

Political Technologies and Multiculturalism in Malaysia

by

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B.A, Winona State University, 2005

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the 1Malaysia campaign, an initiative by the Malaysian state that seeks to address ethnic and religious divisions and economic inequality in the country to for continued political stability and economic growth. This campaign seeks to promote unity among the nation's diverse population. The thesis uses the concept of political technologies to analyze the 1Malaysia campaign and show how it draws on, but also differs from other similar strategies in the nation's history. I will analyze the ways that the state in colonial and post-colonial Malaysia created political tools to manage diverse ethnic and religious groups. This thesis addresses a shift in state policy that may offer insights into the strategies pursued by other postcolonial governments that have diverse ethnic and religious groups. I argue that the political technologies prior to the 1Malaysia campaign had created and maintained ethnic and religious divisions in Malaysia, particularly leading to the implementation of affirmative action policies that benefitted only specific ethnic and religious groups. I contend that the ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front) party views ethnic and religious divisions as a problem and hindrance to economic growth and modernization. It is also trying to define what it is to be Malaysian by creating and fostering its definition of unity and tolerance to be practiced by its citizens. Lastly this work will also examine opposing views of unity and multiculturalism from emerging film movements and public demonstration in Malaysia. This will highlight that the ruling government is facing opposing views to creating solidarity and further highlighting that this nation is going through a period of transition in defining multiculturalism.

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Introduction

The primary focus of this thesis is to analyze the 1Malaysia campaign that was first introduced by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak in 2008, amidst political dissent and economic recession. I will analyze the 1Malaysia campaign as a political technology and a solution to the problem of ethnic and religious dimensions to improve political and economic government. It will be compared to the Wawasan 2020 (Vision 2020) nationalist campaign which was an important nationalist project during the early 1990s. The goal of this earlier political project was to make Malaysia achieve developed nation status by the year 2020. I will highlight a shift in efforts to manage ethnic and religious relations. Lastly, this thesis will offer insight into political protest and opposition towards the ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front) party and the 1Malaysia campaign.

Although the 1 Malaysia campaign has embraced social media and various other media outlets to create a political technology that conveys the message the nation needs to be more united and its people need to be more tolerant towards each other, opposition groups towards the government and 1Malaysia have done the same. The Ombak Baru (New Wave) film movement and the Bersih (Clean) 2.0 demonstrations have benefitted from various social media such as blogging, Youtube, Facebook and Twitter to garner support from the public, disenfranchised groups, and people who are critical of Barisan Nasional. Wawasan 2020 sought to shift Malaysia from an agricultural to an industrial economy as the chief ideological justification in the creation of a more knowledge-based society and a large middle class that is now beginning to demand more liberal rights. I will also analyze how the dawn of the internet

and social media has created avenues in which opposition towards the state could express itself in various creative forms that would have been unprecedented in the past.

Aihwa Ong has described how the state used a “model of pastoral care” to govern Malaysia under the prerogatives of Wawasan 2020.¹ This was a form of communitarian capitalism in which the state limited and controlled certain freedoms. In exchange for curbs on rights the state provided citizens, especially so-called “*bumiputra*” or native of Malaysia with social services such as subsidized housing, education, and health care as well as privileged access to civil service positions and government contracts. The term *bumiputra* was coined in Malaysia by its first Prime Minister Tuanku Abdul Rahman. It was originally a term to define Malays of Malaysia but in the Malaysian constitution it includes indigenous populations of East Malaysia as well. According to the *Buku Panduan Kemasukan ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam, Program Pengajian Lulusan SPM/Setaraf Sesi Akademik 2007/2008* (Guidebook for entry into public higher learning institutions for SPM/equivalent graduates for academic year 2007/2008) a *bumiputra* in peninsula Malaysia is one that has at least one parent who is Muslim Malay or indigenous *Orang Asli* (original people). In East Malaysia if at least one parent of a person is Muslim Malay or from an indigenous they are considered *bumiputra*.

The largely successful goal of this bargain was to create a competitive economy with low unemployment and inflation rates. Under this form of governance the Malaysian state achieved a GDP growth of close to eight percent per year and created a broad middle-class workforce which attracted foreign investors, especially before the 1997 Asian financial crisis hit Southeast Asia. Subsequent economic instability in Malaysia brought attention to economic

¹ Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logic of Transnationality*. (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), 191.

inequality largely based on ethnic lines, which is described by Andrew Willford in his book *Cage of Freedom: Tamil Identity and the Ethnic Fetish in Malaysia*. He argues that the codification of ethnicity in Malaysia was initiated during the colonial period under British administration which separated various ethnic groups geographically and economically. The topic of ethnic and religious difference in Malaysia has throughout independence been a sensitive political topic, but the decade following the 1997 financial crisis has seen more outspoken protest and discussion pertaining to ethnicity and religion. The 1Malaysia campaign is a significant political technology in Malaysia because it represents how the state is recognizing ethnic and religious divides as severe obstacles to continued economic growth and political stability. In response, it is seeking to address past deficiencies of political technologies like the census classification during the colonial period, New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 70s and 80s, and the Wawasan 2020 years of the early 1990s in the management of race, ethnicity, and religion. In sum, this thesis argues that the recent 1Malaysia campaign represents an unprecedented attempt to redefine what it is to be Malaysian.

This thesis uses the concept of political technologies in order to shed light on the 1Malaysia project. In so doing, I draw on Andrew Barry's *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*, in which he defines a technology as "a concept which refers not just to a device in isolation but also to the forms of knowledge, skill, diagrams, charts, calculation and energy which make its use possible."² Barry's book mainly covers examples pertaining to Europe and how its "knowledge based societies" judge national, organizational and individual

² Andrew Barry, *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*. (London & New York: The Athlone Press, 2001), 9.

capacities based on its increase in productivity or property, skills or scientific and computer literacy.³

The 1 Malaysia campaign is a political technology that is deployed throughout Malaysia and the world through various different forms. Whether it is through its logo of the number 1 clad with the Malaysian flag seen across the nation on highways, billboards, the formula 1 race cars of the Lotus F1 team, on business signs, 1Malaysia clinics, 1Malaysia hotels, 1 Malaysia stores, 1Malaysia songs, videos, youth gatherings, the 1Malaysia website, its main purpose is to deliver the message that the ruling government wants to spread the message that Malaysians, no matter what ethnicity or religion need to practice, create and maintain more tolerance towards each other and a feeling of national unity. As such, it is a project that seeks to enlist the governed in their own government by encouraging feedback on how the 1Malaysia campaign can work for them. Just like Barry's description above, 1Malaysia is certainly not a just a technological device in isolation. It seeks to transcend its goals and message through various avenues to create a growing knowledge of unity and progress that Malaysians are united not just because one sees logos of 1Malaysia all across the country. Corporate and local businesses are participating in it and youths are encouraged to attend 1Malaysia sponsored programs that promote unity. There are also 1 Malaysia clinics, stores and hotels established to reduce the burden of health care, groceries and boarding costs for lower income families. Besides promoting the idea of unity the 1Malaysia government efficiency programs have also provided up to date interactive online information on increased government efficiency of various designated selected areas. The goal of all these initiatives is to comprehensively and

³ Ibid, 3.

continuously fuel this creation of knowledge that more unity, tolerance, and increased government efficiency is needed for this nation to meet the goals of its previous political technology's goal, Wawasan 2020.

The Wawasan 2020 campaign has allowed Malaysia to achieve a certain degree of technological advancements and propel Malaysia to the status of a New Industrialized Country (NIC). NIC is a socioeconomic classification given to countries whose economies have not quite reached First World status but whose economies have outpaced other developing nations.⁴ This work will portray an example of a newly industrialized country's (NIC) attempt to increase government productivity and efficiency through the innovation and deployment of the 1Malaysia campaign. The way in which the Wawasan 2020 campaign envisioned Malaysia to be a first world country was to focus on industrialization and modernization of its infrastructure.

As stated above one of the 1Malaysia campaign's main goals is to address ethnic and religious resentment and divisions that were first produced during the colonial period in Malaysia. This thesis will also provide a historical genealogy of past political technologies that were created to manage this diverse population. It will focus specifically on the census classification created by the British colonial administration to manage the growing influx of Chinese and Indian labourers to the Malayan colony with the existing local population, the affirmative action policies during the post-colonial years particularly the New Economic Policy that provided economic privileges to people categorized as *bumiputras* in order to bridge the economic disparity between *bumiputras* and the economically strong Chinese population, and

⁴ Pawel Bozyk, *Globalization and Transformation of Foreign Economic Policy* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 164.

the Wawasan 2020 campaign as mentioned above, to develop Malaysia into a modern first world nation by the year 2020.

During the Wawasan 2020 years under the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, continued affirmative action policies but used it to create a growing middle class group in Malaysia which will consist mainly of *bumiputra* Malays. The Wawasan 2020 years provided *bumiputra* Malays with various opportunities for economic advancements such as lower interest rates, no interest business loans, university scholarships, higher quotas to fill out government university places and jobs, and cheaper housing mortgages compared to non-*bumiputras*. However, I argue that although the Wawasan 2020 managed to lift the economic standing of many Malays, the continued practice of affirmative action policies in Malaysia today has contributed to its slower economic growth compared to the early 1990s. The 1Malaysia campaign as mentioned earlier is trying to create and instill in its population ethnic and religious unity and tolerance. However part of achieving that is also increasing government efficiency and transparency which has been heavily criticized by the opposition Pakatan Rakyat party as being corrupt and inefficient. This is another area in which the 1Malaysia has to improve in order to justify its message and goal of creating a tolerant and united multicultural nation.

I argue that although the Wawasan 2020 campaign created a strong middle class consisting mainly of *bumiputra* Malays, it has also allowed and promoted lack of competition in getting government positions and gaining promotion in those positions. The quota systems in place by the NEP allocated over 50% of government jobs to go to ethnic Malays and mandated that 30% of employees in the private sectors have to be *bumiputras*. This has benefitted many

Malay Malaysians but has also led to the slower economic growth the nation is witnessing now compared to the Wawasan 2020 years. The Malaysian economy during the Wawasan 2020 years was centralized and managed by the government as it is today. The Wawasan 2020 campaign did not specifically endorse affirmative action policies. However it used its policies instead to serve the nation's needs at the time to modernize and industrialize. Barisan Nasional's 1Malaysia campaign has not only to create a more tolerant multi-ethnic and multi-religious society but in order for the entire population to be convinced it needs to reform its affirmative action policies pertaining to the ethnic economic benefits but reform it in a way that retains for both its *bumiputra and non-bumiputra* population the ability to increase their economic position.

This is a challenging undertaking for the ruling Barisan Nasional party which has held power since independence in 1957 but coming out of a poor showing in the 2008 general election where for the first time in its history it fell below a two-thirds majority in parliament. Social media and the internet have allowed Barisan Nasional and the 1Malaysia campaign through its 1Malaysia website to reach out and interact with the public more frequently. It provides up to date access to information and links on 1Malaysia programs such as the Yayasan 1Malaysia, which provides an online forum to discuss ethnic and religious issues and the 1Malaysia Government Transformation Program (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) that give citizens the opportunity to monitor and track the progress of the current government's attempt to increase government efficiency and economic growth. The website also provides information on where to meet and greet the Prime Minister next, follow him on Twitter or Facebook and voice out opinions with him as well as ask him questions.

What makes 1Malaysia different from past political technologies in Malaysia is that it is trying to amend the unequal ethnic and religious policies that have been divisive among the national population. Furthermore, it seeks to engineer solutions to the deficiencies of its predecessors and is using all avenues and tools that are capable in conveying its message, providing the knowledge and creating a population of increased solidarity. The past political technologies in Malaysia have been ones that have had elements of dividing the population ethnically and religiously and 1Malaysia is the first political technology that makes it evident that there needs to be reform in how Malaysians see each other as Malaysians and reform policies that have essentialized codified markers of ethnic difference that were created during the colonial period under British rule and reiterated through various other political technologies such as the NEP (New Economic Policy) and Wawasan 2020 (Vision 2020) during the post-colonial era.⁵

However, opposition critics and skeptics of the government and the 1Malaysia campaign have also been given an avenue to voice their opinions and dissatisfaction through the internet and social media, which was not possible during the Wawasan 2020 years, where the government had complete control over broadcast and radio stations. Compared to its predecessors 1Malaysia has also to contend with a relevant opposition party in Pakatan Rakyat. The Pakatan Rakyat party and a growing knowledge based society where its citizens want more democratic reform, and the growth of social media has allowed more opinions against the government to be voiced and heard in Malaysia today. So not only is the public exposed to the

⁵ Andrew Willford, *Cage of Freedom: Tamil Identity and The Ethnic Fetish in Malaysia* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 17.

1Malaysia version of what it is to be a united Malaysia but they are also exposed to other opinions on what it is to be a Malaysian today.

Methodology

I conducted field work mainly in the west coast of peninsula Malaysia focusing on the capital, Kuala Lumpur and my hometown of Seremban, in the state of Negeri Sembilan from early June to the middle of August 2011. I conducted qualitative participant observation on political events and forums as well as informal and formal interviews. I conducted about 25 to 30 interviews. They ranged from individuals who worked for the government and who to some capacity are involved in 1Malaysia initiatives, businesses owner and employees of corporations and businesses whose establishments are using the 1Malaysia logo in their business branding and marketing, filmmakers who were involved or linked to the Ombak Baru film movement as well as participants in the Bersih 2.0 demonstrations. I also conducted interviews with reporters who have written stories on 1Malaysia, Bersih 2.0 and the Ombak Baru film movement. These interviews ranged from structured and semi structured interviews and were at most half an hour to 45 minutes long.

Why I chose to interview individuals who worked for the government was because these particular people worked in ministries that are directly involved in the creation of 1Malaysia and implementing and planning new 1Malaysia initiatives. The data and content from my interviews with them provides this research with an insight to the workings and construction of 1Malaysia. My reason to include content from individuals involved in corporate and local businesses using 1Malaysia in marketing and branding is to show examples of how the government is encouraging this practice and the differences from a corporate perspective to that of a local business owner. The interviews of Bersih 2.0 participants and individuals involved in the Ombak Baru film movement is to be able to provide the alternate perspective

1Malaysia's plan to create solidarity among Malaysians. The excerpts of interviews included in this research are chosen to provide perspectives to understanding how 1Malaysia's message and goal are carried out, examples of how the ruling government is encouraging regular Malaysians and corporations to participate in its goals and strengthening the argument that there are emerging alternate views to 1Malaysia as well. Together these interviews provide the view of 1Malaysia from the government perspective, from how the population is adopting it, and the opposing views of creating solidarity in Malaysia.

Before describing the methodology of my work I want to clarify the way in which 1Malaysia is used as a political technology. Through my research and with the data I collected through field work I concluded that the ruling government, through 1Malaysia is fostering its ideas of unity and tolerance by showing that if the government and economy can transform then its people can transform and be more tolerant and unified as well. There are the 1Malaysia initiatives and projects that are closely related and linked to the government like the Government Transformation Program (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) as well as the Yayasan 1Malaysia that provides forums to address topics that relate to ethnicity and religion. This is the example of the government showing change by guiding and providing the tools for the nation to change. The GTP and ETP program's website keeps track of government and economic progress and can be accessed online by every Malaysian. The websites of the GTP, ETP, and Yayasan 1Malaysia allow the public more access to the government and more interaction with the government. By analyzing the websites I came to the conclusion that the idea of having more interaction with the government which is going through a transitional phase, displaying its progress and allowing the public to participate,

contribute, and decide what needs to be changed and improved. The current Malaysian government is using the 1Malaysia campaign to allow public feedback and participation and gradually transitioning the government's role as pastoral care taker to a more interactive one. The 1Malaysia program has allowed itself to be designed through feedback from public opinion, hence its slogan "People First, Performance Now."

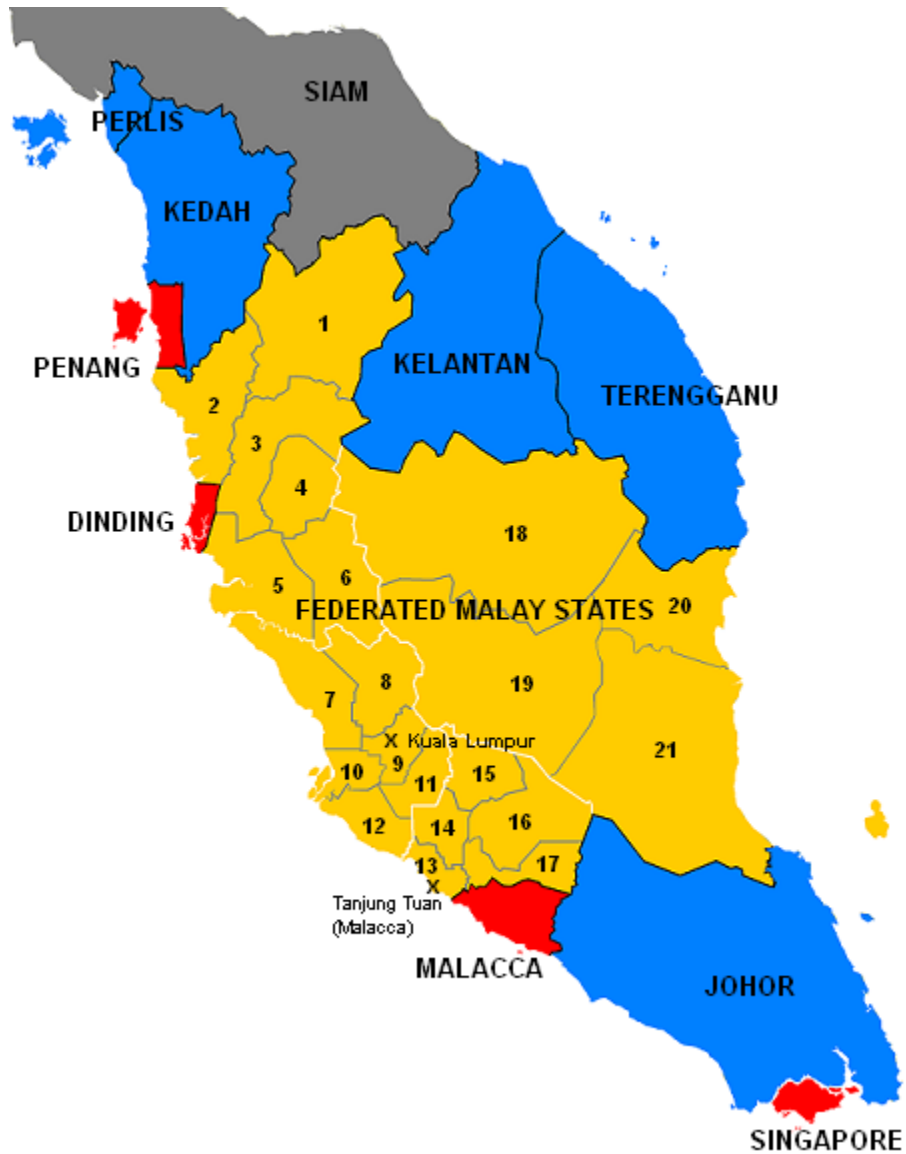
I collected data through participation observation on two major 1Malaysia sponsored events from May to August 2011. These included the 1Malaysia Youth Day 2012 and the 1Malaysia Government Linked Companies (GLC) Day. Both these events showcased the way in which 1Malaysia works in many different ways. I interviewed a number of government employees about these events. I attended other 1Malaysia events but these two events stood out for me during my time doing field work in Malaysia because of their grander presentations and information. They showcased how the 1Malaysia program endorses and sponsors various events that give it the opportunity to showcase its plan to deliver its message that the Malaysian government is trying to create and foster a more tolerant and united younger generation. The 1Malaysia youth day, in the administrative capital of Putrajaya, was an informative event that showcased to youths who attended the various functions of each government ministry and what they are doing to promote national unity and increase government efficiency.

