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POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE POLITICS OF CITIZENSHIP AND ETHNICITY IN PENINSULAR MALAY(SIA), 1957-1968

Abstract

The inclusion of provisions derived from the principles of citizenship and bumiputraisim in the 1957 Malay(si)an Constitution invariably created ambiguities and tensions. While the provisions based on the principles of citizenship proclaimed the equality of rights and liberties of every citizen, those based on bumiputraisim vindicated a hierarchy of rights along ethnic lines. In the sixties, the relatively unencumbered freedoms of speech and press and democratic space permitted the intense contests over the terms and meaning of the Constitution and its implementation to be debated legally and publicly. This paper will examine how the contests over the terms and interpretations of the Constitution and its implementation brought about frictions and fissures in both the Alliance and the opposition parties. Indeed, the contests even fragmented the non-communal and socialist-oriented groups and parties.

A constitution, Sheldon Wolin (1989) argues, “is simultaneously a political and a hermeneutical event” (p.3). In the pre-independence constitutional negotiation with the British, the Alliance Party,¹ as the party that won the 1955 general election, was sanctioned to represent the Malay(si)an people.² How much the British valued the Alliance’s role was clearly shown by the extent the Draft Constitution submitted by the Reid Commission closely followed the contents of the Alliance’s memorandum to the Commission.³ Subsequently, the Working Party authorized to review and amend the Draft Constitution was limited to four local representatives each from the Alliance and from the Rulers. The Constitution thus was a “coup” for the Alliance elites, and as a political event it ambiguously represented a power settlement between the Alliance’s English-educated leaders and the Rulers.⁴ More generally, the Constitution ambiguously accommodated elements of citizenship principles and ethnic rights that the Alliance elites agreed upon and thought they could persuade their respective party and ethnic community to accept.

However, the Constitution was also a hermeneutical event in that although the Alliance elites agreed upon the content of the Constitution, they did not necessarily

agree with its meaning. It follows that the Alliance elites “did not produce *a* particular meaning that was subsequently ratified”. Rather, their constitutional bargain set in motion intense contests to “settle the meaning of the Constitution by unsettling some competing meaning”. In the sixties, the relatively unencumbered freedoms of speech and press and democratic space permitted the intense contests over the terms and meaning of the Constitution and its implementation to be debated legally and publicly. Needless to say, since the May 13 1969 ethnic riots, a hegemonic interpretation of the Constitution has emerged incontrovertible and a few of the competing interpretations declared illegal⁵.

This paper will show that the post-1969 hegemonic interpretation of the Constitution was but only one of several competing interpretations during the sixties. It will also show how the terms and competing interpretations of the Constitution and its implementation fragmented both the Alliance and opposition parties.

Before the May 13 riots, the contests to settle the meaning of the Constitution were very intense in part because the making of the Constitution was a highly elitist affair. Although the Reid Commission solicited the views of a wide array of the other groups within and outside the Alliance, their views were not given the same consideration and importance as the Alliance’s memorandum. As a result, after independence, the terms and meaning of the Constitution were vigorously contested by groups within and outside the Alliance. Even among the Alliance elites differences of opinions immediately surfaced after independence with regard to both the power settlement and the meaning of the Constitution.⁶

The intense contests over the terms and meaning of the Constitution were also partly due to the obviously irreconcilable positions held by the various opposing sides. The irreconcilable positions were articulated in terms of the language of citizenship rights and ethnicity. On the one hand, it was argued that the principles of citizenship affirm the equality of membership rights of the different ethnic groups. Lee Kuan Yew, the then Prime Minister of Singapore, coined the notion of a “Malaysian Malaysia”⁷ that powerfully argued for a Malaysia where every citizen, regardless of ethnic backgrounds, was endowed with equality of rights. On the other hand, the predominant Malay communal⁸ argument insisted on a hierarchy of membership rights for the different ethnic groups according to place of origins. The “bumiputraisim”, or the

native-first ideology, essentially aggrandized the doctrine that the indigenous groups have privileged access to “special rights” by virtue of their historical attachment.⁹

The inclusion of clauses derived from both the principles of citizenship and bumiputraisim in the Constitution invariably created ambiguities and tensions. While clauses derived from the principles of citizenship would support the equality of rights and liberties of every citizen, the clauses based on bumiputraisim vindicated a hierarchy of rights along ethnic group lines (Appendix 1). Thus, for example, although Article 8(2) guarantees the equality of opportunity of every citizen, Article 153, in contrast, justifies the creation of quotas for Malays due to their indigenous position.

Translated into practice, the ambiguous meaning of the Constitution resulted into contests over a wide range of issues. A few of the issues were; the nature of ethnic power sharing, the question of official language(s); what should constitute the national culture; should each ethnic group have publicly funded cultural institutions and education in their mother-tongue; should affirmative actions be based on income or ethnic criteria; should political offices be distributed in line with the principle of ethnic proportionality, or reserved for members of particular ethnic groups, etc. Thus throughout the sixties the contests over the terms and meaning of the Constitution and its implementation brought about frictions and fissures in both the Alliance and the opposition parties.

Differences, Disputes and Fissures in the Alliance

In post-independent Malay(si)a, the British presence as the “impartial” power broker who enabled the Alliance’s rival ethnic elites to reach a constitutional agreement of sorts came to an end. Almost invariably, differences and disputes over the terms and meaning of the Constitution within the UMNO (United Malays National Organization) and MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), and between them, began to take its toll on the parties and their fragile coalition. On the one side, there were growing voices in the MCA aspiring and clamoring for a more equal partnership in the coalition and as well as for equal political and cultural rights for the Chinese community. On the other side, there emerged dissenting voices in UMNO that wanted to enhance the party’s — and thus Malay’s — political dominance, to immediately implement Malay as the sole

official language, to accelerate and enlarge the public presence of Malay cultural symbols, and to increase Malay participation in the economy and education.¹⁰

Dissension in the MCA

Historically, the first crisis in the MCA occurred in the mid-1950s during the pre-independence constitutional negotiations period (Heng 1988, pp.237-246). The Chinese-educated second-echelon leaders, dissatisfied with and distrusting the English-educated Straits Chinese leaders' willingness to advance Chinese equal political and cultural rights, broke away from the MCA to directly lobby the British colonial authorities. They petitioned the British to grant citizenship based on the principle of *jus soli*, which, if approved, would have enhanced Chinese political equality through an expanded Chinese electoral base. In addition, the group also appealed for the equal treatment of Chinese education and culture, especially including Mandarin as an official language. The Chinese-educated leaders clearly had considerable support from the majority of the Chinese guilds and associations, especially the Chinese education movements, UCSTA and UCSCA.¹¹ However, as three of the four key Chinese-educated leaders, Lau Pak Khuan, Leong Chee Cheong, and Cho Yew Fai, were ex-Kuomintang members, the British and UMNO successfully managed to raise doubts about their loyalty to Malaya. UMNO, in particular, vociferously alleged that they were pro-China and represented a Chinese "fifth-column" with the hidden agenda of making Malaya into a province of China.

Most importantly, the British colonial authorities' refusal to include them in the constitutional negotiations meant that the Chinese-educated leaders could only exert, if at all, a peripheral influence in the making of the Constitution. The English-educated MCA leaders thus assumed the pre-dominant role in the pre-independence constitutional negotiations with the British authorities and the UMNO elites for the Chinese community.¹² However, as both belong to the business class group, the English- and Chinese-educated leaders could not afford to remain disunited for it would irreparably weaken their class bargaining position vis-a-vis the UMNO. Consequently, the two groups reconciled their differences immediately after independence; this was publicly formalized by the Conference of Chinese Associations on November 10, 1957.

If the first quarrel in the MCA was eventually resolved without damaging the party, a subsequent quarrel that occurred just before the first federal elections in 1959, however, led to a splinter group leaving the party. This time the Chinese-educated leaders were joined by a group of young leaders led by Lim Chong Eu, an English-educated Cambridge trained physician and leader of the Penang MCA. With the support of the Chinese-educated and other young leaders, and as well as a large majority of the grassroots membership, Lim Chong Eu defeated Tan Cheng Lock, the incumbent and leader of the old English-educated group, to become the second president of MCA in 1958. The new group of MCA leaders led by Chong Eu almost immediately clashed with the UMNO over several issues, particularly over political equality and Chinese language and cultural rights.

Chong Eu and his supporters were dissatisfied with the power settlement terms in the Constitution because they regarded the terms as fostering an unequal political relationship between the Malays and Chinese in general, and between UMNO and MCA in particular. The group thus demanded a re-negotiation of the existing political partnership. First, they argued that in order to allay the Chinese fears of Malay political domination, the MCA must be allocated at least one-third of the federal seats.¹³ They thus demanded that the number of MCA parliamentary seats be raised from 28 to 40. Also, they reasoned that this was a logical step since the Chinese had by then made up 35.6 percent of the electorate. The rationale was that by controlling one-third of the federal seats, the non-Malays could prevent any attempt by the Malays, be it UMNO or PAS (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia) or together, to further include more “pro-Malay” amendments in the constitution. More generally, the MCA calculated that if the Malay parties did not have the two-third majority, then no one ethnic community would have absolute control of parliament.

