

Chapter 6

Ethnic Policies and Political Quiescence in Malaysia and Singapore

Sumit Ganguly

Few multiethnic, postcolonial states have successfully formulated and implemented policies to stave off violent interethnic conflict. The reasons underlying the shortcomings of public policy in multiethnic states are complex. Significantly, however, the vast majority of these states emerged from colonial rule with weak and poorly developed political institutions. The existence of well-developed political institutions can enable a state to channel, mediate, and limit political demands that the forces of modernization unleash.¹ Robust political institutions do not, of course, guarantee ethnic peace. Institutions, unless maintained, can decline and lose their utility.

The states of Malaysia and Singapore stand in marked contrast to the many postcolonial and multiethnic societies that have been fraught with ethnic violence. Malaysia, which has three distinct ethnic groups—the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians (see Table 6.1)—has been remarkably free of ethnic and communal violence.² The last major ethnic conflagration in Malaysia was the rioting that swept Kuala Lumpur on May 13, 1969. The absence of widespread interethnic violence is all the more remarkable in light of the systematic policies of ethnic preference that the government of Malaysia has pursued since 1970. There is little question that the minority Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia have resented these policies of ethnic preference.³ Yet, apart from a handful of

1. For the classic statement of this problem, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968).

2. In 1996, there were 8.5 million Malays, 4.5 billion Chinese, and 1.4 million Indians in Malaysia.

3. Rajakrishnan Ramasamy, "Racial Inequality and Social Reconstruction in Malaysia," *Journal of Asian and African Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3/4 (July–October 1993), pp. 217–229.

Table 6.1. Ethnic Composition of Malaysia.

Group	Number	Percentage
Malay	11,950,000	62.0
Chinese	5,290,000	27.0
Indian	1,500,000	8.0
Other	640,000	3.0
Total	19,380,000	100.0

SOURCE: Based on the census conducted in 1995 by the Government of Malaysia. See *Seventh Malaysia Plan, 1996-2000* (Kuala Lumpur: Government of Malaysia, 1996), p. 105.

Table 6.2. Ethnic Composition of Singapore.

Group	Number	Percentage
Chinese	2,311,300	77.4
Malay	423,500	14.2
Indian	214,900	7.2
Other	36,800	1.2
Total	2,986,500	100.0

SOURCE: Based on the census conducted in 1995. See *Singapore: Facts and Pictures, 1996* (Singapore: Ministry of Information and the Arts, 1996), p. 3.

sporadic incidents in 1987, these communities have not resorted to violent means to have their grievances redressed.

Singapore is a multiethnic society made up primarily of Chinese, Malays, and Indians.⁴ (See Table 6.2.) It has pursued a set of ethnic policies markedly different from those of Malaysia, but has also successfully maintained ethnic peace. Unlike Malaysia, which has pursued explicit policies of ethnic preference, especially after 1969, Singapore has sought at least notionally to de-emphasize racial and ethnic differences. Instead, modern Singapore's preeminent leader, Lee Kuan Yew, has self-consciously sought to mold a distinctive Singaporean identity based on the concept of "multiracialism"—an acceptance of and respect for a variety of racial and ethnic groups.⁵ Despite the commitment to this principle and the government's professed emphasis on meritocracy, its public policies

4. Ezra F. Vogel, *The Four Little Dragons: The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 74.

5. Beng-Huat Chua, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 105-106.

have tended to strengthen the so-called dominant Chinese community.⁶ While ethnic relations were nevertheless not developed in Singapore.

What factors and policies have helped Singapore manage ethnic relations and forestall ethnic conflict? This question has enormous theoretical and practical interest because ethnic violence in Malaysia and Singapore have developed and flourished. Clearly, the particular political and social conditions in Malaysia and Singapore have developed and flourished. Our understanding of the causes of ethnic conflict and how to prevent it and ensure political quiescence and stability is a function of the nature and content of the policies that these countries have pursued. The significance of the success of Malaysia in maintaining ethnic peace cannot be understood without reference to the question of ethnic conflict, a question that the world are constantly grappling with. The lessons of these societies may be able to be applied to other societies and Singapore.

To answer this question, this article will first examine British colonial rule in forging ethnic distinctions in what are now Malaysia and Singapore. Then examine ethnic policies as they have developed in Singapore since independence, and how these policies and participation combined with economic development have forestalled ethnic conflict in some ways.

Colonial Legacies in Malaysia

The three identifiable and mutually exclusive ethnic groups cannot be seen as primordial or pre-colonial. They are conscious groups stemmed in the social and economic priorities of British colonial policy. The policies of ethnic preference have also enhanced

6. Christopher Tremewan, *The Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 125.

7. Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning of Ethnicity: An Analysis of Census Classifications," *Journal of Modern Asian Studies* (1987), pp. 555-581; and Colin Nicholls, "Ethnicity in Singapore," *Journal of Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 8 (1996), pp. 28-30.

8. David Brown, "Malaysia: Class, Ethnicity, and the State," *State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 105.

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Origins: The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 74.

Ideology and Democracy in Singapore (London:

have tended to strengthen the socioeconomic position of a segment of the dominant Chinese community.⁶ Widespread political disorder has nonetheless not developed in Singapore.

What factors and policies have enabled Malaysia and Singapore to manage ethnic relations and forestall widespread ethnic violence? This question has enormous theoretical and policy significance. It is of theoretical interest because ethnic violence racks most multiethnic societies. Clearly, the particular political and economic arrangements that Malaysia and Singapore have developed have enabled them to fend off ethnic conflict. Our understanding of the factors that forestall ethnic violence and ensure political quiescence can be enriched through a careful examination of the policies that these governments have pursued. The policy significance of the success of Malaysia and Singapore in maintaining ethnic peace cannot be understated. Few policy issues are as vexing as the question of ethnic conflict, and multiethnic societies throughout the world are constantly grappling with the problem of ethnic violence. Many of these societies may be able to learn from the experiences of Malaysia and Singapore.

To answer this question, this chapter will first examine the impact of British colonial rule in forging and sharpening ethnic categories and distinctions in what are now Malaysia and Singapore. The chapter will then examine ethnic policies as they have evolved in Malaysia and Singapore since independence, concluding that constraints on political participation combined with economic growth and redistributive justice may forestall ethnic conflict in some multiethnic states.

Colonial Legacies in Malaysia

The three identifiable and mutually exclusive ethnic groups in Malaysia cannot be seen as primordial artifacts.⁷ Their emergence as distinct, self-conscious groups stemmed in substantial part from the exigencies and priorities of British colonial policies.⁸ Post-independence policies of ethnic preference have also enhanced group and ethnic solidarity. Furthermore,

6. Christopher Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 125.

7. Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (August 1987), pp. 555-581; and Colin Nicholas, "The Original Champion," *Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 16, No. 8 (1996), pp. 28-30.

8. David Brown, "Malaysia: Class, State and Ethnic Politics," in David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 216-217.

the policies that various Malaysian regimes have pursued since the country gained independence from Great Britain in 1957 have antecedents in the colonial period. Many present-day Malaysian policies can be linked to the legacy of British colonial policies.⁹

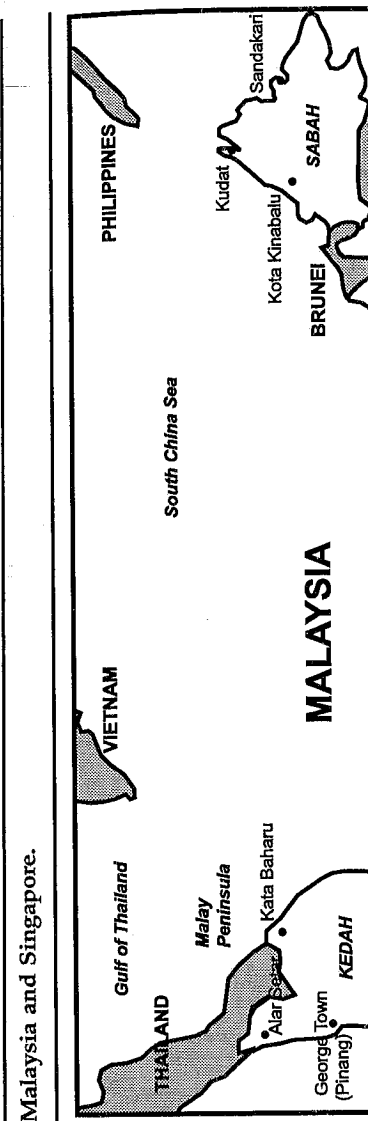
The British secured a foothold in Malaya in January 1874 with the signing of the Pangkor Treaty, which was pivotal in establishing formal relations between Great Britain and the Malay states. The British forged this relationship by arranging a truce between the warring Chinese secret societies and the Malay princes. The first formal symbol of British authority in Malaya was the acquiescence of Raja Abdullah, the sultan of Perak, to the appointment of a British Resident in his realm.

Over the course of the next several decades, British political control and commercial interests expanded across the Malay peninsula. The British set up an entire system of Residents; under the terms of the Pangkor Treaty, they were expected only to "advise" the ruler. However, for all practical purposes, the Resident could ensure that his advice was taken to heart and carried out.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Residents were expected "to preserve the accepted customs and traditions of the country, to enlist the sympathies and interests of the people in our assistance, and to teach them the advantages of good government and enlightened policy."¹¹ Despite the seeming neutrality implied in this statement, British colonial administrators intruded into the realms of existing laws and customs as they deemed necessary. The effects of British rule were extensive and far-reaching. Some of the British intervention was beneficial, such as that which ended the practice of slavery. But many British policies had pernicious effects. For example, the British introduced a rule of property in Malaya that transformed the existing system of land tenure. To promote plantation agriculture, they introduced a system of individualized landholdings. Peasants were now allowed to hold land that they cultivated as long as they paid rent. All unused land, however, passed on to the

9. The terms Malay, Malaya, and Malaysia require some explication. An ethnic Malay, for all practical purposes, is any individual who professes Islam and is of Malay parentage. This definition is, nevertheless, problematic. One of the greatest exponents of Malay privilege, Mahathir bin Mohammed, is partially of Indian Tamil origin. The term Malaya was used to describe the British colonial possessions along the Malay Peninsula and North Borneo. The term Malaysia came about after the independence of Peninsular Malaya from the United Kingdom in 1957. In 1963, Singapore and the states of North Borneo, Sabah, and Sarawak joined Malaysia.

10. Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 159.

11. Quotation from Frank Swettenham, in *ibid.*, p. 172.



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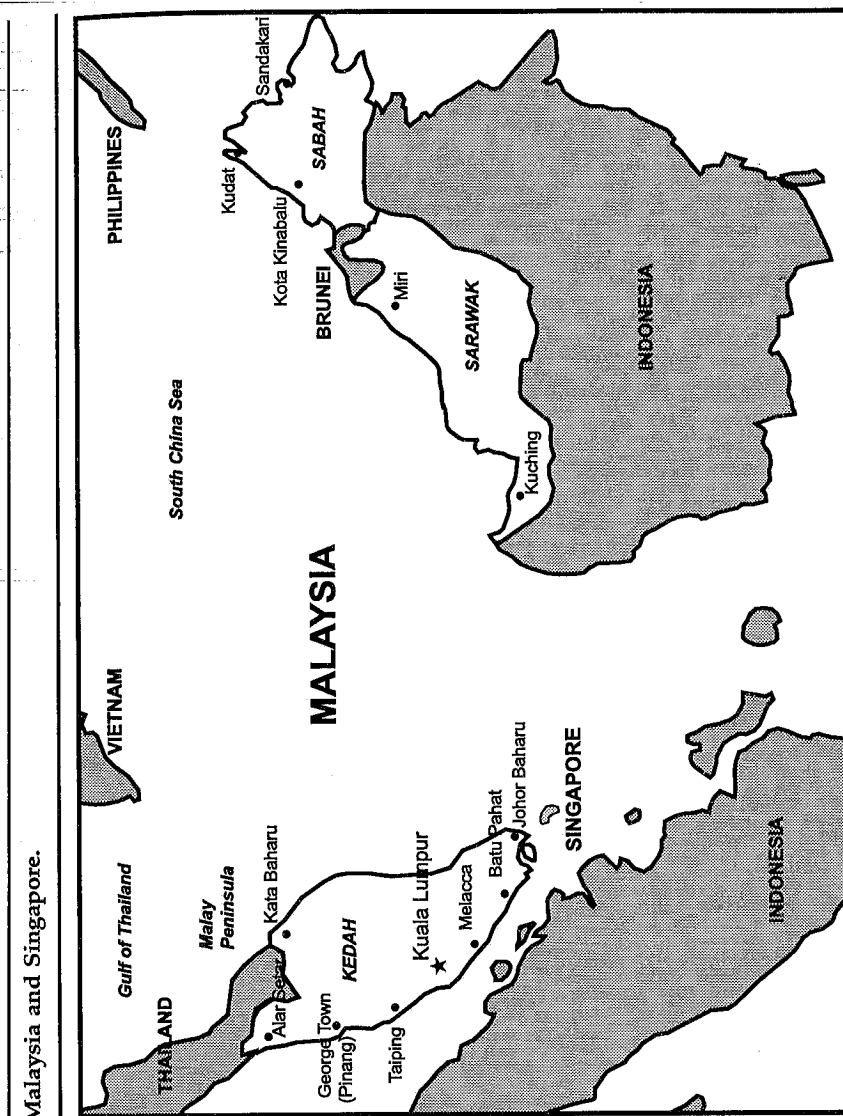
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Malaysia and Singapore.

