East Asian Regional Integration: Diaspora and Impact

Volume I

Editors

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East Asian regional integration; diaspora and impact/editors
Zhuang Guotu, Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh
ISBN 978-967-5148-63-7(v. 1)
1. East Asia—Emigration and Immigration—Economic aspects.
304, 8095
nese TV by satellite and read the People’s Daily by the Internet. They can also easily visit China as tourists, and some have sent their children to study in China—in fact, many ethnic Chinese students from overseas are currently studying at Xiamen University!

It is understandable that the concept of xin qiao can be very controversial. But it is really an important area of research for China scholars who specialize in the “overseas Chinese studies”. Regardless of the validity this new concept of huaqiao, what is important is that all the xin qiao (both new comers and the “new converts”) cannot and should not behave like the traditional old huaqiao. Politically, they remain to keep their allegiance to the country of which they are citizens. But socially, they should also show commitment and responsibility to the community in which they are taking residence, and readily embrace local culture and customs.

In this way, the xin qiao, however defined, can actually play a critical role in increasing the international understanding between China and the region, and this can ultimately serves the goal of promoting regional integration.

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Diasporic Dilemma and Economic Exigencies; Socioracial Relations and the State in an Ethnic Democracy

Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh*

Abstract

The political and socioeconomic problems confronting multi-ethnic societies have in recent years attracted increasing attention not only of the politicians and academics, but also the public at large, partly due to the impact of reethnicization of social segments and the widening of inequalities in various parts of the world due to political and economic transition. Although ethnic diversity is not an exclusive feature of the developing countries, it is nevertheless critically relevant to them, since economic deprivation or desperate poverty often heightens sensitivities and leads to unreasonableleness and distrust, creating barriers in searching for solutions based upon reasonable give and take. Taking into consideration the two major dimensions of ethnicities-ethnic politics and the politics of ethnicity-this paper investigates the role of the State in ethnically diverse societies, taking into consideration both polyethnic and bi-ethnic countries, as

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well as both homeland and homeland-diasporic configurations, with special reference to the case of a contemporary “ethnic democracy”.

**INTRODUCTION**

The political and socioeconomic problems confronting multi-ethnic societies have in recent years attracted increasing attention not only of the politicians and academics, but also the public at large, mainly due to the impact of reethnicization of social segments and the widening of inequalities in Eastern Europe and the Balkan conflicts after the collapse of communism. Although ethnic diversity is not an exclusive feature of the developing countries, it is nevertheless critically relevant to them, since economic deprivation or desperate poverty “unduly heightens sensitivities and breeds a general atmosphere of unreasonableness and distrust, making it immensely more difficult to attain solutions to outstanding problems on the basis of a reasonable give and take” (Vasil, 1984:12). Thus said, one should be mindful that the threat of ethnic unrest is not solely the bane of third world countries. *The Economist* observed in 1965 that the sizzling ethnic tension in Malaysia and Singapore at that time coincided with a week of race riots in Los Angeles, as well as ethnic violence in southern Sudan (cited in Ehrlich and Feldman, 1978:1). The threat of interethnic mistrust looms large and wide. It could both be the scourge afflicting the poor nations, and the sword of Damocles even in times of prosperity.

**MALAYSIA: ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND STATE ACTION**

The seed of Malaysia’s ethnic problem (masalah kaum) today was sown in the late nineteenth century when large-scale Chinese immigration began after the British forced free trade treaties upon some rulers in the Malay peninsula to control tin supplies. Chinese presence in Malaya (as the peninsula was called), however, preceded British colonialism. The earliest record of a Chinese settlement there (in Melaka, Malaya’s earliest sultanate) was found in a 1613 treatise by de Eredia, a Portuguese. There is a Ming dynasty Chinese tomb dated 1622 in Melaka (Tan, 1984) and there are also other epigraphic records (grave-stones, ancestral tablets, etc.) pointing to the existence of a Chinese settlement in Melaka during the seventeenth century. However, large scale Chinese influx did not occur until the expansion of the tin mining industry in British Malaya in the mid-nineteenth century, which was followed by the importation of Indian labour to work in the rubber plantations.1

**Ethnic Corporateness**

While often considered to be a plural society *par excellence*, Malaysia in the days that led up to the 1969 ethnic strife more appropriately belongs to the category of “deeply divided societies” consisting of various ethnic groups that can be defined as “corporate groups”. A “corporate group” is defined by Weber (1947 tr.;145) as a “social relationship which is either closed or
limits the admission of outsiders by rules”. It possesses a formalized system of authority, a concept Fried (1947) and Fortes (1953) later applied to descent groups. The corporateness of ethnic groups in Malaysia is marked by their relative stability. Religious boundaries play the most important role in perpetuating the practice of endogamy that serves to maintain ethnic group separateness over time. Moreover, as Zenner (1967) remarked, one development in the modern world has been “the constitution of the dominant ethnic group in a state as a corporate ethnicity”:

The nation-state, after all, fits Weber’s definition of the corporate group. Each state defines its rules of membership. In many cases, this is defined to favor the dominant ethnic group in the state.

(ilib.)

Furthermore, corporateness hinders social interaction and leads to racial stereotyping. “No man is an island, entirely of itself,” said John Donne, the greatest of the English metaphysical poets, in Devotions (1624). Social interaction—the building block of organized society—can be defined as the mutual and reciprocal influencing by two or more people of each other’s behaviour, or the interchange between one’s actions and those of other people (Vander Zanden, 1988; 167). In ethnic relations, the lack of social interaction leads to prejudice and stereotyping, and hate begets hate in a vicious process microsociologists call the Thomas theorem where fulfilment occurs unintentionally when people’s actions are based on stereotyping as if it were true. While “racial”—meaning phenotypical-differences is only skin deep, ethnic boundary as a process (à la Barth, 1969) tends to be tenacious and uncompromising, the manifestation of the age-old fourfold ascriptive loyalty of race, territoriality, language and religion. Closely interfacing with the politico-economic superstructure, ethnic mistrust more often than not makes many a best-intentioned effort in promoting interethnic harmony and national integration a Sisyphean endeavour. In spite of the continued global effort since UNESCO’s “Statements On Race” (1950, 1964, 1967) to dispel the “race fiction” (Gioseffi, 1993:xiii), interethnic mistrust and prejudice is still a worldwide phenomenon afflicting countries big and small, rich and poor. “Tros, Tyriusve mihi nullo discrimine agetur—Whether Trojan or Tyrian shall make no difference to me,” said Virgil (Aeneid, 19 BC), but the fact is; people still tend to look upon those who look, talk, act and dress differently as “others” that cannot be fully trusted. Psychologists’ experiments have shown that individuals tend to help others who are similar to them and racial differences between a victim and a potential helper affect the extent to which help is given (Bar-Tal, 1976, Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977, cited in McCarty, 1993). However, with ethnic relations becoming “a perplexing political issue overlapping with and sometimes displacing the issue of class” (Rex, 1983:xxi), the problem of ethnic conflict in the modern world needs to be examined from a broader perspective than the merely socio-psychological.

Superordinate-Subordinate Power-Size Configuration

Another aspect of the numerical structure of ethnicity refers to the role played by the relative size of ethnic groups in the soci-
etal power structure. The superordinate-subordinate relationship in a multiethnic society is related to the concept of “minority”. It avoids some of the definitional problems accompanying the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity”, especially those related to the nature and significance of different types of group markers. The concept of “minority”, instead, focuses on the size and strength of the groups involved, in terms of variations in the economic, political and social balance of power. Wirth (1945:347) defined a minority as “a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination”. This definition has been criticized because it makes the existence of minorities completely dependent on the feelings of minority group members, despite his caveat that minorities “objectively occupy a disadvantaged position in society” (ibid., 348). Wirth’s emphasis on the disadvantageous social position of the minority leads to his neglect of the latter’s numerical relationship to the wider society. For him, collective perception of their distinctive disadvantages is the decisive criterion that distinguishes minorities from other subordinate populations irrespective of their number, nature and disadvantage, as a people “whom we regard as a minority may actually, from a numerical standpoint, be a majority” (ibid., 349).

To put the Malaysian situation in context, a power-size configuration of ethnic groups is constructed below (Figure 1), which is similar to Moscovici’s diagram of group power-influence configuration (Moscovici, 1985:26). Based on this paradigm, a typology of multiethnic societies can be constructed, as illustrated in Figure 2.

![Power-Size Configuration of Ethnic Groups](image)

**Figure 1** Power-Size Configuration of Ethnic Groups

* The diagram is similar to Moscovici’s diagram of group power-influence configuration (Moscovici, 1985:26).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nd</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Id</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subordinate</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ns</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Js</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Figure 2** Typology of Multiethnic Societies

* This typology is based on the paradigm presented in the previous diagram.

Excluding case 4, Figure 2 shows a threefold typology of multiethnic societies. Case 2 represents a *Js*-Ns type of society.
which combines a subordinate demographic minority with a dominant demographic majority. Case 3 is an Nd-Js society in which the numerical majority is dominated by a demographic minority. The subordinate-superordinate intergroup relationship in a society with no obvious demographic majority-an Nd-Ns society—is represented by case 1.

