were acceptable to the British. This arrangement was to determine the development of Malaysian politics until today and it has had serious consequences for ethnic relations.

After independence, the Malaysian people became the masters of their own house. The elite Malays, because they had to share political power with the other ethnic groups, were keen to improve the economic position of the Malays. Yet in moving into the commercial and financial sectors, the Malays had to face the rivalry of the better established Chinese business class. Nevertheless for a decade or so under Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malayan politics may be described as *musyawarah* politics, of compromises between the political elites of the major ethnic groups.

The mobilization of political support along ethnic lines by the elites of the three ruling parties and those of the opposition inevitably led to the development of communal politics. Meanwhile the Malay elite demanded significant changes in favour of the "Malays" and this intensified communal politics. As the Malay elite pushed harder and mobilized support among Malay masses, the non-Malay elites felt more insecure too and so they intensified their mobilization of the non-Malays.

This development was inevitable given the lack of commitment to bring about major structural changes. The economic structure, for instance, was polarized along ethnic lines in that the economic sectors were identified with either Malays or non-Malays --- a legacy of colonialism. The Malays were mainly in the rural agricultural sector, most of whom were poor peasants. The Chinese were largely in the commercial, financial and mining sectors. The Chinese population was mainly urban although there were also rural Chinese who were engaged in agricultural and fishing activities. Their concentration in urban centres made them rather visible such that the urban centres were and are seen to be non-Malay in contrast to the rural Malay villages. Furthermore the Malay middle and capitalist classes were rather small and less established when compared to the Chinese, thus there was (and is) a stereotype that Chinese were well-off while Malays were poor. All this had negative impact on ethnic relations and so it was (and is) essential to bring about structural changes in the Malaysian political economy in order to prevent the deterioration of ethnic relations.

As we have seen, economic competition and communal politics tended to create ethnic tension in post-independent Malaysia. Nevertheless, things seemed to be under control until the racial riots of 1969 which rocked the whole nation. There were many causes of the outbreak of racial violence (cf. p. 28), including the manipulation of politicians and the ill-handling of the situation in the initial stage by the authority.¹⁵ The aftermath was that the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman with his style of politics was discredited. A "new" Malay elite took over. This group of Malay political elite included also those who were not from the royal class. The new elite quickly introduced some changes to consolidate its position.

A major development after the 1969 racial riot was the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) under the Second Malaysia Plan. The Policy recognises that "the eradication of poverty and the restructuring of the society and economy are necessary conditions for national unity"¹⁶. These in fact became the two main aims of NEP. The second prong is aimed at "restructuring the society so that the present identification of race with particular forms of economic activity will eventually be eliminated"¹⁷. While the Plan recognises the need of bringing about structural changes and promoting national unity, the approach in "economic reforms" has been rather communal. The government has assumed that the *bumiputera* are the "have-nots" while the non-*bumiputera* (in particular the Chinese) are the "haves". However the Plan is instrumental in the creation and consolidation of a class of Malay capitalists.¹⁸

The quota system has been used to supposedly help to increase the socio-economic opportunities of the Malay masses. The distinction of *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera* has become a major principle of ethnic classification in Malaysian political economy both for legitimization purposes and for the mobilization of the Malay masses. In practice the NEP has mainly benefited the Malay and non-Malay elites and consolidated a Malay capitalist class now dominant in the political circle. Rural poverty has remained a serious problem. At the same time, the communal approach serves only to intensify ethnic competition and ethnic tension. This naturally becomes more serious in times of economic recession.

We should also pay a bit more attention to communal nationalism which like socio-economic competition, contributes to the development of communal politics. Due to certain historical developments as explained above, the limited Malay nationalism had been more concerned with preserving Malay interests against the encroachment of the immigrant communities rather than with overthrowing British rule. It was after the Second World War when the British tried to impose the "Malayan Union" concept on the sultans that Malay nationalism became more developed and more anti-British. Then Dato Onn Jaafar was able to mobilize the Malaya to oppose the Malay Union, and to bring the Malays from different states together as "nationalists" of one nation, as belonging to an "imagined political community".¹⁹

After the British granted independence in 1957, there was the immediate question of nation-building. The Malay elite realized that there could never be a truly Malay nation-state. However, the Malay leaders certainly wished to see the stamp of Malay identity in the political development of the country. English was still the official language and almost half of the population were non-Malays with a totally different cultural background. One of the first tasks of the Malay nationalists was to push for the Malay language policy, to ensure that Malay became the national language.

