Federal Political Elites and the Expansion of Ethnic Politics to the Periphery State of Sabah in Malaysia

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the product of my own original research, and contains no materials which have been accepted as part of the requirement of any other degree at any other university, or any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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Abstract

Ethnic politics has been an important feature of Malaysia's political life since even before its formation in 1963. Despite being part of Malaysia, however, the East Malaysia state of Sabah historically was devoid of such politics. But since the formation of Malaysia, there has been a long decline in ethnic tolerance and harmony in Sabah due to the federal elite's success in expanding ethnic politics there. This thesis investigates the following questions: How did the governing elites in Kuala Lumpur successfully expand ethnic politics to Sabah? Why was it important for the governing politicians to expand such politics to the periphery state? Why did the public allow this to happen?

By carrying out in-depth ethnohistorical investigation into the role played by governing federal politicians in generating ethnicity in Sabah's politics, this thesis notes how ethnic politics can be developed, escalated and diffused. It describes how the federal political elite's decision to export West Malaysia's model of ethnic based coalition government eventually established ethnicity as a feature of Sabah politics due to competition and collaboration between federal and local political elites, and competition between local politicians who elicited responses along ethno-religious lines from the public. For their part the people of Sabah came to accept the expansion there of ethnic politics and its principles of consociational democracy under pressure from the federal elite.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that abandoning ethnic-based democracy and policies is crucial in providing more universal benefits to the citizenry and preventing full-fledged conflict within an ethnically and religiously diverse population.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

ABIM	*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia)
AKAR	*Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat* (People's Justice Front)
Allah	term used by Muslims and Malay-speaking Christians for God
AMCJA	Pan Malayan Council of Joint Action
AP	Alliance Party
BA	*Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front)
BCB	Bumiputra Commerce Berhad
BERJAYA	*Partri Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah* (Sabah People's United Front)
BN	*Barisan Nasional* (National Front)
BR1M	*Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia* (1 Malaysia People's Aid)
Bumiputra	Malay term referring to indigenous people
C4	Centre for Combat Corruption and Cronyism
Ceramah	Discussion in a small groups, political meetings, public rallies
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DYMMYDPA	*Duli Yang Maha Mulia Yang Dipertuan Agong*

	(King of Malaysia)
EC	Election Commission
ECM	Election Commission of Malaysia
EON	Edaran Otomobil Nasional
FELCRA	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
FIMA	Food Industries of Malaysia
FIP	Federal-Independent Party
GERAKAN	*Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Malaysian People's Movement Party)
Gerakan Merah	Red Shirt Movement
GLCs	Government Linked Companies
IC	Identification Card
ICA	Industrial Coordination Act
IGC	Inter-Governmental Committee
IMP	Independence of Malayan Party
Ini Kali Lah	This is it
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISMA	*Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia* (Malaysian Muslimin Solidarity)
IDM	Immigration Department of Malaysia
JMM	*Jaringan Melayu Malaysia* (Malaysia Malay Network)
JOAS	*Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia* (Indigenous Peoples Network of Malaysia)
KCA	Kadazan Cultural Association
KDCA	*Kadazandusun* Cultural Association

KDM	KadazanDusunMurut
Ketuanan Islam	Muslim dominance, domination, hegemony, supremacy
Ketuanan Melayu	Malay dominance, domination, hegemony, supremacy
KK	Kota Kinabalu
Lawan tetap lawan	Fight on
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LPN	*Lembaga Padi dan Beras Negara* (National Paddy and Rice Authority)
MAGERAN	*Majlis Gerakan Negara* (National Operation Council)
MARA	*Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (Peoples' Trust Council)
MARDEC	Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation
MAS	Malaysian Airline System
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
McP	Machinda Party
MEGA	*Mendepani Agenda Asing* (Facing Foreign Agenda)
Merdeka	Independence
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MNC	Momogun National Congress
MP	Member of Parliament
MPAJA	Malayan People Anti-Japanese Army
MSC	Malaysian Solidarity Convention

MU	Malayan Union
MUIS	*Majlis Ugama Islam Sabah* (Sabah Islamic Council)
NCP	National Culture Policy
NDP	National Development Policy
NEC	National Economic Committee
NEP	New Economic Policy
NEdP	National Education Policy
NFP	National Feedlot Corporation
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NOC	National Operation Council
NRD	National Registration Department
NVP	National Vision Policy
PAP	Peoples' Action Party
PAS/PIMP	Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party/Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
Pasok Momogun	United *Pasok Momogun* Organisation
PBDS	Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (Sarawak Native People's Party)
PBRS	*Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah* (United Sabah People's Party)
PBS	*Parti Bersatu Sabah* (Sabah United Party)
PDS	*Parti Demokratik Sabah* (Sabah Democratic Party)
PDSB	*Parti Democratik Sabah Bersatu* (Sabah United Democratic Party)
PERKASA	*Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa*

(Mighty Native Organization)

Pernas	*Perbadanan Nasional Berhad* (National Corporation)
PKMM	*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (Malay Nationalist Party)
PLGP	Progressive Local Government Party
PKR	*Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (People's Justice Party)
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PR	*Party Rakyat* (People's Party)
PR	*Pakatan Rakyat* (People's Alliance)
PRB	*Parti Ra'ayat Brunei* (Brunei People's Party)
PUTERA	*Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* (Centre of the People's Power)
RCI	Royal Commission of Inquiry
RISDA	Rubber Industry Smallholders' Development Authority
SAMORA	Sabah *Momogun Rungus* Association
SAPP	Sabah Progressive Party
SEDCs	State Economic Development Corporations
SF	Socialist Front
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
STAR	State Reform Party
STPC	Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation
SUARAM	*Suara Rakyat Malaysia* (Malaysian People's Voice)

SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
Ubah	Change
UDA	Urban Development Plan
UDP	United Democratic Party
UiTM	*Universiti Teknologi MARA* (University Technology of MARA)
UMNO	United Malay National Organization
UMS	University Malaysia of Sabah
UN	United Nations
UNKO	United *Kadazan* National Organization
UPKO	United *Pasokmomogun Kadazan* Organization
UPMO	United *Pasok Momogun* Organization
USDA	United Sabah Dusun Association
USIA	United Sabah Islamic Association
USNO	United Sabah National Organization

Chapter 1: **Ethnic Politics and Politicians**

1.1 Background and Focus of the Study

This thesis investigates the significance of the political elites' role in the expansion of ethnic politics to the periphery state of Sabah in Malaysia. Ethnicity in Sabah for generations did not have the significance that it held in the peninsular states, where colonial and post-colonial policies entrenched a sense of indigenous claims by the Malays against other ethnic communities of Chinese and Indians. In Sabah, especially before the Federation of Malaysia, social identity focused more on smaller social groups who needed to find non-ethnic basis for political solidarity rather than construct ethnic differences. Nevertheless, after decades in the federation of Malaysia the political solidarity in this territory became more focused on what Tajfel and Turner (1979) calls 'us' versus 'them', an activity of constructing and reconstructing ethnic difference as in West Malaysia. This thesis explores and explains the reason why ethnic hostilities have more recently become a marker of political activities in Sabah.

The principal argument of this thesis is that ethnic politics can be expanded to the periphery traditionally not plagued with such activities by the governing political elites either directly or by indirect methods for their own interests. To introduce this argument, however, it will be necessary to acknowledge how the governing politicians have actually expanded ethnic politics in the periphery. Accordingly, this

thesis investigates the federal elites' role in expanding ethnic politics to the periphery state of Sabah in Malaysia. This research seeks to answer the following questions: How did the governing elites in Kuala Lumpur successfully expand ethnic politics to Sabah? Why was it important for the governing politicians to expand ethnic politics to the periphery state? Why did the public allow this to happen?

By answering these questions, the thesis will contribute to ethnic politics theorization, especially in the context of making the concept of ethnic politics more applicable, in understanding how political elites govern in the modern nation-state. This is because like any other terminology, the concept of ethnic politics is a term that does not lend itself to an easy definition applicable to any society. As Sakhong pointed out "there is no way that we can define ethnic politics based on a single factor. Several factors, perspectives and points of view needed to be taken into account when defining ethnic politics" (2012, p. 1). Nevertheless, in contemporary use the term ethnic politics is usually associated with political mobilization (Esman, 1994).

In many societies, politicians and in particular governing politicians manipulate ethnicity for their own benefit often to dominate political mobilization. The concept of political mobilization refers to a process whereby political actors encourage people to participate in some form of political action, such as to vote, petition, protest, rally or join a political party, trade union or a politically active civic organization (Vermeersch, 2011; Johnston, 2007). Operating within the contexts of the nation-state, political mobilization often gives political actors incentives and opportunities to exploit ethnicity with the aim of gaining political support in their struggle for political power. In fact, since World War II (WWII), ethnicity has

become the most common tool used by the political actors in dealing with the issue of political mobilization. Examples include political mobilization in Nigeria where since WWII the political elites of ethnic groups such as Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani have made ethnicity their major tool in encouraging people to provide them with unwavering political support with the aim of gaining political power (Adebanwi, 2014).

However, this emphasis on ethnic politics is a narrow view that stresses the political mobilization activity rather than the political actors' self-interests. If we wish to describe ethnic politics as an explanation of political actors' self-interests we need to consider the socio-psychological perspective that analyzes ethnic politics as the product of fear of uncertainty among the citizens, especially in the context of the possibility of losing socio-political freedom. Scholars such as Hale (2008) and Appadurai (1998; 2006), who referred to this fear to explain the concept of ethnic politics observed that when citizens encounter uncertainty in their socio-political life they often decide to use ethnicity as a mechanism to reduce such fear by making their existence more calculable. The growing security dilemma among the citizens or even the decision to employ ethnicity to reduce the uncertainty, however, does not simply emerge in a society but requires what Al-Haj (2015) calls the 'mobilizing leadership'. The mobilizing leadership in these regards refers to the political actors who are usually active in shaping the country's political development by implementing action to remain in power. This point of argument was highlighted by Figueiredo and Weingast (1997) who stress that political actors who face a high risk of losing power often pursue a specific strategy in their attempt to maintain power based on the belief that it is a rational decision to impose security concerns in the minds of its citizens. Such a strategy emphasizes what may happen to an ethnic

community within the nation if they become a minority, loose political power and become incapable of improving their economic control.

The emphasis on issues that may be encountered by the ethnic community in their effort to retain power, however, often made ethnic identity fluid. It is possible to see ethnic identity changes in a society due to the political actors' determination to retain power. The governing politicians or the state bureaucrats of the Fijian government, for example, decided to maintain the traditional practice of subsuming all indigenous groups into one label called Fiji indigenous in order to maintain their numerical advantage based on ethnic political supremacy through their numerical advantage over the immigrants, even though their number now is more or less equal to the group classified ethnically as Fiji Indians (Lawson, 1993, p. 2). Similarly, in the United States the black persons who originally came from Jamaica could choose to emphasize their 'Caribbean ancestry', could voluntarily place themselves in the broad category of 'African American' or could emphasize their birth in former British-colony and English speaking country, as 'West' (Ritchey, 2014; Harper & Quaye, 2007: William, 2007). Their decision to become either African American or Westerners was influenced strongly by the political actors' struggle, and such a strong influence usually occurred when political and economic advantages accrued if they identified themselves with the political actors, in particular the governing political elites.

Since ethnic identity usually changes as the result of the governing political elites' desire to ensure the success of their political mobilization, it is also important for us to consider ethnic identity change in an effort to define ethnic politics. By understanding the change in ethnic identity as an important aspect in defining the

concept of ethnic politics, we are able to acknowledge the fact that ethnic identity is indeed not innate or unchanging. Rather ethnic identities must be seen as a "creation – whether they are created by historical circumstances, by strategic actors or as unintended consequences of political projects" (Eriksen, 1993, p. 92). Several scholars describe this issue. For example, Chandra (2012) in the primordial interpretation of ethnicity by referring to constructivist interpretations suggests that an ethnic identity is a dynamic form of social identity.

By interpreting ethnic identity change as part of ethnic politics, it also important to acknowledge the fact that despite the significance of other political actors, governing politicians always play a significant role in this process. The reason is that activities of constructing and reconstructing ethnic identity for political mobilization are usually relevant to the governing political elites' success in their maintenance of nation-state power. As Puyok (2008) and Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) argue; the manipulation of ethnic identity usually pertains to governing politicians' struggle to maintain their grip on nation-state political power because in order to maintain office usually they will move to employ every imaginable strategy to attract constituencies. In this regard, they pointed out that manipulating ethnicity tends to become the most influential strategy to attracting constituencies, and when the political competition becomes fiercer the governing political elites' reliance on ethnic manipulation usually intensifies. In Zimbabwe, for example, the strengthening of political competition for nation-state power has made Robert Mugabe, who has been the President since 1980 constantly inject emotionalism into his ethnic appeal to the wider Black African population. The result of such decisions has not only been his success to retain office but also intensified ethnic hostilities in the country. It suggests that ethnic politics usually arise when the governing political elites become

more interested in manipulating ethnicity to facilitate their grip over nation-state political power.

This thesis defines ethnic politics as activities to construct and reconstruct ethnic identity, and the use of this identity for political mobilization by the governing political elites or the state bureaucrats to maintain office. Defining ethnic politics as such particularly encourages an examination of the significant role played by the governing politicians of modern nation-states who manipulate ethnic diversity for maintaining office in the development of ethnic politics in the periphery. I argue that this definition of ethnic politics does not necessarily apply to all modern nation-states characterized by ethnic diversity. In fact, ethnic politics by nature, as Gisselquist (2013) argues, does not necessarily operate in some societies characterized by ethnic diversity such as in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom and Russia (Rabushka & Selpslie, 1972). However, ethnic politics is the main feature of some other societies, in particular Malaysia (Segawa, 2015; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Rabushka & Selpslie, 1972). For this reason, the thesis examines the role of the governing politicians based in West Malaysia in developing, escalating and diffusing ethnic political activities in Sabah.

Malaysia by nature is a modern society described by Furnivall (1939; 1948) as a plural society that employs the consociational form of democracy that seeks to regulate the sharing of power among ethnic groups within a federation. Many scholars such as Segawa (2015), and Rabushka and Selpslie (1972) argues that ethnic influence over political activities become significant in Malaysia's plural society formed as a federation. While I agree with such an idea, in reality, I argue that the nature of society and political system not only has made ethnic influence over

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political activities in Malaysia strong but it also has largely contributed to the interest among the governing political elites to spread ethnic politics throughout the country, especially in the periphery state of Sabah that traditionally was not plagued with such hostilities.

A similar point has been made by Prasad (2016) who argued that, such nature of society and political system which he described as the institutions that induced ethnic politics in Malaysia (Sarawak) and Indonesia (Kalimantan Province). The opportunity to expand political support base or to maximise chances of victory in elections among the governing politicians being the reason behind such development. Nevertheless, in such nature of society and political system, when elections are contested along ethnic lines, ethnic tensions in the region usually heightened (Davidson, 2005, p. 172; Mietzner, 2014; 51). While ethnic conflict is heightening, it is important to stress that the politics of ethnicity does not necessarily ended, rather remains a force to be reckoned with in Malaysia following the success of the governing politicians based in West Malaysia to expand ethnic politics to Sabah after the formation of the Federation of Malaysia using various strategies. As explained, this is what the thesis attempts to do: to understand the significant of the political elites' role in the expansion of ethnic politics to the periphery state of Sabah in Malaysia. In order to understand the significant of the political elites' role in the expansion of ethnic politics to the periphery state of Sabah in Malaysia, I think that understanding the link between the nature of society, the political system, and their strong determination to develop, escalate and diffuse ethnic political activities in the periphery should become the focus of enquiry for this thesis.

To show the link between the nature of the society, the political system and the governing political elites' strong determination to develop, escalate and diffuse ethnic political activities in the periphery, it thus becomes necessary to examine the existing literature relating to these concepts. The contribution made by several scholars such as Furnivall (1939; 1948), Smith (1965), and Rabushka and Selpslie (1972) on plural society, Lijphat (1968; 1969; 2003), McGarry and O'Leary (2006) and Lembruch (2003) on consociational democracy, and Riker (1975) and King (1982) on federation are explored to establish their usefulness in the construction of theoretical linkages between these concepts. By doing so, this study will be able to construct a theoretical framework on the relationship between ethnic politics, the nature of society and its political system, and the need for the governing political elites to expand ethnic politics in the periphery. The following section thus presents a critical examination of the concept of plural society, consociational democracy and federation.

1.2 The Plural Society

Social scientists widely agree that ethnic politics is the phenomenon that distinguishes the plural society from another type of society. As Rabushka and Selpslie argue, "the hallmark of the plural society, and the feature that distinguishes it from its pluralistic counterpart, is the practice of politics almost exclusively along ethnic lines" (1972, p. 20). This concept of society was developed by Furnivall (1939) based on extensive research in Netherland Indies (contemporary Indonesia) and British Burma and was expanded by Smith (1965). In this comparative political economy study, Furnivall explained that a plural society is a society that comprises

"two or more elements or social orders which live side by side in one political unit[1], but less mingling with one another" (1939, p. 446). He also stated that they are deeply divided culturally and meet only in the marketplace. As he puts it, in this society "each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market-place, in buying and selling" (1948, p. 304).

He also noted that ethnic division within this society generally coincided with an economic division: the Europeans control the world of business and administration, Chinese dominates trade, Indians work in farming, and the Indonesians remain in the rural or underdeveloped areas. In this regard, it is important to note that both ethnic and economic divisions are the result of political manipulation by the colonial elite. In Peninsular Malaysia, for example, during the colonial era the Malays were consigned to villages and the Chinese to new towns (Sua, 2013; Suwannathat-Pian, 2009; Hamid, 2007; Muhammad, 2000; Shamsul, 1986; Yegar, 1984). In Indonesia, however, the Chinese were given the role of collecting taxes from the natives and the natives were encouraged to focus on their traditional farming activities (Erkelens, 2013; Merchant, 2012).

Accordingly, the separation of communities according to ethnic and economic activities made the society become inherently unstable and prone to conflict because this led to the extermination of 'common social will' among the ethnic groups (Guan, 2009; Pham, 2005; Sanders, 2002). In dealing with the possibility of ethnic conflict the colonial elite, as described by Furnivall, carry the duty of holding together the

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[1] The concept of political unit here refers to a territory that usually having a boundaries or a line that separating it from other territory set by political authority and is govern by its own political organization.

society by becoming the arbitrator. By insisting that the colonial powers are the force that holds together the society Furnivall seems to have ignored the fact that the creation of plural society is generally linked to colonial policy. In fact, it was the colonial policy of encouraging the influx of cheap labor forces from various countries to develop the economy and the desire to retain political control in its colonies that contributed to the creation of the plural society (Chernov, 2003). In the process of policy implementation, the colonial powers also played a role as a buffer between ethnic groups to prevent the existing ethnic groups from working together to oppose and jeopardize its desire to gain political control and exploit the economic resources. The result of such policy implementation has been the creation of a heterogenous or plural society.

The creation of a plural society, in turn, exposed the problem of ethnic conflict, which usually escalated following the departure of colonial power, following its decision to grant independence to these societies. Ethnic conflicts arise because the colonial power is removed from these societies. Their departure leaves these societies to manage their own ethnic problems. In some post-colonial plural societies, ethnic nationalism becomes the root cause of ethnic problems. Ethnic nationalism begins followed the increase in the ethnic groups who were originally immigrants brought into the country by the colonial power.

Transformation of their economic status higher than the locals was due to the colonial decision to accord them lucrative financial roles and their own decision to participate in other employment that created a niche market when they were excluded from official roles such as the public service and the military. This provoked a response from the locals to protect their perceived traditional status as the

owner of the land and the natural resources in it. Such awareness translated into an intense effort to gain and maintain control over national politics. However, such efforts often led to the growing opposition by the other ethnic groups because they were of the opinion that all citizens should have similar rights regardless of whether they were originally immigrants. The local ethnic group's struggle for political power and the demands of these new ethnic groups for equal rights as citizens, in turn, made ethnic relations more tenuous under the colonial power. The persistence of ethnic conflicts thus can be seen as the result of the plural society created by the colonial power. This is the issue that has not been clearly identified by Furnivall. Nevertheless, Furnivall's contribution has laid out a foundation to understand the root cause of the ethnic crisis in these societies and the way we should distinguish it from homogenous societies.

Furnivall's concept of 'plural societies' was later criticized by many scholars (Coppel, 2010). The critics have analysed this concept through their systematic examination of societies in other parts of the world such as the Caribbean and parts of Africa (Kuper & Smith, 1969). Some of them found that although this concept can be used to describe the socially heterogenous societies, they remain unconvinced by this concept as they prefer to use the term 'divided societies' or 'segmented societies', rather than plural societies (see for instance Al-Haj, 2015; Bogaards, 2014; Gilligan & Ball, 2014; Nicholls, 1974). This was because they saw Furnivall's concept of a plural society as misleading because it concentrated attention upon differences in race and custom and upon group conflict while at the same time directing attention away from the unity and integration process, in society (Smith, 1958). Smith (1965), for example, tried to refine the concept of a plural society into a general theory of cultural pluralism.

Smith suggested that not all societies composed of diverse cultural groups are plural societies. He saw the plural society as a society characterized generally by an incomplete institutional system. As he noted, the plural societies "are only units in a political sense. Each is a political unit simply because it has a single government" (1965, p. 14). Accordingly, he defined a plural society as a society made up of socio-cultural sections that enjoy greater interdependence, consistency, and coherence within themselves than between each other. They are held together not because of consensus but rather by a government that represents the exercise of power or force by the dominant section over the subordinate ones. Given these socio-cultural sections are held together by the government, he asserted that political competition is an on-going process between sections in this type of society. This is because the dominant section of the society usually forms the government, and to become the dominant section each section must participate in political competition. Quite often, this political competition is characterized by ethnic manipulation by the political elites of a particular section or ethnic group in the society.

Rabushka and Selpslie (1972) echo the idea that political competition is a continuous process and generally characterized by ethnic manipulation as they argue that ethnic identity is often politicized in this type of society because each socio-cultural section is interested in monopolizing political power. In this regard, they identify the determinants of ethnic identity as the 'four bases of pluralism' in plural societies: race, language, religion, and tribe/custom. They argue that the concept of race is a basis for repressive ideologies, and in this case it refers to selected phenotypical features: skin color, facial form, hair type, and so forth. These phenotypical features differentiate peoples and thus provide a basis for political cohesion that is crucial in several plural societies such as Burma and South Africa where indigenous and other

ethnic groups are usually distinguished according to skin color. They also insist that linguistic difference, religion, and tribe/custom can also provide the basis for political cohesion, and become crucial factors in the politics of plural societies. In Belgium, for example, language provided a basis for group cohesion, and in Northern Ireland it is the religion that had provoked group cohesion. However, in Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and Nigeria the main factors of group cohesion have been the tribe and custom (Humphereys, 2008; Green, Preston & Janmat, 2006; Berger-Schmitt, 2000; Lemarchand, 1994; Rabushka & Selpslie, 1972). These ethnic identities usually become salient in politics because they have the ability to unify people. Therefore, it is not surprising that political actors use ethnic identity as a tool for political mobilization.

The politicization of ethnicity often made politics in this type of society unstable because such activity can provoke more intense ethnic conflicts between different ethnic groups. As Wilson (2012) observes, the politicization of ethnicity in what he calls 'small plural societies' often causes political instability because from time to time the ethnic problems becomes even sharper. This ethnic conflict, in turn, becomes the biggest threat to the democratic system and in some cases the state itself.

Given that the stability of both democratic system and the state is in great danger if ethnic conflicts continue, social scientists have suggested different ways in which ethnic conflicts can be neutralized in democratic societies. Lijphat (1968; 1969; 2003), and McGarry and O'Leary (1995; 2006) agrees that the consociational democratic system as a method of state formation is the most relevant in neutralizing ethnic conflicts within the society. I argue, however, that ethnic hostilities may not

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be neutralized through the consociational democratic system. Rather, such a democratic system may not only maintain but also intensify the existing ethnic hostilities as it encourages the politicians to become more interested in politicizing ethnicity in their quest for power. In fact, in reality, ethnic hostilities usually are strengthened in many modern nation-states with an ethnic diversity that relies on consociational democracy for state formation. In post-war Bosnia, for example, consociationalism has contributed to perpetuating ethnic conflict instead of resolving conflict (Norheim, 2016).

1.3 Consociational Democracy

The concept of consociational democracy introduced by Lijphat (1968; 1969; 2003) suggests that cooperation between elites from different ethnic groups that transcend cleavages at a mass level is a prerequisite to the establishment of a grand coalition to govern the country. Lijphat noted that the key element of consociational democracy is elite cooperation because it is "a government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy" (2003, p. 143). For this reason, he stressed that the key principle of consociational democracy is the need for the creation of a 'grand coalition' among the elites of all segments of society, the establishment of mutual veto[2], the application of proportionality-based representation within the grand coalition, and creation of segmental autonomy[3]. Through the implementation of these key elements, it was expected that all ethnic groups in the society including the minorities would always have representatives in

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[2] The concept of mutual veto here refers to the consensus among the groups on the majority rule principle.
[3] The concept of segmental autonomy here refers to need of creating a sense of individuality and allows for different culturally based law.

the grand coalition. Such representation, however, is always based on the population composition, in a way that the percentage of representation in the state political system and public sector employments mirrors the group's percentage in the entire society. At the same time, any decision made by the elite representative of each group is based on the compromise or negotiation process among the elites as a way to defuse any inter-groups conflict because the interests of all citizens are protected within a peaceful framework.

Therefore, scholars commonly describe states formed through consociational democracy as the product of growing concern among the elites within the country of the challenge of critical society fracture. Lehmbruch (2003), for example, argues that the consociational state is a state formed following the growing concern among the political elites of the challenge of strong sub-cultural segmentation. For this reason, many social scientists, especially the supporters of consociationalism such as McGarry and O'Leary (2006), argue that consociational power sharing is the most realistic option for a plural society as it can prevent ethnic conflicts from escalating. With the consociational focus on power sharing at the elite level, I argue that class hostilities may eventually become more important than ethnic hostilities when consociationalism is used as a mechanism for state formation. This is because the elites's determination to protect their class interests as an elite within the state by maintaining the balances of power and managing conflicts often made the elites cooperate to ensure that ethnic cleavage remained the focus. But this often rebounded on them as animosity against them as an elite class.

The growing determination among the elites to protect their class interests, Mahmudat (2010) argues, results in the intensification of ethnic manipulative

activities by the elites for their political benefits. I argue that this phenomenon is a direct result of a state formation using consociationalism principles as it requires each ethnic group to be represented by an ethnically based party, and these political parties usually form a post-electoral governing coalition of all ethnic antagonists (Horowitz, 2014) based on the principles of proportional representation and ordinary majority rule. Under these principles the ethnic party with the most number of seats is entitled to govern the country (Halim & Yusof, 2008) or in other words, to control the state. Most importantly, this system also allocates the posts of Prime Minister and most of the ministries to the elite of a political party representing the ethnic group that constitutes the majority of the country's population. The political outcome of these principles is that the governing political elites are increasingly interested in manipulating social divisions for their political benefits through an election and thus ensure the state's commitment to preserve social harmony and provide transparent governance. Significantly such elements provide the governing political elites with the opportunity to maintain power through the manipulation of an ethnic cleavage and at the same time deny the rights of others to rule the country because those others do not prevent, but rather encourage the governing political elites in manipulating the social cleavage. Therefore, despite Lijphat's (1968) conviction that such a system can prevent ethnic conflicts from escalating, I would rather describe consociational democracy as a system that is always inclined to allow the governing political elites to use ethnicity as their tool to maximize tenure in office.

Consociationalism in Lebanon[4], for example, has made the governing political elites from both Christian and Muslim groups become more interested in using social

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[4] The consociational power sharing mechanism in Lebanon has been implemented through '1943 provision of the Lebanese National Covenant'.

division for their political interests. This phenomenon emerged because the 1943 provision of the Lebanese National Covenant (*Al-Mithaq Al-Watani*) prioritized the political elites from the ethnic majority governing the country. The *Al-Mithaq Al-Watani* set out the principles of Lebanese state formation that gave a slight advantage in government to the Christian groups, in particular, the Maronites, over the Muslim components of Lebanese society. Specifically, the presidency was always allocated to a Christian Maronite due to a population census conducted in 1962 that recorded a slight majority of Christian Maronites (Salamey, 2009). The implementation of *Al-Mithaq Al-Watani* has been a self-perpetuating capture of the state politics by sectarian governing political elites using social cleavage or ethnic boundaries for their electoral victory but it lacks national accountability and undermines government commitment to the public good. This shows that the implementation of consociationalism in state formation in this particular country has made governing political elites from different ethnic groups more inclined to use ethnicity as a source to secure electoral victory by giving them the opportunity to retain office and control the state.

Using ethnicity as a tool to secure electoral victory in turn has led to the strengthening of existing ethnic hostilities within the country. In Rwanda, for example, the governing political elites' determination in utilising ethnicity to gain electoral office acquired through consociational mechanism led to the hardening of ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. This ethnic conflict resulted in the deaths of 800,000 people between 1990 and 1994 (Payam, 1996; Romeo, 2005). In the light of Rwanda's experience, in some countries such as Kenya the masses became more supportive of political actors who strongly rejected the idea of

mobilizing political support using ethnicity as a way of preventing what had happened in Rwanda from taking place in their country.

Nevertheless, the growing political support from the masses for political actors who oppose the idea of ethnic politicisation often leads to the decline in the significance of ethnicity in politics, and thus exposes the governing political elites to the possibility of losing power. I argue that when such a situation arises, the governing political elites are inclined to do whatever they can to maintain office through the formation or strengthening of existing federations. For example, in order to maintain its political dominance, the ruling Kenyan Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Raila Odinga in 2010 decided to strengthen the White-African created federation by redrafting the Kenyan Constitution. The constitution amendment proposal was aimed at the creation of a more decentralized political system through the removal of a total political power from the hand of the President following the death of over 1000 Africans who were pushed off their land by the existing president (McKenzie, 2010). Under this newly amended constitution Raila Odinga managed to retain office as the Prime Minister of Kenya. His success in retaining power was the result of strong political support from the various tribes such as the Kalanjin and Samburu who had sought change in the way the government treated them in terms of land ownership. This then suggests that the strengthening of federation tends to contribute to the success of ruling elites' efforts to retain power.

The success of the white-only Federal-Independent Party (FIP) to maintain power in the pre-independence Kenya also demonstrates the importance of a federation for the political survival of ruling elites. In this respect, the White African political dominance in Kenya through its principal objective, of protecting the 'White

Highlands' (Ajulu, 2002) decided to establish the Kenya federation in 1954. This newly created federation comprised of several provinces, except the Nairobi province. Each province covered several countries but the number of counties covered by each province varied. The Central province comprised of five counties (Nyandarua, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Murang'a and Kiambu), the Coast province six counties (Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifili, Tana River, Lamu and Tata-Taveta), the Eastern province included eight counties (Marsabit, Isiolo, Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, Embu, Kitui, Machakos and Makueni), the North Eastern province three counties (Garissa, Wajir and Mandera) the Nyanza province six counties (Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Migori, Kisii and Nyamira), the Rift Valley province fourteen counties (Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Elyeyo-Marakwet, Nandi, Baringo, Laikipia, Nakuru, Narok, Kajiado, Kericho and Bomet), and the Western province four counties (Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma and Busia). With the creation of a federation, the FIP later transformed into the Progressive Local Government Party (PLGP) and quickly gained control over Kenya's politics through the strengthened support from the local government.

In order to gain strong support from the local government usually dominated by the local tribes, the PLGP decided to impose a new legislation on land tenure. Under this legislation, the tribes who tended to oppose the PLGP were dispossessed of their land and were confined to reservation areas. As a result, many tribes such as the Kikuyu lost their land, while the tribes with leaders who tended to support the PLGP such as the tribes of Kalenjin, Masai, Turkana, Giriama and Samburu were given the opportunity to remain in their land. This was the policy imposed by the Kenyan president in 2010, which led to the death of more than 1000 people forced from their land.

1.4 The Federation

The federation is a politico-constitutional system described by Lijphat as 'a special form of segmental autonomy' that can be applied in the context of territorial nationalities claimed by groups. This system can even exist in the non-territorial context (Elkins, 1995) such as in Belgium where groups were given autonomy over education policy for their members without any restriction by the territorial government. In other words, this system can be applied in the context of both territorial and non-territorial arrangements. In this research, however, I will concentrate only on the more traditional concept of a territorially based federation. This decision is driven by the need to analyze the significance of governing political elites in the maintenance of ethnic influence in the politics of plural society that uses consociational democracy for state formation through continuous effort to expand ethnic politics in the periphery.

With regard to the territorially-based federation, Riker (1969; 1975), King (1982), and Bin (2011) assert that under this system several component regions managed under regional level governments and originally separated via political boundaries become united under a central government (also known as the federal government or national government). Considering that all component regions are united under the management of a central government, scholars of federalism argue that there are at least two levels of jurisdiction that operate concurrently within the country that is the federal and regional levels of governments. As Riker explained, "under federalism, activities of the government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which

it makes the final decision" (1975, p. 101). Riker's definition was echoed by King who stressed that "federalism may be conveniently defined as a constitutional system which instances a division between central and regional governments and where special or entrenched representation is accorded to the regions in the decision making procedures of central government" (1982, p. 141). Therefore, with the administrative power generally in the hands of both central and regional government the federation is usually called a dual system of government.

In such governments, however, the central or the federal government usually holds the significant role in managing the whole federation as many key aspects of national administration, such as finance, education, military, foreign affairs, and national resources are under the control of the central government. This, in turn, brings the political and socio-economic activities of the sub-nations or the regional members of the federation under the control of the central government (Boadway, 2006). Despite the significance of the central government in the political and socio-economic activities at the sub-national level, the law of many federation countries, for example Brazil, stipulates that all parties within the sub-national jurisdiction get social, political and economic security protection from the central government (Rezende, 2002). Torhallsson and Wivel (2006) argues that such a promise tends to become the key factor driving the governing elites of what they call 'small states' such as Wales and Ireland in the United Kingdom to eventually decide to agree to the idea of establishing regional based political union or in other word a federation between their territory and other territories.

While Torhallsson and Wivel (2006) – base their theory on the very illuminating case of the small states of Europe, it is also important to stress that the formation of a

regional based federation can become a tool for maintaining power focused on ethnicity among the governing political elites who have proposed and/or are always interested in such a political union framework. The prospect of maintaining power is particularly important for the governing political elites as the territorial expansion through the federation framework can contribute to the increase of their political support and the preservation of traditional status of their ethnic group. Such a prospect, in my mind, usually takes place when the governing political elites successfully suppress the ethnic identity of people in the new territories by requiring them to identify themselves as part of an ethnic group to which the governing elites belong, in the name of nationalism. This is especially true when the principle of what Lijphat (1968) called the 'proportionality-based representation within the grand coalition' is used as the very basis for state formation as it usually required the political elites of the ethnic majority to dominate the country's power base. In fact, with such a requirement, it is not a surprise when the governing political elites eventually encourage the formation of a federation because the preservation of ethnic majority status via the federation bolsters their effort to legitimize their grip over both the politics and administration of the country. It is a situation that Luping (1985) describes as prevailing in those new federation countries where the governing political elites manipulate the territorially based federation to facilitate their effort to maintain office focused on ethnicity. While in agreement with Luping (1985), I also contend that the formation of a federation often paves the way for more aggressive effort among the governing political elites to preserve or even strengthen the influence of ethnicity over national political activities. Arguably, the reason is that after the establishment of a federation it becomes crucial for the governing political elites to accelerate the integration of the politics of the sub-nations with politics at

the national level. In the United Kingdom, for example, where ethnic identity in Wales, Scotland and Ireland was suppressed in the name of British nationalism (Crick, 2008) the people of Wales, Scotland and Ireland eventually came to resent English dominance of the national government. This in turn led to the strengthening of ethnic politics in those countries.

In such conditions, the people of the sub-nation usually become more interested in opposing the central government. This, in turn, leads to what Yusoff (1999) calls 'centre-state conflict', a political phenomenon in which the sub-nation leaders rise up against the central leaders on issues such as state autonomy, control over natural resources and the introduction of various policies that are incompatible with their norm of life. Despite the uneasy relations, the central government is still capable of dominating the sub-nation through what Gladney (1998) calls 'making majority'. With regard to the making of the ethnic majority, Gladney pointed out that the majorities are no exception as they too "are made, not born" (1998, p.1). In fact, he stresses that numerically, ethnically, politically, and culturally, societies make and mark their majorities under specific historical, political and social circumstances. In China, Fiji, Japan, Korea and Australia, for example, each ethnic majority in these countries emerged as a result of their own historical, political and social circumstances. Such development especially takes place when the governing politicians, in the name of nationalism, decide to reclassify the population based on census definition of ethnic categories (Orgad, 2015; Gladney, 1998), manipulate religion and migration (Mohamad, 2010; Sadiq, 2005), or implement a national policy that facilitates ethnic categorization (Ibrahim, 2013). In Fiji, for example, ethnic Fijians became the ethnic majority due to the Fiji government move to reclassify Fiji's population based on the census definition of ethnic categories,

migration patterns, and the implementation of affirmative action policy. Moreover, in Australia, the implementation of the White Australian policy in 1901 contributed to the maintenance or making there of the ethnic majority, the White Australian or the European Australian. In some countries, especially in Southeast Asia, such moves can be seen as part of the governing politicians' effort to maintain power.

1.5 The Theoretical Framework

In light of this critical examination of the concepts of plural society, consociational democracy and federation in facilitating the political elites' effort to spread ethnic politics throughout the country, it is now possible to formulate a theoretical framework for the study of the role of the federal leaders based in West Malaysia in expanding ethnic politics to the periphery state of Sabah. The consociational democracy system shows that the legitimacy of any political party to govern the country is based on proportional representation and ordinary majority rule principles, by which I mean any political party that manages to win more seats during an election is entitled to rule the country. Similarly, under such conditions, the federal regime is also able to maintain power if it can win more seats during the general election. Under these conditions competition among different political parties is usually intense[5], and in ethnically heterogenous democratic states - the plural society

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[5] Intense political competition here not necessarily occurs between two or more political parties of different ethnic groups but it also occurs between leaders of the same ethnic group. The political competition between leaders of the same ethnic group often led to the growing opposition towards central government. Concerning this aspect, I am in disagreement with Inman when he explains that "once an ethnic group has political control of a federal unit, there is no reason to believe that greater intra-ethnic political competition through proliferation of ethnic political parties will lead to rebellion against the central government" (2013, p. 29). In fact, when the leaders of one particular ethnic group gain total control over the central government, their rival which also the leader of other ethnic group

- the political elites find it expedient to capitalize on ethnicity in the pursuit of political power and private interests (Sambanis, 2001). The reason is that under the consociational democratic system the political elites are required to obtain large enough voting blocs or 'minimum winning coalitions' to maximize their opportunity to achieve such objectives. Such requirements often drive the political elites to emphasize the 'us' versus 'them' narrative. However, to do so the political elites must consider what Horowitz (1985), Fearon and Laitin (2000) and Lynch (2011) described as constructing and reconstructing ethnic identities. Through the creation of new ethnic identity, they are able to instigate more antagonist attitudes among the ethnic group members because in such a plural society interethnic relations are usually prone to hatred and conflict as there is no 'common social will' among the ethnic groups (Sanders, 2002; Pham, 2005; Guan, 2009). Both reactive theory and competitive theory seek to explain this phenomenon.

The reactive theory proposes that ethnic identity becomes more segregated within a particular society due to the determination of political leaders to change the rule of political and economic relations (Hechter, 1975). This determination intensifies when they realise that their group status is deteriorating (Zoltan, 1998) and at the same time their political opponent threatens their existence. As ethnic identity is created based on their determination to change the rules of the game, this theory suggests that this new social identity tends to become a significant instrument for political mobilization.

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or even the leader from their own ethnic group remain interested in the state power, thus constantly involved in competing for the state power.

The competitive theory suggests that ethnic identity is indeed socially constructed, as well as emphasizing the fact that ethnicity can be an important instrument for political mobilization due to its unifying power. As Bell put it "ethnicity is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities re-merge, but as a strategic choice by individuals" (1975, p. 171). Moreover, in explaining this theory, Ozlak (2006) argues that ethnic identity is an effective instrument for mobilization with the aim of increasing a group's access to political resources. This is especially true in the case where both disadvantaged and well-established groups are increasingly determined to advance their socioeconomic status following the dominant group's attempts to impose its supremacy over their competing groups (Zoltan, 1998). In this case, competitive theory asserts that to achieve such an objective the group usually sees the strength of ethnic solidarity and mobilization as crucial in opposing the dominant group. As a result, they begin to construct or reconstruct ethnic identity for political mobilization.

Based on these theoretical explanations of ethnicity, it is now clear that ethnic identity is a social identity that can be constructed by the political actors for a specific objective such as the retention of power. This, in turn, highlights the incompatibility of primordial views of ethnicity that see ethnic identity as a social identity that is fixed, once it is created (Bayar, 2009). It confirms the constructivists' view of ethnic identity as a social identity defined by Wimmer (2008) as a socially constructed and fluid entity that can be formed through various means including conquest, colonization or immigration. In this regard, the constructivists assert that ethnic identity is malleable and dynamic rather than innate and unchanging and dependent on social, political, and historical forces (Chandra, 2012; Blanton, 2015). Indeed, ethnic identity is constructed and reconstructed because it is a social identity

that is formulated and even changed when an individual is affiliated with a particular group of people influenced by political activities. Barth (1969) saw the importance of creating boundaries that enable groups to distance themselves from one another mainly for their group interests, especially in the context of national political and economic power.

It is also important to recognize the fact that the success of federal leaders to expand ethnic politics to Sabah does not take place devoid of specific strategies. I argue that there are both direct and indirect strategies adopted by the federal leaders to expand ethnic politics to Sabah. These include the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government based on ethnic segmentation, the initiation of demographic change through the manipulation of cross-border migration, the reclassification of the indigenous population via conversion of non-Muslim indigenous people to Islam, and the implementation of affirmative action policies designed to prioritize the Malays over other ethnic groups in Sabah. Of these, the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government in Sabah represents the direct method, while initiating demographic change and implementing affirmative action policies represents indirect strategies used by the federal leaders to expand ethnic politics to Sabah.

Similarly, both direct and indirect strategies have been used by the federal leaders to expand ethnic politics in East Malaysian state of Sarawak. Nevertheless, unlike in Sabah, the federal leaders relied on the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government (Chin, 2014b) and affirmative action policies (Ibrahim, 2013), and the reclassification of indigenous population through conversion of non-Muslim indigenous people, in particular the Ibans to Islam. In the process, however, cross-

border migration has not been adopted by the federal leaders as a method to expand ethnic politics in Sarawak. It is thus fair to say that the strategies used by the federal leaders to expand ethnic politics have been somewhat less complex in Sarawak than in Sabah as they have been able to so for their own interest. Jehom (2002) and Jayum (1994) even described ethnic identity construction and reconstruction in Sarawak as not necessarily the result of such strategies but largely influenced by colonial knowledge. According to them, colonial policies had reinforced ethnic identification in this state in relation to the rural areas and agriculture, with regional cleavages first emerging in the Brooke period (1842-1868) and continuing to divide the people of Sarawak today. As a consequence, ethnic contestation has been less significant here than in Sabah and far less compared to West Malaysia (Jehom, 2002). With little ethnic contestation in Sarawak, studying ethnic identity construction and reconstruction in Sabah provides a chance to recognize the significance of the political elites' role in the expansion of ethnic politics to the periphery state.

Before we can analyze this issue any further, we need to understand the origin of ethnic politics in Malaysia and ask why the federal leaders based in West Malaysia became interested in expanding ethnic politics to Sabah? This requires us to first understand the development of ethnic politics in West Malaysia. West Malaysia[6] is a region where political competition and collaboration has always been exclusively along ethnic lines. This started under Malay Sultan rule, nurtured under the colonial rule and strengthened under the Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (United Malays National Organization, UMNO) – Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN)

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[6] West Malaysia is a Malaysia region where most of the Malaysian states which consists of Selangor, Melaka, Negri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Perak, Kedah, Penang, Terengganu, Kelantan, and Perlis are located. The other two remaining states namely Sabah and Sarawak, and Labuan, the third federal territory of Malaysia are located in Borneo Island and usually known as East Malaysia. Both West Malaysia and East Malaysia are separated by South China Sea.

rule. The political competition and collaboration in this region between the Malays and the non-Malays (Chinese and Indians) were strongly characterized by tensions.

This phenomenon is described by Nash (1989) as the politics of confrontation and accommodation between major ethnic groups. In line with such a description, researchers have analyzed ethnic politics in plural societies plagued with prolonged tension by not focusing on one single ethnic group. Two such analyzes are by Ayatse and Akuva (2013), and Gahnstorm (2012). They have analyzed ethnic politics in Nigeria and Tanzania respectively with no significant emphasis on one single ethnic group. In West Malaysia and in Malaysia as a whole, however, ethnic politics is largely influenced by Malay nationalism. This suggests that analyzing ethnic politics in this country by focusing on a single ethnic group can be valuable. Accordingly, in discussing the reason why ethnicity became the foundation of political activities, and in particular the politics of confrontation I begin with the examination of Malay identity creation in West Malaysia and the growing determination among the Malays to safeguard their ethnic group superiority as the reason behind the maintenance of ethnic priorities in the politics of Malaysia. It is followed by the examination of the role of the Malay governing political elites or the Malay federal leaders based in West Malaysia in the development, escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah.

1.6 Studying the Federal Leaders' Role in the Expansion of Ethnic Politics

In order to analyze the significance of federal leaders in the expansion of ethnic politics to the periphery state of Sabah, I have decided to employ the ethnohistorical approach, an approach that integrates both historical and ethnographic approaches. My decision to employ this approach is driven by the fact that it is always important not only to reconstruct the history of ethnic political activities in West Malaysia and specifically in Sabah but also to show how present day people in Sabah live and express their ethnic identity.