Second, the group also wanted the power to select the MCA federal, and state, candidates to be transferred from the Alliance National Council to the MCA Executive Council.¹⁴ If the MCA retained the autonomy to pick its candidates, then it would make the process more “democratic” and would allow Chong Eu and his supporters to pick their own people. Lastly, pressured by the Chinese middle-class, the group proposed that the Government increased the intake of qualified Chinese into the civil service; the existing recruiting quota was four to one in favor of the Malays. Obviously,

if the above demands were accepted, it would have strengthened the MCA participation in the decision-making process, and probably would have helped to somewhat equalize the political relationships between the UMNO and MCA.

The second point of contention was with regards to the question of Chinese cultural rights, specifically the status of Chinese education and language. The status of Chinese language and education were once again raised by the Chinese-educated leaders with support from a large segment of the MCA grassroots and Chinese community, with the UCSTA and UCSCA as the prime movers.¹⁵ Without any doubt, the popular Chinese opinion was increasingly clamoring for cultural pluralism, especially the elevation of Mandarin to official language status and the equal treatment of Chinese education. They did not object to the idea of the Malay special position in the country in so far as it did not mean the relegation of the non-Malay cultures to a “second-class” status. Sensing this popular Chinese sentiment, Chong Eu and his group thus demanded a review of the Alliance Government’s official language and education policies.

Nevertheless, faced with the UMNO’s vehement rejection of their demands, and the subsequent acceptance by the MCA Executive Council, by a narrow margin, of Tunku Abdul Rahman’s ultimatum, Chong Eu and many of his supporters left the MCA in 1959 (Tunku 1986, pp. 69-71).¹⁶ The departure of the Chinese-educated leaders and the moderates, and their supporters, as well as the censuring of those who remained in the party, seriously reduced the MCA’s political popularity and credibility. But, before Tan Siew Sin, the new MCA President, and the other English-educated leaders could reorganize the party and remobilize their mass support, they were dealt a severe blow by the Alliance Government’s new education policy, the Talib Report (1960), named after Abdul Rahman Talib, the then Minister of Education. As Tan (1992) puts it,

Where the Razak Report¹⁷ educational policy had tried to marry the divergent linguistic and cultural commitments with the objectives of a national policy, the Talib Report stated ... that the “legitimate interests” of the various communities were simply “incompatible” with the creation of a national consciousness and the position of Malay as a national language (p.191).

The new education policy hence recommended that the different languages would be allowed as medium of instruction at the primary school level, but that all national secondary schools must teach in either Malay or English (until 1967). Chinese secondary schools which refused to switch to either of the official languages would be deprived of all forms of government aid. In addition, certificates from Chinese secondary schools would no longer be recognized by the Government. Above all, while Chinese primary schools were incorporated into the national system, their continued existence remained uncertain as Clause 21(b) of the Education Act of 1961¹⁸ vested the Minister of Education with the arbitrary power to change the language of instruction of primary schools from Mandarin to Malay. Despite the fact that the majority of Chinese were resolutely against this major change in the education policies, the English-educated MCA leadership could not, and did not, present a strong voice to support their concerns. The language, education and cultural issues resulted in another crisis in the MCA in the mid-sixties, which culminated in the departure of another significant group from the party.

In the end, the apparent ineffectiveness of the MCA to influence the Alliance Government's decision-making and policies gradually eroded its support among the Chinese. The community perceived the party as weak and incapable of defending, much less fight for, their political, economic and cultural interests and rights. In terms of class perspective, an increasing portion of the middle- and working-class Chinese also became dissatisfied with the failure of the business class-dominated MCA leadership to address their economic welfare. Not surprisingly, MCA popularity suffered a precipitous decline throughout the 1960s, culminating in the 1969 disastrous electoral elections when the party failed to win a majority of the Chinese votes; hence it lost its claim as the legitimate representative of the Chinese community.¹⁹ Above all, the 1969 electoral fiasco led to another round of divisive power struggle in the party.

Dissension in the UMNO

Similar to the MCA, UMNO too was riddled with internal quarrels both before and after independence. As a political organization that was essentially established in the midst of the upsurge of Malay political consciousness that accompanied the 1946 Malayan Union proposal, the party attracted support from a wide spectrum of the

Malay political community. Organizationally, the UMNO national leadership came predominantly from the administrative elites, and the second-echelon leadership was comprised mostly of Malay teachers and lower-echelon civil servants. The national leaders, given their British education and aristocratic backgrounds, were relatively more “modern” and less tradition-bounded in outlook in certain areas than the second-echelon leaders; but the administrative elites were largely pro-monarchist. In contrast, the political sentiments of the second-echelon leaders were a rather mix lot; some harbored ‘socialist’ ideas, some populist, some anti-aristocratic, and so on. Most importantly, relative to the administrative elites, the second-echelon leaders were more parochial in their ethnic outlook and thus more zealous than the national leaders in their support for the immediate implementation of Malay as the official language and medium of instruction for all educational levels, the promotion of Malay culture, and the alleviation of their community’s economic well-being. Unsurprisingly, on three occasions differences in UMNO resulted in splinter groups exiting the party.

In 1951, the founding UMNO president Jaafar Onn led a group out of UMNO after they were defeated in their move to convert UMNO into a multiethnic party (Ramlah Adam 1992, Chapters 12 & 13). Not only did Jaafar Onn and his group receive lukewarm support from the UMNO English-educated elites, but an overwhelming majority of the second-echelon leaders and the rank and file members strongly objected to the idea. Subsequently, Jaafar Onn and a few of his more fervent supporters resigned from UMNO and formed a multiethnic party called the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) in September 1951. However, when the party suffered a devastating defeat in the 1952 Kuala Lumpur municipal elections to an UMNO-MCA coalition, Jaafar Onn abandoned his multiethnic platform and formed Parti Negara that eventually became an avowedly pro-Malay party. Despite the change in strategy, Jaafar Onn continued to be unsuccessful in the subsequent elections including the elections held in post-independence Malay(si)a. Nevertheless, through his party’s strident demands for Malay political dominance, promotion of Malay language and culture, and jobs and educational quotas for the Malays, he significantly influenced the UMNO’s elites stand on these issues.

In hindsight, it was the departure of the ‘religious wing’ of UMNO from the party that was to have long term consequences for the party. The UMNO religious

wing came about as a result of the party's mobilization of the ulamas in 1951 (Alias 1994, pp. 23-40). Significantly, not long after it was established, differences and disputes with the UMNO elites' position on religion and race issues led to the departure of the religious wing from the party — and thus the linkage of PAS to UMNO. It was the religious wing's desire to form an Islamic based party that led to the formation of PAS in November 1951. Initially PAS was dominated by the UMNO religious wing but gradually lost the control to leaders from other Malay groupings.²⁰ Nevertheless, the PAS emphasis on Islamic issues did probably influence UMNO to argue for the inclusion of Islam as the official religion of the country in the Constitution.²¹

After independence, Malays naturally had high expectation of UMNO's promise to advance the economic interests and conditions of their community as stipulated in Article 153 of the Constitution. But, however, there were differences of opinions with regards to the best means to achieve the desired results. The UMNO national leaders, led by Tunku Abdul Rahman, largely subscribed to a *laissez faire* approach which would largely depend on the market to redress the economic disparities between the ethnic groups.²² It follows that state supported programs to help the Malays were kept to a minimum. Moreover, admissions to the universities continued to be based primarily on meritocracy. The resulting slow, or lack of, economic and educational progress of the Malay community led many second-echelon leaders and rank and file UMNO members to become increasingly impatient with their national leaders.

In particular, the Malay business and civil servant groups became more and more critical of the Alliance Government economic policies. For example, at the annual Malay economic congresses criticisms of the Alliance Government's failure to help the Malays exacerbated from year to year. Increasingly, the emerging opinion among the second-echelon leaders was that the incapacity to improve the Malays economic well-being was due to the MCA unduly influence on the Alliance Government and the UMNO leadership in particular.²³ More broadly, they accused the Chinese community for not willing to share and to help the Malays. Hence, to protect and to promote Malay economic interests, they wanted the state to play a more interventionist role. For instance, they wanted the state to implement economic controls and even to nationalize selected industries as means to direct economic

opportunities and resources to the Malay community. However, policies based on such controls were scuttled because the UMNO leadership led by Tunku Rahman feared that such measures would severely strained UMNO's relationship with the Chinese business class-dominated MCA leadership and as well as drive foreign investors away.

