

Malaysia Identity for or Against the Multiracial and Multi-Ethnic Society

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Abstract

After 57 years of Malaysia's independence, the identity of races and ethnicity are still explicitly prevailed in politics, education, and economic domains. This is reminiscent of the British divide and rule policy during it colonised Malaya and North Borneo. The division in society is prevailing in education and economic and economic context. The aim is to explore whether the division leads to dynamic or destruction in Malaysian society. Hence, this article focused on multiracial society and multi-ethnic society in economics context, education context and politics explained through historical context. Initially, this paper elaborated British colonisation divide and rule policy. There was a division in society especially in politics, education, and economic sectors. This impact on preserving the status quo of each of the main races and ethnicities was to be identified with their various economic activities. However, towards the process of independence of Malaya 1957, the three races formed Alliance party comprised of United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and Malayan Indian Association (MIC) to gain independence. Later, the Alliance party and political parties in Sabah and Sarawak united to gain independence from Malaysia in 1963. In addition, there are explorations of areas i.e. economic, education and language and premiership and Islam that influence the development of Malaysian identity. The later part of the paper explored the scenario of Malaysian society towards the year 2020. The findings so far, Malay and Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak rights still explicitly/implicitly in all government policies. There are vernacular schools along with national schools. The Chinese monopolise the economic sector. The Indians and minorities are considered unrepresentative in all sectors. However, when Malaysians are at threat of destruction as a result of corruption and integrity in the government; Malaysian society united again through Pakatan Harapan (PH) (comprised of Parti Pribumi, Amanah, DAP, PKR, WARISAN, and Sarawak main political parties) for 2018 general election (GE). The development in Malaysian society after PH won GE 2018 was to acknowledge all races and ethnicity; as well as attempt to address all issues. Unfortunately, PH short live with incompatibility among coalition parties led to Malay supremacy reinstate in March 2020. Despite the change of government, there is evidence of a trend leaning towards dynamic in Malaysian society to overcome pandemic Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Keywords: Identity; Independence; Rights; Society; Dynamic

INTRODUCTION

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Before colonialism, Malaya's peninsula was a territory with an abundance of land and natural resource but with a small population of just 1.7 million (Tharoor, 2017). The local that was the Malays, their economic activities were traditional farming and fishing (Tharoor, 2017). There was no issue of identity politics during that period because most of the population were Malays. Even there were migrations of people from Indonesia, Arab traders, and early connection the ruler of Malacca with the

ruler of China which led to the small percentage of Chinese staying in Malacca. A small percentage of the immigrants were assimilated into the Malays culture.

This routine life was disrupted when in 1786 the island of Penang (now Pulau Pinang state in Malaysia) became the first British colonist. This was secured when the British East India Company through a treaty with the Malay state of Kedah (Drake, 2017). Then there was the possession of Singapore and Malacca (now Melaka state in Malaysia). There was an industrial revolution in the West that demanded raw materials outside from the British land, namely, rubber. The British discovered abundant tin in Perak. Malay land was suitable to grow rubber trees. All these required labours. The Malays in retaliation against the British ruling their land refused to be part of this British economic prosperity in the Malay Peninsula. The British solution was to import labourers from their colonial territories. This was the beginning of the inflow of immigrants' Indians for the rubber plantations and Chinese for the tin mines.

Between 1800 and 1941 several million Chinese entered Malaya (especially the west-coast states), Sarawak, and British North Borneo to work as labourers, miners, planters, and merchants. The Chinese eventually became part of a prosperous, urban middle class that controlled retail trade. South Indian Tamils were imported as the workforce on Malayan rubber estates (Lockard, 2020). The influx of immigrants over the subsequent decades significantly eroded the Malays' population that earlier was accounted for most of Malaya's residents (Lockard, 2020). This was the transition from one race to multi-racial population.

