

The Discourse of New Capitalism: A Study of the *1Malaysia Concept*

Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the discourse of the *1Malaysia Concept* by employing insights from the work of Norman Fairclough (2005) where he uses New Capitalism as a tool for examining political discourse. It analyzes how the *1Malaysia Concept* is used as a device to bring about racial harmony with an economic agenda. *1Malaysia* is formulated as an ideological construct to overcome inter-ethnic social problems and open up pathways for the social harmony necessary to meet the objectives of Vision 2020. The analysis finds that while the discourse of the *1Malaysia* concept shows that representations of change as an important aspect for racial harmony and economic progress, the reality in Malaysia may not support such change.

Keywords: 1Malaysia, critical discourse analysis, ethnic relations, new capitalism

1.0 Introduction

This paper examines a document called ‘The *1Malaysia Concept*’, an idea formulated by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, through a dedicated portal, *1Malaysia.com.my*. A Critical Discourse Analysis using Fairclough’s ideas on New Capitalism is used to identify and study a social problem which has economic ramifications. In order to understand the need for the establishment of this concept (in a dedicated website), we need to look back at the political history of Malaysia.

The type of democracy adopted in Malaysia since independence, while modeled along western liberal ideas, which enshrine basic freedoms of speech, religion and assembly among others, also engages a range of instruments that are at odds with democratic ideals such as the

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Official Secrets Act, 1986, The Internal Security Act, 1960; The Printing Presses and Publications Act, 1984; The Police Act, 1967; and The Seditious Act, 1970 (Brown, Ali and Muda, 2004).

While it is a well-acknowledged fact that since attaining independence from Great Britain in 1957, 'Malaysia has maintained a relatively long record of political stability and minimum experiences of ethnic unrest' (Mohammed, 2005:2), recent events have shaken the confidence in this delicate social balance. In October and November 2007, organized street demonstrations erupted in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. These demonstrations called the *BERSIH* (meaning clean in Malay) and *HINDRAF* (Hindu Rights Action Force) rallies questioned the idea of a happy, multi-racial Malaysian state as oft seen in advertisements calling Malaysia: truly Asia. During this period, more and more blogs and other forms of news media that use the Internet as a source of spreading information have sprouted, making it difficult for government sources to control information (Rajaratnam, 2009).

2.0 The Political Scene in Malaysia

Inter-ethnic rivalry and suspicion has existed since the British colonial rule as the local Malay population was worried that the Chinese and Indian migrant population might exceed the Malay population in numbers, leaving them in a minority position. The Malay states (9 in total ruled by Sultans) and 3 Straits Settlements (Penang, Singapore and Malacca) made up Malaya at the time of Independence (Omar, 2009). Since independence in 1957, Malaysia's ruling governments have comprised of a triumvirate of parties drawn along ethnic lines. Post-colonial Malaysia saw the Malaysian citizenry ruled politically by Malay aristocrats while the economy was (arguably) dominated by ethnic Chinese and the Indians worked in the rubber estates or took up administrative jobs (Saravanamuttu, 2009).

The General Election in 1969 was a very significant event that had repercussions for decades to follow. The coalition of parties drawn along ethnic lines, the Alliance Party, made up of: the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) performed very badly (gaining less than 50% of the vote),

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losing key states due to the lack of support from urban Chinese. This resulted in racial riots for three days beginning 13 May 1969. A state of emergency was declared, parliament was suspended and the country was managed through a National Operations Council until February 1971 (Brown, Ali and Muda, 2004).

The 1969 incident resulted in the formation of the National Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970. The NEP had two main objectives, namely “poverty eradication regardless of race” and “restructuring society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function”. The NEP was supposed to create the conditions for national unity by reducing inter-ethnic resentment due to socioeconomic disparities (Sundaram, 2004:3). The restructuring of society refers to the redistribution of income from non-Malay interests to Malay interests through affirmative action policies that promote *bumiputra* (sons of the soil – Sanskrit in origin but adopted word in Malay) interests. This included a compulsory 30% *bumiputra* share in business.

