

THE RISE AND DEMISE OF *KONFRONTASI*: IMPACT ON POLITICS IN MALAYSIA*

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SO FAR AS MALAYSIA IS CONCERNED THE CRUCIAL CHALLENGE to its political system during the three-year period of *konfrontasi* came not from Indonesia but rather from within the Federation itself. The existence of an aggressive threat from Indonesia and the commitment of British defense forces in the Borneo states helped the response of the system to internal problems, but the story of political change during this period is the theory of internal challenge and response.

Malaysian politics is a reflection of the attempts of the political leadership of Malaya to extend the system they had developed in the mainland states to Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak. The fundamental assumptions and methods of the Malayan political system had only begun to be clear when Malaysia came into existence.¹ It was a pattern of interaction of communal political parties, a federal bureaucracy, and the Tunku's personality aimed at coping with two related problems: communalism and the economic disparity between communal groups. The leadership attempted to control inputs and orient outputs to give advantage to the Malays. That is, it was a system which put high priority on keeping opposition to a minimum and preventing public expression of communal demands and at the same time, using the full resources of the government to raise the level of living and the competitive position of the Malays. A minimum of communal agitation would reduce Malay fears and allow a spirit of common national interest to develop.

The Malaysian scheme was an attempt to solve the anomalous position of Singapore, which though it had its own brand of politics and a Chinese population, was inextricably related economically, culturally, and historically to Malaya. The Malayan leadership assumed that their control over the Federation government would be secure and that Malaysian politics would be an extension of their system. But Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak had developed along different lines with different political styles and levels of governmental competence. The imperatives of political survival in Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak led the political

* This is an updated and amended version of a paper read by the author at the Association of Asian Studies meeting in Chicago, March 1967. — *Ed.*

¹ In this paper "Malaya" and "Malayan" refer to the older Federation of Malaya.

leadership of these states to build political organizations on different goals.

Although conflict was inevitable, three structures existed which could provide channels of accommodation and at the same time serve to link the new members into Malaysia: the federal government, the bureaucracy, and the Alliance. The impact of the creation of Malaysia on politics is the story of how these potentially national structures responded to the problems Malaysia posed. The creation of a Malaysian polity, a Malaysian political culture, a Malaysian identity, depends in large part on the strength of these structures. This paper will describe the experience of the federal government, bureaucracy, and the Alliance in the old Federation of Malaya and the problems posed by the incorporation of Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore into the system. The reader should be warned that there are few systematic studies of Malaysian politics and what follows is little more than a series of partially tested hypotheses.²

The Federal Government

The Federation of Malaya was a constitutional monarchy with a King elected for a five-year term among the nine Malay sultans. The legislature consisted of an upper house made up of two representatives elected by each state assembly and sixteen additional members nominated by the King, and a lower house made up of 104 members elected from single member districts formed on the basis of population. Executive power rested in the hands of a Prime Minister and cabinet representing the majority party in the lower house (Dewan Rakyat). Each of the 11 states had its own representative assembly and Chief Minister of *Mentri Besar* named by the Sultan but required to maintain the confidence of the majority of the Assembly. The states each had a formal head of state, Sultans in the nine states where they existed and Governors-General in Penang and Malacca. The Sultans were designated the protectors of Malay rights and of Islam.

The Federation of Malaysia adapted the constitution of Malaya with minor modifications. The Parliament of Malaya was expanded to include representatives of Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak. Each of the new states was to have a formal head of state and a state assembly and executive of its own. Although Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak retained significant autonomy particularly with regard to immigration, education, and financial policy, they were admitted as equivalent to the eleven states of Malaya although different in kind and in authority.

² However there are several important works pending publication including William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Yale); Gayle Ness, *Bureaucracy and Rural Development* (California); R. S. Milne's volume on the 1964 elections. In addition several doctoral dissertations are in progress dealing with education, policy, the bureaucracy, and local politics.

