

The State and the Citizen: Application of Lakoff's 'Strict Father' Mode to the Malaysian Political Arena

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ABSTRACT

It is a researched fact that the print media has powerful influence over its readers. In Malaysia the mainstream newspapers are owned by those connected to the powerful political parties that form the government. In addition, the Printing Presses Act, 1984 acts as a deterrent to mainstream media from printing information generally perceived by the ruling administration as offensive, seditious or sensitive (Sedition Act, 1970), a threat to national security (Internal Security Act, 1960) or an official secret of national importance (Official Secrets Act, 1986) because licenses need to be renewed annually.

This study shows how the ruling government is able to instil fear among its citizens through the print media by imposing obligations on citizens in a 'Strict Father' mode. The study looks at selected articles published in a mainstream daily, *The Star*, in relation to its reporting strategy of the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) issue from November 2007 to March 2008. A metaphorical analysis following the ideas outlined by Lakoff is made of the content of the articles studied.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, metaphor analysis, the state and the citizen

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines political speak in multi-racial Malaysia where the state enforces certain behaviours from its citizens, initially through the strictly monitored school system and then through the enforcement of strict laws (such as the Official Secrets Act, 1986; The Internal Security Act, 1960; The Printing Presses and Publications Act, 1984; The Police Act, 1967; and The Sedition Act, 1970). Since independence from Great Britain in 1957, it is an acknowledged fact that 'Malaysia has maintained a relatively long record of political stability and minimum experiences of ethnic unrest' (Mohamad, 2005:2).

However, it is hypothesised that beneath the surface of stability and a model multi-racial *bonhomie*, tensions have existed because in October and November 2007, organised street demonstrations erupted in Kuala Lumpur. These demonstrations called the BERSIH (meaning clean in Malay) and HINDRAF rallies demolished the frequently touted happy multi-racial Malaysian dream state. This study further hypothesises that the outcome of the 12th Malaysian General Election held on 8 March 2008 is an indication that the Malaysian citizenry is now ready for a government that respects them and nurtures them rather than one that imposes fear through draconian laws.

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The type of democracy adopted in Malaysia since independence, while modeled along western liberal ideas which enshrine basic freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly, also engages a range of repressive machinery that is at odds with democratic ideals, that few observers, if any, would describe the country as a fully functioning democracy (Brown *et al.*, 2004). Several problematic areas exist which hinder the democratic process. These include, other than the repressive legislation mentioned above, the control of the Judiciary by the Executive, amendments to the constitution by a government that has consistently held a two-thirds majority in Parliament as and when it sees fit, status of Islam as the official religion, special rights and privileges of Malays and citizenship rights of the non-Malays.

This paper examines how the Malaysian government views its role as a father figure in politics and thereby instills obligations on its citizens, not only through its laws but also through the mainstream press, which is controlled through the Printing Presses and Publications Act. The Act gives the government the right to renew or retract licenses to newspapers that do not comply with government requirements on an annual basis. The study examines selected articles published in the mainstream daily *The Star* on its reporting strategy of the HINDRAF issue as well as a number of other sensitive issues that have been plaguing Malaysians. Articles over a period from November 2007 to March 2008 were selected and a metaphorical analysis following the ideas outlined by Lakoff (1995) is made of the content of the articles studied.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the following sections, the political scene in Malaysia is examined and studied. Then the issue of the analysis of political rhetoric is discussed to provide a background to this study.

2.1 *The Political Scene in Malaysia*

Since independence in 1957, Malaysia's ruling government comprises a triumvirate of parties drawn along ethnic lines following a notorious 'bargain' (Brown *et al.*, 2004: 3) made with the British so that the Malays retained political dominance in return for basic guarantees for Chinese business activities. This effectively left out the small but significant Indians and the non-Malay *Bumiputra* from the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak without political or economic powers (Mohamad, 2005).

While the country has mostly been perceived as a poster child for multi-racial harmony (this was based on a pact made among political elites along ethnic lines), underlying tensions have existed over the New Economic Policy which was implemented in 1971 to give preferential treatment to the *Bumiputra* thus creating inequality and the lack of a level playing field for the non-*Bumiputra*.