This approach allows me to combine two key components of data collected during my fieldwork visits from December 2013 to July 2014 and from December 2015 to January 2016 in Sabah, Malaysia. The collection of both historical and ethnographic data was needed in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the research questions, taking into consideration the complexity of the ethnic politics in Sabah. The reason is that combining different data collection techniques, according to Husung (2016) and Sandelowski (2000), provides the opportunity to gain an increased insight into how the federal leaders based in West Malaysia expanded ethnic political activities in Sabah in a way that led to growing ethnic conflict there.

The historical collection consisted of researching academic publications, historiographic and various types of mediated text such as public speeches by politicians and authorities, magazines, newspapers and interviews with key political figures. Collecting this historical information was considered a favourable way to describe, explain and understand actions or events that occurred sometime in the past (Johnston, 2014; Noor Rahmah & Yusof, 2008). This resulted in the reconstruction of what happened during a certain period of time as completely and accurately as

possible. Most of the historical information on which this thesis is based was gathered during my stay in the capital city of Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, where I had served as an academic in the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (University Malaysia of Sabah, UMS) for more than five years preceding the fieldwork. During the fieldwork I searched historical and archival material about ethnic politics development in local libraries, archives and museums, and collected information by interviewing Sabah political figures. While concentrated on interviewing Sabah political figures, the West Malaysian politicians' view on how and why the Malay elites would expand ethnic politics in Sabah has also been obtained indirectly to minimise what McCambridge, Witton and Elbourne (2014) call 'Hawthrone effect'. The concept of Hawthrone effect refers to a situation where the research participants modify an aspect of their behaviour in response to their awareness of being observed or being part of the group being observed, a phenomenon that inclines participants away from an accurate or truthful response (Carter & Libinsky, 2015; Adrian, 1986; Martin, 1962). Therefore, to obtain the West Malaysian politicians' view on the research questions, I thus had to rely on historical documents and newspapers, which is where most press releases from the ruling politicians and the oppositions are publicised. Such a move has not only contributed to the acquisition of the required information but is also a considered way of reducing cost and time. It is also important to emphasise that the decision to concentrate on Sabah political figures provides an opportunity for me to conduct the interviews easily. Being a local myself and more specifically an indigenous person of Sabah gave me an advantage of prior knowledge and allowed me to conduct interviews easily with local political figures. As a local person of Sabah I did not encounter any communication problems with the

informants while conducting interview sessions because like me they speak *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language).

In addition this thesis is also based on ethnographic enquiry. The ethnographic component consists of interviews with local informants. During the fieldwork in Sabah, I spent about two weeks in each of a number of areas where my key informants live, such as in the village and urban areas in the district of Kudat, Sandakan, Keningau, Tawau, Lahad Datu, Tambunan, Tuaran and Penampang. In most cases I was already familiar with these areas and had good information about the way the people in these areas lived and expressed their ethnic identification through political activities. So I availed myself of the help of my friends and through them met key informants in multiple ways such as while visiting friends in the hospitals, or their house and *gerai* (stall), or while having breakfast, lunch or dinner in restaurants or village bars, or while shopping at the *pasaraya* (supermarket) in the nearby town and at the *tamu* (traditional weekly market). Other than that, I also met my key informants during *Pesta Kaamatan* (annual Kadazandusun's traditional harvest festival), *majlis perkahwinan* (wedding ceremonies), Chinese New Year, Christmas, and various *pesta keramaian kampung* (village festivals). During these occasions, I talked to at least a hundred people from different tribal backgrounds, not only indigenous but also non-indigenous who had been affected by the ethnic politics of Sabah.

In addition I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with thirty-five key informants including eleven politicians, fourteen government officials, five ordinary native citizens and five immigrants who had become citizens of Malaysia. These key informants were carefully selected based on the criteria of being the persons with

first-hand knowledge about the association between Sabah politics and the governing political elites as well as being part of a particular ethnic group or community within Sabah. I thus ensured that their view was the most credible over others. They comprised twenty-five male and ten female informants. In terms of ethno-religious identity, among the key informants, seventeen individuals were Muslims and eighteen individuals were non-Muslims. The Muslims comprised twelve Muslim *bumiputras* and five Muslim non-*bumiputras*, the non-Muslims comprised thirteen non-Muslim *bumiputras* and five non-Muslim non-*bumiputras*. All the key informants were aged between forty and seventy years old. The reason why all key informants of this study were in that age range, as Minocha, Hartnett, Dunn, Evans, Heap, Middup, Murphy and Roberts (2013) explain, was because they generally spoke clearly, were sincere, helpful, and able to link the past with the present due to their first-hand knowledge on many issues.

The interview sessions with the key informants were crucial as they provided me with specific information about the development, escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah. The interviews were held wherever the key informants felt comfortable such as in their home and office. They were conducted as informally as possible to create a more relaxed atmosphere. Most importantly, a set of ethical considerations were followed in this research. The main ethical principles of the study were autonomy, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. The principle of autonomy and voluntary participation ensured that the participants had the choice to participate in the study or to terminate their participation. In addition, the participants had the choice to refuse to answer some questions. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007), and Douglas, Robert and Thompson (1988), interviews with participants must meet the general

protocol and procedures for interviewing and oral history. Such protocol and procedures were needed because "all social research involves consent, access and associated ethical issues" (Punch, 2000, p. 75). For this reason, before any interview was conducted, informed consent was obtained from the key informants using either oral or written consent form. Specifically, each key informant of this study was informed in advance about the objectives of the study. In addition, each key informer was also informed that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to terminate their participation in the research, as well as choose not to answer any particular question.

The principles of anonymity and confidentiality ensured that the researcher always protected the right to privacy or secrecy of the key informers. To ensure this, information sheets and consent forms were used to explain that any information that the key informants provided would be kept confidential. The key informants in this research project, therefore, were notified in advance that any information they provided would be kept in a secure location, their name and any recorded interaction would be kept confidential, to the extent that the law allows.

My approach to ethnographic fieldwork in this study is based on the concept of 'experiment of experience' put forward by Barlocco (2014). The concept of 'experience experiment' is a way of analyzing other people's experiences, views, analogies and emotions about any issues through the shifting of various observations in the consciousness of the researcher, which constitutes the deepest and most meaningful form of knowledge. It is a way of understanding other people's experiences through the will and ability to connect with them as somebody seeking the necessary knowledge about the issues under investigation. In this case, despite

being a local of Sabah, I started as somebody without a clear understanding of ethnic politics in Sabah. Because of this position, I ended up relying mostly on the knowledge generated through interaction with the informants, particularly the key informants. My reliance on the knowledge generated through interaction with the informants thus put me in the position of not fully understanding the ethnic politics in Sabah. Nevertheless, with the knowledge of Sabah's ethnic politics gained through this ethnohistorical approach I managed to solve this limitation. This experience, in my view confirms Nonini's (2015) view of the importance of integrating both historical and ethnographic approach in the study of ethnic politics, even if he never directly mentioned ethnic politics in his study. I would, therefore, argue that employing an ethnohistorical approach to integrate both historical and ethnographic approaches remains vital to the study of ethnic politics because it helps to reconstruct the ongoing history of such phenomena.

1.7 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 examines the origin of ethnic politics in West Malaysia, showing how a plural society was produced by the colonial power in this part of the Federation of Malaysia as a foundation of ethnic politics in this country. The chapter starts with a brief outline of the creation of plural society and ethnic identities among the people of West Malaysia (Malaya) before 1957 (colonial era). This chapter then discusses the growing importance of ethnicity-infused characteristics in the political activities of West Malaysian (Malayan) people.

Chapter 3 examines the continuity of ethnic politics and the underlying reason why such socio-political activity persisted in post-colonial Malaya renamed West Malaysia at the establishment of Malaysian federation in 1963. The chapter also presents an analysis of how state-ethnic politics led to the creation of the Malaysian federation, and the reason why the politicians and state bureaucracy from UMNO, as the backbone of the Malaysian state, were interested in expanding ethnic politics to Sabah. The discussion of this issue especially focuses on the role of ethnic politics in UMNO-BN federal regime survival.

Setting the scene for in-depth analysis on the expansion of ethnic politics to Sabah, Chapter 4 reveals how the federal leaders' decision to 'export' the West Malaysia's model of government based on Malay-Muslim supremacy has contributed to such a phenomenon.

Chapter 5 details the federal leaders' significant role in the expansion of ethnic politics to Sabah by focusing on their contribution to the change of Sabah's demographic structures. It analyses the decision of the Malay leaders of the UMNO-led federal government to increase the Malay-Muslim population's numerical advantage over other ethnic groups in Sabah through legalizing the immigration of illegal migrants from neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Philippine, and the conversion of non-Muslim indigenous people to Islam. It also discusses the reactions of local leaders and the masses in Sabah to such activities based on archival facts and interviews with the informants.

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the salience of affirmative action policies in the expansion of ethnic politics to Sabah. Specifically, it reveals the impact of federal

leaders' decision to implements these affirmative action policies designed to prioritize the Malay *bumiputra* over the other ethnic groups.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusion of the study by reiterating the key arguments and findings of the study. This concluding chapter emphasizes the role of the federal leaders based in West Malaysia in the development of ethnic politics in Sabah for their political survival. This chapter also evaluates further work that might be done to support the findings of this study on ethnic politics in contemporary plural societies, even as ethnic politics is declining throughout the world (Newman, 1991; Bai, 2010).

Chapter 2: **The Origin of Ethnic Politics in West Malaysia**

2.1 Introduction

An examination of the origin of West Malaysia's ethnic politics is important to discover why federal leaders based in this part of the Federation of Malaysia were interested in expanding such politics to Sabah. West Malaysia is ethnically fractionalized. Shaffer (1982) and Hirschman (1986) described it as a laboratory for the study of ethnic politics in Malaysia. West Malaysia is also described by Shamsul (2001) and Im (2013) as the 'Malay dominated plural society'. This is reflected in the fact that inter-ethnic relationships in this land have been polluted by ethnic chauvinism, and such sentiments are especially strong among the Malay as the dominant ethnic group who jealously safeguard their own interests in order to preserve their dominance. This hampers the progress of liberal democracy while it consolidates ethnic politics in Malaysia.

This chapter traces the origin of ethnic politics in West Malaysia by focusing on the role of the British colonial power in this respect. Berman (1998) refers to 'a continuing historical process which mostly associated with the colonial era'. The colonial legacy of bureaucratic authoritarianism, patron-client relationships, complex ethnic fragmentation and competition persisted in post-colonial Malaya and later Malaysia. A patron-client relationship characterized the state-society linkage and has significantly contributed to the elites seeking state power using ethnicity. These

elites, as the main architect of ethnic chauvinism in this country, invoke ethnocentric[7] sentiments to mobilize support for their political interests.

This chapter also discusses the early history of Malayan society and the creation of Malay ethno-religious identity. The discussion reflects the conventional interpretation of the Malay ethno-religious identity founded upon the supposedly inevitable political domination by the royal ruler of a *kerajaan* (state) described by Milner (1982) as the *Raja* or what the Malay world in recent times calls the *Sultan.* Milner argues convincingly that the creation of Malay ethno-religious identity is a cultural continuum where political life was dominated by the traditional value and attitude towards the *Raja*. The *Raja* is not only the key institution in the Malay world but the only institution to which his subject gives unwavering loyalty, thus suggesting the significant contribution such institutions could play in the unique Malay ethno-religious identity. Milner's (1982) work is based on what I believe is very illuminating effort to define the Malay world. A lack of such definition is a limitation of Khan's (2006) work, in which he defined the Malay as a village-cum-agriculture-oriented people but does not define who exactly were the 'Other Malays'. Both attempt, in my view, the essential task to reach a deeper and fuller understanding of the Malayan society.

This is followed by a discussion on the creation of West Malaysian plural society as the model of society adopted by the colonial power to manage the different ethnic groups. Given that the West Malaysian society was characterized by strong ethnic disparities, this section will also discuss how British contributed to the growing importance of ethnicity not only in politics but also in the social arena. The chapter

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[7] Ethnocentrism refers to the belief that they are better than the other or is superior to the others.

ends with a discussion on the formation of ethnic based political parties as well as the birth of West Malaysian inter-ethnic political coalition and consociationalism.

2.2 Early History of West Malaysia and the Creation of Malay Ethno-Religious Identity

The capital of West Malaysia[8], also known as Peninsula Malaysia, is Kuala Lumpur, a city at once home to the executive and judicial branches of the federal government[9]. The main ethnic groups here are Malays, Chinese, Indians and the Orang Asli (Lye, 2001). Orang Asli (means 'original people' or the first people) comprises the earliest ethnic group to live in this land. According to Hood (2006), before 2500BC, *Tanah Melayu* (Malay World or Malaya) was inhabited by Orang Asli as probably the earliest populations of West Malaysia. This Orang Asli population consists of various tribes such as Negrito and Senoi (Michale & Chuen, 2012) who each have their own language and culture. Despite that, they live side by side in harmony and actively interact with each other either socially or culturally. Such interaction commenced when the Proto-Malay arrived around 2000BC from the Nusantara region (Malay Archipelago) and the Malay-Deutro in 1500BC from Yunan (Thiessen, 2012). The establishment of the Malay kingship from Majapahit as the last Indianized kingdom in East Java of Indonesia in 13th century led to the social and economic deprivation of Orang Asli due to their small numbers and their inability to compete with the new comers.

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[8] West Malaysia consists of Selangor, Melaka, Negri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Perak, Kedah, Penang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Perlis, and Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. East Malaysia consists of Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan, the third federal territory of Malaysia. They located in Borneo Island and both West Malaysia and East Malaysia are separated by South China Sea.
[9] In 1999 executive and judicial branches of federal government were moved to Putrajaya. However, some of sections of the judiciary remain in the capital city.

The 14th century, therefore, witnessed the creation of social division within the Malayan society following the introduction of ethnic identity and Islam among the Malays. Mutalib (1999) argues that the idea of Malays as Muslims was driven by the belief in universal brotherhood or *Ummah*, and thus Islam became synonymous with ethnicity (Frith, 2000). Ethno-religious identity became prominent in Malaya following the arrival of Arab and Indian-Muslim traders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Even though they were traders they also functioned as Islamic missionaries through their *dakwah* (Islamic missionary works). They used the practices of *sufism*, an Arabic word which means 'the apprehension of divine realities' (Nicholson 1914, p. 1). These practices highlighted the mysticism of Islam founded on the belief that it is possible to have "direct communication with *Allah* (Arabic word of God) under the guidance of charismatic leaders" (Trimingham, 1998, p. 1). This mystical aspect of Islam encouraged the Malays to embrace Islam while preserving some continuity with pre-Islamic cultural elements. The Malays perceived *sufism* as supporting their existing culture because it "did not challenge local animist belief" (Salim, 2015, p. 25). The massive conversion into Islam among the Malays took place in the early 14th century.

The mass conversion of the *rakyat* (literally means the commoners) however was preceded by the first Malay *Sultan* (King), Sultan Megat Iskandar Shah, a former Hindu by the name of Parameswara, in 1303 following his marriage to a princess of Samudera Pasai, the ancient Muslim port kingdom on the north coast of Sumatra, Indonesia (Nasiruddin & Tibek, 2013; Borham, 2002; Groeneveldt, 1977). The *rakyat* were motivated to embrace Islam because of the advantage that came with identifying themselves with the Sultan's religion and the belief that without *rakyat,* there would be no Sultan, and without the Sultan there would be no *rakyat* (Embong,

2014). This in turn made Islam very important in Malaya especially following the incorporation of Islamic principles into Malay traditional law and administration.

The importance of Islam in the Malay world can be seen in their 'unwavering loyalty and tenacity' in adhering to Islam (2012, p. 64). This sense of loyalty to Islam brought new dimension to the relationship between the *Sultans* and the *rakyat*. Their adherence to Islam has encouraged the *rakyat* to remain strongly loyal to the *Sultans* who are seen as the head of Islam. Although loyalty to the *Sultan* is not like their loyalty towards *Allah* (God) and His Prophet, Islam required all Muslims to give unwavering loyalty towards their leaders in the context of governance of the country and for the maintenance of harmony within the community. Yassin and Dahalan note that "as long as the leaders' orders do not conflict with Islamic policy, give benefits to others, give protection to Islam and its followers and do not bring any loss to Islam, the leaders' order must be respected and obeyed. Therefore pledges of allegiance in *makruf* (good deeds) have been shown a lot in the lives of Prophet Muhammad and his companion" (2012, p. 71).

Al-Kandahlawi (2011) also pointed out that Muslims are required to be obedient to their leaders just like the companions of Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Malay believes that loyalty to the *Sultan* is vital and this has led to the development of solidarity between not only the *Sultans* and the *rakyat* but also among the *rakyat* as the rulers' subjects (Lee, 2008). Such solidarity, therefore, made Islam an exclusive religion for the Malay community. As a result, Malay ethnic identity can no longer be separated from Islam. Ever since this identification has constantly been used to lump together people of various different cultural and regional backgrounds through conversion. Andaya and Andaya (1984) argue that after the conversion of the Malay *Sultan* in the

14th century, Islam formed an important part of Malay social identity to the extent that to become Muslim also meant to *masuk Melayu* (to become Malay or to embrace Malayness) and those who decided to give up Islam were usually regarded as rejecting their Malayness. Admittedly, one who converts would not automatically be eligible to become Malay. For example, non-Malays such as Arabs and indigenous people who convert through intermarriages can choose to become Malay or remain as Arabs.

It is important to stress here, however, that many Muslim converts have refused to change their ethnic identity to keep their traditional social identity (Wu, 2015; Sabri, 2012, Lam 2004). The Orang Asli of the Jakun and Senoi in particular tended to retain their ethnic label and prefered to be called Jakun-Muslim, Senoi-Muslim or as *Orang Asli mualaf*[10]. But in general, as Muhamat (2014) observes, the Muslim converts often reject their previous customs and way of life as they adapt their social norms and values in line with Islam as a dominant religion, particularly in regard to specific observances such as prayer, fasting, ritual, alcohol prohibition and eating only *halal* (literately means permissible to use or engage or eat or drink) meat.

This process is what Benjamin (2002) calls assimilation into the dominant religion involving various tribes within Southeast Asia. Other academics such as Miller (2010) described this as a process of civilization as well as a territorial and commercial expansion strategy of the Malay rulers. The Malay rulers used Islam as a means of making Malaya, in particular Malacca a center of economic and religious activities within Southeast Asia. The transformation of Malaya from just a trading stopover for traders from various parts of Asia and the Middle East to a centre of

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[10] The concept of *Mualaf* is an Arabic word for convert.

economic activities and Islamic learning and dissemination encouraged the development of Malayan public administration and politics. The Sultan's decision to introduce a set of laws as written legal documents and the introduction of public administrative ranks heralded the modernization of Malayan public administration and politics. The newly introduced laws were *Undang-Undang Melaka* (Laws of Malacca), *Undang-Undang Laut Melaka* (the Maritime Laws of Malacca) and *Hukum Adat* (Customary Law), the newly created public administrative positions were *Bendahara* (advisor to the *Sultan*), *Penghulu Bendahari* (state treasurer), *Temenggung* (chief of public office and state security), *Laksamana* (head of navy and also chief emissary of the *Sultan*), and *Shahbandar* (harbor masters). To guide the Malayan public administration and politics, the concept of *daulat* (sovereignty)[11] and *derhaka* (treason) was introduced to strengthen the Malay rulers' position or in other words the Malay rulers' domination over Malayan public administration and politics (Gillen, 1994; Andaya & Andaya, 1984). As a result, the position of the Sultan as monarch was strengthened. Following the consolidation of their position within Malay society, by the 15th century many Malay Sultanates emerged throughout the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Borneo (Miller, 2010).

Their emergence, in turn, led to an increase in prestige or social status of not only Malay rulers but also the Malay commoners. When this happened, people from different ethnic background such as *Orang Asli*, Arabs and Indians assimilated into Malay culture voluntarily through Islamization and began to identify themselves as Malays. Arguably, the converts' decision to identify themselves as Malays was driven by the need to improve their social status.

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[11] The concept of *daulat* refers to calls for great respect and loyalty to the Malay rulers (Gillen, 1994, p. 2).

However, during the pre-colonial period, the focus was on the strengthening Malay rulers' political and economic privileges. The *rakyat* mainly used it for the purpose of ethnic identification. For this reason, the use of the term Malay to refer to one's social identity without reference to any political and economic privileges did not create boundaries as a source of contention among the *rakyat* in the pre-colonial Malaya. As a whole, peace existed among citizens from different ethnic groups as shown for example in traditional Malay elites and the early non-Malay (*Orang Asli*) working together for mutual gain (Lee, 2008). This showed that ethnicity was not necessarily significant in the politics and public administration of pre-colonial Malaya. But, when the colonial power arrived in this region such identification did become significant in Malayan politics and public administration due to the arrival of different ethnic groups in Malaya and their differentiation by the colonial authorities.

The British decision to import labor from China and India in the 1920s led to the creation of a multi ethnic state of the type which Furnivall (1969) described as plural society, a society composed of different racial groups living side by side under a single political administration, but not interacting with each other except through economic transactions. As they do not interact with each other, strong ethnic cleavage marked by different religions eventually became a characteristic of the Malayan society. The following section discusses the impact of British administrative on ethnicity in Malayan politics.

2.3 British Colonialism: Towards the Importance of Ethnicity in Malayan Politics and Public Administration

Western colonial powers brought profound changes to Malayan (*Tanah Melayu* or *Alam Melayu*) politics and public administration (Rahim, Mustapha & Lyndon, 2013, pp. 36). The British modernized Malayan politics and public administration by introducing a colonial bureaucratic model and improved legal practice by creating courts and rule of law. These new administration model and legal institutions became the guiding principle in modernizing Malayan politics and public administration that replaced the traditional state administration. However, despite positive changes, the colonial powers left legacies that became a thorn in the flesh of the post-colonial government. The instrumentalization of ethnolinguistic and/or religious cleavages in various areas such as administration, economics and education in order to differentiate their political and economic interests (Ziltener & Künzler, 2013, p. 298) segregated the Malayan people according to ethnic lines. This legacy led to the destruction of the Malay world. In *Hikayat Abdullah,* Munshi Abdullah asserted that the changes brought by the Europeans were a "destruction of the old world and the creation of a new" (Hill, 1970, p. 126 as quoted in Rahim, Mustapha, Ahmad & Lyndon, 2013, p. 36). This was because the introduction of such policies not only prevented the Malayan citizens from socially interacting with each other but it also showed hatred among the people of Malaya as a result of what Lee (1997) describes as ethnic disparities. These were characterized by religious differences following the government intention to make Islam a key element of Malay ethnic identity and this later came to characterize Malayan politics.

Though Malaya was colonized by Portuguese (1511-1641), Dutch (1641-1842) and British (1842-1957), it was the British that brought to the fore ethnic identity and in particular Malay ethno-religious identity. Arguably, both Portuguese and Dutch came to Malaya solely for economic reasons and did not meddle in local politics and public administration as they confined their power to Malacca. In contrast, the British were invited by the *Sultans* to be involved not only in their economic life but also in political and public administration for protection against multiple external threats. This move stemmed from the Sultan's awareness of the fact that most Malays were poor, illiterate, tied to *kampung* (village) and generally engaged in either subsistence farming or fishing (Wigdor, 2013). Therefore, the *Sultan* eventually asked the British to help improve the socio-economic conditions of Malaya, in particular the Malays. At the same time, the *Sultan* also faced threats from *Siam* (Thailand), the *lanun* (pirates) of Sulu who infested the straits of Malacca and the Portuguese who frequently disagreed with the *Sultan*'s decision. This in turn inspired the *Sultan* to meet and negotiate with Francis Light as the British representative in 1771.

As a result of these negotiations the *Sultan* agreed to allow the British to build a trading post in Kedah (located in the northern west part of Malaya), and the British agreed to protect the *Sultan* from existing threats. Thus the British became the colonial power heavily involved in Malayan politics and administration. But the significant involvement of the British in Malayan politics and public administration began only when it signed the Pangkor agreement with Perak ruler on January 20th, 1874. Before the signing of the agreement, the British played only the role of the protector of Malay sultanate. Nevertheless, as the agreement gave the British power to advise the state authorities, it gained an influence over Malayan politics and public

administration (Yaakop, 2010, p. 44). A similar agreement was signed by the British with Selangor and Negri Sembilan in the same year (1874), and Pahang in 1888. The British played an advisory role in these via the appointment of a state advisor called Resident. This provided the Britishwith the opportunity to exert a more direct control over the states' administrative and economic activities and to boost development in the Peninsular states.

The rapid economic development, then, became the pull factor for the arrival of Chinese and Indian immigrants to work in the mining and rubber plantation sector respectively (Shuid, 2001). This was the beginning of the creation of plural society in Malaya. Although there are records of Chinese and Indians traders in the Malaya regions since the fourteenth century (around the year 1349), they did not settle in Malaya. However, during British rule between the 18th and 20th centuries the immigrants were encouraged by the British to stay in Malaya to consolidate the latter's economic interests (Shuid, 2001; Abdullah, 1989; Roff, 1967). The Chinese preferred not to return to their homeland due to political and economic instability there, while poverty forced the Indians to make Malaya their country (Othman, 2002; Deraman & Abidin, 2003). Thus, a new Malayan society comprising not only *Orang Asli* and Malays, but also immigrants from China and India emerged. Towards the end of the British colonial era the population of Malaya was 4,893,000, made up of 49% (2,418,000) Malays (including the *Orang Asli*), 38% (1,871,000) of Chinese and 11% (531,000) Indians (Hirchman, 1980, p. 111).

The state administration was modernized through the introduction of modern law by the Resident. In 1895, the first federation[12] called the Federated Malay States, also

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[12] The central government of first federation of Malaya was in Kuala Lumpur.

known as Protected Malay States, consisting of four Malay states (Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Pahang) came into being. The Resident's effort to modernize the state administration led to the expansion of British indirect rule throughout Malaya. In 1910 Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Johore also signed separate treaties with British and became part of the federation known as the Federation of Malaya. The Federation of Malaya included all states within Peninsula Malaya. The expansion of British rule throughout Malaya indicated its growing influence over Malayan politics and administration.

However British rule was largely indirect. According to Arifin (2014), the British role was confined to that of 'guardian' and 'advisor', and they did not interfere in culture or religion, the sovereignty of the *Sultan*, or the independent status of the Malay states. As a guardian and advisor, the British dominated the Malay states in terms of politics, public administration, and economic activities. However, athough the British dominated in politics, public administration and economy, they did not encroach on the Malay states' autonomy. The Malayan natural resources that included tin and rubber were vital to fuel and sustain the British Empire as they contributed to their foreign exchange earnings (Jomo & Rock, 1998). Therefore, it was inevitable that the British government implemented a policy to reduce the concentration of power in the hands of the Malayan governments (who might mobilize support to oppose the British administration). To facilitate this indirect rule and help control the masses, the British adopted a divide and rule policy (Sua, 2013). The aim of this policy was to divide the Malayan population to preserve its interest in the country especially its economic wealth through continuous control over its natural resources in Malaya.

The British made sure the Chinese and Indians were confined to tin mining and rubber estates respectively. The Malays were encouraged to focus on their traditional economic activities such as small scale planting and livestock farming and fishing and remained confined to their rural villages. The Malay elites, on the other hand retained their traditional political and public administration positions. The implementation of such a policy led to a socio-economic imbalance between the Malays and the non-Malays. Economic power was concentrated in the hands of the Chinese who had gained first-hand economic management knowledge and experience from the colonial government. They gained control over various economic sectors such as manufacturing, mining, medicine, commerce, engineering, construction, accountancy, and administrative and managerial position. As a result the non-Malay socioeconomic standing, especially that of the Chinese, improved significantly.

In contrast, although the political and public administration position of the Malay elites was enhanced rather than reduced due to the British decision to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Malay ruler and by providing posts and pensions for Malay princes (Stockwell, 1977), the ordinary Malays were not given a chance to improve their socioeconomic standing and life chances, and were left mostly to concentrate on agricultural sectors. This condition led to a crack in ethnic relations as well as highlighted class disparity among the Malays as well as their elites. The creation of top-ranked political and administration position such as *Bendahara* and *Laksamana*, and the maintenance of low-ranked political and public administrative position including *Penghulu* (Village Head) reflected the consolidation of class division among the Malay elites. This colonial practice of divide and rule also led to fears the non-Malays, in particular the Chinese, who had become more dominant in economic

aspects might come to control them politically (Yaakop, 2014, p. 57), a condition described by the Malays as a threat to their traditional supremacy status (Yeoh, 2006, p. 9). This drove a wedge between the Malays and non-Malays as the Malays, especially the Malay elites, believed that Malaya was a Malay country and that it should be ruled by the Malays (Yaakop, 2014, p. 56). Even though it appeared that the majority of the Chinese and Indians worked as laborers in tin mining and rubber plantations respectively, the Malay elites became aware of the influence of non-Malays in in the economic arena. The fear was that this would lead to their gaining political and public administrative power, thus marginalizing the Malay elites.

More directly, the role of the British administration in nurturing the belief that Malays were rightful owner of the *Tanah Melayu* and in categorising the immigrants from mainland China and India as Chinese and Indians rather than by their dialects as Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin or Sikh, Tamil, Punjab and Telugu build up hatred among the Malays against the non-Malays. The colonial definition of Malays as "a person belonging to any Malay race who habitually speaks the Malay language….and professes the Muslim religion" (Rogers, 1969, p. 931) instilled a sense of Malay ownership towards Malaya among the Malays, thus making them view the Chinese and Indians as outsiders even if most of them were born in Malaya (Hirchman, 1987). Yaakop argues that "Malays believe that Malaya is a Malay country and that it should be ruled by the Malays" (2014, p. 56). Such belief was strengthened following the British decision to prevent the Chinese and Indians from participating in Malayan politics and public administration. Even though the Malay Rulers had welcomed the non-Malay, especially the Chinese leaders, to become members of state councils, the British insisted that only Malay aristocrats and their colonial advisors should be allowed full participation in political and administration

roles (Hirschman, 1986). This policy of keeping non-Malays as well as the Malay *rakyat* out of the administration, as Hirchman (1986) and Purcell (1965) argue, led to the growing of interest among the Malay elites in constantly dominating the Malayan politics and administration as well as preventing the non-Malays from taking over such roles. This therefore suggests that the British refusal to recognize Chinese and Indians as citizens of Malaya prevented them from participating in Malayan politics and public administration and facilitated its divide and rule policy reinforcing xenophobia among the Malay elites (Hirschman, 1986, p. 353).

It is important to note here, however, that despite the British decision to keep the non-Malay out of politics, the traditional Malay administration began losing their influence in the state political and economic administration. The Malay leaders including the *Sultan* (King), *Bendahara* (Sultan's Advisor), *Penghulu Bendahari* (State Treasurer), *Temenggung* (Chief of Public and State Security), *Laksamana* (Chief of Navy and Emissary of the Sultan), and *Shahbandars* (Harbor Master) lost their administrative function following the strengthening of the British political and public administrative role in Malaya. In fact, by the late 18th century the political and public administrative functions were largely performed by the British Resident. It was only the *Penghulu* (Village Headman) who was the lowest in the hierarchy who retained any significant degree of functional capacity (Hamid, 2007, p. 374). The loss of the traditional leaders' influence in the state administration was the direct result of the British decision to reduce the *Sultans'* and the Malay nobility's active role in state administration and economic development through the creation of Federated and Unfederated Malay states. The Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang were established in 1895 headed by a British Resident General who managed all political and administrative. As for the

Unfederated Malay States of Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu established in the same year (1985) the Malay rulers were given the right to appoint their own cabinet, but they were still required to consult with the British Resident first before they made a decision. This requirement led to the erosion of power and influence of the rulers in the state administration as they followed the advice of the Resident especially in the political and economic arenas. As Suwannathat-Pian observes, this reduced the Ruler and the Malay nobility "to an unhealthy status of frustrated and spoiled pensioner some of whom found no meaningful outlets for their abilities and energy except in unproductive activities" (2009, p. 110). In a similar vein, Funston (1980) argued that the British wide ranging administrative reforms resulting in the traditional Malay state existing only in form, not in substance. This in addition to their concern about the Chinese economic influence made the Malay elites feel threatened, and thus focused on protecting their ethnic interests, that is the perceived Malay superiority status.

The desire among the Malay elites to safeguard their ethnic interests became even more pronounced following the British decision to implement a vernacular educational system to facilitate its divide and rule (or *divide et impera'*). This educational system replaced the existing traditional Islamic education system, the *Sekolah Pondok* (Islamic boarding school), and was aimed at controlling the Malayan people by educating them differently. It was designed primarily to preserve the traditional feudal structure of the Malay society (Sua, 2013). The British implemented a dual system of education for the Malays: one for the Malay aristocracy and the other for the ordinary Malay. The Malay aristocracy was provided with an elitist English education to turn the traditional elites into their allies. By doing so, the British gained the much-needed political legitimacy among

the Malays in general. As for the *rakyat* (Malay masses), the British deliberately attempted to maintain their status as rural peasantry through the provision of a rural-based education. They were only provided with an elementary Malay education that did not go beyond the secondary level. The Malays who wanted to study in the English school were required to undergo four years of Malay primary education. However, the immigrants (Chinese and Indians) were not required to undergo the same procedure. This gave immigrants the advantage in gaining an English education through the establishment of Penang Free School (Penang), Malay College Kuala Kangsar (Perak) and Malacca High Scholl (Malacca) (Sua, 2013).

To complicate the matter further, most of the schools were established by the Christian missionary groups. Malay parents refused to send their children to the Christian schools. Hamid pointed out that the main reason for this was "because the Malays deeply distrusted the British intentions in founding them, which could be used as an instrument for propagating Christianity" (2004, p. 28). The Malay fear of Christianization further deterred them from attending these schools following the British decision to privatize the legal role of Islam. As Hamid put it, "Islam was effectively privatized, becoming equated in the minds of many with politically insignificant rituals. In their desire to reap maximum material benefits for their own selfish ends, the Malay signatories of treaties with the British willingly submitted to the latter's parochial view of religion, hence divesting Islam of its socio-political and legal content" (2004, p. 25). In this regard, the British had introduced the secular concept of separation between Islam and state administration which was alien to the Malay ideological view. As a result the legal role of Islam in Malaya was no longer under the jurisdiction of the state but largely under the control of individuals, and in consequence the influence of Islam in Malayan education slowly eroded.

In accordance with these decisions, the teaching of the Malay language in *jawi* (Arabic script) was replaced by *rumi* (Roman alphabet.). This weakened the lesson in Islam because the *Al-Quran* (religious text of Islam) is written in Arabic similar to *jawi*. This put Islam in an inconsequential position, deepening distrust among Malays towards the colonial power and the non-Muslim Chinese and Indians. The secularization of education and the privatization of the legal role of Islam were regarded by the Malays as a threat to Islam as both undermined the traditional Islamic education system.

When this happened the Malays began to realize how much they had been left behind economically, and how they had to depend on the British even in the administration of their own religion (Yegar, 1984, p. 200). This stirred ethno-religious sentiments and their attempts to safeguard their interests led to antagonism towards the non-Malays and non-Muslims. This marked the beginning of the role of ethnicity in pre-independence Malaya. Since then, ethnic politicization and disparities became a feature of Malayan politics.

Thus, arguably the role of ethnic identity in Malayan politics and public administration was the inevitable result of the British divide-and-rule policy that had (Cheah, 1992) led to the heightening of ethno-religious sentiments and antagonism in Malaya. There was increased fear and mistrust among Malays, Chinese and Indians (Abraham, 1977) due to the absence of integration. According to Hirschman (1986) even in towns where there was the potential for inter-racial contact, residential areas, market places and recreational space were typically segregated along racial lines precluding inter-ethnic interaction Malays tightened their political grip to protect their superior status. This was the focus of UMNO, formed in 1946, a political party

aimed at uniting the Malay aristocracy and *rakyat*, and most importantly embodying the rise of ethno-nationalism among the Malays.

2.4 The Formation of UMNO: The Rise of Malay Nationalism

The need to ensure Malay elites' political supremacy led to growing ethno-nationalism among them, and this made ethnicity a factor in the political activities of pre-independent Malaya. Ethnic consciousness among the Malays was largely a defence mechanism that emerged when the Malay elites began questioning the colonial administrative practice in Malaya. As explained earlier, it was the marginalization of Malay rulers, a symbol of Malay-Muslim political supremacy, that provoked Malay leaders to criticize the British and consolidate their political power. The Malay *perjuangan* (struggle) to reinforce, and thereafter maintain Malay political supremacy began by their rejection of British's post-World War II (WWII) Malayan Union (MU) proposal that conferred equal citizenship rights to all Malayans regardless of whether they were Malays, Chinese or Indians. Under this citizenship proposal, all the immigrants were to be automatically granted citizenship. This was quickly described by the Malay elites as an attempt to erode their superiority. This unhappiness led to political mobilization among the Malay masses and culminated in the founding of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), a Malay-based political party.

UMNO symbolized Malay nationalism and its establishment was widely regarded by scholars as a result of the Japanese occupation in Malay. Wahid (1970), for example, argued that the development of Malay nationalism was encouraged by the Japanese.

The Japanese occupation of Malaya during WWII (1941-1945) ended British political and economic domination in this region. This was an indication to the Malays that the British were not invincible. As Wahid (1983) and Shaffer (1982) observed the Japanese army destroyed the myth of British and 'White' invincibility. Moreover, the Japanese rule largely favored the Malays over other ethnic groups. In this respect, although the Malay states' autonomy ended as they came under the control of Japanese emperor, the treatment of Malay rulers improved tremendously after the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Tojo Hideki to Malaya in July 1943. Tojo praised the Malay traditional leaders and in the *Niponisation* of Malay society appointed the Malay ruler as the Vice-President of the new state advisory council, a council that was intentionally created by the Japanese administration to give voice to local opinion on state matters. The advisory council was set up to seek the Malay rulers' support towards creating the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Daito Kyoeiken*) free of Western powers and their influence.

The Japanese also decided to implement a pro-Malay civil service. This meant a large number of non-Malays who employed by the British as it civil servants were replaced with Malays[13]. The Malay masses who benefited very little under the previous administration (British) were also encouraged by the Japanese to become administrators. Following this, the Malay officials increased rapidly and it was the first time Malays were given administrative role by an expatriate power in the government of the day. Moreover, in the 1943 Islamic Conference, a conference initiated by the Japanese authority, the position of Islam improved through the recognition of Pacific War as a *jihad* or the Islamic holy war (Suwannathat-Pian,

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[13] During WWII, the non-Malays, in particular the Chinese were discriminated by the Japanese. It was because they supported the British to fight against Japanese as a directive from Chiang Kai-Shek, the Chinese President.

2009). This inculcated the spirit of nationalism among the Malays because it was the first such recognition on the importance of Islam in Malayan states by the colonial power. The position of Islam was further enhanced by the reintroduction of religious school and the establishment of state religious council. Simultaneously, the opportunity to continue higher studies in Japan was given to Malay youths which boosted their self-confidence. As a result, they begun to feel a sense of belonging and believed that they were the rightful owners of the country. It eventually enabled the Malays to stand up against post-war colonial power because the pro-Malay policy of the Japanese had unintentionally strengthened the Malays belief as the rightful owners of Malaya, sharing one language and one religion. This attitude led to the emergence of pro-self-government or nationalist sentiments among them.

However, this was short lived as in 1945, the British returned to Malaya after the defeat of the Japanese army in the hands of the Americans. This was viewed with alarm by the Malays and once again they felt threatened when the British colonial Office in London tried to gain full control of Malaya. This was seen as a great disaster mainly because it implied their loss of ethnic superiority. As a matter of fact, Braddell[14], argued that some British officials reckoned that the Japanese occupation as "a God-sent chance to clear up all the country troubles" (as quoted in Ariffin, 2014, p. 2). It was because before the WWII the British have never gained full control of Malaya due to autonomy granted to Malay states. Thus, the Japanese occupation had created an opportunity for the returning British colonialist to gain full control of Malayan politics and economy effectively ending their autonomy. Though

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[14] Braddell R.S.J. was a prominent lawyer in Singapore (1880-1966), Chief Justice of the Federated Malay States (1913-17) and the first attorney general of the Straits Settlements (1986-1982). He was also a joint editor and a contributor to Singapore's centenary celebration publication, One Hundred Years of Singapore, as well as the author of numerous legal and historical publications (Jia & Ong, 2008).

the Malays were given opportunity to work as administrators, as explained earlier, during the Japanese occupation any decision relating to state administration was subject to Japanese emperor's approval and that the Malay administrators who included the Sultans have not say to such decisions. This therefore suggests that the Japanese occupation in Malaya have indeed reduced the autonomy of the Malayan states.

The returning British proposed the establishment of the Malayan Union (MU) in 1946 aimed at centralizing politics and public administration. Nevertheless, the return of British colonialist to Malaya through the introduction of Malayan Union (MU) in 1946 was regarded by the Malays as a means of returning to the pre-war era, a dark era for the Malays. The objective of MU was to gain full control of the Malayan politics and economy by transferring the sovereignty of the Sultans to the British Crown and confer equal citizenship rights to the non-Malays, a plan that effectively overturns any past privilege and protection given to the Malay race and religion (Hamid, 2007, p. 385). Therefore, the Malays perceived British MU as a threat to their position and political future (Arifin, 2014, p. 6), and the dignity of Islam and Muslims (Hamid 2007, p. 375). Rahim, Mustapha, Ahmad and Lyndon (2013) observed that this was because MU envisaged concentration of power under the hands of a central government[15] but because the union was against Malay interests. The union was perceived as favoring the Chinese and other non-Malays as the British believed that the non-Malays (Chinese and Indian) had remained loyal to the colonial power during WWII. During the Japanese occupation, the non-Malays were engaged in an armed battle against the Japanese through Malayan People Anti-

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[15] The Malayan Union main idea was to simplify the British-Malaya administration through the incorporation of all Malay Peninsular states under a single, central government.

Japanese Army (MPAJA) and Malayan Communist Party (MCP) as the Japanese *kempeitai*[16]. Both MPAJA and MCP leaders then decided to co-operate with the returning British and adopted a constitutional line of struggle (Yaakop, 2010, p. 46). In contrast, the British regarded the Malays as disloyal to the colonial power as they had strongly associated with the Japanese administration.

Moreover, the introduction of MU was actually in line with the non-Malay plea for equal rights. The non-Malays demanded the British administration recognize them as citizens and be given opportunity to serve in the public service like the Malays. They wanted to be given the same treatment as the Malays as they have sworn their allegiance to the Malay states. Thus, perhaps as to recognize the non-Malay and to punish the Malay for being pro-Japanese during WWII, the MU idea was first expressed on October 10th 1945 in a brief statement in London by the British (Yaakop, 2010, p. 49). The pro non-Malay policy of MU and the demand by the non-Malays for equality led to xenophobia among the Malays (Muhammad (2000) who looked it as a threat to their Malay supremacy.

This was aggravated by the dramatic increase in the number of non-Malay population in most of the Malay states (Muhammad, 2000, p. 50). For example, the 1931 population census showed the Chinese population in Selangor (45.3%) was twice that of the Malays (23.1%) while in Perak, Malay accounted for only 35.6% of the population, while the Chinese made up 42.5% of the population (Muhammad, 2000, p. 50; Mustapha, 1999, p. 177). The Malays vehemently opposed the implementation of MU and demanded self-rule. This movement for self-rule that symbolized the beginning of Malay nationalist sentiment was initiated and led by

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[16] *Kempeitai* is a Japanese word, to the military police, an arm of the Imperial Japanese Army. It was largely regarded as a secret police and was not a conventional military police.

Islamic-educated, Malay-educated and English-educated intellectuals and culminated in the founding of Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (Malay Nationalist Party, PKMM) in October 1[7th,] 1945 (Soh, 2005, p. 13). This new political party was associated with Islam as the religious-educated intellectuals believed that it was vital for their struggle to create *Indonesia Raya* or *Melayu Raya* (independence of Malaya within greater Indonesia or greater Malaya), an independent movement which envisaged a political merger with Indonesia (Roff, 1970). The PKMM sought unity with Indonesia as the leaders believed the creation of a so-called Malay speaking world will strengthen Malaya and Indonesian resistance against colonialism and enable them to achieve independence early (Angus, 1973). Accordingly, the PKMM was instrumental in cultivating anti-British sentiments through publication of their journals such as *Al-Iman, Neraca* and *Saudara* and emphasizing unity among Muslims.

The intellectuals began campaigning against MU and demanded self-government by forming voluntary Malay Associations in various parts of the country such as Johor, Selangor and Melaka. The struggle of these associations therefore is centered on self-government and requesting the British colonial power to protect the special position of Malays and Islam. However, the British refused to entertain the MNP and Malay Associations' protest against the MU as well as their bid for the independence of Malaya. As a result, on March 1st 1946, the Malay Associations led by Dato' Onn Jafar and other Malay-Muslims political group gathered in a conference, called the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress, held in Kuala Lumpur to unite the Malays against the MU. Following this, Pan-Malayan Malay Congress gathered on May 11th 1946 in Johor Bahru, Johor. At this conference, the Malay Associations and other Malay-Muslims political groups established a political party, the Pertubohan Kebangsaan

Melayu Bersatu (United Malay National Organization, UMNO), to represent the Malays. Under its slogan of *Hidup Melayu* or 'long live the Malays', UMNO was led by Dato' Onn Jafar, the Chief Minister of Johor (Rahim, Mustapha, Ahmad & Lyndon, 2013, p. 40) as the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress successor to oppose the MU proposal.

The UMNO leaders refused to attend the MU installation ceremonies and the British-Malaya Advisory Council meetings. At the same time, the UMNO leaders urged the Malay aristocracy and the *rakyat* to work together to protest against the MU so that the British would grant self-government for Malaya as they declared that Malaya belongs to the Malays. This declaration was acknowledged by the Raja of Perlis, Tuanku Syed Putra Jamallulail, during his speech at the 1949 UMNO annual meeting in Penang. He said, "Malaya belongs to the Malays" (Suwannathat-Pian, 2009, p. 126). Following the declaration, the UMNO leaders then publicly promised the Malay masses that they "do not want the other races to be given the rights and privileges of the Malays" (Ongkili, 1985, p. 47). The Malay elites and Malay *rakyat* collectively decided to terminate their participation in the British-Malaya government bureaucracy and politics.

