

**Translating Malaysian Cultural Modernity: A Critical Discourse  
Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This study presents a critical investigation of Malaysia's modernisation project. It focuses on Malaysian cultural modernity and explores the Malaysian government's national policy implemented to create a united, modern and developed Malaysian society. This study offers comprehensive insights into Malaysian modernity in the post-Mahathir era. Mahathir has become synonymous with modernity ever since he initiated the plan to modernise Malaysia, as well as Malaysians during his first tenure as prime minister from 1981 to 2003. During this period, the topic of Malaysian modernity was explored extensively by many scholars. As a result, discourse on Malaysian modernity tend to be centred around Mahathir. Although Mahathir's national plan, known as Vision 2020 remains relevant after he left the office and continues to be the basic framework for modernity, Malaysian modernity is rather subjective and involves complex issues of identity and culture, specifically with regard to Malaysia's diverse society. This study illustrates the subjectivity of Malaysian modernity through a Critical Discourse Analysis of articles published in Berita Harian and New Straits Times, two mainstream newspapers in Malaysia. It is an exploration of the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity within the period from 2003 to 2018. This study offers academic contribution to the scholarship of post-colonial identity and modernity by investigating the version of modernity that the Malaysian government aims to achieve.

## Table of Contents

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

1.1 Malaysia, modernity and Vision 2020	1
1.2 The NEP and Malay privileges	4
1.3 Post-colonial Malaysians and language	8
1.4 Malaysia, modernity and Asian values	12
1.5 Modernity, Malay and Islam	15
1.6 Mahathir Mohamad, Malay, Islam and modernity	17

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

2.1 Malaysian identity and modernity	22
2.2 Multiculturalism and nationalism	32
2.3 Race and ethnicity	39
2.4 Religion and identity	43

### **Chapter Three: Theory**

3.1 Modernity	48
3.2 Identity	59
3.3 Culture and identity	69
3.4 Personal identity and cultural identity	75

### **Chapter Four: Methodology**

4.1 The research questions	82
4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis	84
4.3 The theoretical framework	88
4.4 Data sampling	90
4.5 Data analysis	95
4.6 Data selection	96

## **Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion**

5.1	A critical discourse analysis of articles published in Berita Harian newspaper during the era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi	102
5.1.1	Constructing modern Malaysians based on Islam Hadhari	102
5.1.2	Knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity	107
5.1.3	Preserving Malay customs as part of the modernity project	112
5.2	A critical discourse analysis of articles published in Berita Harian newspaper during the era of Najib Razak	120
5.2.1	Constructing Malaysian nation	120
5.2.2	Protecting Malay language	150

## **Chapter Six: Findings and Discussion**

6.1	A critical discourse analysis of articles published in New Straits Times newspaper during the era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi	159
6.1.1	Acknowledging the role of religion in Malaysian modernity	159
6.1.2	Reviving Malaysian traditional symbols	165
6.2	A critical discourse analysis of articles published in New Straits Times newspaper during the era of Najib Razak	172
6.2.1	Fostering unity in diversity	172
6.2.2	Protecting cultural heritage	178

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Limitations of the Study**

7.1	Conclusion	186
7.2	Limitations of the study	191

<b>References</b>		192
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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the historical context of Malaysian modernity and Malaysia's development policies such as the New Economic Policy, the National Culture Policy and most importantly, the Vision 2020. It offers insights into Malaysian political culture and the state of multiculturalism in Malaysia, especially in the post-colonial era. It also provides background information on the history of social functions of race, religion and language in Malaysian society. I outline the importance and significance of researching Malaysian modernity. I argue that studies around Malaysian cultural modernity, in particular, has been very limited. The history of Malaysia is provided in order to illustrate the historical and cultural context of my study. The historical background also demonstrates the unfinished project of Malaysian modernity, which is worth exploring.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Section (1.1) provides general information on Malaysian modernity. Section (1.2) addresses the issues of pro-Malay policy. Section (1.3) clarifies the effect of colonialism on Malaysian society. Section (1.4) presents an overview of Asian values. Section (1.5) highlights the link between Malay and Islam. Section (1.6) gives details of the influence of Mahathir Mohamad in Malaysian modernity.

#### **1.1 Malaysia, modernity and Vision 2020**

The Malaysian government has a goal of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020. National plan, known as Vision 2020, was introduced to transform Malaysia systematically. The plan was initiated by Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth and current prime minister of Malaysia, during the tabling of the Sixth Malaysia Plan in 1991. In passing, I would like to mention that people who belong to the Malay ethnic group are addressed by their first name throughout this study because it is the norm in Malaysia. Referring back to Vision 2020, many assert that it is a complex and challenging plan to form a modern identity for the nation. Bideau and Kilani (2012) describe it as an ideological expression of a modern Malaysia, which not only emphasises economic development, democracy and internationalism, but also multiculturalism, religious tolerance and cultural values (Bideau and Kilani 2012, pp. 607). In short, Vision 2020 is an all-encompassing plan to form new Malaysian identity and society.

Among developing countries, Korff (2001) states that Malaysia is one of the first nations that is becoming modern. Apart from the discourses and visions of the further development of Malaysia into a fully industrialised nation (Vision 2020), Malaysia's effort to become modern is indicated by the successful appropriation of images of modernisation such as industrialisation, democracy and the role of Malaysia as a foreign investor in developing countries (Korff 2001, pp. 272). Architecture and urban design were deployed as signs of national transformation. Mahathir took the opportunity at the KLCC (Kuala Lumpur City Centre) launch to describe Malaysia's development as a 'role model' for other developing nations, which, presumably, also wished to bridge the gap between First and Third Worlds (Bunnell 2004). The existence of KLCC illustrates Malaysia's positive progress towards fully developed country by 2020 (Danapal 1992 and Bunnell 2004). The skyscraper also has long been imagined as "a marker of modernity worldwide" (King cited in Bunnell 2004).

From the above synopsis of Malaysian modernity, it appears that industrialisation, contemporary architecture and economic stability are the key determinants of modernity. Apparently, these determinants are the achievements of developed countries, which mostly Western. It shows that Malaysia sees the West as an inspiration. As a developing country, being inspired by the developed countries seems inevitable. I was born and raised in a metropolitan city, Kuala Lumpur and I feel like we are always trying to catch up with the West. It is because according to Ong (1996) cited in Bunnell (2004, pp. 15-16), the idea of modernity is commonly linked to the West and as a result, 'progress' in Malaysia or elsewhere in the non-West is usually understood as "merely mimetic, an act of replication, imitation or catch up". In spite of Malaya's Independence from the British Empire in 1957 (and became Malaysia in 1962), our worlds, constructed by British-type education and the mass media, seem to be failed replicas of the modern West (Ong 1996, pp. 60).

Ong (1996) asserts that it is common for post-colonial elites to emulate the global center as they yearn for a future that consists of both Western and Asian influences. Therefore, tangible and measurable development become the first priority. In the case of Malaysia, every effort was made to improve the image of the nation, hence the economic growth, industrialisation and contemporary architecture. This shows that the Malaysian government jump-started modern Malaysia by making noticeable progress first. Although the Malaysian modernisation project is all-encompassing, social transformation did not

occur alongside country transformation. It seems that Malaysian modernity consists of two steps: the transformation of Malaysia followed by the transformation of Malaysians.

As the transformation of Malaysia is made a priority, many scholars tend to explore Vision 2020 by examining its tangible and measurable outcomes. Take for instance a study done by Khan et. al (2014), Vision 2020 is explored within the scope of Malaysian construction sector. In this context, Malaysia's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth symbolises the validity of the vision. On the contrary, the link between Vision 2020 and the transformation of Malaysians is understudied. Perhaps, it is due to its complexity and immeasurable outcomes. To fill in the gap, this study focuses on Malaysian cultural modernity. It investigates discourse on modern identity formation involving Malaysian society. Although Ong (1996) claims that post-colonial nations tend to simply imitate the Western countries in order to achieve a fully-developed status, I argue, it is not necessarily true when it comes to the plan to transform the society. Factors like religion, culture, race and ethnicity determine the flexibility of Malaysian society. In this context, I see cultural development and country development are equally important and both deserve the same amount of attention. Cultural development in Malaysia, in particular, raises issue of post-colonial identity, thus study on this topic contributes to the understanding of post-colonial modernity.

Although Malaysian modernity seems to be categorised into country development and cultural development, these two categories have indirect effects on one another. It is because the processes of modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation took place especially after the New Economic Policy (NEP) was implemented, which was in 1971 (Abdul Aziz 2012, pp. 29). The NEP had shaped not only the Malaysian economy, but also the Malaysian society. In many ways, the NEP had major influence on Mahathir's Vision 2020. Despite Vision 2020 being an all-encompassing and inclusive plan, there exists an element of ethnic favoritism, which can be traced back to the objectives of the NEP. I was only three years old when the Malaysian government came up with the idea of '*Melayu Baru*' (New Malay). Mahathir, the prime minister at the time, gave a speech to prominent Malaysian businessmen on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1991. The speech was called The Way Forward (later known as Vision 2020) speech and was one of the most well known political references for the term 'New Malay' (Chong 2005, pp. 576). In his speech (cited in Chong 2005, pp. 577), there is an expression of ethnic favoritism:

If *Bumiputeras* are not brought into the mainstream, if their potentials are not fully developed, if they are allowed to be a millstone around the national neck, then our progress is going to be retarded by that much. No nation can achieve full progress with only half its human resources harnessed. What may be considered a burden now can, with the correct attitude and management be the force that lightens our burden and hastens our progress. The *Bumiputeras* must play their part fully in the achievement of the national goal.

As Chong (2005) points out, it is quite strange that Mahathir never use the term '*Melayu Baru*' or even 'New Malay' in his speech. Instead, he preferred to highlight the importance of mental revolution and cultural transformation among *Bumiputeras*. Although *Bumiputeras* commonly refer to the Malay ethnic, the term actually means indigenous. It is originally Sanskrit, i.e. *bumi* (soil or earth) and *putera* (prince). Arguably, Mahathir's preference for the term *Bumiputeras* makes Malay privileges less apparent in his policy, thus distinguishes Vision 2020 from the NEP. Since Vision 2020 is the fundamental framework of Malaysian modernity, this study takes into account the issue of ethnic favoritism.

Nonetheless, Mahathir and his Vision 2020 are not the sole focus of this study. Instead, this study aims to investigate Malaysian cultural modernity in the post-Mahathir era in order to offer new insight into Malaysian modernity. The study of Malaysian modernity, however, is incomplete without reference to Mahathir and his Vision 2020. I am particularly interested to explore one of the key objectives of the modernity project, which is to create a united, modern and developed society. It is important to analyse the universality and inclusivity of the project as there exists the concept of Malay privileges.

## **1.2 The NEP and Malay privileges**

Malaysia seems to be a country that only favours the Malay ethnic. For example, based on the list of Prime Ministers of Malaysia, all of them are Malays and Muslims. Apart from that, the national language is Malay and the official religion is Islam. This might be challenging for the other ethnic groups as they have their own languages and practice different religions. It raises the question of whether interethnic harmony even exists in Malaysia. According to Camilleri (2013, pp. 225), it does exist. She states that Malaysia has been known as a successful multi-ethnic and multicultural society and the relationship

between Malays, Chinese and Indians have generally been peaceful, which might be based on public campaigns promoted by the Malaysian government.

In reality, however, I believe that interethnic harmony among Malaysians is still debatable based on several racial discrimination incidents happened in Malaysia. According to the Malaysia Racial Discrimination Report 2016, there are 10 highlighted trends of racial discrimination, which include racial discrimination in education sector and in the name of religion, racism in the business environment and entrenched racial discrimination among Malaysians. This proves that Malaysia is not as harmony as it appears to be. Some may argue that Malaysian government is the cause of it by favouring the Malays. Historically, though, the British is responsible for the Malay, Chinese and Indian segregation in Malaysia by dividing labor based on ethnicity, which made it impossible for these groups to unite across ethnic lines. As stated by Lim (1980), this segregation is the basis of interethnic conflict, started with prejudice and stereotypes.

Due to the ethnic segregation, the government had to introduce several national policies to ease the tension between various ethnic groups. However, there are few policies that can be seen as pro-Malay policies and the most controversial policy in the Malaysian history is the NEP. The NEP constructed the concept of Malay privileges. The main initiator of the NEP is Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second prime minister. It was taken further by the third and fourth prime ministers, Hussein Onn and Mahathir Mohamad (Mokhtar et. al 2013, pp. 13). It is also known as the *Bumiputera* policy due to its commitment to improve the life of the *Bumiputera* community (Stephen 2013, pp. 4). Initially, it was introduced as a response to the 1969 race riots. The violence was a result of multiple factors (Tarling 1999) and one of the factors was political as Malays believed that Chinese's economic threaten their political power (Noor and Leong 2013, pp. 717). At the time, there was a realisation that it required more than just Alliance government (United Malays National Organisation, Malaysian Chinese Association and Malaysian Indian Congress) to maintain harmony in diversity (Furlow 2009, pp. 201).

The initial objectives of the NEP were to remove poverty regardless of race and to put an end to the race orientated economy (Furlow 2009, pp. 201). So historically, the NEP focused on restructuring the society in terms of economic wealth. In practice, however, the Malays obtained the larger share and maintained a dominant position. Malaysian

citizenship for Chinese and Indians was subject to conditions. One of the conditions was to accept and respect the special privileges given to the Malays (Lee 1997, pp. 29). The Malay-dominated State has made Malay the national language and Islam the official religion in order to ensure the survival of the Malay-based culture and identity, and also to protect Malay economic interests (Lee 1997, pp. 29).

Malays continue to be protected through a Sedition Act (1971) in order to inhibit resentment. The Act makes it illegal for anyone to question the ethnically sensitive provisions of the Constitution, particularly the Malay special position and privileges (Suryadinata 2000). In 1969, the aforementioned racial riots led to the fall of the Alliance government. It was replaced by a broader coalition, namely the National Front, which still exists today and still dominated by the Malay ruling class. The National Front government consisted of 14 political parties and had dominated Malaysian politics from 1973 to 2018, which makes it the longest ruling coalition party in the democratic world. Interestingly, The NEP was negotiated within this new coalition (Lee 1997, pp. 30).

In short, the NEP had two goals: to eradicate poverty and to restructure society. Restructuring society, however, became the focus of government attention. Through the NEP, much effort were made to promote racial equality in education, occupation and corporate wealth (Jomo cited in Lee 1997, pp. 30). Despite the effort, the Malays received 'special treatment' mainly because they were the worst off. This is based on the government's plan to achieve a target of 30 percent Malay equity in existing and future wealth, particularly in corporate wealth, employment and professional manpower development (Salleh cited in Suryadinata 2000).

In order to soften the impact on other ethnic groups, the government launched the NEP not solely for Malays but for *Bumiputera* (indigenous) as well. At the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the Malays' special position was extended to the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak (Suryadinata 2000). At this point, it is apparent that there are two categories of Malaysians: *Bumiputeras* and *non-Bumiputeras*, which seem to contradict the government's effort to promote racial equality. Stephen (2013, pp. 4) asserts that the Malaysian society is categorised based on their resident status. Natives of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak are grouped under the category of *Bumiputeras*. Malaysian Chinese and

Indians are labelled as *non-Bumiputeras* purely because they are the ethnic groups that migrated from their respective home countries.

Since the introduction of the NEP, a knowledge-based economy is given much attention by the government (Furlow 2009). Investment in education and training, research and development and infrastructure illustrates the government's effort to improve the image of Malaysia. In this context, science and technology appear to be central to the plan to build a knowledge-based economy. However, the development of this type of economy had an effect on Malaysian society. It widened the gap between *Bumiputeras* and *non-Bumiputeras*. It also created income inequality among Malays due to the emergence of Malay technocratic, professional and managerial class (Lee 1997, pp. 31). As the NEP was in favor of *Bumiputeras*, there was not equal opportunity for *non-Bumiputeras*. For instance, a large number of *Bumiputeras* were granted scholarship for overseas education. Supported by the quota system at the local universities and programme for overseas training, there was a marked increase in the number of professionally trained Malays by the 1980s (Suryadinata 2000).

Consequently, there was an increase in ethnic tension and racial polarisation among the ethnic groups, which were the opposite of what the NEP aimed to achieve. The policy became the source of conflict and created greater division among Malaysian society (Jasbir and Hena 1993; Lee 1997). The conflict was especially apparent with regard to the access to higher education, as qualified *non-Bumiputeras* were denied places in public tertiary education institution due to racial quota system (Lee 1997, pp. 31). The issue of higher education is mentioned here because it is the best example to illustrate the state of multiculturalism in Malaysia. It is questionable whether the NEP was actually created to solve the racial conflict.

Apart from the implementation of racial quota system, the government also removed all English-medium schools (Lee 1997). Chinese and Tamil schools, however, were left intact. This suggests that the NEP was actually a strategy to eliminate the legacy of the British Empire and to safeguard the Malay ethnic group. This is based on the fact that Malay became the sole medium of instruction in schools and in public higher education (Lee 1997). The removal of English-medium schools shows the government's conservative

attitude towards the English language. As Stephen (2013) points out, to some, English still symbolises colonialism simply because it is the language of the coloniser.

It is important for me to include this brief summary of the NEP in my study as it illustrates Malaysia's post-colonial condition. This implies that the project to modernise Malaysia, especially Malaysians begin with the system that championed the rights of the Malays and resisted the colonial influence. In many respects, there are significant similarities between the NEP and Vision 2020. Both policies were created to restructure Malaysian society and to create national unity. Therefore, Malaysian modernity, within the framework of Vision 2020 seems to be the extension of the NEP.

In this study, the connection between the NEP and Vision 2020 is further investigated to find out whether the Malay-dominated government has similar impact on Malaysian modernity. Despite my point that there is comparability between the NEP and Vision 2020, there is also distinction between them. Lee (1997), for instance, found out that there were major changes in the educational policies since Mahathir introduced the Vision 2020. In the post-NEP era, the policies were geared towards human resource development and quality management. Therefore, there might also be changes to the government's approach towards modernity.

### **1.3 Post-colonial Malaysians and language**

In the previous section, I have mentioned the government's conservative attitude towards the English language. Nonetheless, there is also a liberal attitude towards it, due to globalisation (Dumanig and David 2011). Similar to the Philippines, Malaysia is also a multilingual country. A number of Malaysians are capable of speaking two or more languages (Ibid). Unlike in Indonesia, acculturation does not exist in Malaysia. Malaysians are still divided by race, religion and language. Visitors in Malaysia may be impressed at how Malaysians can simply mix and switch codes with each other and always know which language to use when negotiating a deal, acquiring information or even for politeness (Mukherjee and David 2011, pp. 9). To me, the language has always been English.

Growing up in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia's largest city), I was under pressure to 'modernise' myself. I remember being labelled as '*kampung girl*' (village girl) by my schoolmates due to my poor command of English language. To me, life in Kuala Lumpur was all about achievements in order to catch up with developed countries, which usually

refer to Western countries. My late father was an avid newspaper reader. He enjoyed discussing topic he read from a newspaper and that was one of the fond memories I had with him. Probably based on what he read on newspapers, he always reminded me the importance of English language.

In Malaysia, English becomes the medium of interaction between different ethnic groups, as well as within the groups. Personally, me and my racially diverse friends prefer to converse in English every time we get together. Besides, most of my Chinese and Indian friends are not fluent in Malay. As strange as it sounds, it appears to me that English seems to be the language that unites Malaysians. Also, career-wise, those who are fluent in English are at an advantage (Dumanig and David 2011). Born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, I have noticed how English has become part of Malaysians. As stated by Mandal (2000, pp. 1002), English language has successfully penetrated the corporate sector, technology, education and major urban centres. In rural areas, however, many youngsters still struggle to be fluent in more than one language (Mukherjee and David 2011, pp.10).

English gained a prominent place in the country's capital and public spaces as a result from the refocus on English in the late 1980s and 1990s, which removed the priority placed on the national language (Mandal 2000, pp. 1002). Although Malay language is still the official language in Malaysia, the Chinese and Indians prefer to converse in their mother tongue languages and some prefer to converse in English, especially those who live in urban areas. The expansion of English in key areas of life in Malaysia is due to the state's embrace of globalisation in the 1990s. This is the most significant impact of globalisation in the country, which brings challenges to the country's cultural identities and social values. An obvious example is the displacement of the national language, *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language). However, it seems naïve to blame on the globalisation without considering other aspects such as the role of the local actors. It is worth questioning whether local actors play a part to promote globalising trends along with creating responses to them (Mandal 2000, pp. 1002).

To Mandal (2000, pp. 1002), the rise of English is attributed to some ethnic groups, which promote the language to others. I would like to use the term 'language shift', coined by Fishman (1964) to further elaborate it. Fishman describes it as the "lack of use of its heritage language by a specific speech community" (Fishman cited in Mukherjee and

David 2011, p. 45). Language shift is caused by a competition from a stronger language, locally and socially. It takes place when certain community gives up a language completely and replaces it with another one (Ibid). In Malaysia, particularly, language shift occurs among the Indians. This is caused by "migration, exogamous marriages, school language, urbanisation and the higher prestige and economic advantage associated with the new language" (David cited in Mukherjee and David 2011, pp. 61).

To Sridhar (1995, pp. 47), bilingualism is a worldwide phenomenon and like any other multilingual countries, the most obvious factor of societal multilingualism is migration. I use the terms bilingualism and multilingualism here to acknowledge the use of more than one language by Malaysians. The history of multilingualism in Malaysia can be traced back to the British colonisation. The topic of bilingualism and multilingualism have been studied both as an individual and as a societal phenomenon. The individual phenomenon of multilingualism centres around questions on how one acquires two or more languages in childhood or later, how these languages are represented in the mind and also how these languages are accessed for speaking and writing. The societal phenomenon of multilingualism is determined by several issues such as the status and roles of the languages in a given society and the connection between language use and social factors like ethnicity, religion and class (Ibid).

Categories and labels have shaped a large part of my life, for both good and bad especially when living in a multiracial, multicultural, multilingual and multi-religion country like Malaysia. I have always considered myself as fully Malay, mainly because my first language is Malay and Islam is my religion. I never really embrace the Chinese side of my family, mainly because I do not lead a Chinese lifestyle nor can I speak the language. Having stated that, language has always been part of my identity descriptions. Mary McGroarty (1995) made an interesting point by stating that language is an intimate part of social identity. This is similar with Bakke's point of view as she states that language is not only a part of social process and a socially conditioned process, but it is also a part of society (Bakke 2017, pp. 39). What she meant was, social setting determines the ways people read, speak, listen or write (in which have social effects). McGroarty and Bakke's point of view inspired me to explore the connection between identity and language, especially with regard to the formation of modern Malaysian society.

The language issues matter because language plays a part in defining cultural identity in Malaysia. If the government fails to unite its citizen through national language, it seems a lot harder to create a new identity or transform the Malaysians through Asian values, promoted by the government. As much as Malaysian leaders want to combat neo-colonialism, they cannot simply ignore the difficulty to do so. English language, according to Mandal (2000, p. 1012), is not only an agent of cultural globalisation, but also a platform for "renewed explorations of Malaysia's history, society and cultural identity". Alastair Pennycook (1994) wrote extensively on the subject of language's rise by focusing on the global shifts relating to the political and cultural complexities of certain societies. He perceives that the self-conscious efforts to give privilege to English language as a 'worldly' global commodity is the manifestation of contemporary neo-colonialism. To Salleh, a Malay writer, bilingualism has a positive outcome (Salleh Ben Joned cited in Mandal 2000, p. 1007):

As far as English is concerned, its widespread use can, under the right conditions, be good for the nation because [like Malay], English cuts across ethnic differences. Why regret the fact that our country has more than one lingua franca? Isn't it better for unity and integration?

It is not a surprise that he is often regarded as an outsider due to his inclusive stance towards the country's cultural diversity. To him, English should not be seen as a threat. He views the language as an asset mainly because English does not belong to any ethnic group in Malaysia. To Mukherjee and David (2011, pp. 9), English is a resource, based on the huge income generated by English language teaching and English medium education in anglophone nations. They, however, do not deny the complexity of this resource especially in terms of individual and group identity as it can affect the way we deal with language problems. To Rugaiya Hassan (2007), language is more than just another national resource. Language is a product of social life and she claims that languages own people and not the other way around.

In Malaysia, despite the universal characteristic of English, English education is not entirely accessible to everyone. Although politically Malays appear to be the privileged ethnic, geographically, they are still the underprivileged group, competing for opportunities. Since the colonial era, rural Malaysia is occupied with homogenous Malay

population where most of the Malay schools can be found. Chinese medium schools are mostly located in urban centres while Tamil medium schools are typically in rubber estates (David and Govindasamy 2003). This trend has not changed much to this present day, thus has implication for racial dynamics in Malaysia. Located mostly in urban centres is one of the reasons why English school education is considered prestigious and elitist (Mukherjee and David 2011, pp. 16). In this sense, English seems to have the power to elevate one's social status. Perhaps, it is one of the motivations for Malaysians to master the language. This is not a current occurrence because the Third Malaysian Plan, which was implemented from the 1976 to 1980 stated quite vigorously the plan to ensure English is taught as a strong second language (Mukherjee and David 2011, pp. 17).

To sum up, language is one of the controversial issues within Malaysia. There is a mixed attitude towards the English language, mainly because it is the language of coloniser. Despite this attitude, English continues to survive in Malaysia, which may have an effect on the type of modern Malaysians that the government intends to create. It also opens the door to on-going discussion and exploration on anti-imperialism in the context of Malaysia.

#### **1.4 Malaysia, modernity and Asian values**

Since the introduction of Vision 2020, Malaysia has shown good progress towards becoming a developed nation. Malaysia was among the top performing countries in terms of economic growth and this was acknowledged by the World Bank in *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (Nain cited in Khattab 2004, pp. 171). I suppose Malaysia is still on the right track in achieving its dream. I remember being in awe when I was in Kuala Lumpur in early 2016, to see how Malaysia has changed quite drastically. For example, we now have the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) to bring improvement in public transportation and there are many new impressive apartment buildings being built. It seems that my hometown is no different than the other big cities I have ever been to.

This indicates a promising hope for Malaysia to be recognised as one of the developed nations one day. Having stated that, it does not necessarily mean that Malaysia fully imitate the Western countries. This has been made clear in a number of political discourses. Anwar Ibrahim (the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1993 to 1998), for instance, stated in his book entitled *The Asian Renaissance*, there is a destructive effect

that the West may have on East Asia, especially if the United States and Europe are imitated blindly (Ibrahim 1996). According to Altalib (1997), Anwar's resistance towards Western values is based on the belief that hard work, humility, respect and wisdom of the elders are the strengths of Asia and without these values, Asia will become weak. Anwar's statement somehow depicts the Malaysian government interference in the idea of Malaysian values.

According to Furlow (2009, pp. 205), Asian values derived from the concept of Confucian values. The shift from Confucian values to Asian values was due to the Asian economies integration and the formation of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). In Malaysia, it is apparent that cultural values are important as political figures tend to be very specific in describing them. Apart from Anwar, Mahathir is also a leading advocate for Asian values (Furlow 2009). To Mahathir, Asian values are essential in Malaysian development. Interestingly, Asian values, in the context of Malaysia, are deeply influenced by religion. For example, Anwar clearly points out the positive role of religion in strengthening Asian society (Ibrahim 1996, pp. 51). To him, moral and social deterioration can be avoided through religion. The emphasis on Asian values versus Western values by Malaysian political figures shows that Asian values are seen as 'prescription' for Malaysian society to combat Western-type modernity.

To promote Asian values among Malaysian society, sixteen 'universal values' are listed in the Integrated Curriculum by the Ministry of Education (Salleh cited in Suryadinata 2000). As universal values, they are believed to be compatible with the Malaysian society, despite their differences in terms of religion, culture and norms. These values are: "compassion/empathy, self-reliance, humility/modesty, respect, love, justice, freedom, courage, cleanliness of body and mind, honesty/integrity, diligence, co-operation, moderation, gratitude, rationality, and public spiritedness". They are taught in all disciplines, especially in moral and Islamic education courses.

The above list of values are arguably no different than the Western's. Mahathir, however, has a different view as he sees a contrast between Western modernism and Eastern thought (Mohamad 1995, pp. 81). Mahathir argues that the West might collapse as they abandoned religion and preferred the secular life. Hedonistic values like materialism, sensual gratification and selfishness are seen as possible contributors to the "impending collapse"

of the West. Despite his uneasiness with the West, Mahathir had to allow Western ideas and consumerism to enter Malaysia through the Internet and other communication media. Indirectly, the development of a knowledge-based economy limits Mahathir's power to filter out certain elements of the West, as it requires free flow of information and ideas.

Notwithstanding the knowledge-based economy, Mahathir's vision for modern Malaysia was actually not fully accepted by Malaysians. There are people who voiced discontent with Mahathir because they had different opinion on how modern Malaysia should look like. According to Furlow (2009), these discontents, however, are not signs of rejection of economic, technological or social development. The discontents also do not mean that some Malaysians want Malaysia to be Westernised. Opposition towards Mahathir's idea of modernity centres around the issue of society's values. It is because the 'Malaysian values' that Mahathir promoted were his personal view and heavily influenced by his background: ruling class and local-educated Malay Muslim. His active involvement in the formation of modern Malaysia shows that Malaysian modernity is partly a project to create an imagined society.

To sum up, the so-called Malaysian values, which are also perceived to be universal, are of paramount importance to Malaysian modernity. The government actively attempts to instil the values into Malaysians. Also, Furlow (2009) discovered that the values are integrated with science and technology at the National Science Center, which illustrates their versatility. The values even reflected in Malaysian architecture and in this context, the specific Islamic values are incorporated into architectural design (Korff 2001; Furlow 2009). This shows a clear link between cultural values, moral values and techno-scientific development. The influence of Malaysian values on tangible development have been explored by many scholars. The influence of Malaysian values on Malaysian society, however, remains understudied. Since cultural and moral values are made important in Malaysian modernity, study on this particular topic can contribute to the understanding of imagined community, a concept developed by Benedict Anderson.

### **1.5 Modernity, Malay and Islam**

There are three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, which are Malay, Chinese and Indian. A long history of migration of people to and between the Malay Archipelago contributed to the creation of plural society in Malaysia. In the mid nineteenth century, the British colonial induced and forced Chinese and Indians to come to Malaysia as traders, miners, plantation laborers and colonial officials (Hoffstaedter 2009, pp. 122). Just like in Singapore, the British prioritised the concept of ethnicity in Malaysia and they only accepted three main groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. Therefore, individuals who do not belong to any of these three categories were referred to as the 'Others' (Noor and Leong 2013, pp. 715). The British, based on a secular capitalist system of the West, created this variant of pluralism. The system involves recognising priorities such as entrepreneurial and technical over farming skills and highlights hierarchies, which are ranked according to differences in terms of religion, ethnicity, wealth, status and class. Through the system, however, these hierarchies could be systematically manipulated to respond to the open world economy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wang Gungwu cited in Noor and Leong 2013, pp. 715).

Among these groups, Malays are dominant as they account for more than half of the country's population. They are also dominant in the political landscape of Malaysia. Therefore, the Malay ethnic group may have a significant effect on Malaysian modernity. Malays have been Muslims since the fifteenth century as the result of Malaccan Kingdom (Mohamad 2008, pp. 294). At the time, Islam was made part of the identity of Malays because Malaccan Kingdom's monarchs wanted to create a successful maritime Malay-Muslim polity in Southeast Asian. In 1957, the link between Islam and Malays were made official as Islam became part of the legal definition of Malays. Through Article 160 (2) of the federal constitution, Malay refers to an individual who "habitually speaks the Malay language, practices the Malay custom and is a Muslim" (Mohamad 2008, pp. 294). This legal definition of Malay, however, is debatable because any Muslim can also be considered 'Malay' if he/she speaks Malay language and practices Malay custom. Interestingly, it is not possible for Malays to lose their religious identity because without Islam, they are no longer Malays.

According to Mohamad (2008, pp. 295), the Malay-Muslim identity causes discomfort among Malaysian non-Muslims as they see it as threat of an emerging 'Islamic state', especially when most Malays describe themselves as Muslims first. Therefore, in the context of Malaysia, Malay culture and Islam are closely connected. In contrast to Mohamad (2008), Korff (2001) points out the positive role of Islam in Malay culture. To Korff, Islam was assigned to the Malay ethnic group because it is all-encompassing and does not hinder development, especially in terms of science, economy and financial system (Korff 2001, pp. 279). The existence of Malay-Muslim since the fifteenth century until now shows that Islam continues to be seen as an important 'tool' towards success. Between Islam and Malay, Islam is a positive element of Malay culture. It is because Malays (separate from Islam), are known as peasant and backward community, which make them incompatible with global modernity, in general (Korff 2001, pp. 279).

This suggests that Malay-Muslim identity is particularly important in Malaysian modernity because it has been part of Malaysian culture for too long. I wrote Malaysian culture, instead of Malay culture because there were a number of national programmes, carried out by the government to nurture national culture. For instance, following the introduction of National Culture Policy (NCP) in 1971 by the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Culture, there existed campaigns on good values, cultural performances, exhibitions, seminars, and training. According to Suryadinata (2000), these programmes, together with the national culture that the government tried to foster, consisted elements of Malay culture and Islam. Despite these efforts, there is no evidence to prove that the government has succeeded in realising the national culture concept. It is also debatable whether the implementation of national culture was rational because real culture, as asserted by Suryadinata, develops on its own dynamic. In diverse society, particularly, it is common and natural for cultural practices to be borrowed and exchanged between ethnic groups (Suryadinata 2000).

Nevertheless, the continuation of the NCP to this present day makes the subject of Malaysian national culture worthy of attention. Gabriel (2011) points out the need to interrogate the government's narrative of multiculturalism due to the fact that the NCP is being kept alive by the Malay-dominated ruling party. In sum, Malay-Muslim identity and Malay-dominated ruling class are two important components of Malaysian politics. Although Malay and Islam are not made apparent in the Vision 2020, knowledge on these

subjects are useful for exploring Malaysian modernity. It illustrates the complexity of Malaysian cultural development. It also brings the Malay authenticity into question.

### **1.6 Mahathir Mohamad, Malay, Islam and modernity**

As the Malaysian modernisation project was initiated by Mahathir, it is important for me to acknowledge his viewpoint on Malay, Islam and modernity. I have mentioned Mahathir quite a lot in this chapter even though this study is not really about him. It seems incomplete to study modernity in the Malaysian context without acknowledging Mahathir. I remember learning about all the prime ministers of Malaysia at school. Each one of them comes with an interesting nickname. It started with the first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman who was referred to as Father of Independence, Tunku Abdul Razak as Father of Development, Tun Hussein Onn as Father of Unity and Mahathir Mohamad as Father of Modernisation. The later prime ministers, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Father of Human Capital Development and Najib Razak as Father of Transformation. Interestingly, Mahathir won the 14th Malaysian general election. He returned to the office in 2018 to serve as prime minister for the second time.

In Malaysia, former prime ministers continue to be important national figures. As Father of Modernisation, Mahathir was very passionate in his effort to modernise not only Malaysia, but also Malaysians. He was 45 when he published his controversial book in 1970, entitled *The Malay Dilemma*. The book was published 11 years before he became Malaysia's fourth prime minister. In his book, he criticised his own race (Malay) and he provided an ideological foundation of the pro-*Bumiputera* policy. He then revisited *The Malay Dilemma* and wrote a second preface, which was published in 2008. He did change his mind on some of the things he wrote in the first preface. He stated that today's Malays are well educated and doing much better as he had seen more Malays with PhDs and as professionals. Apart from that, he also shared his thoughts on Islam.

However, Mahathir's thoughts on Islam throughout his 22-year rule of Malaysia (1981-2003) are surprisingly understudied. Since Islam has been declared as the religion of the Malaysian federation in Article 3(1) of the Federal Constitution of 1957, it has become an important aspect in Malaysian society. Its resurgence in the 1970s has made it a permanent political feature of Malaysia (Abdul Hamid and Ismail 2014, pp. 159). Only 40% of the Malaysia population practice Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions, while

the other 60% practice Islam (Ibrahim et al. 2011, pp. 1004). Religious pluralism is one of the challenges in the process of identity transformation in Malaysia. It is important to acknowledge these challenges in order to understand the complex dynamics of this ethnically and religiously diverse society.

Since the Malaysia Independence, the prime minister has always been male, Malay and Muslim. It is beneficial to explore the definition of Islam according to Malaysian prime ministers because until this present day, Islam and its function in Malaysian modernity and development is still controversial. Mahathir, during his first tenure as prime minister had always emphasised on Islamic values in an attempt to transform Malaysian society. However, according to Schottmann (2011, pp. 356), Mahathir's contribution to the articulation of the role of Islam in Malaysian modernity remains comparatively understudied. Schottmann argues that Mahathir's claim of proper understanding of Islam was beyond political rhetoric. In Mahathir's early campaign to inculcate Islamic values into his administration, there was major changes to the Islamic Centre (Abdul Hamid and Ismail 2014, pp. 170). In 1977, the federal government's Islamic bureaucracy was replaced with JAKIM (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*), also known as the Department of Islamic Advancement of Malaysia. Mahathir's view on Islam also underpinned the government's Islamic policies of the 1980s and 1990s.

This shows that Mahathir's articulation of Islam, which some prefer to call it Mahathir's Islam, was an important part of Malaysian politics during the decades of crucial transformation and particularly relevant as it may have long-term impact on Malaysian development experience. As pointed out by Schottmann (2011), Mahathir's Islam highlights Muslims' rights, in which Muslims are free to engage in "rationalistic re-readings of the sources of Islamic law" (Schottmann 2011, pp. 356). To Mahathir, insights into God's revelation is not only limited to religious leaders and every sufficiently literate Muslim should be able to reinterpret the Quran, the prophetic tradition and the work of the classical scholars to make Quran relevant in the present day (Ibid). Based on Mahathir's Islam, it seems obvious that he does not rely on the *ulama* to play a role in educating the Malaysian Muslims. He, in fact, criticised *ulama* in the context of Arab Islam during his interview with the New Perspectives Quarterly editor, Nathan Gardels in 2002. Mahathir blamed those who call themselves '*ulama*' in order to promote their own political agenda

and misinterpreted Islam, which led their followers to do things that are actually against the teaching of Islam.

Mahathir's Islam seems quite liberal and this creates tension among the conservative Muslims in Malaysia. To Mahathir, there is nothing in Islam that against modernisation (Gardels 2002). Mahathir perceives Islam as an opportunity for the Malay race to prosper. He is inspired by the 'golden age' of Islam, in which it was a civilisation of learning and knowledge. Being Malay himself, Mahathir tends to focus on the transformation of the Malay race in Malaysia. In general, his engagement in Islamic discourse is based on one big question, what went wrong? If he is inspired by the Islamic civilisation, it is only rational to question the decline of the Islamic civilisation over the past two or three centuries. Mahathir is obviously aware of this by expressing his concerns and suggesting Muslims to return to the fundamentals of Islam, so they could focus on the development of their nations. He is a firm believer that Islam has the power to facilitate Muslims to compete within the global community.

Mahathir is not the only leader who used Islam as a model of development. Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is also well known for his Islamic principle throughout his leadership from 2003-2009. Similar to Mahathir's Islam, 'Islam Hadhari' (progressive Islam) emerged on the Malaysian political sphere as an effort to offer an alternative model to Western modernity and multiculturalism (Hoffstaedter 2009, pp. 121), which is further analysed in my study. Abdullah introduced his Islam Hadhari to promote an Islam that values inclusivity, moderation and inter-religious tolerance (Abdul Hamid and Ismail 2014, pp. 159). Due to his character and religious background, Abdullah's attempt to project an Islam with a progressive and moderate aspect seemed promising. According to Abdul Hamid and Ismail (2014, p. 161), Abdullah is often being described as "tolerant, non-confrontational, patient, humble, modest, composed, free from corruption and opposed to political aggression".

Abdullah is also the first Muslim leader to speak at the World Council of Churches assembly in August 2004. In his speech, he highlighted the importance of tolerance in religious understanding and practice. Cited from Abdul Hamid and Ismail (2014, p. 163), Abdullah (2004) said:

What we need more than ever today is a concerted effort to initiate inter-faith dialogue. We need to talk to one another openly about the issues that impact on all our lives. Let us go beyond arguing over differences in theology and religious practice. A meaningful dialogue will not be possible if we do not respect each other's freedom of worship. Islam enjoins pluralism and we are reminded of it in the Quranic verse 'to you your religion, to me my religion'.

While Mahathir tends to only focus on transforming the Malay race, Abdullah, on the other hand, seems to aim at every Malaysian. However, just like what happened to Mahathir's Islam, Islam Hadhari, too, faced many challenges. As Abdullah's administration staggered on from 2006, Islam Hadhari's failure was unavoidable. This failure, perhaps, can be attributed to its poor theory and practice approach. Religious officials who implemented the concept failed to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Islam Hadhari (Abdul Hamid and Ismail 2014, pp. 171). Despite its failure, the existence of Islam Hadhari in the period of Malaysia's modernisation makes it worthwhile for me to explore Malaysian modernity in the post-Mahathir era.

Furthermore, another factor that contributes to the challenges in implementing new Islamic framework in the country is criticism by Islamist conservatives, who often target Muslim proponents of liberal Islam and feminist Muslims (Abdul Hamid and Ismail 2014, pp. 169). Opposition towards liberal Muslims, in particular, centers around the issue of ethno-religious priorities. As indicated by Marzuki Mohamad (2008, pp. 155-158), liberal Muslims tend to make Islam appears modern and inclusive, which illustrates their consciousness of Malaysia's multi-ethnic background. It is in this sense that the Islamist conservatives deem liberal Muslims as 'non-Sunnis' and liberal Islam as a "deviant teaching in modern form" (Abdul Hamid and Ismail 2014, pp. 169).

It is worth wondering why it is so important for Malaysian leaders to include Islam in their nation-building discourse. Noor and Leong's essay offers critical insights into this topic. They based their arguments around the modernisation programmes in the 80s and 90s, whereby few well-connected Malays emerged as elites and in control of the state-owned businesses, which closely linked to politics. Due to the lack of business insights and entrepreneurial experience of the Chinese, these new Malay elites had formed partnership with the Chinese (popularly known as '*Ali Baba*' arrangement), which created the political

economy of 'elite bargaining' (Lee cited in Noor and Leong 2013, pp. 717). The immorality of these elites, who were Malays thus representing Islam, appeared to be against the teaching of Islam. As a result, UMNO (Malaysia's largest political party) lost many of its Malay supporters, who moved their support to a religious party in Malaysia, namely Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Noor and Leong (2013) strongly believe that this is the reason why UMNO increasingly interested in an Islamic approach to regain its lost ground.

As for me, Islam is made important in Malaysian politics possibly more than just to regain its lost ground. The inclusion of Islam as part of the legal features of Malay ethnic suggests an attempt to create and preserve ethnic authenticity. Also, the various interpretations of Islam among Malaysian leaders, and the implementation of national programmes based on Islam illustrate the direction of Malaysian modernity. For these reasons, a comprehensive study of Malaysian modernity can fill in the gaps in current knowledge about modernity, in general. The existence of Islamic discourse with regard to Malaysia is enough to show that there is a potential distinction between Malaysian modernity and Western modernity.

## **Chapter Two Literature Review**

This chapter presents the pertinent academic literature to the study. It aims to expand on the relationship between identity-making and modernity project, specifically in the construction of united, modern and developed Malaysian society. Within the literature, Malaysian modernity has been explored by many scholars. However, very few studies explore the cultural aspect of Malaysian modernity. Also, studies on Malaysian cultural modernity tend to be ethnic-specific, which are not sufficient to offer comprehensive understanding of the topic that involves Malaysian society in general.

In this chapter, I further explore the recurring themes associated with the topic. Five central themes are identified to be the key elements of Malaysian identity and modernity: multiculturalism, nationalism, race, ethnicity and religion. These themes are examined in-depth to identify gaps in the literature, which are pointed out throughout the chapter. The link between Malaysian modernity, Vision 2020 and Mahathir are also addressed in this chapter as many studies in this area tend to include a special reference to Mahathir's Vision 2020.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section (2.1) provides the evaluation of the available literature in the topic area. Section (2.2) highlights studies that have been done on multiculturalism and nationalism. Section (2.3) explores the concepts of race and ethnicity based on available knowledge. Section (2.4) analyses the common relationship between religion and identity.

### **2.1 Malaysian identity and modernity**

This section discusses two key terms related to this study, which are identity and modernity. It points out gaps in current knowledge about Malaysian modernity in general and Malaysian cultural modernity in particular. It also shows that Malaysian modernity tends to be associated with Mahathir and his Vision 2020, which illustrates limitation of points of view.

There is a substantial amount of literature that deal with the question of Malaysian identity and modernity since the period of Mahathir's first tenure (1981-2003) as the prime minister

of Malaysia. Malaysia was once known as one of the poorest countries in the developing world (Boey 2002, pp. 31). Forty years after its independence in 1957, Malaysia gained a status of a newly industrialising country, which was based on a per capita Gross National Product (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2000). Since then, Malaysia has shown an outstanding and consistent economic growth. In 1993, the World Bank cited Malaysia as a model for developing countries (World Bank 1993). In 1998, Malaysia was ranked top in economic performance out of 100 countries (Yeung and Mathieson 1998, pp. 198-199). However, by the 1990s, there was a growing concern about the country's economic growth despite the impressive economic track record.

