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# A total approach: the Malaysian security model and political development

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# **A Total Approach**

## **The Malaysian Security Model and Political Development**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**from**

**University of Wollongong**

**by**

**Andrew Humphreys  
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)  
School of History and Politics  
Faculty of Arts  
2009**

# Thesis Certification

I, Andrew Stephen Humphreys, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts, School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Andrew Humphreys  
12 June 2009.

# Abstract

In this thesis I argue that a security-based approach to an analysis of Malaysia offers a new perspective on that country's politics and political system. Since colonialism, Malaysia has been a state obsessed by its own security, particularly the internal dimension of its security. I focus on the impact of security issues and, particularly, security policy on Malaysia's political development. In terms of policy, Malaysia has developed what I call the Malaysian Security Model. The Model represents a 'total approach' to security that attempts to eliminate threats both physically and ideologically. The Model thus has two main functional tools, one coercive, comprised of a series of repressive, preventive laws, and the other ideological. The latter is comprised of a series of government philosophies and broad agendas designed to promote government interests and limit the discursive space for alternate and opposing viewpoints. I argue that Malaysia's security approach has impacted on almost all areas of government policy, including economics, education, foreign affairs, and culture. I argue that Malaysia's security policy is fundamentally concerned not with national security, as it is traditionally defined, but with regime security – that is, safeguarding the interests of the dominant Barisan Nasional (BN/National Front). This overall aim underlies virtually every application of the Security Model.

# Acknowledgements

Although writing a thesis is often characterised as a solitary – if not lonely – experience, I have had the fortune of a good support group. Friends, family, and, most importantly, supervisors, have helped make this experience a rewarding one.

A special mention must go to my fellow postgraduates. Jaimee, Georgia, Joakim, Ross, and Bobby, you made my candidature all the more amusing. Cheers for the coffee breaks, beer breaks, ‘Monday Morning Meetings’, strategy sessions and general shenanigans. I don’t think any of us, even once, had a serious discussion about our actual theses. Good times! Your antics and stories provided me with the necessary ‘break’ from thesis writing and research and, somewhat paradoxically, helped keep me on track! Also, thanks for giving me a nickname which I don’t think I’ll ever be rid of.

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Many thanks as well to the Faculty of Arts, School of History and Politics, as well as the Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS), for their generous support throughout the years.

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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>9/11</b>	11 September 2001 terrorist attacks
<b>ABIM</b>	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)
<b>ADIL</b>	Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial (Movement for Social Justice)
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>BA</b>	Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front)
<b>BN</b>	Barisan Nasional (National Front)
<b>CARPA</b>	Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
<b>CPM</b>	Communist Party of Malaya/Malaysia
<b>DAP</b>	Democratic Action Party
<b>DI</b>	Darul Islam
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>FMA</b>	Federation of Malaya Agreement
<b>FMS</b>	Federated Malay States
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>Hindraf</b>	Hindu Rights Action Force
<b>IGP</b>	Inspector-General of Police
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>ISA</b>	Internal Security Act
<b>ISIS</b>	Institute of Strategic and International Studies
<b>JAKIM</b>	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia)



<b>JI</b>	Jemaah Islamiyah (Islamic Congregation)
<b>KARIM</b>	Koperasi Angkatan Revolusi Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Revolutionary Front)
<b>KMM</b>	Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (Malaysian Militant Organisation)
<b>MCA</b>	Malaysian Chinese Association
<b>MIC</b>	Malaysian Indian Congress
<b>MNLF</b>	Moro National Liberation Front
<b>MPAJA</b>	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
<b>NDP</b>	New Development Policy
<b>NEP</b>	New Economic Policy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organisation
<b>NOC</b>	National Operations Council
<b>OIC</b>	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
<b>OSA</b>	Official Secrets Act
<b>PAP</b>	People's Action Party
<b>PAS/PMIP</b>	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
<b>SEARCCT</b>	Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism
<b>UMNO</b>	United Malays National Organisation
<b>UMNO Baru</b>	New United Malays National Organisation
<b>UMS</b>	Unfederated Malay States
<b>US/USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USA PATRIOT Act</b>	Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>WWII</b>	World War II

# Glossary of Terms

<i>Bayat</i>	Allegiance
<i>Dakwah</i>	To preach or proselytise
<b>Darul Arqam/Al-Arqam</b>	House of Arqam
<b>Dewan Negara</b>	Senate
<b>Dewan Rakyat</b>	House of Representatives
<i>Fatwa</i>	religious declaration
<i>Hudud</i>	A set of punishments under Shari'a law
<b>Islam Hadhari</b>	Civilisation Islam
<i>Jihad</i>	Holy war
<i>Kafir</i>	Infidel
<b>Keadilan</b>	National Justice Party
<i>Keris</i>	Dagger
<i>Konfrontasi</i>	Confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia
<i>Mantiqi</i>	Regional chapter of JI
<i>Merdeka</i>	Independence
<i>Mufti</i>	Islamic scholar who interprets Islam
<i>Mujahideen</i>	Struggler (Arabic). Those persons involved in <i>Jihad</i>
<b>Pakatan Rakyat</b>	People's Alliance
<i>Parangs</i>	Machetes
<b>Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabilullah</b>	Organisation of the Soldiers of God
<b>Pusat Islam</b>	Islamic Centre
<i>Reformasi</i>	Reformation
<i>Sandiwara</i>	Play-acting
<i>Tanah Melayu</i>	Malay Land
<i>Ulama</i>	The learned of Islam
<i>Ummah</i>	Community
<i>Wawasan 2020</i>	Vision 2020
<i>Yang di-Pertuan Agong:</i>	King

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# Introduction

*Behind the façade of a first world country, we [Malaysia] reflect the tendencies of Third World development.*

**Anwar Ibrahim<sup>1</sup>**

The central argument I will present in my thesis is that security policy in Malaysia is calibrated to ensure regime – rather than national – security. Security policy is a political tool used to support the *status quo* favoured by the Barisan Nasional (BN/National Front) and weaken any opposition forces, be they a legitimate physical threat or not. Security policy is designed to support the political interests of the elites and the political system as a whole, which itself is calibrated to ensure the BN remains the dominant political player. When Malaysia's politics is viewed through the framework of its security policy the power and paranoia of the regime can be witnessed.

The BN has become synonymous with the state in Malaysia. A coalition of ethnically diverse parties, the BN has ruled Malaysia since Independence. Over time, the line between the Malaysian state and the BN regime has been blurred, mostly as a consequence of the lack of regime turnover and the BN's control over state institutions. The political system itself has been calibrated to ensure that the BN remains the dominant political power. All state power is vested in the Executive, itself composed of members of the ruling BN regime, thus guaranteeing complete control of the apparatus of the state. A key factor in understanding the BN's continued hold on power is its domestic security policy. The regime has developed what I have termed the 'Malaysian Security Model.' This is a total approach to security which attempts to undermine and/or eliminate threats through a combination of coercion and consent, force and ideology. However, threats to the country as a whole are not the overwhelming focus of

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Terence Netto, 'Anwar hails new birth of nationalism', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/99827>>, 8 March 2009, (accessed 12 March 2009).

the Model, though security policy has also been used to thwart such threats. The aim of the BN's security policy has instead been regime security – that is, ensuring the continued political power of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)-dominated BN government.<sup>2</sup> Every arm of government is therefore geared toward implementing and supporting the Model and ensuring the continuation of the *status quo* favoured by the BN.

In this thesis I analyse the Malaysian government's security policy from the era of British colonialism to the period prior to the March 2008 election. My study focuses on the security policies of the BN regime and the impact these policies have had on Malaysian politics. Broadly speaking, my thesis presents a move away from the traditional themes which dominate Third World development literature, namely the themes of democracy, economic development and culture.<sup>3</sup> I argue that these traditional themes can all be linked to the security agenda of these states. I do not argue against the existing theoretical frameworks but instead seek to promote a complimentary approach which views Third World state policy and development from a security perspective.

Under the umbrella of my primary argument I present a number of sub-arguments. I contend that the central issue of Malaysian politics, and hence the main focus of the security policy itself, is 'race'. The issue of 'race' and 'ethnicity' (with these terms used interchangeably) pervades practically every application of Malaysia's security policy.<sup>4</sup> Security policy is particularly concerned with protecting the racial imbalance favoured

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the noted overlap, in this thesis the terms 'regime', 'government' and 'state' are used interchangeably in reference to Malaysia unless otherwise noted. This reflects a sub-argument of my thesis, namely that the regime and the state in Malaysia are one and the same, especially when it comes to security policy.

<sup>3</sup> In my thesis, the term 'Third World' is used to describe those countries which are commonly perceived as part of the so-called developing world. I use the terms 'Third World state' and 'developing state' interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the term 'race' in this thesis is in keeping with the way the concept is regularly used by politicians, interest groups, intellectuals and others in Malaysia. 'Race' and 'ethnicity' are often used interchangeably in political rhetoric and in some areas of the literature on Malaysian politics. It should be noted, though, that when the term 'race' is used by these actors they are actually generally referring to ethnicity, Malaysia is said to be comprised of three main ethnic groups (the Malays, the Chinese, and Indians). It must be recognised at the outset that when using 'race' I am not asserting that there are actual racial categories in Malaysia. Instead, I am referring to ethnicity. 'Race' is used in this thesis primarily where it is part of a common phrase in the public discourse (for example, the 1969 'race riots' and the 'racial balance') or where it has been used by others (for example, the government's use of 'race' to launch crackdowns against opponents during Operation Lalang).

by the BN – one in which the Malays are regarded as the centre of the political system and all other ethnic groups are seen as peripheral partners. Race and ethnicity thus contribute to the primary objective of the security apparatus – regime security. In addition to protecting the *status quo*, security policy has been and in some cases continues to be deployed against ‘communists’, ‘terrorists’, and ‘religious deviants.’ In actuality, many of these so-called threats are actually a cover for the use of the security apparatus against political challengers to BN hegemony. The issue of religious deviancy is a case in point, the government deploying both coercion and ideology to promote the government’s interpretation of Islam and eliminate any rivals, even if they are peaceful in nature.

Another key sub-argument is that security policy has remained relatively fixed since its establishment during Malaysia’s Emergency period. There has been no amendment to its overall structure, with coercion and consent still deployed. The coercive arm of the security policy has remained consistent, though the ideological component has often been adapted to changing domestic and international stimuli. The continuity of security policy reflects the continuity of government, the latter protecting the former and *vice versa*.

Since the March 2008 election, however, the Malaysian political system, and the security policy which protects it, is facing the most significant challenge in its history. The election did away with many of the preconceptions which have plagued Malaysian politics since Independence. For the first time, the BN regime could potentially be defeated at the next election. The election saw the opposition parties gain considerable ground at the BN’s expense. The election results were a shock to both the government and the opposition. In the lead-up to the elections, while it was believed the opposition had its best chance in over a decade to gain electoral ground, the probability of it breaking the BN’s two-thirds majority in parliament was considered slim.<sup>5</sup> The opposition parties, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the Democratic Action Party

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<sup>5</sup> Ioannis Gatsiounis, ‘Pre-election hopes for Malaysian opposition’, *Asia Times Online*, <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/JC05Ae01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JC05Ae01.html)>, 5 March 2008, (accessed 5 March 2008), and; Imran Imtiaz Shah Yacob, ‘This Malaysian Election May Not be a Lock’, *Asia Sentinel*, <[http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1073&Itemid=178](http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1073&Itemid=178)>, 28 February 2008, (accessed 3 March 2008).



(DAP), and the Parti Keadilan Rakyat, campaigned primarily on non-racial issues, such as human rights and combating corruption. The opposition also campaigned on the issue of reforming the police, which it viewed as dominated by political interests.<sup>6</sup> The Islamic party PAS notably dropped from its agenda its push for an Islamic state, an issue which had both plagued and defined the party for decades.<sup>7</sup> With the mainstream media beholden to the government, the opposition effectively utilised the medium of the Internet to campaign, a move which was particularly successful in reaching urban audiences.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the BN regime under Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi was weighed down by rampant corruption, broken electoral promises, and the growing re-emergence of racial tensions, particularly from minority ethnic groupings. Much of this was admittedly inherited from Abdullah's predecessor as Prime Minister and leader of UMNO, Mahathir Mohamad, who ironically has become a vocal critic of the Abdullah administration in his retirement.<sup>9</sup> The arrests of several Indian leaders in the months prior to the elections also delegitimized the BN's main ethnic Indian party, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC).<sup>10</sup>

Voter turnout for the 8 March election was the highest for any election, with approximately 80 percent of eligible voters casting their votes.<sup>11</sup> The elections saw the BN win just 51.2 percent of the vote, giving it enough seats to remain in power but losing its two-thirds majority in parliament for the first time since 1969. The state governments of Selangor, Penang, Kedah and Perak fell to the opposition parties while Kelantan remained in opposition hands. All of the main leaders of the MIC were 'wiped out.'<sup>12</sup> The opposition's gains were highly significant given the fact that the political

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<sup>6</sup> Soon Li Tsin, 'PKR promises a 'New dawn for Malaysia'', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/78701>>, 26 February 2008, (accessed 27 February 2008).

<sup>7</sup> A. Hafiz Yatim and Minderjeet Kaur, 'ELECTION 2008: Pas drops Islamic state principle in manifesto, signalling push for non-Muslim votes', *New Straits Times*, 22 February 2008.

<sup>8</sup> 'Winning hearts and minds in cyberspace', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/78314>>, 20 February 2008, (accessed 21 February 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Ong Kian Ming and Oon Yeoh, 'Who's worse: Dr M or Pak Lah?', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/81269>>, 12 April 2008, (accessed 14 April 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Bridget Welsh, 'Election post-mortem: Top 10 factors', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79677>>, 12 March 2008, (accessed 13 March 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Malik Imtiaz Sarwar, 'The 75<sup>th</sup> Candidate' in *Political Tsunami: An End to Hegemony in Malaysia?*, eds. N. Tan and J. Lee, Kinibooks, Kuala Lumpur, 2008, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> '2008 polls – interesting facts', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79575>>, 10 March 2008, (accessed 11 March 2008).

and electoral system is biased in favour of the ruling regime.<sup>13</sup> There was some concern that the results may lead to ethnic rioting, like that witnessed in the aftermath of the 1969 elections, an election in which the ruling coalition likewise suffered a considerable loss. However, unlike in 1969, all the major ethnic groups had abandoned the government and Malaysia's streets remained calm.<sup>14</sup> Some even claimed the 2008 election spelled the end of racial and ethnic politics in Malaysia, though claim has not gone uncontested.<sup>15</sup>

Monumental changes swept through Malaysian politics in the aftermath of the election. The opposition parties formed a formal coalition, Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance), on 1 April 2008. Although composed of diverse parties with divergent interests, opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim claimed the parties had united on the basis of the common principles of 'freedom, justice and democracy.' For arguably the first time, a genuine two-party (coalition) system had begun emerging in Malaysia.<sup>16</sup> Anwar announced plans to dismantle the New Economic Policy (NEP), an affirmative action programme and ideological tool biased in favour of the Malays that had been the foundation of the BN's nation-building project.<sup>17</sup> The state governments of Penang and Selangor, now in the hands of the opposition, also announced plans to prohibit the spread of Abdullah's Islam Hadhari concept, a broad ideology which had been central to his administration's nation-building strategies and security policies.<sup>18</sup> For the most part, the government reacted to these developments in typical fashion, utilising the

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<sup>13</sup> Dean Johns, 'Long live the e-volution', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/79667>>, 12 March 2008, (accessed 18 March 2008).

<sup>14</sup> 'Malaysian politics turned upside down', *The Straits Times*, 9 March 2008.

<sup>15</sup> For an example of the claim that racial politics is at an end, see: Syed Jaymal Zahiid, 'Panelist: Demise of racial politics brings joy', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79762>>, 13 March 2008, (accessed 14 March 2008). Former Prime Minister Mahathir put forward this was a 'simplistic' view, claiming many of the opposition parties themselves were racially-based: Mahathir Mohamad, 'Racism and 2008 elections', *Dr Mahathir Mohamad* [blog], <<http://chedet.co.cc/chedetblog/2008/11/racism-and-2008-elections.html>>, 17 November 2008, (accessed 20 November 2008). Nonetheless, it has been pointed out that ethnic Chinese and Indian voters 'happily' voted for Malay Pakatan Rakyat and PAS candidates: Ong Kian Ming, 'Making sense of the political tsunami' in *Political Tsunami*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Baradan Kuppasamy, 'Two-party system takes shape in Malaysia', *Asia Times Online*, <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/JD10Ae01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JD10Ae01.html)>, 10 April 2008, (accessed 17 April 2008).

<sup>17</sup> 'Anwar slams gov't for stoking racial tension', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79915>>, 16 March 2008, (accessed 17 March 2008).

<sup>18</sup> 'Penang next to prohibit Islam Hadhari', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/84201>>, 9 June 2008, (accessed 10 June 2008).

instruments of the state to thwart the political gains of the opposition. The government banned Tamil daily *Makkal Osai*, a move believed to be related to the publication's coverage of the opposition.<sup>19</sup> Anwar was charged with sexual assault, a move widely considered to be politically motivated. The charge inspired a sense of *déjà vu* within the country, a consequence of the government having arrested Anwar on similar grounds in 1998.<sup>20</sup> Implicitly defending his earlier actions against Anwar, Mahathir disputed that Anwar's recent arrest was politically motivated. The former Prime Minister stated:

Yet can it be that the present Government is so stupid and unimaginative as to use the same 'ploy', especially after it was so happy over the release of Anwar? Surely it could come up with another story which would be more credible if it is deliberately plotting or conspiring against Anwar. The probability is that the story is the same because it is genuine.<sup>21</sup>

Mahathir's statement could be regarded as a rare defence of the Abdullah administration, though, as noted, it was more likely a defence of his own legacy.

As I have noted, I will use my thesis to trace Malaysia's political development, ending at the period before the 2008 election. I view Malaysia's development through the prism of security, namely the security issues and policies that have defined the nation since the era of British colonialism. For the purposes of this thesis, security is regarded as state-centric in nature. Given that the object to be secured, the nation-state, is itself an elusive theoretical construct, difficulties in establishing security as a normative and ideological reality are all but guaranteed.<sup>22</sup> In general, security is intrinsically tied to the state in a way that privileges the state's position above all others.<sup>23</sup> Alex J. Bellamy contends that security 'is in the eye of the beholder' and that what counts as security is shaped by

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<sup>19</sup> 'Tamil daily Makkal Osai banned', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/81464>>, 16 April 2008, (accessed 17 April 2008).

<sup>20</sup> 'Here we go again', *The Economist*, 5–11 July 2008, p. 40.

<sup>21</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'The Anwar Debate', *Dr Mahathir Mohamad* [blog], <<http://chedet.co.cc/chedetblog/2008/07/the-anwar-debate.html>>, 17 July 2008, (accessed 19 July 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Barry Buzan, 'The Concept of National Security for Developing Countries' in *Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asian Experience*, eds. M Ayoob and C. Samudavanija, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1999, pp. 165-6.

whose security is in question.<sup>24</sup> As security is state-centred it is the state that defines it. Security and insecurity are usually defined in relation to vulnerabilities, perceived or otherwise, both external and internal, which ‘threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes.’<sup>25</sup> The state’s claims to legitimacy and public loyalty is often derived from its ability – whether actual or imagined – to keep its subjects secure. In return, citizens recognise the performance of this function may mean granting the government latitude of action that would otherwise not be tolerated.<sup>26</sup>

Security as a concept is traditionally based on two main claims. First, threats are seen as arising from outside the state – that is, security is generally concerned with external threats. Second, such threats are military-based in nature and often require a military response.<sup>27</sup> The focus of my thesis is on the domestic – or internal – sphere of security policy. The external dimension of Malaysia’s security policy is intertwined with the issues, agendas, and policy output of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and, as such, lies beyond the scope of this thesis and is already covered thoroughly in various other academic works. More importantly, for developing or Third World states, security itself is largely an internal issue, with the state’s sense of insecurity largely derived from ‘threats’ within their borders.<sup>28</sup> According to academic Mohammed Ayoob, the Third World’s security problematic can be likened to a cake with three layers – domestic, regional and global – in which each layer overlaps with the others but only one – the domestic – flavours the entire cake.<sup>29</sup>

The concept of security is a clear and inseparable part of the state, a reason for its existence, and a tool to sustain its legitimacy. Security is integral to the state in both the First World and the Third World. In formulating a security-oriented approach to an analysis of Malaysian politics, my thesis adopts the ideas of Ayoob, who contends:

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<sup>24</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, ‘The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond Realism’ in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, ed. M. Beeson, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 175.

<sup>25</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1995, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 189.

The security predicament of Third World states is generated largely by the twin pressures of late state making and their late entry into the system of states. I conclude that **a paradigm that does not make security its centre-piece will lack adequate power to explain the domestic or international behaviour of Third World states.** Simultaneously, I argue that just as it is essential to make security the central focus of any paradigm that attempts to explain Third World state behaviour, it is also necessary to adopt the notion of state making as the point of departure for the study of Third World security.<sup>30</sup> [emphasis added]

According to Ayoob, security is intrinsic to an understanding of the Third World state. However, studies of the Third World, whether in keeping with modernisation theory, dependency theory, or developmental state theory, are primarily concerned with economic outcomes, with little if any attention paid to the security dimension. Ayoob notes the emphasis in the current literature on Third World development and state behaviour is primarily economic and thus does not provide a complete picture.<sup>31</sup>

In this thesis I adopt the ideas of Ayoob but I present my own theoretical framework. While Ayoob's notion of a security-based approach to analysis is emphasised throughout, I put forward a model which illustrates how internal security is maintained. The foundation of this model is the coercive and ideological apparatuses of government. The question of whether coercion and ideology is utilised in similar ways to the Malaysian case study in other states falls outside the scope of my thesis. Nonetheless, the model I detail in my thesis should provide a solid basis for future security-based analysis. The use of coercion and ideology as a framework broadly illustrates not only the way in which threats are perceived by Third World elites but also how these supposed threats are then dealt with from a policy standpoint. Therefore, though the focus of my thesis is on how security is perceived, defined and maintained in the Malaysian context, it is likely that the model I depict has broader applications to other studies of political development in the Third World and particularly Southeast Asia.

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. xiii.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

## **Methodology and Chapter Outline**

In constructing my theoretical and empirical arguments, I have consulted a wide range of sources. The two main avenues of data collection have been the existing literature as well as interviews and correspondence which I have conducted since July 2007. In terms of the literature, I have consulted both primary and secondary sources. Local Malaysian newspapers have been useful in keeping the thesis as up-to-date as possible, with online non-government newspaper *Malaysiakini* proving especially useful with its wide-ranging coverage. Unlike mainstream print newspapers, the fact that *Malaysiakini* is published on the web means that it remains relatively free from government regulation. Other Malaysian-based primary sources have also been utilized where possible and/or available, including speeches, press statements, the blogs of notable journalists and past and present Malaysian politicians, as well as articles and books written by political figures such as Mahathir, Abdullah Badawi, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Anwar Ibrahim. Official documents, most notably Government White Papers have been useful sources of information and viewpoints. My research has focused primarily on Malaysian sources: that is, primary and secondary data which has been written by Malaysian nationals. The views and frameworks of outside observers are of course not neglected and are also well-represented. Nonetheless, my thesis is an attempt to formulate an account of the Malaysian nation which is based on the issues which define it. An attempt is made to critique Malaysia on its own terms, through the variety of views and issues which are present in historical and contemporary contexts. As such, I have attempted to consult as wide a diversity of viewpoints within Malaysia as possible. The views of journalists (from both independent and government-run publications), government officials, academics, non-government organisations (NGOs), and opposition elements are all represented in this research.

In addition to an extensive study of the literature, I undertook fieldwork in Malaysia between July and August 2007 in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, with some correspondence and telephone interviews ongoing since that time. The majority of this fieldwork took the form of interviews. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. Those interviewed included academics, journalists, NGO employees, analysts at think tanks, opposition leaders and former representatives of the BN government. Some interviewees requested anonymity and their wishes have been respected. Interview

questions were tailored to the individual interviewee. For example, government officials were asked about the government's official view of certain security issues, including terrorism and racial instability, as well as questions relating to the government's overall security approach. By contrast, NGO employees were asked about the specific issues they were campaigning for/against and how these were situated within the broader issue of security policy. While government officials and NGO employees were, unless they otherwise specified, regarded as speaking on behalf of the administration/organisation, the academics I interviewed were asked their personal and/or professional opinion of the Malaysian political process and the issues which define it. Those interviewed were selected on the basis of their contribution to ongoing debates within Malaysia. I endeavoured to ensure that I effectively represented the different sides to the key issues of security, democracy, and politics. As such, the views of interviewees were often critiqued with reference to the opinions of other interviewees. The biases of interviewees proved especially useful in illustrating the complexity and diversity of opinion within the Malaysian politic. Overall, the interviews provided greater nuance to my views on the subject and, more than any empirical source, helped shape the argument of my thesis.

In the **first chapter** of my thesis, I acknowledge the existing debates in the literature on Southeast Asia and argue that a security-based approach to political analysis, like that put forward by Ayoob, provides new insights into the political systems of the region and complement existing analytical frameworks. Three overlapping issues/debates can be said to dominate the existing literature on Southeast Asian political development. First, there is the question of democracy. Most accounts of Southeast Asia focus on the quality of democracy in the region and it is presumed that the governments in the region are moving inevitably toward a liberal democratic model. I argue instead that Southeast Asia's regimes contain both democratic and authoritarian features. The inherent contradiction of this is often explained away by the notion of 'good government.' An emphasis on hierarchy and authority, rather than democracy, is therefore perhaps the only constant in Southeast Asian politics. The second debate revolves around the issue of economic development. The developmental state model is outlined and its applicability to Southeast Asia discussed. I argue that the developmental state has been utilised to justify the political *status quo* in the region, privileging authority over democracy. The final debate centres on the issue of culture. The culturalist account, as

witnessed in the Asian Values Debate, contends that there is a common culture within Southeast Asia. This common culture is used to justify the authoritarian component of local regimes, with liberal democratic models regarded as foreign.

These three debates are ultimately concerned with the issue of state power in Southeast Asia. I argue that the issues of democracy, economic development, and culture can be viewed through a broader perspective based on security issues and security policies. Security is indeed central to any understanding of the Third World, especially in Southeast Asia where the struggle for political legitimacy is a dominant concern for local governments. Democracy, economic development and culture are all impacted by security issues, though are rarely analysed on this basis. Although the focus of my thesis is on Malaysia, in this chapter I demonstrate that there is merit in viewing other countries in Southeast Asia through the prism of security, thereby illustrating the wider applicability of my analytical framework.

In **chapter two**, I begin the Malaysian case study and establish the approach I take in the remainder of the thesis. I underline my central contention that the main emphasis of security policy has been regime security. The regime and the political system as a whole is outlined and discussed. The connection between regime and state in the Malaysia is illustrated. A number of themes, constant throughout Malaysia's history as a modern state and integral to the shape and function of the Malaysian Security Model, are then identified, including the emphasis on internal security, the use of 'alternative' definitions of security, and the fixation on ethnicity. Next, I detail the two core components of the Malaysian Security Model. I contend the coercive component is composed of a number of repressive laws, enforced by a politically obedient police force. The coercive apparatus has remained relatively unchanged since its establishment. By contrast, the ideological component has adapted to changing circumstances. I contend that ideology has two main purposes in the Malaysian context. First, it performs a security function that effectively limits the parameters of debate and thereby minimises the number of threats to the regime's ideological hegemony. Second, it has a legitimating function in that it legitimises the coercive component and the regime as a whole. These two components, though analysed separately for the sake of simplicity, form a cohesive whole and serve as one of – if not the – primary method of ensuring the interests of the regime are protected and promoted. In this chapter I detail



the fundamental attributes and aims of Malaysia's security policy. In the remainder of the thesis I am concerned with the application of this policy and framework.

The remaining chapters of my thesis are structured chronologically. In **chapter three**, I reach back into the history of Malaysia, the aim being to establish how Malaysia came into its modern form. I analyse three main periods/events: the colonial period, the First Emergency, and the 1969 riots and their aftermath. I contend that many of the security issues and policies which have dominated Malaysia's national discourse were first established in the colonial period, including the obsession with ethnic concerns and the centralisation of government power. The First Emergency saw the beginnings of the Malaysian 'total approach' to security, with a combination of coercion and consent used to combat the threat posed by communist forces. This approach developed in parallel with the state, the state itself achieving independence during the state of emergency. Finally, I examine the 1969 riots and their aftermath. The riots led to an increased centralisation of government power, restrictions on democratic practice, and firmly determined the shape of the Malaysian nation-state for decades. The Malays became unapologetically the centre of the political system. The security approach utilised during the Emergency was used in response to the riots and became further developed and entrenched as a state institution. I argue that the security policy and the regime/state developed in tandem, each influencing the other and ultimately becoming inseparable. While previous studies have analysed and established this period and its events in considerable depth, my analysis focuses primarily on the security undertones of policymaking. Malaysia's response to security issues in these times set the precedent for the decades to come, with the Model outlined in chapter two largely unchanged.

While in chapter three I establish the origins of the Malaysian state and its security policy, in **chapter four** I examine how the security approach became increasingly applied, justified, and established as an eminent, and evidently permanent, tool of government. I focus on the period between 1970 and 2001. In this period, the security approach evolved from one which was reactive, as witnessed in the response to the 1969 riots, to one which was preventive, with several alleged 'offenders' undermined or eliminated before a crime was even committed or in some cases planned. Security policy was particularly focused on promoting the Islamic agenda of the government and reaffirming the ethnic *status quo*. With regard to the former, the government deployed

both coercion and ideology against groups which provided alternative versions of Islam to that promoted by the regime. Nonetheless, the government's emphasis on Islam achieved the opposite of what was intended: it provoked increased resistance instead of creating a unified and cohesive Malay national group loyal to the state and its brand of Islam. Moreover, the government's use of coercive force had begun to undermine the 'hearts and minds' ideology said to underpin its security approach. The security approach retained its focus on racial issues, with two internal UMNO crises – the 1987 faction battle and the 1997-1998 Anwar Ibrahim fiasco – resolved with reference to ethnic issues. In both crises, the government used the spectre of the 1969 riots to garner support from the public. Political opponents were consequently branded as 'racial provocateurs.' In this chapter I note that the security apparatus has developed a somewhat paradoxical nature. Although the coercive component is unchanging, the ideological component is fluid and adaptive, as witnessed in the shift in emphasis toward Islam. Nonetheless, I contend that while the focus of the apparatus does change and adapt, the primary aim of the security apparatus remains the same: that is, the preservation of the regime.

In the final two chapters of my thesis I focus on the contemporary period, with particular emphasis given to the issues which have arisen under the umbrella of the 'War on Terror.' In each chapter I examine the operation of one of the two core components of Malaysia's security policy: coercion and ideology. In **chapter five** I analyse the former, noting that, unlike many other governments in the region and the world at large, Malaysia did not fundamentally alter its security laws post-9/11. With a few minor exceptions, the coercive apparatus remained unchanged. Indeed, there is a notable continuity between the pre- and post- September 11 eras, with Islam and race remaining the main preoccupation of Malaysia's security policy. Nevertheless, though the use of coercion has remained relatively unchanged, there have been two notable exceptions. First, transnational cooperation has increased, Malaysia's relationship with the United States has become particularly strong at the operational level. Second, the coercive apparatus, once criticised by much of the international community, is now seen as an acceptable counter-terrorism tool and its continued use in Malaysia seemingly validated. This marks a major change in Malaysia's security policy as it now faces less criticism for its actions. In addition to these two changes, the other most noteworthy feature of Malaysia's post-9/11 strategy has been the use of the 'terrorist bogeyman' to

justify the use of the coercive apparatus against non-terrorist actors and non-traditional threats. The coercive apparatus has become increasingly applied against legitimate political actors, including opposition parties, bloggers, and interest groups. This overt abuse of the coercive apparatus, combined with the increase in international endorsement of Malaysia's security approach, has set a dangerous precedent for the country's politics, significantly damaging Malaysia's growing, but still developing, civil society.

In **chapter six** I examine the ideological reaction of the Mahathir and Abdullah administrations to terrorism specifically and security in general. Following the events of September 11, the ideological space within Malaysia was defined anew. Mahathir's approach saw an emphasis on root causes and a return to the hearts and minds campaign of the Emergency era. Mahathir sought to use Malaysia's position as an ally of the Muslim and Western world as a platform to salvage the image of Islam in the post-September 11 global climate, albeit with limited success. In many ways, Abdullah's approach mirrored that of his predecessor, with similar issues and views emphasised. What made Abdullah's ideological strategy unique, however, was the form in which it was presented. Abdullah's strategy is summarised in the concept of Islam Hadhari, or 'Civilisational Islam.' Islam Hadhari is a broad ideology which attempted to reframe Islam as a state building tool and a security strategy. There has also been some attempt to export Islam Hadhari abroad: an attempt designed to further legitimise the BN regime and its approach to security. Underlying the ideologies of both Mahathir and Abdullah is the use of a certain form of Islam to combat extremist thought, representing a continuation of the policies I outlined in chapter four. Islam is fused to the security agenda. In defining Malaysian Islam as 'moderate' and 'progressive', Mahathir and Abdullah have attempted to promote a state ideology which promotes the BN's agenda whilst continuing to exclude any radical or 'deviant' interpretations of Islamic texts. Ultimately, this ideology is used in the domestic context to ensure the continuation of the current political climate – one in which the UMNO-dominant BN is in political and economic control.

In this thesis I **conclude** that the Malaysian Security Model is ultimately concerned with maintaining a political *status quo* favourable to the UMNO-dominated BN regime. The BN's dominance of state institutions has allowed it to inherit and then develop a

security policy concerned with upholding the interests of the ruling regime first and the national interest second. Given the centrality of race to the BN system and its construction of the nation as a whole, security policy tends to focus on issues relating to the racial balance in the country, namely protecting the political dominance of the Malays and by extension UMNO. Other issues, also featuring an ethnic component, have also been at the forefront of the regime's security agenda during various periods, including Communism, Islam, and terrorism. Security policy, like the regime itself, has undergone little structural change since its formation. Indeed, security policy has become a fundamental part of the state, playing a role in the state's formation and development as a modern nation. Nevertheless, Malaysia's security policy has become increasingly less viable in recent years, the use of coercion against political opponents undermining the 'hearts and minds' ideology. There is some question as to whether the Security Model will survive should Anwar Ibrahim's Pakatan Rakyat come to power. However, given the intrinsic role of the current security policy in relation to the state, its institutions, and the protection of the national *status quo*, any drastic change would have far-reaching consequences.

# Chapter One

## The State in Southeast Asia: Key Debates and New Approaches

Since the end of World War II (WWII), a number of important debates concerned with statehood and how it is framed have figured prominently in not only the academic literature on Southeast Asia but in the rhetoric of the region's political leaders.<sup>1</sup> Prior to Western colonisation, nowhere in Southeast Asia was there a state with clear boundaries or a permanent ruling authority.<sup>2</sup> The states that did exist were fluid, either in a constant state of expansion or retraction, with all authority located in a particular centre.<sup>3</sup>

Following WWII, the countries of Southeast Asia underwent a process of rapid, and in some cases violent, decolonisation, with the obvious exception of Thailand. Writing about the region in 1967, Lucian Pye noted:

The contemporary theme that now characterises the entire area is the effort to translate diffuse feelings of nationalism into strong loyalties to the nation. In varying degrees, each country is engrossed in the task of nation-building... In most of them, there is disagreement about what the structure of government should be or how the political system should operate. The governmental forms that do exist are still relatively weak and have not become firmly institutionalised.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, when I refer to Southeast Asia I am referring to those states which are currently members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It should be noted, however, that the focus of the literature on Southeast Asia – and by extension this chapter – is on Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. The emphasis given to these states is a consequence of their prominent role in the so-called Asian economic miracle of the 1990s.

<sup>2</sup> Damien Kingsbury, *South East Asia: A Political Profile* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2005, p. 14

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Lucian Pye, *Southeast Asia's Political Systems*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1967, p. 2.

The states and nations that emerged out of the decolonisation process struggled to cope with the internal disunity and diversity that had essentially been ‘inherited’ from the colonial period. Both the state and the nation became contested concepts. The struggle to create national integration, unity, and cohesion, became a primary concern of these emerging states.<sup>5</sup> The nationalism that many of these states faced or constructed was not necessarily monolithic and was constantly challenged. Likewise, the nature and form of the state in Southeast Asia was by no means set. The fact that many of these states faced a Communist insurgency in the years following their independence from colonial rule illustrated that there was no overwhelming consensus as to what shape these states should take.

Given the abovementioned difficulties of forging a state and a nation, the overall political legitimacy of the state in Southeast Asia has long been contested. Indeed, the nature of the Southeast Asian state and nation are still being analysed and critiqued in the contemporary context. In this chapter I offer an overview of the issues and debates which have defined the analysis of the state in Southeast Asia. Particularly since the 1980s, three themes have dominated: democracy and its usage and suitability; the role and impact of economic development, and; the importance of culture to an understanding of Southeast Asian political systems. As I will demonstrate, there is considerable overlap between these issues, with each ultimately concerned with the question of statehood. These issues are all dominated by a statist account of state power, in which the influence and interests of the political elite are emphasised. The importance and relevance of a security-based approach to analysis will be outlined as a new way to consider these debates. My thesis applies this security framework to Malaysia and illustrates the impact of security issues and policies on its political development. In this chapter, I survey the wider applicability of such a framework. I indicate that there is some merit to applying this approach to other countries in the Southeast Asian context.

### **Democracy, Economic Development and Culture as the Foundation of Analysis**

Democracy in Southeast Asia has had a tumultuous history and its ‘development’ has by no means been linear. Following the creation of democratic regimes and constitutions in

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<sup>5</sup> Nick Knight, *Understanding Australia's Neighbours: An Introduction to East and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 98.

the aftermath of independence in the 1950s and 1960s, democracy was soon associated with social upheavals and delayed economic development. In response, the region's political leaders began undermining the democratic foundations of their political systems.<sup>6</sup> Indonesia revoked its constitution in 1959, Singapore launched a crackdown against its political opponents in 1963 which undermined the results of the general election, democracy was briefly suspended in Malaysia in 1969 following race riots, and martial law was imposed in the Philippines in 1972. In this period, Thailand also came under military rule, with elections and political parties banned from 1958. However, by the 1970s all of these countries reverted to a more democratic model.<sup>7</sup> These reversals formed part of what Samuel P. Huntington termed the 'third wave' of democratisation, in which a number of countries throughout the world turned to democratic systems.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the democracies that had emerged in Southeast Asia in this period were restricted. For example, President Suharto in Indonesia introduced controlled elections in which the public was pressured to vote for his ruling party, Golkar.<sup>9</sup> Malaysia's political system was restructured to favour the ruling Malays and, in turn, UMNO, the dominant party in the BN. Democracy in Thailand has remained inconsistent, the country subjected to numerous military interventions and political coups in the decades since.

Democracy has long been a cornerstone of any analysis of Southeast Asian political development. A particular focus has been on whether Southeast Asian states are democratic, a variation thereof, or are in fact moving toward becoming more democratic. Within this tradition, at the one extreme democracy is generally regarded as 'universally good', while at the other, authoritarianism is assumed to be 'morally repulsive.' Ariel Heryanto and Sumit K. Mandal argue that the states in the region are dissected by locals and foreigners alike as if they are on a unilateral trajectory from

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<sup>6</sup> William Case, 'Democracy in Southeast Asia: How to Get It and What Does It Matter?' in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, ed. M. Beeson, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> According to Huntington, democracies have emerged in a 'two-steps forward, one-step back pattern' in which 'reverse occur but neither reverse wave has eliminated all the gains of the previous democratisation wave.': Samuel P. Huntington, 'American Democracy in Relation to Asia' in *Democracy and Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives*, R. Bartley, H. C. Chan, S. Huntington and S. Ogata, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1993, pp. 31-2.

<sup>9</sup> Aris Ananta, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Leo Suryadinata, *Emerging Democracy in Indonesia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2005, pp. 2-3.

authoritarianism to democracy.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Garry Rodan notes that within the literature there is 'a propensity to equate the challenge to, or demise of, authoritarian rule with the advance of 'democracy.''<sup>11</sup> The concept of democracy used in such critiques often endorses a liberal democratic definition despite the fact that very few states in the region could be considered to fit within such a framework.<sup>12</sup> There is little discussion about whether other, local forms of government could be suitable or desirable.<sup>13</sup> Instead, deviations from the liberal democratic model are often characterised as obstacles to the ultimate and inevitable rise of liberal political formulations.<sup>14</sup>

There are also important undercurrents within the literature which argue either that democracy is inappropriate to the Southeast Asian context or that, at the very least, its states endorse a variation of democracy which is just as valid as Western constructions. Huntington has claimed that modern democracy is a Western invention and a product of Western culture.<sup>15</sup> It has also been argued that democracy is an imposition of Western colonialism and is, as such, 'alien' to Asian culture. More dramatically, it has been suggested, often by Southeast Asian leaders such as Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, that a Western-style of democracy might weaken the strength of the state and thus open the door to chaos and violence.<sup>16</sup> Others have suggested that many of the political systems of Southeast Asia are democratic but not liberal democratic. Chan Heng Chee, for example, outlines the common characteristics of what she terms 'Asian democracies': an emphasis on communitarian rather than individualistic values; a greater acceptance for authority and hierarchy; a single dominant party, and; a strong interventionist state.<sup>17</sup> Chan argues that these

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<sup>10</sup> Ariel Heryanto and Sumit K. Mandal, 'Challenges to authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia' in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*, eds. A. Heryanto and S. K. Mandal, RoutledgeCurzon, New York and London, 2003, pp. 1 and 17.

<sup>11</sup> Garry Rodan, 'Theorising political opposition in East and Southeast Asia' in *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*, ed. G. Rodan, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, and; Kingsbury, *South East Asia, op.cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Kingsbury, *South East Asia, op.cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Rodan, 'Theorising political opposition in East and Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Huntington, 'American Democracy in Relation to Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Carl A. Trocki, 'Democracy and the State in Southeast Asia' in *Gangsters, Democracy, and the State in Southeast Asia*, ed. C. A. Trocki, Southeast Asia Program Publications, Ithaca, 1998, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Chan Heng Chee, 'Democracy: Evolution and Implementation' in *Democracy and Capitalism, op.cit.*, pp. 21-4.



characteristics are sufficiently different to warrant the Asian brand of democracy being recognised as a legitimate variant of the concept rather than as a mere transitional form and part of the inevitable evolution from authoritarianism to liberal democracy.<sup>18</sup> Under this argument, it is assumed that ‘Asian democracy’ has evolved out of Asian cultures and that its political systems should therefore not be expected to resemble their Western, liberal counterparts.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the inherent complexities of the democracy debate, there is a tendency in the literature to divide the region into regime types, with states typically seen as fitting somewhere between authoritarianism and liberalism. In one example, it has been contended that Southeast Asia’s regimes fit into four categories: military authoritarian (Burma), absolute monarchy (Brunei), Communist authoritarian (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos), and semi-democratic (Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia).<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, and more explicitly emphasising democracy as a foundation for analysis, William Case argues that Southeast Asia is characterised by pseudo-democracies and low-quality democracies.<sup>21</sup> Case defines pseudo-democracies as those in which elections are regularly held but are to some extent rigged, with restrictions on civil liberties and the stifling of opposition parties. In a pseudo-democracy, elections serve as a legitimating tool – a way to reaffirm the public’s support of the government.<sup>22</sup> Low-quality democracies are ‘fuller’ democracies, offering greater participation and electoral competition. Low-quality democracies tend to be marred by a subservient media, judicial weaknesses, executive abuses and corruption.<sup>23</sup> According to Case, the countries that have fitted within these two categories at various points in their political development are Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Clark D. Neher, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Westview Press, Boulder, 1994, pp. 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Case, ‘Democracy in Southeast Asia’, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77. The argument that elections in Southeast Asia are a legitimating tool for the ruling regime is also present in Chua Beng Huat, ‘Asian Values: Is an Anti-Authoritarian Reading Possible?’ in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-1.

<sup>23</sup> Case, ‘Democracy in Southeast Asia’, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 75-7.

The attempt to categorise Southeast Asian states in this manner has itself been criticised. Khoo Boo Teik argues that such labels are not useful as they tend to simplify inherently complex systems.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, few countries would arguably consistently fit neatly into these categories given the region's aforementioned history of democratic reversals. Thailand has a tumultuous political history, and could sometimes be characterised as military authoritarian and other times the government could be labelled democratic. On the flipside, in recent years Indonesia has shifted from a military elitist government to one which is becoming increasingly representative.<sup>26</sup>

It is more appropriate to acknowledge that Southeast Asian political systems feature both authoritarian and democratic characteristics that do not fit neatly under any particular label. In terms of authoritarianism, these states generally have powerful state apparatuses, backed by a prominent bureaucracy.<sup>27</sup> As I note, elections and civil liberties are also restricted. Southeast Asia's authoritarian tendencies were inherited first from existing traditions and then from colonialism. Prior to colonialism, Southeast Asian political systems based the legitimacy of their rule on other-worldly considerations or emotional factors, rather than on the basis that government was necessary for the function of society. People were to find satisfaction in the greatness of their rulers. The rulers were not obliged to resolve the problems of their subjects.<sup>28</sup> Pye argues that the essence of government in pre-colonial Southeast Asia was 'one of asking people to overlook their own particular interests and to find satisfaction in believing the myths of authority.'<sup>29</sup> In the aftermath of colonialism, Southeast Asia's states were left with weak institutions, particularly those relating to the election of political leaders and government turnover in general. These instabilities created the conditions for the emergence of authoritarian leaders that could unify and dominate the political system.<sup>30</sup> These authoritarian attributes are balanced to some degree in Southeast Asia by elements of democracy, including electoral procedures, party systems, and a significant, though usually somewhat muzzled and often embryonic, civil society.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Khoo Boo Teik, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 10 August 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Neher, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Case, 'Democracy in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>28</sup> Lucian Pye, *Southeast Asia's Political Systems* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1974, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Chua, 'Asian Values', *op.cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>31</sup> Case, 'Democracy in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 80.

Rather than democracy, the most common feature of Southeast Asia's political system has been the emphasis on so-called good governance and an efficient and strong state. In spite of the emphasis on democracy and human rights contained in the concept of good governance, in practice, the notion provides a justification for the theoretically uneasy mix of democratic and authoritarian state features. The function of the state in Southeast Asia has arguably been to provide a government which is strong enough to effectively transform a colony – or, in Thailand's case, a country with a history of significant colonial interference – into a viable and legitimate nation.<sup>32</sup> Bilahari Kausikan notes that such states may emphasise 'good government' – 'effective, efficient and honest administrations able to provide security and basic needs with good opportunities for an improved standard of living' – at the expense of democracy. Although the two concepts are not mutually exclusive, Kausikan contends it cannot be assumed that more democracy and more human rights will inevitably lead to good government. In this analysis, tight controls on civil society may be required to ensure the necessary political and economic stability.<sup>33</sup> Given the emphasis on hierarchy and authority, the quality of leadership is therefore perhaps the most important factor in Southeast Asia's politics.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Lee Kuan Yew has argued that the competence of rulers is more important than the political system itself.<sup>35</sup> In Southeast Asia this appears to be true.

The emphasis on authority is also witnessed in debates on Southeast Asia's economic development. Huntington argued that economic development and political stability are two separate goals with no necessary connection.<sup>36</sup> He claimed that it is the attempt to achieve modernity – rather than its absence – which causes political chaos.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, in Southeast Asia, economic and political development are not regarded as mutually exclusive, least of all by the region's political elites. Socio-political change is

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<sup>32</sup> C. B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 190.

<sup>33</sup> Bilahari Kausikan, 'Asia's different standard', *Foreign Policy*, issue 92, pp. 24(18).

<sup>34</sup> William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon, Richmond, 2002, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man*, Curzon, Richmond, 2000, pp. 108-9.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1968, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

instead viewed as inseparable from economic considerations, notably capitalism.<sup>38</sup> This approach extends beyond the analysis of Southeast Asia to scholarship on the Third World in general, Howard Handelman noting that this literature is often focused on political economy.<sup>39</sup> The success of the so-called miracle economies in Southeast Asia has been linked to the relative political stability of regimes.<sup>40</sup> Singapore and Malaysia are two examples, both having formulated national ideologies and agendas which link the country's successful economic development with the ruling party.<sup>41</sup> Indonesia provides a different kind of example, the Suharto government's ineffectual response to the Asian Financial Crisis leading to political instability and the downfall of the Suharto government. In all, Southeast Asian states have tied their political legitimacy to economic performance.<sup>42</sup> Even if not explicitly acknowledged, it is not surprising then that the economic basis of political development is utilised as a foundation for analysis.

The authoritarian features of Southeast Asian states has led some to conclude that an authoritarian regime may be necessary in the early to middle stages of industrialisation.<sup>43</sup> Owing a debt to the theories of dependency<sup>44</sup> and modernisation<sup>45</sup>, the proponents of developmental state theory argue that the state in East and Southeast Asia is a necessary and key player in the region's economic growth and that part of its strategy in this context involves the use of authoritarian instruments. The term made its formal debut in the writings of Chalmers Johnson who, in his discussion on Japan's economic growth, used 'developmental state' to describe the state-led industrial and

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<sup>38</sup> An example of such an approach is the following compilation: Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison and Garry Rodan (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, democracy and capitalism*. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1993.

<sup>39</sup> Howard Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, 2006, p. 253.

<sup>40</sup> See for example: Philip J. Eldridge, *The Politics of Human Rights in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 199.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, and; Chua Beng-Huat, *Communitarian ideology and democracy in Singapore*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond Realism' in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>43</sup> Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development*, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> See for example: Andre Gunder Frank, *Latin America: Underdevelopment of Revolution – Essays on the Development of Underdevelopment and the Immediate Enemy*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1969.

<sup>45</sup> See for examples: David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1965, and; Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, *op.cit.*

developmental drive occurring in that country.<sup>46</sup> The developmental state in Johnson's analysis was one which gave preferential access to the government in various strategic industries.<sup>47</sup> Adrian Leftwich developed Johnson's ideas further, defining the developmental state itself as:

those states whose politics have concentrated sufficient power, autonomy, capacity and legitimacy at the centre to shape, pursue and encourage the achievement of explicit developmental objectives, whether by establishing and promoting the conditions of economic growth (in capitalist developmental states), by organising it directly (in the 'socialist' variants), or a varying combination of both.<sup>48</sup>

Rather than allowing the free market to reign, the state in this model actively intervenes to ensure that economic – and by extension political – development occurs in a way favourable to the ruling elites.<sup>49</sup> Although there is no consensus on what strategies are needed to achieve the desired rapid economic growth, the developmental state makes development its top priority, even utilising repression if necessary to achieve this goal.<sup>50</sup> Political factors, such as nationalism, an external threat or source of competition, and ideology, shape the focus and pace of developmental strategies in these states.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, the elites (referred to by Leftwich as the 'developmental elites') and the state in this model are regarded as relatively autonomous and are effectively insulated from special interests.<sup>52</sup> Civil society in such states consequently tends to be weak to start with or crushed, often as a result of strict internal security legislation and secret

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<sup>46</sup> Adrian Leftwich, 'Bringing Politics Back In: Towards a model of the developmental state' in *Southeast Asian Development: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences (Volume III)*, ed. J. Rigg, Routledge, London and New York, 2008, p. 33, and; Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1982, p. 19

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> Adrian Leftwich, *States of Development: On the Primacy of Politics in Development*, Polity, Cambridge, 2000, p. 155.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 167, and; Takashi Inoguchi and Matthew Carlson, 'Introduction' in *Governance and Democracy in Asia*, eds. T. Inoguchi and M. Carlson, Trans Pacific Press, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 5-6.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Stubbs, *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle: The Political Economy of War, Prosperity and Crisis*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p. 9, and; John Rapley, *Understanding Development: Theory and Practice in the Third World (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 2002, p. 119.

<sup>51</sup> Leftwich, 'Bringing Politics Back In', *op.cit.*, p. 31, and; Leftwich, *States of Development*, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-5.

<sup>52</sup> Leftwich, 'Bringing Politics Back In', *op.cit.*, p. 37.

police.<sup>53</sup> Control of civil society is seen as a condition for the continuity of developmental states – though ironically the economic success of such states may in effect empower civil society.<sup>54</sup> This overtly statist account of economic development fits well in the context of Southeast Asia which, as noted, can be characterised by its emphasis on authority and hierarchy.

Indeed, the statist approach to economic development exemplified by developmental state theory contains an inherent bias against democracy. In this model, the state is largely autonomous from other actors, including civil society. Bureaucracy reigns supreme, acting on behalf of the developmental elite and with bureaucrats perceived as members of that elite. Popular groups are allowed little say on the formulation of development goals and strategies.<sup>55</sup> The assumption in this model that the state represents the public interest and should therefore spearhead development on its behalf is thus problematic, given the tenuous nature of representative democracy in the region and the fact that political power and authority in Southeast Asia is typically monopolised by a small group of political elites.<sup>56</sup>

The Asian Financial Crisis shook the legitimacy of the developmental state at a time when it was gaining in popularity.<sup>57</sup> A strong case can be made, however, that it was the emphasis on market – rather than state – rule which helped cause the crisis in the first place and that the criticisms of the developmental state in this context were largely unwarranted.<sup>58</sup> It could also be contended that the states in East and Southeast Asia that best handled the Crisis were those which adopted prudent developmental state strategies. Malaysia was one such example, with Prime Minister Mahathir opting for increased regulation over the deregulation and neoliberal policies demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Linking the debates on democracy and economic development, it should be noted that there is a question as to whether there is in fact a causal connection between changing

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>55</sup> Georg Sorensen, 'Democracy, Authoritarianism and State Strength', *European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 5, issue 1, 1993, pp. 13-4.

<sup>56</sup> Rapley, *Understanding Development*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-4.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

socio-economic conditions and the potential for democratic transition.<sup>59</sup> Some have suggested there is a direct link between capitalism and democracy, the former giving rise to the latter.<sup>60</sup> In this argument, economic development creates an affluent, politically-informed middle-class which, eventually, will demand greater political representation.<sup>61</sup> It has been argued that development itself requires the removal of sources of ‘unfreedom’, including social deprivation, tyranny, and poor economic opportunities; attributes typically associated with authoritarianism.<sup>62</sup> Under such a view, it could be contended that Southeast Asia’s economic growth may have been even more significant had the states in the region embraced a more democratic model of governance.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, it has been argued that economic development can hamper democratic progress and *vice versa*. Middle-income countries are said to be less stable and therefore more prone to dictatorship.<sup>64</sup> Some have even championed harsher political systems – which inevitably feature a denial of basic civil and political rights – in the interest of economic growth and overall stability. Lee Kuan Yew contended that too much democracy in a developing state can hinder economic development.<sup>65</sup> Given that such an argument ultimately reinforces the legitimacy and agenda of the ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) government, Lee’s contention is not surprising.

As a whole, Southeast Asia provides an interesting case study of the alleged link between economic development and democratisation. Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei have achieved significant economic growth in the last three decades despite Singapore and Malaysia having a controlled model of democracy and Brunei being a monarchy. Whilst under military-authoritarian regimes, Thailand and Indonesia likewise achieved

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<sup>59</sup> Kevin Hewison, Garry Rodan and Richard Robison, ‘Introduction: Changing forms of state power in Southeast Asia’ in *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, democracy and capitalism*, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> For examples and discussions of this argument see: C. B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1982, pp. 8-9; Muthiah Alagappa, ‘Contestation and Crisis’ in *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*, ed. M. Alagappa, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995, p. 60, and; Kim Sang-Woo, ‘Transparency in the Economy will Aid Democracy in South Korea’ in *Democratic Transitions in Asia*, eds. U. Johannsen and J. Gomez, Select Publishing and Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Singapore and Bangkok, 2001, p. 190.

<sup>61</sup> Knight, *Understanding Australia’s Neighbours*, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>62</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> For example, Yi Feng argues that Singapore probably would have grown faster had it been more democratic: Yi Feng, *Democracy, Governance, and Economic Performance: Theory and Evidence*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 299-300.

<sup>64</sup> Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

notable economic development. By the 1990s, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had neither significant economic growth nor a stable democracy.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the Asian Financial Crisis failed to provide a stimulus for democratic change in most Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia being the primary exception.<sup>67</sup> Thus, although the region has been subjected to significant economic and social change since the 1980s, there has been no consistent pattern of democratic transition. The link between economics and democratisation remains tenuous, at least in the Southeast Asia context. If anything, as Case argues, economic growth has produced a variety of regime types and political systems.<sup>68</sup> This again illustrates the region's political diversity and the inherent problem with categorising its regimes under broad political labels. With economic performance overtly tied to political legitimacy, if anything economic growth has solidified the *status quo* of Southeast Asia – a *status quo* which contains a strong streak of authoritarianism. Ultimately, a primary focus of the debate on economic development in Southeast Asia has not been on economics at all but on its overall impact on political development, with particular emphasis on the implications for greater democratisation. Again, the most prominent constant in the debate is the perceived central role played by the state.

A final alternate framework for analysis is culture. The culturalist approach purports to explain Southeast Asia's economic and political development through the prism of cultural values and patterns. It is argued that culture has impacted considerably on regime type and the style of economic management.<sup>69</sup> In perhaps an early example, writing about Southeast Asia in 1955, Rupert Emerson noted:

... it is certainly plausible to assume that a people's heritage or ways of life and thought must have a significant bearing both on the original shaping of political institutions and on the way in which they evolve.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Samuel C. Y. Ku, 'Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Challenges in the New Century' in *Southeast Asia in the New Century: An Asian Perspective*, ed. S. C. Y. Ku, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kaohsiung, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Rupert Emerson, *Representative Government in Southeast Asia*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1955, p. 10.



The culturalist approach is often premised on the argument that there is a common Southeast Asian culture from which modern institutions, policies and societies have developed. The current nature of political systems, with their democratic and authoritarian components, are said to have derived from this broad Asian culture. The notion of pan-Asianism, of a shared Asian identity, is a recent development. Until modern times there was no consciousness of a common culture in the region. Indeed, there is still considerable resistance to the concept, given the multicultural nature of Southeast Asia's societies and the fact that pan-Asianism has served primarily as an instrument of nationalism and the agendas of specific regimes rather than as a genuine attempt at constructing a common culture.<sup>71</sup>

A particularly noteworthy culturalist account is witnessed in the so-called Asian Values Debate. Reaching prominence in the early 1990s, the origins of the Debate may be seen in a number of international events and trends. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a 'void' in international politics. There was an absence of political and ideological opposition to American hegemony. Second, the IMF and the World Bank began linking international aid and co-operation to human rights issues. Third, the economic success of East and Southeast Asia boosted the self-confidence of governments in the region.<sup>72</sup> The rise of the Asian Values Debate can be traced to a desire by many Asian governments to emancipate themselves from Western domination.<sup>73</sup>

The term 'Debate' is somewhat misused in this context as the Asian Values Debate was mostly comprised of the political statements of Southeast Asian leaders, with few of their points overtly countered by Western countries. The Debate itself was therefore mostly a one-sided flow of political rhetoric. There was a conscious effort on the part of local leaders, particularly Lee and Mahathir, to draw together common elements from the diverse cultures of the region into a coherent alternative to the Western liberal model.<sup>74</sup> Lee and Mahathir argued that Western society was in the midst of social

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<sup>71</sup> Theodore De Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London, 1998, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Ole Bruun and Michael Jacobsen, 'Introduction' in *Human Rights and Asian Values: Contesting National Identities and Cultural Representations in Asia*, eds. O. Bruun and M. Jacobsen, Curzon, Richmond, 2000, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Freeman, 'Universal Rights and Particular Cultures' in *Human Rights and Asian Values*, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>74</sup> Eldridge, *The Politics of Human Rights in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

disintegration due to excessive individualism, particularly the alleged prioritisation of individual rights over the larger communal interest.<sup>75</sup> They argued that, by contrast, the Asian model was built on communitarian values which mandated that the individual act in accordance with the best interests of society.<sup>76</sup> Asian cultures were said to prefer the notion of good government to liberal democratic models.<sup>77</sup> Lee in particular claimed that Asian values were based largely on Confucianism. In this view, Confucius was claimed to have argued that the quality of governance was ultimately dependent on the quality of the rulers.<sup>78</sup> Confucianism had thus been appropriated to support the pre-existing emphasis on authority and hierarchy.

Proponents of Asian values argued that culture was the only way to maintain social cohesion and political stability in the context of rapid economic development.<sup>79</sup> It was claimed that these values made the Asian economies successful in the first place.<sup>80</sup> The Asian approach to development, derived from the abovementioned value system, was said to have promoted economic growth whilst avoiding the social costs of rampant crime and individualism.<sup>81</sup> The Asian values thesis framed many attributes of the developmental state – including the emphasis on authority and the privileging of state interest over the rights of the individual – as part of a wider regional cultural pattern. It should be noted, however, that by explicitly tying Asian values to rapid capitalist development, the Debate effectively excluded the Communist-authoritarian states of Indochina. Arguably Thailand was also not regarded as part of the Asian values discourse given that country's emphasis on Buddhist values, though a similar emphasis on authority and hierarchy – exemplified in the position of the King – exists.<sup>82</sup> Asian values was utilised to justify the politics of a specific set of regimes, namely those in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and, more widely, South Korea and

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<sup>75</sup> Richard Robison, 'Introduction' in *Pathways to Asia: The politics of engagement*, ed. R. Robison, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p. xii.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>77</sup> Kausikan, 'Asia's different standard', *op.cit.*, p. 24(18), and; M. Anne Brown, *Human rights and the borders of suffering: the promotion of human rights in international politics*, Manchester University Press, New York, 2002, p. 76.

<sup>78</sup> Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew*, *op.cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>79</sup> Garry Rodan and Kevin Hewison, 'A 'clash of cultures' or the convergence of political ideology?' in *Pathways to Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> Robison, 'Introduction', *op.cit.*, p. xiii.

<sup>81</sup> Jonathan Rigg, *Southeast Asia: the human landscape of modernization and development*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 60.

<sup>82</sup> Chua, 'Asian Values', *op.cit.*, p. 100.

Taiwan – those regimes most closely associated with the region's rapid economic growth.

The Asian values concept also represented an attempt by the region's elites to disassociate themselves from Western models and, in so doing, justify to both domestic and international audiences the nature, policies and structure of the Southeast Asian state. Nonetheless, Asian values and culturalist interpretations of development in general remain inherently problematic. Fluctuations in economies often occur rapidly; a situation which could not be explained by cultural factors alone given that culture tends to change gradually.<sup>83</sup> The argument that there existed a common Southeast Asian identity able to explain the region's economic and political development has also been criticised. As I have noted, the states of Southeast Asia are diverse and complex, each displaying varying degrees of authoritarianism and democracy. It is difficult to find a common culture within such political systems. Many of the 'miracle economies', including Malaysia and Indonesia, are not culturally Confucian and yet tend to be included as part of the 'miracle.'<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it has been claimed that Confucianism has been misrepresented in the Debate. Theodore De Bary argues that Confucius was not anti-individual and was against 'mindless conformism.'<sup>85</sup> Instead, there is evidence that Confucius emphasised 'learning for one's self' not 'learning for the sake of others.'<sup>86</sup> It should be noted as well that the culturalist approach fails to explain the tensions within societies, many of Southeast Asia's states having notable – albeit often weak and stifled – counter-cultures and civil societies.<sup>87</sup> Even within Southeast Asian nations, culture is not homogenous.

Given the inherent difficulties, it is not surprising that a common criticism of the Asian values concept has been that it essentially attempts to justify the more authoritarian aspects of the local political systems. It has been argued that the concept of

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<sup>83</sup> Jim Granato, Ronald Inglehart, and David Leblang, 'The Effect of Cultural Values on Economic Development: Theory, Hypotheses, and Some Empirical Tests' in *Development and Underdevelopment: The Political Economy of Global Inequality (Fourth Edition)*, eds. M. A. Seligson and J. T. Passé-Smith, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 2008, pp. 241-2.

<sup>84</sup> Rigg, *Southeast Asia, op.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>85</sup> De Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights, op.cit.*, pp. 19 and 23.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Richard Robison, Kevin Hewison, Garry Rodan, 'Political power in industrialising capitalist societies: Theoretical approaches' in *Southeast Asia in the 1990s, op.cit.*, p. 15.

communitarian values is in fact a thin disguise for an emphasis on the state and that the emphasis on the collective good is a veil for authoritarianism.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the leading proponents of Asian values, namely Lee and Mahathir, were regularly accused of violating democratic and liberal principles, including human rights.<sup>89</sup> In Singapore, for example, it has been argued that the promotion of Asian values allowed the government to further restrict debate and limit the power of opposition groups that might potentially upset the country's political stability.<sup>90</sup>

The culturalist debate – exemplified by the discourse on Asian values – thus presents a different, though inherently problematic, attempt to explain Asian politics and development. The Asian Values Debate attempted to explain the issues of democratisation (and the lack thereof) and economic development through the prism of culture. However, it has relied on notions of a common culture which, by many accounts, does not exist. Moreover, Asian values tended to emphasise the importance of maintaining a political *status quo* which was clearly in the interests of the existing ruling elites.

Overall, the key debates in Southeast revolve around the common issue of statehood: how it is defined, structured and justified. The democracy debate illustrates the continually contested nature of state power in the region. Although democracy – namely the liberal variant – is the basis of much analysis, the concept itself has arguably lacked a firm foothold in Southeast Asia. Instead, Southeast Asian states have remained politically diverse. Nonetheless, the emphasis on the role of the state as the driver of political and economic development is entrenched. The developmental state model acknowledges this. The developmental state reaffirms the focus on good, though not necessarily democratic, government as the basic requirement of the political system. This model confirms the central role of political elites and demonstrates the blurred line between state and regime interests. The culturalist approach likewise continues the statist emphasis of the other accounts. The Asian Values Debate in particular represents an attempt by the region's elites to legitimise the local model of governance, with its

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<sup>88</sup> Yash Ghai, 'Asian Perspectives on Human Rights' in *Human Rights and International Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region*, ed. J. T. H. Tang, Pinter, London and New York, 1995, p. 61, and; Chua, 'Asian Values', *op.cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>89</sup> Chua, 'Asian Values', *op.cit.*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>90</sup> Rigg, *Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

authoritarian and democratic attributes, to domestic and international audiences. In the end, these three debates provide different but overlapping perspectives on Southeast Asia's political development. From these debates can be discerned the main issues of any study of Southeast Asia: the contested role of the state; the importance of regime and elites; the difficulty of categorising inherently complex state types; the centrality of development to political legitimacy; and the use of culture and broad ideological platforms to justify the existing political framework. It is these issues, among others, that my thesis will examine in the context of Malaysia's political development.

### **Viewing Political Development Through the Lens of Security: The Southeast Asian Context**

The above debates offer interesting insights into the nature of the state in Southeast Asia, including the central case study of my thesis, Malaysia. However, the dominant theme of my thesis is the notion of security. I argue that the issues of democracy, economic development and culture can all also be analysed under the umbrella of a security-based analytical framework, focused on internal or domestic security.

My analytical framework has evolved from the argument put forward by Mohammed Ayoob who argued that the Third World's commitment to the notion of the state and its sovereignty is derived from their sense of internal and external insecurity.<sup>91</sup> Insecurity in the Third World is said to come from a number of sources, including the porous nature of state boundaries, inadequate social cohesion, and the lack of unconditional legitimacy for state institutions and regimes.<sup>92</sup> Ayoob contended that the protection of state structures and governing regimes is the primary concern of Third World states.<sup>93</sup> Ayoob stated that this is derived from a lack of 'adequate stateness', defined as the balance of coercive capacity, infrastructural power, and unconditional legitimacy. This, in turn, prevents states from imposing a legitimate political order within their borders.<sup>94</sup> I argue this inability to establish legitimacy would only encourage further the obsession with security as the power and position of the ruling regime remains tenuous. It should

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<sup>91</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1995, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

be noted as well that, according to Ayoob and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, security in the Third World generally and Southeast Asia in particular is primarily concerned with internal threats. This of course does not mean that external threats are not present. Rather, the perceived and actual threats to the regime are regarded as most likely to emanate from within the territorial boundaries of the state.<sup>95</sup>

Security provides an important framework to reconsider issues of state and regime power in Southeast Asia generally as well as in Malaysia specifically, as my thesis will demonstrate. Security as a concept has long been regarded as a founding principle of the modern state. The concepts of statehood and security are intrinsically linked to each other. Thomas Hobbes laid the groundwork for the nexus between the modern nation-state and security when he argued that the pursuit of security underlies the very social contract which brings the state into being. In this view, the nation-state is established as a means of providing the security seen as lacking in the brutal state of nature.<sup>96</sup>

Still, the notion of security is not fixed and is as elusive a concept as the nation-state itself. In fact, there is an inherent conflict of interest between the state and nation. Very rarely are a state and a nation regarded as one and the same. More commonly, the security of the nation is at odds with the security of the state.<sup>97</sup> Instead, security is often merely a euphemism for the ambitions and self-image of the ruling elites; that is, the interests of the regime are merged with the interests of the state.<sup>98</sup> In Southeast Asia, where, as I have noted, there is an emphasis on a statism, the security agenda of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is unsurprisingly based on the state rather than individual security.<sup>99</sup> More specifically, Alex J. Bellamy contends Southeast Asia as a whole emphasises the regime, rather than simply the state, in the formulation of security policies and interests. Bellamy argues that ASEAN, for example, is primarily

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<sup>95</sup> Mohammed Ayoob and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, 'Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia: Exploring General Propositions' in *Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asian Experience*, eds. M Ayoob and C. Samudavanija, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1989, pp. 256-7.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan: Parts I and II*, Broadview editions, Ontario, 2005, pp. 95 and 97.