The 1Malaysia GLC day exhibited information on the history of how the Malaysian government has managed many GLC's in the past and helped some of them transition into the private sector. It also showcased the new economic plans and projects that the current government under 1Malaysia is working on to increase the economic growth of the nation. I

focused on these two events because they were examples of how the 1Malaysia campaign is justifying the relevancy Najib Razak's administration today by creating various stages to showcase this information. These two events are examples of grander stages of the 1Malaysia campaign but the 1Malaysia clinics, 1Malaysia hotels, and 1Malaysia stores are examples of changes being implemented by providing affordable needs not only just for *bumiputras* but the inclusion of non-*bumiputras*. I conducted field work on these establishments because they gave examples of the 1Malaysia campaign's initiatives being put into action. I visited these 1Malaysia clinics, hotels and stores and interviewed some of the owners and managers of these establishments to get a sense of the types of services provided, whether or not these services are fully utilized and whether they are gaining positive or negative feedback from the public. I have also documented press articles on these 1Malaysia establishments. Many newspaper or media publications in Malaysia are owned and run by the government but there are also new online publications that are more neutral or anti-government. Malaysia Kini (Now) and the Malaysian Insider are two of the more prominent online news agencies.

Many local business owners are also encouraged to incorporate 1Malaysia into the marketing of their businesses or corporations by displaying the 1Malaysia logo on their business billboards, work attire and advertisements. I will provide examples of how this is done voluntarily by some businesses through my interview with a local restaurant owner in Seremban. I interviewed public relations officers of the Malaysian satellite company Measat Satellite, which will provide an example of how by association of a particular corporation to the government it adopts using the 1Malaysia logo in its products, marketing and employee attire.

I was fortunate to be in Malaysia during the time of the Bersih 2.0 rally, where I witnessed firsthand international and local media coverage of the rally. I managed to interview a number of participants of this rally which provided me with views of regular Malaysians that are disgruntled with the ruling government and its policies. I interviewed individuals who are part of the Ombak Baru film movement which helped shape my chapter on the oppositional views of the 1Malaysia campaign and the ruling government. I analyzed past interviews from the Ombak Baru's most prominent filmmaker Yasmin Ahmad. I analyze one of her most controversial films, *Sepet* (Slant Eyes) as well as a short movie compilation, which is a collaboration by various Ombak Baru directors. This contributed to my idea that the film movement is helping to give alternative views of how Malaysians view diversity, ethnicity and religion. These interviews along with data collected through participation observation will mostly shape the content of chapter 2 and 3 of this work. The data I chose to include in this work from both the interviews and participant observation are to frame the argument of 1Malaysia still being in a transitional phase in promoting its plan for unifying the nation. The data will also provide information about the fact that there are also emerging perspectives of what it is to be Malaysian. The work of Charles Hirschman and Shamsul A.B will shape most of chapter 1 in the framing the historical genealogy of political technology in Malaysia to set up the understanding of how 1Malaysia is different from past political technologies and why is it designed to first and foremost foster national unity and create a definition of being Malaysian.



Map 1: Division of Malaysian States during Colonialism. Red areas indicate British Straits Settlements. Yellow areas are Federated Malay states, Perak, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor, which were under direct British rule. The blue states were known as the Unfederated Malay states that were not under direct British rule.

Chapter 1

The Creation of Divided Cultures

This chapter will focus on presenting how the ethnic classification of Malaysia's three dominant ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese, and Indian, was formed. Charles Hirschman's article "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classification" shows how the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia were shaped over time in censuses conducted during the colonial and post-colonial years in Malaysia. This chapter argues that census classification was one of the first modern political technologies and was used to administer and manage ethnic relations and increase economic productivity in the colony.

To understand the 1Malaysia campaign one must first understand the foundation of how the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia were grouped through census classification to better administer the Malayan colony under the British and the newly independent nation after 1957. The census groupings also set the precedent for the economic roles of people classified as Malay, Chinese and Indian groups when Malaysia achieved independence.

Census classification has also shaped significant events that involved ethnic clashes and policies that pertain to ethnicity and the formation of terms that are related to ethnicity in Malaysia today. This chapter will give an overview of the post-colonial years in Malaysia leading up to the nation's most notorious ethnic clashes between Malay and Chinese groups on May 13th, 1969, and provide a broad overview of the New Economic Policy (NEP) developed after the May 13th incident to improve the economic fortunes of those labeled by the state as Malays. The NEP policy has shaped and effected the years leading up to Mahathir Mohammad's Wawasan 2020 years and today with the 1Malaysia campaign.

This chapter will give an overview of theoretical concepts and historical background on the migrations, as well as the economic standing, geographical placement and interactions between these groups of people. The formation of what are considered today as Chinese and Indian groups in Malaysia came mainly from migrants brought by the British to work in tin and rubber industries in colonial Malaya. These mostly indentured labourers were brought from southern China and India and were already a diverse group linguistically and culturally. This is more apparent with the Chinese migrants from China. The majority of Indian migrants that came from British India were not only divided linguistically and culturally, but they mainly came from lower castes of the Indian caste system, which existed even before the formation of a British colony in India.

Shamsul A.B.'s analysis of Malayness in his work *A History of an Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered*, not only reiterates the argument of Hirschman's census classification but the creation of what he terms "colonial knowledge" which is scientific and statistical data collected about the colony as a whole. During the colonial period a thorough process of data collection was conducted on a wide range of subjects from flora and fauna, historical sites before colonialism and other local knowledge that were significant for Westerners.

In his depiction of Malayness in Malaysia, he determines that colonial knowledge and census classification established the national project to define ethnicity and culture in contemporary Malaysia. He further argues that "Malay or Malayness" as well as other ethnic groups in Malaysia are learned and constructed through census classification and colonial knowledge. What Shamsul describes as "colonial knowledge," was a tool of domination "to

interfere with the local thought system," which consisted of local culture and practices.⁶

According to Shamsul, British colonial conquest in Malaysia occurred not only through superior weapons, economy and shrewd diplomacy but also through certain limitations that were imposed on the local population to define their worlds.⁷ His description of "investigative modalities," a process used by the colonial administration to gather knowledge was used not only to gather data on colonial Malaya but to categorize local society and migrants by simplifying them according to ethnicity, culture and language as a means of surveillance and administration.⁸ The "ethnic fetish" described by Andrew Willford in his book *The Cage of Freedom: Tamil Identity and the Ethnic Fetish in Malaysia*, which has shaped what modern Malaysia is today economically and politically, can be traced to colonial census classification and what Shamsul calls colonial knowledge. Willford argued that in almost all aspects of Malaysian society, from its education system, to economy and politics, are attached to ethnic connotations.

⁶ Shamsul A.B., "A History of an Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered" *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2001): 357.

⁷ Ibid, 358.

⁸ Ibid, 358.

The Development of Census Classification and the Definition of the Malay Ethnic Classification

Contemporary Malaysia is to a considerable degree a direct effect of political technologies like the colonial census. Charles Hirschman details the history of census classification in Malaya, which started in 1870. Hirschman notes that the system shifted back and forth between words such as nationality, race and community to classify members of the colony's population. Nationality was first used in the early years of census classification as a significant part of the new population in the colony, which still had strong ties to other colonial areas in Southern China and India. The word race was first used in 1911.⁹ The definition of the term race in this census classification is still uncertain but it did signify a shift as the number of first and second generation of Malayan born migrants increased among the Chinese and Indian groups.¹⁰ Hirschman notes that there were no significant interactions between the groups of people, as colonial rule was structured according to the economic role that each group had, which also determined where they settled in the colony. Thus, economic organization produced a particular spatial configuration with distinct ethnic groups living in discrete zones, with few mixed settlements.

In 1947 the word community began to surface in the census classification and shaped the years before independence in Malaysia, as it was common that commercial cities like Kuala Lumpur and the capital cities such as Ipoh or Johor Baru were populated mainly by Chinese groups. Rural areas were primarily populated by Malays and the rubber and palm estates and

⁹ Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classification." *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No.3 (1987): 361.

¹⁰ Ibid, 362.

some sections of urban centers like Brickfields in Kuala Lumpur were populated by Indians. The migration of Indian and Chinese labourers organized by the British placed many of these people in particular geographical locations and future generations gradually became identified with distinct areas. Even prior to the arrival of the British, ethnic Malays predominated in rural regions of the peninsula.

There were laws and enactments developed by the British to maintain the geographic placement of the population in order to maintain economic efficiency, administration and also as a form of surveillance. The colonial administration sought to simplify the complex challenges of managing an increasingly diverse population. It also defined who was to be subject to which particular administration. An example is the Malay Reservation Enactment of 1913. It defined who was to be categorized as Malay, who was allowed to grow a particular crop and determined the commercial value of land. Ethnic enactments like these were implemented differently in different Malayan states indicating that the coalescence of colonial knowledge did not take place in uniform fashion.¹¹ In the early years of colonial census collection a Malay of Arab descent was considered Malay in the state of Kedah and a Malay of Siamese descent was considered Malay in the state of Kelantan but not in other states.

For the Chinese and Indian immigrants brought as indentured labourers to Malaya during colonialism it became self-evident what categories they were put into. People brought from anywhere in China were categorized as Chinese and anyone who originated in India was categorized as Indian. The categorizing of Chinese and Indians ignored the distinct cultures and languages brought by these groups of people to Malaysia. This particularly affected the Indians

¹¹ Ibid, 359.

brought from India. The majority of Tamil-speaking people brought from India were mainly from lower caste groups in India. They were mainly placed to work in rubber and palm oil estates. Malayali, Telegu or Punjabi-speaking people from India were mainly situated in the urban areas and held more administrative jobs for the colonial administration. People brought from China were mainly divided linguistically. For example the majority of migrants from China in Penang were Hokkien speakers and the majority of migrants in the south of the Malaysian peninsula were Cantonese speakers. There were also people who settled in Malaya before the British like the Baba and Nyonya who arrived from China early in the early 15th century and Indian groups who have been traders and settlers in Malaya since the 11th century primarily through the South Indian Kingdom of Chola.

The surveillance function of this process was to monitor specific groups which the colonial authorities deemed a threat. They also were interested in the categorization of knowledge related to local, ethnicity, language and culture because it gave them some proficiency to handle matters related to cultural or ethnic conflict. Similarly to colonial posts in South Africa and India anthropometry and fingerprinting systems were implemented to not only to monitor individuals and regulate security but also for general documenting purposes.¹² In Shamsul's attempt to define what Malayness in Malaysia is, it also can be applied to both the question of what is Chineseness and Indianess since the creation of Malaysia. What Willford calls the ethnic fetish in Malaysia highlights that the conditions that colonial knowledge created through the simplification of ethnic makeup during colonialism in Malaysia created the current realities of ethnicity in Malaysia today. As discussed above the production of "colonial

¹² Shamsul A.B., 360.

knowledge” was achieved through the collection of information on all natural and human aspects of the Malayan peninsula. In relation to information collected on ethnicity, language and culture of individuals it soon entailed categorizing a specific group with a specific occupation, place and even skill.¹³ Willford’s work described how ethnic categorizing and stereotyping went to the extent of describing Malays as lazy and unwilling to engage in physical labour, the Chinese were described as hardworking but also cunning at the same time as well as hard to manage, and the Tamils Indians were portrayed as docile and fit into the mold of being a labour force that was cheap and easy to manage.¹⁴ These stereotypes created a cultural division that spanned out over time into other aspects of society and created the ethnic fetish that Willford argues persists in Malaysian society today.

The study of the 1Malaysia campaign is significant because the campaign represents the first time the post-colonial Malaysian government is acknowledging the ethnic and religious divides within the nation. It also seeks to address the issue of improving government efficiency but following Willford’s argument because almost all aspects of Malaysian society, even politics and government has ethnic connotations, the 1Malaysia campaign and improving government efficiency is still an ethnic and national unification campaign at its core.

Shamsul focused primarily on the British role in creating the reality of an ethnic divide. The groups that lobbied for independence in Malaysia did not oppose colonial knowledge. They accepted it as truth and deployed it in the project of nation building. Malaysian history is mainly

¹³ Willford, 17.

¹⁴ Ibid, 17.

derived from *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals).¹⁵ *Sejarah Melayu* is taught in all elementary and high school history textbooks in Malaysia today and emphasizes the emergence of the Kedah Sultanate, the oldest Malay Sultanate in the Malay Peninsula and the Malacca Sultanate that emerged during the 15th century, which during its golden age ruled almost all of what is now today the peninsula of Malaysia and Riau in Sumatra.

The definition of Malay in Malaya as depicted through Hirschman's study of census classification is ambiguous. The ethnic classification for Malays emerged in census classification from 1871 to 1891 as a distinct group of people from other Austronesian groups of people like the Javanese, Bugis or Acehnese. Reforms in the census beginning in 1891 classified Malays as "Malays and others."¹⁶ The others included Natives of the Archipelago, Aborigines, Acehnese Bugis, Dayaks, Javanese, Jawi Pekans and Manilamen, which referred to people from the Philippine Archipelago. In the census classification of Malaya throughout the early 20th century Malays were often categorized along with other people from what is today Indonesia and the Philippines as either Malay or others, the Malay population by race, and in 1931 these groups were categorized as Malaysians by "race."¹⁷ Certain groups of people were gradually taken out of this list but the general idea was to group Malays and people from the Malay Archipelago into a category.

Since Malaysia achieved independence, Shamsul states that the three pillars of Malayness, *Bahasa*, *Raja* and *Agama* (Language, King and Religion) were emphasized to create

¹⁵ Cheah Boon Kheng, compiled, *Sejarah Melayu: The Malay Annals*. Reprint No. 17 (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1998), 3.

¹⁶ Hirschman, 563.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 564.

the history of Malay and Malaysia.¹⁸ Introductory Malaysian history today focuses on the creation of the Kedah and Malacca sultanates, the conversion of the Sultan of Malacca to Islam and how the Sultanate was the foundation of Malay custom, language and religion in helping spread it across the peninsula and retaining its tradition. The Kedah Sultanate's depiction starts from the Kedah Annals which has elements of mysticism in the story of its founding rulers. It basically revolves around the character of Merong Mahawangsa who supposedly has ties to the elite families of Rome. He voyages from Rome to China but his journey takes a detour when he is attacked by a mythical giant bird called the Garuda. Due to the attack he is thrown off course and land in what is today the state of Kedah. Merong Mahawangsa establishes the Kingdom of Langkasuka. He however returns to Rome and his son, Merong Mahapudisat becomes King of Langkasuka. Merong Mahapudisat then divides his kingdom up for his sons to rule. He divides them into the Kingdom of Siam, Perak and Kedah. His lineage through the Sultanate of Kedah from his great-great grandson who converted to Islam from Hinduism and was known Sultan Mudzafar Shah changed the Kingdom of Langkasuka into the Kingdom of Kedah.¹⁹ Mudzafar Shah is considered the first Sultan of Kedah who the current ruler Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah can trace his family lineage up to. The Kedah Annals has mythical aspects to its tale but it does touch on two of the three pillars of Malayness, Islam and Kingship.²⁰

The same historical plot has parallels in the creation of the Malacca Sultanate. It begins with the story of its founder Parameswara Batara Sri Tri Buana who was the ruler of minor areas along the straits of Malacca including the island of what is today Singapore and was said

¹⁸ Shamsul A.B., 358.

¹⁹ Cheah, 221.

²⁰ Ibid, 223.

to have royal ties to the once dominant empire in the region, Srivijaya. His hold over these realms was contested by the regional power house at the time, the Kingdom of Majapahit. Parameswara as he is better known in history before his name and titled changed when he converted to Islam, fled to what is the current state of Malacca. He is said to have converted to Islam once he married a princess from the nearby kingdom of Pasai. He was known as Sultan Mahmud Iskandar Shah after his conversion. The Sultanate of Malacca is depicted in Malaysian history books to be the foundation of Malaysia's history. Even after it was occupied by the Portuguese and Dutch its royal line expanded to the nearby Sultanate of Johor and some of its other descendants started Sultanate Kingdoms that have shaped the geography of what is today the Peninsula of Malaysia.