Schwermerhorn redefined a minority as a variety of ethnic group, is part of the fourfold typology he developed to take account of the numerical and the power dimensions (ibid., 13):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Groups</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subordinate Groups</th>
<th>Size</th>
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<td>Group C</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group D</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 Schwermerhorn’s Fourfold typology of Ethnic relations

The fourfold typology includes not only “majority group” and “minority group”, which are dominant and subordinate respectively in terms of both size and power, but also “elite” and “mass subjects” where numerical superiority and power do not coincide. Societies that combine the subordinate numerical minorities (“minority groups”) with dominant demographic majorities (“majority groups”) (D + A), are contraposed as the structural opposites of those in which the numerical majority of “mass subjects” are dominated by a demographic minority, the “elite” (C + B). While it is undeniable that the typology provides a comprehensive picture of the dominant-subordinate relationship, the C+B case is rare in today’s world after the demise of Western colonialism in the Third World and the end of White rule in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa. Although the fact that such configuration is rare does not imply its total disappearance—two obvious examples are Rwanda and Burundi where the Hutu minorities are still politically dominated by the Tutsi minorities.

Cases 2 and 3 in Figure 2 thus correspond to Schwermerhorn’s AD and BC configurations (1970: 13) respectively. However, since societies containing disadvantaged demographic minorities do not necessarily have the complementary majorities that Schwermerhorn postulated (e.g., Niger, Nigeria, Liberia, Benin, see Smith, 1986), the inclusion of case 1 is necessary.

Such a typology can be considered exhaustive, since “race relations are essentially group power contests” (Baker, 1978: 316) wherein symmetrical power relationships among groups are rare and often transient.

Whatever the power relationship (symmetrical, where both are equal, or asymmetrical, where one is dominant), each group may initiate action or respond to the acts, or anticipated acts, of others … Given changing circumstances over time, group power capabilities (measured in terms of group resources, additive resources, mobilization capabilities and situations) may alter, thereby transforming the character of group power relations. At any given moment in time (T1) the power of A may be equal to that of B (symmetrical), at a later period (T2) that of A may be superior to that of B (asymmetrical, with A dominant), or at another point (T3) that of A may be less than that of B (asymmetrical, with A subordinate).
The infrequency of a symmetrical power relationship was also noted by Hoetink in his study of slavery and race relations in the Americas:

*A race problem exists where two or more racially different groups belong to one social system and where one of these conceives the other as a threat on any level or in any context... One of the groups will commonly be perceived and perceive itself as dominant; the chances that two racially different groups within one society would attain an equilibrium of power, though not absent, are exceedingly small.*

(Hoetink, 1973:91)

Hoetink (1973:47-8) basically saw the multiethnic horizontally layered structure as a special form of *Herrschaftsüberlagerung* “a stratification consisting of at least two layers of which the upper layer has, as it were, moved over the lower one (by military conquest, colonial usurpation, and so forth) or the lower layer has been pushed under by the upper one (by subjugation, the importation of forced labour, and the like).” In societies with such horizontal ethnic division, stimulation of solidarities based on economic or class position may have an aggravating, rather than an ameliorating, effect on ethnic conflict. By contrast, in societies where ethnic divisional lines between the main population segments run vertically, it is likely that a functional relationship between economic differentiation and the increase of interethnic (horizontal) solidarities, such as those based on economic position, will emerge. These foster intercommunication and may serve to mitigate existing ethnic antagonisms. The two patterns of ethnic division are conceptually linked to the two different types of plural society—the hierarchic plurality (based on differential incorporation) and segmental plurality (based on equivalent or segmental incorporation). A society may combine both these modes of incorporation and form a complex plurality. Smith (1986:198) noted that the segmental and differential modes of incorporation generate quite distinct ethnic tensions and problems. Hoetink (1973:146-7) linked the two different patterns of ethnic division to the stability of multiethnic societies:

*It is interesting that the modern societies that often are put forward as examples of reasonably well-functioning cultural heterogeneity, such as Belgium, Switzerland, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, all have vertical cultural boundaries, to the point that their cultural segments even have territories of their own with a certain degree of cultural and sometimes political autonomy. Although European history shows many cases of repression, expulsion, or political elimination of such territorially limited cultural minorities, and although it would be naive to underestimate the still-existing cultural and political tensions in countries like Belgium or Great Britain, it is correct to assume that a minimum of horizontal interpenetration and communication gives these systems a certain viability.*

To this list, Hoetink added Suriname, Guiana and Trinidad. However, symmetrical power relationship among groups in a society is rare and often transient. For various reasons ranging
from demographic growth to economic ethos to social mobility, one of the groups usually achieves dominance in the long run, thus turning the vertical lines of ethnic division into horizontal ones. This can be illustrated with a diagram similar to that by Warner (1936) in his caste-class configuration for the U.S. Deep South.

Interethnic Power Shift

In short, symmetrical power relationship between groups in a society is rare and even if it emerges, tends to be transient. One of the groups will ultimately achieve dominance in the long run through demographic growth, economic achievement or some other factors, thus pivoting the vertical line of ethnic division into a horizontal one, as illustrated in Figure 4.\textsuperscript{5}

![Diagram of Interethnic Power Shift]

**Figure 4  Vertical v Horizontal Ethnic Division**

MALAYSIA: THE ETHNICITY-CLASS INTERFACE

With the typology of Figure 2 in mind, one can discern an important numerical aspect in maintaining ethnic corporateness among the Malaysian Chinese. Unlike the case of Indonesia, the Chinese in Malaysia are sufficiently sizeable not to constitute a demographic minority in the strict sense of the term. At independence in 1957, the demographically dominant ethnic group—the Malays, together with the aboriginals, constituted about 50 per cent of the population of Malaya (the Peninsula and the predominantly Chinese Singapore which later left the federation in 1965), followed by 37 per cent Chinese, 11 per cent Indians and 2 per cent others. The figures today are as follows: 65 per cent *Bumiputera* (52 per cent Malays and 13 per cent Peninsular Aboriginals/Borneo Natives), 26 per cent Chinese, 8 per cent Indians and 1 per cent others (see Figure 6 below for ethnic distribution by state). *Bumiputera* (“prince of the land; son of the soil”) is an official collective term grouping together the Malays, the aboriginals and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak (both on the Borneo island) after these two regions joined the Peninsula in 1963 to form Malaysia. All Malays in Malaysia are by legal definition Muslims while the non-Malays are mostly non-Muslims.

Although the population of Malaysia consists of three major ethnic communities, it is often recognized as a bi-ethnic society, in terms of its intergroup power relationships. While ethnicity is essentially non-territorially based, it is as true today as
Furnivall’s observation (1948:304) half a century ago that, even where the ethnic groups are adjacent, they tend to maintain their separateness. They remain divided by the reinforcing cleavages of language, religion, customs, education, areas of residence and, though decreasingly, type of occupation. While ethnic diversity affects the role of the State, one of its manifestations being the trend and pattern of budgetary policy, it is not the ethnic composition per se but its interaction with the socioeconomic structure of the society concerned that really matters. The Weberian approach views ethnic group is being not “natural” (as kinship group is) but “rational” and primarily political.

Ethnic membership (Gemeinsamkeit) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity, not a group with concrete social action, like the latter. In our sense, ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere. On the other hand, it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the be-

lief in common ethnicity.

(Weber, 1968 tr. ³;389)

Contrast the Weberian approach with Geertz’s approach in his 1963 paper on the effect of “primordial sentiments” on civil politics:

By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the “givens”—or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed “givens”—of social existence: immediate contiguity[sic] and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves.

(Geertz, 1963;109)
Today, studies on intergroup relations usually see ethnicity not as a “given” of social existence, but a political construct linked directly to power relations and resource competition. Take the case of Malaysia. According to Cheah (1984), the Malay ethnic identity (bangsa Melayu) was a creation after 1939 in response to the perceived threat from the increasingly politicized immigrants from China and India. The notion of a Malay race had therefore hitherto been absent, as Cheah elaborated:

... the Malays rose to confront what they considered threats posed by the immigrant races to their rights, but the Malays themselves had not been united as a race or a “bangsa”, and moreover they had not found a way to solve differences among themselves ... [Such differences] were nurtured by the strong provincial feeling among the “provincial Malays” (such as the Kelantan Malays, Perak Malays and so on), DKA Malays (those of Arab descent) and DKK Malays (those of Indian descent) ... [There were also] tribal divisions, such as the Bagis, Minangkabau, Javanese, etc. 

The first open suggestion of a “Malay people” (orang Melayu) came only in 1939 when Ibrahim Yaacob (or I.K. Agastja by his Indonesian name) championed the notion of a unified Malay race across Malaya and Indonesia which he christened Melayu Raya or Indonesia Raya. The boundary marker of ethnicity was thus mobilized to meet the rising need of identity investment for economic/political purposes (the “situation theories” of ethnicity, see Barth, 1969). A further stage of political ethnicization came after the 1969 riots in the creation of the “Bumiputra” race (kaum Bumiputra, as defined earlier). In a different setting, Heiberg (1979) made similar observation that for political purposes, descent has never been regarded by the Basques in Spain as a sufficient criterion for ethnic inclusion. “Basqueness” is measured instead in terms of adherence to certain morally-loaded political and social prescriptions, or more specifically, whether one is a Basque nationalist. Thus it is as an instrument for political mobilization that ethnicity often plays a key role in the interplay between group activities and public policy. By the same token the importance of the ethnic factor in understanding the role of the State in Malaysia does not diminish the significance of contention between social classes.