The best example of this quarrel was the case of Aziz Ishak, a senior UMNO leader and minister, who demanded that the state played a more interventionist role in promoting Malay socioeconomic welfare (Aziz Ishak 1977, pp. 19-42). In 1961 he proposed the creation of a "welfare state" to solve the problem of Malay poverty. In 1962, when he was the Minister of Agriculture, he tried to intervene in the pattern of agricultural production to protect the Malay peasants by displacing the Chinese middlemen with state-funded rice milling factories and by decreasing the dependency on importation of fertilizer, controlled by multinationals, by building local fertilizer plants. His plans, even though supported by United Nation experts, invoked strong objections from the MCA and foreign business interests which fought strongly for less state intervention in the agricultural sector in particular, and in the economy in general. As a result of this episode, and other personal differences that he had with Tunku Rahman, Aziz Ishak was expelled from UMNO in late 1962 even though there was much sympathy and support for him from the second-echelon leaders and the rank and file members.²⁴ For a while he was also detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA). Outside of UMNO, Aziz Ishak also had the support of the Malay middle-class and the increasingly assertive Malay business class, who were in favor of the state playing a larger role precisely because their opportunities had stagnated in the existing *laissez faire* economic strategy. However, only a handful of UMNO members left UMNO with him to form a new political party, the National Convention Party (NCP).

The second divisive issue which generated frictions within UMNO was in relation to the unresolved tensions between citizenship and cultural rights.²⁵ The general UMNO grassroots perception was that the Alliance Government was not doing enough to promote and to advance Malay language and culture in the society. In particular, the Malay language nationalists regarded the continual usage of languages other than Malay in public institutions as an indication of the UMNO leaders' lack of resoluteness to advance the Malay language. And the fact that Chinese schools were preserved was deemed as giving in to Chinese political pressure in general, and to the

MCA in particular. Among the groups that were actively involved in the promotion of Malay language and culture in the society was the Federation of Malay School Teachers' Association (FMSTA). A powerful group operating in and out of UMNO politics, it became deeply involved in the promotion of Malay language, education, and culture. Throughout the 1960s, the FMSTA was probably the most powerful Malay grouping in UMNO, both in numbers and in its capacities. The FMSTA was also the key intermediary group that linked the party to the Malay community at large.

There was as expected widespread support among the second-echelon leaders and grassroots for the Talib Report which they generally saw as an improvement over the Razak Report. In deference to the popular Malay pressure, immediately after the Talib Report was announced, in a temporary upsurge of Malay communalistic sentiments,²⁶ a few extravagant promises were made by some UMNO ministers. The Minister of Education declared that the government, for the sake of national integration, might convert all government primary schools to using Malay as the medium of instruction. Even the Prime Minister promised that the Government would beat the target date of 1967 to make Malay as the sole national and official language of the country. In reality however, the UMNO elites did not carry out the promises and instead were working out a compromise with the MCA English-educated leaders on the language and education problem.

But, in 1966, when it appeared that Tunku Rahman was prepared to concede some grounds to the Chinese community on the education issue, and the continuation of the official status of English beyond 1967, the opponents, led by the DBDP and NLAF, held a series of demonstrations against the Alliance Government.²⁷ Within the UMNO, a few Malay-educated leaders like Syed Nasir, Abdul Rahman Talib, and Ghaffar Baba also voiced their protest against the Tunku. Subsequently, although a compromise was found to the problem, and Syed Nasir and Abdul Rahman Talib were demoted, the UMNO managed to keep the warring factions within the party.

Consequently, the Tunku Government's non-interventionist economic policies, and its moderate gradualist approach to the Chinese education and language issues resulted in an observable decline in Malay popular support for UMNO throughout the sixties. Within UMNO, the movement against Tunku Abdul Rahman and his group became more and more vociferous during the same period. Broadly speaking, the

internal opposition could be divided into three factions, in various levels of disagreements with the Tunku. First, there was the moderate English-educated critics, such as Tun Razak and Dr. Ismail, who wanted the state to play a more interventionist role in advancing Malay economic welfare and in promoting Malay education and language. Second, there was the Malay-educated critics, such as Syed Nasir and Ghaffar Baba, who wanted to do away with the Chinese schools and to make Malay the sole national and official language immediately. Third, there was the emerging faction of young English-educated leaders, such as Musa Hitam, Mahathir Mohammed, and Tengku Razaleigh, who to some extent identify with Tun Razak's ideas, but wanted UMNO to take a more aggressive stance towards the Chinese, and the MCA, on both the economic and education and language fronts. Despite their disagreements, all the factions remained in UMNO because of their common fear of the Chinese seizing political power if the Malays were to become disunited. However, the 1969 electoral setbacks broke the proverbial camel's back and pushed their differences into the public arena, and precipitated a power struggle in the party.

Non-Malay Opposition Parties

Among the non-Malay opposition parties, objections to the UMNO-dominated Alliance's terms and interpretation of the Constitution were vigorous and widespread, but initially fragmented. Broadly speaking, non-Malay opposition parties could be divided into two groupings, excluding the communists; a moderate English-educated group²⁸ that was comprised of individuals from all ethnic groups, and a Chinese-educated²⁹ group. During the constitutional negotiation process, the Reid Commission solicited both the groups for their views even though the Commission did not take them seriously afterwards when formulating their Draft Report. Not surprisingly, both groups were critical, but in different ways, of the largely Alliance dictated terms and interpretation of the Constitution.

Generally, the moderate English-educated group subscribed to a liberal multicultural citizenship ideal (Perak People's Party³⁰ 1955 Manifesto; Gerakan³¹ 1965 Policy Statement). Since they were convinced that a common culture would evolve naturally from the societal and market integrative forces, they were opposed to state interventions in the cultural sphere, particularly the state efforts to promote Malay

culture. Rather, given their evolutionary conception of culture, the group recommended that non-Malay citizens should have equal rights to their cultural conduct of life in private and in public spaces. Optimistically, they believe that in the long run the ethnic cultural differences would remain, but diminished, when a common Malaysian culture would evolve naturally from the different ethnic cultures.

However, on the language issue, this group assumed a pragmatic position in that they supported the idea of Malay as the sole official language as a necessary means to integrate the multiethnic society. In fact, on this matter, they supported the Reid Commission stance on the language issue: that is, the gradual implementation of Malay as the official language coupled with the use of English, Mandarin and Tamil as official languages for a period of ten years after independence. Consequently, they accepted the bulk of the recommendations proposed by the Razak Education Report.

The notion of a “Malaysian Malaysia”³² potently captured the moderate English-educated non-Malays citizenship demands:

Malaysia should be a democratic society where legitimate differences of views ... should be permitted and where individuals and political parties should have full freedom to persuade its citizens, by constitutional means, to their particular point of view. Malaysia being a multi-racial and multi-cultural society must show respect and tolerance for legitimate diversity... . Malaysia was conceived as belonging to Malaysians as a whole and not to any particular community or race (Lee 1965, p. 64).

Their position was that if non-Malay citizens were to shoulder the same duties and responsibilities to the country as the Malays, then they should have equal political and cultural rights as the latter. Nevertheless, aware of the reality of economic and educational disparities between the ethnic groups, the English-educated group advocated a “reformist state” approach to address this problem. Lee Kuan Yew puts it this way “Quite clearly there is a distinction between our political equality and our duty as part of that political equality, to give special attention to the economic and social uplift of the Malays” (ibid., p. 20).

In other words, while they upheld the idea of equality as a right, recognizing the ethnic socioeconomic disparities, they supported the idea of equality as a policy. It follows that this group had no objection with Malay “special position” if it were taken to merely indicate their “indigenous” status, or if it meant some sorts of temporary

affirmative action to alleviate the Malays' dire socioeconomic conditions. In fact, as "moderate socialists" they supported the application of the affirmative action not only to the Malay poor — but to all the Malaysian poor. In this way, they were critical of the Alliance Government pro-capitalist *laissez-faire* policies which they claim protected the rich and neglected the poor. Rejecting the Alliance Government *laissez-faire* policies, they argued for the state to play an active role in the economic development and the distribution of wealth in the country.

But, if "special position" were equated to "Malay rule", then the moderate English-educated group were opposed to it as it would deny the non-Malays of their political and cultural equality in the country. Instead, it would make non-Malays, politically, into second-class citizens in a "Malay Malaysia". In this sense, the English-educated group were aware of how the terms of the Constitution could be used by the Alliance, on the one hand, to justify UMNO's political dominance and, on the other, to advance MCA's business interests. In short then, the moderate English-educated group rejected the Alliance pro-business policies and ethnic-based politics and argued for the establishment of a democratic socialist state with political and cultural equality for all citizens, and special programs to help all poor Malaysians, irrespective of ethnicity.³³

Although the leftist Chinese-educated subgroup employed the language of Marxism to represent their analyses and objectives, there was no question at all that they continued to retain an exclusive ethnic Chinese outlook. Thus their views on the language, education and culture issues in most cases overlapped with that of the conservative Chinese-educated subgroup. Indeed, both subgroups held passionate attachments to their Chinese cultural symbols. And on the language and educational issues, the Chinese-educated leaders had the assistance of the powerful Chinese education movements. While they supported Malay as the sole national language, both subgroups tenaciously fought for a multilingual official languages that includes Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English. In addition, they argued for the equal rights for Chinese education and, more generally, Chinese culture. Unsurprisingly, their demand for Chinese educational and cultural rights to be put on an equal footing with that of the Malays had the support of the majority of the Chinese community. As such, Chinese educational and language rights became critical issues for the leftist Chinese-educated group to mobilize the community with. Their emotional support for Chinese language

and education led them to strongly object to the Alliance Government policies to impose common syllabuses for all schools and the restriction of Mandarin as the medium of instruction to just the primary school level.

