The Plural Society and Consociational Democracy Theory: Malaysia's Case

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Abstract: In this study, we try to examine the views and points on "The Plural Society and Consociational Democracy Theory". Although, A. Lijphart's assertions about "The Plural Society and Consociational Democracy Theory" proved to be important to understand the political, social and economic structures of some European states, but Malaysia's case proved that there is a need to develop these assertions further, taking into account the historical, cultural and various human factors.

Keywords: The Plural Society, Consaciational Democracy Theory, Malaysia, Human Factors

Çoğulcu Toplumlar ve Konsensüse Dayalı Demokrasi Teorisi: Malezya Örneği

Özet: Bu çalışmada,"Çoğulcu Toplum ve Consociational (konsensüse dayalı) Demokrasi" görüşlerini, Malezya örneği çerçevesinde ele alarak, bu görüşlerin, Malezya için ne derece geçerli yada geçersiz olduklarını göstermeye çalıştık. Literatürde, oldukça eleştirilen A. Lijphart'ın görüşleri, her ne kadar, Avrupadaki bazı ülkeler için geçerli olsada, Malezya örneğini, tarihsel, kültürel ve değişik insan özelliklerini ele almadığından dolayı, açıklamada yeterli gözükmemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çoğulcu Toplumlar, Konsensüse Dayalı Demokrasi Teorisi, Malezya, İnsan Özellikleri

Introduction

Our purpose for this explanatory study is threefold. The first aim is to review the literature on "The Plural Society and Consociational Democracy Theory"; to clarify the views and points which have been asserted. The second aim is an attempt to analyse the Malaysian social and political structure for a better understanding of the conditions of stability for society. And the third and the final aim is to try to reach some evaluative results on Malaysian Society in the light of the theory on plural society and consociational democracy. Therefore, this article is divided into three sections. The first section is the theoretical framework, the second section is the analysis of Malaysian social and political structure and the third section is the conclusion.

I. THE PLURAL SOCIETY AND CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY THEORY: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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The concept of "Pluralism"[*] has been used at three different levels in political analysis. First, it has been used by J.N. Figgies, H.Laski and G.D.H. Cole who were influenced by L.Acton and F.W.Maintland who were inspired by the German Otto von Gıerke. These scholars are all British pluralists and " their primary concern was with voluntary associations as a alternative *foci* of citizen loyalties, as bullwarks of liberty against the danger of a powerful state..(they) all appeared to have taken the underlying social and cultural integration of political system for granted"(Mc Rae,1979:677). Second, the concept of pluralism has been used by American scholars, such as, A.F.Bently, D. Truman, R.Dahl, whose central concern was "the competition of counterveilling interest groups on the central movement of policy formation."(Mc Rae,1979:678). Many studies which were made in this area assume that " membership of individuals in more than one interest groups will create cross-pressures and moderate inter- group conflict, thereby counteracting and reducing the potentially harmful effects of societal cleavages"(Lijphart,1980:3-4). The third usage of the concept of pluralism arose in the literature on colonial societies and their post- colonial successor state. J.S. Fuernivall, M.G. Smith, L.Kuper and Pierre Vonder Berghen, studied communities which carry ethnic differentiations.

Following the abovementioned studies, interest spread to these countries which are marked by a high degree of cultural or social segmentation. Arend Lijphart, G. Lehmbruch, H .Dealder, Jurg Steiner and V.Lorvin who see themselves as a "consociational school", deal with societies which are sharply differentiated on the basis of race, communal or ethnic identity, language, religion, ideologies, in its social and political structure and Mc Rae(Mc Rae,1979) uses the term societal or cultural pluralism for distinguishing the third approach from the other two approaches.

Arend Lijphart defines plural society as " that political parties, interest groups, media of communication, schools are voluntary associations which tend to be organized along the lines of segmental cleavages…cleavages may be of a religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial, or ethnic nature…, The growth of the population bounded by such cleavages will be referred to as the segments of plural society"(Steiner,1982:340).