POLITICS AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN MALAYSIA: A HISTORY OF EVOLUTION

The first decade after independence saw the ascendancy of the class fraction often called “bureaucrat capitalists” or “statist capitalists” (Jomo, 1986,244). The United Malay National Organization (UMNO) which dominated the ruling Alliance coalition—the other members were the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC)—was born as a coalition of different Malay organizations formed specifically in opposition to the British proposal in 1946 to establish a Malayan Union with citizenship laws granting equal rights to all persons domiciled in the country. The proposal, from the Malay point of view, denied that Malaya belongs to the Malays and the granting of equal rights to the non-Malays would cause the disappearance
of the special position and privileges of the Malays. As a result of the Malay protest, the Malayan Union project was replaced by the Federation of Malaya Agreement that recognized the special position of the Malays as the indigenous people of the country and dropped the principle of *jus soli* with regard to citizenship of the non-Malays as stipulated in the former proposal.

After the formation of the Federation of Malaya, and subsequently Malaysia incorporating former British colony on the Borneo island (except the enclave of Brunei), a distinctive feature of the local society is the absence of the Malay bourgeoisie. The ruling coalition at this stage represented an alliance of class interests, sharing a common stake in the preservation of the capitalist order. Instead of mounting a challenge against the more established capitalist interests, during the first decade after independence these ruling “administrators” were constrained by the “Alliance contract”, often represented in the formula; “politics for the Malays, the economy for the Chinese”.  

Meanwhile, contradictions generated between such incompatible class fractional identity and ethnic allegiance bred discontent and instability. Husin (1984) provided a simplified illustration of such contradictions:

With M denoting Malay, C Chinese, E elite and Ms masses respectively, the vertical division shows the Malay-Chinese ethnic grouping, while the horizontal one indicates the elite-masses socioeconomic class grouping. Three types of relations are evident here: *vertical relations*, between Malay elite and their masses (a), and Chinese elite and their masses (b); *horizontal relations*, between Malay elite and their Chinese counterpart (c), and Malay masses and their Chinese counterpart (d); *diagonal relations*, between Malay elite and Chinese masses (e) and Chinese elite and Malay masses (f). Intra-ethnic relations are shown by vertical arrows, inter-ethnic ones by the horizontal and diagonal. This typology closely resembles Bonacich’s (1979, 56-57) configuration of class and ethnic relations resulting from imperialism.

Although the economy in this period remained a laissez-faire system, it was marked by specialization of economic activities along ethnic lines. Most Malays continued to live in rural areas, playing their traditional roles as padi farmers, fishermen and rubber smallholders. The majority of the Chinese population were concentrated in urban and semi-urban areas, engaging in trade and commerce or working in tin mines. Most Indians, on the other hand, were rubber estate workers, the rest being mainly professionals. The type of cohesive forces—common economic and political interests—working among the elites was conspicuously missing among the masses. In Husin’s words, economically the Malay and Chinese peasants may belong to a com-
severe contradictions, while official suppression and proscription of class-based organizations, e.g., the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), and ideologies transcending ethnic lines led inevitably to increasing political mobilization on such lines. In such a situation, as Adam (1985) observed in South Africa, "few prospects exist for a traditional consociational élite-cartel which is based on a de-ideologized integration by deference". Since the grand élite coalition of the divided segments “hinges on the acceptance of controversial alliances and disappointing compromises by the grass-roots following . . . tolerance threshold towards ambiguous manoeuvring by group representatives stands much lower once those represented have become mobilized” (Adam, 1985: 285). Against the backdrop of a harsh economic environment, growing inequality and increasing unemployment, frustrations felt by the nascent Malay bourgeoisie and those with such class aspirations were increasingly directed at the already entrenched, most visibly Chinese, bourgeoisie, as well as at the UMNO led Alliance which was perceived not to have done enough for them. The visibly ethnic patterns of employment and the strong identification of ethnicity with class led to a displacement of class-based frustrations by ethnic ones. Furthermore, while class mobilization may act to override ethnic distinctions, ethnic mobilization can obliterate internal class distinctions (Brass, 1985: 23). After the virtual elimination of the legal Left in the mid and late 1960s, essentially racialist political ideologies went unchallenged. As a result, the deteriorating socioeconomic and political situation in the 1960s was increasingly interpreted in ethnic terms, with the State becoming the greatest resource sought by élites in conflict and ethnicity being a “symbolic” instrument to
wrest control of this resource, paving the way to the racial riots of 1969:

Elites who seek to gain control over or who have succeeded in gaining control over the state must either suppress and control ... or establish collaborative alliances with other elites. When elites in conflict lack the bureaucratic apparatus or the instruments of violence to compete effectively, they will use symbolic resources in the struggle. When elites in conflict come from different cultural, linguistic, or religious groups, the symbolic resources used will emphasize those differences.

(Brass, 1985:29-30)

Mutually Reinforcing and Crosscutting Cleavages

In the linking of ethnic fragmentation to class differentiation, the extent to which various ethnic cleavages cut across the socioeconomic ones is a particularly important factor underlying the tragic events of 1969. Lijphart's remarks on religious cleavage are equally applicable to racial and linguistic ones:

If, for example, the religious cleavage and the social class cleavage crosscut to a high degree, the different religious groups will tend to feel equal. If, on the other hand, the two cleavages tend to coincide, one of the groups is bound to feel resentment over its inferior status and unjustly meager share of material rewards.

(Lijphart, 1977:75)

The grave consequences of non-crosscutting ethnic and socioeconomic cleavages are evident in the case of Northern Ireland and pre—1970 Malaysia. Such cases seem to vindicate Newman's proposition that "[the] greater the degree of reward disparity and social segregation between a dominant and a subordinate group, the greater the likelihood that conflicts between them will be relatively intense" or even violent (Newman, 1973:158 9). Newman, however, also proposed that while conflicts in this case tend to be intense, they are relatively infrequent due to limitation in intergroup contacts and the resource deprivation of the subordinate group. This is the case where each social conflict situation produces exactly the same pattern of domination and subordination. Dahrendorf (1959) called this phenomenon “superimposition” of conflict, which reflects the coinciding of cleavages stated above. Infrequent it may be, the ascent by an economically subordinate group to political dominance proved to be a fertile ground for turning suppressed grievances into open intergroup strife which in May 1969 led to the severe ethnic conflict on the streets of Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere in the country.

The “New Realism” and “Coercive Consociationalism”

The aftermath of the riots saw the replacement of the Alliance by the National Front (a considerably expanded grand coalition), the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1971, revisions to the Sedition Act “entrenching” ethnically sensitive issues (citizenship, Malay as national language, Islam as official religion, Malay special rights, the Malay Rulers) in the Constitution, and prohibiting the questioning, even in Parliament, of these issues. A “new realism” was called for meaning a reformulation of the
terms of consociation into accommodation essentially on the terms of the demographic majority; as Mauzy (1993:111) put it, "the fiction of a government of nearly equal ethnic partners was no longer maintained". Brass (op. cit., 23) observed that interethnic class collaboration may take two forms: a limited, informal economic collaboration or identity of interests that does not extend to social and political relationships where ethnicity may remain primary, or one involving more institutionalized relationships where élites from different ethnic groups collaborate on a regular basis to preserve both ethnic separateness and interethnic élite dominance in relation to the subordinate classes. Crossing the watershed of 1969, the Malaysian political scene moved from the latter to the former. The political realignment resulting from the "new realism" was termed by Mauzy (op. cit.) "coercive consociationalism". This is what Smooha (1990) called "ethnic democracy". This is a regime type which Runley and Yiftachel (1990) believed succeeded in maintaining stability in a country with "homeland" majority-immigrant minority ethnic composition, but failed in bi-ethnic "homeland" states and regions like Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, where the ethnic sentiments of both groups are equally intense (Yiftachel, 1992). In such a democracy that is composed of both "homeland" and latecomer communities including their descendents, the situation is more complex than the pure "homeland"-and immigrant-multiethnic/biethnic categories. To understand this one needs to distinguish between two types of "homeland" movements (see Esman (1985). The first category refers to peoples who already possess their own territorial state, but feel threatened by the "invasion" of latecomers, who may reduce them to the status of a demographic minority in their own homeland and eventually assume control both of the State and of the economy. The second refers to ethnoregionalism-movements "directed not at immigrants but at the central state, to protect or redeem the homeland, its culture, and its economy from neglect, encroachments, or domination by an alien central government and the ethnic groups it represents" (Esman, 1985:439). The first type is particularly of interest here. In this case, the political mobilization of the homeland peoples has been triggered and sustained by the fear of being overwhelmed and dispossessed by the (economically) aggressive latecomers and their descendents. The reactive "homeland" movements by the native peoples thus aim to retain control of the State, economy and of their ancestral homeland. Their strategy is to "terminate and if possible to reverse the flow of immigration, to entrench the political, economic, and cultural position of native sons by preferential rules and by limiting the rights and opportunities of immigrants" (ibid., 438). This deviation from the ethnic-neutral position of the State led Smooha (1990) to proclaim the limitation of the explanatory powers of the two conventional models of multiethnic democracies, majoritarian and consociational, and propose a third regime type: the "ethnic democracy". In an ethnic democracy, while individual civil rights are enjoyed universally and certain collective rights are extended to ethnic minorities, the State is institutionally dominated by the majority. 14

