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Introduction

Resistance to Change: Malay Politics in Malaysia

Edmund Terence Gomez

From Reformasi to BA

In September 1998, a major political upheaval known as the *reformasi*, or reformation, occurred in Malaysia. This upheaval arose out of the controversial dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim as deputy to then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Anwar was also removed from his post as deputy president in the United Malays' National Organisation (UMNO), the hegemonic party in the multi-party ruling coalition, the *Barisan Nasional* (BN, or National Front). Not too long afterwards, Anwar was arrested and charged with sexual impropriety and corruption, allegations that many believe were levelled at him solely to remove him from public office. The reformasi initially involved random mass street demonstrations, but these protests were soon institutionalised with the formation of a multi-party opposition coalition, the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA, or Alternative Front). This coalition comprised the leading opposition parties, *Parti SeIslam Malaysia* (PAS, or Malaysian Islamic Party), the newly-formed *Parti Keadilan Nasional* (National Justice Party), led by Anwar's wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, as well as the socialist-oriented, multi-ethnic Democratic Action Party (DAP).¹

The reformasi movement has travelled down a long road since it erupted suddenly on the Malaysian political scene. This movement shocked politicians, in both government and opposition, and shook the foundations of Malaysia's long entrenched authoritarian system. As the crowds gathered and grew, and as unprecedented mass demonstrations persisted in spite of the use of force by the government to disperse them, even Anwar, the man whose abrupt fall from power precipitated the movement, was probably baffled, if not astonished, at the movement he had started.

The movement, correctly, went 'beyond Anwar', to use a now well-worn cliché, to focus on the need to promote justice and democracy in Malaysia. But while a similar reformasi in neighbouring Indonesia had managed to remove the long-standing authoritarian President Suharto from power, this movement in Malaysia failed to overthrow the resident ruler, Mahathir.² The reformasi did, however, manage to become a major site of resistance to Mahathir and his form of governance, badly tarnishing his reputation, locally and abroad. During the subsequent 1999 general

¹ Another member of this coalition was the *Parti Rakyat Malaysia* (PRM, or Malaysian People's Party), which eventually merged with Keadilan to form the *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (People's Justice Party).

² For an in-depth analysis of the reformasi and its failure to bring about a change of regime or major structural reforms, see Gomez (2004).

elections, the BA severely undermined UMNO's influence among the electorate, specifically rural-based economically impoverished Malays.³

The BA's capacity to draw support was attributed to the more inclusive form of politics it had propagated.⁴ Among those who stood behind the BA were people from groups that hitherto had felt marginalized, including the young and women, as well as the Malay rural electorate and new middle class that was increasingly frustrated with wealth concentration and cronyism in government. Resistance to Mahathir also came from within the ranks of UMNO, though for vested interests. As Anwar's supporters were now consigned to the margin, their prospects for moving up the party hierarchy were severely curtailed. Other members of this UMNO faction were also upset that Anwar's departure hindered their hopes of developing their own economic interests. However, although UMNO was deeply divided following Anwar's ouster, there was no mass exodus from the party to the newly-formed Keadilan. Many UMNO members were well aware that other ousted party leaders who had formed new opposition parties had not fared well. Some of them, including the very influential former finance minister, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, spent an unfruitful time – of nearly a decade – in the opposition, in alliance with PAS, only to return to UMNO with his supporters in 1996.

In the case of PAS, the party was probably well aware that the reformasi slogans called for democracy and accountability, but not for the establishment of an Islamic state. As the party had been subject to a severe thrashing in the 1995 general elections,⁵ and its former ally, Razaleigh, had abandoned the opposition for UMNO, its president, the late Fadzil Noor, was astute enough to recognise that his party had a lot to gain from emerging as a part of a new opposition coalition. PAS had normally fared well in general elections that it contested in coalition with other opposition parties.⁶ In view of PAS' influence in the Malay heartland and its well-oiled machinery, Fadzil was also aware that his party would be the dominant force in the new coalition even though the president of Keadilan, Wan Azizah, was installed as leader of the BA. The BA did not fare as well as it had hoped in the 1999 election, and the DAP withdrew from this coalition in 2001. But, the BA remained a formidable threat to UMNO as PAS now appeared to be on the ascendancy in the Malay heartland, capturing control of two state governments and nearly unseating UMNO in another.

On 1 November 2003, Mahathir retired from public office, handing the premiership to his chosen successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. One credible reason for Mahathir's decision to retire was his fear that if he remained in office, UMNO's stranglehold on power would have been seriously jeopardised given his declining support among rural Malays, long the party's traditional bastion of support. During the 2004 general elections, Abdullah led the BN to an extraordinary electoral victory where the ruling coalition secured more than 90 per cent of the seats in parliament, severely undermining the opposition and closing a long chapter in Malaysian political discourse on reformasi.

What was indisputable about the reformasi was that this movement was the most overt and unambiguous statement by a huge segment of Malaysian society that it

³ See Funston (2000), Weiss (2000) and Welsh (2004) for analysis of this general election.

⁴ See, for example, Funston (2000) and Weiss (2006).

⁵ For an analysis of the 1995 general elections, see Gomez (1996).

⁶ See Chapter 4 for an analysis of PAS' performance in general election when in coalition with other parties.

wanted major and meaningful changes in the country's political system. The unanticipated rise of the reformasi would suggest that society was most concerned about the authoritarian and unaccountable nature of the political system under a hegemonic UMNO. However, the considerable shift in support from the BA to the BN in the 2004 elections would suggest that even opposition parties, specifically PAS, the dominant member of the BA, were equally resistant to calls for a more open and inclusive political system. Both Malay-based parties continue to practice the kind of racial and religious-based politics that they had introduced and have now grown accustomed to, resisting calls for reforms. While UMNO has clearly consolidated its position in power without instituting any major structural reforms after its 1999 electoral debacle, PAS was evicted from power in one state, Terengganu, and nearly lost control of another state government, in Kelantan, in 2004.

The objective of this study is to draw attention to this resistance by the leading Malay-based political parties to change, in spite of a clear call from society in Malaysia to be more receptive to key issues, like gender reform and the promotion of a national identity, and to institute a form of governance that is more open and inclusive. Political parties in government appear to be caught in a time warp as far as these matters are concerned. The primary argument here is that the pattern of political mobilisation and the rhetoric of major opposition parties, i.e. PAS and DAP on the one hand, and the leading BN component parties – UMNO, and its main ethnically-based partners, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) – on the other hand, have not changed in any appreciable form since the time they were established. All these parties continue to mobilise support along racial and religious lines, forms of mobilisation that are increasingly alien to large segments of society, given the class and generational transitions that Malaysians have undergone.