But, this definition does not clearly indicate the element and the measurement that are used for separation of a society as plural or non-plural. In other words, the question " How do we differentiate one society which is plural, from that which is non-plural?, or " What is the criteria to differentiate a society as plural or non-plural?", is still ambigious. But later

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[*] For the definition of the concept, see, Kenneth D.MC RAE, "The Western Political Tradition.", <u>Canadian Journal of Political Science</u>, Vol XII/4, December 79.

writings of Lijphart as an answer to such questions asserted four criteria to measure the degree of pluralism in an empirical way. He states " Four criteria may be used to determine whether a society is completely plural or deviates from perfect pluralism to a greater or lesser extent on one or more of the four dimensions"(Lijpart,1981:251).The criteria asserted by Lijphart(Lİjpart,1981:351) are:

1. In a completely plural society , it must be possible to identify exactly the segments into which the society is divided.
2. It must also be possible to determine the size of each segment and how many people belong to each of the segments.
3. In a completely plural society, there must be perfect correspondence between segmental boundaries, between the political, social and economic organization.
4. Political parties are one type of organization covered by the third criterion.

The final test of a completely plural society is that, party and segmental loyalties should coincide. There should be little or no change in the voting support of the different parties from election to election. In a perfectly plural society, an election is a segmental census.

He also stated that above four criteria can be used, (not for all cases) mostly to measure the degree of pluralism in a society, that we distinguish a society as a plural one rather than non- plural, therefore these criteria (especially the third and fourth) may serve as indication of pluralism for South Africa, (as stated by A. Lijphart.) So, we can say that " all societies deviate from the ideal type and the degree to which they deviate can be used as an indication of their degree of pluralism."(Lijphart,1981:356)

Lijphart's main subject is the conditions of political stability of plural society or the term "Consociational Democracy". Consociational Democracy, Lijphart terms as "government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political structure into a stable democracy"(Lijphart,1981:17).

Gabrial Almond ranked the political sytems by distinguishing three types of western democratic system:

1.   Anglo-American political system (Britania, U.S.A.)
2.   Continental European system (France, Germany, Italy)
3.   Scandinavian and low countries (those countries which combine some of the features of the continental European and Anglo-American

political systems and stand somewhere in between the continental pattern and the Anglo-American.)

Almond's criteria for distinguishing the three types of society was "overlapping membership", which was actually formulated by A.F. Bestly and D.B. Truman and very similar to the term " cross-cutting cleavages proportion" of Seymour, Martin Lipset. But the criteria sub-system autonomy which was asserted by A.Lijphart, seems more convenient to system role structure. If two criteria, political culture and role structure are used together to distinguish the societies, Lijphart asserts that "western democracies can be satisfactorily classified into two broad but clearly bounded categories"(Lijphart,1974:211) which are:

1.   The Anglo-American, old Commonwealth and Scandaniavian states.
2.   The other European democracies, including France, Italy, Weimar Germany, low countries, Austria and Switzerland.

But he implies that the political stability of a system apparently cannot be predicted solely on the basis of the two variables of political culture and role structure,…a third variable used to account for the stability of the consociational democracies. The behaviour of the political elite. These deviant cases of fragmented but stable democracies will be called "Consociational Democracies"(Lijphart,1974:211).   Whereas H.Dealder stated it as " the conditions of effective and stable democratic rule"(Dealder,1974:605).[**]

So, by this definition, Consociational Democracy, is a democracy of plural societies which are differentiated by sharp cultural, social, and political cleavages than unique societies. But, it is also possible to hold the political stability in plural societies by consociational decision,which works for the political aggregate function. Grand coalition, universal participation, cartel of elites, advisory council and committees are the typical consociational decision.