**Public Policy in an "Ethnic Democracy"**

After the 1969 election and riots there came a drastic reorientation of some government policies and programmes. Thus
commenced the third phase of planning that spanned the period of the Second (1971-75), Third (1976-80) and Fourth (1981-85) Malaysia Plans, which began with the launching of the First Outline Perspective Plan (OPP1, 1971-90) involving an enlarged, more interventionist role for the State. The new development strategy, the New Economic Policy (NEP), officially possessed two major objectives. First, it aimed to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race. Secondly, it sought to accelerate the restructuring of Malaysian society by correcting economic imbalances in order to reduce and eventually eliminate the ethnic division of labour (OPP115; 1). Specifically, it was expected that by the year 1990 “at least 30 per cent of the total commercial and industrial activities in all categories and scales of operation should have participation by Malays and other indigenous people in terms of ownership and management” (2MP10; 158). To achieve the second prong of the NEP, it was envisaged that the State will “participate more directly in the establishment and operation of a wide range of productive enterprises” (ibid. 7). This was to be accomplished through wholly-owned enterprises and joint ventures with the private sector. Direct participation by the government in commercial and industrial activities was a significant departure from past practice. The objective of an interventionist role of the State was to establish new industrial activities in selected growth centres and to create a Bumiputera commercial and industrial community.

Public expenditure allocation in Malaysia illustrates well how the question of class may come into conflict with ethnicity-based considerations in the formulation of State policy. Allocation decision has been, above all, heavily influenced by the uneven emphasis placed upon the restructuring strategy at the expense of the poverty eradication prong of the NEP. It is interesting to note that demographic majority of the country should still be the principal beneficiaries of an alternative ethnic-neutral, class-based, policy concentrating on poverty eradication since the majority of the poor belong to this ethnic group. However, advocates of the NEP would be quick to suggest that the long-run elimination of historical identification of ethnicity with class (both in employment pattern and capitalist ownership, as reflected in the simplistic and misleading representation of a “Chinese capitalists vs Malay peasants” paradigm) will implicitly highlight class rather than ethnic divisions.

The growing emphasis during the 1970s and early 1980s on one of NEP’s two major objectives, viz. to “restructure society” so as to abolish the identification of ethnicity with economic function (the other being poverty eradication), was reflected in a concerted effort to create, expand and consolidate the Malay capitalist and middle classes through extensive use of the public sector and State intervention. Besides employment and education, such restructuring mainly concerns the redistribution of stock ownership in the modern corporate sector which involves only a small minority of the population, thus reflecting the dominance of capitalist interests in defining supposedly ethnic ones (Jomo, 1989). Another observer, Sowell (1990), questioned the effectiveness of NEP’s aim to narrow the income gap between the Malays and the Chinese. To begin with, part of the Chinese relative affluence compared with the Malays, which forms the moral ba-
sis for these preferential policies, in fact "reflects the greater urbanization of the Chinese and to that extent overstates the real economic differences, in so far as urban dwellers pay for some goods that rural dwellers supply for themselves" (p. 49). As Sowell observed, in 1984, after more than a decade of preferential policies, the Chinese continued to outnumber the Malays absolutely in such private sector occupations as doctors, engineers, accountants, architects and lawyers. The Malays were even outnumbered by the small Indian minority in callings such as dentists and veterinary surgeons (ibid., 51, computed from Fifth Malaysia Plan data). One explanation of these puzzling trends is to see NEP, instead of an inevitable development of a simple interethnic rivalry, as representing a new stage in the horizontal inter-"ethclass" contention.

**Horizontal Inter-ethclass Contention**

The concept of "ethclass" was first proposed by Gordon (1964:53) to help explain the relevance of ethnicity and class to how people interact and develop their primary group relations. Gordon defined ethclass as "the portion of social space created by the intersection of the ethnic group with the social class" (Gordon, 1978:134). Such view is to see "ethnicity" and "class", as Hall (1980) did, not as a dichotomy, but related in such a way that neither can be fully understood through discrete modes of analysis. Hall's view, which was presented in his influential 1980 paper, considers "race" and "class" as forming part of a complex dialectical relation in contemporary capitalism, and was summed up by Solomos (1986:92) as follows:

"Race" has a concrete impact on the class consciousness and organisation of all classes and class factions. But "class" in turn has a reciprocal relationship with "race", and it is the articulation between the two which is crucial, not their separateness.

According to Gordon, people from the same social class but different ethnic groups have behavioural similarities in common, while people from the same ethnic group but different social classes share a sense of peoplehood or historical identification. Only when people are from the same ethnic group as well as social class do they share both behavioural similarities and historical identification and thus develop a sense of participational identity. Husin's illustration of the race and class relations in Malaysia (Figure 7) thus presents four ethclasses-Malay elite (ME), Chinese elite (CE), Malay masses (MMs) and Chinese masses (CMs). Before the 1969 election and riots, as Husin rightly pointed out, the horizontal inter-ethclass relations, which resulted in the "hands off" approach of the State in the economy, was principally characterized by a common desire to minimize conflict and attempts to accommodate members from each other into their respective spheres of predominance.

Some members of the Chinese elite are absorbed into the political power structure dominated by the Malay elite ... On the other hand, members of the Malay elite, especially those who have retired from senior positions in administration and politics are welcomed by some Chinese businessmen as directors in their economic ventures. Common political and economic interests, al-
ready strong among them, are further strengthened by social and sporting activities and membership of exclusive clubs consonant with their social prestige.

(Husin, *op. cit.*, 28)

Such interethnic class affinity noted by Husin finds resonance in Gordon’s hypothesis that social class is more important than ethnic group in determining one’s cultural behaviour and values (Gordon, 1964). However, hiding under this fragile façade of accommodation, resource competition between the nascent Malay bourgeois class and its aspirants and the established Chinese capitalists foreboded increasing conflict horizontally across the ethclasses. “Almost by definition ethnic groups are competitive for the strategic resources of their respective societies”, Skinner (1975:131) asserted, because they are sociocultural entities that consider themselves distinct from each other and, according to Cox (1970:317), most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms. Moreover, Oiite (1975:128) observed that conflicts that occur between ethnic groups have a strong tendency to divide élites along ethnic lines, thus undermining the class ties transcending their ethnic differences. It is in this perspective that Toh (1982:448) saw NEP basically as “a manifestation of the initial victory registered by the Malay petit bourgeois class in its previous contention with the other dominant capitalist classes”, with the “restructuring” prong as a consolidated effort backing the ascending Malay bourgeois and petty bourgeoisie using public funds and the State machinery on a massive scale. The official term “restructuring” has never meant altering the socioeconomic relations between classes or strata, but rather an intervention in such horizontal inter-ethclass relations. Nevertheless, as Jomo (1986:302) observed, the most acute interethnic conflict resulted from NEP’s “affirmative action” occurs among the so-called “middle-class” (or “petty bourgeoisie”), mainly over educational, employment, business and promotional opportunities and facilities. This is not surprising given that the common political and economic interests and social activities shared by the Malay and Chinese bourgeois class, which effectively inject an element of accommodation and collaboration into inter-ethclass rivalry, was conspicuously absent from the relationship between the middle classes of the two ethnic groups. Besides, the very nature of middle class concerns education, jobs, promotions—also has broader popular appeal than the narrower concerns of the bourgeoisie, such as the 30 per cent target of the NEP or the industrial Coordination Act. All this resulted in an inter-ethclass rivalry which is far more acute at the middle-class level than at the upper-class one, and has wider ramifications in the total society. Toh concluded in his thesis that efforts by the Malaysian State to restructure employment have an element of class biasedness in that the bulk of the efforts, particularly those operating on the supply side, are concentrated on creating a high income-earning class of Malay managers, executives and professionals as well as a middle class of sub-professionals and technicians (p. 449). Echoing Rabushka’s (1974) argument, Toh also contended that the ostensibly ethnically biased role of the Malaysian State, deemed necessary to eliminate the ethnic division of labour as a source of ethnic conflict, in turn further intensified racial contention, in a process he called “the dialectics of post NEP development” (p. 450).
Relative Strength of Contending Ethnic Movements

The exact policy outcome in a multiethnic state also depends on the strength of the contending ethnic movements. Esman (1985) identified three types of immigrant movements. The first evolved from the organized migration of settlers into areas inhabited by peoples commanding weaker technological resources, who are subdued and displaced, e.g., the ethnic Europeanization of the Americas, New Zealand and Australia. In this case, the homeland movement of the native peoples (the American Indians, Maoris and Australian aborigines), reduced to impotent and impoverished minority status, is usually of little significance. The second category of immigrant movements is the result of labour migration into established societies, e.g., the Third World “guest workers” in the industrialized countries, such as the Turkish Gastarbeiter in Germany or the Pakistanis in West Yorkshire, England. Ethnic movements organized and led by their second generation usually demand non-discrimination in education and employment, full inclusion as citizens and toleration for cultural differences. Esman’s third category refers to the migrations of “pariah entrepreneurs”-ethnic communities that moved into peasant societies and established themselves in previously unoccupied economic space as a business class. Many of them became comprador merchants under colonial rule. Nevertheless, Esman was obviously oblivious of the fact that members of these migrant communities also included labour moved in mainly under colonial indenture or assisted immigration systems. Such immigrant labour sometimes served to enhance the interests of capitalists of the same ethnicity. For instance in British Malaya.