According to Boey (2002), the Malaysian government aimed to propel the country's economic growth into the next millennium and also to achieve a developed nation status by the year 2020. In this context, Malaysia's path to development was initially motivated by the global economic competition. As stated by Mahathir (1997), Malaysia had to depend on its ability to promote new sources of growth in order to remain globally competitive. Boey (2002) explored the topic and identified two new sources of growth, which according to him, are implicated in the MSC (Multimedia Super Corridor) development. Furlow (2009) asserts that the MSC is not only the main feature of national pride, but it also symbolises Malaysia's modernisation programme.

Apart from attracting high-tech and multinational corporations, the MSC is also designed to place Malaysia in the forefront of the information-based economies of the 21st century. The first source of growth is the expansion of Kuala Lumpur's role as a hub for financial activities, headquarter locations as well as other advanced producer services in the broader Southeast Asian and Asia-Pacific region (Morshidi and Suriati 1999; Morshidi 2000). The second is information technologies, which according to Sassen (1998), are more than just a means for communicating. They are also a platform for capital accumulation and the operations of the global actor.

Apart from Boey (2002), there are many other academic scholars who are also interested in the topic of Malaysian development (see Siwar and Kasim 1997; Goh 2002; Huff 2002; Bunnell 2002; Williamson 2003; Willford 2003; Indergaard 2003). Based on the previous literature, the topic of Malaysian modernity/development is generally explored from an economic point of view. Globalisation and competition in the global economy are two key

factors that are frequently associated with Malaysian modernity during the period of Mahathir's premiership. The subject of Malaysian modernity started to become of interest among academic scholars since Mahathir publicly expressed his intention to integrate Kuala Lumpur into the global and regional service economy, which according to Morshidi and Suriati (1999, pp. 15), was initiated as early as the 1980s. It is also emphasised in Mahathir's famous strategic framework, namely Vision 2020.

Malaysia's promising information economy started to develop since the early 1990s through many agencies, programmes and human resource training (Shari Vadeen 1997, pp. 271-273; Corey 1998, pp. 152-159). While Shari Vadeen (1997) and Corey (1998) highlight the role of information economy in Malaysian development, Mazrui (1998) points out four major forces that played a significant role in the historical development of Malaysia: religion, technology, economy and empire. He also asserts that these four major forces are associated with globalisation. Furlow (2009) draws upon these forces and focuses on the local/global debates about Islam, science and modernity, in relation to Vision 2020. He argues that Vision 2020 is best described as a project to reconstruct Malaysian economy, society and identity. He also argues that the local/global debates about Islam, science and modernity are best conceptualised as competing projects, which represent alternative constructions of Malaysian modernity. For this research, I aim to further explore the conceptualisation of multiple modernities or alternative modernities, which according to Furlow, "emerged to capture the variable ways in which modernity unfolds across time and space" (Furlow 2009, p. 221).

### Vision 2020

As Malaysian government's official development policy/plan, Vision 2020 seems inseparable from the subject of Malaysian modernity. In Malaysian context, literary works on the subject of modernity tend to include a special reference to Mahathir's Vision 2020. In this sense, Malaysian modernity is first understood from Mahathir's point of view. Vision 2020 serves as Malaysia's National Vision (Islam 2010) and also as a guideline for modernity. In general, the vision is known as a goal to transform Malaysia into a fully developed nation by the year 2020. Besides Malaysia, it also aims to transform Malaysians. I argue that Vision 2020 is best conceptualised as a 'tool' to mold Malaysian society into the desired condition. In its detailed statement (cited in Rahman 1993, p. 271), Vision 2020 appears as a political agenda to create an imagined community:

By the year 2020, Malaysia is to be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

The above statement of Vision 2020 can be broken down into two categories. The first one embodies aspects of societal (Malaysians) development, whereas the second category features aspects of country (Malaysia) development. Based on previous literature, the second category appears to be the key interest of many scholars (for examples, see Tsuruoka and Vatikiotis 1991; Isa 1995; Lemaire 1996; Molly 1999; Aziz et. al 2002). Vision 2020 continues to be prominent in many literary works of Malaysian modernity even after Mahathir left the office in 2003. Works of Khan et. al (2014), Haron et. al (2015), Selvaratnam (2016), Mahmoud and Mitkees (2017) are all incorporate elements of Vision 2020. Similar to the available literature during the period of Mahathir's first tenure as a prime minister, literature on Malaysian modernity in the post-Mahathir era also tend to highlight the economic side of Vision 2020. In this respect, Malaysian modernity is mainly determined by an economic growth.

Among those mentioned earlier, Furlow's (2009) work also focuses on the role of economics in the Malaysian modernisation project. According to him, the success of Vision 2020 depends on Malaysia's GDP as it must average 8% growth annually over the 30 years of the plan. His interest in the economic side of Malaysian modernity is inspired by Mahathir's interpretation of modernity. Mahathir believes that a transformation to a knowledge-based economy is required in order to achieve Vision 2020. It comes as no surprise that Vision 2020 is commonly associated with economic development in Malaysia because Mahathir himself placed great emphasis on the importance of economic growth. His specific objectives of Vision 2020 are mainly aimed at restructuring Malaysian economy to eradicate poverty and to eliminate the identification of ethnicity with economic function. Cited from Islam (2010, p. 200), these objectives were clarified at the first open National Seminar on Vision 2020 in 1991:

1. To have sufficient food and shelter with easy access to health and basic essentials
2. To reduce the present level of poverty
3. To remove the identification of race with major economic functions and to have a fair distribution with regard to the control, management and ownership of the modern economy
4. To maintain annual population growth rate of 2.5%
5. To double real GDP every ten years between 1990 and 2020 AD
6. To have a balanced growth in all sectors namely: industry, agroforestry, energy, transport, tourism and communications, banking, that is technologically proficient, fully able to adapt, innovative, with a view to always moving to higher levels of technology

Based on the above list of objectives, Furlow (2009) gives focus to Malaysia's plan to form a knowledge-based economy, which according to him, centred around science and technology. In his work, education and training, research and development and infrastructure are identified to be the key areas for the government to invest in. The government's investments in infrastructure, particularly, has resulted in tangible symbols of modernity such as Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), a Light Rail Transit (LRT) monorail in and around Kuala Lumpur, a second Proton (the national car) factory, Putrajaya (Malaysia's new capital) and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

The existence of the aforementioned tangible symbols of modernity or what Don et al. prefer to call the globalising symbols (Don et al. 2010, pp. 272) has inspired me to explore the cultural aspects of Malaysian modernity, which is the focus of this research. Unlike the economic aspects of Malaysian modernity, not many studies have been done on and around the topic of Malaysian cultural modernity. I believe that cultural modernity is equally important because it has a significant role in the development of new Malaysia. As asserted by Kassim (1993), the focus of Vision 2020 goes beyond the purely economic aspects of development. He made mention of aspects such as social justice, quality of life, moral and ethical values as well as work ethics. In this sense, Vision 2020 appears to be an all-encompassing national plan, which has a direct implication in Malaysia economic outlook and an indirect effect on Malaysian society.

To sum up, Malaysian identity and modernity is an understudied subject. This topic is generally explored from an economic point of view as Malaysia's path to development was initially motivated by the global economic competition. Also, knowledge of this topic is limited to Mahathir's Vision 2020 due to it being the official national policy/plan. Since Malaysian modernity is an ongoing project, study on the topic in terms of post-Mahathir era is useful to offer an up to date knowledge of Malaysian cultural modernity.

### Asian values

This part of the section addresses the key aspect of Malaysian identity, which is known as Asian values. It shows the integration of Malaysian identity and Asian values and how it influences the Malaysian government's concept of cultural modernity. In this section, the idea to distinguish Malaysian modernity from Western modernity is also presented.

Based on the available literature, Malaysian modernity and Vision 2020 are inseparable, which implies a significant role of Mahathir in the Malaysian modernisation project. The subject of Malaysian cultural modernity inevitably involves the issue of Malaysian identity and Mahathir appears to be one of the keywords in a number of literary works (see Harper 1997; Kessler 1999; Reid 2001; Williamson 2002; Boulanger 2002; Stark 2003; Souchou 2003; Nah 2003). The association between Mahathir and Malaysian identity is not only notable from the year 1981 to 2003. He remains relevant even when he was no longer serving as prime minister. From the year 2004 to 2018, studies on Malaysian identity and cultural modernity still refer to Mahathir's ideology (see Khattab 2004; Lan 2005; Yaapar 2005; Ibrahim 2007; Mohamad 2008; Schottmann 2011; Gabriel 2011).

Mahathir's ideology of Malaysian identity mainly encompasses Asian values and Islamisation. Asian values appear as an important term in the studies of Malaysian culture and according to Chia (2011), the term started to be widely used in the political discourse from the 1980s. Mendes (1996) asserts that Mahathir is not the only vocal proponent of Asian values. Beside Mahathir, Lee Kuan Yew (the first prime minister of Singapore) also advocated Asian values and so were their deputies and government officials (Mendes 1996). Chia (2011), however, only explored the origins and philosophical underpinnings of the Asian values discourse in the Singapore context. Nevertheless, Chia's conclusion is worth pondering in order to gain understanding on the term Asian values. He indicates that the state's attempt to articulate a Singaporean identity is the focal point of the Asian values

discourse in Singapore. In this sense, a Singaporean identity is one that was Asian as opposed to 'Western'.

Chia's work inspired me to incorporate the concept of Asian values in my study on Malaysian identity and modernity and also to deal with the question of cultural values in the development of modern and developed Malaysian society. Khattab (2004) implies that Asian values in the Malaysian context are articulated mainly because there is a need to distinguish Malaysian society from Western societies. According to her, it is based on the oriental argument that 'Western' tradition and values potentially hinder not only the path toward economic growth, but also social development, which are the key objectives of the Malaysian modernisation project. Khattab's statement is based on Mahathir's and Ishihara's viewpoints on modernity. Cited in Brooks (2003, p. 89), they define the Asian path to modernity as:

...avoiding anarchy, chaos, moral degeneration, immorality and social decline seen to mark the West... Western societies are riddled with single-parent families, which foster incest, with homosexuality, with cohabitation, with unrestrained avarice, with disrespect for others and of course with rejection of religious teachings and values...

Mahathir's interpretation of cultural modernity is best understood as an attempt to create a developed and modern Malaysian society who are not 'Western' in any way, shape or form, hence his keen interest in the elevation of Asian values. To Khattab (2004, pp. 172), Mahathir's negative perception towards 'Western' culture derived from post-colonial Asia's common understanding of the word 'freedom', which is considered a dirty word and is perceived as 'Western' and 'colonial'. However, according to Huff (2001), there is a clear link between modernity and globalisation, which raises an issue of the practicality of the ideology to create a Malaysian version of cultural modernity. One of the objectives of my study is to find out whether the version of cultural modernity that Malaysia aims to achieve is consistently detached from the characteristics associated with the 'Western' culture. As Huff puts it, globalisation implies adopting international standards. His statement about modernity and globalisation has relevance for Malaysian modernity, in general.

As stated earlier, to achieve Malaysian modernity, the government places great emphasis on the economic growth. Globalisation and competition in the global economy are identified to be the main stimulants to Malaysian development. The emergence of the new information technology, through the MSC programme, exposes Malaysia to outside influences, which could impact the ability of the Malaysian modernisation project to achieve its goals and objectives. As stated by Azzman (1995) cited in Huff (2001, pp. 451), there is a number of radical social, economic, and political implications of the technical advance of the new information technology. One of his examples is the government has less control over national issues. Huff shares similar view with Azzman as he indicates that the new information technology has "major and unavoidable consequences for all nations in the world" (Huff 2001, p. 440).

This sketch of the information technology development in Malaysia serves to point out one of the major challenges facing the Malaysian government. It is important to state the sociological view of modernity of technology because according to Mouzelis (1999), advances in technology, transport and communication has allowed mobilisation of information, people and resources to happen (Mouzelis cited in Bahfen 2011, pp. 148). Consequently, it shows that the ambition and plan to form a Malaysian version of cultural modernity is not a straightforward project. Apart from the issues brought about by globalisation, being a post-colonial nation also adds complexity to the formation of modern Malaysia. In this context, the government's plan to modernise Malaysian society is not only to distinguish Malaysian modernity from Western modernity, but also to offer a new definition of modernity, which certainly different than the one described by Touraine. Modernity, according to Touraine (1998) means "hinging on the fascination with the new while at the same time divorcing (in terms of lifestyle and of society) from the old" (Touraine cited in Bahfen 2011, pp. 148).

However, from an economical point of view, Malaysian modernity is inspired by a development or improvement that took place in developed nations. The government's commitment to improve the performance of Malaysia's economy, primarily through the MSC, shows that it is motivated by the global economic competition. Therefore, economically speaking, Malaysian modernity means advancement in terms of technology and infrastructures. Culturally speaking, Malaysian modernity is not clearly defined. In this respect, Malaysian cultural modernity does not necessarily mean advancement. The

attachment of Asian values to the subject of Malaysian modernity, involving the Malaysian society, shows that the plan to create a developed and modern society is not inspired by modern societies in developed nations.

Despite this interesting aspect, the politics of Malaysian cultural modernity remain understudied. For this specific reason, my study focuses on the cultural and societal aspects of Malaysian modernity, in the hope of defining the modern and developed society that the government intends to create. Since Malaysian modernity is commonly associated with Mahathir, who is famously referred as the Father of Modernisation in Malaysia, studies on this particular topic tend to solely feature him. This, I argue, to be problematic because Mahathir is not the only modernity representative for Malaysia. Nonetheless, it does not mean that I undermine his role in Malaysian modernity as the topic cannot be fully understood without reference to him. Therefore, in this study, Mahathir is featured as the ideological framework of Malaysian modernity.

#### Modern and developed Malaysian society

This part of the section focuses on the abstract concept of modern and developed Malaysian society. It highlights the subjectivity of the Malaysian modernisation project and points out the significance of this study on Malaysian cultural modernity. The continuity of Mahathir's Vision 2020 even after he left the office in 2003 has inspired me to explore Malaysian modernity beyond Mahathir or in the post-Mahathir era. This study, thus, aims to offer an updated interpretation and clarification of the Malaysian version of cultural modernity.

Modernising Malaysia, in a literal sense, seems to be a project that has a clear and measurable objectives. The process, performance and outcome can be examined and explored using measurements like GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and unemployment rate (Ruggeri 2018). Although it is debatable whether the two measurements are helpful to get a sense of how well Malaysia is doing, they still serve as practical methods to explain Malaysian modernity. In contrast, modernising Malaysians is rather a complex project, mainly because it deals with the population of Malaysia. This type of project is what Benedict Anderson (1991) described as creating an imagined community. In this sense, modern and developed Malaysian society is merely an abstract concept, thus liable to unpredictable variation.

Although the idea to modernise Malaysians was first initiated by Mahathir, characteristics that constitute modern and developed Malaysians are not fixed. Don et al. (2010) explored this kind of matter by examining the role of elite discourse in the construction of Malaysian nationhood and identity. According to them, "Malaysian nationhood is a subject for open-ended speculation" (Don et al. 2010, p. 270). Like most of the studies on Malaysian identity and modernity, their study also focuses on Mahathir's own perception of Malaysian nationhood. The understanding of Malaysian identity has been primarily 'Mahathir-based' not only during the period of his premiership, but also since the year 2003 to 2018 (see Mohamad 2003; Desai 2006; Noor 2013; Ghazali 2014; Chan 2018).

A concentration on or interest in Mahathir's ideology has resulted in a uniformity in the interpretation of identity and nationhood. The limitations of point of view in the available literature show that there is a gap in current knowledge of Malaysian identity. To fill in the gap, I aim to further explore the concept of Malaysian nationhood according to Don et al. (2010), of which they described it as a subjective topic. This study, thus explores Malaysian nationhood in the post-Mahathir era to test its subjectivity after Mahathir was succeeded by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2003, and later by Najib Razak in 2009. During Mahathir's era, nationhood was closely associated with economics as Mahathir is a politician whose rhetoric was shaped by the discourse of economy and development (Don et al. 2010, p. 271-272).

Hilley (2001, pp. 4) shares similar view and points out Mahathir's approach to capture the public attention, which was through ideas of a shared prosperity. Apart from Don et al. (2010) and Hilley (2001), Fairclough (1989) also highlighted the concept of subjectivity in his work. To him, matters of identity and nationhood/nationalism are not logical or scientific facts as he believed that they are based on self-evident 'common sense' (Fairclough 1989). Therefore, despite Vision 2020 being one of the main sources of information about Malaysian nationhood (Don et al. 2010), the concepts of identity and nationhood in the context of Malaysia are likely to be affected by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's and Najib Razak's personal beliefs. For this study, the theoretical concept of subjectivity is further explored in a later chapter.

## **2.2 Multiculturalism and nationalism**

This section addresses two of the key areas that are highlighted and often associated with the issues regarding Malaysian identity, which are multiculturalism and nationalism. Multiculturalism is addressed first, followed by nationalism. Both terms are presented together in this section because they are interconnected.

### Multiculturalism in Malaysia

According to Ang (2005), the term multiculturalism was introduced by the Canadian Royal Commission in 1965 (Ang cited in Noor and Leong 2013, pp. 714). The term is mainly used to portray Canada's progressive political system in welcoming diversity as immigrants from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and language backgrounds are accepted into the country. Noor and Leong (2013) assert that, apart from Canada, other Western countries have also witnessed large-scale immigration in subsequent years across its borders. In this particular context, the term multiculturalism has been used to manage the unforeseen social and cultural outcomes of this immigration. As for Vasu (2012) and Berry (2013), multiculturalism is a versatile concept. Apart from being a term to describe demographic of a society and to refer to an ideology that acknowledges racial, cultural and religious differences, multiculturalism has also been employed to refer to a government's programmes/policies or a specific theory about the governance of diverse societies. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2011) also state that multiculturalism brings various meanings.

In this study, I use multiculturalism to refer to the Malaysian government's policies, created and implemented to manage Malaysia's diverse society. Noor and Leong have explored this type of multiculturalism by comparing the development of the multicultural models that have evolved in Singapore and Malaysia. They conclude that the state of multiculturalism is defined and shaped by public policies and social attitudes (Noor and Leong 2013, pp. 723). They also point out that cultural plurality in Malaysia is not a matter of choice. Historical past and the legacy of British colonisation have a significant impact on the demographics of Malaysia. In this respect, "demographic multiculturalism" is described by Noor and Leong as a concept that reflects only the apparent feature of the landscape. For this research, I draw upon Noor and Leong's take on the term multiculturalism to further analyse issues with regard to cultural diversity in Malaysia, and their effect on the formation of a united, modern and developed Malaysian society.

Although Noor and Leong highlight the connection between government's policies and the management of diverse society, their work is only based on Malaysian and Singaporean societies' perceptions of multiculturalism. Their understanding of Malaysia's multiculturalism, in particular, is mainly influenced by the idea of sociocultural dissonance among Malaysians. Although this sociocultural dissonance is based on symbolic and realistic threats, its validity is disputable. There is a possibility that tension among Malaysians is partly an illusion, generated by the government. The multiculturalism that I aim to explore is the one signified by the Malaysian government, through its policy/policies.

Ibrahim et al. (2011) are among scholars who contribute to the definition of multiculturalism. They define multiculturalism "as a process that is contextualised to a particular country and it involves active management by the respective government" (Ibrahim et al. 2011, p. 1003). The active management that they refer to is a balancing act, which promotes diversity and at the same time shows efforts to achieve a common ground. This, according to them, is often translated as "the realisation of the national identity" (Ibid). They made use of Nye's interpretation of multiculturalism, of which the term refers to diversity issues in terms of culture and religion, and the social management that deals with the challenges and opportunities of such diversity (Nye 2007, pp. 110). This aspect of multiculturalism is adaptable to my research as it engages with issues regarding negotiation between the Malaysian government and the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia.

Although Ibrahim et al.'s work focuses on the case of higher education, their findings serve a useful purpose. They found out that multiculturalism is never a finished project. The understanding of multiculturalism as a project shows that multiculturalism goes beyond terminology. This research explores the dynamic nature of multiculturalism by examining elements of diversity in the Malaysian modernisation project. As the project aims at the general population of Malaysia, it is beneficial to find out how cultural differences among Malaysians are dealt with in the making of modern Malaysian society. The credibility of the official policies of the Federation of Malaysia, especially the Vision 2020, is put to the test in order to analyse the meaning of multicultural tolerance in relation to Malaysian modernity.

Vision 2020, in particular, highlights aspects of modernisation such as democracy, tolerance, culture and economic development, as well as the multicultural character of Malaysian society and the need to uphold racial harmony, specifically among three largest ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian (Bideau and Kilani 2012, pp. 605). In this sense, Vision 2020 is portrayed as an all-inclusive national plan, which seems to benefit Malaysian multicultural society. Ganesan (2005, pp. 15), however, points out the communal nature of the Malaysian political process, which he claims to be both good and bad for minority communities. On a positive side, the articulation and representation of the minority groups at the cultural and political levels show that their status are assured. However, the Malay-Muslim hegemony, entrenched by the National Front coalition is likely to have negative impact on the minority groups.

According to Ganesan (2005), the hegemony has been further refined since 1970 through structural adjustments to the domestic political and economic process, which means, there is a probability of its continuity and it might become more pervasive in the future. Ganesan demonstrates the relationship between Malaysian experience and Western liberal theories of multiculturalism in his work and argues that Malaysia practices minority rights within the framework of Western liberalism. Taking Ganesan's findings into consideration, it is interesting to examine the inclusivity of the Malaysian modernisation project. The existence of Malay-Muslim hegemony and the division of Malaysian society into two main groups (dominant and minority) are likely to have an effect on the version of modernity that the Malaysian government aims to achieve. The adaptation of Western liberal theories of multiculturalism to the practice of minority rights in Malaysia shows an imbalance in social equality among Malaysians.

As asserted by Ganesan (2005), only the minority groups in Malaysia are affected by the legal and constitutional rights for freedom of practice of cultural and religious identities, which are based on the liberal framework. Although it depicts political toleration towards the minority groups, the exclusion of the dominant group suggests that toleration, in Malaysian context, is a debatable term. This adds complexity to the Malaysian cultural modernisation project because it involves issues with the identity/identities of the Malaysians. While the minority groups are granted freedom to practice any sort of culture and religion, the dominant group, however, is adhered to the predetermined identity. This raises an important question with regard to the practicality of Malaysian modernity: How

do flexible and fixed identities fit into the government's plan to form a new identity of Malaysians?

### Nationalism in Malaysia

Apart from the issues with multiculturalism, the subject of Malaysian identity is also associated with the term nationalism (see Rahim 1998; Case 2000; Shamsul 2000; Williamson 2002; Neo 2006; Sadiq 2009; Barr and Govindasamy 2010; Noh 2014). Shamsul's (2000) work focuses on the relationship between nationalism and modernisation in the context of Malaysia, which is highly relevant to my study. Nationalism that he specifically explored is the cultural nationalism, which according to him, has a strange connection with the term modernisation. He states that cultural nationalism seems to be coined by intellectuals in backward societies, who see scientific industrial culture as a threat. Their difficulties to comprehend and compete with the scientific industrial culture led them to advocate what Shamsul describes as, "a nostalgic return to the imagined pristine past." Shamsul criticises this type of cultural nationalists by pointing out their inconsistent ideologies, in which they promote the acceptance of modern science-based culture articulated in native idioms, despite being against the scientific industrial culture. This self-understanding among the cultural nationalists implies a point of view that conflict is considered positive or essential to social development (Shamsul 2000).

Apart from Shamsul, there are other academic scholars who also link nationalism with other terms. In the field of identity studies, nationalism does not simply refer to the quality of being patriotic or identification with one's own nation. Based on the available literature, nationalism seems to be an ideology that only emphasises loyalty and devotion and is not necessarily restricted to a nation. In the Malaysian context, there are several types of nationalism such as cultural nationalism, religious nationalism, ethnic nationalism, Malay nationalism, and also economic nationalism. The many types of nationalism imply that there is a difference between nationalism and nationhood. Nevertheless, some academic scholars prefer the term nationhood to nationalism (see Ibrahim 1997; Thamuthran 2008; Verkuyten and Khan 2012; Samuel and Khan 2013; Pillai 2015).

Ibrahim (1997), for instance, employs the term nationhood in his work, which focuses on the identity of the *Bumiputera* (indigenous) 'other' in Malaysia. Ironically, his argument is in favour of *Orang Asli's* (*Bumiputera* 'other') identity, which is, arguably, best conceptualised as *Orang Asli* nationalism. In his work, there is no indication to

demonstrate the idea of shared identity, or national identity to be precise. In fact, Ibrahim highlights the expressions of "otherness", which are against a nationhood and a developmentalism. *Orang Asli's* sense of space, identity and indigenesness are seen as important, thus separated from the idea of the sense of national belonging. Ibrahim's work points out conflicts between ethnic identity and national identity, which deserves attention because it illustrates the politics of Malaysian identity.

The multiple types of nationalism in the Malaysian context suggest that 'Malaysian identity' itself is a problematic term. Although Malaysian identity serves as an umbrella term to group Malaysian diverse society together, there is a possibility for certain ethnic identity to have superiority over others. The complex notion of Malaysian identity requires further exploration because I argue that it is the key component of Malaysian modernity. Nation-building is inevitably conditioned by the circumstances of identity, in which it is either fluid or fixed. The fluidity and inflexibility of the identity of Malaysians are fundamental in Malaysian modernity, and are further discussed in my theory chapter. The identity of Malaysians encompasses matters relating to religion (Neo 2014), language (Ting 2014), race (Samuel and Khan 2013) and ethnicity (Verkuyten and Khan 2012). Despite their significant role in the formation of new Malaysian identity, very limited studies have been done to comprehensively address the matters.

In an attempt to offer an up to date translation of Malaysian identity and modernity, issues regarding religion, language, race and ethnicity are explored with the Malaysian diverse society in mind. It is because many works that have been done on and around my research topic tend to be ethnic-specific, which are problematic as they fail to represent Malaysians, in general. I argue that ethnic-oriented knowledge of Malaysian identity and modernity is inadequate to elucidate Malaysian version of cultural modernity. I, however, do acknowledge the superiority of Malay ethnic in Malaysian politics as it is the dominant group and also commonly known as the privileged group. As Haque (2003, pp. 242) points out, Malaysia has an ethnically focused national policies, which tend to favour the ethnic Malay. As a consequence, Malaysia has been labelled as "ethnocratic state", while its political system has been categorised as "ethnic democracy" or "consociational democracy" (Chua 2000 and Yeah 1999 cited in Haque 2003, pp. 242).

Verkuyten and Khan (2012, pp. 132) assert that ethnicity is the main aspect of Malaysian society as it affects almost every dimension of their life. Malaysians are separated by the differences in their ethnicity. It occurs since the British colonisation, that distinguished ethnic groups along labour lines through its 'divide and rule' policy (Ibid). It seems that race has always been part of Malaysian identity, started from the period of British domination to the period of Japanese invasion in Malaysia. Race continues to be the root of the division among Malaysians even after Malaysia became independent in 1957. It came as no surprise that many Malaysian scholars are interested in exploring race-related issues in their works (for examples, see Lee 2004; Kua 2008; Fee and Appudurai 2011; Ambikaipake 2013; Varghese and Ghazali 2014; Gabriel 2015; Lee and Khalid 2015).

Race, in the Malaysian context, is commonly associated with conflicts or disunity, which has an effect on the perception of national consciousness, not only among Malaysian scholars but also among the Malaysian general public. The various versions of nationalism, as stated above, illustrate the difference of opinion among Malaysian scholars with regard to patriotic sentiment. Dissatisfaction among Malaysians, on the other hand, is an apparent phenomenon as a number of national plans and policies have been introduced and implemented to create racial harmony. The New Economic Policy (NEP), which was introduced in 1970, was the first-ever national policy sought to address racial conflicts among Malaysians (Lee 1997). The Malaysian government continues to show effort to promote inclusivity, especially through the Vision 2020 plan. However, the common focus on racial and ethnic differences in studies in this field has resulted in gap in the literature on nationalism and nationhood.

To fill in the gap, the Malaysian modernisation project is explored objectively in this study to investigate the concept of nationalism. The government has made it obvious that the modernity project is not only to transform Malaysia, but also to form a united Malaysian nation. This is based on the nine central strategic challenges faced by the government in order to make Vision 2020 a success. Interestingly, establishing a united Malaysian nation is the first challenge of the vision, which shows its importance in Malaysian modernity. In spite of that, not many work have been done on this particular aspect of Vision 2020 or Malaysian modernity. From the perspective of Vision 2020, united Malaysian nation indicates a sense of common and shared destiny. As described by Mahathir himself, a united Malaysian nation is "a nation at peace with itself, territorially, and ethnically

integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one '*Bangsa Malaysia*' (Malaysian race) with political loyalty and dedication to the nation."

Mahathir's clarification on 'united Malaysian nation' has relevance to the concept of nationalism. To explore nationalism from the Malaysian government's point of view, Mahathir's concept of united Malaysian nation is used as frame of reference to study its consistency, particularly in the post-Mahathir era. Apart from being the indicator of Malaysian nationalism, the idea to create a united nation also entails issues regarding identity formation. As Malaysian society is mainly divided by race, the formation of united nation requires social restructuring. It is an ambitious project to create a single shared identity of diverse Malaysians. Therefore, it is important to explore the objectives of the Malaysian modernisation project because the version of modernity that the government aims to achieve has implications on Malaysia's multicultural image. It is worth exploring how shared identity can be formed within a multicultural society. This is a serious matter because it raises the question of whether cultural diversity is really celebrated in Malaysia and protected by the government?

To sum up, both multiculturalism and nationalism go beyond terminology. Multiculturalism, in particular, is a term that is worthy of attention as it has major influence on the Malaysian government's policies to manage Malaysia's diverse society. A number of scholars believe that multiculturalism is never a finished project. Multiculturalism is listed as one of the key elements of Malaysian identity and modernity because of the government's initiative to transform Malaysian society, in general. Like multiculturalism, nationalism is also an important term that is commonly linked to the subject of Malaysian identity. Interestingly, nationalism, in the context of identity studies, is more than just a term that refers to the quality of being patriotic or identification with one's own nation. Nationalism can also be understood as an ideology, which is explored objectively in this study in order to investigate the Malaysian government's interpretation of nationalism.

### **2.3 Race and ethnicity**

This section focuses on the other two themes that are central to this study. Apart from multiculturalism and nationalism, race and ethnicity are also the key elements of Malaysian identity and modernity. Race and ethnicity have been explored by many scholars, hence the vast numbers of literature on this topic. In many cases, race and ethnicity seem inseparable and incomplete without one another. In this section, race and ethnicity are grouped together not only to discuss their connection, but also to address the distinction between them.

In Malaysia, racial identity has been an important part of Malaysians. According to Gabriel (2015, p. 783), "race is a fundamental organising principle in Malaysian society." Race first appeared in Malaysian politics in the nineteenth century. It is founded on the political economy of British colonial rule and continues to be significant in the post-colonial Malaysia (Gabriel 2015). As stated in the earlier section, race is one of the four key elements of Malaysian identity. The study of identity, therefore, is incomplete without an analysis of the term and its implications.

For this study, particularly, the meaning of race and the basis for its persistence need to be explored in order to fully understand the continuance of the concept of race in post-colonial Malaysia. Based on the available literature, the connection between race and identity is never positive as it involves the issues of racism and discrimination. Lee and Abdul Khalid (2016) specifically investigate racial discrimination in Malaysia in their work and discovered high degrees of racial discrimination in the hiring of fresh graduates in Malaysia's private sector. Although their work is not directly relevant to my study, their findings show the state of ethnic polarisation in Malaysia, which indicates the difficulty of the Malaysian modernisation project. According to Lee and Abdul Khalid (2016), racial discrimination usually apparent in perception and commentary of Malaysia's labour markets.

Interestingly, they found out that the dominant group (ethnic Malay) is not the only group that tends to discriminate against others. There is also discrimination against Malays in the Chinese-controlled and foreign-controlled private sector. It is a mutual claims of bias as racial prejudice towards non-Malays in the Malay-controlled public sector is not the one and only race discrimination case in Malaysia. The issue of racial discrimination is

mentioned here because it shows the fantasy of united Malaysian nation, advocated by Mahathir. It also serves as an explanation for the need to restructure the society in order to realise Malaysian modernity. In this context, the identity of Malaysians is assumed to be flexible and the division among them is considered resolvable. The fluidity and stability of identity is discussed further in my theory chapter.

Going back to the subject of race, its definition is varied. According to Haslanger (2010, pp. 180), there is an ongoing debate over whether race is real or not and whether race is a social or a natural category. Much of the discussion centred around questions concerning the meaning of the term 'race'. Not only that, the distinction between race and ethnicity is also addressed by certain scholars. According to Clair and Denis (2010, pp. 857), for most social scientists, race is different than ethnicity. Cornell and Hartmann (2006) explain the distinction between the two terms in their work by stating that the assumption of a biological basis in the case of race is what makes race different than ethnicity. They assert that race refers to a shared physical characteristics, presumably fixed, whereas ethnicity is defined by perceived shared ancestry, history, and cultural practices. In contrast to race, ethnicity is considered fluid and self-asserted.

Gabriel (2015, pp. 783) shares similar view with Cornell and Hartmann (2006) with regard to the meaning of race. According to her, in the Malaysian context, race is an ascribed identity and cannot be changed. A Malaysian's race is determined at/by birth, on whether he/she a Malay, Chinese, Indian or Other (MCIO). The race of the Malaysians are inscribed on the birth certificate and national identity card (from the age of 12). Despite the range of contemporary Malaysian identities such as class, religion, gender, age, and sexuality, it is their MCIO identity that Malaysians are commonly asked, especially in various administrative forms, for examples, the state census, university applications, medical reports and also police report forms (Gabriel 2015, pp. 783).

Clair and Denis (2010), however, see race, ethnicity and even nationality as socially constructed categories. Their point of view is based on American society, which is made up of many ethnic groups like Italian-Americans and Arab-Americans. These groups, which once considered ethnicities, are now seen as races and vice versa. Brubaker (2009, pp. 26), on the other hand, believes that race, ethnicity and nationalism should not be treated as an undifferentiated domain, just because it is difficult to distinguish sharply between race and ethnicity. This difficulty is also acknowledged by Babacan (2010, pp.

13-14) as she states that identification has become much more complex, therefore, it is hard to explain the relationship between identity, nationalism, race and ethnicity.

Identity issues seem to be the focal point of the arguments on the concepts of race and ethnicity. It is also the reason why race and ethnicity appear as highly confusing terms. The complexity of identity is addressed by Du Gay et al. (2000), in which identity is not seen as a singular form (Du Gay et al. cited in Babacan 2010, pp. 14). According to them, individuals have to juggle several overlapping identities within complex borderlines and survival conditions. To Babacan, the notion of self adds complexity to the study of identity. In this sense, identity is both stable and fluid, or at least used to be fixed but now varied. Vaughan and Hogg (2002) assert that, identities were more fixed when individuals were classified according to their position in the social order, which was based on hierarchy, caste or religion (Vaughan and Hogg cited in Babacan 2010). However, Babacan (2010, pp. 14) argues that identities, nowadays, are more varied as individuals are influenced by social relationships such as their close personal relationships with family and friends. Not only that, the origins of their varied identities can be tracked down from their relationships and roles defined by work, ethnicity, race, culture, gender and nationality.

Based on Vaughan, Hogg and Babacan's point of view, identity is probably best conceptualised as an entity that is adaptable to change. The adaptability of identity is not only determined by social relationships, but also by globalisation. Ascitti (2009) points out the effect of globalisation on identity by stating that, no event and no action, despite its significance, is restricted to its geographical origin. It is due to the far-reaching system of globalisation that encompasses every nation and every part of the world. It seems that identity is always meant to change and this has both good and bad implications on the Malaysian modernisation project. To restructure diverse Malaysian society and mold them into a new category, their identities have to be flexible. This is problematic because there is an element of their identities that is made fixed. According to Gabriel (2015, pp. 783), due to the social, political and economic contexts, as well as institutional arrangements of society, a Malaysian's race as a Malay, Chinese or Indian is considered a fixed category.

This raises the question of whether the fixed category is made flexible in the development of an imagined society in Malaysia. Interestingly, race does not necessarily tied to the biological criteria. As stated by Quayum (1999, pp. 29), race is a "fictive" concept because it is not firmly supported by scientific evidence. Gabriel (2015, pp. 788) gives similar view

by asserting that the concept of a Malay race was built upon non-biological criteria, which was necessary for membership into the Malay community, hence made it an open and inclusive category. This category welcomed any person who was part of "Malay-speaking trading networks, spoke and wrote the language, wore certain clothes and ate certain foods" (Gabriel 2015, p. 788). In this study, the concept of a Malay race is given special attention only because this type of racial identity is known to be rigid, in comparison to racial identities of the other ethnic groups. Also, Ambikaipaker (2013, pp. 345-346) and Mohamad (2008) assert that, through *Ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) discourse, Malay identity is maintained as an autochthonous fact and unquestionable truth. This illustrates favouritism towards the Malay race and Malay identity, which may have an effect on the Malaysian modernisation project.

One of the objectives of my study is to find out whether the modernity project is actually inclusive and beneficial to diverse Malaysian society. The project is questionable due to the existence of Malay supremacy, which according to Ambikaipaker (2013), re-authorises itself as a form of political mobilisation with regard to racial others. Historically and symbolically, it is anti-colonial white rule and contemporaneously in opposition to non-Malays (Ibid). Malay political domination raises issue of non-Malay identities, which are constructed as "interloping presences" with the labels of "foreigners" and "immigrants" (Ambikaipaker 2013, p. 346). This makes the project to modernise and transform Malaysian society seem like a radical initiative and knowledge on this area is crucial in order to comprehend the evolution of Malaysian society. By being objective, this study aims to benefit both dominant and minority ethnic groups in Malaysia. It is also a contribution to the understanding of Malaysian identity. This study addresses the question of what it means to be a Malaysian, rather than Malay, Chinese, Indian, or Other.

To sum up, while there is a connection between race and ethnicity, there is also a distinction between them. Both terms received attention from many scholars showing their significance in cultural studies. Interestingly, the connection between race and identity, in particular, is never positive as it involves the issues of racism and discrimination. The definition of race is also varied. To some scholars, race is a fixed ascribed identity. However, there are also scholars who believe that race, together with ethnicity, are socially constructed categories. Both terms are important in this study in order to examine the inclusivity of the Malaysian modernisation project.

## **2.4 Religion and identity**

This section addresses the fifth theme that is identified to be an important element of Malaysian identity and modernity. From the available literature, religion is identified to be the third element of Malaysian identity. A number of scholars have studied the connection between religion and identity among Malaysians (for example, see Brennan 2001; Furlow 2009; Suaedy 2010; Weiss 2013; Dumanig et al. 2011; Butler et al. 2014; Neo 2014). Religion has been part of Malaysia since the pre-colonialism era and continues to be significant, specifically in Malaysian politics. According to Ahmad et al. (2016), in many international and regional human rights instruments, the freedom to practice any religion is guaranteed and is considered as one of the fundamental rights. This fundamental human rights is applied in Malaysia as freedom of religion is guaranteed under Article 11(1) of the Federal Constitution (Ibid).

Despite its importance, Ahmad et al. (2016) affirm that the term 'religion' has never been officially defined. As stated by them, to some, religion is viewed as a set of "intensely personal" beliefs, hence the acts of worship and demonstrations of those beliefs, which are practiced communally. The topic of religion is explored in this study because it has a tendency to be the determinant of Malaysians' identities. As Amin and Alam (2008, p. 2368) asserted, "different religions specify different life styles and cultures for people." Their work, however, is not directly relevant to my study as they examined the role of religion in Malaysian women's employment decisions. I draw upon their findings to illustrate the influence of religion on one's life as they found out that human behaviour is significantly affected by their choice of religion.

The notion of "freedom of religion" is not free from conflicts. According to Carroll (2009), a number of issues are raised about the level of freedom an individual has to practice any religion. These issues centred around "the struggle for free exercise within state established religions and free exercise for minority religious adherents in nations with state established religions" (Carroll 2009, p. 101). The main issue, however, is to freely practice certain religion without government interference. Augustine (2009, pp. 65) states that, in a democratic situation, the addition of religious sentiments to identity politics creates more issues and conflicts. Although his work focuses on conflict between Hindu and Muslim communities in India, it gives useful insights into the role of religion in society. Based on his work, religion is portrayed as a culprit that causes division in society.

Similarly, Singh (2000) points out that religion is a source of conflict due to it being a source of identity, particularly in the mobilisation of political forces. The case of religious identity in India is not entirely irrelevant to my study because judges in Malaysia do make use of the concept of "essential practices of religion", which was created in India (Shankar 2016). According to Shankar (2016, pp. 942), the Indian judiciary is a source of inspiration for resolving thorny matter in Malaysia, which shows the transnational dimension of religion. Also, Malaysia and India share some similarities: they are both multi-religion countries, used to be colonised by the British, and they have a common law legal system (Shankar 2016, pp. 944).

In the case of Malaysia, literature on religion and identity mostly highlight Islam. Islam appears to be more than just a religion and interestingly, it is an important aspect of Malaysia, which has always been multiracial and multicultural. It is because in spite of such diversity, Islam has been formally declared as the official state religion. Not only that, according to the Article 53 of the Federal Constitution, *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (the King), serves as Head of the State and a symbol of Islam. By law, all citizens are considered equal and they have the right to practise any religion (Suaedy 2010, pp. 3). This, however, seems confusing because according to Article 153 (1), "it shall be responsibility of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the states of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities..." (Suaedy 2010, p. 3-4). It clearly shows that Malay or *Bumiputera* (indigenous) is a favoured category, which contradicts the notion of equality for all races.

Despite this controversial scenario, not many studies have been done to address issues regarding identity and also equality. Perhaps, it is due to the constitutional protection of Malay/*Bumiputera* rights, which also forbids anyone from questioning the special position of Malay/*Bumiputera*. It is hoped that my study contributes to intellectual studies on the identity formation of diverse Malaysian society, specifically in the case of Malaysian modernity. This study addresses the consequences of Malaysia's Islamic monarchy and Malay/*Bumiputera's* special position in the making of united, modern and developed Malaysians. It is a study that explores the element of equality, appears in the objectives of the Malaysian modernisation project and its impact on the Malay-Muslim identity. Unlike race, which arguably, is both fixed and fluid, Malay-Muslim identity in Malaysia is clearly fixed as Islam is the defining criterion of Malayness (Mohamad et al. 2014; Abdul Hamid

and Razali 2015). Although Malaysia exercises freedom of religion, Malays are not allowed to lose their religious identity. It is the only ethnic group that is tied to the religion of Islam.

Blanch (2015, pp. 53) states that there has been considerable debate on the status of Islam in Malaysia, especially after Mahathir, in June 2002, claimed that Malaysia was an Islamic state, to provoke both Islamists and secularists. This suggests that Islam is not just a particular system of faith and worship. Religion, in general, has become part of Malaysian politics way before Mahathir's public announcement of the Islamic state. In Malay society, religion has played an important role since the precolonial era (Means 1969). According to Means, religion, in the traditional Malay political system, signifies unity of the state. Back then, religion was not actually prominent in Malaysian political system as Malays' strong parochial identity with their state was mainly symbolised by their *sultan* (a ruler), rather than by their religion (Means 1969, pp. 268).

Nevertheless, the Malaysian state's long-standing association with religion is clearly worth exploring to identify the effects of religion upon the processes of modernisation. As stated by Means (1969, pp. 282), despite the little emphasis on religious identity in the first mass mobilisation, Islam has clearly been a significant force in the political mobilisation of the Malays. The connection between Islam and modernity is taken forward and explored in-depth in this study. It is because according to Hoffstaedter (2013, pp. 480), Islamic ethics and morality have major influence on Islamic nation's approach to modernity and hegemonic Western-oriented globalisation. Therefore, it is important to address the term 'political Islam' in the context of nation building. Nazih Ayubi (1991) asserts that political Islam is understood as "a kind of protest movement against 'un-Islamic' states" (Nazih Ayubi cited in Mohamad et al. 2014, p. 362). Some scholars refer political Islam to "Islamic fundamentalism" (Mohamad et al. 2014, pp. 362), which according to Esposito (1997, p. 1), "is a global and diverse phenomenon".

