ENGAGING DIVIDED SOCIETY IN THE NATION-BUILDING PROCESS:

THE CASE OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Engaging Divided Society in the Nation-Building Process: The Case of Government Communication in Malaysia.

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Abstract

This thesis explores how government engages with a divided society in the context of nation-building. The widely used yet loosely understood concept of 'engagement' in the context of government communication is the focus of this thesis. By using Malaysia as the case study, this research investigates how citizens are communicatively constructed in the context of Malaysia's post-independence nation-building process. This study is significant because research on citizen engagement in Malaysia's nation-building is limited and studies focusing on the concept of engagement in deeply divided societies are also scarce.

Thematic analysis on all eleven national action plan (NAP) documents known as Malaysia Plan (1965-2016) was conducted to enable the pattern of similarities and differences in nation-building and government communication strategies to be identified over time. Semi-structured elite interviews with the elite actors in Malaysia's federal government were conducted to understand the government's articulation and operationalisation of engagement in the context of nation-building process.

The key findings from the NAPs reveal that the nation-building in Malaysia takes in a form of national identity project. Adopting an elite instrumentalist approach, national unity becomes the focal communicative strategy in the construction of the national identity. The elite interviews on the other hand demonstrate that government actors tend to describe engagement using the notion of dialogic communication. While acknowledging the advancement in communication technologies, government actors emphasise that the face-to-face engagement initiatives with the citizens are of central importance in the nation-building process.

This thesis contributes to the studies of government strategic communication in the context of a deeply divided society that has been characterised as "plural society" that is in a state of "stable tension" (Shamsul, 2009). It helps to develop a richer understanding and knowledge of Malaysia's nation-building process and approach as a modern postcolonial nation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband, M. Khumeini, for holding the fort as long as I was away. It's about time we hold down the fort together!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASTRO	All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator
BERNAMA	*Pertubuhan Berita Nasional* Malaysia (The Malaysian National News Agency)
BMA	British Military Administration
BN	*Barisan Nasional* (National Front)
CSDU	Civil Service Delivery Unit
DNU	Department of National Unity
ECE	Eastern and Central Europe
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTP	Government Transformation Programme
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JKMPKA	*Jawatankuasa Mempromosikan Persefahaman dan Keharmonian Antara Agama* (Committee to Promote Inter-faith Understanding and Harmony)
JPNIN	*Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional* (Department of National Unity and Integration)
JPM	*Jabatan Perdana Menteri* (Prime Minister's Office)
MARA	*Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (People's Trust Council)
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCM	Ministry of Communication and Multimedia
MEASAT	Malaysia East Asia Satellite
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
NAP	National Action Plan
NCP	National Culture Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NKEA	National Key Economic Areas
PEMANDU	Performance Management and Delivery Unit

PH	*Pakatan Harapan* (Alliance of Hope)
PRIA	Public Relations Institute of Australia
PWIG	Prince of Wales Island Gazette
REACH	Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
RTM	Radio Television Malaysia
SEA	Southeast Asia
TN50	Transformation Nation 2050
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
WESP	World Economic Situation and Prospects

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of Study

Scholars, practitioners and governments around the world have recognised the role of communication in nation-building. Taylor and Kent (2006) for example emphasise that nation-building "is a process that necessitates interactions between citizens and between the state and other nations" (p. 341). In this respect, nation-building is viewed as a process because this process "involves various resources and policies, and communication is one of the most important of those resources" (Taylor & Kent, 2006, p. 342). Mass communication in particular has been acknowledged "as a central part of most nation-building programs" (Taylor & Kent, 2006, p. 342).

The belief on the important role of mass media in nation-building is not new as its history could be traced back to the development communication. It is notable that the earlier works of communication in this context suggested the significant role of media in assisting national development predominantly in the Third World. In explaining the origin of development communication, Waisbord (2001) establishes that it began with the "post-war international aid programs to countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa" (p.1). During this period, these regions faced major issues regarding "poverty, illiteracy, poor health and a lack of economic, political and social infrastructures" (Waisbord, 2001, p. 1). Waisbord further demonstrates that:

> Development communication commonly refers to the application of communication strategies and principles in the developing world. It is derived from theories of development and social change that identified the main problems of the post-war world in terms of a lack of development or progress equivalent to Western countries (Waisbord, 2001, p. 1).

Clearly modernisation theory became the dominant paradigm in the earlier development communication studies especially among the developing nations.

However, the earlier scholars in development communication research in developing nations later saw the flaws in the conception of development in this old paradigm (see Schramm, 1979; Rogers, 1972). The problem with the old paradigm is that the industrialisation, advancement in technology, economic growth and quantity were considered as the benchmark to modernity. The media on the other hand were perceived as the main driver in influencing the development process as well as often used by the elites as the top-down communication tools.

As the focus of modern national development among the developing nations shifted, so did the communication strategies. The development focus is no longer about physical infrastructure building and economic growth alone. What is viewed as nation-building has extended to the aspect of what 'makes' a nation itself. Particularly in post-colonial nations, nation-building has been the task of the local elites and government since these countries received their independence. Within this context, the notion of nation-building does not only signify modernity, but it also represents what a nation intents to be. The nation-building within the post-colonial nations however has proven to be a challenging task "with the degree of racial, ethnic, religious or cultural pluralism within a state" (Derichs & Haberer, 2006, p.1). That said, in the process of realising the nation-of-intent (see Shamsul, 1996a), it becomes the government's duty to not only reconcile the plurality of the nations-of-intent, but also to communicate the ideal nation-of-intent to its citizen.

That said, not only the focus of nation-building has shifted. The recent developments in communication however have not only led to a renewed interest especially among the scholars and practitioners in strategic communication but also among the governments. The sophistication of information and communication technology especially on the potential contribution of social media is believed to have affected the way governments communicate with their citizens as argued by several technology optimists. These technologies according to Verčič, Verčič and Sriramesh (2015) "are evolving so fast that research about them is always playing catch-up" (p. 142). Robson and James (2013 highlight that the public relations academics for example have focused on social media studies largely in regard of their potential in enabling two-way communication and allowing co-creation of meaning. In the context of adoption of ICT by the governments

however, Asgarkhani (2005) argues that as the information age and web continues to expand and public is more aware of the benefits of Internet, there is a high expectation that the government should provide their service at par with the private sector.

Therefore, in-line with the changes in the communication landscape, the governments around the world attempt to move away from the old-fashioned top-down communication approach and shift towards a more contemporary communication strategy. Henceforth, 'engagement' seems to become a catchphrase among governments today. Despite the extensive use of the term, what fundamentally constitutes 'engagement' remains unclear. With this in view, Taylor and Kent (2014) argue that the term "engagement" has been widely used, but it is not defined properly. Along the similar lines, Berger (2009) contends that engagement is still a subject underexplored and that the term should be used only if its significance is fully understood. For Johnston and Taylor (2018), the term engagement can be problematic because the term "has been used to describe just about every type of interaction" (p.1).

Nonetheless, attempts were made by the communication scholars and practitioners in contributing towards the understanding of the concept of engagement in the recent years. To date, research surrounding this topic has been discussed within the themes of participation (see Rowe and Frewer, 2005), civic and political engagement (see Ekman and Amnå, 2012), social media engagement (see Graham, 2014), stakeholder engagement (see DiStaso, 2015), and science and education (see Gregory and Lock, 2008). Despite these attempts, the question remains open as to the conceptual understanding of the term itself, particularly in the context of government strategic communication.

Having said that the overall aim of this study is to explore how engagement is understood and operationalised in the context of government communication in nation-building among the developing countries. More specifically, this study aims at examining how government engages its public in nation-building in the context of contemporary Malaysia. The research objectives, scope, limitation and contribution for this work are presented under the following section.

1.2 Research Objectives, Scope, Limitation and Contribution

As mentioned previously, this study aims at understanding how Malaysian government engages its citizens in nation-building process. Research on Malaysia's nation-building from the strategic communication approach is evidently scarce. Previous studies dedicated to nation-building in Malaysia were largely leaning towards comparative leaderships and political ideologies (see Singh, 2010; Chin, 2010; Ishak, 2006; Mohd Sani et al., 2009; Saad, 2012). Despite the limitation, Ahmad and Idid (2017) conducted a study to gauge the Malaysia's public opinion and reaction to 1Malaysia. 1Malaysia, famous for its slogan People First, Performance Now, is Malaysia's most recent nation-building project aims at creating an inclusive national identity and strengthening national unity. Their findings suggest that the concept was very well accepted by the citizen at the beginning. However, over the years the respondents felt less enthusiastic about 1Malaysia especially among the Chinese. In light of these findings, Ahmad and Idid (2017) suggest that more effort is needed from the government "to ensure the slogan 'People First, Performance Now' was not mere rhetoric" (p. 169).

In regard to strategic communication, Martinez and Kiousis (2005) propound the view on why government Public Relations campaigns fail to appeal to some group of people after analysing the outcomes of study by Taylor (2000) on Malaysia's Neighbourliness Campaign. Their observation suggests that there could be lack of theoretical grounding such as communication theories, postmodern theories among others to assist public relations practitioners in implementing successful campaigns for nation-building. Another point to consider is the globalisation and role of ICT plays today, as according to Martinez and Kiousis (2005) some public relations practitioners might be oblivious and relied solely on their previous experience. Another ground to look at also is the "cynicism of government institutions is often identified as the culprit of failed communication strategies in developed and underdeveloped nations" (Martinez & Kiousis, 2005, p.7). Therefore, by focusing the study on communication process between government and public and answering questions of why and how government communicates at various levels or fails to do so can help shed some light (Heise, 1985).

Having said that, these discussions illuminate the importance of government communication in nation-building. There has yet to be a study that specifically demonstrates how government engages citizen in this context. As argued by Voster (2005), it is important for the whole community to be engaged in the process of nation-building. There is, however, a few things that is worth mentioning pertaining to this study. First of all, it is important to clarify here that "nation-building" in the context of this research is presented as national projects that lead to modernisation and development, and thus the communication process in this context is viewed as at the national level or "internal", that is between the government and its citizen in the effort of communicating the national agenda so that it becomes a shared vision nationally. This is not to be confused with "nation-branding". Although there are some elements in nation-branding that are intertwined with the idea of nation-building such as the promotional of national identity and local culture, however, nation-branding looks into the nation image and reputation management, which aims for international outlook (Fan, 2010). That said, nation-branding focuses on the use of elements that "embodies the characteristics of a nation" in the effort of creating the uniqueness of a country that can have a direct impact on economy for the country through having positive reputation internationally (Fan, 2010, p.100).

Having said that, this research is relevant and timely with the on-going Vision 2020 in Malaysia. The details of the context of this study are elaborated in Chapter 2. With that, this research seeks to specifically answer the following research objectives:

1. To analyse the discursive representations of nation-building in Malaysia over time.
2. To investigate how the Malaysian government understands and articulates the meaning of engagement in the context of nation-building process.
3. To understand and evaluate the key government communication strategies in engaging with the Malaysia's racially divided society.

For the sake of clarity, it is also important to distinguish the "kind" of engagement I am looking at in the context of this study. What I mean by engagement is strictly in the

context of government communication, that is public engagement, or some governments prefer to use the terminology citizen engagement. Therefore, the term public engagement and citizen engagement will be used interchangeably for this work. This concept does not equate "civic engagement", the terminology used by Robert Putnam (1995) to describe publics' connection with the life of their communities in creating social capital. In this respect, Putnam's civic engagement represents actual activities and involvements among people within the communities. Unfortunately, the term civic engagement has become a catchword that is used to describe almost everything under the sun which eventually outlives its usefulness (Berger, 2009). With this in mind, engagement in the context of my work represents government communication in involving and communicating decisions in policy settings to the citizens.

That said, this study aims at making significant contribution to the knowledge of government communication practice in the nation-building particularly in the context of divided society, and towards understanding of how government communication changes over time in non-Western contexts particularly in post-colonial Southeast Asian nations. Be that as it may, I hope this study is able to make a distinctive contribution in government strategic communication in the society that has been characterised as "plural society" that is in the constant state of "stable tension", hence extending our understanding and knowledge in Malaysia's nation-building process and approach.

1.3 Methodology

To describe a concept that has been loosely defined which in this case is 'engagement', it is imperative to understand the contextualisation of nation-building in order to make sense of how 'engagement' fits in the context of this study. Therefore, in fulfilling the research objectives outlined previously, this research employed the case study approach. In particular, the Malaysia's National Action Plan (NAP) documents known as Malaysia Plan were used to allow the identification of pattern of similarities or differences of communication and nation-building over time. Hence, the use of the documents for this research helped in illuminating the conception of Malaysia's nation-

building since the state was formed until today. Semi-structured interviews with the Malaysia's Federal Government actors were also carried out to understand how the government articulated the meaning of engagement based on their experience in the context understudy. The findings from both documents and interviews were then analysed by adopting thematic analysis technique to interpret findings and draw conclusions for this study.

1.4 Organisation of Thesis

This thesis comprises of ten chapters. The remaining chapters of this thesis are described as below:

Chapter 2 primarily sets out the scenario of the context under investigation, which is Malaysia. The history of Malaysia, media and communication, political system as well as background of Malaysia's nation-building are detailed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 and *Chapter 4* highlight the literature and discussion relevant to the context of this study. *Chapter 3* focuses on the debates surrounding the concept of nation-building and state-building and their relevance to the contemporary nation-building. The idea of nation and nationalism in the context of postcolonial states is also discussed in this chapter. *Chapter 4* on the other hand presents the discussions regarding the role of communication in development and nation building as well as the role of the government. The concept of engagement in the context of strategic communication along with the capacity of 'engagement' in relations to nation-building are also explored in this chapter.

Chapter 5 provides an explanation and justification for the methodology employed for this study. The rationale of research methods, sampling procedures and data analysis technique are also discussed thoroughly in this chapter.

Chapter 6, *Chapter 7* and *Chapter 8* which embody the core of this thesis are the empirical chapters that consist of findings from the date obtained for this study. Each chapter attempts to respond to each research objective that served as the guideline for

this research. The data provided in these chapters were obtained from the national action plan (NAP) documents as well as the elite interviews with the Malaysia's federal government officers. *Chapter 6* presents Malaysia's post-independence nation-building efforts and its 'nation of intent' over time as established from the NAPs. Whereas *Chapter 7* details the findings from the interviews with the Malaysian government actors to understand how the government articulates and strategies engagement initiatives in the context of Malaysia's nation-building process. Finally, *Chapter 8* demonstrates the role of communication in engaging Malaysia's multiracial society in nation-building process over time.

Chapter 9 provides the summary of the main findings from the previous findings chapters. The significance and meanings of these findings are discussed in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 10 is the final chapter of this thesis. This chapter outlines the significance of this study for both the theory and practice of strategic government communication. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies as well as my final thoughts are also indicated in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to provide the background of the context under investigation, which in this case is Malaysia. The aim of this chapter is to establish an understanding towards the history, culture, political system, media and communication system as well as the background of nation-building of the country.

2.2 Brief History of Malaysia

The establishment of Malaysia's political, economic and cultural structure could be traced back in the 15th century during the sovereignty of the Malacca Empire or *Kerajaan Melaka* (Hashim & Mahpuz, 2011). The bustling trading activities in Malacca at that time did not only attract traders from India, China and Middle East, but also the attention of European empires that were already colonised India and several African states. For this apparent reason, Malaysia has a very long colonial history, which started some times more than 500 years ago where the country was colonised between 1511 and 1957 by three European empires and one Asian power. It began with the Portuguese who invaded and colonised Malacca for 130 years from 1511 until the Dutch took over and occupied the state from 1641 to 1824 (Abdul Rahman, 2002). Between 1786 and 1824, two European powers ruled parts of Malaya when the British arrived in Penang, formerly known as Prince of Wales Island (north) and the Dutch over Malacca (south). The British were in Malaya from 1786 to 1941 until the Japanese invaded and took over up to the end of World War II. The British then returned in 1945 and continued to rule over Malaya until 1957.

Malaysia was neither a state nor did it attempt to become a nation until 1963. In the early days of British colonisation, the country was known as the British Malaya. In 1946,

Malayan Union[1] was formed, which created massive protests especially among the Malays (Milner, 1987). The main issues that caused the dissatisfactions among the Malays were the threatening position of the Malay Sultans and the granting of citizenship to the non-Malays based on the jus soli principle. Malayan Union was then abolished and replaced by Federation of Malaya in 1948. The non-Malays were later granted the citizenship based on the agreement that they acknowledged and accepted the special rights of the Malays and other indigenous people in the state. Malaysia Federation of Malaya eventually received independence on August 31, 1957 and the name remained until 1963. In September 1961, the first Prime Minister of the federation initiated the idea of creating "Greater Malaysia" which originally consisted of Federation of Malaya, Singapore and Borneo territories including Brunei (British Document on the End of Empire, 2004). Brunei however, decided not to join the union to safeguard the country from losing its sovereignty and oil revenue (British Document on the End of Empire, 2004). On September 16, 1963, Malaysia was finally formed. In 1965, Singapore was expelled from the federation and became an independent state due to conflict of interests between ethnic Malay majority in Peninsular of Malaysia and ethnic Chinese majority in Singapore in terms of envisioning how Malaysia should be. The then Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew had proposed 'Malaysian Malaysia' concept as the nation of intent for Malaysia as a new independent state to promote equality among Malaysian citizens. Lee's idea however had threatened the Malaysia's social contract through the Article 153 of the Constitution which specifically mentioned the special rights of the Malays and indigenous people of Malaysia.

Malaysia's experience in the past has contributed significantly to the diversity of its society today. Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019) stated that the current population in Malaysia is estimated at 32.6 million. The population consists of *Bumiputeras* (69.3%), Chinese (22.8%), Indian (6.9%) and others (1%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). It is important to clarify that the *Bumiputera* or 'sons of the soil' in Sanskrit; is the term used to describe the Malays and non-Malay *Bumiputeras*;

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[1] The creation of Malayan Union was seen as undermining the supremacy of the Malay Sultans as well as challenging the rights and privileges of the Malays as "sons of the soil" (Milner, 1987). The Malays were particularly unhappy with the issue of granting the citizenship to the immigrants and non-Malays based on the jus soli principle (Abdul Rahman, 2015).

which make up the largest race in Malaysia. Most of the Malay occupies the Peninsular of Malaysia (West Malaysia), whereas in Borneo (East Malaysia) the largest race is the non-Malay *Bumiputera*, which is the Iban in Sarawak and the Kadazan-Dusun in Sabah. According to the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, while Islam is the official religion of the Federation, other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation (Article 3, Federal Constitution, 2010). Buddhism is the second largest faith in Malaysia, followed by Christianity and Hinduism.

Although Malaysia is synonym with the concept of "plural society" due to its multiracial society, Shamsul (2009) on the other hand describes the current state of ethnic landscape in Malaysia as "stable tension".

> Malaysia has since been in a state of "stable tension", which means that we have been living in a society dominated by many contradictions but have managed most of them through a continuous process of consensus-seeking negotiation. Sometimes, the process itself is a solution (Shamsul, 2009, p.12).

According to Hirschman (1986), the history of multi-ethnic society in Southeast Asian countries began even before the arrival of the European powers due to the "ebb and flow of regional empires and extensive trading networks" (p.333). In the Malaysian case, this is especially true owing to the port cities that existed in the Malay Peninsula as described by Hirschman (1986), "nowhere were these events more spectacular than on the Malay peninsula" (p.333). For a country that was rich in natural resources, the potential of developing the tin mining industry as well as agriculture in the nineteenth century had resulted in the immigration of Chinese, Indonesian and Indian who were brought in the country during the colonial administration for labour purposes. While the migration and economic activities in the past had essentially added to the racial landscape in Malaysia, unfortunately this had also inevitably caused racial conflicts among the society. Furthermore, countries in Southeast Asia generally suffer from ethnic conflicts as a result of divide and rule policies by the colonial masters in the past (Landé, 1999), and Malaysia is one of them. Despite the struggles that Malaysia had to go through, the country today prides herself for being a multiracial and multi-religious federation and is generally considered as an exemplary of a successful post-colonial

nation in term of managing multi-ethnic society and having relatively political stability in Southeast Asia (Saad, 2012; Abdul Rahman, 2002).

In terms of the economic outlook, the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) by the United Nations stated that all countries in the world are classified based on various dimensions of the world economy (United Nations, 2014). They are either characterised as developed economies, economies in transition or developing economies. A distinction is made between fuel exporters and fuel importers from among the economies in transition and the developing countries. Malaysia is categorised under "developing economies" by means of upper middle-income nation (United Nations, 2014) with gross domestic product (GDP) at USD\$326.9 billion and GDP growth at 6.0% in 2014 (The World Bank, 2015). The unemployment rates remain low across much of East Asia with the estimation at below 3% in Malaysia (The World Bank, 2015; United Nations, 2014). As a producer of raw materials, such as tin and rubber in the 1970s, Malaysia now has diversified economy and become a leading exporter of electrical appliances, electronic parts and components, palm oil, and natural gas. Despite the hit of Asian financial crisis between 1997 and 1998, the country managed to sustain strong growth rates, with the average of 5.5% per year from 2000 to 2008. However, in 2009 Malaysia was affected by the Global Financial Crisis but recovered rapidly, posting growth rates averaging 5.7% since 2010 (The World Bank, 2015).

2.3 Malaysian Constitution and Political System

In order to understand the government communication structure, it is worth to have some knowledge on the overall structure of the Malaysian government. The Government of Malaysia, which is also known as the Federal Government is a national authority body based in the federal territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya. Categorised as a representative democratic country, Malaysia is a federation of thirteen states operating within the constitutional monarchy under the Westminster parliamentary system. Each state has its own ruler, and each state government is headed by a Chief Minister who is appointed by the hereditary ruler (Sultan) or *Yang di-Pertua Negeri* (Governor) for states that do not have a Sultan.

The Federation adopts the separation of powers principle that consists of three main components presented in the Federal Constitution. They are "legislative", "executive" and "judiciary". The *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* (King) is the Supreme Head of the Federation who is elected by the Conference of Rulers for a term of five years (Article 32, Federal Constitution). The *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* is also the head of religion of the Federation, which is Islam, as well as the head of religion for the states that do not have a Sultan. The legislative branch of the Federation has a Parliament that consists of two Houses: *Dewan Negara* (Senate) and *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives). The Senate comprises of seventy senators who are appointed and elected through *Dewan Undangan Negeri* (State Assembly) with two senators for each state and the rest of the members are appointed by *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong*, while the House of Representatives comprises of 222 members that are elected through General Elections held every five years.

For the executive division, the *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* appoints the Prime Minister, who is the head of government of Malaysia. There is no specific term length for the position of Prime Minister as long as he is in command of confidence of the majority of members of the House of Representatives (Article 42, Federal Constitution). In Malaysia, the Prime Minister is generally the leader of a political party that represents the greatest number of seats in the House through General Elections. His roles include advising the *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* on various matters pertaining the government administration, which consist of the appointment of other federal ministers (Cabinet) from either House of Parliament as well as appointments related to legislative and judiciary. The current Government of Malaysia is led by Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad since May 10, 2018 after defeating the country's longest ruling party, *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) led by former Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Abdul Razak in the 14th General Election.

It is necessary to emphasise here that the fieldwork for this study was conducted before the 14th General Election that took place on May 9, 2018. The data obtained for this study however were not affected by the general election results after the party led by the former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, *Pakatan Harapan* (Alliance of

Hope) won a historic victory against *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) that had ruled Malaysia since the country received her independence in 1957. The consistency of the data is maintained before and after the election due to several reasons. Firstly, the text-based material used for this study, which is the national action plans known as Malaysia Plan is a document that is reviewed and revised every five-year cycle. To date, there are eleven Malaysia Plan documents in total with the most recent one is from year 2016 to 2020 and is still on going. Secondly, the study does not intend to analyse the implications of the currently implemented policies from the previous government, instead, the focus of this research is to investigate how the policies are communicated by the government to its citizen. Finally, the participants interviewed for this study were mainly the actual government officers and not the politicians or Members of Parliament except for Dr. Mahathir Mohamad; hence their relevance to be included in this work.

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                    Yang Di-Pertuan Agong
                          (King)
                                              Conference of
  Rulers of the                                  Rulers
    States

              Legislative          Executive              Judiciary

                                       Prime
                Parliament            Minister           Federal Court

                                                  Commission
                                                    Bodies
                                      Cabinet of
     House of        Senate           Ministers          Court of Appeal
   Representative

                  Attorney-General     Ministries    High Court of      High Court of
                   of Federation                    Peninsula Malaysia  Sabah and Sarawak
      Citizen
      (Voters)

                                      Government
                                  Departments/ Agencies
      State
   Governments
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Table 1: Overview of the structure and system

2.4 Media and Communication System

The development of government communication practice in Malaysia has a strong tie to its past particularly in the context of media. Being colonised by European powers earlier, it is not surprising that the printing presses and mass media were introduced in Malaysia by the colonist. The first newspaper published in Malaysia was an English language government gazette known as The Government Gazette, which was later renamed to Prince of Wales Island Gazette (PWIG). Began its publication in 1806 (although some scholars argued 1805, while some said in 1803) in Penang or formerly known as Prince of Wales Island (Hasim, 1992), one of the earliest British settlements in Malaysia, the publication had marked the starting point of the birth of English language newspapers in the country.

The first Malay language newspaper in Malaysia was called *Jawi Peranakan* (The Moslem Local Born) which was published in Singapore in 1877 (Ahmad, 1941). Published every Monday, the newspaper was strongly influenced by the Arabic journalistic terms and methods. There were others that came out later by a few years which were *Nujum ul-Fajar* (Morning Stars), *Jajahan Melayu* (Malay Territories) and *Seri Perak* (Light of Perak) but none of them continued their publication for long (Ahmad, 1941). There were also others established in the early 1900 like *The Chahaya Pulau Pinang* (1900), *Al-Imam* (1906), *Utusan Melayu* (1908), *Nuracha* (1911) and *Pengasoh* (1918). Beginning with *The Chahaya Pulau Pinang* all these newspapers were published in print Jawi script (Arabic alphabet), as against the process of lithography. These old newspapers published regular news items for both local and foreign as well as correspondence and discussions.

Today, the print media in Malaysia are extended to more than just English and Malay language. They also include Chinese, Tamil as well as some Sabah and Sarawak's indigenous languages. On top of that, some of these newspapers are owned or affiliated with political parties, while some claim to be independent media. The summary of the current print media in Malaysia is provided in *Table 1*.

In terms of broadcast media, their existence in Malaysia today dated back in 1921 when the British electrical engineer A.L. Birch brought the first radio set into the country that started as Johore Wireless Association, broadcasted at 300 metres waves. The

development of radio in Malaysia further flourished in 1930s. The British Broadcasting Corporation of Malaya was later opened on March 11, 1937 and subsequently taken over by the Straits Settlement and became as part of the British Information Ministry, which was also known as the Malayan Broadcasting Corporation. The Japanese later took over the existing radio stations in Penang, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban and Singapore and exploited them by transmitting its propaganda after successfully taking over Malaya from the British in 1942. However, it was not too long when the British came back to rule Malaya in 1943 and reclaimed those stations. The Department of Broadcasting was later founded in Singapore on April 1, 1956. When the social riots took place, which led to the declaration of emergency in 1948 due to the Communist insurgency, the development of radio services in Malaya became even more crucial (Radio Televisyen Malaysia, 2016).

In the early 1950s, the broadcasting activities in Malaya were operated from its temporary studio in Jalan Young, which is now known as Jalan Cenderasari, in Kuala Lumpur. Eventually in 1956, the operations were moved to the Federal House, Kuala Lumpur. From there, the broadcasting services in Malaysia were expanded throughout the country by establishing more stations including Sabah and Sarawak. Moreover, the government was able to generate a new source of revenue through the commercial advertisements which were first aired on the radio in 1960. When Malaysia was formed on September 16, 1963, "*Inilah Radio Malaysia*" (This is Radio Malaysia) was used as an introduction by the deejays for the first time to greet listeners (Radio Televisyen Malaysia, 2016).

Broadcasting in Malaysia marked another achievement when the television services were introduced on December 28, 1963. Broadcast operations were later centralised from the *Angkasapuri* Complex[2], which began its telecast on October 6, 1969. Radio and television services in Malaysia were eventually merged under the Ministry of Information (Radio Televisyen Malaysia, 2016). As of today, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) owns two TV channels and thirty-four radio stations.

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[2] *Angkasapuri* was known as Radio Malaya which began its operation on April 1, 1946. Today it is the headquarter of Malaysian government owned broadcaster, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM).

In terms of language availability, both television and radio stations in Malaysia nowadays have included other languages like Chinese, Tamil and Sabah and Sarawak's indigenous languages apart from English and Malay language. The introduction of private broadcast stations later had further added to the landscape of broadcast media in Malaysia. Similar to print media, some broadcast media today are also either owned or affiliated with certain political parties. The existing broadcast media in the country is summarised in *Table 1*.

Organisation	Date Established	Type	Ownership/ Shareholders	Print	Broadcast
Department of Broadcasting, Malaysia or better known as Radio Television Malaysia (RTM)	April 1, 1946	Government	Ministry of Communication & Multimedia	None	• **TV**: TV1 TV2 TVi (available via ASTRO) • **Radio**: 34 radio stations
Media Prima	September 3, 2003	Private	• Media Prima Berhad • Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group	• News Straits Times Press (NSTP): • New Straits Times (English • Berita Harian (Malay • Harian Metro (Malay)	• **TV**: TV3 (Malay/English) NTV7 (Malay/English/ Chinese) 8TV (English/ Chinese TV9 (Malay) • **Radio**: Hot FM (Malay) Fly FM (English) One FM (Chinese
The Star Media Group	September 9, 1971		• Star Publications (Malaysia) • Political party Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA)	• The Star	• **Radio** Red FM (English) Suria FM (Malay) 988 FM (Chinese) Capital FM (Women's radio)

All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator (ASTRO)	June 1, 1996	Direct broadcast satellite, Paid TV	Astro Malaysia Holdings		• TV 170 TV channels • Radio Hitz FM Mix FM Era FM Sinar FM Lite FM MY FM THR Gegar THR Raaga Melody FM
BERNAMA	May 20, 1968	Official news agency of the government	Government of Malaysia	• BERNAMA radio (24 hours news and talk radio)	• BERNAMA TV (broadcast via ASTRO)
Malaysiakini (Malaysia Today)	November 20, 1999	Online news portal	Independent • Available in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil		• KiniTV (internet TV news)
Free Malaysia Today	2009	Online news portal	Independent • Bilingual		

Table 2: The main media outlets in Malaysia.

Based on the history and development of media in Malaysia provided in this section, it is apparent that mainstream media like newspapers and broadcast media play various roles in facilitating the development and welfare of the society. As noted by Peters and Pooley (2012), when communication becomes an axis in modern society, the role of media becomes more significant. Due to their nature of providing communication among the members of the public, media can be considered as "public organs" (Habermas, 1991).

In the case of Malaysia, it is apparent that the colonial government relied heavily on the media before the country achieved its independence. For example, it is evident in the early development of newspapers in Malaysia when censorship was introduced by the colonial administration where proof sheets had to be submitted to the Secretary to Government Office in order for the authority to review and erase any part that the government felt unnecessary and unsuitable for public viewing (Hasim, 1992). This practice also applied to newspaper advertising at that time. That said, it also proves the top-down communication practice between the government and its citizens.

It is also interesting to acknowledge that before the ruling of the current government, media in Malaysia were largely divided by two opposing camps which were the mainstream that were generally seen as the mouthpiece of the government, and alternative which were majorly associated with the opposing parties. As of 2018, Malaysia was ranked at 145 against 180 other countries in the World Press Freedom Index. This was due to journalists were subject to harassment in light of 1MDB scandal (*Reporters Without Bothers*, 2018). Although Article 10 under Federal Constitution guarantees the rights of Malaysian citizens for freedom of speech, assembly and association, however, the privilege of "freedom" can only be enjoyed in a "careful" manner. The freedom of press in Malaysia on the other hand, is not explicitly mentioned in the Federation Constitution (Ratnam & Milne, 1967). However, in view of the administration of the current government, the media are given more freedom to encourage mature democracy in the country (The Star, 2018) which is a big step taken by the government.

2.4.1 ICT as Communication Tools

In the recent years, Malaysia has witnessed a drastic change in the nation's communication landscape. These changes can be seen as a welcoming step to the possibility of fostering a more "mature democratic society practising a form of mature consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that can be a model for many developing countries" as stated in the country's Vision 2020 aspiration. This section therefore serves as a backgrounder to the advancement of media and communication, and how and why internet platforms like social media rose to prominent in Malaysia as well as received attention from the government as of late.

The mid 1990s can be considered as the internet age in Malaysia (Salman et. al, 2013). The Prime Minister at that time, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed (1981-2003) was among the few leaders in the world at that time who saw the internet was going to be a transformative force in social and economic development and that he was very committed to having no-censorship Internet policy (Tapsell, 2013). Subsequently, internet has continuously taken Malaysia by storm and rapidly become the alternative voice for citizens especially in matters regarding politics and current issues. For this reason, it is not surprising that Malaysians are heavy users of Internet.

As of 2018, Malaysia's internet penetration was 87% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2017) reported that most users accessed the internet from home (85.6%) on their smartphones (89.4%) making the country a mobile-oriented society. In terms of activities, majority users used internet to communicate by text (96.3%), visit social networking sites (89.3%), get information (86.9%), listen to music/ radio (72.7%) and stream/watch videos/TV (70%).

In the context of online media movement, Malaysia, which for many technology scholars, remains very much 'a foreign country', has its fair share of unrest and digital media activism but has received far less scholarly attention than countries such as Tunisia, Egypt or the United States (Postill, 2014). The pinnacle of social media activism in Malaysia could possibly begin in 1998, which witnessed the *Reformasi* (Reformation) movement after the sudden dismissal of Former Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the leadership of Mahathir Mohamed. Alternative information platforms

like blogs mushroomed the Malaysian internet scene due to the alleged bias reporting in the mainstream media. However, it could be argued that, even if there were bias in favour of the Government in terms of news coverage, it was due to by the virtue of it having greater news value because it was the government, this would be only 'natural' (Ratnam & Milne, 1967). For this reason, countless websites in supporting Anwar suddenly bourgeoned the cyber-world as a result of protests from the people which not only provided information that was not covered in the mainstream media, but it also marked the birth of vibrant alternative media on the internet (Rajaratnam, 2009). On top of that, because there was no specific regulation governing the online media, other prominent alternative news portals were also booming such as The Malaysian Insider (since 2008), Free Malaysia Today (since 2009) and The Malaysian Insider (since 2008).

The hangover of Anwar Ibrahim's arrest continues to contribute to the vibrancy of social media scene and proves to be impactful in Malaysian political arena. The spread of information about the activities of the new movement had also led to the culmination of the formation of a new political party (Salman et al., 2011). Internet, particularly the social media platforms were used heavily as communication tools by the opposition parties since they were rarely highlighted in the mainstream media. Unfortunately, an echo chamber is created when individuals seek to find information and sources that support their viewpoints and filter out countervailing information. As they find added support for their views repeated online via such mechanisms as emails, blog posts, retweets, social media posts or links, possibly in a more extreme form, they become even more set in their views and less likely to seek countervailing opinions (Newman et al., 2012).

In the Malaysia's 12th election which took place in 2008, *Barisan Nasional* or BN which was fully backed by the mainstream media, suffered unprecedented loss (Muniandy & Muniandy, 2013) by winning only 51% of the votes; and 63% of parliamentary seats which automatically marked the worst performance ever in Malaysia's 50 years of independence. It was the first time since 1969, BN lost the two-thirds majority in the parliament (The Economist, 2008). The Prime Minister at that time, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who later stepped down in 2009, openly admitted to the media on the failure of his party to acknowledge the potential of social media.

The development of online media in Malaysia had also led the mainstream media, both print and broadcast to go digital, which means they are available both on the internet platforms as well as mobile applications. As a result, they become more convenient to be accessed from anywhere as long as the users are connected to the internet.

The opportunities available through the advance development of media and communication could not be simply ignored by the Malaysian government. Realising how influential social media is, Malaysian government decided to take action by adopting social media and tried to maintain its presence in the social media realm particularly during the premiership of former Prime Minister Najib Razak. Najib Razak instructed all government ministries to have a Facebook and also a Twitter account (Tapsell, 2013).

One of the efforts in recognising social media as a communication tool for the government is by providing the Twitter guidelines manual published under the Prime Minister's Office's website (see Publication, JPM). The former Prime Minister himself had given his assurance in preparing the country towards a mature democracy through adopting communication platforms in the cyber world. To ensure that the government officials are able to upkeep with the current communication environment and get adequate training in social media, it was reported recently that a Malaysian university had opened a centre known as Malaysia Digital Innovation Centre to help government officials improve their social media skills (GovInsider, 2016). Apart from the adoption of digital media by the government offices, the utilisation of digital media was mostly notable in the current Malaysia's nation-building project, which is the 1Malaysia since it's launching in 2010.

By looking at the events that happened since the introduction of the Internet in the mid-1990s, it can be concluded that the social media era in Malaysia began as a result of intense political usage as well as the demand from people on "freer information flow as the mainstream media is perceived to be controlled by the government" (Salman et al., 2013).

2.4.2 Communication Practice in Public Sector

Within the existing complex government structure, lies the organisational structure of individual ministry and department which consists of equally intricate hierarchy. For the sake of explanation, an example is provided through the illustration below. The single Malaysia's public service administration like the Ministry of Communication and Multimedia (MCM) typically comprises layers of heads that include a minister, directors and their deputies; office of advisors such as legal and communication; as well as government officers that represent their departments respectively which usually consist of special officers and employees with diverse specialised skills and tasks.

The office of Minister of Communications and Multimedia is assisted by Political Secretary, Press Secretary, Private Secretary and Special Officers. The Deputy Minister's office is structured in almost similar hierarchy except there is no Political Secretary is appointed in his office. On top of the current ministry's structure, one of the most important roles in the government is communication. The communication arms for the government's ministry are generally in an elaborate manner, led by a Head, and assisted by officers and assistant officers. In Malaysia, each ministry has its own official communication unit, and all departments and agencies under each ministry have their own public relations officers or information officers. For example, the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia has an official Corporate Communication Unit, and all departments and agencies reporting to the ministry have their in-house communication team respectively. For the Department of Information; one of the departments under the ministry that has operational offices in the states and districts around Malaysia; each office has its own communication, information and research officers.

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Minister
   |
Deputy Minister
   |
Secretary General ──── Deputy Secretary General (Policy) ──── Divisions:
                                                               1. Strategic Planning
                                                               2. Communication Technology
                                                               3. International
                                                               4. Content Development

                  ──── Deputy Secretary General (Operation) ──── Divisions:
                                                               1. Strategic Communication
                                                               2. Control & Compliance
                                                               3. Infrastructure & Application
                                                               4. Application for Filming &
                                                                  Performance by Foreign Artistes

                  ──── Deputy Secretary General (Administration) ──── Divisions:
                                                               1. Human Resource Management
                                                               2. Finance
                                                               3. Development
                                                               4. Accounts
                                                               5. Service Management
                                                               6. Information Management

   ├── Office of Legal Advisor
   ├── Corporate Communication Unit
   ├── Internal Auditor
   ├── KPI Unit
   └── Integrity Unit

Departments:
1. Broadcasting
2. Information
3. Special Affairs
4. Protection of Privacy
5. Tun Abdul Razak Broadcasting & Information Institute
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Table 3: Organisational Chart of Ministry of Communications and Multimedia, Malaysia.

The trend of employing communication specialists in the government as noted by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) can be seen as a significant development in strategic communication as they act as a dominant force in shaping the course and contents of campaigns. These specialists can be "communication and media specialists, public relations experts, pollsters and campaign managers who seem to have an increasingly powerful voice in the selection and packaging of campaign issues and managing the conduct of political candidates in such ways as to achieve the 'best picture' on television" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 90). In addition, the government information officers often play a role in creating public understanding of government policies as they represent visible figure at interfacing between "the bureaucracy" and "society" (Édes, 2000).

Although all ministries in the Malaysian government have their own communication units and divisions, it is nonetheless important to note that the illustration above does not suggest that all ministries and departments under the Malaysian government are structured in the exact way. The description, however, is adequate to give a general overview of the government's ministries that are typically highly departmentalised in nature.

2.5 Malaysia's Nation-Building

Nation-building has always been the central issue in the Malaysian politics despite its relatively political stability and steady economic development (Ishak, 2006; Ishak, 2002). The centrality of the concern is due to the varying 'nationalisms' underlying within and across ethnic groups in Malaysia (Ishak, 2002). Describing Malaysia's nation building however, requires revisiting the key occasions in the country to make sense of the nation-building efforts today.

2.5.1 Pre-Independence Nation-Building: The Post- War Malaya

According to Abdul Rahman (2015), it has been said that the two world wars that took place in the twentieth century have been the contributing factors to ending an old era and leading to a new one. In the case of Southeast Asia, significant transformation transpired during the World War II that erupted between 1941 and 1945. After the Western colonies were defeated in countries in Southeast Asia, the centuries-old myth of 'White Man's superiority' was no longer celebrated and this gave hope that Asians could rise and lead their destiny (Abdul Rahman, 2015).

While Malaysia was still under the British administration in the 1940s, the unexpected Japanese invasion took place in 1941 and occupied the country until 1945. It began with the Japanese propaganda to undermine the British sovereignty which eventually led to the defeat of the British administration (Ahmad, 2014). Although the propaganda "Asia for Asians" and "Liberating Asian Western Domination" against the Western colonists was initially welcomed by the people (Ahmad, 2014), unfortunately it was not long

before the acts of terror and violence were committed by the Imperial Japanese Army during the occupation. The Japanese occupation eventually came to an end when the British returned to Malaya.

The battles between the British army together with its alliance and the Japanese Empire unfortunately had left Malaya in the war-torn condition. The state was not only in need of rebuilding, but a new policy too was in need to be introduced. Therefore, after the surrender and departure of the Japanese, the state-building exercise began with the establishment of Malayan Union in 1946 under the British Military Administration (BMA), which consisted of "former four Federated and five Unfederated Malay States[3], together with Penang and Malacca" (Turnbul, 1974, p. 243) with the aim of creating a multiracial and unitary state. This idea had inevitably led to dissatisfactions and protests especially among the Malays due to threats to the power of the Malay Sultans and the privileges of Malays. Miller (1987) argues that the formation of Malayan Union was mainly concerned from the "perspective of the European elites" and saw themselves as the principal actors during this period (p.774) without considering the needs of the locals.

Malayan Union was eventually replaced with Federation of Malaya in 1948 and subsequently received its independence on August 31, 1957. A new state was finally born on September 16, 1963 when Borneo States (Sabah and Sarawak) and Singapore joined Federation of Malaya to create Malaysia. As of today, Malaysia consists of thirteen states and three federal territories after Singapore left the federation in 1965. These key moments are important to be mentioned when describing Malaysia's nation building as these events were prerequisite to Malaysia's state-building. According to Shamsul (1996a) up to this point of time, Malaysia was considered as a state-without-nation.

An interesting point to highlight here is that the reconstruction of economic and management of war-torn Malaya was implemented through Draft Development Plan of the Federation of Malaya (1950-1955), the five-year plan introduced under the colonial

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[3] The four Federated States are Perak, Pahang, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, while the States outside the Federation are Kedah, Johor, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Perlis.

rule, which eventually became the feature of Malaysia in the attempt of achieving economic development and creating a nation (Shamsul, 2009).

2.5.2 Post-Independence Nation-Building: The May 13, 1969 Tragedy

Although the nation-building efforts in Malaysia had begun since the country received her independence, however, nation-building in the early days was more directed towards political motivation (Abd Razak, 2009). The efforts only became prominent after the 1969's riot incident with the establishment of New Economic Policy (NEP), which marked the end of the country's *laissez-faire* economic approach. Subsequently, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad took office of the Prime Minister in 1981 and introduced *Wawasan 2020* or Vision 2020. For this reason, when describing nation-building in Malaysia, it is not complete without mentioning these two significant events.

Despite the BMA's effort in rebuilding the country after war, unfortunately one aspect that the colonial government failed to address is that the issues regarding ethnic relations. As mentioned previously, the divide and rule policy introduced by the colonial government had created resentment among the Malaysia's multiracial society. Races were labelled according to their economic functions. The resentment grew even stronger after Malaysia received her independence. Eventually, on the night of May 13, 1969 after Malaysia's third General Election, the country witnessed the biggest and bloodiest racial riot in the history. Nicknamed as 13 May incident, marching for celebration of winners from both administrative government and opposition was about to set when the riot struck in Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur. Media were also believed to play a significant role in provoking and fuelling the hatred among the races at that time. The leaders had freely expressed their feelings and ideas emotionally and publicly and the media particularly newspapers irresponsibly took the opportunity to aggravate the issues in their news coverage. Most newspapers reported biased stories by presenting the voice of certain ethnics and ignoring some others (A. Hamid & Ibrahim, 2012) that angered many people of different ethnicities. Subsequently, the state of national emergency was declared and Parliament was suspended. The press was also

suspended as part of the efforts in restoring peace in the country. According to National Operations Council (1969), 196 people died in the incident. As a result, Malaysia's economic policy changed drastically as the respond to the aftermath of the event, which considerably different from the country's *laissez-faire* approach previously (Sundaram, 1989).

If one thing that Malaysia had learned in a hard way through this incident, was the issue of national unity. For this reason, Malaysia considers national unity as the foundation to nation-building and a way to move forward. Twenty years after the introduction of New Economic Policy in responding to May 13 tragedy which was adopted in 1971, Malaysia began to consider of having a national identity through the introduction of *Bangsa Malaysia* or United Malaysian Nation as part of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's introduction of Vision 2020 in 1991. *Bangsa Malaysia* puts forward the idea of all ethnics in Malaysia live peacefully and harmony, have common and shared destiny and dedicated and loyal to the country. In a plural society nation like Malaysia, Ishak (2002) argues that the rhetoric surrounding nation-building has appeared to be a necessary agenda to neutralise competing ethnic identity and nationhood. Ishak (2006) also adds that "ethnicity has been sharply institutionalised, and form the very basis of Malaysia political system" (p. 50). Therefore, *Bangsa Malaysia* can be viewed as an attempt by the government to reconcile competing 'nationalism' as well as to consolidate Malay nationalism and cultural pluralism "thus promoting the development of 'civic nationalism' or creation of 'a supra-ethnic' national identity" (Ishak, 2002, p.99).

The introduction of *Bangsa Malaysia* also marked the materialisation of Malaysian nation for the first time. To better suit the needs of modern Malaysia, former Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Razak introduced 1Malaysia in 2009 to consolidate Malaysia's path to Vision 2020 by emphasising the concept of fairness to all. According to Chin (2010) 1Malaysia appeared to be "a more inclusive form of government with less emphasis on race and religion" (p.166). It is important to note that 1Malaysia concept should not be equated to 'Malaysian Malaysia', a concept that was widely associated with former Singaporean Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew in 1960s (see Tan, 1965). 1Malaysia is built based on the foundations of Federal Constitution, various existing law and policies, the National Principles, the Vision 2020 and the Nation Mission. That said,

1Malaysia focuses on working with the current mechanism of affirmative action, while Malaysian Malaysia wishes to forego it (Salleh, 2010). At the point of writing of this thesis, 1Malaysia is still an on-going project in Malaysia.

Looking at Malaysia's effort in managing its multiracial society in the context of national unity, it is not surprising that many studies related to nation-building in Malaysia are within the theme of 'plural society' (Milner (2003). J.S. Furnival who served in British administration in Burma sees "plural society" as population that is highly diversified and lived side by side but they do not integrate (Milner, 2003; Morris, 1967). In Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's controversial book *The Malay Dilemma* which was written before he became the Prime Minister of Malaysia, points out that "the main races of the country have practically nothing in common" (Milner, 2003) which serves as a confirmation that the concept plural society exists in Malaysia. It is also necessary to highlight that although some countries may be deeply divided in term of ethnic, religious or clan, Malaysia is different from other nations "where invocations to race in the public sphere have to be mindful of the histories of slavery, segregation or exclusion and other ongoing contexts of racism, discrimination and inequality", however in Malaysian society, there are no such concessions in place (Gabriel, 2015, p. 784).

That is to say, this section has depicted that nation-building efforts in the context of modernisation in Malaysia are based on two major factors, which are economics and politics. The success of nation-building in Malaysia is measured by economics achievements and also national integration, in which the latter is harder to achieve (Shamsul, 2009). According to Shamsul (2009), "political target of nation-building by realising national integration through the implementation of policies" has remained the challenge for Malaysian government (p.22). In the final leg towards Vision 2020 as charted in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), it is evident that government seeks to intensify stakeholder engagement in promoting the 1Malaysia spirit in the effort of fostering social cohesion and national unity. For this apparent reason, this research is particularly interested in exploring how Malaysian government engages its citizen in the national-building process. The debates surrounding the concept of engagement however will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

REEVALUATING NATION-BUILDING

3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at evaluating and reviewing scholarly literature as well as debates that are relevant to this study in the context of nation building. The themes are organised into sections. That said, this chapter intends to explore the existing concept of nation-building and attempts to contextualise the idea of nation-building within the context of this study. Subsequently this chapter aims to explore the role of communication in nation-building based on the existing literature in the context of this study.