Since then, UMNO effort to unify the Malays to oppose the MU scheme intensified which subsequently prompted the British administration to pursue confidential consultations with UMNO representatives and the Malay rulers as a preparation for self-government through the formation of an Anglo-Malay Working Committee. The Working Committee's role was to draw up one alternative socio-political arrangement that was acceptable to Malays[17]. It proposed an alternative socio-

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[17] See Malayan Union (1946).

political arrangement namely the federation of Malaya, with increased safeguards for the sovereignty of Malay rulers and the special position of the Malays, and more restrictive citizenship requirements. The Federation of Malaya came into existence on February 1st 1948.

It, however, triggered opposition from Malays and non-Malays who were frustrated with the British decision to retreat from its promise for the creation of a federation that "welds together the different peoples in Malaya into one united nation" (Hing, 2009, p. 63). In opposing the non-democratic and communally divisive nature of federation due to the consolidation of ethnic division and Malay privilege, in early 1946 a multiracial but largely non-Malay-dominated Pan Malayan Council for Joint Action (AMCJA) was formed. It was followed by the creation of Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Centre of the People's Power, PUTERA) in early 1947 by several progressive and left leaning Malay organizations. These political and civic organizations coalesced into the PUTERA-AMCJA in mid-1947 to demonstrate that united political action on the part of all ethnic groups in Malay was feasible through the promotion of an alternative foundation for the new Malayan federation namely the People's Constitution. Under this alternative arrangement, the PUTERA-AMCJA proposed a system of equal rights, with no distinction between ethnic communities, and retained Malay as the official language, allowing other languages to continue to be used in the short-run. This alternative arrangement also deliberately stripped of any religious connotation the conceptualization of the term Malay.

Equal rights and the new conception of the term Malay were recognized by the non-Malays. For their part, the Malay elites in PUTERA-AMCJA such as Burhanuddin Al-Helmy and Ibrahim Yaakob, were willing to oppose the UMNO conceptualization

of Melayu which referred to 'one who habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom, and professes Islam' by suggesting that the concept of Melayu needed to embrace Chinese, Indians and other regardless of religion, language or customs. Both Burhanuddin and Ibrahim also used Bauer's (1907) definition of nation that stressed the distinction between ethnicity and nationality by proposing the creation of a unitary political entity called Malaya Raya (Greater Malaya). According to Burhanuddin, any individuals who were willing to sever ties with their original nationality and "totally commit allegiance to, as well as fulfill the conditions and demands of, Malay nationality (kebangsaan Melayu)….[could become]… Malay national, in the political sense" (Tan, 1988, p. 18). Therefore, the very basis of the creation of Malaya Raya, as Noor argued was the "willingness to de-racialise the divisions...between Malays and non-Malays by insisting upon a broader conceptions of Malay culture which encompasses the different cultural groupings of the Archipelago" (2002, p. 93).

The PUTERA-AMCJA proposal of People's Constitution, however, was rejected by the British. The British believed that any person born in Malaya automatically became a citizen and the use of the term Melayu as a nationality was farcical. In fact, the British, as Omar (2009) argued, stressed that such a proposal would allow blackmailers, gang robbers, murderers and other criminals (who were mainly non-Malay) to become the citizens of Malaya and be identified as the Melayu (Malay). Most importantly, the British also opined that the Malay elites would not agree that non-Malays could be referred to as Melayu and that non-Malays themselves would not agree to have themselves designated as Melayu. In a similar tone, Onn and the rest of the UMNO hierarchy also argued that the idea of Melayu as a nationality could jeopardize the agenda of safeguarding the privilege of Malay as an ethnic

majority. In this regard, it is important to stress that their strong opposition towards PUTERA-AMCJA's suggestion of the term Melayu to include Chinese and Indians was driven by their determination to ensure a clear boundary between Malays and non-Malays and consolidate their political interests (O'Shannassy, 2012, p. 95). As a result, in January 1948 the Federation of Malaya agreement was signed by both British and UMNO leadership[18] and effectively ended the MU on January 31st 1948. Most importantly it effectively ended the PUTERA-AMCJA conceptualization of what the term Melayu (Malay) should mean.

2.5 The Birth of Inter-Ethnic Political Coalition and Consociationalism

The creation of Federation of Malaya based on the Revised Constitutional Proposal of Anglo-Malay Working Committee marked the beginning of an armed rebellion in Malaya. The key factor that ignited the revolt was the ethnic issue, specifically Malay special privileges. The communists and radicals, among them the leaders of the PUTERA-AMCJA, launched an armed attack and exploited the grievances and communal fears in order to lure rural Malays away from UMNO (Stockwell, 1977, p. 500). The Malay elites of UMNO became increasingly fearful of the growing non-Malay influence. This in turn drove the Malay elites of UMNO to take necessary measures to preserve their privilege. In achieving this, the Malay elites of UMNO defended and championed Malay and Islam by making early independence an UMNO primary and steadfast goal.

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[18] Based on this political framework, the sovereignty of the Malay rulers (Sultans) were restored and the citizenship rules tightened in which one can only qualify for Malayan citizenship if one has resided in Malaya for 15 years, able to speak English or Malay, declare Malaya as their permanent settlement, and confirmed as having good character.

The UMNO reorganized itself following the resignation of Dato Onn Jafar as the president in 1951 as a result of opposition among the Malay elites within UMNO against his proposal to collaborate with other ethnic based political parties. Baginda (2016) and Ong (1998) in explaining this stressed that by early 1950 Dato Onn Jafar had become increasingly disgusted with what he considered UMNO communal politics and became more focused on ending the growing uneasy relationship between Malays and non-Malays. He called for party membership to be opened to all Malayans irrespective of their race. He also suggested that UMNO be renamed the United Malayans National Organization. However, his suggestion was rejected by majority of the Malay elites within UMNO. As a result, Dato Onn resigned from UMNO on August 26th, 1951 to form the Independence of Malayan Party (IMP) which failed to receive sufficient backing from the people of Malaya.

He was succeeded by Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj (hereafter referred to as Tunku), a Malay aristocrat. As soon as he was elected as UMNO's president, Tunku announced his determination to achieve early *merdeka* (independence) by initiating a series of negotiations with the British administration. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier the British made self-government conditional on the various ethnic parties forming a political coalition to manage the country. On January 1952, Tunku as the new leader of UMNO held a meeting with Tan Cheng Lock as the leader of newly formed Chinese party called Malayan Chinese Association (MCA, renamed Malaysian Chinese Association). The ad-hoc meeting was aimed at forming a political alliance between UMNO and MCA to contest the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council election (Hing & Ong, 1987; Gomez, 2010) on January 9th, and to prevent inter-ethnic crisis from worsening (Oong, 2000). The UMNO-MCA alliance demonstrated the possibility of a sustained inter-ethnic political cooperation in

Malay. This political collaboration differed from that of earlier PUTERA-AMCJA inter-ethnic cooperation that was based on political and economic equality among the citizens of Malaya. The UMNO-MCA alliance was based on political expediency and to facilitate the independence of Malaya. This political collaboration did not jeopardize the interests of Malays, rather it strengthened their political access as the alliance was UMNO led and dominated. In fact, MCA leaders "were willing to play junior partner to an UMNO that was prepared to accede to the Chinese citizenship demand" (Horowitz, 1985, p. 407).

Despite the unhappiness regarding Malay special privileges, political collaboration between the Malays and the Chinese, or to be more specific between UMNO and MCA, resulted in the success of the UMNO-MCA alliance; the alliance won 9 of the 12 contested municipal council seats in 1952 (Yaakop 2014, p. 29). The remaining three seats were won by the IMP (2 seats) and an independent (1 seat). Encouraged by the success of the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council election, the political alliance between the Malay and the non-Malay was expanded in 1954 to include the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC, renamed Malaysian Indian Congress in 1963). UMNO, MCA, and MIC cooperation resulted in the formation of the Alliance Party (Parti Perikatan, *AP*). The AP contested the 1955 first Malaya legislative council election in which it won a landslide victory, 51 out of 52 seats[19]. This led to the formation of National Executive Committee (NEC), the primary decision-making body of AP, comprising six representatives each from UMNO and MCA, and three from MIC.

The victory of AP in this election and the formation of NEC convinced the British "that inter-communal coalition or organizationally distinct ethnic parties offering a

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[19] The remaining seats went to *Parti Islam Se-Malaya* (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, PAS).

common slate of candidates, and fully endorsed by UMNO leadership, could be electorally successful through the mobilization of Malay ethnic loyalties and votes for non-Malay candidates" (Kabner, 2009, p. 58). Also, the success of AP in winning almost all available seats left the British no choice other than to give Malaya the chance for self-government. Thus, on February 9th, 1956 the British finally agreed to grant it independence through the London Independence Treaty signed by Tunku and the British Government. Even so, when the independence of Malaya became inevitable, Britain requested that a new constitution be drafted before Malaya be officially declared an independent country. The Reid Commission was established to draft the constitution which led to political compromises between AP leaders who formally endorsed the concept of Malay special rights as per Article 153 of the Malayan constitution; in return the non-Malay would be granted equal citizenship rights which allowed them to join the public services, military and own land. Therefore, despite granting of equal citizenship rights, the Malay special privileges remained. The other concession made by the non-Malays was to agree that Islam be the official religion of the Federation (Article 3), Malay as the national language (Article 152), and the *Sultans* as head of states (Loh, 1982, p. 7). It was with this agreement that the constitutional contract was signed in 1957.

The constitution was approved by the Federal Legislature, thus leading to the declaration of independence of Malaya by Tunku on August 31st, 1957. Post-colonial Malaya become a semi-democratic country based on 'elite accommodation', a governmental practice described by Means (1991) as a system that required mobilization of each ethnic group by its elite and in turn rank and file compliance for agreed policies. This democratic system became the very basis for Malayan and thereafter Malaysian consociationalism described by Vorys (1975) as a government

characterized by *vertical mobilization* of the Malays, Chinese, and Indian communities, and *horizontal solidarity* of the Malay, Chinese, and Indian political leaders. This became the driving force of ethnic politics in the newly independent state of Malaya.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the origin of ethnic politics in West Malaysia. In retrospective, it is clear that the arrival of Islam in pre-independent Malaya (West Malaysia) contributed to the construction of Malay ethno-religious identity which unified the Malay elites and the *rakyat*. At the core of the Islamic teaching is unwavering loyalty to the leaders, especially the *Sultans*. Safeguarding the elites' privilege, which the *rakyat* equated with protecting the privilege of Malay as a whole, burned ever stronger over the years before independence, underlining the development of ethnic politics. The presence of the colonial powers made the Malays more protective of their imaginary superior status. The privileges granted to the Malays were designed to separate the citizens for mainly economic and political purposes. The colonial policies were all designed to increase the dependence of Malays on their elites and indirectly on the colonial power itself (Abraham, 1997). These administrative practices created mistrust among the different ethnic groups pitting the Malays against the non-Malays.

The British administrative practices were driven by their economic interests secured through their divide and rule policy. This triggered Malays' hatred against the non-Malays, especially the Chinese. The British regarded the Chinese as immigrants and

not as citizens as they were brought in for economic purposes but this eventually resulted in the Chinese dominating the post-colonial West Malaysian economy. At the same time, the colonial power recognized the Malays as the 'rightful owners' of Malaya and ignored the fact that the Orang Asli were the prior inhabitants of the land. They privileged the Malays in the political arena, but systematically marginalized them economically. This provoked the Malay desire to take the necessary effort to consolidate their ethnic privilege and status not only in politics, but also in economics. This desire was consolidated following the Japanese rule over Malaya during WWII and their decision to apply pro-Malay policy both in political and economic arenas. Malay efforts to protect their ethnic privilege and status continued after WWII ended through their strong opposition to the returned British Malayan Union proposal. The strong opposition towards the Malayan Union that recognized the non-Malays as citizens was due to the Malay perception that they were being punished by the British for being pro-Japanese during the Japanese rule in Malaya. The founding of UMNO in 1946 reflected the rising desire among the Malays to protect their ethnic privilege and status, which also referred to Malay special rights. Both Onn Jaffar and Tunku Abdul Rahman vowed to protect the Malay special rights.

Their feeling of superiority became the driving force to seek independence from the British. As Malay elites of UMNO held negotiations with the British for independence the British made it a condition that it would grant independence to Malaya only if the ethnic majority collaborated with all major ethnic groups. As a result, inter-ethnic political collaboration at the elite level and a constitutional contract between the Malay, Chinese and Indians was established resulting in the creation of a consociational system. This arrangement became the key-feature of the

political life in the post-colonial Malaya organized along ethnic lines. It characterized the post-colonial Malaya elite-*rakyat* relations.

Thus, ethno-religious identity and the arrival of immigrants led to the creation of a plural society and the politicization of ethnicity. Ethnic politicization strengthened within the consociational democratic system. This led to increasing tension among the ethnic groups within the country. These are the central themes of ethnic politics in post-colonial Malaya that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: **Ethnic Politics in Post-Colonial Malaya (West Malaysia)**

3.1 Introduction

Ethnic politics continued to define post-colonial Malaya renamed the Federation of Malaya in 1957 and after that became part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The 1957 constitution set the basis for ethnic politics in a constitutional contract that recognized ethnicity as a legitimate parameter in political mobilization in the country. According to Vorys (1975), for example, the Malaya constitution recognizes ethnicity as a legitimate tool in political mobilization and in ongoing ethnic politics based on consociational principles in post-colonial Malaya. After all, under this political system, political leaders from different ethnic groups were required to form what Lijphat (1968) calls a 'grand coalition' to minimize interethnic political competition and avert ethnic conflicts from escalating (Leith & Solomon, 2001). Thus, post-colonial Malaya witnessed the establishment of a legitimate and solid Malay-led inter-ethnic coalition government that was later expanded to Borneo territories.

This chapter analyses the continuity of ethnic politics that gained strength in post-colonial Malaya (West Malaysia), and Borneo (East Malaysia). This chapter discusses the ethnic-based coalition government in post-colonial Malaya. This is followed by an examination of key issues behind the strengthening of ethnic politics in this region. The chapter ends with a discussion of the effort by the coalition government or to be more specific the Malay leaders to maintain power through

manipulation of the ethnic divide which resulted in the uneasy relationship between different ethnic communities. This laid the ground work for the elites to develop, escalate and diffuse ethnic politics in East Malaysia, in particular Sabah.

3.2 Legitimacy of Ethnic Based Coalition Government in Post-Colonial Malaya

The ethnic based coalition government was legitimized through the establishment of a Malay-led Alliance Party that was later renamed the Malay-led Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN) in 1973 comprising UMNO, MCA and MIC representing the Malays, Chinese and Indians respectively (Jesudason, 2001). The Malay elites of UMNO positioned themselves as defender of *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy), which required them to retain the country's ethnic edifice and through it the ruling party's political survival (Balasubramaniam, 2006). In fact, UMNO advanced the idea of ethnicity as a formal sociological category to ensure steady political support from the Malays, rejecting the demands of MCA leaders such as Lim Chong Eu and Tan Cheng Lock to increase MCA's seats from 28 to 40 (out of a total 104) in the 1959 election. This was to ensure most seats to UMNO, thus strengthening Malay dominance over other ethnic groups as desired by the Malay commoners (Wade, 2009).

Despite this decision, Tunku eventually allocated 31 seats for MCA and 4 for MIC. The remaining 69 seats, however, were allocated to UMNO to allow a two-third majority of seats for the Malays within the coalition. This distribution of seats led to the victory of the UMNO-led coalition which managed to secure 74 out of 104 contested seats, allowing the coalition to win a two-thirds parliamentary majority

with UMNO successfully winning 52 out of 69 contested seats, and MCA and MIC won 19 and 3 respectively. The victory gave Tunku confidence to fully promote preferential policies for the Malays through the amendment of the constitution. Tunku's determination to pursue preferential policies for the Malay was reflected in the 1962 amendment of the constitution, namely paragraph 2(c) of the 13 schedule, which states that "the number of electors within each constituency in a state ought to be approximately equal except that, having regard to the greater difficulty of reaching electors in the country districts and the other disadvantages facing rural constituencies, a measure of weightage for area ought to be given to such a constituency" (Government of Malaya 1962, p. 212). As it required rural weightage in the determination of electoral districts, the amendment provided a high representation of Malays in the parliament because the majority of the rural population were Malays.

Therefore, 1960 marked the beginning of what Clark and Pietch (2014) called 'gerrymandering through the exercise of re-delineation of electoral boundaries' to provide electoral advantage to the Malays (Wade, 2009). The redrawing of electoral boundaries by the Election Commision (EC) were instrumental in providing an electoral advantage for UMNO as the constituencies were Malay dominated (Pandiyan, 2016). In the constituency of Penang Selatan, for example, Malay voters numbered only 10,869 (35.17% of the 30,903 registered voters) in 1959, compared to the number of non-Malay voters (20,000 individuals; 64.83%). However, the number of Malay voters increased to 22,327 individuals (55.42% of the 40,291 registered voters) in the 1964 election, while the number of non-Malay voters declined to 17,964 following the 1960 re-delineation. As a result, the UMNO candidate (Ismail Idris) won this constituency with a larger majority of 3,517 in 1964 (an increase of

3,259 majority compared to only 258 in 1959 election). Concurrently, UMNO's coalition partners, especially MCA also benefited. The victory of MCA and MIC in various seats during 1964 election such as Ulu Kinta (Perak), Setapak (Selangor), Bandar Melaka (Malacca), Port Dickson (Negri Sembilan) and Alor Setar (Kedah) was the result of EC's decision to redraw the existing electoral boundaries (Pandiyan, 2016).

This gerrymandering was instrumental for the victory of the coalition in the 1964 election, securing 89 out of 104 contested parliamentary seats (an increase of 12 seats). The UMNO captured 59 seats (an increase of 7 seats), and MCA and MIC won 27 (an increase of 8 seats) and 3 seats respectively. The increase in the number of seats won by the coalition largely contributed to the EC's decision to re-delineate the existing electoral districts based on ethnic proportionality (Wade, 2009). As the number of seats won by the UMNO was greater than those of its coalition partners, the MCA and MIC, the Malay domination over Malayan politics strengthened.

As to further strengthening the Malay domination, the term *bumiputra* literally meaning 'son of the soil'[20] coined by the ruling party referred to native Malays as sole inheritors of the land – the legitimate inhabitants (Derich, 2002, p. 47). Although the concept of *bumiputra*, as Siddique and Suryadinata (1982) noted, first appeared in the Malayan newspaper *Seruan Azhar* in June 1927 through an article written by Lufti titled *Memereksa darihal bumiputra dengan bangsa asing* (Examining the relationship between *bumiputra* and foreigners), the use of this term became popular only after the Malay leaders of UMNO began to extensively use it in their politically driven agenda. The Malay-led government decision to hold a series of Malay

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[20] The concept of *bumiputra* is derived from the Malay words *bumi* (earth or land) and *putra* (son).

Economic Congress during the early years of independence led to the first *bumiputra* Economic Congress in 1965, which reflected the determination among Malay leaders who dominated the Malayan government to popularise and formalize the use of term *bumiputra*.

Local academics often portray the congress, which was initiated by Razak Hussein, a Deputy Prime Minister of Malaya at that time, as held mainly to promote Malay capitalism following the growing pressure from Malay middle class for a greater share of the country's wealth (Andaya & Andaya, 1982). It appeared, however, that the move was actually the Malay leaders' way of distinguishing further the Malays as the indigenous people and the non-Malays as the non-indigenous members of Malayan society. Arguably, the reason for this was the fear of being subordinated to the non-Malays (Mauzy, 2006). The social label of *bumiputra* accorded and safeguarded the Malay special position within the Malayan Federation, inferring that other ethnic groups, labelled by the government as non-*bumiputra* were required to respect such a status (Chye, 2010). The constitution drafted by the Reid Commission released on February 21st, 1957 allowed this to happen by stating that "provision should be made in the Constitution for the safeguarding of the special position of the Malay and the legitimate interests of the other communities" (Ratuva, 2013, p. 72).

This concept of 'son of the soil' or the 'original people' recognised the socio-political status accorded to the Malays over other ethnic groups by the British since 1771, even though the Orang Asli were the real original people in Malaya and many Malays themselves had migrated from Indonesia (Crouch, 2001). It was also a socio-political status which was once used by the British to propagate the idea that the Malays as the 'son of the soil' were in need of protection against the perceived

socioeconomic threat from Chinese immigrants through the introduction of preferential rights in various spheres of society (Haque, 2003). Nevertheless, as the British had only granted the status of 'son of the soil' to the Malays, the Orang Asli were effectively excluded from this so-called special protection. As the Equal Right Trust through its 'report on pattern of discrimination and inequality in Malaysia' stated, "ironically, the same level of protection was not accorded to the Orang Asli (original people, natural people or aboriginal people in Malaya) – the 18 tribes who had a longer history of settlement in the country" (2012, p. 22). Accordingly, when Malaya gained self-rule, the special position of the Malays (and by extension the exclusion of the Orang Asli from such privileges) was consolidated by the Malay-led Alliance government.

Article 153 of the Federal Constitution underscores and legitimizes this Malay socio-political special position. Article 153 states that the special position of the Malays, defined by the ruling Malay-led coalition government as *bumiputra* and as the sole inheritors of the land and legitimate inheritors of Malaya, will always be safeguarded (Derichs, 2002). The *bumiputra* label then, as Mauzy (1988) observed, not only led to the division between the Malay and the non-Malay communities, but also justified the Malay political dominance in the AP. The leaders of this ruling ethnic-based coalition consisting of UMNO, MCA, and MIC (Jesudason, 2001) agreed with the idea of power sharing where the Malays would have a dominant position in both areas (Haque, 2003, p. 240; Means, 1986). Thus, UMNO elites became more influential in Malayan politics and public administration following the success of AP and later BN in repeatedly winning two thirds of parliamentary seats (except in the 2008 and 2013 General Elections), thus leaving the non-Malays or the non-*bumiputra* with minor political and public administrative roles (Lee, 1999).

The growing Malay *bumiputra* influence in politics and public administration that coincided with the marginalization of non-*bumiputra* created widespread dissatisfaction among the latter. They began to see Malay hegemony as an ideology that served to politically dominate them (Ishak, 2002). Koon (1996) observed that the implementation of Malay rights since 1957 paradoxically had brought significantly less 'self-rule' for the non-*bumiputra*, in particular the Chinese as it ended their economic autonomy in particular. In explaining this issue, Pye (1986) pointed out that Confucian culture that emphasized the importance of social harmony provided no guidelines for Chinese leaders to function in a non-Confucian context. He argued that "the Chinese concepts of authority are entirely premised on the assumption that both the omnipotent leader and his dutiful subordinates are Chinese, that a Chinese leader should be the subordinate of a 'foreigner' is culturally unthinkable…any Chinese who act as a leader must be an imposter, if he is subservient to the Malay majority leadership" (Pye, 1985, p. 251). Thus, this set the stage for the decline in popularity of MCA (as well as MIC) among their own peoples.

In this regard, the leaders of both ethnic parties who supported the pro-Malay *bumiputra* or what Koon (1996) calls the pro-UMNO constitutional deal were regarded by the majority of Chinese and Indians as self-serving who sold off their peoples' rights for their own political interests. For them their party should represent the community's interests, namely for full citizenship rights, preservation of their own language and schools, and unrestricted economic advancement. However, non-*bumiputra* opportunity for economic advancement (Pye, 1985) was affected by the constitutional guarantees for Malay special privileges that eventually concentrated economic power in the hands of the Malays, thus obstructing the advance of the non-Malays. This led to the growing popularity of multi-racial parties such as the Labour

Party (renamed Democratic Action Party, DAP on October 11th, 1965) that stood against Malay hegemony.

3.3 The Rise of Multiracial Parties: Early Challenges to Malay-led Ethnic Based Coalition

When the political influence of multi-racial parties began to grow, the Malay elites of UMNO as the backbone of Alliance Party realized the importance of maintaining the existing political structure where Malays predominate. Mustapha (1999) opined that the decline of ethnic politics could pose a grave threat to the Alliance Party and ultimately UMNO's political dominance. They feared that if the popularity of multi-racial parties strengthened, it might weaken both MCA and MIC political support from the non-*bumiputras*. Such a development would spell an end to the peculiar system of ethnic based coalition and also see the abolition of Malay special rights.

Adding to fears of a possible end to Malay-led inter-ethnic coalition government, the first ten years after independence saw a significant increase in the population of non-*bumiputra* communities. The 1963 census, as reported by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (1974) indicated the Malays accounted for slightly more than half of the population of Malaya (51.23%, or 3,900,500 of 7,614,200 national population), while the Chinese and Indian made up of 47.35% (3,605,300) of the population. The Malay elites of UMNO felt that if this continued, ethnic politics and specifically their strong grip of Malaya's politics would be in a great danger (Luping, 1985).

The fear of a possible end to their strong grip of Malaya's politics strengthened when Lee Kuan Yew, the president of Singapore proposed to join the Federation of Malaya to manage the communist threat to his PAP government[21]. The Malay elites feared that this could tip the racial balance in favour of the Chinese. There were genuine concerns that the increased number of non-*bumiputra* would give rise to a political system not based on ethnicity and racial divide under Malay domination as the inclusion of Singapore in the federation of Malaya would see the non-*bumiputra* outnumber the Malay *bumiputra*. This would allow non-*bumiputra* to dominate Malayan politics due to the application of the consociational principle of majority rule. This made efforts to maintain Malay *bumiputra* numerical advantage over non-*bumiputra* essential. As a matter of fact, the 1957 census indicated that the merger of both countries would see the non-*bumiputra* outnumber the *bumiputra* by over one million people, and the Chinese population alone without the Indians and Others would outnumber the *bumiputra* by 100,000 people (see Malaya, Annual Report on the Federation of Malaya, 1958; Malaya, Federation of Malaya Official Yearbook, 1961).

Though the non-*bumiputra* were not interested in dominating Malaysian politics, they had been exposed to the influence of Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). Since 1948, CPM had been strongly aligned with the left-wing coalition of Malay and non-Malay organizations (PUTERA-AMCJA) in opposing the terms of the Anglo-Malay 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement. They presented a set of counter demands to the British government that were more progressive and advanced than those of UMNO. They asked for self-rule for the Federation of Malaya, a fully elected

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[21] Lee Kuan Yew's Peoples' Action Party (PAP) government was increasingly under communist threat and the Singapore leader himself was of the opinion that Singapore's future was best secured by joining Malaysia (Luping, 1985, p. 50).

legislature, and democracy for the people of Malaya for an interim period to be followed by the granting of independence. Their political manifesto, 'The People's Constitution for Malaya', demanded the introduction of a nationality called *Melayu* (Malay) for all its citizens, Malay to be adopted as the national language and all the Malay rulers to be regarded as constitutional monarchs. This manifesto became an important blueprint for an attempt to establish a united nation of all ethnic groups who viewed Malaya as their home and the object of their loyalty. The British government, however, rejected this demand. Following this, headed by Chin Peng, the CPM turned to opposing this political system through insurgency that lasted until 1960. Throughout this period of insurgency CPM continued to influence the Chinese community to oppose the Malay-led ruling coalition government by emphasizing the idea that Malays were no longer the 'ethnic core' of the nation, and to state that all races should be treated equally (Cheah, 2009). In addition, CPM compromised its agreement on the national language as it rejected Malay as the national language and demanded that the languages of the three major ethnic groups in Malaya be made official languages. In response to the insurgency the newly created Malayan government with the help of the British implemented the so-called Briggs Plan[22], a resettlement program initiated by a committee under Sir Harold Briggs, the director of operations. Despite the end of insurgency, the MCP opposition against the Malay-led political system instilled strong desire among the non-*bumiputra* to continuously

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[22] Briggs Plan was an alternative way to end the insurgency through two resettlement programs. The first was to regroup people living near jungles and hills which were considered 'security zones' into existing villages, which were thereby enlarged, while others became suburban appendages to towns, sited near main roads easily accessible to government security forces. The majority (80%) of these 'new villages' were in the western part of Malaya Peninsula and together 480 of them were established between 1957 and 1960 and involved the transfer of 573,000 people, 86% of whom were Chinese. The settlement, enclosed by barbed wire and teir entrances guarded by police-posts, had been linked to 'concentration camps, but they were mitigated by the provision of facilities such as electric lights, piped water, schools and clinics. The second exercise was the regrouping of laborers on rubber estates, tin mines, factories and sawmills and other places of employment. Such exercise involved a total of 650,000 people of different races (Cheah, 2009, p. 144).

oppose Malay domination. The non-*bumiputra* began to turn their political support away from MCA and MIC, and support politicians such as Lim Kit Siang who strongly aligned himself with the idea of equal citizenship rights. This led to a growing interest among the non-*bumiputra* to establish a multiracial party, which was realized later in 1965 with the establishment of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) by Lim Kit Siang.

In light of the growing interest among non-*bumiputra* to support a multiracial party, the Malay elites of UMNO eventually began to take relevant steps to ensure *bumiputra* numerical advantage over non-*bumiputra* (Luping (1985).

3.4 The Formation of Malaysia: Maintaining Malay-led Ethnic Based Coalition

The idea of a merger between Malaya and the British colonies of Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei was nothing new. In fact, the British government had raised this idea following the signing of Atlantic Charter by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on August 14th, 1941. This joint policy statement emphasized the commitment of the United States of America and United Kingdom to the goal of self-government (the policy of decolonization) after World War II. Apart from that, this policy envisaged integrating small political units into bigger political blocs in the interests of administrative efficiency, economic development, political stability and defense viability (Singh, 2015; Singh, 1998; Stockwell, 1979). Hence, in 1942 the Eastern Department of the Colonial Office headed by Edward Gent proposed a 'Grand Design' for Southeast Asia post-World War II called 'a federation' of all British territories in the Malaya-Borneo region as a

precursor for granting self-government (Singh, 2015). This Grand Design was to be achieved in stages through political integration between Malaya and Singapore and between North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei[23]. It was with this aspiration the British government introduced measures towards self-rule.

The effort to integrate these two separate blocs, however, failed due to political, economic and social development problems in these regions. As a result, the British government decided to revive the 'Grand Design' in 1949 by creating the post of British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia to act as a coordinating body for these regions. This post was held by Malcolm MacDonald advised by Secretary of State for the Colonies Creech-Jones to coordinate administration between the governments in their area of authority. In order to perform this task, the Commissioner-General introduced the branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)[24] in various British territories. The creation of CPA enabled him to foster much regional solidarity and goodwill among the local leaders; several CPA meetings were held and through these meetings, he elicited cooperation from the local leaders (Singh, 2015) to push vigorously for the realization of the 'Grand Design'.

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[23] This early effort of creating the 'Grand Design' was confirmed by J.D. Higham of the Colonial Office. The minutes dated 20. 01. 1953 C.O. 1022/61, Item 19. 192, J.D. Higham was quoted as saying "our original idea was that Malaya and Singapore would form one bloc and Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei, another, and that the two blocs might then merge into some sort of confederation".

[24] The CPA in pre-independence Malaya was an organisation that works to support the British government in identifying, developing and implementing benchmarks of good governance, democracy and human rights. It managed by an Executive Committee which reported to the Commissioner-General.

The Commissioner-General's aspiration for a political union at this stage received strong support from the first Chief Minister of Singapore, David Marshall in 1955[25], and after that by the first Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew in 1959. Lee Kuan Yew saw the merger as an effective way of making Tunku's government take over responsibility for the island's security as he was reluctant to act against the communists who had supported the PAP and helped it come to power (Cheah, 2003). Despite agreeing that Singapore's security was under threat from the communists, Tunku had strongly opposed the merger because he felt that Malaya should not be implicated in this problem. Tunku said, "in a Malaya-Singapore merger, the Malays might be without the protection of the constitution, find themselves at a total loss in the only homeland they had. This might eventually mean trouble as an outcome. And who wanted that? ...Singapore vis-à-vis Malaya was not as simple as idealists might think" (Cheah, 2003, p. 194).

However, during the Conference of Foreign Journalists Association of Southeast Asia at the Adelphi hotel on May 27, 1961, Tunku in his speech dropped his earlier opposition to such an idea by announcing his agreement for a merger between Malaya and Singapore. His condition was that North Borneo (Sabah), Sarawak and Brunei be included in the new federation to maintain a racial balance. He said, "Malaya today as a nation realises 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. It is premature for me to say now how this closer understanding can be brought about, but it is inevitable that we should look ahead to this objective and think of a plan

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[25] The British 'Grand Design' was temporarily halted in 1957 following its decision to grant independence to Malaya in 1957. The British however, continued its efforts to push for a 'Grand Design' in the following years.

whereby these territories can be brought closed together in political and economic cooperation" (Singh, 2015, p. 214).

The reason for the about-turn on the part of Tunku to form what he called 'Mighty Malaysia' was to ensure that the Malay *bumiputra* remain a majority and the politically dominant ethnic group in the country (Luping, 1985). The 1962 census showed that the inclusion of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei in the federation of Malaysia would see the *bumiputra* comprising Malays and the indigenous peoples of these countries outnumbered the non-*bumiputra* by more than 1,600,000 (see US Bureau of the Census, 1978, pp. 192-193; Population Reference Bureau, 1962). Therefore, Tunku saw the merger as crucial for the maintenance of *bumiputra* majority status as he and other Malayan leaders acknowledged the indigenous people in these British colonies as being culturally similar to Malays in Malaya. This provided a reason to categorize the people of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei as *bumiputra*[26]. On this point Ongkili wrote, "increasingly in the early sixties, Malayan leaders were acknowledging that the indigenous people of Borneo territories could be classified as Malays. Malayan ambassador to Indonesia, Senu Abdul Rahman had made a six-day visit to North Borneo (Sabah) in 1960. In his report, he classified the indigenous population of Borneo as Malays. The addition of the Borneo territories was therefore seen as not imperiling the position of the Malays in the Peninsular. The indigenous population of Borneo would help to balance the Chinese majority in Singapore" (2003, pp. 197-198).

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[26] The concept of *Bumiputra* is derived from the Malay words *Bumi* (earth or land) and *Putra* (son). It is a social identity coined and used by Tunku to lump together the Malays and the indigenous people of Borneo, and is remained in use until today in Malaysia.

In a similar vein, Luping (1985) also argued that Tunku invited the leaders of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei to join the Federation of Malaysia because he wanted to ensure *bumiputra* numerical advantage and UMNO's strong grip on the country's politics. Maintaining *bumiputra* numerical advantage through the inclusion of these British colonies could provide the ruling ethnic based coalition sources of political support through convincing the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak to favor this political arrangement. Most importantly, the consociational power-sharing principle, in particular the principle of proportional representation in the coalition government, was used to affirm the right of the ethnic majority to concentrate political power in their hands.

A series of negotiations between the British government, Tunku, Lee and early leaders of Borneo territories set the stage for the merger. The negotiations focused on the conditions of a federation and began with the British announcement on October 13th, 1961 that Tunku had accepted their invitation to London to discuss self-rule. After this negotiation, a white paper containing the points of agreement on a merger between Malaya and Singapore on November 22nd, 1961 was released. It was followed by the signing of a memorandum in Singapore for the formation of Malaysia on February 3rd, 1962 (Abisheganaden, 1963a, p. 1) by the CPA Committee Chairman, Fuad Stephens (Donald Stephens), witnessed by Khir Johari (representing the Federation of Malaya), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), O.K.K. Datu Mustapha Datu Harun (North Borneo), Teo Cheng Hoe (Sarawak) and Datuk Setia Pengiran Ali (Brunei).

It is important to stress here that despite the presence of Datuk Setia Pengiran Ali of Brunei during the signing of the memorandum, the Brunei Sultanate had earlier

decided to withdraw from the planned merger. Their decision to withdraw from the merger was a result of a few factors. First, the Sultan believed that joining Malaysia would erode his power as he would not be the only monarch in the new political entity. Additionally, the Brunei Sultan knew petroleum revenue from his kingdom would be distributed to other members of the federation (Cheah, 2003, p. 94), which would have an impact on its economic development. Third, during the negotiations for the planned merger, the armed insurgency called the Brunei Revolt broke out on December 8th, 1962. The insurgency was a direct consequence of strong anti-colonial sentiment among the people of Brunei headed by Shaikh Ahmad Azahari of the *Partai Ra'ayat Brunei* (PRB) who heavily opposed the proposed merger with Malaya, Singapore and other Borneo territories (Majid, 2007).

Nevertheless, the leaders from Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak were not deterred by the decision of Brunei to withdraw and proceeded to sign the memorandum. This memorandum recommended that the Cobbold Commission[27], formed on January 17th, 1962 to determine whether the people of North Borneo and Sarawak supported the Malaysia federation proposal (Armstrong, 1963, p. 683; Ibrahim, 2005, p. 94) carry out its work on February 19th, 1962. This commission surveyed the opinion of the peoples of Sabah and Sarawak about the merger and on August 1st, 1962, the commission published the report called CMND 1794[28], which stated that the federation of Malaysia was in the best interests of Sabah and Sarawak. The Commission's findings in summary stated that,

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[27] The members of the Cobbold Commission were included Lord Cobbold (Chairman, Former Bank of England Governor), Wong Pow Nee (Chief Minister of Penang), Ghazali Shafie (Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affair, Malaya), Anthony Abell (former Governor of Sarawak), and Davidson Watherson (former Chief Secretary of Malaya).
[28] See Inter-Governmental Committee. (1962).

about one-third of the population of each territory strongly favour early realisation of Malaysia without too much concern about terms and conditions. Another third, many of them favourable to the Malaysia project, ask, with varying degrees of emphasis, for conditions and safeguards varying in nature and extent: the warmth of support among this category would be markedly influenced by a firm expression of opinion by Government that the detailed arrangements eventually agreed upon are in the best interests of the territories. The remaining third is divided between those who insist on independence before Malaya is considered and those who would strongly prefer to see British rule continue for some years to come. If the conditions and reservations which they have put forward could be substantially met, the second category referred to above would generally support the proposals. Moreover, once a firm decision was taken quite a number of the third category would be likely to abandon their opposition and decide to make the best of a doubtful job. There will remain a hard core, vocal and politically active, which will oppose Malaysia on any terms unless it is preceded by independence and self-government: this hard core might amount to near 20 per cent of the population of Sarawak and somewhat less in North Borneo (Severino, 2011, p. 47-48).

Based on this, however, one can argue that the people of both Sabah and Sarawak were not too keen on the Malaysia federation proposal. This was best described by Chin: "it is clear the Commission itself could only say with clarity that only one-third of the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak fully supported the proposal without reservation. This was despite the massive propaganda undertaken by the colonial authorities. It is also clear that majority of the population, especially those in the

interior and the native population, were uneducated, and thus could not be expected to make an informed judgement" (2014a, p. 162)[29].

Nevertheless, despite this ambiguity, the report suggesting that the merger should go ahead was submitted to the British government and the Government of the Federation of Malaya on June 21st, 1962. Malaysian federation quickly became a step closer. This development, however, evoked strong domestic and international opposition. The domestic opposition came from political leaders in Malaya and Singapore. In Malaya, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (now known as Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS) headed by Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmi[30] insisted that Malaya should form a political union with Indonesia rather than with Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. The PAS leaders were of the opinion that the addition of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei in the new federation would not be able to counterbalances the massive influx of Singaporean Chinese as they had less in common with the Malays compared with the peoples of Indonesia[31]. In Singapore, the idea of Malaysian federation was strongly opposed by the opposition *Barisan Sosialis* (Socialist Front, SF) headed by Dr. Lee Siew Choh[32] who insisted that though they wanted

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[29] The Cobbold Commission interviewed only about 4,000 people in both Sabah and Sarawak. This demonstrated that its recommendation on "the 1/3 of those interviewed supported the Malaysia idea, 1/3 unsure but would support it if there were safeguards, 1/3 definitely opposed" was inaccurate as the report was based on the accumulative view of 0.88% (4,000) of Sabah population in 1960s (454,421) only. Most importantly, most of the interviewee were located in urban areas, places normally inhabited by non-indigenous such as Chinese and British. In addition, there is no specific information of whether the commission had specifically look at the economic, political and social impact of the formation of Malaysia on Sabah. However, social scientists such as Luping (1985) and Lim (2008) opined that the focus of interview was mainly on whether the people of Sabah were interested in the proposed political union in general, thus one certainly can agrue that the people of Sabah and Sarawak were not too keen on the Malaysia federation proposal.
[30] He was the president of PAS from 1959 to 1969 and has been described by the Malaysian Historian as who a radical nationalist and Islamic thinker who advocated Malay rights and proposed a political union with Indonesia.
[31] During this period, the PAS leaders were believed that the Malays in Malaya had more in common with the peoples in Indonesia than they did with the indigenous people in Borneo territories.
[32] The SF was formed on July 29th, 1961 and officially registered on August 31st, 1961 by the left-wing members of PAP.

reunification with Malaya, it was not on the terms that Lee proposed, namely the sacrifice of local autonomy (Pingtjin, 2013, p. 13-15; Turnbull, 1977).

At the international level, the opposition against Malaysia federation came from Philippines and Indonesia who argued that the proposal was nothing more than a 'British neo-colonial plot' to encircle their territories (Cheah, 2003). It was the Indonesia opposition to the Malaysia federation that became the more serious because Sukarno, the Indonesian President, threatened a "political and economic confrontation" (Vorys, 1975, p. 154). The result of such threats led to the postponement of the merger though the Malaysia Agreement was signed in London on July 9th, 1963[33]. This was because Tunku decided to end the pressure from both international parties by demanding the United Nation (UN) determine whether Sabah and Sarawak should be included in this new federation. Accordingly, the UN report dated September 14th, 1963 confirmed that majority of people in Sabah and Sarawak was in favor of this political union. As a result the Federation of Malaysia was officially declared on September 16th, 1963 by Tunku at Stadium Merdeka (Merdeka Stadium, Kuala Lumpur). It was witnessed by *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong*, *Sultans*, and the Governors of Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Penang with the conspicuous absence of Sultan Brunei (Abisheganaden, 1963b, p. 1) when his demand to be recognized as the most senior Malay Ruler and as the first *Yang Di-Pertuan Agung* (King) of the new federation (Mathews, 2013, p. 29) was rejected.

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[33] The Malaysia Agreement was signed by representatives of British government (Harold Macmillan, Duncan Sandys and Lansdowne); the Federation of Malaya (T.A. Rahman, Abdul Razak, Tan Siew Sin, V.T. Sambanthan and S.A. Lim); North Borneo (Datu Mustapha Bin Datu Harun, D.A. Stephens, W.K.H. Jones, Khoo Siak Chiew, W.S. Holley and G.S. Sundang); Sarawak (P.E.H. Pike, T. Jugah, Abang Haji Mustapha, Ling Beng Siew and Abang Haji Openg); and Singapore (Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee).

The new federation ensured *bumiputra* had numerical advantage over non-*bumiputra* communities thus preserving the supremacy of Malays through the maintenance of Malay-led coalition (Hazis, 2015). Indonesia refused to acknowledge this new nation-state and launched an undeclared war called *Konfrontasi* (meaning confrontation, from 1963 to 1966) though it was quickly quelled. In the new entity ethnic politics was reflected in the electoral victory of AP in 1964. The AP won 85.6% (89 seats) of the parliamentary seats (104) contested in Malaya which at this point began to be known as West Malaysia: 59 seats went to UMNO, 27 to MCA and 3 to MIC. By comparison, in the 1959 general election the AP had managed to win a total of 74 out of 104 contested seats (71.1%).

Despite recognition of Malay-*bumiputra* socio-political dominance in the new federation, non-*bumiputra* communities, especially the Chinese, resisted the constitutional provision of Malay special rights.

3.5 Internal Threats to AP: From *Malaysian Malaysia* to the 1969 Tragedy

The non-*bumiputra* resistance against the constitutional provision of Malay socio-political supremacy escalated when in May 1965 the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC) was formed, led by Lee of PAP, following the merger between five Chinese dominated multi-ethnic opposition parties[34]. The MSC was formed to oppose the Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia that legitimated Malays as

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[34] The MSC which composed of People Action Party (PAP), People's Progressive Party (PPP), the United Democratic Party (UDP, later merged with Labour Party to form Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia or the Malaysian People's Movement Party, PGRM) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) from West Malaysia, and the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and the Machinda Party (McP) from Sarawak was officially established in Sri Temasek, Singapore on May 9th, 1965 in an attempt to staunch the spread of communalism in the Federation of Malaysia (see "Grand opposition discuss grave trends….", The Straits Times, May 10th, 1965, p. 1).

bumiputra of Malaysia and the most dominant ethnic groups within the Federation of Malaysia[35]. The MSC created the concept of 'Malaysian Malaysia' which meant that all citizens of Malaysia were equal and that the nation-state was not defined by the supremacy of a particular ethnic group (Alex, 1968; Yee & Liow, 2013). Lee as the leader of the MSC, in announcing this during the Malaysian Parliament sitting on May 27th, 1965 proclaimed that

> support for the ideal of a Malaysian Malaysia means, in theory as well as in practice, educating and encouraging the various races in Malaysia to seek political affiliation not the basis of race and religion but on the basis of common political ideologies and common social and economic aspirations, which is the real basis of ensuring the emergence of a truly free, prosperous and equitable national community (Hill & Fee, 1995, p. 60).

He also said,

> we cannot agree to anything but Malaysian Malaysia…we are prepared to play in accordance with the rules for five, ten and fifteen years, but the idea we present must come true…we will honor the constitution because we believe it can provide a solution to the problems of multiracial society in Malaysia…I would like to make this observation in moving this amendment. Loyalty to Malaysia is not equal to and not as the same as loyalty to the Alliance Party or the Alliance government. I am under no constitutional obligation to be loyal to the Alliance Party or the government, but I must be loyal to the constitution of Malaysia and I must obey the dicta of a

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[35] This Article 153 also authorises the government to create Malay monopolies in various economic sectors.

democratically elected government of Malaysia: I accept it…what this all is about? I thought the Constitution said we are all Malaysians. I said we had better decide now. Are we Malaysian or are we Malays? Because I cannot become a Malay. I can become a Malaysian and sixty-one percent of the people of Malaysia can be Malaysia, can be loyal to Malaysia, can accept the concept of Malaysia (Alex, 1968, p. 262-266).