In Borneo Island, Sarawak, and North Borneo (now Sabah), James Brooke was appointed by the Sultan of Brunei as raja (governor) of the Sarawak River basin in 1841 (Lockard, 2020). This was the sultan of Brunei's gratitude to James Brooke for helping to suppress the local revolt by several Iban groups that (theoretically) were under the sultanate's control (Lockard, 2020). As for North Borneo became a British colony through the British North Borneo Company successfully leasing land from the sultan of Brunei.

By the early 20th century there was little sense, if any, of national identity among the people living in British Malaya, it was essentially an assembly of political entities without a common vision for national development (Tharoor, 2017). This deeply embedded inter-ethnic tension was rooted in the former colonial master strategy of 'divide and rule' which create an ethnic division of labour and occupational specialisation along an ethnic line (Sheila Nair, 2009). The arrival of the British has led to a dramatic demographic change, radically transforming the mono-ethnic indigenous society into a plural society comprised of indigenous people and immigrants (Abdul Rahman Embung, 2002).

Most of Malays in villages, Chinese in towns, and Indians in plantations, the various ethnic groups lived in their neighbourhoods, followed different occupations, practiced their religions, spoke their languages, operated their schools (vernacular schools, Chinese school based their curriculum from mainland China and Indian estate schools with the India curriculum), and, later, formed their political organizations.

The impact of this division i.e. economic and education was later persisted for generations and be a principal factor in the perception of ethnic differences in independent Malaya (Sheila Nair, 2009). The plural society structure in Malaysia, inherited from British colonialism, was described by many analysts at the time of independence as an ethnically fractured society, with serious concern that Malaysia may not-and not-survive as a nation given the conflict and tension between different ethnic groups.

57 years after Malaysia's independence, the identity of races and ethnicity are still explicitly prevalent in politics, education, and economic contexts. This is reminiscent of the British divide and rule policy during it colonised Malaya and North Borneo. The Malay and Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak rights are still explicitly/implicitly in all government policies. There are vernacular schools along with national schools. The Chinese monopolise the economic sector. The Indians and minorities (namely orang Asli) are considered unrepresentative in all sectors.

Hence, this chapter explored whether the division was based on economic and education context in society leads to dynamic or lead to destruction in Malaysian society. The chapter content the events in Malaysian society lead to the unity and the disunity of all the multi-racial and multi-ethnic society. Document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and review of literature are adopted to analyse the events covered during the independence of Malaya (1957) and Malaysia (1963) National Economic Policy (NEP); Malaysia economy; Language policy; government and politics, and the theoretical linkage of plural Society, ethnic politics, and nation-building. This chapter ends with a conclusion of relating the events with the concept of identity politics until early 2020.

MALAYA, MALAYSIA INDEPENDENT AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY

Malaya and Malaysia Independent

By 1950, Malays were still overwhelmingly concentrated in rural agriculture; Indians were more evenly spread between the lower urban and rural occupations; and Chinese, while many formed a low-income stratum, also maintained heavy representation in the retail, sales, and professional categories to assume, on average, the

highest income and wealth levels of the three groups (Tajuddin, 2018). The disparities/gaps in occupation, income, and wealth became more salient/prevail/explicit after comparing the three major ethnic groups' standard of living. These inequalities continue until the time that even successive generation to signify the structural relationship between the groups in the years preceding independence (Tajuddin, 2018).

These inequalities were not merely in the economic domain, but in the overall class, standings were accompanied by segmented experiences in lifestyle, prestige, and political worldviews (Tajuddin, 2018). In Malaya, the British assumed the apex of all political, economic, and social hierarchies and the narratives used to explain these differences were primarily rooted in ideas that reflected the understanding of race during that period (Tajuddin, 2018).

Despite the continuous disparities in economic contexts, however, towards the process of independence of Malaya 1957, the three races formed Alliance party comprised of United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and Malayan Indian Association (MIC) to gain independence. Later, the Alliance party and political parties in Sabah and Sarawak united to gain independence of Malaysia in 1963.

