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**The State of Democracy in Malaysia:
Public Perceptions**

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I. New Frontiers in Political Polling

This paper examines public perceptions of the state of democracy in Malaysia using the template provided by the Taiwan team of the ABS project. The focus is on describing attitudes toward the rule of law and corruption, electoral competitiveness, political participation, efficacy and interest, freedoms, horizontal and vertical accountability and equality. The analysis centers on presenting the Malaysia-specific findings and illustrating how Malaysia compares to the other countries in the ABS project. Of the issues noted above, Malaysians have the greatest concerns with corruption. These results will show that the Malaysian public has mixed views of the quality of democracy in the country. While most highly rate the institutions in the country, there are concerns about the substance of democratic governance. The concerns, however, are far less than the more vibrant democracies in the region – notably Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia, and, overall, are more in line with the more authoritarian regimes in the region – Singapore and Vietnam.

The paper begins the process of assessing the underlying explanatory factors that account for the Malaysian results and variation within Malaysia. The main explanatory factor used in the ABS template is socio-economic variables – namely perceived social status, education levels and gender – as well as perceptions of economic fortunes. These variables are drawn from the Taiwan findings. The study of the Malaysian context, however, shows that these factors have less saliency in explaining attitudes and variation in Malaysia. Critical are a) “positive affirmation effect” shaped by comparative unfamiliarity with polling within Malaysia and constraints on free speech; b) perceived elitism of the regime and Malaysian politics as a whole; c) limited media discussion of substantive issues of governance and importantly, d) the persistence of ethnic politics in framing attitudes and structuring Malaysian politics. We incorporate these four explanatory factors into our analysis below, demonstrating that different analytical factors account for the Malaysian results.

We are fortunate to have a rich data set to analyze. The Asian Barometer Survey pioneers the study of public attitudes in Malaysia in that is a comprehensive national study conducted through systematic random sampling and inclusive of a broad range of issues, from political participation to social capital. As such, this

¹ Special thanks is due to NorGhani Md Nor and Chong Wu-Ling and for assistance with the preparation of the background material for this paper. We also are extremely grateful to the former TAF representative, Andy Andrews, for his support and interest in this project.

survey provides a benchmark to assess country-wide public political attitudes. Of particular importance is the inclusion of East Malaysia, comprised of the two states of Sarawak and Sabah. With all surveys, however, the results reflect perspectives at the time of polling, July-August 2007. Since this period, Malaysian politics has undergone a profound transformation, with the opposition breaking the 2/3rd stranglehold of the governing party on power in March 2008 general elections. The situation in Malaysia remains fluid, as an ongoing leadership transition is unfolding within the incumbent government as well as the potential for the opposition to gain power through a vote of no confidence and political defections is gaining ground. The changes over the last few months point to the need for a careful reading of the results as indicators of contemporary attitudes. Irrespective, the scope of the survey and its valuable findings provide a sound foundation of the evolution of political attitudes in Malaysian politics.

There are four explanatory variables that are important in our Malaysian analysis that vary in their importance in accounting for the results nationally and in regional comparison:

1) The “*positive affirmation effect*” in our view shapes a tendency of the Malaysian public to record favorable attitudes toward the regime and the state of democracy in Malaysia. We argue that this factor has been shaped by comparative unfamiliarity with polling in Malaysia as well as a long-standing practice of self-censorship that has been shaped by years of constraints on the freedom of expression in Malaysia.

Public polling has emerged as a more common phenomenon in Malaysia only in the last few years, after many of the countries in the region. The first major public poll was conducted in 1999, in conjunction between members of the academic community and one of the leading English newspapers – *The Star*. A similar poll was conducted during the 2004 elections. Between 1999 and 2004, independent actors began polling, the most important of which was the Merdeka Centre, our resource partner who conducted this survey. Others include marketing outlets. Polling, however, remains uncommon and only has become more widely accepted and publicized in the last two years. The relative unfamiliarity of the Malaysian public to polling, notably in East Malaysia, contributes to a tendency among the Malaysian public to not report their views openly. This is compounded by limits on civil liberties that have permeated the public psyche and fostered perceptions of constraints on free speech. Discussion of “sensitive issues” – anything involving race, religion and the rights of communities – are illegal and grounds for sedition. In-depth assessment of governance are curtailed by a strict official secrets act and limited transparency. These factors, along with a tendency of please authorities operating in a semi-authoritarian environment contribute to an inflating of the positive assessment of the regime in the 2007 ABS survey. Cumulative polling over time conducted by the Merdeka Centre points to increasing acceptance, familiarity and reporting of polling that has allowed for a broader range of attitudes to

emerge over the last year, many of which reflect more negative perceptions of the regime and translated into a more robust opposition electoral outcome.

2) The *elitist structure* of politics in Malaysia, and arguably regionally, underscores different perceptions of democracy, even in more “open” democratic regimes. The most relevant areas where elitism shapes attitudes are in the scope of political participation, corruption and accountability. Elite rule through political parties constrain engagement and narrow political discussion/participation and thus contribute to broad acceptance of a limited democratic regime. The form and substance of democracy is seen through an elitist lens, in which the role and rights of leaders remain paramount.

Malaysian politics has largely been framed and interpreted through elite rule. From the inception of the governing coalition at independence in 1957, elite cooperation has been the modus operandi of how Malaysia has been governed. Party leaders representing different communities – largely ethnic – have worked behind closed doors in government, and ironically, this pattern has also characterized the opposition. The government controlled media has reinforced elite rule by focusing its reporting on leaders, especially the prime minister. Whether it is Tunku Abdul Rahman, Dr. Mahathir or Abdullah Badawi, media reports have been extremely elite-centered. The end result is three-fold a) discussion centers on the actions/personality of elites, b) this prevents the emergence of a more substantive discussion of democratic issues to enter the public political arena and c) is tied to narrow participation in the political process. From the 1980s, changes within political parties have exacerbated the elitist orientation, as leadership selection has become narrower and less representative. A feudal political culture has been seen to underlie the acceptance of elite rule. Collectively, elitism permeates Malaysian political attitudes, and, as we illustrate below, accounts for an acceptance of the regime, narrow view of what politics is and limited political participation and efficacy.

3) The *role that the national media* plays in Malaysia has its own impact beyond its elitist orientation. Controlled through proxies for political parties and constrained by legal boundaries on the issues it can publish and can access, media discussion is often devoid of substantive issues of governance. This shapes perceptions of accountability, freedoms and competitiveness of the regime in particular.

Malaysia’s mainstream media is owned by business interests close to the political parties within the incumbent government. The media is ethnic in structure, reflecting the orientation of the governing coalition and Malaysia’s ethnic composition of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and other indigenous groups in East Malaysia. The only national media is radio and television, since newspaper coverage is limited in the rural areas, especially in East Malaysia. Both radio and television are tightly controlled by the government. Beyond ownership, the government licenses the media outlets annually, and, if necessary, can use the state legal

structure to arrest and sue those not in compliance with approved views. Editorial appointments in media outlets are political. These factors curtail open political discussion. Since 1999, new forms of media through the internet and blogging have transformed the political arena, and contributed to a broadening of political information. The impact was most felt during the March 2008 polls, but has evolved gradually over the last ten years. Despite the diversification of media outlets, reporting tends to remain elite-centered and lacking in substantial policy analysis. The new media forms are urban and West Malaysia centered, since these are areas that have the infrastructure for internet use. In spite of an opening up of discussion in Malaysia since 2003, Malaysia's media remains one of the most curtailed in Asia, with record highs of defamation cases. We suggest that media reporting plays a major role in shaping the Malaysian results.

4) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we point again to the structure of Malaysian politics in contributing to public perceptions, namely its *ethnic foundation*.² Ethnicity remains the most salient social cleavage in Malaysia, as political parties, political rights and electoral campaigning are ethnic in nature. This factor contributes to attitudes toward equality, accountability and freedoms.

Political parties are ethnically defined. This is explicitly the case in the incumbent coalition's component parties, but implicitly the case in the opposition as well. Even parties that are "multi-ethnic" are describing themselves as the "other" along ethnic lines. All political parties campaign in ethnic terms, with messages for different ethnic communities and the mobilization of leaders for specific ethnic constituencies. Candidate selection is determined by the ethnic composition of a constituency, and political assessments of voting are done largely along ethnic lines. Even more endemic within the system is a perception of political rights along ethnic lines. The Malay community holds that it has a superior position within the polity, and despite in many cases decades longer residency in the Malaysian territory, non-Malays (Chinese and Indians) are "second-class" citizens. Rights are complicated by the position of East Malaysians, who joined the Federation later on condition of protections. Many of these protections have been watered down with the expansion of Malay dominance since 1969 through the supremacy of the Malay component party in the coalition, but the indigenous communities in East Malaysia also fall into the rubric of the "first class" citizen of "sons of the soil" or *bumiputeras*. In practice, East Malaysian have not received the same share of benefits from the state,

² Savaranamuttu, J. (1992) "The State, Ethnicity and the Middle Class Factor: Democratic Change in Malaysia" in K. Rupesinghe (ed) *Internal Conflict and Governance*. New York: St. Martins Press, pp. 44-64; Stafford, D. Geoffrey S. D. 1997, "Malaysia's New Economic Policy and the Global Economy: the Evolution of Ethnic Accommodation." *Pacific Review*, 10/4:556-80

despite their inclusion as “bumiputeras”. Since 1969, race has been a major factor influencing patterns of patronage, state distribution of resources, access to state capital and hiring within the state.³ The prime example in the New Economic Policy introduced in 1971 which has maintained in practice a larger cohort of aid for the Malay community along racial lines. Ironically, it has served to reinforce and further politicize ethnic divisions, despite its orientation to address economic imbalances in wealth. The Malaysian results show that ethnic differences in political attitudes are sharp, and explain why Malaysia has higher regional numbers in its assessment of equality and accountability.

II. Malaysia: A “Hybrid” Political Regime

As the discussion above suggests, Malaysia is a “hybrid” political regime. The governing coalition – *Barisan Nasional* (BN) or National Front – has governed the country since 1957. The BN presently comprises of 14 political parties, based overwhelmingly on ethnicity. The dominant party in the BN is the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which represents the Malay community and is identified with Malay chauvinism. There are three major non-Malay BN political parties – the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) and GERAKAN. The opposition is comprised of three major political parties – the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and People’s Justice Party (PKR). The appeal of these parties is also shaped by ethnicity, although these parties have tried to move away from a specifically racial agenda. Within East Malaysia the party configurations are more diverse, reflecting the increased ethnic diversity of Sabah and Sarawak and the different historical experience of political organizations in this region. Parties are regional, as well as ethnic in East Malaysia. Yet, a parallel pattern of BN dominance, ethnic organization and ethnic appeal remains. With the exception of the DAP, the opposition is comparatively less organized and politically viable in East Malaysia. As such, East Malaysia has served as a critical electoral buffer for the BN, contributing to the powerful hold the BN has had on power since independence.

Although constitutionally a Westminster-style democracy with separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary, Malaysia is a hybrid political regime, neither fully authoritarian nor fully democratic.⁴ The labels used to describe the regime vary from a “semi-democracy” to “dominant one party state.” Executive pre-eminence over the two other branches began early on in the country’s history during the

³ Milne, R.S. 1973. “Patrons, Clients and Ethnicity: The Case of Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysia,” *Asian Survey* 13: 891-907.

⁴ See Crouch, Harold et al. (1993) “Malaysia: Neither Authoritarian nor Democratic,” in Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison and Garry Rodan (eds.) *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy and Capitalism*. New South Wales: Allen and Unwin; Case, William (1993) “Semi-Democracy in Malaysia: Withstanding the Pressures for Regime Change”, *Pacific Affairs* 66 (2).

1950s and 60s when the nascent state was forced into enacting and adopting draconian emergency measures to counter a communist-inspired military insurgency.⁵ Similarly curtailed at this time was the power of the press. Over time, a variety of further constitutional amendments and enactments of authoritarian laws eventually led to the undermining of both parliament and the judiciary to the advantage of the executive.⁶ These amendments were possible by a 2/3rds hold of the BN of electoral seats in parliament. The growing power of the executive was especially evident between the years 1987-1998 under the long watch of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad who was in power for 22 years. The media, apart from being strictly governed by tight legislation was further hobbled via direct corporate ownership by political parties within the BN coalition government or by business entities having close links to the BN.⁷

Dr. Mahathir centralized political power and weakened alternative political institutions, notably the judiciary, the bureaucracy and traditional source of authority, the Malay sultans. His tenure was accompanied by strong economic growth, an average growth rate of over 5%. After the Asian financial crisis in 1997, pressure for increased democratization intensified, leading to a split between Dr. Mahathir and his deputy prime minister at that time, Anwar Ibrahim. This movement, known as the *reformasi* (reform) movement, led to the emergence of the first broad multi-ethnic alternative to the opposition, merging all the opposition parties in a Barisan Alternative (BA), or Alternative Front. The BA split in 2001 over divisions within the opposition over the Islamic governance/secular state. Key were splits between the more secular Chinese based DAP and more conservative thrust of the Islamic party PAS's leadership. However, with Anwar's release and return to active politics in 2006, the BA was loosely reconstituted (although not formally aligned) under his de facto leadership. All the opposition parties cooperated for potential electoral gain, with leaders in the party who formed bonds in the reformasi period underscoring inter-party cooperation.

Malaysia's ratings on civil liberties are mixed. There are strict limits on civil liberties on assembly, speech and political organization. These are justified by the incumbent government as essential for maintaining political harmony among the races in Malaysia. The 1969 racial riots continues to be used to justify political

⁵ Short, Anthony (2000), *In Pursuit of Mountain Rats. The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, Singapore: Cultured Lotus; first published: Frederick Muller Ltd. 1975, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*; Chin Peng (2003), *My Side of History*, Singapore: Media Masters.

⁶ Rais Yatim (1995), *Freedom Under Executive Power in Malaysia. A Study of Executive Supremacy*, Kuala Lumpur: Endowment Sdn.Bhd.; Crouch, Harold (1996), *Government and Society in Malaysia*, Singapore: Talisman Publishing Pte. Ltd.

⁷ Mustafa Anuar (2002), "Defining Democratic Discourses. The Mainstream Press", in Loh Kok Wah and Khoo Boo Teik, *Democracy in Malaysia. Discourses and Practices*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press & Nordic Institute of Asian Studies; pp. 138 – 164; Zaharom Nain (2002), "The Structure of the Media Industry. Implications for Democracy", in Francis Loh Kok Wah and Khoo Boo Teik, *Democracy in Malaysia. Discourses and Practices*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press & Nordic Institute of Asian Studies; pp. 111-137.

restrictions, and marked a closure in rights in the regime. Civil and political liberties were further curtailed under the Mahathir period, as economic growth was used to justify the narrowing of political space and the judiciary was used to target political opponents. Students, non-governmental organizations and opposition activists face serious limits on their actions, notably in the discussion of issues related to race and religion. The government, however, does not engage in broad practices of torture and has only periodically used detention as a means to curb political opposition. Rather, it relies on self-censorship, unspoken limits on political organization and the threat of legal action to restrict liberties.⁸

Despite these limits, Malaysia has held regular elections since gaining independence in 1957, with the latest national election held in March 2008. The elections are seen to be free contests, although not fair. On average in eleven general elections in Malaysia prior to 2008, the opposition won 45% of the popular vote, but due to the limits on the opposition within the electoral system, through gerrymandering, mal-apportionment and the impact of a first-past-the post system, and constraints on political organization for the opposition, have held less than 15% of the seats in parliament.⁹ In the 2004 election the BN won 63.9% of the popular vote, but won 91% of the overall seats.¹⁰ From 1969 onwards, the BN was able to convince voters that it represented all the ethnic communities in Malaysia in its multi-ethnic coalition they have held power through winning over the multi-ethnic constituencies.

This all changed in 2008 when the loose opposition cooperation between the DAP and BA (PKR and PAS) led by Anwar Ibrahim achieved a stunning upset against the BN by denying it a 2/3rds parliamentary majority. Out of 222 parliamentary seats, the BA won 82 parliamentary seats; out of 13 state government, the BA won five and slashed the BN's total popular vote cast to a mere 50.6% compared to the BA which won a total of 49.4% of the total popular vote cast. This was a stark reversal of fortunes compared to the 2004 general

⁸ See various Amnesty International Reports on Human Rights in Malaysia (www.amnesty.org); also Suara Rakyat Malaysia Annual Human Rights Reports on Malaysia (www.suaram.org).

⁹ For a recent comprehensive study on elections, see Welsh, Bridget and Ong Kian Ming, *Reformasi Lives: Contemporary Malaysian Elections*. (Forthcoming) Puthuachery, Mavis and Noraini Othman (2003), *The Electoral System of Malaysia. A Report*, Bangi: IKMAS/UKM; Puthuachery, Mavis and Noraini Othman, eds. (2005), *Elections and Democracy in Malaysia*. Bangi: Penerbit UKM.

¹⁰ Welsh, Bridget and Ong Kian Ming, *Reformasi Lives: Contemporary Malaysian Elections*. (Forthcoming) Carr, Adam, *Malaysia Legislative Election of March 2004*, in <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/countries/m/malaysia/malaysia2004.txt>

election when out of a total of 219 parliamentary seats, the BN won 198 seats and 63.9% of the total popular votes cast while the BA won only 21 seats and 36.1% of the total popular votes cast.¹¹

Recent Political Transition - High Hopes, Despondency and Major Change

After 22 long years in power, Dr. Mahathir finally stepped down from office in October 2003 and handed over political leadership of UMNO, the BN coalition government and thus the country to UMNO Deputy President and cabinet colleague, Mr. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The first two years of the Abdullah administration, 2003-2004, were an extended honeymoon.¹² During these years Abdullah opened up political space, and embraced many elements of the reformasi (reform) agenda. He promised the country that he would deliver political, economic and social reforms and also improve democratic governance. In doing so, he tapped into a wellspring of desire for change among the electorate, most of whom were very happy with Dr. Mahathir's retirement. Consequently, he decisively won the 2004 election by promising reforms on corruption, governance and Islamic moderation/racial tolerance. His own affable non-confrontational personality and grassroots orientation also contributed to his electoral victory and broad national support.

