

SABAH AND SARAWAK IN MALAYSIA: THE REAL BARGAIN, OR WHAT HAVE THEY GOTTEN THEMSELVES INTO?*

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Walaupun Sabah dan Sarawak diberikan peruntukan kuasa yang lebih berbanding dengan negeri-negeri Semenanjung sewaktu Malaysia ditubuhkan, namun kerajaan pusat telah berjaya melaksanakan kawalan ke atas kerajaan negeri, menyekat perkembangan politik yang tidak diinginya, dan mewujudkan pola kehidupan politik di Sabah dan Sarawak yang serupa dengan di Semenanjung Malaysia. Dengan menggunakan pengalaman federalisme di Malaya sebagai latarbelakang, rencana ini meneliti proses dan strategi yang digunakan oleh parti pemerintah di peringkat pusat untuk mencapai kawalan terhadap Sabah dan Sarawak dan sebab-sebab kejayaannya. Hujah bahawa perbezaan etnik menyokong otonomi negeri diteliti semula dengan membandingkan Sabah dan Sarawak dengan negeri Kelantan, yang biasanya telah berjaya mengelakkan cengkaman parti kerajaan pusat. Rencana ini selanjutnya meneliti implikasi kawalan parti kerajaan pusat ke atas otonomi kerajaan Sabah dan Sarawak berbanding dengan negeri-negeri lain. Perbandingan demikian menghasilkan satu tipologi untuk negeri-negeri di Malaysia dari segi bentuk dan darjah kawalan oleh parti yang memerintah di peringkat pusat. Ia juga menunjukkan bahawa kerajaan negeri Sabah dan Sarawak akan terus menikmati lebih otonomi daripada negeri-negeri lain di Persekutuan Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

In considering the position of Sabah and Sarawak in the Federation of Malaysia and the consequences of membership in the federation, a useful starting point is that these two states did not join the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 as founder-members but as new states admitted into the pre-existing Federation of Malaya consisting of eleven states in the Malay peninsular which gained independence from the British in 1957. While this view may still be contested by some in Sabah and Sarawak in favour of the position that Malaysia was formed by the

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coming together of the Federation of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore (which exited two years later in 1965), it serves to highlight the fact that Sabah and Sarawak entered a federation which already had in place a certain configuration of political forces that the new states had to come to terms with. For already existing in independent Malaya was a pattern of pan-Malayan ethnic politics, a highly centralized federal structure, and a Malay-dominated ruling group securely ensconced at the federal level through the primary instrument of a dominant and highly centralized political party or coalition of parties, which also held power in all but one of the eleven constituent states of the federation. This Malay-led ruling coalition initially consisted of three political parties, each representing one of the three main ethnic groups in Malaya; beginning from the early 1970s, however, it has expanded into the National Front, which most other political parties, including those occupying the seats of power in Sabah and Sarawak as well as in other states, have at one time or another felt compelled to become members.

The strength of the ruling coalitional party has both fostered and assisted the realization of the federal elites' goals of establishing a strong central government and a Malay-based national identity within the Federation of Malaya and subsequently also within the larger Federation of Malaysia. Indeed, the main theme of this essay is the unsurprising development that these "Malayan" forces have subsequently impacted importantly on the state political arenas in Sabah and Sarawak and shaped the relations of these two new member states with the federal government. Notwithstanding the formal provision of considerably greater autonomy and powers to Sabah and Sarawak at the point of entry compared to the original eleven Malayan states, the post-entry period has witnessed the substantial success of the federal ruling coalition in asserting its control over the governments of Sabah and Sarawak, circumscribing autonomous political expressions not to its liking in the two states and reproducing in them a pattern of political life similar to that prevailing in the Malayan states.

My purpose here is to examine the process and strategies of control by the federal ruling party, the reasons for its success in Sabah and Sarawak, and the implications thereof for state autonomy and for the political integration of Sabah and Sarawak within the federation generally. It is important, however, to begin with the earlier Federation of Malaya and its dominant political forces in order to provide the necessary backdrop for understanding the subsequent "adjustment" problems Sabah and Sarawak have experienced as members with a special status in what is essentially an expanded Federation of Malaya. This is followed by an account of the process by which the federal ruling party has extended its control over the Sabah and Sarawak state governments. The main

reasons for this success are then examined. It is instructive in this regard to compare the federal success in Sabah and Sarawak with the contrasting case of the peninsular Malayan state of Kelantan, the only state in the country which has consistently, even if not continuously, evaded the grasp of the federal ruling party. The implications of central party control for the autonomy of the state governments of Sabah and Sarawak, again in comparison with other states, are briefly explored before concluding.

MALAYAN FEDERALISM AS CONTEXT AND FOIL

The essence of federalism, or the "federal principle", according to Elazar (1968:361), is "the perpetuation of both union and noncentralization." "In a federal government," as Wheare (1993:3) explains, "there is a division of governmental functions between one authority, usually called the federal government, which has power to regulate certain matters for the whole territory, and a collection of authorities, usually called state governments, which has power to regulate certain other matters for the component parts of the territory." While theorists often suggest that the constitutional distribution of powers between federal and state governments should follow the guiding principle of subsidiarity, which states that "problems should be solved at the lowest level consistent with effective performance of the task" (Newcombe, 1993:10), in practice it is also subject to negotiation and agreement among the component or federating units. Federalism is thus tailor-made for reconciling the imperative of national unity in a country with the need to safeguard and cater for regional-local interests within it. The latter is especially compelling when different regions have different ethnic or cultural majorities at different levels of development in various fields, and those lagging behind in one way or another demand sufficient guarantees to ensure their share of the benefits, as well as sufficient powers and means to promote their own distinct interests, within the larger federation. In this simplified and idealized model of the relationship between federalism and multiculturalism, federalism is both necessitated and sustained by the territorial concentration of different groups in the different constituent parts or states of the federation.

To some extent, federalism in Malaysia may be seen to reflect elements of the "classic" model outlined above, in which devolution of powers to states serves the major function of accommodating the divergent interests among states characterized by distinctive populations with distinctive cultures. This is especially apparent if one focuses one's attention on the second stage of its development, or on the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963.

However, it is considerably less true of the Federation of Malaya formed by the eleven states in Malaya when they became independent of British rule in 1957. To be sure, the impact of the plural society remained highly important. The pattern of ethnic politics, that is to say, political mobilization and competition based upon the ethnic fault-lines of society, has had a powerful and continuing impact on the structure and functioning of federalism in the country. It even played a crucial part, historically, in ensuring federalism's survival in Malaya when the British attempted to do away with it after World War II. But the effect of the plural society on federalism in Malaya differs markedly from that postulated in the classic model. Far from supplying the perceived necessity for devolution and state autonomy, ethnic politics resulted, in the particular circumstances in Malaya, in a highly centralized form of federalism. Ethnicity has been a force for centralization rather than noncentralization of power in Malayan federalism.

The main factor making for federalism in Malaya was its historical division into states ruled by Malay sultans. These states were preserved by British colonial rule, which was formally established through treaties providing for a British "adviser" to the Malay ruler (in effect, indirect rule) in each state. Although commentators are fond of saying that this historical legacy made the adoption of federalism "natural" or "inevitable" in Malaya, despite its small size, the British in fact did not think so themselves and attempted to set up a unitary state in Malaya called the Malayan Union following their return after the War. It is impossible to know what the outcome of this Malayan Union would have been had the British proposed just this and no more, for in conjunction with the unitary state the British also proposed liberal citizenship laws which would have enabled the majority of non-Malays then resident in Malaya to qualify as citizens with similar political and other rights as the Malays. In the state of heightened ethnic tension in the country following the Japanese Occupation, these citizenship proposals caused widespread fear among the economically disadvantaged Malays and led to a massive mobilization of Malay opposition that sank the Malayan Union and its offending features. The Federation of Malaya was proclaimed in place of the Union in 1948. The separate identities of the Malay states and their Malay rulers were reinstated, as these were latched upon by the anti-Union Malay nationalist movement as symbols of Malay political sovereignty and precedence, which the Union scheme had allegedly tried to jettison. Thus was federalism shored up and saved at its moment of critical threat by its coalescence with Malay nationalism.

Still, the fact that neither the above Malay nor the subsequent non-Malay political expression coincided with state boundaries or focused on championing state rights remains the key to understanding the federal system erected at

independence. The utility of the Malay-ruler states as a ready and effective symbol of Malay sovereignty ensured their survival. But the political party that was formed to spearhead Malay opposition to the Malayan Union and to fight for Malay interests thereafter, namely the United Malays National Organization (in short UMNO), transcended narrow state loyalties and was pan-Malayan or national in scope and focus. The non-Malays, for whom state loyalty had little meaning in the first place, also did not find the state structure useful for defending their interests in the face of the UMNO-Malay challenge. Non-Malays, mainly Chinese and some Indians, then comprised almost half the total population, but they were unevenly spread out among the various states rather than concentrated in a single state or a few of them, forming a minority in all the Malayan states except Penang. The clearest geographical divide between Malays and Chinese was (and, to a lesser extent, still is) between rural and urban areas within established state boundaries. Thus the resulting counter-mobilization and the political parties - principally the Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association or MCA, and the Malayan (later Malaysian) Indian Congress or MIC - set up by the politically-minded non-Malays to safeguard their interests were similarly pan-Malayan in nature. Consequently, the ensuing interethnic political contest was waged on a pan-Malayan basis, with power at the federal level after the British departure as its main prize. This pattern of national ethnic politics, being the dominant, all-consuming mode of political conflict, conducted on a supra-state level, and focused on the struggle for control of the federal government as the primary instrument of ethnic protection and gratification, effectively relegated the question of federalism and of state rights to the background of Malayan politics (Carnell, 1961). Federalism, or its primary question of the federal-state balance of rights and powers, simply did not attract much attention or emotion during the process of ethnic political competition prior to independence and was distinctly a secondary concern during the formation of the independent country and its constitution.

Encouraged by their victories in local and state elections and eager to win independence from the British, the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance pressed for early federal elections and won an overwhelming victory in the first federal elections held in 1955. With the UMNO-led Alliance securely established at the federal level, and eager to receive the reins of power from the departing British, the dice was clearly loaded against the states in the ensuing federal-constitutional settlement. Concerned primarily with creating an effective federal government under their control, the founders of the country accorded little priority to endowing the states with wide powers and commensurate resources, and were ironically more than a little sympathetic to the British position behind

the Malayan Union that a small country like Malaya would be more efficiently run by centralizing power rather than dispersing it among a dozen or so smaller states. Indeed, this centralizing bias was perceived -- and feared -- by some quarters, such as the "Queen's Chinese" in Penang, the soon-to-be-diminished political elites in Kelantan and even the Sultan of Johore; their attempts at secession or staking a stronger bargaining position for the states, however, gathered no momentum and simply faded away (Sopiee, 1976: 56-90). Accordingly, the Reid Commission set up in 1956 to draft the constitution of the independent Federation of Malaya was required by its terms of reference to provide for "the establishment of a strong central government with states and settlements enjoying a measure of autonomy."