Unfortunately this proved to be no easy task. A large section of the non-Malays originally opposed the policy, fearing that this might lead to assimilation, while the Chinese educationists were concerned with the future of Chinese education. At first there was also the concern that English was of more practical value than Malay. Colonialism had degraded the status of the

Malay language. English was the prestigious language which the children of the non-Malay elite and the royal class of Malays sought to learn, while Malay was despised as the language of the syce and policemen. Thus the success of Bahasa Malaysia (i.e. Malay, the national language) policy was a major psychological breakthrough for the Malays. However the experience of this success further enhanced the communal direction of the Malay elite.

By and large the non-Malay population has been forced to accept the new reality as a result of legislation and the political dominance of the Malay elite.²⁰ While the political elites of MCA and MIC co-operated albeit reluctantly in the implementation of the policy, the non-Malays by and large failed to understand the psychology of the Malays, i.e., the need for some kind of Malay identity in the political development of the country.

In a way this unfortunate state of affairs was a result of the development we have discussed. The Alliance did not have any clear goal of political development for the country. It was just a convenient alliance of elites from the three major ethnic groups in order to take over the reins of government from the British. Political development was left to bargaining among the elites who were supposed to represent the interests of the three major communities. This meant that nation-building was shaped by communal politics and dominated by the specific interests of the elite. Had independence been achieved by a non-communal party with a clearer goal of nation-building, the situation today may have been quite different.

As I have mentioned, the experience of the Malay elite in dealing with the non-Malay elite and shaping the destiny of the country pushed them towards the communal line. On the other hand, the orientation of the Malays only convinced the non-Malays that they had to continue to adopt the communal approach too. The non-communal approach was regarded as unrealistic and against the interests of the community concerned. Thus communal politics was intensified, and this has also resulted in the communal thinking of most Malaysians, i.e. they tend to see issues in communal terms. This line of thinking has become embedded in their cognition.

With the success of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and the medium of instruction in all schools and universities, (except the Chinese and Tamil-medium primary schools) the conflict has now shifted to the issue of the national culture. This is of course a complicated issue.

There are both extreme and moderate views. Those Malays who hold more extreme views (i.e. without considering the position or even the presence of the non-Malays) tend to define national culture as Malay culture, while there are others who define it in terms of Islam only. The moderate Malay view is that Malay culture should be the basis of national culture, while non-Malay cultural elements which are not in conflict with Malay culture and Islam may be incorporated. However even the moderate Malay view is still very much a "Malay culture" view and this is in line with my arguments on communal nationalism and the psychology of the Malays with regards to nation-building.

It is not surprising that the non-Malays in general cannot accept even the "moderate" Malay view on national culture. One must understand the psychology of the non-Malays here, for there is a growing fear of policies which are believed to lead to assimilation -- the loss of culture and even identity as perceived by the non-Malays. The talk of a national culture based on Malay culture intensifies this insecurity. Overall, the increasing ethnic competition and the perception of the non-Malays that they are losing out has led to a situation in which the non-Malays, on the passive side, try to hold out psychologically to what they still have rather than 'give in' and on the active side, try to bring about cultural revival and to promote unity within their own ethnic group. The Chinese Malaysians, for instance, now have a "total defense" psychology against what they see as the push of the Malays in ways which are perceived as detrimental to Chinese interests. Developments have almost reached a breaking point so that there is a greater than ever need for mutual understanding. Yet in Malay-Chinese relations, there is still no attempt to understand each other's psychology and aspirations.

In the context of Malay-Chinese relations, the Chinese feel that they have been pushed along. Politically MCA and other Chinese-based parties in the ruling National Front are encapsulated within the UMNO dominated government.²¹ Everybody knows that the UMNO elections are of no less significance than the national election because of UMNO's dominance in the National Front. Furthermore, UMNO resolutions are likely to be implemented by the UMNO-led government. Culturally the Chinese educationists are still concerned about the preservation of Chinese education. The stand of the Chinese elite on national culture is that it regards all cultures in the country to be on an equal basis, a proposal which is unacceptable to the Malay elite. In a way we can speak of some form of Chinese communal *nationalism*.²² There have been attempts to unite Chinese Malaysians and there are campaigns to promote speaking Mandarin to ensure that all Chinese can speak a common Chinese language.

Among the Malays, communal nationalism is also linked to another political development. It is the ideology of UMNO and it is used to mobilize Malay masses for two main political purposes. Firstly, as we have seen, it is used to mobilize Malay support for the UMNO elite as the protector of Malay interests against the "encroachment" and "domination" of the non-Malays, especially the Chinese. Secondly, it is used to mobilize Malay masses against the Islamic state ideology of Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS), the Islamic Party which is predominantly Malay in membership although there are some Chinese Muslim members.