The focus of this volume, however, is on Malay politics. One important new issue in recent studies on Malaysian politics is the intra-ethnic divide that has emerged among Malays. This intra-ethnic divide has manifested itself primarily in voting patterns in rural, predominantly Malay-majority constituencies. There now appears to be a constant swing in votes between UMNO and PAS among the rural Malay electorate, suggesting that neither party is seen by them as a viable option to represent their interests. One reason for this is that there have been no fundamental changes in outlook in both UMNO and PAS on core matters such as gender, religion, democracy and human rights since these parties were established. Non-Malays, especially those from the younger electorate, have concerns about issues like 'identity politics', specifically the rise of a Malaysian identity, though this appears to be a predominantly urban middle class phenomenon. The rise of new identities, an issue that remains to be seriously researched, has been recognised by government leaders like Mahathir and Abdullah who have talked about the need to create a more inclusive environment, or a *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation). These two men are probably aware that the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is no longer mere rhetoric, though it was probably conceived as such by Mahathir,⁷ but reflects a transition in society that they need to deal with vigilantly to retain support. For all their support for a *Bangsa Malaysia*, however, the past and present UMNO presidents have had to contend with repeated arguments from UMNO members about the importance of *ketuanan Melayu*

⁷ For an in-depth discussion on the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* as seen by Mahathir, see Ooi (2006).

(Malay supremacy) and the continued need for policies that respect the indigeneity of the Bumiputeras.

Another aspect of this study is to draw out the complexity of the structure of the 'state' under UMNO and PAS, which has now long held on to power in Kelantan. The studies in this volume will show that there are major differences of opinion between UMNO leaders, particularly those holding power at national level, and party members, including leaders at the state level, a serious problem given Malaysia's system of federalism. For example, recent statements by Mahathir and Abdullah indicate that they are aware that affirmative action is no longer of much benefit to the Malays. Before Mahathir stepped down as prime minister, he acknowledged that continued implementation of affirmative action, which was supposed to have ceased in 1990, had contributed to a 'crutch mentality', specifically among business people.⁸ Mahathir even acknowledged that his concerted attempt to develop a new breed of privately-owned Malay conglomerates through selective patronage and much protection had failed miserably, and that the only way to promote entrepreneurship was to expose businessmen to competition.⁹ While Abdullah has concurred with Mahathir on this point, he has qualified his stand by arguing that affirmative action remains relevant because the income disparity between Malays and non-Malays has persisted. Abdullah went on to argue that the reason Malaysians were unhappy with this policy was not because they opposed affirmative action, but that they were dissatisfied with its pattern of implementation.¹⁰

These comments by Mahathir and Abdullah about affirmative action are significant because UMNO members have overtly opposed the idea that this policy should be discarded. UMNO members, having long benefited from the abuse of affirmative action for vested interests, were not interested in any reforms that would jeopardise their access to government concessions deployed along ethnic lines to rectify social ills.¹¹ This was particularly obvious when UMNO members made repeated calls for the retention of racial quotas for entry into universities and for preferential treatment during the award of government contracts.

To draw attention to this resistance by political parties to change, in spite of demands from society for major reforms, the contributors to this volume have adopted different research methods. This study includes an assessment of the history of events and discourses within UMNO and PAS related to the themes of human rights, law and democracy, gender and Islam. Through these methodologies, involving an analysis of these themes from a historical perspective, attention will be drawn to the point that important transitions have occurred in society, but political parties have not adapted themselves to these changes. The nature and discourse of 'gender politics', for example, has not changed after more than five decades, in spite of the rhetoric of UMNO to include more women in positions of authority within the party. The abuse of the law to deal with dissidents, inside and outside of UMNO, has not changed, even though Mahathir has repeatedly insisted that he values and adheres to

⁸ See Mahathir's speech entitled 'The New Malay Dilemma', delivered at the Harvard Club of Malaysia dinner on 27 July 2002.

⁹ The Chinese, Mahathir added, had managed to increase their ownership of corporate equity primarily because they had been forced to compete even harder during the implementation of affirmative action. See his speech 'The New Malay Dilemma'.

¹⁰ See *The Star* (23 November 2005).

¹¹ For detailed studies on how UMNO and its members have benefited from abuse of the NEP, see Gomez (1990), Searle (1999), Sloane (1999) and Gomez and Jomo (1999).

democracy, albeit an Asian form of democracy.¹² These chapters will indicate that while societal attitude to key issues like rule of law, accountability and respect for human rights and gender equality have evolved, UMNO and PAS remain reticent about instituting meaningful reforms involving these matters.

Malay politics, coalition politics: contrasting UMNO and PAS

Much of the character and constitution of Malaysian political parties is influenced by the multi-ethnic nature of its population. Of Malaysia's almost 25 million people in 2004, the *Bumiputera*¹³ community accounted for 66.1 per cent of the population, while the Chinese constituted about 25.3 per cent and the Indians 7.4 per cent; the remaining 1.2 per cent was made up of other minor ethnic groups. One outcome of the multi-ethnic constitution of Malaysian society has been the establishment of political parties that are primarily ethnically-based.

In May 1946, an assortment of Malay clubs, associations and political organisations merged to form UMNO to oppose the Malayan Union. The Malayan Union was a proposal by the British colonial government to place under one government all the nine Malay states and the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. Singapore, the other remaining Straits Settlement, was to be left out of the Union. The Malays renounced the Union as a British ploy to abolish the Malay Sultanate.¹⁴

Spearheaded by Malay aristocrats, UMNO managed to marshal widespread opposition to the Union. UMNO's key role in preventing the implementation of the Malayan Union made the party the leading political force in Malaya, particularly in rural areas. Even now, in the mid-2000s, despite a membership totalling more than two million, making the mass-based UMNO the largest local political party, its bastion of support still remains the rural Malays.

In the immediate post-colonial period, Malaysia managed to avoid political instability with the institutionalisation of a Malay-dominated, yet ethnically inclusive, ruling coalition, the Alliance, comprising three race-based parties – UMNO, the MCA and the MIC. When the Alliance was formed two years before Independence in 1957, the leaders were primarily concerned with capturing power – the aristocratic Malays were keen to secure political power, while the Chinese bourgeoisie leading the MCA wanted to preserve and enhance their economic base. The Alliance members did not share a common political ideology, while Brown has described the objectives of

¹² See Chapter 2 for a discussion on Mahathir's definition of an 'Asian democracy' which is based on his understanding of 'Asian values'. In brief, Mahathir has argued that the values of people of this region are based on culture, involving, among other things, respect for the leader and the desire to resolve problems through dialogue and consensus, not through conflict. Following mass demonstrations against his government in 1998, the concept of 'Asian values' was discredited.

¹³ 'Bumiputera', literally translated, means 'sons of the soil' and is a term normally used in reference to the Malays, though it incorporates other indigenous communities.

¹⁴ The Malays also protested the Union's desire to provide citizenship with equal political rights to all Malaysians, irrespective of race, as long as they professed loyalty to and regarded Malaya as their home. See Roff (1967) and Khong (1984) for an account of the Malay protest against the Union.

UMNO, MCA and MIC as being based on 'ethnic ideologies'.¹⁵ In view of the bourgeois orientation of these party leaders, ethno-populism has camouflaged class dominance. This has also enabled these parties to represent their leaders as ethnic patrons.¹⁶

After the race riots of 1969, the Alliance was enlarged and renamed the *Barisan Nasional* in 1974, but remained under the hegemony of UMNO.¹⁷ UMNO secured hegemony over the enlarged coalition by diminishing the MCA's influence with the incorporation of parties that had Chinese support. Since Malaysian history has shown that a single multi-racial party would be unable to secure broad-based support, the system of consociationalism offered by multi-party, multi-ethnic coalitions – like that on which the BN is structured – emerged as an effective means to consolidate the electoral support of the main ethnic communities.