state and was made available for the development of a plantation economy.¹²

COLONIAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Despite the obvious intrusiveness of their colonial policies, the British continued to maintain the legal fiction that the Malays were the actual rulers of the country. This principle, obviously, only extended as far as the Malay aristocracy. Colonial ethnographers considered the vast majority of the population to be inherently lazy and unfit for governing. The British view of the Malay was aptly summed up by Frank Swettenham, a colonial administrator:

he is . . . lazy to a degree, is without method or order of any kind, knows no regularity or order of any kind, knows no regularity in the hours of his meals, and considers time of no importance. His house is untidy, even dirty, but he bathes twice a day, and is very fond of personal adornment in the shape of smart clothes.¹³

Although this characterization of the Malays suited the purposes of British colonial rule,¹⁴ the Malays were far from innately unsuited for hard work. The majority were peasants engaged in rice cultivation. Not surprisingly, they were disinclined to move from their self-contained village communities. Nor were they especially desirous of working in the harsh conditions of the tin mines.

The Malays' reluctance to leave their traditional occupations and the extreme demand for labor led the British to allow Chinese immigrants into Malaya. To escape dire poverty, the Chinese willingly emigrated to Malaya to work in the burgeoning tin-mining industry. (See Table 6.3.) British colonial authorities considered the Chinese to be the very antithesis of the Malays.¹⁵ The Chinese were seen as industrious, obedient, and productive laborers. It is easy to see how such an ethnic stereotype developed. The initial waves of Chinese workers toiled under the harsh tutelage of Chinese employers and secret societies. Simultaneously, the imperatives of survival in an alien land led them to create tightly woven

12. James V. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Economy: The State, Chinese Business and Multinationals in Malaysia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 28.

13. Quotation from Frank Swettenham, in Alvin Rabushka, *Race and Politics in Urban Malaya* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), p. 65.

14. See Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

15. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 176.

Table 6.3. Ethnic Composition of P (in thousands).

Date	Malays	Other Malaysians
1911	1,221	152
1931	1,275	288
1957	2,803	323

SOURCE: Donald R. Snodgrass, *Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), Table 6.3.

communities. The disinclination of the Chinese immigrant population for hard work.

As the British developed the demand for labor expanded. The Chinese had little inclination to work in the harsh conditions of the tin mines. The demand for cheap plantation labor led the British to allow Chinese immigrants into the Straits Settlements in 1824. The Indians who came to work in Malaya were from the coast of India. Eager to escape the harsh conditions of their home, they came to work in Malaya in significant numbers. The Chinese, Indian, and Malay caste and occupational groups, however, did not form a common front to assert their status. The British colonial authorities ascribed the qualities of the Indian population of Malaya.

THE ORIGINS AND EFFECTS OF COLONIAL EDUCATION
Under British colonial rule, the Chinese were given specific occupational categories to administer, the Chinese and the Malays were given different educational opportunities. As Sir Richard Winstedt, a colonial administrator, stated: "The purpose of Malay education is to create a class of men."¹⁶

Colonial educational policies were designed to control the division of labor. At best, in the view of the British, the Malays were

16. Quotation from Sir Richard Winstedt, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, p. 158.

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Table 6.3. Ethnic Composition of Peninsular Malaysia, 1871-1957
(in thousands).

Date	Malays	Other Malaysians	Chinese	Indians	Others	Total
1911	1,221	152	695	240	35	2,342
1931	1,275	288	1,285	573	67	3,789
1957	2,803	323	2,334	696	124	6,279

SOURCE: Donald R. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980), Table 2.1.

communities. The disinclination of the Malays to intermarry with the Chinese immigrant population further reinforced their distinctive identity.

As the British developed the plantation economy in Malaya, the need for labor expanded. The Chinese who were engaged in tin mining showed little inclination to work in the rubber plantations. To meet the growing demand for cheap plantation labor, the British allowed Indian migration into the Straits Settlements in 1872 and into the Protected States in 1884. The Indians who came to work in Malaya were primarily Tamils from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Madras (now Tamil Nadu) on the eastern coast of India. Eager to escape their own grinding poverty, Indians came to work in Malaya in significant numbers. (See Table 6.3.) Divided by caste and occupational groups, the Indians proved unable to forge a common front to assert their shared interests. In turn, British colonial authorities ascribed the qualities of industriousness and docility to the Indian population of Malaya.

THE ORIGINS AND EFFECTS OF COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Under British colonial rule, particular ethnic groups became associated with specific occupational categories. In this scheme, Europeans were to administer, the Chinese and the Indians were to work in the extractive industries, and the Malays were to be trained to work the land and fish. As Sir Richard Winstedt, a colonial administrator, pithily stated, "The purpose of Malay education is to make them better farmers and fishermen."¹⁶

Colonial educational policies quickly came to reflect this ethnic division of labor. At best, in the view of the British, a Malay elite could be

16. Quotation from Sir Richard Winstedt, in S. Jayasankaran, "A Degree of Success," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, No. 51 (December 21, 1995), p. 27.

recruited and educated to perform the tasks of colonial administration and to staff the growing needs of European-controlled companies.¹⁷ Consequently, little thought, effort, or money was expended to provide the commoners with modern, secular, and technical education.

The limited efforts that the British undertook to educate and develop a loyal, subservient Malay elite stemmed from the demands of the Malay aristocracy in the early part of the twentieth century. Sultan Idris of Perak, an articulate and able Malay ruler who had traveled to Great Britain, had become convinced of the necessity of modern education for social and economic advancement. Accordingly, he was keen on opening the ranks of the Malay Civil Service beyond mere token appointments, and he made this representation at the second Conference of Rulers in 1903.¹⁸

Considerations of expediency and morality shaped the British response to these demands. The British found it more economical to train and utilize Malay staff than to entice Europeans to relocate to Malaysia. Even though the hiring of expatriate staff was deemed to promote the virtue of administrative efficiency, fiscal considerations were of greater importance. The British moral conceit about creating a class of Malays suited to govern their country also came into play. After all, the British rationalized their presence in Malaya on the grounds that the rulers had invited them to teach a better form of administration.¹⁹

After some deliberation, the British created the Malay Residential School at Kuala Kangsar on January 2, 1905. Despite the democratic and egalitarian proclivities of R.J. Wilkinson, the recently appointed inspector of schools for the Federated Malay States,²⁰ the initial recruits to this elite institution were drawn primarily from the ranks of the Malay aristocracy: twenty-six of the initial fifty-four boarders came directly from the royal houses of Malaya. Wilkinson's fond hope that the school would not only train the Malay elite but also be the principal training institution of Malay boys, regardless of origin, was soon dashed.²¹ In 1906, Wilkinson was

17. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 222.

18. At the time of the Second Durbar or Conference of Rulers, only 2,636 Malays out of a population of 310,000 in the Federated Malay States were employed by the British. Of these, 1,175 were policemen. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 228.

19. William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 98-99.

20. The Federated Malay States were created in 1896 with the consolidation of the four so-called Protected States. The town of Kuala Lumpur in the center of the tin-mining district was the capital, and a Federal Secretariat was created; it was headed by a Resident-General to whom all the residents were to report. See Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 183.

21. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 102-103.

transferred to another posting. With the school at Kuala Kangsar was not the Malay elite evaporated. His successor.

The creation of this school and educated Malays into the administrative demands from the Malay community for schools. These demands produced a school. After initially expanding the school in 1924 the British colonial authorities on education, stating that they had no more educated natives than there were places. An effort was expended to develop secondary schools of Malays who successfully finished the Sultan Idris Training College, secondary Teacher Training College, founded in 1924. It was expected to remain attached to the school.

The other two communities, the Chinese and Indians, even less beneficent dispensation. In the face of colonial disengagement, the British government. Chinese and Indians in Malaya were not to be acquired a modicum of hard-earned money to return to their lands of origin. Consideration to educate the members of the Chinese and Indian communities than those in which they were engaged.

THE INDIAN COMMUNITY

The colonial government followed a laissez-faire approach to the Indian community. It permitted the development of schools with little to devise a common curriculum. In the schools (of varying quality), the British

22. In any case, until the creation of the Federated Malay States, the civil services were not open to Malays. The school remained the preserve of Europeans. This situation changed as independence approached, Malays dominated the civil service. Europeans held the politically sensitive posts in the technical and professional services. See Roff, "The Development of Malaysia," in Neil Nevitte and Charles R. H. Wilson, *Policy in Developing States* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), p. 12.

23. Tan Liok Lee, "The Development of the Malay Community," Vol. 16, No. 1 (1996), p. 12.

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transferred to another posting. With his departure, any pretense that the school at Kuala Kangsar was not the exclusive preserve of the traditional Malay elite evaporated. His successors did not share his liberal temperament.

The creation of this school and the subsequent entry of English-educated Malays into the administrative services generated greater demands from the Malay community for the expansion of English-language schools. These demands produced only a partial response from the British. After initially expanding the scope of English-language education, in 1924 the British colonial authorities reaffirmed their elitist vision of education, stating that they had no desire to create any more English-educated natives than there were places in the government service.²² Little effort was expended to develop secondary education in Malay. The handful of Malays who successfully finished primary education were sent to the Sultan Idris Training College, set up in 1921, or the Malay Women's Teacher Training College, founded in 1935.²³ The Malay commoner was expected to remain attached to the land.

The other two communities, the Chinese and the Indians, received an even less beneficent dispensation from the British. Until the time of colonial disengagement, the British maintained the fiction that both the Chinese and Indians in Malaya were only transient communities: having acquired a modicum of hard-earned prosperity, they would eventually return to their lands of origin. Consequently, the British felt little obligation to educate the members of these communities for professions other than those in which they were engaged.

THE INDIAN COMMUNITY

The colonial government followed what could most benignly be described as a *laissez-faire* approach to the education of the Tamil Indian community. It permitted the development of missionary schools, but did little to devise a common curriculum. Apart from these missionary schools (of varying quality), the Tamil population had to rely on the

22. In any case, until the creation of the junior Malay Administrative Service in 1910, the civil services were not open to Malays. The Malayan Civil Service continued to remain the preserve of Europeans. This pattern of ethnic recruitment meant that, as independence approached, Malays dominated the middle rungs of the civil service, Europeans held the politically sensitive upper rungs, and Indians and Chinese were in the technical and professional services. See Gordon P. Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," in Neil Nevitte and Charles H. Kennedy, eds., *Ethnic Preference and Public Policy in Developing States* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1986), pp. 95-118.

23. Tan Liok Lee, "The Development of Education in Malaysia," *Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1996), p. 12.

schools of the coffee and rubber estates on which they were employed. Here their children received rudimentary education from either literate estate laborers or from clerks. Since the owners of the estates frequently employed adolescent children, they rarely saw reason to extend their education.²⁴ The colonial government did little to interfere with these arrangements. It was, after all, interested in ensuring the existence of a docile population with sufficient education to pursue only handicrafts and plantation agriculture. Finally, parents desirous of extending their children's education beyond the primary levels and vernacular training lacked the financial resources to send their children to English-medium schools.