National Economic Policy (NEP)

Capitalism was first introduced into Malaysia through colonialism specifically due to the demand from Britain for much-needed raw materials for its industrial development due to the industrial revolution in the Western world. Aside from economic exploitation, colonial rule had also produced a highly unequal and socially distant multicultural society, whose multifaceted divisions kept the colonial rulers in supreme authority (Tajuddin, 2012). After independence, Britain ensured that Malaysia became a staunch western ally by structuring in a capitalist system specifically helmed by western-educated elites through what appeared to be "formal" democratic institutions (Tajuddin, 2012). The outcome of this system, the Malaysian ruling elites groom by the British has been able to "manage" the country's democratic processes to its advantage as well as pre-empt or suppress serious internal challenges to its power, often in the name of national stability (Tajuddin, 2012).

The Federation of Malaysia experienced ethnic disturbances left the country to be at the stage of emergency in 1969. In 1971 the national government announced its

New Economic Policy (NEP), which provided the foundation of policy for the next 20 years (Drabble, 2019). One aim of the NEP was for Bumiputera (Malays and other indigenous people), who owned 2 percent of corporate share capital in 1970, compared with 23.5 percent for other Malaysians and 60.7 percent for foreign interests, to increase their ownership of total commercial and industrial activities to at least 30 percent by 1990, and the share owned by foreign capital to fall to 30 percent (Drabble, 2019). NEP's purpose is to ensure that ownership in economics for all could lead to the acceptance of a multi racial and multi ethnic society.

Economic In 80s, 90s And New Millennium

Meanwhile, Malaysia's marginal position in the world economy, which has maintained its economic subordination to the developed countries of the west and Japan, has reproduced the internal social inequities inherited from colonial rule and channeled the largest returns of economic growths into the hands of the country's foreign investors as well as local elites associated with the ruling machinery (Tajuddin, 2012). Over the years, however, the state has lost some of its political legitimacy in the face of widening social disparities, increased ethnic polarization, and prevalent corruption (Tajuddin, 2012). This has been made possible by extensive exposure to these issues via new social media and communications technology (Tajuddin, 2012). Hence, informational globalization may have begun to empower Malaysians in a new struggle for political reform, thereby reconfiguring the balance of power between the state and civil society (Tajuddin, 2012).

An example of the shift in this direction was the purchase by Permodalan Nasional (National Capital) of a controlling interest in the primary sector investment of British agency houses—Guthrie Corporation and Harrisons & Crosfield—as well as other foreign-owned firms during the 1980s (Drabble, 2019). The domicile of these assets was transferred to Malaysia. However, by 1990 the targeted overall Bumiputera share of the NEP was only 19.3 percent, whilst that of other Malaysians stood at 43.4 percent (Drabble, 2019). It seems that in economic context could lead to the Malaysian identity for multiracial; and multiethnic society.

EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE POLICY

The direction of the education and language policy was toward the sentiments of nationalism and patriotism. The government was predominantly ruled by the Malays leaders, even though the ruling party was an alliance of three major parties (UMNO, MCA, and MCA). The Malay language was the best choice because Malays are the majority in Malaysia and because of its role as a lingua franca, its position as the main inter-ethnic communication tool before and after independence, its possession of high literature, and its previous use as a language of diplomacy and administration in the Malay Archipelago (Omar, 1979 & 1987). The Malay language was the national official language as stated in the Federal Constitution. It was mandated for a wide range of activities, including media, government, and most importantly, education.

The transition from English to Malay was gradual; it was completed in 1983 for Peninsular Malaysia and in 1985 for the states of Sabah and Sarawak. Since 1970, all English primary and secondary schools and some Indian and Chinese primary schools were converted into national schools with Malay as the medium of instruction. However, there are Chinese and Indian schools that continue at the primary level until the present, as a mark of respect for Malaysia's multicultural society (Zaaba, 2012). In the 1980s, the medium of instruction for science teacher training was changed to Malay. Nevertheless, in 2003, pre-service and in-service science teachers were trained to teach Science in English due to the established policy of Science and Mathematics Teaching in English (Mahmud, Mohamad Nasri, Samsudin, & Halim, 2018). The Malaysian government decided that Science and Mathematics to be taught in English at all levels in primary and secondary education, which was known as PPSMI (Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris) (Sumintono, 2015 in Mahmud et al., 2018). However, in 2012, the policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English was terminated; the medium of instruction in Science was reverted to Malay (Mahmud et al, 2018, Gooch, 2009 & The Edge Markets, 2009).

