



PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES
‘NATIONAL UNITY’
PLF – InKA, UiTM
23rd AUGUST 2004

AT
PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA.

Jointly
organized by:



Universiti
Teknologi MARA

Sponsored
by:



About the Perdana Discourse Series

THE PERDANA LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE SERIES ON THE THEME OF NATIONAL UNITY

**23 August 2004
Perdana Leadership Foundation
Putrajaya**

The concept of national unity takes on a distinct shade when viewed from a different angle, which is contingent to the colours that make up a nation and the outcome of historicism of the particular nation state. Hence, the fundamentals of national unity in one country would demand observance of a different viewpoint from those of another country – the more diverse the colours of a nation, the greater are the challenges in shaping the nation so that it speaks in one voice.

So is the case with Malaysia: we are an example of a melting pot in which multi-ethnicity thrives in spite of differences in colour and culture because the leadership then and now has always strived to put aside the disparities in tongue and tradition, and put in place the vision to build one nation with common goals and common aspirations.

In earning Malaysia a pride of place in the heart of the nation and accomplishing recognition in the eyes of the world, leaders and citizens of the past have sacrificed through blood and sweat in order that Malaysians of today may savour a success story of the coming of age of a nation.

The Perdana Discourse Series seeks to establish a connection between the effectiveness of past leadership with present accomplishments of the nation, and systematically trace the manner in which the country has been ably run to subsequently build one nation in the face of diversity through good governance and skillful manoeuvring on the part of the leaders.

It is only fitting that their relentless enterprise and God-given foresight at bridging the diverse ethnic communities in the country which has brought Malaysia where she is today is aptly captured through the Perdana Discourse Series for the sake of posterity.

Keynote address by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

THE PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES

Presentation by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad on *National Unity*

Crystallisation of a Nation State: A Historical Perspective

The idea of national unity precedes the establishment of a nation state as we know it today.

- When 'national' unity crystallised in 16th century Europe
 - Communities were not ruled by emperors until 19th century
 - Regions were not divided into separate countries
 - Regions were ruled by warlords
 - The warlords forced and enforced rules on those who lived on lands they claimed as theirs
 - The mostly peasant population served the warlords like slaves
 - The population also served as soldiers to fight for the warlords; loyalty was only to these warlords
 - The idea of European Union was somewhat prevalent through the expansion of the Roman Empire and later conquest by the Germans
 - The European community was very much a 'mixed up' group, mostly divided into Slavic, Germanic and Latin
- When it crystallised within the Muslim Empire
 - There was no division into separate states
 - The land under the Muslim rule was simply referred to as the *land of the Ummah*
 - There were rulers other than Arabs, such as Turkish
 - The Muslim community was very much a 'mixed up' group
- Similar idea of 'national' unity preceded the formation of a nation state as in the case of
 - China – which at one time ruled Siberia
 - India – which originally existed as different 'princely states' but were later united as the sub-continent of India by the British colonials
 - Africa – which once existed as tribal groups but later divided by European colonials and ruled by them
 - North America – were conquered by British, Spanish, French who killed and later deprived the native Indians of their rights
 - South America – colonisation by Spanish and Portuguese
 - Malaysia – at one time ruled by chieftains who later on became sultans

The future may see multiracial countries all over the world, made up of people of different colours, either:

- Experiencing total integration, developing a single culture from a diversity of cultures
- Maintaining differences, with no assimilation. But given one dominant culture,
 - will lead to forced assimilation by other cultures into it
 - will either live in harmony, or
 - in opposition with one another
- Living in tolerance with each other's culture, as in the case of Malaysia, which
 - Is multiracial
 - Incorporates racial integration

In Malaysia, culture separates us, NOT ethnicity

- There are Malays who look like Chinese
- There are Indians who look like Malays
- There are Malays who eat with chopsticks
- There are Chinese who prefer hot spicy food, which is not traditionally Chinese
- Malaysians are slowly adopting to each others' cultural traits
- The differences are further diminished with mixed marriages

National Unity

Among political leadership (UMNO, MCA, MIC), it is agreed that Malay is spoken for better understanding because

- The Chinese speak different dialects not understood by all
- The Indians speak different tongues not understood by all

Most Malaysians accept the need to sacrifice in order to achieve success for the nation

- The Malays have made adjustments to accommodate other races
- The Chinese have agreed to share the economic cake with the Malays
- There is support from the non-Malays for affirmative action and the NEP
- The Indians are not giving a lot of problems because of their small numbers

Keynote address by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad...cont'd..

