




Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj 

Tun Abdul Razak Hussein 

Tun Hussein Onn 

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad 



PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES:

National Unity

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PREFACE

Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF) through its collaboration with the Institute of Knowledge Advancement (InKA) UiTM aspires to make the Foundation premise in Putrajaya a hub where knowledge on our Premiers' unique leadership styles: how their thoughts, transpired through their attitudes, behaviors and performances are discussed, analysed and shared. The Institute of Knowledge Advancement (InKA), UiTM was contacted to provide assistance in this endeavor. Dr Kamaruzaman Md Zain of Sapura Holdings, acted as the intermediary between PLF and UiTM. He was instrumental in making this project a reality.

Starting from early December 2003, a number of meetings had been held between InKA, Sapura Holdings and the late Tan Sri Azizan Zainal Abidin, the first chairman of the foundation. Tan Sri shared with us his momentous moments with Tun Mahathir and the rest of the past prime ministers. His assertions on how important it is for us to help document events, accounts and unpublished thoughts of our past leaders never failed to motivate us to work on this project. His justification was to ensure continuity in sharing the right knowledge about what had happened, in the cause of building the nation for the benefit of our future leaders and community. The sudden demise of the late Tan Sri Azizan did not deter us from continuing with the agenda of realizing the discourse series. The first discourse started on smoothly with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivering an impressive keynote address on National Unity.

The session was followed by a discussant session, a presentation by Prof Emeritus Dato' Dr Khoo Kay Kim, Mr KJ John, Prof Col. Dato' Dr Kamarudin Kachar, and two students leaders, Saiful Azhar from UiTM and Siti Salwa from KUKUM.

In short, the Perdana Discourse Series PDS© 2004, InKA stands as an interactive platform of knowledge fusion amongst the older, the present, and the future generations. The platform is where the history of this nation and its current state are discussed, analysed and mapped in order to help create and form the future thoughts of the young.

Roziah Mohd Janor
Institute of Knowledge Advancement, UiTM, Shah Alam

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This joint effort is a tripartite collaborative efforts of PLF, InKA-UiTM and the people. First of all, we would like to thank the Board of PLF and the Vice Chancellor of UiTM, Dato' Seri Profesor Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah, for having faith in InKA to co-organize this discourse series. We are very honoured to have Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad share his thoughts and ideas with us on National Unity. It is also our great pleasure to have Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Ali grace the occasion. A big thank you is due to Datuk Badariah Arshad for her assistance in chairing meetings and making decisions and who has successfully solicited PROTON Bhd to sponsor all the 10 planned sessions. A big thank you also to Profesor Dr Rahmat Mohamad, Assistant Vice Chancellor, InKA, for his support and involvement as the Discourse Manager for the occasion. We would also like to extend our thanks to the people who have supported us before, during and after the event, they are: Dr Kamaruzaman Md Zin - Sapura Holdings, Assoc. Prof Dr Mohd Ismail Ramli, Encik Mohd Jamil Hj Mat Isa, Puan Umminajah Salleh, all from InKA, UiTM, Encik Azahar Mohd Noor from Petronas. A special thank you also to all InKA fellows that contributed as group facilitators, they are: Assoc. Prof. Dr Zaini Abdullah, Dr Zainab Mohd Noor, Tuan Haji Ahmad Suhaimi Ismail, Encik Faizul Abdullah and Ustaz Mohd Nor Mamat from UiTM. Last but not least, we also like to thank Perkasa Nilam Sdn Bhd for making the event a success.

A special thank you too, to all the participants who attended the discourse and contributed to the group discussions.

Editors

FOREWORD

Tan Sri Dato' Azman Hashim

For and on behalf of The Executive Committee
The Perdana Leadership Foundation

We would like to wish a warm *Selamat Datang* to discussants, participants and guests to the Perdana Leadership Foundation and to our first in a sequence of events under the Perdana Discourse Series which commences on August 23, 2004.

The Discourse Series will be part of a string of activities featured at the Foundation. It is our hope that regular hosting of such intellectual discourse on topics that are uniquely Malaysian, will help identify modes pertinent to resolving issues related to nation building and the development of a civil society

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we would like to express our utmost gratitude to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his consent to grace the debut event and share his thoughts and views on the topic of national unity.