Malay groups in Malaysia can trace their ancestry to Malaysia through where their ancestral *kampong* or villages are. Many Malay sultanates were built around these *kampongs*. These kampongs also happen to be an integral part of Malay culture and kampong is a term that many till today feel deeply attached to.²¹ The majority of Malay Muslim Malaysians go back to their kampongs during the Eid festival which occurs at the end of the Ramadhan fast. It has become an integral part of Malay culture during Eid and has also created the term *balik kampong* (which refers to returning to the village or going back home). The kampong became and still is an integral part of Malay identity in Malaysia as well being the foundational place of *Bahasa, Raja and Agama*. The Malaysian and Malay nationalism can also trace its foundation the concepts of *Bahasa, Raja and Agama*.

²¹ Shamsul, 362.

There is no concrete historical evidence regarding the migration history of the Malay peoples. The history of immigrant indentured labourers coming from British colonized areas in China and India are not detailed extensively in elementary and high school education. These gaps in the ethnic history of Malaysia combined with the focus on elite society and kingdoms have dominated the nationalist goals of Malaysia. During Mahathir Mohamad's tenure as Prime Minister the term *Bangsa Malaysia* (the Malaysian Race) became a unifying nationalist program in 1995 to unite all Malaysian ethnic groups. According to Thomas Williamson's work *Incorporating a Malaysian Nation*, he described that Mahathir's plan of *Bangsa Malaysia* was widely promoted in 1995 and generated considerable interest. Williamson also states that "the promotion of *Bangsa Malaysia* filled the desire of many Malaysians to think in supraethnic terms, but the state's specifics for doing so remained as elusive as the definition of a fully developed country."²² Williamson also added that *Bangsa Malaysia* was seen as a threat by many Malay nationalists. Williamson argued that since Malaysia's independence, "many Malay nationalists claimed that any Malaysian identity must be based on Malay characteristics."²³ He gave the example of the Congress of Malay Scholars held in 1995, which discussed and defended the position of the Malay language being threatened by the increased use of English in business and private education. After this congress ended, a memorandum was circulated by committee members of the congress deeming the *Bangsa Malaysia* campaign "to be insufficiently Malay."²⁴ Wawasan 2020 was a political technology catering more towards creating a growing middle class population in Malaysia, which would then lay the foundations

²² Thomas Williamson, "Incorporating a Malaysian Nation," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.17, No.3 (2002): 411.

²³ Ibid, 411.

²⁴ Ibid, 411.

for the nation to reach first nation status by the year 2020. 1Malaysia is still attempting to achieve some of the goals of Wawasan 2020 but its ultimate function as a political technology is to manage and create a multicultural state for all, which Wawasan 2020's *Bangsa Malaysia* component failed to achieve.

The Migration of Chinese and Indians to the Malayan Peninsula

For Chinese and Indian groups, regarding themselves as Malaysian is much more complex. Ching Hwang Yen's *The Chinese in South East Asia and Beyond: Socioeconomic and Political Dimensions* gives a detailed description of the influx of Chinese migration into the Malay peninsula and northern Borneo. According to Ching the largest influx of Chinese migrants to Malaysia is the Min Nan group.²⁵ They came from the Fujian and Guangdong regions of South China. Even within the Min Nan people there is a distinct difference in terms of dialect spoken and culture. The Hokkiens are the largest Chinese dialect group in Malaysia. They originated and arrived from the southern regions of Fujian. The bulk of Chinese settlers in Malaya before the 18th century came from Amoy and Zhangzhou and settled primarily in Penang and Malacca, where they formed the bulk of the local Chinese population.²⁶ More Hokkiens settled in Malaya from the 19th century onwards, and dominated the rubber plantation and financial sectors of the Malayan economy. The bulk of Hokkien-speaking Chinese settled in the Malay Peninsula and formed the largest dialect group in many states, specifically in Penang, Malacca, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis. In Malaysian Borneo, the Hokkiens make up a sizeable proportion within the Chinese community, and are primarily found in larger towns, notably Kuching and Sibiu.²⁷

There are also Teochew and Hainan Min Nan Chinese. Teochew immigrants from the Chaoshan region began to settle in Malaya in large numbers from the 18th century onwards, mainly in Kedah. These immigrants were chiefly responsible for setting up gambier

²⁵ Ching Hwang Yen, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia and Beyond: Socioeconomic and Political Dimensions* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2008), 69.

²⁶ Ibid, 74.

²⁷ Fujio Hara, *Malayan Chinese and China: Conversion in Identity Consciousness* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2003), 98.

and pepper plantation industries in Malaya. More Teochews immigrated to the southernmost state of the Malayan peninsula, Johor, which was encouraged by the state's royal family in the 19th century. Many new towns were established in Johor and populated by plantation workers from the Chaoshan region of China. Chinese immigrants from Hainan began to migrate to Malaya and North Borneo from the 19th century onwards, albeit in much smaller numbers than the aforementioned speech groups.²⁸ The Hainanese were employed as cooks by wealthy Straits Chinese families, while others were engaged in food catering or fishing and formed the largest dialect group in Kemaman district of Terengganu and Pulau Ketam (town in Malaysian state of Selangor) as well as sizeable communities in Penang and Johor Baru.²⁹

The other Chinese groups that migrated from China were the Ming Dong people who mainly spoke Hakka and Cantonese dialects. The Hakka people came from both Guangdong and Fujian provinces. They form the second largest group of people after the Hokkiens. Large numbers of Hakka settled in the western parts of Malaya and North Borneo and worked as miners in the 19th century as valuable metals such as gold and tin were discovered. Descendants of these miners formed the largest community among the Chinese in Selangor and very large communities in Perak (specifically Taiping and Ipoh), Sarawak, Sabah and Negeri Sembilan.³⁰ The Cantonese mostly came from Guangdong province and a minority from Guangxi province. They form the third largest group of people after the Hakkas. They settled down in Kuala Lumpur of the Klang Valley, Ipoh of the Kinta Valley in Perak, Pahang as

²⁸ Ching, 109.

²⁹ Hara, 101.

³⁰ Ibid, 101.

well as Seremban in Negeri Sembilan and Sandakan of Sabah.³¹ They started the development and turned settlement areas into principal towns. Most of the early Cantonese worked as coolie labourers, engaged in tin mining and rubber plantations.

It is critical to note that Malaysians of Chinese descent came from different areas of China that were culturally and linguistically distinct from each other. Although they may have differed culturally and linguistically from each other, Amy Freedman has described how these groups eventually managed to create a distinct Chinese identity in Malaysia. This distinct culture has also helped contribute to the Chinese population in Malaysia being a dynamic economic force.³² Through the creation of religious Chinese societies in urban settlements, many Chinese groups in Malaysia managed to create thriving economic networks which also fostered a new sense of unity, which had some distinction from Chinese nationalism in China. The economic successes of Malaysian Chinese compared to many Malay groups created an uneasy coexistence that reached a boiling point on May 13th, 1969. Even with the implementation of discriminatory racial laws to ease ethnic tension after the May 13th incident, Chinese Malaysians still exert a disproportionate amount of influence in the country's economy. Chinese Malaysians have managed to overcome ethnic discriminatory laws in Malaysia due to their establishment of a strong economic community even during colonial times. This was not the case for Indian migrant workers brought to Malaysia as indentured labourers.

The history of Indian influence in the Malay Archipelago dates back to the Indianized kingdoms of Southeast Asia, which reflected both Hindu and Buddhist influences. Critically

³¹ Ibid, 102.

³² Amy Freedman, *The Effects of Government Policy and Institutions On Chinese Overseas Acculturation: The Case of Malaysia* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2001), 312.

important were the Kalinga kingdoms which exerted influence over Southeast Asian kingdoms. The ancient Indian kingdom of Kalinga was located in southeastern India. In the 7th century an Indonesian kingdom was named Kalingga after the aforementioned Kalinga in India. Chinese sources mention this kingdom as a center for Buddhist scholars around 604 A.D.

The history of the Tamil labourers who came to Malaysia is connected to the Indian caste system particularly from the Tamil Nadu region of India. The majority of indentured labourers that were brought to Malaysia were from these lower caste groups. According to Willford the ancestors of this caste group of Tamil workers were from the *Paraiyar Jati* class who were “recruited because of their impoverished status in Indian society, and in Malaysia their poverty has persisted.”³³ The British also brought Telegu and Malayalee people from South India as well as Tamil Ceylonese of higher caste to administer estates and also work in more professional occupations such as medical assistants and civil servants. During colonial times there also grew an Indian business community made up of the Gujaratis, Sindhis, Chettiars, and Tamil Muslims. Apart from this there was also substantial migration of English-speaking Indians to work in the British colonial government. The administration of Tamil labourers by higher Indian castes further solidified the low rank they had in Malayan society.

The Tamil migration began as soon as the British acquired Penang, Singapore and Malacca. They started gradually to come into Malaysia which started a steady flow of Indian labour. In the later days of the colonial period the majority South Indian Tamils were concentrated mainly in Perak, Selangor, and Negri Sembilan, on the rubber estates and railways, though a significant proportion found employment on the docks in Penang and

³³ Willford, 16.

Singapore.³⁴ The Telugus were concentrated in lower Perak, northern Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Kulim and Sungai Petani in Kedah and Pahang.³⁵ The Malayalees were located predominantly in Lower Perak, Kuala Lumpur, parts of Negeri Sembilan, and Johor Baru where they were usually in the estates or in the civil service in the earlier days.³⁶ The majority of Tamils who were descendants of lower caste groups have only just started to move out of the estates in Malaysia today. Their jobs are being replaced by new migrant workers mostly from Indonesia or Bangladesh but their social and economic status has not seen much improvement, which has recently lead to the HINDRAF rally in 2008, calling for equal ethnic rights for Tamil working class groups of Malaysia.

There are a growing number of Indians that have thrived economically and socially in Malaysia. This group however has distanced themselves from what they still perceive as lower class Tamils.³⁷ Colonial knowledge and the Indian caste system have generally served to divide Indian groups that came to Malaysia. In the post-colonial period that will be discussed in the next portion of this chapter, I will also describe how the Tamil working class groups and many other Indian communities struggled economically because of government affirmative action policies that favored the majority Malay Muslim groups.

³⁴ Wong Siu-Lun, ed., *Chinese and Indian Diasporas: Comparative Perspectives*. (Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, 2004), 127.

³⁵ Ibid, 129.

³⁶ Ibid, 140.

³⁷ Willford, 21.

The May 13th Incident and the Creation of the New Economic Policy

As was above, the production of facts regarding British Malaya during late colonial divided the population into distinct ethnic groups, geographical locations, and economic practices, which made national unity after Malaysia gained independence a difficult proposition. The conditions in which the British left the Malayan colony, with its three ethnic groups culturally, economically and to some extent geographically divided created a difficult challenge for a newly independent Malaysia. The Malay and Chinese groups in particular were wary of each other due to differences in geographical locations, culture, and economic status. The communist uprising was led mainly by Malaysian-born Chinese. Also, at the time of independence, the Chinese population exceeded that of the Malay population.³⁸ This further deteriorated the possibility of solidarity between the members of these two groups.

Malay nationalist groups, which can trace their roots to the various kampongs in Malaysia, demanded the preservation of Malay rights and culture in the newly formed nation of Malaysia.³⁹ Many Malay rights groups feared that the increase in Chinese population in the newly formed Malaysia, which exceeded that of people classified as Malays would undermine their future status. There was political conflict over who was to be considered a citizen of the newly formed nation of Malaysia. Many Malay groups feared being overwhelmed from the immigrant population of Chinese and Indians. The main political organization in Malaysia, United Malays National Organization (UMNO), led by Tuanku Abdul Rahman questioned the loyalty of non-Malays to Malaysia. UMNO, which led a three party coalition group known today

³⁸ Ching, 215.

³⁹ Timothy Barnard, *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, edit. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 17.

as Barisan Nasional (National Front), has been Malaysia's only ruling party since independence.⁴⁰ The other two members of the coalition in the National Front are the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). For the most parts of this political coalition's history, it has served the purpose of formally representing the three main ethnic groups of Malaysia.

However, from the beginning of the coalition's inception UMNO pushed for the protection of Malay rights. During the drafting of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya, which was conducted over the period of June to October 1956 by four Malay rulers, four members of the coalition and a commission set up by the British known as the Reid Commission contained provisions protecting position for the Malays, such as quotas in admission to higher education and the civil service, and making Islam the official religion of the federation.⁴¹ It also made Malay the official language of the nation, although the right to vernacular education in Chinese and Tamil would be protected.

This was originally agreed upon by almost all parties as the Reid Commission saw the necessity for affirmative action policies to protect the rights of Malay groups and that it would also ease the ethnic, economic, and geographical divides that existed between the Malay and Chinese groups, in particular.⁴² The inclusion of the East Malaysian states in Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak as well as Singapore in 1963 further required revision of the constitution but many Malay rights groups, including UMNO were fearful that the addition of Singapore, which was heavily populated by Chinese, might further cause rift between ethnic groups, because they felt

⁴⁰ Durisshah Idrus. *New Economic Policy and the Birth of Malaysia's Own Industrial Relations System*. Jabatan Pembangunan Sumber Malaysia, 2003) 12.

⁴¹ Ibid, 14.

⁴² Tuanku Abdul Rahman Putra. *Political Awakening*. (Pelanduk Publications, 1986), 84.

that there might be an influx of Chinese communities migrating to cities and towns in Malaysia which would in turn change the geographical, economic and political landscape in Malaysia. Regular talks were held between Tuanku Abdul Rahman led UMNO and the People's Action Party led by Lee Kuan Yew, who later became the first Prime Minister of Singapore. Throughout the years 1963 to 1965 in which Singapore was part of Malaysia, Singaporeans wanted an equal and meritocratic society but UMNO was pushing for a society that helped historically disadvantaged *bumiputra* (princes of the soil), who were considered indigenous to Malaysia. Many Chinese communities in Malaysia disproportionately benefitted from colonial economic policies, but UMNO wanted to level the playing field to reduce colonial inequality. UMNO wanted to implement policies that would help Malays economically and politically.

The tension between the Malays and Chinese groups were certainly rife in the early years of Malaysian independence. Ethnic conflict broke out in Singapore in 1964 and in 1965 a unanimous vote by the Malaysian parliament of 126-0, expelled Singapore from Malaysia.⁴³ Although Singapore was excluded from Malaysia ethnic tension still persisted between Chinese and Malay groups in Malaysia. The boiling point was the May 13th incident in 1969. This incident is significant in defining ethnic relations in Malaysia and the creation of concrete policies benefiting people in Malaysia categorized as *bumiputra*. This incident stemmed from the political contestation between the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) and UMNO during the 1969 general elections. The DAP party consisted mainly of Chinese politicians. Ethnic and religious sentiments were major topics to gain votes in this election. DAP accused Barisan Nasional's Chinese faction MCA of giving too many rights away to UMNO. DAP promoted an

⁴³ Ibid, 108.

ethnic unity campaign during this time called Malaysian Malaysia, the main idea of which was to create a confederation of political parties formed to oppose Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia, which benefitted *bumiputras*. The idea of Malaysian Malaysia was originally created by Lee Kuan Yew, when Singapore and Malaysia were negotiating terms that pertained to *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* statuses in Malaysia. During this election DAP had tied with the Alliance for control of the Selangor state legislature, a large setback in the polls for the Alliance. On the night of 11 and 12 May, the opposition celebrated their victory. During the celebration clashes broke out between the majority Chinese DAP party and UMNO members who also felt they should show strength by marching the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

Riots were widespread throughout Kuala Lumpur and there were some clashes in other states in Malaysia. Official figures of the death toll were around 196 but some foreign media speculated that it was ten times that amount.⁴⁴ This event has continuously been invoked as a justification for why the affirmative action policies in place today that benefit *bumiputras* should be maintained. The 1Malaysia campaign is the first government program since the incident that is proposing restructuring preferential treatment for bumiputras since the May 13th incident. The events prompted Tuanku Abdul Rahman to resign and the post of Malaysian Prime Minister was taken over by Tun Abdul Razak who is the father of current Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. Abdul Razak immediately implemented the controversial Malaysian New Economic Policy (NEP) that gave further benefits to the people given the distinction of bumiputras in Malaysia.

⁴⁴ Idrus, 15.

The Constitution Amendment Act of 1971 named Articles 152, 153, and 181, and also Part III of the Constitution as specially protected, permitting Parliament to pass legislation that would limit dissent with regard to these provisions pertaining to the social contract.⁴⁵ The social contract is essentially an implicit *quid pro quo* agreement between the Malay and non-Malay citizens of Malaysia, which in return for granting the non-Malays citizenship at independence, posits symbols of Malay authority such as the Malay monarchy as national symbols, and the Malays were granted special economic privileges.⁴⁶ Some of these privileges included lower prices for land and housing and requiring a certain percentage of *bumiputras* to be employed by private and government firms. The controversial Internal Security Act (ISA), which permits detention without trial, was also amended to maintain harmony and peace in the nation. The opposition DAP party could not prevent the amendments from passing because the Barisan Nasional had a two-thirds majority in Parliament, a majority that it maintained in all general elections up until 2008. The *Rukunegara*, (national pledge), was also created to strengthen ethnic harmony, stressing the belief in god, loyalty to king and country, the supremacy of the constitution, the rule of law, and morality and courtesy. This pledge was reiterated throughout Malaysian society just like the 1Malaysia campaign today, through murals, billboards, media and recitation in schools. The *Rukunegara* created is as follows:

Whereas Our Country, Malaysia nurtures the ambitions of:

- achieving a more perfect unity amongst the whole of her society;
- preserving a democratic way of life;

⁴⁵ Ibid, 18.

⁴⁶ Abdul Rahman, 121.