Unfortunately, by 2006, it began to dawn upon many that Abdullah Badawi was not really able to deliver on many of his commitments. Instead, the country seemed to be regressing further. By 2008, in a survey run by Merdeka Centre, an independent poll company, "inflation, shortage of goods, fuel subsidies, rising crime, majority government, mismanagement, corruption, the demand for free and fair elections by a group of NGOs and political parties under the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH), racial equality especially as highlighted by HINDRAF, Internal Security Act detainees, the case surrounding the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Lingam Video Clip and the eligibility of former Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim" were identified as some of the core concerns of the electorate which had been neglected by the BN government despite their huge mandate in 2004.¹³ Thus, when the elections were finally called, the general view was that the BN had not delivered on its electoral promises, was arrogant and incompetent, and in need of being taught a lesson to bring it back down to earth and to the suffering realities of the electorate. Survey research conducted by Merdeka Centre around the 2008 campaign pointed to serious loss of credibility of the

¹¹ Undi.Info (www.undi.info); Analysis of the recent elections can be found in Welsh, Bridget and Ong Kian Ming, *Reformasi Lives: Elections in Contemporary Malaysia*, forthcoming; Welsh, Bridget and Ong Kian Ming, *How Malaysia Votes*, forthcoming.

¹² Bridget Welsh, "Malaysia: Out of Mahathir's Shadow?" *Asian Survey* XLV, No. 1 (January/February).

¹³ Merdeka Centre, *Pre-Election Survey*, 23-27 February 2008, (www.merdeka.org)

BN leaders, especially Abdullah. Bread and butter issues accounted for much of this loss, as post-1970 record inflation undermined the economic legitimacy of the regime.

Consequently, in March 2008, the governing BN lost its 2/3rds parliamentary majority, one that they had held since 1970 and which they justified as necessary to ensure that UMNO, the backbone of the BN, had the power to amend the Constitution at will to suit their ethnic political interests.¹⁴ Considering that politics in Malaysia is also highly ethnicized owing to country's experience of ethnic riots in May 1969 and the ethnic imperatives of NEP objectives, the recent elections exorcised the ghosts and fears of that experience which had set root deep within the collective psyche of the nation. As well, it set the country along the path of becoming like any other normal democracy, one where governments govern on the basis of simple majorities instead of overwhelming parliamentary dominance; where rational policy debates are central instead of irrational appeals to ethnic considerations that play on the darkest fears of society.

Since then, despite the UMNO/BN's rhetoric about the loss of Malay political control, the country has held together albeit with an unusual level of political uncertainty. On the one hand, UMNO/BN is deeply fractured. While many within UMNO/BN want the Prime Minister and UMNO/BN president Abdullah Badawi to resign and take responsibility for the loss of the 2/3rds majority and four other state governments, PM Badawi is reluctant to do so. As a result, there is presently an intense power struggle gripping UMNO/BN. Former PM Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is demanding PM Badawi's resignation while former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah has called for an EGM to debate the causes of the UMNO/BN electoral debacle which he hopes to use to force out PM Badawi. There is also a groundswell of dissatisfaction within the UMNO/BN rank and file, which PM Badawi has recognized and has attempted to diffuse by postponing party elections until December 2008. Even PM Badawi's current cabinet is not united. On the other hand, Anwar Ibrahim's PR coalition has openly said that it is attempting to lure UMNO/BN MPs over to its side of the parliamentary floor so as to bring down the UMNO/BN-led government and form a new coalition led by Pakatan Rakyat (PR). This has put a lot of pressure on the UMNO/BN government. Yet, all is not well either within the PR coalition which - given its composition of the ethnic-based Democratic Action Party and the religiously conservative Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) - is at best held together by the multi-ethnic, multi-religious National Justice Party (Parti Keadilan) under the charismatic leadership of Anwar Ibrahim. There are tensions

¹⁴ Bridget Welsh, "Election post-mortem: Top Ten Reasons" malaysiakini, March 12, 2008, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79677>

over issues of ethnicity (like the doing away of the ethnic-based New Economic Policy) and religion (like an Islamic State and Islamic laws) within PR that are real and that threaten to break the PR coalition apart.¹⁵

Our attempt to explain the state of democratic governance in Malaysia thus has to be situated in the above context, more so since political events on the ground span the period of the Asia Barometer Survey in 2007, a period during which the governing UMNO/BN coalition has remained in power but has lost much of its legitimacy and political appeal.

III. Socio-Political Profile of Malaysia

	GDP per capita (PPP) in 2006	GDP per capita (PPP) in 2007	Gini Co-Efficient (latest available)	Number of effective parties last election	Freedom House Political Right Score in 2006	Freedom House Political Right Score in 2007	Freedom House Civil Liberty Score in 2006	Freedom House Civil Liberty Score in 2007	WBG I Rule of Law indicator in 2006	WBG I Government Effectiveness indicator in 2006	WBG I Voice and accountability indicator in 2006	WBG I Control of corruption Indicator in 2006
Japan	31865.98	33600.00	25	8	1	1	2	2	1.40	1.29	0.91	1.31
Hong Kong	35395.66	42000.00	43	17	5	5	2	2	1.45	1.76	0.55	1.71
Korea	21876.57	24800.00	32	14	1	1	2	2	0.72	1.05	0.71	0.31
China	8004.14	5300.00	47	1	7	7	6	6	-0.40	-0.01	-1.66	-0.53
Mongolia	2321.79	3200.00	33	2	2	2	2	2	-0.32	-0.46	0.10	-0.54
Philippines	5159.91	3400.00	45	93	3	3	3	3	-0.48	-0.01	-0.18	-0.69
Taiwan	29243.75	30100.00	35	16	1	2	1	1	0.77	1.11	0.79	0.53
Thailand	8876.73	7900.00	42	66	3	7	3	4	0.03	0.29	-0.50	-0.26
Indonesia	4752.88	3700.00	34	50	2	2	3	3	-0.82	-0.38	-0.25	-0.77
Singapore	29742.85	49700.00	42	4	5	5	4	4	1.82	2.20	-0.07	2.30
Vietnam	3255.30	2600.00	37	1	7	7	5	5	-0.43	-0.37	-1.45	-0.66
Cambodia	2533.71	1800.00	42	23	3	6	3	5	-1.11	-1.01	-0.98	-1.19
Malaysia	11914.52	13300.00	49	23	4	4	4	4	0.58	1.02	-0.34	0.38
Average of East Asia	14995.68	17030.77	38.92	24.46	3.38	4.00	3.08	3.31	0.25	0.50	-0.18	0.15

Although not among the richer countries within the region, Malaysia certainly does not rank among the poorer. Its mid-range PPP guarantees its citizenry a reasonably decent standard of living. However when viewed

¹⁵ See various critical news reports on online news portal, www.malaysiakini.com; www.malaysianinsider.com

together with its Gini coefficient of 49, one realizes that Malaysia has the most unequal wealth distribution in the region. For a country that has made poverty eradication and wealth redistribution a central political platform and which has pursued this goal over the last 40 years in all its development plans, this is a major disconnect. Clearly, despite its best efforts, the country policy-makers have serious shortcomings in addressing the country's needy. For many years since 1970 which was when the NEP was launched, Malaysia pursued the distributional aims of the policy only to abandon it in the mid-1980s when the country went through a severe economic crisis which had negative implications for the continuation of publicly financed distributional programmes. Consequently, under Dr. Mahathir, the NEP was dismantled and replaced with the National Development Policy which, while it paid lip-service to the NEP pursued growth rather than equity policy objectives.¹⁶ This has since skewed wealth inequalities further, with wealth disparities being more evident within ethnic groups than between them. One thus cannot help but wonder about the efficacy and real objectives of the NEP when other countries without any such overtly distributional policies have performed much better in terms of building a more equal society and greater poverty eradication.

Despite having 23 political parties, which would theoretically allow for competitive elections and reflect a greater space for democracy to flourish within what is very much a middle-class country, the Freedom House country's indicators on political rights and civil liberties put Malaysia at slightly above the median point of the scale which suggests that the country while somewhat free is still hobbled by authoritarian elements; a situation that has seen no real change between 2006-07. Put differently, the government engages and allows for formal political parties and formal elections but circumscribes the democratic process in substance. The figures also suggest that Malaysia under-performs the East Asian regional average on these particular issues. In terms of the rule of law, Malaysia ends up as the in-between country of the region outperforming all its regional neighbors except Singapore and the four more developed East Asian countries of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. This pattern is interestingly replicated for the same countries in perceptions of government effectiveness suggesting perhaps a link between the coherence and robustness of the rule of law and the effectiveness of government. Unfortunately, the rule of law and effectiveness does not automatically necessarily translate into government accountability. Indeed, the whole East Asian region does not score well in this area, with Malaysia turning out a dismal score ahead of only four other countries. Finally, in terms of controlling corruption, Malaysia's score makes depressing reading, coming out again in the middle of the East Asian region. While the government has made some efforts to control corruption, the reality is that there is still a long way for it to go before it manages to come to grips with the problem of corruption. These "in-

¹⁶ Khoo, Kay Jin (1992), "The Grand Vision: Mahathir and Modernisation", in Joel Kahn and Francis Loh, *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

between” figures are reflected in the public attitudes of the Malaysian public, as, for the most part, it falls into the middle of the pack in the assessment of the state of democracy in the country.

IV. The ABS Survey and Methodology¹⁷

The Malaysia questionnaire was comprised of 211 questions, with additional subcomponents in the following areas: a) rights of different ethnic communities, b) social capital across ethnicities, c) ethnic identity (including both race and religion), d) different institutions in the Malaysian government, e.g. sultans, local councils; c) questions about identity related to religion/race; e) patronage and specific perceptions of campaigning strategies, f) broader range of responses on perceptions of and travel to international countries, to include different ASEAN neighbors and the Middle East.

Sampling Method:

The survey was conducted using statistical sampling at three different levels – national (random sampling), household (interval sampling) and individual (random gender selection). The total sample size of the survey was 1,200 Malaysian adult citizens (18 years old and above) which provided a maximum error margin of $\pm 2.83\%$ at the 95% confidence level, assuming a simple random sampling design. (The sampling error is at its highest when the true proportion being estimated is close to 50%.)

The following approximate 95%-confidence margins for sampling error should be made when aggregating data at various levels:

Geographic Region	Sample Size	Error Margin
Malaysia	1200	$\pm 3.0\%$
Peninsular Malaysia	900	$\pm 3.3\%$
East Malaysia	300	$\pm 6.0\%$

Selection of the study areas at the national level was performed on a random basis by the Malaysian Department of Statistics (DOS). Originally, the DOS was to have provided the ABS Team with census enumeration block maps (each comprising between 100 households) for each state resulting in 240 census enumeration block maps have been selected distributed across all states in Malaysia. Eventually however, the DOS was only able to provide us with the random selection of enumeration blocks for states in Peninsular Malaysia, for a total of 180 enumeration blocks. Faced with the prospect of delays, we utilized an alternative sampling frame by relying on the listing of electoral districts in the Election Roll for East Malaysia. For the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, sampling areas were selected on the basis of the 2004 Electoral

¹⁷ The ABS Team in Malaysia comprised of Dr. Bridget Welsh, Assistant Professor of Southeast Asia Studies at Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Ibrahim Suffian, Director of the Merdeka Centre, Malaysia’s leading independent polling company and Dr. Andrew Aeria, lecturer in Political Science at University Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak.

Roll. The design in this instance used the 54 state electoral constituencies, weighted for number of voters, as the sampling frame. The electoral constituencies were grouped by geographic regions and allocated respondents in proportion to the overall quota.

Region	State	No of Respondents	Enumeration Blocks
North	Perlis	10	2
	Kedah	82	16
	Penang	65	13
East	Kelantan	66	13
	Terengganu	45	9
	Pahang	61	12
Central	Perak	101	20
	Selangor	202	40
	Wilayah Persekutuan	65	13
South	Negeri Sembilan	42	8
	Melaka	30	6
	Johor	131	26

Region	State	No of Respondents	Electoral Localities
East Malaysia	Sabah	150	30
	Sarawak	150	30
	Total	1200	240

Combined, these two random sampling populations provided a national pool of respondents that reflected the demographic and regional diversity of Malaysia.

Households within a census enumeration block in Peninsular Malaysia were then chosen using a 10-household skip pattern using interval sampling. That is, beginning from a random starting point sample households were chosen using a fixed interval of 10 households in between the sampled ones; i.e. every 11th household is sampled. In addition, a randomly generated list of 15 home numbers were selected beforehand and handed to team supervisors for use in cases where substitutions were needed, or if the survey team had exhausted the predetermined skip pattern of calling on respondents without obtaining the desired quota of responses from the enumeration block or electoral locality. A similar pattern was followed in East Malaysia.

In selecting the adult within each selected household in Peninsular Malaysia, a respondent was randomly chosen among the household members who are 18 years of age and older, using a probability selection table. Only male family members were pre-listed in the probability selection table of odd-numbered questionnaires

and only female family members were pre-listed for even-numbered questionnaires to assure for gender parity. In cases where there is no qualified probability respondent of a given gender in a particular household, the interval sampling of households would continue until sample respondents was identified. The respondents were selected a set interval in the electoral roll in the randomly selected locality. In each census/electoral roll enumeration block, interviewers are required to fulfill a quota of 50% male and 50% female respondents. The same random method was applied to a respondent in East Malaysia.

In assessing the results, the ten-country data set which included the regional tables were used for the regional tables. To calculate the statistical descriptive indicators, the weighted Malaysian data set was used, which reflected the racial composition of the country.

The following results suggest an indicative level of acceptance of democracy within Malaysia with comparisons to other countries of the region.

Section A – Rule of Law

One of the key ingredients of a democracy is a viable rule of law. Three related issues have surrounded this feature in Malaysia – the impunity of political elites, the independence of the judiciary, and corruption. In the more recent period, police responses toward crime and protection of rights have also factored into assessments of legal protection, particularly as the crime rate has increased since 2000 and reports of poor treatment of prisoners have emerged. All of these concerns were assessed in the ABS Survey, and overall Malaysia received high ratings for the rule of law and these ratings compared favorably with other countries in the region. We suggest that the positive affirmation affect, elitism, media framing and ethnic differences were critical in shaping these public perceptions.

In examining the impunity of high-ranking officials, as shown in Table A:1, 68.2% of Malaysians believe that the judiciary punishes the guilty. Only a handful “strongly disagree” that high officials are punished, 6.6%.

Table A:1 Law Abiding Government

Our current courts always punish the guilty even if they are high-ranking officials.	1.Strongly Agree	28.1
	2.Somewhat Agree	40.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	21.5
	4.Strongly Disagree	6.6
	7.Don't Understand	0.4

	8.Can't choose	2.9
	9.Decline to answer	0.5
	Missing	--

In looking at the ABS results regionally, illustrated in Table A:2, Malaysia is among the highest in the region, following Singapore and Mongolia.

Table A:2 Law Abiding Government Regional Example

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
Our current courts always punish the guilty even if they are high-ranking officials.	1.Strongly Agree	6.1	46.7	27.7	20.3	25.3	18.5	23.0	42.4	13.5	28.1
	2.Somewhat Agree	37.6	16.0	29.9	50.5	34.2	64.7	58.2	35.4	35.2	40.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	42.0	15.7	25.9	17.7	27.1	11.3	14.8	13.2	35.0	21.5
	4.Strongly Disagree	9.5	18.8	14.6	3.7	10.8	2.0	1.2	1.8	7.2	6.6
	7.Don't Understand	1.1	1.3	0.4	1.7	--	0.4	1.1	1.5	--	0.4
	8.Can't choose	2.8	1.2	1.3	3.9	2.5	2.5	0.9	5.1	8.8	2.9
	9.Decline to answer	0.9	0.1	0.3	2.1	--	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.5
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Interestingly, this high favorable ranking is incongruent with media accounts and reality during the period of the survey research within Malaysia. In the summer of 2007, media accounts sensationally described the murder of a Mongolian model, Altantuya Shaariibuu.¹⁸ This case has been closely linked to the deputy prime minister, Najib Tun Razak, whose close aide was one of the accused in the murder. Najib's special protection detail was also indicted, fueling speculation of his personal ties to the event. Although the trial remains ongoing and Najib's role unknown, this political linked criminal case is calling into question the judiciary's treatment of high officials in that during the trial references to the deputy prime minister are actively being expunged from discussion. The history of political impunity of high officials in Malaysia— particularly related to murder – is colorful. Historically, the most known major scandal involving a murder occurred in the early 1970s, when then high-ranking UMNO leader Mokhtar Hashim was convicted for murder. He was later pardoned, highlighting that even those convicted are treated more favorably than non-political elites. In the 1990s, the case of Chief Minister Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik alleged rape of a schoolgirl hit the headlines, and

¹⁸ For a good account of this case on a day-to-day basis, please see <http://thecourtroom.stomp.com.sg/thecourtroom/murderofmongolmodel/index.html> ; also blog entries by Raja Petra Kamaruddin, <http://www.malaysia-today.net/2008/content/view/8666/84/> and <http://www.malaysia-today.net/2008/content/view/8764/84/>;

led to an opposition member who defended the girl serving prison time.¹⁹ Senior officials, especially those in UMNO, have escaped prosecution for crimes.