3.2. Contextualising Nation-Building

Nation-building remains as a national agenda for many countries. In fact, the concept of nation-building is not new. Interestingly, despite considerable amount of literature published pertaining to nation-building, the topic remains subjective as it is interpreted by scholars and governments differently in different contexts. That said, the subsequent sections of this chapter aim to explore other related concepts such as state-building, nation, nationalism and as well as nation-building in postcolonial states. Finally, this section hopes to be able to shed some light on this concept as well as identify the most appropriate interpretation of nation-building in the context of this study.

3.2.1 The Formation of States

Before the idea of nation-building is discussed further, it is fundamental to understand what constitutes a nation. Every nation that exists today has a long history of nation and state formation. For example, Rokkan (1999) stated that the process of nation-state formation in Europe appeared towards the end of the Old Empires that could be seen from the complex territorial structures in Europe as a result of the "long sequence of migration, centre-building, cultural standardisation, and boundary imposition" (p 145).

James (2006) on the other hand argues that this process can be recognised in the context of "the dominance of difference ways of living and being" (p. 369). In making his point, James (2006) provides illustrations of different eras namely traditional nations, which are the medieval *natio*, modern nations that consist of more of abstract communities and are formed in the context of modernism that exists according to time and space, and finally postmodern nations, which he stresses that are yet to emerge (p. 369). However, he emphasises that at the moment the current postmodern states generally are the continuation of the structures of modernism that consist of "practices and subjectivities of postmodernism, including postmodern nationalism" which can be explained based on "historically and ontologically changing patterns of imperialism and globalization" (James, 2006, p. 369). In this regard, the likes of Rokkan (1999) and James (2006) are useful in terms of understanding why the countries are the way they are today and the transition they had to go through.

Another important aspect to highlight in the context of nation-building is at some point, countries had to go through the state-building process. Persson (2018) for example describes state-building in light of peacebuilding and conflict resolution among conflict states by using Palestine as the case study. According to Persson (2018), the state-building process in Palestine is concerned with the issue of statehood. This process of state-building in the attempt of getting the state of Palestine recognised which began in 1990s had gained huge international attention. This process too had inevitable attracted foreign interventions from the United States and Europe who refused to recognise Palestine as a state. Up to this date, Palestine remains as a nation without state. In this context, state-building represents the struggle for state formation, peace-building process in the conflict between Palestine and Israel as well as the involvement of political interventions from foreign countries. In this respect, Persson (2018) maintains the case of Palestine demonstrates that state-building does not result in the solution of resolving conflicts as "state-building in the Palestinian territories neither led to peace, nor to a state" (p. 446).

In the context of stateless nation, Keating (1997) highlights the limitation of nation-state formulation by using the case of Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland to illustrate his point on 'stateless nation-building'. In this regard, Keating begins his argument by discerning

two types of nationalism: ethnic and civic. According to Keating (1997), ethnic nationalism can be described as the kind of nationalism that defines a nation based on "ascriptive criteria and differentiation" instead of "inclusion and assimilation" (p. 690). Civic nationalism in contrast represents "a collective enterprise based upon common values and institutions, and patterns of social interaction" (p. 690). In this context, Keating (1997) argues that:

> Ethnically based movements may adopt a civic discourse to legitimate themselves in a society where liberal democratic values prevail. Civic movements may appeal to ethnically-exclusive sentiments or invent ethnic identities to enhance their emotive appeal and mobilising power (Keating, 1997, p. 691).

In the case of Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland, they do not intend to create a "classic nation-states but recognise the limitations of sovereignty and seek a place within the state and international order which recognises this" (Keating, 1997, p. 694). In other words, they do not fight for territorial state, but they seek for acknowledgement within the state system that does not give them formal recognition (Keating, 1997, p. 695). The case of Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland is comparable to the most recent situation in other stateless nations such as the refusal of the Australian government to recognise the Aboriginals in its constitution (The New York Times, 2017) and the denial of citizenship to the stateless Rohingya people in Myanmar by the government (Reuters, 2018). The situation in these nations is arguably different from the case of Palestine and Bangsamoro. While Palestine struggled with the issue of statehood (territory), Quebec, Catalonia, Scotland, Myanmar and the Australian Aboriginal people have to confront the state systems that are unwilling to accommodate their aspirations.

However, the experience of Bangsamoro or 'Moro Nation' in Mindanao, the Philippines and as well as the Republic of Ireland offer an interesting outlook in the context of stateless nation and stateless nation-building. Bangsamoro initially struggled for its territorial state through the creation of self-proclaimed and unrecognised Bangsamoro Republik, which covered the islands in the southern Philippines and two Malaysian states in Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak. However, both the Filipino and Malaysian government refused to recognise Bangsamoro Republik due to legitimacy reason.

However, the recent effort by the Filipino government towards the realisation of Bangsamoro Basic Law to recognise the cultural identity and religion of the people of Bangsamoro has been "the most notable approach taken by the Philippine government to resolve the Mindanao conflict" (Kapahi & Tañada, 2018, p. 1). Bangsamoro may not be recognised in terms of land territory, but the recognition in terms of religion and culture by the Filipino government has contributed towards the peace effort in the Philippines nation-building. The case of the Republic of Ireland on the other hand began with Northern Ireland and Southern through the 1920 Government of Ireland Act (Daly, 2007). Although the Irish nationalists who were majorly Catholics had declared Ireland as an independent country earlier, however the British government refused to recognise Ireland as a Free State until the Anglo-Irish Treaty took place in 1922. According to Rokkan (1999), the sense of belonging in Ireland was signalled through "the distinctive and pervasive presence of Catholicism" that "helped to preserve a sense of separateness, as did the burning grievances over land ownership" (p. 189). Contrary with the case of Bangsamoro, Ireland managed to successfully realise its own independent state.

Scholars like Fukuyama (2004) on the other hands attempts to discuss the idea of state-building in the context of development particularly among the weak or failed states. He emphasises on the roots of the world's problems like poverty, humanitarian issues and terrorism lie in the current state of the states. According to Fukuyama (2004) state-building is the process of "creating new governmental institution and strengthening the existing one" (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 17) which is instrumental to the role and capacity of the state in development. In this regards, Fukuyama's view is helpful in terms of understanding to what extend the scope and strength of a country are important in helping or hindering the country's development in which in the context of this study, development is a crucial aspect of building a nation. In particular, this is a common issue faced in state-building among the less developed countries (Kothari, 1972).

The concept of state-building has also been discussed in the context of democracy building in post-conflict countries. According to Diamond (2006):

One of the distinctive features of post-conflict state building in the past two decades has been the increasing reliance on formal democratic mechanisms, particularly elections, to determine who will rule after violent conflict (Diamond, 2006, p. 96).

In other words, the main problem in these countries started with the problem of order, which is later translated into violent conflict. To make his point, Diamond cites Iraq's experience in regard to foreign interventions in the name of post-conflict democracy building. He further proposes more involvement from the international community in terms of adequate military mobilisation, finances, political and knowledge resources in assisting these countries to build their democracy. State-building in this context is the foreign led state-building, and not by the state power in the name of restoring peace and sovereignty in unstable states.

It is interesting to point out here that although both Diamond (2006) and Persson (2018) construe state-building in the context of foreign intervention, however they pose dissimilarity. Persson interprets the idea of state-building in the context of stateless nations while Diamond's understanding on nation-building is applicable in the context of the state without nation. Diamond's view on nation-building however is not unique as his depiction on the subject is synonym with the idea of nation failure. von Bogdandy et al. (2005) describes nation failure as "an aggravated form of state failure particularly relevant to multi-community states" (p. 585). This means that nation failure occurs when the differences in characteristic within the community are irreconcilable, the presence of extreme nationalism which leads to volatility as well as the use of militant and violent by the elites to create fearful atmosphere in the name of national defence. To illustrate this situation, von Bogdandy et al. (2005) use the war that occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the collapse of Yugoslavia as an example. In this sense, the competing ideas of a nation that exist among the states can sometimes leads to extremism and violence and the "state-building" is used in the context of security and stability.

Based on the literature presented so far, the state formation requires physical borders but for a nation to exist, it does not necessarily require a state. However, realising a

nation-state requires a legitimate state, power and political structure as well as shared identity in order for the nation-building process to take place. The following section therefore attempts to contextualise nation-building based on the existing theories and perspectives relevant to this study.

3.2.2 Nation-Building: One Size Does Not Fit All

Alesina and Reich (2015) describe nation-building as:

> a process which leads to the formation of countries in which the citizens feel a sufficient amount of commonality of interests, goals and preferences so that they do not wish to separate from each other (Alesina & Reich, 2015, p. 3).

In this process however, as argued by Kymlicka (2002) in the context of ethnocultural diversity, there seems to be marginalisation especially among ethnic minority. For this reason, the Western theorists have quickly realised that by suppressing minority nationalism, it is only going to counterproductive a nation (Kymlicka, 2000). Therefore, Kymlicka proposes the term 'nation-building' to describe a "new model of the liberal-democratic state" in the attempt of liberal-democracies "to diffuse a single societal culture throughout all of their territory" (Kymlicka, 2000, p. 186). In making his point, Kymlicka (2000) analyses the relevance of the recent Western liberal democracy model of minority rights in the context of Eastern and Central Europe's (ECE) ethnic politics and conflicts. His analysis suggests that the Western liberal democracy model tends to ignore ethnocultural diversity, which perhaps can be a great source of conflict. His proposition does not mean that ECE countries are much different from the West, however he believes that this is where the ECE can learn from the Western liberal democracy countries. This is due to complexity of some countries that may consist of territorial concentrated nations like Ukraine and Crimea for example, in which tolerance in term of ethnocultural diversity is much needed. A recent example in this regard can be observed in the struggle and violence in Xinjiang, China among the ethnic minority of Uyghur Muslim because of the forced assimilation by government into majority Han Chinese (see Van Wie Davis, 2008; The Washington Post, 2018).

Recounting nation-building from the perspective of social science, according to Utz (2005) creating national history is an essential task in nation-building process by creating the usable past. Explaining in the context of nationalism and modernity, Utz (2005) posits that there are two main necessities need to be met in order for a successful nationalisation of the past. Firstly, by proving the unique features of the nation through national history, and secondly the characteristics of today's political order is the outcome of pronounced national struggles which subsequently reinforce "the legitimacy of the regime at the time in nationalist terms" (Utz, 2005, p.627). For example, Cosgrove (2008) in his analysis of history and politics of national identity in late Victorian England shows in many occasions, "history acted as a political instrument" in national identity (p. 30). This in turn becomes a useful aspect of national identity as the past provides understanding and reflection of different elements of national identity based on the construction of the usable past particularly in justifying the contemporary debates of national identity (Cosgrove, 2008).

Utz (2005) further proposes nation-building as a cultural intervention. In this perspective, cultural intervention is the process of establishing "a particular identity on the periphery" by the elites in the effort of creating "a national identity for the rest of the population" (Utz, 2005, p.638). It is notable that at some point, all nation building efforts involve this kind of process. Unfortunately, in some extreme cases, it can cause dissatisfaction which leads to the collapse of a nation and subsequently invites foreign intervention. In an opposing view, Ottoway (2002) identifies that the goal of nation-building is not to impose "common identities on deeply divided peoples but to organize states that can administer their territories and allow people to live together despite differences" (p.170). Ottoway's view suggests that political violence is no longer an acceptable means of nation-building today, and indeed it has to be carried out through a consensual and democratic process.

In another perspective, von Bogdandy et al. (2005) propose that "nation-building is the most common form of a process of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory" (p.586). This process which is undertaken internally, free from foreign intervention "not only projects a meaningful future but also draws on existing traditions, institutions, and customs, redefining them

as national characteristics in order to support the nation's claim to sovereignty and uniqueness" (von Bogdandy et al., 2005, p.586). For example, an analysis by Moran (2011) demonstrates that by promoting inclusive identity in Australia, diversity and multiculturalism have become key features of the nation's identity in Australia's nation-building. His study also reveals the role of government in ensuring the success of this effort. Unfortunately, during John Howard's government, his anti-multiculturalism policy had hampered the values of multiculturalism in Australia as well as its unique feature as a multicultural nation.

Smith (1986) highlights that communication theorists' formulation on nation-building in 1950s was the "first move away from an exclusively Western nationalist standpoint" (p. 231). Although still deeply embedded in the Western blueprint, nation-building from this perspective represents "national participant society" of democratic states (Smith, 1986, p.231). Contrary from the nationalist's standpoint, they did not believe "the nation was 'there' waiting to be discovered", instead, a 'nation' had to gradually be 'built' (Smith, 1986, p. 231). Smith (1986) further argues that what apparently was lacking from modernisation theorists like Karl Deutsch and Daniel Lerner perspective regarding to nation building is "the role for the state and state elites" particularly in the context of communicating the idea of the nation to the public (p. 231). This role is generally assumed throughout. This is where communication theorists trying to reach out as the reaction to nationalist and anti-nationalist interpretations on nation forming (Smith, 1986).

Referring to the non-Western nations, Smith (1986) criticises some scholars' simplified view on nation-building as merely an "ideology and project, rather than a tool of analysis" used by the Third World elites without considering that these nations have to work harder in keeping their diverse ethnic groups together (p. 232). Along similar view Yacob (2006) argues that "if nation building touches the root of people's beliefs and attitudes in regard to politics, then the process of nation building must be affected significantly by the character of a society's political culture" (p. 24).

From the various perspectives on nation-building presented in this section, the are several assumptions can be made here. First, countries do not always share similar

experience and structure (e.g.: tradition, culture and religion) and secondly, relating to the first point, there is no best framework in approaching nation-building since the subject is contextually rooted. The following section is hoped to elucidate this concept clearer based on the context of this research.

3.2.3 Nation and Nationalism: Whose Imagination?

When explaining the concept of nation-building, it is common to relate the concept to the idea of "imagined community" by Benedict Anderson. Coming from the anthropological perspective, Anderson (1983) begins his idea by offering the working definition of "nation". For Anderson (1983) nation is an "imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p.49). He argues that it is imagined because the members of a nation imagine having a communion with their fellow members of whom they have never met or heard of. It is fundamental to highlight here that when Anderson (1983) uses the term "imagined" he does not mean a nation is "fake" or "unreal". In fact, he means the way people "imagine" or invent the ideal of a nation based on their commonality or shared backgrounds. In short, a nation for Anderson (1983) is viewed as socially constructed by the state power.

Anderson (1983) further puts forward the idea of a nation lies in the roots of nationalism. He argues that the print-capitalism plays a big role as the source of national consciousness. In his writing, he points out how the development in printing has become commodity and from there ideas are generated and disseminated. For Anderson (1983) the power of print language has become the basis of national consciousness in three apparent ways. Firstly, it creates "unified fields of exchange and communication" (p.56) by allowing people to identify with each other thus enables "nationally imagined community" (p.57). Secondly, "print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" and finally "print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars" (Anderson, 1983, p.57).

Anderson's concept of a nation however has invited criticisms from several scholars. Smith (1993) for example criticises the idea of constructed identity and imagined community ignores the significant aspects of constraint in all such bonds. Although "it is possible over the long run to exchange one identity for another", however it does not illuminate "why people should be so committed, and feel so passionately, about their ethnic communities and nations that they are prepared to die for them, if they are merely constructs of the imagination and will" (Smith, 1993, p.130).

Other criticisms come from the postcolonial study scholars. For instance, Chatterjee (1991) strongly disagrees on the idea of "imagined community" simply because of the evidence of anti-colonialism nationalism in postcolonial countries. Chatterjee (1991) maintains that the outcome of "the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity, but rather on a *difference*, with the 'modular' forms on the national society propagated by the modern West" (p. 521). In this sense, these countries do not have a choice to "imagine", rather they emulate or follow the path of the idea of modernism based on the portrayal of the West.

Hence, the anti-colonialism nationalism creates its own domains by dividing it into social institutions and practices which are "the materials and the spirituals", which he believes become the feature of anti-colonialism nationalism in Asia and Africa (Chatterjee, 1991, p. 522).

> The material is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology- a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual on the other hand, was an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture (Chatterjee, 1991, p. 522).

Chatterjee's view establishes that the concept of nation and nationalism is not as straightforward especially in the context of postcolonial nations. A clear line is being drawn here: Anderson proposes that the nation is imagined based on what people perceive they have in common, while Chatterjee emphasises on the differences based

on the colonial experience, not based on what can be imagined. In anti-colonialism nationalism, it is about what could be replicated from the West that could assist in the process of modernity and at the same time how the national culture could be preserved or complimented in this process, but not Westernised. According to Chatterjee (1991) "if the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being" and it becomes a "powerful, creative and historically significant project" (p. 522).

In a different argument relating to "imagined community", Abdul Rahman (2015) questions whether the idea of nation and nationalism should be "imagined" or "conceptualised". Taking a middle ground position, Abdul Rahman (2015) views nations as "envisioned" or "envisioning the nation" as this concept represents both the idea of "imagination" and also "conceptualisation". He expresses his idea by using Malaysia's evolution from old kingdom or Malay World to modern state, "struggles against colonial powers and the 'nationalist' projects for independence" (Abdul Rahman, 2015, p. 10). Unfortunately, Abdul Rahman's "envisioning the nation" suffers from being too abstract as it does not critically demonstrate how envision a nation can be both "imagined" and "conceptualised". On top of that, this concept mostly emphasises on Malaysia's historical past and pre-independence period which makes it less relevant in the context of this research which focuses on post-independence nation-building.

3.2.4 Nation-of-Intent as Contemporary Nation-Building

By observing the construction of national identity based on the experience of postcolonial nation, Shamsul (1996a) proposes the concept of nation-of-intent. The nation-of-intent was first mentioned by Robert Rotberg in the context of African nationalism (see Rotberg, 1966). However, this concept was refined by Shamsul (1996a) and argued the reason why "nation-of-intent" is more appropriate to depict modern nation-building.

> By nation-of-intent I mean a more or less precisely defined idea of the form of a nation, i.e. its territory, population, language, culture, symbols and institutions. The idea must be shared by a number of people who perceive themselves as members of that nation, and who feel that it unites them… In any case, the

concept nation-of-intent depicts an idea of a nation that still needs to be constructed or reconstructed. It promises the citizens (or some of them) an opportunity to participate in a 'grand project' which they can claim as theirs. It therefore bridges the authority-defined and the everyday-defined idea of a nation (Shamsul, 1996a, p. 328).

Conceptually however, Shamsul stresses that nation-of-intent is not dissimilar with Anderson's imagined political community. Instead, Shamsul (1996a) argues that by 'imagined', Anderson does not necessarily mean 'invented', "but rather the members of the said community 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'" (p. 328). Nation-of-intent on the other hand is a more open-ended, positive, proactive and forward-looking concept. "It has a programmatic plan of action articulated in *realpolitik*", which "emerged not only from a historical context of anti-colonialism but also in the post-colonial era" (Shamsul, 1996a, p. 328). The strength of the concept of nation-of-intent lies in the government's 'programmatic plan of action', which I find it outstanding and it is the key to practicality in nation-building based on the needs of a country according to space and time.

In establishing his idea, Shamsul specifically uses Malaysia as an example to demonstrate the complexity of a nation for being a postcolonial multiracial state. From the perspective of nation-of-intent, Malaysia is best described as 'one state, several nations'. For this reason, it is not surprising that "various ethnic groups in Malaysia continue to articulate different nations-of-intent" (Shamsul, 1996a, p. 330). For example, in envisioning how a Malaysian nation should be, the Muslim *Bumiputeras* might demand for an Islamic state, which would be very much opposed by the non-*Bumiputeras* as well as the non-Muslim *Bumiputeras* for a fact that an Islamic state might not be ideal for a multiracial and multireligious state. Hence, in this context, Shamsul calls this as "competing nations-of-intent". In Malaysia's case the plurality of nations-of-intent "demonstrates the fact that dissenting voices are present and heard, within and without government" (Shamsul, 1996a, p. 333). Thus, the pursuit of Malaysia's national identity or nation-of-intent, as mentioned earlier, is constantly being constructed and reconstructed. This is basically what is missing from Anderson's

imagined political community as for Anderson, nationalism is less than an ideology than a manifestation of cultural expression. Relating to the context of my study, I find this is where 'communication' fits: how the government communicates the national ideology or more specifically, nation-of-intent to its citizen.

Shamsul's conceptualisation of nation-of-intent has been well received by several scholars studying nation-building in postcolonial nations. Narangoa and Cribb (2010) for example highlight that Shamsul's idea as being original as "it conceives the nation in an instrumentalist way as a tool for the achievement of a particular kind of society" (p. 277). Nation-of-intent manages to distinguish itself from the conventional perspective on national identity which generally assumes national identity as a characteristic forced "on people either by their ethnicity or by their common historical experience" which gives them little or no avenue in conceiving a national identity that drives their aspirations (Narangoa & Cribb, 2010, p. 277).

3.2.5 Nation-building in Post-colonial Nations

Since the context of this research is within the post-colonial nation, it is necessary to understand the interpretation of nation-building particularly in Asia or more specifically, Southeast Asia. It is noted that colonialism in Southeast Asia began with Malaysia in 1511 and ended with East Timor (Roszko & Sutherland, 2015) after its independence was restored[4] in 2002. Based on the observation by Derichs and Heberer (2006) in Asia, "nation-building has been a constant part of the political agenda since the 1950s" especially in the post-colonial nation-states of South and Southeast Asia (p.1). Childs and Williams (1997) identified the reason for this trend is due to independence received by these states.

> The dismantling of structures of colonial control, beginning in earnest in the late 1950s and reaching its high point in the 1960s, constituted a remarkable

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[4] East Timor or Timor-Leste first received its independence from the Portuguese in 1975 and was invaded by Indonesia not long after. Following the United Nations intervention, Indonesia finally relinquished its control over East Timor and its independence was restored in 2002. Currently, East Timor remains as the only sovereign state in Southeast Asia that is not part of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

historical moment, as country after country gained independence from the colonizing powers (Childs & William, 1997, p.1)

Bringing the perspective of postcolonial nation, Voster (2005) attempts to define nation-building as:

the social process of transforming an underdeveloped, poor and divided society into a community with peace, equal opportunities and economic viability within which individuals enjoy dignity, basic human rights and the prospect to observe their own religion, tradition, culture and language in harmony with other people who may function within other traditions (Voster, 2005, p. 474).

For Voster (2005), nation-building in postcolonial nations is crucial as "a prerequisite for establishing peace, dignity and prosperity" (p. 474). He adds that countries that were colonised have the history of being oppressed and they commonly "inherit insufficient infrastructures, old-fashioned political and economic policies and highly divided communities from their previous rulers" which sometimes lead to resistance, struggle and conflict among the societies (Voster, 2005, p. 274). In this regards, Voster's view is useful in terms of viewing nation-building as a process of being both physical and institutional.
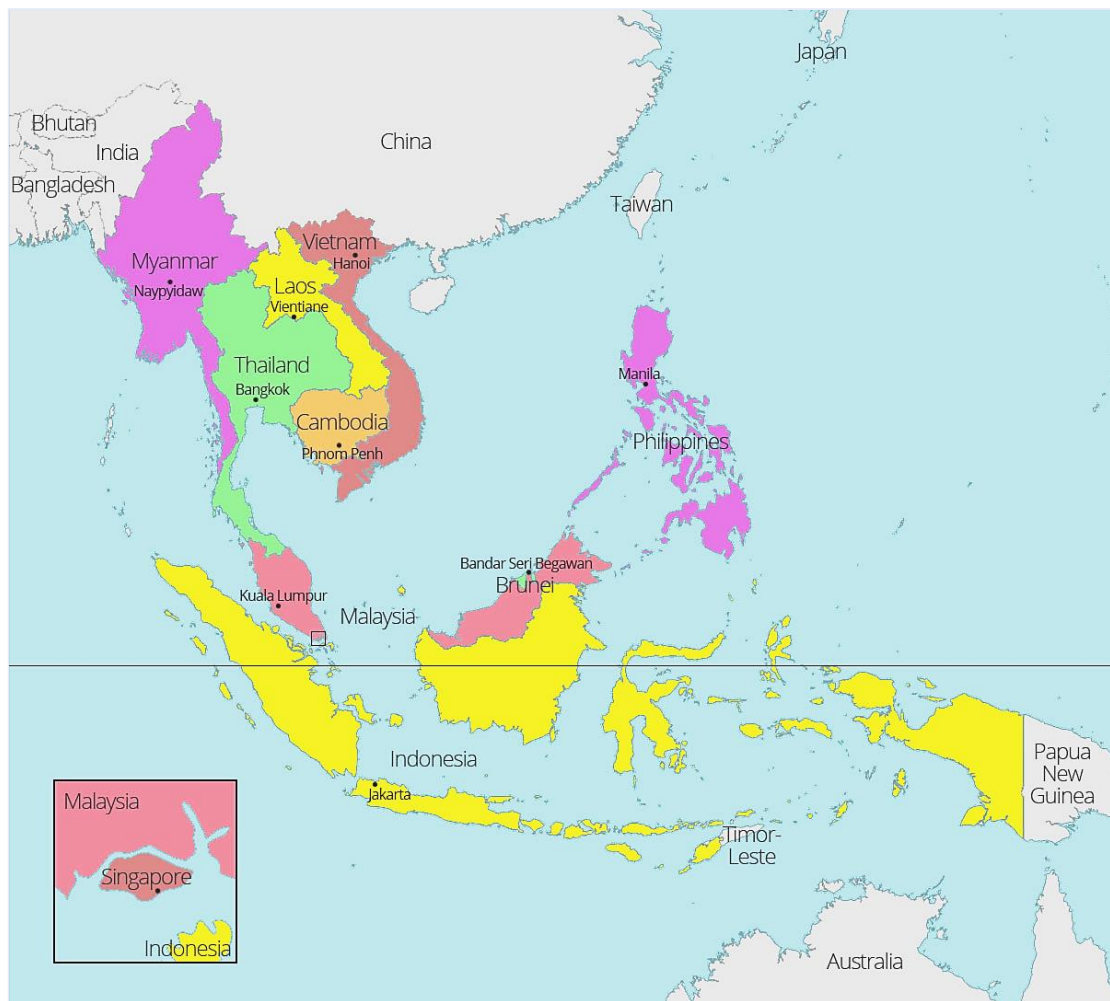
Figure 1: Southeast Asia consists of eleven countries.

After receiving independence, most post-colonial countries in Asia began to go through decolonisation process as part of their nation-building process. This could also be the beginning of Asian consciousness and searching for identity which Funabashi (1993) calls this process as the Asianisation of Asia. According to Funabashi (1993), "this new Asian identity has social, cultural, economic and political implications" (p. 75). In his writing, Funabashi mostly points out that the Asianisation process is particularly the result of Asian countries confronting the European-American challenge especially in terms of social and economic development. This is no surprise as most "Asian nations are former colonies or protectorates, and their independence was gained through economic and societal development" (Funabashi, 1993, p. 81).

The earlier understanding of nation-building in the context of post-colonialism has been related to modernisation theory. Scholars like Berger (2003) traces the heightened of development and transformation of modernisation theory is due to striking evolutions from colonies to nation-states particularly in Southeast Asia as well as the deepening war in Vietnam. In a similar view, Derichs and Heberer (2006) highlight that the task of nation-building in East and Southeast Asia is always focused on development and modernity of the states, and for this reason, nationalism in East and Southeast Asia appears to be less aggressive because nationalism in this region represents two major functions.

> First, it functions as an integrative nationalism aiming at further state- and nation-building. Second, it works as a modernisational nationalism, designed to mobilise the people in the interest of a shared goal: modernisation as a 'solidarity vision' for the nation (Derichs & Heberer, 2006, p.9).

The 'degree' of nationalism and modernisation process after the independence, however, depends on a few factors. Shamsul and Daud (2006) argue that how countries received their independence; whether through negotiation or war; matters in determining the priority after independence. For example, the movement "to raise the Indonesian nationalism against the Dutch colonialism" in building identity and getting people's support through the designation of Day of National Awakening (Yudarwati, 2014, p. 49). The propaganda eventually led to the war of independence against the Dutch empire, which resulted Indonesia to become independent in 1945. Soekarno, the first president for the republic continued "to strengthen nationalism against Western colonialism (Yudarwati, 2014, p. 52) and adopted a political system that was different from the Western style democracy to symbolise Indonesia's capability as an independent country. That is today, based on the example given, the more difficulties that a country had to go through in achieving its independence, the more resentment it has towards its former colonial master or more appropriately, stronger nationalism compared to countries that did not go through bloodshed in the process of getting independence.

The colonialism experience among the postcolonial states has also translated into their identity and national borders. According to Roszko and Sutherland (2015), "Southeast Asia's rigid approach to borders and sovereignty can be considered one of the legacies of colonial power, but its nation-states are not simple derivatives of the European model" (p. 203). Narangoa and Cribb (2010) argue that borders are not only the symbol of the state's self-determination, but they are predominantly the "reflection of national identities, which have been created by some combination of ethnicity and shared historical experience" (p. 277). They further emphasise that borders are not just the result of power relation and manifestation of national identities, but each existing borders of each state reflect "a number of imagined national configurations" (p. 277). For this reason, in addition to the conceptualisation of nation-of-intent by Shamsul (1996a), Narangoa and Cribb propose that:

> Rather than limiting the idea of nations-of-intent to competing political agendas within a single set of borders, we see the setting of borders as a major element in the conception of nations-of-intent (Narangoa & Cribb, 2010, p. 277).

In making their point, Narangoa and Cribb (2010) use the expulsion of Singapore from Malaysia as an example to depict "different nations-of-intent can lead to different border configurations" (p. 278). In this regard, the termination of Singapore was an act by the Malay elites to again adjust the borders "to create a state that would be conducive to a nation-of-intent" that would favour "Malay Muslim culture while giving some recognition to other ethnicities and religions" (Narangoa & Cribb, 2010, p. 278).

Nation-building in former colonial countries is also seen as precondition to stability particularly in the context of ethnic conflict. In some cases, as emphasised by (Voster, 2005), constitutional nation-building is necessary especially in divided communities. vog Bogdandy et al. (2005) postulate that constitutional nation-building can be conceived by integrating constitutional text with some "traditional elements of collective identity" to legitimise power of nationalism instead of trying to replace it (p.597). This is crucial as constitution provides a legal-political framework to ensure stability in avoiding social unrests and protecting the rights of minority. This is especially true as postcolonial

nations in Southeast Asia generally suffer from the ethnic conflicts due to the divide and rule policies through the colonial administration (Landé, 1999).

One of the most striking elements in nation-building in post-colonial nations is the influence of religion. Lubbe (1995) stresses that religion is "often used by political ideologues to justify a particular status quo" (p. 160). Based on the analysis by Hamayotsu (2002) on Southeast Asia's post-colonial Muslim majority countries particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, Islam appears to play a significant role in nation-building and this role however differs strikingly between the countries. Despite the threat that religion may pose to nation-building efforts in countries with multi-religion and multi-ethnic backdrops, it appears that in Malaysia Islam seems to be more compatible with the country's modern nation-building process whereby in Indonesia, Islam is seen as unfit to be used as the foundation of a modern nation. The contrast between two countries according to Hamayotsu (2002) is due to the role that the leaders play in both countries. In Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's anti-West sentiment has given Islam a better position as a modern and progressive religion, whereas in Indonesia, Islam has become the victim of New Order regime campaigns as well as insensitive leaders who contribute to religious violence between the Muslims and non-Muslims. However, the propagation of religion in nation-building does not only necessarily happen after a country received its independence. To illustrate this, Karen nationalist movement in Burma is a great example of colonial legacy

Nation-building has also been discussed in the context of capacity building. In the context of development, capacity building is "an essential element if development is to be sustainable and centred in people" (Eade, 2007, p.1). Bourgon (2010) argues that the goal of nation-building is "to build the collective capacity to achieve public results and to pursue a shared vision of the future" hence the desire to achieve public results is not only limited to government (p. 198). In this context, citizen also has its role to play as it is the people who build nations, nation-states and public institutions (Bourgon, 2010, p. 198). This assessment brings back the idea of Shamsul (1996a) who views nation-building as a 'grand project' where citizens are given the opportunity to participate as presented in the previous section.

The previous sections in this chapter have established several perspectives in nation-building. The elements of nation-building in the context of postcolonial nations have also been discussed throughout this section. It is apparent that the nation-building efforts in postcolonial nations are politically motivated topped with the desire for modernity. In realising the aspiration, it takes the whole community to be engaged in this process (Voster, 2005). Hence the next chapter aims is to understand the role of communication in the context of nation-building process.

CHAPTER 4

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND NATION-BUILDING

4.1 Introduction

The main goal of this chapter is to present the debates and discussions surrounding communication and nation-building. Specifically, this chapter presents the discussions on strategic communication within the context of government communication as well as its relevance to nation-building. Engagement, the concept that is used to inform this study is discussed as well within this context. Having said that, this chapter attempts to address the key issues relating to the concept of engagement by taking into considerations other theories that could potentially contribute to the foundation of this concept.

4.2 Communication and Development

Communication is an important aspect of nation-building. Communication in this context however has its roots in development communication. It is notable that the term 'development communication' itself consists of the word 'development' and 'communication' in which each term carries its own signification. That said, it is worth looking at these definitions for the purpose of creating our understanding as well as identifying their relevance.

In describing development, Sinha (1976) views this as a goal, as in an objective that needs to be accomplished where it involves a process through a systematic approach. Here, development needs to be understood as a dynamic process as it constantly requires "movement from a state of dissatisfaction to a state of satisfaction" (Sinha, 1976, p. 2). Communication on the other hand, is regarded as central to human activities. For Sinha (1976), communication represents how people "share knowledge, information and experience, and thus understand, persuade, convert or control their fellows through communication" (p. 2). With that said, the basic tenets of

communication include the process of transmission of ideas, thoughts, feelings and behaviour, persuasion to achieve desired outcome along with being a two-way process (Sinha, 1976, p. 3). Based on what is emphasised here, it is notable that both 'development' and 'communication' involve a process in the pursuit of achieving something.

In another view, one of the most influential works regarding development can be found from Amartya Sen. Sen (2001) proposes that development is associated with freedom. In making his point, Sen (2001) argues that freedom should be recognised as both "the primary objective of development and its principle means" (p. 506). In other words, development should be treated as both an end and the means. In defining freedom in the context of development, Sen (1988) contends that freedom represents the capability to choose in achieving the quality of life by the members of society. Unfortunately, what is considered important or capabilities that should be enjoyed by the society could also become restraints or forms of unfreedom (Sen, 1999). He gives examples like the access to healthcare and education, equality between genders, basic civil rights and political liberty that can either lead to capability or incapability for development to progress.

In relating Amartya Sen's idea in the context of communication, several scholars have acknowledged its applicability. Garnham (1997) for instance examines its prospect from the perspective of communication policy in relation to welfare. Garnham (1997) argues that it is deplorable for modern societies nowadays to not have access to media and communication. In making his point, Garnham (1997) uses Sen's argument on critical free press as an "important independent variable" in providing information regarding the occurrence of starvation, access to education and explaining variations in life expectancy. For this reason, Garnham (1997) asserts that "the existence of the capability that a free press provides may be very basic indeed" (p. 31). In relation to communication policy, he argues that, access to communication is not enough. There needs to be identification of functioning for each type of media.

> We can then judge the media and communication policy on the basis of how well or badly they serve these needs and how the relevant capabilities are in fact socially distributed. Thus newspapers and broadcasting contribute to a state of belonging to a given cultural group or society (Garnham, 1997, p. 32).

Jacobson (2016) on the other hand, suggests that Sen's capability approach should be applied as the framework for communication for development and social change (CDSC). This is important considering nowadays the role of communication is hardly studied under the rubric of modernisation, instead it is positioned within the CDSC. In demonstrating his point, Jacobson (2016) argues that the capability approach is applicable in the context of CDSC in three ways. Firstly, it offers definition of development that has been missing from the communication studies. In this regard, the definition of development from the perspective of capability approach "is compatible with participatory and social change elements of CDSC" which emphasises that development "should be driven by citizen agency" (Jacobson, 2016, p. 805). Secondly, the capability approach allows for "a unified conceptual framework for interdisciplinary analysis" in the context of CDSC since it emphasises on the citizen choice (Jacobson, 2016, p. 806). That said, it seeks to address the communication process:

> to improve choices among preferred human rights, cultural values, and gender rights, whether these communication processes are mass mediated, face-to-face, or in large informal groups (Jacobson, 2016, p. 806).

Finally, Sen's capability approach is able to bridge "prominent development discourses beyond communication studies" (Jacobson, 2016, p. 791) by "elaborating the analysis of media and public speech within the capabilities" (Jacobson, 2016, p. 206). As mentioned previously, "development processes should be driven by collective citizen preferences" which in this respect, "collective citizen preferences can only be constructed through public speech" (Jacobson, 2016, p. 791). Jacobson (2016) continues to argue that the reception towards media and communication in capabilities approach can be deepened through the research in CDSC where he adds that:

> Capability choices are not decisions that are simply made in the minds of individuals. They are outcomes of public communication processes that are complex, which need to be understood in detail, and that must be effectively practiced (Jacobson, 2016, p. 807).

That said, based on what have been presented so far, development can be viewed as a process of achieving an objective by using a systematic approach and communication is

used to facilitate this process. In describing development communication per se, the "aim of development communication is to remove constraints for a more equal and participatory society" (Waisbord, 2001, p. 2). It is notable that there is an emphasis on 'participatory' in the context of development and communication. Other than that, there are other factors that need to be considered such as culture, religion and political system, which either enable or hinder the development from taking place.

In relating to nation-building, which is the focus of this thesis, it can be established that it is also a process of achieving an objective through a systematic approach where communication is also used to assist this process. As presented in Chapter 3, it can be said that nation-building does not only focus on national development, but it also emphasises on the idea of a nation such as nationalism, national identity and national culture to maintain the stability while at the same time achieving economic goals. It is safe to say that nation-building is citizen centric in the sense that it aims at 'constructing the people' or more accurately nation-of-intent while allowing the member of society to enjoy the forms of freedom in development.

That said, the following section aims at understanding the role of communication in the context of nation-building and national development.

4.3 The Role of Communication in Nation-Building

It is apparent that scholars tend to associate development communication with the role of media in assisting the development process. Some prominent examples can be found in the works of influential communication scholars like Everett Rogers on the use of media technology in the context of development in developing nations. According to Rogers (1976), the potent role of mass media as the main driver to national development is generally assumed than proven. Based on his analysis, the available studies have pointed out that there are evidences where the media are used by the government for propaganda particularly those elite ownership media, thus creating public's distrust in mass communication. Hence, coming from the diffusion of innovations perspective, Rogers (1976) suggests that the attention should be given in terms of the content of media messages to be designed based on the existing social

structure in the society. Similarly, regarding to nation and nationalism, the role of communication is also emphasised by Anderson (1983) particularly the role of print-capitalism as the source of national consciousness in imagined community.

In the less developed world, the mass media are believed to play a role in assisting development process. Isaacs (2015) for example examines the notions of nationhood and national identity of post-Soviet Kazakhstan through the narratives in Kazakh films. The findings depict that films create public space to illustrate alternative narratives regarding the socio-economic dimensions of the nation-building process in Kazakhstan which is usually marginalised by the political institutions (Isaacs, 2015). In this respect, mass media can be viewed as playing twin passive-active role in a developing country (Roperos, 1979). "It is a quiet but strong support of development, a contributor to the overall intent of improving life, uplifting the undeserved sector of the communities" (Roperos, 1979, p. 269).

Taylor and Kent (2006) however argue that although mass communication is an important aspect of nation-building process, however "nation building is a dynamic human process" and that the value of contribution of communication towards national building is a high time endeavour as it stresses on "how meanings such as national identity, national unity, and the nation state are socially constructed" (p. 342). For nation-building to be successful, the "interactions between citizens and between the state and other nations" are seen as crucial (Taylor & Kent, 2006, p. 341). Based on the argument by Taylor and Kent (2006), it demonstrates that nation-state government communication is crucial in nation-building process.

4.3.1 The Role of Government Communication

Therefore, in relation to my study, as mentioned in Chapter 1, communication should be viewed as how communication is used by the government strategically at the national level, in the effort of communicating national agenda to the its citizens. To understand the role of government communication in this regard, it is worth looking into some

definitions of it. In defining government communication, Canel and Sanders (2013) propose both conceptual and functional aspect of government communication:

> The role, practice, aims and achievements of communication as it takes place in and on behalf of public institution(s) whose primary end is executive in the service of a political rationale, and that are constituted on the basis of the people's indirect or direct consent and charged to enact their will (Canel & Sanders, 2013, p.4).

Pasquier (2012) on the other hand defines government communication as:

> all the activities of public sector institutions and organisations that are aimed at conveying and sharing information, primarily for the purpose of presenting and explaining government decisions and actions, promoting the legitimacy of these interventions, defending recognized values and helping to maintain social bonds (Pasquier, 2012, p.1).

From the definitions provided above, it is notable that communication is used by the government to inform the public in the pursuit of achieving desired outcomes. In another view, Singh (2008) contends that government communication is strategic communication, which "therefore, of the persuasive sort" (p. 66) which involves monologic communication and dialogic communication. He further distinguishes between these two types of persuasive communication in this regard:

> monologic communication involves persuasive communication in which the "speaking" party attempts to alter the "listening" party's stance, with little or no expectation of altering their own position. Dialogic communication is then communication in which both parties problem solve and arrive at mutually altered positions (Singh, 2008, p. 66).

Singh's interpretation of government communication offers a fresh outlook in this respect by emphasising that both monologic and dialogic can be persuasive especially where it requires the government to attend a situation that involves unintended consequences that might arise as a result of government policy or action.

Among of the earliest propositions of the role of government communication specifically in the context of national development can be found in the work of Lucian Pye. In

analysing the communication patterns among non-Western representative government, Pye (1956) identifies two important aspects in government communication practice. Firstly, it is related to the content of communication, and secondly "how the communication process itself is organized and structured" (Pye, 1956, p. 250) in order to influence behavioural change among the people. An important observation made by Pye regarding the use of government communication in non-Western context is:

> The problem of having to employ political oratory both to strengthen national unity and to clarify policy alternatives is generally a peculiarly complex one in non-Western societies. ...functions of government have not usually been clearly differentiated. One function is that of providing expressive activities and the other is that of solving questions of public policy (Pye, 1956, p. 254).

Communication and development are an intertwined process. For Colle (2002), development communication simply means 'strategic communication', in which the intended outcome is measured by positive behaviour change among the targeted audience. In other words, public are the enablers for desired changes to take effect and in the case of nation building, this is particularly important. As argued by Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) communication and development do not exist in vacuum and they need to be "supported by necessary policies, strategies and plans to ensure the development goals are realised" (p. 228).

Howlett's (2009) definition on government communication is useful in terms of positioning government communication as an instrument for communicating policy. For Howlett, government communication from this point of view acts as a means for achieving the objectives of a policy. In a different definition, Hallahan et al. (2007) describes strategic communication as the use of communication purposefully by organisation to achieve its missions. It can be concluded that both definitions suggest that strategic communication is used to achieve goals, which in relation to nation-building, government uses strategic communication to accomplish its national mission.

In the recent years, there has been an increasing interest in contemporary nation-building from the strategic communication point of view. García (2012) analyses the use of strategic communication for nation-building purposes in the case of regions, or the so-called "stateless nations" of contemporary Spain which integrates both hard and soft

power approach. As part of soft power approach, the Basque government uses mass media campaigns extensively by framing issues, manufacturing stories and building slogans to achieve its goals (García, 2012). For the hard power approach on the other hand, the government has come out with one-sided laws and various policies that are seen as controversial such as enforcing Basque language on public servants and education system on population that majorly speaks Spanish. García's case study suggests that the government's approach to nation-building by using combinations of hard and soft approach in Basque has caused a mixture of positive and negative outcomes. The negative effect of the approach is mostly from the hard power approach as the Basque government is perceived as being unrealistic. That said, this study has imposed the need for more cooperation and negotiation between government and citizen especially in pluralistic societies to ensure long term success in the efforts toward nation-building especially in a new state.

Discussions pertaining to nation-building too has been well received within Public Relations perspective. While the earliest definitions of public relations are always associated with press agentry and publicity, the more modern definitions on the other hand incorporate the concepts of "engagement" and "relationship building" (Chmielecki, 2012). Chaka (2014) explores public relations strategies employed in the presidential discourses for building relationships among South Africans by comparing political discourses of the three South African Presidents since 1994–2009: Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma. The outcome of the study indicates positive evaluation for all three presidential discourses as the speeches indeed serve as a nation-building tool, in which they conveyed the steps undertaken by the South African government to comply with the nation-building requirements Chaka (2014). This development according to Taylor (2000) shows that national governments see communication as a valuable resource in nation-building.

According to Taylor (2000), the public relations approach to nation-building generally focuses on cooperative relationships and offers a communication-centred, participatory approach for improving ethnic relations in multicultural states. Taylor (2000) conducted a study on public relations campaigns to help build national unity by using Malaysia's Neighbourliness Campaign as her case study shows the importance of communication

process in building and maintaining relationships and cooperative relationships among people in a social system are important for all national development efforts. The study shows that understanding communication campaigns for nation-building requires an understanding of the social, political, and economic context of other nation-building programs and policies. She argues that communication campaigns can build relationships between previously unrelated publics as well as between the government and its public.

As the world changes, so does the technology in communication. Shirky (2011) points out that "as the communication landscape gets denser, more complex, and more participatory, the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and enhanced ability to undertake collective action" (p.29). Shirky's view implies that public nowadays have more options on what to read, what to believe and that the available information is no longer enough, and they wish to be able to contribute to the content and get their opinion heard too.

Several studies have established the potential of ICT as the government communication tool. The analysis conducted by Himelboim et al. (2011) on the use of Twitter in the US State Department has revealed two key aspects regarding public relations. Firstly it shows that formal and informal mediators that bridge the State Department with audiences the agency does not interact with directly and secondly when examining the concept of bilateral relationship between the State Department and its stakeholders, it appears to be unilateral (Himelboim et al., 2011). The result of the study seems to defeat the purpose of the whole concept of social media as Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012) stress out "without conversations, interactions and collaborations, social media will lose their function of being social" (p.10).

Technology can potentially help improve public service delivery. Most governments in the world nowadays are committed to transform their public service. Soon and Soh (2014) examine the use of Web 2.0 for engagement by the Singaporean government by comparing the government portal called REACH and the minister's Facebook pages. The findings from their study suggest that more interaction takes place on the Facebook pages instead of the government official portal. The contributing factor to this phenomenon could be the features of the two mediums (Soon & Soh, 2014). Their study

is useful in illuminating the differences of the medium of communication channels and how they affect the government-citizen communication.

Studies have also demonstrated that transparency is expected in the government communication. Transparency in communication between organisations and public has shifted a lot in the recent years and "this shift is also part of a new imperative as the internet mediates more organisational communication" (Philips & Young, 2009, p. 37). For this reason, transparency has become an important driver in modern management (Philips & Young, 2009). In examining the relationships between public perceptions of the Internet as the source of government-related information, the transparency of city government, and government-public relationships, Hong (2014) conducted phone interviews with 1000 residents of Seoul. Results of the study indicate that transparency of the city government is perceived as favourable by the residents and that Internet has been considered by them as an important source of government information. The outcomes suggest that the positive perception on the use of Internet by the government leads to greater citizen pride in the city which suggests favourable relationship between the government and public. According to Hong (2014), the study supports the majority of existing "literature highlighting the positive influence of government transparency, particularly with regard to facilitating government–public relationships" (p. 2).

Another important role of mass media in this regard is the ability of the mass media to routinely inform governments through a non-official channel about the reactions to the governments' own information efforts. This feedback function is crucial in political and hence economic decision making. Governments that fail to take advantage of this function are most likely to suffer serious consequences. In getting feedback, Savigny (2002) highlights that public opinion is important for political actors to maintain their legitimacy and authority and that the Internet has become the platform for modern society public opinion expression and formation. Consequently, this also highlights the importance of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled as the basic political relationship Vollrath (1976).

The findings in this section have demonstrated the changing role of media and communication in development. Contrary to the belief in the past, the citizens are no longer waiting for information to be presented to them. Specifically, in the context of

nation-building, citizen nowadays wish to contribute and be heard especially if it involves matters that may affect their life. That said, this calls for the governments to rethink about a new strategy when communicating with the citizens. For this reason, communication practitioners believe in a new way to communicate with the public and the emphasis is given to public engagement considering the new technological and social developments (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017). The discussions and arguments on the concept of engagement therefore will be presented in the following section.

4.4 From Information to Engagement

Unlike the conventional top-down communication approach, governments around the world are shifting towards a more contemporary communication style, and the new trend among the governments nowadays is claimed to be as 'engagement'. Whether or not it is just another buzzword, Nalbandian (2008) contends that citizen engagement is no longer an option for the government especially in the context of modern governance. For Kang (2014), public engagement has become "an important concept in contemporary corporate and strategic communication contexts" (p. 400). Heath (2018) however stresses that engagement "is neither new nor easily understood or achieved" (p. 34) yet it is "contextual and topical" (p. 43).

