

Snapshots towards 1Malaysia? Notes on identity representation in texts from The New Straits Times.

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Abstract: *1Malaysia*, a political slogan attached to governmental campaigns and policies since the start of Prime Minister Razak's administration, has been the focus of much discussion over what it represents vis-à-vis Malaysia's multi-ethnic population. This short paper considers the slogan within the context of six texts published in pro-governmental newspaper, The New Straits Times, and explores how identities are represented within them. Taken from August 2011 when the slogan was omnipresent around the country, they give an outline of how ethnic and national identities are framed within a print medium. Analyses reference past and present developments in Malaysian society to present a detailed snapshot from an authority-defined medium. Though limited in scope, the data and analysis of the paper lends itself to further study by researchers in related fields.

Key Words: 1Malaysia, Ethnicity, National Identity

Interdisciplinary Fields: Critical Discourse Analysis, Malaysian Politics, Media Studies, Small Corpus Studies

1 Introduction

The results of the 13th General Election in Malaysia provided evidence of both continuity and change in the behavior of the Malaysian electorate. Continuity through Prime Minister Razak's continued leadership as head of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) and ruling race-based coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN), and change through opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) attainment of a majority of nationwide votes. Headed by ex-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, the PR's appeal differed from the BN's through their explicit targeting of cross-ethnic support, from which they attained unprecedented levels of success in the last two elections. Possibly in response to the opposition's cross-ethnic appeal, Razak attached a *1Malaysia* logo to a selection of governmental activities and policies, with the apparent intention of fostering further unity and integration in the country. As a slogan, *1Malaysia* evokes previous concepts such as former Prime Minister Mahathir's *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation), and also *Malaysian Malaysia*, associated originally with Lee Kuan Yew, first Prime Minister of Singapore, and more recently with Lim Kit Siang, leader of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a key member of the PR coalition.

Such concepts imply a Malaysia in which all races are treated equally by law, and where no one race possesses constitutionally approved benefits over another. However, due to the many vicissitudes that emerged as a consequence of colonialism, Malay Malaysians have maintained special rights since independence in 1957. A Malaysian Malaysia, in which all races are treated equally under constitutional law, would contradict Article 153 of a constitution that confers special privileges upon Malay races and other *bumiputras* (sons of the soil). The incursion of British forces into the then Malaya, and the consequent changes to a society that neither expected nor welcomed the

enforcement of mercantile and military might, necessitated the creation of such an act. Malay culture(s) had been devoted to a sense of the sacred, mainly as manifested through Islam, and though their conquerors were Christian, they were far from possessed by religious ideas (Eaton, 1985). Subsequently, society was modernized, or westernized, but the secular benefits that emerged were not benefits willed by the Malay. Furthermore, the material disparities that emerged between the non-Malay and Malay communities deepened dissatisfactions, and ushered in a secularized civilization in which economic inequalities continued to grow.

Colonially-enforced mercantilism in Malaya saw the introduction of large numbers of immigrants to work in industries that existed outside of mainstream Malay life. Non-Malays were invited to swim in channels carved out by military might and large numbers thrived through an understandable eagerness to become established in foreign lands, while the Malays, whose cultures laid less emphasis upon the material, had far less willingness to participate, and who experienced a decline in living standards vis-à-vis non-Malays in the decades preceding and following independence. Article 153, and the affirmative action policies that followed, allowed Malaysia's first leaders to reduce the material discrepancies that emerged, but their continuation has been a bone of contention to non-Malay communities. Today, both Malays and non-Malays increasingly question the ethics of such policies, yet, as Samsul (2013) recently noted, Malaysia remains a country where people talk conflict but walk cohesion; and where ethnicities "*suka bertikam lidah, tidak berparangan* (prefer tongue wagging instead of machete wielding)". This culture of constructive discussion reduces the risk of inter-ethnic violence, but might the consciousness raising impact of *IMalaysia* help resolve long-standing ethnicised disagreements? Quite possibly, although the concept has

to contend with a political system still dominated by race-based parties, which Holst (2013, p.62) described as fitting Levitsky and Way's theory of competitive authoritarian regimes, whereby formal democratic institutions are violated to such an extent that they begin to fail the minimum standards set for democracy.