This series will not be possible without the support of various individuals and organisations including sponsors, partners and service providers.

We wish all of you a rewarding discourse series, the outcome of which we hope will enhance efforts in realising a better Malaysia for all.

GREETINGS FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

of Universiti Teknologi MARA

YBhg. Dato' Seri Profesor Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah

The Perdana Discourse Series on The Thoughts of Malaysian Prime Ministers is a collaborative effort between InKA, UiTM and The Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF). The series aim to initiate discussions among scholars, concerned public and future leaders on issues regarding nation building. We are very honoured to have our esteemed former Prime Minister, a man of vision who has contributed much towards the country's national unity and identity, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, to present his views on national unity in the inaugural discourse series.

Some of the issues that will be discussed will cover areas on the history of the country, race relations, the complexities involving the diverse ethnic communities, factors that have affected the political transformation of the nation, changes in the socioeconomic conditions and changes in political identity. Through discussions on these issues, we hope that the younger generation will be more exposed to the significant aspects of the nation's history and how some of these events have marked the critical junctures which have brought us to where we are today; an advanced, dynamic and modern multiracial society among developing nations.

At the end of the series, we hope to produce a Visual Map© that shows the progression of our country from the pre-independence era to the present time, relating to unity. This visual map can be used as a benchmark for students, educators, and leaders as reference for research as well as towards innovative applications to education. A monograph series of the discussions will also be published. The document will encapsulate the nation's idea of unity, her vision and mission as well as illustrate the way in which they relate to the present state of our nation.

I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to the organisers, InKA and PLF, for their efforts in making these discourse series a success.

PROLOGUE

PHILOSOPHY AND SOME POINTS ON NATIONAL UNITY

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 the history of a 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.

Malaysia is a model of a nation that speaks in one voice in the face of its multifarious form. We are an example of a melting pot in which multi-ethnicity thrives in spite of differences in colour and culture. The leadership then and now has always strived to put aside among other things, the disparities in languages and traditions, and has instead, focused on the vision to build one nation that stands on common goals and aspirations.

The leaders and citizens of the past had sacrificed much of their life and time in order that Malaysians today may enjoy a better life.

Points On Unity

- National unity is the most important factor in developing policies in a multi-racial country like Malaysia.
- Historically, racial polarisation started during the time of the British Colonialisation as a result of their policy ' of "divide and rule". The Malays were left to remain in the rural agriculture sector, the Chinese in urban areas and the mining sector, while the Indians were mostly in the plantation sector.
- The formula used to address the issue of unity during the pre- M e r d e k a era focused on mutual agreement among the races and consensus building rather than coercion. Fighting for independence was not that difficult because all the three major races agreed to a common goal. However, what came after independence which was maintaining unity amongst the races, was the real challenge. The racial mix later became, and still is, part and parcel of Malaysia's colourful ethnic make-up.
- Six years after independence, the people of Malaya were living in harmony

' Collin Abraham 2005, The Naked Social Order: The Roots of Racial Polarisation in Malaysia

except for the subversive elements that emerged from time to time and unsettled the community. The first challenge was the confrontation with Indonesia over territory and policy matters concerning the Chinese. However, the dispute was subsequently resolved. In September 1963 Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak became part of Malaysia but later in 1965, Singapore was granted independence.

- Then, national growth focused on rural development, which was perceived as giving abundant one-sided attention to the Malays. Wrong perceptions prevailed due to the lack of communication among the three major races. The deep-rooted economic segregation amongst them resulted in the feelings of fear and insecurity The May 13th 1969 riot. The National Operations Council was immediately set up to overcome this problem. One of the decisions made by the National Operations Council was to design a framework that would enhance a sense of shared purpose for all Malaysians. What followed was the creation of the Rukun Negara in 1970.
- The Rukun Negara' was designed to create a focus for the nation guided by certain principles. It in tandem with the New Economic Policy (1970) which aimed to eradicate poverty, irrespective of race and restructure the society to remove racial segregation.
- "Unity can only be durable if it rests on the basis of mutual regard and caring thoughts in terms of the other party", said Ghazali Shafie (1974). Mutual agreement proved to be the success factor in the many rounds of discussion. Another factor contributing to unity then was the consensus to respect and tolerate each other's culture and norms. This country has never practiced assimilation in addressing the issue of unity but utilized the concept of unity in diversity. Education, economic, social policies as well as the policy on technology were introduced to cater to all races in ensuring a stable nation. Facts like income disparity were considered to justify the need to make the economic cake larger to be shared by all. However, there were no advanced communication channels at that time. Due to this, matters that needed immediate attention were not dealt with and grew exponentially.
- Up to the time of Tun Hussein Onn's tenure as Prime Minister, our focus was more on internal matters, building the nation from within. The direction however changed when Dr. Mahathir Mohamad took office in 1981. He wanted us to look not only at Britain, Australia or the United States of America, but also at Japan, Korea, Europe, South America, South Africa, the