II. THE GENERAL VIEW OF MALAYSIAN SOCIETY

It is very difficult to understand the Malaysian social structure because of its unique character. "Malaysia is anything but a homogenous society being the home of numerous ethnic groups, each with their own sets of social mores

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[**] Also see, Brian Barry, "Consociational Model and Its danger.", European Journal of Political Research, 1975, p.390

and values. It is a conglomera and each group is only a part of this conglomera"(Fisk and Rani,1982).

Today's Malaysian social, political and economic structure is the result of the colonial policies which were carried out by Great Britain. To understand today's Malaysian social structure and differences in society, we must carefully examine the subject and the colonial period.

The Malaysian society consists of a number of distinct ethnic groups. These groups, are chiefly, the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians in Peninsular Malaysia, and the Ibans and the Kadazans in Sarawak and Sabah.

These five main groups together "comprised 95 percent of the Malaysian population of 19 million people"(Fisk and Rany,1982:105) and the other 5 percent covering the many other ethnic groups such as the aboriginal people, the Europeans, Arabs and Pakistanis.

In Peninsular Malaysia "the population of 12 million is complicated by the diversity of religion and race the most being the Malays, Chinese and Indians"(Fisk and Rany,1982:105). These ethnic divisions have received the greatest attention in the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) and remains both important and sensitive.

Before colonialism and the early period of the colonialism, Peninsular Malaysia was a place which was inhabited mostly by Malays and there were a limited number of Chinese and Indians and some nomadic aboriginal people. It was during the colonial period that the British encouraged and accelerated the migrations to Peninsular Malaysia from India, China and Indonesia because of the need for a labour force which resulted in today's Malaysian mozaic or a Malaysian Plural Society.

Migration to Malaysia can be considered in three waves:

Migration from Indonesia, China and India. "Migration from Indonesia, had been taking place slowly over the centuries, but this accelerated during the colonial period with the opening up of new land for production of rice and subsistence crops.
From about the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the British colonial administration began to encourage the recruitment of Chinese labour, particularly for work in mining tin. Not long after, the development of large-scale agriculture, first in the cultivation of sugar and later in rubber, plus the development of public works such as ports and railways created further demand for a labour force for these purposes, and the recruitment of Indian labour was encouraged and supported . These three waves of migration to Malaysia are not only different in the racial aspect but also resulted in different economic function and 1ocation.

Firstly, early Indonesian immigrants were located in the low-lying areas of the west coast where rice could be grown, whereas the Indians were concentrated in North Perak and Province Wellesley, in the rubber areas. At the same time, many of the Indians were grouped in newly-growing towns as labourers in the Public Works Department and as traders, shopkeepers and as civil servants, and the professions. On other hand, the Chinese were concentrated in the tin-mining areas and also in towns where they held a dominant economic role.

The social effects of the these waves of migration to Malaysia can be viewed at two levels. One is the Indonesian migrants, who because of close cultural, social and religious contact with the Malays and inter-marriages with Malays resulted in easy assimilation of this culture.

On the other hand, the Chinese and the Indians are not only culturally very different from the Malay society but the adaptation of these two different societies into the Malay society is very difficult, which resulted in today's Malaysian plural society, In addition, these three different societies are not only different from each other ethnically and culturally, but also different geographically.

The Malays have been kampung (rural/village) dwellers, whereas the Chinese generally are town (city) dwellers and the Indians are concentrated on estates.

According to the 1970 Census, 58.5 percent of the Chinese, 12.8 percent of the Indians and 27.5 percent of the Malays in Peninsular Malaysia lived in urban areas, while in the rural areas 69 percent were Malays, 26 percent Chinese and 10 percent Indians .(Fisk and Rany,1982:106)

This urban and rural division had some far-reaching social and economic effects in Malaysian social and economic life. What we mean is mainly that, "the opportunities for healthy growth and higher education have been far more readily available to the urban dwellers than to the kampung people, thus giving the majority of the Chinese a great advantage over the majority of the Malays"(Fisk and Rany,1982:106). So, the geographical separations led to the economic and social imbalance between the Chinese, Indians and Malay societies. The N.E.P. is aimed not only at improving and extending the level of services to rural areas, but also to redress the Malay society and correct the imbalance in the three segments and between towns and villages.