Saravanamuttu (2009) says that the NEP was successful in addressing the lopsided economic wealth distribution with the *bumiputras* forming the majority of the middle class in most categories of employment. Also the Malaysian middle class, in total, had expanded from 19% in 1980 to 45.8% in 2000 (pg. 144).

Embong (1996) says that a developmental policy (that pushed Malaysia towards an industrialized rather than an agricultural state) was pursued aggressively especially during the era of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad who privatized much of the economy to create *bumiputra* entrepreneurial and professional classes. While there is no doubt that socio-economic targets have been achieved, the NEP caused resentment especially among the Chinese. This then follows that the aim of creating better unity among the races may not have seen that much success (Sundaram, 2004).

While tensions have existed since the evolution of the NEP, it was in October and November of 2007, that two groups rallied for a range of causes. The first who called themselves ‘BERSIH’, was a group of concerned Malaysians from all ethnic groups. They rallied by organizing a march for clean and free elections and the eradication of corruption. The second

organized by an Indian movement called ‘HINDRAF’ protested the poor and unequal treatment of Indians (Sankar, 2009).

These events revealed that beneath the exterior of a happily co-existing multi-racial veneer, there exists tensions that have been simmering for several decades. They were manifest in the 2008 general election that resulted in the loss of 5 states to the opposition coalition, a profound shock to the ruling *Barisan Nasional* government, which for the first time since 1969, lost its 2/3 majority in parliament. The above events made it imperative for the government to bring some stability to the country especially if the goals of Vision 2020 or *Wawasan 2020* (introduced by former Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad during the tabling of the Sixth Malaysia Plan in 1991) were to be realized. This vision called for the nation to achieve a self-sufficient industrial, Malaysian-centric economy by the year 2020 (Economic Planning Unit, Vision 2020). It is in this setting that the Prime Minister brought forth the *1Malaysia Concept*.

3.0 1 Malaysia and the Study Objective

The *1Malaysia Concept* which aims to bring forth a united Malaysian race, ‘one that embraces the uniqueness of other races’ (1Malaysia.com.my) is argued as critical for the economic stability of the country, economic prosperity and self sufficiency by the year 2020 (1Malaysia.com.my). Vision 2020 Malaysia’s strategic plan to become a developed nation by the year 2020, has been widely discussed and promoted since it was introduced at the tabling of the Sixth Malaysia Plan in 1991 (Saravanamuttu, 1996). As time draws near for the completion of the economic and social goals that have been set up through Vision 2020, the present Prime Minister is under pressure to ensure that the Vision is achieved. This will be a difficult task as Evers has observed: ‘without appropriate social, political and cultural context, a knowledge economy will not flourish’ (Evers, 2003:372).

The background described above then begs the question – will the 1 Malaysia Concept achieve unity for the country and put it on the path to Vision 2020? It is with this in mind that the objective of this paper is to examine the document entitled 1Malaysia in the PM’s dedicated

portal and analyze it to find out to what extent this concept will succeed in providing racial unity and economic success for the country.

4.0 Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework of Critical Discourse Analysis

This study uses the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as used by Fairclough (2005).

CDA explains the links between language use and power. The language of the media and the consumption of meaning in language in a society are inter-related according to Richardson (2007) and discourse analysis explains how explicitly language users relate context and text (Van Dijk, 1993). Therefore, language and symbols play a very important role in both the media as well as the society that reads and forms meanings from it and language is central to the process by which meaning is produced (Hall, 2001).

Cap (2004) says that more than any other kind of discourse analysis, it is the study of political discourse that seems to invite cross-disciplinary considerations, involving contributions from such disciplines as political science, sociology, (social) psychology and anthropology. The study of language used by politicians especially in the media, can give an insight into the speaker's use of language and it can count as a potent determinant of what the addressee thinks and, subsequently, does. And vice versa: it could possibly constitute an effective constraint on what the addressee should not think and do as well.