This formula has, in the case of the BN, enabled it to draw support on the basis of both ethnicity and class. For example, by the early 1990s, the main bastion of support for UMNO was still the peninsula's rural Malays and Sabah's rural Muslim-Bumiputeras – UMNO does not yet have a base in Sarawak. The MCA helped the BN to marshal urban, upper middle – and business – class Chinese support, while the MIC has consistently been successful in mobilising Indian working class support. The multi-racial *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Malaysian People's Movement) has been able to elicit the vote of large segments of the non-Malay middle class, which found itself uncomfortable with the pronounced ethnic politics of the MCA and the MIC, or the pronounced Chinese orientation of the opposition based DAP. Yet, in view of the decision by these parties to join the BN and their support, both professed and implicit, for the policies of a government that endorses Malay hegemony, the Gerakan, MCA and MIC are not commonly perceived as representing the views or interests of the ethnic or class communities they claim to protect. Most of the electoral victories of the MCA, MIC and the Gerakan are usually credited to UMNO's capacity to mobilise support, even during the 1995 general election when all three parties performed well in urban constituencies traditionally the stronghold of the opposition.¹⁸

Under UMNO hegemony, policies like the New Economic Policy (NEP), which introduced affirmative action, were implemented ostensibly to achieve the goal of equitable wealth distribution among ethnic communities.¹⁹ The NEP, implemented from 1971, was a twenty-year plan to achieve national unity by 'eradicating poverty', regardless of race, and by 'restructuring society' so as to achieve inter-ethnic economic parity between the Bumiputera and the predominantly Chinese non-Bumiputeras.²⁰

While implementation of affirmative action has appreciably improved the economic position of the Bumiputeras, the policy should also have ideally moved

¹⁵ Brown (1994).

¹⁶ See Ratnam (1965); Hua (1983).

¹⁷ Mauzy (1983 and 1993).

¹⁸ Gomez (1996).

¹⁹ For a discussion on the NEP, see, for example, Ho (1988) and Faaland, Parkinson and Rais (1990).

²⁰ The NEP's second objective, the restructuring of society, was unquestionably the main emphasis of this policy. In 1969, the Bumiputera share of corporate wealth (by individuals and government trust agencies) amounted to a meager 2.4 per cent. Chinese equity ownership stood at 27.2 per cent, while more than 60 per cent of the remaining equity was under foreign ownership. For an in-depth study of the implementation of the NEP and its impact on the Malaysian corporate sector, see Gomez and Jomo (1999: 24-74).

towards ending the 'racist' or ethnicised dimension of resource allocation by the government. This has not been the case for two reasons. First, affirmative action has proven to be an indispensable avenue through which UMNO has managed to secure Malay support. Second, UMNO politicians have exploited resource allocation through the NEP to develop and consolidate their position in the party. UMNO members, inevitably, continue to argue for the need for affirmative action-like policies, on the grounds that economic differences still exist between communities, in spite of the emergence of an influential new Malay middle class.²¹

PAS, a breakaway UMNO faction, was formed in 1951 and is the main opposition party with the capacity to undermine the BN's influence among rural Malays.²² As an Islamic-based party, PAS' membership is open to all Muslims. PAS was originally led by leaders of the left-leaning Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) and comprised primarily rural teachers. Its original objective was to secure mass rural-based Malay support through the propagation of a Malay nationalist agenda.²³ In 1982, following a radical change of leadership, PAS began adopting a predominantly Islamic posture.

Currently, PAS' key leaders are Islamic-educated *ulama* (religious teachers) and the party's primary area of influence is limited to the Malay heartland states of Kelantan, Terengganu and (rural) Kedah. PAS first secured a majority in the Kelantan state legislature in the 1959 general elections and governed the state until 1978. PAS also clinched control of the Terengganu state government in 1959, but had to secede control of the state in 1961 following defections from the party to UMNO. During the 1990 general elections, PAS swept back to power in Kelantan with the aid of the then newly-established Malay party, *Parti Semangat '46* (Spirit of '46 Party) led by Razaleigh, the ex-UMNO prince from Kelantan. Razaleigh, a long-standing UMNO vice-president (and treasurer), had formed the opposition party in 1988 after being forced out of the ruling party by Mahathir. PAS' 1990 electoral performance in Terengganu also improved appreciably following its collaboration with Semangat through a coalition called *Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah* (APU, or Muslim Unity Movement).

Although PAS retained control of Kelantan in the 1995 general elections, and obtained a marginal increase in its support in Terengganu and Kedah, its continued emphasis on implementing an Islamic state had meant that the party's influence in the west coast of the peninsula and in Sabah and Sarawak was scant, even among Muslim Bumiputeras. Its aim of achieving power at the federal level was further undermined when Semangat, which had fared miserably in this federal election, ceased operations and its members returned to UMNO.

Among opposition parties, PAS has the most strongly defined objective. As a party motivated by Islam, PAS is principally devoted to the formation of an Islamic state in Malaysia. Accordingly, it espouses policies and ideas that are rooted in Islam. Adopting this preponderant Islamic posture, PAS has been offering Malaysians, Muslim *Bumiputeras* in particular, a vision of a society reformed through legislation based on religious tenets. The establishment of an Islamic state, according to the party, will bring about spiritual regeneration and lead to the development of a more just, democratic, moral, principled and socially conscious society, devoid of

²¹ See Abdul Rahman (2001) for an insightful analysis of the rise of the new Malay middle class.

²² See Farish (2004) for an in-depth historical account of the PAS.

²³ See Roff (1967); Khong (1984); Funston (1980).

repressive legislation and unhealthy economic activities such as gambling. For PAS, its ideas and motivations stem from Islam, as the party perceives it. Democratic ideals, the party believes, are acceptable only within a secular context because they would automatically feature in an Islamic theocratic state, since this system is inherently just. Yet, it has been observed that PAS will, in all likelihood, reject the concepts of majority rule and individual choice because the former can permit the implementation of morally wrong tenets while the latter embodies the assumption that individuals are all-knowing.²⁴

Most urban-based Malaysians, including many Muslims, find PAS' policies, particularly its social policies, profoundly rigid and inflexible. For example, in view of PAS' strict interpretation of Islam, the party has denounced as evil not just the numerous forms of Western culture adopted by Malaysians, such as music, dance and fashion, but has also seen it fit to ban in Kelantan any performance of the *joget*, a traditional Malay dance. Nevertheless, the party believes it has been able to muster the support of rural Malays through active propagation of its conviction that religion and politics are inseparable in Islam and that religion should be thought of as a world view, a value system, a code of ethics, even as ideology. The reason for PAS' strong influence is partly due to its leaders rigorous Islamic training, some graduates of the esteemed Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The party's current leadership comprises many *ulama*, including Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the leader of the Kelantan state government and one of the state's most respected religious teachers.

In the Malay heartland, especially in Kelantan and Terengganu, PAS has consistently enjoyed staunch support, estimated at 35 to 40 per cent of the electorate.²⁵ PAS' collaboration with Semangat, and later Keadilan, enabled it to mobilise sufficient support to secure control of the Kelantan state legislature in 1990 and retain control of it in the general elections in 1995, 1999 and 2004. A review of electoral trends in the Malay heartland between 1990 and 2004 would help indicate this consistent support that PAS has been able to maintain, while also indicating the swing in support by people in this region between the Islamic party and UMNO.