After 1970, many young Malays migrated to the cities in search of employment opportunities and benefits of city life. But, they are poorly educated, relatively unskilled and they found employment opportunities only in the police department, millitary service and in factories. Only a very small portion of Malays, the Malay elites who have been well-educated, are able

to find jobs in the civil service. But most Malays in the kampongs are engaged in small farming, fishing and rubber-tapping.

The Chinese, on the other hand, are engaged mainly in the modern sector of the economy such as banking, commerce, industry and mining.The Indians remained as estate workers but many of them in the urban areas became shopkeepers, civil servants and traders.

As regards the socio-cultural differences, the Malaysian Society today consists of three different sub-societies or segments, which are mainly the Malays, Chinese and the Indians. Each segment of the Malaysian society has its own language, traditions and religious norms and value systems that are very different from one society to another. Not only the economic imbalance of the society leads to polarization, but also the socio-cultural elements create polarization between the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Here I will try to examine, briefly, the socio-cultural elements of each society to show the differences.

Culturally, the Malays are Muslims, speak Bahasa Malaysia and maintain their own traditional customs and practices. The Chinese are mostly Buddhists, Confucians or Christians on a religious basis and speak a variety of Chinese dialects, whereas the Indians are mostly Hindus and speak a variety of dialects of the Indian language.

The Malays, generally live in rural areas that are traditionally engaged in rural agricultural production and fishing. In other words, they are characteristically peasants. Because of the rural life, the Malay society is a cooperative society which means that the relations in the rural area are based on mutual help.

'Gotong Royong' is a form of cooperation that occurs both in social and economic spheres. This institution operates especially during the padi-planting , harvesting , house-building, celebrating weddings, where one is expected to help another, anytime, anywhere. But because of the cash economic system, the "gotong royong" institution is going to be weaker(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:111).

Another institution which unites the Malay society is the concept of Ummah that binds the Malays to each other by the way of believing in the Unity of Allah, and in the messengership of His Prophet Muhammed. In this conceptual frame, everybody is responsible to help his fellow Ummah. He is expected to help his fellow members at anytime, anywhere.

The Unity of the Malay community thus rest on the <u>adat resam</u> (social customs), which includes the institution of "gotong royong" and the concept of "Ummah" and "Malu"[***2] (self- respect).

"The feeling of solidarity arise among the Malays as a result of the observation of "gotong royong", reinforced by the concept of Ummah. The spirit of Ummah, particularly binds the villagers together culturally and socially; the Malays always emphasize their close relationships in terms of brotherhood in Islam"(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:109).

The Chinese

The majority of the Chinese in Malaysia are urban dwellers. This is the case because mainly a considerable portion of the Chinese population earns its livelihood in the towns and cities which are the centers of trade and economic activity. Secondly, many Chinese who lived in rural areas shifted to protected areas during the Emergency period and these places turned into the cities and towns in recent years.

So, the"Chinese in the modern Malaysia are mostly found in the urban areas, and their social characteristics are adapted to town and city 1ife"(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:113). But they are still many Chinese who work in the rural areas and live there.

The language of the Chinese community in Malaysia is an important factor. To communicate with each other, many dialects such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochiew, Hailam and Hakka are used for daily communication and only the educated people (Chinese) of different language groups communicate with each other readily through the medium of Mandarin(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:114).

The basis of the Chinese social system is the family unit which is very large; in other words, the extended family. In the family concept, the elders or ancestors have special places that are strongly emphasized and always exercised their decisions in family matters.