According to Mohamad et al. (2014, pp. 362), it is Islam that has a strong influence on postcolonial Muslim countries, not their Western allies. They affirm that, since late 1960s or early 70s, Islam has proven to be the main force in the development of many Muslim societies in terms of social, economics and also politics. The specific topic of political Islam in Malaysia has been explored by a number of scholars (see Chinyong Liow 2004; Ufen 2009; Zook 2010; Hamayotsu 2012; Abdul Hamid and Razali 2015). Hamayotsu

(2012, pp. 353) asserts that nation building is a challenging task for postcolonial Muslim leaders, especially if it is based on Islamic rules, norms and visions. In Malaysia, Islamic sentiment has been utilised in politics since independence (Abdul Hamid and Razali 2015, pp. 306). Initially, it was used to counter the demands of PAS (the opposition party), thus neutralised intra-Malay competition. It was important for UMNO, which was the ruling power, to be portrayed as the sole protector of Islam by the Malay masses. As a Malay-Muslim party, Islamic legitimacy was crucial to ensure the survival of UMNO.

Since UMNO had dominated the country's politics from independence until 2018, Islamic elements in national policies seem inevitable. As stated by Abdul Hamid and Razali (2015, pp. 373), the position of Islam in nation building project has an immense effect on the entire course of national development. Also, Hamayotsu (2012) found out that Islam does not always have positive association with nation building. Based on the Indonesian case, Islam appears unfit to be the foundation of a modern state. In the context of Malaysia, however, there seems to be a compatibility between Islam and the process of modern nation building (Ibid). As Indonesia and Malaysia are neighbouring Muslim-majority countries, these contrasting outcomes challenge conventional thinking on the topic of Islam and nation building. This matter is further explored in this study to identify the effect of Islam on nation building, especially in relation to diverse Malaysian society. I intend to investigate the uneasy relationship between Islam and nation building in a multi-religious/ethnic setting. It is an attempt to find out how Malay-Muslim identity is negotiated in the formation of modern Malaysians and the impact of Islam on Malaysian modernity.

To sum up, religion is more than just a set of personal beliefs. In the context of Malaysia, religion has a tendency to be the determinant of Malaysians' identities. Apart from race, religion is another sensitive subject as the notion of "freedom of religion" is not free from conflicts. Although Malaysia is a multi-religion country, Islam tends to be highlighted in the studies of religion and identity mainly because the religion is declared as the official state religion. The significance of Islam in Malaysia's political system shows the need to address issues regarding identity and equality.

## **Conclusion**

Multiculturalism, nationalism, race, ethnicity and religion are the most relevant themes in the study of Malaysian identity and modernity and this chapter provides several important illustrations of why this is. Although there are many research that have been done about Malaysian modernity, there is not any that offers a comprehensive analysis of Malaysian cultural identity in the context of modernity. The intangible aspect of Malaysian modernity has largely been overlooked as part of the modernisation project. The emphasis on the economic and infrastructure developments of Malaysia in most academic literature shows the knowledge gap in this field, hence the existence of this dissertation. Also, many scholars tend to use Mahathir and his Vision 2020 as the main framework in offering knowledge of Malaysian modernity, which I find problematic and outdated. This chapter proves that Malaysian modernity is rather subjective and an on-going topic of debate. Unlike the tangible development, every important aspect of Malaysian identity is political, defined by the ruling power. Therefore, there is a need for further exploration of the narrative of the Malaysian cultural modernity, especially in the post-Mahathir era.

## **Chapter Three Theory**

This chapter elaborates on theories in relation to the terms modernity, identity and culture, which are fundamental in this study. Malaysian cultural modernity, in particular, is a theoretical project that aims to construct an ideal society. This chapter thus explores the aforementioned terms in order to make sense of the Malaysian government's plan to create a Malaysian version of modernity. It is divided into four sections. Section (3.1) explores the theory of modernity. Section (3.2) addresses the issue of identity flexibility and stability. Section (3.3) expands the discussion on the role of culture in identity formation. Section (3.4) explores the link between personal identity and cultural identity.

### **3.1 Modernity**

This section addresses one of the key terms of this study in respect of theories. In this study, modernity is a term of the utmost importance. For so many years, the term has been associated with the development of Malaysia. Modernity still remains as Malaysia's ambition rather than experience. It is doubtful whether Malaysia is able to realise its dream of becoming a 'modern' state by the year 2020. In the context of Malaysia, the term modern mainly refers to the fully developed status. The status is considered equally applicable to both Malaysia and Malaysians. As stated in the earlier chapters, societal development is not parallel with country development. The image of the country takes priority over the character of the Malaysians. Nevertheless, both developments are the key objectives of the Malaysian modernisation project.

The term modern needs to be highlighted in order to provide a clear understanding of the subject matter. According to Lauzon (2012, pp. 1), in general, modern and modernity refer to something like "new", "now" or "of recent invention". Lauzon claims that the term modern is used by many as a marker of temporal discontinuity and presents a range of different dates as the beginning of something new, which is described either as "our times" or the "modern world" (Ibid). Moreover, his idea of being modern is more than simply to see the present as equal or superior to the past. To be modern also implies that the past should not in any way constrain the present (Lauzon 2012, pp. 3). Similarly, Brinton (1955, pp. 256) states that, modern means "just now" or "current sense", which refers to the state of being strikingly different from the ancient times.

It is worth rethinking modernity because modern does not simply mean 'new', 'now' or 'of recent invention'. There are several versions of modernity although its definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time (Latour 1993, pp. 10). Discourses on modernity almost always involve debates about the role of the West and there are also few different approaches in understanding modernity, such as the concepts of alternative modernities and also multiple modernities. Arguably, the definition of modernity itself can be contested. Yack (1997) and Wittrock (2000) claim that there is a significant distinction between the temporal and the substantive conceptions of 'modernity'. Lauzon, however, asserts that these two conceptions are related by noting that, the substantive conception of modernity derived from the much older European practice of marking temporal discontinuities, in terms of a teleological development towards an idealised and profoundly different future (Lauzon 2012). To Lauzon, modernity does not simply symbolise an epoch. The notion of modernity represents a special kind of epoch with distinct historical features (Lauzon 2012, pp. 2).

According to Giddens (1991), modernity is profound due to two fundamental reasons. The first reason is that modernisation contributes to a decline in traditional social ties and incline in the spread of social relations, across time and space. This is described by Giddens as the "disembedding" process (Giddens 1991). The second reason is that "modernity requires 'institutional reflexivity' or the regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation" (Giddens 1991, p. 242). Giddens believes that our behaviours are no longer defined by our traditions and our ideas and actions are constantly re-evaluated as we receive new information. In the context of Malaysia, information is mainly provided by the government as they intend to reinvent the cultural identity of Malaysian society. In this reinvention process, Asian values are emphasised, which is part of the attempts to 'protect' Malaysian society from 'Western' values. In this sense, it is the government that constantly re-evaluates the idea of new values in order to replace the old ones.

As mentioned earlier, modernity is usually associated with the West. Malaysian modernity, in particular, is partly influenced by the West as Malaysia was inspired by the economic and technological development in Western countries. Furthermore, Latour (1993) asserts that 'modern' was literally invented (historically) by the West. Malaysia is obviously not the first multi-ethnic country to experience a national transformation. According to Spohn (2003, pp. 282), development, modernisation and also decolonisation, in terms of state

formation and nation building have already occurred in many religiously and ethnically diverse world regions. Inglehart (1995, pp. 381) indicates that, around the world, economic modernisation tends to go together with cultural modernisation in coherent syndromes and that the more fundamental differences in worldviews are between pre-industrial and industrial societies, not among industrialised societies.

In Malaysia, it is debatable whether cultural modernisation happens naturally alongside economic modernisation. Since the Malaysian government initiated the modernity project, a number of cultural policies and programmes have been introduced, amended and replaced to transform Malaysian society. Physically and economically, the government has been consistent in improving Malaysia, especially by constantly upgrading existing infrastructure and actively trying to increase economic growth. Culturally, though, the various ideas (conveyed through political discourse) on what modern society should look like show the government's indecisiveness. In this context, economic modernisation, as well as technological modernisation seem like a straightforward projects, in comparison to cultural modernisation. This also raises the question of whether the Western concept of cultural modernisation is applicable to Malaysian society. However, according to Hefner (2011, pp. 2), the West have major influence on Muslim-majority societies. He asserts that these societies are exposed to new techniques of education, administration, social disciplining, new models for private life and amusement brought by Western hegemony. In this sense, Muslim-majority societies seem to operate within the framework of the West.

#### Malaysian modernity and Western modernity

This part of section 3.1 deals with the question of Malaysian version of modernity. It also addresses Malay supremacy and special position of the Malay ethnic. In the case of Malaysia, the existing discourse on Asian values show that Malaysia does not intend to imitate the West completely. The dominant images of Malaysia are nothing like the dominant images of the West. Also, identity, religion, language, race and ethnicity have been politicised since Malaysia's Independence in 1957. These intriguing and complex aspects of Malaysia make the study on Malaysian modernity sufficiently important and beneficial.

Although Hefner (2011) points out the link between the West and Muslim-majority societies, he asserts that Western innovations are not always appreciated as they are rejected by some Muslim leaders. However, many did not (including Malaysia) and there

are debates over which elements of the West can be welcomed and which elements should be forbidden (Hefner 2011, pp. 2). Although the West has monopolising the leading edge of modernity in Southeast Asia (Bunnell 2004, pp. 31), I argue that the aforementioned aspects of Malaysia (especially with regard to Malaysians) distinguish Malaysia from any other nations. Therefore, this study on Malaysian modernity can provide a new understanding of modernity, beyond the West or at least different than the West.

Modernisation, according to Schmidt (2006), requires intellectual revolution, which he claims to be the most important revolution and makes the modern project possible in the first place. He asserts that the intellectual revolution has to be accomplished before the other various revolutions (associated with the rise of modernity in Europe) could take place such as the industrial revolution, the urban revolution, the scientific revolution, the political revolution and the educational revolution (Schmidt 2006, pp. 79). Schmidt's statement is relevant to Malaysian modernity because the government placed great emphasis on the development of knowledge-based economy when they initiated the modernity project. If intellectual revolution is the first step towards modernity, any other transformations that take place after that seem to be the 'follow-up' projects. This suggests that intellectual revolution sets the tone for Malaysian modernity.

If that is the case, Malaysian modernity is actually a problematic project. It is because the development of knowledge-based economy in Malaysia tends to focus on the Malay ethnic group, based on the existence of the idea to create 'New Malay'. According to Furlow (2009), the concept of 'New Malay' exists to create a Malay middle class, as they were economically worst off as an ethnic group. This brings Malaysia's knowledge-based development into question. The continuity of the policy to support and sponsor *Bumiputeras* (especially Malay-*Bumiputeras*) in education and the establishment of many *Bumiputera*-only universities show that the development of Malaysia's knowledge-based economy is more than just an intellectual revolution. It seems that *Bumiputeras* are still considered the needy group. It raises the question of whether this group is also the focus of Malaysian modernity.

De Certeau's (1984) concept of 'strategy' is useful to gain a better understanding of the construction of Malay identity. He asserts that strategy refers to an initiative of the ruling class (elite), which is much in line with a technocratic societal model (Frow 1991), to isolate and consolidate a position of power from which, according to de Certeau (1984, p.

36), “relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats can be managed”. Martin (2014, pp. 404) states that the strategy involves the establishment of formal method to classify what it takes to be a Malay, as an effort to define Malayness. This identity marker is assigned to those who meet the requirements and continued to be protected as one that occupies a special position in multiethnic Malaysia. The continuation and protection of Malay supremacy illustrate the complexity of Malaysian modernity. If the government was to continue protecting the Malay supremacy, then why the need for an inclusive transformation of Malaysian society?

Apart from the issue of Malay supremacy, Malaysian modernity encompasses matters of Asian values and the West. As mentioned earlier, Malaysia is among the nations that did not reject Western innovations, despite the government's intention to create a Malaysian version of modernity, especially through the concept of Asian values. Theoretically, it suggests that Malaysian modernity is not entirely Western-free. Malaysia's acceptance of Western innovations inspired certain scholars to associate Malaysian modernity with Western. The link between modernity and Western is long established as many scholars tend to make use of the ideas of modern world, which according to Bhambra (2011), offer sociological understanding of modernity. He asserts, these ideas are associated with the economic and political revolution located in Europe and also cultural changes brought by the Renaissance, Reformation and Scientific Revolution. It is due to this understanding that Europe is associated with modernity and European development is seen as inspiration in other parts of the world in their process of becoming modern (Ibid).

Key theorists of modernity such as Anthony Giddens (1990), Michel Foucault (1990) and Bruno Latour (1993) have also, in different ways, associated modernity with Western. Stereotypically, modernity has been synonymous with the West, thus developments in the non-West, according to Ong (1996), are usually understood as an act of imitation. This may be true in terms of physical and tangible transformation of Malaysia. However, in the context of cultural transformation, it is debatable whether the non-West actually imitate the West. Within Malaysia, there is an ongoing debate on Asian values versus Western values. Unlike Western innovations, Western-related cultural values are not fully accepted in Malaysia. Malaysian political leaders, especially, have vocalised intentions to make Malaysia resist some of the Western cultural values but strives to be modern like the Western world.

Social theorists like Marx, Weber and Immanuel Wallerstein also tend to only focus on the Western European and North American societies as their starting point and yardstick to make sense of modernity. The Eurocentric historiographical frame has remained constant although the particular histories within it are contested. Having stated that, the experiences of the non-West 'others' and their contribution to the historical-sociological paradigm have not been recognised (Bhambra 2011). However, according to Schmidt (2006), in terms of peculiar setup of economic institutions, the "varieties of modernity" approach leads to a regrouping of countries and it suggests that several Western countries are more similar to an important Asian country or civilisation compare to their Western counterparts. Schmidt also suggests that similar finding might emerge if the analysis is extended to other institutional sectors of society like social policy regimes and political systems of various modern societies.

Social theorists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had pointed out key indicators of modernity, which produce and shape modern societies. These indicators include industrialisation, urbanisation, commodification, secularisation, bureaucratisation, routinisation, the divide between private and public spheres and also the rise of constitutional democracy, mass media, public intellectuals, professional academic expertise and specific techniques of surveillance and discipline (Lauzon 2012, pp. 6). To Lauzon, the aforementioned symbols of modernity could mean that certain societies are considered 'traditional' if they do not demonstrate those symbols. It could also mean that these 'traditional' societies are waiting for modernisation to happen naturally or through the influence of modern societies, which are mainly European and North American (Ibid). Mark (2002), however, questions these Eurocentric symbols of modernity by arguing that Western European and North American are not the only contributors to the ideas of modernity. Mark (2002, p. 155) argues that certain key characteristics of modernity are contributed by other parts of the world, particularly Asia:

However influential Europeans may have been in the making of this modern world, they did not make it themselves, and the West certainly did not 'rise' over other parts of the world because of cultural (or racial) superiority...Those are Eurocentric myths that do not help illuminate the past and obscure understanding the present...In fact, interactions among various parts of the world account for most of the story of the making of the modern world, not the cultural achievements of any one part. Indeed, those achievements are not understandable except in a global

context.

### Various types of modernity

This part of the section explores diverse points of view on the concept of modernity. There exist (in theory) global modernity, multiple modernities and also alternative modernities. Continuing from the previous paragraph, Mark's thoughts on modernity take me to the idea of global modernity, which is best illustrated by Anthony Giddens (2000) as he argues that the historical transition towards modernity has directly result in globalisation. Social actions, under the conditions of modern society, are 'stretched' therefore connect individuals from opposite sides of the world although only in an anonymous manner.

Those individuals, through their experience of globalisation, come to realisation that they all live on the same planet. Although it is a very basic fact that human beings have been living on the same planet Earth all along, however, to Giddens, this basic fact is taught by social life only after we entered the state of modernity. According to Spohn (2003, pp. 266), it is worth referring to the theories of globalisation as they attempt to explain national phenomena as a result of the growing impact of economic global forces, transnational political structures and a global secular culture that structurally transformed the main features (nation-states, national economies, cultures and societies) of the modern age.

Similar to Giddens' view on global modernity, Raymond Lee (2012) also asserts that modernity has always been global. Global modernity appears to be unique because the spatialisation of time pushes towards uniformity which can be experienced in the mass media, electronic networking and unrestricted consumerism. The world, in the context of global modernity, has gone beyond McLuhan's 'global village' to become a global isle, thriving for sameness (Lee 2012, pp. 32). Not only to pose challenges to the Western origins of modernity, the attempt to produce sameness is also creating an impression of a new spatio-temporal order. In this sense, global modernity seems to provide a new impetus to re-localising the meaning of modernity through liberalising attempts to pose alternatives to the teleology of the Western world (Ibid).

As mentioned earlier, if we want to speak of modernity in a global context, the West is not the only contributor in the making of the modern world and that the non-West is also part of the process. However, the European origins of modernity cannot be denied although this is the very specific fact, which is denied when global interconnections are recognised.

Multiple modernities theorists try to avoid the issue of global interconnections by theorising modernity as being created by institutional frameworks operating together with cultural codes. Both Subrahmanyam (1997) and Barkawi (2004) claim that Eurocentrism has to be acknowledged as 'fact' even though they both agree that Eurocentrism is problematic and sometimes distorted the understandings of modernity. While I do not deny the role of the West in defining modernity, I argue that the definition of modern society should not be associated with the West.

I suppose the idea of modern society itself is subjective depending on criteria created by any particular nation. If we assume Western culture as an example of modern society, it does automatically define the other societies as backward or non-modern. Although Western modernisation has influenced Malaysia's developmental process, the concept of modern society in the context of Malaysia is still complex. This is the main reason why I want to study Malaysian modernity, not in terms of physical modernisation but in terms of cultural modernisation, specifically among Malaysian society. If Marx, Weber, Wallerstein and Giddens tend to give attention to the Western European and North American societies as their starting point to explore modernity, I would like to focus on the Malaysian society to make sense of modernity.

The concept of European modernity as a specific type of modernity has opened a comparative-civilisational viewpoint for the varying groups of national identity formation in other civilisations and civilisational modernisation contexts. From this multiple modernity perspective, it is necessary to consider and analyse the specific modernisation dynamics in the non-European civilisations. According to Spohn (2003, p. 275), these include their "imperial heritage and religious cores, the intra-civilizational forms of state formation, nation building and democratization, the different forms of religious transformation and secularization; as well as the impacts on these civilizations through the interactions with European and western modernity in the eras of colonialism and postcolonialism."

As formulated in classical sociology and generalised in mainstream modernisation theory, secular nationalism model reflects the European experience of nation building and nationalism (Spohn 2003, pp. 270). Taking French revolutionary form of a secular nation-state and nationalism for example, which was used as a model by most European nation-states. This French model promoted the formation of a secular national culture, the

privatisation of religion as well as the separation between church and state and because of these, French nation-state formation combined with a secular nationalism and national identity (Ibid). However, Spohn states that Western modernity and its global aura are not always synonymous with the universal model of secular modernity but rather, it is shaped by specific forms of capitalism, democracy, predominantly Christian and also Christian-based secular cultures.

Postcolonial scholarship has been questioning the assumptions of the dominant discourses (Said 1978; Bhabha 1994). Since the end of colonialism as an explicit political formation, there are an increase in post-coloniality understandings and recognition of the role played by colonialism in the formation of modernity. According to Bhambra (2011, pp. 654), these developments are associated with the “cultural turn”, which within sociology and in relation to understand modernity, is manifest in two broad approaches, which are the third wave cultural historical sociology and the multiple modernities paradigm.

Third wave cultural historical sociology refers to historical understanding of modernity by examining the complex and diverse histories that constitute modern transformations (Adams et al. 2005; Bhambra 2011). The multiple modernities paradigm emerges as other histories need to be included and it addresses the grand narrative of modernity (Bhambra 2011, 654). As stated by Bhambra, in order to differentiate multiple modernities from modernisation theory, there are two things need be avoided, which are there is only one modernity and by looking from West to East, as they can only lead to the sense of Eurocentrism.

#### Multiple modernities and alternative modernities

Some scholars have started to use the terms ‘multiple modernities’ and ‘alternative modernities’, attempting to refuse the universality claimed by modernity. Eisenstadt cited in Lauzon (2012, pp.12) acknowledges that:

The notion of ‘multiple modernities’...goes against the view of the ‘classical’ theories of modernisation and of the convergence of industrial societies prevalent in the 1950s, and indeed against the classical sociological analyses of Marx, Durkheim, and (to a large extent) even Weber,...[who] all assumed, even if only implicitly, that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take

over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world.

To understand modernity, it seems more sensible to see it as a plural term. As asserted by Schmidt (2006, pp. 80), literature on multiple modernities, in particular, exist because they are many modern or modernised societies around the world, hence imply that there are also many modernities. To Wittrock (2000), the concept of modernities also applicable to the West as he stated that various modernities not only appear outside the West, but also within it. For instance, French, German, Scandinavian, English and American modernities are all different from one another (Schmidt 2006). The main point that the proponents of 'multiple modernities' try to convey is, there are modernities outside the West, which apparently come with confusing concepts.

In this context, modernity manifests around major human civilisations, which shaped the institutions of society, for example, European/Western civilisation, Japanese civilisation, Indian/Hindu civilisation, Islamic civilisation and so forth (Schmidt 2006, pp. 80). Contrary to the long history of comprehending modernity, Eisenstadt's concept of 'multiple modernities' suggests that contemporary world and modernity history should be understood as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of diverse cultural programmes (Lauzon 2012, pp. 12). Interestingly, scholars who work with the multiple modernities paradigm share similar view, which is modernity is first and foremost a cultural 'programme' (Schmidt 2006, pp. 79).

So what are the differences or maybe similarities between multiple modernities and alternative modernities? Gaonkar (2001), in particular, prefers to use the concept of 'alternative modernities'. He sees modernity as global and multiple with no governing center and master-narratives accompanying it. He also highlights the need to acknowledge the dilemmas of modernity through a transnational and transcultural standpoint, although modernity has traveled from the West to the rest of the world, in terms of cultural forms, social practices, institutional arrangements and also as a form of discourse. While the term 'alternative modernities' developed in anthropology, the very similar 'multiple modernities' is inspired by the work of S.N. Eisenstadt in sociology.

The proponents of 'multiple modernities' and modernisation theories both agree that once the 'project of modernity' (Habermas) had started in the West, other parts of the world will be affected. Karl Marx, in *Capital* (1936, p. 13) famously stated that, "the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future." Karl Marx was among the first social theorists to point out the consequences of the European transformations to the other parts of the world. However, according to Reinhard Bendix (1977, pp. 410), industrialisation that took place in one nation does not necessarily have an effect on other nations, but it does alter their international environment, which causes them to react or adapt to it.

Schmidt (2006 pp. 78), on the other hand, criticises the 'multiple modernities' by stating that the theory does not contribute much to the understanding of modernity or modern society. He asserts that the literature on multiple modernities are not much different from the work of modernisation theorists as they all rely on an implicit notion of modernity. Literature on modernisation theory tends to capture the whole structure of modern society along with every aspect of its dramatic change processes, whereas literature on multiple modernities only focus on cultural factors and their role in framing politics and the political order, which according to Schmidt, "as though modernity was identical with its polity or with the modern state" (Schmidt 2006, p. 78).

Therefore, Schmidt proposed an alternative concept, which he calls the 'varieties of modernity' to accommodate the differences between different modern societies. Schmidt was inspired by the work of Hall, Soskice, Streeck and Yamamura on 'varieties of capitalism'. Schmidt shares a similar view with Wittrock with regard to the European diversity and the relatively late emergence of political democracy in many parts of Western Europe. Schmidt's main point of argument is for the conceptual conclusion to be drawn from the existence of this diversity. Like in the 'multiple modernities' literature, 'varieties of modernity' also highlights differences. Differences highlighted in varieties of modernity are seen as family differences within a common mode of societal, specifically, economic organisation of modern capitalism. Schmidt affirms that, family differences, first and foremost are institutional differences (not cultural) and they cut across civilisational lines (Schmidt 2006, pp. 82).

To sum up, the existing theory of 'modernities' make Malaysian modernity worth exploring. The investigation on Malaysian version of cultural modernity can contribute to the general knowledge of modernity. It is because Malaysia has a unique approach towards civilisation, in which the West is seen as both an inspiration and a hindrance. Western innovations are admired, whereas Western cultural values are disparaged. Despite the ongoing debate on Asian values versus Western values, it is still not clear which part of Western culture that Malaysia is in opposition to. Therefore, by analysing Malaysian cultural modernity, I hope to contribute to the interpretations of modernity within the context of the non-West. Nevertheless, the role of the West in modernity cannot be denied as they have experienced modernity firsthand.

In the context of human development, though, Malaysia seems to create its own idea on what civilised and modern society should look like, which need to be explored to find out whether Malaysian cultural modernity is really Western-free. As stated by Eisenstadt and Schluchter (2000), "non-western varieties of modernity are not simply an adaptation of non-western civilisations to western modernity, but an incorporation of western impacts and influences in non-western civilisational dynamics, programmes of modernity and modernisation processes" (Eisenstadt and Schluchter cited Spohn 2003, pp. 270). Also, the elements of Islam and Malay supremacy in Malaysian politics make the theory of 'modernities' relevant to Malaysia. As Spohn (2003, pp. 281) stated, "the rise of religious and ethnic nationalism is part of the multiple modernisation processes."

### **3.2 Identity**

This second section of the theory chapter addresses the second key term of the study. Apart from modernity, this study also explores the issue of identity. Malaysian identity and modernity is first and foremost a topic about Malaysian society. Notwithstanding the modernity project, the identity of Malaysians has been of great interest to many scholars. The issue of identity emerged especially in relation to race and ethnicity. There exist a discourse on identity flexibility and stability, which I have briefly addressed in the previous chapter. In this section, I further expand the discourse by specifically looking at the theory of identity. For this study, in particular, it is important to explore the concept of 'identity' in order to make sense of the cultural aspect of Malaysia's modernisation project. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is also explored in this section.

According to Hall (1996), identity is never a finished product. He believes that identity is something that continues to progress. He conceptualised identity as an ongoing product of history and culture. To Bauman (2009), identity is a prism, through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined. For instance, the debate on justice and equality centre around the issue of recognition and the debate on culture is conducted in terms of individual, group or categorial difference. Most importantly, the political process is often theorised around identity-related issues such as human rights, identity construction, identity negotiation and identity assertion (Bauman 2009).

Culturally speaking, identity is rather a complex term. According to Gilroy (2004), the term 'identity' has acquired great resonance, both inside and outside the academic world. Just like race and ethnicity, culture complicates identity and has the tendency to place people into categories. Take Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, for example. One of the dimensions is called individualism versus collectivism, in which cultural values are analysed. This dimension has been used and explored by many scholars (see Triandis 1996 cited in Triandis 2001; Tafarodi and Smith 2001; Cai and Fink 2002; Kuo 2013). It is considered as basic instrument to explain differences among people and it has been associated with behaviour, cognition, emotion, motivation and personality of certain groups and individuals (Triandis 2001; Hofstede 2001; Kuo 2013). According to Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002, pp. 232), individuals' self-concept is determined by their individualist or collectivist orientation. To them, the individualism-collectivism dimension is useful to identify individual's cultural traits.

This dimension is explored in this study because it helps to explain people's cultural being and can contribute to the understanding of identity flexibility and stability. Furthermore, the dimension has been explored extensively in contemporary cross-cultural research, which provide explanation for the distinction between Asian culture and Western culture. It is important for me to look into the distinction between these two cultures as they are relevant to my study. As previously mentioned, the Malaysian government places great emphasis on Asian values in the formation of modern Malaysian society. It is an attempt to differentiate future modern Malaysian society from modern Western society, which makes the dimension an appropriate theory for this study. Also, Triandis (2001) asserts that the dimension has greatly contributed to the understanding of culture. Similarly, Greenfield (2000) also points out the significance of the dimension, which he describes as the "deep

structure" of cultural differences (Greenfield cited in Triandis 2001, pp. 907). According to Greenfield (2000), although there are many other cultural differences, the dimension appears to be important, both historically and cross-culturally.

#### Hofstede's dimension and the understanding of personality

Apart from its significance in cultural studies, the dimension also contributes to the understanding of personality, which is relevant to identity studies. Funder (1997, p. 1-2) defines personality as "an individual's characteristic pattern of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanism-hidden or not-behind those patterns" (Funder cited in Triandis 2001, p. 908). To Triandis (2001, pp. 908), personality determines an individual's unique adjustment to the world and it is a combination of cognitions, emotions and habits, which are stimulated and activated by situations. As stated by Kuo (2013), many scholars claim that the individualism-collectivism dimension is useful for exploring personality, especially on how people cope within a cultural context. I find cultural coping theory appropriate for this study because of the existence of non-*Bumiputera* group in Malaysia, which consists mostly of Chinese and Indians.

Historically, they migrated from their respective home countries. As migrants, there was a need for them to cope with the host country, which suggests that there is a flexible aspect of their identity as they are adaptable to change. Kuo (2011) asserts that the dimension can also distinguish coping variations within and between cultures (Kuo cited in Kuo 2013, pp. 376). Based on studies done by Kim et al. (2008) and Sherman et al. (2009), individuals' ability to cope within a cultural context is affected by their culturally prescribed interdependent or independent orientation (Kim et al. and Sherman et al. cited in Kuo 2013, pp. 376). This illustrates the versatility of the individualism-collectivism dimension in both cultural and identity studies. For this study, I explore the individualistic and collectivistic aspects of identity to comprehend the logic behind cultural differences.

According to Triandis (2001, pp. 912), it is upbringing that determines the individualism and collectivism among people. In collectivist cultures, values like conformity, obedience, security and reliability are highlighted (Ibid). In individualist cultures, people place great emphasis on independence, exploration, creativity and self-reliance (Ibid). Furthermore, Balcutis et al. (2008, pp. 1263) found out that people in individualist cultures tend to inaccurately predict their own generosity, whereas people in collectivist cultures accurately predict their own behaviour. They also discovered that the idea of a 'good person' differs

across cultural orientations. In individualist cultures, an individual is considered a good person if he/she expresses favourable attributes and stands out from the crowd. In collectivist cultures, a good person refers to someone who is able to adjust to social setting and change himself/herself in order to fit in with a particular group (Balci et al. 2008, pp. 1264).

They revealed that in the moral or selfless domain, at least, people in cultures that focus on maintaining a unique and positive sense of self are found to be less accurate when predicting their own behaviour than when predicting that of others. In individualist cultures, people are consistently overestimated the possibility that they themselves would act in a generous manner and underestimated their negative behaviors with no such consistent bias shown in predictions made about others. In contrast, in collectivist cultures, in which people are more motivated toward fitting in with normative group behavior are usually accurate in predicting both their own and other's behaviors (Balci et al. 2008, pp. 1265).

#### Individualistic and collectivistic

The abovementioned individualistic and collectivistic aspects of identity raise issue of compatibility between individualist and collectivist cultures. This issue is explored by Triandis et al. (1988) as they tried to find out how individuals from collectivist and individualist cultures can interact more effectively. In order to explore the compatibility between the two cultures, they believed that it is important to first understand the individualists' and collectivists' reaction to a situation where they have to either maintain harmony or to 'tell it as it is'. Triandis et al. assert that the 'correct' response depends on where and with whom the interaction occurs (Triandis et al. cited in Triandis and Singelis 1998, pp. 35-36). According to Triandis and Singelis (1998, pp. 36), Asian collectivists prefer to maintain harmonious relationships, whereas Western individualists prefer to give opinions. The response is scored as 'incorrect' if a person selects the second option, which is to 'tell it as it is' in the scenario with reference to Japan. This shows the validity of the individualism-collectivism dimension, which proves that there is a huge difference between Asian culture and Western culture.

It is worth mentioning because it implies that Asian culture is easily controlled or manipulated compared to the Western culture. As pointed out by Triandis (2001, pp. 909), individualists tend to behave on the basis of their attitudes rather than the norms of their in-

groups. Other scholars (see Carpenter and Radhakrishnan 2000; Dutta-Bergman and Wells 2002; Ellemers et al. 2002; Devos and Banaji 2003) also revealed similar findings as they found out that individualists are autonomous and independent from their in-groups. Also, according to Triandis (1995) and Waterman (1984), individualists are typically happier than collectivists. Their level of happiness is often related to the high level of self-esteem and self-acceptance (Triandis and Waterman cited in Dutta-Bergman and Wells 2002, pp. 238). According to Mills and Clark (1982), in contrast to individualists, collectivists are interdependent within their in-groups like family, tribe and nation. They prioritise their in-groups' goals and behave in a communal way. Their behaviour is shaped by the in-groups norms, hence it is important for them to maintain good relationship with others, even in conflict situation (Mills and Clark cited in Triandis 2001, pp. 909).

Despite the 'usability' of the individualism-collectivism dimension in cultural and identity studies, there are aspects of it that are seen as problematic. Firstly, the dimension tends to stereotype people, especially between Asians and Westerns. More often than not, Asian society is portrayed as inferior compared to the Western society, which is perceived as superior and civilised. Secondly, although many studies focus on the individualism and collectivism dimension to explain cultural differences, Oyserman et al. (2002) claim that cultural differences in individualism and collectivism are not that large and systematic as often perceived and according to Schimmick et al. (2005, pp. 19), the dimension itself is outdated as it is based on data that were collected in 1968 and 1972. Nonetheless, for this study, in particular, the dimension is worth to be mentioned as it illustrates the important role of culture in identity development. This is because apart from upbringing, culture is believed to shape the identity of individuals.

I, however, do not assume that the dimension represents every individual within a certain culture. As stated by Triandis (2001), not everyone in individualist cultures are individualistic and not everyone in collectivist cultures are collectivistic. Carpenter and Radhakrishnan (2000, pp. 263) assert that the individualistic and collectivistic characteristics are not limited to people who are within the individualist culture and collectivist culture, respectively. According to them, it is likely for individuals within a culture to differ from one another. Markus and Kitayama (1991) assert that variation in self-concepts is based on individuals' level of independent or interdependent in relation to others, which is explained by Carpenter and Radhakrishnan (2000, p. 263):

Each individual has an individualistic, independent, distinct, and personal sense of self as well as a self-concept that is interdependent and defined in terms of other persons and group memberships. It is likely that people from collective cultures have more frequently activated interdependent self-concepts, whereas those from individualistic cultures have more salient independent self-concepts.

The variation in self-concepts among people, especially within the same culture is due to a number of external factors. To Hamamura (2012, pp. 4-5), cultural differences in the individualism-collectivism dimension can be affected by factors like ecological, historical or economic. These factors include economic development (Hofstede 1984), prevalence of pathogens (Fincher et al. 2008), residential mobility (Oishi 2010), language use (Y. Kashima and Kashima 2003), and voluntary migration (Kitayama et al. 2006). According to Tafarodi and Smith (2001, pp. 73-74), international activities, international education and migration have made the world seem smaller and as a result, people often exposed to alien cultures. One of his examples is the increasing number of people who choose to further their studies in countries other than their own. This is made possible by the rise of cross-national mobility and the liberalisation of tertiary education, which lead to the cross-cultural contact among culturally diverse people. His example is relevant to this study because the Malaysian government has sponsored many Malaysians, especially *Bumiputeras* to study abroad and this, potentially, has an effect on Malaysians' identity.

#### Identity, internationalisation and globalisation

Apart from Tafarodi and Smith (2001), Gu et al. (2010, pp. 8) also point out the issue of internationalisation. They assert that the technological transformation in the contemporary era of globalisation has resulted in the increase of volume and speed of global flows of people, information, images, investment, policies and knowledge. Unlike globalisation, they state that internationalisation is not a neutral phenomenon or value free because it involves culturally diverse people. Knight and de Wit (1997) and Knight (1999) argue that internationalisation is a cultural melting pot as it includes many histories, traditions and cultures (Knight and de Wit and Knight cited in Gu et al. 2010, pp. 8). This implies that identity is not only affected by upbringing and culture, but also by factors like globalisation, internationalisation and modernisation. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult to define the term 'identity'. As for Hall (1996, pp. 4), he prefers to situate identity within the historically specific developments and practices, which he believes to cause interruption in many populations and cultures, especially with regard to 'settled' character.

Hall asserts that modernity and the processes of forced and 'free' migration are parallel to globalisation because they have become a global phenomenon of post-colonial nations. To him, identities are about “questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (Hall 1996, p.4). In this context, identities are constructed within representation, not outside it and constituted through but not outside differences. Identities can also be constructed through the relation to the other, the relation to what it is not, to what it lacks and to what has been called its constitutive outside (Derrida, Laclau and Butler cited in Hall 1996, pp. 4-5). According to Ashmore et al. (2004), mass immigration and globalisation have not only created multicultural societies, but have also caused uncertainty and obscurity in terms of individuals' collective identity (Ashmore et al. cited in Usborne and Taylor 2010, pp. 884).

In Malaysian context, there are significant differences between ethnic groups although they share similar national identity. Each ethnic group has its own cultural norms and practices, which can be interrupted or affected by mass immigration and globalisation. Depending on their social environment, they might have to negotiate, possibly competing multiple cultural norms and practices. Therefore, mass immigration and globalisation have the tendency to alter the identity of people from collectivist culture as they are adaptable to change, which I have previously mentioned. In the case of Malaysia, Malay identity seems to be at risk because since the development of knowledge-based economy, a large number of Malays benefit by the national policy that aims to create 'New Malay' (Malay middle class). The formation of New Malay required qualified Malays to be in a different cultural setting as many of them were mainly sent to Western countries to gain knowledge so they could contribute to Malaysian modernity. Their adaptation to the host culture may have major impact on their identity.

However, some argue that changes in a collectivistic society like Malaysia depend on the society's motivation because they usually prioritise their in-groups norms. In this context, it seems that only the identity of voluntary migrants is likely to change. As asserted by Kitayama et al. (2006), “voluntary migrants are a self-selected group of highly autonomous, independent, and goal-oriented individuals” (Kitayama et al. cited in Hamamura 2012, pp. 18-19), who tend to surround themselves with people who just like them. As a result, their individualistic attitude and mentality are strengthened. For

example, in the context of cross-temporal changes in individualism-collectivism in Asian country and Western country, Hamamura (2012) found out that obedience is less important in socialisation and a smaller percentage of adults value social contribution in the United States. Interestingly, tradition has become less important in Japan and independence in socialisation is valued more. His findings clearly support the modernisation theory.

#### Identity, culture, demography and social class

To Daab (1991), it is more important to explore identity within a culture, demographic and social class. He asserts that, in Poland, for example, educated people tend to be more individualistic compared to the less educated ones. In a similar context, Noricks et al. (1987) discovered that Americans over age 56 focus on context rather than content in making judgments about the attributes of individuals, which is more familiar in collectivist culture than individualist culture. Triandis (1995) also revealed similar findings. They state that there are individuals who are more or less allocentric or idiocentric within any culture (Triandis cited in Triandis and Singelis 1998, pp. 36). They use the terms 'allocentric' and 'idiocentric' because they specifically explored the personality traits that correspond to the individualism-collectivism dimension at a cultural level.

For example, people in collectivist cultures can sometimes be idiocentric in order to remove themselves from their in-groups, particularly when they feel oppressed. In individualist cultures, some people become allocentric as they voluntarily join certain communities or collectives (Ibid). In the context of self-concept, allocentric refers to people who are collectivist and it is based on their preference for social relationships and interdependence (Miller and Singelis cited in Dutta-Bergman and Wells 2002, pp. 232). Idiocentric refers to people who are individualist and it is based on their preference for personal freedom, expression and independence (Dutta-Bergman and Wells 2002, pp. 232). Dutta-Bergman and Wells (2002) found out that allocentric and idiocentric differ widely even within the same culture. Carpenter and Radhakrishnan (2000, pp. 232) also point out similar point as they assert that it is theoretically possible for self-concepts to vary among people within the same culture.

Up to this point, it seems that identity is not a fixed system as it is adaptable to change. Nevertheless, identity has not always been flexible. According to Kellner (1992, pp. 6), in the olden days, one's identity was fixed, solid and stable. At the time, the purpose of identity was to act as predefined social roles and a traditional system of myths, which

provided orientation and religious sanction for individuals. He asserts that the realm of thought and behaviour were regulated in traditional societies. In pre-modern societies, identity was not an issue because individuals did not experience identity crisis or have the need to radically modify their identity (Ibid). To Gilroy (2004, pp. 98), identity is always bounded and particular. People like to have a sense of belonging as it is a basic human need. Belongingness can be attained through shared identity, which requires individuals to be connected on the most fundamental levels such as national, racial, ethnic, regional and local. This resulted in division among people. Similarly, Judith Butler also points out the connection between identity and belongingness. As for her, identity is linked to culture (Butler cited in Gilroy 2004, p. 68):

It seems that what we expect from the term identity will be cultural specificity, and that on occasion we even expect identity and specificity to work interchangeably. It is crucial in critical reflection upon who we are and what we want. Often ‘personal identity’ refers to our own sense of who we are that is deeply affected by culture.

In this respect, identity seems to be dependent on many external factors. This suggests that an individual's identity is not the only one of its kind as it has similarities with other individuals within certain group. As asserted by Sarup (1996, pp. 30), people are not born with identity, hence they need to identify in order to have one. To him, identity refers to identification. According to Bauman (2009, pp. 3), human nature, which used to be seen as a lasting and not to be revoked legacy of one-off Divine creation, was thrown (together with the rest of Divine creation) into a melting pot and no more was it seen or could be seen as ‘given’.

Instead, it turned into a task, which every man and woman had no choice but to confront and perform to the best of their ability; ‘predestination’ was replaced with ‘life project’, fate with vocation and a ‘human nature’ into which one was born was replaced with ‘identity’, which one needs to saw up and make fit. To Mead, self-consciousness alone is not enough to provide the core of the self as one has to be conscious of something. Identity is produced through interaction with other individuals from the same society (Mead cited in Woodward 2002). Mead places great emphasis on social interaction and intellectual process by stating that the self is part of the communication process (Mead cited in Woodward 2002, p. 173):

The essence of the self, as we have said is cognitive: it lies in the internalized conversation of gesture, which constitute thinking, or in terms of which thought or reflection proceeds. And hence the origin and foundations of the self, like those of thinking, are social.

Based on the above text, there is a connection between identity and imagination. Mead prefers to use the term 'self' rather than 'identity'. Imagination allows an individual to connect to a society. Mead believes that an individual's involvement in a society requires him/her to have multiple identities as there are many different social settings, hence the need for different reactions. His work on the role of the imagination in identity formation offers insights into the complexities of identity. Although Mead's thoughts on identity are mainly related to cognition, his assertion of social interaction is useful to understand the concept of identity. In this respect, there is a solid link between an individual, society and culture. Despite the many external factors that possibly determine an identity, culture appears to be the one that is strongly attached to a person. According to Carpenter and Radhakrishnan (2000), the way people represent themselves to others is influenced and determined by culture.

To sum up, cultural differences between Asian society and Western society have been extensively explored by many scholars. Their findings are useful for this study as they provide a background knowledge of the concept of identity. Apart from demonstrating the complexity of identity, their findings also give validation to the Malaysian modernisation project. In this sense, the formation of a united, modern and developed Malaysian society seems possible. Although many scholars have studied identity in the context of Asian society, their findings are not entirely applicable to Malaysian society. Therefore, my study on Malaysian identity and modernity can also contribute to the knowledge of Asian society, in general. The individualism-collectivism dimension seems to remain relevant as it has sparked many studies on a diverse range of topics such as self-concept, cognition, emotion, subjective well-being and choice making.

### **3.3 Culture and identity**

This section explores the link between culture and identity. The concept of multiculturalism is revisited to offer a theoretical understanding of the importance of culture in developing one's identity. In collectivist culture, mainly, identity correlates with society and ethnicity. Some scholars even claim that there is a lack of originality among collectivists (see Bond and Cheung 1983; Miller 1987; Cousins 1989; Oyserman 1993; Dhawan et al. 1995; Ip and Bond 1995; Lalljee and Angelova 1995; Rhee et al. 1995) cited in (Carpenter and Radhakrishnan 2000). This implies that culture is the first thing that need to be addressed if the identity of the society was to change. In the Malaysian context, the discourse of Asian values versus Western values suggests that culture continues to be 'narrated' by the government. This raises the question of whether Malaysian culture is always superficial or naturally developed.

There is also a possibility that culture is just a narrative, being passed down from generation to generation. This presumption is based on Kluckhohn's (1954) assertion that "culture is to society what memory is to individuals" (Kluckhohn cited in Triandis 2001, p. 908). To Triandis (2001, pp. 908), culture is something that people inherited from their in-group. The transmission of the culture involves selection process, in which only values that have worked in the past and worth transmitting will be passed down to the new generation. In this context, the distinctions between two cultures are language, time and place (Ibid).

Therefore, it seems unrealistic to write about identity outside the cultural spectrum and without referring to the historical process of culture. It seems that identity cannot get away from culture. As stated by Baumeister (2011), culture determines identity. To him, culture is seen as a strategy for humankind to deal with life in general. He asserts that the strategy involves sharing knowledge and information through social group. In this context, culture consists of shared information and systems, which makes language important in social environment. According to Baumeister (2011), through communication, culture can be passed along to new generations and shared understanding can be developed. Apart from Baumeister's (2011) point of view, there are also many theories that inform us that identity is determined, such as socialisation (role theory), ideology (the state apparatuses that Althusser describes), discourse theory (the early Foucault), discipline and the technologies of the self (the later Foucault). These theories have one thing in common, they all highlight the importance of institutions in identity formation.

