

CHAPTER 3

The Kelantan Challenge

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When the independent Federation of Malaya came into existence on 31 August 1957, little was known as to how the relations between the component states of the Federation would evolve. Federalism in an independent sovereign nation was a form of government that was quite new to the states of the Federation, which had until then been quite used to direct rule by a colonial government. Even the composition of the states within the Federation was a matter that had not really stabilised. The next crucial stage for the young Federation was then entered into when the Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman made a statement before a Singapore press luncheon of the Foreign Correspondents' Association of South East Asia on 27 May 1961. He said:

Malaya today as a nation realizes that she cannot stand alone and in isolation... Sooner or later she should have an understanding with Britain and the peoples of the territories of Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak... We should look ahead to this objective and think of a plan whereby these territories can be brought closer together in political and economic cooperation.

The idea of an enlarged federation had at that moment entered the public domain. The parties involved had their own reasons for agreeing to the enlarged federation.¹ The path was set for the formation of Malaysia, and this came into existence minus Brunei on 16 September 1963. The three new States of the Federation of Malaysia were to have a different constitutional relationship to the Federal Government than that was experienced by the other eleven original member States of Malaya. Leifer has said that the

¹ See R.O. Tilman, 'In Quest of Unity: The Centralisation Theme in Malaysia Federal-State Relations 1957-75', (1976) Occasional Paper No. 39, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 15 at 15-7; For further reading see M.N. Sophe, *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1974); B. Simandjuntak, *Malayan Federalism* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969) ch. vi; and R.O. Tilman, 'Malaysia: The Problems of Federation' (1963) 16 *Western Political Quarterly* 897.