Above all, the leftist Chinese-educated subgroup pursued a decidedly confrontational strategy. Their uncompromising attitudes were in part due to their strong attachment to the politics of class conflicts and struggles. Indeed, their aim was to defeat the British imperialists, Malay feudalists and Chinese capitalists alliance and establish a socialist society where the State would control the entire economic life of the society (Vasil 1970, p.142). Accordingly, the leftist Chinese-educated subgroup portrayed the Constitution as a “feudalist-capitalist-imperialist” invention that would perpetuate the three classes’ interests at the expense of the Malay peasants and the Chinese working-classes. While they were willing to work with other groups which they regarded as “progressive”, it was also clear that their ultimate aim was to established a “socialist” state, whatever that means.

Theoretically then, on the issue of ethnic cultural and language rights, they adopted the standard class position which, instead of acknowledging ethnicity as an independent agency, held the view that “racism” was part and parcel of the superstructure which would “melt into air once the “communist” society is realized. Ironically, while they believed that the success of the class struggle would automatically resolve the ethnic contradictions, given the existing objective conditions, they frequently adopted the most strident ethnic postures. And by playing up the ethnic fears and sentiments in order to gain political support among the Chinese masses, they inevitably accentuated the ethnic differences and competitions. In short, the leftist Chinese-educated group became a prisoner of their strident ethnic posturing in that their communal demands overshadowed the class aspects of their political agenda. In other words, the leftist Chinese-educated group became vulnerable to the allegation that they were “communal extremists”.³⁴

Malay Opposition Parties

There were two main Malay opposition parties to the Alliance negotiated Constitution and their elitist power-sharing formula. On the one side was the conservative religious Malay-educated group³⁵ and on the other side was the secular leftist Malay-educated

group.³⁶ Given the predominance of religious teachers and ulamas membership, the former tended to protect and advance Malay interests couched in Islamic and ethnic terms; indeed, throughout the sixties their strategy was mainly in the form of making direct communal appeals in order to gain support from the Malay community. In contrast, the leftist group, influenced by socialist ideas, tended to use more or less the terminology of class conflicts. Yet, nevertheless, both groups were ardent Malay nationalists in that they both assumed that because of their “special position” the Malays must have privileged access to the economic, political, and cultural positions in the country (Burhanuddin 1963; Ahmad 1979; Muhammad 1992).

While the more extreme elements of the conservative group advocated completely denying the Chinese citizenship, most of their leaders supported granting the Chinese a limited citizenship status, as well as making it harder for them to acquire citizenship (Ratnam 1967). Some their more important views can be found in the 1959 PAS³⁷ party manifesto; for example,

- (1) Restore Malay sovereign rights and give priority to Malays in the areas of government and administration.
- (2) Take steps to amend the Constitution to ensure the implementation of the laws of Allah and restore Malay sovereignty in this state
- (3) Establish a Melayu nationality and allow Melayu citizenship to non-Malays in accordance with clearly defined provisions that do not conflict with the interests of the Malay race.
- (4) Practice healthy democracy and justice in controlling political affairs, and protect the rights of all citizens to freedom of religion, politics, thought and speech so long as these do not oppose the constitution or laws of this state.
- (5) Ensure that the positions of Prime Minister, Ministers, Assistant Ministers, Governors and Head of the Armed Forces must be held by a Malay.

The manifesto, more or less, reflected the group’s twin political designs: (1) Malaysia rightly belongs to the Malays, and (2) establishment of an Islamic state. Given their clearly exclusive Melayu communalism, the conservative group criticized the Constitution for not sufficiently guaranteeing the dominance and permanence of Malay rule. For them Malaya belonged to the Bangsa Melayu and as such the constitutional Special Position of Malays was not just special measures to uplift their socioeconomic conditions but, instead, signified their birth rights. Hence, for them,

Malay political dominance would be a permanent unquestionable fact of political life in the country.

Given their Melayu-oriented conception of culture, it was only logical that they rejected the idea of a national culture composed of elements of the different ethnic cultures. Rather, for them, the Melayu culture is the national culture and for non-Malays to be authentic Melayu citizens they would have to *masuk Melayu* (to become Malay), that is, the non-Malays would have to assimilate.³⁸ Thus, given their intentions of maintaining a 'Melayu Malaysia', it remained unclear how they were going to safeguard the cultural rights of the non-Malays if practicing those rights would necessarily contradict their version of national culture. In this way, it made their call for a "healthy democracy" and the protection of the civil liberties of the non-Malay citizens sound rather hollow, if not hypocritical. Finally, their advocating the implementation of Islamic laws as the laws of the land would mean that the ideas and practices of citizenship would be at the mercy of an Islamic-based legal system³⁹.

With regards to the problem of economic development and inequality, their programs remained at best rather inchoate. In other words, their economic ideas consisted of a haphazard melange of Islamic, nationalist, and populist influences (Funston 1980; Firdaus 1985). Since their primary political base was the Malay poor, particularly the Malay peasants, they were very critical of the Alliance Government pro-capitalist policies; they insisted that the state should implement more programs to further assist the Malay poor. It follows that they supported the idea of a state with extensive powers to intervene in the development and functioning of the economy. And based on Islamic economic principles, they proposed building an economic system that would be somewhere between the free market driven capitalism and full state-control socialism, whatever that means. Finally, one of their central ethnic demands was that they emphasized the need to increase Malay participation in the modern economic sector; given their population size, they claimed that "Malays should make up 51 percent of the workforce in all the country's industries" (Funston 1980, p.154).

In many ways, the leftist Malay-educated group was the counterpart of the leftist Chinese-educated group. For example, in terms of economic strategy they also sought a much larger role for the State, as well as supported the idea of nationalizing the means of production and distribution on a large scale. But, unlike the leftist

Chinese group that emphasized helping “the workers”, the Malay left’s main concern was the Malay peasants. The economic program of the Malay left was more or less clearly outlined by the Parti Rakyat⁴⁰ (PR or People’s Party) party constitution;

- (1) To promote among the people business and agriculture run on the basis of cooperatives and mutual help.
- (2) To demand that all sectors of production, which are important and which affect the livelihood of the masses, especially rubber and minerals, be owned by the State.
- (3) To demand that the distribution of goods which are important for the people, is managed and controlled by the State.
- (4) To demand that the wealth of the country is used only for the happiness of the people. (Anggaran Dasar Party Rakyat, 1958)

Without any doubt then, the Malay left was against the Alliance Government’s *laissez faire* policy and instead wanted the State to play an interventionist role in helping the less fortunate, especially Malay peasants.

Yet, since the Malay left also subscribed to the view that the Malays have a special claim to the country, they implicitly agreed with the prevailing sentiment that the Malays have privileged access to political dominance and also essentially supported Article 153 (Muhammad 1992). As such they keenly supported the introduction of preferential policies as a means to uplift the economic well-being of the community. Perhaps, most importantly, the Malay radicals’ positions on the political and cultural relationships between Malays and Chinese were decidedly colored by ethnic sentiments (Vasil 1970, Chapter 4; Muhammad 1992).

The Malay left, which was influenced strongly by Indonesian nationalism, also espoused the same pan-Malay nationalism that the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) did in the 1930s. That is, they envisioned the creation of a Tanah Melayu (Malay Homeland) comprising of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei with strong links to Indonesia. And in this Tanah Melayu the Malays would be the politically dominant community. It follows that in terms of culture, the radical Malays too claimed Malay culture as the foundation of a national culture. In all probability, their solution to the Chinese problem would be no different from the Indonesian solution, and in some respects similar to the conservative group’s approach. That is to say, their

solution would entail a large degree of assimilation on the part of the Chinese.⁴¹ In fact, on the Chinese education and language issues, the Malay left positions by all accounts were not that different from that of the conservative group. The main difference is perhaps that they supported the gradual implementation of Malay as the sole official language and conversion of all schools to Malay medium. However, as a secular group, the Malay left rejected the idea of creating an Islamic state, and instead proposed the creation of a Malay-dominated “national socialist” state.

Clearly then, on the non-economic issues the Malay radicals had much in common with the religious group; both believe that Malays form the definitive community and thus have privileged access to the political and cultural positions. It was precisely their different understandings of and views on the political and culture issues that strained the relationships between the Malay and Chinese left, making it difficult for the two groups to work together.

