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Kumaran Rajandran
Charity Lee *Editors*

Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia

Legitimising Governance

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Editors
Kumaran Rajandran
School of Humanities
Universiti Sains Malaysia
George Town, Malaysia

Charity Lee
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
Universiti Malaya
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Praise for *Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia*

"…a much-needed book which provides compelling insights into Malaysian political discourse, depicting the central issues of legitimacy in a society pervaded by ethnic, social, cultural and religious divides. An important step forward in researching discourse in underrepresented regions and populations."

—Martina Berrocal, *Vienna School of Business and Economics and Friedrich Schiller University Jena*

"This is an excellent book that I highly recommend. It presents an overview of contemporary Malaysian political discourse with the focus on (de)legitimation of governance from a critical linguistic perspective, which offers a wide range of studies and empirical data very valuable for comparative analysis with other political cultures. The chapters in the book bring to the fore Malaysian contemporary concerns about democracy, attitudes to racial discrimination, women's rights, minority rights, economic competence, the ideological power of the media, the role of social media, the politics of fear, corruption scandals and the weight of tradition, which are also the concerns in other parts of the world."

—Adriana Bolívar, *Universidad Central de Venezuela*

"Politics always, and almost entirely, consists of talk and text. The authors included in this volume show us in precise terms how political discourse works in a particular political context, that of Malaysia. This scholarly volume homes in on the crucial question of how governments, any government, can use language to gain legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. We need more and more studies of this kind, studies that turn the linguistic microscope onto the fundamental mechanisms of governance under different political systems."

—Paul Chilton, *Lancaster University*

"This is a book which offers readers insights into the political discursive practices of multiracial Malaysia through in-depth linguistic analyses. The chapters in this volume collectively paint a comprehensive picture of the nation's political landscape

as it is shaped by the narratives of political actors, the media, and entire communities that are united or divided by the languages in which they operate. This publication would be of interest to researchers of political discourse, and serve as a valuable teaching resource for various courses in the social sciences."

—Ramesh Nair, *Universiti Teknologi MARA*

"Malaysian politics is messy, boisterous and always fascinating. This edited volume, covering an impressive array of texts produced in relation to various issues and events, and representing a range of political voices and ideological persuasions in the Malaysian political-public sphere, provides an insightful look at how Malaysian politics is discursively 'done'. Researchers of politics and governance as well as scholars keen on the rhetorical and ideological functions of discursive features and strategies will undoubtedly find this volume a worthwhile read."

—Carl J. W. Ng, *Singapore University of Social Sciences*

"This book contributes to a better global understanding of the cultural, political, religious, ethnic, ideological, economic and moral complexities of Malaysian society. This collective academic work integrates the efforts that discourse analysis researchers in the country have developed for two decades. In addition, it constitutes a piece where the theoretical and methodological diversity of the study in text analysis is exhibited. The chapters as a whole, propose a critical path of contemporary concerns, analytical strategies and challenges of this object of study for the multilingual context of Malaysia, and the region."

—Dasniel Olivera Pérez, *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

"Scholarly, critical, and up to date, the contributions to this impressive volume provide a comprehensive analysis of contemporary Malaysian political discourse. They pay attention to the role of the media, including social media, to issues of ethnicity, religion and gender, to the role of the monarchy, and more, and they employ a wide range of up-to-date methods of discourse analysis. A must for anyone interested in Malaysian political discourse and in language and politics generally."

—Theo van Leeuwen, *University of Southern Denmark*

Foreword

The present volume comprises studies that focus on the concept of legitimation and its manifestations in language use. They examine relevant sociopolitical aspects as reflected in spoken, printed and digital texts in Malaysian political discourse between 2008 and 2020. Legitimation is an essential element of any political discourse which makes this volume relevant both to a broad spectrum of scholars and the general public.

While there is no unitary definition of the concept, in most research the notion of legitimation is explained as a process of justification of a particular norm, belief and/or performance by actors holding power and/or claiming authority. Legitimation is one of the core concepts in social sciences used in theorising political governance, that is, political authority and political order (c.f. Biegoń [2016] for an overview). Drawing on Weber´s conceptualisation of legitimacy (2019), several dimensions of legitimation are particularly considered in research studies: next to the attitudinal (people have to believe in the rightfulness of a particular legitimate order) and behavioural (when they believe that particular order is legitimate, they can act in order to comply with it) dimensions, one of the most important roles is attributed to communication (Schneider, Nullmeier & Hurrelmann, 2007). The nexus between political communication and legitimacy is elaborated especially in theories of democracy (Otfried & Sarcinelli, 1998, p. 253; Sarcinelli, 2013, p. 93), which view these two features of political discourse as mutually dependent. If legitimacy is conveyed first and foremost through communication, then it is language as one of the most important means of communication that has to be included when analysing legitimation processes. At this intersection, political sciences and linguistics meet, calling for a cross-disciplinary view on legitimation as "a political-linguistic concept" (Cap, 2008, p. 22).

Within linguistically oriented research, studies by Cap (2008, 2010), Chilton (2004), Reyes (2011), van Dijk (2006), van Leeuwen (2008) and van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999), to name but a few, are especially important. They developed and/or enhanced analytical frameworks used widely in empirical studies on legitimation in political discourse. Cap (2008, p. 39) considers "legitimization [to be] a principal discourse goal sought by political actors". Based on such prominence within

political discourse and the complexity of the concept itself, its operationalisation has to consider different levels of analysis, as proposed by Reyes (2011), such as context, institutional and communication settings and, finally, discursive strategies and linguistic means. From the point of view of pragmatics, legitimation is a complex and continuous discursive practice—it cannot be analysed as a singular speech act, but as a sequence of speech acts (Berrocal, 2017, p. 86). Combining conceptualisations from social and political sciences with linguistically oriented discourse analysis, we can define legitimation as a superordinate concept within political discourse production since it comprises, is linked to and is intertwined with and/or dependent on other concepts such as identity, power, ideology, hegemony and democracy. Legitimation includes a variety of discursive strategies and linguistic and other semiotic means (Mackay, 2015), numerous actors (both those in power and citizenry), their stances, general norms and values in society and the complex negotiations between these elements. The present volume reflects this holistic view on legitimation in a compelling way by incorporating an in-depth linguistic analysis of particular discursive fields and genres.

A brief overview of publications in journals following the frameworks of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (e.g. *Discourse & Society, Journal of Language and Politics*) testifies to a continuous increase in contributions to legitimation (e.g. from 99 articles in 2004 to 225 articles in 2020 in JLP), discussing not only discourses in Western countries in various sociopolitical contexts, but also gradually including case studies from other regions of the world. This volume can add to this body of research by illuminating legitimation in a country generally understudied by Western academia (See Chapter 1) and in a country that is not indexed as a "full democracy" (The Economist indexed Malaysia in 2020 as a "flawed democracy"[1] and Freedom House describes the country as "partly free"[2]).

The concept of the legitimation of governance in various fields of political discourse in Malaysia is all the more important since the country is characterised by ethnic, linguistic, regional and/or religious cleavages, which may problematise power relations among different groups. The authors of Chapters 1–13 draw on established views on legitimation as a complex discourse practice, and they have convincingly applied this concept. In addition, the studies have exemplified texts in English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, the major languages of the country. Finally, the authors have deployed several theoretical and methodological approaches within CDS, such as content analysis, thematic analysis, conceptual metaphor theory, discourse-historical approach, discourse relational approach and pragma-dialectics. The authors have

[1] https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf?mkt_tok=NzUzLVJJUS00MzgAAAF_FoftmaAzFsXXQHK19RBHV8gWYUNrSVQHNHZyKht_o9r2FT5MwSjvoigY9frpOwOny4jNXAb1Cbd-UJP5fN1ff5XzJKpbmuoMY0EjbxHPWkmREg accessed on 24 August 2021. "These countries also have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom) and basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation".

[2] https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores, accessed on 25 August 2021.

also offered an analysis of many language features such as argumentation, intertextuality, metaphors, speech acts and topoi. The outcomes of the individual analyses can prove valuable for further comparative cultural and linguistic studies of political discourse, as emphasised by the editors with regard to future research perspectives (see Chapter 1). Finally, but importantly, the present volume is situated within linguistically oriented analyses of political discourses beyond Europe and North America, which can advance further development of CDS by stimulating scholarly dialogue and diversity (Shi-xu 2009, p. 30).

Aleksandra Salamurović
Friedrich Schiller University
Jena, Germany

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Kumaran & Charity

Aleksandra Salamurović holds a PhD in Southeast European Studies from Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, Germany. She is principal investigator in the project "Between the Nation and Europe: A Discourse Linguistic Account of the Communication in the Public Sphere in Western Balkans" funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2018–2021). Her research interests include public language use, sociolinguistics of script and metonymy. She can be reached at aleksandra.salamurovic@uni-jena.de.

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Dr. Kumaran Rajandran is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He teaches BA and MA courses and supervises MA and PhD research in Linguistics. His research involves the multimodal study of various discourses, exploring the articulation of identity and ideology in contemporary societies.

Dr. Charity Lee is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. Her areas of research include narrative analysis and discourse analysis, particularly involving social practices surrounding migrant and vulnerable groups, as well as narrative methodology. Her research also includes communication practices in media, politics and health care. She teaches German Linguistics and translation at the undergraduate level and a range of discourse analysis approaches at the postgraduate level.

Contributors

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia

Pei Soo Ang Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Su'ad Awab Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia, Pagoh, Malaysia

Prasana Rosaline Fernandez School of Humanities and Communication, Xiamen University Malaysia, Sepang, Malaysia

Yang Lai Fong Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University United International College, Zhuhai, China

Kumanan Govaichelvan Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Siti Aeisha Joharry Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia

Mohd Faizal Kasmani Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Nilai, Malaysia

Ying Hooi Khoo Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Yoke Leng Kock Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Kwan Yee Kow School of Communication and Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, Shah Alam, Malaysia

Charity Lee Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Rachel Lim Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Elanttamil Maruthai Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Siti Nurnadilla Mohamad Jamil Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak, Malaysia

Thanalachime Perumal Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Kumaran Rajandran School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia

Usha Devi Rajaratnam School of Pre-University Studies, Taylor's College, Subang Jaya, Malaysia

Selvajothi Ramalingam Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Farrah Diebaa Rashid Ali Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia, Pagoh, Malaysia

Malarvizhi Sinayah Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

David Yoong Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Melissa Yoong Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia, Semenyih, Malaysia

Noorulhafidzah Zawawi School of Business and Social Sciences, Albukhary International University, Alor Setar, Malaysia

Chapter 1
Politics in Malaysia: A Discourse Perspective

Kumaran Rajandran and Charity Lee

Abstract Our chapter introduces *Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia: Legitimising Governance*. Grounded in Discourse Studies, this edited volume is designed to enrich research on Malaysian political discourse. It examines how political actors employ language to legitimise their governance in distinct contexts. The chapter briefly reviews political parties in Malaysia, which establishes the contours of political culture. Subsequently, it presents an overview of linguistic research in political discourse in the last two decades in Malaysia, which establishes the diversity of studies in linguistic analysis. The chapter describes the other chapters in this volume that research spoken, print and digital texts in English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. These chapters pursue an empirical study of language features and strategies about contemporary concerns in Malaysia. Our chapter ends by offering the future directions of research, where potential avenues could be explored.

Keywords Politics · Legitimation · Discourse · Language · Research

1.1 Introduction

Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia: Legitimising Governance brings together linguistic analyses of Malaysian political discourse. Politics involves the governance of society at different levels (e.g. local, state, country). It is often competitive because individuals/institutions compete for finite resources (Bourdieu, 1993), reflecting specific purposes and situations (Chilton, 2004). We recognise the diversity of scholarly disciplines studying politics but being grounded in Discourse Studies, this edited volume examines politics using a linguistic perspective. Following van Dijk (1997), politics is mostly discursive because individual/institutional political actors employ discourse in their exercise of politics. Their political discourse is

K. Rajandran (✉)
School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia
e-mail: rkumaran@usm.my

C. Lee
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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contextual, manifested in events or practices with primarily political functions by professional or non-professional elected or non-elected individuals or institutions (van Dijk, 1997).

Politics in Malaysia has engaged discourse to construct reality, garnering symbolic power for political actors (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 164). Their symbolic power may influence citizens to favour or disfavour the government, a party, other citizens and their actions and decisions. The use of symbolic power helps established actors because it sustains a nexus of relations for their benefit, while newcomer actors, although denouncing symbolic power, would require it. Any venture in political discourse should understand and decipher the articulation of symbolic power. Clearly, symbolic power does not exist in lacuna and is concomitant on economic, social and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1993).

The analysis of political discourse is scarcely new (Chilton, 2004), and it can be traced to Chinese, Greco-Roman and Indian traditions. It has garnered multidisciplinary interest, particularly in the Humanities. Among its branches, Linguistics has had a crucial contribution (Berrocal & Salamurović, 2019). It is the basis for the transdisciplinary field of Discourse Studies, which recognises the constitutive character of discourse for social realities, structures and subjectivities (Angermuller, 2015). Discourse Studies is enhanced by numerous theoretical and methodological approaches (Angermuller, 2015). Despite the diversity, the focus remains the tripartite study of text, context and meaning (Trappes-Lomax, 2004).

This edited volume is centred on political discourse in Malaysia from 2008 to 2020. It examines how political actors legitimise their governance through discursive means. The concepts termed ‘governance’ and ‘legitimation’ are complex and are explored in several scholarly disciplines. A variety of definitions abounds, which may or may not be harmonious among one another. Following Bevir (2012), governance covers the processes of governing, and although it is undertaken by many actors, our emphasis is on governance by government, political parties and citizens. Legitimation gives the reasons why these processes should happen, or happen in a certain way (van Leeuwen, 2008). Practising discursive approaches means considering how discourse is employed by political actors in Malaysia to (de) legitimise a certain process of governing. Legitimation is inherent in political discourse (Cap, 2008) but it is dynamic, experiencing changes in relation to the purposes and situations of governance.

Political discourse shapes the governance of a country and can become orthodox or the official way of speaking and thinking about the world (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 168). Research on political discourse explains the language features and strategies that facilitate orthodox discourse. But heterodox discourse should also be considered, as it recognises and provides alternatives (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). The discourse is heterodox because it questions conventional beliefs and practices. Political discourse, either orthodox or heterodox, endeavours to legitimise or delegitimise a process of governance. Because governance impacts almost every aspect of the lives of the population, Malaysian political discourse about (de)legitimising governance deserves scholarly reflection. The aim is realised by this edited volume. The original research-based chapters select spoken, print and digital texts in English, Malay, Mandarin and

Tamil and examine the discursive representation and evaluation of contemporary concerns in Malaysia.

1.2 Trajectory of Political Parties in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural country in Southeast Asia. Although its multiculturalism is traceable to pre-colonial times, Portuguese, Dutch and particularly British colonialism moulded its present multicultural demography (Zawawi, 2004). Before independence, the Chinese, Indians and Malays were mostly economically segregated (Hirschman, 1986). The colonial state reified ethnic economic structures, which precipitated the establishment of political parties and the resulting ethno-religious political culture (Yaakop, 2014; Zawawi, 2004).

The British co-operated with, encouraged and prepared the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan (later Malaysian) Indian Congress (MIC) for government (Hirschman, 1986). The three parties formed the Alliance coalition and garnered victory in the 1955 general elections in Malaya. The Alliance was influenced by and with several geopolitical developments, notably inter-state rivalries in Malaya, Communist insurgencies in Asia and the Japanese occupation during World War II (Yaakop, 2014). The Alliance led Malaya to independence in 1957 and to merger in 1963 as Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore formed Malaysia. Singapore's intransigence to comply with unequal ethnic rights precipitated its separation from Malaysia in 1965 (Liu et al., 2002).

The Alliance later expanded to become the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition in 1973, comprising ethnic and regional political parties. BN was formed after interethnic riots and an emergency in 1969. UMNO remained *primus inter pares* in the Alliance and BN, its President becoming Prime Minister and its Members of Parliament handling key cabinet posts (Nadzri, 2018). Over time, UMNO became more dominant and power sharing happened more on its terms rather than equitable negotiation (Weiss, 2020). BN solidified its position from election to election, until the government seemed to be an iteration of BN. As BN acquired and retained symbolic power, it seemed invulnerable. Its discourse was entrenched using several methods, such as control of the media, establishment of repressive legislation and influence on judiciary and religious institutions (Nadzri, 2018).

BN always maintained two-thirds control of Parliament until the 2008 general elections. This loss was a culmination of grassroots activism, the Reformasi (Reform) movement and Internet politics. The resentment among citizens towards BN stimulated public participation in non-electoral politics (Weiss, 2000). Anwar Ibrahim's sacking as deputy Prime Minister in 1998 and his subsequent treatment birthed the Reformasi movement. It exposed the government's corruption, cronyism, nepotism and oppression to the public. These developments were predicated on participatory democracy, where citizens were emboldened to be autonomously involved in politics (Weiss, 2000). It coincided with augmented Internet usage, a cheap, easy and

fast medium that opposition parties adopted much earlier than BN. The Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) had a first mover advantage and capitalised on the Internet, in terms on webpages, blogs and social media sites, to champion citizens' grievances and criticisms of BN.

Consequently, BN could not retain its electoral clout post-2008, which shifted towards opposition parties, who formed short-lived coalitions, such as Barisan Alternatif (BA) from 1998 to 2001 and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) from 2008 to 2015. The culmination of the shift was the 2018 general elections, where BN conceded the federal government to Pakatan Harapan (PH). Public discontent about cost of living was compounded following revelations about 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). BN ended its 60-year tenure, and UMNO could not claim to be the sole champion of Malay-Muslims, the majority demographic group. BN did not garner adequate Malay-Muslim votes, and most young voters favoured opposition parties (Waikar, 2020).

The 2018 general elections heralded hopes for a 'New Malaysia' after a peaceful transition of power from BN to PH. PH involved DAP and PKR, two established parties, and Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), new parties splintered from PAS and UMNO, respectively. Simultaneously, BN was diminished because several parties departed the coalition, notably those in Sarawak forming a state-based coalition, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) in 2018. However, PH faced internal and external existential threats. Besides incorporating BN defectors, PH had a disjointed voter block and frequent infighting among party leaders. PAS and UMNO, banded together as the new opposition in the Muafakat Nasional coalition, worked to solidify their Malay-Muslim base by questioning the importance of Malay-Muslims to PH (Ostwald, 2020).

These threats hastened the undoing of PH. Ultimately, Bersatu and 11 Members of Parliament from PKR left PH to form a new coalition with UMNO and PAS in March 2020, named Perikatan Nasional (PN). PN began administering the country as COVID-19 began spreading. New cooperation was minted during the pandemic, such as parties in Sabah forming a state-based coalition, Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) in 2020. The PN-led government was short-lived because UMNO could not work with Bersatu, and the two jostled for supremacy. Ironically, UMNO and the parties in the previous government endorsed an UMNO-led government in August 2021.

The new government and PH signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in September 2021, promising bipartisan reforms and not holding elections before July 2022. As of June 2022, the MOU is upheld although other opposition parties are not always in favour of it. Until 2018, Malaysia had a consistent government coalition in BN and a few opposition coalitions (BA, PR, PH). After 2018, coalitions in government and opposition experience fragmentation and realignment, in response to shifting purposes and situations.

These political parties subscribe to a hegemonic understanding of the postcolonial Malaysian state, which is built on ethno-religious exclusivism and privileges (Hamayotsu, 2013). It embeds Malay-Muslim dominance in various aspects, and Malaysian political culture clearly manifests the institutionalisation of ethnicity and religion

(Ahmad Fauzi, 2018; Hamayotsu, 2013; Weiss, 2020; Zawawi, 2004). Malaysia inherited and has exercised a Westminster system of parliamentary democracy since independence in 1957. But its political culture is hybridised because the Constitution of Malaysia and norms of beliefs and practices entrench and perpetuate the primacy of the Bumiputeras (Malays and other natives), Islam and the Malay Monarchs.

Malay-Muslim dominance, often encapsulated as 3R (Race, Religion, Royalty), constitutes the basis of legitimacy to governance in Malaysia. 3R informs the consociational state, where power sharing has characterised politics since independence. It endorses Malay-Muslim dominance but tries to cater to socio-demographic cleavages, namely ethnic, linguistic, regional or religious. The consociational state has provided political stability, which facilitates economic growth (Abeyratne, 2008). The distributive impact of growth mitigated socio-demographic problems (Abeyratne, 2008), but slower growth after the 1998 economic crisis has meant their re-emergence along the parallel tracks of race and religion.

Although race has remained a permanent feature since the 1950s, religion has gained prominence since the 1980s (Ahmad Fauzi, 2018). The two are conflated because race is linked to religion in Malaysia. Indeed, to be Malay is to be Muslim, following the Constitution (Article 160). Political parties, particularly UMNO and PAS, engage in 'Islamising' their actions and decisions to convince their Malay-Muslim electorate (Zawawi, 2004). In addition, deferment and reference to royalty are conveniently employed in the pursuit of political power. Although Malaysia has a constitutional monarchy, the influence of royal institutions may permeate politics. Hence, 3R forms a nexus and is fundamental to politics. Its three components are intimately coupled, and the (perceived) advantage or disadvantage given to one can impact the other two.

The entrenchment of 3R bolsters ethnic and religious collective identities (Hamayotsu, 2013). It has normalised notions of ethno-religious exclusivism and privileges in politics. Although periodically questioned, from Singapore's 'Malaysian Malaysia' in the 1960s to civil society movements in the 2000s, political elites rarely consider reducing Malay-Muslim dominance (Hamayotsu, 2013). They have been defensive and incorporate non-elites in the defence of their power. 3R polarises Malaysians, creating an us-them division that is partisan or ethno-religious (Weiss, 2020).

For Anderson (2006, p. 7), a nation is an imagined community because despite any actual inequality and exploitation, a deep, horizontal comradeship is believed to exist. In Malaysia, the comradeship is constantly contested, and a political culture nurturing 3R has not helped cohesion among the various ethnic, linguistic, regional or religious groups. Malaysia has experienced four coalitions in government (Alliance, BN, PH, PN) from 1957 to 2022. Whatever the ruling coalition, their political discourse may (re) negotiate multiple concerns. Yet, 3R is always retained because it constitutes their basis of legitimacy to governance.

1.3 Researching Malaysian Political Discourse

In an overview of Discourse Studies, Huan and Guan (2020) observe political discourse being a relatively stable area of research from 1978 to 2018. Research is consistent perhaps because the texts produced in politics never cease, which provides a constant stream of data. It demonstrates the varied themes, topics, methods, frameworks and approaches in political discourse analysis. Research is dominated by Anglo-American scholars (Huan & Guan, 2020) or continental European scholars who moved to the United Kingdom (UK) or the United States of America (USA).

The articles and books on political discourse prove the preponderance of certain countries. While research about the USA used to dominate article publishing, research about Australia, China and the UK is now growing (Huan & Guan, 2020). The trend establishes the shift from unipolarity to multipolarity because several countries are inspiring the study of political discourse. Book publishing is heterogeneous, and research about several countries is available. Among these books, their research is centred on countries in Europe and North America (Bayley, 2004; Berrocal & Salamurović, 2019; Hatzidaki & Goutsos, 2017; Ilie, 2010; Lockhart, 2019; Šarić & Stanojević, 2019) although other countries in Africa (Egypt in Dunne, 2003), Asia (China in Cao et al., 2014; Li et al., 2020) and South America (Venezuela in Bolívar, 2018) have received some interest.

Research on Malaysian political discourse is grounded in Discourse Studies, notably Critical Discourse Studies because it provides useful concepts for a detailed and systematic analysis. These concepts are operationalised as part of frameworks developed from Anglophone material (Berrocal & Salamurović, 2019) but are now employed on Malaysian texts. Typical frameworks are Fairclough's dialectical relational approach, van Leeuwen's socio-semantic approach and Wodak's discourse historical approach. These frameworks are mobilised in their entirety, partly or even complemented by other concepts in Discourse Studies, or concepts in Cognitive Linguistics, Ethnomethodology, Pragmatics or Sociolinguistics (Angermuller, 2015). The eclectic mix gives research the ability to unearth language features and strategies contributing to the social production of meaning. Research performs a close analysis of texts through a manual or automated procedure. Although a manual procedure is favoured, an automated procedure using software (e.g. NVivo, WordSmith) is common.

We review research on Malaysian political discourse along Halliday's field, tenor and mode. Broadly put, field involves what is going on in context, tenor involves the role of interactants in context, and mode is about the role of text in context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 33). These contextual configurations guide an overview of research in the last two decades. While the majority is conducted on non-fiction texts, Jeniri (2005) and Zabidin (2010) reveal the presence of politics in novels, explaining how the political context may impact characters and scenes.

Regarding field, concerns of national importance are prominent. For Randour et al. (2020), studies on political discourse prefer themes on international relations, elections and justice. Research in Malaysia does consider elections and justice but

international relations are not a major focus. Studies about justice contemplate ethnic or economic development. During UMNO General Assemblies, Mahathir Mohamad argues for his leadership enhancing UMNO, Islam and the economy (Idris, 2006; Kamila, 2010), while Najib Razak solidifies UMNO and Malay identity (Rohaidah, 2016; Rohaidah et al., 2019).

Continuing the trend, Harshita et al., (2020) monitor how Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's speech acts change from 2017 to 2018, in relation to UMNO's position in power. Yoong (2019) identifies the conditions for orderly and disorderly conduct in Parliament during question time. Humour is perceived as disorderly conduct but certain conditions make it acceptable or unacceptable. Dayang Sariah et al. (2020) compare modality in Parliament during a budget speech debate. While the government prefers modals that motivate action, the opposition prefers modals that inform, reflecting a variance in power.

Economic scandals happened from the 1970s (Bumiputera Malaysia Finance Limited) to the 2000s (1MDB). Teh (2018) traces the enablers of these scandals but the discourse of these scandals is rarely analysed. Yoong (2021) is an exception, where the CEO of 1MDB reframes financial abnormalities as common practices. Economic crises happen in almost each decade but the financial crisis of 1998 was particularly bad. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad employs metaphors to conceptualise the crisis. His metaphors of colonisation and the military provoke nationalism and shift blame to personified currency manipulators (Kelly, 2001).

The government has formulated programmes for economic development. Prime Minister Najib Razak created several programmes, such as the National Transformation Programme (NTP), Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). Dzulkifli (2016) queries the convergence between beliefs and practices. The ETP was crucial for improving income, and Rajandran (2013) studies speeches about the ETP. Najib Razak employs metaphors of journey, vehicle and plant, which posit economic advantages but naturalise a binary relationship between the government and citizens. Budget speeches set the direction for economic development. Rajandran's (2019) study explains how BN portrays economic competence in these speeches. The government claims to be financially solvent and can introduce desirable initiatives for citizens of several ethnicities and regions, notably Bumiputeras, Sabah and Sarawak. It entails a government-citizen binary because the government is the source of initiatives and citizens are the target of initiatives.

Elections are a popular field of study. Idris (2009) examines BN's 2004 manifesto, through which BN's positive agency is emphasised. Savaranamuttu et al. (2015) and Lim et al. (2018) deliberate the 2013 and 2018 general elections, respectively, where the consociational model of power sharing among ethnic and regional political parties continues to shape electoral results. Because these parties utilise the media to influence voter perception, Gomez, Mustafa and Lee (2018) unpack how a mix of cronyism and regulation mould a mainstream media favouring BN.

Among the studies on media is Siti Nurnadilla (2020), who notes a clear division between the Malay-Muslim 'us' and non-Malay/non-Muslim 'them' in mainstream

Malay language newspapers. The politics of fear amplifies and sensationalises insecurities, which justifies voting for BN in the 2013 general elections. Leong (2019), Lim (2017) and Tapsell (2018) analyse digital media. Leong (2019) identifies the tactics of election advertising in blogs, email, social media sites, Usenet groups and websites during the 2008, 2013 and 2018 general elections. The Internet enables the government, opposition and their respective supporters to engage in informing the public although abuse is noted, as propaganda and fake news abound. Lim (2017) studies the Bersih gatherings for clean and fair elections. The discourse of participants' online activism shows how protests are conceived. Tapsell (2018) recognises the ability of social media sites, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. Their rampant use spread information about the corruption and nepotism of Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Regarding tenor, the individuals/institutions producing the discourse are almost always elites. For Randour et al. (2020), the elites in political discourse are Western and are members of the executive (President, Prime Minister, Minister), aspirants for the executive or political party leaders. Research in Malaysia reflects the trend because the Prime Minister is often selected, as he is the dominant member of the executive and President of UMNO and BN. The discourse of its President has garnered substantial research, as in Idris (2006), Harshita et al. (2020), Kamila (2010), Rohaidah (2016) and Rohaidah et al. (2019). Others, like Kelly (2001) and Rajandran (2013, 2019), consider the Prime Minister, in his capacity to decide on economics, which impacts the whole country. Idris (2009) transcends the individual and selects the party, BN.

The studies above examine the discourse of UMNO or BN because its President (simultaneously Prime Minister) is a metonymic spokesperson, speaking on behalf of the party, coalition or government, and represents its views. Research has analysed how the government and opposition handle a concern of national importance (Dayang Sariah et al., 2020; Yoong, 2019). Speakers with political positions are studied because their discourse conveys authority about elections and justice. Other research selects citizens, who occupy a privileged position, such as the CEO of 1MDB (Yoong, 2021), journalists (Siti Nurnadilla, 2020) or ordinary citizens who are part of the public (Leong, 2019; Lim, 2017; Tapsell, 2018).

Regarding mode, spoken texts dominate research, as with most research on political discourse (Randour et al., 2020). A closed set of spoken texts are analysed, covering parliament speeches (Dayang Sariah et al., 2020; Yoong, 2019), political party President speeches (Harshita et al., 2020; Idris, 2006; Kamila, 2010; Rohaidah, 2016; Rohaidah et al., 2019), Prime Minister speeches (Rajandran, 2013, 2019) and radio interviews (Yoong, 2021). Although spoken, these texts are not ephemeral because print and digital media distribute their transcription across space and time. Other research analyses spoken texts reported in the media (Kelly, 2001). Written texts are analysed, as in election manifestos (Idris, 2009), newspapers (Siti Nurnadilla, 2020) and posts on social media sites (Leong, 2019; Lim, 2017; Tapsell, 2018). These studies analyse language but Idris (2009) acknowledges the importance of image in election manifestos.

Research on Malaysian political discourse tends to analyse the oral texts of political elites on elections and justice. The analysis shows how government or opposition actors shape the representation and evaluation of national concerns, which discloses certain ideologies. Ideology is important in political discourse because discourse enables ideological socialisation (Eagleton, 2007; van Dijk, 1998). A discourse may promote a particular ideology, reiterating the government's positive agency to improve the lives of people in Malaysia. While discourse is not irredeemably ideological (Fairclough, 1992, p. 91), the use of discourse in a contextual configuration of field, tenor and mode conveys an ideological stance.

Considerable research exists on political discourse but Malaysia is understudied in comparison with other countries (Huan & Guan, 2020). *Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia: Legitimising Governance* is a novel contribution because it features research from Malaysia. Particularly, contemporary developments from 2008 to 2020 are selected as this period captures a shift in politics, from BN authoritarianism to fragmentation and realignment among parties. The shift influenced how political discourse reflects national concerns. These concerns experience (de)legitimisation because political actors are competing for symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1994). Legitimation being their principal discourse goal (Cap, 2008, p. 39), a linguistic analysis unearths the language features and strategies that facilitate (de)legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2008). The analysis is grounded in Discourse Studies. Its concepts are operationalised in various texts but these are often in the languages of Europe. This volume reiterates their suitability to decipher spoken, print and digital texts and further demonstrates their suitability on Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, besides English.

Concretely, this edited volume is centred on political discourse in Malaysia from 2008 to 2020 in texts in the major languages of the country. The spatiotemporal context enhances existing literature on political discourse. While political discourse across contexts has shared traits, in Malaysia, it must also engage 3R (Race, Religion, Royalty) because it constitutes the basis of legitimacy to governance. 3R has become a fundamental component of political discourse, where it makes an explicit or implicit appearance in language, regulating what should or should not be said. This appearance helps or hinders symbolic power for established and newcomer actors (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 164). Their legitimation is responsive to purposes and situations in Malaysia, making legitimation obviously context-sensitive and certainly realpolitik. Hence, the analysis in the chapters may shape the dialogue about legitimation in Linguistics and develop new perspectives.

Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia: Legitimising Governance improves our understanding of contemporary Malaysian political discourse. It presents a broad range of studies using various texts and languages, revealing the discursive aspects of politics. This volume benefits people investigating political discourse, either in Malaysia or other countries. It is useful to Linguistics, notably Discourse Studies because several theoretical and methodological approaches are demonstrated. This volume is also of interest to Asian Studies, Communication Studies, Media Studies and Politics and International Relations, exhibiting the ability and potential of linguistic analyses in politics. It could pique the curiosity of the

general citizenry, who can comprehend how language influences their perception of national concerns. Therefore, this volume provides focused reading for anyone exploring discursive approaches in a developing Asian country.

1.4 Overview of this Volume

Discursive Approaches to Politics in Malaysia: Legitimising Governance brings together relevant research in a coherent volume. It examines how language serves to (de) legitimise governance and its subsequent policies and activities in Malaysia. This volume demonstrates a variety of texts. First, it analyses spoken, print and digital texts. Second, it exemplifies texts in English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, the major languages of the country. Third, it deploys several theoretical and methodological approaches. These texts drive the discourse-centred research in the subsequent chapters. These chapters are 'language oriented' (Angermuller, 2015), and their depth of linguistic analyses is determined by the specific research questions posed and the theory and method selected (Berrocal & Salamurović, 2019). Their analyses disclose how texts convey particular meanings in the Malaysian political context, placing them clearly in the ambit of Discourse Studies (Trappes-Lomax, 2004).

Rajandran and Lee (this Chapter) provide contextualisation and an overview of research and the chapters in this volume. Ahmad Fauzi and Noorulhafidzah (Chap. 2) expand the contextualisation, relating the contours of race, religion and royalty in Malaysian political culture. Rajandran (Chap. 3) investigates BN budget speeches in Malay from 2010 to 2018. Performing an intertextual analysis, the presence of economic, political and religious voices facilitates moralisation and authorisation. The voices discursively legitimise actions and decisions for the economy, which perpetuate government economic agency, making BN seems indispensable to development. Farrah Diebaa and Su'ad (Chap. 4) select BN budget speeches in Malay from 2010 to 2018 and PH budget speeches from 2019 to 2020. A conceptual metaphor analysis reveals favoured vocational roles, and BN and PH perceive their government as general/soldier and doctor. These roles conceive a hero-like authoritative government, practising their expertise for the benefit of the country. Perumal, Govaichelvan, Sinaiyah, Ramalingam and Maruthai (Chap. 5) establish the reactions to the budget allocation of Tamil schools by two Indian Malaysian politicians in interviews in Tamil. The allocation is not favourably received, and authorisation, rationalisation and moralisation are employed to delegitimise it. Representing DAP and MIC, the politicians display their capability in protecting the rights of Indian Malaysians.

Kow and Khoo (Chap. 6) describe the media, reviewing media freedom and reforms. While media freedom has experienced marginal improvements, media reforms are laborious. PH created the Malaysian Media Council (MMC), and the MMC has tried to justify its function during the PH and PN governments. Four barriers confront the MMC and its agenda of media reforms, namely the electoral authoritarian regime, censorship, proprietorship and tension between the MMC and

media reformists. Fernandez, Yang and Rajaratnam (Chap. 7) reveal the framing of the Tanjung Piai by-election in newspapers of different languages—English (*Malaysiakini*, *The Star*), Malay (*Harian Metro*) and Mandarin (*Sin Chew Daily*). While *Malaysiakini*, *The Star* and *Sin Chew Daily* are critical of PH, *Harian Metro* is neutral to PH. *Malaysiakini* and *Harian Metro* quote more PH voices but *The Star* and *Sin Chew Daily* quote more BN voices. The newspapers appear partisan, to cater to political ownership and ethnic readership.

Siti Nurnadilla (Chap. 8) inspects editorials and columns on the 13th and 14th general elections in two Malay language newspapers, *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia.* Applying the discourse historical approach, arguments create a binary of voting for the known (BN) and voting for the unknown (PR/PH). The binary frames the politics of fear (Wodak, 2021) because the newspapers argue for BN protecting and PR/PH jeopardising Malay-Muslims. Ang and Kock (Chap. 9) study articles on the International Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in two English language newspapers, *New Straits Times* and *The Star*. Applying the dialectical relational approach, PAS, UMNO and Malay/Muslim organisations are reported to oppose ICERD. Those opposing it frame the politics of fear (Wodak, 2021) in case Malay-Muslim rights are eroded. Yoong (Chap. 10) explores English language press releases by women's rights organisations about women's employment, health and safety. The organisations employ authorisation, rationalisation, nation-building and victimhood to underscore the importance of women's rights. The rights appear instrumental but serve the pursuit of a feminist national identity.

Siti Aeisha and Mohd Faizal (Chap. 11) analyse articles on the 2021 budget in an English language newspaper online, *The Star*. Performing a corpus-assisted discourse analysis, the budget revolves around COVID-19, economy and government. COVID-19 impacts the economy, and government spending to mitigate it creates an expansionary budget although the expansion spurs a deficit. Lee (Chap. 12) explores the COVID-19 pandemic on Twitter. Tweets in English and Malay bearing the hashtag *KitaJagaKita* are gathered into themes and are analysed for legitimation strategies. The themes are utilised distinctly because those supporting the PN government display authorisation, moralisation and altruism but those not supporting PN display moralisation and rationalisation, to (de) legitimise the handling of COVID-19. Lim and Yoong (Chap. 13) study the 1MDB scandal in *The Sarawak Report*. A conceptual metaphor analysis of the posts in English reveals several metaphors to describe the culprits, to simplify money laundering and to intensify corruption. These metaphors clarify the opaque operations of 1MDB, which makes the scandal comprehensible while emphasising its scale and depth.

1.5 Future Directions

This volume is a snapshot of politics in Malaysia from 2008 to 2020. As such, it captures research on BN, PH and PN. The fragmentation and realignment of

coalitions have become common but the discourse of parties and politicians should continue to be explored in future research. It enriches the literature and can trace (dis) continuities in Malaysian political discourse. A starting point for future research could be a bibliometric study, as pursued by Huan and Guan (2020) and Randour et al. (2020), but tailored to Malaysia. It can discover gaps in research and can direct research to certain areas of political discourse.

Political discourse is articulated in various languages but research disproportionately selects texts in English and Malay. English has received more interest than Malay perhaps because those in Discourse Studies are often trained in English Linguistics. While English and Malay are the two prominent languages in Malaysia, other languages remain actively utilised. These languages (e.g. Iban, Kadazan, Mandarin, Tamil, Aslian languages) voice political discourse, and their texts must be examined. It better reflects socio-demographic reality and captures the aspirations of multiple groups.

Existing research is mostly centred on the discourse of elites, articulated as oral monological speeches. Consequently, the discourse produced by non-elite individuals/organisations in other mediums is marginalised. Their discourse should be investigated as it participates in the representation and evaluation of concerns facing Malaysia. Moreover, research can compare the discourse of elites and non-elites. It could track the distribution and circulation of frames and arguments. The tracking permits an analysis of similarities and dissimilarities between elite and non-elite discourse, and the recontextualisation of frames and arguments across space and time.

The comparative focus can be extended to other countries and political systems. A comparison between Malaysia and Singapore would be desirable, considering their similar ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, besides intertwining geography and history. Their divergent post-independence history may divulge the extent of the influence of shared traits on political discourse. Similarly, a comparison among Commonwealth countries is plausible because these countries inherited Britain's Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. It ascertains how postcolonial structures influence political discourse, despite divergent socio-demographic factors.

Research can incorporate software to generate patterns, as it easily unearths (in) consistencies in discourse. But an automated analysis should not be deployed solely to impart a veneer of technological advancement. Instead, its use should be principled and complement a manual analysis. Their synergies may enhance the study of political discourse. Indeed, no linguistic analysis is definitive or exhaustive because multiple interpretations may exist. The interpretations can be substantiated if research procures feedback from the actual producers and consumers of texts using experiments, interviews, observations or surveys.

Moreover, research should not always be fixated on language because a monomodal study would not capture the reality of political discourse, while a multimodal study recognises language in conjunction with other modes. Multimodal texts are typical, where spoken language is utilised with body language, facial expression and gesture, and written language is utilised with layout, colour and image (charts, icons, pictures). Fortunately, the popularity of Multimodal (Critical)

Discourse Studies (Ledin & Machin, 2018) has meant the incorporation of other modes in analysis. Identifying the 'labour' of multiple modes can explain political discourse wholistically.

Ultimately, the study of political discourse in Malaysia and other countries should extend beyond academic exercise and help to reduce or remove exploitation, inequality and oppression in society (Giddens, 1991). The aim is regularly articulated but hardly realised. Academia has popularised the study of political discourse but for the study to participate in Giddens' (1991) 'emancipatory politics', we need to engage with people beyond academia. Such engagement can manifest in numerous ways but an understanding of discourse is indispensable to bring about improvements in the real world.

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Kumaran Rajandran is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He teaches BA and MA courses and supervises MA and Ph.D. research in Linguistics. His research involves the multimodal study of various discourses, exploring the articulation of identity and ideology in contemporary societies. He can be contacted at rkumaran@usm.my.

Charity Lee is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. Her areas of research include narrative analysis and discourse analysis, particularly involving social practices surrounding migrant and vulnerable groups, as well as narrative methodology. Her research also includes communication practices in media, politics and health care. She teaches German linguistics and translation at the undergraduate level and supervises a range of discourse analysis approaches at the postgraduate level. She can be contacted at charity.lee@um.edu.my.

Chapter 2
The Interplay of Race, Religion and Royalty in Contemporary Malaysian Politics

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Noorulhafidzah Zawawi

Abstract The lengthy years of the Perikatan (Alliance) and its successor Barisan Nasional (BN) administrations (1957–2018) gave Malaysia the opportunity to construct and mould the practice of democracy. Democracy is reflected through the existence of various political parties, the holding of regular elections under closely administered electoral processes, the upholding of rights and freedoms of the people to participate in party politics and civil society, the heated interactions among multi-ethnic citizens over mainstream and social media and the limited avenues provided by the law for the populace to express and display dissent. In Peninsular Malaysian politics, fault lines along the divisive racial and religious lines appear to dominate the discursive scene, with related issues over the role of Malay royalty trailing not too distantly behind. The past decade or so has seen political fortunes of the opposition, defined here as parties that oppose BN whether separately or together in coalitions during general elections, progressively improving, culminating in Pakatan Harapan's (PH) trouncing of BN in the fourteenth general elections (GE14) in 2018. However, in Malaysian politics, elected politicians do not by themselves fill all political gaps. In uncertain times, as have prevailed in Malaysia since Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's (PPBM) betrayal of PH in February 2020, the Malay monarchy has become more important than ever in deciding who and which political coalition gets to form the country's executive branch. This chapter presents an overview of how race, religion and royalty are routinely encountered in the country's politics, particularly over the last decade.

Keywords Race · Religion · Royalty · Nationalism · Politics

A. F. Abdul Hamid (✉)
School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia
e-mail: afauzi@usm.my

N. Zawawi
School of Business and Social Sciences, Albukhary International University, Alor Setar, Malaysia

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2.1 Contours of Malaysian Politics After the Fourteenth General Elections (GE14)

Malaysia's fourteenth general elections (GE14), held on May 9, 2018, have had far-reaching consequences in laying out the possibility of diverse trajectories for the country's political democracy beyond the Malay-Muslim hegemonic path set in motion by the New Economic Policy (NEP) enunciated in the aftermath of racial clashes in and around Kuala Lumpur on May 13, 1969. For the very first time in Malaysia's history, the United Malays National Organization's (UMNO) stranglehold over political power, exercised discreetly through its leadership of the multi-ethnic coalitions of Perikatan (Alliance) (1957–1969) and later Barisan Nasional (BN) (since 1974), was broken as the opposition Pakatan Harapan (PH) swept into power on the back of its 121 seats (113 seats plus an additional 8 seats won by PH's Sabah-based ally Warisan) and 46% of popular votes, delivering it a simple majority in the 222-member federal parliament. These figures contrast with PH's main rivals BN and Parti Islam SeMalaysia's (PAS) seat counts of 79 (34% popular vote) and 18 (17% popular vote). At the state level, PH added to its tally the state governments of Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Perak and Kedah to its incumbent administrations in Selangor and Penang, leaving BN with control over only Pahang and Perlis, while PAS retained Kelantan and wrested Terengganu from BN. Meanwhile, Warisan snatched Sabah from BN after some confusion arising from chief minister Musa Aman initially claiming victory for BN. In Sarawak, which had already conducted state elections in 2016, BN was handed a blow when its component parties left the coalition to form the locally based Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS).

PH's honeymoon was, however, short-lived. Despite seemingly maintaining an early momentum of by-election victories in the Selangor state constituencies of Sungai Kandis (August 2018), Balakong (September 2018) and Seri Setia (September 2018), and in the parliamentary constituencies of Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan (October 2018—catapulting the hitherto jailed Anwar Ibrahim back into Parliament), and Sandakan, Sabah (May 2019), its fortunes went downhill with embarrassing defeats in Cameron Highlands, Pahang (January 2019) and Tanjung Piai, Johor (November 2019). PH's defeat in Tanjung Piai was especially hard, happening in a state which PH was helming and having its Malay-Muslim candidate Karmaine Sardini from Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), of which Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was chairman, losing to BN-Malaysian Chinese Association's (MCA) Wee Jeck Seng by a humiliating 15,086 majority. This not only constituted a 20% vote swing that completely reversed PH-PPBM's marginal victory in GE14, but it also supposedly demonstrated the scale to which Malay-Muslims, who formed 57% of the electorate in Tanjung Piai, had become so infuriated with the PH government that they were prepared to vote in a non-Malay Member of Parliament (MP) as long as he represented the pro-Malay BN, which had since September 2019 inked an informal alliance with PAS called Muafakat Nasional (MN). PAS was even prepared to shrug off its Malay-Muslim-centric image during the Tanjung Piai by-election by openly urging its supporters to vote for Wee Jeck Seng (Zurairi, 2019). The Tanjung

Piai by-election also elicited controversy for PH when it was accused of abusing government privileges and projects to buy votes—election misdeeds for which BN had been constantly attacked by PH when PH was in the opposition (Ng, 2019).

Even before the Tanjung Piai debacle, signs of the grassroots Malay-Muslim tide turning against PH were evident from PH's conceding its incumbent Semenyih state seat in a March 2019 by-election. But Tanjung Piai was the point of no return for Malay nationalist elements within the ruling PH coalition who sensed how Malay-Muslim support for PH had plunged to abysmally low levels within one year of winning GE14. Field interviews and opinion polls indicated that racial and religious issues featured prominently among the Malay-Muslim grouses against the PH government. Many of them viewed PH as a Chinese-controlled administration that relegated to unimportance the protection of Malay interests and rights, with a further significant number expressing shock and regret that their denial of votes to BN-UMNO reached the extent of dislodging it from power (Wan Saiful, 2020).

By the end of 2019, signs were increasingly emerging that discontented factions in PH, led chiefly by PPBM politicians and disgruntled leaders of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), whose president Anwar Ibrahim's wife Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was Deputy Prime Minister, were involved in backdoor efforts with MN to restore Malay-Muslim hegemony in government. Especially alarming was the successful organization on October 6, 2019, of a Malay Dignity Congress, bringing together PPBM chairman-cum-Prime Minister Mahathir on the same platform with PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang, UMNO Secretary-General Annuar Musa, PKR Deputy President Mohamed Azmin Ali, Universiti Malaya Vice-Chancellor Abdul Rahman Hashim and influential Perlis mufti Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin, with an iconic picture of them raising one another's hands at the end of the event swiftly going viral over both mainstream and alternative media. PKR President Anwar Ibrahim, to whom Mahathir had agreed in principle to hand over the premiership after two years at the helm, was conveniently left out from the original list of invitees (Mohsin, 2019). Zainal Kling, a public university professor and executive secretary of the Congress, had thunderously declared in his opening speech that Malaysia belonged rightfully to the Malays, claiming further that ungrateful non-Malays had taken advantage of the good nature of the Malays to repudiate the social contract that allegedly governs the relationship between Malays and non-Malays in independent Malaysia. Despite police reports being lodged against the Congress for racial incitement, Mahathir vehemently denied that the event had racist connotations (KiniTV, 2019).

During the final week of February 2020, Malay-Muslim ethnocentric momentum climaxed with the Sheraton Move. A dinner event at Sheraton Hotel, Petaling Jaya, on February 23, 2020, had gathered PH rebels comprising PPBM cabinet members and PKR rebels who together announced their withdrawal from the PH governing coalition. A week of confusion ensued, witnessing Mahathir's resignation as Prime Minister citing a loss of parliamentary majority albeit as yet untested on the floor of the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives); Mahathir's refusal to go along with his party PPBM's plan to install a Mahathir-led Malay unity government comprising MPs from PPBM, PAS and UMNO; Mahathir's acceptance of the position of interim

Prime Minister before a suitable replacement for him was found; and the eventual appointment of PPBM President Muhyiddin Yasin as Malaysia's eighth Prime Minister following the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's (King) separate interviews with various party leaders, which convinced the monarch that Muhyiddin was the prime ministerial candidate most likely to command a working majority of elected parliamentarians (Wan Saiful, 2020). Known rather controversially for his past exclamation that he was Malay first and Malaysian second, Muhyiddin, the Home Minister under the PH administration, led a newly constituted Perikatan Nasional (PN) government backed by PPBM, PAS, GPS and individual BN (UMNO, MCA, MIC, i.e. Malaysian Indian Congress) MPs (Ahmad Fauzi, 2020a).

Having been betrayed by his own party President, Mahathir eventually left PPBM and founded the party Pejuang, which since its registration in July 2021 has failed to find a footing among Malays and Malaysians in general, as proven by its thrashing in the Johor state elections of March 2022. Yet another Malay-centric party, Pejuang is testament to the increasingly muddled terrain of post-GE14 Malay-Muslim politics when the community itself is facing increasing challenges in adjusting to modernization. Malay-Muslims are now torn between loyalties to political representatives from different blocs, each claiming their position as Malay nationalists but without sacrificing national interests and pragmatism in enticing non-Malay support for the purpose of governing the country effectively (Wong, 2022). More open now to the outside world in an age of globalization, younger generation Malays are no longer subservient to the whims of their political warlords. Among former staunch supporters of Mahathir in PPBM, not all followed him into Pejuang. PPBM's erstwhile Youth chief-cum-former Minister of Youth and Sports Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman now heads the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (Muda) which won one seat in the Johor state elections, while the Islamist Dr. Maszlee Malik, PH's former Minister of Education, has joined PKR under Anwar Ibrahim, to whom Mahathir is notorious for having a long-standing aversion. In fact, many quarters believe that it was Mahathir's stubborn refusal to pass over the premiership to Anwar Ibrahim as originally agreed would take place by May 2020, quite apart from his racialist disposition, that precipitated the dramatic events of February 2020, from which Malaysia has struggled to recover since (Gunasegaram, 2019; Sum, 2019).

2.2 From Muhyiddin Yasin to Ismail Sabri Yaakob: Foregrounding Ethno-Religious Nationalism

On August 21, 2021, UMNO Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob took over the premiership from Muhyiddin, following UMNO's official withdrawal of support for the PN government. The palace employed the same method of appointing Muhyiddin just one and a half years earlier. Upon accepting the latter's resignation, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong sought to verify the number of MPs that any parliamentary coalition leader could muster by means of statutory declarations (SDs)

which would be presented before the monarch. In Ismail Sabri's case, individual MPs were further instructed to submit names of their preferred candidate by August 18. As noted by Azmil (2020, p. 104), such a process was essentially 'undemocratic'. Yet, that was the same route that opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim resorted to when he announced in September 2020 that PH had mustered a 'strong, formidable and convincing' majority in Parliament which would enable it to restore the people's mandate given to PH in May 2018 to govern the country (Arfa, 2020). No vote of confidence in Parliament was explicitly sought by either Muhyiddin, Anwar or Ismail Sabri, and although the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had initially required the incoming post-Muhyiddin government to prove its majority on the Dewan Rakyat floor, the royal suggestion was later shelved through a statement from the Attorney General (Anand, 2021; Ng, 2021a). The high and then rising COVID-19 pandemic cases nationally had become a convenient excuse for politicians from all sides of Malaysia's political divide to defer democratic procedures.

Ever since Malay-Muslim politicians of the old order outfoxed PH in February 2020, defence of the Malay race and Islamic religion has been foremost among concerns addressed by unelected Malaysian governments. Even Anwar Ibrahim, when attempting in vain to unseat the PN government merely seven months into its existence to the extent of being granted an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, was careful to stress that the majority of lawmakers backing him in his intended political coup were Malay-Muslim MPs (Danial, 2020). The choice of Ismail Sabri as Muhyiddin's deputy in July 2021 and Prime Minister one month later was similarly calibrated to appease the restless Malay-Muslim constituency. During previous ministerial stints, Ismail Sabri had courted controversy for adopting a combative attitude in privileging Malay businesses over their ethnic Chinese competitors (Ng, 2021b). This was despite Ismail Sabri having married into a Malay DAP family; his father-in-law having twice contested under the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) ticket in Perak in 1978 and 1982. In the Malay-Muslim ethno-religious imagination, DAP, as the political offspring of Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP), is equated with Chinese chauvinism if not outright communism, both of which supposedly explain the party's inexorably anti-Malay and anti-Islamic postures (Faizal et al., 2019). This is despite DAP making vast inroads into the Malay community and relentlessly attempting to shake off its Chinese-centric image since taking over the reins of government in Penang in 2008 (Ahmad Fauzi & Zairil Khir, 2019).

Ismail Sabri's most significant achievement to date has been his securing Malaysia's effectively first-ever confidence and supply agreement between the federal government and the opposition, officially known as the 'Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Transformation and Political Stability' (IDEAS, 2021). Notwithstanding its several shortcomings, for example, the absence of a political funding law to combat political corruption, its other numerous constructive parts helped the government address the health and economic challenges posed by COVID-19 and set in motion institutional changes that laid out paths towards substantive political reform. Among other things, the MOU would officially recognize the position of Leader of the Opposition as being of ministerial status; allow more meaningful

participation of opposition members in the drafting of Budget 2022; ensure balance of representation between opposition and government MPs in Parliamentary Select Committees (PSCs) to ensure effective checks and balances; speed up the implementation of Undi18, i.e. bringing down the age of enfranchisement to 18 years old from the previous threshold of 21 years old, and automatic voter registration (AVR); reintroduce the Parliamentary Services Act thus giving Parliament autonomy to manage its administration and finances; commit political parties to an Anti-Party Hopping Bill in order to arrest politicians' destabilizing antics whenever the government majority is small; give a fair representation to opposition MPs in the COVID-19 National Recovery Council; seek to limit the prime ministerial tenure to ten years; and restore Sabah and Sarawak's equal status with Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia) as two of three regions which together formed Malaysia, as spelt out in the Malaysia Agreement 1963.

Ismail Sabri insists that the MOU forms a strong bipartisan cooperation that will uphold the spirit of Keluarga Malaysia (Malaysian Family)—the tagline of his administration. Keluarga Malaysia draws inspiration from the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's unity call for 'all parties to practice democracy in seeking solutions to any problems to achieve a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable nation' in his Royal Address to Parliament (Asila, 2021). This was in line with the monarch's earlier advice to the incoming Prime Minister before Ismail Sabri was confirmed in his post: That he 'must work in hand with those who lost and all parties should be prepared to work as a team…In other words, the winner does not win it all while the losers do not lose it all' (Ng, 2021a).

Regardless of Ismail Sabri's determination to showcase a more Malaysian rather than just Malay-oriented reputation in line with his elevation to the premiership, some of his key decisions elicited stinging criticism for their majoritarian bias. Budget 2022, for example, was widely reprimanded for its ethnic skewedness, allocating a mere RM345 million to the ethnic Chinese and Indian communities, in contrast to the whopping RM11.4 billion set aside for Bumiputeras, of whom Malay-Muslims form the large majority (Augustin, 2021). The per capita calculation came to around RM577 per Bumiputera citizen, RM15 per Chinese citizen and RM72 per Indian citizen (Hunter et al., 2021). Shortly after the passing of the Budget, which under the MOU PH was obliged not to oppose, Ismail Sabri, doubling up as chairman of the Majlis Kemakmuran Bumiputera (MKB: Bumiputera Prosperity Council) established by Muhyiddin's administration, unashamedly proposed instituting quotas for Bumiputera-owned businesses in strategic locations such as shopping malls and other tourist hotspots (Ashman, 2021).

By filling key government positions with Malay-Muslim technocrats, both Muhyiddin and Ismail Sabri conveyed the impression to ordinary Malay-Muslims that the government was out to restore Malay-Muslim corporate wealth which had seemingly come under threat during the 22-month-old PH administration. Towards this end, initiatives such as the MKB and Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera (TERAJU: Bumiputera Agenda Steering Unit) were elevated to a national agenda, based on the strategy of creating 'Bumiputera as an entrepreneur nation' (Alfian, 2020). With such programmes being put into action and overseen by the Prime

Minister himself, little wonder that many non-Malays felt betrayed by Muhyiddin's assurance that he would be Prime Minister for all Malaysians (Razdan, 2020).

2.3 Rightward Shift After GE14: Politics of Race and Religion

While right-wing Malay nationalism has always been in existence since the country's independence in 1957, its character since the end of GE14 has arguably acquired new attributes as compared with its equivalent during the nation state's first twenty years (1957–1977). Firstly, since the onset of global Islamic resurgence in the 1980s, Islamism, i.e. the political ideology of Islam, in its various manifestations has enmeshed with Malay nationalism in such a way that it is no longer sufficient to speak of Ketuanan Melayu (Malay Supremacy) as the ideological driving force behind Malay-Muslim backlash against perceived threats to their race and religion in the aftermath of GE14, but rather of Ketuanan Melayu Islam (Malay-Islamic Supremacy) (Chin, 2020). Considering the significance of Islamism in GE14 and how its orthodox and bureaucratic variants eventually ganged up against its more humanist variant as upheld by second-generation Islamists in PH (Ahmad Fauzi, 2018), the label Ketuanan Melayu Islam rather misrepresents the phenomenon by conflating Islam with Islamism (cf. Tibi, 2012). What UMNO nationalists and PAS Islamists vie for is more accurately labelled instead as Ketuanan Melayu Islamis (Malay-Islamist Supremacy), epitomized in both parties' convergence on the primary position they believe that *sharia* (Islamic law) should hold in a future Islamic state of Malaysia.

Negotiations towards realizing this Islamist vision had been going on since before GE14 (approximately 2013–2015), with then Deputy Prime Minister-cum-UMNO Deputy President Muhyiddin becoming directly involved in discussions to allow PAS to table Rang Undang-undang 355 (RUU 355: Bill 355), which paved the way towards permitting *hudud* (Islamic criminal law)-like arrangements in Kelantan (Ahmad Fauzi, 2015). These backdoor UMNO-PAS dealings proceeded despite reservations expressed by BN's non-Malay partners and were stalled only after the eruption of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal, which resulted in Muhyiddin falling out with and getting sacked by Prime Minister Najib Razak. In a nutshell, the coming together of UMNO and PAS in MN was the result of a behind the scenes friendship that Malay nationalist-Islamist forces within both parties had been crafting since the end of GE13 in 2013, when UMNO was desperately trying to recover lost ground in Malay-Muslim constituencies. That Muhyiddin could betray Mahathir in February 2020 in a rightward shift towards the UMNO-PAS pole is least surprising when we consider his pivotal position in the pre-GE14 UMNO-PAS negotiations.

Ketuanan Melayu Islamis is more lethal to Malaysian multi-culturalism than merely Ketuanan Melayu Islam or just Ketuanan Melayu. Islamism's major drawback

as a political ideology is how it essentializes the 'Other', meaning non-Muslims and even Muslims not of its Islamist orientation, as a de facto enemy by virtue of their religious outlook. Islamists set capturing the post-colonial state, whether through institutional means or a coup d'état, and its top-down transformation into a *sharia*-based order as the foremost goal of their struggle. Ardent believers in the slogan *al-Islam hu wa al-hal* (Islam is the solution), Islamists have complete faith in the *sharia* as a kind of magic elixir that would foster peace, justice and prosperity in society. They claim that such a pursuit for an Islamic state is mandated by God; hence, those who oppose such efforts are akin to God's enemies whose elimination, metaphorically or literally, should not be ruled out. Islamists are firmly convinced in their role as the true torchbearers of Islam, yet their utopian tendencies set them apart from centuries-old Islamic tradition which respects diversity, opens itself to cultural borrowing from the other and does not frown upon intra-Muslim ethnic and intellectual plurality. This is a far cry from the binary worldview of Islamists, or for that matter, many right-wing extremists bent on using state authority in furtherance of totalitarian objectives (Tibi, 2012).

One of the Malaysia's most prominent Islamists, PAS President Abdul Hadi, who courted infamy in the 1980s for his Amanat (Message) that purportedly excommunicated fellow Muslims who accepted the colonial-designed Federal Constitution over the *sharia* as law of the land (Ahmad Fauzi, 2020b), has explicitly outlined the pillars of an Islamic state as follows: jamaah (congregation), tanah air (independent and sovereign homeland), perlembagaan (constitution) and citizens ruled by Islamic law's absolute justice irrespective of religious affiliation (Abdul Hadi, 2005, pp. 54–55). His rigid views and checkered history of volatile relations with the BN state notwithstanding, Abdul Hadi was honoured by both the Muhyiddin and Ismail Sabri governments as special envoy to the Middle East and was even granted the honorific title of 'Tan Sri'. Under Ismail Sabri, the Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM: Department of Islamic Advancement of Malaysia)—the hub of federal-level Islamic bureaucracy in Malaysia, has practically fallen into PAS's hands, with PAS monopolizing the ministership and deputy ministership in charge of Islamic affairs under the Prime Minister's Department via its Vice President Senator Idris Ahmad and Pengkalan Chepa MP Ahmad Marzuq Shaary. Although in more careful mode since ascending the corridors of power in Putrajaya, PAS's grand plan of eventually installing the *sharia* for general application in Malaysia proceeds nevertheless (Ahmad Fauzi, 2021).

The second aspect which differentiates current Malay nationalism from past stirrings relates to its explicitly pro-royalist leanings. Loyalty to a raja (ruler) has been identified by Malay studies scholars as one of the three pillars of Malay identity, the other two being bahasa (language) and agama (religion) (Shamsul, 1996). However, past stirrings of Malay nationalism have seen bouts of disapproval of actions by the monarch or his family members, especially when they transgress boundaries of human decency. Hence, the appearance of the well-known Malay idiom, raja adil raja disembah, raja zalim raja disanggah (a just ruler is a worshipped ruler, a tyrannical ruler is a disputed ruler). The Kaum Muda (Young Faction)-spurred nationalism of the 1930s had an anti-royalist inclination to it, as the Malay royalty and aristocracy

were deemed to have been working in cahoots with the Kaum Tua (Old Faction) traditionalist *ulama* (religious scholars) in obstructing progress for Malay society.

Similarly, during Mahathir's tenure as the fifth Prime Minister (1981–2003), the monarchy's wings were clipped under the understanding that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong was always obliged to 'act on the advice of the Prime Minister' (Federal Constitution, n.d. Article 43(2)(b), Article 43A(1)) or act on 'advice of the Cabinet or of a Minister acting under the general authority of the Cabinet' (Federal Constitution, n.d. Article 40(1)). Whatever his true intentions were, Mahathir was apparently trying to break the feudalistic mindset of the Malays. Mahathir had several run-ins with the monarchy, resulting in constitutional crises in 1983 and again in 1993. Under Mahathir's stewardship, Parliament stripped the monarchs of their immunity by allowing them to be tried in a special court. Parliament can also question the monarchs without being deemed seditious, although MPs cannot demand the monarchy's abolition. The modus operandi of royal acquiescence to parliamentary measures was amended such that if a Bill fails to obtain royal consent, it still automatically becomes law after 30 days from the day it is introduced in parliament (Abdul Aziz, 2008).

In the post-GE14 period, by contrast, the Malay monarchy, composed of the nine ruling families of states with royal houses in Peninsular Malaysia and whose monarchs take alternate five-year turns in becoming the Yang di-Pertuan Agong—Malaysia's constitutional monarch, emerged as the primary institution of the country's 'deep state' framework intent on preserving Malay-Muslim political hegemony. In difficult times, it is to the monarchy that the Malay masses, more so than other non-Malay Malaysians, would resort to in line with the regal institution's 'protector' status in Malay culture and mentality (Ahmad Fauzi & Muhamad Takiyuddin, 2012). The historic attachment of the Malays to their royalty stretches back to the British colonial era, when Malays were conceived of as subjects of their raja or Sultan, in contrast to non-Malays who were considered to be British subjects. The British colonial method of 'indirect rule' practically meant exercising authority through the Malay ruling houses of each state except in matters touching 'Malay religion and custom', as per the terms agreed in the Anglo-Perak Pangkor Treaty of 1874 (Ahmad Fauzi, 2004).

However, in spite of the Federal Constitution via Article 153—the clause regularly cited to assert Malays' and other Bumiputeras' 'special position', expressly proclaiming the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the guardian of 'legitimate interests of other communities' as well, Malay nationalists have regularly painted the ethnic Chinese and Indian citizens as posing an existential threat to their survival. In fact, among Malay supremacists, the practice of condescendingly ridiculing non-Malays as pendatang (immigrants) or orang asing (foreigners) in the same mould as illegal migrant workers (PATI: pendatang asing tanpa izin) is common parlance in daily conversations in Malay-centric semi-urban and rural areas and over social media (cf. ISMA, 2014). Some UMNO politicians, whipping up majoritarian support as elections or party contests draw nearer, even encourage such xenophobic sentiments against fellow Malaysians to the detriment of inter-ethnic harmony (cf. Agence France-Presse, 2008). When the newly elected PH government proceeded to appoint

high-profile non-Malays to key federal posts, the lay Malay-Muslims' fears had seemingly become reality. Among the major appointments highlighted were those of former Penang chief minister-cum-DAP Secretary-General Lim Guan Eng as Minister of Finance, the Christian ethnic Indian private lawyer Tommy Thomas as Attorney General and Sabahan Richard Malanjum—a Christian Bumiputera, as Chief Justice. Such inclusion of influential Christian figures in PH's Malaysia Baharu (New Malaysia) structures of power ignited conspiratorial allegations of determined DAP-linked evangelical efforts at spreading the Christian gospel among Malay-Muslims (Syed Jaymal, 2019). With an unprecedentedly high number of 11 of the 28 ministers in the PH federal cabinet being non-Muslims, blame was immediately laid onto PH's Malay-Muslim leaders for reputedly collaborating with or kow-towing to their non-Malay partners' wishes. As the strongest of PH's non-Malay-led parties, DAP figures, many of whom were indeed Christian by faith, bore the brunt of the Malay nationalist verbal and social media vilification.