Thus the slogan of the 1985 national day was "*nasionalisme teras perpaduan*", i.e. "nationalism is the basis of unity". This slogan was adopted at a time when UMNO was more and more seriously challenged by the PAS ideology of Islamic state. UMNO as a party has never had any ideology other than "Malay nationalism". The 1985 slogan was launched as a way of promoting national unity. Yet there is no clear thinking on the direction of nationalism today and how it can promote national unity. The UMNO politicians' speeches all linked nationalism to the past, to the struggle against the Malayan Union proposal, although the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir did touch on neo-

colonialism. Obviously the government does not actually mean to lead people to link nationalism with fighting against neo-colonialism, for that contradicts some of its own policies and the interest of the elite class. Being a communal party, UMNO is not able to transcend communalism and its form of nationalism is inevitably communal.

Recently PAS changed its strategy and image.²³ Unlike the past when it stressed Malay ethnicity and Islam, now it stresses the non-communal message of Islam to the non-Muslims. For example, some PAS leaders argued that nationalism is unIslamic because all people are equal. This new strategy of PAS has had a tremendous impact on Malaysian politics. All along the non-Muslims fear PAS because of its ideology of an Islamic state and Malay ethnicity. UMNO was able to exploit this fear, thanks to the unwillingness of the past PAS leaders to reach out to the non-Muslims. Now PAS leaders hold dialogues with various Chinese groups. Yet the Chinese are in a dilemma. On the one hand they dislike the communal approach of UMNO, on the other hand, they cannot actually trust that the interests of the non-Muslims will be safe-guarded under a PAS government because PAS insists on creating an Islamic state.

The recent revival of PAS is of course linked to developments in the political economy. The NEP has not really brought about significant structural socio-economic reform. Rural poverty remains serious. In fact, PAS support is strongest in those states where rural Malay poverty is serious, i.e. Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Upper Perak.

The growing influence of PAS has forced the UMNO dominated government to respond by stressing its Islamic image. In the last few years the government has created a number of Islamic institutions such as the Islamic bank and the International Islamic University. There has been much publicity over government efforts to ensure that food and food products which are sold in the market for the Muslims conform to Islamic strictures. The Mahathir government also launched the Islamization policy. To calm the non-Muslims, the government explains that this does not mean creating an Islamic State. It involves only the absorption of Islamic values, which are also found in other religious traditions, into government administration. Indeed the concern has been more with form and it has been easy for PAS leaders to criticize that form alone does not make the government or the people Islamic.

However, form can be seen, exploited and misunderstood and the non-Muslims are worried. Religion has now, although not before, become an increasing significant factor in ethnic tension. While the constitution guarantees freedom of belief, with Islam's position as the official religion of the federation, the non-Muslims are now worried that freedom of belief may be increasingly violated. This has prompted the non-Muslim religious leaders to co-operate more with one another.²⁴ There is discontent among non-Muslims that not enough land has been allocated for building non-Muslim temples (e.g. Buddhist temples), churches, and cemeteries. In one instance, the Sultan of Selangor intervened to ensure that land was allocated in Shah Alam, the new town not far from Kuala Lumpur, for the building of temples and churches.²⁵

In the last few years there have been cases of statues of deities and other religious objects of the non-Muslims being vandalized. In one instance, Hindu statues were vandalized. Early this year (1986), the statues at the cemetery of the Portuguese Eurasians (who are Catholic) in Melaka were destroyed on a large scale. Recently there were complaints by some Malays that Chinese worship statues are made in the image of Malays or Islamic symbols. The government was concerned as this would have consequences on ethnic relations. Eventually a Chinese Minister (MCA) called on the Chinese to be more sensitive to Malay feeling and not to worship statues of Malay images. In actual fact, Chinese Malaysians have been worshipping *nadugong* for a long time. These are local Malay guardian spirits worshipped by the Chinese. The statues are made in the image of Malays and when the Chinese worship them, they are careful not to offer pork since the spirits ("deities") are regarded as Malay and Muslim.