Chinese capitalist control of tin mining persisted long after British intervention in the tin producing Malay States because of effective and exclusive control over Chinese labour. Relying on “labour-intensive” production techniques, the minimization of the wage bill was key to their viability and profitability. In the absence of a local proletariat, Chinese capitalists chose to employ an immigrant [Chinese] proletariat they controlled by a variety of economic and extra-economic means [including the secret societies which] were transformed into quasi-welfare organizations serving multifarious functions in the uncertain frontier society and embracing most strata of the Chinese community.

(Jomo, 1988:162-3)

For such communities and their descendants, their relative prosperity, real or perceived, “inevitably incites envy, their disinclination to integrate into the native society provokes resentment, and their minority status renders them vulnerable to political attack” (Esman, op. cit.; 440). The effect of the historical geography of ethnicity on contemporary ethnic relations thus plays an important role in influencing ethnic fractionalization as a determinant of State action (and government spending) which in turn, in a democracy, can be seen as “an inherently political process” (Tufte, 1978) under which the collective action of groups furthers their own interests (Pampel and Williamson, 1989:40).

Concentrated v Dispersed Minorities

There are various patterns of demographic intermingling,
Groups can be intermingled on a regional scale—regions are heterogeneous but small communities are homogeneous, as in Malaysia in the 1960s and 70s, or on a local scale where even small communities are heterogeneous, as in Sarajevo and many parts of Bosnia-Hercegovina before the recent war (van Evera, 1994). The power relationship between the dominant and the subordinate groups is influenced by the extent to which the latter is located in a particular regional (or urban) setting—whether it is a “concentrated” or “dispersed” community (van Amersfoort, 1978:229). A subordinate group that forms a numerical majority in certain regions of a state (or lives in large numbers in inner city areas, like the Pakistanis in Bradford, England) may have greater political-economic leverage than a more “dispersed” community. In terms of political influence in a democracy, Lee (1983) noted that the vote of a concentrated minority may be more effective than that of a dispersed community under a “winner takes all” electoral system. It has also been observed that geographical correlation of territorially concentrated ethnic minority distribution and poverty population distribution tends to add volatility to the intergroup relationship between the central state and the regions (Yeoh, 2008:33-37).

Van Amersfoort (1978) has attempted to derive a typology of “majority-minority” relations by combining the orientations of dispersed and concentrated subordinate groups with three dimensions of dominant group aspirations. Using the terms “dominant” (or “superordinate”) and “subordinate” that convey more accurately the power dimension, instead of van Amersfoort’s “majority” and “minority” which can be semantically confusing when size and power do not coincide, Table 1 illustrates a number of probable outcomes produced by this configuration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Typology of Dominant-Subordinate Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>orientation of dominant group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emancipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 demonstrates that a stable relationship between the dominants and subordinates free of conflict is an exception rather than a rule, since only two out of a total of twelve cells formed by the interface of dominant-subordinate orientations those marked “emancipation process” and “federalism” suggest the prospect of a stable form of participation in society by subordinate groups. Federalism, while representing the current state response to ethnic conflict in more and more countries characterized by ethnoterritoriality, for instance, the western democracies of Spain and Belgium, is still far from being a prevalent phenomenon in the world context. Anyway, such is not a choice readily available for Malaysia, where the ethnic divide is not territorial (see Figure 6), and where the mutually reinforcing ethnic and economic cleavages are easily turning a class problem into an ethnic one.20
ETHNIC SEGREGATION IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

One of the factors accounted for the perpetuation of considerable social distance between ethnic groups lies in the school system. Take the example of the Chinese-medium schools. Originally founded by the Chinese community through private donations from within the community, these primary schools have since the country’s independence in 1957 become part of the National Educational System (See Tables 2, 3 and 4). However, to retain the Chinese language as medium of instruction, these “National-type” schools are not owned by the government whose educational policy is Malay monolingual. They are categorized as “government-aided” and only eligible for limited “matching grants” for development purposes. Financial support from the Chinese community itself is therefore crucial for their continuous survival.

Table 2 Number of Government-Aided Schools, 1976—2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay-medium “national-type” schools</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>1231</td>
<td>2172</td>
<td>2285</td>
<td>2737</td>
<td>1549</td>
<td>4804</td>
<td>5001</td>
<td>5211</td>
<td>5487</td>
<td>5723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-medium schools</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-medium “national-type” primary schools</td>
<td>1134</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1032</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>1807</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1289</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>1286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil-medium “national-type” primary schools</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“National” schools (special)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2308</td>
<td>2551</td>
<td>2441</td>
<td>4431</td>
<td>6435</td>
<td>6852</td>
<td>6859</td>
<td>7057</td>
<td>7126</td>
<td>7562</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kuppusamy (2005)

Diasporic Dilemma and Economic Exigencies: Socioeconomic Relations and the State in an Ethnic Democracy

Table 3 Number of Government-Aided Schools in Malaysia by State and Medium of Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Chinese-medium “national-type” primary schools [SRJK(C)]</th>
<th>Tamil-medium “national-type” primary schools [SRJK(T)]</th>
<th>Malay-medium “national” schools [SK/SRK]</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Territory</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negri Sembilan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melaka</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1722</td>
<td>1808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sia (2005:50), Jadual (Table 2.5).

Table 4 Number of Government-Aided Primary Schools in Malaysia by Type of Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Type of aid</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay-medium “national” schools [SK]</td>
<td>3807</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-medium “national-type” primary schools [SRJK(C)]</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil-medium “national-type” primary schools [SRJK(T)]</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“National” schools [Special]</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5309</td>
<td>1604</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sia (2005:41), Jadual (Table 2.3).

Since 1970, the issue of Chinese primary schools has always been used as symbol for ethnic mobilization and sending one’s children to these schools is increasingly viewed as an expression of Chinese ethnicity. The prospect of these schools being converted into Malay-medium ones, a threat posed by clause 21(2) of
the Education Act 1961\(^2\), has been regarded as a direct menace to the Chinese ethnic identity.

Another important development within the Chinese community since the 1970s has been the revival of the independent Chinese secondary schools. In 1962, all Chinese secondary schools were forced to choose between conversion to either Malay-medium “National” secondary schools or English-medium “National-type” ones (which were later also converted into Malay-medium) and be eligible for government assistance or to be independent and ineligible for government funding. The majority of them converted. Problem thus arises for the Chinese primary school leavers due to their inability to cope with the Malay language requirements in the “National-type” secondary schools. The Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (ICSS) Movement since the 1970s is aimed at remedying this situation. Completely funded by donations from the Chinese community, these independent schools which total 60 at present, together with the Chinese primary schools (which are categorized as “government aided” eligible for limited matching grants but whose survival depends crucially upon financial support from the Chinese community), have always been viewed as the last bastion of Chinese ethnic identity.

The development of the vernacular schools in Malaysia (see Table 4) shows how in addition to diverse preferences about the quantity of public provision, tastes are also differentiated regarding the kind of service consumed. Private production of quasi public goods is a response to the latter differentiation, if it is not accommodated by government production. A prominent good in this category is education. As Collins (1975:87) remarked:

Schools everywhere are established originally to pass on a particular form of religion or elite class culture, and are expanded in the interests of political indoctrination or ethnic hegemony. In these situations, education is nothing more than ethnic or class culture, although it can be taught to those who are not born into it.

The present ethnic segregation in the Malaysian school system recently came into the limelight again in a 2004 announcement by the Malaysian Prime Minister that only two percent of Chinese students attended government schools. Likewise, it was estimated that only a small percentage of non-Chinese students (about 60,000) attended Chinese vernacular schools. Inevitably, as Malaysian students of various ethnicities leave schools, they tend to bring along with them the effect of their inadequate interethnic socialization in their earlier educational environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Enrolment in Government-Aided School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay-medium “national” schools</td>
<td>56904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-medium schools</td>
<td>32141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-medium “national-type” primary schools</td>
<td>47411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil-medium “national-type” primary schools</td>
<td>22820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“National” schools (special)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>359270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures include pre-school enrolment.
* Figures up to the year 1971 were for West Malaysia only.
Source: Kappanany (2005).
Education as Pseudo-ethnicity

One particular aspect of public policy—and the societal response it engenders—is a multiethnic polity that deserves attention is that pertaining to education. As one of the most important contributors to cultural distinctions, education can be seen as pseudo-ethnicity—a subcase of the same processes that also produce ethnicity (ibid., 86). Diverse preferences on the type of education (in terms of the type of cultural norm or religious value transmitted, or the language medium of instruction) have led some researchers to suggest that, ceteris paribus, the higher the degree of ethnic fractionalization, the higher the proportion of private provision of education.22

James (1987, 1993) examined the relationship between demographic diversity and the relative size of the public and private sectors in the provision of education. She argued that one motivation for private spending on schools is heterogeneous demand stemming from cultural diversity. McCarty (op. cit.; 227) cited the example of Catholic and “fundamentalist” schools in the United States which exist apart from the public school system as evidence that, minority groups dissatisfied with publicly provided goods that suit the tastes of the majority of voters, may create private markets for them. Each of these sources of private supply is motivated by ethnoreligious differences and ethnolinguistic diversity; for instance, the Chinese “independent” schools created and supported by private funds from the Malaysian Chinese community resistant to the monolingual national educational policy. As James (1987:4-5) noted:

The “melting pot theory” and the general belief in assimilation of minorities to majority values led to the “common school” movement in the nineteenth and twentieth century U.S.; the growth of Catholic private schools was a response by a group that did not want to be fully assimilated.