Malay-Muslim anxiety reached a crescendo following Prime Minister Mahathir's speech at the 73rd United Nations (UN) General Assembly which declared the Malaysian government's intention, in line with PH's GE14 manifesto, to ratify international human rights treaties to which Malaysia had yet to accede to. Beginning with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), fears spread that Malaysia under PH would embrace as well the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CRMW), UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and Punishment (UNCAT) and the Rome Statute (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court) (Abdul Aqmar & Mohammad Agus, 2020). Taken together, this gradual submission to international agreements was interpreted as a sign of weakness on the part of the PH government seen as ever willing to sacrifice dearly held indigenous rights just to be accepted in the comity of nation states that embed racial equality in their paradigm of nationhood. Large public rallies against the government were organized by UMNO, PAS and right-wing Malay non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Support was sought from the Conference of Rulers to pressure the government to at least defer Malaysia's accession to ICERD; a group of four Malay academics was granted an audience with the monarchs to present their research findings that warned that the monarchs would be liable to criminal prosecution overseas should Malaysia ratify ICERD (Chin, 2020). The same opportunity was not afforded to legal minds who had more judicious views about ICERD, for instance the opinion that Article 153 of the Federal Constitution was actually compatible with ICERD's Article 1(4) which provides that 'Special measures taken for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination…' (Paulsen, 2018). Under enormous pressure from all sides and not wanting to risk turmoil and possibility of violence, the PH government

backtracked, sanctioned by none other than the premier-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim, who pleaded, 'We also understand the concerns voiced by the Malays. Please give them the space to provide feedback on the matter' (Syed Umar & Chan, 2018).

2.4 The Monarchy Gains Firm Ground

During PH's 22-month-old administration, Malaysia was ruled by two different personalities as Yang di-Pertuan Agong. First, the relatively young Sultan Muhammad V (b. 1969) from Kelantan ascended the throne during Najib Razak's prime ministerial tenure in December 2016. Hailing from Kelantan, which by then had almost thirty years of experience under PAS administrations, Sultan Muhammad V carried with him a reformist temperament, having stood his ground against UMNO on such issues as demanding oil royalties for his home state. A divorcee and without a nucleus family to attend to, Sultan Muhammad V was well known among the Kelantanese for his affability and ability to mingle with ordinary folk (Ahmad Fauzi & Muhamad Takiyuddin, 2017). He injected the royal institution with dignified humour when he reminded parliamentarians to 'sit down and not run away' when officiating the parliamentary session in July 2018, in response to some politicians staging a previous walkout (Loh, 2019). Nonetheless, his reign was to last only until January 2019, when he abdicated due to personal reasons, many speculating them to be issues revolving around his rocky marriage to a Russian beauty queen.

Replacing him was the more conservative Sultan Abdullah Haji Ahmad Shah (b. 1959) from Pahang—one of the only two states that retained an UMNO-led state government in GE14. Sultan Abdullah would later become pivotal in the drama surrounding the passing of the prime ministerial baton from Mahathir to Muhyiddin in February 2020 and from Muhyiddin to Ismail Sabri in August 2021. On both occasions, the choice of the premier lays in the hands of the monarch, who devised the ingenious method of interviewing prime ministerial candidates from among party leaders and individual MPs to ascertain which candidate would most likely command a working majority in the Dewan Rakyat. Dogged by political uncertainty and troubled by the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysians in general appreciated the stabilizing role that Sultan Abdullah played as a Yang di-Pertuan Agong who oversaw two changeovers involving two incoming governments whose majorities were subject to dispute (Kosmo, 2021). While the Yang di-Pertuan Agong may have been part of the 'deep state' structure that works to maintain Malay-Muslim hegemony in multi-cultural Malaysia (Hunter, 2021), the wide respect that Malaysians across the board, regardless of race and religion, accord the monarchy eventually won the day (Loh, 2019). With the reputation of politicians plunging in view of accelerating cases of corruption, the monarchy has emerged as a venerable institution providing much-needed checks and balances. Indeed, it was royal pressure on Muhyiddin to re-convene Parliament following the end of a COVID-19-related Emergency, and subsequent royal admonition of members of his government for refusing to debate

the revocation of the Emergency ordinance, that brought about the downfall of the PN federal government—the shortest in Malaysia's history (Jaipragas, 2021).

2.5 Conclusion

The stunning triumph of the multi-ethnic and reform-minded PH coalition in GE14 did not, as expected by some optimists, spell the end of identity politics in Malaysia as yet. On the contrary, in more ways than one it unleashed countervailing forces that sought to undermine the reformist trajectory that Malaysian politics has been undergoing since September 1998 when Prime Minister Mahathir sacked his deputy Anwar Ibrahim from the government and UMNO (Saravanamuttu, 2020).

The path of change towards a New Malaysia is not as seamless as one could imagine. Even from the early days of PH's victory in May 2018, remnants of the old order, while showing signs of discomfort, were already preparing towards restoration of the hegemonic Malay-based *ancien régime*. As the black sheep of the PH family, PPBM elements, many of whom inherited and were still living with the UMNO DNA, were most vulnerable from top to bottom (Chin, 2020). Recent evidence has emerged that even PH's then Prime Minister Mahathir was resistant to reform, as symbolized by his warning not to consecrate PH's GE14 manifesto into a kind of scripture (Chua, 2022).

The tension between reformist and conservative wings of PH peaked towards the end of February 2020 when PPBM members and a rebel faction in PKR led by its Deputy President Mohamed Azmin Ali decisively left PH to form a new PN coalition with PAS and select UMNO leaders. Race and religion rather than universal values of democracy, justice and human rights have been of utmost significance in their list of priorities. The monarchy, meanwhile, stands as a permanent bastion to whom hegemonic stakeholders could always appeal to as a measure of last resort should signs emerge of manoeuvres being undertaken against the country's ethno-religious foundations as immortalized by the Malay-Muslim nexuses of authority, also dubbed the 'deep state'.

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Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid is Professor of Political Science at the School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He graduated from the universities of Oxford, Leeds and Newcastle, United Kingdom. A widely published author in the political Islam of Southeast Asia, Ahmad Fauzi, now serves as editor-in-chief of *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies*, published by Universiti Sains Malaysia Press and indexed in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). Since December 2018, he has been serving as consultant expert for Malaysia's Home Ministry on terrorism cases investigated under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA) 2012. He can be contacted at afauzi@usm.my.

Noorulhafidzah Zawawi is a senior lecturer in Politics and International Relations, School of Business and Social Sciences, AlBukhary International University, Kedah, Malaysia. She had previously served at the College of Government, Law and International Studies (COLGIS),

Universiti Utara Malaysia. She obtained her Ph.D. in political science from Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2017. She can be contacted at hafidzah.zawawi@aiu.edu.my.

Chapter 3
Voices of Economic Competence: Legitimizing the Government in Federal Budget Speeches

Kumaran Rajandran

Abstract Budget speeches are an overview of public economic initiatives and can anticipate revenues, expenditures, policies, and activities. These speeches enable a government to discursively legitimize economic competence. While legitimation can be achieved by the representation and evaluation of economic initiatives, intertextuality should also be analyzed because the use of voices helps or hinders legitimation. The chapter explores how the Barisan Nasional (BN) government legitimized its economic competence through intertextual voicing. It outlines the source and engagement of voices and operationalizes a method that involves five sequential stages. The chapter analyzes an archive of Malaysian federal budget speeches from 2010 to 2018. The analysis discloses various instances of intertextual voicing because the speeches articulate voices in economics, politics, and religion. The choice of voices is shaped by the Malaysian context. Intertextual voicing legitimizes BN through moralization and authorization. The voices can be considered as voices of economic competence because economic, political, and religious voices discursively legitimize actions and decisions for the economy. Intertextual voicing serves ideological purposes because it perpetuates government economic agency. In budget speeches, BN promotes itself as indispensable to Malaysian development, and it should consequently continue to govern the country. These speeches then become part of the genres that validate BN.

Keywords Speeches · Economy · Budget · Intertextuality · Voice · Legitimation

3.1 Introduction

Discourse is intertextual because it recontextualizes previous voices (Bakhtin, 1981). Political discourse often deploys intertextuality to gain, maintain, or lose public influence (Windt, 1986). The discourse is manifested in many genres (e.g., debates, interviews, press releases), but research has a proclivity for speeches although budget speeches are rarely analyzed. These speeches are primarily about the economy, which

K. Rajandran (✉)
School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia
e-mail: rkumaran@usm.my

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has social significance because the economy directly or indirectly impacts a country's development. Budget speeches display intertextuality, and the choice of voices should be examined. The present chapter analyzes Malaysian federal budget speeches, and it explores how the Barisan Nasional (BN) government legitimized its economic competence through intertextual voicing.

Intertextuality operates in multiple genres (Bazerman, 2004), and its use in political genres is considered by several published studies. Murray et al. (2016) categorize voices in speeches about the Resource Super Profits Tax in Australia. The speeches cite economists to justify government opinions and ordinary citizens to endorse government response. The justification and endorsement are packaged as part of better governance and prosperity. Atkins and Finlayson (2016) identify voices in British party conference speeches. Delegates cite ordinary citizens to narrow social distance and the opposition to negate their opinions. The delegates also cite British literature to indicate fidelity to their cultural heritage.

Fairclough (2003) recognizes voices in Prime Minister Blair's post 9–11 speech. The Prime Minister quotes various threats, and they seem to be general beliefs because their origins are unknown or vague. Abdul-Latif (2011) finds a typical voice in President Sadat's post-riot speech. The President quotes the Quran to defend his response, and to contrast those for and against the Egyptian government as believers and unbelievers respectively. During the Biden-Palin American Vice-Presidential debate, Biden cites ordinary citizens for empathy and presidential candidates Obama and McCain for authority, while Palin cites her past self to reveal her strong leadership (Reyes, 2015). During war speeches, Presidents Bush and Obama cite foreign Prime Ministers for authority and generals for expertise, to first start and later escalate military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq (Reyes, 2011).

Hence, intertextuality is a strategy in political discourse because politicians in several countries articulate multiple voices in their speeches. The voices privilege their perspective and can create a particular version of political reality (Murray et al., 2016). Politicians seem credible or reliable, which enhances their legitimacy. These earlier studies examine intertextuality in speeches, but budget speeches have not been explored. The speeches enable a government to discursively legitimize economic competence or the ability to identify, expand, and exploit policies and activities (Carlsson & Eliasson, 1994).

In budget speeches, legitimation can be achieved by the representation and evaluation of economic initiatives. Lukin (2015), Rajandran (2019), and Thompson (2015) study budget speeches and explain the language features that convey the economic competence of the ruling government in Australia, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom, respectively. Their analysis can incorporate intertextuality because the use of voices helps or hinders legitimation. Legitimation gives reasons why a social practice or some part of it must happen or happen in a certain way (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 20). Van Leeuwen (2008) distinguishes four categories of legitimation: authorization, moralization, mythopoesis, and rationalization. Authorization is acquired by conformity, expertise, influence, status, or tradition. Moralization is achieved by abstraction, comparison, or evaluation. While mythopoesis employs

stories of observance or non-observance of social practices, rationalization shows the logic and purpose of social practices.

The chapter extends existing research and studies how legitimation can be achieved by intertextual voicing. It is guided by this research question: How did the Barisan Nasional (BN) government legitimize economic competence through intertextual voicing in budget speeches? BN was the longest-serving elected government in Malaysia (1957–2018). Intertextual voicing would have formed part of the coalition's discursive legitimation. The study of intertextuality contributes insights about how BN argued for its agency and establishes a basis for comparing speeches among political parties in Malaysia or other countries.

3.2 Government Economic Agency

Malaysia is a middle-income country in Southeast Asia, but it has the 37th highest GDP in the world and posts solid growth rates (Lafaye de Micheaux, 2017). Growth is driven by a diversified economy of agriculture, mining, oil and gas, industry and services. Although agriculture and mining dominated the 1960s and 1970s, oil and gas and industry dominated the 1980s until the present. The government is involved in these areas, but since the 1980s, it has reduced its overt involvement because the neoliberal formula of deregulation, liberalization, and privatization was implemented (Steger & Roy, 2010). Malaysia adopted the neoliberal economic system, but the government maintains a strong presence (Steger & Roy, 2010). The government instituted a developmental state, and its economic agency stimulated growth by transforming Malaysia from an agricultural to an industrial country (Nasrudin et al., 2013). The transformation was evidence for the economic competence of the federal government under Barisan Nasional (BN), the ruling coalition of 13 ethnic and regional parties. BN positioned itself as indispensable to development and its claim to economic competence helped it retain political power for 62 years, despite various social changes (Rajandran, 2013, 2019).

3.3 Budget Speeches

Budget speeches are an overview of public economic initiatives and can anticipate revenues, expenditures, policies, and activities (Lukin, 2015). These speeches are the central economic speech in a government's repertoire of speeches because their content involves the whole country and a variety of domains (e.g., defense, education, health, tourism) (Rajandran, 2019). Budget speeches garner substantial interest among a national and international audience because the prediction of revenues and expenditures and the revelation of policies and activities directly or indirectly impact a country's development for several years. In Malaysia, budget speeches are a fixed political event every fourth quarter. From 2009 to 2017, the Finance Minister,

who was the Prime Minister, tabled the speech. The minister delivers the speech in the Malay language to Members of Parliament, but technological advancement has enabled almost anyone to hear it. The speech is first recontextualized in live television and online streaming, and later in other formats (e.g., articles, interviews, news, tweets).

3.4 Intertextual Voicing

The ideas of Bakhtin, Barthes, and de Saussure inspired Kristeva to create the terminology 'intertextuality' in 1966. Kristeva's (1980) often-cited statement about texts being the absorption and transformation of other texts postulates the presence of multiple voices in texts. Intertextuality has since acquired various definitions, and the profusion of definitions is overwhelming. The present chapter employs the definition of intertextuality in Discourse Studies and Genre Studies, where intertextuality describes the (explicit or implicit) relations among texts and discourses (Bhatia, 2004; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). Building on earlier contributions, Feng and Wignell (2011) propose the terminologies 'source' and 'engagement' of voices. Source ascertains who provides the voice, and engagement shows how an external voice is positioned in relation to an internal voice. Although Feng and Wignell (2011) study multimodal advertisements, source and engagement can be extended to language in budget speeches. The chapter outlines the intertextual voicing in budget speeches in Fig. 3.1 by adapting Feng and Wignell (2011) with insights from Bazerman (2004), Bhatia (2004), Fairclough (1995), Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), Martin and White (2005), and van Leeuwen (2008).

Source acknowledges the polyphony or plurality of voices (Bakhtin, 1981). Voices are either internal or external. The internal voice is inherent to genres, and its use is not intertextual (Feng & Wignell, 2011). In budget speeches, it is the government using economic discourse. The external voice is composed of two types of intertextual resources, where a discourse may quote other discourses, or a discourse may adopt the conventions of other discourses. Specific to budget speeches, the former is named locutor voice, and the latter is named discursive voice. I proposed these the two types of resources after an exploratory study of budget speeches.

Locutor voice is a terminology encapsulating the quoted individuals/groups, documents or cultural schemata in budget speeches. Individuals/groups are humans or humanized. Documents are categories of texts or specific texts. Individuals/groups and documents may be named by noun phrases (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). The speech by individuals/groups and documents may be provided in clauses through prepositional or verb phrases or is nominalized (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Cultural schemata cannot be traced to individuals/groups or documents. They have relatively fixed words/phrases, and among their typical representatives are clichés, idioms, proverbs, sayings and similes. Cultural schemata seem to be culture-bound although globalization has expanded the repertoire of schemata (Fairclough, 2003).

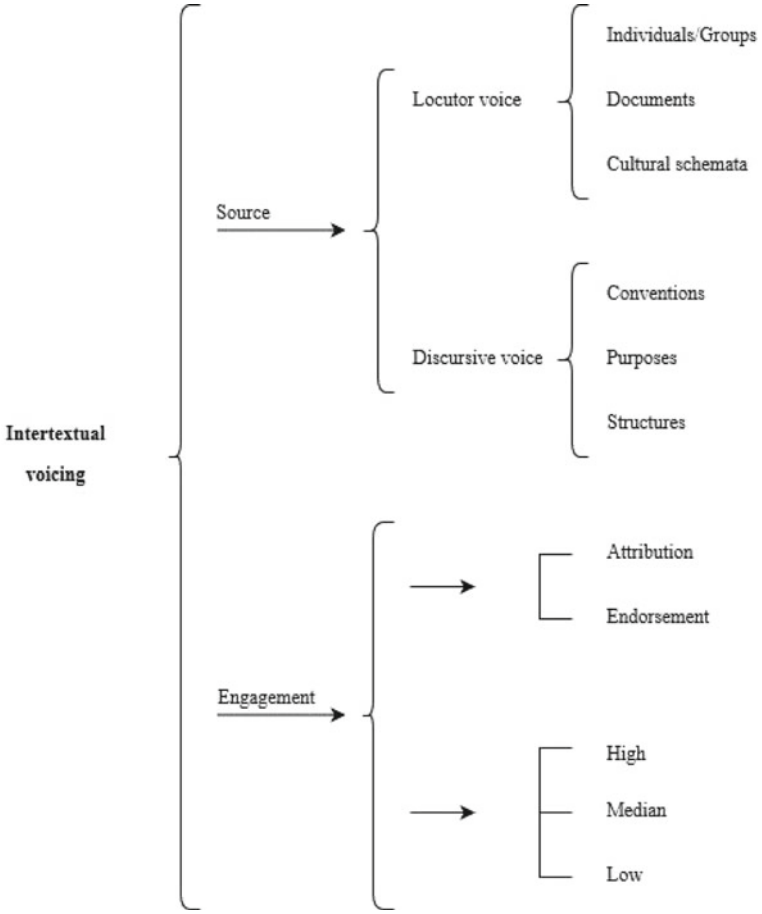

Fig. 3.1 Intertextual voicing in budget speeches

Budget speeches may also adopt the conventions, purposes, and structures of other discourses through discursive voice (Feng & Wignell, 2011). The voice is indicated by topics, words/phrases, or social actors. Every topic has its order and frequency and statements converging around it (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 2003). Words/phrases are adjectives, adverbs, nouns, or verbs indicating an activity or domain (Bazerman, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Social actors investigate how entities taking part in events are construed (van Leeuwen, 2008). Among the representations of social actors are activation/passivation (entities are a dynamic force in events or are undergoing events), genericization/specification (entities are generic or specific), and appraisement (entities are positively or negatively valued) (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Engagement exhibits the stance of the internal voice toward the external voice. It has several options to expand or contract dialogue, but two options (attribution, endorsement) trace dialogue to an external voice (Martin & White, 2005).

The external voice can contract dialogue through endorsement and expand dialogue through attribution. Endorsement makes the internal voice construe the external voice as undeniable or valid (Martin & White, 2005). Attribution makes the internal voice acknowledge or doubt the external voice (Martin & White, 2005). Engagement is also gradable along a high, median, or low scale (Martin & White, 2005). It can indicate the intensity in the locutor voice, where a high, median, or low degree of intensity operates over entities, events, or modalities of inclination, likelihood, obligation, and usuality (Martin & White, 2005). Moreover, it can indicate the degree of integration in the discursive voice (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). High integration blends voices and their boundaries are not easily distinguishable (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). Mid-integration embeds one voice in another voice (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). Low integration sequences one voice after another voice, and their boundaries may signal another section (Bhatia, 2004).

Intertextuality encourages genres to traverse their prototypical boundaries. It permits hybridity (Bhatia, 2004) by mixing 'old' or established and 'new' or novel voices. The reason for mixing shifts in space and time, but it is inspired by changes in social practices. The changes reflect power dynamics, which influences the choice of voices. These practices raise concerns about truth and manipulation in recontextualization (Fairclough, 1995). Intertextuality may recontextualize aspects of reality to cater to the goals and priorities of social groups. It may be strongly linked to ideology and can therefore enable the distribution of ideologies in genres (Feng & Wignell, 2011).

3.5 Data

The budget speeches are tabled in Malay, and the transcripts are later published. The transcription preserves linguistic content but not non-linguistic content (e.g., body language, laughter, pauses, voice pitch/tone/volume). It is not a concern because the present chapter only analyzes the language of the speeches. Although a speech writer may prepare the speeches, their content reflects the government's perspective. The actual writer is perhaps unimportant because these speeches are considered an authentic and authoritative portrayal of the economy (Rajandran, 2013, 2019).

The chapter analyzed an archive of budget speeches from 2010 to 2018. The speeches were delivered by the Prime Minister/Finance Minister under Barisan Nasional (BN), Najib Razak. Although the speeches throughout Najib's tenure (2009–2018) were analyzed, the number of speeches is arguably modest. It became an advantage because a qualitative and interpretive study was pursued, following Abdul-Latif (2011), Atkins and Finlayson (2016), Fairclough (2003), Murray et al. (2016), and Reyes (2011, 2015).

3.6 Method

Although earlier studies examined intertextuality, the criteria for studying voices are not particularly clear. The chapter operationalized a method that involved five sequential stages. The method is a systematic way for studying voices, and it may mitigate arbitrary decisions. It also triangulates academic and practitioner feedback because it is informed by researchers and specialist informants. The first stage was deciding the genre (Bazerman, 2004). The decision should be motivated by one or more research objectives. I decided to explore budget speeches because I wanted to understand the choice of voices in these speeches. Other researchers may be motivated by different reasons.

The second stage was detecting the voices. It should be grounded in language (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2011), explaining which language features convey voices (See 'Intertextual Voicing' section). I recruited my experience and judgment to detect voices (Fairclough, 1995), but it was not easily replicable and may not always be reliable. I mitigated these concerns and asked another researcher to also detect voices. The detected voices were reviewed together before an initial inventory of voices in budget speeches was finalized. The third stage was verifying the voices. I consulted specialist informants, as done by Bhatia (2004) and Rajandran (2018). The informants were involved in writing and editing speeches. Although I had information about budget speeches, specialist informants had disciplinary exposure. Our combined theoretical and practical knowledge provided a reasonable basis to identify the voices.

The fourth stage was naming the voices. There was no definitive list of voices to draw on (Fairclough, 1995), and I utilized general knowledge, searched typical or favored terminology in the literature, or asked the specialist informants for suitable names. The naming of voices prioritized comprehension (an easy to decipher name recognized by members of society) and consistency (a name used throughout analysis). The fifth stage was deducing the function of the voices because intertextuality is purposive (Bhatia, 2004; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). I surveyed the literature and asked the specialist informants about the context. The political context, meaning the configuration of history, culture, economy, and politics, can influence the recontextualization of voices in budget speeches.

3.7 Voicing Economy, Politics, and Religion

Various instances of intertextual voicing are available, but space constraints permit a few representative extracts. Extracts 1–14 reproduce the Malay original, and they were translated into English. In budget speeches, economic discourse is the central discourse (Rajandran, 2018) because it permeates the genre through its use in most sections. The discourse is centered on topics regarding the state of the economy and details of past/future initiatives. Economic discourse quotes organizations in Extracts

1–2 and studies in Extracts 3–4. The organizations and studies represent authorization (van Leeuwen, 2008) because their expertise legitimizes the government pursuing certain initiatives.

Extracts 1–2 explain the state of the economy. The explanation receives median likelihood in Extract 1 using the verb phrase (*italicized*) 'diunjurkan' [projected] but low likelihood in Extract 2 using the verb phrase (*italicized*) 'dijangka' [is expected]. The likelihood varies perhaps because Extract 1 is explicitly traced to an organization ('Tabung Kewangan Antarabangsa' [International Monetary Fund]), but Extract 2 implicitly signals an organization. The IMF can verify its explanation, but the explanation of the unnamed organization cannot be verified. The explanation is attributed to organizations because their expertise is economics. Their authority of expertise (van Leeuwen, 2008) is respected and predicts an economic recovery. Since the economy has recovered, the government can justify the money spent on initiatives.

Extracts 3–4 explain details of future initiatives. Extract 3 names a report ('Laporan United Nations World Tourism Organization' [United Nations World Tourism Organization Report]), and Extract 4 names a policy ('Dasar Agro Makanan Negara' [National Agro-Food Policy]). These studies were produced by reputable organizations, namely the United Nations in Extract 3 and the federal government in Extract 4. Their explanation receives high likelihood because it is taken for granted as factual. The explanation endorses change in tourism and food security because it is the expertise of the studies. The authority of expertise (van Leeuwen, 2008) is respected and inspires new developments. The government can justify initiatives in response to the studies.

Extract 1

Seperti yang *diunjurkan* oleh Tabung Kewangan Antarabangsa atau IMF pada 1 Oktober, ekonomi dunia tahun 2009 menguncup pada kadar yang lebih rendah iaitu negatif 1.1 peratus berbanding negatif 1.4 peratus semasa anggaran dibuat pada bulan Julai tahun ini.

As *projected* by the International Monetary Fund or IMF on October 1, the world economy in 2009 contracted at a lower rate of negative 1.1 percent compared to negative 1.4 percent when estimates were made in July this year.

(2010)

Extract 2

Prestasi ekonomi dunia, turut *dijangka* kembali pulih pada kadar 4.8 peratus berbanding negatif 0.6 peratus tahun 2009.

Global economic performance *is* also *expected* to recover at a rate of 4.8 percent compared to negative 0.6 percent in 2009.

(2011)

Extract 3

Berdasarkan Laporan United Nations World Tourism Organization, pada tahun 2009, Malaysia menduduki tangga ke-9 dari segi bilangan ketibaan pelancong.

Based on the United Nations World Tourism Organization Report, in 2009, Malaysia ranked 9th place in terms of number of tourist arrivals.

(2011)

Extract 4

Melancarkan Dasar Agro Makanan Negara 2011 hingga 2020 yang menggariskan empat strategi iaitu menjamin bekalan makanan mencukupi, meningkatkan nilai ditambah, melengkapkan dan memperkukuhkan rantaian bekalan serta menyediakan guna tenaga pertanian berpengetahuan dan terlatih.

Launch the National Agro-Food Policy 2011 to 2020 that outlines four strategies, namely ensuring adequate food supply, increasing value added, completing and strengthening supply chains as well as providing knowledgeable and trained agricultural employment.

(2012)

Moreover, budget speeches utilize political and religious discourses as auxiliary discourses (Rajandran, 2018), which reinforce economic discourse. Their use makes the government the most suitable political and religious choice for developing the country. Political discourse recontextualizes social actors in practices such as campaigning, governing, legislating, or voting. In budget speeches, the discourse has two topics regarding economic and social governance. Extract 5 explains the topic of debts (economy), and Extract 6 explains the topic of unity (society). 'Kerajaan' [Government] is specified because the noun phrases (**bolded**) 'hari ini' [the day] and 'BN' (Barisan Nasional) signal the federal government, but the noun phrase (**bolded**) 'pihak lain' [other parties] is genericized and evokes the opposition.

The government and opposition are agents and can impact citizens. The government and its practices receive positive evaluation, as designated by the noun phrases (**bolded**) 'usaha memantap tadbir urus fiskal' [improved fiscal governance efforts], 'tanggungjawab moral' [moral responsibility], 'perintis kepada perpaduan kaum' [pioneer of racial unity], and 'teras kestabilan nasional' [core of national stability]. In contrast, the opposition and its practices receive negative evaluation, as designated by the noun phrases (**bolded**) 'konflik' [conflict] and 'kebencian' [hatred] and the verb phrases (*italicized*) 'difitnah' [is slandered] and 'dituduh' [is accused]. The government manages the economy and society, while the opposition could cause socioeconomic risks. Political discourse legitimizes the government and delegitimizes the opposition using moral evaluation (van Leeuwen, 2008) because the government brings stability and the opposition brings instability. Because the government and

opposition, respectively, deliver desirable and undesirable results, the binary of positive 'us' (government) and negative 'them' (opposition) is reproduced (van Dijk, 1997).

Extract 5 has features of economic and political discourses. While several noun phrases (**bolded**) ('usaha memantap tadbir urus fiskal' [improved fiscal governance efforts], 'defisit fiskal' [fiscal deficits], 'kewangan Persekutuan' [Federal finance], 'masalah hutang' [debt problems]) are typical for the economic domain, their use serves the political domain because it conveys government agency. Extract 5 blends economic and political discourses, and the blend displays high integration between the discourses because their boundaries are difficult to distinguish (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). Extract 6 is present after numerous paragraphs of economic discourse. The initiatives (economic discourse) confirm the capability of the government (political discourse). Budget speeches can sequence political discourse after economic discourse, and the sequence displays low integration because the discourses remain separate (Bhatia, 2004).

The moral evaluation in political discourse is strengthened by citing the opposition in Extracts 7–8 and idioms in Extract 9. In Extracts 7–8, the opposition is named by the noun phrases (**bolded**) 'pihak' [parties] and 'seorang pemimpin pembangkang' [an opposition leader]. The verb phrases (*italicized*) 'mencadangkan' [propose] and 'menyebut' [mention] imply low inclination because the opposition does not seem to commit to their opinion about abolishing debts (Extract 7) and about predicting the state of the economy (Extract 8). The internal, government voice (underlined) negates the opinion and gives it negative evaluation using the noun phrases (**bolded**) 'perbuatan yang amat tidak bertanggungjawab' [very irresponsible act], 'sandiwara' [game], 'tiada substance' [no substance], 'pembelot' [defector], and 'perkhianat' [traitor]. Negative evaluation is reinforced by a conditional ('jika dimansuhkan…' [if abolished…]), and a rhetorical question ('siapa…?' [who…?]). The opposition is attributed because their authority of status is recognized (van Leeuwen, 2008), but it is negated to explicitly delegitimize their economic competence and implicitly legitimize the government's competence. The negation distances the government and the opposition. It contrasts those who can and cannot manage the economy, and the contrast strengthens the 'us' and 'them' binary (van Dijk, 1997).

Political discourse also quotes idioms. In Extract 9, the noun phrase (**bolded**) 'pujangga' [poets] does not mean individuals/groups, but it is a metonym for the repository of cultural ideas. The metonym introduces an idiom (dash underlined) to describe unexpected problems. The idiom represents the authority of tradition (van Leeuwen, 2008) because it invokes schemata about problems as part of life. It helps to endorse the internal, government voice (underlined), which articulates the crisis in 2014 as part of life. The adverb (*italicized*) 'Sesungguhnya' [Indeed] implies high usuality because a tangible crisis in real life is emphasized as the manifestation of an abstract cultural idea. Although not about the economy, the idiom shows the government caring for citizens. The government is emphatic but posits the inevitability of problems.

Extract 5

Sejelasnya, Kerajaan yang ada **hari ini** berpegang teguh kepada prinsip bahawa **usaha memantap tadbir urus fiskal** seperti mengurangkan **defisit fiskal** adalah satu **tanggungjawab moral** generasi kita untuk generasi pewaris masa hadapan. Pokoknya, kita tidak mahu mewariskan Malaysia dengan **kewangan Persekutuan** yang terbeban dengan **masalah hutang**.

Clearly, the government of **the day** adheres firmly to the principle that **improved fiscal governance efforts** such as reducing **fiscal deficits** are **the moral responsibility** of our generation for future generations. In any case, we do not want to leave Malaysia with **the Federal finance** burdened by **debt problems**.

(2015)

Extract 6

Kalau kita lihat lagi, hakikatnya Kerajaan **BN** adalah **perintis kepada perpaduan kaum** yang menjadi **teras kestabilan nasional** tetapi **pihak lain** yang ingin menjadi Kerajaan merintis kekuatan melalui **konflik** dan **kebencian**. Kerajaan *difitnah* dan *dituduh* semahunya.

If we look again, the fact is that the **BN** government is **a pioneer of racial unity** that is **the core of national stability,** but **other parties** who want to be the government gain strength through **conflict** and **hatred**. The government *is slandered* and *accused* as they wish.

(2013)

Extract 7

Kita tahu Tuan Yang di-Pertua, ada **pihak** yang *mencadangkan* supaya keseluruhan hutang PTPTN dimansuhkan. Ini adalah satu **perbuatan yang amat tidak bertanggungjawab** kerana jika dimansuhkan, siapa yang akan menanggung lebih 30 bilion ringgit hutang PTPTN?

We know Mr. Speaker Sir, there are **parties** who *propose* that the entire PTPTN debt be abolished. This is **a very irresponsible act** because if abolished, who will bear the over 30 billion ringgit of PTPTN debt?

(2013)

Extract 8

Malah, ada **seorang pemimpin pembangkang** *menyebut* pula, 'Malaysia mengharungi ribut ekonomi yang sukar pada tahun ini'. Saudara dan saudari sekalian, sebenarnya di sini, siapa yang bermain **sandiwara**, siapa yang **tiada substance** sebenarnya, siapa yang menjadi **pembelot** dan **perkhianat** negara sebenarnya, di mana pula timbulnya ribut ni?

In fact, **an opposition leader** even *mentioned*, 'Malaysia faces a difficult economic storm this year'. Ladies and gentlemen, actually, who is playing **a game**, who actually has **no substance**, who actually became **a defector** and **traitor** to the nation, from where has the storm arisen?

(2017)

Extract 9

Bak kata **pujangga**, musim panas, kehujanan, musim hujan, kepanasan. *Sesungguhnya*, tahun 2014 menjadi takwim yang penuh dugaan. Pada suku tahun pertama, belum pun lagi reda dengan misteri kehilangan MH370, rakyat Malaysia dikejutkan pula dengan peristiwa tragik pesawat MH17 milik Malaysia Airlines System ditembak jatuh di timur Ukraine.

As **poets** say, during summer, it rains, during the monsoon, it is hot. *Indeed*, 2014 was a year filled with challenges. In the first quarter, not yet truly understanding the mystery of the disappearance of MH370, Malaysians were shocked by the tragic event of the MH17 plane owned by Malaysia Airlines System being shot down in eastern Ukraine.

(2015)

Budget speeches also employ religious discourse. It recontextualizes social actors in practices such as praying, preaching, predicting, and teaching. In budget speeches, the discourse establishes the topic of petitions. Budget speeches contain Islamic petitions because Islam is the majority (60% Muslim population) and official (Federal Constitution Article 3) religion in Malaysia. Islam enjoys economic and social privileges, and Islamic religious discourse frequently penetrates political genres (Lafaye de Micheaux, 2017).

Extract 10 has a petition for the economy, and Extract 11 shows a petition for an initiative. 'Allah' [God] is specified because it primarily means God in Islam, and 'kita' [we] is specified to refer to the government. The government acquires agency through the noun phrase (**bolded**) 'lawatan ini' [this visit] and the verb phrase (*italicized*) 'telah berusaha' [have worked]. Its agency receives positive evaluation through the adjective (underlined) 'sehabis baik' [well]. The government then shifts agency to God because the verb phrases (*italicized*) 'membuat' [perform], 'mengembalikan' [return], and 'Doakanlah' [Pray] confer God the ultimate agency to decide on results. His decision is presumed to favor the government because it receives positive evaluation, as indicated by the noun phrase (**bolded**) 'kejayaan yang lumayan' [profitable success].

From Extracts 10–11, the government acknowledges Islam and petitions God for his favorable intervention. The government may evoke God because the economy has various uncertainties (Steger & Roy, 2010). During these uncertainties, the government absolves itself of total liability and can claim that God has other plans for the economy. Religious discourse legitimizes the government using moral evaluation (van Leeuwen, 2008) because the government champions Islam although the economy functions along capitalist principles. The discourse can reproduce the binary of positive 'us' (government) and negative 'them' (opposition) (van Dijk, 1997) because the government can demonstrate more Islamic piety than the opposition (Abdul-Latif, 2011).

Extract 10 is present after numerous paragraphs of economic discourse. The petition (religious discourse) comes after initiatives are explained (economic discourse). Budget speeches can sequence religious discourse after economic discourse, and the sequence displays low integration because the discourses remain separate (Bhatia, 2004). Extract 11 has three sentences. The first sentence conveys economic discourse because it describes an initiative. The second sentence continues the description, but it marks a transition between discourses as it inserts a prayerful 'Insya-Allah' [God-willing]. The third sentence conveys religious discourse because it has a petition for the initiative. Budget speeches may embed religious discourse in economic discourse and the embedding displays median integration of the discourses (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). Although religious discourse leaves traces in economic discourse, the removal of certain words/phrases ('Insya-Allah', 'Doakanlah') would separate the two discourses.

The moral evaluation in religious discourse is strengthened by citing scholars in Extract 12 and scriptures in Extracts 13–14. In Extract 12, 'para hukama' [ulemas] explain religious knowledge and acquire the authority of status (Abdul-Latif, 2011; van Leeuwen, 2008). Speech is traced to scholars through the verb phrase (*italicized*) 'kata' [say]. It establishes high usuality because the quotation by scholars presents a taken-for-granted description about godly and human natures in Extract 12. While godly nature receives positive evaluation using the adjective (underlined) 'indah-indah' [beautiful], human nature receives negative evaluation using the adverb (underlined) 'kurang' [less]. The internal, government voice quotes scholars to endorse inadequacies that seem inherent in anything human led. The government can mitigate future problems because being human led, its initiatives may not always be adequate.

Religious discourse also quotes scriptures. In Extracts 13–14, 'Surah Al-Hajj' and 'Surah Yusuf', two chapters in the Quran, and 'Hadis' [Hadith], the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, are the principal basis of Islamic knowledge and acquire the authority of status (Abdul-Latif, 2011; van Leeuwen, 2008). Speech is traced to scriptures through the noun phrases (**bolded**) 'marhum' [interpretation] and 'pengertian' [understanding]. They indicate low inclination because the scriptural quotations only paraphrase a description about human behavior in Extract 13 and a concept in Extract 14. These descriptions are employed for the economy and become the basis for initiatives. The internal, government voice quotes scriptures to endorse the divine sanction of initiatives, giving a veneer of Islamic principles. These principles furnish

a religious justification for initiatives, besides their obvious secular justification. The justification strengthens the 'us' and 'them' binary (van Dijk, 1997) because the government is seen as Islamic, and the opposition becomes un-Islamic if it questions the presumably divine-sanctioned initiatives.

Extract 10

Akhir kalam, dalam segala kudrat manusia, kita *telah berusaha* sehabis baik. Kepada Allah kita *membuat* segala penyerahan dan *mengembalikan* segala urusan.

Finally, in human terms, we *have worked* well. To Allah, we *perform* all surrender and *return* all affairs.

(2014)

Extract 11

Pelaburan untuk kilang LED di Kulim, Kedah ini adalah yang terbesar dan terkini di seluruh dunia. Insya-Allah, minggu hadapan, saya akan ke China pula. *Doakanlah* agar **lawatan ini** akan membawa **kejayaan yang lumayan** untuk negara kita.

This investment for the LED factory in Kulim, Kedah is the largest and latest in the whole world. God-willing, next week, I will go to China. *Pray* that **this visit** will bring **profitable success** for our country.

(2017)

Extract 12

Akhir kalam, bak *kata* para hukama, yang indah-indah itu dari Ilahi dan yang kurang itu sifat insani.

Finally, as the ulemas *say*, anything beautiful is from the divine, and anything less is human nature.

(2016)

Extract 13

Sayugia, sambil merujuk-rujuk **mafhum** tafsir daripada Surah Yusuf, bahawa Tuhan tidak menyuruh kita berhenti dari berusaha, Tuhan juga tidak benarkan kita sesekali berputus asa dari rahmatNya, dan apatah lagi sesungguhnya, Tuhan juga tetap menjanjikan kepada hamba-hambaNya yang berislah dan beriltizam, bahawa, kejayaan pasti menjelma jua.

Indeed, referring to **the interpretation** of Surah Yusuf that God does not ask us to stop trying, God also does not allow us to ever give up on His grace,

and indeed, God also always promises His servants who work hard and who are committed that success will ultimately be achieved.
(2016)

Extract 14
Manakala menerusi **pengertian** Surah Al-Hajj dan Hadis antaranya Riwayat Ahmad, Haa-Ji-Yat pula, berkaitan perkara yang diperlukan oleh manusia bagi memberi kemudahan kepada mereka supaya tidak berlaku kesempitan yang membawa kepada kesulitan dan kesukaran hidup.

Whereas through **the understanding** of Surah Al-Hajj and Hadith, among which are Riwayat Ahmad, Haa-Ji-Yat refers to things required by humans to give them comfort so that insecurities that cause inconveniences and difficulties in life do not happen.
(2018)

3.8 Intertextual Voicing: Perpetuating Government Economic Agency?

From Extracts 1–14, Malaysian federal budget speeches articulate voices in economics, politics, and religion. The locutor voice quotes individuals/groups (opposition, organizations, scholars), documents (scriptures, studies), and cultural schemata (idioms), and the discursive voice adopts conventions in politics and religion. The choice of voices is shaped by the Malaysian context, which helps to understand the significance of the voices. In budget speeches, economic discourse is the central discourse because it is used in most sections (Bhatia, 2004; Rajandran, 2018). The discourse confirms the government discharging its economic responsibility in terms of anticipating revenues, expenditures, policies, and activities (Lukin, 2015; Thompson, 2015). The absence of the discourse would disrupt meaning as budget speeches cannot convey their content. Economic discourse quotes organizations and studies because their expertise legitimizes the government pursuing certain initiatives.

Also, in budget speeches, political and religious discourses are auxiliary discourses and reinforce the central discourse (Rajandran, 2018). Political discourse contrasts the government and opposition delivering desirable and undesirable results, respectively. The discourse gives a political perspective to public economic initiatives because the government can outshine the opposition in economic decision-making. Religious discourse reconciles capitalism and Islam because the government can achieve Islamic principles through the capitalist economy. These principles placate the Muslim-majority population and bolster the official religion, which reduces the

charisma of opposition Islamic political parties (Lafaye de Micheaux, 2017). While political discourse projects the government's capability, religious discourse projects its piety. These discourses legitimize the government because their moral evaluation makes the government the most suitable choice for developing the country. The legitimation is complemented by negating the authority of the opposition and recognizing the authority of idioms, scholars, and scriptures.

The choice of voices reveals the imprint of power because it involves the strategic articulation of voices. Budget speeches by design incorporate the internal voice, but its portrayal of economic competence would sound biased. The use of the internal voice alone could increase resistance to budget speeches because the portrayal insinuates self-praise. Budget speeches incorporate the external voice, which enhances the credibility and reliability of the portrayal. The use of the external voice may decrease resistance to budget speeches (Abdul-Latif, 2011) because the portrayal is legitimized by moralization (Extracts 5–6, 10–11) and authorization (Extracts 1–4, 7–9, 12–14). The portrayal creates a particular version of reality about the government (Murray et al., 2016), and BN acquires positive values through the validation of economic, political, and religious voices.

Previous research (Abdul-Latif, 2011; Atkins & Finlayson, 2016; Fairclough, 2003; Murray et al., 2016; Reyes, 2011, 2015) shows how governance is legitimized by intertextual voicing. Malaysian federal budget speeches reflect the trend because the Barisan Nasional (BN) government incorporates voices in budget speeches to legitimize its economic competence. The government can argue that it can identify, expand, and exploit policies and activities to develop the country. Hence, the voices in budget speeches can be considered as voices of economic competence because economic, political, and religious voices legitimize government actions and decisions for the Malaysian economy.

Intertextual voicing serves ideological purposes in budget speeches because it perpetuates government economic agency, a continuing feature of the Malaysian economy (Lafaye de Micheaux, 2017). The government is promoted as able to manage the economy. The promotion normalizes a paternalistic government, who guides and supervises economic decision-making for citizens (Rajandran, 2019). The binary and dependent relationship characterizes the developmental state (Nasrudin et al., 2013), and its maintenance is believed to foster development. Intertextual voicing sustains the status quo, as if only BN can transform the country through public economic initiatives. In budget speeches, BN promotes itself as indispensable to Malaysian development, and it should consequently continue to govern the country. The discursive legitimation of its economic competence strengthens its claim to political power.

Budget speeches then become part of the genres that validate BN, such as advertisements, election manifestos, interviews and press releases. The genres obscured the distinction between campaigning and governing because they were employed to maintain citizen confidence in BN. BN required their confidence to retain the federal government during elections and to ensure their participation in initiatives in other periods. The endeavor became harder because other parties contested the discursive legitimation of economic competence. The contestation generated debates,

which debilitated the legitimation. These debates manifested citizens' concerns about cronyism, corruption, rising cost of living, taxation, and government financial scandals (notably 1Malaysia Development Limited). The discourse was compromised, and Pakatan Harapan (PH) defeated BN in the 2018 general elections. Clearly, the voices of economic competence could not indefinitely maintain citizen confidence in BN.

In conclusion, the chapter has explored legitimation through intertextual voicing in Malaysian federal budget speeches. The economic, political, and religious voices legitimize the economic competence of the BN government. The chapter reinforces the contribution of intertextuality to Discourse Studies and Genre Studies (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2011). The use of voices may legitimize entities or events in discourses, and subsequently enhance arguments. Knowledge of intertextuality should be inculcated as part of discursive competence or a systematic way to decipher and deploy semiotic features (Rajandran, 2018). The competence may stimulate critical thinking. Citizens can learn to identify voices. They should evaluate discourse and reality, and demand transparency in politics. The practice of discursive competence should transcend emancipatory academic exercise (Abdul-Latif, 2011) and importantly, become an element of engaged citizenry (Rajandran, 2013, 2019).

Malaysian budget speeches constitute a large repository for analysis, as they have been produced since 1960. Future research can track diachronic changes and inspect earlier budget speeches (1960–2018) by Barisan Nasional or later budget speeches by the federal government under Pakatan Harapan (2018–2020) and Perikatan Nasional (2020–2021) (See Farrah Diebaa and Su'ad, Chap. 4). Research can also track change over time and inspect budget speeches of other countries. The diachronic and synchronic variables can disclose how intertextual voicing legitimizes a government's actions and decisions. Comparative studies may reveal the choice of voices across different political contexts. Moreover, intertextuality may or may not be a conscious strategy, and future research can discover how writers and readers interpret voices through ethnographic and experimental methods. Therefore, various avenues exist for the analysis of intertextuality, which enriches our understanding of its contribution to political discourse.

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Kumaran Rajandran is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He teaches BA and MA courses and supervises MA and Ph.D. research in Linguistics. His research involves the multimodal study of various discourses, exploring the articulation of identity and ideology in contemporary societies. He can be contacted at rkumaran@usm.my.

Chapter 4
Legitimising Governance Through Vocational Roles: A Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of Budget Speeches

Farrah Diebaa Rashid Ali and Su'ad Awab

Abstract Although on opposing political spectrums, Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Harapan (PH) legitimised their presence through several vocational roles. These roles were not overtly mentioned, but their use can be unveiled by a conceptual metaphor analysis. This chapter analyses eleven supply bills or better known to Malaysians as budget speeches presented by two Ministers of Finance, Najib Razak (2010–2018) from BN and Lim Guan Eng (2019–2020) from PH. The analysis was informed by conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and membership categorisation analysis (Sacks, 1995). Whilst BN constructed 39 vocational roles for itself, PH had 16 roles. The two coalitions share a preference for certain roles, such as GOVERNMENT IS GENERAL/SOLDIER and GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR, but BN also favours GOVERNMENT IS CAPTAIN. Both BN and PH legitimise their governance by representing themselves as hero-like-authoritative figures who can handle multiple vocational roles. These roles are played out in narratives highlighting the government's authority, value systems and ideologies.

Keywords Politics · Budget speeches · Metaphor · Critical metaphor analysis · Legitimation

4.1 Introduction

The struggle over power is prevalent in democratic countries. Political parties are known to exhaust all available means including linguistic tools to secure the trust of the people in order to be elected or re-elected to power. In the years leading up to the 14th general elections, Barisan Nasional (BN) suffered accusations of mismanagement over 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). The struggle for this coalition to remain relevant and in power ended when it lost to Pakatan Harapan (PH) in 2018. From the very beginning, PH was facing its own challenges too. It was working very hard to maintain the trust it had initially gathered, fulfilling

F. D. Rashid Ali (✉) · S. Awab
Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia, Pagoh, Malaysia
e-mail: farrahdiebaa@iium.edu.my

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promises made, legitimising the decisions and moves it took. In an attempt to maintain hegemony, both coalitions needed to convince the people that they were working hard for the country and the people. One way of doing it was through the creation of vocational roles or occupational-based identities for the government. Through sets of expected or obligated actions and behaviours associated with several occupations, the two parties were not only legitimising their governance but also the actions and ideologies they were perpetuating.

Both coalitions' leaders were portrayed as responsible and had worked hard in helping the people. Vocational roles and relational identities were laden in discourses produced by party leaders, members and government institutions. These roles and identities were indexed in discourse through the use of several linguistic features including verbs, adjectives, adverbs and metaphors. One of the prominent discourse produced by these ruling parties that garnered mass media attention was the annual presentation of the Supply Bill or better known by Malaysians as the Budget Speech.

The annual reading of the supply bill or budget speech by the Finance Minister is a much-awaited occasion by Malaysians and other stakeholders (See Rajandran, Chapter 3, Perumal, Govaichelvan, Sinayah, Ramalingam & Maruthai, Chapter 5 and Siti Aeisha & Mohd Faizal, Chapter 11). The budget speech does not only lay out how the government plans to utilise the country's resources but also how the government is going to increase its income through taxes, levies and other forms of investments. It also highlights mega development projects that will be carried out in the coming year. The government takes this opportunity to boast of their achievements and belittle the opposition parties (Chi-Chang, 2009). Through their discourse, this is part of the ruling party's attempts to legitimise its own governance, actions and ideologies (Simpson & Mayr, 2010).

One of the major strands within the field of institutional discourse is the creation of myth and reality through the construction of identities for *itself* (the dominant group) and *others* (the subordinated group) (Keating & Duranti, 2011; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). In doing so, the government frames itself positively by constructing and representing itself through several social roles. It also assigns the people with social and relational identities that further enhance the government's positive representation. Although these identities and roles may be indexed in discourse through the use of various linguistic features, this chapter is particularly interested in the social vocational roles and relational identities as indexed by conceptual metaphors (Grubenmann & Meckel, 2014; Koller, 2004, 2012; Kram et al., 2012; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Yesilbursa, 2012). These social vocational roles are identified in the discourse through Sacks's (1995) membership categorisation analysis.

4.2 Metaphors, Identities, Legitimation and World Leaders

The conceptual metaphor theory forwarded by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 provides an experientialist approach to metaphor. This cognitive-based neurologically supported theory further emphasises that human thoughts are metaphorically structured and guided. Thus, the linguistic metaphor (e.g. *I don't want to waste time*) produced by a speaker/writer is a reflection of a predominant Western conceptual metaphor (TIME IS MONEY), understood through mapping the source domain (Money) to the target domain (Time) (Lakoff, 1986). This theory asserts that metaphors are strongly grounded in human experiences, cognitive schemas (Johnson, 2005), embodiments (Gibbs et al., 2004; Grady, 1999, 2005; Lakoff, 2013; Yu, 2009;) and neuron circuits (Feldman, 2006; Feldman & Narayanan, 2004; Lakoff, 2008).

Since "words are the meeting points at which regions of experience which can never combine in sensation or intuition, come together" (Richard, 1936, p. 131), language is then "merely a reflection of pure metaphorical thought, a surface realisation of a deeper conceptual level" (Tomoni, 2012, p. 202). These linguistic reflections of deeper conceptual metaphorical thought or mappings from the source domain to the target domain (Lakoff, 1986) are presented using SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS. It indicates that the particular wording does not occur in language as such, but it underlies conceptually all the surface metaphorical linguistic expressions listed underneath it (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *Metaphor We Live By* provides an extensive list of linguistic evidence of the metaphorical nature of the human conceptual system. It proves that a deeper pattern of thought can be identified through sets of linguistic metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2011; Lakoff, 1986; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

In political discourse, metaphors are used as tools of persuasion and manipulation (Charteris-Black, 2011). It is most important in a democratic society as followers need to be convinced that a leader and his policies can be trusted (Charteris-Black, 2011). Van Dijk (2006) explains that as a manipulation tool, metaphor is used to conceal the speaker's intentions. Since recipients are assigned a more passive role, they often do not realise that they have been manipulated. They often accept it as they are "unable to understand the real intentions or to see the full consequence of the beliefs or actions advocated by the manipulator. This may be the case especially when the recipients lack the specific knowledge that might be used to resist manipulation" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 361 in Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 43). Benoit (2001) further added that the worldview constituted by a metaphor functions as a terministic screen which may reduce listeners' critical thinking though not eliminating it entirely. This helps create positive impressions of the candidates, their utterances and their policies. This theory is seconded by Hank Seikopf, a political communicator who said "people do not vote based on their brain, they vote based on their guts" (as cited in Nankani, 2004, p. 1). Charteris-Black (2014, p. 200) stresses that "no matter how socially entrenched metaphors become, the argument that they have been chosen presupposes that they are purposeful." Metaphors communicate an ideology by creating myths. This myth "engages the hearer by providing stories that express aspects of the unconscious. It

provides a narrative-based representation of intangible experiences that are evocative because they are unconsciously linked to emotions such as sadness, happiness and fear" (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 22).

As for successful use of metaphors by political leaders, in the USA, Hillary Clinton was observed using a number of metaphors including those of building and war. She did not only employ NATION IS BUILDING, but PROPERTY/ECONOMY IS BUILDING too. Whilst INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT, NATIONAL PROBLEM and HISTORY OF THE NATION (IS) WAR, SOLIDARITY IS GOOD/STRENGTH (Egana, 2016). Donald Trump on the other hand prefers to use war, sport and health metaphors in his speeches. He views both NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/CONFLICTS ARE WARS, whilst PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ARE SPORTS GAME, INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS are conceptualised as BASKETBALL GAMES. In terms of health, RICH IS perceived as STRONG, whilst POOR IS WEAK/SICK/DEAD (Egana, 2016).

In addition to the above, Xu (2010) who examined the use of metaphors by Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barrack Obama observed that these former American Presidents often utilized journey, health and war metaphors. AMERICA OR AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TRAVELLERS, whilst SOCIAL GOALS ARE DESTINATIONS. In their journeys, DIFFICULTIES ARE BARRIERS AND BURDENS. The health of the country actually depends on economic conditions and power. Since POLITICS IS WAR, social evils are seen as the enemies and the people are the fighters and defenders (Xu, 2010).

Sebok (2017), who analysed seven of Xi Jinping's speeches, found that the Chinese leader preferred journey, war and construction as the source domains for his metaphors. He conceptualised CHINESE HISTORY and NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (IS) JOURNEY, whilst SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS IS PATH. The CHINESE NATION IS TRAVELLER, whilst CHINA AND OTHER COUNTRIES ARE TRAVEL COMPANIONS and THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS GUIDE. Other prominent metaphors include NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS WAR, CORRUPTION IS ENEMY, YOUTHS ARE ARMY and WORKERS ARE ARMY. Since CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS ARCHITECT, therefore, CHINA (the country) IS BUILDING and (national) DEVELOPMENT IS CONSTRUCTION.

An analysis on four Taiwanese Democratic Progressive Party Presidents (Chiang Kai-Shek, Chiang Ching-Kuo, Lee Teng-Hui, Chen Shui-Bian) speeches reveals an extensive use of building and reconstruction metaphors. FORERUNNERS ARE BUILDERS, PAST HISTORY IS FOUNDATION, COMMUNIST IS DESTROYER and THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IS DESTRUCTION were amongst the prevalent metaphors used (Lu & Ahrens, 2008). On similar ground, the former Croatian Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader employed war and building metaphors. Ivo Sanader saw POLITICAL ELECTION IS BATTLE, STATES ARE WAR STRATEGIES, THE OUTCOME OF POLITICS IS THE OUTCOME OF WAR and FEAR IS INVADER OR ENEMY. He conceptualised both nation and theories as building (Lenard & Cosic, 2017).

Closer to home, Indonesian President, Joko Widodo has expressed the importance of freedom through several conceptual metaphors such as FREEDOM IS VALUABLE COMMODITY, SPIRIT OF UNITY IS LINE, POWER IS URGE, SUFFERING IS WEAKNESS and STRUGGLE IS RESURRECTION whilst addressing the audience at the Fifth Extraordinary Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC SUMMIT) in 2016 (Supriadi, 2017). The late Lee Kwan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, preferred to talk about economic crisis in terms of unprecedented natural disasters such as typhoon and earthquake, which are not common in Singapore due to its equatorial location. As these disembodied forces are external and beyond human control, the government maintained their competent and responsible image as they cannot be held accountable and responsible for meteorological mishaps (Kelly, 2001).

In Malaysia, the fourth Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed was well known for his medical metaphors. He observed "*symptoms,*" "*diagnosed*" the problem and would recommend a "*cure*" (Charteris-Black, 2007). Through his speeches, it was observed that he was fond of POLITICIAN IS DOCTOR, POLITICAL PRACTICE IS MEDICAL PRACTISE (Charteris-Black, 2007), THE STATE OF ECONOMY IS STATE OF PHYSICAL/MENTAL HEALTH and BELIEVING IN IDEOLOGIES IS STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH (Imani & Habil, 2014) metaphors. The people or the "patients" rarely challenged the diagnosis and often accepted the treatment no matter how bitter or hard it was (Charteris-Black, 2007), and this includes amputation of weak or non-functional limbs such as his own members of cabinet (Charteris-Black, 2011). As he is active in politics again, medical metaphors are still prevalent in his texts. Responding to one of the Malaysian 14th pre-general election memes (Fig. 4.1), he posted "*Siapa nakal sangat ni* 😊 *Saya doctor, bukan gangster. Nak memulih pentadbiran negara, bukan memusnah*" (Literally translated as "Who is being so mischievous 😊 *I am a doctor*, not a gangster. (I want) to *heal* the country's administration, not destroy it") on his Facebook page on 14 January 2018.

Apart from medical metaphors, Mahathir Mohamed was also observed using colonial and war metaphors when discussing the 1998/99 economic crisis. Instead of military force, financial and economic weapons were used by the country's enemies—currency traders, foreign media and credit-ratings agencies. Malaysia on the other hand was represented as a helpless victim in the economic warfare by foreign powers (Kelly, 2001).

Examining the conceptual metaphors used by the sixth Prime Minister, Najib Razak has been observed conceptualising the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) as a journey, vehicle and plant (Rajandran, 2013). The economy on the other hand was conceptualised as ECONOMY IS SPORT/GAME, and ECONOMY IS A CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE in the ETP reports (Jasman & Kasim, 2014). In other settings, at the opening speech for 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education, Najib Razak conceptualised education as EDUCATION IS MACHINE, EDUCATION IS JOURNEY; EDUCATION IS A FORCE, EDUCATION IS SPORT and EDUCATION IS PLAY (Mohamed Nil, Mohd Kasim, Yusop and Shamsudeen, 2014).

Fig. 4.1 Dr Mahathir's response to a meme on 14 January 2018

Discourse does not only talk about an identity, it constructs, negotiates, reinforces and subverts identity (Koller, 2012). As discourse allows meaning to be emitted, gathered and appropriated (Gee, 1999), it serves as a means for individuals to act and interact, position themselves and be positioned in a social space (Almeciga, 2013). Apart from the ever-changing co-formations of complex relationships between the self and the world (Almeciga, 2013), discourse also plays a significant role in forming and transforming participants' identities. Despite the various approaches developed to identify identity in discourse, many have been criticised for not being able to deal with the subject's unconscious mind (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Since identity can be carefully shaped and indexed through several linguistic features including speech style (Johnstone, 2008), the use of conceptual metaphors as an identity index allows access to the author's unconscious mind (Grubenmann & Meckel, 2014; Koller 2004, 2012; Kram et al., 2012; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Yesilbursa, 2012).

A discourse participant's collective identities are often identified through his/her occupation and social activity (Simpson & Mayr, 2010). Occupational-based identities, most often labelled as vocational roles, refer to the expected or obligated actions, behaviour, routines performed and beliefs held by individuals which are associated to one's jobs, vocations and occupations. They are often identified through descriptive job titles and described through the use of linguistic features such as verbs and nouns. For instance, one who plays a vocational role as a doctor may diagnose and treat diseases, whilst those playing a role as a gardener may plant and take care of trees and shrubs.

When discourse participants are categorised by what they do (occupation) or social activity, they are categorised in a discourse based on "functionalisation"

(Simpson & Mayr, 2010). They are often identified in discourse through the verbs used (Simpson & Mayr, 2010) such as "treat" for "doctor" and "plant" for "gardener." This identification is often discussed in relation to occupational identity. Occupational identity does not only represent "one's perception of occupational interests, abilities, goals and values" (Kielhofner, 2007 in Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011, p. 694), it also represents "a complex structure of meanings in which the individual links his or her motivation and competencies with acceptable career roles" (Meijers, 1998 in Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011, p. 694). It is often identified through descriptive job titles which function as identity badges, for example technician, lawyer, nurse and engineer (Rothma et al., 2015).

However, in this chapter, the term vocational role is preferred over occupational identity; as according to Cullen (2011), vocation is "a commitment to a specialist area of work that the individual engages with in terms that almost equate with religious zeal" (p. 5). Even though it is highly associated with clergy and ministry, in its current sense, it is used in reference to any career of choice (Buijs, 2005). In contrast to occupation, those with a vocation are genuinely committed to their work and are not interested in rewards (Cullen, 2011). This is so as "the framework of a profession tends to include payment for an activity, whereas the framework of a vocation tends to ignore it" (Buijs, 2005, p. 337). As vocation is equal to one's true calling, a vocation helps nourish someone's work and non-work life. The satisfaction comes from one's enjoyment in fulfilling his psychological and spiritual needs by playing a role that will benefit society at large (Buijs, 2005). These, of course, are ideal definitions of political leaders, parties and governments.

Amongst the prevalent vocational roles-related conceptual metaphors inferred from the above reviews on world leaders' metaphors are GOVERNMENT IS FIGHTER, followed by GOVERNMENT IS DRIVER/TRAVELLER and GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR. GOVERNMENT IS BUILDER is an equally well-used conceptual metaphor employed by political leaders around the world. Whilst a few adopt GOVERNMENT IS SPORTSMAN metaphor, GOVERNMENT IS GARDENER, RELIGIOUS LEADER and ACTOR are not favoured by many leaders. These are the vocational roles constructed by the politicians for themselves, their governments or the countries through conceptual metaphors in their speeches.

4.3 Methodology

Since this study is interested in comparing vocational roles constructed by BN and PH to legitimise their governance, actions and ideology, nine budget speeches (2010–2018) read by Najib Razak and two (2018–2019) read by Lim Guan Eng were analysed in two stages which were (i) metaphor identification and (ii) vocational roles determination.

4.3.1 Stage One: Metaphor Identification

The Malay Metaphor Identification Procedure (MMIP) was developed by the authors due to the lack of metaphor identification procedure available for the Malay language. If Pragglejaz MIP (2007) or Steen et al (2010) MIPVU were to be adopted, many challenges and issues arose such as (1) should we treat words with identical base forms such as *head* (noun) and *head* (verb) as a single lexical unit, following Pragglejaz's proposition or as two different lexical units as suggested by MIPVU? (2) should we take historically older meaning into consideration when consulting the dictionary for basic meaning? (3) what is a lexical unit in Malay? (4) are idioms, proverbs and simile to be treated as one lexical unit? (4) which dictionary is to be consulted? (5) what decision is to be made about those linguistic items whose basic meaning and contextual meaning do not contradict locally but globally, and (6) which basic meaning is to be adopted if there is more than one available?

Responding to the issues mentioned above, the Malay Metaphor Identification Procedure was developed by adapting Pragglejaz MIP (2007), Steen et al (2010) MIPVU, Dorst et al. (2013) guidelines on preferred combination of senses to be regarded as basic sense and a few of Krenmayr's (2008) criteria and procedures.

The Malay Metaphor Identification Procedure is as follows:

1. Read the entire text/discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text/discourse:

   (a) Inflectional and derivational words are reduced to their roots, unless they are listed as headwords in Kamus Dewan (4th edition) or Kamus Dewan Perdana.
   (b) Proper nouns, salutation + name, title + name are treated as one lexical unit.
   (c) Numbers, percentage and written numbers are treated as one lexical unit.
   (d) Phrasal verbs (e.g. simpan buang (to keep)) and routine formulas (Selamat pagi (good morning)) are treated as one lexical unit.
   (e) Multi-word expressions such as proverbs (peribahasa), idioms (simpulan bahasa) and similes (perbandingan) are treated as one lexical unit.
   (f) Reduplication and conventional compounds are treated as one lexical unit. However, novel formations of compounds, for example pasaran buruh (labour market) is treated as two separate lexical units as it is important for the readers to understand each word before it is taken as one.
   (g) Discourse markers (e.g. walau bagaimanapun (nevertheless)) are treated as separate lexical items.

   * If there is discrepancy in terms of spelling, the standard spelling as listed in the Kamus Dewan will be used.

3.

   (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in local and global contexts, i.e. how it applies to an entity, relation or attribute in the situation

evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.

(b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For this purposes, basic meanings tend to be:

Senses (additional information)	Action needed
Human + Concrete	Firstly selected over other senses
Human + Abstract	Secondly selected over other senses
Non-human + Concrete	Thirdly selected over other senses
Non-human + Abstract	Lastly selected over other senses
Human + Abstract versus Non-human + Concrete	The MORE MAPPINGS a candidate can account for, the more basic it is
Physical action versus Psychological behaviour	Physical action is a candidate of basic meaning
(Additional consideration)	Concreteness precedes humanness

(from Dorst et al., 2013, p. 84)

Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current/contemporary meaning in other context than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

(Adapted from Pragglejaz, 2007, p. 3)

(i) If yes, mark the lexical unit as a clear metaphor-related word
(ii) If no, mark the lexical unit as clearly not a metaphor-related word
(iii) If in doubt, subject it to inter-rater discussion. If still in doubt, count it as a metaphor-related word (following Steen et al., 2010 and Krenmayr, 2008)
(iv) Idiom, proverb and simile marked as a clear metaphor-related word
(v) For linguistic item where basic meaning and contextual meaning does not contradict locally but globally in a discourse, mark it as a clear metaphor-related word

To increase the reliability of the identified linguistic metaphors in the current study, ten undergraduate students were employed as raters to complement the researcher's judgement. Cohen's κ 0.83 was recorded prior to the deliberation process, whilst 0.98 was recorded after the deliberation was done.

The linguistic metaphors were then grouped according to their source and target domain groups. Words that were semantically related (Skorczynska & Deignan, 2006) or commonly appear within the same source domain such as head, body, limbs, organs were grouped together under the source domain human or living organism. Concepts like finance, banking and inflation were grouped under the target domain economy. As this process did not only depend on intuition, general and specialised

dictionaries offered great help (Skorczynska & Deignan, 2006). Charteris-Black (2014) cautioned that the grouping should not be too specific as it may cause some metaphors to fit in in more than one group. The grouping should also not be too general as the category can become too remote for its members to be meaningful. The conceptual metaphors are then constructed by using the formula TARGET DOMAIN (A) IS SOURCE DOMAIN (B) (Mundwiller, 2013).

