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Social Transformation in Malaysia and the Fragmentation of the Malay-Dominant Political Parties

— Based on a Social Cleavage Structure Theory Perspective

Chen Rongxuan & Fu Congcong

[Abstract] After Malaysia's Fourteenth General Election in 2018, five Malay-dominant political parties entered the federal parliament from Peninsular Malaysia alone: the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (BERSATU), the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), the People's Justice Party (PKR), and the National Integrity Party (AMANAH). Of these, PAS, PKR, and BERSATU split off from UMNO in succession, while AMANAH split off from PAS in 2015. The fragmentation of the Malay-dominant parties is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has undergone a gradual, evolving process. Drawing on the theoretical framework of social cleavage structure theory, this article argues that the configuration of the Malay-dominant parties is the joint product of contradictions among elites within the political society and cleavage structures within the civil society. When the contradictions among the elites cannot be reconciled, or when a new cleavage structure emerges within the civil society, or both, a new party comes into being. If the new party is able to combine with an existing social cleavage structure, or to shape a new cleavage structure from the top down, it can survive; but if it cannot find a social cleavage structure on which to subsist, the new party is bound to wither away.

[Keywords] Malaysia; Malay-dominant parties; party fragmentation; party politics; cleavage structure theory; social transformation

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Introduction: The Malay-Dominant Parties in Fragmentation

On 6 October 2019, the "Malay Dignity Congress" was held in Shah Alam, the capital of the state of Selangor, Malaysia. At the congress, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, made a special point of emphasizing the importance of the word "unity," noting: "At the founding of the nation, the Malays were the dominant force in Malaysian politics. Today, the Malays have already fragmented into small cliques one after another; not a single clique is able to win the support of the entire people. The Malays regard their own brethren as enemies, and all of this is of our own making."[1] In his view, the internal fragmentation of the Malays had gravely undermined the political dominance of the Malay community.

The content of Mahathir's speech is precisely a portrait of Malaysia's present political landscape — the word "fragmentation" best describes the current developmental trajectory of Malaysian party politics. At the party level, over the past five years the number of Malay-dominant parties has risen sharply. After the Fourteenth General Election, in Peninsular Malaysia (Semenanjung Malaysia, abbreviated "West Malaysia"), five Malay-dominant parties (Malay-dominant Parties) entered the federal parliament: the United Malays National Organization (abbreviated "UMNO"), the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (abbreviated "BERSATU"), the Malaysian Islamic Party (abbreviated "PAS"), the People's Justice Party (abbreviated "PKR"), and the National Trust Party (abbreviated "AMANAH").[2] Of these, PAS, PKR, and BERSATU split off from UMNO in 1951, 1999, and 2016 respectively; AMANAH split off from PAS in 2015. In 2019, PKR further divided internally into two distinct factions led by party president Anwar Ibrahim and former deputy president Azmin Ali, the latter of whom subsequently joined the Muhyiddin camp within BERSATU. After the 2020 Malaysian political crisis,[3] BERSATU experienced an internal split: the Mahathir faction and the faction of former Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman left the party, founding respectively the Homeland Fighters' Party (abbreviated "PEJUANG") and the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (abbreviated "MUDA") (see Figure 1).

At the voter level, the party preferences of current Malay voters likewise display a scattered character. According to data from the Merdeka Center, in the Fourteenth General Election 25%–30% of Malays voted for the Alliance of Hope (Pakatan Harapan, abbreviated "PH"),[4] 35%–40% of Malay voters supported the UMNO-led National Front (Barisan Nasional, abbreviated "BN"),[5] and 30%–33% of Malays chose to sup-

[1] "Hanya Melayu boleh pulih maruah Melayu – Tun M" (Mahathir: Only the Malays Themselves Can Restore the Dignity of the Malays), *Berita Harian* (*Daily News*), https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2019/10/614548/hanya-melayu-boleh-pulih-maruah-melayu-tun-m, March 4, 2020.

[2] "GE 14 Results Overview," *The Star Online*, https://election.thestar.com.my/, Nov. 10, 2019.

[3] The 2020 Malaysian political crisis, also known as the "Sheraton Move," refers to the governing crisis that befell the ruling Pakatan Harapan government on 24 February 2020, leading to the Perikatan Nasional government replacing Pakatan Harapan to form a new Muhyiddin cabinet.

[4] In the Fourteenth General Election, Pakatan Harapan was composed of PKR, BERSATU, AMANAH, and the Chinese-voter-based Democratic Action Party (abbreviated "DAP").

[5] In the Fourteenth General Election, the National Front was composed of multiple parties including UMNO, the Malaysian Chinese Association (abbreviated "MCA"), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (abbreviated "MIC"). After the general election, the National Front fell apart owing to its electoral defeat, and the three parties mentioned above, as its founders, are also the only members of the National Front that remain at present.

port PAS.[6]

[Figure 1: Genealogy of Malaysia's Major Malay-Dominant Parties — figure omitted; see original]

Source: Compiled and drawn by the authors based on relevant materials.

In general, the authoritarian era in which a strong party coalition headed by UMNO led Malaysia is long gone and will not return. However, the fragmentation of the Malay-dominant parties is not a new phenomenon. Tracing back the history of the development of Malaysian party politics, it is not difficult to see that the fragmentation of the Malay-dominant parties has in fact undergone a gradual, evolving process. Borrowing the "index of party system fractionalization" proposed by Douglas Rae, one can measure the specific degree of fragmentation of Malaysia's successive parliaments.[7] Here, the seat distribution of each party in the lower house of the federal parliament across fifteen elections is used as data — namely the election held in British Malaya in 1955, and the elections from the First General Election after Malaysia's independence in 1959 down to the Fourteenth General Election in 2018[8] — to calculate the fractionalization index of Malaysia's successive parliaments. In view of the considerable differences between East Malaysia and Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) in geographical location, party types, and political model, the phenomenon of party fragmentation discussed in this article centers mainly on the West Malaysian region as the political center and the chief arena of party activity; the constituencies of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia and the federal territory of Labuan fall outside the scope of this article.