It is interesting to note that the concept is no stranger within the United Kingdom particularly in the context of higher education. National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement or NCCPE describes engagement as:

> the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit (NCCPE, 2018).

The definition of engagement by NCCPE has been widely used among the universities in the United Kingdom in terms of promoting research outputs to the public. In the context of two-way process through interacting and listening, this definition suggests that public

engagement activities serve to inspire, consult and collaborate that can benefit the society (NCCPE, 2018).

The attempts of theorising engagement in the context of strategic communication are predominantly from Public Relations scholars and practitioners which comes as no surprise since Richard Edelman's initiation of positioning public engagement as future public relations (see Edelman, 2008). The emphasis on the importance of engagement in strategic communication could also possibly stem from the declined of civic engagement as Putnam (1995) calls it "the strange disappearance of social capital and civic engagement in America". From the perspective of public relations professional accreditation body like Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA), engagement is construed as:

> Commitment between two parties to a shared journey, over time. It has a clear purpose and future actions for both the person and entity initiating the communication and the recipient of that entreaty (PRIA, 2014).

Based on this definition, it can be argued that the interpretation of engagement by PRIA seems vague. It is unclear the meaning of 'commitment' and 'shared journey' here, which makes the definition appear even more ambiguous.

Conversely, one of the UK leading PR agencies, Weber Shandwick through its publication, *The Science of Engagement*, views engagement as "the intensity of an individual's connection or participation with a brand or organisation" (Weber Shandwick, 2014). The report proposes ten common characteristics (principle) of engagement, nineteen elements of engagement along with engagement from anthropological, psychological and neuroscience perspective. It explains that the principles of engagement comprise of "the science of reciprocity, the importance of immediacy, the marrying of experience and expectation and the clear distinction between capturing and building engagement" while "the elements range from 'Aesthetics' and 'Belonging' to 'Respect' and 'Newness'" (Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 4) which are believed could offer practical guidelines for successful engagement.

In responding to Weber Shandwick's interpretation on engagement, Yeomans and Topic (2015) conducted discourse analysis on the document. By focusing primarily on the

principles and elements of engagement, the findings exhibit two main discourses of engagement as proposed by the agency. Firstly, the consumer is positioned as a passive buyer and secondly as an impulsive buyer. Yeomans and Topic (2015) conclude that the agency's understanding on "engagement" depends heavily on the earlier concept of engagement which sees the notion as a cognitive process based on instinct and persuasive communication and disregards other factors like "cultural and social differences, individual approach, and trust" (p.36). Clearly, the interpretation of engagement in this regard exhibits that engagement is used as persuasive communication in the context of profit-making organisation.

For Yeomans and Topic (2015), "engagement is about building relationships with stakeholder" (p. 29). They insist that engagement is "related to dialogue and a two-way communication rather than a one-way form of communication" (Yeoman and Topic, 2015, p.28). By stressing on empathy Yeoman and Topic (2015) argue that in establishing engagement with public, practitioners must "understand their publics and their needs and find a way to engage them, rather than just communicate with them via communication channels" (Yeomans & Topic, p.29). That is to say, the presence of conversation in communication channels like social media, dialogue or engagement still does not exist since "engagement is more than just a conversation" and communication channels usually allow one-way communication (Yeomans & Topic, 2015).

From the findings above, clearly the academics tend to view engagement as dialogue and two-way communication, whereas the practitioners' versions are more leaning towards positioning engagement in the context of profit-making.

While there is no fixed definition on public engagement, several governments and government related organisations around the world have made attempts in elucidating the term, or at least justifying their actions within this context. However, to understand the relevance of engagement in the context of government communication, it is imperative to understand the purpose of government communication per se. Fairbanks et. al (2007) argue that an important element in a democratic government is to have the public to be well-informed enough to make an appropriate decision. They further explicate that:

This requires that the public have access to information about government actions and decision-making processes, or in other words, that government actions are transparent (Fairbanks et. al, 2007, p. 23).

This view is useful in suggesting that 'information' is the key in government communication. Hence, the idea of disseminating-receiving information between government-public seems hinted in today government's engagement efforts. For the UK government, engagement is perceived as an act of being an "open government". The government considers "open policy-making" effort that was introduced in 2012 through Civil Service reform as a genuine delivery of public engagement (UK Parliament, 2013).

Through ideas such as "the Big Society" and "Open Public Services", the Government is aiming to redefine the relationship between the citizen and the state, enabling and encouraging individuals to take a more active role in society. The process of policy-making is one where the public can play an active and meaningful role, and it is right that the citizen and people with knowledge and expertise from outside Government should have the opportunity to influence the decisions of Government (UK Parliament, 2013, p.10).

Singaporean government on the other hand emphasises that its engagement efforts aim to mainly gain feedbacks particularly on issues concerned by the public as well as consulting its citizen in shaping public policies (REACH, 2016). Based on the interpretation by Singaporean and the UK government, it is apparent that governments position engagement in the context of policy communication. The construal of public engagement by the NCCPE, UK government and Singaporean government reveals similarity: they view engagement as a mechanism to gain and generate information through public consultation.

Despite the lack of conceptual understanding on engagement, studies conducted dedicated to this concept in the context of government communication tend to lean towards the theme of social media engagement. The reason for this trend according to Jelen-Sanchez (2017) is due to the belief among scholars regarding communication advancement especially on the development of digital media that increases the potential of engagement. This is demonstrated by several studies on the potential of innovating the public sector through adoption of various digital media.

Agostino (2013) for example views public engagement as the trend of involving public decisions by the government. In making her point, Agostino (2013) analyses the adoption of social media by the Italian municipalities. In doing so, she visited the homepage of 119 Italian municipalities searching for the links to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Her main findings exhibit "the official presence of the municipality on social media, the level of awareness and engagement and their variability overtime" (Agostino, 2013, p. 233). The findings from this study highlight two main contributions with the first one being the importance of monitoring and managing the information on social media, and secondly is the motive of choosing certain types of social media platform as well as the importance of adopting proper social media strategy in public communication for public engagement purpose (Agostino, 2013).

Another study on adopting social media by the government has been carried out by Guillamón et. al (2016) on the potential of social media platforms in the context of transparency to encourage citizens' participation and collaboration in decision making and improvement of public services. By employing a quantitative approach and using Spain and Italian local governments as their samples, their findings reveal that the more participation by the citizen through social media, the more reason for the government to be transparent and accountable. From the findings provided here, it is clear that both studies by Agostino (2013) and Guillamón et. al (2016) discuss the functions of social media and their potentials.

Within this theme, several researchers attempt to define social media within the area of government communication. For instance, Criado et al. (2013) define social media in government as "a group of technologies that allow public agencies to foster engagement with citizens and other organizations using the philosophy of Web 2.0" (p.320). Again, the definition provided only describes the function of social media as government tools for the purpose of engagement yet the meaning of 'engagement' itself is not clearly understood.

Despite the scholars and practitioners' attempts in defining engagement, Taylor and Kent (2014) argue that the term "engagement" has been widely used by scholars, however it is rarely defined properly. By positioning this concept in the theory of dialogue, they describe engagement as:

> Engagement is part of dialogue and through engagement, organisations and publics can make decisions that create social capital. Engagement is both an orientation that influences interactions and the approach that guides the process of interactions among groups (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p.384).

Taylor and Kent (2014) clearly position engagement in the context of civic engagement as proposed by Putnam (1995). In civic engagement, Putnam (1995) theorises this concept from social capital point of view which emphasises on:

> social life-networks, norms, and trust-that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 1995, p. 1).

Taylor and Kent (2014) however argue that by positioning engagement in the context of dialogue, engagement is viewed as ethical as it focuses on public interest. In responding to the trend in social media research, Taylor and Kent (2014) also highlights that researchers should not be confused between the potential use of web as dialogic tools and "social media interaction as with actual dialogue (p. 390). Dialogue should be seen as the outcome of certain type of relational interaction and not just any communicative interaction. As for engagement, it is "a necessary part of dialogue", in which without it, "there can be no real dialogue" (Taylor and Kent, 2014, p. 390).

In the pursuit of conceptualising and operationalising public engagement, Kang (2014) defines engagement as a "behavioral motivator that elicits individual publics' supportive behaviors toward an organization" (p. 399). Kang's proposition on engagement is characterised by three dimensions which are affective commitment, positive affectivity, and empowerment based on the experience of individual public in the context of organisation-public relationship. According to Kang (2014) the success of an organisation largely depends on its "abilities to find ways to effectively and positively engage their stakeholders for meaningful partnerships" (p. 399). Kang (2014) further argues that the psychological aspect of engagement has been underexplored hence creating confusion of the uses of the term. For example, this confusion leads to the believe that any interaction between marketer and customer to be described as engagement. Another important point to highlight is "engagement measurement has been limited in its operationalization and measurement (Kang, 2014, p. 400). This is the common offence particularly among the social media consultants or marketers who

tend to "equate engagement with the physical manifestations of an engaged state" pertaining to online activities "such as the number of clicks, bookmarking, blogging, friend requests, tweets, or subscribing without really tapping into psychological aspect of being engaged" (Kang, 2014, p. 400).

Recent developments in dialogue in public relations context have heightened the need for engagement. Explaining from the context of organisational legitimacy, Luoma-aho (2015) emphasises that the value of engagement lies in its understanding of dialogue dynamics and enabled participation as engagement understand the importance of relation building with various public. To put into perspective, Luoma-aho offers proposition on how engagement can assist an organisation in the area of stakeholder engagement by addressing all "types" of stakeholders. She categorises stakeholders as faith-holders (positively engaged), hateholders (negatively engaged) and fakeholders (artificially generated or persona-creating). Luoma-aho (2015) emphasises that to promote organisational social capital in the long run and maintain legitimacy, "public relations professionals need to support the faith-holders, engage the hateholders and reveal the fakeholders" (p.7). Luoma-aho's view might be less relevant in the context of this study however, her study on the type of stakeholders might be useful in terms of identifying relevant public to be engaged in the context of this research.

This section is important to provide an understanding on how engagement has been construed by academics, practitioners and governments. Based on the literature presented so far, it is apparent that engagement is often interpreted in the context of two-way communication and dialogue. Hence the following section will look into the debates surrounding dialogue and its relevance in the context of engagement.

4.5 The Concept of Dialogue in Engagement

In explaining "dialogue", the subject per se has attracted many debates among scholars in interpreting the meaning of dialogue in the context of communication. Coming from the Public Relations perspective, Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) argue that "dialogue" has often been treated as "two-way symmetrical" communication model as if they are the same thing. This trend could be the result of system perspective in public

relations and its traditional four communication models by James Grunig that have been the dominant thinking in mainstream public relations. They further stress that equating the two will only truncate the development of dialogic theory in the field. The main issue of equating "dialogue" and "symmetrical" communication according to Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) is that "the core of this systems approach are the concepts of "control" and "self-regulation"" (p.6). For Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) dialogue is an ongoing process where the content and outcome are not controlled, and the act of focusing on specific outcome does not support the philosophy of dialogue.

Within the scope of controlled communication in the context of dialogue, there seems to be a tendency among scholars to relate "controlled communication" with "persuasion" and that it is seen as "offensive" in Public Relations. This trend as Dickerson (2012) calls it, "fear of persuasion", could be stemming from negative connotations surrounding the subject where it is common to associate persuasion with "manipulation" or "domination" based on Grunig's account, or "enslavement" or "willing to submit" based on Greece rhetorician, Georgias's reasoning. In short, the interpretation of persuasion in this context can be viewed as an act of misleading through convincing. To address this matter, Dickerson (2012) argues that persuasion is in fact a common feature of social interactions and he provides everyday conversations like giving suggestions or convincing a person as examples. To put aside persuasion aspect in interactions seems like treating human beings as "a mechanical device, and, implicitly, to treat persuasive communication as a mere conduit for exerting causal influence on that device" (Dickerson, 2012, p.5). On this ground, Dickerson (2012) highlights the dissimilarity "between what actually persuades and what ought to persuade" in order to demonstrate that persuasion does not need to be in "manipulation" and "domination" form (p.6). Firstly, a person "can only be enslaved, coerced, manipulated, or dominated by another person" like by someone who represents an organisation and secondly, as far as "persuasive communication is rational, it is open to public discussion, assessment, and critique" (Dickerson, 2012, p. 6).

In relations to the relevance in nation-building process, Dickerson's account on "rational persuasion" is worth to be considered. Communication approach to nation building

involves a carefully crafted yet consistent nation building messages from government to public. In the case for developing nations, public relations campaigns are generally used for improving citizen's lives and to promote democracy (Taylor & Kent, 2000). Dickerson further adds that:

> ... when we are persuaded by the rational dimension of a communication, we are persuaded by the communication itself (e.g., the evidence and argument that it contains), rather than by the will of the persuader. So, when we engage rationally with persuasive communication, we are not being made subject to anybody's will. Hence, in such cases we are not being 'enslaved', 'manipulated' or 'dominated' by the persuasion, for it is not an exercise of power over us (Dickerson, 2012, p.7).

In this respect, Dickerson's argument is clearly based on the theory of communicative action by Habermas (1984) particularly on the communicative rationality. In this context, Habermas (1984) calls it as purposive-rational action. Relating to nation-building, according to Cruz (2000) where the reality is approached rhetorically, persuasion becomes the hallmark of the leaders in convincing the public such as in identity formation.

Dickerson, however, is not alone in his stance regarding 'controlled communication'. Based on the tedious attempts of conceptualising engagement in the previous section, the element of control is what has been missing from most definitions. In offering fresh perspective pertaining to engagement, Dhanesh (2017) defines engagement as:

> Engagement is an affective, cognitive, and behavioral state wherein publics and organizations who share mutual interests in salient topics interact along continua that range from passive to active and from control to collaboration, and is aimed at goal attainment, adjustment, and adaptation for both publics and organizations (Dhanesh, 2017, p. 931).

Dhanesh's view on engagement offers a different outlook as it contains the element of control and collaboration. It takes into consideration of the perspectives of both public and organisation. She argues that it is important to "acknowledge the need for both collaborative and controlling modes of engagement depending on the nature of the publics" whether they are active or passive (Dhanesh, 2017, p. 931). Based on the various attempts on conceptualising the concept of engagement, Dhanesh criticises

these scholars as only limiting their ideas of engagement as "communicative interaction and redefined engagement to include affective and cognitive dimensions by highlighting the importance of issue salience and communicative non-engagement" and secondly, on basing the concept of engagement "on dialogue over the notion of engagement as control" (Dhanesh, 2017, p. 932).

To understand on the relevance of dialogue in government communication, it is imperative to relook at the foundation of "dialogue" itself. When discussing the concept of dialogue from the contemporary point of view, reference is often made to Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. In Buber's philosophy of dialogue, "he placed dialogue at the heart of human communication and existence" and characterised human relations as I-Thou and I-It (Johannesen, 2000, p.153). I-Thou or dialogical relationship associates the attitudes and behaviours of communication participants with qualities such as "mutuality, open-heartedness, directness, honesty, spontaneity, frankness, lack of pretense, nonmanipulative intent, communion, intensity, and love" (Johannesen, 2000, p.153). I-It or monological relationship on the other hand sees human as an object and not as a person as a whole. While the communication is rather impersonal or non-personal and is often characterised by negative attributes, however Buber noted that this type of communication is often unavoidable and even desirable in human life (Johannesen, 2000). It is important to note that "dialogue is about attitudes held toward each other by participants in a communication process" and not so much on "a specific method, technique and format" (Johannesen, 2000, p.153). Johannesen (2000) summarises four major attitudinal dimensions of dialogue as explained by Buber, which are authenticity; inclusion; confirmation; and presentness. In this case, Buber's idea may be highly influential, however it is too philosophical and might not be practical in the context of government communication.

In a different argument regarding dialogue, Gordon (2011) stresses that despite Buber's philosophy of dialogue which advocates presentness of others and receptiveness as a result of interactions, it is surprising that "almost nothing has been published on Martin Buber and listening" (p.207). For Gordon, such presence "implies that one is ready to *really* listen to the other without dominating the conversation or hastily prejudging the other" (p.207). But Buber only made only "few explicit and very few reference to

listening" despite his focus on dialogue, presence and speech in most of his writings (Gordon, 2011, p.207).

Regarding listening, scholars in communication recently have highlighted similar concern. Place (2019) argues that the emphasis in environment scanning in public relations scholarship and practice implies the important of listening yet, there is little attention given in organisational listening. Acknowledging the lack of listening in communication and engagement, Macnamara (2018) undertook a project called the Organisational Listening Project to examine the organisation's commitment in 'speaking' and "time committed by the same organizations to listening to their stakeholders and public" (p. 120). The findings from this project depicted that although there were indications of open listening by the organisations studied, however much of the focus was given on digital dialogue and only issues and topics that were important to them were tracked. Findings from the UK government on the other hand suggested that there was still a lot needed to be done in engaging citizen.

In explaining dialogic engagement concept, dialogue should be visualised along a continuum where propaganda is at one end of the continuum, while dialogue falls at the other end (Taylor and Kent, 2014). Persuasion, being "part of all human communication, falls along the entire continuum" (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p.389). Controlled channels and restricted content of information are closer on the continuum to propaganda. These include activities like advertising, marketing, blogging, social media and other mass mediated form of communication that involves one-way communication tools. The other end of the continuum which is dialogue "values interpersonal interactions, and place an emphasis on meaning making, understanding, cocreation of reality, sympathetic/empathetic interactions" (Kent & Taylor, 2014, p.389). In this context, dialogic communicators try to deal fairly with publics while at the same time try to pursue organisational goals and interests (Kent & Taylor, 2014).

There seem to be an understanding among scholars that dialogic represents morality. Dickerson (2012) argues there is no moral obligation for public relations to be restricted to symmetrical form of communication. It is in fact "the asymmetrical–symmetrical distinction is not a moral distinction" (Dickerson, 2012, p.7). He adds that persuasion only becomes unacceptable when it depends upon deceit. Ackerman (1989) presented

a comprehensive assessment on the importance of dialogue in his work *Why Dialogue?* Here, he proposes "dialogue as the first obligation of citizenship" and explains why dialogue is more important in public than in personal life (Ackerman, 1989, p. 6). Ackerman (1989) argues dialogue is form of political liberalism and that the liberal citizen must recognise dialogue as dialogic obligation because liberal state the "liberal state does not aim for moral truth that its citizens must recognize themselves under such peremptory dialogic obligations" (p.10). He terms this as *supreme pragmatic imperative* which means through dialogue disagreements about moral truth can be reasonably resolved by talking to one another. Ackerman (1989) further adds that by engaging in conversation, a person can be persuaded despite his disagreement on something.

To put the idea of morality into perspective, Toledano (2018) argues that dialogue and strategic communication both have the potential of being ethical as well as self-serving by using Buber's philosophy as the foundation of her argument. Toledano (2018) attempts the break the long-standing belief of framing strategic communication as manipulative while dialogue is the way of being ethical. She stresses that:

> … PR ethics is less an issue of the form of communication and more an issue of how it is used. Both strategic communication and dialogue are open to abuse. Both might be deployed in an effort to manipulate and mislead or to achieve specific organizational goals on the expense of the stakeholders. At the same time, both approaches might also be used in an egalitarian, ethical, transparent, honest, and respectful way to promote ethical and prosocial purposes. Ethical practices are not about the communication approach but about the treatment of stakeholders and publics (Toledano, 2018, p, 140).

In Towards a Dialogic Theory of Public Relations, Kent and Taylor (2002) outline five main features of dialogue as orientation:

> mutuality, or the recognition of organization–public relationships; propinquity, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics; empathy, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests; risk, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and finally, commitment, or the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p.24; Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Although "empathy" in engagement has already mentioned earlier, it is noted that the feature that is also closely tied to engagement is "propinquity". As an orientation to relationship, propinquity is a type of rhetorical exchange (Kent & Taylor, 2002). According to Kent and Taylor (2002) propinquity is formed by three features of dialogic relationships: which is immediacy of presence (participants involved communicate in presence about an issue and not after a decision is made. The communication takes place in a shared space); temporal flow (Dialogic communication is relational, understanding and deliberative, and focuses on shared future among participants); engagement (dialogic participants must be accessible and interaction has to be conducted respectfully) (p.26).

Kent and Taylor (2002) suggest that dialogue is often referred to as "dialectic", "discourse" and a "process" by public relations scholars with little emphasise on its usage. Dialogue should not be treated as process, rather it is an outcome of relational interaction (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kent & Taylor, 1998). In dialogical engagement concept, Taylor and Kent (2014) shed light on principle of engagement by explaining it from the angle of dialogue theory. They point out that as an established theory of ethics, dialogue means engagement with stakeholders and public in order "to make things happen, to help make better decisions, to keep citizens informed, and to strengthen organizations" (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p.388). This is particularly appropriate in the context of nation building in which the communicative approach serves as "process of communication rather than the content of messages, as that which shapes the collective consciousness of individuals, groups, communities, and the nation" (Taylor & Kent, 2006, p. 346). Having said that, the central focus of dialogic theory in this case is on understanding and tolerance of other individuals and groups for effective government-public relationships (Taylor & Kent, 2006) and one of the ways to achieve this is by having public engagement.

This section has presented various debates regarding the potential role of dialogue in respect to engagement. It is notable that the interpretation of dialogue and functions of engagement appear to be broad. These multiple views have yet needed to be materialised and tested. The next section will examine the potential role of engagement in respect to government communication and nation-building.

4.6 Engagement and Nation-Building

Rowe and Frewer (2005) define the concept of "engagement" by relating it to the concept of public participation. The definition of public participation is generally associated with the practice of "involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations/institutions responsible for policy development" (Rowe & Frewer, 2005, p.253). Rowe and Frewer (2005) however assert that the definition of "participation" itself in fact is too broad and it allows room for various interpretation. According to them, some public may choose to "participate" by becoming passive recipients of information, while in some cases public choose to become more active in the decision-making process itself. Thus, Rowe and Frewer (2005) propose three descriptors to differentiate initiatives of what had been referred to as public participation in the past based on the flow of information between the public and sponsor and based on the combination of these concepts they call it "public engagement". The three forms of public engagement as being put forward by Rowe and Frewer (2005) are public communication (one-way communication); public consultation (one-way communication); and public participation (two-way communication). The third concept as noted by Rowe and Frewer (2005) at some point involves dialogical process. It is important to distinguish the type of engagement as it will affect the effectiveness of transfer of information in which "the most significant variable in this respect is the medium of information transfer" (Rowe & Frewer, 2005, p.271).

In light with the potential use of Internet for dialogic purpose, Kent and Taylor (1998) propose dialogic communication as theoretical framework together with five strategies to create dialogic relationships through Internet with the public. The five principles of dialogic theory are the dialogic loop (allows feedbacks from audience); the usefulness of information (information for general value to the public); the generation of return visits (attractive features); the intuitiveness/ ease of the interface (easy to figure out); and the rule of conversation of visitors (strategic placement of links or ads). Although the framework provided is generally for the website for dialogic purpose, however the same principle can possibly be applied for social media engagement especially on the

fifth strategy which is the rule of conversation. In discussing social media as the space for conversation, Kavada (2015) emphasises that conversation is not only used to signify power, but it can also represent empowerment. It can help explore not only the ways on how "people can enact a better world through communication" but also how the ideal society can be prefigured and constituted (Kavada, 2015, p.1). That is to say, communication is not only used to "affirm community but also to imagine it" as well as "not only to preserve but also to create and innovate" and this is the kind of social media should become (Kavada, 2015, p.2). In regard to nation building this is relevant as Taylor and Kent (2009) argue that the importance of communication in nation building does not lie in "technological advances or the amount of information disseminated but in the relationships that communication creates, maintains and alters" (p.346).

Kent (2013) writes about the role of public relations in reviving democracy by using social media dialogically. Kent (2013) asserts that the way social media is used for dialogical purpose needs to be rethought and the tools should not be treated as the tools of convenience and opportunism. He provides five dialogic solutions on how to reengage participant on social media platform. Firstly, when a social space is constructed for public, it is important to talk about what the public wish to talk about. This is because by serving the interests of public, the organisation actually serves its own interests. Social media should be used as a medium for discussion rather than persuasion. Secondly, using social media should live up to its nature of being social. Kent (2013) observes that at the moment social media is used by politicians and public relations professionals to serve their interest instead of what the citizens want or need. Thirdly, there is a need to revive the public spaces and collective decision making by allowing genuine participation among public. Fourthly, public relations practitioners need to be well informed and able to take charge as organisational counsels rather than being too dependent on the organisation social media platform. Finally, the aim of the communication should be long term and not in short term.

At the moment, although diversity is the unique feature of Malaysia, however unity has proven to be challenging for the nation. As noted by Malaysia's Department of National Unity and Integration, achieving to unity is only for the sake of social harmony, but it is also critical in building a productive and competitive Malaysia. Presently, 1Malaysia

concept, which is introduced as part of Government Transformation Programme, is the continuance of Malaysia's previous development agenda. Apart from strengthening the relationships among different ethnic groups, fostering government-public relationship is equally important in order to achieve the national aspiration. Having good government-public relationship is also in-line with the current Malaysian government's aim to transform its public service for efficient government. Dialogic engagement enables organisation and publics to "interact fostering understanding, goodwill, and a shared view of reality" (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p.391). According to Taylor and Kent (2006) the principles of dialogue and mutuality serve as foundation for public relations approach in nation building as they represent both interpersonal and organisation-public relationships. The available tool for nation building should be treated as ways to create and maintain relationships and not by simply utilising it as government communication channel for government efforts (Taylor & Kent, 2006).

It seems to be the trend among governments nowadays to move towards citizen centric approach in transforming public service. The notion of citizen centric approach is frequently associated with the idea of "putting citizen first" (Lindquist, 2013). The objective of citizen centric approach is to involve the citizen in policymaking and service design. As part of this transformation, citizen engagement and participation have become essential. With the opportunities available through the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), government approach to public engagement via this innovative process has become a new feature of modern democracy (Pratchett, 1999).

In describing democracy, Stoker (2013) argues it can be viewed from the protective model of democracy perspective, and developmental framing perspective. The first viewpoint talks about the necessary of holding back citizen engagement but giving "people enough engagement and enough participation to feel that they were able to influence the system" (Stoker, 2013, p. 25). This form of democracy aims at protecting liberties and constructing stable government. Developmental framing on the other hand, emphasises that citizen engagement is vital because it enables the formation of "better human beings and a better society" (Stoker, 2013, p. 26). Democracy from this view puts forward the idea that it is a basic human right and that citizens have rights to

voice their concern over decisions that affect them, which subsequently "create legitimate and effective outcomes, but stemming from shared learning and exchange of interests and ideas" (Stoker, 2013, p. 26).

The expression of public engagement in government communication is not without raising debates among scholars. Holmes (2011) argues that, in many democracies, citizen participation in policymaking and service design has been debated or attempted, but too infrequently realised. In discussing public engagement in the context of Singaporean government, Tan (2012) highlights that the current efforts in engagement between the government and citizen does not meet expectations. "There seems to be a gap between rhetoric and practice in Singapore" (Tan, 2012, p. 36). The contributing factor to this gap is that the Singapore style pragmatism itself, which over the years has become more rigid. Tan (2012) proposes the tools or models could be developed to measure and evaluate public engagement.

Tan (2012) and Holmes (2011) have particularly highlighted an important point regarding public engagement. Their findings suggest the importance of understanding the concept properly to ensure public engagement is operationalised effectively. The term "engagement" in fact is problematic that it is open for various interpretations. Not only the governments and practitioners, scholars as well have used the term widely without having proper understanding on it (Taylor & Kent, 2014). In the context of government communication, Berger (2009) argues that engagement is still a subject underexplored. In contributing to discussion of how democracy works, engagement should be seen as the most appropriate term to be used only if its significance is fully understood (Berger, 2009).

Throughout this section, the term "engagement" and "participation" have been obviously used together quite often. As highlighted by Rowe and Frewer (2005) engagement is the mechanism that enables public participation. Therefore, it is fair to assume that engagement, a mechanism that is initiated by government, does not necessary lead to citizen participation, but participation, which is initiated by public, occurs only when the citizen is already engaged.

Relating to the context of my study, Malaysian government too is optimistic in having partnership and collaboration between the citizen and government through *rakyat* (people) centric models of public service delivery. For this reason, the government is looking for innovative ways in seeking for public opinions and better engagement with its "stakeholder communities and at the same time deliver messages to the masses" (Guidelines for Developing a Transformation Plan, p. 4). Hence, this study aims at conceptualising engagement based on the perspective of Malaysian government.

Having said that, the following chapter describes the research methodology employed for this study based on the research objectives and its rationale. The limitation of the methods will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research assumptions as well as the methodological approach for this study. It aims at explaining the rationale behind the chosen research methodology and its relevance to this research. The sampling technique, data collection process as well as data analysis procedure are also described in this chapter. Although I have mentioned the objectives of this study in Chapter 1, I reiterate again these objectives, hence the rationale for the chosen methodological approach:

1. To analyse the discursive representations of nation-building in Malaysia over time.
2. To investigate how the Malaysian government understands and articulates the meaning of engagement in the context of nation-building process.
3. To understand and evaluate the key government communication strategies in engaging with the Malaysia's racially divided society.

5.2. The Research Perspective

The ontology concerns with the study of being in which that is "considered as the nature of existence and what constitutes reality" (Gray, 2013, p.19), whereas the epistemology explains the meanings in what has already been known (knowledge). How the researcher perceives the knowledge, however, is deeply grounded on how she views the 'reality'. According to Gray (2013), the selection of approach in the knowledge inquiry is influenced by the researcher's stance on her epistemological view, which is also in turn shaped by her ontological stance.

My ontological consideration for this study lies within the various perspectives of "knowledge" and "reality" that are possessed by specific phenomena as positioned by the constructionist. According to Bryman (2012), constructionism allows researchers to

view social reality as "an ongoing accomplishment of social actors" instead of seeing it as something foreign or total constrains (p.34). In this regard, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that the combination of "knowledge" and "reality" depends greatly on specific social contexts and "these relationships will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts" (p.15). The reality itself is intersubjectivity and can be shared through human interactions. In this case, the knowledge can be generated through interactions between the researcher and participants. As maintained by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Bryman (2012), this form of interaction allows for meanings to be interpreted and constructed. That is to say, the constructivism perspective helps make sense of the knowledge as it gives the researcher privileges to "focus on language, communication and relations" (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2014, p. 6).

My epistemological assumption for this work on the other hand, falls within the interpretivism perspective. Interpretivism is an alternative epistemological perspective that views subjects under investigation in social science such as people and their institution, which cannot be studied by using the same research approach used in natural sciences (Bryman, 2012). For communication research, Langsdorf (1994) stresses that all this while communication discipline "is value-based and practice oriented, rather than fact-based and theory-oriented" which means communication "is literally supported by institutional and cultural acceptance of the value of "good communication skills"" (p.3). Although the initial focus was towards public speaking, however as the discipline grows, it has extended to communication in various groups and organisational environments where technology has become its main driver, just like in other fields (Langsdorf, 1994). Particularly in the context of this research, the interpretivism approach is useful as it may lead to building up "a theory around a social science concept that explains what participants in a study are experiencing" (Creswell & Miller, 1997, p.37). To this date, research dedicating to exploring engagement in the context of Malaysia's nation-building has been scarcely researched. Therefore, this study aims to shed some light towards understanding and defining a concept that has been under explored by examining it from the perspective and experience of the Malaysian government.

For this reason, I choose to view my work from the critical realism viewpoint, a framework that is not just reducible to an epistemology (Fletcher, 2017). According to Maxwell (2012), critical realism endorses "the concept of "cause" in both the natural and social sciences", a concept that is generally associated with positivism as well as antipostivism perspectives (p. 8). As argued by Bhaskar (2008):

> Knowledge shares a feature common to many social products then : namely that though it exists only in virtue of human activity, it is irreducible to the acts of men. For any cognitive act to be possible there must be a material cause; some knowledge established, given to us, already produced (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 178).

Having said that, the practicality of critical realism in social science has been demonstrated in the work of Fletcher (2017) in her study on farm women's experiences with agricultural policy in Canada. Fletcher (2017) argues that critical realism framework's search for causation is an advantage as it potentially assists researchers "to explain social events and suggest practical policy recommendations to address social problems" (p. 181).

In the context of this study, critical realism framework is appropriate as "it acknowledges the social construction of reality" while accepting "the existence of a reality independent of our interpretations on the other hand" (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012, p. 170). When it comes to "causation" in research, I strongly belief it is contextually rooted. An interesting point highlighted by Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012) is that "the roles of culture", an aspect that "deserves more attention and could fruitfully be integrated in a critical realist framework" (p. 171), which in the Malaysian context, this is certainly relevant.

Another plus point of critical realism framework is the researcher is not obligated to a certain methodology or engage "all scholars with all the mentioned issues or concepts" (Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012, p. 171). Hence, this gives critical realism an advantage as a flexible framework. In relating to this study, the data were obtained through the interactions between the researcher and participants of this research. Thus, the "knowledge" in this case, as stressed by Creswell and Miller (1997), will be gained without imposing rigid theories but rather will be formed inductively from the views and experience of the participants. This is certainly crucial as this study attempts to explore

the concept that is lack of discussion among scholars by using the Malaysian government's experience to illuminate our understanding.

5.2.1 Limitations of the Chosen Approach

In any research, the limitations and critiques in its approach and methodology of choice are inevitable. One of the limitations that I acknowledge in this work stems from the research methodology of choice, which is closely related to my epistemological standpoint. For this study, qualitative research methods were adopted. Qualitative research methods unfortunately have always been criticised for their "quality" in providing evidence. According to Hammersley (2007), qualitative research has been critiqued for having "no clearly defined set of quality criteria available for judging it" (p.287). While criteria may be a form of guidelines in the evaluation of research, however Hammersley (2007) stresses the importance of researcher to keep being reminded that when it comes to judging qualitative work, the process is always open for revision and its meaning can only be gained in certain contexts. Employing qualitative methodology in research also reflects the differences of study "between people and the objects of the natural sciences" (Bryman, 2012, p.399). On this note, "the social world must be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied" (Bryman, 2012, p.399). To demonstrate the value of qualitative research, Hickey et al. (2015) have reported that qualitative methodology has proven to be helpful in facilitating "the practitioner-researchers with honest, perhaps surprising, data with which to explore the relational aspects of community experience" (p.14) in their study on understanding government community engagement in Australia.

One of the aspects that is highly criticised for qualitative research is on the matter regarding generalisation, which also associates with the issue of "quality" in qualitative research methods. This criticism is raised due to the view that generalisation allows the knowledge generated from a study to appear legitimate, like how it is typically viewed from the positivist standpoint. Scholars like Polit and Beck (2010) argue that the main goal of qualitative research is not about generalising, rather it is about providing "rich, contextualised understanding of human experience through the intensive study of

particular cases" (Polit & Beck, 2010, p. 1452). Although not all qualitative researchers agree on the importance of generalisation (Polit & Beck, 2010), Payne and Williams (2005) in contrast demonstrate that generalisation in qualitative study is possible through what is called as *moderatum* generalisation, or moderate generalisation. In explaining further, Payne and Williams (2005) suggest that the generalisation is moderate in two ways. The first one being the extend of the claim has to be moderate, and the second one it has to be moderately held "in the sense of a political or aesthetic view that is open to change" (Payne & Williams, 2015, p. 297). Along similar lines, Bryman (2012) stresses that, a social phenomenon is "not only produced through social interaction" but it is also "in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2012, p.33). For this reason, the findings from this research can be viewed as rather dynamic and not purely conclusive considering the context and at the period of this study was conducted. That is to say, "generalization requires extrapolation that can never be fully justified because findings are always embedded within a context" (Polit & Beck, 2010, p.1452). The findings of this study therefore can be used as a case reference or comparison for any studies that may be undertaken in the future.

5.2.2 Limitations of the Researcher

One of the concerns when opting for qualitative research approach is the potential bias that the researcher might contribute in interpreting the findings. As someone who was born and raised in Malaysia, being trained in Public Relations and having both industrial and academic experience in this field, this may somewhat create biased in this study, which is something that I need to be extra mindful when conducting my own research. This is due to the fact that subconsciously, I might be sharing the same meanings with the subject that I was trying to explore. Creswell and Miller (2007) suggest that it is important for the researcher to acknowledge his beliefs and biases in the early research process, especially in reflecting "the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their interpretation" (p.127). I however believe that my own experience does not affect my credibility as a researcher. In fact, the accrued knowledge that I gain throughout my professional and academic experience in this field will be useful in terms of dealing with

the context of my study as well as assisting me in making sense of the data that are gathered from my fieldwork. Moreover, the framework of analysis drawn from the existing literature will be used in guiding the data in interpretation process.

Another challenge that I foresee when it comes to interviewing the government officials especially those in the high-ranking civil servant positions is their ability to handle questions. From the experience I gained professionally, these individuals can be highly trained spokespersons. Sometimes the issue of the age and status gaps between the young, novice researcher and the experienced, high status elite or expert interviewee is highlighted in the literature. It is a good idea to acknowledge this and prepare for it. Gillham (2000) notes:

> Elites will not submit to being tamely interviewed where you direct a series of questions at them. It is not just that they have acquired the habit of being 'in control', though that it is part of it; it is more that in some respects they know better which questions you should be asking and, at more profound level, how knowledge of the subject is best organised. So for all these reasons you have to expect them to take charge to some extent…if you can accept that level of control (and you probably have little choice) they can be uniquely informative as well as facilitating your research activities (Gillham 2000, p. 82).

I acknowledge that I might not get the insight of the issues under discussion, instead I might be fed with information that is perceived as the "right answers". As a novice researcher, I need to be well prepared before the interview by preparing interview guidelines so that the interview can be conducted in an objective manner. On top of that, having preliminary knowledge about issues under investigation is useful so that I will not be "dictated" with what is being presented by my participants, instead I can use my existing knowledge to probe more questions within the topic discussed.

Another challenge I will face in conducting research in Malaysia is the language that is going to be used as the medium for interview. The preference of my potential participants to be interviewed in Bahasa Malaysia is not really a big challenge (although the challenge will come later in terms of translating the interview scripts), however the challenge here is on finding the right term of specific concepts that my thesis aims to examine in Bahasa Malaysia. I find this experience is a common challenge among Malaysian PhD students conducting research in the Malaysian context. I may be familiar

with the terminologies used for my work especially in English language considering my academic and professional background; however, my participants may not necessarily possess extensive knowledge on the subject matter. To ensure less hiccups during the interview, I will have to be careful with the translation of my interview questions, and a number of pilot interviews will be conducted with my Malay speaking colleagues to see whether they understand the questions asked and I will revise and paraphrase the questions from there.

Another source of limitation that needs to be taken into account is from the researcher part of being a PhD student. I acknowledge the feasibility issue as one of the most important aspects in conducting research. Understanding an appropriate research approach to be employed for my research has helped me tremendously in keeping in mind about the practicality aspect when embarking into the research journey. As pointed out by Grey (2003), since time and funding are among the constraints faced by research students, therefore it is highly advisable for students to consider context that they are already familiar with. Not only that, feasibility also concerns with the size of samples used for research. Since my study employs the purposive sampling technique, qualitative research approach is helpful in the sense that it deals with small samples but also offers rich and in-depth data at the same time.

5.3 Research Strategy and Methodology

5.3.1 Case Study

According to Bryman (2012), the case study in research primarily associates "with the location, such as a community or organization" (p.67). For this study, case study approach has been employed as this research examines the discursive representation of nation building and the conceptualisation of engagement specifically in a single case, which in this case is Malaysian context. Case study approach is appropriate to be applied in a study that involves more than one methodology and sources of data, with the ultimate objective is to analyse the relationships and processes that may present in the case (Thomas, 2016). For Daymon and Holloway (2011), the use of case study in the

communication research is "to increase knowledge about contemporary (and sometimes historical) communication events and processes in their context (p.115). Since this study also looks into to the representations of nation-building and the way these ideas are being communicated by the government to the citizen, as well as how both of these (nation-building and communication) evolve according to the era of the context, hence this study employs longitudinal study design. The reason for the adoption of this type of design is due to the fact that this study explores the discursive representation of Malaysia's post-independence nation-building as well as after Malaysia was formally formed until today. The findings are presented in chronological order as suggested by Daymon and Holloway (2011), where the researcher has to indicate the order of occurrence of the events, the people involved, the communication practices that happened at different timeframes and also the locations where the events or processes took place (p.126). The justification for this decision will be explained in the "Sampling Selection and Technique" section in this chapter.

In clarifying the employment of this approach, it is also imperative to distinguish between the selected approach and other approaches that might be overlapped such as grounded theory. The case study approach is employed based on various scholars' interpretations of case study research. Yin (2009; 1981) puts forward the idea that the case study approach is employed when a study involves an in-depth inquiry of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context when there is no clear evident of boundaries between the phenomenon and context. In another perspective, Creswell et al. (2007) views case study as a "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p.73). Both Yin's and Creswell et al.'s definitions of case study are useful in terms of viewing the "case" being studied as contextually embedded where it involves time and space (or location) and that there is a need of in-depth examination of the phenomenon studied.

In demonstrating the differences between case study and grounded theory, grounded theory is an approach used to develop "theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed" where the "theory evolves during actual research" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p.273). In contrast, the theory from case study is developed through

inductive process where it may involve "a priori specification of constructs" to help researchers to have more solid "empirical grounding for the emergent theory" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.536). For Yin (2009), the quality of the case study research is judged based on the reliability and validity as opposed to depend solely on the evidence gathered in grounded theory approach. This is due to the inquiry process in case study which "relies on multiples sources of evidence" that will be converged later for triangulation purpose (Yin, 2009, p.18).

When choosing case study as the research method, the researcher however needs to understand the type or nature of the case study employed. In explaining case study, Stake (1995) identifies three types of case study which are intrinsic, instrumental and collective. According to Stake (1995) an intrinsic case study looks into a case that 'is given' like studying a certain student having difficulty, learning about an agency or evaluating a programme. In other words, the researcher is interested in studying a particular case, not because of her interest to "learn about other cases or about some general problem" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). An instrumental case study alternatively seeks to respond to "a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding" and "get insight into the question by studying a particular case" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). In short, in instrumental case study, the researcher is interested to broaden her understanding on an issue or a phenomenon by using a particular case. Whereas, a collective case study involves multiple cases simultaneously, where each case study is instrumental in creating an understanding about an issue (Stake, 1995). Therefore, based on Stake's categorisation of the case study, I find instrumental case study is appropriate to describe the nature of case study employed for this research. This is because my research focuses on understanding the concept of engagement in the context of government communication which has been the interest of scholars recently, but it is still underexplored. In this case, the Malaysian government is instrumental in broadening our understanding as well as uncovering the prospects of this issue.

That said, in elucidating the usefulness of case study approach specifically in communication research, particularly in Public Relations and Marketing Communication research, Daymon and Holloway (2011) argue that case study can be potentially used to provide understandings in managed communication topics due its innovative and in-

depth approach. On top of that, case study also has an advantage in terms of flexibility. Stake (1995) believes that case study should be flexible in terms of design to allow changes to take place in case these happen when the researcher has already begun her research. In the context of this study, adopting the qualitative case study methodology as the strategy of data collection is appropriate since the study focuses on analysing the status quo in government communication practice in Malaysia. Specifically, this study aims at understanding the engagement concept in the context of Malaysia's nation-building over time. Another key thing to remember is, this research seeks to investigate questions that "deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 9).

One of the methods of data gathering for this research was through content analysis of the governmental document. This method of analysis was proposed because content analysis is a highly flexible method that can be applied to a wide variety of different kinds of unstructured textual information and allowed information to be generated about social groups to which it is difficult to gain access (Bryman 2012). Another advantage of content analysis is this method has generally been viewed as "an objective method of analysis" due to its transparency (Bryman, 2012, p.304). In demonstrating the importance of this method in communication research, Daymon and Holloway (2011) establish that this method is important since "documents endure over time" allows the researcher to identify the "sequence of events" which subsequently makes comparing and contrasting communication practices at "different points of time" possible (p.277).

For this study, interviews were also conducted for my fieldwork. The practicality of employing interview for qualitative research has been demonstrated in several research projects. For example, Somerville and Kirby (2012) use elite interviews as one of their methods in their study on Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland to get the insight of public relations strategies adopted by the main political parties in their referendum campaigns. Somerville and Kirby (2012) highlight that the interviews allow the participants to reflect their understanding on the public relations strategies employed in the context of Good Friday Agreement. In contrast, Valentini (2013) uses survey technique as the means to obtain data in analysing the role of strategic communication

in Italian public administration. While it allows the researcher to gain overview of the nature of communication practice among the public communication officers, the study however suffers from the impossibility of drawing inferences due to "less elaborate accounts" from the respondents as a result of limitation in quantitative approach (Valentini, 2013, p. 110).

5.4 Sampling Selection and Technique

Sampling technique is important in assisting researcher especially in the event of limited time and resources for a study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The goal of purposive sampling is to strategically determine whether the chosen participants "are relevant to the research questions that are being posed" (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). Therefore, the adoption of purposive sampling was appropriate for this study as it aimed at ensuring the selected sample were suitable to be used and helped accommodate in development of the study as well as to gain more understanding about the phenomenon under study. This means the researcher should determine the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the available samples, whether or not they fit the purpose for the study. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), the underlying principle of this technique is to generate in-depth information for qualitative researchers.

5.4.1 Text Based Material

The text-based materials are used for content analysis purpose in this study. Daymon and Holloway (2011) highlight that a case study is "bounded or fairly self-contained" in which the researcher needs to be able to identify and write "the relevant boundaries of time and place" (p. 122). In collecting the documents, I must be mindful of the timeframe that is attached to these documents. For this research, the national action plan (NAP) documents of Malaysia, which is also known as Malaysia Plan, were selected as the source of data. The Malaysia's national agendas have always been documented

via these documents. The first formal Malaysia Plan was introduced in 1966 and presently these documents are reviewed and revised every five years.

It is necessary to indicate here the justification of the chosen materials for this study. Firstly, when it comes to research involving the government, the main concern generally is about getting access to the relevant government materials such as specific policies, strategic documents and procedural documents due to the confidentiality issues. Hence, it becomes the primary reason for choosing the NAP documents solely as the main government documents for the purpose of this research. Secondly, this research did not intend to examine any specific campaign or communication activity by the government. Having said that, these NAPs are relevant and reliable to be used because they are comprehensive documents detailing the Malaysia's national agendas that are appropriate for the context of this study.

Another key thing to remember when choosing documents to analyse as suggested by Daymon and Holloway (2011) is the authenticity, credibility, meaning and representativeness of these documents. In the case of Malaysia Plan documents, the authenticity of these documents is determined by the history (originally was called as The Draft Development Plan of the Federation of Malaya introduced in 1950s by the colonial government) and their purpose (to communicate the national development agenda). The credibility of these documents on the other hand is determined by the producer which in this case is they belong to the government of Malaysia, whereas the meaning is related to the contents which solely represent Malaysia's development agenda and the representativeness depends on the total number of the documents, which up to now there are eleven altogether.

Having said that, the NAP documents allowed for patterns of nation-building to be analysed, as well as whether or not the idea and focus of nation building change over time. On top of that, these documents also allowed for understanding whether these changes may or may not affect the way government communicated with its public. It is important to clarify that the national action plan (NAP) of Malaysia examined were from 1966 when the nation-building task started to be taken over by the local elites. The main reasons for this decision were firstly, this study looked at post-independence nation building of Malaysia (1957 onwards), secondly Malaysia was formed in 1963, which

made the documents published earlier than that were irrelevant for this study, and thirdly Vision 2020 is still an ongoing nation building project in Malaysia, even at the point of time of this study. Therefore, the NAPs analysed were chosen until the most current one (2016-2020).

5.4.2 Interview

In the field of public relations, "qualitative research is often primarily associated with interviewing" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 220). Interview is an appropriate method to be used when the researcher wishes to understand the constructs that interviewees use as a basis for their opinions and beliefs about a particular situation, product or issue (Damon & Holloway, 2011, p. 222). The advantage of using more than one source of data in the study of a social phenomenon will help result in greater confidence in findings (Bryman, 2012).

In determining the appropriate interview participants for this study, it is important to reiterate that this study aimed at exploring the concept that has been loosely defined in the context of nation building, and not the effect of the government's communication strategy on the public. For this reason, the citizens were excluded from the interview participants for this study. On this ground, elite interview was employed. Elite interview is a method where "the interviewees are of less interest as a person than their capacities as experts for a certain field of activity" (Flick, 2009, p. 165). According to Tansey (2007) elite interview is valuable in illuminating the "hidden elements of political action that are not clear from an analysis of political outcomes or other primary sources" (p. 767). For this study, the accuracy of information secured from other sources can be confirmed thus helping shed some light on questions that might arise during the analysis on the governmental documents earlier which subsequently helps in triangulating the data. Another advantage of elite interview as noted by Bogner et al. (2009) is:

> Conducting expert interviews can serve to shorten time-consuming data gathering processes, particularly if the experts are seen as "crystallisation points" for practical insider knowledge and are interviewed as surrogates for a wider circle of players . . . expert interviews offer researchers an effective means of

quickly obtaining results and, indeed, of quickly obtaining good results (Bogner et al., 2009, p. 2).