Electoral Trends in Malay Heartland²⁶

During the 2004 elections, the BN secured a massive victory, winning 199 out of the 219 parliamentary seats and 453 out of the 504 state assembly seats under contest. In the previous election in 1999, the BN had lost more than double the number of these constituencies, that is 42 parliamentary seats and 113 seats in the state legislatures. The BN had recorded its best ever performance in terms of victory in contests in parliamentary constituencies in 2004 by capturing about 91 per cent of these seats, up from 75 per cent in 1999. In terms of popular support, however, the BN secured 64.4 per cent of the vote, still moderately less than the 65 per cent of the vote it secured during the 1995 general elections.

In 2004, the opposition collectively obtained a respectable 35.36 per cent of the popular vote – PAS secured 15.14 per cent, Keadilan 8.27 per cent, the DAP 9.78

²⁴ See Jesudasan (1996).

²⁵ Funston (1980); Gomez (1996).

²⁶ The following analysis of electoral trends in the Malay heartland between 1990 and 2004 is based largely on my study of the 2004 general elections. See Gomez (2006).

per cent and independent candidates 2.17 per cent. The BN recaptured control of the state government of Terengganu, very narrowly lost the opportunity to regain power in Kelantan and improved its electoral performance in Kedah, Pahang and Perlis, states into which PAS had made significant inroads in the previous general election.

Table I.1 indicates the share of votes secured by the BN during the 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2004 general elections in Bumiputera-majority areas in the Malay heartland states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah. In the 31 parliamentary seats listed in Table I.1, Malays constitute 80 per cent or more of the electorate. During the 1995 general elections, when the BN secured its best ever electoral victory, Table I.1 indicates that between 1990 and 1995, Malay support in Kedah and Terengganu for UMNO had begun to slump. This loss of Malay support in Kedah and Terengganu had occurred even though, between 1990 and 1995, the Malaysian economy had experienced a massive boom and during this period the opposition coalition, APU, comprising PAS and Semangat, had begun to encounter serious problems. In 1999, compared to the 1995 elections, the BN gained more electoral support in only two of these 31 seats, indicating a further and serious erosion of Malay support. Both these seats where the BN registered an improved performance were in Kelantan, one of which was retained by Razaleigh, who had returned to the UMNO fold. Razaleigh's seat was the only parliamentary constituency in Kelantan won by the BN.

In 1999, of all the 58 parliamentary constituencies where UMNO faced a direct fight with a candidate from PAS, the BN won only four more seats than the opposition. UMNO barely secured 51 per cent of the popular vote in these 58 parliamentary seats. A majority of the contests between members from PAS and UMNO were in parliamentary constituencies in the Malay heartland.

In spite of this decline in support in the Malay heartland after the 1995 elections, Mahathir did little to address the economic and social concerns of rural Bumiputeras. For this reason, it is probable that the BN would have faced further erosion of Malay support in many of these Bumiputera-majority constituencies in 1999 even if Anwar had not been sacked as deputy prime minister. Undoubtedly, however, the manner in which Anwar, who had presented himself as having a more populist orientation, was dismissed, contributed to the scale of Malay swing against UMNO, specifically in Terengganu and Kedah. It is also probable that discontent among the UMNO grassroots over Anwar's dismissal and the choice of party candidates for this general election contributed to the party's poor performance in Kedah and Terengganu. Prior to the 1999 election, PAS had no parliamentary seats in Kedah and only one in Terengganu (down from two in 1990).

Of the 104 parliamentary seats that UMNO contested in the 1999 election, the party secured victory in only about 69 per cent of these constituencies, that is 72 seats. In the 1995 election, UMNO had won 89, or 87 per cent, of the 102 parliamentary seats it contested. This was the first time in UMNO's history that the party commanded less than half the total number of seats in parliament, seriously undermining Mahathir's hegemony over the BN and the government.

Table I.1
Difference in support for the BN in Bumiputera-majority parliamentary constituencies
in the 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2004 general elections (in percentages)

State	1990	1995	Difference	1999	Difference	2004	Difference
Kedah							
Baling	61.4	55.7	-5.7	48.0	-7.7	53.5	5.5
Sik	59.4	53.6	-5.8	49.0	-4.6	50.5	1.5
Jerlun	59.5	53.9	-5.6	49.0	-4.9	52.9	3.9
Padang Terap	58.4	54.4	-4.0	48.0	-6.4	53.9	5.9
Pendang	52.9	51.0	-1.9	46.0	-5.0	49.9	3.9
Yan	57.2	55.7	-1.5	50.0	-5.7		
Kubang Pasu	75.4	74.2	-1.2	65.0	-9.2	67.3	2.3
Kuala Kedah	52.8	52.3	-0.5	49.0	-3.3	58.1	9.1
Pokok Sena	53.8	54.0	0.2	46.0	-8.0	56.9	10.9
Terengganu							
Kemaman	62.9	57.6	-5.0	48.0	-9.6	63.9	15.9
Kuala Nerus	53.6	51.5	-2.1	40.0	-11.5	54.5	14.5
Dungun	54.0	50.5	-3.5	39.0	-11.5	55.1	16.1
Marang	48.2	47.6	-0.6	37.0	-10.6	50.1	13.1
Hulu Terengganu	53.1	52.5	-0.6	43.0	-10.1	59.7	16.7
Setiu	55.7	55.5	-0.2	46.0	-9.5	58.5	12.5
Besut	50.4	54.6	4.2	45.0	-9.6	59.7	14.7
Kuala Terengganu	45.3	53.5	8.2	35.0	-18.5	51.6	16.6
Kelantan							
Tumpat	33.1	46.1	13.0	35.0	-11.1	48.3	13.3
Pengkalan Chepa	26.1	29.6	3.5	25.0	-4.6	41.1	16.1
Rantau Panjang	38.1	40.4	2.3	36.0	-4.4	48.8	12.8
Bachok	32.8	42.0	9.2	38.0	-4.0	53.5	15.5
Kuala Krai	30.8	42.5	11.7	43.0	0.5	53.4	10.4
Kota Baru	29.3	41.6	12.3	38.0	-3.6	51.9	13.9
Pasir Mas	33.9	44.3	10.4	39.0	-5.3	40.7	1.7
Tanah Merah	33.7	46.9	13.2	43.0	-3.9	54.3	11.3
Pasir Puteh	35.0	44.1	9.1	40.0	-4.1	46.2	6.2
Machang	32.6	43.4	10.8	40.0	-3.4	50.2	10.2
Peringat	35.3	50.5	15.2	43.0	-7.5	--	--
Gua Musang	22.7	21.9	-0.8	56.0	34.1	66.1	10.1
Jeli*	--	51.1	--	49.0	-2.1	63.8	14.8
Kubang Kerian*	--	33.5	--	27.0	-6.5	42.4	15.4

* New seats in the 1995 general elections

In Kedah, the fall in electoral support for the BN between 1995 and 1999 was by more than 4 percentage points in all but one of the nine Bumiputera-majority parliamentary seats. Although the BN retained control of Kedah in the state-level elections, PAS won eight of Kedah's parliamentary seats compared to UMNO's

victory in only five of the 13 constituencies it contested.²⁷ In the state level election, however, the BN component parties managed to retain 24 seats, while PAS won in all the other 12 state constituencies. UMNO won 16 of the 28 state seats it contested in Kedah. The largest decline in support for the BN was in Mahathir's Kubang Pasu constituency, where a fall of nearly 11 percentage points between 1990 and 1999 had been registered. Although UMNO lost to PAS in seven of these nine Bumiputera-majority seats, the margin of support the BN secured was between 46 and 49 percentage points, suggesting that a small swing was sufficient for the ruling coalition to wrest control of these seats in subsequent elections.