1.1 Developing identities

It may have taken several generations, but other countries have succeeded in allowing migrants, or the descendants of migrants, to possess a strong national identity. US President Barack Obama is widely accepted as American rather than African American, while English soccer players with African ancestry are regarded as English rather than African English. In Malaysia though, it is not uncommon for Chinese Malaysians to be referred to as Chinese rather than Malaysian, which is particularly true in the terrestrial media. In our liquid modern world of ethnic diasporas (Baumann, 2011), this is perhaps understandable, but when Chinese is applied to Malaysian Chinese citizens, many of whose ancestors fought foreign invaders, and who made significant contributions to the nation's economic growth, the lack of acceptance might cause considerable distress. To term a Malaysian Chinese citizen as Chinese acts to place the individual outside of the confines of a Malaysian identity. This paper considers this issue and the meaning of *IMalaysia* in relation to texts from The New Straits Times. In doing so, it considers the following four questions:

- i. When does the newspaper choose to highlight ethnic identities, national identities and other identities?
- ii. Are ethnic and national identities overemphasized or underemphasized according to subject matter?
- iii. Are there traces of discriminatory discourses towards certain

communities?

- iv. Does the overall picture concord with a philosophy of 1Malaysia, Bangsa Malaysia, Malaysian Malaysia – or a Malaysia in which *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay Supremacy) holds court?

A corpus of home news texts from The New Straits Times, a newspaper that uses “authority defined discourse”, i.e. discourse that is considered as an expression of a Malaysian elite, was used to investigate the topic of discriminatory discourse (see Shamsul, 1996). It was believed that this discourse would contrast greatly with the “everyday-defined discourse” found in online spaces such as blogs and news portals or in traditional spaces such as the street-corner. Both visual and textual texts were chosen for analysis which used Flowerdew et al’s (2002, p.330) four terms of discriminatory discourse, namely: i) the creation of negative differences, ii) the delegitimation of ethnic communities, iii) the use of scare tactics and iv) the blaming of victims. The texts supply us with a significant snapshot of identity representation within Malaysia’s terrestrial media at a time when *1Malaysia* slogans were ubiquitous around the country, and when both political world and the public began to anticipate the 13th General Election. The examples of discriminatory discourse in the texts appear to reflect voices of a ruling class under pressure, who may have perceived the stirrings of what Razak later called a “Chinese Tsunami” (Anand, 2013), i.e. an alleged tendency of Chinese Malaysians to collectively vote for the opposition (Noh, 2013).

2 1Malaysia: A nation building or regime sustaining concept?

Malaysia today is conveniently divided into native Malay Malaysians and Non-Malay Malaysians, from which 67.4% are Malay or bumiputra Malaysians, 24.6% Chinese Malaysians, 7.3% Indian Malaysians and 0.7%

Other Malaysians (Jabatan Perangkaan, 2011, p.4). Since independence, she has been dominated politically by UMNO, the Malay Malaysian party that is the main power within the ruling BN coalition, and which has become the longest surviving ruling political power in the world. UMNO has been supported by other race-based parties in the form of the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and the MIA (Malaysian Indian Association), who have both preserved a separate racial identity within the coalition. When Razak, in his maiden Prime Ministerial speech, called upon *1Malaysia* to “enhance and preserve the unity in diversity that Malaysia already enjoys” (The Star, 2009), it is likely that his vision was to maintain this existing order.

1Malaysia was enthusiastically embraced by some and seen as a means to further the creation of a Malaysian race through economic and political transformation programs (Sharrif, 2012). Others saw it as a road sign towards further unification that could rank in importance alongside the constitution and the Rukunegara (e.g. Muzaffah, 2012). Still others reacted less enthusiastically, such as Karmal (2010, 2011) who criticized the ambiguity and vagueness in the concept. In reaction to such criticism, Razak termed 2009 to 2012 as a phase during which ideas were raised about the concept (The Star, 2012) which made the slogan look more sentiment than substance. Rather than a nation building concept, *1Malaysia* might be considered a nation or regime sustaining concept, one that suggests but does not commit; one that pacifies without actualizing change.