Despite the federal structure, Malaya had a highly centralized governmental system. The most important reason has been the dominance of the Alliance.³ In practice the Alliance leadership in Kuala Lumpur has chosen the chief ministers of the states. In addition the limited authority left to the states has gradually been weaned away, particularly the most important single area of state control, land. Federal rural development schemes have been initiated and in order to participate the states have had to give over control of the land to the federal government.

The Alliance leaders have found it possible also to define the limits of the Sultan's independence very carefully. Several cases of conflict between a Sultan and the elected Assembly, between a Sultan and the central government, have been made public in the period since 1957.⁴ In all cases the central government has intervened to work out a solution. The Tunku has on more than one occasion warned the Sultans to stay out of politics, hinting rather broadly that they are dependent for their salaries on the largesse of the states and the states are controlled by the Alliance.

The combination of one-party dominance, centralized development planning and, as will be shown, a strong federal civil service, has made nonsense of the federal division of power. Federalism has been used in the Federation of Malaya to woo, but unitarianism to govern. This experience led to certain assumptions about the nature of Federalism in the Malaysian context. Singapore, which had internal self-government, was quite accustomed to handling its own affairs. Sabah and Sarawak, although inexperienced in government and politics, had shown during the Malaysian negotiations a strong desire for independence and a fear of Malay domination from Kuala Lumpur.

The conditions which had allowed Central Government control in the mainland states were not present in the new members. In addition to the fact that Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore retained control over some crucial policy areas, they maintained their own civil service and had their own development plans. Perhaps most important, the Alliance did not control the state assemblies. One of the most crucial conflicts in Malaysian politics has been between parties and over the Alliance's attempt to dominate and integrate the state parties.

³ The Alliance has dominated Malaya's politics since its inception. They won 74 out of 104 seats and control of nine of the 11 states in 1959. The Pan Malayan Islamic Party won control of the state assemblies in Kelantan and Trengganu. In 1964 the PMIP lost 4 of their 13 parliamentary seats and 17 of their 42 state assembly seats. Kelantan is now the only state controlled by the opposition.

⁴ See for example the *Straits Times* and *Malay Mail* for May-June 1961 on the dispute involving the Sultan of Perak and May 1963 for the dispute involving the Sultan of Selangor.

The Alliance

In Britain and the United States political parties grew out of the demands of various groups in the population for attention, for protection and advancement of their economic interests. Political parties were aggregations of groups whose particular special interests could be subsumed under some overriding common interest which could be satisfied by government policies. The history of political parties in these two countries shows a gradual accretion of more or less related interests into alliances for the capture of public office. A generalized policy orientation was thus linked to political success.

In contrast, the political parties of Malaya grew out of discussions and arguments over the relative positions of the various communal groups. The form and character of the government obviously would affect the comparative advantage of each. Economic interests were involved, but these interests too were communal in nature. The Chinese are urban, commercially oriented, and considerably more prosperous than the Malays. The Malays constitute the majority of the rural population and are engaged in rice production, fishing, and small holder rubber-tapping. The Indians are for the most part estate laborers, although there are a considerable number of Indians in the retail trade.⁵ The overriding concern of the political parties at the time of independence and since, is the protection of the rights of the several racial groups. How were Malays to be protected in their own country from the more competitive and prosperous Chinese? How many Chinese and Indians would become citizens? How would community differences be handled? Disputes over these questions divided the leaders, and provided the basis for party organization.

The Malay leader Onn bin Jaafar and his Chinese counterpart Tan Cheng Lock argued for a noncommunal party but as this proved more and more unlikely, they both lost their key leadership roles. The Malay organization chose Tunku Abdul Rahman and accepted the idea of communally based parties. In the 1952 Kuala Lumpur elections, the UMNO and the Malayan Chinese Associated (MCA) cooperated in running joint candidates and the Alliance was born. The strongest opposition then and now, comes from the Pan Malay Islamic Party centered in the dominantly Malay East Coast states of Kelantan and Trengganu. This is the party of the Islamic reformers, orthodox religious leaders, and the early nationalists. The party wants a completely Malay state where the other communities would have to accept the state religion, language,

⁵ The pattern is indicated in the following table.