Between the Politics of Citizenship and Ethnicity

In the wake of political independence, the Alliance elites were faced with rising ethnic conflicts, instead of ethnic cooperation, in the society. With the departure of the British, the Malay suspicions and fears of the Chinese became more real and immediate. Malays’ vulnerability was further magnified by the increasing number of Chinese eligible to become citizens and thus their political presence and participation in the postcolonial society. This emerging situation resulted in mounting pressures from PAS, as well as various segments of the UMNO second-echelon leaders and grassroots, on the UMNO national leaders to consolidate Malay political and cultural paramountcy. As the Talib Report (1960) demonstrated, Malay popular opinion was also clamoring for the immediate implementation of Malay as the sole official language and medium of instruction. Conversely, the Chinese-educated leaders and their supporters were demanding that as citizens they should have equal political and cultural rights. In general then, the spiraling politics of ethnic rights gradually eclipsed and displaced the emerging politics of citizenship, such that it led, among other things, to the decline and/or demise of non-communal parties.

The main “non-communal” opposition parties during the 1960s were represented by the People’s Progressive Party (PPP), the Labor Party of Malaya (LPM),

the People Action Party (after 1965 the DAP or Democratic Action Party),⁴² and GERAKAN. Initially, the PPP, PAP, and GERAKAN were led by a varying coalitions of the moderate English-educated middle-class Malaysians, and the LPM by the progressive English-educated trade unionists and professionals (Vasil 1970). Because of the mostly moderate or progressive English-educated leaderships, the parties originally were more or less non-communal parties in that they adopted citizenship cum class-based political platforms and tried to appeal and to reach out to all the ethnic communities.

Nonetheless, the parties' citizenship-based politics faced two major obstacles; (1) an electorate that was traditional and ethnic-minded, particularly the Malay peasants and Chinese working class, and (2) an entrenched brand of ethnic politics that insisted on the preservation of "a racial balance and communal peace through a sort of separation of powers", rather than to achieve a sociopolitical integration of the different racial groups based on the principle of citizenship equality, (Vasil 1970, p. 290). Faced with these entrenched political realities, the non-communal parties eventually ended up employing the rhetoric of ethnicity, rather than citizenship or class, in order to appeal to the particular ethnic community.

For example, the PPP was founded as a moderate multiethnic party by two Sri Lankan Tamil brothers, the Ipoh lawyers D.R. and S.P. Seenivasagam (Vasil 1970, Chapter 6). The PPP's political ideas were more or less identical with the moderate English-educated group.⁴³ However, failures in successive elections led the PPP to reinvent its non-communal strategy. As a Perak-based party, the PPP leaders quickly realized that they would have to gain the support of the Chinese community in order to remain a viable party, especially when the party by then had already given up on winning Malay support. The first unexpected opportunity for the PPP to gain the Chinese support came with the announcement of the Razak Report (1956) on education.

Many leaders of the powerful Perak Chinese Associations and Guilds became disenchanted with, and felt betrayed by, the MCA which supported the Razak Report. In protest, they channeled their support to the PPP, which thus led to a substantial increase in its membership. With this new support base, in December 1958, the PPP successfully defeated the Alliance and captured the Ipoh Town Council which it

controlled until 1966.⁴⁴ By the time of the first general election in 1959, the PPP was already a considerable political force in Perak where it captured a fifth of the popular votes.⁴⁵ But because the PPP, in order to become a viable political party had to depend on the conservative Chinese-educated group support, it was forced to adopt positions that appealed to that group, such as the language and education issues. In other words, though the leadership continued to be controlled by the English-educated, the PPP as a party became imprisoned by the demands of the particular ethnic demands of the conservative Chinese-educated group. Consequently, the party failed to build up a multiethnic electoral base as their already limited Malay support became alienated by the party's increasingly "pro-Chinese" posturing.

Perhaps, a more interesting example was how the politics of ethnicity affected the LPM and the Malay socialist Party Rakyat (PR) efforts to build a non-communal coalition, the Socialist Front (SF) (established July 1957). Until 1956 the LPM leadership was dominated by English-educated trade-unionists and professionals,⁴⁶ with its mass support concentrated mainly in Penang, Selangor and Perak. The bulk of its supporters, then, were Indians and English-educated Chinese white collar workers in the urban areas. From 1956 onwards when the LPM political orientations became more progressive,⁴⁷ the party saw a huge influx of new members, mostly young Chinese-educated workers. Initially, despite this huge influx of Chinese-educated members, the party remained under the control of the English-educated leaders.

It was the Penang-based "Fabian" group that approached the PR with the idea of forming a coalition in order to provide a non-communal alternative to the Alliance. The LPM and PR leaders hope that by pooling together their resources and respective areas of support, it would help strengthened the constituent parties. Hence, the SF was formed on July 1957.

In its first Policy Statement, the SF proclaimed its twin aims of creating a "democratic socialist state" and a "planned socialist economy". And as a means to enhance the integration of the different ethnic groups, the SF Policy Statement recommended the gradual implementation of Malay as the national language. With regards to the LPM demand for multilingualism, the SF decided to accept the Reid Commission's proposal that English, Mandarin, and Tamil be maintained as temporary official languages. In the long run, however, the SF adopted the PR's position that

Malay be the sole official language. Finally, the SF promised to support Malay national schools along with Chinese and Tamil independent schools. Generally then, the SF tried to play down the ethnic issues and accused the Alliance of stirring up the ethnic issues as a means to prevent the masses from realizing the real conflict of class interests.

Nevertheless, the SF position on language and education soon came under attack from the LPM, especially after the massive infusion of Chinese-educated members into the LPM in 1958 and 1959. Two events drove the Chinese-educated Chinese to join the LPM. One, when the Registrar of Trade Unions de-registered on 30 April 1958 the Chinese-controlled trade unions, such as National Union of Factory and General Workers, it forced many of their working class Chinese members to join the LPM. Also, the de-registration of the trade unions coincided with the MCP (Malayan Communist Party) decision to pursue a policy of “bringing about the downfall of the Alliance in the general elections”. The MCP thus directed its operatives and encouraged pro-MCP workers to join the LPM. Two, as mentioned earlier, many MCA members left the party in 1959, and perceiving the LPM as a better alternative, a significant of those who left the MCA joined the LPM.

It was these successive infusions of Chinese-educated Chinese into the LPM that tipped the balance against the English-educated control of the party. Thus by 1960, if the massive infusions of Chinese-educated members into the LPM dramatically strengthened the party,⁴⁸ it also transformed the party’s membership and political character. Hence by 1961, the leadership was taken over either by leaders of the Chinese-educated or by English-educated leaders who were supported by them. Subsequently, the LPM’s progressive citizenship and class politics became usurped by the Chinese-educated group’s brand of communal politics.

Predictably, with the Chinese-educated Chinese increasing control over the party, the LPM positions on language and education issues came into direct conflict with the PR’s. In this way, the Talib Report precipitated a serious rift between the LPM and PR. Precisely, while the PR was fundamentally in agreement with the Talib Report’s positions on the language and education issues, the LPM, especially the Chinese-educated group, was strongly opposed to it. More broadly, other communal issues, such as Malay special rights, also began to generate internal differences,

divisions and conflicts in the SF coalition. In short, the influx of Chinese-educated Chinese into the LPM resulted in irreparably accentuating the differences and tensions between the PR and LPM.

Finally, the PR's attempt to employ a non-communal strategy failed miserably as it could not win significant support from the Malays who continued to vote for the explicitly communal UMNO and PAS. Moreover, the PR's association with the LPM also caused the PR considerable damage as the Malay public by and large regarded the LPM as a Chinese party. Indeed, UMNO and PAS successfully labeled the LPM as a "chauvinist" Chinese and "anti-Malay" party, and the PR leaders as Chinese "stooges". The LPM, in contrast, managed to win considerable support from the Chinese as it was perceived by the community as championing their rights. Hence, the growing differences of parties' positions on the political and cultural rights of the different ethnic groups eventually led to the collapse of the SF.

In general thus, the non-communal parties' attempts to establish a citizenship-based politics were eclipsed by the politics of ethnicity. Their efforts to argue for the minority ethnic groups equality of political and cultural rights in terms of their citizenship rights were fundamentally perceived by the Malays, and the Malay parties, as challenging their "special position" in the society.

The Demise of Citizenship Politics

In the first two federal elections (1959 and 1964), because the opposition parties were fragmented and poorly organized they could not seriously challenge the Alliance's political supremacy (Means 1976). In addition, in the early sixties, just as the opposition parties were recovering from the repressive Emergency Rule period (1948-60) and gaining political momentum, the Alliance elites completely altered the political landscape when they merged Malaya with Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah to form the Federation of Malaysia in August 1963.⁴⁹ Initially, the merger was a bonus for the Alliance for a number of reasons; it effectively split the opposition as the different parties assumed different positions on the merger, it provided the Tunku Government with the pretext to detain a number of the opposition leaders in the name of national security,⁵⁰ and the Indonesian reaction to the merger raised the patriotic sentiments in the fragmented society. Nonetheless, since the inclusion of Singapore also brought

along with it the huge Singaporean Chinese population,⁵¹ it naturally exacerbated the Malays' anxieties, especially concerning their political dominance.