The cabinet approved the Ministry of Education's proposal to abolish the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI), reverting to Bahasa Malaysia (was Malays language but to reflect the language of Malaysian this term is used) and vernacular languages in phases effective 2012 (Gooch, 2009 & The Edge Markets, 2009). Announcing the decision, Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi premiership) said the move would see national schools teaching Science and Mathematics in Bahasa Malaysia while Chinese and Tamil schools would employ its respective vernacular language (The Edge Markets, 2009). The government has found that academic grades in science and math have fallen since English was introduced (Gooch, 2009 & The Edge Markets, 2009). The former Prime

Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad's initial implementation of the English-language policy was to help graduates to improve their English and employability (Gooch, 2009). The long-awaited decision, announced in July 2009, came after months of lobbying by Malay nationalists and was largely viewed as a political decision by local commentators (Gooch, 2009). In 2012, after the 3 years of the announcement, the teaching of science and mathematics was back to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and vernacular languages national type school. In the education context the focus is the language choice initially is Malaysian identity however later language choice is linked to economic development for all Malaysians.

PREMIERSHIP AND NATION BUILDING POLITICS

Premiership and Islam

Tunku Abdul Rahman's premiership saw Islam as politically marginalised in Malaysia (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd. Razali, 2015). There was lacking his commitment to domestic but more active abroad. Despite the lacking, he founded and headed the Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam SeMalaysia, or Muslim Welfare Association of Malaysia (PERKIM). He prided himself for he related directly to the proclamation of Islam as Malaysia's official religion. Tun Razak's, the second prime minister domestic policy was the projection of a National Cultural Policy (Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan) in which there were three integral planks; first Islam, second the importance of indigenous culture, and third, the acceptability of non-indigenous cultural elements as part of the national culture so long as it deemed appropriate (Mandal, 2008). Tun Razak also continues Malaysia's active participation at the international level. Tun Hussein Onn, the third Prime Minister initiated a government-funded National Dakwah Month; served during Tun Hussein premiership as the iconic term for the burgeoning Islamic revival in Malaysia (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd. Razali, 2015). The prime minister sought to avoid losing the Islamist initiative to independent Islamist movements (Tasker, 1979).

During Tun Mahathir premiership, the introduction of Islamic banking, insurance, and pawnshops (1981-1983); the founding of Islamic think tanks and educational institutions such as the International Islamic University of Malaysia in 1983; instilling Islamic values into the government machinery(penerapan Nilai-nilai Islam) with the government slogan Leadership by Example(Kepimpinan Melalui Teladan) and Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy (Bersih Cekap Amanah) in 1984; the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in 1987; the upgrading of the status of sharia courts and judges to be at par with their civil counterparts in 1988 and lead to "the civil courts could no longer claim supervisory role over the syariah courts" (Abdul Aziz 2003); and in 1992 the formation of Institute of Islamic Understanding of Malaysia (Hussin Mutalib 1990).

Mahathir was strong-willed enough not to turn the clock back; that he determined that state-engineered political Islam was to stay, but he was also intent on enforcing homogeneity, harping on the theme of Malay-Muslim unity in the face of national and global challenges (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd. Razali, 2015). As a follow-up to his campaign to inculcate Islamic values into governmental operations, Mahathir strove hard to effect administrative streamlining between the federal and state Islamic bureaucracies (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd. Razali, 2015). In 1997, he elevated the nerve Centre of the federal government's Islamic policies, the Islamic Centre, to new importance as the Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM, the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia) under the Prime Minister's Department; this Centre had already undergone massive expansion in function and staff numbers since 1982 (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd. Razali, 2015).