At the same time, the courts in Malaysia are seen as a tool for the political elite to remove political rivals. This was best illustrated in the 1999 trial of Anwar Ibrahim, who was convicted for sodomy and corruption in what observers have described as a political trial to neutralize his leadership challenge of then Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir. The sodomy case has been overturned, although the corruption charge stands. Anwar Ibrahim is seeking a pardon.

Given the lack of uniformity in prosecuting senior government officials, there is a real disconnect between public perceptions persecution of officials for crimes committed, and the use of the judiciary for political purposes. Part of the incongruence in Malaysian perceptions is shaped by the fact that there have been convictions of public officials, although often with less severity in sentencing. A good example is the 2007 conviction of Inspector General of Police Rahim Noor who was convicted for assaulting Anwar Ibrahim while in custody in 1999. Rahim received a sentence of two months in jail and a fine of less than US\$500. These examples show that there are limited concrete reasons for a favorable perception of impunity issues.²⁰ In regional comparison, Malaysia's senior officials have not faced the same level of legal scrutiny as those in Korea or Taiwan, but have faced more convictions than in Singapore, Indonesia or the Philippines.

The factors that shape Malaysian perceptions tie closely into those laid out above. In light of the fact that these political cases are deemed "sensitive", many Malaysians are apt to respond more favorably. This is in keeping with the high positive faith in institutions. The favorable response reflects faith in the judiciary and the governing system as a whole. The second factor that contributes to the favorable results is elitism. There is a sense of lack of empowerment of ordinary people. Table A:3 shows this cynicism clearly, where more than half the respondents felt that a lack of avenues to respond to when government officials break the law. Government officials are buffered from the law due to the system's elite structure. While there is faith in the judiciary, this does not necessarily translate to government officials. Most important, however, is the limited open discussion of these criminal cases in the press; the Malaysian government controlled media frames the discussion of the elites, often protecting the cases of alleged crimes from scrutiny and open discussion of cases.

¹⁹ See: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA28/003/1997/en/dom-ASA280031997en.html>

²⁰ Aliran Media Statement, Rahim Noor's Confession: Black Eye and Blacker Deeds, 1 March 1999, at <http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/ms990301.html>; Lim Kit Siang Press Statement, 1 May 2001, at <http://www.limkitsiang.com/archive/2001/may01/lks0938.htm>

Table A:3 How the Legal System Operates

When the government breaks the law, there is nothing the legal system can do.	Strongly agree	12.5
	Somewhat agree	38.4
	Somewhat disagree	32.5
	Strongly disagree	9.4
	Don't understand the question	1.6
	Can't choose	4.9
	Decline to answer	.7
Total	100.0	

Another key factor that accounts for the responses is ethnicity. Malays have much more faith in the system than Chinese. The differences at the extremes of the positions – “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” illustrate this nicely – where 29.2% of Malays believe that the system punishes the guilty, compared to 18.2% of Chinese. At the other end, 14% of Chinese strongly disagree with whether the judiciary punishes high-ranking officials compared to 4.2% of Malays. Underlying public perceptions of both the judiciary and officials is different perceptions of the system. Most of the high-ranking officials recently subjected to criminal speculation are Malays, and thus there is less willingness to question this among Malays. At the same time, Malays compared to Chinese have more faith in a system that is seen to protect their rights to a greater degree than Chinese. Different positions in the polity ethnically account for different perspectives.

Table A:4 Ethnicity and Leadership Impunity Crosstab

		Q131. Our judiciary always punished the guilty even if they are high-ranking officials.								
		Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total	
Ethnicity	%	Malay	29.2%	41.8%	21.6%	4.2%	.5%	1.4%	1.2%	100.0%
		Chinese	18.2%	38.4%	22.9%	14.0%	.6%	5.4%	.6%	100.0%
		Indian	33.0%	36.6%	19.6%	3.6%	.0%	7.1%	.0%	100.0%
		Others	36.7%	32.8%	18.8%	3.1%	.8%	7.0%	.8%	100.0%
		Total	27.3%	39.5%	21.5%	6.7%	.5%	3.6%	.9%	100.0%

These differences come out sharper in assessments of whether the government abides by the law, as shown in Table A:5. There is considerably more cynicism in actors in office than in the system as a whole, the judiciary. A majority of Malaysians, 53.2%, believe that government officials only “occasionally” or “rarely” abide by the law. The lower favorably assessment moves Malaysia down the ranking regionally, as shown in Table A:6. Nevertheless, Malaysia remains square in the middle, with high perceptions of officials. Notable, however, is the sharp lower ratings than those in Singapore.

Table A:5 Abiding by the Law

How often do national government officials abide by the law?	1.Always	13.1
	2.Most of the time	23.2
	3.Occasionally	35.9
	4.Rarely	17.3
	7.Don't Understand	0.8
	8.Can't choose	8.5
	9.Decline to answer	1.1
	Missing	--

Table A:6 Abiding by the Law Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
How often do national government officials abide by the law?	1.Always	2.3	4.3	10.5	3.9	1.7	28.0	12.5	42.9	1.5	13.1
	2.Most of the time	34.3	20.4	19.9	10.3	15.3	48.5	16.0	26.9	36.2	23.2
	3.Occasionally	32.6	38.0	36.6	37.0	42.0	15.9	52.4	9.0	43.3	35.9
	4.Rarely	24.1	34.4	26.9	16.2	36.4	2.1	8.3	2.6	11.0	17.3
	7.Don't Understand	0.9	0.2	1.4	7.0	--	0.3	1.7	1.1	--	0.8
	8.Can't choose	4.5	2.2	3.2	18.8	4.6	4.0	7.7	16.2	8.0	8.5
	9.Decline to answer	1.2	0.3	1.5	6.9	--	1.3	1.4	1.3	0.1	1.1
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Ethnic differences continue to be the most decisive factor accounting for differences in Malaysia, as shown in Table A:7. The poles of responses of the Malays and Chinese remain significantly different, with the share of Chinese respondents, 28.3%, indicating that government officials “rarely” abide by the law, double that of the Malays at 13.1%.

Table A: 7 Abide by the Law Ethnicity Crosstab

		How often does government abide by the law?								
		Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Rarely	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total	
Ethnicity	%	Malay	13.9%	25.1%	38.0%	13.1%	.3%	9.3%	.3%	100.0%
		Chinese	7.7%	17.6%	33.3%	28.3%	.9%	10.4%	1.8%	100.0%
		Indian	20.5%	18.8%	36.6%	16.1%	2.7%	4.5%	.9%	100.0%
		Others	13.5%	26.2%	33.3%	12.7%	.8%	11.9%	1.6%	100.0%
		Total	12.7%	22.5%	36.1%	17.5%	.7%	9.5%	.9%	100.0%

The favorable assessments of the Malaysian public drop precipitously when asked about corruption by government officials. Only a small handful of Malaysians 5.2% and 3.9% felt that “hardly anyone is involved” in corruption at the local and national level respectively. More than double these numbers of respondents felt that “almost everyone is corrupt.”

Table A:8 Malaysian Perceptions of Corruption

Question	Values	Local/Municipal Government	National Government
How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in your local/municipal government?	1.Hardly anyone is involved	5.2	3.9
	2.Not a lot of officials are corrupt	46.6	46.1
	3.Most officials are corrupt	28.1	29.2
	4.Almost everyone is corrupt	11.2	10.8
	8.Can't choose	7.6	8.9
	9.Decline to answer	1.3	1.1
	Missing	--	--

General perception that the government is corrupt is widespread has been shaped by two major factors. Since 1999, when the *reformasi* movement unfolded, corruption has become a major campaign issue for the opposition. In 2004, the BN under Abdullah Badawi campaigned on the issue of corruption. The media's framing of this issue has been critical in deepening and reinforcing perceptions of this issue.²¹ Equally important is the fact that the elitist structure of the polity allows for corruption at the top. State access to contracts as well as limited transparent campaign financing practices underscore entrenched patterns of "money politics" in which government officials engage in payoffs to win party office and reap the benefits of their position through access to state funds, contracts and patronage distribution. New reports have described the scope of recent cases on corruption under Abdullah Badawi's first administration, and provide a flavor to the breadth of corruption in Malaysia. Of the 108 cases, ten of these were investigated by the Anti-Corruption Agency. Others were targeted individuals within UMNO and faced disciplinary action from the party, not criminal charges. The anti-corruption drive under Abdullah Badawi's first administration essentially ended in 2007, a factor that contributed to the BN's record loss in the March 2008 polls.

The elitist structure of Malaysia's political system also is revealed when one looks carefully at how Malaysians view perception. Many felt that "not a lot of officials" are involved. In the Malaysian context this translated into "just those at the top". Interestingly, a lot of Malaysian respondents did not answer the question, suggesting a degree of hesitancy in addressing this salient political topic.

Malaysians as a whole compares well within the region, as more than half of the respondents think the nature of corruption is narrowly confined to a few officials. This is on par with Japan, Indonesia and Korea, although behind Vietnam.

²¹ Imran Imtiaz Shah Yacob (2007), "Malaysia's Losing Battle Against Corruption" in *Asia Sentinel*, 16 March 2007, http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=420&Itemid=31

Table A:9 *Malaysian Perceptions of Corruption in Regional Perspective*

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in your local/municipal government?	1.Hardly anyone is involved	3.5	12.5	13.4	23.2	2.9	--	14.3	32.1	1.9	5.2
	2.Not a lot of officials are corrupt	26.7	35.0	24.5	44.2	51.7	--	38.8	44.9	51.9	46.6
	3.Most officials are corrupt	51.8	30.1	37.6	12.9	31.1	--	24.3	4.5	34.3	28.1
	4.Almost everyone is corrupt	7.4	15.4	18.7	4.1	9.2	--	10.3	0.8	3.7	11.2
	8.Can't choose	8.2	5.2	3.6	11.4	--	--	7.2	17.1	8.0	7.6
	9.Decline to answer	2.4	1.6	2.3	4.3	5.1	--	5.2	0.7	0.2	1.3
	Missing	--	0.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan
How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government	1.Hardly anyone is involved	2.7	2.6	8.6	12.5	1.2	43.8	5.9	9.6	1.0	3.9
	2.Not a lot of officials are corrupt	25.9	19.5	23.0	46.9	48.3	41.1	38.5	57.9	49.6	46.1
	3.Most officials are corrupt	48.1	40.6	38.1	18.1	33.8	1.1	30.6	11.9	34.4	29.2
	4.Almost everyone is corrupt	10.0	30.4	24.2	6.7	11.4	0.4	12.5	1.9	4.7	10.8
	7.Don't Understand	--	--	--	--	--	7.7	--	--	--	8.9
	8.Can't choose	10.8	5.9	3.8	11.6	5.3	--	7.6	18.3	10.1	1.1
	9.Decline to answer	2.5	0.9	2.4	4.3	--	5.9	4.9	1.0	0.2	--
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In keeping with the ABS template, we examined whether interest in politics and following the news were factors shaping attitudes toward corruption, outlined below on Table A:10. The Cross tabulations show that neither was a factor shaping perceptions of corruption.

Table A:10 *Corruption and Interest in Politics Cross Tabulation*

		How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government?						
		Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are corrupt	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
How interested	Very interested	4.6%	47.2%	19.4%	17.6%	9.3%	1.9%	100.0%

	Somewhat interested	3.8%	53.7%	25.7%	7.6%	9.1%	.3%	100.0%
	Not very interested	5.2%	52.3%	29.2%	6.9%	4.9%	1.5%	100.0%
	Not at all interested	2.5%	27.4%	37.2%	17.5%	14.0%	1.4%	100.0%
	Can't choose	.0%	21.1%	5.3%	5.3%	63.2%	5.3%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	Total	3.9%	45.9%	28.6%	10.5%	9.8%	1.2%	100.0%
		How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government?						
		Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are corrupt	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
How often do you follow news about politics and government?	Everyday	3.5%	47.8%	29.5%	10.3%	7.5%	1.4%	100.0%
	Several times a week	5.3%	51.2%	25.1%	10.6%	7.4%	.4%	100.0%
	Once or twice a week	3.1%	45.3%	29.2%	6.8%	14.3%	1.2%	100.0%
	Not even once a week	3.6%	40.8%	32.0%	14.2%	9.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Practically never	4.1%	38.4%	30.2%	11.6%	12.8%	2.9%	100.0%
	Can't choose	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Total	3.9%	45.7%	28.7%	10.6%	9.8%	1.2%	100.0%

What stands out is the factor highlighted above, ethnicity, shown in Table A:11. At 6.4% Malays were the least likely to say that “almost everyone is corrupt”. The other races had more than double that of the Malays, with almost a quarter of Indians believing that almost all officials were corrupt at the local level. This same pattern was not as evident at the national level, but here the difference was in whether there was belief in whether hardly anyone was involved with the Malays showing higher faith in officials than the other communities.

Table A: 11 Corruption and Ethnicity

		How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in your local government/municipal government?							
		Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are corrupt	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total	
Ethnicity	%	Malay	3.9%	55.5%	25.1%	6.4%	8.6%	.6%	100.0%
		Chinese	5.3%	31.2%	38.6%	13.1%	9.5%	2.4%	100.0%
		India	8.1%	37.8%	20.7%	23.4%	5.4%	4.5%	100.0%

		Others	11.8%	43.3%	15.7%	18.1%	10.2%	.8%	100.0%
		Total	5.5%	45.9%	27.4%	11.0%	8.7%	1.5%	100.0%
			How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government?						
			Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are corrupt	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	%	Malay	4.4%	57.1%	21.9%	5.8%	10.4%	.5%	100.0%
		Chinese	.6%	25.9%	47.0%	15.8%	9.2%	1.5%	100.0%
		India	8.0%	36.6%	26.8%	17.0%	7.1%	4.5%	100.0%
		Others	7.1%	48.8%	15.7%	15.0%	11.0%	2.4%	100.0%
		Total	3.9%	45.7%	28.7%	10.5%	9.9%	1.3%	100.0%

In examining the response of the government to corruption, shown in Table A: 12, views were divided. No Malaysians felt this was being done effectively. These findings point to the discontent with the Abdullah Badawi administration in its slowdown in its anti-corruption drive in 2007 as well as its ineffectiveness. A plurality of the respondents did feel, however, that something was being done., although over a third thought it was narrow in scope

Table A: 12 Corruption Responsiveness Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia
In your opinion, is the government working to crackdown corruption and root out bribes?	0.It is doing this effectively	--
	1. It is doing its best	21.1
	2.It is doing something	42.7
	3.It is not doing much	26.4
	4.Doing nothing	6.0
	7.Don't Understand	0.4
	8.Can't choose	3.0
	9.Decline to answer	0.3
	Missing	--

In looking at how Malaysia compares within the region, it has relative high marks, and follows the two authoritarian regimes in the region Singapore and Vietnam. There appears to be more cynicism in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. All countries, however, agree that corruption is a problem and solutions not forthcoming. The fact that Abdullah Badawi raised expectations on this issue and did not deliver effectively – and the media reinforced this framing of his tenure – has contributed to the loss in the March 2008 polls.

Table A: 11 Corruption Responsiveness Comparative Results

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
In your opinion, is the government	0.It is doing this effectively	--	--	--	--	--	34.1	--	--	--	--
	1. It is doing	7.9	9.3	6.8	18.3	2.6	37.8	13.8	41.0	3.5	21.1

working to crackdown corruption and root out bribes?	its best										
	2.It is doing something	55.1	41.9	27.4	40.1	42.0	15.1	38.7	37.6	28.8	42.7
	3.It is not doing much	21.9	36.1	33.3	21.3	37.6	1.7	38.9	12.8	48.7	26.4
	4.Doing nothing	8.9	11.0	26.3	6.0	9.5	--	2.8	0.8	13.1	6.0
	7.Don't Understand	0.9	0.3	0.9	2.1	--	0.7	1.5	0.5	--	0.4
	8.Can't choose	4.3	1.0	3.5	7.3	8.3	4.8	2.6	7.0	5.7	3.0
	9.Decline to answer	1.0	0.4	1.9	4.9	--	5.7	1.8	0.3	0.2	0.3
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Yet, in this national picture, ethnic differences stand out, as shown in Table A:13. The Malay community continues to give the government a much more favorable review on corruption responsiveness than the other communities.

Table A: 13 Corruption Responsiveness Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		In your opinion, is the government working to crackdown corruption and root out bribes?							
		It is doing its best	It is doing something	It is not doing much	Doing nothing	DU	CC	DA	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	24.9%	48.2%	21.0%	2.3%	.9%	2.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	8.3%	30.4%	45.5%	11.9%	.6%	2.7%	.6%	100.0%
	India	19.5%	41.6%	21.2%	13.3%	.9%	2.7%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	33.1%	38.6%	13.4%	2.4%	1.6%	10.2%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	20.7%	41.7%	27.0%	6.0%	.9%	3.4%	.3%	100.0%

Section B Competition

Elections in Malaysia are keenly contested where almost 50% of the electorate feel that there is choice, even if with independents, as shown in Table B:1. This figure rises to 76% if you include those who occasionally felt they had at least some choice on occasion.

This is so because elections in Malaysia commands trust and does elicit participation, with election turnout rates averaging about 72.77% in the 2004 general election and 74.8% (unweighted) in the recent 2008 general election. This reflects a long history of electoral competition with the participation of well-organised parties and with good political coverage of elections in the media, especially the vernacular Chinese and Indian media.