Regionally, the creation of Malaysia received hostile reactions from not just Sukarno's Indonesia, the regional power, but also from the Philippines.⁵² Locally, most Chinese welcomed the formation of Malaysia for they saw Singapore's huge Chinese population as helping to strengthen their numbers — hence their bargaining power. Yet, however, the non-Malay opposition parties' positions on the merger ranged from wholehearted acceptance to complete rejection. For instance, the LPM party leadership's position on the merger was split between the English- and Chinese-educated components; the former supported the merger whereas the latter was strongly opposed to it. The political reason behind the Chinese-educated Chinese position was not that they supported the Indonesian territorial ambitions but, rather, because their counterparts in Singapore, the Barisan Socialis, which was fighting the PAP, was against the merger;⁵³ the PAP was one of the prime movers of the merger. The PPP and United Democratic Party (UDP)⁵⁴ at first objected but eventually came out in support of the merger. Because of their disagreements over the merger issue, the non-Malay opposition parties could not come up with a common strategy to challenge the Alliance in the 1964 general elections. Hence, in the 1964 elections, the non-Malay votes for the opposition were split among the different opposition candidates competing against one another (Vasil 1970).

Importantly, while Lee Kuan Yew's concept of a "Malaysian Malaysia" received enthusiastic support from the non-Malays, it also was greeted with hostile reactions from the Malays. In particular, the UMNO accused him, and the PAP, of questioning the special position and privileges of the Malays.⁵⁵ In fact, feeling aroused by what was perceived as the PAP's attempt to usurp Malays' political dominance, led militant Malays in Singapore, encouraged by elements (Syed Albar and Syed Nasir) in the UMNO, to stage a number of mass rallies against the PAP. Tragically, the rallies resulted in the 1964 racial riots. Days before the riots, Syed Albar exhorted a large gathering of Malays with a rather fiery speech:

We have our last strength to rely upon. We are weak in all fields. We are economically weak. We are weak in the educational sphere. But we still have one last weapon of strength which we could use an insistence upon others to

recognize our existence and our presence, in this island of Singapura. This weapon is none other than our unity With this unity we will save our people, we will better our lot. ... If this unity persists, by the will of God, I tell you, no power ... on earth ... can trample on us, no power can look down upon us and belittle us (Noordin Soipee 1974, Chapter 7).

Above all, after the 1964 election, recognizing the non-Malays disunity, Lee Kuan Yew in June 1965 got together the PAP, PPP, UDP and other moderate elements, to form a new organization, the Malaysian Solidarity National Conference. This bold united move by the non-Malays' to challenge the Alliance was aborted when the Tunku Government decided, in the "interests of racial harmony and stability", to expel Singapore from the Federation later in that year.

On the other hand, the Konfrontasi (1963-1965) with Indonesia affected negatively the Malay opposition parties. This was because many of their leaders had historically shown, and still harbored, pro-Indonesian sentiments. In particular, during the Konfrontasi, the PR, with its Indonesian influenced Marhaenism⁵⁶ ideology, was completely discredited. The PAS president, Dr. Burhanuddin, given his past track record, was especially vulnerable to the allegation that he harbored pro-Indonesian sentiments (Noordin Soipee 1974). Using the ISA, the Alliance Government arrested many of the Malay opposition parties' key leaders.

In general then, though the Malay opposition parties received a boost from the defection of a segment of UMNO led by Ishak Aziz, defections from the opposition to UMNO, partly as a result of serious disagreements over the Indonesian threat, exceeded the former. In vying for the rural Malay support, the PAS attempt to use Islamic and ethnic symbols were successfully adopted by UMNO which began to pay more attention to these symbols. The UMNO also effectively used the mass media to manipulate the identification of 'Government' with 'Governing Party' and effectively played on the Malay traditional loyalty to authority. Finally, the UMNO successfully influenced the non-governmental rural elites (teachers and ulamas), as well as using the state apparatus and funds, to win the Malay popular support. In short, an opportune combination of factors partly helped the UMNO to defeat the Malay opposition parties in the 1964 general elections in all the states, with the exception the PAS traditional stronghold, Kelantan (Means 1970, p.338).⁵⁷

In the aftermath of the merger and Konfrontasi episodes, the communalization of politics continued to exacerbate. Under the banner of Lee Kuan Yew's "Malaysian Malaysia" the DAP, the heir to the expelled PAP, again proposed that the Malay "special rights" be retracted. The DAP demands for a "Malaysian Malaysia", however, coincided with the approaching 1967 deadline to end English as an official language and the promotion of Malay as the sole official language. Naturally, the DAP seized the opportunity to raise again the Chinese-educated Chinese demands for Mandarin as an official language and for the equal recognition of Chinese schools. The PPP too followed the DAP and took up the idea of a "Malaysian Malaysia" and the promotion of Chinese education and of Mandarin to official status. Also, the DAP and PPP benefited substantially from the political breakup between the English-and Chinese-educated elements of the MCA in the mid-sixties and of LPM in 1967. The English-educated faction of the LPM, except for a few who decided to quit politics altogether, joined up with Lim Chong Eu (representing UDP), a group of intellectuals and trade unionists to form the reformist multiethnic Gerakan party in 1968.

When the 1967 National Language Bill was passed by parliament, the Chinese community by and large became disenchanted with the MCA. It reinforced their view that the MCA was politically impotent and incapable of protecting and looking after the Chinese community's rights and interests. For example, when the Chinese Associations and educationists proposed the establishment of a Chinese-medium tertiary institution, the Merdeka University in 1968, the MCA was against the idea. Consequently, the Chinese support for the MCA eroded dramatically towards the late sixties, and ultimately led to the disastrous MCA showing in the 1969 general election.

On the Malay side, just before the Language Act deadline, 1 September 1967, a number of Malay leaders formed the National Language Front (NLF) to mobilize the Malays to pressure the Alliance Government to immediately implement Malay as the sole official language. Precisely because the 1967 National Language Bill deferred the implementation of Malay as the sole official language to a later date, and planned to retain English for a much longer time, there were considerable objections from the Malay community, especially from the Malay teachers and intelligentsia. With the end of Konfrontasi, and thus the end of the politics of patriotism, the return to the politics of ethnic rights provided the PAS with new opportunities to regain its political losses.

With its aggressive rhetoric on Islam and Malay communalism, the recurrent citizenship and language controversies during the late sixties provided the PAS with excellent opportunities to gain more Malay support. Disappointed with the UMNO's failure to implement Malay as the sole official language in 1967 and to improve the Malay community's economic conditions, a significant segment of the Malay public charged the UMNO leaders with conceding too much, if not of selling out, to the MCA, that is, the Chinese. A number of Malay intellectuals, especially those involved in the NLF (and Dewan Pustaka dan Bahasa), and a substantial number of Malay students and teachers switched their support to the PAS. Hence, in the 1969 elections the PAS managed to attract a significant number of Malay protest votes against the UMNO.

In a sense then, the Konfrontasi period was a "pleasant" diversion for Malaysian society as it rekindled the people's patriotism thus putting a lid on the unresolved tensions between citizenship and ethnicity in the society. The aftermath of Konfrontasi returned the society to those tensions, but now under a different convergence of political conditions. On the Chinese side, the status of MCA continued to decline and the non-Malay opposition parties continued to gain support among the Chinese electorate. On the Malay side, the popularity of UMNO too declined, because after more than ten years of independence an increasing percentage of Malays became frustrated with the Tunku Government's "half-hearted" efforts, they alleged, to raise the Malays economic well-being and to promote their group cultural symbols, specifically the official status of the Malay language. Subsequently, the non-Malay and Malay opposition parties achieved considerable electoral gains in the 1969 elections. Yet it was the non-Malay opposition gains that was to intensify ethnic relations in the society; precisely their gains accentuated the Malay fears and anxieties of being overwhelmed by the Chinese.

CONCLUSION

In summary, from 1957 to 1968, the opposing communal demands by the Malay and Chinese communities resulted in widening the gaps between the two communities. On the one hand, increasingly Malay popular opinions were growing frustrated with the

Tunku's Government failures to alleviate their economic and educational opportunities, to promote Malay as the sole official language, and to advance Malay culture. Also, PAS, the main opposition Malay party, was capitalizing on the Chinese growing demands for political and cultural equality to undermine UMNO's support among the Malay community. On the other hand, increasing Chinese popular opinion, and the Chinese-dominated opposition parties, strongly criticized the constitutional position of the Malay community and demanded the reinstatement of equality of rights for every citizen irrespective of ethnic background. The ideological divide between the Malay- and Chinese-based parties thus continued to widen throughout the sixties. Indeed, the ideological divide even fragmented the non-communal and socialist-oriented groups and parties.