The General Election in 1969 is a very significant event because of the repercussions it had on the decades that followed. The coalition of parties drawn along ethnic lines, the Alliance Party, made up of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), performed very badly (gaining less than 50% of the votes) losing key states due to the lack of support from the urban Chinese. This resulted in racial riots for three days beginning 13 May 1969. A state

of emergency was declared; Parliament was suspended and the country was run through the National Operations Council till February 1971 (Brown *et al.*, 2004).

The country has been, since then, ruled with an iron hand inhibiting dissent through legislation that prevents public gatherings, debates, free speech and the formation of societies and organisations seen as non-compliant. This has been made possible not only through the use of draconian laws (see Section 1.0) but also through a very compliant Judiciary and Press that are controlled by the government. Following the May 1969 riots, the Federal Constitution was amended to designate certain issues considered 'sensitive' to the security of the nation thus effectively prohibiting criticism of the government and punishing perpetrators of 'sensitive' issues with machinery such as the Sedition Act.

In October and November of 2007, two groups rallied for a range of causes. The first which called themselves 'BERSIH' was a group of concerned Malaysians who marched for clean and free elections and the eradication of corruption. The second organised by an Indian movement called HINDRAF protested against the poor and unequal treatment of Indians and the demolition of Hindu temples. Both rallies were dealt with strongly by the Police who used water cannons and tear gas to break up the rallies. Several HINDRAF leaders have been jailed under the ISA Act, which allows for detention without trial.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study has a firm footing in language as a means of social interaction and that there are many shared assumptions about the use of language. Linguistic discourse through the use of metaphorical language can reflect the ways in which political elites exploit language to construct unfair and oppressive social hierarchies of power (Meadows, 2007). Language can also be manipulated by politicians so that their actions are legitimised in the presence of their audience. As a political-linguistic concept, legitimisation is used as a tool to drive home the notion of the speaker's right to be obeyed (Chilton, 2004)

3.1 *The State and the Citizen*

The relationship between the state and the citizen can differ from nation to nation depending on the brand of political structure that exists. Hall (1992: 292 cited in Pagani, 2007) describes a state as 'system of cultural representations' while Balakrishnan (1996: 202) says that a state can be a 'cultural and political form' as well as a 'community of customs' while Smith (2001) says that symbols of nationalism such as flags and a common ancestry can contribute to nationhood.

The citizen is theorised either through obligations to the state or as rights expected of the state. Marshall (1992) says the political, civil and social rights given to a person that allow him/her to live the life of a civilised being makes him/her a citizen while Nash (2000) believes that a citizen has several obligations to the state in addition to rights. Gramsci (1971 as cited in Pagani, 2007: 3) views that a state has the obligation to intervene to ensure a certain mindset is adopted by its people. This is to enable a national identity to be formed. The state is often seen as one with authority while the citizen as one who is obliged to go in accordance with authority (Pagani, 2007).

3.2 *Politics and Legitimation of Enforced Morality*

Lakoff (1995) explains how political powers enforce morality through a system of conceptualised metaphors. He argues that society measures well in terms of financial well-being or wealth. An increase in wealth, salary and an ability to spend more is a gain while the reverse is a loss. Morality requires that you pay your taxes and settle all your debts, thereby entrenching the idea that there is a general accounting system for measuring morality. This accounting system states that moral action gives something of positive value while immoral action gives something of negative value, so paying a moral debt is imperative; not doing so results in an immoral action.

3.3 *The Strict Father Model*

Experiencing morality really means that in order to experience well-being, one prefers being healthy rather than sick, rich rather than poor, happy rather than sad, clean rather than filthy etc. Lakoff (1995) further explains that conservative politics in the United States uses certain metaphors linked to morality to explain their policies. The most important metaphor is: Moral Strength (being good is upright, being bad is low, doing evil is falling, evil is a force and morality is strength). However, moral strength cannot exist in isolation and therefore several others are needed in order to have moral strength. These other metaphors such as moral bounds (the need to follow a prescribed path), moral authority (where the state acts as a parent who knows what is good for the child), moral obedience (where citizens obey the state authorities as the parent), moral essence (where people are deemed to have good character), moral health (a parent is expected to keep their children away from morally sick people) and moral wholeness (relates to the ability to have moral strength).