As Holst and Schäfer (2013) noted, the race-based policies of the BN government have done little to change the ethnicised mechanisms of division and exclusion that emerged from colonial rule. Colonial classifications of races for administrative and vocational purposes normalized the separation of races and also simplified their definitions, while the promotion and exclusion

of races in areas of employment normalized further racial separation. Even today, there are some services which are reportedly dominated by one race. Although Chooi (2010) reported Prime Ministerial official, Datuk T. Murugiah, as saying that “the percentage of non-Bumiputeras hired by the ... (Civil Service) ... has increased in the past few years,” Hau (2011) called it a service for one race, and used the word ‘apartheid’ to describe the hiring criteria.

Whether Murugiah or Hau is closer to the truth, it is important to note that the colonial policy of promoting races for certain industries was compounded and justified through orientalist writing. It acted to underplay the interaction of mixed race communities in pre and post-colonial Malaya. Rather than promote communities in which races bred, interacted and worked together, orientalists would often focus upon single-ethnic communities and exacerbate their differences, and consequently helped form the backdrop to the ethnicized communities we see in Malaysia today. Fortunately, works such as Alatas (1977) dismissed myths such as the lazy Malay, but even now local historians such as Khoo Kay Kim and Cheah Boon Kheng remain in disagreement over whether the British colonial administration intentionally divided the races. More importantly, the political elite continue to use epistemological spaces created by colonisers to maintain their own rule. While their predecessors chose the necessary path of incremental change, they have taken few concrete measures to depart from race-based politicking.

2.1 Malaysian Ethnicities: Not Always Divided

The desire to continue the policy of race based politicking created a dilemma for the BN. In 2011, Nik Nazmi stated that:

(The BN) have shaped the debate for so long in terms of race-based analysis. If a Chinese gains, then that means the Malays and Indians lose, and vice versa. Whereas our emphasis has always been about the ordinary people against the powerful.

His quote summarizes the PR's claim to focus upon people rather than race. This support for ordinary people against the powerful explained one reason for their increase in popularity in the 2008 and 2013 elections, which, in turn, signaled a rise in support for issue based politics over race-based politics. History might one day look at the divide and rule policies of the colonial government and the race-based policies of the BN coalition as anomalies imposed upon the masses because Malaysian's ethnic communities were not always so divided. During the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the Workers Movements and the Anti-Colonial Movements were "multiethnic in composition ... and opposed to ... divide and rule" (Soong, 2012, p.22), and long before then, the Peranakan and Kristang communities had been prominent in celebrating their mixed race nature. As Milner has described at length, the Malay ethnicity itself also has multiple forms (2011, p.186-228).

It is therefore unsurprising that Zaid Ibrahim (2009, p.116), in *Saya Pun Melayu* (I, Too, Am Malay), noted that a large percentage of Malays desire the multicultural, multi-racial and multi-religious life which the opposition coalition promoted and represented. This coalition obtained support across ethnic and religious lines through the inclusion of the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the Chinese Malaysian dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Parti Keadilan (PK). Together, these parties assisted in the promotion of the Bersih demonstrations, and also in supporting their indefatigable but embattled leader, Anwar Ibrahim. In consideration of these

developments, perhaps Syed Husin Ali's contention, that monoethnic parties which promote ethnic interests above the nation are being phased out, is a correct one (2008, p.xxii).

2.2 BN: The Architects of Modern Malaysia

UMNO and early BN coalitions had the opportunity to reverse the divide and rule philosophies that shaped present day Malaysia, but they elected not to do so. For reasons of stability this was practical, yet it would also have also countered the interests of those whom Shamsul (1996) termed Malay *administrators*, i.e. those from an existing elite and linked to the colonial administration; it would have also been opposed by what Kua Kia Soong (2012) dubbed *local comprador capitalists*, who consisted of both Malay and non-Malay. Both groups increased their power after independence through their active support for a ruling coalition which indisputably oversaw some impressive achievements that included: the introduction of policies to ensure a more equitable distribution of the economy, the stabilization of Malaysian society, and the establishment of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language.

In 1970 it was considerably different: Chinese Malaysian capital dominated the top 100 companies in Malaysia (Puthuchery, 1960; Lim, 1981), and Malay Malaysian unease in their confinement to low income industries had contributed to the 1969 riots that led to the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), an affirmative action policy which lasted from 1971 to 1990. The NEP and related follow-up policies acted to raise the economic power of bumiputras, and saw the BN use political power to create a Malay Malaysian capitalistic class, but which led to a concentration of capital ownership amongst Malaysian families and individuals. By 1980, over half the capital in Malaysian corporations were concentrated within a hundred or

so families (Lim, 1981).