In terms of the politics of citizenship and ethnicity, by the late sixties the citizenship articulation of rights had become more and more circumscribed by communal appeals. Specifically, Malay popular opinions, and Malay parties, were increasingly taken over by the bumiputraisism conception. Thus, in the ensuing post-election ethnic violence on May 13 1969, a new group of UMNO leaders seized the opportunity to redefine and to redraw the terms of inter-ethnic accommodation in the society. Indeed, it marked the beginning of the consolidation of bumiputraisism and conversely the eclipse of citizenship politics.

3. Religion of the Federation

- (1) Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.

Fundamental Liberties

5. (1) No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.
6. (1) No person shall be held in slavery.
8. (1) All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law.
- (2) Except as expressly authorized by this constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment.
- (3) There shall be no discrimination in favor of any person on the ground that he is a subject of the ruler of any State.
10. (1) Subject to clause 2,
- (a) Every citizen has the right to freedom of speech and expression;
- (b) All citizens have the right to assemble peaceably and without arms;
- (c) All citizens have the right to form associations.
- (2) Parliament may by law impose:
- (a) On the rights conferred by [clause 1] such restrictions as it deems necessary or expedient in the interest of the security of the Federation, friendly relations with other countries, public order or morality

152 National Language

- (1) The national language shall be the Malay language and shall be in script as may by law:
Provided that:

- (a) no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes) or from teaching or learning, any other language; and
- (b) nothing in this Clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or of any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation.

153 Reservation of quotas in respect of services, permits, etc., for Malays and other natives

- (1) It shall be in the responsibility of the Yang Di-Pertuan Agung to safeguard the *special position* of the Malays and other natives and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, but subject to the provisions of this Article, the Yang DiPertuan Agung shall exercise his functions under the Constitution and federal law in such manner as may be necessary to safeguard the *special position* of the Malays and natives and to ensure the reservation for Malays and natives of such proportion as he may deem reasonable of positions in the public service (other than the public service of a State) and of scholar-ships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the Federal Government and, when any permit or license for the operation of any trade or business is required by federal law, then, subject to the provision of that law and this Article, of such permits and licenses.

NOTES

1. The Alliance Party's three components were the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malay(si)an Chinese Association (MCA) and Malay(si)an Indian Congress (MIC). In this paper I will focus on UMNO and MCA.
2. In the 1955 election, Malay voters made up about 80% of the total electorate. Although the Chinese made up close to 50% of the population, they constituted only about 20% of the total electorate because the stringent criteria in the 1948 Federation Agreement, albeit modified slightly in the early 1950s, meant that only a minority of Chinese were eligible for Malayan citizenship.
3. For an excellent analysis of the constitutional negotiation see Joseph Milton Fernando's (1995) dissertation *The emergence of the Alliance and the making of Malaya's independence constitution, 1948-1957*.
4. Also, because of the Alliance elites' desire to gain independence, which was equally matched by the British colonialists' desire to grant independence, the terms of the Constitution for an independent Malaya was basically hastily knocked together. Tunku Abdul Rahman wrote in his memoirs that he prodded his colleagues to agree to the terms by arguing that they could be amended later on — after independence (Tunku 1981): "It was, of course, not a perfect constitution But we knew we were going to be in power with an overwhelming majority and if any changes appeared necessary we would amend the constitution. . . . So why waste haggling over it at that stage? I just told my colleagues to accept everything that was proposed" (pp.15-16). This cavalier attitude towards the Constitution was a bad omen for the future. Indeed, since independence the Constitution has been amended numerous times.
5. Besides entrenching the bumiputraisim version of the Constitution; for example, the 1970 Sensitive Issue Act banned the other competing interpretations from being articulated and debated publicly. It has thus driven such views to the private sphere.
6. Initially, in discussions with the British, the Alliance leaders agreed to review the Malay Special Position after 15 years and thus the Reid Commission recommended the Malay Special Position be removed after 15 years. However, in the Working Party's discussion, UMNO, under a lot of pressure from both within and outside the party, objected strongly to the inclusion of the 15 years limit and instead argued for a more vague phrasing that "it be reviewed from time to time". Of course, since 1970, questioning the Malay Special Position has been made illegal.
7. It is interesting to note that in recent years, the government has been talking about a "Bangsa Malaysia" (Malaysian Race). However, it is clear that the "Bangsa Malaysia" concept does not have the same underpinnings as the "Malaysian Malaysia" concept.
8. The terms ethnic and communal are used interchangeably in this paper.
9. Importantly, even among the indigenous group there is an unstated hierarchical order with the Malays as the First-Among-Equal. The term "special rights" is a misnomer and should probably be labeled as "entitlements".
10. Also, with political independence the Malay Rulers' became increasingly assertive, especially at the state levels, which led to a series of confrontations between royalty and the Alliance Government (Shafruddin 1987, Chapter 6). This, of course, further added to the UMNO's fears of Malay disunity.
11. United Chinese School Teachers Association (UCSTA; est. 1951) and United Chinese School Committees' Association (UCSCA; est. 1954) were essentially grassroots movements led by and comprised of the Chinese-educated segment of the Chinese community. For an excellent study of these two movements see Tan Liok Ee's *Dongjiaozong and The Challenge to Cultural Hegemony 1951-1987*.
12. In the discussions to formulate the Alliance Memorandum, the MCA was represented by Tan Siew Sin, Ong Yoke Lin, T.H. Tan, H.S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, Too Joon Hing,

- and Yong Pung How. Ong Yoke Lin subsequently represented the MCA in the Working Committee to revise the Draft Commission.
13. In a letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman, then President of UMNO and Prime Minister of Malaya, Chong Eu wrote that the Chinese remained fearful of Malay communalism precisely because a provision in the constitution “allows amendment of the constitution with a two-thirds majority”. This provision became unacceptable to Chong Eu and his group because, on the one hand, the UMNO was allocated more than two-thirds of the seats, and, on the other hand, the extreme Malay communalist PAS (Parti Islam Se Malaysia) was apparently gaining political momentum.
 14. In the existing candidate selection process, the final candidate list was wholly up to the Alliance Executive Council, by agreement whose chairman has to be the President of UMNO. Although the Council membership was comprised of 6 UMNO, 5 MCA and 3 MIC representatives, the chairman had considerable power in deciding the final candidate list.
 15. Indeed, immediately after independence, a number of second-echelon leaders, especially in Perak and Selangor, began to mobilize the Chinese community to struggle for the equality of Chinese cultural rights.
 16. Apparently, because Chong Eu’s letter was released, without his consent, to the public, the Tunku, given the circumstances, strongly rejected the demands. Instead, he issued his own ultimatum; either the MCA follow the Alliance under his leadership or they could withdraw from the Alliance. His ultimatum forced a crisis in the MCA and was used by the English-educated group, led by Tan Siew Sin (Tan Cheng Lock’s son) and Ong Yoke Lin, to defeat Chong Eu and his group.
 17. The Razak Education Report (1956) was the most important pre-independence document on the development of education in Malay(si)a. It recommended three controversial guidelines; (1) the separate language-medium school systems were to remain, (2) the adoption of common syllabuses for all schools in the country, (3) the making of Malay and English as compulsory subjects, (4) all schools were to be made eligible for state grants-in-aid provided they conformed to the educational policy, and (5) to form a unified teachers scheme.
 18. The Chinese education issues have continued to invoke passionate reactions from both the Malay and Chinese communities. For example, in early 1987, Anwar Ibrahim, then Minister of Education, proposed to appoint non-Mandarin speaking administrators to Chinese schools. This move was met by strong Chinese protests, which in turn led UMNO Youth to demand the Government to implement Clause 23(b). Interestingly, this was a prelude to the October 1987 Operation Lallang, when the State detained more than 150 Government critics and severely curtailed democratic rights.
 19. This trend was to continue until the 1995 general election.
 20. Namely, the Malay Nationalist Party and *Hizbul Muslimin*.
 21. The Alliance’s memorandum did not propose to include Islam as the official religion in the constitution and neither was it suggested in the Draft Constitution. However, it suggested by Abdul Hamid, the Pakistani representative in the Reid Commission, in his separate memo attached to the Draft Constitution. Subsequently, in the Working Party the UMNO elites successfully argued for its inclusion in the Constitution.
 22. For an excellent discussion of the different approaches to assisting the Malays see Faaland et al (1990). A common fallacy is to think that preferential policies that favored the Malays were only implemented after the New Economic Policy (NEP). In the 60s, the Alliance Government was already practising preferential policies — the main difference was in scope and in strategy.
 23. In a sense this was symbolically represented by the fact that the two most important cabinet positions dealing with the economy, Finance and Trade and Industry, were held