The proclamation of the 'Malaysian Malaysia' campaign was quickly stamped by Tunku and other Malay leaders of UMNO as a threat towards the position of Malays. In responding to such threats, Tunku evicted Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia in order to preserve AP's strong grip on Malaysian politics and public administration (Luping, 1985). In announcing this, during the parliamentary sitting on August 8th, 1965 in Kuala Lumpur Tunku said,

now, in the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful, I, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj Ibni Almahrum Sultan Abdul Hamid Shah, Prime Minister of Malaysia, with the concurrence and approval of His Majesty, Yang Dipertuan Agong of Malaysia, do hereby declare and proclaim that, as of the 9th day of August, in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty five, Singapore shall cease to be a state of Malaysia and shall forever be an independent and sovereign state and separate from and independent of Malaysia, and that the government of Malaysia recognizes the present government of Singapore as an independent and sovereign government of Singapore and will always work in friendship and co-operation with it" (Government of Singapore, 1965, p. 4).

Arguably, this was because the eviction of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia also meant the end of the uneasy political relations between UMNO of Malaya and PAP of Singapore, a relationship that could bring about the end of Malay socio-political supremacy status. This tense political relation emerged due to the determination of both Malay elites of UMNO and Chinese elites of PAP to topple each other. In fact, in an attempt to tip over PAP, UMNO participated in Singapore's 1963 election. Unfortunately it was unable to win any seats contested by PAP. As a response, in 1964 Malaysian general election, PAP placed its candidates in West Malaysia to challenge UMNO where it managed to win Bangsar parliamentary seat. The success of PAP in acquiring Bangsar that had been an UMNO-Alliance Party stronghold quickly ignited Tunku's fear of the possible growing influence of PAP among the non-*bumiputra* voters, and drove him to make an agreement with Lee Kuan Yew of PAP that the UMNO-Alliance Party would not get involved in Singapore's politics (Sopiee, 2005). However, some of the UMNO members disagreed with Tunku as they accused Lee of harassing Malays and denied them their socio-political special rights (Kwa, Heng & Tan, 2009). These accusations perpetuated the tense relationship between UMNO and PAP.

As the UMNO-PAP relationship simmered, some of the AP leaders urged the central government to take constitutional measures to evict Singapore from Malaysia. The reason for that call was based on racial and religious issues. They accused Lee of being a troublemaker due to his decision to introduce the concept of 'Malaysian Malaysia'. In this regard, some of the Alliance leaders such as T.H. Tan and Saidon Kechut described Lee as being anti-Malay, unhappy with Islam as the state religion, unpatriotic, greedy for power, and disrespectful to the Malay ruler and the head of the nation (The Senate, 1965). Guided by these accusations, the Alliance leaders

eventually believed that excluding Singapore from Malaysia federation would be the only way of ending the tense relationship. Consequently, on August 9th, 1965 the parliament voted in favor of Singapore's expulsion from Malaysia.

Nevertheless, the expulsion of Singapore from the Malaysia federation did not mean the end of tense relationship between the Malays as the *bumiputra* and the non-*bumiputra*. In the aftermath of 1969 general election, it appeared that the ruling AP was returned to power but with less than its traditional two-thirds majority parliamentary in the parliament. The AP won only 76 out of a total of 144 parliamentary seats throughout Malaysia (Drumond & Hawkins, 1970; Ratnam & Milne, 1970; Rudner, 1970), while the opposition parties composed largely of multi-ethnic parties such as Democratic Action Party (DAP), Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), People Progressive Party (PPP), Partai Rakyat (Peoples' Party, PR), Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement Party, GERAKAN and Independence gained 68 parliamentary seats. This suggested that neither the Alliance Party nor the opposition commanded an absolute majority in the parliament. The more shocking outcome was that AP not only continued to lose to PIMP (later known as PAS) in Kelantan, but also lost to GERAKAN in Penang. The failure of the AP in acquiring the two-thirds majority in the parliament was partly explained by the decline in MCA and MIC political support from the non-*bumiputra*. As Yackob (2006) observes the humiliating defeat of AP during this election at the hands of the predominantly Chinese opposition parties resulted from the non-*bumiputra* decision to reject the MCA and MIC as part of the AP. This phenomenon occurred especially in Selangor where the AP tied with the opposition for control of the Selangor state legislature for the first time since 1957. Both AP and opposition won 14 state seats.

In contrast in the 1964 state election the AP had won 24 of 28 state seats, while the opposition won only 4 seats.

These results set the scene for the May 13th, 1969 tragedy. The tragedy began when on the night of May 11th and 12th, the opposition celebrated their victory. On the next day (May 13th) UMNO youth members gathered in Jalan Raja Muda of Kuala Lumpur at the residence of Harun Idris, the Selangor *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) and demanded that they too should hold a victory celebration (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 223). The refusal by both parties to accept the fact that they each failed to get majority of seats in the state legislature sparked the riots in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor spreading throughout the city within 45 minutes. The riots led to 196 killings and considerable destruction of property (Yackob, 2006, p. 33). It was also reported 439 people were injured. Among the dead were 143 Chinese and 25 Malays (Taylor, 2008; Hwang, 2003; Colletta, Lim & Kelles-Viitanen, 2001; Funston, 1980).

The racial riot led to the declaration of *darurat* (national emergency) throughout West Malaysia by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong (the ruling king of Malaysia) on May 15th, 1969. As a result, the Malaysian government suspended the parliament and formed a caretaker government, National Operations Council (NOC or Majlis Gerakan Negara, MAGERAN)[36], to temporarily govern the country. Solid security measures were introduced by the NOC to deal with this ethnic violence. Police battalions, a territorial army, and unarmed vigilantes were part of the measures that prevented the violence from spiraling out of control.

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[36] This caretaker government which governed the country from May 16th 1969 to 1971 was composed largely of 'second generation' UMNO leaders and civil servants, and headed by the former Deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Razak Hussein (Rudner, 1970, p. 20).

3.6 The Birth of BN and NEP: Efforts of Malay Leaders to Preserve and Consolidate UMNO-led Coalition

In the immediate period following the 1969 tragedy, Malay elites of UMNO focused on consolidating the UMNO-led coalition under the pretext of remediating the inter-ethnic crisis (Shamsuddin, Liaw & Ridzuan, 2015; Haque, 2003; Derichs, 1999). On January 1st, 1973, Razak Hussein as the leader of the NOC decided to establish *Barisan Nasional* (BN, National Front) to replace the ruling Alliance Party. Raja (2012) notes that the decision to replace the Alliance Party with BN was guided by Razak's desire to increase the membership of the coalition in an effort to establish what he calls '*Ketahanan Nasional'* (National strength) through political stability. The creation of BN was, however, regarded as the result of growing determination among UMNO elites to safeguard Malay supremacy (*Ketuanan Melayu*) which coincided with the PAS leaders' decision to join UMNO[37] in September 1972 (Datar, 1983; Funston, 1980). At this point there were increased calls among the Malay masses to safeguard Malay rights and privileges (Wick, 1971, p. 18). Gomez and Jomo (1997) described this group as the 'Young Turks' of UMNO who were increasingly bold and vocal in their demand for Malay rights. Mahathir, one of the 'Young Turks' of UMNO, criticized Tunku for giving the Chinese what they demanded. He said, "the Malays have run amok, killing those they hate because you have given them too much face" (Means, 1991, p. 8-9; Munro-Kua, 1996, p. 56).

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[37] In commenting this issue, Raja Nur Alaini (2012) noted that the implementation of security measure in 1969 in fact has provided the federal government an opportunity to unite the political powers.

These demands inclined the UMNO elites to focus on consolidating the Malay-led coalition by emphasizing peace and harmony. As Bakar (2003) argues, the May 13th tragedy forced UMNO to broaden its view of political legitimacy to ensure peaceful and just governance of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Ahmad & Sulaiman (2008) stressed that UMNO leaders believed that its political survival was important to prevent a repeat of those traumatic days. Thus, UMNO leaders became focused on ensuring the UMNO-led BN retained full control of Malaysia's politics.

In order to achieve this, Razak and the UMNO elite introduced a pro-*bumiputra* or specifically a pro-Malay policy called the New Economic Policy (NEP) on August 31st, 1970, which was implemented in 1971, and as Koon (1996) argues is strongly associated with special privileges for Malays. In addition, the Malaysian constitution recognized the role of Sultans as the heads of Islam in every state and the determiners of the King[38] as the constitutional monarch at the federal level, selected from their number every 5 years (Haque, 2003; Derichs, 1999). Non-Muslims were automatically disqualified from this position. Thus, any attempt to question the Malay special rights was seen as an insult to the Malay culture and traditions (Harding, 2012). The implementation of Article 153 as per the 1957 Constitution saw the Malay and non-Malays ratio in the public services fixed at 4:1[39] (Means, 1986; Mah, 1985).

This attitude of prioritizing the Malay-Muslims was crystalized when the coalition government announced that *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) should be the national language under the pretext of fostering more rapid national cohesion. The ruling Malay political elites believed that national unity could be achieved by making

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[38] In Malaysia, the King also called '*Yang Di-Pertuan Agung*'.
[39] This ethnic ratio meant that if there are 5 positions in public service, 4 will be held by the Malays.

Bahasa Melayu the national language (Ya'acob, Awal, Idris, Hassan, Kaur & Noor, 2011) but at the same time allowing everybody to learn and use other languages for other than official purposes (this is stated in Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution). The Malay-led coalition government made *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) the language of education and administration replacing English in all public school and higher learning institutions (Gill, 2009). In addition, the Malay-led coalition government introduced an ethnic quota for university admission in place of a merit-based selection (Abraham, 1999). Under this system, public universities reserved a certain proportion of seats for Malay students (Government of Malaysia, 1977) and as a result, an increased number of Malays were able to further their studies in public universities such as Universiti Malaya (Malayan University, UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia, UKM) (Means, 1986).

The preferential treatment covered economic activities as well, even though the early coalition leaders agreed that economic power would be accorded to non-Malays. This was especially evident where the King had constitutional rights to direct any relevant authority to reserve certain proportion of business and trade licenses for Malays. This enabled the UMNO-led or to be more specific Malay-led government to increase the number of Malay business tycoons to compete with their Chinese counterparts (Jayasankaran, 1999). In 1975, for example, the government introduced the Industrial Coordination Act (ICA) as a means of creating and increasing the number of Malay tycoons. Under the ICA any non-*bumiputra* firm with capital and reserve funds of more than 250,000 Malaysian Ringgit with a minimum of 25 employees was required to achieve at least 30% Malay (and in general *bumiputra*) equity ownership to get business licenses approved and renewed (Lee, 2000). The

government, as Crouch (2001) and Mah (1985) observed, also could deny any non-*bumiputra* licenses if they failed to satisfy this requirement especially in the business sectors related to construction, mining, transport, and timber. In addition, the Malay-led government established various state and/or federal owned companies called State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Government-Link Companies (GLCs) to be controlled and managed as *bumiputra* enterprises, such as Edaran Otomobil National Berhad (EON), Malaysian Airline System Berhad (MAS), and Cement Industries of Malaysia Berhad[40]. At the same time, institutions such Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) and Bank Bumiputra (now known as Bumiputra Commerce Berhad, BCB) were created to provide credit and technical assistance to the *bumiputra* and specifically Malay business entrepreneurs.

The Malay-led coalition government' preferential treatment to ensure socio-political supremacy of the Malays, however, was not enough to avert the threat to the UMNO-led BN's political dominance. This was especially true when the *rakyat* (the masses) began to understand that NEP had largely benefited the Malay elites of West Malaysia, but not the *bumiputra* masses. The most critical of the NEP were the non-Muslim *bumiputra* of Sabah led by Donald Stephens and Pairin Kitingan who opposed the Malay-led federal government (Yusoff, 2001; 2002).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the continuity of ethnic politics in post-colonial Malaya (West Malaysia). Ethnic politics became a feature of governance as Malay political

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[40] See Marimuthu (2010).

elites of UMNO attempted to maintain the existing ethnic-based coalition government. In other words, the Malay elites' strong determination to ensure continuation of ethnic based coalition government system for their political benefits explained the continuity of ethnic politics in post-colonial Malaya. In fact, ethnic politics not only continued but strengthened in post-colonial Malaya.

In the process, the division between the communities was not only at the political but also the socioeconomic levels. This aggravated the uneasy relations between Malays and non-Malays. This chapter has shown there was an awkward relationship between *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra*, between the governing *bumiputra* political elites and the non-governing non-*bumiputra* political elites, between the Malay *bumiputra* and the Non-Malay *bumiputra*, and between the political elites and the *rakyat*. The preservation of uneasy relationship between the Malays and non-Malays (Chinese and Indians) in Malaya (West Malaysia) and the growth of unhappiness among the non-Muslim *bumiputra* in Sabah with the Malay-led federal government consolidated the uneasy ethnic relations in the country).

Chapter 4: **Introducing West Malaysia's Model of Government to Sabah**

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed how the political influence of the ruling coalition began to deteriorate following resistance from non-*bumiputra*. The ruling Malay political elite's effort to invite Sabah and Sarawak as well as Singapore to join the Federation of Malaya to form Malaysia was to ensure that the total *bumiputra* population of the new federation would always be numerically superior to that of non-*bumiputra* (Luping, 1985; Chin, 2014b) as was vital for the maintenance of the Malay-led regime. Preserving this political system was important because it provided the ruling elite an opportunity to maintain power in accordance with the consociational principle of ethnic majority rule that allowed only the political leaders of the ethnic majority to control the state. In other words, the desire to include both Sabah and Sarawak in the the new Federation known as Malaysia was mainly driven by the ruling Malay political elite's desire to maintain power through the preservation of ethnic politics in Malaya (West Malaysia) and later expand it to the Borneo territories (East Malaysia).

Nevertheless, in terms of culture and demography there was little in common between the people of Malaya and those of Borneo, other than that they were all once part of the British Empire (Chin, 2014b). Most importantly, before the Malaysia proposal was flouted, there were diverse ethnic groups in Borneo and thus, any attempt to develop, escalate and diffuse ethnic politics based on *Ketuanan*

Melayu (Malay supremacy) as in Peninsular Malaya to the Borneo territories of Sabah and Sarawak was incompatible with indigenous politics. Despite this, ethnic politics eventually expanded into East Malaysia, especially in Sabah. Over half a century, the people of Sabah eventually became socio-politically divided into three: Malay-Muslim *bumiputra*, non-Muslim *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* due to the success of federal leaders in exporting what Chin (2014b) called 'West Malaysia's model of government' to Sabah.

This chapter reviews political developments in Sabah by focusing on federal leaders' efforts to introduce West Malaysia's model of government to this Borneo territory, and how this led to the growing importance of ethnicity in Sabah politics. Before examining these issues, however, it is important that we understand the socio-political background of Sabah. Doing so offers an increased insight into the reason why federal leaders based in West Malaysia expanded ethnic political activities in Sabah.

At the heart of such an approach is the acknowledgement of the necessity to recognize the difference between the category of *rakyat* in West Malaysia and Sabah. Although the concept of *rakyat* refers to the commoners or the ordinary people who are not nobility, the category of *rakyat* in West Malaysia is not necessarily the same as the category of *rakyat* in Sabah. The *rakyat* in West Malaysia comprise Malays who adheres to the concept of *daulat* (sovereignty)[41] and *derhaka* (treason), as well as the Orang Asli, Chinese, and Indians. In addition, there are small numbers of Europeans, Americans, Eurasians, Arabs and Thai. Among these groups, the Malays constitute about half of West Malaysia's population and

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[41] The concept of *daulat* refers to calls for great respect and loyalty to the Malay rulers (Gillen, 1994, p. 2).

their political leaders are politically dominant. In contrast, however, despite comprising about one-fourth of West Malaysia's population and their political leaders not being politically dominant compared to the Malays, the Chinese are economically dominant. Because of the Malay leaders' political domination and the Chinese control over economic power, other groups were often neglected in West Malaysia's politics. This was especially true in the case of Orang Asli who constitute the smallest group of West Malaysia's population and are deprived socially and economically (Nicholas, 2003; Nobuta, 2009; Gillen, 1994; Andaya & Andaya, 1984).

The category of *rakyat* in Sabah is even more complex than that in West Malaysia as it comprises dozens of ethnolinguistic groups. This includes Kadazan, Dusun, Rungus, Murut, Sama-Bajau, Suluk, Bisaya, Malay-Brunei, Chinese, Kedayan, Orang Sungai, Kimaragang, Lun Dayeh, Lun Bawang, Cocos, Dumpas, Rumanau, Lotud, Mangkaak, Tidung, Tambanuo, Idaan, Huminodun, Minokok and Kwijau. The Malaysian government, however, tend to oversimplify the situation in Sabah by officially recognising only some of the dozens of ethnolinguistic groups. The Malaysian government even has classified these ethnolinguistic groups into four headings, namely non-Muslim *bumiputra*, Muslim *bumiputra*, Chinese and Others. Of these groups, the largest group was the non-Muslim *bumiputra*, but unlike in West Malaysia, their political leaders often were dominated by the minority, the Muslim *bumiputra*. Despite being Muslim and politically dominant, the Muslim *bumiputra* in Sabah is not the same as in West Malaysia categorised as the Malays. This point of argument was highlighted by Ajamain (2014) who stressed that the *rakyat* in Sabah cannot be associated as Malay just because they are Muslims. He said, "The people of Sabah may be Muslim but they are equally proud to be Bajau,

Irranun, Dusun, Murut, Brunei, Suluk and 40 other ethnic groups and sub-groups"
(Free Malaysia Today, 2014, March 12).

It is in this sense that shedding light on the dissimilarity between the category of *rakyat* in West Malaysia and Sabah provides a sound basis of knowledge on the federal leaders' move to ensure the expansion of ethnic politics in Sabah. On the other side of the coin, the dissimilarity underscores the difficulty faced by the federal leaders based in West Malaysia to expand West Malaysia's model of government in this state. Political elites understand this well and are aware that there must be a systematic way of overcoming such difficulty. What is required therefore is a clear understanding of the socio-political background of Sabah. This becomes a vehicle with which we can map the contours of the interrelationship between the federal politicians and ethnic politics in Sabah.

4.2 The Socio-Political Background of Sabah

Sabah, originally known as *Sabak* or *Saba* under the rule of Brunei Sultanate and later renamed 'North Borneo' throughout colonial rule, is one of the two Malaysian territories located in Borneo that Ross-Larson (1976) and Chin (2012) called East Malaysia. According to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA, 2016) Sabah is a Malaysian territory with a diverse ethnic population, comprising 42 officially recognized ethnic groups with more than 50 languages and not less than 80 dialects. Of these, 39 ethnic groups are categorized as indigenous (also called natives or *Anak Negeri*) numbering about 2,203,500 or 60% of Sabah's population of 3,736,600 in 2016 (IWGIA, 2016, p. 273). The IWGIA also reported

that three ethnic groups categorized as non-indigenous numbering about 1,533,100 made up about 40% of its population in 2016. The main indigenous ethnic groups are the Kadazandusun, Bajau and Melayu-Brunei, and the main non-indigenous ethnic groups are Chinese and Others (referring to Indonesian and Filipinos) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2015; Amir, Sulaiman, Razak, Yusof, Abdullah, Shah, Deraman, Ahmad, Noor, Meftah, Ariffin, Kasar & Hamid, 2013).

Barlocco (2014) observed that these ethnic labels did not exist in Sabah "before the establishment of outside control over the area" (p. 35). The reason is that the people of Sabah described by Mohamad (1977) as 'the original people' or the 'early inhabitants of Sabah' never evolved any significant unit greater than the *kampong* (village) with a small population size of between 50 and 100 usually consisting of kin (Barlocco, 2014; Boulanger, 2009; Luping, 1985). Thus, the ethnic label was not important because they were focused on maintaining strong family ties and living harmoniously together rather than differentiating themselves (Boulanger, 2009; Robinson, Karlin & Stiles, 2013; Tarmudi, Saibin, Naharu & Tamsin, 2014).

The arrival of Islam through Muslim immigrants from Sulawesi, Indonesia to Sabah in late the 15th century led to the establishment of the external rule of the Brunei Sultanate in the early sixteenth century (Amir, Sulaiman, Razak, Yusof, Abdullah, Shah, Deraman, Ahmad, Noor, Meftah, Ariffin, Kasar & Hamid, 2013). The Brunei Sultanate in its effort to centralize control of administration introduced ethnic labels for Islamized and non-Muslim indigenes, and thus ethnicity began to characterize the social life of indigenous population in Sabah. The Brunei Sultanate introduced the term *Melayu* (Malay) for indigenous people who had embraced Islam and for Muslim immigrants and the term became synonymous with the word Islam or

Muslim (Luping, 1985). Nevertheless, many Islamized indigenes preferred to call themselves Brunei-Malay (Melayu-Brunei, Muslim indigenes who live along the West Coast of North Borneo) or Orang Sungai (Muslim indigenes who lives along the rivers in the east of Borneo) to keep their culture, traditions and language alive through the maintenance of close ties with members of their traditional communities (Ali, 2010). In this regard, the Islamized indigenous people believed that calling themselves as such rather than as Melayu contributed towards the maintenance of their close relationship in traditional communities because Malay was a term for those who lived in Malaya only and not for indigenous people in Sabah (IWGIA, 2016). Such an attitude also affected Muslim immigrants from neighboring countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia who preferred to call themselves Suluk, Sama-Bajau and Illanun rather than Malays (Nimo, 1968; Waren, 1983; Waren 1981; Harisson, 1975).

While most Islamized indigenous and Muslim immigrants rejected Malay as their ethnic label, the Sultan of Brunei also introduced a broad social identification for non-Muslim indigenous peoples called Dusun to differentiate the Islamized indigenous and the non-Muslim indigenous people. The word Dusun is a Malay word referring to farm or orchard. The term Dusun was thus used by the Brunei Sultanate to describe the indigenous farmers who grew both wet and hill paddy (rice) (Glyn-Jones, 1953; Luping, 1985, p. 6). This early social identification comprised what the Sultan of Brunei described as *Suku*[42]: Bisaya, Bonggi, Bundu, Dumpas, Gana, Garo, Idaan, Kimaragang, Kolobuan, Kuijau, Labuk, Linkabau, Liwan, Lotud, Lun Bawang, Dayeh, Makiang, Malapi, Mangkaak/Kunatong, Minokok, Murut, Ngabai,

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[42] The term *Suku* refers to social group of people characterized by commonality of language and *adat* (customary law).

Paitan, Pingas, Rumanau, Rungus, Sonobu, Sinorupu, Sonsogon, Sukang, Sungai, Tagahas, Tatana, Tangara, Tidong, Tindal, Tobilung, Tolinting, Tombonuo, Tuhawon and Tutung (Appell & Harrison, 1968). The Brunei Sultanate decision to introduce Dusun led to the emergence of terms such as Dusun, Melayu-Brunei, Orang Sungai, Melayu, Suluk, Sama-Bajau and Illanun.

These social identifications during this period, described by Scott (2009) and Barlocco (2014), did not necessarily differentiate the people of Sabah during that period, as they viewed ethnic labels as unimportant. In fact, ethnic labels resulted in some ambiguity among the indigenous people of Sabah (Chee-Beng, 1997) as they identified themselves both as Melayu-Brunei, Orang Sungai or Malay on the basis of their Muslim identity and as Dusun due to similarities in their language, costume, music and songs, food and beverages, traditions during birth, marriages, death, and close family relations (Stephen, 2000). Most importantly, all ethnic labels during this period were informal and did not apply in any official matters. Ambiguity of ethnic label among the indigenous peoples continued even after the Brunei sultanate rule ended. Sultan Muhyiddin decided to lease this region in 1977 to an Austrian trader, Gustavus von Overback in 1877[43] to overcome piracy by immigrants from Philippines (many of whom were Illanun and Suluk) and avoid a potential civil war[44]. The ambiguity persisted after Overback transferred the lease in 1881 to Alfred

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[43] The lease made through the signing of treaty on December 29th, 1877 in Brunei Palace by Abdul Momen, the Sultan of Brunei. The treaty granted Overback the right to control the whole region of Sabah. Apart from that, through this treaty Sultan of Brunei also appointed Overback as the "Maharajah of Sabah and Rajah of Gaya and Sandakan".

[44] When Brunei was under the rule of the 13th Sultan Muhammad Ali for a year (1960), there was a misunderstanding between Pengiran Muda Bungsu (son-in-law of Sultan Muhammad Ali) and the son of Pengiran Abdul Mubin over *Sabung Ayam* (cockfight). Pengiran Muda Bongsu lost the game and was jeered by the son of Pengiran Abdul Mubin. Due to anger, Pengiran Muda Bungsu killed Pengiran Abdul Mubin's son. In an act of revenge, Pengiran Abdul Mubin killed Sultan Muhammad Ali and made himself a new sultan of Brunei, and took on the name of Sultan Abdul Hakkul Mubin. He appointed Pengiran Muda Bungsu as *Bendahara* (Treasurer) to prevent retaliation from Sultan Muhammad Ali's families. However, such a decision did not prevent Pengiran Muda Bungu and

Dent Brothers, who immediately after acquiring the lease formed the British North Borneo Company (BNBC) and named the region North Borneo (The Times, 1927, November 24).

However, the transfer of ownership of North Borneo by the BNBC to the British colonial office in 1945 at the end of Japanese occupation of this region[45] witnessed the establishment of formal social categorization in this territory. Under its 'indirect rule' system of administration[46], the British began to establish 'proper social categories' in what became known as the North Borneo Crown Colony in 1946, described by Scott (2009) as a 'module of rule'. In this regard, the British decided to make the existing ethnic labels the legal ethnic categories for all official uses. The British also decided to recognize the early immigrants of Suluk, Sama-Bajau and Ilanun as the natives of North Borneo. Thus, the native population of North Borneo became known as Dusun, Brunei-Malays, Orang Sungai, Sama-Bajau, Suluk and Ilanun. The immigrants from China and other parts of the world who arrived after the establishment of colonial (British) rule in Borneo were identified by the British as Chinese and *Lain-lain* ('Others'), regardless of what dialect they spoke. Together, both Chinese and Others were categorized as non-natives of North Borneo.

Sultan Ali's families to avenge the death of Sultan Muhammad Ali. This created chaos in Brunei, thus forcing Sultan Abdul Hakkul Mubin to move to Pulau Chermin. Following this, Pengiran Muda Bungsu declared himself the Sultan of Brunei by the name of Sultan Muhyiddin, thus resulting in Brunei having two sultans. The existence of two Sultans then ensued the battle between the two competing Sultans. As a result, the civil war of Brunei started in 1961 and lasted for 12 years (1961-1973) (Jamil Al-Sufri, 2007; Raffles, 1830; Saunders, 2002; Wright, 1970).

[45] The Japanese occupation in Sabah began on January 13th, 1942 following its successful invasion of Labuan, and ended on September 10th, 1945 right after the official surrender of Japanese 37th Army led by Lieutenant General Baba Masao.

[46] The British 'indirect rule' refers to a system of administration that retained the local institutions mostly in the form established by the Brunei sultans (Barlocco, 2009, p. 37) such as the *Datuk* (regional leader), and *Orang Kaya-Kaya* (literally means 'rich man', OKK). Apart from that, the colonial institutions such as the Native Chief and Native Courts were also introduced as to facilitate its 'indirect rule'.

The decision of the British to categorize the people of North Borneo, however, at this point did not necessarily divide the people of North Borneo. This was because ethnic identities were free from political manipulation by politicians as British policy did not encourage the people of North Borneo to form political parties. The governor of North Borneo even warned that the establishment of political parties at this stage carried the danger of communal strife (Milne, 1965, p. 104). As a result, there was no political party established in this region. This prevented ethnicity from being manipulated by politicians for their advantage. Regardless of their ethnic identifications, the people of Borneo lived harmoniously and visited each other during the festivals without questioning whether the food served was *halal* (foods and drinks permissible for Muslims to eat or drink under the Islamic law of *Sharia'ah*), and there was also a tendency among them to share *rumah panjang* (long house), gardens and playgrounds. On this basis social scientists such as Tarmundi, Saibin, Naharu and Tamsin (2014), and Robinson, Karlin and Stiles (2013) described North Borneo as a 'multicultural paradise'.

Nevertheless, ethnic differences began to assume importance there following the end of Sabah's long insulation from party politics. It reared its fiery head when Tunku Abdul Rahman announced his proposal for political union between Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei to form the Federation of Malaysia on March 27th, 1961. Tunku's aspiration inclined aspirant Sabah leaders to play up the importance of ethnicity in their social life as a first step to forming what Kaur and Metcalfe (1999) calls 'communal' political parties as in Malaya. Such efforts began when the educated non-Muslim indigenous group led by Donald Stephens introduced an ethnic label called Kadazan to replace Dusun for non-Muslim indigenous people in early 1961. Their use of the word 'Kadazan', as Reid (1997) argues, was a

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reflection of their demand to be treated with as much respect as all other races in Sabah if they were to support Malaysia. However, non-Malays or non-Muslims were treated as second-class citizens by the Malay dominated government in Malaya, even though it was formed from political collaboration among Malay and non-Malay elites. Reid observed, "educated Kadazans have come to regard the word 'Dusun' as derogatory when referred to them during the colonial days. Their use of Kadazans was their demand to be treated with as much respect as all the other races in Sabah" (1997, p. 127)[47]. This attitude also affected leaders of other ethnic groups such as Datu Mustapha Datu Harun (non-Muslim indigenous), G.S. Sundang (non-Muslim indigenous from the interior), and Peter Chin and Khoo Siak Chiew (Chinese/non-indigenous). This was evident when the five communal-based political parties established at the end of 1961 in Sabah all differed in their attitudes towards the proposed political union and the ethnic groups each sought to represent (Yusoff, 1999, p. 3).

The first political party in Sabah was the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO), established on August 1961 by Donald Stephens. This party was supported by non-Muslim indigenes, especially the Kadazans residing along the West Coast. The second political party was the United Sabah National Organization (USNO). It was a political party that represented the Muslim indigenous population who accounted for 31.2% (141,840) of the total population of North Borneo (454,421) in

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[47] Although such attitude and demand also affected other non-Muslim indigenous, many in the interior were not interested in identifying themselves as Kadazans and preferred to call themselves as Dusun or just by their *suku*'s name (Stephen, 2000). Their refusal to identify themselves as Kadazans was mainly because they believed that such label was a British creation. They also believed that the label 'Kadazans' was applicable only to those non-Muslim indigenous living in the nearby areas such as Penampang and Papar because it was derived from the word 'Kakadazan' (towns) (Reid, 1997).

1960 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 1965) and was founded by Datu Mustapha Datu Harun in December 1961[48], a Suluk from Kudat.

The third, fourth and fifth parties were the United Pasok Momogun Organization (UPMO), the Democratic Party (DP) and the United Party (UP). UPMO, like UNKO, was a non-Muslim indigenous party established by G.S. Sundang on January 1962, and mainly supported by the indigenous people of the interior. DP and UP, established by Peter Chin on November 1961 and Khoo Siak Chiew on February 1961 respectively, were mainly supported by Chinese communities. As Chinese comprised only 23.1% (104,971) of Sabah's population, the DP and UP later merged to form the North Borneo National Party (BUNAP) in October 1962 to unify the Chinese communities under one political party. Like DP and UP, UNKO and UPMO later merged to form the United Pasokmomogun Kadazan Organization (UPKO) in June 1964 with the aim of unifying into one political party non-Muslim indigenes who accounted for 37.0% (167,993) of Sabah's population.

It was only USNO, and specifically Datu Mustapha, who appeared to have endorsed Tunku's proposal as he saw such a proposal as favorable to Muslim communities in Sabah (Luping, 1989). In contrast, the leaders of non-Muslim populations were from the beginning doubtful of such a proposal as they saw the formation of Malaysia as a ploy by the Malayan leaders to colonize Sabah and absorb non-Muslims into the Malay-Muslim population through Islamization (Gin, 2009, p. 214). Donald Stephens, in particular, was sceptical of Malaysia proposal in arguing that the

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[48] USNO was described by Datu Mustapha as a multi-racial party, but in reality, this devoted its attention to the indigenous Muslims. According to Ongkili, "It was of course open to non-Muslims, albeit not many could be recruited. USNO immediately supported the Malaysia proposal and worked for its successful formation by fully supporting Tunku Abdul Rahman and the other Malayan leaders over the issues" (1989, p. 62).

formation of Malaysia was in fact a ploy by the Malayan leaders to colonize the Borneo territories. In his open letter to Tunku, Donald Stephens said,

> "if we had been asked to join Malaysia at the time Malaya achieved independence and Britain made it possible for us, the story would have been different one. Now that Merdeka has been Malaya's for some years, and we are still struggling towards it, Malaya's proposal that we join as the 12th, 13, and 14th states savours of imperialism, of a drive to turn us into Malayan colonies… To join Malaya, while we are still colonies, and become Malayan colonies…the implication is to hand (ourselves) over to your (Malaya) control" (Wellman, 2011, p. 89; Kitingan, 2011, September 16).

Stephens also specifically expressed his concern about the possibility of North Borneo becoming a new colony of Malaya, saying, "North Borneo is still not ready to join Malaysia and joining Malaysia means changing the status of North Borneo from a "British colony" to a "colony of Malaya". Furthermore, Stephens emphatically asked Tunku to withdraw his intention to turn North Borneo into the 14th state of the Federation. He said, "please do not pursue the idea of making Brunei the 12th state, Sarawak the 13th State and North Borneo the 14th State of the Federation. We are frankly not interested" (Human Right Watch, 1991, p. 33). That is, with their concern about North Borneo becoming a new colony of Malaya, the non-Muslim leaders opposed the merger. Sundang as the leader of UPMO strongly believed that the Malaysia proposal was hasty, and proposed that North Borneo should achieve progress and independence on its own first before entering into any federation arrangement with any of its neighbors (Ongkili, 1989; Yussof, 1999).

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UNKO and BUNAP continued to oppose the idea of making North Borneo part of Malaysia.

In dealing with the non-Muslim leaders' opposition against the Malaysia proposal, British government eventually decided to grant North Borneo self-rule on August 31st, 1963. Such a decision was a result of all ethnic leaders including the indigenous non-Muslim political parties' leaders consent to the formation of the Malaysia federation. The decision by all ethnic leaders (non-Muslim native, Muslim native and Chinese) to join the Federation of Malaysia, as an equal partner, with Malaya, Singapore and Sarawak, was anchored by the 20-point agreement, *Perjanjian 20 Perkara* (Cheah, 2002; Luping, 1985). This agreement (also known as the '20 points') was submitted by five Sabah political parties, the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO), United Sabah National Organization (USNO), United Party (UP), Democratic Party (DP)[49], and the National Pasok Momogun Organization (Pasok). It was written by leaders of those parties to ensure that the interests, rights and autonomy of the people of Sabah would always be safeguarded after the formation of the Malaysian federation. In addition, it envisaged that Sabah be one of the four entities in the new federation (the others being Malaya, Singapore and Sarawak)[50]. Thus, with the incorporation of the memorandum into the IGC report, the Malaysian Agreement[51] and the Federal Constitution, the IGC concluded its

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[49] Prior to the formation of Sabah National Party (SANAP), there were two Chinese political parties in North Borneo namely United Party (UP) and Democratic Party (DP). The UP formed in Sandakan on February 1962 by Khoo Siak Chiew. This political party catered to the big timber and wealthy English-educated Hakka and Teochew Chinese business interests. The DP formed in Kota Kinabalu on November 1961 by Peter Chin to protect the Chinese Wholesale and retail businessperson interests. Both parties merged to form Borneo Utara National Party (BUNAP) on October 1962. It was then renamed the Sabah National Party (SANAP) on August 31st, 1963 and eventually became the Sabah Chinese Association (SCA) in May 1965 (Yusof, 1999, p. 3; Luping 1985, p. 137).
[50] See Appendix A for the full text of the memorandum.
[51] The Malaysian agreement signed on July 9th, 1963

plenary meeting in Kuala Lumpur (Malaya)[52] on December 18th to 20th, 1962 (Kitingan, 1987). Nine months later, on September 16th 1963, North Borneo, renamed Sabah, officially announced itself as part of the Malaysia federation (Ongkili, 2003; Ryan, 1967).

Sabah's incorporation into the new federation of Malaysia marked the start of the growing influence of ethnicity in its politics. Such a development was partly a result of efforts by federal leaders based in West Malaysia to impose the West Malaysia model of government to their political advantage. This model of government was "essentially based on Muslim-led coalition government with *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy), and in more recent times, *Ketuanan Islam* (Muslim supremacy), as its ideological core" (Chin, 2014b, p. 83). As it was based on the ideology of *Ketuanan Melayu*, this model of government required that the Malay-Muslim leaders must be accorded dominant executive power within the coalition government; hence other ethnic groups (the non-Malay) gained an insignificant role in the government's decision-making process.

The concept of West Malaysia's model of government is based on a consociational model that was first employed in the Netherlands (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993), but that deviated from these initial principles and resulted in Malaysia being defined as a semi-authoritarian regime (Lopez, 2014). As explained in Chapter 1, the consociational model is based on the idea that conflict resolution within a divided society is best achieved through cooperation between political elites from different ethnic groups that transcend cleavages at a mass level anchored by inclusive coalition. As noted by its formulator, Lijphat (2003), consociational democracy is a

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[52] The final plenary meeting held on December 18th – 20th, 1962.

government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy. The model assumes that there are deep differences among the salient segments in the society and these differences are insurmountable. The model also assumes that these segments are incapable of regulating their behavior in the face of these troublesome differences, thus often leading to violent or deadly outcomes (Lopez, 2014). The leaders of these salient segments can overcome such challenges through the creation of a 'grand coalition' among themselves, the establishment of mutual veto, the application of proportionality-based representation within the grand coalition, and creation of segmental autonomy.

In contrast, however, the consociational model as practiced in Malaysia has all but broken down. Although the formation of coalition government in Malaysia primarily reflected the application of the consociational model, the most important principle, the ability of the weakest social group in the grand coalition to veto policies or legislations that affect the groups, has all but dissipated (Lopez, 2014). Within the Malaysian framework, the political elites of BN and specifically UMNO are accorded political and economic advantages since they can veto the interests of the *rakyat*. This resulted in the marginalization of not only non-*bumiputras* but also the Malays and *bumiputras* who were not part of the grand coalition.

The marginalization of non-*bumiputras*, and the Malays and *bumiputras* who were not among the political elites who formed the grand coalition was one of the most discussed issues in Sabah. Most of my informants, and particularly the non-Muslim *bumiputra* males usually acknowledged this situation. The personal experience of one of my non-Muslim *bumiputra* male informants (43 years old) seems also to

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suggest the importance of marginalization against the people of Sabah in their daily conversation. Based on his experience, he said that:

> The marginalisation of *rakyat* in Sabah is the most discussed issue because, like me, the *rakyat* in this state are unhappy and therefore would want to express their disappointment with the government by supporting the opposition. (interview with a non-Muslim *bumiputra* male, a key respondent of this study in his fourty-six years old on June 2nd, 2014 in Sandakan).

While the informant expressed his disappointment with the government, some informants even explained that the marginalisation of the *rakyat* in Sabah has been the result of the introduction of West Malaysia's model of government in this state. At the same time, he also stressed that the introduction of such a model of government in Sabah resulted in the growing importance of ethnicity in Sabah's politics. He said:

> The marginalisation of *rakyat* in Sabah has been the result of federal leaders' move to spread West Malaysia's model of government in this land. The most significant impact of such a move has been the growing interests among our politicians in politicising ethnicity, thus leading to the growing importance of ethnicity in Sabah politics (interview with a non-Muslim *bumiputra* male, a key respondent of this study who was a government servant in his sixty-eight years old on June 2nd, 2014 in Sandakan).

4.3 The Early Attempt to Impose West Malaysia's Model of Government in Sabah (1963-1976)

It is clear from the foregoing that political parties established in the wake of the formation of Malaysia federation sought to represent the different views of the people. Ongkili noted that the situation "prompted them to think communally and to fight for their exclusive interests" (1989, p. 63). Furthermore, encouraged by the political trend in Malaya, soon after the formation of Malaysia, the founding leaders of UPKO, USNO, SANAP (comprising UP and DP) and Pasok chose to form a political alliance similar to the Malayan Alliance and called it the Sabah Alliance (SA) (Ratnam, 1965; Milne, 1967). Nevertheless, Gale (1989) explained that Sabah's early political alliance appeared not to be characterized by ethnic difference, as membership was open to all ethnic groups. Most importantly, the SA was not under the control of Malay leaders because unlike Malaya Malays were not a majority. In fact, based on Table 4.1 Malays constituted only about 0.3% (1,645) of Sabah's population (454,421) in 1960 while the non-Muslim indigenous groups accounted for 37.0% (167,993) of its total population. Thus, Malaya's political system designed to protect the rights of the Malay as a majority ethnic community was not suitable for Sabah (Pugh-Kitingan, 1989). For this reason, when the SA formed the first state government, Stephens, representing the non-Muslim indigenous groups and the political party UPKO, became the first Chief Minister (Chin, 2014b).

To ensure their political survival, the federal leaders based in West Malaysia had taken steps to implement the Malayan model of government in Sabah, introducing what Chin (2014b) calls a 'Muslim-first model', a coalition government which required the Muslim leaders to be given executive power. Thus, the federal leaders began to identify and unite Muslims who identified themselves as Malays (even

though they were traditionally not Malays), Brunei-Malays, Orang Sungai, Suluk, Sama-Bajau and Ilanun. Nevertheless, even with such adjustments, the implementation of the Malayan model of government remained incompatible in Sabah as the Malay-Muslim population was not the majority.

Table 4.1 shows that the Malay-Muslims constituted only about 39.9% (181,457) of Sabah's population compared with 60.1% (272,964) non-Muslim population. Therein began the effort to increase the number of Malay-Muslim population in Sabah with the help of Mustapha. This process, which will be specifically analyzed in the following chapter, in turn dramatically increased the Malay-Muslim population in Sabah, thus igniting fears among the non-Muslim population of losing not only their political rights but their social identity.

Table 4.1: Sabah's Population by Ethno-religious Categories in 1960

Ethno-religious Categories	Total	Percentage (%)
Non-Muslim	272,964	60.1
- *Indigenous*	*167,993*	*37.0*
- *Non-Indigenous (Chinese and Others)*	*104,971*	*23.1*
Muslim	181,457	39.9
-Indigenous	*141,840*	*31.2*
(Malay)	*(1,645)*	*(0.3)*
-Non-Indigenous (Immigrants)	*39,617*	*8.7*
Total	454,421	100.00

Source: Adapted from Fernandez, Amos & Predza (1974); Department of Statistics Malaysia (1965).

Thus the leaders of non-Muslims began to take necessary efforts to strengthen the unity of their own people. Stephens and G.S. Sundang merged UNKO and Pasok Momogun to form the United Pasok Momogun Kadazan Organization (UPKO) in June 1964. The non-Muslim non-indigenous (read Chinese) leaders for similar reasons renamed SANAP as the Sabah Chinese Association (SCA) in May 1965 (Ongkili, 1989).

Non-Muslim leaders, especially Stephens, also began to question Tunku's attitude towards the '20 points', and this resulted in the end of cordial federal-state relations (Yusoff, 1999). Among the issues raised by Stephens, who until January 1971 was a native Christian, was the decision by the federal leaders to replace the British officers with Malays from West Malaysia. He accused the federal leaders of 'Malayanizing' the state civil service, which was antithetical to the Borneanization agenda that underscored the '20 points'. When news of Singapore's expulsion from Malaysia was announced on on August 9th, 1965, Stephens reacted very logically. He said, "the reason we joined Malaysia was to be with Singapore. If Singapore is out, Sabah's position with Malaysia should be reviewed. And we must decide about staying or going" (Golingai, 2013, September 16; Granville-Edge, 1999, p. 78).

Fearful of the possibility of Sabah's secession from the Malaysia federation as well as to facilitate the process of implementing the Muslim-first model of government in Sabah, Tunku encouraged Mustapha, who at that time was the Yang Di-Pertua Negara Sabah (YDPN, Head of State), to challenge Stephens (ASEAN Forecast, 1985). In doing so, Tunku gave him vital support to isolate Stephens by refusing to sign the letter of appointment of John Dusing, a Kadazan, to the post of State Secretary to replace the outgoing British officer. As a result, the relations between

Stephens and Mustapha worsened. It provided Tunku a chance to call all the state's leaders for a meeting in Kuala Lumpur on December 8th, 1964 to determine Stephens's chief ministerial post. During the meeting, USNO delegates proposed that Peter Lo of SANAP take over as Chief Minister.

Thus, on December 16th, 1964, Kalong Ningkan, the Chief Minister of Sarawak, was requested by Tunku to come to Kota Kinabalu, to participate in a National Council[53] of the Sabah Alliance Party. It was held on December 17th, 1964. The council agreed that Stephens step down and in return be appointed to the federal cabinet as official Sabah representative at the federal level. Following this meeting, on December 31st 1964, eleven days after the expulsion of Singapore from the federation of Malaysia, Stephens stepped down from his position as the Chief Minister of Sabah to become the first federal cabinet member from Sabah. The interim Chief Minister was Peter Lo. Meanwhile, in order to ensure that UPKO members did not think that Stephens had lost in the contest of wills, the party council made out that it was a 'promotion[54]'. Additionally, as a Federal Minister, Stephens was determined to defend the equal partner status of Sabah based on the original Federation of Malaysia agreement.

Yet, Mustapha and Tunku persisted in their effort to ensure Malay-Muslim control of the state's politics. With the help of Syed Kecik who was Mustapha's legal advisor from West Malaysia and based on Tunku's recommendation, during the 1967 state election Mustapha and Tunku alienated Stephens from Sabah's politics. Mustapha and Syed Kecik offered voters throughout Sabah money as an incentive to persuade

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[53] The National Council was the consultative and advisory committee for the state's government or the Sabah Alliance Party's government.
[54] The minutes of a National Council meeting held on December 19th, 1964 stated "the conditions were that Dato Donald Stephens must be 'promoted' from State Chief Minister to Federal Minister for Sabah Affairs".

them to vote USNO and threatened them if they refused to do so. When the results were announced, neither USNO nor UPKO could claim an unqualified victory. USNO captured 14 of 32 seats, UPKO 12 and SCA 5 (Yusoff, 1999). USNO required 17 seats to form the state government. Mustapha persuaded SCA leaders to form a coalition with USNO by promising the SCA elected representatives cabinet positions. USNO-SCA alliance formed the state government on April 28th, 1967 with Mustapha as Chief Minister, and 2 ministers from USNO and SCA respectively.