- creating a just society where the prosperity of the country can be enjoyed together in a fair and equitable manner;
- guaranteeing a liberal approach towards her rich and varied cultural traditions; and
- building a progressive society that will make use of science and modern technology.

Now, Therefore We, the people of Malaysia, pledge to concentrate the whole of our energy and efforts to achieve these ambitions based on the following principles:

- Belief in God
- Loyalty to King and Country
- The Supremacy of the Constitution
- The Rule of Law
- Courtesy and Morality

Barisan Nasional became the dominant party in Malaysia but UMNO became the dominant voice within the coalition party. The MCA and MIC, Chinese and Indian faction of the Barisan Nasional coalition has more often followed the lead of UMNO as most ministers have hailed from the Malay Muslim majority. This has been particularly crippling to the MIC faction and the Indian community of Malaysia. According to Willford, the MIC representatives over time have seen their influence in government wane and have had little or no voice in terms of promoting for the rights of the Indian community since independence. The affirmative action policies that benefitted Malays and other *bumiputras* have not benefitted Tamil estate workers. Willford describes criticism of the MIC party as not focusing on improving economic conditions of this Tamil working class group and only focusing on their political and personal interests.⁴⁷ He also describes that the MIC groups were mainly formed by Malaysian Indians who were mainly from

⁴⁷ Willford, 232.

well to do families that considered themselves of higher caste than these Tamil working class groups.⁴⁸

The political technologies of census classification and colonial knowledge in Malaya had a multiplicity of effects for the three main ethnic groups in post-colonial Malaysia. It has shaped the ethnic divide between these groups as well as shaping Malaysian society into rigid ethnical and religious classifications. Malaysia has had to continuously define its meaning of what it is to be Malaysian and work to define and redefine multiculturalism in the nation. Census classification set the tone for the various divisions ethnically and religiously in Malaysia and affirmative action policies that benefitted a majority of the population were used as a governmental tool to manage ethnic and religious differences and promote the majority Malay population economically. There were many complex divisions ethnically and religiously at the beginning of the post-colonial years. To a certain extent, affirmative action policies benefiting the more economically disparaged Malay groups have helped ease ethnic tensions and shaped the foundation of the Wawasan 2020 campaign years through the continuation of the NEP. It has contributed in transforming the Malaysian economy to the category of a Newly Industrialized Country (NIC) in the 21st century. However, industrialization and modernization bring changes. The shaping and the development of citizens of a growing knowledge-based society demands not only a restructuring of affirmative action policies but bringing up the argument that the deal made to implement these policies has recently become more of a deterrent to economy and multiculturalism than a tool to effectively manage them. The 1Malaysia campaign is a new political tool that has been created to manage Malaysia's diverse

⁴⁸ Ibid, 251.

population as the country finds itself confronted with new competitors in Asia, such as China, India, and Indonesia. The next chapter will focus on the foundational years of shaping the Malaysian economy under the banner of Wawasan 2020 in the late 80s and early 90s and how it compares to the state's new effort at multicultural development in the 1Malaysia program.

Chapter 2

Understanding 1Malaysia as a Political Technology

This chapter's main goal is to present the current programs and performances of the 1Malaysia using the tools and plans it has laid out to achieve, ethnic and religious harmony, global economic competitiveness and increasing government efficiency. This chapter will present the differences between 1Malaysia and Wawasan 2020 in their goals of shaping Malaysian economy and society. It will highlight that both are political technologies that have overlapping similarities but the main difference is that the 1Malaysia campaign recognizes ethnic differences and seeks to manage and create a tolerant multiethnic society in which all groups are recognized and have a place. The Malaysian state has created 1Malaysia to elicit multicultural harmony and create a nation in which all of Malaysia's diverse ethnic and religious groups are represented as integral. Furthermore, it seeks to produce ethnic and religious tolerance and increase the efficiency and transparency of government.

This chapter will show that the 1Malaysia is also a continuation of the Wawasan 2020 campaign. The goal of 1Malaysia is to continue the project of making Malaysia into a developed nation by the year 2020. I refer to it as a political technology that is intended to elicit collective harmony and ethnic and religious tolerance. Harmony and tolerance are viewed as essential to a stable nation that will be capable of continued future growth. With the economic expansion of China and India, as well as increasing competition regionally from countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, Malaysia needs to ensure its economic competitiveness and appeal to foreign investors. This chapter will also present the core tools that the 1Malaysia campaign has designed to represent the state as transparent. It will be divided into two subsections. The first

section will analyze the core principles of the 1Malaysia campaign and compare it to the Wawasan 2020 years. I will explain the central programs of 1Malaysia and contrast it with Wawasan 2020. The second section will also be a comparative analysis but will mainly highlight the economic goals of 1Malaysia. It will document the 1Malaysia campaign's role in rebranding the nation's image to increase its economic credibility. It will highlight the economic plans and strategy that Najib Razak's government intends to take to achieve Vision 2020.

In some respects my analysis of 1Malaysia is inseparable from my personal experience growing up during the Wawasan 2020 years. When I returned to Malaysia after seven years away, I was a little overwhelmed. The images of my childhood memories of Malaysia as a developing nation have changed. Having received the bulk of my higher education in North America since 2002 gives me the perspective not only as a citizen who has a deep understanding of the nation but, given my experience abroad, I am able to reflect on events in the country as at least a partial outsider.

Driving from my hometown Seremban in the state of Negeri Sembilan to the capital of Kuala Lumpur, it was hard not to notice the billboards that were situated on bridge crossings and billboard towers along the North-South highway. Almost all of them carried the symbol of 1Malaysia, the number 1 clad with the colors of the Malaysian flag. Some restaurants had their servers pin little 1Malaysia logos on their work uniforms. There were 1Malaysia medical clinics that offered affordable healthcare for lower income families in Seremban. There were also 1Malaysia hotels that afforded budget accommodation. On the television it was hard to miss commercials that were linked to 1Malaysia and the self-titled 1Malaysia songs in different versions.

The 1Malaysia campaign was announced when it was decided by Barisan Nasional members decided that Najib Razak would take over as the next Prime Minister of Malaysia on September, 16th, 2008. During his speech at Dewan Rakyat (People's Hall) on that day, he accepted his election to be the next Prime Minister of Malaysia, after Abdullah Badawi stepped down from the post and called for the cabinet, government ministries and agencies, and all civil servants to emphasize ethnic harmony, national unity and efficient governance. 1Malaysia was established in response to protests including the BERSIH (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections) 1.0 rally on November 10th, 2007, which called for electoral reforms, the HINDRAF (Hindu Rights Action Force) which occurred on November 25th, 2007, that mainly consisted of Tamil working class groups of Malaysia, calling for more ethnic and religious equality, and the poor showing in the 2008 general elections by the ruling coalition party of Malaysia, the Barisan Nasional (National Front) party, losing its two-thirds majority in parliament for the first time in history.

The 2007 Bersih rally was held in the capital Kuala Lumpur on November 10. The aim of this march was to campaign for electoral reform. It was precipitated by allegations of corruption and discrepancies in the Malaysian election system that heavily favors the ruling Barisan Nasional party. Much of the publicity for the rally was distributed through online media and blogs. The 2007 HINDRAF (Hindu Rights Action Force) rally was also held in Kuala Lumpur on November 25, 2007. The rally organizers called the protest over alleged discriminatory policies which favour ethnic Malays. HINDRAF was formed by ethnic Indian lawyers in Malaysia to preserve and push for equal rights and opportunities for minority Indians. The event that immediately prompted sweeping changes being needed within the Barisan Nasional party was the 2008 Malaysian general election. Barisan Nasional's main opposition was the Pakatan

Rakyat party. The parliamentary election was won by BN, but yielded one of the worst results in the coalition's history. Opposition parties had won 82 seats out of 222 seats in parliament or 36.9% of parliamentary seats, while BN only managing to secure the remaining 140 seats or 63.1%. In addition, five of the twelve contested state legislatures were won by the opposition, compared with only one in the last election.⁴⁹ These three events shaped what 1Malaysia's goals were to be and how it was to be implemented across the nation.

During Najib's speech on April 3rd, 2009 when he was sworn into office at the *Dewan Rakyat* (People's Hall), he addressed the underlying goals of 1Malaysia. He stated that the ultimate objective of 1Malaysia is to achieve national unity. In response to queries from Datuk Halimah Mohd Sadique, a Barisan Nasional member and politician during question time at the *Dewan Rakyat*, Najib stated "1Malaysia is a concept to foster unity in Malaysians of all races based on several important values which should become the practice of every Malaysian."⁵⁰ Halimah had asked Razak, who was attending parliament for the first time after his election as prime minister, to clarify the 1Malaysia program in terms of its implementation and assimilation by the plural society of the country and how it would contribute to the success of Wawasan 2020. Najib said that 1Malaysia did not diverge from the previous policies of the Barisan Nasional government but complemented existing approaches to further strengthen unity and ensure stability towards achieving greater progress and development for the people and country. Najib said "1Malaysia is a formula which serves as a prerequisite to ensure realization of the country's aspiration to achieve developed nation status by 2020 if it is

⁴⁹ "Election Setback for Malaysian PM," BBC News, August 3, 2008.

⁵⁰ Najib Razak, "Prime Minister Najib's Maiden Speech: '1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now'." *The Star Online*, April 3 2009, 1.

assimilated in the people and practiced by society. If creating a *Bangsa Malaysia* (the Malaysian race) outlined in Vision 2020 is the ultimate objective of this journey, then 1Malaysia is the guide pointing the way towards that objective.”⁵¹

In his responses, Najib added that the unity portrayed under the 1Malaysia concept differed greatly from the concept of assimilation practiced in other countries where ethnic identities have made way for a common national identity. He said 1Malaysia also differed greatly from the ‘Malaysian Malaysia’ concept of the opposition because 1Malaysia did not deviate from the essence of the Federal Constitution. He said 1Malaysia would uphold all the fundamental provisions of the Federal Constitution, “Let no one feel apprehensive or suspicious and worried that the concept would deviate from what had been agreed to by our forefathers. In fact, 1Malaysia values and respects the ethnic identities of every community in Malaysia and regards them as assets to be proud of.”⁵² He was alluding to article 153 of the federal constitution, specifically the agreement that Malay and *bumiputra* rights were not going to be entirely reformed but would be redirected on providing for those who really need economic and social assistance.

During this question and answer session he emphasized that 1Malaysia is about “acceptance among the people of various races where any one race accepted the uniqueness of the others so that everyone was able to live together in a situation of mutual respect as the people of one nation. It is an obvious progress from the attitude of tolerance.”⁵³ Najib described the basis of 1Malaysia consisting of the principles of justice for all races, and this

⁵¹ Ibid, 1.

⁵² Ibid, 2.

⁵³ Ibid, 2.

meant that all the people would be taken care of and no one would be marginalized. Najib said “this justice must take into account the different levels of progress of the races. As such, the government policies and constitutional provisions which safeguard the needy will continue to be implemented.”⁵⁴ He said 1Malaysia was a continuation of the agenda of nation-building and, for the country to progress, the people must achieve progress first, and this had to begin with the attitude of inter-ethnic acceptance which would strengthen unity. Najib never questioned or asserted that past national policies or leaders have neglected national unity but this thesis is arguing this political campaign is the first in Malaysian history designed mainly to foster national unity⁵⁵. Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad has criticized the 1Malaysia campaign, saying he did not understand what its true function was.⁵⁶

It is clear that this political technology is to strengthen the nation. Razak said when unity had been achieved the process of national development would be smoother. Najib is certainly alluding to the fact that for Malaysia to move forward economically and achieve the goal of Wawasan 2020, which is to reach first world status by the year 2020, more tolerance and unity needed to be developed among the nation’s people. 1Malaysia is a political technology to fix the current ethnic and religious division so that it can contribute to the initial goal of Wawasan 2020. Razak explained that the 1Malaysia concept was founded on and would be implemented under two main aspects: firstly, the assimilation of core elements of unity, and, secondly, the assimilation of aspiration values. What he means by aspiration values are moral values that the

⁵⁴ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 2.

1Malaysia campaign seeks to instill in the Malaysian people.⁵⁷ “The core elements of unity are, firstly, the attitude of acceptance among the races and the people, secondly, principles of nationhood based on the Federal Constitution and the *Rukunegara* (National Ideology), and, thirdly, social justice.”⁵⁸ He said these elements of unity were supported by aspiration values which should be a part of the lifestyle of the people, including values such as mutual respect, piety, moderation in conduct and speech, and prudence in decisions and actions. Razak said the second aspect emphasized elements which should be the practice of any community which wanted to be progressive and successful; “These elements encompassed a culture of excellence in discharging all duties and responsibilities; a culture of punctuality in terms of respecting time and upgrading efficiency; boldness in being innovative and exploring new opportunities; meritocracy in offering a task to the most qualified to implement based on the Federal Constitution and the country's policies.”⁵⁹

Razak said the fostering of these aspiration values would give rise to a respected Malaysian society of integrity in line with a developed and successful nation-state. He said that in implementing its commitment to the people, the government had coined the slogan “People First, Performance Now” as part of 1Malaysia. Razak explained:

“The theme means that in emphasizing the importance of unity among Malaysians, the government will also give preference to issues regarded as important by the people. The government also stresses on performance and

⁵⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 2.

achievement by all civil servants in their dealings with the people. In other words, the government understands very well how important civil service efficiency and quality are in improving the living standard of the people and, as such, all government agencies will give priority to the people-friendly approach.”⁶⁰

Another aspect of the 1Malaysia project was an aggressive media campaign as the state sought to use both old and new media to reach out to the population. On September 17th, 2008, the 1Malaysia.com.my website was officially launched. Razak said that the website was one of the main forums that would enable better communication between the government and the people.⁶¹ The website highlights and updates the 1Malaysia initiatives and events. He said it is a tool to provide a forum for Malaysians to interact with their government. It extensively uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Razak posts updates and his opinions on Facebook and Twitter which usually garner a lot of comments both equally good and bad especially during the time of the Bersih 2.0 rally. Razak who usually posts or tweets on the current government’s programs under 1Malaysia and the progress it is making may get a lot of comments from his followers thanking him, but because he does not restrict the privacy settings on his Facebook or Twitter pages, during and after the Bersih 2.0 rally there were a lot of video posts from the Bersih 2.0 rally showing police beatings and tear gasses being thrown at Bersih supporters. The Prime Minister himself has close to a million Facebook followers and over half a million Twitter followers to date. The 1Malaysia website with its use of social media,

⁶⁰ Ibid, 3.

⁶¹ Ibid, 4.

has allowed an increase of interaction between citizens and their Prime Minister. Compared to the other political technologies in the past that were designed to manage multiculturalism and ethnic and religious differences in Malaysian history, 1Malaysia sets itself apart from census classification during the colonial period, the New Economic Policy during the Sino-Malay conflict of 1969 and Wawasan 2020 because it has more interactive approaches and components in its attempts at reaching out to the public and deploying its message to the public. Barry states that “interactive technology is expected to produce active citizens.”⁶²

It is a political technology that has embraced new media and the use of internet websites to create and promote its various projects in a way that is highly interactive and accessible compared to the past political technologies in Malaysia. The 1Malaysia has had its share of criticism and does have a lot of issues it needs to address over its expenditure and intent, but it certainly has set itself apart from past political technologies. Through 1Malaysia the Malaysian government is moving away to a certain degree from playing the role of pastoral care taker, to being a government that is more interactive and reflexive in its approach and practices of increasing government efficiency and productivity. As discussed in the introduction and later in this chapter, the GTP, ETP and Yayasan 1Malaysia are three programs under the 1Malaysia program and the Prime Minister’s department designed to showcase and provide an interactive forum for addressing topics related to ethnicity and religion and to track the progress of the government’s transition to increase its productivity, transparency, and efficiency. These 1Malaysia projects and initiatives according to Najib Razak are designed through feedback from the public, through opinion polls, discussions and interaction with the

⁶² Barry, 127.

people through Facebook and Twitter and through meet and greet session with the Prime Minister that are frequently announced on the 1Malaysia website. It is through these interactive possibilities online that 1Malaysia is shaping its utility to foster unity according to the people's needs. For example the GTP's mission statement below highlights how these 1Malaysia programs encourage interactivity and put the citizens as the catalyst of the nation's future progress.

Deploying 1Malaysia to the Nation

Just like the Wawasan 2020 campaign, the 1Malaysia campaign had created songs and videos to go along with its message. The 1Malaysia campaign songs are more focused on spreading the ideas of solidarity among youth. 1Malaysia campaign song titled *Satu Suara, Satu Komuniti Satu Persatuan* (One Voice, One Community, One Organization) portrays images of youths from Malay, Chinese and Indian backgrounds singing about this idea of forgetting differences and embracing diversity for the future of the nation and the way in which the nation can move forward towards future prosperity. This consists of young diverse group of artists singing a combination of Malay, Mandarin and Tamil lyrics which are respectively the main languages for Malays, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups in Malaysia. This is a key difference to the Wawasan 2020 years that focused more on the image of a modern Malaysia. It also composes traditional and contemporary music in these videos as well as traditional and contemporary attire. Even the 1Malaysia song composed by college students from the Lim Kok Wing Institute (a private college for media studies in Kuala Lumpur) apart from the first minutes of images of the current progressive modern images of Kuala Lumpur, focused mainly on visuals of ethnic representation and images of unity and solidarity among citizens of Malaysia. Even the lyrics in both these songs continually reiterate the idea of solidarity for the future of the state. Songs from the Wawasan 2020 campaign like *Setia* (Loyalty) and *Sejahtera Malaysia* (Prosperous Malaysia) focused more on images of a modern Kuala Lumpur, which was the symbol of Malaysian modernity during the 1990s. Its lyrical content had elements of reiterating the place of Islam and the King of Malaysia as central in to the state's imaging. Verses like "*puji dan syukhur kepada Ilahi*" translates as "praise and thanks to the divine" and "*demi raja yang di*

sanjung tinggi” translates as “the king who is looked upon highly” both refer to the Islam and the King of Malaysia. These songs were frequently aired on government broadcasting stations, Radio Television Malaysia 1 & 2. The 1Malaysia campaign has shown much less of referral to Islam and the King in its media messages but focuses much more on the images of unity and harmony of the people of Malaysia.