THE CHINESE COMMUNITY

The Chinese community, like its Indian counterpart, also found it necessary to rely upon its own resources to educate its children. Initially, the Chinese relied on literate Chinese for this. Chinese education, also of widely varying quality, was heavily focused on the Chinese cultural and historical heritage. The British authorities did not object to this orientation because it suited their belief that the Chinese, like the Indians, were a transient community in Malaya. Only in the wake of the 1911 revolution in China, when Chinese education started to acquire a xenophobic and hyper-nationalistic streak, did British authorities start to pay serious attention to educational institutions within the Chinese community. Specifically, in 1919 the colonial government passed the School Registration Enactment, which was designed to curb political activities. This act did not have the desired effect, however; Chinese schools became centers of contentious argument between the supporters of the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang. In 1929 the British again took action against the Chinese schools. It ensured that all xenophobic references were removed from Chinese texts, Chinese-born teachers were restricted, more government officials were designated to oversee Chinese schools, and British control was extended to Chinese schools through the use of federal grants.²⁵

The goals of British colonial education were clear. Each community was expected to perform a particular economic function and not challenge corporate British interests. The creation of a substantial educated class could have pernicious consequences for British colonial interests. Such a

24. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 223.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

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Malaysia: Toward Independence

World War II, the flight of the Bri
occupation from 1941 to 1945 had i
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collaborated with the Japanese, who
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There is little question that the
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nity had links with and was inspir
Consequently, they chose to fight t
part of a combined nationalist and
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26. See Tan, "The Development of Edu

27. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Econom*
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28. Brown, "Malaysia," p. 221.

er estates on which they were employed, elementary education from either literate since the owners of the estates frequently they rarely saw reason to extend their government did little to interfere with these interested in ensuring the existence of a nt education to pursue only handicrafts ally, parents desirous of extending their e primary levels and vernacular training o send their children to English-medium

s Indian counterpart, also found it neces- rces to educate its children. Initially, the ese for this. Chinese education, also of vily focused on the Chinese cultural and thorities did not object to this orientation at the Chinese, like the Indians, were a Only in the wake of the 1911 revolution ion started to acquire a xenophobic and ritish authorities start to pay serious at- ns within the Chinese community. Spe- vernment passed the School Registration l to curb political activities. This act did ever; Chinese schools became centers of he supporters of the Chinese Communist 929 the British again took action against that all xenophobic references were re- ese-born teachers were restricted, more gnated to oversee Chinese schools, and Chinese schools through the use of federal

education were clear. Each community ular economic function and not challenge creation of a substantial educated class nces for British colonial interests. Such a

class could become the basis of a unified Malaysian nationalism, which, in turn, could challenge British dominance.²⁶

Malaysia: Toward Independence

World War II, the flight of the British from Malaya, and the Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945 had important consequences for the three major ethnic groups within the country. The Malays, for the most part, collaborated with the Japanese, who placed many of them in high administrative positions vacated by the British. The Japanese also encouraged Malays to develop a pan-Malaysian nationalism; many Malay intellectuals were drawn to this enterprise.

The Chinese and Indian communities fared quite differently under the Japanese occupation. The Japanese treatment of the Indians was mixed. To some extent, the Japanese maltreated the Indians, conscripting estate labor for Japanese war-related projects. On the other hand, the Japanese helped organize Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army to fight against British rule in India.

There is little question that the Chinese suffered most from the harsh Japanese occupation policies. A significant section of the Chinese community had links with and was inspired by the Chinese Communist Party. Consequently, they chose to fight the Japanese occupation with vigor as part of a combined nationalist and communist enterprise. The Malaysian Communist Party (MCP), which had a substantial Chinese following, had organized both mining and estate workers during the Great Depression. It had successfully organized strikes and demonstrations and had created an enormous trade union, the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions.²⁷ The MCP also had developed an armed resistance wing, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), which had a following of around 10,000.²⁸ The Japanese moved to crush these organizations with considerable brutality. Furthermore, they encouraged interethnic hatred by promoting a Malay paramilitary force to fight against the predominantly Chinese MPAJA. When the Japanese occupation ended in 1945, members of the MPAJA turned against the Malay quislings, provoking further interethnic enmity.

When the British returned after the war, they refused to recognize the

26. See Tan, "The Development of Education in Malaysia," pp. 11-18.

27. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Economy*, pp. 40-41. For an overtly sympathetic account of the MCP and its activities against the Japanese, see Brown, "Malaysia," p. 221.

28. Brown, "Malaysia," p. 221.

MCP as a legitimate political entity even though it had played a vital role in opposing the Japanese occupation. The British hostility to the MCP stemmed primarily from Cold War considerations. As the MCP's tactics became more violent, the British turned against it with a vengeance. On June 18, 1948, the British declared a state of emergency throughout Malaya. This declaration permitted the colonial regime to draft men for the security forces, control employment, and closely regulate organizations.

The MCP scored some initial successes, including the assassination of Sir Henry Gurney shortly after his retirement. But the British authorities soon managed to outwit the MCP militarily and politically. British military success stemmed largely from the draconian laws that enabled the colonial authorities to act against the guerillas with impunity. By announcing their intention in March 1949 to grant Malaya independence, the British also undercut the communists politically. Furthermore, in early 1952, Lieutenant General Sir Gerald Templar, the newly arrived high commissioner, announced that it was the British government's immediate goal to form a unified Malayan nation. Within two years of that announcement, Templar proclaimed that national elections would be held in 1955.²⁹ The municipal elections of Kuala Lumpur foreshadowed the national elections. In these elections, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), a Malay-dominated political party formed in 1946, joined a conservative Chinese party, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) against a Malay-led multiracial party, the Independence of Malaysia Party (IMP).³⁰ The UMNO-MCA combine, referred to as the Alliance, won the elections handsomely, taking ten out of a possible twelve seats. The IMP's defeat in the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections not only spelled its demise but also undermined the possibility of a party based on a multi-racial alliance seeking to forge a common Malaysian identity. In 1954, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) also joined the Alliance. This tripartite organization, which sought to represent the corporate interests of the three principal ethnic groups, won a dramatic victory in the 1955 general election. It captured 81 percent of the popular vote and won fifty-one out of the fifty-two seats it contested. The only other seat went to the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, a blatantly pro-Islamic party dedicated to establishing Islam as the cornerstone of a Malay-dominated state.³¹

With a relatively conservative government in place, one that would

29. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 261.

30. Harold Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 17-18.

31. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Economy*, p. 44.

not threaten British commercial interests, a communist insurgency receded, and the British left Malaya. Before granting independence, the British helped fashion a constitution for Malaya, while granting the other com-

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CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

As the time for their withdrawal approached, the British proposed the creation of a federal state with certain features. Within a unitary state, all residents born locally as well as immigrants would have equal political rights. Sultans would be allowed to remain, but their powers would pass to the British Crown.

This proposal met with some opposition. A group who rapidly organized on a national level, with some force, that the sultans should retain some of their privileges. In response, the organizations merged to form a new party. In opposition, the British abandoned the proposal. The Federation of Malaya Agreement was signed.

The new British proposal provided for a head of state (*Yang Dipertuan*) chosen from reigning sultans. It would also provide for a cabinet, while promising citizen participation. Malaya, also enshrined the separation of powers.

While this agreement foundered, some opposition emerged from the middle class communities and found inspiration in the MIC. Both organizations sought a secular state, meritocratic approach to government, and a laissez-faire economy. These principles, and expressed in the constitution, already Chinese-dominated

The Malaysian Constitution

32. Edmund Terence Gomez, *Political Parties* (Townsville, Australia)

among these competing positions. It accorded citizenship to all residents born in the federation after Merdeka (Independence) Day, August 31, 1957. Those born before Merdeka Day had to meet several qualifications. They had to register with the government and demonstrate that they had resided in the federation for five of the preceding seven years, that they intended to do so permanently, that they were of good character, and that they had a working knowledge of the Malay or English language. Within two years of Merdeka Day, more than two million non-Malays became citizens through this procedure.³³

The Malays regarded their willingness to confer citizenship rights to non-Malays as a significant concession. In return, all the symbols of the state would be quintessentially Malay. Islam would be the state religion, but freedom of worship was guaranteed. Malay would become the national language after sharing equal status with English until 1967. The special position of the Malays was given explicit recognition. The government could provide a range of preferential services to Malays without specified time limits in higher education, government employment, and particular occupations.³⁴ These preferential arrangements were justified on two grounds. First, the Malays constituted the *bumiputra* (literally, "sons of the soil"), or the original inhabitants of the land. Second, these arrangements would compensate for the relative economic backwardness of the Malay community in comparison with the Chinese.³⁵

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

After independence, the UMNO lost little time in solidifying its electoral base through a series of rural development programs designed to

33. Donald R. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 45-47.

34. Milton J. Esman, *Ethnic Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 62-63.

35. Clearly there was ample evidence of the economically backward position of the Malays. As David Brown has written, "By 1957, 97.5 per cent of rice farmers were Malays, while 69 per cent of those in market gardening were Chinese; 48 per cent of Indians were involved in rubber production and they comprised 40 per cent of rubber estate labourers; 66 per cent of those in commerce and 72 per cent of those in mining and manufacturing were Chinese. In terms of occupational category, 62.4 per cent of administrative and managerial workers, 66.1 per cent of sales and related workers were Chinese, whereas 62.1 per cent of agricultural workers were Malays. . . . Finally, data on incomes show that in 1957 mean Chinese household incomes were perhaps twice as high as Malay incomes." Brown, "Malaysia," p. 218. Also see Just Faaland, J.R. Parkinson, and Rais Saniman, *Growth and Ethnic Inequality: Malaysia's New Economic Policy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), p. 17.

improve the lot of Malays. As the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, stated,

The Malays required help in raising the five-year development plan we agreed to. The people of the *kampungs* (villages) had been neglected by the British. To be fair, however, an equal partnership with the government was required. The government provided economic help and business opportunities. The government had to subsidize their commerce and business.³⁶

The Tunku regime continued the policies inherited from the colonial regime. The Rural Development Authority, started in 1956, and the Land Development Authority founded in 1956. The government created the new Ministry of Rural Development in 1956. Minister Tun Abdul Razak.

The new government's policies were given a moderately strong endorsement in the independence election of 1959. Since then, the government has broadened substantially. In the 1959 election, 57 percent of the eligible electorate voted for the Alliance. In this election, the Alliance (the coalition of the UMNO, the MCA, and the MIC) was the dominant partner) saw its electoral base broadened. The Alliance had won 81.7 percent of the seats in 1959, 51.8 percent. It nevertheless emerged as the dominant party, winning 74 out of a possible 104 seats. The Alliance performed worst in the peninsula and Trengganu, where it lost ten out of sixteen parliamentary seats. The election raised questions of race and ethnicity obvious.

There were two major sources of the Alliance's defeat posture. One was a blatantly anti-Chinese Islam (PAS). The other was the D

36. Quotation from Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Malaysia: Growth and Ethnic Inequality*, p. 20.

37. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia: Means, Malaysian Politics: The Second General Election* (1991), pp. 4-5.

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improve the lot of Malays. As the first post-independence prime minister,
Tunku Abdul Rahman, stated,

The Malays required help in raising their standard of living, so in the first
five-year development plan we agreed on extensive development because the
people of the *kampungs* (villages) had been completely neglected by the
British. To be fair, however, an equal area of land was given to the other
communities with the government providing funds and facilities. Next, it
provided economic help and business facilities for the Malays, though the
government had to subsidize them as the Malays need time to learn com-
merce and business.³⁶

The Tunku regime continued two rural development projects it had
inherited from the colonial regime. They were the Rural and Industrial
Development Authority, started in 1950, and the Federal Land Develop-
ment Authority founded in 1956. Additionally, in 1959 the government
created the new Ministry of Rural Development, headed by Deputy Prime
Minister Tun Abdul Razak.

