

MALAYSIAN CHINESE

The **Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)** was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute's research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies (RES, including ASEAN and APEC), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS).

ISEAS Publishing, an established academic press, has issued more than 2,000 books and journals. It is the largest scholarly publisher of research about Southeast Asia from within the region. ISEAS Publishing works with many other academic and trade publishers and distributors to disseminate important research and analyses from and about Southeast Asia to the rest of the world.

MALAYSIAN CHINESE

Recent Developments and Prospects

EDITED BY

LEE HOCK GUAN • LEO SURYADINATA



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Singapore

First published in Singapore in 2012 by ISEAS Publishing
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 119614

E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg

Website: <http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

© 2012 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

The responsibility for facts and opinions in this publication rests exclusively with the authors and their interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views or the policy of the publisher or its supporters.

ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Malaysian Chinese: recent developments and prospects / edited by Lee Hock Guan and Leo Suryadinata.

1. Chinese—Malaysia.
- I. Lee, Hock Guan.
- II. Suryadinata, Leo, 1941–

DS595.2 C5M232 2012

ISBN 978-981-4345-08-8 (soft cover)

ISBN 978-981-4345-09-5 (E-book PDF)

Typeset by International Typesetters Pte Ltd
Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Preface</i> | vii |
| <i>Contributors</i> | ix |
| <i>Glossary</i> | xi |
| <i>Introduction</i> | xv |
| 1 Malaysia: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Nation Building <i>Tan Chee-Beng</i> | 1 |
| 2 Being Muslim and Chinese in Malaysia <i>Rosey Ma</i> | 26 |
| 3 <i>Quo Vadis: The Chinese in Malaysia</i> <i>Lee Kam Hing</i> | 45 |
| 4 At a Crossroads: Malaysia's Coalition Politics and Chinese-based Political Parties <i>Ho Khai Leong</i> | 70 |
| 5 The End of Chinese Malaysians' Political Division? The March 8 Political Tsunami and Chinese Politics in Penang, Selangor, and Perak <i>Wong Chin Huat</i> | 86 |
| 6 Forced to the Periphery: Recent Chinese Politics in East Malaysia <i>James Chin</i> | 109 |

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 7 | The New Malaysian Economic Agenda: Some Preliminary Observations <i>Toh Kin Woon</i> | 125 |
| 8 | The Old And New Malaysian Chinese Language Press, with Special Reference to the 12th General Election <i>Khor Yoke Lim, Beh Chun Chee and Lim Lai Hoon</i> | 144 |
| 9 | Education of the Chinese in Malaysia <i>Lee Hock Guan</i> | 166 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 193 |

PREFACE

On 10 July 2008, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and Chinese Heritage Centre (CHC) jointly organized an international seminar on the Chinese in Malaysia. It was the second one in the series on “Ethnic Chinese Communities in Southeast Asia”.

The first joint seminar was held in 2007 on “The Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in the Era of Globalization”. In this second seminar, we chose the topic, Malaysian Chinese, as there had been new developments in Malaysia, especially after the momentous outcome of the March 2008 general election, when the ruling coalition lost its two thirds parliamentary majority for the first time since Malaysia attained Independence. This seminar, therefore, was topical and timely. We invited leading scholars on Malaysia to discuss “Malaysian Chinese: Recent Developments and Prospects”. We selected most of the papers from the seminar and put them together as a book so that they can reach a wider audience. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the writers for their kind cooperation in revising their papers for publication.

Lee Hock Guan, ISEAS
Leo Suryadinata, CHC

CONTRIBUTORS

Beh Chun Chee is Lecturer at the Faculty of Creative Industries, Department of Mass Communication, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia.

James Chin is Professor of Political Science and Head of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University, Sunway Campus, Malaysia.

Ho Khai Leong is Professor and Dean of the Institute of Chinese Studies, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia.

Khor Yoke Lim is Associate Professor and Head of the Persuasive Section of the School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Lee Hock Guan is Senior Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

Lee Kam Hing is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya.

Lim Lai Hoon is Lecturer at the School of Social Science and Humanities Courses, Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Penang.

Rosey Ma is Research Fellow at the Department of Islamic History and Civilization, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Leo Suryadinata is Professor and Director of the Chinese Heritage Centre, Singapore.

Tan Chee-Beng is Professor of Anthropology at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Toh Kin Woon was a former leader of the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia — the Malaysian People's Movement Party — and former Senator, Malaysian Upper Chamber of Parliament.

Wong Chin Huat is Lecturer in Journalism at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University, Sunway, Malaysia.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------|---|
| BA | Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front) |
| BCIC | Bumiputra Commercial and Industrial Community |
| BERSIH | Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections |
| BN | Barisan Nasional (National Front) |
| CMS | Cahaya Mata Sarawak |
| CPI | Corruption Perception Index |
| DAP | Democratic Action Party |
| EC | Election Commission |
| FDI | foreign direct investments |
| GCC | Group of Concerned Citizens |
| Gerakan | Parti Gerakan Malaysia |
| GM | <i>Guang Ming</i> |
| HINDRAF | Hindu Rights Action Force |
| ICSS | Independent Chinese Secondary Schools |
| IMP | Independence of Malaya Party |
| INSAP | Institute of Strategic Analysis and Policy Research |
| IPTA | public institutions of higher learning |
| IPTS | private institutions of higher learning |
| ISA | Internal Security Act |
| JAWI | Federal Territory Department of Religious Affairs |
| KEADILAN | Parti Keadilan Nasional |
| KLSCAH | Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall |
| KOSATU | Koperasi Belia Bersatu |
| KTHCF | Kudat Thean Hou Charitable Foundation |
| LDP | Liberal Democratic Party |
| MAFREL | Malaysians for Free and Fair Elections |
| MCA | Malaysian Chinese Association |
| MCKK | Malay College Kuala Kangsar |
| MIC | Malaysian Indian Congress |
| MIMOS | Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems |
| MK | <i>Malysiakini</i> |