The product was a decidedly "top-heavy" federal system. The constitution divides the powers of government into federal, state and concurrent lists. The state list is considerably shorter than the federal list and the only important matters included in it are land (generally regarded as the states' most important power), local government and Islamic religious affairs. In fact, it is even open to a purist to insist that purely state powers as such do not exist, as all state powers are importantly qualified by constitutional grants of legislative power to the federal parliament, primarily for the purpose of ensuring uniformity across states. Furthermore, such federal legislation enjoys precedence over state legislation in cases of conflict or inconsistency. Federal laws on local government and most important matters relating to land do not even require adoption or passage by the state legislatures. The constitution also allows the federal government to legislate on all state matters, in effect to take over the government of a state, after a declaration of emergency -- by the titular head of the federation but in effect the federal government -- has been made. Most importantly, the allocation of revenue sources and control over financial matters, the "life blood" of government, is so skewed in favour of the centre that it practically guarantees the dependence of the states on the federal government for anything more than the barest housekeeping functions. If historical circumstances ensured the survival of federalism in Malaya, the architects of the constitution -- no doubt with the connivance of the departing British rulers and their Malayan heirs and erstwhile opponents of the Malayan Union -- sought to achieve within the federal framework a large measure of the virtues of dispatch, efficiency and uniformity associated with a unitary state.

The political expression of ethnicity, particularly the party system spawned by it, therefore produced a highly centralized federal system in Malaya, contrary to the "classic" relationship postulated for federalism and the plural society. It is important to note that the independence constitution also endowed the federal government with far-reaching powers within its own sphere of competence,

resulting in a highly centralized government with few effective checks on its powers at the federal level. This is essentially a reflection of Alliance leaders' emphasis on the need for effective government in the Malayan plural society and their equation of effective government with one that is minimally subject to institutional and other fetters on the exercise of its powers. Whatever their prior origins or relationship with local tradition, these beliefs could only have been encouraged by the fact that the Alliance leaders sit at the top of a dominant governing party at the federal level. While students of federalism have understandably focused on the vertical dimension of power, it would be surprising if this "horizontal" concentration of power would not also importantly condition the development of the vertical dimension of federalism in the country.

Post-independence Malaya also exhibited several related developments affecting or having implications for the practice of federalism. These developments, which represent the continuation, accentuation or elaboration of extant tendencies, were manifest even before the formation of Malaysia in 1963 and thus offer notable portents for the relations of Sabah and Sarawak with the federal government in the expanded federation. A brief account of these developments is useful for indicating continuity with the subsequent experience of Sabah and Sarawak, as well as for rendering the later comparisons of Sabah and Sarawak with the Malayan, states more comprehensible.

The party system has been identified by students of federalism as the most important factor affecting the actual operation of a federal system. Elazar (1968:359) states that "the existence of a noncentralized party system is perhaps the most important single element in the maintenance of federal noncentralization." He notes that in "formally federal nations dominated by one highly centralized party, ... the dominant party has operated to limit the power of the constituent polities in direct proportion to the extent of its dominance." The dominance of the Alliance within the Federation of Malaya was only slightly reduced in the first post-independence elections in 1959, when it lost the state government of Kelantan, and for a short period that of Trengganu as well, to the opposition Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP; later popularly known by its Malay acronym of PAS). An often overlooked but hardly less important development, however, is the increased centralization of power within the ruling Alliance: power has shifted markedly toward UMNO within the coalition following the unsuccessful challenge to its dominant position by the MCA in the so-called 1959 UMNO-MCA crisis (Means, 1976: 212-215); and within UMNO itself, it has been gathered into the hands of its top federal leaders as a result of the 1960 party constitution and subsequent amendments.

The 1960 UMNO constitution replaced the more autonomous and powerful state UMNO organizations with State Liaison Committees headed by persons appointed by the top party leadership; it also centralized disciplinary powers and control over the choice of candidates for federal and state elections within the party's top echelons (Funston, 1980:186; Ibrahim Mahmood, 1981: 758-760). These changes soon culminated in the striking requirement of the Prime Minister's approval in the selection of Chief Ministers and members of State Executive Councils in Alliance-controlled states after the 1964 elections (Groves, 1964:90).

The Alliance and later the National Front has not only remained politically dominant since independence but has also forged itself into an internally centralized party. The importance of this factor can hardly be over exaggerate. By simultaneously fostering, and enabling the realization of, the leadership's belief in strong and effective government, it has had a powerful influence on the course of federalism and national politics in the country –most notably in the direction of greater centralization of power, both toward executive dominance in the federal government (Lim, 1989) and from state to federal centre. To dwell a little on the more direct effects on federalism, the above centralization of power within the Alliance, particularly within UMNO, has effectively ensured the effective control over all Alliance-controlled state governments by the party's top leaders, and by the Prime Minister in particular. This has exerted a powerful influence, clearly in the direction of greater *de facto* centralization, on the actual operation of the already centralized formal federal framework, as well as produced further centralizing changes in the framework itself. Both these forms of federal aggrandizement Malaya and their continuance into Malaysia have been noted in the major works on Malaysian federalism (Simandjuntak, 1969; Tilman, 1976; Shafruddin, 1987). Party control also vitiated from the start the formal safeguard against detrimental amendments afforded to the states by the constitution. With a number of exceptions, amendments to the constitution require the consent of at least two-thirds of the members of both Houses of Parliament, and the constitution, following established practice, provides the states with representation (two members from each state) in the Senate or upper House sufficient to block amendments repugnant to their common interests. However, the so-called state representatives in reality owe their appointment and continuation in office to federal party leaders, and have thus far subordinated their role as state watchdogs to their role as representatives of the ruling party. In fact, beginning with the formation of Malaysia itself, the state representatives in the Senate had acquiesced in the diminution of the safeguard afforded them by the constitution, as the proportion of federally-appointed "non-state" members in the Senate has

been progressively increased by constitutional amendment (Lee, 1978:376-379).

No less important for the development of federalism (as well as democratic government generally) is the general attitude of the Alliance toward power and competition for power within the country. The Alliance response to the erosion of its popular support, especially after the 1959 and 1969 elections, clearly revealed its determination to retain government power -- especially the impressive powers of the federal government but also state power -- in its own hands. Even more ominous is the evident willingness on the part of the ruling Alliance to use its constitutional and political arsenal, including its two-thirds majority in parliament, to retain power and to stymie the opposition. The draconian emergency and preventive detention powers of the federal government under the constitution have been increased by constitutional amendments and repeatedly used to overcome political challenges and potential threats posed by opposition parties (Jayakumar, 1978; Lee, 1986; Means, 1991). The electoral advantage of the ruling coalition, especially that of UMNO, has been progressively increased by amendments to the electoral system (Lee and Ong, 1987; Rachagan, 1993). The Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1962 increased the permissible weightage in favour of rural and largely Malay electoral constituencies for both federal and state elections, and effectively transferred the final determination of constituency delimitation from the more independent Election Commission to the government of the day, prompting a leading scholar of the Malayan constitution to warn stridently of the "manifest" Alliance temptation to manipulate electoral constituencies for partisan advantage (Groves, 1962:329). The constitutional limits to rural weightage, relaxed in 1962, were completely removed by the Constitution (Amendment) (No. 2) Act of 1973. The Act also made the Kuala Lumpur area into a Federal Territory and thus effectively removed the threat, clearly manifested in the 1969 elections, posed by its non-Malay population to the coalition's or UMNO's control of the state government of Selangor (ISA, 1974). As part of the post-1969 "restructuring" of the political system, several sensitive issues were also removed from political contestation by the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1971 and amendments to the Sedition Act. Although these limitations on freedom of speech are more readily defensible on public security grounds than can the changes made to the electoral system, they also have the effect of disadvantaging the opposition parties in competing against the ruling party.

Direct evidence of the federal government's attitude toward an opposition-controlled state government is provided by the experience of Kelantan.

Relations between the federal government and the lone opposition-controlled state of Kelantan before as well as after the formation of Malaysia (see generally Milne and Mauzy, 1978:107-111; Funston, 1980: 56-60), have evidenced more than the clash of conflicting partisan interests normally to be expected in such situations. The federal government's hostility and non-cooperation toward the PAS state government and the unabashed use of development programmes and funds for partisan political ends in a federation of financially-dependent states certainly do not augur well for the performance capacity and well-being of other opposition state governments that may be formed in the larger Malaysian federation.

The "coercive" effects of the above-mentioned federal attitude and actions played no small part in the success of the Alliance recovery plan after its worst ever electoral showing in the elections of 1969. On that occasion, the Alliance was again defeated by PAS in Kelantan. It also lost the Chinese-majority state of Penang to the Gerakan (the popular Malay name for the nominally multi-racial but Chinese-based Malaysian People's Movement), and came close to losing Perak and Selangor, two other west coast states with large urban Chinese concentrations. The outbreak of racial riots in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city, led to a period of emergency rule and the suspension of parliamentary democracy. Parliamentary democracy was restored in 1971, but only after the passage of the earlier-noted Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1971 had effected important changes in the rules of political competition favouring the Alliance. This was followed in 1973 by further changes to the electoral system by the self-dealing Alliance. It was from this engineered position of strength that the Alliance then sought to strengthen its hold on the centre and extend its control over the opposition-controlled states of Kelantan and Penang by co-opting opposition parties into an expanded UMNO-dominated coalition called the National Front. Mindful of the increasingly difficult environment facing opposition parties, both PAS and Gerakan, though not without considerable internal dissension, became members of the National Front. In the past, PAS had succeeded in appealing to Malay voters on the basis of its Malay-chauvinist and Islamic religious platform, and PAS supporters in Kelantan had been willing to pay the price of lower receipts of discretionary development funds and projects from the Alliance federal government. Feeling itself disadvantaged by the changes in political rules which removed certain "sensitive" issues from political contestation, PAS leaders were persuaded that their position in Kelantan would be better assured by joining the National Front. As for Gerakan, its non-Malay leaders realized the power of the centre and its control over needed development resources, and were anxious to avoid the "Kelantan" treatment from the increasingly assertive and Malay-inclined federal

government. They too found it expedient to join up in the post-1969 atmosphere of heightened ethnic tensions.