The fifth Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, was well known for Promulgating Civilizational Islam (Islam Hadhari 2004-2008) in his administration. There was the involvement of Islamic figures in politics during his premiership. Unfortunately, his premiership was short-lived due to the National Fronts (Barisan National (BN)) lost a two-thirds majority in the 12th General Election 2008(the worst performance since 1973 formation of BN). Hence, all the 5 prime ministers' main focus was Islamic development.

New Era of Malaysian Identity

The emergence of multi-facet political identity occurring during Datuk Najib premiership, he did not continue his predecessor's legacy. His policy statements on 1 Malaysia, the Government Transformation Programme road map, and Bumiputera Economic Council lack Islamic virtue opened to Islamist discourse in Malaysia (Abdul Hamid & Che Mohd. Razali, 2015). This is well elucidated in Abdul Hamid and Che Mohd Razali (2015) article The Changing Face of Political Islam in Malaysia in the Era of Najib Razak, 2009–2013 stated:

... the Najib era has also witnessed a proliferation of liberal Muslim and secular-humanist NGOs fighting for the rights of groups whose members feel marginalized in Malaysia's increasingly Islamist polity..... Members of each of these groups claim to have been victimized by the country's sharia legal system. Most of them have joined forces to form the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs, or COMANGO.

His era has thus seen a proliferation of groups and individuals who claim to speak in the name of Islam, each from different and even contrasting perspectives. These groups and individuals bear multifarious labels: "conservative", "pro-establishment", "moderate", "liberal" and even "secular". Najib's weaknesses and lack of religious legitimacy have permitted Islamic bureaucrats to take it upon themselves to defend what they claim is Islam's unassailable right to be installed at a higher pedestal than other religions in all matters of the state. But skeptics, both Muslim and non-Muslim, have thrown doubt on this defense of Islam and Muslims. They question whether the reactionaries' articulation of Muslims' rights and interests have not gone overboard and whether they do not stand against the vision of Malaysia's founding fathers to gradually subsume Malaysians of all ethnoreligious categories into a common category of citizens.

PLURAL SOCIETY, ETHNIC POLITICS, AND NATION BUILDING: THE THEORETICAL LINKAGE

Nation-building has always been an integral agenda in most plural society as the state sought to neutralise competing ethnic ideologies of nationhood. A plural society is one in which politics is ethnicised, in which political competition is overtly drawn along ethnic lines (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). This condition was apparent in Malaysia with the unsettled nature of postcolonial contract remain plainly and painfully obvious in inter-ethnic relations even after 57 years of Malaysia independence. Ethnicised rhetoric and cultural politics that emphasises the superficial over the substantive continues to bare the poverty of the national imaginary (Sheila Nair, 2009)

There are remarkably few attempts of critical academic analysis on the role of the state, in particular, the elites which represent the ethnic groups' interest at the national level and how it impacts the dynamics of the nation-building process. To undermine the role of the state and the elite would be erroneous, as elites of different communities in a plural society have long been acknowledged to control the stabilising effect of open ethnic competition. Ethnic discourse is fluid, thus it is important to offer contemporary and recent discourse on state and elite roles, as it corresponds to the Malaysian reality. The ground rule is that the discourse should be questioned and redefined time and again, especially in the era of globalization. Regardless of the outcome of the variable of past literature, however, nearly all scholars recognize that ethnic differences remain the cornerstone of nation-building in Malaysia.

In the context of nation-building, the chief instrumental value of the ruling elite lies in its strategic position as executive of the state which affects the national outcomes

regularly and substantially. In Malaysia, the development of racial and communal differenced into a disruptive and divisive force of communalism has its roots, not in the phenomenon of social and cultural pluralism itself, but in the long period of Britain divide and rule and the extension of this policy by the Malaysian ruling elites to post-independence Malaya and Malaysia (B.N.Cham, 1977). The deeply divided society is prone to communal contradiction because of the persisting semi-feudal and semi-capitalist environment from the former colonial master era and perpetuated in the post-independence era by the upper-class elites of both the Malay and non-Malay communities seeking to build their support base in their respective community purely along communal lines (B.N.Cham, 1977). The task of elites is to give tone to national identity and provide direction and inspiration to the nation-building process. A social construct nation needs to be built, and it is the elites that have the most power to define who and what group makes up this 'imagined community' (Ivan Yan Chao Ng, 2020) A meaningful unity among the various ethnic communities cannot be achieved if the condition of political and social were not conducive towards establishing genuine unity in Malaysia. This requires political will from the governing elites as their decision has a direct bearing on the national policy.