<sup>97</sup> Barry Buzan, 'The Concept of National Security for Developing Countries' in *Leadership Perceptions and National Security*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> Stephen Philip Cohen, 'Leadership and the Management of National Security: An Overview' in *Leadership Perceptions and National Security*, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond Realism' in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

concerned with legitimating the rule of its member governments – that is, the region's regimes.<sup>100</sup> An analytical framework focused on security issues would thus provide a different insight into the nature of regimes and their relationship with the nation and the institutions of the state. A central contention of my thesis is that in Malaysia a security-based framework in fact illustrates the blurred line between state and nation, the two effectively regarded as one and the same.

Further demonstrating the relevance of utilising a security-based perspective, in Southeast Asia generally the debates on democracy, development and culture are all impacted upon by security issues. First, political elites use both the democratic and authoritarian components of their political systems to maintain their grip on power. The political system tends to be geared towards ensuring the continuation of the regime, rather than on fulfilling the typical functions of the state. This can be particularly witnessed in Singapore, Malaysia, New Order Indonesia, and President Ferdinand Marcos' administration in the Philippines. Second, the developmental state and the economic agenda in general are used to justify government policy decisions, notably the restrictions on those civil liberties which could potentially upset the power of the regime. Since the Asian Financial Crisis, in particular, economic instability has been perceived as the most significant threat to political security, more so even than traditional military-based threats.<sup>101</sup> Finally, culture promotes the political system of these states as a model for economic and political development to both domestic and international audiences. In doing so, the *status quo* – which, in turn, favours the existing regime – is upheld.

Despite the apparent influence of security considerations, these issues are nonetheless rarely if ever analysed on the basis of security. My thesis is an attempt to view these debates together from a security-based perspective. Thus, the issues of democracy, development and culture are complemented, rather than discarded, in my analysis. That said, the security framework is also a tool designed to go beyond the other views of the state in Malaysia and, potentially, more broadly in Southeast Asia and the Third World

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<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163. Barry Buzan critiques the idea of 'economic security' in a capitalist system, noting that capitalism is itself dependent on a measure of insecurity among individuals and firms: Buzan, 'The Concept of National Security for Developing Countries', *op.cit.*, p. 15.

itself. Though the focus of my argument is on Malaysia, it is expected that the basic security framework outlined in my thesis will be applicable to other settings.

In Southeast Asia, for example, the use of such a framework would provide new insights into the issues and debates which define the region. An obvious starting point for any analysis of security in the region is ASEAN. ASEAN was formed in 1967 in the context of concern over the influence of Communism.<sup>102</sup> War prevention and conflict management were also emphasised, the organisation having been formed initially to provide rapprochement among the states in the region and provide a code of behaviour for the peaceful resolution of disputes.<sup>103</sup> Stephen Chee contends that this focus on external threats dissipated with the end of the Cold War:

With the demise of Cold War international politics... national security concerns in Southeast Asia have been re-directed to internal issues of national cohesion, political stability, and socio-economic development. The shift from concern over external vulnerabilities to internal security, however, does not hide the fact that the predominant emphasis is on the nation-state as the primary referent object for national security.<sup>104</sup>

However, it should be noted, that, on the contrary, internal threats have long been a preoccupation of the ASEAN states, even during the Cold War. Bellamy argues that the 'common glue' which brought the region's leaders to establish ASEAN in the first place was their shared experience of trying to govern fragile states. These leaders understood that regional peace and external security in general was reliant on the internal security and stability of states.<sup>105</sup> When ASEAN was first created, the greatest threats to the security of its individual states were indigenous insurgencies. These insurgencies had, in turn, invited external intervention and in some cases were even supported by external powers.<sup>106</sup> The focus of security in Southeast Asia, then, has always been predominantly concerned with the domestic context. Internal political stability has

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<sup>102</sup> D. R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia: Past & Present (Fourth Edition)*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997, p. 357.

<sup>103</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 48.

<sup>104</sup> Stephen Chee, 'Introduction' in *Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia: Institutional Aspects*, ed. S. Chee, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1991, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>106</sup> Shaun Narine, *Explaining ASEAN: Regionalism in Southeast Asia*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 2002, p. 13.



traditionally been seen as vital to preventing external interference and, by extension, external insecurity.

The emphasis on internal security has evolved out of a number of perceived and actual internal sources of insecurity. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the states of Southeast Asia feature a tension between the state and the nation, both having been essentially constructed out of necessity following the colonial period. Ethnic majorities have held political power over substantial ethnic minorities, leading to a lack of political legitimacy and greater potential for rebellion.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, there is a general lack of consensus on the issues of culture, as well as political and economic development. The limit on political participation in many of these states further erodes political legitimacy and state claims of representativeness.<sup>108</sup>

The obsession with domestic security can be particularly observed in ASEAN's principle of non-interference. Amitav Acharya argues that this doctrine 'can only be understood in the context of the domestic security concerns of the ASEAN states.'<sup>109</sup> The principle states that its members should not interfere in the domestic affairs of other members.<sup>110</sup> This principle has been utilised in most ASEAN documents.<sup>111</sup> Bellamy argues that its inclusion is unsurprising given that the region's states are primarily concerned with regime and state consolidation – that is, internal political security.<sup>112</sup> In fact, the principle was designed to ensure that domestic conflicts were not further aggravated by outsiders, namely other states in the region.<sup>113</sup> More specifically, member states were not to criticise the domestic policies of other members, and were prohibited from providing sanctuary, recognition or support to any rebel group. Members were instead to provide support and assistance to other states in their campaign against internal insecurity.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Andrew Tan, 'The 'New' Terrorism: How Southeast Asia Can Counter It' in *September 11 & Political Freedom: Asian Perspectives*, eds. U. Johannsen, A. Smith and J. Gomez, Select Publishing, Singapore, 2003, p. 91.

<sup>108</sup> Ayoob and Samudavanija, 'Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>109</sup> Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>110</sup> Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, and; Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>112</sup> Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>113</sup> Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

In their pursuit of internal security, the governments of Southeast Asia have developed a number of repressive policies, designed to curb threats, both legitimate and otherwise. These policies have impacted considerably upon the shape of political systems in Southeast Asia, repression often being deployed to further entrench a *status quo* favourable to the ruling elites. For example, starting in the 1950s and 1960s, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, and North and South Vietnam suppressed those elements of civil society seen as posing a threat to the state.<sup>115</sup> In Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia, civil society groups were comparatively more active but were nevertheless stifled by the government by the 1970s.<sup>116</sup> The countries of Southeast Asia have established such repressive laws as the Anti-Communist Activities Act 1952 (Thailand), the Internal Security Act 1960 (Malaysia), the Internal Security Act 1963 (Singapore), the Anti-subversive law 1963 (Indonesia), Arrest, Search and Seizure Order 1970 (the Philippines) and the Anti-subversive law 1975 (Burma).<sup>117</sup> Perhaps the most infamous of these laws are the Internal Security Acts (ISA) of Malaysia and Singapore. These Acts allow for indefinite detention without trial. It has been alleged that the ISAs of both countries have been used to crackdown on legitimate political opposition and that the legislation itself is thus merely a tool of the government rather than an instrument to ensure national security.<sup>118</sup> Following the events of September 11, and growing Western support for repressive security legislation, Malaysia and Singapore began urging others in the region to implement similar laws, notably Indonesia.<sup>119</sup> Not only do many Southeast Asian states therefore have an existing repressive security framework, many are continuing to expand the powers and reach of these laws.

Given that security in Southeast Asia is often framed from a statist perspective, the notion of security often takes into account those alternative security issues which impact upon the interests of political elites. As I have argued, economic development is viewed

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<sup>115</sup> Lee Hock Guan, 'Introduction: Civil Society in Southeast Asia' in *Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, ed. H. G. Lee, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>117</sup> Sinapan Samyadorai, '9/11 Anti-Terrorist Measures and their Impact on Human Rights in Asia' in *September 11 & Political Freedom*, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>118</sup> The various political uses of the ISA in Malaysia are detailed in the remainder of this thesis. For allegations against the ISA in Singapore, see: Diane K. Mauzy and R. S. Milne, *Singapore Politics Under the People's Action Party*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 130.

<sup>119</sup> Samyadorai, '9/11 Anti-Terrorist Measures and their Impact on Human Rights in Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 224. See also for example: 'Internal Security Act would help Indonesia fight terrorism: Lee Snr', *Singapore Window*, <<http://www.singapore-window.org/sw05/050201a2.htm>>, 1 February 2005, (accessed 2 May 2009).

under the security umbrella, as is culture. In my thesis I argue that the Malaysian government views practically every sphere of government policy as related to security, the ultimate aim of which being the continuation of regime power. Malaysia has thus adopted a total approach to security. Similarly, Singapore utilises a total defence concept in its formulation of security. Total defence embraces military defence, economic defence, and civil defence.<sup>120</sup> Social defence, the creation of social harmony, and psychological defence, ensuring the commitment of the individual to the nation, are also components.<sup>121</sup> The ultimate end of the total defence doctrine is the maintenance of political stability and the formal political commitment to the state by the individual citizen. David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith argue that this is a reflection of the PAP's obsession with mobilising the population towards national goals.<sup>122</sup>

Overall, a security-based perspective would provide a new insight into the functions of Southeast Asia's political systems, particularly the impact of such policies on the growth of civil society as well as the general social and political implications of implementing such policies. Given the reach and power of these laws, it is clear from this brief survey that the security policies of Southeast Asia have an adverse impact on the quality of political systems in the region and the potential for democratic transition. The influence of these laws provides the foundation for a new critique of the central issues of democracy, economic development and culture. The case study of Malaysia in my thesis will provide a modest starting point for an analysis of this type in Southeast Asia.

## **Conclusion**

Conceptions of the nation remain contested throughout Southeast Asia and the political legitimacy of the state is under constant challenge, or is at least perceived to be. The line between state and nation is often blurred, a result of the latter being constructed and promoted to fulfil the interests of the former. That said, the state in Southeast Asia is difficult to categorise, the region itself composed of various regime-types. Although

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<sup>120</sup> David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith, 'Southeast Asia and the War against Terrorism: The Rise of Islamism and the Challenge to the Surveillance State' in *September 11 & Political Freedom*, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, p. 155.

there are several issues that can be considered under this umbrella, there are three central, overlapping themes which I have argued dominate.

First, there is much debate over the issue of democracy. While there is no consensus on the issue, democracy has been a significant theme in discussions on the region since the aftermath of WWII. Democracy is by no means well-established in Southeast Asia, and those countries with democratic foundations tend to feature authoritarian policies and leaderships. The internal complexity and inconsistency of these states is nonetheless often viewed and critiqued from a liberal democratic angle by both locals and outsiders. However, it should be noted that Southeast Asia's regimes feature both democratic and authoritarian frameworks, the inherent paradox of this is explained away with reference to good government and the concept of good governance. Indeed, the emphasis on hierarchy and authority is perhaps the only consistent feature throughout the region. Ultimately, the debate on democracy often centres on whether the states in question are democratic, a variation of democratic, or moving toward democratic.

Second, economic development has likewise provided fertile ground for debate about the nature of state power in Southeast Asia. The developmental state model, used in both East and Southeast Asian contexts, continues the emphasis on authority and hierarchy which has permeated the democracy debate. The developmental state is a model of economic development which is used to justify the current structure of the relevant political systems. The overriding emphasis on good and efficient government is also utilised here, with economic growth overriding any demands for greater democratisation. Contrary to the expectations of some, economic growth has by and large not had any substantial impact on the quality of democracy in the region – if anything, it has reaffirmed regime diversity. The statist account is thus sustained in this model, with the interests of the regime largely coinciding with what is regarded as the interests of the state.

The final dominant theme is that of culture. The culturalist account, exemplified in the Asian Values Debate, likewise attempts to legitimise the *status quo* of Southeast Asia's political systems. It is argued that there is a common, constant culture which informs the shape and decisions of these polities. Liberal democracy is regarded as 'alien' and the centrality of leadership is presented as a natural, unchanging part of the local

culture. I have argued, along with many others, that this perspective is inherently problematic and reflects the interests of elites.

In this thesis I view the issues of democracy, economic development, and culture through a somewhat broader perspective; that is, one based on security. This thesis does not assume a linear trajectory from democracy to authoritarianism within the region generally or Malaysia specifically. The reality is instead acknowledged as inherently complex and the security-based approach used to provide further nuance. Ayoob argues that security is central to any understanding of the Third World state, given the struggle for political legitimacy. As with the above issues, security in the region is seen through the perspective of the state – the state often being synonymous with the regime. The issue of security is prominent in the decision-making of Southeast Asian states. This is illustrated in the already existing repressive domestic security frameworks which have been constructed by the region's elites to allegedly ensure political stability. In spite of the action of member-states such as Burma, ASEAN has long had an emphasis on regional harmony and non-interference in the affairs of its members. By viewing the politics of these states through the prism of security, another perspective on the nature and interests of the regimes has been used.

Malaysia provides a case study for the application of this perspective. I argue that in Malaysia, a security-based approach provides a unique understanding of how the regime and state operates, its motivations, as well as the excessive paranoia which often informs policy decisions. Security issues have defined the Malaysian nation since the colonial period. Security has been an obsession of the regime and has been prominent in most spheres of government influence. I will now turn my attention to the theoretical basis of Malaysia's specific approach to security policy.

## Chapter Two

### Democracy, Coercion and Consent: Constructing the Malaysian Security Model

*The racial composition of our country is such that real democratic process can promote as much ill-will as authoritarian rule. The disadvantage of the democratic process is that it satisfies no one. Authoritarian rule can at least produce a stable strong government... we must accept that there is not going to be a democracy in Malaysia; there never was and there never will be.*

**Mahathir Mohamad<sup>1</sup>**

Given that Malaysia's security policy supports the maintenance of regime power, it is important at the outset of my thesis to define the parameters of the regime in question and the political system with which it is synonymous. An understanding of the Barisan Nasional (BN) regime is vital to any assessment of Malaysian politics. The BN regime is the central power in the Malaysian political system, its behaviour shaping the culture, development, and identity of the nation. The regime is intrinsically tied to the state. The state in Malaysia came before the nation, with the latter constructed by the former. The construction of the nation has unsurprisingly reflected the political ends of the regime. Mirroring the multi-ethnic, UMNO-dominated ruling BN coalition, the Malaysian nation is constructed as diverse and multicultural, but dominated by the Malay ethnic group. The Malaysian political system is primarily used to legitimise and reproduce this *status quo*.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in In-Won Hwang, *Personalized Politics: The Malaysian State under Mahathir*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2003, p. 209.

Security policy is clearly a crucial component of the Malaysian state/regime. It is also a crucial component of the nation and national identity constructed to support the regime. The sheer scope of the regime's security policy is notable. However, existing scholarship has largely overlooked the point that Malaysia cannot be understood as a political and historical entity without taking into account the security issues and policy responses that have preoccupied the regime's elite since Independence. The management of security is evident in every sphere of government action. Security in Malaysia is fundamentally concerned with regime security rather than national state-wide security. This is, in part, a consequence of the blurred line between regime and state in Malaysia, with the protection of one regarded as the protection of both. The very notion of security is defined within Malaysia by the elite and enforced *via* a security apparatus. The latter developed in tandem with the state and regime.

In this chapter I establish the nature of the Malaysian regime/state and contend that the entire political system is designed to ensure continued BN political hegemony. Next, I turn my attention to Malaysia's security policy, a significant – if not the most important – tool used by the BN to maintain political power. I establish the overall perspective and theoretical model that will be utilised in the remaining chapters. The foundations of Malaysia's security approach and the fundamental themes that dominate it are acknowledged and assessed. I outline the Malaysian Security Model and then argue that the Model has two distinct, though overlapping, components – one coercive, one ideological. I discuss each of these components separately. The former component is composed of a number of repressive laws enforced by the police. The latter features a number of ideological tools designed to stifle debate and to legitimise the continued survival of the regime.

### **Democracy and the Malaysian Political System: An Overview**

The Malaysian political system is a constitutional monarchy, headed by the King (*Yang di-Pertuan Agong*) with a theoretical separation of powers between the Executive (symbolically vested in the King, but practically vested in the Prime Minister and

cabinet), Legislature, and Judiciary.<sup>2</sup> Sultans remain the symbolic leaders of the territorial state but, at the federal level, the King serves to ‘symbolically unite all Malaysian citizens (independent of race and religion) in his realm’ and is a source of national identity.<sup>3</sup> As with other Westminster systems, there is no clear separation in practice between the Executive and the Legislature, with the Prime Minister and the cabinet being members of both.<sup>4</sup> The Federal Legislature is a bicameral parliament, with a lower house (Dewan Rakyat or House of Representatives) which is popularly and directly elected and an upper house (Dewan Negara or Senate) which is not.<sup>5</sup> Senators are either elected by state legislatures or appointed by the King.<sup>6</sup> The Senate is primarily a house of review and its powers of veto may only delay passage of a bill for a limited time. The Senate remains a useful way for the Prime Minister to bring into his cabinet his own appointees without them being directly elected.<sup>7</sup>

The judiciary is constitutionally charged with the power of judicial review, and was originally to act as a sentinel for the Malaysian Constitution and to ensure its independence from the other two branches of government.<sup>8</sup> However, the power of the Judiciary has been steadily eroded since the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the theoretical separation between the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary is no longer a reality. In practice, federal power is vested almost entirely in the Executive.

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<sup>2</sup> Deborah A. Johnson and Anthony Milner, ‘Westminster Implanted: The Malaysian Experience’ in *Westminster Legacies: Democracy and Responsible Government in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. H. Patapan, J. Wanna, and P. Weller, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2005, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State*, MacMillan Press and St Martin’s Press, London and New York, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson and Milner, ‘Westminster Implanted’, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> See *Constitution of Malaysia* (1957), PART IX, and; R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> After a number of High Court cases went against the government, Prime Minister Mahathir began verbally attacking the courts for their infringement of Executive power and, by extension, the will of the majority of Malaysians. The *Federal Constitution (Amendment) Act* (1988) was passed, transferring the power of the judiciary from the Constitution to statutes passed by parliament. The Act also stripped the High Court of its constitutional power of judicial review. The Attorney-General instead was to instruct the court on which cases to hear and assumed responsibility for judicial assignments and transfers: Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.



The regime derives a substantial portion of its legitimacy from the functioning of the country's democratic system. Democracy in Malaysia is not a mere façade, though like all institutions in the Malaysian state it is geared toward satisfying the political interests – the survival – of the ruling UMNO-dominated government.<sup>10</sup> Democracy can be defined as a 'means of constituting authority in which the ruled choose the rulers.'<sup>11</sup> Democracy is not only a means of choosing authority, it is also a means of limiting it.<sup>12</sup> The recognition by government of the citizen's civil and political liberties is often regarded as an important element of a democracy.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on such rights is evident in what are labelled 'liberal-democratic' regimes. Liberal democracy is a type of democracy: a government can be democratic without being liberal and vice versa.<sup>14</sup> Liberalism emphasises protection of the individual, granting certain rights which cannot be taken away by a majority. Given that majority rule is an essential element of democracy, it has been argued that liberalism is in this sense somewhat anti-democratic.<sup>15</sup> It has been recognised that liberal democracy may be more appropriate for societies that have already reached consensus on basic values and on equality. It may be less appropriate for highly polarised societies, divided on class, nationality, ethnicity, or religious grounds.<sup>16</sup> As I have noted, democracy, particularly the liberal variant, is often seen as a product of Western culture and development, with it being argued that most non-Western states became democratic not by their own volition but as a consequence of Western colonialism, imposition, influence, and example.<sup>17</sup>

The Malaysian political system features both democratic and liberal principles, albeit to varying – and often quite limited – extents. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the electoral system. Universal suffrage is observed and the elections themselves often provoke vigorous political debate and high levels of participation within Malaysian

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<sup>10</sup> Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'American Democracy in Relation to Asia', in *Democracy and Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives*, R. Bartley, C. H. Chee, S. Huntington, S. Ogata, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1993, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia: The Winds of Change*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Margolis, *Viable Democracy*, Macmillan, London, 1979, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Emmerson, 'Reforms Needed for Democratic Transitions in Asia: Some Thoughts Outside the Box' in *Democratic Transitions in Asia*, eds. U. Johannsen and J. Gomez, Select Publishing and Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Singapore and Bangkok, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p. 118.

<sup>17</sup> Huntington, 'American Democracy in Relation to Asia', *op.cit.*, p. 29.

society. There is clear evidence that on a number of occasions the regime has responded to expressions of electoral discontent by modifying its policies.<sup>18</sup> Hence, responses to political pressure occur via changes to government policy rather than through a change of government.<sup>19</sup>

Elections in Malaysia take place under tightly controlled circumstances. Election rallies by opposition parties have been banned since 1978.<sup>20</sup> The campaigning periods for elections are often short, having been reduced from 14 days in 1971 to seven days in 1986. The Election Commission claims the shortening of the campaign period is for security reasons, though it has been argued that the real motivation is that such a move provides the opposition parties with less time to promote their election policies.<sup>21</sup> The effect of this particular limitation is debatable, as opposition parties are generally aware of when an election is approaching and unofficially campaign – in recent times using the Internet – months beforehand.<sup>22</sup> The Election Commission itself is appointed by the King on the advice of cabinet and is in charge of, among other matters, the number and delineation of constituencies.<sup>23</sup> Given that the Election Commission is composed of political appointees, it is unsurprising that in the lead-up to general elections the Commission has been accused of padding out pro-regime states with new constituencies, often out of proportion to their respective voter population. For example, a delineation exercise in April 2003, prior to the 2004 general election, saw the state of Johor, a UMNO stronghold, gain six new seats, while other relatively pro-government states like Selangor and Pahang had their numbers of seats increased by five and three respectively.<sup>24</sup> It has been noted that those who vote against the government are liable to be banned from procuring government contracts. In March 2000, the state

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<sup>18</sup> Ben Thirkell-White, 'Political Islam and Malaysian Democracy', *Democratization*, Vol. 13, issue 3, 2006, p. 421.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 425.

<sup>20</sup> Jomo K. S., 'Deepening Malaysian Democracy With More Checks and Balances' in *Malaysia: Critical Perspectives – Essays in Honour of Syed Husin Ali*, eds. M. I. Said and Z. Emby, Malaysian Social Science Association, Kuala Lumpur, 1996, p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> Parti Keadilan Rakyat, 'Sham Democracy: A Report on Malaysian Elections', *Parti KeADILan Rakyat*, <<http://www.keadilanrakyat.org/library/documents/sham-democracy.pdf>>, 2006, (accessed 1 January 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>23</sup> John Funston, 'Malaysia: Developmental State Challenged', in *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. J. Funston, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Liow, 'The Politics Behind Malaysia's Eleventh General Election', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, issue 6, 2005, p. 909.

government of Malacca confirmed the existence of a so-called 'blacklist' of opposition supporters in the 1999 election. Those on the list were banned from gaining contracts.<sup>25</sup>

It has been argued that the party elections for the UMNO general assembly are the 'real' elections in Malaysia, with politicians competing for party posts which closely parallel positions in the government hierarchy. It should be noted, however, that competition for the posts of President and Vice-President (essentially the positions of Prime Minister and Deputy Minister) are discouraged; rather, UMNO members are advised to respect the processes of seniority and planned succession.<sup>26</sup>

Once elected, the ability of opposition members to influence the legislative process or make an impact on national debates is limited. Bills are presented to parliament only a few days before passage. This severely restricts the potential for debate and gives rise to the concern that the Legislature acts merely as a 'rubber stamp' for the Executive.<sup>27</sup> Question time in Parliament is also tightly controlled. Twenty questions are permitted in each question time, though time is limited to an hour. The order in which the questions are presented is of particular importance, many opposition parties claiming that their questions are listed last and are often excluded as a consequence of the time constraint.<sup>28</sup>

Francis Loh Kok Wah argues that there is no denying that Malaysia's is a variant of the Westminster political system. At the same time, he states that it should not be denied that the rule of law is often not upheld, with the system instead often endorsing 'rule by law.'<sup>29</sup> Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), a Malaysian think tank with close ties to the government, argues that Malaysia is democratic, noting that there are 26 political parties in existence and 14 of these as of 2007 were in government under the banner of the Barisan Nasional. To put minority parties with minority support into government, Jawhar contends, would be fundamentally undemocratic. Jawhar argues

<sup>25</sup> Rainer Heufers, 'The Politics of Democracy in Malaysia', *ASIEN*, Vol. 85, 2002, pp. 48-9.

<sup>26</sup> William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon, Richmond, 2002, p. 111, and; William Case, 'Malaysia: Still the Semi-Democratic Paradigm', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 21, issues 2-3, 1997, pp. 86-7.

<sup>27</sup> Heufers, 'The Politics of Democracy in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p.50.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Francis Loh Kok Wah, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 13 August 2007.

the existence of opposition state governments also illustrates that Malaysia is democratic.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it should be noted the regime has exercised considerable restraint in a number of areas. It has resisted meddling in the internal affairs of the opposition or seriously obstructing their recruitment drives. Nor has it deployed goons, thugs, or godfathers to menace the opposition and their supporters, and there is little evidence of systematic ballot-box stuffing, deliberate miscounting or false reporting of votes.<sup>31</sup>

Other commentators contend that Malaysia should be classified a 'semi-democracy.' A semi-democracy can be defined as:

those countries in which the effective power of elected officials is so limited or political party competition so restricted, or the freedom and fairness of elections so compromised that electoral outcomes, although competitive, do not produce popular sovereignty and accountability, or in which civil and political liberties are so uncertain that some political orientations and interests are unable to organize and express themselves peacefully, without fear.<sup>32</sup>

William Case contends that the semi-democratic label can be applied to Malaysia. In advancing this argument, Case utilises a definition of democracy which specifically emphasises the features of liberal democracies. Case argues the extent of democracy in a country can be measured on two dimensions: civil liberties and regular elections.<sup>33</sup> According to Case, democracies feature both, while semi-democracies or semi-authoritarian states are missing one or both.<sup>34</sup> Given the restrictions of civil liberties, such as the use of preventive laws, government control of mainstream media, and the election restrictions outlined above, Case contends that in Malaysia civil liberties are so limited that they prevent government changeover and, thus, limit the political impact of elections. Therefore, while Malaysia satisfies the 'regular election' requirement of

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>31</sup> William Case, 'Malaysia's General Elections in 1999: A Consolidated and High-Quality Semi-Democracy', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 25, issue 1, 2001, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Introduction: What Makes for Democracy?' in *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), eds. L. Diamond, J. J. Linz, S. M. Lipset, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1995, pp. 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> Case, 'Malaysia: Still the Semi-Democratic Paradigm', *op.cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, p. 81.

democracy, it fails on the ‘civil liberties’ front. It is for this reason that Case argues that Malaysia is a semi-democratic regime.<sup>35</sup> Malaysia has also been labeled an ‘illiberal democracy’<sup>36</sup> and a ‘pseudo-democracy’<sup>37</sup> for similar reasons.

In opposition to the above view, Malaysian academic Khoo Boo Teik insists that labels like semi-democracy, democracy, and so on, are not very useful, describing them instead as ‘shortcuts to understanding a system that is... relatively complex.’<sup>38</sup> Democracy is a ‘double-edged system’, not just in Malaysia but in all democratic regimes, as while it promises political participation and certain freedoms, it remains a form of rule that features some degree of coercion and oppression.<sup>39</sup> Illustrating the complexity of the Malaysian system, James V. Jesudason characterises Malaysia as a ‘syncretic state’ which mixes the often contradictory concepts of coercion, democratic procedures, religious and secular goals, and ethnicity and nationalism.<sup>40</sup> Chan Heng Chee contends that, within Asia, regimes are often criticised on the basis that they do not fit within the Western model of what democracy should be.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, according to a 2007 survey, Malaysians appear satisfied with both democracy in general and the level of democracy in their country. The survey noted that 74 percent of Malaysians felt that elections in their country were free and fair, and 69 percent felt they were well-represented by the government – the highest in the region. Moreover, 85 percent of Malaysians agreed that democracy was the best system of government.<sup>42</sup>

My argument in this thesis is premised on the notion that the Malaysian political system is certainly a form of democracy, albeit a limited kind. The system is, as Khoo suggests,

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> William Case, ‘Democracy in Southeast Asia: How to Get It and What Does It Matter?’ in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, ed. M. Beeson, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 77, and William Case, ‘Testing Malaysia’s pseudo-democracy’, in *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, Equity and Reform*, ed. E. T. Gomez, RoutledgeCurzon, London and New York, 2004, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Khoo Boo Teik, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 10 August 2007.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> James V. Jesudason, ‘The syncretic state and the structuring of oppositional politics in Malaysia’ in *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*, ed. G. Rodan, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 131.

<sup>41</sup> Chan Heng Chee, ‘Democracy: Evolution and Implementation – An Asian Perspective’ in *Democracy and Capitalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Democracy in Asia: Malaysia scores big in Gallup International poll’, *New Straits Times*, 7 December 2007.

inherently complex, and as such the quality of democracy is open to debate. Opposition parties can and do gain power at the state level, and as I noted they achieved massive gains in the 2008 election. Nonetheless, Malaysia's democracy is stifled by the restrictions on civil liberties and the defects in its electoral system. While it is in a sense democratic, the system is ultimately designed to ensure the continued survival of the UMNO-dominated BN regime. However, despite being highly biased in favour of the existing regime, elections perform an important legitimating function. Elections allow the government to claim a mandate from the electorate and provide opportunities for the regime to re-energise constituents in support of the government's positions as well as the political system as a whole. Elections also provide a security function. They allow dissidents to vent their frustrations through electoral – rather than violent – channels. Elections provide an important feedback mechanism, allowing the regime to identify areas that do not support the government and formulate responses – or retaliation – accordingly.<sup>43</sup>

The regime dominates the prevailing political discourse of the country, reflecting its interests and obsessions. This is particularly so with regard to the issue of race. As noted, the issue of race pervades Malaysian politics, the political framework of the ruling regime reflecting the racial imbalance previously outlined. The regime claims that changes to the *status quo* will lead to racial instability and insecurity. The Malaysian system has been described by academics as Consociationalism, a process of interethnic power sharing based on compromise rather than confrontation. Consociationalism is inherently elitist in its distrust of the ethnic masses to be rational, with elites deciding on conflicting ethnic claims on behalf of their communities.<sup>44</sup> The focus of the regime and UMNO in particular has been to secure the support of the majority of ethnic Malay voters, partly through patronage distribution, partly through the promotion of Malay insecurity.<sup>45</sup> It has even been argued that the government's

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<sup>43</sup> Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Chee, 'Consociational Political Leadership and Conflict Regulation in Malaysia' in *Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia: Institutional Aspects*, ed. S. Chee, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1991, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> Harold Crouch, 'Malaysia: Neither authoritarian nor democratic' in *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, democracy and capitalism*, eds. K. Hewison, R. Robison, and G. Rodan, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1993, p. 138.

political legitimacy is drawn from its apparent success in preventing ethnic conflict rather than its compliance with democratic rules and principles.<sup>46</sup>

Illustrating the Malay dominance which permeates the political spectrum is the regime's positioning of Islam at the core of national identity.<sup>47</sup> Islam was originally adopted in the Malay Peninsula as part of an interactive process in which indigenous Southeast Asians adapted local religious customs to Islam.<sup>48</sup> This occurred mainly as a top-down process with the Malay aristocracy being the first to adopt Islam. Conversion of the masses occurred as a consequence of elite sponsorship. By the seventeenth century, Islam had become the dominant religion and part of the Malay identity.<sup>49</sup> The blurred line between state and Islam established in this period has continued to the present day. Under the Malaysian Constitution, Islam is regarded as the official religion. The framers of the Constitution intended this to be largely ceremonial with Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman stating shortly after Independence, 'I would like to make it clear that this country is not an Islamic state as it is generally understood, we merely provide that Islam shall be the official religion of the state.'<sup>50</sup> However, under the Constitution, while non-Muslims are granted freedom of religion, they are not permitted to preach or propagate their faith among Muslims. Thus, although constitutionally protected, non-Muslims and Muslims do not have an equal legal status as both possess different duties and privileges.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Heufers, 'The Politics of Democracy in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that people of all ethnicities may be accepted as *bumiputra* if they convert to Islam and adhere to Malay rites and customs. Nonetheless the term 'Malay' has a strong ethnic component, with many Chinese and Indian Muslims excluded on the basis of ethnicity: John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p. 3, and; Michael D. Barr and Anantha Raman Govindasamy, 'Hegemony without conversion: religious nationalism in modern Malaysia', *Oceanic Conference on International Studies* [online publication], p. 19, <<http://www.uq.edu.au/ocis/published-proceedings>>, 2008, (accessed 15 November 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Greg Fealy, 'Islamisation and politics in Southeast Asia: The contrasting cases of Malaysia and Indonesia' in *Islam in World Politics*, eds. N. Lahoud and A. H. Johns, Routledge, New York, 2005, p. 154.

<sup>49</sup> Abdullah Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity: The Issue of Radical Religious Elements in Malaysia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, issue 2, 1999, p. 263.

<sup>50</sup> Lily Zubaidah Rahim, 'The Road Less Travelled: Islamic Militancy in Southeast Asia', *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, issue 2, 2003, p. 211.

<sup>51</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1996, p. 126.

Islam's prominent place within the Constitution can be explained as a source of Malay security, enshrining their central place in the state framework.<sup>52</sup> Notably, though, freedom of religion applies only with respect to Islam *vis-à-vis* other religions, not among different interpretations of the Islamic faith.<sup>53</sup> Motivating this is regime insecurity, premised as it is on Malay dominance. Malaysian scholar Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid argues that there is 'an obsessive desire of Malay ruling elites to ward off any signs of Malay-Muslim disunity in the wake of maintaining the delicate political balance between Muslims and non-Muslims.'<sup>54</sup> Islam in Southeast Asia generally and Malaysia in particular is often thought of as a moderate variant of the faith. What is less acknowledged and will become evident throughout this thesis is how Islam is controlled by the Malaysian regime for its political purposes. Islam is constructed and framed in pro-government rhetoric and utilised to promote and fulfil government objectives. This is evident in the *Rukunegara*, the New Economic Policy (NEP), Vision 2020, Islam Hadhari, among others. Islam in Malaysia is not so much moderate as it is moderated. Overall, as with all other aspects of the state in Malaysia, the nation – constructed with a dominant Islamic identity and supplemented by overtures to the non-Muslim constituencies – is a means to a political end: the continued political and electoral survival of the regime.

On the whole, Malaysia presents a unique case study. Malaysia is a state in which there is no clear separation between the regime and the state, the latter using the institutions of the former to maintain its grip on power. The political system itself is dominated by the Executive, which in turn is dominated by the BN. The political system and the political *status quo* are routinely legitimated by regular, though arguably unfair, elections. The political system thus reflects the political interests of the ruling regime. The regime bases its rule primarily on the ideal of racial harmony, though in reality the racial/ethnic *status quo* is biased in favour of the politically-dominant Malays. A key element of this is Islam, the religion being used by the government to legitimate its rule and its policies. The Islam promoted is heavily moderated by the regime, with alternative interpretations eliminated. The political system and political discourse of

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<sup>52</sup> K. S. Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation' in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. M. Alagappa, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 522.

<sup>53</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *RSIS Working Paper No. 123*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2007, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*



Malaysia are dominated by the BN regime. Malaysia's security policy is also a consequence of this approach. It reflects the interests of the ruling regime and is the most significant and consistently used political tool in the BN's arsenal.

### **Malaysia's Security Model: An Overview**

In Southeast Asia generally, the threat, perceived or actual, from within the state is often paramount. Security issues are said to be identified by the elites, with the priority being state rather than individual security – an emphasis that perpetuates the authoritarian tendencies of the region's regimes.<sup>55</sup> The dominant account of security in Southeast Asia is considered statist in nature.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, Bellamy contends it is not the state, as such, which elites seek to secure but particular regimes.<sup>57</sup>

In the Malaysian context, Bellamy's argument is validated as regime security and state security are regarded as one and the same.<sup>58</sup> Security is conceived as an all-encompassing concept, inherent in all spheres of government action. Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad identified this succinctly:

Security is not just a matter of military capability. National security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony. Without these all the guns in the world cannot prevent a country from being overcome by its enemies, whose ambitions

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<sup>55</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond Realism' in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>57</sup> It could be argued, in fact, that part of ASEAN's primary goal is the promotion of peace and security via the legitimisation of its member states; *ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

<sup>58</sup> The constitution, the foundation for Malaysia's political system, enables the Security Model but does not endorse it. The Alliance/BN's historical dominance of the legislature has enabled it to amend the constitution at will, even undermining many of the principles on which it was originally founded. For example, the constitution was significantly altered after the 1969 riots to allow for broader government power. In terms of ideology, the constitution was amended in the same period to ensure that the special privileges and position of the Malays would not be subject to debate. Such an amendment effectively limited the ideological space for alternate narratives and further engrained UMNO's position at the centre of the political system. Moreover, the permanent state of emergency following the riots has allowed the government to justify its use of coercion and its amendments to various repressive legislations. For a general discussion on Malaysia's constitutional structure, see Johnson and Milner, 'Westminster Implanted', *op. cit.*, pp. 81-108.

can be fulfilled sometimes without firing a single shot... In Malaysia we think that the contentment of the people is a major factor in determining security.<sup>59</sup>

Security in Malaysia goes beyond the military threats of traditional accounts and instead is a **total response**. The effective management of all aspects of society is regarded as a vital bulwark against insecurity.

Security policy in Malaysia has remained consistent since the Emergency period, with few minor alterations to the Security Model. The regime in Malaysia has likewise remained virtually unchanged, with the state still synonymous with the BN (formerly the Alliance)<sup>60</sup> and UMNO. Malaysia's political continuity is owed, at least in part, to the unchanging security apparatus. The regime/state and the Model developed in tandem and this helps account for the consistency of both. Security policy in Malaysia is characterised by two apparatuses: one coercive, one ideological. There is considerable overlap in the function of both, but I have analysed and regarded each as separate entities in this thesis. I have done this for the sake of clarity. The overlap is nonetheless noted wherever it occurs. Coercion and ideology form part of the total response used by Malaysian authorities when attempting to deal with the root political causes of insecurity.

It should be noted that Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid utilises a similar framework for his discussion of Islamic Movements. Fauzi examines the coercion and 'co-optation' components of the government's response to non-governmental forms of Islam. My thesis differs from Fauzi's argument because I establish coercion and ideology as part of a wider apparatus of government – one which has been utilised in many contexts. I have extended Fauzi's model beyond the government's Islamisation agenda.<sup>61</sup> I also contend

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<sup>59</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'The First ISIS National Conference on National Security', speech, The Institute of Strategic and International Studies, <<http://www.pmo.gov.my/WebNotesApp/PastPM.nsf/acfe72124fba2e148256e72001d223e/d07d785c78a5f9e14825674a0013634e?OpenDocument>>, July 1986, (accessed 11 September 2008).

<sup>60</sup> The Alliance was the forerunner to the BN. The Alliance and the coalition system it promoted was changed to the BN, a coalition which would place much more emphasis on Malay dominance, in the aftermath of the 1969 riots.

<sup>61</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Patterns of State Interaction with Islamic Movements in Malaysia during the Formative Years of Islamic Resurgence', *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, issue 4, 2007, pp. 444-65.

that the Malaysian Security Model represents a domestic application of the international relations concepts of hard and soft power, put forward by Joseph S. Nye Jr. Hard power refers to the use of coercive – usually military – force, and can utilise inducements (‘carrots’) or threats (‘sticks’).<sup>62</sup> The coercive apparatus in many ways reflects this notion of hard power, though I argue the emphasis is more on police, rather than military, action. By contrast, soft power is an indirect way of exercising power – it co-opts rather than coerces.<sup>63</sup> In international relations, soft power ‘arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.’<sup>64</sup> In the domestic Malaysian context, the ideological apparatus can be seen as a form of soft power in that it appeals to the ‘hearts and minds’ of the ‘enemy’ – that is, it focuses on co-opting, rather than coercing. It should be noted, however, that the ideological apparatus deviates somewhat from the soft power idea in that it also performs a coercive function, albeit a more limited one, which complements the operational component. Over time, the contradictions between the use of hard power coercion and the use of a ‘hearts and minds’ soft power strategy in Malaysia has become increasingly apparent. This has undermined both the security policy and the regime which wields it.

### *Key Themes in the Malaysian Security Model*

As I have noted, in Malaysia the state came before the nation. Consequently, Malaysia’s security practice ‘reflects the struggle to build a nation out of a state inherited from British colonialism’ and this informed the shape of its security doctrine.<sup>65</sup> Academic K. S. Nathan contends, ‘The concept of ‘Malaysia’ and conceptions of national security... embody the interplay between ‘nation’ and ‘state.’’<sup>66</sup> As I will demonstrate in the next chapter of this thesis, Malaysia’s security policy developed in tandem with the nation. As such, Malaysia’s conception of security is determined by a number of factors intrinsic to its nation-building process, including management of interethnic tensions,

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<sup>62</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2004, p. x.

<sup>65</sup> Nathan, ‘Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation’, *op.cit.*, p. 513.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

the goal of national unity and social cohesion, and the vision of becoming a modern industrialised country.<sup>67</sup>

As with other Third World and particularly ASEAN states, internal security is the main plank of Malaysia's security policy. In 1984, then Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam outlined the foundations of Malaysia's security policy:

Reduced to its basics, there are three pillars in Malaysia's doctrine of comprehensive security. The first is the need to ensure a secure Southeast Asia. The second is to ensure a strong and effective ASEAN community. The third, and most basic, is the necessity to ensure that Malaysia is sound, secure and strong within.<sup>68</sup>

Joseph A. Camilleri notes that Hitam's three 'pillars' were essentially tied to internal goals. These goals were: to remove the incentive for other states to intervene in Malaysia; to cope with real and potential internal and external threats, and; to eradicate internal 'conflicts and contradictions' and thus deny outside powers an opportunity for interference.<sup>69</sup> Internal security is ultimately regarded as inseparable from the external dimension.<sup>70</sup>

Security policy in Malaysia also takes into account 'alternative' security issues, the most prominent being the pursuit of economic security. Economic threats are difficult to relate to national security as capitalist economics is one of risk, competition and uncertainty. The state is also often only one actor among many and its responsibilities and interests are not as clear in the economic sphere as in the military and political sectors. The economy does, however, form part of the foundation of the state and is, consequently, integral to the stability of the nation-state, its institutions, and its regime.<sup>71</sup> It is on this basis that Malaysia ties its security to economic stability.

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Joseph A. Camilleri, *States, Markets and Civil Society in Asia Pacific: The Political Economy of the Asia Pacific Region* (Volume 1), Edward Elgar, Cheltenham and Northampton, 2000, p. 277

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton, 1983, p. 79.

Indeed, in Malaysia, as I have noted in Southeast Asia more generally, the legitimacy of the regime, and therefore the state, is tied to economic performance.<sup>72</sup> Mahathir has stated that economic difficulties are a 'serious threat' to national security. Mahathir contends:

Failure to understand this threat may result in a cycle of recession followed by political [instability], security threats and even greater recession... management of the economy and clear thinking are therefore an integral part of the strategy for national security.<sup>73</sup>

Vital to economic security is development. The role of the state as an agent of development is seen to coincide with the state's security function.<sup>74</sup> Development is the core of all of Malaysia's five-year plans. For example, the First Plan (1966-1970) promoted the economic and social integration of Malaysian citizens, at least in part to ensure national security.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, it is argued that the flow of economic benefits to ethnic Malays via the NEP has limited Islamic extremism in the country. Malays are said to harbour little of the political resentment found in other Muslim communities in Southeast Asia as a result of the career and economic opportunities provided to them through this policy.<sup>76</sup>

Another theme in Malaysia's security policy is the emphasis on ethnicity. Ethnicity is perhaps the most important and dominant of the themes, with the management of ethnic security generally regarded as the number one priority for the country.<sup>77</sup> Racial or ethnic politics is the key to security in Malaysia and racial stability is claimed to bring about political, economic, regime, and developmental security. After all, the Malaysian nation has been constructed on the basis of ethnic identity. The state is dominated by ethnically based political institutions, such as UMNO and, more widely, the BN, composed as it is of predominantly ethnically-based parties.<sup>78</sup> The racial/ethnic balance is regarded by the elites as precarious and in need of constant protection. Nonetheless,

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<sup>72</sup> Bellamy, 'The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia', *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>73</sup> Mahathir, 'The First ISIS National Conference on National Security', *op. cit.*

<sup>74</sup> Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 527.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 526.

<sup>76</sup> Greg Fealy, 'Islam in Southeast Asia: Domestic Pietism, Diplomacy and Security' in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with analyst at a think tank, 27 July 2007.

<sup>78</sup> Camilleri, *States, Markets and Civil Society in Asia Pacific*, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

Malaysia's so-called racial politics is essentially the story of the domination of one ethnic grouping – the Malays – over all others, a situation which could hardly be called a 'balance.' The NEP was a clear example of this imbalance and how inherent security is in ethnic policy, its ultimate aim being to overcome the Malays' sense of insecurity via affirmative action programs and thus promote social stability.<sup>79</sup>

Continued Malay dominance over the institutions of the state is seen as the core component of security. Nathan recognizes that 'Malay security is inevitably equated with Malaysian security.'<sup>80</sup> Malay dominance is entrenched in the Constitution with Article 153 affirming the 'special position of the Malays' along with 'the legitimate interests of other communities.'<sup>81</sup> This provision remains ingrained fifty years after Independence despite the political dominance of the Malays having been assured, especially since the 1969 riots, and the improvement of their economic conditions *vis-à-vis* the non-Malays. Article 153 affirms Malay dominance and consequently strengthens Malay security in relation to the other ethnic groupings.<sup>82</sup> Article 153 was to be reviewed in 1972 but this did not occur,<sup>83</sup> Malay rights having become further entrenched following the riots. The constitutional and political protection of Islam is also closely tied to security. The official, modern version of Islam reinforces ethnic security by promoting an interpretation of the faith that protects the regime and supports the basic tenets of the nation. Any deviation from official Islam is strongly discouraged, if not penalised by the security apparatus. Mahathir, and later Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, both made Islam a tool of national security, unifying the Malay constituents and limiting their political exploitation by outsiders or other extremists.<sup>84</sup> It should be noted that the emphasis on Malay security is balanced against the interests of the non-Malays, whose acceptance of the *status quo* must be affirmed to ensure continued Malay supremacy.<sup>85</sup> Thus, ethnic security, while emphasizing Malay dominance, nonetheless recognizes that this dominance can only be maintained with some level of consent by the other ethnic groupings.

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>80</sup> Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>81</sup> *Constitution of Malaysia* 1957 (Malaysia), Article 153.

<sup>82</sup> Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 517.

<sup>83</sup> Geoff Wade, 'Southeast Asian Apartheid: The Origins and Evolution of Ethnocracy in Malaysia', Paper presented at Australian National University, Canberra, 24 June 2008, p. 24.

<sup>84</sup> Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 523.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p. 520.

To varying extents, the main threats identified by the regime throughout Malaysia's modern history have featured a racial/ethnic component. The threat posed by Communism during the First Emergency, for example, was not simply a battle of Cold War era ideologies. The Communists were comprised mostly of ethnic Chinese, while the state the Communists were attempting to overthrow was identified with the Malays. The government's response to this crisis took into account the ethnic component and attempted to undermine Communist influence in the Chinese community and encourage increased loyalty to the state within that community. The threat posed by so-called religious deviants and later Islamic 'terrorists' likewise had a strong ethnic component, Islam being a defining feature of Malay identity. Many of these groups provided counter-narratives to the pro-development Islamic agenda of the government. They were targeted by security forces.

The main argument of my thesis is that security policy in Malaysia is ultimately concerned with regime, rather than state, security. Policy-makers tend to define security in terms of issues that affect regime security. Initially, the notion of regime security was linked to policies combating the threat of Communism during the Emergency. The Emergency was important in this respect as a victory against the Communists was viewed as integral in legitimising the new regime and political system. Eventually, regime security became entwined with 'Muslim unity', ethnic stability and economic security.<sup>86</sup> National security has become a 'convenient device' for regime legitimatisation.<sup>87</sup>

### *Hard Power: The Coercive Apparatus*

The coercive apparatus refers to the ground or operational level of the Malaysian security approach: the implementation of legislative policy by the institutions of the state, namely the police, and the coercive force utilised in support of the ideological apparatus and the regime which propagates it. All governments employ some form of

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<sup>86</sup> Noraini Haji Abdullah, 'Leadership in Malaysia: Security Perceptions and Policies' in *Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asian Experience*, eds. M. Ayoob and C. Samudavanija, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1989, p. 146.

<sup>87</sup> Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 547.

coercion as a tool of punishment.<sup>88</sup> The coercive apparatus is viewed by the regime as an important nation-building tool. It establishes limits to individual behaviour and what is and what is not acceptable in the nation, as envisioned by the regime. The apparatus is ultimately controlled and maintained by the government, reflecting again the highly centralised nature of power in the Malaysian state and the blending of regime and state functions and interests.

Unlike other Third World states, Malaysia's use of coercion usually does not involve the military, the Emergency aside. Malaysia's military has traditionally restrained itself from involvement in politics.<sup>89</sup> This can be attributed to a number of factors. First, the royal elites have been actively involved in the leadership of the military, engendering a high level of respect amongst the rank and file for the *status quo*.<sup>90</sup> Second, the Malaysian military expanded very gradually and, until the 1980s, was outnumbered in manpower by the paramilitary federal police.<sup>91</sup> Third, by the 1990s, Malays constituted approximately three quarters of military officers and 80 percent of other ranks, thus helping ensure loyalty to the government, UMNO in particular.<sup>92</sup>

The main coercive force under the coercive apparatus is the police. The police special branch was established by the British in the 1950s during the First Emergency to monitor the Communist enemy. The special branch has since seen its roles and duties expand, assisting the government with detaining dissidents and political opponents.<sup>93</sup> Police act under the control of the Inspector-General of Police, who in turn is answerable to the Minister of Internal Security.<sup>94</sup> The police remain a tool of the government and are not independent of the interests of the regime. Given the crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations and a number of cases of deaths in custody, a representative from Malaysian human rights organisation Suaram has accused the police

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<sup>88</sup> David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1965, pp. 239-40.

<sup>89</sup> Johnson and Milner, 'Westminster Implanted', *op.cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1991, p. 146.

<sup>93</sup> Case, 'Testing Malaysia's pseudo-democracy', *op.cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>94</sup> Francis K. W. Loh, 'National Security, the Police and the Rule by Law: Militarisation by other Means' in *Militarising State, Society and Culture in Asia: Critical Perspectives*, Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives, Hong Kong, 2005, p. 194.



of functioning like ‘gangsters with licence’, the licence being the legal power given to them by the government.<sup>95</sup> Malaysian academic Francis K. W. Loh notes that the system of criminal justice in Malaysia ‘eggs on the prosecutor to obtain a confession’ and this has, in turn, led to the opportunity for the abuse of police powers. An example of this is the use of violence against arrested suspects. Between 1989 and 1999, 635 people were shot dead by Malaysia’s police.<sup>96</sup> There have also been allegations of torture of political detainees by police. Few alleged torturers have been brought to account.<sup>97</sup>

Implemented by the police, the coercive apparatus consists of a number repressive Acts. Most of these Acts, including the Sedition Act, the Internal Security Act, the Emergency Ordinance, and the Printing Ordinance (later the Printing Presses and Publications Act), originate in some form from the Emergency. These Acts were originally enacted to combat Communism and were claimed to be necessary to curb threats to the stability of the *status quo* and protect the population. The Acts are mostly preventive in nature. According to Francis Loh Kok Wah, the use of the coercive apparatus can be likened to internal ‘pre-emptive strikes.’<sup>98</sup> These Acts, combined with the equally important ideological or ‘hearts and minds’ component, were ultimately successful in defeating Communism. Nonetheless, the Acts were not revoked after the Emergency. Instead, they became entrenched as a permanent part of the state and formed the core of the coercive apparatus of its security policy. I will argue that the Emergency was a definitive event in the formation of Malaysia’s security approach, firmly establishing the coercive arm of the government at a time when the nation itself was being constructed.

Of the two apparatuses, the coercive apparatus is the most consistent. It has remained relatively unchanged since it was established. It continues to be defined by the key pieces of legislation noted above, most of which have undergone little amendment since first becoming law. However, while the content of the apparatus has not changed, its

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Enalini Elumalai, Campaign Coordinator, Suaram. Petaling Jaya, 24 July 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Wah, ‘National Security, the Police and the Rule by Law’, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>97</sup> Kua Kia Soong, ‘Introduction: Reform the Malaysian Police’ in *Policing the Malaysian Police*. K. S. Kua, Suaram Komunikasi, Petaling Jaya, 2005, p. 4. See also: Abolish ISA Movement, ‘Torture Under the ISA’ in *Policing the Malaysian Police*, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-34.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Francis Loh Kok Wah, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 13 August 2007.

application certainly has. Initially deployed against Communists, the apparatus has since targeted, Islamic deviants, racial provocateurs, opposition members, and terrorists. Considering that the coercive apparatus, and the Model in general, is beholden to the interests of the BN – interests which have evolved over the past five decades – the changes in its application are not surprising.

The coercive apparatus is often accused of being used for political purposes, predominantly to detain the BN's political opponents. There is merit to this argument but, as I will argue, it has been overstated in some instances. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that the coercive apparatus has been abused on several occasions for overtly political purposes. Most notable of these have been the recent crackdowns against bloggers and a Hindu rights group (see chapter five). These crackdowns represented a clear example of the government using its coercive apparatus against individuals who posed no real threat to national stability. Instead, these individuals were targeted on the basis of the political damage they could potentially inflict on the BN. More generally, opponents to the regime are liable to face punishment under a number of the abovementioned pieces of repressive legislation for any opinions regarded as threats to national security and peace, defined broadly in the Acts themselves. A 1999 report by the Asian Network for Free Elections found that the use of repressive legislation created a 'climate of fear' which made fair elections 'virtually impossible.'<sup>99</sup>

The coercive apparatus is the more prominent of the two central components of the Model. With the exception of the Emergency Ordinance, for which there is little documentation, arrests of individuals and groups are routinely reported by the media if not outright promoted by the government as a victory against instability. An example of the latter is the arrest of various alleged Jemaah Islamiyah members in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks – arrests which the government used to establish itself as an anti-terror government in the new 'War on Terror' era (see chapter five and chapter six). In this sense, the coercive apparatus has an ideological function and can be regarded as a propaganda tool in its own right, despite almost universal resistance to its existence within civil society and contemporary opposition parties. Furthermore, the coercive apparatus is built on the prevention of not just physical threats to the regime

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<sup>99</sup> Heufers, 'The Politics of Democracy in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 45.

and the nation but ideological threats as well. The coercive apparatus has been deployed on a number of occasions to eliminate ideological narratives which run counter to those endorsed by the government. Examples of this include various individuals connected to the Islamic *dakwah* movement, members of PAS, and those associated with Al-Arqam (see chapter four).

The idea that coercion can be used as an ideological tool reflects the arguments put forward by Marxist Louis Althusser. Althusser saw ideology as operating in two main forms. The first, the Repressive State Apparatus, consists of the government, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, and so on.<sup>100</sup> The Repressive Apparatus operates predominantly by repression and only secondarily by ideology.<sup>101</sup> The second apparatus is the Ideological State Apparatus. The Ideological Apparatus involves 'a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialised institutions.'<sup>102</sup> According to Althusser, these institutions include churches, the education system, the family, the legal system, the political system, trade unions, the media and culture.<sup>103</sup> While there is one, centralised Repressive Apparatus, there are multiple Ideological Apparatuses.<sup>104</sup> The Ideological Apparatuses are unified in their diversity by the fact that they operate beneath the ideology of the ruling class:

... this same ruling class is active in the ideological state apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realised in the ideological state apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions.<sup>105</sup>

The Ideological Apparatus is portrayed as an inversion of the Repressive, functioning primarily by ideology and secondarily by repression.

The applicability of Althusser's thesis to the Malaysian Security Model is limited but nonetheless worth noting. The Repressive Apparatus of Althusser's model has the same

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<sup>100</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), NLB, London, 1977, p. 136.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p. 139.

basic structure of the Malaysian coercive apparatus in that both are defined by and composed of the coercive instruments of the state. More significantly, Althusser's Repressive Apparatus performs an ideological function, though as with the Malaysian Model, this is secondary to its overt use of force. As I will argue, Althusser's Ideological Apparatus has much in common with the Malaysian apparatus of the same name, particularly the argument that the ideological strategy of the government goes beyond official propaganda and extends to all levels of society, including the media, culture and religion. However, Althusser's model differs from the Malaysian Security Model on the issue of class. Whereas Althusser saw both apparatuses as controlled by and reflecting class interests, the same cannot be said of the Malaysian Model. Malaysia's security policy is first and foremostly concerned with ethnicity, namely maintaining a 'racial imbalance' favourable to the political elites in the country. These elites are defined not by class but by racial (that is, ethnic) issues – the BN itself composed not of class-based parties but of parties representing specific ethnic groupings. Class is an important issue in Malaysia – indeed, it has been at the forefront of much of Malaysia's modern history, the Emergency in particular. Nevertheless, it is not the most central concern of the BN regime and, therefore, is not the primary focus of its security policy.

Overall, the coercive apparatus is primarily concerned with thwarting the physical and ideological threats to the nation and, more often, the regime. As with the Malaysian Security Model as a whole, coercion is used to protect the interests of the regime, particularly its ethnic agenda. It is often a political, rather than simply a security, tool.

### *Soft Power: The Ideological Apparatus*

Providing a balance to the coercive apparatus, the ideological apparatus focuses less on overt coercion and more on winning or at least dominating the 'hearts and minds' of the regime's opponents. It is the soft power to the coercive apparatus' hard power. State ideology serves two main functions in the Malaysian context. First, it performs a security function. Official ideology defines the parameters of debate and determines which ideas are and are not acceptable. By narrowing the ideological space, the threat of rogue ideas damaging the regime is minimised. For example, the aforementioned restricted definition of Islam effectively limits other interpretations. This helps ensure

there is no alternative view of the faith that could challenge the state-sponsored version. General ideological constructions which perform the security function, to varying degrees, include Vision 2020, the NEP, and Islam Hadhari, among others (see chapter three, chapter four and chapter six). The Malaysian ideological apparatus, in its security function, thus features some element of coercion, particularly in this hostility toward alternative ideologies. There is often an overlap between the coercion and consent functions of the different apparatuses. The second function of state ideology is its legitimating function. Official ideology justifies the existence and continued use of the coercive apparatus and, by extension, the regime reliant on it.

The definition and usage of the term ideology varies between different theoretical frameworks. Put simply and broadly:

...[ideology] links particular actions and mundane practices with a wider set of meanings, giving social conduct a more honorable [sic] and dignified complexion. This is, of course, a generous view. From another viewpoint, ideology is a cloak for shabby motives and appearances.<sup>106</sup>

Ideology can therefore legitimate and give meaning to social conduct but can also provide a justification or ‘cloak’ for more dubious actions. Ideology of course operates in every level of society. My focus is on the state level and how this is utilised in the security context. The use of ideology by other actors will be identified and analysed where appropriate.

The term ‘ideology’ itself originated in the Enlightenment. Initially defined as a ‘science of ideas’, the study of ideology was devoted to unmasking bias and maximising objectivity.<sup>107</sup> Ideology did not refer to a type of thought but a method for discovering truth and uncovering illusions.<sup>108</sup> It was Karl Marx and Frederick Engels who cast the

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<sup>106</sup> Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>107</sup> Willard A. Mullins, ‘Ideology and Political Culture’ in *Ideology, Philosophy and Politics*, ed. A. Parel, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Alberta, 1983, p. 112, and; David M. Minar, ‘Ideology and Political Behaviour’, *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, issue 4, 1961, p. 318.

<sup>108</sup> Willard A. Mullins, ‘On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science’, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, issue 2, 1972, p. 449.

concept in its modern form.<sup>109</sup> No longer was ideology a technique – it became a quality of thought, especially social thought, that is illusory or distorted, a system of ideas dominating the minds of a man, a class or a social group.<sup>110</sup> Previous accounts of ideology share some broad similarities with the above noted conception of ideology that I use in my thesis. No account fits neatly within the context of the Malaysian Security Model. Nonetheless, some of the concepts and themes that have been well-established by other authors and scholars provide insights to the construction of ideology. These are worth noting.

In *The German Ideology* (1845), Marx and Engels contended that ideology resides in the mind of man and reflects the conditions of society, of capitalism. They wrote:

We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking.<sup>111</sup>

Engels later clarified the meaning of ideology with his notion of ‘false consciousness’:

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives.<sup>112</sup>

Marxism envisioned ideology as a system of beliefs determined by social conditions or ‘social existence.’<sup>113</sup> The ultimate source of ideology for Marx was human practice.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, and; Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>111</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology: Part One*, International Publishers, New York, 1970, p. 47.

<sup>112</sup> Frederick Engels, ‘Engels to Franz Mehring’, *Marx and Engels Correspondence*, <[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1893/letters/93\\_07\\_14.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1893/letters/93_07_14.htm)>, 1893, (accessed 29 May 2008).

<sup>113</sup> John Plamenatz, *Ideology*, Macmillan, London, 1971, p. 23.

Practice created ideas and ideology was a certain type of idea. Most prominently, the act of economic production, a form of practice, shaped social relations and consequently the character of society. Economic production, in turn, created ideas and beliefs which come to represent the productive relations within society and the mind of man.<sup>115</sup> In the Marxist view, ideas are the ‘historical outcomes of economic activity.’<sup>116</sup> Economic practice occurred under conditions which included a ruling class, the bourgeoisie. The practices of the ruling classes created ideas which, due to their privileged position, then dominated society.<sup>117</sup> The individual’s perception of reality is thus dependent on the conception and ideas of those who control the means of production.<sup>118</sup> Religion is explained in this analysis as a form of social control.<sup>119</sup> The purpose of Marx and Engel’s recasting of the ideological concept was arguably to expose the illusory nature of capitalism and, as a result, bring about the downfall of the bourgeoisie.<sup>120</sup>

Like the French Structuralist Marxist Althusser, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci specifically discusses the role of ideology. However, Gramsci provides a somewhat different interpretation of the nature of ideology and its relationship to the state. Like Marx and Engels, but particularly Marx, Gramsci begins from the premise that ideology has a material existence, embodied in the social practices of individuals and the institutions and organisations in which these practices take place. Ideologies are not limited to a material existence, however, as they also exist in and through ideas, concepts and propositions.<sup>121</sup> Gramsci distinguishes between two types of ideology: historically organic ideologies, which refer to ideologies that are ‘necessary to a given structure’, and rationalistic, arbitrary ‘willed’ ideologies.<sup>122</sup> Gramsci differentiates the two:

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<sup>114</sup> Helen Marshall, *Not Having Children*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 15.

<sup>115</sup> Ken Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought*. SAGE Publications, London, 1995, p. 45.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>117</sup> Marshall, *Not Having Children*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>118</sup> Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>119</sup> Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 505.

<sup>120</sup> Michael Billig, *Ideology and Opinions: Studies in Rhetorical Psychology*, SAGE Publications, London, 1991, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Roger Simon, *Gramsci’s Political Thought: An Introduction*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1982, pp. 59-60.

<sup>122</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (Volume III), Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, p. 171.

Insofar as they are historically necessary, ideologies have a validity that is 'psychological'; they 'organise' the human masses, they establish the ground on which humans move, become conscious of their position, struggle, etc. As for 'arbitrary' ideologies, they produce nothing other than individual 'movements', polemics, etc.<sup>123</sup>

Ideology in the Gramscian view ultimately provides people with rules of practical conduct and moral behaviour, equivalent to a secular religion.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, Gramsci contends ideology is a 'practical tool of government.'<sup>125</sup> Ideology acts as a cement or cohesive force that binds together diverse classes and social interests. Ideology cannot simply represent the interests of one class – it must be a synthesis, taking into account historical traditions and the contributions of various social movements.<sup>126</sup>

Important to an understanding of Gramsci's view of ideology is the interests and structure of the state within which it operates, influences, and dominates. Central to Gramsci's account of the state is the notion of hegemony. The etymological origins of hegemony can be traced to the Ancient Greek word *hegmonia*, meaning 'to lead.'<sup>127</sup> For the Ancient Greeks, hegemony was defined as an alliance in which a state establishes unrivalled military and political leadership.<sup>128</sup> The term was also used in early Russian social democratic movements in the nineteenth century and in the discourse of Leninism.<sup>129</sup> For Russian Marxist Vladimir Lenin, hegemony was a strategy for revolution to be adopted by the working class as a means to achieve support of the masses.<sup>130</sup> Though Leninism was an influence, Gramsci's use of hegemony was more in line with the Ancient Greek meaning.<sup>131</sup>

For Gramsci, hegemony referred to the dominance that a class and its representatives exercise over subordinate classes through a combination of coercion and persuasion.

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<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>125</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison (Volume II)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 172.

<sup>126</sup> Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>127</sup> Richard Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>128</sup> Benedetto Fontana, 'Hegemony and Power in Gramsci' in *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion*, eds. R. Howson and K. Smith, Routledge, New York, 2008, p. 81.

<sup>129</sup> Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>131</sup> Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.



Hegemony is the organisation of consent by means of political and ideological leadership.<sup>132</sup> Hegemony is practiced by the bourgeoisie to gain state power and maintain that power once attained.<sup>133</sup> A hegemonic class achieves national leadership by combining patriotic struggles and ideas with its own class interests.<sup>134</sup> In Gramsci's terms, hegemony is a 'moment' in which the philosophy and practice of a society are fused or are in equilibrium with a certain way of life and thought dominating the public and private spheres of life.<sup>135</sup> The state dominates in the interests of the bourgeois ruling class and maintains their interests by keeping subordinate social actors fragmented and passive.<sup>136</sup> Hegemony seeks to explain how the state apparatus can coerce society into consenting to the current order through the use of the police, legal institutions, the military, and so on. Hegemony also contributes to an understanding of how the state – *via* the institutions of education, religion, the family, and others – contributes to the production of meaning and values which likewise produces consent for the *status quo*.<sup>137</sup> Gramsci thus expands the view of state power residing in the coercive apparatus of the police and so on, and stresses that the hegemonic apparatus of the state also includes the educational system, culture, libraries, the organisation of information, and religion.<sup>138</sup> State power therefore blends opposing notions: force and consent, violence and persuasion.<sup>139</sup> To achieve consent, the state must utilise not only its ideological apparatuses, such as the education system and religion, to persuade: it must also take into account popular and democratic demands, particularly those which do not have a purely class character and thus do not conflict with the interests of the ruling bourgeoisie. This appeal to universal interests is a concept Gramsci referred to as national-popular.<sup>140</sup>

The work of Marx, Engels and Gramsci throws light on the Malaysian Security Model's use of ideology. Marx and Engels' notion of religion as an instrument of social control

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<sup>132</sup> Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>135</sup> Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, Croom Helm, London, 1980, p. 232.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Howson and Kylie Smith, 'Hegemony and the Operation of Consensus and Coercion' in *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion*, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1980, p. 20.

<sup>139</sup> Fontana, 'Hegemony and Power in Gramsci', *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>140</sup> Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

and a reflection of the economic structure fits well with Malaysia's security discourse. In Malaysia, religion serves both functions of the ideological apparatus – that is, the security and legitimating functions. The official version of Islam is promoted heavily by the regime, with any alternative interpretations either co-opted or coerced into irrelevancy. The narrowly defined parameters of official Islam effectively stifles and narrows the ideological space for other interpretations, thereby strengthening the appeal of the government version and assuring the security of the regime which promotes it. Islam also legitimates the regime, primarily by reinforcing the 'Islamic' character of the government and thus winning the support of the important Muslim Malay community. Official Islam further legitimates the *status quo* by emphasising the Islamic nature of government economic policy. Mahathir often emphasised the importance of accumulating wealth, regarding it as an Islamic duty. During Mahathir's Islamisation of Malaysia, several important economic structures, including banks, became more Islamic: that is, run according to so-called Islamic principles. The use of Islam in the economic context ultimately allows the regime to win support for its nation-building plans.