The exclusion of UPKO in the USNO-SCA government, however, did not satisfy Mustapha as Stephens as the non-Muslim leader was still not completely alienated from Sabah's politics. Thus, Mustapha persuaded key UPKO members to defect to Sabah Alliance by offering them cabinet posts, timber concessions and other inducements (Ross, 2001). As a result, two UPKO elected representatives, including Payar Juman of Kiulu[55] who was later appointed as Minister of Social Welfare, defected from UPKO and joined USNO. After the defection, Mustapha and federal government blocked financial assistance for UPKO. This prompted Stephens to dissolve UPKO and join USNO the same year (1967) with the hope the party could regain access to the Sabah government, share in the distribution of offices and prevent further defections from its ranks. Unfortunately, such a decision led to the end of Stephens' domination as Mustapha gained full control over Sabah's politics.

This provided the federal leaders an opportunity to impose the Muslim-first model of government in Sabah. Encouraged by the federal leaders, Mustapha began to integrate diverse Muslim ethnic groups in Sabah as desired by federal government. To achieve this, "Mustapha tried actively to promote Islam as a means of creating

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[55] Kiulu is a state constituency located in Tuaran, and is part of Tuaran parliamentary/federal constituency.

cultural and religious uniformity within the state. In 1971, he introduced a bill to amend Article 5A of the state constitution to make Islam the official religion of the state. He also instituted an intensive program of Islamic conversion in the state" (Yusoff, 1999, p. 13). To facilitate the systematic conversion into Islam of the indigenous peoples, he established the United Sabah Islamic Association (USIA) on August 14th, 1969. Mustapha's effort in propagating Islam had the desired result. By February 1974, over 75,000 indigenous peoples of Sabah had converted to Islam (Yusoff, 1999). This pleased the federal leaders as they viewed Mustapha's success in propagating Islam as a good start for the implementation of Muslim-first model of government, leading to the improvement of relationship between state and federal government.

However, in 1970, in the second term of Mustapha as the Chief Minister, after Tun Abdul Razak had replaced Tunku[56], the federal-state relations once again began to deteriorate. During this period, Razak described Mustapha's policies and action as Chief Minister as contrary to federal interests. He accused Mustapha of actively assisting the Moro rebels in Philippines. Apart from that, Razak also accused Mustapha of hoping to become a *Sultan* (King) of Sabah as he came up with an idea of taking Sabah out of Malaysia and incorporating this land with the Sulu archipelago in the Southern Philippines (Chin, 2008). This was against the Malayan leaders' ambition of implementing the Malayan model of government in Sabah. For this reason, Razak prepared to oust Mustapha from the post of Chief Minister and sought an alternative Sabah-based political party to weaken Mustapha's electoral strength.

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[56] He was the second Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaysia.

Razak was well aware that relations between Stephens and Mustapha were characterized by prolonged tension, and that despite being isolated from Sabah's politics Stephens remained popular at the grassroots level. Hence, Razak asked Stephens to team up with Harris Salleh, USNO's secretary general and a Minister for Industrial Development in Mustapha's government, to create a new political party called Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (Sabah People's United Front, BERJAYA). BERJAYA was formed as a multi-ethnic political party led by Donald Stephens and Harris Salleh on July 15th, 1975. It then contested in the 1976 state's elections and gained an outright majority of seats in the State Legislative Assembly (SLA)[57] capturing 28 of 48 seats[58], USNO captured 20 and SCA did not win any seat. Consequently, Mustapha was ousted from the post of Chief Minister and on April 20th, 1976 BERJAYA government was sworn in with Stephens, who become Fuad Stephens following his conversion to Islam in 1971, once again appointed as the Chief Minister and Harris Salleh as the Deputy Chief Minister. The formation of the BERJAYA state government strengthened the Malayan leaders' effort to execute the Muslim-first model of government in Sabah.

4.4 West Malaysia's Model of Government in Sabah during BERJAYA Rule (1976-1985)

Two months after the formation of BERJAYA state government, on June 6th 1976, Fuad Stephens who had begun to oppose the incursion of the federal government into Sabah politics died tragically in a plane crash near Kota Kinabalu airport (Aziz, 2013, p. 89). Those killed in the crash included Datuk Peter Mojuntin (Minister of

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[57] SLA in Sabah also known as *Dewan Undangan Negeri* (DUN).
[58] There were 48 seats contested during 1976 election with an increase of 16 seats compared to only 32 seats in 1967 election.

Local Government Affairs), Datuk Chong Tahin Vun (Minister of Transportation and Public Works), Datuk Salleh Sulong (State Finance Minister) and Darius Binion (Assistant Minister to the Deputy Chief Minister). In the aftermath of the tragedy, and after investigations by the Australian GAF NOMAD aircraft manufacturer were completed, despite the fact that Malaysia had not yet publicly released their final and full report of the investigation, Mohd. Ali bin M Shariff, the Deputy Communication Minister of Malaysian government made the following statement on the findings on October 28th, 1976 (Bennett, 1976):

> the findings of an investigation did not reveal any technical errors or sabotage as being the cause of the air crash. What they have instead discovered is that the fault was due to human error. It was also revealed that the aircraft's storage space at the back of the aircraft was loaded with goods above the maximum load. As a consequence, this resulted in the aircraft losing control when it attempted to land at the Kota Kinabalu Airport, thus resulting in the accident (Sta Maria, 1978, p. 21-22).

Many, however, believed the crash was premeditated and engineered by state and federal leaders to sabotage Fuad to ensure that any local leader must be supportive of the federal agenda and "even today, many people still subscribe to this theory" (Golingi, 2013, June 13).

This belief was strengthened with the appointment of Harris Salleh, the Muslim leader with strong UMNO connections, as successor to Fuad. As the new Chief Minister of Sabah, Harris had strong political support from the newly elected Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, and was bent on strengthening the Malay-Muslim political dominance and weakening non-Muslim indigenous political

influence. He embarked on efforts to ensure the Kadazan - who were the majority ethnic group - appeared culturally inferior (Puyok, 2011). To dilute their (Kadazan) political influence Harris categorized all indigenous people in Sabah into one ethnic group called *Pribumi*[59], which altered Sabah's demographic character from non-Muslim dominated to Malay-Muslim dominated through systematic legalization of Muslim illegal immigrants from other countries such as Indonesia, Philippines and Pakistan (this issue will be discussed further in chapter 5). At the same time, Harris also ordered *Pesta Kaamatan* (harvest festival) to be renamed *Pesta Rakyat* (People's Festival). This ignited criticisms from a young Kadazan leader in Harris' cabinet, Joseph Pairin Kitingan, who believed such a move not only diluted the Kadazan ethnic identity, but also made them constitutionally inferior to the Malays who were described as *bumiputra* in the federal constitution. The effort of the federal leaders and Harris to prioritize Malay-Muslims and offer them socioeconomic advancement opportunities convinced Pairin to take this view.

Harris was angered by Pairin's criticism seriously and gave him his marching orders. Pairin was forced to resign from BERJAYA and was also sacked from his state cabinet post on August 15th 1984 (Chin, 1999a, p. 7)[60]. To completely cast Pairin out of Sabah politics, Harris declared Tambunan constituency vacant and called for a by-election on December 29th, 1984. To remain in the state's political arena, Pairin contested as an independent. In his political campaign, apart from drawing attention to Harris's effort to marginalize non-Muslim indigenous people through the introduction of the *Pribumi* term and the legalization of Muslim illegal immigrants,

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[59] *Pribumi* is a Malay word that means indigenous people.
[60] BERJAYA was a multi-racial party and did not require political collaboration with ethnic based political parties as BERJAYA comprised political leaders of all ethnic groups in Sabah. In other words, during BERJAYA's era, Sabah's government was not a government of coalition parties, rather it was made up of a single political party.

Pairin also highlighted wrongdoing committed by Harris. According to Puyok (2011), Pairin accused Harris of handing over Labuan to the federal government without any compensation for the state or for the people of Sabah, claiming that Harris himself was the only individual who benefited from the transfer. This accusation led to the growing anti-BERJAYA sentiment in Sabah, and particularly the electorate in Tambunan. Consequently, when the by-election result was announced, Pairin had managed to beat BERJAYA candidate, Roger Ongkili, by a margin of four to one.

Harris was not happy with the by-election result, and downgraded Tambunan's status from a district to a sub-district, and withdrew government officers and facilities from this constituency (Kong, 1986, July 7). Despite this undemocratic gesture from Harris, the people in Tambunan did not waver in their support for Pairin as they wanted him to continue to fight for their political rights and interests as the indigenous people of Sabah (Chin, 1999a). Accordingly, Pairin formed a political party called Parti Bersatu Sabah (Sabah United Party, PBS). This party was officially registered on March 5th, 1985 with the aim of defending the political rights and interests of indigenous peoples regardless of their religion. Fearful that the establishment of PBS would further strengthen Pairin's political influence in Sabah, supported by Mahathir Harris advised Sabah Governor, Adnan Robert, to dissolve the SLA and called for a fresh state election on April 20th - 21st, 1985. In this election, Mahathir sent federal ministers to support BERJAYA, promising more socioeconomic development funds for the state and on-the-spot grants (Kong, 1986, July 7). In addition, in his heated *ceramah* (political campaign) Mahathir accused PBS of being anti-Islam and Pairin a 'Catholic chauvinist', and that the federal

government would 'swim and sink' with BERJAYA. This made Harris confident that BERJAYA would obtain a majority in the SLA.

Despite this, BERJAYA was thrashed in this election with PBS emerging as the clear electoral victor. In describing this, Yusoff noted that,

> despite its formidable advantages, BERJAYA suffered a stunning defeat. BERJAYA retained only six seats, compared to the forty-four it previously held[61], and Harris Salleh himself lost his Tenom seat to Kadoh Agundong, a virtual unknown, by 895 votes. Mustapha's Muslim-based USNO, which had been expelled from the BN in 1984, captured sixteen seats, with PBS winning clear majority with twenty-six seats (including one Pasok candidate who had defected to PBS) (2001, p. 29).

This resulted in the fall of BERJAYA and the disruption of the federal leaders' effort to implement the West Malaysia's model of government in Sabah as the PBS government was dominated by non-Muslims headed by Pairin.

4.5 West Malaysia's Model of Government in Sabah during PBS Rule (1984-1994)

After the establishment of the PBS government, Mahathir encouraged Mustapha of USNO to take legal proceedings against Pairin. Mustapha demanded that the State Governor (*Yand Dipertuan Negeri*, YDPN) announce as void the appointment of

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[61] In 1981 election, there were 48 seats contested. Of these, 44 captured by BERJAYA, 3 went to USNO, and 1 for the Sabah Chinese Consolidated Party (SCCP).

Pairin as Chief Minister before the Sabah High Court (Tan, 2011). Mustapha also demanded the YDPN exercise his discretion under Article 6(3) of the Sabah Constitution by appointing himself (Mustapha) as Chief Minister. This demand, however, was unsuccessful as Justice Tan Chiew Thong concluded that the YDPN could not appointed Mustapha as Chief Minister because USNO did not win the election (Tan, 2011). Pairin, on the other hand, was entitled to the post of Chief Minister following the success of PBS in gaining an outright majority of seats in the SLA. The decision by the judge was based on Malaysia's consociational democratic system of majority rule.

Following his failure in bringing Pairin down through legal challenge, Mustapha and Harris then launched a series of political demonstrations. At the same time, they also orchestrated public violence in Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan and Kudat, which allegedly had the tacit blessing of the federal government and resulted in a proclamation of an emergency to justify a takeover of state government by the federal government (New York Times, 1986, March 29). The people of Sabah claimed that Mustapha and Harris manipulated the presence of thousands of illegal Muslim immigrants from the Philippines, as Sabahan Muslims did not have a problem with Pairin (Ling, 2012, September 14). These immigrants were given food, money and permission to stay in the state mosque with their wives and children for a week, and in return, they were required to hold the demonstrations, setting off fish bombs throughout the cities. The violence, as Firus noted, "caused 18 bomb blasts, 14 fires, 2 explosions along with fire, 32 false bomb blasts calls, 5 unexploded bombs found, 2 civilians were killed, 10 people were injured which included policeman, 30 warehouses were destroyed which involved the loss estimated at RM6.3 million. A total of 1, 260 people have been arrested for their involvement in the demonstrations" (1986, p. 36).

Despite the public violence, Mustapha and Harris failed in their attempt to bring Pairin down. As long as Pairin remained the Chief Minister, federal leaders together with Mustapha and Harris continued to undermine him. Federal leaders advised the State Governor (*Yang Dipertuan Negeri*, YDPN) to dissolve the *Dewan Undangan Negeri* (State Legislative Assembly, SLA) and call a fresh state election on February 26th, 1986, a year after the 1985 election. The objective for the dissolution of SLA was to give the local Muslim-led party an opportunity to gain electoral victory, isolating PBS from state politics. In this state election, however, PBS surprisingly gained a bigger victory by winning 34 out of 48 seats, an additional 8 seats. In contrast, BERJAYA won just 1 seat, USNO 12 seats and Sabah Chinese Consolidated Party (SCCP) 1 seat. Having won more than a two-thirds majority, the PBS government was sworn in and Pairin once again became the Chief Minister.

As he was well aware that the federal government was in charge of the national coffers, Pairin as the leader of the PBS attempted to join BN to ensure that Sabah would get funds for socioeconomic development from the federal government. The federal government also was well aware that BN had no choice but to accept PBS or it would mean risking the loss of Sabah parliamentary seats to the opposition in the upcoming general election. Arguably, even if PBS was dominated by non-Muslims, the inclusion of PBS into the BN coalition would create an opportunity for the implementation of a Muslim-first model of government. This was because the BN coalition structure required all non-dominant parties to support UMNO as the dominant party within the BN coalition, thus making it possible for the forced implementation of Muslim-first model by the UMNO leaders in Sabah. Accordingly, a few months before the general election, on August 8th, 1986, the PBS application to join the BN was finally accepted (Yusoff, 2002).

Following this, Mahathir began to take the necessary steps to implement the Muslim-first model of government in Sabah through his refusal to recognize PBS leadership. Yusoff (2001) noted that in order to achieve this, Mahathir appointed Malay staff from West Malaysia into the upper ranks of the Sabah administrative hierarchy. This inevitably placed Sabah under greater federal control as various socioeconomic development projects were placed under the control of upper rank Malay officials, leaving the state government with fewer roles in these projects. In responding to this development, Pairin described Mahathir's refusal to recognize the PBS leadership as a ploy to prevent them from leading the state government because of their social identity as non-Muslims (Yusoff, 2001). This re-ignited the anti-federal sentiment among the non-Muslims population in Sabah. As a result, the relationship between the non-Muslim indigenous-led state government and the Malay-led federal government that was stable after the PBS joined the BN coalition once again became uneasy.

The non-Muslim indigenous-led state government and the Malay-led federal government relations became even tenser when Pairin "released a directive calling for the replacement of the term *pribumi* by *bumiputra* which would place the indigenous people in Sabah at the same level as the Malays in Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia). Pairin also carried out drastic restructuring of the civil service to improve efficiency. He removed the practice of seeking the Village Development and Security Committee's (*Jawatankuasa Keselamatan dan Kemajuan Kampung* or JKKK) approval for land applications, permits for housing construction, trading and firearm licenses, education, scholarships, and other related applications. Pairin alleged that JKKK was introduced by BERJAYA as a means of political control rather than as a tool to help the people. He also restructured MUIS (Majlis Ugama

Islam Sabah/Sabah Islamic Council) to ensure that missionary works were carried out by qualified officials to prevent forced conversions involving non-Muslims" (Puyok, 2011, p. 9). These measures posed a threat to any effort to implement the West Malaysia's model of government in Sabah because such moves weakened Muslim political influence. The restructuring of MUIS, for example, weakened their political influence as they no longer were able to perform Islamic missionary activities without a qualification such as a Diploma in Islamic Mission and official permission from the PBS government to perform this activity.

As these moves posed a threat to West Malaysia's model of government in Sabah, Mahathir began to initiate the arrest of PBS key leaders under the Internal Security Act (ISA). Among them were Jeffery Kitingan, Benedisc Topin, Abdul Rahman Ahmad, Damit Undikai, Vincent Chung, Albinus Juarie and Arifin Hamid. They were charged with having a plan to turn *Pulau Balambangan* (Balambangan Island) of North Kudat into the PBS military training base to take the state out of Malaysia (Yosoff, 2002).

The uneasy state-federal relationship became more apparent after Pairin withdrew PBS from BN on October 16th, 1990 to support Gagasan Rakyat (People's Might, GR), the opposition coalition led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (a man who was widely seen as a threat to UMNO's monopoly of Malay votes) during the general election held on October 20th – 21st 1990 (Hoong, 1991). Mahathir stressed that this act was a 'stab in the back'. Following this, after a series of negotiations to persuade Mustapha to join UMNO, Mahathir announced that UMNO would spread its wings in Sabah. Thus, on February 22nd 1991, he officially announced that UMNO would enter Sabah. On January 10th 1994, Pairin, the Chief Minister, advised the YDPN to

dissolve the SLA for state election. The outcome saw PBS capturing 25 state seats

with the remaining 23 going to the BN (UMNO 18, SAPP 3, LDP 1, AKAR 1).

Nevertheless, shortly after PBS secured a simple majority, some of its elected leaders

defected to BN component parties such as UMNO, USNO, PDS,[62] PBRS,[63] SAPP[64]

and AKAR[65]. As Chin explained,

> although PBS won the election narrowly, the Pairin-led administration
> collapsed within three weeks when Sabah UMNO successfully enticed key
> PBS legislators to defect. The going rate for the early defectors was said to be
> three million ringgit[66]. The final blow to Pairin came when his younger
> brother, Jeffrey Kitingan, announced that he was leaving PBS to form a new
> party, Parti Democratic Sabah Bersatu (PDSB), which would ultimately seek
> to join the BN. Another key PBS strongman, the party's secretary general,
> Joseph Kurup, also left and formed Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS).
> Kurup joined the BN coalition immediately. Yet another key PBS figure and
> former deputy chief minister, Bernard Dompok, formed Parti Demokratik
> Sabah (PDS) and it too became a component of the BN (1999a, p. 9).

Many believed that the federal leaders had given the defectors what the locals

described as political *kataks* (the Malay word for frog)[67] worth up to one million

ringgit each for leaving PBS (Chin, 1994). This in turn resulted in the collapse of the

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[62] An abbreviation for 'Parti Demokratik Sabah' (Sabah Democratic Party), a political party headed by Bernard Dompok.

[63] An abbreviation for 'Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah' (United Sabah People's Party), a political party headed by Joseph Kurup.

[64] An abbreviation for 'Sabah Progressive Party', a political party headed by Datuk Yong Teck Lee.

[65] An abbreviation for 'Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat' (People's Justice Front), a political party formed by Mark Koding.

[66] Ringgit is a Malaysian currency.

[67] The word 'Katak' here refers to the politicians who hop from one party to another, like frog (Chin, 1999a: 14).

PBS government as it was forced to hand over the state's political power to UMNO Sabah. This then led to the successful implementation of the Muslim-first model of government in this Borneo territory.

4.6 West Malaysia's Model of Government in Sabah after 1994

On March 19th, 1994, the introduction of a rotational appointment of Chief Minister in Sabah led to the division of the people of Sabah into three main communal groups just as in West Malaysia (Daily Express, 2005, January 1). It was also a means to share political power among the three main communities - the non-Muslim *bumiputra*, Muslim *bumiputra* and Chinese - represented by various political parties in this state. Each leader appointed under this system was given a period of 2 years as a Chief Minister. The post was then passed on to another leader representing another community. Under this system, seven political leaders were appointed as Chief Ministers. These included Sakaran Dandai (Muslim *bumiputra*), Salleh Said (Muslim *bumiputra*), Yong Teck Lee (Chinese), Bernard Dompok (non-Muslim *bumiputra*), Osu Sukam (Muslim *bumiputra*), Chong Kah Kiat (Chinese) and Musa Aman (Muslim *bumiputra*).

This system was discontinued when BN captured 59 of 60 seats in the 2004 state election. The remaining seat was won by an independent candidate John Ghani in Kuala Penyu constituency. Abdullah Badawi who was then Prime Minister of Malaysia and successor to Mahathir announced the abolition of the rotation system for the chief minister on January 1st, 2005. The Daily Express (2005, January 1) explained that

after 10 years and seven Chief Ministers from the three main ethnic groups in Sabah, namely the Muslim *bumiputra*, non-Muslim *bumiputra* and Chinese, the unique Chief Minister rotation system was finally abolished. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) Chairman, fresh from leading the BN to the landslide victory in the March 21 general election, announced the scrapping just as the new Sabah Cabinet members were being sworn in at the Istana Negeri on March 27. With the abolishment of the system, Datuk Seri Musa Aman, who took over from Tan Sri Chong Kah Kiat and whose term was supposed to end in March 2005, became Sabah's 14th Chief Minister for the next five years (2005, January 1, p. 1).

The end of the rotation system thus closed the door to political leaders of both non-Muslim *bumiputra* and the non-*bumiputra* (Chinese) communities getting back into power. This consolidated the UMNO and specifically Muslim *bumiputra* grip over Sabah politics as Musa Aman has remained Chief Minister until now (2017). This also signified the success of federal leaders' efforts to implement the Muslim-first model of government in the state (Puyok, 2008, p. 4), especially after PBS re-joined the BN coalition for the second time on January 23rd, 2002[68]. In 2002, for example, 7 out of 11 ministerial positions and 10 out of 18 assistant ministerial positions were accorded to Muslim *bumiputra*. In addition, the position of State Secretary was accorded to Muslim *bumiputra*. Thus the Muslim *bumiputra* dominated the state government by holding 60% (18 of 30) of its key positions.

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[68] During the PBS Six Delegates Conference on September 12-13th 2001, the PBS Supreme Council made a decision to return to BN. On November 15th 2001, Pairin submitted PBS's formal application to Mahathir. However, the federal leader who was actually instrumental in bringing back PBS back into the national coalition was Mahathir's Deputy Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Puyok, 201).

The Muslim *bumiputra* domination over state government led non-Muslim *bumiputra*, Muslim *bumiputra* and Chinese leaders to use ethnicity to make their existence more calculable within Sabah's political arena. The BN structure that was essentially based on inter-ethnic political collaboration with Malay dominance has been the key driving factor behind the manipulation of ethnicity to further the interest of Sabah politicians. This was exemplified by the remark made to me by a Bajau man in his forties who said, "all politicians in Sabah, nowadays, are the same. They tend to manipulate ethnicity for their own political interests such as to gain and maintain political support from the masses, to enable them to become the minister, and most importantly to accumulate wealth" (interview with a key informer of this study on February 6th, 2014, in Tuaran, Sabah).

The idea expressed by this Bajau man was well demonstrated by the expansion of ethnic politics into Sabah. This was especially true when the politicians in Sabah became more determined in urging the *rakyat* to identify themselves based on their ethnic labels. On January 24th, 1995, for example, Pairin who was also the president of Kadazan Cultural Association (KCA), in his effort to consolidate political support from the non-Muslim indigenous peoples, signed an agreement with Mark Koding of United Sabah Dusun Association (USDA)[69] to introduce the term Kadazandusun rather than Kadazan or Dusun. This was aimed at unifying all indigenous peoples in Sabah regardless of whether or not they were Muslims to support PBS. On May 20th 2000, the Kadazandusun politicians coined the term 'KadazanDusunMurut' with its acronym 'KDM' for similar reasons (Puyok & Bagang, 2011; Puyok, 2011).

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[69] USDA was an ethnic based non-governmental organization established in 1960s by the indigenous people who refused to call themselves as Kadazan due to the belief that such ethnic label is a British creation (Stephen, 2000).

More recently, various indigenous politicians throughout Sabah have urged the government to upgrade their ethnic labels from the status of sub-ethnic to full ethnicity for their own political interests. For example they requested that Rungus be upgraded from a sub-ethnic category of KadazanDusunMurut to full ethnicity on June 12th, 2015 (Dangin, 2015). Since then Rungus and some other sub-ethnic communities such as Kimaragang, Murut, Bonggi, Tombonuo and Tobilung have no longer considered themselves as part of ethnic KadazanDusunMurut. As a result, the people of Sabah prefer to call themselves according to their newly recognized ethnic categories. For example, 'Momogun' as an ethnic label for indigenous people was introduced on June 3rd 2015 by Henrynus Amin, Christine Van Houten and Slyvester Disimon through the formation of the Momogun National Congress (MNC) but this did not lead to most indigenous people identifying themselves as Momoguns as they preferred to be known as Rungus, Kimaragang, Muruts, Bonggi, Tombonuo and Tobilung (Bagang, 2017). The reason for this rejection was mainly because of what my Bajau (Muslim-*bumiputra*) female informant aged forty-two years who I spoke with during my visit in Tuaran on February 6th, 2014 described as their leaders' determination to gain political support from the *rakyat*.

4.7 Implication of Recent Voting Trends in Sabah

The introduction of West Malaysia's model of government influenced voting trends in Sabah. By the turn of the 21st century, Anderson's (2013) 'us' versus 'them' based on ethnicity led to a situation where people of the same ethnic group supported parties headed by elites of their own ethnic group. The voting patterns in both state and parliamentary election in 2004, 2008 and 2013 explain how this happened in this

state. In the 2004 and 2008 elections, the BN captured 59 of 60 state seats and 24 of 25 parliamentary seats, and in the 2013 elections it captured 48 of 60 state seats and 22 of 25 parliamentary seats (see Table 4.2). Table 4.3 shows that most of the seats were captured by UMNO. In the 2004 and 2008 elections, 32 of 59 seats and 13 of 24 parliamentary won by BN were held by UMNO, and its local coalition partners contributed 27 state seats and 11 parliamentary seats. Although BN experienced a setback in the 2013 election when it won 48 state seats (a reduction of 11) and 22 parliamentary seats (a reduction of 2), UMNO remained the main contributor as it won 31 of the 48 state and 14 of the 22 parliamentary seats. Its local non-Muslim coalition partners such as PBS, UPKO and PBRS, however, contributed only 17 state and 8 parliamentary seats. This indicated that the decline in the number of both state and parliamentary seats won by BN in the 2013 election was the result of the failure of UMNO coalition partners to maintain support from the voters.

Table 4.2: Elections Results in Sabah, 2004-2013

| Parties' Name | Year of Election | | | | | |
| | 2004 | | 2008 | | 2013 | |
	State	Parliament	State	Parliament	State	Parliament
BN	59/60	24/25	59/60	24/25	48/60	22/25
Opposition	1/60	1/25	1/60	1/25	12/60	3/25

Source: Adnan & Jamal (2014); Noor (2013); Moniruzaman (2013); Sun (2013); Marzuki (2004); Election Commission Malaysia (2009; 2013)

The 2013 election saw an increase in the number of state and parliamentary seats won by the opposition parties of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (National Justice Party,

PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), State Reform Party (STAR) and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) as they had won only one seat at both state and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2008. Together the opposition parties captured 12 state and 3 parliamentary seats in this state in the 2013 election. This was the result of the formation of three non-Muslim dominated parties in Sabah but this divided the KadazanDusunMurut political elites and weakened their political bargaining (Puyok & Bagang, 2011). After the fall of PBS government in 1995, two non-Muslim dominated parties were formed called Parti Demokratik Sabah (Sabah's Democratic Party, PDS) and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (United Sabah People's Party, PBRS). The PDS, renamed the United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organization (UPKO) as an attempt to resurrect the old UPKO formed by Stephens in 1964, was founded by Bernard Dompok in 1994 after the split from PBS. The PBRS was founded by Joseph Kurup, who left PBS in 1994. Together, these non-Muslim dominated parties were expected to be a force in securing strong support for BN among the non-Muslim indigenous groups in Sabah.

However, as a result of the strong Malay-Muslim grip over state government through the implementation of Muslim-first model of government, political support from the non-Muslim indigenous people weakened. This happened due to the growing disappointment among non-Muslim indigenous groups with their parties' efforts to unite them politically. Puyok and Bagang pointed out that

> although the calls for unity have grown louder and stronger, the three leaders appear to be somewhat unenthusiastic about it. The reason is more personal than technical. The PBS called the UPKO to walk hand in hand with Pairin for the betterment of the KadazanDusunMurut community. The UPKO, however,

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insisted that if there was a plan to unite the KadazanDusunMuruts, it must be through an appropriate platform. It proposed the UPKO to be the platform because it was a 'pure' Kadazandusun party, unlike the multi-racial PBS (2011, p. 188).

The disagreement among the three leaders disappointed the non-Muslim indigenous people because it indicated they were pursuing their own interests rather than those of the *rakyat* and this further divided the non-Muslim communities (KadazanDusunMurut).

Table 4.3: Seats Captured by UMNO and its Coalition Partners in Sabah, 2004-2013

Type of Seats	2004		2008		2013	
	State	Parliament	State	Parliament	State	Parliament
UMNO	32/59	13/24	32/59	13/24	31/48	14/22
UMNO Coalition Partners	27/59	11/24	27/59	11/24	17/48	8/22

Source: Adapted from Hazis (2015, p. 14); Puyok (2008); Mohamad (2004); Election Commission Malaysia (2009; 2013).

This drove the non-Muslims to support the opposition. Consequently, the BN lost 10 non-Muslim majority seats and 1 mixed seat[70] at the state level. BN also lost nine non-Muslim seats, but added 1 Muslim majority seat of Beaufort at the parliamentary level. This indicated the decline of non-Muslim support for the BN but did not

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[70] While the mixed seat here refers to constituency with no significant different in terms of ethnic voters share of population proportion, the non-Muslim majority seats (as well as Muslim and Chinese majority seats) refers to constituencies with more than 51% of voters are from these ethnic groups respectively.

necessarily affect the Muslims as they remained the key supporter of BN in Sabah. Table 4.4 shows that BN's popular vote in Sabah remained significant at more than 60% in the 2008 (68.9%) and 2013 (61.5%) elections in Muslim *bumiputra* areas, but declined from 59.6% in the 2008 election to 44.4% in the 2013 election in non-Muslim *bumiputra* areas. The BN's popular vote in the Chinese majority constituencies declined from 35.6% in 2008 election to 34.2% in 2013 election. However, in mixed seats, BN's popular vote remained strong at more than 55% despite it declining from 63.4% in 2008 election to 56.5% in 2013 election.

Table 4.4: BN's Popular Vote by Ethnic Divide in Sabah, 2004-2013 (in Percentage)

Type of Seats	2004 (%)	2008 (%)	2013 (%)
Muslim *bumiputra* Seats	66.0	68.9	61.5
Non-Muslim *bumiputra* seats	58.6	59.6	44.4
Chinese seats	35.6	35.6	34.2
Mixed seats	62.1	63.4	56.5

Source: Adapted from Hazis (2015, p. 14); Puyok (2008); Mohamad (2004)

The decline in BN's popular votes in each ethnic based seat is in line with the decline in its total popular votes at both state and parliamentary in the 2008 and 2013 elections. As Table 4.5 shows, BN's popular votes declined from 61.6% in 2008 to 55.8% in 2013 state elections. Its popular vote in the parliamentary elections also declined from 61.2 in 2008 to 54.8% in 2013. In contrast, the opposition's popular

votes increased from 38.4% in the 2008 state election to 44.2% in the 2013 state election. The opposition's popular votes also improved from 38.8% in the 2008 parliamentary election to 45.2% in the 2013 parliamentary election.

Table 4.5: BN and PR's Popular Vote in Sabah, 2004-2013 (in Percentage)

Parties	2004		2008		2013	
	State	Parliament	State	Parliament	State	Parliament
BN	61.5	64.0	61.6	61.2	55.8	54.8
Opposition	38.5	36.0	38.4	38.8	44.2	45.2

Source: Election Commission Malaysia (2009; 2013); Hazis (2015); Mohamad (2004)

The increase in the popular vote for the opposition, however, did not lead to a collapse of the UMNO-led BN government because their popular vote remained higher in both state and parliamentary elections in Sabah. Disunity among the opposition parties, in particular among the political elites of these parties, was the cause of this. Even though the opposition parties in Sabah could have improved on their popular vote through political collaboration, disunity among them created multi-corner contests. Each party refused to compromise on their differences and attitudes to each other or make way for political unity under one banner to face their common enemy BN. This resulted in UMNO-BN securing a popular vote of more than 50% in various seats in 2013 election. This was especially true in some non-Muslim majority seats such as Keningau, Kota Marudu, Tenom and Pensiangan.

Hazis observed that "in four KDM seats (Kota Marudu, Keningau, Tenom and Pensiangan), less than 50% of the popular vote went to the BN, but the opposition votes were split between the PKR, SAPP, STAR and Independents" (2015, p. 21). In some cases, when the opposition parties were dominated by different ethnic groups who went separate ways their ability to gain electoral victory eroded. Their decision to challenge each other and UMNO-BN even resulted in the opposition parties losing their deposits. For example, the Chinese dominated SAPP that contested 8 parliamentary seats lost their deposit for all 8 seats. It also lost its deposit in 37 of 41 seats contested. The non-Muslim *bumiputra* dominated STAR that contested 49 state seats lost its deposit in 42 seats and captured only one seat. As for the parliamentary seats, STAR contested 20 parliamentary seats and lost its deposit in 18 seats and did not win even one seat.

Thus, the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government in Sabah politically divided the people of Sabah and weakened the non-Muslim political bargaining and was the reason why the opposition groups split and challenged each other rather than focusing on their common goal of defeating UMNO-BN. This model of government created problems related to intra- and inter-party coordination. Although the opposition parties could have used this model of government by forming a non-Muslim-led alliance to increase their chance to win the election, they attracted voters instead through appeals to candidate qualities alone (Greene, 2007). The opposition also could have manipulated the tendency among Muslim voters to support political elites of their own ethnic group, but they dismissed this approach. As a result, opposition parties lacked the capacity to strengthen their popular vote and subsequently failed to weaken UMNO-BN grip over Sabah politics.

4.8 Implications for the Survival of UMNO-led Federal Government

The successful implementation of West Malaysia's model of government in East Malaysia, in particular Sabah, by the federal leaders also consolidated the rule of UMNO-led federal government there at the time when its political influence in West Malaysia was waning. This was especially true when the *Reformasi* movement began to gain support from the *rakyat*. It was a protest movement that had kicked started in September 1998 in West Malaysia initiated by Anwar Ibrahim following his sacking as Deputy Prime Minister by Mahathir, the then Prime Minister. It started as a political campaign calling for the resignation of Mahathir as Prime Minister who was labelled as a dictator by Anwar and whose administration was denounced as riven by corruption and cronyism (Weiss, 1999). The political campaign subsequently resulted in demonstrations, riots and online activism among the *rakyat* who were affected by these allegations. It included a huge rally in Kuala Lumpur on September 20th, 1998, in the midst of the Commonwealth Games and Queen Elizabeth of England's visit to Kuala Lumpur. Consequently, Anwar and some of his key supporters such as Dr. Badrul Amin, Ezam Nor, Saari Sungib, Hishamudin Rais, N. Gobalakrishnan, Tian Chua Chang, Lokman Adam and Ghani Haron were finally arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA 1960).[71]

While his key supporters were released in 1999, Anwar was charged with misuse of power and sodomy on April 14th, 1999, and sentenced to nine years of imprisonment. This did not detract from the growing influence of the *Reformasi* movement

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[71] ISA 1960 (Akta Keselamatan Dalam Negeri 1960, ISA 1960) was a preventive detention law in force in Malaysia. It enacted in 1957 and amended in 1960, allowing for detention without trial or criminal charges under limited and legally defined circumstances.

throughout West Malaysia. The *Reformasi* movement attracted several Malay non-governmental organizations such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia, ABIM), Malaysian Islamic Reform Society and non-Malay non-governmental Organizations like Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Voice, SUARAM) who joined forces in organizing more demonstrations in West Malaysia. They demanded the resignation of Mahathir, the end of UMNO political domination, and a change in the national political system from 'race'-based to issue-based. Building on the momentum of the *Reformasi* movement, Anwar's wife, Wan Azzizah Wan Ismail, eventually formed a political party called Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party, PKR) on April 4th, 1999 to provide the *rakyat* a legitimate platform to overthrow Mahathir, ending UMNO political domination and to change the political system through elections. Thus, with the slogans of *Lawan Tetap Lawan* (Fight On), *Ubah* (Change) and *Ini Kalilah* (This is the moment), PKR formed an opposition coalition called Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front, BA) on October 24th, 1999 with Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) to face the UMNO-BN in the 2004 General Election. The growing political support for PKR-led opposition from the *rakyat* ewas demonstrated in the 1999 General Election when the opposition gained 45 of 193 seats in *Dewan Rakyat* (Parliament of Malaysia), adding 15 seats (including 1 parliamentary seat created by Election Commission of Malaysia) to the 30 in the 1995 election. In contrast, despite winning the 1999 election, the number of seats captured by UMNO-BN was reduced by 14 as it won only 148 seats compared with 162 in 1995 election. The results were described by UMNO leaders as the greatest blow for UMNO-BN since 1969. This drove Mahathir to finally announce during UMNO's general assembly in 2002 that he would resign as Prime Minister in October 2003 because he believed that such a

decision could remediate anger among the Malay voters who flocked to BA, many in protest at his treatment of Anwar (Wain, 2010). Mahathir was then succeeded by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who was sworn into office on October 31st, 2003 (Harper, 2003).

After five months in office, on March 21st, 2004, Badawi advised the *Duli Yang Maha Mulia Yang Dipertuan Agong* (King of Malaysia, DYMMYDPA) to dissolve the existing parliament to hold the 2004 election. In this election, although the electorates in West Malaysia were inclined to support the opposition, under Badawi's leadership, UMNO-BN won an overwhelming victory by holding 198 of 219 seats in the *Dewan Rakyat* (Marzuki, 2004; Harper, 2003). Of these, 51 seats were from Sabah and Sarawak (Puyok, 2011).

Table 4.6: Elections Results and UMNO-BN Hegemony, 1999-2013

| Parties' Name | Year of Election | | | |
	1999	2004	2008	2013
UMNO-BN	148/193	198/219	140/222	133/222
-West Malaysia	100/145	147/166	86/166	86/166
-East Malaysia	48/48	51/53	54/56	47/56
BA/PR	45/193	21/219	82/222	89/222
-West Malaysia	45/145	19/166	80/166	80/166
-East Malaysia	0/48	2/53	2/56	9/56

Source: Adnan & Jamal (2014); Noor (2013); Moniruzaman (2013); Sun (2013); Marzuki (2004)

Following the success of UMNO-BN in winning almost all parliamentary seats in Sabah and Sarawak, federal leaders began to label these Borneo states as a 'fixed deposit' of votes (Brown & Lim, 2013; Sun, 2013). After the 2008 election many began to label Sabah and Sarawak as the 'kingmaker'. Sun (2013) observed that the crucial role of Sabah and Sarawak in determining which way the country would go for the ruling BN coalition or for the Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front, BA) which was renamed Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance) on April 1st 2008. In the 2008 election, when the results were announced, BN had captured 140 of 222 parliamentary seats with 54 seats from East Malaysia, while PR won 82 seats with only 2 from Sabah and Sarawak (Moniruzzaman, 2013). Table 4.6 shows that in the 2013 election BN captured 133 of 222 parliamentary seats with 47 from Sabah and Sarawak, while PR won 89 seats with 9 from Sabah and Sarawak. This meant that UMNO-BN lost its two-thirds majority, having lost 7 seats to PR in Sabah and Sarawak compared with only 2 in 2008 election.

The reduced number of seats captured by UMNO-BN in Sabah and Sarawak was due to the electoral success of local opposition leaders such as Jeffry Kitingan, Lajim Ukin, Yong Teck Lee and Baru Bian through the slogans 'Sabah for Sabahan' and 'Sarawak for Sarawakian'[72]. Moniruzamman noted that, "it is only Sabah and Sarawak that may keep the BN coalition surviving for some more times, but a slight loose in their grip may enable the PR (Pakatan Rakyat or opposition) to change the political and electoral landscape in Malaysia" (2013, p. 68-69). In addition, Sun wrote, "had Sabah and Sarawak not brought in their 47 seats in the last elections, there could have been a change of government in Putrajaya. That's how critical these

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[72] 'Sabah for Sabahan' and 'Sarawak for Sarawakian' are political slogan used by local opposition leaders to urge Sabahans and Sarawakian reject the West Malaysia based political party and support local parties respectively.

two East Malaysian states are to BN" (2013, April 9). Arguably, UMNO-BN campaign has been very effective in maintaining more than 80% winning margin in Sabah and Sarawak. In contrast in West Malaysia, after the 2004 election UMNO-BN constantly failed to achieve a similar margin of electoral victory when it captured only 52% of all seats (166). Most importantly, without this sufficient number of parliamentary seats from Sabah and Sarawak, BN would fail to get a simple majority in the *Dewan Rakyat*, thus preventing this coalition from forming government. To obtain a simple majority in the *Dewan Rakyat*, each party or coalition party is required to win 112 parliamentary seats in elections. However, in 2008 and 2013 election, UMNO-BN captured only 86 of 166 parliamentary seats in West Malaysia. Hence, if it had not won 54 and 47 parliamentary seats in the 2008 and 2013 elections respectively in Sabah and Sarawak, BN would have failed to get the simple majority of seats in the *Dewan Rakyat*.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter described the political development in Sabah that focused on the federal leaders' role in the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government based on ethnic divide. Although it appeared to be not as strong as in West Malaysia, the implementation of such a model of government led to the expansion of ethnic politics in Sabah. The expansion of ethnic politics, in turn, resulted in the consolidation of UMNO-led federal government.

Accordingly, given their role in the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government in Sabah, this chapter argued that the federal leaders' effort to

implement such a model of government by expanding ethnic politics in this state was mainly driven by their determination to stay in power. This is because, without the success of UMNO-BN in capturing more than eighty percent of parliamentary seats in Sabah, they would have lost power in the 2008 and 2013 general elections. The UMNO-BN success in winning those seats in both elections was the result of the expansion of ethnic politics in this state by the federal leaders. Nevertheless, it is important to stress here that the expansion of ethnic politics was not necessarily the result of federal leaders' efforts to implement ethnic based model of government in Sabah, but rather was due to local politicians' efforts to make their presence more significant in Sabah politics. In fact, in order to remain in Sabah's political arena, local politicians such as Stephens, Datu Mustapha, Harris Salleh, Pairin and Musa Aman adopted the Malayan leaders' practice of divide-and-rule based on ethnicity. The *rakyat*, on the other hand, were brainwashed into identifying themselves according to specific ethnic labels such as Malay-Muslim, Dusun, Kadazan, Kadazandusun, KadazanDusunMurut and Momogun in the pretext of safeguarding their own ethnic interests.

Chapter 5: The Demographic Change and Ethnic Politics in Sabah

5.1 Introduction

The population of East Malaysia traditionally does not fit with what Boulanger (2009) calls the 'tri-ethnic schema' of the West Malaysia plural society which has three major ethnic groups, Malays who are the majority, followed by ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians. Also, unlike in West Malaysia where the Orang Asli as the only indigenous community are a minority group, Sabah has more than 30 indigenous communities[73] and the Malays are a minority (Chin, 2014b, p. 90). Before the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, Malays were the minority as they accounted for less than 40 percent of Sabah's total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 1970; Fernandez, Amos & Predza, 1974; Milner, 2008). The people of Sabah who professed different religions coexist peacefully (Sintang, 2014) and hence when Sabah together with Malaya, Sarawak and Singapore, came together to form Federation of Malaysia in 1963, they supported political parties regardless of ethnic differences and the leaders of these early communal political parties promoted multi-ethnic membership and focused more on regional sentiment (Puyok, 2011). The demographic and political characteristics of Sabah posed a threat to the ruling

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[73] Indigenous communities of Sabah consists of Tangaa', Rungus, Murut, Orang Sungai, Tidong, Kimaragang, Tobilung, Tagas, Kimaragang, Sandayoh, Sonsogon, Sukang, Tagaro, Tatana, Tutung, Bisaya, Lotud, Kwijau/Kuriyou/Kuyau, Gana, Bonggi, Minokok, Mangkaak/Kunatong, Pingas, Bundu, Liwan, Tagahas, Tindal, Tagol, Timugon, Tombonuo, Lun Bawang/Lun Dayeh, Baukan, Serundung, Okolod, Pingas, Lingkabau, Dumpas, Rumanau, Lobu, Sinobu, Makiang, Kolobuan, Sinobu, Malapi, Paluan, Selungai and Malay-Brunei.

Malay-led-federal coalition parties' efforts to maintain a grip over Malaysia's politics through the ethnic divide. It thus forced the federal leaders with the help of some local Muslim leaders to apply what Nagata (1979) described as 'various ways' to alter Sabah's demographic character from non-Muslim dominated to Malay-Muslim dominated as they believed that such a move could contribute to the escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in this region.

Observers such as Sadiq commented that:

> the incorporation of illegal immigrants through citizenship documents is connected to the electoral politics of Sabah. Legalising illegal [Muslim] immigrants has become the preferred strategy of the dominant Malay parties when overt Malaysization (through conversion, internal migration and so on) does not proceed quickly enough. The goal of the Malay, who dominated the federal government, is to change the demographic and political character of Sabah so that it become Malay-Muslim dominated (2005, p. 116).

Therefore, with the legalization of illegal Muslim immigrants through the systematic granting of citizenship (Chin, 2014a; 2014b), Sabah's demographic character eventually changed from non-Muslim dominated to the Malay-Muslim dominated. As Frank noted "it is an open secret that Sabah's demography has been changed by special exercises condoned as 'Project 1' and 'Project 2' that enable the immigrants to legalise their status" (2006, p. 73).

Apart from the legalization of illegal Muslim immigrants, it is also important to recognize the significance of the federal-led Islamisation of Sabah's population which changed its demographic character. The objective was to assimilate Sabahans,

especially the indigenous people, into Malayness (Barlocco, 2014). Mustapha, for example, with the support of federal government practiced an Islamization policy that reached its peak between 1970 and 1974. Called the 'one language, one culture, one religion policy' its aim was to assimilate the people of Sabah into Malayness. Although Mustapha's reign ended after the collapse of USNO in 1976, the Islamization policy has continued until today.

