A Comparative Study among Politicians Concerning 1Malaysia

Edwin Michael*, Afi Roshezry Abu Bakar*, Ira Meilita Ibrahim**, Taufik A Latif**

University of Tunku Abdul Rahman*
Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Department of Journalism
edwinm@utar.edu.my*

University of Tunku Abdul Rahman**, Faculty of Creative Industries, Department of General Studies,

Abstract
In the book “Government Transformation Programme Roadmap (GTP Roadmap)” forwarded by the Prime Minister of Malaysia himself, 1Malaysia means fairness to all, and that no particular group of people should be discriminated. This is regardless of race, skin colour, inborn traits or physical attributes, only that equal treatment and opportunities be given to all Malaysians based on merit and need. It hopes to build a Malaysian culture of inclusiveness and mutual respect among the diverse cultures, ethnic groups and religions of the nation. However, some people believe that 1Malaysia is no more than a slogan by the government to gain mere political support. Based on four cases, this paper will look on how the politician’s view of 1Malaysia society. The result is believed to be very insightful as to discover politician’s thoughts and will resulted to the Malaysian society’s end product.

Key words: Politicians, 1Malaysia

Introduction
The process of nation-building is an effort to develop the spirit of patriotism and solidarity to create a country whose people share a common identity. In Malaysia, the idea of establishing a nation was initiated before Malayan Union was introduced, during the struggles in seeking independence from British colonization (Wan Norhasniah, 2011).

Latest, the current Prime Minister (PM), Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak had introduced the 1Malaysia concept which means fairness to all, and that no particular group of people should be discriminated. The 1Malaysia concept is parallel to the long-standing efforts by the government to prolong and perk up the Islamically-inclined culture of tolerance and compromise amongst Malaysia’s diverse ethnic groups. It aims to create a multicultural Malaysia that strives on excellence, perseverance, acceptance, education, integrity, meritocracy, humility and loyalty (Mohd Adnan & Melina, 2011).

The question is, how far can this objective be realized, when the concept of the Malaysian race is still debated up to this day based on the cases reported directly or indirectly by the mainstream media. It seems that the national identity that should form the backbone of unity is still indistinct to the citizens. Therefore, in order to verify the successfulness of the 1Malaysia concepts, the article aims to analyze the cases that can obliterate the concept of 1Malaysia. The research objectives are:

1. To analyse the apparent cases from social, political and economic aspects that can obliterate the concept of 1Malaysia.
2. To find out the politicians opinions towards the concept of 1Malaysia based on the cases analysed.

Discussion

© 2011 British Journals ISSN 2048-1268
It needs to be noted that attempts had been made to reach out to the politicians of the incumbent government, but due to lack of interest, inability to communicate well in English and a busy schedule, we could not get any replies from the incumbent government. For the opposition side, however we only managed to acquire 3 replies out of 50 emails sent. However, we succeed to have face to face interview with one of the opposition politician.

**Perkasa**

The privileges provided to the Bumiputera community are protected by the Yang Di-PertuanAgong and there is no need for any organization to protect such rights. Even, PERKASA argued and keep repeating about their concern towards Bumiputera ‘rights’ but, if we are truly applying the “1Malaysia”, such an organization would never be openly supported by the government. Instead, ministers and UMNO leaders openly embrace PERKASA; indicating a stance that immediately discolours and prejudices 1Malaysia or any pronouncements made by the Prime Minister as mere hypocrisy. In addition, when continuous threats are made by PERKASA against the non-Malay community the Prime Minister is seen to remain largely silent.

Moreover, instead of debating about the rights and special privileges given to the Bumiputeras, PERKASA should give attention to the exploitation of such rights. With the intentions of New Economic Policy (NEP) and National Development Policy (NDP) to eliminating poverty and restructuring society so no one group is identified with a particular economic activity, however, abuses have taken place since the NEP’s inception in 1971 and there is little choice for Malaysia but to pass positive discriminative policies based on needs, rather than race. Even the National Economic Advisory Committee (NEAC) alludes to this in their report. Furthermore, faulty implementation of the NEP has led to uncontrolled rent-seeking activities and created a social stratification not between different races but within the entire Malaysian society.