Percent of each community living in Urban and Rural Areas
(Urban = areas with populations over 1,000)

	Malays	Chinese	Indian	Other
Urban	19.5	73.3	39.5	88.2
Rural	80.5	26.7	60.5	11.8

and culture of the Malays. All the other opposition parties call themselves non-communal, but in fact they are predominantly Chinese.

After independence the Alliance leadership needed to organize the population to achieve the goals they set for themselves and, of course, to stay in power.

Their overriding purpose was to use all the resources at the disposal of the government to encourage the economic development of the Malay community so that Malays could compete with the Chinese and Indians and all learn to live as one nation. Three facts must be kept in mind: the Alliance leadership accepted the strength of communal identifications and built on that basis; they belonged to a thin stratum of society which had an overwhelming advantage in education, wealth, and political knowledge over their countrymen; they were not communalists but rather shared the same kind of interests and social life. The Chinese, Malay, and Indian leaders of the member parties of the Alliance probably had more in common with each other than each had with their own supporters.

The Alliance parties rely on the natural primary identifications of Malays with Malays, Chinese with Chinese, Indians with Indians. Controlling the government it energetically builds public works and undertakes development projects to ensure that the Alliance label and communal identification will be complete. The party is a centralized machine with power at the center. Division and branch levels are in theory and largely in fact, simply extensions of the center and largely administrative. Factional disputes over policy and personality are constant but the control of the center keeps them in line. With minor exceptions those who aspire to the State Assemblies or the Parliament must join the relevant branch of the Alliance and since most Alliance seats are and will be for some time, safe seats, he must bow to the will of the center or be replaced. The party leaders, or government leaders, keep control over pork barrel projects tightly in their own hands. It is they who give out the goodies and they who help the people. The *Mentri Besars* often play an important role in the local organization, but this is purchased by going along with the *Tungku*, and few are able to maintain any degree of independence from the center. They too, can be replaced. The party-government structure discourages the development of personal followings and machinery which would give the MP an independence from the party. This system assures remarkable public harmony and discipline. In discussing these matters the MP's admit if they deserted the Alliance, the Alliance would crush them in the next election.

Alliance control of state politics and recruitment in Malaya has been possible because there has been no opportunity for state-based power to develop. Ultimately political success is dependent on the Alliance and on

the Tunku. Politicians in Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore, however, had developed their own political organizations and bases of power. Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore had fought and won his battle for control of that island's politics.⁶

In Sabah the situation was not so clear. Except for local authority elections in 1962-63, Sabah politicians had not been tested. The Sabah parties fought against one another in the earlier elections and there has been little use made of the legislature. Thus it is not really clear which, if any, leaders could win statewide support, nor is it possible to predict what will happen when discipline is essential to party control of the government. The United Pasok Momogun Party, which was Donald Stephen's party, is supported by non-Muslim natives and some Chinese. The United Sabah National Party, led by Tun Mustapha, attempts to be a local version of UMNO and has received organizational help from the UMNO secretariat.

The Sabah Chinese Association is weakened by splits within the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and considerable conflict within the Chinese community as a whole. The Sabah Indian Association is of minor importance since there are relatively few Indians. Despite these divisions the Alliance encouraged the formation of a Sabah Alliance and since its inception has worked to combine all the native groups into one party and all the Chinese into another. Much of the trouble arising from this pressure from Kuala Lumpur is due to the fact that the Sabah native groups and Chinese have no necessary inherent unity. But the real stumbling block has been Donald Stephens whose political party cuts across racial and community lines and who is a political personality in his own right.