It is worth mentioning that, given that Malaysia's party coalitions are relatively weakly binding and that parties can survive independently of their coalitions, the various parties that form alliances in a general election are also counted as independent units in the calculation. At the same time, if attention is focused on the Malay-dominant parties, this same trend of change can also be observed. In order to present this change intuitively, this article selects a more straightforward indicator: the number of major Malay-dominant parties in the West Malaysian parliament — that is, how many Malay-dominant parties were able to obtain 5% or more of the seats in the lower house (and if a party's seat count did not reach the 5% threshold but was decisive in forming the governing coalition, it is likewise taken into account).[9] The two indicators above are shown in Figure 2.

[6]"Report: 95% Chinese but Less than 30% Malays Voted for PH," *Free Malaysia Today*, https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2018/06/14/report-95-chinese-but-less-than-30-malays-voted-for-ph/, Nov. 10, 2019.

[7]The "fractionalization index" is explained in terms of "pairwise disagreement" (pairwise disagreement); its meaning is the probability that, if two members are randomly drawn from the entire body of members of parliament, the two belong to different parties. The fractionalization value varies between 0 and 1; the greater the number of parties of comparable strength, the greater the fractionalization value. For example, the fractionalization index of a two-party state approaches 0.5. The specific formula is as follows (where N is the number of parties and P_i denotes the proportion of seats held by the i-th party): $F = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{N} P_i^2$. See Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Wivenhoe Park: ECPR Press, 2005, pp. 271–273; cf. the Chinese translation: G. Sartori (Italy), translated by Wang Mingjin, *Parties and Party Systems*, The Commercial Press, 2006, pp. 418–424.

[8]Election data are from Francis G. Carnell, "The Malayan Elections," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1955, p. 315; Dieter Nohlen, Florian Grotz, Christof Hartmann, *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook (Volume II: South East Asia, East Asia, and the South Pacific)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 152; Portal Rasmi Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (Official Website of the Election Commission of Malaysia), http://www.spr.gov.my/, 2020-03-05.

[9]Another indicator worth considering is to calculate directly the fractionalization index of the Malay-dominant parties within parliament. The method of calculation is to set the total number of seats won by all Malay-dominant parties as 1, and to calculate the probability that, if two members are randomly drawn from the entire body of members of parliament from Malay-dominant parties, the two belong to different parties. However, such a calculation finds it difficult to exclude the influence that may be brought by other types of parties (such as Chinese-dominant parties), and so this article does not adopt this method of calculation.

[Figure 2: The Fractionalization Index of Successive Lower Houses of the Federal Parliament and the Number of Major Malay-Dominant Parties in the West Malaysian Region — figure omitted; see original]

Source: Compiled and drawn by the authors based on relevant materials.

From the trends of the two fractionalization-index line graphs — parliamentary fractionalization and the number of major Malay-dominant parties — it can be seen that the party-political landscape of the West Malaysian region has, on the whole, exhibited an increasingly fragmented character; at the same time, the development of the configuration of the Malay-dominant parties also reflects a consistent trend. This process of development has passed through several important stages. First, around the time of national independence, the Malaysian parties experienced their first marked fragmentation; it was not until UMNO led the establishment of the National Front (Barisan Nasional) in 1974 and built up an absolute position of rule that the struggles within the Malay community temporarily subsided and the situation of party fragmentation gradually eased. By the late 1980s and the 1990s, the developmental trajectory of Malaysian party politics shifted once again. Especially after the 1999 general election, multiple parties with roughly comparable numbers of seats gradually appeared in parliament, so that the various parties mutually constrained one another and there was no clear center of power. At the same time, considering that Malaysia has long given the votes of rural Malay voters greater weight through distorted electoral redistricting, the fractionalization index calculated by the current method is still relatively underestimated.[10]

It can thus be seen that the Malay-dominant parties of the West Malaysian region have always been in a dynamic process of fragmentation and merger. So, why do the Malay-dominant parties fragment? Why do some new parties established after a split manage to survive, while others wither away? Although the phenomenon of Malay-dominant party fragmentation has long existed, existing research has tended to conduct specific case analyses of one particular split, and has failed to provide a systematic explanation of this continually recurring phenomenon.

Against this background, this article attempts to explain Malay-dominant party fragmentation over a long time span, and to analyze why some of the parties that split off are able to survive while others are not. First, by reviewing the existing literature, this article points out why social cleavage structure theory can help in understanding the phenomenon of Malay-dominant party fragmentation. Second, when using social cleavage structure theory to analyze the situations of Malaysia and other Asian countries, the theory needs to be revised in accordance with these countries' distinctive historical backgrounds. Thereafter, this article selects representative cases from the process of Malay-dominant party fragmentation in post–World War II Malaysia, and explains specifically how Malay-dominant party fragmentation gradually shifted from an elite-led process to a mass-led process. Finally, this article argues that a historical narrative proceeding solely from the elite perspective cannot fully reflect the realities of political development in Southeast Asian countries; treating correctly the historical experience of democratic political development in Southeast Asian countries is of great significance for the study and development of political-science theory.

[10] Chin-Huat Wong, James Chin, Norani Othman, "Malaysia – Towards a Topology of an Electoral One-party State," *Democratization*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 2010, pp. 920–949.