As in the case of the arguments promoted by Marx, Engels, and Althusser, a key difference between Gramsci's notion of hegemony and hegemony in the Malaysian context is on the issue of class. In the Gramscian framework, hegemony is used to support the interests of the ruling class. In Malaysia, while class is still very much an important factor in social relations and the construction of civil society, racial issues remain the primary concern. Malaysian elites are not so much defined in terms of class – though connections to class are certainly maintained – but in terms of ethnicity. The dominant ethnic faction is clearly the elites within UMNO, the prominent Malay party. Power is shared with the other ethnic groups within the BN, represented primarily in the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), though UMNO remains the dominant player, as evident in the continued emphasis on Islam in Malaysia as well as the ongoing protection of affirmative action policies for Malay citizens.

As in the Gramscian Model, however, these elites achieve hegemony through a combination of coercion and consent, expressed most explicitly in the regime's use of the coercive and ideological apparatuses. The coercive apparatus uses the police and the

aforementioned repressive Acts. The ideological apparatus is concerned mostly with consent, with winning hearts and minds. The legitimating function of the ideological apparatus fits within the notion of consent, as it seeks to attain universal acceptance within the Malaysian community for the *status quo*, particularly the continued dominance of the BN regime. The regime has formulated a number of ideological systems, models and constructs to achieve this consent and to ensure regime security and legitimacy. Examples of these systems include the NEP, Vision 2020, and Islam Hadhari. The national-popular concept is inherent in a number of these ideological constructs. Though these constructs overtly target the Malay community, they nonetheless also evince a universal quality in that the interests of the non-Malays are taken into account and catered for.

Ultimately, however, it must be noted that the accounts of Althusser, Marx, Engels and Gramsci do not fit neatly into the Malaysian context. The issue of class dominates their accounts, weakening their overall applicability to the Malaysian Security Model which, as I have argued, is dominated primarily by ethnic interests and racial issues. Nonetheless, Marx, Engels and Gramsci provide key insights into the nature of state power which are broadly relevant to the central themes of my thesis. They establish the importance of consent and ideological tools to the maintenance of state power. While I do not specifically utilise the ideological models established by these theorists, their work draws attention to the point that ideology is primarily deployed by governments, including and particularly the Malaysian government, to sustain the political power of the elite.

More fitting to the Malaysian context is the conception of ideology provided by Anthony Downs. For Downs, ideology is defined as ‘a verbal image of the good society and of the chief means of constructing such a society.’<sup>141</sup> Ideology is a political instrument used to define the parameters of society. Downs contends:

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<sup>141</sup> Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row, New York, 1957, p. 96.

In modern political science, ideologies are nearly always viewed partly as means to political power employed by social classes or other groups, rather than as mere representations of actual goals.<sup>142</sup>

It is the uncertainty of modern politics which has made ideology a ‘weapon’ of political parties in their quest for office.<sup>143</sup> Ideology is thus seen predominantly as an election tool. In contrast to the objective of universal support inherent in Gramsci’s national-popular concept, Downs notes that the tension in societies with well-defined social groups prevents any one political ideology from strongly appealing to all groups simultaneously.<sup>144</sup> Consequently, parties can only ideologically woo a limited number of social groups at a time ‘since its appeal to one implicitly antagonises others.’ Furthermore, the dynamic nature of society means the right ideology in one election may be the wrong one in the next.<sup>145</sup>

Downs’ argument that ideology can not attain a universal quality is somewhat inconsistent with the Malaysian experience. The very organisation of the Alliance/BN – it being a coalition of diverse interests and ethnic groups brought together under the one political umbrella – is a clear attempt by the regime to formulate a universal political platform. Given the electoral success of the BN in the last fifty years, voting irregularities aside, it could be argued that, contrary to Downs, some measure of universal appeal has been achieved. That aside, Downs’ contention that ideology is fundamentally a political tool supports my construction of the Malaysian ideological apparatus. The apparatus itself is primarily concerned with the interests of the ruling political coalition and limiting the potential for counter-narratives.

David Apter also applies a political perspective to ideology. He argues that: ‘It is the relation to authority that gives ideology its political significance.’ Ideology supports the elite by justifying its exercise of power.<sup>146</sup> Ideology serves as ‘the link between action and fundamental belief’ and ‘helps to make more explicit the moral basis of action’<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>146</sup> David Apter, ‘Ideology and Discontent’, in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. D. Apter, The Free Press, New York, 1964, p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

Ideology is linked to the establishment of identity and solidarity. In this regard, Apter notes ideologies can be used by political leaders to create a sense of shared feelings and understanding and communicate a common condition.<sup>148</sup>

Ideology in Malaysia is linked to the creation of a shared identity, not dissimilar to the view of ideology put forward by Apter. In Malaysia, much emphasis is placed on establishing ideological frameworks which promote a specific identity within particular ethnic groupings or, on rare occasions, across multiple ethnic groupings. The government's Islamisation agenda specifically targeted the Malay community, and attempted to promote a particular vision of Islam which served the broader interests of the regime. By contrast, the *Rukunegara* and Mahathir's Vision 2020 agenda aimed to appeal to all Malaysia's ethnic communities, though both were likewise constructed to support the political *status quo* favoured by the BN and, in particular, UMNO.

While there is much focus in Malaysia's ideological apparatus on ensuring inter-ethnic harmony and the winning of hearts and minds, an undercurrent of fear is often present. As I will note in chapter five, the government has detained or arrested members of various social and political groups for the purpose of inspiring fear within that group and wider society. The regime recently launched a campaign against bloggers at least in part to discourage alternate narratives and government criticism on the internet. Following the September 11 attacks, the government also arrested several lower echelon members of PAS. A motivation behind these arrests was to create a sense of fear within PAS's leadership circle. It was an attempt to discourage its leaders from strongly opposing or criticising the government. Moreover, the PAS arrests helped cement the BN's political position into the public consciousness. The BN's stated position was that PAS was Malaysia's answer to the Taliban. The arrests were an attempt to inspire an atmosphere of fear amongst the general population toward UMNO's main political rival.<sup>149</sup>

Overall, the Malaysian ideological apparatus supports the main function of the Security Model as a whole; that is, ensuring regime security. The ideological apparatus features a number of tools in both the public and private domains. Ideology most frequently comes

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<sup>148</sup> Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, *op.cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>149</sup> See pages 201-209 of this thesis.

in the form of broad governmental programs or agendas. These programs are designed to support the regime's economic, political, and social goals. Ideology is thus concerned with constructing and maintaining a *status quo* beneficial to the political elite. Key to this is the legitimisation of the regime and the coercive apparatus on which it is dependent. While the ideological apparatus shares some similarities to other frameworks, none provide a neat fit. Marx, Engels, and Gramsci shed light on the issue of consent, particularly the role it plays in furthering the interests of the state. Although broadly useful, the applicability of their accounts to the Malaysian political situation is weakened by their emphasis on class. Downs' argument that ideology is a political tool and Apter's linking of ideology to solidarity and identity are likewise relevant to my account. Nonetheless, my concept of ideology departs from the views put by Downs and Apter because I view ideology within a specific context – Malaysia and, more widely, the Third World – and I see this apparatus as concerned primarily with security and not only with politics.<sup>150</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In Malaysia, the regime and the state developed in tandem, the two effectively becoming one and the same, resulting in a security policy which regards a threat to one as a threat to both. Political opponents of the regime are often regarded, characterised or treated as enemies of the state. The political system features both democratic and liberal elements but, ultimately, cannot be characterised by either of these principles. The political system can be seen as democratic to an extent, in that there is a possibility –

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<sup>150</sup> The notion of 'myth' can also be viewed under the umbrella of ideology, though this is not a focus of my thesis. Nonetheless, many elements of myth in Malaysia – for example, government claims regarding Malaysia's interethnic harmony and the 'moderate' nature of the state-sponsored version of Islam – are discussed in this thesis. For discussions that focus on myths in modern Malaysia, see: Farish A. Noor, 'Malaysia and the Myth of "Tanah Melayu" (Part I)', *The Other Malaysia*, <<http://www.othermalaysia.org/2007/08/22/malaysia-and-the-myth-of-tanah-melayu-part-i/>>, 22 August 2007, (accessed 28 September 2009); Farish A. Noor, 'Malaysia and the Myth of "Tanah Melayu" (Part II)', *The Other Malaysia*, <<http://www.othermalaysia.org/2007/08/29/malaysia-and-the-myth-of-tanah-melayu-part-ii/>>, 29 August 2007, (accessed 28 September 2009); Sadanand Dhume, 'The myth of a moderate Malaysia', *The Malaysian Insider*, <<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/index.php/malaysia/36474-the-myth-of-a-moderate-malaysia>>, 31 August 2009, (accessed 28 September 2009), and; Mavis Puthucheary, 'Malaysia's Social Contract – Exposing The Myth Behind The Slogan', *Project Malaysia: An experiment in nation building*, <<http://www.projectmalaysia.org/2008/09/malaysias-social-contract-exposing-the-myth-behind-the-slogan/>>, 2008, (accessed 28 September 2009).

however remote – of a change in government. Illustrating the inherent complexities and biases of the existing system, this government turnover has not yet occurred. Malaysia's is a diluted form of democracy. The political system is geared toward ensuring continued BN political hegemony, with elections, the media, and the separation of powers all biased in favour of the government and the ruling elite. Supporting this *status quo* is a security policy which, through the use of coercion and ideology, ensures that the current ethnic imbalance is entrenched, debate stifled, and the BN's power consequently guaranteed.

Malaysia's security policy is focused on ensuring regime stability and the protection of the regime's policies, notably its development agenda. The emphasis is on domestic security. This is a consequence of the Malaysian nation being born in a time of internal insurgency. Security is an all-encompassing concept in Malaysia. Virtually every sphere of government action has a security component, including economics, the traditional focus of scholarship. Ethnicity or 'race' is the most important and central aspect of security policy, the regime propagating a racial/ethnic imbalance biased in favour of the Malays. This mirrors the ruling BN coalition, in which the Malay-based UMNO dominates the parties of the other ethnic groups. By maintaining a similar ethnic hierarchy in society at large, UMNO's position at the centre of the BN remains assured. Ethnic security is thus seen as vital to the overarching goal of Malaysia's security policy – regime security.

Given that the Malaysian regime sees security policy as all-encompassing, it is unsurprising that the security apparatus itself attempts a total approach focused on thwarting threats on multiple levels. To this end, the Malaysian Security Model has two apparatuses. The first is coercive, composed of a series of repressive laws, enforced by an obedient police force. 'Security' is vaguely defined in these Acts, thereby enabling the regime to act quickly against any threats to its legitimacy. The Acts are preventive in nature, allowing 'offenders' to be caught before a crime has even been committed or, in some cases, planned. Unlike in other Southeast Asian and Third World countries, the military is not usually involved in the application of the coercive apparatus, the Emergency aside. The second component of the Model is the ideological apparatus. This apparatus acts in tandem with the coercive apparatus. Ideology legitimises the use of coercion and, more broadly, the regime which deploys it. Ideology is also utilised to

limit discourse within the country. This is an attempt to eliminate the threat of rogue ideas which could damage the political *status quo*.

The Malaysian Security Model established here can be seen as a domestic application of Nye's hard and soft power concepts, the former reflecting the coercive apparatus, the latter the ideological. The security approach has remained effectively unchanged since it was established. The regime which the security approach was formulated to protect has likewise remained in power since the nation achieved independence. The continuity of both the security apparatus and the regime is no accident, the survival of one depends on the other.

Ultimately, a study of Malaysia focused on the security dimension yields an analysis different to one emphasising the traditional issue of economics. By applying a security lens, and using the Model established here as a framework, a different story can be told. Security issues and policies have defined the nation from its very beginnings through to the present day and account for the continued survival of the BN, the weakness of the opposition, and the shape of the nation. In the remaining chapters, I use empirical evidence to illustrate this.



## Chapter Three

### Hearts, Minds, and Bullets: Security Policy and Nation-Building from Colonialism to the New Economic Policy

*Malaysia's first line of defence is not its military capability. The first line of defence lies in its national resilience.*

**Mahathir bin Mohamad<sup>1</sup>**

No understanding of recent events in Malaysia's history is complete without reference to the country's formative years, from the colonial period to the 1969 riots. This period witnessed the beginnings of Malaysia's nationhood. It was during these years that Malaysia's security approach was first developed. The entire security apparatus developed in tandem with the state and has become inseparable from it. British colonialism, Japanese occupation, the Emergency, and the 1969 race riots were the most influential factors in shaping modern Malaysia. Each factor impacted on the construction of national identity and fundamentally altered the structure of the state and its institutions. These factors justified the creation of a security-obsessed state, dominated by a single regime, maintained by a security policy featuring both coercive and ideological components. Indeed, the restriction of democracy in Malaysia has most commonly been justified by the need to contain ethnic tensions and combat Communism, two core themes of this period in Malaysia's history.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in J. N. Mak, 'Malaysian Defence and Security Cooperation: Coming Out of the Closet' in *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, eds. S. S. Tan and A. Acharya, East Gate, New York, 2004, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, 'Nationalism, Capitalism and 'Asian Values'' in *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, eds. F. L. K. Wah and Khoo B. T., Curzon, Richmond, 2002, p. 58.

While previous studies have analysed this period in considerable depth, my analysis focuses primarily on the security undertones of policymaking. I argue that Malaysia's response to security issues in these times set the precedent for the decades to come, with the Model discussed in the previous chapter largely unchanged ever since. Given the impact of security issues on the development of the Malaysian nation, I contend that security policy can be seen as a defining feature of the Malaysian state. The centrality of security is demonstrated throughout this chapter, present in all the tumultuous events which have shaped modern Malaysia. My argument in this chapter confirms one of the central arguments of my thesis: the study of national and political development in Malaysia specifically and the Third World generally is inseparable from the issue of security.

In this chapter I argue that key elements of Malaysia's national identity were established during the periods of British colonialism and Japanese occupation, namely the segregation of the different ethnic groupings, the special position of the Malays, and the notion that ethnic harmony and national security are inseparable. These features remain prominent to the present day, as evinced in the continued emphasis on ethnic stability in Malaysia's security approach. I examine the Emergency and illustrate the fundamental link between security policy and the formation of the modern Malaysian nation-state. Notably, the security approach adopted by the British to combat Communism established the use of coercion and ideology in containing threats. This security approach developed parallel to the formation of the Malaysian state, with independence being declared during the State of Emergency. Finally, I analyse the impact of the 1969 race riots. The riots led to an increased centralisation of government power and restrictions on democratic practice. The riots determined the shape of the Malaysian nation-state for decades. The Malays became the undeniable centre of the political system and the ruling regime was for all intents and purposes overtly merged with the state. The security approach originally utilised during the Emergency was used in response to the riots and therefore became further developed and entrenched as a state institution. The riots would mark one of the last times the security apparatus was deployed in response to a threat; in the future, it would be almost purely preventive in character.

### **A Nation-State Constructed Under Colonialism and Occupation**

Historian Anthony Milner contends that Malaysia lacks a Great Tradition. Unlike Indonesia or the Philippines, it has no heroic anti-colonial revolution that might serve as a common reference point for a large portion of the nation. Milner contends that the only real common political experience for the peoples of the country was ‘a relatively uneven subjection to British colonial control’ and the Japanese occupation of World War II.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the Emergency, British colonialism and Japanese occupation were the two main forces that can be said to be the genesis for Malaysia’s national identity and the impetus, directly and indirectly, for the construction of the Malaysian nation. First, British colonialism laid the basis for much of Malaysia’s contemporary politics. It installed a system of Malay dominance, with particular emphasis on Islam, while concurrently and paradoxically constructing an inherently pluralistic society. Under British colonialism, the nation became more heterogeneous, while its various ethnic groupings became more internally homogenous. The ethnic and political foundations of Malaysia and its security apparatus can thus be identified in this period. Second, the Japanese occupation of Malaya during World War II brought increased tension between the ethnic groupings, particularly the Malays and Chinese. The Japanese were the first to unite Malaya under a single central authority, but the nation remained as divided and ethnically unstable as ever. Malaya thus entered the Emergency period as a nation that was incredibly fragile, disunited, and far from cohesive.

#### *Colonialism*

Although it was British colonialism which had the longest presence and largest impact, it was not the first colonial power to make its mark on the Malay people. The British faced two colonial legacies when they arrived in Peninsular Malaya: first, an Islamic-Malay population that had become increasingly homogenised in response to Portuguese provocation, and; second, a colonial predecessor – the Dutch – that had ruled with some measure of respect for existing indigenous culture. Beginning with Malacca in 1511, the Portuguese presence in the Malay archipelago was defined by its anti-Islamic fervour.

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony Milner, ‘Historians Writing Nations: Malaysian Contests’ in *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*, ed. W. Gungwu, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2005, p.122.

The Portuguese oversaw a series of bloody wars and sieges, essentially an anti-Muslim crusade for control of the spice trade.<sup>4</sup> It has been claimed that the main impact of the Portuguese presence was on religion. The anti-religious zeal of the Portuguese provoked in the local Malays a stronger religious and cultural unity in their practice and commitment to Islam, though cohesive political associations remained lacking.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the Portuguese, the Dutch colonisers focused on ensuring their own commercial success, and consequently used existing traditional tribute and commercial patterns.<sup>6</sup> Britain's approach followed that of the Dutch.

The primary purpose of British involvement in Malaya was the rapid economic and commercial development of the country's natural resources. To ensure this, the creation of political stability and a Westernised government was considered a priority. An expressed concern for the welfare and advancement of the Malay people was also put forward as a motivation.<sup>7</sup> Britain's movement into Peninsular Malaya began in the economic sphere, establishing commercial houses in the ports of Penang and Singapore that employed Europeans, local Malays and immigrant Chinese and Indians. The 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty clearly defined the separate British and Dutch spheres and interests in Malaya. Peninsular Malaya, including Singapore, was made the exclusive preserve of the British. This was followed with the merger in 1826 of Malacca, Singapore and Penang into a single administrative unit, later known as the Straits Settlement.<sup>8</sup> In 1896 the Federated Malay States (FMS) association was formed, comprising the peninsular states of Selangor, Perak, Pahang, and Negri Sembilan. In 1909, the Malay states under British control, with the exception of Johor, were joined under a common federal legislative council.<sup>9</sup> Also in 1909, the states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu gained freedom from Siam but refused to participate in a single centralised political entity. Consequently, these states, along with Johor, were referred to as the Unfederated

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<sup>4</sup> Stanley S. Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore: The Building of New States*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1978, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the Dutch attack against Malacca in 1606 and later in 1640-41 was aided by the local Malays. Once in control, the Dutch proved as commercially avaricious as the Portuguese but nonetheless continued to tolerate local systems of rule and tradition: *ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1967, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, p. 31, and; J. E. Jayasuriya, *Dynamics of Nation-Building in Malaysia*, Associated Educational Publishers, Colombo, 1983, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Damien Kingsbury, *South East Asia: A Political Profile (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2005, p. 269.

Malay States (UMS). Operating more or less independently of the others, each one of these five states entered into treaty arrangements with the British as the 'protecting power.' The sultan of each state had a British advisor and a small number of British officials.<sup>10</sup>

Britain ruled Malaya through the Malays.<sup>11</sup> Prior to colonialism:

ordinary Malays inhabited a transborder world which encompassed dispersed territories in Singapore, British Malaya, parts of the Netherland East Indies, the southern islands of the Philippines, southern Siam and parts of Indochina, across which large number of peoples who came to be classified as Malay moved relatively freely and more or less continuously.<sup>12</sup>

A 'Malay' in this period actually referred to a 'racially and culturally diverse collection of peoples, many of whom had no particular sense of loyalty or attachment to a *Tanah Melayu* (Malay Land) located on the Malay Peninsula.'<sup>13</sup> It is consequently often argued that the concept of 'Malay' as a racial, social and cultural category was in fact a construction of British colonialism, based on an imperialist discourse characterised by racialism. Moreover, leading Malay intellectuals in this time often formulated their notions of Malay identity within the framework set by European cultures and conceptions of nationhood.<sup>14</sup>

From the early twentieth century onward, the British began educating select Malays, primarily among the traditional elites, for incorporation into the civil service. Although Malays initially held posts with little authority, the civil service became the primary avenue through which Malay elites could acquire status in the modern world. Traditional authority began to wane. The result was the creation of a new elite which owed its legitimacy partly from inherited social status and partly from advancement

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<sup>10</sup> These officials were admittedly at the lower levels of government: Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore, op.cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Times Books International, Singapore, 1970, p. 129.

<sup>12</sup> Joel S. Kahn, *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World*, Singapore University Press and NIAS Press, Singapore and Copenhagen, 2006, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2 and 92.

within the British colonial regime.<sup>15</sup> The British adopted increasingly pro-Malay policies, including preferential recruitment to the public sector and a proliferation of Malay schools.<sup>16</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, then the future Prime Minister of Malaysia, wrote:

The non-Malays were never true legislators but were merely rubber stamps... the British recognised the Malays as the only people whose consent must be obtained before any changes could be made in Malaya. The other communities were also consulted but no proposal objectionable to the Malays had a chance of getting through.<sup>17</sup>

All major changes were therefore negotiated with the Malay rulers with whom the British had concluded agreements with little to no input from the non-Malay communities.<sup>18</sup>

One of the main avenues through which Britain ensured Malay support and cohesion was the promotion of Islam. Joel S. Kahn notes that state Islam was ‘very much an outcome of colonial modernisation’ and therefore not necessarily a feature of traditional Malay custom or rule.<sup>19</sup> Islam was seen as a ‘force for promoting stability’ within Malaya.<sup>20</sup> The British ultimately saw Islam as useful in pacifying the Malay rulers and their subjects. British support of Islam, it was hoped, would minimise resentment toward colonial policies and practices. The British did not generally interfere in religious matters. The sultans were recognised as the head of Islam in their respective states and all matters relating to Islam remained under the sultans’ jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup> According to some, this resulted in a concentration of doctrinal and administrative religious authority in the sultanate.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Meredith L. Weiss, ‘Contesting Race and Nation: Malay Dominance and Multiracial Coalitions in Malaysia’, in *Nations Under Siege: Globalization and Nationalism in Asia*, ed. R. Starr, Palgrave, New York, 2002, p. 198.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>17</sup> Mahathir, *The Malay Dilemma*, *op.cit.*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 129, and; R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Kahn, *Other Malays*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Haniff Bin Hassan, ‘Explaining Islam’s Special Position and the Politic of Islam in Malaysia,’ *The Muslim World*, Vol. 97, issue 2, 2007, p. 289.

<sup>22</sup> Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

While promoting Malay dominance, the British concurrently encouraged increased immigration. As many Malays preferred subsistence living to working in the mines or as a rubber tapper, Britain needed to fill the void. Hundreds of thousands of labourers from southeast China and southern India were imported between 1870 and 1930. It has been argued that the non-Malays were generally entrusted with economic power, partly because Chinese were more often English educated and urbanised, partly because the British preferred the Malays to remain in rural subsistence agriculture.<sup>23</sup> It was only after a preliminary census in 1931 revealed there to be more non-Malays than Malays in the country that immigration restrictions began to be imposed.<sup>24</sup>

It has been said that Malay nationalism has emerged, at least in part, as a reaction against the growth in immigrant populations. Nationalism had been an alien concept to the Malays, the necessary unity being difficult to achieve in a community that was fragmented into numerous states, not to mention the FMS and UMS.<sup>25</sup> However, as the non-Malay populations became more prominent, the Malays in the different states and administrative units began to share a common experience based on their attitudes toward the immigrant ethnic groupings.<sup>26</sup> For example, the Chinese had begun to contest some of the special rights given to the Malays, insisting that their community be given similar rights and privileges.<sup>27</sup> To the Malays, this was seen as an attempt to sideline the Malay community and its traditions, many fearing that Malay culture could not survive in an increasingly heterogeneous environment.<sup>28</sup>

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion. I agree with the analysis of academic John Funston, who contends that British colonialism pre-World War II impacted on Malaysian politics in a number of ways. First, it provided a strong, authoritarian foundation for the future Malayan political system. Second, the British entrenched the principle of Malay dominance through a number of pro-Malay policies

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<sup>23</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>24</sup> Diane K. Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia*, Marican and Sons, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Selected by Anthony Reid), George Allen & Unwin and Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, Singapore and Sydney, 1981, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1965, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

and an emphasis on the sultanate system. Islam was promoted above all other religions. Finally, Britain fundamentally altered the demographics of the country by importing predominantly Chinese and Indian labourers. This created what many saw as a 'plural' society, though this was clearly at odds with the privileges bestowed on the Malays. Occupational difference reinforced ethnic differences, culminating in a growing sense of Malay identity, unity, and, ultimately, a sense of Malay nationalism.<sup>29</sup> What is less acknowledged as a legacy of the colonial period is that it established a number of the issues which would define Malaysia's security policy in the decades ahead, namely ethnic insecurity and the use of authoritarian powers to promote 'unity.'

### *Occupation*

British colonialism was interrupted by the occupation of Malaya by Japanese forces during World War II. Though ultimately short, this occupation proved significant in shaping the growing Malayan nation. Ethnicity, in particular, was forever altered, with the lines dividing the various communities strengthening and the tensions between them increasing.

The Japanese attack on Malaya began on 8 December 1941, approximately four hours after the attack on Pearl Harbour. After 68 days, the Japanese had pushed British forces down the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia with little effective resistance. Kuala Lumpur fell to the invaders on 11 January.<sup>30</sup> Local resistance to the Japanese invasion came mostly in the form of the Communist Party of Malaya/Malaysia (CPM). Originally founded in 1930, the CPM grew in the aftermath of the Japanese invasion.<sup>31</sup> The CPM quickly offered aid to the British, eventually publicly declaring its support for British defence measures.<sup>32</sup> It was agreed that the CPM would raise resistance groups which the British would, in turn, train. The CPM agreed that its recruits would be used

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<sup>29</sup> John Funston, 'Malaysia: Developmental State Challenged', in *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. J. Funston, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001, p. 161.

<sup>30</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star Over Malaysia: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941-1946 (Second Edition)*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 1983, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1985, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> Cheah, *Red Star Over Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 58.



at the discretion of the British.<sup>33</sup> The CPM became a core component of the wider front against the Japanese occupation, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). During the first 18 months of its existence, the MPAJA fared poorly, with insufficient supplies, ineffective leadership, and inadequate training. From mid-1943 onward, however, the MPAJA improved its organisation, food supplies, communications systems and training, ultimately increasing four times in size.<sup>34</sup> The CPM grew into a force of 7,000 men. The CPM built up its organisation in the hopes of not only expelling the Japanese but eventually the British as well.<sup>35</sup>

The MPAJA was mostly composed of ethnic Chinese recruits. The British made little attempt to mobilise the Malay population against the Japanese occupiers. This could be owed, in part, to British concerns about fostering Malay nationalism. Given the signs of growing Malay nationalist sentiment in the 1930s, historian James Ongkili argues the British had not wanted to use the war to promote such aspirations. Britain believed a growth in Malay nationalism might potentially spell the end of colonialism in Malaya following the war.<sup>36</sup> During the campaign against the Japanese a clear ethnic divide had emerged – indeed was promoted by the British – with the Chinese actively recruited and the Malays all but ignored. British interests, primarily the maintenance of its colonial system, had increased the divide between the already segregated ethnic communities.

The Japanese occupation itself was significant in many respects. The Japanese fundamentally altered the position of the sultans, forcing them to surrender many of the powers and privileges tolerated or promoted by the British. Unlike Britain, the Japanese ruled Peninsular Malaya as a single entity, all but ignoring the FMS and UMS groupings. In effect, there were no longer separate states.<sup>37</sup> This effectively paved the way for the creation of a single Malay federal state more than a decade later. Furthermore, the Japanese continued the British policy of emphasising Malay rights over non-Malay rights. The Japanese brought in more Malays to fill in posts in the high

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>35</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> James P. Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia 1946-1974*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1985, pp. 23-4.

<sup>37</sup> Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 27.

levels of civil service vacated by the retreating Europeans.<sup>38</sup> The Malays were also brought into the police force and the military in large numbers.<sup>39</sup> The Japanese 'laid the ground work for the indigenous takeover of the state after the war.'<sup>40</sup> By contrast, the ethnic Chinese were treated brutally by the Japanese occupiers, with many thousands massacred. Given the preferential treatment of the Malays by the Japanese, this aroused a strong resentment amongst the ethnic Chinese against the Malays. This tension was further exacerbated by the fact the Japanese often used Malay military units against the Chinese-dominated resistance forces.<sup>41</sup> The Japanese occupation had therefore helped cement racial consciousness and embedded the tension between the various ethnicities within the country, particularly between the Malays and the Chinese. Overall, ethnic tension had been exacerbated by external forces, with Malay nationalists being encouraged by the Japanese to fight a proxy war against the British-armed and trained Chinese.<sup>42</sup>

When the British reoccupied Peninsular Malaya in September 1945, the ethnic tension and segregation remained embedded. Malaya was placed under the British Military Administration, which ruled the country as a single entity, thereby continuing the centralised method of governance utilised by the Japanese.<sup>43</sup> Following the Japanese surrender, the MPAJA acted quickly to consolidate its position as a leading political force and began organising popular support to force the British to grant Malaya a democratic form of government. Communist propaganda urged the Malays to unite in the cause of a 'new' Malaya.<sup>44</sup> To combat this, the British ordered all MPAJA units to come under British central command and declared that the movement would no longer be operational after 12 September. MPAJA units were however allowed to remain intact and armed but were not allowed to act without permission from the British.<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State*, MacMillan Press and St Martin's Press, London and New York, 1997, p. 104.

<sup>39</sup> Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>40</sup> Syed Farid Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>41</sup> Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>42</sup> Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006, p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> In-Won Hwang, *Personalized Politics: The Malaysian State under Mahathir*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore 2003, p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> Cheah, *Red Star Over Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 249-50.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 194.

growing strength of the MPAJA only increased fears within the Malay community of a Chinese takeover. Indeed, between late 1945 and early 1946, a number of racial clashes took place between the Malays and the Chinese.<sup>46</sup>

The British had hoped to avoid the anti-colonial movements that plagued other European powers in post-war Southeast Asia. The British also sought to revitalise Malaya's primary industries, namely tin and rubber, in the hope this would assist in Britain's own post-war recovery.<sup>47</sup> However, the aforementioned circumstances in Malaya negated against this. Nationalism and Communism had clearly emerged as strong forces, neither of which would tolerate indefinite British control of Malaya.<sup>48</sup> With the onset of the Cold War, Britain opted to support the nationalistic tendencies of the Malayan population against the Communist forces. Consequently, Britain began to make plans to unite Malaya into a single, independent political entity.

Overall, the period of Japanese occupation had served to further disunite an already fragile and divided country. The ethnic groups remained overtly segregated – a situation which was promoted and exploited by the Japanese and the British. Tensions increased, often taking the form of interethnic violence. Nationalism remained ethnic, rather than truly national, in character, with each ethnic group fighting for their own rights, privileges and place in society. In order to make a clean withdrawal from the country, Britain was aware that securing interethnic harmony would be vital. The outbreak of the Emergency, pitting the Chinese-dominated CPM against the Malayan nation as a whole, somewhat paradoxically contributed to the British desire to at least superficially achieve their goal of interethnic harmony.

### **The Origins of the Malaysian Security Approach: Independence and Emergency 1945-1960**

For the British, the granting of independence to Peninsular Malaya was contingent on the establishment of security in the country. British demands reflected a fundamental tenet on which the modern nation-state is built: that is, the ultimate purpose and end of

<sup>46</sup> Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia 1946-1974*, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Roger Buckley, *The United States in the Asia-Pacific since 1945*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, 2002, p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

the state is the attainment of security. In Malaya, Britain recognised that ethnic stability was the key to achieving security, having witnessed decades of tension and division, much of which was a result of colonial policies. Resolving the perceived threat from the CPM, itself composed mostly of ethnic Chinese, became the central battleground.

### *Moves toward Independence*

Following World War II, the movement toward Independence gained increased momentum. Unlike many other Southeast Asian countries, a broad, powerful anti-colonial movement did not emerge in Malaya. The division between the various ethnic communities prevented a common anti-colonial ideology from developing. Consequently, independence was to be achieved through negotiations rather than struggle.<sup>49</sup> One of the first major attempts to achieve this was the Malayan Union. Put forward in October 1945, the British Malayan Union plan proposed the transfer of sovereignty from the sultans to the British. The aim was to establish a centralised polity consisting of the Straits Settlements, the FMS and the UMS, with equal citizenship for all the immigrant ethnic groupings.<sup>50</sup> The hope was that this would lead to greater integration – and thus ethnic stability and security – and the creation of a ‘Malayan’ identity.<sup>51</sup> In this view, the Malays would be weaned from their strong loyalty to the sultanates and the non-Malays would be weaned from their loyalties to their respective homelands. The loyalty of all the ethnic groups would instead be to the Malayan Union.<sup>52</sup> The Union would theoretically provide the necessary security and lay a foundation for the establishment of a modern nation-state. A long-term goal of the plan was Malayan independence.<sup>53</sup>

The plan sparked strong resistance, particularly among the Malay community. The Malays protested against the lack of acknowledgement for Malay sovereignty. Under the plan, the Malays would be treated as just one social group rather than the dominant

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<sup>49</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Challenges and Choices in Malaysian politics and society*, ALIRAN, Penang, 1989, pp. 490-1.

<sup>50</sup> Weiss, ‘Contesting Race and Nation’, *op.cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>51</sup> Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>53</sup> Omar, *Bangsa Melayu*, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

group.<sup>54</sup> It would afford equal political status to a large number of non-Malays, a situation which many Malays feared would lead to a substantial decline in Malay power. Given the economic dominance of the ethnic Chinese, and the looming threat of the MPAJA/CPM, the Malays saw the Union plan as a threat to their survival.<sup>55</sup> Historian Ooi Kee Beng contends that the plan ultimately reflected British interests – in the aftermath of the war, the British had become more wary of the Malays, given their association with the Japanese, and more trusting of the Chinese and Indian communities.<sup>56</sup>

At a meeting on 1 March 1946, a number of Malay associations gathered to discuss the Union plan and condemn its formation.<sup>57</sup> A result of this meeting was the formation of the United Malays National Organisation. UMNO decided that it would oppose the Union through non-cooperation, non-participation and mass demonstrations, and outlined an alternative federation framework which featured protections for the Malays. UMNO agreed to negotiations with the British, but only on the condition that the negotiations would be limited to UMNO, the sultans, and the British.<sup>58</sup>

The Union was officially promulgated in April 1946.<sup>59</sup> The inauguration of the Union and the installation of Sir Edward Gent as the first Governor were completely boycotted by the Malays, including the sultans. The sultans refused to attend the first meeting of the Malayan Union Advisory Council on 2 April. The Malay masses were strongly behind their leaders – if not restrained by them.<sup>60</sup> It became clear to the British that the Union plan had to be scrapped and the increasingly politically conscious Malays needed to be won over.<sup>61</sup> By 25 July 1946, mere months after it was first promulgated, the Union plan was officially abandoned.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>55</sup> Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia 1946-1974*, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>56</sup> Ooi Kee Beng, 'New Crises and Old Problems in Malaysia', in *Mahathir's Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, eds. H. K. Leong and J. Chin, Times Editions, Singapore, 2003, p. 102.

<sup>57</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 7, and; Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Viewpoints*, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, Kuala Lumpur, 1978, p. 92.

<sup>58</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>60</sup> Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945-65*, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1976, pp. 30-1.

<sup>61</sup> Nicholas Tarling, *Southeast Asia: A Modern History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004,

In place of the Malayan Union, the sultans, in consultation with UMNO, proposed the Federation of Malaya Agreement (FMA). The FMA and the Union plan did not differ too drastically, historian Albert Lau noting the two plans coincided in roughly 75 percent of their content.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, there were a number of notable differences in the FMA. This plan maintained the centralised political unity of the Union but restored the state structures, namely the sultanates.<sup>64</sup> Special rights were granted to the Malays and citizenship restricted for non-Malays.<sup>65</sup> Although far from supportive of the Union, the non-Malay communities were fiercely opposed to the FMA.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, illustrating the importance the British attached to appeasing the Malay community, the Federation of Malaya displaced the Malayan Union on 1 February 1948.<sup>67</sup>

The FMA ultimately entrenched the system of Malay dominance that began – albeit to a limited extent – in the pre-World War II colonial period and that has continued to the present day. The non-Malays’ failure to challenge the ‘special position’ of the Malays effectively sidelined the political position and power of the immigrant ethnic groups. Malay dominance became a central component of future agreements and arrangements with the British, including the Reid Constitution and the 1957 Federation of Malaya Constitution.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, as a consequence of strong Malay resistance to the Malayan Union, Malay dominance was seen as vital by the British in achieving the ethnic stability necessary for independence. The political dominance of the Malays was formally and constitutionally established here – a political dominance which would soon – and arguably needed to – be protected by a strong security policy.

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p. 130.

<sup>62</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>63</sup> Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy 1942-1948*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1991, p. 282.

<sup>64</sup> Tarling, *Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>65</sup> The FMA provided that the majority of Malaysians be Malay. Of the 59 percent of the population who applied for citizenship under this agreement, 78 percent of those eligible were Malay, 12 percent were ethnic Chinese: Weiss, ‘Contesting Race and Nation’, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>66</sup> Tarling, *Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy 1942-1948*, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>68</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, ‘Ethnicity and Contesting Nationalisms in Malaysia’ in *The Challenge of Ethnicity: Building a Nation in Malaysia*, ed. C. B. Kheng, Marshall Cavendish, Singapore, 2004, p. 47.

### *The Emergency*

Mere months after the establishment of the FMA, the ethnic model it had entrenched appeared to be under threat from the Chinese-dominated CPM. While many guerrillas disarmed following the war, a secret group of about 4000 hid a cache of weapons.<sup>69</sup> Politically, the CPM enjoyed an initial period of strength. Between 1946 and 1948, the CPM came to dominate three-quarters of the labour force through the machinery of the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions. A number of successful strikes took place – 300 in 1947 alone.<sup>70</sup> The political phase of CPM's operation was eventually derailed by a number of factors. Internal dissent was rife within the party, with fierce discussions taking place on the issue of whether to continue with a moderate political policy or whether to instead attempt to win power by force of arms. The elevation of Chin Peng to the position of secretary-general effectively decided the issue with the new leader advocating armed struggle.<sup>71</sup>

The Malayan Emergency was triggered by the murder of three British planters in the state of Perak on 16 June 1948.<sup>72</sup> Following several more murders, the High Commissioner Edward Gent declared a State of Emergency in the Federation on 19 June.<sup>73</sup> From the outset, it was clear that the Emergency could take on an ethnic character.<sup>74</sup> By some estimates, the CPM was about 90 percent Chinese.<sup>75</sup> Stanley Bedlington notes that many CPM recruits were highly educated Chinese who found themselves unable to climb the social and occupational ladder due to their lack of knowledge of the English language. The insular nature of Chinese schools also segregated the community from the non-Chinese, and stifled the development of a

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<sup>69</sup> Kingsbury, *South East Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 272.

<sup>70</sup> Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>71</sup> The announcement in Warsaw of Cominform's plans for national liberation revolutions in Asia further eroded the earlier moderate leanings of the CPM. Cominform was a Soviet-dominated Communist organisation designed to coordinate Communist activities world-wide. It was established in the aftermath of World War II: *ibid.*, pp. 76-8.

<sup>72</sup> Buckley, *The United States in the Asia-Pacific since 1945*, *op.cit.*, p. 45, and; Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>73</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>74</sup> David Camroux, 'Looking East!... and Inwards: Internal Factors in Malaysian Foreign Relations During the Mahathir Era, 1981-1994,' *Australia-Asia Paper No. 72*, Griffith University, Nathan, 1994, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

Malayan identity.<sup>76</sup> Further reinforcing the ethnic character of the CPM, the Chinese Communist Party had enjoyed a close relationship with the CPM since its formation, ensuring that the organisation remained predominantly Chinese in nature rather than multiracial. The local Chinese lacked a clear local identity and often looked to China for direction.<sup>77</sup> The ethnic nature of the struggle should, however, not be overemphasised. Indeed, the targets of the CPM were not only the security forces but also pro-government Chinese supporters and politicians. The CPM did not represent a genuine widespread Chinese uprising.<sup>78</sup>

The Emergency was essentially fought between the CPM and Commonwealth forces. By keeping the army, which was 95 percent Malay, as a supporting force for the police, the ethnic nature of the insurgency was effectively softened.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the British adopted a total approach to solving the insurgency, a cohesive overall strategy which integrated political and military strategies. The British saw that the insurgency was a threat on both the military and political level. The British believed that at the heart of the insurgency were a number of political grievances that required a political solution lest they continue to manifest themselves through violence. Imperative in achieving this political solution was the establishment of government legitimacy and, in particular, the winning of the loyalty of the population.<sup>80</sup> The somewhat paradoxical mix of military and political components in the British strategy was the genesis of the Malaysian Security Model. The Emergency, and particularly the eventual success in defeating the CPM, effectively established in the minds of Malaya's leaders that threats were best dealt with through a combination of coercion and ideology.

The British strategy did not begin with the total approach identified above – this approach developed as a consequence of trial and error. Between 1948 and 1950, the British pursued a purely militaristic approach. The harshness of this strategy led to a decline in Chinese support for the British.<sup>81</sup> In the period 1950 to 1951, the British recognised the need for a political solution and a necessary change in military tactics.

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<sup>76</sup> Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>77</sup> Cheah, *Red Star Over Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>78</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East... and Inwards', *op.cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>80</sup> Brian Drohan, 'An Integrated Approach: British Political-Military Strategy in the Malayan Emergency,' *Armor*, Vol. 115, issue 1, 2006, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.



From 1952 to the end of the Emergency in 1960, the British integrated the political and military approaches. The first major attempt at a political, rather than coercive, solution was Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs's plan to resettle half a million ethnic Chinese into so-called 'New Villages.'<sup>82</sup> Known as the Briggs Plan, it was hoped that this would isolate the CPM from its supplies, as well as intelligence and recruitment sources. The plan placed a priority on winning the support of the population rather than on using force to defeat the CPM.<sup>83</sup> The New Villages were to be administered by civil administrations and the police in the hope that this would build up confidence in the federal government and thus minimise political grievances among the Chinese.<sup>84</sup> A particular target of the Briggs Plan was the substantial Chinese squatter population. These squatters were an important source of recruits and supplies and winning their support was thus seen as vital to stifling the CPM. Nearly half a million squatters were resettled in the New Villages.<sup>85</sup>

Following the Briggs Plan, the concept of 'white areas' was established by the British. Areas were declared white when stable and secure. Curfews, travel and food restrictions in these areas would subsequently be lifted. The ultimate end of this policy was to encourage confidence in and support for the government and its counter-insurgency strategy.<sup>86</sup> In general, government officials, police, and soldiers were encouraged to be propaganda-minded, the idea being that those individuals and groups implementing government policy did not inadvertently negate the government's ideological stance.<sup>87</sup> Britain's ideological campaign to win the 'hearts and minds' of its enemies was helped by the actions of the CPM, given that a number of its decisions dramatically backfired. Most notable was the murder of High Commissioner Henry Gurney by the Communists on 6 October 1951. Ongkili argues that British resolve was strengthened following the murder of Gurney and that the CPM had painted itself as diabolical, savage, and a threat

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<sup>82</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> An alternative view is that the villagers were pacified, as opposed to having their hearts and minds won by the British: Francis K. W. Loh, 'National Security, the Police and the Rule by Law: Militarisation by other Means' in *Militarising State, Society and Culture in Asia: Critical Perspectives*, Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives, Hong Kong, 2005, p. 187.

<sup>84</sup> Drohan, 'An Integrated Approach', *op.cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>85</sup> Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 154-5.

<sup>86</sup> Drohan, 'An Integrated Approach', *op.cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>87</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna, 'The Southeast Asian Approach' to Counter-Terrorism: Learning from Indonesia and Malaysia', *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 25, issue 1, 2005, p. 40.

to the future stability of Malaya. The CPM was thus partly responsible for its own 'terrorist' image.<sup>88</sup>

A further ideological tool used by the British was Islam. The British recognised the rhetorical ammunition that Islam provided against both the ethnic and ideological threat of the CPM, especially given most Malays saw the Emergency as an attempt by a predominantly Chinese association to gain control of the state.<sup>89</sup> Islam became a central component of British propaganda. Britain portrayed itself as a defender of Islam and declared that the aim of the Communists was to destroy Islam and exterminate the Malays. So appealing was Britain's use of Islam to the Malay community that the CPM acknowledged that it was in effect fighting the Islamic religion. This, in turn, angered the Malays.<sup>90</sup> The use of Islam, combined with the other aforementioned methods of increasing government support, represented the political component of the British strategy. I contend that this was a domestic application of Nye's 'soft power' concept in that the aim of these policies was to co-opt, rather than coerce, the target populations, though some measure of coercion was certainly present. This political approach set the tone for the security apparatus that would ultimately develop, particularly the ideological component of the apparatus. It established that ethnic appeals were a core element in winning popular support and that the continuation and legitimisation of the *status quo* was the ultimate goal of the ideological apparatus.

The coercive apparatus of the Malaysian security approach likewise had a clear predecessor in British Emergency policy. The Emergency was effectively a police, rather than a military operation. This can be attributed to the fact that the police had a freer hand, not being bound under the rules of war.<sup>91</sup> A series of Emergency regulations empowered the police. The Essential Regulations Proclamations were enacted in July 1948 and vested the police with powers such as search, curfew, control of movement, and the strict regulation of firearms, ammunition and explosives, the unauthorised

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<sup>88</sup> Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia 1946-1974*, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>89</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 56.

<sup>90</sup> T. N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 167.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152.

possession of which was punishable by death.<sup>92</sup> The power to arrest and detain without trial was also granted, with police arresting 1,779 persons by the end of 1948, the first year of the Emergency, and deporting 637 others. By Independence in 1957, 33,992 had been detained for varying periods and 14,907 deported. There was very little oversight of this power, detentions only subjected to review every six months.<sup>93</sup> These Emergency Regulations were the predecessors to the Internal Security Act, the central piece of legislation in the coercive apparatus. The ISA entrenched many of these powers, namely the powers of preventive detention.

The coercive resources of the government in general were also dramatically expanded in the Emergency period. In less than three years from the start of the Emergency, the police force had more than doubled in size.<sup>94</sup> The government's capacity to control the population was increasingly centralised. By April 1950, all decisions regarding the Emergency were concentrated in the new position of Director of Operations, held by Briggs. Briggs established a Federal War Council which coordinated the civil administration, police and military. Briggs and his Council were effectively the government of the Federation. Briggs himself once stated that in his position his power was such that he was 'at liberty to direct anybody to do anything.'<sup>95</sup> In effect, I contend a precedent had been established whereby the government and its institutions were highly centralised, with the coercive apparatus under the direct and unaccountable control of the state.

### *Independence in a State of Emergency*

Within the first few years of the Emergency, the Communists had lost approximately half their forces.<sup>96</sup> By the mid-1950s, the insurgency was effectively at an end.<sup>97</sup> Even in the midst of the campaign against the CPM, though, the idea of independence

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<sup>92</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 169, and; Anne Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, Macmillan Press and St Martin's Press, London and New York, 1996, p. 20.

<sup>93</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>94</sup> Karl von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus: Communalism and Political Stability in Malaysia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975, p. 84.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>97</sup> Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

remained an attractive prospect and goal for Malaya's various communities. Nonetheless, it was clear that the British still needed to be satisfied that the country they were leaving behind was secure and stable.

Representing the interests of Malaya's Indian community, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was formed in August 1946.<sup>98</sup> With the CPM outlawed, a political vacuum had been created in the leadership of the Chinese community.<sup>99</sup> Originally conceived by High Commissioner Gurney, the Malayan Chinese Association was formed in February 1949 to fill this void.<sup>100</sup> Though it was essentially a businessman's pressure group, it provided an avenue for the Chinese to become involved in the political process.<sup>101</sup> It was also hoped that the MCA would provide an alternative to the CPM.<sup>102</sup>

The 1952 Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council Election was the first real test for Malaya's new political organisations. The necessity of interethnic cooperation – particular between the Chinese and Malay communities – became apparent during the election campaign. Cooperation between the Malays and Chinese was regarded as necessary due to the size of each group – the Malays accounting for approximately 50 percent of the population, the Chinese 37 percent. The Malays knew a move against the MCA would be a move against 37 percent of the population and not something that would promote the interethnic harmony desired by the British.<sup>103</sup> Consequently, in the lead-up to the election, UMNO made a deal with the MCA, whereby the MCA would finance the campaign if a pact between UMNO and the MCA was created. The arrangement was that UMNO and the MCA would each field six joint UMNO-MCA candidates. The result was that the UMNO-MCA won nine out of the 12 seats.<sup>104</sup> Seeking to institutionalise this success, the UMNO and MCA formally set up a National Alliance Organisation (the Alliance) on 23 August 1953. The Alliance was joined by the MIC on 17 October 1954.<sup>105</sup> The 1952 election had effectively established the political

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<sup>98</sup> It should be noted that the MIC was initially attached to the politics of India rather than Malaya: Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>99</sup> Kua Kia Soong, *May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969*, Suaram Komunikasi, Petaling Jaya, 2007, p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>102</sup> Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>104</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

configuration of the would-be independent Malaya.<sup>106</sup> The 'Alliance Formula' would soon be applied throughout the country and, to varying degrees, in all future elections.<sup>107</sup> Importantly, the interethnic nature of the Alliance encouraged the British to acknowledge that Malaya was becoming politically mature enough for independence.<sup>108</sup>

The nature of the interethnic cooperation promoted by the Alliance is best illustrated in the so-called Bargain. The Bargain was an unwritten deal by the Alliance elites that effectively created the 'political rules of the game', namely that the Malays would remain politically dominant in return for unhindered Chinese (and, to a much lesser extent, Indian) economic activity.<sup>109</sup> To appease the British, the Bargain also established that UMNO would accede to MCA and MIC demands for the liberalisation of citizenship rules as long as the 'special position' of the Malays was acknowledged and supported.<sup>110</sup> In a sense, the Bargain meant that there were two levels of citizenship, one for the Malays and one for the non-Malays; the former having more rights and privileges than the latter.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, although the Alliance system represented a move forward in interethnic cooperation, the system of Malay dominance remained firmly intact, and the racial imbalance which would dominate Malaysia's national discourse was cemented into place.

While the development of the Alliance made independence an increasingly likely prospect, the ongoing Emergency had made British rule in Malaya virtually untenable. The CPM portrayed itself as a nationalist movement with independence as the ultimate goal. To effectively eliminate the CPM's *raison d'être*, the British had to embark on a policy of rapid decolonisation.<sup>112</sup> The British came to believe that granting independence would uncover the real objectives of the CPM – that is, whether it was a legitimate nationalist movement or simply a group seeking to institute a Communist

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<sup>106</sup> Kua, *May 13, op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Mark T. Berger, 'Decolonising Southeast Asia: Nationalism, Revolution and the Cold War' in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, ed. M Beeson, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional, op.cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> Muzaffar, *Challenges and Choices in Malaysian politics and society, op.cit.*, pp. 242-3.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>112</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia, op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.

system of government in the country.<sup>113</sup> The Alliance concurred, and by 1955 was pushing for independence on the basis that this would undercut the CPM.<sup>114</sup>

Following the Alliance's success in the first general federal elections in 1955, in which it won 51 of 52 seats, and the election of Tunku Abdul Rahman as chief minister, there was a renewed push to end the Emergency and leave Britain with no option but to grant independence.<sup>115</sup> The Tunku declared an amnesty for CPM guerrillas and in December 1955 held negotiations with CPM leader Chin Peng and chief minister of Singapore David Marshall. Held at Baling in the state of Kedah, the negotiations ultimately failed as a consequence of Malayan refusal to legalise the CPM.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, Chin Peng promised that the CPM would lay down its arms after independence was achieved and the powers of internal security and defence were transferred to the Alliance.<sup>117</sup> This effectively meant that, to end the Emergency, the British needed to quickly grant independence and transfer the complete powers of government to the Alliance.<sup>118</sup>

Independence was formally declared on 31 August 1957. The newly independent Malaya nonetheless continued to promote the political *status quo* that had developed under British rule. Malays retained their special privileges, including quotas in the civil service, judicial service, police and armed forces, education, and awarding of licenses and land.<sup>119</sup> UMNO wielded disproportionate power in the federal cabinet, holding the most important posts, including Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Education, Foreign Affairs, and Economic Development.<sup>120</sup> To appease the MCA, a small number of MCA cabinet members held key posts, such as Finance, Commerce and Industry.<sup>121</sup> These posts clearly reaffirmed the tenets of the Bargain, with the Chinese effectively limited to an economic role.

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<sup>113</sup> Ongkili, *Nation-building in Malaysia 1946-1974*, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>115</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 213, and; Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>116</sup> Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>117</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>119</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>120</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

Although Malay dominance was maintained, the immediate aftermath of independence was a period of relative pluralism. The Tunku recognised a purely Malay nation-state could only be achieved at the expense of the non-Malays – a prospect which did not bode well for interethnic harmony. Instead, the Tunku opted to compromise and accommodate the non-Malays as much as possible.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, historian Cheah Boon Kheng argues that under the Tunku the notion of ‘Malay dominance’ was an illusion. The government could instead be characterised as a mixed or plural government.<sup>123</sup> Under the Tunku’s Alliance, the leaders of the Chinese, Indian and Malay communities guaranteed that their communities would accept the outcomes of negotiation and pledged to trust one another.<sup>124</sup> This interethnic harmony was generally maintained until the 1969 riots.

That Independence was declared during a State of Emergency has significantly impacted on the shape and power of the Malayan state. The freedoms enshrined in the 1957 Constitution were effectively overridden by the Emergency clauses already in effect, namely Article 149 which grants Parliament the power to deal with subversion and Article 150 which outlines the powers of the executive during periods of Emergency.<sup>125</sup> Though Emergency regulations were lifted following the formal end of the Emergency on 31 July 1960, the draconian laws utilised against Communist subversives remained in effect.<sup>126</sup> The Alliance amended Articles 149, 150 and 151 of the Constitution to allow provisions for preventive detention. The Alliance claimed this was necessary to prevent a revival of Communism, though it provided no evidence that this was a likely prospect.<sup>127</sup> The Constitution’s Emergency provisions were also amended. Previously, proclamations of Emergency were constitutionally valid for a period of two months. The 1960 amendment decreed that an Emergency could only cease when revoked or annulled, effectively allowing for an indefinite State of

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<sup>122</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, ‘Ethnicity in the Making of Malaysia’ in *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>123</sup> Cheah, ‘Ethnicity and Contesting Nationalisms in Malaysia’, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>124</sup> Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia: The Winds of Change*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995, p. 99.

<sup>125</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 24, and; *Constitution of Malaysia 1957* (Malaysia), Articles 149 and 150.

<sup>126</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>127</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

Emergency.<sup>128</sup> Given the instability of the period in which the government was founded, it is perhaps not surprising that national security has been the primary concern of the state since Independence.

Significantly, a number of Acts which have since formed the basis of Malaysia's coercive apparatus initially evolved out of the Emergency and its strict regulations. One such example is the Sedition Act. Passed in 1948 at the start of the campaign, the Act prohibits virtually all activities causing disaffection toward the government and its institutions.<sup>129</sup> The powers of the Act were later expanded in 1970, following the ethnic riots, to address acts of communal ill will, particularly those which questioned the 'special position' of the Malays.<sup>130</sup> Actions which threatened interethnic stability were to be regarded as seditious, again illustrating the strong link between notions of security, ethnicity, and nation in Malaysia. The Act criminalises any speech judged to have a 'seditious tendency', though the speaker's intent and the veracity of their statement are regarded as irrelevant.<sup>131</sup> Violations are punishable by up to three years imprisonment, a 5000 ringgit fine or both.<sup>132</sup> The Act utilises broad, vague language and therefore has the potential to be used against political opponents expressing criticism of the *status quo*.<sup>133</sup> For example, several opposition figures were arrested under the Act in January 2000 for criticising the government. Human Rights Watch notes that while several reports were filed to police alleging acts of sedition by government officials during the same period, it was only members of the opposition who were detained.<sup>134</sup> The Sedition Act illustrates the political interests and purposes driving the operational component of Malaysia's Security Model and clearly demonstrates the overlap and the lack of separation between the state, the regime, and the security apparatus.

The Internal Security Act is the most prominent piece of coercive legislation in Malaysia. Likewise derived from Emergency regulations and inherited by the Malaysian

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<sup>128</sup> H. P. Lee, 'Constitutional Values in Turbulent Asia', *Monash University Law Review*, Vol. 23, issue 2, 1997, p. 381.

<sup>129</sup> Funston, 'Malaysia: Developmental State Challenged', *op.cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Repressive Laws', *HumanRightsWatch*, <<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/malaysia/2000/laws-sedition.htm>>, 2000, (accessed 10 December 2007).

<sup>132</sup> As of 16/4/2009, 5000 Malaysian ringgit = \$AUD1,932.19

<sup>133</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Repressive Laws', *op.cit.*

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*



government from the British following Independence in 1957, the Act itself was promulgated in 1960. It has remained virtually unchanged ever since.<sup>135</sup> The most notable provisions of the ISA are sections 73, 7 and 8. Under section 73, any police officer may arrest and detain without warrant any person who has ‘acted or is about to act or is likely to act in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia or any part thereof.’<sup>136</sup> Detentions lasting longer than thirty days must be approved by the Home Minister.<sup>137</sup> Detentions are therefore a matter of Executive discretion. After sixty days of detention, an individual can then be detained under sections 7 and 8, which provide for a detention period of two years. This detention order can be renewed every two years afterwards by the Home Minister, thus providing for indefinite imprisonment.<sup>138</sup> The Minister’s exercise of this power is exempt from judicial review following a 1988 amendment.<sup>139</sup> As with the Sedition Act, the language used to define criminal activity under the ISA is vague, with no attempt to specifically define what constitutes a threat under the Act.<sup>140</sup> The government is consequently left with wide discretion in its use of the ISA.

Given the preventive nature of the detention permitted, those arrested under the ISA are typically detained for what they say, rather than what they do.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, *Malaysiakini* editor Steven Gan has argued that in Malaysia, ‘You have freedom of speech but not freedom after speech.’<sup>142</sup> Detainees under the ISA are subjected to a wide range of infringements of their civil liberties and rights, particularly in regards to procedural rights, such as the right to a fair trial, the right to meet with an attorney and the right to be informed of the reason for arrest.<sup>143</sup> Alternatively, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies has defended the use of the ISA, claiming it is used responsibly and in a ‘very limited way’:

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<sup>135</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Freedom in Fetters: An analysis of the state of democracy in Malaysia*, Aliran Kesedaran Negara, Penang, 1986, p. 1

<sup>136</sup> *Internal Security Act 1960* (Malaysia), section 73.

<sup>137</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘In the Name of Security: Counterterrorism and Human Rights Abuses Under Malaysia’s Internal Security Act’, *HumanRightsWatch*, Vol. 16, issue 7, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, and *Internal Security Act 1960* (Malaysia), *op.cit.*, section 8.

<sup>139</sup> *Internal Security Act 1960* (Malaysia), *op.cit.*, section 8B(1).

<sup>140</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘In the Name of Security’, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Norulhuda Othman, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 25 July 2007.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Steven Gan, Editor-in-Chief, *Malaysiakini*, Kuala Lumpur, 20 July 2007.

<sup>143</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘In the Name of Security’, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

You cannot run a society without legitimate, responsibly administered constraints on certain rights... Especially an unstable, fragile society. Once there is no legal basis [for such restrictions] it is very bad. But otherwise it is absolutely necessary.<sup>144</sup>

The ISA has been a prominent part of the coercive apparatus since the Emergency and it is now an embedded part of the nation, given that it is purportedly used in its defence. Human Rights Watch, an international human rights watchdog, contends that preventive detention laws can be justifiable but only under limited circumstances. The situation must be of 'exceptional character where the life of a nation is threatened.'<sup>145</sup> The climate in Malaysia today, and in most periods since the Emergency, clearly does not warrant government powers with such a wide scope. An 'exceptional' threat has not existed in the country since the Emergency. The 1969 race riots are the most notable exception.

The ISA's position as a legitimate use of government power is also eroded by the very nature of the Act. The secrecy shrouding the Act, particularly how and why it is used, leaves it open for criticism that the ISA is being abused by the regime. The government defends its use of the ISA on the grounds of national security, and, on that basis, argues it does not need to justify its actions beyond that.<sup>146</sup> However, the very presence of the ISA brings into question the legitimacy of the state that it purports to protect. Malaysian academic Norulhuda Othman argues there is a contradiction in this regard between protecting Malaysia's democracy and protecting its state. Norulhuda contends that the ISA should not exist if the former is to be protected but is 'much needed' for the security of the latter.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> ISIS is a policy think tank which focuses on those issues regarded as relevant to Malaysia's 'national interest.' Despite being regarded as independent, it nonetheless has ties to the government: Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007, and; *ISIS Malaysia*, <<http://www.isis.org.my/>> , 2009, (accessed 16/4/2009).

<sup>145</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Convicted Before Trial: Indefinite Detention Under Malaysia's Emergency Ordinance', *HumanRightsWatch*, Vol. 18, issue 9, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with analyst at a think tank, 27 July 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Norulhuda Othman, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya. Kuala Lumpur, 25 July 2007.

Evolving out of the Printing Presses Act 1948, an Emergency regulation, the final major element of the coercive apparatus is the Printing Presses and Publications Act and other laws providing restrictions on the media. As of 2003, the number of laws directly and indirectly hampering press freedom was 35.<sup>148</sup> The Printing Presses and Publications Act requires that all newspapers and regular publications possess a publishing licence. This licence is issued annually by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Minister may revoke this licence for a publication on the basis that said publication has been 'prejudicial to the nation's security.' Since 1984, the Act also empowers the Minister to grant a licence for a more limited duration.<sup>149</sup> The licence requirement performs a coercive function – the ever-present threat of closure gives journalists a 'cautious, timid, and frequently servile role in reporting and interpreting the news.'<sup>150</sup> This helps to ensure the regime's continued control over information.

Media restrictions are justified by the government and its supporters on the basis of security. Jawhar contends the experiences of the Emergency and the 1969 riots, combined with the fact that different publications are owned by different ethnic groups, necessitates some control and moderation by the government to ensure interethnic stability.<sup>151</sup> Executive Editor of Malaysian newspaper *New Straits Times*, K. P. Waran, though claiming his paper has 'little connection with the country's leadership apart from covering them for the newspaper', likewise maintains that the newspaper's journalists are 'mindful of sensitive issues which can create problems in a racially balanced nation like ours but we look at all stories objectively.'<sup>152</sup> Waran's view here in many respects reflects that of the mainstream print media in Malaysia, in that the paper's close political and financial links to the government effectively limits its ability to report on issues and events from an independent perspective. The interests of the regime are thus respected if not outright propagated.

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<sup>148</sup> Parti Keadilan Rakyat, *Sham Democracy: A Report on Malaysian Elections*, p. 17, <<http://www.keadilanrakyat.org/library/documents/sham-democracy.pdf>>, 2006, (accessed 1 January 2008).

<sup>149</sup> Mustafa K. Anuar, 'Defining Democratic Discourses: The Mainstream Press' in *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, op.cit., pp. 149-50.

<sup>150</sup> Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1991, p. 138.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>152</sup> Correspondence with K. P. Waran, Executive Editor, *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, 26 July 2007.

While the mainstream newspapers and other publications are subject to tight control under the Act, it should be noted that the Internet is at present very lightly regulated. The government hopes to encourage a competitive advantage for Malaysia – that is, economic security – particularly over the more restricted Internet regulations in Singapore as well as encourage investment in Mahathir's Multimedia Super Corridor project launched in 1996.<sup>153</sup> Nonetheless, in recent years, I argue the Internet, particularly websites and online newspapers featuring alternative or opposition viewpoints, has been increasingly threatened by the government (see chapter five). The last bastion of media freedom in Malaysia is under threat. Government action in this context is, again, justified on the basis of national security. This is despite the fact that those being threatened by the government are political – not physical – threats to the state and, as such, pose more of a threat to regime, rather than national, security.

Overall, the coercive apparatus, as established in the Emergency and maintained ever since, is fundamentally concerned with affirming the *status quo*, namely the state and the regime to which it is intrinsically connected. The various components outlined here have remained virtually unchanged since the Emergency years. The coercive apparatus also provides that the nation envisioned by the regime with protection by removing from public life those who challenge it, physically and politically. The notion of 'security' promoted by this apparatus is deliberately vague, thereby enabling the regime to act quickly against any threats to its legitimacy, perceived or actual.

I contend that the ultimate legacy of the Emergency period was not that independence was achieved, but that the Malayan nation itself was founded on a national security ideology which emphasised the preciousness of the ethnic balance and the insecurity of the *status quo*. The use of coercive instruments, combined with ideological appeals, was a vital component and has been entrenched ever since.<sup>154</sup> The Malaysian security approach, with its coercive and ideological components, had been established prior to Independence and became intrinsically linked to the state that evolved out of the Emergency. The use of a total approach to security is often confined in the literature to

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<sup>153</sup> Jason P. Abbott, 'The Internet, *reformasi* and democratisation in Malaysia', in *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, Equity and Reform*, ed. E. T. Gomez, RoutledgeCurzon, London and New York, 2004, p. 82.

<sup>154</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

the Emergency period alone. What is under-examined is that this dual coercive/ideological approach has been maintained ever since. The state has continued to use the ideological apparatus to justify and buttress its continued use of the coercive apparatus. The threat of Communism has been particularly emphasised. Academic Chandra Muzaffar notes:

There is no better bogey than the Communist one for in the eyes of the ruling elite the entire question of security and stability, of peace and harmony, is inextricably intertwined with the perennial Communist threat. In a sense, for a significant segment of Malaysian society too, national security is inseparable from the challenge posed by the Communist movement. This is why in every mass ISA exercise since *Merdeka* [Independence], the Communist threat has been used as a justification for detaining all sorts of people without trial.<sup>155</sup>

Though a common justification, it needs to be noted that Communism can ultimately be linked to the primary justification for Malaya's total approach: ethnic security. As I have argued, ethnic security was certainly a concern and underlying theme of the colonial and post-colonial Malaya. It was not until the 1969 riots, however, that the issue became inseparable from the issue of security.

### **The Peoples' Own Emergency: The 1969 Riots**

Although UMNO was always regarded as the dominant partner in the Alliance, this became increasingly obvious after the riots. The political and economic dominance of the Malays became a central element of state policy and was regarded as key to maintaining the ever-important ethnic balance. I argue the riots also further established the security apparatus and further reaffirmed the importance of ethnicity. From this time on, the security apparatus would become inseparable from the state. The riots reaffirmed the coercive arm of the state, with the ISA being amended and the Emergency Ordinance enacted. The ideological apparatus was likewise strengthened with the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

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<sup>155</sup> Muzaffar, *Challenges and Choices in Malaysian politics and society*, op.cit., pp. 176-7.

*Security in the 1960s*

Security issues remained prominent prior to the riots. Although the Tunku had emphasised the importance of maintaining an ethnic balance in the country, the fear that the number of non-Malays would eventually outnumber the number of Malays led him to pursue a merger with Sarawak, British North Borneo (now Sabah) and Singapore. By merging Malaya with these territories, the number of 'Malays' in the federation would increase as the indigenous populations of Sabah and Sarawak were included as members of the Malay race.<sup>156</sup> Although the indigenous inhabitants of the Borneo states were not ethnically Malays, academics R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy note 'they certainly weren't Chinese.' The inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak also neutralised the inclusion of the predominantly Chinese Singapore.<sup>157</sup> An ethnic imbalance biased in favour of the Malays was thus maintained even in the relatively pluralistic period of the Tunku.