Dato Stephens became the first chief minister of the state of Sabah. As Chief Minister he maintained a considerable degree of independence from the central government and continued to build his own party on a non-communal basis. He resigned to become Minister of Sabah Affairs and Civil Defense in the Federal Parliament and was replaced by Tun Mustapha. After the expulsion of Singapore from the Federation in August 1965, he was publicly chastised by the Tunku for calling for a re-examination of the terms of entry. The Tunku himself flew to Jesselton to calm things down and Tun Razak later toured the state explaining that the Central Government had no intention of letting Sabah go. Meanwhile Donald Stephens resigned from politics and took a trip abroad. But within a few weeks he was back and soon informally active in po-

⁶ This paper ignores the specific problems raised by Singapore since that story has been told previously. See Michael Liefer, "Singapore in Malaysia: The Politics of Federation," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, VI (1965), pp. 54-70; Milne, R. S., "Singapore's Exit from Malaysia: the Consequences of Ambiguity," *Asian Survey*, (March 1966); Grossholt, "An Exploration of Malaysian Meanings," *Asia Survey* (April 1966).

litics. The removal of Mr. Ningkan from office (see below) in Sarawak triggered off a new round of criticism, particularly from Peter Mojuntin (UPKO) in Sabah and in December 1966 Mr. Stephens resumed leadership of UPKO.

The Central Government's attempts to build a Sabah Alliance which would unite all the "native" groups into one party and the Chinese into another, continued. When the elections were announced for April 1967, Stephens was offered and accepted an ambassadorship which was expected to remove him from the scene. But he did not leave Sabah and resumed leadership of the party during the election. Unable to agree on the allocation of seats, the parties contested against each other in most. The results gave UMNO 14, UPKO 12, the Sabah Chinese Association 5, and one went to an Independent. Several members of the government were defeated, including the Chief Minister Peter Lo (SCA). Tun Mustapha claimed the UPKO had left the Alliance and with his allies, the SCA, formed a new government. After considerable negotiations locally and with Kuala Lumpur, Stephens announced in December 1967 that UPKO would disband and he would retire from politics. But the maneuverings were by no means over. During February rumors reported in the press that UPKO would join the government or continue as an opposition party. The jealousies and feuds between the native groups appear to be too serious to allow for unity and UPKO's calls for a reappraisal of the terms of entry into the Malaysian Federation have made them suspect in Kuala Lumpur.⁷

The Sarawak situation is even more confusing. A hodgepodge of racial and tribal groups with the Chinese the most prosperous, best educated, and most urban group, results in a complex variety of alignments. There has been no unity among the non-Chinese groups and, at least in some areas, the native groups find more in common with the local Chinese than they do with other native groups. In some cases these alignments are based on economic ties, in others on common religion. Many Chinese are Christians and some of the native groups are also. Thus Islam, which is of crucial importance to the unity of Malays on the mainland, is a hindrance to native unity in the Borneo states. Sarawak parties suffer from the same weaknesses as those of Sabah. They have never been tested in general elections. There have been two local elections, the most recent during June 1963. These were direct elections to district councils which in turn elected representatives to divisional council, which in turn elected the Council Negri. Very complicated alignments of par-

⁷In late June 1966, for example, Peter Mojuntin, UPKO, attacked the State Finance Minister, Inche Harris bin Mohammed Salleh of UMNO, accusing him of misusing his office. There was considerable suspicion that Mojuntin was allying himself with the Ningkan faction in Sarawak. Mr. Mojuntin made several public statements during this period strongly critical of the removal of Ningkan and linking the Singapore expulsion and Ningkan together as examples of the Kuala Lumpur leaders' attitudes.

ties resulted. Only two of the several parties are really noncommunal, Party Pesaka, an Iban party and the Sarawak Chinese Association. The others, which include the Sarawak National Party (SNAP), Party Negara Sarawak (PANAS), Barisan Raayat Jati Sarawak (BARJASA), and the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP), all have mixed membership. SUPP, which is Chinese led, opposed the creation of Malaysia and has had considerable troubles with its branches. The Clandestine Communist Organization has used SUPP as a cover for some of its activities. SUPP (and until recently PANAS), is the only opposition party — all the others are in the Alliance.