Affirmative action policies had already begun prior to the NEP. When the possibility of Singapore seceding from Malaysia emerged, a climate of fear surrounded the issue of Chinese Malaysian finance and, in one case, led to the nationalization of the bank known today as Maybank. Half a century later and although Maybank has a reputation for pro-Malay policies (e.g. see Hong, 2007), it is decidedly more Malaysian. Such state intervention in the economy, through the nationalizing of banks and promotion of Malay-owned conglomerates revealed, if nothing else, the power of the state over *l'aissez faire* economics. The bank has since been an active user of the *1Malaysia* slogan in the promotion of some its products.

Policies such as the NEP were overseen by what have become known as UMNO dynasties, a group who might also be termed as the architects of modern Malaysia. The present Prime Minister is the son of the 2nd Prime Minister, and the nephew of 3rd Prime Minister, Tun Hussein Onn, who himself is the father of present Cabinet Minister, Hishamuddin Hussein. Broadly, their vision has been to assimilate non-Malays into a Malaysia that does not accommodate calls for a heterogeneous national identity (Shamsul, 1996), and their success has been highly reliant upon a politico-media-complex sympathetic to their philosophy. The newspaper in this study, The New Straits Times, is one medium that is part of the Malaysian 'complex'.

3 Why use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze identity in a Malaysian English medium?

CDA is a popular methodology in media text research because of its multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach (Wodak and Meyer, 2010, p.2).

Early CDA studies on identity in the news focused upon linguistic descriptions (e.g. Fairclough, 1995), but more recent studies have focused upon the role of language as a tool for social construction, in which discourse is examined to see how it is exercised and negotiated (Machin and Marr, 2012, p.4). Media based CDA studies tend to focus upon official languages, but a number of studies have focused upon non-official or second languages. Within Malaysia, there are daily newspapers in four ‘major’ languages, which includes English, a language taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary state schools and from between 2003 to 2009 was the medium used to teach Mathematics and Science in secondary schools (Gooch, 2009).

3.1 Why use CDA with The New Straits Times?

Owned by Media Prima, The New Straits Times Press (NSTP) has been long recognized as a tool in the politico-media complex. Back in 2008, Tan and Ibrahim (2008, p.14) wrote that The New Straits Times was “directly or indirectly controlled (by) government or government-linked individuals”. Five years on, it sells 240,000 copies daily and an additional 4,350,000 people view its website each month (Q410 MAL Nielsen, 2013). A self-description on the website explains that the paper has a conviction for stable and progressive nation-building and for a move towards a united and progressive Malaysia (NSTP, 2013). It therefore appears a worthwhile medium to analyse when reporting on identities in modern Malaysia.

Almost two decades ago, Herman and Chomsky (1994) outlined a model of how governments all over the world use the media to serve and propagandize on behalf of the social interests that control and finance them. The New Straits Times is no different than other newspapers in this respect: the newspaper’s possible collusion or support for the BN, through the manufacturing or

promotion of specific content, is far from unexpected. What is unexpected is for a government to arrange for foreign individuals and foreign media companies to create favourable reports about their own policies. However, as Ian Burrell (2011, 2013) wrote, the BN paid a British media company to ensure that reports that praised governmental policies were made. In addition to this, it was alleged that the party paid Joshua Treviño, American owner of blog, *Malaysia Matters*, to write articles against the opposition, and specifically against leader, Anwar Ibrahim (Gray, 2013). When a ruling power enlists foreigners and foreign media companies to manufacture perception about Malaysia from outside the country, we may wonder what tactics it might use in media found within its jurisdiction.

3.2 Regulation on land; deregulation offshore

The New Straits Times is a product of terrestrial media and therefore subject to the Malaysian Printing Presses and Publications Act. It faces more restrictions than media published in cyberspace because Malaysia lacks a regulatory law for speech on the Internet (Abbot, 2001, p.104 cited in Tun and Ibrahim, 2008, p.17). The Printing Presses and Publications Act, however, stipulates that presses must apply annually to the Home Ministry to have their publishing licences renewed, something which creates an environment whereby it is unwise to overtly criticize government policy. It also explains why Malaysia was 141st out of 178 countries in the 2010 Press Freedom Index (Press Freedom Index, 2010). Because of this, online media soon became a home for oppositional forces which, in a pre-Internet era, would have spread messages on street corners, via pamphlets, or through cheaply recorded cassettes and CDs. Print media thus is considered to reflect a pro-establishment voice (Chew, 2011), although as Holst (2011) and the Trevino incident revealed, the situation is in considerable flux.