Elite interview method, however, has been rivalled with expert interview method. Littig (2009) highlights that the notion of elite interview is not common in German speaking world, but it is more accustomed in English speaking world. Taking a middle ground position, Littig (2009) argues that fundamentally there is little difference between elite and expert and that despite the position of power, "the (professional) functional elite" can be classified "as a specific group of experts" (Littig, 2009, p. 98). Littig (2009) however points out that interviews that aim "at generating explicit, tacit, professional or occupational knowledge should be seen as expert interviews" (p. 99). Richards (1996) on the other hand interprets elite interview based on the function of the method. For Richards (1996), elite interview offers the researcher "an insight into the mind-set of the actors who have played a role in shaping the society in which we live" as well as their "subjective analysis of a particular episode or situation" (p. 200), which is a preferred method among political scientist. Drawing from these perspectives, I certainly view my method of choice as elite interview considering the participants were from a political institution, which in this case was federal government, who hold certain privilege for being in high raking positions, had the ability of making decision and shaping the society through policymaking. Furthermore, in the case of my research, some participants were also politicians or politically connected or holding honours titles.

The participants chosen for the interview were mostly from the federal government's Top Management Group. According to Malaysia's Public Service Department, Top Management Group in Malaysian government is defined as "a group consists of promotional grade of the Management and Professional Group for strategic posts" and "it consists of the Premier Grade C and above" (Public Service Department website). This group of individuals are generally high-level civil servants who hold leadership positions in their ministries or departments.

For this research, participants were identified and contacted based on the latest version of Malaysia's Public Media Directory released by the Department of Information, Malaysia. They were recognised based on their ministries' or departments' function

relevant to the scope of this study. As mentioned earlier, although the participants were chosen based on purposive sampling technique, however, snowball sampling was also adopted later in the course of research process. Snowball sampling takes place when the initial participants refer other participants to additional contacts (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). In this research, potential participants were also contacted based on the recommendations from my interview participants who they felt were appropriate to answer certain questions. This was certainly helpful as it could help produce information by probing the current and previous experience in order to uncover the feelings, perceptions and thoughts of the participants.

5.5 Data Collection Process

The data collection process for both methods is explained in the section below.

5.5.1 Text Based Material

The data collection process for government documents was very straightforward. Malaysia Plans are published documents that are available for download from Economic Planning Unit's website. Unfortunately, not all documents were available in the text-based format. Some documents were in the image format especially the earlier Malaysia Plans due to the lack of technological advancement in the early days. The ones in the image format however were able to be converted into text format by using Adobe Acrobat Reader. These documents were later uploaded in NVivo software for analysis purpose. The analysis technique for these documents will be explained in the "Data Analysis Procedure" section. The following table exhibits the existing Malaysia Plan documents, the validity periods as well as the leaders of the Malaysian government respectively.

Malaysia Plan	Duration	Leadership
First Malaysia Plan	1966-1970	Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj
Second Malaysia Plan	1971-1975	Abdul Razak Hussein
Third Malaysia Plan	1976-1980	Hussein Onn
Fourth Malaysia Plan	1981-1985	Mahathir Mohamad
Fifth Malaysia Plan	1986-1990	Mahathir Mohamad
Sixth Malaysia Plan	1991-1995	Mahathir Mohamad
Seventh Malaysia Plan	1996-2000	Mahathir Mohamad
Eighth Malaysia Plan	2001-2005	Mahathir Mohamad *Note: Mahathir Mohamad stepped down in October 2003 and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took the office of the Prime Minister
Ninth Malaysia Plan	2006-2010	Abdullah Ahmad Badawi *Note: Abdullah Badawi stepped down in April 2009, and replaced by Najib Razak
Tenth Malaysia Plan	2011-2015	Mohd. Najib Abdul Razak
Eleventh Malaysia Plan	2016-2020	Mohd. Najib Abdul Razak

Table 4: Malaysia Plan documents and their validity periods.

5.5.2 Interview

The University of Leicester's guideline recommended that for elite interviews, the formal written consent may be or not be necessary to be obtained beforehand (see https://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/ethics/guidance/planning/consent). For this study however, it was obligatory for me to get clearance from the Malaysian government before the fieldwork began. The initial contact with the Federal Government of Malaysia was made through a formal application via Economic Planning Unit's online application portal. Although the Economic Planning Unit or EPU is the main department under the

Prime Minister's Department that is responsible for matters regarding national planning and policies, the department is also responsible for being the first point of contact for the government for any application related to conducting research in Malaysia.

In the application, I had to determine the prospective ministries or departments that I intended to approach. The requirement for listing the ministries or departments of interest is necessary so that the EPU could obtain feedback from them for approval purpose. In other words, EPU acted as a "middle person" in the process of getting access. On top of that, there were some documents that needed to be attached as part of the application requirements.

The first formal form of communication from the EPU was received approximately two weeks through an email containing a formal letter from the department to inform on the progress of the application after the formal application was made. Within two months after the first formal correspondence, an email was sent by the EPU stating the outcome of my application for getting access for my research. I was required to personally visit Putrajaya (the federal administrative centre of Malaysia) to collect the approval letter as well as my research pass.

After the access to the government was obtained, interview invitation emails were sent to the individuals identified from the Public Media Directory. Participation information sheet and abstract were also attached in the emails to allow participants to make decision on accepting or rejecting the invitations. For some participants in this study, they personally requested for the list of interview questions to be sent in advance. It is also necessary to mention that when conducting the interview, I had to keep in mind to abide by the Explanatory Notes of Sensitive Issues, the document that was attached together when I received my approval letter from the government. The document clearly stated that all researchers had to be mindful when conducting the research in the name of national security. Having said that, researchers were required to avoid anything that was going to cause prejudice and hatred toward any races or religious groups which could affect public safety and national security (See Appendix G). For this reason, I ensured that the interview guide that I prepared did not contain any elements that was deemed sensitive from the perspective of the Malaysian government. The following table shows the ministries and departments approached for this study.

	Ministry/Agency	Department	Responded
1.	Ministry of Communications & Multimedia	Office of the Secretary-General	1
2.	Ministry of Communications & Multimedia	Department of Information	1
3.	Ministry of Communications & Multimedia	Department of Broadcasting	4
4.	Prime Minister's Department	Department of National Integration & Unity	2
5.	Prime Minister's Department	Public Complain Bureau	2
6.	Prime Minister's Department	Performance Management Delivery Unit (PEMANDU)	1
7.	Prime Minister's Department	Civil Service Delivery Unit (CSDU)	2
8.	Prime Minister's Department	Office of the Former Prime Minister (Mahathir Mohamad)/ Perdana Leadership Foundation	1
11.	Malaysian Communications & Multimedia Commission	Network Safety, New Media Monitoring, Compliance and Advocacy	1
Total number of participants			15

Table 5: The ministries and agencies approached for this study.

A total of 15 participants were interviewed for this study, which were sufficient for the purpose of this research. As highlighted by Richards (1996):

> …by definition, elites are less accessible and are more conscious of their own importance; so problems of access are particularly important. At the same time, and inevitably, elite interview samples tend to be a lot smaller (Richards, 1996, p.200).

For the purpose of this research, I personally went to the interview premises as set by the interview participants. Before any of the interview session began, the participants were asked to read and sign the participant consent form. The average duration for each

interview was between 1 hour and 1 hour and a half, depending on the amount of information provided by the participants. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. As suggested by Aberbach and Rockman (2002), the recording of interviews is necessary to minimise information loss. Regarding transcribing and reporting the interview data, Gillham (2000) suggests that:

> An elite interview is something you should report fully…it is in any case more central both in terms of the authority of the evidence and in the roles it plays in directing the research. Of course you summarise and you edit but there should be extensive direct quotations, especially of those statements that you want to cross-refer to other kinds of evidence or which are key indicators of the research direction (Gillham, 2000, p. 83).

With that said, all interviews were transcribed fully and uploaded in the NVIVO software for analysis and cross-referencing purpose.

5.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The thematic analysis approach was conducted for both text-based material and interview. According to Braun and Clarke (2006):

> Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

Therefore, the data obtained from the Malaysia Plan documents and elite interviews adopted thematic analysis six-phase guide as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006) "some of the phases of thematic analysis are similar to the phases of other qualitative research, so these stages are not necessarily all unique to thematic analysis" (p. 86). The following table shows the six steps to thematic analysis approach. How I applied the Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps of thematic analysis for each data source will be explained in the following sub-sections.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 6: The phase of thematic analysis[5].

In terms of the presentation of data, Braun and Clarke (2006) further argue thematic analysis usually involves thick description and detailed account of the data to allow readers to get "a sense of the predominant or important themes" (p. 83) in which the analysis of the findings will be presented in detail in Chapter 7, Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 accordingly.

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[5] Adapted from 'Using thematic analysis in psychology' by Braun and Clarke, 2006, Qualitative Research in Psychology 3(2), p. 87.

5.6.1 Text Based Material

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of thematic analysis is to identify, analyse and report patterns within the data. Since Malaysia's NAPs consist of a large volume of data, different validity periods as well as leaderships, therefore the first step in conducting thematic analysis for these documents was to familiarising myself with the text by reading and re-reading the documents several times and jotting down my preliminary observations of the data based on my research objectives. As mentioned earlier in Sampling Selection and Technique section, the purpose of the text material used in this study was to understand the pattern and focus of nation-building in Malaysia as well as the government communication strategies within this context over time. During this phase, I had to be mindful when dealing with the data to determine their relevance in the context of my research objectives. Since there were eleven Malaysia Plan documents in total with large volume of text for each document; which the average number of pages was 500 pages per document; I had to be specific on the kind of information I was looking for. Malaysia's NAP documents are generally presented in multiple chapters in a single document. Krippendorf (2004) calls this process as sampling, especially when a researcher faces the size of text that might be too large to handle hence the need to ensure that the text is in manageable size to be analysed. For this research, cluster sampling is adopted considering the large size of text involved. Cluster sampling is useful "where sampling units can be listed in larger chunks, or clusters" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 114). Each large unit is categorised based on period and represented by the focus of nation-building transpired. For the purpose of this research, relevant chapters were selected based on the research objectives. For example, in all Malaysia Plan documents, chapter one mainly consists of the goals of the policies pertaining to national development agendas, which is highly relevant to be used in the context of this study. Another criterion for analysing these documents was that relevant chapters that I believed contribute directly or indirectly to the advancement of communication in Malaysia were also included. Since each NAP document involved a certain time frame, I recorded my initial findings accordingly so that any pattern of similarities and differences across the data could be highlighted.

The next phase in this process is generating initial codes. Since I was dealing with a large volume of data, I uploaded all the NAPs in the NVivo software to assist me in organising and managing the data. During this initial stage, the software had also been helpful in terms of performing key word search and word frequencies. Daymon and Holloway (2011) note that qualitative content analysis may present some statistical outlook at the beginning, however qualitative researchers are more interested in the meanings behind it. Although the word count might be applicable to exhibit the representation of significance, nevertheless as a qualitative researcher I was more interested in the meaning and interpretation behind this representation. In this study, the codes were determined based on the patterns that emerge from the data. The framework of analysis drawn from various academic literatures was also used in guiding the coding process. In this respect, interpreting data that came from the context that I was familiar with had been helpful in terms of articulating the meaning of the data. In assisting the coding process, the NVivo was employed to assist in coding and identifying emerging themes. The keyword searching technique was also used to look for any mention of specific keywords in order to understand the context that adhered to them. Therefore, the key word searching was useful in terms of ensuring that no information was left behind, whether it was relevant or not.

After the initial codes were created, these codes were later classified into overarching themes. Since there were eleven Malaysia Plan documents altogether, these codes were initially categorised into their respective validity period. From there, different codes were reviewed and might be combined to create an overarching theme. During this process, the relationship between codes that were categorised according to the period of each NAP was also observed and how they could possibly be categorised into the same or different themes, discarded or probably become themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), during this phase, the researcher will start having "a sense of the significance of individual themes" (p. 90).

The next step in thematic analysis approach as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) is reviewing themes. This is where the themes are reviewed and refined further by the researcher. In this process, the researcher has "to read all the collated extracts for each theme, and consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern" (Braun and

Clarke, 2006, p. 91). For the NAPs, some data might have more than one code. In this case the decision must be made to classify the codes under the most appropriate themes. If they were not suitable, I had to rework on the themes and create a new one until I felt satisfied with my decision in this process.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the next step in thematic analysis is defining and naming themes. When I reviewed my themes at this stage, I tried to refine them again by not having too many themes. For themes that I found to be almost similar, I only constructed one theme with an appropriate name to represent the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasised that "it is important not to try and get a theme to do too much, or to be too diverse and complex" (p. 92). What more important is to "identify what is of interest about them and why" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). In doing so, I kept referring to my research objectives to ensure I stay objective with what I was looking for in the data.

After the themes were clearly defined, the final step of the analysis was to produce the report. Since the Malaysia's NAP documents involved specific time frame, the reporting of the findings was presented in a chronological manner to establish coherence and comprehensibility.

5.6.2 Interview

The first step towards thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) is data familiarisation phase. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) it is important for the researcher to immerse himself in the data to get the sense of depth and breadth of the content. "Immersion usually involves 'repeated reading' of the data, and reading the data in an active way- searching for meanings, patterns and so on" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). For my interview data, I transcribed them by using a free online transcribe platform (see http://otranscribe.com/). To get a better sense of familiarisation of the data, the transcribing of all interviews was conducted solely by myself. Some interviews that were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia were translated in English for uniformity in the analysis process. Any important point mentioned in the interview was noted for

referencing purpose and for pattern identification. Any unique information that I found was recorded for future reference when I embarked into the writing of the findings.

The second phase in thematic analysis is generating initial codes. According Braun and Clarke (2006) this process begins when the researcher has read and familiarised herself with the data as well as "generated an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about them" (p. 88). This is where it "involves the production of initial codes from the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Codes represent the feature of data that the researcher finds interesting and it is always important that codes are not to be confused with the unit of analysis (themes) which are generally broader (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the richness of the data, NVivo software was used to record all the initial codes generated from the data that I found interesting or useful. The use of NVivo was also for the purpose of data organisation and management.

The next phase in thematic analysis is searching for themes. This phase involves re-focusing data analysis in a broader level where codes are sorted into potential theme and collated all "relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). In this phase, researcher starts considering how different codes can potentially be combined to form an overarching theme. Based on the initial codes that I generated through NVivo, I began to categorise the codes into themes within the interviews by creating the parent nodes in NVivo. In this way, it allowed me to start thinking about the relationship between codes, relationship between themes and also the different levels of the themes out my data. This process also enabled me to consider possible sub-themes that could be created from the data. I also use existing literature to help me identify the emerging themes from the data.

The next step in the analysis is reviewing the themes. This phase allows researcher to refine the themes created earlier. Braun and Clarke, (2006) suggest two levels of reviewing and refining the themes. The first level "involves reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts" and the second level is "a similar process, but in relation to the entire data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). In this phase, I reviewed all the themes and sub-themes created to ensure they fit to form a coherent pattern. Whichever themes that I found did not fit, I went back and reworked and created new themes to accommodate those themes appropriately. In this process I also discarded themes that

I found to be irrelevant in the context of the study. The review process was crucial before the data could be mapped out. On top of that, I had to revisit all the created themes to ensure they reflect or represent the data accurately and how they fit together.

The fifth phase of thematic analysis is defining and naming themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) posits that in this phase of analysis the researcher needs to be able to identify "the 'essence' of what each theme is about" and for each theme the research needs to "conduct and write detailed analysis" as well as "identifying the 'story' that each theme tells" (p. 92). In this stage, I kept referring to my research objectives to make sure they were relevant to the context of my study.

And the final procedure in thematic analysis is producing the report. When the researcher has finally worked out all the themes, the final step is to conduct final analysis and write up the report. In the reporting of finding phase, Braun and Clarke (2006) provides a guideline on how present the findings. They suggest that it is important that it:

> provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell - within and across themes. Your write-up must provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data - ie, enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 1993).

That said, the following page shows the diagram indicating the main themes found across the data set from this study. The illustration also depicts their relationship between the data obtained from the NAPs and the interviews through the shared themes particularly on nation-building (generated from the NAPs) and citizen engagement (generated from the interviews) and the challenges (generated from both data sources). In terms of writing up the findings, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest it is not merely about presenting the data, it has to be "embedded within an analytic narrative" as well as providing argument in relations to research questions (p. 93). The findings of this study are presented in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 of this thesis. The detailed discussion of the key findings from this study however is presented in Chapter 9.
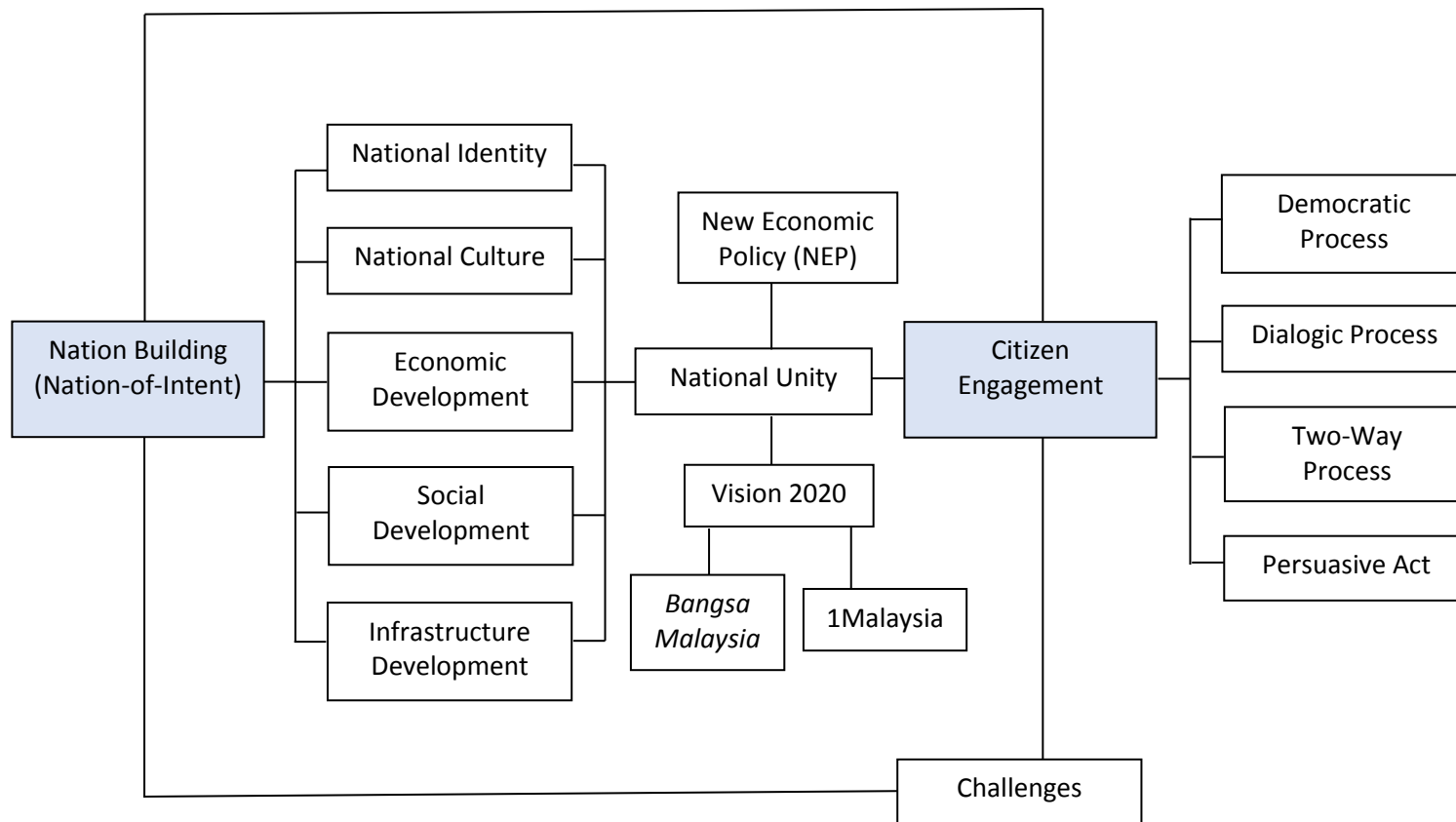
Figure 2: Diagram showing the main themes found across the data set.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

REALISING THE VISION: TOWARDS A FULLY DEVELOPED NATION

6.1 Introduction

The findings in this chapter are established from the Malaysia's National Action Plan (NAP) documents with the purpose of addressing the first research question of this study, which seeks to understand the conception of nation-building in Malaysia over time. In searching for the answer to this question, the Malaysia's NAP documents that are known as Malaysia Plan were used to investigate the conception of nation-building since the state of Malaysia was formed up to now. Since this study employed longitudinal study design, the findings are presented in chronological order based on the period of Malaysia's nation-building projects transpired to identify the pattern of similarities or differences of nation-building efforts over time.

For many countries, the NAPs are generally the government tools containing specific guidelines and approaches towards achieving overall objective of the national agenda. For example, the China's National Plan is the document that lasts every five-year cycle, comprises of development planning that sets out to achieve its vision 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Similarly, Malaysia too has its own NAP documents known as the Malaysia Plan. It is necessary to reiterate here that the five-year plan is the Malaysia's main national development policy that becomes the feature of the country's nation-building agenda since its introduction before the independence. Presently, Malaysia has set its vision to become a fully developed nation by year 2020 or better known as Vision 2020.

Laissez Faire Economic Approach (1965-1970)	Addressing the country's socio-economic development problems and challenges: • Promote welfare for all • Increase level of income • Introduce new economic activities • Provide physical infrastructure
New Economic Policy (1971-1990)	Reduce disparities by restructuring the society: • Economic participation by all races • Eradicate poverty irrespective of races
Vision 2020 (1991-2020)	To become a developed nation in Malaysia's own mould: • *Bangsa* **Malaysia** concept (1991) • **1Malaysia** concept (2010)

Figure 3: Malaysia's nation building can be divided into three eras.

The figure above shows Malaysia's nation of intent over time. On the left are the main nation-building agendas and on the right are the government's strategies to achieve these agendas.

6.2 Malaysia as a New Independent State

Economic development in Malaysia in recent years has taken place in a context of profound and rapid political change. The new nation of Malaysia was formed in September, 1963, and subsequently found it necessary to defend itself against political and military confrontation. The separation of Singapore from Malaysia in August, 1965, led to a further change in political boundaries. These important political developments, however, did not disrupt the steady economic progress of Malaysia.

First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970).

The findings set forth under this section were obtained primarily from the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) with the purpose of understanding Malaysia's nation-building process and development priorities in the early years since the country was formed. The First Malaysia Plan also marked the first official National Action Plan (NAP) for the state of Malaysia after the end of Malayan Second Five-Year Plan in 1965, the five-year plan that was launched two years before the state of Malaysia was formed in 1963. The document, which was developed under the leadership of Malaysia's first Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj also marked the first plan as 'Malaysia' and the development plan also included the state of Sabah and Sarawak. It is necessary to recap that Malaysia was formed six years after receiving her independence in 1957. It can be said that at this point Malaysia had succeeded in creating on national borders, in-line with the observation by Narangoa and Cribb (2010) on decolonisation process among postcolonial countries in realising "a number of imagined national configurations" by merging Federation of Malaya, Borneo states and Singapore to form a state. Moreover, the main goal of bringing together these former British territories is for "closer association" in ensuring cooperation in "development, security and self-determination" (Stockwell, 2003, p. 228).

One notable challenge faced by Malaysia was the political and military confrontation from Indonesia, who opposed the formation Malaysia in the same year Malaysia was

established. Two years after the country was formed, Malaysia faced another political challenge, which was the separation of Singapore from Malaysia. Despite these political challenges, Malaysia's development still progressed significantly. However, economic and social issues remained as outstanding matters to be resolved by the government. Having said that, this is also the first Malaysia's NAP that integrated the development planning for the Borneo states: Sabah and Sarawak. As a new independent state, Malaysia faced numerous challenges economically, socially and politically.

6.2.1 Improving Citizen's Welfare through Socio-Economic Development

It is evidenced from the First Malaysia Plan that the focus of Malaysia was moving towards modernisation with the goal of achieving economic and social development to create a happier and prosperous country. However, in light of the current internal and external threats, Malaysia saw the importance of maintaining her economic growth and development.

> …demonstrate to the world and all Malaysians alike that in the face of national emergency and threats of external aggression, we are undeterred in our efforts to raise living standards by promoting sustained economic growth with an imaginative and constructive programme of development (First Malaysia Plan, Foreword, p. V).

The national strategic development planning however was designed based on the existing problems in the country. The government saw the present economic problems through the current economic activities as well as issues relating to social justice. The First Malaysia Plan also exhibited that historically, there had been substantial dependence on two export products; the rubber and tin; which the former experienced steady price drop and the latter saw rapid depletion in resource. Another problem pertaining to national development was also associated with the increase rate of population in the country, where it affected the employment and labour force, while at the same time there were also shortages of skilled human resource to carry out development. The social problem faced by the country also included income disparities

between rural and town residents as well as among various social groups within the country.

In order to address the problems acknowledged earlier, the government had come out with what was termed as 'bold and imaginative' measures in moving forward. What appeared to be on top of the priority was the matter of integration.

> To promote the integration of the peoples and states of Malaysia by embarking upon a development plan explicitly designed to promote the welfare of all (First Malaysia Plan, p.2).

Stressing on the importance of social justice in the context of national development, the Malaysian government aimed at approaching this issue by increasing the level of income of the people, creating more employment opportunities, controlling population growth by introducing family planning programmes and improving health and other social welfares such as low-cost housing projects. In order to increase the citizen's participation in the country's development, the government highlighted the significance of education and training in national development.

> …directly raise output and incomes through agricultural and industrial development or upgrade the quality of human resources through education, especially in the agricultural and technical fields. These are the two main themes of the public investment programme: raising incomes through directly productive investment and building towards much greater productivity in the future through education (First Malaysia Plan, p.11).

Apart from producing qualified human resources, in line with the First Malaysia Plan objective in promoting integration among the people, one of the goals of the education programmes was also to encourage unity.

> …to consolidate further the national educational system in order to promote social, cultural and political unity (First Malaysia Plan, p.166).

Another measure taken to increase economic productivity was developing both agricultural and industrial sector for generating new kind of economic activities to lessen the dependence on rubber and tin as well as to increase productivity and income earning

capacity of the citizen. On top of that, the government considered the development of infrastructure was also important so as to progress.

> To provide electric power, transportation facilities and communication services adequate to keep ahead of foreseen demands (First Malaysia Plan, p. 2).

Nevertheless, in putting the development framework into perspective, the government took into consideration a number of factors that would affect the progress. It is clear from the First Malaysian Plan that the focus of the development agenda was to accelerate the development to encourage investments and possibly utilise the country's human and natural resources.

> The pace at which the economy develops… will depend partly on the success of the Plan in achieving its aims and partly upon a number of historical, natural and political factors which are not within the immediate control of development policy. Some of these factors, such as the economy's natural resource base, are given and unalterable. Others, which are of a political nature, can be altered but only by means other than an economic and social development plan (First Malaysia Plan, p. 41).

With regards to the country's human resource; which contributed to the labour force; the recent improvement in health services had contributed directly towards reduced death rates. For this reason, the source of population growth for Malaysia was epitomised by the excess birth rates instead.

> Malaysia population is relatively youthful and is receiving more and more years of education, the number of persons seeking employment will not grow quite so rapidly in 1966-70 as total population. Nevertheless… The labour force will rise from 3.2 million in 1965 to about 3.7 million by 1970. National economic development will thus be needed to ensure that work is available for all these new additions to the nation's manpower supply (First Malaysia Plan, p. 43).

Acknowledging that the low-income groups were mainly of the *Bumiputera* (son of soil), the government had come out with various incentives and programmes to encourage them to participate in the industrial development.

In view of the relative lack or capital and industrial know-how among the lower income groups, which comprise in the main the Bumiputera. Their participation in industrialisation will require that they be provided with the necessary facilities and opportunities to do so (First Malaysia Plan, p. 137).

The period of the First Malaysia Plan saw intense efforts on rural development through various initiatives.

… agriculture and rural development projects, which will directly benefit the rural people by raising their productivity and income levels, expenditure in many other areas will also contribute to rural development. Much of the expenditure to be incurred for education, health, transportation and water supplies will be made in the rural areas (First Malaysia Plan, p. 10).

Based on the findings presented so far, it is evidenced that Malaysia adopted "a strongly pro-rural, pro-poor development strategy" particularly through agrarian development by uplifting the Malay's traditional sector which had contributed significantly to its sustained income growth since 1958 (Henley, 2012, p. 33). As highlighted by Briones and Felipe (2013), in the period of modernisation among Asian countries, "the development of agriculture was a key element of structural transformation in Asia, and that agriculture will continue to play an important role in future transformation" (p. 1). This strategy became even more prominent and intensified under the administration of the Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (1970-1976) which began with the Second Malaysia Plan. Hence, the findings in the next section highlight the key moments and efforts in Malaysia's nation-building.

6.3 Towards a United Nation through Modernisation

… The birth of Malaysia in 1963 brought in another period of national integration fraught with many external threats and challenges. Then in 1969, Malaysia faced an outburst of racial conflict that showed clearly an area of weakness which undermined the very foundations of the nation.

Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980).

The findings presented under this section were mainly obtained from the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975), Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980), Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985) and Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990) which serve as the basis of understanding Malaysia's nation-building process after May 13, 1969 tragedy as well as give us insight into the country's new era of nation-building. Following the 1969's racial riot, national unity has become an overriding objective for Malaysia in the modernisation planning.

From the findings in the Malaysia Plan documents, it was obvious that the Malaysian government had always intent to create a united nation. In fact, the idea of 'united nation' was mentioned in the earlier Malaysia Plan documents before the country eventually became a nation in 1991 under the Sixth Malaysia Plan.

> …fashioning the socio-economic environment necessary for strengthening the beliefs of the nation and realizing its goals for a united nation (Third Malaysia Plan, 1976-1980, p. 91).

Prior to realising a united nation, the Malaysian government saw national unity and social integration as crucial aspects in this process. Thus, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in the country, which marked a new era of Malaysia's nation building.

> This direction towards national unity is fundamental to the New Economic Policy… is designed to facilitate the achievement of the national objective. It marks a new phase in the economic and social development of Malaysia (Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975, p. 1).

6.3.1 Social Justice through Restructuring Malaysian Society

Since the May 13, 1969 tragedy, the government has given a strong emphasis on national unity and it has since become the prerequisite to national development. In the context of unity and national development, the Malaysian government understood that poverty was the major reason for social discontent in the country, which could also disrupt the national unity. By depending on economic means solely, the achievement of national unity among the citizens could not be assured. Therefore, the introduction of

the NEP in Malaysia was aimed at encouraging the national unity through the restructuration of society by achieving two main objectives.

> The first prong is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race. The second prong 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 (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 1).

As shown in Chapter 3, the labelling of races according to their economic functions was the result of divide and rule policies during the colonial administration in Malaysia that inevitably created resentment among races in Malaysia. The resentment had eventually caused the May 13, 1969's tragedy and the implementation of the NEP was a drastic measure to respond to this incident.

Seeing poverty as the major barrier in creating a united and just society, the government came out with the strategies to generate a high rate of economic growth to allow for job creation and opportunities by adopting modern techniques and facilities to increase productivity, providing assistance in terms of financial and technical, and education and training, and also providing free or subsidised social services to raise standard of living especially among the low-income groups.

> The creation of a strong demand for labour is an important prerequisite for eliminating poverty, as well as restructuring the society. Wider job opportunities must be created, especially for youths of all races, to provide increasing rewards for productive human effort (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 5).

Recognising the complexity of being a multiracial state especially after the racial riot, the introduction of the new policy clearly showed that the Malaysian government adopted elite instrumentalist approach in the nation-building process as a measure of creating stability in the country. Instrumentalism views ethnic identities in primarily rational terms (Kataria, 2018). As emphasised by Brass (1991) "elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to

compete with other groups" (p. 75), which is clearly translated in the NEP. In this regard, stability was created through the NEP by producing more middle class *Bumiputeras* hence narrowing the gap as well as reducing the tension between races. This is because majority of Malays still lived in the villages and carried out traditional economic activities like paddy farming. Therefore, in eliminating the race identification with certain forms of economic activity, the NEP explicitly stated that above all other efforts towards this objective, it called for the participation of rural community particularly among the Malays and other indigenous groups (*Bumiputera*) in forming the Malay commercial and industrial community to enable these groups to create partnerships in the economic life of the country.

> Explicit and deliberate efforts by the Government will be required to enable significant numbers of Malays and other indigenous people to gain experience and to have greater access to commercial and industrial opportunities…With such a role by the Government, the development of a multi-racial commercial and industrial community will be greatly facilitated, and the identification of race with economic function will be ultimately eliminated (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 8).

On top of that, to create more competitive and qualified *Bumiputera* professionals in the job market, various incentives and programmes were introduced. One of them was the establishment of education and training institutes specifically created for the *Bumiputeras*.

> An important measure for facilitating entry of Malays and other indigenous people into the industrial sector is the provision of accelerated opportunities for technical, agriculture, vocational and business training. The MARA Vocational Schools, MARA Institute of Technology, the Ministry of Labour and Manpower and the National Productivity Centre will be training more Malays and other indigenous people for industry (Second Malaysia Plan, p.160).

Since May 1969, the government had intensively reviewed the current national policies and priorities. Despite the remarkable progress that Malaysia experienced in the economic and social development, however, poverty, unemployment and economic disparities remained as serious problems and concerns. The rapid development

particularly in education, urbanisation and extended economic activities had also caused other issues among the youth of the society.

> … have all resulted in the creation of new ideas, the loosening of old ties, the questioning of traditional values, and the search for new sources of meaning and understanding, particularly among the youth of the society. The Government has further noted that these developments in turn have made for a socially and politically volatile society, yet a society responsive to new concepts and policies of social and economic order (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 2).

Acknowledging the root cause of the problems was actually due to the nature of multiracial society, a policy that addressing the needs of this kind of society was required to correct the racial economic imbalance and subsequently achieve the national unity, which in this case was through the introduction of the NEP. On top of that, the national principles (*Rukunegara*, see Appendix D for reference) was introduced to consolidate this new strategy.

> The implementation of the new strategy to achieve these objectives will be guided by the principles of Rukunegara, proclaimed on 31st August, 1970. The Rukunegara, which declares the national objectives and values and the fundamental principles to guide the citizens and the nation… creating a united, socially just, economically equitable and progressive Malaysian nation (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 2).

To maximise the achievement of national unity under the new policy, for the first time through the Second Malaysia Plan, Malaysia started considering about having a national identity. By using *Rukunegara* as the basis, a united nation should be able to be achieved through loyalty and dedication.

> This search for national identity and unity involves the whole range of economic, social and political activities: the formulation of education policies designed to encourage common values and loyalties among all communities and in all regions; the cultivation of a sense of dedication to the nation through services of all kinds; the careful development of a national language and literature, of art and music; the emergence of truly national symbols and institutions based on the cultures and traditions of the society (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 3).

The new objectives under the NEP, which focused on reducing poverty and racial economic disparity in the effort of fostering national unity, had also resulted in the establishment of the Department of National Unity on July 1, 1969, in the same year after the racial riot happened, to ensure the goal of economic balance was achieved.

> The emphasis on the problems of poverty and racial economic disparity brought about changes in the planning process. The new Department of National Unity (DNU), in conjunction with other central planning agencies, played a major role in defining the goals of economic and social development… The DNU will continue to conduct research into various aspects of race relations and evaluate measures to reduce economic disparity… to enable the formulation of a strategy to restructure the economy in order to achieve the goal of economic balance (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 113).

6.3.2 The Construction of National Identity

The 1969's racial riot, which left a stain in the history of Malaysia, had led the government to re-examine the approaches taken towards strengthening the national unity. Consolidating a nation with a multiracial society, which was segregated by socio-economic and cultural differences had proven to be Malaysia's greatest challenge in achieving the national development.

> A most significant aspect of the trials and challenges which the nation faced in its formative years was the development of the political system itself. Throughout these trying years, the ideals of parliamentary democracy have been maintained and nurtured with modifications to adapt to the needs of a multiracial society. Except for a period of national emergency which was declared following the 1969 racial disturbances, Malaysia has always given free rein to democratic expression and governance. To forestall a recurrence of the 1969 incidents, new safeguards against ethnic rivalries and fears were effected through appropriate constitutional and legal processes (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 2).

Through the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980), the Malaysian government finally acknowledged the concept of plural society in the context of sociological, political and national security by using *Rukunegara* as the basis of creating a united nation.

The Rukunegara provides the ideological foundations for a common value system among Malaysians which transcends ethnic, cultural and socio-economic differences within the nation. It symbolizes the aspirations of all Malaysians for bringing into reality the goals upon which the nation was created. Socio-economic factors influence in many ways the progress that can be made towards creating the united and resilient society envisaged by the Rukunegara (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 91).

The government perceived plural society as one of Malaysia's strongest assets in developing the country since its's development efforts had always been schemed within this context. This had been exhibited throughout the history where ethnic and cultural diversity had allowed Malaysia to achieve one of the fastest development rates in Southeast Asia.

The strength of the nation lies squarely on the willingness of all Malaysian citizens, irrespective of race, culture and religion to give their fullest support to the national development goals. These goals should become the rallying point for the entire nation. It is only this unity of purpose that can turn Malaysia's diversity into one of the strongest assets for the nation (Third Malaysia Plan, p.92).

At the same time, the government attempted to address the misconception on benefitting the Malays and indigenous people through the New Economic Policy (NEP). This new approach simply meant to include the representation and achievement of multiracial structure in all fields and sectors that were not adequately represented in the past.

…The poor in Malaysia involve other races as well, although the majority are the Malays and other indigenous people living in rural areas. Another misconception is in respect of urban poverty. With the migration of the Malays and other indigenous people to the urban areas, this problem is no longer limited to the other Malaysians. Urban poverty is, therefore, a multiracial problem (Third Malaysia Plan, p.92).

The government also attempted to justify that although the special rights of the Malays and indigenous people were acknowledged officially in the constitution under the Article 153, however, it should not be overly emphasised for fear of creating resentment among

other racial groups. The Article 153 of the Federal Constitution clearly states the special position of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak particularly on the reservation of quotas that covers position in the public service, scholarships, education as well as permit or license for operation of trade or business required under federal law (Article 153, Federal Constitution). As highlighted by Shamsul (2009) in Chapter 3, this evidently describes the presence of 'stable tension' in Malaysia which he argued the stability in Malaysia is maintained through constant negotiation and consensus seeking. According to Shamsul (2009) the practice of census seeking in Malaysia has its history dating back in 1871 for the Straits Settlements during the colonial period which eventually shaped and consolidated "the different meanings and measurements of ethnic groups in the country" and therefore established "the pattern of ethnic relations for decades after" (p. 5)

> An over-emphasis on the special rights of the Malays and other indigenous people by public officials will generate apprehension and fear on the part of other Malaysians, leading to a sense of alienation and neglect. Equally, undue pressure on the part of other Malaysians for a stake over and above that envisaged by the NEP could be disruptive. Only an awareness and acceptance of the national character of the exercise to remedy the ethnological imbalance in the national economy and a refrain from making demands based on purely racial lines will enable the nation to devote full attention to these national goals (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 93).

To create the sense of national pride and belonging among the citizens, the most crucial aspect in this pursuit was to form a true Malaysia's national identity. The government however recognised that the plurality of the society posed a great challenge in the quest of moulding a national identity especially for a young state. These efforts required determination and sacrifice among the people.

> It calls for (i) a full identification and commitment to the national goals and ideals; (ii) viewing emergent problems of whatever nature in terms of a challenge to Malaysia's capability as a nation and a people; (iii) accepting the country's socio-cultural diversity as a source of pride in regard to the nation's uniqueness; and (iv) treating internal differences and conflicts as a natural process of consensus seeking in the pursuit of the most satisfying compromises and alternatives. A common national identity lies in the willingness of the people to accept the above as guidelines for action (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 94).

Additionally, acknowledging the history that led towards the country's struggle for independence and the role of national language, which is *Bahasa Malaysia* as well as the national culture was fundamental in terms of moulding a nation. Therefore, the education system in Malaysia was designed to become the instrument for this purpose. The use of education as the tool for state is in-line with the argument by Gellner (1983) on the use of education and educators in modern states in establishing identity as education does not only act as the instrument for identity formation but it is also the "symbol of state power", hence "legitimate education is now more important, more central than the monopoly of legitimate violence" (p. 34)

> … Thus the education system is designed for this purpose. It will inculcate a greater sense of national belonging, love for the nation, greater self-discipline and respect for the elders, appreciation of what the nation bequeaths to the people and the responsibilities expected of them in return (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 94).

As discussed in Chapter 2 on the use of religion in nation-building in Southeast Asia, the association of religion in the context of nation-building and nationalism within this region generally is without "the imposition of violence through mechanisms such as forced expulsions, genocides and ethnic cleansing" (Barr, 2010, p. 257). Barr (2010) further argues that religion in nation-building is treated as a constitutive force. In the case of Malaysia's nation-building, the teachings of Islam and other religions existed in the country were considered as the enforcers of socio-cultural characteristics (such as tolerance and understanding, respect, hospitality, love for peace, devotion, common sense etc.) as the basis of forming Malaysian identity for a young multiracial nation. On top of that, the government perceived these qualities as being helpful in overcoming the trials and tribulations over the years.

> It requires a high degree of mutual tolerance among the various races, respect for each other's culture and religion, the integration of basic norms and values in regard to the nation and its identity and the establishment of and a commitment to a common set of goals and aspirations that transcend communal interests (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 104).

Nonetheless, it is evident at this point that the search for Malaysia's national identity was the Malay-led national identity. According to Shamsul (1996b) when defining the identity formation, it is created based on "two social reality" context which are "authority-defined" social reality, and the other one is "every-day defined" social reality though these two realities may coexist at the same time (p. 447). Presently, the identity formation in Malaysia clearly can be discerned as the "authority-defined" social reality where the formation of identity is "authoritatively defined by people who are part of the dominant power structure" (Shamsul, 1996b, p. 447).

> The evolution of a Malaysian national identity will be based on an integration of all the virtues from the various cultures in Malaysia, with the Malay culture forming its core. It will also include the infusion of new characteristics that can foster the process of cultural integration and strengthen the very foundation of the multiracial society (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 94).

As part of the desirable future state of Malaysia, the country's quest for searching her character and identity also included the role of women in the society, an image that the government viewed as being progressive. The role of women was in fact acknowledged before the independence when they fought together with the men "in the nationalist war against the British" (Ariffin, 1999, p. 417). According to Ariffin (1999), the main difference between the struggles in Malaysia and many western countries, "was that Malaysian women did not have to fight to get the vote as in the long struggles of the suffragettes" and when the country achieved its independence in 1957, the right to vote was already granted to them as enshrined in the constitution (p. 417).

> ...the role of women in society has become an increasingly important factor in both the developed and developing countries. The active participation and contribution of women in development outside the family circle are no longer saddled by prejudice and traditional conservatism... These are significant factors in a nation's search for character and identity. The contribution of women to the evolution of a strong and self-reliant society in Malaysia needs to be appreciated and taken into consideration in the agenda for rapid development and progress (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 105).

The next section will present the findings from the Fourth Malaysia Plan, which marked the intensifying of Malaysia's modernisation process under the administration of Prime

Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad from 1981 to 2003 that made him the longest serving Prime Minister in Malaysia. Nicknamed '*Mahathirism* Era' by many observers, his years of premiership had not only marked remarkable progress in the country, but also traces of his legacies in Malaysia's nation-building process.

6.3.3 Creating Stability through Unity

Despite the rapid economic growth and high standard of living that Malaysians generally experienced in the past decade, national unity remained as the foundation of building a strong and united Malaysian nation.

> No nation, however prosperous, will remain viable and secure if its citizens are disunited and lack a strong sense of commitment to the nation. Prosperity and progress without unity, stability and a deep sense of loyalty on the part of its citizens will, in the long run, weaken the foundation of Malaysian society… necessary for the building of a strong and united Malaysian nation (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 87).

Since the 1969's tragedy, strict measures had been taken by Malaysia to demonstrate her commitment in ensuring the stability and peace in the country, which included the government's decision to make amendments to the Federal Constitution, the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1971 (See Appendix E). In Chapter 2 of this thesis, several scholars had emphasised the role of constitution in nation-building. In Malaysia's case, it is evident that the constitution plays a big role in ensuring stability in the country due to its legal-political framework nature to reduce dispute in the country.

> …to remove sensitive issues from the realm of public debate. Discussions on these issues were conducted in the National Consultative Council, and on the dissolution of the Council, in the National Unity Board. Following the dissolution of the Board, discussions were then continued in the Department of Rukun Tetangga and National Unity (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 87).

The removal of 'discussion of sensitive issue' in public sphere also encompasses media freedom and censorship. According to Mohd Sani (2008), despite the importance of

media as the information providers, the Malaysian government "uses legal measures to contain the media from being critical and perform as civil society that encourages public deliberation" (p. 70). In the government's defence however, the press should be restricted or controlled due to the nature of being multiracial and multireligious country where there were many sensitive issues that needed to be considered before press freedom could be realised. This practice however can be considered as quite common since many countries around the world have their own media censorship in the context of politics, nationalism and nation-building (see Das, 2018; Xiao, 2013).

In-line with the constitutional changes, the ruling party at that time had also acknowledged the role it played in the national development. Therefore, the ruling party since Independence, Alliance, had reorganised and expanded its role, which led to the formation of *Barisan Nasional*.

> The aim of the coalition was to strengthen political consensus and reduce "politicking" so that more time and resources could be devoted to national development… to maintain continuity and stability to the planning and development efforts throughout the decade… provided the link between the Federal and State Governments, leading to greater identification of the components of the Federation with the aspirations of the nation (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 87).

Moving forward towards national unity and nation-building, regional integration in various states of Malaysia was equally important in realising the country's dream of becoming a united nation.

> … integration among Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. The education systems in Sabah and Sarawak were progressively integrated into the national system… Better communication links were also strengthened through air and sea transport, telecommunications, and postal services (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 6).

The role of education undeniably had become a major vehicle in Malaysia's nation-building process. The existing national education system in Malaysia can be traced back to two important education reports namely Education Committee Report (1956) or The Razak Report and the Education Review Committee Report (1960) or better known as The Rahman Talib Report (Singh & Mukherjee, 1993). The major recommendation of

these reports was "the creation of a new national identity through internal reorganisation of the education system" by using "common language instruction", "common content curriculum and examinations" (Singh & Mukherjee, 1993, p. 90). Apart from using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction to promote effective communication between races, education system in Malaysia also provided an avenue for the Malaysian children to be exposed and experience the county's values and cultures since at the young age. The curriculums were designed to inculcate Malaysian values that served the needs of a multiracial society.

> … emphasis was given to the study of the historical, economic, and social development of Malaysia. The moulding of civic and national consciousness was also emphasized. Co-curricular activities also provided opportunities for school children to interact and work together in club activities and sports (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 6).

To tighten the role of education in the process of nation-building, the National Education Policy was introduced in-line with the objective of NEP.

> The National Education Policy, as spelt out in the Education Act, 1961, emphasized the greater access to education, the implementation in stages of Bahasa Malaysia as the main medium of instruction, the establishment of a common curriculum, and the use of Bahasa Malaysia and English in the national examination system. The teaching of pupils' own languages as provided for under the Education Act, 1961, continued to exist during the period. The Policy also emphasized vocational and technical education to meet manpower needs as well as moral and religious education (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 483).

In the context of 'own language', there are also vernacular schools in Malaysia. The difference between the national schools and vernacular schools are only in terms of language of instruction used whether it is in Chinese or Tamil "with Malay and English to be taught alongside" (Brown, 2007). The allowance over vernacular schools was proposed by the second Prime Minister "both at primary and secondary level, but that a common curriculum be instituted, recommendations which were accepted and given effect by the 1957 Education Ordinance" (Brown, 2007, p. 320).

In encouraging interactions between races and living side by side, the government had taken the initiative to promote racial balanced in residential areas particularly in the urban areas. A study conducted on intergroup contact in fostering nation-building in Indonesia's resettlement programmes by Bazzi et. al (2018) reveals that diversity impacts integration which contributes to intergenerational process of nation-building, which is very crucial in the years to come.

> The development of low-cost housing schemes, including flats, enabled the urban low-income households of all races to acquire decent living places. Many of these housing schemes were provided with recreational facilities, allowing greater opportunities for the various communities to integrate freely in their daily lives (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 90).

The housing programmes however were schemed towards the context of human settlement concept to upgrade the quality of life. The concept of human settlement has been discussed by scholars and professionals in the context of economic development. As defined by Overseas Development Institute (1977), the concept of a human settlement is "both social and physical, and it can be defined as having two components: a human group, and the habitat of this group" (p. 1). An important aspect of this concept is it is more than the physical infrastructure, but these settlements also include "sets of social relationships" (Overseas Development Institute, 1977, p. 1).