Encouragement rather than suppression is very important for the growth of a young Chinese. The Family works those who are bright in the family. The father gives a chance to his young Chinese son to learn the trade and economic activity. So the "young Chinese will respond in accordance with his upbringing with respect, loyalty and hardwork, which is the one point of Chinese economic supremacy in Malaysian society. They are involved in

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[***] The Concept of Malu (Self-Respect), is important feature of Malay social value system which means to expect of every one (Malay) who should at all times maintain his own self-respect."Loss of Malu",is particularly associated with certain types of misbehaviour, such as disobeying parents

almost every aspect of commercial agriculture and fishing. In urban areas they own or operate most of the trade and commerce; retail and wholesale outlets, and private sector banking. The capital market is largely operated by the Chinese and they are the largest employers and suppliers of wage labour outside the government. In the rural areas as well as in the towns, the Chinese role as a middlemen places them in an economically strategic position. In all these ways the Chinese play a decisive role in the economic life of the whole Malaysian society"(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:116).

The religious system of the Chinese are not centralized under one single authority, thus " there are various temples and places of worship with loose membership of worshippers and devotees who are also members of some other temples as well"(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:117).

Like the concept of "malu" in Malay society "the concept of face" is very important in social interactions among more traditional Chinese, so to "lose face" becomes synonymous with dishonesty in the eyes of the community. To the concept of honesty, trustworthiness and loyalty values, the Chinese attach important sociological values.

The Indians

The Social Structure of the Indian community, depending on the nature of migration from a town or small vilage of India or Sri Lankan, have been divided into many sub-groups.

The vast majority of the Indians in Malaysia are Tamils, Malayalis and Telugus. Accordingly, in their customs, practices of Dravidian India predominate, with emphasis on Sivaism and the worship of the female deity in its various forms(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:118).

The Indians in Malaysia are mainly engaged in estate-work and live in rural areas. In other words, they are estate workers. "While rural Indians are involved mainly in the plantation economy, urban Indians are mostly distinct groups, including many Sri Lankans, and are involved in many occupations ranging from traders and businessmen, retailers and wholesalers, professions such as a doctors, administrators and teachers right down to manual workers and labourers. Some Indians known as Chettiars, are noted for their money-lending business"(Abdullah and Yusoff,1982:119).

Another value related to the Indian community in Malaysia is the cultural value attached to caste system. The consciousness of caste among the Indians in Malaysia tends to be very much eroded while caste consciousness in India tends to be perpetuated by numerous existing economic, political and social structure. Another interesting point of the Indian community is that there are quite a number of Indian Muslims who have a special place in their relation with Malays.

The Stratification of the Malaysian Society which is the result of socio-economic and political development after 1969, that in the light of the N.E.P. can be summarized as follows(Ali,1982).[****]:

a. The Upper Class: made up of (i) the nobility, (ii) leading government politicians and administrators, (iii) successful capitalist or businessmen, and (iv) successful professionals. Those in category (i) are exclusively Malay, in (ii) mostly Malay, while those in category (iii) and (iv) are mostly non-Malay, the majority of whom are Chinese. Some Malay and non-Malay members of this class are closely linked with one another, through various institutions and associations. For example, politically some of them are leaders in the component parties forming first, the Alliance and then later the National Front (NF), and the Government. Economically, some of them have entered into partnership or joint- ventures, and also many ex-politicians or ex-civil servants have become directors or senior executives in some of the big non-Malay companies.

Socially some members of the upper class are also members of certain exclusive clubs, e,g. the Royal Selangor Golf Club and the Lake Club.

b. The Middle Class: made up of (i) middle-range government or public servants, (ii) the professionals, and (iii) businessmen, managers etc. Whereas membership of the civil service in (i) is largely made up of Malays, technical and educational services, for example, consists largely of non-Malays. In category (ii), the majority is non-Malay, but the Malay component is increasing. As for those in category (iii) they are still mostly non-Malays, in spite of government policy to encourage Malays. Most members of the middle class share a common life-style, and those in categories (i) and (ii) are often westernised. A large number of them, especially from categories (i) and (iii) are leading participants or strong supporters of the governing political parties, either at the state or district levels. As for those in category (ii), although quite a good number are activists or supporters of the governing parties, a significant number are also active in the opposition. Socially, in certain big towns some of them become members of inter-ethnic clubs, e.g. the Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur.