Singapore, Sarawak, and British North Borneo joined with the Federation of Malaya to form Malaysia in September 1963. When this was announced, neighbouring Indonesia declared its opposition, claiming the new state was a neo-colonial plot designed to weaken nationalism in the region and separate Indonesia geographically from its ally, China.<sup>158</sup> In response, Indonesian President Sukarno pursued a policy of *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation).<sup>159</sup> Malaysian territory was infiltrated by armed Indonesians, and guerrilla activities and bomb attacks were carried out.<sup>160</sup> Indonesia hoped the Malaysian population would rise up in opposition to the British 'plot.' However, the reverse occurred, with the population instead rallying around the Tunku. *Konfrontasi* came to an end on 11 August 1966.<sup>161</sup>

According to J. D. Legge in his biography of Sukarno, the new Malaysia was seen by Indonesia as 'a cover for continued British economic, political and military

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<sup>156</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>157</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>158</sup> Bedlington, *Malaysia and Singapore*, *op.cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>161</sup> Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, The Macmillan Company of Australia, Artarmon, 1979, p. 435.

influence.’<sup>162</sup> Sukarno’s opposition to the merger was often attributed to his plans for a pan-Malaysia-Indonesia or ‘Greater Indonesia’, a concept he first suggested in 1945.<sup>163</sup> Legge argues to the contrary, noting that none of the Sukarno’s demands referred to the idea of a ‘Greater Indonesia.’ Instead, Legge contends that Sukarno’s opposition can be traced back to domestic concerns, namely the demands of various pressure groups within Indonesia, particularly the army. The Indonesian army viewed the tension with Malaysia as an opportunity to garner an increase in the military budget and reinforce the army’s prestige.<sup>164</sup>

The 1964 general elections were held in the midst of *Konfrontasi*, with the crisis being the main theme of the Alliance’s election campaign. The Alliance appealed to the public for loyalty in a time of crisis. The non-Malays supported the Alliance and were staunchly opposed to Indonesian interference. Race and economic inequality was not a central issue in the election. The Alliance was successful in capitalising on *Konfrontasi*, winning 84 out of 104 Parliamentary seats and 58.3 percent of the popular vote.<sup>165</sup>

*Konfrontasi* was a rare case in Malaysia’s history: a genuine external threat. While the threat had domestic implications, the Malaysian security apparatus was not applied in response to the crisis, though the use of *Konfrontasi* to promote Malaysian solidarity during the election campaign could be regarded to some extent as an ideological response. The internal dimension thus remained the primary emphasis in Malaysia’s Security Model. Indeed, the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1967, of which Malaysia was a founding member, acknowledges this. ASEAN’s main goal was to promote peace and security in the region by legitimising the regimes of its member-states and protecting them from internal threats. In the view of ASEAN, the divide between internal and external security threats is blurred as it is the security of the region’s regimes that is important – and this security is most often threatened by internal challenges.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> J. D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, Archipelago Press, Singapore, 2003, p. 407.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 407-8 and 416-7.

<sup>165</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>166</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, ‘The Pursuit of Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond Realism’ in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

Toward the end of *Konfrontasi*, a new challenge to Malaysia's statehood emerged in the form of Singapore, one of the new states in the Federation. Singapore and Malaysia had initially agreed to a political merger in 1963 for a number of reasons. The merger was seen by Singapore's People's Action Party as essential for survival, for creating unity amongst Singapore's diverse peoples.<sup>167</sup> The growing fear of Communist subversion combined with the tough, anti-Communist stance of the Malaysian government also helped convince PAP that the Federation would provide Singapore with the necessary political stability.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the Federation provided Singapore with an 'economic base', namely the rubber and tin industries.<sup>169</sup> For Malaysia, a merger with Singapore was in part derived from a fear that the island state would become another Cuba.<sup>170</sup> Singapore entered the Federation as a constituent state, given special powers over education and employment but less-than-proportionate representation in the Federal Parliament.<sup>171</sup>

Tension between the federal government and Singapore grew steadily over the next two years. PAP leader Lee Kuan Yew insisted on retaining his title of Prime Minister and, while enjoying the privileges of Federation, demanded various elements of autonomy. The PAP launched itself as a party on the Malaysian mainland in a bid to contest the national elections. The PAP called for a 'Malaysian Malaysia' and not a 'Malay Malaysia.' To help achieve this, Lee Kuan Yew created the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC), which declared:

A Malaysian Malaysia means that the nation and the state is not identified with the supremacy, well-being and the interests of any one particular community or race... The people of Malaysia did not vote for a Malaysia assuring hegemony to one community.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Raj Vasil, *Asianising Singapore: The PAP's Management of Ethnicity*, Heinemann Asia, Singapore, 1995, p. 10.

<sup>168</sup> Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945-65*, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1976, p. 106.

<sup>169</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, *The Battle for Merger*, Government Printing Office, Singapore, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>170</sup> Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with vulnerability*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, p. 28.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>172</sup> Cited in Geoff Wade, 'Southeast Asian Apartheid: The Origins and Evolution of Ethnocracy in Malaysia', Paper presented at Australian National University, Canberra, 24 June 2008, pp. 18-9.



In championing this concept, the PAP was essentially calling for increased rights and political representation for the ethnic Chinese and thus was challenging the political dominance of the Malays established during the independence years by the Bargain.<sup>173</sup> The presence of Singapore within the Federation had started to threaten the political *status quo*, the very foundation of the political system. According to historian Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, the PAP's aggressiveness in pursuing its goals increased the assertiveness of the non-Malays. In turn, this generated a defensive response from the Malays, many of whom saw the PAP as promoting Chinese extremism. Sopiee claims that the growing racial tension was one of the most important reasons for Singapore's 'expulsion' from the Federation, the Tunku even stating 'unless I took action immediately, there would be pure murder.'<sup>174</sup>

Singapore left the Malaysian Federation in August 1965. In some respects, the merger had achieved its goals – the Communist challenge had died out and the PAP had achieved a comfortable parliamentary majority and therefore the political stability it had desired.<sup>175</sup> Nonetheless, according to academic Michael Leifer, the PAP has consistently portrayed the separation as an eviction. Much of the tension and suspicion between the Malaysian and Singaporean governments has not been resolved, with Singapore consequently developing a foreign policy 'rooted in a culture of siege and insecurity.'<sup>176</sup> On Malaysia's part, the tensions with Singapore are less emphasised, the focus instead remaining on domestic security issues. Indeed, the entire episode contributed to the view that ethnic security was fundamentally inseparable from national security. This became further entrenched by the end of the decade as a consequence of the racial riots.

### *The 1969 Riots*

The race riots of 1969 represented Malaysia's greatest internal crisis since the Emergency, if not in the country's history. The long-term impact of the riots, politically, socially, and culturally, can be explained by the crisis being ethnic in origin. As noted, achieving ethnic harmony had been a key aim not only of British Malaya but of the

<sup>173</sup> Kingsbury, *South East Asia, op.cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>174</sup> Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation, op.cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>175</sup> Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy, op.cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

Alliance as well. The country had been sharply divided into different ethnic groups, segregated further by occupational differences, since colonial times. Ethnicity was thus the defining element of Malaysia and its political system. The ethnic nature of the riots therefore effectively represented a breakdown in this system and the nation as a whole.

Ethnic tension was on the rise in the lead up to the 1969 election. The Alliance fought the election campaign without an overarching theme, unlike in the 1959 elections where the 'newness' of independence was emphasised or the 1964 elections where patriotism in the face of *Konfrontasi* was the focus.<sup>177</sup> Instead the Alliance, as well as the opposition parties, emphasised racial issues. The Alliance slogan for the campaign was 'Vote Alliance for Racial Harmony.'<sup>178</sup> The Tunku claimed the opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP, later known as PAS) played up racial and religious sentiments, while the Democratic Action Party and Gerakan stirred up Chinese sentiments by claiming they would remove the special privileges of the Malays if elected.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, Mahathir contends racial grievances came to 'the boil' in the election campaign as a consequence of the Alliance government's decision to opt for a prolonged campaign period. In his view, the protracted nature of the campaign allowed for racial tensions to build to breaking point.<sup>180</sup>

On the eve of the election, tension was mounting in the capital. That day there had been a huge Chinese funeral procession for the burial of a young, allegedly Communist, Chinese who had been killed in a clash with police. The crowd, originally restricted to 1000, swelled to 10,000, and sang provocative songs outside sensitive areas, including UMNO headquarters.<sup>181</sup>

The election was held on 10 May 1969. The election results were a shock to the Alliance, UMNO in particular.<sup>182</sup> The Alliance won only 76 of the 113 Parliamentary seats, losing its two-thirds majority for the first time.<sup>183</sup> Although the Malay opposition

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<sup>177</sup> John Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy*, John Murray, London, 1969, p. 11.

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, *May 13 – Before and After*, Utusan Melayu Press Limited, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, pp. 17-8.

<sup>180</sup> Mahathir, *The Malay Dilemma*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>181</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 297.

<sup>182</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>183</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 18, and; Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

party PMIP increased its vote, what was more startling was the massive gain for the Chinese opposition parties at the expense of the MCA.<sup>184</sup> The MCA had failed to deliver to the Alliance the much needed Chinese vote. Although this represented a considerable setback for the Alliance and its interethnic electoral formula, the election results had the potential to be a boost for local democracy. Observer John Slimming noted a strong, articulate opposition had emerged through the democratic process rather than through force of arms.<sup>185</sup>

Tensions continued to build in the days following the election. On 11 May, a victory celebration by Chinese and Indian supporters of the opposition took place, with some in the crowd shouting racial taunts at the Malays.<sup>186</sup> Such taunts continued the following evening at a Gerakan demonstration.<sup>187</sup> According to Kua Kia Soong, Director of Suaram, on May 13 the feeling within UMNO was that democracy had gone too far and the interethnic balance and the Malay's political dominance had been unwarrantedly disrupted by the election process.<sup>188</sup> That same day, MCA leader Tan Siew Sin announced his party would not participate in either the Federal or State Governments. This was a strategic move, designed to encourage Chinese voters to reflect on the disadvantages of having no representation in government. However, this alarmed the Malays, who already thought the MCA had let the Alliance down and saw this new strategy as the final nail in the coffin.<sup>189</sup> The Tunku's Alliance formula was breaking down – and, most importantly, this represented a significant attack on the political hegemony of the Malays.<sup>190</sup>

There is some question as to how much political influence the Malays actually had before 1969. Funston contends that UMNO's dominance of the Alliance prior to the riots is a persistent 'myth.' The Alliance relied heavily on MCA capital – and that this economic power would likely have translated into political influence within the Alliance. Funston argues that UMNO had ceased to be a political party during the 1960s with all power within UMNO essentially concentrated in its leader, the Tunku.

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<sup>184</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>185</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>186</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, pp. 297-8.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>188</sup> Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>189</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 295.

<sup>190</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

Whatever the case, it had become clear by 1969 that the Malays perceived their position in Malaysia to be under threat.<sup>191</sup>

Rioting began in the evening of May 13. An UMNO counter-demonstration had been organised in response to the opposition rallies that had been held on May 11 and May 12.<sup>192</sup> A confidential report by the British High Commission later noted:

It is not yet possible to establish the extent to which the Malay counter demonstration on the evening of 13 May was organized by certain leading members of UMNO but we know that they were given a police licence for a victory procession that evening. There is evidence that groups of Malays came into KL [Kuala Lumpur] during the day from fairly distant areas and that some of them were armed.<sup>193</sup>

The demonstrations began on the evening of May 13 with the Malays carrying banners and shouting taunts at non-Malays. Fights soon broke out between them and the Chinese and Indians, many of whom ran back to their homes to get their own weapons.<sup>194</sup> By 6pm the violence had started – by 6.40pm the first three dead Chinese lay hacked to death beside the road.<sup>195</sup> The violence was predominantly a clash between Malays and Chinese and many of those involved were said to be disaffected youths.<sup>196</sup> The worst of the rioting ended that night, but sporadic violence continued in the days that followed.<sup>197</sup>

The riots began after office hours and consequently there was nobody in government able to take charge and bring immediate order to the situation. Despite racial/ethnic tension being a key concern of the Alliance – indeed, one of the reasons for its existence in the first place – no contingency plan was in place to deal with an outbreak of ethnic violence.<sup>198</sup> In response to the riots, the government deployed 2000 soldiers and 3600

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<sup>191</sup> Neil John Funston, 'Writings on May 13', *Akademika*, issue 6, 1975, pp. 6-7.

<sup>192</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

<sup>193</sup> British High Commission confidential report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dated 28 May 1969: Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>194</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, pp. 298-300.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>196</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>197</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 301.

<sup>198</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

police.<sup>199</sup> However, the troops were initially deployed from the Malay Regiment, which was 100 percent Malay, further exacerbating the situation.<sup>200</sup> A 24 hour curfew for the whole of Kuala Lumpur was imposed before 7.30pm on May 13. Many residents were unaware of the curfew and were shot simply for being outdoors.<sup>201</sup> Creating further confusion, there was a media blackout immediately after the breakout of the riots. The blackout was lifted on May 14, but information remained tightly restricted for months to come. The lack of information gave rise to rumours and speculation, thereby increasing ethnic tensions.<sup>202</sup>

According to official statistics, the number of deaths resulting from the riots was 196.<sup>203</sup> This is almost certainly an under-estimation. Most estimates give the total death toll as being closer to 1000, even 2000.<sup>204</sup> Although, the exact number of dead will never be known, it is clear that the proportion of non-Malays killed was relatively high – in one account, six non-Malays for every one Malay.<sup>205</sup> This can be explained, at least in part, by the bias of the security forces which, as noted, were predominantly Malay. Funston notes, ‘the security forces were trained to combat Communists of Chinese origin and were thus psychologically ill-equipped to act against Malays.’<sup>206</sup> A British High Commission telegram on 17 May claimed there was ‘no doubt’ security forces were discriminating in favour of the Malays. This discrimination took the form of not enforcing curfews in the most violent Malay areas, with many armed Malays allowed to roam freely. By contrast, curfews were strictly enforced in the Chinese areas.<sup>207</sup> There

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<sup>199</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 300.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>201</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>202</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Freedom in Fetters: An analysis of the state of democracy in Malaysia*, Aliran Kesedaran Negara, Penang, 1986, p. 44.

<sup>203</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>204</sup> For a range of different death toll statistics see: Andrew Tan, ‘Intra-ASEAN Tensions’, *Royal Institute of International Affairs Discussion Paper 84*, the Royal Institute of International Affairs: Asia Programme, London, 2000, p. 8; Garry Rodan, *Transparency and Authoritarian Rule in Southeast Asia: Singapore and Malaysia*, RoutledgeCurzon, London and New York, 2004, p. 23; Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 47-8, and; Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>205</sup> N. J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p. 210.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

were also reports that security forces had indiscriminately fired into Chinese shop-houses.<sup>208</sup>

In a television and radio broadcast on 16 May, the Tunku declared a State of Emergency, likening the circumstances to that faced by the British during the Communist insurgency.<sup>209</sup> The *Sunday Times* sympathetically declared on 18 May the State of Emergency was justified:

This was the peoples' own emergency: Only with the aid of the people could the government end it... Malaysia must not be too fearful of 'Emergency.' It is not a new factor in the life of the country.<sup>210</sup>

The racial nature of the violence was ignored, the Tunku and his government instead opted for a scapegoat which was less likely to threaten Malay hegemony – the Communists. In his broadcast, the Tunku stated:

The terrorist Communists have worked out their plan to take over power. They have managed to persuade voters by threat, by intimidation and by persuasion to overthrow the Alliance through the process of democracy, but fortunately for us, we were returned in sufficient majority to form a Government, as otherwise I dread to think what would have happened to this country. They branded the MCA as pro-Malay and not pro-Chinese of Malaysia. [sic] They got the Chinese to vote against the MCA.<sup>211</sup>

The Tunku claimed the Communists had changed tactics and were now using 'racialism' as propaganda instead of Communist ideology.<sup>212</sup> Home Minister Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman stated, 'The unseen hand of Communism has manoeuvred events, using the Opposition parties as its tools.'<sup>213</sup> It was alleged that 93 'hardcore terrorists' had been arrested. By 18 May, a further 60 were detained.<sup>214</sup> In addition, a number of rioters

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<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 43 and 45.

<sup>209</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13, op.cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>210</sup> Kua, *May 13, op.cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>211</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13, op.cit.*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>213</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia, op.cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>214</sup> Kua, *May 13, op.cit.*, p. 45.

were detained without trial, as was DAP leader Lim Kit Siang, who had criticised the Alliance during the election campaign.<sup>215</sup>

The government would modify its original accusation of Communist aggression, claiming 'evil elements', 'traitors', and paid saboteurs also played a role.<sup>216</sup> Indeed, Dr Ismail would later completely deny Communist participation, stating, 'Everybody thought that the Communists were responsible for the disturbances. Later we found that the Communists were as much surprised as we were.'<sup>217</sup> However, the government would continue to refuse to acknowledge Malay complicity in the violence and no mention was made of the fact that these were fundamentally racial clashes.<sup>218</sup> A British High Commission report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 28 May noted:

To blame the disturbances on Communist terrorists gave added justification for the assumption of authoritarian powers. But it was also an attempt to duck the fact that these were essentially racial clashes. In particular, the government drew a veil over the undeniable fact that in this case the Malays were the chief aggressors.<sup>219</sup>

By denying the true nature of the riots and the disproportionate killing of non-Malays, the government had attempted to salvage the political hegemony of the Malays. Had the Malay participation in the violence been emphasised, the notion of Malay political supremacy would be undermined and ethnic tension increased. Having denied the racial nature of the riots, the Alliance capitalised on the events and ensured that Malay dominance not only remained the central element of the political system but was strengthened.

#### *The Aftermath and the Legacy: Phase II of the Malaysian Security Model*

In every general election prior to 1969, Muzaffar argues, democracy was a convenient tool for the Alliance, confirming its popularity and establishing the legitimacy of its

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<sup>215</sup> Simon Barraclough, 'The Dynamics of Coercion in the Malaysian Political Process', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, issue 4, 1985, p. 814.

<sup>216</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 44 and 62.

<sup>217</sup> Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>218</sup> Slimming, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43 and 62.

<sup>219</sup> Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

rule.<sup>220</sup> Following the 1969 riots, democracy was no longer seen as useful, at least in the short-term. Dr Ismail declared on 16 May:

There is no doubt now that democracy is dead in this country; it died at the hands of the opposition which triggered off this violence leading to chaos. Democracy cannot work amidst chaos. It is therefore the first duty of the government of this country to restore law and order.<sup>221</sup>

Following the announcement of a State of Emergency, the Tunku also declared that a National Operations Council (NOC) had been established with Tun Abdul Razak as Director of Operations. The NOC operated from May 1969 to March 1971.<sup>222</sup> The Council was 'charged with full responsibility of administration under the proclamation of Emergency' including control of the security forces.<sup>223</sup> The aim of the NOC was 'to coordinate the work of the Civil Administration, Military and Police in an all-out effort to restore peace.'<sup>224</sup> Parliament was suspended and several opposition politicians were arrested.<sup>225</sup> The NOC effectively confined the violence to Kuala Lumpur and brought it to an end within weeks.<sup>226</sup> The NOC was run like a military administration, with the daily assessments and requests of police and military almost always accepted.<sup>227</sup> Tun Razak ruled with almost dictatorial powers in a way similar to the British during the first Emergency.<sup>228</sup>

The NOC was fully backed by the UMNO leadership. Given the 1969 election results and the threat this was perceived as posing to Malay dominance, many Malays even argued that the NOC could be the basis for a strong, authoritarian government. Muzaffar notes that authoritarianism became an integral part of the new emerging group of Malay

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<sup>220</sup> Muzaffar, *Freedom in Fetters*, *op.cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>221</sup> Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>222</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia Since 1957: Class, Ethnicity and Changing Capitalism' in *Democratization in Southeast and East Asia*, ed. A. Laothamatas, St Martins Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, New York and Singapore, 1997, p. 54.

<sup>223</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>225</sup> Khoo, 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia Since 1957', *op.cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*, *op.cit.*, p. 302.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*, p. 302.



leaders.<sup>229</sup> Illustrating this trend, Mahathir stated in 1969, ‘Why not bravely say that the people of Malaysia are too immature for a workable democracy? Why not say that we need some form of authoritarian rule?’<sup>230</sup> UMNO ultimately settled on a modified form of democracy, the constitution amended to ensure that provisions relating to the special provision of Malays would not be subject to debate. The attacks against these provisions during the 1969 election campaign had been seen as a primary cause for the Alliance’s electoral woes. By stifling debate, UMNO hoped to ensure its political position would be unchallenged.<sup>231</sup> Democratic practices were thus to be permitted so long as they did not undermine the ruling elites and their interests.<sup>232</sup>

Parliament was finally reconvened in January 1971 following the resignation of the Tunku and the resolution of an intra-Malay conflict over the national leadership – namely between supporters and opponents of the Tunku and his Alliance formula.<sup>233</sup> Just as the state was being restructured along more authoritarian lines, the Alliance system likewise became more centralised, with more power vested in UMNO and its leadership. The Alliance was scrapped and replaced with the Barisan Nasional. New Prime Minister Tun Razak first publicly used the term *Barisan Nasional* in his Independence Day radio and television broadcast in August 1972, stating, ‘there is the possibility of a national front among political parties to work together in facing national problems.’<sup>234</sup> The Barisan Nasional (BN) was registered as a political party with little fanfare on 1 June 1974. The BN was a coalition of nine political parties: UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, PAS, People’s Progressive Party, Gerakan, Sarawak United People’s Party, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, and the Sabah Alliance party.<sup>235</sup> Included amongst these nine were a number of former opposition parties, such as PAS and Gerakan, though PAS would later withdraw from the coalition.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Muzaffar, *Freedom in Fetters*, *op.cit.*, pp. 276-7.

<sup>230</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>231</sup> Muzaffar, *Freedom in Fetters*, *op.cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>232</sup> Harold Crouch, ‘Authoritarian Trends, the UMNO Split and the Limits to State Power’ in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, eds. J. S. Kahn and F. L. K. Wah, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p. 21.

<sup>233</sup> Alatas, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>234</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>236</sup> At least part of the reason for the withdrawal of PAS from the BN was that the *ulama* (learned of Islam) in the former felt that the latter was insincere in its implementation of Islam: Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, ‘Towards a History of Malaysian Ulama’, *Working Paper No. 122*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2007, p. 17.

While UMNO was the most dominant party in the Alliance, its position became even more hegemonic in the BN, at least in part to reaffirm the legitimacy of Malay rule and the introduction of new pro-Malay policies.<sup>237</sup> The Alliance had granted UMNO political dominance but allowed the MCA economic powers and a veto over policies and suggestions.<sup>238</sup> Under the BN, UMNO was to be regarded as the core party whilst all others were seen as 'peripheral partners.'<sup>239</sup> UMNO was to provide the foundation for the political system and the mass base of political support for the government.<sup>240</sup> The interests of non-Malays were not ignored but became secondary to that of the Malays.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, by continuing to work with the non-Malays, tensions between the ethnic groups were minimised and UMNO's legitimacy was enhanced. Furthermore, by keeping the nation divided along ethnic lines, it was believed the Malay community would continue to define themselves against the Chinese and not the Malay elites, thereby reinforcing UMNO support.<sup>242</sup> All key cabinet posts went to Malays except for the Minister of Finance, who was Tan Siew Sin. Members of non-Malay BN parties were given deputy positions within the cabinet, a move designed to underline the political dominance of the Malays.<sup>243</sup> The notion of interethnic cooperation and bargaining that had defined the Alliance era was at an end.<sup>244</sup>

The challenge for the National Operations Council was to establish unity in a nation that had been torn apart by a lack of social cohesion. Of particular importance was the re-establishment of UMNO's political primacy. The assumption was that a united Malay community would be a politically strong force and that this would, in turn, reinforce Malay superiority.<sup>245</sup> However, following intra-Malay faction battles between supporters and opponents of the Tunku in the aftermath of the riots, it could not be said

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<sup>237</sup> Mauzy, *Barisan Nasional*, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>238</sup> P. Ramasamy, 'Nation-Building in Malaysia: Victimisation of Indians?' in *Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese*, ed. L. Suryadinata, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2004, p. 150.

<sup>239</sup> Stephen Chee, 'Consociational Political Leadership and Conflict Regulation in Malaysia' in *Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia: Institutional Aspects*, ed. S. Chee, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1991, p. 75.

<sup>240</sup> Means, *Malaysian Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>241</sup> Ramasamy, 'Nation-Building in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>242</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>243</sup> Means, *Malaysian Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>244</sup> Ramasamy, 'Nation-Building in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>245</sup> Cheah, 'Ethnicity and Contesting Nationalisms in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 51.

that there was much unity among the Malay elites, let alone at the grassroots level. Causing further problems, the UMNO-MCA-MIC alliance rested on the assumption that each party represented the interests of their different ethnic constituents. It was assumed that, at least politically, the non-Malays were relatively homogenous. This was far from the case. The non-Malays were dispersed between different political parties, as well as along class and linguistic lines.<sup>246</sup> Although this meant that the non-Malays were unable to mount a cohesive political challenge against the Malays for the time being, it also meant that the NOC had to restore order and stability to a country that was fractured on multiple levels.<sup>247</sup>

It is in the above context that I contend Malaysia's approach to security became firmly established. The First Emergency and its immediate aftermath were certainly the genesis for the framework through which threats were to be dealt with, the security policy in question combining coercive regulations with an ideological 'hearts and minds' strategy. This security approach was never discarded in the interim between the Emergency and the 1969 riots, though it was seldom used – primarily due to the concentration on external security in the wake of *Konfrontasi*. Following the riots, however, the security approach wielded during the Emergency was repeated and strengthened. In reusing this basic strategy, the government confirmed that this was the only approach to dealing with security issues within Malaysia.

Unlike in many future crackdowns, security policy in this context was used in the aftermath of the crisis. The riots marked a turning point. The government has since used its powers mostly to prevent, rather than react to, undesirable circumstances. The riots provided an added justification for the preventive use of the government apparatus – the events of 1969 were too costly, politically and socially, to ever be repeated and therefore had to be prevented. Following the riots, security policy was used to mend the fractures that had developed as a consequence of the breakdown in the Alliance system. As before, the responses took the form of coercion and ideology. Coercion was used to enforce the new social boundaries that had been created. Ideological tools were used to justify the coercive component as well as promote stability through unity, predominantly amongst the Malays but also among and between all communities.

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<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>247</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

The coercive apparatus was amended. One of the first Bills in the new Parliament in 1971 was an amendment to the ISA. The amendment allowed for the detention without trial of anyone perceived to be a threat to 'essential services' and 'economic life', a definition so wide it could include virtually any political opponent. Again failing to acknowledge the racially charged events that were the impetus for the change, Dr Ismail justified the amendment on the grounds of combating the Communist threat. The amendment was passed amidst some disagreement within the BN, with some members, most notably from Gerakan, arguing that the changes would undermine any potential 'hearts and minds' strategies.<sup>248</sup> The 1971 amendment ultimately allowed the ISA to be applied against non-Communist threats, including peasant, labour and student leaders, academics, social activists and dissident Islamists, against whom the government could not attain enough evidence for trial.<sup>249</sup>

Several other pre-existing Acts were also amended. One such piece of legislation was the Sedition Act, with its definition of sedition widened to include any questioning of the constitutional privileges of the Malays and their rulers, as well as any use of words that would undermine non-Malay rights.<sup>250</sup> This effectively meant the political opposition were now restricted in their ability to publicly criticise the government.<sup>251</sup> The Printing Presses Act was amended to allow the government to withdraw newspaper licences, with criterion broad enough to cover political reasons.<sup>252</sup>

A new addition to the coercive arsenal was the Emergency Ordinance. The Emergency Ordinance was passed in response to the riots and has not yet been revoked. The Emergency Ordinance compliments the ISA and was enacted as a 'temporary measure' to control violence in the aftermath of the 1969 riots.<sup>253</sup> While the ISA is 'top-down', in that detention is ordered by a government minister, the Emergency Ordinance is 'bottom-up', as the police, failing to collect enough evidence to prosecute a suspect, can request a detention order from the Minister. Unlike the ISA which focuses specifically

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<sup>248</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>249</sup> Khoo, 'Nationalism, Capitalism and 'Asian Values'', *op.cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, and; Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>251</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>253</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Convicted Before Trial', *op.cit.*, p. 6.

on state security, the Ordinance is generally used to detain criminal suspects who the police find difficult to bring to justice due to lack of evidence.<sup>254</sup> Suaram notes that while the press is often aware of who is arrested under the ISA, there is much secrecy surrounding who is detained by the Ordinance. Consequently, it is unknown how many people are arrested, who they are, or why.<sup>255</sup> The Emergency Ordinance is an important component of the operational apparatus, allowing for the detention of those whose actions do not contravene the admittedly already broad offences prohibited by the ISA. Also new was the Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA), which prohibited the taking or making of copies of any unauthorised documents, no matter how insignificant, even if the information is common knowledge. The OSA limits the amount of information available to the public and the opposition, reducing government transparency and accountability.<sup>256</sup>

While the government did not launch a ‘hearts and minds’ campaign to specifically combat the issue of ethnic tension as it did to win the ideological battle against the CPM, it nonetheless formulated a general ideological response designed to unify the Malay masses and the nation in general. I contend that in this context ideology had two main functions: first, it promoted stability and security by attempting to create a general sense of social cohesion within and between the various ethnic communities, and; second, it reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Alliance/BN’s nation-building project and thus enhanced regime – rather than simply state – security. In legitimising the regime it was also, by extension, legitimising the coercive tools central to the maintenance of its power. Overall, the ideological response took the form of a new national ideology and the passing of a series of pro-Malay policies.

On 31 August 1970, the new national ideology – the *Rukunegara* – was announced. The *Rukunegara* had five main tenets: Belief in God; Loyalty to King and Country; Upholding the Constitution; Rule of Law, and: Good Behaviour and Morality.<sup>257</sup> Academics Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay note this set of principles was broad

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<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> Interview with Enalini Elumalai, Campaign Coordinator, Suaram, Petaling Jaya, 24 July 2007.

<sup>256</sup> *ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>257</sup> Means, *Malaysian Politics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 12-3.

enough that no one could argue with them.<sup>258</sup> It was essentially a formal declaration of a national social contract, a continuation of the Bargain, the acceptance of which was to be a prerequisite for political participation.<sup>259</sup> The *Rukunegara* was designed as a set of rules that would promote harmony and tolerance and, thus, prevent a future outbreak of ethnic violence.<sup>260</sup> The success of the *Rukunegara* was limited. Malaysian academic Khoo Boo Teik argues the *Rukunegara* did not engender a strong sense of social cohesion as it was 'too contrived and superficial to capture the public imagination.'<sup>261</sup> Illustrating the limited success of the ideology, the *Rukunegara* is no longer a major component of the Malaysian school curriculum. On the other hand, in the decades since there have been calls for the *Rukunegara* to be revived whenever ethnic tensions have arisen.<sup>262</sup>

The *Rukunegara* marked the only major ideological attempt by government to address the issue of ethnic tension by targeting the entirety of Malaysia's population. The other prominent use of ideology in the aftermath of the riots was in a series of pro-Malay policies, designed to benefit the Malays specifically, often at the expense of the other communities. For example, the National Culture Policy announced in 1971 aimed to force a Malaysian cultural identity that was based and built on Malay culture and Islam.<sup>263</sup> There was no non-Malay participation in the formulation of this policy, despite it being claimed to be a national policy.<sup>264</sup> Another example was the National Education Policy which declared Malay to be the main language of education and administration.<sup>265</sup> These policies favoured UMNO as the dominant faction of the BN, permanently entrenching Malay primacy throughout society.

The most notable pro-Malay policy was the New Economic Policy. Formulated by the NOC, the NEP was a socio-economic program designed to tackle the class-ethnic roots

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<sup>258</sup> Neher and Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>259</sup> Means, *Malaysian Politics*, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>260</sup> Kua, *May 13*, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>261</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, *Beyond Mahathir: Malaysian Politics and its Discontents*, Zed Books, London and New York, 2003, p. 16.

<sup>262</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>263</sup> Muhammad Ikmal Said, 'Malay Nationalism and National Identity' in *Malaysia: Critical Perspectives*, eds. M. I. Said and Z. Emby, Malaysian Social Science Association, Kuala Lumpur, 1996, p. 55.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>265</sup> Muzaffar, *Challenges and choices in Malaysian politics and society*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

of the 1969 riots.<sup>266</sup> In practice, it promoted affirmative action for the Malays in a variety of economic contexts. The policy was rooted in the government's view that development and national security were inseparable, reflecting the economic dimension of its approach to security.<sup>267</sup> The main objectives of the NEP were the eradication of poverty irrespective of ethnicity and social restructuring designed to abolish the identification of ethnicity with economic function. The government claimed the ultimate aim was the creation of national unity and that the achievement of its anti-poverty objectives was crucial to ensuring political stability.<sup>268</sup> Prior to the NEP, poverty reduction had usually been championed by the political opposition.<sup>269</sup>

Underlying the NEP was the belief that poverty, in particular the ethnic division of labour and Malay resentment of interethnic economic inequalities, was the core reason for the riots. Consequently, the NEP focused on affirmative action policies which favoured the Malays.<sup>270</sup> A primary goal of the NEP was the creation of a Malay professional and business community that would be able to compete with the more economically powerful non-Malays, namely the Chinese.<sup>271</sup> The NEP rarely in practice targeted the non-Malay poor, Khoo arguing the government assumed poverty was mostly a rural Malay problem.<sup>272</sup> Nonetheless, the government attempted to portray the NEP as beneficial to the non-Malays. The NEP guaranteed that 40 percent of the country's total equity ownership remained in non-Malay hands. More importantly, the NEP, it was claimed, would also lessen Malay bitterness and thus prevent a repeat of 1969.<sup>273</sup> To a large extent, the NEP was sold to non-Malay audiences as a security policy, rather than simply an economic one.

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<sup>266</sup> Khoo, 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia Since 1957', *op.cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>267</sup> K. S. Nathan, 'Malaysia: Reinventing the Nation' in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. M. Alagappa, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 526.

<sup>268</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, p. 103.

<sup>269</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>270</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, 'The State and the Market in Malaysian Political Economy' in *The Political Economy of South-East Asia: Conflicts, Crises, and Change (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, eds. G. Rodan, K. Hewison and R. Robison, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 184.

<sup>271</sup> Weiss, 'Contesting Race and Nation', *op.cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>272</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>273</sup> William Case, 'Malaysia: Aspects and Audiences of Legitimacy' in *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*, ed. M. Alagappa, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995, p. 73.

Through the NEP, the poverty rate would drop in the following decades. The incidence of absolute poverty was reduced from 52.4 percent in 1970 to 6.8 percent in 1997, though poverty would remain high in less developed states such as Sabah, Kelantan and Terengganu.<sup>274</sup> By 1983, Malay ownership of the economy had risen from 2.4 percent to 18.7 percent.<sup>275</sup> By 2003, the Malay share had risen to 23 percent.<sup>276</sup> Between the early 1970s and the early 1990s, the Malay middle class increased from 18 percent to 28 percent of the population.<sup>277</sup> Much of this success can be owed to the NEP, though the Asian economic boom lasting from the 1970s to the 1990s was also a likely contributing factor.<sup>278</sup> Although there was understandably some resistance to the NEP among the non-Malays, Chinese with strategic ties to UMNO and the Malay elite did well as business partners.<sup>279</sup> In fact, a common criticism levelled at the NEP is that it most benefited particular elites, namely those businessmen with links to the political leadership.<sup>280</sup> Included in this were Malays who were politically and bureaucratically well-connected.<sup>281</sup>

In the long-term, the NEP also helped spark an Islamic revival among the Malay population. The emphasis on pro-Malay policies raised the profile of Islam as a core component of Malay identity.<sup>282</sup> The NEP increased the urbanisation of young Malays, many of whom left the rural sector to seek employment in the modern sector.<sup>283</sup> Rural-urban migration led to a conflict of values, with many Malays confronting the challenges of individualism and modernisation for the first time. Islam became an

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<sup>274</sup> Ishak Shari, 'The Financial Crisis and its Social Implications' in *Malaysian Economics and Politics in the New Century*, eds. C. Barlow and F. L. K. Wah, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2003, pp. 62-3.

<sup>275</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>276</sup> Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 2003, p. 50.

<sup>277</sup> Robert W. Hefner, 'Introduction: Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia' in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, ed. R. W. Hefner, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2001, p. 30.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 30-1.

<sup>280</sup> Interview with Josef Roy Benedict, Executive Director Amnesty International (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, 19 July 2007.

<sup>281</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>282</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Islam in Malaysia,' *Advanced Seminar on Southeast Asian Studies: Focus on Malaysia*, Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 10 August 2007.

<sup>283</sup> Harold Crouch, 'Malaysia: Do elections make a difference?' in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, ed. R. H. Taylor, Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 126.



alternative, a way of overcoming the disorientation of modern life.<sup>284</sup> Islam provided the Malays with an identity after finding themselves in daily contact with non-Malays and their cultures.<sup>285</sup> The introduction of Malay as a language of instruction in secondary schools after 1969 led to the demise of the language as a distinctive cultural marker. This, in turn, contributed to the rise of Islam as the distinctive and key component of Malay ethnic identity. The growing interest in Islam was capitalised on by UMNO in the coming decades, with the creation of several policies designed to 'Islamise' the state and its institutions.<sup>286</sup>

The NEP ended in 1990 and was succeeded by the New Development Policy (NDP), which featured similar goals but was less focused on meeting specific numerical ethnic targets. Instead, more emphasis was placed on strengthening the capacity of Malays to manage, operate and own their own businesses. The NDP's aim of eradicating poverty in general was less pro-Malay.<sup>287</sup> Overall, the NEP and, by extension, the NDP, represented the most prominent ideological response of the government to the ethnic tensions arising from the riots. I contend that ideology performed both a legitimating and security function in this regard. Combined with the other ideological responses, ideology in this context can be seen as legitimising the new overtly Malay-centric *status quo* and the regime which promoted it. Furthermore, these ideological tools effectively spelt out the nation-building plan over the coming decades. Deviations from or criticisms of this ideology were often the target of the coercive apparatus, particularly the newly expanded Sedition Act and ISA. Official ideology had helped to stifle debate at the lower levels of society, thereby enhancing regime security.

## **Conclusion**

The modern Malaysian nation was constructed in tumultuous circumstances. From British colonialism came the basic structure of Malaysian politics, with the Malays at the centre and each ethnicity effectively segregated from the others by virtue of occupational and cultural differences. The society was essentially plural, though

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<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*, and; Fauzi, 'Islam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*

<sup>285</sup> Crouch, 'Malaysia: Do elections make a difference?', *op.cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>286</sup> The Islamic revival was not unique to Malaysia – it was worldwide.

<sup>287</sup> David Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-option, and Confrontation', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, issue 9, 1996, p. 855.

paradoxically privileged the Malay elites. Even during the early stages, officials promoted unity within rather than between the various ethnicities, with Malay solidarity regarded as particularly important. The Japanese occupation highlighted the inherent problems with the British Model. During the war, tensions flared between the ethnic groups, the Japanese exploiting the differences that had previously been capitalised on by the British. When the British returned, and independence became inevitable, a withdrawal had become feasible only in the event that Malaysian ethnic stability was achieved. The management of ethnicity had become linked to security and would remain so to the present day. The British legacy was that it had established the importance of ethnicity to national security – though, ironically, many of the ethnic problems actually originally stemmed from British policies.

The Malaysian state continued to develop following the outbreak of the Emergency. I have argued that the state developed in tandem with a two-pronged security policy: one prong emphasising coercion, the other consent. The coercive apparatus consisted of a number of repressive laws and regulations, most of which would continue to be law even following the Emergency's conclusion in 1960. The ideological apparatus featured a 'hearts and minds' campaign, designed to win over the parts of the population which were seen as vulnerable to Communist propaganda, namely the Chinese. Though the Emergency was essentially a front in the ideological battle of the Cold War, it nonetheless remained an inherently ethnic issue, with the CPM a predominantly Chinese organisation. Following increased interethnic cooperation, exemplified in the formation and political success of the Alliance, independence was finally granted to Malaya in 1957. Significantly, Independence was achieved in a period of Emergency, an era of strict regulation policed by the security apparatus. Given that the security approach has remained largely unchanged in the decades since, its role in Malaysia's formative years is likely to be regarded by elites as a vital ingredient in the continued survival of the political system.

Ending a relatively pluralistic and peaceful period under the Tunku, notwithstanding *Konfrontasi* and the split from Singapore, the 1969 riots and their aftermath defined the Malaysian nation-state for decades to come. Unlike in many future crackdowns, the security apparatus was applied in the aftermath of the crisis. The government has since used its powers mostly to prevent, rather than react to, undesirable circumstances.

Following the riots, the Malays via UMNO unapologetically became the centre of the political system and the new coalition, the BN. The resistance to the possibility of government turnover by elites in the 1969 election effectively meant that regime and state became intertwined. Power became more centralised. To ensure the survival of this regime, the security apparatus was amended and expanded. The coercive component gained new laws and old laws were given wider powers. Ideologically, the government legitimised the new *status quo* through a series of pro-Malay policies designed to ensure security by decreasing Malay bitterness. This, in turn, would protect the non-Malays by eliminating the reasons for Malay resentment. A national ideology was also promulgated in a somewhat unsuccessful attempt to re-establish the Bargain and therefore the BN/Alliance system at the core of Malaysia's politics.

By the beginning of the 1970s, Malaysia had firmly established its national identity. It was a Malay nation which promoted Malay interests in order to achieve national stability. In practice, it protected the political *status quo* and the central position of UMNO within the BN and the state in general. Entering the early 1970s the BN also had extraordinary security powers justified by various ideological tools, which assured the continued survival of its regime. This security has remained relatively consistent, in terms of both structure and aims, ever since. The structure of the Malaysian state and nation would also remain virtually unchanged. The next three decades would effectively establish Malaysia's security policy as a permanent tool of government. The security policy would be deployed frequently in response to opposition elements, particularly those which presented a challenge to the government in the areas of race and Islam.

## Chapter Four

### Islam and Race as a Security Strategy: Security Policy Prior to 9/11

*If we study the history of Islam, what brings calamity upon Muslims is not their religion but the fondness of certain people among them for interpreting Islam according to their own self-interest...*

**Mahathir Mohamad<sup>1</sup>**

If we are to understand the post-9/11 era of Malaysian politics, an analysis of the period between 1970 and 2001 is vital. While the previous chapter outlined the genesis of Malaysia's security policy, notably the events of colonialism, occupation, the Emergency and the 1969 riots, in the present chapter I detail how this policy became increasingly applied, justified, and established as a pre-eminent, and evidently permanent, tool of government. With few exceptions, security policy evolved from one which was reactive, as was witnessed in the Emergency and the 1969 riots, to one which was preventive, wielded against 'enemies of the state' before their crimes had been committed or, in some cases, planned. In this period, the maintenance of ethnic relations continued to be used as an ideological justification for the continued use of the security apparatus. However, this justification was joined by the use of another, albeit related, ideological tool, one which had been relatively dormant up till this point – Islam. An investigation of this period of Malaysia's history helps us to understand the way Malaysia has reacted to the extremist strands of Islam in the post-9/11 context, the details of which will be discussed in Chapter Five and Six.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'No place for religious fanatics', *New Straits Times*, 7 November 1992.

My argument in this chapter also illustrates the layered and somewhat paradoxical nature of the security apparatus – the coercive component is unchanging, while the ideological component is fluid and adaptive. The coercive apparatus established during and after the Emergency has remained relatively unaltered. In this chapter I will show that the ideological component used to justify the use of coercion, and the state which wields it, is by contrast often changed, sometimes drastically, in different time periods, according to different social stimuli, contexts and the changing societal *zeitgeist*. In the 1970s while the old justification of race continued to be utilised to justify repression, Islam emerged as a new ideological tool in response to growing pressures for Islamisation within society. The ideological apparatus firmly moved from one designed to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of those vulnerable to Communist propaganda to a tool designed to unify the Malays and eliminate any challenge to UMNO’s ideological supremacy. The use of Islam was also a strategy aimed at ensuring ethnic stability, namely unity within the Malay community.

The discussion I present in this chapter moves between the two interrelated issues of race (and ethnicity) and Islam, weaving together an account and analysis of events in this period through a security lens. Narrating the period beginning in the middle of the 1970s through to the period just prior to the September 11 attacks on America, I argue that the security apparatus was continually deployed to legitimise the regime and its policies, namely the multiracial nature of the political *status quo* and the use of Islam as a response to the growing politicisation of the religion in wider society. First, I address the Islamic revival within Malaysia and detail the government’s response. Second, I discuss the 1987 faction battle. I contend that the spectre of the 13 May riots was used to justify a sweeping crackdown on opposition elements. The ultimate end of this crackdown was not national security as claimed, but to re-establish the legitimacy of UMNO and the Prime Minister. Third, I detail the government assault against Darul Arqam/Al-Arqam (House of Arqam), a seemingly peaceful Islamic organisation, and argue that it represented a pre-emptive strike against an ideological – rather than a physical – challenge to the regime and the Islamic agenda with which it had become synonymous. Fourth, I analyse the Anwar Ibrahim crisis and again I illustrate the use of ethnicity for political gain. Finally, I examine the period immediately prior to the September 11 attacks. I demonstrate that the government had begun wielding its

security apparatus against groups with alleged links to international terrorism in the months before the terrorist strikes on Washington and New York.

### **The Beginning of Moderated Islam: *Dakwah* and the Government Response**

Given that the Malays – and therefore UMNO – had unapologetically become the centre of the political system following the 1969 riots and the establishment of the NEP, it became increasingly important for the regime to secure Malay support. Consequently, the question of defining Malay identity became a central concern of the ruling coalition. Implicit in the NEP, the government's strategy was to define the Malays, politically, culturally, and socially, in accordance with the interests of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in general and UMNO in particular. The worldwide Islamic revival beginning in the 1970s consequently posed a challenge for the regime, Islam being a definitive aspect of Malay identity. The revival sparked the creation in Malaysia of a number of non-government Islamic associations and also pushed PAS away from its nationalistic focus and toward a more overtly traditional Islamic discourse. The government's response was to 'out-Islamise' its opponents, push Islam to the centre of its agenda, and construct a version of the faith in keeping with the regime's interests – namely, economic growth and regime stability.

By analysing the process of Islamisation through a security framework, a different account of this period can be told. I contend that Islam became a new tool for the government to ensure cohesion amongst its most important constituency – the Malays – with any alternative interpretations of Islam regarded as a threat to the state and the regime with which it was intrinsically linked. For example, PAS became increasingly characterised by the government as a deviant or radical organisation dangerous to the security of the nation. The government's antagonism toward PAS culminated in the use of coercive force against several of its members in an event known as the Memali Incident. I argue that the government's new emphasis on Islam was ultimately a security strategy designed with the same fundamental goal of previous security policies: the continued political dominance of the BN.

### *Dakwah and Islamisation*

With a resurgence in the political role of Islam worldwide, Islam became increasingly prominent in Malaysia in the 1970s. The burgeoning emphasis on Islam began at the grassroots level, composed of a number of non-government Islamic associations, and referred to collectively as the *dakwah* (meaning preach or proselytise) movement. Although international developments were certainly a factor, it has been argued *dakwah* was also a response to number of domestic developments.<sup>2</sup> *Dakwah* was an urban movement, concentrated in schools, institutions of higher learning and the civil service, and did not spread to the poor and illiterate in Malay rural areas.<sup>3</sup> It was a reaction against the Western-styled modernisation policies of the government and its dependence on foreign – namely Western – capital. Further, it was a consequence of the increased segregation of the different ethnic groups, particularly the ethnic boundaries between the Malays and Chinese, which were in turn a by-product of the NEP.<sup>4</sup> According to commentator Zainah Anwar, the affirmative action policies directed toward the Malays unintentionally contributed to the *dakwah* movement. To improve the socio-economic position of the Malays, the government had sent many Malays overseas to study abroad. Most of these Malays were sent to England, the cultural shock of being transported to an alien Western environment with its own set of mostly liberal values, led many Malay students to feel alienated and powerless.<sup>5</sup> Zainah puts forward that Islam was the ‘familiar’, providing something to believe in amidst a thoroughly alien environment.<sup>6</sup> Many of these students were influenced by radical organisations such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami and returned to Malaysia with a different, though overtly Islamic, worldview.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the opportunities provided by the NEP meant many Malays migrated from rural to urban centres – the culture shock of

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<sup>2</sup> Vidhu Verma lists several international factors that contributed to the global Islamic revival in the 1970s, including the Arab-Israeli War (1967), the Arab oil embargo (1973), and the Iranian Revolution: Vidhu Verma, *Malaysia: State and Civil Society in Transition*, Strategic Information Research Development, Petaling Jaya, 2004, pp. 99-100.

<sup>3</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2002, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup> Michael G. Peletz, *Islamic Modern: Religious Courts and Cultural Politics in Malaysia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the students*, Pelanduk Publications, Petaling Jaya, 1987, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 24 and 26.

this move likely leading large numbers of Malays to turn to Islam.<sup>8</sup> Malaysia's development agenda had contributed to the growth in Islamic sentiment.<sup>9</sup>

Broadly, the *dakwah* movement emphasised the promotion of Islam through missionary effort and socio-political activity. The aim was to create 'better Muslims' and raise the level of Islamic consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Seventh century Arab customs were often regarded as the model, with Malay men and women donning Arabic dress.<sup>11</sup> *Dakwah* attempted to remove from Malay Islam those elements regarded as animist or Hindu.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, given the aforementioned role the NEP played in sparking the movement, many *dakwah* followers were opposed to the NEP due to the fact that it was based on ethnicity rather than religion and therefore against the Islamic notion of universalism.<sup>13</sup> *Dakwah's* impact was said to be particularly great in the decade from 1975 to 1985.<sup>14</sup>

The three major *dakwah* groups were Darul Arqam, Jemaat Tabligh, and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement or ABIM).<sup>15</sup> Of the three, it was ABIM which became the most prominent. Led by Anwar Ibrahim, ABIM was somewhat moderate or progressive in its appeal. Unlike other *dakwah* associations, ABIM did not call for the creation of an Islamic state. Instead, ABIM claimed that it concentrated on developing the critical thinking and awareness of society and the issues which plagued it. ABIM avoided the use of the word *dakwah* on the basis that this implied a more conservative reading of Islam. Anwar instead referred to the

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. 'Islam in Malaysia,' *Advanced Seminar on Southeast Asian Studies: Focus on Malaysia*, Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 10 August 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Suzaina Kadir, 'Mapping Muslim politics in Southeast Asia after September 11,' *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 17, issue 2, 2004, p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 168, and; Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and Their Roots*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1984, p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, traditional Malay dances were banned on the basis that they supposedly encouraged illicit sexual relations between men and women: Patricia Sloane, *Islam, Modernity and Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, Macmillan Press and St Martin's Press, London and New York, 1999, p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> Zainah, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 168, and; Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Although all three were anti-Western, anti-socialist and anti-Zionist in orientation, the *dakwah* movement was regarded as heterogeneous in purpose and form: Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.



organisation as ‘tolerant and liberal’<sup>16</sup>, though I would argue ABIM’s later affiliation with UMNO undermines this claim.

The growing role of Islam in society posed a new problem for the ruling regime. Islam had not played a large role in the policies of the BN up to that point. Although Malay interests had been at the heart of government policies, particularly since the introduction of the NEP, the regime had not emphasised the religious aspects of Malay identity.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, under the Tunku, UMNO leaders had repeatedly declared Malaysia would not become an Islamic state.<sup>18</sup> Instead, a Western, secular state appeared to be the model.<sup>19</sup> The Tunku believed that Malaysia should be a multicultural country in which freedom of religion was protected. While Islam was the official religion of the Federation, this was originally symbolic. The imposition of Islam was seen as having the potential to cause interethnic tensions.<sup>20</sup> However, while Islam was not emphasised under the Tunku, it was not completely ignored. For example, the Tunku sought a special relationship with Muslim countries and had even proposed the idea of a Muslim Commonwealth.<sup>21</sup>

The government’s response to *dakwah* represented a dramatic departure from the emphasis on multiculturalism. The government embarked on a series of policies generally regarded as an attempted Islamisation of the country. Islamisation can be broadly defined as:

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<sup>16</sup> Zainah, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Ikmal Said, ‘Malay Nationalism and National Identity’ in *Malaysia: Critical Perspectives*, eds. M. I. Said and Z. Emby, Malaysian Social Science Association, Kuala Lumpur, 1996, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> N. J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, Kuala Lumpur, 1980, p. 145. The Tunku stated that to become an Islamic state would require ‘the drowning of every non-Muslim’ in the country: Joseph Liow, ‘Deconstructing Political Islam in Malaysia: UMNO’s Response to PAS’ Religio-Political Dialectic’, *Working Paper No. 45*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, 2003, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>20</sup> The Tunku instead had a liberal attitude towards Islam, stating ‘Why must we bother about Malays who go to race horses or drink? Are they troubling others by doing what they like?’: Muhammad Haniff Bin Hassan, ‘Explaining Islam’s Special Position and the Politic of Islam in Malaysia’, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 97, issue 2, 2007, p. 296.

<sup>21</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

the process by which what are perceived as Islamic laws, values and practices are accorded greater significance in state, society and culture... Islamisation is a quest for the Islamic ideal. It is an attempt to restore the pristine Islam perceived to be lost or disrupted as a result of Western colonial domination.<sup>22</sup>

Islamisation tends to be a reaction against the prominence and presence of Western culture and forms of governance in Muslim societies. Islamic policies and practices – often of a more traditional variant – are proposed as the antidote to the perceived imposition of alien values and political structures. In 1971, the government established the Islamic Research Centre and, in 1974, founded the Institute of Islamic Mission and Training. The secretariat for the National Council of Islamic Affairs became a division of the Prime Minister's Department in 1974, marking the beginning of 'federal Islam.'<sup>23</sup> Malaysia's Prime Minister between 1976 and 1981, Hussein Onn, stated, 'You may wonder why we spend so much money on Islam... if we don't, PAS will get us.' Hussein argued that without such policies, the people would 'lose faith' in the government and the main Islamic opposition party, PAS, would fill the void.<sup>24</sup> Islamisation was a strategy to ensure the continuation of the BN system.

Hussein was succeeded by Mahathir Mohamad on 1 July 1981.<sup>25</sup> As with Hussein, Mahathir's attempted to 'out-Islamise' PAS.<sup>26</sup> The view of UMNO as a secular Malay party was abandoned. Instead, it was claimed that Islam was at the heart of UMNO and that the promotion of Islam had always been the party's primary goal.<sup>27</sup> To assert

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<sup>22</sup> Norani Othman, 'Islamisation and democratization in Malaysia in regional and global contexts' in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*, eds. A. Heryanto and S. K. Mandal, RoutledgeCurzon, New York and London, 2003, p. 124.

<sup>23</sup> Syed Ahmad Hussein, 'Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy' in *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, eds. F. L. K. Wah and Khoo B. T., Curzon, Richmond, 2002, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-4.

<sup>25</sup> Mahathir's rise to Prime Ministership had been tumultuous. Expelled from UMNO in 1969 in the aftermath of the riots, he was readmitted and elected to the party's Supreme Council. He would become Education Minister under Razak and later emerged as Hussein's choice for successor. Mahathir was elected leader unopposed by the UMNO General Assembly: Ho Khai Leong, 'The Political and Administrative Frames: Challenges and Reforms under the Mahathir Administration' in *Mahathir's Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, eds. H. K. Leong and J. Chin, Times, Singapore, 2003, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Diane K. Mauzy and R. S. Milne, 'The Mahathir Administration in Malaysia: Discipline through Islam', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 56, issue 4, 1983-1984, p. 635.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 636.

UMNO's new role as guardian of Islam, the Mahathir administration established a number of Islamic institutions and programmes. In 1981, Mahathir founded the Islamic Consultative Body to ensure no government policies or development plans were contrary to Islam and announced the Inculcation of Islamic Values Policy which articulated a model of corporate Islam.<sup>28</sup> By 1982, the Prime Minister's office had employed over 100 *ulama* (the learned of Islam) while the Education Ministry had some 715 on its payroll.<sup>29</sup> In 1983, the government opened the International Islamic University.<sup>30</sup> That same year, the Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (Islamic Bank) was created, claiming to operate according to Islamic principles.<sup>31</sup> Civil servants required a good knowledge of Islam to ensure promotion, while state radio and television channels began exclusively broadcasting Islamic religious programmes.<sup>32</sup> Tasked by the government with the role of administration of Islamic activities, Pusat Islam (Islamic Centre) began identifying various sects and groups that were promoting or spreading 'deviationist' interpretations of Islam.<sup>33</sup> By 1996, Pusat Islam was upgraded to Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia or JAKIM).<sup>34</sup>

Notably, Mahathir elevated the Muslim Shari'a courts to the same level as civil courts.<sup>35</sup> The 1980s saw several amendments to Shari'a criminal laws in most Malaysian states. These amendments were often obsessed with moral surveillance,

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<sup>28</sup> Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 2003, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Blood, Sweat and Jihad: The Radicalisation of the Political Discourse of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) from 1982 Onwards', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 25, issue 2, 2003, p. 206. The *ulama* are Muslim legal scholars and often yield great influence over the Islamic community domestically.

<sup>30</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>31</sup> The bank was to operate under two principles: first, it would not offer interest on deposits but would instead share the profits earned from investing with its customers, and; second, the bank would only sanction projects and deal with businesses not prohibited by Islam: Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, pp. 177-8.

<sup>32</sup> Greg Fealy, 'Islamisation and politics in Southeast Asia: The contrasting cases of Malaysia and Indonesia' in *Islam in World Politics*, eds. N. Lahoud and A. H. Johns, Routledge, New York, 2005, p. 158.

<sup>33</sup> Farish A. Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951-2003)* (Volume 2), Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur, 2004, p. 374.

<sup>34</sup> Othman, 'Islamisation and democratization in Malaysia in regional and global contexts', *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>35</sup> Fealy, 'Islamisation and politics in Southeast Asia', *op. cit.*, p. 158.

including punishment of Muslims for such transgressions as eating during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan or consuming alcohol.<sup>36</sup> The Administration of Islamic Law Act declared that *fatwas* (religious declarations) issued by the state *mufti* (the highest ranking religious official at the state level) were automatically law. Such *fatwas* could be regarded as tantamount to a rule by decree as the legislative process is bypassed. *Fatwas* could only be revoked or amended by the mufti and any violation of a *fatwa* constituted a criminal offence.<sup>37</sup>

To further strengthen UMNO's Islamic credentials, the government co-opted a number of notable *dakwah* leaders, most notably Anwar Ibrahim.<sup>38</sup> The government had previously feared the possibility of a future link-up between ABIM and PAS.<sup>39</sup> By bringing Anwar into UMNO, ABIM's credibility as an opposition force was weakened.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Anwar brought into UMNO a large number of ABIM members and ABIM itself became generally supportive of UMNO's agenda.<sup>41</sup> The fact that many Islamic groups were thus co-opted and accommodated, rather than rejected, has been praised by Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, who suggests, 'the world, and the Muslim *ummah* [community] in particular, have a lot to learn from the Malaysian way of handling Islamic movements.'<sup>42</sup>

At the same time that Islam was becoming increasingly influential in domestic policies, Malaysia's foreign policy was being re-oriented along similar lines. From the 1970s onward, Malaysia entered the mainstream of international Islamic politics, developing

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<sup>36</sup> Othman, 'Islamisation and democratization in Malaysia in regional and global contexts', *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>37</sup> Zainah Anwar, 'What Islam, Whose Islam? Sisters in Islam and the Struggle for Women's Rights' in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia*, ed. R. W. Hefner, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2001, pp. 239-40.

<sup>38</sup> Abdullah Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity: The Issue of Radical Religious Elements in Malaysia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, issue 2, 1999, p. 266.

<sup>39</sup> Mauzy and Milne, 'The Mahathir Administration in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 634. Indeed, UMNO's co-option of Anwar was a major coup given that PAS had also been eyeing the ABIM leader: Hussein, 'Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> David Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-option, and Confrontation', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, issue 9, 1996, p. 859.

<sup>41</sup> Hussein, 'Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Patterns of State Interaction with Islamic Movements in Malaysia during the Formative Years of Islamic Resurgence', *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, issue 4, 2007, p. 446.

an avowedly pro-Islamic foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> This stance can be attributed to domestic factors, namely the government's attempts to establish its Islamic credentials to Malay Muslim audiences. For this reason, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 posed a dilemma for UMNO. The Islamic appeal of Ayatollah Khomeini and his revolutionaries among certain sections of the Malay population was regarded as a threat to UMNO. The Shi'ism of the Iranian revolutionaries was considered incompatible with the Sunni Islam promoted by the government and subscribed to by the Malays. Moreover, the Iranian republican style of governance was viewed as a threat to the constitutional monarchy of the Malaysian political system.<sup>44</sup> Not wanting to risk a backlash from its Malay constituents, the Malaysian government was careful not to directly attack the Iranian Revolution.<sup>45</sup> The government did not even comment on the Iranian Revolution until eight months later when Malaysia's Foreign Minister declared that relations between the two countries would continue in the manner of 'business as usual.'<sup>46</sup> Mahathir did not visit Iran until 1994 and the first visit by the Iranian president did not occur until later that year.<sup>47</sup>

Despite such tensions, Mahathir's foreign policy was overtly Islamic. The Muslim world was placed second behind ASEAN in the administration's formal ranking of international priorities.<sup>48</sup> Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat visited Malaysia in 1984 and declared that 'Malaysia is even closer to us than some of the Arab nations', thereby boosting Mahathir's Islamic credentials at home and abroad.<sup>49</sup> The Mahathir administration was also sympathetic to the struggle of the *Mujahideen* against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Malaysian government called for economic and military aid for the *Mujahideen* and established the Islamic Alliance for the Afghan *Mujahideen* to institutionalise its support.<sup>50</sup> The Malaysian government emphasised that its support for the *Mujahideen* was based on Malaysia's support for the international

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<sup>43</sup> Mohamad Abu Bakar, 'Islam in Malaysia's Foreign Policy' in *Malaysian Foreign Policy: Issues and Perspectives*, eds. M. A. Karim, L. D. Howell and G. Okuda, National Institute of Public Administration (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, 1990, p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>46</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>47</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 866.

<sup>48</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 394, and; Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies: Determinants of Malaysia's Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Administration' in *Mahathir's Administration*, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>50</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies', *op.cit.*, p. 136.

principles of sovereignty, non-intervention and self-determination. However, it was clear that, as with other pro-Islamic foreign policies, domestic politics was a key factor. By associating itself with the *Mujahideen*, academic Shanti Nair argues UMNO hoped to improve its Islamic credentials and thus out-Islamise its Islamic political rivals, namely PAS.<sup>51</sup>

The interpretation of Islam which had permeated the government's domestic and foreign policy was one which promoted the interests of the BN system, particularly economic growth and political/regime continuity. Unlike the situation in other Muslim societies, the version of Islam promoted by the government was generally formulated not by religious scholars but by politicians. Academic Virginia Matheson Hooker notes the coverage of Islamic issues in the Malaysian press gives the impression that it is the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister alone who are setting the agenda for Islam in the country. The opinions of traditional leaders of Islam are often presented solely as reactions to statements by these two political leaders.<sup>52</sup>

For Mahathir, UMNO had the solution to the malaise in which Islam had found itself. Over a decade before assuming the Prime Ministership, Mahathir wrote in *The Malay Dilemma* that Islam had stifled the social and political growth of the Malays, noting, 'The adoption of Islam as the religion of the Malays also resulted in the development of a permanent barrier against further changes in religion.'<sup>53</sup> Mahathir continued to emphasise this view while Prime Minister Mahathir claimed Islam had become stagnant as a result of Islamic tradition falling into the hands of literalists and traditionalists who eschewed the study of science and technology in favour of studying only religious texts.<sup>54</sup> In Mahathir's view, Muslims had turned inward and become 'an extremely backward and weak people' who had 'deluded themselves into believing that this worldly life is not for them and that heaven awaited them in the afterlife.'<sup>55</sup> In his 1986

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<sup>51</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>52</sup> Virginia Matheson Hooker, 'Reconfiguring Malay and Islam in Contemporary Malaysia', *RIMA*, Vol. 34, issue 2, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Times Books International, Singapore, 1970, p. 23.

<sup>54</sup> S. Mark Heim, 'Malaysian model: A different kind of Islamic state', *The Christian Century*, Vol. 121, issue 20, 2004, p. 32.

<sup>55</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'The Role of Islamic Civilisation in Fostering Interreligious Understanding', speech, Kuala Lumpur, 25 May 1999 in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*:

book, *The Challenge*, Mahathir argued for a different interpretation of Islam, one which supported wealth accumulation, and thus was in keeping with Malaysia's development agenda. Islam would no longer be a barrier to development – instead it would be a vehicle for growth.<sup>56</sup> Anwar Ibrahim, as Deputy Prime Minister, concurred with Mahathir's analysis, claiming, 'Perhaps no other religion has put more confidence in the market than Islam.' Pointing to the various Quranic injunctions that were steeped in commercial imagery and the Prophet Muhammad's own commercial experience, Anwar argued 'the Muslim mind is nurtured to be pro-market.'<sup>57</sup> Overall, UMNO claimed to have developed an Islam which was modernist, progress-oriented, embraced foreign investment and technology, and in harmony with pre-existing notions of development that had been established by the ruling elites.<sup>58</sup> UMNO's Islam was portrayed as more liberal than that advocated by PAS and various so-called radicals in that it emphasised the promotion of Islam throughout society rather than the imposition of Islam through the creation of an Islamic state.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, Mahathir saw Malaysia as a model for other Muslim societies to emulate.<sup>60</sup>

The pro-development, so-called moderate interpretation of Islam by UMNO's leaders was promoted as the correct reading of the faith. Mahathir claimed, 'UMNO upholds the true teachings of Islam'<sup>61</sup> and the 'biggest struggle' faced by the party was 'to change the attitude of the Malays in line with the requirements of Islam in his modern age.'<sup>62</sup> UMNO's was thus the 'right' version of Islam, against which all other

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*Selected Speeches of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia*, ed. Hashim Makaruddin, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya, 2003, pp. 14-7.

<sup>56</sup> Mahathir observed, 'The history of Islam clearly shows that its followers practice moderation in all their dealings. Wealth is not disapproved of and certainly not forbidden... As for poverty, Islam takes a serious view of it, to the extent of regarding it as close to ungodliness... Viewed from any angle, Islam evidently does not hold poverty in high esteem or disapprove of wealth. On the contrary, it puts priority on moderation in all things. At the same time society is responsible for reducing any imbalance found within it.': Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenge*, Pelanduk, Petaling Jaya, 1986, pp. 15-6.

<sup>57</sup> Anwar Ibrahim, *The Asian Renaissance*, Times Books International, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, 1996, p. 80.

<sup>58</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup> Francis Loh Kok Wah, 'A New Politics in Malaysia: Ferment and Fragmentation' in *Malaysian Economics and Politics in the New Century*, eds. C. Barlow and F. L. K. Wah, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2003, p. 99.

<sup>60</sup> Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, Free Press, New York, 2003, p. 67.

<sup>61</sup> Mahathir, 'No place for religious fanatics', *op.cit.*

<sup>62</sup> Mauzy and Milne, 'The Mahathir Administration in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 644.

interpretations could be deemed ‘wrong’ and therefore potentially seditious.<sup>63</sup> I contend that the official brand of Islam clearly featured a security component and was thus more than an economic strategy. By establishing the ‘correct’ version of Islam, the government was able to justify crackdowns against any groups whose interpretations of the faith provided a counter-model. Alternative interpretations of Islam would in future be presented by the government as undermining the goals and values of the country and stifling its development into a modern nation.<sup>64</sup>

To ensure the government’s version of Islam was the sole interpretation, the notion of deviancy was employed. In 1982, the Penal and Criminal Code was amended to allow the state to take action against ‘deviant’ groups and alternative schools of Islamic thought deemed harmful to both the state and the Muslim community.<sup>65</sup> In 1985, the Unit for Faith Protection and Deviationist Teachings was overhauled to ‘monitor and police the spread of ‘deviationist’ teachings in the country’, including Sufi and Shi’ite practices. Attaches were sent abroad to monitor Malay Muslims studying overseas and ensure they were not influenced by radical ideas.<sup>66</sup> Islam had become an ideological tool to ensure the cohesion of the Malay community, portray support for UMNO as a religious imperative, and hence legitimise the political *status quo*. Furthermore, Islam was also used to counter non-religious threats to security. For example, action against the CPM was now claimed to be based, at least in part, on religion. The atheist nature of the CPM was portrayed as antithetical to the values of Islam, and therefore to the Malays as a whole.<sup>67</sup>

Although Islamisation was emphasised by the government, the multiethnic nature of Malaysia was not completely ignored or neglected. Mahathir unveiled in 1991 a plan known as Vision 2020, which envisioned that Malaysia would become a fully developed and industrialised nation by the year 2020. Under Vision 2020, the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would be eight times its GDP in 1990, making

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<sup>63</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>64</sup> Academic Shanti Nair argues that Islamisation in Malaysia has focused on the distinction between the moderate Islam deemed appropriate for society and the more radical expressions of Islam regarded as unacceptable by the government: *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 383.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>67</sup> See for example: Mahathir, *The Challenge*, *op.cit.*, p. 84.



Malaysians four times richer.<sup>68</sup> Vision 2020 relied on ‘constructed symbols of national unity, invoking a *vox populi* of social belonging and common purpose.’<sup>69</sup> Vision 2020 was more than an economic agenda – it was an attempt to create a cohesive social order and a nationalism which united all of Malaysia’s ethnic groups.<sup>70</sup> According to Hooker, race/ethnicity and nation were to be infused and the divisions inherited by British colonialism overcome.<sup>71</sup>

Much like the *Rukunegara* two decades prior, Vision 2020 represented an attempt by the government to legitimise the *status quo* established by the BN amongst all ethnic constituencies and was, as such, an ideologically-based policy designed to ensure regime security. Vision 2020 blended the values and aspirations of the BN with the values and aspirations of the nation. Despite the multiethnic tone of Vision 2020, Mahathir argued that the plan was aimed at protecting and promoting Islam. Mahathir declared anyone who claimed otherwise was an ‘enemy of Islam.’<sup>72</sup> Although Vision 2020 claimed to be inclusive, Islam remained the central component of the idealised nation it envisaged. Despite this, the non-Malay communities generally responded well to the Mahathir administration. This can be partly attributed to the fact Mahathir opened up more higher education opportunities for non-Malays and allowed for the public display of various non-Malay cultural symbols, a practice previously discouraged by the government.<sup>73</sup>

Overall, the process of Islamisation increased the public presence of Islam in Malaysia, ironically more so than the *dakwah* movement which the state was originally responding to.<sup>74</sup> The underlying purpose of Islamisation was the legitimisation of the

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<sup>68</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, *op.cit.*, p. 327.