I. Literature Review: Institutionalism, Social Cleavage Structure Theory, and the Empirical Facts of Malaysia

When it comes to the question of Malay-dominant party fragmentation in the West Malaysian region — such as the 1951 split between UMNO and PAS, or the 2016 split between PAS and AMANAH — a common explanatory approach is that these parties differ in ideology and in their lines of struggle.[11] However, this explanation cannot account for why fragmentation continues to occur between UMNO and BERSATU — which both likewise espouse Malay nationalism and adhere to "Malay supremacy" — as well as within these two parties. At the same time, the relevant research cannot explain the causes of the long-term phenomenon of Malay-dominant party fragmentation, and is confined to the Malay-elite perspective without accounting for the voter bases on which the relevant parties subsist.

Some other research attempts to combine intra-party factionalism (factionalism) with Malaysia's process of modernizing development to explain the causes of Malay-dominant party fragmentation. This kind of explanation generally holds that during Mahathir's first term as prime minister, the degree of central concentration of power within UMNO was excessive, large quantities of political and economic resources were distributed unevenly, and this ultimately led to fierce struggles among the various factions within the party. At the same time, the "New Economic Policy" implemented by Malaysia fostered a large new urban Malay middle class, and this segment of voters bitterly detested the patron-client politics (patron-client politics) and nepotism (nepotism) practiced by UMNO and the National Front. Therefore, they were more willing to support other Malay-dominant parties as well as leaders who had broken away from UMNO, in pursuit of change. This explanatory approach is commonly seen in analyses of the split of Semangat 46, and of how Anwar was expelled from UMNO and subsequently united his faction and supporters to found the National Justice Party.[12] This approach takes into account the standpoints of both political elites and voters, but it still suffers from being overly simplistic and cannot explain other instances of Malay-dominant party fragmentation. Moreover, if factional struggle gives rise to new parties, then under what circumstances can these newly emergent parties survive amid fierce competition, and under what circumstances do they gradually wither away? Both having been founded by senior UMNO leaders who held dissenting views from Mahathir, why was Semangat 46 unable, like PKR, to win the long-term support of voters but, on the contrary, after

[11] For relevant research see: Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 10, 1981, pp. 1040–1059; Farish A. Noor, *The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951–2003)*, Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2004; Farish A. Noor, *The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951–2013, Islamism in a Mottled Nation*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014; Dominik M. Müller, *Islam, Politics and Youth in Malaysia: The Pop-Islamist Reinvention of PAS*, Taylor and Francis Books, 2014; Maszlee Malik, "Rethinking the Role of Islam in Malaysian Politics: A Case Study of Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH)," *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2017, pp. 457–472; Maszlee Malik, "From Political Islam to Democrat Muslim: A Case Study of Rashid Ghannouchi's Influence on ABIM, IKRAM, AMANAH and DAP," *Intellectual Discourse*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2017, pp. 21–53; Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, Kajang: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, New Era College, 2006; Xu Liping et al., *Contemporary Southeast Asian Islam: Development and Challenges*, Current Affairs Press, 2008; Fan Ruolan et al., *Islam and the Process of Modernization in Southeast Asia*, China Social Sciences Press, 2009; He Shengda (ed.), *Southeast Asian Islam and Contemporary Politics*, China Books Publishing House, 2010.

[12] For relevant research see: Hari Singh, "Political Change in Malaysia: The Role of Semangat 46," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 8, 1991, pp. 712–728; William Case, "The UMNO Party Election in Malaysia: One for the Money," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 10, 1994, pp. 916–930; William Case, "UMNO Paramountcy: A Report on Single-party Dominance in Malaysia," *Party Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1996, pp. 115–127; Edmund Terence Gomez, "Political Business in Malaysia Party Factionalism, Corporate Development, and Economic Crisis," in Edmund Terence Gomez ed., *Political Business in East Asia*, London: Taylor and Francis, 2004, pp. 99–131; Andreas Ufen, "The Transformation of Political Party Opposition in Malaysia and Its Implications for the Electoral Authoritarian Regime," *Democratization*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2010, pp. 604–627.

the 1990 and 1995 general elections returned once again to UMNO? Clearly, the existing case studies have not answered this question well.

Parties and party systems are among the hottest fields in political-science research, and party fragmentation is a widely discussed question. The most classic question among these is precisely: what determines the number of parties within a given polity. In general, the political-science discipline has proposed two distinct research approaches to answer this question:[13] one approach emphasizes the role of electoral rules in shaping the party system — that is, the "institutionalist" approach — while the other focuses on the possible influence of long-standing social cleavage structures (social cleavages).

The institutionalist research approach is represented by "Duverger's Law," which holds that the plurality (first-past-the-post) electoral system tends to produce a two-party system, the (two-round) majority electoral system gives rise to parties that ally with one another, while proportional representation tends to form numerous independent parties.[14] After being revised by William Riker and Giovanni Sartori,[15] this law can be further stated as: "The plurality electoral system tends to produce two-party competition within specific constituencies, and if accompanied by a nationally structured party system, will foster a two-party system nationwide."[16] However, testing the empirical facts of Malaysia through this approach seems to produce a certain counterintuitive effect. On the one hand, Malaysia uses a single-member-constituency plurality electoral system — that is, the candidate who receives the most votes in a constituency wins;[17] on the other hand, Malaysia's electoral system has long been manipulated by the National Front government. This manipulation is manifested in many respects, the most typical feature of which is the "gerrymandering" style of constituency demarcation. Plurality voting and the manipulated electoral rules have made the survival of opposition parties — especially smaller opposition parties — extremely difficult. From the specific data, UMNO and the National Front have consistently been in a state of overrepresentation, while the conversion rate of the votes obtained by the opposition has been greatly compressed. In successive elections before 2008, the largest Malay-dominant opposition party in parliament[18] could generally obtain 10%–21% of the votes, but these votes could only be converted into 3%–14% of the seats. This situation is fundamentally caused by Malaysia's electoral system.[19] Yet, subtly, it is precisely under such circumstances that the fragmentation of Malaysia's ethnic parties continues to intensify, and even within a party that has long been in opposition, such as PAS, fragmentation is an unavoidable phenomenon.