Institutions like family, school, workplace and the media are perceived to play a determining role in shaping one's identity. In the context of Malaysia, the government seems to play a determining role in shaping Malaysians' identity. This is based on the political discourse on Asian values and also the intention to create a united, modern and developed Malaysian society. The modernisation project is the first platform that showcases the idea to define Malaysian society as a whole. Prior to the project, Malays are the only ethnic group, whose identity is determined by the government. Therefore, through the modernisation project, the government's involvement in identity-making is extended to the other ethnic groups as well. It is an attempt to create a new cultural identity of Malaysians. Usborne and Taylor (2010) assert that a clear cultural identity is important because it serves as a model for an individual to form a sense of self. They claim that cultural identity also helps individual to achieve self-esteem and well-being.

In order to explore the probability of Malaysia's cultural modernisation project, it is beneficial to address the link between the self and society because society is synonymous with culture. According to Billington et al. (1998), one's 'true self' is often overlaid by social relationships. However, to them, society is seen as a threat because it is damaging to one's identity. Society has a negative impact on one's uniqueness and potential. Ironically, people feel most 'at one with ourselves' when they have a role to play and have a recognised place in a society. Also, people usually feel at ease when their sense of identity is confirmed in their relationships with others. Billington et al. (1998, pp. 50-52) assert that roles are subjective and integral to our personalities since they are part of our identities in a way we see ourselves and how others see us.

At the same time, these roles can be objective, outside, part of culture and social structure passed down across generations. For example, in a collectivistic culture whereby the complexity of the task of becoming a socially competent person, someone who fits in, feels at ease with others and relates to them in socially acceptable means, are more visible because there is no unifying 'I' to conceal it. Sarup (1996) also highlights the link between the self and society. According to him, the self is produced through narrative because when you ask someone about their identity, a story soon appears. The narrative encompasses elements like class, nation, race, ethnicity, gender, and religion, which exist within society (Sarup 1996, pp. 46).

The complex interconnection between the self, institution, society and culture shows that identity is not free from external factors, hence can be manipulated. In the case of Malaysian modernity, the government's plan to transform the identity of Malaysians seems to be based on solid theoretical framework. However, to modernise a society is more complex than to modernise a country. Modernising society involves alteration of identity on an individual level. As asserted by Pickering (2001, pp. 80), the cultural aspect of identity cannot simply be discarded. Although culture is a property of people, they do not own it like they own material things. Not only culture influences how people interpret and understand what they encounter, it is also part of who they are. According to Pickering, culture generates identity to the extent that it creates an appearance of similarity among people who more or less share it, who seem to belong to it and feel at home within it. In this study, the flexibility of the cultural identity of Malaysian society is examined to find out how the identity of ethnic groups is affected.

#### Multiple identities and multiculturalism

This part of the section explores the possibility of multiple identities and also the relevance of the concept of multiculturalism. In response to Pickering's take on culture, I doubt whether it is necessary for any individual to discard his/her cultural identity. As stated by some scholars, identity can be plural, thus multiple identities can be negotiated depending on the circumstances. Therefore, the Malaysian government's intention to modernise Malaysian society does not necessarily mean that there is a need for Malaysians to get rid of their identity. The modernity project can also be seen as a project to add a new type of identity to the Malaysian society. Berry (2005) is among scholars who addressed the issue of multiple identities. He asserts that integrated collective identities contributes to greater psychological well-being among people (Berry cited in Usborne and Taylor 2010, pp. 884). Collective identity clarity is defined by Tajfel (1978) as "that part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups), along with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel cited in Usborne and Taylor 2010, p. 884).

The subject of multiple identities is also explored through the concept of multiculturalism (see Adler 1977; Baker 2001; Moore and Barker 2012). As asserted by Baker (2001), multiculturalism also refers to the idea that "an individual can successfully hold two or more cultural identities" (Baker cited in Moore and Barker 2012, p. 555). Adler (1977)

points out that multicultural individual has an identity that is adaptive, temporary and open to change rather than firmly attached to a particular group. Due to these characteristics, it is possible for a multicultural individual to develop several cultural identities (Adler cited in Moore and Barker 2012). Apart from that, a multicultural individual is also believed to be competent in intercultural communication, which is closely related to the concept of cultural intelligence. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) refer multicultural individuals as "the third culture individuals" because their personal and cultural identity are only developed after they experienced multiculturalism. In this sense, their identity is a mixture of their home culture and host culture, which makes them truly multicultural (Pollock and Van Reken cited Moore and Barker 2012, pp. 553-554).

Apart from multiculturalism, some scholars explore multiple identities through the concept of cosmopolitanism. Hannerz's work on 'cosmopolitans' is one of the examples that highlight the distinction between diversity and difference. The term 'cosmopolitan' is described by Billington et al. (1998, p. 207) as "someone who is at home in more than one culture, who is aware of 'culture' as a concept and who can exercise choice over their role vis-à-vis someone who is foreign and therefore seen as different." In this sense, cosmopolitans are not synonymous with tourists because tourists travel with their individual's local culture. In contrast, cosmopolitans do not take their individual's local culture with them. They tend to adopt foreign culture as an attempt to settle into new environment and this is apparent in terms of the way they dress, what they eat and how they decorate their homes (Ibid). As for Hannerz, global transformations can be explained through investigation on the self and society at the local level. This way, the effects of relationships (that take place across international boundaries) on culture will be revealed as relationships are no longer territorially bounded (Hannerz cited in Billington et al. 1998, pp. 208).

Beside Hannerz and Billington et al., Calhoun (1994) also explored the concept of cosmopolitan, with regard to diversity and difference. He asserts that it is very common for people to have an identity crisis. The crisis centres around identity exploration, which involves matters like aspirations, desires and social interactions. According to him, differences among people and tensions within people are inevitable. For examples, in Lebanon and Istanbul, peaceful coexistence of citizens not necessarily due to the fact that they share similar culture or they like each other. The harmony among them exists because they are not expected to participate in many collective projects, in terms of democratic

self-government, universities or neighbourhoods. In this respect, peaceful among them is maintained through separation, which is best described as they mix but they do not combine.

According to Calhoun (1994, pp. 2), collective identity and individual identity are correlated because individual identity was shaped by what Foucault called new disciplines of power. It is also due to the issue of necessary qualification for individual identity to participate in the public discourse, which can shape policy and influence power. To Calhoun, individual identity is an object of personal struggle as it "is a product of self-construction, is open to free choice, and not simply given by birth or divine will" (Calhoun 1994, p. 2). In this context, the *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) domination of Malaysia for more than thirty years was made possible by Malaysians, not from divine right, ancient inheritance or sheer power.

Although *Barisan Nasional* tends to be associated with Malay supremacy, its existence somehow symbolises the common will of the people as it earned its legitimacy from democratic thinking. It is in this sense that collective identity and individual identity are seen as correlated. Based on Foucault's theory of power, identity can only be problematic if there exist grievances against the government, which also implies that there are grievances among the citizens. The long-standing *Barisan Nasional* domination illustrates mutuality of the government and the Malaysian citizens, hence suggests that the cultural modernisation project is favoured by the Malaysians.

### Modern identity

Although the Malaysian government aims to transform Malaysia and Malaysians by the year 2020, modern Malaysians, in particular, are still 'under construction'. The project opened the door to discussion and debate because it is not simply a transformation project, but a modernisation project. Therefore, a study on Malaysian identity is not only useful to offer knowledge of Malaysian society, but also to contribute to the knowledge of modern identity, in general. For so long, modern identity has been associated with Western society, which automatically makes other societies seem old-fashioned and uncivilised. It also does not help that many available literature on modern identity tend to be Western-orientated. In this sense, the term 'modernity' is often mentioned together with the terms 'developed', 'urban' and 'Western'. Agnes Heller is among scholars who explored modernity, particularly modern Western culture, which she describes as "modernity's dynamic"

(Heller cited in Robins 1996, p. 62):

Modernity asserts and reasserts itself through negation. Only if several things are constantly changed, and at least certain things are continuously replaced by others can modernity maintain its identity... Moderns do not acknowledge limit, they transcend it. They challenge the legitimacy of institutions, they criticise and reject them: they question everything.

Apart from Heller, Stuart Hall also points out the link between the terms 'Western' and 'modern'. Hall asserts that 'modern' is synonymous with 'the West', which shows that 'Western' is not a geographically bounded term. Regardless of the geographical map, any society can be part of the West if it is developed, industrialised, urbanised, capitalist, secular, and modern (Hall 1992, pp. 277). In this sense, modernity has the power to have an effect on the meaning of the terms Western and identity. As stated by Kellner (1992, p. 6), in modernity, "identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive and subject to change and innovation." Nonetheless, Hegel asserts that identity in the context of modernity still depends on mutual recognition, which means it is also social and Other-related (Hegel cited in Kellner 1992). Recognition from others and self-validation are still parts of the key elements of identity. Although the boundaries of possible identities and new identities are continually expanding, there are parts of identity that are relatively circumscribed, fixed, limited and bounded by roles and norms (Kellner 1992, pp. 6).

As modernity is often linked to the West, the 'pre-modern' world seems problematic especially because modernity defined itself against the 'pre-modern' (Robins 1996). Therefore, the distinction between modern (the West) and pre-modern (Others) might remain constant and the world continues to be divided between the enlightened and the benighted (Heller cited in Robins 1996, pp. 62). In this case, it is more important to address the term 'civilisation', which is often left-out although it is one of the determinants of modern society. In cultural context, civilisation is an abstract concept. As asserted by Friedman (1994), civilised culture is based on formality and abstractness. It means that it does not necessarily refer to the West. Friedman (1994, p. 81) conceptualised civilised identity as "a structure of behavior, manners, rules and ideas defining the properties of a center as opposed to a periphery, temporal and/or spatial, exhibiting a more 'primordial' character." Perhaps, through an investigation of Malaysian modernity, the definition of

modern Malaysians in the context of civilisation can be revealed, thus challenge the Western-orientated knowledge of modernity.

### **3.4 Personal identity and cultural identity**

In this section, the theory of identity in relation to culture is further unpacked. Thus far, it is still arguable whether identity is fixed or flexible. Nevertheless, identity is constantly linked to culture, which suggests the importance of personal identity and cultural identity. These two types of identity are further explored in this particular section because they are both interconnected, as claimed by Schwartz et al. (2008). They also assert that globalisation is one of the reasons why there is a need to study the conceptions of personal identity and cultural identity together. I often wonder whether personal identity really exists or maybe there is no such thing as personal identity and what left is just a cultural identity that I share with my fellow Malaysians. This raises the question of whether I should see myself as Malay or Malaysian. The modernisation project seems to address the issue by attempting to create a single identity for the Malaysian society. However, the context of one's life experience, shaped by culture based on ethnicity, race, language, religion and etc. cannot be simply dismissed or avoided.

As stated by Baumeister (2011), selfhood is essential in one's life because it is the key requirement for an individual to function in social system. In order to have selfhood, an individual has to rely upon social and cultural system. While Baumeister (2011) prefers the term selfhood, Rosenberg (1979) uses the term self-concept. Selfhood or self-concept, identity is one of the key components of it (Owens et al. 2010, pp. 479). There are four key sources of identity characterisations: personal/individual identity, role-based identity, category-based identity and group membership-based identity (Ibid). According to Owens et al. (2010), personal identity is the most elementary type of identity, which is often described as the social classification of an individual into a category of one. Interestingly, they assert that personal identity is social and institutional in origin. Similarly, Loseke (2007) describes identity as cultural, institutional, organisational and personal narratives. Like Sarup (1996) and Baumeister (2011), Loseke (2007) also places great emphasis on narrative because she believes that identity is constructed through narrative and people are essentially a story-telling beings.

The role of narrative in identity strengthens the connection between personal identity and cultural identity, which makes it harder for people to deny belonging to their in-groups. Therefore, they often resist being viewed as part of their in-group completely (Ellemers et al. 2002, pp. 171). To express their personal uniqueness, they tend to create a richer picture of themselves by focusing on additional identities. According to Ellemers et al. (2002), ethnic minority may emphasise their identity as members of the main population in order to avoid being categorised as minority group. Based on the available literature, the topic of personal identity is also discussed within the context of Western and Others.

Some scholars argue that personal identity only exists in Western culture because a coherent sense of self is the characteristic of Western society. It is based on the idea that "personal identity represents one's set of goals, values and beliefs", which is pointed out by Schwartz et al. (2008, p. 635). According to Van Hoof and Raaijmakers (2002), the internal consistency of goals, values and beliefs forms a coherent sense of self. As stated by Cross et al. (2003) and Suh (2002), the coherence tends to be relevant to Western culture, in which one is expected to be the 'same person' at work, at home and with friends (Cross et al. and Suh cited in Schwartz et al. 2008). In Western culture, one's self can be distinguished from others, whereas in Asian culture, one's self is interdependent (Devos and Banaji 2003).

The topic of personal identity and cultural identity is often explored through the individualism and collectivism dimension. Therefore, it is mainly understood within the context of cultural differences between the West and the Others. In this respect, personal identity seems to only exist in the West because individualism tends to be a symbol of Western society (Baumeister 2011). According to Triandis et al. (1990), the individualism and collectivism dimension appears relevant because it explains how the self is defined and evaluated differently by people, which is due to many factors like ethnicity and cultural background (Triandis et al. cited in Devos and Banaji 2003, pp. 199). The dimension is considered important as it is one of the concepts that belong to the cultural identity theory. According to Schwartz et al. (2008), apart from the individualism and collectivism dimension, cultural identity theory involves concepts like acculturation orientations (Berry 1997), ethnic identity (Phinney 2003), independence and interdependence (Markus and Kitayama 1991), familism (Sabogal et al. 1987), filial piety (Yeh and Bedford 2003), and communalism (Boykin et al. 1997).

Meanwhile, personal identity theory involves concepts like identity exploration and commitment (Marcia 1966), identity consistency (Dunkel 2005) and identity capital (Cote 1996). Schwartz et al. (2008) assert that cultural identity theory highlights cultural values and practices, whereas personal identity theory focuses on the definition of the self. Schwartz et al. (2008, p. 636) describe personal identity as “an individual’s goals, values, and beliefs in areas such as political preference, religious ideology, occupational choice, family and friend relationship styles and gender role ideologies.” Based on the aforementioned distinction between personal identity and cultural identity, both of them include the importance of values. In order to understand 'identity', it is important to explore personal identity together with cultural identity. While personal identity theory addresses the question of 'who am I?', cultural identity theory addresses the question of 'who am I as a member of my group and in relation to other groups?', which make them equally significant.

To Reid and Deaux (1996), cultural identity is the bigger picture of personal identity. Similarly, Dien (2000) asserts that cultural identity is both personal and public. Matsumoto (2003) defines cultural identity as a concept that is multilevel: individual-level and group-level. In terms of personal identity, Schwartz (2001) finds it important to conceptualise ethnicity and culture as a domain of personal identity development, either for main population or the minority (Schwartz cited in Schwartz et al. 2008, pp. 636-637). Instead of addressing the question of whether personal identity is more important than cultural identity, Ellemers et al. (2002) prefer to focus on the issue of superiority. They explored Turner's (1987) theory of self-categorisation and Tajfel's (1978) theory of social identity in order to find out whether collective self is more superior than the individual self or vice versa. The social identity theory highlights the link between the self and social context. In this sense, social identity is seen as a perceiver factor that connects different aspects of the self/social selves.

### The 'self'

Personal's meaningfulness and social identities can either be enhanced or diminished by the social context (Ellemers et al. 2002, pp. 163). To Grant and Hogg (2012), social identity is an important source of belonging. They assert that personal identity leads to uncertainty as people often struggle to fit in with other people. By referring to Hogg's (2012) uncertainty-identity theory, they state that a clearly defined group identification through self-categorisation is a solution for an individual to overcome uncertainty.

Unlike Tajfel (1978), Grant and Hogg (2012), Baumeister (2011) prefers to pay attention to 'the self'. He asserts that the understanding of the self is of paramount importance in order to comprehend identity and other identity-related concepts. He describes the self as "what one means when one speaks (as most people frequently do) of 'myself' and 'yourself' and the like" (Baumeister 2011, p. 48). He offers three conceptual or experiential roots to explain the self, which he claims to be useful for understanding selfhood.

First, self is a knowledge structure. Through self-awareness, a wide range of information is constructed. Based on empirical evidence, people's knowledge of themselves consists a loosely associated beliefs. It is also debatable whether the concept of self-knowledge is true to its name as some scholars argue that knowledge symbolises correctness or truth. The elements of false claims and distortion in relation to the concept of self-knowledge seem to be the opposite of truth. Second, self is an interpersonal being. Through interpersonal relations, self emerges, which is adaptable to change and can be modified depending on the interpersonal situation. This illustrates the strong bond between the self and others, which also means that self-knowledge cannot be considered as an independent concept because it can leads to the impression that selfhood emerges in isolation.

Third, self is an agent with an executive function. This concept implies that an individual is not simply a being but also a doer who makes choices, take action and in control of his/her own responses and inner processes. Basically, to Baumeister, continuity and differentiation are the basic criterias for selfhood. Differentiation refers to a situation in which an individual is expected to consistently remain the same but different from others. Despite any changes in later life that could potentially transform an individual, he claims that unity of self will remain constant. Continuity, enforced by the social systems, remains important. In social life, an individual is required to be a single and unified self, which means that the individual is entirely responsible for his/her action (Baumeister 2011, pp. 48).

The topic of personal identity and cultural identity is discussed in length because it illustrates the condition of Malaysia's cultural modernisation project. As stated by Friedman (1994), cultural identity formation and maintenance depend on the circumstances of personal identity. According to him, there are an internal and external aspects of personal identity. He believes that certain types of identity are marked on or carried by the body, which are defined as internal to the person. Others are external to the person and

marked in the forms of social practice or symbols employed by a population. However, in terms of external symbols, there is a degree of overlap. Therefore, there are also an internal and external aspects of cultural identity. For instance, cultural identity can also mean ethnicity, which refers to the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population. In this sense, an individual and culture are bonded by blood, which makes cultural identity something that is inherited and ascribed, not practiced or achieved (Friedman 1994, pp. 29-30).

### Identity and race

According to Friedman (1994), there are two ways to define cultural identity. In the strongest sense, cultural identity is expressed through race or biological background. In a weaker sense, it is expressed as heritage or as cultural descent, which is the most common notion of ethnicity in the Western world. Interestingly, the Western notion of ethnicity centres around lifestyle or way of life, in which its basis in tradition is questionable. As cultural identity seems synonymous with ethnicity, some might argue that it is a fixed identity. However, according to Friedman (1994, pp. 29-30), ethnicity is not necessarily fixed. In the context of traditional ethnicity, in particular, ethnic affiliation can easily be altered and complemented by geographic mobility because it is based on membership, defined by certain activities and practices. In this sense, social group is more like a congregation rather than a biological unit.

Similarly, Ferdman and Horenczyk (2000) also point out the changeability of ethnicity, which is based on social psychological and contextual factors. To them, ethnicity is the images of behaviours, beliefs, values, and norms, which are constructed by individuals to characterise their groups, thus can be amended (Ferdman and Horenczyk cited in Phinney et al. 2001, pp. 496-497). It seems that the issue of identity flexibility and stability will remain debatable. In other words, identity appears to be an abstract concept. Friedman's notion of ethnicity flexibility implies that almost every aspect of identity can be theorised. Mennell (1994) and Calhoun (1991) also raise similar issue in their work. According to Calhoun (1991), identity formation in sociology is a complicated subject because it is a typical example of "the entirely abstract macro-micro divide." Like Calhoun (1991), Mennell (1994, pp. 175) asserts that the divide is entirely abstract.

It is apparent that the theory of identity is subject to debate because it embodies two sets of beliefs (Mennell 1994). First, there is a common idea that one's identity is constructed through a series of sequential stages. In this sense, identity appears as a universal human property that have to go through social process. Mennell (1994) asserts that one's identity continues to develop as he/she experiences various stages of development throughout the lifetime. Second, there are different understandings of the role of society in identity formation. The concept of collective identity is still questionable because there exist many ideas on how various categories of people such as communities, classes, elites, ethnicities and genders can determine or contribute to one's feeling of belonging to a group. Despite the various understandings, identity theorists do agree that people have never been solitary beings. Both self-images and we-images have always been constructed within groups of interdependent people.

To sum up, the topic of personal identity and cultural identity seems to be explored using many concepts like the self, self-knowledge, selfhood, individual self, collective self, self-images, and we-images, among others. Nonetheless, they are all social-related, which more often than not, involve culture. The existence of the self is determined by culture. The claim that personal identity only exists in the Western world illustrates the role of culture in identity formation. Like race and ethnicity, culture seems to be the cause of division among people, which implies that the individualism and collectivism, for example, are the extension of the debate on 'the West' and 'the rest'. Like modernisation, the theory of individualism illustrates the uniqueness of the West compared to the rest.

In terms of culture, Western society is portrayed to be the only one of its kind that seems to reject even the basic human need: a sense of belonging. Among many scholars, Ellemers et al. (2002), Devos and Banaji (2003) claim that Western society symbolises individualism, which mainly refers to a society that is self-motivated, has strong self-reliance and strong sense of personal identity. Indirectly, the characteristics of individualism and collectivism place Malaysian society under the category of collectivism. Therefore, theoretically, Malaysians can be defined as members of groups, who give priority to group goals rather than theirs and have a weak sense of personal identity. These characteristics illustrate the identity flexibility of Malaysian society, which seems to be the theoretical underpinning for the modernisation project.

## **Conclusion**

As a theoretical national project, Malaysian cultural modernity inevitably involves an abstract concept of modern Malaysians. In this context, the theories of modernity and identity are two highly useful system of ideas to explain the viability of the project. As main key terms of this study, modernity and identity need also to be explored from different angle, leading to more nuanced and complex understandings of my research topic. While the literature review chapter considers the previous work that have been done around my study, this theory chapter focuses on available literature on the theories of modernity and identity. It became apparent that knowledge of modernity and identity have been dominated by Western understanding of the terms.

Modern and modernity generally refer to something like new, now or of recent invention, which often highlight Western influence on modern world as well as modern society. As a result, there is a gap in the current knowledge of cultural modernity. Malaysia's unique approach towards civilisation makes this study particularly interesting for challenging the common notion of modernity and also for clarifying what it means to be modern and developed society in Muslim majority state. This chapter also shows that both modernity and identity are flexible concepts and can be contested. The existence of a rich literature on global modernity, multiple modernities, alternative modernities, individualism versus collectivism, personal identity and cultural identity all signify the importance of an on-going exploration of this research topic, especially in the context of the non-West.

## **Chapter Four Methodology**

This chapter presents the research design and the specific procedures used in conducting this study. Here, I clarify my research questions, the rationale of my choice of methodology, research samples, data collection and data analysis. This study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse the textual content of two mainstream newspapers in Malaysia, which are *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*. A Malay language and an English language newspapers are purposely chosen as they are the best options for me to address and answer the research questions. There are several forms of discourse analysis and the one that I prefer to use for this study is the linguist Norman Fairclough's version of CDA. Fairclough believes that the social world is constructed through texts and discourse, which I find relevant to the objectives of my study.

This chapter consists of six sections. Section (4.1) elaborates the three research questions this study aims to address. Section (4.2) clarifies the version of CDA used in this study. Section (4.3) explains the theoretical rationale behind my chosen research method. Section (4.4) provides details of the chosen newspapers. Section (4.5) summarises the analysis strategy. Section (4.6) clarifies the need for analysing news articles within the period from 2003 to 2018.

### **4.1 The research questions**

This study argues that the Malaysian government's plan to modernise Malaysian society is an ongoing project and not limited to Mahathir's era of modernisation. Unlike economic modernisation, cultural modernisation is based upon subjective visions of modernity. As an ongoing project, the formation of modern Malaysian society is likely to be influenced by Mahathir's successors. Therefore, in order to explore the subjectivity of Malaysian cultural modernity, there is a need for more comprehensive study of the discourse of cultural modernity. Unfortunately, Malaysian modernity is often explored within Mahathir's era, thus knowledge of this particular topic tends to be Mahathir-orientated.

Furthermore, most of the studies on Malaysian modernity focus on the tangible development. This study aims to fill in the gap by specifically exploring cultural modernity in the post-Mahathir era. Newspapers articles are analysed mainly because texts are part of

social events that are capable to influence changes in people, actions, social relations and the material world, as indicated by Fairclough. The term 'text' comes in a broad sense that includes written and printed texts, transcripts of conversations and interviews, TV programs and also webpages (Fairclough 2003, pp. 5-9). This study focuses on three research questions, which are:

- 1) How relevant is Mahathir's Vision 2020 in the post-Mahathir era?
- 2) What version of modernity does the Malaysian government intends to achieve?
- 3) Which aspect of Malaysian culture that requires transformation?

The first research question aims to examine the continuity of the original plan (known as Vision 2020) to modernise Malaysia and Malaysians, which was introduced by Mahathir in 1991. Since he left the office in 2003, Malaysia was governed by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi from 2003 to 2009 and Najib Razak from 2009 to 2018. Therefore, this is an important question to find out whether there are any changes to the original objectives of the modernisation project.

The second research question aims to address the issue of Malaysian modernity. The existence of the discourse on Asian versus Western implies that Malaysian modernity is not entirely inspired by Western modernity. The Malaysian government seems to create a Malaysian version of modernity to distinguish modern Malaysian society from other modern societies. Thus, it is interesting to find out the type of modernity that is intended for the general public in Malaysia. Malaysian cultural modernity in particular does not only involves debate on 'the West', but also Islam, Malay supremacy, cultural diversity and ethnic diversity. Therefore, the modernisation project is definitely not free from conflict. By answering this question, this study can offer clarification on the topic of cultural modernity in the context of post-colonial Malaysia.

The third research question aims to explore the viability of the cultural transformation of Malaysian society. As a multi-ethnic nation, Malaysians are culturally diverse society, thus raises the issue of Malaysian culture. This question attempts to address this issue in order to find out what and which cultural norms require transformation. It also aims to clarify cultural norms that are believed to symbolise various ethnic groups in Malaysia.

## **4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis**

This study uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity. The idea to create modern Malaysians in particular is coined by Malaysian political leader and is being implemented by the Malaysian government, thus best conceptualised as a political ideology to create an ideal society. As a political ideology, Malaysian cultural modernity can only be understood through the government's vision for a new, modern society. Therefore, the government's discourse on cultural modernity is an important source of information for answering the research questions.

Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, culture continues to be 'narrated' by the government as it is the first thing that need to be addressed if the identity of the society was to change. By doing CDA, the issue of cultural modernity can be clarified in detail in order to offer a new understanding of Malaysian modernity beyond the era of Mahathir. There are few different ways to approach the study of Malaysian identity and modernity such as through content analysis, focus group interview with the public and in-depth interview with Malaysian political figures, to name a few. CDA is chosen because of the main assumption that mainstream media in Malaysia is manipulated to serve powerful elites.

To explore their hidden ideologies, two mainstream newspapers are chosen as samples because their news articles are accessible through Nexis database, which makes it possible for me to analyse texts published from the year 2003 to 2018. I also choose CDA because this is a qualitative study to interpret the concept of modern Malaysians, not from the public perspective but through the lens of those with the power to shape public's opinion. This study does not employ an in-depth interview with Malaysian political figures because of the logistic issue and it is not possible for me to approach all three prime ministers of Malaysia. Also, I do not employ more than one method in this study because of the large number of data I obtained from *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*, which I believe is sufficient to answer my research questions.

Referring back to my chosen method of analysis, discourse, according to Jorgensen and Phillips (2013, pp, 9), refers to a system to understand the world or a part of the world (Jorgensen and Phillips cited in Bakke 2017, pp. 24). Fairclough (2003, p. 124) defines discourse as "ways of representing aspects of the world: the processes, relations and

structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world." Therefore, discourse analysis is best understood as an approach to make sense of the world. Discourse analysis is also considered a way to approach and think about a problem to make the world meaningful (Mogashoa 2014). As stated by Mogashoa (2014), from reading and analysing, interpretation arises, thus give meaning to a particular text. Fulcher (2010) asserts that the qualitative method of discourse analysis is largely adopted and developed by constructionists.

For this study, I choose to draw on method from CDA. Instead of focusing exclusively on the specific grammatical and linguistic use of language, I use CDA as an analytic method to study the social processes that (re)produce and reflect knowledge and power relations through discourses (Fairclough 2003). In general, CDA is a practical method for this kind of study because it allows researcher to adopt any of various text analytic approaches (Fairclough 2003). Furthermore, according to Breeze (2012, pp. 495-496), CDA is the methodological approach that takes the social effects of language seriously, which makes it the most suitable method to investigate the impact of language on society. The key point that distinguishes CDA from the other linguistic approaches is its emphasis on power and its assumption that there is connection between social relations (reflected in language phenomena) and unequal power relations (Breeze 2011, pp. 496).

CDA was developed in the late 1980s and since then, it has been part of linguistic and social science studies (Reisigl 2013). According to Reisigl (2013, pp. 1), there are at least six types of CDA: social semiotic and systemic functional approach (van Leeuwen and Kress), socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk), a combination of Foucault's approach to discourse analysis and Link's discourse theory (promoted by the Duisburg Group around S. and M. Jager), the Oldenburg approach (promoted by Gloy and Januschek), discourse-historical approach/discourse sociolinguistics (elaborated by Wodak), and Fairclough's approach, which is the version of CDA that I believe is applicable to this study.

Fairclough's version of CDA is a preferred method because of his assertion that language is a material form of ideology and language is invested by ideology (Fairclough 1995). Generally, CDA is useful for exploring how specific topics are discussed (or not discussed) within specific social structures and practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). According to Mogashoa (2014), it is necessary to use CDA in describing, interpreting,

analysing, and critiquing social life reflected in text. Similarly, Van Dijk (2006, pp. 252) asserts that CDA is an appropriate approach to explore complex relationships between text, talk, social opinion, power, society and culture. To Locke (2004), it is important to analyse discourse not only because it is a coherent way of making sense of the world as reflected in human sign systems, but it is also a concept that is in an active relation to reality. In the context of my study, CDA is the best tool for me to deal with language as I choose to analyse newspapers articles. Locke (2004) highlights the importance of language as he asserts that “language signifies reality in the sense that discourse is in a passive relation to reality, with language merely referring to objects which are taken to be given in reality” (Locke cited in Mogashoa 2014, p. 107).

As a system of communication, language appears to be the key element of discourse. Therefore, certain ideology can be interpreted through discourse analysis. Furthermore, discourse is more than a practice of representing the world. According to Locke (2004, pp. 5), discourse is also a practice of signifying the world. He asserts that the meaningful elements in the world are constructed through discourse. To McGregor (2010, pp. 2), discourse signifies personality because people use words to express themselves. The usefulness of discourse is also acknowledged by Foucault, which left an impact on CDA. According to Foucault, discourse plays a significant role in social relations, power relations and social constructions (Foucault cited in Breeze 2011, pp. 497).

For this study, it is of the utmost importance to analyse discourse in order to comprehend social constructions in particular. Discourse analysis is best described as “a method that rests on certain ontological and epistemological assumptions such as social constructivism (the world is constructed and given meaning through language), a critical view on knowledge (created through discourse), historic and cultural specificity, connections between knowledge, social processes and social action (knowledge is created through interactions and limits what people can and can not do/say), and a theoretical and methodical base” (Jorgensen and Phillips cited in Bakke 2017, p. 22).

As this study uses Fairclough's version of CDA, I have to mention Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) because it is Fairclough's main point of reference within literature on text analysis and linguistic. SFL methodology is commonly associated with the British linguist, Michael Halliday. According to Fairclough (2003, pp. 5), SFL is a method to

conduct linguistic analysis of texts, which often focuses on the social character of texts as well as the link between language and other elements/aspects of life. Fairclough uses SFL as his main tool for text analysis, which he describes as "a valuable resource for critical discourse analysis" (Fairclough 2003, p. 5). However, he seems to avoid using the technical terminology of linguistics such as 'field', 'tenor', 'mode', and 'lexico-grammar', which are terms characteristic of SFL. Despite that, terms like 'interdiscursivity', 'order of discourse', 'hybridization', 'dialectics', 'hegemony' and 'intertextuality' appear in his work.

Although this study employs Fairclough's version of CDA, I do not intend to use SFL to analyse my textual data as it is not my objective to produce a linguistic study of Malaysian identity and modernity. I choose Fairclough's version of CDA simply because it incorporates concepts such as power, ideology, social practice and common sense, which are deemed appropriate for this study. Instead of focusing on the grammatical constructions of text or describing the language of text, I aim to look at the 'content' of the chosen texts in order to investigate the concept of modern Malaysians and perhaps to uncover hidden ideologies, which align with Fairclough's aim of CDA.

Although I intend to focus on ideology and power in the context of text, Fairclough's three-dimensional model (text, discursive practice and socio-cultural practice) is applicable to this study. The three dimensions of discourse are interrelated as Fairclough (1992, p. 9) states that "the link between socio-cultural practice and text is mediated by discursive practice." According to him, there are three stages of discourse analysis: description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis) and explanation (social analysis). "Description is connected with the linguistic part of analysis while interpretation and explanation are connected with the ideological part of the analysis" (Al-Radhi et al. 2016, p. 143). All three stages constitute his three-dimensional model. Just like the three-dimensional model, the three stages of discourse analysis are also interconnected. The model and stages are crucial aspects of CDA and therefore relevant to my data analysis, which are reflected in the findings chapter.

Apart from Fairclough's approach of CDA, there are other analytical toolkits that are useful in analysing text. For instance, Wodak's historical-discoursal approach (Wodak 2009), Van Dijk's ideological square (Van Dijk 1998) and Van Dijk's semantic macrostructures (Van

Dijk 1988). All of these approaches highlight the importance of both linguistic and ideological parts of analysis. Linguistic analysis involves two levels of analysis, which are known as micro-structures and macro-structures. Micro-structures aims at three key features of discourse: syntactic, lexical and rhetorical, while macro-structures is associated with a micropropositions. As I mentioned earlier, this study aims to focus on the general content of the chosen news articles from Berita Harian and New Straits Times. In other words, this study is mainly about Malaysian identity and modernity, not CDA.

CDA is only used in this study as a methodological tool to allow me to answer my research questions. However, I do not deny the importance of my chosen method of analysis as this study deals with textual materials. Therefore, it is impractical for me to neglect the linguistic part of discourse completely as it is apparent in my findings and discussion chapter. However, I need to stress that this study focuses on the ideological part of discourse by giving special attention to the interpretation and explanation processes of data analysis. In this context, Fairclough's three-dimension approach of CDA is used merely as a framework and guideline for analysing my chosen textual data.

#### **4.3 The theoretical framework**

The theoretical rationale behind my chosen research method is agenda-setting, which is one of the three theories within media effects. Not only it is one of the most powerful concepts in mass media and communication research, agenda setting is also a fertile concept (Bryant and Miron 2004). Brosius and Kepplinger (1990) describe agenda setting as a dynamic process, in which the frequency of media coverage on certain topic has an impact on how the public perceives the importance of that topic. In other words, there is a connection between the mass media's emphasis on a specific topic and the significance of that topic on public agenda. The original idea of agenda setting, developed by McCombs and Shaw, indicates the transfer of the media agenda to the public agenda and its contingent conditions (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Weaver et. al 1981). This theory particularly highlights the power of the media to tell people what to think about, which is usually the topic that has been heavily reported by the media. The link between the media and the public is also pointed out by Lee and Xu (2018, pp. 202), which is based on the media effect in the 1970s. They assert that media is the only tool that is able to set the public agenda.

There are a number of studies that use agenda setting theory as their theoretical framework (see Kassed and Mustaffa 2017; Pinto et al. 2018). On methodological grounds, agenda setting theory is widely used in quantitative studies. The theory is especially prominent in the fields of journalism and political communication (Zyglidopoulos et al. 2012). Throughout its 46-year history, agenda setting theorists have dealt with two important types of questions/hypotheses, which are divided into two levels. The first level agenda setting investigates the salience of 'issues' or 'objects', whereas the second level agenda setting addresses the question of 'attribute' or 'frame' salience. Fundamentally, the essence of the theory is a transfer of salience, which is a conclusive relationship between what the media portray and what the public subsequently sees as important. The theory has influenced scholars from many different disciplines due to its interesting notion of the media attribution to bring significance to certain issues. I believe that the theory is also applicable to qualitative studies. Although agenda setting is mostly useful in finding out the frequency of media coverage on certain topics, this theory is also relevant to look for topics that the media chose to cover.

For this study, it is more appropriate to use the term 'agenda building theory', which is still connected to the agenda setting theory. Reason being, agenda building theory assumes that the media does not exclusively set the agenda. Political actors like governments, political organisations and activist groups can play a significant role in agenda setting process. These political actors are capable to influence the media (through their information subsidies) to set certain agenda. This particular process is called agenda building. The information subsidies provided by political actors include press releases (Kioussis et al. 2011; Lieber and Golan 2011), video news releases (Harmon and White 2001), and political advertisements (Holbert et al. 2002). Agenda building and agenda setting are not exactly two separate theories because according to Lee and Xu (2018), the original agenda setting research has naturally contributed to the development of agenda building research. I prefer 'agenda building' to 'agenda setting' simply because of its relevance in the formation of the media agenda or policy agenda.

#### **4.4 Data sampling**

Two newspapers are selected for this study, which are *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*. *Berita Harian* is a Malay language newspaper, whereas *New Straits Times* is an English language newspaper. These newspapers are chosen mainly because they are part of the mainstream media in Malaysia. As a multi-ethnic and multilingual country, newspapers in Malaysia are published in different languages to serve the respective major ethnic groups. In Malaysia, vernacular newspapers existed since the colonial era (Shaari et al. 2006). Primarily, these vernacular newspapers have one thing in common, which is to provide reports on events that are important to their respective communities (Halimahton et al. 2006; Mustafa 2010; Fong and De Rycker 2017). Generally, these vernacular newspapers play a significant role in shaping the political and social reality for their ethnic groups (Mansor 2005; Ooi 2006). They also address certain issues differently because different ethnic groups have different living standards and economic status (Mansor 2005; Ooi 2006).

*Berita Harian* is chosen because its target readers are Malays. I also select *New Straits Times* as its readership transcend ethnic groups. I believe these two newspapers are the best sources of information for this study because I intend to explore the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity in terms of Malaysian society as a whole. Apart from being a 'universal' newspaper, *New Straits Times* also cater to the Malaysian 'elite' readers (Shaari et al. 2006), which include Malay elites. Like Chinese and Indians, Malays too, although not all, are bilingual or multilingual, depending on where they live and school they go to. Therefore, *New Straits Times* is the best option for me to analyse a specific news content that are intended for diverse Malaysian society. Also, *New Straits Times* is selected because English language is widely used in Malaysia. According to Mandal (2000), the expansion of English in Malaysia is due to the state's embrace of globalisation in the 1990s. Since then, English becomes the preferred language in many sectors, especially in the social life of major urban centres (Mandal 2000, pp. 1002). Mandal asserts that this language expansion brings with it disruptions in cultural identities, hence validate my choice to include an English language newspaper in this study.

Another rationale behind my decision to analyse *Berita Harian's* and *New Straits Times's* news articles is their connection with the Malaysian government. Many scholars have underlined a symbiotic relationship between mass media, politics and the political process

(see McNair 1999; Nain 2002; Idid and Kee 2012; Adnan 2013; Ahmad and Othman 2014) Lumsden (2013) asserts that in many countries, the ruling parties usually own and control the mainstream mass media. Malaysia is no exception because according to Mohd Sani (2010) and Rajaratnam (2009), the mainstream newspapers in Malaysia are either controlled or owned by the ruling government. Yang and Ahmad Ishak (2016, pp. 111) also point out the media-government relations in Malaysia as they state that United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) holds the controlling shares in the Malay-language newspapers. Media freedom in Malaysia is heavily restricted by legislation and ownership (Lent 1984; Zaharom 2000; Wang 2001; Netto 2002). “This was done by replacing long-established, family-operated newspapers with a new set of government dailies, by putting corporate control of newspaper groups in the hands of those close to government and by instituting legislative and other controls over the distribution of foreign news” (Lent 1984, p. 2).

The Malaysian government has also introduced various laws such as the Printing Presses and Publication Act, Internal Security Act, Official Secret Act, Sedition Act and the Multimedia and Broadcasting Act to put restriction on publication. This is the reason why political scientists describe Malaysian political system as “quasi-democracy”, “semi democracy” or “modified democracy” (Yang and Ahmad Ishak 2015, pp. 25). Lee (2002) asserts that Malaysian political system is situated somewhere between democracy and authoritarianism. The relationship between the Malaysian government and the Malaysian media strengthens my rationale for exploring the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity through the mainstream newspapers. Furthermore, according to the Malaysian Canons of Journalism, mainstream media in Malaysia play a significant role in the process of nation building and in the formation of public policy (Mohd Sani 2014, pp. 62). Also, the role of the media is firmly established through the principles of *Rukunegara* (National Principles) and the national aspirations, in which media organisations are also responsible for cultural, political and societal development (Mustafa et al. 2013, pp. 37). In this context, it is apparent that the mainstream media are the preferred platform for the government to disseminate certain ideologies and to publicise certain policies.

Newspapers in Malaysia are circulated in different languages to meet the needs of the different ethnic groups. Vernacular newspapers in Malaysia have existed since the colonial era (Shaari et al. 2006). Back then, early Chinese newspapers in Malaya (now known as

Malaysia) were focusing a lot on business and Chinese Revolution in China. Indian interests such as Indian education, political demands and literary works were highlighted in the Tamil press (Syed Arabi 1989). Malays too were not excluded from being ethnocentric by publishing Malay newspapers in the 1870s and 1900s to promote the spirit of nationalism. At the time, Malay newspapers was used as a platform to highlight attitudes that were believed to have negative impact on the development of the Malays. In fact, according to Syed Arabi (1989), Malay newspapers contributed to the development of the Malay political parties.

According to Fong and Ahmad Ishak (2016, pp. 105-106), the development of the vernacular newspapers in Malaysia can be summarised in two phases. In the first phase, 1806 to the late 1930s, British traders and colonial officials produced English newspapers specifically for the British and the Europeans in the colony to satisfy their commercial needs. At the time, English newspapers articles were mainly commercial news and advertisement. Chinese and Indian newspapers, on the other hand, highlighted the issue of cultural, emotional and political attachments of the ethnic groups in Malaya to their homelands. Similarly, Malay newspapers also served its community by addressing sensitive topics that were important to the Malay ethnic group such as religion and Malay nationalism. Starting from 1940s to independence in 1957, there was a shift in the Chinese and Indian newspapers and this is when the second phase took place. It is also this period that the fight for factional interests became prominent in the newspapers.

Fong and Ahmad Ishak (2016, pp. 106) assert that, it started when the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups came to realisation that Malaya is their home. This was reflected in their newspapers, in which Chinese and Indians were strongly encouraged to become Malaya citizens. It is this period of time that newspapers intensified the identification with their own ethnic groups. The Malays began to show their fears of losing control of the political and economic affairs of the country through the expression of anti-Chinese and anti-Indian sentiments in their newspapers, because they were overwhelmed by the influx of Indian and Chinese immigrants in Malaya. As a result, it created tension between ethnic groups. The non-Malays became more critical towards the Malays and they were especially against the pro-Malay attitude of the British administration. According to Shaari et al. (2006, pp. 191), the racial orientation of the newspapers has not changed much from the colonial era. The Malay newspapers still cater to the Malays, the Mandarin newspapers are still

generally read by the Chinese and the Tamil and Punjabi dailies are still targeted at the Indians (Ibid). The only newspapers whose readership transcends racial groupings are the English language newspapers, which often aimed at the elites and English-educated readers hence they are mainly distributed in the urban areas (Ibid).

According to Kua (2010), racism is quite common in Malaysia and it has been part of Malaysian political, economic, social and cultural realities since the colonial era (Kua cited in Fong and Ahmad Ishak 2016, pp. 105). As stated by Fong and Ahmad Ishak (2016), race appears as a necessary condition for educational institution admissions, housing discounts and business contracts. Official policies for education, social and cultural are also influenced by race. Political parties like the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) often utilise race in order to gain electoral support from their respective racial constituencies. Like these ruling political parties, some opposition parties also use race to win electoral support. The racially defined component parties have shaped Malaysian politics for decades. As a result, Malaysian politics are commonly regarded as racial politics (Yang and Ahmad Ishak 2016).

Referring back to my data sampling, *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times* are two useful samples for this study. For data analysis, I examine news articles that mention, highlight and discuss Malaysian identity, Malaysian modernity, Malaysian culture, Vision 2020, Malaysian/Asian values, and also Western values. Before I proceed to the data analysis section, I shall provide the background of *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*. *Berita Harian* is the first newspaper that I selected. *Berita Harian* was launched in 1957, exactly two months before the independence of Malaya. It is one of the earliest Malay newspapers that uses the Romanised script (Jaafar 2014). In fact, *Berita Harian* started the Romanised edition 10 years earlier than *Utusan Malaysia*, which is another main Malay newspaper in Malaysia. Romanised script was popularised back in the 50s by the renowned literary movement, *Angkatan Sasterawan 50* (popularly known as *Asas 50*).