The logo of 1Malaysia has also been incorporated by many businesses in Malaysia. Since the inception of 1Malaysia, the government has encouraged businesses, both large and small to use the logo of 1Malaysia for their marketing and branding purposes. It was not uncommon while doing field work in Malaysia to walk into restaurants that have their servers and staff wearing collar pins or shirts that carry the logo of 1Malaysia. I interviewed the owner of a growing restaurant franchise in my hometown of Seremban, called Salmah Bevi. This restaurant uses the 1Malaysia logo on server and staff uniforms, caps, and collar pins. I interviewed Salmah Bevi at her restaurant branch in downtown Seremban, who named the restaurant after herself. Bevi is of Indian Muslim background and serves mainly Indian Muslim food, like *murtabak* (shredded beef wrapped in dough bread), mutton fried rice, and *roti canai* (fried bread).

There are 4 Salmah Bevi Restaurants in Seremban alone. Bevi said that as long as she complied with using the same 1Malaysia logo without altering its shape, style or colors, she may use it for her business. She said that to use the 1Malaysia logo she just had to register her business with the Prime Minister’s Office. She noted that all restaurants that want to use the 1Malaysia logo have to be certified as a halal food restaurant by JAKIM the government agency that is given the authority to interpret and implement Islamic shariah laws for Malaysian

Muslims. She added that the guidelines for the usage of the logo are not enforced by any particular government body if deemed that it is used wrongly, but said that may be because there have not been many cases of misuse. She said that the government is encouraging its use rather than limiting it. When asked whether incorporating the 1Malaysia logo to promote her restaurant brought her any added benefit or attracted more customers, she said not exactly in attracting more customers but there are some benefits. "My restaurant has been successful for a while, even before 1Malaysia. The reason why I thought it was a good idea was because it allowed me to brand my product to something that was new and free." She said it is a logo that is attractive and known to all Malaysians today, whether they like it or not. She also added that the uniforms that have the 1Malaysia logo are at a competitive price compared to just getting regular uniforms for her employees. The government subsidizes all the cost of anything 1Malaysia, from the clinics, hotels, stores, and usage of its logo. She said "actually before this I did not require the use of uniforms for my staff but since the price of 1Malaysia uniforms were cheaper, why not."

The 1Malaysia logo is also used by bigger corporations like Measat Satellite. It is the first and only satellite dish provider in the nation owned by Malaysia's current richest entrepreneur, Ananda Krishnan. Former Measat public relations executive, Shawna Felicia Lawrence said she was involved in the process of incorporating the 1Malaysia logo and slogan into Measat's image as a company that supports the government's initiatives. She explained, "When I was involved in this exercise, Measat had no other choice but to support the initiatives by the Ministry of Information, Communications, Culture (MOICC) given we were governed under them. To be able to gain their support, we had to initiate the government's philosophy of "people first,

performance now” so all collateral products, websites, and advertisements had to have that logo placed on it. With that particular logo and support given, MEASAT was able to garner their support (at the) international level, able to get licenses for certain projects etc. Basically, it’s a business deal! Support their initiatives and you get what you want”.

Lawrence said there was a reciprocal quid pro quo agreement especially for bigger companies like Measat to support this campaign especially because they have to work directly with MOICC. She added that Measat implemented putting the logo on its satellite dishes and banners and encouraging the use of 1Malaysia collar pins and neck ties.



Figure 3

Measat 1Malaysia collar pin and corporate ties that carry 1 Malaysia logo on the bottom right corner.

1 Malaysia Sticker

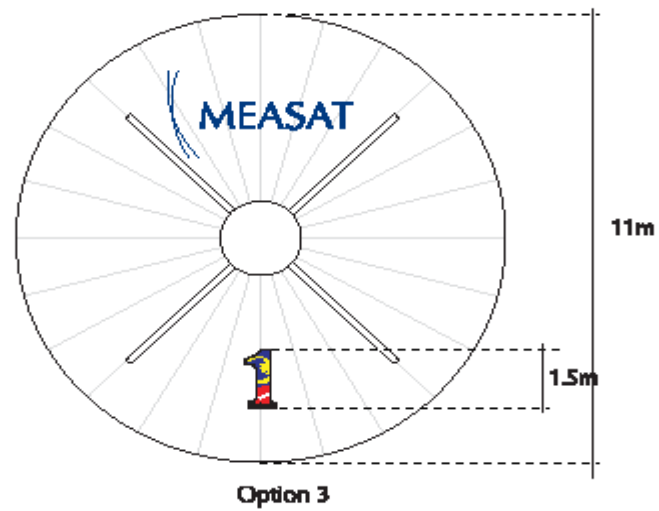
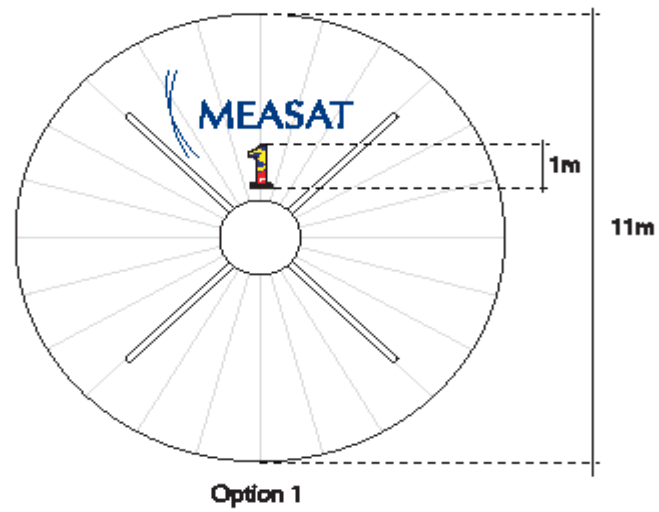


Figure 4

1Malaysia satellite television dish for consumers

MEASAT

25 Ogos 2009

Y. Bhg. Dato' Kamaruddin bin Siaraf
Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Penerangan, Komunikasi dan Kebudayaan Malaysia
Aras 1, Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad
Jalan Raja 50506
Kuala Lumpur

Serahan Tangan

CADANGAN SUMBANGAN KORPORAT UNTUK PROMOSI GAGASAN 1MALAYSIA

Dengan segala hormatnya perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa bagi pihak Lembaga Pengarah MFASAT Satellite Systems Sdn Bhd, MEASAT sebagai warganegara korporat industri komunikasi yang bertanggungjawab akan turut serta menyumbang dan menyokong apa-apa program yang akan dilaksanakan oleh pihak Kementerian dalam menjayakan Konsep 1 Malaysia.

3. Bersama-sama ini dilampirkan sesalinan cadangan dan sumbangan korporat yang dirancang oleh MEASAT beserta anggaran nilai program seperti di Lampiran A. Sekiranya pihak KPKK memerlukan maklumat lebih lanjut, sila hubungi Cik Farah Suhanah bt. Tun Ahmad Sarji di talian +60 (3) 8213 2162 atau e-mel ke: farahs@measat.com

Sekian. Terima kasih.

Yang benar
Bagi pihak,
MEASAT Satellite Systems Sdn Bhd



Farah Suhanah Tun Ahmad Sarji
General Counsel

Cc: Y. Brs. Dr. Mohd Ali bin Mohamad Nor, Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha

MEASAT SATELLITE SYSTEMS SDN BHD (Company No 267944-X)
MEASAT Teleport and Broadcast Centre, 61101 Cyberjaya, Malaysia
Tel: + 60 (0) 8213 2168 Fax: + 60 (0) 8213 2233 Web: www.measat.com

Figure 5

Agreement between Measat and MOICC on implementing the usage of 1 Malaysia logos and supporting its initiatives

LAMPIRAN A

CADANGAN SUMBANGAN MEASAT UNTUK PROMOSI GAGASAN 1 MALAYSIA

BIL	NAMA PROGRAM	RINGKASAN PROGRAM	ANGGARAN NILAI PROGRAM
	MEASAT menyokong kempen Satu Malaysia: Rakyat Didahulukan, Pencapaian Diutamakan.	Logo Satu Malaysia akan di pamirkan di parabola MEASAT yang menhadap lebuh raya KL- Putrajaya	RM10000
		Logo Satu Malaysia akan dicetak bersama dengan Logo MEASAT di poster pameran MEASAT di Pameran / Expo Antarabangsa dan Tempatan (seperti ITU Telecom World 2009 di Geneva, Asia Pacific Satellite Communication Counsel 2009 di Kuala Lumpur)	RM2000
		Logo Satu Malaysia akan dicetak bersama dengan Logo MEASAT di kad – kad perayaan (Hari Raya, Deepavali, Tahun Baru Cina dan Hari Natal)	RM10000
		Logo Satu Malaysia akan dicetak di diari korporat MEASAT 2010	RM10000
		MEASAT juga ingin mencetakan pin kolar logo Satu Malaysia untuk kakitangan MEASAT	RM1000
		MEASAT akan mempamerkan bendera satu Malaysia bersamaan bendera Selangor dan Malaysia di tiang bendera berhadapan bangunan MEASAT.	RM500
		Logo Satu Malaysia akan dipamerkan di laman web utama MEASAT	NIL

Figure 6

Cost and placement of the logo throughout the corporation

Figures 3 and 4 are neckties and collar pins designed for the use of Measat employees. The third figure gives the measurement of the 1Malaysia logo stickers that are placed on Measat satellite dishes for its consumers. The fifth figure is the official agreement between the chief executive of MOICC, Dato Kamaruddin Bin Siaraf and Measat General Counsel Farah Suhanah Tun Ahmad Sarji that Measat will comply and support the 1Malaysia campaign initiatives and objectives. The sixth figure is the proposal of the ways Measat intends to implement the 1Malaysia logo corporate wide, along with the cost to implement them. This provides an example of how a corporation and the government are mutually benefitting by using the 1Malaysia logo as a marketing tool. For the corporation it is mainly for business purposes and linking its corporate brand with the logo. For the government it allows more exposure of the 1Malaysia logo which is the symbol of its intent to unify everyone in the nation. The first proposal is to include the 1Malaysia logo on Measat's spherical advertisement sign on the Kuala Lumpur-Putrajaya Highway. The second proposal is that Measat will include the 1Malaysia along with its corporate logo at all international and local expos and trade shows. The third proposal is that the Measat and 1Malaysia logos will be printed on the holiday cards that Measat sends to its consumers, suppliers, and affiliates, including cards for the Eid Festival, Chinese New Year, Diwali, and Christmas. The fourth and fifth suggestions were to create 1Malaysia color pins and print 1Malaysia logos on Measat corporate diary books that are distributed to employees. The last two proposals were to display the 1Malaysia flag together with the Malaysian and Selangor state flag in front of the Measat building and to incorporate the 1Malaysia logo on the Measat webpage.

These examples show that compared to past political technologies in Malaysia, the state is deploying 1Malaysia not just in state spaces, but in corporate spaces across the nation. Wawasan 2020 did not have a distinct logo but its slogan was placed and seen on government buildings, government companies, and billboards on highways and in the city. The state is encouraging businesses, both large and small to use the 1Malaysia logo. These businesses do get some benefit of marketing the company's brand with the 1Malaysia campaign and the government gets to populate the nation with the symbol which is synonymous with fostering unity and harmony. It also allows smaller businesses to have a connection to the government whether directly or indirectly. Salmah Bevi said that she supports the 1Malaysia campaign and feels that everyone should do what they can to make the government goal into a reality. She added that although implementing the 1Malaysia logo throughout her business may not be seen as something that has a profound impact to the goals of 1Malaysia, she still feels that if everyone supports 1Malaysia in some small way, national unity might become a reality.

The 1Malaysia campaign does not only stop at working together with businesses to foster support for its initiatives but also creates various programs of its own that are promoted and linked through its main website 1Malaysia.com.my. PEMANDU (Performance Management and Delivery Unit) was established on September 16th, 2009 and is a unit under the Prime Minister's Office to oversee implementation and assess the progress of the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) and the Government Transformation Program (GTP), which are two programs that were designed to increase the nation's economic production and increase government efficiency and foster transparency.

The Economic Transformation Program (ETP) is described by the PEMANDU as a comprehensive effort that will help transform Malaysia into a high-income nation by 2020. Its goal is to lift Malaysia's gross national income (GNI) per capita from RM23,700 (USD6,700) in 2009 to more than RM48,000 (USD15,000) in 2020, which they believe will propel the nation to the level of other high income nations.⁶³ They target a GNI growth of six per cent per annum in order to achieve the targets set under Vision 2020. Many of the PEMANDU staff believe that successful implementation of the ETP will see Malaysia's economy undergo significant changes to resemble other developed nations. According to one its executives Mat, the goal of ETP is to continue to promote the shift towards a service-based economy. Mat said the goal is to create more than 3.3 million new jobs by 2020, which will be spread across the country in urban and rural areas. He also added that the nature of these new jobs that are intended to be created will result in a shift towards middle and high-income salary brackets. Mat said that “the goal is to achieve growth in a sustainable manner, without cost to future generations, through initiatives such as building alternative energy generation capacity and conserving our environment to promote eco-tourism.”

Mat said that what sets apart this economic growth initiative under 1Malaysia from past initiatives is that it has involved both government and private sectors. This is true in that there has been more involvement from the private companies in attaining government contracts than in the past. The only criticism to that statement is that through my observations from the GLC open day, which will be discussed later in this chapter, the private companies working with the government were once government owned companies like Tenaga Nasional (National Energy),

⁶³ Economic Transformation Program (ETP). “Economic Transformation Program Objectives.” Last modified April 30, 2012. Etp.pemandu.gov.my/default.aspx

Malaysia's national electric and energy supplier in the past that has been privatized. In May 2010 a Thousand People Workshop was held to identify the NKEA (National Key Economic Areas). The private sector played a large role in this project compared to past national economic projects according to Mat. He said the labs began in June with 500 carefully selected individuals from the private sector and 200 government personnel grouped together to develop the 12 NKEAs (National Key Economic Areas). According to the ETP booklet the 12 areas are Oil, Gas and Energy, Palm Oil & Rubber, Financial Services, Tourism, Business Services, Electronics and Electrical, Wholesale and Retail, Education, Healthcare, Communications Content and Infrastructure, Agriculture, and the development of Greater Kuala Lumpur and Klang Valley areas. The ETP website enables visitors to track and monitor the progress of these 12 NKEA's in interactive fashion. The online information on the ETP website provides information for each of the NKEA areas that give details on the specific areas in these industries that it is planning to develop, for example in the oil, gas and energy industry the ETP predicts rejuvenating the existing oil field through advanced oil recovery will garner RM8469.7 million and 411 jobs. The financial services industry will provide business opportunities in commercial, banking, investment banking, Islamic banking and Takaful insurance services. The ETP websites gives detailed descriptions on how and why these areas will grow and provide business opportunities. This ETP provides citizens information on the development and progress of the nation's economy, which also provides them with the knowledge on economic areas that they would be interested in contributing to. By providing an interactive and updated knowledge about the economy, the ETP seeks to encourage not only interaction but participation of its

citizens to meet the economic demands, thus attempting to enlist the governed in their own goal.

The same can be said about the GTP program. It offers the same type of interactive component of allowing visitors to its website access to information and knowledge pertaining to government transformation and reform. It wants citizens to engage and support the NKRA areas and track its progress online nationally, state wide, and parliamentary areas. According to its website overview the GTP “is an ambitious, broad-based initiative aimed at addressing key areas of concern to the citizens while supporting Malaysia’s transformation into a developed and high-income nation in accordance with the Vision 2020 goal. In line with 1Malaysia - People First, Performance Now, the GTP is focused on priorities that matter most to the citizens and delivering fundamental changes on a nationwide basis.” The NKRA’s and their detailed targets were made public with the publishing of the GTP Roadmap, which can also be acquired online, making it transparent to Malaysians in January 2010. According to the GTP Roadmap, the first year of the GTP indicated that the majority of the NKRA’s achieved more than 90% of their targets.⁶⁴

Mat believes that the showcase of transparency is a testament to Malaysia’s move to a new direction of injecting more accountability in government operations. Another research participant, Hass added that “the GTP will be implemented until 2012 to ensure a strong foundation is laid for the transformation of Malaysia into a progressive, harmonious, and high-income nation.” The seven NKRA’s are reducing crime, fighting corruption, improving student outcomes, raising living standards of low income households, improving rural basic

⁶⁴ Tan Sri Ismail Adam, “Setting Target in The Public Service.” *The Star Online*, August 31, 2009, 1.

infrastructure, improving urban public transport, and addressing the cost of living. Just like the ETP website the progress of these NKRA's are easily accessible and are presented in an interactive manner.

However, besides the ETP and GTP documentation of increased economic and government progress, the main goal according to Najib Razak since 1Malaysia's inception is the need to strengthen unity and create a more harmonious multi ethnic and multi religious society. The Yayasan 1Malaysia was created and described as a non-partisan, independent, and nonprofit organization. The purpose of its creation was to engage all Malaysians in working towards national unity. It was established in July 2009 and has since dedicated its cause to develop, support, and spearhead activities and programs that promote national unity. Mindy Lam, who works as an officer with Yayasan 1Malaysia said that the organization sees itself as "an interethnic bridge builder" and is dedicated to shaping and understanding the dynamics of Malaysian public opinion and national issues. I interviewed her before the launch of Yayasan 1Malaysia's new initiatives in July 2009, the 1Malaysia roundtable.