Arend Lijphart once attempted to interpret this special situation, but the alternative explanation he pro-

[13]Octavio Amorim Neto, Gary W. Cox, "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1997, p. 149.

[14]Maurice Duverger, "Duverger's Law: Forty Years Later," in Grofman, Bernard, Arend Lijphart eds., *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, New York: Agathon Press, 1986, p. 70.

[15]For relevant research see: William H. Riker, "The Number of Political Parties: A Reexamination of Duverger's Law," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1976, pp. 93–106; William H. Riker, "Two-party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4, 1982, pp. 753–766; Giovanni Sartori, "The Influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Method?," in Grofman, Bernard, Arend Lijphart eds., *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, New York: Agathon Press, pp. 43–68.

[16]Chen Jian, "Interpreting 'Duverger's Law'," *Seeker* (*Qiusuo*), No. 8, 2012.

[17]"Penjalanan Pilihan Raya" (The Election Process), Portal Rasmi Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (Official Website of the Election Commission of Malaysia), https://www.spr.gov.my/ms/pilihan-raya/penjalanan-pilihan-raya/umum, 2020-05-12.

[18]With the exception of 1955 (the National Party), 1974 (the People's Socialist Party of Malaysia), and 1990 and 1995 (Semangat 46), the largest Malay-dominant opposition party in the lower house of the federal parliament generally refers to PAS.

[19]Chin-Huat Wong, James Chin, Norani Othman, "Malaysia – Towards a Topology of an Electoral One-party State," *Democratization*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 2010, p. 923.

posed remains insufficiently convincing. On the one hand, Lijphart's research points out that, in a multiple-regression equation relating malapportionment in the allocation of constituency seats and the degree of disproportionality, a parliamentary majority, and the majority manufactured (by exploiting the aforesaid malapportionment and disproportionality), the influence of malapportionment in the allocation of constituency seats vanishes entirely. However, Lijphart also concedes that only when the influence of the effective parliamentary threshold is controlled can the influence of malapportionment be ignored; yet malapportionment frequently occurs in single-member-constituency countries. Therefore, this alternative explanation clearly does not hold for Malaysia, which practices a single-member-constituency system. In addition, Lijphart also proposed a possible supplementary explanation, namely that malapportionment in the allocation of constituency seats may well be neutralized under the influence of other factors — for example, UMNO's advantage in rural constituencies may be offset by opposition votes concentrated in urban constituencies.[20] But this explanation, too, can only account for why, after entering the twenty-first century — especially in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth General Elections — the advantage gained by UMNO and the National Front in constituency demarcation was no longer obvious; it cannot explain why new parties are still being continually produced.

On the other hand, according to the institutionalist view, joint electoral campaigning by parties benefits small parties and can reduce the degree of disproportionality, and is therefore conducive to increasing the number of parties entering parliament.[21] This can clearly explain why, after entering the 1990s, the fractionalization index of Malaysia's parliament continued to climb — this is because, after the 1990s, Malaysia's Malay-dominant parties, including the great majority of opposition parties, generally adopted the method of joint electoral campaigning (apparentement) to contest general elections. In other words, the institutionalist line of thought can help us answer by what means parties produced through a split are able to survive. Nevertheless, this line of thought still has problems: first, it still cannot explain why Semangat 46 dissolved in 1996 while the People's Justice Party managed to survive even after its crushing defeat in 2004; second, it cannot help answer the other core question of this article: for what reasons do the Malay-dominant parties fragment.

Given that the institutionalist explanatory approach is still insufficient to answer perfectly the questions posed by this article, another, political-sociological, explanatory approach — social cleavage structure theory — becomes especially crucial. To clarify social cleavage structure theory, one must first make clear the concept of "cleavage." A "cleavage" is distinct from both "division" and "conflict": a cleavage is a profound, persistent social division existing between different social groups, born out of a particular social conflict. A given social division must, at the very least, contain three important elements in order to be called a social cleavage: first, this division causes society to form a social cleavage structure bounded by such standards as class, religion, and level of education; second, the members of different social groups within the social cleavage structure possess a certain degree of collective identity (collective identity); third, these social groups are able to manifest their existence over the long term through collective action.[22] In other words, the specific groups within a social cleavage structure are able to convey their demands clearly and to hold a definite attitude toward specific issues.[23]

[20]Arend Lijphart (USA), translated by Xie Yue, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: An Empirical Study of 27 Countries, 1945–1990*, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2016, p. 120.

[21]Ibid., p. 124.

[22]Stefano Bartolini, Peter Mair, *Competition and Electoral Availability*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 42–56.

[23]Stefano Bartolini, "The Class Cleavage: Conceptual and Methodological Framework," in *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 9–53.

Social cleavage structure theory was first proposed by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan. They held that a country's party system is a manifestation of that country's deep-seated social conflicts. These persistent contradictions and conflicts harden into the foundation of long-term social cleavages, and shaped the party landscape of early Europe. Generally speaking, new cleavage structures arise as a result of large-scale social movements. These critical junctures (critical juncture) determine the development of a country's party politics for decades to come.[24]

At the time of its formation, social cleavage structure theory was meant to explain the formation of the party-political landscape of Western Europe. They held that social cleavages comprise principally two dimensions: the territorial–cultural cleavage and the functional cleavage. The territorial–cultural cleavage structure is the product of the national revolution (national revolution): there is hostility and conflict between the cultural center of nation-building and the groups of peripheral regions in terms of ethnic identity, language, and religion; there is also conflict between the newly born nation-state and the historical privileges of the Church. After the territorial–cultural cleavage became relatively fixed, cross-regional functional cleavages arose in turn under the impetus of the Industrial Revolution: the interests of the landlord class contradicted those of the rising industrial bourgeoisie, and there was also conflict between owners and employers on the one hand and laborers and workers on the other. The four social cleavage structures above laid the foundation of the modern party-political landscape of Western Europe.[25]