According to Jaafar (2014), *Asas 50* played a major role in influencing the Ministry of Education to promote the use of the Romanised script in schools and in official correspondence. They believed it was important to ‘Malayanise’ the written script for national schools that have always been in *Jawi* (the Arabic script) because Malaya was on the verge of independence at the time. The first editor of *Berita Harian* was A. Samad

Ismail, who was one of the articulators of *Asas 50*. *Berita Harian* used to be perceived by many as merely the translated version of the *New Straits Times*. However, it has developed its own character over the years and is more than just a newspaper that harps on news and events. *Berita Harian* has also positioned itself as a newspaper of choice for students due to its popular education supplement, *Didik* (Ibid).

*Berita Harian* is printed in Malay, which is the official language in Malaysia. Therefore, it serves mostly Malays, whose religion is Islam. As an official religion, Islam has become a symbol of 'Malayness' and is inseparable from the Malay ethno-cultural heritage (Syed Husin 2008). Based on Article 160, the term 'Malay' refers to “a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay custom” (*Perlembagaan Persekutuan* 1957). Although the non-Malays have embraced some aspects of the Malay culture like food, language and traditional attire, it is Islam that differentiates the Malays from other ethnic groups (Gatsiounis 2006). Nah (2006) asserts that it is possible for the non-Malays to become Malay and benefit from the affirmative action policies targeted at Malays as long as they are willing to embrace Islam. The perception that a Malay must be Muslim remains relevant in today's Malaysian society. '*Masuk Islam*' (become Muslim) also means '*masuk Melayu*' (become Malay). According to Kim (2011, pp. 17), the synonymy of 'become Muslim' with 'become Malay' confuses many non-Malays because they believe that Muslim and Malay are the same.

The second newspaper selected for this study is *New Straits Times* (known as NST). NST was launched in 1845 and continues to thrive in today's fast-changing media landscape despite the many choices of English language media in Malaysia (Othman 2018). Being an English language newspaper, its readership transcends racial groupings. As one of the leading newspapers in Malaysia, NST serves as a platform to promote thinking and discussions on current issues especially among the Malaysian 'elite' readers (Shaari et al. 2006). Like *Berita Harian*, certain regulations in editorial space influence the news direction in NST (Mustafa et al. 2013, pp. 37). According to Khatirasen (2006), NST also publishes 'solution-oriented' articles to help restore order in the country, which is the key factor that distinguish Malaysian press from the foreign press (Khatirasen cited in Mustafa et al. 2013, pp. 37).

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

First and foremost, the media industry in Malaysia is designed to serve a particular sector such as Malay, Chinese and Indian due to its rich multicultural and multiracial background (Tham and Zanuddin 2015, pp. 126). As my study is mainly about Malaysian society, the sampling strategy involves selecting newspapers based on their readerships. The main purpose of this study is to offer a new understanding on the topic of Malaysian cultural modernity. I have chosen to analyse newspaper articles simply because Malaysian modernity is a political ideology, which means that the idea of modern Malaysian society is constructed by the ruling power. I believe that this idea is publicised through the mainstream media, which is based on the fact that the government and government-linked individuals holds control over the Malaysian media either directly or indirectly, as asserted by Fong and Ahmad Ishak (2015). Therefore, in order to gain insights into Malaysian cultural modernity, it is best to look at or in this case, to analyse the mainstream newspapers in Malaysia.

This study is designed to examine news articles on the subjects of cultural identity, cultural modernity, Malays, Malaysians, Islam, and also 'the West'. These subjects are the keywords in this study, thus need to be explored extensively in order for me to make sense of the Malaysian government's plan to 'reconstruct' the Malaysian society. I conducted a search for relevant news articles through the Nexis database, which is the most comprehensive research database that allows me to produce a systematic sample of news articles. Also, this study analyses the publication of specific news articles during specific period by using a qualitative research method. A qualitative method is the most sensible and appropriate approach for me to find answer to my research questions as I am not interested to find out the frequency or percentage of news coverage on Malaysian identity and modernity. The sample of news articles are divided and organised based on themes that correspond to the central topic of this study.

Although this study aims to investigate the link between Malaysia's modernisation project and Malaysian society, my data analysis strategy involves paying close attention to the role of Malay and Islam in Malaysian cultural modernity. This is because, firstly, the Malays, who are also known as *Bumiputeras* (indigenous), are the ethnic majority in Malaysia. Secondly, Malays are synonymous with Islam ever since the fifteenth century. They are not allowed to convert out of Islam because it would mean that they are no longer Malays

(Mohamad 2008). Islam is not only serving as the official religion, but is also seen as essential to improve the quality of life for the Malays, especially in their journey towards development and modernisation (Saat 2012, pp. 141). Islam and Malay development is a topic of rigorous discussion among the Malay elites in Malaysia. Also, there is a strong correlation between Islam and the concept of 'New Malay', which was coined by the Malaysian elite. This suggests that Malay and Islam might potentially have a huge amount of influence over the modernisation project.

Furthermore, the modernisation project has its root in the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was initiated in 1970 by the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak. As stated in earlier chapters, the NEP was initially introduced as a government response to the most significant racial riots in Malaysian politics, namely the 13 May 1969 incident. At the time, the Malaysian government felt the need to take action on the Malay economic underdevelopment crisis by using the NEP to create a Malay middle class so that the Malays could 'catch-up' with the non-Malays (especially the Chinese). The NEP era, which was from 1970 to 1990, is often described as an era of 'developmentalism' (see Khoo Kay Jin 1992; Loh Kok Wah 2002). As Mahathir is known to be a strong proponent of the Malay development, there is a possibility that the era of modernisation in Malaysia is a continuation of the NEP era. Therefore, it is important for me to analyse news articles that are written in Malay because they are constructed for the Malay ethnic group. For this study, I choose to analyse critically Malay and English news articles to see whether there are any similarity or dissimilarity between *Berita Harian's* and *New Straits Times's* news content.

#### **4.6 Data selection**

For this study, I intend to analyse the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity from the year 2003 to 2018, which is the post-Mahathir era. In this way, I hope to offer a new understanding of Malaysian modernity, which is not limited to Mahathir's concept of modernity. As explained before, the idea to modernise Malaysia and Malaysian society was first introduced by Mahathir. He publicised his idea using the concept of 'Vision 2020' during his first tenure as a prime minister, which was from the 16th of July 1981 to 31st of October 2003. His 22 years of service makes him the longest-serving prime minister and the most prominent political figure in Malaysia. Interestingly, he continues to be influential in Malaysian politics as he became the chairman of *Pakatan Harapan* (The Alliance of

Hope) coalition, which is an opposition to the ruling *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) coalition. *Barisan Nasional* has enjoyed an uninterrupted supremacy over the country since Malaya's independence in 1957. However, *Pakatan Harapan* won the 14<sup>th</sup> Malaysian General Election in 2018. Following the unprecedented election, Mahathir was sworn in as Malaysia's Prime Minister for the second time. For the first time in Malaysian history, the ruling *Barisan Nasional* coalition was voted out of power. As asserted by Hutchinson (2018), this interesting political scene demonstrates the remarkable role Mahathir played in Malaysian politics.

In Malaysia, Mahathir has always been known as *Bapa Pemodenan* (Father of Modernisation). It is because Malaysia experienced a period of rapid modernisation and economic growth during his first tenure as prime minister. His government had introduced a series of bold infrastructures projects to turn Malaysia into a modern country. He introduced Vision 2020 as the government's long term goal to become a fully developed nation in every sense of the word by the year 2020, which means economically, politically, socially, psychologically and culturally (Islam 2010). He had also identified nine challenges, which require attention in the formation of Malaysian modernity. Malaysians, including various ministers have supported and publicised these challenges. As quoted from Islam (2010, p. 200), the nine challenges are:

1. Establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This should be a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated
2. Creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed society with faith and confidence in itself, robust enough to face all manners of diversity
3. Developing a mature democratic society, practicing a form of mature consensual, community-oriented democracy
4. Forming a community that has high morale, ethics, and religious strength
5. Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society wherein people of all colors and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation
6. Establishing a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking, one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilization of the future

7. Establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which the society will come before self and the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system.
8. Ensuring an economically just society, a society in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation
9. Establishing a prosperous society, with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient

There are a number of studies that have been done on Malaysian modernity, which mainly based on Mahathir's Vision 2020. However, very few that prefer to explore the formation and politics of Malaysian identity, especially in terms of Malaysian society in general. To contribute to the knowledge of Malaysian modernity, this study aims to be inclusive, rather than only focusing on specific ethnic group. A brief introduction of Mahathir and Vision 2020 is provided in this section because they are the framework of Malaysian modernity, thus might have indirect or direct effect on the discourse of cultural identity and modernity. Vision 2020 is also featured in academic studies years after Mahathir left the office in 2003 (see Khattab 2004; Ka 2012; Noor 2013). Also, even after he left the office, Mahathir was still actively involved in Malaysian politics and became a strident critic of his hand-picked successors.

This study is useful to find out whether the concept of modern Malaysian society has changed after the Mahathir era. Since modernisation is an ongoing national project, this study aims to offer analysis of the topic that is up to date. This study examines the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity for the period of 14 years. Due to the high volume of data retrieved, data are organised into themes, which can be found in the next chapter. Although this study is conducted using a qualitative method, it is important for me to analyse a good amount of news articles to avoid unfounded generalisation. I only analyse news articles that are available on the Nexis database, which means that this study is ethically unproblematic.

As for the data collection process, I initially intended to analyse two Malay language newspapers: *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*. It is because they are the only mainstream newspapers targeted at Malay ethnic group and therefore comprehensive in terms of data. However, only news articles from *Berita Harian* that are available on Nexis database for the period of 2003 to 2018. Data collection process is executed by making full

use of Nexis' search engine. I created a search by inserting a number of keywords that are related to the topic of Malaysian identity and modernity. The search is done in stages as I divided the 14-year period into two parts. The first part represents the period of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia, which is from 31/10/2003 to 3/4/2009. The second part represents the period of Najib Razak's premiership as the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia, which is from 3/4/2009 to 10/5/2018. I started with Berita Harian, followed by New Straits Times.

For Berita Harian, I begin with the first time frame (2003-2009). I first used keywords such as *pemodenan* (modernity), *moden* (modern) and *pembangunan* (development). More than 3000 results were displayed, which is too much for me to deal with. I refined my search by inserting another keyword (within the 3000 results) such as *bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysians), which then gave me 224 results. The 224 news articles were sorted manually to remove irrelevant articles and articles produced by the readers. From 224 articles, I managed to have 151 articles that are relevant to my study. Each of the 151 articles was carefully read to detect patterns or recurring views. For this first time frame, there are three recurring views: constructing modern Malaysians based on Islam Hadhari, knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity and preserving Malay customs as part of the modernity project. The same search technique is applied to obtain data for the second time frame (2009-2018). From more than 3000 results retrieved, only 149 articles include the term *bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysians). Further sorting process left me with 123 articles that are relevant to my study. I discovered two recurring views for this second time frame: constructing Malaysian nation and protecting Malay language.

For New Straits Times, I also begin with the first time frame (2003-2009). I inserted the same keywords that I used for Berita Harian. From more than 3000 results retrieved, only 245 articles include the term Malaysians. After removing irrelevant articles, I have 121 articles to be properly analysed. The analysis reveals two recurring views: acknowledging the role of religion in Malaysian modernity and reviving Malaysian traditional symbols. For the second time frame (2009-2018), a large number of data retrieved is narrowed down to 541 results. From 541 articles, there are 300 articles that are relevant to the topic of Malaysian identity and modernity. Two recurring views are revealed: fostering unity in diversity and protecting cultural heritage. Overall, I analysed 695 news articles, which is a large amount of data for a qualitative study. This justifies my choice to employ a single

method of analysis, CDA. Due to word and time limitation, employing more than one method of analysis is impractical and over-ambitious. Below is a table showing details of data used in this study:

### **Berita Harian**

Timeframes	Number of News Articles	Themes
2003-2009	151	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Constructing modern Malaysians based on Islam Hadhari (42 articles).</li> <li>2. Knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity (64 articles).</li> <li>3. Preserving Malay customs as part of the modernity project (45 articles).</li> </ol>
2009-2018	123	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Constructing Malaysian nation (73 articles).</li> <li>2. Protecting Malay language (50 articles).</li> </ol>

## New Straits Times

<b>Timeframes</b>	<b>Number of News Articles</b>	<b>Themes</b>
2003-2009	121	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Acknowledging the role of religion in Malaysian modernity (99 articles).</li><li>2. Reviving Malaysian traditional symbols (22 articles).</li></ol>
2009-2018	300	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Fostering unity in diversity (165 articles).</li><li>2. Protecting cultural heritage (135 articles).</li></ol>

## **Chapter Five**

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **(Berita Harian)**

#### **5.1 A Critical Discourse Analysis of articles published in Berita Harian newspaper during the era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi**

This chapter presents my findings and discussion from my analysis on the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity in Malay newspaper. Data collected within the period from 2003 to 2018 are divided into two time frames: (2003-2009) and (2009-2018). This chapter contains two key sections, which represent the two time frames, respectively. I begin with the first section. The results of this section are based on data retrieved for the first time frame of the analysis, which is the period of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia. The actual time frame of data collection is 31/10/2003-3/4/2009. The analysis focuses on the thematic-level of the discourse to single out common views across the 151 texts. It reveals three recurring views deployed by text producers to promote the objectives and ideologies:

- 1) Constructing modern Malaysians based on Islam Hadhari
- 2) Knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity
- 3) Preserving Malay customs as part of the modernity project

##### **5.1.1 Constructing modern Malaysians based on Islam Hadhari**

The first ideology articulated across the texts is the importance of Islam Hadhari in the formation of modern Malaysians. From 151 results retrieved with regard to the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, there are 42 news articles that discuss and promote the ideology of Islam Hadhari. In this context, Islam Hadhari is described as an Islamic concept and an approach to develop human capital in Malaysia. News articles on Islam Hadhari are mainly extracts from Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's speeches. The definition of Islam Hadhari is clearly described in one of the 42 news articles:

Islam Hadhari is a teaching of Islam that focuses on life. It is a teaching to increase the quality of life, a degree of which society are civilised and have a distinguished culture in facing the challenges of the new millennium, such as information technology explosion, borderless world, global economy, materialism, identity crisis, and colonisation of the mind (January 17, 2008).

Discourse on cultural modernity within this time frame shows a reference to Mahathir's plan to modernise Malaysia. This indicates that Mahathir's Vision 2020 is still applicable even after he left the office in 2003. There are 46 out of 151 news articles that reemphasise the initial objectives of Vision 2020. The obvious addition to the Malaysian cultural modernisation project within this period is the concept of Islam Hadhari, which is articulated in a persuasive manner using Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's speech extracts. The need to implement a new concept of Islam in Malaysia is expressed as a necessary measure to avoid failure in constructing modern Malaysians. The texts tend to use the word Muslims as the main subject of modern Malaysians:

**Islam Hadhari is a humble approach to elevate the entire society including the non-Muslims.** As Muslims, we have to choose to be religious first and then decide whether we want to be doctors, teachers or any other professions, in order to contribute towards nation building. Muslims today are being looked down because they are not united to the extent they are not capable on their own to modernise the country, therefore have to depend on the non-Islamic countries. Muslims always blame their fate and this is the reason why they are poor and backward, even though Islam never teaches its followers to be economically and socially deprived. **Islam encourages modernity and success.** It is compulsory for us to be united because all of the principles of Islam Hadhari are for strengthening the dignity of Muslims, Malays and the country (February 4, 2005).

The above extract raises two key issues. Firstly, the inclusion of the non-Muslims. The subject of non-Muslims appears in the very first sentence of the text, which classifies it as part of the topic sentence. This suggests that the concept of Islam Hadhari is not introduced solely for the Malaysian Muslims. As shown in the above extract, Islam Hadhari appears in the discourse of Malaysian modernity as a concept and an approach that is compatible with diverse Malaysian society. Despite the universal portrayal of Islam Hadhari, the text consistently makes reference to Muslims, which shows the significant role of religious identity in the formation of modern Malaysians. This is made apparent in the second sentence of the extract, in which religion is regarded as more important than career. Considering Malaysia's demography, it is compelling to discover that a specific religion, Islam, is considered capable to unite diverse Malaysian society. The third sentence of the extract suggests two points. First, unity is the key element in the formation of modern

Malaysians. As the sentence uses the word Muslims, it shows that unity, in this context, refers to religious unity. Second, the connection made between Muslims and the inability to modernise the country suggests that, Islam is featured in the discourse of Malaysian modernity partly to improve the image of Muslims.

Secondly, the above extract indicates that the religion and teaching of Islam is chosen to be the best ‘tool’ to achieve Malaysian modernity. This shows a similarity between Mahathir’s ideology and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s ideology, as they both highlight the role of Islam in Malaysian cultural modernisation project. The main difference between their ideologies is the concept of Islam they tend to endorse. Mahathir advocates a concept of *Fardu Kifayah* (communally obligatory), whereas Abdullah Ahmad Badawi promotes Islam Hadhari (civilisational Islam). Indirectly, the text suggests a version of modernity that the Malaysian government intends to achieve. Although modernity is commonly associated with the West, the analysis on modernity in Malaysian context offers a rather interesting perspective. In this respect, the discourse of Islam sets apart Malaysian modernity from Western modernity. Islam appears to be the core facilitator for the socio-cultural transformation in Malaysia:

Every citizen has to comprehend the ideology of Islam Hadhari, which is introduced to strengthen the identity of Malaysians in order to withstand globalisation (February 9, 2005).

The above extract shows that Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s engagement with Islam clearly driven by political objectives and the need to restructure Malaysian society. However, the role of Islam in Malaysian cultural modernisation project seems problematic because not every Malaysian is Muslim. This suggests that the project, first and foremost, aims at Malaysian’s Malay-Muslim majority. Aware of this limitation of the project, text producers make strong claims to avoid backlash from any party:

As the effort to transform the society is the responsibility of the government, I think **it is irrational for anyone to underestimate Islam Hadhari**. Those who underestimate this concept are actually **jealous and absurd** (February 5, 2005)

The above extract illustrates Malaysia’s authoritarian leadership. The subject of Islam Hadhari in Malaysian modernity is not open to criticism. Malaysian society are expected to

accept the concept wholeheartedly. The text uses words such as irrational, jealous and absurd to describe individuals who are against the ideology of Islam Hadhari. The word jealous in the text implies a reference to Malaysian's non-Muslims, who are most likely to disagree with the concept of Islam Hadhari. They are labelled jealous to question Islam as the chosen religion in facilitating socio-cultural transformation in Malaysia. News articles on Malaysian identity and modernity reflects authoritarianism as they are structured to mainly include speech extracts from Malaysian political leaders. Also, the words used in the framing of the headlines of the analysed news articles suggest a positive perception of Islam Hadhari:

1. *Islam Hadhari perkasakan ummah* (Islam Hadhari strengthen society) (February 5, 2005)
2. *Islam Hadhari menjana kemajuan ummah* (Islam Hadhari generates societal modernisation) (February 9, 2005)
3. *Islam Hadhari bentuk modal insan berkualiti* (Islam Hadhari forms a quality human capital) (March 17, 2005)
4. *Islam Hadhari galak kemajuan* (Islam Hadhari encourages modernity) (March 22, 2005)
5. *Islam Hadhari perkukuh Rukun Negara, Wawasan 2020* (Islam Hadhari strengthen the National Principles and Vision 2020) (May 5, 2005)
6. *Islam Hadhari tunjang pembangunan* (Islam Hadhari is the foundation of development) (July 22, 2005)
7. *Islam Hadhari strategi tingkat kemajuan ummah* (Islam Hadhari is a strategy to elevate society) (August 31, 2005)
8. *Konsep Hadhari galak peringkat kecemerlangan* (The concept of Hadhari promotes excellence) (September 5, 2005)

As shown in the headline samples above, the concept of Islam Hadhari is given a significant role in the transformation of Malaysian society and is consistently portrayed as an ideal approach. Headline entitled "Islam Hadhari strengthen the National Principles and Vision 2020", for instance, shows that the concept of Islam Hadhari is not instigated to replace Vision 2020. Instead, it appears as a better concept to continue Mahathir's legacy in modernising Malaysians. A strategy to form an appealing image of Islam Hadhari is illustrated in the headline samples above. In this context, Islam Hadhari appears as a

comprehensive concept intended for a general population of Malaysia. Islam Hadhari is heavily promoted not only by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, but also by other political figure in Malaysia:

The concept of Islam Hadhari, which promotes simplicity, will be able to transform Malaysia into a modern country through Vision 2020, said ***Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku (the King) Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail***. He affirmed, Islam Hadhari is not a concept to introduce a new teaching of Islam or new Islamic jurisprudence. Instead, it is an approach to elevate the standard of society without jeopardising the fundamental principles of Islamic teaching and the freedom for the non-Muslims to follow their own religions. Although this Islam Hadhari approach takes time, **we need to have confidence in it so the objectives of Vision 2020 can be achieved** (March 22, 2005).

As shown in the above extract, the concept of Islam Hadhari is supported by the King of Malaysia. The validation from a prominent political figure makes Islam Hadhari a reputable concept to achieve Malaysian modernity. The above extract also illustrates a correlation between Islam Hadhari and Vision 2020. However, the emphasis on Islamic approach indicates a new form of modernity, which seems to divert Islam Hadhari from Vision 2020. The focus on religious identity instead of ethnic identity puts the modernity project, during this period, outside the parameter of ethnic groups in Malaysia, which again, seems to stray from the path of Vision 2020. Therefore, Islam Hadhari seems like an approach to enhance Vision 2020, rather than to correspond. The analysis on Islam Hadhari reveals a persistence to adopt an Islamic concept in Malaysian modernity as an alternative model to Western modernity. The analysis also shows that Malaysian modernity is inspired by the beginning of the Islamic state at the time of the Prophet:

Islam is actually a religion that has a successful outcome. This is based on the history of all prophets, in which **human beings are taught to be successful and pious**, based on the standards set by Allah (the God). Prophet Muhammad, **the last prophet, had formed a successful and pious community** (January 21, 2008).

As illustrated in the above extract, cultural modernity, in Malaysian context, refers to a successful and pious society. Elevating society based on Islamic conducts suggests an attempt to alter the identity of Malaysians, both Muslims and non-Muslims. The text

includes the word pious to describe an ideal community, which means constructing God-fearing society is deemed necessary to achieve Malaysian modernity. It shows that the cultural modernisation project intends to instil into Malaysians not only Islamic beliefs, but also Islamic practices. The emphasis on orderly conduct among citizens in the discourse of Malaysian modernity suggests two points. Firstly, it illustrates boundaries. The teaching of Islam is believed to be able to equip Malaysian citizens with necessary moral values to resist external influence brought by globalisation. Secondly, it differentiates Malaysian modernity from Western modernity. It shows that the idea of civilised nation is redefined. Although Malaysia aims to reach a level of modernity displayed by developed nations, the characteristics of modern society in modern countries seem incompatible with Malaysian citizens, hence result in the undertaking of an Islamic approach in Malaysian modernity.

### **5.1.2 Knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity**

The second recurring subject revealed from the analysis on Berita Harian's news articles for the first time frame is the importance of knowledge in Malaysian modernity. There are 64 news articles that highlight the need for Malaysians to gain knowledge in the formation of modern Malaysians. Instead of using the word *pendidikan* (education), the texts emphasise the word *ilmu*, which means knowledge. Although the topics of education and knowledge are correlated in the texts, the focus on knowledge indicates a specific kind of understanding required in Malaysian modernisation project. In contrast with the discourse of Islam Hadhari, discourse on knowledge mainly mentions Malays, not Muslims. This is apparent in a number of headlines:

- 1) *Melayu kena bersatu, kuasai ilmu untuk berjaya* (Malays have to be united, gain knowledge to be successful) (February 28, 2006)
- 2) *Anak Melayu kena kuasai ilmu untuk kekal bangsa dominan* (Malays have to gain knowledge to remain dominant) (August 22, 2007)
- 3) *Menuntut ilmu perlu jadi budaya jika Melayu ingin maju* (Gaining knowledge should be a way of life if Malays want to succeed) (January 7, 2009)
- 4) *Melayu tersisih jika tak endah kualiti ilmu* (Malays will be left behind if they disregard the quality of knowledge) (May 6, 2008)
- 5) *Orang Melayu mesti tambah nilai diri: PM* (Malays must add their values: Prime Minister) (November 16, 2007)

The headline samples above illustrate a special attention given to the Malay ethnic. Malays are strongly urged to gain knowledge to transform themselves into successful citizens. The emphasis on knowledge for Malays, but not Muslims indicates two matters. Firstly, it seems to justify the government's effort to fund and support Malay ethnic in education. This suggests that Malay ethnic is still considered lag behind other ethnics in Malaysia, hence requires a government support. It seems that the strategy to eliminate the barriers between ethnic groups is not yet over since the introduction of New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970. The NEP was the government's major response to provide the Malays with an affirmative action program, that authorised quotas for Malay ethnic in education and hiring. This also suggests that there is an attempt to create more Malay middle class in Malaysia:

**Another factor to determine the success of Malay ethnic in the future is definitely a strong unity among them and work really hard in seeking knowledge.** It is not too late for us to empower the battle to develop Malays through knowledge and education. Now, there are **many facilities that have been provided to give opportunity to Malay ethnic to gain as much knowledge as possible. Only education can transform Malay ethnic into a brilliant ethnic,** not only in Malaysia, but also on an international level and it is not something that is impossible and hard to achieve. It only requires a spirit to be successful and a resilient identity. Malays should not waste their time and energy in unnecessary matters or being divided by states. **If we want to be a successful ethnic, we have to live together as one ethnic, determined and united with a clear goal.** This battle should not be compromised and it needs commitment from every party (February 28, 2006).

The above extract shows a connection between education and Malay identity formation, instead of Malaysian identity formation. It clearly states that education is perceived as a powerful tool to transform Malay ethnic into an excellent ethnic. It suggests a dissatisfaction towards Malay ethnic's current status, not only in Malaysia but also in a global context. Education is made appealing as it is able to elevate the Malay ethnic. In this respect, through education, Malay ethnic not only gains knowledge, but also social status. Therefore, success among Malays is determined by their level of social status. In other words, a Malay is considered successful if he/she has a certain level of education, which implies that those who are not educated as failure. The text also strongly encourages ethnic

unity among Malays, which indicates that there is an element of ethnocentrism in the discourse of knowledge and education in Malaysia. It gives an idea of ethnic competition as there is an implication that Malay ethnic is a team against the other ethnics in Malaysia.

However, not all news articles on knowledge aim at Malay ethnic. The analysis shows that the discourse on knowledge has two different contents to serve two different groups. In this context, the Malay ethnic is separated from the rest of Malaysian population. This is apparent in a number of headlines, in which the topic of knowledge is either depicted in a broad sense or specifically aims at Malay ethnic. As the above list of headlines shows the specification of Malay ethnic, below are headline samples to illustrate the topic of knowledge aims at non-specific group:

- 1) *Penguasaan ilmu lonjak kecemerlangan umat bangsa* (Knowledge elevates society) (April 17, 2007)
- 2) *Ilmu seimbang benteng godaan, jana kemajuan* (Sufficient knowledge avoids disruption, generates development) (April 13, 2006)
- 3) *Memperkasa ilmu hadapi cabaran globalisasi* (Empowering knowledge to face the challenges of globalisation) (March 22, 2006)
- 4) *Penguasaan ilmu jana kehidupan lebih baik* (Knowledge generates better life) (March 5, 2006)
- 5) *Ilmu pengukur kemajuan ummah* (Knowledge is an indicator of societal development) (February 20, 2006)

The above headline samples show a connection between knowledge and societal development. From these headlines, there is no indication to suggest that news articles contain details about Islam. The topic of Islam appears to be prominent in the main body of the news articles. News article under the headline “knowledge elevates society”, for instance, clearly comprises discourse on Islam. This is made apparent in the first sentence of the article, which reads, “Islamic excellence, which was initiated by Prophet Muhammad and his companions had successfully transformed the mankind into an honourable and highly civilised human race”. This marks a dissimilarity between the discourse of knowledge aims at Malay ethnic and the discourse of knowledge aims at Malaysian society as a whole. News articles that specifically mention Malay ethnic are structured to present viewpoints on knowledge in a general sense, which mainly act as a reminder on the importance of knowledge among Malay ethnic. They are designed to

remind Malay ethnic of their particular privilege in education, of which they are entitled to the government's support. In contrast, news articles that aim at Malaysian society are structured to convey a specific type of knowledge, which is the knowledge of Islam:

The Islamic excellence was witnessed and followed by the next generation after that, which shows how Islam spread to every corner of the world despite the geographical boundaries. **Islam is accepted as a religion that provides guidance and as a fair system in every aspect of human being's life.** Islam is universal in nature. As we all know, in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslims were advanced and developed. They mastered all type of knowledge, including science and technology. **It is disappointing to see Muslims, now, although they live in rich nations, want to depend on the West.** It is understandable why it is hard for developing countries to resist pressure and other type of modern colonisation. Therefore, we have to be determined to create more intellectuals in various disciplines in order to elevate Muslims' dignity (April 17, 2007).

The above extract illustrates the specific subject of Islam in the discourse of knowledge. The text insinuates an attempt to spread Islam in multi-religious Malaysia. This is based on comparison between the analysis on news articles about Malays and news articles about Islam. In Malaysia, Islam is the official religion of Malay ethnic. Interestingly, Islam is not mentioned and highlighted in news articles about Malays. Instead, the discourse of Islam tends to be the focal point of news articles on knowledge, written for a general population. The universality of Islam is highlighted in the first three sentences of the above extract, which shows the key role of Islam in Malaysian modernity and national identity formation. This gives an insight into the characteristic of an ideal cultural modernity in Malaysia.

The text also mentions the West, which indicates that Malaysian modernity is not fully disengaged from the concept of the Western world. The West, however, is not portrayed in the text as an example to be imitated. It suggests that Malaysian cultural modernity is not inspired by the West, but by the Islamic excellence during the time of Prophet Muhammad. In this context, it reveals a concept of modernity beyond the West. A developing country like Malaysia appears to be inspired by a development that took place in the past, rather than development in the present, which shows a reconsideration of the idea of modernity. It also places Islam and Muslims in the general discourse of modernity.

Although the above extract is taken from news article that aims at a general population, the word Muslims is mentioned several times in the text, which shows a similarity between the discourse on Islam Hadhari and the discourse on knowledge. Muslims are reemphasised as an important subject in national identity formation. This is consistent across the 64 analysed news articles regarding the discourse of knowledge. The highlight on religious identity instead of ethnic identity suggests that the other ethnics in Malaysia are not entirely ruled out from the Malaysian cultural modernisation project. As it is unfeasible to change the ethnicity of Malaysians, their religious identity, however, seems flexible. It is because Malay ethnic is the only ethnic that is prohibited to convert to other religions. The other ethnics are free to embrace any religions. Therefore, theoretically, the Malaysian cultural modernisation project is not only for Malays, but also for individuals who consider themselves as Muslims, despite their ethnicity. The mention of Islam in the topic of national identity formation and Malaysian modernity indicates an effort to encourage Malaysians, in general, to embrace Islam. The modernity project appears to be the best platform to feature the glory of Islam and to form a positive perception of Islam among Malaysians:

**Islam needs to be reconsidered as a guide in cultural modernity** to free people from distorted belief, mentality and culture. This is the ‘light’ and ‘blessing’ of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w **for the entire universe. Islam clearly consists the values of universality, fairness and welfare across any border, ethnic and the colour of skin.** Islam encourages unity among human beings through toleration and moral values. This should be the core reason to **change the negative perception towards Islam, with assumptions that Islam is anti-modernity, anti-world and anti-development, especially by non-Muslims.** The way out of this misconception is to spread widely the knowledge of Islam, which is based on the principles of rational thinking, universality and societal development.

As shown in the above extract, the religion of Islam is given positive exposure in every sentence. There is a strong connection made between Islam and cultural modernity. Across the 64 news articles, Islam is constantly described as a universal religion, as displayed in the above extract. The word universal is used repeatedly across the texts, which indicates an attempt to inspire an acceptance of Islam among Malaysians. As the other religions are not mentioned in the texts, Islam appears to be the only religion that is compatible with

every ethnic in Malaysia. Strangely, the topic of Islam Hadhari is not present in the discourse of knowledge, although it is mainly about Islam. This raises an important question: Why Islam Hadhari is not consistently promoted within the topic of Islam? From the analysis on both recurring subjects, it shows that the general topic of Islam is the specific knowledge curated for a general population, especially for non-Muslims. While the Malay ethnic is encouraged to gain a non-specific knowledge, the rest of Malaysian population are obliged to learn about Islam. This is made apparent in the above extract, “...to spread widely the knowledge of Islam, which is based on the principles of rational thinking, universality and societal development”.

The analysis on the first and second recurring subjects reveals a great similarity between the concept of Islam Hadhari and the knowledge of Islam curated for Malaysian general population. The discourses of Islam Hadhari and Islam both highlight and promote Islamic civilisation. The interpretation of Islam Hadhari is reemphasised in the second recurring subject using the term Islam, instead of Islam Hadhari. As previously stated, out of 151 news articles, there are 64 news articles that highlight the importance of knowledge in Malaysian modernity and national identity formation, which makes it the most prominent subject in this section of findings. The subject of Islam is the only specific knowledge mentioned in the texts. The texts prefer to use the term Islam in order to give validation to the concept of Islam Hadhari. It shows that Islam Hadhari is actually based on the original teaching of Islam, not an introduction to a new Islamic teaching. It seems that news articles on knowledge for a general population are purposely structured to be Islamic oriented in order to raise public awareness of Islam Hadhari, which is perceived to be the best approach for Malaysian cultural modernity. The use of the term Islam instead of Islam Hadhari in this context suggests an attempt to avoid confusion because Islam Hadhari is not a common concept.

### **5.1.3 Preserving Malay customs as part of the modernity project**

Preserving Malay customs is the third recurring subject revealed during the analysis on Malaysian identity and modernity in Berita Harian’s newspaper. From 151 analysed news articles, there are 45 articles that repeatedly highlight the need to preserve Malay customs amidst Malaysian cultural modernisation. Malay language, traditional wear and tradition are identified as the Malay customs that require protection. For this specific theme, the term modernity appears to have a negative connotation:

**Modernisation has caused deterioration in Malaysian values** like '*budaya rewang*' (the culture of community cooperation). Sadly, Malaysians, nowadays, do not even know the meaning of the word *rewang*. **Rewang is part of the culture and tradition** since long time ago but is now forgotten. *Rewang* refers to cooperation among community (male, female, young or old) to offer helping hands in running particular events, usually weddings, until the events are finished (June 17, 2006).

The above extract suggests that modernity, in Malaysian context, is interpreted in two ways. It seems that there are two sides of modernity: the good side and the bad side. The bad side of modernity is illustrated in the above extract. The text indicates a negative implication of modernity, which shows that there is a version of modernity that Malaysia is opposed to. In this respect, Malaysia favours a version of modernity, of which the Malay customs are unthreatened. The above extract highlights the specific type of Malay custom, which is '*budaya rewang*' (the culture of community cooperation). As shown in the above extract, there is no obvious connection made between *rewang* and Malay ethnic. However, in Malaysia, *rewang* is commonly associated with Malay culture, although it is known to be a practice among those who live in villages. The word *rewang* itself is a Malay word. The text illustrates an initiative to popularise the culture of *rewang*, not specifically to the Malay ethnic, but to the general population. This is clearly stated in the above extract, "Malaysians, nowadays, do not even know the meaning of the word *rewang*".

The repetition of Malay traditional 'cultural' practices across the 45 news articles suggests an effort to control the impact of modernisation or in other words, to place limitations on Malaysian modernity. News articles are structured to issue guidelines on Malaysian modernity to ensure certain aspects of Malay culture are not jeopardised. However, the discourse on Malay customs and culture in the texts seems elusive as it is only based on Malaysian constitution's interpretation of Malay culture:

It is important to seriously review matters regarding identity because **economic success among Malays has its toll on Malay identity and values**. It was evident that most Malays struggle and experience difficulty to interpret their own cultural symbols, for example, language and customs. Changes in values will happen in any nation, consistent with time and condition. It is true that industrialisation, capitalism and economic liberalism (symbols of modernisation and modern

development) have changed many nations including the most successful nation in the world. However, **does success among Malays makes them reject their language, culture and tradition? Is identity no longer important when they have newfound confident in themselves? Or is it necessary to lose their identity in order to be consumers of Western culture?** The concept of ethnic, nation, Malay supremacy, nationality movement and ethnic identity are all related to the interpretation of Malayness. Also, in Malay context, aspects like Islamic movement and Islamic awareness cannot be neglected (August 13, 2006).

The above extract is a perfect example to illustrate an elusive concept of Malay identity. Although the text identifies language, culture and tradition as three main aspects of Malay identity, there is no clear indication to specify what kind of culture and tradition the text refers to. This applies to the rest of the news articles on the topic of Malay customs. Malay language, traditional wear and '*budaya rewang*' are the only specific types of Malay customs mentioned in the texts, although it is debatable whether these types of cultural symbols really represent the Malay ethnic. The term Malay or Malayness is lack of clear specification. This points out the shortcoming of the ideology to preserve Malay customs. It seems that it is more important to instil into Malaysians the idea to 'safeguard' the identity of Malay ethnic, rather than to clearly define it. The last sentence of the above extract shows a correlation between Islam and Malay. Islam is considered an important part of Malay identity, hence included in the discourse of Malay customs.

As shown in the above extract, a connection is made between success among Malays and deterioration of Malay identity. It seems to imply that, the more successful the Malays are, the less Malay they will be. The text specifically shows concern towards a group of Malays who have achieved economic success. From a geographical perspective, economic improvement among Malays has contributed to the formation of Malay middle class (also known as the New Malay) in Malaysia. As an ethnic which used to be economically deprived, Malays once populated rural areas in Malaysia. The emergent of Malay middle class, therefore, has resulted more Malays to populate urban areas in Malaysia.

Indirectly, the text seems to aim at Malay middle class, which illustrates the redefinition of Malaysian modernity. Initially, Malay ethnic is strongly encouraged to transform themselves to become modern and developed ethnic. This is apparent in the discourse of knowledge aims at Malay ethnic, as discussed in the previous section. In this respect, it

appears that the discourse of knowledge is essentially presented in the texts for a group of ‘unprogressive’ Malays, whereas the discourse of Malay customs targets modern Malays. This suggests that news articles are structured to reach two different groups of Malays, which determines the definition of Malaysian modernity.

For Malay group, which I classified as Old Malay, modernity is highly encouraged as a positive development. For a group of New Malay, modernity appears as a threat to Malay identity. Although Malaysia intends to form its own version of cultural modernity, the texts imply that there is already an influence of Western modernity in Malaysian culture. This is highlighted in the above extract, “is it necessary to lose their identity in order to be consumers of Western culture?” This identifies Western modernity as the bad version of modernity. As the analysis reveals two versions or sides of modernity, the Malaysian cultural modernisation project perhaps is best described as a project to structure and restructure the Malaysian society, especially the Malay ethnic.

Although the Malaysian cultural modernisation project is supposed to include Malaysian society as a whole, Malay ethnic seems to be the focus of the project. Also, news articles that highlight the negative interpretation of modernity are mainly associated with Malay ethnic and the topic of Islam. Islam is made apparent as one of the determinants of Malayness among Malay ethnic. Although there are other aspects of Malay identity, such as language, traditional wear and tradition, Islam seems to be the main rationale behind the redefinition of modernity. Malay identity is fixed with religious identity. Islam is presented in the analysed news articles not only as a religion, but also as a way of life. This is apparent in the analysis of Islam and Islam Hadhari. As the Malaysian cultural modernisation project focuses on Malay ethnic, the definition of an ideal Malaysian modernity are infused with Islamic values. As a result, the other version of modernity, which is not based on Islamic values is considered bad and undesirable.

From the analysed news articles, Western modernity appears in the texts as the bad version of modernity. This is apparent during the analysis on all three recurring subjects. Although the topic of Western modernity is not the focus across the 151 analysed news articles, it is still worth exploring because of its relevance to Malaysian modernity and Malaysian’s interpretation of modernity. Across the texts, Western modernity is lightly mentioned as a version of modernity of which Malaysia is not inspired to imitate. The topic of Western modernity is mentioned in the texts in a general sense. Therefore, there is no obvious

indication to specify and identify the undesirable aspects of Western modernity. However, news articles during the period of Malaysia's Independence Day, which is in August, give insight into the idea of bad modernity:

As we will be celebrating Independence Day on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, various events are organised to celebrate our country's independence from the British Empire. Although we are free from colonisation, **our fight to make our Independence meaningful is still incomplete.** It will reach the most challenging phase, which requires mental and physical strength not only among leaders but all Malaysians in general. **This is a never ending fight if we want to achieve and preserve development in terms of moral values.** It is true that we have achieved rapid development, economic success, political stability and respect for Malaysians. However, along with these positive progress, comes various social problems and values that can jeopardise the effort to make our Independence meaningful.

The above extract points out two important views with regard to Malaysian modernity. Firstly, the text suggests that Malaysia still struggles to give meaning to post-colonial Malaysia. As a country that once colonised by the British empire, the British influence in Malaysian society seems inevitable. The second sentence of the extract indicates a commitment to eradicate, specifically, the British influence from Malaysian society. It shows that Malaysia is not entirely free from British colonisation even after the Independence, which seems to justify the need to make Malaysia's Independence meaningful. Meaningful Independence, in this context, seems closely related to the ideology to structure and restructure Malaysian society. This suggests that Malaysian version of cultural modernity is essential, not only to transform Malaysians into modern and developed society, but also to make Malaysia's Independence meaningful. Therefore, meaningful Independence is best described as an absolute freedom from the influence of colonisation among Malaysians.

Secondly, the text provides a particular aspect of societal development, which is moral values. News articles during the period of Malaysia's Independence are not structured for a specific ethnic. Neither Malays nor Muslims are mentioned in the texts. As shown in the above extract, the importance of moral values is made relevant for Malaysians in general. The connection between moral values and Malaysians is indirectly related to the ideology and concept of Islam Hadhari. This is because Islam Hadhari is first and foremost a

concept that focuses on civilisation. As previously discussed, in Malaysian context, the teaching of Islam appears as the essence of an ideal cultural modernity. This suggests that the moral values the text refers to are the Islamic values, which are not made apparent in the text due to Malaysia's religious diversity.

Apart from moral values, news articles during the period of Malaysia's Independence also highlight the importance of *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malaysian language). Interestingly, the term Malaysian language is preferred although the language refers to *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language):

**The awareness to instil a love of our national language and to encourage appreciation of this language as the identity of Malaysians will be enhanced,** said the Minister of Education, Hishammuddin Hussein. He said, the **printing media** should be used as a medium to highlight this effort through news and advertisements, so it will stick in the citizen's mind. It would be better if **electronic media** plays songs and clip videos that can encourage and instil a love of national language, to the extent it leaves an impact in the heart of every citizen of Malaysia. He intends **to create Malaysian citizens who are proud of Malaysian language as their identity**, fluent in the language and ready to honour and promote it wherever they are. **“All we have is our Bahasa Malaysia as our identity** and this national language only has us to continue its glory and existence”, said Hishammuddin Hussein during the launch of National Language and Literature Month with the theme, *'Bahasa Melayu Citra Bangsa Malaysia'* (Malay language is part of Malaysians) (August 30, 2006).

As shown in the above extract, Malaysian language and Malaysians are the focal point of the text. The text repeatedly uses the term Malaysian language to promote Malay language among Malaysians. It is apparent that the term Malaysian language is preferred in order to illustrate the inclusivity of the campaign. The above extract shows a determination to elevate Malay language in Malaysian society, which classifies Malay language as one of the key elements in the formation of modern and developed Malaysians. Besides the topic of moral values, it seems that the topic of Malay language is purposely chosen to be another important issue that needs to be highlighted in news articles during the period of Malaysia's Independence. This suggests that the National Language and Literature Month was not coincidentally launched during the same period.

There are two ways to explain the ‘special appearance’ of Malay language in August news articles. Firstly, as Malaysia intends to form a Malaysian version of cultural modernity, an identity symbol seems necessary to differentiate Malaysian modernity from any other versions of modernity. Not only Malay language, which is the language of Malay ethnic, is given a special status as the national language of Malaysia, it also appears as a symbol to represent the identity of Malaysians. It shows that the topic of Malay language is not featured in the text aimlessly. As shown in the above extract, actions are taken to seriously promote the language among Malaysians, which involve print and electronic media.

Secondly, as August is the month to celebrate Malaysia’s Independence from British colonisation, it indicates a back-to-basics approach to reinvent Malaysian society. It shows an attempt and effort to eliminate the remainder of British colonisation by drawing attention to the original symbol of Malaysian identity, which is, apparently, the language of Malay ethnic. Malay language is constantly associated with identity, to the extent it is chosen as the theme of the campaign. This is stated in the last sentence of the above abstract, “*Bahasa Melayu Citra Bangsa Malaysia*’ (Malay language is part of Malaysians)”. Despite the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic aspects of Malaysia, the emphasis on Malay language during the period of Malaysia’s Independence suggests that Malaysia yearns for the pre-colonisation version of identity. Indirectly, this justifies the Malay-centrism element of Malaysian modernity.