> … in the context of the human settlement concept, with the objectives of providing adequate social facilities and upgrading the quality of life as well as promoting national unity. Under this concept, the provision of social facilities, such as schools, clinics, and community halls, will be emphasized, in addition to the provision of basic infrastructural facilities and the promotion of economic opportunities (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 525).

Among other strategies to encourage national unity, the government recognised the role of sports in contributing towards this effort. Jaksa (2011) argues that sports play an important role at the national level upon which the foundation of national unity can be built particularly among the deeply divided and war-torn countries in which sports can offer "a common ground from which to begin reconciliation" (p. 40).

The formulation of the National Sports Policy to be finalized in 1986, will emphasize mass participation in sports and recreation. It will define the role of sports in national development within the context of national unity and the need for greater participation and high performance in sports (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 539).

On top of other efforts in building a successful Southeast Asian nation, the government implemented the Look East Policy, a framework that was modelled after successful countries in the East that was widely adopted in 1983. The Look East policy was modelled after Japan and Korea in the effort of turning Malaysia into an industrialised country "in terms of work culture, ethics, investments, and human capital development" (Aboo Talib et. al, 2013, p. 111). It is interesting to point out here how value systems play a huge role in the context of nation-building in non-Western countries. Singapore for example, emphasised on the relevance of Confucianism in a modern society. Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew "attributed the cultural emphasis on hard work and thrift to the Confucian ethics" to "help Singaporeans keep their Asian bearings as they progress into the 21st century" (Huat, 1989, p. 5). This evidence supports the argument by Chatterjee (1991) on the materials and spirituals aspect as the feature of anti-colonialism nationalism in Asia and Africa instead of merely based on 'imagined community'. In Malaysia, the value system is not only built based on the existing cultures and religions in the country, but also by adopting non-Western values that are considered appropriate to be embedded on top of the existing value system.

… learning the experiences of successful countries in the East… to encourage the citizens in general and members of the public service in particular, to inculcate values of hard work, thrift, self reliance, initiative, and perseverance, which are very essential for progress… a greater awareness was created among members of the public service of the work ethics, attitudes, and values of their counterparts in economically progressive countries (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 256).

The period of the Fifth Malaysia Plan was the final phase of the New Economic Policy (NEP) that was introduced in 1971. During this period, Malaysia's economic was affected by sharp inflationary pressure at the beginning of 1970s due to the world economic situation. Therefore, the focus of the Fifth Malaysia Plan was mainly to prepare Malaysia in overcoming challenges socio-economically and politically in light of uncertainties.

… ensuring that further progress will be made towards the national objectives, particularly in the light of continued uncertainties in the international economic environment and of the emerging resource constraints (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 4).

As a result, anti-inflationary measures were taken by the government to reduce the impact as well as to ensure that the NEP targets were achieved. For this reason, Malaysia experienced relatively stable price and the rate of inflation was considered lower compared to most other countries.

> The Government took steps to improve the availability of goods throughout the economy by introducing a nation-wide anti-hoarding campaign, improve the distributive network and establishing a Standing Committee on Anti-Inflation to monitor price developments (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 28).

Since 1982 however, with the exception of 1984, Malaysia was affected by a significant decline in its terms of trade and export demand due to prolonged international recession. For this reason, the role science and technology (S&T) through the research and development (R&D) had become more prominent in maintaining Malaysia competitiveness in the economic environment and for the first time through the Fifth Malaysia Plan that the role S&T was discussed comprehensively.

> … strengthening the four main components of the S & T system. These comprise an international pool of S & T from which Malaysia must have the capacity to draw and to which it must also contribute; a national S & T infrastructure which is effective; a private sector that can create wealth through the application of S & T; and an enlightened society which can provide the social framework and resources necessary for the above components to operate (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 275).

In terms of national unity, despite significant progress shown in the achievement of goals in national unity and nationhood, there were other concerns arose.

> … an increasing concern over the emergence of parochial interests, excessive demands, and extremism among certain quarters of the Malaysian society… There is a need to mould and inculcate the right values, perceptions, and attitudes towards each other with a view towards building a multiracial society that is characterized by tolerance, harmony, mutual understanding, justice,

fairness, and unity. A greater understanding and appreciation of the sensitivities of the various communities as well as a recognition of the commonness of experiences and values would go a long way in promoting racial harmony and tolerance, and serve to strengthen the bonds among all Malaysians (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 7)

The findings in the next sections will demonstrate Malaysia's initiatives in realising a nation. The aim of the findings is to understand Malaysia's contemporary nation-building and how the competing nations-of-intent is reconciled in the context of multiracial nation.

6.4 The Awakening of National Consciousness

In striving to be a fully developed nation as envisaged in Vision 2020, there is the need to instil a sense of common identity and national pride... This sense of common identity and shared purpose continues to be crucial to nation-building.

Eight Malaysia Plan (2001-2005).

The findings put forward under this section were established from the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000), Eight Malaysia Plan (2001-2005), Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) and Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). The purpose of this section is to focus on Malaysia's history and agenda of the current and on-going nation-building project, which is the Vision 2020.

6.4.1 Creating the Knowledge-Based Society through ICT

The period of the nineties marked another era of Malaysia's nation-building after the completion of New Economic Policy (NEP) phase. Findings from the earlier NAPs had also demonstrated Malaysia's goal of becoming a united nation. This goal however was

refined further and through the Sixth Malaysia Plan, for the first time Malaysia determined what it aimed to achieve specifically by becoming a united nation.

> We must always be ready to put the good of the nation above self and sectarian interests… If we succeed in doing this, our goal of making Malaysia a developed nation by the year 2020 will become a reality (Sixth Malaysia Plan, Forward).

The early 1990s was also the period where Malaysia had survived the world recession in the 1980s. Therefore, the goal of achieving a developed nation status by the year 2020 was solidified with the introduction of the National Development Policy (1991-2000), which succeeded NEP, to mainly focus on the long-term sustainability of Malaysia's resources and development.

> The objective of NDP is to attain balanced development in order to create a more united and just society. NDP which emphasizes growth with equity will enable all Malaysians to participate in the mainstream of economic activities, thereby ensuring political stability and national unity (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 4).

Although the role of science and technology (S&T) was laid out extensively in the Fifth Malaysia Plan, however it had become the foundation for future S&T management and policy. As a matter of fact, MSC becomes "the key driver of Vision 2020 that aims to achieve a standard of living and a level of development equivalent to that of a developed country by the year 2020" (Jarman & Chopra, 2007, p. 195) since the idea was tabled by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in 1995 (Ramasamy et al., 2004).

> For the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the goals of S&T policy will be to ensure continuous scientific and technological developments that will sustain high rates of economic growth, accelerate overall development and lay the foundation for the attainment of a scientific and technologically advanced industrial society by the year 2020 (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 187).

Through the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the government acknowledged the importance of knowledgeable and well-informed society especially in the context of social development. By using sub-Saharan Africa as an example, Trudell (2009) highlights the links between language, literacy and development. She suggests that the importance is more significant particularly among the rural, poor, women and people who struggle

within formal education system and that the efforts in improving literacy can be carried out through the formal or informal ways. The more literate the citizens are, the better they become at being a well-informed society. For this reason, the government attempted to create a well-informed society through the role of information and broadcasting as well as face-to-face communication initiatives.

> The role of information and broadcasting is to contribute to the development of a well-informed society imbued with positive, strong moral and ethical values receptive to modernization. Broadcast media and face-to-face communication have been the most effective instruments for disseminating information on Government development policies, programmes and strategies, to ensure social and political stability (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 371).

Another approach towards the creation of knowledgeable and well-informed society was through inculcating the reading habit among the citizen.

> The objective of the library development programme is to inculcate and promote a greater reading habit among Malaysians with a view to developing a knowledgeable and well-informed society, as part of the overall national goal of developing quality citizens... The construction of the National Library building with computer facilities started in 1989 and is expected to be completed by 1991 (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 372).

For a long time, the government had been a firm believer in the role and contribution of women in national development. This was discussed in the previous section of this chapter in the context of national identity, but there was no formal policy regarding women in place at that time. The only thing that formalised the right of women in the context of voting was the constitution. Therefore, to optimise the potential of women in social and economic development, the National Policy for Women was formulated in 1989 with the objectives:

> to ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources and information as well as access to opportunities and benefits of development, for both men and women; and to integrate women in all sectors of national development in line with their abilities and needs in order to improve the quality of life, eradicate poverty, abolish ignorance and illiteracy and ensure a peaceful and prosperous nation (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 413).

As discussed in Chapter 2, conceiving a concept that represents an idea where the citizens can relate to is fundamental in reconciling various competing nations-of-intent especial in the multiracial and multicultural society. In-line with the Vision 2020, the government introduced the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation) in characterising the nation.

> … developing a sense of common identity and shared purpose among all Malaysians continues to be crucial to nation-building and the creation of *Bangsa Malaysia*. Fundamental to these is the need to instil a sense of national pride built on Malaysia's heritage, achievements and potential with the view to evolve a national *esprit de corps* (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 29).

In the effort of working towards becoming a *Bangsa Malaysia*, developing a national culture was one of the most important aspects in enhancing national unity and integration as well as raising the quality of life of the citizen.

> The objectives of the cultural development programme are to enhance the role of cultural institutions as a vehicle and viable instrument for national identity and national integration, as well as to reaffirm national unity and racial harmony and the formation of a new Bangsa Malaysia in line with the National Cultural Policy and Vision 2020. The central theme is creating a cultured and mature society in an effort to counter the spread of negative aspects and to neutralize the intrusion of foreign culture that brings together negative influences (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 580).

The main agenda for the Seventh Malaysia Plan was to prepare the country for future challenges.

> … to enhance potential output growth, achieve further structural transformation and attain balanced development… Special emphasis will be given to skill upgrading, capital deepening and technological development (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 10).

Despite the world financial crisis, the period of mid 1990s was the era of information and technology (IT) for Malaysia. The government strongly emphasised on the role of IT as the catalyst for national development. For this reason, the potential role of IT was stretched to its limit.

Realizing the important role of IT as a catalyst for national development, the Government has initiated the construction of the Multimedia Super Corridor… supported by the provision of world-class physical and information infrastructure… to undertake remote manufacturing as well as introduce high value-added IT goods and services, thereby enabling Malaysia to become a regional IT hub (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 22).

Under the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), the main components of the ICT development plan were projects related to Electronic Government (EG).

In this regard, five EG pilot projects were launched encompassing three categories of applications, namely intra-agency, inter-agency and Government to citizen/business service applications (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 614).

Malaysia launched its own satellites in 1996 to advance its communication and IT services.

With the launching and operation of Malaysia's own satellites, Malaysia East Asia Satellite (MEASAT) 1 on 13 January 1996 and MEASAT 2 in October 1996, immediate and simultaneous point-to-point and point-to-multipoint telecommunications, broadcasting and IT services will be available throughout Malaysia, even to the most remote areas as well as most of East Asia. When all these are in place, it is anticipated that there will be sufficient capacity to meet the nation's telecommunications and IT needs (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 376).

The period of early 1990s was also the beginning of the internet era in Malaysia.

With the installation of a satellite link between Malaysia and USA in 1992, JARING was connected to the Internet. This provided Malaysian users with accessibility to the Internet in more than 140 countries, through nodes located in 20 major towns in the country… the number of users was estimated to have increased from 90 to 43,200 (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 458).

The National Vision Policy (2001-2010) was later introduced in the early 2000 through the Eighth Malaysia Plan to chart Malaysia's development in the first decade of 21st century as well as to strategically guide the country towards achieving a fully developed nation by 2020. The introduction of this policy also marked the end of National Development Policy (1991-2000).

> ... NVP represents the consolidation of all past development efforts and is aimed at establishing a united, progressive and prosperous *Bangsa Malaysia* that lives in harmony and engages in full and fair partnership. To address the challenges faced by the nation in its quest to become a fully developed nation in its own mould, emphasis will also be given to the building of a resilient, competitive nation and an equitable society to ensure unity and social stability (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 4).

The agenda during the period of the Eighth Malaysia Plan was mainly to prepare Malaysia in facing economic challenges in light of globalisation, liberalisation and rapid expansion of technology, particularly with regards to information and communication technology (ICT). For this reason, the focus was on the development of knowledge-based economy.

> ... to shift the growth strategy from input-driven to one that is knowledge-driven in order to enhance potential output growth, accelerate structural transformation within the manufacturing and services sectors, revitalize the agriculture sector and strengthen socio-economic stability (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 5).

To consolidate the knowledge-based economy agenda, the government introduced the National IT Agenda framework.

> ... aimed at transforming the nation into a knowledge-based society in line with Vision 2020, focused on human development and leveraging on the public-private sectors partnership. The framework was based on the balanced development of three key elements, namely, people, infostructure and applications (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 367).

As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, the value system is an important aspect in Malaysia's nation-building. In striving to become a fully developed nation by 2020 as well as in facing the challenges in the era of globalisation, the government considered good value system as more important hence it should be inculcated through various means.

> A good value system that emphasizes moral and ethical behaviour based on religion, customs and tradition, will be an important component of all development efforts. Attributes such as honesty, discipline, diligence, integrity,

commitment, respect and tolerance will continue to be nurtured and inculcated through the education system, religious, social and business organizations as well as the media (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 19).

Despite the role of ICT in aiding the national development, the government also realised the adverse effect of the ICT, especially the internet. Therefore, the government intended to educate the society since at the school level.

The negative influences of the Internet, such as misreporting and abuse of knowledge, can pose a security threat to the nation. To counter such influences, a code of ethics in the conduct of activities over the Internet will be inculcated beginning at the school level (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 383).

The government also recognised the role of youth in nation-building and considered the youth population as a valuable asset.

… to equip youths with the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to enable them to rise to the challenges and cope with the effects of rapid economic development and globalization… to ensure that youths recognize their critical responsibility and contribution towards national development as well as in enhancing national unity (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 573).

Although the duration of Eighth Malaysia Plan was from 2001 to 2005, however Dr. Mahathir Mohamad stepped down from his position as the Prime Minister in 2003 hence it marked the end of his leadership. Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took the office of the Prime Minister and continued the agendas that was laid out from the previous administration. Therefore, the next findings which are mainly from the Ninth Malaysia Plan are based on the leadership of Tun Abdullah Badawi.

6.4.2 Islamic Fundamentalism and Nation-Building

At this point of time, Malaysia was already in the mid-way towards Vision 2020. The National Mission that was launched through the Ninth Malaysia Plan consisted of five key thrusts. It is also interesting to note here that the language of the Malaysia Plan documents, starting with the ninth plan had begun to transform into corporate language, which could be seen from the excerpt below.

> First: To move the economy up the value chain
>
> Second: To raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation and nurture 'first class mentality'
>
> Third: To address persistent socio-economic inequalities constructively and productively
>
> Fourth: To improve the standard and sustainability of quality of life
>
> Fifth: To strengthen the institutional and implementation capacity
>
> (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006-2010)

The Malaysian government too had come out with a theme for the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

> The population must remain united and supportive of the initiatives of the Government to build a more prosperous nation and to bring a better quality of life for all. To underscore the importance of collaboration and collective effort, we have chosen Together Towards Excellence, Glory and Distinction as the theme of the Ninth Plan (Ninth Malaysia Plan, Forward).

The development framework during period of the Ninth Malaysia Plan was based on the concept of *Islam Hadhari*, which was introduced in 2004 (see Appendix F).

> The framework was formulated as an approach that enjoins progress and advancement as an imperative for the people, while being firmly rooted in the universal values and injctions of Islam. Islam Hadhari outlined 10 principles to empower the people to face global challenges, while ensuring that its approach and implementation are acceptable to all groups in the country (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 9).

According to the government, *Islam Hadhari* is not a new religion or a new denomination. The concept was introduced mainly as an effort to portray Civilisational Islam.

> Islam Hadhari also emphasises the sovereignty of the country through self-defence capabilities but holds a firm stance against aggression and terrorism (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 9).

Achieving a fully developed nation also called for a change of mindset, which was one of the main objectives of the Ninth Malaysia Plan through inculcating the "first class mentality".

> The most important factor in becoming a developed nation is the capability and character of the country's people. Malaysia will need to move away from the notion that it is a nation with 'first class infrastructure, but third class mentality'. We will need to adopt a holistic approach to human capital development, encompassing not only knowledge and skills, but also ethical values, progressive mindset and cultural awareness (Ninth Malaysia Plan, Forward).

Before the cycle of the Ninth Malaysia Plan ended in 2010, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi stepped down from his position in 2009, and Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Razak became the Prime Minister of Malaysia. It is notable the concept of *Islam Hadhari* was not continued under the new leadership thus the concept was replaced completely with a new one which is going to be explained in the next section. The following section therefore will elucidate the Malaysia's nation-building efforts under Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Razak from the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) to the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) before Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad became the Prime Minister again in 2018.

Therefore, the Tenth Malaysia Plan consisted of the new approaches and strategies towards the Vision 2020 based on the "10 Big Ideas":

- Internally driven, externally aware
- Leveraging on our diversity internationally
- Transforming to high-income through specialisation
- Unleashing productivity-led growth and innovation
- Nurturing, attracting and retaining top talent

- Ensuring equality of opportunities and safeguarding the vulnerable
- Concentrated growth, inclusive development
- Supporting effective and smart partnerships
- Valuing our environmental endowments
- Government as a competitive corporation (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 8)

In charting the path towards a high-income nation, 1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now concept was introduced, which focused on inclusivity. This concept was introduced to replace *Bangsa Malaysia* concept that was introduced in 1991 by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to better represent today's modern Malaysian society. However, it is important to indicate that despite the inclusive sounding of 1Malaysia, "the preferential policies and special rights of the Malays and bumiputeras" remained unchanged (Chin, 2010, p. 167).

> The 1Malaysia concept has at its core, the principle of social justice. This principle necessitates a renewed focus on championing the interests of each and every community, ensuring no group is left behind or marginalised in the course of the nation's development (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 18).

Although the findings presented earlier in this chapter spoke about the influence of religion in nation-building among Southeast Asian countries, however, in the Tenth Malaysia Plan, the influence of Islam became more apparent. The government even attempted to explain the 1Malaysia concept in the context of Islam and nation through a Quranic verse.

> The Holy Quran teaches us: O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). Al-Hujarat (49:13) (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 11).

In this regard, the government further explained how the Quranic verse served as a universal lesson and guidance for the citizens to live together and learn from each other.

> The concept of 1Malaysia, which incorporates this Islamic precept, promotes unity that is anchored on a set of universal values. It is only through humility and

mutual respect of the differences between us that we can be better than the sum of our individual strengths. That is what we need as a nation in charting a common path forward. That is 1Malaysia (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 11).

A new approach of transforming Malaysia was also introduced during the period of the Tenth Malaysia Plan, which was through transforming government known as Government Transformation Programme (GTP).

Malaysians will be able to rely on a government that is efficient, effective, responsive and committed to the national objective of building a high-income economy and an advanced nation (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 314).

It seems to be a trend among the modern governments today to corporatise or adopt business-like practice in their administration, and Malaysia is one of them. A study on how corporatisation helps in improving the government agencies in Australia by Nelson and Nikolakis (2012) reveals that the adoption of business-like practice could assist in enhancing the agencies' performance by improving clarity business decision. This practice also helps in terms of raising the autonomy of managers. In the context of GTP, transformation of government in Malaysia means mimicking the priorities of a competitive corporation.

- Customers: which in the Government's case involves the rakyat and businesses;
- Competitiveness: in terms of raising the performance of public delivery;
- Finances: both in terms of getting value for money on expenditure and ensuring sustainability of public finances; and
- Talent and organisation: ensuring the necessary human capital and organisational structure to meet the needs of the country. (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 29).

The New Economic Model was introduced under the GTP which was enabled via the National Key Economic Areas (NKEA).

The NKEAs are: 1. Oil and gas; 2. Palm oil and related products; 3. Financial services; 4. Wholesale and retail; 5. Tourism; 6. Information and communications technology; 7. Education; 8. Electrical and electronics; 9. Business services; 10. Private healthcare; 11. Agriculture; and 12. Greater Kuala Lumpur (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 122).

Through the Tenth Malaysia Plan, it was the first time that the government introduced monitoring and tracking departments to monitor the government's performance.

> … other monitoring and delivery units to manage the delivery of specific outcomes include the Project Management Unit (PMU), Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) and the new Economic Delivery Unit (EDU) (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 342).

At the time of writing up this thesis, the Eleventh Malaysia Plan is still an on-going NAP and is the final leg towards the Vision 2020. The focus of the strategy is on the people towards achieving the country's aspiration in the Vision 2020, hence the theme of the plan, "Anchoring Growth on People" which also acts as the premise of progressive and united *Bangsa Malaysia*. Based on this theme, the strategy towards national transformation is based on the 'six thrusts' and 'six game changers'[6]. The purpose of the six thrusts is:

> … to help Malaysia stay ahead of the challenges and opportunities of the fast-changing global and political landscape. These thrusts aim to comprehensively address the end-to-end needs of the *rakyat* and the nation (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 1-8).

The six game changers on the other hand are meant for:

> … innovative approaches to accelerate Malaysia's development, that once successfully applied, will fundamentally change the trajectory of the country's growth (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 1-8).

Although it was evident from the Third Malaysia Plan that the national identity was formed by using the Malay culture as its core, however through the concept of 1Malaysia, the national identity began to move towards the idea of cultural diversity and shared national identity, which is in-line with Malaysia's aim of becoming an advanced nation that is inclusive and sustainable by 2020.

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[6] The six thrusts are: 1. Enhancing inclusiveness towards an equitable society, 2. Improving wellbeing for all, 3. Accelerating human capital development for an advanced nation, 4. Pursuing green growth for sustainability and resilience, 5. Strengthening infrastructure to support economic expansion, 6. Re-engineering economic growth for greater prosperity.

The concept of 1Malaysia is founded upon the aspiration of building a harmonious, progressive, and united Malaysian society, based on the underlying principle of "People First, Performance Now". It emphasises the importance of understanding, respecting, and embracing the diversity that exists in a multiracial society. It also emphasises the value of a shared national identity, grounded in a common commitment to building a united and prosperous society (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 4-21).

Building the national identity at this point was through embracing *wasatiyyah* (balance) concept.

There is a greater sense of what being a Malaysian truly is. We are optimistic and resilient in the face of challenges. We stand, we think, and we act as Malaysians. We are moderate, balanced, and just in our interactions, fully embracing the *wasatiyyah* concept (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 10-7).

The meaning of *wasatiyyah* concept was also explained in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan.

In the context of national development, social cohesion, and national unity, the wasatiyyah concept emphasises moderation, balance, justice, and excellence in all spheres of life for the individual and the community with the aim of developing a harmonious Malaysian society (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 10-7).

In delivering the "six thrusts" and "six game changers", the government is also committed to transform its public service by adopting citizen-centric approach.

… by becoming more citizen-centric and enhancing the productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of service delivery. The aspiration is to deliver public service in a less bureaucratic, hierarchical, and centralised manner; with talent that is multiskilled; and a range of service offerings that is more accessible and innovative (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 1-17).

Since the Eleventh Malaysia Plan marks the thirty years journey towards the Vision 2020, it also includes the aspirations for Malaysia beyond 2020.

The vision is for all Malaysians to have an unshakeable national identity and clear moral compass. The country will be governed by trusted and independent executive, legislative, and judicial institutions that protect all Malaysians equally. Malaysians will have a government that delivers and is led by leaders with

integrity and conviction who embrace the concept of *amanah*[7] (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 1-17).

6.5 Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the findings presented serve as the foundation towards understanding Malaysia's nation-building since the country received her Independence as well as after Malaysia was formally formed. There were six main themes found from the analysis of the NAPs which were the national identity, national culture, economic development, social development, infrastructure development and national unity. It is notable that during the early days after Malaysia was formed, the efforts in nation-building were made directly towards economic growth and development particularly in accelerating growth in the agriculture, infrastructure and rural development. It was evident from the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970), that the essence of what makes a nation like national identity was never being mentioned during this period. This could potentially be the contributing factor to May 13, 1969 incident due the lack of "citizen" aspect in the nation-building process. Following the incident, a drastic measure had to be taken through the implementation of the New Economic Policy (1971-1990), which lasted approximately for twenty years. After the end of the NEP period, for the first time the government declared it aspiration through the Vision 2020 in the early 1990s. To go along with the Vision 2020, for the first time the government acknowledged what Malaysia intents to be as a nation through the introduction of *Bangsa Malaysia* concept. Almost twenty years later, 1Malaysia concept was introduced in 2010. Currently, Malaysia is in her final leg towards Vision 2020 through the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), which is the most current NAP. From the findings in this chapter, it can be concluded that each of the policy framework was implemented based on the needs and challenges at the time and the responses required by Malaysia in certain situations. The following chapter will exhibit the findings from the NAPs in providing the understanding and evaluating the government communication strategies in engaging the citizens over time.

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[7] In Malay, *amanah* means trust.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN ENGAGING MALAYSIA'S MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY IN NATION-BUILDING

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the NAP documents to understand the pattern of government communication in Malaysia's nation-building process over time. The NAPs provided an insight into the communication development in Malaysia as well as the roles and contributions of communication in national development in the context of multiracial society. Similar to Chapter 6, the findings are presented in the chronological order, beginning with the earliest and ending with the most recent Malaysia Plan documents.

7.2 Promoting National Consciousness

The findings in this section were obtained primarily from the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) and Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975). Although both documents were produced during different leaderships, however both periods of the documents represented the early communication development in post-independent Malaysia. On top of that, the objectives of each Malaysia Plan document are generally based on the previous economic and development achievements, and therefore the following Malaysia Plan document is tabulated as the continuation or improvement of the previous efforts.

Although the government communication practice had existed in Malaysia earlier through the colonial government, however, the role of strategic communication during the colonial administration was mostly tailored towards the issue of national security. According to Selamat and Rosli (2015), before Malaya achieved her independence, the practice of public relations in Malaya was used by the British Malaya to fight terrorism, gain support from the locals and facilitate development. The department of information

was believed to be established in September 1945, at the same time of the establishment of the Department of Publicity and Printing. Earlier, the matters regarding to public relations in the country was taken care by an agency called Malay States Information Agency, which began its operation in 1926 (Department of Information Malaysia website). With the establishment of the agency, it was evident that the formal public relations practice existed in the country for 31 years prior to independence (Selamat & Rosli, 2015). In April 1, 1946, the department was restructured and subsequently renamed to the Department of Public Relations. The development of communication during the colonial period showed the importance of government communication in the pre-independent Malaya. The practice and development in government communication was later continued under the administration of local elites hence the following sections will present these efforts after the formation of Malaysia.

7.2.1 Communication and Transport as the Main Drivers for Development

After Malaysia was formed in 1963, the state began to witness major development in transport and communication. This development was demonstrated in the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) due to intensive economic development focus of Malaysia. To achieve the desired outcome of the national economic development, the Malaysian government aimed at ensuring the effectiveness in administrative machinery in planning and implementation through the building of communication infrastructure.

> The successful execution of this task will depend to a great extent on the understanding of the objectives and priorities of the Plan and the ability of those engaged in implementation to maintain effective communication with each other. It is in recognition of these problems that improvements in certain aspects of the machinery for development planning and implementation will be effected (First Malaysia Plan, p. 89).

For this reason, an extensive development was carried out nationwide in terms of transport and communication especially through the media that could be deployed by the government for national development purposes.

> ...transport and communications with special, emphasis on those media in which the government has an important role to play. It deals with road, rail, water and air transport and telecommunication, postal, information and broadcasting (radio and television) services (First Malaysia Plan, p. 139).

In the period of the First Malaysia Plan, the government had allocated significant amount of budget for the extension and improvement of information and broadcast services. For example, the quality and variety of the radio and television programmes would be improved as well as the additional radio transmitters would be installed throughout the country. Apart from that, as a new independent state, it was important for Malaysia to search for solidarity and security nationally and internationally. Despite Indonesia's objection on Malaysia's participation in Afro-Asian Solidarity[8] organisation due to Indonesia's belief that Malaysia "was a tool of British imperialism and therefore not a true Asian country" (Pauker, 1965), nonetheless the government saw the importance of connecting with other non-Western states to show solidarity.

> New high frequency transmitters will be purchased to broadcast to African, Middle East and Caribbean countries with a view to promoting Afro-Asian solidarity (First Malaysia Plan, p. 150).

Another reason for the development in the communication infrastructure during this period was to promote national consciousness and unity among the Malaysian society.

> An additional 40 mobile units will enable the Department of Information Services to increase the services it provides to rural areas. A national civic centre will be established at Petaling Jaya for the purpose of promoting national consciousness and unity (First Malaysia Plan, p. 150).

State, district and village rural development was equally important in the process of national development. It is worth mentioning that in the context of Malaysia, the term rural development was used to depict "both direct productivity-raising programmes and efforts" that targeted mainly the Malays, who were the majority resided "in the rural

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[8] Afro-Asian Solidarity is a non-governmental organisation aims at focusing on Afro-Asian cooperation to create a peaceful international order.

areas as peasant producers" (Shamsul, 1988, p. 218). For this reason, the government set up the National Operation Rooms to assist the government administrative machineries in terms of rural development.

> The operations rooms and the techniques used for using them originate in the Ministry of National and Rural Development. The objective is to utilize for peaceful development purposes some of the successful military operations techniques used during the Emergency in 1948-60. Operations room techniques are at present being shared with a growing number of other countries seeking methods to improve their information, control and decision-making activities for development (First Malaysia Plan, p. 93).

These National Operation Rooms reported to several ministries in the government. From the findings, it was apparent that the National Operation Rooms acted as the centralised information and reporting centres for all levels of government.

> The government has evolved and established a technique for reporting and controlling operations related to development in Malaysia which is regarded by many as being unique and effective. A National Operations Room functions close to the office of the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also Minister of National and Rural Development as well as Minister of Defence. In the Operations Room are complete, current and uniform reports on progress in public development programmes arranged by state and district which show the development activities of all levels of government. The reporting form emphasizes plan performance in the public sector by showing project status alongside previously set targets. Maps, charts, diagrams, films and tape recordings supplement the verbal and statistical reports (First Malaysia Plan, p. 92).

It was clear that the primary function of the National Operations Rooms was to ensure efficiency among those involved directly in the planning and implementing in the context of national development. According to Shamsul (1988), these rooms were "set up at the national, state, district and village levels" where the "maps, graphs, pictures and charts showing the location, details and progress of each rural development project" were usually exhibited clearly and colourfully (p. 219).

> The information in the National Operations Room is kept up to date by the various ministries, departments and authorities, each being responsible for reporting its own activities, expenditures, successes and difficulties. Periodic meetings with representatives from these ministries and departments enable

the Deputy Prime Minister and other Cabinet Ministers quickly to identify and resolve emerging problems (First Malaysia Plan, p. 92).

7.2.2 Creating Understanding and Cooperation between Government and Citizens

Up to this point, it was apparent that the communication infrastructure was developed mainly as the means for the government to exploit for the purpose of national development. In the period of the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975) however saw a slightly different approach in the way the Malaysian government communicated with its citizen particularly on the use of the mass media. As stated previously, the period during the Second Malaysia Plan was a critical period for Malaysia due to the racial riot that took place on May 13, 1969. For this reason, the government must intensify its efforts in communicating the government's initiatives and policies through various campaigns and strategies to strengthen the national unity particularly between 1970s and 1980s (Department of Information Malaysia website). During this period, West Malaysia had already received television services since they were introduced in the late 1963 (Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975).

Therefore, in the Second Malaysian Plan, the Malaysian government aimed to create understanding and co-operation with the public by having more interaction between the government and public. In realising this effort, the government clearly depended on mass media as the main channels of communication during this period. It is also interesting to note here that the Malaysian government actually defined the type of mass media and its purpose in Malaysia's nation-building.

> An important channel for communication between these two groups is the mass media: radio, television, newspapers, magazines, films and information services. The achievement of the goal of national unity through eradicating poverty and restructuring society to correct economic imbalance requires public understanding and support, which will be enlisted through the media of mass communication. The mass media convey proposals for development as well as reaction to Government policies from the public to the Government. Action is being taken to improve the effectiveness of the Ministry of Information in this regard and to obtain the full co-operation of private news media as well (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 118).

It is also notable from the Second Malaysia Plan that the government attempted to improve its public services by inviting suggestions from the public. Apart from using mass media as the means of communication, the public could also bring up any suggestions for the government through other non-mass media channels.

> For its part, the Government will remain alert and responsive to constructive suggestions from any quarter. There are many channels through which such suggestions can flow. Besides the mass media, other channels which offer opportunities for suggestion are parliamentary debate and the internal workings of political parties and voluntary associations such as worker, farmer, employer and consumer groups. In some cases, the Government has established formal consultative machinery, as in the case of the Private Sector Advisory Panel to the Capital Investment Committee. Whether there is formal provision for consultation or not, however, the Government is not only receptive to but actively invites positive suggestions from the public (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 118).

On top of improving the communication between the government and the citizen, the Malaysian government also strived to improve the communication within the public sector itself. As emphasised by Jianu et. al (2013), effective communication in public sector is crucial when there is "a mission or a need to fulfill a goal" (p. 176).

> A number of changes are envisaged to improve the flow of development information within the public sector. One of the major actions is the reactivation of the monthly briefings by Secretary-Generals of Ministries and Heads of Departments, conducted in the presence of the Prime Minister, other Ministers and members of the NDPC. The data and information systems housed in the National Operations Room, where these briefings are normally held, will be significantly improved (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 118).

In the context of nation-building, the Malaysian government considered broadcast media as a primary medium in promoting national unity as well as development communication. This is important for Malaysia as the country was going through the recovering process from the riot as a result of divide and rule policy during the colonial administration. Creating national unity is challenging for many postcolonial countries as highlighted by Gaither and Curtin (2019), the "displacement of identity is common characteristic of the colonial experience" (p. 124) because the unity can only be created if the citizens feel they share a common link.

> Radio and television broadcasts play an important role in nation-building, especially in promoting national unity and ideals as enshrined in the Rukunegara, and in changing traditional attitudes unconducive to national development (Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975, p. 198).

The findings also exhibit the role of communication to ensure the efficiency of national development and nation-building process by connecting and informing the less developed regions in Malaysia with the more developed regions of the country.

> New transportation, communication and power facilities will provide closer links between the rural and urban areas, thereby bringing new contacts and new knowledge to the less developed regions of the country (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 44).

> A sum of $4.93 million has been allocated for the construction of information offices and quarters and the purchase of mobile units for land, sea and riverine uses. This will enable the Department to increase the services it provides to rural areas and to promote national consciousness and unity (Second Malaysia Plan, p. 266).

Clearly the government communication under the Second Malaysia Plan was directed surrounding the new policy, which was the NEP that was introduced to correct the racial economic imbalance in the context of economic expansion "leading towards the creation of a dynamic and just society" (Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975, p. 1). The following section will present the government communication efforts in the subsequent periods of the NEP.

7.3 Encouraging Public Participation

As mentioned in Chapter 1, nation-building is a process and that this process involves communication and interaction between the government and public (see Taylor & Kent, 2006). Having said that, this section reveals the communication efforts by the Malaysian government in enabling this process. To demonstrate the communication efforts involved in this process, the findings under this section were established from the Third

Malaysia Plan (1976-1980), Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985) and Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990).

7.3.1 Framework of National Participation

As noted by MacAndrews (1977), up to the period of the Third Malaysia Plan, the national plan remained "as a catalyzer to attempt to solve national ideological and ethnic problems" (p. 299). For this reason, the Malaysian government intensified its communication effort by introducing the framework of public participation through the Third Malaysia Plan. In this case, the government defined its public participation framework from the national development point of view.

> Involvement, of course, implies active participation in the processes of development. It means that the public has to take part in determining what needs to be done, how it should be done and be accountable for the consequences of its choice (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 100).

The framework of public participation also included the channels that the public could possibly employ for active participation in the respect to decision-making.

> The public can only participate actively in decision-making if they are well organized at the community or village level. The Government has provided a structure for planning inputs at the village, district and State levels in the form of Development Committees operating at each level. It is most necessary, therefore, that these committees at the village level be used as operational committees providing direct inputs in terms of information feedback and expression of village interests and problems (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 100).

The participation framework also included feedback mechanism from the people.

> All members of the village will present their problems to the appropriate committee member to be taken up with the Penghulu (headman) or Penggawa (district officer) individually or at the committee meetings. This will strengthen the role of the committee as a whole as a feedback mechanism (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 100).

During this period, the government also looked forward to extending the broadcast coverage throughout the country especially among smaller towns in the effort of promoting national unity.

> Approximately 80% of the population in the country are now within TV and radio coverage, thus enhancing efforts made through radio and television broadcasts in the realm of nation-building, especially in promoting national unity (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 352).

Moreover, more communication infrastructure and services would be expanded to meet the requirement of national development.

> Communications facilities, particularly telephone and telegraph services, will continue to be expanded to meet the growing requirements of commerce and industry. Postal, meteorological and broadcasting facilities will also be expanded (Third Malaysia Plan, p. 342).

7.3.2 Promoting Community Development

The period of the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985) saw the continuation efforts on community development based on the strategies from the previous NAPs. During this period, the telecast services linking Peninsular Malaysia with Sabah and Sarawak were already established for the purpose of information, education and entertainment.

> The mass media programmes were designed primarily to inform, educate and entertain people… The Department of Information, through its local and state offices, conducted civic courses as part of its function to disseminate information and educate the people (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 262).

A major breakthrough for television development in Malaysia during this period was the introduction of colour television in 1978.

> A major development was the introduction of colour television in 1978. Filem Negara (National Film Department) specialised in producing documentary films, a number of which won international acclaim. Steps were already taken to expand its technical facilities such as colour film laboratory and sound recording system for colour productions (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 262).

Another milestone in the Malaysia's information and broadcasting was the introduction of the national news agency, which is the official news agency of Malaysian government until today.

> Berita Nasional Malaysia (BERNAMA), the national news agency established in 1967, provided wide coverage of domestic and international news in the country (Fourth Malaysia Plan, p. 262).

7.3.3 Promoting National Culture

The Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990) was the last leg of the New Economic Policy (NEP) that was introduced in 1971 after the riot in 1969. The approaches articulated through the Fifth Malaysia Plan was strategised based on the changing environment that "was seen as calling for a "rethinking of the current development strategies and the need for the introduction of new approaches to development'" (Courtenay, 1988, p. 251). As mentioned in the previous findings chapter, the Malaysia's economic was affected by sharp inflationary pressure due to the world economic situation since the early 1970s. Therefore, the strategies of the Fifth Malaysia Plan were basically focusing on preparing the country in time of uncertainties. As a result, more attention on social development was given during this period particularly in the context of national development through inculcating positive values.

> Social development was given significant attention in view of its contribution to national development. The main objective is to inculcate positive values oriented towards community development, self-reliance, and nationhood (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 533).

Up to this point, it was also clear that Malaysia was moving forward towards realising a nation. For this reason, the government emphasised on the developing a national culture, an attempt that was made in the previous NAPs.

> The programmes for social development during the Fourth Malaysia Plan period encompassed culture, community development, youth, sports, social welfare, and information and broadcasting. Programmes under culture were designed mainly for the promotion of integration and unity through the development of a national culture (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 533).

In creating the national culture, the Malaysian government had intensified the efforts in creating awareness through various channels especially in education and media.

> During the Fifth Plan period, programmes and activities will be organized to instil greater awareness among Malaysians of the rich and varied cultural heritage of the country. Through education and the mass media, efforts will be made to promote and foster understanding, tolerance, and appreciation of the varied cultural practices (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 537).

On top of that, the Malaysian government took the initiative in preserving the national heritage and historical importance.

> Measures will be taken to produce more reading materials on the national heritage and culture and to promote the development of fine arts and handicrafts as well as the architectural design of buildings in the country. The National Museum will continue to assist in inculcating greater awareness among the general public of the Malaysian cultural heritage by preserving and exhibiting items of historical importance (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 537).

The period of the Fifth Malaysia Plan also marked the beginning of the science and technology era in Malaysia. This was evidenced through the development of telecommunications services throughout the country.

> Several new services were also introduced including videotax, telefax, and automatic telephone using radio (ATUR). This increase in the volume and range of telecommunications services was made possible by the increasing use of advanced telecommunications technology such as computer-controlled exchanges, satellite transmission system as well as digital transmission equipment in the expansion and modernization of telecommunications (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 439).

This period also witnessed another milestone in broadcasting services in Malaysia. Apart from the wider coverage of the radio in both Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak, a private own television channel was commissioned in 1985.

> The objective of information and broadcasting, particularly through the mass media, is to disseminate accurate information on the policies, strategies, and development programmes of the country… The period also saw further extension and enhancement of radio and television transmission throughout the

country. The first privately owned and operated television channel was commissioned in 1985 (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 537).

The establishment of the private owned television channels was meant to encourage more productions of the local contents.

> Efforts will be made to increase local programmes in the media. The private sector is expected to produce more local dramas, entertainment programmes, and documentaries. New local radio stations will also be identified for private sector participation. The operations of the privatized media will be co-ordinated and supervised in line with the objective to provide information, education, and entertainment (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 540).

As mentioned previously, the value system is an essential aspect in Malaysia's nation-building. Therefore, the broadcast services were used to encourage positive values and attitudes, that also included the attitude of being compassionate towards the elderly and disadvantaged communities.

> In line with social development objectives of the Government, greater emphasis will be placed on the promotion of self-reliance and increased participation by the community. Besides disseminating information, the information and broadcasting networks will inculcate a spirit of greater self-reliance as well as nurture positive values and attitudes (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 541).

> Efforts will be made to increase community participation, particularly among the young members of the society, in caring for the elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged members. Such societal responsibilities will alleviate pressure from the various welfare institutions. Towards this end, interagency co-operation will be sought to publicize and educate the young members of the society. The Government and voluntary organizations, through the media of radio and television, will disseminate positive values and norms among the younger generation (Fifth Malaysia Plan, p. 540).

7.4 Towards a Well-Informed Society

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the period of the early 1990s was considered as the beginning of the internet era in Malaysia and Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, the Prime Minister at that time saw the internet was going to be the catalyst in the social and economic development. The findings in the following section therefore reveal the efforts and strategies by the government in respect to the new communication technology. These findings were established from the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) and Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005).

7.4.1 Information and Broadcasting as the Main Communication Channel

The implementation of the Sixth Malaysia Plan was considered as an important period in Malaysia's nation-building. According to Osman-Rani (1992) this period was historically significant because it marked "the end of the rather controversial New Economic Policy (NEP) and the beginning of a new, post-NEP era" (p. 202). For the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the National Economic Consultative Council (NECC) was formed to review the previous policy and "draft a fresh development proposal for nation building during the post-NEP period" (Osman-Rani, 1992, p. 202). As mentioned in the previous findings chapter, the Vision 2020 was introduced during the period of the Sixth Malaysia Plan. In assisting Malaysia towards achieving the Vision 2020, various communication channels were exploited in engaging with the society. Nonetheless, information and broadcasting remained as the main communication channel in aiding the modernisation process especially in creating a well-informed society.

> The role of information and broadcasting is to contribute to the development of a well-informed society imbued with positive, strong moral and ethical values receptive to modernization (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 371).

The Malaysian government nonetheless believed that the broadcast media and face-to-face communication were the most effective means of communication between the government and the citizens.

Broadcast media and face-to-face communication have been the most effective instruments for disseminating information on Government development policies, programmes and strategies, to ensure social and political stability. Towards this end, wider radio and television coverage in the country was effected through further extension and enhancement of radio and television transmission. As an information strategy towards the creation of a robust, hardworking, loyal and dedicated united Malaysia, activities with grassroots involvement were organised to enhance the success of the process of development (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 371).

With regards to the Vision 2020, broadcasting services coverage would be extended, and up-to-date infrastructure would be built in creating public awareness towards the national agenda.

The Government will continue to enhance radio and television coverage in the country to ensure greater access to all citizens. With adequate infrastructure, up-to-date technology and skilled manpower, broadcasting inculcates public awareness, while face-to-face communication garners public receptiveness towards objectives of nation building pertinent to the 2020 vision (Sixth Malaysia Plan, p. 381).

Apart from using the broadcast services and face-to-face communication in creating a well- informed society, the library development programmes would be introduced to the community to inculcate reading habit.

During the Sixth Plan, library development programmes will continue to emphasize greater accessibility to library services for the community. This emphasis will be in line with the Government's efforts to inculcate the reading habit and a reading culture aimed at developing a well-informed and knowledgeable society (Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991-1995, p. 381).

7.4.2 Promoting Quality of Life

As mentioned previously, in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), the Malaysian government had intensified its efforts in terms of promoting cultural programmes to reaffirm national unity and the formation of *Bangsa Malaysia* in-line with the Vision 2020. Nonetheless, cultural programmes in Malaysia's nation-building process was also used as instruments to improve quality of life of citizens.

Cultural programmes, as an instrument to improve the quality of life, enhance national identity, promote national integration and unity as well as maintain racial harmony were given greater emphasis during the Plan period. Efforts were also undertaken to strengthen cultural networking among various cultural institutions and voluntary organizations through activities such as music and arts performances, cultural shows, creative writing, research on Bahasa Malaysia, and various conventions and symposia on language and literature (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 566).

For this reason, broadcast services played an important role to support and promote cultural programmes. However, these programmes must abide by the guidelines set by the Ministry of Information.

In addition, to ensure programmes contain good educational, cultural and entertainment value, contents of local and foreign programmes were reviewed through a selective process according to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Information (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 566).

These programmes will play a major role in shaping society together with the effort to enhance national identity, national unity and harmonizing good universal and moral values consistent with the rapid growth of the economy (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 580).

Since the arrival of communication technology in Malaysia, the goal of development of the ICT was extended towards improving the welfare of citizen and also creating a well-informed society. Most importantly, the advancement of information and broadcasting was also instrumental to encourage public participation in the national development process by creating public awareness through various campaigns and programmes nationwide.

Information and broadcasting services contributed towards the development of a well-informed society imbued with positive and strong moral and ethical values that is receptive to modernization. To ensure positive participation of the public in the development process, programmes such as the National Loyalty Campaign, the Nation-Building Programme and the Love The Nation Campaign were implemented throughout the country. These programmes helped to instil in the public an awareness of their role and contribution in the development of the country (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 565).

During the period of the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the level of awareness and commitment among the citizens towards environmental issues would be increased through media.

> The thrust during the Plan period will be to enhance the level of environmental awareness and commitment among the population through the formal education system; participation, involvement of and leadership by environmentally-committed organizations, NGOs and businesses; and the development of coherent broad-based campaign themes. Recognizing the need for environmental education to be made a life-long process, greater use will be made of the media to cover environmental events and issues and broadcast environmental messages to schools and the public (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 615).

The main goal of the Seventh Malaysia Plan was for Malaysia to become not only stronger economically, but also to become more united as a nation. During this period, Malaysia was also affected by the 1997's world financial crisis. Nonetheless, the government kept expanding the ICT for the socio-economic development. From the previous NAP, it was apparent that the period of the early 1990s saw the advancement of communication technology in Malaysia. This advancement however was taken further throughout the period of Seventh Malaysia Plan.

> Priority will be accorded to the development of a world-class telecommunications infrastructure comprising fibre optics, satellite and wireless technology, and services. The development of the information superhighway through the telecommunications infrastructure will be accelerated during the Plan period (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 465).

As mentioned previously, another milestone in terms of communication technology was achieved through the launch of Malaysian owned satellites MEASAT 1 and MEASAT 2 in 1996. The aim of integrated telecommunications, broadcasting and computers technologies was to improve the quality of life as well to change the way business was conducted.

> The merging of telecommunications, broadcasting and computer technologies will improve the quality of telecommunications services as well as bring changes in lifestyle and the way business is conducted. International strategic alliances among telecommunications, cable and video, broadcasting and computer operators will enhance the benefits of synergy derived from the merging of these

technologies. With interactive multimedia along the Information Superhighway, physical commuting will be reduced with teleconferencing, telemedicine, distance learning, video on demand, home banking and home shopping. Networking, facilitated through development in telecommunications infrastructure, will lead to improved quality of life (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 376).

With the launch of MEASAT, the programmes to promote common interests and local cultures and values at the international level especially among ASEAN countries would be enhanced.

> The Government, in consultation with ASEAN counterparts, will implement the Common Regional Network with its base in Kuala Lumpur, to beam programmes of common interests and promote local culture and values. The transmission of the proposed network will be enhanced through the use of broadcasting facilities offered by MEASAT (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 850).

The government also sought to improve the welfare of the people and create a well-informed society through the housing and social services programmes. With the launch of MEASAT, upgrading and replacing ageing radio and television transmitters would be carried out throughout the country to provide quality transmission. This effort also included the rural areas in the country.

> In this context, the Malaysia East Asia Satellite (MEASAT) will be operational in 1996 and most of the transmissions will be relayed through satellite for quality reception of the programmes. In this regard, more private radio and TV stations will be encouraged to use the MEASAT facilities, thus giving consumers greater choices in the selection of various programmes including entertainment, culture, sports, education and information. In this respect, quality programmes will be aired over TV channels, particularly through *Rangkaian Perdana and Rangkaian Emas* in an effort to provide good educational, cultural and entertainment value programmes for viewers (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 579).