| | |
|--------|---|
| MMM | Malay/Melanau/Muslims |
| MR | <i>Merdekareview</i> |
| NDP | National Development Policy |
| NEA | New Economic Agenda |
| NEP | New Economic Policy |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| NHEFC | National Higher Education Fund Corporation |
| NMB | Non-Muslim Bumiputra |
| NOC | National Operations Council |
| NSTP | New Straits Times Press |
| NUS | National University of Singapore |
| NVP | National Vision Policy |
| OEM | Original Equipment Manufacturer |
| OSA | Official Secrets Act |
| PAS | Parti Islam Semalaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) |
| PBB | Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu |
| PBS | Parti Bersatu Sabah |
| PGCC | Penang Global City Centre |
| PGRM | Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia |
| PKR | Parti Keadilan Rakyat |
| PPPA | Printing Presses and Publications Act |
| PR | Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact or People's Alliance) |
| PRS | Parti Rakyat Sarawak |
| ROS | Registrar of Societies |
| SAPP | Sabah Progressive Party |
| SC | <i>Sin Chew</i> |
| SDC | Special Delegates Conference |
| SEAPA | Southeast Asian Press Alliance |
| SELCAT | Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency |
| SIB | Sidang Injil Borneo |
| SJKCs | Sekolah Kebangsaan Jenis Cina |
| SMEs | small and medium enterprises |
| SPDP | Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party |
| SPM | Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia |
| STPM | <i>Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Higher School Certificate) |
| SUPP | Sarawak United People's Party |
| UEC | United Examinations Certificate |

| | |
|------|---|
| UM | University of Malaya |
| UMNO | United Malays National Organisation |
| UPSR | <i>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Evaluation Test) |
| Y4C | Youth for Change |

INTRODUCTION

The results of the 8 March 2008 election stunned both the ruling coalition and opposition parties (Ooi et al. 2008). The Barisan Nasional were denied a two-third majority in parliament, and five states — Penang, Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Kelantan — were won by the opposition parties. Overwhelmed by the unexpected outcome, some observers characterized the election results as a “political tsunami” and extrapolated that the political landscape of Malaysia has completely changed. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight observers have become more cautious in their assessments of the impact of the March 2008 election. Nevertheless, the momentous March 2008 event is worth further examining, especially its impact on the Malaysian Chinese.

This collection of ten papers, including this introduction, attempts to assess the state of the art in the study of the Chinese community in Malaysia. It examines the nature of Malaysian multi-ethnic society and the position of the ethnic Chinese, the conflation between ethnicity and religion, the 8 March 2008 election and its impact on the community, the similarities and dissimilarities of the Chinese positions in East and West Malaysia, the new developments in the economy, and the media and education in the past few decades under the New Economic Policy that have had major bearings on the 8 March 2008 election, and the post-election Malaysian Chinese community.

NATION BUILDING AND THE POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

Since Independence in 1957, nation building in Malaysia has been bedevilled by the question of how to construct a common nationality that will have

Malay culture as its core and is also inclusive of, and fair to, the non-Malay cultures. Most Chinese naturally prefer an inclusive national identity that embodies the multicultural foundation of Malaysian society. In contrast, most Malays insisted that their language, religion, and culture should be granted a privileged position in the common national identity. Indeed there are Malay leaders who would conflate Malaysian nationalism with Malay nationalism and favour using the term *Melayu* nationality. In the 1960s, because ethnic-bounded identity was omnipotent, the prevailing sentiment was that “the Malay is first of all a Malay, then Muslim and then a Malayan; and the Chinese first of all a Chinese then a Buddhist or Christian if he is religious and then possibly a Malayan ...” (Wang 1992, p. 192). Consequently, after the May 1969 ethnic riots, the UMNO-Malay dominated nation essentially abandoned multiracial Malayan nationalism for a largely Malay-defined common nationality.

In his chapter Tan Chee-Beng argues that nation building in Malaysia has come to be shaped mainly by the politics of ethnicity, which has resulted in entrenching a communal world view and created a nation that is communally divided.¹ UMNO Malay elites aggressively set about creating a Malaysian nation that is Malay in cultural characteristics and Islamic in identity. Indeed, two mechanisms that have further communalized the polity and polarized the communities are the *Ketuanan Melayu* ideology and the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Initially, it was argued that the NEP was needed in order to alleviate the Malay economic handicap, and create a level playing field, and that it would only be for twenty years — from 1971 to 1990. But, over the years, the justification for the continuation of the NEP has increasingly been linked to Article 153, which stipulates the safeguarding of the special position of the *Bumiputra* through a system of quotas. Article 153 was initially meant to be a temporary measure implicitly agreed to by the Alliance elites, but since the 1980s, UMNO leaders have insisted on Article 153 being a timeless “social contract” which endows the Malays with “special rights”. The special rights position, Tan argues, has, in fact become a “political and administrative weapon to promote the interest of the Malays under the Bumiputera ideology”. With the implementation of the NEP, Malaysian society gradually became more ethnically divided, with the Chinese seeing themselves as being discriminated against, while the Malays as a whole are protected and the recipients of state favours.

The NEP and *Bumiputra* ideology have communalized society to the extent that many issues in the country have invariably become interpreted, problematized, and debated in ethnic terms. In the 1970s and 1980s, the

centre of controversy was in the cultural and language arenas, with UMNO Malay nationalists pushing aggressively to expand and entrench Malay culture and language, and the Chinese resisting firmly to defend their cultural and linguistic space. With Islamic resurgence and the increasing Islamization of the Malay identity and the seizure of PAS by Islamists in the mid-1980s, championing Islam became the focal point of the UMNO-PAS political competition. In part to win the Malay Muslims' support, the UMNO-dominated country promoted an Islamization policy which, among other things, resulted in the expanding presence of Islam in the public sector, as well as the bureaucratization of Islam. For example, school curricula and public educational institutions became increasingly Islamized. Tan points out that the increasing Islamization of national schools indeed pushed the Peranakan Chinese of Terengganu to enrol their children in the Chinese schools in town increasingly instead of enrolling them in neighbourhood national schools. Based on his research on the Peranakan Chinese of Trengganu and other studies he has conducted, Tan observes that race and religion were not contentious issues in the past as Malaysians were generally sensitive towards and tolerant of one another's cultural practices and religious beliefs. Race and religion only became problematic issues when they were mobilized to gain the support of the Malay Muslim population. Referring to the political competition between PAS and UMNO, Tan argues that "it is not the presence of diverse religions that causes social tensions; it is the use of religious symbols in communal politics that causes this".