The Yayasan 1Malaysia's 1Malaysia Roundtable was headlined last year at its inception by prominent Malaysian personalities like Air Asia CEO Tony Fernandes and Serbgeth Singh, the former member of the Malaysian national soccer team and celebrity English Premier League pundit on Astro Supersports, to lead discussion that addressed issues and topics related to ethnicity and religion. Before launching the 1Malaysia roundtable session Najib Razak said that the online Roundtable will allow online access and interaction with these prominent personalities to "all Malaysians, regardless of our geographic location, our profession or our age – to provide fair and constructive comments, suggestions or ideas to better the lives and the

people of Malaysians, moderated by some of the most respected and celebrated individuals of our nation.”⁶⁵ The first roundtable session was conducted live and aired on the Yayasan 1Malaysia’s website, mediated by both Tony Fernandes and Serbgeth Singh.

Razak added that the concept of the Roundtable has long been in existence, and is used by members of communities to discuss issues in a respectful manner. He said that it is designed to allow everyone a right to speak and where everyone’s input is valued. He added that difference of the 1Malaysia Roundtable is that it transforms this concept of a roundtable discussion to fit a growing online community, tailored to the needs of Malaysian citizens. Najib said:

“I thought and wanted to also experiment with this unique online idea – that this could be another way of all Malaysians to interact not just with me, but amongst all of us. Hence, over the past month, I have informed my office to engage a number of Malaysians who are recognized as icons or role models in their respective fields – of diverse backgrounds, and even some who are based abroad. These individuals or Subject Matter Experts (SMEX) will join me in guiding you through various discussions, and in gathering your ideas for my review and consideration. Yes, these discussions I invite you partake in are meant to glean fresh ideas and input, derived from a healthy and intellectual discussion among fellow Malaysians.”⁶⁶

The areas that the 1Malaysia Roundtable was said to address and discuss at its inception were the fields of economy, national unity, health, youth participation and sports. Just like the

⁶⁵ “1Malaysia Roundtable Goes Live Tomorrow.” *Borneo Post*, June 12, 2011, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

other 1Malaysia programs the 1Malaysia Roundtable is accessible and conducted entirely online and the minimum age group that is allowed to participate in the discussion is 15 years old. The first few discussion topics of the roundtable were about discrimination and inequality in business and sports in Malaysia that was headed by Tony Fernandes and Serbgeth Singh. The discussions were kept very civil but the questions asked to both Fernandes and Singh were very basic and just asked them about their opinions and advice. It also seemed that there was a lack of participation as there were not many questions that were streaming in. The 1Malaysia roundtable is still going on today but there have been reports of abuse and lack of tactfulness from participants, particularly since the political wrangling between the opposition Pakatan Rakyat party and Barisan Nasional escalated in the run up to the 2013 elections.

Lam said that the way in which to understand all of 1Malaysia's main programs like the GTP, ETP, the 1Malaysia main website, and the Yayasan 1Malaysia is that one of its main target are the younger generation of Malaysia. She said:

“the incorporation of social media into all 1Malaysia programs and projects was considered as the main priority in the creation of the online websites. They wanted to market these websites in a way that would connect with a younger audience and wanted to create more participation from these target groups. We wanted people to talk and give feedback as well as create avenues of discussion in regards to issues that may have been very taboo topics in the past which were related to race and religion.”

When asked why the current Facebook and Twitter following of this program was rather low (less than 1,000 followers), she said that they are still in a transition to create even more awareness to the public. She added that Yayasan 1Malaysia is still brainstorming new ideas from the public feedback in order to increase its followers and achieve its goals. She did not go into more detail but when I began discussing the issue of funding and the amount allocated by the 1Malaysia project to Yayasan 1Malaysia, she only stated that they received a fair amount and have used the funding in a wide array of diverse activities like the roundtable discussions.

One of the main and consistent criticisms of the 1Malaysia campaign is that it is a waste of government funds. The allocation of RM 50 million to a local company Tribuces Inc. to develop the 1Malaysia email received heavy criticism as to the necessity of such a project.⁶⁷ Lam added that I understand why many people in the public are skeptical when a funds allocated to a certain government initiative goes to waste. She was alluding to the countless cases of money being swindled by ministers and politicians in the past and only offering those contracts to their relatives or close associates. Lam does however believe that 1Malaysia initiatives if given a chance, will “blossom into something that will truly benefit all Malaysians and not only a select few.” She said that some plans like the 1Malaysia email might not take off soon but she pointed out that 1Malaysia is about three years old and needs some time to develop. “People gave Wawasan 2020 a chance and we have seen some of its success, they should also give 1Malaysia a chance as well.

The 1Malaysia has also established a number of initiatives to reduce the increasing cost of living in Malaysia, targeted mainly low income families. While I was conducting field work in

⁶⁷ Shazwan Mustapha, “On Facebook, 24,000 spurned 1Malaysia e-mail.” *The Malaysian Insider*, January 12, 2012.

Malaysia the government established the *Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia* (KRIM) (1Malaysia Grocery Stores). These stores are operated in a mini market format which provides basic necessity goods that carried the brand of 1Malaysia. The *Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia* was also established to act as the medium for the government to control prices and lessens the monopolization of products which has long been dominated by the multinational manufacturers. These stores offered Malaysian made products that were cheaper but a month into the launching of these stores, there have been a wide array of reports from local newspapers that the quality of products in these stores was low.⁶⁸ KR1M executives responded by instructing its suppliers to send their products for periodical laboratory testing.⁶⁹ There have also been establishment of 1Malaysia clinics across the nation where Malaysian citizens would only be charged RM1 and non-citizens will only be charged RM 15 for medical services that include illnesses and injuries such as fever, cough, colds, wounds and cuts, diabetes, and hypertension.

The issue of the cost of 1Malaysian and its subsidiary programs has been a constant criticism from opposition groups and many disgruntled citizens because they have not seen significant improvement in the increasing cost of living, government efficiency and improvement in its ethnic and religious policies. The most surprising criticism came from Pakatan Rakyat opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim during a parliamentary hearing in early April 2010. He claimed that 1Malaysia was designed by APCO Worldwide, which is a communication consultancy agency that has worked with the 1Israel campaign. Members of the ruling coalition threatened to expel Ibrahim from parliament because of the allegations of linking the 1Malaysia campaign and an Israeli nationalist campaign. The ruling coalition in Malaysia has

⁶⁸ "Suppliers ordered to send KRIM products for Lab Test," *The Star Online*, December 5, 2011, 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

long been in opposition to Israel and former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad has been an outspoken critic of Israel and its policies, particularly toward Palestinians. Anwar claimed the appointment of APCO warrants genuine concern for national security because of the subtle relationship between *Ketuanan Melayu*, Neo-conservatism and Zionism. *Ketuanan Melayu* is a political concept emphasizing Malay preeminence in present day Malaysia that justifies their privileged rights to affirmative action policies. He sees Barisan Nasional as using 1Malaysia to package their autocracy and to cover up the reluctance to implement structural and institutional reforms. It does have a lot of connotations of a conspiracy theory and his correlation of both APCO and 1Malaysia are a little vague and unclear, but by putting the idea out there that a Muslim leader in Malaysia has links to an organization that has close ties to the state of Israel sparked dissent from Barisan Nasional members because many feared they risked alienating their Malay Muslim supporters.



Figure 6

MIC politician visiting a 1Malaysia Clinic in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan

This effort to remake the nation has differences from the Wawasan 2020 (Vision 2020) years. As a child I recall the dream of Malaysia becoming a modern industrialized nation by the year 2020. Catching up and chatting with old friends at a *Mamak* stall (open air hawker stall) called Palani's in Seremban brought back memories of the early 1990s. Most of us were born during the beginning of Mahathir's reign as Prime Minister of Malaysia in the 1980s. It was a good way to start getting a sense of the basic current cultural trends among the young middle class of the Vision 2020 generation. As my childhood years progressed so did the economy of Malaysia. I recall the time in the early 1990s when Malaysia prospered economically, so did my family along with it. I recall when my parents bought our first house and car, a Malaysian made Proton Saga. "A cheap replica version of Mitsubishi" or "scrap metal on the road," some would call it. The irony is that many who called the Proton unreliable and a low quality version of Mitsubishi models, most likely owned one. My family was one of many. At one point during the 1990s, close to 70 % of cars in Malaysia were Protons. Proton may have been a low grade Mitsubishi replica, but for me and I believe many Malaysians it symbolized that our nation was becoming modern and industrialized. In my young mind at the time it meant we are going to become like England and the U.S.A. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad had a vision of creating a modern and fully industrialized nation by the year 2020, and while I was growing up a good majority of Malaysians, not only *bumiputras*, reaped the benefits of high economic growth during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many Malaysians enjoyed the low inflation rates that made goods and commodities affordable at the time and high employment rates. At the time the vision of a modern industrialized Malaysia felt attainable.

Ong's book chapter "Saying No to the West: Liberal Reasoning in Southeast Asia" details the period of Wawasan 2020 as one of high economic growth and to achieve it the government took a pedagogical role to ensure the nation's economic goals were met. In the Malaysian model of statecraft, citizens are enmeshed in a culturally sanctioned collectivity, managed by the state.⁷⁰ Under Najib Razak's tenure does this still hold true? Chatting with my old high schools friends at the 'mamak stall' we recalled shenanigans and memories of school and how a lot of has changed in our hometown and Kuala Lumpur.

I lived an hour away from Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. My family would make frequent trips to the capital when I was younger. Every time we reached Kuala Lumpur it seemed that skyscrapers and condominiums kept multiplying. I felt this was modernization; this is Mahathir's vision for the future of Malaysia.

Propaganda songs constantly played on government run television stations which lyrics carried the message that citizens need to sacrifice and be loyal to country in order to achieve progress and the goal of Wawasan 2020 . Images of Kuala Lumpur, Proton cars in the United Kingdom, Malaysia winning the Thomas Cup in 1992 (the Badminton World team cup), a modernizing Malaysia for all were constantly reiterated in these songs lyrics. The images painted the picture of a peaceful, prosperous and unified developing country. These songs also included images of Mahathir Mohammad, the *Yang Di-pertuan Agong* (title for the King of Malaysia) and the national mosque. We heard these songs on the radio, constantly saw them on the government owned television stations and we also had to sing them in school. One thing we talked about was the memory of reciting the *Rukunegara* (National Pillar or National

⁷⁰ Ong, 194.

Principles) every Monday morning at school. It was compulsory on Monday mornings for all the students to sing the national anthem and recite the *Rukunegara* together lead by the head prefect (Student Disciplinary leader) of the school.

I was referred to an officer at the *Kementerian Penerangan, Komunikasi dan Budaya* Malaysia, KPKB (Malaysian Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture) by a Putera MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress Youth Division) member of Negeri Sembilan, who went by the name, Palu. The officer's name was Mohammad Hassan and when I arrived at the historical Sultan Abdul Samad building in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, he greeted me at the narrow lobby next to the information desk of the building. He wanted to be known as Hass because that was what he was usually called in his workplace. Hass gave me a tour of the building and gave me details on KPKB's history as a Ministry for the government. According to Hass, it was founded in 1961 to administer Malaysia's broadcasting and radio regulations. Hass said that before it officially became a government ministry, it was a British administrative division that was tasked to air radio broadcasts to the entire colony of Malaya. It was used as a propaganda tool by the British to broadcast its initiatives and later by the Japanese army to justify its occupation of Malaya. Hass said that from radio broadcasting this administration then was tasked to create movies that were anti communist during the communist uprising in Malaysia during the late 1940s and 50s. Once it was officially a ministry it was first created to manage and regulate policies for radio or television broadcast for the Malaysian nation. It was also considered a gate keeper regulating the information that could be aired in the country. It still holds the same function in regulating Malaysia's very strict censorship laws. Hass also said that the Ministry has evolved from regulating broadcast policies in Malaysia to assisting the government to creating

programs, which was designed to strengthen ethnic ties during the post-colonial years. This Ministry was involved in the creation of the *Rukunegara* after the May 13th incident of 1969. The *Rukunegara* became the national creed to strengthen ethnic ties in Malaysia. Hass said that this ministry played a very big role during the Wawasan 2020 years in creating and managing media content related to the Wawasan 2020 campaign. Hass, as he liked to be called said the KPKB is working very closely now with the *Jabatan Perdana Menteri* (Prime Minister's Department) in strategizing and creating content that is related to media, exhibitions, archives and publications that carry information on the 1Malaysia concept. He said in comparison to the Wawasan 2020 years, this Ministry used to act independently but now has to work closely with the Prime Minister's Department think tanks and personnel.

Hass mentioned that all it seems that KPKB is working on today is reiterating the importance of the *Rukunegara* especially in schools as it is still very much part of the 1Malaysia concept's ideology as well as the nation. He mentioned that the core message of *Rukunegara* is still very much part of 1Malaysia and the KPKB have created songs that recite the principles of the *Rukunegara* with melodies in hopes that its message still resonates among younger Malaysians. The reiteration of the importance of reciting the *Rukunegara* in public schools and having it painted as murals in schools are now is being accompanied by the image of the 1Malaysia symbol. Many elementary, middle and high schools including my alma mater still have the *Rukunegara* murals on school walls but they also have the 1Malaysia symbol painted on various walls as well.

The main focus of the *Rukunegara* and 1Malaysia principles is the younger generation of Malaysia, specifically elementary and high school students. During Malaysia Youth Day on

May 27th to the 29th held in Putrajaya, the first few exhibitions at the entrance were by the KPKB and it gave presentations on the history of the *Rukunegara*, its importance to the nation as mentioned in the chapter before this, and how it relates to the 1Malaysia principles.

1Malaysia is a political technology different from its predecessor, the Wawasan 2020 campaign, which focused mainly on deploying its message of industrialization and modernization through the creation of a new strong middle-class population that would consist mainly of Muslim Malays. The difference with 1Malaysia is that there are more technological options available today to spread governmental messages but there is also more competition from other media that are exposed by the populace. In addition, for the first time in Malaysia's political history it has a more vocal and stronger opposition party in the Pakatan Rakyat (People's Coalition). The fundamental difference between Wawasan 2020 and 1Malaysia is that 1Malaysia is designed to mainly administer ethnic and religious divide and create a multicultural society that is more tolerant in order to move forward to the goal of achieving first world status by the year 2020.

Gagasan 1Malaysia which is the underlying goals of the 1Malaysia campaign, does make clear indications that 1Malaysia is different from past nationalist initiatives but also states that it wants to maintain the goal of being a fully industrialized modern state by the year 2020. According to the definition in the KPKB *Gagasan Malaysia*, written by Najib:

“The goal of the 1Malaysia idea is to strengthen relations and cooperation between the various ethnic and cultural groups in this country as a main weapon to face threats and challenges that threaten the prosperity of their lives. This idea, if appreciated fully by

everyone, will enable Malaysia to become a country that is peaceful and successful in every arena as well as being respected by the world.”⁷¹

One of the key parts of *Gagasan 1Malaysia* is the application of the “aspired and pure values” that Najib Razak feels need to be embraced by every citizen in order to achieve a 1Malaysia and a nation that is modern. What is termed as “pure values” by the *Gagasan 1Malaysia* are humbleness, humility (*tawadhuk'*), gentleness and respectfulness. Aspired values consist of developing a culture of high performance, punctuality, intellectualness, knowledgeable, integrity, loyalty, innovation and determination.⁷² Many of these values have been taught in the Malaysian education system through the subject called moral studies. Moral studies have been a compulsory subject from elementary to high school in the Malaysian education system. In 1998 it was also made compulsory for first-year college students across the nation. The inclusion of what the aspired values are and what they entail is a new component of moral studies today in the Malaysian education system today. A lot of the past values are maintained but the inclusion of the aspired values that focus more on developing citizens that are better equipped for becoming a generation that is more tolerant towards each other have been added. The values are a mixture of traditional ethics that have some relation to Islamic teachings, for example the value of humility or in Malay *keserdahanaan* which is derived from the Quranic value of *tawadhuk'*, and to values like punctuality and innovation that relate more to becoming modern citizens.

⁷¹ Kementerian Penerangan, Komunikasi & Budaya. *Gagasan 1Malaysia*. (Absolute Masters Printers: 2011) 3.

⁷² *Ibid*, pg 8.

The 1Malaysia project does however state in Gagasan 1Malaysia that it does not mean it will remove affirmative action policies that benefit the *bumiputras*, but will ensure that it is conducted fairly in that only qualified *bumiputras* will receive benefits from the government. It also states that it does want to refrain from the past practice classifying problems and issues ethnically.⁷³ The last sentence although rather vague still does set 1Malaysia apart from past nationalist campaigns in that it represents the state in a period of reflexivity and point to the fact that it needs to address its ethno-religious conflicts before it can continue to thrive economically.

On June 24 and 25 I attended the “GLC Open Day” at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Center, which is right next to the Petronas Twin Towers. The exhibits inside showcased the history, importance and growth of GLCs. They emphasized that these companies are an integral part of the Vision 2020 plan to achieve developed nation status. Companies that are categorized as GLCs are all required to go through what is called GLC transformation program. The GLC transformation program according to the forum and its exhibits is in its seventh year. It was established with the aim of transforming GLC’s to become high performance entities.⁷⁴ There are three underlying principles to the program. First it has to be “performance focused” by creating economic and shareholder value through improved GLC performance. Second, it must be in line with the National Development Foundation by growing with equity, improving total factor productivity, developing human capital and the *bumiputra* community. Finally, it must demonstrate good governance, shareholder value and stake holder management through

⁷³ Ibid, 10.

⁷⁴ PEMANDU Malaysia. *Government Transformation Program Annual Report*. (2011), 17.

implementation of GLCT initiatives.⁷⁵ The underlying principles were very vague in their explanation and what was meant by good governance and stake holder management does not address questions regarding the equal distribution of government largess. Unstated is whether the transformation addressed would mean loosening New Economic Policy practices, in place since 1970, that allocate a disproportionate amount of benefits to *bumiputra* shareholders. This new program is called the New Economic Model (NEM) which focuses on making the Malaysian economy “regional champions and collaborate and co-invest with the private sector.”⁷⁶ It still condones the same practices of the New Economic policy of benefiting *bumiputras* and requiring government or private firms to have 30 percent of upper management executives and share holders be of *bumiputra* status.