<sup>69</sup> John Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, Zed Books, London and New York, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> Hooker, ‘Reconfiguring Malay and Islam in Contemporary Malaysia’, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>72</sup> Mahathir stated, ‘Vision 20/20 is not only compatible with Islam but is actually meant to protect and advance the cause of Islam. Therefore UMNO will persevere in realizing Vision 20/20 as part of its struggle for Islam. Only a strong Islamic country with Muslims proficient in diverse knowledge and skills can help to defend the religion and fellow Muslims’: Mahathir, ‘No place for religious fanatics’, *op.cit.*

<sup>73</sup> Lee Kam Hing, ‘Differing Perspectives on Integration and Nation-Building in Malaysia’ in *Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese*, ed. L. Suryadinata, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2004, pp. 86-7.

<sup>74</sup> Sloane, *Islam, Modernity and Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

regime.<sup>75</sup> The creation of Islamic institutions and programmes boosted UMNO's Islamic credentials and thus undermined its politico-religious opponents, including PAS and various *dakwah* associations. The pro-development, pro-BN interpretation of Islam adopted by UMNO further ensured regime security by intrinsically linking religion and state. More specifically, UMNO linked religion and development, framing the latter agenda in Islamic terms. UMNO had created a situation in which a Malay voting against the BN could be characterised as voting against his or her own religion. UMNO, and by extension the BN, had therefore increased its political legitimacy amongst the Malay community.

### *Early Challenges to Islamisation*

Given its role in fostering development, creating social cohesion and ensuring regime security and legitimacy, the government's emphasis on Islam can be regarded as part of the ideological component of its security apparatus. Islam played a role similar to the 'hearts and minds' campaign of the Emergency and the pro-Malay NEP in that it justified the *status quo* and attempted to achieve stability through political manoeuvres. As with previous ideological frameworks, Islam also justified and influenced the coercive apparatus which itself supported, promoted and enforced the government's interpretation of the faith. The coercive apparatus continued to be a feature of government policy during the Islamisation process as, paradoxically, the regime's Islamic initiatives and programmes had not only encouraged Islam's development in the country but had raised the problem of controlling its expansion.<sup>76</sup>

From its earliest days, the process of government-sponsored Islamisation did not go unchallenged in Malaysia. The non-Malay communities, whose culture and traditions had once again become secondary to the interests of the Malays, did not seriously contest the shift in policy and were not perceived as threats by the government. Instead, the most pressing challenge came from within the Malay community.

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<sup>75</sup> Othman, 'Islamisation and democratization in Malaysia in regional and global contexts', *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>76</sup> Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity', *op. cit.*, p. 266.

Beginning in the 1970s, a series of minor challenges to the government's Islamic agenda were swiftly put down by the coercive apparatus. The Koperasi Angkatan Revolusi Islam Malaysia (KARIM/Malaysian Islamic Revolutionary Front) was banned and its leaders detained under the ISA for preaching the overthrow of the government.<sup>77</sup> The ISA was also used in 1980 in response to riots by thousands of rice farmers, who were demonstrating against the government's move to introduce a forced-savings scheme.<sup>78</sup> Although the demonstrations had clear economic motivations, the government claimed that a shadowy organisation, Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabilullah (Organisation of the Soldiers of God), had been behind the rioting and were intent on establishing a revolutionary Islamic government.<sup>79</sup> The government insisted that the group had connections to PAS.<sup>80</sup> Action was likewise taken against the Penang-based Crypto cult movement in 1992. It was claimed the movement was dissatisfied with the BN's approach to Islam and planned to overthrow the government and replace it with an Islamic theocracy.<sup>81</sup>

The 1970s also saw the government acting against those associated with the comparatively more peaceful *dakwah* movement, particularly students. In 1971 and later again in 1975, the government introduced severe restrictions on student political activity on university campuses. Ironically, this had the opposite effect to that desired by the government, as non-government Islamic associations became the only safe channel through which students could air their grievances.<sup>82</sup> In 1974, several students and academics were detained without trial for mobilising demonstrations. Students were arrested for illegal assembly and threatened with the cancellation of their enrolment and scholarships.<sup>83</sup> ABIM was targeted on a number of occasions, most notably in the period between 1979 and 1981. The government penalised ABIM supporters in the civil

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy: operational and ideological challenges', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, issue 2, 2004, p. 243.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, and; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *Working Paper No. 123*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2007, pp. 8-9.

<sup>79</sup> Fauzi, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op. cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 856.

<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, one of those detained at this time was Anwar Ibrahim: Simon Barraclough, 'The Dynamics of Coercion in the Malaysian Political Process', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, issue 4, 1985, p. 814.

service and changed the legislation on associations to limit ABIM's activities.<sup>84</sup> The government's use of the coercive apparatus in these contexts was an attempt by the BN to enforce its Islamic agenda to the exclusion of all others. As in previous eras, security policy was primarily used to ensure regime, rather than national, security.

Perhaps the most prominent and long-term challenge to the government's Islamic credentials has come from PAS. Founded in 1956, PAS has developed from a leftist, nationalist party to an almost solely Islamic-based party. In the period between 1959 and 1969, under the leadership of Dr Burhanuddin al-Helmy, PAS developed an ideology combining progressive Islamism, nationalism and anti-colonialism. Under the leadership of Asri Muda, the party advocated exclusive Malay communitarian rights and emphasised Malay racial, cultural and political supremacy. In this period, PAS was also briefly a member of the BN in the aftermath of the 1969 riots, though returned to opposition in 1977. Asri's departure from the more progressive Islam of his predecessor led many members of PAS to turn instead to *dakwah* associations like ABIM and Darul Arqam. Amidst internal turmoil, a 1982 coup toppled Asri from the PAS leadership.<sup>85</sup>

Replacing Asri was Yusof Rawa, who re-oriented PAS to a more overtly Islamic agenda. The party underwent a process of radicalisation and 'Arabisation', with Yusof attempting to bring PAS into line with other Islamist movements in the Muslim world.<sup>86</sup> The Iranian Revolution was seen as a model.<sup>87</sup> PAS became opposed to communalism, secularism, and materialism – political tenets associated with the pro-Malay, multiethnic, development-oriented BN.<sup>88</sup> In PAS's view, Islam, rather than the Malay nationalism of the NEP, was to be the basis of society. PAS utilised Islam to distinguish itself from UMNO.<sup>89</sup> PAS began to call for the creation of an Islamic state, with the Quran and Sunnah as the constitution and Shari'a law as civil law, under the leadership

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<sup>84</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 859.

<sup>85</sup> Farish, 'Blood, Sweat and Jihad', *op.cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p. 208, and; Farish A. Noor, 'The Localisation of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS' in *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics*, eds. V. Hooker and N. Othman, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2003, p. 199.

<sup>87</sup> For example, Yusof stated, 'The success of the Iranian revolution has added to our resolve and conviction about the success of Islam in the future... We must learn from the success of the Iranian revolution so that we too can develop our will and ability to struggle': Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 355.

<sup>88</sup> Farish, 'Blood, Sweat and Jihad', *op.cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>89</sup> Said, 'Malay Nationalism and National Identity', *op. cit.*, p. 61.

of religious scholars.<sup>90</sup> The emphasis on Islam has continued under every PAS leader since.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the calls for a more theocratic state, PAS has maintained that it supports democracy and democratic principles. PAS has emphasised the congruity between Islam and democracy and cited the party's peaceful and uninterrupted participation in all elections as further evidence of the party's commitment to the democratic system.<sup>92</sup> PAS also has had competitive internal elections for top leadership positions.<sup>93</sup> PAS claims that a Malaysia under its rule would be more moderate, tolerant, and democratic, with civil society and opposition parties given greater legitimacy.<sup>94</sup> Thus, although PAS has used its Islamic agenda to clearly distinguish itself and its values from the BN system, the party has nonetheless displayed a commitment to the democratic processes of the existing political *status quo*.

PAS's first major ideological challenge to the state Islamisation project was the so-called *kafir* (infidel) accusations.<sup>95</sup> In a speech in April 1981, Abdul Hadi Awang, PAS Commissioner for Terengganu, claimed that the BN had inherited an infidel constitution from the British, that those PAS members who died in fighting UMNO were martyrs, and that anyone who separated religion and politics was *kafir*.<sup>96</sup> In 1982, Hadi Awang issued an edict declaring the Malay-Muslim leaders of UMNO hypocrites and that to

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<sup>90</sup> Zainah, 'What Islam, Whose Islam?', *op.cit.*, p. 241.

<sup>91</sup> Yusof's immediate successor, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, for example, declared that God is on the side of PAS, and even that God and PAS are practically one and the same: Farish, 'The Localisation of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS', *op.cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>92</sup> Hussein, 'Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 96-7, and; William F. Case and Liew Chin-Tong, 'How Committed Is PAS to Democracy and How Do We Know It?' *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 28, issue 3, 2006, p. 399.

<sup>94</sup> Hussein, 'Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>95</sup> Although it was the statements of Hadi Awang which started the controversy, it should be noted that this was not the first time a leader of PAS had made such allegations. PAS had first referred to UMNO and the ruling coalition as infidels in 1964, when a member of the PAS Ulama Council, Haji Yaakob Ishak, labelled UMNO as *kafir*, declared that meat slaughtered by UMNO members was *haram* (forbidden), and that prayer congregations led by UMNO members was null and void in the eyes of Islam. PAS' position was later suspended when it joined the BN after the race riots: Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity', *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>96</sup> Fauzi, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 11.

wage *jihad* (holy war) against the government was an Islamic duty.<sup>97</sup> Academic Zainal Kling contends it was with these announcements that PAS became regarded by the government as enemy to be discredited or destroyed.<sup>98</sup>

In declaring UMNO ‘infidels’, PAS had attempted to undermine the Islamic ideology established by the BN. PAS was seen as a threat to UMNO’s legitimacy and therefore political stability.<sup>99</sup> In response, the government utilised the framework established by its new Islamic ideology to discredit PAS. In November 1984, the government issued a White Paper which linked PAS to the subversive activities of violent extremist groups.<sup>100</sup> The government declared Muslim unity and national security were essentially one and the same: should religious extremism undermine Muslim solidarity, national security would be affected.<sup>101</sup> Raising the spectre of Communism again, the government even claimed the CPM would be able to effectively infiltrate a weak and divided Muslim community.<sup>102</sup> Hadi Awang was accused of being an extremist who advocated the violent overthrow of the state.<sup>103</sup> The ideological battle between UMNO and PAS was viewed by the government at least rhetorically as a national security issue. Islam had clearly entered the government’s toolbox as a weapon to be used against its political opponents.

Despite such tensions, the battle between UMNO and PAS has remained an essentially political contest – the competition between the two has rarely moved from a strictly ideological battlefield and has seldom resulted in violent conflict. Perhaps the most notable exception to this occurred during this early phase of Islamisation in an event that became referred to as the Memali Incident. In 1984, the government issued an arrest warrant for Ibrahim Mahmood (alias Ibrahim Libya), a popular religious teacher and member of PAS who had unsuccessfully run for the Bayu state assembly in the 1978

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<sup>97</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 346.

<sup>98</sup> Zainal Kling, ‘UMNO and BN in the 2004 Election: The Political Culture of Complex Identities’ in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, eds. S. Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2006, p. 179.

<sup>99</sup> Kamarulnizam, ‘National Security and Malay Unity’, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, and; Fauzi, ‘Islam and Violence in Malaysia’, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Kamarulnizam, ‘National Security and Malay Unity’, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 270-1, and; Fauzi, ‘Islam and Violence in Malaysia’, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 346.

general elections.<sup>104</sup> Ibrahim previously declared PAS would ‘resist and oppose’ those who hindered the party’s attempts to uphold its Islamic principles. Ibrahim claimed those members of PAS who were killed in this struggle would be martyrs, while those who oppose PAS ‘can only die for nothing.’<sup>105</sup> The government accused Ibrahim of spreading radical teachings of Islam and consequently of threatening Malay unity.<sup>106</sup> The government labelled him a ‘deviant’ Muslim.<sup>107</sup> The police failed to arrest Ibrahim, who had escaped with the help of students, and continued to live as a free man for over a year.<sup>108</sup> Tensions between the government and PAS escalated in 1985 following the death of a PAS supporter in Kedah who had been killed, PAS alleged, at the hands of UMNO-paid thugs.<sup>109</sup>

On 19 November 1985, police attempted to arrest Ibrahim in Kampung Memali in the state of Kedah. A small rural village, Memali was surrounded by a total of 576 security and armed forces.<sup>110</sup> Wielding automatic rifles and tear gas, the police stormed Ibrahim’s compound during a religious lesson.<sup>111</sup> In the ensuing showdown, four policemen and fourteen villagers, including Ibrahim, were killed.<sup>112</sup> The police rounded up and detained 161 villagers, including women and children. The government announced a comprehensive ban on all political discussion and rallies in the states of Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Penang, and northern Perak, all of which, with the exception of Penang, were PAS strongholds.<sup>113</sup> The government justified its assault on Ibrahim’s compound as defensive with the police claiming to have found machetes (*parangs*), knives, poisoned arrows, a shotgun and Molotov cocktails.<sup>114</sup> Local villagers disputed this, noting that what had been described as spears were actually pieces of

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p. 401, and; Elina Noor, ‘Al-Ma’unah and KMM in Malaysia’, in *A Handbook of Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*, ed. A. T. H. Tan, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham and Northampton, 2007, p. 169.

<sup>105</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 401.

<sup>106</sup> Liow, ‘The Mahathir administration’s war against Islamic militancy’, *op.cit.*, p. 243, and; Hussein, ‘Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy’, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>107</sup> Liow, ‘The Mahathir administration’s war against Islamic militancy’, *op.cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>108</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 401.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p. 395, and; Fauzi, ‘Islam and Violence in Malaysia’, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, and; Liow, ‘The Mahathir administration’s war against Islamic militancy’, *op.cit.*, pp. 243-4.

<sup>112</sup> Fauzi, ‘Islam and Violence in Malaysia’, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>113</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>114</sup> Hussein, ‘Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy’, *op. cit.*, p. 92, and; Kamarulnizam, ‘National Security and Malay Unity’, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

village fencing which had been uprooted after the battle began.<sup>115</sup> Regardless of the veracity of the police claims, the government had clearly acted in a heavy-handed fashion as the villagers were outmatched by the comparatively sophisticated weaponry of the security forces.<sup>116</sup>

The Memali Incident was the first time the government had used deadly force against its Islamic political opponents. The government defended its actions by claiming those killed were armed religious fanatics and extremists.<sup>117</sup> PAS countered by declaring Ibrahim and his deceased followers martyrs.<sup>118</sup> In response, the government issued a White Paper which implicated PAS leaders such as Hadi Awang as instigators of the violence. The Islamic Council of Kedah, and later the National *Fatwa* Council, issued a *fatwa* that Ibrahim was not a martyr and those killed in the incident did not die in the name of Islam.<sup>119</sup> The incident represented perhaps the most brutal and violent use of the coercive component of the state's security policy. As opposed to most usages of the coercive apparatus, the Memali Incident was a police operation and not an application of various repressive pieces of legislation. It ultimately illustrated the extent to which the regime would protect its version of Islam from counter-narratives.

Overall, I argue that the government's Islamic policies were self-defeating. Islamisation had been deployed in response to the Islamic resurgence, aiming to create a united, cohesive Malay community loyal to the regime. Instead, it had provoked counter-narratives, namely among those Muslims who felt that the government had not gone far enough in establishing Islam as the centre of the political system. Islamisation had not created Muslim solidarity, it had led to increased Malay disunity. In response, the regime essentially redefined and amended the security policy, the government wielding its powers, sometimes brutally, against those Islamic groups which challenged the regime's interpretation of Islamic doctrine. Once more, the focus of security policy had been on maintaining the security of the regime and imposing its agenda, in this case the near-impossible goal of enforcing Islamic conformity on the Malay community.

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<sup>115</sup> Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity', *op. cit.*, p. 272.

<sup>116</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>117</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 403.

<sup>118</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>119</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 404.



## **The Return of the Racial Bogeyman: UMNO, the Security Apparatus and the 1987 Faction Battle**

Although the security apparatus had been increasingly used to implement the state's Islamic programme, ethnicity was never ignored and remained a central concern of the regime. In the midst of a party faction battle in 1987, UMNO would use the so-called 'racial bogeyman' to justify one of the government's largest ever crackdowns – Operation Lalang. The government justified its actions on the basis of quelling ethnic unrest, though much evidence exists that, to the contrary, the government had political motives in launching the operation. In utilising the security apparatus, in this instance the coercive component, I argue the government attempted to stifle dissent and enhance its legitimacy.

The 1987 UMNO faction battle marked the most dramatic internal crisis that had faced the party since its formation. UMNO had traditionally portrayed itself as a united front, a political necessity given the party's obsession with creating and enforcing Malay cohesion.<sup>120</sup> Despite UMNO having performed well in the 1986 general elections, Razaleigh Hamzah challenged Mahathir for the UMNO Presidency at the April 1987 General Assembly. Running with Razaleigh was Musa Hitam, Mahathir's former Deputy, who challenged Mahathir's new Deputy, Ghafar Baba, for his position.<sup>121</sup> Amidst claims of electoral fraud, Mahathir defeated Razaleigh by 43 votes, or 1.5 percent of the total, while Ghafar beat Musa by 40 votes.<sup>122</sup> Razaleigh's faction (known as Team B) had been defeated but only by a small margin, exposing the rifts and divisions within the party and the dissatisfaction with Mahathir's leadership.<sup>123</sup> As a result, Mahathir purged Team B ministers and deputy ministers from the cabinet.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Prior to 1987, there had only been one instance of someone challenging UMNO's incumbent President – that was in 1978 when Sulaiman Palestin, an unknown with no chance of winning, stood as a protest candidate against Hussein Onn: Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, *op.cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>121</sup> Jomo K. S., 'Deepening Malaysian Democracy With More Checks and Balances' in *Malaysia: Critical Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Syed Husin Ali*, eds. M. I. Said and Z. Emby, Malaysian Social Science Association, Kuala Lumpur, 1996, p. 79.

<sup>122</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, *op.cit.*, pp. 269-70.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>124</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia Since 1957: Class, Ethnicity and Changing Capitalism' in *Democratization in Southeast and East Asia*, ed. A. Laothamatas, St Martin's Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, New York and Singapore, 1997, pp. 68-9.

UMNO was split in two as Team B was dissatisfied with the results of the Razaleigh-Musa challenge. The split led to UMNO being declared illegal by the Malaysian courts. Mahathir sought to re-establish UMNO under a new entity, UMNO Baru (New UMNO), while Razaleigh formed his own party, Semangat 46. The faction battle had left UMNO in crisis and its legitimacy – as well as Mahathir's – in question.

On 17 October, the UMNO Youth Wing held a rally protesting Chinese opposition to recent government policy initiatives. Banners at the rally carried slogans such as 'May 13 has begun' and 'Soak the *keris* [dagger] in Chinese blood.' The Youth Wing called for another demonstration on 1 November, asking half a million Malays to attend.<sup>125</sup> Mahathir banned all political rallies and, as Minister of Home Affairs, launched Operation Lalang in conjunction with the police on 27 October.<sup>126</sup> On the first day of Operation Lalang, there were 55 arrests under the ISA and three newspapers – the *Star*, *Watan* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh* – were suspended indefinitely.<sup>127</sup> The arrests continued over the next few days and weeks, the number of detainees eventually reaching 119 in December. Those arrested included members of DAP, the MCA, and Gerakan, as well as prominent NGO figures, university lecturers, and local Muslim teachers.<sup>128</sup> Members of Team B were also detained in the operation as were a number of politicians from PAS, whom the government accused of encouraging religious and racial conflict against Christian missionaries.<sup>129</sup>

Although there were considerable numbers of political figures among the detainees, the government claimed the primary target of the operation was dissidents threatening racial harmony and therefore 'national security.'<sup>130</sup> Raising the spectre of the 1969 riots, the arrests were said to be a pre-emptive move, designed to forestall interethnic violence.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 422.

<sup>126</sup> Mahathir has emphasised that Operation Lalang was a police operation – however, Mahathir's position as Home Affairs Minister leaves him ultimately responsible for what occurred: *ibid*; Khoo, 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia Since 1957', p. 69, and; Jomo K. S., 'Race, Religion and Repression: 'National Security' and the Insecurity of the Regime' in *Tangled Web: Dissent, Deterrence and the 27th October 1987 Crackdown*, ed. Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia (CARPA), CARPA, Kuala Lumpur, 1988, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, *op.cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 284-5.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, and; Farish, 'Blood, Sweat and Jihad', *op.cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>130</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 422.

<sup>131</sup> Khoo, 'Democracy and Authoritarianism in Malaysia Since 1957', *op.cit.*, p. 69.

Mahathir placed much of the blame on the Chinese, particularly the DAP, a leading Chinese-based opposition party.<sup>132</sup> Mahathir claimed the DAP had championed communal issues and attempted to politically mobilise the Chinese community. Mahathir argued the Malays were not the primary cause of the interethnic tensions but were merely responding to Chinese provocation.<sup>133</sup> By placing the blame elsewhere, Mahathir ensured the Malay's position at the centre of the political system was not further undermined and that the dominance of UMNO within the BN would continue. This parallels the government's reaction to the May 13 riots in which the use of violence by Malays was downplayed by the regime.

The government defended its actions in a White Paper on the incident. Released in March 1988, the paper justified Operation Lalang on the grounds that the country was on the brink of being torn apart by extremist movements exploiting racial and religious issues.<sup>134</sup> PAS was specifically identified as having extremist tendencies and strategies, the paper claiming several PAS members had formed an underground militant movement that was preparing to overthrow the government.<sup>135</sup> Various other movements were labelled 'communist' or 'pro-communist', including the Christian Conference of Asia.<sup>136</sup> Although ethnicity was the primary focus, the government had also justified its use of its coercive apparatus on religious and anti-communist grounds, which I have noted are two common and well-established 'bogeymen' in the history of Malaysia's security policy.

The actual motivations behind Operation Lalang are not as simple or noble as the government has suggested.<sup>137</sup> It has been said that most of those detained were not even

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<sup>132</sup> Jomo, 'Race, Religion and Repression', *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>134</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, p. 426.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, p. 425.

<sup>137</sup> Former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, criticised the government's action, stating, 'For the PM (Dr Mahathir) to repeat the story of the May 13 Affair as a warning of what would have happened if the Government had not taken appropriate action is like telling ghost stories to our children to prevent them from being naughty... The tale should not be repeated because it shows us to be politically immature': Kua Kia Soong, *May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969*, Suaram Komunikasi, Petaling Jaya, 2007, p. xiii.

The Tunku further claimed, albeit without evidence, that Mahathir had let the situation in the country deteriorate to a point where government repression could be justified: Jomo, 'Race, Religion and Repression', *op.cit.*, p. 6.

associated with ethnic issues.<sup>138</sup> Of those originally arrested, over a quarter were not identified with the parties and movements blamed for rising ethnic tensions. Many of these social activists had in fact been attempting to develop non-ethnically-based alternatives to the political *status quo*.<sup>139</sup> The motivation behind the government crackdown was not 'racial' but political. Prior to Operation Lalang, Mahathir's credibility and legitimacy as Prime Minister had been severely undermined, primarily by the faction battle and the resulting UMNO split. Operation Lalang effectively brought an end to Mahathir's political woes and helped stabilise his political career. According to Human Rights Watch, the operation had removed a number of political threats and shored up Mahathir's position as Prime Minister.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, the DAP's momentum was stalled and PAS's reputation further tarnished.<sup>141</sup> It has also been suggested the detentions were an attempt to discourage other dissidents and critics from challenging Mahathir.<sup>142</sup> In addition, in the immediate aftermath of the operation, Mahathir dismissed the head of the judiciary and other justices who had been critical of him, thereby protecting UMNO from future court decisions which might undermine it or limit its powers.<sup>143</sup> Operation Lalang marked the end of Malaysia's strong tradition of judicial independence and effectively established the Executive as the dominant force in the political system.<sup>144</sup>

Operation Lalang was yet another example of the government using its security apparatus to shore up the regime's – in particular Mahathir's – legitimacy. In this instance, the government relied upon the coercive apparatus, primarily the ISA. The use of coercion was justified with reference to the pre-existing ideological frameworks established by the government – race and ethnicity, religion and anti-Communism. Operation Lalang strengthened the rule and powers of Mahathir and helped to stabilise UMNO. Although it was claimed the operation was done in the interest of national security, it is clear that the major beneficiary of the crackdown was not the nation but

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<sup>138</sup> Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia: The Winds of Change*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995, p. 107.

<sup>139</sup> Jomo, 'Race, Religion and Repression', *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>140</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security: Counterterrorism and Human Rights Abuses Under Malaysia's Internal Security Act', *HumanRightsWatch*, Vol. 16, issue 7, 2004, pp. 8-9.

<sup>141</sup> Jomo, 'Race, Religion and Repression', *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>142</sup> CARPA, 'Introduction' in *Tangled Web*, *op.cit.*, p. xii.

<sup>143</sup> Neher and Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>144</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security', *op. cit.*, p. 9.

the regime. The nation had been burdened with a weakened opposition and a neutered judiciary.

### **Al-Arqam: A Challenge to the UMNO Islamisation Project?**

Despite UMNO's internal turmoil, the government's Islamisation continued apace in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. By this time, the government had firmly established its brand of Islam. More importantly, the government had demonstrated that it would use the full powers of the security apparatus to discredit or obliterate any challenge to the government's Islamic agenda. For example, the government again exercised its powers in 1988 with Operation Kenari, a crackdown by government forces against several PAS members who were allegedly in possession of weapons.<sup>145</sup> 31 PAS members and supporters were detained under the ISA over a period of 28 days, the government-sponsored mainstream media portraying the accused as militants.<sup>146</sup> Although the government was unable to garner enough evidence to effectively link PAS to institutionalised militancy, PAS's reputation had again been tarnished, its legitimacy as a viable political alternative weakened, and UMNO's position as the voice of Malaysian Islam consequently assured.<sup>147</sup>

In this same period, a more cohesive challenge to Islamisation emerged in the form of the Al-Arqam (or Darul Arqam) movement. Though it is questionable as to whether the Arqam movement actually saw itself as a viable alternative government, the regime saw it as a threat to the political *status quo*. The government's campaign against Arqam illustrated how effective the government's coercive and ideological apparatuses had become in enforcing official Islam and eliminating rival interpretations. Al-Arqam was founded in 1968 as a religious study and discussion group by Ashaari Muhammad. At first, its membership was mostly composed of members of the working class but by the late 1970s its influence had spread to the middle class and the higher strata of Malaysian society.<sup>148</sup> The movement emphasised that to create an Islamic state, an Islamic society

<sup>145</sup> Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op.cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>146</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, pp. 431-3.

<sup>147</sup> Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op.cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>148</sup> Johan Hendrik Meuleman, 'Reactions and Attitudes Towards the Darul Arqam Movement in Southeast Asia', *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 3, issue 1, 1996, p. 48.

must first be established.<sup>149</sup> In the movement's early stages, members even refused to participate in public and political activities in order to emphasise their separation from the *status quo*.<sup>150</sup> Beginning in 1973, however, Arqam began making itself more publicly visible, creating its own brand of products, establishing clinics, schools, and a 'shadow economy' detached from the 'un-Islamic' national economy.<sup>151</sup> As Arqam developed, it established its own bureaus, complete with ministries and departments such as foreign affairs, education, media and communication and *dakwah*.<sup>152</sup> Arqam members lived in communities which mirrored the communal life of the Prophet's followers, embraced Arab-style dress, and practiced total segregation of the sexes.<sup>153</sup> Arqam expanded into an international movement, eventually existing in approximately 16 countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, and Pakistan.<sup>154</sup> At its peak, Arqam was said to have 10,000 members, about ten times this number for sympathisers, in Malaysia and 300 million ringgit in economic assets.<sup>155</sup>

Initially, the regime did not see Al-Arqam as a threat. Ashaari met with Mahathir to explain the organisation's activities. From this meeting, Mahathir was reportedly convinced that Arqam did not threaten the aims of the NEP and even expressed admiration of the movement.<sup>156</sup> As Arqam expanded in size and influence, the regime re-evaluated its relationship with the organisation, eventually becoming overtly hostile to its ambitions.<sup>157</sup> Arqam had built a successful business empire, linking Islamic traditions – such as dress – with modern techniques such as missionary work and commercial activity. In doing so, Arqam had created a viable alternative to the state version of Islam.<sup>158</sup> Arqam operated independently from the state, developing self-

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<sup>149</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1996, p. 129.

<sup>150</sup> Judith Nagata, 'Alternative Models of Islamic Governance in Southeast Asia: Neo-Sufism and the Arqam Experiment in Malaysia', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 16, issue 2, 2004, p. 107.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 509.

<sup>153</sup> Esposito and Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.* Other sources give the number of countries in which Al-Arqam had a presence as 17. See: Meuleman, 'Reactions and Attitudes Towards the Darul Arqam Movement in Southeast Asia', *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'The banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 39, issue 1, 2005, p. 91.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>158</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, pp. 864-5.

contained communities complete with their own infrastructure, thereby impinging on the traditional functions and services of the state.<sup>159</sup> Its autonomous economic policies and shadow economy posed an indirect challenge to the NEP specifically and capitalism in general. Its growing influence and presence, particularly among the youth, provided Arqam with a powerful base from which it could potentially enter politics and directly challenge the *status quo*.<sup>160</sup> Arqam claimed to have a following of some 7,000 public servants within the Mahathir administration and was believed to be slowly penetrating mainstream politics.<sup>161</sup> As a result of all of these factors, Al-Arqam was increasingly seen as a threat to the notion of Muslim unity which the state had so aggressively constructed through its Islamisation policies. It was also seen as having the potential to upset Malaysia's all-important 'racial balance.'<sup>162</sup>

Conflict between Al-Arqam and the regime began in the early 1980s after Ashaari publicly criticised the effectiveness of the Islamic centre in promoting the 'true teachings' of Islam. Ashaari suggested that the administration of the centre be handed to the Arqam movement.<sup>163</sup> The government returned fire. The Islamic Affairs Department and the Federal Islamic Council summoned Ashaari and at their urging got him to renounce certain mystical elements of his version of Islam as unacceptable deviations from the religion. Ashaari released a book in 1986 defending his beliefs but this was soon banned by Malaysia's *fatwa* authorities, despite books with similar interpretations of Islam continuing to be sold.<sup>164</sup> Seemingly unperturbed by growing official resistance to his movement, in the late 1980s Ashaari began making increasingly provocative public statements attacking the Islamic credentials of UMNO leaders and even openly speculating about UMNO's internal disunity.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, p. 865.

<sup>160</sup> Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>161</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 864.

<sup>162</sup> Meuleman, 'Reactions and Attitudes Towards the Darul Arqam Movement in Southeast Asia', *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>163</sup> Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity', *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>164</sup> Meuleman, 'Reactions and Attitudes Towards the Darul Arqam Movement in Southeast Asia', *op. cit.*, p. 52, and; Fauzi, 'The banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>165</sup> Farish, 'The Localisation of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS', *op.cit.*, p. 202.

In June 1994, Malaysia's religious authorities launched a public information campaign emphasising the dangers of the Al-Arqam movement.<sup>166</sup> On 5 August, the National Fatwa Council outlawed Al-Arqam, claiming it had deviated from the 'true' teachings of Islam. The Council issued a *fatwa* prohibiting the movement's ideology, the use of its materials, the selling of its commercial products, and the displaying of any symbol, diagram or sign identified with the group. The Council decreed that all of Arqam's schools be closed, all its publications be banned under the Printing Press and Publications Act, and all sympathetic civil servants be disciplined. The Council stated that the use of the ISA to enforce the ban was at the discretion of the police.<sup>167</sup> The federal government gazetted this *fatwa* on 27 August, thereby giving the Council's declaration legal force. In a well co-ordinated and efficient fashion, this move was then followed in all states.<sup>168</sup> Working with the Indonesian, Thai and Singaporean governments, in September the Malaysian security forces arrested virtually every senior member of Al-Arqam, including Ashaari.<sup>169</sup> The full force of the coercive apparatus was used, with a series of raids launched against the movement's communes and schools and some 300 members ultimately detained and fined. The government froze the movement's financial assets, thereby effectively eliminating the economic challenge it had posed to state capitalist policies and the NEP.<sup>170</sup> Ashaari and other senior leaders were forced to admit their mistakes in public, appearing on television to confess that their beliefs were wrong and had deviated from the true principles of Islam. Al-Arqam was then formally disbanded by its leaders in November 1994.<sup>171</sup> Ashaari and a few others were then conditionally released from detention.<sup>172</sup>

The crackdown on Al-Arqam was justified by the government on the grounds the movement had links to a secretive militant organisation in Thailand.<sup>173</sup> Arqam was accused of training over a hundred of these militants and forming a 'suicide army' that

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<sup>166</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 863.

<sup>167</sup> Fauzi, 'The banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>168</sup> Meuleman, 'Reactions and Attitudes Towards the Darul Arqam Movement in Southeast Asia', *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, and; Farish, 'The Localisation of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS', *op.cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>170</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 863.

<sup>171</sup> Farish, 'The Localisation of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS', *op.cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>172</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 863.

<sup>173</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 513.



was planning to overthrow the Malaysian government.<sup>174</sup> The Thai government, however, denied the existence of this army.<sup>175</sup> The Malaysian government would later admit the army did not exist, a chief research officer at the Islamic Centre even admitting just prior to the *fatwa* banning Arqam that the suicide army charge had been a propaganda exercise designed to justify the comprehensive ban about to be imposed on the movement.<sup>176</sup>

The crackdown was more likely motivated by the government's desire to stem any potential challenge by Al-Arqam to the state version of Islam. Though the move against Al-Arqam featured a comprehensive use of the coercive component of the security apparatus, a more dramatic strategy was deployed at the ideological level. Even more than in previous crackdowns of Islamic movements, the government deployed Islam as a tool to justify its actions and legitimise the government's version of the faith. The 'deviant' label, given extra credibility by the declarations of various *fatwa* councils, had been deployed by the government to effectively outmanoeuvre the movement at the ideological level. By declaring that the movement had deviated from the teachings of Islam, the government effectively stifled Al-Arqam's ability to operate within the bounds of Malaysian – and particularly Malay – society. By this stage the ideological apparatus had firmly moved from one designed to win the 'hearts and minds' of those vulnerable to communist propaganda, instead becoming a tool overtly designed to unify the Malays and eliminate any challenge to UMNO's ideological supremacy. Illustrating the superficial nature of the government's case against Arqam, no member of the organisation was charged in the Shari'a court for embracing or promoting deviant teachings and the theological allegations against the movement were never properly investigated or proven.<sup>177</sup> Malaysian academic Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid contends the government destroyed Al-Arqam's credibility as a religious alternative through a 'trial by media.'<sup>178</sup> The whole incident served to remind Malays there was only one true Islam in Malaysia – the one established by the government. Indeed, in the wake of the crackdown, Mahathir announced plans for a federal rehabilitation centre at which

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<sup>174</sup> Camroux, 'State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 863, and; Fauzi, 'The banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>175</sup> Fauzi, 'The banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, p. 108, and; Kamarulnizam, 'National Security and Malay Unity', *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>177</sup> Fauzi, 'The banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*, p. 111.

‘deviants’ could be ‘re-educated.’<sup>179</sup> It was also announced that the government would amend the constitution to ensure that only Sunni Islam was officially recognised in Malaysia and that all other branches of Islam were thus deviant and punishable by law.<sup>180</sup> The state’s interpretation of Islam had effectively become constitutional.

The Al-Arqam movement was later revived to some extent by Ashaari and a group of former Al-Arqam members. Ashaari founded Ruffaqa, a corporation aiming to create Malay entrepreneurs capable of engaging with the global economy. Unlike Al-Arqam which promoted an economic alternative to the government, Ruffaqa essentially supported the state’s developmental goals, particularly its pro-Malay policies.<sup>181</sup> Ashaari claimed he had no desire to re-establish Al-Arqam, stating ‘Do not confuse developing a legitimate enterprise with reviving the movement.’ Nonetheless, Ruffaqa has not gone unchallenged. In 2005, religious police in Selangor arrested some 100 members of the organisation.<sup>182</sup> This was followed in November 2006 with the arrests of 107 people.<sup>183</sup> In 2007, 51 people connected to Ruffaqa were detained in Penang for acting in contravention to state Islamic enactments.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, although given some freedom to pursue economic interests, namely those in line with government objectives, Ashaari and his followers have continued to be subjected to the coercive policies of the government, effectively pre-empting any possible revival of Al-Arqam and keeping its former members neutered. The government’s action in this context again reaffirms a central argument I make in this chapter: that the security apparatus had been re-oriented to pre-emptively defend the state’s goals, in this case its Islamic agenda. The security apparatus was seldom applied reactively.

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<sup>179</sup> Camroux, ‘State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia’, *op. cit.*, p. 865.

<sup>180</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

<sup>181</sup> Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan, ‘Islam, State and Civil Society in Malaysia: The Case of the Al Arqam’, *NIAS Nytt*, Vol. 4, 2004, p. 9.

<sup>182</sup> ‘Malaysia puts Islamic cult under scrutiny’, *Yahoo! Asia News*, <<http://asia.news.yahoo.com/061212/3/2u8ui.html>>, 12 December 2005, (accessed 12 February 2008).

<sup>183</sup> Suaram, *Human Rights Report 2006: Civil and Political Rights*, Suaram, Petaling Jaya, 2007, p. 87.

<sup>184</sup> Suaram, *Malaysia Civil and Political Rights Report 2007: An Overview*, Suaram, Petaling Jaya, p. 14.

### **The Anwar Ibrahim Crisis and the Ghosts of May 13**

By the middle of the 1990s, UMNO had established its Islamic credentials and limited the potential for counter-narratives. As occurred with the 1987 faction battle, however, events would serve to divide UMNO and weaken its legitimacy. The sacking and arrest of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in the midst of the Asian Financial Crisis led to the creation of the *reformasi* movement and increased the prominence of the opposition parties. I argue the growing opposition to the government was in part a protest against the perceived misuse of the security apparatus, namely its coercive component, particularly the repressive laws wielded against Anwar by a subservient judiciary. The government's security policy had been a central part of the state since Independence – that it was being challenged by elements of civil society represented an attack on the foundations of the Malaysian state. I demonstrate that the issue of ethnicity again came to the fore, the government evoking the memory of the May 13 1969 race riots to re-establish its political dominance. That said Islam was also used as an ideological tool, albeit to a more limited extent, the government portraying Anwar as un-Islamic in character are an attempt to undermine him.

The Asian Financial Crisis began in Thailand, following the devaluation of the Thai baht, and quickly spread to its neighbours. The Malaysian government imposed a regime of stringent credit control but the economy plummeted into recession.<sup>185</sup> This policy was replaced in September 1998 with a new system of capital controls. The economy bounced back, the currency, stock and property markets recovered, and unemployment approached an historic low. Malaysia's recovery was spearheaded by a strong export-oriented manufacturing sector and government spending.<sup>186</sup> In taking such action, Mahathir was resisting the demands of the International Monetary Fund, which had pushed for increased economic liberalisation as a response to the crisis.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> R. Thillainathan, 'Malaysia and the Asian Crisis: Lessons and Challenges' in *Malaysian Economics and Politics in the New Century*, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-4.

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>187</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*, Verso, London and New York, 2004, p. 273.

Although there was some speculation that the Malaysian economy would have fallen into recession by the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century even if there had been no regional crisis,<sup>188</sup> Mahathir squarely placed the blame for Malaysia's economic woes on foreigners, particularly the West. Mahathir blamed the crisis on American financial speculator George Soros and 'some other Jews [who] were said to resent any progress that was made by Muslims.'<sup>189</sup> In framing his rhetoric in this way Mahathir was again using Islam as a political tool to shore up regime legitimacy. The charge against Soros was part of Mahathir's broader indictment of the dominance of the West over the rest.<sup>190</sup> Mahathir blamed Western speculators in general, arguing that there was a conspiracy to manipulate the stock markets and exchange rates.<sup>191</sup> Exploiting the situation for further domestic political gain, Mahathir claimed that opposition parties, particularly the DAP, were foreign agents, who 'parroted' foreigners out to destroy Malaysia's political and economic stability.<sup>192</sup> Despite Mahathir's rhetoric, however, the government's policy towards the West did not change: political and trade ties with Western countries remained and ambassadors were not recalled. Academic Joseph Liow argues that this was a consequence of Mahathir's desire not to see the regime's development goals undermined. He observes that:

For all his ranting, Mahathir is fully aware that Malaysia's national interests are best served by maintaining good relations with the West, and in particular Western business enterprises, for they hold the money and technology coveted by him to make his nationalist visions a reality. Indeed, the disjuncture between Mahathir's rhetoric and policy verifies the fact that his rhetoric towards the West was constructed for political purposes, namely to bolster his legitimacy as a nationalist and was not a guide for policy.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> For this argument, see: Thillainathan, 'Malaysia and the Asian Crisis', *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>189</sup> R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 76.

<sup>190</sup> Donald K. Emmerson, 'What do the blind-sided see? Reapproaching regionalism in Southeast Asia', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 18, issue 1, 2005, p. 9.

<sup>191</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia, op.cit.*, p. 227. Mahathir had been criticising the West for years prior to the crisis, writing in 1986 that 'The West does not wish to see the East become so advanced and strong as to pose a threat to the West': Mahathir, *The Challenge, op.cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>192</sup> 'PM: Opposition parties mere agents to foreign prophets of doom', *New Straits Times*, 21 July 1998.

<sup>193</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies', *op.cit.*, pp. 154-5.

Although the hostility toward the West can be seen as almost purely political, it must be acknowledged that Mahathir's claims were not without some basis. Academic Mark Beeson argues the US used its dominant position in the IMF and World Bank to exploit the crisis, pressuring the region's governments to liberalise and thus open up Asian markets to America.<sup>194</sup>

The financial crisis not only brought about an economic downturn, it revealed the inadequacies of Malaysia's political system and the tensions within it. Historian Ooi Kee Beng contends the crisis exposed the point that the 'special position' of the Malays had not created a highly effective economy and had actually tied the hands of the 'more economic-minded' ethnic Chinese. Furthermore, the crisis pushed a number of state institutions to their limit, namely the judicial system and bureaucracy, and exposed their lack of transparency and integrity.<sup>195</sup> Tensions within UMNO gathered pace, particularly between Mahathir and his Deputy, Anwar Ibrahim. While Mahathir blamed the West and resisted the IMF, Anwar, as Finance Minister, appeared to endorse the IMF's interpretation of events and agreed to adopt the IMF's advice to reduce rapid growth in money supply and increase fiscal transparency. Mahathir feared the adoption of more IMF policies may prevent the bailout of firms linked to the government.<sup>196</sup>

With its two highest leaders at odds, UMNO became increasingly disunited. At a June 1998 UMNO meeting, a book entitled *50 Reasons Why Anwar Can't Become Prime Minister* was circulated by anti-Anwar elements. The book alleged that Anwar was involved in corruption, adultery, 'unnatural sex', complicit in murder, and was a foreign agent. Although Mahathir dismissed the contents of the book, had its author arrested, and the book itself banned, the claims in the book had nevertheless become widespread.<sup>197</sup> At the same June 1998 meeting, Anwar's supporters openly criticised

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<sup>194</sup> Mark Beeson, 'Southeast Asia and the Major Powers: The United States, Japan and China', in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, ed. M Beeson, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 203. For further criticisms of the US role in the financial crisis see: Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2004, pp. 79-80 and 209-15.

<sup>195</sup> Ooi Kee Beng, 'New Crises and Old Problems in Malaysia' in *Mahathir's Administration*, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>196</sup> Cheah, *Malaysia*, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>197</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

Mahathir for his response to the crisis.<sup>198</sup> Mahathir began to fear that Anwar would challenge him for UMNO's leadership at the next party elections, scheduled for 1999. Mahathir confronted Anwar on 1 September 1998, demanding he resign or face a public campaign of humiliation. Anwar refused, stating he would expose the rift between Mahathir and himself if he were formally sacked. Mahathir nonetheless dismissed Anwar on 2 September.<sup>199</sup> Anwar was expelled from UMNO on 4 September.<sup>200</sup> In dismissing Anwar, Mahathir accused Anwar of 'inappropriate behaviour', citing the aforementioned anti-Anwar book distributed at the June UMNO meeting as evidence.<sup>201</sup>

In response, Anwar mobilised mass followings and demonstrations.<sup>202</sup> Anwar coupled a push for increased accountability with elements of Islam and social activism, appealing to liberal, devout and alienated Malays. By the middle of September, Anwar was drawing crowds of 50,000.<sup>203</sup> Anwar was 'warmly reclaimed' by ABIM and other Islamic NGOs.<sup>204</sup> In the face of growing public support for the ousted Deputy leader, the authorities arrested Anwar at his home on 20 September. Six of Anwar's supporters were likewise detained under the ISA. The police claimed all seven had been arrested for acting against national security and participating in a rally which threatened public order.<sup>205</sup> Mahathir immediately invoked Islam in defending his action, stating 'I am a better Muslim than Anwar is.'<sup>206</sup> Within a month of Anwar's arrest, 270 others were arrested for participating in peaceful assemblies.<sup>207</sup> After much international criticism, Anwar's arrest under the ISA was rescinded. However, the Attorney-General then charged Anwar under criminal law, namely five counts of sexual misconduct and five

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<sup>198</sup> William Case, 'The Anwar Trial and its Wider Implications' in *Malaysian Economics and Politics in the New Century*, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>200</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>201</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Press Advisory – Arrests in Malaysia', *Human Rights Watch*, <<http://www.hrw.org/press98/bck-brif/my-pr0921.htm>>, 21 September 1998, (accessed 10 December 2007).

<sup>202</sup> Case, 'The Anwar Trial and its Wider Implications', *op.cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>203</sup> William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, Curzon, Richmond, 2002, p. 134.

<sup>204</sup> Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006, p. 129.

<sup>205</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Press Advisory – Arrests in Malaysia', *op.cit.*

<sup>206</sup> John Funston, 'Malaysia's Tenth Elections: *Status quo*, Reformasi or Islamisation?' *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, issue 1, 2000, p. 37.

<sup>207</sup> Parti Keadilan Rakyat, 'Sham Democracy: A Report on Malaysian Elections', *Parti KeADILan Rakyat*, <<http://www.keadilanrakyat.org/library/documents/sham-democracy.pdf>>, 2006, (accessed 1 January 2007).

(later reduced to four) counts of corrupt practices. These charges appeared to be designed to weaken Anwar's credibility as a devout Muslim and as a reformer.<sup>208</sup> The majority, if not all of the charges appeared to be politically motivated if not completely fictional. For example, of the five men who claimed to have sodomised by Anwar, three would later admit that their 'confessions' had been coerced.<sup>209</sup> Nonetheless, Anwar went on trial for abuse of power on November 1998 and was found guilty on all counts. A trial on the sodomy allegations began in December, concluding in August 2000 with a guilty verdict. Anwar was subsequently jailed.<sup>210</sup>

The coercive apparatus had again been used to crush the momentum of the regime's political opponents. As with the faction battle, the government's action against Anwar exposed a deep rift within UMNO. The arrest of Anwar and his supporters was clearly designed to eliminate this political split and act as a warning to those UMNO members who might dare challenge the *status quo* in the future. While, in this respect, the government's action was successful, it backfired in a different context. The various opposition parties were able to effectively capitalise on the growing dissent within UMNO and the increased public sense of dissatisfaction with the country's leadership.

In the aftermath of Anwar's arrest, his wife, Wan Azizah Ismail launched a political reform organisation known as the Movement for Social Justice (ADIL). In April 1999, ADIL became Keadilan (National Justice Party).<sup>211</sup> Purporting to be multi-ethnic, Keadilan attracted over 100,000 members in its first month.<sup>212</sup> Keadilan united with PAS and DAP to form the Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front/BA), a coalition unofficially supported by various smaller or non-Peninsular parties.<sup>213</sup> Despite the major political differences between the parties – PAS being overtly Islamic, DAP and Keadilan being more secular – the BA produced a common manifesto entitled *Toward a Just Malaysia*. The manifesto emphasised the commonalities of the parties, not mentioning PAS' commitment to forging an Islamic state or DAP's call for a Malaysian

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<sup>208</sup> Case, 'The Anwar Trial and its Wider Implications', *op.cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>209</sup> Peletz, *Islamic Modern*, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

<sup>210</sup> Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>211</sup> Jason Abbott, 'Vanquishing Banquo's Ghost: The Anwar Ibrahim Affair and its Impact on Malaysian Politics', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 25, issue 3, 2001, p. 292.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>213</sup> Meredith L. Weiss, 'Overcoming Race-based Politics in Malaysia: Establishing Norms for Deeper Multiethnic Cooperation' in *Mahathir's Administration*, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

Malaysia.<sup>214</sup> The BA campaigned for *reformasi*, pushing for the elimination of corruption, the reduction of income inequality, an increase in individual and media freedoms, and enhanced transparency and accountability.<sup>215</sup> Overall, the BA was a clear departure from the racially-based agenda of the BN coalition. The BA did not contain any race-based parties – although PAS, as an Islamic party, can be regarded as a Malay party – and stressed class issues over race issues. In doing so, the BA was attempting to capitalise on the fact that, since the introduction of the NEP, Malays and non-Malays were increasingly sharing the same economic space and thus had many of the same economic and political concerns.<sup>216</sup>

Facing for the first time since 1969 significant popular support for opposition parties, the BN drew deeply from its ‘kitbag of dirty tricks’ in the lead-up to the 1999 general elections.<sup>217</sup> The key emphasis in the government’s election strategy was to invoke the race card and stress the possibility of a repeat of the 1969 race riots. In speaking around the country, Mahathir often mentioned riots, warning that the opposition may resort to violence because they could not win the election.<sup>218</sup> BN election broadcasts featured images of the racial violence against the Chinese community that had occurred in the midst of Indonesia’s own *reformasi*, thereby implying that only a BN government could ensure the allegedly precarious ethnic balance within Malaysia was not upset.<sup>219</sup> The opposition also resorted to scare tactics, warning Muslims not to vote in un-Islamic ways lest they be punished in the afterlife.<sup>220</sup> Interestingly, despite government claims to the contrary, there was little evidence of racial tension in Malaysian society in the aftermath of the Anwar Ibrahim scandal. The *reformasi* movement in fact appeared to be focusing on ‘non-racial’ issues, namely corruption and transparency.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> William Case, ‘Malaysia’s General Elections in 1999: A Consolidated and High-Quality Semi-Democracy’, *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 25, issue 1, 2001, p. 46.

<sup>215</sup> Weiss, ‘Overcoming Race-based Politics in Malaysia’, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>217</sup> Case, ‘Malaysia’s General Elections in 1999’, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>218</sup> Funston, ‘Malaysia’s Tenth Elections’, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>219</sup> Abbott, ‘Vanquishing Banquo’s Ghost’, *op.cit.*, p. 299.

<sup>220</sup> Case, ‘Malaysia’s General Elections in 1999’, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>221</sup> In-Won Hwang, ‘Authoritarianism and UMNO’s Factional Conflicts’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 32, issue 2, 2002, pp. 216-7.



The election was held on 29 November, following an eight-day campaign period.<sup>222</sup> UMNO suffered severe losses in the election, losing 22 parliamentary seats and 56 peninsular state assembly seats.<sup>223</sup> UMNO now held fewer parliamentary seats than the combined total of its BN partners. To ensure the continuation of its power, UMNO became more dependent than ever on the other parties in the BN.<sup>224</sup> A particularly significant outcome of the election was that the majority of non-Malay votes were for the BN. This marked a dramatic shift in Malaysia's electoral politics as, in the past, the non-Malay parties in the coalition had been reliant on Malay votes to balance the number of non-Malay votes that went to the opposition. Moreover, in 1999 non-Malay votes were crucial in helping a number of UMNO members get elected. The BN's scare campaign had clearly worked. Many Chinese voted for the government as a consequence of the ethnic violence in Indonesia, which the BN had heavily referenced in its campaign.<sup>225</sup> At the same time, the Chinese became increasingly cautious of the DAP, given the party's association with PAS. The Chinese were particularly concerned about PAS' desire to establish an Islamic state, a fact which the BN had used in the campaign to scare the non-Malays.<sup>226</sup>

In terms of the opposition, PAS was the most successful of the *reformasi* parties. In the lead-up to the elections, the other *reformasi* parties had to accept PAS as the dominant party, given that it was already the largest opposition party in the country.<sup>227</sup> In total, the elections saw the BA increase its number of parliamentary seats from 22 to 45. PAS won 27 parliamentary seats and 98 state assembly seats, compared to seven and 33 respectively in the 1995 elections.<sup>228</sup> PAS's success in the election, however, was a result of the euphoria surrounding *reformasi* rather than a widespread endorsement of the party's policies. As Syed Ahmad Hussein has argued, PAS was the biggest

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<sup>222</sup> The government was criticised for the timing of the election. Parliament had been suspended in the middle of a debate over the budget and, by holding the elections before the year's end, an estimated 680,000 new voters were kept off the electoral rolls. Many of these voters were young adults and it was believed they would have voted 'overwhelmingly' in favour of the opposition: Case, 'Malaysia's General Elections in 1999', *op.cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>223</sup> Wah, 'A New Politics in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>225</sup> Hing, 'Differing Perspectives on Integration and Nation-Building in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, and; Funston, 'Malaysia's Tenth Elections', *op.cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>227</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'The UMNO-PAS Struggle: Analysis of PAS's Defeat in 2004', in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>228</sup> Hussein, 'Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 106.

beneficiary of *reformasi* but not the biggest contributor.<sup>229</sup> PAS would later misinterpret its increased popularity as support for its Islamic agenda, resulting in its disastrous election performance in 2004.<sup>230</sup> Indeed, the DAP would eventually leave the BA in September 2001 in protest over PAS' adoption of Islamic laws, notably the *hudud*, in the states of Terengganu and Kelantan where PAS held power.<sup>231</sup> The government would continue to intimidate the opposition parties, using coercion to undermine their successes. After the election, for example, the government imposed restrictions on PAS' newspaper, *Harakah*, and closed down other opposition papers.<sup>232</sup> In the coming years, there would also be several waves of arrests targeting pro-Anwar opposition figures.<sup>233</sup>

While in the short-term *reformasi* united disparate groups around a common theme – supporting Anwar and protesting the *status quo* – in the long-term it failed to maintain cohesion.<sup>234</sup> *Reformasi*'s momentum slowed and was practically non-existent by the time of the next elections. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that the movement was essentially non-racial in character, with the issue of race and ethnic identity having been a central part of Malaysia's political culture for decades and remaining important for many of Malaysia's citizenry.<sup>235</sup> In short, the Anwar Ibrahim fiasco and the resulting *reformasi* movement illustrated, somewhat paradoxically, the success of the BN system in formulating a national identity and ideology based on race and ethnicity and the maintenance of race relations and entrenching it within the nation's psyche. It also marked a continuation of a theme established in the 1987 factional battle: when faced by internal party conflict, UMNO would resort to race-based scare tactics to shore up support for the government. Given the aforementioned importance of racial/ethnic issues to Malaysian society at large this was not surprising. The scare tactics involved,

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<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>230</sup> Fauzi, 'The UMNO-PAS Struggle', *op.cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*, p. 106, and; Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities*, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>232</sup> Funston, 'The Malay Electorate in 2004: Reversing the 1999 Result?' in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>233</sup> See for examples: Human Rights Watch, 'Malaysia: End Political Arrests', *Human Rights Watch*, <<http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/04/malaysia0430.htm>>, 30 April 2001, (accessed 10 December 2007), and; Human Rights Watch, 'Malaysia's Internal Security Act and Suppression of Political Dissent: A Human Rights Watch Backgrounder', *Human Rights Watch*, <<http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/malaysia-bck-0513.htm>>, 13 May 2002, (10 December 2007).

<sup>234</sup> Fauzi, 'The UMNO-PAS Struggle', *op.cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>235</sup> Sheila Nair, 'The Limits of Protest and Prospects for Political Reform in Malaysia', *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, issue 3, 2007, p. 356.

primarily, the use of the coercive apparatus against dissenting elements, with the government justifying its actions on the dubious claim that it was attempting to avoid another May 13. Ethnicity had continued to remain a central part of the security apparatus' ideological component.

### **A Growing Concern: The Importance of Islam to Security Policy Immediately Prior to 9/11**

Though the maintenance of ethnic stability remained the main priority of the government's security policy, in the years and months leading up to the September 11 attacks in 2001 the promotion of government Islam was again the primary motivation behind a number of government crackdowns. Indeed, given the government's history of 'removing' from Malaysia's political terrain any Islamic groups which deviated from the pro-development, pro-BN version of Islam, the 9/11 attacks did not bring about a dramatic shift in policy orientation as it did in other countries. By 11 September 2001, the government had firmly established its security credentials in this context, evinced in the crackdowns against Al-Maunah, the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (Malaysian Militant Organisation, or KMM) and PAS which occurred just prior to the 9/11 attacks.

#### *Al-Maunah*

Al-Maunah began as a martial arts association, registering as a society in September 1998, and growing to include over 1000 members nationwide. Led by Mohamed Amin Mohamed Razali (Amin), the movement claimed to provide to its followers through martial arts not only physical strength but an 'invisible strength' attained through belief and submission to Allah.<sup>236</sup> Amin cultivated a deep loyalty among his followers, many of whom believed he had supernatural powers. The supernatural powers attributed to Amin included the ability to read minds, disappear then reappear elsewhere, and send opponents flying by lifting an eyebrow.<sup>237</sup> Amin claimed similar powers could be attained by Al-Maunah's members.<sup>238</sup> Followers were required to pledge allegiance to Amin and were warned about questioning his judgement. Most of Al-Maunah's

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<sup>236</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 175 and 178.

<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175.

members were said to be captivated by Amin and his powers and genuinely believed his claim to have been gifted with special powers by God.<sup>239</sup> Amin also declared that Malaysia must become an Islamic state and that the Prime Minister should resign and be replaced by an Islamic scholar.<sup>240</sup>

On 2 July 2000, a group of 20 Al-Maunah members infiltrated two army camps in Perak and stole a large cache of weapons. The government alleged Al-Maunah had planned to post the details of its success on its website with the aim of creating chaos in the country and toppling the government.<sup>241</sup> The group involved in the heist were tracked by authorities to their hideout where, after a brief siege, two non-Muslim hostages were killed by Al-Maunah members.<sup>242</sup> Amin was captured, four other members surrendered to the authorities, and 29 others were charged under Malaysia's Penal Code for 'waging war against the [King].'<sup>243</sup> It was claimed Al-Maunah was also responsible for grenade attacks on a brewery and a Hindu temple at the Batu Caves. 16 Al-Maunah members would later be given life imprisonment and three others, including Amin, were sentenced to death by hanging.<sup>244</sup>

The government attempted to exploit the incident politically, using it as a pretext to criticise PAS. The government accused PAS of having sympathy for movements such as Al-Maunah.<sup>245</sup> Mahathir claimed many of Al-Maunah's members had at one time been members of PAS. UMNO's Secretary-General, Khalil Yaakob, claimed Al-Maunah had been inspired by the militant overtones of PAS propaganda.<sup>246</sup> Much to the government's embarrassment, however, it was soon revealed that there were also UMNO members in the Al-Maunah organisation.<sup>247</sup> PAS claimed that the whole Al-Maunah affair was a government orchestrated *sandiwara* (play-acting). PAS argued that

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<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>240</sup> Fauzi, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>241</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>242</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op.cit.*, p. 647.

<sup>243</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>244</sup> 'Death penalty for three Malaysians', *BBCNews*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1731503.stm>>, 28 December 2001, (accessed 9 January 2008).

<sup>245</sup> Farish, 'Blood, Sweat and Jihad', *op.cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>246</sup> Fauzi, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, pp. 17-8.

<sup>247</sup> Farish, 'Blood, Sweat and Jihad', *op.cit.*, p. 223, and; Jan Stark, 'Contesting Models of Islamic Governance in Malaysia and Indonesia', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 16, issue 2, 2004, p. 129.

the government had constructed the incident to tarnish the name of Islam and Islamic movements in general.<sup>248</sup>

Al-Maunah was a rare instance in the history of Malaysia where a fringe Islamic group represented a legitimate threat to the established order. It also marked one of the few occasions outside of the 1969 riots in which the security apparatus reacted to the crimes rather than pre-empted them. Mahathir seemed to admit that the government was wrong in not using the security apparatus preventively in this instance, stating:

When we saw a group of people carrying out training, we thought this was something normal because in Malaysia we have many such groups...We did not do anything until they carried out their activities, including killing people. This is very sad, but now our apparatus has been enhanced.<sup>249</sup>

Overall, Al-Maunah's blending of mysticism with Islam was a clear deviation from the official brand of Islam. Al-Maunah thus presented a threat to the state not only as a consequence of the crimes committed but on the level of ideology as well, though it did not gain support as widespread as Al-Arqam.

### *The KMM*

Malaysia's first major encounter with a group allegedly connected to international terrorism was the Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia, or as it was later and more widely known, Kumpulan Militan Malaysia. On November 4, 2000, Kedah state assemblyman and deputy state chief of the MIC Dr. Joe Fernandez was driving home when two men on a motorcycle stopped alongside his car in heavy traffic and shot him dead. Although initial investigations into the murder centred on a possible business motive, religion eventually became seen as a key factor as, prior to his death, Dr. Fernandez had been accused of helping to convert Muslims to Christianity.<sup>250</sup> The investigation was effectively stalled until a botched bank robbery in Jalan Gasing, Petaling Jaya on 18

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<sup>248</sup> Farish, *Islam Embedded, op.cit.*, p. 647.

<sup>249</sup> Brendan Pereira, 'KL to keep close eye on schools run by PAS', *The Straits Times*, 16 October 2001.

<sup>250</sup> Ian Stewart, 'Sectarian motives explored in politician's murder', *South China Morning Post*, 29 November 2000.

May 2001 which led to the arrest of nine individuals. The nine suspects confessed their involvement in the murder of Dr. Fernandez and were soon connected to various other crimes, including the bombing of a church, an Indian temple and a video centre, as well as the attempted murder of two ethnic Indians.<sup>251</sup> The arrests led to the exposure of 84 other members.<sup>252</sup>

Originally known as the 'jihad gang', the KMM was linked to international terrorism within days of the initial arrests, the depth of the link exposed over the coming months.<sup>253</sup> The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Tan Sri Norian Mai noted that several members had fought in Afghanistan and Ambon and that they sought to create a 'pure and clean' society.<sup>254</sup> Police seized documents on the group's 40-week training schedules, warfare theories, and analyses of militancy in southern Philippines, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Ambon.<sup>255</sup>

Contrary to the official argument that KMM was a player in an international terrorist network, Liow puts forward the argument that KMM was essentially a domestic organisation, citing the group's emphasis on religious purity among Malays, support of PAS, and desire to implement Shari'a law within Malaysia. Liow argues that while aspects of the group's ideology may originate from external sources such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a regional terrorist group against which the government would launch a series of crackdowns in the aftermath of 9/11, the movement remained essentially 'home-grown.' Liow contends that links with JI – and, by association, al-Qaeda – have been difficult to ascertain and remain inconclusive.<sup>256</sup> Liow's argument, however, fails to acknowledge the substantial overlap in membership between KMM and JI.<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, Singapore JI member Othman Mohamed assisted the KMM in buying a boat to support militant activities in Indonesia, namely ferrying supplies and fighters to

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<sup>251</sup> Leslie Lau, '7 suspects linked to murder of Kedah politician', *The Straits Times*, 7 June 2001, and; Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op.cit.*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>252</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>253</sup> See for example: 'Group linked to politician's murder held', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 7 June 2001.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> Elina Noor, 'Terrorism in Malaysia: Situation and Response' in *Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific: Threat and Response*, ed. R. Gunaratna, Eastern Universities Press, Singapore, 2003, p. 162.

<sup>256</sup> Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op.cit.*, p. 248.

<sup>257</sup> See Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 179.

the Maluku islands.<sup>258</sup> In return, KMM helped JI acquire ammonium nitrate as part of a plan to bomb targets in Singapore.<sup>259</sup> JI leader Hambali is also said to have played a significant role in the KMM, leading meetings with KMM members in 1997 to discuss the idea of overthrowing the Malaysian government by force and replacing it with an Islamic state.<sup>260</sup>

While the extent to which KMM was associated with JI is somewhat debatable, it had become clear that the security apparatus was no longer focused on purely domestic threats. Malaysia's security policy had prevented many major uprisings from within the Muslim community, the coercive apparatus having been deployed on numerous occasions to uphold the government's Islamic ideology and thus limit the ideological space for alternative strands of Islam. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, however, more militant strands of Islam had emerged and, in some cases, developed into regional networks. Having limited the potential for home-grown Islam, the Malaysian government was now faced with a more international interpretation of Islam and employed the security apparatus accordingly.

#### *Further Crackdowns on PAS*

The increased emphasis of the security apparatus on international groups soon impacted on Malaysia's Islamic politics, namely the contest between UMNO and PAS. However, while the government had no hesitation in portraying PAS as terrorists at the political level, in terms of actual security operations the opposition party was not the target of a substantial or widespread crackdown.

After the capture of the first nine KMM militants, the IGP ruled out any possible link between the militants and any political organisations in the country.<sup>261</sup> This soon changed with the arrest in August 2001 of Nik Adli Nik Aziz, son of PAS spiritual leader Nik Aziz Nik Mat. It was alleged that Nik Adli had received military training in Afghanistan between 1990 and 1996 where he recruited other Malaysians for militant

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*, and; Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore, 2003, p. 8.

<sup>259</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper, op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>260</sup> Ressa, *Seeds of Terror, op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>261</sup> 'Group linked to politician's murder held', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 7 June 2001.

activities.<sup>262</sup> The detention order claimed Nik Adli was seeking to overthrow the Malaysian government through 'armed struggle' and sought to replace it with 'a pure Islamic state comprising Indonesia, Mindanao and Malaysia.'<sup>263</sup> Along with Zainon Ismail, an Afghanistan War veteran, he was also said to be one of the founding members of the KMM.<sup>264</sup>

Immediately after his son was arrested, Nik Aziz claimed the arrest was politically motivated, stating, 'I can think of no other reason why the government arrested my son but to undermine the PAS party.'<sup>265</sup> Furthering this claim, Australian scholar James Cotton criticised the government's use of Nik Adli's experience in Afghanistan as evidence by noting many other Malaysians had likewise fought against the Soviet occupation of that country with explicit government encouragement.<sup>266</sup> Contrary to Cotton's argument, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, the Chairman of pro-government Malaysian think-tank ISIS, points out that Nik Adli was essentially a political non-entity, stating 'If you wanted to go for Nik Aziz, why not go for Nik Aziz?'<sup>267</sup> Further, Abuza contends that if the arrest was politically motivated it was also 'politically very courageous' in the period before 9/11 as Mahathir was looking vulnerable in the polls whilst the opposition was growing in strength, basking in the aftermath of *reformasi*.<sup>268</sup> This line of argument is also supported by Jawhar, who notes, 'As far as the government is concerned, it knows if it does something like this [that is] politically motivated it is counter-productive.' Indeed, Jawhar points out no high-profile members of the political opposition were incarcerated.<sup>269</sup> In keeping with previous moves against PAS, an alternative view would be that the arrest of Nik Adli was designed to intimidate PAS, a warning to not overstep and force the government's hand.

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<sup>262</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, pp. 170-1.

<sup>263</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Reaping the Bitter Harvest After Twenty Years of State Islamisation: The Malaysian Experience Post-September 11' in *Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific*, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>264</sup> See for example: Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 170, and; Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>265</sup> Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>266</sup> James Cotton, 'Southeast Asia after 11 September', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, issue 1, 2003, p. 156.

<sup>267</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>268</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>269</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.