4.3.2 Stage Two: Determination of Vocational Roles

The government's vocational roles and the people's relational identities were identified using Sacks's membership categorisation analysis (MCA). MCA highlights how discourse participants categorise themselves and others as certain sorts of members of society in talk and text (Day, 2011; King, 2010). One's membership in a social category or social identities are often based on one's activities or actions (category-bound activity) and characteristics (category-bound predicates) (Day, 2011; Stokoe, 2003). For this study, the membership categorisation was done based on vocation. Target domains (objects, characteristics, attributes, actions, roles and responsibilities) which are related to a particular vocation were grouped together. For example, metaphors related to a healer, patient, disease and illness were grouped together under the vocation of doctor/healer. These metaphors were taken as indices for the vocational roles constructed by BN and PH for themselves in the budget speeches.

4.4 Findings and Discussion

Barisan Nasional constructed 39 vocational roles for itself, whilst Pakatan Harapan constructed only 16. Based on the frequency of the linguistic metaphors that represent the category-bound activities and category-bound predicates of vocations, it was discovered that both coalitions' most preferred vocational roles were GOVERNMENT IS GENERAL/SOLDIER, and GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR. Whilst GOVERNMENT IS SHIP CAPTAIN was a predominant metaphor during Najib Razak's tenure as Prime Minister, this vocational role was not present in Pakatan Harapan budget speeches. GOVERNMENT IS ARCHITECT and GOVERNMENT IS GARDENER were also present in the two coalitions' budget speeches. In this chapter, only the top three vocational roles constructed by the coalitions are discussed. Excerpts taken from Barisan Nasional Najib Razak's budget speeches are labelled as [NR], whilst those of Pakatan Harapan Lim Guan Eng's are labelled as [LGE]. Below are the lists of vocational roles constructed by both coalitions.

In all the budget speeches read by Najib Razak and Lim Guan Eng, the conceptual metaphor GOVERNMENT IS GENERAL/SOLDIER was predominantly present, as shown in Table 4.1. Whilst the opposition [NR01, NR02 & NR03], economic slowdown [NR04], B40 group [NR05] and bribery [NR06] were regarded as the

enemies by Barisan Nasional, Pakatan Harapan only talked about economic challenges [LGE01] and trading war [LGE02]. In tackling the battle of world economic situations [NR04, LGE01 & LGE02], targeted subsidies [NR05 & LGE03] and programmes [NR10] were deployed by these coalitions to the affected groups and sectors. Apart from the above, Pakatan Harapan's strategies to overcome the economic slowdown battle included getting a bond from the Japanese government. The bond was named after the Japanese traditional warrior, the samurai [LGE04]. As for Barisan Nasional's strategies, they were laid out in budget speeches [NR07] and Economic Development Plans [NR08]. In combating bribery, a special key result area (KRA) was developed as part of Barisan Nasional's strategies [NR06]. In the battle between Barisan Nasional and its opposition, verbal attacks were being compared to arrows [NR09], whilst the general election was their battlefield [NR01 & NR03] (Table 4.2).

Both Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Harapan adopted the GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR vocational role. As doctors, they did not only treat the country [NR12, NR13] but most importantly the economy and economic activities [NR14, NR15 & NR16]. They have also treated abandoned projects [NR22] and old buildings [LGE06]. Barisan Nasional put greater emphasis on treating new entrepreneurs as pre-term babies [NR21]. Both the country and the economy suffered from a global economic recession [NR13] with the ringgit "losing its weight"—depreciation of the ringgit [NR14] and increase in "inflationary pressure" [NR15] as symptoms. Treatments administered by the government as a doctor include fund injection [NR17], stimulation [NR16 & NR18], rehabilitation therapies [NR22 & LGE06] and incubator for new entrepreneurs [NR21]. Lack of money (poverty) has been conceptualised as the pathogen that caused the disease that needed to be eradicated [NR20]. Once recovered, economic activities became active and continued to grow [NR19], and the once abandoned, projects will receive their Certificate of Fitness (CF) [NR22] (Table 4.3).

Apart from the two vocational roles presented above, GOVERNMENT IS CAPTAIN can only be traced in the budget speeches delivered by Najib Razak. With the country as the ship [NR24, NR25 & NR26] sailing in the sea of world economic situation [NR27] heading towards a high-income country [NR29] and developed nation [NR24, NR26 & NR 29] as the ports/destinations, the National Blue Ocean Strategy [NR28] was drafted to help the captain navigate the ship. Several aspects of the administration and economy have been chosen as the main currents [NR29] that helped bring the ship to port faster. This voyage was led by Najib Razak as the captain with the ministers as crew [NR24 & NR25] (Table 4.4).

GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR is commonly used by political leaders like Mahathir Mohammed, Margaret Thatcher (Charteris-Black, 2006, 2011, 2014; Imani & Habil, 2014), Donald Trump (Egana, 2016), Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barrack Obama (Xu, 2010), and GOVERNMENT IS GENERAL/ SOLDIER is popular with Barrack Obama (Plisetskaya, 2013), Xi Jinping (Sebok, 2017), Ivo Sanader (Lenard & Cosic, 2017), Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump (Egana, 2016), Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton and George W, Bush (Soto, 2012; Xu, 2010), GOVERNMENT

Table 4.1 Lists of vocational roles found in the budget speeches

Barisan Nasional's vocational roles	Total number of indices (%)	Pakatan Harapan's Vocational Roles	Total number of indices (%)
1. GOVERNMENT IS GENERAL	37 (18)	1. GOVERNMENT IS GENERAL	9 (25.7)
2. GOVERNMENT IS SOLDIER		2. GOVERNMENT IS SOLDIER	
3. GOVERNMENT IS SHOOTER		3. GOVERNMENT IS SHOOTER	
4. GOVERNMENT IS FIGHTER		4. GOVERNMENT IS FIGHTER	
5. GOVERNMENT IS WARRIOR		5. GOVERNMENT IS WARRIOR	
6. GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR	23 (11.2)	6. GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR	6 (17.14)
7. GOVERNMENT IS HEALER			
8. GOVERNMENT IS PHYSIOLOGIST			
9. GOVERNMENT IS CAPTAIN (SHIP)	23 (11.2)		
10. GOVERNMENT IS METEOROLOGIST			
11. GOVERNMENT IS CARTOGRAPHER			
12. GOVERNMENT IS ARCHITECT	20(9.75)	7. GOVERNMENT IS ARCHITECT	6 (17.14)
13. GOVERNMENT IS BUILDER		8. GOVERNMENT IS BUILDER	
14. GOVERNMENT IS RENOVATOR		9. GOVERNMENT IS RENOVATOR	
15. GOVERNMENT IS GARDENER	17 (8.29)	10. GOVERNMENT IS GARDENER	3 (8.57)
16. GOVERNMENT IS ECOLOGIST		11. GOVERNMENT IS INVESTIGATOR	3 (8.57)
		12. GOVERNMENT IS ACCOUNTANT	2 (5.7)
17. GOVERNMENT IS STORYTELLER	11 (5.36)	13. GOVERNMENT IS WRITER	1 (2.86)
18. GOVERNMENT IS WRITER			
19. GOVERNMENT IS DRIVER	9 (4.39)		

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Barisan Nasional's vocational roles	Total number of indices (%)	Pakatan Harapan's Vocational Roles	Total number of indices (%)
20. GOVERNMENT IS ATHLETE	9 (4.39)		
21. GOVERNMENT IS MANAGER GOVERNMENT IS ASSET MANAGEMENT MANAGER	9 (4.39)		
22. GOVERNMENT IS PRODUCTION AND MANUFACTURING MANAGER			
23. GOVERNMENT IS COMPOSER	7 (3.4)		
24. GOVERNMEMT IS SINGER			
25. GOVERNMENT IS BLACKSMITH	8 (3.9)		
26. GOVERNMENT IS GOLDSMITH			
27. GOVERNMENT IS ARTIST	4 (1.95)	14. GOVERNMENT IS ARTIST	1 (2.86)
28. GOVERNMENT IS COOK	4 (1.95)		
29. GOVERNMENT IS WAITER			
30. GOVERNMENT IS ENGINEER	4 (1.95)		
31. GOVERNMENT IS WEAVER	4 (1.95)	15. GOVERNMENT IS WEAVER	2 (5.7)
32. GOVERNMENT IS HUNTER	3 (1.46)		
33. GOVERNMENT IS TRAPPER			
34. GOVERNMENT IS ACTOR	3 (1.46)	16. GOVERNMENT IS ACTOR	2 (5.7)
35. GOVERNMENT IS BOAT MOORER	3 (1.46)		
36. GOVERNMENT IS SCIENTIST	2 (0.97)		
37. GOVERNMENT IS CARVER	2 (0.97)		

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Barisan Nasional's vocational roles	Total number of indices (%)	Pakatan Harapan's Vocational Roles	Total number of indices (%)
38. GOVERNMENT IS CLEANER	2 (0.97)		
39. GOVERNMENT IS LEXICOGRAPHER	1 (0.48)		
Total	**205 (100)**	**Total**	**35(100)**

IS CAPTAIN is unique to Najib Razak as none of the other political leaders were reported to use it extensively. Najib Razak was very fond of sailing and boat-related metaphors. When commenting on the earlier Prime Ministers of Malaysia in 2005, he said "All the five Prime Ministers have ascended to the helm of the political apex at times when it suited their presence" (Abdul Razak, 2005, p.3). In March 2009, as the vice President of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), he delivered a speech entitled "*Menakhoda Zaman*" (Helming the Times) to the UMNO women and youth members. In this speech, he stressed on the weaknesses of UMNO and the challenges it faced to stay relevant and remain in power. This speech was later published with his other speeches in a collection entitled "Menakhoda Zaman" in 2011. In this book, UMNO was conceptualised as the ship (UMNO IS SHIP) with him Najib Razak, the president as the captain (PRESIDENT IS CAPTAIN).

Through the use of metaphors, the two coalitions created a positive representation of their governments, personifying them as professional, reliable and able institutions. As professionals, the governments led by the Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Harapan were portrayed as experts in what they were doing, therefore legitimising their governance, actions and ideologies. Being portrayed as army generals, doctors and captain, the governments were put in places that require not only specialised knowledge and skills but also the ability to develop clear and well supported decisions and strategies. These can be seen in the numerous policies and strategies developed by the governments in tackling problems and challenges.

Through the use of selected metaphors, these governments have successfully created negative representations of others, for example those who bribe and receive bribes were considered as enemies. Poverty, on the other hand, was considered as a pathogen that needed to be eradicated. As for the people, regardless of their citizenship status, they are portrayed as dependent, vulnerable entities, the one to be targeted, to be treated and to be ferried around (Rajandran, 2013). In these three positions, the people's well-being and advancement were in the governments' hands. In the budget speeches, these roles and identities were constructed, negotiated and reinforced but never subverted. These positive and negative representation of self and others legitimise and delegitimise the political actors in question (Charteris-Black, 2011).

The governments were also toying with the people's emotions. Fear was instilled in the people. They were presented with enemies, pathogens, stormy weather and rough sea conditions, whilst social problems were cancers [NR23]. The people were

Table 4.2 Government is general/soldier

Code	Excerpt	English translation*
NR01	*Sememangnya pun, kita telah melalui satu Pilihanraya Umum yang … penuh **tantangan*** (Supply Bill 2014, Para 4)	Indeed, we went through a General Election which is… full of **challenges**
NR02	*Malah pihak seberang sana, yang mula-mula dulu **menentang** dengan begitu lantang dan keras, kini juga mula menerima GST, hatta telah memasukkannya pula dalam dokumen bajet* mereka (Supply Bill 2016, Para 44)	Those who used to vehemently **oppose** GST have now accepted it and even included it in their budget document
NR03	*angin kemenangan besar Pilihanraya Negeri Sarawak, … akan mula meniup obor **perjuangan** yang kami yakin dan percaya, … akan membawa pula kemenangan besar* (Supply Bill 2017, Para 333)	the wind of victory of the Sarawak State Election has blown over … will eventually be the torch of **endeavour**, which we believe and confident … will bring the ultimate victory
NR04	*sebalik pelbagai kerencaman dan **cabaran** ekonomi* (Supply Bill 2018, Para 18)	amid economic **challenges**
NR05	*BR1M merupakan suatu bentuk subsidi **bersasar** kepada golongan yang benar-benar memerlukannya, terbukti keberkesanannya.* (Supply Bill 2018, Para 163)	BR1M is a form of **targeted** subsidy for those in need and has proven to be effective
NR06	*NKRA yang utama untuk **memerangi** rasuah.* (Supply Bill 2010, Para 80)	**Combating** corruption is an important NKRA
NR07	*Menyongsong **strategi** Bajet 2011 demi mencapai status negara maju* (Supply Bill 2011, Para 13)	Following the **strategies** outlined in 2011 supply bill to attain developed nation status
NR08	*kerajaan akan menyusun **strategi** merancakkan aktiviti ekonomi domestik terutamanya pelaburan swasta dan awam, serta penggunaan* (Supply Bill 2012, Para 11)	The government will put in place measures (**strategies**) to stimulate domestic economic activities, in particular public and private investments, as well as private consumption
NR09	*sekalipun seribu **panah** tersusuk di badan, seandainya sejuta luka terbenam di**serang*** (Supply Bill 2017, Para 55)	Even though the body is being stabbed by thousands of **arrows**, wounded by attacks
NR10	*program eRezeki dan eUsahawan … Kerajaan **mensasarkan** 100 ribu dari kalangan B40* (Supply Bill 2016, Para 143)	The eRezeki and eUsahawan programmes …. The Government **targets** 100,000 people from B40
LGE01	*Menghadapi **cabaran** ekonomi* (Supply Bill 2019, Para 216)	To face economic **challenges**
LGE02	*Diakibatkan **perang** perdagangan antara Amerika Syarikat dan negara lain* (Supply Bill 2020, Para 6)	Caused by trading **war** between the USA and other countries
LGE03	*memberi subsidi minyak secara **bersasar*** *(*Supply Bill 2019, Para 69)	To give **targeted** petrol subsidy

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Code	Excerpt	English translation*
LGE04	*Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), sekali lagi telah* ***menawarkan*** *… bon* ***Samurai*** (Supply Bill 2020, Para 187)	Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), once more is offering **Samurai** bond

Keys:
Bold words are the linguistic metaphors that serve as the indices to the vocational roles identified in the speeches.
*The English translations are the official translations available on the Ministry of Finance website.

presented with selfless heroes, the one under the attack of thousands of arrows [NR9] and the one who helmed the ship through a rough sea [NR30]. They were excited with hopes that they would surely win the war, feel better and reach their destination. The people were assured that these were for the common good that would make the community they were living in better.

Coherent myths were being perpetuated by both governments. It functioned as a stable foundation for political ideologies to reside in the people's mind and later manifested as beliefs and actions. The governments often named their programmes and policies using metaphors from the same domain as the myth. The governments' approaches to problem-solving strategies and solutions were also often motivated by these myths, for example the *National Blue Ocean Strategy* was adopted by the Barisan Nasional as it correlates with the myth it was perpetuating—GOVERNMENT IS CAPTAIN, the *Abandoned Housing Project Rehabilitation Programme* was coherent to GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR role and the *Targeted Subsidies,* and *Samurai Bond* for GOVERNMENT IS SOLDIER.

These preferred metaphor was in line with their parties' manifestos. For Pakatan Harapan to act as a general/soldier was part of their promise—"Pakatan Harapan is stepping forward to offer ourselves to save this country …" (Pakatan Harapan, 2018, p. 7) as they "*will return the rule of law by ensuring the independence and integrity of important government agencies*" (Pakatan Harapan, 2018, p. 8). As a doctor who felt "*the pressures suffered by the people*" the coalition vowed in taking "*immediate steps to stabilise the prices of essential items and to control the factors that lead to price increases*" (Pakatan Harapan, 2018, p. 18). As for the Barisan Nasional, expressions like "*the path of democracy,*" "*towards a path of greater liberalisation,*" "*the journey towards total transformation,*" "*we are on track*" in the coalition's 13th general elections manifesto exemplified Najib Razak's preference for journey metaphors, as Rajandran (2013) also finds.

The two coalitions legitimised their governance, actions and ideologies by representing themselves as hero-like-authoritative figures who held many different vocational roles, creating coherent myths that touches different aspects of human emotions, convincing the people that they are in the hands of experts and most importantly whatever they are doing is for the common good. These findings suggest that conceptual metaphor analysis is a useful tool to uncover identity in political discourse. If employed systematically, these metaphors do not only gain attention,

Table 4.3 Government is doctor

Code	Excerpt	English translation*
NR12	*Selamat dan **afiat**kan tubuh Malaysia, zahir dan batin* (Supply Bill 2018, Para 220)	(No translation available for this line in the English translation of the 2018 Supply Bill) Save Malaysia, physically and internally (Authors' translation)
NR13	*negara kita telah berjaya **pulih** daripada kemelesetan ekonomi dunia* (Supply Bill 2011, Para 7)	Malaysia has **recovered** from the global economic recession
NR14	*Sungguhpun begitu, kita sedar, bahawa kita tidak dapat lari daripada menghadapi kelembapan ekonomi global, termasuklah dari segi penurunan harga komoditi terutamanya minyak, kelapa sawit dan getah, **penyusutan** nilai ringgit serta **pertumbuhan perlahan** di negara-negara kuasa besar ekonomi dunia* (Supply Bill 2016, Para 15)	We acknowledge that we are not spared from the impact of a slowdown in the global economy, including declining commodity prices, particularly crude oil, palm oil and rubber, depreciation of the ringgit and slower **growth** in major advanced economies
NR15	*Berikutan pertumbuhan ekonomi global tidak menentu, perdagangan luar sederhana, **tekanan** inflasi meningkat serta suasana geopolitik yang bergolak* (Supply Bill 2012, Para 9)	Despite uncertainties in the global economy, moderation in external trade, increased inflationary **pressures** as well as geopolitical unrest
NR16	*aktiviti ekonomi yang telah **dirangsang**, dan **kesihatan** jangka panjang sistem kewangan Malaysia* (Supply Bill 2017, Para 314)	Spurring economic activities and **healthy** long-term financial system of Malaysia
NR17	*Baru-baru ini, sempena lawatan saya ke Arab Saudi, sebuah syarikat negara itu telah **menyuntik** dana sebanyak 1.5 bilion dolar Amerika* (Supply Bill 2010, Para 32)	Following my recent visit, a company from Saudi Arabia has invested **(injected)** USD1.5 billion
NR18	*Pakej Rangsangan Ekonomi berjumlah 67 bilion ringgit. Pakej **rangsangan** ini merupakan antara yang terbesar dan komprehensif* (Supply Bill 2010, Para 14)	The implementation of two Economic Stimulus Packages totalling RM67 billion. These **stimulus** packages are amongst the biggest and comprehensive
NR19	*Prestasi yang baik ini disokong oleh **kecergasan** sektor pembinaan yang berkembang 2.8 peratus* (Supply Bill 2010, Para 15)	This improved performance was supported by the construction sector, which grew 2.8%
NR20	*Dasar Ekonomi Baru, Dasar Pembangunan Nasional, Dasar Wawasan Negara dan sejak 2010 Dasar Transformasi Nasional, kesemuanya berkisar tentang **pembasmian** kemiskinan* (Supply Bill 2015, Para 7)	New Economic Policy, National Development Policy, National Vision Policy and since 2010, the National Transformation Policy, have all focussed on poverty **eradication**

(continued)

Table 4.3 (continued)

Code	Excerpt	English translation*
NR21	*justeru, satu pelan pembangunan entreprenur akan digubal untuk menyediakan ekosistem kondusif yang memberi penekanan aspek penjanaan idea yang boleh dikomersilkan, prasarana latihan dan **inkubator**, modul entrepreneurship, kemudahan pembiayaan serta pemasaran.* (Supply Bill 2014, Para 73)	An entrepreneur development plan will be formulated to provide a conducive ecosystem which emphasises the generation of ideas which can be commercialised, infrastructure for training and **incubators,** entrepreneurship modules, financing facilities as well as marketing
NR22	*melalui Program Pemulihan Rumah Terbengkalai, Kerajaan berjaya **memulihkan** dan mendapat Sijil Layak Menduduki (Certificate of **Fitness**) bagi 82 projek yang melibatkan lebih 15,000 unit rumah.* (Supply Bill 2012, Para 82)	Through the Abandoned Housing Rehabilitation Programme, the government successfully **rehabilitated** and obtained the Certificate of Fitness (CF) for 82 projects involving more than 15,000 units
NR23	*Kerajaan memandang serius gejala sosial yang **membarah** dalam masyarakat. Untuk menanganinya, geran sepadan sebanyak 50 juta ringgit bagi membiayai social enterprise dan NGO untuk menyelesaikan masalah kemasyarakatan harian serta cabaran sosial secara inovatif yang membantu rakyat* (Supply Bill 2018, Para 92)	The government is very concerned on the social ills in the society. To address this, a matching grant of RM50 million will be provided to social enterprises and NGOs to resolve daily social issues and challenges in innovative ways
LGE05	*sektor kewangan masih **sihat** dan sektor monetari kekal **stabil*** (Supply Bill 2019, Para 216)	Healthy financial sector and **stable** monetary sector
LGE06	*program pemuliharaan dan **pembugaran** Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad* (Supply Bill 2019, Para 177)	Sultan Abdul Samad Building Rehabilitation Programme

Keys:
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facilitate understanding and frame issues, but most importantly, they "create political myths and discourses of legitimation and de-legitimation that give rise to ideologies and worldviews" (Charteris-Black, 2014, p. 174).

4.5 Conclusion

The vocational roles—GOVERNMENT IS DOCTOR and GOVERNMENT IS CAPTAIN, constructed by Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Harapan identified through

Table 4.4 Government is captain

Code	Excerpt	English Translation*
NR24	*Dalam **mengemudi** Malaysia menjadi negara maju* (Supply Bill 2011, Para 106)	In **steering** Malaysia towards a developed nation
NR25	*Termustahak juga segala wala dan sokongan tidak berbelah bahagi yang diberikan kepada saya oleh Anggota-anggota Jemaah Menteri, Pimpinan-pimpinan Parti Komponen dalam **menakhoda** bahtera Malaysia ini.* (Supply Bill 2018, Para 246)	This includes all the support from Members of the Cabinet, Leaders of Component Parties in **helming** the nation
NR26	*saya … memahat paku-paku pelengkap sekaligus **menaikkan layar** Bahtera Malaysia menuju ufuk negara maju.* (Supply Bill 2011, Para 2)	The government has taken measures to **propel** the country towards becoming a developed and high- income economy
NR27	*Sesungguhnya, sokongan besar rakyat amat penting untuk mempastikan perjalanan kita akan menemui kejayaan yang diimpikan menuju gapura Malaysia yang maju, makmur sebagai oasis harapan dan kestabilan dalam **lautan dunia** yang tidak menentu.* (Supply Bill 2012, Para 124)	(No translation available for this line in the English translation of the 2012 Supply Bill) The people's support is important to ensure that our journey will end successfully as we have dreamt about, heading towards a developed Malaysia, a prosperous oasis of hope and stability in uncertain **seas** of the world. (Authors' translation)
NR28	*Bagi 2018, sebanyak 300 juta ringgit diperuntukkan untuk program NBOS termasuk pembinaan UTC baharu, Blue **Ocean** Entrepreneur Township* (Supply Bill 2018, Para 126)	For 2018, a sum of RM300 million is allocated to implement NBOS programmes, including construction of new UTCs, Blue **Ocean** Entrepreneur Township, Mobile CTC, entrepreneurship programme, Global Entrepreneurship Community as well as inclusive and vibrant social entrepreneurs
NR29	*Menuju ke tahun 2020, menjadi sebuah negara maju berpendapatan tinggi, inovasi akan terus diperkukuh dan **diarusperdanakan** dalam semua sektor dan segenap lapisan masyarakat.* (Supply Bill 2013, Para 76)	Towards becoming a high-income and developed nation by 2020, innovation will be further strengthened and **made pervasive** in all sectors and segments of society
NR30	*biar menggunung **ombak** mendatang, kita, kita tidak akan sesekali berputus harapan.* (Supply Bill 2016, Para 207)	(No translation available for this line in the English translation of the 2016 Supply Bill) Despite the challenges (**waves**), we will not lose hope (Authors' translation)

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

Code	Excerpt	English Translation*
NR31	*Malah, ada seorang Pemimpin Pembangkang menyebut pula, Malaysia mengharungi **ribut** ekonomi yang sukar pada tahun ini* (Supply Bill 2017, Para 256)	In fact, an opposition leader stated that Malaysia will face a **difficult economic situation** this year

Keys:
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the conceptual metaphors have painted bigger pictures rather than only constructing the institutions' social vocational identities. They serve as platforms to legitimise the coalitions' governance, social actions and ideologies. The coalitions were portrayed as independent entities which held multiple vocational identities, whilst the people and others were positioned as dependents—dyadically in relation to the role held by the coalitions. For instance, when they were indexed with the collective vocational role of a doctor, the people and others were positioned dyadically with a relational identity as patients. It is important for the coalitions to present to the people and others that they were competent and efficacious. For that reason, they were expected to act in line with their vocational roles, i.e. the government is "expected or obligated to perform some set of actions, behaviours, routines, or functions in particular situations" (Fearon, 1999, p. 17). In this study, these actions, behaviours, routines and functions indexed through conceptual metaphors help the coalitions to obtain or maintain power, to achieve social acceptance, or even to reach popularity and fame. They provide justification for the coalitions' decision and actions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the vocational roles constructed by the coalitions played important roles in legitimising their governance of the Malaysian economy.

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Farrah Diebaa Rashid Ali is a Senior Lecturer at the Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia. She is interested in conceptual metaphor and is currently working on identities in political discourse. Her research works have been published by both local and international publishers. She can be contacted at farrahdiebaa@iium.edu.my.

Su'ad Awab was an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. Her areas of specialisation are corpus linguistics, phraseology and metaphor studies. She is currently researching on authenticating translations of hadith on social media. She can be contacted at suadacad@gmail.com.

Chapter 5
(De)legitimizing the 2021 Budget Allocation for Tamil Schools in a Talk Show

Malarvizhi Sinayah, Thanalachime Perumal, Kumanan Govaichelvan, Selvajothi Ramalingam, and Elanttamil Maruthai

Abstract Tamil vernacular schools provide access to education and career opportunities for Indian Malaysians. Tamil schools are perceived to be an important component of Indian minority rights, an avenue for the Tamil-speaking community to establish and institutionalize their language and cultural identity. However, the government reduced its allocation for these schools in the 2021 budget. Indian political leaders, shouldering the responsibility to channel the discontent among Indians, have raised concerns on various platforms, such as newspapers, social media, and television interviews. It is imperative to observe how Indian political leaders prioritize minority rights while preserving their own or parties' political interests. Politicians utilize rhetoric to influence the public, but few studies are conducted on the political discourse of Indian Malaysians. This chapter studies an interview in *Vizhuthugal-Samugathin Kural*, a Tamil talk show televised on Astro *Vaanavil*. Grounded in discourse studies, this chapter analyzes the (de)legitimizing strategies used by two prominent Indian politicians from MIC and DAP. Although the two parties hold opposite ideologies, this chapter highlights their similarities in advocating minority rights for Indian Malaysians.

Keywords Indian Malaysians · Minority rights · Tamil schools · Budget allocation · Talk Show

5.1 Introduction

The Malaysian education system has witnessed developments to expand education opportunities for citizens. With almost 98% of enrollment at the primary level and 48% at the tertiary level, exceeding the target set by UNESCO (Wan et al., 2018), the Malaysian education system is relatively developed. As education is a federal matter, curriculum planning is done at the federal level and centrally administered, having national unity in mind as a priority (Ahmad, 1998). However, the multiethnic

M. Sinayah · T. Perumal (✉) · K. Govaichelvan · S. Ramalingam · E. Maruthai
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: thanalachime@um.edu.my

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setting poses various challenges toward establishing an inclusive education system in Malaysia. The policies set have to cater to the diverse needs of the various ethnicities, preserving their socioeconomic stability, political footing, language institutions, and cultural and religious identities (Ishak, 1999).

In post-colonial Malaysia, mother tongue education for minority communities was retained through vernacular schools as a concession to maintain social harmony (Canagarajah, 2005). Therefore, vernacular schools are perceived to contribute to creating values, norms, and beliefs among Malaysians (Sualman et al., 2019), along with the freedom to have religious bodies and political organizations. Tamil vernacular schools are envisioned to be an important component in the Indian minority rights as stated in Article 152 of the Constitution (Loo, 2009). It is an avenue for the Tamil-speaking community to establish and institutionalize their language and cultural identity because vernacular educational entities provide access to education and career opportunities, especially for minority communities to upgrade their livelihoods (Bakar, 2014).

Many Tamil schools were established prior to Malaysian independence by either non-political or religious movements (Rajantheran et al., 2012). Currently, there are 527 Tamil primary schools nationwide recognized and regulated by the Ministry of Education. Rajantheran et al. (2012) state that the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) played a vital role in upholding the recognition of Tamil schools in Malaysia. MIC is also regarded as the guardian of Tamil schools as it has contributed much to obtain funds and land for Tamil schools and is directly involved in issues involving Tamil schools, besides carrying out additional programs to improve students' performance (Venothan, 2008). This explains the role of ethnic-based political parties in sustaining vernacular education in Malaysia. Nevertheless, investigating the role of ethnic-based parties in supporting minority community would further highlight areas for improvement. Thus, this study analyzes the talk of two prominent Indian Malaysian politicians during a television interview on the 2021 budget allocation for Tamil schools.

5.2 Tamil Education Budget

Since 1946, the Indians have had their own communal political party, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) (Sandhu, 2006). Hence, Indian Malaysians were predominantly represented by the MIC. MIC functioned as an agency to channel their concerns and with whom the government could consult before making decisions on issues involving the Indian community. Furthermore, MIC's Education wing, a separate division designated to manage education issues among Indians, is currently led by Kamalanathan, who also contributes toward upgrading the access for quality education among Indians, either via Tamil schools or obtaining monetary support. Apart from that, Kamalanathan was also appointed as Deputy Minister II and as the MIC representative in the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2014 until 2018, looking after Tamil school affairs.

Table 5.1 Budget allocation for the Tamil schools from 1990 to 2010

Malaysia plan	Year	Allocation (RM)	Percentage (%)
Sixth	1990–1995	27,042,000	2.40
Seventh	1996–2000	10,902,000	0.41
Eighth	2001–2005	13,800,000	0.26
Ninth	2006–2010	56,100,000	1.16

Source Arumugam (2008)

However, the narrative on ethnic-based politics changed when Pakatan Harapan (PH), a multiparty coalition without explicit ethnic-based stance, took over the federal government in 2018 (Dettmann, 2018). PH was made up of Amanah, Bersatu, DAP, and PKR. Although DAP was perceived to be a Chinese dominated party (Samuel et al., 2014) and Amanah an Islamist party (Jan, 2018), it was widely accepted that the PH government was built on a multiethnic platform, in contrast to Barisan Nasional (BN) (Reddy & Selvanathan, 2020).

However, after PH took over the government, there was no Indian representation in the MOE. Recognizing this fact, a special committee was set up by deputy minister Teo Nie Ching to manage the issues of Tamil schools, especially in terms of construction, upgrading, school relocation and maintenance. This committee was called the Advisory Committee on Education for the Indian Community (*Jawatankuasa Penasihat Pendidikan Masyarakat India*).

Tamil schools have been receiving funds from the former the BN government since the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1990–1995) (Table 5.1), where the percentage reflects the proportion from the total funds allocated for primary education. As seen in Table 5.1, there is a decline in percentage of allocation from Sixth to Eighth Malaysia Plan. It was in the Ninth Malaysia Plan where the allocation for the Tamil schools rose to RM56.1 million or 1.16% of the development allocation for primary education (Arumugam, 2008).

Since 2012, during Dato Seri Najib Tun Razak's tenure as Prime Minister, Tamil schools received an increased allocation. Under the "Tamil Schools Action Plan" (*Pelan Tindakan Sekolah Tamil*), a special project plan (*Projek Rancangan Khas*) was initiated. Under this project, the government approved RM250 million to be used for five years continuously for upgrading and maintenance purposes. After that, there was no special plan or provision for Tamil schools in terms of funding.

Despite being clearly marked under the 11th Malaysian Plan, the change in government led to the suspension of Malaysian Indian Blueprint (MIB), which outlined financial provisions specifically for Indians and Indian-related government entities, including Tamil schools. In 2018, the PH government allocated RM550 million as a Special Fund for school upgrading and maintenance, and the budget was RM50 million for Tamil schools, which was 9.09% of the total allocation. In 2019, the total allocation for all types of schools was RM652 million, and 7.69% (RM50 million) of the allocation was channeled to Tamil schools. The government

awarded a fixed amount of RM50 million annually for five years despite the annual budget for the education sector increasing each year.

From March 2020, the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government was formed after the PH government could not be sustained. During the PH government, four Indian Malaysians were given full ministerial positions, namely M. Kulasegaran (DAP), Gobind Singh (DAP), P. Waythamoorthi (Senator), and Xavier Jayakumar (PKR). When PN took over, there was an imbalanced ethnic representation in the cabinet, as Saravanan from MIC was the only Indian, assigned as Minister of Human Resources Development. This lack of representation hindered PN from gaining the public's trust in achieving multiethnic harmony.

Based on the 2021 budget announcement by PN, the Ministry of Education received the largest allocation amounting to RM50.4 billion out of RM322 billion ringgit. Notably, the annual Tamil school maintenance funds were downsized from RM50 million (2020) to RM29.98 million (2021). Furthermore, the amount of allocation using special formulas for all types of schools as mentioned by Senior Minister Radzi Jidin during a presentation on Budget 2021 (November 24, 2020), was insufficient for Tamil schools. According to a feasibility study conducted by Subramanian (2020), the total allocation required for improvement and management of Tamil schools was RM55.5 million. Tamil school management lacked an estimated budget of RM25.7 million. Considering the potential financial constraints and its implications on Tamil school students (Kenayathulla et al., 2018), this reduced fund allocation in Budget 2021 caused dissatisfaction among the Indian community.

These budget contractions were deemed to pose numerous financial constraints for Tamil schools. Therefore, minority leaders representing the community, who shouldered the responsibility for channeling the growing discontent among Indians, raised concerns and initiated discourses on this matter in various media, including newspapers, social media, and television interviews. As such, it is imperative to observe how Malaysian Indian political leaders prioritize minority rights while preserving their own or parties' political interests. Meanwhile, political parties and politicians are also required to be mindful and considerate in releasing statements, as they are expected to promote tolerance and communal harmony. Their communication will help minority communities understand the government's political priorities better.

Limited studies have been carried out involving political discourse among Indian Malaysians. This chapter aims to analyze the legitimizing and delegitimizing strategies used by two prominent Indian politicians during a television interview. As both represent parties holding opposite ideologies, it highlights the commonalities shared between Indian politicians in advocating minority rights and addressing challenges faced by them.

5.3 Methodology

Data for this study are taken from an interview titled "Why was the budget allocation for Tamil schools downsized?" in "*Vizhuthugal-Samugathin Kural*," a Malaysian

Tamil talk show telecast on Astro Vaanavil on December 2, 2020 (9–10 pm). Vizhuthugal is the only talk show that has been telecasted live for the past 13 years by Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad (ASTRO), which speaks of its potential in influencing the masses (M. Nirmala Devi, personal communication April 7, 2021). Notably, this talk show was the only one that highlighted the budget issue.

The invited guests were Kamalanathan, former deputy minister of education, currently representing MIC's Education Wing and Saneeswaran Nethaji Rayer, Jelutong Member of Parliament, representing DAP. Rayer was invited because he was publicly known to be vocal in parliamentary sittings (Annuar, 2020), hence capable of criticizing and arguing against Kamalanathan's statements (M. Nirmala Devi, personal communication April 7, 2021). The interview lasted an hour, but the speakers were only given 35 min to speak, as the remaining time was used for the hosts to interact with the guests, commercial breaks, and a video clip. However, upon transliterating in Tamil, it is found that only 25 min were used to discuss the issue of Tamil schools budget allocation. The selected interview excerpts were Romanized, translated to English, and then screened for micro-level discursive strategies (van Leeuwen, 2007). Keeping ethical considerations in mind, a written permission to use data from their talk show was obtained from Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad (ASTRO), which owns the copyright. A personal communication also was conducted with Nirmala Devi Munisamy, the producer of the talk show on April 7, 2021 to get more information about the show and the reasons behind selecting the interviewees.

Politicians are known to use rhetoric to influence the emotions and perceptions of the public to achieve their political goals (Chavez et al., 2019). Notably, discursive legitimation strategies contribute to introducing changes in an organization (Hyndman et al., 2018). This chapter analyzed the interview by applying the framework outlined by van Leeuwen (2008) to observe the micro-level discursive legitimation strategies, as was also done by Rajandran (Chap. 3), Yoong (Chap. 10), and Lee (Chap. 12).

In van Leeuwen's framework (2008), there are four legitimation categories: (1) authorization, (2) rationalization, (3) moral evaluation, and (4) mythopoesis. Authorization is a legitimation strategy utilizing the reference to one's authoritative role in an organization or association with authority. Based on van Leeuwen's framework, authorization can be categorized into six subtypes: personal, expert, role model, impersonal, tradition, and conformity. Rationalization can be classified into two types: instrumental rationalization and theoretical rationalization. Rationalization generally explains "*why such social practices exist*" and "*why they take the form they do.*" Meanwhile, moral evaluation is legitimation based on moral values. Finally, legitimation achieved through storytelling is known as mythopoesis, where the speaker utilizes moral tales or cautionary tales to narrate the consequences of actions.

5.4 Analysis and Discussion

This section explains the discursive strategies found in the statements by Rayer and Kamalanathan to legitimize their political stance while (de)legitimizing the 2021 budget allocation for Tamil schools by PN. The significant (de)legitimation strategies used by the politicians were authorization, rationalization, and moral evaluation. The analysis revealed that both politicians use authorization and rationalization more frequently to delegitimize the budget allocation and opposition's political contribution in preserving minority rights. Meanwhile, moral evaluation is used to reiterate the narrative of ethnic-based policies in Malaysia.

Based on Kamalanathan's argument, he mostly uses the interview to reinforce his contributions during his tenure. He delegitimizes the 2021 budget by blaming the governance of PH for the past 22 months since 2018. He claims that the lack of consideration from PH leaders for the Indian community resulted in the budget reduction. He tried to establish that having a separate ethnic-based entity, like MIC, could resolve Indian issues, compared to PH's model. In contrast, Rayer repeatedly condemns the inadequate responses and lack of evidence received in Parliament during the question-and-answer session. The following excerpts from the interview illustrate how these politicians use discursive strategies to validate their points and positions.

5.5 Authorization

Rayer and Kamalanathan express their discontent against the reduction of funds for Tamil schools. Both politicians use authorization to re-establish their role and relevance in the decision-making process, in their party's interest. Below, (de)legitimation through authorization can be found in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1: Kamalanathan (minute 04:07)

Source text: 29.98 milliyaṉ vantu makiḻccik kudukkiṟa oru ceyti eṉṟāl, kēṭṭīrkaḷ eṉṟāl niccayamāka makiḻcci illāta oru ceytitāṉ. ēṉeṉṟāl, nāṉ kalvi amaicciṉ tuṇai amaiccarāka irukka, irunta kālakaṭṭattil, 50 milliyaṉ kudutta māṉiyam kūda pattātu eṉṟu pala pōrāṭṭaṅkaḷ, pala tiṭṭaṅkaḷ pōṭṭu atikamāṉa māṉiyam tāṉ nām eduttuk koduttōmoḻiya, inta, inta muṟai 29.98 milliyaṉ māṇiyam niccayamāka tamiḻppaḷḷik kūdattukku itu pattātutāṉ eṉṟu nāṉ kūṟa virumpukiṉṟēṉ

Translation: *Definitely, cutting down the budget to 29.98 million is upsetting. Reason being, during my tenure, as the deputy minister at the Ministry of Education, despite being given 50 million, we strived, encountered multiple challenges and devised strategies in acquiring more funds for Tamil schools.*

Thus, this 29.98 million ringgit fund will definitely not be enough for Tamil schools

Based on Excerpt 1, Kamalanathan disagrees with the budget formulation and reduction in the fund allocated by PN. He also registers that Tamil schools received a RM50 million budget during his tenure. In this excerpt, authorization was used to delegitimize the current budget as Kamalanathan refers to his previous political role in obtaining funds for Tamil schools, and this is a form of personal authorization (van Leeuwen, 2008). Using "niccayamāka" (definitely) twice indicates his certainty against the government decision, which delegitimizes the budget. Nevertheless, using the exclusive "nām" (we), he informs his and the party's (MIC) contributions in collecting funds for Tamil schools during his tenure. However, "pala pōrāṭṭaṅkaḷ, pala tiṭṭaṅkaḷ pōṭṭu" (encountered multiple challenges and devised strategies) indicate that the budget allocation was never smooth. Meanwhile, via stating his contribution in acquiring more funds beyond what was allocated, he delegitimizes the role of PH leaders in prioritizing Tamil school welfare, persuading the public with his superior performance. This illustrates Kamalanathan's intention to attack the opposition party instead of delegitimizing the 2021 budget drafted by PN.

Excerpt 2: Rayer (minute 9:39)

Source text: nāṉ nādāḷumaṉṟattula eṉṉa kēḷvi kēṭṭaṉā, "inta aracāṅkattukku vantu ēṉ inta kuṟaivāṉa māṉiyam otukkīdu ceytirukkāṅkā?" appadiṉu kēḷvi kēṭkum pōtu, takka patil kodukka māṭṭiṅkiṟāṅka, kodukkavum mudiyala, mēṟkoṇdu intiyarkaḷ cārpāka ippa uḷḷa aracāṅkattil iraṇdu piratinitikaḷ; atāvatu Edmund Santhana, Segamat nādāḷumaṉṟa uṟuppiṉarum dattō caravaṇaṉ tāppā uṟuppiṉarum avaṅkakiṭṭa inta vicayattai kalantu pēcuṉāṅkaḷā? avaṅkaḷudaiya, avaṅkaḷudaiya feedback etāvatu eduttāṅkaḷā? appadiṉu kēṭkumpōtu takka patil koṭukka mudiyala koṭukka mudiyāta oru cūḻnilaimaiyila irukkāru namma amaiccaru

Translation: *When I raised this issue in Parliament, to know the reason behind the insufficient budget allocation, they didn't and couldn't give a proper answer. In addition, representing the Indians in the current government, are Edmund Santhara, MP Segamat and Dato' Saravanan, MP Tapah, were they consulted for the budget allocation? When I raised this question, the minister was unable to answer*

In Excerpt 2, Rayer strongly claims that the finance minister could not answer his questions, indicating that the budget needs to be scrutinized, as he believes that he deserves to know the reason behind the budget formulation. Hence, obligation modality is expressed here via the phrase "patil koṭukka mudiyala" (unable to

answer), as Rayer indicates that the minister should be able to justify the budget allocation and his failure to do so may delegitimize the budget. Rayer has repeatedly mentioned his action of questioning the budget formulation and not receiving any adequate answer. This was done to convince the audience that his questions received inadequate responses from the finance minister, Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

Next, he also assigns responsibility to Member of Parliment for Segamat, Edmund Santhara, and Minister of Human Resources, Dato' Saravanan, to act on behalf of the community. Rayer indirectly gives importance to ethnic-based opinions when formulating budget for ethnic-based entities, which also falls under obligation modality through "avaṅkaḷudaiya feedback etāvatu eduttāṅkaḷā?" (were they consulted), as he emphasizes that Indian representatives should have been consulted. While Kamalanathan compared his past political experience to portray himself superior to PH politicians, Rayer highlights the lack of priority given to Indian representatives, despite the ethnic-based setting of the PN government.

Excerpt 3: Kamalanathan (minute 10:59)

Source text: ippa intak kālakaṭṭattil enna nadantukoṇdirukkiṉṟatu eṉṟāl, ma.i.kā-viṉ tēciyat talaivar tāṉśrī cā. Vikṉēsvaraṉ avarkaḷum cari, ma.i.kā-viṉ tēciyat tuṇait talaivar, tāppā nādāḷumaṉṟa uṟuppiṉar, maṇita vaḷa amaiccar avarkaḷ, ivarkaḷ iraṇdu pērum kūda amaiccarkaḷidam; kalvi amaiccum cari, niti amaiccidam neridayākap pēccu vārttai nadatti, tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdattukku todarntu 50 milliyaṉ riṅkiṭ māṉiyam vaḻaṅka vēṇdum eṉṟa oru nōkkattil irukkiṉṟārkaḷ. atu maṭṭumillāmal iraṇdu nāṭkaḷukku muṉṟ(p)u, viyāḻakkiḻamai aṉṟu, nāṉ nēridaiyāka kalvi amaicciṉ mūtta KSU-vaic cantittu inta muppatu, 29.98 milliyaṉ riṅkiṭ māṉiyam tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdattukkup pattātu, tayavu ceytu inta māṉiyattai nīṅkaḷ maṟuparicīlaṇai ceyya vēṇdum eṉṟu kūṟi, atukku vēṇdiya nadavaṭikkai eduttukkoḷkiṉṟōm

Translation: *Now, what's going on is that, both MIC's National President, Tan Sri S. Vigneswaran, and MIC's Vice President, MP Tapah, the human resource minister, are engaging talks with the education minister and finance minister with an intention to request 50 million ringgit as a continuous annual budget allocation for Tamil schools. Also, two days ago, I personally spoke to the MOE's Secretary General, and humbly requested him to reconsider this insufficient fund allocation, and we are taking necessary steps to achieve that*

In Excerpt 3, Kamalanathan introduces the precise political position of every member he mentions. This can be considered as authorization to influence the public regarding MIC's closer association with authority, implying a greater relevance in the decision-making process. He also uses the phrase "nāṉ nēridaiyāka" (I personally) to emphasize his personal effort and contribution to resolve this matter, to strengthen his reputation. This is because the use of "nāṉ" (I) potentially reflects the reliability, credibility, and moral philosophy (Proctor et al., 2011) of the speaker. However, in

contrast, he reveals that he had to "humbly request" the government to reconsider the fund allocation, which indicates that the opinions of minority representatives were not counted prior to finalizing decisions at ministries. This statement is in line with what Rayer assumed in Excerpt 2, namely the minister's failure to gather feedback from Indian representatives.

Excerpt 4: Kamalanathan (minute 04:46)

Source text:kalvi amaiccar vantu pōṉa vāram oru putiya formula oṉṟu aṟimukappaṭuttiṉār. anta formula-vai nāṉ vantu ēṟṟukkoḷṟatāka illai. ēṉeṉṟāl, anta formula enta vakaiyil ēṭukkiṟatuṉu eṉakkut teriyavillai. āṉā, inta 50 milliyaṉ riṅkiṭ māṉiyam, atāvatu penyelenggaraan sekolah-sekolah Tamil eṉṟu ovvoru āṇdum vaḻaṅkappaṭṭatu. atu iraṇdu, oru āṇdō iraṇdu āṇdō muṉpu kidaiyātu. ovvoru āṇdum nāṉ kalvi amaiccarāka irunta kālakaṭṭattil 2013-ām āṇdiliruntu 2017 āṇdu varai 50 milliyaṉ riṅkiṭ maṭṭumallāmal, utāraṇattiṟku irupatti, 2017-ām āṇdu 50 milliyaṉ riṅkiṭ penyelenggaraan-kkum 10 milliyaṉ riṅkiṭ atikam koduttu pālarpaḷḷi kaṭṭuvataṟku eṉakku 50 pālar paḷḷi kaṭṭuvataṟkum nāṅkaḷ antak kālakaṭṭattil, najīp tuṉ racāk talaimaittuva kālakaṭṭattil itu vaḻaṅkappaṭṭatu

Translation: The *education minister has introduced a new formula, however, I refused to accept it, because it does not make sense to me. Noteworthy, Tamil schools have been receiving 50 million ringgit for maintenance each year, not just in the past two years. During my tenure from 2013 to 2017 as the deputy education minister, funds were not limited to 50 million each year, specifically, in 2017, apart from the 50 million ringgit for maintenance, an additional 10 million ringgit was given to set up 50 pre-schools. This was given during the tenure of Najib Tun Razak*

Kamalanathan tends to highlight his previous experience in the Ministry of Education in every question he answers. Unlike previous excerpts, Excerpt 4 portrays authority of tradition to an extent, as Kamalanathan mentions a consistent practice of getting RM50 million over a specified period, from 2013 to 2017, during his tenure. Kamalanathan chooses to explain the tradition of receiving RM50 million to delegitimize the fund reduction in the budget by indicating the fund allocation as an obligatory practice by the BN government. Mentioning the fact that the consistent budget allocation was drafted during the former Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak's tenure shows the association of the practices with the BN government, thus legitimizing the ethnic-based government. Furthermore, he also informs the public of his successful attempt in getting an additional RM10 million allocation to build Tamil pre-school facilities. This sets a stronger example in advocating minority education rights.

Generally, politicians try to maintain their power by conveying their ideological position. Political discourse has always been considered a planned discourse, which

involves an advisory team to review the words to be uttered by politicians. This is known as intentionality, related to the act of political legitimization (Capone, 2010; Reyes, 2011). As Kamalanthan repeatedly mentions his political contributions throughout the interview, his motive to use this is seen as an opportunity to highlight his political relevance. According to Sadeghi et al. (2014) personal authorization is the most often used approach in political discourse. In line with their opinion, the results of this study show that both Kamalanathan and Rayer utilized personal authorization to delegitimize the 2021 budget and by extension, the PN government.

5.6 Rationalization

Both politicians rationalize their arguments at multiple instances, using their past and present political experiences. Reyes (2011), based on Lakoff (1991), describes that part of legitimization involves a story where there is a villain, a victim and a hero. Thus, through rationalization, it can be observed how both politicians are competing to be the hero who solved the Tamil school budget issue, by listing their contributions. Selected excerpts below are discussed to highlight the differences between the two politicians.

Excerpt 5: Kamalanathan (minute 5:44)

Source text:onṟu vantu amaiccar colkiṟār "atu vantu oru putu formula". atu eṉakku ēṟṟukkoḷḷa muṭiyātu. ēṉeṉṟāl anta formula vantu eppaṭi uruvākkuṉāṅkaṉu yārukkum teriyātu…iraṇṭāvatu kāraṇam eṉṉaveṉṟāl, oru aracāṅkam nitiyamaiccu vantu ovvoru amaiccukkum ovvoru āṇdukkum māṉiyaṅkaḷ valaṅkavum. utāraṇattiṟku nitiyamaiccu kalvi amaiccukku 100 milliyaṉ kuduttārkaḷ eṉṟāl, utāraṇattiṟku 2018-ām āṇdu 100 milliyaṉ kuduttāl 80 milliyaṉ payaṉpaduttiṉārkaḷ eṉṟāl, 2019-ām āṇṭu kuṭukkum pōtu 100 milliyaṉ kuṭukka māṭṭāṅka 80 milliyaṉ tāṉ kuṭuppāṅka. So, anta mātiri antanta kāla kaṭṭattiṟku ēṟṟa anta amaiccu evḷō payaṉpaṭutturāṅkaḷō, atukku takunta māritāṉ adutta āṇdu māṉiyam valaṅkappadum itu tāṉ iyalbu. tanta pōtu tāṉ payaṉpaduttiṉārkaḷā oru cantēkamāka irukku

Translation:*Firstly, it's a new formulation, which no one is aware of, and with which I totally disagree…The second reason is the Ministry of Finance allocates a budget for each ministry every year. For example, if the Ministry of Finance allocates 100 million to MOE in 2018, and when MOE only uses up to 80 million, then for budget 2019, the Ministry of Finance will reduce the funds to 80 million, and not 100 million. This shows that the allocation for every year depends on the previous year's utilization. This is the norm and I doubt whether the money allotted previously was utilized fully by them*

Excerpt 6: Rayer (minute 07:00)

Source text: itukkup pōtiya patil inta amaiccar kodukkavillai. ēṉ eṉṟāl inta varudam kodutta aṟikkai, itāṉ inta paṭjeṭ odaiya tākkal ceyta paṭjedōda puḷḷivivaraṅkaḷ. aṉaittu amaiccarukkum kodutta puḷḷivivaraṅkaḷ. inta paṭjeṭ aṟikkaiyile vantu niccayamāka tamiḻppaḷḷikku otukkīdu ceyta māṉiyam vantu puḷḷivivaraṅkaḷākak kuṟippidavillai caṟṟu pōtu dattō pi. Kamalanātaṉ coṉṉār, nampa kēḷvi eḻuppum pōtu nāṉum tōḻar kulacēkaraṉ, tōḻar civakkumār inta, inta, inta vicayattaip patti nādāḷumaṉṟattil kēḷvi kēṭṭa pōtu amaiccar colluṟāru "nāṅka taṉippaṭṭa muṟaiyila oru formula ēṟpadutti ēṟpaduttiyirukkōm. anta formula mūliyamātāṉ kācu koduppom" appaṭiṉu colliyirukāru. irunta pōtilum, anta formula, nāma puḷḷivivaraṅkaḷ kēṭkumpōtu, anta formula avaruṉāla kodukka mudiyala. itu varaikkum anta formula iṉṉum nammakiṭṭa camarppikkavillai. ataṉāla tāṉ ēṉ eṉṟa kēḷvi. anta formula eṉṉa formula? antap puḷḷivivaraṅkaḷ eṉṉa puḷḷivivaraṅkaḷ? anta, anta formula ēṟṟukkoḷḷa mudiyumā illaiyā? mutal muṟaiyāka anta, intap paṭjeṭ namma ēṟṟuk koṇdālum anta kā, 29 milliyaṉ pōy cērumā illaiyā appadiṉuṭṭu oru oru kēḷvi

Translation: *The minister did not provide an acceptable response because this is the booklet given this year (showing a green booklet), containing budget information and statistics. This was given to all ministers, definitely does not contain statistics on Tamil school budgets. As Dato' P. Kamalanathan mentioned, when we raised the question, my fellow members Kulasegaran, Sivakumar, and myself were present in the Parliament when the minister replied by saying that there is a separate formula that they complied with in order to decide on fund allocation. Nevertheless, when we raised questions on the formula, he could not share the formula. To date, no formula or statistics was shown to us. That's a concern, why? What formula and what are those statistics? Is the formula acceptable? Despite us accepting the budget for the first time, will this 29 million reach the schools?*

Throughout Excerpt 5, Kamalanathan rationalizes why the budget was cut. He suggests that budget 2021 was dependent on the monetary management in previous years under PH. Also, his mention of 2018 and 2019 as examples refers to PH's period as the ruling government. Lexical choices, such as "ovvoru āṇdukkum" (every year) and "iyalbu" (norm), are used to explain the government's practices in allocating funds as well as assuring the public of his experience in government. These statements delegitimize PH's ability to acquire funds to sustain minority education rights. This is classified as theoretical rationalization, referring to the natural order of things to legitimize one's statement (van Leeuwen, 2008). Furthermore, by stating his doubt, he attempts to delegitimize the monetary management of the PH government. Although Malaysia was under BN for 60 years, Kamalanathan chose to blame PH's two budget allocations for the flaws in the 2021 budget.

In Excerpt 6, Rayer asserts his stance against the budget formulation by explaining his parliamentary experience, strengthened by mentioning the other Indian representatives from his party, DAP. This is a form of instrumental rationality, referring to the means and outcomes, as Rayer implicitly stressed the means of getting clarification on the budget. As an elected representative, he claims that the Indian opposition MPs have raised questions, thus fulfilling their duty to argue against the budget cut. He also stresses the outcome of his questions, the failure of the minister to provide adequate answers, which strengthens his claims. By questioning the legitimacy of the budget formulation, while simultaneously emphasizing the failure of the PN government in providing evidence and statistics, Rayer delegitimizes the budget formulation. As Kamalanathan did in Excerpt 5, Rayer too raises suspicions on the conduct of fund distribution and its effectiveness.

Excerpt 7: Rayer: (minutes 31:08)

Source text: niyāyamāka, inta patil yārukiṭṭa iruntu varaṇum. ippō uḷḷa education minister, amaiccarkiṭṭa iruntu varaṇum. atāvatu "2018-la kodutta māṉiyattai Pakatan Harapan celavu paṇṇula. 2019-la kodutta māṉiyattai Pakatan Harapan amaiccarkaḷ celavu paṇṇula, ataṉāla tāṉ, inta varucam kuṟaivā koduttirukkōm," appaṭiṉuṭṭu

Translation: *By right, who should we obtain these answers from? The current education minister should be able to say that "PH did not utilize the budget in 2018 and 2019, thus we reduced the budget this year."*

To invalidate Kamalanathan's assumptions in Excerpt 5, Rayer emphasizes the bureaucratic means of obtaining the answer in Excerpt 7. Here, by implying that the most qualified person to issue such statements is the current education minister, Mohd Radzi Md Jidin, Rayer restricts Kamalanathan's credibility to make sensational statements. Kamalanathan is merely representing a minority party's education wing, not representing any ministry in the current PN government. By rebutting Kamalanathan points via means-orientation, Rayer is using instrumental rationalization. For instance, "niyāyamāka" (by right) here implies the correct thing to be done, based on Rayer's political experience. He uses rationalization by highlighting PN's politicians' failure in obeying parliamentary procedures, thus delegitimizing the budget allocation, as also seen in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 8: Kamalanathan (minute 14:22)

Source text: nāṉ iruntа kālakaṭṭattil nāṭṭilirukkum ellā, 524 tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdattukkum nāṉ māṉiyam vaḻaṅkappaṭṭatu. itu ēṉ vaḻaṅkappaṭṭatu enṟāl, adimaṭṭattil kuṟippāka utāraṇattukku colkiṟēṉ. nam kaṭci mā.i.kā.-viṉ kiḷait talaivarkaḷ antanta kālakaṭṭattil vantu, paḷḷikkūdattiṟkāka,

antap paḷḷikkūdap piratinitiyāka vantu eṅkaḷudaṉ pēccuvārttai nadatti, paḷḷikkūda utavi ceytu koṇṭirukkiṉṟōm

Translation: *During my tenure, all 524 schools in the country received funds. This was given because fundamentally all our MIC branch leaders, in a timely manner, on behalf of the schools, approached us to request funds for schools, and we helped*

In Excerpt 8, Kamalanathan also delegitimizes the capability of PH in satisfying minority needs by highlighting what MIC has done for Tamil school budgets. In explaining how committed MIC branch leaders as Tamil school representatives were, he justifies the importance of ethnic-based entities to advocate minority rights, while implicitly delegitimizing PH's model. Kamalanathan emphasizes the outcome of having ethnic-based parties, which has contributed to getting funds for Tamil schools.

Rationalization involves processes or procedures defined by a specific society (Reyes, 2011). Through rationalizing their statements to delegitimize the current budget formulation, both politicians revisit their actions in compliance with the bureaucracy, indicating they have done their best within their capabilities. Hence, statements which explain their step-by-step actions and its outcomes were classified under instrumental rationalization. Meanwhile, speculations were classified as theoretical rationalization.

5.7 Moral Evaluation

Moral evaluation is a strategy to influence the cognitive perspective of the audience by referring to a specific society's value orders (Höög & Björkvall, 2019). The target audience for Kamalanathan and Rayer is Indians, who account 6.9% of the Malaysian population (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2020). From the following excerpts, it is observed that both express similar social values to gain the favor of Indian Malaysians.

Excerpt 9: Rayer (minute: 08:56)

Source text: nām intiyarkaḷ vantu inta nāṭṭiṉ kudimakkaḷ. nampaḷukkup pālar paḷḷikaḷ uṇdu tamiḻppaḷḷikaḷ uṇdu. adippadaiyāka intiyarkaḷ vantu mukkiyamāka intap palar paḷḷikkum tamiḻppaḷḷikkum tāṉ namma mukkiyattuvam kodukkiṟōm. ēṉā nammaḷōṭa camutāyattap porutta aḷavula, tamiḻ kalāccāram, tamiḻ parṟu, tamiḻmoḻiyiṉ parṟu itu ellām vantu tamiḻ school illāviṭṭāl inta tamiḻ parṟu, tamiḻ kalāccāram ellam illāmal pōyirum. ataṉāla, intat tamiḻ mēla oru parṟu illāma oru, oru akkaraiyillāta oru aracāṅkam tāṉ appadiṉuṭṭu makkaḷukku uḷḷa uḷḷa tōṉutu

Translation: *Indians are Malaysian citizens. We have Tamil pre-schools and Tamil schools, and basically, Indians have given importance to both schools. This is because, according to our community, the culture and loyalty to the Tamil language will disappear without the existence of Tamil schools. The government's lackadaisical attitude on these values drives the public to feel that the government lacks care for Indians*

From Excerpt 9, by equating Indians with Malaysians, Rayer emphasizes their access to equal rights. However, by associating the sustainability of Tamil culture and language with the existence of Tamil schools, he portrays the value he shares with those who subscribe to Tamil schools. Thus, he implies that the outcome of the budget reduction can threaten the existence of Tamil schools and consequently language and cultural identities. He delegitimizes the PN government, which largely involves politicians from BN, who pay less importance to the welfare of Indians. Emphasizing the outcome of insufficient fund allocation can be categorized under instrumental rationalization. Rayer evokes community-specific sentiments through his statements, which is only relevant to Indian Malaysians.

Excerpt 10: Kamalanathan (minute 52:35)

Source text: tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdam vantu moḻi maṭṭum campantam oru viṣayam alla. kalai, kalāccāram, pārampariyam, nam camutāyamē orrumaiyāka irukkiṟa oru taḷam tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdam. inta tamiḻppaḷḷikkūda muṉṉērrattukkāka aṉaittu intiyarkaḷum orrumaiyāka irukka vēṇṭum. ciṟanta vēlai ceytāl pārāṭṭa vēṇṭum. ciṟanta vēlai ceytāl pārāṭṭa vēṇṭum. ciṟanta vēlai ceytāl mutukil kuttakkūdātu, enṟutāṉ nāṉ kūṟa virumpukiṟēṉ. orrumaiyāka ceyalpaṭṭōm enṟāl, enṉa 523 paḷḷikkūdam, 530, 540 tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdam kaṭṭalām orrumaiyāka irukka vēṇdum camutāyam orrumaiyāka iruntāltāṉ tamiḻppaḷḷikkūdam munnērram peṟa vēṇdum enṟu niṉaikkiṟēṉ

Translation: *Tamil schools are not only language institutions, but also a place where cultural values and heritage are manifested. All Indians should be united for the development of Tamil schools. If we have done a commendable job, please praise, do not backstab. If we stand united, not only 530 schools, we can target for 540 Tamil schools in the future*

Kamalanathan expresses ethnic-based sentiments by highlighting the role of Tamil schools in language and cultural maintenance. He calls for Indians to be united, implicitly indicating that MIC is a symbol of Indian unity, expecting Indians to support MIC. Using "mutukil kuttakkūdātu" (backstab) may trigger guilt among those who choose otherwise, as a way to demand loyalty. Moreover, knowing the impact of quantitative evidence, Kamalanathan sows hope that supporting his party would lead to an increase in the number of Tamil schools nationwide.

Excerpt 11: Rayer (minute 50.51)

Source text: ennaip porutta varaiyila, araciyal rītiyila namma karuttu vērupādu iruntāl kūda, eṅkaḷ takappaṉāru colluvāru, "iṉamtāṉ iṉattaik kākkum. iṉamtāṉ iṉattaik kākkum." nām ellāmē tamiḻarkaḷ. nām oṉṟāka ceyalla iṟaṅki, oṉṟāka ceyalpaṭṭu, inta nādāḷumaṉṟattil niccayamāka oṉṟāka kural koduttu, inta kuṟainta māṉiyattai maṟupadiyum niṟaivu ceyya vēṇdum eṉṟu ennudaiya tāḻmaiyāṉa oru karuttu…We should not discriminate Tamils appadiṉuṭṭu namma adippadaiyāka we have a basic understanding. nammaḷudaiya purintuṇarvu ennaṉā, tamiḻarkaḷa, tamiḻppaḷḷiya poruttavaraiyil taṉippaṭṭa muṟaiyila otukka avaṅka otukkīdu ceyyak kūṭātu. Discriminate paṇṇak kūdātu, so, eṉṉuṭaiya karuttu ennāṉā, niccayamāka inta viṣayattiṟku namma kural koduppōm

Translation: *My opinion is, despite our differences in political ideologies, we should always stand united. My father used to say, "One is always protected by his own kind." We are Tamils. We must work along together under one voice to obtain sufficient funds, is my humble request…We should not discriminate, is our basic understanding, and when it comes to Tamils and Tamil schools, they should not be disregarded or discriminated. So, my opinion is for us to work together speak up collectively on this matter*

In Excerpt 11, Rayer expresses that he shares the common intergenerational sentiments that prevail among the community by mentioning "eṅkaḷ takappaṉāru colluvāru" (my father used to say). Rayer intends to unite Indians, while sounding neutral regardless of political differences, to advocate for sufficient funds for Tamil schools. By making the budget reduction seem like a form of discrimination, he reiterates his role in being the voice of the community. As DAP lacks a separate wing for Indians, Rayer establishes his intention to safeguard minority rights through his personal capacity, by quoting it as his personal view. By expressing that only Indians will stand for Indians; he encourages the audience to buy into the ideology of ethnic-based politics, probably due to the Malaysian political scenario.

Regarding the value-laden arguments for moral legitimation, both politicians use ethnic-based sentiments. They tend to narrate the budget reduction as a result of the lack of consideration for Indian Malaysians. This financial constraint can potentially challenge the existence of Indians in Malaysia, as it can threaten their language and culture. Though Rayer sounded more neutral by highlighting equal rights, if a spectrum were to be drawn, both were disagreeing with the budget formulation, while delegitimizing each other's role as politicians.

Politicians safeguard their power by explaining or justifying their acts in a specific way to gain people's support (Reyes, 2011). Here, both Rayer and Kamalanathan attempt to highlight their Indianness to make them seem relevant to the Indian community. This is mainly due to the existing political setting in Malaysia, which promotes ethnic-based representation when addressing community issues.

5.8 Conclusion

As the budget cut caused dissatisfaction among the Indian community, both Kamalanathan and Rayer disagreed with the allocation and the new formulation used. They expressed their objections by using discursive strategies. Comparatively, Kamalathan's arguments were more systematic than Rayer when using authorization. Kamalanathan's experience in MIC and as an MP has helped him to delegitimize the 2021 budget and PH. Meanwhile, he promoted the MIC as the ruling party for a long period of time and listed the party's contributions. Unlike Kamalanathan, Rayer's lack of experience in managing Tamil schools resulted in difficulties on his part when legitimizing his arguments. Nevertheless, his experience as an opposition MP has trained him to critically question points presented by Kamalanathan.

Based on the excerpts classified under rationalization, Rayer's statements seemed to be firmer than Kamalanathan. This is because Rayer used instrumental rationalization which includes asking for evidence, mentioning the proper parliamentary procedures, and describing the outcome of his questions. In contrast, Kamalanathan's arguments for rationalization were more theoretical, as they were arresting but lacked evidence. Despite coming from opposing political parties, both of them held similar views on Tamil schools, regarding them as important institutions for the Indian community. Both argued that the sustainability of Indian culture and loyalty to the Tamil language are highly reliant on the existence of Tamil schools in Malaysia. Through this budget issue, both attempted to portray their capabilities and superiority in advocating minority rights. Both politicians claimed that the educational needs of Indian Malaysians were not fulfilled, which showed that they deserve equal access to funds. Nevertheless, they firmly believed that these can only be manifested through firstly building communal spirit among Indians.