Many supporters of the Pakatan Rakyat see policies such as the NEP as susceptible to breeding nepotism and corruption. I interviewed Siew Boon Lam, a historic building restoration executive in Kuala Lumpur, who participated in the Bersih 2.0 rally in July who is an avid supporter of the opposition Pakatan Rakyat initiatives, said that:

“the further these policies are maintained the further they will be misused. I understand the fact that there are still many *bumiputras* who need help especially in rural areas but this policy has been in place since 1970, why haven’t the majority of people categorized as *bumiputras* in certain areas of the nation had their standards (of living) raised.”

⁷⁵ Ibid, 17.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 18.

He believes that corruption and nepotism that stemmed from affirmative action laws over the past 20 years has only benefitted a select few. Siew stated:

“many of these few are Barisan Nasional ministers. Prices of commodities are rising, petrol (gas) is rising, gone are the days of *inflasi sifar* (campaign during the 90s to maintain low inflation rate, translated directly as zero inflation), but there is still money to go around for these big projects, who do they benefit? Who is seeing these rewards? Not me and not many other Malaysians including *bumiputras*.”

The current area of contestation in Malaysia today underlies the government’s limitations. Many of these protests have forced Najib Razak to speed up his proposed reform of unequal policies of the past by making bold reforms on September 16, 2011. These reforms entailed replacing tough security laws such as the Internal Security Act that allowed for individuals to be held in custody without trial for an undisclosed amount of time, proposed abolishment of media laws that required publications to renew their licenses every year and updated laws regarding public assemblies to meet international standards of organizations like Human Rights Watch.

These reforms were well received by the opposition and many Malaysians, but many analysts questioned the motives of the Prime Minister.⁷⁷ Earlier in 2011 he proposed a move to push the general elections to the end of the year. The elections had originally been scheduled for 2013. Malaysia usually holds general elections every five years and the last was in 2008.

⁷⁷ John Malott, “Running Scared in Malaysia,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2011, 1.

1Malaysia has still to forge a concrete underlying description of what it truly means to be a Malaysia for all. The limitations of what it is to be a Malaysian is that for longest time it has meant and carried so many different meanings, which was dependent on your ethnic and religious background, or being *bumiputra* or non-*bumiputra*. There are so many complexities to what it is to be Malaysian and past political technologies have maintained divisiveness rather than fostering and focusing on unity. To overturn years of ethnic and religious difference in a diverse and developing country like Malaysia might take more than just a political technology because the complexities of ethnicity and religion in Malaysia through years of ethnic codifying. The next chapter will look at how citizens, visual artists and the media in Malaysia represent and interpret 1Malaysia, ethnic relations and religion.

Chapter 3

The Translation of Multiculturalism through Media and Visual Art

This chapter argues that the representation of unity and multiculturalism in Malaysia is also in a transitioning period. It used to be dominated by government owned media outlets during the Wawasan 2020 years to the application of new technology and social media by the 1Malaysia campaign, but there are more alternative views of unity and multiculturalism through emerging film movements and social movements and protest. Barisan Nasional formerly had exclusive ability to represent multiculturalism and its plan for the nation to progress and move forward. However, today other groups are competing to present alternate representations of ethnic and religious tolerance. These alternate views are using social media and the loosening of censorship and government restrictions on filmmaking content. This shift has mainly occurred due to the changing composition of Malaysian society. As Malaysia became more industrialized in the late 1980s and early 1990s it also developed a knowledge-based society that is increasingly able to express its growing desires for economic and democratic reforms through new media technologies, particularly social media. It has helped mobilize and create three of the biggest movements against the ruling Barisan Nasional in Malaysia's recent history, the Bersih 1.0 and 2.0, which called for government reforms and cleaner elections and the HINDRAF rally, which called for more rights for minority groups, particularly the Tamil working class. This chapter will look into these forms of protest against the current government today. It will focus particularly on the Bersih 2.0, which occurred in August 2011, during the period in which I undertook field research. I will also focus on a growing movement in the Malaysian film industry called the Ombak Baru (New Wave) movement of filmmakers. I argue

that this movement of filmmaking is creating and allowing new trends in filmmaking that are unprecedented compared to any others in Malaysian film history. Many of the movies or short films created by filmmakers of these movements are thematically tied to issues of ethnicity, religion, criticism of the government and the economy.

Many of the Ombak Baru filmmakers implement themes that tackle issues that have never been covered in Malaysian films in the past due to the state's tight censorship laws. These laws are based on the premise that presenting issues related to ethnicity and religion in publication or media may cause increased tension between ethnic and religious groups. This logic has guided government policy since the May 13th incident of 1969 and is a tangible example of curbs on freedom of expression in contemporary Malaysia. Yasmin Ahmad is the most prominent of the Ombak Baru filmmakers. Her movies were the first to include issues of ethnic and religious difference. Her movies were initially banned in Malaysia due to its tight censorship laws in the early 2000s. However, due to critical acclaim received at various international film festivals in South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong, the censorship board of Malaysia allowed for her movies to be screened in Malaysia, although certain scenes were censored. However, due to the development of new social media such as Youtube and streaming websites, the Malaysian public had access to her films in their entirety. Creative products that are seen as contrary to state interests are much more accessible today in Malaysia than they have been in the past.

The Bersih 2.0 rally is the most recent protest against Najib Razak's government and Malaysia and has received a great amount of coverage from the foreign press. This international attention was taken as detrimental to the ruling Barisan Nasional party. As in

Barry's chapter on protest in *Political Machines*, he argues that we should not just view the use of new technology by states as means to solve problems, but protest can also be viewed in the same way. For example, organizing and disseminating messages that are in opposition to the governments can also be seen as a technological intervention.⁷⁸ Ombak Baru are film productions that usually carry heavy political issues as their themes. There is now the opportunity for increased exposure to the people of Malaysia of these movies that has not been available in the past through new technology and media.

Before one of Southeast Asia's richest men, Ananda Krishnan began diversifying his business into the multimedia arena, venturing into MEASAT, Astro (Malaysia's only satellite feed and satellite TV provider) and Maxis, (Malaysia's leading telecommunications provider), Malaysian television was primarily monopolized by government owned RTM1 and RTM2 (Radio Television Malaysia).

Today RTM 1 and 2 are included into Astro's basic family package along with 24 other channels that are mostly locally-based, Malay language channels. Subscribers can also add on extra packages that include Chinese language movies, entertainment and music channels based in Hong Kong or China, Bollywood or Tamil language channels from India, American or English channels like the BBC, CNN, Discovery Channel, HBO Asia, MTV Asia and others. According to annual reports from Astro, as of April 2011 Astro provides service to about 3 million customers, about 50% of which are Malaysian households and businesses.⁷⁹ During the time I was conducting research in Malaysia, there were not many commercials or programs that addressed 1Malaysia in the channels included in the Super or Plus packages. However, RTM 1

⁷⁸ Barry, 182.

⁷⁹ Williamson, 421.

and 2 along with UMNO-owned TV3, 8TV, NTV 7 and TV 9 were the channels that aired nationalist songs, morning shows that talked about 1Malaysia themed events or initiatives and commercials. All locally based news on television is still monopolized by these channels.

The broadcast of one of these government owned channels is the recording of the 53rd Independence Day celebration that occurred on August 31, 2010. On that date the song titled *Satu Malaysia* (One Malaysia), originally produced by Lim Kok Wing Institute of Creative Technology (a private arts education institution), was sung by thousands of participants at the Putra Indoor Stadium in Bukit Jalil (few kilometers outside Kuala Lumpur). The chorus of the song returned to the refrain “We are one nation, We are one country, We are one goal, We are 1Malaysia” (*Kita satu bangsa, Kita satu negara, Kita satu matlamat, Kita satu Malaysia*). The performers were clearly identifiable as of Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnicities and were dressed in traditional attire. This 53rd Independence Day celebration version of the song is often repeated when the state-linked TV channels have finished airing its last show or sometimes right after the national or daily news.

The scenes in this broadcast show a packed stadium of participants. They were colour coordinated and divided according to their colourful attire waving Malaysian flags in unison from left to right. Ministers from the ruling Barisan Nasional party were also participating, all in red outfits waving smaller Malaysian flags. The participants in the middle section of the stadium were dressed in black waving larger Malaysian flags on poles and the participants in the stands were mostly dressed in white but waving either red, white, blue or yellow pom poms up and down. There were also scenes of the *Yang Di Pertuan Agong* Malaysia (Title for Malaysian King) marching with members of the Malaysian military, performances during the day from

Malaysia's armed forces, cultural shows that had performers dressed in various cultural clothes of Malaysia's ethnic groups. This portrayal of an entire nation united from its many ethnic groups, its government ministers, the uniformed marches of the armed forces, navy, and police force as well as royalty is certainly a grand scale of fostering unity in all aspects of Malaysian society.

Images of unity in 1Malaysia's media portrayals are certainly more extravagant in comparison to the Independence Day celebrations, propaganda songs and media portrayals during the Wawasan 2020 years. The state does not have a complete monopoly of media control in Malaysia like it did during the Mahathir years. 1Malaysia may paint a picture of a state in tune with current trends but even in terms of media production it is still struggling to keep up with what the current generation of Malaysians is exposed too. The move towards being a more transparent state that promotes more equality among ethnic groups is up against various other forms of interpretations of what unity in Malaysia means.

The Ombak Baru Film Movement

The more prominent representation of unity through visual art in Malaysia is evident in the work of one of the country's most prominent filmmakers, the late Yasmin Ahmad, who passed away after a stroke in July 2009. Before releasing her first movie *Sepet* (Slant Eyes), she was prominently known for her commercials for Petronas, the state oil company. She mainly directed commercials commemorating holidays like Independence Day for the company. She was not a vocal protester of the government, but took more of a neutral stand on political matters in Malaysia.

Tian Hian Boon, who owns a small advertising firm in Malaysia has also been contracted to direct Petronas commercials. I interviewed him because of his experience working with Ahmad and his insight on the Ahmad's views. He feels that she was a pioneer in the Ombak Baru film movement. He noted that she was the first to bring issues that "for the longest time, many Malaysians wanted to see brought out. Her stance and her balanced opinions on the government and growing opposition are just like most ordinary Malaysians. He stressed that more than anything else "the majority of Malaysians like me who have grown during the Wawasan 2020 years, want the maintenance of the peace and prosperity witnessed during those times." Tian said that he believes that the current middle class mainly want the peace to be maintained but if the ruling party can't provide that, he hoped that the transition to another party would be smooth. "Change is probably needed but it may not be a real necessity at the moment. I have grown up with Malay, Indian, Kadazan (East Malaysian *bumiputra* ethnic group) friends, it's not that Malaysians don't know how to live together. We do know how but it's just when politics and wrangling of power, getting contracts and laws benefits some and alienates

others, then how can we see each other face to face and have a nice conversation as Malaysians when there is a white elephant in the room.” Tian believes that Ahmad’s movies do provide a viewpoint that has been missing for the longest time. It has opened doors and is providing a healthy trend for creativity to flourish in Malaysia, where people can voice their opinions and thoughts.

The main themes in Ahmad’s commercials for Petronas were the strengthening of family values, maintaining traditional cultural values, and unity among Malays, Chinese and Indians. Tian and many of his co-workers who have also worked on past Petronas commercials said that the methods and themes which are used and directed in her commercials were targeted towards all Malaysians. During Malaysia’s 50th year anniversary celebration, Ahmad directed a commercial for Petronas titled “The Love of Tan Hong Ming.” The video was filmed in an elementary school in Malaysia in an impromptu interview format with a student named Tan Hong Ming. The person interviewing Tan Hong Ming was Yasmin Ahmad herself although this was not revealed during the commercial. In the first scene she asks Tan Hong Ming for whom he has affection. He says that he likes Umi Qazrina, a Malay girl. Ahmad goes on and asks him why and he says it is because of the “earrings she wears, her pony tail and she’s pretty.” A few more questions are asked and later Umi Qazrina appears and Ahmad asks her who her best friend is and whether she has a boyfriend. She answered “Tan Hong Ming” to both, and the video then cuts to Tan who expresses his simultaneous shock and delight. They walk away with shy faces together through a corridor. The commercial ends with the message “Our children are color blind. Shouldn’t we keep them that way? *Selamat menyambut Hari Kemerdekaan ke-50* (Happy 50th Independence Day).”

Ahmad made a few more Petronas commercials using elementary school children for the 50th Independence Day celebration. The commercials titled “Who’s Your Friend,” “Karate” and “How Do You Spell Dinosaur” all involved children from Malay, Chinese and Indian backgrounds. In the last commercial the main characters are two boys of Malay and Chinese ethnicity. Ahmad first asks them to spell dinosaur but both of them spell it incorrectly and Ahmad repeats the way they spell, “dinosaru” and “dinosare”. They both just laugh but when asked about race, both look in confusion at each other and at the camera. They both ask whether she means “race like a race car.” The clip ends the same way “The Love of Tan Hong Ming” ends, with the lesson that “Our children are color blind. We should keep them that way.”

In one of her final interviews with the *Star Online*, she was asked what was behind the Tan Hong Ming commercial. She answered, “I think Tan Hong Ming represents the hopes I had. Actually I didn’t know what he was going to say. I just knew what questions to ask him. And I had a hunch that children were not race conscious.”⁸⁰

During the interview with *Star Online* Ahmad was asked whether the 1Malaysia campaign could be grasped by every Malaysian. She answered, “Yeah. Otherwise I wouldn’t keep making films.”⁸¹ The interviewer asked her, even despite the differences between different people in Malaysia? She answered yes and said that 1Malaysia does not mean that one has to be more Malay, Chinese or Indian but one should embrace difference. She did use a verse from the Quran, “That we go by the Quran’s advice that God has created many different tribes and the reason for this is that you get to know one another.”⁸² She added that the Quran

⁸⁰ Harmandar Singh, “A Toast to World Class Work,” *The Star*, July, 29, 2009: 2.

⁸¹ Ibid, 3.

⁸² Ibid, 3.

is her favorite book in the world and her second is the Tao Te Ching, the foundational text of Taoist religious practice.

Ahmad made Petronas commercials during both the Mahathir and Razak eras. She said during the interview that has been talking about 1Malaysia for 20 years in her work as filmmaker. She does make a distinction between what Wawasan 2020 was and 1Malaysia when asked about the differences. “Wawasan 2020 is about achieving first world status.”⁸³ The interviewer clarified that he wanted to know her view of the differences in terms of approaches between 1Malaysia and Wawasan 2020. Ahmad described the differences between the approach of Wawasan 2020 and 1Malaysia comes from the mentality of the Prime Ministers. “Wawasan 2020 was introduced by a man, Doctor Mahathir, who had first world mentality. So when he came in and he said I want us to be first world its quite easy to believe because you know he was ambitious and he would tell the Unites States where to go (pointing to his blunt comments on anti-Semitism and what he believed was the new world order that was controlling the world’s economic system), and the whole of Asia, the Middle East, and some parts of Europe admired him greatly for having the guts to stand up to superpowers.”⁸⁴ She described Mahathir Mohammad as having more “first world mentality than some first world leaders.”

She describes 1Malaysia as coming from a different kind of leadership. She believes this is why people are a little hesitant. “Until this group of people [the government under Najib Razak] go out of their way to prove that they really believe in it. When Mahathir said Wawasan

⁸³ Ibid, 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 5.

2020 he had already displayed more than one decade of first world thinking.”⁸⁵ This display during the Wawasan 2020 years included mega-projects described in the earlier chapter like the MSC, which displayed concrete images of modernity with an Islamic identity. “So when he said it everyone believed it,” Ahmad said.

During my interview with Tian I also asked him about his views on Wawasan 2020 and 1Malaysia. He said that everyone believed in the Wawasan 2020 goals and messages. He said “all my friends that I grew up with (believed them). It is hard for many Malaysians of the 90s generation to see the government in an entirely bad light. We have seen the nation grow when we were growing up. So we do want to believe in the government and this 1Malaysia but because of the disappointments and many scandals and reports of massive corruption, I believe the majority of us are not very trusting anymore.” He also believes it is why the opposition Pakatan Rakyat party has attracted so many followers and has been doing quite well in gaining support, more so than any other opposition party in Malaysia in the past. “People always want to be a part of something new. The Pakatan Rakyat is possibly a new hope for some people.”

The Wawasan 2020 years displayed high economic growth which shadowed a lot of the unequal affirmative action policies. As long as the state provided economic competition its citizens overlooked inequalities and the fact that the Malay majority was getting a disproportionate amount of the state’s largesse. The Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, however, was the beginning of the state’s pedagogical role decreasing as its economic performance began to stumble and the goal of achieving first world status appeared less of a reality. Opposition towards the state began to increase especially after the deposed former

⁸⁵ Ibid, 5.

Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was charged and convicted with charges of sodomy, which is illegal according to Malaysia's Sharia'a courts, and corruption. Many of his followers formed *Parti Keadilan* (Justice Party) in retaliation to what they saw as an unjust conviction by the state. Since 2007 and the 2008 global financial crisis the *Parti Keadilan* (Justice Party) along with other opposition parties, PAS (Pan Malaysian Islamic Party) and DAP (Democratic Action Party) formed what is known today as the Pakatan Rakyat Party (PKR).