The federal and local Muslim political leaders moved to manipulate issues related to cross-border migration, citizenship and Islamization for the pursuit of demographic change and this resulted in the growing importance of ethno-religious sentiment in Sabah. Thus, ethnic politics in Sabah became more pronounced than ever before as "bargaining for political power was no longer based on multi-racial appeals but ethno-religious sentiments" (Puyok, 2011, p. 19). Ethno-religious sentiments used for political power among political elites in turn led to heightened ethno-religious tension. This invited historical examination of the significance of both cross-border migration and the Islamization policy in changing Sabah's demographic character with emphasis on their contribution to the escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics and how such activity accommodated the growing ethno-religious friction in this region.

This chapter examines how federal leaders, with the help of some local Muslim political leaders, decided to legalize the illegal immigrants[74] and introduced the

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[74] The concept of illegal immigrants in this study refers to what Kassim (2009a) described as (i) a foreigner who enters a country without permit or pass, (ii) a foreigner who enters a country legally but stays on without renewing the permit or pass, (iii) a contract worker who violates the work permit by changing their work or their employer, (iv) a foreigner who misuses the pass visit, (v) those who possess fake document or legal document through illegal means, (vi) a foreign workers who fails to renew his or her working permit, and (vii) a refugee who fail to renew his or her yearly IMM13 pass.

Islamization policy as their preferred strategies to pursue demographic change in Sabah. It also shows how the escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics contributed to the growing ethnic friction in this region. Ethnic friction related to tensions between the non-Muslim and the Malay-Muslim populations and between the indigenous and the 'new citizens'.

In examining the impact of federal and local Muslim leaders' strategies to manipulate cross-border migration and Muslim conversion of the indigenous people, I shall apply Brauch's (2011) and Cesari's (2009) social constructive perspective which looks at cross-border migration and religious difference as a source of socio-political change. Comparing the phenomenon of cross-border migration and religious conversion in pre-independence and post-colonial Sabah is important as such an exercise will eventually reveal the significant role played by the federal and the local Muslim political leaders.

Accordingly, the first section of this chapter briefly examines the phenomenon of cross-border migration, religious difference and social relationship in pre-independent Sabah. It has to be noted that although cross-border migration and religious conversions have taken place in Sabah since before the colonial era, they did not have a significant effect in those times on ethnic relations due to the insignificant role of ethnicity in Sabah's politics. This is followed by an examination of how federal and local Muslim political leaders' efforts to change the existing demographic character through the manipulation of cross-border migration and religious conversion for their political interests have made ethno-religious sentiments vital in Sabah's politics. The third section investigates the rise of ethno-religious

sentiment and its impacts on the relationship between non-Muslim and Muslim groups, and between the indigenous and the new citizens in Sabah.

5.2 Brief History of Cross-Border Migration and Religious Differences in Pre-Colonial Sabah

The phenomena of cross-border migration and the conversion of local peoples to Islam are by no means new in Sabah as both activities have taken place since even before the colonial era. Broadly speaking, it is possible to categorize the immigrants into two groups namely pre-independence and post-colonial immigrants. Together, both groups of immigrants coexist with the Dusunic speaking people of various tribal groups, whom Luping (1985; 1994) calls the 'original inhabitants' or Mohamad (1977) calls the 'definitive race of Sabah', and the Islamised local peoples of the territory. As they contributed to changing Sabah's demographic character, pre-independence and post-colonial immigrants and new Muslim converts were often linked with the development of Sabah politics (Lim, 2013), especially in the context of ethnic politicization.

Historically, in the period before independence in 1963, Sabah's population was dominated by the non-Muslims, in particular the 'original inhabitants' of Sabah who were traditionally non-Muslims. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (1970) and Fernandez, Amos and Predza (1974) said the population percentage of non-Muslim in 1960 was about 60.1% (272,964 individuals) of the total population of Sabah (454,421 individuals) and that the population percentage of Muslims was only about 181,457 individuals (39.9% of the total population). The non-indigenous population

was a result of cross-border migration of Muslims from the neighboring countries of Indonesia and the Philippines, and non-Muslims from China and India. While the Muslim immigrants from Indonesia and the Philippines arrived in Sabah long before the colonial powers established their presence in this part of the world (Kurus, 1998), the non-Muslim immigrants from China and India arrived during the British rule.

Instead of settling in this territory, however, before 1963 most of the Muslim Indonesians and Filipinos preferred to return to their homeland and continue to visit Sabah. Transnational mobility among Muslims of Indonesia and the Philippines in Sabah was part of their normal life (Lina & Sarkawi, 2011). The geographical location of Sabah close to both Indonesia and the Philippines with their porous borders allowed easy movements of these people (Lumenta, 2011).

As most of the Muslim Indonesian and Filipinos were unwilling to settle in Sabah permanently, in 1881 the British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBC) began to recruit Chinese labor as a solution to their manpower problem. At the time there were only between 60,000 and 100,000 Dusunic speaking people (Tze-Ken, 1998, p. 13). Thus, they needed to recruit foreign labor to develop the new colony.

Sir Walter Medhurst was appointed the Immigration Commissioner to recruit the labor from China. The British decision to recruit the labor from China, who, in West Malaysia identified as Chinese rather than as Haka, Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese, was due to their reputation of being hardworking and not choosy in terms of jobs (Badiru, 1993). The non-Muslim Chinese willingness to work in any kind of job in fact provided the British with the opportunity to develop not only the agricultural sector but also the mining industry. Unlike the Chinese, the locals such as the Rungus, the Dusunic speaking people who lived in the northernmost point of

Sabah during this era practiced certain taboos. Their culture prohibited them from digging certain areas. This was known as *pantang larang* (taboo). The Rungus male (non-Muslim *bumiputra*) in his seventies even described the planting of coconuts as similar to digging one's own grave. He said, "when the British asked the Rungus in Kudat to dig a hole for planting the coconuts, some of their leaders insisted that such an act was unacceptable because it was similar to an act of digging a grave for themselves" (interview with a key respondent on December 12th, 2013 in Kudat).

In light of this factor, under Medhurst's control many non-Muslim Chinese from China were recruited who in the 1920s made up one-fifth of Sabah's population (Tze-Ken, 1998, p. 85). Many eventually decided to assimilate and settle in Sabah, marrying the locals, primarily the Dusuns. Their offspring adapted to the local culture.

Apart from the Chinese, Punjabis from India were brought into Sabah by Captain Harrington following the formation of the Armed Constabulary in 1889 (Gill, 2007). Under the Constabulary the Punjabis (also called Orang Sikhs or Sikhs by the locals and categorized as Indians by the British) performed paramilitary functions alongside the natives as members of the British armed personnel. Gill in explaining this issue said:

> "the original force of the constabulary employed by the British North Borneo Chartered Company after its formation in 1881 was composed of Sikhs who were brought into the country by Capt. Harrington, formerly of the Riffle Brigade and the uncle of Lt. Col. C.H. Harrington who was the Commandant of the North Borneo Armed Constabulary from 1889 till 1926" (2007, p. 53).

The formation of the Constabulary thus led to the emergence of a small population of Indians in Sabah, who numbered around 174 in 1911 (Rose, 1912, p. 21). Many of them, when World War II ended, returned to India after retiring from the constabulary, but a small group remained. Like the Chinese, most of them eventually got married to locals and became assimilated into Sabah society (Sandhu & Mani, 1993, p. 581). The religious similarity between the locals, the Chinese and the Punjabis in terms of either Christianity or *paganism* (animism) and the fact that consumption of pork and keeping dogs as pets were not prohibited in the non-Muslim culture in Sabah enabled the easy integration of both groups of migrants.

In contrast, despite the fact that they arrived earlier than the Chinese and the Punjabis, the Muslim immigrants from Indonesia and the Philippines who decided to permanently settle in Sabah were often seen by the locals as the 'other' due to religious differences. Their religion of Islam prohibited them from consuming pork and keeping dogs as pets and these became the main sticking points. Even in cases where some of them married locals, their integration into the local society remained problematic, especially when they showed reluctance to live among the locals.

The fact that the pre-independence Muslim immigrants from Indonesia and the Philippines hardly integrated into the traditional society of Sabah stood in sharp contrast with the easy integration of the Chinese and Punjabis into Sabah's society. This was aptly described by a Kadazandusun man (non-Muslim *bumiputra*) in his 70s who was not only a politician but also a local scholar concentrating on Sabah politics who remarked:

> we as the real natives of Sabah have never stopped anyone from becoming part
> of our society. All are welcome to live within our community. However, some

do not want to recognize our religion and the way we live our life as the non-Muslim. We are exactly peace loving type of people and have never stopped anyone from becoming part of our society, but they tend to insult our religion and have no strong will to live within our traditional native society (interview conducted on April 2nd, 2014 in Penampang).

The idea of 'lacking strong will' to live within the traditional society of Sabah as expressed by this Kadazandusun man indicates very well the fact that difference in religion prevented the Muslim immigrants from integrating into Sabah non-Muslim society.

The issue relating to integration into the traditional society, however, has never prevented the pre-independence Muslim immigrants from Indonesia and the Philippines from being identified as the natives of Sabah. In fact, together with the locals or the Dusunic-speaking people, the pre-independence Muslim immigrants were identified as 'native' by the British following the introduction of Land Proclamation 3 in 1913. In contrast, however, the Chinese and Indians despite being assimilated into Sabah's society, as in Malaya, were never referred to by the British as the natives of Sabah. This was because the Land Proclamation (Official Gazette, February 21st, 1913) stated that "native means any aboriginal inhabitants of Malay Archipelago and the children of such an inhabitant by any union of any native or aliens" (Government of British North Borneo, 1913). Based on the 'Proclamation', the term native was only used to refer to the aboriginal inhabitants of the Malay Archipelago. Nevertheless, the offspring from such mixed marriages could consider themselves as native. Their children usually identified themselves as Sino-Kadazan or Sino-Dusun (literally means half Kadazandusun and half-Chinese) or if their

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father was a native then the children identifed themselves with their father's ethnicity. This may have been the reason why many of the Chinese married locals because the native title accorded to their children enabled them to own a land and enjoy many other benefits enjoyed by the natives (Pue & Sulaiman, 2013; Opinion, 2010, December 5; Bulan, 2007).

The 1960 census of Sabah's population shows that 37.0% (167,993) of the state's population (454,421) were non-Muslim natives while 31.2% (141,840) were Muslims (see Table 4.3 in chapter 4). Although non-Muslims were more numerous there were no social barriers between the peoples of Sabah due to their strong inclination to view ethnicity as distinct from religion, and focus on the common good and social harmony and reject formal social differentiation (Chin, 2015; Lim, 2008; 2013; Luping, 1985).

It has to be emphasized that the decision to create social identity based on cultural and language similarity (which gave birth to the invention of Kadazan as an ethnic category) in the late colonial period of between 1950s and 1960s (Luping, 1985; Puyok & Bagang, 2011) later drove the British to reclassify the natives as non-Muslim natives and Muslims but did not drive a wedge between the people of Sabah. In fact, their decision, as Puyok and Bagang (2011), and Hussin (2008) observed was merely aimed at identifying themselves as one social group and not meant to differentiate themselves. As a consequence, the relationship between the non-Muslims and Muslims was good, even though both groups tended to live separately in their different *kampung* (village), but they saw each other as their social companions and not rivals in political and economic activities.

Non-Muslims natives also supported leaders who were of Muslim origin such as Tun Mustapha in his demand for Sabah for Sabahans. Datu Mustapha was a Suluk of Philippines origin. Despite his origins, the locals recognized him as the 'father of Sabah's independence' and 'father of Sabah's Development' (Sabah Foundation, 2003). Thus, though some of the Muslim natives were seen as immigrants, they were nevertheless accepted as Sabahans. Not only were cross-border migration and religious differences not major issues in pre-independent Sabah, there were also cases where non-Muslim indigenous people married immigrants and embraced Islam. The decision to embrace Islam can be described as not politically driven but rather based on various personal, informal reasons (Kassim, 2009b).

The key reason for this is that there was no formal contest for political power in pre-independent Sabah (Yusoff, 1999). Issues relating to cross-border migration and religious differences were irrelevant. Thus, locals were not interested in ethnic politics as a kind of social belonging.

Additionally, before the 1960s, majority of the original people of Sabah were uneducated (Chin, 2014a), unaware of regional politics, and were not subject to the need to (re)identify their social belonging or to distinguish themselves from each other. However, when Sabah gained self-rule and thereafter became part of the Malaysian federation many of the 'original inhabitants' of Sabah became educated following the mandatory requirement for all children to undergo a schooling system (Ruslan, 2003; Tze Ken, 2003; Luping, 1994). The people of Sabah began to comprehend how both cross-border migration and religious differences were impacting on the demography of Sabah, which in turn personally affected their social status as the 'original inhabitants' of Sabah who had been largely marginalized.

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5.3 The Growing Importance of Cross-Border Migration and Religious Differences in Post-Colonial Sabah

Both cross-border migration and religious difference assumed importance in Sabah following the dramatic increase of its population, especially when the Muslim population and in particular the Muslim immigrant population increased (Gunggut, Habibun & Zuraidah, 2006) after federation of Malaysia in 1963. Table 5.1 shows that half a century after independence, Sabah's population had increased by 390% (an increase of 2,752,321 in 50 years) against the increase of only 165% at the national (Malaysia) level for the same period of time, "making Sabah a Muslim majority state" (Chin, 2014b, p. 83).

Table 5.1: Population Growth in Malaysia (1960 – 2010)

Year	Sabah			Sarawak			Malaysia		
	Population	Increase	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Population	Increase	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Population	Increase	Annual Growth Rate (%)
1960	454,421	-	-	744,529	-	-	-	-	-
1970	636,431	196,883	3.7	976,269	231,740	2.8	10,439,430	-	-
1980	929,299	277,995	3.9	1,235,553	407,218	2.4	13,136,109	2,696,679	2.6
1991[75]	1,734,685	805.386	5.9	1,642,771	372,018	2.7	18,102,362	4,966,253	2.6
2000	2,603,485	868,800	4.5	2,009,893	367,122	2.3	22,198,276	4,095,914	2.6
2010	3,206,742	603,257	2.1	2,471,140	461,247	1.8	28,334,135	6,135,859	2.0

Total Population
Increase   2,752,321 (390.0%)   1,726,611 (149.0%)   17,894,705 (165.0%)
(1960-2010)

Source: Adapted from Fernandez, Amos & Predza (1974); Department of Statistics Malaysia (1970, 1980, 1991, 2000, 2010); Swee-Hock (2007); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1978, p.188).

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[75] Instead of 1990, the census for Malaysia's population was held only in 1991. For this reason, Table 5.1 uses the census data for Malaysian population in 1991.

The latest census shows a decline in Sabah's annual population growth rate from 4.5% in 2000 to 2.1% in 2010 though it remains higher than the national average of 2.6 in 2000 and 2.0 in 2010; Sarawak also experienced a decline in population growth and fertility whereby it registered a population growth rate of 2.3 in 2000 and 1.8 in 2010[76]. It is also interesting to note that until 1990, the population of Sabah was smaller than Sarawak (by 306,254), but by 1991 Sabah had a larger population (by 91,914 individuals). Sabah's population was almost half a million (458,353) more than Sarawak in 2000, and by 2010 Sabah's population was 735,602 more than Sarawak. These figures thus indicate that Sabah experienced what Frank (2006) calls 'extraordinary' population growth during these last four decades.

This extraordinary increase of Sabah's population coincided with the decline in the percentage of non-Muslim *bumiputra* (KadazanDusunMurut) from 37.0% (167,993) in 1960 to only 21.1% (675,070) in 2010. In contrast, there was a percentage increase in Muslim *bumiputra* population from only 31.2% (141,840) of Sabah's population in 1960 to 40.2% (1,290,239) in 2010. The population of non-Muslim non-*bumiputra* also declined in terms of percentage from 23.1% (104,971) of Sabah's population in 1960 to 13.6 % (435,519) in 2010. Like the Muslim *bumiputra*, the population of Muslim non-*bumiputra* consisting mainly of Muslim immigrants from Southern Philippines and Indonesia increased rapidly from only 8.7% (39,617) of Sabah's population in 1960 to 25.1% (805,914) in 2010 (see Table 5.2). This changed Sabah's demographic character from non-Muslim dominated to Muslim dominated.

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[76] Sarawak's population which already high than Sabah in 1960 (744,529 individuals) increased to 2,471,140 individuals only in 2010 (an increase of 148% or an addition of 1,726,611 individuals in 50 years).

Table 5.2: Ethnic Group Representation in Sabah (1960-2010)

Ethnic	Census Year					
Group	1960	1970	1980*	1991	2000	2010
Non-Muslim *Bumiputra*	167,993 (37.0%)	215,811 (33.9%)	487,627 (52.5%) [Non-Muslim]	397,287 (22.9%)	569,678 (21.9%)	675,070 (21.1%)
Malay-Muslim *Bumiputra*	141,840 (31.2%)	221,264 (34.8%)	770,389 (82.9%)	606,253 (35.0%)	1,031,676 (39.6%)	1,290,239 (40.2%)
Malay-Muslim Non-*Bumiputra*	39,617 (8.7%)	63,797 (10.0%)	[Malay-Muslim]	455,961 (26.3%)	626,611 (24.1%)	805,914 (25.1%)
Non-Muslim Non-*Bumiputra*	104,971 (23.1%)	135,559 (21.3%)	158,910 (17.1%)	275,184 (11.5%)	375,518 (14.4%)	435,519 (13.6%)

Source: Adapted from Department of Statistics Malaysia (1965; 1970; 1980; 1991; 2000; 2010).

* The 1980s census collapsed non-Muslim *bumiputra*, Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* and Malay-Muslim non-*bumiputra* which included Indonesians and Filipinos (Regis, 1989, p. 419) into single category of *Pribumi*, thus making it impossible to obtain data for individual ethnic groups.

Unlike in India where changes in its demographic character were the result of increased fertility rate among Muslims (Balasubramanian, 1984) Sabah's demographic character has been the result of both federal and local Muslim political leaders' use of 'phantom voters' to influence the outcome of Sabah's elections and to ensure a Malay-led or Muslim-led state government based on West Malaysia's consociational democracy.

In doing so, by the late 1960s there were many *Malay celup* (fake Malay) in Sabah. The concept of *Malay celup* here refers to an individual in Sabah (and Sarawak) who is classified by the Malaysian government as Malay due to his or her religious similarity with the Malays in West Malaysia.

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In an effort to increase the *Malay celup* in Sabah, the federal government introduced Project 1 (Loh, 2005), a special exercise of granting Malaysian identification cards to Muslim illegal immigrants and Muslim refugees from the Philippines. These Muslims were chosen because in terms of spoken language and physical appearance they closely resemble the Bajau of Sabah, and therefore can easily disguise themselves as Sabah citizens (Frank, 2006). Many of these illegal immigrants and refugees were given the opportunity by the Sabah government to become its citizens following the establishment of citizenship law and regulation in 1963. Nevertheless, in this earlier period, unlike the non-Muslim Chinese and Indians these Muslims decided to retain their Filipino citizenship rather than becoming the citizens of Sabah. As Kassim (2009a) observed, the Muslim migrants from the Philippines who arrived in the 60s and earlier could have applied for citizenship when Sabah achieved independence in 1963, but most of them did not do so.

Most Filipinos regularly come to Sabah for economic purposes. In the late 1960s the shortage of labor brought about by special privileges granted to the *bumiputra* opened up work opportunities for Filipinos willing to perform unskilled job or what Kassim (2009a) termed the '3-D jobs': dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs. Due to their willingness to perform the '3-D jobs', both Sabah and the federal government encouraged the Muslim immigrants from Philippines to participate in developing various sectors of Sabah's economy (i.e. primary [agriculture, farming, fishing, quarrying] and secondary [construction, processing, manufacturing]) (Hassan, Omar & Dolah, 2010).

While some were recruited through proper processes, most of them arrived clandestinely in Sabah and this caused great concern to the indigenous people who

viewed them as a threat to their security. Instead of preventing the Muslim illegal immigrant evacuees from the insurgency against the Philippines government in Mindanao[77] from coming to Sabah, the authorities granted them permission to stay and work in Sabah under IMM13 social work passes. They were also accommodated temporarily in five resettlements: Telipok and Kinarut in Kota Kinabalu, Kampung Bahagia of Sandakan, Kampung Selamat of Semporna and Kampung Hidayat of Tawau. The IMM13 and the temporary accommodation were given based on the conditions that they: a) had been directly affected by the unrest; b) had arrived in Sabah between 1970s to 1980s; c) had come from Region 9 (Zamboanga del Norte, del Sur, Sibugay); d) were Muslims; and e) must renew their IMM13 social work pass every year for an annual fee of RM90.00 per person (Kassim, 2014, p. 19). The Malaysian Immigration Department issued IMM13 to 57,000 Filipinos who mostly settled in coastal towns such as Sandakan, Tawau and Lahad Datu (Frank, 2006).

At the time of Mustapha's term as the Chief Minister (1967-1976), under the guidance of Syed Kecik[78], a peninsular Malay businessman sent to Sabah by the federal leaders to assist Mustapha (Chin, 2014b, p. 84), these political refugees and the illegal immigrants were naturalized as citizens of Malaysia (Tham, 2016; Sadiq, 2009). Mustapha, as a Muslim of Suluk origin decided to secretly make them Malaysian citizens through the issue of a Malaysian identification card, a document that showed they were legitimate citizens of Malaysia in Sabah (Shukri, 2015). The change in their status from either refugees or illegal immigrants to Malaysian citizens

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[77] The prolonged conflict between the Philippines Army and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), later renamed Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had caused the Muslim communities to move out of the conflict zone of Mindanao (Barrios-Fabian, 2004).

[78] He (Syed Kechik Syed Mohamed Al-Bukhary) was the Mustapha government's legal advisor from 1968 until 1975. Many non-Muslims in Sabah believe that he was the real man behind USNO government's aggressive Islamisation effort and was the mastermind behind the banishment of 'Catholic priest and nuns' out of Sabah in early 1970s.

enabled the Malaysian government to classify them as Malay or as what Chin (2014b), Frank (2006) and Dolittle (2011) called Malay-Muslim who included Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* (natives) and Malay-Muslim non-*bumiputra* (immigrants).

Apart from the secret granting of citizenship, Mustapha also tried to convert the non-Muslim indigenes through 'forced Islamization' with the aim of including them in the category Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* (Nagaraj, Kiong-Hock, Nai-Peng, Chiu-Wan & Pala, 2007). Some even call this the *Malayanization project*. Leiking, a Member of Parliament for Penampang, for example, described the conversion of non-Muslim indigenes since the Mustapha era as the effort to 'Malayanise' (a program to make them Malays) or an effort to reclassify non-Muslim indigenous as the Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* (Lim, 2013; Goliu, 2013). Mustapha established the United Sabah Islamic Association (USIA) on October 10th, 1969 and later the Sabah Islamic Council (Majlis Agama Islam Sabah, MUIS) on April 26th, 1972 to ensure his Islamization efforts were lawful. The establishment of USIA and MUIS paved the way for Mustapha to push for more organized and active *dakwah* (Islamic mission) activities in Sabah. Under the *dakwah* program of these government-supported organizations of USIA and MUIS, it was reported that 2,840 non-Muslim indigenous people in Sabah converted to Islam between 1970 and 1980 (Kassim, 2009b, p. 47; Lim, 2008; 2013). Among them was Donald Stephens, the *Huguan Siou* (Paramount leader of the Dusunic speaking people in Sabah) who converted to Islam in January 1971 and later adopted the name Muhamad Fuad Stephens (Granville-Edge, 1999).

The effort to increase the *Malay celup* population through the granting of Malaysian identification cards and the Islamization policy, as Chin (1999a), Schumann (2006), and Adnan and Jamal (2014) argue, was the beginning of the strong growth of

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Malay-Muslim population in Sabah. As Table 5.2 shows, in the 1960 census, the Malay-Muslim population was about 39.9% (181,457 individuals) of Sabah's population. The Malay-Muslim population, however, increased to about 44.8% (285,061 individuals) in 1970. The increase in Malay-Muslim population continued and in 1980 52.5% (487,627) of the Sabah population (929,299 individuals) were registered as Malay-Muslims.

This continued even under the BERJAYA government era (1976-1985). When BERJAYA won the state election in 1981, Harris Salleh as the Chief Minister of BERJAYA government wanted to foster more rapid integration with Malay-Muslim dominated West Malaysia and allowed only three ethnic categories, namely *bumiputra*, Chinese and *lain-lain kaum* (others ethnics) in Sabah (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p. 297). Accordingly, Harris who had strong political support from the federal leaders, in particular Mahathir Mohamed, the longest-serving Prime Minister of Malaysia (1981-2003) decided to take necessary measures to increase the Malay-Muslim population as a means of further consolidating the Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* political dominance in Sabah.

His efforts were more aggressive than Mustapha as he allowed the naturalization of not only the illegal immigrants from Philippines but also illegal immigrants or the immigrants with proper working pass from Indonesia and other countries such as Pakistan and India (Su-Lyn, 2013). At the same time, he also boosted the *dakwah* activities to ensure more non-Muslim indigenous people became Muslims. Thus, the census carried out at the end of Mustapha's era showed that Sabah's annual population grew from 3.7 % per annum up to 1970 to 3.9 % per annum from 1970 to 1980 (see Table 5.1). Furthermore, it was also reported that the number of Muslim

converts increased from 2,840 individuals between 1970 and 1979 to 13,451 individuals between 1980 and 1990 (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Muslim Converts in Sabah (1970 – 2015)

Years	1970-9	1980-1990	1990-2000	2001-2004	2005-2015
Total	2,840	12,451	10,268	4,660	*

Source: Adapted from Kassim (2009b).

* No new data for Muslim converts in Sabah are available for 2005-2009 and 2010-2015, but many non-Muslim indigenous people suggests that the rate of conversion has declined following the success of UMNO-led BN to change Sabah's demographic character and later gain control over its politics.

As the Malay-Muslim population grew significantly many, if not all, non-Muslim indigenous people began to show their opposition as they feared they were becoming a minority and a marginalized group in Sabah in terms of their political rights. According to Hwang (2003) and ASEAN Forecast (1985, August), Harris's open exhortation to the Muslims to affect a 52 per cent Muslim majority to control the Christians of Sabah caused widespread apprehension among non-Muslim indigenes, in particular the non-Muslim leaders as they faced the possibility of becoming a minority and thereafter politically deprived. Some non-Muslim leaders who were against Harris' policy were dissatisfied that these 'new citizens' had systematically been granted the status of 'native' by the BERJAYA government (Sadiq, 2005; 2009; Leong, 2009).

They claimed that while the Sabah Native Ordinance 1952 (Section 2 (d) which loosely defined the 'natives' as members of a people indigenous to the Republic of Indonesia or the Sulu group of islands in the Philippines Archipelago or the states of Malaya or the Republic of Singapore was manipulated to categorize many Muslim Indonesian and Filipinos as the natives of Sabah. The definition of Malay according to Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution was the tool to categorize the Muslims from other parts of the world such as Pakistan as the native people of Sabah[79]. To do so, Harris introduced the term *pribumi*[80] on October 7th, 1982 (Regis, 1989, pp. 15-16) to include Muslim immigrants in the category of Malay-Muslim native[81]. Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution defined the Malay and the native/indigenous persons in Malaysia who belong to the category *pribumi* as "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom" (The Commissioner of Law Malaysia, 2010, p. 153). This was the basis for Harris to include the Muslim immigrants in Sabah as Malay-Muslim natives. In Indonesia the word *asli* (literally means original or the first/earlier inhabitant of a specific territory) is added to the term *pribumi* (read *pribumi-asli*) to refer to native/indigenous status (Siddique & Suryadinata, 1982, p. 663) and so to distinguish the native from the newcomers. The introduction of the term *pribumi* allowed the illegal Muslim immigrants to be systematically granted citizenship soon after they arrived in Sabah (Sadiq, 2009) and to be included in the category *lain-lain* (others) in the 1970 census and eventually subsumed under the new category of natives in the 1980 Population and Housing Census (Sadiq, 2005, p. 110).

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[79] The definition of native and Malay as stated in Ordinance 1952 (Section 2 (d) and Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution is the very reason why Muslim immigrants from Indonesia, Philippines and Pakistan can become native of Sabah Malaysia overnight, and yet Chinese and Indians can never do so, hence must remain immigrants.

[80] *Pribumi* refers to a group in Sabah that share a similar sociocultural heritage and whose members are considered as natives of the state.

[81] As they have the same meaning, that is the 'son-of-soil' or the 'indigenous/native people', since 1980s until to date, both *pribumi* and *bumiputra* were used interchangeably in Sabah.

The Sabah Native Ordinance 1952 (Section 2 (d) and the Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution), therefore can be seen as the legitimate documents manipulated by Harris and the federal leaders to reduce the non-Muslim numerical supremacy by bringing in the Muslim immigrants from not only Indonesia and Philippines but also Muslims from other parts of the world to Sabah (Sadiq, 2005; 2009; Leong, 2009; Frank, 2006; Mutalib, 1999). It is therefore, not a surprise that many 'natives' in Sabah who admitted that they were Indonesian or Filipino were actually not natives but were the BERJAYA government's certified natives (literally means the immigrants who had been given native certificates or documents that enacted their inclusion in the category of native people). The State Local Government and Housing Minister, Datuk Hajiji Noor in 2012 admitted that loose certification of natives took place in Sabah. He said, "we need to admit that a few decades ago we made the serious mistake of opening a huge loophole in the law by allowing the loose certification of natives" (Lajiun, 2016). Hajiji's confession in many respects indicated that such a systematic effort to increase the Malay-Muslim population in Sabah had been continued in the BERJAYA era, and that non-Muslim disquiet was not misplaced.

The result of growing apprehension among the non-Muslim indigenous was assuaged by the overthrow of BERJAYA by a newly formed political party, the Christian-led PBS in 1985. The success of PBS in defeating BERJAYA and subsequently forming the state government caused the Malay-Muslim leaders at the federal level to acknowledge the need to further intensify efforts to increase the number of Muslim population significantly in this state. As a result, the federal leaders, in particular Mahathir Mohamad, who was the Prime Minister of Malaysia during that time decided to continue Mustapha and Harris's effort to increase the Muslim population

in Sabah. This effort was far more aggressive as it included a systematic granting of citizenship to more than half a million illegal Muslim immigrants (Frank, 2006) to ensure the overthrow of the non-Muslim indigenous-led PBS government. This action, which contributed to the overthrow of PBS government on March 17th 1994 resulted in a significant increase in Sabah's annual population growth from 3.9% per annum up to 1980 to 5.9% up to 1991 (see Table 5.1) and a strong increase in the Malay-Muslim population in the territory from 1,658,287 individuals in 2000 (63.7% of 2,603,485) to 2,096,153 individuals in 2010 (65.3% of 3,206,742). This was known to the locals as Project IC or Project Mahathir or Project II.

5.4 *Projek IC* and the Malay-Muslim Domination

The *Projek IC*[82] is the term used by many indigenous people of Sabah, in particular the non-Muslims, to describe the systematic granting of *Kad Pengenalan Malaysia* (Malaysian Identification Card, IC) or in other words the systematic granting of citizenship to foreigners in Sabah in return for their votes. They argued that the aim of this operation which started around mid-1990s (Mutalib, 1999) was to further increase the Malay-Muslim population in Sabah believing that they would vote against any Christian-led political party and would be supportive of a Muslim-led political party (Sadiq, 2005; 2009). This project is believed to have involved the former Prime Minister of Malaysia (Mahathir Mohamed), the former Chief Minister of Sabah (Harris Salleh), and several federal government institutions such as National Registration Department (NRD), Election Commission of Malaysia (ECM),

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[82] IC is an abbreviation for identity card, a card used by the Malaysian government to identify its citizens.

the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Immigration Department of Malaysia (IDM).

This dubious IC granting process involved the granting of IC without going through the proper legal process of the submission of important documents such as Birth Certificate and their Parents' Marriage Certificate required by the Malaysian registration law. Locals assert that many Muslim immigrants from Indonesia, Philippines and other countries such as Pakistan managed to become Malaysian citizens through this Project IC. Soon after they were given IC, their names were added to the Malaysian electoral roll to enable them to vote during elections.

The individuals who were granted IC in return were required to vote for the ruling coalition (Mutalib, 1999; Sadiq, 2005). In order to ensure these 'new citizens' would only vote for the Malay-led ruling coalition, the UMNO-BN leaders stressed that all Muslims were obliged to vote for Muslim-led political party in accordance with the Islamic *fardhu* (obligation). The former Chief Minister of Sabah, Osu Sukam, for example, during the gathering of the state's Islamic officials and missionaries in Kota Kinabalu (KK) stated that it was *fardhu kifayah* (an Islamic social obligation) for Muslims to vote for BN because it was led by Muslims and Islam could only flourish under Muslim rule (read UMNO-led government) (Chin, 1999a). Accordingly, the locals, especially the indigenous people, understand that these 'new citizens' have consistently voted for BN since the 1980s or even earlier.

There is strong anecdotal evidence to support such a claim. In 2000, Justice Muhammad Kamal Awang in what was popularly referred to as the Likas[83] case

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[83] Likas is a sub-district of Kota Kinabalu which located less than 15 kilometres from Kota Kinabalu city centre.

(petition K11/99) declared that the result of 1999 Likas constituency election was void. The failure of the ECM in maintaining an 'electoral roll in accordance with the law (read a clean roll)' according to the judge made the electoral roll illegal and hence the Likas election was declared null and void. During the 'hearing', Hassanar, the former District Officer of Sandakan claimed that some 40,000 foreigners were given citizenship rights through Project IC. The petitioner even presented evidence of 4,197 persons with dubious ICs who cast their vote in Likas.

A former Internal Security Act (ISA) detainee, Siti Aminah Mahmud[84], during a press conference in Petaling Jaya, Selangor on February 27th, 2013 admitted that Project IC was indeed real. She confessed that she was one of the individuals who helped to achieve the goals of the project to increase the size of the Malay-Muslim population in Sabah. She admitted to being instructed by some of the UMNO supreme leaders to facilitate the issue of IC for Muslim immigrants as part of a plan to help UMNO take over Sabah from PBS in the 1990s. She said, "there were five tasks for me – helping to campaign, increasing Malay voters, locating villagers in rural especially those who have no IC at the border of Sabah-Indonesia, and ensuring the victory of UMNO in toppling PBS" (Omar, 2013; Zulkifli, 2013). She also confessed to being involved in this operation from 1990 to 1994, before she was detained under ISA in 1995, and that she knew the operation was led by Mahathir Mohamed. She said, "I knew it because Datu Mustapha (the Sabah UMNO Chief during that period of time) told us not to be afraid about getting arrested. He said this is Mahathir's and Megat Junid's projects and he said if he (Mustapha) helps UMNO to win, he (Mustapha) would be appointed as the state governor" (Omar, 2013; Zulkifli, 2013). In addition, she claimed, "the IC were given to a group of

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[84] She was detained under ISA in 1995 for two years for her alleged involvement in the 'Project IC'.

immigrants…not some but in bags (IC)…the area with highest number were Tawau, Sandakan, Lahad Datu and Kota Kinabalu, as well as at the Tawau-Indonesia border. Another area was Semporna. Many were given there because many Filipinos were there" (Omar, 2013; Zulkifli, 2013).

Interestingly, although the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Illegal Immigrants of Sabah (RCI) formed on August 11th, 2012, found that Project IC existed, it refused to acknowledge the involvement of federal and local Muslim leaders as it concluded that it was a result of the Registration Department of Malaysia officials' desire for corrupt monetary gain. The RCI report concluded that:

> it was a period in which syndicates and individuals aided by or in complicity with corrupt officials, had taken advantage of a weakly institutionalized citizenship system compounded by the huge number of immigrants/foreigners for monetary gain. It was also a period which saw the emergence of an alleged project called Project IC with a corrosive political agenda. In short, it was a period heightened nefarious activity that had precipitated and accelerated the influx of illegal immigrants in the State. Sabah now suffers the cumulative spill-over effects of that period (Kiong, Luping, Mustafa, Ampon & Wu, 2014, p. 365-366).

In responding to the delay of more than 3 years in the release of RCI report (August 2012-December 2014), Lim Kit Siang, the DAP's (Democratic Action Party) Member of Parliament for Gelang Patah said "it looked as if the authorities had something to hide" (Chan, 2014, December 12; Editor Team SabahKini, 2014, December 6).

Many indigenous peoples of Sabah were also suspicious of the federal leaders' attitude towards this issue. Simon Sipaun, a native person of Sabah and a member of the anti-graft watchdog, the Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism (C4) argues that the federal leaders adopted different strategies in dealing with illegal immigrants in West Malaysia and in Sabah. He said

> West Malaysia was at one time flooded with Vietnamese refugees, but they had been either deported home or sent to other countries. However, when it came to the immigrants in Sabah, they were allowed to stay and even awarded citizenship…what made it worst was that these people were registered as voters, which gave them opportunity to decide the state's fate (Sokial, 2015, April 14).

Therefore, due to the different strategies employed by the federal leaders in dealing with the problem, despite its decision to set up the RCI the locals remained steadfast in their belief that the federal government was not sincere in solving the illegal immigrant woes in Sabah.

What is clear is the fact that the federal and local Muslim leaders have contributed to the extraordinary increase in Sabah's population that coincided with the strong growth of the Muslim population here. The reason for this, as a key informant of this study argues is, "if they (the federal and local Muslim leaders who were also the top leaders of BN), were sincere in solving this perennial problem then they would have imposed proactive efforts in Sabah" (interview with key informant on April 3rd 2014 in Penampang).

Although it appeared that the federal government had deported 550,000 immigrants from Sabah since 1990 (Omar, 2016), which resulted in the decline of Malay-Muslim non-*bumiputra* population from 26.3% in 1991 to about 24.1% in 2000[85], locals assert that such efforts were insufficient. In fact, when commenting on this issue, the native peoples of Sabah generally said that both state and federal governments are not sincere in tackling the problem as they claim that the governments retain their old attitude of encouraging many more illegal Muslim immigrants to Sabah (Adnan, 2013; FMT Staff, 2011, August 28).

According to the general perception shared by most Sabahans I spoke to, the governments retain such an attitude because it seems to have been a successful strategy in Malay-Muslims dominating Sabah politics. Supporting this perception, Barlocco noted that "the strategy seems to have been successful, a fact that might be seen as connected with the defeat of PBS in 1994 and the victory of UMNO in the elections held since then. The voting immigrants have until now been loyal to UMNO, knowing that their benefits would be granted by the ruling party, while …..the number of voting Indonesians is so high in certain areas in the east coast that they filed their candidates and got some elected in the State Assembly" (2014, p. 78-79). The former chief minister Harris Salleh himself acknowledged that the influx of illegal immigrants from the Philipphines and Indonesia were all part of the federal government's plan to change the voting pattern in Sabah to benefit Malay parties (Sadiq, 2005). In fact, the change of ethnic makeup in favour of the Malay-Muslim in a significant way has contributed in dramatic change of percentage of voters based on ethnicity. Table 5.4 shows that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the non-

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[85] As the percentage of Malay-Muslim non-*bumiputra* population declined, the percentage of non-Muslim non-*bumiputra* increased from 11.5% of Sabah population in 1991 to about 14.4% of Sabah population in 2000.

Muslim *bumiputras* were the dominant voters, comprising about 39.6% of the state's voting population but, to their alarm, by 1991 they had fallen to 22.5%. Similarly, Chinese have seen their share decline from 23.0% in 1960 to 11.5% in 1991. Both of these groups were the supporters of non-Muslim led parties such as the PBS, which opposes the systematic granting of citizenship to the illegal immigrants by some local and federal political elites.

In contrast, the population of Malay-Muslim voters who were the supporters of Malay-Muslim led party such UMNO and USNO have risen from 36.4% in 1960 to 61.0% in 1991 following the significant increase of Malay-Muslim non-*bumiputra* or to be more specific the Indonesians and Filipinos voters.

Table 5.4: Percentage of Voters by Ethnic Group in Sabah, 1960-1991

Ethnic Group	Census Year			
	1960	1970	1980	1991
Non-Muslims *bumiputra*	36.9	34.7	-	22.5
Malay-Muslims	36.4	37.3	-	61.0
Malay-Muslim bumiputra	*29.3*	*28.1*	*-*	*31.5*
Malay-Muslim non-bumiputra (Indonesian & Filipino)	*7.1*	*9.2*	*-*	*29.5*
Chinese	23.0	21.4	-	11.5

Source: Adapted from Sadiq (2005, p. 109); Tomiyuki (2000, p. 37).
* The 1980s census collapsed non-Muslim *bumiputra*, Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* and Malay-Muslim non-*bumiputra* which included Indonesians and Filipinos (Regis, 1989, p. 419) into single category of *Pribumi*, thus making it impossible to obtain data for individual ethnic groups.

As explained, this overwhelming increase in the population of Malay-Muslim voters contributed to the failure of PBS to maintain a bigger majority in the state assembly in the 1994 election. PBS won 25 seats while the remaining 23 went to the UMNO-BN, and these results followed a clear racial line: PBS won all 15 Kadazandusun-majority constituencies and UMNO took all 18 Malay-Muslim-majority constituencies (Chin, 1994). The non-Muslim PBS performed worse in 1999 election when the Malay-Muslim BN took 31 from a total of 48 seats with Sabah UMNO wining 24 seats and its coalition partners comprised of SAPP, LDP and PDS 7 seats. The PBS as the non-Muslim *bumiputra* party, however, declined as it took only 17 seats. This allowed the UMNO-led BN in Sabah to form the state government on March 13th, 1999. This marked the end of non-Muslim *bumiputra* political domination, and thus made Sabah's political character to be dominated by Malay-Muslims.

5.5 Increased Feelings of Insecurity among Non-Muslims

The insincerity of Malay-led federal and state government to solve the problem of illegal immigrants has ignited a feeling of insecurity among not only local political leaders but also the non-Muslim communities in general, especially the non-Muslim indigenous groups. They have begun to realize that their economic, social and political rights have been compromised as the federal leaders preferred 'new citizens' over its own bonafide citizens (Sadiq, 2005), in order to make the new citizens their political allies in their effort to implement and later consolidate *Ketuanan Melayu*

(Malay hegemony) and in more recent times *Ketuanan Islam* (Muslim Supremacy)[86], prioritizing the new citizens over the original inhabitants of Sabah.

The federal government was said to prefer the new citizens because they strengthened the Muslim political influence in Sabah (based on selected interviews with key informants). Studies have indicated that the link between cross-border migration and political activities in Sabah has strengthened Muslim political influence in the territory. Sadiq (2005), Mutalib (1999), and Wan Sawaluddin, Ramli and Ahmad (2012), for example, argued that the immigrants had an enormous influence over the politics of Sabah, and more broadly the politics of Malaysia. Most importantly, the immigrants who were granted IC through Project IC admitted that they participated actively in the politics of the country by repeatedly casting their votes in each election from the 1980s. They also admitted that they had never voted for any other political party than the BN and its component parties. According to one 'new citizen', "of course yes, why not. We have participated in the politics of Malaysia. We are the strong supporters of the Barisan National (BN) and we never once voted the political party that opposed the BN. This is how we show our gratitude to the BN government who have given us IC". He even pointed out that the number of their population in Sabah is significant. He said, "I can confirm to you that the number of our people in this state is significant...probably more than 20 percent of the total population of Sabah" (interview with a key respondent on May 1st, 2014 in Lahad Datu).

The presence of a large number of new citizens or *instant citizens* of Malaysia created strong dissatisfaction towards Malay-Muslim leaders at both federal and

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[86] See Chin (2014b, p. 83)

local level and the natives of Sabah began to oppose any Malay-Muslim leaders'
effort to further strengthen the Malay-Muslim domination. The natives' objection
over Malay-Muslim domination of Sabah's politics is shown by their strong protest
against Islamization of the indigenous peoples and until today most of them have
refused to identify themselves as Malay. One interviewee said, "being Muslim does
not necessarily means that we are Malays. In fact, many Islamized Kadazans,
especially those who were forced to convert into Islam during Mustapha and Harris
eras even have never practiced Islam in their life and do not speak Malay fluently"
(interview with key respondent of this study on February 28th, 2014 in Tuaran).

The non-Muslim natives objected to the proposal of Bungsu @ Aziz Jafar, the
Sabah's *Mufti* (an Islamic Scholar who is an interpreter or expounder of Islamic Law,
the *shariah* and *fiqh*). He urged the conversion of natives and the labeling of Sabah's
bumiputra Muslims as Malays. This proposal was announced by Bungsu in his
speech before a thousand people in a symposium titled *Mendepani Agenda Asing*
(Facing the Foreign Agenda, MEGA) held on September 28, 2013[87]. Their objection
captured the sentiments of the natives against further strengthening of Malay-Muslim
domination in Sabah. Their unwillingness to be identified as Malays stood in contrast
to the new citizens who enjoyed the label Malays and supported the Malaysia state as
they benefited from Malaysia's rapid growth. The native objectors made their
objection clear through a press conference held by Darrel Leiking, a Member of
Parliament for Penampang on September 30, 2013. On behalf of the non-Muslim
natives, he said:

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[87] The symposium was jointly organized by Muslim no-government organizations (NGOs) Ikatan
Muslimin Malaysia (Malaysian Muslim Solidarity, ISMA) and Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional
(Malaysian Muslim Youth Organization, PEMBINA) in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

I express regret over the Malaynization proposal mooted by the Sabah Mufti Ustaz Bungsu @ Aziz Jafar at a symposium at Putrajaya recently, as the latter had claimed that many indigenous Muslims in Sabah still refuse to call themselves Malay. My stand is very clear on this matter. Sabah agreed to form Malaysia together with peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Sarawak for security, economic prosperity, development, better education and healthcare and not in any way to become another Malay-majority state in the federation. Let's take ethnic group A that has an equal ratio of Muslims and non-Muslims as an example. Would it make sense if a program to Malayanise the Muslims within ethnic A take place considering their language and hereditary customs are totally different from the Malays in peninsular Malaysia? It is understandable for the mufti to say that the Javanese and Bugis in the peninsula now refer to themselves as Malays since these three ethnic groups share the same language and hereditary customs but I don't think Dusun and Murut ethnics in Sabah do" (Leiking, 2013, September 30).