Norman Fairclough is an important practitioner of CDA, whose early works concentrated on linking language with other elements of social life. Language is an integral part of the social process and social life comprises interconnected networks of social practices that involve economic, political, cultural, and other aspects of life (Fairclough, 2005). In particular, Fairclough was interested in analyzing semiosis and other elements of social practices when describing the language of he called *New Capitalism*. He does not apply the term to only economic issues but also to several areas in social life that have been radically changed by the

capitalism that came about after World War II (Fairclough, 2003). He mentions three ways of analyzing discourse: The first way is by using language in a particular manner in order to do a job. The second is when people represent their own practices reflexively according to their own position within the practice while re-contextualizing other practices. In other words representations of social practices shape the social process. The third way is when people who operate in positions within a practice will perform differently than those who differ in some manner such as social class, gender, ethnic, or cultural membership or nationality (Fairclough, 2005:123).

Semiosis in the representation of social practice is looked for in the discourse analyzed. As the text analyzed is a politically motivated one, it is also examined for ideas embedded as New Capitalism (NC). Economic and social transformations are important here when critically examining language and discourse (Fairclough, 2002). Al Sharabi, Ibrahim and Mohd Nor (2011) further add that this involves a two level analysis; that is the text analysis which allows for a micro level analysis while the social practices allow for a macro level analysis.

3.2 Data

The text analyzed is Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak's 'The *IMalaysia Concept*' which was launched in his personal website in September 2010. Its declared objective is to bring about unity among all Malaysians. The objective of achieving racial harmony and unity is first defined and then analyzed employing the ideas advanced by Fairclough (2005).

Here the restructuring and re-networking of certain social practices are examined between economic and non economic fields. The term Vision 2020 is an important phrase in the Malaysian economy as it outlines the need for Malaysia to become a fully developed nation with an industrial approach to its growth as the core.

The IMalaysia Concept introduces another catchphrase, 'People First; Performance Now'. This can also be seen as ideas embedded in order to show that people are most important

(to ensure equality and fairness among citizens) and economic performance as imperative to achieve capitalistic goals for the nation to get to Vision 2020.

The text is also examined to find out if the neo-liberal discourse of New Capitalism, which argues that change as inevitable in the modern global economic climate or system and therefore must be lived with and adapted to, is employed.

4.0 Analysis

The *IMalaysia Concept* is a text divided into two parts. One part talks about the need to foster unity and bring about change to the mindsets of the people regarding national identity and racial integration and unity. The second part of the text discusses the reason why such a change is necessary to [perhaps] building industrial economy as laid down in Vision 2020. If Malaysia is to become a wealthy nation, then national unity must be achieved so that economic change can happen and the vision realized.

In this analysis a social problem is identified before a linguistic analysis is made. Both the text and the context are examined in order to critically examine the discourse. In order to identify a potential social problem underlying the forging of *IMalaysia Concept* (see Appendix 1), it is necessary to go outside the text to get a sense of the social context in which the Concept was developed. Problems as outlined below show that ethnic unrest has been an issue of major concern to the ruling government (see 1.0 and 2.0).

Several issues in recent times have created ethnic tension in Malaysia's multi-racial society. Two recent events have given immediacy to the problem. The first issue was with the relocation of a Hindu temple in an area where many Malays (who are Muslim) lived, resulting in a protest by a group of Muslims, (now famously referred to as the 'cow head protest'). The cow head protest involved a freshly slaughtered cow's head (cows are sacred to Hindus) which was dragged through a street, stamped on and dumped in front of the State Secretariat Building in full view of reporters and the Police (Yeng, Sept.9 2009), sending shock waves through the country.

The second issue was the move to stop non-Islamic religions from using the word ‘Allah’ by certain Muslim groups, resulting in a few Catholic churches being torched. The issue goes back to 1988 when a law was enacted to forbid the use of the word *Allah* by non-Muslims. However, the term *Allah* has been used in Sikh religious texts and Malay translations of the Bible for several years without any issues. There has been a sudden implementation of this law which has upset certain quarters. This perceived inequality reveals the social structures governing the diversity of Malaysian life and divide Malaysians into Muslim and non-Muslim groups (Use of ‘Allah’ Forbidden, January 13 2010, *The Staronline*).

