

elites siding with communities affected by dispossession. Springer turns a blind eye to these stories and uses selective empirical data to support his line of argument.

Overall, *Violent Neoliberalism* reads as an engaging critique of contemporary neoliberalism. With his energetic and occasionally bold style, Springer draws attention to hidden injustices and various shapes of violence caused by the much-celebrated neoliberal post-war development paradigm.

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Challenging Malaysia's Status Quo. By Lim Teck Ghee. Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2018. xxiii+476 pp.

Lim Teck Ghee has for some years enjoyed a reputation as one of the most perceptive observers of Malaysian politics, religion and society. In many respects, this current work may be viewed as an update of the comprehensive volume *Multi-Ethnic Malaysia: Past, Present and Future* (2009) which he co-edited with Alberto Gomes and Azly Rahman. *Challenging Malaysia's Status Quo* is a thematically organized and wide-ranging series of critical essays grouped under eleven sections which examine the many, and increasingly urgent, issues which will impact upon Malaysia's economic and political future.

Lim contends that an obsession with the politics of communalism and racial structures, and growing religious intolerance, along with the entrenchment of both as instruments of social control, have led Malaysia into an increasingly dangerous cul-de-sac. These essays reveal a Malaysia plagued by widening ethnic polarization, a rampant and intrusive religious bureaucracy, an economy encumbered by networks of cronyism, favouritism and corruption, and policymaking processes that are based on ad hoc decision making that favours immediacy and short-termism.

In 2005, after some years abroad, Lim returned to Malaysia to establish the Centre for Policy Studies, a think tank located within the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI). This appointment was to lead him into the vortex of a rather acrimonious controversy. In 1971, the New Economic Policy (NEP) enunciated within the context of the Second Malaysia Plan (1971–75), aimed, inter alia, at attaining a 30 per cent share of corporate assets by 1990 for Malays and other indigenous groups — collectively known as bumiputera, or “sons of the soil”. Barely a year into his appointment, Lim and his co-author Edmund Terence Gomez, published the paper *Corporate Equity Distribution* (2006) which questioned government statistics on ethnic ownership of corporate equity. Using advanced and contemporary methodologies, the paper concluded that the NEP target of 30 per cent equity had not only been reached but exceeded, and bumiputera ownership of corporate equity might actually be as high as 45 per cent — compared to the official figure of 18.9 per cent. In the furore which followed, ASLI President, Mirzan Mahathir, announced that the study would be withdrawn. In his subsequent letter of resignation, Lim asserted his belief in the validity of the research which informed the paper and stood by the paper’s conclusions.

The controversy overshadowed the report’s conclusions and recommendations. While Lim and Gomez noted that the NEP had been remarkably effective in redistributing wealth in terms of equity, it had outlived its usefulness and had ceased to meet its foundational objectives. Moreover, it neither promoted national unity nor contributed to equitable development. The Mahathir policy of

creating a select and catalytic strata of Malay entrepreneurs had been exposed as a failure during the financial crisis of 1997 when many newly formed Malay businesses proved unviable. Additionally, the policy of selective patronage had concentrated Malay wealth within a small body of politically well-connected Malays, and had done little to uplift the poorer members of the community. The study contained a series of recommendations which highlighted the need for sweeping reforms in poverty alleviation, education, economic regulation, and the administration of the civil service (pp. 45–84).

The New Economic Model (NEM), initiated within the context of the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011–15), forecast major reforms that would promote both transparency and efficiency. However, as Lim documents, very little changed in reality; the foreign workforce continued to expand, and the management of Government-Linked Companies — the major shareholders of corporate equity — continued to be determined by political and ethnic criteria. The extension of the NEP's 30 per cent requirement beyond corporate equity to include property and assets, and the continuing focus upon ethnicity yielded new avenues for corruption, rent seeking and cronyism. The outcomes have been predictable — a severe reduction of foreign direct investment flows, capital flight, diminished competitiveness, an accompanying brain drain, and substantial levels of financial outflow.

The series of essays in chapter 5 identify the rising tide of Islamization as a further factor deterring potential investors. Islamization, driven by Malay ethno-centrism, intensified in the wake of the racial riots of 1969, creating both inter-ethnic divisions and rancorous and deep fissures within the Malay community. This phenomenon has been exploited by politicians, especially those associated with ethnic Malay parties, which, in introducing ever more extreme Islamic measures, have sought to demonstrate their Islamic credentials. The processes of Islamization have been greatly exacerbated by the seemingly uncontrolled activism of an ever-expanding religious bureaucracy. Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM, or Department of Islamic Development) — the subject of

Lim's essay "Liberal Islam: Public Enemy Number One?" (chap. 5, pp. 201–3) — has attempted to reorganize Malaysian political and cultural life around a Wahhabi- and Salafist-inspired Islam. In its relentless campaign it has increasingly infringed upon the rights of minorities and those of moderate Muslims.

The essays in chapter 6 broadly examine the politics of "race" and its adverse impact upon the Malaysian education sector. Declining standards, aggravated by policies which dictate that appointments are determined by ethnicity rather than merit, together with the stringent curtailing of academic freedom, have not only resulted in the plummeting reputation of Malaysian universities but also increased the number of poorly educated graduates. In his essay entitled "Our School Children as Sacrificial Lambs" (pp. 275–77), Lim observes that this malaise has also extended to Malaysian schools where outcomes are increasingly decided on the basis of racial criteria rather than that of actual achievement.

The latter chapters of *Challenging the Status Quo* include several essays of biting political and social satire, and interviews which deal with Lim's formative years and the experiences which helped mould his political and social perspectives.

This lucid and comprehensive work not only catalogues the many failures and loss of direction of the previous UMNO-dominated Barisan Nasional government but also adumbrates the daunting array of major reforms that the incoming government must confront.

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The Malayan Emergency: Essays on a Small, Distant War. By Souchou Yao. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2016. 178 pp.

The Malayan Emergency of 1948–60 pitted communist-led insurgents against a British Empire determined not to lose prematurely Malaya's dollar-earning tin and rubber. British officials and officers led a miscellany of Malay police, Chinese Special Branch detectives, a 250,000-strong Home Guard, and troops from all over the empire to victory. By 1960, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was holed up at the Thai border, never to return to more than high nuisance status. That victory has been trumpeted in a myriad of works as a counter-insurgency paradigm, a model mix of coercive pressure and persuasive wooing of "hearts and minds", and a case study on how resettlements could blend rigid control with schools, community centres and basketball courts, to eventually produce real communities.

Given the tsunami of works on the Emergency, why read this one? The answer is, in part, that it is a series of interlinked intellectual "essays", each reflecting, in a lively way, on how the Emergency story has been told, as well as what actually happened. In addition, it uses a blend of techniques to combine analysis with an attempt to bring the experience of the conflict alive, and to see it from the viewpoint of the MCP and its supporters. It uses ethnographic reflection on interviews, deploys Marxist-style class analysis to assess why the MCP struggled to keep villagers united behind it, and delves into culture and fiction.

In this vein, Yao presents us with nine chapters, each on a different topic: communism, violence, revolutionary warfare, and so on. For me, the most enjoyable was chapter 2 "On Communism" (pp. 20–39), which weaves an analysis of how people experienced communism around two individuals Yao talked to at a Peace Village for ex-insurgents in Southern Thailand. These individuals capture two broader types of insurgents; the relatively poorly educated fighter from a rural background, and the Chinese-educated idealist. The former is represented by the pragmatic, farming and jungle-edge