^ National Operations Council was set up immediately after the May 13 1969 incident.

^ The Rukun Negara is a document that laid out the principles that need to be upheld by all Malaysian citizens.

Middle East countries, and Russia. Nevertheless, unity has never taken a back seat even then. Vision 2020 designed in 1991 continued to instill unity amongst Malaysians. One of his wishes was to see the multi-ethnic society transform into a truly Malaysian race rich with its multi-cultural inheritance by the second decade of the 21st century.

- We need to analyse our readiness in order to chart another milestone in maintaining unity in the country.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

THE QUEST FOR NATIONAL UNITY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The idea of a nation state began to crystallise in 1500 A.D. Europe was then not yet divided into separate countries. Europe was governed by powerful warlords who ruled peasants living on lands which the former claimed as theirs. These peasants served the warlords as slaves and soldiers to fight for them for even more lands. The European communities were also ruled by a number of Roman as well as German emperors. As a result of the different emperors and rulers, the European communities were a mixed group of societies that comprised among others the Romans, Germans, Latin and Slavs. The European countries became recognised as they are today only after the 18th century when they were divided into different states by different rulers.

Many countries around the world had evolved much in the same way as Europe. There were no well-defined boundaries. The mixed groups of people lived wherever there were lands or came and conquered lands for themselves. The Muslim Empire known as the Land of the Ummah was not divided into different states. The followers of the faith lived as one religious group. The Chinese once ruled up to as far north as Siberia, while princes and maharajahs ruled India until the British colonials came and divided it into many states. Malaya was also once ruled by chieftains and sultans until the Dutch, Portuguese, and the British came and took over the local government and separated the Malay Peninsular into different states.

The Essence of National Unity

The movements and settlements of people lead to the formation of multiracial countries all over the world. They are made up of people of different origins, colours, cultures and languages. These societies of different communities usually experience problems like identification with the country because of their complex social backgrounds. When different races and cultures merge, there will be three different kinds of integration among the society:

One culture will dominate and force other cultures to assimilate with it
 A single culture that results from a total integration of many cultures
 Different cultures that maintain their differences and do not assimilate with other cultures

National Unity — The Case of Malaysia

Malaysia has a very distinct mix of different ethnic groups. People from different races live together in harmony and over time have blended and adopted some aspects of other cultures from each other. For example, the hot and spicy Malay and Indian food are also favoured by the Chinese. The Malays are taken to using chopsticks when eating and people from different races enjoy *teh tarik* and *roti canai* at the *mamak* stalls. The differences are further diminished with mixed marriages among the different races. The Malays, Chinese and Indians who have their own ethnic characteristics have somehow blended and adopted the same culture which is uniquely Malaysian.

Political leaders (UMNO, MCA, MIC) have consented and agreed that Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) is spoken for better understanding in doing business among the various races. This is because the Chinese speak different dialects that are not understood even by some Chinese, and the Indians also speak in different tongues, also not understood by all.

Most Malaysians accept the need to sacrifice in order to achieve success for the integration of the nation. The people should adhere to the philosophy introduced by Tun Razak of sharing the economic cake which will continue to grow when shared by the population instead of having the cake shrinking when they have it all to themselves.

Factors that Impede Efforts Toward National Unity

There are extremists and purists who are bent on being "pure" and who do not tolerate any "impurities" in their culture. Many Chinese have lived in this country for generations who, however, still act as if they are in their own motherland and not in a new country that is Malaysia. Then, there are the Malay purists who insist that only Malay is spoken to the point of denying the access to knowledge. There are still many Malays who are not economically strong and who are not competitive. They still work on the old mindset namely the "*Ketuanan Melayu*" where they feel that Malay Reserve Land is

necessary. This old mindset created by the British Colonials works on the concept that if the Malay Reserve Land is allowed to be bought by the Non-Malays, eventually the *bumiputras* will not have any land at all. This fear will disappear if the Malays prosper and have the capacity to buy lands. Finally, it is important to cultivate the culture of savings among Malays. In order to equalise the competition among the races in Malaysia, it is important that the Malays adopt some changes to their culture and value system by working hard, cultivating the savings habit and acquiring knowledge.