The above incidents, viewed together with the Hindraf protests (see Introduction above) where Indian groups protested the unequal treatment of Hindus and Indians, show that ethnic tensions in Malaysia can be said to be tenuous at best. These recent incidents resulted in government initiatives to build greater racial harmony through the promotion of the *1Malaysia Concept*.

4.1 The Social Problem

The text itself makes references to issues about unity in Malaysia. For example, the Prime Minister says that if Malaysia wants to achieve fully developed status by the year 2020 (to meet the objectives of Vision 2020) there must be greater stability and unity of the various racial groups. Problems with the implementation of the National Economic Policy, Malay rights and an unstable government could push away investors. Deterioration of inter-ethnic relations began in the 1950s and has been accelerating since the mid sixties (Sundram, 1989). Furthermore, in 2005, during the Asian financial crisis Malaysia took the Ringgit (Malaysian currency) off the fixed exchange system signaling a deteriorating economy while grappling with racial unity.

4.1.1 Racial Unity

The problem with racial unity goes back to Independence and the issue of Malay Rights. To understand the concept of Malay rights one needs to go back in history to pre independence days when the then Malaya was preparing for independence from Great Britain. Britain wanted

to create a Malayan Union which gave equal citizenship rights to Malays and the migrant Chinese and Indian populations that had come to work in the tin mines and rubber estates. This idea was successfully contested by the Malays who had formed the *United Malay National Organisation* (UMNO). The result was a ‘bargain’ whereby the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese accepted Malay domination for basic guarantees that their businesses would not be undermined (Brown, Ali and Muda, 2004).

The independence bargain was maintained through a consociational model where the newly independent Malaya was ruled by a three- party alliance reflecting the main ethnic communities. However Malay resentment that their economic status was not on par with the Chinese rose steadily and in 1969, race riots occurred, resulting in the NEP and the enforcement of Malay rights as seen in Articles 153 and 89 of the Malaysian Constitution (Mohamad, 2009). This in turn resulted in the twofold aim of the NEP: to redistribute wealth and eradicate poverty.

The redistribution of wealth was managed through affirmative policies for the Malays through a quota system that saw the civil service and government positions being filled with those of Malay origin, education scholarships being awarded and places in institutions of higher learning reserved for Malays and business opportunities being provided through a compulsory 30% share awarded to Malays (Sundaram, 2004). This has created an element of discontent among the non-Malays which is now slowly being seen through rallies and calls for equality.

4.2 Obstacles facing 1Malaysia

The *1Malaysia Concept* was first posted on the Prime Minister’s own dedicated website established to connect with the Malaysian people. It has been translated into a policy document and become part of a network of practices within the government. The Prime Minister has used the full force of his office to make 1Malaysia as visible as possible to the public.

Billboards, advertisements and a segment on television called *My Story*, all embrace the *1Malaysia* concept and show people of all three main races in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese and Indian) going about their daily business in a very happy united way. Greetings from Television

and Radio announcers and news reporters incorporate ‘*Salam Satu Malaysia*’ (1 Malaysia Greetings) in an attempt to instill the 1Malaysia rhetoric. The effort goes across to businesses which spend millions to advertise using the 1Malaysia concept. Most advertisements of insurance companies, banks, the Telecoms among others use the concept to promote the government’s initiative to promote unity.