Table B:1 Competitive Choice

Question	Values	Malaysia
How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different	1.Always	24.4
	2.Most of the time	24.1
	3.Occasionally	27.3

parties/candidates.	4.Rarely	14.8
	7.Don't Understand	2.6
	8.Can't choose	6.4
	9.Decline to answer	0.4
	Missing	--

Electoral messages of the various parties are also relatively coherent. Still, we suggest that the 2004 general election was special since it was held after Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's retirement which gave hope of reforms and change to many, both within and without the BN. BN supporters who were hostile to Dr. Mahathir certainly voted for the BN under the new leadership of Abdullah Badawi while many in opposition also felt duty-bound to give Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Dr. Mahathir's successor, a fair chance to prove himself since he had at that time, effectively commandeered the political message of the reformasi movement and the political opposition. However, all this changed in the recent 2008 election which ended up as a referendum on Abdullah Badawi's leadership which was perceived as weak and lackluster. As well, the 2008 elections saw the return of Anwar Ibrahim to active politics. Consequently, election participation was high in response to his leadership and the coherence of the political opposition's electoral message – which was effectively summarized into a single word, “Change”.

Table B:2 Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different parties/candidates.	1.Always	9.9	14.0	13.8	31.6	18.7	12.8	37.7	56.6	2.9	24.4
	2.Most of the time	41.3	34.3	24.5	24.1	28.6	35.8	38.2	19.5	41.2	24.1
	3.Occasionally	29.6	28.1	33.8	21.7	33.9	27.8	15.8	9.9	39.4	27.3
	4.Rarely	12.9	20.0	22.5	6.7	11.0	16.0	1.9	4.3	8.7	14.8
	7.Don't Understand	2.1	1.1	1.1	1.9	--	0.6	1.8	0.3	--	2.6
	8.Can't choose	3.5	2.1	3.4	8.2	7.8	5.5	3.5	9.0	7.7	6.4
	9.Decline to answer	0.8	0.3	0.9	5.9	--	1.5	1.1	0.5	0.1	0.4
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Regionally, given a symbiotic political-economic history until 1963 and an on-going symbiotic economic relationship, Malaysia is better but not much better than Singapore within the top “always” cohort as far as electoral choices are concerned (See Table B2). Malaysia is worse off in terms of electoral competitiveness than its other immediate regional neighbors, Thailand and Indonesia (especially given the explosion of political parties in Indonesia post- Suharto) but better than the Philippines where choices are often limited by personalized politics.

Returning to a domestic discussion of competitive choices, we find that ethnicity is a big factor in influencing electorate perception. The cross-tabulation between competitive choice and ethnicity in Table B3 shows that

the Chinese are the least persuaded to see elections as providing competitive choices compared to other ethnic groups, especially Indians, Others (mainly East Malaysian natives) and Malays. That this is so is due to the Chinese being circumscribed by the nature of ethnic politics in the country where institutional issues like Malay parties (UMNO and PAS are the two largest Malay ethnic parties), an ethnic-Malay public discourse and Malay-majority constituencies dominate. Indians being longtime supporters of the BN are also apt to vote across ethnic lines for any BN candidate, thus their perception of choice. It is however likely that the Indian community would have a lower perception of competitive choice today in the recent light of the community's painful experience around HINDRAF.

Table B:3 Election Choice and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different parties/candidates.							
		Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Rarely	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	26.2%	25.7%	27.1%	15.0%	1.1%	4.8%	.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	15.7%	18.7%	26.4%	21.1%	7.1%	10.7%	.3%	100.0%
	India	29.5%	31.2%	24.1%	8.9%	2.7%	2.7%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	33.1%	21.3%	23.6%	8.7%	2.4%	10.2%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	24.3%	23.8%	26.3%	15.4%	3.0%	6.8%	.3%	100.0%

On the issue of perception of access to the media, about 58% felt that electoral candidates had equal access to the media. Yet, a substantial percentage did not agree which poses the problem of explaining such incongruent figures. Before 1999, the government-controlled mainstream media dominated social and political discourse to the detriment of the opposition which would help explain why people see the media as being quite uneven in its coverage. Although the opposition did get some coverage prior to 2004 in the media, it was uneven and limited to mainly the vernacular Chinese and Indian newspapers. But after Abdullah Badawi took over in late 2003, he has allowed more media freedoms including continuing Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's hands-off policy with regard to the new/alternative internet media. This move to allow greater freedoms was undertaken within limits, namely religion and ethnicity. Newspapers that transgressed these boundaries (e.g. by publishing the infamous cartoons caricaturing the Prophet Mohamad), they were sanctioned. Some were issued warnings and forced to make public apologies, some suspended while others were closed down after their licenses were revoked.²² Still, despite more controls, there was a move to open up the media (within the set limits) and to

²² In 2005, two editors were forced to resign from the China Press after inaccurately reporting on a sensitive "nude squat" story which embarrassed the country; the Guangming Daily was suspended; the Oriental News Daily had its licence

make the media more newsworthy and attractive. Consequently, by 2007, when our poll was conducted, it was more apparent that the mainstream media had become more splashy and critical, attempting to engage its readers with more intellectually-stimulating articles and presenting more dimensions to a political position and candidate than what it previously practiced. Furthermore, with the advent of new/alternative media (especially the internet), the mainstream media's agenda is now challenged and often set by the more versatile new/alternative media. This situation of greater media freedom is thus likely to change further thanks to technology. Indeed, the recent 2008 election saw the new/alternative media come into its own, what more when they had a media focal point for the elections in the person of Anwar Ibrahim, who brought a whole new discourse to the hitherto political rhetoric.

Table B:4 Access to the Media Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia
Political parties or candidates in our country have equal access to the mass media during the election period.	1.Strongly Agree	12.4
	2.Somewhat Agree	46.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	25.2
	4.Strongly Disagree	9.7
	7.Don't Understand	1.6
	8.Can't choose	4.5
	9.Decline to answer	0.4
	Missing	--

Despite its strict controls over the media, it is evident that compared to its regional neighbor Singapore, Malaysia is less strict. Singapore's state controls over the media are much tighter given the institutional coherence of the regime and undesirable news is often not published for fear of the threat of legal suits.

Table B5: Regional Comparison - Media

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
Political parties or candidates in our country have equal access to the mass media during the election period.	1.Strongly Agree	4.9	32.8	24.1	15.9	15.5	4.8	5.2	38.0	17.3	12.4
	2.Somewhat Agree	56.6	29.7	32.5	45.0	50.8	45.9	62.6	40.2	42.1	46.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	27.6	22.3	28.2	24.5	24.2	22.1	13.1	4.8	25.3	25.2
	4.Strongly Disagree	2.3	10.4	11.5	4.1	4.8	18.8	0.9	1.0	4.6	9.7
	7.Don't Understand	4.0	1.8	1.6	2.2	--	1.7	12.6	2.8	--	1.6
	8.Can't choose	4.0	2.7	1.3	6.5	4.7	5.4	4.7	12.3	10.4	4.5

withheld for months; in 2006, the Sarawak Tribune had its licence revoked; the New Straits Times and Radio Television Malaysia were given warnings; on-line newspaper Malaysiakini had their offices raided and their computers taken away. See www.aliran.com for critical views on this issue.

	9. Decline to answer	0.6	0.1	0.8	1.7	--	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.4
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Interestingly, cross-tabulating media access with ethnicity basically shows little ethnic difference. If anything, it suggests that perception of equal mass media access depends on where one stands in the political camp that one is supportive of. Only the Indian community shows a slight difference in perceiving greater media access but this is again due to their over-whelming support for the BN within the community prior to the 2004 election

Table B:4 Media Access and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		Political parties or candidates in our country have equal access to the mass media during the election period.							
		Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	10.0%	47.4%	28.1%	10.1%	.5%	3.6%	.3%	100.0%
	Chinese	12.8%	41.4%	22.3%	14.3%	1.5%	7.1%	.6%	100.0%
	India	20.5%	46.4%	23.2%	4.5%	3.6%	1.8%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	16.5%	41.7%	24.4%	2.4%	5.5%	8.7%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	12.4%	45.1%	25.7%	9.9%	1.6%	4.9%	.4%	100.0%

As shown in Table B: 6, which gauges the fairness of elections in Malaysia mirrors the results of Table B1, namely the high amount of trust that the electorate has in the electoral system which allows for a high amount of competitiveness based on free and fair contest. Still, despite this, there is a sufficiently large percentage of respondents who have deep reservations, namely the 16% who articulated their deep concern about free and fair elections given the messy experience of the 2004 general elections. In that election even Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi voiced his dissatisfaction over the bungled administration and asked for a thorough investigation of the said election owing to numerous electoral irregularities, like incorrectly printed ballots, misunderstandings in places of voting, the existence of different electoral rolls, phantom voters, bribes, counting discrepancies, etc.²³ (Devaraj 2004, Khoo 2004, Tikamdas 2004). PM Badawi however later denied his dissatisfaction as being only minor problems and the media trumpeted the fact as such. In other words, despite the seriousness of the irregularities, public perception of the seriousness of it all was deeply influenced by an elite response to public perception, which we argue thus led to such a high percentage of Malaysians perceiving elections to be free and fair. That said, we also note that over 10% chose not to answer this

²³ Tikamdas, Ramdas (2004), "An election day under guardian angels", <http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2004a/3b.html>; Khoo (2004), "A brave new world? Worrying implications for democracy", <http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2004a/3i.html>; Devaraj, Jayakumar (2004), "The 2004 BN victory: By fair means or foul?", <http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2004a/5c.html>

question. We interpret this 10% figure as reflecting people who are circumspect about their views to pollsters given the semi-authoritarian nature of the state and their fear of being seen as publicly articulating a response that could ‘get them into trouble’. Since then, it is unlikely that the high figure of 72% has held firm. In late-2006, the BERSIH movement, a loose coalition of civil society organizations and opposition political parties that was formed largely in response to the election irregularities of 2004 began in November 2006 to lobby and advocate for major reforms to the election system after serious cases of systemic fraud and irregularities were uncovered (BERSIH 2006). It was this civil society movement via the internet which eventually contributed to the recent massive public concern in Malaysia – prior to the March 2008 general election – of the need for substantive change in the way elections are organized and run in the country. Arguably, this also led to the huge reversal of fortune for the Barisan Nasional in the 2008 election.

Table B: 6 Fairness of Elections in Malaysia

Question	Values	Malaysia
On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 2004.	1. Completely free and fair	34.4
	2. Free and fair, but with minor problem	38.2
	3. Free and fair, with major problem	7.9
	4. Not free or fair	7.9
	0. Not applicable	
	8. Can't choose	10.1
	9. Decline to answer	1.6
	Missing	--

Again, comparing Malaysia with its nearest neighbor Singapore gives us an insight into how the media, via public discussion of issues, can influence perception towards the freedom and fairness of elections. The figures show that Malaysians have a more critical view of the electoral process and its limitations relative to Singapore, where general elections are deeply circumscribed by all sorts of rules and procedures. Yet, Malaysia’s figures are not unusual since it mirrors other regional neighbors. If anything, we think this reflects elite framing of the news and of elections in the media. Elite ownership and framing of news permeates regional news coverage.

Table B:7 Media Access Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia		
On the whole, how would you rate the	1. Completely free and fair	16.0	32.0	14.3	31.2	13.4	29.6	54.0	--	62.4	20 .3	--	34.4
	2. Free and fair, but with minor problem	30.7	34.8	40.1	35.4	43.9	55.6	29.3	--	22.7	44 .1	--	38.2

freeness and fairness of the last national election.	3.Free and fair, with major problem	15.7	20.0	25.1	11.1	17.8	4.4	10.4	--	4.2	15.2	--	7.9
	4.Not free or fair	25.6	5.9	15.1	8.0	9.3	2.5	2.6	--	1.0	3.0	--	7.9
	0.Not applicable	--	--	--	1.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	8.Can't choose	7.7	4.6	3.8	8.8	15.6	5.4	1.8	--	9.1	17.3	--	10.1
	9.Decline to answer	4.2	1.2	1.7	4.4	--	2.4	1.9	--	0.7	--	--	1.6
	Missing	--	1.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

We examined factors that contributed to these political attitudes. Using the ABS template, we looked at partisanship and found the allegiance to a party did not impact attitudes toward electoral completion not media access – both detailed in Tables B:8 and B:9 respectively.

Table B:9 Electoral Competitiveness and Party Allegiance

		How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different parties/candidates.							
		Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Rarely	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
How close do you feel to your chosen political party?	Very close	36.1%	27.1%	16.2%	18.0%	.8%	1.9%	.0%	100.0%
	Somewhat close	24.2%	24.2%	30.6%	14.8%	2.6%	3.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Just a little close	16.4%	24.0%	38.7%	12.0%	.9%	8.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Can't choose	12.0%	16.0%	20.0%	8.0%	.0%	44.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	33.3%	16.7%	27.8%	.0%	11.1%	.0%	11.1%	100.0%
	Total	25.6%	24.6%	28.1%	14.6%	1.7%	5.2%	.2%	100.0%

Table B:8 Electoral Competitiveness and Party Allegiance

		Political parties or candidates in our country have equal access to the mass media during the election period.						
		Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Total
Winning/Loosing camp	Winning camp	15.8%	48.6%	24.4%	6.4%	.9%	4.0%	100.0%
	Loosing camp	7.7%	24.2%	33.0%	31.9%	1.1%	2.2%	100.0%
	Total	14.5%	44.5%	25.8%	10.6%	.9%	3.7%	100.0%

In fact it was only when we looked at the Malaysia-specific features that we find sharp differences. When the perception of free and fair elections is cross-tabulated with ethnicity, as shown in Table B:10, the Chinese had

almost half less that the perception of the election was free and fair, 20.8% compared to 35.2% for the Malays. Considering that the Chinese opposition party DAP lost out badly during the 2004 election, it is unsurprising that less of them thought the elections free and fair relative to the Malays, Others and the Indian communities.

Table B:10 Free and Fair Election and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last general national election, held in 2004?								
		Completely free and fair	Free and fair, but with minor problems	Free and fair, with major problems	Not free or fair	Cant' choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	35.2%	43.5%	8.6%	8.9%	3.3%	.6%	100.0%
	Chinese	20.8%	34.8%	9.2%	8.9%	22.3%	3.9%	100.0%
	India	54.0%	24.8%	.9%	10.6%	8.8%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	44.9%	29.9%	7.1%	1.6%	15.0%	1.6%	100.0%
	Total	34.0%	37.9%	7.9%	8.3%	10.3%	1.6%	100.0%

We also found that where one stands, either in the winning/losing camps, influences perceptions of the electoral process. Table B:11 cross tabulates these questions and finds that those in the winning camp were three times more likely to see the elections as “completely free and fair”, 48.1%, than those in the losing camp, 14.1%. We conclude that one’s perception of freedom and fairness in elections depends on where one stands in the winning or losing camps, with the winners claiming free and fair while the losers claiming otherwise. This issue closely parallels the ethnicity discussion in that the perceived position in the polity influences perceptions of the viability of Malaysia’s democracy.

Table B8 – Free and Fair Elections and Cross-Tabulation with Winners/Losers

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last general national election, held in 2004?								
		Completely free and fair	Free and fair, but with minor problems	Free and fair, with major problems	Not free or fair	Cant' choose	Decline to answer	Total
Winning/Losing camp	Winning camp	48.1%	39.3%	10	2.4%	5.1%	.9%	100.0%
	Losing Camp	14.1%	26.1%	29	37.0%	9.8%	2.2%	100.0%
	Total	42.4%	37.1%		8.2%	5.9%	1.1%	100.0%

Section C – Participation

Another key ingredient in democracy is participation. Ethnic differences, elitism and media framing continue to impact these results. In Malaysia, the main form of participation has been voting. This is in keeping with the regular practice of holding election within a five year time period since independence. As Table C:1 shows, turnout in Malaysian elections have been traditionally high, especially on Peninsular Malaysia.

Table C:1 Turnout for Malaysian and Peninsular Malaysia General Elections, 1959 to 2008²⁴

Year	Malaysia	Peninsular Malaysia
1959	73.3%	73.3%
1964	78.9%	78.9%
1969	73.5%	72.9%
1974	75.1%	75.0%
1978	76.1%	76.7%
1982	74.4%	75.5%
1986	69.9%	71.4%
1990	71.8%	73.7%
1995	68.0%	70.3%
1999	70.7%	73.1%
2004	74.3%	74.7%
2008	75.4	76.2
Avg. Turnout	74.4%	75.2%

The results in the ABS survey for Malaysia as shown in Table C:2 are thus comparatively lower, with only 59.1% of voters recording that they voted in the 2004 polls. The turnout out figure is actually for those eligible to vote, those over the age of 21. The ABS survey includes those above the age of 18, which would account for the lower than turnout number. Studies have shown that there is a growing number of younger Malaysians not registering to vote, and this also contributes to the differential. Relative high voting has evolved with the national media often serving as the propaganda machine for the incumbent BN government. Elections are “politics” in Malaysia. This is tied to the elite structure of the polity, which reinforces the idea that the selection of elites is *the* political playing field. It is important to note that comparatively the 2004 poll was not

²⁴ Source: Election Commission Reports, 1959 to 2004

as competitive a contest as other elections, notably both the 1999 and 2008 polls. The mood on the ground was strongly in favor of giving the new prime minister, Abdullah Badawi, a chance.