The indigenous peoples of Sabah since the 1980s have persistently tried to show their support as Malaysian citizens and to gain greater impact in Malaysian politics. This was noticeable between 1960 and 1990 when Donald Stephens and Pairin Kitingan attempted to unite all non-Muslim indigenous people and elevate their social status by using ethnic labels such as Kadazan, Kadazandusun or KadazanDusunMurut. Although the non-Muslim indigenous peoples' political influence has been eroded systematically due to the significant increase in the size of Malay-Muslim population, in particular the legalized Malay Muslim immigrants, political activities in Sabah have becomes more ethnic based and more ethno-religious based.

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5.6 Change in the Relationship between the Non-Muslims and the Malay-Muslims, and between the Indigenous and the New Citizens

The growing ethnic or ethno-religious sentiments in Sabah due to the maneuvering of federal and local Malay-Muslim leaders for political gains significantly affected the relationship between the non-Muslim and the Malay-Muslim, and between the indigenous and the immigrants, better known as the new citizens of Malaysia. Although, Islamization never wielded the same influence as in West Malaysia, these factors changed the way the people of Sabah saw each other. Unlike in the era before independence where the relationship between the non-Muslims and the Malay-Muslims, and the indigenous and the immigrants were amiable, in recent times the relationship has become increasingly one of 'us' versus 'them' as described by Tajfel and Turner (1979).

Although Tamring (2008) and Sintang (2014) suggests that religious tolerance remained high in Sabah, in reality there was growing tension between the non-Muslim and the Malay-Muslim. The predominance of Islam and the emergence of the Malay-Muslim hegemony produced apprehension among the non-Muslims about the future of their religious traditions, especially in the context of their right to continuously practice their faith. There was growing mistrust towards the Malay-Muslims and this led to non-Muslim natives distancing themselves from the Malay-Muslim community. At the time of my fieldwork in early 2014 this distancing from each other had become more noticeable in Sabah, especially in the urban areas. In explaining this, a Kadazandusun female (non-Muslim *bumiputra*) in her forties, at the same time a local political activist stressed that:

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many of us as the traditional inhabitants of Sabah have become increasingly interested in distancing ourselves from the Muslims, especially the Muslim leaders because they have destroyed our trust, confidence and friendship when they decided to support federal leaders' effort to legalize illegal Muslim immigrants and forced some of our elders to profess Islam in the past. Even if they have the ability to correct their wrongdoing by resolving these issues, they refrain to do so (interview with the key informant on January 10th 2014 in Kota Kinabalu).

Apart from the objections to labeling the indigenous *mualaf* (literally 'one who embraces Islam or a Muslim convert') as Malay, there have been incidents of non-Muslims opposing the construction of a mosque in some areas. For instance, when the government proposed the construction of a mosque in Penampang in 2013, the non-Muslims in this area strongly opposed such a plan and as a result it is still on-hold until today (Percy, 2013).

Similarly, the Malay-Muslims of Sabah, especially those who studied in West Malaysian universities and were affected by strong ethno-religious sentiments there (West Malaysia), also distanced themselves from their non-Muslim neighbors as they became super sensitive to all issues pertaining to Islam (Chin, 2013). Among the issues of contention is the use of word *Allah* by the Christians. The use of the word *Allah* especially became a sensitive issue for Malay-Muslims in Sabah following the Malay-led government's decision to ban Christians and non-Muslims from using the word in their publication in 1986. Following the ban, many Muslims in Sabah increasingly saw the non-Muslims who continued to use *Allah* in their publications and in their worship as insulting Islam, even though they had used the title even

before independence. In addition, the Malay-Muslims also distanced themselves from the non-Muslims due to their strong prejudice against the non-Muslim traditions of keeping dogs in their house and eating pork, as both these activities were considered *Haram* ('forbidden' or 'proscribed') and unclean in Islam. This phenomenon is noted by Awang (2003) and Rahman and Hambali (2013) as the result of Muslims' prejudice against other religions and their failure to understand the idea of universality in Islam.

The Muslim's attitude to other religions, in particular Christians, as well as Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* dominance and the institutionalisation of Islamic faith, in turn, led to what Puyok (2014) calls the 'rise of Christian political consciousness. This response began when the Catholic Church filed a suit against the government and won in the High Court. Following the victory, the Christian leaders who were traditionally conservative about Christians' participation in politics[88] began "to encourage their followers to challenge the abuse of power and seek a level playing field in terms of power relations for the good of all" (Puyok, 2014, p. 69: Yapp, 2011). The President of Borneo Evangelical Mission, Jerry Dusing, for example, urged Christians to support political leaders and parties that committed to transforming the country and to ensuring that Malaysians are treated not according to their ethnicity and religion, but their constitutional rights (Puyok, 2014: To, 2013, January 26). In response to this encouragement, the Christians in Sabah and Sarawak became increasingly interested in participating in the political process to change the country's political climate by supporting the opposition parties. Some Christian leaders such as Marunsai Dawai and Baru Bian even contested t the ruling party in

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[88] The Christian leaders in Sabah traditionally teach their followers to respect the rule of law and authority, thus not associating Christian with the political activity.

the 2013 election. The aim of such moves was to topple the ruling party dominated by political leaders who in their view had contravened the promise of religious freedom clearly stated in the Twenty Point Agreement and the subsequent Article 11, Constitution of Malaysia.

In explaining this, a key informant of this study, a Kadazandusun man (non-Muslim *bumiputra*) in his forties stressed that:

> by all means the Christians should participate actively in the political processes of the country if they so desire to challenge the abuse of power. They should join political parties and even contest the elections because such moves are part and parcel of the process towards a fair and equitable treatment in politics and administration of the country (interview with the key informant on January 7th 2014 in Kota Kinabalu).

In a similar tone, another informant of this study who was also a Kadazandusun male (non-Muslim *bumiputra*) in his fifties argued that:

> As a Christian, we should engage in good works, including participating in the political process because of the legitimate and significant role of government. Any decision made by the government certainly has substantial impact on all Christian, thus we should participate in the political process to ensure that the government treats us fairly and equitably (interview with the key informant on January 8th 2014 in Kota Kinabalu).

The informants, therefore, as Christians got involved in political activities. He was among the leaders of a local political party which strongly opposed the abuse of power among the governing politicians. Their intense interest in political

participation that I observed during my stay in Kota Kinabalu was reflected in their carrying out a series of political meetings that focused on Sabahans' rights contained in the Twenty Point Agreement. The meeting attended by the Christians was a significant example of the Christian political consciousness. This meeting also showed how the Christians had become increasingly unhappy with the Muslim-led governments.

The long-term effect of this is the heightening of ethno-religious sentiments in Sabah. To complicate this, the indigenous people of Sabah who are both non-Muslim and *mualaf* have become more hostile towards immigrants who have been given citizenship rights. The indigenous people often see the presence of large numbers of new citizens as a serious threat to their political, economic and social rights as the natives of Sabah. They generally believe the new citizens have reduced their political influence. They find that they have become increasingly unable to choose their representatives, primarily because the political representatives can be determined long before the election due to the existence of large numbers of new citizens who commit themselves to particular political elites (Sadiq, 2009).

Despite the fact that they played important roles in the economic development of Sabah, the new citizens were often seen by the indigenous people as potentially destabilizing Sabah as they posed a grave threat to national security (Tajari & Affendi, 2015; Kassim & Imang, 2007). The Kalabakan incident on December 29th, 1963[89] and Lahad Datu incident on February 11th, 2013[90] were reminders that the

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[89] Kalabakan incident was a combat war between Indonesian and Malaysian armed forces in Tawau of Sabah. The incident was inspired by Sukarno who opposed the formation of Malaysia with Sabah as part of this new federation. The war ended in 1966 following the defeat of Indonesian forces by the combination of armed forces from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia. The war also ended following the elimination of communist influence in Indonesia under the rule of Suharto.

new citizens could be the source of a security crisis in the state. This was because both incidents involved the new citizens of Sabah. While the Kalabakan incident involved the new citizens of Malaysia from Indonesia, the Lahad Datu incident involved the new citizens from Philippines. The indigenous people felt their right as the real natives of Sabah had been eroded (Mutalib, 1999), including their rights to determine the government through elections, their rights to land ownership and employment opportunities in the public sector, and their opportunities to study in public universities and gain financial assistance (Mutalib, 1999; Kitingan, 1997). In fact, it was common for new citizens to admit that they acquired their citizenship through Project IC and after that were able to become actively involved in electoral politics, to work in the public sectors, own land, enroll in public universities and gain scholarships, and to obtain financial assistance to start any business activities. As one of those new citizens, a Bugis man (Muslim) in his forties who was interviewed in this study noted:

> some of us, like my niece, even have become the *orang kanan* (senior official) in the public sector....the directors, administrative officers and teachers. We are now Malaysian citizens, and therefore, like the Kadazandusun, we are also able to own a piece of land for farming, get financial assistance to start a business form the government. Many of our kids who are good in school also have enrolled in public universities and been granted scholarship (interview with a key respondent of this study on June 3rd, 2014 in Sandakan).

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[90] The Lahad Datu incident was a military conflict between Malaysian armed forces and the group called themselves as the 'Royal Security Forces of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo (RSFSSNB)' sent by Jamalul Kiram II, one of the claimants to the throne of Sultanate of Sulu in Lahad Datu of Sabah. Many of the RSFSSNB army are still living in Sabah and have a Malaysian Identification card.

Accordingly, it is not a suprise that the indigenous people refuse to acknowledge the new citizens as part of their society as they strongly feel that their rights as the indigenous or the lawful citizens of Malaysia have been stripped by this group of people. There is a widening of the social gap between them and the new citizens who usually live in different areas. The indigenous people usually live in *kampungs* and proper residential area, but the new citizens often live in squatter settlements, palm oil plantations and remote islands near cities in Sabah. Thus, society in Sabah has become more fragmented.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the changing demographic landscape of Sabah that led to an escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics there. It was a phenomenon that changed the nature of social relationships between the non-Muslims and the Malay-Muslims, and between the indigenous and the new citizens. Specifically, the chapter showed that the federal leaders with the help of some local Muslim leaders helped to change the demography of Sabah from non-Muslim dominated to Malay-Muslim dominated through the legalization of illegal Muslim immigrants and the reclassification of indigenous population through Islamization. These actions contributed to friction in this region. There was awareness among the Malay-Muslims that ethnicity plays a crucial role in the politics of Malaysia as part of its consociational democracy. Additionally, the non-Muslim indigenous people felt their rights as natives had been systematically eroded. Thus, the growing ethno-religious friction now defines the social relationship and politics in Sabah.

Considering that these phenomena are the result of federal and local Muslim political leaders' decision to manipulate cross-border migration and religious difference, it is now clear that the change in demographic character has played a significant role in the development, escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah as a periphery state within the federation of Malaysia. This means federal leaders have expanded ethnic politics to Sabah through the strategy of changing the demographic landscape of Sabah from one dominated by non-Muslims to one dominated by Malay-Muslims based on manipulation of cross-border migration and religious difference.

Chapter 6: **Affirmative Action Policies and Ethnic Politics in Sabah**

6.1 Introduction

The federal leaders' decision in 1971 to implement affirmative action, also known as pro-*bumiputra* policies, in Sabah is significant. The policies have been the country's guiding principle to elevate the socioeconomic status of the *bumiputra* as well as redress the ethnic economic imbalance. From the viewpoint of the government, these policies have achieved their objectives. In West Malaysia, in the years after the introduction of these ethnic based policies new Malay *bumiputra* business groups began to emerge (Tori, 1997). They were the AMDB group (Azman Hashim), the Sapura group (Shamsuddin Abdul Kadir), the Antah Group (Tengku Naquiddin and Tunku Iskandar of Negeri Sembilan royal family), the Melewar group (Tunku Abdullah and Tunku Iskandar), the Mofaz group (Mohamed Fauzy Abdul Hamid), the DRB group (Yahaya Ahmad) and the Taiping group (Suleiman Manan) (Tori, 1997, p. 209). At the same time, the introduction of affirmative action policies resulted in the Chinese political parties losing their influence in the economic policy areas, especially after the resignation of Tun Tan Siew Sin, the President of MCA from his post as a Minister of Finance. He was replaced by Tun Hussein Onn from UMNO in 1974 (Milne, 1976). All these were acknowledged by the Malay-led federal government as a testimony to the success of the affirmative action policies.

Nevertheless, Mason and Omar (2003) are correct that the policies that comprised the New Economic policy (NEP, 1971-1990), the National Education Policy (NEdP,

1971-1990), the National Culture Policy (NCP, 1971-1990), the New Development Policy (NDP, 1991-2000) and the National Vision Policy (NVP, 2001-2020) did not achieve their original objective, but deviated alarmingly from them. In this regard, Mason and Omar noted that "the plans [were] drawn up by technocrats and economists but [were] implemented by politicians. As such, implementation [of the policies] was often subverted by political expediency" (2003, p. 6). Indeed, it appeared that the policies' implementation benefited the politicians, especially the UMNO-BN leaders who dominated the federal government. The strengthening of political patronage in Malaysia's politics is an outcome of this.

 These policies were implemented by the UMNO-BN leaders, in particular the Malay leaders of UMNO, to ensure continuous electoral support of Malay-Muslim *bumiputra*. Granting of government contracts and projects was the mainstay of the affirmative action policies (Ibrahim, 2013). Apart from this, federal leaders also gave out money during elections to the *bumiputra* communities in rural areas that still lagged in terms of socioeconomic advancement compared with the *bumiputra* in the urban areas. The UMNO leaders' tendency to use money politics in their effort to gain electoral victory, however, made them indebted to the Chinese businessmen who provided financial support during elections. For this reason, when the federal leaders returned to power following their success, they were under obligation to return the favor rather than focusing on the general population (Mokhtar, Reen & Singh, 2013). In order to channel the policy benefits federal leaders promoted business partnership between the Chinese businessmen and the *bumiputra* (Gomez, 1999; Gomez & Jomo, 1997; Emsley, 1996). As a result Malay *bumiputra* elites often become shareholders in their business.

As a consequence, the implementation of affirmative action has disadvantaged not only those ethnic groups who are excluded from the policies (the Chinese and the Indians) but also many within the *bumiputra* group. It has caused a disproportionate distribution of wealth among the *bumiputra* in Malaysia as the policies benefited only a few Malay *bumiputra* elites and those with strong political ties with UMNO. The *bumiputra* in the rural areas were disadvantaged as they usually did not have ties with the UMNO elites.

To complicate the matter further, there was growing socioeconomic discrimination[91] against the non-Muslim *bumiputra* in Malaysia. This discrimination was especially blatant in Sabah where the non-Muslim *bumiputra* or to be more specific the Kadazandusun have "not shared in the so-called gains of the other bumiputra under [such policies] and other recent development efforts" (Ongkili, 2003, p. 206). The resulting discrimination in the implementation of affirmative action policies by the federal leaders had socioeconomic ramifications in Sabah.

Accordingly, there was growing disenchantment with their *bumiputra* status among the non-Muslim indigenous groups who were largely concentrated in the rural areas of Sabah. This was particularly pertinent given their growing interest to revert to their traditional communal identity as Kadazandusun because they perceived themselves as no longer benefiting from the privileges analogous to the *bumiputra* policies (Ongkili, 2003). While reverting to their traditional communal identity, the non-Muslim indigenous groups joined forces with the non-indigenous (Chinese) in urging the federal leaders to uphold the past leaders' promise of special position for

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[91] The concept of socioeconomic discrimination here is defined as a discrimination or different standard of treatment and opportunities based on socioeconomic factors such as education and occupation.

all indigenous people of Sabah and to end the socioeconomic discrimination against not only the non-Muslim indigenous but also the non-indigenous citizens. This has characterised the political struggle among the indigenous groups in Sabah bringing ethnic politics to the fore, with an attendant deterioration in ethnic relations.

This chapter focuses on the impact of ethnic politics in Sabah leading to tense relations between the communities. Specifically, it examines how *bumiputra* status accorded to the non-Muslim indigenous in Sabah has ethnicized politics in Sabah.

6.2 The Spread of *Bumiputraism* in Sabah

Before examining the impact of affirmative action policies on ethnic politics in Sabah, it is vital that one understands the history behind the term '*bumiputra*'. Historically, although it was once part of the British Empire like the Federation of Malaya, before 1963 Sabah was not politically associated with the Federation of Malaya. Apart from that, in terms of culture and demography, there was nothing in common between the people of Malaya and Sabah (Chin, 2014a; 2014b). Therefore, in the period prior to the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the introduction of special rights for the Malays as the 'original people' or *bumiputra* was neither relevant nor applicable to Sabah (Ongkili, 2003, p. 199).

However, when the Malayan leaders began to seriously examine the proposed establishment of political union between Malaya and Singapore, the Malayan leaders, especially Tunku as the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, promised that the Malays' special position as the *bumiputra* would be extended to the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak (Salleh, 2000, p. 139; Ibrahim, 2013, p.

301). The reason why Malayan leaders made such a promise was because initially the people of Sabah, in particular the indigenous, strongly opposed the proposed 'Greater Malaysian Federation' (Smith, 1963). As explained earlier, the early indigenous leaders such as G.S. Sundang and Donald Stephens opined that joining Malaysia would not give any advantage to the people of Sabah as they saw the new federation as a new form of colonialism under Malaya. As they refused to be subjected to Malaya's political domination, the early leaders of Sabah expressed their opposition against the proposed federation through the establishment of political parties such as Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Kadazan Bersatu (United Kadazan National Organization, UNKO) and Pertubuhan Pasok Momogun Bersatu (United Pasok Momogun Organization, Pasok Momogun). Together, these political parties expressed anti-Malaya sentiment throughout Sabah and urged the British to grant self-rule to Sabah. Such activities were seen by the Malayan leaders as an obstacle to the formation of Malaysia. To overcome such obstacles, the Malayan leaders promised that the special position enjoyed by the Malays as the *bumiputra* in the Peninsular would be extended to the natives or the indigenous people of Sabah if this Borneo territory would join the proposed new Federation of Malaysia.

The promise of the privileged position for the indigenous people of Sabah (and Sarawak) as the *bumiputra,* regardless of their religion, was enshrined through the constitutional amendment made on September 16th, 1963. The amendment that saw the Federal Constitution of Malaya renamed as the Federal Constitution of Malaysia extended the special position of the Malays as *bumiputra* to the natives of Sabah and Sarawak. In this regard, Article 153 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia specifically stated that the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (the King of Malaysia) is required to safeguard the special position of the Malays and the natives of Sabah and

Sarawak, and the legitimate interests of other communities. The Article 153 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia also required the King of Malaysia to reserve for the Malays and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak certain proportion of: (i) positions in the public service, (ii) scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the federal government, and (iii) any permits or licenses for the operation of any trade or business as required by federal law, subject to the provision of that law (The Commissioner of Law Revision Malaysia, 2010).

Accordingly, Article 153 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia was a sweetener for early political leaders, such as G.S. Sundang, Donald Stephens and Dato Mustapha, and they became convinced joining Malaysia was good for Sabah's development (Ongkili, 2003; Luping, 1985). In other words, the promise of a privileged position for the indigenous people of Sabah like the Malays in Malaya (West Malaysia) underpinned the decision by the former to support the proposed federation. The federal leaders quickly declared that the term *bumiputra* would include all groups of indigenous people, including Muslim and non-Muslim, of Sabah as listed in the Article 161A of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (Mason & Omar, 2003, p. 2).

6.3 The Practical Application of *Bumiputraism* in Sabah

The first affirmative action policy was known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). This policy was formulated by the National Operation Council (NOC) [Malay: Majlis Gerakan Negara (MAGERAN)] in 1970 and thereafter put in practice by the Malay-led federal government between 1971 and 1990 mainly to cater to the

socioeconomic interests of the *bumiputra.* This social group has always been the majority and politically dominant group in this country, but economically disadvantaged compared with the non-*bumiputra* communities. In other words, the NEP was an affirmative action policy formulated to cater to the majority and politically dominant community and thus NEP was different from affirmative action policies in other countries such as in Nigeria, United States of America, Belgium and Lebanon that catered to the minorities who were not only socioeconomically disadvantaged but also politically marginalized.

The fundamental reason for this was the Malaysian government's determination to remediate the existing ethnic tensions as a result of racial riots in 1969 in West Malaysia. In this regard, the Malaysian government firmly believed that ethnic tensions in the country could be resolved by elevating the socioeconomic status of Malays as the dominant group. The National Operation Council on October 9th, 1969 concluded that the May 13 tragedy basically arose from mounting disappointment among the Malays over the unfair socioeconomic system. It was a system that had been promoted by the British during the colonial era (Andaya & Andaya, 2001). Under this socioeconomic system, as explained earlier in the Chapter 2, the Malayan people were segregated according to their occupation by the British to maintain control over Malaya's politics and economic resources. The non-*bumiputra*, especially the Chinese who were concentrated in urban areas, owned a big chunk of the wealth in the country (Mokhtar, Reen & Singh, 2013). While the Chinese were seen as rich and holding the levers of economic power (Chua, 2012), the Malays were seen as afflicted by poverty. The Malay *bumiputra* usually lived in the rural areas and were confined to the agricultural sector with low per capita income. Ironically, the incidence of poverty was even worse among the Indians who were

concentrated in the estates. According to Mokhtar, Reen and Singh, this situation "reflected the differences in the incidence of poverty by race particularly in Peninsular Malaysia. The household monthly income in 1970 in Peninsular Malaysia ranged low as RM276 for the Malays, followed by RM478 for the Indians, RM632 for the Chinese and RM1304 for other groups" (2013, p. 12).

The result of the lower household monthly income of the Malay *bumiputra* compared with the non-*bumiputra* communities was the growing disappointment among the Malay *bumiputra* over their socioeconomic status. This was aggravated by the fact the non-*bumiputra* were determined to get equal socio-political rights as the *bumiputra* consolidated their political position. The Malay *bumiputra* felt that it was the existing socio-economic system that made the non-*bumiputra* emboldened to raise such a demand and in Tunku's word they had won for themselves economic power (The National Operation Council, 1969, p. 64; Khoon, 1969; Slimming, 1969). Furthermore, there were concerns among the Malays that such demands could affect their special privileged position within the country as guaranteed under the Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia (Wilford, 2007; Rock, 2016). Due to such fears, the Malays eventually began to feel threatened in terms of not only politics but also economic activities. As Vorys noted, "the Malays who already felt excluded in the country's economic life, now began to feel a threat in their place" (2015, p. 363). The feeling of being threatened became the flashpoint that triggered the chain reaction of violence in Peninsular Malaysia, particularly when the non-*bumiputra* began to celebrate the success of the Chinese dominated opposition party (DAP) when the ruling Malay-led alliance lost its 2/3 parliamentary majority for the first time since 1957. Thus, NOC concluded that it was the disappointment among the Malay *bumiputra* over the existing socioeconomic system that triggered the racial

riots as they felt that the increase in political influence of the non-*bumiputra* were mainly determined by their economic power.

On this basis the NOC opined that correcting the economic imbalance between the *bumiputra* and the non-*bumiputra* is crucial (Economic Planning Unit, 2004; Aslam & Hassan, 2003; Tori, 1997). The NEP was driven by the government's desire to provide the Malays with a greater share of Malaysia's wealth while the previous system was seen as having created disproportionate patterns of wealth in the country.

The initial two-pronged objectives of the NEP consisted of eradicating poverty in the country irrespective of race and the restructuring of socioeconomic structures of society to eliminate the identification of ethnicity with economic function. The NOC argued that the socio-political justification for these NEP objectives was not only the economic development of the country but also national unity and national security (Jawhar, 2011). As the Malaysian government explained, "national unity is unattainable without greater equity and balance among Malaysia's social and ethnic groups in their participation in the development of the country and in the sharing of the benefits from modernisation of economic growth. National unity cannot be fostered if vast sections of the population remain poor and if sufficient productive employment opportunities are not created for the expanding labor force" (Government of Malaysia, 1971, p. 3-4). This notwithstanding, the basic idea, as Torii argued, "was to lift up the socioeconomic position of the bumiputra, and particularly the Malays at its core, whose economic positions were historically inferior, to bring them abreast of Chinese and other ethnic groups in Malaysia" (1997, p, 213).

To achieve this, the policy called for aggressive efforts to restructure employment, create a *bumiputra* commercial and industrial community, and 'expand the pie' namely by increasing the *bumiputra* share of pie or the corporate equity ownership from under 2% in 1970 to 30% by 1990 without reducing the size of the non-*bumiputra* wealth ownership. Hence, the NOC as the policy maker, introduced *bumiputra* quotas as the key element of the NEP for access to public universities and the awards of scholarships, civil service employment and promotions, and the allocation of government contracts, special trade or business permits and licenses and financial assistance. This meant that the *bumiputra* were clearly favored in socioeconomic sphere under this policy as they were supposed to get easy access to government contracts, financial assistance, places in public tertiary institutions and scholarship.

In order to impose *bumiputra* quotas, the policy makers made it clear that the implementation of NEP required greater economic power and resources in the hand of the state or the Malay-led federal government. This in turn resulted in opportunities for the ruling politicians based in West Malaysia, especially the ruling Malay political elites of UMNO as the backbone of federal government, to influence national development projects for wealth accumulation and to cement political support in the country. As Mokhtar, Reen and Singh argue, "the political elites used this power as a mechanism to get votes from the public. As the government controlled public enterprise to achieve the goal of the NEP, eventually it provided the ruling politicians an opportunity to be involved in development project. Development formulation has, for the most, pragmatically reopened to the ambitions of the ruling political leaders" (2013, p. 13).

Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, the new Prime Minister of Malaysia (1970-1976) and President of UMNO announced on May 27th, 1971 that "the government will take a direct and positive role in setting up commercial and industrial enterprise, to be held in trust for and eventually transferred to the Malay and other indigenous people" (Torii, 1997, p. 218). This marked the start of UMNO leaders' significant influence in the establishment of national development projects such as Food Industries of Malaysia (FIMA), Lembaga Padi dan Beras Negara (National Paddy and Rice Authority, LPN), Urban Development Authority (UDA), Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation (MARDEC), Rubber Industry Smallholders' Development Authority (RISDA) and Petroliam Nasional Berhad (Petronas). The ruling Malay elites also had a hand in the management of public bodies such as the State Economic Development Corporations (SEDCs), Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Peoples' Trust Council, MARA) and Perbadanan Nasional Berhad (National Corporation, Pernas). Thus, the federal government influence over national development projects strengthened.

When Mahathir Mohamed became the Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981, he used public bodies and socioeconomic development projects to create UMNO crony capitalism and make the Malay *bumiputra* beholden to the UMNO for assistances. In the name of policy readjustments, Mahathir took several political steps to facilitate such ambitions. By 1995, he had privatized a total of 374 development projects such as Bakun Hydroelectric Power Project, ports throughout Malaysia, and several coastal highway and light rail transit systems in West Malaysia. These development projects were allocated to mainly Malay *bumiputra* with strong ties to UMNO (Pandian, 2005a). At the same time, he was selective in appointing only Malay *bumiputra* to manage or to become directors or chairmen of public enterprises and

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trust agencies (Gomez, 2005). For this reason, the *rakyat* realised that Mahathir's cronies got the lion's share of NEP gains (Aeria, 2016; Nesadurai, 1998). This continued even when Mahathir's tenure as the Prime Minister ended and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over the reins of power in 2003. The introduction of Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (Malaysia People's Aid 1, BR1M) as financial aid for the poor, the appointment of Mohamad Salleh as the Chairman of National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) who had direct links with UMNO, and the appointment of Najib Razak to succeed Badawi in 2009 further consolidated cronyism and as a result the Malay *bumiputra* continued to feel obligated to UMNO.

All these came at the expenses of the non-Muslim *bumiputra* or the non-Muslim indigenous groups in Sabah who were discriminated against despite being in the 'privileged' group.

6.4 Ethnic Discrimination against the Non-Muslim *Bumiputra* in Sabah

While it is undeniable that implementation of affirmative action policies contributed to the reduction of poverty among the *bumiputra* as a whole (Hatta & Ali, 2013), it also heralded the beginning of ethnic discrimination against the non-Muslim indigenous groups in Sabah. Wealth in the hands of the *bumiputra* increased from only 4% in 1970 to 19.3% in 1990, and later 23.5% in 2011 (Funston, 2001, p. 193), but it came at a price of ethnic discrimination against the non-Muslims. The federal leaders made it clear that the measures associated with achieving NEP objectives largely focused on specific ethnic groups within the *bumiputra* rubric namely the majority ethnic group (Malays). Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* special rights were

expanded in the areas of education, civil service employments, access to government contracts and share of corporate equity. When the NEP privileges were extended to include the indigenous *bumiputras* in Sabah, it came at the expense of eroding the socioeconomic rights of the non-Muslim *bumiputra*. Even when this policy officially ended in 1990 and was replaced by the New Development Policy (NDP, 1991-2000) and the National Vision Policy (NVP, 2001-2020) they all retained these NEP features (Mohamad, 2012; Chin, 2009; Mason & Omar, 2003). Since these later policies continued to prioritize the Malay-Muslims, the position and status of non-Muslim *bumiputra* in Sabah did not change. As Chin suggests, "in reality, most of the benefits were with the Malay community and the East Malaysia indigenous groups were relegated to 'second class' *bumiputra*. In the federal civil service, the largest employer of bumiputra in the country, only 2 percent of its 1.4 million civil servants are from the East Malaysian non-Muslim *bumiputra* community" (2014a, p. 157). He also stated that "in theory, *bumiputra* are favored in all political, economic and social spheres under the infamous New Economic Policies (NEP). They are supposed to get easy access to government jobs, scholarships and places in public universities, special licenses and easy credit. In reality, it would appear that these benefits are only available to the Muslim *bumiputra* (MB) while the majority *bumiputra*, being non-Malay and non-Muslim, are marginalized or get very little benefit from the NEP and other affirmative action policies" (2014c, p. 109).

The former Chief Minister of Sabah, Harris Salleh, even admitted that the implementation of affirmative action policies in Sabah have disadvantaged non-Muslim *bumiputra*. He said: "more than 90 percent of those given the privileges of special allocations are Semenanjung (West Malaysia) Malays. Very few were allocated to Sabah and Sarawak Muslim *bumiputra*; none to non-Muslim

bumiputras" (Opinion, 2010, June 13). It is little wonder Sabah continued to lag in terms of socioeconomic advancement compared with the rest of the states in the Federation of Malaysia. Based on the concept of relative poverty that is closely tied to the distribution of income and the quantity and quality of services enjoyed by households, the rate of poverty in Sabah declined slowly from 58.3% in 1976 to 4.0% in 2014 (see Table 6.1). In contrast, however, the poverty profile in Kelantan (as the state with highest poverty level in 1976 (67.1%) declined to 0.9% in 2014. The superior decline in poverty level was even experienced by Sarawak as its high poverty level in 1976 (56.5%) also declined to 0.9% in 2014. Sabah was the only state with more that 3.9% of poverty in the 2016 census with all other states recording less than 1.0%.

In terms of the distribution of poor households by ethnic groups, Table 6.2 shows that the poor households in Sabah were mainly located in the rural areas, the areas heavily inhabited by the non-Muslim indigenous or the ethnic Kadazandusun. As can be seen in the table, the percentage of poor rural households were high between 1970 (58.6%) and 2012 (12.5%), but declined sharply in 2014 to 7.3%. The percentage of poor households in urban areas was also high between 1970 (25.9%) and 1980 (14.3%), and later declined significantly in 2014 to 1.9%. Despite the continuous decline, it also appeared that poverty incidence in the rural areas of Sabah remained significant compared with the percentage of poor households in urban areas. In 1970 ethnic Kadazandusun were the most affected by poverty (38.7%) compared with other indigenous communities (32.3%) within Sabah. Even though poverty steadily declined in four decades (1970s - 2010s), the percentage of poor households among the Kadazandusun was still high in 2014 (20.0%) compared with the percentage of poor households among other indigenous groups (9.8%).

Table 6.1: Incidence of Poverty by State in Malaysia, 1970-2009 (in percentage)

States	Year					
	1970[92]	1976	1990	1999	2000	2014
Terengganu	68.9	60.3	31.3	14.9	4.0	0.6
Kelantan	76.1	67.3	29.6	18.5	4.8	0.9
Sabah	-	58.3	34.3	20.1	19.7	4.0
Kedah	63.2	61.6	29.9	13.5	5.3	0.3
Sarawak	-	56.6	21.0	6.7	5.3	0.9
Perak	48.6	43.0	19.2	9.5	3.5	0.7
Pahang	43.2	38.9	10.0	5.5	2.1	0.7
Melaka	44.9	32.4	12.4	5.7	0.5	0.1
Negeri Sembilan	44.8	33.0	9.1	2.5	0.7	0.4
Penang	43.7	32.4	8.7	2.7	1.2	0.3
Johore	45.7	29.0	9.8	2.5	1.3	0.0
Selangor	29.2	22.9	7.6	2.0	0.7	0.2
Perlis	73.9	59.8	31.3	13.3	6.0	0.2
Malaysia	49.3	43.9	16.5	7.5	3.8	0.6

Source: Balakrishnan (2016); Hatta & Ali (2013); Mat Zin (2011)

One possible explanation is that the Kadazandusun experienced what Kurus and Tangau (2003) called 'a long historical process of marginalization' from the national socioeconomic development agenda. This was the direct result of federal leaders' tendency to use affirmative action policies to improve the socioeconomic standing of Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* rather than the *bumiputra* as a whole. This would suggest that the affirmative action policies have not fully achieved their objective of uplifting the *bumiputras*' socioeconomic standing in Malaysia.

Ironically, the affirmative action policies have generally been hailed as a success by the federal government. As Mason and Omar explain,

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[92] There was no census on poverty incident in Borneo before 1976.

in the Sixth Malaysian Plan (1991), the Federal Government reported that at the expiry of the policy in 1991, the NEP had succeeded in increasing the *bumiputra*'s share in the corporate equity ownership to 20%. This was some 10% shy of the targeted 30% increase but was certainly a marked improvement from the under 2% in 1971. In other areas, such as education, training and employment, the accomplishment was more impressive. Already by the beginning of the 1980s, there saw the emergence of a sizeable *bumiputra* middle class, professionals, business community and even industries and corporate entrepreneurs (2003, p. 7).

Table 6.2: Poverty Incidence in Sabah by Location and Ethnicity, 1970-2010
          (in percentage)

Selected households characteristics	Year				
	1970	1980	1990	2012	2014
a. Location					
-Urban	25.9	14.3	8.5	5.1	1.9
-Rural	58.6	38.6	33.0	12.5	7.3
b. Ethnicity					
-Kadazandusun	38.7	29.4	27.4	22.8	20.0
-Other Indigenous	32.3	15.7	13.0	12.5	9.8

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2010; 2015); Omar (2010); Kurus & Tangau (2003)

Mason and Omar, however, argued that these successes eluded East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). As a matter of fact, though there is very limited official reporting on this matter, Ongkili (2003) and Chin (2014c) found the NEP and other affirmative action policies indeed disadvantaged the peoples of East Malaysia region, especially

Sabah, primarily affecting non-Muslim *bumiputra*. The Equal Right Trust through its report on patterns of discrimination and inequality in Malaysia published in 2012 confirmed this finding.

The report revealed that discrimination was rampant in the area of education. The implementation of National Education Policy (NEdP) in 1971 became the basis of discrimination in the area of education. It had three main aims, namely "to make Malay the main medium of instruction, to formulate a common curriculum based on the local context and needs of local schools including the English, Chinese and Tamil schools, and to foster patriotism in order to create as Malaysian nation" (Harun, 2010, p. 587). When it was made known in Sabah, the policy came under attack from various quarters (Wahid, 1996). The change in the education system, in particular the content of the school curriculum pertaining to the language was a contentious issue when Malay replaced English as the main language of public school in line with the assertion of Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* special rights over the other ethnic groups in the country. The report observed that "the use of Malay as the language of instruction in state school directly disadvantages those whose first language is not Malay" (Equal Right Trust, 2012, p. 29). Thus, as the Malay was not their first language, the change in the medium of instruction from English to Malay in Sabah's public schools disadvantaged the non-Muslims. Students who were fluent in Kadazandusun and English as their main language of interaction experienced difficulties in their learning when they had to attend Malay language schools (Equal Rights Trust, 2012). As a result, many non-Muslim indigenous students failed to qualify for university places due to their poor academic performance.

The poor academic qualifications also affected the non-Muslim indigenous students'
access to civil service employment. Means observed that over the years, "through the
operation of Malay special rights giving recruitment and promotion preferences to
Malays, the whole structure of government services has become a bastion of Malay
power and the major avenue for Malay professional advancement. This pattern is
particularly profound at the higher administrative and policy-making levels where
Malay dominance comes to reality" (1991, p. 297-298). The Equal Rights Trust
(2012) alluded to this matter of poor representation of non-Muslim indigenous
people in the public service as directly attributable to their poor secondary school
performance. Many non-Muslim indigenous Sabahans also claim to have
experienced discrimination in civil service employment (Equal Right Trust, 2012).
They argue that systematic discrimination against the non-Muslims indigenous
people in Sabah has been ongoing since 1970s. One non-Muslim *bumiputra*
respondent for this study, a male academic (51 years old) at the local university for
example, claimed that,

> the non-Muslim indigenous people who were supposed to lead the state and be
> dominant due to their ethnic majority status have been wilfully left behind and
> sidelined by the federal government in almost every spectrum of opportunity in
> both federal and state level of civil service. In some cases of new recruitment
> into the civil service, certain departments were taking in only the Malay-
> Muslims and no non-Muslims. This phenomenon of discrimination against the
> non-Muslim indigenous escalated during the era when Mustapha was the Chief
> Minister of Sabah. During this era, those who converted to Muslim could easily
> get employment in the civil service and after that get promotions. But, the non-

Muslims did not get the same opportunities (interview with key respondent of this study on February 5th, 2014 in Tuaran).

Thus, ethnic discrimination resulted in the overwhelming 'imbalance' in various civil service departments in Sabah. In the institutions of higher learning such as Universiti Malaysia Sabah (University Malaysia of Sabah, UMS) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (University Technology of MARA, UiTM) in Sabah, this is clearly reflected in the ethnic composition of their executive personnel. Since establishment of the universities top officials have always been from the Malay-Muslim community. The imbalance is not due to the absence of qualified non-Muslim indigenes for such posts, but simply the result of the ruling politicians' preference for Malay-Muslims. Despite the fact that there have been a few prominent non-Muslim indigenes in both universities from the beginning, none has ever been appointed to the senior posts (Rintod, 2013).

There have been cases where long-serving non-Muslim indigenous officers remained in their posts while the new Malay-Muslim recruits without any experience climbed the ladder. One respondent said,

in Yayasan Sabah, the native non-Muslim who serves in the Division II position for more than ten years remains in such position. However, even if they had no experience the new recruited Malay-Muslims could easily become the First Division official. You can even find that the job opportunities meant for locals have for the past few decades been taken by the Malayans. This especially happens in the federal departments such as Police department, education sectors, Immigration and National Registration Departments. This also happens in government-owned companies such as the Federal Land

Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA) and the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) (interview with key respondent of this study, a non-Muslim *bumiputra* male in his sixties on December 13th, 2013 in Kudat).

In 2014 Fernandez (2014, December 1) reported this bias against *Orang Asal* (indigenes) in the civil service as well as the discrimination against non-Muslim indigenous people, and there has been no improvement since then. The report specifically stated the new intake in the civil service was mostly of Muslims because only one non-Muslim indigenous and six Muslim indigenous persons were appointed for the posts. The report did not reveal the distribution of officers by their ethnicity (Teik, 2005, p. 18).

Access to government contracts and shares of corporate equity also favoured the Muslims. Chin (2015, August 27) reports that "during the 1980s and 1990s, when Mahathir Mohamad was Prime Minister, major infrastructure projects were awarded to Malay companies with ties to UMNO. A vast privatization program also multiplied connections between the party and Malay big business, as many public utilities become so-called government linked companies, or GLCs were stifling with representing and promoting *bumiputra* interests". In explaining this, one respondent aged 45 years old (non-Muslim *bumiputra*) who worked as a lawyer at a law firm in Kota Kinabalu and had written a book on Sabah politics stated that,

> the tendency among the federal leaders to award infrastructure projects to the
> Malay companies has continued even after Mahathir stepped down as the prime
> minister. Perhaps this has been the reason why many Kadazandusun converted
> to Islam and later become the recipients of bigger shares of wealth in the

country obtained through the award of government projects by the federal leaders and the local Malay-Muslim leaders (interview with key respondent of this study on April 4th, 2014 in Penampang).

In addition to this, the implementation of National Cultural Policy (NCP) in the pretext of nation-building also further disadvantaged the non-Muslim indigenous. It formulated a national identity based on three main principles: 1) the national culture of Malaysia is based on the culture of indigenous people of the region, 2) other cultural elements which are suitable can be accepted as part of the national culture, and 3) Islam is to be an important element in shaping the national culture. Similar to other affirmative action policies, when it was made known in Sabah, the NCP also led to ethnic discrimination against the non-Muslim indigenes. The non-Muslims in Sabah were exposed and systematically forced to accept Islam as part of their culture. To do so, the government initiated an Islamic missionary movement called '*dakwah*' (Kumar, 2012). While the *dakwah* missionary workers were allocated between 6 and 9 million ringgit by both federal and local governing political leaders such as Mahathir, Mustapha and Harris, the Christian missionary workers were marginalised to intensify the *dakwah* movement in Sabah (Lim, 2008, p. 105-106). As explained in the previous chapter, this led to the conversion of at least 30,219 non-Muslim indigenes to Islam between 1970 and 2004[93] (Kassim, 2009b; Lim, 2008; 2013). This, however, has resulted in non-Muslim indigenes becoming more aware of what they have gained and lost from the implementation of affirmative action policies in Sabah, in particular the NCP (Chin, 2014c; Ibrahim, 2013; Ongkili, 2003).

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[93] See Table 5.3 in Chapter 5

Thus, based on the foregoing, it is undeniable that affirmative action has contributed to *bumiputra* socioeconomic development. In fact, its implementation, as Mokhtar, Reen and Singh (2013) argue, has led the *bumiputra* to venture out of the agricultural sector and paved the way for them to get involved in business and industries. Nevertheless, as noted earlier in this chapter, we also need to accept the fact that the implementation of affirmative action policies in Sabah has not only strengthened the political patronage system in this territory (Shamsul, 1986; Mohamad, 2009), but has disadvantaged the non-Muslim indigenous. Perhaps, this is because the NEP and other affirmative action policies were primarily designed to reform the economy to specifically meet Malay-Muslim expectations, in particular the Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* in West Malaysia for a greater share of the economy (Shome, 2002).

Equally important in explaining the ethnic discrimination against the non-Muslim *bumiputra* is that Iban and other non-Muslim *bumiputra* economic development resulted from the implementation of affirmative action policies in Sarawak. Just like the Kadazandusun in Sabah, the Iban (and Dayaks) as the non-Muslim *bumiputra* in this land had also been marginalised under the affirmative action policies. In explaining this, Jayum (1994) stressed that Ibans (and Dayaks) who were traditionally concentrated in the low income sector or the primary sector (agriculture) continued to dominate this low income sector after the introduction of NEP and other affirmative action policies in 1971. Despite being part of the *bumiputra* category, the Ibans (and Dayaks) continued to be heavily under-represented in the high income sectors, the secondary and tertiary sectors. Table 6.3 shows that the percentage of non-Muslim *bumiputra* in the primary sector, secondary and tertiary sectors was about 64%, 12% and 17% in 1970 respectively. In 1980, the percentage of Ibans in these sectors accounted to about 67% (primary sector), 16% (secondary sector) and

21% (tertiary sector), thus suggesting that the Ibans' share of the labour force in the low income sector actually increased. Nevertheless, the Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* share of the labour force in the low income sector was reduced from 16% in 1970 to about 14% in 1980. The Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* share of the labour force in secondary and tertiary sectors, however, remained high at about 66% in 1970 and 72% in 1980.

Table 6.3: Occupation by Ethnic Group in Sarawak, 1970-1980

Occupational Sector	1970		1980	
	Non-Muslim *Bumiputra*	Malay-Muslim *Bumiputra*	Non-Muslim *Bumiputra*	Malay-Muslim *Bumiputra*
Primary	64%	16%	67%	14%
Secondary	12%	30%	12%	29%
Tertiary	17%	36%	14%	38%

Source: Adapted from Jayum (1994, pp. 205-206).

The under-representation in both secondary and tertiary sectors described the discrimination against the non-Muslim *bumiputra* in Sarawak. The result of the discrimination against them has been the decision among the Iban to identify themselves as 'minority *bumiputra*' in the hope that identifying with this rubric would qualify them for special consideration in the country's affirmative action policies to uplift the lot of the native (Mason & Omar, 2003, p. 7). By using the terms, the second generation Ibans through the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (Sarawak Native People's Party, PBDS) mobilised non-Muslim *bumiputra* nationalism, and the

non-Muslim *bumiputras* in Sarawak secured political power in the *Council Negeri* elections of 1983, 1987 and 1991. This in turn provided the non-Muslim *bumiputra* entrepreneurs the opportunity to gain benefits from the affirmative action policies with the presence of their representatives in the *Council Negeri*, the coordinating body of development activities in the State.

6.5 The *Bumiputra* Question and the Politicization of Communal Rights in Sabah

From the above it is clear that the NEP and other affirmative action policies were created by the NOC or the government policy makers to improve the living standards of the *bumiputra* community in Malaysia, and specifically in Sabah. However, in reality, the *bumiputra* of both Malay-Muslim and non-Muslim indigenous groups do not have equal access to privileges or benefits. The NEP and other affirmative action policies have largely benefited the Malay-Muslim *bumiputra*, and in particular, West Malaysian Malay *bumiputra*. In contrast, non-Muslim *bumiputra* have been generally marginalized from the mainstream socioeconomic development agenda (Kurus & Tangau, 2003) because according to Mohamad (2009), and Mason and Omar (2003) it is deviation from NEP and other affirmative action policies' initial objectives of uplifting *bumiputra* economic standing and redressing ethnic economic imbalance. The policies have become a tool for achieving certain political aims by the UMNO political elites as the backbones of the federal government.