While all of the above are visually pleasing and pleasant to hear, obstacles exist to this problem of unity among the multi-racial population. The following is a list of the obstacles:

- i. The issue of Malay rights is being heavily debated because the *1Malaysia Concept*, in theory, is meant to promote meritocracy. This would mean the dismantling of the special rights accorded to the Malays
- ii. In education, government and businesses, there exists a quota system established by the National Economic Policy which started in the 1970s. While the NEP was officially dismantled, the quotas have remained so that people who are defined as *Bumiputra* are able to benefit from established quotas. The 1Malaysia Concept talks of meritocracy which would be impossible to implement if the quotas favouring *bumiputras* are not dismantled
- iii. Recent religious conflicts such as conversion into and out of Islam, the cow-head protest and church burnings are all obstacles that would be difficult to overcome while trying to implement the *1Malaysia Concept* as sentiments can run high when perceived inequalities exist within the system.
- iv. Laws (such as the Internal Security Act, The Police Act and the Sedition Act) that prevent debates and discussions on the unequal partnership of the races also stand in the way of the establishment of the *1Malaysia Concept*.
- v. The Printing Presses and Publications Act, 1984 acts as a censorship tool that prevents freedom of the press. This is another obstacle to the *1Malaysia Concept*

In addition to the above problems seen outside of the text and as an obstacle to the Concept itself, there are problems within the text when the PM talks of the establishment of *Bangsa Malaysia* (a *Malaysian race* which does not divide citizens into different racial groups) but at the same time he also says that the concept will be faithful to the guarantee of Malay rights. This is

alluded to in the document as “Therefore, no one should fear or cast aspersions that the concept will deviate from what has been agreed upon by our founding fathers” (page 1, paragraph 4). This can be seen as a contradiction in terms and one which puts the 1Malaysia concept in jeopardy if obstacles to meritocracy are to be maintained.

Another obstacle seen in the text is the ‘value of acceptance’. Each race must accept the uniqueness of the other. The 1Malaysia concept aims to ‘respect and value ethnic identities’. Each is seen as an ‘asset’; however the ‘foundation for all this is the principle of justice for all’ and ‘justice must take into account the varying levels development of each ethnic community’ and therefore ‘government policies and the provisions of the Constitution will continue to be implemented’. This poses an obstacle since it does not show any difference from the present state where special rights exist for ethnic Malays (as mentioned under Malay Rights in 4.1.1)

Another problem seen is the rejection of the Opposition party’s *Malaysian Malaysia* (which refers to a more egalitarian Malaysia where quotas do not exist and meritocracy prevails) and the imposition that ‘1Malaysia does not deviate from the spirit of our Federal Constitution. . . such as in Articles 3, 4, 152 and 153’.

While the rhetoric appears to support the equality of all races, mention of the Constitution and the specific articles firmly entrenches status quo. Article 3 guarantees Islam as the religion of the Federation, Article 4 makes the Constitution the supreme law, Article 152 guarantees the Malay language as the National Language while Article 153 guarantees the special position and rights of the Malays (The Malaysian Constitution). The *1Malaysia Concept* is touted as the ‘roadmap that guides us to the destination’ (of *Bangsa Malaysia* and Vision 2020). Races are told to live in unity and harmony in acceptance of one another while the concept is put into action ‘within the confines of the Constitution’ (referring to Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution).

4.3 Linguistic Features

The text was examined for linguistic features. The linguistic features of the text invite the following observations.

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4.3.1 No Responsible Social Agents

The text shows that the public is called upon to make changes so that a united Malaysia can quickly achieve Vision 2020 which hopes to put Malaysia among the developed nations of the world. In order to achieve this change no agents are specifically mentioned. Agents of processes are abstract or inanimate as seen in the following examples:

- ‘... if inculcated, in minds of’;
- ‘... practiced by the entire community...’;
- ‘... which means welfare will be looked after’;
- ‘... such justice must take into account....’ and
- ‘... principles must be inculcated....’

4.3.2 Agent-less, Timeless Truths

Much of the text presents universally understood truths in terms of modality. Truths understood and heard by Malaysians throughout history such as the need for ‘national unity’, to ‘foster unity’ and the need for ‘stability’ are all repeated with the agent for change being ‘1Malaysia’. Sentences can be seen strewn about the text whereby 1Malaysia is made the agent thereby maintaining an abstract idea as the actor which will bring about change. For example:

- ‘1Malaysia is a concept to foster unity’
- ‘If the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia*....., then 1Malaysia is the roadmap....’ (passive voice where Vision 2020 is the agent, followed by 1Malaysia as the agent)

In both the instances above, the inanimate 1Malaysia is the agent that will bring about change.