Tan concludes that the Malaysian experience shows how ethnic-based politics and nation building cannot create an inclusive society, but, instead, causes polarization among the ethnic groups. Accordingly, he argues that to redress the economic disparities between ethnic groups, affirmative action policy should be need based rather than ethnic based. Ethnic based affirmative action should only be for small minorities and not for the majority group in a society such as Malaysia. More generally, Tan proposes that the Malaysian nation building project should move away from UMNO's narrow ethnic based vision towards a non-racial policy that is consistent with the multi-ethnic composition and character of the society. The authoritarian statist approach to managing ethnic issues and relations have, Tan claims, worsened ethnic relations in Malaysia in part because UMNO monopolized the definition and interpretation of the ethnic problem by banning alternative non-racial versions. Moreover, UMNO and the bureaucratic elites have manipulated the *Bumiputra* ideology to further their vested interests. Tan insists that a democratic state would enable oppositional views to be debated in society and thus expose the ordinary Malaysians to alternative ways of managing

ethnic relation and nation building. The March 2008 election which has resulted in a two-coalition party system can potentially democratize political space and provide promising possibilities of a Malay-led, but non-racial, or, perhaps, a less racial, model.

Because of the politics of ethnicity and identity in Malaysia, Chinese Muslims find that their multiple and fluid identities are largely ignored by the Malay-Muslim dominated state on the one side, and the Chinese community on the other. Rosey Ma's chapter captures succinctly the identity dilemma of Chinese Muslims, especially converts, who have become a casualty of the Malay-Chinese political rivalry. In particular, Ma points out, Chinese converts encounter a "general belief that being Malay is equivalent to being Muslim, as defined in the Constitution, a notion endorsed by the authorities and accepted by the public at large" so much so that it is difficult to position the identity of Chinese who are Muslims. In Malaysia, "where ethnicity and religion are so entwined in one's social and official identity, the Chinese Muslims are of the ethnicity of one community — the Chinese, while professing the religion of another community — the Malays. In the Malaysian context, this group is reduced to a double-minority: minority Muslim among the majority non-Muslim Chinese, and minority Chinese among the overwhelmingly Malay Muslims". Hence for Chinese converts the "redefining and construction of the new identity takes place within two dimensions, religious and ethnic/cultural".

The conflation of ethnicity and religion in Malaysia in the context of the strained ethnic relations between the Malays and Chinese has deleterious effects on Chinese Muslims such that it is difficult for the latter to maintain both their Chineseness and faith separately. They indeed find that they are not welcomed by either community. On the one hand, many Malays expect Chinese Muslim converts to leave their Chineseness behind as much as possible and adopt the Malay way of life; indeed they should *masuk Melayu* or become Malay — implying complete assimilation. In this sense, the Malays are emphasizing Malay characteristics to manifest their religious identification. If Chinese converts do not *masuk Melayu*, the Malays may suspect that they have become Muslims so as to become *Bumiputra* in order to gain access to all the privileges and perks that come with being *Bumiputra*. Thus becoming Malay is an indication that converts have not just left behind their Chineseness, but also that they now identify, and their loyalty is, with the Malays. On the other hand, Chinese converts find rejection and hostility from families of their ethnic community, who frequently equate their conversion with their becoming Malay. Here the "religious identity of

the convert overshadows his cultural and ethnic identity in the eyes of other Chinese”. Because of the frayed relationship with the Malays, many Chinese would equate becoming Muslim with effectively becoming Malay and thus view such conversion as betraying one’s family and race, and bringing shame to the community.

More generally then, Ma argues that “a Chinese who has become Muslim ... has stepped out of his ethnic boundaries to cross over to the other one”. For both communities, it is difficult to place being Malaysian Chinese and being Muslim in the same identity space. This is because in the Malaysian context,

[o]ne does not cross ethnic boundaries: if you are born Malay or Chinese, you remain Malay or Chinese. One may cross religious boundaries, but officially and subjectively, only by leaving the former religion before stepping onto the other one. [In] Malaysia where one’s religion and ethnicity are spelled in the same breath, how does one cross the religious boundaries when the attached ethnic part bounces back from the other sphere?

Fortunately, in recent years things have started to become better for Chinese Muslims in Malaysia. A major contributing factor is that Malaysians are now more educated and are thus becoming more aware of the two separate identities: Chinese and Muslim. The opening up of Malaysia’s relations with China, and, also, greater exposure to the outside world, have helped to improve the situation for Chinese Muslims in Malaysia. Lastly, Chinese Muslims have mobilized their community to struggle for their space and rights in society.

THE CHINESE IN MALAYSIAN POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

In his interesting chapter (Chapter 3), Lee Kam Hing proposes to use Wang Gungwu’s quadrilateral model of Malaysian politics to frame and account for the recent political developments in Malaysia.² Bearing in mind the complex social and ethnic stratification in Malaysia, Wang posited that there are four major sources of power in Peninsula Malaysia, namely: the Malay rulers, Islam, Malay nationalism, and the plural society, which refers to the non-Malay communities, especially the Chinese. The Malaysian political structure can thus be depicted as a quadrilateral shape with the four sources of power constituting the “legs” which anchor politics in the country. For that reason, if the “legs or four institutions become seriously out of proportion in

relation to one another, then the stability of the table or Malaysian politics is threatened”.

The nature and significance of each of the four sources of power and their relation to one another have obviously changed from colonial times to the present. In particular, Lee claims that since Independence the influence and power of Malay nationalism, or *Bumiputra* nationalism, and Islam have greatly expanded. After the 1969 ethnic riots, the UMNO-led Malay nationalists used the tragedy to entrench Malay hegemony or supremacy — *Ketuanan Melayu* in Malay — in the political, sociocultural, and educational fields, and the state apparatus. Official preferential policies and strategies were implemented to expand Malay participation in various sectors, and also ownership of the economy. At the same time, Islam has also become more influential as a result of the resurgence of Islam since the 1970s, the emergence of Muslim civil society groups, and the Islamists’ control of PAS since the mid-1980s. With the Islamists in control of PAS, the growing intensive UMNO-PAS political competition for Malay-Muslim support became circumscribed by each party trying to outdo one another in championing Islam.