The new government's policies of limited socioeconomic restructur-
ing were given a moderately strong endorsement in the first post-inde-
pendence election of 1959. Since the election of 1955, the electorate had
broadened substantially. In the 1955 election, Malays had constituted only
57 percent of the eligible electorate; in 1959 they constituted 84 percent.
In this election, the Alliance (the consociational arrangement between the
UMNO, the MCA, and the MIC, within which the UMNO was the
dominant partner) saw its electoral base shrink. In the 1955 election, the
Alliance had won 81.7 percent of the vote. In this election, it dropped to
51.8 percent. It nevertheless emerged with a comfortable majority, win-
ning 74 out of a possible 104 seats in the parliament. Not surprisingly, the
Alliance performed worst in the poor, Malay-dominated states of Kelan-
tan and Trengganu, where it lost the state assemblies and won only two
out of sixteen parliamentary seats.³⁷ Its moderate orientation toward
questions of race and ethnicity obviously failed to appeal to poor Malays.

There were two major sources of opposition to the Alliance's moder-
ate posture. One was a blatantly pro-Malay and Islamic party, the Parti
Islam (PAS). The other was the Democratic Action Party (DAP), which

36. Quotation from Tunku Abdul Rahman, in Faaland, Parkinson, and Saniman,
Growth and Ethnic Inequality, p. 20.

37. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, p. 48; and Gordon P.
Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation* (Singapore: Oxford University Press,
1991), pp. 4-5.

had its origins in Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP) of Singapore. The DAP sought to represent non-Malay interests.

What did the government's policies of rural development yield? Between 1955 and 1960, Malay rice cultivators were important beneficiaries of the rural development programs. Irrigated rice land expanded from 270,000 acres to 390,000 acres. Other forms of rural infrastructure also expanded considerably. These included the creation of rural cooperatives, roads, new water supplies, and the extension of social services to the rural areas.

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Apart from attempting to improve the conditions of rural life, the government also made a concerted effort to expand educational facilities. In 1956 there were 767,000 students in primary schools and 89,000 in secondary schools. By 1965 the numbers had jumped to 1,252,000 and 345,000, respectively.³⁸ Given its commitment to preserving the "special position" of Malays, the government withdrew assistance to Chinese-language schools in 1961. Not surprisingly, the Chinese saw this action as a direct assault against their cultural institutions. Their ensuing resentment would continue to fester over the next several years and contribute to the ethnic tensions and rioting that erupted in Kuala Lumpur after the 1969 elections.

Singapore: The End of Colonial Rule over the "Lion City"

Singapore came under British control in 1819. Stamford Raffles, an official of the British East India Company, had sought to establish a British presence in Singapore because of the island's strategic location on the Straits of Malacca. The East India Company's presence on Singapore enabled it to suppress the pirates who had long preyed on commercial traffic in this region. In 1867 Singapore was formally transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown. Over the better part of the next century, thanks to its strategic location and British commercial policies, Singapore emerged as a major commercial hub in Southeast Asia.

Historical patterns of immigration explain most of Singapore's ethnic composition and the numerical dominance of the Chinese community there. As mentioned earlier, in the late nineteenth century, large numbers of Chinese migrated to Malaya to work in the tin-mining industry. An intermediary class of Chinese merchants in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur

38. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, p. 49.

controlled this labor supply. By the close to 75 percent of Singapore's population, brought there to supply labor.

The origins of the Malay population were indeed inhabitants of 1819. Subsequently, a wave of migration followed by waves of Javanese migration later, during World War II, the Japanese conscript laborers to Singapore.

The composition of Singapore's colonial labor policies. Most Indian and are Tamil, Malayalee, or Telegu.

During World War II, the Japanese when the British returned to Singapore pressure from local nationalists to general first elections preparatory to Singapore. Twenty-five of the thirty-two seats in the general electorate. No party won the governor invited David Marshall to form a coalition government. Ten Alliance (a conglomeration of the United Malay Union).⁴² In 1957 Singapore's foreign and defense policies, however, in the elections of 1959, it became

In the 1959 election, Lee Kuan Yew was victorious, winning forty-three out of a wake of its initial electoral victory, Lee demonstrated an unwillingness to tolerate, particularly affected the left-leaning faction steadily undercut. The PAP retained control the radical trade unions, and Lee's hostility toward

39. Tremewan, *Political Economy*, p. 8.

40. Tania Li, *Malays in Singapore: Cultural* (University Press, 1989), pp. 94-95.

41. Lai Ah Eng, *Meanings of Multiethnic Relations in Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford

42. Chan Heng Chee, *The Dynamics of On* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 19

43. Chua, *Communitarian Ideology*, p. 13.

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controlled this labor supply. By the early part of the twentieth century,
close to 75 percent of Singapore's population was ethnically Chinese in
origin, brought there to supply labor for the Malaya peninsula.³⁹

The origins of the Malay population of Singapore are complex. Some
Malays were indeed inhabitants of the island when Raffles arrived in
1819. Subsequently, a wave of migration took place from Malacca, fol-
lowed by waves of Javanese migrants in the mid-nineteenth century. Still
later, during World War II, the Japanese brought substantial numbers of
Javanese conscript laborers to Singapore.⁴⁰

The composition of Singapore's Indian population stems largely from
colonial labor policies. Most Indians in Singapore hail from South India
and are Tamil, Malayalee, or Telegu in linguistic origin.⁴¹

During World War II, the Japanese occupied Singapore. After 1945,
when the British returned to Singapore, they encountered increasing
pressure from local nationalists to grant independence to Singapore. The
first elections preparatory to Singapore's independence were held in 1955.
Twenty-five of the thirty-two seats in the assembly were to be selected by
the general electorate. No party won a clear-cut majority, however, and
the governor invited David Marshall, the leader of the Left Front (LF), to
form a coalition government. Ten elected LF members joined with the
Alliance (a conglomeration of the UMNO, the MCA, and the Singapore
Malay Union).⁴² In 1957 Singapore obtained the right of self-government;
foreign and defense policies, however, remained in British hands. Follow-
ing the elections of 1959, it became an independent entity.

In the 1959 election, Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party emerged
victorious, winning forty-three out of a possible fifty-one seats.⁴³ In the
wake of its initial electoral victory, the PAP, under Lee's tutelage, quickly
demonstrated an unwillingness to tolerate dissent. This attitude particu-
larly affected the left-leaning faction of the PAP, which saw its position
steadily undercut. The PAP retained repressive colonial laws, tried to
control the radical trade unions, and allowed political detainees to lan-
guish in prison. Lee's hostility toward the PAP's leftists ultimately led to

39. Tremewan, *Political Economy*, p. 8.

40. Tania Li, *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 94-95.

41. Lai Ah Eng, *Meanings of Multiethnicity: A Case Study of Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 16.

42. Chan Heng Chee, *The Dynamics of One-Party Dominance: The PAP at the Grass-Roots* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1976), p. 189.

43. Chua, *Communitarian Ideology*, p. 13.

a split within the party: in 1961, thirteen of the PAP Assembly members left the PAP to set up the *Barisan Sosialis* (Socialist Front). In 1962, as the issue of a merger of Singapore with Malaysia arose, the *Barisan* called for a boycott of the referendum. The electorate did not respond positively to this call: 71 percent of the eligible electorate voted for the merger.⁴⁴

At one level, the split weakened the party: the PAP's leftists had constituted a significant section of its political base. On the other hand, the left's departure permitted the PAP to impose the full weight of the state's security apparatus on the *Barisan* and its supporters. To fully undermine the left's organizational strength, the PAP government chose a particularly harsh strategy: Operation Coldstore, launched on February 2, 1963, led to the arrest and incarceration of 111 opposition leaders. This sweep effectively decapitated the leftist opposition to the PAP.⁴⁵ In the 1963 elections, the PAP won 46.9 percent of the vote and the *Barisan* received 33.3 percent. The PAP has won every election since 1963, through policies that combine paternalism, widespread repression, the gerrymandering of electoral districts, and the pursuit of rapid economic growth.

A number of factors prompted the PAP leadership to seek a merger with Malaysia in the early 1960s. It looked like an excellent means to suppress the political left within Singapore, as Malaysia, still in the throes of confronting a communist insurgency, had retained the draconian colonial legislation directed against the left. Merger with Malaysia would also benefit Singapore's economy. Not only could the island-state sell its manufactured goods in Malaysia, but it would also have access to Malaysia's agricultural lands, tin mines, and rubber plantations. Malaysia, in turn, was interested in the merger because of Singapore's excellent natural harbor and its port facilities.⁴⁶

Modern Malaysia

THE MALAYSIAN ELECTIONS OF 1964

Singapore's merger with Malaysia became one of the two key issues in the Malaysian election campaign of 1964. During this campaign, Lee Kuan Yew's PAP attempted to establish a political foothold in peninsular Malaysia.⁴⁷ Keen on breaking the MIC's hold over the Chinese community,

44. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

45. Tremewan, *Political Economy*, pp. 27-29.

46. Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay, eds., *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia: The Winds of Change* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), p. 131.

47. Singapore had been incorporated into the Malaysian Federation on September 16, 1963, as part of a larger plan that sought to bring together the former British colonies

Lee campaigned on the theme of "A Malaysian Malaysia." This slogan was construed as an attack on the MIC's pluralistic and meritocratic vision of Malaysia. The tensions that Lee's strategy generated in the Malaysian federation, Malay numerical dominance in the federation, and Singapore's ouster from the Malaysian federation two years after the merger took place.⁴⁸

The other prominent election issue was Sukarno's policy of "confrontation" with the Malaysian federation. Sukarno started the "confrontation" by calling for the disintegration of the Malaysian federation, calling for the withdrawal of British troops from the Malaysian federation, and Sukarno's intimidation generated patriotic sentiment that translated into support for the UMNO.⁴⁹

In the 1964 election, the Alliance government, which had lost in the previous election. It captured 51 percent of the vote and its share of the popular vote shot up to 60 percent. However, it still failed to take control of the government.

Buoyed by the returns of the 1964 election, the government implemented the First Malaysia Plan, which continued the government's commitment to uplift the Malay population and efforts to uplift the Malay population. The government's commitment to agriculture almost doubled the government's expenditure from \$468 million between 1961 and 1963 to \$1.1 billion in 1964 and 1970. Interestingly enough, it made use of the additional preserves of the Chinese community to extract revenue from them to redistribute to the Malay community. It remained content to pursue a policy of "confrontation" to extract revenue from them to redistribute to the Malay community.

The government also created a Marketing Authority to break Chinese and foreign control over the rubber and tin markets. Moreover, in an attempt to undermine the MIC's hold over the exploited Malay farmers, the government created a Rubber Marketing Authority. These efforts notwithstanding, the Chinese community continued to control the economy and all forms of non-agricultural economic activity.

of Sarawak, North Borneo, and Brunei. Even today, the Malaysian federation.

48. The expression "A Malaysian Malaysia" was a slogan of the pluralistic and meritocratic vision of Malaysia.

49. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development*.

50. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, p. 67.

51. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development*.

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Lee campaigned on the theme of "A Malaysian Malaysia." This campaign
 slogan was construed as an attack on the special rights of the Malays and
 generated considerable resentment against Lee in the Malay community.⁴⁸
 The tensions that Lee's strategy generated ultimately contributed to Sin-
 gapore's ouster from the Malaysian federation on August 9, 1965, only
 two years after the merger took place.⁴⁹ With Singapore ousted from the
 federation, Malay numerical dominance of Malaysia was all but assured.

The other prominent election issue was Indonesian President
 Sukarno's policy of "confrontation" with Malaysia over the creation of
 the Malaysian federation. Sukarno started a campaign of publicly bully-
 ing the Malaysian federation, calling it a neocolonial, imperialist plot.
 Sukarno's intimidation generated patriotic fervor in Malaysia and trans-
 lated into support for the UMNO.⁵⁰

In the 1964 election, the Alliance gained some of the ground it had
 lost in the previous election. It captured 89 seats out of a possible 104,
 and its share of the popular vote shot up from 51.8 percent to 58.5 percent.
 However, it still failed to take control of Kelantan state.

Buoyed by the returns of the 1964 election, the government launched
 the First Malaysia Plan, which continued to emphasize rural development
 and efforts to uplift the Malay population. Indeed, the government's
 commitment to agriculture almost doubled under this plan, climbing
 from \$468 million between 1961 and 1965 to \$900 million between 1965
 and 1970. Interestingly enough, it made little or no effort to enter the tra-
 ditional preserves of the Chinese community—mining, industry, and com-
 merce. It remained content to pursue a regulatory role in these areas and
 to extract revenue from them to redistribute among the Malay population.