During the 2004 general elections, following Mahathir's departure as prime minister, the BN recorded an increase in support in all nine constituencies, and secured control of all but one of the Malay-majority parliamentary seats in Kedah. The swing in support to UMNO increased appreciably, ranging from 10.9 percentage points (in Pokok Sena) to 1.5 percentage points (in Sik). However, in all but one seat, UMNO secured less than 58 per cent of the popular vote, and in five of these constituencies, the BN support was less than 54 per cent. This suggested that a small swing in favour of the opposition in the next election would be sufficient for it to again undermine UMNO's territorial gains in the 2004 election. In all these Malay-majority parliamentary seats in Kedah, the BN's main opposition was PAS, indicating that the Islamic party remains an influential force in Kedah.

In Terengganu, diminished Malay electoral support for the BN between 1990 and 1999 was even more striking, with an almost double-digit percentage point fall in support in all constituencies, contributing to the BN's loss of control of the state to PAS in the 1999 general elections. In 1999, UMNO did not win any of the eight parliamentary seats it contested in Terengganu. Of the 31 state seats in Terengganu that UMNO contested, the party won in only four constituencies.

In the Dungun parliamentary constituency, the fall in support for the BN between 1990 and 1999 was a massive 15 percentage points, while in Kemaman it was 14.6 percentage points, Kuala Nerus 13.6 percentage points, Marang 11.2 percentage points, Hulu Terengganu 10.7 percentage points, and Setiu 9.7 percentage points. During the 1999 elections, in the constituency of Kuala Terengganu, the fall in support for BN that year was a colossal 18.5 percentage points! In six of these eight constituencies, the BN's level of support was less than 45 per cent of the popular vote, suggesting then that UMNO faced an uphill struggle to regain control of the state government in Terengganu in the next election.

For this reason, the BN's capture of the Terengganu state government during the 2004 elections was an extraordinary achievement. The swing in support from the opposition to the BN in all parliamentary seats was in double-digit figures, ranging from 16.7 percentage points (in Hulu Terengganu) to 12.5 percentage points (in Setiu). However, in four of these eight seats, the BN's margin of victory was less than 5 percentage points, again suggesting that while the BN had recovered much ground, UMNO could still lose support in future if the government it now leads does not deliver on its pledges.

The BN's performance was almost as impressive in PAS' stronghold of Kelantan as it was in Terengganu in 2004. A comparison, however, of the voting trends in Kelantan during the elections in 1999 and 1990 (when UMNO failed to win a single parliamentary and state seat) indicates that, in a majority of the state's parliamentary seats, the proportion of Malay support for the BN was higher in 1999.

²⁷ The BN's MCA won the two other parliamentary seats in Kedah.

The BN secured two seats in the state-level election in 1999. During the 2004 elections, the BN further improved its performance, registering an increase in support in all parliamentary constituencies in Kelantan. In 11 of the 13 parliamentary seats under review, the increase in support was in double-digit figures. The percentage point increase ranged from 16.1 (in Pengkalan Chepa) to 10.1 (in Gua Musang), to 6.2 (Pasir Puteh). In only one constituency, Pasir Mas, was the margin of increase of support below 5 percentage points, that is a mere 1.7.

Table I.1 also indicates that during the period 1990 and 1995, UMNO had managed to regain lost ground (following the emergence of Semangat which had helped PAS secure control of Kelantan in 1990). In 1999, however, in spite of the return of Razaleigh to UMNO, but following the Anwar debacle that undermined Mahathir's legitimacy, the BN again registered a loss of support in all but two constituencies, Bachok (0.5 percentage point increase) and Gua Musang (a massive 34.1 percentage point increase); Gua Musang is Razaleigh's constituency. In 1999, the BN's level of popular support in 12 of the 14 parliamentary constituencies was between a mere 25 per cent and 43 per cent. Under these circumstances, the BN's victory in seven of the 13 constituencies in 2004 suggested a major return of support for UMNO. However, in all but two of these seven constituencies won by the BN, the margin of victory was by less than 5 percentage points, again suggesting that UMNO's position in Kelantan was still quite tenuous.

PAS' performance in 2004, in terms of seats in the new parliament, was dismal, dropping from 27 to a mere seven, a severe regression for a party seemingly on the rise. Six of these victories were recorded in Kelantan, the remaining one in Kedah. PAS failed to win a single parliamentary seat in Terengganu, a major reversal of its fortunes compared to 1999 when the party denied the BN representation in any of the eight constituencies in this state. The Islamic party was not able to win a single seat in Perlis, Selangor and Pahang, states in which PAS was reputed to be growing in influence.

The results for PAS were similarly dire in the state-level elections. While the Islamic party had 98 state seats going into the 2004 elections, its total was reduced appreciably to a mere 36 when the results were declared. Although PAS had the largest number of seats among the opposition, 24 of these victories were in Kelantan. Of the remaining 12 seats under PAS, five were in Kedah, four in Terengganu and one each in Perlis, Penang and Johor. The victory in Johor was by default when the BN's nomination papers were rejected on technical grounds. Following the 1999 elections, PAS had 41 state seats in Kelantan, 28 in Terengganu, 12 in Kedah and three in Perlis. The party was not able to secure any representation in Pahang, where it had control of six seats going into the election, in Selangor, where it had four assemblymen after the 1999 state elections or in Perak where it previously had three representatives in the state assembly. In Kelantan, of the 24 seats won by PAS, in five of these constituencies, BN was narrowly defeated by razor thin majorities of less than 100 votes. In seven other constituencies, PAS' margin of victory was by less than 1,000 votes. According to one estimate, PAS' support in the Malay heartland fell by about 11 percentage points between 1999 and 2004, from 56 per cent to 45 per cent.²⁸

PAS' partner in the BA in the 2004 election, Keadilan, another party reputedly with substantial Malay support, fared the worst among the leading opposition parties, winning – very narrowly – just one of the 58 parliamentary seats it contested, that is

²⁸ See *New Straits Times* (28 March 2004).

Permatang Pauh, formerly held by Anwar and represented by his wife and Keadilan president, Wan Azizah. The party did not win any of the 121 state seats it contested. Following the 1999 elections, Keadilan had five representatives in parliament and control of four state seats. Keadilan managed to reduce the BN's support in only one parliamentary seat, the Chinese-majority constituency of Alor Setar in Kedah, but even here the percentage point decline was a mere 0.8. This suggested that in Chinese-majority constituencies, Keadilan, probably because of its partnership with PAS, was facing much difficulty garnering support.