In conclusion, the analysis on the three recurring subjects shows great complexities of the Malaysian cultural modernisation project. It reveals commitments and ideologies to form a Malaysian version of cultural modernity, which is motivated by an ambition to differentiate future modern and developed Malaysia from the other modern and developed nations. The analysis shows that Western modernity is not an inspiration in the formation of modern Malaysians. Malaysian cultural modernity is mainly inspired by the Islamic civilisation and the period of cultural flourishing in the history of Islam, hence the appearance of the Islam Hadhari concept in the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity.

Apart from Islam, the analysis reveals an element of Malay-centrism in the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity. The Malay language and the Malay tradition are strongly encouraged among Malaysians, despite the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic aspects of Malaysia. The elements of Islam and Malay-centrism in the discourse of Malaysian

modernity shows the two facets of the Malaysian cultural modernisation project. The first facet refers to the objective to distinguish Malaysian modernity from Western modernity by establishing the good and bad versions of modernity. The second facet refers to the objective to rectify post-colonial Malaysians and to 'reset' Malaysian society back to the original pre-colonial form of Malaysians, hence the recurring subject of preserving Malay customs.

The analysis also discovers a division of Malaysian society into three groups, which shows that the project is not all plain sailing. From the analysed news articles, the term Malaysians is not exclusively and consistently used in the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, although it concerning the general population of Malaysia. Instead, the analysis points out three categories of Malaysians, which are the Muslims, the Malays and the rest. The Malaysian cultural modernisation project during the period of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership seems to favour the Malaysian Muslims and the Malay ethnic. The analysis on the subjects of Muslims and Malay ethnic shows that the project aims to structure and restructure the Malaysian society. To simplify, Muslims and Malays are chosen as key subjects in the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity because, they represent an ideology to form a single version of Malaysian modernity, of which there is only one religious identity and one ethnic identity. As it is undoable to convert the other ethnics to Malay ethnic, religious identity of the other ethnics is perceived to be adaptable and is considered as an ideal option to transform the general population of Malaysia.

## **5.2 A Critical Discourse Analysis of articles published in Berita Harian newspaper during the era of Najib Razak**

This section presents the second part of the findings from the analysis of Berita Harian newspaper. The results are based on data retrieved for the second time frame (2009-2018) of the analysis, which is the period of Najib Razak's premiership as the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia. The actual time frame of data collection is 03/04/2009-10/05/2018. The analysis reveals two recurring views with regard to Malaysian identity and modernity:

- 1) Constructing Malaysian nation
- 2) Protecting Malay language

### **5.2.1 Constructing Malaysian nation**

From 123 results retrieved in regard to the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, there are 73 news articles that discuss and promote the ideology of *bangsa Malaysia*. According to Malay dictionary, the word '*bangsa*' means nation or race. In this context, *bangsa Malaysia* is associated with nation building, therefore it is best described as Malaysian nation in English language. The ideology of Malaysian nation dominates Berita Harian's news reporting on identity and modernity from the year 2009 to 2018. This shows a significant distinction from the ideology revealed in the first time frame, which mainly connected to Islam (Islam Hadhari) and Malay ethnic.

Similar to the concept of Islam Hadhari, the ideology of Malaysian nation is related to the cultural modernisation project in Malaysia. Again, Mahathir's Vision 2020 is mentioned in several texts. While Islam Hadhari appears to be an original concept and an 'add-on' to the cultural modernisation project, Malaysian nation however, is not a new concept created by Najib Razak for the project. The idea to construct a Malaysian nation is already stated among the initial objectives of Vision 2020, which is initiated by Mahathir Mohamad. It is also the first objective of Vision 2020, aims to establish a united Malaysian nation that is made up of one ethnic and one destiny. However, the term *bangsa Malaysia* is not used consistently throughout the texts. It is mainly because of the introduction of '1Malaysia' concept within this period of nine years.

Similar to the concept of Malaysian nation, 1Malaysia is presented in the texts as a campaign to create unity among Malaysians. The 1Malaysia concept is initiated by Najib Razak, the prime minister of Malaysia at the time. This reveals an interesting trend in

Malaysian politics. Despite similar ambition among Malaysian prime ministers to strive for Malaysian modernity, however, each one of them has a different concept of cultural modernity. This is apparent in Mahathir's Vision 2020, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Islam Hadhari and Najib Razak's 1Malaysia. Although they all share the same aspiration for Malaysia and Malaysians, the difference in ideology has a strong influence on their approaches. As a result, there are different versions of cultural modernity in Malaysia.

In Malaysian nation context, the introduction of 1Malaysia appears as an 'alternative' and an 'improvised' version of Mahathir's *bangsa Malaysia*. The first indicator is the term used to describe the concept. *Bangsa Malaysia* has a specific definition, which either means Malaysian nation or Malaysian race. In contrast, 1Malaysia is a broad term, which can be interpreted in many ways. The terms *bangsa Malaysia* and 1Malaysia are used interchangeably across the 73 texts. This shows that the concept of *bangsa Malaysia* is not fully replaced by the concept of 1Malaysia. Interestingly, out of 73 news headlines, only seven mention 1Malaysia. The rest of the headlines use words such as *integriti* (integration), *bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation), *nasionalisme* (nationalism) and *perpaduan* (unity).

From the 73 news headlines, not a single headline uses the word Islam as part of the news framing and only two headlines mention the word Malay. This pattern of news reporting provides obvious dissimilarity to the style of news reporting during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership as a prime minister. The analysis on the first time frame shows the prominent subjects of Islam, Muslims and Malays, whereas the analysis on this second time frame highlights Malaysians in general as the subject of nation building. This is apparent from majority of the headlines. Below are nine examples of headlines taken from each year within the time frame 2009 to 2018:

- 1) *Pembinaan Negara Bangsa diterus* (The construction of nation state continues) (May 15, 2009)
- 2) *Tindakan afirmatif sari utama jati diri kebangsaan* (Affirmative action is the essence of national identity) (November 17, 2010)
- 3) *Membentuk citra jati diri unggul bangsa Malaysia* (Creating a distinctive identity of Malaysian nation) (April 28, 2011)

- 4) *Transformasi sosial satukan rakyat* (Social transformation unites the society) (August 15, 2012)
- 5) *Realisasi Wawasan 2020 dengan acuan Malaysia* (The Malaysian way of realising Vision 2020) (January 23, 2013)
- 6) *Idea, cabaran bentuk bangsa Malaysia* (Idea, challenges of constructing Malaysian nation) (May 21, 2014)
- 7) *Mencapai pertumbuhan bersifat inklusif* (Achieving inclusive development) (May 22, 2015)
- 8) *Cara didikan dalam membina identiti bangsa Malaysia* (Teaching strategy to construct the identity of Malaysian nation) (May 7, 2016)
- 9) *Merealisasikan bangsa Malaysia* (Realising Malaysian nation) (August 30, 2017)

The ideology of 1Malaysia seems to be rationalised clearly across the texts. This is different than the way Islam Hadhari is clarified in news reporting during the first time frame. Islam Hadhari tends to focus on Muslims in Malaysia, whereas 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation appear to be inclusive and aim at Malaysian citizens in general. The concept of 1Malaysia is introduced as soon as Najib Razak became a prime minister of Malaysia in April 2009. The first news reporting of 1Malaysia uses the ‘question & answer’ style between a journalist and Najib Razak:

**I describe this 1Malaysia concept as an important ‘mind set’ or mentality that every Malaysian citizen should have.** The idea of 1Malaysia is coined by prime minister, Najib Razak, **a politician who cares about the future of Malaysian generation** (April 19, 2009).

The above extract is Najib Razak’s answer to the interview question for a news article. This indicates two points. The first point is to convince Malaysian citizens into believing that the 1Malaysia concept is created for every citizen. The second point is to support the legitimacy of 1Malaysia by putting out a self-proclaimed statement regarding the ‘good quality’ of Najib Razak: a ‘caring’ prime minister who does not discriminate. From Najib Razak’s statement, he also stresses the reason behind his 1Malaysia concept, which is to follow in the previous prime ministers’ footsteps and generate an original idea or project to contribute to the Malaysian development:

To me, we have to start with our country’s history. **Every prime minister has his own icon, index or concept to represent himself.** For examples, Tunku Abdul

Rahman, who is also known as the Father of Independence in Malaysia emphasised that every citizen should have a home and food. Tun Abdul Razak Hussein initiated the New Economic Policy, National Principles, National Language Policy, National Education Policy and the National Front coalition, which were continued by Tun Hussein Onn. During Mahathir Mohamad's era, we can see many concepts like Clean, Fair and Trustworthy, Application of Islamic Values Policy, Look East Policy, Privatization Policy, Malaysia Incorporated Policy and Vision 2020. Finally, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with his open policies such as Lets Work With Me, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission. **As for me, I want to introduce '1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now', which is created to promote involvement of every ethnic in nation building. This means that every leader leaves a 'mark' to be remembered by the citizens** (April 19, 2009).

In the above extract, it shows a particular political trend and tradition in which every single prime minister of Malaysia has originated a policy or policies during their premiership. Oddly, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Islam Hadhari is not acknowledged in the text. The extract also indicates one of the duties of the succeeding prime minister, which is to continue the trend and tradition. Therefore, it is debatable whether the introduction of a new policy is necessary every time a new prime minister is appointed. It is because Najib Razak's 1Malaysia is practically similar to the concept of *bangsa Malaysia* created by Mahathir Mohamad. Instead of employing and continuing Mahathir's *bangsa Malaysia*, Najib Razak has the urge to create the 1Malaysia concept as his contribution to the country. This contributes to the complexity of cultural modernisation project in Malaysia because different leader comes with different ideology. This is apparent from the analysis on two time frames in this research.

The first time frame reveals the subjects of Muslim and Islam, which have a significant role in the development and construction of modern Malaysians. In contrast, Najib Razak attempts to offer a different approach to the cultural modernisation project by promoting national unity among Malaysians despite their ethnicity. From the above extract, it appears that Najib Razak's main motivation to create the 1Malaysia concept is to leave a 'mark' during his premiership. Therefore, it is questionable whether the 1Malaysia concept is actually created for the sake of Malaysian citizens.

Unity is publicised across the texts as the foundation of 1Malaysia. The word unity has many synonyms and the one Najib Razak refers to is ‘oneness’. He introduces the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia such as one language, one ethnic and one nation. This seems problematic because Malaysia is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation. It raises two important questions: what language? And what ethnic? The introduction of the aforementioned sub-concepts seems to contradict the initial objective of 1Malaysia:

Undeniably, the foundation of this concept is unity. **Everyone has to think about unity and one nation.** If we want to describe this country, it has to mean one Malaysia or 1Malaysia. It is important to compliment unity with specific image, relevant concept and rhetoric about Malaysia: **One language, one ethnic, one nation.** This is a **political concept and correlate with nation building** (April 19, 2009).

First and foremost, the analysis on both time frames reveals Berita Harian’s news writing style. It is apparent that news articles are not designed to inform but to ‘urge’ the readers to accept certain ideologies. Take the above extract for example, sentences such as “everyone has to think...” and “it has to mean...” illustrate ‘command’ rather than ‘inform’. It shows that media ownership has a profound influence on media content. This is evident from a number of Berita Harian’s news articles that are structured based on speeches given by particular Malaysian politicians. Also, this particular paragraph shows the linguistic part of the analysis, which is inevitable in some articles. The above extract is also described linguistically because of the existence of the lexical element of the text. In this context, the micro level of Fairclough's three-dimension approach of CDA is utilised.

The above extract reveals two key words to represent the 1Malaysia concept. The words unity and one are used in the text to validate 1Malaysia as an appropriate approach for Malaysian cultural modernisation project. As shown in the above extract, the 1Malaysia concept is linked to the ideology of one language, one ethnic and one nation. Therefore, it is essential to unpack the actual ‘oneness’ of 1Malaysia in order to provide a clear understanding of the concept. The analysis on the ‘oneness’ of 1Malaysia is divided into two subsections. The first subsection contains analysis on the ideology of one language. The second subsection contains analysis on one ethnic and one nation.

### One language

The analysis on 73 news articles regarding the ideology of *bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation) reveals Najib Razak's concept of 1Malaysia, which further uncovers the concept of one language. This section aims to find answer to the question: what language does this concept refers to? As previously stated, this is an important question due to the fact that the ideology of Malaysian nation is supposed to be inclusive as it aims at Malaysian citizens. There are many ethnics in Malaysia with Malay, Chinese and Indian being the main ones. Therefore, there are also many languages that come along with these ethnics. The most common languages in Malaysia are Malay, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil and English. Hence, the 'oneness' in terms of language requires clarification.

From 73 headlines regarding the concept of Malaysian nation, only one headline includes the word language, specifically, Bahasa Malaysia (Malaysian language). As previously discussed in the analysis on the first time frame, Bahasa Malaysia refers to *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language). Interestingly, the rest of the headlines are structured to exclude the term Malaysian language or Malay language although the concept of one language is discussed in the main body of texts. In this context, the ideology of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia are only highlighted as broad terms. Headlines are designed to portray either Malaysian nation or 1Malaysia as (first and foremost) a concept that promotes national unity.

Across the texts, the discourse on one language is consistently associated with the Malaysian language (Malay language). Although, initially, the ideology of 1Malaysia appears to be different than Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's ideology with regard to nation building, however, they both share a similar essence, which is to protect the Malay language. The idea to protect the Malay language is not simply a manifestation. The Malaysian government, during this second time frame, decides to end the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematic subjects in English at the school level. The use of English language in Malaysian education system in the first place shows that Malaysia, initially, does not entirely avoids the influence of Western, which in this context, the language. Based on the analysis on two time frames, it is apparent that alternative modernity is desired not because Malaysia wants to reject the influence of Western entirely, but it is because the government intends to implement a 'pick and mix' approach:

The decision made by the cabinet to end the *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (PPSMI) (Teaching and Learning of

Science and Mathematics in English) **is a wise action**, which can be explained in several viewpoints. Firstly, it has to be understood that the **disputation against PPSMI is not an attack to the English language** and it is not because it burden the pupils. The main premise of this disputation against PPSMI is because it will cause a set back to the development of national language as the language of knowledge. This is the important and main reason, so lets not be confused with the other reasons. **The key struggle in linguistic is to make *bahasa Malaysia* (Malaysian language) a *bahasa ilmu* (language of knowledge)** so it will be the biggest legacy. Therefore, **any action to underestimate its status and function is a betrayal towards Malay ethnic and national aspiration** (July 12, 2009).

Based on the sentences highlighted in the above extract, there are three important viewpoints revealed regarding the concept of one language. Firstly, the restructuring of the medium of teaching and learning at the school level. It shows that the construction of ‘one language’ in the nation building project requires a drastic action from the Malaysian government. Within only three months since the announcement of 1Malaysia, the cabinet decided to end the use of English language in teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics and replaced it with Malaysian language (Malay language) to make it consistent with the other subjects at school. In this context, the concept of ‘one language’ plays a part in education policy implementation, especially at the school level.

Secondly, the drastic action is considered wise and necessary although it may creates confusion among pupils. The ‘experiment’ to replace Malay with English and then back to English with Malay indicates the struggle to juggle between creating an alternative modernity/development and managing Westernisation and globalisation. Across the texts, language is perceived as an important aspect in nation building. As a multi-lingual country, the extract shows that English language is the first language to be tackled in order to ‘champion’ the Malay language at the school level. The extract also addresses main and important reason for the drastic action and clearly disassociates it with an attack to the English language. It highlights the main reason of the action, which is to make Malaysian language a medium and language of knowledge in Malaysia, hence indicates the chosen language to represent the ‘one language’ concept.

The chosen language to represent the concept is indirectly refers to Malay language. Based on the above abstract, there is a connection between the topic of one language and the Malay ethnic. The Malay ethnic is the only ethnic mentioned in the text. This indicates that the other languages in Malaysia are undermined. The implementation of the new educational policy shows that the Malaysian government intends to elevate (theoretically and practically) the Malay language to be a national language and a legacy of Malaysia. It suggests that the 1Malaysia concept is not introduced to create a new identity for Malaysians but to ‘instil’, presumably, part of the Malay identity into the other ethnics.

Thirdly, it reveals the status of the Malay ethnic in the constitution of Malaysia. Although, initially, 1Malaysia appears to be a promising inclusive concept for all Malaysians, the decision to pick Malay language as the language of Malaysian citizens reveals a different objective. Therefore, in this context, the concept of ‘oneness’ is best described as ‘Malayness’. From the extract, it is apparent that there is a connection between Malay and national aspiration. The reference to the Malay ethnic and national aspiration are put together in one sentence: “any action to underestimate its status and function is a betrayal towards the Malay ethnic and national aspiration”. The sentence also includes the word ‘betrayal’, which illustrates the status of the Malay ethnic in the construction of Malaysian nation. The exact Malay word used in the sentence is ‘*pengkhianatan*’, which is a strong negative word to describe betrayal. It illustrates Malay superiority in Malaysian political scene, hence determines the concept and direction of the nation building project. This is the case with regard to the ideology to create Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia.

The decision made to end the use of English language in Science and Mathematics at the school level is not stated in the texts as an attempt to attack the language. Instead, the analysis shows that English is perceived as a threat even though this language is used as a medium of teaching and learning for only two subjects. This is evident from the above extract: “the main premise of this disputation against PPSMI is because it will cause a set back to the development of national language as the language of knowledge”. Here, it shows the significance of English in post colonial Malaysia. As a country that once colonised by the British, English language seems to be more than just a foreign language. English language is perceived as part of the British colonisation, therefore its usage is assumed to affect the process of nation building:

**Malaysian language has to function as the medium of knowledge**, which in turn, will become the character and ethos (cooperation and patriotic) of Malaysian nation. Our **leaders need to be open about this matter and cannot be carried away and obsessed with English language**. In regard to nation building, language is an important factor and **should not easily be taken over by a foreign language (English)**, which is perceived as a solution to every intellectual concerns and civilisation as if it is an Aladdin magic lamp. Leaders or whoever think that way is considered irresponsible to their tradition and culture. **They are also people who lost their cultural identity because their mind are occupied by the fascination of Western's advanced technology and products**. The mentality to compete with the West in order to be on the same level of advancement is the reason why we are encouraged to imitate them. This is because **our soul have been colonised by English and our 'elites' were educated in English language whether in this country or in the United Kingdom, America and Australia**. As a result, we no longer see other language and other approach although educated people are supposed to have innovative thinking and free from being trapped in every aspect of 'Englishness'. What need to be reflected thoroughly and deeply is how **to protect Malaysian language and the citizens from deteriorating** (July 12, 2009).

Based on the above extract, English is given an exclusive attention in the discourse of nation building and national language despite being a foreign language. This suggests a characteristic of English in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Malaysia. The universality of English is seen as a threat to the Malay(sian) language. Therefore, there is an attempt to manage this 'product' of Western from becoming the Malaysian language. This is made clear in the extract above: "language is an important factor and should not be easily taken over by a foreign language (English)". Although there are many other languages in Malaysia, only English is portrayed negatively in the texts.

The analysis also reveals an ideology of the West, which is strongly connected to the English language. It becomes apparent that the government fears the influence of the West, which is seen capable to cause disruption in the process of nation building in Malaysia. English and the West are criticised in order to provide clear distinction between Malaysian modernity and Western modernity. It shows that the effort to develop or reconstruct Malaysian nation is not based on the idea of the West. Malaysia seems to have its own agenda and criteria in defining its nation, hence, in this context, the West is seen as a

threat, not an inspiration. It seems that English and the West are portrayed negatively in order to justify the ideology to redefine and restructure the Malaysians, which are seen to be carried away by the influence of the West.

Since language appears to be the most important factor in nation building, the effort to make Malay language a Malaysian language is extended to the other ethnics in Malaysia. The discourse on language is discussed within educational contexts. It started with the national schools and is extended to the vernacular schools. Education is seen as a powerful tool to nurture integration mainly among ethnics, therefore it is used as a first approach to create a national unity through the concept of 'oneness'. In order to promote the idea of one language comprehensively, vernacular education is also criticised to bring a negative impact in nation building. It is because schools are believed to play a vital role in creating unity, especially national unity. Therefore, in order to create a national unity among Malaysians, there is a suggestion to form a 'one concept' school, which means one type of educational model for all schools. This ideology seems to aim at Chinese and Indian vernacular schools in Malaysia. While English language is discouraged in order to minimise the influence of the West in Malaysia, vernacular schools are criticised for being ethnocentric and not contributing to the creation of Malaysian nation. However, unlike English language, vernacular schools are not seen as threat but more like a 'hiccup' in the nation building project.

The tone and style of news reporting are also different between the discourses of English language and vernacular schools. The discussion on English language contains negative connotations to paint a bad picture of the language and also the West. In contrast, news reporting on vernacular schools is structured to be persuasive and inviting. It is constructed to trigger realisation on the importance of unity among ethnics:

In plural society like Malaysia, education is more than just to educate children. It needs to be understood as a power that can create integration such as national unity. **Education is very important in the formation of Malaysian nation.** In this context, it is undeniable that **school is the best institution to nurture unity among youngsters.** Nowadays, not many youngsters are seen socialising with different group of ethnics and what is worst is that they do not have the intention to do so. One of the reasons is **because their parents send them to ethnocentric schools.** This social problem continues to happen at higher education institutions

and also workplaces. Therefore, **ethnic polarisation can be seen everywhere**. It is about time for us to **have the spirit of 1Malaysia by realising the idea to form a ‘one concept’ school and education institution** (November 8, 2009).

The above extract reveals two main points. Firstly, it highlights the role of education in the formation of national unity, which is presented alongside the Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia concepts. The text does not only emphasise the importance of education but also education institutions, especially schools. Schools are mentioned in a general manner, therefore it may refer to all primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. Also, the text only mentions ethnocentric schools, which means it is not limited to Chinese and Indian vernacular schools. It seems to include all vernacular schools in Malaysia. This indicates that the ideology to create a ‘one concept’ school is not an attempt to attack any particular school but all vernacular schools in general.

Secondly, the extract reveals a distinctive style of reporting in which news articles are constructed to feature the ‘cause and effect’ of certain issue. This shows a dissimilarity between the portrayal of the West and the Malaysian ethnics in news reporting. The West is considered the external factor, whereas Malaysian ethnics are the internal factor of nation building. These two factors are approached differently in the texts. English language and the West are portrayed negatively, whereas issues regarding Malaysian ethnics are reported based on racial sensitivity to avoid controversial remarks. News reporting during this second time frame are structured to support the concepts of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia, therefore texts are carefully constructed to appear inclusive for Malaysian citizens. This is illustrated in the extract above in which ethnic groups in Malaysia are not portrayed negatively. The text is designed to give focus to the ‘cause and effect’ of educational issues in Malaysia. In the extract, it explains the situation of racial polarization in Malaysia. Interestingly, there is no statement to show that the government is responsible for the ethnic division in Malaysia. Instead, the blame is placed on parents for sending their children to ethnocentric schools although vernacular schools are created and approved by the government.

Consequently, parents are used in the text as the ‘cause’ of the problem. As a result, youngsters become ethnocentric, thus makes it difficult for them to mingle with people from different ethnic backgrounds. This issue is made serious by stating that racial polarization continues to take place even at higher education institutions and workplaces,

which can be referred to as the ‘effect’ of the problem. There is no clear indication to suggest that vernacular schools are seen as threat to the nation building project. However, it suggests an important insight to the topic of Malaysian nation. Indirectly, it is an ‘attack’ to the vernacular schools that do not use the Malay language as the medium of teaching and learning, although the text attempts to be inclusive. Therefore, it seems that the text is actually aims at Chinese and Indian vernacular schools but not Malay schools. Reason beings, the concepts of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia intend to promote an ideology of ‘one language for all’ and Malay language is made obvious to be the chosen language for Malaysian nation. Although news articles regarding the role of education in nation building seem only related to the formation of national unity, however, they are also linked (indirectly) to the ideology of ‘one language’.

This illustrates a systematic approach to achieve the status of Malaysian nation or 1Malaysia. In this analysis, it first reveals the concept of Malaysian nation and followed by 1Malaysia. Later on, it reveals the ideology of ‘oneness’ to compliment the Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia concepts. Within the ideology of ‘oneness’, the analysis discovers a ‘one language’ concept, which leads to the discourse on Malay(sian) language. The analysis reveals that the concept of one language is not simply a meaningless ideology circulated in the media. News reporting on ‘one language’ are not only constructed to endorse the concept but also to justify and encourage drastic actions that are perceived to be necessary in forming a ‘one language’ nation. This refers to the action taken to end the usage of English language as the medium of teaching and learning in Science and Mathematics and also the attempt to banish vernacular schools in Malaysia. The attention given to the role of language in the nation building project shows that the government is determined to actualise the concept of ‘one language for all’ in Malaysia.

#### One ethnic and one nation

This section aims to provide a clear understanding on the second and third sub-concepts of 1Malaysia, which are the ideology of one ethnic and one nation. The findings of these two sub-concepts of 1Malaysia are combined under this section. It is because the one ethnic and one nation concepts are similar in terms of their main characteristic of which they are both ethnic-oriented. The analysis of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia concepts shows that the term one ethnic is used interchangeably with one nation. This section attempts to find answer to the question: what type of ethnicity does the Malaysian government attempts to create for the Malaysian citizens in realising Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia?

First and foremost, unlike the ‘one language’ concept, there is no obvious indication to connect the concepts of one ethnic and one nation with a specific ethnic in Malaysia. The analysis on these two sub-concepts begins with an examination of 73 news headlines with regard to the topics of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia. It reveals that none of the headlines highlight the narrow concepts of one ethnic and one nation. Only one headline contains the word Malay although it is not clearly associated with the concept of one ethnic or one nation:

*Salasilah orang Melayu, keterbukaan 1Malaysia* (Malay ancestry, the openness of 1Malaysia) (February 16, 2011)

From the headlines alone, it is not possible to find connection between certain ethnics and the ideology to create a singular ethnicity. In this context, headlines are structured to only bring attention to the general terms of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia, which are portrayed as a universal approach for the nation building project in Malaysia. Although none of the headlines clearly address the characteristic of one ethnic or one nation concepts, however, the analysis on 73 news articles reveals a connection between the two sub-concepts of 1Malaysia and the Malay ethnic.

The analysis also reveals one main difference between the discourse on one language and one ethnic/one nation. While the analysis on one language apparently reveals the role of Malay language in the formation of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia, news reporting on one ethnic and one nation, however, seem obscure and fail to offer a clear clarification of the concepts. In this context, news articles are structured to emphasise national unity rather than one ethnic or one nation, which is similar to the structure of the headlines. Interestingly, the analysis reveals a recurring theme, which is the acceptance of racial differences among Malaysians. This is different than the news reporting on ‘one language’ in which English language and vernacular schools are criticised rather than being accepted. Although the concepts of one language and one ethnic/one nation are created to support and compliment the ideology of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia, they appear to contradict one another and different in terms of the way they are being presented in the news articles. It seems that the formation of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia only jeopardise the multi-lingual aspect of the country, not the multi-racial:

**Diversity is actually wealth, which is supposed to be celebrated and not diminished or being replaced by trying to create a single identity.** Any concept that attempts to reject differences will only lead to catastrophe. In Malaysian context, there are several different ethnics, religions and cultures. **This diversity should be able to strengthen the identity of Malaysian citizens through the spirit of unity.** Therefore, it would be problematic to rebrand Malaysia as a country that only consists of one identity because **in all certainty, every ethnic would not want to lose their respective history.** “It would be a waste to restructure the Malaysians based on one culture because we are rich in culture and this cultural richness alone will make it difficult to achieve the concept of ‘one culture for all’. In addition, we are known because of our diversity and **certainly, any individual would not want to lose their history of identity**”, said senior lecturer in the department of media studies at Universiti Malaya, Dr Abu Hassan Hasbullah (June 20, 2011).

As previously discussed, the ideology to create Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia consists of three main objectives based on the notion of ‘oneness’. These objectives, which are identified as the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia include plan to rebrand Malaysia as a country that is made up of one language, one ethnic and one nation. The analysis on the concept of one language reveals the government effort to use Malay language as a common language among Malaysian citizens. The ideology of one language seems to benefit the Malay ethnic and ensures protection of the Malay language. Hence, the analysis on the concepts of one ethnic and one nation are anticipated to reveal the discourse of Malay culture. However, the above extract shows a different approach for the one ethnic and one nation concepts. Firstly, the extract tends to emphasise diversity and differences among Malaysian citizens. It also appears as a criticism towards the idea of one ethnic/one nation. In the text, the term ‘unity’ is not linked to the concept of ‘oneness’ like the news reporting on one language concept. Instead, the word ‘unity’ is used in the text to encourage acceptance of racial differences. This shows a different viewpoint to look at the ideology of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia.

On the surface, it seems that there is no attempt to promote a concept of ‘one ethnic for all’ and there is no sign to suggest an endorsement of the Malay culture. In general, news reporting regarding ‘one ethnic’ and ‘one nation’ are structured to give focus to the subject of multi-ethnicity in Malaysia. In this context, ethnic diversity is highlighted as the key

component in the formation of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia. Ethnic diversity is considered as a precious heritage of Malaysia and has to be protected and cherished by all Malaysians. In comparison to the analysis on Malaysian language, it seems strange and confusing that diversity in terms of language is not considered valuable and part of Malaysian identity. Drastic action to make Malay language a Malaysian language is seen as appropriate and necessary. Interestingly, language is excluded from being part of the components of diversity in Malaysia as stated in the above extract: “in Malaysian context, there are several different ethnics, religions and cultures”. While differences in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture are mentioned, language differences are not acknowledged. Across the texts, language is detached from the discourse of diversity, possibly to avoid scepticism towards the one language concept.

The above extract also points out the unfavourable portrayal of the one ethnic and one nation concepts. The concepts are believed to be problematic because they involve difference races in Malaysia and it seems impossible to define Malaysians based on one ethnic without causing dissatisfaction among the Malaysian citizens. The reluctance among Malaysians to lose their cultural and ethnic identity is mentioned twice in the extract, which indicates that this is the key reason to challenge the one ethnic and one nation concepts. Across the texts, it shows that news articles are written with a thoughtful intention to avoid any racism remarks, which will cause disruption in the project to form Malaysian nation or 1Malaysia. It also illustrates an unbiased reporting on the ideology of one ethnic and one nation by providing various viewpoints.

The above extract includes direct quotation from a senior lecturer at Universiti Malaya, Dr Abu Hassan Hasbullah. In the discourses of one ethnic and one nation, there are several occasions news reports include direct quotations from Malaysian scholars. This makes the reporting on one ethnic and one nation different than the reporting on one language. The discourse of one language shows a distinctive style of reporting in which Malay politicians’ viewpoints are frequently used in the texts as a way to strengthen certain ideologies and statements. In contrast, the analysis on the topics of one ethnic and one nation reveals that news articles are structured to not only incorporate Malays’ perspectives, but to also include viewpoints from the other ethnics. In this context, a diversity of perspectives illustrates Berita Harian’s effort to provide a fair and inclusive reporting. Also, direct quotations featured in the texts are not simply taken from random

sources. News reports on one ethnic and one nation appear to only utilize viewpoints from reputable sources such as academic scholars:

Lecturer in the department of Social Science at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), **Dr Kntayya Mariappan said**, the **1Malaysia concept is an open concept**. It is entirely up to the citizens of this country who are from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds to fill this concept and make it a reality by sharing one spirit (June 20, 2011).

With regard to the one nation concept, the most important aspect of the discussions is, **religion has a significant role in nurturing and maintaining social solidarity**. This role refers to action and effort to help one another with a belief that we are all God's creation who are created to be supportive of one another despite our races. **In Malaysian nation context, this solidarity means ownership of feelings, opinions and ambitions that are shared among Malaysians**. In other words, as Malaysian ethnic, we actually share similar fate in the land of Malaysia (**Teo Kok Seong**, deputy director at the Institute of the Malay World and Civilization, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) (June 8, 2011)

Differences in terms of values among ethnics are also the reason that make relationship between races more complicated. Every ethnic has certain cultural practices that form their identity. **If their identity are questioned, it will only bring harm to our country's security and prosperity**. The lack of solidarity among ethnics will cause instability in our country. It will cause racial tension and political chaos. If this happens, it means we cannot achieve national unity among Malaysians (**Dr Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani Ahmad Sabri**, Deputy Director at the *Institute Pemikiran Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad*, Universiti Utara Malaysia) (May 25, 2013).

The above three abstracts are some of the examples to show that the topics of one ethnic and one nation are discussed by featuring academic scholars in Malaysia who come from different ethnic or racial backgrounds. The above extracts represent perspectives from Malay, Chinese and Indian scholars as these are the main ethnics in Malaysia. Although these three abstracts are taken from three different news articles, they share one similar theme, which is ethnic solidarity among Malaysian citizens.

From the above extracts, there is no obvious indication of the actual ‘oneness’ of Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia concepts although the initial objective of the concepts is to create a nation made up of one language, one ethnic and one nation. Instead, the discourses of one ethnic and one nation are profoundly related to national unity with a sole focus on toleration among ethnics in Malaysia. In this context, it appears that the concepts of one ethnic and one nation are best defined as concepts to create national unity through acceptance of each other’s racial, religious and cultural differences. It seems that the one ethnic and one nation concepts are not an ideology to dismiss the multi-ethnic aspect of the country as opposed to the one language concept, of which Malay language is promoted and other languages are suppressed.

Based on the analysis of one ethnic and one nation concepts, racial, religious and cultural differences are acknowledged whereas language differences are not mentioned in the texts. This suggests that language is purposely excluded from the texts in order to avoid criticism of Malay language as a universal language for Malaysian citizens. Unlike one language, the discourses on one ethnic and one nation appear to show the inclusivity of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation concepts, which are portrayed to be compatible with every ethnic in Malaysia. The inclusivity of the concepts are not only apparent in the texts but also in the structure of the texts. Although *Berita Harian* is known as a Malay-centric newspaper, news articles on one ethnic and one nation are structured to offer diversity of opinion. Based on the analysed texts, it seems that *Berita Harian* is cautious in choosing its sources. Topics that are considered sensitive and complex appear to be addressed using a particular journalistic style that differs from the coverage of other topics. This is apparent in the coverage of the one ethnic and one nation concepts in which news articles are structured to include appropriate sources to support certain viewpoints.

Religion is considered a sensitive subject due to the fact that Malaysia is a multi-religious state. The religious aspect of the one ethnic and one nation concepts is discussed in the texts based on non-Muslim perspective. In the above extract, it shows that the text uses a Chinese scholar as news source. The Chinese scholar, Teo Kok Seong provides statement on religion in a general sense. This implies that the Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia concepts are not subject to any particular religion or to promote religion of the dominant ethnic, which is Islam. This is different than the discourse on religion during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s premiership in which Islam or specifically, Islam Hadhari is widely promoted as a universal religion for Malaysian citizens. In contrast, Islam is not

emphasised during Najib Razak's premiership although the analysis on the second time frame shows that religion still has a role in nation building.

In this context, the text appears to only give focus to the universality of religion, which is to assume that there is only one God and every individual is a creation of one God despite various religious beliefs. This suggests that the concepts of one ethnic and one nation are not only applicable to all ethnics but also to all religions in Malaysia. This type of inclusivity tends to create a positive portrayal of the Malaysian nation and 1Malaysia concepts although this is not the case with regard to the ideology of one language. From the above abstracts, it also shows that *Berita Harian* is not entirely an ethnocentric newspaper as it addresses issues facing by the Malaysians and it acknowledges the need to respect diversity among Malaysians in creating Malaysian nation or 1Malaysia. In comparison between the discourses of one language and one ethnic/one nation, it reveals that language is not considered a sensitive issue unlike religion, race and culture. Issues concerning religion, race and culture are presented differently as a precaution to avoid racial tension and political chaos in order to ensure the continuity of the Malaysian nation or 1Malaysia project.

#### Two layers of 1Malaysia

The analysis on one ethnic and one nation reveals a distinctive style of news reporting. It appears that there are two 'layers' of the 1Malaysia concept, which I classified as the outer layer and the inner layer of 1Malaysia. The topics of one ethnic and one nation are presented in the texts in two stages. The first stage represents the outer layer of 1Malaysia whereas the second stage represents the inner layer of 1Malaysia. The first stage signifies the portrayal of 1Malaysia as a universal and inclusive concept for Malaysian citizens despite their racial, religious and cultural differences. In this stage, the inclusivity and universality of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation are illustrated in the texts to promote the second and third sub-concepts of 1Malaysia: one ethnic and one nation. It indicates an attempt to differentiate the concepts of one ethnic and one nation from the concept of one language.

Unlike the ideology of one language, the one ethnic and one nation concepts are clearly connected to race, religion and culture hence require a different style of reporting to avoid any racism remarks. Therefore, in the first stage of reporting, it seems that the focus and essence of the texts is diversity. Interestingly, the one ethnic concept is 'prescribed' to

Malaysian citizens as it is believed to be an effective concept to fix racial, religious and cultural polarisation in Malaysia. In this context, the main recurring viewpoint is toleration among ethnics, which dominates the first stage of the reporting on one ethnic/one nation. As previously stated, this stage shows a dedication to form a positive portrayal of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation. The texts are categorized into an outer and inner layers because they are structured to convey two different messages regarding the topics of one ethnic and one nation. The analysis reveals that the outer layer of 1Malaysia appears to be a 'cover-up' to conceal the actual objective of the one ethnic and one nation concepts. On the surface, the concepts seem tailored to the religious and ethnic pluralism in Malaysia. It tends to show that *Berita Harian* is not an ethno-centric newspaper and Najib Razak's 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation concepts are non-discriminatory. Also, the outer layer of 1Malaysia is the main body of the texts, therefore the only obvious contents are the inclusivity and universality of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation.

The analysis on the second stage of the reporting on one ethnic and one nation reveals a significant discovery of the inner layer of 1Malaysia. This inner layer contains the actual objective of the one ethnic and one nation concepts, which is obscurely presented in the texts. In this stage, it reveals a hidden aspect of toleration, which seems to contradict the 'type' of toleration that is encouraged in the first stage of the reporting. Although news articles on one ethnic and one nation initially intend to describe 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation as universal and inclusive concepts, however, the analysis on the inner layer of 1Malaysia reveals an ideology to form 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation based on one particular ethnic, which is the Malay ethnic. This ideology is not apparent in the texts as they are structured to focus on racial, religious and cultural diversity in order to encourage toleration among ethnics in Malaysia.

Similar to the way racial, religious and cultural diversity is presented in the texts, the analysis on the topic of toleration among ethnics in Malaysia also reveals an interesting style of reporting. This topic is carefully and systematically structured to 'hide' the actual denotation of toleration that the news producers intend to instil in Malaysian citizens. In this context, the encouragement of toleration among ethnics can be interpreted in two ways. Primarily, across the texts, toleration generally means acknowledging and respecting other peoples differences in terms of race, religion and culture. However, the analysis on this topic shows that the actual toleration the texts aim to convey (in a tricky way) is accepting Malay privileges and ideology to elevate the Malay ethnic as the main

determinant of the one ethnic and one nation concepts. As previously discussed, it is quite challenging to disclose the real interpretation of toleration circulated in the texts because they are structured to only highlight the inclusivity and universality of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation concepts by repeatedly drawing attention to the topic of diversity.

This is evident from the headlines and the structure of news writing with regard to the topic of toleration. In journalism, the 5W1H framework is one of the most universal tools to gather, analyse and organise information. It refers to an approach to answer six basic questions in gathering information about nearly any subject: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. There are few common formats of news writing such as hourglass, inverted pyramid and narrative. In one ethnic and one nation context, news articles are structured based on the inverted pyramid format in which the most important information is placed at the beginning of the articles. In this regard, headlines and introductory paragraphs are designed to feature and accentuate key terms, which are inclusivity, universality, diversity, unity, integration and toleration. These are the terms that are repeatedly associated with the 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation concepts, which are also reflected in the 5W1H framework of the news articles:

The 1Malaysia concept is introduced by Najib Razak when he entered office as prime minister on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2009. In particular, 1Malaysia is an idea, principle and plan **to create national unity** and to develop the nation. As repeatedly stated by Najib Razak himself, he intends to continue the legacy of the previous five prime ministers. This legacy is the country's vision and mission, **based on two important themes: unity among ethnics and national integration.** These two themes remain as the essence of the various concepts and policies introduced by the previous prime ministers. **Unity among Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnics, as well as national/regional integration between the Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia have to be strengthened at all time** because these are the essential precondition to ensure stability towards achieving the country's goal. The unity and integration, in this context, mean the continuation of pluralism, which is the foundation of our Independence and formation of Malaysia. Therefore, 1Malaysia is certainly not a concept that endorses assimilation to dismiss ethnics identity in Malaysia (August 12, 2010).

The above extract is an example to illustrate Berita Harian's news structure with regard to the 1Malaysia concept. The extract is an introductory paragraph of news article entitled "*Gagasan 1Malaysia mulia, tak mengelirukan*" (1Malaysia is a noble concept, not confusing). This particular news article consists of nine paragraphs in total, written by Teo Kok Seong, a professor of sociolinguistic studies at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The extract shows that the topic of 1Malaysia is presented in the text using the inverted pyramid format. This introductory paragraph is structured to immediately draw attention to the terms unity and integration. It suggests the importance of these two terms as they are repeatedly mentioned in the text. The connection made between the 1Malaysia concept and the words unity and integration shows the inclusive and universal side of 1Malaysia. As previously discussed, externally, the ideology of 1Malaysia/Malaysian nation is introduced to the public as a necessary measure to achieve the country's goal, which is to become a developed nation.

The text appears to manipulate the word pluralism to 'trick' readers into believing that the 1Malaysia concept is created for all ethnics in Malaysia. It is also structured to feature the main races in Malaysia: Malay, Chinese and Indian. From this introductory paragraph alone, the text manages to answer all six basic questions of the 5W1H framework:

- 1) Who: The prime minister, Najib Razak
- 2) What: The 1Malaysia concept
- 3) When: 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2009
- 4) Where: Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia
- 5) Why: To create national unity and develop the nation
- 6) How: Unity among ethnics and national integration

In this context, it is apparent that news' headline and main body are utilized as an 'advertisement' platform to 'sell' the ideology of 1Malaysia to every ethnic in Malaysia. Also, the news article is not written by Berita Harian's journalist. A Chinese professor is chosen to write the article, which is for a (commonly known) Malay-centric newspaper. This demonstrates that ethnicity is the most significant aspect of the 1Malaysia concept hence requires a 'special' approach. This special approach seems to be identical to the basic advertising approach in which repetition of certain terms is perceived to be effective for attracting attention and building brand awareness or in this context, ideology awareness. From the analysis, it appears that Berita Harian aims to 'sell' the ideology of

1Malaysia to the main ethnics as they make up a majority of Malaysia population. Therefore, acceptance of 1Malaysia among these main ethnics ensures success of the cultural modernisation project in Malaysia. The ‘desperation’ to ‘sell’ the ideology is displayed across the texts:

The 1Malaysia concept, introduced by Najib Razak, has increased confidence among Chinese with regard to the government’s effort to make a difference. MCA deputy president, Liow Tiong Lai said, **the Chinese community in Malaysia fully support 1Malaysia** because they are confident that the concept is able to put the country on the right track. He added, Najib Razak’s hard work to make amendment of the national policy for the sake of all ethnics **is much appreciated by the Chinese community. “What our prime minister is doing through his concept, which represents one dream, one ethnic and one nation is actually beneficial to the Chinese community”** (June 22, 2009).

The above extract is another example to show that the concept of 1Malaysia, concerning ethnicity, is not only introduced as a news worthy topic, but is also ‘advertised’ as an effective concept based on the insertion of ‘testimony’ from the Chinese community. The text incorporates statement from MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) deputy president, which in a way strengthened the legitimacy of 1Malaysia. It suggests that Najib Razak’s concept is already accepted by the Chinese community, which is the second largest ethnic group after the ethnic Malay majority. This sort of statement or testimony has a potential to influence the other ethnics to follow suit. The ‘advertisement’ or ‘testimony’ of 1Malaysia is (first and foremost) made apparent in the headline, which read *“Masyarakat Cina sokong konsep dianjurkan Najib”* (The Chinese community fully support Najib’s concept”).

Therefore, at first glance, the ideology of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation seems to be a ‘breath of fresh air’ to the cultural modernisation project in Malaysia. In the beginning, Najib Razak’s concepts appear to be completely different than the concept introduced by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation concepts seem promising to include Malaysian citizens in general. However, the analysis on the inner layer of 1Malaysia reveals a different outcome. It turned out that Najib Razak’s and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s concepts share a significant similarity rather than dissimilarity. The analysis shows that their concepts have a sense of favouritism.