In Sarawak also the Kuala Lumpur leaders have worked to create unity among the native groups. BARJASA and PANAS, both predominantly Malay parties, have been under considerable pressure to unite. Part of the aftermath of the Ningkan dispute was the merger of these two parties.

The removal of the Sarawak Chief Minister, Dato Stephen Kalaong Ningkan, by the Alliance leadership was part of a series of moves and negotiations aimed at creating a unified native party. Conflict between the member parties of the Alliance had been acute for some time and Ningkan's position has been in doubt ever since the Land Bill controversy in May 1965. At that time the Government introduced a land bill which would allow natives to sell their land to non-natives. Opposition from the Malay parties and some of the Iban groups forced the government to withdraw the legislation and precipitated a serious crisis. Much of the discussion that emerged at the time concerned how the various tribal and communal groups should be divided up among the parties. Obviously there were disagreements. Another issue that was made clear at the time was the Malay demand for special rights for the native groups which would include Malays, but not Chinese. It was evident that the UMNO leadership in Malaya supported this move. In any case the crisis cooled down until the following year. On June 15, 1966, after Ningkan had fired BARJASA's leader from the Cabinet, Tunku Abdul Rahman announced in Kuala Lumpur that Ningkan must go. He said he had received a letter from the majority of members of Sarawak's Council Negri stating they had lost confidence in Ningkan.

He said that if Dato Ningkan quit "peacefully and constitutionally" there would be no need to make public the charges against him. The Tunku stressed that all the Chief Ministers and Mentri Besars were chosen by the head of the Alliance Party and therefore could be removed by him. A group of Sarawak Alliance members of the Council Negri met in Kuala Lumpur and selected a new Chief Minister. Since this group constituted a majority of the Council, the Tunku argued it was perfectly clear Ningkan had lost their confidence. Dato Ningkan, however, resisted and took the case to court. The Court ruled in September that

the removal had been unconstitutional. Dato Ningkan had never been defeated by a vote in the Council Negri. The Federal Parliament then passed a constitutional amendment allowing the Governor to call a special meeting of the Council. The Council met and voted out Ningkan.

Since then the two important civil service posts, the State Secretary and the Financial Secretary, which had previously been filled by expatriates identified with Dato Ningkan, have been filled with natives of Borneo. The Sarawak National Party, now expelled from the Alliance, is a noncommunal organization with a heavy Chinese membership. The only channel for Chinese participation in the government is now the Sarawak Chinese Association. Chinese fears for their future, which have contributed to the strength of the Clandestine Communist Organization, have increased. It is not yet clear what kind of Alliance has been patched together since the removal of Ningkan. There have been reports that all the non-Chinese parties would merge into a single native party, the Bumiputra Party. In February 1967 Dato Kingkan won a by-election for a district council seat in a Dayak area despite heavy campaigning by Malaysian Alliance leders and the release of development funds. Since then periodic crises have rent the Sarawak Alliance, and Alliance Leaders have attempted to negotiate an acceptance unity among native groups. The Malaysian Alliance leadership has made it clear that the center will interfere when and where it sees fit. The ease with which Alliance majorities at the center are able to pass constitutional amendments and the use to which they have been put (*i.e.*, to expel Singapore and to remove Ningkan), shows that political control is substantial. Whether this control meets with the approval of the local populations is not yet established.

The Kuala Lumpur leadership has moved to formalize the extension of the Alliance by creating a nationwide organization. The Malaysian Alliance Party was formed in April 1965 as an Alliance of the four separate Alliance parties of Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore, and Malaya. The Singapore Alliance withdrew after August 1965. The organization has a national council made up of 36 members (Malaya 27, Sarawak 5, Sabah 4). The chairman, vice chairman, secretary-general, and eight others elected from the members of the council constitute an Executive Council which meets every three months and has the authority to select candidates for parliamentary and state elections, maintain discipline among the members and handle party disputes. Tunku Abdul Rahman has periodically threatened to open up membership in the MAP directly to individuals in order to overcome the frustrations he faces in the Borneo states.