As Malaysian political parties operate in several languages to accommodate their multilingual audience, studying the political discourse of Indian Malaysian politicians enriches the understanding of issues facing different ethnicities. Comprehending their discourse regarding social issues helps minority communities make wise decisions and helps political parties evaluate their representatives. As this study examines the discourse of two politicians on a Tamil talk show, future studies could also focus on other political discourses in public speeches, election campaigns, or a party's Annual General Meeting, to understand the discursive representation of issues faced by minorities in Malaysia.

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Malarvizhi Sinayah is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. She received her Ph.D. in Discourse Analysis from University Putra Malaysia. Her main fields of interest are Discourse Analysis, Teaching and Learning Tamil, and Sociolinguistics. She is currently working on a project to observe the language and cultural environment that motivate Orang Asli students in Peninsular Malaysia to continue their education. She can be contacted at malarvizhisinayah@um.edu.my.

Thanalachime Perumal is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. She received her Ph.D. in Discourse Analysis from University Putra Malaysia. Her main fields of interest are Discourse Analysis, Teaching and Learning Tamil, and Sociolinguistics. She is currently working on two projects to observe the language and cultural environment that motivate Orang Asli students in Peninsular Malaysia to continue their education. She can be contacted at thanalachime@um.edu.my.

Kumanan Govaichelvan is an aspiring multidisciplinary scholar, pursuing a Master of Data Science at the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Malaya. His academic achievements and research potential have helped him gain a fully funded scholarship from the Malaysian Public Service Department. His research currently involves natural language processing, sentiment analysis, and emotion mining in low-resource language. His keenness in applying linguistic understanding to address social issues motivated him to expand his research interest into crisis communication, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. He can be contacted at selvakumanan@yahoo.com.

Selvajothi Ramalingam is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. His main fields of interest are Sociolinguistics, mother tongue education, indigenous studies, and language use in job interviews. He is a writer of secondary level Tamil textbooks for the Malaysian Ministry of Education. He is also an external examiner for Tamil language curriculum review at the Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education. He is an advisor for a government-funded project "Parents Assuring Students Success" organized by the Tamil Foundation of Malaysia. He can be contacted at selvajothi@um.edu.my.

Elanttamil Maruthai is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. His main fields of interest are Corpus Linguistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Tamil language teaching. He is the President of International Forum for Information Technology Tamil (INFITT). He can be contacted at elanttamil@um.edu.my.

Chapter 6
Seeking Legitimation in Political Uncertainties: Reforming the Media

Kwan Yee Kow and Ying Hooi Khoo

Abstract The media in Malaysia have long been controlled by censorship laws, and media bias has long been identified as a key hindrance to progressive discussion in the public sphere, as the government traditionally controls the media. The former Pakatan Harapan (PH) government made media reform promises in their election manifesto, which covered the repeal of laws deemed oppressive and a threat to free speech, and importantly, the support for self-regulation mechanisms through a media council. The Malaysian Media Council (MMC) was formed in December 2019 with 17 pro-tem committee members. Yet, the future of media reform is uncertain because systemic barriers remain. Besides the continued existence of censorship laws, some media organisations retain patronage by political parties and different sectors of society have distinct expectations of policy outcomes. Moreover, the fate of media reform is unclear after the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government came to power in late February 2020. This chapter employs a content analysis of press releases and news articles, supplemented by participant observation, to explore the legitimation of media reform. It first provides an overview of progress on media reform, and then analyses the challenges and barriers faced by members of the MMC and activists who fight for media reform. This chapter suggests that Malaysia is expected to continue to witness policies that limit media freedom rather than those that pursue media reform.

Keywords Pakatan Harapan · Perikatan Nasional · Malaysian Media Council · Media freedom · Media reform

K. Y. Kow
School of Communication and Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, Shah Alam, Malaysia

Y. H. Khoo (✉)
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: yinghooi@um.edu.my

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6.1 Introduction

Since the British colonial period, media freedom has been restricted and it persists even after Malaysia achieved independence in 1957. Since then, Malaysia has been known as an electoral authoritarian regime with semi-competitive elections. A number of scholars (Case, 1993; Mandal, 2004; Moten, 2009) recognised that the Malaysian political system is closely aligned with ethnicity, due to the Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. The institutional hindrances of electoral authoritarianism (Ufen, 2012) were prevalent to prevent the discourse on social issues to be translated into party political and parliamentary conflict. Such racialisation (Mandal, 2004) is said to have sustained Barisan Nasional's (BN) hegemony for decades and helped to sustain it against the opposition's challenges (Wong, 2018).

With the mixed nature of democracy and authoritarian system, media bias has long been identified as a key hindrance to progressive discussion in the public sphere, as the government traditionally controls the media. One of the explanations of the source of media bias is the legal framework that oversees the mass media in Malaysia. The Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA) for instance, prohibits the publication of any information that the government deems as confidential or sensitive unless explicitly authorised. The Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA) is another legal framework that selectively constrains media reporting critical of the government. At the same time, the ownership structure of Malaysia's traditional mass media[1] continues to be uneven because most of the major newspapers are either owned by Barisan Nasioanl (BN) or closely linked to key BN figures, which indirectly put these media organisations under the control of BN. As a consequence of the legal environment and ownership structure, media freedom was compromised and biased in favour of BN (Ostwald, 2017).

However, the 14th general elections held in May 2018 changed the media landscape in Malaysia. The election marked Malaysia's unprecedented political change after 61 years under BN. The country saw a new government formed by Pakatan Harapan (PH), a coalition that used to be the main opposition bloc before the election. The PH government was however short-lived. After a week-long political impasse in February 2020, the PH government collapsed and Muhyiddin Yassin was appointed as the 8th Prime Minister of a new coalition named Perikatan Nasional (PN). PN consists of Malaysian United Indigenous Party (Bersatu), United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Islamist Party (PAS), and People's Justice Party (PKR) faction, supported by Gabungan Bersatu Sabah (GBS) and Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS).

In their GE14 election manifesto, PH made media reform promises, ranging from the repeal of laws deemed oppressive and a threat to free speech, to the support of self-regulation mechanisms for local journalists by a media council, an idea that was mooted almost 40 years ago (Bernama, 2019). The Malaysian Media Council (MMC) was formed during the PH government's term with a total of 17 pro-tem committee members to bring forward media reforms including a bill to recommend that all members of the media industry be entitled to be members of the council.

Through the method of content analysis, supplemented by the first author's participant observation during a national consultation session[2] on the formation of the MMC in March 2019, this chapter explores media reform progress and the challenges and barriers that were faced by the MMC and the media reformists in seeking legitimation of their aspiration within the context of administrative change. Various sources were used for content analysis such as reports, formal decisions, public statements, press releases and news articles dated until July 2020.

6.2 Media Freedom in Malaysia

There are three reasons why media reforms are necessary in Malaysia. First, media in Malaysia have long been controlled by censorship laws. Second, political and economic developments have resulted in controversial political ownership in the media landscape. Third, there are different views on the role of the media and the value of the press in Malaysian society. These three reasons will be elaborated through a historical overview and the development of media freedom in Malaysia.

6.2.1 British Colonial Rule: The Beginning of Media Control

Media regulation started in the 1800s when the Governor of Penang issued a licence to the first English newspaper called *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* (*PWIG*), which was owned by an entrepreneur named A. B. Bone who wanted to improve his fortune by publishing a commercial newspaper targeting colonialists. Back then, there was no law governing newspapers. Bone later requested that each issue of the *PWIG* be censored by the British government before publication and this is considered the beginning of the links between the state and the press in Malaysia (Dhari, 1992; Mohd Safar, 1996). The press control that started with *PWIG* was not formalised until 1874 when Britain extended its political and administrative control beyond the Straits Settlements (Mustafa, 2003).

The colonial government amplified press control as there had been increased publication of Malay, Chinese and Tamil newspapers in Malaya. The emergence of Malay newspapers for instance was linked to an Islamic reformist movement amongst the Malays that had heralded a growing control of the press during the colonial period. Upon returning to Malaya after World War II, the British colonial government had to face advancing Malay nationalism and insurrection led by the Communist Party of Malaya (Mustafa, 2003). This led to the introduction of a variety of laws to suppress the spread of communism (Pak, 2014), such as the Sedition Ordinance 1948 and the Printing Presses Ordinance 1948. This established the foundation for Malaysia's legal framework to restrict media freedom.

6.2.2 After Independence: Media in the Young Nation

Press freedom was institutionalised in the Federal Constitution at independence in 1957 (Mohd Sani, 2008). However, press freedom was increasingly restricted under several censorship laws. In 1962, UMNO as the biggest political party that represented Malay rights, orchestrated a takeover of Utusan Melayu Press Bhd to ensure the company's Malay daily- *Utusan Malaysia*- would portray the party and BN administration in a favourable light (Gomez, 2004). This triggered protests by the Malay daily's journalists as they called for editorial independence that was in line with the newspapers' original philosophy of fighting for "race, religion and homeland" (Mustafa, 2003). Despite the 93-day strike staged by the journalists and other workers, UMNO ignored the resistance (Mohd Safar, 1996). This recorded the first incident of the ruling political party controlling a newspaper in the country.

The Alliance government, later BN, inherited restrictive media laws from the British, as it perceived that the media's role was to disseminate information and ideology to help the government maintain harmony within the existing multi-ethnic and multi-religious social structure. Hence, the role of media was reshaped to serve nation-building after independence. Under this concept, the press was not encouraged to criticise the government but only to present positive impressions of the state. Press freedom in Malaysia was further constrained after the ethnic riots of 13th May 1969. Apart from suspending publication of all newspapers for two days, the government introduced censorship laws and banned the circulation of certain foreign magazines. A series of amendments to the Federal Constitution were made, which prohibited the public, including the media to question sensitive issues including the power and status of the Malay rulers, and Malay special rights and privileges (Means, 1991; Mustafa, 2003).

Three years after the May 13 riots, the BN government had also classified many official documents as "official secrets" under the Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA) and this denied the public access to government documents. The Printing Presses Act 1948 was further amended to ban foreign ownership of Malaysian newspapers. This amendment resulted in "monopolisation of Malaysia's mainstream press by ruling political parties and their economic allies" (Mustafa, 2003). As the government launched the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 as one of the remedies to improve inter-ethnic relations, the quota systems under the NEP resulted in the controversial ownership structure of local media. For instance, in 1972, the Straits Times Press Group, was bought over by a national corporation—Pernas—and later sold to an investment company which UMNO owned called Fleet Holdings (Mustafa, 2003).

6.2.3 Mahathir and the Muzzled Media

Press freedom in Malaysia was further eroded during Mahathir Mohamad's first administration in 1981. His administration took a series of actions to suspend the

permit of critical local and foreign publications. One of the steps was to repeal the old Printing Presses Act 1948 and enact the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) in 1984 to give the Home Minister absolute power to grant and revoke publishing permits.

In 1987, more than 100 people including social activists, opposition politicians, academics and members of civil society were detained under a major crackdown called Operasi Lalang. As "punishment" for reporting this political clampdown on the front page the next day, three newspapers—*The Star, Sin Chew Jit Poh* and *Watan*—had their publishing permits suspended under the PPPA for six months. The result of this suspension was that the printed media become more servile and compliant with less critical reportage (Wang, 2001).

The privatisation concept introduced by Mahathir became a tool that allowed the ruling elite and business acquaintances of BN to invest in the media industry (George, 2007; Gomez, 2004; Mustafa, 2014). Whilst privatisation may be strategic in the macroeconomic context, this policy does not include an open tender system in Malaysia (Mustafa, 2014). For instance, the TV3 television station that was owned by an assortment of BN component parties was the first private station that received a broadcast licence. By the end of the 1990s, the component parties of BN were already controlling or having substantial interests in major English, Malay and Chinese-language newspapers via their investment arms and political affiliates. For instance, UMNO owned a media conglomerate—*Utusan Melayu* Group—that published various Malay-language newspapers and magazines which had high circulation and readership in the Malay-dominant rural areas, also known as election strongholds for UMNO. This kind of corporate control created the public perception that the BN-owned media were "muzzled" and biased in their reporting.

6.2.4 Reformasi and the Rise of Alternative Media

The development of the Internet in the late 1990s changed the media landscape in Malaysia. In 1996, Mahathir's main project, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) was launched. In a bid to attract foreign investors from the information technology sector, Mahathir promised no-censorship on the Internet (Zaharom & Mustafa, 1998). This meant that bloggers, online writers and news portals benefited from this no-censorship guarantee. Since then, Malaysia saw the emergence of online news portals such as *Malaysiakini.com* during the Reformasi, following the sacking of the then deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. Tens of thousands of Anwar's supporters rallied at street protests. Most of the traditional media reports on the *Reformasi* demonised Anwar. Subsequently, public demand for alternative media was strong (Khoo, 2003; Steele, 2009). Although news portals were unlicenced and not regulated under censorship laws such as PPPA, these entities were still being monitored under different sets of regulations including the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, the OSA 1972 and the Sedition Act 1948.

Online news related to politics were photocopied and distributed in the rural areas that had no internet access then. Some younger voters also shared alternative news reports with their parents who did not know how to browse the Internet. Besides, Malaysia also witnessed a boom in online dissent as political bloggers who were critical of the government, contributed to various discussions in the public sphere (George, 2007).

6.2.5 Najib and the Fall of BN

The 12th general election in 2008, also popularly labelled as "political tsunami" denied the BN a two-thirds majority in Parliament. This is partly attributed to the rise of online media. One year after the "political tsunami", Abdullah Badawi ended his relatively short prime ministership and handed over power to Najib Razak. Similar to his predecessors, Najib tried to build an image of moderation by promising better press freedom when he first took over the government. However, freedom of speech was further curtailed under his administration. For instance, whilst the PPPA was further amended in 2012 so that publications no longer needed to renew licences annually, the Home Minister still holds power to revoke or deny publishing permits and printing licences (Mustafa, 2014). Najib also promised to scrap the British colonial-era Sedition Act. However, he broke the promise after BN suffered from poor election results in the 2013 general elections. An amendment was made to increase the penalty of the Sedition Act and to allow the government to remove seditious material online. As a result, in 2015 alone, at least 91 individuals who were mainly rights activists, artists, journalists, lawyers, academicians and opposition members were either arrested, charged or investigated for sedition (Amnesty International, 2016).

As the online media continued to expose the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal, media freedom was further curtailed. For instance, in 2016, the editors of the online news portal *The Malaysian Insider* (TMI) were arrested and its website was blocked by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). The continuous reporting of 1MDB also resulted in the passing of the Anti-Fake News Bill 2018 in Parliament. The broad definition of "fake news" under the Act was criticised by the opposition parties, saying that this enactment would be misused to muffle dissent. Nevertheless, as the voters were frustrated due to various reasons ranging from economic issues, a financial scandal to political contestation, this then resulted in the end of the 60-year-old regime under BN in the 14th general elections in 2018. BN's hegemonic rule had made it difficult for the media to act independently, however, the struggle for media freedom continues and the process of media reform is seen to be even more important in the years that follow (Voltmer, 2013). PH replaced BN as government but its rule was short-lived. In late February 2020, Perikatan Nasional (PN) took over the government. That sets a different direction on the journey of media reform.

As the country experienced political uncertainties after the establishment of the MMC, and with PN as government, questions of legitimation are as PN did not gain

power through elections (See Lee, Chap. 12). Being legitimate is important to any government. Without it, it could be potentially difficult to exert influence over others based solely upon the possession of power (Tyler, 2006). As the legitimacy of the PN government continues to be questioned, how does the MMC itself seek legitimation under these political uncertainties and move forward the reform agenda?

6.3 Legitimation and Delegitimation

Legitimation refers to the activity of either seeking or granting legitimacy (Bexell, 2014). As defined by Hurd (1999, p. 381), legitimacy is "the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed". As Reus-Smith (2007, p. 44) puts it, legitimacy is "the lifeblood of the politics of legitimation" and it may or may not contribute to an institution's legitimacy in the eyes of the relevant stakeholders. In this chapter, we look into the question of legitimacy in the formation of the MMC and its advocacy. By using the method of the first author's participant observation during the national consultation session for the MMC, we explore the potential legitimacy of the MMC and its media reform agenda. Legitimacy also contributes to compliance with rules and decisions by providing internal reasons for actors to follow them (Hurd, 1999). There are arguably many sources that can contribute to legitimacy. For Scholte (2011), elements such as efficiency, legality, democracy, morality and charismatic leadership are important to be taken into consideration in the discourse on legitimacy. Hurrell (2005) proposes procedural, substantive, efficiency-based, specialist-based and reason-giving legitimacy.

Political authorities and institutions lose legitimacy when they do not adhere to procedural fairness norms (Farnsworth, 2003; Gangl, 2003; Murphy, 2004). Delegitimation refers to a process of contestation that undermines existing institutions' legitimacy (Steffek, 2009). The concept of delegitimation is important to be mentioned in this chapter, as the PN government's legitimacy continues to be debated. The legitimacy of MMC is also ambiguous as it was established to fulfil the manifesto of PH. It triggers the question of whether media freedom as discussed by the MMC will continue to be taken into serious consideration. In this chapter, the concept of delegitimation is employed by looking into the strategies by the MMC and also media activists, whether their involvement in governance processes has a legitimating effect (Scholte, 2007).

6.4 Media Reform Progress

Media reform is defined as an ongoing struggle over the unequal distribution of communicative resources whereby the process essentially involves changes and shifts in institutions, values and practises and the outcomes ideally focus on achieving public policies that encourage media independence and diversity (Freedman &

Obar, 2016; McChesney, 1998; Pickard, 2015; Voltmer, 2013; Waisbord, 2010). Media reform is sometimes also considered a type of social movement because the purpose of media reform is similar to social movements' purposes of challenging the distribution and uses of power by employing planned strategies, and eventually, the aim is to force a policy change (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; McAdam, 1982; Pickard, 2015). The outcome of media reform is often a result of a compromise reached by competing actors- the government, civil society, media owners, media practitioners, academicians and the general public.

Discussions about media reform in Malaysia was first raised in 1973. One of the key suggestions was to form a national press council (Mohd Safar & Ahmad Murad, 2002). The idea was initiated by the second Prime Minister, Abdul Razak Hussein, who later formed a high-level committee for a press council comprising of the representatives from the government and media industry. However, there was no final decision on the press council as the members could not reach a consensus. Following that, the same top-down media reform approach had been discussed several times between 1983 and 2016 without any conclusive decision (Mohd Safar & Ahmad Murad, 2002; Shuaib & Haron, 2016). There are two reasons that contribute to the failure in materialising the press council. First, the media fraternities disagreed with the existing laws over the press by demanding the repeal of the media laws. Second, the government's active involvement in the council was perceived as a form of media control.

The sacking of the then deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 was a watershed moment for media reformists in Malaysia (Steele, 2009; Tapsell, 2013; Tong, 2004). The Reformasi coincided with the emergence of the Internet and this encouraged independent journalism and vibrant media freedom advocacy groups. By the end of 1998, at least 30 anti-government sites were established and some of them saw several million hits in early 1999 (Kelly, 2003; McCargo, 2003). This marked a milestone for the bottom-up media reform approach started by the media activists and journalists in media reform history. When the alternative media gained increasing popularity and support, media reformists were optimistic that the Internet would allow individuals to abandon biased reporting and look for independent news. Some mainstream media journalists too began to push for reforms. One of the achievements was the mobilisation of 951 journalists to sign a petition calling for the repeal of the PPPA in May 1999 (Tapsell, 2013). However, the government did not take into account what was urged in the petition but instead, it launched a series of clampdowns against the media (Abbott, 2004; Funston, 2001).

Journalists who joined the media reform movement were side-lined in the mainstream media newsrooms. Different ideologies existed within the media fraternities. Other journalists did not support their reformist colleagues. The reform process was also hindered by the position taken by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), the only journalist's union in Malaysia:

> NUJ continued to see its main role as advocating for better pay conditions of mainstream journalists. As a result, they needed the support of the government and the major media owners. This meant they were reluctant to criticise those in power; those who also hindered the freedom of the press.

(Tapsell, 2013, pg. 10)

The situation did not improve when Mahathir stepped down and the prime ministership was taken over by Abdullah Badawi in 2003. According to Zaharom (2008), Abdullah Badawi did not materialise his promises of reform as all censorship laws stayed. However, the media reformists continued to challenge the government by setting up more independent news portals and publications. These publications included magazines like *Off the Edge,* news websites such as *The Nutgraph* and *The Malaysian Insider* that appealed to the young English-speaking, urban elite, and a Chinese-language independent news website–*The Merdeka Review*. In the 2008 general election, BN recorded its worst election results as it lost a two-thirds majority. Abdullah Badawi confessed that they have certainly lost the "internet war" (AFP, 2008) and media reformists saw the Internet through independent news ventures as important for pushing wider change in the media industry.

6.4.1 Media Reform After May 2018

The concept of media reforms was sharpened after the change of government as a result of GE14. The PH government, which was filled with self-proclaimed reformists, initiated the formation of the media council in 2018. In March 2019, a national consultation session which gathered more than 70 participants including journalists, editors, representatives from the civil society and the PH government was held to work out a roadmap for the self-regulation of Malaysian media. PH leaders had consistently promised to support the idea that local journalists would be self-regulated by a media council, with a pro-tem committee formed in January 2020. This was the first time the government was not included directly in the working committee of the media council. On 3 February 2020, the pro-tem committee outlined the following six principles for its draft bill:

(1) The scope of the council shall cover all forms of media including print, broadcast and online and shall cover private as well as public-owned media;
(2) The media council will not cover individual speech on social media or blogs, for which other laws currently or should cover;
(3) That participation in the council will be on a volunteer or opt-in basis and that there will have to be sufficient benefits and incentives for the media industry to participate;
(4) Laws that curb press freedom or inhibit good journalistic practises will have to be abolished;
(5) The council will have a code of conduct for media as well as a proper grievance procedure; and
(6) The council will also look into the overall sustainability of the media industry, improving journalism standards and media literacy.

However, less than a month after the announcement of MMC's six principles, the country experienced an unprecedented political turmoil which saw most of the former BN leaders taking over the government through the formation of the PN government in February 2020. This raises the question if the new ruling coalition would view MMC's reform agenda seriously because the pro-tem committee was formed under the aegis of PH. The media industry undergoes reforms and transformations during political transitions (Price et al., 2002). The system of media and news institutions evolve, especially when the state is experiencing changes in the political system. When there is a political transition, media are expected to play a significant role in presenting history to the local and global audience. But what is more important to examine is whether the media are "able to take on the pivotal role in supporting the transition, or to impede the democratic process" (Voltmer, 2013). In the case of Malaysia, the political transition which saw the return of the old regime had posed a great challenge to media reform.

Whilst the change of government in GE14 had arguably opened the door for media reform especially with the establishment of MMC, challenges exist when it comes to the PN government. That raises the question on how the MMC seeks legitimation under this political uncertainty and moving forward the reform agenda, when PN itself is questioned of its own legitimacy. There are arguably many sources that can contribute to legitimacy ranging from efficiency, legality, democracy, morality and charismatic leadership (Scholte, 2011). Do these elements exist in the current media reform in the MMC? In the next section, we will explore the opportunities and barriers in the media reform agenda in this period of political uncertainties.

6.5 Opportunities and Barriers

Whilst there has been media reform progress as highlighted in the above section, particularly with the establishment of the MMC, the direction of media reform is however uncertain as it shifts between legitimation and delegitimation due to four reasons. First, existing structural and political barriers. Second, censorship laws are still in place. The full repeal of repressive laws as promised earlier is controversial as the government has been reluctant to commit to full transparency and freedom of speech. Third, some traditional media organisations are still economically and structurally owned by political parties and their business allies. Fourth, the internal tension amongst the MMC members and the media reformists on different ideologies on press freedom and the role of media in Malaysia.

6.5.1 Existing Structural and Political Barriers

As an electoral authoritarian regime with semi-competitive elections, the authoritarianism feature arguably guaranteed large parliamentary majorities for the ruling

coalition. This is then enhanced by Malaysia's centralised system with control of financial means, as well as the bureaucracy, judiciary and media channels that open the door to the sustainability of the ruling coalition, which is used to curtail civil liberties, (Ufen, 2012, p. 451) particularly the freedom of speech, association and assembly and constraints on the opposition to effectively channel social grievances including the impact on press freedom. The institutional hindrances of electoral authoritarianism (Ufen, 2012) are prevalent to prevent press freedom. The restriction in media freedom has laid the foundation that enables the growth of online media where it provides increased access to alternative sources of information and opened a space for the vibrant exchange of political views (Tapsell, 2013). Whilst online media is also subject to some of the same restrictions as the print media, however online news portals such as *Malaysiakini* established after Reformasi provides more options to Malaysians that enable them to read the other side of the story. For many, the mainstream media are no longer a trusted source of information due to their strong bias. Thus, they use the Internet as an alternative medium of information (Radue, 2012).

6.5.2 Censorship Laws Are Still in Place

In April 2020, Malaysia recorded the greatest improvement in Reporters without Borders (RSF) global index (Lim, 2020a) by ranking 101st amongst 180 countries. According to RSF, press freedom in Malaysia experienced a breath of "fresh air" after a surprising first-ever defeat of BN in GE14, resulting in a more relaxed environment for journalists. As a result, self-censorship declined and the print media offered a fuller and more balanced range of political viewpoints. As such, this increased the legitimacy of media reform and also the MMC itself. However, RSF also noted that anachronistic and draconian laws remain in Malaysia as a continuing threat to press freedom. To date, the legal environment in Malaysia does not encourage independent media or critical reporting. Whilst there is a constitutional guarantee for freedom of expression, freedom of speech and press freedom, there are also limitations on grounds of national security, public order and morality, contempt of court, defamation as well as the protection of other constitutional provisions related to the special positions and privileges of the monarchy, the Malays and indigenous communities (Faruqi, 2008; Federal Constitution of Malaysia, 2010).

The full repeal of repressive laws as promised earlier is controversial as the PH coalition at that time was reluctant (Centre for Independent Journalism, 2018, 2019) to commit to full transparency and freedom of speech. The-then PH government back-pedalled on its moratorium on the use of the Sedition Act 1948 by citing the excuse that it was needed (Bernama, 2018) in cases related to national security, public order and ethnic relations. When the PH government was replaced, the country was also facing an unprecedented public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Citizens had to follow a movement control order (MCO) and subsequently conditional movement control order (CMCO) imposed by the new

PN government. Not surprisingly, journalists faced more restrictions when covering news about the pandemic. For instance, journalists were reportedly barred from an open court hearing of UMNO president Ahmad Zahid's daughter who breached the MCO (Palansamy, 2020). Besides that a correspondent for the *South China Morning Post* was investigated (Teh & Perimbanayagam, 2020) by the police over her news report of Malaysian authorities arresting undocumented migrants during a raid. Her article questioned the need for a large scale raid and quoted human rights activists as saying that this would prevent illegal immigrants from coming out to be tested for COVID-19, as they fear being deported.

These instances show that regulations and policies can be abused by the state or designed to benefit the old and new power holders, or emerging interest groups (Milton, 2001; Peruško, 2013). At present, the legal reform as championed by some of the MMC committee members will not be materialised without the political will of lawmakers to repeal censorship laws.

6.5.3 Media Owned by Political Parties and Business Allies

The state was instrumental in allowing government-linked companies (GLCs), the ruling political parties and their business associates to run the media industry. This political ownership was greatly challenged after GE14. Before the elections, the media organisations that were owned by BN component parties and allies were struggling to survive financially. The media industry including public listed companies witnessed more serious financial losses and the axing of employees on a large scale after GE14. For instance, Media Prima, a media conglomerate suffered losses up to RM104.5 million for its fourth quarter ended 31 December 2019, and has gone through several restructuring exercises, including staff retrenchment (Malek, 2020). *Utusan Malaysia* that was previously owned by UMNO, was forced to cease operations in October 2019 after it defaulted on its loans and failed to pay its employees their salaries (Palansamy, 2019). The period since the elections has also seen the closing of pro-BN Tamil language newspaper, *Tamil Nesan*, due to financial issues in February 2019.

These financial struggles paved the way for business acquaintances of Mahathir, to re-enter the scene through ownership of the media. The most prominent move was by business tycoon Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary, who has business interests in power generation, rice, sugar, plantations and auto assembly and is a known acquaintance of Mahathir. Syed Mokhtar acquired controlling stakes in both Media Prima and *Utusan Malaysia* after the elections (Loheswar et al., 2019), making him one of the major media owners in the country, alongside the state and other large corporations also owned by political parties or pro-establishment businessmen.

To date, most of the traditional media organisations are still economically and structurally owned by political parties and their business allies. The concentration of media ownership and unequal distribution of communicative resources have been challenging for media reformists to confront formidable change, to reshape media

policy which could review the ownership structure of the media industry. However, the process of media reform can be complex because the financial struggles of news outlets are not only caused by the controversial ownership structure but also changes in media consumption patterns. The noticeable shifts of audiences' interest towards social media had resulted in major newsrooms reducing the printing of physical copies in 2020. For instance, local Chinese-language newspaper *Oriental Daily* stopped its weekend editions and reduced the newsstand price (Lim, 2020b). Earlier, another local Chinese-language daily, *Sin Chew Daily*, stopped printing physical copies of its night edition from 1 April 2020, citing various reasons that were difficult to overcome. On 21 April 2020, the leading business and financial publication *The Edge Financial Daily* (FD) also decided to operate fully digitally due to Malaysia's "shift to digital news and the current lockdown of the economy because of the COVID-19 pandemic". In response to this, the MMC pro-tem committee reiterated the importance of looking into the overall sustainability of the media industry, improving journalism standards and media literacy amongst the readers and audience, which is one of the six principles included in the MMC's draft bill (Chan, 2020).

6.5.4 Internal Tension Amongst MMC Members and Media Reformists

The legitimation discourse amongst the MMC members and the media reformists is called into question as they faced challenges in reaching consensus amongst themselves on the direction of media reform. Findings from the participant observation show the stakeholders presented different proposals and focussed on different priorities during the national consultation session held in March 2019. The MMC pro-tem committee saw different actors representing the government, civil society, academics and media industry fighting for dominance. One of the civil society representatives in the committee is the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) which has been advocating press freedom. Comparatively, the nature of media group representatives is more diverse such the NUJ which was once accused of being a labour union that has been "largely subject to nepotism and cronyism for journalists who did not want to make changes from within the industry" (Tapsell, 2013, p. 7). However, the position of the NUJ has not been consistent. The labour union responded to curtailing press freedom differently, depending on the ideologies and beliefs upheld by the committee members. For instance, NUJ has been outspoken against the recent banning of journalists in the courtroom.

Other media groups' representatives in the MMC committee include the Malaysian Press Institute (MPI), a media training institute. The National Press Club Malaysia is said to have close ties with Mahathir who contributed a clubhouse (The National Press Club Malaysia, n.d.) to it, whilst the Foreign Correspondents Club Malaysia (FCCM) is a networking association for journalists who work with the

foreign newsrooms based in Malaysia. There are also other advocacy groups formed by journalists and editors who uphold the value of press freedom that have been appointed to join the pro-tem committee. These groups are mainly represented by the Institute of Journalist Malaysia (IoJ) and Gerakan Media Merdeka (Geramm), which were both established in 2013.

All these associations, unions and advocacy groups have different ideologies and expectations of media reforms. The nascent stage of MMC formation under the PH government has been marred with the exclusion of some media groups. In 2019, NUJ, IoJ, Geramm, FCCM and Sabah Journalists Association issued a joint statement (The Star, 2019) to condemn that a proposal for MCC was submitted to the government by a group of publishers and media owners without consulting them:

> While we welcome the formation of a media council, neither the contents of this proposal were made public or shared with all journalists, nor were we invited to take part in its consultative process. We cannot endorse any submitted proposal that has not been seen or reviewed in detail by journalists at all levels of the industry.
>
> (The Star, 2019)

In addition, CIJ and the other media advocacy groups reiterated that to achieve successful media reform, the PPPA 1984 must be abolished before or when the media council is set up because having both the PPPA and the media council co-exist would defeat the purpose of having a self-regulatory body to regulate media standards (Centre for Independent Journalism, 2020). To date, this proposal has not received a response from the government. Meanwhile, other media representatives want to prioritise the issues of journalistic transgressions and punitive actions against "irresponsible journalism". This shows that one of the challenges of media reform is to incorporate the interests of various stakeholders (Yong, 2020).

This section listed four opportunities and barriers: existing structural and political barriers; existence of censorship laws, structural issues involving some traditional media organisations as they are owned by political parties and their business allies; and internal tension amongst the MMC members and media reformists on different ideologies of press freedom and the role of media. Based on these four elements, the question of legitimation is raised due to the political uncertainty and the lack of political will in making media reforms by the policy-makers.

6.6 Conclusion

Structural, technical and legislative changes are essential for holistic media reform. For instance, trust needs to be rebuilt amongst the government machineries with the abrupt change of government from PH to PN. The legislative changes promised, such as the proposed draft bill on the establishment of the Malaysian Media Council, which amongst others aims to uphold and promote media freedom and to create a conducive legislative and regulatory environment have not been implemented. This chapter reiterates that the country is expected to witness delays in the policy relating

to media reform. This then directly imposes challenges to the sustainability of the MMC that has been established, starting from its legitimacy.

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Notes

1. Traditional media stated in this research includes newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television stations.
2. The national consultation session was first initiated by media advocacy groups and supported by PH government representatives. The two-day conference also saw stakeholders presenting different proposals and media reform agendas. Source: https://www.thesundaily.my/local/steering-committee-set-up-to-discuss-forming-malaysia-media-council-AE644561

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Kwan Yee Kow is a Lecturer at the School of Communication and Creative Arts, University of Wollongong Malaysia. She used to be a journalist who covered a range of areas (crime, court and politics) for *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*. Her research interests include press freedom, media reform, journalism regulation, and communication policies and practises. She can be contacted at kowky517@gmail.com.

Ying Hooi Khoo (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya. Ying Hooi is the Editor-in-Chief of Malaysian Journal of International Relations (MJIR), and she sits on the Board of Editors with the Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, and Indonesian Law Review (ILREV). Her research interests include civil society, social movements, national human rights institutions, human rights and democratisation with a regional focus on Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia and Timor Leste. She can be contacted at yinghooi@um.edu.my.

Chapter 7
Framing the Tanjung Piai By-Election in Multilingual Malaysian Newspapers

Prasana Rosaline Fernandez, Yang Lai Fong, and Usha Devi Rajaratnam

Abstract This chapter analyses how multilingual mainstream Malaysian newspapers reported the Tanjung Piai by-election of November 2019. The Tanjung Piai parliamentary seat became vacant after the death of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) Member of Parliament. Barisan Nasional (BN) held the seat previously but lost it to PH in the 2018 general elections. This by-election was important because it indicated the people's confidence in PH and the Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad. This chapter uses framing theory to explain how the media structure their delivery of news, promoting interpretations of events by selecting certain facts. Frames appearing in the media are important when they resonate with the audience's strongly held perceptions. Articles in *Harian Metro*, *Malaysiakini, The Star* and *Sin Chew Daily* are analysed to determine the intensity of coverage, the predominant sources, the frames and the valence of the articles towards PH and Mahathir Mohamad. The analysis reveals that BN's resounding victory is a strong indication of the people's disappointment with the government and their efforts at reforms. The voters protested PH with an intention to 'teach it a lesson' by voting for BN's candidate.

Keywords Media · Newspapers · By-election · Political communication · Framing

7.1 Introduction

The Tanjung Piai by-election on 16 November 2019 was the final blow for the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government as it exposed the growing dissatisfaction of the public with their performance. Nadirah and Ng (2019) stated that it was the fourth electoral loss

P. R. Fernandez (✉)
School of Humanities and Communication, Xiamen University Malaysia, Sepang, Malaysia
e-mail: prasana.fernandez@xmu.edu.my

U. D. Rajaratnam
School of Pre-University Studies, Taylor's College, Subang Jaya, Malaysia

Y. L. Fong
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University United International College, Zhuhai, China

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for the PH government in 2019, where the opposition Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate, Dr Wee Jeck Seng, won by a whopping 15,086 majority over the PH candidate Karmaine Sardini. They also reported that this constituency has 52,986 voters, of which, 57% are Malay; 42% Chinese; and 1% Indian. This win in a majority Malay area by a BN Chinese candidate indicates the swing by Malay and Chinese voters back to BN. Yang Razali Kassim (2019) highlighted that the results signalled two important explanations: one the BN-Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) unity appeased the Malays, and two the Chinese were angry with the Democratic Action Party (DAP) for failing to deliver their promises to the community. He also explained that the PH loss after the euphoria of the 14th General Election (GE14) pointed to the growing unhappiness with the Mahathir administration over the slow pace of reforms, unfulfilled promises, and non-stop bickering between the PH parties and within Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), PH's largest component party.

The Tanjung Piai by-election was important to PH against a backdrop of growing dissatisfaction among Malaysians who were looking forward to a new Malaysia after 60 years of BN rule. This chapter will analyse how multilingual mainstream Malaysian newspapers framed the Tanjung Piai by-election of November 2019. Such an examination will be useful to ascertain how the media structured their delivery of news, promoting interpretations of events by selecting certain facts. Articles from *Harian Metro*, *Malaysiakini, The Star* and *Sin Chew Daily* are analysed using framing analysis to determine the intensity of coverage, the predominant sources, the frames, and the valence of the articles towards PH and Mahathir Mohamad. As the ruling government, the outcome of this election had the greatest impact on them as it determined their survival as a formidable government and their ability to fulfil the aspirations of the millions of Malaysian voters who elected them to power.

The media plays an important role in processing and presenting political discourse. It understands the impact of populism so the frames appearing in the media are significant as they resonate with the audience's strongly held perceptions and indicate grassroots' sentiments. The politicians, in turn, use the media as their mouthpiece to get their news across to the public. Politicians make every effort to win elections and present themselves in the best possible manner to the media. They use language strategies to present and legitimise themselves through positive representation and delegitimise their opponents through negative representation. Legitimation deserves special attention in political discourse because it is used by political leaders and opponents to justify their political agenda to maintain or alter the direction of a country (Reyes, 2011).

7.2 14th General Election

GE14 held on 9 May 2018 has been termed the "Mother of all Elections" (Idris, 2018) as it saw Malaysians vote out the previously undefeated Alliance/BN ruling coalition after 62 years of continuous power since independence. BN and its predecessor the Alliance had emerged victorious in every general election since the first general

election that was held in 1955 (2 years before Malaysia gained independence) (Lee, 2020).

GE14 was basically a contest between three coalitions, i.e. BN the largest, oldest and most powerful coalition, which was formed in 1973 with 13 partners; PH which was formed in 2015 with four partners and Gagasan Sejahtera (GS), a coalition of four Islamic parties headed by PAS which was formed in 2016. Many believed that BN would be re-elected to power with a narrow majority for the fourteenth time since the country's independence in 1957 (Hutchinson, 2018). However, for the first time in Malaysia's young political history, Pakatan Harapan or "Coalition of Hope" emerged victorious. The coalition comprised four parties: PKR, DAP, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) and Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) (Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018). Significantly, this election saw former archenemies Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar Ibrahim joining forces under the PH banner to end BN's 60-year grip on Malaysian politics.

This regime change occurred as a result of growing dissatisfaction and anger towards BN's poor governance and mismanagement of the country's finances, and the most prominent being the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal. BN was also embroiled in a myriad of other financial scandals involving the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), the Council of Trust for the People (Majlis Amanah Rakyat or MARA), and Lembaga Tabung Haji. Ng et al. (2020) highlighted that public confidence in the BN-led government also waned because of the apathy of authorities to arraign any individuals for these scandals. Additionally, they explained that on the backdrop of these corruption scandals, the public were infuriated with the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST) on 1 April 2015 and the reduction of various subsidies especially the fuel subsidy which exposed them to a higher cost of living.

7.3 PH Government

The PH coalition was voted in on the hope of correcting all the wrong doings of the previous BN government. Malaysians in general looked at post-GE14 as an era of change. However, PH and its loosely formed partners in this coalition shared different ideological paths despite being truly multi-ethnic (Chin, 2020). Bersatu was founded by Mahathir Mohamad and Muhyiddin Yassin, a splinter group from United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), DAP was a Chinese-based multi-ethnic party led by the father/son duo Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, PKR was a Malay majority multi-ethnic party led by Anwar Ibrahim, and Amanah was a breakaway party from PAS. On the other side of the aisle, UMNO signed a political pact with PAS called Muafakat Nasional to bounce back from the GE14 loss and garner the divided Malay votes (Izzuddin, 2020). This pact, according to Izzuddin (2020), was able to disrupt the PH government's efforts on reforms by sowing social discontent in the minds of the Malay community through discourse on Malay nationalism and

Islamic conservatism, thus increasing ethno-religious polarisation among the various ethnicities (see Siti Nurnadilla, Chap. 8 and Ang and Kock, Chap. 9).

According to Tan (2020), the Malay acceptance of PH began to collapse within six months of its coming to power after a successful campaign by Muafakat Nasional to portray PH's move to ratify the International Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and subsequently the Rome Statute, as an attack on Malay interests. Shortly after, right-wing Malay and Islamic groups staged the Malay Dignity Congress (MDC), where the leaders of the four most important Malay majority political parties attended: UMNO, PAS, PKR and Bersatu (Chin, 2020). To add insult to injury, the keynote at MDC was delivered by none other than the new PH Prime Minister, Mahathir himself. Mahathir's presence at MDC indicated that PH or specifically Bersatu condoned the divisive and racists narratives expressed by the speakers at the conference. According to Chin (2020), the right-wing Malay nationalist parties with the strong backing of Muafakat Nasional worked towards bringing down the new government by framing the narratives of mainstream Malay politics as Malay supremacy being under threat. Chin also emphasised that the perception among Malays was that non-Malays had too much influence in the PH government, particularly the Chinese of DAP, as more than half of the Members of Parliament in the PH coalition were non-Malays and 11 of the 28 ministers in the PH federal cabinet were non-Malays. The Malay community was also riled up that prominent government appointments like the Minister of Finance, Chief Justice of Malaysia and the Attorney General's positions were occupied by non-Malays.

The non-Malays on the other hand were disillusioned firstly with PH's decision to abandon their plans to ratify the ICERD and the Rome Statute, and secondly, they saw the MDC and the Prime Minister's presence there as a regressive step towards building Malaysia Baru as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country (Tan, 2019). Chin (2020) affirmed that the PH coalition came together for the sole purpose of bringing down Najib Razak and removing BN from power and had little in common with each other. Bersatu was also trying to increase its base by attracting defectors from UMNO (Jan, 2020; Tan, 2019), so Bersatu was seen as "old Barisan wine in a new Pakatan bottle" (Izzuddin, 2020, p. 103) displaying the same Ketuanan Melayu Islam attitude as UMNO. This led to tensions with the coalition partners and other allies who wanted to promote a non-ethnic style of politics (Chin, 2020). Therefore, PH was a dysfunctional government and found it difficult to work in a cohesive manner with Ministers contradicting each other in public.

Additionally, Malaysia's highly politicised civil service was not used to dealing with different political masters and this added to the frailty of the new coalition (Chin, 2020; Hutchinson, 2018). Yang Razali Kassim (2019) also attributed the power struggle and difficulties in the transition of power faced by PH to the number of inexperienced ministers who were unable to tackle issues relating to the cost of living. The public were no longer interested in listening to the transgressions of the past government but were eager to see reforms to improve the country's quality of governance. Yang Razali Kassim (2019) succinctly described the difficulties faced by PH as the mismatch between expectations and reality in terms of PH's capacity to deliver.

Chin (2020) claimed that Mahathir himself played a crucial role in the destruction of his own administration by backtracking on the succession plan to hand the premiership to Anwar Ibrahim after two years. Chin also said speculation was rife that Mahathir tried to weaken Anwar politically by encouraging the rivalry in PKR between Anwar Ibrahim and Azmin Ali. This public infighting in PKR eroded public confidence in PH's ability to govern the country and bring about the much-needed reforms promised in the election manifesto.

DAP, the most reform-minded party in the coalition, found itself in a difficult position. Chin (2019) highlighted that the Chinese felt frustrated at the slow progress in DAP's commitment to gain recognition for independent Chinese school qualifications (Unified Examination Certificate). Chin explained that DAP was in a tight spot as every reform policy it advocated was immediately branded as "pro-Chinese" and thus "anti-Malay" or "anti-Islam" by Muafakat Nasional. Additionally, Chin said that PH's decision to increase the number of university places set aside for those that came through a one-year pre-university matriculation places to 40,000 from 25,000 did not go well with the non-Malays. He highlighted that the majority of matriculation students are Malays and increasing the number of matriculation places reduced the number of university places for the non-Malays who usually take the high school examination (STPM) route to university.

PH's pro-reform supporters were also demoralised with its slow progress and initiatives like the introduction of khat (Malay-Arabic calligraphy) in the school syllabus (Tan, 2020). To add insult to injury, Lim Guan Eng's decision to withhold RM30 million in funds for Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARUC) was another issue that angered the Chinese voters ("TARUC must not be MCA-owned", 2019). Yang Razali Kassim (2019) attributed the wide margin of defeat for PH in the Tanjung Piai by-election to the Chinese voters in the constituency swinging back to the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Chinese party in BN. He contrasted this with GE14 when the Chinese overwhelmingly voted for PH.

7.4 Framing News

Frames have significant effects as they not only shape what people think of an issue but also impact how they structure and guide public discourse. As Entman (1993, p. 52) explains:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations.

Consequently, any group wishing to promote an agenda, frames the pertinent issue in a way that advances its cause. The media in turn serves as conduit for partisan frames developed by politicians and other groups who encourage specific issue positions. For this reason, D'Angelo and Kuypers (2010) highlighted that much

framing research concentrates on the ways politicians, issue advocates, and stakeholders engage journalists and other news professionals to convey to the public their desired meanings of events and issues. They also mentioned that journalists need these sources' frames to create news by adding or merging their own ideas in the process. This embodies Scheufele's (2004) model of framing perspectives which affirmed two frame building sub-processes: firstly, "journalists are audiences for the framing behaviours of other social actors, and secondly, journalists use those framing elements to construct news stories" (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, p. 4).

Lawrence (2010) emphasised that ultimately "events are framed as much by the decisions of journalists and editors as by the intentions of political actors" (p. 265). Journalists draw their ideas and language from various sources, but they construct their own frames for the news. Similarly, Arenas and Jiménez (2018) described the media as "political actors" as it plays a pivotal role by contextualising particular current events rapidly that it elicits reactions in different groups based on their political inclination. Hence, media frames have the power to impact politics because of its persuasive role in communication. The media can complicate issues through positive and negative evaluations of political parties thus legitimising or delegitimising their actions pertaining to an issue. For this purpose, positive and negative representations are made possible in framing political discourse by using legitimation discursive strategies (Chilton, 2004). Legitimation strategies are applied by the media to present political discourse in preferred positions of self and others. The positive and negative representations can alter the reporting of a single event in a way to publicly legitimise or delegitimise political strategies.

7.5 Method

7.5.1 Data

The newspapers chosen for this study were *The Star* (English), *Sin Chew Daily* (Mandarin), *Harian Metro* (Malay) and *Malaysiakini* (English). *The Star*, *Sin Chew Daily* and *Harian Metro* were selected as they are mainstream newspapers in Malaysia, and they enjoy the highest circulation within their respective language stream. According to Selva (2010), the 2019 average daily circulation of *The Star*, *Sin Chew Daily* and *Harian Metro* was 175,986, 293,804 and 79,049, respectively.

The MCA, one of the component parties of BN, is a major shareholder of *The Star*. The English newspapers in Malaysia are usually read by the elites and English educated readers, who are mostly concentrated in urban areas. Lent (1990) stated that it is only the readership of English newspapers that could transcend ethnicity in Malaysia. Hence, the author claimed that the English press also serves as an inter-ethnic medium.

Sin Chew Daily is owned by a business and media tycoon, Tiong Hiew King. It is circulated throughout Malaysia and neighbouring countries, such as in southern

Thailand, Brunei, Indonesia and northern Kalimantan. It is also published and printed in Indonesia and Cambodia under separate mastheads. It is noteworthy that Sin Chew offers extensive coverage on politics, economy, culture and education while being considered as one of the most outspoken mainstream newspapers in Malaysia (Ou, 2009).

Harian Metro is owned by Media Prima, which is an investment arm of UMNO. Media Prima is Malaysia's largest media and entertainment conglomerate that owns various media companies. It holds the controlling shares of newspapers like *New Straits Times*, *Business Times*, *Malay Mail*, *Berita Harian* and *Shin Min Daily News*. It also has majority equity interests in television stations like TV3, NTV7, 8TV and TV9, while owning three radio stations, Fly FM, Hot FM and One FM.

Malaysiakini is one of the most successful alternative news sites in Malaysia (Asad, 2020; Kasmani, 2016; Lai & Muthaly, 2019; Murudi & Ting, 2019). It is also the country's first commercial online newspaper and has records average daily hits of approximately 500,000 (Kasim & Sani, 2016). In addition, *Malaysiakini* is said to often set the agenda for other news media (Asad, 2020). Although *Malaysiakini* offers sections in English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, this study only focused on the English section because the other sections contain mainly translations of major stories in English.

The time frame of this study was 1–22 November 2019 as it represented the peak period of the by-election coverage. The nomination day was set on 2 November 2019 with a 14-day campaign period, and the polling day was 16 November 2019. The coverage on the by-election continued for about a week after the polling day with some analysis of the polling results.

The unit of analysis was articles on the by-election, which included straight news, editorials, columns, opinions and letters. The articles were collected via database searches, which were retrieved from the respective newspaper's online archive. The search words used in the study was "Tanjung Piai by-election", which were found within headlines or body text of the articles.

7.5.2 Coding Procedures

The news articles were coded to answer these research questions:

RQ1: What was the intensity of coverage published by the newspapers?
RQ2: What were the sources used by the newspapers?
RQ3: What were the news frames used by the newspapers?
RQ4: What was the valence of the news articles published by the newspapers?

The intensity of coverage refers to the importance of news stories (Yarchi et al., 2017). It was studied from two angles: (1) number of news items and (2) type of news items.

There are two possible approaches to content analysing frames in the news: inductive and deductive (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The inductive approach involves

analysing a news story with an open view to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined pre-conceptions of these themes. This approach can detect the many possible ways in which an issue can be framed, but this method is labour-intensive, often based on small samples, and can be difficult to replicate. A deductive approach involves pre-defining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news. This approach makes it necessary to have a clear idea of the kinds of frames likely to be in the news, because the frames that are not defined a priori may be overlooked. This approach can be replicated easily, can cope with large samples and can easily detect differences in framing between media (e.g. television vs. press) and within media (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Similarly, Wimmer and Dominick (2013) stated that there are two ways to establish coding categories for content analysis. The first is known as a priori coding, where the researcher establishes the categories before the data is collected, based on some theoretical or conceptual rationale. The second is called emergent coding, where the researcher establishes categories after a preliminary examination of the data.

This study employed the inductive or emergent coding approach for analysing news sources and news frames. The researchers outlined the following categories after a preliminary examination of the news articles. The categories for sources used in this study were: (1) political parties (either from PH or the opposition), (2) independent candidate, (3) Election Commission of Malaysia, (4) government agencies, (5) police, (6) NGOs and associations, (7) general public and (8) others.

The following are the coding categories for frames developed for this study and their operational definitions. For each article, only the three most dominant frames were recorded.

1. Credentials and future direction of PH: reported contribution and achievement of the PH government; reported reasons mentioned by PH's politicians of why voters should continue to support the coalition; reported the PH government's plan in developing Tanjung Piai, Johor or the country; reported PH leaders' statements about the lessons and reflections they have gained through the failure in the by-election; reported PH leaders' statements about their plan and/or strategy to move forward.
2. Criticism of PH: reported the dissatisfaction or criticism towards the performance of PH and/or its coalition parties; reported dissatisfaction or criticism towards Mahathir Mohamad; reported condemnation of the campaign strategies and tactics (i.e. offering voters money, handouts, vouchers, SIM card for mobile phone, tickets, travel reimbursements, promises of economic benefit, etc.) employed by PH, reported condemnation of empty and/or sweet promises by PH.
3. Political strategies of other competing parties/independent individuals: reported reasons for supporting a particular candidate; reported the collaboration between different political parties; reported promises given by politicians before or after the by-election.
4. Conflict: reported politician's criticism of other competing parties or candidates.

5. Public opinion and commentary: reported expectation of the general public/NGOs/individual author towards the government or the political parties; reported commentary or public opinion towards the by-election/political parties/candidates; reported results of polling.
6. Politicians as individual: reported personal and/or background information about a candidate; reported quotes by individuals who commended the personality/integrity of a candidate; reported the motivation/inspiration of a candidate to compete in the by-election.
7. Others: any other content that did not fit into the above-mentioned frames. They included coverage about preparation for the campaign, nomination or voting day; episodic details of the nomination or voting day; police reports lodged against a particular candidate or party during the campaign, as well as action taken by police; reminders from the Election Commission of Malaysia or police about election rules and regulations; statement from Public Accounts Committee (PAC); politician's dissatisfaction with election rules and regulations, etc.

Valence of the articles refers to the attitude expressed towards any individual, group, party or institution by its user (Han & Wang, 2015). This study used the categories of supportive, critical and neutral for the analysis of attitude expressed towards PH and/or Mahathir. The two most dominant attitude categories were recorded.

1. Supportive of PH and/or Mahathir: conveyed a favourable impression towards PH and/or its coalition parties; conveyed a favourable impression towards Mahathir; highlighted, supported or complimented the policy or performance of PH and/or its coalition parties; contained quotes by individuals who approved the stance of PH and/or Mahathir.
2. Critical of PH and/or Mahathir: conveyed an unfavourable impression towards PH and/or its coalition parties; conveyed an unfavourable impression towards Mahathir; criticised the policy and/or performance of PH; contained quotes by individuals who disapproved the stance of PH and/or Mahathir.
3. Neutral of PH and/or Mahathir: neither favourably nor unfavourably portrayed PH and/or its coalition parties; neither favourably nor unfavourably portrayed Mahathir.

Coding was conducted manually by the three authors. A sample of 10% was selected randomly for re-assessment by a second independent coder, who is a communication graduate. Using Krippendorff's alpha, the inter-coder reliability was $\geq$0.94.

7.6 Findings

The differences in intensity of coverage, the predominant sources, frames and valence of the articles reflected the dissimilar depiction of PH and Mahathir Mohamad in the presentation of the newspapers.

Table 7.1 Number of articles

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
The Star	25	2.82
Sin Chew Daily	519	58.51
Harian Metro	110	12.40
Malaysiakini	233	26.27
Total	**877**	**100**

Table 7.2 Types of articles

Types of articles	*The Star* (n = 25) %	*Sin Chew* (n = 519) %	*Harian Metro* (n = 110) %	*Malaysiakini* (n = 233) %
Straight news	88.00	82.85	100.00	82.83
Column articles	4.00	16.18	0	0
Editorials	8.00	0.96	0	0
Letters	0	0	0	3.43
Reader's comments	0	0	0	4.72
Opinions	0	0	0	9.01

7.6.1 Intensity of Coverage

A total of 887 articles were collected in this study. *Malaysiakini* contributed 26.27% to the sample, followed by *Sin Chew Daily* (58.51%), *The Star* (2.82%) and *Harian Metro* (12.40%) (Table 7.1).

Most of the articles published in *Sin Chew Daily* were in the form of straight news (82.85%), followed by column articles (16.18%) and editorials (0.96%). *Harian Metro* only published straight news (100%) in its coverage of the by-election, and 22.00% of its news was taken from the Malaysian National News Agency, Bernama. The majority of *The Star* articles were in the form of straight news (88%), followed by editorials (8%) and column articles (4%). *Malaysiakini* in its coverage focussed on straight news (82.83%), followed by opinions (9.01%), reader's comments (4.72%) and letters (3.43%) (Table 7.2).

7.6.2 News Sources

Sin Chew Daily quoted opposition politicians (42.96%) slightly more than PH leaders (40.19%). It mostly cited sources from the MCA, including the MCA President Wee Ka Siong and the MCA candidate for the by-election Wee Jeck Seng. In addition,

Table 7.3 News sources

News sources	*The Star* (n = 25) %	*Sin Chew* (n = 519) %	*Harian Metro* (n = 110) %	*Malaysiakini* (n = 233) %
Pakatan Harapan	9.76	40.19	43.56	36.30
Barisan Nasional	36.59	42.96	10.89	30.05
Independent candidate	0	2.96	6.93	0.96
Election Commission	12.20	3.52	12.87	4.81
Government agencies	4.88	0.37	3.96	2.16
Police	4.88	2.41	10.89	0.72
NGOs and associations	2.43	3.15	0	2.16
General public	26.83	3.89	9.9	18.99
Others	2.43	0.56	0.99	3.85

Sin Chew Daily also sourced from leaders of UMNO. For PH sources, *Sin Chew Daily* mostly quoted the leaders from DAP. The most predominant source employed by *Harian Metro* was the leaders of PH (43.56%), and most of them were leaders from Bersatu. The second dominant source used by *Harian Metro* was the Election Commission of Malaysia (12.87%). The opposition leaders and police attributed for 10.89%, respectively, as the third dominant source for *Harian Metro.*

The Star in its reporting quoted the opposition the most (39.74%), followed by the general public (26.82%), the Election Commission (12.19%) and only (9.73%) for PH. *The Star* in its reporting of the opposition gave equal coverage to UMNO and MCA with (14.63%), respectively. For PH, Sabah's Warisan Party was the most quoted. The role of the general public was noteworthy in *The Star's* reporting. The top three sources cited by *Malaysiakini* were PH (36.30%), followed by the opposition (30.05%) and the general public (18.99%). Bersatu, DAP and PKR were given the most coverage within PH, while UMNO and MCA dominated the coverage for the opposition. The party leadership and the candidates within PH and the opposition were prominently quoted in its coverage. *Malaysiakini* also gave prominence to the views of the general public who were voters in the constituency (Table 7.3).

7.6.3 News Frames

Each of the newspaper had undertaken a different framing approach in reporting the Tanjung Piai by-election. The most salient frame found in *Sin Chew Daily*'s coverage of the Tanjung Piai by-election was "Criticism of PH" (31.00%). Most of

Table 7.4 News frames

Frames	*The Star* (n = 58) %	*Sin Chew* (n = 600) %	*Harian Metro* (n = 111) %	*Malaysiakini* (n = 346) %
Credentials and future direction of Pakatan Harapan	7.27	13.17	27.03	16.76
Criticism of Pakatan Harapan	23.64	31.00	1.80	27.46
Political strategies of other competing parties/independent individuals	20.00	14.50	8.11	10.70
Conflict	10.91	11.50	0.90	19.36
Public opinion and commentary	25.45	14.17	3.60	9.25
Politicians as individual	1.82	1.33	2.70	8.67
Others	10.91	14.33	55.86	7.80

the criticism came from MCA leaders, Chinese NGOs and column article writers. The condemnation centres around several issues, namely the failure of DAP in defending Chinese interests; cowardice of DAP to speak up within PH; refusal to subsidise UTAR and TARUC; teaching khat calligraphy (*Jawi*) in vernacular schools; failure in recognising the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC); failure to materialise earlier promises by the PH government; racism of Mahathir; Islamisation; corruption of the PH government during the by-election campaign; bad economy and internal conflicts within PH (Table 7.4).

In an editorial published by *Sin Chew Daily*, it was mentioned that 95% of Chinese voters supported PH in GE14 but they did not receive the same favourable treatment in return (*Sin Chew Daily*, 2 November 2019a). In another editorial, it was mentioned that both PH and BN failed to eradicate racism after GE14. On one hand, Bersatu brought back the topic of *bumiputera* (son of the soil) policy, defended the radical Indian Islamic preacher Zakir Naik and participated in the MDC. On the other hand, UMNO moved towards the right and caused Malay politics to be even more conservative. This implied that the establishment of a two-party system failed to bring about more democracy and equality but generated inequality instead. In addition, the editorial pointed out that PH was afraid to offend Malay voters and hence did not adopt a moderate path. This in turn gave more opportunities to Muafakat Nasional and other radical right-wing parties to fan ethnic issues (*Sin Chew Daily*, 16 November 2019b).

After the Tanjung Piai by-election, *Sin Chew Daily* published an editorial to analyse the results. It pointed out that strong public grievance led to a shared intention among the voters to "teach PH a lesson". This triggered the worst by-election result for PH, where it only obtained 26.7% of votes. The editorial mentioned that "nothing is more attractive than to teach PH a lesson and to release the anger of voters". It

added that there is no such legend as DAP controls the Chinese votes. It explained that the Chinese supported DAP because it has been fighting racism. However, when it became part of the government, DAP failed to materialise what it promised earlier. Consequently, the voters decided to tell DAP that they are watching the government and will not be manipulated (*Sin Chew Daily*, 19 November 2019c). A closer examination of *Sin Chew Daily*'s coverage revealed that the newspaper reported the Tanjung Piai by-election as a rivalry between DAP and MCA for Chinese votes, as well as a competition between Bersatu and UMNO for Malay votes.

In contrast, *Harian Metro* framed the Tanjung Piai by-election in a rather peaceful and harmonised manner. By adopting "Others" frame (55.86%), the newspaper mostly reported episodic information about the preparation for campaign, nomination or voting day; details of the nomination or voting day; and reminders from the Election Commission or police about election rules and regulations. In fact, there were quite a number of articles in *Harian Metro* that portrayed friendliness, tolerance, kindness, forgiveness and other virtues. For example, it was reported that the then Minister of Federal Territories Khalid Abdul Samad, who is in PKR, met his elder brother Shahrir Abdul Samad, who is a leader from UMNO. Nonetheless, it was reported that the difference in political ideology between the two brothers did not affect their sibling love for each other (*Harian Metro*, 2 November 2019a).

In another article, *Harian Metro* reported that the candidate from Bersatu, MCA and Gerakan met each other unexpectedly at a morning market during the campaign. The appearance of the three candidates was welcomed by the locals, and it was reported that the open-mindedness of the people enabled the three candidates and their party members to distribute pamphlets in a peaceful and friendly manner. *Harian Metro* also reported that there was no provocation, but each party had its own unique strength in attracting the voters' attention (*Harian Metro*, 3 November 2019b).

For *The Star*, the most prominent frames were "Public opinion and commentary" (24.13%) and "Criticism of PH" (22.41%). A major part of these frames were criticisms of the PH leadership and its performance post-GE14. Grievances from the Tanjung Piai community were also reflected pertaining to local issues as well as national level politics and decisions made by the senior politicians within their respective party. Several questions were raised about PH maintaining its coalition narrative (The Star, 2 November 2019a). Besides this, the "Chinese vote" swing factor was given coverage. Also highlighted under its "Political strategies of other competing parties/independent individuals" (18.96%) were the exemplary performance of Wee Jeck Seng in his previous term, as well as how voting BN will benefit the constituents. Several articles were also dedicated to the Election Commission's decision requiring police permit and if this was a fair decision (The Star, 13 November 2019b, 2019c). This issue was further highlighted by BERSIH (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections) (The Star, 14 November 2019d) and finally resolved when the Attorney General intervened to resolve it (The Star, 15 November 2019e).

In the column "Along the Watchtower" with the heading "Plenty at stake in Tanjung Piai", the dissatisfaction of the Chinese community towards the PH government was clear. The 15-month rule of PH was questioned, and disappointment was expressed in relation to Mahathir's leadership, laws such as SOSMA, Zakir Naik,

failure to recognise UEC, removal of funding for UTAR/TARUC, khat calligraphy and ICERD (*The Star*, 13 November 2019b, 2019c). Speculation of which party was subservient and how the community's role will be defined in future were also discussed.

The first editorial column in *The Star* focussed on post-election analysis with a focus on Mahathir's leadership and the performance of the PH government. Much of the article was centred on how the voters wanted to teach PH a lesson, as a result of their unfulfilled promises, policies and actions since GE14. A key point to highlight was the statement that Tanjung Piai will go down in record as the worst performance for any ruling coalition in a parliamentary by-election in Malaysia (The Star, 18 November 2019f, 2019g). Another salient point was that the Chinese voters accepted that MCA's working relationship with PAS, if it meant to bring down PH.

Another post-election editorial in *The Star* contributed by the editor-in-chief of *Sin Chew Daily* highlighted the staggering results of how PH, the ruling government would continue to lose support. The writer highlighted issues with PH that brought about its downfall while emphasising how MCA was rekindling the support of the Chinese community and was a party to be reckoned with (*The Star*, 18 November 2019f, 2019g).

The most prominent frame used in *Malaysiakini's* coverage was criticism of PH (27.46%). The criticism centred around the PH leadership, its inability to fulfil promises post-GE14, freebies offered by PH, which party dominated the coalition, internal problems between DAP and Bersatu, and the disgruntlement of PKR members against Bersatu. Through its frames, *Malaysiakini* draws attention to the internal problems within PH, specifically the dispute between the Perak Chief Minister and DAP, in which, he expressed that he was fighting a desperate battle alone against DAP factions. Eleven articles were dedicated to this issue from 8 November 2019 to 13 November 2019. This issue was further exacerbated when the Perak PKR chief openly announced that Ahmad Faizal does not deserve to be Chief Minister (*Malaysiakini*, 8 November 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019h, 2019i, 2019j). The continuous display of internal strife was also brought to the fore with Bersatu Youth Chief Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman informing the public that the dispute between the Perak Chief Minister and DAP can be resolved within the PH "family" (*Malaysiakini*, 9 November 2019k). This was reiterated by Lim Kit Siang of DAP *(Malaysiakini*, 8 November 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019h, 2019i, 2019j).

Dissatisfaction within the party machinery also compelled its top leadership to urge all its lawmakers to present a united front for the sake of the coalition, at least until the end of the by-election (*Malaysiakini*, 9 November 2019k). DAP had its fair share of criticism, which was reflected by dissatisfaction among its members regarding the prosecution of one of its lawmakers in the LTTE case, a controversial comic and the disciplinary action against its party central executive member (*Malaysiakini*, 9 November 2019k).

Criticism from the voters and public towards who really controlled PH was reported with Bersatu President Muhyiddin Yassin reiterating that the PH government at the state and central levels is administered jointly and not dominated by a single

party. This was further strengthened by PH secretary-general Saifuddin Abdullah's statement that PH member parties are equal (*Malaysiakini*, 11 November 2019l).

In a reader's comment article, a reader mentioned that the conduct of PH in the Tanjung Piai by-election was far worse than UMNO, shamelessly indulging in the same manner of voter rewards that UMNO was previously criticised for. In addition, the reader pointed out that Bersatu, the party with the least seats, calls all the shots, with the other parties meekly wrapped around its little finger (*Malaysiakini*, 19 November 2019t).

Another reader commented that the DAP leaders abandoned their principles and went along with Mahathir's racist, divisive agenda. The reader criticised that after PH won the elections, Mahathir laughed off the election manifesto, saying unrealistic promises were made because they did not think they were going to win GE14 (*Malaysiakini*, 19 November 2019t).