In contrast, Lee argues that the Malay rulers and Chinese “legs” of the quadrilateral model have lost significant influence and powers since Independence. During the Mahathir administration, the Malay rulers’ powers were to some extent clipped by two successive constitutional amendments in 1983 and 1993 that deprived the rulers of some of their legal immunity. He however pointed out that since the “Malay rulers have largely retained their powers as defined by the 1957 constitution”, it is possible that “in a situation where the ruling coalition and opposition are more evenly balanced, they can play a critical role”. In the aftermath of the March 2008 election where UMNO political dominance was considerably weakened, Malay rulers, especially in Kedah, Perak, and Selangor, have tried to regain some of their powers.

For Lee, the most important political development, since Independence, has been the greatly diminished power of plural society, especially the Chinese and Indians. Several factors have contributed to the weakening of the non-Malay communities’ political position, such as: non-Malay elites’ acceptance of “constitutional compromises which conceded political pre-eminence to bumiputra nationalism”; and “a relative decline of the Chinese in the total population because of lower birth rate, and consequently [a] decreasing number of Chinese-majority seats in parliament”. Among the Chinese, their influence and power were further weakened by deep divisions “between those in opposition and in government”, within the ruling coalition between Gerakan and MCA”, and “intra-party splits that occur at regular intervals

such as those in the MCA and these sap the energy and resources of the largest Chinese-based party”.

Until the March 2008 election results, power was concentrated around Malay nationalism and Islam, with the Chinese politically marginalized. To make matters worse, the Chinese are “increasingly sandwiched between a Malay nationalism [that] has been usurped by UMNO’s *Ketuanan Melayu*, and [a version of] Islam [shaped] by PAS’s conservative Islamic state outlook”. In the past, because the Chinese fear a PAS’s Islamic state more than UMNO’s *Ketuanan Melayu*, UMNO could count on winning a majority of the Chinese support. In the March 2008 election, the opposition won more than a third of the parliamentary seats in part because when PAS downplayed its Islamic state goal, it led a large number of Chinese to reject UMNO’s *Ketuanan Melayu* and vote especially for the DAP and PKR. Does March 2008 mark “a temporary setback for the UMNO brand of Malay nationalism or [does it] mark the emergence of an alternative Malay nationalism led by PKR and a moderate leadership faction from PAS”? If the Malay constituency remains fragmented, then winning Chinese support will be critical to both the BN and PR. And for PR to maintain its advantage over BN in winning a majority of the Chinese, PAS must restrain its Islamic state demands. Thus for now UMNO’s Malay nationalism has lost considerable credibility while the “emergence of a two-party system in the parliament has given the Malay rulers and, to an extent, non-bumiputra a chance to return to a situation resembling the old quadrilateral model” before the ascendance of Malay nationalism and Islam. In a succession of by-elections since March 2008, UMNO remained incapable of regaining the support of the majority of the Chinese (see Chapter 5) who continue to support the opposition coalition.

Ho Khai Leong’s chapter focuses on the pattern of the Chinese vote in, and the implications for Chinese-based parties after, the March 2008 election. While most analysts predicted correctly that Indian and Chinese votes would swing in favour of the opposition, none anticipated the huge size of the swing; more than 70 per cent of the Chinese and 60 per cent of the Indians voted for the opposition. Combined that with a more fragmented Malay vote, the BN lost its two-third parliamentary majority and as well as five state governments to the opposition coalition PR. The MCA, the largest Chinese-based party in the BN, lost half of the thirty-one parliamentary seats it won in the 2004 election. Gerakan, another Chinese-based party in BN, fared even worse, losing eight out of the ten parliament seats it won in the 2004 election, as well as the Penang state government. In contrast, the DAP increased the number of seats it won from twelve in the 2004 to twenty-eight in 2008. The best performance was recorded by the PKR which bolstered

its one parliamentary seat won in 2004 to thirty-one seats in 2008. The performance of the DAP and PKR, and to some extent PAS, would indicate that there was cross-ethnic voting in their favour.

What prompted the Chinese to vote overwhelmingly for the opposition, especially the DAP and PKR? Several factors, according to Ho, contributed to the general vote swing against the BN, such as the negative impact on the local economy of the American sub prime crisis and the rising cost of living, corruption and cronyism, the worsening crime and security situation, election fraud and gerrymandering, and various forms of power abuse by the BN government. UMNO's racist posturing and its demands not just to continue the NEP, but to claim an even larger share of the economic pie further alienated the non-Malay voters. The Anwar Ibrahim factor also played a key contributing factor to the excellent performance of the opposition. Finally, another factor was the important role played by the alternative media in providing the opposition with the means to broadcast its message to the voting public and thus counter the pro-BN mainstream media's monopoly of the news.

Chinese voters were disillusioned with the MCA and Gerakan because the two parties had failed to speak out, defend, and advance their interests. Indeed, they were perceived as weak and dominated by the UMNO-Malay party in the BN coalition. In addition, the MCA was also considered to be rife with corruption, with the party, especially its leaders, viewed as being more interested in looking after its own vested interests than the interest of the community it allegedly stands and fights for. It also did not help that the MCA was driven by intraparty factional fighting, not over principles, but over the spoils of the incumbent. In the case of Gerakan, it lost the Chinese support in Penang because the Chief Minister of Penang, Koh Tsu Koon, and the Penang Gerakan leaders were generally perceived as weak, and had given in to UMNO in the administration of the state. In contrast, the DAP was outspoken and stood up in many instances for the Chinese and thus won over their support, especially among the younger Chinese voters. The PKR also attracted much support from the Chinese community as its New Economic Agenda advocates moving away from a race-based to a more need-based policy.