In their research, Lipset and Rokkan assumed that the voter alignments and party systems beneath the social cleavage structure were "frozen."[26] This means that their theory cannot explain the dynamic interactive relationship between voters and parties. In reality, however, dealignment (dealignment) and realignment (realignment) continually reshape the party-political landscape. Even Lipset and Rokkan emphasized that "dealignment" is long-standing.[27]

So-called "dealignment" refers to the decline in a particular party's capacity for political mobilization with respect to its past voter alignment; "realignment" occurs simultaneously with political dealignment. In real society, new issues must continually arise. When a new social issue stays within the existing social cleavage structure, these issues are integrated into the existing framework, and the party-political landscape is thereby able to maintain stability; but when a new social issue does not conform to the existing social cleavage structure — that is, when the existing parties cannot represent the newly produced voter alignment — social realignment occurs. Owing to their own inertia, existing parties find it difficult to respond to the demands of the voter alignment under the new social cleavage structure; in this situation, a new party may emerge to represent the interests of this segment of voters, or a new faction of political elites may emerge within an existing party to lead the party in carrying out reform. If neither of the two situations above occurs, the existing party may fragment under the action of the new social cleavage.[28]

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[24] Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspective*, Cambridge: The Free Press, 1967, pp. 1–61. Cf. the Chinese translation: Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan (USA), "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments," in Seymour Martin Lipset, translated by Zhang Huaqing et al., *Consensus and Conflict* (revised and enlarged edition), Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2020, p. 123.

[25] Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan, op. cit., pp. 13–16.

[26] Ibid., p. 3.

[27] Ibid.

[28] See Ronald Inglehart, "The Changing Structure of Political Cleavages in Western Society," in *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 25–69; David R. Mayhew, "Realignment Perspective," in *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 8–33.

At this point, social cleavage structure theory has developed an entire system concerning the formation, weakening, and recombination of voter alignments, displaying the interactive relationship between voter alignments and parties over a relatively long period. In sum, in order to survive, a party as a political organization must have the capacity to rally a body of voters who possess particular characteristics, or who share particular common interests.

It is worth noting, however, that social cleavage structure theory was proposed on the basis of the empirical facts of Western Europe. Therefore, when applying this theory to Malaysia, two aspects of the problem must be borne in mind. First, social cleavage structure theory takes the national revolution and the Industrial Revolution as the starting points for the emergence of contemporary Western European social cleavage structures; when applying it to the case of Malaysia, one must detach from the macro-historical narrative of Western Europe, seek out the historical junctures that had a major influence on social development in Malaysian history, and pay attention to the origins of Malaysia's cleavage structures. Second, in social cleavage structure theory, the emergence of social cleavage structures precedes the formation of the electoral system and the party system.[29] In Western Europe, debates concerning factions and parties began as early as Roman times, when representative government had not yet taken shape.[30] In emerging nation-states such as Malaysia, however, the situation is precisely the reverse: parties and electoral systems often precede the emergence of civil society. Therefore, particular attention must be paid to the role of political elites and the various institutions they create in shaping the social cleavage structure.[31]

In the course of reviewing the institutionalist research approach, the influence of Malaysia's electoral system on its party system has already received ample attention; nonetheless, Malaysia has many other peculiarities that have not been noticed. Therefore, before specifically tracing the process of fragmentation of Malaysia's Malay-dominant parties, it is quite necessary to revise social cleavage structure theory to a certain extent in light of Malaysian history. This not only helps to present this article's line of argument more clearly, but also helps to break free from the West-Europe-centered limitations of comparative-politics theory, providing a possible improved approach for studying the social cleavage structures of contemporary emerging nation-states.

II. Analytical Framework: Civil Society and Political Society in Transition

To apply social cleavage structure theory to the specific case of Malaysia, one must revise the existing theoretical framework. According to social cleavage structure theory, a country's party system is a reflection of that country's deep-seated social cleavage structures — social movements arising from the civil society (civil society) produce the party system within the political society (political society). This line of analysis is in fact a bottom-up one. In Western Europe, civil society developed gradually following a series of social transformations: industrialization, urbanization, the expansion of citizenship, and the establishment of the

[29] Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspective*, Cambridge: The Free Press, 1967, pp. 1–2.

[30] Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Wivenhoe Park: ECPR Press, 2005, pp. 3–5.

[31] Simon Bornschier, "Cleavage Politics in Old and New Democracies: A Review of the Literature and Avenues for Future Research," *Living Reviews in Democracy*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 10.

nation-state.[32] On this basis, political society is a by-product of civil society.[33]

However, Malaysia's process of social transformation differs from that of Western Europe, and social cleavage structure theory, grounded in Western European empirical facts, cannot be applied well to Malaysia's situation. In order to construct this article's analytical framework, it is necessary first to interpret civil society and political society precisely within the Malaysian context.