There is some suggestion that the KMM itself was a fabrication of the government, a cover for the arrest of opposition members such as Nik Adli.<sup>270</sup> Alleged members of KMM, while under detention, continuously denied the existence of the group, claiming the whole organisation was a creation of the police and that the government had distorted their legitimate participation in a loose network of Malaysian alumni of Islamist schools in India and Pakistan.<sup>271</sup> The belief in such a notion among certain segments of Malaysian society is primarily – if not solely – the fault of the government. The government weakened its own case in two main ways. First, unlike the Al-Maunah case where the government took the movement to the civil courts and provided conclusive evidence on their activities, it detained the KMM members and Nik Adli without trial under the ISA.<sup>272</sup> Thus, the public – and the political opposition – did not see the charges against the group proven in a court of law. Second, the government, without explanation, changed the name of the KMM from Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia to Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, both of which had the same initials, lending support to the thesis that the organisation's existence was fabricated.<sup>273</sup> Secretary-General of the Parti Sosialis Malaysia S Arutchelvam argued that the reason for the name change was simply because the term *Mujahideen* brought up feelings of admiration, not revulsion, amongst the Muslim populace.<sup>274</sup> Overall, though, as argued by Malaysian academic K. S. Balakrishnan, the assertion that the KMM was completely fabricated is weak because those who put forward this theory fail to cite or recognise in their analysis the murder of Joe Fernandez, the robberies and the other crimes allegedly committed by the group, none of which would have occurred without the existence of an underground criminal organisation.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> For examples of this argument see Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy: operational and ideological challenges', *op.cit.*, p. 251, and; Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security', *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>271</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security', *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>272</sup> Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op.cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>273</sup> Cotton, 'Southeast Asia after 11 September', *op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>274</sup> Interview with S Arutchelvam, Secretary General, Parti Sosialis Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 31 July 2007.

<sup>275</sup> Interview with K. S. Balakrishnan, Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 19 July 2007.

## **Conclusion**

The aftermath of the 1969 riots saw ethnicity pushed to the forefront of Malaysia's politics. Maintaining the so-called 'racial balance' has since remained a central concern of the government and one of its main legitimating tools. Nonetheless, the government recognised that the domestic impact of the worldwide Islamic renaissance beginning in the 1970s required an official response. The government formulated a policy which enhanced the already privileged position of the Muslim Malays by Islamizing the institutions of the state. Given the entwined nature of Malay ethnic identity and local Islam, the government's response was to a large extent a continuation of its race-based politics, though in this instance it was the religion of one ethnic group which was emphasised rather than ethnicity alone.

In terms of security, the government continued to use the security apparatus to maintain its hegemony over Malaysian society and politics. In keeping with the times, the apparatus was increasingly deployed against those groups which provided alternative versions of Islam to that promoted by the state, including ABIM, PAS, Al-Arqam, Al-Maunah and a number of small allegedly militant groups. Somewhat ironically, these organisations were either responding to, or created as a result of, the government's Islamisation policies. In a sense, the government's emphasis on Islam had achieved the opposite of what was intended: it had provoked increased resistance instead of creating a unified and cohesive Malay national group loyal to the state and its brand of Islam. Further complications arose with the presence of international Islamic terrorism, the government again deploying the security apparatus to detain alleged perpetrators and used the arrests for political gain in its contest against PAS.

The government's new focus on Islam formed the basis for a new component of its state ideology. The use of the coercive apparatus against various groups was often justified on religious grounds, though was essentially motivated by the political imperative of enhancing the government's Islamic credentials and thus its legitimacy within the Malay community. In justifying the coercive apparatus, the government also appealed to both Malay and non-Malay audiences, referring to the stability provided by the state version of Islam and portraying other so-called deviant versions as a threat to the *status quo* and the racial harmony with which it was linked. The ideological apparatus

effectively limited the rhetorical space available for counter-versions of Islam and therefore restricted the possibilities for dissent. Politics in Malaysia increasingly became dominated by Islamic politics, namely the contest between UMNO and PAS for the Malay vote. However, given UMNO's control of the state, and the security apparatus, it was the government that set the parameters of the country's Islamic politics, thereby limiting PAS's ability to provide genuine political opposition.

The period in Islamic politics immediately preceding 9/11 was one of escalating tension over the issue of terrorism, reflected in the use of the coercive apparatus against PAS. The crackdown on KMM exposed the government and Malaysian society in general to the threat posed by international groups with militant tendencies. As with the government's previous actions against domestic Islamic groups, the government effectively capitalised on the events for political gain, attempting to associate PAS with international terrorism and thus paint it as a party with deviant tendencies. Despite the international dimension, the KMM arrests in many ways marked a continuation of previous practices. However, the events of 9/11 would take the political battle between UMNO and PAS to an entirely new level.<sup>276</sup>

At the same time as the security apparatus was being deployed in defence of state Islam, the government faced two major internal crises, each resolved with reference to race rather than Islam alone. First, the 1987 faction battle literally split UMNO in two. Using grassroots demonstrations as a pretext, the government launched a crackdown, arresting several opposition politicians and activists. The government justified its actions by claiming it was averting another May 13-style riot. In actuality, most of those arrested were not associated with ethnic issues. A more accurate interpretation of events was that the arrests were politically motivated, designed to intimidate UMNO's opponents, legitimate its rule, and ward off challenges to Mahathir's leadership. Second, the arrest and trial of Anwar Ibrahim created disunity within UMNO and saw a dramatic increase in the popularity of several opposition parties, particularly PAS. The government did not launch a wide-scale police operation as it did with the faction battle, but it did arrest a large number of Anwar supporters and protestors on the grounds of national security. To combat waning support for its agenda, the BN turned to race to gain votes. In this

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<sup>276</sup> Cotton, 'Southeast Asia after 11 September', *op. cit.*, p. 156.

context, the government again raised the spectre of the 1969 riots, though this time mainly to encourage non-Malay support. In this respect, the government was successful, gaining a large number of non-Malay votes in the 1999 elections.

Overall, Malaysia's security policy from the 1970s through to the start of the new century remained largely based on the issue of ethnicity, though Islam – a core element of Malay ethnic identity – was also increasingly utilised and established as a political tool. The issue of race was largely used to legitimate the existing order, the lack of racial riots attributed not to the restraint of the citizenry or the growing sense of national – rather than ethnic – identity in the country but to the multiethnic balance provided and embodied by the BN. Any threat to the BN, be it violent or political, was thus by extension regarded and promoted as a threat to the country's racial balance. Malaysia's security policy would continue in its current format to the present day. The events of 9/11 and the alleged growth of transnational Islamic militancy brought about a renewed emphasis on the Islamic component of the ideological apparatus and altered the state of Islamic politics in the country. The coercive and ideological response of the government is detailed in the final two chapters.

# Chapter Five

## Malaysia's Coercive Apparatus in the Age of Terrorism

*If the choice is between public safety and public freedoms, I do not hesitate to say here that public safety will always win.*

**Abdullah Ahmad Badawi<sup>1</sup>**

The post-9/11 era marked a continuation of the coercive apparatus established in the early years of the Emergency. Arrests of suspected terrorists began in the months prior to 9/11 and have continued in the months and years since. Counter-terrorism became one of the primary justifications for the government's use of the ISA in particular and operational crackdowns in general. The fear of terrorism was used to provoke a certain reaction from the population – one which was intended to justify and win support for the deployment of the coercive apparatus. That said, the number of detainees under the ISA has dropped since the 'War on Terror.' Instead the main function of the coercive apparatus has been to intimidate – to create fear for the wide variety of actors opposed, though often not violently, to the government and the *status quo*. Such consistency in security policy is remarkable given that in the post-9/11 period Malaysia underwent a leadership transition from the Prime Ministership of Mahathir Mohamad to Abdullah Badawi. There is little distinction to be made between the application of the coercive apparatus by either Prime Minister.

While the coercive apparatus itself has remained virtually unchanged in the present period, there are a few notable exceptions. First, there has been an increase in

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<sup>1</sup> 'Speech by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Khazanah Global Lecture Series, Putrajaya International Convention Centre', *New Straits Times*, 10 December 2007.

transnational cooperation, most notably with the United States of America. Second, the ISA, once derided by much of the international community, is now seen as an acceptable counter-terrorism tool by many outsiders and its continued use in Malaysia has seemingly been validated. This marks a major change in Malaysia's operational security policy as it now faces less criticism for its actions. Indeed, the ISA has been reframed as a public relations tool that the government uses to showcase its anti-fundamentalism and 'progressiveness' as a modern Islamic state.

In addition to these changes, the other most noteworthy feature of Malaysia's post-9/11 coercive strategy has been the use of the 'terrorist bogeyman' to justify the use of the coercive apparatus against non-terrorist actors and non-traditional threats. The security apparatus has been increasingly abused for political purposes. The terrorist bogeyman is effectively blended with the previous bogeymen of Malaysian security politics, namely racial provocateurs and religious deviants. In many ways the terrorist bogeyman is a clear continuation of the regime's previous campaign against deviancy. Several low-level members of PAS were arrested and a political campaign linking the party to international terrorism launched. The government's attack against PAS was mostly political, with, as I have noted the coercive apparatus predominantly used to intimidate, rather than detain, its members. The post-9/11 political conflict between PAS and UMNO revolved around the Afghanistan conflict and the rise of Islamic radicalism in the world generally. By pushing hardline rhetoric in relation to these situations, PAS effectively gave the power it had gained from *reformasi* back to UMNO. In this phase, at least, UMNO emerged the clear winner, with a shattered PAS left to pick up the pieces. Internet weblogs ('blogs') and bloggers were also targeted by the government for featuring allegedly anti-government comments on their websites. In an attempt to create self-censorship within the Malaysian blogosphere, the government declared it would use counter-terrorism legislation against any bloggers posting comments that threatened ethnic harmony or that could be regarded as seditious. Finally, an Indian rights group protesting the government's marginalisation of the country's ethnic Indian community were labelled 'extremists' and 'terrorists' by UMNO's leadership. Several of the movement's leaders were arrested on these, and other equally dubious, grounds. Evident here is the blending – albeit unconvincingly – of two of the security apparatus' main themes: ethnicity and counter-terrorism.

Overall, the increased use of the coercive apparatus against legitimate political opponents and figures, combined with the increase in international endorsement of Malaysia's security approach, has set a dangerous precedent for the country's politics, significantly damaging Malaysia's growing, but still developing, civil society. Despite a seemingly new emphasis on counter-terrorism, the coercive apparatus continues to be primarily concerned with regime security. The line between genuine national threats and legitimate political opposition has been increasingly blurred by the regime in a clear attempt to reaffirm its grip on power. In this chapter I will focus on the coercive component of Malaysia's response to contemporary threats, namely terrorism, and argue that it has been a period of remarkable continuity. However, as chapter six will illustrate, there is less consistency in the ideological apparatus.

### **Continuity in a World of Change: The Coercive Apparatus in Action Post-9/11**

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001 heralded the beginning of a new era in world politics, one defined by both increased transnational cooperation to counter terrorism and by a renewed emphasis on internal security. Governments around the world struggled to find the appropriate response to this 'new' threat to global peace and economic security, many significantly altering the legislative fabric of their societies on the grounds of countering terrorism. For Malaysia, however, there was no such struggle or debate. There was almost complete continuity from the policy that had been established in previous decades and recently implemented against the KMM. The coercive apparatus continued its primary function of legitimising the government, namely by detaining and restricting the activities of alleged threats to the regime – as opposed to simply threats to the nation – and undermining the political credibility of its political opponents. The coercive apparatus was utilised in a number of crackdowns in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 to legitimise the regime at the international, rather than purely domestic, level of politics. The main justification for this was to quell a view which had developed in some international circles that Malaysia was a supporter or at least an enabler of terrorism.

David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith argue the ASEAN countries had long failed to recognise, let alone attempted to counter, the threat posed by the rise of radical militant Islam. They contend that 9/11 stripped away the 'illusion' of regional order that

had been maintained by the governments of Southeast Asia since the financial crisis. The events of September 11 exposed the networks of antagonistic Islamist organisations that had allegedly developed without the knowledge of the ASEAN governments.<sup>2</sup> It has also been argued that, within the region, Malaysia is one of the least experienced in handling the threats posed by terrorism since it has only undergone one nationwide armed rebellion, that of the CPM.<sup>3</sup> Most other Southeast Asian countries, with the exception of Singapore, have faced multiple rebellions or insurgencies.

While the countries of the region were certainly caught off-guard by the revelation of allegedly sophisticated terrorist networks operating in their midst,<sup>4</sup> Malaysia was hardly as unprepared as the arguments above both imply and contend. As I argued in the previous chapter, Malaysia has had decades of experience dealing with the threat from fundamentalist religious groups. Within Southeast Asia, Malaysia is the most staunchly opposed to religious fundamentalism, evidenced in the regime's ideological apparatus and the number of security crackdowns against such organisations that preceded the events of 9/11 and that were, in turn, justified by this ideology.

Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks Malaysia was described by US officials as a springboard state for al-Qaeda operations, including its operation on 9/11.<sup>5</sup> The accusations were derived from a number of instances. In 1995, Wali Khan Amin Shah, an international terrorist associated with Ramzi Ahmed Youssef, the man responsible for the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing, was arrested in Malaysia.<sup>6</sup> In January 2000, Yazid Sufaat, a former Malaysian army captain, hosted a three-day meeting at his condominium in Kuala Lumpur in which the attack on the *USS Cole* in

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<sup>2</sup> David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith, 'Southeast Asia and the War against Terrorism: The Rise of Islamism and the Challenge to the Surveillance State' in *September 11 & Political Freedom: Asian Perspectives*, eds. U. Johannsen, A. Smith and J. Gomez, Select Publishing, Singapore, 2003, pp. 146-8.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia', *Working Paper No. 123*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2007, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Particularly Indonesia, see: Jones and Smith, 'Southeast Asia and the War against Terrorism', *op. cit.*, pp. 146-8.

<sup>5</sup> Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 2003, p. 123.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy: operational and ideological challenges', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, issue 2, 2004, p. 246.



October 2000 was planned.<sup>7</sup> Present at the meeting were two of the 9/11 hijackers, Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi.<sup>8</sup> The movements of Al-Midhar and al-Hazmi were tracked by Malaysian intelligence afterwards but there was not enough evidence to arrest them. The two were eventually put on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) watch list eighteen months later on August 21, 2001, less than a month prior to 9/11.<sup>9</sup> Yazid Sufaat, the host of the Kuala Lumpur meeting, was also alleged to have assisted Zacharias Massaoui, another supposed planner of the 9/11 attacks, during his stay in Malaysia.<sup>10</sup> A further terrorist attack alleged to have been planned in Malaysia – though this time by Hambali, a leader of international terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah – was the Christmas Eve 2000 bombings in Indonesia that left 19 dead.<sup>11</sup>

The view of Malaysia as a hub was not helped by the openness of the country's financial sector and lax immigration requirements. Zachary Abuza, a specialist in Southeast Asian security issues with connections to the US government, claims that as an Islamic banking and financial centre with a growing economy Malaysia was 'an unassuming place to establish front companies from the Middle East'; something which occurred at least once.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, alleged al-Qaeda members testified that Malaysia's banking network had been essential to Osama bin Laden's organisation during the 1990s. In regards to immigration, there had been massive inflows of Middle Easterners due to the lack of visa requirements for citizens of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) states.<sup>13</sup> These immigration policies helped perpetuate the view that radical Islamists were free to come and go in the country – a somewhat absurd notion

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<sup>7</sup> Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, Free Press, New York, 2003, p. 78; 'The Kuala Lumpur meeting', *GlobalSecurity.org*,

<[http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/the\\_kuala\\_lumpur\\_meeting.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/the_kuala_lumpur_meeting.htm)>, Date Unknown, (accessed 15 April 2008); Michael Richardson, 'Maritime-related Terrorism: Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, What Next from the International Jihadist Network?', *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, p. 4, <[www.iseas.edu.sg](http://www.iseas.edu.sg)>, 2006, (accessed 20 November 2007), and; Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>8</sup> Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy', *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>11</sup> Ken Conboy, *The Second Front: Inside Asia's Most Dangerous Terrorist Network*, Equinox Publishing, Jakarta, 2006, pp. 122 and 127.

<sup>12</sup> At least one al-Qaeda front company was, at the time of Abuza's writing, known to have been established in Malaysia: Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

given the Malaysian government's tight control over the use and interpretation of Islam, a policy developed over the previous two decades.

Malaysia responded strongly against terrorism after 9/11 in both the short and long-term, at least in part to dispel this view, and to establish itself in the new world climate as what K. S. Balakrishnan refers to as an 'anti-terror government.'<sup>14</sup> Malaysian academic Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid notes that the government, being 'loyal to the imperatives of globalisation', also knew it had to denounce terrorism quickly otherwise it risked being isolated by the community of nations.<sup>15</sup> Upon hearing of the attacks, Mahathir phoned the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur to condemn them and express his condolences.<sup>16</sup> The Malaysian government issued a series of public statements denying that the country was a 'hub' for international terrorist operations. For example, political commentator Farish A. Noor notes, 'The Prime Minister's department and the Ministry of Finance categorically denied that terrorists' funds had been deposited in Malaysian bank accounts and financial houses.'<sup>17</sup> To prevent Malaysia's continued use as a transit point for international terrorists, the government began cracking down on visa fraud and imposed visa regulations for Afghan, Iranian, and Iraqi nationals.<sup>18</sup> Later that month, the government also made known its plans to make it compulsory for students studying abroad to register with the Immigration Department in order to better monitor them.<sup>19</sup> By early 2002, the government claimed to have arrested 62 terrorists and militias with 'global and regional links' under the ISA.<sup>20</sup> Included in this number was a second wave of ISA arrests of alleged KMM members, with six detained.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with K. S. Balakrishnan, Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 19 July 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang, 17 August 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Pamela Sodhy, 'US-Malaysian Relations during the Bush Administration: The Political, Economic, and Security Aspects', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 25, issue 3, p. 365.

<sup>17</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Reaping the Bitter Harvest After Twenty Years of State Islamisation: The Malaysian Experience Post-September 11', in *Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific: Threat and Response*, ed. R. Gunaratna, Eastern Universities Press, Singapore, p. 186.

<sup>18</sup> Abuza claims that an ulterior motive for this action was to halt the flow of asylum seekers en route to Indonesia and Australia: Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>19</sup> 'KL to require students going abroad to register', *The Straits Times*, 13 October 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak, 'U.S.-Malaysia Defense Cooperation: A Solid Success Story', *The Heritage Foundation: Lecture #742*, <<http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/HL742.cfm>>, 3 May 2002, (accessed 14 February, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Koh Swe Yong, *Malaysia: 45 Years Under the Internal Security Act*, Strategic Information Research Development, Petaling Jaya, 2004, p. 329.

A primary target of Malaysia's coercive apparatus since 9/11 has been Jemaah Islamiyah. JI traces its origins to the Darul Islam (DI), an Indonesian organisation which fought alongside the Indonesian revolutionary army against Dutch colonial rule in the 1940s.<sup>22</sup> In 1985, several radical DI cadres – notably Abu Bakar Bashir and Abdullah Sungkar – fled to Malaysia after their arrest in Indonesia for subversion.<sup>23</sup> In Malaysia, the DI elements regrouped, renamed themselves JI, and began networking with other militants from Southeast Asia and further afield, such as Egypt and Chechnya.<sup>24</sup> JI's first base of operations was established in Malaysia, though it initially operated as a transit point for Southeast Asians on their way to Afghanistan and Pakistan to either study or to fight the Soviets.<sup>25</sup> As time progressed, the JI organisation became more complex and far-reaching, with Sungkar eventually splitting the group into regional chapters, or *mantiqi*, in 1993: Mantiqi 1 was Malaysia and Singapore, Mantiqi 2 referred to Indonesia.<sup>26</sup> The network was also linked through a web of marriages, many between Malaysians and Indonesians.<sup>27</sup>

The Malaysian JI chapter is said to have been the largest, with an estimated 200 members. JI recruitment in Malaysia focused on Indonesian exiles/migrants and university students and lecturers.<sup>28</sup> Recruitment efforts gathered pace toward the end of the century, with military, terrorism-related training replacing fitness-type training.<sup>29</sup> It is alleged the cell itself was responsible for establishing several front companies used to channel funds, weapons and materials.<sup>30</sup> These businesses had to contribute 10 percent of their earnings to the network.<sup>31</sup> The Malaysian cell also helped procure large

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<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore, 2003, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Zachary Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, issue 3, 2002, p. 450, and; Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper*, *op. cit.*, p. 6, and; Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>25</sup> Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-1, and; Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror', *op. cit.*, p. 450.

<sup>26</sup> Conboy, *The Second Front*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> International Crisis Group, *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, International Crisis Group, Brussels, 2003, pp. 27-8.

<sup>28</sup> Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror', *op. cit.*, p. 452.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror', *op. cit.*, p. 454.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

quantities of ammonium nitrate, a chemical fertiliser used in bombs, for use against targets in Singapore.<sup>32</sup>

In both Malaysia and Southeast Asia in general, the ultimate aim of JI is said to be the creation of a pan-Islamic state by force.<sup>33</sup> This regional caliphate would encompass Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Thailand and parts of the Philippines (particularly Mindanao).<sup>34</sup> While this claim is widespread and accepted by governments inside and outside the region, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan contends that within JI itself there is no actual plan for such a state – that is, while there certainly exists the idea for it, the logistics on what it would entail and how it would be implemented are non-existent. Consequently, Jawhar argues that there is little ‘traction’ for the notion within Malaysia and, as such, it is not a component the government needs to address. Rather, ‘all you need to do is apprehend the elements.’<sup>35</sup>

The network is said to be closely connected, if not allied, with al-Qaeda. For example, it is alleged that al-Qaeda has provided both funding and logistical assistance to the group.<sup>36</sup> Abuza notes that at one point Sungkar travelled to Afghanistan himself, met with bin Laden, and pledged *bayat* (allegiance), ‘effectively absorbing his movement into al-Qaeda.’<sup>37</sup> In contrast to this, the International Crisis Group, a non-government international body focused on the prevention and resolution of conflicts, paints a more complex picture, arguing that while sharing a similar ideology and a common experience in Afghanistan, JI is not al-Qaeda’s subordinate. Instead, JI’s decision-making and fundraising is mostly conducted locally, with its primary aim also being local in nature – that being, the overthrow of the Indonesian government.<sup>38</sup> Bashir has

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<sup>32</sup> Abuza, ‘Tentacles of Terror’, *op.cit.*, p. 454.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Dato’ Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007, and; Conboy, *The Second Front*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> Conboy, *The Second Front*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Dato’ Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Richard A. Clarke, Glenn P. Aga, Roger W. Cressey, Stephen E. Flynn, Blake W. Mobley, Eric Rosenbach, Steven Simon, William F. Wechsler, Lee S. Wolosky, *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*, The Century Foundation Press, New York, 2004, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Abuza, ‘Tentacles of Terror’, *op.cit.*, pp. 450-1.

<sup>38</sup> International Crisis Group, *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

rejected any connection to al-Qaeda, though he praised its leader, Osama bin Laden, as a 'true Muslim fighter.'<sup>39</sup>

The links between the JI and KMM are even less distinct, though there is a considerable overlap in membership between the two organisations.<sup>40</sup> The arrest of Mat Sah bin Mohammed Satray in April 2002 illustrates the blurred lines between the two organisations. Mat Sah was originally accused of being a member of KMM but this charge was later dropped and he was instead charged with being a JI member.<sup>41</sup> In another example, Hambali and Bashir were wanted by the Malaysian government for their 'connection' to the murder of Dr Fernandez, a crime that had been attributed to KMM.<sup>42</sup> The JI-KMM link is said to be based mostly on the personal contact between Hambali and Bashir with the leadership of a KMM cell in the Malaysian state of Selangor. Government intelligence indicates that a one-off meeting of representatives from KMM, JI and unknown representatives from South Thailand and the Philippines took place near Kuala Lumpur.<sup>43</sup> Overall, the literature that exists on the topic of JI and KMM seems to suggest the two groups are one and the same, or at least a part of the same network. However, the actual nature of the connection between the two has yet to be firmly established by any source.

Regardless of any ambiguity, the arrest of JI suspects began soon after 9/11. The first known JI arrests in Malaysia took place in December 2001 in a coordinated operation with Singapore.<sup>44</sup> In October 2002, the government deported Ahmed Ibrahim Bilal, an alleged leader of a terrorist cell in Portland, Oregon, who had been studying at

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<sup>39</sup> David Wright-Neville, 'Dangerous dynamics: activists, militants and terrorists in Southeast Asia', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 17, issue 1, p. 40.

<sup>40</sup> Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror', *op.cit.*, p. 453.

<sup>41</sup> Islamic Human Rights Commission, *Malaysia's Internal Security Act (ISA) Detainees: Mat Sah bin Mohammed Satray*, Islamic Human Rights Commission, London, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs (Singapore), *White Paper, op. cit.*, p. 5, and; Conboy, *The Second Front, op.cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>43</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, 'Understanding and Responding to the Threats of Muslim Militant Groups in Malaysia' in *Understanding and Managing Islam, Fundamentalism, and Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Kamarulzaman, A., Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network, Penang, 2005, p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, 'Terrorism, Insurgency and Religious Fundamentalism in Southeast Asia', *9th Asian Security Conference*, p. 8, [http://www.isis.org.my/files/pubs/papers/TERRORISM\\_INSURGENCY\\_AND\\_RELIG\\_FUN\\_D.pdf](http://www.isis.org.my/files/pubs/papers/TERRORISM_INSURGENCY_AND_RELIG_FUN_D.pdf), 9-10 February 2007, (accessed 22 October 2007).

Malaysia's International Islamic University.<sup>45</sup> Stemming from information provided under interrogation by Hambali, 13 Malaysian nationals were detained in Karachi and questioned mainly by US interrogators, who asked them about their connections and involvement in JI. The Malaysian government did not object to their alleged mistreatment and did little to assist them or their families. When the students were flown back to Malaysia, they were immediately detained under the ISA, with Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi defending the detentions by noting the allegations that the students may be 'JI cadres.'<sup>46</sup>

By the end of 2003, 31 persons with suspected JI links were detained in total in Kamunting detention centre under the ISA. By the end of 2006, the number in custody totalled 57.<sup>47</sup> During detention the detainees were said to undergo 'rehabilitation.' Several JI detainees have since been released, including Wan Min Wan Mat, an alleged financier of JI. Perhaps indicating the success of the 'rehabilitation' process, Wan Min thanked the government after his release for detaining him in the first place and defended Malaysia's use of the ISA. It is unknown whether this statement was made voluntarily.<sup>48</sup>

Wan Min's alleged gratitude toward the government aside, a common accusation levelled at the Malaysian government in recent times has been that it has utilised the climate of fear for political purposes. In other words, it is claimed the government justifies increased repression on the grounds of counter-terrorism. A critique of this approach is provided by Human Rights Watch, which argues the Malaysian government is using the War on Terror to abuse human rights and curb freedoms.<sup>49</sup> Inadvertently endorsing this account in the wake of September 11, the Chair of SUHAKAM, the national human rights commission established by Parliament in 1999, commented that it

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<sup>45</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security: Counterterrorism and Human Rights Abuses Under Malaysia's Internal Security Act', *HumanRightsWatch*, Vol. 16, issue 7, 2004, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> See Table 1.7 in Suaram, *Human Rights Report 2006: Civil and Political Rights*, Suaram, Petaling Jaya, 2007, pp. 25-8.

<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Detained Without Trial: Abuse of Internal Security Act Detainees in Malaysia', *HumanRightsWatch*, Vol. 17, issue 9, 2005, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Cited in Sinapan Samydorai, '9/11 Anti-Terrorist Measures and their Impact on Human Rights in Asia', in *September 11 & Political Freedom*, *op.cit.*, pp. 235-6.

was reasonable to suspend democracy and human rights for the purposes of national security.<sup>50</sup>

However, the statistics on ISA arrests since 9/11 indicate that the government's use of this aspect of the coercive apparatus has not significantly increased. Indeed, the figures in Table 1 show a contrary trend:

**Table 1: Statistics on ISA Arrests and Detentions, 1960 - 2006**

Year	Arrests	Detention Orders	Restricted Orders
1960	30	23	5
1961	40	32	20
1962	37	25	12
1963	57	28	23
1964	265	228	29
1965	408	393	11
1966	143	117	20
1967	169	122	20
1968	278	131	142
1969	178	100	69
1970	265	72	55
1971	431	126	116
1972	411	71	128
1973	258	38	92
1974	635	112	121
1975	770	155	166
1976	1,118	316	187
1977	1,180 <sup>51</sup>	380	212

<sup>50</sup> Koh, *Malaysia, op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>51</sup> Several of the arrests in the years 1976-77 can be attributed to intra-UMNO leadership struggles. In 1976, Samad Ismail, managing editor of the *New Straits Times* was arrested, followed by six others, including deputy ministers Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid. It was claimed by Home Minister Ghazali Shafie that these arrests were necessary to prevent a Communist conspiracy aimed at the UMNO leadership. Samad and the two Abdullahs were reputedly influential with the late Prime Minister Abdul Razak, the then current Prime Minister Hussein Onn's immediate predecessor. Before and after these arrests, *Parti Rakyat* leaders were also detained: Francis Loh, 'The BN national security state and the ISA', *Aliran*, <[http://www.aliran.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=760:the-bn-national-security-state-and-the-isa&catid=72:2008-7&Itemid=45](http://www.aliran.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=760:the-bn-national-security-state-and-the-isa&catid=72:2008-7&Itemid=45)>, 18 November 2008, (accessed 25 September 2009), and; J. Terence Netto, 'Two Anti-ISA Stories, One Deafening Silence', *Official Website of the International Free Anwar Campaign*,

<b>Table 1 contd</b>			
1978	728	307	195
1979	532	136	117
1980	326	106	101
1981	181	87	25
1982	76	24	16
1983	108	5	27
1984	58	11	14
1985	47	3	27
1986	67	47	31
1987	182	65	15
1988	214	155	16
1989	87	56	8
1990	154	118	5
1991	57	57	3
1992	50	41	5
1993	7	1	-
1994	52	22	7
1995	137	101	4
1996	139	118	3
1997	250	86	3
1998	216	136	1
1999	4	-	1
2000	89	30	3
2001	70	40	5
2002	53	41	4
2003	48	32	6
2004	45	25	2
2005	17	13	1
2006	20	18	17

Source: SUHAKAM statistics cited in Suaram, *Human Rights Report 2006: Civil and Political Rights*, p. 13.

For the entire year 2001, the number of ISA arrests was 70, while in 2002 the number of arrests decreased to 53. In every year since the number of arrests and detention orders under the ISA has fallen drastically. The average number of yearly arrests in the five year period between 2002 and 2006 is 37 people. By comparison, the average number of arrests in the previous five-year period, 1997 to 2001, totalled 126. In fact, the entire

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<<http://www.freeanwar.net/articles/article180401.htm>>, date unknown, (accessed 25 September 2009).



first five years of the 'War on Terror' era has featured, on average, less ISA arrests than any previous five-year period. Thus, statistically, this current era has not brought an increase in government-sponsored repression through its overt use of the ISA – if anything it has been marked by a statistical decrease.

However, it should be noted that the ISA represents only one aspect of the coercive apparatus, and the decline in its use should therefore not be seen as confirmation that the use of coercion was declining. To the contrary, the government strengthened the coercive apparatus, the 2003 amendment to the Penal Code for example providing a new avenue for governmental control. This amendment provided a sentence of up to life imprisonment for 'anyone who harbours or interferes with the arrest of terrorists, recruits members into a terrorist group or provide them with explosives or facilities such as meeting places.'<sup>52</sup> Such criteria are broad and could potentially affect lawyers and journalists as the confidentiality of clients and sources is a major part of their occupations.<sup>53</sup> Although Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Rais Yatim conceded that present laws (such as the ISA, the Sedition Act, and Printing Presses and Publications Act) were sufficient to tackle terrorism, he insisted that the amendment was 'appropriate.' Dr Rais stated, 'The issue of this new law overlapping other sets of laws usually happens in a country's judiciary system. It is better for Malaysia to use a specific definition and punishment to deal with terrorism.'<sup>54</sup>

Overall, the use of coercion by the government has been consistent in the post-9/11 era, the coercive apparatus remaining virtually intact in the midst of monumental changes in international politics. Wielded against alleged elements of KMM and JI, the use of the ISA has continued unabated and remains the predominant instrument in the government's coercive arsenal. In doing so, the government has further enhanced its legitimacy for both domestic and international audiences. Domestically, the government's action against various alleged terrorist elements removed a number of seemingly real threats to national security and implicitly reaffirmed the government's position as the sole interpreter of Islam in Malaysia. Internationally, the various

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<sup>52</sup> Fauwaz Abdul Aziz, 'New anti-terror laws bad news for journalists', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/17230>>, 26 September 2003, (accessed 12 March, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Beh Lih Yi, 'New anti-terror law passed amid strong protest', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/17787>>, 11 November 2003, (accessed 12 March 2008).

crackdowns by the government helped undermine the notion that Malaysia was a springboard state for international terrorist groups. In some respects the crackdowns themselves served as a propaganda exercise for international audiences, reasserting to outside observers that the regime remained moderate, in control and legitimate. The coercive apparatus continued to perform its primary function: securing the legitimacy and security of the ruling regime.

### **Extending the Coercive Apparatus: A New Phase?**

Although the coercive apparatus itself remained intact, some minor changes in its application and *raison d'être* were inevitable in the post-9/11 era. Jawhar states, 'We have a longstanding policy with regard to terrorism or militancy of various kinds. So after September 11, it is essentially an extension of that policy.'<sup>55</sup> There are two main differences and extensions to the coercive component of the Security Model in the current era. First, there has been an increase in transnational co-operation, illustrated in Malaysia's relationships with the ASEAN states, the OIC, and America. Malaysia's security policy has become less insular and increasingly preoccupied with internationally-based, rather than simply domestically-based, threats. Second, Malaysia's coercive apparatus has been increasingly endorsed, explicitly and implicitly, by other – most notably Western – countries. This marked a significant departure, as prior to 9/11, the coercive apparatus was criticised by the West and others, particularly during and after the Anwar Ibrahim crisis. By acknowledging the coercive apparatus as a legitimate security tool, these countries have enhanced the legitimacy of the Malaysian government which is, as I have argued, inseparable from and dependent upon its security policy.

#### *Transnational co-operation*

Dato' Ahmad Mokhtar Selat, formerly of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations of Malaysia (1994-1996) and Deputy Secretary-General of the ASEAN Secretariat (2000-2003), notes that post-9/11:

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

[A] different strategy has [had] to be adopted as the issue is transnational in nature.

We cannot do it alone and we need the cooperation of all the actors – states and non-states. We cannot do it on [a] piecemeal basis.<sup>56</sup>

Malaysian academic Norulhuda Othman contends that the government has increasingly opened up to other countries, changing its view from ‘our terrorists’ to ‘sharing’ terrorists.<sup>57</sup> This is evident in three of the most significant relationships in Malaysia’s foreign policy: with the ASEAN states, the OIC, and America.

The ASEAN states have formulated a ‘common rhetorical position’, signing a number of joint declarations, including the Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism (2001) and, with the US, the Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism (2002).<sup>58</sup> Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines signed an anti-terrorism pact in mid-2002 aimed at sharing intelligence and police operations. The pact is open for other ASEAN states to join.<sup>59</sup> Malaysia had earlier cooperated with the Philippines in January 2002 when Malaysia deported Nur Misuari, leader of the separatist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), to face trial in the Philippines.<sup>60</sup> Regional meetings on terrorism have also become a regular occurrence. The military intelligence directors of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Brunei held an informal meeting in Kuala Lumpur in January 2002 to discuss intelligence sharing and the threat posed by regional terrorist networks. This marked the beginning of a series of such meetings. ASEAN’s foreign ministers likewise met in February 2002 to discuss regional collaboration on the issue.<sup>61</sup> In May 2002, the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the ASEAN Chief’s of National Police in Phnom Penh focused on addressing terrorism and other transnational crimes – a focus

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<sup>56</sup> Correspondence with Dato’ Ahmad Mokhtar Selat, formerly of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations of Malaysia (1994-1996) and Deputy Secretary-General of the ASEAN Secretariat (2000-2003), Kuala Lumpur, 23 August 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Norulhuda Othman, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 25 July 2007.

<sup>58</sup> A further Declaration on Terrorism was also signed at the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh in November 2002: Ralf Emmers, ‘Comprehensive Security and Resilience in Southeast Asia: ASEAN’s Approach to Terrorism and Sea Piracy’, *Working Paper No. 132*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2007, pp. 12 and 15.

<sup>59</sup> ‘South-East Asia acts on terror’, *BBCNews.com*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1972121.stm>>, 7 May 2002, (accessed 17 March 2008).

<sup>60</sup> Ralf Emmers, ‘Comprehensive Security and Resilience in Southeast Asia’, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

which was then repeated at consecutive meetings in August 2004 (Chiang Mai), May 2005 (Bali), and June 2007 (Singapore).<sup>62</sup>

Evidenced in its increased cooperation with ASEAN, the Malaysian government was increasingly seeing domestic threats as emerging from international sources and thus requiring international responses. This represented a departure for the Malaysian government which, since Independence and the departure of the British, had viewed its own security apparatus as the primary method for dealing with threats, be they purely domestic (for example, the 1969 race riots and Al-Maunah) or somewhat international in character (for instance, the international networks of Al-Arqam and other *dakwah* movements), and had staunchly opposed external interference in such affairs. While the Security Model remained the primary method of dealing with threats to the *status quo*, Malaysia increasingly saw cooperation with its neighbours as a counter-terrorism strategy in its own right.

With regard to the OIC, Malaysia played a leading role in formulating the Organisation's Kuala Lumpur Declaration on International Terrorism (2002) (the KL Declaration). Described as a 'triumph for Malaysian diplomacy',<sup>63</sup> the KL Declaration condemned terrorism, rejected attempts to link the struggle for Palestine with terrorism, emphasised the importance of addressing the 'root causes' of international terrorism, and disavowed 'any unilateral action taken against any Islamic country under the pretext of combating international terrorism, as this will undermine global cooperation against terrorism.'<sup>64</sup> Although the OIC expressed some reservation towards Mahathir's inclusion of Palestinian suicide bombers within the definition of terrorism, the Declaration is a clear reflection of the ideals of the Malaysian Model, with its focus on a 'holistic' total response to the issue and addressing its 'root causes.'<sup>65</sup> Indeed, in many ways, the KL Declaration began a trend in Malaysian foreign policy, with the Malaysian approach to security increasingly seen as the appropriate method for dealing with threats to government power, particularly in Muslim countries.

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 13-4.

<sup>63</sup> K. S. Balakrishnan, 'The Islamic World's Perspective on Terrorism,' *Asian Defence and Diplomacy*, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on International Terrorism*, <<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/c25aba03f1e079db85256cf40073bfe6/55625226ccc4c7fa85256ba40049e3cf!OpenDocument>>, 2002, (accessed 7 January 2008).

<sup>65</sup> Balakrishnan, 'The Islamic World's Perspective on Terrorism,' *op. cit.*, p. 26.

Neither of the above relationships featured as dramatic a shift in policy as the shift that took place in relation to America. Khoo Boo Teik notes that historically Malaysia's 'non-aligned' position *vis-à-vis* the US, the Soviet Union (USSR), and China had led to it adopting an 'equidistant stance.' This mostly involved Malaysia criticising the superpowers for their actions, notably the US for its support of Israel and the USSR for its occupation of Afghanistan.<sup>66</sup> Bill Clinton's terms as American President strained the US-Malaysia relationship, with the US openly criticising the Malaysian government, particularly on the issue of human rights. The Malaysian government saw the Clinton administration's 'liberal internationalist' agenda on human rights and open markets as a threat to the Malaysia's highly centralised and more repressive political and economic models of governance.<sup>67</sup> The deterioration of the relationship came to a head during the financial crisis and the detention and trial of Anwar Ibrahim. Vice-President Al Gore praised the call for *reformasi* and walked out of a dinner hosted by Mahathir, a move described as a 'blatant snub.'<sup>68</sup> US State Department's Richard Boucher said America was 'outraged' by the Anwar crisis and that the bilateral relationship was 'impeded by Malaysia's poor record on human rights.'<sup>69</sup> Relations in the early months of the George W. Bush administration improved only slightly, mostly due to its initially realist outlook and desire to move away from interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, US State Department officials reportedly told Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid that a meeting between President Bush and Mahathir could take place only if there was progress on the Anwar case and the treatment of political opponents.<sup>71</sup> Repeated attempts by the Malaysian government to curry favour with the new administration – such as sending high-level emissaries to Washington D.C. three times in Bush's first nine months in office – were 'largely rebuffed' on similar grounds.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, p. 75.

<sup>67</sup> H. E. S. Nesadurai, 'Malaysia and the United States: Rejecting Dominance, Embracing Engagement', *Working Paper No.72*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> Sodhy, 'US-Malaysian Relations during the Bush Administration', *op. cit.*, p. 365.

<sup>70</sup> Nesadurai, 'Malaysia and the United States', *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Malaysia's Internal Security Act and Suppression of Political Dissent: A Human Rights Watch Backgrounder', *HumanRightsWatch*, <<http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/malaysia-bck-0513.htm>> 13 May 2002, (accessed 10 December 2007).

<sup>72</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security', *op.cit.*, p. 44.

The events of September 11, Malaysia's immediate use of the coercive apparatus to arrest terrorist suspects, and Mahathir's endorsement of the War on Terror, changed this stance. Public statements by US officials against Malaysia's human rights record dwindled in number. President Bush, for example, made no comment on the human rights issue at the October 2001 APEC summit in Shanghai.<sup>73</sup> Instead, praise was heaped on the Mahathir administration. US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick stated, 'Malaysia is a model', 'a force in regional stability in both political and economic terms' and 'an Islamic country that provides leadership.'<sup>74</sup> Though noting the Anwar issue as a matter of concern, Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly called Malaysia a 'beacon of stability.' The Malaysian counter-terrorist strategy was also endorsed, US officials accepting the Mahathir administration's assertion that the KMM was linked to al-Qaeda despite the problematic nature of the claim.<sup>75</sup> Southeast Asian scholar William Case notes Mahathir 'came to be looked upon... in the way Anwar had once been viewed, as a moderate Islamic leader with whom the West could do business.'<sup>76</sup>

Illustrating the change in mood, Mahathir was finally invited to visit the White House and meet with President Bush. Bush described Mahathir as a man he 'could deal with'.<sup>77</sup> Questions have since been raised as to how the meeting was arranged. In early 2006 it was discovered that a payment of RM4.6 million had been made to lobbyist Jack Abramoff to secure the meeting, though Mahathir and the government have denied being the ones who footed the bill.<sup>78</sup> Abramoff reportedly contacted presidential adviser Karl Rove on Malaysia's behalf at least four times to help arrange a meeting.<sup>79</sup> Mahathir claimed that this was not corruption and was how the American political

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<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Malaysia's Internal Security Act and Suppression of Political Dissent', *op.cit.*

<sup>74</sup> 'Malaysian objection to Afghan war will not harm ties – envoy', *Kyodo News*, 16 October 2001.

<sup>75</sup> James Cotton, 'Southeast Asia after 11 September', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, issue 1, 2003, p. 162.

<sup>76</sup> William Case, 'Testing Malaysia's pseudo-democracy', in *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, equity and reform*, ed. E. T. Gomez, RoutledgeCurzon, London and New York, 2004, p. 43.

<sup>77</sup> Farish, 'Reaping the Bitter Harvest After Twenty Years of State Islamisation', *op.cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>78</sup> 'Why did Malaysian embassy pay RM1.1mil?', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/47275>>, 22 February 2006, (accessed 6 June 2008).

<sup>79</sup> Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten, 'Abramoff Charged Malaysia for Meeting With Bush', *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 February 2006.

system worked.<sup>80</sup> Abramoff's attempt to hide the deal from official scrutiny does, however, weaken Mahathir's assertion.<sup>81</sup> Regardless of the alleged payment, the fact that the Bush administration had just months prior resisted all overtures by Malaysia but was now embracing it as an ally, illustrates the important political shift that had occurred in the relationship between the two countries.

The US State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism* reports continued this pattern. The reports in 2002 and 2003 both provided a glowing review of Malaysia's counter-terrorism measures, including its overall commitment to transnational cooperation in this area.<sup>82</sup> The Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* likewise praised Malaysia's efforts, referring to the country as a 'strong partner in the war on terrorism.'<sup>83</sup> The reports all note the number of ISA arrests, with no mention of the pre-emptive nature of the arrests, the absence of trials, or the question of guilt.

In addition to increased endorsement by the US at the rhetorical level, the bilateral relationship also improved in the area of defence cooperation. In May 2002, the above mentioned Declaration on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism was signed by both countries and provided for increased intelligence sharing and improved liaison between Malaysia and the US's law-enforcement agencies.<sup>84</sup> Also in May 2002, Malaysia's Defence Minister Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak revealed the depth of the defence relationship during a visit to Washington D.C. Describing the relationship as a 'well-kept secret' and as one based on the 'common values' of 'democracy, religious tolerance, and equality', Najib noted that the level of defence cooperation between the two countries, though strong in the decades prior, had been 'elevated' after 9/11. Among the achievements in this era, Najib listed America's 'excellent access to Malaysian intelligence' and Malaysia's protection of US ships in the Straits of Malacca.

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<sup>80</sup> 'So who bankrolled White House meeting?', *Malaysiakini*, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/47252>, 21 February 2006, (accessed 6 June 2008).

<sup>81</sup> Nusaybah, 'Mahathir-Bush meet reeks of corruption', *Malaysiakini*, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/47304>, 22 February 2006, (accessed 6 June 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Department of State (US), *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002*, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2002/html/19983.htm>, 30 April 2003, (accessed 13 June 2008), and; Department of State (US), *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2003/31611.htm>, 29 April 2004, (accessed 13 June 2008).

<sup>83</sup> Department of State (US), *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004*, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/45388.htm>, 27 April 2005, (accessed 13 June 2008).

<sup>84</sup> Elina Noor, 'Terrorism in Malaysia: Situation and Response', in *Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific*, *op.cit.*, pp. 168-9.

Najib noted that Malaysian forces continued to do field exercises with the US Army and that Malaysia also granted approval for the over 1,000 requests by the US for overflights.<sup>85</sup> It is noteworthy that despite the government's vocal opposition to the US-led war against Taliban Afghanistan, Malaysia allowed US military flyovers on a case-by-case basis during Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>86</sup>

The reason for America's sudden endorsement of the Malaysian administration clearly goes beyond the latter's support of the War on Terror. Evident in the comments of Zoellick and Kelly, Malaysia is seen as a model for other Islamic societies to emulate, with its moderate, relatively democratic form of state Islam. Norulhuda notes that Malaysia is viewed as a potential intermediary between the region's Muslims and non-Muslims – a view which was capitalised upon at the ideological level by both Mahathir and Abdullah. This had some limited success.<sup>87</sup>

On Malaysia's part, a key motivating factor in its relationship with the US is its economic strength. The US continued to be a highly valuable export market and a source of foreign direct investment (FDI), and technology – all essential components of growth for the economy and 'a means to achieve its goal of reaching developed country status.'<sup>88</sup> In 2001, Malaysia was America's 12<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner. By 2002, it moved up to 11<sup>th</sup> place, and then 10<sup>th</sup> place the year following. The US is Malaysia's largest trading partner.<sup>89</sup> The importance of the economic level of the relationship was demonstrated during negotiations on the Malaysia-US trade and investment framework agreement. These negotiations took place during a period when, at the political level, relations were at their worst – in the middle of 2003, during the early stages of America's Iraq campaign, much criticised and opposed by the Malaysian government.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the above-mentioned cooperation at the political, defence and economic level, it must be emphasised that Malaysia forcefully maintained its independent and critical stance against US hegemony and power. In response to US concerns before the 2002

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<sup>85</sup> Najib, 'U.S.-Malaysia Defense Cooperation', *op.cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Sodhy, 'US-Malaysian Relations during the Bush Administration', *op. cit.*, pp. 380-1.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Norulhuda Othman, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya. Kuala Lumpur, 25 July 2007.

<sup>88</sup> Nesadurai, 'Malaysia and the United States', *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>89</sup> Sodhy, 'US-Malaysian Relations during the Bush Administration', *op. cit.*, p. 371.

<sup>90</sup> Nesadurai, 'Malaysia and the United States', *op. cit.*, p. 23.



Bali Bombing that al-Qaeda-linked militants were operating in Indonesia, Mahathir staunchly denied the existence of such a threat and stated, 'I think we can handle (the threats).'<sup>91</sup> Even though America's concerns proved justified, Mahathir was clearly denying the US any space to manoeuvre within the politics of Malaysia's fellow ASEAN members. In another example of Malaysian resistance, Mahathir rebuffed direct appeals by the US to hand over several hundred individuals suspected of having links to terrorist organisations. Malaysia refused these requests on the grounds that the US had failed to provide direct evidence that the individuals in question had committed a crime within America.<sup>92</sup> Malaysia's vocal criticism of the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and, most prominently, Iraq are the most public examples of Malaysian opposition to American power. In response to the latter conflict, Mahathir stated, 'The fact that North Korea's open admission that it has weapons of mass destruction was met only with mild admonishment seems to prove that indeed [the Iraq War] is a war against Muslims' and that the invasion of Iraq 'will simply anger more Muslims who see this as being anti-Muslim rather than anti-terror.'<sup>93</sup> Mahathir described the actions of the US as 'cowardly and imperialist.'<sup>94</sup>

Malaysia's criticisms of US actions may seem a contradiction when cooperation between the two appears so entrenched. The reason for Malaysia's stance lies not only in its leading role in the OIC, but also in domestic factors. For example, Steven Gan states, 'I think as a rule the Malaysian government would not [admit] that the US government influences [it]... That would be political suicide. Most Muslim voters would not accept that.'<sup>95</sup> Western academics Diane K. Mauzy and Brian L. Job argue, 'Malaysian leaders have offset the quiet cooperation of their military intelligence agencies with American counterparts with vocal public opposition to US actions...'<sup>96</sup> Fauzi doubts the sincerity of the government's 'anti-Americanism', noting that it provides a strong slogan at the grass-roots level, but at the policy-making level, the

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<sup>91</sup> Victor Tjahjadi, 'Mahathir upbeat about Indonesia, Malaysia counter-terrorism efforts', *Agence France-Presse*, 8 August 2002.

<sup>92</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>94</sup> 'Malaysian PM condemns Iraq war', *BBCNews*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2880519.stm>>, 24 March 2003, (accessed 13 December 2007).

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Steven Gan, Editor-in-Chief, *Malaysiakini*, Kuala Lumpur, 20 July 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Diane K. Mauzy and Brian L. Job, 'U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia: Limited Re-engagement after Years of Benign Neglect', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 47, issue 4, 2007, p. 639.

relationship remains strong.<sup>97</sup> This is reaffirmed by Jawhar, who says, ‘Sometimes you see differences between Malaysia and the US at the political, even at the terrorist level, but on the actual professional level, police action, it’s very close.’<sup>98</sup> Confirming Jawhar’s argument, US Assistant Secretary of State, James A. Kelly pointed out that cooperation with the US, on a variety of efforts, remained close despite Malaysia’s strong opposition to the Iraq conflict.<sup>99</sup> Opposition to American policy is essentially a political tool used by the government to appease domestic – namely Muslim – audiences.

Demonstrating Malaysia’s increased cooperation at the transnational level is the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), established in Kuala Lumpur in 2003. First suggested by US Secretary of State Colin Powell in July 2002, the idea was announced in October following a meeting between Bush and then-Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah.<sup>100</sup> SEARCCT actively organises seminars and workshops on counter-terrorism.<sup>101</sup> Operating under the purview of the Malaysian Foreign Ministry, the Centre conducts studies on terrorist movements worldwide, training on counter-terrorism measures, and aims to increase public awareness through seminars and education programs.<sup>102</sup> Within its first four years of operation, SEARCCT had conducted 39 short courses involving 1,387 participants, some from abroad.<sup>103</sup> US influence on SEARCCT is claimed to be limited, with the Malaysian government stressing the Centre was developed independently as part of its own counter-terrorism strategy.<sup>104</sup> However, as is the case in other areas of the US-Malaysia relationship, this affirmation is politically-motivated and not reflective of the actual situation, with the US actually providing between 30 and 40 percent of the programmes and funding.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, School of Distance Education, USM, Penang, 17 August 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Dato’ Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Nesadurai, ‘Malaysia and the United States’, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>100</sup> Yap Mun Ching, ‘KL counter-terrorism centre – task in progress’, *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/15010>>, 2 April 2003, (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>101</sup> Fauzi, ‘Islam and Violence in Malaysia’, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Regional counter-terrorism center not involved in operations – FM’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 1 July 2003.

<sup>103</sup> ‘SEARCCT gets nearly RM7 mln to carry out activities’, *Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies*, 5 July 2007.

<sup>104</sup> Liow, ‘The Mahathir administration’s war against Islamic militancy’, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>105</sup> ‘US to contribute office and training equipment to SEARCCT’, *Organisation of Asia-Pacific*

Malaysia's motives for developing and hosting SEARCCT are threefold. First, by providing leadership in the area of counter-terrorism, Western countries are dissuaded from interfering in the domestic affairs of Southeast Asian nations on the pretext of combating terrorist movements.<sup>106</sup> Second, it reassures regional and international audiences that Malaysia is committed to the effort against terrorism.<sup>107</sup> This in turn helps reaffirm Malaysia's position as a 'moderate', cooperative Islamic country to both domestic and international audiences. Third, it provides an influential outlet through which Malaysia's counter-terrorism doctrine can be spread. Foreign Minister Syed Hamid says that SEARCCT aims at changing the thinking of those who view counter-terrorism solely through the military lens.<sup>108</sup> The SEARCCT website claims the Centre allows for Malaysia's perspective to be promoted.<sup>109</sup> The Malaysian Security Model is clearly the main inspiration for the Centre's counter-terrorism strategies, the website noting the most effective strategy to defeating terrorism includes:

the need to seek an internationally-recognized definition of terrorism, studying the root causes of terrorism, promoting the need to deal with terrorism in a comprehensive manner rather than solely relying on a military solution, and the need to 'win the hearts and minds' in the long-term struggle over international terrorism.<sup>110</sup>

The Centre promotes the total approach to security which has permeated Malaysian politics since the First Emergency.

On the whole, 9/11 saw an increased emphasis within Malaysia's coercive apparatus on the external dimension. In a coordinated regional effort to counter terrorism, a series of agreements were signed with ASEAN and its member states. Malaysia attempted to enhance its leadership role within the OIC and establish a criterion for all Muslim

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*News Agencies*, 8 February 2007, and; Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah, 'M'sia shows leadership in combating terrorisms, says US', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 9 July 2007.

<sup>106</sup> Fauzi, 'Islam and Violence in Malaysia' *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Wong Wing On, 'Anti-terror centre: Allay concerns with facts, not rhetoric', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/21923>>, 31 October 2002, (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>108</sup> 'SEARCCT gets nearly RM7 mln to carry out activities', *op.cit.*

<sup>109</sup> 'About SEARCCT', *Official Web of Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, <[http://www.searcct.gov.my/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=272](http://www.searcct.gov.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=272)>, 20 January 2009, (accessed 27 February 2009).

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*

countries to follow in the pursuit of their security. Malaysia's relationship with America became further enhanced at the operational and logistical level though, as a result of domestic politics, Malaysia remained rhetorically independent from the superpower. In all these relationships there was a growing awareness on the part of the Malaysian government that threats in the new era of international politics would not simply come from within and that establishing ties with external actors was increasingly a necessary part of ensuring its operational policy remained relevant and effective.

### *The Vindication of the ISA?*

The ISA has remained at the forefront of the coercive apparatus in the War on Terror era. However, unlike in previous eras, the ISA is now criticised less by foreign – most notably Western – governments, who themselves have adopted vaguely similar legislation in response to the terrorist threat, such as the Australian Anti-Terrorism Act (2005), the Canadian Anti-Terrorism Act (2001), and, most infamously, the 2001 Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT Act). A key element of many new counter-terrorist laws has been the emphasis on preventive detention. An essential component of the Malaysian Security Model's coercive apparatus has now become more accepted. Although this has not led to an increase in arrests or any major change to the Model itself, it has nonetheless strengthened the Malaysian government's own justification for continuing to use the ISA and the coercive apparatus in general. It now faces less international antagonism. Indonesia's inability to effectively crackdown on Islamic movements with the same 'success' as Singapore and Malaysia has itself been blamed on the greater level of democratisation in that country – a process which has not allowed for the creation of an Internal Security Act similar to that deployed by its neighbours.<sup>111</sup> Francis Loh Kok Wah argues that the ISA is not controversial anymore. It has become 'the norm.'<sup>112</sup>

The process of rhetorically reframing the ISA as an effective and proven counter-terrorism tool began immediately. Days after September 11, Deputy Prime Minister

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<sup>111</sup> Amitav Acharya, 'Security and Security Studies After September 11: Some Preliminary Reflections', *Working Paper No. 23*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, 2002, p. 22.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Francis Loh Kok Wah, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 13 August 2007.

Abdullah stated that the ISA had served its purpose in combating terrorism and that the government had made the right move in acting against the KMM in the months beforehand. Later that September, Mahathir claimed countries which once accused Malaysia of being undemocratic because of the government's use of the ISA were now adopting similar legislation. Bringing justification for the ISA into the contemporary context, Mahathir stated, 'One reason why the ISA was enacted and had not been repealed by the Government was because of its effectiveness in countering terrorism.'<sup>113</sup> After the Marriott bombing in Jakarta in 2003, Mahathir again stressed that, prior to 9/11, 'Malaysia was criticised and people said that we were cruel for detaining suspects. They don't know which is better, to have bombs explode first before making arrests, or to arrest first before bombs explode.'<sup>114</sup> Firm support for the ISA was continued under Prime Minister Abdullah, who stated:

Implementation and enforcement of the ISA... has always been undertaken in the most decent moral conduct and with careful detail, to curb any element who jeopardises the security of the country. That is why the government only arrests someone under the ISA when there are solid reasons against the person, that they will endanger national security.<sup>115</sup>

The US, in particular, has praised ISA detentions in recent years as contributing to the global counter-terrorism effort. US Attorney-General allegedly expressed support for the Act, endorsing its significance in the context of the PATRIOT Act.<sup>116</sup> In May 2002, a US official stated that Malaysia had not used the ISA for political purposes since 9/11, further sanctioning its usage.<sup>117</sup>

There are two main reasons for the US backflip. First, the US wished to legitimise the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) regime, seeing it as a source of stability in a region of anarchy and shadowy terrorist networks.<sup>118</sup> Second, America's own conduct in the War on Terror in terms of human rights has 'undercut its desire and harmed its ability to

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<sup>113</sup> Koh, *Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>114</sup> 'No adverse impact on economy, says PM', *New Straits Times*, 8 August 2003.

<sup>115</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Detained Without Trial', *op.cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>116</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security', *op.cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>117</sup> Cotton, 'Southeast Asia after 11 September', *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>118</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'In the Name of Security', *op.cit.*, pp. 43-4.

engage in effective human rights advocacy.’<sup>119</sup> In particular, the US practice of indefinite detention without trial of terrorist suspects at Guantanamo Bay draws parallels to Malaysia’s ISA practices and thus puts America in no position to criticise.<sup>120</sup> This has even been admitted by members of the Malaysian government. Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Mohamed Nazri claimed that the US no longer criticises the ISA because of Guantanamo.<sup>121</sup> Ironically, in ensuring it remains suitably distant from the US at the political level, the Malaysian government has protested against US treatment of suspects at Guantanamo while failing to acknowledge the similarities to its own practices.<sup>122</sup>

The foreign endorsement of the ISA has had an adverse effect on actors in Malaysia’s civil society. Josef Roy Benedict of the Malaysian branch of Amnesty International, for example, has stated:

It’s been harder for civil society to challenge [the government] now when countries like US/UK are putting in laws like this... In the past Malaysia was in a way a part of a minority compared to other countries who had these kinds of laws... Western countries don’t have the moral high ground [they] used to have. That’s the hard part now. Whereas in the past we’d say ‘look at this country’, use it as a model, now these countries have undermined human rights, [as shown in the] renditions in the EU, Guantanamo Bay in the US.<sup>123</sup>

The growing acceptance and emulation of the ISA abroad has weakened Malaysia’s civil society, with actors such as Amnesty International no longer able to use many of the alternative foreign models of governance as a model for Malaysian society.

The aftermath of 9/11 saw the ISA reframed as a counter-terrorist tool, the government implying that it had always served this purpose. The ISA, and by extension the coercive apparatus as a whole, was increasingly legitimised by the growing acceptance and

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Detained Without Trial’, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>122</sup> For example: ‘KL lashes out at US over al-Qaeda suspects’, *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/56699>>, 13 September 2006, (accessed 12 March 2008), and; Suaram, *Human Rights Report 2006*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Josef Roy Benedict, Executive Director, Amnesty International (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, 19 July 2007.

emulation of this aspect of Malaysia's security policy by other countries. By legitimising the coercive apparatus, the regime to which it was intrinsically linked was likewise legitimised. The ISA had continued to serve its primary purpose in the post-9/11 world – that being, to prop up the BN/UMNO regime.

### **Overstretched: Abuse of the Coercive Apparatus Post-9/11**

In addition to the above alterations to the coercive apparatus, the Malaysian government has utilised the 'terrorist' discourse to its advantage, labelling threats to its political and economic power – as opposed to actual threats to national security – as 'terrorists' and 'extremists' in an attempt to justify and win support for its actions. The 'terrorist' label had certainly been applied to 'threats' before 9/11 – often in reference to 'communist terrorists' – but in recent times the term has had a whole new meaning. Thus, when the government defines an issue in terms of 'terrorism' now, it is provoking a different reaction than in years past. Indeed, Steven Gan, editor-in-chief of online newspaper *Malaysiakini*, notes that while human rights abuses had not been worsening and had been occurring well before September 11, the current climate has 'given a gloss over the abuses, allowed the government to make its actions more palatable...'<sup>124</sup> Malaysian academic K. S. Balakrishnan concurs, stating the government 'is consistently undemocratic... whether there is terrorism or anything, the government always ensures it has an advantage.'<sup>125</sup> The terrorist bogeyman, combined with the growing international acceptance of the coercive apparatus, has allowed the Malaysian government to use its security policy against a number of elements critical of government but whose threat to national security was minimal, namely PAS, the online blogging community, and the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf). In the lead-up to the March 2008 elections, the issues raised by these groups were all but ignored, with the government instead launching or threatening crackdowns against them. In this context it could be argued that the 2008 election results represented a rebuke of the government's strategy.

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with Steven Gan, Editor-in-Chief, *Malaysiakini*, Kuala Lumpur, 20 July 2007.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with K. S. Balakrishnan, Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 19 July 2007.

## PAS

The post-9/11 period featured an intensification of the political conflict between PAS and UMNO. The conflict centred on the Afghanistan conflict and the rise of Islamic radicalism in the world generally. By pushing hardline rhetoric on such issues, PAS ultimately gave the power it had gained from *reformasi* back to UMNO. The period immediately following 9/11 was characterised by increased political rivalry between UMNO and the PAS, with the former linking the latter to terrorist-related organisations and activities. The government's attack on PAS was predominantly political, using the contemporary climate to undermine its main rival for Muslim votes. Some PAS members were arrested, though these members were outside the leadership circle and could be regarded as political non-entities.

In comparison to the strong reaction of the UMNO-led government in the aftermath of September 11, PAS's response to the attacks was somewhat more restrained. In a 'carefully worded statement', PAS President Fadzil Noor condemned the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York but failed to mention the attack on the Pentagon. This could be seen as a lack of sympathy for what could be defined, essentially, as a military – rather than civilian – target. The PAS leader then used his statement to criticise the US on the issue of its peacekeeping responsibilities.<sup>126</sup> Commentators noted that 'Although PAS counts followers stretching from liberal to deeply conservative, the September 11 attacks seem to have silenced the moderates.'<sup>127</sup> While this may be the case to a certain extent, the actual response of PAS to 9/11 appeared to be fairly moderate in tone and not too dissimilar to other views expressed within the mainstream of both domestic and international politics. It was only with the US invasion of Afghanistan that the more extremist elements of PAS became increasingly vocal.

The US-led invasion of Afghanistan marked a dramatic shift in Malaysia's Islamic politics. At least rhetorically, all the major actors in the Malaysian political system were opposed to the war. However, there was some support for America's operation offered by the Malaysian government. Foreign Minister Syed Hamid stated that he was

<sup>126</sup> Joceline Tan, 'PAS worried by possible Islamic link to US attacks', *The Straits Times*, 17 September 2001.

<sup>127</sup> S. Jayasankaran and Lorien Holland, 'The Islamic Party's Malay Dilemma', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 164, issue 42, 2001, p. 17.



convinced, after being shown a confidential report by a US ambassador, that the invasion was designed to counter terrorism and was not an act of revenge.<sup>128</sup> However, Prime Minister Mahathir's rhetoric demonstrated the government's overall opposition to the war. Justifying his stance on a fear of massive civilian casualties, Mahathir stated that 'attacking Afghanistan was not the solution to the problem' of terrorism and could in fact 'actually result in the spawning of more terrorists.' Mahathir's position was clearly derived from the nature of Malaysian domestic politics, knowing that even adopting a 'neutral' stand on the issue would be akin to political suicide.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, there was concern that PAS would exploit the issue among Muslim voters, thus draining an UMNO devastated by *reformasi* of critical support.<sup>130</sup>

PAS's partners in the BA adopted a view of the conflict that was very similar to that of Mahathir's. Keadilan and the DAP both opposed the invasion, their main concern being potential civilian casualties.<sup>131</sup> This more 'mainstream' approach was a contrast to that endorsed by PAS. Commenting on the invasion, Fadzil Noor declared the US a 'terrorist state' and openly called for a *jihad* against it. The *jihad* was justified on the grounds that Afghanistan was attacked without strong proof of its involvement in the 9/11 attacks and terrorism, with Noor viewing the conflict as one against all Muslims.<sup>132</sup> Noor claimed the call for *jihad* was not in defense of Afghanistan's Taliban regime, but in defense of 'an Islamic nation being attacked by an enemy of Islam.' Many Malaysians were unable to see the distinction.<sup>133</sup> The view of PAS as terrorist sympathisers was reinforced in early October when PAS Youth Leader Mahfuz Omar launched a *jihad* fund, called on the government to break off diplomatic ties with the US, and declared his willingness to raise an army to fight in Afghanistan.<sup>134</sup> It was further re-enforced on 12 October 2001, when 3,500 PAS supporters demonstrated in front of the US embassy, many brandishing T-shirts, banners and armbands with

<sup>128</sup> Tong Yee Siong, 'Mahfuz wants gov't to provide military aid to Taliban', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/5070>>, 11 October 2001, (accessed 17 March 2008).

<sup>129</sup> Osman Bakar, 'The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 16, issue 2, 2005, p. 114.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 114-5.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, and; Farish A. Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951-2003)* (Volume 2), Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur, 2004, p. 669.

<sup>133</sup> Bakar, 'The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam', *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>134</sup> 'PAS backing for jihad against the US 'a gimmick'', *The Straits Times*, 11 October 2001.

slogans such as ‘We love *Jihad*’, ‘Crush America’ and ‘Taliban/Afghan [sic] are our brothers.’<sup>135</sup>

Farish A. Noor declared PAS's reaction to the Afghanistan conflict to be the ‘biggest own goal scored by the party against itself over the past few years.’<sup>136</sup> The BN in general and UMNO in particular capitalised effectively on PAS's political misstep, using the image PAS had unwittingly constructed to score political points for the ruling coalition. The government claimed PAS's call for jihad was ‘a gimmick’ aimed at scoring political points within Malaysia's Muslim community.<sup>137</sup> The government consequently portrayed PAS as ‘Malaysia's Taliban.’ The government embarked on a television campaign which inter-spliced images of PAS leaders with the murder of a woman by Taliban troops.<sup>138</sup> In January and February 2002, Malaysian television channel Radio Televisyen Malaysia constantly played a video clip of the Memali Incident, prompting PAS to defend its claim that Ibrahim Libya and his followers were martyrs. Fauzi argues that this played right into the government's hands as it effectively manipulated PAS into admitting an association with violence and terrorism.<sup>139</sup> The direct linking of PAS to specific terrorists established during the KMM arrests continued, with the government using the new anti-terrorist climate and PAS's damaged image to its advantage. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah stated that ‘practically’ all the militants arrested in the period between September 11 and the end of January 2002 were members of PAS. He noted:

We don't want to be very quick in drawing conclusions, but we are saying that the presence of these people among the PAS people can create a kind of PAS politics which may not be in the long-term interests of Malaysia.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Bakar, ‘The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam’, *op. cit.*, p. 115, and; Farish, *Islam Embedded*, *op. cit.*, p. 672.

<sup>136</sup> Farish, ‘Reaping the Bitter Harvest After Twenty Years of State Islamisation’, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>137</sup> ‘PAS backing for jihad against the US ‘a gimmick’’, *The Straits Times*, 11 October 2001.

<sup>138</sup> Joseph Liow, ‘Deconstructing Political Islam in Malaysia: UMNO's Response to PAS' Religio-Political Dialectic’, *Working Paper No. 45*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, 2003, p. 11.