The construction of the Malaysian nation is complicated by the problem of clear ethnic cleavage rooted in and aggravated under colonial rule (Sheila Nair, 2009). This has resulted in difficulties to separate the 'ethnic' from broader nationalist aim and objective as these are expressed by state officials, leading intellectuals, the media, and understanding of ordinary people since ethnicity is also embedded in the construction of those who rightfully 'belong' in the nation (Sheila Nair, 2009). The significance of ethnicities lies in its salience for group consciousness and collective political action. As Mustafa (2002) argues, the appeal of the collective 'nation' is so strong to the point that people are willing to die for it. It was to the people's perception that ethnicity is a personal and cultural essence with which we are born and about which we cannot do anything. This does not only concern political emancipation but also cultural elements with a tangible set of common identification like language, food, music, and names when other social collectivises become more abstract and impersonal. Therefore, psychologically, it has one advantage over the other modes of personal identity and social linkage, through its capacity to arouse and to engage the most intense, deep, and private emotional sentiment of the people (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). However, while ethnicity offers a sense of belonging for those of the same ethnicity, this also means the exclusion of that outside of it. This was coined as the process of 'othering' in which it was made clear of 'us' and 'them'.

Identity on the other hand is the force behind ethnic consciousness. The ethnic group usually transform themselves into the political ethnic group to safeguard and protect group interest from the perceived threat of domination from other ethnic groups, which might result in the dilution of their ethnic identity (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak,

2002). The resulting emotional intensity of ethnic cohesion from the process will then produce ethnic solidarity and consciousness. This is following Merger (2003) argument that 'in no society do people receive an equal share of the society's rewards, and in a plural society, ethnicities serve as an extremely critical determinant of who gets 'what there is to get' and 'in what amount'. Another prevailing and protracted issue living in a plural society and mingling with multiple identities is the conflict between protecting ethnic distinctiveness or identity vis-à-vis subscribing to a national identity, attempting to delineated identity at the expense of the minorities (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002).

When there exists relatively strong, cohesive, and common identification between the people and the state, then a nation-state is arguable created (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). In this regard, national identity, or collective culture links together the people and the state to create a nation-state. These states are a composition of both cultural and political nation, which emerge through a long process of the ethnogenesis of the nation (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). However, most nationalism is modern ideological invention, while ethnic identification has existed since ancient time (Ivan Yan Chao Ng, 2020). Despite nation-building is seen as a process of transferring loyalty from one ethnic group to the nation, people seem to resonate better with ethnic than the nation. This might be a consequence of Malaysia experience under the colonial master in which the ruling elites inherited the state, but without having 'a united union' (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). Ethnic politics have made it difficult for the government to develop a clear and consistent policy framework for national integration (Segawa, 2015). Therefore, the government has had to promote nation-building while managing discordance between national integration and ethnic politics. This is a common issue in a plural society with built-in fragility, where a homogenous community does not exist, differing ethnic and cultural origins require the formulation of a new basis for the national identity (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). In other words, their national identity is still weak in comparison to their ethnic identities (Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, 2002). This also implies that whereas the citizen can identify with the state politically because of their citizenship status, they may not identify strongly with it culturally. This is a crucial problem in the development of national culture and identity in Malaysia. Hence, if Malaysia envisages the 'nation', it will tend to be a political nation rather than a 'cultural nation'. Therefore, countries such as Malaysia can be regarded as states with 'several nations' or 'plural society nations' because of their multinational or multi-ethnic composition (Muhamed Mustafa Ishak, 2014). In the political context there are many attempts for "Malaysian identity for multi-racial and multi-ethnic society". However, the path is not smooth due to politicians always highlighting disparity among race and ethnic especially in the economic context.