- by MCA. In addition, financially, the UMNO, with only minimal resources, was dependent on the MCA.
24. Nevertheless, his criticisms of the Government economic policies were noticed. For example, Tun Razak, the deputy Prime Minister, and Dr. Ismail, the Minister of Home Affairs, managed to convince the Tunku Government in the mid-1960s to create a number of institutions or expand the role of existing institutions (MARA, FAMA, RISDA, Bank Bumiputra).
 25. Religious issues did not become an important area of ethnic conflict until from 1975 onwards. Nevertheless, since independence, the Government had consistently channeled more funding towards building mosques and promotion of Malay culture.
 26. Two organizations which played important roles in pressuring the UMNO to promote Malay as the sole national language were; the semi-governmental institution Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), led by Syed Nasir Ismail, and the National Language Action Front (NLAFF) formed in 1964 by a loose alliance of Malay intellectuals in reaction to the Chinese educationalist campaigns against the Talib Report and the Education Act of 1961. Also it has to be stressed that support for Malay as the official language was not merely an expression of cultural nationalism but also a question of bettering Malay employment opportunities.
 27. For a discussion of the language and education issues in the late 1960s see Tan (1992)
 28. For example, the leaders of the People's Action Party (PAP), later the Democratic Action Party (DAP), People's Progressive Party (PPP) and Gerakan .
 29. This group can be further divided into two subgroups. One subgroup was closely affiliated with the leftist Labor Party of Malaya (LPM) and the various cultural and educational groups. Three of their prominent leaders were Tan Kai Hee, Tan Tuan Boon and Gan Yong Beng. A second subgroup was also the conservative Chinese-educated group who came mainly from the business class and were supporters of the defunct Kuomintang. While the two group shared by and large similar sentiments on the culture, language and education issues, they were on the opposite side of the spectrum with regard to economic issues.
 30. Which later became the People's Progressive Party.
 31. Its full name is Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia or Malaysian Peoples' Movement and was founded in 1968 by a group of English educated reformers. The main sponsors were Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, Professor Wang Gungwu, Dr. J.B.A. Petersen, Dr. Lim Chong Eu, Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, and V. Veerapan. For an overview of the Party's ideas see its 1965 *Policy Statement*.
 32. The meaning of "Malaysian Malaysia later became a much disputed — and contested — concept. Originally, it was used by Lee Kuan Yew to mean the equality of rights for all fully recognized citizens irrespective of ethnic background (Lee 1965). Obviously, this concept invariably clashed with the UMNO's and the opposition Malay parties' interpretations of the constitutional position of the Malay "special rights" and indeed they successfully managed to stigmatize the "Malaysian Malaysia" concept as representing Chinese chauvinism.
 33. On the question of the Malay Rulers, the group alleged that the Malay masses had been falsely led by the UMNO to believe that their interests were identical with those of the Malay Rulers. Nevertheless, recognizing the existing popular Malay sentiments they supported the idea of transforming the Malay Rulers into Constitutional Heads with restricted powers and privileges, and as well as suggested that the question of a successor to any of the present Rulers be decided by a popular referendum.
 34. The Chinese leftists manipulation of the ethnic issues is reminiscence of Lenin's prescient warning to the Russian communists who tried to use nationalism as a revolutionary means — "Do not paint nationalism red."

35. The most important leaders of the conservative group were Dr. Burhanuddin el-Helmy, Ustaz Zulkiflee Mohammad, Ustaz Othman Abdullah and Mohammad Asri.
36. Many of its top leaders naturally came from the pre-independence Malay left. The better known ones were Muhammad Ishak, Ahmad Boestaman, and Abdul Wahab bin Majid.
37. PAS became the political vehicle of three Malay groups opposed to UMNO and to the Chinese. The first group came from the religious wing of UMNO. The second group were leaders of the defunct Hizbul Muslimin such as Khadir Khatib, Othman Hamzah and Baharuddin. Hizbul Muslimin was established in 1948 as a reformist Islamic party with three basic goals, namely, to achieve independence, build an Islamic-based society and making Malaya into an Islamic state (Darul Islam). In fact, Hizbul Muslimin itself was an offshoot of MATA (Majlis Agama Tertinggi Sa-Malaya or Pan-Malayan Supreme Islamic Council), established in 1947. The third group were the religious-minded leaders of the defunct Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) such as Abdullah Zawawi Hamzah and Taha Kalu. After independence, PAS had evolved into a clearly anti-UMNO party that presented itself as championing Malay rights, especially Malay peasants, and Islam. A combination of factors made PAS the strongest political force in Kelantan and Trengganu where it won the majority of the state and parliament seats in the 1959 general election (Kessler 1978).
38. The Melayu nationalism was best articulated by Burhanuddin in his short booklet *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (1963).
39. Two points need to be clarified. One, the concept of an Islamic state remained vague at that point in time but, nevertheless, they rejected the Pakistani version of an Islamic state. Two, throughout the 1960s Islam continued to play second fiddle to Malay nationalism — even for this group as well.
40. The origins of the PR of course came from the radical Malay nationalist group, led by Ahmad Boestaman, the veteran of many radical Malay movements. Boestaman was jailed for seven years, from June 1948 to June 1955. After his release, he more or less singlehandedly brought together the dispersed radical Malay elements to form the kernel of PR.
41. Especially after the 1965 military “counter-coup” led by General Suharto, the Indonesian Chinese cultural rights were greatly curtailed; for instance, public display of Chinese symbols was severely restricted, and all Chinese language publications were banned, except the State-controlled Chinese newspaper.
42. The DAP was the offshoot of the People’s Action Party (PAP) after Singapore was expelled from Malaysia in 1965. The DAP was initially led by the famous trade unionist C.V. Devan Nair, later to be the President of Singapore. Following the PAP, the DAP also championed the concept of Malaysian Malaysia. See the party’s *1967 Setapak Declaration*.
43. For example its *1955 Manifesto*, among other things, states: (a) equality before the law, (b) prohibition of racial discrimination, (c) equality of opportunity, (d) freedom of speech, conscience, and religion, and (e) protection of liberty.
44. In keeping with its cultural pluralism policy the PPP introduced multilingualism in the Ipoh council meetings. More generally, nearly all city councils came under the control of opposition political parties as the non-Malays were the majority in the urban areas. Partly to exert their political control over the city councils and partly to rationalize the state system, the Government gradually displaced the elected bodies with appointed ones in the 1960s and early 1970s.
45. Translated into state and parliamentary seats it had 8 out of 40 and 4 out of 20 respectively. In terms of total votes it had more than the MCA.
46. A few of the important leaders of the party were Osman Siru, Yeoh Cheng Kung, C.Y. Choy, Mohammad Sopiee, Lee Moke Sang, D.S. Ramanathan, V.Veerapan, Lee Kok

- Liang, and Tan Phock Kin. As a whole the leaders were influenced by the British Labor Party.
47. This swing was initiated by the emergence of a group of English-educated professionals who were Fabian socialists; Lee Kok Liang, Tan Phock Kin, Lim Kean Siew, D.S. Ramanathan, and V. Veerapan, all from Penang.
 48. The membership in Johore, Selangor, Penang and Perak increased significantly. For example, the branches in Johore went from 15 in 1958 to 34 in 1959 to 57 in 1960, in Selangor it went from 18 to 27 to 54, in Penang it went from 18 to 14 to 32, and in Perak it went from 9 to 3 to 21.
 49. However, it should be noted that within UMNO there was a significant segment — led by Syed Albar, Syed Nasir and Ghafar Baba — that was against the merger because they were suspicious of Lee Kuan Yew, hence PAP, motives such as challenging Malay dominance.
 50. That is, the 1963 Operation Cold Store which resulted in the detention of most of the radical opposition leaders both in Malaya and Singapore.
 51. With the inclusion of Singapore, Malay comprised 39% while the non-Malay increased to 61% of the total population. In other words, the Chinese would become the largest group.
 52. This is because Philippines claims Sabah as part of its territory. The claim is based on the historical fact that Sabah used to be part of the Sulu Sultanate's empire. Since the Sulu island became part of Philippines, the Filipino state argued that the British should return Sabah to the Philippines.
 53. In taking an anti-merger position, the LPM became vulnerable to the allegation, by the ruling elites, that it was unpatriotic. Worst yet, the merger created an unbridgeable rift between the English- and Chinese-educated left. Hence, not long after their 1964 elections debacle, the bulk of the English-educated leaders such as Tan Phock Kin, V. Veerapan and Ooi Thiam Siew resigned from the party (Vasil 1970, pp.154-155).
 54. The United Democratic Party was established on April 1962 by a breakaway faction of the MCA. It was led by Lim Chong Eu, the former president of MCA, and its strength came mainly from Penang, his hometown.
 55. The two groups in UMNO most critical of the PAP were the Malay-educated group (Syed Albar and Ghafar Baba) and the "Young Turks" (Mahathir and Musa Hitam). Syed Albar, in fact, demanded that the Tunku Government to arrest Lee Kuan Yew.
 56. A term coined by Sukarno after a Sundanese peasant named Marhaen. As an ideology it was usually promoted as some kind of Indonesian socialism which was supposed to be an alternative to capitalism and communism.
 57. The Kelantan exception has been much studied. For an excellent account see Kessler (1978).

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