4 The Data

Texts from 2011 to 2013 were collected into word files to create a corpus used with corpus software, Wordsmith. This paper focuses upon texts from 2011 that were first received as paper copies at hotels in Malaysia; in total, the corpus contains 200,000 words of text from Home News pages that can be used in qualitative or quantitative analyses to develop a picture of how identity is represented in the medium.

5 The Texts

Six texts were taken from between August 6 and August 12 and are listed in table 1 in the order of which they appear in this paper. The title is written on the left side of the table and comment on discriminatory discourse is placed on the right. The type of discriminatory discourse is based on Flowerdew et al (2002).

Table 1

Texts taken from between August 6 and August 12 2011

Text	Discriminatory discourse
1Malaysia Shop A Boon To All	None
New Media to Spread Lies	Scare Tactics; Delegitimation
Advertisement for Maybank	Delegitimation (?)
Kamunting Like 2 nd University	Negative Differences; Scare Tactics
Advertisement for Kuwait Finance House	Negative Differences (?)
Ex-Anwar Aides Clamouring to Testify	Blaming of a Victim

5.1 1Malaysia Shop A Boon To All

1Malaysia Shop A Boon To All (1Malaysia) reported upon the newly

introduced *1Malaysia* grocery shops that were part of a governmental enterprise, Kedai Rakyat *1Malaysia* (KR1M). Written like a piece of promotional literature, the article informs us that they were created to help Malaysians from lower income households obtain cheaper food. In the excerpt below we read about Fatimah Atuk, a housewife who discovered KR1M through TV commercials and who has no regrets whatsoever about using the shops.

1Malaysia shop a boon to all

PETALING JAYA: Although Siti Fatimah Atuk lives in Sungai Buloh, she visits the Kedai Rakyat *1Malaysia* here to get most of her children's basic necessities. Her logic is simple. Siti Fatimah does not mind travelling the distance to the shop, which is located near the Kelana Jaya LRT station, because the goods here are sold at affordable prices compared with shops elsewhere. Thanks to the advertisements on television, the 44-year-old housewife came to know of the shop, and has had no regrets *whatsoever* [italics added] ...

The use of *whatsoever* was an interesting choice which intimates that some sort of regrets have been expressed by others. KR1M is a boon to those who desire to save money, but their timely appearance, when an election loomed on the horizon, might have raised a withering eyebrow or two. Two days before, the newspaper reported on a 'pay out' to 1.27 million civil servants, for work in governmental development programmes, and also to pensioners, in celebration of the Hari Raya holiday (Karim and Augustine [b], 2011). These expressions of stately largesse were timed to coincide with the approach of a national holiday from which all Malaysians could potentially benefit.