4.3.3 Change

Many words are used to show the changes that need to be made in Malaysia such as: ‘developed status’, ‘*Bangsa Malaysia*’, ‘strong and stable country’, ‘acceptance amongst multi-racial people’, ‘solidarity’, ‘unity’, ‘acceptance’. Many of the changes mentioned in the lexical items used show the need to bring about change but the sentences do not show how the change will be brought about as they are agentless.

4.3.4 Economic Change

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Changes are also mentioned in order to achieve economic advantage. These economic changes are shown as ‘Culture of Excellence’, ‘ Culture of Precision’, ‘Loyalty’, ‘Courage to innovate and explore new opportunities’, ‘meritocracy’, ‘perseverance in the face of adversity’, ‘Advanced Malaysian nation’, ‘esteemed by the world’, ‘betterment of standard of living’, ‘achieving higher growth’, ‘competitiveness and success’, ‘integrity’, ‘thriving’ and ‘developed nation’. The above lexical items are termed as ‘Aspirational Values’, the inculcation of which will enable us to ‘.... distinguish ourselves as a powerful, respected and admired Malaysian community, befitting the identity of a thriving and developed nation’. There are no agents mentioned for the inculcation of the ‘aspirational values’ mentioned in the text.

While agents are not mentioned for the changes in national unity and economic improvements, the PM outlines the initiatives that he has personally undertaken to make changes within the government:

- a Key Performance Index (KPI) is established for government servants
- a Minister solely in charge of carrying out KPIs

The above measures do not show how economic change can be made or who will be responsible for the changes.

4.3.5 Authoritative Statements

In declaring the 1Malaysia Concept as a viable one the PM makes authoritative statements to describe the plan:

‘is a formula’; ‘is a roadmap’; ‘does not deviate’; ‘remains faithful’; ‘values respect’; ‘is conceptualized’ and ‘guarantees stability’

The making of such statements in an authoritative fashion makes the plan seem a lot more viable therefore the language used shows how committed the PM is to the concept of 1Malaysia.

4.3.6 The ‘Is’ and ‘Aught’ Domain

The word ‘*is*’ is used in order to show that change has to happen. This present tense verb makes change important and it must happen as can be seen in the following examples:

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‘... Ultimate goal of 1Malaysia *is* national unity...’
 ‘...1Malaysia *is* a concept to foster unity’
 ‘...*is* a formula conceptualized ...’
 ‘...if it *is* conceptualized in the minds of’
 ‘...*is* a roadmap that guides ...’
 ‘...the key requisite *is* a strong ...’
 ‘...foundation for all this *is* the principle of justice’

On the other hand, the “ought” domain is used for response especially by the government. Some examples of how responses should be to the changes he prescribes are:

‘... key values that every Malaysian *should* observe’
 ‘...strong and stable country, which *can only be* achieved when its people..’
 ‘...where one race *embraces* the uniqueness of the other races...’
 ‘...where the welfare of all Malaysians *will be looked* after’
 ‘...*will continue* to be implemented’
 ‘...that *must be* indicated as part of ...’
 ‘... elements that *must be* practiced by any society...’
 ‘...KPIs *will be* implemented...’

The *is* domain refers to the need for a change to keep up with the new world order which is more global in nature. Change is presented as a timeless present in rather authoritative terms about general truths that can be stated anywhere (unity, progress, solidarity, growth, culture of excellence and precision, innovation and perseverance. There is a move to use *ought to* for all responses that are necessary to achieve the change. Therefore while 1Malaysia *is* a roadmap for unity, a strong and stable country can only be achieved when its people make changes, meaning that people *ought to* act in a certain fashion.

5.0 Discussion

The text reveals that social change is a present process that ‘we’ must respond to. It is authoritatively represented in the text as general truths whose social agency is not clear but

which must be responded to in set ways. This change is essential to construct Vision 2020 where Malaysia will be a developed nation respected by others.