A better approach would be need-based affirmative action that would aid in helping the poor Bumiputeras instead of the NEP and NDP. Therefore, PERKASA’s rationale is indisputably irrelevant, especially when it is very clear that the NEP and NDP provide many privileges only to a certain group of the Bumiputera community which mostly politically well-connected but not to those that are dearly in need of it. It bears reminding that Malays still form 80% percent of the rural poor despite the NEP.

Essentially, each ethnic community is ethno-centric, as they sense that their cultural elements are better-quality contrasted to other communities that are frequently looked upon as low-grade, strange, and immoral (Cox, 1959). However, even PERKASA argues that they are trying to defend the Malay rights, but this attitude is against 1Malaysia concept and also creates a lot of chaos to the government and society.

**Christians in Malaysia**

In the 1Malaysia concept, it is target clearly that every citizen must show up the mutual respect in the religion issues in Malaysia society. But there are two issues coming out suddenly and making turmoil in Malaysia society. First is disturbance of 30,000 Christian Bibles in Malay and used the word “ALLAH” in these translated Bibles. Then, the coming next is the Utusan Malaysia news reported about the Christians is trying to challenge the official religion of Muslims and get more rights in their political position. However, Christian leaders had made the standpoint clearly that they will not be challenging and respect the role of Muslim as official religion in Malaysia. Government also allowed the bibles in any language, including Bahasa Malaysia, be imported and printed locally in the indigenous languages of the Sabah and Sarawak natives. In part of Utusan news report is more difficult to solve as intervened by PERKASA, finally the Home Ministry put a notice that police officers will take on it and advice the public become positive on it.
Nowadays, more Christians have showed to take more concern in their political positions in recent years. To BN politicians, they need to play a role to maintain these two religions in cold relation. Following that, they must avoid the sensitive problems especially the word ALLAH and Holy War. These two are avoiding in these two religions from long times ago until today in the open public. That is why the government politicians must be carefully put up opinions and speeches on these two parts.

To PM, he needs to lead his cabinet to find out a better way to prohibit a little part of extremist in our country use these issues to make our society become in provocation and misunderstanding. Either Christian or Muslim, they are all the citizens of Malaysia and are faith to Malaysia. Government also must concern the information what show up by media on religion problems to make sure there is no any sensitive and provocative word appears more new problems to the public.

In the opinion of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders on the Christian society rights and political position in Malaysia, they think it still have a lot of difficult problems to Christians to fight their rights under the country institution on today. Especially the PERKASA president Ibrahim Ali usually performs many speeches what full of provocative and sensitive in society religion to the media.

The Christians make part only 9% of the Malaysia’s population. PR politicians think the constitution not only just protects the rights of majority religion, but also used to protect the rights of minority religion. According to the Article 11, one of the fundamental liberties under Part II of the Federal Constitution guarantees that every person has the right to profess and practice his religion. It means that the freedom of religion is subject to the general law relating to public order, public health or morality.

The politics is not having the discrimination of religion, so that everyone cannot use the religion minds to make become a political problem. PR politicians also feel the government is no one times to put any punishment to Ibrahim Ali’s irresponsibility speech. They prefer the Ibrahim Ali’s speech is showing up his religious bigotry in religion and race part. The Ibrahim Ali’s point is really unreasonable in the PR politician’s sight and thinks this is a big block that Malaysia wants to become a multiracial, multi-religious society in the 1Malaysia concept.

Brain Drain
Every year, the government always be facing a lot of questions what put out by the public that why many citizens who with high talents and abilities are leaving out the own “motherland” and staying in overseas. Then, there are a lot of results showing out that they are becoming successful people in foreign countries. What is the reason that many high talent Malaysians don’t take choice to stay in own country to develop their own career and make contribution to the country construction, but choose to go to overseas. Is Malaysia has no any potential to build up a suitable area to give these elites to show up their skills? Or these elite class people are truly don’t want to give any contribution to build own country and society?