Ahmad sees the 1Malaysia concept as something that is still in its formation and going through a process of transition. "Those in charge have never ever spoken about 1Malaysia before. When they speak about it, people go I'll sit and watch--see whether you mean it."⁸⁶ When asked what are the roles of the leaders in bringing forward the values of 1Malaysia she replied "well if you go by the Laozi (founder of Taoism, or teacher in Mandarin) principle, the leader has got to enact it, because you behave the way you believe. You can say you believe in this but if you don't enact it nobody will believe you."⁸⁷ Ahmad saw the 1Malaysia campaign as something still in formation but she thought it was a positive approach. She also said that the goal of 1Malaysia "will never be a 100%. Even in the Chinese community there are those that are fighting for the preservation of Mandarin, and there are those that say language is just for reasons of communication." She also added that even in the Chinese community those who are Christians and non-Christians have differences. She jokingly described her mother-in-law shouting "the Alleluia behind there always throws stones at my pigeons. Even in each community there is prejudice." What Ahmad described is the complex dynamics of Malaysian communities and ethnicities. There are differences in terms of religion, language, caste and

⁸⁶ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 8.

class. Working class Tamil communities are still considered lower castes to more Malayali or Telegu-speaking groups and even within *bumiputra* Malays there are those who have benefited from government aid and those who have not.

I interviewed the *Star* newspaper reporter, who I call Susan, who helped arrange the interview with Ahmad. Susan described that over the years reporting on social issues related to ethnicity and religion, she has experienced that the majority of Malaysians are tolerant towards each other. She said that many people can relate to the work of Ahmad because she understands the “regular Malaysians.” “She understands how we view each other in terms of ethnicity, religions, *bumiputra*, non- *bumiputra*, West Malaysia, East Malaysian and old generation and new generation.” Susan said that although Ahmad takes a neutral stance toward the government and the opposition, Ahmad understands why there is a faction in the country in strong support for the opposition. “Ahmad and her movement of filmmakers understand how to make ethnic and religious unity make sense to regular Malaysians, the government has so far shown that they do not.”

What sets Ahmad’s visual representation of the idea of unity in Malaysia apart from government nationalist songs, commercials and 1Malaysia websites are the themes of her movies. Her movies are similar to her commercials and are usually cast with younger actors. However in her movies starting with *Sepet* she presents controversial taboo topics through interethnic relations. It is not uncommon to see interracial relationships in Malaysia but if one party in a relationship happens to be a Malay-Muslim and the couple decide to marry, the non-Muslim party is obligated to convert to Islam by law. *Sepet* does not tackle the issue of conversion but focuses on the interracial relationship between a Chinese boy and a Malay girl.

Sepet was originally banned from being released in Malaysia because of its controversial subject matter. The movie is one of the few Malaysian productions during its time of release that highlighted social prejudices and taboos. The movie's two main characters are 19-year old Ah Loong, starring Linus Chong (who also called himself Jason) who is in charge of a stall selling pirated VCDs (Video Compact Discs) and Orked, starring Sharifah Amani, a Malay high school girl who belongs to an upper middle-class family. The messages in Ahmad's movies usually depict multicultural themes that resonated with her Malaysian audience and garnered the film rave reviews. A film review by Wong Soak Koon particularly touched the ethnic relations in the movie. "One of the most interesting aspects of *Sepet* is its inversion or blurring of stereotypes. Malaysians, in their daily lives, clearly traverse cultural and ethnic boundaries. We don't live by the tight ethnic categories politicians use to box us in at certain stages of their own ambitious careers."⁸⁸

Although Ah Loong's character is a lowly VCD sales man he has an unusual hobby of reading and writing poetry. He is also is a hopeless romantic. Ah Loong's life takes a sudden turn one day when Orked, arrives at his stall while looking for films starring her favorite actor Takeshi Kaneshiro. Love blossoms between Orked and Jason, although there are social and cultural pressures that stand in their way. In addition, their lives are complicated by the fact that Ah Loong impregnated his boss's sister. During Jason and Orked's courtship in a photo studio Orked hikes up her *baju kurung* (a traditional Malay dress for ladies) to pose with Jason. These scenes were originally cut by the Malaysian state censorship board. In the end, Ah Loong is involved in a motor vehicle accident while Orked is in England to pursue her studies.

⁸⁸ Wong Soak Koon, "Discussing *Sepet* ove Tau Chooi," *Aliran Monthly*, January 25, 2005, 1.

His death and last phone call to Orked has superstitious elements of spirits after death as the last scene showed Orked answering a call from Ah Loong who had died in a motorcycle accident chasing her to the airport. *Sepet* is part of a trilogy revolving around the loves of Orked's lives.

Ahmad's movie present complex issues and makeup of Malaysian society today and it gives an alternative view compared to the past dominance of government monopoly in the creation of what it sees as national unity. Malaysian society today has different versions to make up their view of what is unity in its highly complex multicultural, ethnic and religious society. Malaysian made movies in the past were never allowed to be critical about Malaysian society's ethnic and religious tensions or differences. Ahmad's movies and films made by Ombak Baru film makers collectively create specific examples on ethnic and religious issues or social and political problems related to ethnicity and religion. Along with bringing the realities of society to moving pictures, this was not allowed in the past due to nation's tight censorship laws, it provides the knowledge of what is hindering ethnic and religious harmony and what are the deterrents in societies that contribute to division. Being critical of political policy that created some of these ethnic and religious divisions allows viewers to have a different and fresh perspective on how to view ethnic and religious relations in the country.

Another project made by the Ombak Baru movement is the 15Malaysia short film project. It was a collaborative effort by directors from the Ombak Baru movement using some prominent Malaysian personalities, celebrities and politicians. It was intended for release online although an opening screening was held to commemorate its completion. The 15 Malaysia short film project used mostly controversial figures that have taken an oppositional stance towards the government like Namewee who was criticized for remixing the Malaysian national

anthem, making fun of it and posting on Youtube while he was a student in Taiwan. Even the opposition leader from PAS, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, plays a lead character in one of the movies explaining how Islam can be the foundational source of creating a society that caters to all ethnicities and religion and maintains economic prosperity. The 15Malaysia film project did not receive much opposition from government groups as it also cleverly included the more neutral UMNO Youth leader Khairy Jamaluddin, who has taken a more open view to gradually removing affirmative action policies, which he believes are crippling the Malay population of the country.

The 15Malaysia project covers a wide range of topics that do touch the realities of ethnicity and religion in Malaysia but most importantly it highlighted the idea that almost all contemporary social issues in Malaysia are ethnically and religiously linked to some degree and critical of policies and practices that keep allowing disharmony in society. The 15 short movies cover topics from converting to Islam and opening an Islamic bank account to reap the benefits of low interest rates, interracial attraction, Islam as the source of national unity, the plight of Tamil working class, halal meat, ethnic violence, inflation, health, corruption and crime. The films are presented in a variety of genres from comedy, drama, horror, docudrama, mocumentary, romance and a musical. This project is a continuation of and a progression of a current trend among Malaysian filmmakers to use visual art to address social issues pertaining to taboo topics of ethnicity and religion that were prohibited in the past. The pioneering work of Yasmin Ahmad paved the way to create a new avenue that had not previously existed in Malaysia before to present and express opinions that is not necessarily in agreement with the government and its politics.

Bersih 2.0

Another example of opposition and opposing alternatives of ethnic and religious unity to that of the ruling governments is the Bersih 2.0 rally in 2011. The Bersih 2.0 rally was a demonstration that occurred at various locations in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur on 9 July 2011 as a follow-up to a 2007 Bersih 1.0 rally. This demonstration took place during my fieldwork and was a hot topic of conversation and a major issue in Malaysian politics. Leading up to the rally was the issue of where the Bersih rally was allowed to take place. This dispute was contested mainly by Bersih rally organizers with the backing of the opposition party Pakatan Rakyat and UMNO, lead by Khairy Jamalludin. The rally was deemed illegal by the government. Bersih 2.0, was chaired by former president of the Malaysian Bar Council Ambiga Sreenevasan, was pushing the Election Commission of Malaysia (EC) to ensure free and fair elections in Malaysia. It demanded that the EC clean up the electoral rolls, reform postal voting, use indelible ink in printing ballot forms, introduce a minimum 21-day campaign period, allow all parties free access to the media, and put an end to electoral fraud.⁸⁹ The rally was constant topic in Malaysian local news especially during the months of June and July of 2012.

The police vowed to stop any rallies from taking place on the planned date on the grounds that all public gatherings without police permits are illegal. Having originally planned to march through the streets of Kuala Lumpur, Bersih decided to hold its rally at Merdeka Stadium after consultations with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Malaysia's head of state.⁹⁰ Supporters of Bersih claim that demands for electoral reform made during the 2007 demonstration fell on deaf ears. UMNO Youth and Perkasa planned counter-rallies, dismissing

⁸⁹ Dean Johns, "Let Them Eat Dirt," *Malaysia Kini*, July, 8 2011, 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

Bersih's demands for electoral reform, but Perkasa called off its counter-rally due to its inability to secure a venue and permit. Estimates of the Bersih rally turnout ranged between 10,000 to over 20,000. The protestors were unable to congregate at Merdeka Stadium as many were forced to disperse by police who were heavily deployed throughout the city. Police arrested more than 1600 protestors, including Ambiga and several other opposition figures. Ambiga has summed up the main issues raised by the organization she leads as "unhappiness in Sarawak (after suspected tempering of state elections in the east Malaysian state), unhappiness about corruption, and unhappiness about the independence of our institutions." She said demands made during the first rally in 2007 have not been addressed, hence the follow-up rally. The communiqué issued by Bersih in 2007 called for reforms to Malaysia's first-past-the-post electoral system, ensuring the independence of the Election Commission (EC), eliminating electoral practices deemed unfair to opposition candidates, eliminating corrupt campaign practices, equal access to the media for all political parties, and instituting a caretaker government during election periods, among others in the long term. After agreeing to abandon plans for a street demonstration, Bersih also called for a Royal Commission into election practices. The rally's original plan was to have protestors gather at the KL Sogo shopping center, Kuala Lumpur City Hall building, and the Kampung Baru Mosque before marching to the Istana Negara to deliver a memorandum to the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*. After consultations with the King, Bersih decided to hold the rally in a stadium instead. However, their request to use Merdeka Stadium was rejected by police. Bersih accused the government of reneging on a previous offer to let them rally in a stadium instead of the streets.⁹¹ Bersih insisted on gathering

⁹¹ Ibid, 5.

at Merdeka Stadium, despite preventative measures taken by police. Simultaneous rallies in support of Bersih were planned by Malaysian citizens in more than 30 cities in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Egypt, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, the United States and Cambodia.⁹² Many participants that I interviewed from the Bersih rally believed it was a very unifying experience as it gave Bersih participants and members of the opposition a sense of unity and that change may be possible. All of the participants of the Bersih protest are quoted under pseudonyms because they were not comfortable revealing their identity.

I interviewed a number of Bersih rally supporters. Bala, who was a lawyer from the Seremban, said that during the rally and confrontation with the police he felt very scared especially after being tear-gassed by police. He said, "I felt my eyes tearing so badly, and for some time, I felt a little scared and maybe I would be arrested and beaten. Then I saw this Malay *makcik* (auntie) who was holding a tissue, she wiped my face and eyes and at that point I really did not feel scared anymore. We were all here together fighting for a cause we believed was right in our own country. We have the right to this." Bala felt very proud being part of the rally. It was not clear whether he was an active member of the Pakatan Rakyat as he kept diverting his answer to something else when asked this question.

Siti, who is a clerk from the East Coast State of Kelantan said that she really believed that the Bersih cause was right and believes that the new coalition opposition party can survive and win the next elections if cleaner elections were in place. The interview with Siti was

⁹² Ibid, 6.

conducted in Malay because she was not comfortable speaking in English. She said, “Malaysia needs to move forward and we cannot have dirty games played in the elections. We cannot progress this way. We need the people to stand up and fight for what we feel is right. Now everyone can see what 1Malaysia is really. Siti was alluding to mixture of Malaysians from different ethnic backgrounds uniting to a cause that was opposing to the governments. Malay here, Indian here and Chinese here, one together.” The crowd that gathered for this rally were a diverse group that consisted primarily of Malay, Chinese and Indians. There were allegations that some participants were paid to walk in the rally. Both political factions and foreign and local news agencies fiercely debated the number of participants in the demonstration. Bersih claimed over 50,000 participants; the foreign media reported figures ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 people whereas local media outlets and police estimated under 6,000 participants.

The Bersih 2.0 rally and international coverage of it was and still is a concern for Najib’s government and his 1Malaysia program. The concept of a united Malaysia is now also being interpreted in the form of protest which is in direct contrast to the ideals of a united Malaysia. The Bersih 2.0 rally may have called for cleaner and fairer elections but what it also highlighted is that the opposition faction in Malaysia can also present an alternate interpretation of unity among the main ethnic groups in Malaysia. The crowds were a good mixture of the main ethnic groups of Malaysia. Many Bersih rally participants that I interviewed alluded to the fact that this rally was a united contribution of a group of Malaysians from all different ethnic and religious backgrounds and ages. The interpretations of what it is to be a multicultural state in Malaysia today is taking various different forms. 1Malaysia as a political technology has deployed the necessary tools to convey the message that the nation needs to unite to move forward to larger

goals, but it now faces resistance to its goals as new technology is also assisting opposing interpretations of national unity in a more creative manner and providing as well exposure and coverage of it internationally. 1Malaysia has made the goal of ethnic and religious harmony in Malaysia a very important issue to address. Many Malaysians have opinions on the matter of ethnic and religious divides. 1Malaysia is contesting to be the premier national unification tool but because it is not the only one and Malaysia is transforming into a growing knowledge-based society, citizens are also being influenced and by these alternate views demanding alternative ways the country as a whole can fix the divisions within society. 1Malaysia is designed by a government that in the past that has failed to foster unity in the nation, which is why 1Malaysia's stake as the best alternative to ethnic and religious unity is seen by a growing number of Malaysians as one that should be viewed with skepticism.

Conclusion

This work has shown how political technologies from the colonial period and the post-colonial period have shaped ethnic and religious differences, inequalities and the economic and political stratification of Malaysia. Colonial and post-colonial political technologies from census classification to the New Economic policies have maintained ethnic and religious divides for the management of diversity in the population during colonialism and for the economic elevation of *bumiputras*. The Wawasan 2020 years and its goal to develop Malaysia into a first world nation by the year 2020, created a more knowledge based society. The huge transition that the Malaysian population has witnessed and lived through has also prompted a significant amount of the population to demand for more democratic freedoms.

What separates 1Malaysia from past political technologies is that it is the first government initiative that explicitly seeks to create unity and tolerance among its ethnic and religious group. It also does seek to resolve the problems created by past affirmative action policies but its plan is to reform these policies gradually. Past political technologies in Malaysia have often maintained policies and laws that maintained ethnic and religious differences and privileged certain groups over others. The current Barisan Nasional party has not yet implemented changes to past affirmative action policies that have benefitted *bumiputras* but are creating initiatives and programs through 1Malaysia that promote and include all Malaysians regardless of ethnicity and religion. The analysis of the programs and efforts that the current Malaysian government has undertaken under 1Malaysia, suggests a shift from continuing policies and laws that have benefitted a certain group to creating initiatives and programs of inclusion. 1Malaysia is an attempt to remedy, at least on the surface, the divisive

effects of past political technologies. The census classification of the colonial period created various categories of ethnic groups in Malaysia but today 1Malaysia is a new means to foster a Malaysia for all. These reforms are evident to the extent that Prime Minister Najib Razak has spoken of reevaluating the New Economic Policy.⁹³ The goal of 1Malaysia is not to eliminate the New Economic Policy but to increase its efficiency and provide support only to *bumiputras* that truly need economic assistance. 1Malaysia also seeks to keep the goal of Wawasan 2020 on track. The creation of the 1Malaysia suggests that the Malaysian government realizes that affirmative action policies and preferential treatment of *bumiputras* is leading to unequal divisions in society as well as possibly leading to economic struggles. In the process of keeping the goals of transforming Malaysia into a modern nation, the government has to create and instill the knowledge of unity and tolerance as the only way the country can move forward and achieve continued economic and political progress.

This thesis offers insight into this process of transition. It has highlighted the programs that have been set up by the 1Malaysia program to lay the ground work into creating and instilling ethnic and religious unity and tolerance. This work has also highlighted the methods in which 1Malaysia is also attempting to increase government efficiency. It is not just the people that have to be instilled to change but the government as well. 1Malaysia has created avenues for the government to be more interactive with its citizens and vice versa. This is also slight shift from being a more centralized government to a one that is allowing more feedback from the people.

⁹³ Kementerian Penerangan, Komunikasi & Budaya. *Gagasan 1Malaysia*, 4.

This is also a period in Malaysia in which there are more significant and bolder political opposition. The nation is not only going through transition and introspection in the state but the people are also reevaluating what they want the future of their country to be. The presence of a significant oppositional party in Pakatan Rakyat provides Malaysians with a different option and choice on how they want their nation to be shaped for the future. 1Malaysia has not defined a concrete description of what is a Malaysia for all. Collectively this nation is going through a period of representing itself anew in motion pictures, rallies, and the political technology called 1 Malaysia. 1Malaysia does mark a change in the ruling government to address divisions in the nation but it faces competition to defining how it is going to shape a harmonious multicultural nation.

Today in Malaysia there are more demonstrations against government policies compared to anytime since the 1960s. The HINDRAF and Bersih 1.0 demonstrations brought to light government deficiencies and ethnic inequality. Since the inception of 1Malaysia and the idea of uniting the nation by Barisan Nasional emerged, the Bersih 2.0 rally demonstrated Malaysian crowds that consisted of multiethnic groups. The Pakatan Rakyat Party members cried foul over the motives of the 1Malaysia campaign as a tool to gain back support of its lost voters in the last election. Many demonstrators of the Bersih 2.0 rally saw their participation in the rally as true unity among Malaysians. Unity among Malaysians is certainly what is sought, after years of ethnic and religious divisions but defining what is a Malaysian is a complex task. 1Malaysia has laid down various programs and is the first political technology to thoroughly do so. However the process of defining 1 Malaysia for all of Malaysia is complex and contested. The emergence of other views and definitions of a harmonious Malaysian nation has maybe

provided the 1Malaysia program some needed alternatives to define the future of this post-colonial, multicultural nation.

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