Table C:2 Voting in Malaysian Elections Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia
Did you vote in the election in 2004?	1.Yes	59.4
	2.No	19.6
	No because not old enough/not registered	20.8
	0.Not applicable	--
	8.Can't choose	--
	9.Decline to answer	0.2
	Missing	--

Malaysia stands out regionally for its voting participation, recording the lowest number in the region. It is likely that if one excludes younger voters who were not eligible to vote, this number would have been considerably higher. Nevertheless, as Table C:3 shows, Malaysians, as recorded, vote even less than Singaporeans, where there is an even greater lack of contestation.

Table C:3 Voting in Elections in Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia		Vietnam	Japan		Malaysia
Did you vote in the election in 2004?	1.Yes	82.6	83.5	80.6	87.5	68.2	62.3	93.3	92.7	85.8	85.1	--	59.4
	2.No	12.7	14.6	17.7	9.3	23.8	4.2	5.3	6.0	13.8	12.7	--	19.6
	No because there was no contestant ²⁵	--	--	--	--	--	28.3	--	--	--	--	--	20.8
	0.Not applicable	4.0	1.6	1.2	--	5.1	2.6	0.9	0.9	0.4	1.2	--	--
	8.Can't choose	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.5	2.9	0.8	0.4	0.3	--	1.0	--	--
	9.Decline to answer	0.6	0.1	--	2.7	--	2.0	--	0.1	--	--	--	0.2
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

²⁵ This is actually younger or non-registered voters, not lack of contests in the Malaysia data.

The dominance of elections in political participation comes out when one looks more closely at whether Malaysians attend a campaign rally or persuade a person to vote, as shown in Table C:4. Slightly over a quarter of Malaysians attend rallies, 26.6%. Since Malaysian campaigning is still traditional, in that open meetings are the main conduit for sharing information, especially for the opposition, this number is not insignificant. For the BN, rallies are often entertainment events, with food and performers. The nature of campaigning in Malaysia is shifting toward more reliance on “modern” campaigning, television and internet, and, as such, rallies are less central as a means to get information across than in the past. This was notably the case in the 2008 polls, where the internet and YOUTUBE played a key role.

Table C:4 Participation in Malaysia

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
Attend a campaign meeting or rally?	1.Yes	26.6	Persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party?	1.Yes	14.6
	2.No	71.2		2.No	82.9
	0.Not applicable	1.6		0.Not applicable	1.9
	8.Can't choose	0.4		8.Can't choose	0.2
	9.Decline to answer	0.2		9.Decline to answer	0.3
	Missing	--		Missing	--

Political participation remains low when individuals are asked whether they try to influence another to vote, whether they actually campaign for specific candidates. Here only 14.6% of Malaysians are active for certain candidates or parties. While Abdullah Badawi opened up the campaign process, removing the legal constraint on holding public rallies or *ceremah*, there are still limits on political participation, particularly if one campaigns for the opposition. Open support for the opposition is frowned upon, especially if one is a civil servant. It may also lead to negative economic implications. This is especially salient in East Malaysia, where the elites are closely linked to patronage, and many do not oppose the government openly for fear of reducing their benefits.

Regionally, Malaysia is towards the low side of the regional attendance of rallies record, close to that of its regional neighbors, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. The level of participation in rallies in Malaysia is more than double that of Singapore. Malaysia is also in line with its regional neighbors in the level of participation in campaigns. The only country that has perceived robust participation is Mongolia. Malaysia, however, has greater participation than Singapore, where less than 5% engage in campaigning. This shows a greater vibrancy in elections and their competitiveness, with greater organized opposition parties in Malaysia.

Table C:5 Political Participation in Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia		Vietnam	Japan		Malaysia
Attend a campaign meeting or rally?	1.Yes	13.4	60.8	23.2	23.7	21.0	10.2	23.4	--	53.9	21.1	--	26.6
	2.No	86.1	36.5	75.8	74.3	78.1	89.0	75.8	--	37.9	76.1	--	71.2
	0.Not applicable	--	2.5	0.6	0.5	--	0.3	--	--	7.2	1.2	--	1.6
	8.Can't choose	--	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.9	0.3	0.1	--	0.9	1.5	--	0.4
	9.Decline to answer	0.4	--	0.4	1.1	--	0.2	0.7	--	0.1	0.1	--	0.2
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party?	1.Yes	16.1	31.4	19.8	19.7	16.9	2.7	12.3	--	--	6.9	--	14.6
	2.No	83.5	65.4	78.7	77.0	82.2	95.7	86.9	--	--	90.4	--	82.9
	0.Not applicable	--	2.8	0.8	0.8	--	0.6	--	--	--	1.2	--	1.9
	8.Can't choose	--	0.3	0.2	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.1	--	--	1.3	--	0.2
	9.Decline to answer	0.4	--	0.5	1.7	--	0.8	0.8	--	--	0.1	--	0.3
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

A closer look at the socio-economic variables that shape political participation point to some interesting patterns. Gender, as outlined in Tables C:6 and C:7, does not affect voting. This goes against patterns of voting in non-Asian democracies, where women due to homecare commitments often vote less. This also points to a high degree of mobilization of women by political elites within the institutionalized political parties.

Table C:5 Voting and Gender Cross Tabulation

		Did you vote in the General Election held in 2004?			
		Yes	No	Decline to answer	Total
Gender	Male	76.4%	23.4%	.2%	100.0%
	Female	76.0%	23.8%	.2%	100.0%
	Total	76.2%	23.6%	.2%	100.0%

The gender differences are sharper when one looks at other forms of political participation, rally attendance and campaigning. Women are considerably less likely to engage in both activities. Table C:6 shows that 35.9% of men attend rallies, while only 19.7% of women do. This is caused by the timing of rallies, which are often scheduled at night when women have to take care of children or face security concerns. Many rallies are held in dark areas, football fields, for example, that lack facilities for the protection of women. This is especially the case for opposition rallies. Men are also twice as more likely to persuade other voters than women. Traditionally women in Malaysia have played a strong campaign role, but this is not reflected here. As written, this question implies a belief in the capacity to change other opinions, and although women are active in campaigning, they often underestimate their influence in persuasion. This could account for

differences. The media reinforces this role by focusing on women’s campaigning in specific gender-specific arenas, such as markets, or with specific women’s groups, such as single mothers.

Table C:6 Political Participation and Gender Cross Tabulation

		Thinking about the national election in 2004, did you attend a campaign meeting or rally?				
		Yes	No	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Gender	Male	35.9%	63.6%	.3%	.2%	100.0%
	Female	19.7%	79.8%	.3%	.2%	100.0%
	Total	27.9%	71.6%	.3%	.2%	100.0%
		Thinking about the national election in 2004, did you try to persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party?				
		Yes	No	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Gender	Male	20.6%	78.9%	.2%	.3%	100.0%
	Female	10.5%	89.2%	.2%	.2%	100.0%
	Total	15.6%	84.0%	.2%	.3%	100.0%

Although education is important in other ABS country surveys, for the most part, this factor was not associated with sharp differences in Malaysia. The exception is voting, where the results outlined in Table C:7 point to a fascinating relationship between education and voting. The lower the levels of education, the more likely one is likely to vote. When one shared these results with a leader in the opposition, in his tongue in cheek Malaysian English response was “No wonder, la. The BN always in power what.” However, when one considers other form of participation, education is not associated with differences in attitudes.

Table C:7 Voting and Education Levels Cross Tabulation

		Did you vote in the General Election held in 2004?			
		Yes	No	Decline to answer	Total
Education level	No formal education	85.3%	13.2%	1.5%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	82.9%	17.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	83.9%	16.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	79.0%	21.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	70.8%	29.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	66.7%	32.4%	1.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	79.0%	21.0%	.0%	100.0%

	Some university education	61.1%	38.9%	.0%	100.0%	
	University education completed	67.3%	32.7%	.0%	100.0%	
	Post-graduate degree	55.6%	44.4%	.0%	100.0%	
	Total	76.1%	23.7%	.2%	100.0%	
		Thinking about the national election in 2004, did you attend a campaign meeting or rally?				
		Yes	No	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Education level	No formal education	26.5%	72.1%	1.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	26.2%	71.4%	1.2%	1.2%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	36.1%	63.4%	.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	29.3%	70.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	29.2%	70.8%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	26.5%	72.7%	.4%	.4%	100.0%
	Some university education	23.0%	77.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	University education completed	23.4%	76.6%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Post-graduate degree	22.2%	77.8%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	27.8%	71.7%	.3%	.2%	100.0%
		Thinking about the national election in 2004, did you try to persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party?				
		Yes	No	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Education level	No formal education	17.6%	80.9%	.0%	1.5%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	21.4%	76.2%	1.2%	1.2%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	15.8%	83.2%	.5%	.5%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	15.9%	84.1%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	14.0%	86.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	20.2%	79.8%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	15.8%	83.4%	.4%	.4%	100.0%
	Some university education	10.4%	89.6%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	University education completed	10.5%	89.5%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Post-graduate degree	22.2%	77.8%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	15.7%	83.8%	.2%	.3%	100.0%

Despite the prominent role of ethnicity in accounting for variation in attitudes towards the rule of law and competition, it does not shape political participation evenly. As Table C:8 shows, Malays only slightly vote more than other races.

C:8 Voting and Ethnicity Cross Tabulations

		Did you vote in the General Election held in 2004?			
		Yes	No	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	79.4%	20.4%	.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	73.1%	26.5%	.4%	100.0%
	India	72.9%	27.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	71.4%	28.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	76.2%	23.6%	.2%	100.0%

Table C:9 shows, however, that Malays are much more likely to attend a political rally than Chinese, 39.1% compared to 8.9% and persuade others through campaigning, 16.9% compared to 9.9%. This illustrated the unequal rights of different communities in how they perceive they can participate in Malaysian politics. Chinese are much less “political”.

C:8 Political Participation and Ethnicity Cross Tabulations

		Thinking about the national election in 2004, did you attend a campaign meeting or rally?				
		Yes	No	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	39.1%	60.9%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	8.9%	90.8%	.3%	.0%	100.0%
	India	23.2%	74.1%	1.8%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	24.2%	74.2%	.8%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	27.9%	71.6%	.3%	.2%	100.0%
		Thinking about the national election in 2004, did you try to persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party?				
		Yes	No	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	16.9%	82.9%	.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	9.9%	89.5%	.3%	.3%	100.0%
	India	18.8%	80.4%	.0%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	20.2%	78.2%	.8%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	15.5%	84.0%	.3%	.3%	100.0%

Ethnic differences persist as a factor underlying variation in political interest. Table C:10 outlines the variation in political interest in the country, with 40.8%, showing an interest in “politics”. A greater share of Malaysians follow the news daily, 57%.

Table C:10 Political Interest in Malaysia

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
How interested in politics?	1.Very interested	8.4	Often follow political news	6.Everyday	33.4
	2.Somewhat interested	32.4		5.Several times a week	23.6
	3.Not very interested	34.2		4.Once or twice a week	13.3
	4.Not at all interested	23.6		3.Not even once a week	14.3
	7.No answer	--		2.Practically never	14.9
	8.Can't choose	1.1		7.No answer	--
	9.Decline to answer	0.2		8.Can't choose	0.4
	Missing	--		9.Decline to answer	0.2
					Missing

Malaysians comparatively are more interested in politics than their neighbors, notably Singapore, but do not lead the region with active interest, as shown in Table C:11. Comparatively, they follow the news less frequently than their neighbors.

Table C:11 Political Interest in Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
How interested in politics?	1.Very interested	4.6	6.7	11.0	16.1	7.8	2.1	4.0	36.6	14.1	8.4
	2.Somewhat interested	27.7	50.3	41.1	56.3	35.1	21.4	29.8	37.6	54.6	32.4
	3.Not very interested	39.6	38.6	23.2	21.2	43.2	38.2	39.0	18.7	27.6	34.2
	4.Not at all interested	27.0	4.1	23.0	4.2	12.9	37.4	24.8	4.8	3.2	23.6
	7.No answer	--	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	8.Can't choose	0.7	0.2	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.5	1.4	2.1	0.4	1.1
	9.Decline to answer	0.4	--	0.5	1.2	--	0.4	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.2
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Often follow	6.Everyday	40.3	43.4	45.2	46.6	52.2	28.5	25.8	58.1	73.6	33.4
	5.Several times a week	13.5	25.9	16.2	30.5	22.8	20.8	22.0	22.0	15	23.6

political news	4.Once or twice a week	17.9	20.6	15.8	12.9	14.9	26.6	18.3	10.6	6.8	13.3
	3.Not even once a week	7.9	5.2	14.5	5.8	6.4	14.2	11.1	3.8	1.8	14.3
	2.Practically never	19.5	4.7	6.3	2.3	2.5	8.9	21.7	4.2	2.6	14.9
	7.No answer	--	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	8.Can't choose	0.4	--	1.3	1.1	1.3	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.1	0.4
	9.Decline to answer	0.5	0.1	0.8	0.8	--	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.2
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Ethnicity and the role of different ethnic communities in the polity underscore these differences. Chinese Malaysians are significantly less likely to express interest in politics compared to the other races, as a result of years of conditioning after the 1969 racial riots. Chinese in particular are deemed second class citizens and too much involvement will translate into further curbing of rights, as occurred in after 1969.

Table C:11 Political Interest and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		How interested would you say you are in politics?						Total
		Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	Can't choose	Decline to answer	
Ethnicity	Malay	10.4%	38.2%	37.2%	13.6%	.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	2.4%	25.8%	26.4%	43.9%	.9%	.6%	100.0%
	India	10.6%	31.0%	32.7%	23.0%	1.8%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	16.5%	24.4%	31.5%	19.7%	7.9%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	8.9%	32.6%	33.2%	23.5%	1.6%	.2%	100.0%

This lack of status and curbed role for Malaysian Chinese is not echoed in following the news. Despite different perceptions of belonging in the polity, as political participants, all ethnic groups follow the news regularly to the same degree with a majority following the news more than several times a week, as shown in Table C:12.

Table C:12 Following the News and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		How often do you follow news about politics and government?							Total
		Everyday	Several times a week	Once or twice a week	Not even once a week	Practically never	Can't choose	Decline to answer	
Ethnicity	Malay	35.5%	27.1%	12.8%	14.5%	10.3%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	36.7%	15.1%	13.9%	14.2%	19.5%	.3%	.3%	100.0%
	India	38.4%	28.6%	8.9%	8.0%	15.2%	.0%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	25.0%	21.1%	17.2%	14.8%	18.8%	3.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	35.0%	23.3%	13.2%	13.8%	14.2%	.4%	.2%	100.0%

In examining perceptions of political efficacy, the elitist nature of the Malaysian polity, in our view, accounts for low numbers at the top. Malaysia hybrid nature, the fact that elections are regular and institutional parties

reflects some participation, underlies perceptions of efficacy in participation within a limited scope. As Table C:13 shows, only 37.8%, slightly above a third, think they have the ability to participate in politics. The numbers recorded by those perceiving politics as “too complicated, 71.2%, is even higher.

Table C:13 Political Efficacy in Malaysia

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
I think I have the ability to participate in politics.	1.Strongly Agree	6.9	Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.	1.Strongly Agree	17.2
	2.Somewhat Agree	30.9		2.Somewhat Agree	53.9
	3.Somewhat Disagree	42.6		3.Somewhat Disagree	21.1
	4.Strongly Disagree	16.3		4.Strongly Disagree	4.0
	7.Don't Understand	0.4		7.Don't Understand	1.5
	8.Can't choose	2.3		8.Can't choose	2.0
	9.Decline to answer	0.7		9.Decline to answer	0.2
	Missing	--		Missing	--

Despite these numbers, Malaysia falls in the middle in terms of political efficacy. There are no clear regional patterns. This points to the overall regional elitist structure of democratic regional practices and the narrow transparency of issues. In Malaysia, the media fails to promote substantive discussion of issues. At the same juncture, in elitist polities, there is no need to “understand” politics, rather there is a need to show loyalty.

Table C:14 Political Efficacy in Regional Comparison.

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
I think I have the ability to participate in politics.	1.Strongly Agree	2.1	24.6	8.8	25.0	3.9	2.2	1.5	12.2	3.8	6.9
	2.Somewhat Agree	32.9	33.7	18.8	50.7	24.6	19.7	27.8	25.5	15.2	30.9
	3.Somewhat Disagree	50.5	17.9	23.6	13.0	42.7	52.4	59.3	25.2	37.9	42.6
	4.Strongly Disagree	9.6	22.2	45.7	4.9	22.2	23.0	4.7	21.3	39.7	16.3
	7.Don't Understand	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	--	0.1	2.9	1.8	--	0.4
	8.Can't choose	2.5	0.9	1.5	3.2	6.6	2.0	2.7	10.3	3.1	2.3
	9.Decline to answer	1.3	0.1	1.2	2.7	--	0.7	1.1	3.8	0.3	0.7
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.	1.Strongly Agree	10.4	27.7	25.9	30.6	6.8	12.4	6.1	10.7	18.6	17.2
	2.Somewhat Agree	63.0	39.2	31.3	52.8	47.2	58.2	68.4	34.3	43.4	53.9
	3.Somewhat Disagree	21.9	21.2	26.0	10.2	33.3	17.5	18.6	28.0	25.6	21.1
	4.Strongly Disagree	1.9	9.8	12.6	1.0	7.3	9.6	0.9	10.7	9.2	4.0
	7.Don't Understand	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	--	0.3	3.6	6.0	--	1.5
	8.Can't choose	1.2	1.0	2.7	1.9	5.4	1.7	1.7	9.2	3.0	2.0
	9.Decline to answer	0.6	--	0.6	2.3	--	0.4	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.2
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

A closer look at the socio-economic variables, suggest that ethnicity remains the main cleavages. Table C:15 outlines gender differences, and shows that women have lower perceptions of efficacy and political understanding than men.