The Bureaucracy

In addition to the constitutional structures and party system that link the states of Malaya, there is a federal civil service which provides the

implementing administration of government policies. Some of the key service posts in the states are filled by Malayan Civil Service. Each state, for example, has a legal advisor and a state secretary who are federal civil servants. The states are divided into Districts under the administration of District Officers, again from the federal civil service. The DO's work directly under the State Secretary and in turn rely on subordinate units under Penghulus. The Penghulu was a traditional office in Malaya and in some areas still is. For most of the country, however, the penghulu is now a civil servant and in many cases a stranger to his district. Thus the federal civil service reaches down to the kampong level and has replaced local leadership.

The civil service is the most stable and well established institution in the country. The senior posts are occupied by well-educated men of upper-class (even royal) family background. They are highly respected, very well paid, and regarded as objective and unpolitical. Since most of the present political leadership have served in the civil service and were recruited into politics from the MCS they have accepted the view of a separate, highly educated elite civil service which they are committed to protect. Indeed the politicians still appear to hold to the bureaucratic values. This understanding between politicians and bureaucrats allows the bureaucracy considerable independence and decision-making authority.

Beneath the cabinet level there is a growing conflict between the politician and the bureaucrat. The latter, being better educated, is inclined to dismiss the state assembly men and even the MP's as uneducated hacks. Civil servants at the state level often refer to the politicians as "people who can't pass the higher school certificate." While the civil servant regards the politician with ill-disguised contempt, the politician responds with resentment, but also a good measure of self-doubt and loss of confidence. In discussing their role, the politicians often reveal a note of bewilderment. They talk of the civil service as "The Government" and consider the government well educated and experienced. But one gets the impression they are wondering just what their own job is. At the moment the bureaucracy is much more important in decision making than the Parliament, the State Assembly or the Municipal Council. The appointed civil service carries more weight than the elected politician.

The role the civil service plays and the fact that the political elite is the offspring of the civil service contributes to a view of politics as essentially administrative decision making. Educated, rational men determine the needs of the people and fulfill them. The distaste for open criticism, for interest groups and for trade union disputes, the fear that elections to local councils are creating "political fanatics" at the grass roots, are all reflections of this attitude.

There is a growing disenchantment with the superior position of the bureaucrat, his method of work and his reluctance to innovate. The expansion of the civil service, especially at the lower levels, may undercut the position of the MCS. The lower levels of the service are separated by a wide gap in pay and allowances from those at the top and this creates discontent within the ranks. Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister of Rural Development, has publicly chastised the civil servants for lethargy and lack of enthusiasm for the Rural Development program. Tun Razak has introduced some reforms in the administrative structure and public service commission in an attempt to overcome some of these weaknesses. Coming from Tun Razak, who was himself a civil servant, this public criticism is significant. Another factor of importance in the future of the civil service is the ratio of Malays to non-Malays. The provision that recruitment must be at the rate of four Malays to each one non-Malay has insured continued Malay dominance and raised questions in the minds of non-Malays as to just how "objective" such a civil service is likely to be. Non-Malays are predominant in the technical and professional services but the government's attempt to find Malays for the top posts has caused considerable discontent and division among the services.

When Malaysia was formed Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore all had their own civil service. The Singapore service was well trained and established and there was no thought of incorporating them into the MCS. In the Borneo states, however, there was considerable suspicion of the Federal civil service and in both states it was assumed that British expatriates would be kept on until Borneans were ready to take over.