The government also created a Malay bank (Bank Bumiputra) to
 break Chinese and foreign control over the banking industry. Further-
 more, in an attempt to undermine the power of rural middlemen who
 exploited Malay farmers, the government created a Federal Agricultural
 Marketing Authority. These efforts notwithstanding, foreigners and the
 Chinese community continued to control large-scale commercial agricul-
 ture and all forms of non-agricultural enterprises.⁵¹ Consequently, despite

of Sarawak, North Borneo, and Brunei. Eventually, Brunei chose not to join the
 federation.

48. The expression "A Malaysian Malaysia" was seen as a euphemism for a more
 pluralistic and meritocratic vision of Malaysian society.

49. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, p. 51.

50. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, p. 67.

51. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, p. 52.

these government efforts to reduce rural, and in particular Malay, poverty, gaps in income distribution by ethnic group expanded during this period,⁵² contributing to interethnic tensions, particularly between the Chinese and Malay communities. Despite the government's efforts to improve the lot of the Malay community, little appreciable change took place between 1957 and 1970 in terms of reducing aggregate family income disparities between the Chinese and the Malays; the average income of a Chinese household remained about twice that of a Malay household.⁵³

The communal structure of politics in Malaysia, where few political parties offered a pluralistic vision seeking to unite all Malaysians through a common ideology, exacerbated interethnic differences. This growing reservoir of resentment and the consequent ethnic polarization taking place in Malaysia would manifest itself in the 1969 election campaign and its aftermath.

Two years before the election of 1969, the debate over a national language contributed to a worsening of communal relations within Malaysia. The 1957 constitution had called for the use of Malay and English for a period of ten years. In the wake of Singapore's expulsion from the federation in 1965, strong pressure developed from within the Malay community for the adoption of Malay as the national language when the ten-year period drew to a close on August 31, 1967. This campaign found support among many members of the UMNO, but was staunchly opposed by the MCA and the MIC. A number of non-Malay opposition parties also campaigned against the full implementation of the Malay language provisions. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the aristocratic and conciliatory prime minister, was instrumental in fashioning a compromise. In 1967, he managed to pass the National Language Act, which made Malay the sole national language but also envisaged a continuing role for English for official purposes. Non-Malays were satisfied with this compromise, but many Malays construed it as a sop to the non-Malay community. Some dissident members of the UMNO felt they could no longer rely upon Tunku to champion Malay causes.⁵⁴

THE 1969 ELECTION

It was against this backdrop of steadily worsening communal relations that the 1969 election was held. In campaigning, the Alliance emphasized

52. K.S. Jomo, *Growth and Structural Change in the Malaysian Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 10.

53. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, p. 82.

54. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, p. 23.

its past achievements, promised to society, and insisted on its ability to defend the Alliance continued to defend the promised not to deny opportunities voices of dissent were emerging within UMNO; they argued that the old guard of defending Malay prerogatives.

Apart from the incumbent Alliance, PAS, the DAP, and a new political party (Malaysian People's Movement, founded in 1967) took up the Malay cause, called for policies that had been conferred on the bumiputras to be formulated to strengthen a different agenda. It called for the development of a different agenda. It argued that the bumiputra policies had created a rapacious class of Malay rural Malay elites. The *Gerakan* (as it was called) called for social justice, human rights, and a broader political base, primarily among the urban areas of Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

The election campaign was far more intense than previous campaigns. Both the incumbent and opposition parties resorted to overt campaigning.⁵⁵ The elections were held throughout 1969, and were scheduled for two to four weeks later. The results revealed a dramatic loss of support for the Alliance. The Alliance won 48.8 percent of the vote and 66 of the 103 seats. The number of Malay voters shifted to the Alliance. Within the Alliance, the MCA proved to be the most popular party. The performance of the MCA led its leader to announce that he would not join the federal cabinet.⁵⁶ At the state level, losing control of the government.

The non-Malay opposition parties were delighted with the electoral outcome.

55. Much of this discussion has been covered in "Malaysia," pp. 4-5.

56. Brown, "Malaysia," p. 230.

57. Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," p. 230.

duce rural, and in particular Malay, poverty by ethnic group expanded during this period. Ethnic tensions, particularly between the Chinese. Despite the government's efforts to improve community, little appreciable change took place in terms of reducing aggregate family income of Chinese and the Malays; the average income of a Chinese household was about twice that of a Malay household.⁵³

of politics in Malaysia, where few political parties were seeking to unite all Malaysians through a coalition that would transcend interethnic differences. This growing ethnic polarization taking place in the consequent ethnic polarization taking place was manifest itself in the 1969 election campaign and the election of 1969, the debate over a national language. The worsening of communal relations within Malaysia had called for the use of Malay and English. In the wake of Singapore's expulsion from the Federation, the pressure developed from within the Malay community for Malay as the national language when the election was held on August 31, 1967. This campaign foundered on the part of the UMNO, but was staunchly opposed by the MIC. A number of non-Malay opposition parties had opposed the full implementation of the Malay Language Act. Abdul Rahman, the aristocratic and conciliatory leader of the UMNO, was instrumental in fashioning a compromise. In the National Language Act, which made Malay the official language, also envisaged a continuing role for English. The non-Malays were satisfied with this compromise and continued it as a sop to the non-Malay community. The UMNO felt they could no longer defend their Malay causes.⁵⁴

of steadily worsening communal relations. In campaigning, the Alliance emphasized

Rural Change in the Malaysian Economy (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 82.

Economic Development in Malaysia, p. 82.

Malaysia in Malaysia, p. 23.

the past achievements, promised to create a stable, liberal, and tolerant society, and insisted on its ability to contain communal discord. Although the Alliance continued to defend the special position of the Malays, it promised not to deny opportunities to non-Malays. However, important voices of dissent were emerging within the principal alliance partner, the UMNO; they argued that the old guard within the UMNO was incapable of defending Malay prerogatives.

Apart from the incumbent Alliance, the election was contested by the PAS, the DAP, and a new political party, the *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Malaysian People's Movement, founded in 1968). The PAS, as expected, took up the Malay cause, called for the expansion of the special rights that had been conferred on the *bumiputras*, and demanded that new policies be formulated to strengthen Islam. The DAP pushed a very different agenda. It called for the dismantling of the special rights, and argued that the *bumiputra* policies had not benefited Malays at large but had created a rapacious class of Malayan capitalists and had strengthened rural Malay elites. The *Gerakan* (as it was popularly called) was dedicated to social justice, human rights, and an open democratic system. It had a slender political base, primarily among the university-educated elites and in the urban areas of Penang and Kuala Lumpur.⁵⁵

The election campaign was far more vigorous—and abrasive—than previous campaigns. Both the incumbent party and some of the opposition parties resorted to overt communal appeals to garner political support.⁵⁶ The elections were held throughout peninsular Malaysia on May 10, 1969, and were scheduled for the states of Sabah and Sarawak some two to four weeks later. The results of the election in peninsular Malaysia revealed a dramatic loss of support for the ruling party, which won a mere 48.8 percent of the vote and 66 of the 104 parliamentary seats. A substantial number of Malay voters shifted their allegiance from UMNO to PAS. Within the Alliance, the MCA proved to be the biggest loser. Twenty of the thirty-three candidates it put up for election lost. The disastrous performance of the MCA led its leader, Tan Siew Sin, to declare that it would not join the federal cabinet.⁵⁷ The Alliance performed even worse at the state level, losing control of Kelantan, Perak, and Penang.

The non-Malay opposition parties, the DAP and the *Gerakan*, were delighted with the electoral outcome. They had fallen considerably short

55. Much of this discussion has been drawn from Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," pp. 4-5.

56. Brown, "Malaysia," p. 230.

57. Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," pp. 6-7.

of victory at the national level. Nevertheless, they had succeeded in preventing the Alliance from achieving a two-thirds majority in parliament. Furthermore, they had been instrumental in toppling the Alliance from Perak and Penang.

THE ONSET OF RIOTING

Most scholars trace the origins of the riots that broke out in Kuala Lumpur on May 13, 1969, to the victory celebrations of some members of the Chinese community in light of the DAP and the *Gerakan* victories. Apparently, many of those attending the victory rallies taunted the Malays, leading to a Malay counterdemonstration.⁵⁸ Before long, the contending groups turned to violence. In these riots, some eight hundred individuals were killed and some six thousand were rendered homeless.⁵⁹

There is some disagreement about the underlying sources of rioting, however. In one view, the riots were merely the manifestation of deep-seated ethnic grievances that had long been smoldering and were ignited by the callous behavior of the opposition parties.⁶⁰ In another view, the riots stemmed from fundamental economic grievances.⁶¹ A third explanation suggests that the riots were neither "the expression of overt economic grievances [nor] of class animosities. Rather, in the atmosphere of crisis and with irrational mechanisms of crowd psychology, primal emotions surged into uncontrollable waves combining racial antipathies, anger, fear, hatred, and self-justifying rationalizations for barbarous behavior."⁶² It appears, however, that two sets of factors, underlying and proximate, led to the rioting. There is little question that each ethnic group had long-standing grievances, real and imagined, against the others. At the same time, it seems clear that political leaders from every community helped to nurse these grievances. The Chinese demonstrations occasioned by the DAP and *Gerakan* victories and the Malay counterdemonstration organized by the *mentri besar* (chief minister) of Selangor, Datuk Harun Idris, were the proximate causes of the rioting.

58. William Case, "Aspects and Audiences of Legitimacy," in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 93-94.

59. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, p. 68.

60. See Faaland, Parkinson, and Saniman, *Growth and Ethnic Inequality*, pp. 12-15.

61. See Brown, "Malaysia," p. 231.

62. Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," p. 7.

THE SUSPENSION OF PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL

Once the rioting was brought under control, parliament and the Council of Ministers were suspended, a state of emergency was declared, and the elections for Sabah and Sarawak were postponed. The powers of governance were placed in the hands of the National Council (NOC). The NOC, chaired by Tun Abdul Razak, was composed of the heads of the federal government, the service, and foreign office, as well as the heads of the state governments. Razak of the UMNO, Tan Siew Sin of the MIC. Although the cabinet continued to function, the real power and decision-making shifted to the NOC.

In the wake of the rioting, Malay political process. They contended that the government had been far too generous toward the Chinese and that the lot of the Malays had been neglected. The emergency, however, was directed against the Chinese. Mahathir bin Mohammed, a Malay physician from Kedah, called for Tunku's resignation, accusing him of giving the Chinese the impression that he had been planning to retire anyway, felt that his deputy, Tun Abdul Razak.

Faced with these waves of anger, the government decided to create several mechanisms to defuse the situation. The National Consultative Council (NCC) was established to deal with interethnic problems. Although it had no formal powers, it served as a legislative body. It had sixty-five members of the NCC with a wide ethnic spectrum. The government kept fifty seats, the remainder was given six. The remainder was given to state governments, religious organizations, and the press.

At a larger level, the NOC moved to address what it believed were the underlying causes of the rioting. In the view of the NOC, the

63. Mahathir bin Mohammed subsequently resigned and returned to rehabilitate himself, however, and in 1970.

64. Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics: A Study in*

mic (and consequently psychological) back-
ground. Accordingly, public policies had to be
underlying sources of tension and discord.
the New Economic Policy (NEP).

in camera and decided that a three-pronged
structure Malaysian society and politics. The
the NOC concluded, could only be accom-
social engineering and preferential policies,
s strategy were a "national ideology," or
one the norms of conduct within Malaysia;
ic policies to redress the economic imbal-
e Malays and the other two communities;
was passed by a reconvened parliament in
nge to the new order.⁶⁵

the maintenance of a democratic society,
ditions, and the equitable sharing of wealth,
ideology" was little more than an exercise
ess, it was an important undertaking in that
new social contract.

the new strategy, the NEP, was undoubt-
nt initiative. Essentially, it had two facets:
ification of race with occupation, and the
licit quantitative targets were set for pov-
ment was made to ensure that at least 30
state sector would be shifted to Malay hands
ssuage the misgivings of the non-Malays,
ak made clear that the expansion of Malay
he expense of other communities. In effect,
on of property, loss of jobs, or denial of the

ment of the new strategy involved shrinking
within the country. New legislation was
it reconvened in 1971, which specifically
tical parties from questioning a range of

Quasi Democracy in a Divided Society," in Larry
our Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing*
e Rienner, 1989), pp. 362-365.