Malaysiakini condemned PH's campaign strategies to reclaim lost ground. It was reported that PH pumped almost RM17 million into the Tanjung Piai by-election and most of it before nomination day. In addition, PH was criticised for its involvement in ethnic-based campaigning, something which it had criticised BN for in the past. This included PH's fliers urging voters at the talk attended by Mahathir to "vote Muslim first". Furthermore, many of those who attended Mahathir's talk turned up in PH colours, suggesting that they were partly workers who might not necessarily be voters, but the crowd size appeared to have a psychological effect on the locals (*Malaysiakini*, 15 November 2019p).

Conflict was the second most prominent frame, where criticisms towards competing political parties were reported. The tensions between PH and the opposition were most prominent, while minimal conflicts were reported for the Gerakan and Pan-Malaysian Islamic Front (BERJASA) candidates. Issues related to the Johor bicycle tragedy (*Malaysiakini*, 8 November 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019h, 2019i, 2019j), frictions between MCA and DAP leadership as well as competing candidates were reported (*Malaysiakini*, 9 November 2019k). *Malaysiakini* highlighted Wee Jeck Seng's incompetence when he served the constituency in the 13th Dewan Rakyat proceedings, where he only engaged in debates 11 times and only spoke for 19 min yearly hence warranting the name "check-in Seng". In addition, Wee Jeck Seng's alleged links to the vehicle entry permit (VEP) were also featured (*Malaysiakini*, 6 November 2019b).

The credentials and future direction of PH were the third most prominent frame. The top leadership, including the Prime Minister Mahathir was seen cajoling the voters to put their trust in PH (*Malaysiakini*, 13 November 2019n). The PH government was framed as a government that is committed in resolving all problems and dissatisfaction faced by all ethnicities in the country. MCA reiterated that Muafakat Nasional was well received by all the component parties, and PAS had shown support to MCA's nominee, which strengthened the future of BN (*Malaysiakini*, 13 November 2019n).

Addressing the lessons and reflections gained through the failure in the Tanjung Piai by-election, DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang said that his party and PH accepted the devastating result, in which, voters spoke not only on behalf of themselves but of the

country and about their frustration and unhappiness at the pace of reforms since the 2018 elections (*Malaysiakini*, 17 November 2019r). In another opinion article, the author wrote that the Tanjung Piai by-election was PH's ninth electoral outing since GE14 and its fourth defeat after Cameron Highlands, Semenyih and Rantau. The author remarked that in the Tanjung Piai by-election, PH was drowned by a wave of protest votes that cut across ethnic lines, with a substantial number of Malays and Chinese shifting towards BN. Notably, Chinese-majority polling districts were abandoning PH at a rate more than double than that of Malay majority polling districts (*Malaysiakini*, 17 November 2019s). In another opinion article, the author wrote how the Tanjung Piai by-election further demonstrated how non-Malay political structures are merely proxies for Malay hegemons, hence indicating his frustration (*Malaysiakini*, 4 November 2019a) In the Yoursay article, the voice of the grassroots was reflected indicating the voters' prerogative in casting support for a candidate that can best represent them. Meanwhile praises were also seen by the public for the deceased assemblyman Dr Md Farid Md Farik, as well as previous assemblyman Wee Jeck Seng (*Malaysiakini*, 11 November 2019l, 2019m).

In addition, former Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak called *Malaysiakini* a "spin expert" when MCA President Wee Ka Siong criticised *Malaysiakini* for taking BN's Tanjung Piai by-election candidate Wee Jeck Seng's Facebook post "out of context". This happened after the online news portal translated Jeck Seng's Chinese-only Facebook post into Bahasa Malaysia, in which he wrote "MCA unites to oppose Jawi and defend Kolej Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. Is that playing racial issues?" However, after *Malaysiakini* translated and published his post, he amended it to read "MCA unites to oppose the addition of Jawi khat (calligraphy) in the Bahasa Malaysia curriculum in Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools and to defend Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman. Is that playing racial issues?" *Malaysiakini* reported that neither Najib nor Ka Siong acknowledged that Jeck Seng's post had been edited but the old and amended version can still be viewed as Facebook keeps a record of all edits (*Malaysiakini*, 15 November 2019q).

7.6.4 Valence

Sin Chew Daily was rather critical (44.70%) towards PH and Mahathir in its coverage. It is noteworthy that 71.4% of its column articles, and 100% of its editorials carried a critical valence. In contrast, *Harian Metro* adopted a neutral stance (60.00%) in its reporting. The findings reflected that *Sin Chew Daily* mostly condemned PH and Mahathir for not looking into the interest of the Chinese in particular, and the people in general. *Harian Metro* only reported information of Tanjung Piai by-election, and hence, its coverage was neutral.

The Star reporting displayed a high percentage of (51.72%) of neutral, followed by critical valence (48.83%). The neutral stand percentage was high as a number of articles covered the Election Commission. Both its columns and editorials were 100% critical of PH by highlighting its frustration towards a government that was

Table 7.5 Valence in reporting

Valence	*The Star* ($n = 29$) %	*Sin Chew* ($n = 519$) %	*Harian Metro* ($n = 110$) %	*Malaysiakini* ($n = 247$) %
Supportive	3.45	16.96	28.18	14.98
Critical	48.83	44.70	11.82	46.97
Neutral	51.72	38.34	60.00	38.05

indifferent to its voters' needs and its inability to fulfil economic and political pledges. Hence, the reporting implied that the PH government should be taught a lesson for not living up to its electoral promises. *Malaysiakini* was critical in its reporting towards PH (46.97%), followed by neutral (38.05%) and only (14.98%) supportive (Table 7.5).

7.7 Conclusion

The newspapers' framing of the Tanjung Piai by-election expressed numerous categories of populist rhetoric. *Sin Chew Daily* was more aligned to BN, and hence, the source it quoted frequently was from MCA and UMNO. It successfully framed the betrayal felt by the Chinese as PH and specifically DAP failed to act on Chinese-centric issues, such as recognising the Unified Examination Certificate, inclusion of khat calligraphy in the primary school syllabus and the holding back of funding for UTAR/TARUC. In addition, the news was framed to highlight the racism of Mahathir, Islamisation, corruption of the PH government during the by-election campaign, stagnant economy and internal conflicts within PH. Chinese voters in Tanjung Piai were widely seen as the kingmakers in this by-election as they make up 42% of voters, so the grim picture painted by *Sin Chew Daily's* news frames may have contributed to PH's dismal performance. Similarly, only 9.73% of the source for the coverage in *The Star* was from PH, and the news were mainly criticisms of PH's bad leadership and its failure to implement promised reforms. *Harian Metro* took the middle ground and was less critical of either party as it was presumed that the large Malay electorate would vote for BN's candidate which was endorsed by Muafakat Nasional. *Malaysiakini*, though PH-friendly, was also critical of PH's leadership and unfulfilled promises.

Generally, the four newspapers though targeted to different ethnic groups, framed PH as a disappointment for being unable to live up to their GE14 election promises but they commended MCA's ability to reconnect with the Chinese constituents. The negative representation of PH in the dailies delegitimised its image as the Coalition of Hope. In contrast, the positive representation of MCA legitimised their candidate Wee Jeck Seng as a worthy Member of Parliament for the constituency of Tanjung Piai.

The media frames identified in the newspaper articles revealed that it incorporated many of the categories that previously studied authors (Tan, 2019; Yang Razali Kassim, 2019; Chin, 2020; Izzuddin, 2020) highlighted about PH's failings. The defeat in the Tanjung Piai by-election was a clear indication of the growing frustration towards PH. It marked the beginning of the end for the PH government as less than four months later the PH government collapsed by a coup d'état of sorts that took place between 21 and 24 February 2020.

Finally, the media frames in this research were able to foster understanding of the political climate and create legitimacy for change. This study may be a baseline for future research. The inclusion of analysis of political speeches, as well as interviews with the public, may provide a better understanding of the effects of public opinion and strengthen the findings of this study.

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Prasana Rosaline Fernandez is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Advertising, Xiamen University Malaysia. Her areas of research include risk and health discourse, green marketing, branding, and advertising. She can be contacted at prasana. fernandez@xmu,edu.my.

Yang Lai Fong is an Associate Professor at the Programme of Media and Communication Studies, Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College. Her areas of research include media and ethnicity, media and social problems, media and diplomacy, political communication and media sociology. She can be contacted at laifongyang@uic.edu.cn.

Usha Devi Rajaratnam is a Senior Lecturer at School of Pre-University Studies, Taylor's College. She has over 20 years of experience in the field of academia. Her research interests

are political communication, women empowerment and intercultural communication. She can be contacted at UshaDevi. Rajaratnam@taylors.edu.my.

Chapter 8
‘Remember Our Race, Our Religion and Our Progeny’: An Argumentation Analysis of Malay-Language Newspapers During General Election Campaigns

Siti Nurnadilla Mohamad Jamil

Abstract This chapter focuses on discursive strategies of legitimation in mainstream Malay-language newspapers during the 13th and 14th general election campaigns. It analyses how editorials and columns published in *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* constructed arguments during the campaign periods from 20 April to 4 May 2013 and 28 April to 8 May 2018. The chapter examines how particular relations of power were enacted, reproduced and legitimised within Malaysia’s government-owned mainstream media, where control was institutionalised. To contextualise and illuminate the discursive and social practices of both campaigns, the analysis is grounded in the discourse-historical approach’s conception of argumentation and pragma-dialectics’ ten rules for rational dispute and constructive arguing. This chapter, therefore, looks at the argumentation strategies employed in editorials and columns serving as a methodical justification of validity claims reflected linguistically using speech acts. The findings demonstrate the politics of fear that characterises much of Malaysian right-wing rhetoric, particularly how fear of the future was employed by Barisan Nasional as it struggled to maintain and retain legitimacy during both campaigns.

Keywords Editorials · Columns · Election campaign · Legitimation · Argumentation analysis · Politics of fear

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the discursive legitimatory micro-politics of the strongest and oldest right-wing party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)—how they produced and reproduced their ideologies and agenda in campaigning through editorials and columns in the Malay-language mainstream newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*. It compares the election campaign

S. N. Mohamad Jamil (✉)
Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak, Malaysia
e-mail: nadillajamil@iium.edu.my

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in 2013, where the Barisan Nasional (BN) government (with UMNO *primus inter pares*) successfully maintained its legitimacy with that in 2018 when it failed to do the same as Malaysians voted out the coalition that had been in power since independence in 1957. Since the process of legitimation always involves argumentation, i.e. "by providing arguments that explain our social actions, ideas, thoughts, declarations, etc." (Reyes, 2011, p. 782), I focus on the arguments employed in the editorials and columns of Malay-language national (but government-owned) newspapers. This chapter attempts to unmask the dominant ideologies which appear as 'neutral', which hold on to assumptions that stayed largely unchallenged in Malaysia during the campaign election periods in 2013 and 2018 as the government searched for support and approval to maintain power.

Fairclough (1995, p. 2), following Foucault (1975), defines power not only as the asymmetries that exist between individuals participating in the same discursive event, but also in terms of how people have different capacities to control how texts and thus discourses are produced, distributed and consumed. Therefore, this study considers texts as sites fighting for dominance and hegemony, as "power is legitimised or delegitimised in discourses" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 89). In democratic societies, it is crucial to have disciplinary power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations and social identities, as opposed to sovereign power (see Foucault, 1975, p. 223), or consent as opposed to coercion. Here, this chapter does not only analyse power in terms of resources but also in terms of the force of argument, the authority of reason or, in general, discursive power. From this perspective, power does not only claim the right to rule but also that its decisions and actions are reasonable.

In contrast to news reports which typically focus on facts, information and details, opinion genres like editorials and columns are more concerned with making sense of the 'what-s' by concentrating on the 'why-s' (i.e. meaning construction). Editorials and columns share one primary social function (or mission), i.e. they both aim to persuade their readers; hence, they will be treated as one genre in this chapter. Through editorials and columns in *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*, meanings as well as what is right, reasonable and factual are negotiated, and public opinion is formed, shaped, articulated and altered—influencing debate and promoting social interaction between writers and audiences during the campaigns (see van Dijk, 1996; Le, 2004; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008, p. 70). Against this background, this chapter views editorials and columns as argumentation. Here, there are four characteristics of argumentation or argumentative discourse that need to be considered (see Richardson, 2007, pp. 155–6):

1. Argumentation is *active*
   It is an activity in which participants use language to *do* certain things, whether this is advancing their point of view or attacking that of someone else. On this point, Perelman (1979) reiterates that "it must not be forgotten that all argumentation aims somehow at modifying an existing state of affairs" (p. 11), whether this be mental, social or political.
2. Argumentation is *social*

It is a social activity in which argumentation moves are "not just the expression of an individual assessment, but a contribution to a communication process between persons or groups who exchange ideas with one another in order to resolve a difference of opinion" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 55).

3. Argumentation is a *joint process* between participants
   It is an interaction, requiring participants to both produce and consume argumentation, to compose arguments and to analyse those of their opponent; argumentation can only work when participants consent to being persuaded.
4. Argumentation requires *certain standards* by which the quality of the argumentative language can be measured (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 56).

Argumentation is aimed at resolving differences of opinion, occurs in a particular material social context and is realised through the participants offering arguments which they believe support their standpoint and which aim to exert an influence on the opinions, attitudes and even behaviours of others. However, argumentation is not a free-for-all, with participants offering any argument and concluding that they have proved their standpoint. It is unreasonable for Person A to threaten Person B and then, once Person B is too scared to defend his/her standpoint, to declare that Person A has won the argument, because this is an approach of violence, not persuasion. Therefore, there are standards, or rules of argumentation, and "these rules should aim to regulate both the *product* of arguments as texts and the *process* of argument as an activity" (Richardson, 2007, p. 156) and, in other words, to regulate the content of arguments and the conduct of arguers. Such pro-active, opinionated discourse, according to McNair (2000) has:

> …the power to set the dominant political agenda, as elaborated over weeks, months and years…amounting to extended narrative of unity and division, success and failure, rise and fall. In this capacity the institutions of the press take the lead in establishing the dominant interpretative frameworks within which ongoing political events are made sense of. (p. 30)

Approval and support for the established dominant political agenda give a government legitimacy. Legitimation is negotiated in society in the sense that citizens cast their votes, i.e. grant legitimacy, in return for certain benefits. Fairclough (2003) views legitimation as the "widespread acknowledgement of the legitimacy of explanations and justifications for how things are and how things are done" (p. 219). Hence, elections contribute to providing justification for the existence of a regime, thus consolidating its legitimacy. In this chapter, my analysis is based on these research questions:

- What discursive argumentation strategies were employed in Malay-language editorials and columns to legitimise the UMNO/BN government during the campaign periods in GE13 and GE14?
- How did Malay-language editorials and columns communicate their validity claims when supporting the UMNO/BN government in 2013 and 2018?

In what follows, I explain my data and draw on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and its discursive argumentation strategy (Reisigl, 2018; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016).

8.2 Data

Editorials and columns were collected from four paid-for daily Malay-language mainstream newspapers, along with their Sunday editions, *Utusan Malaysia, Mingguan Malaysia (S), Berita Harian* and *Berita Ahad (S),* during the GE13 and GE14 campaign periods (see Table 8.1).

This collection was initially based on the Malay-language print newspapers with the highest circulations in 2013, as shown in Table 8.2.

Even though *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian,* including their Sunday editions, suffered a drop in print circulation of more than 50% in 2018, a 2018 Reuters Digital News Report showed *Berita Harian Online* still ranking first among Malay-language news portals in Malaysia with 24% of weekly usage by local users, followed by *Utusan Online* (17%). By mainstream, I refer to national traditional newspapers, with digital versions of the printed newspapers online, that circulate throughout the whole country, as opposed to local newspapers serving a city or region, with broadsheet content, as opposed to tabloid, sensationalistic news.

Table 8.1 Totals of editorials and columns per newspaper during the campaign period

		GE13 20 April–4 May 2013		GE14 28 April–8 May 2018		Total
1	Utusan Malaysia/Mingguan Malaysia	105	243	139	250	493
2	Berita Harian/Berita Ahad	138		111		

Table 8.2 Mainstream newspapers' circulation in 2013 and 2018 (per issue)

		2013		2018	
	Print newspaper	Average newspaper circulation	Total	Average newspaper circulation	Total
1	Utusan Malaysia	199,314	590,322	97,393	296,547
2	Mingguan Malaysia (S)	391,008		199,154	
3	Berita Harian	173,076	372,305	63,471	114,661
4	Berita Harian Ahad (S)	199,229		51,190	

S = Sunday edition.
Source Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) Malaysia (2016, 2018).

Utusan Malaysia is a Malay-language daily first published in 1967, a Romanised version of the jawi-scripted *Utusan Melayu*, initially published in 1939. These newspapers advocate Malay rights and articulate issues pertaining to Malay interests and development. UMNO's control of *Utusan Melayu* began with the appointment of UMNO strongman, Ibrahim Fikri, by the party leadership to run the newspaper in July 1961. The newspaper's former editor, Said Zahari (2001), wrote in his memoir that:

> …only with a free policy could Utusan Melayu be the voice of the people, fighting for the interests of the people…But UMNO wanted Utusan Melayu to be totally different. That Utusan Melayu should belong to UMNO and should only serve that political party. (p. 73)

During GE13 and GE14, UMNO still held controlling shares in Utusan Melayu (M) Berhad (UMB) (Hafiz Yatim, 13 August 2012; Anuar, 2014; The Star, 8 February 2019; Ramli, 2019). Its newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia,* and the Sunday edition, *Mingguan Malaysia*, are those among mainstream newspapers that reflect the agenda and ideology of the ruling coalition, BN. It was available as a 32-page printed broadsheet as well as online at: http://www.utusan.com.my/ until UMB officially ceased operations in October 2019 following years of financial losses (see Ong, 28 September 2019; Tan, 19 August 2019). *Utusan Malaysia* returned under new ownership of media tycoon Syed Mokhtar AlBukhary in July 2020 (*The Straits Times*, 21 July 2020).

Berita Harian and *Berita Ahad* are published by the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd (NSTP). During GE13, the NSTP was largely owned by one of the UMNO's allies, Media Prima Berhad, with a 43 per cent equity stake. MPB's largest shareholder was Gabungan Kesturi Sdn Bhd, an UMNO-owned company (see Ding, Lay & Surin, 2013). In 2018, UMNO still held a direct 7.96 per cent stake in NSTP via Gabungan Kesturi Sdn Bhd and Altima Inc. (see Ramli, 2019). They are available online at: http://www.bharian.com.my/.

The translations of Malay-language editorials and columns from *Utusan Malaysia*, *Mingguan Malaysia*, *Berita Harian* and *Berita Ahad* from Bahasa Malaysia into English are my own. The process of translating the material was two-tiered: it was initially done in a side-by-side procedure with another Malay-language speaker, in which possible wordings were discussed before the final translated texts were verified by a second Malay-language speaker. The translation was intended to be as literal as possible, except where modifications were necessary in order to preserve conversational style. However, Malay-English translation poses its own translation challenges as these two languages come from different language families (see, e.g. Azmi et al., 2016). Therefore, maintaining equivalence when translating Malay-language content is not a straightforward task, especially when it involves inappropriate equivalent words (collocation aspect) and equivalent words according to field as well as cultural differences. Since translation is an interpretive act, some meaning may get lost in the translation process (see the discussion in Van Nes et al., 2010). Therefore, I analysed the original articles in Bahasa Melayu, instead of in the translated texts, to minimise potential limitations in the analysis.

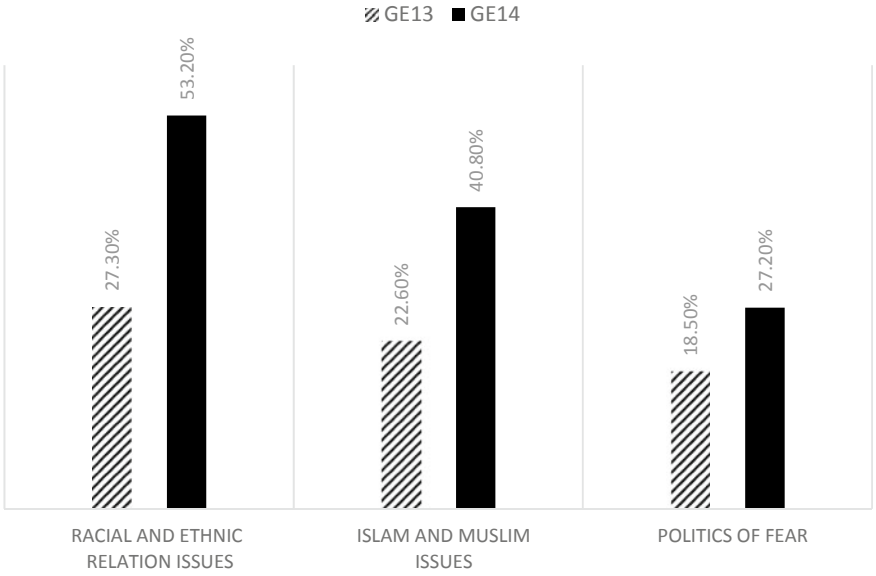

Fig. 8.1 Key topics discussed in Malay-language editorials and columns during GE13 and GE14

The selection of texts for qualitative analysis was based on the most frequently recurring themes previously identified in a quantitative content analysis conducted prior to this study. Across the sample as a whole from 20 April to 5 May 2013 and 28 April to 8 May 2018, racial and ethnic relations accounted for around a striking 40 per cent ($n = 197$) of the discussion, almost the same amount of attention that was devoted to Islam and Muslims (32%, $n = 157$). Of note was the substantially high number of politics of fear articles (23%, $n = 113$) during both campaign periods, as illustrated in Fig. 8.1.

The preliminary quantitative findings speak in a rather interesting way (which I explore more in subsequent sections) with regard to how topics of racial and ethnic relations, Islam and Muslims and the politics of fear were foregrounded in mainstream editorials and columns to legitimise the UMNO/BN government during GE13 and GE14. Against the background provided earlier, such negotiation of legitimacy in an opinion genre like editorials and columns is argumentative in nature, as it typically involves persuasion through the reinforcement and clarification of existing ideas, as well as consideration of various viewpoints during the campaign periods. Since opinion, as a form of complex verbal action, is goal-oriented, it must be defended and supported, which explains why they exhibit certain argumentative structures and strategies, such as proving (or making) their own positions plausible and/or others' untenable. The selected data, therefore, were further analysed using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) discursive strategy, i.e. argumentation, which is summarised in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 Summary of argumentation strategies in the DHA (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016)

Discursive strategy	Purpose	Devices	Linguistic function
ARGUMENTATION	justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness	• topoi (formal or more content-related) • fallacies	Ways of reasoning Ways of persuading

8.3 Argumentation Strategies

Argumentation in this chapter draws on Reisigl (2014, see also Reisigl & Wodak, 2016; Reisigl, 2018), whose conception of argumentation follows Kopperschmidt's Habermasian theoretical framework.[1] According to Houtlosser (2001, p. 41), in Kopperschmidt's (1985) view, when assertive or directive speech acts are performed, they imply a guarantee of a legitimate underlying validity claim. Performing such speech acts implies one's obligation to defend them, when asked to do so. However, Kopperschmidt (2000 in Reisigl, 2014) convincingly argues, which is a point I wish to reemphasise, that "argumentation is not an autonomous speech act per se" (p. 70). Although validity claims of truth as well as of normative rightness are prototypically performed by or take the form of assertive and directive speech acts at the level of pragmatic deep structure, "the literally uttered secondary illocutionary act often deviates from the intended primary illocutionary act" (Reisigl, 2014, p. 70). Therefore, Kopperschmidt (2000, p. 59 in Reisigl, 2014, p. 70) highlights that all types of speech acts can fulfil an argumentative function under certain conditions, which complicates the argumentation analysis discussed in the section below.

This chapter also integrates a normative dimension in the analysis to distinguish between reasonable and fallacious argumentation. Key to argumentation strategies in the DHA is argumentative *topoi* (singular *topos*) (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2016; Reisigl, 2018). Topoi can be described as central parts of argumentation that belong to premises, as illustrated in Fig. 8.2.

Since argumentation is frequently enthymemic, i.e. shortened on the linguistic surface structure (Reisigl, 2014, p. 72), topoi are not always expressed explicitly but can be made explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases, such as 'if x, then y' or 'y, because x' (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, pp.6 9–80; Wodak et al., 2009 [1999], pp. 36–42; Wodak, 2015, p. 53). Argumentation schemes can be reasonable or fallacious; if the latter is the case, we label them *fallacies*. A fallacy is "an underlying, systematic kind of error or deceptive tactic of argument used to deceptively get the best of

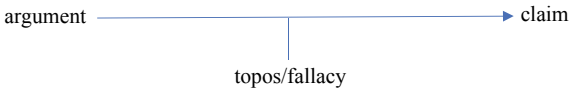

Fig. 8.2 The relationship between topos/fallacy, argument and claim in a simplified functional approach to argumentation

a speech partner" (Walton, 2000, p. 1). However, KhosraviNik (2015) asserts that "distinguishing reasonable from fallacious, identifying topoi is not an objective, formulaic process" (p. 112), because "it is not always easy to distinguish precisely without context knowledge whether an argumentation scheme has been employed as reasonable topos or as fallacy" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 110). And to say that an argument is fallacious, according to Walton (2000), is a strong charge as it entails "more than just the claim that the argument is weak or has been insufficiently supported by good evidence" (p. 25). A central normative basis for the DHA approach is pragma-dialectics with its ten commandments (or of reasonableness) for rational dispute and constructive arguing (see Reisigl, 2014, pp. 79–80). The ten rules are as follows (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2016; pp. 208–12):

1. The freedom rule (freedom from arguing): participants must not prevent each other from advancing or casting doubt on standpoints.
2. The burden-of-proof rule (obligation to give reasons): whoever advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so.
3. The standpoint rule (correct reference to previous discourse by the antagonist): an attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has been advanced by the protagonist.
4. The relevance rule (obligation to 'matter-of-factness'): a participant may defend her standpoint only by advancing argumentation related to that standpoint.
5. The unexpressed premise rule (correct reference to implicit premises): a participant can be held to the premises she leaves implicit; equally, an antagonist may not falsely suggest that a premise has been left unexpressed by the other participant.
6. The starting point rule (respect of shared starting points): a standpoint must be regarded as conclusively defended if the defence takes place by means of arguments belonging to the common starting point. A premise must not falsely be taken as a common starting point, and, conversely, a shared premise must not be rejected.
7. The validity rule (logical validity): the reasoning in the argumentation must be logically valid or must be capable of being valid by making explicit one or more unexpressed premises.
8. The argumentation scheme rule (use of plausible arguments and schemes of argumentation): a standpoint may not be regarded as conclusively defended if the defence does not take place by means of an appropriate argument scheme that is correctly applied.
9. The closure rule (acceptance of the discussion's results): the failed defence of a standpoint must result in a protagonist retracting the standpoint, and a successful defence of a standpoint must result in an antagonist retracting her doubts.
10. The usage rule (clarity of expression and correct interpretation): formulations must be neither puzzlingly vague nor confusingly ambiguous and must be interpreted as accurately as possible.

If any of these rules are violated, we no longer have sound topoi, but fallacies. Although the consequences of violating these rules may vary in their seriousness, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2016, pp. 212–14) maintain that every violation is a potential threat to a successful conclusion of the discussion. Therefore, "all violations of the rules are incorrect moves in critical discussion as it corresponds roughly to the various kinds of defects traditionally referred to as *fallacies*" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987, p. 284). The following section discusses how certain ideological inputs were weaved into the selected editorials and columns through the employment of discursive argumentation strategies designed to legitimise the UMNO/BN government's hegemony through racial, religion and fear sentiments during the campaign periods in both 2013 and 2018.

8.4 Analysis and Discussion

During Malaysia's GE13 and GE14 campaign periods, the slew of legal controls and indirect or direct mainstream newspapers' ownership helped to maintain the BN government's hegemony. All mainstream print newspapers were pro-government, including the newspapers selected in this study, as discussed earlier. Any criticism of the government can be interpreted as sedition under a provision in the Sedition Act 1948, which states that a statement will be deemed seditious if it tends to cause disaffection against any Ruler or the government (see Sect. 3(1) of the Sedition Act 1948). With regard to offences, Sects. 4(1)(b) and 4(1)(c) state that anyone commits sedition if they utter any seditious words, or print, publish, sell, offer for sale, distribute or reproduce any seditious publication, with 'seditious' being defined as anything with a 'seditious tendency' (see Malayan Law Journal, 2006). Therefore, to begin with, I argue that, with homogenous positive government and negative opposition texts in 2013 and 2018, these Malay-language newspapers had already violated rule one of the ten commandments, i.e. *the freedom rule* (freedom from arguing), as only pro-government opinions were published while those opposing it (or favouring the opposition) were not.

Imposing certain restrictions on opinions that may be advanced or called into question restricts the fundamental right of the other party to advance or cast doubts on whatever opinions they choose. As such, the violation of one or more of these rules leaves us with fallacies and no longer with sound topoi. The following will discuss the corresponding key fallacies used as discursive strategies of legitimation in Malay-language mainstream editorials and columns during the campaign periods in 2013 and 2018. Here, overlapping arguments in Malay-language editorials and columns during both GE13 and GE14 campaigns feature a presumptive type of deductive reasoning concerned with hypothetical conjectures about what will, may or might happen in the future. Consider, first, Extract 1 from *Berita Harian* during GE13:

Extract 1 (Mat Lutu, 4 May 2013, *Berita Harian*).

Ingat bangsa, ingat agama, ingat anak cucu Mat Lutu cuma nak ingatkan kita semua. Ingat bangsa, ingat agama, ingat anak cucu. Jangan ikut sedap hati, ikut marah, ikut benci. Kita bukan kerengga. Kita manusia. Kena pakai otak waras. Jangan korbankan bangsa kita…jangan pecah belahkan anak bangsa. Jangan kerana nak menang, hina bangsa sendiri. Burukkan bangsa sendiri. Pemimpin bangsa sendiri…Mat Lutu nak ingatkan jangan kita rosakkan masa depan anak cucu kita. Jangan sampai kita ikut cakap helang makan buah belolok. Jangan kerana kita nak menang kita hancurkan bangsa kita, agama kita, masa depan anak cucu kita. Mat Lutu doakan kita mengundi dengan tenang esok. Ingat dalam otak kita, maruah bangsa kita, kesucian agama kita dan masa depan anak cucu kita. Jangan fikir lain. Kita pakat tolak mana-mana yang tak boleh bagi tiga jaminan itu. Kita pakat tolak parti yang bersengkongkol dengan musuh kita dan mereka sendiri kerana nak menang. Kita tolak pemimpin yang tak bermoral. Kita tolak orang yang ikut fahaman liberal serba boleh	**(Remember [our] race, remember [our] religion, remember [our] progeny)** I just want to remind all of us. Remember [our] race, remember [our] religion, remember [our] progeny. Don't follow our heart, our anger, our hatred. We are not weaver ants. We are humans. [We] must use our sanity (literally a sane brain). Don't sacrifice our race. Don't sacrifice the future of the children of our race. Don't insult your own race, the leader of your own race just for the sake of winning…I just want to remind [you], don't ruin our progeny's future. We shouldn't go to the extent where we listen too much to what others have to say because, in the end, it will ruin us [idiom: jangan sampai kita ikut cakap helang makan buah belolok]. Don't let us ruin our own race, our own religion and our own progeny's future just for the sake of winning. I pray that we can vote in peace tomorrow. Remember this: the dignity of our race, the sanctity of our religion and the future of our progeny. Don't think about anything else. Let us together reject those who can't guarantee us these three things. Let us together reject the party that is abetting our enemies just for the sake of winning. Let us reject immoral leaders. Let us reject those who have a liberal view about everything

At the speech-act level, the extract above has the illocutionary force of a directive, in which the columnist, Mat Lutu, commits himself to a validity claim of normative rightness. It performs the function of conveying the writer's plan to the reader, who is expected to do what the writer wants her to do. It exhibits a world-to-word direction of fit. The headline: **Ingat bangsa, ingat agama, ingat anak cucu** serves as an instruction or reminder ['something [such as an order, advice etc.] which has to be done or presented to someone else' (KPBM, 1989, p. 513)]. This three-part list of instructions to think about [our] race, [our] religion and [our] progeny is repeated throughout the excerpt. The explicit verb choice '*ingat'* used in Extract 1 presupposes that the reminder is not simply focused on *thinking*, but, more specifically, on *remembering*, which forms a link between past and future thoughts (via present thoughts). The use of *remind* as a verb does not merely trigger something *into* consciousness, but something that *is already held in* one's consciousness being emphasised throughout GE13 and repeated in GE14. For example, in Extract 2 from *Utusan Malaysia* in 2018, the writer uses a near synonym of 'think', '*renungkan'* (contemplate):

Extract 2 (28 April 2018, *Utusan Malaysia*).

Renungkanlah wajah-wajah anak bangsa dan harganya apa yang kita nikmati sekarang. Janganlah musnahkan semua itu	[Let's] ***contemplate*** the faces of our nation's children and the price of what we enjoy now. Don't destroy all that

Such usage of the specific verb for cogitation, '*renungkan'* (contemplate), in Extract 2 still displays the world-to-word direction of fit, like 'think', 'consider' and 'remember', albeit with a degree of semantic 'directive' difference, which merely serves as a reminder on one level, but on another level, this speech act also functions as a threat through its essentially enthymematic argument, in the sense that it contains non-explicitly stated premises. This therefore changes the world-to-word direction of fit to world-to-word-to-world (double direction of fit), in which the world is altered to fit the propositional content by representing the world as being so altered through the declarative illocution of threats. This is also an example of *petitio principii,* also known as *circular argument/ reasoning,* in which what is controversial and in question, and thus has to be proved, is presupposed as the starting point of the argumentation. The fact that in the argument it is assumed that what has to be proved has already been proved is linguistically hidden using varying formulations, i.e. paraphrasing of the same proposition in the premises and in the conclusion. While this is often more subtle in the campaign period in 2013, it is made more explicit and direct in the Malay-language op-eds during GE14 in 2018, as in Extract 3:
Extract 3 (Shahrizat, 2 May 2018, *Utusan Malaysia*).

Rakyat hanya ada dua pilihan iaitu memilih BN dipimpin oleh seorang pemimpin (Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak) yang kita kenal hati budi dan keikhlasannya atau pilih pembangkang dikuasai DAP…Pengundi perlu sedar bahawa jika gabungan pembangkang PKR menang PRU-14, bukan calon Melayu…yang memimpin negara sebaliknya ialah Penasihat DAP, Lim Kit Siang sebagai de facto *leader*	People only have two options, i.e. to choose BN which is led by a leader (Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak) whom we know inside out or to choose the opposition led by the DAP…Voters should realise that if the opposition PKR coalition wins GE-14, it will not be the Malay candidates…who will lead the country but the DAP Advisor, Lim Kit Siang as the de facto leader

The explicit declaration in Extract 3 reflects a formulation of a dogmatic view held by the writer who assumed that she had the authority to formulate a view which would bind the reader. Here, in contrast to the speech act 'inform' or 'announce', whose focus would be on information, the declaration in Extract 3 stresses the element of arbitrary decision, one which leaves no room for further discussion. It explicitly displays an illusion of choice which implies a certain finality, like a final verdict on the matter: vote for BN/Najib Razak (government) and you will be safe, vote for the opposition and you will be doomed.

The arguments employed in Extracts 1–3 are fallacious because they also violate rule 6, i.e. the starting point rule: a standpoint must be regarded as conclusively defended if the defence takes place by means of arguments belonging to a common starting point. All three arguments in the extracts above are tied to arguments about

the future, as will be further illustrated below, and arguments about the future are disseminated throughout Malay-language editorials and columns in GE13 and GE14, in which fear is aroused by depicting a personally relevant and significant threat of voting for the opposition, and then, there follows a description of a threat by outlining that voting for the government is effective and feasible to deter negative consequences. This disjunctive form of argumentation postulates only two choices, implicitly in Extracts 1–2 or explicitly in Extract 3: either maintain the status quo by voting for the government to stay in power, or all gains will be reversed, and a fearful outcome will occur. When the reader is presented with an either/or option, it is an indication of a fear-appeal argument through the explicit use of a device named 'dichotomisation', which is summarised in Table 8.4.

> **OPTION A:** If we do not follow the columnist's proposition in the present, i.e., vote for the government (Action A), it will lead to undesirable consequences, the future will be at risk.

Throughout the GE13 and GE14 campaign periods from 20 April to 4 May 2013 and 28 April to 8 May, respectively, projected events are constructed as variations of a conditional statement. That is, they follow an if/then construction, as illustrated in Table 8.4. In conditional statements, information in the apodosis (then-clause) is constructed as dependent for its realisation on the outcome of the situation presented in the protasis (if-clause). Palmer (1986) explains that the purpose of conditional sentences is not to state that "an event has occurred (or is occurring or will occur); the sentence merely indicates the dependence of the truth of one proposition on the truth of another" (p. 189). Or in slightly different terms, according to James (1982), the protasis sets up an imaginary world in which the proposition in the apodosis is the case. Information that is presented through a conditional statement, then, is presented as speculation about conditions and their contingencies. Dunmire (1997) suggests that what is significant here is how this conditional statement has been written such that the hypothetical and contingent status of the information in both the protasis and apodosis is suppressed.

> **OPTION B:** In contrast, if we do follow the columnist's proposition, the future of our race, our religion and our progeny will be in good hands. But the future is uncertain. Hence, rendering the future as known is paradoxical or, as Dunmire (2011) puts it, to "deny it as future, to place it as given, as past." (p. 40)

This relationship between Option A and Option B is summarised in Fig. 8.3. It shows how Malay-language editorials and columns legitimised their arguments during GE13 and GE14 through a sample timeline.

As illustrated above, during the general election campaign periods, the monolithic projection of the future in editorials and columns submits to the status quo and values the present in terms of its relation to the past. The tendency to conflate current achievements with glories of the past echoes a rhetoric of actuality that views the present as the result of the past and the foundation of the future. Since the future by definition involves epistemic uncertainty, such rhetoric operates on the supposition that "we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated" (Aristotle, 350BCE/2004, 1355a 5). Similarly, Fleischman (1982) explains that:

Table 8.4 Summary of conditional sentences used as threats in Malay-language editorials and columns

PROTASIS [the if-clause]		**APODASIS [*then*-clause]**	
		GE13 (2013)	**GE14 (2018)**
If [we do not vote for the government] If [we vote for the opposition] If [the government loses power]	+	**1. The future of our race (Malays)** • Our race will be sacrificed (4 May, BH) • The Malays will have nowhere else to go, they will never be able to be in the position they are now in government (21 April, UM) • 'Malaysian Malaysia' will be formed, where the backbone is the secular ideology of the 'equality' concept (28 April, MM) **2. The future of our religion (Islam)** • The word 'Allah' will be used by non-Muslims (to refer to their God) in the Malay-language Bible (28 April, MM) • *Shi'ite* teachings will be spread (28 April, MM) • Liberalism and pluralism will engulf the nation (28 April, MM) • Zionism will be established, as it is on the agenda to convert Muslims with their liberalism-pluralism understanding of religion (23 April, UM) • The country will be shared and plunge us all into a hole of curses by Allah (21 April, MM) • Malaysian Malaysia will be formed, where the backbone is the secular ideology of the 'equality' concept (28 April, MM) **3. The future of our progeny** • The children (of our race) will be divided. The future of our progeny will be ruined. The future of our progeny will be destroyed (22 April; 28 April, MM; 4 May, BH)	**1. The future of our race and our religion (Malays & Islam)** • The Malays will lose power (29 April, MM; 2 May, UM) • Islam will be under threat (1 May, UM) • DAP's Malaysia for Malaysian agenda will be continued (1 May, UM) • The Malays will continue to be exploited (1 May, BH; 2 May, UM) • DAP (i.e. the Chinese) will rule Malaysia (2 May, UM; 2 May, BH) • Malay institutions will be destroyed (2 May,UM) • Our race and our people will continue to be insulted and looked down upon (3 May, UM) • Our rights will automatically be denied (3 May, UM) • We can no longer defend our religion Islam (4 May, UM) **2. The future of our country** • Malaysia will be economically backward (28 April, UM) • Our national unity will be threatened, people will be divided (29 April, UM; 3 May, UM) • Malaysian ringgit will be depreciated (1 May, BH) • Malaysia will be a failed state (3 May, UM) • Malaysia will be in danger (7 May, BH) • The country will go bankrupt (8 May, UM) **3. The future of our progeny** • The future of our progeny will be bleak (1 May, UM29 April, BH; 7 May, UM)

UM= Utusan Malaysia; MM= Mingguan Malaysia; BH= Berita Harian

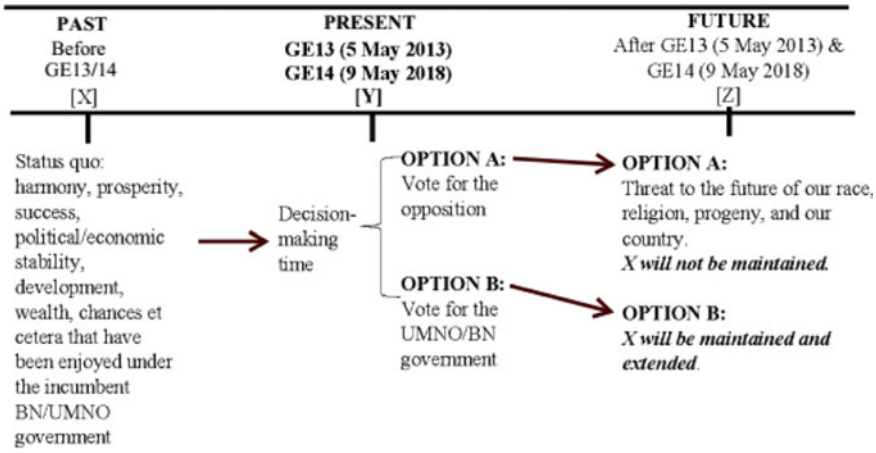

Fig. 8.3 Legitimation of arguments through time

> What purports to be a *statement* describing a future event is therefore, of necessity, a subjectively modalised utterance…The subjectivity factor is a crucial one, since the distinction drawn [between contingent and assumed events] depends not on any objective, ontological notion of "future reality" but on the *speaker's conviction* that the predicated event will at some future moment constitute reality. (p. 20)

However, given the role of campaign discourse in the political process, references to or threats about future developments and announcements or promises about future action should be expected. But, contrary to Fleischman (1982) and Dunmire (2011), in the Malay-language newspapers during the GE13 and GE14 election campaigns, references to the present tend to be positive and those to the future negative. There are two potential explanations for this: first, there is a need to maintain the status quo. And from the incumbent government's perspective, it is not only the BN as a governing coalition that is challenged during both general elections, also at stake is the entire uninterrupted political system that has been built and steered by UMNO, the dominant party in BN since independence in 1957. Second, there is an expectation of something better than the status quo. And from the reader's perspective, during the campaign periods in 2013 and 2018, respectively, there was the question of whether GE13 or GE14 would be conclusive, or whether they would follow a period of uncertainty, if not instability, and what this would mean for Malaysia and the region. This kind of argumentative move is thus opportunistic, especially in the attempt to win undecided voters.

In these Malay-language columns and editorials, the future is emphasised through unfavourably imagined scenarios. Consider first the extracts taken from the GE13 campaign period in Extracts 4–5:

Extract 4 (Awang Selamat, *Utusan Malaysia*, 23 April 2013).

Bayangkan, jika mereka ditakdirkan diberi mandat, maka bercelaru**lah** negara! *I have bolded lah above to increase its salience*	Imagine if they are fated to be given the mandate, the country will be chaotic!

Extract 5 (Hasan Ali, *Utusan Malaysia*, 25 April 2013).

Di peringkat diri sudah dibayangkan bencana membelakangkan akidah	The consequences for an individual can already be imagined [if one] trivialises *aqidah* (Islamic creed)

On the speech-act level, Extract 4 is a directive that primarily involves a validity claim of normative rightness, while Extract 5 is an assertion that primarily claims the truth. Consider now the conceptually very dense Extract 4, which starts by setting up a hypothetical space by means of the imperative '*Bayangkan*' (imagine). Within this space is a counterfactual conditional sentence. Roughly, the antecedent of the sentence (the *if* part) is 'if they (the opposition) are fated to be given the mandate', and the consequence is 'the country will be chaotic'. Although the possibility of the consequence has not yet been actualised or taken place through the use of the modal *will*, it is intensified by the particle *lah,*[2] making it accurate to translate it as: 'Imagine if they are fated to be given the mandate, the country will [definitely] be chaotic!' The particle *-lah* is non-obligatory, in that Extract 4 does not become ungrammatical if it is removed. So, from a rhetorical point of view, its use implicitly signals a higher degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition while manifesting commitment: the degree to which the columnist commits himself to the validity of what he is writing. In other words, the absence of hedges or modal adjuncts (i.e. probably, maybe, perhaps) and the deliberate choice to use the particle *-lah* in the column not only express the strong commitment of the columnist towards the statement, but also give the statement the validity he seeks in making it an apparent matter of fact.

On the other hand, the verb *bayang* (imagine) is affixed in Extract 5: ***di****bayang****kan*** (prefix *di* and suffix *kan*), which then changes its meaning to 'being imagined'. In Extract 5, it is no longer an order to form a mental image or concept of what will, may or might happen in the future, but a consequence that has been mentally formed by the columnist. Putting Extract 5 into context: if one trivialises *aqidah* by voting for other than the government, i.e. the opposition, the columnist has already sketched out a possible disaster as the outcome of a proposed action without any real proof being given that this outcome will occur. *Aqidah* or the Islamic creed is the most important thing in Islam. It is what a person takes as religion. Someone who has the correct *aqidah* is someone who has the right beliefs. *Aqidah* is an action of the heart; it is to believe and affirm something in the heart. This is also what marks out the Malay-language editorials and columns, the focus on Islam and defining 'us/our' as Muslims.

Consider Extracts 6–7 from the general election campaign period in 2018:

Extract 6 (Najib Razak, 4 May 2018, *Utusan Malaysia*).

Sekiranya negara ini jatuh ke tangan DAP yang memperjuangkan liberalisme melampau dan fahaman sekular berbahaya, pastinya, hak dan keistimewaan orang Melayu yang diperjuangan serta dipertahan oleh UMNO selama ini, termasuk institusi-institusi bumiputera antaranya MARA, FELDA, RISDA…akan pupus dan lenyap	If the country fell into the hands of the DAP who fight for extreme liberalism and dangerous secular ideology, the rights and privileges of Malays that have been fought for and defended by UMNO over the years, including institutions of the *bumiputera* like MARA, FELDA, RISDA…will be abolished

Extract 7 (Farhana, 8 May, 2018 *Berita Harian*).

Malaysia bakal mencatat sejarah hitam yang besar iaitu bermulanya kejatuhan kedudukan Islam sebagai agama Persekutuan, sekiranya pemimpin-pemimpin DAP dalam gabungan pembangkang PKR megambil alih kepimpinan negara pada 9 Mei ini	Malaysia will record a huge dark history, namely the beginning of the fall of Islam as the religion of the Federation, if the DAP leaders in the PKR opposition coalition take over the country's leadership on May 9

Again, on the speech-act level, Extracts 6–7 are both declarations which are expressed by assertions. At this point, we have seen how assertions simultaneously express belief, but belief itself, when unspoken, is by default (or *ceteris paribus*) the belief the writers are confident to endorse or entertain with certainty. Therefore, Extracts 6–7 serve the aim of communication, not merely pieces of information about the potential consequences of not voting for the government (or voting for the opposition), but also the writers' attitudes of certainty about these propositional events via '*sekiranya*' (if) and '*bakal'* (will). Such assertions are part of constatives which express the writers' beliefs and their intention or desire in the editorials and columns that the readers have a form like a belief—that is, in asserting *P*, the writers express: (1) their belief in *P* and (2) their intention to induce the reader to contemplate the same belief. At the same time, in asserting *P*, the writers of the editorials and columns acknowledge (and thus undertake) a commitment to *P*. By acknowledging such commitment and the entitlements that follow from it, the writers urge their readers to have the same commitment (i.e. licensing the readers to assert *P* and what follows from it on the basis of the authority of their claims about *P*). Such entitlement is made possible based on presupposed shared circumstances, which will then potentially influence the reader's decision when voting. This is especially so in making such assertions in the context of an election campaign expressing propositions, whose truth value depends on the actual circumstances [OPTION A and OPTION B above]—if the reader takes the writer's belief to be true. Such truth of presuppositions is taken for granted by the writers (and the reader is invited to take it for granted too), marking a piece of information as presupposed tends to naturalise assertive conjectures and therefore ones which can be accepted with certainty.

Extracts 4–7 evidently demonstrate how the writers evoke (and promote) people's fears, attempting to deceive the other party into reasoning erroneously. The fallacy

is delusional in character, as the reader is fooled by her anxiety into thinking that they must accept this as the truth, if the claim in question is justified. With BN's total dominance over politics in its six-decade rule, it is only to be expected that that those who want change during GE13, or even GE14, albeit enthusiastically, are still worried about the consequences of change as well as the future of the country. This is understandable, as a new government would be a momentous change for one of the Asia's most economically dynamic nations. While there is growing dissatisfaction, particularly among younger, urban voters regarding government inertia on tackling corruption and cronyism, and reforming laws and policies decried as authoritarian and racially discriminatory, older (Malay) Malaysians remain fiercely loyal to BN as the architects of independence, and as the custodians of a long-standing peace, or assumed inter-ethnic 'harmony' and economic growth, especially after the violence of 13 May 1969 (see, e.g. Weiss, 2013; Welsh, 2018; Waikar, 2020).

Throughout the campaigns in 2013 and 2018, Malay-language editorials and columns intimidate the reader via a kind of innuendo suggesting that the potentially bad consequences are very scary and that the future is very uncertain and dangerous. The representation of general elections as decisive presupposes a period that requires making crucial decisions when choosing who should govern the country. The choices are connected to the status quo (i.e. when the BN government was in power, which occurred in the past, i.e. before GE13) and a consequence (which may occur in the future, i.e. after GE13 or GE14). In other words, in the past, the cause of our success, peace and harmony was the BN government, and it now triggers imminent action to maintain and extend the existing state of affairs in the future. Making sure BN is still in power after the general elections is the only way 'we' (writer and reader, Malays) can enjoy a successful future. This argument about the future is a violation of rules 4 and 7.

8.5 Conclusion

The editorials and columns during the GE13 and GE14 campaign periods had their own agenda; however, the aspiration for a 'balanced forum' beyond mono-ideological parameters was lacking due to the political, regulatory and structural control over mainstream newspapers in Malaysia. In this chapter, I have also argued that the absence of alternative voices in the Malay-language editorials and columns violated the first rule of the ten commandments, i.e. the freedom rule which allows a wide range of voices to be heard or cast doubts on standpoints. This violation left us with *fallacies* instead of *topoi*. Reiterating van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1987), in principle, "everyone is entitled to advance a point of view on any subject and to call any standpoint into question" (p. 283). The homogeneity of the political stance throughout the editorials and columns during the campaign periods in 2013 and 2018, as reflected through the total support given to the government as opposed to the opposition, was also identified through the *illusion of choice* in Malaysia's democracy: (1) vote for the known with a proven track record (i.e. the government) and you will be safe or (2) vote

for the unknown (i.e. the opposition) and you will be doomed. Such a leap from the desirability of one proposition to the undesirability of an extreme opposition is a form of correlative-based fallacy. It subtly coerces (as opposed to persuades) the reader to accept a conclusion with a menacing either/or projection, while backgrounding other possible alternative options in order to manufacture consent and maintain the legitimacy of the then UMNO/BN government.

It is also crucial to highlight that the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural nature of Malaysia had been often used as a convenient justification for the then BN/UMNO government to restrict, regulate and control the country's mainstream newspapers. However, despite racial and religious sensitivities abounding, the findings show that the fallacious arguments employed (and condoned) throughout the campaign periods in 2013 and 2018 fall into three legitimatory categories: fear of the future for our race, our religion and our progeny. These fallacies rely on prejudices, i.e. preconceived opinions that are not based on reason or actual experience of the reader, to stir them up; the writers of the editorials and columns direct their arguments at what they take to be the deeply held emotional commitment of the reader. Such tactics exploit the bias of their readers towards their own interests, whether, for example, these are financial interests, social interests or a combination of these within the template of 'our race, our religion and our progeny'. Normatively, as discussed earlier in this chapter, there should be free-flowing discussion, so that another party can reply to an argument in whatever way she thinks will best fulfil his or her obligation or express his or her view. But fallacies that appeal to emotions are used to capitalise on a bias that shifts or twist the context of discussion, i.e. general elections in Malaysia.

Such a rhetorical argumentative strategy with persuasive messages provokes the emotion of fear by "depicting a personally relevant and significant threat and then follows this description of the threat by outlining recommendations presented as effective and feasible in deterring the threat" (Witte, 1994, p. 114). This prophecy, or 'futurology' as Fairclough (2003, p. 167) puts it, primarily works with 'fear' because 'fear begins with things we fear' (Altheide, 2002, p. 3). In this case, the findings illustrate how editorials and columns during the GE13 and GE14 campaign periods generated fear and redirected fear that already exists among Malay-language speaking readers, especially the Malays themselves, fear of everything that can be constructed as a threat to 'us' and everything that belongs to 'us'—'our race, our religion and our progeny', including status, cognitive and affective attachments, possessions as well as practices and the ability to navigate the symbols, ideas and institutions of a group (Siti Nurnadilla, 2020), as also seen in Ang & Kock (Chapter 9). As illustrated in this chapter, fear was constructed through a timeline connecting 'our' (writer and reader, Malays) past, present and future in order to legitimise the then UMNO/BN government.

The findings also show that the use of 'race' as a legitimising ideological tool has turned the concept around and used it to construct an alternative, positive self-identity of the government and the Malay/Muslim community. Bonilla-Silva (2013) notes that 'race', along with social categories, is a social (as opposed to a biological) reality, "producing real effects" (p. 9) so that, according to Buggs (2017), due to

these real consequences of 'race', racialised social structures exist, e.g. awarding privileges to Malays and denying them to others (non-Malays). Similarly, the use of religion is treated as a force which legitimates social order, considering that religion is one of the major symbols of group identity in Malaysia. Quoting Peter Berger (1973):

> [R]eligion has been the historically most widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation. All legitimation maintains socially defined reality. Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality. The tenuous reality of the social world is grounded for dissent. (p. 140)

Thus, legitimation, as emphasised by Turner (2008, p. 496), is a matter of social cohesion. But from a critical perspective, legitimation is a struggle for hegemony. In this sense, religion, as expressed by Berger, is an example of ideology, or 'meaning in the service of power'; alternative constructions of reality are suppressed by reference to an ultimate, unquestionable source—the sacred. Here, the empirical evidence has shown that Islam was employed as the ideology of different groups in order to maintain/regain legitimacy during the GE13 and GE14 campaigns, e.g. when writers in Malay-language editorials and columns recontextualised religious terms, among others, *aqidah* (Islamic creed) and *hudud* (Islamic law) and verses in the Quran (i.e. the words of God), to tie their arguments to the religious realm.

All these fallacies are ideologically driven as the future constitutes 'an ideologically significant site in which dominant political actors and institutions can exert power and control' in the present (Dunmire, 2011, p. 19). This gravitation towards a hypothetical future in GE13 as well as GE14 did not only assist in legitimising the government's political position, but it also reflected power legitimation. Such reasoning, according to Grosz (1999), echoes Foucault's notion of power, whereby it functions "to dampen and suppress" the potentiality and possibility inherent in the future and seeks to "link it as firmly and smoothly as possible to that which is already contained" in order to maintain the status quo and "make the eruption of the event part of the fabric of the known" (p. 16). However, as long as democratic citizens are conditioned to think with a 'second-hand' reality, democracy in the country via conventional reasoning is nonsensical. This is the current crisis of modern democracy, as while it may be easy to detect such political manoeuvres in totalitarian regimes, some people in democratic societies like Malaysia may not even be aware that they are actually fed with information by their representatives, using disguised and underhand tactics, to cement their hegemony.

There are several gaps that follow from this paper's findings and would benefit from further research. First, since the current study only focuses on mainstream Malay-language editorials and columns in print, further research could explore mainstream op-eds in *The Star* or *New Straits Times*, *Nanyang Siang Pau* or *Sin Chew Daily* (Chinese language) or *Malaysia Nanban* or *Tamil Nesan* (Tamil language) during the GE13 and GE14 campaign periods. Moreover, online newspapers have

huge potential to strengthen the democratisation process and democracy in Malaysia. Therefore, further research could explore whether editorials and columns published in online media like *Malaysiakini* or *Free Malaysia Today* played this role during the GE13 and GE14 campaign periods and helped to rationalise or mitigate the fears propagated in mainstream Malay-language newspapers.

Notes

1. The framework is presented in its fullest form in German in *Methodik der Argumnetations-analyse* (Kopperschmidt, 1989), but see Kopperschmidt (1987) for an English introduction.
2. I struggle to compare the elusive meaning or function of the particle *-lah* in (4) with that of a similar particle in English. The translation equivalents are problematic simply because different languages have different particles; they very rarely match up in number let alone in meaning (see Li et al., 2016). The particle *-lah* is multifunctional (e.g. softening, confirming, emphasising, parsing, intensifying and expressing), and it very much depends on the reader's linguistic intuition to infer what the various uses have in common and how they differ. Examples cited from Goddard (1994) prove that *-lah* has never been consistently translated in English: Baskaran (1988, p. 342) glosses *-lah* as 'for heaven's sake' (declarative) and 'I am pleading' (imperative), Kwan-Terry (1978, p. 23) and Bell and Ser (1983, p. 13) offer 'of course' and 'really', respectively, for some contexts, but point out that in other contexts these would-be equivalents will not do.

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Siti Nurnadilla Mohamad Jamil is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics specializing in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) at the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. She earned her Ph.D. in Critical Discourse Studies (2018) from Loughborough University, UK; MA in Discourse Studies (2013) from Lancaster University, UK; and BA with Honours (2012) from the International Islamic University Malaysia. Her main research interests revolve around social inequalities and language use and the ways that

these interact with and affect each other, which include campaign rhetoric, argumentation, everydayness, race and racism, discourses on refugees and children’s discourse. She can be contacted at nadillajamil@iium.edu.my.

Chapter 9
Contesting Views in the Representation of ICERD Ratification in English Language Newspapers

Pei Soo Ang and Yoke Leng Kock

Abstract The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) is a treaty endorsed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1965. It advocates ending discrimination based on ethnicity and prohibiting the circulation of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred towards ethnic origin. Malaysia is one of the 14 member states that has not ratified ICERD. When the Pakatan Harapan government announced a review of the treaty in October 2018, it sparked a series of protests expressing resentment, predominantly by political and religious leaders, although the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) explained that ratification of ICERD would help to mould a united Malaysia. This chapter aims to unpack how articles in mainstream English language newspapers discursively represent the sentiments of the various parties for and against ICERD. Employing the dialectical relational approach, and premised upon membership categorisation and identity politics, this chapter studies *New Straits Times* and *The Star* and unveils the interplay of racial, social, and political voices and the justifications for the positions taken. The findings indicate that ICERD is largely constructed by social actors using the discourses of fear, threat, and discrimination against the Bumiputeras, who seemingly would be undermined by the minorities. These are discursively manifested in hypothetical forms through the use of conditionals and modality as well as overlexicalisation of vocabulary to intensify the tone of extremity. The debates on ICERD employing the discourses of identity politics seem to be for political gains rather than for the interest of equality and human rights for all Malaysians.

Keywords ICERD · Identity politics · Racial discourse · Media discourse · Newspapers

P. S. Ang (✉) · Y. L. Kock
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: angps@um.edu.my

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9.1 Introduction

Malaysia prides herself as an ethnically, religiously, and culturally pluralistic society. Of the 29.7 million citizens, the ethnic composition comprises the Bumiputeras (69.6%), Chinese (22.6%), Indians (6.8%), and other minorities (1.0%) (Department of Statistics, 2020). The Bumiputeras (a Malay term translated as "sons of the soil") form the largest group with the majority Malays together with the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak. The current demographic state could be traced back to the eighteenth century when Chinese and Indian labourers were brought into the then Malaya by the British to work in the plantation and mining industries. Following this policy, the Chinese subsequently formed one-third of the population and the Indians one-tenth (Barlow & Loh, 2003). When Malaya gained its independence in 1957, the Reid Commission recognised the growing issue of economic disparities between ethnic groups. Based upon this recognition of the need for equity in economic and social development specifically for the Bumiputeras, the founding fathers of the country agreed on affirmative action provisions in Article 153 of the Federal Constitution (Jomo, 2005).

Article 153, Clause (1) states that it is the King's responsibility to "safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the states of Sabah and Sarawak". Clause (2) outlines the safeguarding in areas of reservation of "positions in public service", "privileges", and "special facilities" in exhibitions, education, trainings as well as trade and business licences (Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia, 2010, pp. 145–146). Despite this exceptional status, the Chinese continued the control of the country's wealth, straining inter-ethnic relations which led to racial riots on 13 May 1969. Following this, the government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970 that sought to eradicate poverty and restructure society to eliminate the identification of ethnicity with economic function in the aspiration of national unity (Jomo, 2005). NEP endorsed quotas advantaging predominantly the Malays within the social, economic, and education sectors. Further, Parliament made a decree in 1971 which prohibited the questioning of the special provisions in Article 153 (Suzuki, 2011).

Despite constitutional prohibition, Article 153 continuously invites socio-political debates publicly and privately. The original conception left by the colonial powers has over the years been recontextualised by different voices. Deemed highly sensitive to Malaysians from the majority group, particularly the Malay or Islam-based political parties while being viewed as racist by those at the opposing end, the social understanding of the provisions of the Article and the introduction of NEP reflects the perspective of the political power of the administration. There were also undocumented claims that the forefathers of the non-Bumiputeras had informally agreed to the special rights in exchange for citizenship at the time of negotiation for independence. Other questions raised include how the preferential treatments have been reinterpreted as guaranteed rights, and whether the positive discrimination has now moved away from its original intention since it has resulted in creating elite Malays while other Malays continue to be left behind economically. The argument by civil

society is the NEP permits the perpetuation of systemic and constitutionally approved discriminatory practices. Political parties in particular the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) has also championed the narrative of "Ketuanan Melayu" (Malay pre-eminence). This is despite the fact that the understanding of Bumiputeras should also encompass the indigenous peoples whose voices have been subdued.

The 14th General Election on 9 May 2018 made history when there was a change in the federal government after Malaysia had been ruled by Barisan Nasional (BN) for 61 years. The newly minted government, Pakatan Harapan (PH), made promises and commitment for the development of human rights including ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). ICERD is a treaty endorsed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1965 that advocates ending discrimination based on ethnicity and prohibiting the circulation of ideas based on superiority of ethnicity or hatred towards colour or ethnic origins. It is in consideration of the Declaration of Human Rights that all human beings are born free and possess equal dignity and rights and that every individual is equal before the law, and all are authorised to the same protection of the law (OHCHR, 1996). Supremacy based on racial variation is scientifically false, morally not right, socially unfair, and harmful, and a deterrent to peaceful living (OHCHR, 1996).

Of the 195 UN member states, Malaysia is one of the 14 countries that has yet to ratify ICERD. When the then appointed minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Waytha Moorthy, announced on 24 October 2018 that PH would review ICERD in 2019, it sparked a series of protests including a mass anti-ICERD rally on 8 December 2018 led by leaders of UMNO and Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Media reporting denoted that the opponents were disconcerted that ratifying ICERD was a contradiction to Article 153 and implied threats on the country's sovereignty and Islam as the official religion of the state as accorded in Article 3 of the Constitution. The protesters played on the fear of losing their special positions as guaranteed by the Constitution, constructing themselves as victims should ICERD be ratified. The protest from the alliance of nationalists and Islamists was also perceived as reactionary to the political power loss of BN and PAS and to demonise the minorities in administration. In particular, the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) as well as ridiculing Waytha Moorthy, the minister who happened to be an ethnic Indian and former member of Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF), a coalition of 30 religious-based non-governmental bodies advocating for Hindu rights (Temby, 2020). They were also other discourses of resentment through press conferences and social media. Through hashtags #TolakICERD (#RejectICERD) and #LucutWaytha (#SackWaytha), an Islamist youth NGO known as Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA) was instrumental behind the very strong social media outreach (Temby, 2020). The mobilisation of Malay Muslim-led protests eventually succeeded in preventing the ratification of ICERD.

There were also proponents of ICERD. The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) had urged the government to endorse ICERD. SUHAKAM's chairman, Tan Sri Razali Ismail, said that one of the basic principles of human rights is upholding human dignity and that human rights are in line with all religions in the world, including Islam. Thus, ICERD would not be in conflict with religious norms (Zainal & De Souza, 2018). SUHAKAM assured the protection of human rights according to Rukun Negara and Constitution and that the rights of certain ethnic groups would not be abolished as enshrined in the Constitution (Bernama, 2018). There have been calls by Malay bourgeois and non-Malays that the government should no longer advocate for race-based politics and norms (Boo, 2019; Star, 2020). In fact, many governments have achieved economic success due to the collective empowerment of society focusing on human rights which include casting votes against poor governance and corruption that violate human rights (Bernama, 2018). It seems obvious that the voices of ICERD proponents have been subdued or downplayed in this public discourse.

The ICERD protest became one of the key platforms that represent the complexity of identity politics used in advancing the agenda of ethnic and religious-based politics (International Commission of Jurists, 2019). After more than 60 years of independence, the understanding of preferential treatments for the Bumiputeras has become part of the fabric of the country where entitlements and rights are awarded as the birth right of a particular ethnic group. There have been calls from the Malays and non-Malays, also from SUHAKAM for change of mindset, advocate for meritocracy and a fairer distribution of the economic pie (Star, 2020). However, Article 153 continues to be key to the legitimation of Bumiputera rights. Indirectly, it has also implicated discriminatory racial discourses and discourses of resistance against an acknowledgement of equality for all citizens accorded under Article 8. Article 153 was initially aimed to close the gaps through equity in socio-economic and political policies. It has subsequently created inequality within the Bumiputera subgroups themselves and with other citizens. The identity politics embraced has socially constructed citizens in a pecking order. In critical discourse terms, this is a social-political practice of social constructionism through membership categorisation. The debates from the majority and minority persist as both are perceived as politicising ICERD from different sides. The Bumiputeras, predominantly the Malay Muslims, have been using the argument of social equity as well as constitutional and legal discourses while the minorities use the understanding of social equality from a human rights discourse perspective for social justice, but all were entrenched in complex identity-based politics. Thus, it is the interest of this research to understand these multiple voices as reported in the media on the intention to ratify ICERD. The questions asked are as follows: How do the various voices discursively argue for and against ICERD ratification as represented by mainstream news reporting? What are the implications of the current social-political stance? This chapter will shed light on how arguments and justifications have been presented to the public through news reporting to better understand the social-political sentiment and reactions of represented parties. Apart from

empathising with the represented and under-represented parties, this study assesses the perceived implications of the non-ratification of ICERD.