Can the Chinese-based parties in the BN, MCA, and Gerakan, remain relevant? What are the implications of the March 2008 election results for the Chinese, the Chinese-based parties in the BN and, more generally, for ethnic-based politics? Because of the fragmented Malay vote, and if this situation were to persist, winning the majority of Chinese votes would be necessary in order to win in ethnically mixed constituencies. Thus a fragmented Malay

vote would empower the Chinese and Indians. The future of Chinese-based parties in the BN, MCA and Gerakan, will very much depend on UMNO. If UMNO persists in playing up race-based politics and fails to address the various issues that have alienated the Chinese, then the MCA's and Gerakan's support among the Chinese will continue to diminish. On the other hand, Chinese support for the DAP and PKR will also be negatively impacted if the more conservative elements in PAS and PKR were to succumb to the urge to play up ethnic and religious politics. Hence, for Ho, whether the two-coalition party system and more democratic politics will consolidate depends on many tangible and intangible factors.

Wong Chin Huat observes that Malaysian politics has shifted from being "United Malays vs Divided Chinese" towards a new situation of "Divided Malays vs United Chinese". In a nutshell, while the overwhelming Malay vote used to support the BN, in the March 2008 election there was a significant Malay vote swing to the opposition, especially for PAS and PKR, which means that the Malay bloc is now divided. Meanwhile, the March 2008 election saw an almost wholesale Chinese vote swing in favour of the opposition, so much so that one can conclude that the Chinese bloc is now united in its opposition to the UMNO-led BN. The fundamental question here is whether this "Chinese united against the UMNO" pattern is here to stay. Wong attempts to answer this question by looking at the factors that led to the Chinese voting *en masse* for the opposition, and whether those factors have been reinforced or weakened since the March 2008 election.

In strategic terms, the Chinese are caught between a politics of negotiation through representation within the government and a politics of pressure through voting for the opposition. Up until the March 2008 election, the Chinese bloc was divided between the negotiation and pressure camps. However, the failure of the Chinese-based parties in the ruling coalition to obtain concessions from the BN government gradually withered Chinese support for the BN to the extent that in the March 2008 election a huge majority of Chinese rejected the BN and voted in unison for the opposition. In uniting behind the opposition, the Chinese appear to have overcome their three traditional fears, namely; fear of ethnic violence, fear of losing representation in the government, and fear of instability or uncertainty. In the states of Penang, Perak, and Selangor, Wong provides empirical evidence and explanations to show how the Chinese in those states overcame the three fears and voted for the opposition in droves.

The intriguing question then is whether Chinese voters have consigned to history their fear of ethnic violence, losing representation in the government, and instability or uncertainty since the March 2008 election. For the two

years since the March 2008 election, UMNO and its various affiliated groups have tried to raise the spectre of ethnic violence, but thus far they have not managed to terrify Malaysians, especially the Chinese, “to bow to violence and modify their political preferences”. Instead, their playing up of racial and religious issues was roundly condemned and delegitimized by civil society and opposition parties, especially Malay Muslims. The MCA and Gerakan claim that, if the Chinese do not strongly support them, the community will be marginalized in the government, has lost credibility since the DAP and Chinese PKR politicians were not only allocated places in the Penang, Selangor and Perak state governments, but, in fact, appear to have more parity in their relationships with their Malay counterparts. Moreover, the Chinese are no longer constrained by their fear of instability or uncertainty, given the stability — despite the occasional intra and interparty bickering — of the state governments of Penang, Selangor and Perak (before UMNO’s usurped control of it). As such, Wong concludes that for the BN to make gains in the next general election, it would have to depend on Malay votes.

To what extent is Chinese politics in Sabah and Sarawak similar and different from that in Peninsular Malaysia? James Chin’s chapter provides a succinct picture of Chinese politics in the East Malaysian states and shows the limited applicability of Wang’s quadrilateral model to those states. While Chinese politics in East Malaysia has also undergone increasing marginalization, especial in electoral politics, there is however a “key difference between Chinese politics in the peninsula and East Malaysia [with] the continued pre-eminence of the local-based parties in Sabah and Sarawak”.

The majority of Sarawakian Chinese have consistently voted for the Sarawak United People’s Party (SUPP), a party in the Sarawak BN, and that has not changed even up to the most recent state election in 2006. The main argument that the SUPP has used to win Chinese support is that the latter need representation in the local government to look after the community’s interests. This argument, in spite of the pro-*Bumiputra* federal policies, has convinced a majority of the Sarawakian Chinese to throw their support behind the SUPP. However, over the years, gerrymandering and malapportionment in the delineation of constituencies have drastically reduced the proportion of Chinese majority seats to far below their demographic percentage. As such, the Chinese vote has been gradually marginalized electorally while Malay-Muslim majority seats have increased faster than their population growth. Nevertheless, Chin argues that a growing number of Chinese, especially those of the younger generation, have become disillusioned with SUPP for failing to protect and advance the community’s interests. The increasing abuse of

power by and corrupt practices of Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud and his family have also alienated the Chinese community. Intraparty squabbles in the SUPP have also caused splits within the party, with many former SUPP members and supporters switching their support to the opposition. That more Chinese are now willing to vote for the opposition, which, in Sarawak, means largely the DAP, was clearly demonstrated in the Sibu parliamentary by-election in 2010 where the DAP defeated the SUPP in what was traditionally a SUPP stronghold. Chin's chapter did not discuss the 2011 election as it was written in 2008. But in his recent notes to the editors of this volume, Chin wrote that "Taib decided to call for a snap state election in April 2011. The election results confirmed the 2008 voting trend. The Chinese voters abandoned SUPP completely. With the exception of Batu Lintang and Bawang Assan constituencies, the DAP won all the Chinese majority seats. Batu Lintang was won by a Chinese candidate from PKR, DAP's alliance partner. In Bawang Assan, DAP won in all the urban, Chinese voting streams. Wong Soon Koh (of the SUPP) was only able to win Bawang Assan because he won heavily in native areas in the constituencies." Chin went on to argue that, "The depth of SUPP's losses can be seen by the defeat of the SUPP president, George Chan, by an unknown first time DAP candidate. Two SUPP deputy ministers were also defeated. The Chinese were simply fed-up with SUPP's inability to represent them and more importantly, were particularly incensed with allegations of Taib's corruption."