In Malaysia, besides the other effects and ramifications of preferential policy, the NEP period also witnessed important development in conflict regarding the provision of education.28 However, private provision of education, such as the Malaysian ICSS Movement29, in an ethnically diverse society is not a unique phenomenon. James (1984) observed the development of large private sectors in education in advanced industrial countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium that she argued resulted from differentiated rather than excess demand for education. Based on the view of Weisbrod (1975, 1977), James attempted to apply the “cultural heterogeneity” model to explain such private provision of education, especially at the primary level where linguistic ability and religious identification develops, and value formation takes place. It is evident that these sources of private supply are motivated by ethnoreligious differences and ethnolinguistic diversity. Therefore, private provision of such quasi-public goods like education can be seen as a response to the diverse preferences in a divided society regarding the kind, rather than the quantity, of goods that the State should provide.

While this argument seems generally applicable to the existence of private and semi-private Chinese schools in Malaysia, McCarty’s and James’s emphasis on cultural heterogeneity (based on religious or linguistic “primordial sentiments”) as the
source of such diverse preferences should not be taken for granted. Socioeconomic factors may actually play a more important role in the Malaysian case. For one thing, the cultural model is unable to explain why increasing number of Chinese parents were sending their children to English-medium schools during the 1960s. Loh (1984) observed that the enrolment in Chinese-medium primary schools declined from 33.3 per cent of total enrolment in 1957 to 27.8 per cent by 1970. The same trend was also evident in the case of Malay-medium schools albeit at a slower pace (from 47.3 down to 42.8 per cent). On the contrary, enrolment in English-medium schools rose significantly from 14 per cent of total enrolment to 23.8 per cent during the same period. It was only after the conversion of the English-medium schools into Malay-medium ones after 1970 that witnessed the increasing popularity of Chinese-medium schools.

What should not be overlooked is the role of language not only as a cultural pride but also as an instrument for socioeconomic advancement. Prior to 1970, English-medium education was perceived to be offering the best opportunity for social mobility. Deprived of this instrument after 1970, Chinese parents began to turn to schools using their own vernacular based on considerations more economic than cultural. With the implementation of the NEP since 1970, job market in the private sector has become increasingly important for the non-Malays since job opportunities in the public sector are extremely limited for them. Familiarity with the Chinese language becomes economically valuable for social advancement, especially for the Chinese families of the lower classes, given the strength of the Chinese in the country’s private sector economy. The case of Chinese private education in Malaysia, therefore, may serve to point out the inadequacy of the “cultural heterogeneity” model as advocated by James and McCarty in their explanation of how ethnic diversity affects the issue of public v private provision of quasi-public goods. Apparently, additional factors, especially those regarding class mobility, need to be considered in addition to ethnic diversity.

Ethnic Relations in Tertiary Educational Environment

After examining the issue of ethnic segregation in the school system, this section moves to look at the issue of ethnic social distance by focusing on the Malaysian tertiary educational environment as a microcosm of the Malaysian society.

Ethnic interactions are to a large extent influenced by individual attitudes towards people of different ethnic groups. In a multiethnic country like Malaysia, it is important to know how people from different ethnic groups feel towards one another, the reasons for ethnocentrism and what can be done to promote racial harmony and social cohesion. The notion of ethnic “exclusion” can be seen in terms of social distance that can be defined as the feeling of separation between individuals or groups. The figures that follow shows part of the findings of a survey conducted in 2002 on undergraduates (Yeoh, 2006). The survey results shown here are based on a modified version of the Bogardus social distance scale that asks the respondents to indicate their willingness to interact with various ethnic groups in certain social situations, which represent several levels of social distance. The five items employed here involve an increasing social distance as one moves down the list from whether the respondent will accept
a member of a particular group as one’s spouse, to close kinship by marriage to one’s relative, as a regular friend, as a neighbour, and as a colleague. Social distance is an important issue as it can often be self-fulfilling. When someone says that he or she cannot accept a certain group it is quite certain that he or she will avoid contacts with members of that group. As a result, the unfavourable stereotypes one holds towards that “out-group” are highly unlikely to be broken down, and this certainly does not augur well for inter-group harmony. Figure 9 shows that there is a rather high level of unwillingness to personally marry someone of a different ethnicity. A slightly less, but still strong, unwillingness exists to accept a member of such “out-groups” as spouse of one’s relative. In general, the respondents in this survey are willing to accept someone from ethnic groups not their own beyond the taboo of extending kinship ties (Figure 10). Even so, there exist quite remarkable differences among the sub-groups.

One’s willingness to accept members of different “out-groups” to a certain tie is influenced by many factors, ranging from the presence or absence of personal stereotyping to the degree of cultural differences, dietary prohibition, the requirement for religious conversion, and the like.

Historical Geography of Ethnicity

Ethnic interaction among students is to a large extent influenced by their place of origin and socioeconomic background. An important piece of background information of the 2002 undergraduate survey is the kind of home state they come from whether multiethnic or mainly monoethnic.

Multiethnic states are defined here as those with a degree of ethnic diversity above 50 percent, and mainly monoethnic states are those with a degree of ethnic diversity below 50 percent, with
the exception of the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak. Based on the 2000 population census data, the groupings of the multi-ethnic states and mainly monoethnic states are shown in Figures 11.

Figure 11

In terms of social distance, in general, the 2002 university student survey found that a significantly higher percentage of respondents from multiethnic states, in comparison with those from mainly monoethnic states, are more willing to marry members of ethnic groups which are not their own (Figure 12). The former are also more willing to accept members of other ethnic groups to marry their relatives. State differences can also be observed with respect to the next three categories of social distance indicators although the differences are less substantial (Figure 13). Such findings point to a higher degree of social distance among respondents from mainly monoethnic states, *vis à vis* those from multiethnic states, towards members of other ethnic groups. 29

Figure 12 Percentage who can accept others as spouse, by state of origin

Figure 13 Percentage who can accept member of other ethnic group as spouse, relative's spouse, etc., by state of origin
CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has examined the various theoretical and empirical aspects of ethnic relations and public policy in Malaysia. However, one final note needs to be made before ending the paper. As could be observed in the history of ethnic relations in Malaysia, one can hardly be oblivious to the effect of the economic environment on the relationship between public policy and ethnic conflict. That economic situations play an important role in interethnic conflict seems obvious. Collins (1975; 389-390) believed that the more severe a (political/economic) crisis, the greater the tendency for groups to coalesce along the lines of collective interests and the society to polarize into two-sided conflicts. Van Evera (1994; 9) claimed that the publics become receptive to scapegoat myths (which are more widely believed) when economic conditions deteriorate. Rex (1970) noted that scapegoating is a means to restore social equilibrium, a mechanism whereby resentment may be expressed and the existing power structure maintained. It is “the social process par excellence that literally fulfills Parsons’ description of one of his functional subsystems as pattern maintenance and tension management” (ibid.; 45). Bainbridge, Burkitt and Macey (1994: 432) observed that the deflationary impact of the Maastricht Treaty may intensify nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism “as the economically insecure seek weaker scapegoats to blame for the economic problems confronting them”. Hauser and Hauser (1972) stated that scapegoats occur when there is an imbalance between power and citizens’ rights and are “often an elite’s safeguard in its dealings with a dissatisfied and potentially dangerous majority” (p. 330). In other words, the repressed, negative and hostile feelings of the majority vis-à-vis its own ruling élite are transferred on to the scapegoat. This can be observed amidst the anti-Suharto campaigns in Indonesia before the regime’s collapse in which Chinese commercial institutions were attacked. In the extreme case, the scapegoat may seem to be totally unrelated to the initial cause of the feelings of hostility. The term “free-floating aggression” has been used in this case while the more general concept of “scapegoating” is reserved for the transfer of hostility towards any object (Turner and Killian, 1957; 19). The pattern of ethnic conflict caused by scapegoating may not be solely a racial problem, but may partly result from social class differential and the economic environment.

To sum up this paper, it has been noted that while the population of Malaysia consists of three major ethnic communities, in terms of intergroup power relationships, it has always been recognized as a bi-ethnic state a special, problematic type of multi-ethnic state, especially in view of its mutually reinforcing phenotypical, ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious cleavages. This is not just a plural society par excellence as it has always been considered, but also, especially in the years leading up to the 1969 ethnic strife, a “deeply divided society” (Yeoh, 2003a: 89-91) in which deep-rooted ethnic mistrust, closely interfacing with the politico-economic superstructure, more often than not makes many a best-intentioned effort in promoting interethnic harmony and national integration a futile endeavour. While ethnic rela-
tions have probably improved since Furnivall’s seminal study of 1948 and the turbulent days of the late—1960s, it is apparent that much still needs to be done in the days to come.