Table C:15 Political Efficacy and Gender Cross Tabulation

		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : I think I have the ability to participate in politics.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Gender	Male	8.4%	36.0%	37.5%	15.4%	.0%	1.9%	.6%	100.0%
	Female	6.0%	24.5%	46.4%	18.4%	.7%	3.5%	.5%	100.0%
	Total	7.2%	30.4%	41.9%	16.9%	.3%	2.7%	.6%	100.0%
		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Gender	Male	15.9%	49.6%	26.1%	5.5%	1.1%	1.6%	.2%	100.0%
	Female	19.3%	57.3%	15.0%	2.5%	2.0%	3.7%	.2%	100.0%
	Total	17.6%	53.4%	20.6%	4.0%	1.6%	2.6%	.2%	100.0%

Education levels also point to differences, as outlined in Table C:16. In keeping with the more frequent voting of those with lower education levels, there is a parallel sense higher sense of efficacy among those with lower education. More education in Malaysia ironically brings about less efficacy.

Table C:16 Political Efficacy and Education Levels Cross Tabulation

		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : I think I have the ability to participate in politics.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagreed	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Education level	No formal education	13.0%	14.5%	34.8%	21.7%	1.4%	14.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	8.4%	18.1%	44.6%	22.9%	1.2%	3.6%	1.2%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	6.6%	26.8%	39.9%	21.9%	.5%	3.3%	1.1%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	6.1%	27.2%	39.5%	23.7%	.0%	2.6%	.9%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	10.5%	26.8%	41.8%	17.6%	.7%	2.0%	.7%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	5.3%	32.1%	45.0%	14.5%	.8%	2.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	6.5%	34.6%	46.2%	11.2%	.0%	1.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Some university education	3.6%	42.0%	40.6%	12.3%	.0%	.7%	.7%	100.0%

	University education completed	11.5%	35.9%	37.2%	15.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Post-graduate degree	.0%	55.6%	22.2%	11.1%	.0%	.0%	11.1%	100.0%
	Total	7.3%	30.3%	41.8%	16.9%	.4%	2.7%	.6%	100.0%
	Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.								
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Education level	No formal education	20.3%	44.9%	15.9%	.0%	7.2%	11.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	23.8%	50.0%	10.7%	3.6%	2.4%	8.3%	1.2%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	17.4%	52.2%	18.5%	3.8%	3.3%	3.8%	1.1%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	13.0%	50.4%	27.0%	5.2%	.9%	3.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	18.3%	54.2%	20.3%	4.6%	1.3%	1.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	19.2%	54.6%	19.2%	3.8%	1.5%	1.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	15.5%	60.9%	19.4%	4.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Some university education	17.3%	54.7%	24.5%	3.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	University education completed	20.3%	44.3%	26.6%	5.1%	1.3%	2.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Post-graduate degree	.0%	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	17.5%	53.4%	20.6%	4.1%	1.6%	2.6%	.2%	100.0%

Ethnicity persists, however, with the sharpest differences, as shown in Table C:17. Interestingly, Chinese and Malays have similar strong perceptions of the ability to participate, but taking the two top responses collectively, both Chinese and Indians have sharply less perceived political efficacy than Malays or others. Chinese also stand out significantly in recording higher levels of lack of understanding of politics, compared to the other communities. Ethnic politics in Malaysia permeates political perceptions.

Table C:17 Political Efficacy and Ethnicity Cross Tabulations

		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : I think I have the ability to participate in politics.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	7.0%	37.2%	44.9%	8.9%	.3%	1.2%	.5%	100.0%
	Chinese	6.6%	18.5%	37.9%	31.6%	.6%	3.9%	.9%	100.0%
	India	3.5%	26.5%	43.4%	23.9%	.0%	1.8%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	13.4%	29.9%	36.2%	11.8%	.0%	8.7%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	7.2%	30.3%	41.9%	16.8%	.3%	2.8%	.6%	100.0%

		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	11.8%	59.3%	24.0%	2.5%	.9%	1.4%	.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	29.5%	44.3%	14.9%	5.4%	1.5%	4.2%	.3%	100.0%
	India	13.4%	55.4%	17.9%	9.8%	2.7%	.0%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	19.0%	44.4%	21.4%	4.0%	4.0%	7.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	17.6%	53.2%	20.6%	4.1%	1.6%	2.6%	.2%	100.0%

Section D Vertical Accountability

On the issue of vertical accountability, we find and outline in Table D:1 that three quarters, 75%, of Malaysians, largely agree that they have the power to change a government that they do not like. Yet, we find their answers to this question incongruent with local conditions since when they had the chance to do so in the 2004 election. They did not opt to vote for the opposition, despite the fact that the BN government had become extremely unpopular by mid-2003 under the leadership of former PM Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Instead, the same government (with almost the same cabinet) but under the leadership of PM Abdullah Badawi won the 2004 election convincingly, capturing an overwhelming majority of parliamentary seats (198 out of 213 seats) and about 64% of the popular votes cast. If anything, this reinforces our view that politics in Malaysia is elitist since many people voted the way they did in 2004 not because of the BN government but because of the absence of “nasty” Dr. Mahathir as opposed to the leadership of “nice guy” Abdullah Badawi. The personality of these elites played a major role in the campaign. As well, this question points to some likely misunderstanding of the question among the respondents polled since the question does sound like it is a compound question. Specifically, while people may perceive themselves as having the power to change a government, it does not follow that they will do so in an election. Thus, a potential misunderstanding.

Table D:1 –Vertical Accountability Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
People have the power to change a government they don't like.	1.Strongly Agree	30.0	Between elections, the people have no way of holding the government responsible for its actions.	1.Strongly Agree	13.0	How often do government officials withhold important information from the public view?	1.Always	29.2
	2.Somewhat Agree	45.6		2.Somewhat Agree	49.1		2.Most of the time	23.3
	3.Somewhat Disagree	17.6		3.Somewhat Disagree	25.5		3.Occasionally	27.3
	4.Strongly Disagree	3.8		4.Strongly Disagree	4.3		4.Rarely	9.6
	7.Don't Understand	0.6		7.Don't Understand	3.4		7.Don't Understand	1.2

	8.Can't choose	1.8		8.Can't choose	4.1		8.Can't choose	8.6
	9.Decline to answer	0.6		9.Decline to answer	0.7		9.Decline to answer	0.7
	Missing	--		Missing	--		Missing	--

The next set of figures shows further incongruence since although many polled view that they have the power to change government, nearly 2/3rds, 62.1%, do not seem as convinced when it comes to the exercise of democratic checks and balances to hold a government accountable for its actions in between electoral periods. Indeed, this large figure suggests electorate powerlessness instead democratic power. Again, we see this as pointing towards elitist politics with significant disconnect between what people believe and what is practiced. Similarly, this view of elitist politics is reinforced by the next set of figures that shows about 80% of those polled saying that the government does withhold important information from the public. If anything, it adds to the sense of disconnect between government and those governed where those governed perceive themselves as being unable to hold the government to account since they do not have access to key information. Malaysians thus trust democratic politics to work during election periods but expect opaque government outside these periods. In other words, democratic politics in Malaysia is largely elitist since democratic politics revolves around elections and within an electoral arena but does not spill over into the normal life of society outside of electoral periods.

When seen from an ethnic perspective outlined in Table D:2, what we find is that there is little difference between ethnic groups with regard to how they perceive their power in changing a government they do not like. However, when it comes to holding the government to account in-between elections, the Chinese (73%) and Indians (71%) are those who feel most powerless unlike the Malays (58%) and Others (43%) who seem to be more convinced of their power to assert a democratic check and balance on government outside of election periods. This is unsurprising given the ethnic nature of politics in the country where political demands that are rooted in an ethnic mould get noticed and are especially rewarded if it is cast in a Malay/Bumiputera light. However, when it comes to government information transparency, almost all ethnic groups are in agreement that the Malaysian government is opaque in its dealings with the public.

Table D:2 Vertical Accountability and Ethnicity Cross Tabulations

		People have the power to change a government they don't like.							
		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	31.6%	47.4%	14.8%	3.7%	.6%	.8%	1.1%	100.0%
	Chinese	27.0%	43.3%	18.7%	4.7%	.3%	4.7%	1.2%	100.0%

	India	33.9%	37.5%	23.2%	2.7%	2.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	24.4%	49.6%	19.7%	2.4%	.8%	2.4%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	29.8%	45.6%	17.1%	3.8%	.7%	2.0%	1.0%	100.0%
Between elections, the people have no way of holding government responsible for its actions.									
		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	10.1%	48.0%	29.3%	5.6%	2.8%	3.0%	1.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	19.9%	53.4%	14.2%	2.4%	3.3%	5.9%	.9%	100.0%
	India	17.9%	53.6%	19.6%	3.6%	2.7%	2.7%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	5.5%	37.5%	33.6%	6.2%	10.9%	5.5%	.8%	100.0%
	Total	13.0%	48.9%	24.7%	4.6%	3.8%	4.0%	1.0%	100.0%
How often government withhold information from the public view?									
		Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Rarely	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	29.6%	24.0%	25.5%	11.2%	.6%	8.6%	.5%	100.0%
	Chinese	30.4%	24.1%	25.9%	7.1%	1.5%	9.8%	1.2%	100.0%
	India	25.7%	16.8%	31.0%	16.8%	1.8%	8.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	22.8%	22.8%	30.7%	7.9%	3.1%	10.2%	2.4%	100.0%
	Total	28.7%	23.2%	26.7%	10.3%	1.2%	9.0%	.8%	100.0%

When compared regionally, as shown in Table D:3, we find that Singapore is the least convinced that they have the power to change their government. One in four Singaporeans think that their government is not transparent as opposed to half in Malaysia. We attribute this to the role of the media in Singapore which is highly controlled - much more so than in Malaysia - and which does not provide much of an institutional oversight role towards government. The stymied flow of free information and the weakness of the Singaporean parliament also thus explains the perception of lack of transparency and accountability. It is the media and how it frames issues that enhances less critical discourse in Malaysia, including questioning the media.

Table D:3 – Vertical Accountability Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
People have the power to change a government they don't like.	1.Strongly Agree	6.1	58.6	35.3	25.5	5.7	5.9	10.3	20.4	14.1	30.0
	2.Somewhat Agree	53.3	23.1	31.7	51.0	38.4	45.3	56.8	35.2	42.5	45.6
	3.Somewhat Disagree	31.4	9.4	19.6	13.5	36.7	30.9	24.8	17.9	32.0	17.6
	4.Strongly Disagree	3.3	6.4	11.7	3.4	12.5	14.4	2.1	9.8	7.5	3.8

	7.Don't Understand	1.6	1.2	0.4	1.1	--	0.3	3.0	4.8	--	0.6
	8.Can't choose	3.4	1.1	1.3	4.0	6.8	2.4	2.4	9.9	3.7	1.8
	9.Decline to answer	0.8	0.1	0.2	1.5	--	0.8	0.7	1.9	0.3	0.6
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Between elections, the people have no way of holding the government responsible for its actions.	1.Strongly Agree	6.7	36.3	14.8	12.2	12.0	6.0	3.5	10.1	24.0	13.0
	2.Somewhat Agree	54.3	27.3	34.3	39.7	44.1	47.4	41.1	21.7	37.5	49.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	30.7	16.2	32.3	25.9	30.3	24.4	37.0	27.8	23.9	25.5
	4.Strongly Disagree	2.6	9.4	13.7	5.4	5.4	14.4	4.7	15.3	3.8	4.3
	7.Don't Understand	1.4	5.7	1.1	6.0	--	1.6	8.9	7.8	--	3.4
	8.Can't choose	3.2	4.5	2.8	8.5	8.2	4.3	3.4	15.8	10.5	4.1
	9.Decline to answer	1.1	0.5	1.2	2.4	--	1.8	1.3	1.6	0.3	0.7
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
How often do government officials withhold important information from the public view?	1.Always	13.7	21.2	21.0	5.2	28.5	5.7	3.2	37.7	14.6	29.2
	2.Most of the time	34.9	39.1	30.9	13.4	41.3	19.4	22.7	24.2	40.4	23.3
	3.Occasionally	35.2	29.0	25.6	43.7	22.0	40.9	35.5	12.1	36.1	27.3
	4.Rarely	6.9	5.5	14.3	21.5	2.6	23.0	26.5	4.3	2.4	9.6
	7.Don't Understand	1.3	0.8	2.4	1.2	--	1.0	3.1	1.1	--	1.2
	8.Can't choose	6.7	3.3	3.8	10.2	5.5	8.3	7.4	19.8	6.4	8.6
	9.Decline to answer	1.3	0.9	2.0	4.9	--	1.7	1.6	1.0	0.1	0.7
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Section E Horizontal Accountability

When it comes to issues of holding the government to account when it breaks the law, over half of those polled in Malaysia feel that the legal system is ineffective. On the other hand, nearly 65% of those polled feel that the legislature can play a role and keep the government in check. This, for us, is another disconnect. Yet, it is unsurprising since Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, during his 22 years as PM, deliberately undermined the power of the judiciary (and most infamously in 1988 when bludgeoned judicial institutions by sacking the Lord

President and two other Federal Court judges and suspended two others) and took away the judiciary’s powers of judicial review via a series of constitutional amendments.²⁶ Indeed, Dr. Mahathir is famous for his view that the courts should not make the law since that is the purview of parliament; instead, the courts should just implement the law. Interestingly, this view is also shared by about 52% of Malaysians polled as shown in Table E2 which asks if judges should listen to the executive branch of government when deciding important cases.

Table E:1 –Horizontal Accountability Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
When the government breaks the laws, there is nothing the legal system can do.	1.Strongly Agree	12.6	To what extent is the legislature capable of keeping the government in check?	1.Very capable	12.8
	2.Somewhat Agree	37.9		2.Capable	52.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	33.8		3.Not capable	21.4
	4.Strongly Disagree	9.4		4.Not at all capable	5.4
	7.Don't Understand	1.1		7.Don't Understand	2.5
	8.Can't choose	4.5		8.Can't choose	5.4
	9.Decline to answer	0.7		9.Decline to answer	0.4
	Missing	--		Missing	--

Taking a regional perspective, as shown in Table E:2, one realizes that Singaporeans broadly shares the same basic position of Malaysians towards the role and impact of the legal system and the legislature as a democratic check and balance to government. Specifically, Singaporeans share the same pattern of responses but only differ in the degree whereby they perceive the judiciary has less impact and influence upon the government as compared to the legislature. Thailand’s experience is comparable with Malaysia but Indonesia is not since nearly 59% of those polled in Indonesia are convinced that the legal system has power to act against the government. It is likely that this is due to the recent high-profile legal cases brought against former President Suharto and his family and other regime cronies which were reported widely by the Indonesian press. As well, about 63% of Indonesians felt that their legislature was able to act as a check against the government. This is also likely due to the reformasi process and the holding of genuinely freer elections that took place after President Suharto stepped down.

²⁶ Tun Salleh Abas with K.Das, *May Day for Justice*, Kuala Lumpur: Magnus Books. See also special issue on the 1988 judicial crisis in *Aliran Monthly*, Vol.25, No.3

Table E:2 Horizontal Accountability in Regional Perspective

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
When the government breaks the laws, there is nothing the legal system can do.	1.Strongly Agree	6.6	50.3	18.0	12.9	10.5	2.9	3.4	5.7	22.3	12.6
	2.Somewhat Agree	48.3	21.7	27.5	31.3	36.5	28.7	30.4	15.4	37.7	37.9
	3.Somewhat Disagree	35.2	11.0	32.6	32.1	36.5	35.3	48.1	34.0	20.9	33.8
	4.Strongly Disagree	2.7	12.2	17.9	12.7	6.8	27.0	10.7	26.2	5.8	9.4
	7.Don't Understand	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.3	--	1.8	4.0	6.8	--	1.1
	8.Can't choose	3.9	2.4	1.8	6.4	9.8	3.3	2.0	9.9	13.0	4.5
	9.Decline to answer	1.2	0.1	0.4	2.3	--	1.2	1.4	2.0	0.3	0.7
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
To what extent is the legislature capable of keeping the government in check?	1.Very capable	4.1	5.1	9.8	5.7	11.6	18.3	5.9	37.9	4.6	12.8
	2.Capable	47.0	49.8	47.6	33.8	41.3	60.3	57.5	41.9	35.7	52.1
	3.Not capable	34.9	35.9	25.8	20.4	31.4	12.5	26.8	3.2	43.2	21.4
	4.Not at all capable	5.5	4.2	7.9	5.6	6.7	1.3	1.3	0.5	4.9	5.4
	7.Don't Understand	2.1	0.7	2.7	7.2	--	0.9	3.0	0.8	--	2.5
	8.Can't choose	4.9	4.1	4.8	19.3	8.9	4.8	4.6	14.9	11.5	5.4
	9.Decline to answer	1.5	0.1	1.6	8.0	--	1.9	0.9	0.8	0.1	0.4
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

The ethnic patterns on horizontal accountability are less sharp than in other areas, but persist. As shown in Table E:3, more Chinese feel that there are fewer checks when the government breaks the law within the legal system. The differences are much sharper when one looks at the viability of the parliament as a check on the executive. When seen from an ethnic viewpoint, peoples' confidence in parliament keeping the government in check ranks high in all ethnic groups except the Chinese where only about 42% express confidence. The rest are either not confident or are unable to choose or respond. Again, this points towards the ethnic nature of politics, the political influence of the Chinese community and the overly ethnic Malay-Bumiputera discourse that is framed by the local media.