This study argues that in Malaysian politics, a conservative worldview is taken and the government sees itself as the head of a conservative household where the father makes all the decisions, provides support and protection and teaches his children right from wrong. When they make mistakes, it is the duty of the father to punish them, and teach them to be self-disciplined and self-reliant. This Strict Father role expects the head of the household to show 'tough love' as explained by Lakoff (1995).

4. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

In order to prove the hypothesis that the country is ready for change from conservative politics to a more liberal one, articles from the mainstream newspaper, *The Star*, which is heavily dependant on the goodwill of the government to renew its license on a yearly basis were selected. The articles selected were from November 2007 to May 2008. These dates are significant as they signal the start of a new era in Malaysia. Rallies that were unheard of in previous decades took place one after the other just before the general elections scheduled for March 2008.

The election results were a shock to the ruling party, the *Barisan Nasional* (BN) or National Front, because the Opposition coalition calling themselves *Pakatan Rakyat* (PKR) or the People's Alliance won seats that even they were shocked to win. It is commonly held that if the PKR had contested more seats, they would have won them too.

The selected articles were analysed using Lakoff's 'Strict Father' Model explained in Section 3.3. A metaphorical analysis was made of the content of the articles to see if the discourse used by people in power conformed to the 'Strict Father' mode proposed by Lakoff (1995). Table 1 was drawn up to fit the metaphorical utterances into the categories of morality. It shows examples of how government officials and people in authority use the press in order to instill fear and obedience among the reading public.

4.1 Coding

In order to analyse and determine the extent to which authority figures in Malaysia adopted a Strict Father mode, Lakoff's (2002) ideas of cognitive models that outline sets of conceptual metaphors which underlie the political ideologies that rule right or left wing politics in the United States were used in this study

To determine how the authorities in Malaysia instill behaviours among its populace or citizenry that is consistent within a morality that is prescribed by the government, newspaper articles especially chosen were from November 2007 to May 2008. November 2007 was the month when a group of Indians calling themselves HINDRAF took to the streets of Kuala Lumpur demanding equal rights for Malaysian Indians. In March 2008, the General Election was held and while the ruling party did form the government, it lost four states to the Opposition, *Pakatan Rakyat* (or People's Alliance). This signaled a new era in Malaysian politics. Articles from the mainstream newspaper, *The Star*, were analysed using the following categories specified in Lakoff (2002): Moral Strength, Moral Authority, Moral Order, Moral Boundaries, Moral Wholeness, Moral Purity, Moral Health, Moral Self Interest and Morality as Nurturance.

5. FINDINGS

The findings from the analysis of media reports adopted for this study are discussed in the sections that follow.

5.1 The Strict Father

The articles examined point out several instances where the government is portrayed as the 'Strict Father'. This is done through several institutions under the direct control of the government of Malaysia and several draconian laws that have been in place since the British colonial days. These institutions are the Police, the Judiciary, the various Ministries and the leaders of the most important component parties of the ruling coalition (the *Barisan Nasional* or National Front) which make up the government. The Islamic Affairs departments etc. routinely issue statements to the controlled media that are laced with language that threaten the security of the ordinary individual. Laws such as the Internal Security Act, the Official Secrets Act, the Police Act, The Printing Presses and Publications Act also play a part in maintaining the status of the ruling government as a Strict Father who will not hesitate to take action against any individual who does not act for the 'common good' of the nation in maintaining peace and security.

5.2 Moral Authority Enforced through Government Policies

Table 1 lists the expressions used by people in power in order to enforce moral authority to quell public discontent. It also tables the actions taken by the authority to show that morality speak is not confined to words only but is followed by tough action that could jeopardise their well-being in some way.

5.3 Moral Strength

The concept of having strength of character that is infused with morality is the core of Lakoff's argument for a Strict Father instilling such strength to fight all the evil that exists in the world. An example will be article No.1 in Table 1 where the Prime Minister exhorts to the public especially the Indians not to be "misled" by "blatant lies" spread by the runaway group calling themselves HINDRAF. The metaphorical allusion to the need to have strength to oppose such lies is followed by a tough stance taken against perpetrators who were jailed without trial under the Internal Security Act. This action serves as a reminder to people that if they lack moral strength, the government is prepared to protect other citizens by punishing those who do not display such strength.