> Special emphasis will be given to rural and remote areas in Sabah and Sarawak, to overcome poor reception in pocket and remote areas. The utilization of both satellite and terrestrial transmissions will contribute to the creation of an information-rich Malaysian society (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 580).

Malaysia's information services achieved another milestone with the completion of the National Library in 1993, which was equipped with the latest information technology to attract wider membership and greater access.

> The National Library, in collaboration with the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronics Systems, established the National Library network infrastructure under the *Jaringan Ilmu* project. Under this project, the National Library had access to libraries in selected Government departments as well as public institutions of higher learning. With these linkages, users including researchers had immediate access to various publications and data (Seventh Malaysia Plan, p. 565).

7.4.3 Promoting Equal Participation

It was evidence that the Malaysian government focused on the improvements of broadcasting and information technology in the context of quality of life of the citizen through the housing and other services during the Seventh Malaysia Plan period. During the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005), the National Vision Policy was introduced based on the Malaysia's strategic development to achieve a fully developed nation by 2020. The main goals of the Eighth Malaysia Plan were to create knowledge-based economy, equal participation among races in Malaysia, expansion of the R&D, Science and Technology as well as the ICT, sustainable economic growth, better quality of life and also to instil positive values via education system, religious and social organisations and media. In achieving these objectives, more informative programmes in the pursuit of creating a well-informed Malaysian society would be produced.

> Recognizing the importance of the development of a well-informed society, information-rich programmes covering news, talk shows, documentaries, scientific and educational programmes were aired regularly through the electronic media (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 510).

The purpose of these programmes was to instil moral and ethical values among citizens in-line with the culture and beliefs of Malaysia. For this reason, these programmes must fulfil the guidelines provided by the Malaysian government.

In addition, to ensure that society is imbued with strong moral and ethical values that are receptive to modernization, more locally produced dramas, movies and religious programmes were transmitted (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 510).

All radio and TV programmes were continuously reviewed to ensure dissemination of values and principles consistent with the culture and beliefs of the country (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 511).

In terms of communicating policies to the public, the Malaysian government used both broadcast media and face-to-face communication to spread information.

Broadcast media and face-to-face communication were also used as instruments to effectively disseminate information on Government policies and strategies (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 511).

The Malaysian government saw the importance of disseminating accurate information regarding the policies to keep the public informed on the progress and issues in national development. In this respect, the government information officer played an important role as the representatives of the Malaysian government.

The dissemination of accurate information on government policies and strategies as well as providing timely explanations about developments and issues confronting the country will contribute towards the creation of a well-informed society. Towards this end, information officers will be trained and equipped with more effective communication skills and the latest technologies (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 527).

In the period of the Eighth Malaysia Plan, the aim of the development of communication infrastructure was also to address the matter regarding the digital divide.

As a measure to reduce the digital divide, efforts were undertaken to ensure equitable access to communications and hence information throughout the country. Towards this end, the Communications and Multimedia Commission completed a study on Universal Service Provision (USP) in December 2000. The main objective of the study was to identify measures to extend communications services to high-cost areas and low income groups (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 282).

As mentioned earlier, culture had become an instrument in terms of national unity and integration as well as quality of life. In the context of Malaysia's nation-building, culture also played a role in countering the spread of negative aspects of foreign culture. During this period, promoting cultural understanding would be encouraged through the participation of youths and communities.

> While efforts to strengthen cultural understanding and consciousness among Malaysians will continue, greater emphasis will be given to encouraging the participation of youths and communities in arts and cultural activities. Towards this end, arts and cultural activities, which include traditional and modern dance, drama, and music, will be promoted through the organization of campaigns, exhibitions and performances at the district and state levels, to increase appreciation of the nation's rich cultural heritage (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 528).

In the context of culture, the role of broadcast media was not only to promote the understanding of culture among the Malaysian citizens, but also to promote regional solidarity among ASEAN countries.

> Recognizing the importance of cooperation among ASEAN countries, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle Television (IMTGT-TV) Station at Langkawi will be established. The IMTGT-TV will transmit programmes of common interests to further promote regional solidarity as well as local culture and values (Eighth Malaysia Plan, p. 528).

7.5 Creating an Inclusive Nation

The findings in this section were obtained from the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) and Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). It is important to note that the findings in this section reflected the post *Bangsa Malaysia* period after the Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad stepped down from the position.

7.5.1 Promoting Values through *Islam Hadhari*

As mentioned in the previous findings chapter, the concept of *Islam Hadhari* was introduced as the universal development framework during the period of the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010). After Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad stepped down from his position as the Prime Minister in 2003, he was succeeded by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The introduction of *Islam Hadhari* can be considered as a more tolerant approach as well as a welcome change from Mahathir's 'anti-Western' leadership style (Gatsiounis, 2006). The Malaysian government set out to advance holistic human capital development through the framework of *Islam Hadhari* in achieving Vision 2020 by implementing programmes that focused on ethics, moral and spiritual values.

> Islam Hadhari will be promoted to nurture a progressive developmental outlook in society. Programmes to develop a moral and ethical society will be made an integral and critical part at all levels of development planning to complement the physical development programmes as well as enhance national unity. In this regard, values of tolerance and moderation as well as a sense of belonging and pride in the nation, which are crucial in a multi racial country will be given emphasis (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 259).

For this reason, these efforts required participation from all segment of society, which was promoted through various avenues.

> Programmes to internalise moral and ethical values will be wide in coverage encompassing all segments and age groups in society. The implementation of these programmes will also be broad-based involving family and religious institutions, educational and training institutions, the workplace and community as well as media (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 259).

This period also depicted more digital based content being developed through multimedia and Internet-based applications to encourage knowledge-based economy in Malaysia.

> The digital content industry, which includes creative computer animation, digital games, edutainment programmes, mobile applications and services, interactive television, digital archiving, digital publishing as well as multi-industry and multimedia applications, will be further promoted and developed as a new growth area (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 148).

> Adequate and reliable ICT infrastructure with extensive capacity to support access and delivery of information will remain a major factor in the support of a knowledge-based economy. A critical component will be the availability of broadband network needed to achieve greater adoption of online multimedia and Internet-based applications (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 143).

To ensure the rural and less developed areas in Malaysia could also enjoy the advantages of the ICT in the country, wireless technology would be deployed nationwide.

> In order to accelerate infrastructure deployment and improve ICT penetration to the general public, including rural and underserved areas, the industry leveraged on wired and wireless technologies to provide broadband services throughout the country. These efforts were part of the overall implementation framework contained in the National Broadband Plan (NBP), to provide for planned operationalisation of the broadband nationwide (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 134).

> This will encompass essentially the increased integration of the Internet, mobile telephony and broadcasting services (Ninth Malaysia Plan, p. 143).

Although numerous efforts were made towards advancing the country however the acceptance of Abdullah's *Islam Hadhari* among the people was unclear. His landslide victory in 2008's election, the first time the ruling party lost two-thirds majority in parliament since Malaysia's independence could be the answer despite other mounting issues such as corruption, racial equality and inflation to name a few at that time. From the communication perspective however, the contributing factor to the failure of *Islam Hadhari* could be due to lack of communication and promotion of the concept from Abdullah's government. The available evidence shows that most of *Islam Hadhari* promotional efforts were made mostly through seminars, state run press and speeches by the Prime Minister (Gatsiounis, 2006). The concept also was lacking in debate in the internet sphere and other non-governmentally controlled media. Even "if they do, it is to document the lack of engagement people have and feel with it" (Hoffstaedter, 2009, p.136). The principles which were never put into law and formal practice in the first place, ultimately suffers because of its top down approach and as a result it remains as a vague concept to many (Gatsiounis, 2006). To top it all, there were very little efforts

done by the government in explaining the suitability of *Islam Hadhari* to be practiced in the country and how it helped in leading to democratisation of Malaysia (Mohd Sani et al., 2009).

7.5.2 Inculcating the 1Malaysia Spirit

As established in the previous chapter, the period of the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) was strategised based on the principle of 1Malaysia, the concept that was introduced to replace *Bangsa Malaysia*, which was introduced during the Sixth Malaysia Plan. Together with 1Malaysia, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) was launched to help chart Malaysia's path towards vision 2020. The aim of GTP is to transform public service to ensure effectiveness in the way it works where "real issues will be tackled with real solutions, thus propelling the nation forward" (GTP The Roadmap 2.0, p. 11).

> The Plan details strategies towards a more focused role for the Government as a regulator and catalyst while upholding the principles of 1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now to ensure effective delivery of services (Tenth Malaysia Plan, Forward).

> Hence, the full commitment and drive of all stakeholders, in terms of the rakyat, businesses and public sector, is required… Success would be achieving Vision 2020 in a holistic sense, not just higher income and quality of life but also achieving developed nation status in a manner consistent with our cultural values (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 9).

To appeal to people, Najib Razak's administration brought in a public relations team to assist him in creating a new image through the slogan "1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now" (Chin, 2010) which eventually became the principles of GTP. The 'People First' principle can be described as government's effort to prioritise on the areas that the people need and want most and direct the available resources to those areas, whereas 'Performance Now' sets a new bar for the government in term of transparency and accountability. Therefore, the goal of the Tenth Malaysia Plan was to create an

inclusive socio-economic development that also included the role of government on transparency achieving its objective.

> Transparent. Policies, procedures, and criteria will be made clear and public (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 142).

In inculcating the spirit of 1Malaysia per se, this concept was integrated in the public service delivery and social development particularly in the context of National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) in living up to its tagline People First, Performance Now. Examples can be seen from the excerpts below.

> 1Malaysia clinics will be expanded to provide services to urban poor and other underserved areas, with additional clinics to be built during the Plan period (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 162).

> 1Malaysia Internet Centres in rural communities will provide affordable internet access as well as function as community centres (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 261).

In conjunction with the 1Malaysia principle, 1Malaysia telecentres were set up in most rural areas for government communication and information and well as developing the local community ICT skills.

> In line with the efforts to move towards creating a high income nation based on innovation, the Government together with the communications and multimedia industry will create 1Malaysia telecentres especially in the rural areas. These 1Malaysia telecentres will become focal points for the local community to learn new skills through the extensive use of ICT (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 176).

Acknowledging the role of youth in nation-building, the government encouraged active participation from youth in instilling the culture of innovation and creativity in the spirit of 1Malaysia.

> In the context of inculcating a culture of innovation and creativity, these centres will also provide the forum for youth to engage in activities and exchange ideas…These 1Malaysia telecentres will involve active participation of local youth (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2011-2015, p. 176).

During this period, various programmes would be introduced to prepare youths for the future "to produce a youth population that is capable in the areas of skills, entrepreneurship and leadership" (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2011-2015, p. 182).

> The Government will nurture positive attitudes towards patriotism and volunteerism to produce youth that love the nation and appreciate the spirit of solidarity amongst all Malaysians — in line with the 1Malaysia concept. Programmes for youth will be focused to establish a competitive culture based on merit and ability (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 182).

Women empowerment was the key agenda during this period. Various programmes would be introduced to encourage women to not only participate in labour force, but also to "increase the number of women in decision-making position" (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2011-2015, p. 180). Moreover, this agenda also covered the women from ethnic minority communities and rural areas through the cooperation with the NGOs.

> In addition, skills training programmes in cottage industries such as beading and tailoring will be expanded through the *Jejari Bestari* and *Inkubator Keusahawanan Wanita* (I-KeuNITA) entrepreneurship programmes for women in bottom 40% households, Orang Asli communities and ethnic minorities in Sabah and Sarawak. Health awareness programmes such as on HIV prevention will continue to be promoted in rural areas with the cooperation of Ministry of Health and NGOs (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p. 181).

7.5.3 Enhancing Social Cohesion and Unity

As mentioned earlier, the Eleventh Malaysia is an on-going NAP and also the final phase of Malaysia towards the Vision 2020. In terms of achieving social cohesion and national unity, the government aimed at "reducing polarisation and various forms of socio-economic disparities across regions and ethnicities" (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020, p. 4-21).

> The Government also recognises that the process of integration requires exposure to and interaction among communities, so as to promote an understanding and appreciation of Malaysia's diverse society. During the Eleventh Plan, the Government will therefore focus on enhancing programmes and platforms for greater interaction, engagement, and collaboration among Malaysians (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 4-21).

During this period, the 1Malaysia concept that was introduced during the previous plan was continued in-line with the government's strategy on focusing on the people.

> ...the Eleventh Plan is a strategic plan that paves the way for Malaysia to deliver the future that the *rakyat* desires and deserves. It represents the Government's commitment to fulfilling the aspirations of the people (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 1-1).

As mentioned in Chapter 7, the government introduced six strategic thrusts and six game changers strategy during this period. Therefore, 1Malaysia concept was communicated and promoted within this new strategy. Each area of concern would carry '1Malaysia' message to it to signify an inclusive nation. The excerpt provided below depicts how 1Malaysia was used in addressing the housing issues.

> Demand for affordable housing by the low-income group will also remain favourable, which will be supported by several Government initiatives, such as Program Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA), Rumah Idaman Rakyat and Rumah Mesra Rakyat 1Malaysia (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020, p. 2-21).

On top of that, the Malaysian government hoped to enhance the integration among the multicultural citizen in Malaysia to promote social cohesion and national unity by creating moral and ethical society.

> In addition to social cohesion and national unity, the Government also aspires to foster a fully moral and ethical society, in line with the aspirations set forth in Vision 2020. During the Eleventh Plan, the Government will therefore intensify collaboration with all stakeholders, particularly community-based and religious institutions, to foster a shared sense of responsibility for building a more moral and ethical society (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 4-21).

Another strategy in strengthening national unity is through "stakeholder engagement to build a shared sense of responsibility" (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020, p. 4-22).

> Efforts to promote understanding, tolerance, and ethics will be done through extensive engagement with and involving communities. For example, at the community level, the Government will collaborate with NGOs to promote ethical and moral values through specially targeted programmes and awareness campaigns. Professional and community leaders will be encouraged to role

model the desired behaviours of a caring society. Religious institutions are also expected to play a bigger role in fostering these values by conducting their own programmes (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 4-22).

To maintain the stability in the country, the government also recognised the role of media. Therefore, the shared sense of responsibility was also extended to the media organisation.

As information accessibility rises, it is important that every Malaysian takes the initiative to practice responsible dissemination of information. Similarly, responsible reporting in mainstream and online media is important to ensure fair and non-inflammatory coverage of concerns vital to the Malaysian public (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 4-22).

On top of that, the participation in sports was encouraged to promote healthy lifestyle and unity through various programmes under 1Malaysia.

Mass participation in sports will enhance social integration and unity among Malaysians. The vision is for 50% of Malaysians to embrace a sports culture, where sports and physical activities are an integral part of life, by 2020 (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, p. 4-23).

7.6 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter have demonstrated the patterns of communication in the context of engaging Malaysia's multiracial society in nation-building. Some findings might seem repetitive, but they serve different contexts. The earlier NAPs especially the First and Second Malaysia Plan had indicated the importance of communication in the context of national development. Apart from deploying the government officers throughout the country, these periods also depicted the government's effort in improving the communication nationwide through infrastructure building. It was evidence from the NAPs that the government relied heavily on the mass media especially before the arrival of the internet in Malaysia. As mentioned in Chapter 2, both newspaper and radio were introduced in Malaysia before the independence, whereas the television was introduced in the late 1963. The mass media were used by the

Malaysian government mostly in development communication as well as to spread national consciousness. On top of that, the face-to-face communication also played a significant role in Malaysia within this context.

In the early 1990s, the ideology of *Bangsa Malaysia* or the united Malaysian nation was introduced to consolidate the national aspiration in achieving a fully developed nation status by 2020. However how this concept was promoted specifically was unclear from the NAPs. Most of the communication efforts during the period of *Bangsa Malaysia* were tailored mainly on communicating national unity and promoting local culture and values. The introduction of the ICT during this period had created more mileage in the government communication in Malaysia. For example, the advancement of the ICT was used to create awareness on various nation-building campaigns. When *Islam Hadhari* was introduced by the successive government, the promotion of this concept was not clear from the NAP except for the mention of programmes that were in-line with this concept. Nonetheless, this period saw more advancement in terms of communication technology particularly through multimedia and internet-based applications. However, when 1Malaysia was launched, it is interesting to note that there was consistency in terms of messages and promotions of national unity by the government. As mentioned previously, the government at that time hired a PR team to assist in the promotional of 1Malaysia. The concept was promoted through various channels which also covered the public service delivery as depicted in the NAP.

That said, the understanding and articulation of the concept of engagement in the context of nation-building by the government actors will be analysed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS

ARTICULATING "ENGAGEMENT"

8.1. Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to analyse the concept of "engagement" as articulated by the Malaysian government. The findings in this section were derived from the elite interviews with the government actors. The purpose of the interviews is to understand how Malaysian government understands and articulates the meaning of engagement in the context of nation-building process as well as to give us an insight into its operationalisation in this context over time.

In conducting the interviews with the government actors, I took into consideration a number of factors like the position the participants held in the organisation, the period or duration they work for the government as well as their main responsibilities within the organisation to allow "warrant" in terms of experience in the phenomenon under investigation as suggested by Silverman (2017). For this research, fifteen elite interviews were conducted with the federal government actors whom on average had served the government between ten and forty years. In term of anonymity, only one interviewee requested his identity to be anonymous. The rest of the participants will be addressed with their title followed by their first names, which is a common practice in Malaysia.

When probed regarding how the participants perceived "engagement" in the context of nation-building, it was no surprise that there were various interpretations made by the participants in their attempts of explaining the concept. As pointed out by several scholars (see Dhanesh, 2017; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Kang, 2014; Berger, 2009), it is a concept that is lacking clarity.

8.2. Engagement as a Democratic Process

Most interviewees saw the importance of public engagement in the context of democratic process. In explaining the concept of democracy, the government actors had the tendency to relate the idea with transparency. In understanding the role of transparency among the federal government communicators, Fairbanks et. al (2007) suggests that the government believes that transparency is needed in fulfilling the requirement of a democratic government by providing the access to government information and living up to institution of press freedom.

8.2.1 Transparency

For Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah Syed Ahmad, who had been with the government for more than thirty years and at the time of the writing up of this thesis and just retired from her position as the Secretary-General for Ministry of Communications & Multimedia of Malaysia, she viewed public engagement as an indicator of democracy as well as the way government could be transparent to the citizens.

> *That is very transparent, very democratic and I like that… We call it democratic engagement. Democratic engagement is not the engagement where you go, and you are the only one who talk.*

Mr. Alex Iskandar Liew, the Executive Vice President and Partner for Performance Management Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) Associates on the other hand interpreted engagement as an act of being an open government.

> *…today's government is more open. You can see that the Prime Minister himself shares openly during the annual report launch… And he also shares the challenges, he also shares some of the things that the government has not delivered. And it is OK because transparency is key.*

Mr. Alex however added that in gaining trust from citizens, the government has its role to play in being transparent to the public.

> *In public engagement you're not only to have a very clear message, you have to be transparent about you did not do. And why you didn't do it and how you're overcoming it. So, if you're able to answer questions of that nature, then you have a healthy public engagement and trust from the public.*

Mr. Balakrishnan Kandasamy, the Deputy Director of Communication Services & Community Development (Campaign Branch), Department of Information Malaysia highlighted that through public engagement, the government had started being accountable on their action, especially when the public started questioning certain issues or decisions.

> *I'm talking about the transparency. So, the KSN (The Chief Secretary to the Government) personally chairs the forum and invites secretary-generals of concern ministries, all heads of departments, press and certain people, and they were all asking him to answer. Tell us, where is the money? What went wrong? So the departments involved were asked to answer the questions. The press carried the story and published it in the manner that the government had been listening to the people.*

8.2.2 Engagement is Not Optional

For this reason, the current Malaysia's Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad perceives communication as an important component of a democratic system. This view is in-line with the claim by Stoker (2013) in Chapter 4 on democracy from the developmental framing where better human being and better society can be created through citizen engagement.

> *…communication has become a very, very powerful medium in order to bring the government and people closer together. And in the democratic system of course*

this is very important because the government must always be aware of what the people want because the government in a democratic system is there in order to serve the public.

Putting himself from the perspective of the citizen, Mr. Alex, construed public engagement as a symbol of modern democracy as it allows for decision-making process among the public.

… as citizens we need to understand a few things first, that the government is put in place because of the governance of a country… So in modern democracy… it is not about who's right and who's wrong. Democracy is about having the majority to take someone's opinion, listen to it and then make your own decision, about what you should follow or what you should not follow…

In-line with Mr. Alex's point of view, when it comes to engagement in the context nation-building process, Mr. Fabian Bigar, the Director of Civil Service Delivery Unit (CSDU) at the Prime Minister's Department viewed public engagement as crucial as citizens would get the opportunity to express on what they wanted for their country.

Well, it is an important part of nation-building because a country is what the citizen wants it to be, right? I mean I'm not a politician but it's a very logical thing to say that the country is what the citizens want to live in, in democracy. Of course in the democratic way. I mean Malaysia is a functioning democracy…

On top of that, Datuk Harjeet Singh Hardev Singh, the Director General of Public Complaints Bureau at the Prime Minister's Department stressed that the public should be allowed to voice their opinions as nowadays they were better educated, and they also understood their rights as the citizens.

It's just that these days more people want to voice out their own ideas. They have their own way of thinking and they are more educated. They're more vocal and

they know more about their rights… I don't think we should hinder that. Let them. That should be how a democratic country is.

Dr. Fadhlullah Suhaimi Abdul Malik, the Malaysian government's Chief Communication Officer for Strategic Communications on the other hand had observed by conducting citizen engagement, it showed that the government was aware and willing to adapt with the changes of eras and environments.

As an observation, I will say this. In the previous years, let me take you from the years say from 1957 to the 80s. Then, the public viewed anything that the government said must be right because our literacy rate was not that great. The coloured TV was not even available in the 80s. You only had two channels, RTM1 and RTM2, that's it. So, the public was not so exposed. Now, right into say in the 20th century to the 21st century, suddenly the information is highly available and people react differently and therefore whatever the government says, may not necessarily be true. Because of these changes, engagement becomes important. There was no need for engagement in those days.

In a similar vein, Datuk Harjeet responded that, the days for the government to decide on behalf of the citizen had ended.

And another key thing is gone are the days of the government knows best. So it means you have to engage. Because in the 1970s or the 80s, government knew everything, as if. But now the government, like the Prime Minister has mentioned so many times, they days of the government know best have gone! That is why we have to engage with the public because from there we are able to get to know what they want.

8.3 Engagement as a Dialogic Process

Based on the discussion presented in Chapter 4 on dialogue, it has been considered by some scholars as the most ethical form of communication (see Taylor & Kent, 2014). It is not surprising that the overwhelming responses from the interviewees regarding engagement is framed in the context of dialogue. Nevertheless, the presence of controlled content and outcome in order to achieve specific may not necessarily support the philosophy of dialogue. However, what is apparent from the findings is the understanding of 'dialogue' from the perspective of Malaysian government seems to suggest the existence of the element of interpersonal communication.

8.3.1 Dialogue

For several government actors interviewed, dialogue indicated as having an actual interaction with the citizens. For example, Mr. Alex considered allowing dialogues between the government and citizens as a sign of progressive public engagement.

> *Public engagement is not a one-way traffic. It has to be a dialogue. You must be brave enough to actually take on questions and answers.*

Some interviewees believed that dialogue could potentially be conducted through media. Tan Sr. Dr. Sharifah Zarah maintained that dialogue could also be conducted through television and radio and this could be more viable since traditional media nowadays were also available digitally.

> *We also organise dialogues, we go on television and have dialogue through there, we do dialogue on the radio, and many ways of using other communication channels. They are variety of them. We do face to face communication, digital based by using television and radio channels, but social media is the main one for now.*

Interestingly, several interviewees associated events as avenues for having dialogues with citizens. For example, Mr. Baharin Idris, the General-Director of Department of National Unity & Integration at the Prime Minister's Department stated that dialogue could take place via town hall events.

> *Through programmes, we can do a lot of listening. Like town hall programme, dialogues, meeting sessions with the community at the grassroots level through their community leaders. We take into account all views from the identified groups. It is a method where we at the department level, in the government level to get input.*

In respect of having dialogue with the citizens, according to Mr. Balakrishnan, the face-to-face initiative could be conducted through the media or physically where public could attend.

> *Actually I would say the government encourages it. If you look at the public forum, like on the radio, television, in fact it is one of the ways. Our programme like Dialog Setempat, where we go to certain areas to organise public forums. This means that the government encourages people to speak out. It is a people's corner, people can speak.*

8.3.2 Listening

As highlighted by Gordon (2011) in Chapter 4, one particular aspect that is frequently absent when discussing the philosophy of dialogue is the role of listening. In fact, listening is also rarely mentioned in most existing definitions of engagement. The findings from the interviews however exhibit that majority of the government actors stressed on the importance of listening when describing public engagement.

Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah considered that public engagement was one of the ways the citizens were able to get their voice heard by the government and in turn, it was the government's duty to listen to them.

Because we represent them… we were appointed to lead… We must listen to their voice; we have to engage them because they have their rights too… Now their voice is ours to listen to. We give them the freedom for expressing themselves to the government. That's why we have to engage them, we have to ask them. For me that is really crucial. If we fail to do that I think we are a failure.

At this point, it is obvious that the act of listening by the Malaysian government can be considered as the purposive listening. According to Tun Dr. Mahathir, listening to the citizen in the context of engagement had become possible today with the improvement and availability of communication means.

And as the media availability improves, we are not only able to talk to the people, but we can listen to the people. They can tell us what their feelings about anything and we can then understand them and perhaps work out ways to resolve the problem.

Interestingly, Mr. Baharin had also highlighted the importance of listening in the context of engagement from the perspective of religion.

For our department, since we deal with public, when we say public engagement it means we need to regularly open spaces as wide as possible, to listen to the society. I believe in that. I also think, in the religious teaching context as well, we are taught to listen more, not to talk more. And listening is an advantage that God has given to us. The first thing we receive is hearing, as the first sensory. The last sensory that is going to be taken away is also hearing.

When explaining the importance of listening in the context of engagement, Mr. Balakrishnan felt that it was no longer the citizens' role to just listen to the government and that the role had shifted.

Sometimes we learn from the audience. You see, it is the other way round. Never ever underestimate the audience. The audience used to listen to us, but now we are also listening to the audience, because they also have learned, have a lot of information that should be shared and the government should be known.

8.4 Engagement as a Two-Way Process

The role of feedback in two-way communication has been highlighted by several scholars. Park, Wilding and Chung (2014) emphasise on the importance of feedback in policy transfer translation and adaptation. Their study demonstrates that by combining translation "framework with policy transfer and PR theories" the "modification of policy to context occurs under two-way communication" is likely to increase the 'success' of the policy (Park, Wilding & Chung, 2014, p. 410).

Most of the government actors view the reason for citizen engagement in the context of nation-building is to get feedback regarding the implementation of policies. Mr. Alex perceived feedback as a good way to deliberate what worked and what did not work when implementing a policy.

So we take all this feedback and we deliberate it again. We see what works and what doesn't work. And then we put it into implementation. At the end of the day, delivery is about implementation. You must implement to the deliver.

Mr. Balakrishnan pointed out a nation could be built based on not only from getting feedback from the citizens but from also knowing the problems faced by public.

This is very important because a nation can be built upon problems faced by the public. By knowing the problem, if they know how to solve the problem, it is easy for the nation to be built. In Malaysia, what we have seen all these years through my experience, we have a system known as feedback. Getting the feedback from public in many ways, from many sources. There are other departments too doing

this. But in the Department of Information, we also collect data, which means issues related to the public.

He also added that citizen's feedback too could add to the improvement of policies due to their various knowledge and background.

Our targeted audiences have been so much knowledgeable than us. They audiences are consisted of variety of people. They backgrounds have also entirely changed. Sometimes their feedback surprises us. Sometimes we learn from the audience. You see, it is the other way around. Never ever underestimate the audience. The audience used to listen to us, but now we are also listening to the audience, because they also have learned, have a lot of information that should be shared and the government should be known.

Although the role of listening was mentioned in the previous section however, the act of listening was also considered as two-way communication by several government officers and this seems to suggest that it is one of the ways of getting feedback. Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah for example perceived two-way communication as having actual interactions with the citizens, which also involved listening.

I feel that is what I mean by public engagement, meaning, you really sit down with the people, you go to them, you talk to them and it must be interactive. It cannot be one-way. It must be two-way... listen. The word is listen. Listen to their voice. You don't go there to speak, you go to listen. Something like that.

When getting feedback, Dr. Fadhlullah regarded it as a way of government to have a reality check.

It allows you to get feedback. That's the bottom line. Like I have mentioned, if you don't get the feedback, then it's just talk. So, with the government engagement, it also does a bit of reality check.

Along similar lines, Mr. Fabian observed that by getting feedback from public, it would allow the government to understand the citizen's feelings regarding the government decisions.

> *It gives the government an insight of the temperature or the pulse of the citizens, to answer it in short. I mean of course the government is also on the ground and all that but sometimes we may perceive things differently because we're the government. We think what is best for the citizen from our lens, you see*.

A senior government officer pointed out that one of the ways of getting feedback is by being aware of the public comments.

> *And we can see the comments from the public. A few hundreds of them, commenting on the project. There are people who are very happy, but they are also people who don't give good remarks to the government. I think the government can analyse these based on the responds from the public…*

Mr. Alex suggested that feedback could possibly happen through two-way communication via media. He specifically pointed how it could be done through radio programmes.

> *I think it was a good platform to allow the public to vent. And we heard that feedback. They were some that were totally irrelevant, some criticisms were totally arose out of emotions rather than facts. Some of them were very factual and could actually address it immediately.*

In acknowledging the importance of feedback in the context of nation-building, Mr. Fabian provided comparison of past and current nation-building effort by the government.

> *Feedback! And I think everyone knows this, even the government knows that, the days of the government knows it all, I think it's over. And I think a very good*

example is TN50. The moment of TN50. The engagements, getting the aspirations from the people. When we did Vision 2020, there was no such thing, right? It was all conceived in the mind of mostly Tun Mahathir, maybe. Or maybe it was the policy advisers. Now is different. You go down to the ground, every level of the government from the politicians, from Prime Minister to the ministers, even the top officials from the ministries, they are expected to go down to the ground and get the ground feedback, and listen and respond and explain during the sessions.

Interestingly, the act of getting feedback was considered as a bottom-up approach by the Malaysian government and this had been echoed by Tan Sr. Dr. Sharifah Zarah.

From the ground level to up. Like me, in this ministry, we have our own machinery. Every day they will send the feedback to me. They send it to us. We have on the state level, federal level, local government level.

Mr. Baharin shared similar view regarding bottom-up approach and he used the current efforts for the future nation-building project as an example.

In the latest approach as we can see is the government is not only listening but, it's willingness in acceptance from the public in drafting policies especially for future programmes by the Prime Minister, which is the TN50. It really goes to the grassroots, bottom up. If possible, no voice will be left behind.

Mr. Balakrishnan viewed this approach as crucial as it was able to prevent the government from making assumptions on the needs of its citizen.

It is better rather the government assumes there is an issue by observing from the top and try to come out with an idea. I think it doesn't work in this country. It does go from top to bottom, but from bottom to top is more important.

8.5 Engagement as a Persuasive Act

In Chapter 4, Dickerson (2012) argued that controlled communication and persuasion should not be the indicators of ethics, and that rational persuasion is acceptable. Similarly, Dhanesh (2017) contended that the element of control is absent in most definitions of engagement. In this context, the government officers interviewed did not directly use the term 'persuasion' when describing their engagement activities however, the element of persuasion is apparent throughout their engagement efforts.

Interviewees were also asked regarding their rationale when conducting engagement with the citizen. Majority of government officers stated creating understanding as the main objective of public engagement. Tun Dr. Mahathir remarked public engagement was a great way of creating understanding between the government and citizen.

> *Well, public engagement is important in order that we don't do things that the people do not want. To the point where they react, they may demonstrate, they may... well, resist like land acquisition and all that. They will not cooperate. So it is important that there is good understanding between the government and the people.*

Mr. Balakrishnan felt that the way of creating understanding among the citizens in the context of nation building was by correctly, and timely informing the government policies to the public.

> *I believe this ministry's task is informing the public about government policies or in Malay we call it 'dasar-dasar kerajaan'. We have many government policies that should be correctly informed and timely informed to the public. So that they have a better understanding a nation can only be built upon understanding of the basis of needs. It means a nation can be built based on the understanding of national objective, the vision.*

When the citizens understood, that was when they would 'buy-in' the policies introduced by the government, which according to Datuk Harjeet, that was what the government aimed for.

> *They aim to get the buy in, it's the main thing. Because without engaging the public, there will be no buy in. When there's no buy in, whatever that you have decided people will be opposing. It's very straightforward*.

He also added that a good indicator that the public accepted certain policies introduced was when the grouses among people were able to be reduced.

> *So once they understand, then only we are able to reduce the grouses of the people. I believe that's the best way… but you can't satisfy everyone. When you cannot satisfy them, explain to them why we cannot do as what they wanted. So once they understand, I think half of the battle is won. But you go to any country, it's still the same. Depending on their political thinking and so on*.

In the context of nation building in a multiracial and multi-religion country like Malaysia, creating understanding also means having common ground among its citizens through public engagement as emphasised by Ms. Aananthi:

> *…issues pertaining to religion are very sensitive among Malaysians. For me as well, of course my religion is important, and for you, your religion is important. So all this will become a sensitive issue. There was no platform introduced by the government before this where people who were of different religions could sit together and discuss this issue to find a solution together or to have a common understanding*.

Ms. Aananthi explained the approach taken by the government in the context of national unity since the early days.

> *Now we have another one, BNR. Bargaining, Negotiation and Reconciliation. This has been our practice since our forefathers until today. Whenever we have problems, we negotiate, we try to solve them. The establishment the JKMPKA is one of the ways for BNR. So that finally people can come to a common understanding on how things should be done.*

She also elaborated that having a common understanding had become even more prevalent after the racial riot in 1969.

> *We should be more understanding because, of course today we didn't get to experience the 1969's riot, but I myself heard about it from my parents, the hardship they had to go through and we don't want this kind of thing to happen in Malaysia anymore.*

When conducting engagement with the citizens, Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah stressed on the concept that had been practiced by the Malaysian government recently.

> *Okay, what I can say now the trend is we call it as consult, engage, collaborate. So it is quite amazing that actually from the top down before this, now we have bottom up. I can say that because there is one phrase that was crafted, we say merakyatkan perkhidmatan awam (making the public service people-oriented) ... In terms of communication, we really get down to the rakyat (people) because we feel that the citizen-centric approach is really important for us.*

Contrary to the view of most government actors interviewed for this study, Dr. Zainal Abidin Sait, who has served government for twenty-seven years and is currently the Director of Strategic Development Division, Department of Broadcasting at Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) on the other hand believed that public engagement is unnecessary because he felt that citizens had already known that they were involved directly in the nation-building process.

In fact, the citizens don't need public engagement, but the government promotes public engagement so that the citizens know they are involved directly in natio-building in Malaysia. I believe in that.

Government actors interviewed for this research also stressed on getting public support as one of the reasons government conducted engagement with its citizens. As emphasised by Dr. Zainal, "Firstly, the government is a political institution, they need support. To gain support, you must create people like us." In this context, Mr. Balakrishnan recognised the importance of creating an informed society as a factor in getting support from public.

Our objective is that we should have an informed society. Informed society in the sense that government policies should be briefed and informed to the public so that they have a better understanding what is the objective of the government, the objective of the ministries concerned and how it is delivering the service to the people. When this is clearly spelled out and explained to the people and they understand, we believe the people will support the government today.

In a similar vein, Tan Sri. Dr. Sharifah Zarah responded that having an informed society is crucial in terms of making an informed decision.

It's about connecting people and to create an informed society. So I hope that one day we can really create an informed society, because an informed society can create an informed decision. And with that we can really build our country, which aspires to be able to fulfil our dreams. Whatever dreams that we have.

Moreover, she also stated that getting support from people also meant gaining trust from them.

I think we need to achieve confidence, trust from the public. We want to help them and they who help themselves. It is not easy because of the culture. For example, our culture is more like very dependent on the government.

Getting public support is vital in making the government stay in power, as indicated by Dr. Fadlullah.

I think at the end of the day, the objective of government... as the government I would like to split it in two ways. The government being the politically elected government. For them it's about staying in power. Continuing to drive the country as they see right. So this is what they call as whatever that we do we must there must be political dividend.

Dr. Zainal agreed with this view in the context of making sure the continuity of existing policies in the country.

For example, if we look at SEA Games. Indonesia, The Philippines, Thailand, they are no longer at the top. The ones on top of the ranking are Malaysia, Vietnam, Myanmar. Why? Because for these three countries, they governments have not been changes. Doesn't matter whether they are Communist or whatsoever, but they remain the same. When it is not changed, then only the policies can continue to keep moving continuously. I'm not trying to campaign for the General Election. Think about your children in the future. That's all.

In the context of nation building, according to Mr. Baharin having public support is fundamental for the country to thrive.

In the context of nation building, for me what's important for the government is the support. For nation building, we can see various plans and programmes related to development like attracting foreign investors to development physical

aspect of the nation. If the citizens do not support the government, it can give a
negative effect.

8.5.1 Targeted Engagement to Promote Inclusion

Explaining from the perspective of multiracial society, several interviewees highlighted the goal of public engagement particularly in the context of inclusivity. Datuk Harjeet for example summed up that "So you just do not engage the public but engage the public across the board". For Mr. Baharin, he perceived the reason for having engagement as to avoid any citizen from being marginalised.

> *… the aim of public engagement the way I see it, is so that we don't marginalise*
> *any groups or individuals in the society. We feel that if we accidentally overlook*
> *certain groups, an issue will be sparked and spread. This will reflect on the*
> *government to show that we are not concerned*.

When it comes to inclusivity, according to Mr. Fabian public engagement became more important particularly in a complex society like Malaysia in terms of limiting the differences.

> *For Malaysians, I know as much as we would like to see us as 1Malaysia and I*
> *agree with that, I totally buy in that we shouldn't be divided by our racial*
> *differences, or ethnic differences for that matter. No, I don't like to use the word*
> *"race", but I see this now there are still things that matter to certain ethnic group*
> *which I'm very much concerned, but not to the others. So, we probably need to*
> *understand that as well, that needs*.

Similarly, Tun Dr. Mahathir emphasised on the importance of reducing disparities in order for citizens to be identified as one nation.

So in order to be united to form, to identify yourself as being of one nation, we need to reduce as much of the differences and disparities as possible. Now, we cannot change their race, so in Malaysia we don't insist that people should be assimilated. We allow for kind of close integration within the races.

Differing from the opinions of other government officers in terms of inclusivity through citizen engagement, Dr. Zainal, contrarily argued that not everything in terms of policies government should be consulted by general public. The relevance of engagement depends very much on the objectives of certain policies to give more accuracy in terms of getting the public input.

I'm not speaking on behalf of everyone that the more engagement we have the better. It's not like that. I disagree. But the more accurate it is, the better. For example, when we want to create a policy relating to broadcasting. Our public engagement strategy does not involve all citizens. Our target public for engagement are the vendors, film suppliers, then producers, NGOs related to productions. This gives more accuracy. Viewers come second. If we go straight to the public, then get some findings, the findings will be not useful because the main players are not involved.

He maintained that by involving general public unnecessarily, it could potentially create other problems, which government eventually would be blamed for the failure in case there were difficulties in the implementation.

I used to be based in district offices, the people demanded a lot of things. I said to them, despite our praying every day, even God doesn't give you everything. You understand what I mean? Because even God knows if He gives everything people wouldn't know what to do. In fact, if God really gives everything, what's the point of our existence on the Earth. I became the DO (District Officer) when I was thirty-four years old. As I said, we need to identify who our target public or groups for accuracy. It's not about involving everybody. That's how it should be.

Throughout the interviews, several government officers interpreted engagement as the way of communicating policy to the citizens. According to Mr. Baharin, it should be the government's duty to communicate policies to the grassroots.

> *… we have to bring in the elements of service. Bring the message to them. Like us, our duty is to bring the messages and government policies to the grassroots. At the same time, we need to ensure the space and opportunity for discussion so that people will be able to digest and understand what we are trying to convey.*

When communicating policies, it is not only about bringing the government's message to the citizens. As pointed out by Dr. Zainal, through engagement, it is also about making citizens agree with the policies implemented by the government.

> *For those proactive departments, they will go to the ground. They promote their policy. Like myself in the Department of Personal Data Protection previously, I did the same thing. I told the people why the changes were needed, who agreed and disagreed here, how we could improve. People will surely give their opinions. I think while we create the system, we must be in the system. So when it comes to public engagement, no one can say it is not important. It is very important. Because the policy is for the citizen, so they have to understand, and they have to be involved. Then only it's easier for us to implement. They have to agree.*

Dr. Zainal also explained about getting the citizens to agree on the policy implementation from the perspective of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)[9].

> *It has to be described from RIA's perspective… When we are trying to come out with a new policy, we have to table it according to people's view, then we have to analyse the feedback from the people, then only we can come out with the final draft, present it to the cabinet and cabinet will approve. For the engagement*

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[9] "RIA is a process of systematically identifying and assessing the expected effects of regulatory proposal, using a consistent analytical method such as cost-benefit analysis" (Malaysia Productivity Corporation website).

aspect, the government today has already done it. Especially through RIA. As long as RIA disagrees, we cannot table the new policy.

For some interviewees, they discerned public engagement as a mechanism of creating understanding among the citizens. For Mr. Baharin, engaging citizen was important as it could create awareness on the government's efforts in the context of country's development.

Today, it can become a challenge for the government. If the government does a good thing for national development, but it is translated as something that is not beneficial by some group of people, that is very bad. For me, that's why it's important when do public engagement, we need to make all groups understand so that whatever efforts by the government for the physical development aspect for the nation, and it is being accepted and seen as something that is going to bring good things. But this is challenging for us.

Having said that, when it comes to creating the understanding through public engagement, Dr. Fadhlullah felt that it was important for the government to engage its citizen properly.

… no man is an island. So you need to engage, and you need to engage correctly. The engagement, for the sake of engagement to me is like you know, melepas batuk di tangga (doing things half-heartedly). That's not right.

Several government actors also stressed on the importance of identifying the right public when conducting citizen engagement. Ms. Aananthi Thuraisamy, Director of Policy and Planning Division, Department of National Unity & Integration, Prime Minister's Department highlighted that identifying the right public is crucial in terms accuracy in policy formulation.

They have to approach public engagement especially in the context of TN50 towards the certain target groups. I feel that it is very good today that now the government is becoming open, focusing towards this kind of policy creation by getting the view of the public first.

In this respect, Ms. Aananthi suggested that government must identify the right public to be engaged, depending on the government's objectives.

Like us here in JPNIN, our target groups are the RTs (Neighbourhood); the people at community level; our targeted groups also include the youths… These are the targeted groups for us. So our role in this is we want to get these people's aspirations, views on how unity and integration should be.

Dr. Fadhlullah on the other hand raised the importance of public micro-segmentation before appointing the right individuals to be involved in citizen engagement.

If you want every citizen to get engaged, you think that's a tall order. But what you want could be having as many influential people to be engaged. And you say you can't boil the ocean, right? So you need to get you know, these catalysts. For them to be engaged, you then need to have what we call as micro-segmentation… So, different social demographics would have slightly different set of needs. And today, the government does that by engaging in more of a micro-targeted approach. But that does not stop them from doing the macro approach.

In identifying the right target public, Dr. Fadhlullah gave a recent example of how government attempted to collect aspirations for the upcoming Malaysia's nation building agenda which is Transformation National 2050 (TN50).

I can take the latest effort by the government being the TN50. So, the Transformation National 2050 actually breaks down the population into either

by social demographics or by industry. So they reach out and have if you want, a Ted Talk like sessions, the people get engaged to have their aspiration. What would you like to see in this country in 2050.

Some government officers interviewed saw the importance of involving key personalities or individuals when engaging the public. Mr. Balakrishnan pointed out on getting influential individuals involved in identifying the target public.

For engagement, under this department we have a programme called engage with the OBP. OBP means orang berpengaruh (influential people). These influential people are the heads of villages, political party leaders, NGO leaders, we have community leaders, and we have housing community leaders. These leaders are being engaged with our department. We often have discussions with these leaders. From them we identify the targeted people. These heads are helping us to identify the public whom government can engage with.

On top of that, for Mr. Balakrishnan it was also important to get individuals who were experts in certain areas involved in the context of public engagement.

But now the challenge that we face is that when people in front of us, whoever are sitting and listening, they are now more knowledgeable than us. That's why we have people who are so called subject matter experts (SME).

Along similar lines, Ms. Aananthi acknowledged the role of community leaders in educating the society.

Like people say TOT, Training of Trainers. They can go back and explain to the people in their community. Because they are the religious leaders, they have the authority. They can go back and educate their community.

More than half of the participants interviewed indicated public engagement could be conducted by involving public representatives. Dr. Fadhlullah commented that in some cases, not everyone citizen could be engaged hence the government had to engage with their representatives instead.

> *The challenge will come in actually reaching out to the users. You can't invite everybody, right. So, you will the invite probably people who are involved in either NGOs, consumer bodies, so they will then represent the masses*.

Datuk Harjeet spoke about his experienced with his previous ministry where theses representatives were actually recognised by the government.

> *In my former ministry, we already have the machinery. It means for example, for the persons with disability we have Majlis OKU. They have the representative from different types of disabilities then, checked by the minister. Then with regard to senior citizens, there is also Majlis Penasihat Warga Emas Negara. For children, Majlis Penasihat Kanak-Kanak. That means, they already have the specific target groups*.

When the right public was identified, according to Mr. Alex, it would also let the government utilise the right platform for citizen engagement purpose.

> *Today I think the government needs to be versatile, it needs to understand that to reach the many different demographics of this country you need to apply strategic thinking to it, meaning that you need to know which platform gets you to which audience.*

Interestingly, Mr. Fabian observed that identifying the right public could assist the government better in terms creating a better understanding towards the public themselves.

Because you have to understand the sensitivities of the different segments of society. I personally can say that I don't have the experience dealing with the rural because most of the time I'm in the central. But, of course I believe you should treat their core. You must understand your audience. I mean that is the very basic concept which is understanding your audience and how to communicate across.

8.5.2 Space for Community

Government actors interviewed also described how Malaysian government conducted engagement with its citizen. Findings from the interviews suggested that citizen engagement could be operationalised through both offline and online platforms. However, all interview participants demonstrated ICT as the means of citizen engagement. Mr. Alex conversely indicated that it is crucial for the government to understand the role of ICT in the context of public engagement.

I think we have to first define that public engagement is a function. ICT is a tool, and the tool creates platforms. So, in term of public engagement… if you are focused on the subject matter, and you have the right messaging to share, and you're factual about it, then you can marry or you can bring in the ICT means… many media platforms that are built on ICT.

He also added that ICT was merely an enabler and could not function by its own.

I think ICT will be an enabler. I always think that platforms will change; platforms are always evolved over time. Same thing with ICT. What is available to us today will become more complex in five years, in ten years. So I don't think an aspiration or a vision should be anchored on platforms. It should be anchored on ingenuity, people's ideas, people's ability to implement.

Mr. Baharin on the other hand suggested that by using ICT, it showed that government was aware of the changes and was willing to adapt.

We also follow the development in ICT, and we encourage that all department heads and also our agencies at state level to create social media accounts like Facebook and so on so that it allows the society to be engaged. Especially the younger generation today who is more exposed with the ICT.

This view was echoed by Tun Dr. Mahathir on the reason of government's investment on infrastructure in the country especially in communication.

… we can also inform the people on the need for stability in the country if development is going to take place. We don't want to divert funds, with the government to things like security and defence because the country is unstable. But use that money actually to benefit the people by providing them with the good infrastructure.

In the context of ICT, overwhelmingly majority of government officers mentioned social media as the way to engage with the public. Datuk Harjeet for instance responded that it is a trend among the public nowadays to use social media as a medium of interaction.

To me, their preferred platforms will definitely be social media, apps. Not even websites. Websites are already gone! Emails are gone! They don't want to read the emails. The just want the social media where they can just throw out something. From there when post something they can also read what others have commented. That's why to them when you put in something, once they have seen someone else commented they can add more. It means the interactivity.

The findings however did not illuminate specific social media platforms preferred by the government and how they were actually managed for public engagement purpose, rather the interviewees explained about it in a generic manner. Nonetheless, Mr. Balakrishnan believed that the social media tools were fully utilised by the public.

... the public now like sharing in social media. They want to say something through their Facebook, through their Twitter, through their Instagram. Because government also has promoted their WhatsApp group. So the public go there directly and they share their feelings. Nowadays, the public are bold enough, they are not shy anymore in telling what they want. This is what is what I want and they tell straight away. So the tools are fully utilised.

A number of interviewees mentioned Facebook when referring to social media. Ms. Aananthi however remarked Facebook as the most popular social media site among Malaysians.

Today even the PM can be reached easily through certain platforms. I think it creates a way, you know. Meaning the government gives a channel for people to voice out… We are being given the platform, so it is up to us whether we want to grab it and channel our opinion through it. I think public should take it, and I think a lot of people are using Facebook. Malaysia is one of the highest Facebook users based on some study.