Why is it only now there are complaints against the Chinese worshipping spirits which are perceived to be of Malay identity? This actually reflects the ethnic tension. Religion is increasingly mobilized as a principle in ethnic competition and communal nationalism. In the process of rationalization, some Muslims seek to strive for a "purer" version of Islam. There is therefore criticism of those Malays who still visit shrines of guardian spirits (*keramat*). In the context of the national culture controversy, the attack on unIslamic practices is extended to the non-Muslims who worship Malay *keramat* and the Chinese *Nadugong*. Islamic revival in Malaysia is very much linked to the question of ethnic identity and national identity. In a situation of increasing ethnic competition and consequently increasing stress on ethnic identity, the non-Muslims also express the tension in some form of religious revivalism. Among the Chinese worshippers, the traditional form of religious expression in the context of conflict is the growth of religious sects. The stress on religion is also shown by the increasing scale of religious celebration (eg. Wesak celebration) among the non-Muslims.

The mobilization of religion in ethnic conflict could be highly explosive if it is not checked, because religion is emotionally charged with supernatural legitimization and if ethnic tension is expressed in religious forms, it can easily lead to violence. Now that religion is beginning to be an issue in ethnic tension in Malaysia, it is the concern of all Malaysians to see that the present ethnic tension does not further develop into inter-religious conflict. Communalism cannot be morally justified, but religious violence can often find legitimization in the defence of religion. This is why religious conflict is even more dangerous.

In the above analysis, I have touched on the economic, political, cultural and religious factors. I should like to say more about the psychological component of ethnic relations. The psychological component arising out of the contradictions in ethnic relations is crucial to our understanding of ethnic tension and the outbreak of racial riots. I have already mentioned that this psychological aspect is crucial to the development of communal nationalism. The security factor plays an important role in inter-ethnic relations and in fact is often used as an excuse for legitimizing communalism. It must be understood that the presence of a large number of non-Malays must have a

tremendous psychological effect on the Malays who wish to retain the Malay identity of the new nation.

For the non-Malay elites, and I shall use the example of the Chinese, the major concern has been economic security, although this seems paradoxical as the Chinese have been seen as economically dominant. In fact the modern patterns of Malay-Chinese relations can be traced to the 1920's and 1930's when faced with growing Malay nationalism, the British introduced a number of supposedly pro-Malay policies to help the Malays. This caused uneasiness among the non-Malays. The introduction of the decentralization policy which in theory gave more power to the state council (in practice to the State British Resident) alarmed the non-Malays, especially the Straits Chinese elite. News reports of this period, especially the Straits Chinese newspaper *Malacca Guardian*, contained many criticisms against the policy.

The underlying fear was actually the economic security of the Straits Chinese elite. Tan Cheng Lock expressed this feeling to Sir Samuel Wilson (Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office). According to him:

A powerful State Council dominated by the Malays and a pro-Malay British Resident may, for instance, shape the land, educational and other policies of the state, should it have control over them, to the detriment of the non-Malay inhabitants therein.²⁶

Thus psychologically the Malays feel insecure with regard to the economic dominance of the Chinese business class. At the same time the Chinese feel insecure about the political dominance of the Malay elite. This provides the basis of communalism in Malaysia. The largely communal approach to national economic and ethnic problems of the governments since independence certainly perpetuates this psychology.

The security factor based on real or imagined grounds provides the psychological condition for the outbreak of racial riots when tension is released in the form of violence against individuals of the other ethnic group. It is not so much an attack on a particular individual as an attack on the unseen "group", the individuals attacked being seen to belong to the group.

As we have seen, there are various factors which can explain the outbreak of racial riots in Johor (especially Batu Pahat) in 1945-46. Nevertheless a very crucial factor was the intense insecurity felt by the Malays with regards to the Chinese, especially the Malayan Communist Party which had an army that could attempt to take over post-war Malaya. Similarly, there were various factors which led to the outbreak of the 1969 racial riots, and various books and articles on it have been published. The economic and political factors discussed above are of course crucial. One must also note that the insecurity of a section of Malay population caused by the success of the non-Malay-based opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) in Selangor had already resulted in a rather tense situation. There was already the psychological condition for unrest. The celebration of the non-Malays in Kuala Lumpur provided the provocation for violence.

What I am trying to say is that there is always a psychological condition which makes a racial riot possible. The psychological condition due to feelings of insecurity based on real or imagined grounds is built up to a point when a slight provocation can lead to violence. The underlying tension in Malaysian society is that both the Malays and the non-Malays (mainly Chinese and Indians) do not feel secure. The 1969 racial riots have added to that insecurity. In Kuala Lumpur when there is a slight sign or rumour of trouble, as in the recent case of the arrest of a prominent Malay politician on corruption charges, the people begin to store food.²⁷ The psychological condition is such that it is highly likely that a few Malays and Chinese can easily start a riot by throwing stones at each other and shouting ethnic abuses. Outwardly Malaysian society is a model of ethnic harmony, but the underlying structure of the society is tense.