Keadilan recorded an appreciable decline in support in urban middle class areas like PJ Selatan, where the party expected to be received more favourably. In this constituency, although the Keadilan's candidate was a senior party leader and a prominent human rights lawyer, the party's decline in support was by nearly 13 percentage points compared to 1999. In the last election, the BA had managed to reduce the BN's majority by nearly 8 percentage points in this constituency.

The situation was similarly dire for Keadilan in other urban constituencies like Bayan Baru and Nibong Tebal in Penang where the decline in support was by 15.6 and 12.9 percentage points respectively; in Gopeng and Lumut in Perak by 8.3 and 12.7 percentage points respectively; and in Gelang Patah in Johor by 7.5 percentage points. Keadilan had, however, contested primarily in constituencies that could be considered 'mixed' areas, seats normally retained by the BN with ease.²⁹ Among Kuala Lumpur's large middle-class population, where the BA, particularly Keadilan, was thought to have some backing, the party was unable to secure substantial support, losing all the seats in the city area that it contested. The 2004 elections results suggested that Keadilan had lost much of the urban middle class electorate – and the non-Bumiputera community – support that it had secured in 1999.

Following the 2004 general elections, Keadilan leaders blamed PAS, and the latter's stand on promoting an Islamic state in Malaysia, for its disastrous showing in the polls. According to Abdul Razak Ahmad, Keadilan's Johor leader, "They (PAS) failed to see that Malaysia is a multi-racial country and they would frighten people, including the Muslims in Johor who are a moderate group of believers".³⁰ Razak also attributed Keadilan's poor performance to the dissipation of the '*reformasi* spirit' and the disunity among the opposition, drawing specific attention to the departure of the DAP from the BA.³¹

The 2004 electoral trends reflect a number of pertinent issues. First, the results suggest that the BA does not appear to be a viable alternative to many Malaysians, an issue that became apparent following the 1999 elections.³² While analysts of the 1999 elections had argued that the 'split' among the Malays had contributed to UMNO's loss of Bumiputera support to PAS in the economically less-developed Malay heartland, the BN maintained the community's support in the southern states of the peninsula. Although this indicated intra-ethnic Malay class dichotomies, the 2004 results also suggest that the BA, and the ostensibly multi-racial Keadilan in particular, could not muster support in more economically developed mixed constituencies.

Second, Keadilan's almost total rejection, PAS' abysmal performance and the DAP's negligible increase in support despite its withdrawal from the BA – the party

²⁹ See Loh (2003). In 'mixed' constituencies, the division of the electorate along Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera lines is almost equal.

³⁰ *The Star* (25 March 2004).

³¹ *The Star* (25 March 2004).

³² See Gomez (2004).

secured one additional parliamentary seat in 2004 compared to 1999 – suggests that the opposition is a spent force. However, the results in the Malay heartland indicate that the Islamic party retains some influence. The electoral trends since 1990 reveal that PAS has persistently had about 40 per cent of support in the Malay heartland. A small swing in support is sufficient to allow the BA to regain a dominant presence in Terengganu, re-establish its control in Kelantan and increase its number of seats in the rest of the Malay heartland. In fact, the 2004 results indicate that PAS' share of popular support had increased by 0.8 percentage points, to 15.8 per cent, compared to 1999,³³ suggesting that the Islamic party remained a serious threat to UMNO. Even though the BN secured control of about 90 per cent of the seats in parliament, UMNO's support in the Malay heartland amounted to only 55 per cent,³⁴ further indicating that a modest swing would be sufficient for the opposition to undermine the ruling coalition's electoral gains in 2004.

However, while PAS remains the main opposition to UMNO, the electoral trends over the past 15 years suggest that the Islamic party did not gain ground over the BN because of its Islamic stance. PAS' national influence is limited, and it is unable to record electoral gains outside of the Malay world – the party secured a state seat in Johor for the first time in its history by default. Apart from promoting in multi-racial Malaysia a system of governance that is hardly inclusive, PAS has reputedly alienated, through its rather conservative policies, two important groups – women and youth. According to one estimate of the voting pattern of the new 800,000 new predominantly young voters, a majority of them supported the BN. One prominent PAS leader, Harun Din, was quoted, as saying, "I would say that from the early reading of the results, we did not get as many new voters as BN."³⁵ UMNO, probably recognising the alienation of women by PAS, had moved effectively to cultivate the support of this group, including by establishing a new government ministry of women and family development to promote, among other things, gender equality, and by fielding more women candidates in the 2004 elections.

Of the 55 women candidates that the BN fielded in parliamentary and state seats, 49 of them secured victory. 35 of these 55 women candidates were UMNO members, and only four of them failed to secure victory; one lost by default. In the opposition, however, of the 38 women candidates fielded, only seven won in these contests. Of the 15 women candidates fielded by Keadilan only one won, while just two of the ten PAS candidates fielded secured victories, both in Kelantan. This was the first time since 1969 that PAS has fielded women candidates. The DAP fared much better with four of the nine women candidates it fielded winning seats.³⁶ In urban areas contested by BN women candidates, usually taking on Keadilan, the BA fared very poorly. In Gelang Patah (in Johor), in Ampang (Selangor), and in Lembah Pantai (in the KL Federal Territory), the BN's margin of victory was huge – of approximately 31,600, 15,000, and 14,000 votes respectively. All the ten women candidates fielded by the BN in the Selangor state election won their seats with comfortable majorities.³⁷ Meanwhile, prominent BA women candidates fared poorly. The PAS' women's wing deputy president, Lo' Lo' Mohamed Ghazali, lost her bid to

³³ *New Straits Times* (24 March 2004)

³⁴ *New Straits Times* (28 March 2004)

³⁵ *New Straits Times* (24 March 2004).

³⁶ *The Star* (25 March 2004).

³⁷ The BN Selangor set a new record in state elections by nominating ten women. See *The Malay Mail* (27 March 2004).

win the Bukit Gantang parliamentary seat in Perak while the Keadilan president, Wan Azizah, was nearly unseated in her Permatang Pauh constituency in Penang.

The voting trends in 2004 – and in 1999 – suggest important developments in Malaysian society that have not been adequately addressed by the BN and the opposition, though there is increasing recognition by politicians of demographic changes and the need to respond to these new trends. Most political parties in Malaysia have, for example, acknowledged the importance of securing and maintaining the support of the young. After the 1999 elections, among the BN component parties, UMNO and MIC responded to the issue of limited youth support by establishing *Puteri* (young women) wings. The leaders of the BN Chinese-based parties, the MCA and Gerakan, have acknowledged that they have faced much difficulty getting young Malaysians to join their parties. Following the 2004 elections, these two parties announced that they would commence talks about a merger, even considering the possibility of evolving into a multi-racial party, though there was no evidence of much progress in these discussions by the end of 2005.

Structure of Volume

The subsequent chapters in this volume will deal with four major topics, law and governance, human rights, gender and Islam. The final chapter provides an analysis of the 2004 general elections, with a particular emphasis on these four themes. The primary objective of these four thematic chapters is to highlight the resistance by the key Malay parties, UMNO and PAS, to institute reforms involving these four issues. The final chapter indicates how the electoral voting trends suggest that the voters are sending a message to the politicians that the time has come for real change.