Unlike Gerakan, whose mainly Chinese political base in Penang has so far been sufficiently acknowledged and which has remained within the National Front, PAS went through a bad patch within the dominant coalition and finally left it in 1977, largely because of the continuing UMNO-PAS rivalry and their competition for the Malay vote in Kelantan. The appointment in 1974 of the PAS Chief Minister of Kelantan by the National Front leader and Prime Minister went against the wishes of party leaders and precipitated a severe split in PAS. The refusal by the federally-supported Chief Minister to resign following a vote of no confidence against him in the state legislature in 1977 resulted in some disturbances that led to a declaration of emergency and the imposition of federal rule in the state. In the March 1978 state elections held almost immediately after the lifting of the emergency, PAS was routed by the team of UMNO and a new party formed by the incumbent Chief Minister, which effectively split what would have been the PAS vote. PAS only found its feet years later when a new leadership tried to mold it into a fundamentalist Islamic party. Playing down ethnic distinctions and appeals (including the special position and privileges of the Malays) in the name of a purer Islam, however, has not enabled PAS to regain its former electoral appeal, or even to carve out a secure niche for itself, as UMNO has also worked hard to burnish its Islamic image. Nevertheless, in the 1990 elections the party managed to regain control of the Kelantan government, albeit in coalition with Semangat '46 (The Spirit of '46), a party formed by a splinter group from UMNO. The last elections in 1995 saw a better performance by the National Front, but the PAS-Semangat coalition retained control of Kelantan. At the time of writing, however, Semangat had been dissolved and its leaders and members rejoined UMNO. Kelantan is now ruled by PAS alone. Only time will tell whether PAS can still garner enough support among Kelantan voters to maintain Kelantan as the singular exception to National Front rule.

MALAYSIA: ETHNIC BALANCING AND A LOOSER FEDERATION

Singapore is a predominantly Chinese island off the southern tip of the Malay peninsula and it was left out of the Federation of Malaya in 1957 in order to maintain a Malay population majority and thus ensure Malay political control within the federation. The Federation of Malaysia was formed when Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Malayan Prime Minister, became convinced that Singapore was coming under increasing communist influence and had to be

brought into the federation to prevent it from becoming a threat to Malaya's security. Taking in Singapore alone, however, would produce an overall Chinese majority and this was simply unacceptable to the Malay leaders and the Malays of the Federation. Thus it was proposed that the then British-controlled territories in Borneo, i.e. Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei, be also invited to join the new federation. In point of fact, both Sabah and Sarawak have very mixed populations in which no single ethnic group forms a majority. Both Malays and Chinese are minorities and outnumbered by "native" groups, of which the largest is the Dayaks in Sarawak and the Kadazans in Sabah. However, the peninsular Malay leaders apparently thought that the other native peoples, besides the Malays in Sabah and Sarawak would naturally side with the Malays politically and help keep the Chinese in check in the Federation of Malaysia. The composition of the Federation of Malaysia is therefore determined by ethnic political considerations. The fundamental objective of the dominant Malay party, UMNO is to ensure an ethnic population balance, or more precisely imbalance, that would maintain the predominant position of the Malays within the new federation.

The considerable differences in the ethnic composition of the new member states, as well as marked disparities in levels of development, also resulted in a looser and more variegated form of federation compared to the Federation of Malaya. It was generally agreed by the leaders of the various territories that it would be impractical to admit the new member states on similar terms or on terms identical to those for the Malayan states. During the process of negotiating mutually acceptable terms, the constitution of the Federation of Malaya was used as a point of departure (and therefore implicitly accepted as the basis for the new federation) and attention was focused on the exemptions, variations and concessions that would be appropriate to make for each of the new states. Those finally settled upon differed markedly between Singapore, on the one hand, and Sabah and Sarawak, on the other.

The need for a greater measure of autonomy for the more developed and predominantly Chinese Singapore was acknowledged, and this was provided for by transferring a number of matters on the federal list to the state and concurrent lists of governmental powers so far as Singapore was concerned. Those placed under the state list for Singapore were education, labour and health, while those moved to the concurrent list include elections in Singapore, banking, insurance and shipping. Singapore also retained a large proportion of its revenue and was exempted from federal control in various financial matters. The terms for Singapore's entry reflected the desire of the Malayan leaders to limit the political role and impact of Singapore within the new federation. Ostensibly as *quid pro quo* for its more extensive powers over its internal

affairs, Singapore was allocated a much smaller number of seats (i.e. 15 compared to 104 for Malaya) in the federal parliament than it would be entitled to on a proportional-to-population basis (about 25). All citizens share a common Malaysian citizenship. However, to prevent the Chinese from Singapore from upsetting the ethnic political balance in Malaya, a distinction was made between Singapore citizens and other Malaysian citizens for electoral purposes, and the participation of Singapore citizens in elections, whether as candidates or voters, was confined to Singapore itself. In return, other citizens of the federation were denied electoral rights in Singapore.

The terms of entry for Sabah and Sarawak were much more generous than those for Singapore and met all the major demands of the Borneo states. The native populations of these two states were needed to offset Singapore's Chinese but even the more numerous non-Muslim natives in these states were initially hostile to the Malaysia proposal and so generous terms were felt to be necessary to win over all the native groups. The special position and privileges as "bumiputras" accorded the Malays in Malaya were extended to all native groups in Sabah and Sarawak. As a concession to the non-Muslim natives, Islam was not made the state religion in Sabah and Sarawak and the Head of State for each of these two states was made open to members of all communities and thus not confined to Malays or Muslims. Malay was accepted as the national language but English would remain an official language for ten years after the formation of Malaysia and any changes to its official use thereafter can only be made by the legislature of the state concerned. To assuage their fears that they would be swamped by citizens from Malaya and Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak were given the unusual power of control over immigration into their respective territories. They were also given additional sources of revenue as well as special development grants. All these special concessions and additional powers for Sabah and Sarawak were not accompanied, as in the package for Singapore, by a reduction in their representation in the federal parliament. On the contrary, their demands for additional representation at the federal level on account of their larger area and potential were also acceded to by Malayan leaders. With 16 and 24 federal parliamentary seats respectively, Sabah and Sarawak were thus given "more than double the Singapore representation, though both of them together contribute less to the total population, trade, and revenue of Malaysia than Singapore" (Sadka, 1963:56-57). In addition, any reduction in this favourable proportion of seats in the federal parliament for Sabah and Sarawak within the first seven years of the federation's existence would require the concurrence of the government of the state concerned.

It is widely recognized that Malaysia is by necessity and design a looser form of federation than that formed by the eleven Malayan states and that the main beneficiaries of the difference are the states of Sabah and Sarawak. In contrast to the Malayan experience, ethnicity and territorially-based ethnic differences appear to have produced the commonly supposed effect of a greater dispersion or noncentralization of power in the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. Ethnic political considerations, which were paramount in determining the membership of the new federation, also played an important role in shaping the terms of membership for each of the new member states. The new member states, each in its own way, were (and are) ethnically different or distinct from the Federation of Malaya and the terms of entry undoubtedly gave them considerably more powers over their own affairs compared to their Malayan counterparts. This evaluation is little affected by Singapore's separation in 1965. Singapore was asked to leave the Federation of Malaysia after its leaders refused to be politically confined to their own island and tried to forge new political alignments, first in Malaya and then in Malaysia as a whole, that threatened the comfortable political *status quo* of the Malayan leaders. Sabah and Sarawak leaders protested that they were not consulted by the Malayan leaders and probably also felt their bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the latter somewhat weakened by Singapore's departure from the federation. Their suggestion that the terms of federation should be reexamined however, was simply ignored by the federal government. Still, compared to the other eleven states, there can be no doubt of the "most favoured state" status of Sabah and Sarawak, whether in the presently thirteen-state or the originally fourteen-state Federation of Malaysia.

Nevertheless, it is important not to lose sight of the larger picture of a still highly centralized federation. Crucial for the purpose of understanding federalism in Malaysia generally and federal-state relations with respect to Sabah and Sarawak in particular is the fact that these two states were, in effect, grafted onto the existing highly centralized Federation of Malaya, whose ruling political party and leaders will not only continue to dominate in the larger Federation of Malaysia but, as argued in the preceding section, also rank high in the penchant for centralizing control and in the command of the wherewithal to do so. The manner in which this ruling federal party has since acted to secure effective control of the state governments of Sabah and Sarawak -- the subject of the next section -- represents the single most important political dynamic affecting the development and future of federalism, and the place of Sabah and Sarawak, in the Federation of Malaysia.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FEDERAL CONTROL OVER SABAH AND SARAWAK

The federal ruling coalition (which since 1974 has been expanded from its original three members to include, or absorb, the majority of Malaysian parties, including those in Sabah and Sarawak) has played an active role in the politics of Sabah and Sarawak from the very inception of Malaysia, initially for ensuring the triumph of pro-Malaysia political forces and subsequently for ensuring that the governments of the two states remain in the hands of parties that are acceptable or friendly to it, and are members of the UMNO-led National Front. Because of the different conditions obtaining in Sabah and Sarawak, and the strength of state-centred sentiments in these two states, the federal ruling coalition, until only recently, refrained from spreading their operations directly to these two states and engaging in a direct contest for state power. The federal ruling coalition, most importantly UMNO, was content with exercising "indirect rule" through local intermediaries, primarily by forging for itself the role of "kingmaker" in the internal politics of the two states. This entailed the deliberate use of its weight and resources to alter the balance of state-level political forces and install in the state governments friendly and dependent parties which would be sensitive and responsive to federal wishes. The federal government has sought to ensure the states' compliance needed for the continued success of this strategy by clear and repeated demonstrations of federal power and resolve, and by swift and certain retribution for offenders or uncooperative leaders in both states. This political strategy has so far fulfilled federal expectations -- and is still in place -- in Sarawak. In Sabah, however, it was successfully challenged by the PBS (Parti Bersatu Sabah) in the mid-1980s and this led to a direct bid for power by UMNO in Sabah in the most recent state elections held in 1994.