Unlike in Sarawak where Chinese politics is largely represented by SUPP, in Sabah the Chinese bloc is fragmented as there are several Chinese-based parties in the BN. Over the years, the already divided Chinese vote also experienced political marginalization similar to that in Sarawak. Specifically, their diminished electoral strength was due to the pro-Malay Muslims' biased delineation of constituencies, as well as to the government systemically enlarging the Malay Muslim population by granting citizenship to Muslim immigrants from the the Southern Philippines and Indonesia. All the same, recently a number of developments have negatively impacted Sabahan Chinese support for the BN. Firstly, the mass granting of citizenship status to Muslim immigrants from the Southern Philippines has triggered a backlash from the Chinese and Kadazans. Secondly, because the federal government has not honoured the 20-Point Agreement over the years, it has led to a rising Sabahan nationalism among both the Kadazans and Chinese. Thirdly, discriminatory actions against non-Muslim faiths such as that illustrated in the controversy over Malay-language bibles and the usage of the word "Allah" among Christians, and the refusal of the government to permit the construction of Mazu, a deity important to the Chinese, have also alienated

the Chinese and Kadazans. Hence, the March 2008 election showed an increase in support for the DAP and PKR but the two parties did not do as well as they should have precisely because they failed to agree on an electoral pact and ended up splitting the Chinese vote between them in constituencies where both contested.

Chin concludes that while both in Sabah and Sarawak the Chinese have lost the role of “kingmaker” because of the electoral marginalization of the community, it “would [still be] unpalatable not to include them in any government”. In Sabah, the Chinese vote will remain fragmented with support divided among several Chinese-based parties in the BN and the DAP and PKR in the opposition. For Sarawakian Chinese, while their current choice is either the Chinese-based party, SUPP, in the BN, or the DAP from the opposition, it is possible that the MCA and Gerakan may decide to expand into Sarawak sometime in the future.

ECONOMY, EDUCATION, AND MEDIA

The Malaysian NEP is perhaps one of the most comprehensive ethnic-based preferential policy in Asia, if not the world. Officially, it has two objectives: one, to eradicate poverty regardless of ethnicity; and two, to restructure society so as to eliminate ethnicity with economic functions, or more generally, to reduce the economic inequality gap between the Malays and Chinese. State elites have always emphasized with the eradication of poverty via raising the productivity and income levels of the poor, but they did not pay any attention to narrowing the gap between the rich and poor within and across ethnic groups. The narrowing of economic inequality was framed in ethnic terms and the emphasis was on closing the gap between the Malays and Chinese. To a large extent, the state has successfully enhanced Malay participation in the occupational structure of the modern and productive economic sectors by the 1990s. Beginning with the Mahathir administration in the early 1980s, the government became engrossed with establishing a Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC), and indeed devoted huge resources, as well as used a privatization strategy to build a Malay capitalist and corporate elite.

While the various government policies and programmes have greatly lowered the poverty rates, as well as narrowed the ethnic economic inequality in the country, there has, however, been a widening intraracial income inequality gap, especially among the Malays. Thus the NEP has contributed to “enhancing the life chances of many bumiputras through affirmative action policies”. It has, however, also nurtured a state-dependent class of rentiers

who are closely linked to the BN, and UMNO in particular. The special preferential treatment given to the politically well connected rentiers have created market distortions, such as the inefficient allocation of resources, waste, and declining competitiveness. Moreover, in recent years the debate over the NEP has been hijacked by those with vested interests, and has focused on the NEP target of increasing *Bumiputra* equity ownership to 30 per cent. Although critics have challenged the claim that the 30 per cent target has yet to be achieved, the state and UMNO have continued to use the 30 per cent figure to frame economic policies. The problem here is that the 30 per cent-equity ownership issue essentially involves only the upper strata of Malaysian society and, as such, has little or no bearing on the rest of society. Toh argues that UMNO authoritarianism and arrogance, and the party's corruption and cronyism partially contributed to the alienation of a significant number of the Malay middle-class who voted for the opposition in the March 2008 election.

The New Economic Agenda (NEA) proposed by Anwar Ibrahim and the PKR, with varying levels of support from the DAP and PAS, promised to move away from the narrow, ethnic-based NEP to a more inclusive, need-based policy orientation. The central rationale is that, with the current level of economic development and the success of NEP in creating a sizeable Malay middle-class, it is time to introduce an affirmative action policy that is more need-based. Even with a need-based affirmative action policy, the NEA argues the *Bumiputra* would be the main beneficiary of the NEA as they constitute the majority of the poor. Linked to the NEA need-based affirmative action policy is also the emphasis on *Ketuanan Rakyat* (People's Supremacy) instead of UMNO's *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay Supremacy). NEA's *Ketuanan Rakyat* would be more inclusive and promises a new type of Malay leadership which would not marginalize the non-Malays. Indeed, in terms of Wang Gungwu's quadrilateral model, the NEA proposes to harmonize Malay nationalism with the non-Malays' position. And in terms of governance, the NEA promises a clean, transparent, and merit-based system of administration. With an open tendering process, government procurement and projects would be free of crony-style business dealings, which characterized previous UMNO-dominated administrations. Lastly, the NEA would introduce more competition and meritocracy in the education system to improve the quality of human capital in the country.

Since coming into power the state governments of PR-controlled Selangor, Penang, and Perak (before UMNO usurped control of it) have initiated a number of policies that are consistent with NEA's principles. The Penang administration introduced its Clean, Accountable, and Transparent

governance, including an open tendering process for government projects and procurement. On its part, the Selangor administration has introduced a Committee on Competency, Accountability & Transparency (SELCAT) and passed the Freedom of Information Bill 2010. The short-lived PR state administration of Perak addressed the various problems encountered by the lower income groups, regardless of their ethnicity, such as land titles. In all three state governments, Chinese and Tamil schools were granted financial assistance, as well as land for their expansion needs. However, these opposition-controlled state governments very quickly discovered the limits as to what they could do precisely because over the years power has been vested in the central government, leaving the local governments with limited jurisdiction and financial capacities.