CONCLUSION

The 1957 independence is indeed an important landmark for Malaysian society in dealing with pluralism and multiculturalism. The situation 63 years ago in Malaya (then Malaysia was formed in 1963) may differ in many respects from the situation today, yet certain aspect of the past resonates in the present (Abdul Rahman Embung, 2018). Malaysia is not just facing the issue of ethnic or racial issues. Identity politics became explicit from all segments in the Malaysian society due to the lack of leadership during Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Najib Abdul Razak. Tun Abdullah premiership displayed his inability to unite BN hence unable to govern the country which led to GE 12 Political Tsunami (Mohamad, 2008). Datuk Najib liberal stand during his premiership led to GE 13 Urban Tsunami (Moten, 2009). The post GE13 was the years of power struggle, questioning of integrity and corruption in Najib administration.

What seemed to be disunity among the society due to many segments in the society seeking an opportunity to claim their identity politics now becomes a threat of destruction because of corruption and integrity in the government. Malaysian society united again through Pakatan Harapan(PH)(comprised of Parti Pribumi, Amanah, DAP, PKR, WARISAN Sabah, and SUPP Sarawak's main political party) for 2018 GE 14. This GE 14 was described as Malaysia Tsunami (Moten, 2019).

The development in the Malaysian society after (PH) won GE 2018 was to acknowledge all races and ethnicity; as well as attempt to address all issues. Later, PH enthusiasm to address all issues in the society overshadowed the burdening BN mismanagement of government planning and financial, weak cabinet, and Mahathir authoritarian administration. Society became impatient with PH. This allowed BN to gain trust from the society and even attract Members of Parliament (MPs) of the PH to secretly collaborate (later it became overt when several prominent MPs from PH to cross over. Besides, PH short life due to incompatibility among coalition parties led to Malay supremacy reinstate in March 2020.

Since March, the *Perikatan Nasional (PN)*, under Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, diligently trying to ensure the health and economic condition will be back on track by 2021 with the supply of vaccine by end of February for all Malaysians. Movement Control Order (MCO) commencing March 18th, 2020 unite Malaysian to ensure the survival of Malaysia. Unfortunately, though most of the Malaysians disregard their identity politics support the PN government initiatives to overcome the pandemic Covid-19, it is not so for opposition (PH who felt betrayed by their political ally).

In Sabah, Musa Aman attempted to reinstate as Chief Minister in the State Assembly after gaining majority), however Tuan Yang Terutama of Sabah did a drastic

decision by dissolving the State Assembly to make way for state election on 26th September. Unfortunately for WARISAN PLUS, Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) won in the election (another proves of political will unite Malaysian). Unfortunately the aftermath election contributed to the second and third wave of pandemic Covid-19 in Sabah and spread to Peninsular in particularly, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. There was an attempted to anger the Malaysian towards the State election. However, this was able to subside through unity to combat this pandemic. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong (The King) declared a state of emergency for Batu Sapi (Malay Mail, 2020), Gerik, and Sibuga (Lite, 2020) by-elections to be postponed for fear of another wave of the pandemic. In the parliament seating since November 2020, there was continuous political upheaval especially of the tabling of Budget 2021. This ended with 111 MPs backed the budget and 108 MPs voted against the budget (Anand, 2020). This again displayed at the time of saving the nation able to unite most Malaysians with various political identities.

The trend leaning towards dynamic in Malaysian society to overcome pandemic Covid-19 continues. On the 11th January 2021, Prime Minister national address the reimplementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) for the states of Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Johor, Melaka, Sabah, Pulau Pinang, and Kelantan on the 16th January 2021 (Berita Perdana 15 Jan 2021, 2021); Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) for the states of Perak, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis and Sarawak placed under Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) (Yiswaree Palansamy, 2021). On the 12th of January 2021, Yang di-Pertuan Agong agreed to proclaim a State of Emergency nationwide until 1st August (Dawn Chan, 2021). Hence, it seems national issues either in the economic context or political context always lead to Malaysian identity for multi-racial and multi-ethnic society.

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