Sarawak politics and relations with the centre settled early into a pattern which, with only minor changes, has persisted to the present. Dayaks (over three-quarters of whom are Sea Dayaks or Ibans) are the largest group in Sarawak, forming slightly over 40 percent of the state population compared to about 30 percent for the Chinese and only about 26 percent for the Muslim Malay/Melanaus. From the very inception of the Federation of Malaysia, federal leaders played an active role in putting together a pro-Malaysia coalition of mainly native-based parties, called the Sarawak Alliance (later changed to the Sarawak National Front), in order to defeat the then anti-Malaysia and Chinese-based SUPP (Sarawak United Peoples Party). The post of Chief Minister in the first Sarawak Alliance government went to Stephen Kalong Ningkan, the leader of SNAP (Sarawak National Party), one of the two Dayak

parties in the Sarawak Alliance. Policy differences and personal rivalries within the local ruling coalition soon led the other coalition leaders, with federal support, to oust Ningkan. A majority of Council Negri (state legislature) members declared their lack of confidence in Ningkan and the federal Prime Minister demanded his resignation. Ningkan not only refused to oblige; he also refused to call a meeting of the Council Negri so that he could be constitutionally removed by a proper vote, and instead sought to hold fresh elections which he hoped to win on a platform of state rights and autonomy. The federal government declared an emergency in Sarawak, the Sarawak constitution was amended to allow the Governor, the titular head of state, to call meetings of the Council Negri and Ningkan was duly voted out of office, and replaced by another Dayak.

The Ningkan episode bears recalling as it clearly demonstrates the importance of federal power and of federal support for aspiring state leaders. Henceforth the "mandate of Kuala Lumpur" was seen as crucial by all aspirants to state power - including (as we shall see) the leaders of the PBS in Sabah. The importance of federal support to state leaders derives partly from the immensity of federal powers and the readiness of the federal ruling party to use those powers, and partly from the fact that none of the multiplicity of ethnic groups and ethnic political parties enjoy majority status in either Sabah or Sarawak.

Many noteworthy changes have since taken place within the federally supported ruling coalition in Sarawak. The Muslim Malay/Melanau parties in the ruling coalition merged to form the Parti Bumiputra in 1966; the formerly opposition SUPP joined the coalition after the 1970 state elections; Pesaka, the remaining Dayak party in the coalition (after SNAP left with Ningkan in 1966), joined forces with Parti Bumiputra to form the Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB) in 1973. More importantly, the Malay/Melanau leaders of the PBB have, since the 1970 state elections and with clear federal support, wrested leadership of the coalition, including the Chief Ministership, from Dayak leaders. The PBB has also acted to enhance its position within the ruling coalition and state politics: in the most recent state elections held in 1996 under electoral constituencies gerrymandered, heavily in its favour, it has managed to win 29 of the 62 state seats, thus making it by far the strongest party in the ruling coalition.

The PBB's pre-eminent position rests upon a combination of factors. It continues to benefit from the fact that the Dayaks have remained politically divided. It has also been led by a number of politically astute leaders. But federal patronage is clearly a crucial if not sufficient factor in enabling the PBB to remain at the helm of the state government. Federal patronage has also

enabled the PBB to strengthen its position relative to its state coalition partners, as can be seen, most notably, in the partisan delineation of electoral constituencies for the 1996 state elections. The federal government too, no less, has achieved its major objective: Sarawak is run not only by a core Malay/Muslim leadership with whom federal UMNO leaders feel greater affinity but, more importantly, also by one that is dependent on federal support for its continuation in power.

The major threat to the present political settlement in Sarawak is a Dayak resurgence, whether based solely upon a united Dayak bloc or in alliance with the whole or part of other ethnic groups dissatisfied with the PBB-led government. So far, this threat has failed to materialize largely because of divisions and disunity among the Dayaks themselves and secondarily because of the lack of trust between the Dayaks and the Chinese. A dangerous bid by SNAP to wrest leadership from the PBB-led ruling coalition in the 1974 state elections failed narrowly for want of both Dayak and Chinese support. The most determined attempt to win power on the basis of an exclusively Dayak nationalism (or "Dayakism") is represented by the PBDS (Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak), formed in 1983 by a breakaway group from SNAP. In the state elections of 1987, the PBDS left the Sarawak National Front and teamed up with a party formed by a splinter group from PBB led by Rahman Yaacob, the former Melanau Chief Minister, and mounted the most serious challenge to date to the PBB-led ruling coalition. The PBDS won 15 seats, or two-thirds of the total number of constituencies in which Dayaks formed the largest single group of voters. However, its partner (known by its Malay acronym of PERMAS) was rejected by Malay/Melanau voters who saw unity under the PBB as the best and tested way to ensure their interests; PERMAS won only a disappointing 5 seats -- mainly on the basis of Dayak votes, as Leigh (1991:198) has shown. By comparison, the Sarawak National Front partners, namely PBB, SUPP and SNAP (which returned to the coalition in 1976) won 14, 11 and 3 seats respectively, making for a total of 28 against the PBDS-PERMAS total of 20 in the 48-member state legislature. The PBDS tried again in the 1991 state elections, but obtained even fewer seats than before, i.e. only 7 of the now-enlarged 56-member legislature. Thus humbled, PBDS applied to rejoin the Sarawak National Front and it was re-admitted in 1994.

It is instructive to note that federal leaders acted with noticeable caution and restraint during both the PBDS challenges, especially considering that they had supported the latter's formation as a means of weakening SNAP and as a "political strategy of dividing Dayak representation, and of inhibiting the recreation of a powerful Dayak-Chinese grouping within SNAP, an alternative

political alignment that had posed such a formidable threat to the PBB back in 1974" (Leigh, 1991:187). While they steadfastly supported the PBB-led Sarawak National Front, they allowed the PBDS to remain in the National Front at the federal level when the Dayak party mounted its challenge and then played the role of opposition to the National Front ruling coalition at the state level, and even ensured the re-admission of the PBDS into the Sarawak National Front after its second unsuccessful attempt at winning power. This federal behaviour is not difficult to understand, especially in the light of recent political developments in the neighbouring state of Sabah, where a united Kadazan nationalism (with some help from other groups) had brought the opposition PBS to power in the 1985 state polls. Of course, the federal restraint shown toward the PBDS also derives importantly from the fact that the PBDS threatened only the PBB leadership in the state and not federal control exercised through the National Front, in which the PBDS clearly intended to remain. No less important, however, is that the Dayaks, like the Kadazans in Sabah, form the largest ethnic group in the state. Although Dayaks are more disunited than the Kadazans, their arithmetic status in Sarawak is likely to invite a PBDS-type bid for power at some time or other in a context of ethnic political competition. It is therefore prudent for federal leaders not to jeopardize relations with a party representing the largest ethnic group in the state. Any reprisal against PBDS would not only make future relations more difficult but may even provide the very fillip needed by the Dayaks to overcome their differences and join together in a united Dayak nationalism that alone appears capable of upsetting the "favourable" political *status quo* in Sarawak.

With the return of the PBDS prodigal child in 1994 and the results of the 1996 state elections, the Sarawak National Front now enjoys a virtually unassailable position in the state. It has been opined that "another Iban-led challenge to the Melanau/Malay-led administration is unlikely for some time to come" (James Chin, 1996). This is especially the case after the 1996 constituency delineation has further reduced the electoral prospects of any Dayak-based party in the future. As stated by Taib Mahmud, the long-ruling PBB leader and Chief Minister, the present situation of a PBB-dominated National Front government in Sarawak can be expected to continue so long as there is no "groundswell of discontent" in the state (*New Straits Times*, 28 August 1996). Barring such a development, it is unlikely that a widespread and concerted enough Dayak-Chinese revolt would materialize to bring down the present political edifice in the state.

In Sabah, the Chinese, with only slightly more than a fifth of the population, form much less of a political force than they do in Sarawak. From the very outset, the power struggle, waged within a federally-inspired and -allied Sabah

Alliance of indigenous groups, has been between parties representing the non-Muslim Kadazans, the largest ethnic group forming about a third of the state's population, and the Muslim native groups (mainly Bajau but including Malay, Sulu, and others) which together comprise almost two-fifths of the state's population and thus collectively outnumber the Kadazans. At Malaysia's formation, a federally arranged compromise made Donald Stephens, leader of the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO) and, after 1964, of the larger United Pasokmomogun Kadazan Organization (UPKO), the state's first Chief Minister. His main rival, Mustapha Harun, leader of the Muslim USNO (United Sabah National Organization) became Sabah's first head of state in a Sabah Alliance government. Stephens, however, soon fell out of favour with the federal government for his vigorous support of state rights (in religion, language and the "Sabahanization rather than the "Malaysianization" of the state civil service) and opposition to federal intervention in state affairs. Stephens was appointed a federal Minister and thus removed from the state. The post of Chief Minister, after being held by a "caretaker" Chinese from 1965 to 1967 passed to Mustapha. Stephens' UPKO left the Sabah Alliance over the allocation of seats for the state's first direct elections in 1967 and failed to capture a majority of state legislative seats. Mustapha, with clear backing from the federal government, first refused to include UPKO, and then tried to contain it within the USNO-led Alliance state government. Stephens eventually dissolved UPKO and went into political retirement, and Mustapha proceeded systematically to establish himself as the undisputed strongman of Sabah politics.

Some of Mustapha's policies, particularly his aggressive promotion of Malay culture and propagation of Islam, won him considerable federal favour. However, his overly independent ways in running the state like his personal fiefdom, policy disputes, and personal indiscretions and bravados, including raising the possibility of Sabah's secession from the federation, eventually exhausted the goodwill and tolerance of federal leaders. Unable to remove the entrenched Mustapha the "Ningkan" way, Kuala Lumpur leaders sponsored the formation of a new multi-racial party, BERJAYA (Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah) headed by Stephens and former USNO leaders in order to unseat Mustapha's USNO in the 1976 state elections. This mission was duly accomplished, despite initial uncertainties. Stephens, back as Chief Minister, was killed in an air crash soon thereafter and was succeeded by Harris Salleh. With federal-state relations repaired, federal funds flowed in to boost development under BERJAYA rule, and the party easily won the next state elections in 1981. Harris Salleh continued support for Islam in the state and even acceded to the federal wish to make the island of Labuan a Federal Territory. However, before long, Harris

Salleh also began to disappoint his federal backers as he too, like Stephens and Mustapha before him, became increasingly independent and recalcitrant in federal eyes. His downfall, however, was brought about not by federal machinations but by opposition generated from within the state.