Another example is No.12 (Table 1) where the Home Minister issues a statement telling the public that "there is no place for extremism" in this country and that allowing for the dismantling of the ISA (as the opposition had tabled in parliament) would be "very bad" indeed. Moral strength is to be able to resist "extremist" ideas. The interpretation of what is extremist is not open as far as the Home Minister is concerned. Those who break laws are to be jailed and good citizens should follow the laws.

Moral strength also means believing the word of Muslim clerics as seen in No.20 in Table 1, where a Syariah High Court Judge overturned an application by a Chinese family to verify the thumb print of a deceased man alleged to have converted to Islam as they did not believe that he had done so. The judge said that as the "testimony" was given by officers of the Council, therefore it should be believed. The body of the deceased Chinese man was taken by the Islamic Affairs department to be buried under Muslim rites.

5.4 Moral Authority

Several examples can be seen in Table 1 below which show authorities using their office and/or power to enforce moral authority. Moral authority is vested among those in power as they are deemed to know what is best for the citizenry. For example, the UMNO Vice President (No.2, Table 1) asked to "revoke the citizenship rights" of HINDRAF leaders held under ISA "for their outrageous actions" and for "betraying their own country" while the Deputy Prime Minister (No.3, Table 1) thought that "they had crossed the line" and "tarnished the image of the country overseas." The government will now "have to act to counter any negative image painted by the group." The Prime Minister meanwhile assures the country that he is "not prepared to let the country be destroyed" by the actions of groups such as HINDRAF.

The Judicial Commissioner (No.7, Table 1) in a defensive statement says that there was basis that the five were involved in activities (such as holding a public rally) that could be "detrimental to public order and prejudicial to the country's security." He was justifying the

Table 1. Conceptual metaphors found in newspaper articles

No.	Subject/Topic	Authority figure uttering expression	Date	Expression used	Conceptual metaphor alluded to	Action taken by authorities
1	HINDRAF claims	Prime Minister	2/12/07	...it is spreading... <i>blatant lies</i> . I am really <i>angry</i> did not want <i>the people</i> , especially the Indians <i>to be misled</i> <i>Pledged</i> to look after <i>the interests</i> ...	Moral authority Moral strength Moral authority	Leaders jailed without trial under ISA
2	HINDRAF claims	UMNO V.P	2/12/07	<i>Revoke their citizenship</i> <i>Rebuked</i> leaders for their <i>outrageous actions</i> These people are <i>betraying their actions</i>	Moral authority Moral authority Moral boundary	Leaders jailed without trial under ISA
3	HINDRAF move to publicise overseas	Deputy Prime Minister	2/12/07	... will <i>tarnish the image</i> of the country internationally ... the government will <i>have</i> to act to counter any <i>negative</i> picture painted by the group They can keep up but one day they will <i>cross the line</i>	Moral purity Moral authority Moral boundary	Leaders jailed without trial under ISA
4	HINDRAF rally	Prime Minister	2/12/07	.. I've <i>helped</i> them (the Indians) in many ways. They want money for their temples, I <i>help</i> because we <i>respect</i> other religions	Moral wholeness Moral wholeness	Leaders jailed without trial under ISA

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Table 1. Continued

5	Problems faced by Indians	MP for BN	4/3/08	<p>... <i>not prepared to let country be destroyed</i> by the actions</p> <p>...holds the Indian grassroots <i>close to his heart</i></p> <p>.. <i>will look into the welfare</i></p> <p>They don't <i>need to worry</i></p>	Moral authority	Promises before election to Indians
6	Insult to Indians	P.M.'s son-in-law to opposition M.P.	3/3/08	<p>..he cannot <i>allow such an irresponsible statement</i></p> <p>...opposition had <i>misinterpreted</i> his speech</p> <p>.. they (the opposition) give the <i>wrong impression</i></p> <p>I will be <i>wakil rakyat</i> (the representative) for all the races, Malays, Indians and Chinese.</p>	Moral authority	Threatens to sue opposition M.P.
7	HINDRAF trial	Judicial Commissioner	26/2/08	<p>..<i>there was basis</i> that the five were <i>involved</i> in activities (holding a public rally) that could be <i>detrimental to public order</i> and <i>prejudicial to the country's security</i></p>	Moral authority	Refused release from detention without trial
8	HINDRAF supporters	Official press statements Inspector General of Police	22/2/08 22/2/08	<p><i>Police monitoring</i> areas where HINDRAF supporters are <i>likely to cause problems...</i></p> <p>Police had already <i>taken steps to prevent</i> any situation from becoming <i>ugly</i></p>	Moral authority Moral purity Moral authority	Police patrols and checks in various parts of the country