In Chapter 1, Marzuki Mohamad provides a historical profile of the issue of law and legal coercion in UMNO and Malaysia. His primary objective is to indicate how the law is used by the government as a tool of political control, to contain or restrain dissent within and outside UMNO. His analysis provides insights into two important issues. First, Marzuki shows how those within UMNO who stand up to the party leader can be victimised. The law has been used on a number of occasions against prominent UMNO leaders, including Aziz Ishak in the 1960s, Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid in the 1970s, Razaleigh Hamzah in the 1980s and Anwar Ibrahim in the 1990s. The case studies on Aziz and Anwar reveal that UMNO leaders who take a different viewpoint from the party president can be subjected to the laws promulgated to act primarily against non-party dissidents.

On the other hand, Marzuki also indicates how party members can come to have significant influence on the actions of the prime minister and party president. A change of leadership in UMNO can have profound impact on the position of different factions. For example, the rapid ascent of Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid in the early 1970s was stymied by the sudden demise of Tun Razak in 1976. The subsequent case made against the two Abdullahs was an attempt by UMNO members to show how powerful factions and ambitious leaders in the party can turn on their opponents to ensure vested interests are protected.

The case studies on Razaleigh and Anwar call attention to the growing distance between the party president and grassroots members. While the president, in this case Mahathir, may have had a developmental plan for Malaysia, it was evidently not a vision shared by party members or even his own colleagues in cabinet. Mahathir's plan of selective patronage to develop Bumiputera capital, employing also

privatisation, was not received well by UMNO members who felt that these policies were only of benefit to a well-connected elite. Led by Razaleigh, a large segment of Mahathir's cabinet, as well as a huge section of UMNO, challenged his leadership of the party. Anwar's problems with Mahathir – and the reformasi, led by an UMNO faction – stemmed, in part, from his opposition to government bailouts of well-connected businessmen following the currency crisis in 1997. In both cases involving Razaleigh and Anwar, the UMNO president used the law and legal institutions to effectively check attempts by party members to undermine his position. In effect, Marzuki's study helps trace the growing centralisation of power in the office of the executive, which was well deployed to consolidate the UMNO president's position even though his influence over party members had diminished considerably.

The second chapter, by Carolina Lopez C., traces the history of human rights activism in Malaysia. Lopez focuses on how the government responded to this activism, including adopting a number of different methods to deal with calls from civil society to respect human rights. From the 1960s until the late 1980s, the government dealt with human rights activism punitively, by resorting to draconian legislation such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) to detain activists without trial. Lopez points out that there have been phases of ups and downs involving such activism, with the 1970s as a key decade when a number of new human rights organisations emerged. The mid-1980s, however, was a time when the activities of these groups were heavily curtailed, and when many of their leaders were detained without trial for long periods. Their detention and the government's use of draconian measures to deal with human rights activists led to a period of decline in social activism. In the 1990s, specifically during the reformasi, NGOs involved in human rights emerged as a major force, driving the reform movement and working in coalition, for the first time, with opposition parties, even participating in new multi-body institutions to promote human rights in the country.

During the early 1990s, as democracy spread through East and Southeast Asia, the BN government began adopting more nuanced methods to rebuff calls to implement laws respecting human rights. Mahathir, along with his counterparts in Singapore and Indonesia, who had developed their economies well but had yet to democratise their political system, articulated a new form of democracy, one ostensibly based on 'Asian values'. This discourse on Asian values by these leaders dithered during the 1997 currency crisis and was eventually discredited during the reformasi. Subsequently, the government resorted to establishing seemingly independent institutions responsible for monitoring human rights abuses in Malaysia. These institutions helped give the government a veneer of credibility, indicating that it was concerned about the promotion of human rights.

Lopez's study draws our attention to another important point. There were segments in Malaysian society, deeply involved in NGOs, who also subscribed to the government's 'relativist' position on human rights. While her analysis reveals the complex framework of Malaysian society, Lopez also argues that regardless of the relativist or universalist position adopted by these NGOs, they were genuinely concerned with promoting the well-being of Malaysian society. UMNO, on the other hand, was primarily motivated by the need to maintain power in government as well as defend its actions involving the abuse of human rights.

Through her historical study of the activism and discourse on human rights, Lopez reveals how UMNO has not progressed very much in terms of fundamental structural change to allow for greater democratic space in Malaysia. While the new Abdullah government has promised much in terms of creating room for open

discussion on the problems within the state and society in Malaysia, there has been, to date, no attempt to repeal draconian legislation such as the ISA, the Printing & Publications Act and the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA), to name but a few. The main newspapers remain under the control of the well-connected and publishing licences have to be renewed on an annual basis, thus hindering attempts by the press to develop independent analyses of social and political issues.

In Chapter 3, Helen Ting provides an in-depth historical analysis of gender relations and discourses within UMNO and PAS, from the time these parties were established. Ting reveals how both parties have a women's wing, an institutionalised apparatus through which their voice, long on the margin, could be brought to the centre and be heard. However, her study reveals that in both parties, the women's wings could not function effectively as lobby groups to promote the welfare of women. The subservience of women in these parties, even senior leaders of the women's wing, to the male-dominated hierarchy is well-captured in her analysis of the marginalisation of dominant women politicians, one of whom, Khadijah Sidek, served in both UMNO and PAS.

In more recent times, UMNO and PAS have come to recognise the importance of securing the votes of women – and the young – in order to secure victory in electoral contests. Both parties have moved to accommodate women, with UMNO even establishing *UMNO Puteri*, a new wing to enlist women below the age of 40 as members. A new ministry was also established after the 1999 general election to focus on the needs of women and the family. While women are now seen to play a dominant role in UMNO, as members of the party's Supreme Council as well as Cabinet members in federal and state governments, Ting points out that at the local level, women are still not recognised as people who can play a leadership role in the party. No women, for example, serve as chairperson of any of the UMNO state liaison committees, meaning they play no role as party leader of the individual states. No woman has ever served as *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister) of any state in Malaysia. Currently, only one woman leads an UMNO division, a further indication of the minimal role for women as leaders at the grassroots level.

The situation involving gender equality in PAS, as Ting shows, is no better in terms of incorporating women into leadership and meaningful decision-making positions. Ting argues that both parties recognise that votes from the women cohort can swing electoral contests in their favour, but it is UMNO that has gone on a publicity blitz to portray the idea that gender matters to the party. In reality, however, the nature of the debates in parliament by UMNO members on topics involving women's rights, indicate that the party remains insensitive to the issue of gender inequality.

In Chapter 4, Liew Chin Tong traces the history of PAS' handling of the concept of an Islamic state, a vision the party has long espoused for Malaysia. Although the establishment of an Islamic state in Malaysia is a central objective of the party, PAS had not tried to define this concept, probably – and primarily – because it was an issue that was bound to create dissension among not just non-Muslims but also among Muslims. In spite of this, when challenged by Mahathir to outline explicitly how an Islamic state would function in Malaysia, PAS responded by working on a blueprint to define this concept. This blueprint came to divide the party.