Economic Development, p. 60.

Malaysia," p. 104.

policy provisions: Malay rights, citizenship (particularly that of the non-
Malays), the royalty, and Malay as the national language. These were all
deemed to be "sensitive issues," and challenging them was deemed to be
sedition. Indeed, the constitution was amended in 1971 to extend the
reach of this legislation to parliament itself.⁶⁸ The new prime minister
forthrightly defended these restrictions on free speech and democratic
procedures:

The Malaysian type of democracy is best suited to the needs of the country's
unique multi-racial society. The Malaysian concept of democracy subscribes
also to the need to balance individual interests against the general security
of the State. . . . We recognize that each nation must develop . . . its own
political and economic system and that the developing world has a special
need of an articulated political system suitable to its own problems.⁶⁹

IMPLEMENTING THE NEP

At its broadest level, the NEP involved a range of policies designed to
improve the economic and political positions of Malays. To accomplish
this, the NEP was folded into the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75).⁷⁰ This
plan affected such sectors as education, employment, business, and the
administrative services.

In the early 1970s, the government introduced a number of sweeping
changes in educational policy designed to benefit Malays. One of the key
provisions of the new education policy was the conversion of English-
language schools into Malay-language schools. In 1970 the first year of
primary school was converted to Malay; each year another grade was
converted until the process culminated in 1982. Universities were ex-
pected to follow suit by 1983. The National University of Malaysia (Uni-
versiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) was established in 1970 with Malay as the
sole language of instruction.⁷¹ Non-Malay resistance to these changes was

68. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, pp. 82-83.

69. Quotation from Tun Abdul Razak, in Ahmad, "Malaysia," p. 365.

70. Faaland, Parkinson, and Saniman, *Growth and Ethnic Inequality*, p. 73. In 1990, the
NEP was replaced by the National Development Plan (NDP). The objectives of the
latter are not fundamentally different from those of the NEP. However, the NDP did
reflect two shifts, one in terms of strategy and the other in terms of goals. The strategic
shift involved an emphasis on privatization. Nevertheless, the benefits of privatization
would be directed toward Malays and especially those with close connections with the
UMNO. The other change involved a greater emphasis on redistributive goals. See
Government of Malaysia, *The Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991-1995* (Kuala Lumpur: National
Printing Department, Government of Malaysia, 1991), esp. pp. 31-37.

71. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, pp. 160-161.

largely ineffectual except at the level of primary education. Significant numbers of Chinese parents placed their children in Chinese-language schools, as the English-medium schools were converted into Malay-speaking schools.

In 1982, in addition to the switch in languages, the government primary schools placed a new emphasis on learning fundamental skills—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Much to the consternation of the Chinese community, even the Chinese-language schools were supplied with Malay texts. The government claimed that Chinese texts would eventually be provided.⁷²

The Chinese community also protested the barriers they faced in higher education as a consequence of the government's ethnic preference policies. To increase the number of Malays in higher education, the government had set different standards for Malay and non-Malay applicants. The worsening prospects for non-Malay entrants to the universities led to repeated demands from the Chinese community for the creation of a Merdeka (Independence) University. The government repeatedly rejected this proposal. Eventually, under pressure from the MCA, it allowed the Chinese community to create the Tunku Abdul Rahman College, where the medium of instruction was English.

In another seeming concession to the Chinese and Tamil communities, in 1993 Prime Minister Mahathir announced that the government would allow the use of English in Malaysian universities for the purpose of teaching in the areas of science, technology, and medicine. In all likelihood, this change in policy was driven more by the imperative of competitiveness in an increasingly global economy than by the need to address the misgivings of minority communities. As Malaysia's economy continues to mature and moves into newer areas of high technology, the Mahathir regime and its successors may be forced to make further changes. Despite Malay opposition, universities may have to abandon their Malay-only policy. Indeed, Malaysia already faces a significant shortage of highly skilled personnel in science and technology.⁷³

The Chinese community was not the only minority community in Malaysia to suffer from the preferential policies in education. The lack of government funding and the relative economic backwardness of the Indian community also hindered the educational prospects of that community. The 500 Tamil-language schools are among the worst in Malaysia; most are decrepit and short of teachers. The statistical evidence on the

72. Ibid., p. 161.

73. James Kynge, "A Shake-up on Campuses," *Financial Times*, June 19, 1996, p. iv.

poor performance of Indian students of Tamils at the end of six years of in-Bahasa Malaysia, the national Chinese and 72 percent of Malay nical subjects such as mathematics; only 50 percent of Tamils compared to 87 percent of Malays 10 percent of the students entering years of education, and a mere 3 quality of Tamil-language education entering universities, especially year for which the Malaysian Ministry statistics, a mere 1 percent of students of origin.

The vast majority of Tamil-language part to the continuing poverty (Tamil) population. According to Malaysia's 1.4 million Indians remain have not been able to muster quality of their education. Obvious national successes have bypassed them.

The NEP's educational initiatives of the Malay population, however government devoting close to 6 (GDP) to education since the early grew approximately six-fold in recent ment has instituted a range of policies the *bumiputera*, as well as generous higher education abroad. At the schools were set up exclusively percent of the available positions Malays.⁷⁷

A battery of statistical evidence policies. For example, in 1980, a

74. Murray Hiebert, "Class Divide," (October 19, 1995), p. 33.

75. S. Jayasankaran, "Balancing Act," (December 21, 1995), p. 26.

76. S. Jayasankaran, "A Degree of Success," No. 51 (December 21, 1995), p. 27.

77. Ibid.

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Access to the Chinese and Tamil communities. Mahathir announced that the government would focus on research in Malaysian universities for the purpose of science, technology, and medicine. In all likelihood, this was driven more by the imperative of a globally competitive economy than by the need to improve the educational prospects of minority communities. As Malaysia's economy moves into newer areas of high technology, the pressures on the government may be forced to make further adjustments. In this position, universities may have to abandon their traditional focus. Malaysia already faces a significant short-
age of teachers. The statistical evidence on the

was not the only minority community in Malaysia. Preferential policies in education. The lack of relative economic backwardness of the Indian community. The educational prospects of that community are among the worst in Malaysia; the quality of the schools are among the worst in Malaysia; the quality of the teachers. The statistical evidence on the

Campuses," *Financial Times*, June 19, 1996, p. iv.

poor performance of Indian students is damning. In 1991, only 19 percent of Tamils at the end of six years of schooling passed the composition test in Bahasa Malaysia, the national language. In comparison, 33 percent of Chinese and 72 percent of Malays passed the same examination. In technical subjects such as mathematics, their performance has also been distressing: only 50 percent of Tamils passed the mathematics examination, compared to 87 percent of Malays and 57 percent of Chinese. Only about 10 percent of the students entering Tamil primary schools complete eleven years of education, and a mere 3 percent go on to university.⁷⁴ The poor quality of Tamil-language education has hurt the prospects of Indians entering universities, especially in the technical areas. In 1988, the last year for which the Malaysian Ministry of Education provided race-based statistics, a mere 1 percent of students in technical colleges were of Indian origin.

The vast majority of Tamil-language schools are underfunded, due in part to the continuing poverty of much of the Indian (predominantly Tamil) population. According to one estimate, close to two-thirds of Malaysia's 1.4 million Indians remain mired in poverty.⁷⁵ Consequently, they have not been able to muster the requisite resources to improve the quality of their education. Obviously, the benefits of the NEP's educational successes have bypassed the country's Indian population.

The NEP's educational initiatives have dramatically improved the lot of the Malay population, however. This transformation began with the government devoting close to 6 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) to education since the early 1970s. During this period, the GDP grew approximately six-fold in real terms.⁷⁶ Simultaneously, the government has instituted a range of preferential quotas and scholarships for the *bumiputra*, as well as generous scholarships and bursaries for pursuing higher education abroad. At the secondary school level, elite boarding schools were set up exclusively for Malays. In late 1995, close to 64 percent of the available positions at the university level were reserved for Malays.⁷⁷

A battery of statistical evidence shows the results of these preferential policies. For example, in 1980, a decade after the beginning of the NEP,

74. Murray Hiebert, "Class Divide," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, No. 42 (October 19, 1995), p. 33.

75. S. Jayasankaran, "Balancing Act," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, No. 51 (December 21, 1995), p. 26.

76. S. Jayasankaran, "A Degree of Success," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, No. 51 (December 21, 1995), p. 27.

77. *Ibid.*

1,164,980 Malays were enrolled in primary schools. Within five years, the number climbed to 1,336,922. More dramatic changes appeared in post-secondary education. For example, in the sciences, the numbers of Malay students increased from 5,111 to 12,110 during the same period.⁷⁸ The university-level statistics are even more striking. In 1980, 7,072 Malay students were enrolled in graduate and post-graduate science courses; by 1985 that number had shot up to 11,685.

Admittedly, this transformation in educational opportunities came at some cost. Apart from the racial inequities that it has perpetuated and, indeed, now exacerbated, the government's preferential policies have had other pernicious consequences. For example, it is widely held that race-based entry standards have lowered educational standards. Furthermore, non-Malays have faced widespread discrimination in terms of both university appointments and promotions.⁷⁹

OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

One of the professed goals of the NEP was to disassociate occupation and race. From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the government embarked on a massive affirmative action program in the field of education. What steps did it undertake in the area of employment to achieve this goal?

Prior to 1969, Malaysia had already instituted a system of preferences in hiring. However, this system was confined to governmental services. With the adoption of the NEP, the system of preferences was extended to the private sector.⁸⁰ Quotas were set for the employment of Malays in commercial and industrial firms. Moreover, firms were asked to devise plans for the training and promotion of Malays to more skilled and upper management positions. Foreign corporations were expected to comply with these regulations. In fact, the contractual terms of investment in Malaysia were linked to the creation of quotas for Malays.

The systematic pursuit of these goals has yielded substantial results over the course of two and a half decades. Again, the statistical evidence

78. Government of Malaysia, *Fifth Malaysia Plan* (Kuala Lumpur: National Printing Department, Government of Malaysia), p. 493.

79. The evidence for this assertion is largely anecdotal. However, a range of interviews conducted with academics at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and Universiti Kebangsaan in Bangi suggested that there was at least a kernel of truth to this assertion. One social scientist at the Universiti Kebangsaan produced a copy of the faculty directory and stated, "See for yourself." Author interviews in Kuala Lumpur and Bangi, November 1995.

80. Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," p. 108.

Table 6.4. Employment in Malaysia, 1957-1985.

Occupational group	1957		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Professional & technical	35.1	41.9	12.1
Administrative & managerial	17.5	62.3	12.3
Clerical	27.1	46.2	19.9
Sales	15.9	66.1	16.8
Service	39.7	33.3	12.8
Agricultural	62.1	24.3	12.8
Production	26.5	53.5	18.9

SOURCE: Adapted from K.S. Jomo, *Growth and Development in Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 1990), Table 4.2.

is compelling. For example, in 1957, 37.4 percent of all Malaysians were engaged in some form of middle-class occupation. By 1985, this had dropped to 37.4 percent. Similarly, the percentage of middle-class occupations at an upper level rose from 27 percent in 1957 to 27 percent in 1985. The number of *bumiputra* doctors rose from 4 to 24 percent, architects from 4 to 24 percent, and accountants from 7 to 11 percent. In social engineering, the widely held belief that it underwent a dramatic transformation (See Table 6.4.)

Another stated goal of the NEP was the conversion of all equity holdings into Malay-owned limited companies. Because in 1969 Malays owned only a small percentage of limited companies. To accomplish this goal, the government, on behalf of the Malay community, encouraged corporations that were operated by non-Malays to be converted into Malay-owned enterprises. This investment created a number of investment enterprises.