(1) Civil Society and Political Society in Malaysia's Social Transformation

Civil society is a relatively complex concept. The modern usage of "civil society" can be traced back at the earliest to Scotland and continental Europe during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. After World War II, the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci reawakened people's attention to civil society — he described civil society as an important bastion of resistance against tyranny.[34] In the 1970s–1990s, the concept of civil society was first revived in the struggles of the East European democrats. Although Eastern Europe and Latin America had economic and geopolitical backgrounds different from those of Western Europe, this concept was nonetheless widely applied to analyzing the processes of transition from authoritarianism to democracy in these two regions.[35]

Civil society is regarded as the cornerstone of the development of the Western democratic system: civil society is composed of individuals, and the individual is the smallest unit of social life; the individual has the right to choose to join the organizations (organization), associations (association), and institutions (institution) of which he approves.[36] However, the manner of definition above relies on the model of Participatory Democracy. If one holds excessively high expectations of the autonomy of Malaysian citizens in political life, certain historical junctures of major significance for Malaysia will be overlooked. By contrast, Malaysia's actual situation is closer to the model of Elite Democracy. This model holds that democracy is essentially a process of making political decisions through institutional arrangements; political leaders acquire power by competing for the people's votes.[37]

On this basis, Meredith L. Weiss, in her work studying the development of Malaysian civil society, proposed that Malaysia's civil society should not be regarded as an aggregate of citizens possessing fully autonomous powers of choice, but rather as something closer to a particular realm (realm): within this realm there are many groups or individuals who — whatever views they hold or whatever organizations they are based in — participate in debating, evaluating, challenging, or supporting the official discourse, and interpret government policy.[38] Within this, social movements as well as various types of non-governmental organizations, including religious groups, can all be classified as Civil Society Agents (Civil Society Agents).[39]

Yet even if one loosens the definition of civil society, in Malaysia's early period of independence it is still

[32]Vidhu Verma, *Malaysia, State and Civil Society in Transition*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, p. 9.

[33]Jean L. Cohen, Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, p. ix.

[34]Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 24.

[35]Jean L. Cohen, Andrew Arato, op. cit., p. 15.

[36]Vidhu Verma, op. cit.

[37]Jean L. Cohen, Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, p. 4.

[38]See Jean L. Cohen, Andrew Arato, op. cit., p. 4; Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 9.

[39]Meredith L. Weiss, op. cit., 2006, p. 9.

difficult to discern the existence of a civil society, and even more difficult to examine its influence on the development of party politics — the ordinary Malay masses were in fact remote from politics. This situation in Malaysia, in which political elites dominated politics and were disconnected from the ordinary populace, must be traced back to the period of British colonial rule. Before the outbreak of World War II, the British colonizers in effect practiced a kind of segregated rule over the various ethnic groups of the Malay Peninsula of the time — that is, British Malaya: the Chinese occupied the cities, while the Malays were mainly engaged in agricultural production in the countryside, and only a small portion of Malays were employed in service to the aristocracy.[40] This situation meant that most of the Malay political leaders who grew up in the struggle for national self-determination were of aristocratic lineage, or were under the protection of the royal house.[41] They had always maintained good interactions with the British colonizers, which determined that Malaysia's independence and the various post-independence arrangements were ultimately established through negotiation between the Malay elites and the British.

For precisely this reason, at the founding of the Malaysian nation its political society was much more fully developed than its civil society. Or, to put it another way, in the Malaysian context, political society should be regarded as a legacy of colonial rule rather than a product of civil society. On the one hand, the social face of the colonial period provided the social background for the earliest competitive party politics; indeed, the competitive party system itself was imposed on Malaysia by the British colonizers. On the other hand, as mentioned above, in the process of resisting colonialism, the nationalist movement that sought national self-determination became the starting point for the development of the first batch of parties.[42]

Of course, after revising the definition of civil society in accordance with the Malaysian context, the definition of political society must be adjusted accordingly. Following the definition of civil society, political society can be defined as a realm constructed by the polity (polity) itself: within this realm, the various parties wage political struggle to contest public power and control of the state apparatus.[43] Parties, political organizations, and the political publics (political publics) — including parliament — all belong to the constituent parts of political society.[44]

Because Malaysia around the time of independence possessed a relatively complete political society and a feeble civil society, the development of Malay-dominant party politics inevitably bore a pronounced top-down (top-down) character, and one can see that the development of Malaysian civil society was greatly constrained by the political society. However, with social transformation, civil society finally sprouted and continually grew stronger, and began to influence the development of party politics.

[40]Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 58–59.

[41]Vidhu Verma, *Malaysia, State and Civil Society in Transition*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, p. 31.

[42]Vicky Randall, "Party Systems and Voter Alignments in the New Democracies of the Third World," in Lauri Karvonen and Stein Kuhnle eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments Revisited*, New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 261–262.

[43]Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 9.

[44]Jean L. Cohen, Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, p. ix.

(2) The Initial Cleavage within the Malay Community: The Territorial and Class Divisions of the Colonial Era

The initial cleavage structure of Western European society was the product of the nation-state revolution and the Industrial Revolution, whereas Malaysia's initial cleavage structure was shaped by the British colonizers. If one detaches from the context internal to the ethnic community and regards the whole of West Malaysia as a single entity, then the basic cleavage structure within Malaysian society is not greatly disputed. As Thomas Pepinsky has pointed out, the most basic cleavage structure within post–World War II Malaysian (and its predecessor Malayan) society has always been ethnicity and the economic issues associated with this ethnic segregation, and this has long remained unchanged.[45] However, before 1957 there was no clear definition of "the Malays" or "the Malay community." Traditional Malay society grew up with the Malay sultans as its apex (apex), and the Malays were regarded as an extension of the entity that was the Malay sultan. The communal identity (communal identity) of the Malays as a single integral ethnic community was only slowly constructed during the British colonial period.[46]

Colonial rule was of crucial importance to the construction of the Malays as a single integral ethnic community. During the colonial period, the Malay royal houses declined, while the modernized bureaucratic system established by the colonizers was continually strengthened. In this process, the extension of the category "Malay" was imperceptibly broadened. For example, the 1911 census of the Federated Malay States (Federated Malay States Census) listed the following items under "Malay population by race": "Malays," "Javanese," "Sakai" (Sakai), "Banjarese" (Banjarese), "Boyanese" (Boyanese), "Mendeling" (Mendeling), "Krinchi" (Krinchi), "Jambi" (Jambi), "Achinese" (Achinese), "Bugis" (Bugis), and "others." Among these options, apart from the majority "Malays" and "Sakai," all the rest came from the Dutch East Indies, that vast neighboring colony; and the very existence of the "others" option further proves that the modern concept of the Malays was a constructed criterion of division.[47] Nonetheless, the British colonizers did succeed in shaping the ethnic identity of the Malays, an identity that was further strengthened against the broad backdrop of segregated rule over the various ethnic groups during the colonial period. Yet colonial rule, while engendering unity, also created division.