5.2 The Role of New Media: 1Malaysia and Bersih 2.0 on Facebook

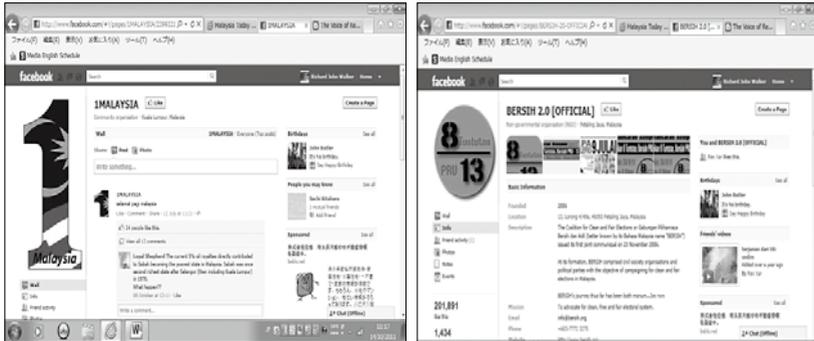


Figure 1. Facebook pages for 1Malaysia and Bersih 2.0 in October 12, 2011

As discussed above, terrestrial media and online media differ in the legal environment in which they exist and thus in the expression of speech. Terrestrial media is where Fatimah Atuk saw advertisements for the KRIM food shops referred to above, but online media hosts a less supportive platform for the government. Online media has been used less to support governmental campaigns and more to promote critical viewpoints such as those found with the supporters of the Bersih 2.0 rally. It also tends to be the medium of the young. Figure 1 shows a screen capture of the official *1Malaysia* and Bersih 2.0 pages on the social network website Facebook. On October 12, 2011, the *1Malaysia* page had received 15,142 people likes, which contrasted weakly with the 201,891 likes received on the Bersih 2.0 page. The *1Malaysia* slogan may have been ubiquitous around Malaysia and in the terrestrial media at this time, but support for Bersih 2.0 was seen to be far greater on Facebook. This is one of several reasons why the Malaysian government voiced distrust for what it called new media.

5.2.1 New media used to spread lies

It is unsurprising therefore that the government distrusted online media. In *New media used to spread lies* we see how readers are warned about lies that are spread on such media. Cabinet Minister Hishamuddin Hussein claims that the Bersih demonstrations, which were arranged online, were a useful vehicle for the opposition, and openly admitted that the opposition used New Media better than the government.

New media used to spread lies

PUTRAJAYA: Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said ... many of the issues propagated through ... (new media) ... were untrue. ... It (was) clear from the start that the rally was not about pushing for free and fair elections but for the interests of parties riding on Bersih's name. ... (The opposition) ... are better than us and we need to get our act together in using the new media.

One of the eight demands by the Bersih 2.0 movement was to promote free and fair access to state funded media so that proportionate and objective coverage would be allocated to all political parties (Bersih 2.0, 2011). Stephen Gan, co-founder of online news service, *Malaysiakini*, was quoted by Steele (2010) as saying that Malaysiakini was the first ever independent news medium and that because of this the BN didn't know how to deal with them. The criticism metered out on online blogs, networks and blogs moved BN politicians such as Hishammudin to fear that it could destabilize the country. He added:

What we have in Malaysia, most people outside would look at it as something that we should cherish ... Unfortunately, there are people in Malaysia who

do not appreciate what we have. ... A democracy with a single racial composition will not have this problem, but in a multiracial country like ours, our leaders must be very careful.

Hishammudin is referring to the race-based power balance between ethnicised political parties. There are few democracies with “a single racial composition” in the world, but there are many who believe that governmental policies and the state controlled press to be the major problem in Malaysia. Writing on *The Malaysian Insider*, K. Krishnamurthy, an Indian Malaysian, referred to lies in the terrestrial media and to the Bersih 2.0 demonstration of July 9th 2011 (2011, July 14).

To see the lies reported in the newspapers makes me mad but gives me hope to believe that maybe everything else I've read in the news before this were lies too. After all I did not see clannish Chinese, easygoing Malays or selfish Indians, I only saw Malaysians, eager for peace and justice. July 9, 2011 is the day when I finally stopped being an Indian in Malaysia. I am now proud to be simply a Malaysian.

5.3 Maybank advertisement using sports stars with concealed identities

The history of Maybank could be read as a microcosm of developments in the national economy over the last half century. In 1965, the banks founder, Khoo Tek Puat, was ousted in the aftermath of Singapore's secession from Malaysia. In hindsight the subsequent nationalization of the bank fitted in well with governmental policies that aimed at creating a Malay entrepreneurial class through direct intervention. Almost fifty years on and the bank has a close connection to the *IMalaysia* concept: there is a loan scheme called SARA – the Skim Amanah Rakyat *IMalaysia* (SARA *IMalaysia*) amongst

others. Indeed, in consideration of Maybank's development, the advertisement in Figure 2 makes for interesting, if only suggestive, semiotic readings.