In the Sabah state elections of 1985, BERJAYA was challenged by the newly-formed multi-racial but mainly Kadazan PBS. The PBS campaigned primarily on the basis of the state government's neglect of Kadazan interests and its betrayal of the interests of Sabah, symbolized most notably by the cession of the island of Labuan to the federal government without compensation by the BERJAYA government. The federal government was compelled to support BERJAYA against what it regarded as the anti-federal PBS, but to no avail. The PBS won 25 of the 48 seats in the state legislature and its Kadazan leader, Pairin Kitingan, became Chief Minister in a PBS state government. With its defeated adversaries in the state and the federal government giving the new government a hard time, the PBS sought to improve its precarious position in the legislature by calling for fresh elections after barely ten months in office. It succeeded brilliantly by winning 34 of 48 seats and increasing its share of votes from 30 to 53 percent. Support for the PBS came not only from the united Kadazans but also from non-Muslims fearing the establishment of a Malay-Muslim hegemony throughout the federation.

Clearly the federal strategy of installing friendly and dependent state governments produced decidedly more mixed results for the federal government in Sabah than it did in Sarawak. To be sure, the federal government repeatedly acted out and sought to reaffirm its role as kingmaker, but all the three main Chief Ministers Sabah has had thus far apparently did not believe that they were as dependent upon the federal government for their position as the minority-group Chief Ministers of Sarawak, or were more willing than their Sarawak counterparts to risk their position for other purposes. The victory of the PBS heralded considerably more turbulence for federal designs and federal relations with Sabah.

The PBS judiciously applied to join the National Front and became a member in 1986. However, federal-state relations continued to deteriorate as Kitingan sought to buttress his position by vigorously championing and defending state rights against the federal government. "In a federation," Kitingan declared in a conference in Kuala Lumpur soon after becoming Chief Minister, "it is incumbent upon each state to stand up for its rights ... (and) be its own watchdog" (Kitingan, 1985: 16). After his party became part of the National Front, Kitingan continued to play up the issue of state rights, and demanded federal obeisance to the "Twenty Points" agreed on in the course of negotiating

Sabah's participation in Malaysia. This stance inevitably and predictably placed him on a collision course with the powerful and resolute federal government, and may appear foolhardy at first sight. However, the first priority of the PBS was to secure itself in power. And this, in the eyes of its leaders, required a degree of popular support that is sufficient not merely for maintaining the PBS as Sabah's premier political party but also for compelling federal leaders, who had hitherto shown a strong preference for Muslim political control and leadership of the state, to accept a non-Muslim ruling party and Chief Minister in Sabah. The support of other ethnic groups besides Kadazans was needed for this purpose and Kitingan apparently believed that a state-rights platform was the best way to win the cross-ethnic political support needed to maintain power and eventually to compel federal acceptance of the hard reality of PBS rule in Sabah. Viewed in this way, his persistence in arousing federal ire -- and facing the known and severe risks of doing so -- by championing the rights of Sabah, becomes more readily intelligible. To a greater degree than his predecessors, Kitingan saw the championing of state rights as a matter of political strategy or even political necessity, in the circumstances then facing him in Sabah. And this strategy, which has helped to bring his party to power as well as consolidate its power, was clearly vindicated again in the 1990 state elections, when a campaign of restoring Sabah's rights gave the PBS a whopping 36 of the 48 legislative seats contested.

Despite the impressive PBS victory and Kitingan's reiterations that his party's calls for federal respect for state rights only reflected the expressed wishes of the people of Sabah, the federal government continued to spurn its demands. Kitingan finally made a dramatic departure from the National Front in October 1990, pulling out his party in the midst of what at the time appeared to be the most serious electoral challenge to the position of the National Front at the federal level. In the event, the National Front was returned to power in the 1990 federal elections and the "cold war" between PBS and the federal leaders rapidly turned hot, especially for PBS at the receiving end. The federal government, in an impressive display of power, launched an all-out campaign to harass the PBS government and to overthrow it. The federal retribution included the following: charges of corruption against Kitingan, detention without trial (under the Internal Security Act) of his brother and several other PBS leaders, federal insistence that Kitingan had to be removed before PBS would be re-admitted into the National Front, economic measures such as slowing down development projects and banning the export of timber logs that hurt the state's economy, and the entry of UMNO into Sabah to put together and lead a multi-racial coalition to topple the PBS in the next state elections in 1995 (Ongkili, 1992; Francis Loh, 1996). The participation of UMNO in Sabah state

elections marks an important change in federal political strategy toward Sabah, signaling the abandonment of the earlier strategy of indirect control in favour of a direct bid for power in the state by the leading federal ruling party.

The PBS found the fresh delineation of state electoral constituencies unfavourable to its chances of re-election and called for early elections in 1994 before the proposed constituencies could receive parliamentary approval and come into force (Jayasankaran, 1994:8). Control over the delineation of constituency boundaries has been effectively in the hands of the federal ruling party since the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1962 and constitutes yet another of the myriad forms of power available to the federal government in Malaysia. Fighting against the impressive machinery and resources of the UMNO-led coalition and its siren promises of accelerated federal-assisted economic development and increasing wealth for all, the PBS nevertheless survived the electoral challenge, but only barely, winning 25 seats to the other side's 23, of which 18 were won by UMNO. However, a spate of UMNO-engineered defections and departures from the PBS, not only by its Muslim and Chinese but also by its Kadazan elected representatives, eroded the slim majority of the PBS and brought the new PBS state government to a halt.

Thus in 1994 Sabah came under an UMNO-dominated coalition consisting of parties representing all major ethnic groups in Sabah, including Kadazan parties formed by leaders whom UMNO had prized away from the PBS. Through the rotation of the Chief Minister's post among coalition members representing the main ethnic groups and other means, UMNO sought to consolidate the ruling coalition in order to split the Kadazans politically and to prevent the PBS from achieving the more-than-Kadazan support that would appear to be needed for a successful comeback in the state -- a strategy which was also used to contain the Dayak threat in Sarawak. The heightened appeal of economic betterment would probably also make it more difficult for PBS or another state party to mount a successful challenge in future, as an UMNO-led state government, with easy access to federal resources, would clearly be seen to be in a better position than any state political rival to deliver the desired economic benefits to the state. Still, it is too early to tell whether the present regime and political configuration in Sabah will attain the stability of its neighbouring Malaysian state: the PBS has shown itself to be a more formidable challenger than either the SNAP or PBDS in Sarawak and it remains to be seen whether UMNO can deliver the promised economic goods and whether economic development would suffice to keep the PBS at bay in politically more volatile Sabah.

EXPLAINING FEDERAL CONTROL: COMPARING SABAH AND SARAWAK WITH KELANTAN

The preceding sections have highlighted the high degree of centralization and the control orientation of federal leaders in the Malayan federation, explained the special constitutional position of Sabah and Sarawak in the larger Malaysian federation, and examined the establishment of federal political control over the state governments of Sabah and Sarawak. Particular emphasis has been placed on the importance of the federal ruling party, the UMNO-led National Front, both as cause and instrumentality in the centralization of power and the establishment of federal control in the federation. The National Front has succeeded in winning control of the state government in all the states of the Malaysian federation except Kelantan. The establishment of party control by the Malay-led centre has succeeded in the geographically distant and ethnically divergent East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak and yet failed in the most Malay of the Malay states in the Malay peninsula, Kelantan. How can this difference in outcome be explained? This question appears extremely interesting not only for the limited purpose of better understanding successful federal control of Sabah and Sarawak but also for the opportunity it provides for a closer look at what may be called the "ethnic bulwark" thesis, namely the widespread view that regional or state ethnic distinctiveness (from other regions and from the federation as a whole) is a powerful force in sustaining state autonomy and hence viable federalism against the strong pressures towards centralization that are to be found in almost all contemporary federal systems. The success of federal political control in Sabah and Sarawak compared with its failure in Kelantan may lead us to rethink, or at least help us specify more accurately, the conditions under which ethnic distinctiveness can provide an effective basis for the practice of federalism.

Part of the explanation for federal success in Sabah and Sarawak and its failure in Kelantan may be the federal government's greater determination to achieve meaningful control over the two East Malaysian states. Politics, after all, is less about objective conditions, whether natural or artificial, than about the formulation and exercise of human will under such conditions. Although it would fly in the face of the evidence to suggest any weakness of will on the part of the federal leaders in securing control over any Malayan state, there may be reason to believe that National Front control over Sabah and Sarawak is more important to the federal government than control over any of the Malayan states, including Kelantan and, I would even suggest, Penang. It is possible that Sabah and Sarawak have more potential because of their size: their combined

area is one and a half times, and the area of Sarawak alone is only slightly less than, that of the eleven Malayan states combined. The key factor here, however, appears to be the federal government's perception of the higher risk of not having sufficient control over Sabah and Sarawak compared to non-control of any of the Malayan states. I am referring of course to the greater risk of secession, either singly, or, as appears more feasible, jointly, by the contiguous states of Sabah and Sarawak, which are not only ethnically and culturally distinct but are also geographically separated from Malaya by hundreds of miles of sea and have the land area and resources to make nationhood outside Malaysia viable.

The experience of Sabah leaders from Stephens to Kitingan should leave very few doubts that the issue of secession, or its very proposal, remains the number one federal bugbear in its relations with Sabah -- and almost certainly with Sarawak as well, although the issue has not been openly mooted by any incumbent Chief Minister in that state. This explains why the achievement of sufficient control over ruling politicians and political developments in Sabah and Sarawak through the National Front has been so important to federal leaders. By comparison, secession has never been a real threat, and hence the need for such prophylactic control is almost non-existent, in the case of Kelantan or any other Malayan state. Moreover, experience may have indicated to many UMNO leaders, especially those with political bases in other states, that a PAS-controlled Kelantan may not be such a bad thing, or an unmitigated evil, after all: keeping PAS alive (but confining it to one state) can be politically useful, both for reminding the non-Malays of UMNO's moderation relative to PAS and for providing the opposite pressures needed to counterbalance and resist non-Malay demands from inside and outside the National Front. In contrast, the loss of either Sabah or Sarawak to the opposition would produce no compensating side benefits of any sort to the National Front's federal leaders.

