

POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY ASIA

# MALAYSIA

MAHATHIRISM, HEGEMONY  
AND THE NEW OPPOSITION

---



JOHN HILLEY

---

*'Rigorous, theoretically informed and  
insightful ... invaluable.'*

KHOO BOO TEIK

*author of Paradoxes of Mahathirism*

---

# Contents

---

List of Tables	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Abbreviations and Organisations	x
<b>Introduction: The New Orientalism</b>	<b>1</b>
The power bloc, hegemony and the intellectual /9 Towards an application /14	
<b>1 The Construction of Legitimacy: Vision 2020 and the Language of Control</b>	<b>19</b>
Vision 2020: Development, society and post-ethnicity /19	
Class, state and the ideology of ethnicity /20 The colonial phase /23 The alliance phase /29 The NEP phase /32	
Democracy, Asian values and the ideology of growth /35	
<b>2 Constructing the Vision: State-Class Relations, the Power Bloc and the Origins of Crisis</b>	<b>47</b>
The Malay dilemma and the challenge of modernity /47	
The NEP: class formation and contradictions /50	
Shaping the NEP society: ethnicity, poverty and the new middle class /56 Privatisation: the new hegemonic opportunity /58 The emerging crisis: 1997 /65	
Anwar's interventions /69 The 'IMF debate' /72	
Managing the crisis: policy schism and the Anwar factor /74	
<b>3 Mahathirism and the Politics of the Power Bloc</b>	<b>83</b>
Politics, conflicts and institutions: building the new consensus /83	
Internal conflict and the UMNO split /87 Consolidating the bloc after 1990 /90 Holding the coalition: Chinese politics and the wider party alliance /90 Consolidation and the succession issue /94 Addressing corruption /97 Playing the international	

stage: politics and diplomacy / 99 Political pressures and crisis  
management: 1997/100 The purge / 106

#### **4 Organic Intellectuals: Ideological Production and the UMNO Network** **117**

Civil society, organicity and the UMNO network / 117  
Networks of influence: the media in Malaysia / 119 Vision  
discourse and national culture / 129 Vision 2020: the new  
context of communication / 131 'Oh IT ... guna IT' / 132  
Managing the crisis: the UMNO network and media  
coverage / 136 TV news and current affairs / 136  
The *Sun*: pushing the boundaries? / 141

#### **5 The Anwar Crisis and the Media** **151**

The Malaysian press: 'Let's work together' / 157 Reporting  
the media: foreign coverage and competing ideologies / 162  
Dateline Malaysia: 'Seizing the moment' / 168 The media  
and the net / 170 The crisis of containment / 172

#### **6 Traditional Intellectuals: PAS, Islam and the Countervision** **178**

Vision Islam and the management of traditional  
consciousness / 178 Islam and nationalism / 181  
PAS, nationalism and the Islamic resurgence / 183  
Contesting the vision / 186 Terengganu and Wawasan  
Sihat / 187 Civil development in Kelantan / 188  
Contesting Kelantan: UMNO enterprise at work / 189  
Confronting *hudud* / 191 PAS-Islam, party politics  
and the crisis (1) / 193 Nik Aziz and the view from  
Kelantan / 193 Fadzil Noor and the PAS leadership / 196  
PAS, Anwar and the *reformasi*: setting the scenario / 199

#### **7 PAS, the Anwar Crisis and Counter-hegemony** **205**

PAS, the *reformasi* and Malay discontent / 206 PAS, the  
*reformasi* and *Harakah* / 209 PAS, the opposition bloc and  
national-popular support / 213 PAS-Islam, party politics  
and the crisis (2) / 219 Fadzil Noor and Anwar's fall / 219  
Planting the seed: party cooperation and PAS influence by  
mid-1999 / 220

**8 Counter-hegemony: Reformasi, Left Politics and the Conditions of Dissent** **226**

The emerging bloc and Anwar's *dénouement* /226 Situating the left: conditions and legacies /232 Left intellectuals and the Islamic condition /236 Left intellectuals: ethnic and cultural conditions /239 Insiderism: the conditions of dissent /242 Hegemonic crisis, new conditions: situating the left and the *reformasi* /245 *Reformasi*, the left and Mahathirism: the dialectics of change /247

**9 Fin de siècle: Mahathirism, Election '99 and the New Political Landscape** **254**

The project reviewed /254 Implications of the 1999 general election /260 The new political landscape: 2000 /265

**Appendix: Theoretical Approach, a Gramscian Perspectivism** **270**

The historical bloc, hegemony and the intellectual /270  
The power bloc, hegemony and the intellectual: the global-domestic dialectic /276

**Bibliography** **285**

**Index** **295**

Hakimi Ibrahim, Rohana Ariffin and the staff at USM library. My special thanks to Khoo Boo Teik for his valued insights and support.

I would like to record my debt to the many and varied people across Malaysia who provided me with information, material and opinion. My fond regards also to many others in Penang for their discursive interest, social insights and friendships, particularly Hareesh K. Chhabra at Kolej Antarabangsa, Felix Patrikeeff, Michael and Carolyn van Langenberg, Maura Crowley and Hai Long. My thanks also to the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hull, John Sidel at SOAS, Peter Preston at the University of Birmingham and Robert Molteni at Zed Books for their helpful direction.

Finally, thanks and love to my children Caroline and Paul for 'looking after me', my mum, sisters and brothers for their good hearts and humour, my extended family and friends for their moral support, and, most of all, my wife Jazqui for her love and understanding.

All views, interpretations and faults within the text belong, of course, to the present author.

## Tables

2.1	Malaysia: ownership of share capital	51
2.2	Occupation and income by ethnic group (1995/96)	52
2.3	Employment by sector (1997)	53
2.4	Total labour force (1998) and unemployment rate (1985-98)	53
2.5	Malaysia: export structure (1970-98)	54
2.6	Gross domestic product by sector (1995-98)	56
2.7	State-class relations: key corporate elites closely linked to UMNO	64
2.8	Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange: selected indices (1990-98)	67
4.1	Selected Peninsular Malaysia (daily) newspaper circulation figures (1996-99)	122
9.1	General election, 1999: federal and state results	261
9.2	General election, 1999: seats by party	262

## 7 PAS, the Anwar Crisis and Counter-hegemony 205

PAS, the reformist and Malay discontent / 206	PAS, the reformist and <i>Harakah</i> / 209	PAS, the opposition bloc and national-popular support / 212	PAS-Islam party politics and the crisis (I) / 219	Fadil Nor and Anwar's fall / 219	Planting the seed: party cooperation and PAS influence, mid-1997/200
---	---	---	---	----------------------------------	--