Table E:3 Horizontal Accountability and Ethnicity Cross Tabulations

		When the government breaks the law, there is nothing the legal system can do.							
		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total

Ethnicity	Malay	11.2%	38.8%	37.2%	9.2%	.5%	2.8%	.3%	100.0%
	Chinese	17.5%	39.5%	22.0%	8.3%	1.8%	9.2%	1.8%	100.0%
	India	9.7%	40.7%	34.5%	10.6%	.0%	3.5%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	7.8%	31.2%	35.2%	12.5%	8.6%	4.7%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	12.5%	38.4%	32.5%	9.4%	1.6%	4.8%	.7%	100.0%
To what extents is the parliament capable of keeping the government in check?									
		Very capable	Somewhat capable	Somewhat not capable	Not at all capable	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	17.3%	55.8%	17.7%	3.3%	1.4%	4.4%	.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	2.7%	38.9%	31.2%	13.4%	3.9%	9.2%	.9%	100.0%
	India	14.3%	54.5%	21.4%	3.6%	2.7%	3.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	16.4%	51.6%	15.6%	.0%	3.1%	10.9%	2.3%	100.0%
	Total	12.9%	50.6%	21.6%	5.7%	2.4%	6.3%	.6%	100.0%

This discussion merits a closer look at the judiciary, which has been the central focus of attention of reform in contemporary Malaysia. Over the years, the judiciary has been embroiled in a whole series of scandals ranging from influence-peddling among judges (the Ayer Molek case), influencing the appointment of judges (the Lingam-Gate affair), inexplicable court decisions on corporate cases (e.g. Metramac), politically-motivated trials (The Anwar Ibrahim affair), etc. which have brought their public reputation to its nadir. Furthermore, the power to prosecute is the responsibility of the Attorney-General (AG), a position that unfortunately, has become deeply politicized during the tenure of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, as seen clearly in the Anwar Ibrahim case. All this has engendered a deep sense of distrust over the ability of the legal system to deliver justice against the powerful, and more so if it involves the government. Consequently, parliament and the various state legislatures have emerged as relatively stronger institutions within Malaysian democracy, and more so when we see even the BN Backbencher's Club (BBC) under the stewardship of activist parliamentarians like Shahrir Samad play a positive role in interrogating government power and demanding explanations for government excess. Interestingly, this raises the issue of incongruence between a high level of trust in the election system and that of how parliament and the judiciary operates.

The Malaysian findings show reticence in increasing the scope of the judiciary. As illustrated in Table E:4, over half, 52.2% , believe that the executive's views should be accepted in the judiciary. This is clearly a reflection of attitudes echoed by Dr. Mahathir during his tenure. It also reflects the elitist orientation of the system, which places power in the hands of a leader, the prime minister.

Table E:4 Judicial Autonomy Malaysian Results

		Percent
When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch.	Strongly agree	11.0
	Agree	41.2
	Disagree	28.9
	Strongly disagree	11.7
	Don't understand the question	2.6
	Can't choose	3.5
	Decline to answer	1.1
	Total	100.0

What is interesting that the ethnic differences in this area of horizontal accountability remain minimal. While Table E:5 shows that there is a slight difference in Chinese support for executive views over the judiciary, 11.6% compared to 7.9% for the Malays, the difference is marginal. Ethnic differences are less persuasive in addressing issues in this area.

Table E:5 Judicial Autonomy and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch.							
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	7.9%	42.3%	34.1%	12.0%	.6%	1.9%	1.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	11.6%	40.2%	19.0%	16.4%	4.5%	7.1%	1.2%	100.0%
	India	18.6%	38.9%	31.0%	7.1%	1.8%	1.8%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	18.8%	39.8%	27.3%	1.6%	8.6%	3.9%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	11.1%	41.1%	28.9%	11.6%	2.6%	3.5%	1.1%	100.0%

Section F – Freedom

On the issues of free speech and free association, basic civil liberties, the results of Table F:1 suggest that the perception in Malaysia is that there is more freedom to associate in an organization (71%) than to express one's views openly (65.5%). These results only reflect the hitherto semi-authoritarian nature of Malaysian society which has numerous restrictive laws that circumscribe free speech like the Internal Security Act, the Emergency Regulations, the Sedition Act, the University and University Colleges Act, etc. etc. Similarly, there are restrictive laws that circumscribe free association like the University and University Colleges Act, the Trade Union Act, the Societies Act, the Emergency Regulations, etc. However, in recent years, with the dismantling of genuinely activist social movements like the trade union movement and the emergence of industry-specific factory unions and other more middle-class civil society groups like consumer, women, environmental non-governmental organizations, there is a genuine sense of one being able to associate in a

variety of societies and participate in their activities, albeit still within circumscribed limits. Thus, while one may participate in a women’s NGO, it does not necessarily translate that one can also openly speak up against sexual/gender discrimination in the press or even hold public demonstrations on the issue. There are tight controls over the press to ensure that this does not occur unless officially sanctioned. As well, it does not also translate that academics working in universities are free to voice critical views in public without inviting official reprisal, especially when their conduct is tightly regulated by all sorts of bureaucratic curbs and strictures (e.g. UUCA, Aku Janji, feudal management and punitive actions).

Table F:1 – Civil Liberties Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
People are free to speak what they think without fear.	1.Strongly Agree	25.4	People can join any organization they like without fear.	1.Strongly Agree	27.2
	2.Somewhat Agree	40.1		2.Somewhat Agree	44.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	23.6		3.Somewhat Disagree	20.5
	4.Strongly Disagree	8.4		4.Strongly Disagree	4.7
	7.Don't Understand	0.7		7.Don't Understand	0.8
	8.Can't choose	1.6		8.Can't choose	2.5
	9.Decline to answer	0.2		9.Decline to answer	0.2
	Missing	--		Missing	--

This repression of free speech and free association is based on an ethnic argument that suggests that tight control is required in a plural society that has had a long history of fragile ethnic and religious relations. Indeed, this message has been propagated for so long and is so entrenched that a large majority of 79% of those polled agree that the government should censor ‘sensitive’ views in Malaysian society, as shown in Table F:2. In other words, there is now little necessity to enforce such curbs on free speech and free association since society itself is imposing self-censorship on free speech and free association especially when it comes to ‘sensitive issues’ (e.g religious conversion, ethnic quotas, Islamic laws and Islamic state, etc). That said, it is likely that things are changing especially since 2005 when a flurry of supposedly ‘sensitive issues’ involving religious conversion of minors, body snatching of dead Muslim converts, the ethnic quotas and policies of the government were highlighted by and discussed in the internet media. Indeed, much of this subsequent discussion was the basis of many peoples’ decision to vote against the current BN government in March 2008.

Table F:2 Discussion of “Sensitive Issues” – Malaysian Results

		Percent
Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : The government should censor sensitive issues in our society.	Strongly agree	22.0
	Agree	57.6
	Disagree	13.1
	Strongly disagree	2.9
	Don't understand the question	1.9
	Can't choose	2.0
	Decline to answer	.6
	Total	100.0

Key issues that are always deemed sensitive in Malaysia are issues of ethnicity/ethnic quotas and religion. Thus, it is expected that the Chinese are more critical of ethnically-based policies since they have long survived in Malaysia without any ethnic-privileges and have long felt discriminated against by such policies. As well, the Chinese vernacular press is much freer (within limits) when discussing these issues compared to the English, Malay and Indian press. Conversely, censorship of sensitive issues appeal to the Malays and Bumiputera natives in Sabah/Sarawak who see themselves as not having benefited sufficiently from ethnic quotas despite over four decades of its implementation, and who thus do not want them ended and who also do not want the issue discussed as it raises up passionate views on either side of the opinion-divide. The Indians, long-supportive of the government and long having been left out by such policies, also see the continuation of ethnic quotas as necessary but oriented towards themselves as a key demand of ethnic advancement. So too the issue of religion when conflated with ethnicity and which has previously caused tension and clashes between communities (the most recent being ethnic/religious clashes between Indians and Muslims in Kampong Rawa, Penang in 1998 and in Kampong Medan, Selangor in 2001 has been deemed too sensitive for public discussion, the government preferring that such sensitive discussions be held privately and differences ironed out within the consociational nature of the BN. Another ‘religious issue’ that emerged into the public sector but which was pushed back into the shadows was the suggestion from civil society to form an Inter-faith Commission of Malaysia to discuss how best to deal with religious issues when ‘religious boundaries are crossed deliberately or inadvertently’.²⁷ Despite the best intentions of its founders, the idea of the ICM floundered when a group of Muslim NGOs accused the ICM of fomenting ‘deep hatred against Islam’ (ibid). The government closed down any subsequent discussion on the basis of ‘sensitivity’. The fear such issues generate among the various communities are palpable which explains why so many agree that the state ‘censor sensitive issues’. This perspective of censorship is also reflected in Table F4, a view that leads to many Malaysians agreeing that communal harmony will be affected negatively if too many groups are

²⁷ Johan Savaranamuttu (2005), “Faultlines of Malaysian multiculturalism”, *Aliran Monthly*, Vol.25, No.3; <http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2005a/3e.html>

organized as per the results of Table F5 which shows about nearly 70% of those polled agreeing to a form of ‘inverse’ self-censorship.

F: 3 – Political Freedoms in Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
People are free to speak what they think without fear.	1.Strongly Agree	8.9	41.0	34.3	27.0	8.6	6.3	14.3	34.7	12.6	25.4
	2.Somewhat Agree	64.1	27.9	32.4	42.8	47.9	32.2	75.2	40.0	39.3	40.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	22.1	18.1	21.3	17.8	31.5	36.5	7.8	15.3	33.6	23.6
	4.Strongly Disagree	1.8	10.5	9.8	4.3	8.4	23.3	0.5	4.7	10.5	8.4
	7.Don't Understand	0.9	0.6	0.5	1.4	--	--	0.6	1.7	--	0.7
	8.Can't choose	1.6	1.7	1.2	4.2	3.5	0.9	1.1	3.3	3.8	1.6
	9.Decline to answer	0.5	0.2	0.5	2.5	--	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.2
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
People can join any organization they like without fear.	1.Strongly Agree	9.6	49.1	32.6	23.6	10.0	5.1	13.5	29.4	16.6	27.2
	2.Somewhat Agree	67.2	29.5	32.7	44.9	54.3	40.5	76.6	25.8	39.9	44.1
	3.Somewhat Disagree	17.7	12.6	22.5	18.3	24.9	31.6	5.8	19.3	30.5	20.5
	4.Strongly Disagree	1.1	5.8	9.7	4.7	5.0	19.8	0.4	6.8	7.7	4.7
	7.Don't Understand	0.9	0.7	0.4	1.3	--	0.7	1.6	2.8	--	0.8
	8.Can't choose	2.6	1.5	1.5	4.7	5.8	1.9	1.6	5.2	5.1	2.5
	9.Decline to answer	0.8	0.6	0.7	2.6	--	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.2
	Missing	--	0.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Finally, on a regional basis, the results indicate that Malaysians and Singaporeans, despite sharing quite a similar ethnic and religious social make-up (and thus similar propensity for the emergence of ‘sensitive issues’), do not share similar levels of perception towards free speech and free association. Instead, Malaysians perceive themselves as being far more open to speak (68%) and associate freely (71%) than Singaporeans do (free to speak – 38%; free to associate – 45%). It does suggest that institutionally, Singapore is a far more authoritarian state that puts much tighter limits on free speech and free association - arguing on the same basis that not doing so allows for the emergence of ethnic and religious tensions. That this is so is due to the fact that there has been practically no change of effective leadership in Singapore (Lee Kuan Yew is

still very much in charge!) since its independence in 1965 while Malaysia has seen various transitions of leadership with the most open period (almost a Prague Spring!) taking place after Dr. Mahathir Mohamad stepped down from office in favor of PM Abdullah Badawi in late 2003. Note that PM Badawi made change and reforms a centre-piece of his administration in the early days of his PM-ship. This is what likely contributed to increased perceptions of freedom in the country.

Table F:4 which highlights the findings of results of perceived role of discussion and harmony illustrate continued reluctance on the part of the Malaysian public towards greater political space.

Table F:4 Political Perceptions of Need for Freedom of Discussion

		Percent
Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society.	Strongly agree	14.4
	Agree	54.8
	Disagree	20.0
	Strongly disagree	6.1
	Don't understand the question	.8
	Can't choose	3.0
	Decline to answer	.8
	Total	100.0
		Percent
Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.	Strongly agree	15.8
	Agree	52.0
	Disagree	23.2
	Strongly disagree	4.4
	Don't understand the question	1.7
	Can't choose	2.4
	Decline to answer	.6
	Total	100.0

An ethnic cross-tabulations shown in Tables F:5 and F:6 shows that generally, although the Chinese (54%) are in favor of censorship of sensitive issues, they are less enthusiastic than the other communities, the Malays (74%), Indians (70%) and Others (78%) who are much more significantly more supportive of censorship. When asked if government should censor sensitive issues in our society, this more direct question elicits even more support from all communities, namely Malay (85%), Chinese (71%), Indian (69%) and others (80%).

Table F:5 Political Discussion and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society.									
		Disagree		Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total	
Ethnicity	Malay	18.4%		4.0%	.3%	1.2%	1.1%	100.0%	
	Chinese	25.4%		13.3%	1.2%	5.3%	.6%	100.0%	
	India	24.3%		2.7%	.9%	.9%	.9%	100.0%	
	Others	10.3%		.8%	2.4%	7.9%	.0%	100.0%	
	Total	20.0%		6.2%	.8%	3.0%	.8%	100.0%	
Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : The government should censor sensitive issues in our society.									
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	20.7%	64.8%	11.8%	1.1%	.5%	.9%	.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	18.7%	52.2%	14.8%	6.2%	2.1%	4.7%	1.2%	100.0%
	India	21.4%	48.2%	21.4%	5.4%	1.8%	.9%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	37.5%	43.0%	7.0%	.0%	8.6%	2.3%	1.6%	100.0%
	Total	22.0%	57.5%	13.0%	2.8%	1.9%	2.1%	.7%	100.0%

When freedom to speak without fear is cross-tabulated against ethnicity, again the pattern shows that the Chinese are the ones least apt to agree. Given the phobia of the Chinese towards ethnic tension and conflict (given their bitter experience of the May 1969 riots) and the way ethnic politics is structured in the country, this is understandable. Similarly, the Malays (73%) and the Other Bumiputera (75%) are the ones that are most agreed that people are free to speak without fear given the leeway accorded them by the political system. The figures repeat the same ethnic pattern highlighted above.

People are free to speak what they think without fear.									
		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	27.0%	46.1%	18.8%	5.7%	.3%	.9%	1.1%	100.0%
	Chinese	10.4%	32.0%	36.7%	16.3%	1.2%	3.6%	.0%	100.0%
	India	24.1%	42.0%	23.2%	8.9%	.0%	1.8%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	41.7%	33.9%	11.8%	2.4%	7.1%	3.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	23.7%	40.5%	23.4%	8.6%	1.2%	2.0%	.6%	100.0%

	People can join any organization they like without fear.							
	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity Malay	29.1%	48.4%	16.5%	3.7%	.5%	.8%	1.1%	100.0%
Chinese	14.3%	42.3%	29.2%	7.1%	1.2%	5.7%	.3%	100.0%
India	26.8%	46.4%	17.9%	5.4%	.9%	2.7%	.0%	100.0%
Others	37.0%	32.3%	18.1%	1.6%	7.1%	3.9%	.0%	100.0%
Total	25.6%	44.8%	20.3%	4.6%	1.4%	2.6%	.7%	100.0%

	Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.							
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity Malay	13.8%	55.1%	25.3%	3.9%	.5%	1.2%	.2%	100.0%
Chinese	13.4%	48.7%	23.1%	7.4%	1.5%	5.0%	.9%	100.0%
India	26.8%	48.2%	20.5%	1.8%	1.8%	.0%	.9%	100.0%
Others	22.7%	47.7%	14.8%	2.3%	7.0%	3.1%	2.3%	100.0%
Total	15.8%	51.9%	23.2%	4.5%	1.6%	2.4%	.7%	100.0%

Perceptions of freedoms are strongly seen through an ethnic lens.

Section G Equality

The issue that is most salient when it comes to ethnicity is equality. As Table G:1 shows, Malaysians are divided in their perceptions of equality. Elitism and ethnic political standing in our view account for the key differences in the polity.

Table G:1 Equality and Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia
Everyone is treated equally by the government.	1.Strongly Agree	19.0
	2.Somewhat Agree	31.8
	3.Somewhat Disagree	32.9
	4.Strongly Disagree	14.4
	7.Don't Understand	0.2
	8.Can't choose	1.3
	9.Decline to answer	0.3

	Missing	--
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Despite the disparity of views, Malaysia has the third highest belief in treatment of government's toward equality in the region. One of the reasons is that equality is on agenda, rooted in ethnic politics and discussion of the affirmative action policy. It is tied to the ethnicized polity. When compared to Singapore, more people in Malaysia see inequality on the part of the government. We would argue this is racially based.

Table G:1 Equality in Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
Everyone is treated equally by the government.	1.Strongly Agree	4.0	13.5	16.2	19.1	1.3	12.3	14.9	43.0	3.3	19.0
	2.Somewhat Agree	38.6	20.7	21.3	36.5	11.7	55.7	57.8	35.5	16.0	31.8
	3.Somewhat Disagree	47.3	30.1	30.0	27.6	55.5	19.2	22.3	12.4	48.0	32.9
	4.Strongly Disagree	6.7	33.6	30.1	11.4	27.6	10.2	2.3	2.6	27.3	14.4
	7.Don't Understand	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.9	--	0.2	0.9	2.0	--	0.2
	8.Can't choose	2.0	1.0	1.9	2.7	3.9	1.8	0.8	4.3	5.2	1.3
	9.Decline to answer	0.4	0.2	0.2	1.7	--	0.7	1.1	0.3	0.3	0.3
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

As Table G:3 shows, social status lacks a strong relationship to perceptions of equality.