However, various moves by the opposition-controlled state governments to introduce a more ethnic-blind policy received much resistance from within the coalition and especially virulent criticisms from UMNO, Malay business groups, and various Malay non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The virulent reaction to the opposition attempt to move towards need-based affirmative action is best illustrated by the new Malay “non-governmental group”, PERKASA. It embodies the worst aspects of *Ketuanan Melayu*, which insist on Malays having entitlements derived from their indigenous status. In this, they usually refer to Article 153, which stipulates that Malays have a special position because of their indigenous status and that safeguards were introduced to protect their special position. Interestingly, during the Constitution negotiations the Reid Commission had proposed this Article as a temporary measure to be removed later on. This is because the Constitution should uphold the equality of every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, and the Commission was afraid that Article 153 could be used to justify discrimination of citizens based on ethnicity. PERKASA, whose members mostly also belong to UMNO, have fanned Malay fears of losing their special rights and more frighteningly the political dominance to the Chinese. As such, they have manufactured a climate that has negatively impacted ethnic relations in the country. Nevertheless, PAS, Malay members of the PKR, and various Malay individuals and groups have come out to criticize PERKASA and UMNO for playing race politics in the country.

Like the rest of the Malaysian media, the development and function of the Chinese media was radically affected by expanding state intervention and regulation of the sector in the aftermath of the May 1969 ethnic riots. Constitutional amendments to Article 10 and the Sensitive Act constrained and stunted the development of the freedom of speech while the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) forced the transfer of any foreign

ownership of newspapers to local owners, especially to the government-funded PERNAS and the UMNO-funded Fleet Group. Subsequently, the MCA and MIC also through party-funded companies, acquired the other mainstream newspapers as well. Thus, PERNAS became the majority owner of *Nanyang Siang Pau*, the leading Chinese newspaper, and the MCA-funded HUAREN acquired *Malayan Thung Bao*.

During the Mahathir administration, state intervention and the regulation of the media were further strengthened through more amendments to the Constitution and as well as changes to the PPPA. Three successive factors — the economic and financial conditions in the 1980s, the implementation of privatization, and the political crisis triggered by the Mahathir-Anwar fallout in 1998 — contributed to the downsizing of the number of newspapers published, and to increasing ownership concentration of the Chinese media. In addition, intraparty rivalry in the MCA also spilled over to rival interests vying for control of the Chinese newspapers. Thus by 2006, Tiong Hiew King, a Sarawakian businessman who used to be close to Ling Liong Sik president of the MCA from 1986–2003, has control over all four major Chinese dailies, comprising about 85 per cent of the Chinese newspaper market.

With the increased ownership concentration of the mainstream Chinese media, alternative and critical voices had to turn to other avenues to reach out to the Malaysian public. The main avenue turns out to be the Internet where two Chinese web-based newspapers, *Malaysiakini* (Chinese version) and *Merdekareview*, were launched in 2005. *Malaysiakini* started out as an online English news daily in 1995 by “activists cum entrepreneurs”, with a grant from SEAPA (Southeast Asian Press Alliance), which felt there is a need for alternative and critical voices to be heard and read as a counter-measure to the mainstream media. *Merdekareview*, on the other hand, was founded by journalists from the mainstream Chinese newspapers taken over by the MCA, or Tong, with financial backing from some Chinese businessmen. One distinct advantage that the online newspapers have over their print counterpart is that they are not subject to the PPPA. Initially, since the online media still have to abide by the Sensitive Act, OSA (Official Secrets Act) and ISA (Internal Security Act), the government tried to regulate and stifle the online media through periodic application of the various relevant regulations, and also by refusing to issue Press ID cards to their journalists. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the March 2008 election, the BN government control over the online newspapers has weakened as opposition-controlled state governments have freely allowed online media access to information, press briefings, and other state functions.

Commercially, because sale of the mainstream newspapers has fallen, or even plummeted in some instances, and this is partly due to readers turning to the free and more vocal online media, mainstream journalists are pushing for more freedom of expression.

An examination of how the Chinese print and online media covered the March 2008 election demonstrates major “differing interpretation of news values” between the various newspapers, and between the print and online media. The mainstream Chinese newspaper, *Sin Chew*, tended to focus more on the “official” coverage and version of news, while *Guang Ming* “as [a] regional newspaper gave prominence to issues in Penang and the DAP state government”. Much of its “news was straightforward reporting of day-to-day issues such as crime prevention, distribution of rice to the needy, and land issues”. In contrast, both *Merdekareview* and *Malaysiakini* focused primarily “on the controversial issues, presenting views from diverse groups, including the opposition parties and non-government organizations”. This way, *Merdekareview* and *Malaysiakini* came across as critical of the BN government as they provided the opposition parties and civil society groups with a medium to articulate their views.

It is clear that the “ownership pattern of Chinese newspapers in Malaysia has shifted from personal ownership, where control is in the hands of the founding family or group, to state control in the Eighties, and finally to concentration in the hands of a conglomerate with strong connections with the power centre”. Thus parallel to the concentration of ownership is the increasing control of the media “through a combination of repressive laws, shareholdings, direct nominees and close political relationships”. Thus *Merdekareview* and *Malaysiakini*, and the Internet in general, have reintroduced media diversity, as well as the flourishing of critical independent points of views and analyses. In this sense, the Internet has played a crucial role in enabling opposition parties to disseminate information and their views to the electorate, and thus indirectly assisting the PR to achieve its outstanding results in the 2008 election. If the UMNO-dominated administration continues to stand by its cyber laws, then it will be difficult for the ruling coalition to control what Malaysians read — and how they should think.

Language and education issues have generated much heated debates in Malaysia even before the country was granted Independence in 1957. Indeed the importance of language and education issues resulted in three major reports being carried out in succession a few years before 1957, namely, the Barnes Report (1950), Fenn-Wu Report (1951), and Razak Report (1956). The key problem encountered was how to transform the decentralized,

multilingual, colonial education system into a centralized, national education that privileges Malay as the sole national and official language, while also respecting the language rights of the minority groups. In post-colonial Malaysia, due to the UMNO-Malay dominated nation's aggressive attempts to use education as a means to create a Malay-centric nation and advance Malay socio-economic interests, language and education have remained contentious issues, with the Chinese community struggling to protect and advance their community's educational opportunities and mother tongue education. This is especially the case since the Chinese put a lot of emphasis on education as a stepping stone to socio-economic success, and a means to transmit and preserve their language and culture.