Conclusion

The discussion above shows that in the study of ethnic relations in Malaysia in a historical context, there are two major structural principles which shape the form of ethnic relations, namely socio-economic competition (and the psychological component linked to it) and communal nationalism. This is most evident in Malay-Chinese relations. The elite class of Malays are most concerned with the economic power of the Chinese business class. This concern is transformed by them into the concern of the Malay masses, and class is fused with "race", hence the stereotype that the Chinese as a category is well-off and economically dominant. Pro-Malay policies are adopted as a form of positive discrimination to improve the economic position of the Malays. In actual fact the so-called special rights and Malay quotas largely benefit the middle and upper classes of Malays and enlarge as well as consolidate the elite class. The Malay poor remains largely poor and so the economic basis of race relations is never corrected. The business class of Chinese feels insecure because of what it sees as the pro-Malay policies. Its grievances are presented to the Chinese at large as the threat to Chinese economic security as a whole. Since the quota system affects all people irrespective of class, it is not difficult for the Chinese masses to be convinced of their insecurity.

As for communal nationalism, the elite classes of Malays, certainly supported by the Malay masses, are concerned with preserving the Malay identity of the new nation. This thinking guides their push for language and cultural policies. On the Chinese side, the push for Malayness is seen as threatening their ethnic identity and cultural interests. This encourages them to develop some kind of Chinese communal nationalism in campaigning for Chinese unity, strengthening Chinese culture, and pushing their ideal of a multi-ethnic nation in which Chinese identity and Chinese culture can be securely preserved. On both Malay and Chinese sides, there are extreme views; hence there is much room for conflict and politicking. Obviously both communal nationalism and social-economic competition contribute much to communal politics which in turn increases ethnic tension and further promotes communal nationalism. These developments shape the thinking of Malaysians which has become rather communal in outlook.

The analysis of ethnic relations here is at the general level. Not all groups develop a noticeable degree of communal nationalism in response to ethnic competition and Malay communal nationalism. The Orang Asli, for example, being such a heterogeneous but small minority, have not been able to assert themselves politically. However, the intensification of communal politics is bound to increase communal nationalism in the country. This is especially so with the indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak. Nationally the Kadazan and the Iban are minorities but in their own states they are the largest ethnic categories. The increasing political consciousness among them is bound to cultivate communalism in response to the larger communal environment, especially Malay communal nationalism in these states where Malays do not form the majority people. Indeed recent events in Sabah have shown the rise of Kadazan communal nationalism. Similarly the increasing political consciousness of the Iban in Sarawak points to this new development too.

Is there no alternative to the communal nature of nation building? The persistence of the approach of the Malay elite in UMNO with their version of "nationalism" will only enhance communalism. At present, PAS presents the only other politically influential approach. It criticizes nationalism and offers equality for all ethnic groups as laid down by Islam. Yet its insistence on an Islamic state is disliked and distrusted by non-Muslims while a big section of the Malay elite and middle-class are worried too about having an Islamic state. PAS has not been able to offer an economic programme under the proposed new state, and cannot explain whether as well as how the non-Muslims can participate in the political process. Overall there is a concern of the further restriction on democracy due to a dogmatic and conservative interpretation of Islam, as indicated in PAS's present view on women's participation in public.

Furthermore the appeal of PAS Islamic ideology is linked to what I call communal nationalism, despite PAS' criticism of UMNO's nationalism. Islam is crucial to Malay identity which is best preserved in an Islamic state, i.e., in other words the support of Malays for PAS must be seen in the light of Malay identity and the search for an alternative to the UMNO version of communal nationalism and socio-economic development but an alternative which will ensure the dominant identity of the Malays. We must also not forget that the increasing support of PAS is very much linked to Malay poverty and unhappiness over their socio-economic conditions. It is thus unlikely that communalism will be eradicated under the Islamic state of PAS. In fact if the elite are conservative and autocratic, this may be worse. We should note too that the root of ethnic tension does not rest with religious ideology, but the socio-economic structure.