What retards efforts towards national unity

- Extremists who do not tolerate 'impurity' in their culture although they are in Malaysia not China
- Purists who insist that only Malay is spoken in Malaysia
- There are still not many Malays who are economically strong and very much involved in the economy
- There are still Malays who are not competitive
- The Malays are still working in the old mindset vis-à-vis *ketuanan Melayu*
- The culture of savings is still lacking among the Malays

Factors that will support efforts towards national unity

- A change of mindset (which equates values) among Malays that will allow them to better compete with the other races
- A need for more non-Malays to join the government service in order to integrate faster and better



Points from Tun Hussein Onn on National Unity

Points (Tun Hussein Onn on national unity)

1. To quote J. Victor Morais, 1981 who wrote about Dato Onn Jaafar, "...Datuk Onn was the architect of the plans which changed the Malayan Union into the Federation of Malaya – the forerunner of Malaysia. It was he who had laid the foundation of harmonious cooperation between those previously rather discordant groups which enabled a multi-racial Malayan nation to be formed."
2. Datuk Onn urged the admission of non-Malays to the U.M.N.O. He had conceived the idea of forming one political party for all the races. He felt that a multi-racial organisation would accelerate the granting of independence for Malaya.
3. In his farewell speech Datuk Onn said, "U.M.N.O. emerged from the istana and now the time has come for me to hand over the leadership to one who came from the palace." Tunku was made the President of U.M.N.O. in 1951.
4. Tunku in his book Looking Back wrote: "Datuk Onn was the first Malay leader to attain political eminence in his own country. Whatever faults he may have had, he was the first man to weld the Malays together. He founded U.M.N.O., but later on, he went too far, too quickly. He decided to form a new multi-racial organisation, the independence of Malaya Party." It was not well received.
5. On Tun Hussein Onn, Victor wrote, "Hussein rejoined Umno in 1968 and was made the Executive Committee of UMNO in 1969 soon after the May 13th disturbances when most of the Malays leaders rallied to the cause of solidarity and national unity." He was made a member of the cabinet in 1970 under Tun Razak as Education Minister.
6. Much of the credit for the unity and understanding among the partners of the ten-party Barisan Nasional Government goes to him.
7. Of the many actions he has taken since he became Prime Minister, one move that won general acclaim was the appointment of several young and well educated leaders who had proved themselves as promising technocrats, in the Federal and State Governments and in statutory bodies. To name some: Adib Adam, Rais Yatim and Rahim Bakar, Datuk Musa Hitam, Najib Razak (25), Leo Moggie (37), Paul Leong, and Datuk Samy Vellu, Sanusi Junid (37). He has great faith in the youth.
8. He was a fair leader, during his time, more and more non-Malays in the civil service have been given promotions which they deserve.
9. 1977: Kelantan riot, PAS left BN.
10. When questioned by a journalist on freedom to discuss questions relating to national language, education and other matters affecting the non-bumiputeras, Hussein was frank: "Restrictions on liberty in the Malaysian constitution stem from the years of internal communist subversion and terrorism. We have our fears and doubts. We are trying to balance the claims of diverse societies and varied cultures. It is not that we are less democratic. It is because we want to ensure that our nation survives."
11. He stressed the need for tolerance. He feels that without tolerance and without a reciprocal acceptance of the many cultures that constitute the Malaysian identity, the very foundation of our multi-racial society would be in jeopardy.
12. He has pleaded for unity and goodwill among all Malaysians. He has urged them to show genuine appreciation of one another's cultures and practices and that the various races should refrain from racial or religious bigotry in order to avoid misunderstanding. He has warned that no action that seeks to deliberately cause tension for selfish sectarian motives would be condoned.
13. On unity he confessed that he was wrong in assuming soon after he joined the Government that the country could achieve national unity in a few years. He said, "Now I have to revise that opinion. It will take a much longer time, probably a generation. But I am confident that we will achieve unity despite the problems we have faced and still are facing. However, my faith in the future of the country is unshaken." His thought on national unity can be best described as moving towards making every Malaysian should regard our selves first and foremost as Malaysian not Malaysian Malay, Malaysian Chinese or Malaysian Indian.