What colonial rule first gave rise to was a territorial cleavage structure within the Malay community, manifested chiefly in differing degrees of colonization in different regions. The west-coast region, represented by Kuala Lumpur, was highly colonized; by contrast, the states of the north and the east coast were less colonized, and Malay conservative forces there were strong. Johor, of course, was a relatively special state. The reason for the existence of this territorial disparity is that the West Malaysian region of the British colonial era — British Malaya — was not a single entity, but a composite made up of the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca, Singapore), the Federated Malay States (Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Pahang), and the Unfederated Malay States (Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor). The degree to which the British colonizers intervened in these three areas differed. The Straits Settlements were full colonies, where Malay traditional forces were weaker. The Federated Malay States still retained their Malay royal houses, but these were responsible only for ceremonial and religious affairs. The royal houses of the Unfederated Malay States,

[45]Thomas B. Pepinsky, "The New Media and Malaysian Politics in Historical Perspective," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2013, pp. 83–103.

[46]Hari Singh, "Tradition, UMNO and Political Succession in Malaysia," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1998, p. 243.

[47]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York: Verso, 1983, 2006, pp. 165–166.

by contrast, retained relatively strong power and a higher degree of autonomy, and their traditional conservative forces were also the strongest. Among them, the situation of Johor was the most special — the Johor royal house long maintained good interactive relations with the British colonizers, and thus, while reaping the economic benefits brought by colonial rule, also rather well protected its own power.[48]

The influence brought by this kind of territorial cleavage during the British colonial period was not confined to differences in the strength of Malay conservative forces; it also imperceptibly created another basic cleavage structure within the Malay community: class disparity. Income or occupation cannot accurately measure the class cleavage within the Malay community; the criterion of class disparity within the Malay community lies in whether one possesses the capacity to enter a channel of upward mobility.

The economy of the British Malayan period has been called an "enclave economy" (enclave economies): on the one hand, for the sake of their own economic interests, the British developed mining and plantation industries around the cities (the principal cash crops being rubber and palm), and these economic sectors were chiefly controlled by non-Malays; on the other hand, the British colonial government kept the Malays in the rural areas as far as possible, confining them to the traditional economic sectors, especially rice cultivation. Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu were all important rice-producing areas. The greater part of the Malays remained content with rural life during the colonial period.[49]

However, not all Malays lacked the opportunity to come into contact with the rapidly developing capitalist economy of the cities. Education was the greatest barrier the British colonizers set up to the Malays' entry into urban life, but it was also a means by which Malays could enter the channel of upward mobility. Apart from the royal houses, only the children of the aristocracy and of wealthy peasants could afford the "modern education" taught through the medium of English.[50] This kind of opportunity to enter the channel of upward mobility often meant gaining closer ties with the colonizers and the political center, thereby helping the family to seek greater economic benefits, which further hardened the disparities between classes. The Malays who possessed resources and successfully exploited this opportunity became wealthier, while the Malay poor who could not obtain resources became poorer.[51]

On the whole, although Malaysia around the time of independence had no fully formed civil society, it nonetheless had a very obvious cleavage structure. The initial "territorial–class" cleavage structure within the Malay community was shaped by the British colonizers. This initial cleavage structure laid the foundation for the configuration of Malaysia's subsequent party-political development.

(3) Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the analysis above, this article proposes the following hypotheses: the configuration of the Malay-dominant parties is the joint product of elite contradictions within the political society and social cleavage structures within the civil society; when the contradictions among the elites cannot be reconciled,

[48] Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "The Development of the Underdevelopment of the Malaysian Peasantry," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1979, pp. 439–440.

[49] Ibid., p. 441.

[50] For a detailed account of this period of history, see Barbara Watson Andaya, Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1991, pp. 114–261.

[51] See James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 51; Mohamed Salleh Lamry, "Economic Change and Social Stratification in Kampung Sungai Limau, Selangor, Malaysia," *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1998, p. 201.

or when a new cleavage structure emerges within the civil society, or both, a new party comes into being. When Malaysia had just gained independence — especially before the "13 May Incident" of 1969 — it did not yet possess a fully formed civil society. Therefore, the parties newly emerging at this stage were chiefly products of fragmentation among the elites. With the implementation of the New Economic Policy, rapid economic development, and the continual growth of civil society, the cleavage structures within the Malay community began spontaneously to seek out agents among the elites within the political society, triggering new party fragmentation. It is worth noting that these two paths of party fragmentation are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, in some cases the emergence of a cleavage structure within civil society may aggravate fragmentation among the elites, thereby accelerating the emergence of new parties.

However a party is born, in order to survive it must combine closely with a social cleavage structure — to put it colloquially, that is, it must consolidate its own voter base, or core support. If a new party is able to combine with an existing social cleavage structure, or to shape a new cleavage structure from the top down, it can survive. If a party produced through a split cannot find a social cleavage structure on which to subsist, it is no different from a castle in the air and is bound to wither away.

