

MALAYSIA: Between Nation-state building and Ethnic-stake building

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*Presentation, 22nd Asia-Pacific Roundtable,
2-5 June 2008, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

Malaysia's 'Modernization Project'

Economic Development

- Industrialization as a vehicle
- Progress and Performance could be measured

Nation-state Building

- A Series of Public Policies as vehicle (education, economic, language, etc.)
- Progress and Performance is not easily measured

BANGSA MALAYSIA: A united Malaysian nation

- Vision 2020: a developed industrialised united Malaysian nation by 2020
- The centripetal & centrifugal challenges
- Social divisions and differences (ethnic, class, religious, cultural)
- Navigating a difficult path, resolving continuous contestations thro macro and micro management strategies

Managing 'Oppositionism'

- Malaysia: always in the state of “stable tension”
- Within the government
 - Within the ruling parties
- Outside the government
 - Among different groups (political parties, NGOs, the electronic community, the local and foreign media)
- The process as a solution: discourse & negotiation
- Violence is not an option; prefers “tongue wagging not *parang* waving”

Public Contestations

- Top-down perspective: framed in the context of nation-state building, built into the five-year development plans
 - National unity
 - Quality of life
- Bottom-up perspective: framed in the context of ethnic-stake building
 - On ethnic distribution, amongst ‘small ethnic majorities’; building ethnic economic-stake
 - Idiomised as ‘human right’ and ‘civil society’ issues

Recent Developments

- Public street demonstrations
 - Over election issues
 - Corruption and transparency
- The 2008 General Election results
 - Ruling party failed to get its 2/3 majority
 - Increased support for the opposition coalition
- Battle of the Prime Ministers: past & present
- Ethnic-stake building a major issue: HINDRAF, 'social contract' (read the NEP; read Article 153 of Federal Constitution); Sabah complaints, etc

Viewpoints on contemporary Malaysia

- Malaysia facing an impending ethnic breakdown and perhaps open conflict
- Malaysia survives through a continuous consensus-seeking efforts at all levels
- The independent-minded 'Malaysians' vs. ruling & opposition parties