Mr. Fabian on the other hand specifically named Twitter as the medium of engagement between the government and public, but the utilisation of this platform should be used cautiously.

So far I think it's just limited to Twitter between mostly top officials and the public. As for successful... you can say that it's not easy because there will be a lot of noises as well, like I said again and again, you must be able to decipher which is real and which is not. But I would feel a good policy… is to allow within certain perimeters, officials of all levels, those who are in the government, maybe at this point not all but officers and above, to have a Twitter account and respond immediately.

Regarding social media, Mr. Balakrishnan offered an explanation on the difference between communication platforms available in the past and today.

> *It's a very challenging job. Government has tried so far with many ways… About ten years back there was nothing. Most of the ministries did not have their own portal, they didn't have a Facebook account, they didn't have the Instagram, they didn't have a Twitter ... all of these, no! But now we live with all these so-called media tools like social media. So all ministries are engaged with social media.*

Surprisingly, only a minority of interviewees mentioned traditional media as a means for citizen engagement. Mr. Balakrishnan for instance illustrated how traditional media like television and radio were used by the government in the context of citizen engagement.

> *The other way is of course we have radio with thirty-two radio channels, through these radio channels we try to engage with the people through interviews, getting people come to the radio stations or through telephone interviews. We have RTM, the so-called government television. Through them we try to broadcast the government's activities, policies, or whatever government is doing we try to broadcast so that people get to know. In spite of this, we also have the official news agencies called BERNAMA. We try to make use of BERNAMA to tell the people, tell the world about what government is doing.*

Despite the lack of mention on traditional media among the interviewees, Dr. Fadhlullah believed that government had managed to connect with people at different levels, especially with high internet penetration in the country.

> *For the masses, you use all three categories. Again, you use the traditional media, we use the organised online media and we also use the disorganised online media like blogs, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook. So once you have all those assets, you'll find that you're connected to people at different levels. Hopefully. And given the penetration of the internet in Malaysia today which is the broadband is about 80.2 percent, 80.2 per hundred household and mobile penetration is*

about 134 per hundred population. I think we would have reached easily about 90 percent of the public, which is what it is today.

The most striking findings to emerge from the interviews is that in all cases, the government officers responded that face-to-face initiatives as the platforms for public engagement. Mr. Balakrishnan indicated that the government still believed in the face-to-face engagement and it should still be continued until today. One particular face-to-face initiative that Malaysian government still practices until today is known as '*turun padang*'.

They feel that face-to-face communication and engagement should be happening like the old glorious days we had before. This is one of the reasons why government feels that we should have more engagement. That's why we have this that we call in Malay as 'turun padang', goes down to the ground. PM himself goes to the ground. When you see these two hundred and twenty-two Parliamentarians, they are assigned to go the ground to meet people every weekend.

Additionally, when people were gathered in one place for engagement purpose, that is where Mr. Balakrishnan called it intelligent gathering.

Sometimes although we have the people down on the ground in our department to get the information collected, that's what we call as intelligent gathering. We try to collect the information from the public, all the related people to our department. It can be in the form of issues, good ideas, telling the government what do... these are the intelligent gathering. About what people are thinking and how our department get that information.

Despite the Malaysian government's belief in face-to-face communication method, Dr. Fadhlullah explained that when engaging the citizens, government used both online and offline methods for better coverage.

…for every of the session, we have the Facebook. It goes live. While you may invite a set of people because you provide and open channel, anybody who's interested in that particular discipline, there can be unlimited audiences that you create.

The single most striking observation made by a small number of participants is when they highlighted the first time the government conducted open days to engage with the public. Mr. Alex for example noted that this was something that the government had never practiced in the past.

Now, they engage the public in events, in launches and things like that, but they've never engaged general public in policies. So, when we started the Government Transformation Programme in 2010 we ran open days. That was the very first time we ran open days.

As part of the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), according to Mr. Fabian that was when the agency responsible to handle this matter, PEMANDU was introduced in the government.

Having seen the government in action, in different ministries, it depends on the ministries actually. Of course PEMANDU is hard to compare because their DNA is different… they are more open to engagements. But after the so-called arrival of PEMANDU in the government, and it started all this with the so-called open days, we called it open days where we engaged with the public. I think you can see a change in the other agencies that they are more receptive towards this.

Dr. Fadhlullah highlighted that, through the GTP, the national labs were also introduced to deliberate all feedback from the citizens.

I think when we started this, we ran a survey before we actually picked the national key result areas… What happened was that the public actually gave us specific things that they felt that we needed to address. These were the top six or

top seven things that the government should focus on. We took that and we went to work with, we went into labs, we brought in people from the public, private sector, ministries so they worked together and came out with targets, came out with solutions, came out with activities. And then we rolled out our initiatives, the action plans and all that.

Some interviewees stated the role of members of Parliament in the context of public engagement. Tun Dr. Mahathir emphasised that citizens could use the members of Parliament to reach directly with the government.

Well, the people have their representatives in the Parliament. And they can use their representatives to ask question to the government. The government can use the Parliament in order to explain to their representatives. And at the same time of course the government tries to go directly to the people to explain the policies and decisions.

This view was also echoed by Mr. Balakrishnan in terms of letting the government know about the public opinion through these Parliamentarians.

The Parliament is meant for the parliamentarians to bring up all the grouses. The Parliament is the highest body in this country where we can go to. Parliamentarians are the representatives of the public. When you're talking about the public opinion means, the parliamentarian will bring the public opinion in the Parliament.

In illustrating this practice, Dr. Fadhlullah gave an example of the recent sessions in the Malaysian Parliament.

As of two parliamentary sittings ago, where it was during the first sitting this year, the parliament now has what is called now as the ministers question time (MQT), which happens every Tuesday and Thursday, twice a week where the

hottest issue of the day can be brought into Parliament without having to be organised in a structured order of parliamentary questions. Normally the parliamentary questions get submitted up front and it is organised in particular days. But the MQT provides a platform for the public via their representatives to raise hot topics of the day.

8.6 Challenges to Engagement

8.6.1 Negative Impact of ICT

When asked regarding the challenges that the Malaysian government faced in the context of citizen engagement, interestingly majority of the officers described technology as the main challenge that could hinder citizen engagement, which is counterintuitive from the findings in the previous section. For technology, there were mixed views among the participants. Firstly, some officers perceived lacking technology advancement as a reason that could contribute to the effectiveness of engagement. For instance, Tun Dr. Mahathir explained that the lack of technology was a big contributing factor, especially in the past.

There has been mainly of course to reach the remote places. Initially of course there were no rural roads, and because of that it was difficult for the government officers to go down and see what was being done in the more remote places. To solve that problem, we built rural roads, not only main highways and expressways, but also rural roads. Rural roads are made to become all weather roads. So that you can reach any part of the country any time whether the weather is good or bad. So this physical communication now becomes much easier because due the growth of economy, we earn sufficient money in order to build these facilities for the people.

Mr. Balakrishnan highlighted that this issue was quite prevalent in some parts of Malaysia.

> *Yet, we can't guarantee that the engagement is fully done. They may be problem here and there like especially Sabah and Sarawak. We find it difficult to reach because of course the system there. The road system there is not as accessible as in Peninsular Malaysia. Sabah and Sarawak are mountainous. If you want to go to a certain remote area, the road transportation is not so accessible yet. We may not be able to reach the people there as we are expected to in Sabah and Sarawak. But in Peninsular, I believe more or less we are able to reach the people. So the engagement in Peninsular is more or less better than Sabah and Sarawak.*

For other interviewees, the advancement of technology too had become a problem for the government. For Ms. Aananthi, technology could easily be misused by irresponsible users.

> *Now there is internet. Just a click away, you can already spread information to all over the world. It should make out life convenient, but we are the ones misuse it and turn it into negative. We can't blame the technology. The human has to be blamed, the users.*

Agreeing with the view, Mr. Alex suggested this issue had become something that was hard to manage by the government.

> *And I always would like to think you know that social media today is so much more advanced than it was when we started in 2010, so much more advanced than in 2005, or year 2000 you know when the turn of millennium. You know social media... it was not the platform that was a problem. It was not the platform that the government could not manage. It was the visuality of news that were not substantiated and not proven, that were difficult to manage. And because, I guess, you know the government in Malaysia did not have a mechanism to actually address that at that point in time.*

According to Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah, it was the human nature to be inclined towards something sensational and with the advancement of technology, it made it even easier.

For me that's really a big challenge because our people are more knowledgeable now. The perception too. Because now it is about emotion. About sentiment of the people. And social media today, it makes it worse. Sometimes the fake ones are more appealing, within a blink of the eye, they become viral. People who are not ready for this kind of environment, they get a shock and fall for it. They are so many things we need to educate the public on what the truth what's not. With the revolution of information, it makes people become confused.

Another challenge of having successful citizen engagement as stated by several interviewees is the issue of public perception towards the government. According to Mr. Baharin, the government is struggling to create positive public perception especially in light of the advancement in communication nowadays.

It's not even helpful when the society likes saying negative things. And today with open communication system, for just an isolated case, but people fall for it easily and it becomes viral. This can influence others' perception too. That's what we are worried about… But sometime along the way, you will face leakage of problems among the civil servants. The challenge for us is to get positive perception.

In combating the false information propagated through various platforms of digital media today, according to Mr. Zainal Abidin, the Malaysian government, had to introduce an online portal called *sebenarnya.my* for public to verify the information received.

…yes, with pictures too. Those are fake. But people don't bother to Google about it. People also don't Google sebenarnya.my. People just believe whatever they hear.

8.6.2 Internal Factors

In explaining the challenges faced by the government in the context of citizen engagement, a number of government actors acknowledged that the weakness could come from the government itself. For this reason, Mr. Balakrishnan stressed on the importance of government to upgrade itself.

> *The challenge is the public become very concern, they want to know the latest information about the government, and in this case we need to upgrade ourselves.*

In the context of expertise, Mr. Alex argued from the communication perspective which according to him, managing communication was not for everyone.

> *The challenge is that I think we always think communications is something that someone else does; it's never about what we do. Communication essentially has a thinking process to it. You need to know and have a background of the subject matter.*

Being trained in communication for years, he highlighted an interesting point especially if the government was put in a spot.

> *That's the beauty about communication. You need to learn the magic and art of answering without answering.*

For this reason, Mr. Alex also added that experience became very important for the government to engage with the citizens.

> *You see that most of their press officers, most of the people who are in-charge of communication, they are in their late forties almost fifties. Because it requires a bit of tenacity, it requires a bit of experience, it requires the ability to think on your feet.*

Hence, in the context of policy communication, Mr. Fabian felt that the government officers needed to be trained in this kind of area.

The officers. So people need to be trained. I think the government has to have this kind of expertise. I mean more and more people need to be trained. Even maybe not from the communications department, but anybody who works on policies needs to have certain kind of ability to manage the kind of situation.

At the same time, according to Mr. Balakrishnan, government also had to learn to adapt with the changes.

… we must also be an IT savvy. Now the time has changed, we used to have public speaking without referring to any slide or any projector. We used to speak just like that for half or one hour. But now trend is no longer there.

Unfortunately, adapting to changes is not something that the government can do so quickly. Mr. Zainal Abidin gave examples that the slow in adaptation also happened in the traditional media.

… there were already competitors, TV3 was already established at that time. But when I was younger, there was none. When there's no competitor, we forget that people really want to watch a programme, people don't want just to watch TV. So the "forgetful" period was going on for a long time. When they forgot from 1984 until 1997, it became prevalent. We believed at that time the entities needed to be changed from the government organisation to private sector or entity. But we didn't realise that the content was the one that needed be changed.

Along the similar lines, Dr. Fadhlullah put forward that "maybe it's the behaviour, maybe they have not adapted to that culture. Sometimes it is also the culture of age."

Unfortunately, according to him especially in the era of social media it required a different kind of expertise.

> *And they had some initial I would say growing pains, because not everybody was very comfortable with social media. They thought that "it was like one size fits all. So if I can get it right with the conventional media, I can just push it out the same way on social media", with little realising that the audience in the social media has slightly different character.*

In the context of using social media for public engagement reason, it goes back to Mr. Alex's argument on expertise and experience.

> *And of course there were kind of added disadvantages when it came to social media as well. And I always would like to think you know that social media today is so much more advanced than it was when we started in 2010...it was not the platform that was a problem. It was not the platform that the government could not manage.*

Mr. Fabian added that the government's own action sometimes could add to less favourable public image.

> *... when I say "we" I mean the government, not very good in telling our side of the story. The achievements that we received, so sometimes we are slow to respond. So people tend to believe those news and think that since the government doesn't respond, or the government responds poorly, therefore it is the truth. That's the problem.*

Surprisingly only one interview recognised budget constraint as one of the challenges to engaging with the citizen. According to Mr. Zainal, different type of engagement and platform required different budget.

For the radio, we will organise pizza party every Saturday, we will call the listeners, listen to them, find out what they want, then we put that element into our morning shows. But for the television, we don't have much money to do something similar. But the way we engage with the viewers in different ways.

8.6.3 Political Challenges to Government

Another challenge in engaging citizens in the context of nation building as cited by several government officers is political reason. Dr. Fadhlullah recognised that the political reasons could hamper the implementation of policies.

The first is the political challenge. In politics, there are always will be two sides; the government and the opposition. And you have the opposition that will find faults in everything. You can call it political immaturity or maturity... and that's what we have here. So, pushing out a good policy can sometimes be a challenge politically.

To add to Dr. Fadhlullah's view, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad indicated that this could potentially be the attempt of certain parties to demonise the government.

At the same time, of course we have to be very careful because some may object because of political consideration. The opposition parties of course will object but it is up to you to evaluate the objection whether it is based on the real feelings of the people or the attempt by the opposition to demonise the government.

By using the "satay theory" as a metaphor to explain the political influence in the context of nation-building, Mr. Baharin responded on the importance of holding to the foundation of building the country.

When we think of challenge, it is like satay. Unity is also like satay. They will someone who pokes; you know poking the meat for satay. What is means is, in

our society we get people who like to provoke. They will be someone who puts the fire. You know to grill the satay, to heat it up... You don't only burn it, but you add the oil on it. To make the meat smell good and taste good... It's the same for unity. There are people like satay. Someone who fans, to make things merrier and happening. Just like doing a street demonstration (laughs). To make it more fun, it benefits some people, so they eat. So since people spend their effort to make stay, someone has to eat. It becomes like an opportunity for them. The worst is, someone who pays. For the person who pays, if anything bad happens to our country, who's going to pay for it? If the unity collapses, like we said unity is our foundation, if the foundation collapses, who's going to pay for it?

In the context of political reason, Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah highlighted that sometimes it made the engagement efforts become difficult due to trust issues among the public towards the government.

We really go down to see the people, it's just that the political situation in our country is sometimes making it rather a little difficult for the servants to do the job. Because they don't believe in the government servants. The trust is not there. That's what is difficult.

Tan Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah's claimed that the trust issue could be associated with the public attitude towards government. For this reason, a senior government officer felt that part of the purpose of citizen engagement was to deal with the public perception.

Yes, because sometimes the problem is with the perception. It's about how to engage with them to correct the perception. That's why we need engagement.

On top of that, Dr. Fadhlullah viewed the change of the environment had contributed largely to the difficulties that the government faced today.

The audiences today are a bit more demanding, they are better educated, and therefore they are also able to also question the rational of a certain policy.

Similarly, this view was echoed by Mr. Balakrishnan on how the public these days are more knowledgeable, and they no longer take everything at the face value.

It means people now want evidence. As I said, the challenge can be the audience. The audience twenty years ago and now, it's entirely different. We are facing the audience who are very knowledgeable. They know everything in their fingertips. Sometimes they are better than us.

8.7 Conclusion

Through the presented findings, five main themes had emerged from the interviews. Despite the various interpretations of the concept, the Malaysian government viewed engagement as a democratic process in especially in the modern government with the purpose of achieving certain objectives and that it had to be done through dialogue and two-way communication process. The findings also demonstrated that most government actors believed in the importance of listening through the citizen engagement. Regardless of the overwhelming number of interviewees emphasised on the social media as the way to engage the citizens, however, the government still believed in the importance of face-to-face initiatives in the context of Malaysia's national-building process.

Having said that, the following chapter will provide further discussion and highlight the key findings from both NAPs and interviews. The research objectives are also addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to address the research objectives of this study by highlighting and discussing the key findings established from the Malaysia Plan documents as well as elite interviews as presented in the previous findings' chapters. These key findings will be discussed and debated within the existing literature and concept. Hence, this chapter begins by restating the research objectives of this study followed by the discussion of the key emerging themes in responding to each objective.

9.2 Addressing Research Objectives

For this study, I have attempted to investigate the concept of engagement established from the narrative of Malaysian government in the context of nation-building. In doing so, I have presented my research findings according to my research objectives in the previous chapters. In this discussion chapter, I will discuss the key findings from this study by addressing each research objective.

9.2.1 Nation-building as the National Identity Project

Ethnic Identity and the Formation of National Identity

The discussion in this section seeks to address the first research objective which is to analyse the discursive representations of nation-building in Malaysia over time. In addressing this objective, I firstly conducted qualitative content analysis on all eleven Malaysia Plan documents to identify the patterns of nation-building in Malaysia accordingly. The findings from the documents were analysed in detail in Chapter 6. I contended earlier in this thesis that to make sense of Malaysia's nation-building was to describe through the lens of 'nation-of-intent' by Shamsul (1996a) that emphasised on

the programmatic action plans as discussed in Chapter 3, hence the relevance use of the NAPs in this study. As deliberated earlier, it is apparent that the focus of nation-building in Malaysia shifted drastically after the racial riot incident on May 13, 1969. Despite the little mention of 'unity' in the First Malaysia Plan, however, becoming a united nation had always been the successive government of Malaysia's overriding objective of nation of intent since the country was formed, and this was demonstrated clearly throughout the subsequent Malaysia Plan documents.

As emphasised by Haque (2003), for majority multi-ethnic countries in the developing world that experienced the colonial legacy in terms of ethnic tension and distribution, it becomes the state's responsibility to implement appropriate policies and programmes to resolve such conflicts. The notion of 'multi-ethnic' however, is often interpreted within racial and ethnic identity. According to Samuels (2014), race is a concept that is socially and legally constructed which originates "from the classification system used for plants and animals" (p. 2). Ethnicity on the other hand is social identity, which is generally presumed "to correspond to a racial group" (Samuels, 2014, p. 3). The concept of ethnicity thus expands beyond "the groups' assumed external characteristics of physical appearance" (Samuels, 2014, p. 3). In the case of Malaysia however, it can be argued that both terms multi-ethnic and multiracial are appropriate to describe the country because the identity formation in Malaysia as proposed by Shamsul (1996b) is constructed based in the context of two social reality.

> first, the "authority-defined" social reality, one which is authoritatively defined by people who are part of the dominant power structure; and, second, the "everyday-defined" social reality, one which is experienced by the people in the course of their everyday life (Shamsul, 1996b, p. 477).

As exhibited in Chapter 6, the use of the term '*Bumiputera*' or son of the soil was used by the state to classify the Malays and other indigenous groups and the rest of other ethnic groups are categorised as 'non-*Bumiputera*'. This state classification or 'authority-defined' identity is generally "used in official government documents as well as in the idiom of everyday interaction" (Shamsul & Daud, 2006, p. 133). In contrast, the 'everyday-defined' identity is experienced and generally "disparate, fragmented and intensely personal conducted mostly orally" (Shamsul, 1996b, p. 478). Based on the

conception of race and ethnicity in Malaysia, the term multi-ethnic and multiracial are often used interchangeably to describe Malaysia's plural society.

(Multi)cultural, Malayness and National Identity

Given the creation of identity that is based on the social reality context, it is not surprising that the most striking findings from the NAP documents is that the concept of 'national identity' in Malaysia evolves over time. According to Taylor and Kent (2006), national identity, as a fundamental task in nation-building, "can be defined as the conscious identification of a group of people with shared national goals" (p. 343). In this respect, the creation of national identity generally ensues at the early stage of nation-building as a prerequisite to national unity. Interestingly, the idea of national unity was never mentioned in the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) although Malaysia was formed in 1963. While the concept of national identity can be argued from the ethnicity or nationality point of view, however in the context of this study, national identity can be viewed as political self-determination by the elites. According to Dahbour (2002), national identity in the context of political self-determination is a mechanism for "national groups- in order to survive and prosper in a hostile international environment- often require state of their own" (p. 17) and therefore it is necessary for a nation to exist "for a proper claim of self-determination" (p. 18). In the case of Malaysia, my findings had shown that the government had to defend the country against the political military and confrontation from Indonesia who opposed the formation of the state of Malaysia, as well as the political conflicts with Singapore regarding the idea of how the new independent state should be.

Despite the lack of mention of national identity in the First Malaysia Plan, my findings had suggested that it was apparent that the Malay elites sought to realise a *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay Supremacy) state. I briefly mentioned in Chapter 2 the concept Malaysian Malaysia should not be confused with 1Malaysia. Malaysian Malaysia was initiated by the former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as a protest to Article 153 in the Constitution regarding the protection of the special rights of Malays and the indigenous people (*Bumiputera*) which eventually led to termination of Singapore from

Malaysia in 1965 due to conflict of interests between the two states. In this respect, Singapore, a Chinese dominated state demanded equal rights, which was something that could not be agreed by the Malay majority Federation of Malaya. The Malay elites however were determined to realise a *Ketuanan Melayu* state due to the history of Federation of Malaya itself. As presented in Chapter 2, Federation of Malaya; which included the nine Malay states with nine Malay rulers that make the Conference of Rulers today; was formed as a result of the protest among the Malays against the formation of Malayan Union that was seen as undermining the power of Malay rulers. The *Ketuanan Melayu* therefore became the political narrative of the Malay nationalists and politicians to symbolise the sovereignty of the independent Malay state. Despite the acknowledgement on the plural society in the country, however the idea of Malay supremacy became clearer in the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) when the Malay culture became the basis of Malaysia's national identity.

These findings are comparable with the case of East Timor's struggle for self-determination after it was unable to claim its political independence. For East Timor, the mapping of its imagined borders was created through the Portuguese and Dutch negotiations. According to Strating (2014), this "international political 'imagining' of East Timor preceded the formation of a distinctive national identity within East Timor" (p. 471). This is important for East Timor in terms of recognising its distinctive ethnic, culture and political identity after the invasion by Indonesia in its effort to convince the international community to support its cause since the state did not have "the military capability to expel Indonesia from its territory" (Strating, 2014, p. 4710). The findings from the case of East Timor also reveal that, the East Timorese still lived in according to the "mythology and legends that accumulated over the past centuries of native and foreign presence in the land" despite the arrival of Catholicism (Fatah, 1998, p. 59). This mythology in turn shaped their culture, beliefs as well as tracing their origins which subsequently became their political narrative in the effort of self-determination during the Indonesian invasion. While Indonesia believed on "the ethnic 'kinship' between Indonesians and East Timorese", East Timor in contrast disputes it by emphasising on cultural links with Portugal and Melanesia as its cultural heritage to prove its distinctiveness from Indonesia as the justification for its political claim (Strating, 2014,

p. 469). In this respect, East Timor was trying to reflect its identity and national borders which subsequently realising the 'East Timor' state by using its cultural heritage as its foundation to national identity.

My findings also demonstrated that realising the national unity and integration are a major issue in Malaysia being a multi-ethnic and multireligious state. After the end of the NEP period, *Bangsa Malaysia* (United Malaysian Nation) concept was introduced by the government in the early 1990s together with the Vision 2020 policy to construct a more inclusive national identity for all Malaysians or the nation of intent, which focused on both politics and economic development. As a multiracial state, each race poses its own nation-of-intent. Hence, the conception of *Bangsa Malaysia* can be argued as the first step towards reconciling these competing nations-of-intent in Malaysia. Having said that, the introduction of the new policy automatically halted the National Culture Policy (NCP) that emphasised on the assimilation of Malay culture which was introduced in the 1970s in an attempt of cultural restructuring after the May 13, 1969 incident. According to Ishak (2002), when Vision 2020 was announced in 1991, it was the first time the Malaysian government had actually formulated a "clear vision of constructing 'a nation' or Bangsa Malaysia" (p.103) since the country received its independence in 1957. The globalisation in the 1990s had resulted in "reduced influence of Malay culture leadership" and instead of maintaining the centrality of Malay culture, the new concept was more appropriate in preparing Malaysia towards the industrialised nation (Mandal, 2008, p. 275). *Bangsa Malaysia* was eventually replaced with 1Malaysia concept in 2010, which stresses on social justice as its principal to better characterise the contemporary Malaysian society. This concept was seen "to be "champions of the rakyat" and toned down the rhetoric of Ketuanan Melayu" (Chin, 2010, p. 166). Most importantly, the introduction of the inclusive national identity like *Bangsa Malaysia* and 1Malaysia also aimed at strengthening the country's stability and unity to ensure the national development to progress, which was crucial in Malaysia's modernisation process.

In the effort of creating unity and inclusivity, similar findings could be observed in South Africa through President Mbeki's call for the African Renaissance as the post-apartheid agenda. According to Bongmba (2004), Mbeki's call for the Renaissance was timely with the "precarious socio-economic situation in Africa" (p. 291). The African Renaissance is

an all-embracing concept that emphasises on South Africa's nation of intent to develop it economics, social and politics without compromising its African identity. By introducing this concept, South Africa hopes to achieve social cohesion and reconciling its past especially in the aftermath of apartheid as a result of pre-colonial ethnic divisions and subsequently achieve economic prosperity by actualising the African identity and consciousness (Bongmba, 2004). Another comparison of findings in terms of creating inclusive national identity by embracing multiculturalism can be observed in the case of Australia. I had highlighted elsewhere in this thesis on how the Howard government's combative approach to national identity had threatened Australia's nation of intent of becoming a multicultural nation (see Moran, 2011). The analysis by Moran (2011) has shown that the former Prime Minister had criticised multiculturalism for undermining Australian citizenship and values as well as being divisive in nature.

Based on the comparison between Malaysia and the findings from other nations, it indicates that it is highly likely that the conception of nation of intent in nation-building depends greatly on the leadership of the countries. It is also necessary to stress here that the nation of intent changes over time depends on the periods and needs as well as the leaderships of the country respectively. This assumption is in-line with my findings which established that almost all Malaysia's Prime Ministers propelled their own conception of nation of intent: Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj (laissez faire economic policy), Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (economic equality approach), Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (*Bangsa Malaysia*), Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (*Islam Hadhari*) and Dato' Seri Mohamad Najib Abdul Razak (1Malaysia).

The Role of Gender and National Identity

Another significant finding pertaining to national identity is that the association of gender and national identity as found in the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980). As emphasised by Wickes et al. (2006), it is common that the role of women is generally absent in the nationalism and national identities due to patriarchal culture structures. In the case of Malaysia however, the position of women was already recognised right after the country received her independence through the right to vote which was

already granted through the Constitution. My findings further established that the Malaysian government perceived the inclusion of role of women in national development as part of its national character and identity as progressive. This image is important for Malaysia especially as a Muslim majority federation where women tend to be constrained with prejudice and traditional conservatism. My findings had shown that the position of women was further strengthened through the introduction of National Policy on Women in 1989 under the leadership of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in the efforts of encouraging women participation in national development which has continued to become the national agenda until today. For this reason, feminism is perceived as a Western concept in Malaysia and most Malaysian women prefer not to be associated with feminism as the concept does not represent the local conditions accurately (Ariffin, 1999). In this context "women's demands need to be couched in terms of respect towards the state, family, and religion" (Ariffin, 1999, p. 417).

In comparing these findings with the experience of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the context of gender, national identity and citizenship, Moghadam (1999) reveals that in general "the relationship between national identity politics and women's rights" in Middle East "has been unpredictable and uneasy" (p. 154). "Nationalism and women's rights are equated" in some case while "in other cases, national identity politics seeks to recuperate "traditional" norms, including the public/private division" (Moghadam, 1999, p. 154). On the contrary, feminists and intellectuals in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco are represented as ramparts based on their rejection of fundamentalism, which constitutes a major barrier against the success of Islamists (Moghadam, 1999). Such representations of women according to Moghadam (1999) "in which women are depicted as citizens and political actors and not only as wives and mothers - may herald a significant shift in gender relations" (p. 155).

It can be observed here that the role of gender particularly women in both Malaysia and MENA pose similarities. Women in both contexts struggled for their rights and role to be recognised in their countries. Although my findings showed the inclusion of women as part of Malaysia's search for national identity in the mid-70s through the Third Malaysia Plan however, these findings had also hinted the struggle for their role to be recognised officially based on the gap of the period when the official National Policy on

Women (1989) was introduced, which was at the end of the Fifth Malaysia Plan. Similar to MENA, women in Malaysia had to face the religious fundamentalism, traditionalism as well as patriarchal social system. The role of religion and traditionalism however is not only limited to the struggle in the context of gender, which brings us to the next point.

The Religious Fundamentalism and National Identity

Another aspect of nation-building is the role that the religion plays in this process. Juergensmeyer (2010) argues that religious politics has become a global trend among countries around the world. In respect to nation-building, the "term religious nationalism, therefore, means the attempt to link religion to the idea of the nation state" (Juergensmeyer, 2010, p. 271). My findings had supported this claim by establishing how the religion was used by the government to form the basis of national unity. This can be observed through the introduction of the national ideology, *Rukunegara* in 1970. In this respect, the first principle of the national ideology stated 'Belief in God' without any reference to specific religion (see Appendix D). However, my findings further revealed that the reference to Islam became obvious when 'Islam' was specifically mentioned in the Ninth Malaysia Plan through the concept of *Islam Hadhari*, which emphasised on the balance between physical and spiritual development. Subsequently, when the concept of 1Malaysia was introduced, the Malaysian government attempted to explain this concept from the context of Islamic teachings by referring to a specific Quranic verse as exhibited in Tenth Malaysia Plan. Despite the notable use of Islam in the process of nation-building in multiracial Malaysia, Hamayotsu (2002) suggests that the Malaysian government managed to incorporate Islam into Malaysia's national vision by "flexibly and pragmatically interpreting and rationalising the religious doctrines" (p. 356). The practical implementation of the Islamic universalism principles was able to lay "an inclusive ideological foundation for a newly emerging "Malaysian" nationhood (Hamayotsu, 2002, p. 356).

In the context of religion and politics however, Beyers (2015) maintains that religion can work as an effective instrument for political gain by becoming the "nationalistic ideals of leaders" in the attempt of creating group solidarity (p. 146). In the case of Malaysia,

the use of religion particularly Islam could also potentially be used by the government to gain support from the Malays, which are the biggest ethnic group in Malaysia and who are also the Muslim majority in the country. Compared to the findings by Coakley (2007) in the context of modern Ireland, it demonstrates that religion and ethnic identity have created a long-term impact on the Irish political evolution. The available data have depicted that the religion had contributed to identity patterns and fundamental political priorities in Northern Ireland where "the Catholic community is more divided in these respects than the Protestant community" (Coakley, 2007, p. 591). The history and complexity of religion and ethnic identity in Northern Ireland have also influenced the pattern of electoral behaviour among the people. At the level of national identity according to Coakley (2007) "the division is clear, though there are small numbers of 'British' Catholics and of 'Irish' Protestants, and larger numbers identifying as 'Northern Irish' on the two sides" (p. 592). At the communal affiliation level on the hand, there is no association "between the two sides (virtually no Protestant 'nationalists' or Catholic 'unionists'), but a significant group within each community refuses to align itself with either label" (Coakley, 2007, p. 592).

Based on the case of Northern Ireland, it can be argued that religion can potentially be the source of conflict in nation-building. As suggested by Barr (2010), the term religious nationalism has been commonly associated with violent conflicts. Comparably to Malaysia as a multiracial and multi-religious state, it can be less conducive as overly emphasis on Islam might be viewed as undermining other faiths. The concern on the potential conflict that might arise from pushing on a specific religion in a multireligious state has brought this discussion to my next findings.

It was significant from my findings in regard to Malaysia's national identity and nation-building was the definition of 'sensitive issues' in the federation. Since the racial riot in 1969, the Malaysian government had to take an extreme measure to ensure the country's stability, which led to the Constitution amendments. The 'sensitive issues', which were perceived as the threat to national unity included the role of Islam, Malay language and privileges of the *Bumiputeras* were not allowed to be discussed and debated in the public space that also included in the Parliament. In other words, these findings suggest that it is one of the ways for the Malaysian government to avoid conflict

from happening by avoiding these 'sensitive issues' to be brought up by the people at all. The analysis from a study on political space in post-genocide Rwanda by Beswick (2010) has revealed similar findings. In the case of Rwanda, the government employs the integration of legal and 'shadow methods' to prevent debates on topics that are considered sensitive in public space to maintain peace and stability in the country while at the same time reinforce "its own dominant position within Rwandan politics" (Beswick, 2010, p. 227) after the of the Rwandan Civil War in 1994 which witnessed the genocide against the Tutsi tribe. This is also one of the ways to manage divided communities is through constitutional nation-building in which legal-political framework could be provided through the constitution which was discussed earlier in Chapter 3.

Based on the summary of key findings from Chapter 6, it can be said that creating an inclusive national identity is such a complex task considering the race, culture, religion and gender issues that exist in a country. The findings from my study had demonstrated that the government attempted to promote unity between religiously and ethnically diverse citizens through fostering economic equality as the prerequisite to socio-political stability as well central to the task of constructing a national identity. It is also interesting to note the irony of Malaysia's elite instrumentalist approach in its nation-building process especially in creating national unity through favouritism of certain race and religion which was reflected thoroughly through my findings in Chapter 6. This practice is not new as it had been executed in different counties as well. That said, the promotion of certain races regarding economic development can be argued from the angle of positive discrimination. In this regard, positive discrimination is supposed to act as the remedy for creating equality by protecting and advancing under-represented groups by explicitly setting mandatory group quotas (Norris, 2001), which in the Malaysia's case, *Bumiputera* was the underrepresented group in the economic sector. Norris (2001) uses the Westminster case as an example in regard to the lack of representation of women in the Parliament hence the needs for the increase of the number of seats for the female MPs. Although my findings pointed out that the goal of affirmative action policy in Malaysia was to create diversity in terms of economic and education opportunity as well as wealth distribution, however, it could also invite unintended negative effect especially in terms of creating inclusive national unity in a

multiracial state. The experience of Malaysia is summed up accurately by Shamsul (2009) when he describes Malaysia as a 'stable tension' state that requires "continuous process of consensus-seeking negotiation" in Malaysia nation-building process (p. 12) Looking at the complexity of Malaysia's past and current experience, it becomes an even more challenging task for the government on how to effectively engage its citizen in its nation-building process, which is the next objective of this study.

9.2.2 Strategic Engagement as Dialogic Communication

The discussion in this section aims to address the second objective of this study which is to investigate how the Malaysian government understands and articulates the meaning of engagement in the context of nation-building process. What have been presented so far are the elements that contribute to Malaysia's 'nation-of-intent'. As highlighted in the previous findings chapter, the government sought to increase more "programmes and platforms for greater interaction, engagement, and collaboration among Malaysians" in regard to Malaysia's nation-building (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020). Therefore, to understand how the 'nation of intent' is communicated to the public, this research seeks to explore the concept of engagement within the context of 'continuous process of consensus-seeking negotiation' in Malaysia's nation-building. In addressing the second objective of this research, elite interviews with the Malaysia's federal government officers were conducted. The detailed findings from these interviews were presented in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

Throughout the interview findings, it was obvious that the Malaysian government aimed to create citizen participation through various engagement initiatives particularly in the context of communicating national policies. My findings also revealed that engaging citizen in policies was the practice that the Malaysian government began to deliberate recently. According to the government actors interviewed, the main objective of engaging the public in this regard is to get more participation, input and feedback from the people when tabulating a new policy. These findings are in-line with Reddel and Woolcock (2004) observation that there has been "a major shift in the policies and practices of national and international governments — the increased attention to, and

use of, citizen engagement strategies as a basis for developing more participatory forms of governance" (p. 2004).

In the attempt of explaining 'engagement' in the context of nation-building, it is significant from my findings that the majority government actors interviewed linked the concept of engagement in the capacity of dialogue. As discussed in Chapter 4, scholars tend to associate the concept of engagement from the perspective of dialogue due to the current developments of the concept of dialogue in public relations. However, as revealed in Chapter 8, findings from these interviews were not able to validate the philosophy of dialogue as suggested by Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) due to the presence of 'controlled communication' and 'persuasion' in this context. I reiterate again that the philosophy of dialogue has been characterised as being nonmanipulative intent and noncontrolled outcome. However, in the context of government communication, my findings demonstrated that it was almost impossible to execute communication without expecting specific outcomes. In this respect, dialogue, based on the understanding of the Malaysian government actors could be potentially interpreted as dialogic communication as proposed by Escobar (2012):

> As a process, it is often facilitated through specific formats and norms of engagement that seek to create safe spaces for collaborative inquiry. In the same vein, dialogic communication refers to interpersonal communication that is mutually responsive, free flowing, open-ended, and oriented to the exploration and co-creation of meanings (Escobar, 2012, p. 20).

The findings in Chapter 8 had suggested that there was a strong presence of the characteristics of interpersonal communication in the government's engagement initiatives. For example, the features of interpersonal communication could be seen from the mention of town halls, intelligent gatherings and forums to name a few where the dialogue between the government and citizens could actually take place. By using a case in India, the findings from an analysis by Singh (2008) had revealed that a group of hill women from a rural area in Himachal Pradesh, "who had never undertaken any form of protest came together to find solidarity and purpose in their voice" (p. 67). These women were upset with the government's decision to cordon off the "land with barbed wire that these women had traditionally used for their cattle" to prevent the tragedy of

the commons (Singh, 2008, p. 65). This decision however upset these women mainly because the government did not consult them regarding its decision. Singh (2008) argues that in this case, dialogic communication could possibly "allow for desired governance outcomes from both the perspective of society and that of its governors" (p. 66). This further suggests that the act of enacting engagement is equally important as it may be seen as authentic by the public.

In respect to 'control communication' and 'persuasion' on the other hand, it can be argued from the theory of communicative action by Habermas (1984) in the context of rationality as mentioned in Chapter 4. Habermas (1984) argues that rationality is important in a plan of action as it determines the outcomes. Therefore, the goal of communicative rationality is to create understanding in the pursuit of creating the desired outcomes, which is relevant in the context of government communication in nation-building. For example, this can be clearly seen from the interview excerpt below:

> *I believe this ministry's task is informing the public about government policies or in Malay we call it dasar-dasar kerajaan. We have many government policies that should be correctly informed and timely informed to the public. So that they have a better understanding a nation can only be built upon understanding of the basis of needs. It means a nation can be built based on the understanding of national objective, the vision* - Mr. Balakrishnan Kandasamy.

In the context of Malaysia's nation-building process, 'creating understanding' also means creating understanding among its multiracial citizens through engagement in the context of national unity as highlighted by several government officers interviewed for this study. Ms. Thuraisamy from the Department of National Unity and Integration for instance stressed on the importance of having dialogues among the multiracial and multi-religious citizens to create a common understanding between them. The Malaysian government perceived creating understanding in this context as crucial since the May 13, 1969 tragedy and this could be achieved through government-citizen and citizen-citizen engagement programmes and platforms. For example, the committee for the promotion of inter religious understanding and harmony was established to ensure peace and stability by initiating dialogue programmes to promote understanding and

tolerant among the multi religious society in Malaysia. The findings are also in-line with the strategic communication perspective as argued by Holtzhausen (2014) "can affect local and global outcomes in terms of every aspect of society, from democracy, political systems, and markets to gender roles and cultural orientation" (p. 1).
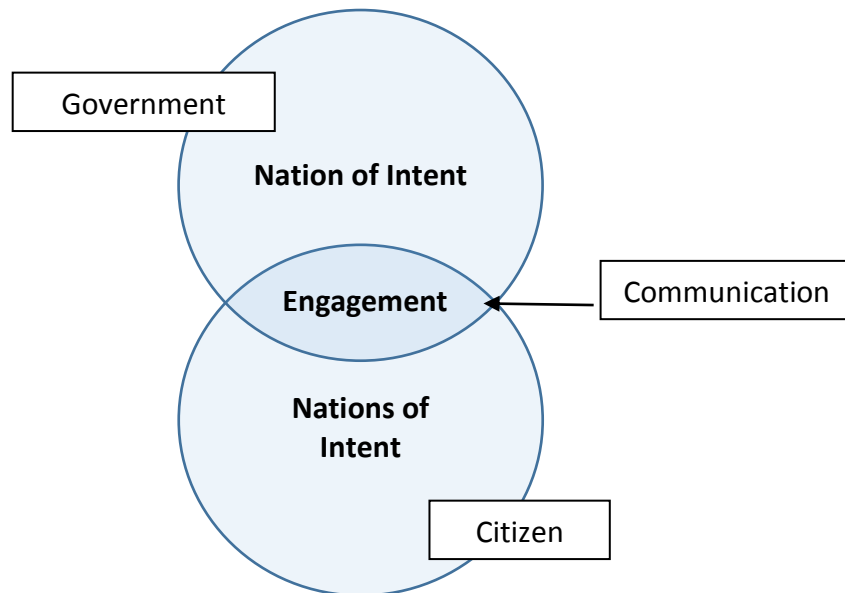
Figure 4: Malaysian government actors view engagement as dialogic communication.

It was significant from the findings that the Malaysian government viewed dialogue in this context as having actual interaction and exchange of information with the public, which was clearly demonstrated throughout Chapter 8 particularly on the use of public space regardless online or offline or both. The findings reflected the argument by Habermas (1991) on public sphere and public opinion where he emphasised on the requirement of "specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it" (p. 73) which in the modern government today include both online and offline communication channel as shown from findings. In the Malaysian case however, the information transmitted in public sphere is subject to the definition of sensitive issues as mentioned in the findings previously (see Appendix E). This restriction was effective after the constitution amendments were made to respond to the May 13 incident to protect the national unity and security.

Another striking finding from the interview was that majority of the Malaysian government officers linked the concept of engagement with the importance of listening. Interestingly, several scholars have highlighted 'listening' as an element that is missing in the context of organisational strategic communication (see Macnamara & Gregory, 2018; Macnamara 2018; Macnamara 2016). Contrarily, Malaysian government emphasised how the duty of listening had shifted from the citizens to government and that it was crucial especially in the context of nation-building process. According to Macnamara (2018), listening could potentially help organisations like governments, corporations, and institutions "make engagement meaningful and mutually beneficial for organizations and their stakeholders" (p. 127). In the context of this study, the findings suggest that the Malaysian government opted for purposive listening in respect to engagement in nation-building as emphasised by the Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad:

> *And as the media availability improves, we are not only able to talk to the people, but we can listen to the people. They can tell us what their feelings about anything and we can then understand them and perhaps work out ways to resolve the problem.*

The excerpt from the interview above suggests that the Malaysian government listening practice can be described from the concept of environmental scanning as proposed in the context of stakeholder concept (Mendelow, 1981). Environmental scanning is a concept introduced for managing issues by organisations where "the information about the environment could be collected, analyzed, and acted upon" (Mendelow, 1981, p. 407). In the context of government communication, Bevan and Rasmussen (2017) suggest listening could possibly be done through "information transmission between citizens and policymakers" which could assist in aligning policy with the public opinion (p. 1). In understanding how listening works in a different context, Klüver and Pickup (2019) suggest that there are three mechanisms to encourage government responsiveness which are campaign contributions, electoral support and information supply. By using Germany as the case study, their findings reveal that the interest groups play an important role in facilitating the government responsiveness by transmitting

"their policy views to decision-makers by ensuring that the voice of citizens is 'loud enough' to be heard by governments (Klüver & Pickup, 2019, p. 106).

In the context of listening in engagement, the findings indicated that majority of the government officers interviewed emphasised on the importance of listening to the voice of citizens. One of the interviewees in fact used the term 'democratic engagement' to describe this process. Listening and citizen voice in this context therefore could be discussed from the perspective of deliberative democracy as proposed by Mintrom (2003). By using Aristotle's definition, Mintrom (2003) suggests that the deliberation could be achieved in two ways:

> First, the best way to achieve given ends in a variety of human endeavors is often unclear and any particular approach is open to reasonable contestation. Second, consulting with and listening to others can be a valuable means of identifying and then settling on an appropriate course of action (Mintrom, 2003, p. 58).

In regards to deliberative democracy, a study by Somerville and Rice (2017) in the context of government communication in deeply divided society in Northern Ireland establishes that deliberative democratic approach could be useful in terms of delivering successful community policing by having a space for engagement with the local representatives in the effort of reaching the fragmentised audiences. In the context of Malaysia's multiracial society, listening and deliberating could be helpful to avoid any voice from being marginalised especially in the context of policy implementation. In Malaysia, the marginalised groups or communities are what the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia or SUHAKAM categorised as 'undocumented Malaysian'. These groups include "indigenous peoples, Indian plantation workers and those of Siamese origin who reside in states along the Malaysia-Thai border, such as Kedah, Kelantan and Perlis" (SUHAKAM, 2010, p. 8). In this regard, my findings had shown how the concept of nation-of-intent through citizen engagement were able to give voices to these communities.

The most compelling findings pertaining to listening in the context of engagement is the emphasis on the obligation of listening from the perspective of religion. As shown by Schnapp (2008) in the context of religion and spiritual, studies concerning listening

effectively in religion suggests the act of caring for those in need such as being open, available and empathy. In the context of Malaysia, findings in Chapter 6 had shown the prominence of religions and their values in Malaysia's nation-building. In this respect, the findings could also suggest that religion certainly had some influence in the Malaysian government communication strategies. As put forward by Mustaffa et al. (2014), the reformation of Malaysian public service was influenced by the local values, which were established through religious system and local cultural values. Although religions and cultures are distinctive, however they are generally closely interrelated (Mustaffa et al., 2014).

The findings also clearly indicated the importance of feedback in the context of engagement in Malaysia's nation-building process. One interview participant had highlighted that getting feedback from citizens was not something the government used to practice in the past. As stated in Chapter 8, the role of feedback tends to be associated with two-way communication as emphasised by several scholars. Park, Wilding and Chung (2014) for example argue that getting feedback is important in the context of policy success and this process occurs through two-way communication. Béland (2010) on the other hand suggests that "policy feedback simply refers to how policies affect politics over time" (p. 569). In other words, policy feedback is not merely for the government to get reality checked on the policy acceptance by the public, but also use to get support from citizens in order for the government to stay in power in the long run as emphasised by several government officers interviewed for this study.

When conducting engagement with the citizen, Malaysian government emphasised on the importance of strategic engagement. In the context of Malaysia's nation-building, the government considered strategic engagement as a way of creating inclusivity considering the complexity of Malaysian society. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 6, creating inclusivity was the primary focus of 1Malaysia concept, and as indicated by Mr. Baharin Idris, the Director-General of the Department of National Unity and Integration, citizen engagement was important to avoid any group from being marginalised. However, the Director of Strategic Development Division, Department of Broadcasting at Radio Television Malaysia (RTM), Dr. Zainal Abidin Sait highlighted that not every policy required consultations from general public because it depended on the objectives

and desired outcomes of the policy. Similar findings were shown in the case study of Queensland government pertaining to engagement initiatives by Reddel and Woolcock (2004). In their study, Reddel and Woolcock (2004) established that each engagement initiative requires different methodology and approach based on the objective and target public. Hence, the findings suggest that while engagement is important, however, conducting strategic engagement is more important to ensure its effectiveness.

Regarding to engagement initiatives, my findings had demonstrated that in all cases, the government officers interviewed believed in face-to-face platforms as the effective means of engagement. This was demonstrated through the mentions of events and programmes such as town halls, forums and gatherings. One participant particularly mentioned Malaysian government's grassroots engagement tradition called *turun padang* (going to the ground) that was still practiced until today. Although the feature of face-to-face engagement efforts could reflect interpersonal communication, however, Holtzhausen (2014) stresses that:

> unlike interpersonal or small group communication, strategic communication takes place in the public sphere, which, with new communication technologies, is more pervasive and has taken on new meaning. Strategic communication is therefore viewed as an important tool in shaping public information and discourse (Holtzhausen, 2014, p. 1)

The Malaysian government's preference towards face-to-face engagement initiatives could also be explained from the perspective of Malaysia's culture in the context of cultural appropriateness. One government officer in fact pointed out that the Malaysian society generally preferred to see the 'face' or the presence of a person when it comes to communication. In this respect, Ramli (2013) identified that traditionally, the concept of *budi bahasa* (man of culture) is perceived as "respect, care for other people's emotion, politeness and language" among others in Malaysian context (p. 65). In Malaysia, cultural appropriateness is:

> related to budi (virtue/politeness) in Malaysian cultural of communication ethics. Ethical and ethics are simply defined as a good doing and the way a human reacts with a good action towards something whether in speaking, working, or in a relationship between a human and another human and nature (Ramli, 2013, p. 66).