c.The Lower Class: made up largely of (i) the peasantry, (ii) lowest ranking personnel in government or uniformed services, and (iii) workers in commercial and industrial enterprises. A big majority of those in (i) and (ii) are Malays, but there are some Chinese peasants in certain villages and some

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[****]. For the Development of Class and Race, also see, Hing AI YUN," Capitalist development,Class and Race in W. Malaysia"(1983); Lim Teck Ghee, "Malaysia: Changing Occupational Pattern:The Growth of The Worker Class and Its implications for Social Relations"(1983); Zakaria bin Haji Ahmad,<u>Political Structure of Malaysia</u> (1982)

Indians working as labourers in a number of government departments. As for those in category(iii), they are mostly Chinese, but the Indians also form a large group, especially in the rubber industry. Among the peasants, the Chinese minority are often absorbed into the way of life of the Malay majority; this is especially so in states such as Kelantan, where the non-Malays have been almost completely assimilated. At the same time, among the working class, especially those in the same factories or industries, there is also close understanding and cooperation, especially when facing crisis situations, such as strikes. But overall, between the predominantly Malay peasants and the largely Chinese workers, there is a great social distance, and often their ignorance of each other's values have led to stereotyping and suspicion amongst them.

This social stratification of Malaysian society shows that ethnicity (or race) factor divides the Malaysian society in vertical lines which means Chinese, Malays, Indians and other ethnic groups. At the same time, the vertical lines (ethnic groups) are divided by factors in the shape of compartments. In other words, the Malaysian society has been divided along the line of compartmentalized vertical columns.

Compartmental division is especially clear in the Malay society, because of special privileges given them by the Government and which resulted in many problems in this society or polarization in the Malay society. Firstly, because of the N.E.P, urban and village differences are going to increase, where young Malays who are kampung dwellers, start to migrate to cities for the benefit of city life, but at the same time they would make up the core working class.

Secondly, because of the difference in income and monetary terms in Malay society, those Malays who benefit more from these circumstances are going to be changing their values and perceptions.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

For a better understanding of the Malaysian Political Structure, "it is useful to examine the development of the ruling political coalition, the features of the federal/state relationships, the characteristics of, and origins of the bureaucracy"(Ahmad,1982:91).

Alliance which has been the major coalition of The United Malay National Organization (U.M.N.O.), The Malaysian Chinese Association (M.C.A.), and The Malaysian Indian Congress(M.I.C.), has been the government since 1955.

Alliance after 1969, became National Front (N.F) or Barisan Nasional (B.N.), covering several other parties in its fold. U.M.N.O., has been the major political party in Alliance and its successor National Front (N.F.) or

Barisan Nasional (B.N.). Both the National Front and Alliance may be seen as the crystallization of political power at federal level.

All of the societal segments in Malaysian society (mainly Malay, Chinese and Indians) can be represented, partially, to govern the state at the federal level by the formula of Alliance and National Front which was also asserted by Lijphart "for the agreement of political elite to govern the society"(Lİjphart,1982).

United Malay National Organization (U.M.N.O) which has been representing the Malay society, with majority support from the Malays, whereas the other parties Malaysian Chinese Association (M.C.A.) supported by the Chinese and Malaysian Indian Congress (M.I.C.) is supported by the Malaysian Indians.

P.M.I.P or later known as P.A.S has been trying to challenge the (N.F) with the most support for PAS coming from those who desire to govern Malaysia in the light of Islam and its principles(Meaden,1983:610; Ahmad,1982:92).

On the other hand, another party, the Democratic Action Party(D.A.P), is supported mainly by non-Malays, especially by the Chinese who live in urban areas. It challenges Malay political supremacy as well as offers a possible alternative to the non-Ma1ays or Chinese components in the National Front (N.F.) (Ahmad,1982:92).