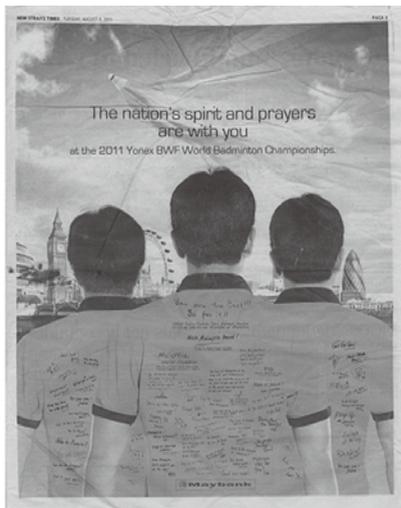


Figure 2. Maybank advertisement using sports stars with concealed identities

This advertisement was placed on page 5 of the newspaper on August 9, 2011 and shows three men dressed in yellow and black. These are the colours of the bank's logo and also the colours associated with the Bersih 2.0 demonstration. The players have their back turned to us and appear to be viewing a photo-shopped image of key London monuments, above which there is a message of goodwill from the bank, which reads: "The nation's spirit and prayers are with you at the 2011 Yonex BWF World Badminton Championships." There are also a number of good luck messages written on the back of their shirts, with the most prominent from the wife of Prime Minister Razak, who writes: "You are the best!! Go for it!!!" At first glance this seems to be a wonderful gesture of support by a bank that wishes to verbalize a united national spirit, but more

consideration might lead one to question why the identities have been concealed.

Although there is no definite reason to suspect overt discrimination, when we discover that the sport is dominated by Chinese Malaysians, we might wonder why the players are not more openly celebrated. With *1Malaysia* in mind, perhaps this advertisement represents a missed opportunity to acknowledge their world-class abilities. The advertisement is there to wish the players good luck, which makes the omission of their faces an unfortunate one. However, as most texts draw on several discourses, there are several potential readings of this text: the creators of the image might feel that the image transcends ethnicised readings, the cost of paying for image rights of the players might have been too expensive, and there may have not been enough time to photograph the actual players. Without discussion with the creators of this image, all we can do is surmise.

5.4 Kamunting like 2nd University (Abdullah, SM)



Figure 3. Print version of *Kamunting Like 2nd University*

This was not the first time that week that the newspaper had published a Chinese Malaysian with his back to the camera. Two days earlier, on page 19

of the newspaper, *Kamunting Like 2nd University* showed the back of a former Chinese Malaysian immigration officer with his family. He had been detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and had just been released. Though we are not informed about the details of his crime, he is referred to as a “50-year-old Chinese man” rather than as Malaysian Chinese or Malaysian.

This ‘Chinese’ man found his rehabilitation programme really useful and, somewhat surprisingly to those with knowledge about the ISA, described the Kamunting detention centre as an environment akin to a second university. Inside the text, we read that writing published on blogs about his treatment were lies and that he had learned a lot about religion. The article makes it plain: the Chinese detainee saw his experience at Kamunting as beneficial.

Kamunting like 2nd University

PASIR MAS: Kamunting detention centre in Taiping is like a second university for those detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA), described a detainee who was released from the camp on Friday. The 50-year-old Chinese man, a former Immigration employee, said he and other detainees had found the motivational and other courses, included in the rehabilitation programme, really useful, especially for those lacking depth in religious knowledge. ... Asked whether he was satisfied with the treatment he had received during detention, the man said the detainees were well treated, dispelling rumours and blog entries which had reported otherwise.

5.4.1 Links between the Maybank advertisement and the Kamunting article

The Maybank advertisement and the Kamunting article have pictures of Chinese Malaysians with their backs to the camera. It is natural for the detainee to have his identity protected by the newspaper, but why does the

newspaper refer to him as Chinese? The case is different in the Maybank advertisement, where we have three high class sports players who competed in the name of Malaysia. It may have been impossible to arrange, but an emphasis upon their Chinese Malaysian identities would have been a gesture in the spirit of a true *IMalaysia*. In any case, one month after the publication of the Kamunting article, the government scrapped the ISA after it having been on the statute book since colonial days. Perhaps this was another sign that the government was listening to the demands of the rakyat.

5.5 Kuwait Finance House advertisement with a smiling Chinese Malaysian



Figure 4. Kuwait Finance House advertisement with smiling Chinese Malaysian

Three days later, on page 3 of the newspaper we saw a prominent advertisement for Kuwait Financial House (KFH). Figure 4 shows two men: a smiling Chinese Malaysian customer and a bank official of Middle Eastern origin. The Chinese Malaysian customer smiles as he receives a bank card

which, as the text informs us, is for a shariah compliant gold account. The quality of KFH's financial services is not in question, but the choice of customer is though, for two reasons: firstly, after having the identities of two Chinese Malaysians withheld in two texts, we now see a Chinese Malaysian foregrounding this advertisement. Secondly, this advertisement is for a shariah compliant gold account, i.e. an Islamic bank which follows shariah principles. Irrespective of the advantages or otherwise of shariah law, it would be a small percentage of Chinese Malaysians who would follow it. This makes the choice of identities in the advertisement somewhat puzzling, but does, however, do much to challenge existing stereotypes of Chinese Malaysians, Muslims and the face of Malaysia!