9	HINDRAF	Media report	18/2/08	<p>...vital to look at the big picture</p> <p>..another protest took place</p> <p>... on the pretext of offering the PM roses</p> <p>...outrageously they want to gather at the British High Commission</p> <p>... Putrajaya (government HQ) is obviously losing patience</p> <p>.. some have called for tougher actions, even the use of the ISA against the organisers</p> <p>The Government is understandably unhappy</p> <p><i>Those who advocate street protests in the name of freedom of expression..... how we should react toissues to the streets?</i></p>	<p>Moral boundary</p> <p>Moral purity</p> <p>Moral wholeness</p> <p>Moral authority</p> <p>Moral purity</p> <p>Moral authority</p> <p>Moral purity</p>	<p>Use of press to vilify perceived enemies of the state (i.e. HINDRAF supporters)</p>
10	HINDRAF appeal	Press report	24/11/07	<p>Two truckloads of Federal Reserve Unit personnel as well as policemen were on standby</p>	<p>Moral authority</p>	<p>Warning issued to public through press</p>
11	Comment on Tamil paper <i>Makkal Osai</i> 's license	Home Minister	18/4/08	<p>I read the Tamil paper, it's terrible</p>	<p>Moral Authority</p>	<p>License of paper revoked</p>
12	ISA detainees	Home Minister	18/4/08	<p>There is no place for extremism in this country.... It is like a spark. when you cannot control it, it will become very bad</p>	<p>Moral Strength</p>	<p>ISA cannot be revoked as per the wish of Opposition members of parliament.</p>

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Table 1. Continued

13	Rally by Opposition party	Police Deputy Commissioner	18/4/08	In fact we had repeatedly advised them to do so (get a permit for the rally)	Moral Authority	Police recording statements from Opposition leaders
14	Criticism of PM's leadership	Prime Minister	7/4/08	<i>Disciplinary action</i> will be taken against <i>saboteurs</i>	Moral authority	Speaking out for a united party and warning 'saboteurs'
15	Incarceration of HINDRAF leader and MP	Home Minister	29/3/08	We cannot simply react to political parties' call. We have to give <i>priority to public safety and peaceno threat to national security.</i>	Moral authority	Refusal to allow MP to attend parliament or allow trial.
16	Increase in crime	Police Commissioner	28/3/08	Public plays a big role.....can help reduce crime by <i>lodging reports...come forward</i> Parents must keep an eye on their children <i>cannot allow them to loiter unsupervised.</i> We can do our part and <i>parents must do theirs</i>	Morality as nurturance	Advice to public on how to help with recent spate of missing children
17	UMNO rally not taken to task as HINDRAF and BERSIH rallies	Police Commissioner	28/3/08	To me, the demonstrators wanted to voice their unhappiness against the statement made by Penang Chief Minister (Opposition) with regard to the NEP. We did not use water canon or tear gas because they dispersed when asked to do so.	Moral Authority	UMNO rally (Govt.) allowed while HINDRAF and BERSIH not allowed.
18	SMS messages used as alternative method of communication	Police Commissioner	28/3/08	I want to issue a <i>stern warning</i> to these people. If any one is <i>caught sending</i> out such messages, <i>we will arrest the person and charge him or her under the ISA.</i>	Moral Authority	Warning to public not send out SMSes that are political in nature.