Liew's central argument is that PAS is divided into two major factions, which he calls the 'purists' and the 'mainstreamers'. The mainstreamers are pragmatic politicians who recognise the potentially explosive and divisive impact the Islamic state concept can have on a multi-racial society. The purists, wanting to remain true to

their Islamic vision for Malaysia, refuse to compromise on 'diluting' or structuring their definition to accommodate the interests of non-Muslims. This difference in opinion seriously undermined unity in the party, and when the purists eventually managed to gain a stranglehold on the issue, the blueprint caused a deep fracture in the BA, between the Islamic party and its main partner, the multi-racial Keadilan. Prior to this, even before the blueprint was prepared, the DAP had departed the BA, damaging the prospects of the opposition to secure power at federal level. During the 2004 general elections, PAS was shockingly rejected in the Malay heartland, where it was expected to make greater in-roads. The election results suggested that the electorate had rejected PAS over an issue that the purists had thought would win the party more support. In fact, the election results also suggested that the establishment of an Islamic state was not a primary concern of Muslims in Malaysia.

Liew's method of an in-depth analysis of the preparation of the Islamic state blueprint helps provide an insightful view of the factionalism within PAS. His analysis suggests that PAS, under the *ulama*, appears out of touch with society, while its arguments about the nature of an Islamic state in Malaysia laid bare the non-inclusive form of governance they hoped to implement.

In Chapter 5, Khadijah Khalid provides a comprehensive analysis of the results of the 2004 general elections, looking specifically at the theme of Islam, though also providing some comparative analysis of voting trends in the 1999 general elections. Khadijah's main contention is that the theme of Islam was portrayed by the media and the leading Malay-based parties as the dominant issue in this general election. The electoral trends indicate, however, that the manner of propagation and practice of Islam by UMNO and PAS does not help explain how Muslim Malaysians cast their votes. Khadijah argues that primary reason for the importance of Islam in political discourses is because of UMNO's belief that PAS' support in the Malay heartland is due to its propagation of the religion as a means to deal with Malaysia's social and economic problems.

Khadijah argues that in order to understand recent electoral trends there is a need to focus on the issue of 'personality politics' and the outcome of economic policies. In view of the personalised nature of Malaysian politics,³⁸ voters have long been conditioned to view national and state politics from the perspective of the personality of the leaders in power and from their form of governance. The outcome of development policies and their impact on Malaysian society, specifically the rural poor, had a significant bearing on the voting trends of the electorate situated in the Malay heartland. Khadijah further contends that Mahathir's diminishing popularity among rural Malays, following the debacle involving Anwar's dismissal from UMNO and his criticism of the Malay psyche, specifically their continued dependence on government for aid and concessions to uplift their status, helps explain the party's dismal performance in the 1999 general elections. A change of administration, with Abdullah securing the premiership and his pledge to institute meaningful reforms, was probably the major factor contributing to UMNO's capacity to stem PAS' growing influence in the Malay heartland. In this regard then, Khadijah questions the usefulness of Abdullah's endeavour to counter PAS by promoting Islam Hadhari, his vision of just and accommodating religious values applicable in a multi-ethnic context.

³⁸ See Hwang (2003)

Conclusion

The studies in this volume reveal that transitions have occurred in society, but not in political parties. While society has evolved with the rise of a new generation that has adopted different perspectives on key issues, including democracy, human rights, gender equality and national identity, the two main parties that have come to dominate the Malaysian political landscape, UMNO and PAS, have not reviewed their position on these issues. The chapters in this book show cogently that the nature and discourse of politics among the leading parties have not changed after more than five decades, suggesting a growing mismatch between UMNO and PAS and the electorate they claim to represent. It is clear in these studies that UMNO and PAS are not ambivalent in their views about these core issues, specifically gender equality, democracy and national identity. On gender equality, for example, their problem is that while these parties need the support of women during federal and state elections, they remain reluctant to support or promote this issue in the party or in the country. In UMNO, in spite of its rhetoric of the need to create a more inclusive environment, or a *Bangsa Malaysia*, party members are aware that policies promulgated to support Bumiputeras can be abused to benefit party members.

The chapters in this study indicate that as early as the 1970s there was a mushrooming of new and active NGOs led by charismatic leaders calling for political reforms. These NGOs would emerge as a bane to UMNO, with their persistent attempts at exposing the flaws in government policies as well as the shortcomings of the BN's form of governance. The activities of these NGOs were undermined following the mass detention, without trial, of many of their leaders in the mid 1980s, an event that severely hindered the movement for social reforms in Malaysia.

These studies also indicate that two important events that occurred in the early 1980s had a profound impact on UMNO and PAS. First, in July 1981, when Mahathir became prime minister, he offered Malaysians a new vision and economic agenda for the country, one that would culminate in industrialised nation status for Malaysia by the year 2020. It was a vision that was not shared by his government colleagues, specifically his move to industrialise and privatise Malaysia. In PAS, the party leadership was taken over by a group of *ulama* who would come to have a major influence on the objectives and direction of the party. Malay nationalism was no longer PAS' rallying cry, while the tacit but subsequently overt pursuit of an Islamic state in Malaysia became the primary preoccupation of its leaders, sometimes even to the detriment of the party during electoral contests, as was the case during the 1986 general election.

In PAS, under the *ulama*, its pledge to form an Islamic state became the party's avenue to secure power, an objective that remained its guiding light even though it caused discord in the party. Party members were aware that this objective was alienating people from PAS and hindering its prospects of mustering broad-based support. PAS members were also aware that unless it cooperated with other parties, its hope of securing power at federal level was extremely slim, though such alliances meant that the party would have to tone down its call for the establishment of an Islamic state.

Both UMNO and PAS subsequently came to be trapped in the outcome of these monumental leadership changes on their parties. Mahathir would bring about structural changes that would entail disempowering key institutions, including the media, judiciary and parliament, and then re-moulding them to suit his understanding

of how they should operate. Mahathir also domesticated UMNO to the point that the party remained quite subservient to him as he centralised power in the office of the executive. Meanwhile, PAS fared well in the 1990 and 1999 general elections, when in coalition with other parties, but suffered a major defeat in the 2004 general election, a loss of support that this study has attributed to its insistence on promoting an Islamic state in Malaysia.

PAS' poor electoral performance in 2004 was also due to the reforms Abdullah promised, including his desire to re-build the institutions that had lost their legitimacy under Mahathir. His pledge to devolve power and weed out corruption, as well as his focus on policies that would help alleviate the plight of poor rural Malays, inspired hope for real change in Malaysia, more so given the declining influence of the reformasi. While Abdullah may have been sincere in his desire to institute these reforms, much of which still remain on the drawing board, UMNO, however, appears rather reluctant to subscribe to his vision.

UMNO's reluctance to institute meaningful institutional changes is not surprising, as the studies in this volume reveal that the political system, dominated by this party, has not moved on, even though major protagonists like Mahathir have retired from public office while Anwar, now in opposition, vocally criticises the party's human rights record and racist rhetoric. Meanwhile, PAS remains dogmatic about its desire to implement an Islamic state, in spite of suggestions that the influence of the *ulama* is beginning to wane. The nature of the discourse in PAS is showing signs of change, but the practice of politics remains the same. In the meantime, as society has evolved, Malaysians now are viewing with increasing concern the resistance of the two parties to institute a new, more democratic and inclusive political system.

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