5.6 Ex-Anwar Aides Clamouring to Testify Against Him (Ex Anwar)

Finally, we have an article about Anwar Ibrahim, the Malay Malaysian leader of the opposition coalition who famously spent several years in a Malaysian jail for crimes that were overturned upon his release and which writers inside and outside of Malaysia claim to have been a politically motivated decision. In *Ex-Anwar Aides Clamouring to Testify Against Him* we see him subjected to assumptions and inferences about his private life for a second time. Whether the claims have truth, or not, it would be fairer to treat him as innocent before proven guilty, yet because he was threatening a power base supported by The New Straits Times, it appears that the paper quoted ex-colleagues to infer his guilt. Perhaps this was because, whether guilty or not guilty, "there (is) ... no other leader who can hold together the opposition coalition of an Islamic party with a Chinese party, who is capable of being prime minister, and who has the experience and international recognition that Anwar has (Thayer, 2010)." The article refers to Ibrahim's success in calling for the Prime Minister and his wife, both of whom were alleged to have met

Anwar's accuser two days before the alleged act (*The Sun*, October 3, 2011), to attend the trial. Rather than a clamour to testify, as suggested by the headline, the article reads as a character assassination by disgruntled ex-colleagues. One sees the court as an opportunity to counter lies spread by Anwar about him and his comrades, and the other comments suggestively about where Anwar 'leans'. There appears to be no room for Anwar's own comments.

Ex-Anwar aides clamouring to testify against him

KUALA LUMPUR: Several members of parliament and former aides of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim have offered themselves to be prosecution witnesses in his ... trial. This follows Anwar's success in getting the court to allow his defense to call 15 people, including the prime minister and his wife, as witnesses ... The MPs and former aides said they would make better witnesses than Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, since they were privy to what went on. ... Former PKR Youth chief Ezam Mohd Nor ... said he would "tell all" if given a chance to become a witness at Anwar's trial. ... "The court is the perfect avenue for me to counter all the lies spread by Anwar about me and my comrades that we left the opposition for gratification. ... Anuar Shaari, Anwar's former private secretary also offered himself as a witness. He said he was the best person for the court to hear from. "I know what he is all about and where he leans as well as his 'interests'. "To me, the prime minister and his wife are irrelevant in this case as they have nothing to do with (the accused act) ..."

6 Conclusion – Civilisation over ethnicity

Anthony Milner raises an interesting point in closing 'The Malays' (2010, p.242) on the question of civilisation versus ethnicity. Acknowledging that

ethnic identities often act to divide rather than to reconcile, he suggests that representations and states of mind found in Malay civilisation have fluidity and are susceptible to being rebuilt. If so, then might this somehow be transferred to the issue of Malaysian nationality? Concepts such as *1Malaysia* may be used by authority defined media such as The New Straits Times to promote a deeper understanding and respect for differing ethnic identities, while also building upon the existing cross-ethnic desire for unity. Although the priority of ethnicity over civilisation will continue, together with the phenomena of diasporas in our ever-globalised world, concepts such as *1Malaysia* could promote the awareness that Malaysian civilisation is better for recognizing the achievements of all races. Rosmah Mansor, speaking at the 2013 World Chinese Writer's Conference, hinted as much, saying, "We have long accepted and respected the customs, culture and religions of each other's ethnic group in the name of peace and development ... the basis of *1Malaysia*." Yet although accepted and respected, when newspapers refer to Chinese Malaysians as Chinese or Indian Malaysians as Indian, it belittles the movement towards a truly united Malaysia. When a newspaper highlights a 'Chinese' identity in the case of a crime, and withholds Chinese Malaysian identity when it should be celebrated, there is a justifiable claim that some identities are delegitimized by the paper. For a truly 'one' Malaysian civilisation to emerge, perhaps authority-defined newspapers such as The New Straits Times might re-consider whether their approach might be construed as discriminatory and whether the newspaper represents all Malaysians with the same amount of dignity and of respect.

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