19	Converting out of Islam	Deputy Chief Minister (also Chair of Religious affairs committee – of different state)	10/5/08	The State Islamic Religious Council <i>should have provided better counseling</i> and advice to Muslim convert (to remain within the religion rather than convert back to Buddhism)	Moral Purity	Voicing unhappiness that a Chinese lady was allowed to go back to her original religion
20	Appeal to verify thumbprint of Chinese man claimed by Islamic Affairs to be Muslim	Syariah High Court Judge	29/1/08	... was a Muslim based on the testimony by officers from the council....	Moral Strength	Syariah Judge dismissed an application by deceased's wife and children to verify conversion papers with his thumbprint and release body for Muslim burial.
21	Civil marriage nullified after husband converts to Islam	Syariah lawyer	20/9/07	..civil marriage between a woman and her husband <i>becomes nullified under hukum syarak</i> (Islamic law) upon the husband's conversion to Islam	Moral authority	Federal court dismisses non-Muslim wife's appeal to prevent newly converted husband from converting minor son to Islamic faith
22	Behaviour expected from non-Malays	Johor UMNO Youth Chief	11/5/08	What we are asking of the non-Malays is a willingness to contribute... a willingness to wear the <i>songkok</i> , not fighting for mother tongue classes	Moral behaviour	All MPs expected to wear the traditional Malay muslim headgear—the <i>songkok</i>
23	Malay supremacy or <i>ketuanan Melayu</i>	Prime Minister	29/4/08	Malay supremacy meant that the Malays, the indigenous people of Malaysia.... ensure that they are developedif they are not then they are not <i>tuan</i> (master)....I am sure we do not want to become <i>coolies</i> (labourers)	Moral Right	Explaining to non-Malays why they should accept supremacy of Malays

detention without trial of HINDRAF leaders. All the above statements were issued to inform the public as to what is considered moral behaviour and what is not. These are followed with actions (such as jail) to give weight to the warnings.

The press plays an important part in disseminating information on what is considered moral behaviour and acting with moral strength and the consequences of not following moral authority; this is ostensibly seen to be supporting government authorities (as their license is dependant upon it). Examples Nos. 9 and 10 (Table 1) show this clearly as media reports on the HINDRAF issue make statements such as “another protest took place ... *on the pretext* of offering the PM roses” and that the government “was understandably unhappy” and “obviously losing patience” (with HINDRAF) and that truckloads of police “were on standby” just in case they were needed, ostensibly to protect the innocent who follow rules and punish those who do not.

5.5 Moral Purity, Obedience, Boundary and Wholeness

The children of a Strict Father are expected to behave in an exemplary manner with good moral character which shows a pureness that is necessary for the family, that is, the state or country. In order to achieve such “wholeness” it is necessary for the father or the government to eradicate that which disturbs the moral wholeness of the nation. The father can and will insist on obedience from all his children (the citizens) and punish those who fall short of the pure essence and wholeness of good character. Knowing the boundaries of one’s behaviour is important so that one is seen as a good child rather than a bad one.

The above can be seen when authorities jail those who “cross the line” (boundary-No.2, Table 1) of moral behaviour but if they want to be good wholesome children they should “come forward and lodge reports” (No.16, Table 1) while parents “must keep an eye on their children...” and “not allow them to loiter unsupervised” (No.16, Table 1). In order to maintain moral wholeness, people in power will hold the “grassroots at heart”(No.5, Table 1) and be “*wakil rakyat* or people’s representative” (No.6, Table 1) , “monitor the areas where HINDRAF are causing problems” “provide (Islamic) counseling (before allowing Muslims to reconvert) and take “steps to prevent any situation from becoming ugly” (No.8, Table 1). The government will also take action against “saboteurs” (No.14, Table 1) and those who are a threat “to safety and security” (No. 7, Table 1), who “send SMSes that are political in nature” (No.18, Table 1), “don’t get a permit for rallies” (No.13, Table 1), write ‘terrible things in their newspapers’ (No.11, Table 1) or question “Malay supremacy” (No. 23, Table 1).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

On examination of the articles in the newspaper with Lakoff’s Strict Father categories, it is possible that the following obligations or duties are seen as necessary for Malaysian citizens as ideal children of a strict father.