A change of mindset is definitely incumbent upon the Malays. This will allow them to better compete with other races. When the Malays are able to compete, uncertainties and fears like having to hold on to Malay Reserve lands will disappear. In addition, more non-Malays need to join the government services. When all these are achieved, social integration will be faster and better.

Rapporteur : Masturah Alias

DISCUSSANTS' OPINION ON NATIONAL UNITY

Profesor Emeritus Dato' Dr Khoo Kay Kim

The subject of national unity has been much talked about since the first ethnic conflict in the country in 1945. The conflict, known as the Sino — Malay conflict, lasted for several months between the years 1945 and 1946. A riot started in Batu Pahat, and continued to Batu Kikir, Sg. Manik and Pantai Remis. It was more of a Chinese - Banjarese rather than Chinese - Malay conflict.

The second ethnic riot took place in the Federal Capital of Kuala Lumpur in 1969 between the Malays and the Chinese. The government took this riot more seriously than the earlier one that happened in 1945 as it started in the city. In actual fact the 1945 riot was more serious as it lasted longer than the 1969 riot. The difference between these two riots was that in 1945, there was little consciousness of the differences in the various ethnic groups.

Today, the problem that the country is facing is the feeling of discomfort amongst the various races. This can be clearly seen especially in the universities. Students of different ethnic groups do not mix well with each other. The problem the country is facing today is more cultural rather than racial.

How do we handle the problem of the ethnic divide that has arisen since 1945? A number of racial clashes like the Kg. Medan incident, and another in the 1980s between two political parties prove that there is still a potential threat of disunity amongst the races in the country. Although this situation can be dangerous, the country has always been able to manage the problem.

In order for the various races to live peacefully together, we have to promote the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia*. Most Malaysians do not understand the concept of Bangsa Malaysia. What is the Malaysian Race? This is because the word "bangsa" is equated to the word "race". When a person has been exposed to different races (like Prof Khoo himself), he will have no problems with ethnicity. If a person assimilates with a culture and speaks the language, than he becomes it.

Fate alone will not unite two ethnic groups. To quote an Indian economi:

APPENDIX II

Profile of Malaysia's Four Prime Ministers

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (1957-1970)

Remembered as the Father of Independence, Malaysia's first prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, recognised the vital importance of fostering cooperation among Malaysia's various ethnic groups as a way to overcome political problems. It was also Tunku Abdul Rahman who proposed the idea of Malaysia - a federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah which was established in 1963. perhaps Tunku Abdul Rahman's greatest single achievement was to give Malaysia a sense of pride and nationhood.

Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (1970-1976)

Tun Abdul Razak masterminded and implemented Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP), vigorously tackling the economic and social disparities, which fuelled racial and antagonisms. The NEP set two basic goals: to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty and to eliminate the identification of race with economic function. For his contributions to national and rural development, he is known as the Father of Development.

Tun Hussein Onn (1976-1981)

Tun Hussein Onn is renowned for stressing the issue of unity through policies aimed at rectifying economic imbalances among the races. This included launching the National Unit Trust Scheme. He also dedicated his tenure as Prime Minister to creating a culture of discipline, purpose, integrity and good government. For his efforts to promote goodwill among the country's various communities. Tun Hussein Onn is remembered as the Father of Unity.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003)

Tun Dr Mahathir opened the country to foreign investment, reformed taxation, reduced trade barriers, privatised numerous state-owned enterprises and created a world-class physical infrastructure. He also sought to bridge Malaysia's remaining ethnic division by increasing general prosperity. In 1991, he launched the New Development Policy, which emphasised industrial and commercial development and the elimination of poverty. Under Tun Dr Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia developed into one of the most prosperous and dynamic economies in Southeast Asia, with a burgeoning manufacturing sector, an expanding middle class and enhanced quality of life.



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