9.2 ICERD Ratification as a Discursive Issue

In the context of public policy and administration, social justice can be discussed through the lens of social equality and social equity. Miller (1998, p. 23) distinguished two sub-types of equality which are firstly, "distributive equality" where there are equal distributions of social goods and, secondly, "social equality" that promotes "the ideal of a society that is not marked by status divisions" and "hierarchically ranked categories". Meanwhile, "social equity" is a moral imperative of the field where some segments of underprivileged people should be given more to enable them to be on par with the rest in society in achieving the desired social equality (Johnson & Svara, 2011; Svara & Brunet, 2005). Such was the intention that sparked the "episodic corrections" of affirmative actions in Article 153 which was also similar to the American Civil Rights Act 1964 (Guy & McCandless, 2012, p. 55). In both cases, social equality and social equity are argued as a social construct realised through political discourses where members of both represented and under-presented groups are positioned in a hierarchical order of socio-economic and political priorities to recompense for prior exclusion. This is viewed as precisely the basis of (counter) arguments on the relevance of ICERD in Malaysia.

Related to the above is Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA). In a paper written by Sacks in 1979, he stated that "any person who is a case of a category is seen as a member of a category, and what's known about the category is known about them, and the fate of each is bound up in the fate of the other" (cited in Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015, p. 4). MCA explores the way members accomplish their interaction and knowledge of the world through methodical organisation of social categories, devices, and predicates mapped onto categories (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2009). A study done by Clifton (2014) on political debate in a radio talk show employing MCA unveiled practical reasons in which Islamophobia was defined through dual membership devices of (1) "worlds" with the argument of Islam and Western cultural incompatibility and (2) "race" through relational pairs of Muslim/Asian versus White British. Membership categorisation devices allude to how social order is accomplished through what is done by people, and how people conduct and carry themselves and interact with one another, subsequently organising social categories where members form co-membership or structure themselves in a certain pecking order (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015). Although studies using MCA are largely conducted on spoken interactions and MCA is a methodology itself, in this study, the notion of "category devices" from MCA is borrowed as a method to analyse membership devices in direct and indirect speech in news reporting. Identity categories can be discursively created through purported cases of ethnicity, religion, constitution, and political affiliation in this study.

Identity categories are also linked to the discourses of racism similar to gender, class, or religious-based inequality. From the perspective of discursive psychology, Wetherell and Potter (1992, p. 70) contended that attitudes and stereotypes are actively constitutive of social and psychological processes, creating prejudices. Identity politics is contended as a social construction and association with aristocratic descent and membership related to a dynasty or ruling house (Wodak, 1999). They are in fact manifested discursively as perspectives and stance, constructed, and reconstructed by means of discourse (Wodak & Reisigl, 1999). They evoke legitimising, exploiting, and oppressing certain social groups by dismissing opportunities to privileges and advantages in different areas.

The idea employed by both proponents and opponents of ICERD is to construct a positive self-identity as a basic opposition to politics as well as gain more self-governing right, freedom, and superiority. In politicising ICERD, political power control seems to be the predominant agenda (International Commission of Jurists, 2019; Temby, 2020). Power possession allows the holder to have access to limited resources in society, for instance finance, status, information, different public discourse, and communication channels with the aim to control the actions and thinking of members (van Dijk, 2001). Specifically, broadcast news and related media not only report "facts" but are resources for promoting government initiatives and policies to the voting public (Boortin, 1973). The media represent a channel where accountability and democratic checks and balances are performed (Fairclough, 1995). Power can be exercised through persuasion and manipulation through text and talk. Therefore, to explore and understand how the construction of identity categories is enacted through ICERD debates, mainstream news reports have been selected as the medium of investigation in this study.

Since the research is interested in investigating the opaque dialectical relationship between media discourse and social practice, it adopts Fairclough's (2010) critical discourse approach (CDA) as the main theoretical framework. CDA has been adopted in previous research to understand how discourse structures could influence thinking. Among them are on identity politics in the news media (Caballero Mengibar, 2015; Fairclough, 1995; Ho, 2019), specifically in issues of racism and nationalism in the media (Costelloe, 2014; Teo, 2000; Wodak et al., 2009) and anti-Semitism (Wodak, 1991). In terms of racism and ICERD, social and legal studies by Falcon (2011) and Hill (2016) revealed that the United States (US) government evaded ICERD responsibilities through the legal discourse of Reservations, Understandings, and Declarations (RUDs) which allowed the US to alter treaties in conflict with domestic obligations. Through the legal discourse of RUDs, the US lawfully restrained full responsibilities including prohibition of minority-owned business and execution of death penalties on black citizens not because of the crime committed but because they were poorly defended as socially disadvantaged. Specific to ICERD and local Malaysian media research, only one study was found. Joharry and Saupi (2019) did a cross-linguistic corpora study on how ICERD was reported in English and Malay online newspapers. Both consistently reported high occurrences of "not to ratify" but interestingly the Malay newspaper exhibited this high co-occurrence of not ratifying ICERD with expressions of gratitude. While the study has highlighted

sentiment and frequency counts, it did not employ a critical lens onto the social practices. On the whole, previous studies on both local and international data found systemic othering and stereotyping of ethnic communities along with prejudices and ideologies. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to unpack how the mainstream English language media in Malaysia (*New Straits Times* and *The Star*) have reported the represented voices and (de)legitimisation of ICERD ratification and to what extent the media space has allowed fair debating on racial politics and ethnoreligious tension.

9.3 Data and Methods

This research employs the Faircloughian dialectical relational framework (2010) of critical discourse studies which sees semiotic or discursive elements being constitutive and constituted by social practices in society (Fig. 9.1). In simple terms, ideological potentials influencing behaviours in society are shaped by discourse constructions and continue to be redefined through changes in discourse. The research follows the three stages of identifying formal characteristics of the discourse (descriptive), interpreting of the discursive choices (interpretative) and explaining the interaction with the social context (explanatory).

The dataset was derived from a total of 257 news articles (82,607 words), comprising 123 published in *The Star* and 134 from *New Straits Times (NST)*. These are the top two Malaysian mainstream English language newspapers in terms of circulation and readership in both print and online versions (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2018). Opinion pieces from columnists and individual letters to the editors were excluded to focus only on the reporting of what happened on the ground. As the research focuses on the media coverage of ICERD, the data collection started from 24 October 2018, the day Waytha Moorthy announced the ratification of ICERD, and ended on 31 December 2018, close to a month after the anti-ICERD rally. Three keywords used in data collection search were "ICERD", "anti-ICERD", and "ICERD + rally". This was to avoid collecting data specific to any party.

As entry into data, the automated one-click sentiment analysis function in a qualitative analytical software (Nvivo12 Plus) was utilised to check for the general stance taken by both newspapers. This software performed the broad semantic parsing of words and broadly categorises them according to the positivity and negativity of

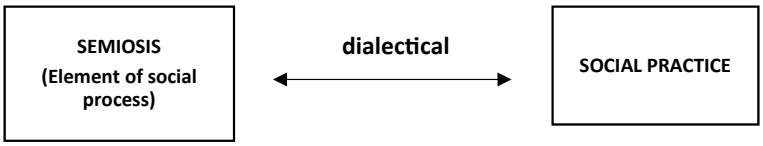

Fig. 9.1 Fairclough's (2010) dialectical relational framework

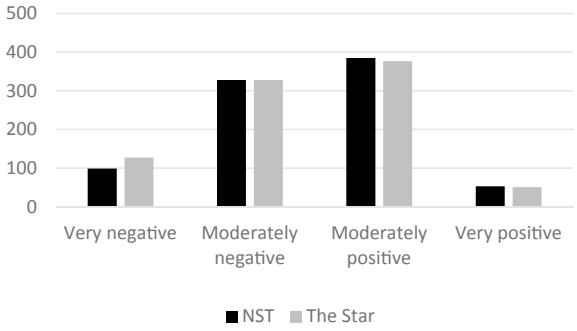

Fig. 9.2 Sentiments in the reporting of ICERD ratification by *NST* and *The Star* (trend of cases in Nvivo12 Plus)

lexical meanings. Figure 9.2 show that both newspapers generally exhibit more negative sentiment in reporting the issue. However, what is more important is that both share similar tone as observed in the similar percentage exhibited in each category of the "very negative", "moderately negative", "moderately positive", and "very positive" (Fig. 9.2). It is crucial to verify the stance of each newspaper as findings could be skewed should a different position be taken by any one of the newspapers. The consistency displayed suggests that it would be valid to group both datasets together in the analysis and they are representative of mainstream voices.

Sentiment/Newspaper	Very negative		Moderately negative		Moderately positive		Very positive		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
NST	99	11.45	328	37.92	385	44.51	53	6.13	865	100
The Star	127	15.26	328	39.42	377	45.31	51	6.13	832	100

Also as entry into the context of the data, another semantic parsing corpus software (WMatrix4) was used to identify the uniqueness of the data through the keyness function. This step enabled the identification of key linguistic categories found in the data under study and hence statistically validated them as the prominent features worthy of investigation. To identify the characteristics distinctive to ICERD as well as journalistic reporting, the data was compared to a general written English corpus. Here, it was compared to the British National Corpus (Written) as a practical means of comparison since this corpus is pre-installed in WMatrix4. Figure 9.3 shows the top 30 categories unique to the corpus under study.

			Item	O1	%1	O2	%2	LL	LogRatio	
1	List1	Concordance	G1.1	2309	2.80	3542	0.37 +	4475.43	2.93	Government
2	List1	Concordance	Z99	4622	5.60	22165	2.29 +	2500.66	1.29	Unmatched
3	List1	Concordance	Q2.1	2218	2.69	7024	0.73 +	2246.13	1.89	Speech: Communicative
4	List1	Concordance	S7.4+	835	1.01	1270	0.13 +	1627.63	2.95	Allowed
5	List1	Concordance	S5+	1656	2.00	5811	0.60 +	1472.57	1.74	Belonging to a group
6	List1	Concordance	Z1	2593	3.14	16434	1.70 +	729.05	0.89	Personal names
7	List1	Concordance	S1.1.1	634	0.77	2089	0.22 +	611.53	1.83	Social Actions, States And Processes
8	List1	Concordance	K4	372	0.45	738	0.08 +	597.22	2.56	Drama, the theatre and show business
9	List1	Concordance	Z3	890	1.08	4809	0.50 +	376.17	1.12	Other proper names
10	List1	Concordance	X4.1	472	0.57	1947	0.20 +	331.79	1.51	Mental object: Conceptual object
11	List1	Concordance	S1.1.3	58	0.07	0	0.00 +	295.02	10.41	Participation
12	List1	Concordance	A6.1-	776	0.94	4629	0.48 +	257.97	0.97	Comparing: Different
13	List1	Concordance	S8-	266	0.32	885	0.09 +	253.46	1.82	Hindering
14	List1	Concordance	S1.1.3+	266	0.32	918	0.09 +	241.80	1.76	Participating
15	List1	Concordance	T1.3	1151	1.39	8327	0.86 +	208.50	0.70	Time: Period
16	List1	Concordance	Z6	1118	1.35	8052	0.83 +	205.99	0.70	Negative
17	List1	Concordance	S9	531	0.64	3016	0.31 +	199.75	1.05	Religion and the supernatural
18	List1	Concordance	A6.2+	429	0.52	2275	0.23 +	189.02	1.14	Comparing: Usual
19	List1	Concordance	G2.1	444	0.54	2418	0.25 +	184.36	1.11	Law and order
20	List1	Concordance	X6+	233	0.28	911	0.09 +	177.87	1.58	Decided
21	List1	Concordance	Q2.2	1248	1.51	9724	1.00 +	166.08	0.59	Speech acts
22	List1	Concordance	G1.1-	51	0.06	31	0.00 +	155.74	4.27	Non-governmental
23	List1	Concordance	Q4.2	201	0.24	828	0.09 +	141.60	1.51	The Media: Newspapers etc.
24	List1	Concordance	A13	23	0.03	0	0.00 +	116.99	9.07	Degree
25	List1	Concordance	N5++	515	0.62	3576	0.37 +	108.30	0.76	Quantities: many/much
26	List1	Concordance	S6+	653	0.79	4861	0.50 +	105.73	0.65	Strong obligation or necessity
27	List1	Concordance	G1.2	551	0.67	4064	0.42 +	92.59	0.67	Politics
28	List1	Concordance	T1.1.3	623	0.75	4846	0.50 +	83.55	0.59	Time: Future
29	List1	Concordance	S7.1-	142	0.17	697	0.07 +	73.44	1.26	No power
30	List1	Concordance	S2	399	0.48	2896	0.30 +	71.38	0.69	People

Fig. 9.3 Key semantic categories found in corpus under study compared to the British National Corpus (Written) in WMatrix4

Figure 9.3 informed the researchers and confirmed that the prominent clusters of word meanings or key semantic categories (Rayson, 2009) and discourse features found in the corpus studied:

a. direct and indirect speeches (Line 3 Speech Communicative; Line 21 Speech Act): to analyse direct and indirect speeches and speech act functions
b. power struggle (Line 29 No power): confirms the issue of power struggle and hence the need to unpack the contesting voices
c. sentiments (Line 8 Drama; Line 12 Comparing; Line 13 Hindering; Line 16 Negative; Line 26 Strong obligation): to analyse vocabulary expressing sentiment/tone/stance/feeling.
d. discussion of time (Line 15 Time: Period; Line 28 Time: Future): to study the grammatical elements related to time, specifically modality and if-conditionals in speaking about the future.
e. membership (Line 5 Belonging to a group; Line 30 People): to analyse how members are socio-politically packed in the news through the following membership devices:
    i. device of "religion" (Line 17 Religion)
    ii. device of "constitution" (Line 19 Law and Order)
    iii. device of "politics" (Line 27 Politics)
    iv. device of other social categories (Line 7 Social Actions, States and Processes).

These membership devices are also consistent with those identified through literature review which are ethnicity, religion, rights, constitution, and politics.

Based on the above, the two key aspects to be analysed are sentiment analysis and membership analysis. Sentiment analysis is concerned with identifying the mood or

opinion of subjective elements within a text (Bhadane et al., 2015). By understanding the positive–negative polarity in the discourse, we can gauge the stance (orientation and disposition) on ICERD. To understand the sentiments of the reported voices more accurately, lexical items related to positive and negative emotions and their overlexicalisation were extracted from WMatrix4. Overlexicalisation refers to a word that conveys emphasis or accentuation of meaning of an idea or concept, often carrying the tone of extremity. Data were also coded in Nvivo12 Plus for grammatical analyses of modality and if-conditionals to determine how the social actors expressed sentiments through predictions of the outcomes of ICERD ratification. The second part of the analysis focuses on membership categories of the social actors. Data were also coded according to category devices identified which are ethnicity, religion, rights, constitution, and politics.

9.4 Analysis

9.4.1 Sentiment Analysis

Sentiments can reflect the degrees of preference or opposition of the citizens, and they suggest if ideological values are reinforced or contradicted. In the dataset studied, the voices of the Malay nationalists and UMNO were consistently strong in opposing ICERD's ratification. In terms of words employed by these actors, the Negative Word list generated in WMatrix4 shows 1103 tokens, while the Negative Emotions word list exhibits 132 tokens. These lexical items connote that ICERD is a cause or source of disaster, disorder, and disharmony. Top words found in the data which indicate such notions are "concerns", "tension", "threaten", "hatred", "worry", "riot", "fear", "trouble", "jeopardise", "disaster", "trigger", "provocation", "warning", "chaos", "rifts", "harm", "dangerous", and "disharmony" as seen in Extracts 1–4 below:

Extract 1 *NST*	*UMNO Vice-President Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said* ***trouble*** *could arise if anybody did anything to 'touch' the Constitution.*	*Warning/Expressing fear*
Extract 2 *NST*	*"I* ***worry*** *that if the government proceeds with the ratification of the ICERD without prior consultation with non-governmental organisations and Bumiputera leaders, it will* ***trigger dissatisfaction*** *and* ***provocation*** *among the Bumiputera."*	*Expressing concern and fear*
Extract 3 *The Star*	*"We have no issues with the Chinese controlling the economy, having their own schools. But do not create* ***chaos*** *over this issue," he said.*	*Warning/Threatening*
Extract 4 *The Star*	*"We do not want ICERD to be signed. It will bring* ***harm*** *if it is signed."*	*Expressing refusal/fear*

The bolded items above highlight the negative thoughts and perceptions of the nationalists and Malay-Muslim politicians towards ICERD as something that would bring trouble and put peace and sovereignty of the country at stake. The words carry nuances of extremity or are overlexicalised, resulting in the reinforcement of the intensity and seriousness of the situation as well as persistence of the quoted voices. The utterances also act as expressions of warning, refusal, fear, and concerns in terms of speech act functions with underlying tone of anger and dissatisfaction. These suggest the predominantly negative sentiment and resentment of the reported political voices.

Sentiments could also be observed from the analysis of modality. Modality is a semantic category which can be indicative or subjunctive; it expresses the mood of a verb. There are high occurrences of modal auxiliaries expressing the degrees of possibility and certainty that something undesirable would occur if ICERD is ratified. These are realised through auxiliaries such as "could (not)", "must (not)", "should (not)", "would (not)", and "will (not)". Modalities inform us about the commitment people have towards what they utter including revealing and concealing.

In analysing the voices of the opponents, the auxiliaries "could (not)" appeared 107 times and were largely used to express predicted possibility of negative effects of ICERD ratification. Examples from the corpus under study include (Extracts 5–7):

Extract 5 *NST*	*He said UMNO is against the ratification as it is "a new form of colonialism" which* ***could*** *jeopardise racial harmony.*
Extract 6 *NST*	*The group said the report was lodged as ICERD* ***could*** *threaten the country's religious and racial stability.*
Extract 7 *NST*	*The move has sparked concern among various quarters, especially UMNO and PAS, who believe that it* ***could****, among others, signal an erosion of Malay and Bumiputera special rights.*

ICERD is viewed as a possible threat to stability, harmony, and rights of the Malays and Bumiputeras in general. It is also deemed as a chess piece used by the PH government as a hidden political agenda. The use of "could" suggests prediction, which means the threat did not exist but propagated as a possible future implication and hence constructing ICERD as a possible destruction of the Malays and the country.

The use of modal "must (not)" ($N = 106$) is also found, as seen in Extracts 8–10:

Extract 8 *NST*	*"All quarters* ***must*** *repent (on this matter). We do not want to mention (the ICERD) again until Hari Kiamat (doomsday/Judgement Day)."*
Extract 9 *The Star*	*Tuan Ibrahim said that the government* ***must not*** *beat around the bush over the issue of the ratification of ICERD anymore.*
Extract 10 *NST*	*"We* ***must*** *oppose (ICERD) because it is compulsory for Muslims to say that Islam is correct."*

In the extracts above, "must (not)" is employed to express a compulsion to prohibit the action of ratifying ICERD as well as assert and persuade Muslims not to surrender. Instead, they must come together to oppose it as if it is their duty to do so. The strong rejection and disagreement towards ICERD are significantly magnified through the auxiliary "must (not)".

The modal verbs "should (not)" were also found in the data frequently ($N = 204$). As seen in Extracts 11–13, they are expressions of advice and recommendations to the government and public which indicate speakers' expectations. Although "should" is more subtle in terms of modality compared to the compulsive tone in "must", the former co-occurs with many expressions of opposition against ICERD.

Extract 11 *The Star*	*"Even the Prime Minister had in an interview with The Washington Post in 2002, said that we* ***should not*** *be in a situation where the demands of the minority can cause problems to the majority," he said in a statement.*
Extract 12 *NST*	*Shahidan said the issue of the ICERD as it pertains to Malaysia* ***should*** *now be laid to rest forever, as it is a sensitive matter in the country; and cautioned all ministers against ever again making inflammatory statements related to the ICERD.*
Extract 13 *The Star*	*Malaysia* ***should not*** *ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) as "positive discrimination" helps to reduce inequality among races, says Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan (pic).*

The modal verb "would (not)" has a high frequency ($N = 444$). It is often used to produce conditional meaning or reference to a future action as the past form of "will". Referring to the examples in Extracts 14–16, it is utilised to express extreme possibilities or as hypothetical statements of serious future actions including threats and plans to organise rallies. When such highly intense sentiment is expressed, it purports a lead to kinetic actions (Puschmann and Powell, 2018).

Extract 14 *NST*	*Shahidan said he* ***would*** *bring 2,000 people from Perlis, while PAS had guaranteed the attendance of 200,000 people.*
Extract 15 *The Star*	*Asked what* ***would*** *happen if the government went ahead with the ratification, Tuan Ibrahim said it* ***would*** *result in mass mobilisation of Muslims and Bumiputera from Sabah and Sarawak, who would also be affected.*
Extract 16 *NST*	*Last night, UMNO president Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi warned Putrajaya the Malay-Muslim community* ***would*** *run "amuk" to protest the government's pledge to ratify ICERD.*

The most widely used modal verb is "will (not)" ($N = 456$). It is used to make promises or voluntary actions in the future or predictions about the future, express willingness, or ability in making requests or offers, finish a conditional sentence, prompt likelihood in the immediate present, and issue commands. Using "will (not)" also adds assertiveness and forcefulness to the expressions. In Extracts 17–19, it was found that "will (not)" was used to assert actions that would take place in the future, which was the anti-ICERD rally held on 8 December 2018. The modal verb "will (not)" was used to indicate future events, for example, the number of people

at the rally. It acts to caution the PH government to be careful about their actions so that nothing unwanted would happen. The determination was strongly felt through their expressions. The speech acts of threatening and warning were expressed as a conditional relationship; this meant that if the PH government proceeded with the ratification, the opposition would retaliate with actions and protests as seen in Extracts 17–19.

Extract 17 *NST*	*"This is to show that the Malays are really against ICERD. It is also to make sure that the matter* ***will not*** *resurface in the future," he said.*
Extract 18 *NST*	*"ICERD is like a virus in our body, when we (Muslims) are strong and have strong antibodies, ICERD (referring to those proposing for Malaysia to accede to it)* ***will*** *be quiet, but when we are weak, it* ***will*** *grow quietly."*
Extract 19 *NST*	*"This is a peaceful gathering and UMNO Youth* ***will not*** *compromise with any form of provocation and attempts to play up racial sentiments. We* ***will*** *send agent provocateurs to the police ourselves," he said at a press conference after chairing an UMNO Youth meeting at Menara Dato Onn here today.*

The conditional relationship is further seen in the use of "if-conditionals" ($N = 232$). In speaking about ICERD, "if-conditionals" were predominantly used to predict an imaginary future if ICERD was ratified. The opponents expressed their worries and concerns that if the ICERD treaty was ratified, something unwarranted would happen and this was with reference to the proposed rally and the probable eventual loss of Bumiputera rights. This further suggested the opponents' sense of insecurity. The "if-conditionals" were also expressed as a form of threat directed to the PH government to cease the ratification, which indirectly hinted that havoc would ensue if the ICERD treaty was ratified. The adamant attitude of the opponents was presented in hypothetical form rather than factual (Extracts 20–23).

Extract 20 *NST*	*"I worry that* ***if*** *the government proceeds with the ratification of the ICERD without prior consultation with non-governmental organisations and Bumiputera leaders, it will trigger dissatisfaction and provocation among the Bumiputera."*
Extract 21 *NST*	*"At the same time, we also thanked the government for not ratifying ICERD. But we can't help but wonder* ***if*** *there is a guarantee that the matter will not be brought up again in the future."*
Extract 22 *The Star*	*"****If*** *we do not give the Malays more opportunities than other races,* ***if*** *we believe we must give everything equally, in equality, then those who are competent will be more successful and those who are not will be left behind."*
Extract 23 *NST*	*"This is a lie. Take it back… if he refuses to do so, we will mobilise NGOs in the whole of Malaysia to gather in Putrajaya to urge for a retraction and an apology from him to the Muslim community."*

Generally, the sentiment analysis of the ICERD opponents shows that emotive words and expressions of mood through modality largely suggest negativity with strong opposition, resentment, and concern and insecurity. The opponents of ICERD manipulated the discourses of fear and threat as a means to champion Bumiputera

rights. By opposing the ratification, indirectly, they also constructed the PH government as weak, as if the latter did not earnestly defend and uphold Malay constitutional rights. Their criticisms could be interpreted as a political opportunity for the opponents to gain more popularity.

9.4.2 Membership Analysis

As seen in the previous section, the arguments by the opponents were largely justified on changes in social action and social processes. This is consistent with the semantic category presented in Line 7 in Fig. 9.3. Their justifications centred on the positioning of membership of citizens using "membership devices". The voices in the discourses of ICERD used the category devices of ethnicity, religion, culture, heritage, rights, constitution, and politics in categorising Malaysian citizens. However, these devices might not necessarily be single categories but could be realised in dual or more categories as a "collated" device that effected the division of us and them. This is precisely the argument of how the various identity categories have been fused in the politicking process due to the diversity Malaysian society.

Analysis of the discourses seems to suggest that ethnicity and religion are two indivisible components in the discourse, as Siti Nurnadilla (Chap. 8) finds. Many of the people who reacted strongly against the ratification of ICERD were Malay Muslims or the opposition parties, especially PAS, an Islamist party. They assumed a responsibility for themselves and turned themselves into guardians of Islam. They were reported to represent themselves as being disadvantaged, with their rights at risk, and had to rise and defend their religion. Expressions found which denote such notions are "responsibility", "uphold", "we should not forget our tradition, heritage, and history", "obligation to reject", "unite to oppose ICERD", "protecting the dignity of Islam and the Malays", "uphold and defend Islam as the official religion, "defending the right of the Malays", "defending our faith and religion", "concerns the sovereignty of the royal institution and Islam", and "claiming what is enshrined in the Federal Constitution, which are Articles 3 and 153". The fuller expressions of these discourses are seen in Extracts 24–31:

Extract 24 *NST*	*On Nov 16, thousands of people, comprising UMNO and PAS leaders as well as non-governmental organisations, gathered nationwide to protest plans to ratify the convention, which they deemed would be detrimental to the* ***Muslim way of life in Malaysia****, as well as* ***a blow to Bumiputera rights and the monarchy****.*
Extract 25 *NST*	*"We have to reject ICERD as it also concerns the* ***sovereignty of the royal institution and Islam****," he said.*
Extract 26 *NST*	*"We are here because we are not anti-Chinese, or anti-Indians, we are just* ***defending the right of the Malays****."*
Extract 27 *NST*	*"We don't hate the Hindus, the Buddhists or the Christians but we are only* ***defending our faith and religion****," he said.*

(continued)

(continued)

Extract 28 *NST*	*PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang says all Muslims have a duty to oppose the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which he claims would* ***place Islam on the same level as other religions****.*
Extract 29 *NST*	*We can give rights to other religions but to say that* ***other religions are the same as Islam is unacceptable****.*
Extract 30 *NST*	*"As such, Muslims have an obligation to* ***reject liberal concepts which place all religions equally****. It is only natural for* ***all religious followers to believe that theirs is the true religion; not think that it is the same as other religions****," he said in a statement on Thursday.*
Extract 31 *NST*	*Tuan Ibrahim also stressed that the anti-ICERD rally was not held to deny the rights of other races or religions, but to* ***uphold and defend Islam as the official religion as stated in the Federal Constitution****.*

Article 160 of the Constitution defines a Malay as a "person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay custom." (Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia, 2010, p. 153). Islam is the official religion of the federation; this likely stems from the fact that all persons of Malay ethnic origin are "automatically" Muslims if viewed from the perspective of the Constitution. Therefore, it is not surprising for the data to show a fused category of "Malay + Muslim".

The devices of "Malay + Muslim" are also collocated with the "royalty/monarchy", as represented in Extracts 24–25. The association with the ruler as also lawfully enshrined in the Constitution further constructs the superior position of Malay and Muslims in the discourse. This could be deduced from their discursive positioning in Articles 3, 153, and 160 of the Constitution as explained earlier. The unpacking of the data also suggests that superiority of the Malays and Islam is also a co-construction with membership of other ethnic groups and faiths practised in the country. As evident in Extract 26 (membership device of ethnicity—the Chinese and Indians) and Extract 27 (membership device of religion—Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians), the discourses construct non-Malay Muslims as "less superior" or the other. The rejection of equal status is denied as seen in Islam not being "on the same level of other religions" (Extracts 28–30), and this is "unacceptable" (Extract 29). While Malaysia is not a theocratic Islamic country, the special position of Islam is recognised in the Constitution, which is used as a device to establish its higher status (Extract 31). What has also been observed is the under-representation and lack of the reporting of the voices of other Bumiputeras (the indigenous people in East and West Malaysia). The backgrounding or silencing of the other Bumiputeras, where the majority of them are non-Muslims, is another co-construction of the less superior ethnic group. Despite being "Bumiputera", they do not belong to the 'Muslim' category device and hence, discursively less significant in membership.

The device of "race" is also packed with "rights" of social-economic advantages privileged by birth and constitutional definition. In line with the understanding of social equity, "rights" is another device used to socially construct a hierarchy

in society. "Rights" is co-constructed with the privilege and achievement of social justice measured by sub-devices of "social equality", "social equity", or even possibly "social superiority". Generally, the opposition of ICERD arises from the device of "rights" of certain groups being threatened or taken away. This notion is evident in phrases such as "erosion of certain rights" (Extract 32), "…my rights are taken away?" (Extract 33), "remove our privileges" (Extract 35), and "special rights, political and legal rights…abolished" (Extract 36).

Extract 32 *NST*	*"ARMADA urges the government to reconsider ratifying the ICERD if it leads to Malaysia's laws to be on the same level as international laws because this could lead to* ***socio-economic imbalance*** *and* ***erosion of certain rights****," the Member of Parliament for Muar said in a statement here today.*	*Social equity*
Extract 33 *NST*	*"Can I accept it* ***if my rights are taken away due to discrimination****? The answer is no," added the Barisan Nasional secretary-general.*	*Social equity Social superiority*
Extract 34 *NST*	*"As a Muslim and Malay, I oppose the ratification of ICERD.* ***Everyone has been treated fairly*** *before this and there is no need for Malaysia to ape the West," he said.*	*Social equality*
Extract 35 *NST*	*"To* ***remove (our privileges) in our weak state in the name of equality is not right****."*	*Social equity Social superiority*
Extract 36 *NST*	*"ICERD's definition and scope of discrimination is wide ranging encompassing all forms of discrimination in the country which include* ***special rights, political and legal rights which will be abolished****."*	*Social equity Social superiority*

As seen in the Extracts 32–36, the yardsticks employed in the contestation of ICERD are about whose rights and the kinds of rights. Fairness and justice are subjective and a matter of perspective of a particular voice. What is fair to the nationalists is their entitlement to additional rights (social equity) to remain competitive with the richer ethnic groups in the country as originally agreed at the point of the country's independence. However, in the subsequent decades post-independence, the interpretation has become rights to "social superiority" or "exclusivity" (Roberts, 2000). Religious and racial agenda has become more politicised than ever by political parties like UMNO and PAS.

Despite the above, some of the political voices have also categorised all Malaysians as a group as "us" against "foreign policy and harmful Western ideology" (Extracts 37 to 39) as "them". The Western agenda was assumed to be detrimental as they had "abandoned religion and the true ethics of humanity" (Extract 39), and it was demonised as a "Freemason agenda" (Extract 41). Freemasonry is a group of fraternities steeped in rituals and symbolisms; here, the religious leaders had politicised it as threatening faiths practised by Malaysians and that Islam was the only true teaching. By this too, it was claimed that Malaysians would forget and lose their "tradition, heritage and history" (Extract 40) connoting an agenda of colonisation by the West or echoing an orientalist view where the values of the East are distorted by Western perspectives (Said, 1978).

Extract 37 *NST*	*Speaking at Dataran Merdeka during the anti-ICERD rally in the city, Hadi said Malaysia should never bow to "**policies created by the West**."*
Extract 38 *NST*	*"So there's no need for Malaysia to **import foreign policies**. What's more important is that we care for the welfare, peace and harmony of this country," he said.*
Extract 39 *NST*	*"Muslim, those with religion, the Bumiputera and all races must unite to oppose ICERD. Do not be swayed by the **Western agenda which has long abandoned religion and the true ethics of humanity**," he said.*
Extract 40 *NST*	*"To be liberal in terms **of progress and innovation is good. But we should not forget our tradition, heritage and history**," he wrote.*
Extract 41 *NST*	*"Those who champion ICERD must be opposed as this is **a Freemason agenda to destroy religion, race and country**.*

The strong opposition against ICERD eventually made the PH government postpone the ICERD ratification before the rally day itself. This was despite assurances from the advocates of ICERD including SUHAKAM and PH politicians, some of whom were Malay Muslims too. They had continuously provided reassurances and commitment to take responsibilities through the modal verbs of "will (not)" and its past tense form of "would (not)" and "have to" as seen below:

Extract 42 *NST*	*"If ICERD needs to be ratified, then the views and suggestions of all stakeholders will be taken into account. We **will engage all government representatives and opposition**.*
Extract 43 *The Star*	*Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said that Malaysia **would** only endorse the convention **after consulting with all ethnic groups in the country**.*
Extract 44 *The Star*	*He said ICERD **will** become the last convention ratified by the government as it involves a law that has to be scrutinised as well as to **seek views from various parties through negotiations** to eliminate any concerns.*
Extract 45 *NST*	*"The matter involves various communities and Islamic groups, so **I have to** discuss with **a cabinet colleague and seek views on the aspects of Islam**."*
Extract 46 *NST*	*"The government gives its guarantee that Article 153 of the Federal Constitution **will neither be amended nor abolished**.*
Extract 47 *NST*	*He said assumptions that the ratification **would result in Malay rights being diminished or threaten the status of the Malay rulers and Islam was incorrect**.*
Extract 48 *NST*	*He said ICERD **would not change the identity of the country from the aspect of Constitution, culture or anything for that matter**..*
Extract 49 *NST*	*Certainly, we **will conduct an in-depth study**, including taking into account **what happens at the grassroots level and all state governments**," he said …*

The use of "will (not)", "would (not)", and "have to" in Extracts 42–49 evoked the notion that the PH government and SUHAKAM were determined, committed, and took serious responsibilities in considering ICERD. The tone of commitment was also co-constructed with an image of openness where the government would be in consultation with parties (Extracts 42–45 and 49) and would factually consider ICERD through "in-depth study" (Extract 49). While the voice of SUHAKAM was

clear in favouring the ratification (Extracts 47 and 48), the tone of the PH government was more cautious, impartial, and less hasty, which suggests careful, reliable, and fair leadership and governance (Extracts 42 to 46 and 51). In terms of issues related to Article 153, the PH government made promises and was firm in matters pertaining to upholding the constitution and law, assuring rights, suggesting attempts to pacify the protestors, and mitigating the ongoing negative sentiments (Extracts 44 and 46).

Through the reporting of views of the PH government, there were mentions of sub-devices of "race/ethnicity" (Extracts 43 and 47), "religion" (Extract 45), political affiliations of "government" and "opposition" (Extract 42), and "grassroots" and "states" (Extract 49). However, collectively as seen in Extracts 42 to 49, they suggest that the PH government's discourse would construct the people as a holistic "group", as citizens belonging to a country first rather than categories of ethnicity or religion. In line with the multi-ethnic nature of the PH government, society as a whole was recognised, unlike UMNO and PAS who seemed to define people primarily by ethnicity or religion. The politicking of membership as inclusive or exclusive is all dependent on a political organisation's agenda.

9.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This study has shed light on how arguments and justifications were presented to the public through news reporting to better understand the socio-political sentiment and reactions of represented parties towards ICERD. The research has shown how the news discourse reporting on the contesting views of ICERD ratification is dominated by the voices of the majority Malay Muslims but under-represented the views of the other Bumiputeras as well as the Chinese and Indians. These non-Malays were not highlighted in the press to express what they felt about social equality and ICERD, as if they lacked rights in such discussions. While SUHAKAM was a clear advocate of ICERD, the PH government was represented as more cautious and impartial on the ratification issue, to minimise of the risk of losing political support from the majority Malays.

In general, the sentiment and membership analyses have shown the predominance of negative stance of religious leaders and political parties representing the Malay Muslims, in particular UMNO and PAS. These are manifested discursively in hypothetical forms through the use of conditionals and modality as well as over-lexicalisation of vocabulary and structures to intensify the tone of extremity. ICERD is alleged to evoke intimidation of the majority and the Constitution, whom and which seemingly would be undermined and threatened by the rise of the minority. ICERD is presented as the cause of disorder, dissatisfaction, and provocation of the majority and a disguised ideological domination of the West. The discourses have generally construed the victimisation of the Bumiputeras, particularly the Malay Muslims but less was mentioned about the non-Malays and non-Muslim Bumiputeras in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak.

The membership and entitlements of the Malays were constructed through the dual devices of Malay Muslim, which are constitutionally and legitimately superior and above other ethnic groups and faiths in Malaysia as evident in the analysis of membership devices. The constitutional conflicts have been cited as justifications of "social superiority" and "social equity" in contradiction to "social equality" as propagated by ICERD. ICERD was originally associated with fighting colonialism where the minority ruled over the majority with philosophies of segregation, discrimination, and racial superiority. However, in the context of Malaysia, the politics of it is about the majority defending their rights of racial superiority for fear of lagging behind in socio-economic and political dominance if the minority were given equal standing. This so-called positive discrimination has become part of racial politics in Malaysia and continues to be manipulated for the political dominance of certain political parties.

While it is understandable that the current socio-political construct particularly the Malay-Muslim rhetoric is fundamentally historical and constitutionally based, the voices of non-ratification of ICERD here could be interpreted as politically hegemonic and permit the persistence of alleged systemic racism. From an epistemological perspective, the discourses of ICERD are a social construction, formed by consequences of subjective social ideas, social actions, and social processes in line with the Fairclough's (2010) notion of dialectical relationship. This subjective experience when assimilated becomes common sense and normalised. This racial sentiment in political discourses ought to be highlighted, or it would continue to legitimise the unequal power relations.

In brief, ICERD is seemingly constructed as a threat and victimisation of the majority Malay Muslims with the arguments of constitutional clashes and intimidation of the rights to social equity and social superiority. The discourses in the English language newspapers also suggest that reported dominant voices seem to manipulate the ratification issue for their own political gains. In particular for UMNO and PAS, this was to regain the votes and trust of the Malay Muslims which they lost in the 14th general election in 2018 rather than any effort to resolve the challenges of the ratification in practical ways without disrespecting the Constitution and balancing this with mutual respect for all ethnic groups and faiths. Rejecting the ratification amounts to rejection of a further commitment to racial equality, the continued fight against hate speech, and the affirmed prohibition against discrimination. As long as ICERD is debated through the discourses of identity and racial politics rather than equality and human rights, the pecking order of membership in Malaysian society based on ethnicity/religion will continue. Such is the irony and complexity of ICERD ratification in the pluralistic Malaysian scenario.

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Pei Soo Ang is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. Her areas of research interest include disability and health discourses, critical disability studies, critical discourse analysis, social semiotics, and multimodality. Her research centres on characterising the discourses of disability as represented in the Malaysian news media, employing a critical semiotic theoretical approach and a multi-perspectival methodology. She can be reached at angps@um.edu.my.

Yoke Leng Kock holds a master's degree from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. Her areas of research include discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis of media and political representations. She can be reached at nataliekockyl23@gmail.com.

Chapter 10
(De)legitimation Strategies in the Media Statements of Women's Rights Organisations

Melissa Yoong

Abstract This chapter examines the (de)legitimation strategies that women's movement organisations in Malaysia use to advance their policy and issue demands. Sustained pressure from activists has been important to get the state to implement reforms to improve women's rights in this country. One of the frequent means by which they delegitimise the decisions and practices of the state and claim legitimacy for their own change agendas is through media statements which are widely published and reported in the mainstream press. This case study explores the strategies employed in English language media statements released by the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality, the Women's Aid Organisation, and the All Women's Action Society. More specifically, it focuses on statements pertaining to one of the key areas that the groups advocate, namely women's right to safe, healthy, and gainful employment. Using frameworks on discursive (de)legitimation and social actor representation, this chapter examines the various ways the organisations frame and assess legislation, policies, and political actions that impact the experiences and livelihood of working women. It distinguishes and analyses four main (de)legitimation strategies used in the press statements, which are (de)legitimation through authorisation, rationalisation, discourses of nation-building and discourses of women as victims. The chapter argues that these devices may be effective in shaping public opinion and gender governance outcomes if they are perceived as representing or promoting national interests but potentially constrained by culturally dominant discourses that marginalise feminist ways of thinking.

Keywords Legitimation strategies · Social actor representation · Gender · Women's rights organisations · Media statements

M. Yoong (✉)
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham Malaysia, Semenyih, Malaysia
e-mail: melissa.yoong@nottingham.edu.my

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10.1 Introduction

Sustained pressure from feminist activists is often important to get governments to undertake reforms that advance gender equality. In Malaysia, much of the structural and substantive improvements in women's rights have been brought about through the efforts of women's organisations pushing their agenda on the state (Tan, 2011). These successes have been partly dependent on the discursive politics of the organisations as they disrupt state logics and dominant worldviews by 'challenging established definitions, categories, and conceptions; demonstrating the shortcomings of the received view; showing that alternative understandings are possible; and mobilising support for significant changes in accepted meanings or "discursive regimes"' (Hawkesworth, 2012, p. 120). Thus, to better understand the process of gender governance in this country, it is essential to study the political argumentation of these women's rights organisations. However, whilst scholarship has explored these groups' collective actions and struggle for gender justice, to my knowledge, no work has been done to examine their language practices. This chapter presents an initial step towards filling this research gap by analysing the discursive strategies that women's movement organisations in Malaysia use to delegitimise government approaches to gender-related issues and legitimise their own policy and legislative goals.

One of the frequent means by which women's NGOs in Malaysia assess and repudiate the decisions and governance principles of the state is through press releases. These statements, in contrast to the groups' other publications, have a larger readership as they are widely circulated and reported in the media. They have become important sites where activists contest gendered systems of power and dominant ideologies with the intention of persuading the public and policymakers. This chapter closely examines the organisations' English language press statements using van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy of social actor representation and a set of categories of (de)legitimisation proposed by van Leeuwen (2008), Ross and Rivers (2017) and Atanga (2009). Through this, the study aims to identify the strategies that the activists use to construct the worthiness of laws, policies and political actions.

This chapter begins with an overview of the Malaysian women's movement and its achievements and struggles for legislative reform. It continues by briefly exploring the legitimation practices of women's rights groups in other countries. It then outlines the data and analytical approaches used in this study, before presenting the findings from the analysis. This section illustrates the most common means of (de)legitimation in the media statements through a detailed examination of representative extracts. The chapter concludes with a discussion of these strategies' theoretical ability to create resonance with target audiences and improve gender governance outcomes.

10.2 Women's Rights Groups and Legislative Reform

The Malaysian women's movement is not homogenous, speaking with one voice, but comprises of a profusion of organisations across the political spectrum. These groups have coalesced into two main coalitions: the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) and the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG). NCWO, an umbrella organisation for over 200 affiliates, is closely associated with the state and, in the past, with the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration. Although it describes itself as a non-political body, its members include women's wings of political parties, and its leadership and that of Wanita UMNO have historically overlapped on occasion. Leveraging on its long-standing relationship with the establishment, NCWO would lobby directly with the BN government and give impetus to women's rights legislation and policies through 'behind-the-scenes negotiation' (Ng et al., 2006, p. 21). Amongst its achievements in moving BN towards a more gender-responsive governance are legislative reforms such as job security and pensionable status for women in the civil service, separate taxation for women, and illegalising polygamy and raising the minimum marriage age to eighteen for non-Muslims (NCWO, 2017). However, scholars have pointed out that its strategy to work for change from within and maintain a non-confrontational approach limited its activism to issues that were not politically threatening to the authoritarian state (Lai, 2002; Ng et al., 2006). As yet, there is no strong evidence that NCWO will withdraw from its accommodative stance and engage in a more contestatory dialogue with the current BN-Perikatan Nasional (PN) administration.

JAG is an informal collective with fluid membership. Unlike NCWO, it does not have links with the government or political parties. Thus, its discourse plays a vital role in gaining legitimacy for feminist perspectives and gender equality laws, as illustrated below. The coalition was launched in 1984 as the Joint Action Group Against Violence Against Women (JAG-VAW) which consisted of individuals and five women's organisations that were aligned over the issue of VAW. It initially focussed on reforming legislation pertaining to rape. After four years of lobbying lawmakers and mobilising public opinion through the media, amendments were passed in 1989. JAG also pushed for the enactment of a Domestic Violence Act (DVA). Member groups lobbied MPs from both sides in Parliament. At the same time, they organised an array of activities to increase public backing and education around this issue (Lai, 2002). Following almost ten years of agitation, the DVA was finally passed by Parliament in 1994. Support from the BN-led administration had been a problem. Although the bill was sponsored by then Minister of National Unity and Social Development Napsiah Omar, it received strong opposition from UMNO members during its tabling, up to the final night of the parliamentary session (Abdul Aziz, 2005). It would take another two years before the legislation was implemented after activists handed a memorandum to the Minister in Charge of Women's Affairs and then took to the street on International Women's Day 1996 (Lai, 2002).

Whilst the rape law reform and DVA are important markers of progress, both fell short of what JAG had sought. Lai (2002, pp. 63–64) argues that this 'reflected the

more secure base of the state in comparison to that of the women's movement' and 'indicates the need for the women's movement to grow and develop a wider base so that the state will have no choice but to concede to the movement's demands'. Tan (2011, p. 95) similarly underscores the importance of public support in shifting the course of gender governance, observing that:

> Often … women's demands were acceded to in pursuit of popular support rather than out of a commitment to women's rights. The passage of the reform bill for laws related to rape, for instance, is seen not as a sincere move by the government to create safe spaces for women or to adopt the recommendations of the feminist lobby but as a response to the groundswell of public opinion.

These arguments point to the importance for activists to use discursive practices that persuade the *rakyat* to see issues according to their perspective and, in the process, increase public pressure on legislators to introduce progressive gender laws. In order to gain insights into the strategies that the NGOs employ, the present study examines their media statements pertaining to one of the key areas where the legitimacy of state actions and decisions is frequently called into question by the activists, namely women's right to safe, healthy, and gainful employment. JAG members are central players in ongoing legislative and social debates on the welfare of women workers. Together with the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government, they drafted a Gender Equality Act which is expected to protect women from discrimination in the workplace. After the change to the PN government in March 2020, it has been unclear when the act will be tabled in Parliament, and JAG continues to advocate for the passage of the bill. The coalition has also been vocally critical of the way in which sexual harassment in the workplace has been approached. JAG members had been calling for a Sexual Harassment Act since the early 1990s and even submitted a proposed bill to the BN government in 2001, but no stand-alone law on sexual harassment was enacted by this administration. In January 2020, the PH Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development announced that it would table the Sexual Harassment Bill in March 2020, but this did not materialise due to the change in federal government. Consequently, in October 2020, the All Women's Action Society (AWAM), which is part of JAG, ran a social media campaign to build advocacy for the bill and push for it to be tabled in November 2020. The bill was eventually tabled for its first reading in December 2021 and passed in the Dewan Rakyat on 20 July 2022. JAG has publicly committed to ensuring the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act is effectively implemented. Another member organisation, Tenaganita spearheads programmes to protect the rights of migrant and domestic workers in Malaysia, whilst Empower is actively involved in promoting women's political and economic empowerment. Hence, JAG's press statements on gender and work issues provide a rich resource for analysing the (de)legitimation of gender governance in Malaysia.

10.3 Legitimation Strategies of Women's Movement Actors Beyond Malaysia

Much of the current scholarship on the legitimation practices of women's interest groups has emerged from political science, sociology, and anthropology. These studies have explored the discourses that women's activists produce to legitimate positive action for women and mobilise support from the state and wider society. Whittier (2016), for example, argues that women's movement organisations in the US were able to secure the votes of both liberal and conservative members of Congress for the Violence Against Women Act by strategically combining feminism with discourses of crime to construct a gendered crime frame that was compatible with multiple ideological positions. Brommer (2011) discusses how two South Asian domestic abuse organisations in Northern California, which initially faced community hostility, built widespread support by mobilising discourses of differing experience, empowerment, and social change. Jenson et al. (2019, p. 137) describe how feminist activists in the European Union mobilised 'a discourse of equal opportunities in order to claim that real gender equality required some special opportunities for women'. Whilst the articulation of certain discourses can open new pathways to action, the assemblage of *effective* discourses evolves over time. As Naples (2013, p. 136) demonstrates, discursive frames can lose their power for social activism through delegitimation and co-optation by conservative political groups and media. When this happens, feminist activists must 'create alternative discursive strategies to effect cultural and political change'.

Research shows that women's groups often draw on nationalist discourses to legitimise their demands. The Indonesian women's movement in the 1950s, for instance, adapted a discourse of nationalism to argue for women's education rights. Education was framed as necessary to prepare women for their roles as wives and mothers, which would benefit the country since a strong family was regarded as the foundation of a strong, stable, and successful nation. Education was also justified as a means of shaping women into useful citizens who can contribute to the country's development through their productive labour (Martyn, 2005). In Korea, the family-law reform movement advocated for the abolition of the family-head system by engaging in the postcolonial nationalist discourse of (re)constructing culture. Feminist groups contended that the family-head system had been brought in by their former Japanese colonisers, and it distorted traditional Korean family customs which were neither patriarchal nor patrilineal. Similarly, the 'comfort women' redress movement employs nationalist elements in their discourse to win more attention and support for their demands (Kim, 2009).

Although nationalist discourses have positively served these feminist causes, they can be problematic. In the case of the Indonesian women's movement, the expansion of women's education rights through their nationalistic gender roles underscores what many feminist writers have argued: that whilst nationalism permits women to forge a place in the public sphere, it also shores up traditional female roles of motherhood. For the Indonesian activists, 'these roles enabled women's progress to

be demanded for the good and benefit of the nation but meant that when women's interests were not grounded in nationalist discourse or agendas it was difficult to mobilise wider support' (Martyn, 2005, p. 209). This could be clearly seen in the activists' struggle for marriage equality, which was a more contentious issue than education. Scholars have also critiqued the nationalist discourse that underlies the claim for redress for the wartime 'comfort women' in Korea, arguing that it neglects the fundamental issue of the 'comfort women' as sexual victims. The discourse, as represented by the comfort-women movement, reflects and reinforces the gender order, patriarchal norms of female sexuality (Kim, 2009) as well as a patriarchal paradigm of nationalism which interprets rape as 'the infringement of male property rights' and 'the violation of the nation' (Ueno, 2004, p. 94).

Researchers have examined how movement actors constitute subjectivities that serve as legitimation devices. Zanker (2018), for example, found that during Liberia's civil war, women's groups described themselves as mothers and daughters in order to gain access to government officials and rebels and exert influence in negotiations. Richardson and Langford's (2015) analysis of press statements issued by Canada's childcare movement actors, who are overwhelmingly women, reveal that they discursively constructed their collective identity differently during two contrasting political climates. When there was a very real possibility of policy success for the organisation, their collective identity was more accommodating and sympathetic with the state. However, as the socio-political environment became more conservative and less friendly to their goals, they communicated a stronger sense of solidarity with labour groups, women's organisations, and social justice and anti-poverty groups. This could be seen as 'a strategy to increase the legitimacy of the group, as it suggests a greater mass of people concerned about [its core] issues' (ibid., p. 91).

As we shall see in this study, there are parallels between the practices discussed above and the instruments that Malaysian women's organisations employ in their pursuit of legitimisation. However, before we examine the recurrent (de)legitimation strategies in the media statements, the following section will describe the study's data and analytical frameworks.

10.4 Data and Approaches

This case study analyses English language media statements that were released by JAG, the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) and AWAM in 2020. At the time of writing, WAO and AWAM are both members of the JAG coalition. Focussing on these three civil society actors does not imply that they use the most effective (de)legitimation strategies or that they have the strongest influence on government policies. They were selected as they regularly issue media statements to push for improved governance in the context of gender and employment. They are not representative of all women's NGOs in the country. Rather, they provide illustrative examples of the ways women's interest groups in Malaysia frame and assess laws, policies and political actions that impact the lives of a broad range of working women, from

migrant workers to white-collar professionals to members of Parliament. JAG's statements were first located through an internet search using the key term 'Joint Action Group for Gender Equality', and then downloaded from online newspapers and NGO websites. WAO and AWAM's media statements were extracted from the 'Press Statements' and 'News' archives in their respective websites. Only original press releases were collected. News reports about these media statements as well as statements unrelated to gender and paid work were discarded. The final data set comprised 33 press releases: 9 by JAG, 19 by WAO and 5 by AWAM.

The statements were subjected to a coding analysis using van Leeuwen's (2008) framework of legitimation, as also attempted by Rajandran (Chapter "Voices of Economic Competence: Legitimizing the Government in Federal Budget Speeches"), Perumal, Govaichelvan, Sinayah, Ramalingam & Maruthai (Chapter "(De)legitimizing the 2021 Budget Allocation for Tamil Schools in a Talk Show") and Lee (Chapter "#KitaJagaKita: (De)legitimising the Government during the 2020 Movement Control Order"). The analysis is also complemented by Ross and Rivers' (2017) model for examining acts of delegitimisation and Atanga's (2009) work on the legitimation of positive action for women. van Leeuwen (2008) distinguishes four main categories of legitimation:

Authorisation. Reference to authority figures, custom or law.

Moral evaluation. Reference to value systems

Rationalisation. Reference to the utility or purpose of particular actions and to social knowledges that give them cognitive validity

Mythopoesis. Reference to narratives that reward legitimate actions

Ross and Rivers (2017) consider van Leeuwen's categories from an inversed 'negative' position and propose four delegitimisation strategies:

Authorisation. Reference to the abuse of authority

Moral evaluation. Reference to the violation of moral laws or standards

Rationalisation. Reference to the ineffectiveness and irrationality of actions

Mythopoesis. Reference to a negative imagined future scenario as a result of non-legitimate actions and policies

Atanga (2009) builds on van Leeuwen's framework to identify a set of argumentation strategies used in parliamentary discourse to legitimate positive action for women. In addition to authorisation and moral evaluation described earlier, she also observes the tactical articulation of discourses, such as those that position women as victims of violence and inequality. Through the coding process, the extent to which these various strategies are present in the data is established.

The construal of social actors plays an important role in justifying or reducing the legitimacy of political decisions. Thus, the analysis also employs van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic inventory of social actor representation to examine how social actors are realised through the roles they are given to play and through mechanisms such as association, assimilation and genericisation. These representational choices are correlated with specific means of (de)legitimation.

10.5 Discursive Strategies of (De)legitimation

Analytically, four main discursive (de)legitimation strategies are observed, which are (de)legitimation through authorisation, rationalisation, discourses of nation-building and discourses that position women as victims. Each of these strategies are used in combination with the others. Whilst there is also evidence of moral evaluation and mythopoesis, those are not as salient in the data. This section illustrates how the major strategies are linguistically constructed through a detailed analysis of extracts.

10.5.1 (De)Legitimisation Through Authorisation

Policies and reforms demanded by the women's rights groups are frequently constructed as beneficial and necessary through references to expert authority, impersonal authority, and the authority of conformity (van Leeuwen, 2008). With expert authority, legitimacy is established by citing well-known bodies whose expertise is often taken for granted in political discourse, as exemplified below:

Extract 1:
To address the economic impacts of COVID-19 on women, the UN recommends that governments take several tailored measures. These include putting cash directly in women's hands, introducing tax relief for women-owned businesses, and introducing a gender assessment as part of planned country assessments specifically to understand the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls and how to effectively address this.

('United Nations Paper Warns of Gender Gaps Amplified by the COVID-19 Pandemic, Malaysia Must Take Heed', WAO)

This excerpt is from a press release urging the PN government to take gender-sensitive measures to address the impact of the pandemic on women. In the extract and the statement's title, expert authority takes the form of verbal process clauses (*the UN recommends*, *United Nations Paper Warns*) with the United Nations (UN) and its policy brief as subjects. The extract has the illocutionary force of a directive or advice; however, no arguments are presented to substantiate that the measures listed would be efficacious courses of action in Malaysia beyond 'the UN advocates them'. Similarly, the obligational modality (*must*) in the title rests, in part, on the UN's assumed superior knowledge. This illustrates how the activists use an organisation's standing as experts to increase legitimacy for their demands.

The NGOs also appeal to the impersonal authority of laws and international agreements such as the Constitution and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Extract 2 below comes from one of

the media statements pushing for amendments to the Employment Act to introduce, amongst others, anti-discrimination provisions. In this extract, the answer to the unspoken question 'Why should we amend the Act?' is 'because the Constitution says so'. The second sentence implies that the Employment Act in its current form violates the Federal Constitution, the highest law of the land. Calling attention to this legal inconsistency legitimates the need for legislative revisions.

Extract 2:
We also urge the government to include anti-discrimination protection for both employees and job seekers—on the grounds of gender, race, religion, disability, and other characteristics. This would help make a reality the protections against discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and religion in the Federal Constitution […]

('WAO welcomes government's commitment to amend Employment Act, and repeats call for seven days paternity leave and job-seeker protection', WAO)

Another way that the women's groups legitimise their causes is by suggesting that they have the endorsement of the Malaysian people. This is a type of conformity legitimation which conveys the implicit message that 'if most people advocate this, so should you'. In the data, conformity legitimation is often realised linguistically via the inclusion of high-frequency modality as well as real numbers, as illustrated in Extract 3:

Extract 3:
AWAM, together with the Malaysian public, is strongly advocating the Malaysian Parliament and the Cabinet of Malaysia to take serious action to put a stop to sexual harassment in the country through our AWAM for the Bill campaign […] As part of this campaign AWAM has started a petition to push for the tabling of the Bill, and in the span of just three days, we have obtained over 3000 signatures.

('AWAM's fight to table the Sexual Harassment Bill at Parliament this November', AWAM)

In the excerpt above, AWAM legitimates their call for a Sexual Harassment Act by presenting the number of signatures collected in their recently launched petition and emphasising their strong public backing through the time indicator *in the span of just three days*. They also establish conformity legitimation by explicitly 'associating' (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 38) themselves *with the Malaysian public* to form an entity with shared interests and demands. The use of the mass noun suggests that they have the overwhelming support of Malaysians. All this can be viewed as a strategy

not only to encourage more civic engagement in their campaign, but also to place pressure on the PN government to respond to critical popular opinion.

The strategy of authorisation is also used to delegitimise state practices and decisions, such as by pointing out that they go against expert recommendations. In Extract 4 below, legal experts (*organisations including SUHAKAM, unions, and representatives of the Bar Council, Former Malaysian Bar President*) are the subjects of verbal process clauses. Their utterances carry recommendations that challenge the Malaysian government's assertion that there are *legal barriers to including job seekers in the Employment Act*. This can result in a loss of legitimacy for the state's decision-making.

Extract 4:
The Malaysian government had cited legal barriers to including job seekers in the Employment Act. However, organisations including SUHAKAM, unions, and representatives of the Bar Council, have noted that there are no legal or technical barriers to including job seekers in the Employment Act. Former Malaysian Bar President (Ragunath Kesavan) stated, "including protection for job seekers against discrimination in the Employment Act is not only reasonable but it must be legislated."

('Anti-Discrimination Provisions in Employment Act Must Extend to Job Seekers and Include Disability Status', WAO)

Efforts to delegitimate the governance principles of the state also include suggesting a misuse or unethical use of power. Excerpt 5 is from a press statement criticising the police's decision to arrest five hospital cleaners and unionists for picketing during the COVID-19 conditional movement control order. Members of the national union for hospital cleaners had protested against their government-linked employer, Edgenta UEMS, for exploiting and intimidating its workers. Here, describing the actions of the police as *the high-handed behavior of a repressive state* delegitimises not just the excessive use of state power by the police, but also the PN government behind the police action on the basis that they are exercising authoritative rule.

Extract 5:
The arrest of five picketers epitomised the high-handed behavior of a repressive state, and we condemned this action especially when the overcrowded conditions of the lock-up where they spent the night did not comply with any Covid-19 preventive measures.

('Stop intimidation of victimised frontline hospital workers', JAG)

10.5.2 (De)Legitimisation Through Rationalisation

The women's groups frequently legitimate particular legislative bills through effect-oriented instrumental rationality, that is, they validate the need for a new or amended law by emphasising its positive effects, as illustrated below:

Extract 6:
The Sexual Harassment Bill and the proposed Anti-Stalking amendment to the Penal Code would go a long way in giving survivors security and most importantly, to demand accountability through a legal process where their personal, physical, mental and emotional security has been threatened or compromised. It would also serve as a prevention tool and teach Malaysians to have respect for their fellow citizens in all spaces, online or otherwise.
('Online Sexual Harassment on the Rise During MCO', AWAM)

Extract 6 stresses the predicted benefits of the *Sexual Harassment Bill* and *Anti-Stalking amendment to the Penal Code*, which legitimises them as purposeful, useful and effective. Within van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimation framework, although morality is submerged in cases of instrumental rationalisation, there must be an element of moralisation for a practice to be justifiable. In the extract above, *give survivors security*, *demand accountability*, *serve as a prevention tool* and *teach Malaysians to have respect for their fellow citizens* are all moralised outcomes.

The activists also use instrumental rationalisation as a delegitimisation strategy. When taking this approach, the legitimacy of the PN government's plans and measures is undermined by casting them as ineffectual, for example in Extract 7:

Extract 7:
Despite eldercare being an important component of unpaid care work undertaken mostly by women, the Penjana stimulus package completely ignores eldercare services and focuses solely on childcare.
('Malaysia is witnessing a spike in people leaving the labour force due to unpaid care obligations', WAO)

PENJANA, Malaysia's fourth economic stimulus package, was introduced in June 2020 to protect jobs and help businesses recover from COVID-19. WAO calls out the absence of support for eldercare in the plan. The significance of this form of caregiving is underscored by explicitly describing it as *important* in the sentence-initial subordinate clause. However, in the subsequent main clause, this vital care work becomes the Phenomenon of the mental process *ignores*. This could generate

concerns about the value of PENJANA for women caregivers who wish to remain in the workforce, which can reduce its legitimacy.

The analysis shows that delegitimisation also occurs through theoretical rationalisation. According to van Leeuwen (2008, p. 116), theoretical legitimation is 'founded on some kind of truth, on "the way things are"'. Ross and Rivers (2017, p. 8) interpret this, in their delegitimisation framework, to mean that 'an absence of legitimacy results from a lack of "truth" or reality which in turn makes it difficult to rationalise support of [particular social actors or practices]'. In several media statements, the NGOs indirectly encourage the reader to question whether certain state decisions are grounded in any kind of truth or logic, as in Extract 8:

Extract 8:
Meanwhile, the move to terminate Dr Narimah as chairperson of LPPKN by Perikatan Nasional is bizarre and baffling at the same time considering that her experience in the medical field is extensive.

This is compared to her replacement, Parit MP and Parit Umno leader Mohd Nizar Zakaria [...] who has no medical background nor any experience or expertise in the field of family planning, and/or women's reproductive health.

('Stop replacing qualified women with male politicians to head GLCs', JAG)

The extract above is from a media statement criticising the removal of women from leadership positions in government-linked companies and other organisations following PN's coming into power in March 2020. It casts doubt on the logic of replacing Dr. Narimah as chair of the National Population and Family Development Board. A strong sense of irrationality is conveyed, first, by describing the move as *bizarre* and *baffling* and then, by juxtaposing her *extensive experience in the medical field* with her replacement's lack of *medical background*, *experience* or *expertise in the field*. Highlighting such absences of reason in government actions serves to delegitimise the decisions. It is also notable that in the statement's title, women like Dr. Narimah are classified as *qualified*, which encourages the reader to view them as legitimate leaders, whereas the men chosen to supersede them are merely *male politicians*. Nevertheless, since this press release was downloaded from *Malaysiakini*, it is uncertain whether the title was composed by the online news portal or the activists themselves.

10.5.3 Discourses of Nation-Building

The women's groups often articulate nation-building discourses as a means to politically legitimise their interventions in gender governance. These discourses establish women's rights and equality as a cornerstone of the country's development

process. They also reimagine Malaysians as unified in their goal of producing a more gender-equal society, as shown below:

Extract 9:
The slated reforms above were the fruit of years of activism. But these reforms now hang in the balance. We must ensure that they are not derailed—if we are to create a Malaysia where women can thrive and flourish.
('5 Reforms to Improve Women's Rights that Must Persist', WAO)

The press release from which Extract 9 is taken calls for the introduction of the Sexual Harassment Act, anti-stalking laws, paternity leave, protections against workplace discrimination, and the Gender Equality Act. The statement is addressed to citizens rather than the state, as signalled by the collective pronoun *we* and personal address *you* throughout the text. In this excerpt, the use of 'are to-infinitive' in the if-clause implies that *creating a Malaysia where women can thrive and flourish* is a target that Malaysians—interpellated by *we*—are trying to achieve. The assumption that women's empowerment is a desired outcome of nation-building is thus built into the text, which grants legitimacy to the legislative reforms above.

Through nation-building discourses, the activists construct a collective Malaysian identity that shares the values of gender equality. This is realised linguistically through 'collectivisation' (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 38). The people of Malaysia are collectivised through the pronoun *we*, as seen in Extract 9, as well as through other terms exemplified in Extract 10:

Extract 10:
We are all one in our goal that we would like to see a safe, thriving and nurturing Malaysia and not one that is archaic in its vision. This would be an excellent opportunity for the new PM and his team to prove to the rakyat that they will be indeed a cabinet that delivers.
('Let's Continue Our Agenda of Reform and Progress, Especially with Women's Rights', AWAM)

AWAM instantiates a collective Malaysian voice through the first-person plural (*we*, *our, us*) and *rakyat*. This signals consonance amongst Malaysians, as does representing them as *all one* through a relational process. The noun phrases *Our Agenda* and *our goal* presuppose the existence of a shared desire for gender *reform* and a country that is *safe, thriving and nurturing* for women. By presenting the promotion of women's rights as a universal cause uniting Malaysians, the activists give legitimacy to their demands. Similarly, Extract 11 carries the presupposition that making Malaysia more gender-equal is an accepted and understood aspiration.

Extract 11:
Now is the time for big and bold action towards making Malaysia a better country for women, and thus towards creating a better Malaysia for everyone.
('National Women's Day 2020: Four Things the Government Should Do to Make Malaysia a Better Country for Women', WAO)

The presupposition is cued in *towards making Malaysia a better country for women* and *to Make Malaysia a Better Country for Women.* Importantly, the interests of women are conflated with the interests of the wider society at the end of the excerpt. This is yet another way discourses of nation-building are used to legitimise approaches to gender equality. In several press statements, national interests are constructed as a basis for demanding women's rights. For instance, enhancing women's empowerment is represented as key to the country's economic development. In Extract 12 below, the expressions *which will, in turn, affect* and *directly translates into* explicitly indicate a direct cause-effect relationship between women's professional advancement and Malaysia's economic recovery and success. This constitutes a form of instrumental rationalisation, in that having more women in leadership is justified by the expected positive economic outcomes.