Table G:3 Equality and Social Status Cross Tabulation

		Everyone is treated equally by the government.							
		Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
SE13. Social status	Lowest status	17.8%	30.0%	36.7%	13.3%	1.1%	1.1%	.0%	100.0%
	2	24.0%	32.0%	20.0%	16.0%	.0%	8.0%	.0%	100.0%
	3	13.0%	32.6%	41.3%	13.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	4	23.5%	28.4%	28.4%	16.0%	.0%	3.7%	.0%	100.0%
	5	16.7%	34.2%	31.7%	16.3%	.0%	.9%	.2%	100.0%
	6	16.0%	28.5%	40.3%	13.2%	.7%	.7%	.7%	100.0%

	7	20.2%	26.2%	32.1%	21.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	8	16.7%	37.5%	35.4%	10.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	9	29.2%	25.0%	33.3%	12.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Highest status	17.8%	36.2%	34.5%	10.9%	.0%	.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Can't choose	13.3%	6.7%	44.4%	20.0%	.0%	11.1%	4.4%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	9.1%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	17.6%	31.3%	33.9%	14.9%	.3%	1.6%	.3%	100.0%

Ethnicity stands out in accounting for the variation, as shown in Table G:4. Ethnic differences between the Malays and Chinese are large and significant.

Table G: 4 Equal Treatment and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation

		Everyone is treated equally by the government.							
		Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	20.7%	37.9%	30.9%	9.8%	.2%	.3%	.2%	100.0%
	Chinese	6.8%	18.8%	42.0%	28.0%	.0%	3.6%	.9%	100.0%
	India	18.8%	36.6%	28.6%	16.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	29.7%	27.3%	33.6%	4.7%	2.3%	2.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	17.6%	31.4%	34.0%	14.8%	.3%	1.4%	.3%	100.0%

We argue this has to do with the persistence of the affirmative action policy in Malaysia, which in our view underscores different ethnic treatment towards groups by the state. Table G:5 shows variation in attitudes.

Table G:5 Attitudes toward the NEP

		Percent
Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : The government should maintain programs that assist bumiputeras, such as the New Economic Policy	Strongly agree	30.9
	Agree	41.2
	Disagree	12.4
	Strongly disagree	10.7
	Don't understand the question	1.2

Can't choose	2.3
Decline to answer	1.3
Total	100.0

The attitudes across races toward the NEP described below are telling.

		Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree : The government should maintain programs that assist bumiputeras, such as the New Economic Policy.							Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	
Ethnicity	Malay	43.4%	52.9%	1.4%	.3%	.3%	.6%	1.1%	100.0%
	Chinese	6.5%	20.5%	32.7%	31.8%	.6%	5.4%	2.4%	100.0%
	India	14.2%	38.1%	26.5%	17.7%	.0%	2.7%	.9%	100.0%
	Others	47.2%	39.4%	1.6%	.8%	8.7%	2.4%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	30.9%	41.2%	12.4%	10.7%	1.2%	2.3%	1.3%	100.0%

Malaysia's ethnicized polity reinforces not only differences in perceptions of rights, but also underlines ideas of equality. Gender and education levels showed little differences in views.

Section H – Responsiveness

With respect to government responsiveness to peoples' desires, what we found is that slightly more than half of those polled felt that government was responsive (56%) while slightly less (53%) felt that government would solve their most important problems within the next five years. In a sense, this indicated just above average levels of confidence in government responsiveness and ability to respond to people's problems. However, when we cross-tabulated the responses for government response with government ability to solve important problems, we found relatively high levels of confidence and trust in government to respond to peoples' problems. This is most evident in people's confidence and trust in civil service institutions especially

the military, the federal bureaucracy, local councils, and even the Prime Minister.²⁸ When cross-tabulated with ethnicity (Table H3), we found the same ethnically-polarized pattern as in our earlier responses cases where members of the Indian community were more trusting of the government (73%), followed by the Malay community (64%), Others (53%) and finally the Chinese (34%). Interestingly, here we find that the Indians are more trusting of the government than even the Malays. But this is explained by the fact that since Malaysian politics is deeply ethnicized and even in political representation. Here, the Indian community is only represented by the Malaysian Indian Congress in government with no alternative in opposition. As such, the Indian community is constrained to only look to the MIC for succor. On the other hand, the Malays have got an alternative, Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), which does command wide-support and which does influence the way the Malay community views government albeit within the ethnic lens of the New Economic Policy (NEP). So too the Bumiputera natives of Sabah and Sarawak. But for the Chinese, their views are influenced by weak political representation in government (Malaysian Chinese Association, Gerakan, Sarawak United Peoples' Party, Liberal Democratic Party) but strident views in the opposition (Democratic Action Party). The Chinese also are marginalized outside of the NEP and the hitherto framing of ethnicized political discourse in the country. This pattern is also similarly evident in Table H7 which cross tabulates perception of government ability to solve important problems with ethnicity. Making things worse is the fact that there is little – if any – policy discussions taking place in the public sphere let alone carried by the media. In this absence of any policy discussions, ethnicity and religious sentiments prevail with the end result being a dearth of public policy measures being used to evaluate government responses and ability. This situation is slowly changing but there has not yet been any significant developments even after the March 2008 election.

Table H1 - Malaysian Results

Question	Values	Malaysia	Question	Values	Malaysia
How well do you think the government responds to what people want?	1.Very responsive	10.3	How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified [i.e., the first problem the respondent mentioned] within the next five years?	0.Not applicable	7.6
	2.Largely responsive	45.8		1.Very likely	10.6
	3.Not very responsive	35.2		2.Likely	42.6
	4.Not responsive at all	3.6		3.Not very likely	25.5
	7.Don't Understand	1.1		4.Not at all likely	8.8
	8.Can't choose	3.5		7.No answer	--
	9.Decline to answer	0.4		8.Can't choose	4.6

²⁸ Welsh, Bridget, Ibrahim Suffian and Andrew Aeria (2007), "Malaysia Country Report", Asia Barometer Working Paper No. 46, Asia Barometer, National Taiwan University and Academia Sinica, Taipei.

	Missing	--		9.Decline to answer	0.2
				Missing	--

There is little significant difference in government responses and government ability to solve problems when seen from a gender perspective (Table H4 & H8). However, when we take a look at education levels – and if we use education as a very rough proxy to social status/class – we find that those who have higher social status/class perceive government to be more responsive than those from the lower cohorts. Specifically, about 35% of those without any formal education find government responsive. This rises in a slow gradient to 45% (incomplete primary/elementary education), 47% (complete primary/elementary education), 56% (incomplete secondary/high school/technical/vocational education), 56.5% (complete secondary/high school/technical/vocational education), 57% (incomplete secondary/high school), 60% (complete secondary/high school), 62% (some university education), about 60% (university completed) and 44% (postgraduate education). This trend is also evident in Table H6 which cross-tabulates status with government responsiveness where those with lower status (between 36%-54%) find government less responsive than those in the highest status (66.5%). Similarly, this pattern is replicated in our cross-tabulation of government ability to solve important problems with that of education. The lowest educated (46%) find government least able to solve their problems compared to those having a complete university education (51%) (Table H9). This is also reinforced by Table H10 which cross –tabulates government ability to provide solutions with social status where those with the lowest status (46%) find government less able to provide solutions than those in the highest status cohort (63%). This broadly suggests that government in Malaysia does have a status/class-based approach in dealing with society and hence politics. In part, it also reflects the varying status/class-power that exists in society and which can be brought to bear upon the political responsiveness of government. Put differently, this is elitist politics at work.

Finally, from a regional perspective (see Table H11), we find that Malaysians, along with those polled in Singapore, have a lot of trust in their government compared with their closest neighbors. As well, along with Singapore, there is a lot of trust and confidence in the respective government’s ability to provide solutions to peoples’ problems. In part, it reflects a sense of bureaucratic coherence that is partly historical legacy and partly based on both government’s developmental approach towards governing that largely underpins their respective claims to political legitimacy. Put differently, both governments orient their respective administrations into delivering economic goods as the underlying basis of their continued political legitimacy to govern.

Table H2 - Responsiveness and Resolution Cross Tabulation

		Q143. How well do you think the government responds to what people want?							
		Very responsive	Largely responsive	Not very responsive	Not responsive at all	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Q127A. How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified within the next five years?	Very likely	29.6%	40.7%	26.7%	.7%	.7%	1.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Likely	8.7%	60.6%	26.2%	1.8%	.6%	1.8%	.2%	100.0%
	Not very likely	5.3%	36.5%	51.3%	4.3%	.7%	2.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Not at all likely	3.6%	21.6%	56.8%	12.6%	.0%	5.4%	.0%	100.0%
	Can't choose	8.3%	31.7%	23.3%	5.0%	5.0%	18.3%	8.3%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	.0%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	9.8%	46.1%	36.0%	3.6%	.8%	3.1%	.5%	100.0%

Table H3 - Responsiveness Cross Tab – Ethnicity

		How well do you think the government responds to what people want?							
		Very responsive	Largely responsive	Not very responsive	Not responsive at all	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	11.7%	52.2%	31.0%	2.3%	1.6%	1.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	3.6%	30.6%	47.8%	7.4%	1.2%	8.6%	.9%	100.0%
	India	16.1%	57.1%	24.1%	.0%	.9%	1.8%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	16.4%	36.7%	28.9%	3.1%	7.0%	5.5%	2.3%	100.0%
	Total	10.3%	45.0%	34.8%	3.6%	2.0%	3.8%	.5%	100.0%

Table H4 - Resolution Cross Tab Gender

		How well do you think the government responds to what people want?							
		Very responsive	Largely responsive	Not very responsive	Not responsive at all	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Gender	Male	12.3%	42.4%	36.5%	4.4%	1.0%	3.1%	.5%	100.0%
	Female	8.5%	47.6%	33.1%	3.0%	2.8%	4.5%	.5%	100.0%
	Total	10.4%	45.0%	34.8%	3.7%	1.9%	3.8%	.5%	100.0%

Table H5 - Resolution – Education Level

		How well do you think the government responds to what people want?							
		Very responsive	Largely responsive	Not very responsive	Not responsive at all	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total

SE5. Education level	No formal education	17.6%	27.9%	20.6%	4.4%	20.6%	5.9%	2.9%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	8.3%	36.9%	41.7%	4.8%	1.2%	6.0%	1.2%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	10.9%	36.1%	37.2%	3.8%	3.8%	7.1%	1.1%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	10.3%	45.7%	35.3%	1.7%	.0%	6.9%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	11.0%	45.5%	39.6%	3.2%	.0%	.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	11.5%	45.8%	33.6%	4.6%	.8%	3.8%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	11.9%	48.7%	33.7%	3.4%	.0%	1.9%	.4%	100.0%
	Some university education	5.0%	56.8%	33.1%	2.2%	.0%	2.9%	.0%	100.0%
	University education completed	6.5%	53.2%	31.2%	7.8%	.0%	1.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Post-graduate degree	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%	.0%	11.1%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	10.4%	44.9%	34.7%	3.8%	1.9%	3.8%	.5%	100.0%

Table H6 - Responsiveness – Social Status

		How well do you think the government responds to what people want?							
		Very responsive	Largely responsive	Not very responsive	Not responsive at all	Don't understand the question	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
SE13. Social status	Lowest status	9.9%	44.0%	29.7%	8.8%	3.3%	3.3%	1.1%	100.0%
	2	4.0%	32.0%	40.0%	12.0%	.0%	12.0%	.0%	100.0%
	3	4.3%	31.9%	61.7%	2.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	4	13.6%	40.7%	33.3%	3.7%	1.2%	6.2%	1.2%	100.0%
	5	9.4%	44.2%	37.7%	3.6%	.4%	4.2%	.4%	100.0%
	6	13.2%	44.4%	36.1%	4.2%	.7%	1.4%	.0%	100.0%
	7	8.3%	51.2%	32.1%	4.8%	.0%	3.6%	.0%	100.0%
	8	12.5%	54.2%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	9	13.0%	47.8%	30.4%	8.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Highest status	13.3%	53.2%	26.6%	1.2%	4.6%	.6%	.6%	100.0%
	Can't choose	4.5%	29.5%	29.5%	.0%	15.9%	18.2%	2.3%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	.0%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	10.4%	45.0%	34.8%	3.7%	2.0%	3.6%	.5%	100.0%

Table H7 - Solution – Ethnicity

		How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified within the next five years?						
		Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
Ethnicity	Malay	15.2%	51.5%	24.1%	6.7%	2.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Chinese	3.3%	27.6%	33.9%	21.4%	12.8%	1.0%	100.0%
	India	16.3%	51.0%	27.9%	2.9%	1.9%	.0%	100.0%
	Others	14.4%	51.4%	27.0%	3.6%	3.6%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	12.0%	44.9%	27.4%	10.0%	5.4%	.3%	100.0%

Table H8 - Solutions – Gender

		How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified within the next five years?						
Gender	Male	13.1%	43.5%	26.9%	12.9%	3.3%	.3%	100.0%
	Female	10.9%	46.5%	28.0%	7.0%	7.4%	.2%	100.0%
	Total	12.0%	44.9%	27.4%	10.0%	5.3%	.3%	100.0%

Table H9 - Solutions – Education Levels

		How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified within the next five years?						
		Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
SE5. Education level	No formal education	18.6%	27.9%	18.6%	11.6%	23.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete primary/elementary	15.1%	46.6%	20.5%	11.0%	6.8%	.0%	100.0%
	Complete primary/elementary	10.4%	41.5%	23.2%	11.0%	14.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	9.9%	48.5%	33.7%	5.9%	1.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	Complete secondary/high school:technical/vocational types	10.4%	47.2%	31.2%	7.6%	2.8%	.7%	100.0%
	Incomplete secondary/high school	15.6%	44.3%	24.6%	9.8%	4.9%	.8%	100.0%
	Complete secondary	12.0%	47.2%	29.6%	8.0%	3.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Some university education	13.2%	45.6%	27.9%	12.5%	.7%	.0%	100.0%
	University education completed	6.8%	44.6%	29.7%	16.2%	2.7%	.0%	100.0%
	Post-graduate degree	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%	37.5%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	12.1%	44.8%	27.4%	10.0%	5.4%	.3%	100.0%	

Table H10 - Solutions – Social Status

		Q127A. How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified within the next five years?						
		Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Can't choose	Decline to answer	Total
SE13. Social status	Lowest status	12.2%	34.1%	30.5%	18.3%	4.9%	.0%	100.0%
	2	4.3%	60.9%	17.4%	4.3%	13.0%	.0%	100.0%
	3	4.9%	41.5%	34.1%	12.2%	7.3%	.0%	100.0%
	4	10.7%	42.7%	30.7%	6.7%	9.3%	.0%	100.0%
	5	11.6%	47.0%	26.0%	9.6%	5.3%	.5%	100.0%
	6	15.8%	47.4%	26.3%	6.8%	3.8%	.0%	100.0%
	7	12.2%	45.1%	29.3%	13.4%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	8	8.5%	38.3%	44.7%	8.5%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	9	15.0%	50.0%	15.0%	15.0%	5.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Highest status	14.2%	48.4%	25.2%	10.3%	1.3%	.6%	100.0%
	Can't choose	8.8%	32.4%	23.5%	2.9%	32.4%	.0%	100.0%
	Decline to answer	18.2%	18.2%	27.3%	18.2%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	12.0%	44.9%	27.5%	10.0%	5.4%	.3%	100.0%

Responsiveness: Regional Comparison

Question	Values	Taiwan	Mongolia	Philippines	Thailand	Korea	Singapore	Indonesia	Vietnam	Japan	Malaysia
How well do you think the government responds to what people want?	1.Very responsive	2.3	2.8	5.4	9.4	0.7	8.5	4.2	22.0	0.5	10.3
	2.Largely responsive	33.5	21.8	27.3	37.9	20.5	57.9	41.0	57.7	32.8	45.8
	3.Not very responsive	48.6	64.0	47.6	37.6	60.0	28.9	48.8	13.4	57.3	35.2
	4.Not responsive at all	10.6	9.8	17.4	3.4	14.4	1.5	3.7	0.4	6.8	3.6
	7.Don't Understand	0.7	0.4	0.6	1.3	--	0.1	0.6	0.5	--	1.1
	8.Can't choose	3.6	1.1	1.0	5.6	4.5	2.0	1.1	5.7	2.4	3.5
	9.Decline to answer	0.8	0.1	0.7	4.7	--	1.2	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4
	Missing	--	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
How likely is it that the government will solve the most important problem you identified	0.Not applicable	13.2	5.3	4.4	--	--	--	--	--	9.7	7.6
	1.Very likely	2.6	5.9	7.0	6.9	--	7.4	10.2	28.5	1.3	10.6
	2.Likely	27.4	55.4	31.2	51.7	--	47.7	64.6	47.6	20.3	42.6
	3.Not very likely	40.3	26.6	32.5	17.9	--	34.7	16.0	14.5	52.2	25.5
	4.Not at all likely	9.1	5.0	19.3	4.5	--	5.0	0.9	0.7	14.2	8.8

	7.No answer	--	--	0.3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	8.Can't choose	6.4	1.3	4.7	14.3	--	3.2	3.5	6.4	2.2	4.6
	9.Decline to answer	0.9	0.4	0.7	4.8	--	1.2	4.8	2.3	--	0.2
	Missing	--	--	--	--	--	0.8	--	--	--	--