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi tends to favour the Muslims whereas Najib Razak favours the Malay ethnic. It indicates that the cultural modernisation project in Malaysia is not free from discrimination and prejudice. This is verified by two recurring subjects revealed in an analysis of the inner layer of 1Malaysia: learning Malaysian history and understanding the Malaysian constitution. These recurring subjects signify the actual objective of 1Malaysia. Although these two subjects are repeatedly circulated across the texts, they are not clearly associated with the meaning of 1Malaysia, which is the reason why they are considered the inner layer of 1Malaysia.

The most significant difference between the outer layer and the inner layer of 1Malaysia is the way texts/news are structured to address them. The outer layer refers to the emphasis of inclusivity and universality of 1Malaysia, whereas the inner layer denotes the importance of learning Malaysian history and understanding the Malaysian constitution. As presented above, the inclusivity and universality of 1Malaysia dominate the discourses on one ethnic and one nation in *Berita Harian* newspaper. In this context, 1Malaysia is consistently described as an inclusive and universal concept, which tend to shadow the inner layer of 1Malaysia.

As stated in the previous paragraph, texts/news structure is the main indicator to point out the outer and inner layers of 1Malaysia. Interestingly, unlike the topics of inclusivity and universality, the discourses on Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are not presented as part of the description of 1Malaysia although they are relevant to the aforementioned topics. Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are used interchangeably in the texts and presented as a 'reminder' to alert Malaysian citizens on the jurisprudence aspect of 1Malaysia. The discourses on Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are presented in the texts to put a limitation on the inclusivity and universality of the 1Malaysia concept. These two subjects are categorised as the inner layer of 1Malaysia because they are not presented concurrently with the topics of inclusivity and universality in the texts.

News articles on Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are structured to be separated from news articles on the definition of 1Malaysia. This suggests that *Berita Harian* attempts to avoid sending mixed messages, which might create confusion with regard to the definition of 1Malaysia that the newspaper intends to proclaim. Presented separately in different news articles, the discourses on Malaysian history and Malaysian

constitution consist of one recommended action, which is to ensure Malaysian citizens are well-informed about Malaysian history. It is perceived to be important in order to achieve the proclaimed objectives of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation. Initially, unity among ethnics and national integration are publicised as important measures to achieve the status of 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation. In this context, the inner layer of 1Malaysia exposes the main method to achieve unity among ethnics and national integration, which is through learning Malaysian history.

As discussed earlier, the analysis on the discourses of one ethnic and one nation reveals two sides of 1Malaysia. 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation are essentially identical although they are used interchangeably across the texts. 1Malaysia is introduced by prime minister Najib Razak to 'rebrand' Mahathir's concept of Malaysian nation. Nevertheless, these two concepts share similar objective, which is to include (arguably) every Malaysian citizens in Malaysia's cultural modernisation project. The analysis reveals that the outer and inner layers of 1Malaysia represent respectively two different interpretations of the 1Malaysia concept. The below extract is the best example to illustrate the inner layer of 1Malaysia. First and foremost, the analysis reveals that the inner layer of 1Malaysia made an appearance approximately two years after Najib Razak introduced his 1Malaysia concept. This implies that the first two years of Najib Razak's premiership, *Berita Harian* allocates its news reports to only highlight the outer layer of 1Malaysia, which is the first interpretation of the 1Malaysia concept.

A scholar, A Aziz Deraman said, the **identity formation of Malaysia cannot be done recklessly by implementing the principle of equality in every sector**. A Aziz, who represents GAPENA further elaborates, **the identity of a multi-ethnic nation like Malaysia should be based on similarity** in terms of symbol, national institution, jurisdiction, national values that are mutually shared, loyalty in politic and the confidence to describe themselves as one ethnic. This should also includes element of moral values, moral, strong ethic, democratic, liberal toleration in the context of acceptance, fair and impartial but does not mean equal, progressive and prosperous, competitive, perseverance, competent and dynamic (April 28, 2011)

The above extract reveals the second interpretation of 1Malaysia. The extract is taken from a news article published in 2011 entitled "*membentuk citra jati diri unggul bangsa Malaysia*" (forming a distinguished identity of Malaysian nation). From the extract, it

shows that there is no apparent connection between the text and the term 1Malaysia. The text prefers to use the term Malaysian nation instead, not only in the main body of the text but also in the headline. This highlights the primary difference between the structure of the outer layer and inner layer of 1Malaysia. News reports on the outer layer of 1Malaysia appear to mainly use the term 1Malaysia, whereas news reports on the inner layer of 1Malaysia generally use the terms Malaysian nation and identity formation.

The extract shows that identity formation of Malaysians is the topic sentence of the text. Instead of using the term 1Malaysia, the text focuses on the topic of identity formation, which is essentially the core of the 1Malaysia concept. The topic of identity formation is not emphasized during the time 1Malaysia is promoted and advertised as an inclusive and a universal concept for Malaysian citizens. It seems that this particular topic is purposely omitted from being associated with the proclaimed interpretation of 1Malaysia during the first two years of its introduction. This reveals the second interpretation of 1Malaysia, which appears to contradict the first one. This might be the reason why news articles have two different structures in reporting on the topics of one ethnic and one nation as opposed to the topic of one language.

The second interpretation of 1Malaysia is a perspective to redefine the meaning of equality that is repeatedly associated with the 1Malaysia concept in its first stage of reporting. Equality is redefined as a term associated with oneness and similarity among ethnics in Malaysia. This raises issue regarding the first interpretation of 1Malaysia, which the concept claims to be inclusive and universal by highlighting the need to respect and accept other people's differences in terms of race, religion and culture. On the one hand 1Malaysia seems to offer a fair and equal approach to form a Malaysian nation by acknowledging the diversity aspect of the country and encouraging unity among ethnics. On the other hand fairness and equality for Malaysian citizens are limited to a certain degree as shown in the abstract: "fair and impartial but does not mean equal".

This indicates that 1Malaysia is not a concept that endorses an absolute equality for Malaysian citizens as repeatedly stated and highlighted in the first stage of its reporting. The second stage of news reporting of 1Malaysia tends to underline the main limitation of the 1Malaysia concept, which is the restriction of equality. In this context, the terms fair, equal and impartial are described in-depth in order to clarify the distinction between them. As stated in the above extract, the principle of equality with regard to the 1Malaysia

concept is considered to be problematic thus requires clarification. The text illustrates the need to re-evaluate the aspect of equality promoted by the 1Malaysia concept. It indicates a suggestion to replace the idea of equality with similarity. The word similarity is described in detail, which apparently connected to the ideology of 'oneness'. As previously discussed, the ideology of 'oneness' is the foundation of the sub-concepts (one language, one ethnic and one nation) of 1Malaysia.

In the extract, similarity among ethnics is perceived as an important factor in a multi-ethnic nation like Malaysia and should be treated as a main indicator of Malaysians identity. The Malaysians identity is determined by a mutually shared symbol, national institution, jurisdiction, national values and political loyalty. The text also includes the term 'one ethnic' as a concept that should be embraced by Malaysians. The discourse on similarity among ethnics differentiate the second stage of news coverage of 1Malaysia from the first one. In the second stage of news coverage of 1Malaysia, the ideology to respect cultural diversity in Malaysia and to offer equality for Malaysian citizens are gradually dismissed in the texts.

The topics of inclusivity, universality, diversity, unity, integration and toleration with regard to the formation of 1Malaysia are replaced by the topic of similarity among ethnics. In Malaysian context, similarity among ethnics is quite a tricky subject because every ethnic in Malaysia has its own identity, tradition, cultural practices and values. The expectation to define Malaysian citizens based on similarity among them might result in the dismissal of certain ethnics and cultures. Therefore, it is important to explore the inner layer of 1Malaysia in order to gain clarification on this matter. From the analysis, the topic of similarity among ethnics is indirectly connected to the two recurring subjects revealed in an analysis of the inner layer of 1Malaysia, which are learning Malaysian history and understanding the Malaysian constitution. It shows that similarity among ethnics is not a 'stand-alone' topic as it is based on Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution:

He said, **Malaysian citizens, especially the young generation should be given awareness of the aspects of statehood** such as history knowledge, literature knowledge, ethnics relation, sociocultural, ethnics and tribes background, traditions, kingship and the government, and also state rights as opposed to ethnic rights. In geopolitics context, a mutual contract is already sealed in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, which is the supreme law of the country. Therefore,

**1Malaysia is created based on the Malaysian constitution and National Principles.** According to A Aziz, strategic planning and development of identity is connected to the cultural development, which is important for a multi-ethnic nation. **Malaysia needs an identity symbol in accordance to the concept of Malaysian nation** (April 28, 2011).

The above extract is taken from the same news article that gives emphasis on similarity among ethnics. It points out three issues regarding the 1Malaysia concept. Firstly, the Malaysian citizens are narrowed down to young generation, which is the targeted group that should be aware of the aspects of statehood. The aspects of statehood are described in detail, which seem to represent the big subjects, Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution. The learning and understanding of Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are deemed important among the young generation. This implies an involvement of educational institutions in distributing knowledge about Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution.

Secondly, the text mentions the 1Malaysia concept. In this context, 1Malaysia is not the focal point of news report unlike news reports on the outer layer of 1Malaysia. The text shows the relevance of the 1Malaysia concept to the Malaysian constitution and National Principles. This proves that the 1Malaysia concept is subject to terms and conditions of the Malaysian constitution and National Principles. Therefore, the proclaimed universality and inclusivity of 1Malaysia, which are highlighted in the first stage of its reporting are disputable. It also shows that 1Malaysia is not an open concept although the analysis on the outer layer of 1Malaysia reveals otherwise. It is because the constitution of Malaysia consists of Article 153, which is one of the most controversial articles in the Malaysian constitution. Article 153 refers to the special position of the Malay ethnic in Malaysia, which conflicted with the principle of universality and inclusivity promoted by the 1Malaysia concept.

Thirdly, the text gives emphasis on identity symbol, which is considered essential in representing Malaysia and Malaysians. It appears that a new identity symbol is only required because of the formation of Malaysian nation. In this respect, identity symbol has to represent similarity among ethnics. This is based on the statement mentioned in the previous extract: “the identity of a multi-ethnic nation like Malaysia should be based on similarity in terms of symbol, national institution, jurisdiction, national values and political

loyalty". Similarity in identity symbol among ethnics is indirectly connected to the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia, which are one language, one ethnic and one nation. Although 1Malaysia is generally promoted as a universal and an inclusive concept, its sub-concepts appear to have different objectives.

Initially, the one language concept seems to be the only sub-concept of 1Malaysia that favours the Malay ethnic. However, the analysis on the one ethnic and one nation concepts reveals a connection between these two concepts and the Malay ethnic. This is due to the fact that the importance of learning Malaysian history and understanding Malaysian constitution are the recurring subjects revealed in the analysis. As a Malay-dominated country, the Malaysian history and the Malaysian constitution, inevitably incorporate the Malay discourse. The special position of the Malay ethnic in Malaysia is enshrined in a number of controversial policies and affirmative actions. Therefore, cultural modernisation project to restructure the Malaysian citizens through the implementation of the 1Malaysia concept seems to be another action to protect the Malay ethnic.

Furthermore, the text incorporates A Aziz Deraman's viewpoint as a supporting statement to clarify the meaning of the terms fair, equal and impartial. A Aziz Deraman is featured in the text to represent GAPENA (The Federation of National Writers Associations of Malaysia). GAPENA is a well-known establishment that ensures the continuity of the Malay language. Therefore, the clarification of the terms fair, equal and impartial are based on Malay perspective. This shows a significant difference between the news coverage of diversity and the news coverage of equality in *Berita Harian* newspaper. News reports on diversity tend to feature multi-ethnic perspectives and include sources from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, whereas news reports on equality tend to only feature Malay perspectives and only include sources from Malay-ethnic background.

The subjects of Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are interconnected because the legal framework and rights of Malaysian citizens are determined by the Malaysian history. The analysis reveals that national policies and affirmative actions are not independently initiated by prime ministers. In the context of cultural modernisation in Malaysia, national policy such as 1Malaysia and affirmative actions to create a nation that is made up of one language, one ethnic and one nation are tied with Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution. Interestingly, the significance of Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are not made apparent in the news reports on 1Malaysia. The subjects of

Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution are only detectable during the analysis on the inner layer of 1Malaysia:

**Although the 13 May 1969 incident is the low point of Malaysian history, there is a blessing behind the incident.** The incident has **encouraged the government to execute social transformation in order to strengthen unity among citizens** in this country. Various initiatives have been introduced by the government such as the National Principles, New Economic Policy (NEP), national education and national language. All of these initiatives are meant to establish citizens and a nation that are unified, democratic, liberal, progressive, scientific, fair and equitable. **They are proven to be effective in tackling racism and creating citizens who are tolerant and understanding.** Although there are some people who voiced out their dissatisfaction to jeopardise unity among citizens in this country, this issue has been successfully resolved by the dedicated **National Security Council** (April 8, 2013).

The above extract is taken from a news article entitled “*Kerajaan stabil jadikan Malaysia maju, sejahtera*” (A stable government makes Malaysia modern, harmonious). First and foremost, the headline does not suggest a connection between the news article and the 1Malaysia concept. Instead, the headline gives focus to the general objective of the cultural modernisation project, which is to make Malaysia a modern and a harmonious country. Article-wise, the 1Malaysia concept is only briefly mentioned in the last few paragraphs of the text although the article is about 1Malaysia. In this context, the term Malaysian nation is frequently used, supposedly to divert attention from the 1Malaysia concept. The above extract and the news article in which the extract comes from represent the typical news structure of the inner layer of 1Malaysia.

The above extract shows the correlation between Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution. It suggests that social transformation, which is the essence of the cultural modernisation project, has to be actualised only because of the 13 May incident (racial riots). The biggest incident in Malaysian history is used in the text to justify the implementation of several controversial policies and actions. All of the initiatives mentioned in the extract are indirectly favour the Malay ethnic as unpacked in this findings chapter. Ironically, these pro-Malay initiatives are considered appropriate in creating a unified citizens. The extract also mentions toleration and understanding among citizens.

Toleration is one of the key terms that is repeatedly mentioned in news reports on the outer layer of 1Malaysia. The interpretation of toleration differs in the two layers of 1Malaysia. In the outer layer of 1Malaysia, toleration is interpreted as a term to respect other people's differences, whereas in the inner layer of 1Malaysia, toleration means accepting the government's pro-Malay initiatives that are based on Malaysian history and Malaysian constitution.

The initiatives have several objectives, which include the establishment of a democratic country. However, this particular objective seems unachievable because the freedom to criticise the government is prohibited as stated in the above extract: "although there are some people who voiced out their dissatisfaction to jeopardise unity among citizens in this country, this issue has been successfully resolved by the dedicated National Security Council". It shows that the pro-Malay initiatives are protected by the government through the National Security Council. It also indicates that criticism towards the government's initiatives is not welcomed because criticism is considered a threat to national unity.

To sum up, the unpacking of the outer and inner layers of 1Malaysia reveals a whole picture of the 1Malaysia concept. The analysis reveals that news reports on one ethnic and one nation, which are the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia are presented across the texts like a jigsaw puzzle. In order to produce a complete 'picture' of 1Malaysia, it requires the 'assembly' of interlocking terms. It shows that 1Malaysia is a two-sided concept. The first side, which I classified as the outer layer of 1Malaysia is the appealing side of the concept. It represents 1Malaysia as a universal and an inclusive concept that accommodate diversity among Malaysian citizens. The second side, which I classified as the inner layer of 1Malaysia, however, shows a rather off-putting side of the concept. It reveals that the 1Malaysia concept is guided by Malay-centrism. The sub-concepts of 1Malaysia appear to have a strong connection with Malay ethnic. It suggests that the one language, one ethnic and one nation concepts are designed to protect Malay 'identity' and to systematically form an exclusivity of Malay ethnic, which appears to be the determinant of Malaysian identity.

This particular findings point out the problematic features of the proposed version of Malaysian modernity. The existence of one language, one ethnic and one nation concepts within 1Malaysia show that the modernisation project during the era of Najib Razak is 'multipurpose'. Other than aiming to continue Mahathir's legacy, 1Malaysia is introduced

to unite the Malaysian society, to manage the impact of Westernisation and globalisation, to protect Malay privileges as well as to elevate the status of the Malay ethnic and the Malay language. It seems that the Malay ethnic is the centre of this ambitious plan because they are still seen as the worst-off group and therefore requires government intervention. This makes the inclusivity of the modernisation project questionable and the term 'Malaysian modernity' disputable.

### **5.2.2 Protecting Malay language**

From 123 results retrieved from Nexis database regarding the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, there are 50 news articles that highlight the importance of protecting Malay language amidst the cultural modernisation project. In this section, the issue of Malay language involves not only the Malay ethnic but the Malaysian citizens in general. Protecting Malay language is the second recurring subject revealed in the second time frame of the analysis. This particular subject is made apparent in 25 news headlines. The analysis on 50 news articles on Malay language shows that the subject is frequently associated with the terms national identity, patriotism and unity. Interestingly, it is not directly linked to the 1Malaysia concept. It shows that there is a similarity between this subject and the discourses of one ethnic and one nation. Unlike the one ethnic and one nation concepts, which are clearly connected to 1Malaysia, protecting Malay language, however, is associated with cultural modernity in general. In this context, the special position of Malay language is presented in the texts as a separate issue. This is apparent in a number of headlines:

- 1) *Bahasa Melayu patut jadi ukuran perpaduan kaum* (Malay language should be the indicator of ethnic unity) (August 12, 2009)
- 2) *Bahasa Melayu bukan penghalang kemajuan* (Malay language does not hinders modernity) (January 19, 2011)
- 3) *Usaha martabat bahasa Melayu belum selesai* (Determination to elevate Malay language is not yet over) (October 19, 2011)
- 4) *Ramai pelajar lemah bahasa Melayu* (Many students are incompetent in Malay language) (August 17, 2011)
- 5) *Bahasa Melayu lenyap jika dipinggirkan* (Malay language will vanish if it remains abandoned) (March 14, 2012)

The above headlines are the examples to show that the topic of Malay language is detached from the topic of 1Malaysia although they include key terms that are frequently used in the discourse of 1Malaysia. This is the main reason why protecting Malay language is categorised as the second recurring subject and is separated from the analysis on one language, which is one of the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia. Although they both point out the role of language in cultural modernisation project, they are approached differently in the texts. This marks the difference between the analysis on the one language concept and the analysis on the topic of Malay language in Berita Harian newspaper.

The main difference is their style of news reporting, which encompasses vocabulary, tone and sentence structure. The most apparent indication is the name of the language. Malaysian language and Malay language are both refer to the language of the Malay ethnic. Despite this similarity, they are presented separately from one another in the texts. The discourse on one language prefers the term Malaysian language instead of Malay language. As regards news structure, news articles on one language are designed to represent the ideology of 1Malaysia, whereas news articles on Malay language tend to represent the ideology of Malaysian nation:

"By using just one language, we get to develop and enrich the spirit of togetherness among us and forget our differences. If we are able to do this together with strong determination, the 1Malaysia concept introduced by the prime minister can be realised through appreciation and application of one language" said the deputy prime minister, Muhyiddin Yassin (October 7, 2009).

...Malay language is the only language that is able to distinguish the identity of Malaysian citizens. Not only our identity as Malaysians is important because Malay language is the heart of Malaysian nation, it is also important to ensure that Malaysians are recognised and remembered as a unique community in and outside the nation (December 23, 2015).

In this context, 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation appear to be two different concepts although they both are essentially similar. In the analysis of the first recurring subject, the terms 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation are used interchangeably in the texts. Although the first recurring subject is titled constructing Malaysian nation, the term 1Malaysia appears to dominate the analysis. The emergence of the 1Malaysia concept within the discourse of Malaysian nation shows that 1Malaysia is essentially an extension of the Malaysian nation concept. In other words, the term 1Malaysia is coined to 'rebrand' the Malaysian nation concept initiated by Mahathir Mohamad. In addition, both of the concepts share similar objectives, which is to redefine ethnicity and group all the ethnics together by naming them *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation). This explains the reason why both of the terms are used interchangeably in the texts and in the analysis of constructing Malaysian nation.

However, in the analysis of the second recurring subject titled protecting Malay language, the term Malaysian nation becomes dominant and outweighs the term 1Malaysia. This raises a question regarding the rationality of both concepts. If 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation are essentially similar, why aren't they being featured concurrently or interchangeably in the discourse of Malay language? A comparison between the two recurring subjects is necessary in order to answer this question. The analysis reveals that news articles that specifically use the term Malay language are structured to only associate the discourse of Malay language with the concept of Malaysian nation. It shows that *Berita Harian* attempts to distinguish the special position of Malay language from the concept of 1Malaysia. This offers an interesting insight with regard to the topic of Malaysian identity and modernity. It shows that certain terms are purposely manipulated by news producers as a way to guide readers' attention. These terms refer to Malaysian language, Malay language, 1Malaysia and Malaysian nation. The analysis on both recurring subjects reveals that, the news producers of *Berita Harian* intentionally match the term Malaysian language with the term 1Malaysia, while the term Malay language is matched with the term Malaysian nation:

**National identity formation cannot be accomplished without empowering the Malay language.** Despite all the challenges of modernity and private sector rationalization, **Malay language should always be protected.** Malay language has gone through many challenges. In colonialism era, **British colonisation** has placed Malay language to the lowest level, hence caused the citizens to feel ashamed of the language let alone to use it. Not much has changed since Malaysia gained

independence from Britain because **Malay elites**, who were educated in London, tend to lead various agencies in this country. As a result, the supremacy of national language is affected. *Bulan Bahasa dan Sastra Negara* (Language and Literature Month), which was initiated by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is now replaced with *Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan* (National Language Month). The national language campaign aims to embody the identity of Malaysian nation, besides **publicising the role of national language as an important aspect in the formation of Malaysian nation** (October 19, 2011).

#### Malay language, Malay ethnic and Malaysian citizens

The above extract points out a key issue regarding the discourse of Malay language. Malay language is perceived to be the most important aspect of national identity formation. The text suggests that this issue involves not only the Malay ethnic but the Malaysian citizens in general, as stated in the extract: “national identity formation cannot be accomplished...” and “...important aspect in the formation of Malaysian nation”. In this context, it seems that there is a similarity between this analysis and the analysis on the one language concept. The main aspect that distinguish them is the association between Malay language and Malaysian nation, which is not manifested in the discourse of one language. The second aspect involves the news setting in which the aforementioned terms are assigned to. Malay language is exclusively correlated with the topic of national identity formation, whereas Malaysian language relates to the education policy. This raises two important questions: why the discourse of Malay language requires a different news setting? And why Malay language is described as Malaysian language in the discourse of one language but not in the discourse of identity formation?

To answer these questions, a comparative analysis of the one language concept and protecting Malay language is conducted. The analysis reveals that the subject of protecting Malay language is not merely a separate issue although the headlines and the main body of the texts suggest otherwise. It is because the topics of Malaysia, Malaysian nation, identity formation and cultural modernity are all interconnected by default, even though they are not presented concurrently in the texts. The discourse of Malay language requires a different news setting and is separated from the discourse of one language due to the nature of the Malay language itself. Malay language clearly represents the Malay ethnic, as

it is assumed to be the main determinant of Malay identity. Therefore, its inclusion in the discourse of one language may result in contradictory findings. It is because the one language concept represents the ideology of 1Malaysia, which theoretically aims at Malaysian citizens in general. Berita Harian prefers to use the term Malaysian language instead, in order to justify the ideology of one language as a universal and an inclusive concept for Malaysian citizens.

In the context of national identity formation, Berita Harian prefers to use the specific term, Malay language, in its news articles. This provides an interesting viewpoint with regard to the topic of Malay language and Malaysian identity. It indicates that the specific Malay language is the only substantial aspect in the discourse of cultural identity in Malaysia. The other societal aspects of culture such as values, symbols and norms are not given as much exposure as the language. The special position of Malay language is also enshrined in Article 152(1) of the Constitution of Malaysia, which is publicised in Berita Harian's news articles:

If **Article 152 (1) of the Constitution of Malaysia** has stated one particular language as the national language, why is it still difficult for people to comprehend it? By law, it clearly means: "national language is Malay language". Article 152 (6) emphasises: "In this context, it encompasses the Malaysian government, whether it is federal government or state government, which includes any public authorities". These articles have given status to Malay language as national language and official language. **Malay language is not only the language of Malay ethnic. It is our language and our country's language. Loving national language is one of the ways to show our love towards the country.** (October 10, 2012)

The above extract highlights the official status of Malay language in Malaysian government. Similar to the exceptional privileges provided by the Article 153 on the Malays, the special position of Malay language in Malaysia is protected by law, which makes it illegal for any party to question it. The text also points out an unrepresentative notion, declaring Malay language as the language of Malaysian citizens and Malaysia. From the extract alone, it appears that the protection of Malay language is more intense and direct in comparison to the protection of Malay ethnic. The extract also indicates the main reason why Malay language should be embraced by Malaysian citizens, which

primarily because they have to abide by the law. The strong affiliation between Malay language and the Constitution of Malaysia automatically classifies the language as an indicator to measure patriotism among Malaysian citizens. This suggests that law and authority are used to protect an act of political partisanship by making Malaysian citizens legally bound to the ideology to protect Malay language.

#### Malay language and the other languages

The analysis on protecting Malay language also reveals that the other languages, which represent the other ethnics in Malaysia are completely dismissed in the texts. This suggests that the special position of Malay language in Malaysia is highlighted in the texts due to two reasons. Firstly, language is chosen to be the most important aspect of cultural identity in Malaysia. Secondly, the Malaysian government attempts to set Malay language as the first language of Malaysian citizens, despite the fact that Malaysia is multi-lingual nation:

Malaysian citizens are not prohibited from using, learning or teaching other languages. In fact, **it is necessary for Malaysians to be proficient in a foreign language such as English and the other world language.** The constitution has given clear guidance on this matter. **However, it is important to have an awareness of which language we should champion and which language we should give less attention to.** It is because national unity can only be achieved through a mutual ownership of one language. Therefore, it is **compulsory for Malaysian citizens to respect the law** by recognising the importance of national language in our country and also in our lives as Malaysians. **An immediate realisation is required** to acknowledge Malay language as an official language, national language, medium of educational teaching and also language for economy, business, industry, higher education, science, technology, literature, art, culture, religion and philosophy (October 10, 2012).

The above extract is a good example to demonstrate the dismissal of the other languages in Malaysia. The text appears to suggest a second language options, which are clearly not including the languages of the other ethnics in Malaysia. Malaysian citizens are strongly encouraged to learn what is considered the most commonly spoken language in the world. In this context, English language is clearly mentioned while other world language is open for interpretation. This marks another dissimilarity between the discourse of one language

and the discourse of Malay language. The analysis on one language depicts a negative role of English language in the formation of 1Malaysia. English language is perceived as a threat that is able to hinder the process of nation building in Malaysia. Ironically, the analysis on Malay language shows a different outcome. In this respect, English language gains a positive recognition as the main world language, which implies that it is crucial for Malaysian citizens to have a reasonable level of competence in English.

Based on the comparison between the analysis on one language and the analysis on Malay language, it seems that there is a distinction between the 1Malaysia concept and Malaysian cultural modernity although they are coexisted. It appears that Malaysian modernity are categorised into two levels: national and international. On a national level, Malay identity has a significant role in the process of nation building. The only aspect of Malay identity that is apparent across the texts is the Malay language. As previously stated, language is considered highly important in national identity formation. In multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Malaysia, a mutual ownership of one language (Malay language) among ethnics is made necessary and compulsory as indicated in the extract. Malay language is deemed important within the country and the lives of Malaysian citizens, which suggests that the importance of Malay language only applies on a national level.

On an international level, the text indicates the importance of proficiency in other languages. It narrows down the other languages to world language, particularly English. Since the other languages of Malaysians are dismissed in the text, it shows that world language such as English is given publicity as a main second language option for Malaysian citizens. Therefore, it suggests that English language plays a part in Malaysian modernity. This contradicts the outcome of the analysis on the first recurring subject, in which English is considered a threat. It raises a question with regard to the government's action to banish the use of English in teaching and learning of Science and Mathematic at schools. If English should be the second language of Malaysians, why the government decided to end its use in schools?

It becomes apparent that there are two principles of Malaysian modernity: modernity in Malaysian context and modernity on a global scale. Malaysian citizens are expected to reach a certain standard of modernity set by the ruling power. In Malaysian context, they are obliged to accept and embrace Malay language as part of their identity. The embrace of

English language is only deemed acceptable in a global context. Malaysian citizens are urged to be able to differentiate their level of importance. In the above extract, modernity in Malaysian context appears to be more important than modernity in a global context. This suggests that the cultural modernisation project in Malaysia aims to modernise Malaysians nationally and internationally. Despite the globalisation pressure, it shows that Malaysia is determined to form a new national identity based around their own standards.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the findings from analysis of Berita Harian articles for a period of 14 years (2003-2018). For the first time frame (2003-2009), I discovered three recurring views deployed by text producers: constructing modern Malaysians based on Islam Hadhari, knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity and preserving Malay customs as part of the modernity project. During this period, the religion and teaching of Islam are prominent in the discourse on Malaysian cultural modernity. It is also a period in which the concept of Islam Hadhari is introduced. Islam Hadhari is considered as a concept and an approach that is compatible with diverse Malaysian society.

Despite being a multi-religion country, Islam is chosen to be the best 'tool' to achieve Malaysian modernity, which shows that the Malay-Muslim group is the focus of the project. The existence of the discourse on Islam Hadhari also suggests that Western modernity is not seen as an inspiration or something to look up to. The findings revealed an interesting interpretation of modern society. In this context, modern Malaysians refer to an abstract concept of successful and pious society. Other than the religion and teaching of Islam, the findings also revealed the government's initiative to preserve Malay customs such as Malay language, traditional wear and tradition.

For the second time frame (2009-2018), I discovered two recurring views: constructing Malaysian nation and protecting Malay language. The concept of 1Malaysia is introduced during this period. 1Malaysia is linked to the ideology of one language, one ethnic and one nation. I also discovered that there are two 'layers' of 1Malaysia, which I classified as the outer layer and the inner layer. I found out that there is a sense of Malay-centrism, in which Malay 'identity' is protected. Apart from that, there is also an initiative to protect Malay language amid the plan to modernise Malaysia as well as Malaysians. As for a second language option, English language is promoted while the languages of the other ethnic groups in Malaysia are dismissed.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **(New Straits Times)**

#### **6.1 A Critical Discourse Analysis of articles published in New Straits Times newspaper during the era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi**

This section presents the findings of Critical Discourse Analysis of New Straits Times (NST)'s news articles. NST is one of the leading newspapers in Malaysia and serves as a platform to promote thinking and discussions on current issues especially among Malaysian 'elite' readers. As an English language newspaper, its readership transcend racial groupings, which means that it aims at English speaking members of the general public. Data collected within the period from 2003 to 2018 are divided into two time frames: (2003-2009) and (2009-2018). This section contains two key sections, which represent the two time frames, respectively. I begin with the first section. The results of this section are based on data retrieved for the first time frame of the analysis. The actual time frame of data collection is 31/10/2003-3/4/2009. The analysis across the 121 texts reveals a dissimilarity in terms of news contents between Berita Harian and New Straits Times. It reveals two recurring ideologies:

- 1) Acknowledging the role of religion in Malaysian modernity
- 2) Reviving Malaysian traditional symbols

##### **6.1.1 Acknowledging the role of religion in Malaysian modernity**

The first ideology articulated across the texts is the importance of religion in Malaysian modernity. From 121 relevant results retrieved with regard to the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, there are 99 news articles that give focus to the topic of religion. From the headlines alone, it seems that news articles are structured to cater to diverse religious beliefs among Malaysians. This is based on the words used in the framing of headlines. From 99 news headlines, only 15 headlines contain the word Islam. The rest of the headlines contain words such as religion, religious, faith, unity, harmony, greatness, kind and amity. This marks the main difference in terms of news style and news structure between Berita Harian and New Straits Times. Berita Harian tends to highlight a specific religion and religious group, which are Islam and Muslims. In contrast, New Straits Times seems to feature the subject of religion in its news headlines using general terms, which suggests its relevance to the general population of Malaysia.

Interestingly, the concept of Islam Hadhari only appears twice across the 99 headlines, although it is the prominent concept during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership. The understated of Islam and Islam Hadhari shows that New Straits Times attempts to be more inclusive than Berita Harian. On the surface, religion, in general, seems to be the focal point in the discourse on Malaysian identity and modernity. However, the analysis on the 99 news articles reveals the significant subject of Islam. In fact, there are 87 news articles that specifically mention and highlight the role of Islam in Malaysian modernity. In this context, Islam subtly appears as an important subject, which is made relevant for Malaysians, in general.

In New Straits Times articles, the topic of Islam is presented alongside the topic of Islam Hadhari. This points out another dissimilarity between Berita Harian and New Straits Times as Berita Harian tends to separate these two topics from one another. The appearance of Islam and Islam Hadhari in this particular section of the findings validates the findings revealed from the analysis on Berita Harian's news articles with regard to the discourse on knowledge aims at Malaysians. It shows determination to impart the knowledge of Islam to a broader audience or at least to those who have proficiency in English language. The discourse on Islam and Islam Hadhari in the main English language newspaper in Malaysia also suggests that the knowledge of Islam is deemed necessary among urban Malaysians.

The analysis also reveals that the discourse on Islam seems more comprehensive in New Straits Times. Islam and Islam Hadhari are repeatedly stated as the best approach to achieve Malaysian modernity. As Islam and Islam Hadhari appear concurrently in the texts, it suggests that text producers intend to shape Malaysians' perception of the Islam Hadhari concept. It seems that news articles are structured to constantly remind Malaysians that Islam Hadhari is a rational concept, in accordance with the teaching of Islam. This raises two important questions: If Islam Hadhari is essentially identical to the original teaching of Islam, why there is a need to introduce and promote the concept of Islam Hadhari among Malaysians? Why cant Islam be promoted as it is?

In order to find answer to these questions, news articles on Islam and Islam Hadhari are carefully examined to point out the primary objective of Islam Hadhari. The analysis reveals two main purposes of Islam Hadhari concept. Firstly, Islam Hadhari is endorsed by

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his main legacy or contribution to the nation building. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi seems to follow in the previous prime ministers' footsteps and advocates a political concept. As stated in the previous section, every prime minister of Malaysia initiates a unique political concept, which seems to be the tradition in Malaysia's political scene. This suggests that Islam Hadhari is first and foremost a 'symbol' to represent Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Secondly, the analysis reveals that Islam Hadhari is heavily promoted in the main body of the texts as an initiative to 'rebrand' Islam. Based on the analysis, the negative perception of Islam is acknowledged in the texts. The religion of Islam seems to be disparaged not only by non-Muslims, but also by the Muslim community in Malaysia. The texts point out that Islam is backward and anti-modernity. Therefore, it implies the need to improve the image of Islam among Malaysians, hence the endorsement of Islam Hadhari:

It is, in fact, the Institute of Islamic Understanding (Ikim)'s role to **promote better understanding of the faith in a world where Islam is perceived as backward** and associated with terrorism and violence. We have to deal with intolerance before it is too late. The prime minister has made it a personal crusade to give the world a more **modern** and compassionate Islam. Islam Hadhari encompasses the principle that Muslims must be **tolerant** and respect others. He asked what went wrong when the level of tolerance towards others is now wafer-thin or none at all. Asri was forthright. When asked why the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims today was difficult, the answer was: "**The problem lies with Muslims, their appearance, their attitude and their focus on petty issues.**" Now, that is interesting. When was the last time you heard the voice of religious authority blaming the ummah? He has this to say about the role of mufti in this country: "He must be responsible for bringing the knowledge of Islam in this modern era." His own role? "My duty is **to present Islam in its modern face and get it out of the clutches of conservatives, who have made the religion look obsolete**" (December 16, 2006).

The above extract shows that the discourse on Islam in New Straits Times consists of two keywords: modern and tolerance. The above extract also shows an attempt to alter general perception of Islam. The text implies that Islam is generally associated with negativity, therefore, it is important and necessary to reform the image of Islam, at least on a national

level. This shows a complexity of the role of Islam in the cultural modernisation project. It seems that Malaysian modernity is not only a project to restructure the Malaysian society, but also a project to restructure the image of Islam. The analysis shows that the ideology to improve the image of Islam is rather complicated and time consuming.

Taking the above extract, for instance, the project to restructure the image of Islam is still articulated in news article in the year 2006, three years after the concept of Islam Hadhari was introduced. This suggests that Islam Hadhari is not easily accepted, not only by Malaysian non-Muslims, but also by Malaysian Muslims. Perhaps, this is the reason why the discourse on Islam is dominant in both *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times* from the year 2003 to 2009. However, the analysis reveals that *New Straits Times* contains more news articles on Islam compare to *Berita Harian*. This raises another question: Why the topic of Islam is more prominent in English language newspaper? As previously discussed, Islam is the official religion of the Malay ethnic group. Therefore, *Berita Harian* is expected to be the main newspaper to largely spread the knowledge of Islam through its news articles. As the analysis shows otherwise, it makes it worthwhile to explore the discourse of Islam in English language newspaper in Malaysia.

Although *New Straits Times* is one of the mainstream newspapers that is tied to the Malaysian government, its news contents are not exclusively aim at a specific ethnic group in Malaysia. However, it is also important to note that not all Malaysians are proficient in English language. As stated in the earlier chapter, English is the language of elites and middle class in Malaysia. The definitions of the elites and middle class include a wide degree of subjectivity. However, the subjects of Malaysian elites and Malaysian middle class appear during the analysis of *Berita Harian* newspaper. In *Berita Harian*, these two groups of Malaysians are described as successful citizens, who are well-educated, either nationally or internationally. As *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times* are both linked to the Malaysian government, *Berita Harian*'s definition of elites and middle class is applicable to the analysis of *New Straits Times*.

Although *New Straits Times* is initially seen as a universal newspaper that transcend diverse ethnic background, its actual target readers are Malaysian elites and Malaysian middle class. Therefore, news articles about Islam in *New Straits Times* are designed to be relevant to the aforementioned groups. Unlike other vernacular newspapers, *New Straits*

Times aims to cater to specific social groups, not ethnic groups. As it is not an ethnocentric newspaper, New Straits Times seems to be universal, compare to the other vernacular newspapers in Malaysia. Due to its universality, it is able to reach a wider audience, hence the large number of news articles about Islam in New Straits Times. This suggests that the Malaysian government uses the print media not only to improve the image of Islam, but also to use it as a platform for '*dakwah*' (preaching), in order to influence the 'most important' social groups in Malaysia to embrace Islam. These groups are considered important not only because they are the main subjects of Malaysian modernity, but also because they represent modern Malaysians. As Islam is chosen to facilitate Malaysian modernity, Islam too, needs transformation to appear modern and appealing.

This is supported by the above extract, in which Islam is linked to the words modern and tolerance. The word modern is the main keyword in the discourse on Islam in New Straits Times. It is the word that news producers want Malaysians to associate Islam with. The extract shows that the idea to modernise Islam is not simply an ideology articulated in the mainstream print media. The 'rebranding' of Islam involves not only commitment from Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to promote Islam Hadhari, but also commitment from the Institute of Islamic Understanding (Ikim). This shows the seriousness of the role of Islam in Malaysian modernity. As stated earlier, from 99 news articles, there are 88 texts that put a great deal of emphasis on Islam. Although Malaysia is a religiously diverse country, there are only 11 news articles that mention the other religions.

The disproportionate coverage of religions in New Straits Times illustrates media bias in Malaysia. Although New Straits Times is an English newspaper and is considered universal in terms of audience reachability, its news articles, however, seem constricted. This shows that the contents of New Straits Times are heavily affected and influenced by the Malaysian (Islamic-based ) government. Interestingly, the news contents of Berita Harian and New Straits Times are not identical, although they are both linked to the Malaysian government. The main difference between these two newspapers is their medium of news reporting. Berita Harian uses Malay language, whereas New Straits Times uses English. The analysis of these newspapers reveals the significant role of language in the discourse of Malaysian modernity. In this context, language has an influence on readership demographics and news contents, despite the concentration of media ownership.

To conclude, this findings of the analysis of New Straits Times are relatable to the second recurring subject revealed from the analysis of Berita Harian, entitled, "knowledge as the foundation of Malaysian modernity." It is because they both point out that the subject of Islam is the specific knowledge intended for Malaysians, instead of Malays or Muslims. As presented in this section, the subject and knowledge of Islam is more prevalent in New Straits Times compare to Berita Harian. This shows a determination to promote the religion of Islam to the other ethnics in Malaysia, which also explains why there are more articles about Islam in New Straits Times.

Ironically, in the discourse on Islam in New Straits Times, the word tolerance is repeatedly used alongside the word modern. In this context, there are two angles to analyse the use of the word tolerance in the texts. Firstly, the word tolerance is preferred to represent not only Islam, but also the Muslims. In the above extract, for instance, the text implies the importance of toleration between Muslims and non-Muslims. The text shows that Muslims are strongly encouraged to respect others. Indirectly, they are actually advised to respect other people's religious and spiritual beliefs. Interestingly, in New Straits Times, Muslims and Islam are detached from one another. As shown in the above extract, Muslims only appear in the text as a subject that is responsible for the disunity among Malaysians, particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims.

It shows that New Straits Times' news articles are cautiously structured to avoid any further misunderstanding about Islam. As Islam seems to be the only religion that is protected and defended by New Straits Times, it strengthen the findings in this section. It shows that there are two objectives of the discourse on Islam in New Straits Times. The first objective is to 'rebrand' Islam as a modern religion, which makes the role of Islam in facilitating Malaysia's modernisation project seems appropriate. The second objective is to convince Malaysian elites and Malaysian middle class to embrace Islam, which makes New Straits Times a platform for '*dakwah*' (preaching). This shows that the modernisation project not only aims to create modern and developed Malaysians, but also to create more Muslims.

Secondly, the word tolerance is analysed from news reporting perspective. In this context, tolerance in the texts is disputable. It is because the imbalance reporting on the topic of religion in New Straits Times shows the opposite of toleration. It seems that New Straits

Times' news content and news structure tend to contradict one another. Although tolerance appears as the second keyword in the discourse on Islam, New Straits Times fails to provide clear argument and sufficient texts to illustrate religious tolerance for people of other faiths. The analysis shows that the subject and knowledge of Islam in New Straits Times seem to be an extension of the subject and knowledge of Islam in Berita Harian. Therefore, the knowledge of Islam is deemed more important than the knowledge of other religions, which seems to contradict New Straits Times' standpoint to promote toleration. This suggests that the kind of toleration New Straits Times actually signifies is the acceptance of Islam among Malaysians.

### **6.1.2 Reviving Malaysian traditional symbols**

The second recurring subject revealed from the analysis of New Straits Times newspaper is Malaysian traditional symbols. From 121 relevant results retrieved with regard to the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, there are 22 news articles that point out the need to revive Malaysian traditional symbols. The topic of cultural symbols is given special attention in the texts due to two reasons. Firstly, cultural symbols are considered an important part of Malaysian identity. Secondly, as cultural symbols are attached to Malaysian identity, they automatically have a significant role in Malaysia's modernisation project. It is simply because the project aims to transform the Malaysian society.

However, as the title suggests, the analysis reveals an ideology to revive Malaysian traditional symbols, not to form new symbols. It seems to contradict the ideology to modernise and transform the society. It shows that there are certain aspects of Malaysian society that are excluded from the transformation project. It also shows that the modernisation project is not solely a project to create a new modern identity for Malaysians. Consequently, it affects the coherence of Malaysian modernity. It also adds a 'flavour' to the version or type of cultural modernity that the Malaysian government intends to achieve.

The analysis reveals a similarity between the subject of Islam and the subject of cultural symbols in the discourse on Malaysian identity and modernity. Both Islam and Malaysian traditional symbols are stereotypically linked to backwardness. Interestingly, these two subjects are the only subjects that are prominent in New Straits Times, which key reader segments are Malaysian elites and Malaysian middle class. They are also generally known

as urban Malaysians because they tend to populate urban areas in Malaysia. The analysis shows that news articles for urban Malaysians are used as platforms to illustrate a modern portrayal of Islam and to popularise old traditions. From the analysed texts, there are specific Malaysian old traditions that are outlined as important cultural symbols to represent Malaysian version of modern society, which will be discussed later in the chapter. It seems that old traditions are featured in the discourse of modernity in order to distinguish Malaysian modernity from Western modernity:

One of the reasons that modernity has been criticised is because it is linked to Westernisation and being exposed to Western value systems, perhaps in terms of knowledge and power. The Western role is seen as hegemonic and that is perhaps why modernisation is often criticised. You don't have to leave traditions and customs behind to embrace modernity. Instead you can appropriate traditions and culture to give you sense of belonging (November 27, 2003).

As the texts aim at urban Malaysians, it indicates initiatives to reverse Malaysian identity among this particular group, which suggests two key points. Firstly, there is an unfavourable side of urban Malaysians. Secondly, the urban Malaysians are not role models to the Malaysian society, although the government aims to create more middle class in order to symbolise modern Malaysians. This implies that the government has a specific idea of an ideal modern Malaysians. From the analysis, an ideal modern Malaysians are best described as well-educated Malaysians, who are modern and traditional at the same time. This points out the shortcoming of urban Malaysians and the main reason they are not considered as role models for other Malaysians to look up to.