The challenge from the (DAP) and (PAS) towards (N.F) National Front is essentially in Peninsular Malaysia. But also in Sarawak, (SNAP) Sarawak National Party has been the major opposition of N.F till 1970. After 1970 or late 1970, (SUPP) and (SNAP) both has become a party of the National Front Coalition (Ahmad,1982:93).

So, the need for communal solidarity, may sustain the notion of inter-communal cooperation (Political elite cooperation) as practised in the concept of the National Front (N.F as a sort of "democracy without census" according to one observer "(Ahmad,1982:92). But observations show that the Islamic movements and Islamic groups in the Malay society seek political power increasingly, yet these groups do not deny the rights of the other religions, although, Islam is the state religion, and the Islamic competition with the other countries is forcing the government to toe the line in a more Islamic way as possible. This is showing a growing impact in Malaysian Political life. The notion is that "How long UMNO will be able to resist becoming more Islamic to offset the criticism of PAS will be a significant problem in the coming years and one fear amongst non-Malays (non-Muslims) is the seemingly increasing use of Islamic symbols in the nation's ways of life"(Ahmad,1982:94).

One other aspect of the strong political structure of Malaysia is utilizing a strong and non-partisan bureaucratic apparatus, such as the civil service and the police which shows a growing impact after 1969, and that most of the positions in these areas are filled by Malays"(Ali,1982).

The existence of these organs and the quality of personnel and their non-political behaviour, make it easier for the government to achieve government goals. On the other hand, the bureaucracy could also run to destroy the regime's credibility, in the case of inefficiency and incapacity.

Inter-communal coalition formula which is the notion of a strong government is the another aspect of Malay political supremacy which means that "Federal structure of the state ensure Malay majority at the hands of the central government" that implies weakness of the local authority (Ahmad,1982:94).

POLITICAL STRUCTURE PRE— 1969 and after 1969

Inter-Racial riots and violence followed Malaysia's Fourth General election in May, 1969 which is mainly localized in Kuala Lumpur and "widely awakened those who had come to think of Malaysia as a prosperous extremely rational and democratic country in which all groups worked together harmoniously for the common good, what is surprising in retrospect is not that the dream was shattered but that it lasted so long"(Gibbon ,1971).

It was assumed that if political power is in Malay hands and economic power is in Chinese hands, the Malaysian political and social stability will be achieved. But the racial differences could not be considered seriously till that time. Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein wrote "..on that day (13th May 69) we were jolted into a sharp realization that the racial problem in this country is a serious one and measures taken in the past to cope with it have not proved adequate"(Gibbon,1971:116). In other words "communal considerations, generally considered the silent feature in decision-making were often of little importance and the end result was generally more beneficial to non-Malays than to Malays"(Funstow,1980).[*****]

If we accept the definition of politics by H.D. Lasswel as " who gets what, when, how", we say that mainly the causes of the Riots of 13th May 1969 were based on the economic and social status of the Malay community in Malaysian Society. The Second Malaysia Plan and its scope and aims also proved this assertion.

The plan incoporates a two-pronged New Economic Policy(N.E.P.) for development. The first prong is to reduce and eventually, eradicate poverty

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[*****] See also, S. Husseyin Ali (1983): Chandra Muzaffar (1983): Hing Aı Yun (1983)

by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race.

The second programme aims at accelerating the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalance, so as to reduce and eventually, eliminate the identification of race with economic function. This process involves the modernization of rural lives, a rapid and balanced growth of urban activities and the creation of a Malay commercial and industrial community in all categories and at all levels of operations, so that Malays, other indigenous people will become full partners in aspects of the economic life of the nation (Ahmad,1982:96).