I have suggested that the federal government is probably more determined to impose and retain party control over Sabah and Sarawak than over Kelantan or any other Malayan state, primarily in order to ward off secession attempts by the former. The risk of not having party control in Sabah and Sarawak is simply too great. If this is correct, it would suggest that ethnic distinctiveness can cut both ways, as far as its effect on state autonomy is concerned. While a state's ethnic distinctiveness is generally associated with a higher level of state power and autonomy, it can also have the opposite effect if it raises serious doubts in the minds of federal leaders about the commitment of the state to remain within the federation and thus lead them to make greater efforts to control the state. One requirement for the success of federal systems, according to Elazar (1968:

365), is "sufficient homogeneity of fundamental interests -- or consensus -- to allow a great deal of latitude in political operations and to place primary reliance upon voluntary collaboration." The most fundamental point on which consensus must exist must surely be a state's commitment to remain as a member of the federation. Thus we can state that ethnic distinctiveness will produce its commonly supposed effect of increasing state powers and autonomy only when the above mentioned consensus has been achieved and there are no credible threats to the territorial integrity of the federation. If this condition is still in doubt, greater control efforts by the federal government are likely to be the result. This fundamental premise of the "ethnic bulwark" argument is reminiscent of the statement often made of Britain that it is so fundamentally at one that it can afford to bicker. In the context of federalism, the requirement is that all states must be seen to want to remain fundamentally as a single national entity before state autonomy in the name of accommodating ethnic distinctiveness can be seen to be affordable by the centre.

The desire to achieve party control is one thing, achieving it is another. It is not enough to look only at variations in the federal government's desire and efforts to achieve control between Sabah-Sarawak and Kelantan. A full explanation of the Sabah-Sarawak and Kelantan difference in party, or National Front, control must also take into account the factors which have resulted in the centre's success in establishing its control over Sabah-Sarawak in comparison with its relative failure to do so in Kelantan. If achieving National Front control appears to have been easier in Sabah-Sarawak than in Kelantan, why has this been the case? It is this question that leads us to a closer look at the operation of the ethnic bulwark in the context of federalism.

The contrast between Sabah-Sarawak and Kelantan suggests that the critical factor is the existence or otherwise of a successful state/regional political party which is able to maintain enough electoral support to retain control of the state government against the political party in power at the centre. Only with such an adequate and secure political base can a state party prevail over the National Front, both in direct electoral contests for state power and in maintaining its autonomy from the controlling embrace of the National Front. Such a political party is found in Kelantan where PAS has more often than not defeated UMNO in past state elections. The PAS blend of ethnic and religious appeal has enabled it to compete successfully in Kelantan against UMNO, even though the latter's control of the federal government has given it access to impressive economic and other resources which it has shown few qualms about using for partisan electoral advantage. As explained earlier, PAS now tries to distinguish itself from UMNO almost entirely on the basis of religion. Whether its purely

religious appeal and difference from UMNO will enable PAS to defeat UMNO in future elections in Kelantan -- indeed whether PAS can succeed in maintaining enough of a difference from UMNO in religious matters -- appears uncertain. The fact remains, however, that there has to be enough support for a state-based political party within a state in order to deny control of the state to the ruling federal party.

The experience of PAS in Kelantan and PBS in Sabah suggests that, to maintain the necessary level of support, it is extremely important for a state-based political party to have a programme or an ideology that a majority of state electors consider more appealing than that of the rival party from the centre. PAS evidently met this requirement for success in Kelantan up to the 1969 elections. The party has since faced greater difficulties, partly as a result of changes in the law that prevent the questioning of certain sensitive issues but mainly because UMNO has moved increasingly closer to PAS on ethnic and religious matters. In any case, the sustained efforts of its leaders to project PAS as an Islamic religious party as opposed to a Malay nationalist party, after its departure from the National Front clearly points to their awareness of the importance of having a distinct programme or ideology in the contest with UMNO for the state of Kelantan -- even though there is no guarantee that its chosen programme, or any other, would continue to be effective enough for victory.

That the efficacy of a party programme can vary over time is clearly illustrated by the PBS experience. After obtaining and then entrenching its power on a platform of restoring state rights, the PBS in Sabah stuck adamantly to the same as its chosen programme to ensure its continued electoral success in the state, in spite of the considerable risks entailed by such an "anti-federal" programme. That the PBS eventually lost the gamble was due to several factors, but a main factor, arguably the decisive factor, was the declining appeal or efficacy of its programme of state rights itself under changed conditions and in the face of the rival federal programme of accelerated economic development aggressively propagated under the slogan of a "New Sabah" by UMNO in its maiden electoral contest in Sabah in 1994. In other words, the federal government's or UMNO's programme of a "New Sabah" appears to have seriously undercut the appeal of the PBS programme of "Twenty Points" and "Sabah for the Sabahans". To this must be added the success of UMNO's post-election machinations in inducing the leadership defections and departures from the PBS that eventually deprived it of its electoral majority. The success of UMNO in this regard in an East Malaysian state where greater constitutional powers and richer natural resources undoubtedly provide an incumbent government with greater spoils to maintain party cohesion than in any Malayan state, especially

Kelantan, underscores both the prevalence of materialistic ties within the PBS and the heavy- and under-handed tactics resorted to by UMNO. Still, the shift in voter support remains crucial as these factors were able to tilt the balance only because the UMNO's "New Sabah" programme had met with an adequate measure of electoral success.

What is the role of ethnicity or state ethnic distinctiveness in all this? The answer, as the experience of both Kelantan and Sabah suggests and the absence of similar experience in Sarawak does not necessarily contradict, is that state ethnic distinctiveness from the rest of the federation can make it easier for a state-based party to meet the requirement for success mentioned above, namely to design a programme that will attract sufficient support to enable it to resist both the electoral challenge and co-optation by the ruling federal party.

The reader may immediately object to the view that the predominantly Malay state of Kelantan is ethnically distinct from Malay-majority Malaya, or even from Malaysia in which Malays form clearly the largest ethnic group, even if he or she concedes that PAS is different from UMNO although they are both Malay parties. In reply, it may first be pointed out Kelantan retains its ethnic distinctiveness not because it is less, but because it is more, Malay than any other state in Malaysia. PAS, accordingly, has always espoused a programme that is in significant ways more Malay or pro-Malay than that of UMNO. Additionally, Kelantanese have a distinct dialect, a more established system of religious education and a more close-knit traditional society than the other Malay states, resulting, most significantly, in a sense of cultural distinctiveness that is commonly professed by Kelantanese themselves as well as observed by scholars (Kessler, 1978; Roff, 1974). Certainly PAS has been the beneficiary, and perhaps also captive, of the political expression of this Kelantanese sense of distinctiveness. What the Kelantan case perhaps also suggests is that any widespread sense of distinctiveness within a state, a widely-shared feeling that "we are different from them" whether based on ethnicity or other factors, would provide the opportunity for a skillful state-based political party to come up with an appropriate programme to win power in the state. The Kelantan case may be seen, after all, to affirm the facilitating effect of state ethnic or cultural distinctiveness with respect to the emergence of a successful state party.

Both the states of Sabah and Sarawak are also ethnically distinct from the rest of the Federation. While the importance of this factor is difficult to evaluate, it is unlikely to be insignificant in fostering among their respective populations a subjective, territorially-based sense of separateness as Sabahans or Sarawakians within Malaysia, even as Sabahans or Sarawakians first and Malaysians second.

This kind of collective identity was (and is) in existence and therefore available for mobilization by a state political party as a shield against federal party capture of the state government, as was done by the PBS in Sabah. The PBS strategy of relying upon a programme of state rights to win and keep power in Sabah was clearly successful for a whole decade, from its rise in 1985 until its electoral appeal was challenged and almost matched by UMNO's "New Sabah" programme of accelerated economic development in the 1994 state elections. The absence so far of any attempt by a political party to mobilize such a state-wide identity against a federal challenge in Sarawak does not mean that it is not available there. The present federally-integrated, ethnic-based governing structure appears to be satisfactory to most groups, a state of affairs that in turn hinders the prospects for and therefore discourages malcontents contemplating cross-ethnic state-rights mobilization. However, such latent possibilities for political realignment undoubtedly exist in Sarawak and Taib may be right that a groundswell of discontent would lead to their activation. Thus the argument that state ethnic distinctiveness makes the crucial task of a state-based party, that of obtaining majority support in the state, easier or more likely to be achieved appears to be supported by the cases of Sabah from 1985 to 1994 and Kelantan, and not contradicted by the case of Sarawak. Parenthetically, the absence of single state-party rule in Sarawak, the lapse of PBS rule in Sabah, and the interruptions in PAS rule in Kelantan -- or more simply, the absence of continuous rule by a state party in all the three states -- show that state ethnic distinctiveness by itself is not a sufficient condition for state party success.

The experience of Sarawak and Sabah also suggests another important point about the relation between state ethnic distinctiveness and state party success, namely that the efficacy of ethnic distinctiveness may be significantly reduced if it is not sufficiently homogeneous as well; or, in other words, if no single ethnic group is numerous enough to attain a comfortable majority in the state. Sarawak has no majority ethnic group and no one party in Sarawak has ever won a majority of seats or a majority of votes in any of the state elections held so far. The forty plus percent of Dayaks in Sarawak represents the highest percentage of state population attained by a single ethnic group in either of the two East Malaysian states; yet it proved insufficient to bring electoral victory to SNAP in 1974 and to PBDS in 1987 and 1991, given some loss of ethnic votes due to internal divisions, the Dayak-splitting tactics of opponents or even the need to obtain cross-ethnic support. Even the undiluted "Dayakism" of the PBDS failed to win power for the party. Although it must be noted that member parties of the ruling Sarawak National Front have generally contested elections as a team and that none of the coalition parties, with the sole exception of PBDS, has recently fought an election on its own, it appears safe to say that no single party would be able to win outright on its own even if it

tries. Remarkably, the PBB came closest in the last state elections, when, with the help of gerrymandering, it won 29 of the 30 seats it contested in a 62-seat legislature. Most notably, the absence of a majority ethnic bloc in the state has also resulted in a situation in which one or more of the parties representing the different ethnic groups have found it either necessary or advantageous to "import" outside assistance in the form of federal support. To do this, membership in the National Front would appear to be a necessary though not sufficient condition. It is this dependence on the centre for winning the state power struggle that has facilitated entry by the federal government or ruling party into state politics as well as provided it with the leverage needed to set itself up as the kingmaker. And this role of the federal government is unlikely to be forgotten even by the enhanced PBB, whose fortunes will undoubtedly change for the worse if the federal helping hand is turned into a punishing one.