The only main answer on this problem is Malaysia policymakers are not putting out any policy to build up a satisfy welfare to the local brains in career work. Not just in career area, the education too. The unfair of institutions and treatments to non-Malay student finally make many of high talent students forced to leave to take studies in foreign regions. And that is the phenomenon call “diaspora” is appearing in Malaysia until today.

To government politicians, this symptom has developed in a very terrible condition for over 25 years. That is same like what the World Bank Report said, the brain drain problem is the key issue to Malaysia that is really developing become a true high income country. More earlier be solved by government on this problem, the true high developed economy environment and society can truly show out in 1Malaysia concept, and finally the Vision 2020 can be approached in Malaysia.

According a World Bank report (Asrul, 2011), brain drain stands in the way of a high-income Malaysia. Although the government cabinet has been started to produce and promote some policies like gives good treatment and gives high guarantee in live, facilities and other in Malaysia to attract our local
talent stay back in Malaysia, in the opposition sight there are still not 100% to solve this problem. The PR politicians think there is a various part of true nucleus of brain drain in Malaysia. The first part of brain drain problem is coming from one most important area: the education. The reason how it is so important in brain drain problem is have a high quality education system; the country will have a high developed society and economy environment.

Hence, our education institution also still get many old problems not to solve like unfair treatment to non-Bumiputras in scholarship admissions and entrance standard to study in local universities, especially to the students who come from Chinese independence schools. In PR politicians’ sight, they think government is not taking full concern to solve these problems and that is why finally we see many students take choice to go to overseas like Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other OEDC countries. And most ridiculous is they all become high talent brains after graduated and become successful employees. The PR leaders think, Malaysia government don’t just take whole concern on the hardware constructions, but also must put more forces to develop and strengthen its own software powers, that means if we want to our talents stay in “homeland” that must start to change and improve our education part.

The following part in the brain drain crisis is the basic treatments and benefits institutions of employees in Malaysia is still cannot make a big attractive to our local high-skill and high-knowledge classes to develop their career in here. The first what Malaysian brains not to consider to come back is the income. Just by looking to the competitive of salary treatment between Malaysia and Singapore, we can realize Malaysia companies treatment to employees is can’t match with Singapore companies. So, PR politicians think Malaysia need an institution to build up a good income and salary treatment to attract more local brains come back to Malaysia.

Not just the company income and salary treatments, the high-skill talents also need to have a better quality of life in society, especially their retirement benefits. To them the money income is the part inside their career; life quality is the part of outside their career. For instance, Australia and New Zealand are always providing wonderful retirement benefits for its citizens and permanent residents. Say simply, the human rights also seen to be stronger in these countries, which is not surprising why many of our intellectuals have moved there.

**Political Freedom and Mainstream Media**

This study also found that the 1Malaysia concepts will not be achieved because of the lack of freedom in political aspect, which is being manipulated by the mainstream media.

When it comes to the Malaysian media, the members of parliament (MP) from the opposition party said that the mainstream media had not contributed to the 1Malaysia ideals in that there was no freedom of press. The Member of Parliament for the Lembah Pantai parliamentary constituency Nurul Izzah Anwar mentioned that the media has only reported about the good things of the current government and 1Malaysia, but has failed in reporting the ugly side of the Malaysian government and the frailties and cases where 1Malaysia has not been held or followed by the government. She says the mainstream media has been successful at filtering news that are read by the people and reporting biased views that are pro-government and show one side of the story.