The government also adopted other areas of economic policy. In Public Utilities, the principal

81. Crouch, *Government and Society*

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More dramatic changes appeared in post-
ple, in the sciences, the numbers of Malay
to 12,110 during the same period.⁷⁸ The
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Malaysia Plan (Kuala Lumpur: National Printing
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gested that there was at least a kernel of truth to
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r yourself." Author interviews in Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia," p. 108.

Table 6.4. Employment in Malaysia by Occupation and Ethnic Group,
1967-1985.

Occupational group	1957			1970			1985		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Professional & technical	35.1	41.9	12.1	47.0	39.5	10.8	54.4	32.4	11.1
Administrative & managerial	17.5	62.3	12.3	24.1	62.9	7.8	28.2	66.0	5.0
Clerical	27.1	46.2	19.9	35.4	45.9	17.2	54.0	36.8	8.7
Sales	15.9	66.1	16.8	26.7	61.7	11.1	37.9	56.8	5.2
Service	39.7	33.3	12.8	44.3	39.6	14.6	57.9	31.2	9.7
Agricultural	62.1	24.3	12.8	72.0	N/A	9.7	73.5	17.2	8.3
Production	26.5	53.5	18.9	34.2	55.9	9.6	45.5	43.1	10.9

SOURCE: Adapted from K.S. Jomo, *Growth and Structural Change in the Malaysian Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1990), Table 4.2.

is compelling. For example, in 1970, 62.3 percent of Malays in peninsular Malaysia were engaged in some form of agriculture; by 1990, this number had dropped to 37.4 percent. Simultaneously, Malays had moved into middle-class occupations at an extraordinary pace, increasing from 12.9 percent to 27 percent between 1970 and 1990. For example, the proportion of *bumiputra* doctors rose from 4 to 28 percent, dentists from 3 to 24 percent, architects from 4 to 24 percent, engineers from 7 to 35 percent, and accountants from 7 to 11 percent.⁸¹ Thanks to concerted efforts at social engineering, the widely held image of Malays as peasant cultivators underwent a dramatic transformation within the span of two decades. (See Table 6.4.)

Another stated goal of the NEP was the transfer of at least 30 percent of all equity holdings into Malay hands. This was a formidable task because in 1969 Malays owned a mere 1.5 percent of capital assets of limited companies. To accomplish its goal, the government acted on behalf of the Malay community, investing heavily in publicly owned corporations that were operated and managed by Malays. The government created a number of investment schemes to attract private Malay investment to these enterprises.

The government also adopted a highly interventionist posture in other areas of economic policy. For example, the Ministry of Works and Public Utilities, the principal contractor for government construction

81. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, pp. 185-188.

projects, was required to reserve at least 30 percent of its contracts for Malay firms, that is, those with at least 51 percent Malay ownership.⁸² In addition, the government established government-run banks—such as the Bank Rakyat and the Bank Bumiputra—to provide financial services to the Malay community.⁸³ Finally, the government created a number of development banks, such as Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Berhad (1973), Bank Kemajuan Perusahaan (1979), and Bank Islam (1979).

There is little question that the government has achieved some of its objectives. As a consequence of the creation of new banks, lending to the Malay community increased substantially. In 1968, 4 percent of the loans in Malaysia went to Malays; by 1980 this total had grown to 20.6 percent, and in 1985 it reached 28 percent.⁸⁴ However, even though the government mounted a concerted effort to create a Malay entrepreneurial class through extensive interventions in the market, the results have been distinctly mixed. A Malay economic elite has undoubtedly emerged. It is doubtful that this elite would have enjoyed a similar degree of success without the obvious benefits of steadfast governmental intervention on behalf of Malays.⁸⁵ At the same time, one government organization, the Council of Trust for the Indigenous People, which was created to promote entrepreneurship and provide credit to small businesses, reported in 1983 that of the 55,000 loans that had been given to Malay businesses, only 6,000 had been paid back. The bulk of the defaulters had either gone bankrupt or believed that the loans did not have to be paid back. Other evidence pointed to the difficulties of instilling the virtues of entrepreneurship. In 1980, for example, the Ministry of Public Works and Public Utilities announced that out of the 5,000 Malay contractors registered with it, only about 20 percent could be considered successful.⁸⁶

The final component of the NEP is the government's efforts to eradicate poverty. At one level, it is difficult to gainsay the state's achievements in this area. In 1970, close to half the population in peninsular Malaysia lived in poverty; it is believed that the incidence of poverty in Sabah and Sarawak was even worse.⁸⁷ Fifteen years after the inception of the NEP, poverty had declined to 20.7 percent. By 1990, at the start of the National

82. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Economy*, p. 102.

83. Means, "Ethnic Preference in Malaysia," p. 110.

84. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Economy*, pp. 100–102.

85. S. Jayasankaran, "The Chosen Few," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, No. 51 (December 21, 1995), p. 30.

86. Jesudason, *Ethnicity and the Economy*, p. 103.

87. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, p. 189.

Development Plan (NDP), poverty projected a further decline to 11 percent. The performance of the Malaysian economy has been strong. By 1994, the poverty rate had fallen to around 2.9 percent, and the per capita income was around \$3,406.⁸⁹ Much of this was due to the rapid growth of the Malaysian economy. In 1995, the Malaysian economy recorded a growth rate of over 8 percent a year. The reduction of poverty has benefited all three of the main ethnic communities, but the Malays, who were in the most dire situation, were the primary beneficiaries.

Beyond Economic Explanation

What other factors, beyond economic development, have helped the government's redistributive policies to maintain ethnic peace? After all, not all ethnic groups in the community have enjoyed the results of the NEP. Some, like the Chinese, have done as well as the Malays or even better.

Until the late 1960s, the concept of ethnic harmony embodied in the National Alliance was the dominant theme. These arrangements obviously caused the electoral results of the 1969 general election to reflect ethnic violence. Apart from pursuing ethnic harmony, the Alliance and the *Barisan Nasional* (after 1974) placed a number of restrictions on press freedoms. Many of these restrictions were lifted after parliament was suspended in 1988. However, long after the state of emergency ended, civil liberties have remained weakened and strengthened.

This creeping authoritarianism

88. Government of Malaysia, *Sixth National Development Plan*, p. 10.

89. Mohamed Jawhar bin Hassan, "The Malaysian Economy," *Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (February 1995), p. 10.

90. Mohamed Jawhar bin Hassan, "The Malaysian Economy," *Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (February 1996), pp. 123–129.

91. Murray Hiebert, "Underclass Blues," *Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 10 (October 19, 1995), pp. 32–33.

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Development Plan (NDP), poverty had declined to 17.1 percent; the NDP
projected a further decline to 11.1 percent by 1995.⁸⁸ The economic per-
formance of the Malaysian economy exceeded the government's projec-
tions. By 1994, the poverty rate had declined to 8.8 percent, unemploy-
ment was around 2.9 percent, and the per capita income of the country
was \$3,406.⁸⁹ Much of this was made possible by the extraordinary dy-
namism of the Malaysian economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In
1995, the Malaysian economy registered its eighth consecutive year of
growth at over 8 percent a year. Real growth of GDP amounted to 9.6
percent.⁹⁰ The reduction of poverty significantly improved the position of
all three of the main ethnic communities in Malaysia, though the Malays,
who were in the most dire situation prior to 1970, have been the greatest
beneficiaries.

Beyond Economic Explanations

What other factors, beyond extraordinary levels of economic growth and
the government's redistributive policies, have enabled Malaysia to main-
tain ethnic peace? After all, not all ethnic groups, most notably the Indian
community, have enjoyed the rewards of economic growth to the same
extent as the Malays or even the Chinese.⁹¹

Until the late 1960s, the consociational power-sharing arrangements
embodied in the National Alliance succeeded in maintaining ethnic har-
mony. These arrangements obviously represented a tenuous peace be-
cause the electoral results of the 1969 elections served as a catalyst for
ethnic violence. Apart from pursuing policies of growth and social justice,
the Alliance and the *Barisan Nasional* (as the *Barisan Sosialis* was called
after 1974) placed a number of curbs on personal rights, civil liberties,
and press freedoms. Many of these limitations were put into force shortly
after parliament was suspended and the state of emergency imposed.
However, long after the state of emergency was lifted, these limitations
on civil liberties have remained and in some cases, have even been
strengthened.

This creeping authoritarianism has been made possible in part by the

88. Government of Malaysia, *Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991–1995*, p. 32.

89. Mohamed Jawhar bin Hassan, "Malaysia in 1994: Staying the Course," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (February 1995), pp. 186–193.

90. Mohamed Jawhar bin Hassan, "Malaysia in 1995," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (February 1996), pp. 123–129.

91. Murray Hiebert, "Underclass Blues," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 158, No. 42 (October 19, 1995), pp. 32–33.

structure of the Malaysian polity. The Malaysian Constitution is very susceptible to amendment. A mere two-thirds majority of parliament enables the ruling party (or coalition) to amend the constitution. Neither the Alliance nor the *Barisan Nasional* had much difficulty in mustering the requisite two-thirds majority. The opposition remained free to protest, but to little effect.

Other institutions of governance have bolstered the powers and prerogatives of the ruling regime. For example, except on rare occasions, the Malaysian judiciary has been remarkably pliant. In the early years of the Malaysian state, most Malay politicians came from the same social background as the judiciary. Consequently, they shared a consensus on a range of political and social issues. There is, in fact, some evidence that prime ministers even consulted the higher reaches of the judiciary before introducing legislation in parliament.⁹²

The pliant judiciary in Malaysia has enabled various regimes to impose significant controls on the mass media. In 1974, parliament passed legislation that required Malay majority ownership for all newspapers. Soon thereafter, the principal political parties (UMNO, in particular) moved to control most major newspapers. By the 1980s, UMNO had direct or indirect control of the *New Straits Times*, *The Malay Mail*, *Berita Minggu*, *Utusan Melayu*, and *Utusan Malaysia*.⁹³ The government also controlled two of the three television channels and held 40 percent of the equity in the third.

Apart from ownership of the press and mass media, the government also possesses other legislative means to exercise control. The annual licensing requirements of the Printing Presses Ordinance of 1958 in conjunction with the Sedition Act of 1948 leave the threat of closure an ever-present possibility for any media outlet. The Sedition Act was amended over time to prohibit any discussion of Malay special rights, the privileges of the sultans and the royalty, the citizenship of non-Malays, or the government's language policy. The government has also moved to limit foreign publications that are deemed prejudicial to "public order, national interest, morality, or security."⁹⁴ In 1984, two more pieces of legislation that imposed further restrictions on press freedom were passed: the Printing Presses and Publications Act, and the Official Secrets Act. The first made it mandatory for foreign publications to provide large

92. Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, pp. 138-142.

93. Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation*, pp. 137-138.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

deposits, which would be forfeited in court following the publication of material of national interest. The Official Secrets Act was amended to require that any information entrusted in confidence to the government was deemed to be a secret. The penalties for breach were nothing short of draconian. For example, a person could face prison terms for government employment if he or she discloses any requests for official information to the public.⁹⁵

In addition to this panoply of repressive legislation that curtails personal freedoms, the government will, including the Internal Security Act (1972 and 1975), under which the minister can detain any individual in preventive detention for up to three years. The Sedition Act of 1948 provides statutory authority to arrest individuals for "seditious" acts, and anyone can be imprisoned for up to three years.

Other pieces of legislation, passed in the 1970s, significantly reinforced the coercive powers of the government formulated during Malaysia's first socialist-led uprising. Nevertheless, these laws have been used by various regimes to suppress dissent. Two ordinances are of particular significance: the (Preservation) Ordinance of 1958, which restricts public areas and processions, and the Ordinance of 1972, which empowered the police to search and arrest individuals at will. The other statute, the Prevention of Crime Ordinance, allows the police to detain individuals for up to three years without cause.⁹⁶

These dramatic restrictions on press freedom have ensured that few inflammatory statements by politicians are hesitant to make over the dominance of the ruling regime remain. The government has on occasion used these laws to meet challenges from national opposition.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

96. Much of this discussion has been derived from

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deposits, which would be forfeited if the publishers failed to appear in court following the publication of material detrimental to the national interest. The Official Secrets Act was equally insidious: under its terms, any information entrusted in confidence by one public official to another was deemed to be a secret. The penalties embodied in this act were nothing short of draconian. For example, the act called for five-year prison terms for government employees who failed to report to the police any requests for official information that they received from members of the public.⁹⁵

In addition to this panoply of restrictions, a stunning array of legislation that curtails personal freedom has been passed and is invoked at will, including the Internal Security Act of 1960 (revised and amended in 1972 and 1975), under which the minister for home affairs can place an individual in preventive detention for a period of two years without trial. The Sedition Act of 1948 provides sweeping powers to the government to arrest individuals for "seditious" activities. If convicted, an individual can be imprisoned for up to three years.