Extract 12:
JAG is concerned about the gender imbalance in leadership positions as it will have a longterm impact on the progress of women which will, in turn, affect the economy and Malaysia's recovery post-MCO. Advocating for women's empowerment and agency is important as it directly translates into economic gains for Malaysia.
('Stop replacing qualified women with male politicians to head GLCs', JAG)

Discourses of nation-building are also articulated to delegitimise negative actions against women by men in government, as in Extract 13. It is from a press statement calling for amendments to the Standing Orders of Parliament in order to curb the use of sexist remarks during debate. In this example, *attacks against women politicians and women's voices* are equated to *attacks on democracy*. Framing the harassment as going against becoming a truly democratic country legitimises the proposed intervention. At the same time, it creates a negative perception of the male MPs who produce the offensive utterances, thus reducing their legitimacy as governance actors.

Extract 13:

> We must have zero tolerance for attacks against women politicians and women's voices, which are attacks on our democracy itself.
>
> *('WAO supports MP's call to amend standing orders to prevent sexism in Parliament', WAO)*

10.5.4 Discourses of Women as Victims

The analysis shows that the women's interest groups often invoke discourses that position women as victims—of men, discrimination, unjust structures, and negligence—in order to legitimate introducing or amending laws and policies that would protect them, for example:

> **Extract 14:**
> Unfortunately, attacks on female politicians and women who are critical of the politics in Malaysia are not new developments.
>
> From the stereotyping of women political candidates, to sexist remarks in Parliament against female MPs, to threats made via Facebook and other platforms against women who hold a critical political view, the political environment in Malaysia has consistently been and continues to be hostile towards women.
>
> It is both this explicit hostility towards women as well as the more insidious and systemic discrimination that prevents women from participating in the political sphere.
>
> *('Stop violence and discrimination against women politicians', JAG)*

This excerpt comes from a media statement urging the PN government and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission to take concrete steps to prevent and counter online gender-based violence following social media attacks against Nurul Izzah Anwar, an MP. In the extract as well as the statement's title, women politicians and women in general are depicted as subjected social actors, that is, they are represented as objects of *attacks*, *stereotyping*, *sexist remarks*, *threats*, *hostility*, *violence* and *discrimination*. Their subjection is realised by 'circumstantialisation' (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 34) through prepositional phrases with *on*, *of*, *against* and *towards*, where *female politicians*, *women who are critical of the politics in Malaysia*, *women political candidates*, *female MPs*, *women who hold a critical political view*, *women* and *women politicians* are passivated. It is also realised by 'participation' where *women* are the Goal in relation to the material process *prevents*. Further, the *attacks*, *hostility* and *discrimination* that women face are presented as persistent

and widespread (*not new developments*, *has consistently been and continues to be*, *systemic*). Constructing women as victims of long-standing negative actions justifies the need for laws and measures to intervene on their behalf.

Notably, as we move through Extract 14, we can see that references to women social actors are increasingly genericised, from the more specific *female politicians* to *women who hold a critical political view* to the generic *women*. The generic references essentialise women as a single entity with the same problems. It implies that it is typical for women to want to *participate in the political sphere* and to face *explicit hostility*. This approach can be regarded as what Spivak (1996) would refer to as 'strategic essentialism', whereby diversity within a group is temporarily downplayed to construct an intelligible identity of marginalisation so as to enable the dominant group to understand their experiences of discrimination.

Women are also represented as neglected by state initiatives and the laws of the country. This is illustrated through Extract 15:

Extract 15:
This wage subsidy policy narrowly targets workers in formal employment, ignoring a substantial segment of individuals in vulnerable employment, including the self-employed, informal workers, and unpaid family workers, who are disproportionately women.

('Prihatin stimulus package does not reach women who are most at-risk', WAO)

Women outside formal employment are the objects of the transitive verb *ignoring*, which positions them as victims of inattention. This segment of women who have been overlooked, we are told, is *substantial*. This legitimises WAO's call for the scope of the PRIHATIN economic stimulus package to be widened. The use of the adjective *vulnerable* also exemplifies the activists' reliance on the concept of vulnerability as a legitimation strategy. Extract 15 constructs women's vulnerability through an intersectional gender lens, in that it recognises that women's experiences vary according to the form of work they engage in; it is particular types of *employment* that are *vulnerable*, not women per se. In contrast, Excerpt 16 uses essentialism strategically to present women as a vulnerable group:

Extract 16:
Now, more than ever, is the time for the MWFCD to step up and provide the necessary leadership which our women, families and communities need to get through this crisis and beyond. It includes valuing women's unpaid care work, recognising their vulnerability to gender-based violence and economic

hardship in the wake of the pandemic, and so many other pressing issues that deserve our time, attention and practical solutions.

('MWFCD Must Get Its Priorities Right: Stop Harmful Stereotyping, Focus on Critical Women's Issues & Engage Constructively with Civil Society', JAG)

Extract 16 is from a press release addressed to the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD). Unlike in Extract 15 which refers to subgroups of women workers, this excerpt discusses women generically. The noun phrase *their vulnerability* presupposes the existence of women's vulnerability on the basis of their gender. This can be a useful legitimation tactic since if women 'characteristically undergo discrimination, it is even more pressing for there to be measures to eliminate this' (Atanga, 2009, p. 198).

10.6 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this case study was to elucidate the primary means of (de)legitimation that are employed in media statements issued by JAG, WAO and AWAM in their movement to reshape governance pertaining to gender and paid work. The analysis has shown how legislation, policies and political actions that affect employed women are (de)legitimised through authorisation, rationalisation, discourses of nation-building and discourses of women as victims, all of which are echoed across press statements by the coalition and organisations. This final section evaluates the theoretical ability of these strategies to influence public opinion and political behaviour.

With regard to expert authority (de)legitimation, this can constitute an effective strategy to a certain extent. In order for political actors to present themselves as leaders who are measured and well-informed in their decision-making, they would need to listen to voices of expertise. It could be difficult for politicians to justify their actions when those actions contradict knowledge and advice that promise to deliver positive policy outcomes. Hence, by evoking the voices of legal experts and international bodies in their press statements, the activists could be fairly effective in exerting pressure on the government to act in accordance with their calls for change. However, this strategy can be equally used by the state. For example, the PN MWFCD legitimised the delay in tabling the Sexual Harassment Bill by arguing that it needed to be redrafted with different experts (Daim & Yunus, 2020). At the same time, public deference to expert authority may be waning globally, partly because people are increasingly aware of 'the plurality of expertise, of the fact that many problems have more than one expert solution' (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 107) and partly due to rising populism, which is closely associated with anti-intellectualism and mistrust towards experts (Merkley, 2020). Without population level polls, we cannot be sure how Malaysians view experts. Nonetheless, the low initial registration

rate for the COVID-19 vaccination in Malaysia, as a case in point, suggests that using expert-based legitimation claims has potential weaknesses.

When good decisions rest on expertise and there is a society-wide consensus on desirable versus undesirable outcomes, delegating decisions to experts is often preferred to leaving governance solely to politicians (Skogstad, 2003). In such cases, appeals to expert authority can help secure public support. However, Malaysians hold conflicting views about the roles that women should play, and as Bardon (2020) argues, people tend to dismiss expertise when it does not fit their ideological worldview. Thus, when advocating for greater employment rights and provisions for women, expert authority, and arguably the impersonal authority of international conventions prepared by experts, are vulnerable. For similar reasons, efforts to delegitimise and reverse political outcomes through instrumental and theoretical rationality may not make much headway. For people who are ambivalent about women working outside the home, it may matter little if state decisions relating to women's professional opportunities are inefficacious or illogical.

Invoking the authority of conformity may be more productive as it incorporates elements of popular authority to shore up legitimacy. Popular authority is 'the idea that "the people" should directly decide issues that concern them' (Skogstad, 2003, p. 956). Notions of popular authority have become increasingly woven into Malaysian civic rhetoric in recent decades, in part as a result of the Bersih movement which has given the public a 'greater consciousness of their own right to participate in politics' (Khoo et al., 2021, pp. 87–88). By carrying out surveys and signature campaigns and quantifying their public support, the feminist groups legitimate their position on a model of popular authority that 'provid[es] for direct public input and deliberation in the decision-making process' (Skogstad, 2003, p. 962). This could compel the government to commit to legislative reforms based on 'what the people want', but only if there is strong public feeling. Because women's concerns are not prioritised by Malaysian society, they are not contentious issues with implications for voting behaviour. As such, the state may not have powerful incentives to deviate from established gender governance practices and values. For instance, by early December 2020, AWAM had received only 17,000 signatures in support of the Sexual Harassment Act, and the MWFCD postponed tabling the bill again.

Citing abuses of authority could also be a successful strategy since it can provoke emotions that skew the public towards accepting and supporting the groups' demands, with anger being one potent emotion. Malaysia has witnessed a rise of public anger over kleptocracy, which became an important underlying driver behind the political change in the 14th general elections (Welsh, 2018). Allusions to political self-interest at the expense of citizens in the press statements could trigger strong emotions that have been gaining momentum through the years, which can fuel public outcry for changes in courses of action. However, '[e]motional appeals can fade quickly if not replaced by more concrete and substantive engagement' (ibid., p. 104). Gains in public attention and backing could quickly dissipate with the emergence of another political issue that also taps into public anger.

The activists' pursuit for political legitimacy through instrumental rationality and discourses of women as victims could be challenged by postfeminist and neoliberal

discourses that assume that gender equality has been achieved and that any issues that women face should be overcome through individual hard work, resilience, self-confidence and transforming one's interior life. Such ideas have become increasingly common-sensical in Malaysia (Yoong, 2019, 2020). This could induce many to disavow women's 'victimhood' by men, patriarchy and the state whilst repudiating vulnerability as shameful and positive actions for women, even those that are effectual, as unmeritocratic. Yet, when directed towards the government, vulnerability as a legitimating discourse could be useful as the state may be 'more responsive to and responsible for the vulnerable subject' than an autonomous and empowered one (Fineman, 2008, p. 2).

Given the ambivalence and even antipathy towards feminism in Malaysia (Lee, 2018), building gender equality into unspoken assumptions as to what constitutes nation-building and Malaysian identity may be valuable for making feminist goals appear to be not just 'common sense', but 'good sense'. Developing and normalising a collective Malaysian feminist-national identity can be regarded as a long-term strategy that could increase public support and legitimacy for the movement actors' agenda over time. Weaving feminism into the national economic project may also facilitate cross-ideological support. However, it risks reinforcing the Malaysian instrumentalist approach towards gender where women are regarded not as individuals with rights, but as 'economic resources to fit into the dominant neoliberal growth theory' (Chin Abdullah, 2012, p. 104). This, in turn, could impede the legitimation of women's causes that do not directly further national priorities.

To conclude, this case study analysed how women's interest groups invalidate existing power structures in Malaysia, provide 'good reasons, grounds, or acceptable motivations' (van Dijk, 1998, p. 255) for changes in courses of action and attempt to influence public attitudes and political outcomes. Women's rights remain a highly pressing issue in this country; thus, more research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the processes that shape and contest the decisions made by state actors in relation to gender. Linguists could examine other genres of political discourse produced by activists and other relevant social actors. Audience reception analysis and studies of discursive tropes that are uncritically adopted by state and media institutions could also be conducted to enable us to draw inferences on the efficacy of the (de)legitimations and whether they actually do resonate with target audiences (Simonsen, 2019). This will ultimately contribute to more successful strategies and better gender governance.

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Melissa Yoong is Associate Professor in Sociolinguistics at the School of English, University of Nottingham Malaysia. Her research explores issues at the intersections of language, gender, sexuality, employment and family care, with particular emphasis on disrupting postfeminist and neoliberal conceptions of women's empowerment. She is author of *Professional Discourses, Gender and Identity in Women's Media* published by Palgrave and other academic contributions to journals and edited books. She can be contacted at melissa.yoong@nottingham.edu.my.

Chapter 11
Exploring Malaysia's 2021 Budget through Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies: (De)legitimation in Online News

Siti Aeisha Joharry and Mohd Faizal Kasmani

Abstract This chapter examines how a particular social event, Malaysia's 2021 budget is reported in *The Star Online*. It aims to analyse the discourse surrounding the budget through use of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). Using corpus linguistic techniques, a specialised corpus is firstly compiled of the phrase 'Budget 2021' in *The Star Online* from one month before and after Parliament passed the budget on 26 November 2020. A total of 889 articles ranging from a number of sections (e.g. Nation, Letters, and Business) were identified from the website that resulted in 339,651 words. Standard corpus methods were employed namely, the investigation of frequency lists, collocational patterns as well as examining the corpus in more detail via concordance. Findings from the Budget 2021 corpus show patterns of how language is used to describe, explain as well as oppose a political issue like the national budget, which may influence how governance achieves legitimacy in the eyes of the public. It also reveals how discursive meanings can be viewed in a more systematic way.

Keywords Economy · Budget · Corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) · Corpus linguistics · Online news

11.1 Political Discourse of Digital Texts

Investigating 'discourse' is usually discussed in terms of the structural point of view of institutions and power within a particular social context. As Nordquist notes:

> [d]iscourse studies look at the form and function of language in conversation beyond its small grammatical pieces such as phonemes and morphemes. This field of study, which Dutch linguist Teun van Dijk is largely responsible for developing, is interested in how larger units of language—including lexemes, syntax, and context—contribute meaning to conversations (27August 2020).

S. A. Joharry (✉)
Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia
e-mail: aeisha@uitm.edu.my

M. F. Kasmani
Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Nilai, Malaysia

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Within the specific political context of a discourse, there are mainly two types as described by Ädel (2010): the first is to focus on the political genre as the main criterion—by 'political discourse' here, any forms of communication or speech event, which takes place in a political context, and/or involving political agents. Other definitions of what 'political discourse' may mean could either be viewed from a broader scope (referring to any discourse on a topic which is political) or from an extended scope; the idea that power and control are (often or always) enacted through discourse, which makes it possible to consider any discourse as 'political'. In the present chapter, we shall use the latter view, investigating how a political topic is discussed in an online social setting as a form of analysing 'political discourse' using corpus techniques. More specifically, the chapter sets out to investigate how talk about Malaysia's 2021 Budget in a selected online news portal can be carried out via a corpus approach, revealing discursive tendencies that shape the forms of journalism. In addition, findings from this chapter emphasises on instances of (de)legitimation as a result of intertextual features in the news.

As Ädel further points out, "[p]olitical discourse is frequently represented in corpora, in part because many political genres are not only public but also widely publicised, which makes them more easily accessible than many other types of discourse" (2020, p. 592). Echoing from this, digital texts that demonstrate political discourse are therefore rich in meaning as readers now transition to obtaining news and information online. Although digital texts comprise a vast repository of different genres and text-type, the present chapter focuses on online written texts or articles systematically chosen (via the corpus linguistic approach) for political discourse in context.

11.2 Online News and Corpus Discourse Studies

Many academics have written about the democratising impact of digital media practises regarding news reporting and journalism. Hartley (2008) argues that the convergence of digital media and news contributes to a community of citizen journalists (McNair, 2006; Terry, 2009). This is attributed to the growth in user-generated content that decentralises and distributes the ability of netizens to produce content on their own (Bruns, 2008). This participatory media society creates an atmosphere in which media producers and users are increasingly interested in engaging with each other, where consumers are becoming increasingly stronger in relation to media producers (Jenkins, 2006). This provides people a more collective voice; the Internet has now broadened the conventional limits of debate, whilst also offering a range of resources for immersive, asynchronous, and multi-directional modes of discussion that could lead to more comprehensive dialogue on public concerns (Zamith & Lewis, 2014).

McNair (2006) suggests that since the advent of digital media and the Internet, journalism has seen a rise in democracy and transparency in the public sphere. This is mainly because opportunities to produce and distribute media have become more accessible to a wider range of people and in turn, this puts more critical scrutiny of

political elites and the way governance is presented. Dahlgren and Sparks (2005) also assert the positive contribution of the Internet in facilitating democratic discourse and civic culture to the public that promotes civic engagement and interaction (Papacharissi, 2008). The result of this is the break-up of a singular, integrated public sphere into multiple, heterogeneous communicative forums and practises (Terry, 2009).

Online discourse is not only seen as a platform for democratising the way in which news were reported but is also felt like a means to express feelings or responses to everyday scenarios in the country. Apart from the accessibility, writers are said to contribute to the multiple viewpoints found in the readership, where both writer/readers views and voices are incorporated into the journalistic work (Collins & Nerlich, 2015). News reporting can be seen from different angles, either through the lens of the professional or the citizen journalist, and this new form of journalism encourages or stimulates for more "conversations" rather than receiving information from a single authoritative source (Collins & Nerlich, 2015).

One way to investigate political discourse is through corpus-assisted discourse studies, also known as CADS. This, according to Partington (2018: p. 2) is "a field of study in its own right" as more discourse studies have incorporated the use of corpora over the years (Partington et al., 2013: p. 10). Unsurprisingly so, studies that adopt CADS are often productive in that they are never exclusive nor intended to replace other approaches but "frequently marry well with, provide sustenance to, blend into and lead out of other types of approaches, and ways of collecting data […], which is why CADS is both particularly interdisciplinary and can be adopted in and adapted to so many other fields of study" (Partington, 2018: p. 2). He further argues that research using corpus linguistics and CADS "decontextualises in order to recontextualise and reconstruct the object of study, the discourse type under investigation" (2018: p. 4), which allows researchers to analyse language use at different levels of abstraction via machine interventions (e.g. corpus linguistic techniques and tools) that support the overall intuitive process.

Discourse as defined by Partington (2018) is "language in use as a vehicle of communication, as language doing things, as speakers and writers attempting to influence the beliefs and actions of their interlocutors using language" (p. 2) and some well-known corpus-based or CADS type of studies include the representations of Islam in the British media (Baker et al., 2013), the portrait of immigrants in the British and Italian press (Taylor, 2014), and media reporting surrounding the London Olympics 2012 (Jaworska, 2016). Typically, these studies begin with a quantitative analysis of a statistical output of some sort, followed by a close reading of concordance lines to investigate contextualised language use in more detail. As noted in Jaworska (2016: p. 9), "The CADS approach utilises the quantitative tools offered by corpus linguistics, but it extends the methodological paradigm by integrating techniques commonly associated with qualitative discourse analysis in order to understand the discourse in question and its context as much as possible". In addition, comparison is often made between texts within two separate time frames (usually before and after a particular event) so as to evaluate the impact of certain events and how they are discursively constructed.

Whilst Rajandran (Chap. 3) and Farrah Diebaa and Su'ad (Chap. 4) study budget speeches, this chapter follows Perumal, Govaichelvan, Sinayah, Ramalingam, and Maruthai (Chap. 5) in studying media reporting of the 2021 Malaysian Budget. More specifically, it provides a snapshot of how *The Star Online* reports about the budget via an empirical (corpus linguistic techniques), and in-depth analysis, grounded in CADS.

11.3 The 2021 Malaysian Budget

The 2021 Malaysian national budget was tabled in Parliament on 6 November 2020. It was regarded as the largest budget in the country's history with an increase of RM7.8 billion in expenditure (from RM314.7 billion in 2020 to RM322.5 billion in 2021). Named "Resilient as One, Together We Triumph", the allocation of the budget was seen as contentious as it occurred during a global pandemic as well as a political crisis in the country (Tan, 2020a, 2020b).

At the time when the budget was tabled, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin was facing political uncertainty as the Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim claimed that he managed to garner enough support from parliamentarians to topple the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government. There was, therefore, a high political stake for the Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz to table a strong and effective budget that met everyone's needs. Most importantly for the government, the budget should be able to get the support of the Members of Parliament (MPs), given the government's slim parliamentary majority. To ensure that the MPs supported the budget, the Opposition bloc was consulted in the run-up to the budget presentation. The finance minister was reported to have made additional allocations based on feedback from both sides of the aisle, mostly with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main highlights of the budget included the increase of the COVID-19 fund allocation from RM20 billion to RM65 billion. The main purpose was to fund aid packages and benefits for frontliners as well as to procure vaccines (Tan & Yusuf, 2020). The second important measure of the 2021 Budget was to protect livelihood due to the loss of jobs as a result of the pandemic and underemployment. This included various approaches such as RM6.5 billion for a cash aid programme, RM28 billion for subsidies, aid and incentives, and RM1.5 billion to extend wage subsidy programmes. The budget also announced a targeted EPF Account 1 withdrawal facility of RM500 per month, up to RM6,000 for 12 months, with total withdrawal from EPF Account 1 amounting to RM4 billion (Ministry of Finance, n.d.). To sustain economic recovery, the 2021 Budget also provided relief for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) grappling with survival and recovery during the pandemic. This included another set of allocation ranging from RM510 million to finance SMEs and micro-SMEs, RM800 million through capacity-building programme and RM95 million for special micro-credit fund to empower women entrepreneurs.

On 26 November 2020, Parliament declared that the 2021 Budget passed with a voice vote (Anand, 2020; Lee & Goh, 2020). Several refinements were made taking

into account viewpoints from various parties. These include an increase of withdrawal limits of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), an auto-approval mechanism for those in the B40 group as well as SMEs, rebranding of the government's Special Affairs Department (JASA) to become the Community Communications Department (J-KOM) to justify the budget allocated at RM85.5 million and extending a one-off payment to frontliners battling COVID-19 (Yusuf, 2020; Palanasamy, 2020).

The 2021 Budget passed its third reading in the Lower House with a division vote on 15 December 2020 (The Edge Market, 2020). The ratification of the 2021 Budget was seen as a victory for Muhyiddin Yassin who returned with renewed doubts regarding his majority in the week preceding the final budget vote (Shukry, 2020). The Prime Minister, however, still faced strong opposition from Anwar Ibrahim who claimed to secure the backing of several government MPs from UMNO to undo Muhyiddin's majority. His predecessor, Mahathir Mohamad, also announced that he was teaming up with a senior government MPs to form a government (Shukry, 2020), and this too seemed to create a sense of uneasiness. Amongst speculations surrounding the news were the rejection of the bill and involvement of a declaration of state emergency should Parliament not be able to reach a consensus. One of the reasons for this disagreement between parties can be traced to reporting on social media about proposals (mainly from the Opposition) that were not met and other criticisms of the budget, such as unrealistic projected earnings for 2021 and a dissolved BN department that was proposed to be given RM85 million (Ng, 2020).

Digital texts including online news that are publicly and widely publicised on the web provide a wealth of data for corpus linguists. More specifically, we aim to analyse talk about the Malaysian 2021 Budget in a popular national English online news portal, *The Star Online*. According to Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020, "[o]nline and social media remain the predominant sources of news for our online sample of Malaysian news users" (p. 98). *The Star Online* in particular was chosen because of its wide readability in the country. Using corpus linguistics techniques, a specialised corpus was firstly compiled of articles from *The Star Online* based on the topic (Budget 2021) as a search phrase. These include the various sections like Nation, Business News, and so on that also appeared as a result of the search between a specified timeline of when the bill was tabled and passed in Parliament.

11.4 Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS)

This chapter incorporates corpus techniques in a study of Budget 2021 as a political topic. We follow Partington's (2010) description of corpus study of political language that examines texts on political issues (like the budget), emanating from main sites of public experience of political issues, in our case, *The Star Online*. The study starts with a simple description of the list of words that may tell us how the topic of interest is talked about in the corpus. Whilst it may be argued that identification of keywords, i.e. words that are "statistically significantly more frequent" (Baker et al., 2013, p. 27) in one corpus than in another would be the typical starting point of a corpus study, in this

chapter, it was not the intention to compare two corpora. Rather, it is possible to create a specialised corpus and investigate the use of language via online corpus analysis tools like Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). Following this, further analysis is carried out using salient keywords identified as the starting point for qualitative analysis in CADS, as "corpus linguistics (CL) techniques provide a 'map' of the corpus, pinpointing areas of interest for a subsequent close analysis" (Baker et al. 2008, p. 284). In other words, by adopting the CADS approach, political discourse of online news surrounding the budget is investigated using corpus linguistic techniques to demonstrate how "[l]arge collections of tokens of a discourse type would seem to be a valid, appropriate, and rigorous way of reflecting the intertextuality of political discourses" (Partington, 2013, p. 4).

11.5 Corpus Building

As mentioned earlier, Budget 2021 was tabled in the Malaysian Parliament by the Finance Minister on 6 November 2020. Given this, it is useful to collect data four weeks prior to this event (6 October 2020) as well as another four weeks after the bill was tabled (6 December 2020) in order to potentially see differences in the way the budget was talked about leading up to the decision of passing the bill on 15 December 2020. The decision to compile a specialised corpus was found to be more suitable for this type of study as research has shown that there is equal wealth in examining smaller sized corpora for a more specific/focussed discourse (Flowerdew, 2004; Lee, 2008). A specialised corpus provides a snapshot of the language used to describe a particular occurrence in time and since findings have been sufficient for ample discussions, the duration for which the corpus was built was considered reasonable.

It should be noted that a full comparison of newspapers was not the aim of this study, for reasons of focus as much as space, instead we focussed on *The Star Online* as a popular and widely read mainstream online English newspaper in Malaysia, with 56% of online readers trusting the brand (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2020). In this study, the specific search term 'Budget 2021' was keyed in on the website (www.thestar.com.my) that generated 889 related articles (ranging from those under sections like Nation, Letters, Business and so on) acting as a starting point in which the phrase was found. This amounted to 339,651 words to be analysed and in turn, enabled findings to be mostly specialised or discourse specific as to how Budget 2021 was described and discussed in *The Star Online*.

The first part of corpus analysis is quantitative in nature where statistical measures are used to determine salient words/phrases as the starting point of analysis whereas subsequent steps require qualitative analyses. This is a typical integration quality of CADS that "requires constant oscillation between quantitative and qualitative viewpoints, moving back and forth between computer-based discovery procedures and traditional, human hermeneutics" (Mautner, 2019, p. 8). Table 11.1 shows a list of frequent words found in the corpus. The statistical measure employed to determine

the significance of difference is Average Reduced Frequency where ARF "is a variant on a frequency list that 'discounts' multiple occurrences of a word that occur close to each other, e.g. in the same document", available on Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). This enables us to consider the frequency of words in relation to the word's distribution in the corpus that may otherwise be misleading on simple frequency of occurrence alone (Tranchese, 2019). In other words, this meant that the words are not only frequent, but they are distributed quite evenly across texts.

Table 11.1 compares the two different measures when counting for frequent words in a corpus (words in red are those not found in the corresponding frequency measure). For ease of readability, Table 11.1 shows first 30 and last 30 in the rank of 100 top frequent words according to absolute frequency and ARF.[1] Since there is no cut-off point for using ARF and all words with an ARF score close to their absolute frequencies should be analysed, only the top 100 keywords (as identified in descending order by ARF scores) were considered following Tranchese (2019, p. 7).

These words were then categorised into semantic macro-categories, as shown in Table 11.2 that may identify the topics that dominated the discussion of Budget 2021 in the corpus using the free UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS) English semantic tagger available online. This web-based semantic tagger developed by Rayson (2002) is used to show semantic fields of words that are generated automatically online, which are then referenced following the USAS category system (Archer et al., 2002) to avoid risk of inconsistencies and bias. However, the list of semantically tagged words were manually inspected to ascertain more meaningful associations based on contextual information (for example, 'will' was labelled as a word depicting volition or relating to law and order by the software but is contextually grouped as showing effort/resolution in the case of 'political will'). Other more generic terms (often grammatical) like 'has/have' were categorised under grammatical words. In short, despite the automatic tagging of top 100 frequently distributed words, they were also (partially) manually categorised to meet the context of the Budget 2021 corpus.

Grouping the wordlist (based on ARF measures) into semantic categories was the first step for analysis and it provided a sense of the context on how the budget was viewed in terms of dominant themes. Table 11.2 presents macro-categorisations of the top 100 words[3] in the corpus, using the online free USAS semantic tagger. However, as mentioned earlier, certain words had to be reclassified upon realising the more suitable meaning that would be represented in the context of the corpus.

Upon first inspection, Table 11.2 shows that salient words in the corpus are mainly grouped as grammatical words and this is not unusual as most English texts display more functional words than lexical ones. Categories of 'Movement, location, travel, and transport' and 'Numbers and measurement' are equally striking in that despite their function as prepositions, suggest that the Budget 2021 corpus involves a lot of talk about quantities (e.g. ***some*** *profit-taking activity*, ***All*** *MPs should support Budget 2021*) and location/direction (e.g. *exemption from July 1 to Dec 31 for* ***this*** *year*, *incentives* ***under*** *the campaign*). This is not surprising as the articles collected were written during the time of tabling the budget and it could be argued that financial issues (depicted by words 'budget', 'economy' and 'economic' in the 'Money and

Table 11.1 Top 100 frequent words in absolute frequency compared with ARF scores

No.	Word	Absolute Freq.	No.	Word	ARF	No.	Word	Absolute Freq.	No.	Word	ARF
1	The	25,017	1	The	17,035.30	71	Should	632	71	Economic	315.3
2	To	12,690	2	To	8285.40	72	Year	621	72	Should	309.7
3	And	8658	3	And	5753.90	73	But	620	73	Such	304.8
4	Of	8367	4	Of	5386.70	74	They	596	74	Year	304.5
5	In	6748	5	In	4314.70	75	I	593	75	They	296.8
6	For	5399	6	For	3380.90	76	Economy	576	76	When	292.5
7	A	4957	7	A	3009.60	77	If	570	77	Economy	288.1
8	Is	4119	8	Is	2553	78	People	550	78	If	280.7
9	Said	3870	9	Said	2374.60	79	Tax	550	79	Seri	278.4
10	That	3650	10	On	2293.20	80	Allocation	549	80	During	277.1
11	On	3595	11	That	2183	81	State	544	81	People	273.2
12	Be	2901	12	Be	1707.90	82	Support	534	82	Added	269.5
13	As	2761	13	As	1551.70	83	Such	518	83	Support	255.9
14	He	2616	14	Budget	1400.60	84	Seri	516	84	Related	253.9
15	Budget	2516	15	He	1370.60	85	Nov	484	85	Time	252.3
16	Will	2056	16	With	1166.60	86	When	481	86	While	249.1
17	It	2011	17	It	1151.40	87	Mps	480	87	Other	246.8
18	With	1914	18	Will	1136.20	88	During	480	88	Nov	245.6
19	Was	1867	19	By	1026.80	89	Help	475	89	I	241.8
20	Government	1849	20	Government	1014.30	90	Added	469	90	Only	239.8
21	By	1704	21	Was	1011.80	91	Parliament	458	91	Well	235.4

(continued)

Table 11.1 (continued)

No.	Word	Absolute Freq.	No.	Word	ARF	No.	Word	Absolute Freq.	No.	Word	ARF
22	This	1672	22	This	989.1	92	Time	454	92	Help	235
23	From	1671	23	From	969.2	93	Could	445	93	Could	234.8
24	Are	1664	24	Are	928.2	94	Only	435	94	Allocation	230.2
25	Also	1492	25	Also	889.4	95	While	432	95	Need	221.6
26	Not	1452	26	Our	822.4	96	His	430	96	After	219.1
27	At	1403	27	Out	804	97	Development	428	97	Some	216.7
28	Enjoy	1396	28	At	790.4	98	Business	422	98	So	212.9
29	We	1321	29	Not	769.1	99	Other	419	99	Into	211.1
30	Would	1241	30	Enjoy	732.1	100	Need	416	100	Business	208.2

Table 11.2 Broad categorisation of highly frequent and well-dispersed words in the Budget 2021 corpus

Category	Description	Examples
Names & Grammatical words	Closed class words such as prepositions and proper nouns	The, to, and, of, for, a, on, that, is, be, as, with, by, was, from, are, at, has, have, which, an, or, had, been, were, such, but, when, during, while, after, so, into
	Negative	Not
	Conditional	If
	Pronouns, Personal/Proper names	He, it, our, you, their, we, its, they, I, Datuk, Malaysia, Seri
	Discourse markers	Well[2]
General & Abstract terms	Affect: cause/connected	Related
	Affect: modify, change	Up, added
	Definite (+ modals)—abstract terms of modality (possibility, necessity, certainty, etc.)	Would, should, could
	Getting and giving; possession (relating to allocating/relinquishing/acquiring/receiving, etc.)	Allocation
	Degree: boosters—intensifiers that amplify to a high degree (but not the upper extreme)	More
	Exclusivisers/particularisers—focussing subjuncts that draw attention to/focus upon X	Only
	General comparative terms	Other
Body & individual	Health and disease	COVID-19, pandemic
Government & the public domain	Government (terms relating to government and governmental activities)	Government, minister
Linguistic actions, states & processes	Communication in general; Speech acts (communicative—relating to spoken communication)	Said
Psychological actions, states & processes	Wanting, planning, choosing (volition)	Will
Money & commerce in industry	Terms relating to money generally (also relating to cost/worth/value)	Budget
	Terms relating to business generally (also relating to cost/worth/value)	Economy, economic
Numbers & measurement	Quantities	Also, up, some
	Terms depicting maximal/ maximum quantities	All, added

(continued)

Table 11.2 (continued)

Category	Description	Examples
Movement, location, travel & transport	Location and direction—depicting position of/point of reference for X (deictic markers)	Out, this, there, under, in
Social actions, states & processes	Obligation and necessity	Need
	Helping/hindering	Support, help
Time	Relating to a specific period of time	Year, time

commerce in industry' category), which are more topical were as noticeable as words describing senses that are measurable as well as in motion. Other initial findings from Table 11.2 point to the discussion around the COVID-19 pandemic, words related to the government or governmental activities (*government*, *minister*), spoken communication depicted by the reporting verb 'said', sense of volition (*will*) as well as words referring to obligation (*need*), help (*support*; *help*) and time (*year*; *time*).

These general semantic categories show that frequent words in the corpus were mainly from categories of 'Movement', 'Numbers/Measurement', followed by 'Money'. These show that economic issues were prominent in the corpus as well as the description about them, signalled mostly by deictic markers, both temporal (e.g. *out*; *in*) and spatial (e.g. *some*; *all*) as well as prepositions like *under*. Whilst closed class words may not appear to show much, pronouns and proper nouns reveal interesting themes that may suggest the agentive role of certain people in the talk about Budget 2021 (e.g. *we*, *Datuk*, *Malaysia*). On the basis of this preliminary inspection of salient words in the corpus, it can be argued that recurring themes involving the health crisis, economy and the government are indeed part of what the budget was about. Although grouping salient words semantically may not show much definitive results, it was a helpful tool to highlight topics that were prominent in the corpus that can provide further insight into the next part of the research.

Since it would not have been possible to analyse all 100 top ranking words in the corpus, the key term 'budget' (ranked number 14 in the list) was used as our focal point in the next part of the study: collocation analysis. Through use of WordSketch, a tool available on SketchEngine, the word 'budget' was searched for its grammatical and collocational behaviour (i.e. collocates or co-occurring words) with a minimum frequency of five, using LogDice as the default statistic. This measure describes the typicality score indicating strength of association between the target/node word with its collocates—the higher the score, the stronger the collocation. Typical collocation of 'budget' is thus helpful to see how the word is used or referred to with other words in the corpus and then analysed in context through concordance analysis.

11.6 Collocation and Concordance Analysis

Having provided an overview of the main themes that characterised the Budget 2021 corpus, this section focuses on the collocation and concordance analysis of 'budget' more closely. Table 11.3 presents the most typical collocates of 'budget' using WordSketch. More specifically, the table shows how the budget is mostly referred to as a 'budget deficit'. Although instances can also be found where the term 'deficit budget' was used, this only points to the same thing and therefore, adds to the number of how 'budget' typically occurs with 'deficit' (freq. = 24) in the corpus. As can be seen, 'budget' usually occurs as a subject (e.g. *budget is*; *budget has*), occurring with possessives (e.g. *next year's budget*; *facilitate the Government's Budget*; *its budget*); mostly collocating with verbs and adjectives (e.g. *pass the budget*; *approve a partial budget*; *an expansionary budget*; *the national budget*), as well as functioning as adjective (e.g. *budget deficit*; *his maiden budget speech*; *2021 Budget debate*).

Generally, 'budget deficit' occurs when spending exceeds income. As Amadeo (2020) explains, deficit must be paid. If it is not, then it creates debt. This was found to be one of the concerns in the Budget 2021 corpus (lines 5, 13, and 22; see Fig. 11.1) and these may be argued as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (lines 6, 10, 17, 20, and 21), where reports show "economic fallout [were] inflicted by the pandemic crisis" (Lee Heng Guie, 2020). This echoed the findings of the semantic grouping of frequently distributed words, indicating how the budget is described in relation to health and disease, particularly from the impact of COVID-19. The last two occurrences in Fig. 11.1 refer to descriptions of the budget deficit in other countries like Indonesia (lines 23 and 24), which may seem to normalise the idea of a budget deficit. This first look at the occurrences of 'budget' and 'deficit' demonstrates the first instance of intertextuality at play where information about the budget deficit is shared in detail across different sections of *The Star Online*, namely, Nation, Metro News, and Business News. Arguably a specific term within the business discourse, 'budget' and 'deficit' can also be seen in close proximity in Nation and Metro News, reporting how the budget creates an excess of allocation compared to an increase in debt as reported in Business News.

Next, most verbs patterning strongly with 'budget' as object had meanings associated with either approving it (e.g. *pass*, *approve*, *support*) or rejecting it (e.g. *reject*, *oppose*). This exemplification of two differing views offers the reader both positive and negative viewpoints of the budget in the corpus. Although the budget eventually was passed (supported by a majority vote in Parliament), it was found that there were speculations of whether the bill will "be defeated by the Opposition" and how the government was preparing for "possible scenarios". Reasons for why this was the case was unfortunately missing from the reports. Other collocates that functioned as a verb with 'budget' as an object were described as neutral actions in relation to the process of debating, tabling, drafting, and presenting the budget (to name a few), whilst 'defeat' was found to occur with expressions of how the budget was "defeated" at the time, largely in part to the Opposition (see Fig. 11.2). This occurrence, mostly

Table 11.3 WordSketch of 'budget' in corpus, minimum frequency = 5

Modifiers of 'budget'	Freq	Score	Nouns modifiers of 'budget'	Freq	Score	Verbs with 'budget' as object	Freq	Score	Verbs with 'budget' as subject	Freq	Score
	227	28.41		96	12.02		300	37.55		160	20.03
Expansionary	17	11.08	Deficit	16	11.6	Pass	22	10.88	Be	105	9.31
National	19	10.88	Speech	9	10.98	Approve	16	10.47	Have	12	7.75
Federal	12	10.54	Debate	7	10.82	Defeat	11	10.1			
Previous	10	10.07	Bill	5	10.17	Support	17	10.08			
5bil	8	10.07	Allocation	10	9.61	Debate	11	10.04			
Deficit	8	10.06				Table	13	10.03			
Annual	8	9.94				Reject	10	9.87			
State	16	9.91				Draft	6	9.26			
Partial	6	9.7				Oppose	6	9.26			
Large	8	9.62				Present	5	8.88			
Health	8	9.61				Expect	7	8.74			
Unity	5	9.4				Get	6	8.66			
Big	5	8.96				Allocate	6	8.63			
First	5	8.65				Say	22	8.6			
						Be	26	8.45			
						Need	5	8.45			
						Have	6	7.74			

Prepositional phrases	Freq	Score	Possessors of 'budget'	Freq	Score	Pronominal possessors of 'budget'	Freq	Score
	303	0		35	4.38		16	2

(continued)

Table 11.3 (continued)

Prepositional phrases	Freq	Score	Possessors of 'budget'	Freq	Score	Pronominal possessors of 'budget'	Freq	Score			
… of "%w"	47	5.88	Year	21	13.14	Its	6	8.41			
… in "%w"	45	5.63	Government	5	9.24						
"%w" for …	29	3.63									
… for "%w"	23	2.88									
… on "%w"	19	2.38									
… under "%w"	17	2.13									
"%w" in …	15	1.88									
… from "%w"	12	1.5									
… to "%w"	11	1.38									
"%w" of …	8	1									
"%w" at …	8	1									
… against "%w"	6	0.75									
… if "%w"	6	0.75									
"%w" with …	5	0.63									
"%w" on …	5	0.63									
"%w" as …	5	0.63									

				Source
1	The government, Lin said, then would be able to recoup despite a deficit	budget	. "This is the time I will say go for a deficit budget, and the time for the government to borrow,	Nation
2	"This is the time I will say go for a deficit	budget	, and the time for the government to borrow, then help the smaller businesses to expand and	Nation
3	a slow process to regain what the government spends after the deficit	budget	as investors are also cautious. "We need a fiscal policy (with more spending by government	Nation
4	titled Berdaya Tahan Demi Kemakmuran, Hasni said the state would face a deficit	budget	of RM248.14mil next year. "This is based on our income projections of RM1.60bil while our	Metro News
5	the nation's annual budget, and for many years now, Malaysia has been running on a deficit	budget	, resulting in an increasing national debt, although there are a number of factors that	Business News
6	pandemic have caused the state government to dig more into its coffers to present a deficit	budget	to help steer the state out of the present situation. Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Hasni Mohammad	Nation
7	In his maiden budget speech, he said that the state would face a deficit	budget	of RM248.14mil in 2021. "This is based on our income projections of RM1.60bil, while our	Nation
8	For 2021, the state is expected to have a deficit	budget	of RM248.14mil. "This is based on our income projections of RM1.60bil while our spending is	Nation
9	additional RM55bil or 3.7% of GDP pushing the	budget	deficit to GDP ratio to hit estimated between 6.0% and 6.5% this year, to arrest the sharp	Business News
10	pandemic crisis. We expect the Finance Ministry to calibrate a targeted expansionary	budget	deficit estimated 5.5-6% of GDP in 2021, increase spending, provide selective tax relief and	Business News
11	pressure on the current self-imposed 60% debt-to-gross domestic product ceiling, while the	budget	deficit will be down by another few notches. With less than a month to go before the	Business News
12	"There will be some relative pullback, however, from the 5.8% to 6%	budget	deficit to gross domestic product (GDP) expected this year to around 5.5% in 2021, to give a	Business News
13	be just profit-driven. An endless string of unnecessarily large	budget	deficits in the past has saddled us with too big a debt to step up spending now. We	Business News
14	Bear in mind, the Malaysian government is not alone in having enlarged	budget	deficit in 2020 and 2021, as countries worldwide are doing the same to kick-start their stalled	Business News
15	a "neutral" outlook of the MGS this year, said based on the official forecast of RM86.5bil in	budget	deficit , he is revising down gross MGS+GII issuance forecast this year to RM148.8bil from	Business News
16	alleviate the financial burden of Malaysians and at the same time keep close tabs on	budget	deficits . He added that the sizeable allocation would translate into a larger impact to the	Nation
17	create new opportunities for businesses. Unfortunately, this means we must operate on a	budget	deficit. Whether or not we can handle this is dependent on how much longer this Covid-19	Nation
18	the vaccines in 1Q 2021. Over the medium term, the government is committed to lower	budget	deficit to 4% of GDP by 2023. Key strategy will be on revenue enhancing given the limited scope	Business News
19	in the first quarter of 2021. Over the medium term, the government was committed to cut its	budget	deficit to 4% of GDP by 2023. A key strategy would be on revenue enhancing given the limited	Business News
20	allocated RM17bil for the Covid-19 Fund as containing the pandemic is crucial to reduce the	budget	deficit . The uneven state of economic recovery from the pandemic-inflicted slump gets a strong	Business News
21	subsidy programme is one-off under the Covid-19 Fund in 2021. Hence, it helps to reduce the	budget	deficit if the Covid-19 pandemic is contained. We believe that global rating agencies will give	Business News
22	may be sustained. Such a scenario points to various vulnerabilities arising from record	budget	deficits , rising debt levels, geopolitical risks and uncontrollable virus infections. Malaysia's	Business News
23	stimulate growth. With so much additional spending, most countries already have record	budget	deficits , and to stimulate spending, they would also have record low interest rates. Indonesia	Business News
24	they would also have record low interest rates. Indonesia has forecast a fiscal deficit (	budget	deficit including borrowing and other liabilities) of 6.34% of gross domestic product (GDP) for	Business News

Fig. 11.1 Concordance lines for 'budget' with 'deficit' in the corpus

referring to the act of the Opposition curtailing the bill (depicted by the collocate 'defeated') was reported in the Nation sub-section. During this time, news about the possibility of the budget not being received in Parliament by a majority vote created a sense of spectacle over predictions of another general election (lines 7 and 8) and whether the Prime Minister should step down (lines 8, 10, and 11). Nation is one of the sub-sections of the newspaper that caters to local news and is updated throughout the day. By associating the budget with predictions of it being defeated, shows an example of delegitimising governance.

Concerns over the budget can also be seen in relation to the stock market index; Kuala Lumpur Composite Index (KLCI) that was found to have "retreated in early trade Thursday in line with the pause at regional markets, and ahead of the Budget 2021 vote in Parliament" (Murugiah, 2020). Figure 11.3 shows a screenshot of the local market overview for the year. As can be seen, three specific dates were marked as significant to the time of news reporting (in the corpus). The dip (circled in red) was identified during the time which the news reported on possibility of the budget being defeated (end of October 2020) and hence, could have triggered the stock market to 'retreat'.

Another reason for the dip in the stock market was the mentioning of the King and his decision to declare a state of emergency, which was reported in proximity to

				Source
1	the special Cabinet meeting had included, among others things, possible scenarios should the	Budget	be defeated by the opposition. However, besides the special meeting – held for the second time	Nation
2	themselves," said the source, adding that they also discussed the possible scenarios should the	Budget	be defeated . "For now, we want to remain optimistic that it will be passed but we are	Nation
3	a special Cabinet had taken into account, among other things, possible scenarios, should the	Budget	be defeated by the Opposition. However, the King then decided against declaring a state of	Nation
4	a special Cabinet had taken into account among other things, possible scenarios, should the	Budget	be defeated by the Opposition. However, the King then decided against declaring a state of	Nation
5	insists on not having a CSA Bill with the official Opposition, then he must resign if his	Budget	is defeated . "Malaysia will not have to go for a snap poll or risk not having a Budget, as the	Nation
6	the budget may be defeated following Najib's expressing conditional support for it. "Even if the	Budget	is defeated , it may not necessarily lead to a general election. "If the King does not want to	Nation
7	to helm the government, " he said. "It is unlikely that a general election will be called if the	budget	is defeated owing to Covid-19. "If the budget is defeated, the King may still have the option of	Nation
8	unlikely that a general election will be called if the budget is defeated owing to Covid-19. "If the	Budget	is defeated , the King may still have the option of appointing a new prime minister based on the	Nation
9	before it is put to vote, pointing out that there would be huge implications if the	budget	was defeated . "It would mean that the government cannot use the allocated funds to	Nation
10	Assoc Prof Khairil Azmin Mokhtar from IIUM said there could be several outcomes if the	budget	was defeated . He said that although convention dictates that the prime minister should resign	Nation
11	He said that although convention dictates that the prime minister should resign if a	budget	is defeated under Article 43(4) of the Federal Constitution, he need not necessarily do so but	Nation

Fig. 11.2 Concordance lines for 'budget' with 'defeat' in the corpus

Fig. 11.3 KLCI stock market (Bursa Malaysia)

the speculation of the budget to be defeated as shown in the examples below. As can be seen, these two separate reports show a similar style of reporting, which indicate forms of intertextuality as well as news being discursive.

> PUTRAJAYA: It is back to preparing for Budget 2021 and finding more effective measures to combat COVID-19 for the government after the King decided against declaring a state of emergency for the country. Sources said the special Cabinet meeting had included, amongst other things, possible scenarios should the Budget be defeated by the Opposition. However, besides the special meeting – held for the second time in four days – other political meetings on the sidelines are equally sparking intrigue amongst observers (*Nation*, 27 Oct 2020).
>
> Budget 2021 will see debates at the policy stage for almost two weeks and three days of ministerial replies, followed by voting by MPs on Nov 23 in Parliament. Previously, the government sought to declare a state of emergency after a special Cabinet had taken into account, amongst other things, possible scenarios, should the Budget be defeated by the Opposition. However, the King then decided against declaring a state of emergency, whilst reminding politicians to stop all forms of politicking that could disrupt the stability of the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic (*Nation*, 29 Oct 2020).

Nevertheless, the index rose on 15 December when news reported of a more optimistic view of the budget after it was passed in Parliament (Bernama, 2020). Another dip found before 15 December could be explained for in an article dated 14 December 2020 in Nation, where speculations of the budget to be defeated by a bloc vote was reported. However, since experts described the event as slim (*Nation*, 15 December 2020), the stock market rose again the following day.

> Budget 2021, which is now in the second reading, was passed at policy stage. It is currently being debated at the committee stage. The budget has to be passed at the end of these debates on Tuesday where it could still be defeated by a bloc vote (*Nation*, 14 December 2020).

Close examination of the KLCI along with patterns from the concordance lines reveal a possible relationship between what was reported in the news as well as how this has potential impact on the stock market. Language choice on how the budget was argued for or against in the local news shows ways in which language patterns exhibit forms of (de)legitimising governance through use of intertextual features, arguably affecting economic activities like the stock market.

Other verbs related to 'budget' that may be of interest is how the bill was represented as a subject or having an agentive role. This is primarily seen where 'budget' occurs preceding the be-verb (*is*, *are*, *was*) and is discussed further here compared to occurrences of the phrasal 'budget + has' that were less frequent. Whilst most instances (68 out of 105 occurrences) showed 'budget' occurring with verbs that referred to the process of ratifying the bill (e.g. budget is *rejected/passed/defeated*), it was found that 37 other instances described the budget in terms of existential meanings (see Fig. 11.4). These include representations of the budget as being big/large and expansionary (lines 6, 11, 22, 33, 34, and 36). This resonates with other typical collocates that modified 'budget' in terms of size, i.e. an *expansionary* budget; the *largest* budget; and the *biggest* budget. This, as Cindy Yeap reports "is the biggest federal government budget announced to date in absolute (ringgit) terms, pipping even the outsized RM317.5 billion Budget 2019 that benefitted from a RM30 billion-special dividend from Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) used to return excess taxes to taxpayers" (The Edge Malaysia, 2020). At RM322.54 billion, or more than one-fifth of the economy, she further argues that the government may have to "raise its self-imposed statutory debt ceiling of 60% of GDP if it intends to borrow more money to spend on the people and bolster economic recovery" (The Edge Malaysia, 2020). In turn, this relates back to how Budget 2021 was typically discussed in terms of the budget deficit, pointing to more forms of intertextuality that demonstrate how political discourse in the newspaper is suggestive of ideologies, in this case, connecting the large amount of sum to an anticipated national debt.

11.7 Conclusion

Initial extraction of frequency lists with help from a sophisticated online corpus tool, SketchEngine has shown to be useful when directing us to important concepts in a text (in our case themes on financial issues, depicted by words 'budget', 'economy' and 'economic' as well as words describing senses that are measurable and in motion) that has helped to show how 2021 Budget was framed in *The Star Online*. More specifically, the corpus highlighted the concern for a massive budget deficit, possibility of the budget to be defeated, and descriptions of how the budget was 'expansionary'. We could also argue for how 'budget' and 'expansionary' were reproduced to create an allusion as a form of legitimising governance; the frequent collocation alludes to the intention of an economic (or political) expansion at the expense of the actual amount involved. This shows identification of meaningful links between features of texts and the context in which they were produced (or received), highlighting that

				Source
1	and the monthly public transport passes announced in the	budget	are not just for a single race, " he said. Dr Wee noted that the	Nation
2	and existing investors. "FMM views the measures introduced in the	budget	are wide ranging and targeted at every segment of the economy	Nation
3	administrative matters and the government's agenda, with the	Budget	being the main highlight. "We talked about what needs to be	Nation
4	and prevent Budget 2021 from being passed. "A failure to pass the	Budget	is tantamount to the Prime Minister not having a vote of	Nation
5	Budget 2021, " she says. While a rejection of the government's	budget	is unprecedented in Malaysia, Yeoh says that this has occurred in	Business News
6	work, " he added. The RM800mil allocated in next year's	budget	is more than what was allocated in Budget 2020, he said. Radzi	Nation
7	subject to the approval of these two matters. "Our support on this	budget	is conditional, " he said during an hour-long speech as Barisan	Nation
8	subject to the approval of these two matters. "Our support for this	budget	is conditional, " he said during an hour-long speech as the	Nation
9	and ways to enjoy the festivities to the fullest. Related News The	budget	is certainly skewed to deal with the immediate need to alleviate	Business News
10	a significant impact on businesses as well as the rakyat. The	budget	is certainly skewed to deal with the immediate need to alleviate	Business News
11	during this pandemic. A positive from this year's mental health	budget	is a 4% (RM10mil) increase in emoluments in psychiatry and	Letters
12	local workforce, including wage subsidy programmes. "The	budget	is also a very good initiative to help the people who lost their	Nation
13	under the Perikatan Nasional administration. He stressed that the	budget	is a continuity from the four stimulus packages worth RM305bil	Nation
14	packages that have been announced since February because this	budget	is a continuation of those efforts and measures, " said	Business News
15	packages that have been announced since February because this	budget	is a continuation of those efforts and measures, " said	Business News
16	the conditional MCOs seen in many parts of the country. No federal	budget	is perfect in the measures and spending plans put forward, but	Nation
17	the pandemic also affects the government's revenue. "The	budget	is for the Year 2021. The expectation of economic recovery is too	Nation
18	MPs from performing their responsibility to ensure that the	Budget	is for the interest of the people and not the political interests of	Nation
19	the issues raised on the budget. "I know everyone is busy but the	budget	is an important issue. Yet, I don't see any ministers here, " she	Nation
20	of the conditional MCO seen in many parts of the country. No	budget	is perfect in the measures and spending plans put forward but in	Nation
21	of Malaysia committee chairman for SMEs Koong Lin Loong. "This	Budget	is different from previous years because this year we are affected	Nation
22	may expect more because when the Federal Government says this	budget	is the biggest one, the allocation for Sarawak should be	Metro News
23	as retraining and upskilling of tourism workers. "The infrastructure	budget	is for the maintenance of facilities such as the RM20mil provided	Nation
24	speech in Parliament. "The rationale for objecting to this	Budget	is basic and fundamental. This Budget is not a just and fair one.	Nation
25	PETALING JAYA:The Perikatan Nasional government's maiden	budget	is one that has many incentives targeted towards women's	Nation
26	Mention of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the	budget	is comforting. R&D in support of the SDGs deserve priority.	Letters
27	the Covid-19 pandemic. "The funding allocated under the national	Budget	is still commendable, " he said. However, Jahid said Sabah would	Nation
28	president Datuk Tan Kok Liang said the allocation under the	Budget	was "inadequate to empower the tourism industry". "Given the	Nation
29	officer Yee Wing Peng was optimistic that the expansionary	budget	was the right move to ensure people's prosperity, business	Business News
30	However, Koong said one of the things he had hoped to see in the	budget	was more funds allocated for low-interest soft loans for SMEs.	Business News
31	ACCCIM SME committee chairman Koong Lin Loong said the	Budget	was "balanced" and the targeted Employees Provident Fund	Nation
32	Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye (pic) said such a	budget	was necessary to rescue Malaysians and help rebuild lives,	Nation
33	Malaysia fellow Datuk Dr Madeline Berma said the RM322.5bil	budget	was the biggest so far, with large sums allocated to mitigate the	Metro News
34	Datuk Seri Yong Teck Lee. The statement said the RM322.5bil	budget	was the largest in the nation's history and reflected the Perikatan	Nation
35	and give their full support to Budget 2021. The King said the	budget	was important to ensure the wellbeing of the rakyat and	Nation
36	Alliance), to discuss the Budget. Tengku Zafrul said the	Budget	was an expansionary one and aimed at sectors which would	Nation
37	Zerin Properties managing director Previndran Singhe said the	Budget	was one that truly addressed current issues, the current state of	Nation

Fig. 11.4 Concordance lines for existential use of 'budget' in the corpus

discourse and society are mutually constitutive in that meaning is a product of social practises (Mautner, 2019, p. 4).

Inarguably, "[c]orpora, being electronic collections of authentic texts, are a valuable source of first-hand language data for the empirically minded linguist" (Lew, 2009, p. 297). And as Baker (2004) notes on 'discourse', citing Parker and Burman (1993, 156), that "discourses emerge as much through our work of reading as from the text" and that "[b]ringing corpus linguistic methods on board is meant to put discourse studies on a sounder empirical footing" (Mautner, 2019: p. 8). This, we have found to bring methodological synergy in investigating political discourse in an online Malaysian news portal. More specifically, representations of Budget 2021 were explored via corpus techniques and CADS, which provided empirical evidence to strengthen traditional discourse analysis. Finally, this chapter recommends examining other forms of political discourse in sections of the same (or different) newspaper(s) that could reveal more about how Malaysia's governance are reported.

Notes

1. A number of words that seemed odd in the wordlist were those that came up as parts from the online newspaper sub-headings or tag lines like "Trending in Business", "Stories You'll Enjoy", "The Season Of Joy Is Here!", "Check out our Christmas issue for ideas on gifting and ways to enjoy the festivities to the fullest", which were discarded for further analysis.
2. Where words are polysemous, they are given an * (asterisk) mark to denote their other potential meanings (e.g. *as well as*, *doing well*).
3. Excluding words that were part of the online newspaper's sub-headings and tag lines (e.g. Trending News).

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Siti Aeisha Joharry holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Sydney, Australia. In 2017, she joined Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, UiTM Shah Alam, Malaysia where she is currently the resource person for Pragmatics in Business and Professional Settings (undergraduate) and Corpus Linguistics (postgraduate). She has since participated in many research projects including organising the 4th Malaysian Corpus Research Symposium and published in several international journals including Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, Asia Pacific Journal of Corpus Research and 3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies. Her research interests include investigating language using corpus linguistic approaches and she can be contacted at aeisha@uitm.edu.my.

Mohd Faizal Kasmani was a former broadcast journalist at 8TV and TV9 news channels in Malaysia from 2004 to 2007. He was awarded a Commonwealth scholarship in 2004 and he obtained his MA from the University of Sheffield in Journalism (Broadcast). He received his PhD in Arab, Islam and the Middle East from the Australian National University. He is currently an Associate Professor at the New Media Programme and the Dean of the Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). He has published in several international journals including International Journal of Communication, International Communication Gazette and Journalism Studies. He authored a book entitled "Representation of Islam and Muslims Issues" and co-edit a book entitled "The New Media Ascent: its Usage and Impact in Malaysia". His interests include journalism, social media and political communication. He can be contacted at faizalkasmani@usim.edu.my.

Chapter 12
#KitaJagaKita: (De)legitimising the Government During the 2020 Movement Control Order

Charity Lee

Abstract On 18th March 2020, the Malaysian government enforced a movement control order (MCO) that required everyone to stay in their homes until 4th May 2020 to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. During this time, social media became not only a source of information for citizens but also the main space for their mediated social and public lives. Besides the hashtags #stayhome and #dudukrumah, the hashtag #KitaJagaKita started trending as netizens and civil society took the initiative to champion the proper enforcement of the MCO and safe distancing, as well as to find solutions for the shortage of medical safety equipment. This chapter presents findings from a discourse analysis on the discourses surrounding the hashtag #KitaJagaKita on Twitter and its use to (de)legitimise the Perikatan Nasional government and its leader, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin. Pro-government netizens use the hashtag to represent the government as protecting citizens through its policies and guidelines, and fellow citizens, who adhere to the MCO, as partnering in this effort. Netizens who are less supportive of the government, however, argue that the government is not doing enough to protect citizens and healthcare workers. They use the hashtag to criticise government policies and a lack of decisiveness and speed in properly implementing the MCO. They also use the hashtag to rally citizens to take care of each other by fundraising and finding "better" solutions for healthcare workers.

Keywords Hashtag · Legitimation · Political commentary · Hashtag activism · Twitter

12.1 #KitaJagaKita and the Movement Control Order

The COVID-19 pandemic led to state action to bring the infection rate under control. It effectively quarantined citizens at home on an unprecedented global scale. Although the measures carried out by individual governments ranged from relaxed, such as in Sweden, to more restrictive, such as in China, millions of people were affected

C. Lee (✉)
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: charity.lee@um.edu.my

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by physical distancing and quarantine measures. In Malaysia, the newly formed government, Perikatan Nasional, led by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, took a restrictive approach to deal with the pandemic. On 18th March 2020, a movement control order (MCO) was introduced, restricting citizens to their homes for the next two months. Subsequently, as the infection rate started coming down, the restrictions were lifted in stages but at the time of writing, Malaysia was placed again under a less restrictive MCO due to a spike in cases nationwide.

During the early stages of MCO, the Internet and social media became not only sources of information for citizens but also the main space for the mediated social and public life of its users. Netizens were preoccupied with news on the movement of citizens for the first few days of the MCO and the distressing shortage of medical safety equipment for frontline healthcare workers screening potential COVID-19 patients. The hashtags #stayhome and its Malay version, #dudukrumah, were used by government and healthcare bodies as well as citizens to encourage people to adhere to the MCO. The hashtag #KitaJagaKita (*We take care of each other*) also started trending on social media on 18 March as a general response of gratitude by the public to healthcare professionals for their services and sacrifice during this time (Rodzi, 2020). The genesis of #KitaJagaKita as a call for advocacy was first mooted by Malaysian author, Hanna Alkaf, on Twitter, which then quickly developed into an initiative by a group of concerned citizens and activists through the hashtag and the website kitajagakita.com (#KitaJagaKita, n.d.). Netizens and civil society started taking the initiative to champion the proper enforcement of the MCO and social distancing as well as finding solutions for the shortage of medical safety equipment. The hashtag was also used by government ministries, especially the Ministry of Health, to encourage responsible physical distancing practises during the pandemic. To date, the #KitaJagaKita movement has successfully facilitated numerous partnerships between NGOs and citizens.

The significance of the #KitaJagaKita hashtag was heightened by what came just prior to the enforcement of the MCO, namely, the formation of the government under a new coalition, Perikatan Nasional (PN) on 1 March 2020. The political stability of the country was in doubt weeks before as rumours of defections from the previous government, Pakatan Harapan (PH), started circulating on social media. PH's collapse after only 21 months in power was triggered in part by Muhyiddin's own defection from his party and he then formed a coalition government consisting of United Malays Nasional Organisation (UMNO) and Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) (Ostwald, 2020). Most Malaysians were still trying to understand what had happened when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Malaysia. Thus, the sentiments expressed in the #KitaJagaKita movement inevitably included social commentary on this newly formed government and the pandemic only added to the scrutiny.

Social and political activism online is not a new phenomenon in Malaysia and has its roots in the convergence of the advances in digital technologies in the mid-1990s and the grassroots anti-government movement that began with the *Reformasi* movement in 1998 (Brown, 2005). Without access to state-controlled media, opposition political leaders, anti-government movements and ordinary citizens used the opportunities found online to create and sustain alternative discourses to long-standing and

hegemonic political rhetoric (See Kow & Khoo, Chap. 6). The alternative media, pioneered by *Malaysiakini*, *Harakah Daily*, *Aliran*, amongst others that exists until today is testament to the emancipatory role of the Internet in Malaysian political discourse (George, 2005). Social media has also enabled grassroots movements to assemble and mobilise advocacy efforts more rapidly and extensively (Leong et al., 2015; Tim et al., 2018; Tye et al., 2018).

12.2 Hashtags and Social Activism

Hashtags (#), historically associated mainly with the social media platform Twitter, has since been increasingly used on various platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. It was originally created as "channel tags" or metadata tags that allowed users to search for specific tweets and participate in particular conversations (Salazar, 2017), a form of "searchable talk" (Zappavigna, 2015). Its uses range from predominantly functional, such as collecting and indexing information and facilitating discussions on topics (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Small, 2011), to publicly symbolic, such as encouraging and publicising activism surrounding social issues (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). Wang et al. (2016) posited that the choice of specific hashtags was driven by two interrelated processes: grabbing the attention of certain users and increasing visibility by achieving virality. As such, users can autonomously choose to participate in decentralised conversations (Majchrzak et al., 2013) that are located within large-scale information sharing amongst certain communities. Because hashtags are searchable, they enable users to access conversations and communities outside their natural social network, although it is unlikely that their relationship would progress beyond their engagement with the topic at hand. The kind of participation amongst users can range from more passive, such as informative, namely, seeking or giving information, to "digital convergence" (Shaw et al., 2013) that involves positioning themselves within the site, event or conversation in question. The online community that develops around hashtags has been described as an "ad-hoc community" (Bruns & Burgess, 2012) or "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna, 2011), which describes "a co-present, impermanent community" (ibid.) separated by time and space that congregates around a hashtag and shares common views and ideologies.

Taking their participation one step further, users have also used hashtags to engage in hashtag activism or hashtag-related activism, which can be defined as the "activity of using hashtags to bring attention to social issues and mobilise communities for action" (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018). For users, hashtag activism is a kind of *participatory culture* (Jenkins, 2006) that enables them to form online connections and social support with other like-minded users over particular events or topics. Again, the hashtags can have a more informative function, such as being a medium for raising awareness and creating discussions (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015) or allowing users a more active role in facilitating policy and social changes (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018; Saffer et al., 2013). There have been numerous studies on hashtags used in protest and political movements, such as the Arab Spring revolution (Harlow &

Johnson, 2011; Kharroub & Bas, 2016), #BlackLivesMatter (Freelon et al., 2016; Ince et al., 2017) and #MeToo (Bogen et al., 2019; Dejmanee et al., 2020; Manikonda et al. 2018; Xiong et al., 2019). Research has also shown the effectiveness of hashtags to encourage political commentary and engagement across various demographics and societal levels (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Journell et al., 2013; Ross, 2019).

This chapter aims to explore the discourses surrounding the hashtag #KitaJagaKita on Twitter during the first ten days of the MCO that (de)legitimised the newly formed government, Perikatan Nasional, and its leader, Muhyiddin Yassin. Of particular interest here is the observation of the competition over meaning or "politics of representation" (Holquist, 1983; Wodak, 2001) between pro- and anti-government Twitter users. It was observed that pro-establishment individuals were less likely to use social media to air their views as they had ample access to mainstream media outlets and may not want to engage in counter opinions online, whilst anti-establishment users were more active on social media (Shen et al., 2020). However, this chapter will argue that social media no longer belongs mainly to anti-establishment or pro-democracy movements as it did in the past.

12.3 Legitimation in Political Discourse

Political discourse is a genre that involves the act of public engagement and authors of these discourses can present their political agendas or views in subtle or more assertive ways (Reyes, 2011). Enacting their symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) through language, political actors often present these arguments using legitimation to achieve their political goals (Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2002). Legitimation involves any kind of discourse or argumentation that explains, justifies, or gives accreditation to a particular type of social behaviour or activity (van Dijk, 1998). Habermas (2006) argued that the "deliberate legitimation process" in society involved political discourses on three levels—institutionalised, mass media and civil society discourses—and these levels are dialogic, constituting and being constituted by each other. Social media crosses all three levels but has increasingly become a powerful tool for civil society to engage more actively in political discourses. Yet considerable work has been done on legitimation of political discourses from top-down approaches involving government authorities and the mass media, whilst bottom-up approaches, i.e. how civil society uses legitimation to comment on political discourses, have remained largely neglected (Sundström & Obenius, 2020). It is important to include grassroots voices instead of merely giving space to elite voices if we are to understand how legitimation functions in political discourse (Abulof, 2015).