1Malaysia is a political text formulated to persuade the Malaysian public of the government's assurance of understanding the importance of meeting the problems associated with recent racial events, issues that are critical for the social and economic prosperity of the country. However the changes alluded to appears to be superficial, as the crux of the racial issues is both ethnic and religious. While political rhetoric about 'national unity', '*Bangsa Malaysia*' and 'stability' among others are meant to calm the non-Malay population that they too will be looked after, there is also a Malay stance (signaled rather than articulated) when the PM refers to articles in the Constitution and National Policy providing assurance to the majority Malay population that their rights and privileges will remain (See Appendix -1 Malaysia Concept, pg 2 para 2)

The text is most prescriptive about what ought to be done to achieve unity and progress. Most changes referred to have no active agents but instead intangible processes (such as Culture of Excellence and Precision) are agents of change.

The 1Malaysia Concept is divided into two specific parts: one to achieve unity so that Vision 2020 can be realized, and the second on why economic change is essential for growth and competitiveness. The objective is to distinguish Malaysians as a powerful, respected and admired community befitting the identity of a developed nation. The PM argues that social unity will allow Malaysian society to be competitive and efficient thus presenting an economic objective to the 1Malaysia Concept because this is very critical in an increasingly global world. The talk about unity and *Bangsa Malaysia* is at odds with the special rights of *Bumiputras* (because he signals without actually articulating that it is status quo as per Articles 3,4, 152 and 153 of the Malaysian Constitution. One can assume that the more important change necessary is really the ability to compete in the global economic front so that Malaysia can be seen as a powerful contender.

The PM also mentions Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which is really business rhetoric for improving efficiency in an organization. The PM makes specific mention that he has implemented KPIs in his Ministries to show that he will walk the talk and lead the way for 1Malaysia to be successful. He wishes to operationalize the 1Malaysia objectives through this effort to see that elements of his program are implemented in agencies that come directly under his purview.

Changes in the economic and business fronts in Malaysia are essential to raising a flagging economy and to get the Malaysian Ringgit back on a respectable level in the international markets. Rising costs and unemployment are challenges for the new PM who has to raise the standards of the country but who is also faced with new challenges on both the social and economic fronts.

The old social issue of racial harmony is being re-worked in a new fashion in the *1Malaysia* Concept by means of advertisements on billboards, television and radio networks in a visible manner and also by having a dedicated website set up by the PM himself so that a semblance of unity can be seen for the greater and more economic reason of making business and economic strides. Rahman (2009) comments that race and religion based policies have resulted in the socially divisive modes of consciousness and behavior. After more than 50 years of independence the term *bumiputra* should have evolved so that Malaysians regardless of racial origin must be given the same opportunities given to Malays for the last 40 years but Ooi (2009) says that in Malaysia where ethnicity is always political, a cosmopolitan society can be threatening to those whose power depends on the ethnic group they represent. Therefore keeping the ethnic divide through policies generated through the NEP and NDP (National Development Policy) for restructuring wealth along ethnic lines and reinforcing the ethnic identification among the multi-ethnic population might be a good thing for those in power (Ong, 2009)

For the PM, it is also a question of political survival because he has to pacify the majority Malay population by not removing their rights but at the same time bring about unity among the races. This is because investor confidence in the country could wane if the country is seen to be in turmoil. Furthermore, if during his time Vision 2020 is not achieved, he may be remembered

for all the wrong reasons as the Prime Minister who failed to achieve the economic goals set up for the country. It is indeed catch 22 for Prime Minister Dato Seri Najib Tun Razak who must implement the 1Malaysia Concept for Vision 2020 to succeed and lead the country into economic prosperity and racial harmony.

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Associate Professor Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar, Ph.D.

School of Communication

Taylor's University, Malaysia

Street Address: 1, Jalan 12/12, 46200 Petaling Jaya

Selangor, Malaysia

lokasundari.n@taylors.edu.my

vijayasankar100@yahoo.com