Although Sabah may appear more ambivalent in that a single party has been able to rule for much of the period of the state's membership in Malaysia, it still bears out the contention here that the absence of a majority ethnic political base has failed to sustain a victorious state party which is independent of National Front control. Both USNO and BERJAYA relied on federal support to maintain themselves in power. The Kadazan-led PBS sought to dispense with federal support for its continuation in office by rallying other ethnic groups behind it on the basis of championing the rights of the state against the federal government -- a strategy which was feasible, largely because of the state's overall ethnic distinctiveness from the rest of the federation. Not lacking in valour, the PBS nonetheless exercised discretion and joined the National Front. After thus remaining in power in Sabah for a decade, it broke off with the National Front and was ousted by UMNO as its cross-ethnic political base and allies proved to be fragile and vulnerable to the inducements and threats of its federal opponent. As in Sarawak, the ethnically divided state political forces broke ranks and made it easier for the federal government to intervene and achieve control. Still, it is most unlikely that the PBS would be as easily dislodged and its political base as fragile and susceptible to erosion by UMNO if Sabah is both ethnically distinct and sufficiently homogeneous, that is to say, if Kadazans form a clear majority in the state.

The lack of ethnic homogeneity in Sabah and Sarawak appears to have been the main stumbling block to the emergence and continuation of a single state party with firm majority support and able to fend off an encroaching federal ruling party. Overall state ethnic distinctiveness, and a collective state identity facilitated by it, can provide a shield that can be hoisted by a state party against federal control, but it is not the bulwark that may be formed by a distinctive and

homogeneous ethnic majority in the state. Insufficient state ethnic homogeneity, plus of course the determined and powerful control-seeking centre, have produced the present form of political integration of Sabah and Sarawak within the larger federation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE AUTONOMY: COMPARING SABAH AND SARAWAK WITH MALAYAN STATES

The party system is widely regarded as the leading factor that affects the actual operation and division of powers in federal systems. The present situation in the Federation of Malaysia in which a centralized federal ruling party has succeeded in establishing its political control over the state governments in all but one of the constituent states is regarded as a powerful force for centralization in federal systems. The underlying proposition may be stated as follows: leaders of a political party or coalition that is highly centralized internally and is in power at both the federal level and most of the states will have both the motivation (since they are the power wielders at the centre) and the ability (as resistance by subordinate and dependent state leaders can be suppressed or overcome) to centralize powers in the centre or in the federal government at the expense of the states. This general proposition receives ample support from the Malaysian experience with federalism; the "centralization theme", as noted earlier, has been highlighted by all major studies of federalism in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that party control is therefore uniformly tight and effective in all states or that the weight of party control has obliterated the effects of all other factors, and that therefore all state governments and their leaders, including those in Sabah and Sarawak, are *de facto* uniformly lacking in autonomy in relation to the dominant federal government. Indeed, for the purpose of understanding the actual position of Sabah and Sarawak in the Malaysian federation, it is important to compare, or rather to contrast, each of these two states with the others in terms of the degree of *de facto* central control and to explore the factors that may account for these inter-state variations in central control. The obvious contrast between the more autonomous PAS state government in Kelantan and the less autonomous governments in states controlled by the National Front highlights the important influence of party control on federal-state relations. This is not the only possible or interesting comparison, however. More important for understanding the position of Sabah and Sarawak in the federation are the variations in central control among National Front-controlled states and the factors responsible for these variations.

Unfortunately, there is as yet no study that systematically compares states on the basis of defined criteria and dimensions or that systematically canvasses the causes of inter-state variations in central control, in the limited literature on Malaysian federalism. These issues still await research. It may be a useful beginning to identify the factors that may make for inter-state differences in Malaysia and discuss their differential effects on the states, and then on that basis make provisional inter-state comparisons where possible. Examining the effect of each of these factors in isolation will, in principle, enable no more than a series of *ceteris paribus* statements of the following form: other things being equal, the operation of this or that factor will make central control higher in state A than in state B. All these factors do not always pull in the same direction or have the same magnitude in every state; as a result, it is often difficult to say *a priori* whether the sum total of their effects has made central control in one state higher or lower than in another. However, such summary assessments are possible in paired comparisons of states which do not differ significantly with respect to all factors but one: as all the other factors are naturally "controlled for" the two states in question would differ according to the known (or expected) effects of the single factor differentiating them. In addition, even when such natural controls are absent, all or nearly all of the factors may have convergent or similar effects on a given state, whether in one direction or the other, thus strongly indicating that the level of central control for that state is different from the average, and even more different from another state where the various factors are similarly convergent but in the other direction. Even so, the propositions offered below on inter-state variations in central control require refinement and systematic empirical verification.

Several partly interacting but analytically distinct sources of inter-state variations in central control can be identified in Malaysia. Party control has been widely regarded as a major centralizing force in the operation of federal systems; therefore, variations in the strength or effectiveness of party control is an important source of variations in central control among states. Before examining this factor in greater detail, the operation of three other sources of variations in central control in the Malaysian context may be briefly noted.

First, the special constitutional status of Sabah and Sarawak would still count for something. Formal provisions have normative force and are even enforceable in court. National Front control over Sabah and Sarawak would tend to reduce to some extent the stark contrast in state powers and autonomy that formally exists between these two East Malaysian states and the other states in the federation. Central party control may attenuate the effects of divergent constitutional provisions but it is unlikely to negate them completely. A

theatrical analogy makes the point well: the "play" may be influenced by other factors besides the "script" but it is difficult to imagine that the script has no effect whatsoever on the actors and their actions. For this reason, the special constitutional position of Sabah and Sarawak -- their position remains special even after some safeguards have expired with time -- can be expected to make central control lower in these two states than in the other National Front states.

A second and equally obvious factor is geographical separation and distance from the centre, as exertions of federal control have to overcome what some geographers call the friction of space. This is getting increasingly easier with progress in technology. Although probably of dwindling importance, the factor of geographical distance, like formal provisions, cannot be completely nullified and also makes for greater autonomy for Sabah and Sarawak compared to the Malayan states.

A third factor is some form of politically significant state ethnic distinctiveness which demands central cognizance and compels greater relaxation of central control to enable the state government to adapt central policies to the more complex conditions within the state and generally to devise and carry out more appropriate strategies for retaining political support. The ethnic composition of the population in Sabah and Sarawak differs considerably from Malaya. The majority indigenous peoples of these states may share the same special position as the Malays in Malaya but there are important differences in culture and religion separating them from the Malays, not to mention the shared feelings among most Sabahans and Sarawakians that they are still somehow separate from the remainder of the federation. This factor, like the first two, can be expected to result in greater autonomy for Sabah and Sarawak and also for Penang than for other National Front-controlled states.

Penang does not enjoy the other "advantages" of Sabah and Sarawak and therefore illustrates most clearly the decentralizing effect of ethnic distinctiveness. Unlike Sabah and Sarawak, Penang lacks distance from the centre and enjoys no special constitutional position. But Penang has the distinction of being the only Malaysian state with a Chinese population majority. This important political fact alone has resulted in greater autonomy for the state government of Penang, as symbolized by its unbroken line of Chinese Chief Ministers since independence, irrespective of whether it was ruled by the National Front or the opposition. The Chinese-based Gerakan continues to be acknowledged as the leader of the National Front Penang state government, even though successive electoral constituency delineations (with respect to which the Malaysian constitution, as pointed out earlier, has been amended to allow unlimited weightage to largely Malay rural areas) have

steadily increased the number of Malay-majority constituencies and hence UMNO members in the state legislature, where it is now exceeded only by the combined membership of Gerakan and the MCA, the other Chinese party in the coalition government. The Chief Ministership has of course been eyed by state UMNO leaders. However, federal UMNO leaders have kept such ambitions in check for fear that there is nothing more effective than a Malay Chief Minister for delivering the state into the hands of the Chinese-based opposition party in the state. This party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), has attempted unsuccessfully to wrest control of the Penang state government from the National Front in the last few elections, but it remains a credible threat to the National Front in Chinese-majority Penang.

To return to the factor of party control, the main point to be made is that party control is probably more pronounced in some National Front states than in others, and that variations in the strength of party control are likely to result in different degrees of central control among states ruled by the National Front. Understanding this source of inter-state variations in central control requires a closer look at the nature of party relations within the National Front, specifically the relations between the federal ruling coalition and the party or parties controlling the government in the states. As the federal ruling coalition and its propensity to centralize is a common factor faced by all states, the key factor here is the nature or composition of the National Front ruling coalition at the state level. As will be explained in the typology presented below, the nature of the state ruling coalition affects the strength of party control by federal government leaders over state government leaders through its effects on at least two pertinent variables, namely, the motivation of the state government leaders to resist centralization and keep power in their own hands and, secondly, their ability to resist the centralizing actions of federal government leaders. In other words, both the motivation and the ability of the state government to resist centralization would affect the actual degree of centralization in Malaysian federalism and appear to depend importantly on the composition of the state ruling coalition.

It may be pointed out that the implicit premise underlying the present examination of differences in strength of party control, namely, that relations among members of a coalition are characterized by partial conflict, is by no means an unrealistic one. This is especially the case in a broad coalition like the National Front, in which most member parties have objectives and agendas not entirely consistent with those of the coalition's UMNO leaders and even of the National Front itself. Not only the Chinese-based parties but also parties of indigenous groups such as those in Sabah and Sarawak, and even PAS when it

was a member of the National Front, view their membership primarily in calculative terms, joining and staying within the National Front largely because the advantages of membership outweigh the disadvantages and not mainly because they identify normatively with UMNO and share its values and goals. In Sabah and Sarawak, the PBS under Kitingan and SNAP under Ningkan best exemplify resistance to central wishes by state parties while they were National Front members, but, in lesser and varying degrees, so did all the Chief Ministers of Sabah before Pairin at some stage of their political careers, and PBDS leaders and their platform of Dayakism in Sarawak.

Three main types of states controlled by the National Front -- two pure types representing the extremes and an intermediate type in between -- can be distinguished in the Malaysian context. The first type (Type 1) is the situation where the state government is in the hands of one or more national or federal parties, i.e. parties which also held or share power at the centre, which is the level of government they are primarily interested in. Type 1 represents the highest degree of party control and centralization in federal-state relations: being non-state-based and primarily federal-oriented, the party or parties controlling the state government have low motivation to resist centralization; and being subject to strong intra-party hierarchical control by central party leaders, their ability to resist federal centralizing efforts is also low. With the exception of Penang, all National Front-controlled Malayan states are governed by an UMNO-led coalition with the MCA and MIC, or with the MCA alone, and thus would be encompassed within Type 1.

At the other extreme in terms of party control and *de facto* centralization (Type 3) is the state ruled by a single state-based party or by a coalition consisting entirely of state-based parties. As members of the National Front, such parties may also participate in the federal government. However, their nature as state parties is little affected by their participation as "junior" members in the federal ruling coalition, as their main political base lies within a particular state and their main locus of interest is the government of that state. State-based parties are likely to desire to retain maximum powers within the state government. They are also more able to resist federal centralizing efforts as they are separate parties with their own political bases, which they jealously guard against one another and the federal parties alike, and are subject to a looser form of "party-party" or coalitional control compared to formal hierarchical control within the same party. Currently, Type 3 is exemplified solely by Sarawak, although it would also include Sabah before the UMNO-led coalition took over power in 1994.