Discursively, legitimation can be accomplished in a number of ways. Van Leeuwen's proposed four legitimation strategies (2007, 2008) have already been described by Rajandran (Chap. 3), Perumal, Govaichelvan, Sinayah, Ramalingam & Maruthai (Chap. 5), and Yoong (Chap. 10). It is a useful tool for exploring how legitimation functions. Reyes (2011) expanded this work to introduce five categories, including three that overlap with van Leeuwen's. According to him, legitimation

can be achieved through the appeal to emotions, particularly the negative emotion of fear, which has the power to skew opinions through the identification of in- and out-groups. Related to this is legitimation through a hypothetical future that is seen as threatening and requiring urgent action. The next two categories are similar to van Leeuwen's. Legitimation through rationality is based on argumentation grounded in evidence and reliable sources, whilst voices of expertise are realised when interlocutors defer to the authority of official and institutional discourses. The final category, altruism, involves legitimation that is motivated by utilitarianism or the common good and a system of values, somewhat similar to van Leeuwen's moral evaluation category. These strategies can be used individually or in combination with others.

12.4 Data and Method

The data consists of tweets collected using NCapture with the hashtag #KitaJagaKita between 18 and 27 March 2020. This period is significant as the MCO coincided with the start of the new government's ruling period whilst many Malaysians were still coming to grips with both these situations and expressing their thoughts and emotions online. The initial collection was done through sampling by theme (Androutsopoulos, 2013) of all tweets using the hashtag during this period and yielded over 100,000 tweets. There was a need to filter out irrelevant tweets, such as those using the hashtag to promote content or products and posts that were unrelated to politics, so a secondary search was carried out using the hashtag in combination with the keywords found in Table 12.1. This yielded 5821 tweets that formed the dataset for this study. Although this sampling method was suitable for this study, it is important to acknowledge that the limitation of sampling by theme is the possibility of missing out on collecting other relevant tweets within the same period because the specific hashtag or lexical items were not used.

Table 12.1 Number of tweets with #KitaJagaKita and keywords

Keyword + Hashtag	No. of tweets
government	2,352
kerajaan (Malay word for "government")	2,035
gomen (slang word for "government")	71
PM (Short for "Prime Minister")	982
Muhyiddin (First name of the Prime Minister)	202
TSMY 56230.(PM's full title, "Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin")	100
Prime Minister	79
PN (Perikatan Nasional) (PN)	173
Total	5821

The dataset consisted of tweets written in English, Malay and a mix of English and Malay. The preparation stage included obtaining general information about the tweets, including demographic information about the users, type of tweets, and mapping of other hashtags used in combination with #KitaJagaKita. At the coding stage, all tweets and retweets were first grouped into clusters of semantically similar tweets to get an overview of the content of the dataset. The dataset was further cleaned by removing all retweets and this brought the number of tweets analysed in the dataset to 605 individual tweets.

These were then sorted according to the political sentiments expressed, namely, if they were supportive or critical of the government or merely neutral. This process involved gathering information about the socio-political context of the tweets that usually included hyperlinks or references to a specific event to understand what the user was referring to. The tweets were also analysed based on the internal linguistic context for the types of words, phrases, and sentences that were used. From this process, more specific themes were derived within the pro-, anti-, and neutral stances of the users. The relevant tweets under these themes were then analysed according to legitimation strategies introduced by van Leeuwen (2007, 2008) and Reyes (2011). Whilst some tweets clearly contained one legitimation strategy, most tweets consisted of more than one strategy and thus, needed to be coded multiple times.

The analysis process needed to consider some significant events that took place during this data collection period as they impacted the content of the tweets and provided much needed context. These events were:

- The new Health Minister, Adham Baba, claimed during a WHO teleconference that warm water could help wash away the COVID-19 virus (19th March 2020).
- Announcement from the government that citizens could withdraw RM500 per month from their Employees Provident Fund (EPF) account to buy essential goods (23rd March 2020).
- Announcement from the government of the MCO extension until 14th April 2020 (25th March 2020). It was significant to note that the Prime Minister cried on the live telecast of this announcement during his prayer for the nation.
- The government announced a pay cut for 70 cabinet members (including the Prime Minister) that would be channelled to the COVID-19 fund (26th March 2020).

12.5 Main Topics and General Political Sentiments

A preliminary analysis of the dataset revealed clustering of the tweets around five main topics: (i) news issues and official statements, (ii) business and service-oriented tweets, (iii) support for and defence of government action, (iv) criticism of the government and (v) advocacy and appeal for civic-minded behaviour and social action. Table 12.2 presents an overview of frequency and percentage of the tweets categorised according to the five clusters. The tweets in the advocacy cluster were further categorised into the sentiments expressed with regards to the government: anti-, pro-, and neutral stances.

Table 12.2 Frequency and percentage of tweet clusters

Cluster	Frequency	%
News & official government	143	23.6
Business	20	3.3
Anti-government	175	28.9
Pro-government	158	26.2
Advocacy Pro-government ($n = 43$; 39.5%) Anti-government ($n = 2$; 1.8%) Neutral ($n = 64$; 58.7%)	109	18
Total	605	100

The first cluster included posts and tweets from news outlets and government-affiliated bodies on the latest updates and measures on COVID-19. The second cluster consisted of tweets from businesses giving operational information or advertising products and services. However, most of the tweets in the dataset were delineated along political lines, with users either supporting or criticising the government and/or its actions in relation to COVID-19 and the MCO. As such, this chapter will focus on the pro-government, anti-government, and neutral clusters as they are relevant to the study at hand. The tweets in the neutral cluster, which performed a more advocative or appellative function, were either politically neutral or overlapped with the other two clusters. Here, users employed the hashtag as a form of activism to either encourage citizens to practise safe health and social practises or to appeal on behalf of the needy.

Over half of the tweets in the dataset (55.1%) clearly expressed either pro- or anti-government sentiments, whilst 18% were appellative in nature. The number of pro- and anti-government tweets were not vastly different, at 26.2% and 28.9%, respectively. Of those that focussed on advocacy, 58.7% did not express political sentiments, 39.5% expressed support for government and the law, whilst only 2 tweets were more critical of the government.

12.6 Anti-government Sentiment

The anti-government tweets were directed mostly at the government collectively but also specifically at the Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, and occasionally at government ministers. Moral evaluation was used most frequently by users, specifically in 139 tweets, to delegitimise Muhyiddin and his government. This kind of legitimation usually leans heavily into value systems that are presumed to be collectively shared by both the text producers and recipients (Reyes, 2011), often as existing in the binary of "good" and "bad" in a generalised way (van Leeuwen, 2007, 2008). Legitimation by moral evaluation is marked by evaluative language, such as the use of evaluative adjectives and references as well as comparison with another person or subject.

12.6.1 Evaluative Language

Evaluation was accomplished in the tweets through explicit and implicit means. Whilst explicit evaluations often function as inscriptions or overt expressions of the author's own values and opinions, implicit evaluation are often presented as factual tokens, requiring knowledge of the context for more precise interpretation of its meaning (White, 2006). Naturally, there are more positions available to the authorial voice to express evaluation, which fall between both extremes. The following extracts illustrate the use of explicit evaluation by means of adjectives or noun phrases (**bolded**) attributed to the government or the Prime Minister.

Extract 1: I so agree with you. This cabinet is **an utter disgrace**. It is **not a working** government. **Illegitimate, bloody selfish and incompetent**.

Extract 2: Can you accept the truth? Do not just *syiok sendiri* (indulge yourself) and end up being a **self-serving bastard** in a **pathetical** [sic] **lame** government!

Extract 3: Basically, it is #KitaJagaKita la because our government ***tak boleh pakai*** (cannot be relied on).

Extract 4: So how **dumb** do you have to be in order to be health minister under PN gov?

Extract 5: Still this ***haram*** (illegal) government not giving any. So, *betul* (really) la #KitaJagaKita

Extract 6: *Memang* (really) literally #kitajagakita. ***Bodoh punya*** (dumb) **backdoor gomen** (a clipped version of "government").

The government was frequently evaluated for its competency in carrying out its duties as seen in Extracts 1–4. Here, it was evaluated as incompetent and unreliable, two qualities that "good" governments are not expected to possess. Extract 4 singled out the incompetence of the "dumb" Health Minister for his non-scientific recommendation of washing away the virus by drinking warm water. The legitimacy of Muhyiddin's government was often called into question as seen in Extracts 5–6 and this was a major talking point in the early days of PN's rule because of the way they came into power without going through an election. In Extract 5, the adjective *haram* (illegal) was used, whilst in Extract 6, the government was evaluated as both dumb and illegal through the nominal phrase "backdoor gomen". The hashtag #backdoorgovernment and its Malay version #kerajaanpintubelakang was also widely used on social media at the time and is still being used as a derogatory name for Muhyiddin's government.

The choice of references to people is another explicit way that speakers can express their opinion and evaluation of someone else. Although the slang word "gomen" is commonly used in spoken Malaysian English, it only appeared in anti-government tweets in this dataset, thus acquiring a more derogative quality especially when collocated with "backdoor". The reference to the backdoor government was embedded in the tweets in-text or as hashtags as seen in Extracts 7–8.

Extract 7: *#KitaJagaKita adalah hasil usaha rakyat yg bantu rakyat lain disebabkan ahli politik aka menteri2 tak guna kerajaan pintu belakang yg tak buat keje…jadi apabila menteri2 guna hashtag sama, gelilah…* (#KitaJagaKita is a result of the citizens' efforts in helping other citizens because of politicians a.k.a. useless ministers of the backdoor government that are not working. So, I am disgusted when ministers use the same hashtag…)

Extract 8: Well, @MuhyiddinYassin & his #kabinetpintubelakang is staying true to @perikatan_my style. #KitaJagaKita by tapping into whatever funds we have to survive cause the PN government ain't gonna *jaga* (care for) it is [sic] own rakyat during this #COVID-19 pandemic.

Some users employed a play on the acronym of the government's name to negatively refer to them as seen in the extracts below. Here, the acronym PN is embedded into the Malay words "penyakit" (disease) and "penipu" (liar) in extracts 9 and 10 respectively (**bolded**), which has both a semantic as well as visual function.

Extract 9: *Sebab semua tengah stress **Kerajaan PNyakit** gagalis. Meh kami hiburkan anda dengan video ini.* (Because everyone is stressing over the loser **disease government**. Meh (Come), let us entertain you with this video.)

Extract 10: *Hastag #KitaJagaKita tu untuk negeri pembangkang yang tidak dijemput mesyuarat bersama **PM PNipu**.* (The hashtag #KitaJagaKita is for the opposition states, who were not invited to the meeting with **the liar PM**.)

Evaluation of the government was also often less explicit and accomplished here through verbal phrases (**bolded**), namely, when describing what the government has or has not done.

Extract 11: This is 2017 [sic], that's why now we have to put high pressure to the current government. ***Jgn cakap je demi rakyat, demi rakyat… buat keje buktikan korang boleh handle masalah2 frontliners ni.*** (**Do not just say it is for the sake of the people… do the work to prove you can handle the frontliners' problems.**)

Extract 12: *If betul government nak bail out, bail out peniaga-peniaga kecik yang sewa premis, food court, goreng pisang tepi jalan, pomen workshop yang hilang pendapatan sebab kena tutup kedai sepanjang RMO.*

Bukannya bailout airline companies!!!! Bukan jaga crony!!!

(If the government really wants to bail out, bail out the small businesses that rent premises, food courts, the banana fritters stall at the roadside, car workshops that lost income because they had to close throughout the RMO. **Not bail out airline companies**!!!! **Not take care of cronies**!!!)

Extract 13: @myksm It shows to us that **PN never mean to walk the talk** … #SocialDistancing is meant for their own protection also not intended to carry out after claiming; would you really think they will perform any for the sake of Rakyat with the promises claimed? Do not be foolish.

Both tweets in Extracts 11 and 12 address the shortcomings of the government in helping those struggling during the MCO, the medical workers and small businesses. The government is evaluated as only giving lip service without action through two imperative sentences (in Extract 11) and having the wrong priorities when giving financial aid to large companies and cronies (in Extract 12). Extract 13 also critiques the government for not "walking the talk" when it came to practising social distancing.

Analogies or comparisons almost always have a (de)legitimatory function (van Leeuwen, 2007) as comparisons to another person(s) or social practise invites negative or positive evaluation. In the tweets, the PN government was often compared to citizens, private individuals or companies and other governments by anti-government users (**bolded**) to put the PN government in a negative light.

Extract 14: I am seeing more **average Malaysians** contribute to helping each other more than the so-called Government and the country's T20 rich. We all share what little we have, because really…. #KitaJagaKita

Extract 15: This is what happens when the **people** get together with **private sectors** to help the people. The government should be doing this. What a shame.

Extract 16: **Thai government** gives out free mask and hand sanitizer to the public. Ours increase the price from RM0.80 to RM2. *Bestnya* (How great).

Extract 17: *Jenis Bantuan Mengikut PM:* (The type of aid according to PM)

(1) ***Kerajaan BN****, guna duit kerajaan (BR1M)* (BN government, uses government money)
(2) ***Kerajaan PH****, guna duit kerajaan (BSH)* (PH government, uses government money)
(3) *Kerajaan PN, suruh rakyat keluarkan duit simpanan KWSP* (PN government, asks the people to withdraw their EPF savings)

In Extract 14, the government was collectivised with the country's elite as not helping the rest of the country in comparison to "average Malaysians", whilst in Extract 15, the collective effort of citizens and hotel companies to provide free accommodation for COVID-19 medical workers was highlighted to argue that it was something the government should have been doing. A comparison to the Thai government's altruistic action over masks and sanitisers was put in contrast with the Malaysian government in Extract 16. Finally, in Extract 17, PN was compared to the previous two governments, Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Harapan (PH), who both used government funds to help citizens, in comparison to PN's move to let citizens withdraw their savings from the national retirement fund.

12.6.2 The Use of Rationalisation with Emotions

In contrast to legitimation through moral evaluation that prioritises values above rationale and logic, rationalisation explains how social practises are marked by thoughtful

and measured procedures. Morality is backgrounded in this case but still plays an influential role (van Leeuwen, 2007, 2008). Here, anti-government Twitter users employed a form of rationalisation that van Leeuwen referred to as effect orientation, which legitimises social practise based on the outcome of particular actions. The users legitimised their use of the #KitaJagaKita hashtag and their political stance by constructing argumentation that centred on the effects of the PN government's actions and decisions. One such extract can be seen below, where one user argues that Malaysian citizens could not rely on the government by providing a list of extracts of the government's "politicking".

Example 18:
Kerajaan pintu belakang sibuk berpolitik. (The backdoor government is busy politicking.)

- *Peruntukan MP PH dibekukan* (PH MPs' allocation frozen)
- *Muhyidin sibuk pecat YB Marzuki sebagai SU Agong PPBM* (Muhyiddin is busy firing YB Marzuki as Secretary-General of PPBM)
- *Harga topeng muka dinaikkan* (The price of masks was increased)

Itu sebab kita kena jaga diri sendiri. (This is why we need to take care of each other.)

The tweet starts off with the statement, "The backdoor government is busy politicking", and proceeds to give a list of extracts of how the government was neglecting its duties. This supports the argument that consequently, Malaysians need to look out for one another. Extract 19 employs a similar strategy for delegitimising the government:

Extract 19: *Lagipun EPF tu kan retirement plan punya lagi - lagi yang swasta tak de pencen nie. Pokoknya, your new unelected gomen tak tolong you pun.* ✌🏻✌🏻✌🏻(Moreover, the EPF is the retirement plan, is not it—what's more, those in the private sector have no pension. The conclusion is, your new unelected government is not even helping you.)

Here, the government's actions are posited to have resulted in citizens losing their retirement savings and the causal phrase "The conclusion is…" links these actions to the argument that the government was not helping its citizens. Note the use of the adjective "unelected" that reveals the author's evaluative stance towards the legitimacy of the PN government. A similar evaluation occurred in Extract 18 above as well, using "backdoor government".

Extract 20: *Kesian rakyat, terpaksa #KitaJagaKita, terpaksa harapkan sesama sendiri sebab apa? Sebab kerajaan lembab. Rakyat sibuk nak cegah wabak, PM sibuk main golf, lepas tu sibuk isi borang pencalonan parti.*

Dah ada 2 org mati, kerajaan sibuk berpolitik, pecat sana sini. Bangang.

(Have pity on the citizens, #KitaJagaKita, we must depend on one another, because? Because the government is incompetent. The citizens are busy fighting this outbreak, the PM is busy playing golf, and

then busy filling out party nomination forms. 2 people have already died, the government is busy politicking, sacking here and there. Idiots.)

A mixture of strategies is used in Extract 20. There is an appeal to emotions at the start of the tweet in the imperative sentence, "*Kesian rakyat*" (have pity on the citizens), and an evaluation of the government at the end ("*Bangang*"). But the main part of the tweet again provides a list of the government's "sins", including not displaying any urgency despite two people having already died (it was early in the pandemic at this point). This supports the antagonistic stance taken and the need for the hashtag. As seen in this tweet, the use of emotive language can also be used to delegitimise the government's governance.

Extract 21: The government is basically saying to all Malaysians:

"You are on your own, folks.
If you do not have EPF or savings, then that's your problem, not ours."
IOW, we have been left to fend for ourselves.
Again.

Extract 22: Somehow I think that basically, the Government just said: "Look mate, you are on your own."

In Extract 21, the government's voice is intertextually embedded alongside the author's own voice, with the latter offering this hypothetical quote to provide an interpretation of the government's motivation for making the decision on the EPF withdrawal, seen in the use of the phrase "IOW" (in other words). The phrase "left to fend for ourselves" is particularly emotive when used with the intensifier "again", which was placed alone on the next line, implying that this is not the first time that the government has abandoned the people. In Extract 22, a similar strategy of hypothetically voicing the government was used albeit in a more flippant way to play on the fear of abandonment.

Another fear that users touched on was the fear of loss of personal money as seen Extracts 23–24:

Extract 23: So the government are giving nothing. Basically we use our money to save ourselves.

Extract 24: Literally #KitaJagaKita measures taken by the government for allowing Rm 500 to be taken from OUR OWN EPF account.

Both these tweets work on the assumption that the citizens' expectations of the government's responsibility for their material well-being have not been fulfilled. The use of the verb "save" (in Extract 23) in place of more neutral options is particularly emotive as it creates a heightened sense of urgency in what citizens have to do for themselves, in contrast to the government, who is "giving nothing". The emphasis through capitalisation of "OUR OWN" (in Extract 24) expresses the author's incredulity towards what was assumed to have originally been the government's responsibility.

12.7 Pro-government Sentiment

The pro-government tweets consisted of those performing one or both of the following functions: political commentary supporting the government ($n = 158$) and advocating for citizens to follow government-issued safety and health guidelines ($n = 43$). The overwhelming legitimation strategy employed by users in the former ($n = 77$) and latter ($n = 39$) categories was authorisation. However, users in this category generally drew on a much wider range of legitimation strategies in their tweets about the government compared to the anti-government users.

12.7.1 Subscribing to the Authority of the Government

One of the most common ways users showed their support of and submission to government authority was through the use of the imperative, which functioned as a call to their fellow citizens to also submit to the government. The imperative is led by a form of verbs that are used to give orders and, the most frequently used verb in imperative form was "follow" and its Malay equivalent "ikut". Extracts of this are found below:

Extract 25: *Mari kita **ikut** saranan PM kita @MuhyiddinYassin demi #MalaysiaBebasCovid19 dan bersama #KitaJagaKita semua.* (Let us **follow** our PM's @MuhyiddinYassin counsel for the sake of keeping #MalaysiaFreeFromCovid19 and together #KitaJagaKita all.)

Extract 26: Just stay at home. Just **follow** the rules of government, they know what the best for our country. 14 days only!

Extract 27: Today 172 new case … Still continue #StayHome … To All Malaysian … Let us stay health and be strong … Let us trust our PM KKM PDRM & ARMY to handle the situation … We **follow** the instructions …

Here, the government is legitimised through reference to their undiluted personal authority (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106) as the government of the day. In Extract 25, we see how the Prime Minister is specifically mentioned as having this authority and that by following his counsel, citizens can work together to combat the virus. The next two extracts urge citizens to follow government-issued rules and instructions and display complete trust in the government for knowing what is "best for our country" (Extract 26) and how to "handle the situation" (Extract 27). This personal authority is extended to the police and armed forces (PDRM & ARMY) and the Ministry of Health (KKM) in Extract 27 as legitimate representatives of the government. This extension can be further seen being attributed to individual police officers and security guards in Extract 28.

Extract 28: *Ikut je la cakap kerajaan pakai topeng muka tu. Kau beli je yang jenis kain boleh basuh tu. Takpayah gaduh dgn konstabel polis atau security guard tunjuk screenshot statemen KKM. Diorg ikut arahan saja, bukan boleh tukar sistem. Kesian la kat diorg…* (Just follow what the government said by wearing the face mask. You can just buy the washable cloth type. No need to argue with police constables or security guards by showing the screenshot of KKM's statement. They are only following orders, they cannot change the system. Have pity on them…)

The authority of the government is unquestioned here and the police and security guards are represented as doing their duty in carrying out the government's orders. Citizens are urged not to resist this authority but are expected to sympathise with them. Other similar tweets in Malay employed the imperative on citizens using verbs such as *patuh* (obey), *akur* (abide by), *sahut* (respond to), and *dengar* (listen to), which all have the same effect as "follow" and "ikut". In these extracts, the citizens were placed in a passive role compared to the government, who was placed in a position of authority. This was not always the case as some tweets placed citizens in a more active role despite still using the imperative forms of "help" / "bantu" and "bagi kerjasama" (give cooperation to) that are bolded below.

Extract 29 Come on Malaysia! We can beat Covid-19! Let us stay home! **Help** government to defeat Covid-19!

Extract 30: *Jadi mari kita **bagi kerjasama** yang sepatutnya kepada kerajaan!* (So, let us **give the cooperation** that they deserve to the government!)

Here, the government is still ascribed authority, but responsibility is also given to citizens to play their part by helping and cooperating with the government. In Extract 30, the tweet goes so far as to declare the government's assumed right to receive cooperation from its citizens (underlined).

12.7.2 Displays of Emotion

Some tweets (n = 28) consisted of emotive language to express (1) gratitude to the government, (2) familial attachment to the government, 3) empathy with the Prime Minister, and 4) pride in the government. An extract of a show of gratitude can be found here:

Extract 31: *Terima kasih* (thank you) PM @MuhyiddinYassin for your hard work ♡□♡□you did well even its a difficult decision and difficult situation ♡□♡□Malaysian will stand with you #KitaJagaKita Malaysia will *kembali pulih* (recover again)

Extract 32: *@MuhyiddinYassin YAB! terima kasih ya. Kami sekeluarga sangat berbangga dengan kepimpinan dan kerajaan YAB!* (@MuhyiddinYassin YAB! thank you, yea. We as a family are very proud of your leadership and government!)

According to Reyes (2011), people react to emotions through the process of indexicality, which are associations to semiotic resources (socio-political, historical) found in any given speech. In Extract 31, the user expresses gratitude to the Prime Minister and positively evaluates him for his "difficult decision" to extend the MCO to 14th April 2020 (the first extension of many to come) during his televised speech. This emotion is further established visually with the use of four heart emoticons. The user in Extract 32 also expresses gratitude with pride. Emotion was also evident in tweets that referred to the Prime Minister as "tok ayah" (grandfather) in Extract 33 or "abah" (father) in Extract 34, which are Malay kinship terms that connotatively show respect and affection.

Extract 33: ***Tok ayah*** *(YAB PM Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin) telah mengumumkan lanjutan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) sehingga 14 April 2020.*

Beliau sebak. Kita juga sebak. Ini cabaran besar yang perlu kita hadapi bersama.

Semoga Allah SWT memelihara kita semua. ♡

(**Grandfather** (YAB PM Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin) has announced the extension of the MCO until 14th April 2020. He cried. We also cried. This is a big challenge that we need to face together.

May Allah SWT sustain us all. ♡)

Extract 34: *Allah sedih nya. Part nie paling sedih. Pm kita ni mcm* ***abah2*** *kita. Moga kita semua dilindungi. Keadaan pulih.* (Oh man, this is so sad. This is the saddest part. Our PM is like our **fathers**. May we all be protected. Things to recover.)

Apart from referring to the Prime Minister as "tok ayah" in Extract 33, the Prime Minister is also titulated with his full title, indicating deep respect. Furthermore, both users here empathise with the Prime Minister's show of emotions by either crying (Extract 33) or expressing sadness (Extract 34). There were many other similar tweets from this cluster that displayed an outpouring of emotion as a reaction to the Prime Minister's speech. For these users, the Prime Minister crying on air was received positively as it showed them that the Prime Minister was human and deeply cared for his country.

12.7.3 Moral Evaluation and Altruism

The government was evaluated positively by pro-government users for i) their personal qualities (Extract 35) and ii) actions or decisions made (Extract 36) (**bolded** below).

Extract 35: *Suka dengar PM bagi ucapan.* ***Rasa macam atok*** *bagi nasihat dekat cucu.* (I like listening to the PM' speeches. **It feels like a grandfather** advising his grandchildren.)

Extract 36: This is the 1st time a Prime Minister prayed for the safety of the people at the end of the speech, **like how a leader was supposed to**.

Extract 37: **Thanks @MuhyiddinYassin for early announcement.** Looks more prepared and way better than 1st one on 16/03. Plenty of time for people to plan. Maybe you are PM that we do not want. **But PM that we need.**

The act of comparing the Prime Minister to a grandfather ("atok") in Extract 35 evokes a sense of familiarity and the nurturing nature of family relationships, whilst in Extract 36, the Prime Minister is explicitly evaluated as a good example of an ideal leader. Extract 37 evaluates not just the Prime Minister's decisive action positively but also acknowledges that he is the right person for the job, an emphasis on utilitarianism (need) over personal feelings (want).

The government also received praise because of their decision to cut the salaries of the Prime Minister and entire Cabinet and channel it to the national COVID fund.

Extract 38: *@helahhidup Alhamdulillah. Mereka sanggup potong gaji untuk rakyat.* (Praise be to God. They were willing to take a pay cut for the people.)

Extract 39: *Subhanallah! Jemaah Menteri Malaysia potong gaji 2 bulan untuk Tabung Covid-19. Terbaik! Ini lah Kerajaan Malaysia* ♡(Praise be to God! The Malaysian Cabinet is taking a 2-month pay cut for the COVID-19 fund. Best! This is the Malaysian Government.)

Altruism legitimises actions based on the principles of utilitarianism, i.e. for the benefit of others, and was used in pro-government tweets to show support for the government and urge citizens to cooperate with the government.

Extract 40: *PKP itu satu keperluan. bantuan menghadapi kesan PKP itu juga satu keperluan. Ramai yang kerja gaji hari. bila PKP dilaksana terus takde kerja & gaji. golongan macam ini most likely takde KWSP, SOCSO, & EIS. ya #KitaJagaKita, tapi Kerajaan ada sumber untuk bantu mereka semua.* (The MCO is a necessity. Aid to tackle the effects of the MCO is also a necessity. Many are day workers. When the MCO was enforced they lost their jobs and salary. This group most likely has no EPF, SOCSO, etc. yes #KitaJagaKita but the Government has resources to help them all.)

Extract 41: *Dilanjutkan. Bacaan doa dr TSMY mendalam sangat. Stay safe semuanya.* ***Ini demi keselamatan semua.*** (Extended. TSMY's prayer was very profound. Stay safe, everyone. **This is for everyone's safety.**)

The tweet in Extract 40 fully supports the government and its decisions, acknowledging that whilst having citizens care for each other is important, ultimately the government is the one that is able to help everyone. In Extract 41, support for the Prime Minister can be seen through titulation (TSMY is the acronym for the Prime Minister's full title, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin) and in positive evaluation of his prayer. But the tweet ends with the reminder that the government is working for everyone's safety.

12.8 The (De)legitimising Effects of a Hashtag

The findings in this chapter revealed how Malaysian Twitter users presented themselves as legitimised to evaluate and comment on the government's performance during the COVID-19 crisis and in turn enabled them to show partisanship. The hashtag #KitaJagaKita served as a means for them to gather and align around shared beliefs and values and even opened up the potential for belonging and group membership (Zappavigna, 2012). Chouliaraki (2006) described three ways that audiences of media and news are able to engage with an event, namely as (1) the involved spectator (expressing empathy), (2) the omnipresent spectator (demanding justice and call to action), and (3) the distantiated spectator (removed emotionally from event but using it as an opportunity for self-reflection). This can be applied to the study at hand and it was observed that the Twitter users positioned themselves with regards to #KitaJagaKita as involved and omnipresent spectators. The involved spectator presented her or his political commentary, which consisted of opinions and reactions but also at times, feelings regarding the events that occurred during this time. The omnipresent spectator was far more active and often mixed commentary with either advocacy for healthcare workers and those in need, in the case of anti-government users, or advocacy for following government rules, as in the case of pro-government users.

Evaluation was a useful way for users to (de)legitimise the government and was accomplished in various ways as discussed above. The focus on the government's incompetence and its illegitimate rule enabled anti-government users to delegitimise the Prime Minister and his government's actions. In contrast, pro-government users used evaluation to highlight the government's positive qualities and the effect of their decisive and thoughtful actions, which had a legitimising effect as it bolstered support for the embattled Prime Minister and his government. Tweets regarding the Prime Minister specifically were significant and points to the important role political or state leaders have in generating continued legitimacy for the state as a whole (Strong & Killingsworth, 2011). In other words, if Muhyiddin was presented in a positive and acceptable way, by proxy, his government would be legitimised too. Similarly, Ross (2019) explored how the #secondcivilwarletters hashtag was used satirically to delegitimise President Trump for his rhetoric and leadership style and the Republicans as irrational and incompetent.

The use of emotive language was another interesting finding of the study and was employed very often by both sides for different effects. Studies on legitimation in political discourse have demonstrated how politicians have often used negative emotions, such as guilt, insecurity, amongst others, to prey on their audiences' fears (Chilton, 2004; Reyes, 2011; van Dijk, 2006). Fear has been used to legitimise anti-immigration policies (Charteris-Black, 2006; Gale, 2004; Rojo & van Dijk, 1997) and economic policies (Fonseca & Ferreira, 2015). On social media platforms, fear has been used to propagate "fake news" and influence the behaviour of citizens and voters (Igwebuike & Chimuanya, 2020) but such studies are still scarce. Anti-government users, as noted in this chapter, used the fear of abandonment and fear

of losing personal finances to delegitimise the government and its decisions. Pro-government users, however, employed positive emotions, highlighting the Prime Minister and government's caring nature by using references to family and kinship, whilst also positioning themselves as involved spectators in the Prime Minister's show of emotion. As far as the author is aware, the phenomenon of citizens displaying empathy towards political leaders has not yet been studied from the perspective of legitimation.

The discourses found under #KitaJagaKita as presented in this chapter reflect larger discourses surrounding the global shift in views on governance and state responsibility for citizens' welfare. Scholars have noted a shift in governance in Western states that places more emphasis on active citizenship, whereby citizens are expected to learn to depend less on state welfare and support and take more responsibility for achieving their own socio-material well-being (Joseph, 2013; McClelland, 2002; Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2013). Many users that engaged with #KitaJagaKita, particularly the pro-government users, positioned themselves as involved spectators in this regard as they took responsibility for the welfare of others by advocating health and safety practises in line with government circulars. This produced an interesting tension between submission to the government and an active attempt to influence the behaviour of other citizens. Anti-government users engaged less with advocacy in general but used the hashtag to put forth arguments for why the Malaysian people had to depend on themselves instead of the government.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated how Twitter users on both sides of the political divide were able to use #KitaJagaKita to discursively (de)legitimise the PN government. From a methodological angle, the integration of van Leeuwen's and Reyes' frameworks was useful for studying how civil society engaged with political discourses. As the political situation in Malaysia continues to develop in unpredictable ways and citizens continue to use social media to engage in political commentary, further research into other hashtags on other social media platforms would provide insights into how governance and citizenship are negotiated and contested at different societal levels.

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Charity Lee is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. Her areas of research include narrative analysis and discourse analysis, particularly involving social practices surrounding migrant and vulnerable groups, as well as narrative methodology. Her research also includes communication practices in media, politics and healthcare. She teaches German linguistics and translation at the undergraduate level and teaches and supervises a range of discourse analysis approaches at the postgraduate level. She can be contacted at charity.lee@um.edu.my.

Chapter 13
Conceptualizing Money Laundering in the 1MDB Scandal: An Analysis of Metaphors in *The Sarawak Report*

Rachel Lim and David Yoong

Abstract The 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal is one of the most complex and widely reported scandals in the world as it involves a complicated web of financial transactions, business deals and other forms of transactions. The complexities of this scandal were first exposed by an online news portal called *The Sarawak Report*. Metaphors were extensively used by the primary writer, Clair Rewcastle Brown, to describe the scandal, which helps readers comprehend the magnitude of the scandal. The data used in this chapter come from 1MDB-related articles in *The Sarawak Report* blog. Critical metaphor analysis is used to identify, interpret, and explain the primary orientation of the conceptual metaphors found in the blog posts. This approach unpacks the metaphors used in context and reveals underlying meanings and motivations of surface level metaphors, helping readers to make connections between the subject matter and the concepts that are used to describe it. The analysis shows that the mixing of different concepts and analogies enable readers to understand the actions of the culprits, the act of money laundering, and the severity of the crime of corruption. This chapter demonstrates how metaphors can be used to make a complex and challenging issue easier to comprehend.

Keywords 1MDB · Scandal · Money · Conceptual metaphors · Blog

13.1 Introduction

The Sarawak Report (TSR) on 28th February 2015 first revealed the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, which amassed a massive debt of US$11.73 billion for Malaysia. The extent of this scandal was so significant that US Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, remarked in 2017 that 1MDB was "kleptocracy at its worst." 1MDB's dealings involved a complex web of activities and money trails that are difficult to follow due to secrecy in its national and international transactions, as

R. Lim · D. Yoong (✉)
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: daveyoong@gmail.com

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well as the data being shrouded in technical financial-business language. Preliminary analysis suggests that TSR made the technical information of the clandestine money laundering details more accessible to the public using conceptual metaphors. Consider the following excerpt.

Extract 1: An Example from TSR (Brown, 2016f)

World's Biggest Money Laundering Investigation Goes Up Another Gear [a car changing gear to speed up]

Malaysia could find fame for triggering [a human entity/celebrity discharging a weapon] a new, more effective level of regulatory cooperation between the financial centres of the world—one positive development from landing at the centre of the world's biggest money laundering investigation [arriving at a destination].

Today's events have been an indicator of how closely investigators are working to trace the US$7 billion, which Malaysia's Auditor General now calculates to have gone missing from the 1MDB development fund into a network of obscure off-shore "treasure island" companies [pirate buried treasures], before emerging once again in the bank accounts and asset portfolios of politically connected Malaysians.

There is extensive literature that examines how metaphors are employed in the news (e.g. Kennedy, 2009; Shie, 2010), and there is research that has focussed on how metaphors are used by alleged wrongdoers to deflect blame (Dryll, 2017; Hansson, 2018; Richard, 2014). Arguably, the choice of metaphors is also idiosyncratic because it reflects a writer's creativity in expressing ideas and educating his/her audience, as seen in Farrah Diebaa and Su'ad (Chap 4). For this reason, it is worthwhile examining how author and editor, Claire Rewcastle Brown of TSR used conceptual metaphors to narrate the 1MDB saga creatively and to help the public comprehend the significant events that took place. To explore this phenomenon further, we pursued the following line of enquiry in this research: What metaphors were used in TSR to describe the 1MDB scandal, specifically when describing money, the main perpetrators, Najib Razak and Jho Low as well as the scandal as a whole?

We used *Sketch Engine* to identify the different collocations used with the search term '1MDB' in TSR's published blog posts. Following that, a list of concordances was used to recognise other contextual metaphors. Charteris-Black's (2004) critical metaphor analysis (CMA), which consists of metaphor identification, interpretation, and explanation, was used to determine the deployed metaphors. Additionally, the study uses the Merriam-Webster dictionary (*Merriam*), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (*Longman*), Collin's Cobuild Dictionary (*Collin*), and the Online Etymology Dictionary (*Etymology*) to confirm the original uses and origins of the metaphors found to verify their use and meaning in context. Besides that, these

dictionaries also display examples of how the conceptual metaphors were used in similar contexts.

13.2 The 1Malaysia Development Berhad Scandal

Launched to increase foreign investment into Malaysia, 1MDB was founded by Najib Razak when he took office in 2009 as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. On its now-defunct website, the company's vision was to be "a strategic enabler for new ideas and sources of growth." Its mission was "to drive sustainable economic development by forging strategic global partnerships and promoting foreign direct investment (FDI)". Besides being the founder of the investment fund, Najib also led the advisory board and was heavily involved in overseeing all operations in the company. Initially, the company was set up to buy privately-owned power plants in Malaysia and even the Middle East. Other plans include the development of a new financial district called the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) in Kuala Lumpur. In 2014, rather than earning extra revenue, 1MDB generated a debt of US$11 billion, and this drew condemnation from various opposition groups (Adam et al., 2018).

Whilst she was investigating the illegal logging trade by then Chief Minister of Sarawak and now Yang di-Pertua Negeri of Sarawak, Abdul Taib Mahmud, Clair Rewcastle Brown was handed a total of 227,000 leaked documents with in-depth details of the 1MDB fraud in 2015. The leaked data revealed money laundering trails and elaborate scams. They disclosed the different perpetrators involved in the scandal, which included Najib Razak, his wife Rosmah Mansor, and Jho Low. The scandal gained greater infamy in July 2015 when the *Wall Street Journal* published documents indicating that Najib Razak had accepted at least US$681 million as payment into his private bank account (Channel News Asia, 2018).

In 2017, the United States Department of Justice (US DOJ) released a press statement regarding the scandal. According to the DOJ, funds of US$4.5 billion belonging to 1MDB were allegedly embezzled by high-ranking officials of 1MDB and their partners. The DOJ mobilised to recover approximately US$540 million in assets stolen from 1MDB (US DOJ, 2017). From the years 2009–2015, money was allegedly used to finance extravagant shopping sprees of designer bags, real estate, and luxurious jewellery. Besides that, Jho Low also misappropriated the funds from 1MDB and spent the money lavishly on luxury yachts, alcohol, and expensive parties as well as fund the production of the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

13.3 Conceptual Metaphors

Metaphors are powerful tools that enable communicators to persuade and convince people to believe a version of the truth, to evoke certain emotions for specific reasons or it may be a heuristic, to summarise a concept or story in the most straightforward

and more relatable way possible. As Charteris-Black and Musolff (2003, p. 158) put it, metaphors enable the communicator to:

> …achieve particular rhetorical goals such as establishing a relationship with the reader and making judgements by selecting particular words and phrases to refer to important topics when these words or phrases usually refer to other topics.

Conceptual metaphors are a formal statement of an idea by using some imagery or figure of speech to describe a particular scenario or even a character. According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) formalised by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphors highlight the role of cognition in the interpretation of discourse. Metaphors cannot be deciphered just by finding its meaning in the dictionary without considering the context. Koller (2004, p. 3) states that "by favouring particular metaphors in discourse, journalists can reinforce, or even create, particular mental models in their readers' cognition."

Mapping is a core concept in the conceptual metaphor approach. The mappings between basic and abstract domains can be described using conceptual metaphors and conceptual keys. Charteris-Black (2004, p. 15) says that conceptual metaphors are "formal statements of any idea that is hidden in a figure of speech that can be inferred from several metaphorical expressions and helps to resolve their semantic tension." He adds that conceptual keys are "inferred from a number of conceptual metaphors and is a higher level of metaphor that explains how several conceptual metaphors are related" (ibid.). When combined, conceptual metaphors and conceptual keys show the motivation of surface level metaphors. They are a "valuable notion of describing and classifying figurative language." Besides that, they also explain which ideas are associated with the source (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 16).

In examining conceptual metaphors, we need to consider three stages: Identification, interpretation, and explanation. Cameron and Low (1999, p. 34) construe that the three stages "typically proceeds by collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic… generalising from them to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify and using the results to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain people's beliefs and actions."

The following describes how CMA is carried out. It begins with metaphor identification. Metaphor identification consists of two stages. In the first stage, the analyst manually goes through the selected texts from the chosen corpus to identify words, phrases or sentences that may be identified as possible candidate metaphors. In the second stage, the analyst decides whether the metaphors found are used in a literal or metaphorical sense. During this stage, concordance software can be used to support the analysis to observe the different contexts the keywords have been used in to make precise comparisons.

The next stage of CMA is metaphor interpretation. It "involves establishing a relationship between metaphors and the cognitive and pragmatic factors that determine them" (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 37). At this stage, conceptual metaphors and conceptual keys are identified and mapped. Analysts need to take into consideration the extent of metaphor choices in "constructing socially important representation"

(p. 38) to determine whether or not the word choices used were rhetorically successful in showcasing the writer's evaluations of the subject matter.

The final stage of CMA is metaphor explanation. In this stage, the analyst focuses on distinguishing the social agencies involved in the discourse production and their "social role in persuasion" (p. 39) The analyst would have to identify the functions of the conceptual metaphors and conceptual keys found in the corpus to propose the writer's ideological and rhetorical motivation. The evidence of said motivations is not found in the writer's intuition but in the context in which the metaphors occur. This stage can also be supported by using corpus concordance to compare uses in context.

13.4 Text Analysis Research Methods

One hundred ninety-nine blog posts were extracted from TSR's official website. These articles were found using the search term '1MDB.' The articles were then saved as *.txt files and compiled into a corpus using the Corpus Building Tool in an online lexicology software called *Sketch Engine* (Kilgariff et al., 2014). The articles date between 2010 and2017 when the scandal first began to be investigated by TSR.

The study applies the empirical method of critical metaphor analysis based on Charteris-Black's (2004) three-steps of identification, interpretation, and explanation. Firstly, metaphorical expressions and metaphor keywords are manually identified and classified according to their source domain (linguistic content) and the target domain (what they describe). The definition of a metaphor is based on the primary orientation of metaphors, as suggested by Charteris-Black (2004). Then, cognitive semantics are employed to infer the assumptions that underlie metaphor use and to explain the relationship between its linguistic choices and metaphorical meanings.

In past corpus-based studies of metaphors, Krennmayr (2014) conducted a quantitative analysis of metaphors in a set of British newspapers to explore whether metaphors were truly ubiquitous in news writing. Su'ad and Norazit (2013) compared the metaphors used to describe and report the 2008 global economic crisis in major newspapers in Malaysia and Singapore using corpus linguistics tools.

Corpus concordance methods were used because they provide "a set of procedures, or methods, for studying language" (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). It enables us to carry out "rapid searches of patterns that can be investigated qualitatively and quantitatively" (Krennmayr, 2014, p. 532). To perform metaphor identification, a manual reading of all 199 blog posts was replaced using *Sketch Engine*. The 'Word Sketch Function' narrows down the collocations of '1MDB.' Then, the concordance tool which lists the 'Keywords In Context' (KWIC) are manually checked for the most salient metaphors used in describing the 1MDB scandal. A metaphor becomes salient when a word or group of words come from different conceptual domains, e.g. 'Look east policy.' 'Look east' is a visual direction-orientation focus action that is connected to 'policy,' which is an abstract idea of governance. The dashboard interface of *Sketch Engine* is shown in Fig. 13.1.

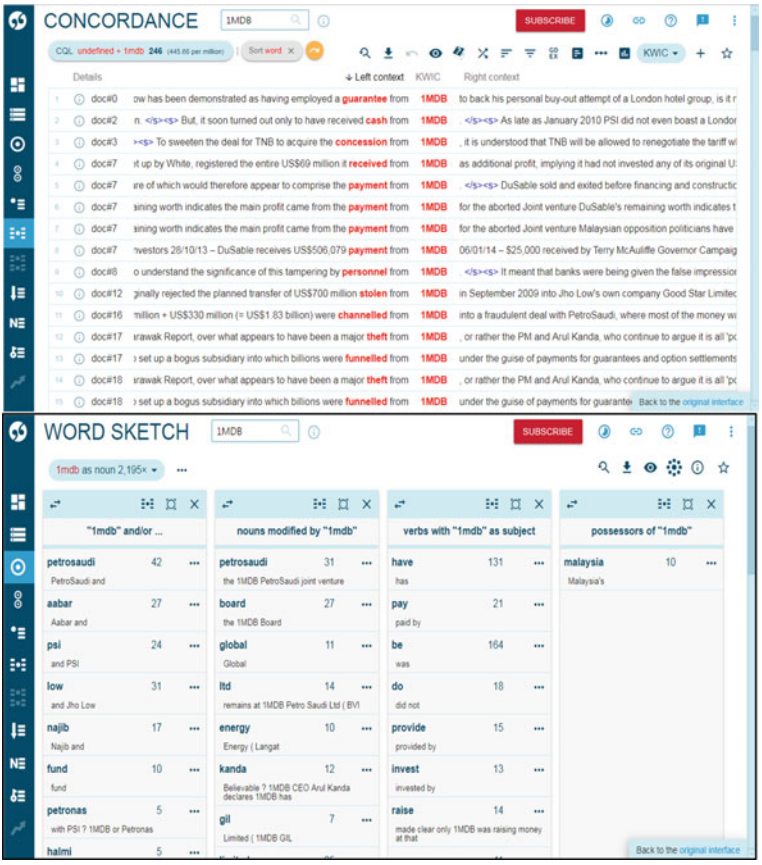


Fig. 13.1 The dashboard of *Sketch Engine*

The data are presented in the form of bar charts and tables to identify and process the metaphors used in the corpus. Next, the metaphor interpretation is supported using *Merriam*, *Longman*, *Collin*, and *Etymology* is also used to understand the etymological meanings or the original meanings of the metaphors. Finally, the interpreted data are explained by comparing the conceptual metaphors with their original definitions, based on the contexts found in the text. Context refers to the surrounding words that contribute towards meaning accuracy.

13.5 Analysis

In this section, we discuss how conceptual metaphors were used in the texts to provide a description and comparison of the powerful culprits, simplify the act of money laundering and intensify the severity of the crime of corruption.

13.5.1 Metaphors Used to Describe the Culprits

The personification of 1MDB was very evident in the collocation of the search terms '1MDB + has.' The verb 'has' indicates possession or ownership, i.e. it represents the actions and experiences of a person in the perfect tense and the conditional mood of that individual at a particular time. 130 appearances of this keyword were noted (Extract 2).

Extract 2: '1MDB + has' (Brown, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c)

So 1MDB has now suddenly admitted it has 'documents' for the Aabar BVI company after all, even though it had refused to produce them to the PAC or Auditor General (Brown, 2016a).

It also dissolved its board of advisers, which Mr. Najib chaired. 1MDB has said it would cooperate with investigations but hasn't been contacted yet by any outside agency (Brown, 2016b).

1MDB had claimed this money was being 'invested' by its subsidiary 1MDB Global, however it has already been queried why so much government cash was passed to the small, private BSI Bank after the bond issue by Goldman Sachs?" (Brown, 2016c).

In these examples, we see how 1MDB exist as an agent who can speak, admit something, and make claims. Rewcastle Brown has also described Jho Low as the Jay Gatsby of the twenty-first century. She did so 11 times in the 199 articles. Jay Gatsby is a fictional character from F. Scott Fitzgerald's literary masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*. He is a mysterious millionaire with shady business connections who amassed great wealth by illegal means. Whilst he usually does not want to be acknowledged when throwing lavish parties for his wealthy and famous friends, he did try to win the heart of a lady he fell in love with, trying to impress her with his riches and possessions.

Extract 3: Examples of 'Jay Gatsby' (Brown, 2015a)

'Jay Low' acting out for real the role of his best Hollywood pal Leo DiCaprio as Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby?

Close up—follow the trail showing the first payments into Jho Low's company Good Star, followed by the pay offs for his co-conspirators! *Secret 'Jay Lho' Gatsby of the twenty-first century party scene* It is clear that Jho Low was immediately desperate to wallow in his fabulous sudden riches from 1MDB and keen to impress new collaborators for future scams, such as the then Chairman of Abu Dhabi's Aabar fund and the Hakkasan chain, Khadem Al Qubaisi, who became a key pal and business partner

Like the fictitious conman Jay Gatsby of the iconic American novel The Great Gatsby, Jho Low has attempted to keep to the background of the enormous parties he has funded

By comparing Low to Gatsby, Brown presents Low as a swindler who obtained a substantial amount of money for himself, his family, personal friends, ex-lovers, associates, and especially for Najib Razak and Rosmah Mansor. Jho Low has also been known to have played a part in the production of the Hollywood movie, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which was a project by Riza Aziz, the step-son of Najib Razak. Jho Low also organised expensive and alcohol-filled parties for celebrities such as Jamie Foxx, Paris Hilton, and Leonardo DiCaprio. It was also reported that Low had purchased expensive jewellery for his ex-lovers, including a diamond necklace for Australian supermodel Miranda Kerr (Malaysiakini, 2018), a wedding ring for a proposal to Taiwanese singer Elva Hsiao, and for the socialite, Paris Hilton (Chen et al., 2019). Moreover, he also used the usurped money to acquire precious stones and jewellery for his family.

Sketch Engine also revealed the word *orchestrator* and *orchestrated* being used in several contexts. These words appeared 14 out of 45 times to compare Jho Low and Najib Razak with a musical orchestrator, who provided high-level directions of songs and arrangements in musical performances:

Extract 4: Examples of *orchestrator* (Brown, 2016d)

This money was also used by Low to acquire business and other assets in the US. *The Aabar/BVI Phase—Money went directly to Najib* The DOJ goes on to deal with what it describes as the second major phase of the kleptocracy scam, plainly orchestrated by the one man still in charge throughout, PM Najib Razak

"Jasmine Ai Swan Loo was originally identified by TSR as a key player in so-called Project Uganda, the operation orchestrated by Jho Low to channel money out of 1MDB and through PetroSaudi in order to buy up Taib Mahmud's family concern UBG group."

This PetroSaudi deal was, as we now know, the first of several sums that disappeared from 1MDB in a similar fashion over subsequent years, each of which was orchestrated by Jho Low, who has simultaneously managed the

Prime Minister's private business, right down to paying for his wife Rosmah's diamond purchases in Hong Kong

A search on the Word Sketch Function of Sketch Engine under the English Web 2015 corpus listed the word *orchestrator* as a noun that had a frequency of 6229 per million, often used alongside the word *of*. Using the Keyword in Context (KWIC), it was found that *orchestrator* was used in a few contexts. *Merriam* and *Longman* define the verb *orchestrate* as "to compose or arrange (music) for an orchestra" (*Merriam*). Similarly, *Longman* defines the verb as "written to organise an important event or a complicated plan, especially secretly."

13.5.2 Metaphors Used to Describe the Elaborate and Complex Process of Money Laundering

The most significant metaphor used by Brown to simplify the process of money laundering is a liquid metaphor. The notable liquid metaphors identified in the articles are *syphon*, *channel*, *flow*, and *splash*. The following words clearly illustrate that the frequency of liquid metaphors used in the article is of a significant number and influence in the reporting of the 1MDB scandal. According to *Etymology*, the original meaning of *syphon* is in the form of a noun is defined below:

i. A tube bent to form two legs of unequal length by which a liquid can be transferred to a lower level over an intermediate elevation by the pressure of the atmosphere in forcing the liquid up the shorter branch of the tube immersed in it whilst the excess of weight of the liquid in the longer branch when once filled causes a continuous flow; a bent tube used for getting liquid out of a container, used by holding one end of the tube at a lower level than the end in the container.
ii. To dishonestly take money from a business, account, etc. to use it for a purpose for which it was not intended.

In TSR, the term *syphon* was used a total of 31 times throughout the 199 articles, making it the most saliently used term to refer to liquid cash. *Syphon* (verb) is a word used to describe illegal money transactions. As a metaphor, it is still synonymous with the first definition as the movement of money is described as a one-way process. The following are some examples of how it was presented in the articles:

Extract 5: Examples of *syphon* (Brown, 2016g)

TSR has obtained exclusive close-ups of documents held up by Apandi at the event, which show that investigators had traced a further RM33 million on top

of the RM42 million, which the PM has now admitted was syphoned from the KWAP public pension fund into his personal bank accounts.

Low had poured US$300 million into PetroSaudi and paid Tarek a US$85 million brokerage fee for acting as "a front" in the scheme to syphon a total US$1.4 billion out of the 1MDB joint venture.

When the scandal first erupted, Najib had responded wide-eyed to suggestions that money had been syphoned out of the struggling 1MDB by his close friend Jho Low.

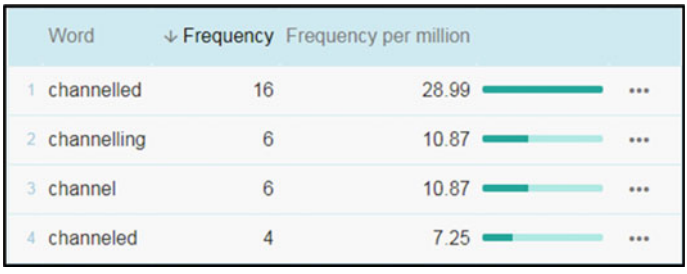
To this end they say Najib has orchestrated the syphoning of major chunks of Sarawak's infrastructure and health budgets into companies controlled by Bustari Yusof, as we reported.

The word *channel* is the second most frequently used word in the 199 articles from TSR. Etymologically, it was first used as a noun in Old French, *channel* which referred to a "bed of a stream of water" and "by which something passes or is transmitted" (*Etymology*). The word is more frequently used as a verb throughout TSR. *Longman* defines the verb as: "to control and direct something such as money or energy towards a particular purpose." In TSR, the verb channel was found to be used 32 times, most saliently in phrases such as channel money to, channel money out of and channel (money) from, as in Fig. 13.2.

Channel often collocates with the nouns related to money such as billions (of dollars) and *funds*. The examples are listed below.

Extract 6: Examples of *channel* (Brown, 2016e)

Najib's fighting fund was the 1MDB theft's smoking gun Indeed, without their ability to buy votes in Sarawak/Sabah BN would have long since lost its majority in Federal Malaysia and this was the reason why Najib has openly admitted that he used money from 1MDB to channel his bogus "Saudi royal donation" into his election fighting account at AmBank in March 2013.



	Word	↓ Frequency	Frequency per million
1	channelled	16	28.99
2	channelling	6	10.87
3	channel	6	10.87
4	channeled	4	7.25

Fig. 13.2 Frequency of *channel* in TSR

> Aabar is a fund known to have strong investment ties with Malaysia's 1MDB and also the Malaysian business tycoon Jho Low, whom it backed during a bid for the Claridige's hotel group in London Yet, Red Granite, which is owned by Najib Razak's step-son, Riza Aziz, had earlier threatened to sue TSR for querying if the hundreds of millions channelled into the company's various film projects could indeed be linked to Riza's Malaysian connections and his close party friend, Jho Low.
>
> We have detailed how US$1 billion + US$500 million + US$330 million (= US$1.83 billion) were channelled from 1MDB into a fraudulent deal with PetroSaudi, where most of the money was diverted into the Zurich account of the company Good Star Limited belonging to its official 'Advisor' Jho Low.
>
> The figures show that the first $148 million in stolen money were transferred into Jho Low's US accounts on 21st October 2009, just a couple of weeks after the $700 million was channelled out of 1MDB into his Good Star account in Zurich.

The first uses of the word flow were as the Old English word *flowan*, which meant "to flow, stream, issue; become liquid, melt; abound, overflow" (*Etymology*). *Longman* refers to the word in verb form and defines it as "if money flows somewhere, such as into a bank account or into a particular country, it is moved there." In TSR, the word 'flow' has been used as a verb in describing the movement of cash 39 times, as in Fig. 13.3.

O'Connor (1998) states that money is usually related to the transferability and instancy of access. This refers to the immediacy of availability when it is conceptualised as a liquid. The MONEY IS A LIQUID conceptual metaphor may also show "transitoriness and instability" which are most often associated with the concept of *flow*, which relates to the process of moving or running smoothly with unbroken continuity of moving liquid (Henderson, 2000) Hence, money might flow in and out of a company, organisation or individual's bank accounts, which in this case is

Word	↓ Frequency	Frequency per million
flowed	16	28.99
flown	9	16.30
flow	6	10.87
flowing	5	9.06
flows	3	5.43

Fig. 13.3 Frequency of the word *flow* in TSR

conceptualised as a container, resting on the image schema of a CONTAINER. Here are some examples of how *flow* was used in the articles from TSR.

Extract 7: Examples of *flow* (Brown, 2016g, 2016h)

It can be seen that sums totalling RM12 million flowed on from the PM's account ending *880* into his other AmBank account ending *906* (which was also to receive some of the monies paid later from the RM42 million).

Armed with this decision making control, the Jho Low controlled Panama Investment Manager bought over UBG bank in the name of Tarek Obaid and PetroSaudi International: Li Lin Seet–answered to Jho Low and was the signatory of the two companies that controlled the money which flowed from 1MDB to the UBG buy out Li Lin Seet—answered to Jho Low and was the signatory of the two companies that controlled the money which flowed from 1MDB to the UBG buy out Delightfully for the young men involved, there was clearly plenty of money left over in the system to fund a very expensive life-style for Seet and some new found friends on the celebrity circuit.

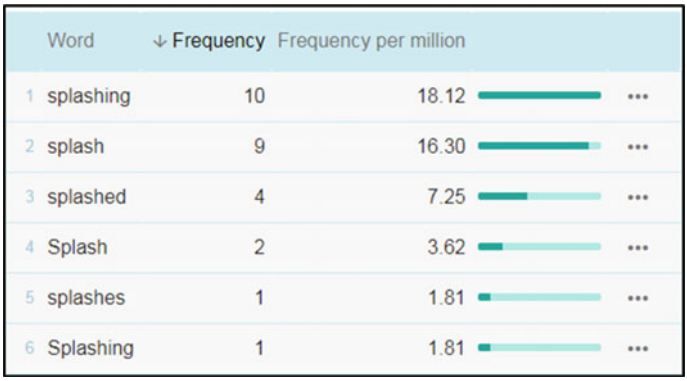
This, BN tells them, is 'progress' and keeping the money flowing through Sarawak's "safe deposit" is Najib's priority to keep his party and himself in power.

The word *splash* originated from the noun plash, which was defined as "small puddle, shallow pool, wet ground." Later in 1736, it was used as a noun to refer to "water or liquid thrown upon anything" (*Etymology*). In *Sketch Engine* under the Word Sketch function in the English Web 2015 Corpus, it was found that the word was not also collocated with the natural movement of liquid such as splashed water or splashed paint. Instead, it was also found to be used with words such as money, cash, and millions. In TSR, the word *splash* was found to be used 27 times in the 199 articles in variations such as 'splash,' 'splashed' and 'splashing', as in Fig. 13.4. All of them are in the form of verbs.

Splash is more frequently used in describing the act of overspending, giving the image of treating money as if it was a large amount of water without thorough consideration. The following are examples of how it was used in the articles from TSR.

Extract 8: Examples of *splash* (Brown, 2015b)

Najib used both a Visa and a MasterCard on the 2014 holiday splurge Najib used both a Visa and a MasterCard on the 2014 holiday splurge Prime Minister Najib Razak splashed over US$1 million on his credit cards during the month of August in the year following the election, according to information received by TSR.



	Word	↓ Frequency	Frequency per million
1	splashing	10	18.12
2	splash	9	16.30
3	splashed	4	7.25
4	Splash	2	3.62
5	splashes	1	1.81
6	Splashing	1	1.81

Fig. 13.4 Frequency of the word *splash* in TSR

> Two weeks beforehand Jho Low was living it up in St Tropez with Paris Hilton. Newspapers in New York had registered Jho Low when he first started splashing money in October 2009 straight after the PSI joint venture was signed.
>
> Jho Low has been splashing out on 'philanthropy', e.g. US$50million to US cancer research…but did the money come from Malaysia's development fund?

Liquid metaphors were the most salient conceptual metaphors used to describe the process of illegal transactions through money laundering. They may have been used because liquids can easily be shaped and controlled. Furthermore, liquid also moves at rapid speed. It may indicate that the millions were very swiftly and efficiently transferred from one place to another on command. Besides that, liquid can be controlled more easily than gas, indicating that Najib and his collaborators may have had full control on where the direction of the millions go, just like the motion of water. The use of splash when describing how the money was spent showed the evaluation that the vast sums of money were mindlessly and excessively spent by Najib, Low and the other culprits of the scandal, often without any consideration or even remorse, intensifying the severity of their actions.

In an email interview with Brown (personal communication, 2nd April, 2019), she mentioned that by describing cash with words associated with a moving liquid process, it neatly suggests a continuous and regular movement of money. Therefore, if there is a system in place for the transfer of funds, words such as channel or flow would be most suitable in this context. However, if it is related to a one-off cash transaction, then words such as syphon would be more appropriate for the situation. Brown also says that people also respond to alliteration and assonance. As a journalist, she reiterates that such usage of liquid metaphors tends to be a natural process as she has only one main objective in mind whilst reporting, which is to engage with the reader instinctively.

13.5.3 Metaphors Used to Intensify the Scandal

The conceptual metaphor *abuse* is often used alongside the noun 'power' to describe the misuse of power by people in power. *Longman* defines abuse as "the use of something in a way that it should not be used." *Etymology* says the word 'abuse' comes from "wicked act or practise, shameful thing, violation of decency."

Extract 9: Examples of *abuse* (Brown, 2016g, 2016h)

But, every shred of evidence in the 1MDB case (which is what this is all about) shows only one thing, which is that the Prime Minister had been stealing billions from Malaysian public funds in a massive abuse of trust and power.

And what must their neighbours in Saudi Arabia also be thinking, given the similar set of claims 1MDB made over PetroSaudi? *Why Najib cannot escape* The ultimate problem is that all this lying and abuse of power in Malaysia, which is based on a local misconception that Najib is 'all-powerful' and 'untouchable,' cannot cover up the international money trail, which has started to emerge.

Najib has utilised the law against scores of key figures in Malaysia over the past few months, who happen to have voiced concern against his blatant abuse of the legal system and over the widespread corruption allegations relating to 1MDB and the PM's own bank accounts.

According to *Etymology*, the word *abuse* is associated with non-consensual, forced sexual activity. Brown's use of the conceptual metaphor in phrases such as abuse of power, abuse of trust and abuse of the legal system when describing the main perpetrators' actions show that they consider themselves to be above the law. They can do anything they like for the purpose of gaining wealth and access. The money they stole from 1MDB was supposed to be used to benefit the people of Malaysia. However, the act of abusing the power that has been given to them can be likened to sexual abuse such as rape, not allowing the victim to make any choice or support any decision making.

Body part metaphors were also used to portray how lavishly money was spent and stolen by the perpetrators, highlighting the intensity and seriousness of the act of money laundering and corruption. They brought about an aesthetic function whilst describing the lavishness of the money profited by the different parties described, ascribed to tangible and intangible ideas to improve the clarity or astuteness of the articulation. In the context of this paper, *handsome* is used to describe the level of lavishness in profit for the different individuals involved in 1MDB. According to Walters-York (1996), the aesthetic function of a metaphor carries meaning closer to 'emotive or sensual experience'. For example, any attempt to reword the phrase 'representational faithfulness' would bring about a different meaning and would lack the impact and suggestiveness that the word 'faithfulness' gives in describing

accounting. (Walters-York, 1996). The following are examples of some of the body part metaphors used in TSR.

Extract 10: Examples of *handsome* (Brown, 2016i)

Bridge Partners were supposed to pay a handsome price of US$2.3 billion for these shares, according to the 'sale purchase agreement,' which was advertised by 1MDB as a successful profit on its original US$1.83 billion investment into this series of PetroSaudi related enterprises.

The Prime Minister cum Finance Minister has nevertheless persisted in maintaining that 1MDB sold out its 'interest' in the PetroSaudi venture for a handsome profit to a third party (who has mysteriously remained anonymous) and that the proceeds (alleged to be US$2.3 billion) were stashed in a shadowy and anonymous Cayman Islands fund.

The adjective handsome was used 7 times in the 199 articles and was found to collocate with words related to monetary gain such as profit, price, remunerations, price and million (dollar fund). The adjective fat on the other hand was used as a conceptual metaphor 7 times throughout TSR articles. It was found to often collocate with the word profit, which refers to "a valuable return" (*Merriam*).

Brown's choices of metaphors suggest that she was trying to not only emphasise the fact that a sizable amount of money was stolen from 1MDB, and she also reinforces the seriousness of the issue. These adjectives handsome and fat share a common characteristic: all of them were used to reiterate that huge sums of money were stolen. Instead of using basic physical adjectives such as big and huge, the body part metaphors inflicted an intense evaluation of the crime of corruption and suggests how everything related to money in this scandal is either given or taken in large amounts.

Although they were not as frequently found as compared to the other conceptual metaphors, the few examples of these metaphors found in the 199 articles are enough to show Brown's evaluation of Najib and Low's lavish expenditures.

13.6 Discussion and Conclusion

However, it should also be stressed that there were some difficulties that emerged throughout the process of identifying the conceptual metaphors and their contexts. Firstly, even though a framework and guideline were provided by Charteris-Black (2004) for identifying conceptual metaphors, there was a danger of over-analysing the words found and jumping to conclusions. Secondly, some of the metaphors used in the articles were not commonly used amongst people who did not learn English as a first language. In the email interview with Brown (personal communication,

2nd April 2019), she mentioned that she did write her blog posts to suit and target a certain audience. This implies that the readers would have to have a similar linguistic background or prior knowledge of the metaphors that she had chosen, or they would not get the impact of these choices.

The metaphors that Brown chose to use emphasised the seriousness of the scandal, and arguably, it aroused curiosity in people and compelled anger amongst those who read TSR. Citizens started to call for investigations into the stolen funds and the criminal wrongdoings highlighted in the alternative media also led to the downfall of the government in the 14th General Elections. On the face of it, what can be concluded from the findings and analysis is that metaphors are very useful in shaping viewpoints and helping readers to understand a subject matter in a more simplified manner through images and even concepts which they are familiar with. Further studies can be carried out to test these ideas via experimental research designs.

This research also suggests that it is important for readers to not just read at a surface level, but to delve deeper into the blog posts and decipher what message the writer intends to send across. Additionally, future research can compare how other news media describes the 1MDB scandal using metaphors. For example, another news media outlet that has covered the scandal is the *Wall Street Journal*. A comparative study can be conducted to explore the different metaphors used to describe the main perpetrators, Najib Razak and Jho Low to explore whether there are similarities between writers, the evaluation shown and the impact on readers. Besides that, future studies can also look into Brown's book, *TSR: The Inside Story of the 1MDB Exposé* that was released in 2018. The other conceptual metaphors she uses in her book should be studied and explored and future researchers might want to include the feedback from her readers to gather the impact of her choice of conceptual metaphors and how it helped them to understand the scandal better.

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Rachel Lim is an English teacher and aspiring comic illustrator. She read her Master of English Language Studies at the University of Malaya. She can be reached at laruXnews@gmail.com.

David Yoong is an independent scholar. He was Deputy Dean (Research & Development) at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. He read his Ph.D. at La Trobe University, and his Master of Criminal Justice and Master of Linguistics at Universiti Malaya. He can be reached at delphi@be-adept.com.