The elite political, social and economic status of the Malayan civil service and the ill-concealed contempt they often display for politicians and politics, contribute to the fears of the Sarawak and Sabah leadership that they will be "Malayanized." Only a few of the Borneans have had the same training and advantages. Although some of the political leaders in these states worked in various capacities for the British colonial government, few reached the higher level positions. In Sarawak, and to a lesser extent, in Sabah, there is a strong desire to keep the British expatriates on until Borneans can be trained to take their places. The Kuala Lumpur government, on the other hand, argues that the British must go and that "Malaysians" should help "Malaysians." Both Donald Stephens, the former Chief Minister of Sabah, and Stephen Kalong Ningkan, the former Chief Minister of Sarawak, were described to this writer as being pro-British or under the control of the "expats." In both cases their removal from office was related to their presumed ties with the expatriates. After the expulsion of Singapore, Dato Stephens had called for a re-examination of Sabah's terms of entry into the federation. He was accused of plotting with foreign governments (namely

between the leaders of the parties. As one party bureaucrat said: "There is no contact or coordination at the branch levels, there are three separate parties. The alliance is really the friendship of Kapitan Tan and Kapitan Tengku." Now the Sabah and Sarawak Alliance leaders must be considered. But obviously as subordinate to the Tunku. Pressures from below often force decisions and talks at the top but little is made open, overt or manifest.

On both sides there is a bit of illusion, just as Tan Siew Sin does not speak for the Malaysian Chinese, and cannot really commit them, so too the Tengku's hold on the UMNO and Malays is not all-pervasive. Still the Cabinet accepts the decisions of the two Kapitan, and really severe party disputes also go there. For the functional fact is that there is no "Alliance" except at the top. The separate parties go their own way, perpetuate their own jealousies, indiscretions, communal demands . . . without regard to their so-called partners. There is little contact at the lower branch level. For example, in Krian Laut, a strongly Malay area where an UMNO candidate faced a PMIP man and would have to depend upon non-Malay (Chinese) votes to win, the MCA branch at first did not wish to campaign since they had recently lost two by-elections and felt if UMNO won they would look bad. UMNO youth, for example, has little if any contact with MCA youth at the local levels. The government's attempts to obscure the communal issue has really worked in some cases to intensify communalism and to prevent the integration of the communities.

Although this attitude towards politics shores up cabinet control, it does not lend itself to open bargaining and negotiation and the public resolution of communal fears. Common interests which might cut across communal lines and across state lines are not encouraged. The creation of national unity in Malaysia is inhibited by a political system based on communal identification. This constitutes a trap surrounding every issue with the suspicion of racial exploitation. The creation of Malaysia served to increase these communal pressures. Lee Kuan Yew's challenge and the finality of the response created serious pressures within the Alliance system. Younger Chinese impressed with the dynamism of the Singapore government have increased their pressure for equality and Malays have responded with aggressive demands for protection of the Malay character of the society. Both Malay and Chinese nationalism were encouraged by the central government's dispute with Lee. The ability of the leadership to cope with these demands is being tested, while UMNO intramurals are on the increase. In the June 1966 session of Parliament for example there was considerable criticism of government policies from Alliance backbenchers. Even the acceptance speech, normally a series of government platitudes, turned out to be an unsubtle attack on the government.

lished. The Chinese of Sarawak have not accepted a subordinate role and their ties with native groups and ability to exploit the fears of Malay domination make a formidable challenge. The Clandestine Communist Organization is still active and apparently able to maintain protected bases in Indonesian Borneo. Malaysian Army troops have replaced the British on the border and conflict between the mainland Malays and natives is very likely. Kuala Lumpur's involvement in local politics has created considerable opposition and the likelihood that Ningkan's party will join the SUPP and CCO in opposing Malaysia.

In both Sabah and Sarawak the local communal divisions have not lent themselves to organization and linkage into the communal parties of Malaya. As a result a truly national political party has not emerged.