It seems to me that the only realistic but difficult approach is the non-communal approach. In the development of the multi-ethnic society, plurality should be recognised and so the approach is to enhance unity within plurality. While accepting plurality and following the principle of freedom of belief and practising one's culture, it is necessary to view this in the historical context of the evolving Malay society.²⁸ In other words the new state must incorporate a certain identity that has been the historical development of the land. This is

difficult but the attainment of Malay as the national language is in the right and in fact the only realistic direction. Malay has been the language and lingua franca of the peninsular. Even the diverse groups of people in Sabah and Sarawak use some form of Malay as a lingua franca. Thus Malay language is the common cultural link of all ethnic groups in Malaysia and it represents the "unity in diversity". It should continue to be promoted as the underlying unifying structure of the nation. It defines the identity of the nation and at the same time it fulfills certain historical-psychological needs of the Malays in terms of their sense of identity in a land which has been within the Malay sphere or polity.

The promotion of the language should be developed to the extent that not only can all Malaysians speak and write the language but also to the extent that it becomes accepted as one of the in-group languages of the non-Malays. In other words, Malay should be accepted as a language of communication among the Chinese just like English has been used as a medium of communication among the middle-class Chinese. As for studying non-Malay languages, the teaching of mother tongues should be provided in all schools. Other than the Malay language, it is not realistic for the communal nationalists to push other aspects of Malay culture into the realm of national culture which encompasses all ethnic groups.

In fact the development and use of Malay by all ethnic groups will define the national identity and in the process, certain of the Malay elements may be incorporated into the non-Malay population. For example, songs, drama and literature which is expressed through the language can in time come to be incorporated. In this way national culture will have its Malay identity and at the same time become Malaysian in that the non-Malay elements will be incorporated too, since a large number of the people who use Malay are themselves non-Malays. What I have just said is one possible approach which will help to reduce ethnic tension and make nation-building possible. Total Malay communal nationalism and total non-Malay communal nationalism (i.e. total rejection of the Malay model) will not work. There is of course the need to reduce communal politics, but this is a thorny problem. The contradiction in ethnic relations gives rise to communal politics, but communal politics enhances those contradictions. If we study the history of the development of political parties in Malaysia, it has been a history in which non-communal political parties found it difficult to survive. Even the supposedly non-communal parties today are ethnically based. Politicians recognize the seriousness of communal politics and yet to go non-communal will mean losing political support. It is a vicious circle.

In this context, the non-governmental organizations (NGO) are very important. It is the non-partisan NGOs which can cultivate the non-communal approach and influence public opinion. They can play the job of conscientization and of raising consciousness on the need and possibility of a non-communal approach. They should analyze for the people the communal fictions that have been presented to the public. Hopefully this will eventually lead to a change in public thinking and the approach of genuinely non-communal political parties.

The NGOs together with concerned citizens have to play the crucial role of preserving and promoting democracy. This has great significance in ethnic relations for the loss of democracy will not only mean the increase in oppression of the people, it can also lead to oppression and conflict along ethnic lines. Indeed an oppressive regime can, through its propaganda, ensure that class contradiction is channelled into the ethnic arena. Fortunately for Malaysia, there have been many people of different ethnic backgrounds who are non-communal, concerned with justice and are willing to speak out. The hope of a non-communal Malaysia lies with this minority.

Obviously it is necessary to bring about socio-economic reform to eradicate communal tension. One of the areas that needs urgent attention is the eradication of poverty. I have shown that poverty is an important underlying cause of ethnic tension due to the fictive association of class with race. As the dominant fiction has been that Malays are poor and Chinese are well-off, it is especially important to eradicate poverty in the rural areas where the majority of the Malays live. Of course one should be concerned with urban poverty too, but it is necessary to single out rural poverty for special notice because of its significance on the Malay-Chinese stereotypes.

In bringing about economic reforms with emphasis on increasing the welfare of the poor, highly capitalist development is undesirable. This calls for re-examining the present socio-economic policies. At the same time rural-based light industries are more important than heavy industries or those that do not allow the development of the rural resources, since Malaysia is basically an agrarian society.

If the government is sincere in doing something to reduce ethnic tension and communal thinking, an immediate task is to adopt a non-communal approach in socio-economic planning. Primary emphasis should be given to not modernization projects in the urban areas, but solving poverty, especially rural poverty. While the quota system is beneficial to the elite, by and large it does not solve Malay poverty, while actually increasing ethnic tension and enhancing misleading ethnic stereotypes. All policies which distinguish people by "race" should be abolished, including the need to specify "race" in application forms. While it is a fact that Malays are *bumiputera*, its use in government policies can only be seen as part of a racial ideology which serves to divide the people. Such an ideology should be abolished, and this call certainly does not deny that Malays are indigenous to the land. Historical fact should be distinguished from ideology.