With the marginalization of non-Muslim indigenous groups and the affirmative action policies' success in bringing about socioeconomic development, ethnic political consciousness has strengthened among the people of Sabah, especially among the non-Muslim indigenous people. Ibrahim (2013) highlighted the impact of affirmative action policies in favor of the Malay-Muslim indigenous groups towards ethnic political consciousness among the non-Muslims in this region. He argued that the emphasis on one particular ethnic group, that is the Malay-Muslim, has made the non-Muslim indigenous groups in Sabah question their status as *bumiputra* because in reality they have been largely excluded from these socioeconomic benefits.

As a result, the Kadazandusun community believe they are actually second class or third class *bumiputra* (Chin, 2014c), pseudo-*bumiputra* and *bumiputra-celup*[94]. The local scholar, Ongkili, summed up the unhappiness among the non-Muslim indigenous groups:

> not much can be said about the development of Kadazan *bumiputraism* today, except to note that Kadazandusuns are increasingly less enamored with the *bumiputra* status accorded to them 40 years ago. There is growing disenchantment with the term as Kadazans no longer subscribe to the 'privilege analogue to the Malays' policy. Many in the community treat it with difference, others tend to joke about it, hence the terms third class *bumiputra*, *pseudo-bumiputra* and *bumiputra-celup* (2003, p. 205).

The unhappiness among the non-Muslim indigenous groups also led to suspicion over how the federal and local Malay-Muslim leaders were able to secure Malay-

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[94] *Bumiputra celup* refers to indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak who has been excluded from mainstream national socioeconomic development programs.

Muslim communities' strong political support in each state election held since 1970s. They, as Sadiq (2005) argues, have accused the federal leaders and the local Malay-Muslim leaders of blatantly using socioeconomic development programs/projects in Sabah to assure their contined support,

> The Malay-Muslims are usually the strong political supporters of UMNO-led BN because the government is always prioritizing them and as they are Muslims, there is no way that the Malay leaders at the federal level and the local Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* leaders would have excluded them from the socioeconomic development agenda (interview with a non-Muslim *bumiputra* male who was a government official in his fifties on January 10th, 2014 in Kota Kinabalu).

In fact, there is general unhappiness and disagreement among the non-Muslim *bumiputra* in Sabah with the federal leaders' preference for Malay-Muslim communities over other groups (Ongkili, 2003).

The majority of Malay-Muslims interviewed for this study admitted they were strong supporters of UMNO-BN because the latter had provided them with opportunities to improve their standard of living. They even pointed out how the socioeconomic development programs/projects had benefited them such as the opportunity to work and get promotion in the federal civil service, opportunity to further their study via scholarship, and financial assistance from the UMNO-BN government to start their business. This is consistent with the findings of Mamat, Saat and Ariffin (1985), and Haque (2003) who argued that the perceived affirmative action policies' contribution to the improvement of *bumiputra* socioeconomic conditions as a whole was not entirely true as the policies never ran a true course. Unlike the non-Muslim

indigenous groups, the Malay-Muslim indigenous groups of Sabah still manage to obtain the benefits from the implementation of affirmative action policies while the non-Muslim indigenous groups think that the federal leaders actually never upheld their promise of special rights for *bumiputra* as a whole in Sabah.

Such perceptions, as mentioned earlier, have driven the perceived disadvantaged group to revert to their communal identity of Kadazandusun (Mason & Omar, 2003). The non-Muslim indigenous groups have urged federal leaders to end socioeconomic discrimination against them by reminding these leaders of the importance of upholding the promise of special privilege for all indigenous people of Sabah regardless of their religion, a promise made originally by Tunku and other Malayan leaders in 1963. To do so, the non-Muslim indigenous leaders such as Stephens and Pairin have continuously reminded all non-Muslim indigenous people of the importance of always taking good care of their communal identity as Kadazandusun described by Reid (1997) as an 'endangered identity'. Pairin in his speech when officiating at the Penampang district level *Kaamatan* Festival in 2014 said "we do not want our culture to disappear and if this were to happen then we will lose our identity as a Kadazandusun" (Aziz, 2014, May 21). Apart from that, as Chin (1999b) argued, the non-Muslim leaders, in particular Pairin, urged the non-Muslim indigenous groups to remain united in urging the federal leaders to uphold their promise of non-Muslim indigenous socioeconomic rights and most importantly to end the socioeconomic discrimination against them.

In accordance with such calls the majority of the Kadazandusuns have become relatively united to push for their socioeconomic rights as promised and to end the socioeconomic marginalization against them. Apart from the Kadazandusun, the

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Chinese as a non-Muslim group and the non-Malay group were also supportive of the non-Muslim indigenous (Chin, 1999b). Perhaps the Chinese decided to support the non-Muslim indigenous move to push for their socioeconomic rights as *bumiputra* and end the existing ethnic discrimination because they also felt that the Malay centric policy also discriminated against them. According to Lim and Mun (2009) and Soong (2015) the introduction of affirmative action policies in favor of the *bumiputra*, and specifically the Malay-Muslims, were often described by the Chinese and other non-*bumiputra* communities in Malaysia, and specifically in Sabah as an act of discrimination against them by the federal government. It indicated that the Chinese were also unhappy with such policies. Therefore, it was not a surprise that they strongly supported the non-Muslim indigenous move to challenge the socioeconomic marginalization.

Their unhappiness can be seen in the Kadazandusun declaration in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah on January 19th, 2008: "we condemn the BN government for its failure to bring about positive economic growth, to eradicate poverty and most of all to uplift the living standard and well-being of the Kadazandusun in the rural districts…we condemn the BN government for the divide and rule tactics that split the Kadazandusun community politically" (Administrator, 2008, January 19). Thus ethnic marginalization remained the main agenda of the Kadazandusun political activities, and this, arguably, in the eyes of federal leaders and the local Malay-Muslim indigenous leaders contributed to the strengthening of Kadazandusun political influence and potentially lead to the decline of Malay-Muslim domination in Sabah politics.

On the basis of maintaining the Malay-Muslim political grip over Sabah, the federal leaders with the help of local Malay-Muslim leaders have become more interested in urging the local Muslims to identify themselves not only as *bumiputra* but also as Malay and to strongly support the UMNO-led BN and its components by emphasizing the opportunity to get benefits from the socioeconomic development programs/project by doing so. Masidi Majun, the Sabah UMNO's strongman and an Islamized Kadazandusun, for example, during the UMNO youth and *Puteri* movement's general meeting in Ranau on August 17th, 2014 urged the Kadazandusun to acknowledge that they are part of the larger group of the Malay stock that spread through the Malay isles, Indonesia, Borneo, the Philippines and more. He said, "while the people of the peninsula called themselves Malays, the true sense of Malay people is all of us" (Joseph, 2014, August 20; Daily Express, 2014, August 19). In addition, he also said "I also deny the notion of certain quarters that UMNO is an imported party from the peninsular Malaysia" (Joseph, 2014, August 20; Daily Express, 2014, August 20). Masidi's claim that the Kadazandusun are part of the Malay stock and that UMNO is not an imported party from the peninsular generated anger among many Kadazandusuns who accused Masidi of being unreasonable on this issue.

Despite the opposition from many Kadazandusuns, some Islamized Kadazandusun have been very supportive of Masidi's suggestion as they felt that identifying themselves as such could situate themselves as the recipients of the UMNO-led federal government socioeconomic development programs. According to one Muslim non-*bumiputra* female (63 years old) who acquired citizenship after the 1980s "identifying ourselves as Malays could enable us easily to get benefits from the development programs taking place in Sabah" (interview with a key respondent

of this study on May 1st, 2014 in Lahad Datu). In addition, some Muslims in this territory who traditionally did not belong to the Malay ethnic group such as Sama-Bajau and the Muslim immigrants from Indonesia and the Philippines even described themselves as Malays from the beginning. The local academic Saat (2008) in supporting this claim argued that the Sama-Bajau community in Sabah indeed can identify themselves as Malay because they historically belong to this ethnic group. He thus stressed that the Malaynization of Muslim communities in Sabah has been strongly supported by the Sama-Bajaus.

Furthermore, with the politicization of the strong link between socioeconomic opportunities and ethnicity by the politicians' fragmentation along ethnic lines has been growing in recent years. This is confirmed by the emergence of an Islamic version of *Pesta Kaamatan*.

6.6 *Pesta Kaamatan* Islamic: Manifestation of Growing Disunity in Sabah

The celebration of *Pesta Kaamatan* by a group of indigenous Muslim-converts headed by Nicholas Sylvester Muhammad Abdullah of Hidayah Center Foundation in the district of Papar on May 6th, 2017, can be considered as a manifestation of growing disunity among the people of Sabah. Specifically, it can be considered as an attempt by certain parties to consolidate the division between Muslims and non-Muslims in Sabah. The significance of Islamic *Kaamatan* as a manifestation of growing disunity among the people of Sabah's diverse society lies in the fact that it provided the people in this state with a measure of religious based social categorization.

The celebration of Islamic *Kaamatan* included a feature that had not characterized *Kaamatan* up to this time. It was the first time in which the celebration was connected with religion. As pointed out by Chan (2017), during the celebration of Islamic *Kaamatan*, there were several women dressed in a long, loose robe-like variation of the traditional Kadazandusun black-and-gold costume, but with their arms and heads all covered up with hijab. The traditional way of celebrating *Kaamatan* where the *Bobohizan*[95] started the celebration with worship of the *Bambarazon* (the rice spirit) called *Magavau* ceremony was also replaced with a thanksgiving prayer in Kadazandusun and Arabic by the local Islamic leader. Other essential Islamic elements presented by the organizers in this celebration were the Muslim beauty queen contest and the ethnic Islamic fashion show. The inclusion of these elements which portrayed a growing interest among the people of Sabah to differentiate themselves from each other can be described as the deviation of *Kaamatan* celebration from its character as a unifying force for the multiracial people of Sabah (Barlocco, 2016).

In its traditional form, normally celebrated annually by the ethnic Kadazandusun over the whole of the month of May, *Pesta Kaamatan* or *Kaamatan* (harvest festival) has united all Sabahan who keen to preserve social harmony in the state through the spirit of 'togetherness'. Organizers of *Kaamatan* aim to not only preserve the Kadazandusun culture but also foster social harmony in Sabah through its celebration. The state government has strongly supported *Kaamatan* by providing financial support, government facilities and declared May 30th and 31st as public

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[95] *Bobohizan* refers to a highest priestess, a ritual specialist and a spirit medium in Kadazandusun pagan rites. The primary role of the *Bobohizan* is to appease the rice spirit called the *Bambarazon* during harvest festival (*Kaamatan*).

holidays in Sabah from the time when Sabah was named crown colony of North Borneo in 1960 (Ismail, Mansor & Samsudin, 2015). Since the 1960s, the following political parties, various ethnic associations and government agencies have been co-organizing *Kaamatan*: the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), the United Sabah Dusun Association (USDA), the Sabah Momogun Rungus Association (SAMORA), the Sabah United Party (PBS), the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Organization (UPKO), the United Sabah National Organization (USNO), the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (Sabah People's United Front, BERJAYA), the Chief Minister Office of Sabah, the Sabah Tourism Ministry and the Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation (STPC).

Arguably, *Kaamatan* has helped unify Sabah's diverse communities. The significance of *Kaamatan* as a unifying force has been confirmed by some key political figures in Sabah and in West Malaysia. Musa Aman, Chief Minister of Sabah, for example, in his speech during the launch of a month-long *Kaamatan* celebration on May 1st, 2017 in Tambunan said, "*Kaamatan* helps to unify Sabah's diverse communities by bringing people together and promoting cultural understanding" (Bernama, 2017, May 1; The Star, 2017, May 2). His views were echoed by the West Malaysia based 1Malaysia Foundation trustee Lee Lam Thye: "the festival of *Kaamatan* should be a unifying force in bringing people of different races together for a common goal and for the country's success. We must remember that the process of establishing a united Malaysian nation is a continuous one and what has been achieved so far must be nurtured and reinforced. Unity is a priceless gift, a symbol of our humanity and the foundation upon which we build relationship, families, communities and nation" (Bernama, 2017, May 30: Nation, 2017, May 31). This view is bolstered by the presence of large numbers of people from all ethnic

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groups who are keen to separate culture from religion (Bernama, 2017, June 1; Hashim, 2017). The people enjoy *Unduk Ngadau* (beauty pageant), *Sugandoi Kaamatan* (*Kaamatan* singing contest), *Sumazau* dance (Kadazandusun traditional dance), *moginum kinomol* (drinking rice wine), *magavau* (a ritual to invite *Bambaazon*[96] to the festival and is conducted only by the *Bobohizan*[97]) and various traditional activities such as *mipulos* (arm wrestling) and *mogunatip* (bamboo dance) during *Kaamatan* festival.

However, the celebration of the Islamic *Kaamatan* poses a threat to this. The event has the support of Sabah Tourism Minister Masidi Manjun who is also the UMNO division head for Ranau constituency, the Sabah Islamic Religious Affair Department and the Islamic Development Department of Sabah (Davidson, 2017). The celebration of Islamic *Kaamatan* gained momentum among Muslim communities as indicated by the emergence of a proposed schedule of similar celebrations throughout Sabah. These programs were scheduled to be held in several more districts statewide, in Keningau on May 11, followed by Ranau on May 12, Kudat on May 16 and culminating in a two-day finale in Kundasang on May 20. The Sabah deputy chief minister as well as the Kadazandusun *Huguan Siou*[98] Pairin Kitingan commented that "either the organizers are completely ignorant of the noble intentions of *Kaamatan,* or they have a deliberate agenda" (Ariffin, 2017, May 21).

The Islamic *Kaamatan* can be seen as part of the effort to increase the size of the Muslim population through the Islamization of traditional festivals. The organizers confessed that their principal objective was to develop Islam in Sabah, in line with

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[96] *Bambaazon* or *Bambarayon* is a Kadazandusun word for rice soul (Ooi, 2009, pp. 253-254).
[97] *Bobohizan* or *Bobolian* is a Kadazandusun word that refers to a high priestess or a spirit medium in Kadazandusun pagan rites (Ooi, 2009, p. 37).
[98] *Huguan Siou* is a Kadazandusun word which means paramount leader.

the ongoing efforts to Islamize the indigenous population. Their ultimate aim is to change the demographic make-up of Sabah and its political character from non-Muslim dominated to one which is Malay-Muslim dominated. This development is gradually destroying the social harmony between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Despite gaining party support, the celebration of the Islamic *Kaamatan* has come under strong criticism from the people of Sabah, especially the non-Muslims who consider the festival as an attempt to widen the division between the Muslims and the non-Muslims (Chan, 2017). They have even urged the organizers to not destroy the *Kaamatan* as it is *Orang Asal* (the Malay term for original people) way of fostering social harmony in Sabah and tearing down any serious racial divide in the larger interest of improving ethnic relations in the country. Joeman, who is also the Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (the Indigenous Peoples Network of Malaysia, JOAS) secretariat director, for example, said "please do not rape our culture, our adat[99] and the essence of being *Orang Asal* and try to make it some sorry state of celebration your way" (Chan, 2017, May 8). The organizers later apologized for renaming the festival by adding the word 'Islamic'.

However, the latest development has done little to change the prevailing view that the *Kaamatan* celebration held by this group of indigenous Muslim-converts is non-inclusive (Ariffin, 2017). The non-inclusive nature of their *Kaamatan* thus showcases the growing disunity between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Sabah, even when they come from the same cultural background. It also showcases the fact that beyond its connection with the Kadazandusuns' traditional

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[99] *Adat* is a Malay word of local customary practices and tradition.

culture, *Kaamatan* symbolises the continuity of struggle between the governing politicians and ethnic minorities, the Kadazandusun, over the role it should play within the Malaysian politics.

Historically, the celebration of first Kaamatan in 1960, as Loh (1992) argued, marked the important turning point in the memory of the Kadazandusuns. It provided the Kadazandusuns with a sense of being in control of Sabah and of their own destiny following the colonial decision to fulfill the Kadazandusuns' demand of recognising the *Kaamatan* as the Kadazandusuns' harvest festival and its proclamation as a public holiday. In addition, it was also the first time in which the *Kaamatan* was being celebrated in the same venue and time rather than taking place in different localities after each single harvesting of paddy (Barlocco, 2016; Loh, 1992). Since then, in particular after the formation of Malaysia, the celebration of *Kaamatan* was often associated with the Kadazandusuns' determination or victory in acquiring state political power through election. Such a development, however, led to the growing interest among some governing Muslim politicians such as Datu Mustapha and Harris Salleh to systematically manipulate the festival in their effort to weaken the Kadazandusuns' political influence.

In 1976, for example, the *Kaamatan* was celebrated after the electoral defeat of Chief Minister Tun Mustapha, initiator of Kadazandusun conversion to Islam campaign (Barlocco, 2016). However, as explained Chapter 4, in 1982 *Kaamatan* celebrations were renamed *Pesta Rakyat* (People's Festival) by the Chief Minister Harris Salleh as a way of diluting Kadazandusun's political influence through the reclassification of all indigenous people in Sabah as *Pribumi* (Barlocco, 2016). The 1982 Kaamatan was also celebrated with a ceremony of conversion of some Kadazandusun to Islam,

resulting in the elimination of certain rituals carried out by the *Bobohizan* and the shortening of the celebration from two to one day. This suggests that the *Pesta Kaamatan* celebration plays important role in the politicization of ethnic identity in Sabah. Thus, it was not a surprise when the celebration of Islamic *Kaamatan* was strongly supported as well as opposed by some politicians in this state.

6.7 Conclusion

Affirmative action policies meant to uplift *bumiputra* socioeconomic standing as a whole had unintended consequences in the escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah. The implementation of affirmative action policies in favor of the Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* has highlighted ethnic differences in Sabah. Originally conceptualized and introduced in West Malaysia, when these policies were introduced in Sabah, the indigenous people began to feel a stark difference in the treatment of respective communities. This not only strengthened ethnic differences, but most importantly made them aware of the importance of ethnicity in politics. This in turn led to the growing importance of ethnic politics in Sabah. Therefore, it must be emphasized that the federal leaders' decision to introduce the Malay-Muslim centric affirmative action policies in Sabah with a focus on indigenous *bumiputra* contributed to the development, escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah. The non-Muslim or the non-Malay *bumiputra* and other non-Muslim communities (also defined as non-*bumiputra* in the Malaysian constitution) became critical of the federal leaders' treatment of them as the Malaysian citizens, and specifically as *bumiputra*.

The prime beneficiaries of affirmative action were the Malay-Muslim indigenous group although the indigenous and the *bumiputra* people as a whole did benefit from the policies as an instrument of federal political power. This led to growing ethnic friction not only in the political but also the social arena of Sabah society. The growing unhappiness among the non-Muslim indigenous and other non-Muslim communities towards such policies was the source of ethnic tensions not only between the Malay-Muslim indigenous and non-Muslim indigenous groups, but also between the Malay-Muslim indigenous, the non-Muslim indigenous and the non-indigenous or the non-*bumiputra* groups. The tensions were high especially between the Malay-Muslim indigenous and the non-Malay indigenous groups even though it was not as heightened as in West Malaysia. Yusoff (1999; 2001; 2002), Chin (1994; 2014a; 2014b) and Sadiq (2005; 2009) found tensions most obvious between the Malay-Muslim indigenous and the non-Muslim indigenous groups in Sabah's socio-political development.

This indicates that the implementation of any policies with principal aims of uplifting the citizens' socioeconomic standing in favor of a specific ethnic group can create a basis for the development, escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in a periphery originally not plagued by ethnic politics. It also suggests that any socioeconomic development agenda should exclude ethnic discrimination because it provokes unhappiness among the non-privileged group leading to rising tensions between the beneficiaries and the marginalized groups. Thus, the end result of overlooking this issue is the strengthening of social segregation along ethnic lines which may prove to be very difficult to resolve. In Rwanda, when the people of two major ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, began to link their socioeconomic advancement opportunities with ethnicity they began to distance themselves with growing tensions between both

ethnic groups. The strong link between socioeconomic improvement opportunities and ethnicity led to the worsening of ethnic relations. This is especially true when the politicians from different ethnic groups mobilize political support by sowing ethnic hatred to consolidate their economic and political interests. As Alesna and La Ferrara (2005) argue, politicians are often inclined to use ethnic hatred to mobilize political support leading to widening of communal disparities. Given that affirmative action has been used as a tool by the federal government to discriminate one group against the other, I argue that in order to prevent political elites from using ethnic hatred for political mobilization the pro-*bumiputra,* or to be more specific Malay-centric affirmative action, must end.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Although ethnic politics has declined in many countries globally[100] following the efforts by their elites to prevent their country from sinking to political decay (Newman, 1991; Bai, 2010), it has instead become consolidated in some plural societies (Lijphat, 1969) like Malaysia. This has been a direct result of ruling politicians' reliance on ethnic politics to secure power. Recent developments in Malaysia shows that ethnic politics has been used as a political strategy by the ruling regime to secure power, and has led to the consolidation of ethnic identity in the country. In the process, the federal politicians based in West Malaysia (federal leaders) have taken measures to expand ethnic politics in the periphery state of Sabah which traditionally was not plagued by such a phenomenon. The federal leaders did this to influence voting patterns in Sabah. Muslim *bumiputra* who after 1980 made up the majority in Sabah now support the Malay-led or UMNO-led BN coalition and have refused to support non-ethnic based and/or non-Malay dominated political parties such as the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party, PKR) and Parti Tindakan Demokratik (Democratic Action Party, DAP) as demonstrated in the 13th Malaysia's General Election (GE13) (Hazis, 2015; Saravanamuthu, 2016). This has led to the growing ethnic conflict in Sabah.

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[100] Most societies increasingly view ethnic division as a root cause of conflict, and which would lead to political decay characterized by political chaos and disorder. Some countries have even banned ethnic parties. For example, since 1990 ethnic and other identity-based parties has been banned in sub-Saharan Africa such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Libya followed this footstep and banned political parties based on ethnicity.

This study examines the spread of ethnic politics in Sabah as part of the Federation of Malaysia. It focuses on the governing politicians' role in the development and the escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah since the late colonial era especially after Tunku announced his aspiration for a merger between Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak in 1961. This study also investigates strategies used by the ruling regime and specifically the ruling politicians to bring ethnicity to the fore in Sabah politics. This study began with the premise that the consociational democracy which underpinned the formation of Malaysia played an important role in the emergence of politicians who aligned themselves with ethnic politics because it made the ethnic divide crucial in Malaysian politics.

7.2 Ethnic Politics and the Governing Politicians

The aim of this thesis is to unravel why and how the ruling federal political elites expanded ethnic politics to the periphery namely Sabah. By throwing light on this issue, this thesis contributes to knowledge and debates surrounding the nature of ethnic politics. It also focuses on how ethnic politics was successfully used by the federal elites to create political division in the periphery and the reason why a traditionally 'non-ethnic' state like Sabah could succumb to the manipulation of ethnicity to serve the ends of the ruling regime. Therefore, this thesis proposes the use of historical and ethnographic understandings for an in-depth analysis of the process through which the strong relationship between ethnic politics and governing politicians has come into being in Malaysia, and specifically in Sabah. To do so, this thesis has employed an ethnohistorical approach to allow the use of history and ethnography concurrently in tracing the evolution of ethnic politics in

West Malaysia and to show how this impacted on society in Sabah bringing ethnic identification to the fore when traditionally it was not the case.

This thesis demonstrates that ethnicity was instrumental to achieve the objective of the federal leaders where it served as a readily available tool to 'divide and rule' Sabah and hence preserve the Malay-led coalition government. Consociationalism, a form of democracy that seeks to regulate the sharing of power in a state that comprises diverse groups (distinct ethnic, religious, political, national and linguistics groups) underpinned these efforts. It is well known that ethnicity can unify and separate people within any country. Consociational democracy has been a feature of government in West Malaysia since 1957 based on its plural character. There were three main ethnic groups namely Malays, Chinese and Indian, or two groups, namely Malay and non-Malay (Chinese and Indian). Although they coexisted, there was not much inter-mingling between the 'races' as a result of the divide and rule policy of the British. Thus, West Malaysia was characterized by strong ethnicity in the competition for political power among political elites[101]. This, together with the idea of *Ketuanan Melayu* was instrumental in mobilizing Malay political support against other ethnic groups to concentrate power in the hands of a few Malay political elites.

Due to the intense competition between Malays and non-Malays, consociational democracy made political collaboration between ethnic groups essential. The political collaboration between Malays and non-Malays through the establishment of

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[101] To date, appeared there is no solid evidence that ethnicity will cease to play a significant role in West Malaysia's politics. This is attested by the emergence new ethnic based organization as key supporters of BN such as Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa (Mighty Native Organisation, PERKASA) and Gerakan Merah (Red Shirt Movement) and Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (Malaysia Malay Network, JMM). The leaders of these organizations became more focused on inciting hatred among members towards other ethnic groups in their desire for political power.

the Alliance Party in 1952 was evidence of the sharing of power between political elites of these ethnic groups. The principal aim of power sharing at the elite level was to remedy the intense competition for political power between these political elites. Despite such an aim, however, it appeared that this political collaboration never successfully remediated the strained relationships between the Malays and the non-Malays (Hirchman, 1986). These strained relations eventually led to the outbreak of ethnic violence on May 13th, 1969.

Application of consociational democracy as a basis for state formation also led to uneasy relations between the Malays and the non-Malays sparking confrontations every now and then. Specifically, the application of the consociational principle over ordinary majority rule required political elites of the ethnic majority to dominate the country's politics and was the key factor in ensuring tense ethnic relations between both ethnic groups. This underlined the importance of *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) and in recent times *Ketuanan Islam* (Muslim supremacy) to secure the political interests of the majority 'race' and in particular political elites of Malay within UMNO. The concept of *Ketuanan Melayu* was based on the view that Malays were the early inhabitants of Malaya, even if the original population in the land were the *Orang Asli*. The Malay leaders of UMNO continue to spread the belief that the masses need UMNO to maintain their status as the dominant group and they must resist any efforts to undermine their perceived supremacy. Thus, UMNO is touted as the only protector of Malay interests.

The UMNO leaders have stressed that *Ketuanan Melayu* should always be the basis for the Malaysian nation-state. However, other politicians, in particular politicians of non-Malay communities, have seen *Ketuanan Melayu* as the Malay elites' ploy to

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subordinate other ethnic groups and promote a Malay-based hegemony. This has sparked strong opposition among the non-Malays and the rise of ethnonationalist sentiments in the country. The rejection of *Ketuanan Melayu* was viewed by the Malay governing political elites from UMNO as a threat to the preservation of Malay-led political system and their political survival, especially when they began to perceive that the non-Malay or non-*bumiputra* population would increase in size due to migration, high fertility and the potential inclusion of the Chinese-majority Singapore in the Federation, especially as the Chinese since the beginning have strongly opposed such a political system.

Thus the Malay political elites threw their support behind a merger between Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak in 1961 to form the federation of Malaysia in 1963, principally to maintain a Malay-led political system that ensured their political domination via their numerical advantage. However, fears of losing power due to growing sentiments of the anti-ethnic based political system and the tendency among political elites in Sabah to oppose the Malay-led federal government made the federal leaders more inclined to expand ethnic politics to Sabah. In order to secure their position that could only be achieved via a political framework based on Malay domination, federal leaders implemented several strategies to expand ethnic politics to Sabah. Among them, they introduced West Malaysia's political system that focused on exploiting ethno-religious differences, restructuring the demographic character of Sabah by legalization of immigrants from neighboring countries, the Islamization of indigenous peoples, and implementing affirmative action policies that were primarily designed to reform the economy to specifically meet Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* expectations. Together, these strategies contributed to the development, escalation and diffusion of ethnic politics in Sabah as local elites adopted the divide

and rule policy along ethnic lines as in West Malaysia as their tool for political mobilization. This ultimately resulted in the growing tense relations between those of different ethno-religious background and pitted Muslims against the non-Muslims.

Thus contrary to Lijphat (1968; 1969; 2003), and McGarry and O'Leary's (1995; 2016) view that consociational democracy can prevent the escalation of ethnic conflict in a plural society, Sabah witnessed the strengthening of ethno-religious sentiments while West Malaysia experienced ethnic violence in 1969. The findings of this thesis suggest that Malaysia's peculiar consociational democracy consolidated ethnic political tensions due to the application of the majority rule principal which accorded political domination through the allocation of the post of Prime Minister and most of the ministries to the Malay political elites as they represented the ethnic group that constituted the majority of the country's population. Additionally, this thesis shows ethnic hostilities and consociational democracy are two sides of the same coin as consociationalism can lead to tense relations between different ethnic groups who live in the same political unit.

It is clear from this thesis that ethnicity can be manipulated to give rise to ethnic politics. An examination of Malaysia's politics shows that ruling political elites are capable of expanding ethnic politics to peripheral regions such as Sabah that were traditionally not plagued by ethnic differences by embarking on various strategies to advance their own political interests. Ethnicity as the basis of ethnic politics can be constructed and reconstructed by political actors allowing it to be expanded to the periphery in Sabah. Ruling political elites at the federal level played a significant role in transforming Sabah into a state plagued by ethnic and religious differences. This effectively violated the spirit of federation and compromised Sabah's political

autonomy within the federation due to their direct involvement in the administration and formation of Sabah government, but most importantly the federal political elites through the involvement of local political elites extended the ideology of *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) or *Ketuanan Islam* (Muslim supremacy) in Sabah (Chin, 2014b). As a result, this influenced Sabah's political development leading to clear ethnic boundaries between the Muslims and non-Muslims.

However, it has to be emphasized that the development of ethnic politics and its escalation in the periphery would not have been possible without the active participation of the locals, especially the politicians. In fact, exporting West Malaysia's model of government based on ethnic division, reconstruction of demographic structure and implementation of affirmative action policies that focused on Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* population initially appeared to have been less effective in Sabah as the *rakyat* (people) of Sabah tended to separate ethnicity from political activities. However, over time, local Malay-Muslim politicians' strong support of West Malaysia based ethnic parties in contrast to their non-Muslim counterparts' determination to oppose ethnic discrimination and inequality did have an impact in terms of dividing the polity along ethnic lines. This is because the local politicians of both sides were concerned about sustaining their political career as well as advancing their economic gains. Malay-Muslim political leaders in Sabah persuaded the *rakyat* through various economic and social incentives and strategies to identify themselves as Malays and support Muslim-led political parties. In contrast, the local non-Muslim political leaders perceived such efforts as a threat to their political career, and in order to remain competitive in both the local and national political arena, persuaded the *rakyat* of the real dangers of the imposition of dominant culture on their own existence. This resulted in the revitalization of non-Muslims or to be more specific of

the Kadazandusun cultural and political movement to project Kadazandusun identity. The main objective of this movement is to promote Kadazandusun culture, highlighting their status as original inhabitants of Sabah and most importantly to express their strong opposition against the federal and local Malay-Muslim political leaders' effort to promote Malaynization in Sabah for their own political benefits.

In sum, the expansion of ethnic politics that led to growing ethnic conflicts in Sabah can be regarded as the product of not only governing politicians at the national level effort to ensure the maintenance of a Malay-led coalition government for their own political benefits, but also an outcome of political collaboration between federal and local political elites, and political competition between local politicians. The public, on the other hand, seems to have allowed this to happen due to their acceptance of consociational democracy. Such findings, therefore, suggest that in an analysis of expanding ethnic politics in the periphery we must not only focuses on the role played by the governing federal politicians for their political interests and to maintain their political hegemony, but also need to take into account the response of both local politicians and the masses toward the federal politicians' efforts to legitimize and maintain their political hegemony. In fact, as the findings of this thesis shows, the resistance of local politicians and *rakyat* 'people' against the ruling UMNO-BN elite hegemony and the peculiar nature of consociational democracy led to growing tensions between the majority and minority and played a significant role in the expansion of ethnic politics in Sabah. This is especially true when the vast majority of people in Sabah began to understand that ethnicity can be used as one of the most politically effective forms of resistance against the UMNO-BN regime as well as in the maintenance of political elites' hegemony in the politics of modern plural society (Boulanger, 2009).

Another striking finding of the thesis is that ethnic politics in Malaysia is largely influenced by one particular ethnic group, that is the Malays. It is clear the ruling Malay elites used ethnicity to mobilize political support as key players of ethnic politics premised on *Ketuanan Melayu*. Scholars such as Koon (1996), Guan (2002, 2010), Lim (2008), Kesavapany, Mani and Ramasamy (2008) and Berger (2010) have suggested that it is the Malay determination to safeguard their perceived ethnic hegemony that has prevented the growth of an inclusive multicultural Malaysian society, and strengthened ethnic politics in Malaysia, and specifically in Sabah. This has led to Malay identity creation, and the growing determination among the Malays to safeguard their perceived ethnic group superiority status via the expansion of ethnic politics based on *Ketuanan Melayu* in Sabah. By understanding how ethnic politics has operated historically in Malaysia and specifically in Sabah, we are now in a better position to appreciate its contribution to ethnic conflict.

Furthermore, by viewing ethnic politics as an expandable phenomenon, this thesis has demonstrated how the majority is made in the periphery state. The thesis has highlighted the fact that the ethnic majority in Sabah is exactly "made, not born" (Gladney, 1998, p. 1) and that the majority is made under specific historical, political and social circumstances. It is thus clear that it was not only the politicians' determination to maintain power but also the social and historic contours of the Malaysian political system which largely focuses on ethnic make up that allowed the formation of the ethnic majority in the periphery state of Sabah. I contend that the Muslim *bumiputra* cannot emerge from a minority to a majority without these factors. The making of an ethnic majority, however, does not mean that ethnic politics in Sabah is necessarily advanced in a progressive sense as compared to West Malaysia's politics. As explained, recent evidence suggests that despite the growing

importance of ethnicity in Sabah's politics, West Malaysia's politics remains highly influenced by ethnicity. Much of this development is determined by the key characteristics of society in both territories, whether the *rakyat* and the politicians there remain committed to ethnic based politics concentrating on safeguarding the interests of one group within the society or become more interested in speaking up for and protecting all Malaysians.

7.3 Implications of the Thesis

The implications of this thesis are three-fold. First, at the theoretical level, the thesis demonstrates that ethnic politics in countries characterised by plural society and consociationalism can be expanded to other regions through federation and the various strategies of the governing politicians for their political survival. The findings of this thesis show that the governing politicians in West Malaysia have successfully expanded ethnic politics to Sabah through the formation of the Malaysian federation, the implementation of West Malaysia's model of government based on the ethnic divide, the manipulation of Islam and migration from neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Philippine, and the implementation of an affirmative action policy designed to protect the interest of Malay-Muslim *bumiputra* communities rather than *bumiputra* communities as a whole. The result of such efforts has been the growing ethnic conflict in Sabah. The thesis also shows that such efforts have been the result of consociationalism that accorded power to the political elites from the majority ethnic group but not to the politicians from non-majority ethnic groups.

Apart from that, the findings of this thesis also demonstrated the importance of the relationship between politicians and the society in expanding ethnic politics to the periphery. This suggests that any analysis focused on governing politicians and consociationalism is inadequate. What is required, therefore, is to take into account the role of not only ruling political elites and consociationalism but also the relationship between politicians and society.

Second, from a policy perspective, it highlights the importance of terminating ethnic based consociational democracy and ethnic based policies to prevent the country from political collapse. The democratic system should not be based on ethnicity but on equitable development regardless of ethnicity. The thesis suggests that the termination of the Malay-led coalition government is vital as it undermines government commitment to the public because all politicians are inclined to manipulate ethnicity for political mobilization. This can be achieved through the introduction of a more inclusive and transparent democratic system and national development policies. The findings of this thesis show that before 1963 ethnic relations problems were absent in Sabah, principally because the state's politics and policies were not ethnic based but rather the focus of the government was on improving and uplifting the socioeconomic conditions of all its people. The application of ethnic based consociational democracy in Sabah following the creation of the Malaysian federation in 1963 and the implementation of Malay-centric policies in 1971, however, provoked growing awareness among the people of Sabah of the importance of ethnicity which led to conflict between the Malay-Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The non-Muslim communities increasingly felt marginalized and disappointed in the racially and religiously biased democratic system and policies. When disappointment soared, they mounted on opposition

against the ruling political elites at both federal and local level. Thus, ethnic conflict between non-Muslim and Malay-Muslim was inevitable as Malay-Muslim political leaders went all out to ensure sustained Muslim support by manipulating ethno-religious sentiments.

While the governing politicians have been able to legitimize their power through the implementation of ethnic based policies and ethnic based consociational democracy system, they now must appreciate the importance of making sure that the country will not experience political collapse. In order to prevent the country from descending into chaos, the Malaysian government must set in motion the abolition of the ethnic based political system because it has become an instrument of deceit by politicians. The consociational democracy and policies that prioritized Malay-Muslims have failed to assuage the feelings of alienation of the minority as cries of marginalization continues. Such policies have proven overtime to be counter-productive because they deny the nation of competent leadership as the leaders are a product of ethnic bias and not of competence.

Therefore, this thesis emphasizes the importance of different ethnic groups uniting behind a common cause. In this regard, the findings of this thesis shows that if Malaysia is to escape the problem posed by ethnic politics (ethnic conflict), there is a need for attitudinal and mental change on the part of politicians, especially the governing politicians from all ethnic groups. There should be a realization among the people that politicians' only interest is to manipulate ethnicity to further their ends. Lessons can be learnt from developed countries such Australia, Switzerland, Sweden and Russia, which are multi-ethnic countries that have risen to world reckoning politically and economically as their politicians focused more on socioeconomic

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development without any ethnic influence. Thus, the ruling regime in Malaysia must place national interest above personal and ethnic interests. The time has come for Malaysians as a whole to rise above all forms of ethnic distrust and hatred, especially as the socioeconomic conditions of the country continue to worsen (Ries, 2017; Jasin, 2016; Menon, 2014; Mariapun, Hairi & Ng, 2016). In this respect, I agree with Ade-Ibijola (2016) that no nation can attain progress when people are suspicious of one another fuelled by historical resentment.

Finally, the thesis indicates that ethnic politics leading to ethnic conflicts can be maintained by both federal and local political elites. Both federal political leaders based in West Malaysia and political elites in Sabah as a part of Malaysian federation have consolidated ethnic politics to maintain power and to make their presence more calculable in the country's political arena respectively. Such moves facilitate the maintenance of ethnic politics and after that consolidate ethnic conflicts in Malaysia, and specifically in Sabah because their move to use ethnic politics for their own interests through the 'us' versus 'them' narrative. Thus, federal and state political elites' effort to secure power through their strategies explains why ethnic politics is still a feature of Malaysian politics.

7.4 Agenda for Further Research

Overall, the study has made a number of essential and unique contributions to the theorization of ethnic politics in modern plural societies, particularly with regard to the survival and consolidation of ethnic politics in some countries but its decline in others. It shows how the ruling elites in the center (federal government of Kuala

Lumpur, in this case) by either directly or indirectly expanding ethnic politics in the periphery influence the way that people express their social identification and contribute to growing tense ethnic relations in this state. Regardless, there is potential for further research in this area. One further research is a more thorough and systematic examination of the generational differences of what Hashmi and Majeed (2015) calls internal instability that occurs as a result of ethnic political activities between the core and periphery, especially with regard to where both may be heading in the future. The present study has not specifically focused distinctions between the core and periphery in regard to these generational differences. There is a tendency among social scientists to concentrate on the core, rather than all states within the country. This is especially true as far as Malaysia, and specifically Sabah, is concerned. As Lim observes, "Sabah and Sarawak are often underexplored or virtually ignored in mainstream analysis of the country's political system…… primarily because they do not conform to the conventional perspectives of ethnic politics found in West Malaysia" (2008, pp. 1-2). Therefore, it is suggested that this topic is studied to show differences between the core and the periphery states in terms of their internal instability.

It is also imperative to examine the role of external powers in perpetuating ethnic politics. Investigation on this topic is also crucial as over the past few years developing countries have received support from economic conglomerates in developed countries for perpetuating ethnic politics in those countries for their own interests. In Syria, for example, President Assad received monetary and non-monetary support such as weapons and military training from Russia, Iran, North Korea and the Greece based trading company, Naftomar (Donati & Farge, 2012). In contrast, the Syrian ethno-religious opposition constantly received monetary and

non-monetary support from United States, United Kingdom, France, Arab league and the Free Iraqi Army (William, 2012). As a result, ethnic politics in Syria were maintained. Accordingly, it would be useful to examine the extent of foreign influence over politicians' attitude towards spreading and consolidating ethnic politics.

Further research could also focus on how politicians expand their political influence to maximize wealth. In this respect, it would be useful, for example, to embark on a more comprehensive examination of politicians' role in the consolidation of ethnic politics as their source of wealth in modern plural societies. Arguably, this would provide valuable insights concerning the politicians' tendency to do whatever they can to ensure ethnic politics at the national level and in the periphery enable them to stay in power and maximize wealth.

Moreover, since plural societies in developing countries have been aspiring to achieve developed nation status, it would be useful to investigate the implications of ethnic politics for such aspirations. It is hoped that research of this type can steer politicians, policy makers, non-government organizations and academics towards supporting efforts to minimize the ramifications of ethnic politics. This is crucial to prevent another Syria, Afghanistan and Cambodia because the consolidation of ethnic politics could lead to the political collapse of a country (Roessler, 2016). Research on this topic can focus on politicians' interests in manipulating ethnicity for their political survival, the negative impacts on youth attitudes towards others and how such antagonistic attitudes undermine youth aspirations to reach developed nation status. Focusing on the ethnic manipulation of youth attitudes will provide information for politicians, policy makers, non-government organizations and

academics to create a strategy to ensure future ethnic relations in their country do not worsen because youth are the successor of a country's leadership and their attitude towards others is vital in the maintenance of political stability and harmonious ethnic relations (Hamid & Hanafiah, 2016).

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Perjanjian 20 Perkara (the 20-point of agreement)
Source: Luping (1989, p. 12-14)

The full text of the 20-point of agreement or the so-called memorandum submitted by United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO), United Sabah National Organization (USNO), United Party (UP), Democratic Party (DP)[102], and the National Pasok Momogun Organization (Pasok) to the British are as follow:

1. Religion
    While there was no objection to Islam being the national religion of Malaysia, there should be no state religion in North Borneo, and the provisions relating to Islam in the present Constitution of Malaya should not apply to North Borneo (Sabah).

2. Language
    a. Malay should be the national language of the federation;
    b. English should continue to be used for a period of 10 years after Malaysia Day;
    c. English should be an official language of North Borneo for all purposes, State or Federal, without limitations of time.

3. Constitution
    Whilst accepting the present Constitution of the Federation of Malaya should form the basis of the Constitution of Malaysia, the Constitution of Malaysia should be a completely new document drafted and agreed in the light of a free association of states and should not be a series of amendments to a constitution drafted and agreed by different states in totally different circumstances a new constitution for North Borneo (Sabah) was of course essential.

4. Head of the Federation
    The head of State in North Borneo should not be eligible for election as head of the Federation.

5. Name of the Federation
    'Malaysia' but not '*Melayu Raya*'.

6. Immigration

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[102] Prior to the formation of Sabah National Party (SANAP), there were two Chinese political parties in North Borneo namely United Party (UP) and Democratic Party (DP). The UP was formed in Sandakan on February 1962 by Khoo Siak Chiew. This political party was formed to charter for the big timber and wealthy English-educated Hakka and Teocew Chinese businessmen interests. The DP was formed in Kota Kinabalu on November 1961 by Peter Chin to charter the Chinese Wholesale and retail businessman interests. Both parties merged to form Borneo Utara National Party (BUNAP) on October 1962. It was then renamed the Sabah National Party (SANAP) on August 31st 1963 and eventually became the Sabah Chinese Association (SCA) in May 1965 (Yusof 1999, p. 3; Luping 1985, p. 137).

Control over immigration into any part of Malaysia from outside should rest with the Central Government but entry into North Borneo should also require the approval of the State Government. The Federal Government should not be able to veto the entry of persons into North Borneo for State Government purposes except on strictly security grounds. North Borneo should have unfettered control over the movement of persons other than those in Federal Government employ from parts of Malaysia into North Borneo.

7. Right of Secession
There should be no right to secede from Federation.

8. Borneanization
Borneanization of the public service should proceed as quickly as possible.

9. British Officers
Every effort should be made to encourage British officers to remain in the public service until their places can be taken by suitably qualified people from North Borneo.

10. Citizenship
The recommendations in paragraph 148 (k) of the Report of the Cobbold Commission should govern the citizenship rights in the Federation of North Borneo subject to the following amendments:

   a. Sub-paragraph (i) should not contain the proviso as to five years residence;
   b. In order to tie up with law, sub-paragraph (ii) (a) should read '7 out of 10 years' instead of '8 out of the 12 years'
   c. Sub-paragraph (iii) should not contain any restriction tied to the citizenship of parents – a person born in North Borneo after Malaysia must be a federal citizen.

11. Tariffs and Finance
North Borneo or Sabah should retain control of its own finance, development and tariff, and should have the right to work up its own taxation and to raise loans on its own credit.

12. Special Position of Indigenous Race
In principles the indigenous races of North Borneo should enjoy special rights analogues to those enjoyed by Malays in Malaya, but the present Malays formula in this regard is not necessarily applicable in North Borneo.

13. State Government
   a. The Prime Minister should be elected by unofficial members of Legislative Council,
   b. There should be a proper Ministerial system in North Borneo.

14. Transitional Period
This should be seven years and during such period legislative power must be left with the State of North Borneo by the Constitution and not be merely delegated to the State Government by the Federal Government.

15. Education
    The existing education system of North Borneo should be maintained and for this reason it should be under the state control.

16. Constitutional Safeguard
    No amendment modification or withdraw of any special safeguard granted to North Borneo should be made by the Central Government without positive concurrence of the Government of the State of North Borneo. The power of amending the Constitution of the State of North Borneo should belong exclusively to the people in the State.

17. Representation in Federal
    This should take account not only of the population of North Borneo but also of its size and potentialities and in any case should not be less than that of Singapore.

18. Name of Head of State
    'Yang Dipertua Negara'

19. Name of State
    'Sabah'

20. Land, Forest, Local Government, etc.
    The provisions in the Constitutional of the Federation in respect of the powers of the National Land Council not apply in North Borneo. Likewise, the National Council for Local Government should apply in North Borneo.