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See previous pages for citations and references.


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Note:
1 In retrospect, Gordon (1968:27) placed the blame for today's communal problem on the former colonial power; "The British may be historically responsible or rather irresponsible for it is they who allowed the wholesale penetration of the Malayana mainland by aliens, aliens in nationality, language and culture, without any policy of assimilation. It is they who built an economy without building a nation; it is they who brought forth the "cult of efficiency" regardless of the national repercussions."

2 However, some (e.g., Zainal Kling, 1984:172) questioned whether post-colonial Malaysia still qualified as a plural society (masyarakat majmuk) as defined by Furnivall (1948) or Loefchie (1968), taking into consideration the changes that had taken place since independence after the demise of the colonial "divide and rule" policy.

3 In contrast to the Chinese in Malaysia, the Chinese community in Thailand is a non-stable corporate group (Zenner, 1967) whose members are less resistant to assimilation, because of the absence of religious barriers and because in early days Chinese women could not immigrate to Thailand. Therefore interethnic marriage became a necessity.

4 The importance of this factor is evident in the prevalence of interethnic marriage in the early days, resulting in the emergence of the "Sritha Chinese" or "Baba" community, in the absence of the present legal requirement for the conversion of the non-Muslim partner in an interethnic marriage.

5 Figure 4 represents the relative positions of ethnic and class categories, but not their relative size. It expresses a combination of the horizontal and vertical principles of social differentiation. The diagonal lines A-B incorporate the status gap and divide ethnic group I from ethnic group II (Warner's (1936) "castes"). The two double-headed vertical arrows indicate that movement up and down the class ladders within each group can and does occur, but there is no movement across the ethnic line A-B (Warner's "caste line"). The ethnic line is pushed round its axis (C) towards a horizontal position when one group becomes dominant and the other, subordinate the exact power distribution and extent of dominance depend on the skewness, i.e., the angle of slant of the ethnic line. The test of the existence of a superordinate-subordinate relationship is to verify a group's dominant behaviour towards the other within the same class. Should the ethnic line reach the position d-e indicating a system of combined equality and separation the upper class of one ethnic group would be equivalent to that of the other, while the lower classes in each of the parallel groups would also be of the same social status. With the ethnic line tilted in the way shown in Figure 4, within each class level to which they have risen, members of group II are thought of as socially inferior to members of group I of the same class, until as individuals they become assimilated by the latter. In contrast to the vulgar Weberian perspective which argues that the increased ability of a bureaucratic State to realize internally generated goals will reduce the power of all societal groups "outside" the State, Poulantzas neo-Marxism posits that an "autonomous" State, capable of wideranging and coherent interventions in socioeconomic relations, increases the social power of the dominant class, whose objective and needs it necessarily functions to meet (Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, 1985). A dominant ethnic faction whose emergence is depicted as inevitable in Figure 4, thus, in line with the latter theory, would be served by a powerful State whose interests it concurs in.

6 For instance, the strict religious dietary prohibitions observed by the dominant group have been a barrier to social interaction as its members have to shun eating places for other groups. This is also partly a reason why there is always an uproar whenever a young member of a Chinese family is converted to the religion of the dominant group; s/he would be under pressure to leave the family in order to observe strictly such prohibitions as well as other related religious customs including way of dress.

7 Year refers to publication date of English translation. Weber's original manuscript was written between 1910 and 1914.

8 Translated from Cheah (1984:83).

9 However, perspectives such as Toh's which views the Malaysian State as a "class category seeking to promote the interests of the dominant capitalist class... by way of realizing and maintaining the organisational prerequisites
of the capitalist social order” (Toh, 1982:5) could be enhanced in its explanatory power by incorporating the ethnic variable. In this way one can avoid the pitfall of reductionist Marxism, in which, as Wolpe (1988:15) remarked, ethnicity “becomes merely an external instrument for the reproduction of class interests which are assumed to be entirely defined by the economic relation of production”. Rex’s remark that “what we call ‘race and ethnic relations situations’ is very often not the racial and ethnic factor as such but the injustice of elements in the class and status system” (1986a:xi-xii), which emphasizes the economic, political and social balance of power rather than biological or cultural characteristics of groups. Differences in power and the dynamic change of power resources over time are seen as the key to explaining racial and ethnic conflicts. Such a perspective enables parallels to be drawn, for instance, between the “religious” conflict in Northern Ireland and racial violence in the British urban areas, which at first sight may not seem to share much similarity. As Stone (1985:38) argued; “It is true that the sectarian gunman who enters a public house in Belfast and demands to know the religion of the drinkers before deciding who to murder has an identification problem not faced by the white racist intent upon attacking blacks in the streets of Brixton or Bradford. However... [both] incidents of violence take place against a background of differential group power, perpetuated over the years in customary patterns of social relations and institutions, and both are to some degree a legacy of colonialism.” Such a focus upon power differentials, and the conceptual problem associated with “race” and “ethnicity”, leads to the argument that the notion of “minority” is central to the analysis of race and ethnic relations.

12 Affirmative action and preferential treatment are “race-conscious” and “group-centred” strategies in contexts where the dominant policy form, particularly in liberal democracies, is individual-centred and “colour-blind” (Edwards, 1994:55).

13 While such simplistic representation was essentially false, since Malays with significant political power comprised only a small minority while only a small proportion of Chinese possessed considerable economic assets, it did capture the tone of the apparent compromise underlying the post-colonial government’s policies (Jomo, ibid., 246).

14 While segments A and C in Bonacich’s model represent the “imperialist (white) bourgeoisie” and “workers in the imperialist nation” (and segments B and D refer to their non-white counterparts in the colonies and semi-colonies), in the present context they may well be the non-Malay bourgeoisie and proletariat whose existence was a direct consequence of colonial policy and closely linked to the interests of the imperialist nation. While Bonacich’s model refers to classes in the Marxian sense of the word, Husin speaks about “elite” instead. According to Brass (1985:49), the term “elite” is not a substitute for “class”, but refers to formations within ethnic groups (e.g., the aristocratic class) and classes (e.g., the secular elites) that often play critical roles in ethnic mobilization. Each of these elites may choose to act in terms of ethnic or class appeals. What determines their action is neither their ethnicity nor their class, but rather their specific relationship to competing elites in struggles for control over their ethnic group, or in competition with persons from other ethnic groups for scarce political and economic benefits and resources.
enables the former to exercise, or attempt to exercise, politico-economic hegemony within the framework of democracy by seizing the control of the State and implementing government-mandated preferential policies (e.g., Fiji, the Indian state of Assam, at different critical structural periods) that usually lead to the expansion of the State, reflected in an increase in public expenditure. Prominent examples within this theoretical framework would include Malaysia where such policy impact has been an integral part of the politico-economic structure of the country since the 1970s, Fiji where such policy imperative has been in progress since the mid-1980s coup and the new South Africa where such policy direction is increasingly inevitable to aly the growing social discontent of newly empowered but economically backward ethnic majority. Among other countries where the politically dominant ethnic majority has in one way or another voted themselves preferences at one stage or another over the economically more successful minorities are Sri Lanka, Nigeria, various states of India, Indonesia, Uganda, Guyana, Trinidad and Sierra Leone (see e.g., Sowell, 1990). If the two communities are homeland-based with equal ethnic intensity, such an attempt by one may result in a breakdown of the democratic machinery, violent ethnic strife and ethnonationalism-the second type of homeland movement in the above typology, e.g., Sri Lanka, Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

Another factor that stands out here is the existence of borders that bisect nationalities, which are usually more troublesome than those that follow national demographic divides because the borders that bisect nationalities entrap parts of nationalities within the boundaries of states dominated by other ethnic groups (van Evera, 1994, 22). Revanchist tendencies of the adjacent truncated nations implicit or expressed or sympathy and support (including logistic or even arms support) from co-ethnics who are the group in power across the border often serve to fuel ethnic intensity of the minorities this side of the border or potential separatist regional sentiment of the entrapped nationalities, as in the case of Sri Lanka, Cyprus and Northern Ireland, in marked contrast to the absence of such borders for Malaysia and Fiji.