Between these two extremes is a mixed state ruling coalition consisting of both state and federal parties (Type 2), in which the motivation and ability on the part of the state government to resist centralization is neither as strong as in Type 3 nor as weak as in Type 1. Examples of Type 2 states are Sabah since 1994 and Penang.

Each of the three main types can be broken down further. Thus Type 1 contains three situations according to whether state rule is by one federal party (Type 1a), a coalition of federal parties in which one party is dominant (Type 1b), and a coalition of federal parties in which no one party is dominant (Type 1c). As all the three subtypes are characterized by low motivation and ability to resist centralization, the factor differentiating them is the secondary one of transaction costs: Type 1a with a single party entails lower transaction costs for the federal government and thus facilitates centralization to a greater extent than when there are more parties sharing power in the state, although transaction costs may be somewhat reduced for the federal government by a dominant party under Type 1b compared to Type 1c. Similarly, Type 2 may be decomposed into state rule by a coalition of federal and state parties in which a federal party is dominant (Type 2a), in which no one party is dominant (Type 2b), and in which a state party is dominant (Type 2c), with the motivation and ability to resist centralization expected to increase from Type 2a to Type 2c. The three corresponding subtypes under Type 3, arranged in the same decreasing order of party control and centralization, are state rule by a coalition of state parties in which none is dominant (Type 3a), state rule by a coalition of state parties with a dominant partner (Type 3b), and state rule by a single state party (Type 3c). While the motivation and the ability to resist centralization is generally higher in Type 3 than in Type 1 and Type 2, within Type 3 both these factors can be expected to increase in strength from Type 3a to Type 3c. Thus National Front-controlled states in Malaysia can be classified, in decreasing order of strength of party control and expected centralization, under nine categories ranging from Type 1a to Type 3c. Using this more elaborate typology, readers may note, for example, that Gerakan-dominant Penang is Type 2c, that Sarawak is moving increasingly from Type 3a to Type 3b as the PBB strengthens itself within the state ruling coalition, while Sabah has moved in the other direction from mostly Type 3c to Type 2a with the installation of an UMNO-dominant government in 1994.

It is time to address directly the main interest of this section, which is to examine, in a comparative manner, the *de facto* autonomy of the Sabah and Sarawak state governments, i.e. their autonomy in the actual operations of governing the state. The following statements may be ventured. The effect of

the four factors examined above on Sabah and Sarawak, compared to the Malayan states, are almost entirely convergent and lend strong support to the view that these two states, or their governments, still enjoy a greater degree of operational autonomy than the other National Front-controlled states, barring possibly Penang. The federal ruling coalition has established control over the Sabah and Sarawak state governments to prevent secession and achieve other objectives. However, this has not prevented greater operational autonomy for these two states compared to the Malayan states controlled by the National Front -- so long as they meet the basic desiderata of the federal power-holders. There have been changes, brought about mainly by changes in the strength of party control: the autonomy of the Sabah government *vis-à-vis* the federal government has deteriorated, while that of the Sarawak government has been maintained and possibly slightly improved over time. Currently, the Sarawak state government is in all probability more autonomous than that of Sabah, due mainly to the looser party control from the centre on the Sarawak government than on the Sabah government. Thus it may be stated with more confidence that Sarawak is more autonomous than Penang than that Sabah is similarly so. Nevertheless, subject to the last mentioned proviso, Sabah is likely to remain more autonomous than the Malayan states under National Front rule: the degree of party control, although tightened since 1994, is still below that for the Malayan states, and the effect of other factors, especially ethnic distinctiveness, would continue to favour Sabah. Incidentally, that the Kelantan state government, the only one not under National Front rule, may enjoy greater autonomy than even Sarawak attests strongly to the importance of party control for federal-state relations.

Empirically, existing studies of federal-state relations in Malaya cited earlier leaves little doubt that central control is strong in the Malayan states. In addition to these general works, our own empirical work on Malayan federal-state relations in particular areas or sectors provides further support for such a view. We deliberately chose to look at federal-state interactions in two leading areas of state jurisdiction, namely land and Islamic religious affairs (Syed Ahmad Hussein, et al., 1996). We found clear evidence of federal activity and leadership, even dominance, in these two nominally state functions, thus lending direct and strong support to the thesis of strong central control in Malayan states. The federal government plays such an active and expanded coordinating role that it is clearly the prime mover and leader in these two areas of nominally state jurisdiction. Federal officials in the Ministry of Land are primarily responsible for reviewing and updating land policy and legislation and for securing the concurrence of state administrative officials through regular conferences and also that of state political leaders during meetings of the National Land Council. They also monitor implementation closely, collect

impressive amounts of data, conduct intensive studies, make detailed recommendations for reform and put almost continuous pressure on state officials to improve land administration. The federal government is similarly the more active party in the review and reform of Islamic laws and the Islamic legal system, as well as in the modernization of Islamic education, compared to the states in the field of Islamic affairs.

The disparity in resources between the federal and state governments is obviously an important factor here. State resistance is rare, though not entirely absent, and shortfalls in state performance and compliance do occur, even persist. But these are almost always the result of inadequate resources and administrative capacity rather than resistance to federal objectives and expectations. The fact that the states as a whole do not voice resentment against the increasingly active role of the federal government within their own constitutional domains points strongly to the effectiveness of party control in federal-state relations in Malaya. However, the study did not attempt inter-state comparisons and did not cover Sabah and Sarawak because of their special constitutional position (i.e. greater formal autonomy) with respect to these two matters; as such, it can offer no support for the kind of comparisons we are attempting here. To repeat, inter-state comparisons in terms of actual operating autonomy in Malaysia await systematic investigation. However, the above analysis strongly suggests that Sabah and Sarawak enjoy more of it than the other states in the Malaysian federation.

CONCLUSION

Sabah and Sarawak joined an existing federation in which the dominant federal government possessed an almost congenital centralizing tendency which soon engulfed the ethnically distinct new member states as well. This central government has since successfully used its resources and powers to achieve party-political control over Sabah and Sarawak. Far from serving as a bulwark of state political autonomy against federal encroachment, their ethnic distinctiveness may even have heightened central fears of secession and thus made federal leaders more determined to achieve effective control over them. While Sabah and Sarawak are ethnically distinct from Malaya as a whole, they are insufficiently homogeneous. This fact has deprived the state ethnic parties of the secure and sufficient political support they need to thwart federal control as well as greatly facilitated federal penetration and enhanced the importance of federal assistance in the struggle for state power. Theory predicts that a strong unified party or coalition in power at both the federal and state levels

will be a powerful force for centralization in federal-state relations. This has been substantially verified in federal-state relations in Malaysia as a whole. As a counterpoise to the prognosis of increasing reduction and leveling of state autonomy in Malaysian federalism, however, it is argued that inter-state differences in autonomy will persist and that Sabah and Sarawak are likely to enjoy generally more autonomy than the National Front-controlled states in Malaya, both because of differences in the form and degree of party control from the centre and because central party control is unlikely to obliterate the decentralizing effects of other factors.

In general, the analysis of the process of establishing federal control strongly indicates that federal leaders have applied basically the same political orientation, objectives, strategy and tactical repertoire to Sabah and Sarawak as to the Malayan states. The same strategy and tactics have already produced satisfactory results for federal leaders in Malaya even prior to the formation of Malaysia and its extension to the new member states of Sabah and Sarawak is hardly surprising. Indeed, it would be surprising if it were otherwise. And it cannot be said that the same strategy and tactics have failed to produce similarly satisfactory results for federal leaders in Sabah and Sarawak as well, despite the special constitutional position and marked ethnic distinctiveness of these two states. Differences of course exist and persist, both in process and outcomes, but the similarities are by far the more striking.

It is important to note that the establishment of effective party-political control over the governments of constituent states is only one aspect of what may be called the Malayan model of politics (including federal-state politics) that has been extended by federal leaders to Sabah and Sarawak. There are other aspects of the Malayan model that have also been implemented in Sabah and Sarawak; these too have been alluded to in this essay. Whether as a rationalization of the strategy of political control or as a policy goal subsequently pursued, the political life of Sabah and Sarawak has been "Malayanized" in many other important ways. This is evident not only in the ethnic, and increasingly mono-ethnic, organization of political parties and the political containment of the non-bumiputras (largely Chinese, as in Malaya), but also in the entrenchment of state political control in the hands of bumiputra leaders who are Malay/Muslim rather than non-Malay and non-Muslim, despite the fact that it is this latter bumiputra groups that form the largest plurality in both Sarawak and Sabah. The propagation of Islam and Malay culture, openly favoured by federal leaders, have found strong resonance in Sabah under Mustapha and Harris Salleh, although this has remained somewhat muted by political "necessity" in Sarawak where Muslims form a much smaller plurality than in Sabah. The Malayan model, in other words, is much more than a

strategy of control or of centralized federalism: it is at once a strategy for maintaining power, for structuring political life and for societal governance, as well as a programme for creating the sort of good society imagined and desired by federal power-holders. It is in this larger and more important sense that the "Malayanization" of Sabah and Sarawak can be said to have occurred.

Membership in Malaysia, it seems reasonable to maintain, has brought real gains, principally in economic development and security, to Sabah and Sarawak. Inevitably, membership also means that a "price" has to be paid in terms of state autonomy and that to some extent, the wishes of federal leaders and of the larger federation have to be accommodated in these states. This important accompaniment of membership in a federation cannot be wished away; only its form remains in question. And the form that this accommodation has so far taken, which in its main contours may be characterized as the "Malayanization" of Sarawak and Sabah, perhaps, will evoke mixed as well as different reactions from different resident and non-resident individuals and groups. Apparently, to a majority of the people in Sabah and Sarawak, the overall bargain, however Faustian, seems good enough in this uncertain world, if their recent voting behaviour and the palpable absence of a "groundswell of discontent" is proof of such satisfaction. But the ledger is certainly not empty on the debit side. Not least among its entries, perhaps, is the introduction, nay, imposition, of self-feeding ethnic politics into a previously not so ethnically politicized society -- and the ensuing spectacle of continual rhetoric and recurrent campaigns in pursuit of what must remain an ever elusive national unity in a society of deliberately constructed and institutionalized ethnic divisions, nurtured by leaders whose exalted positions depend on their perpetuation.

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