The eradication of ethnic problems in Malaysia is a long-term process, involving the reform of the socio-economic and political structure, institutions as well as the cognitive structure (thinking) of the individuals. Since the ruling elite is unlikely to make substantial political and economic reforms, it is left to NGOs and concerned individuals to exert their influence in fighting for a more democratic, just and non-communal society. The reduction of ethnic tension is part and parcel of nation-building in Malaysia.

NOTES

¹ See *1980 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia: General Report of the Population Census* Vol. 1, Kuala Lumpur, Department of Statistics Malaysia, 1983, p. 13.

² Roger Kershaw, "Native but not Bumiputera: Crisis and Complexity in the Political Status of the Kelantan Thais after Independence", *Contributions to Southeast Asian Ethnography*, No. 3, December, 1984: 46-71.

³ When a Portuguese Eurasian reader in Melaka read of the eligibility of Malaysians of Thai descent to participate in ASN, he wrote to a newspaper to inquire if Malaysians of Portuguese descent, who have a history of five centuries of settlement in Melaka, are eligible to participate in ASN. The official reply was that they were not eligible to participate in the scheme. See "The Portuguese Community and the ASN", *New Straits Times*, 6 August, 1983, p. 19.

⁴ See *General Report of the Population Census*, 1982, p. 18.

⁵ See *1970 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia: Community Groups*, Kuala Lumpur, Dept. of Statistics Malaysia, p. 46.

⁶ According to the 1980 Census, the Muslims in Sabah comprise 51.3% of the state's population.

⁷ After the PBS victory, the new state government was besieged with problems, mainly due to the lack of support from the federal government. The Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir, avoided giving public endorsement of the Christian Kadazan Chief Minister, Datuk Pairin Kitingan, while a few UMNO leaders came out to support the allegations of a few defeated Muslim leaders in Sabah that the newly elected government was communal and acted against the interests of Malays and Muslims. There were also a few cases of un-explained fires and bombing in Sabah. Meanwhile the Kadazan Chief Minister was challenged in court by Tun Mustapha, President of the United Sabah National Organization (USNO), who managed to get the Governor to swear him in as Chief Minister, although his party did not get the majority votes. Later, the Governor declared that the ceremony was forced on him and was in fact a fake, and he swore in Datuk Pairin of PBS, the majority leader. Eventually, Datuk Pairin decided to call a new election which was held in early May 1986 and PBS won convincingly mainly through the strong support of the Kadazan and the Chinese. What we should note in particular is that during the one-year crisis in Sabah, religion and ethnicity were used to create ethnic tensions between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. For analyses on the Sabah crisis, see *Aliran Monthly*, issue June/July 1985 and issue April/May 1986. For detailed reports, see the newspapers, *Asia Week* and *Far Eastern Economic Review* of this period.

⁸ W.F. Wertheim, *East-West Parallels: Sociological Approaches to Modern Asia*, The Hague, W. Van Hoeve, 1964, p. 76.

⁹ "Malay" here should be read as "Malay" of the Malay archipelago.

¹⁰ See T. Braddell, "Notes of a Trip to the Interior from Malacca", *The Journal of The Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, Vol. 7, 1853, pp. 75-76. According to Braddell, the "Cassang Tin Mines" had been worked by the Malays until the year 1844 when Chinese miners began to mine there. In 1851, the Malays "came down in large bodies from Rumbow and Johole and committed depredations to such an extent as to interfere materially with the workings of the miners".

¹¹ For a good discussion of elite stratum and upward mobility, see the comparative study of Thailand and Java by G. William Skinner in "Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java", *Journal of South Seas Society* 16 (1 & 2), 1960, pp. 86-100.

¹² Khoo Kay Kim, "Sino-Malay Relations in Peninsular Malaysia before 1942", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XII (1), March 1981, p. 97.

¹³ See Kenelm D.C. Burridge, "Racial Relations in Johor", *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2(2): 151-168; and Cheah Boon Kheng, "Sino-Malay Conflicts in Malaya, 1945-1946: Communist Vendetta and Islamic Resistance", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XII (1), March 1981, 108-117.

¹⁴ cf. Cheah Boon Kheng, *ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁵ There are a number of works on the 1969 racial riots, see, for instance, John Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy*, London, John Murray, 1969; Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13 -- Before and After*, Kuala Lumpur, Utusan Melayu Press, 1969; Anthony Reid, "The Kuala Lumpur Riots and the Malaysian Political System", *Australian Outlook* 23 (3), 1969, pp. 258-278; Felix V. Gagliano, *Communal Violence in Malaysia 1969: The Political Aftermath*, Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia 13, Ohio Center for International Studies Southeast Asia Program, Athens, Ohio, 1970; Goh Cheng Teik, *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, and others.