For this reason, the concept of *budi bahasa* was also incorporated in Malaysia's national ideology, *Rukunegara* that emphasised on the "high standard of morality in order to develop a harmonious community" (Ramli, 2013, p. 68). It is interesting to note that several scholars as shown in Chapter 3 also echoed the idea of ethics and morality in the context of communication. In this respect, the findings clearly demonstrated the influence of local cultures in the Malaysian government strategic communication and the face-to-face form of engagement were acceptable and might appeal to certain public as opposed to the online form of engagement since it reflected the context of the culture. In regard to the ethical communication on the other hand, it is a culturally rooted notion, which in this case is expressed through the concept of *budi bahasa*.

It was also significant that all government officials interviewed indicated the ICT platforms as the important means of engagement especially through social media. These findings are not surprising considering the numerous literatures surrounding engagement and social media published in the context of government communication had shown the government willingness to adapt to the changes in communication environment as exhibited in Chapter 4. The adoption of ICT in the context of government communication is also demonstrated in a study by Haro-de-Rosario et al. (2018). Their findings depicted that many Spanish local governments use at least one type of social media platform for the purpose of interacting with the public. With respect to ICT, one officer interviewed however stressed that despite the government excitement in joining the social media bandwagon, government must also understand that engagement was a function, and this function could be enabled via ICT as tools. In this regard, when conducting engagements through ICT platforms, focus should be given on the content and context of the messages for effective engagement. According to Heldman et al. (2013), when conducting social media engagement with the public, developing "clear, responsive approval processes" can help organisations "manage risk and ensure the accuracy and quality of information" (p. 11).

Despite the overwhelming response on the use of ICT as the potential tools for citizen engagement, it is interesting to note that majority of the officers interviewed also saw the ICT as a challenge to successful engagement. While ICT has contributed significantly in addressing digital divide in Malaysia however, the medium also constitute its own

threats. For this reason, the findings suggested that in the context of ICT, the challenges could be from both internal and external factors. In respect to internal factors, the Malaysian government officers admitted the weaknesses from the government side could attribute to less effective engagement initiatives. These challenges included adaptation to the changes in communication and information technology, right expertise and experience in strategic communication, lack of resources and dealing with sceptical public. Quite similar findings were found in a study on small non-profit organisations (NPO) pertaining to the social media effectiveness in public engagement by Hou and Lampe (2015). According to Hou and Lampe (2015), the constraints faced by these organisations were financial resources, human resources, competition from larger NPOs in terms of public funding as well as stakeholder's retention, which could contribute to communication challenges. In terms of external factor on the other hand, the findings from interviews established that political reason as the main factor that hindered effective engagement with the citizens. These political factors nonetheless could be in the forms of engagements from opposition parties as well citizen opinions and criticisms towards government expressed through ICT platforms, which could potentially influence the effectiveness of government communication and engagement efforts. This impression was demonstrated in Chapter 2 of this thesis regarding the heavy use of social media by the opposition coalition in the 12th General Election as well as the social media activism during the *Reformasi* movement in 1998. According to Wok and Mohamed (2017), social media have been used widely to represent "opposition and dissenting voices" that generally are not presented in mainstream media (p. 55) in Malaysia. A study on direct public engagement in local government by Nabatchi and Amsler (2014) has established that one of the factors that affects the government's public engagement effort is the political culture.

> Several issues affect political culture, including professional expertise, officials' attitudes toward the public, the public's attitudes toward government, and community composition (including group identities and conflicts), among others (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014).

Throughout the summary and discussion of findings from Chapter 8, it is apparent that the Malaysian government viewed engagement in nation-building in the context of

dialogic communication for the purpose of listening and getting feedback from the citizen. In this regard, the government strategised engagement initiatives by using both online and offline platforms. It is also worth noting that there is considerable influence of culture and religion in Malaysian government strategic communication practice.

9.2.3 Communicating National Unity to Malaysia's Multiracial Citizens

Finally, this section is dedicated to discussing the main findings for the third objective that is to understand and evaluate the key government communication strategy in engaging Malaysia's racially divided society. The findings from the NAPs in Chapter 6 had clearly shown the Malaysia's nation-of-intent in becoming a united nation. In analysing how Malaysian government communicated the idea of nation of intent to its citizens, the NAP documents were also used to understand the pattern of communication in the context of nation-building over time. The findings in Chapter 8 on the other hand demonstrated the Malaysian government's perspectives and strategies on citizen engagement in Malaysia's nation-building process. Whereas the goal of Chapter 8 was to provide an insight to the role of government communication in engaging multiracial society in Malaysia, and the key findings from this chapter are going to be discussed in this section. As mentioned previously, Malaysia's nation-building could be viewed as a national identity project. In the same section, the discourse of race and ethnicity in Malaysia was also highlighted. The conception of divided society in Malaysia, however, goes beyond the differences in races and religions. This division in the society also includes differences in political opinions in the context of competing nations of intent. Shamsul (1996b) contends that the "question of identity and "the nation" in Malaysia, or "national identity," remains contested" until today (p. 482). To illustrate further, in Malaysia each race or group of people offers its own nation of intent, which challenges the authority-defined identity at the level of everyday social reality. Shamsul and Daud (2006) argue that:

> the authority defined cultural principle has been challenged by three groups, namely, the non-*bumiputera* group, led by the Chinese, and two *bumiputera* ones, the non-Muslim *bumiputera* group and the radical Islamic bumiputera group, each offering its own nation-of-intent, that is, its own vision of what the

cultural principle should be for the political unit (the state), based on a particular ideological framework. The non-*bumiputera* rejects the *bumiputera* based and *bumiputera*-defined cultural principle in preference for a more 'pluralized' one, in which the culture of each ethnic group in Malaysia is accorded a position equal to that of the *bumiputera* (Shamsul & Daud, 2006, p. 134).

That said, the construction of national identity in the post-independence Malaysia remains as an 'unfinished business' thus it becomes the government's agenda to create a cohesive identity in-line with the national objective in achieving national unity. In the context of national identity among postcolonial countries, Gaither and Curtin (2019) argue that:

> The shift from colonial to postcolonial required nations to completely reimagine their identities and rework the structures that had defined them. At stake was how a newly formed country defined itself – its essence, its identity, its culture and policies – to a global external audience and, perhaps more importantly, to its own citizens (Gaither & Curtin, 2019, p. 115).

The findings from Gaither and Curtin (2019) in a study Ghana and Mozambique as demonstrate that although the idea of nationhood is articulated within the context of nationalism, however 'the discursive emphasis on 'national unity' is more public relations strategy than tactic" by the local elites (p. 125). With regard to Asian countries however, Halff and Gregory (2014) contend that "public relations developed first as part of post-colonial nation-building and later as a reaction by those nations to economic globalization" (p.401). In this case, my findings had shown that it was important to preserve the national culture and identity while allowing for the nation to progress. In respect to national unity, my findings had reinforced this idea by pointing out on the importance of creating the sense of belonging among the people as well as to ensure there is a check and balance in fulfilling of the demands of society according to their race.

In the context of Malaysia's nation-building, the findings in Chapter 7 had clearly reflected the national unity rhetoric in the context of socioeconomic development through the government's media and communication strategies especially after the May 13, 1969 riot. As argued by Ahmad and Idid (2017), the repercussions of the riot had

given public relations "a greater role in governmental institutions" (p. 155). For this reason, national unity was attempted through the implementation of national policies and PR officers were appointed in various government agencies to ensure the policies were communicated to the people throughout the country (Ahmad and Idid, 2017). Nonetheless, the first step towards the creation of national unity was conducted through the introduction of the national ideology, *Rukunegara*, as demonstrated in my findings.

From the findings, it was evident from the First Malaysia Plan (1965-1970) that the government acknowledged the importance of communication primarily in the context of national development. As stated in Chapter 7, communication was used by the colonial government as a strategy to correct its public image as well as facilitate development process and as mentioned in Chapter 2, mass media like newspaper and radio were already introduced before Malaysia achieved her independence. It is interesting to note that from the First Malaysia Plan and Second Malaysia Plan, there was evidence of colonial government communication legacy, which was the National Operation Rooms that were used previously as military operations techniques during the Emergency between 1948 and 1960. During the period of both Malaysia Plan documents, these National Operation Rooms were converted into the principal development implementation machineries for the central, ministerial, state and district level. According to Shamsul (1988), the setup of National Operation Rooms as a special government strategy was to allow constant monitoring of rural development projects since the task had "been both administratively trying and politically difficult" (p. 219). As stated in the First Malaysian Plan, the adoption of National Operation Rooms was considered by many observers as unique and effective in the context of national development.

As demonstrated in the First Malaysia Plan, effective communication was perceived as crucial especially among the government machineries as well as those who involved directly in national development. For this reason, extensive development in transportation and media had been carried out throughout the country. Having said that, these findings confirmed the beliefs in media and technology dependency in development process as highlighted by several scholars as shown in Chapter 3. As

emphasised by (Waisbord, 2001), classic theorists like Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm both pro the idea "on media-centered persuasion activities that could improve literacy and, in turn, allow populations to break free from traditionalism" (p. 3). Lerner and Schramm might be right on the use of media for persuasion activities however, the media were not used to break traditionalism in postcolonial countries like Malaysia. In fact, the media were used to strengthen nationalism and promote national consciousness. In the context of becoming a united nation, the goal of building the communication infrastructure by the Malaysian government was to promote national consciousness and unity, which was necessary for a new independent state.

As shown in Chapter 7, the most striking findings from the Malaysia Plan documents was the concept of public participation in the context of nation-building. It was apparent that the Malaysian government sought to encourage public participation through various channels, which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs in this chapter. As shown in Chapter 7 the Malaysian government introduced the national framework of public participation in the context of national unity and national development during the period of the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980). Interestingly, the idea of public participation might not be formally mentioned previously, however the public was encouraged to participate in national development earlier by inviting suggestions from people through mass media and non-media channels as depicted in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975). However, the framework of public participation was only formally introduced during the Third Malaysia Plan. As emphasised by Macandrews (1977), the Third Malaysia Plan was the period where the government gave priority to the national security by promoting ethnic harmony after the riot in 1969, as well as preparing Malaysia in facing the on-going threat of internal communist insurgency. Therefore, with the introduction of the framework of public participation, it "clearly warns Malaysian that if they are going to continue to sustain their present way of life and standard of living they must work together to make this Plan work" (Macandrews, 1977, p. 294). In respect to public participation, Barnes et al. (2003) argue that:

> Enhanced public participation is viewed as capable of improving the quality and legitimacy of decisions in government, health services, local government and other public bodies, as well as having the potential to address the 'democratic

deficit' and building community capacity and social capital (Barnes et al., 2003, p. 379).

In the context of development planning, my findings suggested that the public participation framework sought to encourage active participation from the public in respect to decision-making as well as allow feedback from the people especially among the village community. In this respect, Innes and Booher (2004) identified five purposes of public participation: for decision makers to find out public's preferences, improve decisions based on local knowledge, advance fairness and justice, legitimise public decisions, and fulfil the law that requires planners and public officials to do so (p. 423). Within this context, Dutta (2019) argues that public participation also allows for organisational listening hence it could give the opportunity to the marginalised community to be heard. Along similar lines, Banerjee (2007) argues that:

> Communication was thus seen to be a key instrument to provide the poor and the marginalised with access to knowledge and opportunities to better their lives and participate in the social and economic activities of a community or nation and benefit from development (Banerjee, 2007, p. 63).

As exhibited in the findings, the government encouraged active participation from the village community as well as community from the less developed regions in Malaysia to ensure efficiency in national development process.

As illustrated in Chapter 7, in the context of public participation, it was apparent from the findings that the mass media especially broadcast media like television and radio played significant roles in Malaysia's nation-building process as depicted throughout all Malaysia Plan documents. It was evident the Malaysian government had focused on improving broadcast services throughout the country especially in the rural and remote areas for information disseminating purpose. According to Rogers and Shukla (2001), 'informatization' through the development of communication, technologies "has potential for bringing about needed social change" (p. 1). Similar findings could be seen from the study by Mboene and Conçalves (2017) on President Armando Guebuza's effort in strengthening national identity in Mozambique. In this regard, the findings reveal that the broadcast media could benefit rural population in several ways. The

population lives in rural areas in Mozambique is reached primarily through radio due to low literacy level and poverty. The availability of several national languages through the radio services has help the rural community to receive information and keep them informed. Similarly, in the context of Malaysia's nation-building, the findings indicated that the potential of mass media was acknowledged in respect to socioeconomic development, and therefore the mass media programmes were produced to inform, educate and entertain.

The findings also demonstrated the importance of mass media in creating national culture especially during the period of Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990). As mentioned previously, during this period, Malaysia faced a tough time due to world economic situation. For this reason, the government sought to encourage citizen to stay united and resilient through the promotion of national culture. Although national culture is fundamental to Malaysia's national development, unfortunately, as highlighted by several scholars, the problem of creating national culture is more complicated in Malaysia than other young countries (Chopyak, 1987). Although Malay culture and Islam formed the basis of national culture, however space may be allowed "for some influences from the other racial and religious groups" (Chopyak, 1987, p. 433). As indicated in the findings in Chapter 7, the Malaysian government intended to promote national culture through various avenues particularly education and media. For example, music, promoted through mass media and education, was given an important role by the Malaysian government in the process of unification especially after the racial violence outbreak in 1969 (Chopyak, 1987). Moreover, as exhibited in the findings, the introduction of colour television had given more advantage in terms of producing television programmes that aimed at promoting understanding, tolerance and appreciation towards diverse cultural practices. The introduction of private owned television channels had further encouraged more production of local contents in this respect and to ensure the programmes met the national objective in the context of national unity, these programmes must abide the guideline set by the Ministry of Information.

The findings demonstrated that the role of broadcast media remained important especially in assisting Malaysia's modernisation process. In this respect, the role of

broadcast media became more prominent in terms of creating a well-informed society as demonstrated in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995). As mentioned previously, during this period, the Vision 2020 was introduced together with the *Bangsa Malaysia* concept to create a more unified identity, which also marked the end of New Economic Policy (NEP). In this respect, Bornman (2013) suggests that:

> The fact that the mass media enable all citizens to hear, read and see the same messages, serves to create nation-wide communication networks that foster integration, unity and an overarching national identity. Governments usually also expect the media to fulfil a role in fostering a sense of unity and solidarity (Bornman, 2013).

Her findings in the context nation-building in Africa and South Africa have demonstrated that the media are generally controlled by the governments where they are expected to play a role in national integration (Bornman, 2013). That said, my findings had clearly indicated that the aim of developing the communication infrastructure was to assist carrying the government messages for nation-building and development as well as to create national consciousness among the people which brings this discussion to the next point in the context of creating an informed society.

In the pursuit of creating an informed society in Malaysia, the broadcast media were used to create public awareness and promote national agenda. My findings further revealed that the advancement of information and broadcasting had further allowed public awareness through campaigns and programmes to be promoted nationwide to encourage positive public participation in the development process. As depicted in the findings from the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000), examples of these programmes were National Loyalty Campaign, the Nation-Building Programme and Love the Nation campaign.

Apart from the broadcast media, the findings also indicated that the Malaysian government believed that face-to-face communication was an effective means of communication particularly in the context of developing and communicating policies to the public. Regarding to face-to-face communication, as revealed in Chapter 8, the interviews with the government actors offered similar findings. Although the findings from the interviews were argued previously from the perspective of cultural

appropriateness (see Ramli, 2013), however this phenomenon could also be viewed from the perspective of high-low context communication as proposed by Edward T. Hall (Mohd Salleh, 2005). According to Mohd Salleh (2005):

> At least three possible reasons can account for what led to the divide into high-low context culture: perception of information ownership, basic economic structure, and religion or spirituality (Mohd Salleh, 2005, p. 5).

In this respect, Malaysia can be categorised as high-context communication considering the presence of emotions over rational, indirectness, use of nonverbal communication as well as use of analogous language (Mohd Salleh, 2005). The findings from Mohd Salleh (2005) however could be viewed as cultural appropriate in the context of Malaysia as proposed by Ramli (2013). The findings clearly demonstrated that while culture had a profound influence in the way government communicated with the public however, acknowledging how communication worked in the context of culture was equally important in strategic communication. These findings were in-line with the claim by Halff and Gregory (2014) on the false description of public relations in Asian-Pacific countries "as a catching up with the 'West' on the teleological course of public relations history", in fact, they "are a product of a unique history and have their own characteristics (p. 403).

The findings in Chapter 8 also showed the advancement of communication technology through the adoption ICT particularly from the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000). As mentioned previously, this period also witnessed the 1997's world financial crisis, which directly affected Malaysia's economic progress. Nonetheless, this period saw major development in information superhighway through the development of communication infrastructure in the effort of creating integrated telecommunications, broadcasting and computer technologies. As stated in the Malaysia Plan, the goal of expanding the telecommunication services was to improve quality of life by advancing the welfare of citizen as well as creating information-rich society. According to Aziz (1996), the Malaysia Plan documents "reflect the existence of a dominant development paradigm represent the commitment of the State to provide conducive environment for the population to enjoy a higher quality of life" (p. 73). However, through the Seventh

Malaysia Plan, it was the first time the government gave greater emphasis on social development alongside with economic agenda (Aziz, 1996). On top of that, the development of communication technology had also enabled Malaysia to promote common interests and local cultures as well as values among Southeast Asian countries. As highlighted by Aziz (1996):

> This is due to the increasing realisation that a sustainable economic growth and development need to be supported by strong, positive social, moral, ethical and cultural values. Without strong sociocultural values political stability would be threatened which concomitantly will destroy the progress and development which thus far have been achieved in the country, and also stifle future economic growth and stability (Aziz, 1996, p. 79).

Moreover, the findings in Chapter 7 also exhibited the goal of development in ICT was to address the issue on digital divide. According to Fong (2009), digital divide through uneven distribution and limited access to ICT in developing countries may limit or deny certain segment or group from socioeconomic opportunities. As stated in the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005), the goal of the plan was to create knowledge-based economy as well as equal participation among races alongside with the advancement of Science and Technology and ICT. Correspondingly, the findings from the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) indicated that in regard to ICT, wireless technology was deployed in the rural and less developed areas in the country to address digital divide. An analysis by Nkanu and Okon (2010) in the context of Nigeria has revealed that ICT could help bridge the gap in digital divide through the adoption of ICT among Nigerian libraries. Similarly, the findings from the Malaysia Plan had shown that the completion of Malaysia's National Library equipped with the latest ICT in 1993 had enabled wider membership and access to information.

In-line with the Ninth Malaysia Plan's objective to advance human capital development, the findings demonstrated that the Malaysian government encouraged participation from all segment of society in various programmes that aimed to promote moral and ethical values in achieving the Vision 2020. As mentioned earlier, under the leadership of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the concept of *Islam Hadhari* was introduced during this period as a framework to achieve a holistic human capital development. Under his

leadership, "the government was committed to enhance ethical business practice and good governance among business in Malaysia (Ahmad, 2014). For this reason, the findings showed that more digital based contents were introduced to promote knowledge-based economy. On top of that as highlighted by Ahmad (2014), during the period of the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the Malaysian government encouraged responsible business practice by introducing corporate social responsibility (CSR) incentives.

> Unlike the United States and the United Kingdom, the Malaysian government has allocated special CSR funding and incentives; which include tax exemptions for companies that have made substantial social investment to society (Ahmad, 2014, p. 87).

In this regard, CSR was used as the government public relations tool to achieve national goal in both national development and business commercialisation.

To strengthen national unity in Malaysia, as mentioned in Chapter 6, the Malaysian government had introduced 1Malaysia concept during the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) under the leadership of Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib Abdul Razak. Since the introduction of the concept, according to Ahmad (2014), the government had utilised "various PR strategies to maintain social stability and win support from the population" (p. 87). For this reason, as part of government's PR exercise, extensive events using numerous channels of communication were utilised to reach the citizens (Ahmad, 2014). From the findings in the Malaysia Plan, the Malaysian government set up 1Malaysia telecentres in most rural areas for the purpose of spreading information. Moreover, the goal of the telecentres was also to encourage the local community to learn new skills in ICT. Within the sphere of 1Malaysia, Ahmad and Idid (2017) argue that the concept is highly recognised by the Malaysian.

> This could be attributed to a strategic and orchestrated effort to promote 1Malaysia and its products through both traditional and new media (Ahmad & Idid, 2017, p. 164).

As depicted in the Tenth Malaysia Plan and Eleventh Malaysia Plan, the message of '1Malaysia' was consistent throughout all government efforts. For example, the use of

'1Malaysia' could be seen on 1Malaysia clinic (health), 1Malaysia Internet Centres (rural community development), *Tabung Perumahan 1Malaysia* or 1Malaysia Housing Fund (housing) and 1Malaysia One Call Centre or 1MOCC (customer service) to cite a few.

In respect to participation in nation-building, the government had recognised active participation from the youth in nation-building process. According to Blum (2006), policymakers have recognised that "successful nation-building depends on enlisting the loyalty and active participation of young people" (p. 96). In respect to human capital development, the findings from the analysis by Indike and Eme (2015) in Arica showed that "youths could be a source of labor inputs as well as human capital in production, which would improve total factor productivity in a region of the world where capital formation is limited" (p. 57). In the context of Malaysia's nation-building, the findings revealed that the role of youth had been acknowledged since the First Malaysia Plan. The findings indicated that the Malaysian government had come out with various youth development programmes to prepare them for the challenges and cope with the effect of development and globalisation. In the context of national unity and integration, the findings showed that more structured programmes to enhance national unity and integration were implemented to prepare young generation as future leaders. For example, as stated in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), 1Malaysia For Youth (iM4U) in-line with the current 1Malaysia concept, was introduced to cultivate youth volunteerism.

In the Eleventh Malaysia Plan however, it was apparent that the Malaysian government was committed to create greater interaction, engagement and collaboration with the citizens by implementing people focus approach. For example, it was interesting to note that the government decided to implement "no wrong door policy and one-stop service centre philosophy" when introducing 1MOCC as stated in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan to encourage suggestion and feedback from the public (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2019-2020, p. 9-7). Since the introduction of ICT in Malaysia, the government had taken the opportunity to maximise its potential by improving the public service delivery. Findings from a study by Akhter et al. (2007) on the adoption of e-government in Bangladesh has shown improvement in terms of the relationship between government and citizens. Moreover, their findings also suggest the improvement in the context of data sharing

amongst governmental and non-governmental offices. Similarly, in the case of Malaysia, the findings had revealed the Malaysian government's commitment for the inclusive socio-economic development by stressing on the role of transparency. The findings also depicted that the aim of the ICT adoption was to foster greater economic integration by creating more rural-urban linkages. In the context of national unity, it was clear from the findings that the government had focused on the people approach by creating more programmes through community-based and religious institutions and sports to encourage more interaction between citizens.

Based on the summary and discussion of findings from Chapter 7, in can be concluded that, achieving the national goal in national unity requires participation from all citizens. Hence, the findings had demonstrated that the government communication efforts through media and non-media channels were implemented to encourage participation among the Malaysian citizens. In a multiracial society like Malaysia, 'national unity' becomes a commitment for both government and citizens, which is represented through the national identity projects. As argued by Gaither and Curtin (2019), "articulating identity is a necessity because it provides structure for governance; but holding that structure in place against a combustible dynamic of cultural difference is the enduring challenge" (p. 126). In this respect, PR strategies were used "to sustain social stability and restore public confidence to the ruling government thus maintaining political status quo" (Ahmad, 2014, p. 88).

9.3 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the main findings from both NAPs and elite interviews based on the previous findings' chapters. As illustrated in the discussion, nation-building in Malaysia takes in a form of national identity project. While the Malaysian government intends to create a unified national identity, however this process proves to be difficult based on the historical, political and racial backdrop of Malaysia. This complexity particularly stems from the divisive nature of the approach to nation-building itself which may be contradictory with the idea of a united nation. In this regard, the nation-building process in Malaysia has to go through 'continuous process of consensus-seeking

negotiation' in maintaining the stability in the society. Hence, the articulation of the concept of engagement by the Malaysian government officials reflects this constant process of negotiation particularly on the mentions of dialogue and national unity. That said, national unity has become the Malaysian government communication strategy in communicating the national identity to its citizens which is necessary for a country that had to go through the history of divide and rule policies in the past that subsequently led to a profound effect on the country until today. The impact of divide and rule policies could be observed on the racial economics imbalance and labelling which eventually became the reason for the racial riot in 1969. It is interesting to note that the influence of culture and religion is not only apparent in the conception of Malaysia's nation-building, but this influence is also reflected in the context of government communication and engagement initiatives particularly on the idea of listening.

Having said that, the implications and contributions of the discussed findings, limitation of this study as well as suggestion for future research are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by highlighting the implication and contribution of this research, followed by the limitations as well as recommendations for future research and finishing with the researcher's final thoughts.

10.2 The Implication and Contribution of Study

Theoretical

My interest in carrying out this research sparks from my curiosity on the concept of engagement itself. The term 'engagement' has become almost a catchphrase recently with its meaning and operationalisation remain unclear. The term suddenly appears everywhere, but without any apparent meaning attached to it. This also includes the governments, particularly in their communication efforts. That said, the term also has invited several debates among the scholars and practitioners recently, especially those in strategic communication in their attempts to elucidate its meaning. While the existing discussions surrounding this concept are useful in terms of opening more conversations regarding this topic, nonetheless, the disparate views have led to more question than clarity, thus the need to call for empirical research to be conducted. Hence, this study seeks to fill this gap by creating an understanding on this concept as well as its operationalisation by using nation-building as its context.

Although the findings from this study have reinforced the earlier discussions regarding 'engagement' especially in respect to dialogic communication, two-way communication, persuasion as well as the contribution of social media in enabling its operationalisation, however there are some aspects that have been overlooked in the debates surrounding this topic especially in respect to government communication. Therefore, the findings

have demonstrated these limitations in several ways. Drawing from the outcomes of this study, I shall reflect on the implications of the findings in the following points.

Firstly, the conversations surrounding engagement have largely focused on the explanation of the term itself, but there is a very little effort has been done regarding to exploring the motivation of conducting engagement in the first place, which in turn may possibly help in terms of describing the concept. The interviews with the government actors have revealed that the rationale of conducting engagement is as important, which has also influenced the way they articulate the meaning of engagement. For instance, the government actors attempt to connect the purpose of listening to the voice of citizens with the idea of democracy. That said, the findings further demonstrate that the reason for enacting engagement is an objective of engagement itself, which is as important as achieving the intended outcomes.

Secondly, this research has indicated the significance of strategic communication in respect to engagement, which is rarely emphasised in the literature. Most of the discussions mainly stress on the importance of engagement as well as achieving its outcomes. However, what is missing is the operationalisation of engagement itself. Hence, this study highlights the implication of the communication strategy and management by emphasising on the importance of the purpose, targeted audience, focused and consistent messages as well as the appropriateness of the communication channels used, both online and offline.

Thirdly, while most studies emphasise on creating mutual understanding and public participatory through engagement, however there are limited discussions notably in relation to the challenges to conducting effective engagement. The findings from this study offer a different perspective regarding the possibility of the success or failure in the citizen engagement initiatives which subsequently affects the desired outcomes. This is particularly challenging for the government especially in managing the divided society where the engagement initiatives need to be managed strategically especially when there are restrictions and complications presented in the context.

Fourthly, I have discovered from the findings that the articulation and operationalisation of 'engagement' was influenced by the culture and experience of the context under

study. I have discussed the findings previously based on the cultural and religious perspective to make sense of the government communication practice and engagement initiatives by the Malaysian government. A significant finding from this research is on the value of face-to-face engagement that is seen as more effective and culturally appropriate as opposed to the online communication channels. Furthermore, the interviews also revealed the significant role of religion especially on the role of listening in respect to engagement. In this regard, these findings can possibly add a valuable input in the debates regarding ethics and persuasion particularly in the context of strategic communication.

Practical

This research too, has offered several practical implications. In this thesis, I have demonstrated the practicality of the concept of 'nation-of-intent' to describe the contemporary nation-building. In fitting into the wider context of communication, the findings have established how the idea of nation-of-intent could be engaged with the citizens as well how the government through engagement efforts could reconcile the competing 'nations of intent' considering today's world that is "increasingly fractured by ethnic, religious and racial conflict" (Somerville & Davidson, 2019, p. 172). Somerville and Davidson (2019) highlight that several scholars have shown the role of government communication in reconciling public interests through dialogic communication. They further emphasise that:

> the public interest is best served by agreements forged through interactions with the people affected, rather than through internal decision-making mechanisms followed by dissemination of policies through publicity (Somerville & Davidson, 2019, p. 186).

Having said that, this implies that this research could potentially have a practical implication in the context of plural, divided, conflict and post conflict societies.

In view of the advancement of ICT, this research could possibly offer practical implication particularly in light of the proliferation of media. Mancini (2013) argues that:

> Media fragmentation and audience segmentation are not new but they greatly increased in the very last years because of the long ongoing tendency towards commercialization and mostly because of the development of new media and the internet in particular (Mancini, 2013, p. 43).

The findings of this study have revealed that the ICT platforms particularly social media might potentially pose some threats to the effectiveness of engagement efforts. Although the ICT platforms are just tools, however, how the tools are being utilised by both government and public are what matter the most. In relations to nation-building and national unity, especially in the context of plural and divided societies, the proliferation of media can conceivably amplify the fragmentation of nations of intent as well as political polarisation. In this respect, this study can potentially contribute to the management of communication and engagement by both government and communication practitioners within the context of how the ICT impacts upon nation-building within this type of society. It is important to note that, the development of ICT does not contribute to the government-citizen engagement, however, it enables the engagement initiatives to take place.

I believe my research is also timely with the on-going Vision 2020 initiative in Malaysia. As reported recently in the Malaysian media, the current government might need to delay the Vision 2020 to 2025 due to the change of government administration in 2018 (The Star, 2018). Unfortunately, the most recent survey on the strategic communication among ministers in the current government, *Pakatan Harapan* or Alliance of Hope, has shown that the public feel the current government communications is 'inconsistent' and 'confusing' with so many 'u-turns' (see Citrine One Strategic Communications Survey 2019). In this regard, my findings demonstrate the importance of continuous engagement as well as consistent messages in the government strategic communication. In light of these findings, I contend that the weakness in communication may cause the government to lose its credibility and subsequently lose support from the people. In fact, at the time of the writing of this thesis, more reports by the media have surfaced to show the support from people for the current government has declined compared to the previous year (The Star, 2019; The New Strait Time, 2019). In this respect, the findings from this study could potentially be useful for the current

government and communication practitioners in formulating and implementing the formal government communication and engagement policy. In the context of nation-building, getting support from the citizen is important in achieving the national goals. My findings demonstrate that nation-building does not happen overnight, it is a continuous process. For this reason, the continuous engagement through strategic engagement becomes important.

10.3 Research Limitations

This study was conducted to explore the understanding of the engagement concept by the government actors in the context of Malaysia's nation-building process during the approved period by the Malaysian government which was between June 2017 and February 2019. Therefore, the limitations of this research apply in several aspects of this study. First of all, it lies in the context of the study itself, which is Malaysia. It is necessary to emphasise here that the outcomes of this study are illustrative of Malaysia within the research period approved by the government. Since the end of the data gathering period, there have been numerous changes in the Malaysia's political landscape especially after the 14th General Election on May 9, 2018. For example, the former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad became the head of the government again and since then there had been major changes in the cabinet of the Malaysian government. Malaysia's Performance Management and Delivery Unit or PEMANDU that was set up under the Prime Minister's department in 2009 to implement National Transformation Programme (NTP) by the previous government had become a private consultancy firm known as PEMANDU Associates and no longer reported to the Prime Minister's department. Moreover, some of the government officers interviewed for this study had either been transferred somewhere else in the government agencies or ministries or retired from their positions. Nonetheless, the findings from this research are valuable for a context that is under researched particularly from the government communication point of view. Since the Vision 2020 is still an on-going nation-building project, it will be useful to see if the research in this area can be conducted in the context of 'New Malaysia' government since its takeover from the previous serving government coalition

which had been in power since Malaysia received her independence. The future findings based on the context of the current government can be potentially used to not only compare, but also add more depth to the current findings.

Another aspect of limitation of this study possibly stems from the method employed for this research. While conducting elite interviews with the government actors was appropriate for the purpose of this research, however the results of the research could only depict the account of the government, but not from the citizen's point of view. The goal of this study was neither about examining the effect of engagement on the citizen nor the impact of government policies on the citizen; hence, the respond from the citizens was excluded. Rather this study aimed to understand the interpretation of engagement from the government actors' point of view in the context of nation-building. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to find out the public acceptance towards the government engagement initiatives. Thus, the results obtained from this research can be potentially used as the comparison by using the citizen's perspective in the future research. Having said that, a mixed method approach like surveys and focus group could possibly be employed for future studies within this context.

Another limitation that I acknowledge from this research is the interpretation of my data was restricted by the context understudy. Since I had to abide the rules and regulations set by the government when conducting my research, I had to limit myself from breaching this agreement in any part of my research process. That said, it will be interesting to see a study being conducted that focuses specifically on certain aspects like the role of religion and culture in influencing the communication practice and policy as well as how this may also contribute to the success or failure in the citizen engagement especially in the context of divided society.

Despite the limitations highlighted in this section, I believe that this thesis has its own strength and uniqueness particularly in its contribution in the area of government communication in the context of divided societies. In fact, at the time of writing up this thesis, there was no study published on exploring the concept of engagement in nation-building within this context.

10.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations stated in the previous section, the findings of this study were limited within the context of this study, which is Malaysia. Therefore, my recommendations for the future studies can be undertaken in the context of neighbouring postcolonial countries in Southeast Asia. Scholars like Hirschman (1986) has acknowledged that Southeast Asia is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world (p. 106). Despite the exposure of globalisation in Southeast Asia, unfortunately, there are still "unresolved conflicts between nationalities, ethnic, and religious groups" (Saravanamuttu, 2002). Hence, by conducting comparative studies, it will be interesting to understand the experience of other governments within this region in managing and engaging their multi-ethnic or divided societies in the nation-building process as well as how national unity is strategically communicated within these countries. The findings from these future studies can be valuable in extending our understanding of the concept of engagement and its operationalisation within the context of government strategic communication in nation-building.

10.5 Final Thoughts

I am always interested in how the government engages its citizen in nation-building particularly in the context of maintaining the stability and national unity in a deeply divided society. In my opinion, stability is crucial in allowing a country to prosper economically, socially and politically. Positioning myself as a normal citizen of Malaysia, I grew up experiencing the Malaysian government's effort in promoting national unity. One prominent example was through the television public service advertisements (PSA) especially those from the national oil and gas company, PETRONAS. These PSAs were and are still popular that they hold a special place in the hearts of most Malaysians (see Periasamy et. al, 2017). These kinds of PSAs are aired during the main religious and cultural festival celebrations such as Eid, Chinese New Year, Deepavali and *Gawai* as well as to mark special occasions like Malaysia Day and Independence Day. Messages carried by these PSAs generally consist of celebrating the idea of diversity, unity and local

cultures and customs. Subsequently, more organisations follow PETRONAS's footstep in promoting the ideal of Malaysia's multiracial society. However, as I embarked into this research, I discovered that the society had become more mature and the media had become more sophisticated, thus the task of engaging the citizen in nation-building process had become even more challenging for the government. Moreover, the diversity of media today has created more fragmentation in the already divided society, or more accurately, fragmented nations of intent. Through my research, I learned more about the complexity of Malaysia's history, and racial and political landscape. It is more complex than what has been presented and spoken about in the public space. In fact, prior to the fieldwork, I was provided with a document by the Malaysian government on the explanation of sensitive issues in Malaysia which I had to be mindful about when conducting my research hence, the interpretation of my findings was within this limitation.

The government actors interviewed openly acknowledged the challenges they faced in managing the Malaysia's multiracial society, hence the communication and engagement with the citizen had become the government's priority. One interviewee specifically mentioned that nowadays any proposal of policy at the parliament level needs to be accompanied by a communication strategy especially on its contribution towards the national unity, which is the recent practice of the Malaysian government. In fitting my study into the global context, I contend that the government communication through citizen engagement is important especially in the situation where it may cause a profound effect on the future of the country. The most current contemporary worldwide example is Brexit. At the time of this thesis was written, the UK government was not only busy negotiating the post-Brexit deals with the EU, but also building independent UK from the EU while at the same time attempting to unite the divided nations in time of uncertainties.

APPENDIX A

Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form

School of Media, Communication
and Sociology, University of
Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK.

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

Study Title : A Communication Approach to Nation-Building: Engaging Citizens in Malaysia's Nation Building Process

Researcher : Diyana N. Kasimon

Supervisor(s) : Dr. Ian Somerville & Dr. Scott Davidson

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project that is part of a Doctoral study at the University of Leicester. Before you decide to participate, you need to understand why the research is being conducted and what is involved. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to participate or not.

Thank you for taking your time in reading this information sheet.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to examine the conceptualisation of nation building pertaining to government communication. Specifically, this study aims at exploring how public engagement is operationalised by the government in the context of nation building.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to participate in this research because you are knowledgeable and personally involved in national strategic planning. Participants are selected based on the latest version of Malaysia's Public Media Directory released by the Department of Information, Malaysia. The participants may be selected and invited to participate directly, after prior discussion, or indirectly through the recommendation of others.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and there will be no adverse consequences if you do so.

How will the study be conducted?

The research will be conducted in form of face-to-face interview, which will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. The researcher will come to your premise should you agree to be interviewed. Interviews will be audio-recorded.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be interviewed by the researcher based on the research topic. If you agree to take part in it, the researcher will ask you to fill and sign a participation consent form on the day of the interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no known risks or disadvantages of taking part, as the researcher strives to protect your confidentiality, unless you explicitly agree that your name and your position can be mentioned in publications arising from the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although this research is unlikely to be of direct benefit to you, it will give you the opportunity to reflect your experience and express your opinion in strategising the nation building project, which can provide useful insights into government communication theory and practice. Your input will be extremely beneficial in the understanding of Malaysia's nation building process and approach.

Is the purpose of this study educational?

Yes. The data from this research will be used mainly for a PhD study and may also be used in other academic publications. The data however, will not be used by other researchers outside this project.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All data collected during the course of the research project will be analysed from the Doctoral student alone and will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity, as well as the organisation's identity, will remain anonymous and pseudonyms or ID numbers will be used in any documentation or presentation produced from the research. Any information you provide will be stored in password protected computers at the University of Leicester. Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data collected from this study is mainly for the fieldwork part of my research. The data will be analysed and used for academic publications and other research outputs. You will not be identified in any report, publication or presentation without seeking your full consent.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The PhD study is sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the University of Leicester Research Ethics Committee.

For further information, please contact:
Diyana N. Kasimon
Phone : +60178638389
Email : dnk5@leicester.ac.uk / diyana.kasimon@gmail.com

Dr. Ian Somerville
Email : ijas1@le.ac.uk

Dr. Scott Davidson
Email : sd310@le.ac.uk

School of Media, Communication
and Sociology, University of
Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK.

CONSENT FORM

**A Communication Approach to Nation-Building: Engaging Citizens in Malaysia's
Nation Building Process**

Please tick the appropriate box	Yes	No
Taking Part		
I have read and understood the project information sheet provided.		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.		
I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and audio recorded.		
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.		
Use of the information I provide for this project only		
I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.		
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, conference proceedings and other research outputs.		
Please choose *one* of the following two options		
I would like my real name used in the above.		
I would **not** like my real name to be used in the above.		
Use of the information I provide beyond this project		
I understand my words will not be used by any third parties.		

Name of participant ……………………….. Signature ………………. Date ……………

Name of researcher ……………………… Signature ………………. Date ……………

* Project contact details for further information: See **Participation Information Sheet**.

Interview Questions

	Questions	Probing points
Part1	Introduction	
1	What position do you hold within the organisation?	
2	How long have you been working for your organisation?	
3	What are your main responsibilities?	
Part 2	Government communication practice	
A	Current government communication trend	
1	In your view, what are some of the growing trends in the way government reaching to the public?	How has this changed over the years? Do you have examples for this?
2	In your view, how successful has government been in adapting to the needs of the citizens through public service delivery?	
3	In your experience, are there any internal challenges in adapting to the needs of the citizens in public service delivery?	
B	Public Engagement in Nation Building	
1	In your view, how would you describe "public engagement"?	In your opinion, how important public engagement is to the government? To yourself? What kind of activities do you consider as public engagement?
2	What does government aim to achieve through public engagement?	
3	Regardless of channels, in your view how can government ensure that all citizens are engaged?	How does government identify individuals or groups that need to be engaged? Does government have any public engagement plan or policy? How does the government formulate a public engagement plan or policy?
4	In your opinion, how can public engagement impact nation building process?	
5	In your opinion, how does public engagement help in governmental decision/formulation of policies pertaining to national development?	How has this changed over the last years? In your view, has it been an improvement in term of planning for national agenda? If so, how? What roles do the public play in governmental decision making?
6	How does government respond to public enquiry relating to governmental decision?	Do you interact with the public frequently?

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		Is there any rules or protocol in interacting/responding to the public? Is there any platform or channel that allows citizens to provide feedback on policies and government services? How has this different over the years?
7	In your experience, what are the challenges faced by the government in engaging the citizen in the nation building process?	Internal challenges? External challenges?
C	Evaluation	
1	How does government evaluate the success of public engagement?	How about specifically in citizen participation in nation building efforts? In your opinion, how can the government evaluate the success in a better way?
2	Under Government Transformation Plan (GTP), government aims at focusing on *rakyat* (people) centric models of public service delivery. In your opinion, how successful government is so far in executing this model in relation to public engagement?	Do you have any example?
3	Public Sector ICT Strategy: In your view, how successful government is so far in integrating ICT strategies in relation to public engagement?	In your opinion, how does the development in ICT help in achieving national goals? How do you identify the citizens' preferred engagement platforms? How do you determine the most effective engagement platforms? How has this changed in the previous years?
Part 3	Closing	
1	Is there anything else that we haven't discussed already?	

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SAMPLE EMAIL INVITE

Dear Datuk/Datuk Seri/Dato/Datin/Mr/Mrs/Ms,

My name is Diyana Kasimon and I am currently a Doctoral student at the University of Leicester, United Kingdom. For my PhD research, I am focusing on the use of communication in the context of nation building process in Malaysia.

Since your ministry/department deals extensively with national transformation planning, it will be great if I can gauge your input regarding my PhD topic. I understand your hectic schedule but it will give me a great pleasure if you could participate in the interview for my research. The interview will take around 30-40 minutes to be completed.

For your information, I am currently in Malaysia for my research fieldwork and I will be delighted if a session can possibly be arranged soon. Please let me know the date and time that are convenient to you. The participation information sheet is attached in this email for further information regarding this work. My research pass reference number issued by Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is: UPE 40/200/19/3436.

Thank you for your time and consideration on my request regarding this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

Diyana Kasimon

PhD Researcher

University of Leicester, UK.

RUKUNEGARA

DECLARATION

OUR NATION, MALAYSIA, being dedicated

to achieving a greater unity of all her peoples:

to maintaining a democratic way of life;

to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared:

to ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions:

to building a progressive society which shall be oriented

to modern science and technology;

WE, her peoples, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends guided by these principles:

Belief in God

Loyalty to King and Country

Upholding the Constitution

Rule of Law

Good Behaviour and Morality

White Paper on Constitutional Amendments Published

Event Date : 20-01-1971

On this day in 1971, the White Paper on Constitutional Amendments was issued and published by the Government of Malaysia. The White Paper was released to explain to the public on why the government amended Article 63, 71, 152, 153 and Article 159 of the Constitution. The May 13 incident in the country's history became a symbol that carried important lessons for the nation. The unrest had exposed the dangers that threaten our country's multi-racial population, which was due to differences in languages, religions and cultural values, and the more evident threat was the vast economic disparities between the races. On this day in 1971, the White Paper on Constitutional Amendments was released. This was the best way to preserve national unity and to secure the future of Malaysia. In general, the purposes of the proposed Constitutional Amendments were:

- Preventing public discussion on sensitive issues so that parliamentary democracy operates smoothly.
- Improving the imbalances among racial groups in specific fields and hence fostering national unity.

The Constitution Amendments were made on:

Article 10, Clause 2, on freedom of speech and expression.

Article 63 on the privileges of members of Parliament.

Article 72 on the privileges of a Member of the State Assembly.

Article 152 on Malaysia Language as the national language.

Article 153 on the privileges of the Malays

Source: The National Archive

ISLAM HADHARI

In order to achieve a balance between physical and spiritual development, the Government launched a comprehensive and universal development framework called *Islam Hadhari* (Civilisational Islam) in 2004. This framework emphasises development, consistent with the tenets of Islam with focus on enhancing the quality of life through the mastery of knowledge and the development of the individual and the nation; the implementation of a dynamic economic, trading and financial system; and the promotion of integrated and balanced development that creates knowledgeable and pious people who hold to noble values and are honest, trustworthy, and are prepared to take on global challenges. *Islam Hadhari* is not a new religion. It is not a new teaching nor is it a new mazhab (denomination). *Islam Hadhari* is an effort to bring the people back to basics and back to the fundamentals, as prescribed in the Quran and the Hadith that form the foundation of Islamic civilisation.

Islam Hadhari outlines ten principles as follows:

• Faith in and piety towards Allah;

• A just and trustworthy government;

• Free and liberated people;

• A rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge;

• Balanced and comprehensive economic development;

• A good quality of life for the people;

• Protection of the rights of minority groups and women;

• Cultural and moral integrity;

• Safeguarding of the environment; and

• Strong defence capabilities.

It is in accordance with these principles that policies and strategies will be formulated and reviewed to represent the best interests of society. Observance of these principles will improve the governance for the people and ensure a high commitment to public accountability. Islam Hadhari also emphasises the sovereignty of the country through self-defence capabilities but holds a firm stance against aggression and terrorism.

Source: Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010)

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON SENSITIVE ISSUES

1. In the context of national security, sensitive issues mean any issue that can cause prejudice, hatred, enmity or contempt between or towards any ethnic or religious group and can affect public safety, national security and/or the integrity of the Government and is generally connected with the following acts or behaviour:

   1.1. Questioning the implementation of certain government policies pertaining to economic development, education and social matters.

   1.2. Questioning the implementation of particular provisions in the Federal and State Constitutions pertaining to Federal Laws, the freedom of religion, the special position of the indigenous community (Bumiputera), citizenship and rights of the other communities.

   1.3. Regarding a racial or religious group as neglected or given preference in the implementation of a particular policy without providing the background or reasons that necessitate it.

   1.4. Promoting the success of one racial or religious group on the basis of the preference and facilities provided by the government to individuals or the ethnic group concerned.

   1.5. Questioning the authority, wisdom and abilities of a group in a particular area on an ethnic basis.

   1.6. Associating and blaming a racial or religious group as the cause of an incident.

   1.7. Publicising the name or the ethnic group involved.

   1.8. Publicising the details of an incident or violent happening that can arouse anger amongst those who read and/or hear about it.

   1.9. Publicising and displaying of photograph or sketch that shows the racial origin or religion of the parties involved in causing the incident.

   1.10. Conveying the impression that the authorities have failed or are unable to control the situation and are rude and unjust in the discharge of their duties.

   1.11. Exaggerating an incident or using rumours or information as the basis for reports that can cause panic or apprehension amongst the people.

   1.12. Exaggerating the weakness of the government to particular groups overseas with the intention of demeaning the integrity or eroding the confidence of the international community in the authority of the government.

Page 1 of 1

UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Blok B5 & B6
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA

Tel   : 603-8000 8000
Laman web : www.epu.gov.my

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref.:

Ruj. Kami: UPE 40/200/19/3436
Our Ref.:   (5)

Tarikh: 9 Jun 2017
Date:

Ms. Diyana Nawar binti Kasimon
273 Mere Road
LE5 5GS Leicester
United Kingdom
Email : diyana.kasimon@gmail.com

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the **Research Promotion and Co-ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department.** The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name	:	**DIYANA NAWAR BINTI KASIMON**
Passport No./ I.C No	:	
Nationality	:	**MALAYSIAN**
Title of Research	:	**"THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS ENGAGEMENT TOOLS FOR NATION BUILDING"**
Period of Research Approved	:	**1 year and 8 months (13.6.2017-28.2.2019)**

2.   Please take note that the study should avoid sensitive issues pertaining to local values and norms as well as political elements. At all time, please adhere to the conditions stated by the code of conduct for researchers as attached.

No. 1, Jalan P8H
Precint 8
62250 Putrajaya, Wilayah Persekutuan
www.perdana.org.my
Tel: 603 8885 8900
Fax: 603 8889 1166

PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION
Y A Y A S A N
KEPIMPINAN
P E R D A N A
(6 0 4 6 4 2 - U)

11th October 2017

Puan Diyana Kasimon
Postgraduate Researcher
University of Leicester

Via Email: diyanakasimon@gmail.com

Puan,

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER: INTERVIEW INVITATION - A COMMUNICATION APPROACH TO NATION BUILDING (YABHG TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD)

I refer to your email dated 10th October 2017.

I am happy to advise that YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad has agreed to be interviewed by you regarding the role of communication in the context of nation building process on **13th November 2017 (Monday)** at **10.00am** at the **Perdana Leadership Foundation, No.1, Jalan P8H, Presint 8, 62250 Putrajaya.**

The time allocated for this interview is 40 minutes.

Kindly furnish us with the list of questions for our reference.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Datuk Badariah Arshad

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