The analysis reveals that urban Malaysians fail to meet one important criterion for an ideal modern Malaysians, which is to remain traditional in certain aspects. Although urban Malaysians are described as modern in the texts, it is not the version of modernity signified by the Malaysian government. The loss of Malaysian traditions among urban Malaysians is seen negative because it is not the desirable outcome of the modernisation project. From the analysed texts, Westernisation is identified as the cause of deterioration in Malaysian traditions among urban Malaysians because it is often mistaken for modernisation. Therefore, news articles are structured to build awareness of cultural identity issues and to address a misperception that being modern means being Western:

Malaysia remains a country with a soul. We have a long and proud heritage and all races have thus far retained the essence of their culture or religion in spite of the racial integration that has taken place. **As we thrust forward to developed nation status, we should not forget these roots from which we have grown.** We must work on our weaknesses and seek to eradicate them so that our nation will retain its identity. We must maintain our respective cultures and values but recognise that we must not be bogged down by archaic principles or rules which do the nation no good. As parents we must **ensure that Westernisation does not completely invade our young and their minds.** Our **Asian values must be upheld** lest we slide and view Western culture as being all good (August 30, 2007).

The above extract illustrates the importance of cultural identity among urban Malaysians. The text clearly refers to Malaysia's authentic national identity as it uses the words heritage and roots. It indicates that Malaysia's modernisation project is not a project to completely transform the Malaysian society. Although the text focuses on national identity, it is not clear what sort of authentic national identity the text refers to. It seems that the main purpose of the above text is to establish another key element of Malaysian modernity, which is traditionalism. It shows that Islam is not the only element that is considered compatible with the general urban Malaysians. Traditional Malaysian cultures and values are added to the discourse on Malaysian identity and modernity and are chosen to be the second element to differentiate Malaysian modernity from the other versions of modernity. The general Malaysians are not encouraged, but are commanded to retain their original national identity. This is based on the highlighted sentences in the above extract. The phrase "we must" are repeated five times in the text, which illustrates an active role given to the general urban Malaysians and also to make them aware of the urgency to avoid traditional cultures and values from being replaced by the Western culture.

The above extract also illustrates the complexity of cultural identity in the Malaysian context. It seems that the urban Malaysians are given a difficult task. On the one hand they are commanded to retain their respective traditional cultures and values, but on the other hand they are required to have national and Asian values. Although the text attempts to place the aforementioned values in one single group, they are actually different from one another. It is because different ethnic groups have different cultures and values. The idea of national and Asian values are also questionable due to their subjectivities. Moreover, the

urban Malaysians are also expected to adopt certain aspect of Western culture. This suggests that Malaysian modernity is not a 'Western-free' version of modernity. Western culture is not entirely forbidden among urban Malaysians as stated in the second last sentence of the above extract, "...we must ensure that Westernisation does not completely invade our young and their minds". This indicates two categories of Western culture: good and bad. Although Western culture is perceived to cause deterioration in Malaysian cultures and values, there are certain aspects of it that appear to be useful and compatible with Malaysian version of modernity. Therefore, it suggests that Western culture is not all bad or all good.

Unlike *Berita Harian*, in *New Straits Times*, the good and bad of Western culture are outlined in the texts. In *Berita Harian*, only the bad of Western culture is identified during the analysis. The analysis of both newspapers shows that the Western culture is mentioned more in *New Straits Times* than in *Berita Harian*. This suggests that the topic of Western culture is more relatable to the general urban Malaysians. Although it is not one of the recurring subjects revealed from the analysis of *New Straits Times*, a further exploration on the subject of Western culture is useful to contribute to the understanding of cultural modernity in the Malaysian context. Below are examples of the inclusion of Western culture:

It has taken a bold step in reviving traditional culture, which would otherwise die out in the wake of industrial growth and the influence of Western culture. There is no better way to preserve traditional culture than to inculcate it among the younger generation and promote it in cultural shows or stage performances (March 9, 2004).

With the predominance of Western culture, Malaysians will, like it or not, become somewhat Westernised. Specifically, the English language and culture will continue to play a prominent role in shaping Malaysian culture (August 17, 2006).

From the analysed texts, the good of Western culture refers to qualities such as open-mindedness and innovative. Meanwhile, the bad of Western culture is identified to be related to individual freedom and Western way of life, which includes Western fashion, Western entertainment, Western literature, secularity, sanctity of marriage and family values. The analysis reveals a correlation between the subject of Western culture and the idea to revive Malaysian traditional symbols. It seems that this second recurring subject

emerges from the analysed texts to offer solutions to eradicate the bad influences of Western culture on urban Malaysians, particularly. The analysis identified a list of Malaysian traditional symbols that require revivification, which appear to be related to aspects of Western culture that are considered bad in the texts. Below are examples of headline implying an initiative to revive certain traditional symbols:

1. A modern twist to classic tales (April 21, 2007)
2. State to promote new '*wayang kulit*' (February 12, 2007)
3. Reviving new version of *wayang kulit* in Kelantan (April 14, 2004)
4. Reviving '*adat perpatih*' (March 5, 2006)
5. Getting children to love literature (April 29, 2006)

The list consists of '*adat perpatih*' (customary laws), '*baju raya*' (traditional Malay costume), '*baju kebaya*' (traditional Malay costume), '*wayang kulit*' (shadow play), traditional Malay house, Malay language and Malay literature. Interestingly, the aforementioned symbols, which supposed to represent Malaysians are actually associated with non-urban Malay ethnic. This shows that the idea to revive Malaysian traditional symbols among urban Malaysians is misleading. It is because the elements of culture to represent the other ethnics in Malaysia are neglected in the texts, although the texts are intended for urban Malaysians, in general. This suggests that the plan to revive Malaysian traditional symbols has two key objectives. The first objective is to ensure that the Malaysian version of modernity is infused with Malaysian culture. The second objective is to instil Malay culture into urban Malaysians, especially the non-Malays. This marks another dissimilarity between *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*.

In *Berita Harian*, the topic of cultural symbols is not comprehensively discussed. As revealed from the analysis, *Berita Harian* lays stress on the general idea of preserving Malay customs to ensure cultural symbols that represent the Malay ethnic are not affected by modernisation. In contrast, the analysis of *New Straits Times* points out a number of 'Malaysian' symbols that are considered important and need to be revived. In short, the analysis of both newspapers reveals two important keywords: preserve and revive. These two keywords differentiate the discourse on cultural symbols between *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*. *Berita Harian*'s news articles about cultural symbols contain a theory-based approach to ensure the continuity of certain elements of Malay culture. In contrast,

New Straits Times uses a practice-based approach to make certain elements of Malay culture look appealing to the urban Malaysians, so that they could become tradition and part of the identity of the general urban Malaysians, either Malays or non-Malays:

Great cultures of the world have died as a result of neglect. **"When a culture is not being practised anymore, it dies.** This has happened in Europe," says Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) social anthropologist Professor Datuk Shamsul Amri Baharuddin. The key to safeguarding cultures is **consistent awareness programmes besides practising them.** Shamsul, who is also the director of UKM's Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation (ATMA) and Institute of Occidental Studies, says that *adat perpatih* may also die if no concerted efforts are made to preserve this often misunderstood culture. It has been said that *adat perpatih's* strength is its holistic nature. It guides practitioners in every aspect of their lives-from managing a family to running a business. It also teaches a democratic system of conduct and thoughts. Both men and women are consulted during occasions to overcome obstacles and to provide solutions. However, **due to lack of understanding about *adat perpatih*, outsiders or non-practitioners only recognise it for its matriarchal nature** (March 5, 2006).

The above extract illustrates an intention to make Malay-associated culture practicable among the general urban Malaysians. It is made apparent in the last sentence of the extract, in which the text seems to aim at outsiders or non-practitioners. In this context, outsiders seem to refer to the non-Malays, whereas non-practitioners refer to the Malays. It shows that the urban Malays is not the only group that is responsible to keep the old tradition alive, even though the specific tradition mentioned in the text belongs to the Malay ethnic group. From the text, there are two points identified that suggest a connection between the Malay ethnic group and '*adat perpatih*'. Firstly, the content of the text is provided by Professor Datuk Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, who is the director of UKM's Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation. Secondly, the name '*adat perpatih*' itself is in Malay, which suggests its origin. As shown in the above extract, '*adat perpatih*' is mentioned in the text not only to inform urban Malaysians about a dying tradition, but also to urge them to practise it. It is emphasised three times in the text: "When a culture is not being practised anymore, it dies", "The key to safeguarding cultures is consistent awareness programmes

besides practising them" and "*adat perpatih* may also die if no concerted efforts are made to preserve this often misunderstood culture".

As stated earlier, there is a correlation between the subject of Western culture and the idea to revive Malaysian traditional symbols. From the analysed texts, Western culture and lifestyle are preferred among urban Malaysians because there is an assumption that Westernisation symbolises developed and modern society. Therefore, it makes Western culture and lifestyle desirable among urban Malaysians. The adaptation of urban Malaysians to Western culture also creates a division between urban Malaysians and non-urban Malaysians. Westernised Malaysians seem to have high social status in Malaysia solely because they were educated abroad, speak fluent English, eat with knife and fork and wear imported clothes. New Straits Times addresses Western stereotype and indicates strategy to replace Western elements in urban Malaysians with Malay elements. The Malaysian traditional symbols, as listed earlier, are given modern and trendy touch to appear contemporary. New Straits Times is used as a platform to advertise and promote the 'revived' traditional symbols, which includes Malay traditional costumes with modern cutting, modern themed shadow play and expansion of new words in Malay language. It shows an effort to keep up with the Western influence on urban Malaysians by attempting to make Malaysian culture on par with Western culture.

In conclusion, the analysis on the second recurring subject reveals a misleading notion of Malaysian traditional symbols. Certain elements of Malay culture are chosen to be revived while elements of culture that represent other ethnic groups are disregarded. Similar to the first recurring subject, the discourse on cultural symbols is intended for the general Malaysians, although it is mainly related to the Malay ethnic group. Although New Straits Times seems universal as it is an English newspaper, it consists of concentrated contents aim at urban Malaysians. It focuses on the idea to restructure urban Malaysians to be less Western. It illustrates an attempt to create an identity of modern Malaysians, who are not only modern but also traditional.

## **6.2 A Critical Discourse Analysis of articles published in New Straits Times newspaper during the era of Najib Razak**

This section presents the second part of the findings from the analysis of New Straits Times newspaper. The results are based on data retrieved for the second time frame (2009-2018) of the analysis. The actual time frame of data collection is 03/04/2009-10/05/2018. The analysis reveals two recurring subjects with regard to Malaysian identity and modernity:

- 1) Fostering unity in diversity
- 2) Protecting cultural heritage

### **6.2.1 Fostering unity in diversity**

Unity is the main recurring subject revealed during the analysis on the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity in New Straits Times. There are 165 news articles that highlight the importance of unity among Malaysians. In New Straits Times, the topic of unity is seen more important than the concept of 1Malaysia, although 1Malaysia is an important political concept during Najib Razak's premiership. Based on the 165 headlines, only ten mention 1Malaysia. The rest of the headlines tend to draw attention to the word unity. It seems that New Straits Times prefers to focus on the main objective of 1Malaysia, which is to create unity among Malaysians.

As previously stated, the unity that Najib Razak refers to is oneness, which is translated in 1Malaysia's sub-concepts: one language, one ethnic and one nation. Interestingly, the concepts of one language, one ethnic and one nation are not mentioned in the texts even though they are the key elements of 1Malaysia and the determinants of unity or oneness that Najib Razak aims to realise. Instead, New Straits Times repeatedly uses the phrase 'unity in diversity' in its news articles and consistently link it to the 1Malaysia concept. In this context, 1Malaysia appears as a promising formula for 'unity in diversity':

Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Peter Chin Kah Fui said under this concept **(1Malaysia) that aimed to unify the people without compromising their respective identities**, Malaysians would come as one to work together in achieving targets in all aspects, including development, trade and unity. "In a nutshell, the prime minister wants the people to **focus less on racial**

**differences but act together in all their diversity to attain the country's visions.**

"We are always talking about unity and multiracialism... now we must make this work by **promoting unity in diversity as we have been too eaten up by racial differences.**" Chin said the ministers at Najib's first cabinet meeting as prime minister, unanimously backed the concept (April 16, 2009).

The above extract points out two keywords to interpret the 1Malaysia concept, which are unity and diversity. The subjects of unity and diversity appear in the first three sentences of the text to illustrate the inclusivity of 1Malaysia. The text also introduces the phrase 'unity in diversity', which seems to be the 1Malaysia's slogan 'exclusive' to New Straits Times. Although both Berita Harian and New Straits Times put a special emphasis on unity with regard to 1Malaysia, the kind of unity these newspapers refer to is different from one another. In Berita Harian, the analysis reveals an ideology to create unity through a shared cultural identity, which consists mainly of Malay language and Malay customs. It illustrates the special position of Malay ethnic in the formation of new national identity. In this respect, minority ethnic groups are expected to integrate into Malay ethnic group, which implies that their respective cultural identities are in jeopardy.

In contrast, the analysis of New Straits Times reveals an ideology to create unity without compromising cultural identities of the minority ethnic groups. The topics of diversity and racial differences are frequently addressed in the texts to constantly remind the readers of the quality of 1Malaysia. From the analysed texts, there is no apparent connection made between 1Malaysia, Malay language and Malay customs. News articles are structured to promote racial equality and to offer solutions to racial polarisation:

It is thus essential for parents, teachers and leaders to help enhance social integration among children and young people and to do all they can to eliminate social prejudices and discrimination. To establish a society based on the principle of "unity in diversity" takes creativity, diligence and courage. It does not occur spontaneously. Mere rhetoric must be replaced by deliberate effort and honest, positive action. We need to be mindful of the rights and interests of people who are different from us. We must speak about, encourage and strengthen constructive interaction that will create greater appreciation and understanding of each other's cultures and way of life (February 12, 2012).

As shown in the above extract, the discourse of Malaysian identity centred around the idea of toleration among Malaysians. There is no indication to suggest a cultural assimilation or to create a collective identity. Again, the slogan "unity in diversity" appears in the text. Oddly, the slogan is not heavily promoted in Berita Harian. This suggests that Malay and English newspapers choose different news angle in reporting the same topic. As New Straits Times seems to be universal in terms of its geographical reach and readership, the discourse of identity and modernity is presented in a broad sense. Therefore, the slogan "unity in diversity" is perceived to be appropriate and effective to influence the general population of Malaysia to fully support the political concept of 1Malaysia. Although news content of New Straits Times is not identical to the news content of Berita Harian, there is an apparent similarity between them. Both newspapers share similar themes in order to promote 1Malaysia.

The themes refer to unity, diversity and toleration, which are also linked to the concepts of one language, one ethnic and one nation. Therefore, there is a sense of coherence in the discourse of 1Malaysia in both newspapers despite their differences in readership. The emphasis on diversity shows that this section of findings is interrelated with the first recurring subject revealed from the analysis of Berita Harian. It also strengthens the idea that there are two layers of 1Malaysia. Like Berita Harian, New Straits Times seems to conceal the actual objective of 1Malaysia by focusing on diversity. News articles are structured to publicise the outer layer of 1Malaysia, which refers to the idea of universality and inclusivity. Due to New Straits Times' readership, the analysis reveals an attempt and a strategy to ensure the general Malaysians are united so that the actual objective of 1Malaysia can be achieved. Therefore, there are 165 news articles that focus on fostering unity in diversity instead of describing the concept of 1Malaysia. Similar to Berita Harian, the inner layer of 1Malaysia is not made apparent as it is not the focal point of the texts.

The analysis on the subject of unity in diversity points out two limitations. Firstly, the texts fail to offer clear solutions to end racial polarisation in Malaysia although the subject appears on multiple occasions in the texts. It is shown in the above extract, in which the solutions offered are mainly conceptual and superficial. Secondly, the subject lacks consensus of national unity. The parameters of unity are not clearly defined as there are different perceptions of national unity. On the one hand national unity is understood as uniformity, but on the other hand it is seen in terms of diversity. The plan to group

identities and cultures of diverse Malaysian society into a common denominator seems problematic because each ethnic group is embedded with strong cultural identity.

Therefore the slogan "unity in diversity" is not an assurance to ensure the identities of minority ethnic groups (particularly) are unaffected. As Malays are dominant in the political landscape of Malaysia, the issue of the special position of the Malay ethnic group is pertinent in the context of New Straits Times, although it is not made apparent in the texts. It is because Malay ethnic is still the largest ethnic group and their special position and rights are enshrined in the Constitution. Therefore, the plan to foster unity in diversity is not necessarily an initiative to create a Malaysian nation, in which all Malaysians are equal, deserving the same rights as each other. From the analysis, the concept of unity in diversity seems to be used as a tool to bring Malaysians together to concur with the ideology of 1Malaysia:

"The core elements of unity are, firstly, the attitude of acceptance among the races and people, secondly, principles of nationhood based on the Federal Constitution and *Rukun Negara* and, thirdly, social justice." Najib said the elements of unity were supported by noble values which should be part of the people's way of life, including mutual respect, piety, moderation in conduct and speech, and prudence in decisions and actions. He said the second aspect emphasised what should be the practice of any community which wanted to be progressive and successful (June 16, 2009).

The above extract highlights the core elements of unity, which are acceptance and nationhood. The first element, acceptance, illustrates a concept of understanding. It shows a noble quality of the kind of unity Najib Razak refers to. In the text, there is no indication to imply a quality of fairness in forming 1Malaysia. It suggests that 1Malaysia is not a concept to diminish the terms bumiputra (indigenous) and non-bumiputra (non-indigenous), which are powerful terms as they determine the privilege of Malaysians. *Bumiputeras*, which mainly refer to Malays remain protected and untouched. This is based on the second element of unity, which is the principles of nationhood. It shows that Najib Razak's concept of unity or oneness is attached to the Federal Constitution and the National Principles. Indirectly, it sets the standard of unity or oneness envisioned by the Malaysian government. Again, equality seems to be detached from the concept of unity in

diversity. In terms of nationhood, the special position of *Bumiputeras* stated in the Federal Constitution separates the Malay ethnic group from the non-indigenous groups.

1Malaysia and Malaysian nation seem invalid and problematic as they are not actually introduced to offer a fair concept of nationhood. The missing element of equality raises issue in the discourse of 1Malaysia in New Straits Times. Indirectly, it suggests that there is a Malay sentiment in the discourse although the topic of Malay ethnic is not mentioned or discussed in the texts. Across the 165 texts, the topics of national language and single-stream education system are mentioned, although not in detail. News articles about national language and single-stream education seem neutral as they are not associated with any particular ethnic group. However, the fact that the aforementioned topics appear in the texts shows the persistence of the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia (one language, one ethnic and one nation). The analysis of Berita Harian reveals a connection between the sub-concepts of 1Malaysia and Malay ethnic, thus suggests that New Straits Times is also a Malay-centric newspaper. The obvious differences between the two newspapers are the structure and style of their news articles:

The year 2010, like many before, saw **strong calls for the establishment of a single-stream education system in the country**. I am **fully supportive of this proposal as I believe that such a system is integral to foster unity in a multiracial nation like ours**. Some may argue that the present system of multiple streams allow parents to choose which school to send their children to, besides helping to preserve the identity of different races. But to me, and **I believe to many Malaysians, the forging of a united *Bangsa Malaysia* should take precedence**. A standard education system will by no means eradicate the culture of any race. On the contrary, it will contribute towards moulding our different cultures **to create a holistic Malaysian identity**. Malaysian children of different races, religions and backgrounds should be brought together to study under one roof, to learn with and from each other (January 3, 2011).

The above extract is taken from a news article entitled "one schooling for one Malaysia", written by a non-Malay journalist, Shivanand Sivamohan. First and foremost, the headline seems to suggest a concept of universal school for the general Malaysians. There is no mention of national school in the headline and the text. It shows how article is structured to

be relevant to the target readers and also to be racially sensitive. Again, the text illustrates the universality and inclusivity of 1Malaysia. Indirectly, there is a connection between the text and the first sub-concept of 1Malaysia, namely one language. As the analysis of Berita Harian reveals, the idea to unite Malaysians through the use of one language is interrelated to the idea to elevate Malay language nationwide. Notwithstanding the 1Malaysia concept, Malay language is already given a special status in the Constitution as it is also known as the national language.

Therefore, it is apparent that the medium of instruction in single stream education system the above text refers to is Malay language. Furthermore, Malay term, *Bangsa Malaysia*, appears in the text although it can easily be translated into English. The use of Malay words to refer to Malaysian nation implies the significance of Malay language not only in education system, but also in the representation of culturally diverse Malaysians. The text also illustrates an unbiased viewpoint as it is written by an Indian journalist, who is in favour of the idea to form a collective identity to represent modern and developed Malaysians. In the context of news structure and style, the text uses a subtle approach to form positive public opinion on the idea of 1Malaysia without mentioning 1Malaysia and its sub-concepts. The text is almost like a 'letter of recommendation' for 1Malaysia from a non-Malay. It illustrates a strong support to persuade and encourage the other non-Malays to have faith in the government's plan to unite the Malaysians.

In conclusion, the analysis of New Straits Times supports and strengthens the discovery of the inner and outer layers of 1Malaysia, revealed by the analysis of Berita Harian. Due to New Straits Times' readership, the outer layer of 1Malaysia, which represents inclusivity and universality, is re-emphasised in greater quantity of news articles. Therefore, the two layers of 1Malaysia are more prominent in New Straits Times rather than in Berita Harian. The analysis points out a slogan "unity in diversity", which is repeatedly mentioned in the texts to divert attention away from the actual objective of 1Malaysia. In this context, the inner layer of 1Malaysia is outweighed by the outer layer of 1Malaysia. Despite being an English newspaper, the analysis uncovers the special position of Malay ethnic in the formation of 1Malaysia or Malaysian nation. It shows that 1Malaysia is not a concept to offer equal status for Malays and non-Malays. Although New Straits Times aims at the general Malaysians, the non-Malays seem to be the main focus of the texts. News articles

are structured to convince the non-Malays that the concept 1Malaysia is compatible with them, hence the slogan "unity in diversity".

### **6.2.2 Protecting cultural heritage**

Cultural heritage is the second recurring subject appears in the discourse on Malaysian identity and modernity in New Straits Times. News articles that highlight the aforementioned subject seem to contain an idea to preserve Malaysia's cultural heritage. There is a connection made between the topic of preserving cultural heritage and achieving cultural modernity, although they seem to contradict one another. The texts place great emphasis on the idea to protect both tangible and intangible cultures to ensure the distinctiveness of Malaysian modernity in comparison with the other versions of modernity. Cultural modernity in Malaysian context refers to society that is modern and developed but still has traces of Malaysian values. However, it is not as straightforward as it seems because the term Malaysian values itself is quite problematic and complex.

There are many aspects that have to be considered in order to define Malaysian values. Cultural diversity is one of them and it is also the key aspect of Malaysian society. Ideally, Malaysian values are supposed to be based on Malaysian diversity and representative of all the ethnic groups in Malaysia. The importance of Malaysian values in Malaysian modernity is acknowledged by New Straits Times. The newspaper attempts to present the topic in a general sense in order to be relatable to the general population of Malaysia. In the headlines, the words such as 'we' and 'our' are used to illustrate inclusivity. It suggests that news articles are written for Malaysian citizens, in general and urban Malaysians, in particular:

- 1) Our films, our heritage (April 7, 2013)
- 2) In Asean, all of us eat rice and sing songs of our forefathers (April 23, 2014)
- 3) Reclaiming our heritage (June 15, 2012)
- 4) Preserving our heritage (September 3, 2016)
- 5) Why we need to preserve cultures (December 31, 2015)
- 6) Understand our heritage and historical tenets (July 29, 2015)
- 7) Wearing our culture (November 9, 2017)
- 8) Why we need 'Malaysia Village' (February 14, 2013)
- 9) History, culture are our strengths (June 3, 2011)
- 10) Save our arts, culture and heritage (December 8, 2012)

As shown in the above list, the headlines use the terms culture and heritage in a deliberately non-specific and all-embracing way. It shows that the varied cultures of the different people of Malaysia are grouped together to make sense of the term Malaysian culture. From the headlines alone, it is apparent that the issue of culture and heritage requires immediate attention from all ethnic groups. However, due to New Straits Times' readership, urban Malaysians seem to be a specific group that need to be informed of the importance of protecting cultural heritage. It suggests that urban Malaysians is the main group that has a tendency to deviate from the path to Malaysian modernity. It also suggests that they are easily influenced by the non-Malaysian culture, perhaps because they have first-hand experience of modernity. These two statements are based on the fact that New Straits Times is written in English. Although English is commonly known as global lingua franca, not every Malaysian is fluent in the language, especially those who populate rural areas in Malaysia:

The Education Ministry will introduce the Cambridge Accessible Tests (CATs) programme **to help students in rural areas improve their English proficiency**. Its minister, Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, said CATs was a supplementary way to learn English online. "Our working committee will run the pilot project in the next six months. It will involve about 40 primary and secondary schools. "Our focus is on helping students in rural schools improve their English, as most of them are weak in this subject and have little exposure to the language" (March 21, 2017).

Therefore, English proficiency is one of the key factors that distinguishes urban Malaysians from non-urban Malaysians. It also symbolises Westernisation in Malaysia, which makes it possible for Western culture to have an effect on urban Malaysians. The issue of English language appears in New Straits Times although it is separated from the discourse on cultural heritage. English usage is encouraged among Malaysians solely because it is seen as a skill for personal development and an effective mean for Malaysians to improve their employment prospects:

**The reality of the workforce** today is that employers are looking for qualified workers who are not just skilful in their field, but also competent in English. According to Long (Grand BlueWave Hotel general manager), English is the major **language of communication in the private sector**. He said the language was a

tool used in cross-border business dealings and networking with international counterparts (October 17, 2017)

As a result, English is not banned in Malaysia although it could potentially put Malaysian culture at risk of becoming extinct. Instead, English language newspaper like New Straits Times is used as a platform to raise awareness of cultural issues to prevent urban Malaysians from forgetting their roots. It is because there are 135 news articles that highlight the importance of Malaysian culture with regard to Malaysian identity and modernity. Below is an example:

Malaysia will continue to advocate for the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage. Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the significance of art and culture was omnipresent as it was the manifestation of civilisation (April 16, 2015).

Also, the analysis of both newspapers shows that the topic of cultural heritage is more prominent in New Straits Times, which will be discussed later in this section. In Berita Harian, (Malay)sian language is the only aspect of Malaysian culture that is emphasised in the analysed news articles. It shows content differentiation between Malay newspaper and English newspaper, although the topics that they repeatedly highlight in their news articles are quite similar.

For instance, the second recurring subject revealed by the analysis of Berita Harian is preserving Malay language, whereas protecting cultural heritage is the second most important subject in New Straits Times. On the surface, the two subjects are related as they both belong to the same theme, which is Malaysian culture. It shows that their readership demographics have an influence on their news contents. Berita Harian tends to have concentrated content compares to New Straits Times as the newspaper mainly aims at the Malay ethnic group. In contrast, the subject of Malaysian identity is presented in New Straits Times in a general way in order to cater to a broader audience. Here are some examples:

I think that parents will have to play a major role in educating their children on our Eastern lifestyle as the media has begun to play a major role in influencing one's life. Let's all teach our children to appreciate Malaysia and to honour our very own culture because if we don't, we would have failed as Malaysian citizens (August 28, 2009).

The Malay saying, *biar mati anak, jangan mati adat* (it's better to lose a child than to lose our culture), tells us how relevant culture is to a society. The expression is based on the need for culture to teach future generations on the good way to live (December 31, 2015).

Prime Minister Najib Razak says the country should be administered and developed the "Malaysian Way" based on unity and cooperation among the races (October 8, 2012).

Despite its attempt to appear universal and inclusive, the analysis reveals an imbalance in New Straits Times' news content. Although the general terms 'culture' and 'heritage' are used in the texts to refer to the culture and heritage of all ethnic groups, one particular ethnic group seems to be the focal point of the texts.

Culture and heritage of the Malay ethnic group appears to be the key aspects of Malaysian culture that require protection. Based on the data for this second theme, only three ethnic groups that are made relevant to the subject: Malay, Chinese and Indian. All three groups are the main ethnic groups in Malaysia. The small minority of Malaysians who do not fit into the broader or main ethnic groups are disregarded by New Straits Times, which implies that their culture and heritage are unworthy of serious consideration to be part of Malaysian culture. Therefore, it is questionable whether the words 'we' and 'our' in the texts, especially in the headlines are actually refer to the general Malaysians.

The data also show that New Straits Times' news content are not simply relevant to urban Malaysians, but to specific urban Malaysians who are from Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic backgrounds. This raises an issue with regard to the term 'Malaysian culture', which initially seems to be all-embracing and non-specific. As Malaysian culture is revealed to be a problematic term, a deeper exploration of the aspects of culture and heritage in the texts

are necessary and beneficial in order to provide clear understanding on the definition of Malaysian culture that the texts actually refer to. It raises an important question: what are the specific culture and heritage that need to be protected? As stated earlier, the culture and heritage of Malay ethnic appear dominant in the texts:

As an adjunct in the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, the Department of Museums, besides its core business of exhibiting historical relics that include weapons, jewellery, costumes, ceramic and crafts, also periodically organises performances of traditional art forms such as *wayang kulit*, *Mak Yong* and *gambus* music. **It is hoped that with the existence of such departments, we would not repeat the fiasco of destroying our cultural heritage that started when the British education system replaced our *Jawi* with romanised script**, erasing our identity as well as scholarship and calligraphic skills in *Jawi*. We are among the few countries in the world without our own script. Other countries regard their script as their national pride and heritage, but we abandoned it, which for centuries had been used in courts and local provinces as an administrative, literary and communicative tool (July 3, 2017).

The above extract points out two issues regarding the discourse of Malaysian culture. Firstly, there is a mention of *wayang kulit*, *Mak Yong* and *gambus* music. There is a connection made between these three traditional art forms and cultural heritage, hence suggests that they are part of the important aspects of Malaysian identity. The text presents the topic of cultural heritage in a general sense by not mentioning any particular ethnic group. However, the traditional art forms stated in the text are the cultural heritage of the Malay ethnic group. The main indicator is the terms *wayang kulit*, *Mak Yong* and *gambus*. They are all Malay terms and commonly practiced by the Malay ethnic in the olden days.

The text also mentions *Jawi*, which is an Arabic script for writing Malay language and used to be an official script in Malaysia. *Jawi* became prominent with the spread of Islam in Malaysia. Like *wayang kulit*, *Mak Yong* and *gambus* music, *Jawi* is also connected to the Malay ethnic because Malay and Islam are inseparable. Interestingly, cultural heritage of the other ethnic groups are not mentioned in the text. It suggests that the traditional cultural forms, specified in the text are a representative sample of Malaysian culture.

Therefore, it shows the dominant role of Malay culture, or culture that is associated with the Malay ethnic group to be precise.

In this context, Malaysian culture seems to refer to Malay culture. The analysis on 135 news articles identifies a list of cultural symbols that are clearly connected to the Malay ethnic such as *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language), Malay literature, *pantun* (Malay poetical form), movies of P. Ramlee, *wayang kulit* (puppet-shadow play), *Mak Yong* (traditional form of dance-drama), *Gambus* music, *nasi lemak* (Malay fragrant rice), *silat* (a type of martial arts), *baju kurung* (traditional Malay costume for women), *baju melayu* (traditional Malay costume for men), Eid celebration (religious holiday celebrated by Muslims), *kampung* (village) culture, and *adat* (the customary way of life).

From the analysis, only three types of Chinese heritage that are stated in the texts, which are Baba-Nyonya tradition, lion dance and cheongsam (traditional Chinese costume). Similarly, the Indian ethnic group is only associated with *roti canai* (Indian-influenced flatbread), *teh tarik* (milk tea) and *sari* (traditional Indian costume). Altogether, the aforementioned cultural symbols are the specific types of culture and heritage that require protection. It is apparent that there is an imbalance of details in the definition or interpretation of Malaysian culture as those specific types of culture and heritage are not a fair representation of diverse Malaysian society. Cultural symbols that represent the Malay ethnic seem to be regarded as more important than the other types of culture and heritage. The dominant role of Malay culture is the second issue shown in the above extract. The text uses the words 'we' and 'our' although it is mainly about Malays' cultural symbols.

In the second sentence, for instance, there is a connection between *Jawi* script and Malaysian identity: "...the British education system replaced our *Jawi* with romanised script, erasing our identity ...". In this particular sentence, the keyword is 'our', which suggests that *Jawi* script belongs to Malaysians, in general. Indirectly, it also shows the Islamic side of Malaysian identity even though Islam is not the only religion being practised in Malaysia. The text makes mention of the British education, which appears to be the main cause of *Jawi* script extinction. It illustrates the negative effect of British colonisation in Malaysia. Based on the general data on cultural heritage, there is a correlation between British colonialism and the aforementioned types of culture and heritage that require protection.

New Straits Times seems to give emphasis on the topic of cultural heritage in order to encourage appreciation of the authentic Malaysian culture: the lifestyle of Malaysians before the British domination in Malaysia. This is based on the list of cultural symbols, identified from the analysed texts. Nineteen specific types of culture and heritage that are linked to the general term Malaysian culture were identified from the data, which apparently only represents the main ethnic groups in Malaysia: Malay, Chinese and Indian. In spite of that, these main ethnic groups are not represented proportionately as 13 of the cultural symbols represent the Malay ethnic, while the other six is divided into two to represent Chinese and Indian respectively. Although all 19 symbols are the traditional forms of culture in Malaysia, the special importance given to the Malay traditions indicates an effort to define Malaysian culture based on its pre-colonised state.

It is a condition in which Malaysia is populated mainly by the Malay ethnic group before Chinese and Indian immigrants came to British-ruled Malaya (now known as Malaysia) in search of a better life. This is based on the main specific types of culture and heritage that are highlighted in New Straits Times. From the analysed texts, the 13 main cultural forms associated with the Malay ethnic are mostly the forgotten traditions even among Malays who populate rural areas. It is believed to be the impact of British rule, which brought profound changes and transformed the various states socially and economically. Therefore, the need to protect and preserve traditional forms of culture such as Malay literature, *pantun*, *wayang kulit*, *Mak Yong*, *Gambus*, *silat*, *baju kurung*, *baju melayu*, *kampung culture* and *adat*, illustrates protection of Malay supremacy.

In conclusion, culture and heritage associated with the Malay ethnic group appears to be dominant in the discourse of Malaysian culture. Although New Straits Times presents the topic of preserving cultural heritage in a general sense, Malay culture is revealed to be the most important component of Malaysian culture. Due to the readership demographic of the newspaper and the use of the word 'we' and 'our' in the analysed texts, the other ethnic groups are expected to be accepting of the idea to elevate the Malay-based culture of Malaysia. Therefore the term Malaysian culture is not representative of Malaysian society. It appears to be a deceptive term to illustrate inclusivity. The findings of an analysis of New Straits Times correlate with the findings of an analysis of Berita Harian. There is a similarity between the second recurring subjects of both newspapers. The subjects of protecting Malay language and preserving cultural heritage both consist of the special position of the Malay ethnic group in Malaysia's modernisation project.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusion and Limitations of the Study**

This chapter provides a summary of the study and reflects on key findings that have been discussed in chapter five and six. Here, I address each of the research questions along with the research limitations. This chapter is divided into two sections. Section (7.1) offers a brief synopsis of this study and addresses the three research questions. Section (7.2) states the limitations of this study and the obstacles faced in the research process.

#### **7.1 Conclusion**

I was inspired to explore the cultural aspect of Malaysian modernity because it involves the Malaysian society. For so long, cultural identity has been a controversial subject in Malaysia. Despite its importance, the topic of Malaysian cultural modernity remains understudied. When it comes to Malaysian modernity, many scholars are interested in exploring the tangible and measurable aspects of the modernisation project. Although there are few scholars who have addressed the issue of Malaysian cultural modernity, their studies tend to be ethnic-orientated. Therefore, there are no available comprehensive studies investigating the rationale behind the Malaysian government's plan to modernise Malaysian society as a whole. Also, since Mahathir is synonymous with modernity in the context of Malaysia, available studies in this field are mostly only refer to Mahathir's ideology of modernity. As a result, the topic of Malaysian modernity is commonly explored within the Mahathir era.

This study shows that the intangible development of modern Malaysia is as important as economic and infrastructure developments. Since cultural and identity development of Malaysian society has been overlooked in this field of study, my dissertation contributes to the current knowledge of cultural modernity, which tend to be dominated by Western scholarship. As presented in both literature review and theory chapters, the term modernity is commonly linked to the West, which contributes to the general understanding that modern refers to something like new, now or of recent invention. This common understanding is disputable as this study shows that modern and developed does not necessarily mean new. This study also shows that Western modernity is not always seen as an inspiration.

In the context of Malaysia, full transformation is not required in the plan to create a modern and developed society. Ideal Malaysians are the ones who are modern and traditional at the same time. Unlike the available literature on modernity, this study shows that Islam has a significant role in defining Malaysian version of cultural modernity. The incorporation of Islam in the making of modern Malaysians points out Malaysia's unique approach to modernity in which the process involves both 'looking forward' and 'looking backward'. With this, this study also contributes to the literature on theories of alternative modernities and multiple modernities.

It seems that not all post-colonial nations intend to fully imitate developed Western nations. This study shows that the Western concept of cultural modernity is not really applicable to Malaysian society. Apart from that, this study provides a contemporary perspective for understanding the theory of individualism and collectivism in the context of modernity, which shows the importance of cultural discourse in identity and modernity studies. This study is important both theoretically and culturally because the idea of modern Malaysians is not just the government's narrative but an important ideology, which serves as the basis of national policy/policies. Therefore, it has a direct impact on Malaysian society, in general. This study is also useful to inspire discussion about ethnocentrism in multi-cultural Malaysia.

To sum up, this study offers a new insights into Malaysian modernity. It is a study that points out the link between the Malaysian government, the mainstream media, Malaysian modernity, Malaysian identity and Malaysian society. Several unexpected elements of Malaysian modernity are discovered. This study proves that the concept of modern Malaysian society is subjective and heavily influenced by the ruling power, thus validate the method of Critical Discourse Analysis for critically investigating the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity. It points out distinctive characteristics associated with the idea of modern Malaysian society. Through the analysis, I managed to answer all three research questions of the study. The brief summary of each of the research questions are as follows:

### How relevant is Mahathir's Vision 2020 in the post-Mahathir era?

Both chapters five and six addressed this research question in great length. Based on the analysis results, Mahathir's Vision 2020 appears relevant even after he left the office in 2003. First and foremost, this proves that Malaysia's modernisation is an ongoing project. Although the vision remains relevant in the post-Mahathir era, there are some additions to it. The obvious one is the concept of Islam Hadhari during the period of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's premiership. From 2003 to 2009, Islam was heavily promoted by both newspapers, especially the New Straits Times. This is an interesting findings because as an English newspaper, NST's news articles are structured to cater to diverse Malaysian society. Also, while Berita Harian uses the term 'Islam Hadhari', NST only emphasises the general term 'Islam'. The repetition of Islam Hadhari and Islam as the best approach to achieve Malaysian modernity illustrates an attempt to constantly remind the society that the Islamic concept of modernity is a rational concept and compatible with the religiously diverse Malaysians.

From 2009 to 2018, the notion of *bangsa Malaysia* appeared prominent. *Bangsa Malaysia* is best described as Malaysian nation as it is associated with nation building. Unlike Islam Hadhari, Malaysian nation is not a new concept created by Najib Razak because it is already stated among the initial objectives of Mahathir's Vision 2020. During the period of Najib Razak's premiership, the term *bangsa Malaysia* is not used consistently mainly because of the introduction of the '1Malaysia' concept. Although Malaysian society seems to be the focus of Malaysian modernity in the post-Mahathir era, there exists an element of favouritism in both Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Najib eras. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi placed great emphasis on Muslims, whereas Najib Razak prioritised the Malay ethnic group. The answer to this first research question also strengthen the belief that the idea of modern Malaysian society continues to be 'narrated' by the ruling power.

### What version of modernity does the Malaysian government intends to achieve?

This is the most important question in this study because it involves issues of post-colonialism, Malay supremacy, Islam, Asian values, Malaysian values, as well as 'the West'. Based on the analysis, there is a consistent pattern of beliefs. The need to form a Malaysian version of modernity are apparent in both eras. The reason being is that the characteristics of modern society in modern countries are believed to be incompatible with Malaysian society. There is an apparent opposition to Western modernity, mainly because of the country's history of colonialism. Part of the objective of creating a Malaysian version of modernity is to restructure Malaysia's post-colonial condition. During the era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, cultural modernity refers to a successful and pious society. The word pious interrelates with the phrase "an ideal society". This means that the construction of God-fearing society is a key process for achieving modernity. Evidently, Islam is integrated into the idea of modern society. The analysis pointed out an attempt to alter the identity of Malaysians in general, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Islam is the preferred 'tool' to modernise the society because it is believed to be useful in two respects. First, the Islamic approach seems appropriate to equip the society with necessary moral values in order to resist external influence brought by globalisation. Second, Islam is considered the best option to differentiate Malaysian modernity from Western modernity.

Through cultural modernisation, the government intends to instil into the society both Islamic beliefs and Islamic practices. This is an interesting discovery because it contradicts the government's notion that the non-Malays are free to practise their chosen religion. Another interesting discovery is that modernity in the context of Malaysia does not necessarily mean new. It is because Malaysia is inspired by development that took place in the past, rather than the present. In this context, the Islamic excellence during the time of Prophet Muhammad is the preferred model of modernity, not the West. This study thus presents a concept of modernity beyond the West, of which Islam and Muslims are incorporated in the general discourse of modernity. It is apparent that the West is not seen as an example to be imitated. Similarly, during the era of Najib Razak, there was no attempt to encourage the society to be Western. During this period, cultural modernity refers to uniformity. There was an expectation for Malaysian society to be united through one language and one identity. Interestingly, the language refers to Malay language and the identity refers to Malay identity.

### Which aspect of Malaysian culture that requires transformation?

This question is part of the reason I undertook this study. The term Malaysian culture is a broad concept and highly subjective, hence is worth to be investigated. Also, it is an important question to be addressed in this study in order to efficiently translate Malaysian identity and modernity. In general, Malaysian culture refers to cultural norms among Malaysians, which means it symbolises diverse ethnic groups. Logically, the cultural identity of all ethnic groups is bound to be affected by the modernisation project. However, this study found that certain elements of Malay culture were being protected. Also, Malaysian modernity does not necessarily mean that Malaysian society is given a total 'make-over'. There are specific kinds of the so-called Malaysian culture that are considered important thus need to be preserved or revived.

They refer to *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language), *budaya rewang* (community cooperation), Malay literature, *pantun* (Malay poetical form), *wayang kulit* (puppet-shadow play), *Mak Yong* (traditional form of dance-drama), *Gambus* music, *nasi lemak* (Malay fragrant rice), *silat* (a type of martial arts), *baju kurung* (traditional Malay costume for women), *baju melayu* (traditional Malay costume for men), Eid celebration (religious holiday celebrated by Muslims), *kampung* (village) culture, and *adat* (the customary way of life), Baba-Nyona tradition, lion dance, cheongsam (traditional Chinese costume), *roti canai* (Indian-influenced flatbread), *teh tarik* (milk tea) and *sari* (traditional Indian costume). These specific types of culture and heritage are linked to the general term Malaysian culture although they only represent the main ethnic groups in Malaysia, which are Malay, Chinese and Indian. Interestingly, most of the cultural symbols actually belong to the Malay ethnic group and they were widely practised in the pre-colonial era. This study also found that cultural modernity in the context of Malaysia mainly involves restoration process rather than transformation process. The rationale behind it is that Malaysia needs distinctive features of Malaysian culture to distinguish modern Malaysian society from other modern societies.

## **7.2 Limitations of the study**

Since studies on Malaysian identity and modernity in terms of culture are very limited, this study felt rather experimental. Unlike modern Malaysia, the concept of modern Malaysians is abstract thus requires extensive exploration of the identity, cultural and modernity theories, which mostly contributed by the non-Malaysian scholars. Data collection process was also challenging because initially I wanted to select three mainstream newspapers for this study. However, not all Malaysian newspapers are available on the Nexis database. I was only able to analyse Berita Harian and New Straits Times although there are many other vernacular newspapers in Malaysia. One of the reasons is that I only understand Malay and English. As I am not a professional Malay-English language translator, some text extracts may sound strange in English. Also, the findings are based on my own interpretation and understanding of the texts, which might have influenced the results. Furthermore, news articles retrieved from Nexis search engine might not include every single article published by both newspapers. Although this study has provided comprehensive analysis on the discourse of Malaysian identity and modernity, it is also opens up ideas for further studies. The topic of cultural modernity can be further analysed through other media platforms as mainstream newspapers might not be the only platform used by the ruling power.

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