¹⁶ Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, Kuala Lumpur, 1971, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ For a critique of the NEP, see Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975: A Critique*, Occasional Paper No. 15, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1972, Professor Syed Hussein Alatas argues very strongly against the attempt of the government to create by government funds a group of Malay capitalists "whose interests are not the interests of the poor fishermen ... the poor peasants ..." (p.11).

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983, p. 15.

²⁰ The compulsory requirement of a pass in Malay in government examinations for promotion in school and for admission to local universities and civil service has caused the non-Malays to take the Malay language seriously.

²¹ Judith Strauch applied the idea of encapsulation very well in her *Chinese Village Politics in the Malaysian State*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981.

²² This is essentially Chinese communalism linked to the Chinese Malaysians' ideal of Malaysian nation, of the 'imagined community'. The different imagination of Malays and Chinese with regards to nation-building is a major underlying cause of ethnic conflict and tension between the two major communities in Malaysia.

²³ This refers to the period prior to the national election which was held on 3 August 1986. However, in the election the National Front (Barisan Nasional) won 148 parliamentary seats, DAP 24, Independents 4 and PAS 1 only. The election shows that the Malay by and large continued to support UMNO while the urban Chinese and Indians rejected MCA and Gerakan for the DAP. There are many reasons for the PAS failure to do well. Obviously its attempt to woo Chinese votes had backfired. UMNO capitalized on this as well as the formation of the Pas-led Opposition Front and told the Malays that PAS would sell out Malay and Muslim interests. At the same time obviously few Chinese had voted for PAS because of its ideology of an Islamic state. In actual fact in Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis, PAS did not do so badly in terms of votes polled as it obtained over 30% of the votes in these states. For example in Kelantan, PAS obtained 45.8% of the votes in contrast to 55.6% won by UMNO. For analyses on the 1986 election, see Chandra Muzaffar, "The Barisan's 2/3 Majority: Why the Opposition Failed", *Aliran Monthly*, 6 (8), August/September, 1986, pp. 2-6 and Tan Chee Beng "The 1986 Election and Ethnic Relations", *Aliran Monthly*, 6 (9), September/October, 1986, pp. 2-3.

²⁴ The Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hindunism and Sikhism which was launched in 1984 provides a platform for such cooperation.

²⁵ See for example, the comments of Tan Sri Dr. Tan Chee Khoon in his paper, "Constitutional Provisions for Religious Freedom in Malaysia," in *Contemporary Issues On Malaysia Religious*, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *et. al.*, Petaling Jaya, Pelanduk Publications, 1984, pp. 32-33.

²⁶ See "Why the Chinese are Perturbed: Present Policy in Malaya: a Memorial Written by Tan Cheng Lock", *Malacca Guardian*, 2 January, 1933.

²⁷ During the campaign period of the recent General Election held on 3 August 1986, there were rumours that there would be trouble in Kuala Lumpur. In the few days before the election, many

people of all ethnic groups in Kuala Lumpur bought extra food items to store just in case there was a racial riot. Added to the tension were the warnings of some government leaders that a racial riot might occur if people voted for the opposition. For a comment on this, see my paper, "The 1986 Election and Ethnic Relations", *Aliran Monthly*, 6 (9), September/October 1986, p. 1-4.

²⁸ The question of history became a big controversy in early November 1986 when on 2 November the Selangor MCA adopted a resolution which urged the government to review the 1948 Sedition Act to make it an offence to call any of the three major ethnic groups in the country *pendatang* ("immigrants"). This call was in response to certain UMNO leaders calling the Chinese and Indian citizens *pendatang*. Unfortunately the preamble to the resolution mentioned that the three major ethnic groups originated from other countries and so none of them should brand the other as immigrants. This caused anger among the Malays, and the UMNO Youth Wing even asked the Selangor MCA Chief to resign from his Cabinet post. Eventually MCA withdrew its resolution at the Cabinet meeting on 12 November, while the Cabinet agreed that it was not proper to label non-Malay Malaysians as *pendatang asing* or "foreign immigrants". (See eg. *The Star*, 13 November 1986, p. 1.) During the period of this controversy, there were rumours of possible racial riots in Kuala Lumpur - another example of my comment on the psychology of insecurity in the capital city.