So, we can say that the pre-1969 Malaysian political structure system was not as is generally alleged, a Malay-dominated one. Political decisions were substantially influenced by financial class and bureaucratic influence, and by the politicalised style of Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

After 1969, the Malaysian Political Structure can be viewed in the light of the NEP which enunciated two broad objectives, namely the restructing of society and the eradication of poverty. On the one hand, giving opportunities to those who seek political representation. On the other hand, restructing and the eradication of poverty entails considerable modernization of bumiputra attitudes, as well as, restructuring of regional economic imbalance.

To reach the goals stated in the N.E.P., the government plays an important role; The National Corporation (PERNAS) and The State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), under the government agencies were established.

Rapid modernization and implementation of policies by the Government has shown certain outcomes:

a. It may lead to anti- government feelings as a result of the beneficiaries of such a programme.

b. Economic differentiations in the Malay community will cause change of perception and values of certain groups within the Malay community.

c. Middle-class Malays has been increasing and they play an important role in the business and public sectors.

d. This may lead to the creation of working-class or lumpen ploteria in urban areas, which is the result of migration from the kampung.

e. Increasing modernization of the Malays will cause some changes in the power structure of the community and this means that there may be a change in the Malay political supremacy in Malaysian political life.

Conclusion

After a short review of the theoretical framework of the plural society and consociational democracy concept, I started to examine/analyse the Malaysian socio-cultural and political structure.

My proposition is that the concept of consociational democracy which is formulated and asserted by Arend Lijphart is based on some small European states experience whereas the other countries/plural societies in Africa and Asia are very different, not only historically but also culturally and with various human elements.

The general theory of all sciences must be applicable in all cases of the scientific phenomena whereas Lijphart's theory is based on only European states experience. The European states which were examined by A. Lijphart have not had the same past experiences in their history, compared to the other plural societies in Africa and Asia, which were mostly colonized.

Lijphart, in his theory, did not consider the individual perception differences or individual characteristics, whereas the Europeans, to some extent, have been expected to be similar. In other words, European people are more politicalized than the people in Asian and African plural societies.

Lijphart did not speak about the <u>relative autonomy</u> of government which means that government in certain times and conditions held on to autonomy to govern the states or to protect it against external attack or to prevent class struggle or to protect a certain segment's rights in the society.

Another difference between the European small states, plural societies and the third world is that, the European states accept the liberal or open economic system and they are mostly industrialized. But plural societies in Asia and Africa, they accept the open economic system ,but mostly, government intervention can be seen in all sectors of the economy.

Malaysian Society:

Malaysian social structure can be divided and explained in two dimensions which are vertical and horizontal.

The vertical division arises because of the availability of the different sub-societies which are mainly the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians, that brings into view the Malaysian society and its structure.

Each sub-society covers a cultural membrane which is very different from one society to another and that the elements of the cultural membrane are the belief system, which is the religion, language and norms, value system and the people's perception.

There is also the cultural aspect which is language, religion, norms and value system polarization, cleveages that divide the Malaysian society. But, economical and political polarization rather than the cultural polarization are very important, that the economic and geographic (city/village, bandar/kampung) polarization were the main causes of the May 1969 riots.

In other words, horizontal polarization seems to be the core point which is the sensitive, balancing point of the Malaysian society. Horizontal divisions are mainly the social, political and economic elements of the society.

The economic consciousness of each segment, especially, for the Malay society, has been showing the growing importance of the Malay desire to hold more economic status in the social strata of the society, by way of special privileges.

In future, even as the Malay society would be divided or differentiated on an economic basis, ultimately, political power would remain in Malay hands.

Economic recession seems a serious problem which may cause imbalance in the social structure in the horizontal line. In other words, if Malaysia could not overcome economic recession, it may face many political and social problems.

A considerable number of Malays hold positions in the civil service and eventually, even more in the business private sectors, which is the aim of the N.E.P.

The social structure of Malaysia now, compared to the early 1969 have been showing changes in that more Malays are dominant in each sector of Malaysian social life.

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