<sup>139</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, ‘The UMNO-PAS Struggle: Analysis of PAS's Defeat in 2004’, in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, eds. S. Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2006, p. 112.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Terror investigations strain Malaysian politics’, *BBCNews*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1775718.stm>>, 22 January 2002, (accessed 17 March 2008).

As before, however, this remained a political level attack – those arrested were simply members within the broad PAS organisation, effectively political non-entities, and none were associated with the leadership circle. As Fadzil Noor said, ‘As far as we know there is no connection at all. If there is, it is based on the actions of individuals.’<sup>141</sup> Considering the small number of arrests, the government’s broad statements linking PAS as a whole to terrorism are incredibly misleading and clearly based on the desire for political gain rather than on fact. The coercive apparatus had clearly been used for a political – rather than a security-based – purpose.

The alarm caused by PAS’s calls for martyrdom and an Islamic state, combined with its association with members of the KMM and its alleged sympathy with the Taliban, took its toll on the BA. The DAP quit the BA as a consequence, leaving the already fragile opposition front in shambles.<sup>142</sup> The death of Fadzil Noor furthered PAS’s decline.<sup>143</sup> The 2004 general election testified to PAS’s lost ground, the opposition’s failure to capitalise on *reformasi*, and the BN’s success in linking PAS to radical Islam and itself to ‘moderate’, progressive Islam. UMNO performed well in Malay-majority constituencies, with an average 10 percent increase in its support in these seats, though this was less than what it had received in 1995 pre-*reformasi*.<sup>144</sup> By contrast, PAS dropped from 27 seats to just seven.<sup>145</sup> PAS had clearly misunderstood the type of Islam desired by its Malay-Muslim constituency,<sup>146</sup> with the elections instead reflecting an embrace of the Islam Hadhari agenda of the incumbent Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi.

Therefore, by pushing a hardline Islamic stance on the Afghanistan conflict and appearing sympathetic to the Taliban, PAS effectively squandered the political capital it had gained as a result of *reformasi*. In this period, at least, UMNO emerged the clear

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<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, *op.cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>143</sup> Vajai Balasubramaniam, ‘The Politics of Locality and Temporality in the 2004 Malaysian Parliamentary Elections’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 27, issue 1, 2005, pp. 54-5.

<sup>144</sup> Khadijah Md. Khalid, ‘Voting for change? Islam and personalised politics in the 2004 general elections’, in *Politics in Malaysia: The Malay dimension*, ed. E. T. Gomez, Routledge, London and New York, 2007, p. 143.

<sup>145</sup> Edmund Terrence Gomez, ‘Introduction: Resistance to change – Malay politics in Malaysia’, in *Politics in Malaysia: The Malay dimension*, ed. E. T. Gomez, Routledge, London and New York, 2007, p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> Khalid, ‘Voting for change?’, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

winner, with a shattered PAS left to pick up the pieces. Given its unsuccessful experience of emphasising Islam in this period, it perhaps unsurprising that in the 2008 election PAS opted, much more successfully, to focus on non-theological issues, such as corruption and the state of Malaysian democracy.

### *Bloggers*

A more drastic government crackdown has been visited on the Malaysian Internet blogging community. A blog is typically defined as ‘a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so that the most recent post appears first.’<sup>147</sup> A 2006 survey of Asian bloggers revealed that Malaysia’s blog readers had a higher interest in political blogs than other Asian countries surveyed. A 2006 survey in Malaysia discovered that 97 percent of respondents, 35 percent of whom were active bloggers themselves, saw blogging as freedom of expression.<sup>148</sup> With the mainstream media in Malaysia restricted by government laws and ownership, the Internet in general and the blogosphere in particular has become an important conduit for debate and dissent, the Internet itself as yet not subjected to as much regulation as the other media outlets. Former Prime Minister Mahathir alleged that blogs are the only avenue left through which pressure can be applied to the government, a government which Mahathir since his retirement increasingly sees as corrupt and stagnant.<sup>149</sup> Mahathir stated:

UMNO has become completely paralysed. It cannot do anything (to correct itself). The only hope left is with the bloggers.<sup>150</sup>

The blogosphere openly showcases the failures of the BN state project. Far from showing Malaysia as the harmonious multicultural society portrayed in government propaganda, the blogosphere reflects the fragmentation of society on ethnic, language

<sup>147</sup> Jun-E Tan and Zawawi Ibrahim, *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia: A New Civil Society in the Making*, The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, Petaling Jaya, 2008, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>149</sup> For the origins of the feud between Mahathir and the Malaysian government, particularly Prime Minister Abdullah, see: Tan, N. (ed.). *Mahathir vs. Abdullah: Covert Wars & Challenged Legacies*, Kinibooks, Kuala Lumpur, 2007.

<sup>150</sup> Andrew Ong, ‘Dr M: Bloggers are only hope left’, *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/71238>>, 15 August 2007, (accessed 13 January 2009).

and political grounds, amongst others.<sup>151</sup> Given all these factors, the government has become increasingly wary of blogs, even using the rhetoric of the War on Terror as a pretext to justify its threats and crackdowns.

In February 2005, blogger Jeff Ooi was questioned by police for a comment somebody else had posted on his weblog *Screenshots*. The comment had stated it was contradictory for Abdullah to promote Islam Hadhari when UMNO itself was riven with corruption.<sup>152</sup> In July 2007, bloggers Nathaniel Tan and Raja Petra Kamarudin were investigated for similar comments that had been posted on their blogs, with Raja stating, 'The bottom line is, what you post in the comments section may get me sent to jail under the Sedition Act.'<sup>153</sup> Bloggers were thus being questioned by police on the basis of statements that were not even made by them. Indeed, earlier that year, the government had announced it was setting up a group of 500 writers to counter bloggers' claims as well as track and monitor content that could be deemed 'anti-government.'<sup>154</sup> Following the arrests of Tan and Raja, there is some fear within the blogosphere of 'cyber troopers'; individuals who are allegedly planted by the government to post libellous or seditious comments on blogs, the ultimate aim being to justify a government crackdown against the blog's owner.<sup>155</sup>

In the lead-up to the 2008 election, with the political blogging community becoming increasingly influential amongst Malaysia's 11 million Internet users,<sup>156</sup> the government began expanding its campaign against the blogosphere. Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin accused bloggers of being 'dangerous', 'pro-West' and supporting 'foreign elements bent on destroying our beloved country.'<sup>157</sup> The government warned that it would use its anti-terror laws – including the ISA – against

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<sup>151</sup> Tan and Ibrahim, *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>152</sup> Sonny Inbaraj, 'Media-Malaysia: Bloggers hit with Government crackdown', *Inter-Press Service*, 1 April 2005.

<sup>153</sup> Yang-May Ooi, 'Blogging Thrives in Malaysia', *Communication World*, Vol. 24, issue 6, 2007, pp. 37-8; 'International media watchdog slams Nazri', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/70432>>, 26 July 2007, (accessed 12 March 2008), and; 'Police return blogger's phone, PCs', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/73991>>, 25 October 2007, (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>154</sup> Ooi, 'Blogging Thrives in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>155</sup> Tan and Ibrahim, *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>156</sup> Ooi, 'Blogging Thrives in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>157</sup> 'Fresh round of gov't attacks on bloggers', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/70510>>, 29 July 2007, (accessed 12 March 2008).

bloggers and was looking at the possibility of formulating new laws to allow better monitoring.<sup>158</sup> According to Nazri Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's department, this action was designed not to stifle Internet freedom but 'to put a stop to the freedom to lie in the blogosphere.'<sup>159</sup> A proposal to introduce a 'code of ethics' for Internet users was also floated, with Deputy Energy, Water and Communications Minister Shaziman Abu Mansor stating, 'The government's leniency does not give Internet users freedom to misuse the facility to insult the country and its leaders...'<sup>160</sup> The government began urging mainstream newspapers to avoid quoting blogs in their publications, believing that this would only affirm the legitimacy and credibility of the blogosphere.<sup>161</sup> Given the government's threats, it is perhaps not surprising that in 2007 Malaysia fell to its worst ever ranking in the *Reporters Sans Frontieres's* Press Freedom Index, dropping 32 spots to 124<sup>th</sup> position, behind Cambodia (85<sup>th</sup>), Timor Leste (94<sup>th</sup>) and Indonesia (100<sup>th</sup>).<sup>162</sup> In the aftermath of the 2008 election, blogger Raja was arrested and charged with sedition for an article that questioned the involvement of Deputy Prime Minister Najib in the murder of a young Mongolian woman.<sup>163</sup>

The cases of Ooi, Tan and Raja aside, the government's response to the blogging issue has been mostly rhetorical with no major legislative changes to date. The preferred avenue of action against bloggers has been civil defamation, with bloggers being sued by the government-controlled *New Straits Times*. For example, bloggers Ooi and Ahiruddin Attan were sued for allegedly defaming the paper.<sup>164</sup> Steven Gan contends that the use of civil defamation is seen by the government as a 'gentler approach' as it is

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<sup>158</sup> 'Nazri warns bloggers face harsh laws', *Malaysiakini*, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/70375>, 25 July 2007, (accessed 12 March 2008), and; Ooi, 'Blogging Thrives in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>159</sup> 'Nazri warns bloggers face harsh laws', *op.cit.*

<sup>160</sup> Yoges Palaniappan, 'Coming soon – Internet code of ethics', *Malaysiakini*, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/73840>, 22 October 2007, (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>161</sup> Tan and Ibrahim, *Blogging and Democratization in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>162</sup> Suaram, *Human Rights Report 2006*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>163</sup> Chan Kok Leong, 'Raja Petra charged, chooses jail over bail', *Malaysiakini*, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/82386>, 6 May 2008, (accessed 7 May 2008).

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Steven Gan, Editor-in-Chief, *Malaysiakini*, Kuala Lumpur, 20 July 2007; 'Malaysian blogger says his site has become media watchdog as lawsuit begins', *The China Post*, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/latestnews/2007125/43929.htm>, 25 January 2007, (accessed 7 April 2009), and; 'New Straits Times staffers sue two bloggers', *Reporters sans frontières*, [http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id\\_article=20489](http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20489), 19 January 2007, (accessed 7 April 2009).

regarded as a private issue rather than an issue of state versus civil society.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, the government's threats to use anti-terrorism laws are primarily designed to promote self-censorship within the blogosphere. The threats are to make people think twice not only about using blogs to criticise the government but about creating a blog in the first place.<sup>166</sup> Prime Minister Abdullah claims to the contrary that such censorship is the choice of the individual, stating 'If they self-censor, that is their choice.'<sup>167</sup> A different view is put forward by Khairy Jamaluddin, UMNO Youth deputy chief and son-in-law of Abdullah. Likening the Internet to the 'law of the jungle', Khairy contends '...we need to take action against one 'monkey' [bloggers]. I think the other 'monkeys' will also get scared.'<sup>168</sup> Overall, it is clear that the coercive apparatus was being used against a legitimate actor in Malaysia's civil society who posed no real threat to national security. The 'anti-terrorist' climate was used as a justification. However, while bloggers did not represent a national security threat, by criticising and therefore undermining government power, bloggers represented a threat to the regime.

### *Hindraf*

Several commentators and analysts agree that ethnicity remains the number one priority for the government, not terrorism. Jawhar refers to ethnic, religious and national unity as 'priority number one'.<sup>169</sup> Enalini Elumalai, Campaign Coordinator of human rights NGO Suaram similarly contends that race is increasingly important, stating 'The racial tension is getting worse... Don't blame the races, it's the system.'<sup>170</sup> An analyst at a Malaysian think tank who I interviewed in July 2007 and requested anonymity noted that maintaining an 'ethnic balance' is 'a greater challenge' than the challenge presented by terrorism. After 9/11, there has arguably been an intensification of ethnic identity, exacerbating the situation further. The think tank analyst noted that Malay-Muslims are

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Steven Gan, Editor-in-Chief, *Malaysiakini*, Kuala Lumpur, 20 July 2007.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Josef Roy Benedict, Executive Director, Amnesty International (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, 19 July 2007.

<sup>167</sup> Brendan Pereira, 'Abdullah explains Islam Hadhari to Aussies', *New Straits Times*, 9 April 2005.

<sup>168</sup> 'Fresh round of gov't attacks on bloggers', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/70510>>, 29 July 2007, (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Chairman and Chief Executive, Officer, ISIS, Kuala Lumpur, 27 July 2007.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Enalini Elumalai, Campaign Coordinator, Suaram, Petaling Jaya, 24 July 2007.



re-asserting their identity, with the consequence being the other ethnic groups are likewise becoming more assertive. How much of this re-assertion on the part of the Malay-Muslims was a response to 9/11 and how much was from the evolution of ethnic relations in Malaysia is difficult to quantify. Though, as the analyst contends, 'there is a greater feeling of threat on both sides.'

The above situation is particularly evident in the recent 'conversion cases' which pitted Muslim against non-Muslim.<sup>171</sup> In January 2007, M Revathi, a Hindu but born a Muslim, was detained and subsequently held at a religious rehabilitation camp after she attempted to have her official religious status recognised as a Hindu.<sup>172</sup> During her 'rehabilitation', Revathi alleges she was subjected to 'mental torture', forced to pray, wear a headscarf and, against Hindu customs, eat beef.<sup>173</sup> Another famous conversion case was that of Lina Joy who attempted to have the word 'Muslim' removed from her national identity card. The Federal Court ruled against Lina Joy on the grounds that the Shari'a Court, not the Federal Court, had jurisdiction on the issue. Justice Richard Malanjum noted, however, that Lina Joy would be incriminating herself to a criminal offence of apostasy if she went to that court.<sup>174</sup> Prime Minister Abdullah, along with other UMNO leaders, supported the Federal Court's decision.<sup>175</sup> More successful was the case of Siti Fatimah Tan Abdullah, who was permitted by the Shari'a Court to convert from Islam back to Buddhism.<sup>176</sup> Illustrating the growing tension within Malaysian society, this result was protested by a Muslim group on the grounds of being 'against Islamic laws.'<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Interview with analyst at a think tank, 27 July 2007.

<sup>172</sup> Suaram, *Malaysia Civil and Political Rights Report 2007: An Overview*, Suaram, Petaling Jaya, 2007, p. 13, and; 'Report card: Excellence, glory, distinction', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/78712>>, 26 February 2008, (accessed 27 February 2008).

<sup>173</sup> 'Report card: Excellence, glory, distinction,' *op.cit.*

<sup>174</sup> Suaram, *Malaysia Civil and Political Rights Report 2007, op.cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>175</sup> Lim Kit Siang, 'Lina Joy case biggest P. R. disaster for Malaysia' in *Religion Under Siege? Lina Joy, the Islamic State and Freedom of Faith*, eds. N. Tan, and J. Lee, Kinibooks, Kuala Lumpur, 2008, p. 20.

<sup>176</sup> 'Malaysian court allows Muslim convert to go back to Buddhism', *International Herald Tribune*, <<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/05/08/asia/malay.php>>, 8 May 2008, (accessed 12 May 2008).

<sup>177</sup> 'Muslims protest ruling on apostasy in Penang', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/83017>>, 16 May 2008, (accessed 19 May 2008).



While ethnic tension has remained a core element of the Malaysian political system, the threat it poses to 'national security' is no longer defined solely in terms of ethnicity. In the past the bogeyman of 'racial conflict' was frequently alluded to by the government in various periods of crisis, notably the 1987 factional conflict and the Anwar Ibrahim crisis in 1997/1998. In the contemporary context, though, this 'bogeyman' has been blended with the new 'bogeyman' – international terrorism. In an era where the 'terrorist' and 'religious extremist' label has particular connotations, it is no surprise that, when threatened, the BN has chosen to use such terms to undermine its detractors. This became apparent in its 2007/2008 skirmish with the Hindu Rights Action Force.

The marginalisation of the Malaysian Indian community has occurred at the economic, cultural and political level. The Indian community constitutes between seven to eight percent of the Malaysian population, depending on the source used.<sup>178</sup> Writing in 2004, P. Ramasamy noted that Indian ownership of the national economy is approximately 1.5 percent, compared to 25 percent for Malays and 40 percent for Chinese. This level of ownership has remained consistent throughout Malaysia's history, with the Indian share roughly being one percent for the period 1957 to 1990. Its share only increased to 1.5 percent in 1995 during the peak of the Asian economic boom.<sup>179</sup> Consequently, 43.6 percent of the 63.6 percent of Indians in Malaysia's working class live in poverty.<sup>180</sup> In terms of culture, the state emphasis on Islamisation has meant that Hindu culture has been sidelined, if not blatantly infringed. Islamisation has placed restrictions on the construction of non-Muslim places of worship, with several Hindu temples, as well as Chinese/Buddhist shrines, being demolished for being illegal constructions.<sup>181</sup> Hindraf

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<sup>178</sup> For a variety of statistics on the total percentage of ethnic Indians in Malaysia, see: P. Ramasamy, 'Nation-Building in Malaysia: Victimisation of Indians?', in *Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese*, ed. L. Suryadinata, ISEAS Publications, Singapore, 2004, p. 152; Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook – Malaysia*, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>>, 2008, (accessed 18 February 2008); Andrew C. Willford, *Cage of Freedom: Tamil Identity and the Ethnic Fetish in Malaysia*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2006, p. 295, and; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 'Press Statement: Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics Report – Population and Housing Census 2000', <[http://www.statistics.gov.my/english/frameset\\_census.php?file=pressdemo](http://www.statistics.gov.my/english/frameset_census.php?file=pressdemo)>, 6 November 2001, (accessed 16 June 2008).

<sup>179</sup> Ramasamy, 'Nation-Building in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>180</sup> Willford, *Cage of Freedom*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>181</sup> Ramasamy, 'Nation-Building in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 158.

claims 79 Hindu temples have been demolished since 2006.<sup>182</sup> Politically, the NEP's pro-Malay quota system led to the erosion of elite Indian influence in the public sector.<sup>183</sup> The political marginalisation of the Indian population has further resulted from its poor representation in parliament. It has been suggested that the MIC is so politically weak in the face of the Malays' political dominance that it can do little more than request assistance for its constituents.<sup>184</sup> Similarly, while not accepting the claim that Indians are marginalised, former Prime Minister Mahathir, having grown increasingly antagonistic toward the Abdullah government in his retirement, claimed that the MIC was not representing its constituency properly. 'Here you have only one (Indian) political party and nobody else is allowed to come and that is what is making the Indians really unhappy,' said Mahathir.<sup>185</sup> Mahathir argues the lack of governmental dialogue with the Indian community has exacerbated the situation and that this is symptomatic of the MIC's failure to properly voice the concerns of the constituency it represents.

In the face of growing Islamisation, a cultural revival amongst the Indian community is said to be occurring.<sup>186</sup> The Hindraf movement began as a response to these issues. Hindraf was established in December 2005 by Waytha Moorthy and was originally designed as a coalition. Moorthy had attempted to forge an inter-religious alliance with Malaysian Christians. The Christians however feared government retribution and declined his invitation. Hindraf was initially concerned with the issues of religious freedom and the freedom to challenge religious rights in civil society but eventually the scope of the movement broadened to include other Hindu rights issues such as education and culture. Moorthy, the Chairman of Hindraf, stresses that the movement is concerned not just with Hindu rights but human rights alone, though it is often portrayed as simply a Hindu organisation in the media.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> 'Report card: Excellence, glory, distinction', *op.cit.*

<sup>183</sup> Willford, *Cage of Freedom*, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>185</sup> 'Dr M fears corruption in general election', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/77573>>, 29 January 2008, (accessed 30 January 2008).

<sup>186</sup> Willford, *Cage of Freedom*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>187</sup> Personal communication with Waytha Moorthy, Chairman and Founder of Hindraf, 15 July 2008.

On November 25, 2007, Hindraf held a rally in Kuala Lumpur in protest of what they saw as discriminatory government economic policies. Hindraf's attempts to obtain a police permit for the march were denied but, citing the Constitution's guarantee of freedom of assembly and expression, the organisation proceeded with the protest. Police eventually dispersed the rally with force, including the use of batons and tear gas.<sup>188</sup> On December 13 the government arrested five Hindraf leaders, two of whom were also members of the DAP.<sup>189</sup> The five were sent immediately to Kamunting without undergoing the usual 60 day investigation period.<sup>190</sup> Elaine Pearson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch, argues that 'Holding Hindraf leaders under the ISA is an attempt to frighten into silence a minority community concerned about its rights.'<sup>191</sup>

Days before the arrests Hindraf was accused by the Inspector General of Police Musa Hassan of 'trying to seek support and help from terrorist groups.'<sup>192</sup> Though Musa did not name the terrorist groups, it is assumed from accusations by the Attorney-General in court that the IGP was referring to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.<sup>193</sup> After their arrests one of the Hindraf detainees claimed he was being pressured by police into admitting involvement with terrorist activities, stating:

The government and the police have no evidence to substantiate their accusations on our alleged terrorism links. As such they are now using the back way to obtain a confession from me by forcing me to admit of having terrorism link [sic].<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> 'Malaysia: Hindu Rights Activists Detained', *HumanRightsWatch*, <<http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2007/12/18/malays17573.htm>>, 18 December 2007, (accessed 4 February 2008).

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*, and; Chua Sue-Ann, 'Hindraf arrests: Use of ISA slammed', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/76035>>, 13 December 2007, (accessed 14 December 2007).

<sup>190</sup> K. Kabilan, 'ISA crackdown: 5 Hindraf leaders detained', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75999>>, 13 December 2007, (accessed 14 December 2007).

<sup>191</sup> 'Malaysia: Hindu Rights Activists Detained', *op.cit.*

<sup>192</sup> 'IGP: Hindraf linked to terrorist groups', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75760>>, 6 December 2007, (accessed 7 December 2007).

<sup>193</sup> Beh Lih Yi, 'Prelude to an ISA crackdown', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75816>>, 8 December 2007, (accessed 10 December 2007), and; 'IGP: Hindraf linked to terrorist groups,' *op.cit.*

<sup>194</sup> K. Kabilan, 'Stop the police pressure, cries Hindraf detainee', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/78141>>, 16 February 2008, (accessed 18 February 2008).

The IGP also raised the commonly used spectre of racial conflict, stating, '[Hindraf's] actions are potentially explosive in sparking racial clashes.'<sup>195</sup> It should be noted here that Hindraf itself has also used a 'terrorist' discourse. In a letter to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown dated 15 November 2007, P. Uthayakumar, Hindraf's legal adviser, describes the government-sponsored groups responsible for demolishing Hindu temples as 'Islamic extremist [sic] and armed terrorists.'<sup>196</sup>

In the weeks following the Hindraf detentions, Prime Minister Abdullah also used the term 'extremist' in an attempt to continue sidelining the Hindraf movement. On 25 December 2007, in a clear reference to Hindraf, Abdullah warned Malaysians against religious extremists pulling the country apart. Abdullah urged Malaysia to continue with its 'middle position.'<sup>197</sup> In February 2008, Hindraf held what became known as the Rose Protest. Hindraf attempted to hand Abdullah flowers and hoped to ask him to release the Hindraf Five. The protest was unsuccessful, resulting in the arrest of some 200 people. Continuing the discourse, Abdullah labelled those participating in the protest as 'extremists' who were attempting to disrupt the March 2008 election.<sup>198</sup> The 'religious extremist' label was here utilised in a way similar to the way 'deviancy' was utilised in the 1980s and 1990s in that groups which are seen as challenging the *status quo* of Malaysian politics are brandished as dangerous outsiders and as a threat to the social fabric.

In an attempt to counter claims of racism, Abdullah pointed out that the ISA had also been recently used against Muslim groups, such as Al-Maunah and JI. Abdullah said, 'They are my people, who believe in the same religion. But I had a duty to carry out. What is wrong is wrong. The law is colour blind.'<sup>199</sup> By using these two organisations as examples, Abdullah had again linked Hindraf to religious extremism and

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<sup>195</sup> 'IGP: Hindraf linked to terrorist groups', *op.cit.*

<sup>196</sup> 'Hindraf memorandum to UK Prime Minister', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, <[http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news\\_lite.php?id=300857](http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news_lite.php?id=300857)>, 6 December 2007, (accessed 5 June 2008).

<sup>197</sup> 'PM warns about religious extremism', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/76390>>, 25 December 2007, (accessed 27 December 2007).

<sup>198</sup> 'Rose violence: Global demo against M'sia', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/78152>>, 17 February 2008, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>199</sup> Carolyn Hong, 'Malaysia ready to arrest more people under ISA', *The Straits Times*, 17 December 2007.

international terrorism. However, his assertion of the law being ‘colour-blind’ has not gone unchallenged. Dean Johns, writing for *Malaysiakini*, pointed out that, while several arrests had resulted from the Hindraf rallies, the government had not brought to justice the police responsible for the high rate of deaths in custody, particularly among Indian detainees. Nor did the government reprimand UMNO members who at the 2006 general assembly ‘threatened to bathe the *keris* [dagger] in the blood of fellow Malaysians’ and ex-Malacca Chief Minister Rahim Thamby Chik for his statement that ‘The Malays have never taken to the streets so do not force us to do so as we will draw our *parang* [machete] to defend the Ketuanan Melayu in this country.’<sup>200</sup>

It can be deduced that the motive of the government in characterising and dealing with threats in these ways is a function of its continued emphasis on regime – particularly BN and UMNO – stability. The hypocrisy of the government noted by Johns illustrates this clearly, as the law is not applied consistently – it is only applied in situations where there is a direct challenge to the Malay-dominant regime not to society as a whole. When members of this regime make racially provocative remarks they are not reprimanded – when outsiders to the regime make similar comments or protest, they are arrested or branded as ‘extremists’ or ‘terrorists.’ This policy helps protect the regime by not only eliminating political ‘threats’ but, through the emphasis on racial elements, allowing the government to divide the people and score political points in various constituencies.<sup>201</sup> The government’s response to Hindraf resulted, if only briefly, in an increase in support for Abdullah among the Malay population, rising from 65 percent a year previously to 80 percent. The Chinese also reportedly felt some unease about the apparent rise in ‘political Hinduism.’<sup>202</sup> As evident in the 2008 election, this support was ultimately not maintained and the continued use of the security apparatus as a tool for maintaining government legitimacy was undermined.

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<sup>200</sup> Dean Johns, ‘Duplicity of Pak Liar’, *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75945>>, 12 December 2007, (accessed 13 December 2007).

<sup>201</sup> S Arutchelvam similarly argues that the state creates division by bringing in racial elements to divide the people: Interview with S Arutchelvam, Secretary General, Parti Sosialis Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 31 July 2007.

<sup>202</sup> Baradan Kuppusamy, ‘Malaysia’s Hindus show political muscle’, *Asia Times*, <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/JB06Ae02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JB06Ae02.html)>, 6 February 2008, (accessed 7 February 2008).

This pattern points to a larger phenomenon evident in the other examples provided. The campaigns against PAS and the bloggers, like that against Hindraf, were clearly motivated by political, rather than security reasons. None of the groups mentioned posed any discernible threat to the national security of Malaysia, but all provided, to varying degrees, some threat to the continued dominance of the UMNO-led BN. By ignoring the issues raised by these groups, and focusing instead on undermining them with the coercive apparatus, the government had failed to respond to a number of growing societal concerns. This in part can explain the backlash against the BN in the 2008 elections.

### **Conclusion**

The coercive apparatus of Malaysia's Security Model has remained intact in the post-9/11 era and continues to serve its primary function of supporting the BN regime. Compared to previous periods, Malaysia's coercive response to the demands of the post-9/11 world is consistent. Responding to concerns that Malaysia was a hub for international terrorist networks, the Malaysian government wielded the coercive apparatus against alleged members of KMM and JI. This did not lead to a major increase in the number of annual ISA arrests – rather it led to a decrease. Aside from as yet unused alterations to the Penal Code, the operational component of the apparatus itself remains the same with no major changes to its main legislative implements, such as the ISA. Any changes in policy have been superficial, with the actual apparatus itself – composed of the various coercive pieces of legislation – remaining intact.

The application and justification of the coercive apparatus has nevertheless undergone some change. First, transnational co-operation has increased. The relationship with ASEAN has arguably deepened in relation to security, with a number of declarations on the matter signed and several meetings held. With regard to the OIC, Malaysia has sought to promote a more cohesive response within the Muslim world to the issue of terrorism, albeit with minimal success. Most notably, relations with the US have improved dramatically. The US has seemingly forgiven Malaysia's past transgressions and embraced Malaysia as an ally at both the operational and ideological level. Malaysia has maintained some political distance from the US to ensure its image at home and abroad is not tarnished. Second, the ISA has now become an accepted

counter-terrorism tool. This has provided the Malaysian government with more freedom to wield the ISA as it now faces less criticism from other governments.

Most noteworthy of all has been the government's use of coercion against its political opponents. The abuse of the coercive apparatus, combined with the growing international endorsement of Malaysia's security policy, is setting a dangerous precedent for the country's politics, one which is already damaging Malaysia's growing, but still fragile and disparate, civil society. For example, following the arrest of some minor party members, the government began making broad statements linking PAS to international terrorism. This is a situation that worsened as a consequence of PAS's poor choice of rhetoric. Bloggers were also soon viewed through the prism of terrorism due to their criticism of the government. Finally, the Hindraf movement was repeatedly challenged and coerced by the government for what it stood for – opposition to certain government policies – rather than for their actions, none of which warranted either the 'extremist' or 'terrorist' label.

The government has continued to use the coercive component of its policy to secure the continued political survival and dominance of the BN coalition in general and UMNO in particular. This, rather than national security, has been the apparatus's primary function. In the contemporary era, the rhetoric of counter-terrorism has provided a new justification for the continued use of coercion and, in turn, the BN's continued dominance. I argue that this has led to increased abuse of the coercive apparatus, with the definition of terrorism being stretched past its limits in a bid to demonise politically opposed elements such as PAS, the blogging community and Hindraf. This does much to explain the BN's considerable political setbacks in the 2008 election.

On the whole, there has been no major departure from previous periods in the usage of the coercive apparatus. Malaysia's security policy has moved smoothly into the post-9/11 era, its past practices now seemingly viewed as a model for others to emulate. By contrast, at the ideological level, dramatic shifts have been apparent. Mahathir and Abdullah have both championed an alternative approach to the War on Terror to that offered by America's soft power practices.

## Chapter Six

### Moderated Islam: The Role of Ideology in the Malaysian Security Model Post-9/11

*No attempt is being made at all to trace the causes of the anger which makes people ever willing to blow themselves up.*

**Mahathir Mohamad<sup>1</sup>**

*For the Malays, if the religion says this is a good way, they will do it. Islam becomes an imperative, an inspiration, a call that the Malays will readily accept because it is good. When our religion says it is good, we will do it.*

**Abdullah Ahmad Badawi<sup>2</sup>**

While there was much continuity in the coercive apparatus following 9/11, the ideological component of Malaysia's security approach underwent a number of significant alterations. Since Independence, the ideological apparatus has necessarily been the more fluid and changing of the two components, typically used to justify the continued application of the coercive apparatus in different contexts. As I have already noted, in the post-9/11 era a new justification for the coercive apparatus emerged. It was counter-terrorism. The ideological space in Malaysia was consequently defined anew.

I argue that the ideological approach adopted by the Malaysian government since 9/11 represents an attempt to undermine the ideological strength of al-Qaeda and establish Malaysia as a leader of the Muslim world. Moreover, by portraying Malaysia as a

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in David Capie, 'Between a hegemon and a hard place: the 'war on terror' and Southeast Asian-US relations', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 17, issue 2, 2004, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> 'Transcript of Bernama Interview with the Prime Minister', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, <<http://www.bernama.com>>, 10 February 2005, (accessed 12 April 2008).



tolerant and moderate Muslim country, the ideological approach is intended to further legitimise the Barisan Nasional (BN) regime to both domestic and international audiences, Muslim and non-Muslim. The use of ideology in this context is in many ways similar to the hearts and minds strategy deployed during the Emergency, a point often cited by the government.

First, to establish the context, I analyse the ideological war between the West and al-Qaeda. I compare the ideology of al-Qaeda to the Western perception of the organisation and note the gap between these two viewpoints. I argue that given the history of conflict and mistrust between the West and the Islamic world, the battle for the hearts and minds of those susceptible to al-Qaeda propaganda will only be won with the cooperation of moderate Muslim governments. The Malaysian regime aspires to perform this function, promoting its ideology and the security apparatus as a whole as the appropriate response to terrorism. I have then used the remainder of the chapter to assess the ideologies of Mahathir and his successor Abdullah. I have analysed each separately. Mahathir and Abdullah both presented a unique vision of how to ideologically combat extremism at home and abroad. Mahathir's approach emphasised root causes, a return to the hearts and minds campaign of the Emergency era. Mahathir used Malaysia's position as an ally of the Muslim and Western world as a platform to attempt to salvage the image of Islam in the post-September 11 global climate. While advocating similar issues, Abdullah brought all the ideological elements together in a single package. The package – Islam Hadhari or 'Civilisational Islam' – represented a push by Malaysia to export its security model and by extension its model of governance. This would buttress the legitimacy the BN regime at home and abroad.

Underlying both ideologies is the use of a particular form of Islam to combat extremist thought. Islam is fused, with varying degrees of success, with the security agenda. In defining Malaysian Islam as 'moderate' and 'progressive', Mahathir and Abdullah have attempted to promote a state ideology which promotes the BN's agenda while continuing to exclude any radical or 'deviant' interpretations of Islamic texts. Ultimately, this ideology is used in the domestic context to ensure the continuation of the current political climate – one in which the UMNO-dominant BN is in political and economic control. At the international level, the ideology is used to emphasise Malaysia's position as a leader of the Muslim world, as well as to advance the cause of

Islam in general. However, the contradictions between this ideology and the use of the coercive apparatus have become increasingly apparent. They have been undermining the Security Model as a whole.

### **A New Ideological War?**

As with the Cold War, the so-called War on Terror cannot be fought only at the military level. In a training manual uncovered by British police, al-Qaeda acknowledges the military and ideological elements of its struggle:

Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. They are established as they (always) have been by pen and gun, by word and bullet, by tongue and teeth.<sup>3</sup>

With the United States' military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as its overt and covert support for and/or endorsement of counter-terrorist police operations the world over, little attention has been given at the government level to the ideological dimension of fighting terrorism. Although the War on Terror is claimed to be a campaign against all forms of terrorism, the focus of the US, the West, and much of Southeast Asia, has been al-Qaeda and its alleged surrogates. Scant attention has been given to other forms of terrorism – including state terrorism and terrorism committed by other religious and political groups or cults – with the focus instead being on the militaristic or extremist forms of Islam. Even within this narrow focus, the motivations of these militants have scarcely been considered by policymakers in the US and its allies. I argue there is an inherent ideology that drives the strand of terrorism the War on Terror is primarily trying to combat. Being one of the few countries to actually consider the ideological aspects, Malaysia's counter-terrorist rhetoric can be viewed against the discourse of al-Qaeda. Its success in deconstructing the ideas of this extremist brand of Islam can also be measured.

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<sup>3</sup> 'The Al Qaeda Manual', *United States Department of Justice*, <[http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1\\_1.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf)>, Date Unknown, (accessed 21 April 2008).

### *The al-Qaeda Idea*

The ideology of al-Qaeda is derived from a number of elements. It is primarily political, its ultimate aims being political in nature – the physical and political removal of American influence from the Muslim world. Its motivations are derived from the policies of the US government and its allies which are seen as unjust toward Islam. Religion – Islam – is also a vital component of al-Qaeda's ideology. Al-Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden sees conversion to Islam as the ultimate solution to the West's immorality. It should be noted that the political aspects of its ideology are also derived from the religious component in that the West's policies are presented as being against Islam and Muslims.

The ideology of al-Qaeda can be seen as having a political purpose with religious overtones. The ideology is derived from Islam, where religion and politics are seldom separated. In using the term 'ideology' in the context of al-Qaeda, a non-state actor, I am following the same basic definition of the concept that I have used when discussing the ideology of Malaysia and its security apparatus. The ideology of al-Qaeda refers to the system of beliefs used by the group to justify and explain its actions. The ideology of al-Qaeda, like state ideology, presents a means of constructing the societies it is targeting in its actions. Similar to the ideology of domestic political opposition groups, the role of al-Qaeda's ideology is to present an alternative to the *status quo*, though, unlike domestic groups, this is aimed at both national and international levels.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the ideology of al-Qaeda was quickly defined by US President George W. Bush in simple black-and-white terms. The group was said to oppose freedom in general and democracy in particular. These 'enemies of freedom' sought to remake the world by 'imposing [their] beliefs on people everywhere.' In this respect, Bush argued the group was the 'heir' to the 'murderous ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century', including fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism.<sup>4</sup> The terrorists were 'schooled

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<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', speech, Washington D.C., < <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> >, 20 September 2001, (accessed 14 June 2008).

in the methods of murder' and supported by 'outlaw regimes.'<sup>5</sup> Bush emphasised that the Islam preached by al-Qaeda was not the true interpretation of the faith. Instead, the al-Qaeda group were 'traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself.'<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the rightness of America's campaign was steeped in religious rhetoric, Bush stating for example:

Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.<sup>7</sup>

The War on Terror began, ideologically, as a campaign of 'good' (the US and its allies) versus 'evil' (al-Qaeda, its surrogates, its state sponsors, and terrorism broadly). The simplicity of these statements was clearly designed to justify the launch of the counter-terrorist campaign, domestically and internationally, as well as to garner public support. The lack of depth in these pronouncements suggests they were designed to justify the military aspects of the campaign and not to provide an ideological counter to, or critique of, the discourse put forward by al-Qaeda. Indeed, despite the emphasis that Islam was not the target of America's new war, Bush's use of religious language to defend present and future actions of the US is likely to have fermented concern within the Muslim world that this was a battle between the Christian and Islamic faiths.

A similar view of al-Qaeda's ideology is presented by Paul Levine, an American scholar, and Harry Papasotiriou, a European. In their account, al-Qaeda sees itself as part of an Islamic tradition, originating in the raids launched by the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century against the two superpowers of that time, Byzantium and Persia. Although attacks are targeted at the West, the real target of al-Qaeda's operations are said to be the states in the Muslim world that have abandoned what the movement regards as traditional Islamic values and instead adopted modern or 'Western' practices. Al-Qaeda intends to mobilise and radicalise the Muslim world to overthrow their governments and replace them with theocracies.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Israeli academics Yoram

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<sup>5</sup> George W. Bush, 'The President's State of the Union Address', speech, Washington D.C., <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>>, 29 January 2002, (accessed 14 June 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Paul Levine and Harry Papasotiriou, *America Since 1945: The American Moment*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p. 245.

Schweitzer and Shaul Shay claim al-Qaeda's ideology views the world as a battleground between the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this view, Muslims must wage a 'defensive battle' against the persecution of the West. Schweitzer and Shay claim al-Qaeda wishes to prove the West to be vulnerable because of its lack of belief.<sup>9</sup> These two accounts emphasise the religious themes of al-Qaeda's struggle and appear to concur with Bush's notion that the group is motivated primarily by its hatred of Western political systems and cultures rather than by Western policies and double-standards.

The above accounts can be contrasted with the statements of Osama bin Laden. One of the first extensive glimpses into bin Laden's worldview came in 1996 when he issued a declaration of war entitled 'Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places.' In this *fatwa*, bin Laden declared the presence of American forces in Saudi Arabia to be an affront to Islam, stating, 'Clearly after Belief there is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the holy land.' The struggle is described as a 'legitimate and morally demanded duty' with 'paradise' being the reward for Muslims who fight against the US. The 'terrorising' tactics to be employed find precedent in the 1983 bombing of the US military barracks in Beirut and the 1993 battle of Mogadishu. These incidents, says bin Laden, illustrated the 'impotence and weakness' of the US as in both situations American forces withdrew from Muslim lands after the death of American servicemen. Bin Laden also lays much blame on the Saudi government for allowing American forces to be stationed on its soil in the first place. He claims that this, along with the suspension of Islamic Shari'a law in the country, has led to Saudi Arabia losing legitimacy. Bin Laden does however maintain that America is the principle and main cause of the situation and, as such, efforts should be concentrated on destroying it.<sup>10</sup>

Bin Laden followed this declaration of war in 1998 with another *fatwa*. Though the first *fatwa* was attributed solely to bin Laden, the second was signed by bin Laden, Ayman

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<sup>9</sup> Yoram Schweitzer and Shaul Shay, *The Globalisation of Terror: The Challenge of Al-Qaeda and the Response of the International Community*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London, 2003, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Osama bin Laden, 'Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places', *PBS News*, <[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1996.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html)>, August 1996, (accessed 17 June 2008).

al-Zawahiri, the emir of Egyptian Islamic Jihad and a leader of al-Qaeda, as well as a number of other leaders of extremist Islamic groups. Like the first, the second *fatwa* lists America's presence in Saudi Arabia as an act of war. The document contends that the blockade against Iraq as well as America's support for Israel are 'a clear declaration of war on God, his messenger, and Muslims.' On the basis of these issues, the following *fatwa* is declared:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim.<sup>11</sup>

The worldwide scope of bin Laden's war is evident in the quote, including the declaration that the killing of Americans is the duty of every Muslim in any country. By indicting America's allies, and failing to define what an ally is, bin Laden implicitly justifies attacks against almost every country in the world, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, as virtually any cooperation with the US could be regarded as the action of an ally.

A warning to America was issued by bin Laden in the weeks following 9/11, an attack he described as an act of God. The statement reiterated much of the content of the two *fatwas* and emphasised the 'hypocrisy' of the US for supporting the oppression of the Palestinian people and the blockade of Iraq.<sup>12</sup> Bin Laden's motivations were further spelt out in his November 2002 'Letter to America.' Contrary to Bush's claims that al-Qaeda was motivated by its hatred of freedom and democracy, bin Laden confirms that the reason for al-Qaeda's campaign against the US was 'because you attacked us and continue to attack us', listing Palestine, Somalia, Chechnya, Kashmir and Lebanon as

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<sup>11</sup> Osama bin Laden, 'Al Qaeda's 1998 *Fatwa*', *PBS News*, <[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1998.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html)>, 23 February 1998, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>12</sup> 'Bin Laden's warning: full text', *BBC News*, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1585636.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1585636.stm)>, 7 October 2001, (accessed 17 June 2008).

examples. The solution, claims bin Laden, is for the US to convert to Islam and end its 'oppression, lies, immorality and debauchery...'<sup>13</sup>

The tenets of Islam play an important role in al-Qaeda's ideology. The version of Islam in al-Qaeda's ideology is derived from a number of historical sources. The writings of Ibn Timia (1263 – 1328) provide justification for the rebellion against rulers who do not adhere to the Shari'a.<sup>14</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4 – 1792) emphasised the divinity of the Shari'a, claiming that only God, and not man, could make laws. Sayyid Qutb (1906 – 1966) extended Wahhab's argument by contending liberalism was fatally flawed and democracy was a false religion.<sup>15</sup> Qutb believed the West (referred to here as Europe and the United States) had reduced religion to a form of private morality by separating the Divine from the 'social order' and failing to realise that the real final arbiter is not the individual but God.<sup>16</sup> Qutb argued the solution was Islam, which provided a comprehensive, interwoven and interdependent system that covered all aspects of human life.<sup>17</sup>

Overall, al-Qaeda's ideology is a combination of a number of elements. It is primarily political because it ultimately aims to remove American influence from the Muslim world, particularly the Middle East. Underlying these political aims is a commitment to Islam, presented by bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda as the solution to the West's moral decadence and hypocritical policies. Contrary to President Bush's claims, antagonism toward democracy and freedom play little part in al-Qaeda's worldview. Al-Qaeda certainly seeks to spread Islam and impose Shari'a law but, on the whole, the group's motivations appear to be derived mostly from what the US and its allies have done and are doing rather than what they are. The emphasis in President Bush's statements is therefore on the wrong elements. Indeed, BBC correspondent Frank

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<sup>13</sup> Osama bin Laden, 'Letter to America', *The Guardian*, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>>, 24 November 2002, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Schweitzer and Shay, *The Globalisation of Terror*, op. cit, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 2003, pp. 80-1.

<sup>17</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Islam: The Religion of the Future*, The Holy Koran Publishing House, Beirut, 1974, p. 5.

Gardner observes bin Laden often tries in his messages to sway the opinions of the Western public in the hope of ‘driving a wedge between them and their leaders.’<sup>18</sup>

Though al-Qaeda’s rhetoric focuses particularly on issues in the Middle East, the ideas inherent in its worldview have evidently had some influence in the Asian context. The broadness of its ideology permits local struggles to be redefined as part of a larger, global *jihad*.<sup>19</sup> Bin Laden has attempted to influence politics in South Asia, for example, by urging Pakistanis to overthrow President Pervez Musharraf due to his ‘loyalty, submissiveness and aid to America against the Muslims.’<sup>20</sup> More notable though has been al-Qaeda’s alleged influence over Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia though the group clearly functions with a considerable degree of independence. In terms of ideology, JI’s notion of a regional Islamic super-state run according to Shari’a law, its overt targeting of Westerners, and its endorsement of martyrdom in the name of *jihad*, reflect the similar ideas put forward by al-Qaeda. This ideological influence can also be seen as derived from the published statements and *fatwas* of bin Laden and other members of al-Qaeda’s leadership as well as from the shared experience of many al-Qaeda and JI members in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Though JI leader Bashir has denied a connection to al-Qaeda, his noted admiration for bin Laden implies at least some common values. The aforementioned exchange of information and technology between the two groups indicates shared interests and, by extension, values.

### *Soft Power – The Role of Ideology in the War on Terror*

In the broader War on Terror, ideology plays an important though often overlooked role. A well-cited critique of contemporary international politics since the mid-1990s has been the *Clash of the Civilizations* thesis authored by Samuel P. Huntington. Huntington argued that culture and cultural identities (broadly, civilisational identities)

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<sup>18</sup> Frank Gardner, ‘Trimmed Bin Laden in media-savvy war’, *BBC News*, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6985086.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6985086.stm)>, 8 September 2007, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>19</sup> David Leheny, ‘Terrorism, Social Movements, and International Security: How Al Qaeda Affects Southeast Asia’, *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 6, issue 1, 2005, p. 99.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Bin Laden urges Pakistan holy war’, *BBC News*, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7005140.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7005140.stm)>, 20 September 2007, (accessed 17 June 2008).



‘are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world.’ The most notable tension between civilisations is between the Christians (the West) and the Muslims. This tension flows from the very nature of each: both are monotheistic, universalistic and missionary religions whose adherents see themselves as obligated to convert non-believers.<sup>21</sup> Although written in 1996, the applicability of this thesis to the War on Terror is obvious. Seen through this lens, the ideological battle between al-Qaeda (representing Islam) and the West (representing Christianity) can be viewed in terms of civilisations with each enunciating a contrasting set of values in the pursuit of global dominance and/or an idealised utopia.

However, it has been noted that since the end of the Cold War there has been as much conflict within civilisations than between them. For example, most countries in the Islamic world quickly denounced the 9/11 attacks and even offered the US access to their bases, military installations and airspace, Malaysia included. This weakens the notion that the US is ‘taking on’ Islamic civilisation.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, given the diversity of political and cultural structures in the Muslim world, and the variety of interpretations of the faith, it is misleading to conceive of a monolithic Islamic civilisation in the first instance. Furthermore, unlike Communist and socialist ideology during the Cold War, al-Qaeda’s ideology attracts few adherents, even in the Muslim world.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore incorrect to view the current conflict as a clash of the civilisations as al-Qaeda does not adequately represent the civilisation it claims as its own. Joseph S. Nye more accurately states that the current struggle against terrorism is in fact a clash *within* civilisations, a civil war between the moderate and extremist followers of the Islamic faith, and one which the US and its allies will win only if the moderate Muslims emerge triumphant.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, The Free Press, New York, 2002, pp. 210-1.

<sup>22</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2002, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, ‘Introduction: Predictability and Stability Despite Challenges’ in *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, ed. M. Alagappa, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2004, p. 131.

In an attempt to ensure this outcome, the US has waged a limited ‘propaganda war’ targeting Arabs in particular and Muslims generally.<sup>25</sup> The US has continued to broadcast its Voice of America radio service to promote American values and ideology overseas. Other specialised stations focusing on particular countries have also been established, such as Radio Sawa and Radio Farda which broadcast to Iran.<sup>26</sup> The campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, at least in part, sought to transform the politics of the Middle East by attempting to convert two unstable, authoritarian regimes into functioning, peaceful democracies. The 2006 US *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* proposes that the export of democracy is the long-term solution to the ‘battle of ideas.’<sup>27</sup> The attempt to change the ideological underpinnings of the Middle East has thus far failed, with the perceived unjust application of America’s hard, military power to these Muslim societies only degrading the image of the US in the larger Islamic world and undermining the US initiative for democratic change in the process. More generally, the Bush administration has attempted to revive its soft power through a number of programmes targeting the welfare of the Third World. The Millennium Challenge initiative, which promises increased aid to countries in the Third World willing to make reforms, and the Global HIV/AIDs Initiative, combating infectious diseases, are two examples.<sup>28</sup> The US State Department has also increased its educational and cultural exchange programs by nearly 25 percent.<sup>29</sup>

However, the US has to date given a low priority to improving its soft power cache. The combined cost of US public diplomacy programmes and international broadcasting is close to only a billion dollars, or approximately four percent of the nation’s international affairs budget, three percent of its intelligence budget, and 0.29 percent of its military budget. Indeed, if one percent of the military budget were spent on public diplomacy it would automatically quadruple the existing budget.<sup>30</sup> The emphasis on

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<sup>25</sup> Lamis Andoni, ‘Deeds Speak Louder Than Words’, in *The Battle for Hearts and Minds: Using Soft Power to Undermine Terrorist Networks*, ed. A. T. J. Lennon, The MIT Press, Cambridge, p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, pp. 7-10, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/nsct2006.pdf>>, September 2006, (accessed 9 December 2007).

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 144, and; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., ‘On the Rise and Fall of American Soft Power’, *NPQ*, Summer 2005, pp. 75-6.

<sup>29</sup> Nye, ‘On the Rise and Fall of American Soft Power’, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

militarism over diplomacy is highly problematic given the aforementioned antagonism to America's recent military endeavours.

The limited resources devoted to diplomacy aside, it should be noted that the soft power component of America's strategy was always going to be difficult to formulate and then sell to its intended recipients, given the US's tumultuous history with the Muslim world. Considering the improbability of the US alone undermining al-Qaeda's ideology in the minds of potential terrorist recruits, allies are necessary. In this context Muslim societies would be ideal partners.<sup>31</sup> Should Muslim societies promote versions of Islam that discredit extremism and promote political moderation, the ideas of al-Qaeda may become less attractive and thus can be more easily combated. Given the diverse nature of Muslim societies and the political oppression inherent in many of them, such a situation at present appears to be somewhat out of reach.

Nonetheless, Malaysia can play a key role. Malaysia's economic success and staunch opposition to militant Islam has led to it becoming associated with the progressive and liberal forms of Islam regarded as necessary to combating extremism.<sup>32</sup> As a supposedly moderate, modernising populace with an anti-extremist government, it has been argued that Malaysia follows the path that the US hopes to see other Muslim countries follow.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the methods of dealing with the threat of terrorism are well-established in Malaysia: a coercive apparatus on one level pre-emptively arresting alleged terrorist suspects combined with an ideology designed to not only justify the other apparatus but also to win the 'hearts and minds' of those vulnerable to extremist propaganda. Malaysian Prime Ministers Mahathir and Abdullah have both formulated ideologies that continue this pattern, though have presented their ideas in different formats. What has been consistent has been the Prime Ministers' belief that the Malaysian ideological response to terrorism is exportable.

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<sup>31</sup> Gerard Chaliand, 'Needed: A cool Assessment on Terrorism', *S. Rajaratnam School International Studies (RSIS) Commentaries*, <<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/commentaries.html>>, 2007, (accessed 25 October 2007)

<sup>32</sup> Clive Kessler, 'Islam, the state and freedom of religion in Malaysia: The struggle between 'gentle Islam' and 'ungentle Islam' within Malaysia may have more than local significance', *Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 25, issue 9, <<http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2005b/9b.html>>, 2005, (accessed 7 March 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, 'President Bush Presses Antiterror Agenda in Southeast Asia', *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 5, issue 4, 2004, p. 72.

### **Hearts and Minds: Mahathirist Ideology and the War on Terror**

Before and after 9/11, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resisted the trends of international politics that went against Malaysia's – and, by extension, his administration's – interests. Mahathir carved a unique place for Malaysia in the world community: that of an opinionated, often controversial, but always, at least rhetorically, independent Muslim country. Throughout his tenure, and in varying contexts, Mahathir sought to portray Malaysia as an example to be followed by other Muslim populations, be they Muslim states or Muslim minorities. The War on Terror era was no different in this respect with Mahathir formulating an ideological response to the issue of international terrorism designed for both domestic and international audiences.

#### *Background: The Asian Values Debate and the Post-9/11 Shift to Islam*

Prior to 9/11, the West, rather than radical Islam, was the primary target of Mahathir's rhetoric.<sup>34</sup> This is understandable given the role of Western players in the Asian Financial Crisis. However, Mahathir's challenge to the West began before the Crisis hit, with the Prime Minister rhetorically attacking the broadly defined West, the US in particular, for its policies and values throughout much of the 1990s. As I have noted, this was part of what is often referred to as the Asian Values Debate. Mahathir was a key figure in the debate. Along with Singaporean leader Lee Kuan Yew, Mahathir resisted the imposition of what was perceived to be the decadent values of the Western countries. As I noted in chapter one, the general argument was that Asian cultures preferred 'good government' – 'effective, efficient, and honest administrations able to provide security and basic needs with good opportunities for an improved standard of living' – to liberal democracy.<sup>35</sup> The issue of human rights was the most contentious element of the Debate. Mahathir and Lee contended that the promotion of human rights was simply an expression of Western cultural hegemony, believing these rights to be a Western invention and thus only suited to Western cultures.<sup>36</sup> Mahathir stated:

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<sup>34</sup> Dean Martin Jones and Michael L. R. Smith, 'Islamists Defeat Asian Way: Islamism in Southeast Asia', *The World Today*, Vol. 58, issue 6, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Bilahari Kausikan, 'Asia's different standard', *Foreign Policy*, issue 92, Fall 1993, p. 24(18), and; M. Anne Brown, *Human rights and the borders of suffering: the promotion of human rights in international politics*, Manchester University Press, New York, 2002, p. 76.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *Human rights and the borders of suffering*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

No one, no country and no civilisation has a right to claim that it has a monopoly of wisdom as to what constitutes human rights. Certainly from the records and performance of the Western liberals, they are the least capable of defining and preaching human rights. Indeed, at the moment they have no right at all to talk of human rights, much less judge others on this issue.<sup>37</sup>

Human rights were seen to be based on the individualism of the West. Mahathir claimed individualism had led to the erosion of moral standards in Western society, specifically its embrace of immoral and hedonistic practices and values. To Mahathir, such values were deemed inappropriate to Asian cultures which he claimed to be more communal and religious.<sup>38</sup> The Debate provided Mahathir with the opportunity to portray Malaysia as a regional – and Asian – leader, enunciating a doctrine ideologically different, if not completely opposed, to that emphasised by the broadly defined West.

Interestingly, Islam – a key ideological element in Malaysia's state building project and domestic politics – did not figure prominently in the Debate. This might be explained by the fact that other countries in the region – notably Indonesia – have a secular state ideology, whilst Malaysia itself could not emphasise Islam at the expense of its significant non-Muslim population.<sup>39</sup> With 9/11, Islam returned to the forefront of Mahathir's rhetoric. Malaysia had certainly embraced aspects of Islam and viewed itself as a leader of the Muslim world well before September 2001, but the War on Terror allowed Malaysian elites to push Islam to an even more dominant position. This is reflected in the role played by Malaysia internationally as well as in the country's domestic politics. Indeed, the War on Terror provided Mahathir with an opportunity to reclaim his legacy, marred as it was by the political fallout of the *reformasi* movement years earlier. As Osman Bakar has argued, Mahathir was able to reverse his political

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<sup>37</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Rethinking Human Rights', speech, JUST International Conference on 'Rethinking Human Rights', Kuala Lumpur, 6 December 1994, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia: Selected Speeches by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia*, eds. Hashim Makaruddin, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya, 2000, pp. 207-8.

<sup>38</sup> Mahathir stated, 'The West's interpretation of human rights is that every individual can do what he likes, free from any restraints by governments... Individuals soon decided that they should break every rule and code governing their society... Hedonism and total immorality are the norms of absolute freedom for one and all': *ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>39</sup> Michael D. Barr, *Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The tepid war*, Routledge, London, p. 135.

decline by using the events of 9/11 to bolster his standing in the Muslim world as well as within Malaysia, thereby allowing him to leave office in 2003 from a position of strength.<sup>40</sup>

### *The International Dimension*

Internationally, Mahathir's response to the changing dynamics of the post-9/11 world was to formulate a unique ideology which both supported and condemned the approach of the US. As I have noted, Mahathir pledged his support for America's campaign against international terrorism and quickly signed on to the War on Terror. Malaysia began to be promoted as a model Muslim country, both by foreigners and the Malaysian government itself. Mahathir has denied that Malaysia set itself up as a model, stating:

All we did was to do what we think is right according to the fundamentals of the Islamic religion. It is others who make this remark that we appear to be a model of tolerant Islam, not us. As far as we are concerned, we will do what we think is right by our religion.<sup>41</sup>

Contradicting this, however, the Mahathir government invited Westerners to Malaysia in the aftermath of 9/11 to examine what he referred to as a 'model Islamic state' and to 'clear confusion over Islam in the West.'<sup>42</sup> I argue that a new role for Malaysia in international affairs had begun with the 9/11 attacks: one in which Malaysia envisioned itself as a leading spokesperson for Islam. This role included both mediating between the Islamic world and the West, as well as enhancing the government's Islamic credentials and views in the eyes of both domestic and international audiences. A further element of this new role was the promotion of the coercive apparatus. 9/11 provided Mahathir with an opportunity to sell the entire Malaysian Security Model to the rest of the world.

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<sup>40</sup> Osman Bakar, 'The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 16, issue 2, 2005, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> 'Ask the Malaysian Prime Minister', *BBC News*, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking\\_point/3191639.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/3191639.stm)>, 13 October 2003, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Bartlett, 'Government offers alternative view of Islam in wake of terror attacks', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/4723>>, 18 September 2001, (accessed 17 June 2008).

Though the coercive elements of both the US and Malaysian domestic counter-terrorism campaigns became increasingly similar (most notably with the adoption of the US PATRIOT Act), Mahathir differentiated the ideological component of his strategy from that of the US. Mahathir's immediate response to 9/11 was to urge the American government not to seek revenge. Days after 9/11, Mahathir stated, 'Retaliation will lead to the deaths of many people and will be followed by more counter-strikes.'<sup>43</sup> The rejection of a military-only approach to counter-terrorism became a common theme in Mahathir's ideological response to War on Terror era terrorism. This was particularly prominent in his opposition to US-led invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq. In the aftermath of the first Bali bombing, Mahathir again re-emphasised this point, declaring that the attack showed the failure of America's militaristic strategy. Mahathir argued the US had failed to proceed on the basis of 'reason and logic', particularly since it had made no attempt to address the root causes of terrorism.<sup>44</sup> Mahathir instead emphasised an approach focused on undermining the root causes of terrorism, stating in a letter to French President Jacques Chirac:

As a doctor, I am trained to treat the disease not the symptoms. Terrorism is the symptom of the disease of injustice, discrimination and oppression of the Muslims. Cure the disease, terrorism will – if not disappear completely – at least be much reduced.<sup>45</sup>

For Mahathir, 'the principal cause is the Palestine issue.'<sup>46</sup> Rather than engaging in the discourse on terrorism established by President Bush, whereby al-Qaeda is an 'enemy of freedom' motivated by a hatred of democracy, this time Mahathir is actually explicitly addressing one of the elements of bin Laden's *fatwas* – Western support for Israel. Mahathir argued that while Palestinian 'acts of terror' are rightly condemned by the world, the 'more terrifying acts of the Israelis' are not.<sup>47</sup> He continued:

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<sup>43</sup> *International Reaction to the September 11, 2001 Attacks in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington*, <<http://september11news.com/InternationalReaction.htm>>, 2001, (accessed 13 December 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Capie, 'Between a hegemon and a hard place', *op.cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>45</sup> Letter dated 17 October 2001: Cited in Abdullah Ahmad (ed.), *Dr Mahathir's Selected Letters to World Leaders*, Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia), Shah Alam, 2008, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Bakar, 'The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam', *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>47</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Speech by Prime Minister, the Honourable Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the Opening Session of the XIII Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement at Putra World Trade Centre', speech, XIII Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement,

This blatant double standards [sic] is what infuriates Muslims, infuriates them to the extent of launching their own terror attacks. If Iraq is linked to the Al Qaeda, is it not more logical to link the expropriation of Palestinian land and the persecution and oppression of the Palestinians with September 11? It is not religious differences which angered the attackers of the World Trade Centre. It is simply sympathy and anger over the expropriation of Palestinian land, over the injustice and the oppression of the Palestinians, and Muslims everywhere. If the innocent people who died in the attack on Afghanistan, and those who have been dying from lack of food and medical care in Iraq, are considered collaterals, are not the 3,000 who died in New York and the 200 in Bali also just collaterals whose deaths are necessary for the operations to succeed?<sup>48</sup>

In Mahathir's view, resolving the Israel-Palestine issue is key to addressing the threat posed by al-Qaeda. A broader root cause identified by Mahathir is the relentless military attacks against Muslims. In a letter to George W. Bush on 4 October 2001, Mahathir stated that the 'problems' of Palestine, Chechnya, Iraq, Iran, Sudan and Libya – all geopolitical hotspots involving Islamic movements – must be solved in order to deplete the ranks of the terrorists.<sup>49</sup> Mahathir argued that the bombing of Afghanistan 'would actually result in the spawning of more terrorists' rather than effectively eliminate the threat.<sup>50</sup> Mahathir further claimed that the War on Terror had foolishly devolved into a war against Muslims which, in turn, would only create more violence. He noted, 'While Iraq, Iran and North Korea are labelled as the axis of evil, action is concentrated only on Iraq and Iran, Muslim countries.'<sup>51</sup>

To combat the 'anti-Muslim hysteria',<sup>52</sup> Mahathir pushed for the term terrorism to be disassociated from Islam. Illustrating the consistency of this element of his ideology,

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Kuala Lumpur, <<http://www.nam.gov.za/media/030225na.htm>>, 24 February 2003, (accessed 19 February 2008).

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Cited in Abdullah Ahmad (ed.), *Dr Mahathir's Selected Letters to World Leaders*, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Susan Loone, 'Gov't's 'successful' anti-terror campaign was not only about arms: PM', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/5528>>, 16 November 2001 (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Shingto Ito, 'US anti-terror campaign targets Muslims: Mahathir', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/13951>>, 14 December 2002 (accessed 12 March 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Mahathir referred to reactions to the first Bali bombing as 'anti-Muslim hysteria': Capie, 'Between a hegemon and a hard place', *op. cit.*, p. 232.



Mahathir began speaking out against the 'Muslim terrorist' label before 9/11. In a speech in 1999, Mahathir noted that while those of other faiths who used terrorism were simply labelled 'terrorists', the Arabs who did likewise were referred to as 'Muslim terrorists.' 'They never ever talk of Christian, Buddhist or Hindu terrorists. But they never miss to link the religion of the terrorist if he happens to be Muslim,' he said. Mahathir further claimed that terrorist methods were 'largely European inventions' and had simply been adopted by Arabs in Palestine.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, Mahathir asserted, 'Every terrorist act is attributed to Muslims until proven otherwise.'<sup>54</sup>

After 9/11, Mahathir pushed for an official definition of terrorism that removed any link to religion. Mahathir's definition was as follows:

Armed attacks or other forms of attack against civilians must be regarded as acts of terror and the perpetrator as terrorists. Whether the attackers are acting on their own or on the orders of their governments, whether they are regulars or irregulars, if the attack is against civilians, then they must be considered as terrorists. Groups or governments which support attacks on civilians must be regarded as terrorists, irrespective of the justification of the operations carried out, irrespective of the nobility of the struggle.<sup>55</sup>

It was hoped this definition would be adopted by other nations. The issue of definition was canvassed in Mahathir's opening speech to the meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers in Kuala Lumpur in 2002. Using this definition, Mahathir argued that Palestinian and Tamil Tiger suicide bombers, attacks against civilians by Israeli forces, and the 9/11 attacks, must all be considered as acts of terror and its perpetrators condemned as terrorists.<sup>56</sup> Mahathir's views failed to gain the consensus of the OIC. The OIC

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<sup>53</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Role of Religion in a Multireligious Society', speech, International Conference on Religious Studies: Meeting the Millennium, Kuala Lumpur, 30 December 1999, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah: Selected Speeches by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia*, ed. Hashim Makaruddin, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya, 2000, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'The Role of Islam in Fostering Interreligious Understanding', speech, International Seminar on the Role of Islamic Civilisation in Fostering Interreligious Understanding, Kuala Lumpur, 25 May 1999, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah, op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Elina Noor, 'Terrorism in Malaysia: Situation and Response', in *Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific: Threat and Response*, ed. Rohan Gunaratna, Eastern Universities Press, Singapore, 2003, pp. 165-6.

<sup>56</sup> 'OIC rejects Mahathir's labelling of Palestinians as terrorist', *Asian Political News*, <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0WDQ/is\\_2002\\_April\\_8/ai\\_84640338?tag=content;coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2002_April_8/ai_84640338?tag=content;coll)>, 8 April 2002, (accessed 17 June 2008).

particularly objected to the inclusion of Palestinian suicide bombers.<sup>57</sup> Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Kamal Kharazi claimed that the motivations of suicide bombers must be taken into account, stating:

The difference is that in Palestine, the land of these people who are committing suicide has been occupied. In general, the resistance is a legitimate one... quite different from the terror attack on New York which was condemned by everyone including the Islamic community.<sup>58</sup>

Indonesia's representative, Justice and Human Rights Affairs Minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra, agreed, saying, 'Suicide bombers in Palestine are not terrorists, even if they killed civilians.' Backtracking from Mahathir's statement, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar agreed defining terrorism was difficult, noting that even the UN had failed to come to an agreement on the matter. He added that Palestinian suicide bombers were not terrorists as their acts were in self-defence.<sup>59</sup> Although Mahathir failed to achieve his goal at the OIC conference, he nonetheless continued in his attempt to divorce the concept of terrorism from Islam. In July 2003, Mahathir opened a global conference of Islamic scholars aimed at countering misconceptions about Islam.<sup>60</sup>

These attempts to focus on root causes can be seen as part of a wider ideological strategy adopted by the Mahathir administration in response to post-9/11 terrorism. Mahathir claimed Malaysia had been successful in combating terrorism domestically because it had not relied solely on arms but had adopted an ideology aimed at eliminating the conditions which allow militancy to breed.<sup>61</sup> Defence Minister Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak summarised the approach while visiting the US in 2002:

In addition to pursuing a military/security solution, we believe that we must win over the hearts and minds of our people by ensuring higher standards of living, eliminating poverty, providing quality education and health services, and creating more jobs. In essence, we

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<sup>57</sup> Noor, 'Terrorism in Malaysia', *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>58</sup> 'OIC foreign ministers ponder definition of terrorism', *Asian Political News*, <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0WDQ/is\\_2002\\_April\\_8/ai\\_84640335?tag=content:coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2002_April_8/ai_84640335?tag=content:coll)>, 8 April 2002, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> 'Ask the Malaysian Prime Minister', *op.cit.*

<sup>61</sup> Loone, 'Gov't's 'successful' anti-terror campaign was not only about arms', *op. cit.*

must create hope, not despair; a more promising future is the antithesis of a breeding ground for future militants.<sup>62</sup>

The often-cited historical parallel in this context is the Emergency. The success of the Malaysian state in defeating the ‘communist terrorists’ is owed not to the military strategy alone but to winning the hearts and minds of the segments of the populace who were vulnerable to Communist propaganda. According to Mahathir, speaking in November 2001, this strategy ensured the ‘terrorists’ lost their civilian support.<sup>63</sup> Mahathir claimed the Emergency era government studied the causes of the disaffection of the ‘terrorists’ and their supporters and then took ‘remedial action’, according citizenship rights to over a million non-Malays. Mahathir insists that this won the loyalty of the disaffected and helped mobilise support for the state against the Communists.<sup>64</sup> Mahathir had once more clearly attempted to use Malaysia as a model for the rest of the world to emulate, perhaps understandable given the recent support for the coercive component of his administration’s security strategy. As with the growing international endorsement for the ISA, the promotion of Malaysia’s ideological approach abroad was, at least in part, designed to further legitimise the Malaysian Security Model as a whole and thus enhance the legitimacy of the Mahathir administration specifically and the BN regime generally.

