

KHOO BOO TEIK



*Paradoxes of
Mahathirism*

An Intellectual Biography of
Mahathir Mohamad

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia since 1981, is one of Asia's most successful politicians. In a career spanning half a century, he has been an occasional writer on Malay affairs, a doctor cum parliamentarian a Malay nationalist who has emerged as a Third World spokesman, and a practitioner of Islamic modernism. Once feared by some as an ideologue of state intervention to restructure Malaysian society, Mahathir is now admired by many for his vision of industrializing his nation into Asia's 'fifth tiger'. Mahathir himself appears to thrive on unfashionable ideas, controversial policies, and a contentious diplomacy, all of which make him an enigma baffling to opponents and observers alike.

Paradoxes of Mahathirism is the first full-length scholarly examination of the enigma of Mahathir. As a study of political ideology, it explores Mahathir's ideas on nationalism, capitalism, Islam, populism, and authoritarianism—the core of Mahathirism. Within the context of Malaysia's recent political history, it charts the evolution of Mahathir's complex world view to reveal paradoxes, alternating patterns of consistency and contradiction, which help us understand his politics, policies, and personality. In biographical terms, it examines the legacy of Mahathir's youthful immersion in the Malay world, the class background to his religiosity, and the medical influence on his political style. At the theoretical level, it offers insights into the *problématique* of 'race and class' in Malaysian society and politics.

Jacket illustration:

Mahathir autographing a portrait of himself at Angkasapuri Kuala Lumpur, 29 December 1992.

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*To the memory of my friends,
Lim Boon Teik and Pramod Manaloor*