Meanwhile, the Member of Parliament for the Selayang parliamentary constituency, Leong Jee Keen said that the media have painted a beautiful picture of the Malaysian economy when in fact it has been taking a slow and downward turn ever since its independence. Even though the rate of poverty has decreased since Malaysian independence but due to cronyism, all the profits of the government are being given to the cronies and not to the people who it primarily belongs too. Malaysia, he claims should have one of the strongest economies in Asia as our soil was rich with natural resources but now due to irresponsible use of money the government is about to face bankruptcy.
Laws like the Internal Security Act 1960, Printing Press Publication Act 1984 (PPPA), Official Secrets Act 1972 and the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 has prevented any form of print media or media corporation in Malaysia full freedom of press and hence provide low quality content, fail to critic the government and defend and fight for democracy in Malaysia, hence serve the public. With so many laws to control media content; how the people, the media and journalists can without fear and hesitation uphold their professional ethics and at the same time not be accused of going against the law. Lent (1978) clearly puts it when he says “that it is more of a forced cooperation than anything else, a cooperation that results when a gun is placed at the head”.

To begin with, the PPPA requires any magazine or print media cooperation to renew their license every year. Also under section 13A—to quote—“any decision of the Minister to refuse to grant or to revoke or to suspend a licence or permit shall be final and shall not be called in question by any court on any ground whatsoever”. These are just some of the methods that the government has used in order to “assert enormous pressure on the press to conform to the ideology of the government” (Lim, 2007). Nelson (2006) said that under the Internal Security Act 1960, journalists are kept under a tight leash through management pressures and threats of prosecution whereby they can be remanded or detained without a trial for a period of time. Hence, they are severely constricted and further inflict upon journalists the need to write news that improves the government’s standing in the eye of the people.

When it comes to Utusan Malaysia, the oppositions are saddened that the paper has lost all its ethics, professionalism and its fire when it once fought against the ownership of UMNO over Utusan Malaysia by having a 93 day strike against UMNO who wanted Utusan Malaysia to continue to support UMNO (Anuar, 2000). Utusan is now the “sayapkiri” or official voice for UMNO (Michael et al., 2011).

When it comes to the our current government concerning the media, not much is said, but Khairy Jamaluddin does agree with the opposition when he says that the government should repeal the PPPA and the need for any media organization to have a license from the government in order to be legal, so as to ensure freedom of press. In Free Malaysia Today, he said “It is time that the government consider amending or abolishing the act and bring it with the ambit of an independent body like in the UK where the media governs itself”. Neither legal rights for journalists, or legal restrictions on the media can be good for the practice journalism (Belsey et al., 1995). Hence therefore an alternative approach to regulate freedom of press and to ensure the social responsibility of journalists instead of having rules and laws is to have a body that regulates the media which are occupied by independent journalists.

**Conclusion**

By looking at the objective, 1Malaysia has shown the effort by government in encouraging and developing the national unity. It is clear that the concept can give a good impact to the Malaysian society. However, the journey to achieve 1Malaysia is still in the long way. The main cases discussed in this study showed that those cases can obliterate the 1 Malaysia concepts. These cases are just the examples of obstacles for 1Malaysia and we cannot deny that there will be more and more obstacles and challenges will emerge in future. Therefore, it is very important for PM and his Barisan Nasional members to think and rearrange the strategies to promote and also to practice 1 Malaysia concept. When the roots can show the good examples of 1Malaysia, there is high possibility for all Malaysians to accept and practice also.

**References**


Department of Prime Minister (January, 2010). Goverment Transformation Program the Roadmap. The Performance Management & Delivery Unit.

Department of Information of Malaysia. 2009. 1Malaysia: People First Performance Now. National Policy Publications Division


Ir. Dr Hasnul M. S. (n.d.) 1Malaysia: Concept and Values.


**Authors Profile**

Mr. Edwin Michael is a lecturer at the Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. His email is edwinm@utar.edu.my.

Mr. Afi Roshezry Abu Bakar, is a Head of Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. His email is afi@utar.edu.my.

Ms. Ira Meilita Ibrahim, is a lecturer at the Department of General Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. Her email is meilita@utar.edu.my.

Mr. Taufik A Latif is a Head of Department of General Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, University of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. His email is taufik@utar.edu.my.

© 2011 British Journals ISSN 2048-1268