### *The Domestic Dimension*

Post-9/11, Mahathir’s ideology was as fixated on justifying Malaysia’s political *status quo* as it had been during the earlier Asian Values debate, the pronouncement and promotion of his Vision 2020, and the promulgation of the NDP. Domestically, Mahathir invested in an ideological strategy not dissimilar to the one deployed against previous enemies of the regime. Indeed, continuity could almost be seen between Mahathir’s campaign against Islamic deviants in the 1980s and 1990s and his strategy

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<sup>62</sup> Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak, ‘U.S.-Malaysia Defense Cooperation: A Solid Success Story’, *The Heritage Foundation*, <<http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/HL742.cfm>>, 3 May 2002, (accessed 14 February 2008).

<sup>63</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘The need to identify the terrorists and remove the cause of terrorism’, speech, Conference on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 16 November 2001 in *Terrorism and the Real Issues: Selected Speeches of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia*, ed. Hashim Makaruddin, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya, 2003, p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.

against Islamic extremists and terrorists in the 2000s. In conjunction with the use of the coercive apparatus, the ideological strategy promoted the state-sponsored interpretation of Islam as the only correct version of the faith. All other interpretations, including that of PAS, were consequently regarded as false and extremist. Although in many ways, this continued the pre-9/11 ideological policy of the government, there were some notable alterations to Mahathir's ideological strategy, including his declaration that Malaysia was an Islamic state; an announcement which effectively redefined and narrowed the religio-political space in the country.

In the battle for hearts and minds waged against contemporary terrorists, Islam is seen as a key component. As with the international component of the government's ideology, Defence Minister Najib emphasises the administration's ideological imperative to distance Islam from terrorism domestically:

At the same time, of course, the proper interpretation of Islam by our people is imperative; that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance, and is against violence and senseless killing.<sup>65</sup>

As before 9/11, the government saw a state-sponsored Islam, coupled with a strong coercive apparatus, as the key to combating so-called extremists or, more specifically, those who deviate too far from Malaysia's state-building, capitalist, BN-dominant framework. This creates an almost paradoxical situation, where hearts and minds are won by essentially forcing the Muslim population to adopt the state brand of Islam out of fear of being detained for any deviation. At the domestic level, ideology continues to ensure the BN's perpetual dominance, while at the international level the goal is to provide an alternative to the militarism of the US thereby appeasing Mahathir's international and domestic Muslim audience.

As at the international level, the domestic policy of the Mahathir government focused on a search for the root causes of terrorism and extremism. Nonetheless, the domestic approach differs substantially from that proclaimed internationally. Academic Joseph Liow notes:

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<sup>65</sup> Najib, 'U.S.-Malaysia Defense Cooperation', *op. cit.*

The government's ideological strategy thus far appears to be merely an extension of its operational one – the mobilisation of state authority to substantially narrow the religio-political space and portray renditions of Islam alternative to the state's interpretations as examples of 'heresy' and 'deviancy.'<sup>66</sup>

The concept of deviancy has long been a part of the state ideology. It aims to discredit any interpretations of Islam that contradict the state-sponsored version. Illustrating the overlap between private and public spheres in Malaysia's ideological foundations, the state *ulama* and state-sanctioned *fatwa* are often mobilised in support of this strategy.<sup>67</sup> Not only does the strategy prevent the emergence of strong radical fringe groups, which could ultimately damage Malaysia's international reputation as a centre for moderate Islam, it also serves as a political tool against the Islamic political opposition party, PAS, and thus helps ensure the continued political dominance of UMNO.<sup>68</sup> By defining what is and is not an acceptable interpretation of Islam, UMNO has essentially given PAS little ideological room to manoeuvre lest it continue to be branded with the deviant label.

To narrow the ideological space more completely, the government almost immediately after 9/11 launched a campaign aimed at curbing radicalism within the education system. Seen as part of the wider hearts and minds campaign, it attempted to deal with the 'pipelines' of deviancy by placing religious education in the hands of the national government.<sup>69</sup> In October 2001 the government gave notice that kindergartens, schools and colleges run by PAS would come under closer scrutiny out of concern such institutions might prove to be a breeding ground for extremism. Mahathir stated these schools brought 'no benefit to Islam' and instead 'shape from a very early stage the thinking of pre-schoolers to hate the government and vote for a political party.'<sup>70</sup> More broadly, there is now greater scrutiny of private religious schools and their syllabi, with the government introducing a programme (JQAF, an acronym for the teaching of Jawa,

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, 'The Mahathir administration's war against Islamic militancy: operational and ideological challenges', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, issue 2, 2004, p. 254.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>69</sup> Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, Free Press, New York, 2003, p. 76.

<sup>70</sup> Brendan Pereira, 'KL to keep close eye on schools run by PAS', *The Straits Times*, 16 October 2001.

the Arabic alphabet system for the Malay language) designed to build a Malaysian identity in accordance with Islamic teachings for Malaysian primary school students.<sup>71</sup> This represents a clear application of the Malaysian ideological strategy in which one type of Islam (the state-sponsored version) is promoted to the exclusion of all others. While this embeds in Malaysia a non-violent form of Islam, essential for a developing and leading Muslim state in the post-9/11 world, it stifles debate and ultimately promotes a rigidity within Malaysian Islam that is the antithesis of the 'progressive' model it believes itself to be presenting to the outside world.

The religio-political space was not only narrowed but redefined after 9/11. Mahathir set a new ideological battleground in the weeks following the terrorist attacks by announcing on 29 September 2001 that Malaysia was an Islamic state. Mahathir had previously rejected the use of such a label, stating as late as April 2001, 'Malaysia will not become an Islamic state... any attempts to enforce Islamic laws where the non-Muslims form the majority would create problems.'<sup>72</sup> This about-face was made 'on the basis that significant elements of the country's legal and administrative systems had foundations in Islam.'<sup>73</sup> Some of the points put forward by the government in support of its new policy included that the country's Head of State is a Muslim, Islam is the official religion, Malaysia's laws are practiced in other Muslim states, the Islamic emphasis of infrastructure and political planning, and the existence of freedom of worship for Muslims.<sup>74</sup> Mahathir assured non-Muslims his announcement would require no constitutional changes. This was endorsed by UMNO's BN partners MCA and Gerakan.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Elina Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', in *A Handbook of Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*, ed. A. T. H. Tan, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham and Northampton, 2007, p. 185.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Deconstructing Political Islam in Malaysia: UMNO's Response to PAS' Religio-Political Dialectic', *Working Paper No. 45*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, 2003, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'An Islamacist's View of An Islamic State and Its Relevance to a Multi-Racial Society', *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, p. 12, <<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/>>, 15 November 2001, (accessed 1 October 2007).

<sup>74</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'The UMNO-PAS Struggle: Analysis of PAS's Defeat in 2004', in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, eds. S. Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2006, p. 108.

<sup>75</sup> Lee Kam Hing, 'Differing Perspectives on Integration and Nation-Building in Malaysia', in *Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese*, eds. L. Suryadinata, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2004, p. 102.

The timing of the Islamic state announcement, mere weeks after 9/11, would suggest an international dimension to Mahathir's strategy. By officially embracing Islam in a world which increasingly feared its radical variant, Mahathir was essentially presenting to the global community an alternate vision of Islam – a state-sponsored, moderate, capitalist version that fitted well within the norms of the globalised world and which could be clearly separated from the Islam presented by al-Qaeda. It can be seen as an example of Malaysia's policy of disassociating Islam from terrorism. It also promoted Malaysia's position, with its relatively stable politics and economics, more firmly as a leader of the Islamic world at a time of great upheaval.

The announcement was nevertheless somewhat confusing. The aforementioned timing of the announcement could have had adverse effects on Malaysia. By declaring itself an Islamic state so soon after 9/11, Mahathir risked an international backlash, both politically and, in the case of tourism, economically. It needs to be noted, though, that the risk paid off. Malaysia strengthened its relations with the West in general and the US in particular. Ultimately, however, the announcement was aimed at his domestic context. Domestically, the announcement was regarded by the Bar Council as 'essentially a political statement.'<sup>76</sup> Chinese educationist Lee Ban Chen concurred, referring to Mahathir's declaration as a 'two-pronged political gimmick to out-do PAS on the Islamic state issue': on one hand it was designed to increase UMNO's Islamic credentials in the eyes of domestic Muslim audiences, on the other hand it was an attempt to convince the non-Muslims that UMNO's version of the Islamic state was more moderate and acceptable than that offered by PAS.<sup>77</sup>

PAS was not convinced by Mahathir's arguments and was critical of the announcement. PAS President Mustapha Ali stated, 'the only thing Islamic about Malaysia now is there are mosques, and there are Muslims here... That does not qualify us to call ourselves an Islamic state.'<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, the announcement was a direct challenge to PAS to come up with an alternative operational blueprint for an Islamic state.<sup>79</sup> Until that point, PAS

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<sup>76</sup> K. Kabilan, 'PM's declaration 'a political statement': Bar Council', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/5356>>, 2 November 2001, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>77</sup> Lee Ban Chen, 'The Islamic state debacle', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/7017>>, 12 November 2001, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>78</sup> Liow, 'Deconstructing Political Islam in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Fauzi, 'The UMNO-PAS Struggle', *op.cit.*, p. 108.

had failed to provide such a blueprint or establish a workable example of the concept in the two states under its control, Kelantan and Terengganu.<sup>80</sup>

PAS had been reluctant to produce an Islamic state document of its own. DAP member Liew Chin Tong believes the reason was twofold. First, any blueprint going beyond the *status quo* could be viewed negatively by non-Muslims and possibly cause disagreements within the Muslim population.<sup>81</sup> Secondly, any document not perceived as 'Islamic enough' would invoke criticism from UMNO and other political opponents, in addition to creating further division within PAS itself between the traditionalists and more mainstream members.<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, though, the challenge to political Islam resulting from 9/11 coupled with Mahathir's announcement led to PAS relenting and formulating its own version of an 'Islamic state.'<sup>83</sup>

Finally released in 2003, the PAS document was regarded as a victory for the purist or traditionalist members of the party because the blueprint was essentially conservative in tone.<sup>84</sup> The document lists the Shari'a as its 'main source of guidance and governance in conducting the affairs of the state.'<sup>85</sup> Included in this, the blueprint called for the implementation of Shari'a and *hudud*, though only Muslims would be subject to it.<sup>86</sup>

The document failed to reverse a period of political decline for PAS. In 2002, the newly PAS-run Terengganu state assembly attempted to introduce a new criminal code based on its interpretations of the Shari'a and *hudud*.<sup>87</sup> Punishments under this code included stonings, amputations, and floggings for crimes such as theft, adultery, alcohol consumption, and renouncing Islam. Massive protests took place and Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Abdullah Badawi ordered police in the state to ignore the

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<sup>80</sup> Fauzi, 'An Islamacist's View of An Islamic State and Its Relevance to a Multi-Racial Society', *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> Liew Chin Tong, 'PAS politics: Defining an Islamic state', in *Politics in Malaysia: The Malay dimension*, ed. E. T. Gomez, Routledge, London and New York, 2007, p. 111.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 111-2.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 116, and; Ben Thirkell-White, 'Political Islam and Malaysian Democracy', *Democratization*, Vol. 13, issue 3, 2006, p. 437.

<sup>85</sup> *The Islamic State Document*, PAS, Baru Bangi, 2003, p. 19.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>87</sup> Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-9, and; William Case, 'Testing Malaysia's pseudo-democracy', in *The State of Malaysia: Ethnicity, equity and reform*, ed. E. T. Gomez, RoutledgeCurzon, London and New York, p. 43.



law and to only uphold criminal laws in line with the federal constitution.<sup>88</sup> PAS had essentially played into the government's hands.<sup>89</sup> By introducing conservative laws and an Islamic state document to match, PAS unwittingly fitted the mould set by UMNO – that PAS was Malaysia's answer to the Taliban. Mahathir's 'Islamic state' announcement had thus upped the ante in Malaysia's Islamic politics, laying down a challenge to PAS which the party then failed. Combined with the minimal coercive campaign against PAS discussed in the last chapter, PAS was substantially weakened as a political force and as an alternative national government. Indicating the success of Mahathir's strategy, PAS went on to lose dramatically in the 2004 elections.

Overall, I argue that Mahathir's post-9/11 ideology had both international and domestic components. Internationally, Mahathir sought to establish Malaysia as a model Islamic country and a leader in the Muslim world. Mahathir pushed for an understanding of the 'root causes' of the War on Terror and shunned the militarism of some of Malaysia's allies. An attempt was also made to disassociate Islam from terrorism. Domestically, Mahathir, backed by a strong coercive apparatus, continued enforcing Malaysia's state-sponsored form of Islam as its ideology. UMNO's interpretation of Islam allowed little space for Islamic radicals to manoeuvre and was thus seen as an antidote to extremism. The Islam in Malaysia continued to be moderated by the government, with the post-9/11 climate providing a new reason for the promotion of official Islam at the exclusion of all other forms. Mahathir's security ideology therefore contained a dualism: at the international level, Mahathir spoke out against the use of force as a response to terrorism while, domestically, his state ideology was implemented with the help of the government's coercive apparatus. Elements of Mahathir's ideology were incorporated into that of his successor, Abdullah Badawi, with the latter repackaging state Islam into a concept – and commodity – known as Islam Hadhari.

### **Abdullah and Islam Hadhari: Moderate or Moderated Islam?**

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took the reigns of power on 31 October 2003 following a planned and orderly leadership transition from the Prime Ministership of Mahathir. Abdullah promised a kinder, gentler approach than that of his predecessor, asking the

<sup>88</sup> Ressa, *Seeds of Terror*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-9.

<sup>89</sup> Case, 'Testing Malaysia's pseudo-democracy', *op. cit.*, p. 43.

Malaysian populace to 'work with me, not for me.' As I noted in chapter five, the coercive component of Malaysia's security policy continued with minimal change. In terms of national ideology, there was also much continuity between the policies of the two Prime Ministers. Reflecting the anti-extremist emphasis of Mahathir, Abdullah noted in his maiden speech as Prime Minister the need to be firm and oppose extremism, terrorism and militancy.<sup>90</sup> The root causes approach was likewise adopted. Abdullah told a conference in 2002:

Muslim anger is... fuelled by the impunity with which Israel ignores and flouts UN resolutions and the protection it receives in the world body from friends that prevent any enforceable sanctions being imposed upon Israel... International terrorism... cannot be quelled without resolving the Palestinian-Israeli issue.<sup>91</sup>

As in the case of the Mahathir administration, Abdullah regarded Israel-Palestine as a crucial causal factor for international terrorism.

Similarities aside, the ideology underlying Abdullah's security policy departed from Mahathir in a number of ways. The Abdullah administration placed less emphasis on the security situation in Malaysia or the possibility of terrorist attacks occurring in the country. Doctoral candidate S. D. N. Ambrosio notes that unlike the coverage of the 2002 Bali bombing and the August 2003 JW Marriott bombing by the Malaysian mainstream government-controlled media, the 2004 Australian embassy bombing in Jakarta and the 2005 Bali bombings were reported with minimal reference to Malaysia's security situation. Ambrosio argues that the reason for this is that, having secured a landslide victory in the 2004 elections against PAS, Abdullah no longer saw the need to overstate the domestic terrorist threat.<sup>92</sup> A further reason is Abdullah's promotion of Islam Hadhari or 'Civilisational Islam', a moderate form of national Islam.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Bakar, 'The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam', *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>91</sup> Capie, 'Between a hegemon and a hard place', *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>92</sup> S. D. N. Ambrosio, 'News Reporting on Terrorism in Malaysia and Singapore', *Media Asia*, Vol. 33, issue 3, 2006, p. 197.

<sup>93</sup> For a discussion on the etymological roots of 'hadhari', see: Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas and Ng Tieh Chuan, *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi*, Pelanduk Publications, Subang Jaya. 2005, pp. 133-6.

Islam Hadhari is another departure from Mahathir. Although Mahathir certainly saw Malaysia as a model Muslim country, Abdullah's Islam Hadhari took it one step further by crafting a broad ideology designed to appeal to domestic Muslim and non-Muslim audiences as well as Muslim populations abroad. As with Mahathirist ideology, religion, a concept typically seen as residing in the private sphere, was brought into the public sphere and under government control and moderation through the Islam Hadhari concept. Like previous ideologies, Islam Hadhari provided a dual function: one, an electoral tool, an attempt to out-Islamise the political opposition, and; two, a means to constructing society in the government's own interests. Overall, as with all other official ideologies of the Malaysian government, the ultimate underlying aim can be seen as the maintenance of the BN's power and the political *status quo*. In Islam Hadhari, Abdullah had also embraced Malaysia's role as a leading Muslim country to the extent that he had repackaged the Malaysian brand of Islam into an exportable commodity. Abdullah's playing down of the existence of extremism in Malaysia can also be attributed to the Prime Minister's desire to promote a certain image of his country at home and abroad: one that was moderate, anti-extremist and an example of Islam Hadhari being put into practice. Malaysia's ideology had become more internationalised than ever before.

### *The Concept of Islam Hadhari*

The concept of Islam Hadhari has as its 'ideological roots' the Islamisation policies of Mahathir in the 1980s.<sup>94</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Najib, however, stated that Islam Hadhari had been practiced by the Malaysian leadership since Independence, claiming his own father, Prime Minister Tun Razak, had put the concept into practice through development programmes.<sup>95</sup> The term Islam Hadhari was introduced by then-Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah in 2002 without fanfare.<sup>96</sup> Islam Hadhari was then gradually fleshed out in a series of rallies leading up to the March 2004 elections and became a 'central campaign issue.'<sup>97</sup> Indeed, as journalist Rose Ismail notes, Abdullah all but

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<sup>94</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, 'Wake me up at half past six', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.aliran.com/aliran-monthly-mainmenu-10/27-2006-5/130-wake-me-up-at-half-past-six>>, 14 November 2006, (accessed 7 March 2008).

<sup>95</sup> 'Najib: Islam Hadhari not something new', *New Straits Times*, 14 December 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Rose Ismail, 'Bringing Islam Hadhari into the mainstream', *New Sunday Times*, 25 July 2004.

<sup>97</sup> Rita Sim, 'Islam Hadhari and PM's aspirations', *New Straits Times*, 26 June 2004.

ignored Islam Hadhari until the election campaign.<sup>98</sup> The concept clearly formed a part of UMNO's re-election strategy.

Islam Hadhari itself is not so much an original idea as it is a 'syncretic restatement' of views expressed by various Islamic groups in the last 25 years. Much of Islam Hadhari can be seen to be derived from ideas put forward by groups such as ABIM and Jamaah Islah Malaysia, for example.<sup>99</sup> According to Abdullah:

Islam Hadhari is an effort to bring the *ummah* [community] back to basics, back to the Fundamentals, as prescribed in the Quran and the Hadith that form the foundation of Islamic civilisation.<sup>100</sup>

Islam Hadhari is composed of 10 principles. The first principle is 'faith in and piety to Allah.' Although seemingly dismissive of the other religions in Malaysia, this principle also emphasises a belief in freedom of religion and the lack of compulsion in religion, as derived from the Quran. The fourth principle – 'a vigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge' – and the fifth – 'balanced and comprehensive economic development' – illustrate Islam Hadhari's economic undertones. The fourth aims to face the challenges of globalisation, integrative knowledge, science and technological advancement through the production of human resources. The fifth seeks to combine 'moral economic practices' with a 'comprehensive economic development' approach.<sup>101</sup> In short, these principles seek to put into practice Abdullah's notion that 'Islam is a religion for development.'<sup>102</sup> The eighth principle is 'cultural and moral integrity.' This consists of

<sup>98</sup> Ismail, 'Bringing Islam Hadhari into the mainstream', *op. cit.*

<sup>99</sup> Muhamad Haniff Hassan, 'Islam Hadhari points way for Malaysia', *The Straits Times*, 30 October 2004. At least one observer claims there is little difference between Islam Hadhari and the Islamic agenda of previous BN governments and that the concept even has much in common with the principles of the more secular-based Vision 2020: Khadijah Md. Khalid, 'Voting for change? Islam and personalised politics in the 2004 general elections', in *Politics in Malaysia*, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>100</sup> Abdullah Badawi, 'The Concept of Islam Hadhari', *Official Website of Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia*, <<http://www.pmo.gov.my/website/webdbase.nsf/vIslamHadhari/7ADA18205EDC7C6C482570830032B65E>>, 2005, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>101</sup> Abdullah Badawi, 'Principle of Islam Hadhari', *Official Website of Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia*, <<http://www.pmo.gov.my/website/webdbase.nsf/vIslamHadhari/6AB761E2215A9BD8482570830030EC27>>, 2004, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>102</sup> Sim, 'Islam Hadhari and PM's aspirations', *op. cit.* See also: Abdullah Badawi, 'Islam Hadhari and the Malay Agenda', speech, UMNO's 55<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Kuala Lumpur, 23-

internalising 'high moral values' that 'ensure prosperity, harmony and peace in a multi-racial society.' Moral development and economic development are seen as coinciding. The remaining principles of Islam Hadhari are: 'a just and trustworthy government'; 'a free and independent people'; 'a good quality of life for the people'; 'protection of the rights of minority groups and women'; 'safeguarding the environment', and; 'strong defence capabilities.'<sup>103</sup>

The terms used are fairly general and as such could be applied in other contexts. This is a reflection of Abdullah's disdain for literal teachings of Islamic religious texts, the Prime Minister indicating instead a preference for 'taking into account the modern world in which we live.'<sup>104</sup> Islam Hadhari marks a shift toward understanding the contemporary era within the framework of Islam.<sup>105</sup> Liow argues what is actually innovative about Islam Hadhari is the form of the idea, rather than its actual content. Abdullah had succeeded in expressing the state's well-entrenched ideology in 'readily identifiable and catchy Islamic terminology.'<sup>106</sup> In structuring Islam Hadhari in these ways, Abdullah hoped to refocus Islam as a 'progressive' religion which emphasised personal and societal development.<sup>107</sup> Moderation in Islam was to be restored and the 'mainstream' embraced.<sup>108</sup> Ultimately, it aimed at alleviating the many problems seen as plaguing the Islamic world.<sup>109</sup>

Islam Hadhari was an attempt by the Abdullah administration to continue Mahathir's policy of disassociating Islam from terrorism. In a speech in New Zealand in 2005, Abdullah linked Islam Hadhari to the anti-extremist agenda. Abdullah stated, 'I can confidently say that we in Malaysia have succeeded in containing extremism and radicalism.' Abdullah claimed that the elimination of poverty and the provision of good

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25 September 2004 in *Islam Hadhari: A Model Approach for Development and Progress*, MPH Group, Kuala Lumpur, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Abdullah, 'Principle of Islam Hadhari', *op.cit.*

<sup>104</sup> S. Mark Heim, 'Malaysian model: A different kind of Islamic state', *The Christian Century*, Vol. 121, issue 20, 2004, p. 31.

<sup>105</sup> Syed Ali and Chuan, *Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>106</sup> Joseph Liow, 'The Politics Behind Malaysia's Eleventh General Election', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, issue 6, 2005, p. 920.

<sup>107</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>108</sup> Mohamed Sharif Bashir, 'Islam Hadhari: Concept and Prospect', *Islam Online*, <<http://www.islamonline.net/english/Contemporary/2005/03/article01.shtml>>, 3 March 2005, (accessed 21 April 2008).

<sup>109</sup> Noor, 'Al-Ma'unah and KMM in Malaysia', *op.cit.*, p. 185.

governance are ‘key’ in the fight against radicalism and, in this context, presented Islam Hadhari as Malaysia’s approach for achieving such a national order.<sup>110</sup> Abdullah noted:

I would like you to know that this approach has also been inspired by our firm belief that good governance, healthy democratic practices, empowerment of the citizenry through education and equitable sharing of the benefits of economic growth will remove any attractiveness towards radicalism and blunt any tendencies towards extremism. We in Malaysia would like to show by example that a Muslim country can be modern, democratic, tolerant and economically competitive.<sup>111</sup>

Abdullah’s Deputy, Najib, shared the sentiment. In 2004, Najib likewise argued that Islam Hadhari was timely since Muslims had been viewed with suspicion since 9/11. Najib claimed Islam Hadhari to be a vehicle for change, to present to the world that Islam advocated peace and progress.<sup>112</sup> The impact of Islam Hadhari’s anti-extremist component will be analysed in two parts: the first dealing with the domestic political landscape, the second with the attempt to export the model.

### *The Impact of Islam Hadhari on the Domestic Sphere*

As already noted, Islam Hadhari played a key role in the 2004 general elections. Academic John Funston contends the election itself revolved around two issues: Islam and anti-corruption. Both of these issues were portrayed as being personified by Abdullah Badawi. The subservient mainstream media highlighted Abdullah’s Islamic credentials. These credentials had been reinforced by his selection of a number of prominent Muslim leaders as candidates. Islam Hadhari formed a key component of the BN manifesto.<sup>113</sup> With the government securing 198 of the 219 seats in Parliament, former US ambassador to Malaysia John Malott noted:

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<sup>110</sup> Abdullah Badawi, ‘Islam Hadhari and good governance’, speech, Victoria University, Wellington, <<http://www.pmo.gov.my/webnotesApp/Abdullah.nsf/f51b39741cd58c9448257084000a19c8/d33361f0890dd06548256fe700190019?OpenDocument>>, 31 March 2005, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> ‘Najib: Islam Hadhari not something new’, *New Straits Times*, 14 December 2004.

<sup>113</sup> John Funston, ‘The Malay Electorate in 2004: Reversing the 1999 Result?’, in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, *op.cit.*, pp. 146-7.

The voters appear to have rejected the strident political Islam of PAS and reaffirmed Malaysia as a place where a more moderate form of Islam prevails.<sup>114</sup>

The effectiveness of Islam Hadhari as an electoral tool is clear, though the performance and impact of the concept domestically in the period following the election is more questionable.

To spread the Islam Hadhari philosophy, the government, *via* the Information Ministry's Special Affairs Department, launched a five-year information campaign in the wake of the elections. Led by a panel made up of religious leaders, journalists, academics, lawyers and psychologists, the campaign involved 600 speakers disseminating information on the concept to the public through various forums.<sup>115</sup> Illustrating the centrality of Islam Hadhari to the government's ideological cache, in 2007 Abdullah gave a RM50,000 cheque to each Member of Parliament, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The funds were to be used to create awareness of the project in their constituency.<sup>116</sup> Although significant capital was thus spent promoting the concept, it is evident that the government itself did not fully embrace it. As noted by *de facto* opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim in 2008, four years after the concept was fully articulated:

What is so Islamic about the Hadhari model when corruption is more endemic now? You detain people without trial. The media is also not free.<sup>117</sup>

The government's commitment to practicing the Islam Hadhari philosophy on the operational level is therefore questionable. A question is raised as to whether the concept was always merely a strategy for winning Malay votes whilst not alienating the non-Muslim community rather than a genuine attempt at transforming Islamic thinking at home and abroad.

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<sup>114</sup> Liow, 'The Politics Behind Malaysia's Eleventh General Election', p. 907, and; Leslie Lopez, 'Abdullah's Coalition Wins Malaysia Election – Surprisingly Strong Victory Shows That Moderate Islam Has Broad Popular Support', *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, 22 March 2004.

<sup>115</sup> 'Five-year campaign to explain Islam Hadhari', *New Straits Times*, 29 July 2004.

<sup>116</sup> 'International Islamic Community supports Islam Hadhari approach', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 23 April 2007.

<sup>117</sup> Andrew Ong, 'Anwar: PM akin to a communist leader', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/77599>>, 29 January 2008, (accessed 30 January 2008).

Islam Hadhari was also utilised to justify subsequent government crackdowns on 'deviant' sects, as well as to provide ideological support to the existing coercive apparatus. In the aftermath of the 2004 election, the government began moving against its usual targets – Muslim sects operating outside the state's Islamic project. In the weeks following the BN's electoral success, 70 members of Tarikat Samaniah Ibrahim Bonjol, a Muslim sect, were arrested in Selangor by Islamic religious authorities. It was claimed the sect had a 'casual' attitude towards prayer and marriage and considered the Quran to simply be merely a historical text. Such views clearly ran counter to the Islam Hadhari project which used the Quran as its foundation, viewing it as a holy document. This thus accounts for the sect's removal from the public sphere. Subsequent to the arrests, the state Menteri Besar Khir Toyo announced that he would act against the more than 60 'deviant' sects said to be operating in Selangor.<sup>118</sup> The BN believed it had been given a mandate in the elections – a nation-wide endorsement of Islam Hadhari – and was using it as a new ideological justification for the continued use of the government's coercive apparatus.

The government's crackdown on Sky Kingdom represented a further attack on ideological rivals to the national brand of Islam. In 2005, the Sky Kingdom, a religious sect in Terengganu, was shut down by the state Islamic development committee on the grounds the movement possessed documents contrary to Islam.<sup>119</sup> The leader of Sky Kingdom, Ayah Pin, had a large following among Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Hindus inside and outside the country, with an estimated 5,000 – 10,000 Malay followers and 30,000 followers from other ethnic groups.<sup>120</sup> Although the group claimed not to be militant in nature, the government alleged Ayah Pin was a threat to national security, with Abdul Hamid Othman, religious advisor to Abdullah, stating, 'Of course he must be arrested because his influence will jeopardise not only religion but also political stability.'<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Leslie Lau, 'Backed by Muslims, KL takes on extremists', *The Straits Times*, 6 April 2004.

<sup>119</sup> '21 Sky Kingdom members arrested', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/37573>>, 4 July 2005, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>120</sup> Claudia Theophilus, 'Lo and behold! The Sky Kingdom', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/28700>> 26 July 2004, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>121</sup> '21 Sky Kingdom members arrested', *op.cit.*, and; 'Molotov cocktails rain down on Sky Kingdom', *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/37997>>, 18 July 2005, (accessed 18 February 2008).



However, the sect itself posed no discernible threat to the security of the nation. The threat Sky Kingdom posed was ideological, in that its controversial views on religion and lifestyle offered an alternative – albeit one seemingly without mainstream support – to that provided by the government. The crackdown on Sky Kingdom draws parallels to the campaign against al-Arqam in the 1990s. Both were tolerated by the government for a time until being forcefully disbanded because of their alternate views.

In terms of Malaysia's Islamic politics, Islam Hadhari provided the government with the opportunity to ideologically out-manoeuvre PAS even after the election. Abdullah claimed that Islam Hadhari was an attempt to prevent Malaysia's Muslim population falling into 'PAS's trap.'<sup>122</sup> Abdullah set out the long-term political goal of the project in these terms:

Muslims are easily motivated by religious arguments, including what PAS is telling them. We have to tell them what it is (to correct any misunderstanding).<sup>123</sup>

Islam Hadhari allowed the government to more firmly define the terms, aims and parameters of the state brand of Islam. Islamic groups operating outside the state Islamic project were consequently easier to identify. PAS itself was also given increasingly little ideological space – it either agreed with the state Islam project and operated within that framework, or it rejected it and risked being cast as an outsider, essentially an enemy of the state. Islam Hadhari therefore can be seen as an extension of the campaign against deviancy, a campaign which began decades earlier.

For PAS, Islam Hadhari marked the beginning of new ideological phase. Following its poor electoral showing, and the apparent success of Islam Hadhari as a political tool, Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin (Zam) claimed there was pressure on PAS to alter its stance to fit with the modern political context. This context, Zam claimed, was one in which moderate Islam was being embraced by the public and

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<sup>122</sup> Cited in Terence Chong, 'The Emerging Politics of *Islam Hadhari*', in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>123</sup> 'Non-Muslims won't be marginalised', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 9 March 2004.

militant Islam roundly rejected.<sup>124</sup> PAS initially put up much resistance to Islam Hadhari. The party attacked the idea as ‘revisionism’ of holy texts and highlighted its failure to emphasise the importance of the Shari’a.<sup>125</sup> However, Zam’s views later proved to be correct. In the 2008 election campaign, PAS dropped the Islamic state issue from the forefront of its agenda and focused on political – rather than religious – issues such as corruption. In a sense, then, Islam Hadhari had a part in tempering the extremist – or purist/traditionalist – tendencies of the opposition. While this could be seen as a victory for the anti-extremist agenda of the BN, it backfired with the government coalition suffering heavy losses in the election. Moreover, following the election, the opposition state governments of Penang and Selangor began making moves to ban Islam Hadhari from their state.

While Islam Hadhari was said to promote a moderate form of Islam, it has inspired an increase in more rigid readings of Islam’s holy texts. Since the concept’s introduction, Abdullah claims that some elements in Malaysia have actually become more conservative and radical, stating:

Let me be clear – Islam Hadhari is not a blank cheque to bring about conservative revivalism in this country... While I will protest Islam’s position and the role of the Shariah courts from being undermined, I will also ensure that no one tries to hijack Islam in Malaysia in order to breed intolerance and hatred.<sup>126</sup>

Islam Hadhari, by further institutionalising Islam and bringing the religion even more to the forefront of domestic politics, had inspired increased Islamisation of the public itself – though not in the direction desired by the government.

Overall, the impact of Islam Hadhari on Malaysia’s domestic politics is decidedly mixed. On one hand, the concept was seemingly embraced by the population at large with the BN achieving a landslide electoral victory in 2004, an election in which Islam Hadhari was a major component. The government made some attempt to show Islam

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<sup>124</sup> ‘Islam Hadhari principles forced Pas to change, says Zam’, *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 20 June 2005.

<sup>125</sup> Zainal Kling, ‘UMNO and BN in the 2004 Election: The Political Culture of Complex Identities’, in *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>126</sup> ‘Malaysia’s Abdullah vows to take ‘stern action’ against racial troublemakers’, *AFX Asia*, 15 November 2006.

Hadhari was not a mere electoral ploy, spending significant funds to explain and spread the concept in the election's aftermath. On the other hand, the contradictions within the government's domestic policies led to the concept being all but cast aside. The long-term impact of Islam Hadhari appears to be twofold. First, it illustrated that the Muslim population – and the population in general – would support an interpretation of Islam that was consistently promoted as moderate, whether it was so or not. This fact was not missed by the opposition, PAS in particular. Second, it provided the government with a justification for the continued use of its coercive apparatus, as elements deemed as going against the 'moderate' image the Abdullah administration sought to portray at home and abroad became more readily identifiable. This fits in with the pattern of previous ideological formulations, such as the *Rukunegara*, Vision 2020, and the rhetoric of Mahathir, all of which operated to limit the ideological space within Malaysia, to restrict the expression of alternative viewpoints, and thereby ensure the BN's continued dominance.

*Internationalising UMNO: The External Impact of Islam Hadhari*

The international dimension of the Islam Hadhari agenda is more notable and consistent than its domestic counterpart. Despite the patchwork nature of Islam Hadhari's domestic implementation, the first full term of the Abdullah administration saw Islam Hadhari promoted widely to international audiences, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. In a sense, the product being sold was the UMNO/BN model of development, at the core of which is its state-sanctioned version of Islam. Islam Hadhari was portrayed as a model for Muslim development, nationally, internationally and spiritually, as well as an ideological counter to the extremist ideologies of al-Qaeda and its various cells. Islam Hadhari represented a response to the growing demand in international politics for a moderate Islamic ideology.<sup>127</sup>

A primary function of Islam Hadhari was to solidify Malaysia's place as a model Muslim nation and leader of the Islamic world. With Malaysia presiding over the OIC under Abdullah, Islam Hadhari allowed the Prime Minister to 'internationalise

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<sup>127</sup> Chong, 'The Emerging Politics of *Islam Hadhari*', pp. 41-2.

UMNO's religious credentials beyond their former association with only national development.'<sup>128</sup> Abdullah proclaimed that it was Malaysia's 'duty' to:

demonstrate, by word and action, that a Muslim country can be modern, democratic, tolerant and economically competitive.<sup>129</sup>

Although acknowledging Islam Hadhari was not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution, Abdullah emphasised that Malaysia nonetheless provided an insight into how to successfully build a 'progressive and modern Muslim nation.'<sup>130</sup> The very vagueness of the Islam Hadhari concept and its principles has allowed for the internationalisation of the UMNO model. Academic Terence Chong notes that its ambiguity has 'endowed Islam Hadhari with the flexibility to respond to both domestic local politics and the global 'War on Terror.''<sup>131</sup> Abdullah's claim that several countries sought to discuss the concept with Malaysia would appear to be a confirmation of this.

In 2004, before the elections were held, Abdullah stated that several countries expressed an interest in Islam Hadhari and a desire to adapt it to their circumstances.<sup>132</sup> In the years that followed this statement, however, there are only a few examples of countries indicating an interest in Islam Hadhari, let alone implementing it. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India stated that his country shared Malaysia's view of Islam as a 'civilisational force' and described Islam Hadhari as 'timely and necessary.'<sup>133</sup> In 2006, Brunei also expressed an interest in the Islam Hadhari approach.<sup>134</sup> There is little

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<sup>128</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, 'The house of the rising sons: What they didn't debate at the UMNO general assembly', *Aliran Monthly*, Vol 24, issue 9, <<http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2004b/9c.html>>, 2004, (accessed 7 March 2008).

<sup>129</sup> Cited in Ioannis Gatsiounis, 'Islam Hadhari in Malaysia', *Center on Islam, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World*, <[http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/pubID.43/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/pubID.43/pub_detail.asp)>, 16 February 2006, (accessed 17 June 2008).

<sup>130</sup> 'Malaysian PM Takes 'Islam Hadhari' to India', *Islam Online*, <<http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2004-12/22/article03.shtml>>, 22 December 2004, (accessed 22 April 2008).

<sup>131</sup> Terence Chong, 'Beating terror, the McDonald's way: A global movement should adapt itself to local needs just like Islam Hadhari has', *Today (Singapore)*, 1 February 2006.

<sup>132</sup> 'PM reveals foreign interest in Islam Hadhari', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 18 February 2004.

<sup>133</sup> 'Islam as a civilisational force, India shares Malaysia's vision', *Hindustan Times*, 22 December 2004.

<sup>134</sup> 'Brunei keen on Malaysia's 'Islam Hadhari' Concept', *Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies*, 5 July 2006.

indication these statements are more than mere rhetorical support as it does not appear that either country has since put Islam Hadhari into practice. The concept has attracted little support in neighbouring Indonesia and the Philippines, where Ioannis Gatsiounis argues it would presumably be most attractive, given the similarly flexible variants of the Islamic faith in those countries.<sup>135</sup> Islam Hadhari proved more successful at the OIC, with it being incorporated into the Makkah Declaration and the summit's joint communiqué in 2005.<sup>136</sup>

In terms of the wider War on Terror, the concept has had more, albeit limited, success. During a working visit to Malaysia in 2005, Robert Zoellick, now US Deputy Secretary of State, was briefed on Islam Hadhari. Of particular interest to Zoellick was the concept's applicability to the situation in Iraq and whether the Malaysian government could use its experience to help.<sup>137</sup> US image builder Karen Hughes reaffirmed this during a visit to Malaysia later that year. Hughes stated that the BN model provided an 'outstanding' model of governance for Iraq. Hughes secured a pledge from Malaysia to spread Islam Hadhari to help fight terrorism in Iraq, stating, 'Islam Hadhari has a powerful message of inclusion and tolerance.'<sup>138</sup> Other Middle Eastern countries have reportedly also invited Malaysia to describe the concept.<sup>139</sup> In terms of the so-called Second Front of the War on Terror (Southeast Asia), the most notable, though seldom reported, instance of Islam Hadhari being used to fight extremism is in Mindanao in the Philippines. According to Malaysian academic Norulhuda Othman, Mindanao illustrates a 'practical example' of promoting Islam Hadhari and counter-terrorism, with the Abdullah administration providing medical aid, development assistance, economic planning and having meetings with local leaders and government representatives to, essentially, help set up a Malaysian-style government.<sup>140</sup> Most of this has occurred

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<sup>135</sup> Ioannis Gatsiounis, *Beyond the Veneer: Malaysia's Struggle for Dignity and Direction*, Monsoon Books, Singapore, 2008, p. 184.

<sup>136</sup> Zubaidah Abu Bakar, '“Civilisational Islam” approach accepted', *New Straits Times*, 9 December 2005.

<sup>137</sup> 'Malaysia a model Muslim nation, says Zoellick', *New Straits Times*, 10 May 2005.

<sup>138</sup> Leslie Lau, 'Malaysia the way to go for Iraq, says US image czar', *The Straits Times*, 26 October 2005.

<sup>139</sup> Chong, 'The Emerging Politics of *Islam Hadhari*', *op.cit.*, pp. 41-2, and; Ahmad Osman, 'Other Muslim states show interest in Islam Hadhari', *The Straits Times*, 29 September 2004.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Norulhuda Othman, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 25 July 2007.

behind closed doors and, as such, the direct success of this policy is difficult to ascertain.

Islam Hadhari signals not just an ideology to combat extremism within the Muslim world, but provides to the rest of the world, the West in particular, an interpretation of Islam and a soft power tool that counters extremist ideology. Abdullah denies this:

It is not an approach to pacify the West. It is neither an approach to apologise for the perceived Islamic threat, nor an approach to seek approval from the non-Muslims for a more friendly and gentle image of Islam. It is an approach that seeks to make Muslims understand that progress is enjoined by Islam.<sup>141</sup>

However, there is much evidence to suggest that Islam Hadhari is more than a philosophy to be emulated by other Muslim countries. For example, Abdullah later claimed there was a noticeable difference in the tone and views of non-Muslim communities overseas after 9/11 when compared to their views after the Islam Hadhari concept was explained to them.<sup>142</sup> Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar also noted that several European countries saw Islam Hadhari as a useful 'platform' to foster more effective relations.<sup>143</sup> Syed has stated that Islam Hadhari would help improve communications between the Islamic and non-Islamic world and could help prevent a 'clash of the civilisations.'<sup>144</sup> Islam Hadhari ultimately allows Malaysia to position itself as a model Muslim society,<sup>145</sup> one which counters the view prevalent in the West of Islam as radical and backward. The post-September 11 world increased international interest in a moderate Islamic ideology and Islam Hadhari responded.<sup>146</sup> Islam Hadhari offered a 'moderate' form of Islam at a time when Islam was associated with extremism and violence.<sup>147</sup> Abdullah's Islam Hadhari attempted to reclaim Islam's image, 'to

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<sup>141</sup> Abdullah Badawi, 'Islam Hadhari in a multi-racial society', speech, Asia Society of Australia, Sydney, <<http://www.pmo.gov.my/webnotesApp/Abdullah.nsf/f51b39741cd58c9448257084000a19c8/311ee38bcfdd22e348256fde00089b82?OpenDocument>>, 8 April 2005, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>142</sup> 'Islam Hadhari: Give ideas, detractors told', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 2 July 2005.

<sup>143</sup> 'Positive response for Islam Hadhari from abroad', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 18 July 2005.

<sup>144</sup> Gatsiounis, *Beyond the Veneer*, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>145</sup> Chong, 'Beating terror, the McDonald's way', *op.cit.*

<sup>146</sup> Chong, 'The Emerging Politics of *Islam Hadhari*', pp. 41-2.

<sup>147</sup> Khoo, 'The house of the rising sons', *op.cit.*

extricate the Islamic world from this crisis and to help the process of rehabilitating ourselves to restore Islam's past glory.'<sup>148</sup>

*Islam Hadhari: Moderate or Moderated Islam?*

Though portrayed as moderate both domestically and internationally, the moderate profile of Islam Hadhari is highly questionable. Indeed, by nullifying the appeal of PAS's brand of Islam, at least temporarily, some began to find it hard to distinguish between the Islam of UMNO and PAS.<sup>149</sup> The contradictions within the BN's domestic performance and strategy ran counter to the moderate claim. Malaysian academic and commentator Khoo Boo Teik observes that UMNO's 'moderation' is not clearly defined. For example, it is not clear how the government's use of the ISA, the Sedition Act, and the OSA gels with the Islam Hadhari philosophy.<sup>150</sup> The continued limitations on civil liberties within Malaysia contradict the progressive claim of the concept. Books said to deviate from the teachings of Islam are routinely banned.<sup>151</sup> The intolerance toward other interpretations of Islam – such as Al-Arqam/Rufaqa and Sky Kingdom – and alternative opinions generally – such as those expressed by bloggers and Indian rights activists – indicate not a moderate Islam but rather a moderated, controlled version which eliminates any threat, real or otherwise, to the political and economic *status quo*.

So controlled is Islam in Malaysia that the Islamic state issue has become even more contentious under Abdullah than under Mahathir. The independent online newspaper *Malaysiakini* reports that the Internal Security Ministry has issued directives to the mainstream press not to publish news on the issue on the grounds it could cause

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<sup>148</sup> Abdullah Badawi, 'UMNO's 57<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly', speech, UMNO 57<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Kuala Lumpur, <<http://www.pmo.gov.my/webnotesApp/Abdullah.nsf/f51b39741cd58c9448257084000a19c8/3c88fd1e03a248da4825722700186ac2?OpenDocument>>, 15 November 2006, (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>149</sup> Chong, 'The Emerging Politics of *Islam Hadhari*', *op.cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>150</sup> Khoo, 'The house of the rising sons', *op.cit.*

<sup>151</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Islam Hadhari' cannot correct itself', *Aliran*, <<http://www.aliran.com/content/view/441/40/>>, 27 February 2008, (accessed 7 March 2008). For a list of the books banned by the Malaysian authorities in 2006 (56 in total), see: Suaram, *Malaysia: Human Rights Report 2006: Civil and Political Rights*, Suaram Komunikasi, Petaling Jaya, 2007, pp. 54-60. For another example of this policy see also: 'Ministry Bans 11 Books About Islam', *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, 29 January 2008.

‘tension.’ This directive followed a comment by Deputy Prime Minister Najib that Malaysia was an Islamic state. The media was consequently told not to publish news on whether the country was secular or Islamic.<sup>152</sup>

Malaysian political commentator Farish A. Noor contends that the lack of moderate Islam at the governmental level has seeped into the grassroots of the population. Owing to the patronage system established by the NEP and UMNO in general, Farish contends the Malay community has been rendered dependent on the goodwill of the government, economically, politically, and ideologically. The end result of this ‘suffocating patronage’, Noor argues, is that the Malays have become ‘more defensive, reactionary, conservative and narrow in their worldview.’ This goes against the ‘universal’ claims of the Islam Hadhari agenda.<sup>153</sup>

Liow contends that to non-Muslims, Islam Hadhari is less about Islam and more about ‘the all-too-familiar refrain of Malay primacy.’ Liow attributes this view to the escalation of Islamisation that has resulted from the promotion of Islam Hadhari which has served to heighten the reservations of non-Muslims. It is notable that the first principle of Islam Hadhari is ‘Belief in Allah’. This is a significant change from the *Rukunegara*, which had ‘Belief in God’ as its first principle.<sup>154</sup> Again, Islam Hadhari can be seen as the continuation and development of the previous, pre-9/11 ideological campaign against alleged deviants.

## **Conclusion**

The attacks of 11 September 2001 promoted a significant change in the ideological component of security policy in Malaysia and abroad. Al-Qaeda’s ideology represented an even greater danger to the stability of various nation-states, and by extension the world’s political order as a whole, than its military capabilities. Al-Qaeda’s ideology, as presented in the statements of Osama bin Laden and various other leaders, emphasised political goals first and foremost, with religion providing a framework through which al-Qaeda’s message was then disseminated. However, at the rhetorical level at least, the

<sup>152</sup> Ng Ling Fong and Soon Li Tsin, ‘Ministry bans Islamic state debate in media’, *Malaysiakini*, <<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/70148>>, 19 July 2007, (accessed 18 March 2008).

<sup>153</sup> Farish, ‘‘Islam Hadhari’ cannot correct itself’, *op.cit.*

<sup>154</sup> Joseph Liow, ‘Islam Hadhari: A slogan gone cold?’, *The Straits Times*, 23 February 2008.



US and many of its Western allies portrayed al-Qaeda as opposed to Western values and political systems. In doing so the root causes of al-Qaeda were not addressed and its political demands ignored. The ideological response of the US has thus far been limited and, not surprisingly, misdirected, with the military component of its strategy receiving overwhelming emphasis. On balance, though, the soft power aspect of the US strategy was always going to be difficult to formulate, especially given the history of America's relations with the Islamic world. A more effective method of undermining the ideology of al-Qaeda and its surrogates would have been for the West to embrace as allies the more moderate, or at least pro-Western, Muslim states, and utilise their soft power resources to counter extremist ideas. I argue that in many respects Malaysia has, intentionally or not, attempted to perform this function.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Mahathir quickly redirected and somewhat altered Malaysia's existing ideological strategy against Islamic deviancy toward the new evil of international terrorism. Internationally, Mahathir emphasised a hearts and minds ideology similar to that used during the Emergency. He targeted what he saw as the root causes of terrorism, namely the Israel-Palestine issue and Western double standards. Mahathir also endeavoured to disassociate Islam from international terrorism. He blamed the perceived association between the two on Western prejudice. To this end, Mahathir began seeing himself as a leader of the Muslim world, attempting to unite the OIC against terrorism and encouraging it to make a stand on the issue. Ultimately though, Mahathir's international agenda was part of the domestic agenda. By promoting a view of counter-terrorism different to that of the US, Mahathir had painted himself as independent from US influence: a necessary position in Malaysia's Islamic politics. Moreover, in promoting a view of terrorism which disassociated it from Islam, Mahathir further strengthened his standing in Malaysia and abroad by illustrating that Islam – in the form promoted by UMNO – could be moderate and legitimate and was thus not to be feared by non-Muslims at home or overseas.

In the domestic context, Mahathir's strategy can be seen as an extension of regime coercion. This is a situation that contradicts the softer hearts and minds approach promoted at the international level. Mahathir re-used and re-tooled the deviancy concept deployed in the 1980s and 1990s. The state version of Islam was increasingly used to justify further controls over the religion. Mahathir declared Malaysia to be an Islamic

state, solidifying its Islamic credentials and essentially backing PAS into a corner. Islam in Malaysia continued to be moderated rather than moderate.

Although continuing many aspects of Mahathir's strategy, the administration of Abdullah saw the state brand of Islam take on a new form, essentially transforming it into a commodity. The new ideological strategy revolved around the Islam Hadhari philosophy promoted by Abdullah, a philosophy which served two purposes: first, it legitimated Malaysia's political *status quo*, and; second, the broadness of its principles allowed it to serve as a model to be emulated abroad, particularly by Muslim countries. Domestically, Islam Hadhari provided a further justification for the continued use of the coercive apparatus as elements deemed as going against the 'moderate' image the Abdullah administration sought to portray at home and abroad became more readily identifiable and thus easier to 'remove.' This fits with the pattern of previous ideological formulations, such as the hearts and minds campaign of the Emergency and the rhetoric of Mahathir, all of which operated to limit the ideological space in Malaysia and restrict the expression of alternative viewpoints. The moderate tone of Islam Hadhari was however undermined by the continued use of the coercive apparatus, with the latter apparatus ironically often claimed to be enforcing Islam Hadhari's principles. The government's commitment to practicing the Islam Hadhari philosophy at the operational level is therefore rather thin. A question is raised as to whether the concept was always merely a strategy for winning Malay votes whilst not alienating the non-Muslim community rather than a genuine attempt at transforming Islamic thinking at home and abroad.

Islam Hadhari had limited success overseas where Abdullah promoted it as the ideological counter to the views of bin Laden and other Islamic terrorist groups. Few countries appeared interested in the idea, let alone actually moving to implement it. Islam Hadhari did however promote Malaysia as a leader of the Islamic world, an achievement which would further legitimise UMNO's regime and the state Islam underlying it.

There are elements to be admired in the ideological approaches of Mahathir and Abdullah. Their strategies represented a cohesive attempt to undermine extremist interpretations and promote a more peaceful view of the faith. On the other hand, the

ideological approach of both leaders was most concerned with maintaining the domestic political *status quo*. The strategy of both was to limit the ideological space of their opponents and use 9/11 as a pretext to further restrict the discourse on Islam in their country. While internationally and domestically the Islamic agendas of Mahathir and Abdullah were promoted as genuine attempts to rally the Muslim world against terrorism and undermine the influence of extremists, the ultimate goal of their ideological approach has remained consistent with the goals of previous periods. They sought to maintain the legitimacy of the existing political order. It should be noted that the use of the ideological apparatus in this way does have the potential to backfire on the government. By promoting one specific view of Islam to the exclusion of all others, the view of Islam in Malaysia is narrowed and thus may eventually promote a more literalist – rather than modernist – interpretation of the faith. This is something which UMNO has been arguing against for decades.

# Conclusion

## The Malaysian Security Model and the Nation's Political Future

### The Malaysian Security Model

In this thesis I have outlined and analysed the impact of what I have termed the Malaysian Security Model. The Model deals with threats through a combination of coercion and ideology, force and persuasion. I have argued that the impact of Malaysia's security approach has gone beyond the security sphere, influencing or utilising almost all areas of government policy, including economics, education, foreign affairs, culture, and religion. My conclusion is that Malaysia's security policy is not primarily concerned with traditional security issues. Threats to the nation or the country are not the overwhelming focus of those promoting and implementing Malaysia's Security Model, though security policy has been effectively used to thwart traditional threats (in the Emergency, for example, or the case of Al-Maunah). **In Malaysia, the aim of security measures has been to protect and buttress regime security – that is, to ensure the continued political power of the UMNO dominated BN government.**

In Malaysia the regime and the state emerged at approximately the same time and the same regime has remained in power since Independence. This has meant that the institutions and instruments of the state have become synonymous with the regime which uses them – one reinforces the other. Many aspects of state power have been established and developed by the regime for the specific purpose of reinforcing its power (for example, Pusat Islam, the

NEP). The line between regime and state is blurred. This has resulted in a security policy which regards a threat to either the state or the regime as a threat to both.

The Malaysian Security Model and its relationship to the Malaysian government confirms the analysis of Mohammed Ayoob. Ayoob argues that security is an issue essential to understanding the nature and behaviour of Third World states. In making this argument, Ayoob is going against the current of much of the existing literature on Third World politics that emphasises the economic issues in developing countries and the economic influence on government decision-making. Like Ayoob, I argue that security policy is a central issue in Malaysia's domestic politics, historically and in contemporary times. Security policy is one of the foundations of the Malaysian state itself – for not only is the regime dependent upon the security approach for political survival, it is, as I point out, inherent in all aspects of the Malaysian polity. Security policy reflects the regime and *vice versa*. Security in Malaysia is an all-encompassing concept. The notion of security is defined by the Malaysian elites, namely the members of UMNO and more broadly the BN, and threats are identified among those who challenge the political *status quo*.

Perceived threats to the Malaysian polity have been addressed using one of the following four categories: Communist, religious (Islamic) deviant, terrorist or racial. The notion of a Communist threat was initially used by the British colonial administration, though until the 1980s the Malaysian government continued to claim that there were subversive Communist groups acting against the nation. In most instances the blame was misplaced. It tended to be ethnic provocateurs (as in the 1969 riots) or political upheaval (Operation Lalang) that were responsible for unrest rather than Communism. Outside the Emergency, Communists were a convenient scapegoat. The notion of religious deviancy then became a central preoccupation of the security apparatus following the government's Islamisation policies. Those who undermined the regime's Islamic credentials and agenda were branded as religious deviants and thus enemies of the state. The state's claim to greater religious piety gave it further ammunition against political opponents, particularly PAS, and allowed it to justify its use of coercion on religious grounds. The use of the terrorist bogeyman following the 9/11 attacks then continued this campaign against so-called religious deviants, though

the terminology changed. The ‘terrorist’ label proved suitably broad. The government branded secular (bloggers) and non-Islamic (Hindraf) groups as terrorists and extremists.

### **Coercion, Ideology, Race and the War on Terror**

I have argued that Malaysia’s security policy has two main components, one based on coercion, the other on consent or ideology. The coercive apparatus is composed of a number of repressive laws enforced by an obedient police force. The laws include the ISA, the OSA, the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Emergency Ordinance and the Sedition Act. The legislation is preventive in nature and focuses on maintaining the political *status quo* thus eliminating any physical or ideological challenges to the regime’s legitimacy. Violence is not generally a feature of operational policy. Opponents are rarely killed or ‘disappeared’ – rather they are detained and ‘rehabilitated.’ Most detainees are released within a few years, if not months and unlike many other Third World states and, indeed, Southeast Asian states, the military is not a feature of domestic security.

Since its establishment in the Emergency, the coercive apparatus has remained essentially the same, with little amendment or deviation. By contrast, Malaysia’s ideological apparatus has, as I argue, constantly adapted and evolved, most often in response to new government agendas and social stimuli. Ideology has served two functions. First, it has served a security function. Ideology has limited the space for ideas which challenge the *status quo* and therefore the regime’s legitimacy. Second, ideology has had a legitimating function. Ideology has served to legitimate not only the application of the coercive apparatus but the regime which has used it.

It is clear from the argument I have presented in this thesis that Malaysia’s security policy has been a vital component of Malaysia’s national identity. It has played a significant role in its genesis, most notably by warding off the divisive threat of Communism and by enforcing a new *status quo* favoured by the Alliance. Security policy became inseparable from the state, the policy itself having been formulated in the years prior to Independence and, as I have pointed out, it played a crucial role in achieving the stability necessary for a nation to be established. Few sources have acknowledged that the fundamental strategy of

combining coercion with a ‘hearts and minds’ component has continued in eras outside the Emergency. I argue that the coercion/ideology approach to security has been a vital and persistent part of Malaysia’s security policy.

While Malaysia’s security policy from the 1970s through to the start of the new century remained largely based on the issue of ethnicity, Islam – a core element of Malay ethnic identity – was also increasingly utilised and established as a political tool. The growing presence of Islam can be viewed as a consequence of the regime’s own shifts in emphasis toward Islamic policies, itself partly a result of UMNO’s political rivalry with PAS. I have recognised that the structure of the security approach did not change in response, though the ideological apparatus was significantly altered to cope with the regime’s change in priority. By contrast, the coercive apparatus remained virtually unaltered, continuing to be based largely on prevention.

The regime began to Islamise the state in the 1970s in response to the local *dakwah* movement. The ethnic imbalance favoured by the elites was continued, with the Malay-dominant UMNO remaining the unapologetic leader of the BN coalition. The regime, however, shifted its emphasis from Malay dominance to Muslim dominance, Islam being a central component of Malay identity. The religious component of the Malay ethnicity was a new focus, the issue of Islam having been essentially ignored under the Alliance. The pro-development, pro-BN interpretation of Islam adopted by UMNO ensured regime security by intrinsically linking religion and development, framing the latter in Islamic terms.

To ensure the regime’s Islamic policies and credentials were not undermined, the security approach was increasingly used to overtly undermine or destroy any challenge, legitimate or otherwise. The security apparatus was increasingly and undeniably used as a political tool, warding off any challenges to UMNO’s hegemony and the BN system. The regime’s claim of upholding the ‘true’ interpretation of Islam was used to justify a series of crackdowns against rogue Islamic groups, generally labeled as ‘deviants.’ In the 1970s there were a number of crackdowns against small fringe groups. In one of the few instances of actual violence, the government launched a raid on a PAS leader, an event referred to as

the Memali Incident. The excessive use of force in this instance was justified by the regime on the basis that those killed were armed religious fanatics and extremists. I have contended that this illustrated the extent to which the regime would use coercion to protect its version of Islam from counter-narratives. The deployment of the coercive and ideological apparatuses against al-Arqam and Al-Maunah further illustrated the government's willingness to act against those who posed an ideological threat and not simply – or even – an actual national security threat, though the crackdown on Al-Maunah appeared to be somewhat justified given the apparently violent nature of the group. I have noted the perceived threat from within Islam expanded in the months prior to 9/11, with the government targeting the KMM, a group with alleged connections to terrorist networks. Malaysia's security policy would continue in its current format to the present day, though the events of 9/11 and the alleged growth of transnational Islamic militancy would bring greater emphasis to the Islamic component of the ideological apparatus and alter the state of Islamic politics in the country. I have argued that Malaysia was well prepared for the shift in world politics that would occur in the wake of September 11.

Although the government had effectively parried several challenges to its Islamic credentials, the increased use of the security apparatus against so-called religious deviants illustrated that the government's security policy had backfired. The government's promotion of Islam had aroused a greater Islamic consciousness within the nation. However, the regime's attempt to promote one official version of Islam to the exclusion of all others and staunchly protect it with its security apparatus had clearly provoked resistance from within the Malay (Muslim) community. I have maintained that it had created increased division rather than a unified Malay community devoted to tenets of Islam promoted by UMNO. Resistance to the Security Model had effectively begun.

At this point in my concluding comment I should stress that while Islam had increasingly become the focus of the regime, the issue of ethnicity remained the number one priority. Indeed, the focus of the Islamic agenda was essentially on the Malay ethnic group. Operation Lalang in 1987 illustrated the continued importance of ethnicity, the regime utilising pre-existing ideological frameworks – religion, anti-communism, and most



prominently ‘race’ – to justify a move against political opponents. Though justified by the regime on these grounds, the operation had a clear political motive, namely upholding Mahathir’s position as leader and stabilising a disunited UMNO following the faction battle. Regime security, not national security, was again the focus. The crackdown against Anwar Ibrahim and his supporters likewise featured the issue of ethnicity, the regime overstating the threat and potentiality of racial riots in an attempt to win the votes of non-Malays. Overall, the issue of ethnicity was used to legitimate the existing order, the lack of racial riots attributed not to the restraint of the citizenry or the growing sense of national – rather than ethnic – identity in the country, but to the multiracial balance provided and embodied by the BN. Any threat to the BN, violent or political, was regarded and promoted as a threat to the country’s ‘racial balance.’

Despite drastic changes in international politics and the adoption of new repressive laws in many countries, particularly in the West, following 9/11, the structure of Malaysia’s security policy remained essentially unchanged. The security apparatus continued to combine coercion with consent, the former now promoted as a counter-terrorist tool, the latter extending its previous campaign against Islamic deviancy to the ‘new’ menace of international terrorism. Both components of the apparatus were increasingly promoted as the solution to terrorism. Malaysia’s security policy had been transformed into an exportable commodity. Nevertheless, both prongs of the security approach remained primarily concerned with the objective of ensuring regime security.

I have stressed that few alterations are evident in the coercive apparatus. Few new laws or amendments were introduced. The same repressive laws that had been used to combat Communism, racial provocateurs and deviants were now being deployed to combat terrorism. I have noted that statistically, though, there have been fewer arrests under the ISA – the most prominent piece of legislation in the government’s coercive arsenal – in the post-9/11 period on average than in any prior period. One notable change has been the increase in transnational cooperation, notably with the ASEAN countries, the OIC, and the US, among others. Though security is seen as less a purely domestic concern, Malaysia nonetheless remains staunchly opposed to most outside interference in its internal affairs,

even refusing some US requests to transfer prisoners. That said, the regime does not hesitate to use external events to its advantage. For example, the regime has not hesitated to use the rhetoric of the so-called War on Terror to justify the continued existence of the ISA. Indeed, the second major change to the coercive apparatus has been the increase in international support or at least indifference toward the ISA and the coercive apparatus in general. Other countries have been increasingly hesitant to criticise Malaysia's security policy due to the passing of vaguely similar counter-terrorism legislation in their own jurisdictions. The coercive apparatus has consequently become a more legitimate tool of government in the eyes of outside observers, a fact not missed by the Malaysian government which has reframed the ISA as a counter-terrorism tool.

In chapter five I have noted that emboldened by greater international support, the coercive apparatus has been increasingly deployed against legitimate, peaceful groups, namely PAS, internet bloggers and Hindraf. The government has branded each group with the terrorist label and either deployed or threatened to deploy the coercive apparatus against them. While Malaysia's security policy has always upheld regime – rather than national – security, the government's action in this context demonstrates that the coercive apparatus has been increasingly used for overtly political reasons and is now regarded less and less as a genuine security tool by all the major actors in Malaysia's politics.

In conjunction with the use of the coercive apparatus, Mahathir and Abdullah each presented a unique vision of how to ideologically combat extremism at home and abroad. Ideology itself is an important though often neglected aspect of the War on Terror. Although there is acknowledgement in the West that the 'War' cannot be won by military might alone, few resources have been spent countering the narratives presented by al-Qaeda.

I have recognized that Mahathir's post-9/11 ideology had both international and domestic components. Internationally, Mahathir sought to establish Malaysia as a model Islamic country and a leader in the Muslim world. Mahathir pushed for an understanding of the root causes of terrorism and shunned the militarism of some of Malaysia's allies. An attempt

was also made to disassociate Islam from terrorism. Domestically, Mahathir, backed by a strong coercive apparatus, continued enforcing Malaysia's state-sponsored form of Islam as its ideology. UMNO's interpretation of Islam allowed little space for Islamic radicals to maneuver and was thus seen as an antidote to extremism. Islam in Malaysia continued to be moderated by the government, with the post-9/11 climate providing a new reason for the promotion of official Islam at the exclusion of all other forms. As I have argued, particular attention was paid to the education system, with the government targeting PAS-funded schools. Mahathir's security ideology ultimately contained a dualism: at the international level, Mahathir spoke out against the use of force as a response to terrorism while, domestically, his state ideology was implemented with the help of the government's coercive apparatus.

While the content of Abdullah's ideological response to the issue of security in general and terrorism in particular shared many similarities with Mahathir's ideology, the form in which it was presented was unique. Abdullah reframed the state brand of Islam into a counter-terrorism tool to be exported, a commodity to be sold at home and abroad. Abdullah's ideology was packaged into the Islam Hadhari concept, a vague Islamic-based ideology which was specific enough to legitimate Malaysia's political *status quo* in religious terminology but sufficiently broad to serve as a model to be emulated in other countries. Domestically, Abdullah continued the approach of his predecessors, limiting the ideological space within the country and using ideology to justify various uses of the coercive apparatus (one notable example being the crackdown on the relatively benign Sky Kingdom sect). The primary tool Abdullah used in this context was Islam Hadhari, the concept sold and promoted by the government nationwide as part of the state's development agenda. The lofty ideals of Islam Hadhari were, as I have said, nonetheless undermined with every use of the coercive apparatus.

### **Malaysia's Political Future**

The effectiveness of the Malaysian government's security approach has been weakened in recent times. The government's use of the apparatus, particularly the coercive component

of the security apparatus, against legitimate actors has undermined the legitimacy of both the Malaysian Security Model and the regime. Although the use of coercion has always been at odds with the ideological hearts and minds component of the Malaysian state's approach, it has become increasingly out-of-step in recent years with unjustified crackdowns against those who are clearly not *bona fide* enemies of the state but are in fact merely opponents to the regime. The 'real' agenda of the Model has therefore become more and more evident to the Malaysian population. It has been increasingly exposed as a primarily political tool.

With dramatic changes sweeping Malaysia's political landscape following the 2008 general election it appears that the current format of the security approach could be approaching its end. The leadership transition from Abdullah to Najib Abdul Razak on 3 April 2009 is unlikely to bring about such a change, though given recent opposition to the concept at the state level Islam Hadhari may no longer be used as a major ideological tool. However, an electoral defeat of the BN at the next election, for the first time a reasonable prospect, would almost certainly bring about some, if not major, alterations to security policy. The current opposition parties, organised in the Pakatan Rakyat coalition, are all antagonistic toward Malaysia's internal security policies, particularly the coercive component. Many of the key figures and leaders in the opposition have been subject to detention under the ISA, former DAP leader Lim Kit Siang and Keadilan leader Anwar Ibrahim being the two most famous examples. The ideological elements of the security approach have also been criticised by the opposition, many doubting the integrity and authenticity of Islam Hadhari. Should the BN regime lose the next election, it would logically follow that the security policy that has formed an intrinsic part of the BN state project would also be discarded. However, this may not necessarily be the case. At least three different scenarios are possible. If faced with an electoral defeat, the BN regime may use the security apparatus to cling to power. This I argue is unlikely. Although the BN has certainly manipulated the electoral process to its advantage, particularly *via* the Electoral Commission, with the exception of the 1969 elections it has generally respected the results of the polls, conceding defeat in a number of state elections for example. Another scenario is that Pakatan Rakyat secures a federal victory but does not significantly alter the security approach. A number of

the main instruments may be discarded or amended, such as the ISA, Islam Hadhari, or the Printing Presses and Publications Act. Given that the security approach has become an ingrained element of the Malaysian state, some parties in Pakatan Rakyat may believe or claim it to be too destabilising to abolish it completely. Indeed, it should be noted Anwar himself was a leader in the BN during a time when the ISA was continually deployed against political opponents. A further scenario is that a Pakatan Rakyat government retains the basic coercive/consent structure of the Model but completely overhauls it, using less overt or repressive coercion and less manipulative or limiting ideological tools. In other words, the essential elements of the security approach may be brought more into line with international human rights standards, human rights being a key element of Pakatan Rakyat's election agenda.

Although change is a growing possibility, the Malaysian Security Model has had a significant though not necessarily positive impact on the Malaysian nation, its history, politics, and culture. It contributed to post-war stability, solidified the BN's position at the centre of Malaysia's politics, and eliminated foes of the regime, real and imagined. The Model has paradoxically both protected the nation from legitimate threats and undermined it by stifling genuine political competition, restricting debate, and weakening civil society and the democratic elements of the political system as a whole. The regime has certainly benefited more from the Model than the nation as a whole. Whether this will continue to be the case remains to be seen.

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