Other pieces of legislation, passed after independence, have significantly reinforced the coercive powers of the state. Many of these were formulated during Malaysia's first state of emergency, during the communist-led uprising. Nevertheless, they have remained on the books and have been used by various regimes against members of the opposition. Two ordinances are of particular significance. The first, the Public Order (Preservation) Ordinance of 1958, permits the police to declare that certain areas are restricted. Once the ordinance is in effect, the police are empowered to regulate processions and meetings of more than five individuals, to search and arrest individuals at will, and to control firearms. Violations of this ordinance bring whipping and imprisonment for up to ten years. The other statute, the Prevention of Crime Ordinance of 1959, permits the police to detain individuals for up to twenty-eight days without showing cause.⁹⁶

These dramatic restrictions on personal, press, and political freedoms have ensured that few inflammatory charges are made in the press, that politicians are hesitant to make overtly communal appeals, and that the dominance of the ruling regime remains largely unchallenged. The government has on occasion used these legislative powers not only to quell challenges from national opposition parties such as the DAP, but also to

95. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

96. Much of this discussion has been derived from *ibid.*, pp. 141-145.

and "Others" in each neighborhood and housing estate in Singapore. The government's by some standards, a remarkable success. Projects accommodate some 80 percent of its and, the extensive governmental role in the of housing amounts to a form of social as ethnic groups. Furthermore, certain eth- lays, have expressed concerns about dis- Chinese settlements.¹⁰⁵

rited colonial educational policies and in- ars of colonial rule, the British had done versal education in Singapore. Missionary age education to a particular stratum of n found employment in the lower echelons ation. Only upon their return to Singapore a well-developed nationalist movement, ies seek to control the Chinese schools that er the tutelage of the Chinese Communist h-language education with a view toward elite. English-educated Singaporeans were nercial and administrative positions while on (Chinese, Malay, and Tamil) were di- cational training.

ed in 1955, the Legislative Assembly ap- Singapore's education policies. Lee Kuan this committee, and the roots of the PAP's ed to the committee's recommendations, ment of the four main language groups, ucation in the primary schools and trilin- ools, and the designation of Malay as the ; this last provision, the committee mem- geopolitical location and the strength of ity within the city-state.

l policy occurred in 1980 in the wake of

nd Development, p. 139.

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y, Singapore: The Legacy of Lee Kuan Yew (Boulder,

the "Goh Report," named after its author, Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee. The report had been prompted by unacceptably high dropout rates in Singaporean schools.¹⁰⁷ The report identified bilingualism as one of the key factors underlying these high attrition rates. Contending that large numbers of students were incapable of coping with the demands of bilingualism, it proposed that students be "streamed," based upon educational performance. The brightest students would be placed in superior schools with a more demanding curriculum, and weaker students would be directed towards monolingual and vocational education. Simultaneously, the report also called for incorporating moral education into the curriculum, to limit the penetration of "Western values." The government has subsequently sought to promote "Asian values," which in its view call for discipline and deference, as opposed to individualism, which it associates with Western decadence.¹⁰⁸

Singapore's educational reforms have produced mixed results for the city-state's Malay and Indian communities. Malays continue to be the poorest performers in Singaporean schools. Their poor performance, in turn, has significantly affected their employment opportunities.¹⁰⁹ The response of the Singaporean government to the relative economic backwardness of the Malay and Indian communities has been less than benevolent. Instead of addressing historical and underlying factors that can inhibit educational performance, the government has blamed the victims. It has called for increased self-help efforts within the Malay community, and has suggested that Malay cultural traditions and habits may explain Malay educational failures.¹¹⁰

ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Despite its professed commitment to multiracialism, the PAP government has actively discriminated against some of the city-state's ethnic communities. Malays, for example, are under-represented in the top ranks of the civil service. More to the point, they have been actively excluded from the military and the police services since the break with Malaysia in 1965. Even when Malay youth are called up for national service, they are given

107. Ibid., p. 19. The primary school attrition rate was about 29 percent when the government's new policy was instituted in 1980.

108. Neher and Marlay, *Democracy and Development*, p. 136. For a critique of Lee Kuan Yew's views, see Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 6 (November/December 1994), pp. 189-194.

109. Eng, *Meanings of Multiethnicity*, pp. 156-157.

110. Ibid., p. 165.

menial duties and kept away from elite air force, commando, and tank units.¹¹¹

In addition to encountering discrimination from the government and the state services, Malays report widespread discrimination in the private sector. Discrimination is most likely to take place in Chinese-controlled firms. This form of prejudice against Malays is rooted in the belief that, unlike the Chinese, the Malays are not industrious and reliable employees.¹¹² Although the existence of racial discrimination in the private sector cannot be directly attributed to government policies, the persistence of patterns of discrimination in an ostensibly multiracial and meritocratic society suggests that the government has not taken adequate steps to eradicate such practices.

CURBING DISSENT

Despite making notional commitments to democracy, PAP governments have systematically squelched political dissent in Singapore. Although elections are somewhat free and fair, the PAP has used the advantages of incumbency to undercut opposition forces. These repressive policies have also prevented the emergence of ethnic political mobilization. A battery of legislation limits free speech, civil liberties, and judicial review.

Significant curbs exist on press freedoms in Singapore. The government-controlled Singapore Broadcasting Corporation has a monopoly on all radio stations and television channels. Under pressure from foreign businessmen, the government has since 1993 allowed a Cable News Network channel in five-star hotels on in-room television sets only. All newspapers are published by Singapore Press Holdings, an organization with close ties to the PAP leadership. Local journals, fearing reprisals, engage in self-censorship.¹¹³

Much has been written about the pliant judiciary in Singapore.¹¹⁴ Issues of judicial autonomy came to the fore in 1994 when Christopher Lingle, a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore, was charged with contempt after he published an article in the *International Herald Tribune*. In the article, he alleged that an unnamed Asian country had a "compliant judiciary." The *Herald Tribune* was forced to make a

111. Li, *Malays in Singapore*, p. 109.

112. *Ibid.*, pp. 109–110.

113. Neher and Marlay, *Democracy and Development*, p. 136.

114. For a discussion that suggests that Western critiques of Singapore's legal regime may be overblown, see Diane K. Mauzy, "Consolidating the Succession," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (February 1996), pp. 117–122.

public apology.¹¹⁵ This was not the first time that the government in Singapore had sought a public apology from foreign publications.

Two important pieces of legislation that have shaped political activity are the long-standing Internal Security Act and the recent Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. The latter have been relied upon extensively to deal with groups that are as inimical to the preservation of ethnic harmony as various church and social workers' groups. Charges of having organized a Marxist group were levied under the Internal Security Act even against the Singapore Chinese Tong admitted in parliament that he had organized the group.¹¹⁶ Although few in Singapore have been charged under the Internal Security Act, it remains

Conclusions

Both Malaysia and Singapore have sought to maintain ethnic peace in contrast to many postcolonial, multiethnic states that have entailed majority ethnic dominance.

There is little that is transferable from the Singaporean experience in preserving ethnic peace; its experience in maintaining economic performance, its other achievements in larger multiethnic societies. Much of the Singaporean success has come from extensively intrusive webs of social control. However, the degree of social control exercised by the government over its population is not unique in a significantly larger multiethnic state.

The Malaysian case, on the other hand, has had different implications. Extraordinary restrictions on personal freedom have helped to create a unique Singaporean culture within the context of a Southeast Asian work.¹¹⁷ These restrictions, coupled

115. Diane K. Mauzy, "Singapore in 1994," *Asian Survey*, No. 2 (February 1995), pp. 179–185.

116. Milne and Mauzy, *Singapore*, p. 128.

117. See Crouch, *Government and Society in Singapore*, Case, "Can the 'Halfway House' Stand? Singapore and Southeast Asian Countries," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1984), p. 464.

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public apology.¹¹⁵ This was not the first time that the executive branch of government in Singapore had sought to use judicial power to tame foreign publications.

Two important pieces of legislation that place significant curbs on political activity are the long-standing Internal Security Act and the more recent Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. Both pieces of legislation have been relied upon extensively to curb any activity that the state sees as inimical to the preservation of ethnic peace. In 1987, for example, various church and social workers were arrested and imprisoned on charges of having organized a Marxist conspiracy. They were remanded under the Internal Security Act even though Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong admitted in parliament that he had reservations about the evidence against the group.¹¹⁶ Although few individuals are still incarcerated under the Internal Security Act, it remains on the books.

Conclusions

Both Malaysia and Singapore have successfully maintained ethnic peace, in contrast to many postcolonial, multiethnic societies. However, this has entailed majority ethnic dominance and systematic political repression.

There is little that is transferable about Singapore's experiences in preserving ethnic peace; its experience is virtually unique. Admittedly, there is no gainsaying its striking economic achievements. But beyond its economic performance, its other accomplishments are hardly replicable in larger multiethnic societies. Much of Singapore's success rests on its extensively intrusive webs of social policies designed to maximize social control. However, the degree of social control that the Singaporean government exercises over its population could not be easily approximated in a significantly larger multiethnic society.

The Malaysian case, on the other hand, does have some useful policy implications. Extraordinary restrictions on political expression and personal freedom have helped to create a distinctively authoritarian political culture within the context of a seemingly democratic political framework.¹¹⁷ These restrictions, coupled with a pattern of phenomenal

115. Diane K. Mauzy, "Singapore in 1994: Plus ça change, . . ." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (February 1995), pp. 179-185.

116. Milne and Mauzy, *Singapore*, p. 128.

117. See Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, pp. 236-247. Also see William F. Case, "Can the 'Halfway House' Stand? Semidemocracy and Elite Theory in Three Southeast Asian Countries," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (July 1996), pp. 437-464.

economic expansion and moderately successful redistributive policies, have maintained a fragile ethnic peace. The Malaysian case also suggests that in the absence of powerful, robust political institutions for mediating ethnic conflicts, it may be useful to defer widespread political participation. The normative implications of this proposition may be quite unappealing to the adherents of liberal democratic values. Furthermore, from a practical standpoint, authoritarian institutions, once entrenched, are difficult to dismantle. Finally, ample evidence exists that authoritarian regimes do not necessarily promote economic growth, ensure social justice, and maintain ethnic peace. Consequently, authoritarian constraints on political participation alone are no guarantee of desirable political outcomes. Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that political enfranchisement in most Western liberal democracies proceeded very gradually and in distinct stages. The rapid expansion of political participation in multiethnic societies has frequently given political entrepreneurs opportunities to stir imaginary grievances and generate ethnic violence.¹¹⁸

Finally, both the Singaporean and Malaysian cases underscore the signal importance of promoting economic growth in conjunction with a measure of redistributive justice. Ethnic tensions clearly lurk in both Singapore and Malaysia. The ability of governments in both states to promote rapid economic growth while providing economic security to all politically salient ethnic communities may well be the key to preventing a resurgence in ethnic conflict in this part of Southeast Asia.

118. Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 5-40.

Chapter 7

Coercive
Management
Relations

R. Williams

The Republic of Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Founded in 1945 by nationalists who had been fighting against Dutch colonial rule, they envisioned a modern state based on popular sovereignty. After a four-year struggle against a dictatorship after World War II.

Since independence, cultural and ethnic tensions have been major sources of political instability. Substantially attributed to the breakdown of presidential dictatorship from the 1950s, ethnic policies have been formulated. President Suharto's authoritarian central government responded to demands from groups outside the state for an exchange of material goods and services as part of the policy equation. The process has had successes and failures.

In the mid-1990s, conflict along cultural/regional, religious, and ethnic lines began. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Indonesia entered a difficult period in its political development. Power for more than thirty years had been concentrated in Jakarta. Growing ethnic conflict may be seen in the larger context of increasing vulnerability to political pressures and to the