In the education sector, because the Malaysian state has allocated large investments to expanding the sector, the country has made impressive educational gains since Independence. The Malaysian Chinese have also benefited from state educational investments: illiteracy is almost negligible in the community, younger generation of Chinese are better educated, there are better educational opportunities for most Chinese, and the ethnic preferential policy has narrowed inter-ethnic educational inequalities. With the increasing privatization of the higher education sector since the 1990s, qualified Chinese students can acquire a local tertiary education without much problem — provided they can afford to pay for it. Changing societal and community attitudes towards women acquiring higher education qualifications, and also changing familial and economic structures, have enabled Chinese women to make impressive gains in educational attainment, especially at the higher education levels. Nevertheless, there is still discrimination when it comes to women employment opportunities.

With regard to education medium, Lee argues that the preference of most Chinese is to enrol their children in Chinese primary schools and then national secondary schools. While most Chinese are satisfied with this educational compromise, the UMNO-Malay dominated nation for many years harboured the idea of establishing a single Malay-stream education for all. The nature of ethnic politics in the country, however, prevented UMNO Malay nationalists from eliminating the Chinese primary schools. This has not stopped the state from marginalizing Chinese education in terms of public financial allocations, land for the expansion of existing schools, and the granting of licences for building new schools. Moreover, the increasing discrimination against Chinese students in the national primary schools has resulted in more than 90 per cent of the Chinese students enrolling in Chinese schools since the 1990s. With the overwhelming majority of Chinese students enrolled in Chinese schools, several problems have arisen,

including, among other things, overcrowding in and shortage of Chinese schools. Until the March 2008 election, the Chinese community encountered strong resistance from the UMNO-controlled administrations in getting land for extending schools, and licences to build new schools. That has changed since the March 8 2008 election, especially in states controlled by the opposition-coalition, PR. This in turn has influenced the UMNO-controlled federal government to be more accommodating to the Chinese community's application of land and new licences for schools.

When the UMNO-dominated state implemented a wide-ranging, ethnic-quota higher education admission policy from 1971 onward to increase Malay enrolment, it dramatically decimated the higher educational opportunities for qualified Chinese students in the country. This was because higher education opportunities in the country were limited and this remained so until the privatization of higher education and the expansion of public higher education, especially from the 1990s. The privatization of higher education came about with the influence of the then neoliberal pro-market ideology and the sector underwent a huge expansion especially in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The privatization of higher education shifted the burden of financing higher education to families, in particular, Chinese families. It also partially helped to increase the "production" of tertiary educated Malaysian students for the government objective of moving the economy up the value chain. However, the privatization of higher education, coupled with the state continuing with its pro-Malay admission policy, has resulted in the ethnic segmentation of higher education, with the Malays identified with the public higher education, and the Chinese with the private higher education.

The UMNO-dominated state marginalization of Chinese primary schools and the discrimination against Chinese students in the admission into local public higher education had the most adverse impact on the lower-income segment of the Chinese community, especially the more than one million Chinese New Village residents. Chinese schools in the New Villages are more dependent on state financial allocation because they cannot expect to receive much funding from the generally lower-income Chinese families who constitute the majority in the villages. Indeed a lack of financial resources has led to Chinese schools in many New Villages having facilities in need of repairs, as well as a shortage of teaching staff. In addition, school dropout rates are much higher among Chinese students from the New Villages because of the lower quality of instruction, their weak command of the Malay language, the cost of attending secondary schools, which are usually located in towns,

the need for these students to work to supplement family incomes, and so on. Unsurprisingly, the privatization of education has not helped to enhance the higher education opportunities for Chinese students from lower-income families as they are frequently priced beyond their families' financial means. Chinese students from lower-income homes then largely have to depend on gaining admission into the local public higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

Malaysia under the long and dynamic Mahathir Administration underwent a number of major political, socio-economic, and cultural changes. In a sense, the results of the 2008 election reflect the changes in the country under the Mahathir administration. UMNO obtained fewer Malay votes and both the MCA and Gerakan — Chinese parties in the ruling coalition — were seriously challenged by the DAP, giving rise to questions of their future development, if not viability. Nevertheless, the significance of the changes in the political landscape since the March 2008 election is still limited and perhaps even tentative. Malay power has been undermined somewhat as the Malays have become divided while the Chinese have become more united, but Malay dominance in the political system remains entrenched and the ideology of the indigenous state, or *Ketuanan Melayu*, continues to prevail as the UMNO-dominated Barisan Nasional still dominates politically and ideologically.

Globalization and the rise of China have had major impact on Malaysia in general, and the Chinese population in particular. Because globalization releases economic forces which do not recognize state and ethnic boundaries, the economic rise of China has provided more opportunities for Malaysian Chinese businesses and has thus contributed to their economic dominance in Malaysia. Globalization has also changed the landscape of the Chinese mass media in Malaysia, where a multinational Chinese conglomerate, which is close to the state elite, now has control over the main Chinese newspapers in the country, but, at the same time, the worldwide web has given rise to an alternative mass media. The impact of new media on Malaysian Chinese politics is tremendous as reflected in the March 2008 election. Chinese education has also experienced new developments, with more concessions to Chinese-medium education made, and more private educational institutions set up, making the ethnic division in the educational field more conspicuous: the Malays concentrate in public tertiary institutions, while the Chinese dominate private tertiary institutions.

As ethnic size matters in an ethnic-based political system, the fact that the Chinese population in Malaysia has been declining in terms of percentage, though not in absolute numbers, will undoubtedly affect the future political landscape of Malaysia. In all probability, unless a fragmentation of the Malay community materializes, the political influence of Malaysian Chinese will continue to weaken in line with their shrinking percentage in the total population.

Notes

- ¹ Tan prefers to use the word “communal” instead of “ethnic”.
- ² Wang introduced his quadrilateral model in his seminal essay, *Reflections on Malaysian Elites* (1986).

References

- Ooi Kee Beng, Johan Saravanamuttu and Lee Hock Guan. *March 8: Eclipsing May 13*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008.
- Wang Gungwu. “Reflections on Malaysian Elites”. In *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia*. 2nd ed. New South Wales, Australia: Asian Studies Association of Australia and Allen & Unwin, 1992.