12. Similar conflicts also occur in other class strata. As Johnstone (1976) suggested regarding the South African situation, and Rex pointed out in the case of Britain, the "capitalist class has created basic distinctions between employed and unemployed", a framework in which workers from one ethnic group "fight for their own interests against ... workers [from another ethnic group]" (Rex, 1986b:76).
14. Non-democratic states may, of course, resort to other means, e.g., genocide, deportation.
15. The inability of the minority group to exercise control over its supposed representatives in the state apparatus also enables the state to preserve simultaneously both the status quo and the interests of the dominant group through the implementation of preferential policies in the favour of the latter.
16. The clause reads: "Where at any time the Minister is satisfied that a National-type primary school may suitably be converted into a National primary school, he may by order direct that the school shall become a National primary school."
17. For practical purposes, this can be measured either as “percentage of schools that are private” or “percentage of total enrollments in private schools” (James, 1987).
18. Specifically, in an earlier paper (1984) James argued that the “cultural heterogeneity” model best explains the development of large private sectors in advanced industrial countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium. Differentiated rather than excess demand is the moving force, especially at the primary level where linguistic ability and religious identification develop, and value formation takes place. In her 1987 study, she provided a theoretical model in which the relative size of the private sector in education is de-
terminated by excess demand, diverse preferences and the supply of nonprofit entrepreneurship in the society. Adopting Weisbrod’s (1975, 1977) view that the private sector is a market response to a situation where large groups of people are dissatisfied with the level or kind of public provision, she argued that there are two different patterns of private education—one motivated by excess demand, the other by diverse preferences (e.g. religious education, medium of instruction). A supply-side variable the availability of religious educational entrepreneurs helps to explain “why much private production in education is nonprofit [and] why much nonprofit production is in education” (James, 1987:1). James argued that the one by excess demand is more likely to be the case in developing countries, the other more likely in advanced industrial societies. This generalization, as the Malaysian experience shows, is not always true. James’s first type of demand is based on Weisbrod’s finding that, with a given tax structure, if the vote-maximizing government satisfies the median voter, part of the population will have a “left-over” demand for public goods (or quasi-public goods like education, with a certain degree of excludability) which they will try to satisfy privately (Weisbrod, 1977). There are two variants of differentiated demand-differentiated preferences about the kind of service and those about quality. James hypothesized that due to barriers to mobility (i.e. the difficulty for people with like tastes to move and congregate), considerable heterogeneity often exists within a local political unit. The local government’s inability (due to economics of scale, standardization or other political constraints) to satisfy such diversity results in private production as an institutional mechanism responding to diverse preferences without incurring the costs of overcoming barriers to mobility. Conducting regression analysis to explain variations in the size of the private sector across states within the United States, Japan, Netherlands and India, she found in all cases the religion variable to be highly significant. Her studies (1987, 1993) provide evidence that private spending on education is higher in countries with significant religious and linguistic heterogeneity. However, the relationship between ethnic fractionalization and private provision of education is subject to the influence of various external factors. Private provision may only be required when the government is constrained to offer a relatively uniform product, either the median voter’s preferred choice or a constraint imposed by national education policy (which set conditions on public provision) in line with the preferences of the demographically/politically dominant ethnic group (e.g. an assimilationist monocultural, unilingual educational approach). In this case the ethnic intensity of the dominant group (minority-respecting/minority-oppressing) vis-à-vis those of the other groups is also crucial. It reflects the “homeland”-latecomer dichotomy, determined by the degree of ethnic intensity and the tolerance for cultural heterogeneity (Connor, 1986; van Evers, 1994). On the other hand, private provision is only legally possible if the dominant ethnic group is not resolve in imposing its preferences. In addition, where preferential policy stipulates quotas on admission into public educational institutions in favour of certain ethnic groups—as under Malaysia’s New Economic Policy (NEP)—private provision becomes an exit for the others. Where ethnic groups are concentrated in different geographical areas, decentralization renders private provision unnecessary since local government can achieve the desired diversity. In other words, private provision is only required if the diversity in demand is so geographically dispersed that accommodation by local government provision is practically impossible. This is of course the condition that the central government does not have the resolve to impose the dominant group’s monocultural, unilingual educational policy to these ethnic regions.

24 The issue of education has always been a flashpoint in the country’s interethnic relations. While the October 1987 crackdown owed more to intra-ruling party struggle than any other factors, its pretext has been the heightening racial tension ensuing from the Chinese community’s protest against the appointment of non-Chinese speaking principals to “government-aided” Chinese primary schools.

25 The Independent Chinese Secondary Schools Movement spearheaded by the United Chinese Schools Teachers Association and the United Chinese Schools Committees Association (jointly known as Duongjiazong) since
the 1970s was a reaction to the conversion of the majority of Chinese secondary schools to either Malay-medium “National” secondary schools or English-medium “National-type” ones (which were later also converted into Malay-medium) in 1962.

24 It is also for the same reason that there has been student protest in Cambodia against the continuing preference for French, rather than English, in the country’s education policy. It is in fact not unreasonable to doubt the survival of these Chinese schools in Malaysia if national education policy has not brought about the demise of the English-medium schools. It is interesting to note that in neighbouring Singapore, which is 76 per cent Chinese, the vast majority of Chinese students are today enrolled in English-medium schools. More revealing is the substantial number of Chinese students from Malaysia more than 10,000 in 1985, according to Sowell (1990; 50) attending secondary schools in Singapore which teach in English, mainly to escape compulsory Malay-medium instruction in government schools in Malaysia.

25 The campus survey, funded by the Centre for Economic Development and Ethnic Relations (CEDER), University of Malaya (UM), was conducted in 2002 by the author and Mr N. P. Tey, an associate professor at the Department of Applied Statistics, Faculty of Economics and Administration (FEA), UM. The research team was led by Professor Jahara Yahaya, who was both the dean of FEA and the chairperson of CEDER. Dr Sulochana Nair and Mr H. A. Lee, both from the Department of Development Studies, FEA, commented on part of the initial design of the survey questionnaire. The survey was conducted in all the academies/faculties/centres that offer undergraduate courses. A stratified random sample of 10 per cent of students from each academy/faculty/centre was selected for the survey. Students from each faculty were listed according to ethnicity and year of study. The sample was then selected using systematic sampling. A total of 2,092 students were selected from about 21,000 undergraduates for the survey.

26 The degree of ethnic diversity is here measured by the index of ethnic fractionalization (EFI) that indicates the probability that a randomly selected pair of individuals will belong to different ethnic groups:

\[ EFI = 1 - \sum \frac{n_i}{N} \left( \frac{n_i}{N} - 1 \right) \]

where \( n \) is the number of members of the ith group and N is the total number of people in the population (Yeoh, 2003b: 28). The index is constructed through the computational procedure of Rac and Taylor’s index of fragmentation (F), defined as the probability that a randomly selected pair of individuals in a society will belong to different groups (Rac and Taylor, 1970: 22-23). The index varies from 0 to 1. The value is zero for a completely homogeneous society (the probability of belonging to different groups is nil). The value 1 occurs in the hypothetical society where each individual belongs to a different group. The fragmentation index is identical to Rac’s measure of party system fractionalization (Rac, 1967; 55-58) and Greenberg’s measure of linguistic diversity (Greenberg, 1956):

\[ F = 1 - \sum \frac{P_i}{1} \]

where \( P \) is the proportion of total population in the ith language group.

29 Due to the very different demographic makeup of the Borneo states compared to Peninsular Malaysia, responses of students from these states are analyzed separately. It is interesting to note that respondents from these two states show a remarkably low degree of social distance towards members of other ethnic groups, compared to those from Peninsular Malaysia.

30 Such phenomenon is in the main rooted in the resentment of the lower in come-class members of the dominant group directed at their own ruling elite who was perceived to cooperate with and protecting rich minority interests.

31 In the case of Malaysia, Mauzy (1993) noted that rapid economic growth could be the most important variable in explaining the absence of ethnic violence (as occurred in Lebanon and Sri Lanka) in response to preferential policies that led to growing ethnic polarization. Every non-Malay she interviewed between October and December 1990 “cited the continued possibilities of making money as the chief reason why there has been no ethnic vio-
ence in Malaysia" (ibid. ,127). However, it is interesting to note an opposite view posited by Harris in his study of ethnicity in Latin America (1964;98) that "the price which the underdeveloped countries or regions ... have paid for relative racial tranquillity is economic stagnation". Economic stagnation, he believed, may lead to less ethnic conflict than economic expansion "by virtue of the fact that there has not been too much to fight for" (ibid. ,97). While not denying the possibility that ethnic conflict may increase with economic expansion, Hoetink (1973;111-2) argued that it is not the expanding economy per se that disturbs racial tranquillity but rather the presence of poorer members of the dominant ethnic group, "who are not objectively different from the other poor racial groups and hence tend to exploit their ascriptive distinctions á outrance". In other words, economic expansion leads to a decline in economic differentiation and therefore results in an emphasis on other dimensions of social distinction, especially racial characteristics, as manifested in the following historical examples: "In Haiti under President Pétion in the early nineteenth century, land reform, which reduced considerably the differences in economic power and prestige, led precisely to an increased emphasis on the social distinction between Negro and colored, in much the same way in which the poor whites in the U.S. South tended to attach a greater social value to their somatic characteristics vis-á-vis the Negroes than the upper class whites, who could point to so many more socially relevant differences." (ibid. ,111)

31 See Lijphart's description of a dual segmentation as one that entails a constant tension between "a [majority] hegemony or a precarious balance ... [and leads] easily to an interpretation of politics as a zero-sum game" (1977;56).

Abstract

From 1985 on, Chinese migrant workers went to work in Singapore in the form of labor service to foreign contracted projects. Singapore is now a major receiving country for Chinese migrant workers. The number of Chinese migrant workers in Singapore is estimated to be about 200,000. Most of them work in construction, manufacture, maritime and service industries. They come to Singapore mainly through recruit agents after paying huge commission. They face such problems and risks as money loss, bad welfare, physical abuse and psychiatric problems. The reasons for those problems and risks are system flaws, disorder of market and Chinese migrant workers' weak position.

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