Discussion results from three (3) groups:

GROUP: 5

GROUP LEADER: En. Hamdan Ahammu (GM, Putra Jaya Holdings)

FACILITATOR: Faizul

Group 1

<p>Contribution of the Past Premiers on National Unity (reflecting on their thoughts)</p>	<p>Tunku Abdul Rahman Harmonize the three races i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indians. Indication of solidarity. Very helpful to fight the British. National unity symbolized national solidarity. Laid the foundation for unity.</p> <p>Tun Abdul Razak Uplifted the status of the malays. NEP, rural development eg. FELDA helped to counter act communist activities, bridge the gap between rich and poor, growth of vernacular schools.</p> <p>Tun Hussein Onn Known as ‘Bapa Perpaduan’. Strengthen unity among the 3 races. Help build a Malaysian identity ‘Bangsa Malaysia’.</p> <p>Tun Dr Mahathir Growth of country by 2020. National unity emphasized. Development of vision schools, national service. The increase in general prosperity helped to bridge unity among the different races in the country.</p>
<p>Current Issue on National Unity</p>	<p>Tackle the polarization problem from home. Lack of understanding in inter-cultural practices eg religious practices. Integration of the different races. Economic disparity among the different races.</p>
<p>Recommendation/ Proposal on how to Strengthen the Future of National Unity</p>	<p>Parenting courses. Overhaul the Malaysian education system. Revamp education system. Look into the teacher training colleges. Local councils should be active to strengthen national unity eg. Introduce ‘neighbor-hood watch’. Ignore the ‘skeptics’ and push for national unity.</p>

Group 2

GROUP: Group 2 & 3
 GROUP LEADER: Joshua Choong Kah Chun
 FACILITATOR: Ahmad Suhaimi Dr. Ismail

<p>Contribution of the Past Premiers on National Unity (reflecting on their thoughts)</p>	<p>All past premiers had significantly contributed to National Unity and had put forward effective policies.</p>
<p>Current Issue on National Unity</p>	<p>Racial Polarization Education →Parents' perception/Awareness →Education of the individual →Ability to think → Content – civic -religious -comparative 1)Racial polarization 2)Economic imbalance 3)Communal identity 4)Skewed perception</p>
<p>Recommendation/ Proposal on how to Strengthen the Future of National Unity</p>	<p>1) Multiculturalism (compulsory subject) 2) Official functions E.g. Universal prayer 3) Addressing prefix is standardized 4) Need for other languages, emphasis on English 5) Learn and adopt 6) Display appropriate attitude 7) Eliminate type schools - just maintain Wawasan schools</p>

Group 3

<p>Contribution of the Past Premiers on National Unity (reflecting on their thoughts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tun Razak – Policy of Education – main objective 1956 Razak report to promote National Unity. Tunku Abdul Rahman * '87 – a visible polarization at school level. Recognized earlier efforts by govt. – advent of PAS leaving Barisan Nasional. Present environment in commerce * A mutual respect for Tunku Abdul Rahman for National Unity from the Indian community. Pre independence sentiments very positive for integration. * Understanding of cultures, to narrow the gap. At higher learning inst. However the level of understanding seems to lessen. * working experience – race is not an issue, work comes first. * observation amongst youth - evident polarization, especially in large groups * root cause – family? Home Environment? School environment? - should begin at school level. Commonality of objectives e.g. Independence, development – unites Realization of unity is important – via common needs and values Cannot be static continuous identification of these common needs. * Education system? Tolerance factor. Not too much exam oriented. To re look into the system? Homogenous environment not good? * Racial bias prevalent? Present environment on unity is superficial. * Deviant teachings played a role in disunity. * Why continue the existence of national type schools? * trust, comradeship * cultural understanding & tolerance
<p>Current Issue on National Unity</p>	<p>Political parties with vested interest sets disunity. Reflections while working in an international company, race is not an issue. However, discussion on Bumiputera privileges.</p> <p>Set objectives on National Unity are good but implementation?</p> <p>The value of Independence – is this realized by today's youth? Back to school - to be taught values.</p> <p>At present unifying factor is superficial. No real need now all of society is complacent.</p>
<p>Recommendation/ Proposal on how to Strengthen the Future of National Unity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Preschool level instilling the values of unity. Kindergarten racial integration - No dominant group Parental education? Political influences towards positive steps Activities at grassroots' level – on the national unity agenda Political parties' main agenda on national unity. Play a bigger role. Should champion national unity