The Malaysian elite had developed their own style in politics which matched the imperatives of their system. The effect has been to dampen open communal conflict and limit the political arena. The language of politics is the language of the pulpit, exhorting the electorate to stay united, work hard, appreciate what the government has done, trust the leaders. Internal and external temptations must be constantly resisted. Government propaganda is essentially a "pointing with pride" to what has been done and an exhortation to the people to do their bit. Inherent is the idea that the government knows best and will carry out programs to accomplish the common welfare. Meanwhile the people should relax, learn to get along with one another and unite behind the Alliance. There is considerable evidence of an attitude that politics has no place in government, in the hearings of the Royal Commission on Local Government, in the speeches of the leaders, in government restrictions on information.

In this atmosphere politics is not quite respectable. Interest articulation is best left to the bureaucrats who are legitimate and objective spokesmen for what is best for the country. The public arena of government is thus in large part confined to public relations activities and the real process of governance hidden amongst the files in the Ministries. Interest groups do operate, however, and businessmen (in particular, the Chinese) interested in licenses, forest concessions, mining lands, etc. protect and advance their interests well hidden from public view. The parties of the Alliance serve as interest articulators also, confining themselves to broad communally based economic and political interests. Although in recent years both UMNO and MCA have been shaken by open and aggressive demands from their youth groups and separate local branches, the leadership still sits, and expects to continue to sit, firmly in control.

The really tough communal issues (the national language, the recruitment to the civil service, etc.) are handled by private agreements

between the leaders of the parties. As one party bureaucrat said: "There is no contact or coordination at the branch levels, there are three separate parties. The alliance is really the friendship of Kapitan Tan and Kapitan Tengku." Now the Sabah and Sarawak Alliance leaders must be considered. But obviously as subordinate to the Tunku. Pressures from below often force decisions and talks at the top but little is made open, overt or manifest.

On both sides there is a bit of illusion, just as Tan Siew Sin does not speak for the Malaysian Chinese, and cannot really commit them, so too the Tengku's hold on the UMNO and Malays is not all-pervasive. Still the Cabinet accepts the decisions of the two Kapitan, and really severe party disputes also go there. For the functional fact is that there is no "Alliance" except at the top. The separate parties go their own way, perpetuate their own jealousies, indiscretions, communal demands . . . without regard to their so-called partners. There is little contact at the lower branch level. For example, in Krian Laut, a strongly Malay area where an UMNO candidate faced a PMIP man and would have to depend upon non-Malay (Chinese) votes to win, the MCA branch at first did not wish to campaign since they had recently lost two by-elections and felt if UMNO won they would look bad. UMNO youth, for example, has little if any contact with MCA youth at the local levels. The government's attempts to obscure the communal issue has really worked in some cases to intensify communalism and to prevent the integration of the communities.

Although this attitude towards politics shores up cabinet control, it does not lend itself to open bargaining and negotiation and the public resolution of communal fears. Common interests which might cut across communal lines and across state lines are not encouraged. The creation of national unity in Malaysia is inhibited by a political system based on communal identification. This constitutes a trap surrounding every issue with the suspicion of racial exploitation. The creation of Malaysia served to increase these communal pressures. Lee Kuan Yew's challenge and the finality of the response created serious pressures within the Alliance system. Younger Chinese impressed with the dynamism of the Singapore government have increased their pressure for equality and Malays have responded with aggressive demands for protection of the Malay character of the society. Both Malay and Chinese nationalism were encouraged by the central government's dispute with Lee. The ability of the leadership to cope with these demands is being tested, while UMNO intramurals are on the increase. In the June 1966 session of Parliament for example there was considerable criticism of government policies from Alliance backbenchers. Even the acceptance speech, normally a series of government platitudes, turned out to be an unobvious attack on the government.

Malaysia's existence has been stormy and brief and its future still in doubt. Two serious problems are evident at this point. One, there is no institutionalized channel for national issues and interests to merge. Two, the Alliance insistence that the state parties must be subordinate to the center thrusts the opposition into an anti-Malaysian stance. Challenges to the center's dominance have been handled by authority and not by persuasion. "We just have to find a basis for the future unity of the country," the Tunku said recently.⁹ It is evident that the methods used thus far have not been successful.

⁹ *Straits Times*, February 25, 1967.