6.1 Obligations of Malaysians as Citizens

The following are seen as obligations of Malaysians as ‘good’ children who follow the strict father’s code of conduct:

1. *Passive acceptance of authority*

As the ruling government without any credible opposition for many years, Malaysia's ruling Barisan Nasional has been able to enforce acceptance of its policies that discriminate minority communities through the strict enforcement of draconian laws which prohibits any questioning of "sensitive" constitutional provisions on pain of sedition (Lim, 2002). Various instances of this can be seen from the findings in Table 1 which see people in power in the mode of the strict father saying things like "I want to issue a *stern warning* to these people. If any one is *caught sending* out such messages, *we will arrest the person and charge him or her under the ISA,*" and "*Disciplinary action* will be taken against *saboteurs,*" "In fact we had repeatedly advised them to do so (get a permit for the rally)" and "police had already *taken steps to prevent* any situation from becoming ugly." All these serve as a warning to the public (under the guise of maintaining public order to protect the public) not to protest, take part in rallies or otherwise demonstrate against the government because strict action (jail without trial) will be the result. It is better for good children to accept all government decisions without question as these decisions made by a strict father can only be for the benefit of the children.

2. *Not take part in debates, demonstrations, rallies that defy or question government policies*

An important part of being the good child of a strict father is to know one's moral boundaries. In order to keep the multi-racial components of the Malaysian citizenry in check, several steps have been taken to prevent dissent. The Police Act requires permits to be obtained for all public gatherings – "a requirement stringently enforced for opposition groups, and all but ignored for government parties" (Brown *et al.*, 2004:5). The Societies Act (1981) and the Official Secrets Act (1986) further prevent the arena of public debate. The Internal Security Act is used with impunity on all those who are seen as a danger to public safety. This act has been used to jail the HINDRAF leaders who are at the time of writing still in jail under ISA for protesting against inequalities against the ethnic minority Indians in Malaysia. Prominent social activist Chandra Muzaffar (1989:147) thinks that an independent judiciary will go a long way to help "preserve Malaysian democracy." However under Tun Mahathir's rule, the independence of the judiciary was further reduced.

3. *Not write anything that questions government policies or decisions*

The Printing Presses and Publications Act is used ruthlessly to control information fed to the public. In Malaysia, newspapers need to renew their licenses on a yearly basis. This means that editors have to toe the line or lose their license. This year a Tamil newspaper *Makkal Osai* (People's Voice) was told abruptly to stop publication because of their coverage of HINDRAF. The biased, unequal coverage of parties standing for election during the March 2008 elections is a case in point. Neither the television stations nor the mainstream papers covered the opposition parties in an equitable

manner, if at all they were. Government machinery was talked about routinely as though they were still running the country even though parliament technically had been dissolved for the elections. The outcome of the elections which gave the ruling coalition a bare majority left them wounded and bewildered. Even the opposition coalition gained in areas they did not think they would win. The country was just tired of the strict father. They need a parent who will listen and treat them as grown up individuals. Post election research shows that the Internet media and other alternative media such as the mobile phone was the cause of information reaching an otherwise ill-informed public.

4 *Engage only in activities prescribed by the Government in order to be labeled a 'good citizen'*

Malaysian citizens have been often advised by officials of the government as well as the police that to band together to oppose the government is a bad thing. Mohd Bakri (2005:2), the Inspector General of Police, agrees that the ISA of 1960 places restrictions on “fundamental liberties” but goes on to say that it is necessary to protect the “fragile democracy” and “defend the constitution.” He goes on to say that a duly elected government has a duty to fulfill to the ‘majority’. This includes exhausting “all forms of threats.”

Statements such as the above go towards explaining away the draconian laws that prevent assembly of persons, writing of dissenting opinions or speaking at rallies that will question motives or actions of the government because they are catering to the majority who are peace loving citizens. Often when rallies are dispersed, the harsh actions are defended as necessary to protect the majority of citizens who do not “support” the actions of detractors.

The Education system has been manipulated so that “sensitive issues” (Brown *et al.*, 2004:6) such as the status of the Malay language, the “special rights” of the Malays and Islam and the problems of non-Malays etc. are not to be discussed as they are deemed to cause trouble among the races.

The outcome of the 12th Malaysian General Election held on 8 March 2008 shows that the Malaysian citizenry is now ready for a government that respects them and nurtures them rather than one that imposes fear through draconian laws.

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