III. Case Studies: Social Cleavage Structures and Malay-Dominant Party Fragmentation

This article selects important historical junctures from the process of fragmentation of Malaysia's major Malay-dominant parties during the period from the eve of independence of Malaysia (and its predecessor "Malaya") down to the end of the Fourteenth General Election in 2018, in order to test the research hypotheses. This article has selected two paired sets of cases from Malaysia's social transformation. The first set of cases is the withering away of the National Party (Parti Negara) after it broke from UMNO, and the 1951 withdrawal of the Islamist faction from within UMNO to establish PAS, intended to illustrate that the fragmentation of the early Malay-dominant parties was chiefly a product of fragmentation among the elites. The second set of cases is the two major intra-party splits that UMNO experienced during Mahathir's first term as prime minister: the founding of Semangat 46 and the birth of the People's Justice Party amid the "Reformasi" movement, which display how, in the process of the expansion of Malaysian civil society, contradictions among the elites and the civil-society movement jointly impelled party fragmentation. The reasons for selecting the relevant cases are: first, the time junctures at which the two sets of cases occurred are representative — the first set occurred during the period of political-society dominance, and the second set during the period of civil-society expansion; second, the party fragmentations in the different sets of cases occurred in the same eras and are interlinked before and after; third, the four party fragmentations in the two sets of cases each constitute a positive–negative paired test — among them, the National Party and Semangat 46 quickly withered away after the party split, and are negative test cases, while PAS and PKR survived after the split, and belong to the positive test cases. These cases all test the same theoretical hypothesis, namely that shaping a social cleavage structure, or combining with an existing cleavage structure, is crucial to the survival of a party.

(1) Elite Fragmentation within Political Society: The Withering Away of the National Party and the Survival of PAS

After World War II, the first batch of Malay-dominant parties grew up chiefly in the anti-colonial and pro-independence movements. The most representative of the parties established at this stage was UMNO, and UMNO's first major split was brought about by elite fragmentation within the political society. The fundamental disagreement of this first elite fragmentation lay in their differing conceptions of the path of nation building (nation building) after independence. The parties produced by this split — the National Party and PAS — nonetheless met with different fates.

In October 1945, Britain dispatched the special commissioner Mac Michael (Mac Michael), who, through coercion and inducement, compelled the monarchs of the various Malayan states to sign the Agreement of Malayan Union (The Agreement of Malayan Union), uniting the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States into a colony under direct British rule. Through treaties signed with the Malay monarchs of the various states, the Malayan Union was scheduled to be promulgated on 1 April 1946. But before this British plan had even been formally announced, it provoked the strong dissatisfaction of the Malay community and gave rise to anti-colonial demonstrations that spread across the country. On 1 March 1946, forty-one Malay organizations convened the First All-Malaya Malay Congress in Kuala Lumpur. On 11 May, at the Second Malay Congress held in Johor Bahru, the United Malays National Organization (that is, UMNO) was formally established, with the then Menteri Besar of Johor, Dato' Onn Jaafar (Onn Jaafar), serving as its first president.[52] At this time there was a common goal within UMNO — to strive for national independence — but the lines they advocated were not entirely the same. On the whole, the Malay nationalists rallied by UMNO can be divided into three categories: the Islamic stream, representing Islam; the leftist forces, representing socialism; and the class of Malay intellectuals representing secularized Malay nationalism. Among these, the Malay Nationalist Party (Malay Nationalist Party), representing the leftist forces, was soon forcibly disbanded by the British colonial government on account of its radicalism and anti-colonialism.[53] The other two forces, however, continued to wield powerful influence.

The first stream was the Islamic stream. The origins of this group can be traced back to the early twentieth century. Yet they did not originate in the rural areas, where the religious atmosphere was thick and conservative thought prevailed; on the contrary, they were the younger generation (Kaum Muda) living in the cities. Because the British colonizers brought in large numbers of laborers from other parts of Asia into the cities and their surrounding areas, the Muslim community had always been something of a minority in the cities. Therefore, most of these young people held ideas of cosmopolitanism (cosmopolitanism) and internationalism (internationalism), and some had even traveled to Mecca and Cairo in the Arab world to study. These religious elites and the religious elites of the Dutch East Indies built a community through publications such as magazines. They admired the modernity (modernity) displayed by the colonizers, and offered new possibilities for the future construction of the Malaysian state. During the Japanese occupation, the Islamic

[52]Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, jointly published by Kajang: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, New Era College, and Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), 2006, pp. 103–104.

[53]Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, jointly published by Kajang: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, New Era College, and Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), 2006, pp. 104–106; Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Ethnic Politics in a Multi-ethnic Society*, China Social Sciences Press, 2021, p. 127.

stream grew further. In 1944, the Japanese organized the Pan-Malayan Religious Council (Pan-Malayan Religious Council) in Kuala Kangsar (Kuala Kangsar), which enabled the traditionalists (traditionalist) among the Muslim elites and the younger reformists to converge.[54] Within UMNO, the representative figure of this group was the traditionalist Ahmad Fuad (Ahmad Fuad), who was charged with organizing the Ulama Union (Ulama Union) in order to win the support of religious elites across Malaya. The other stream, representing the secular Malay nationalists, was composed chiefly of English-educated Malay aristocrats and commoner elites, including Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was of royal lineage; Tun Razak, an aristocrat of Pahang; the commoner-born intellectuals Dato' Onn Jaafar and Mahathir; and a large number of Malays who served as civil servants and schoolteachers within the colonial system. They all supported striving to restore Malay sovereignty.[55]

Although these two groups temporarily converged in order to strive for national independence and to safeguard the position of the Malays, their advocacies regarding nation-building were after all different, and even within the same stream there was no unified consensus on this question. Among the secular Malay nationalists, Dato' Onn Jaafar believed that UMNO should advocate pluralism (pluralism) and broadly represent the interests of the various ethnic groups; however, the nationalists led by Tunku Abdul Rahman insisted that UMNO should be a purely Malay party, serving as the political spokesman of the Malays. In September 1951, the two factions formally parted ways.

On the one hand, Dato' Onn Jaafar formally left UMNO and founded the Independence of Malaya Party (Parti Kemerdekaan Malaya).[56] Dato' Onn Jaafar's motive in wishing to establish a pluralist party was still to safeguard the leading position of the Malays. At that time, among the Chinese, although the Malayan Communist Party had already been suppressed by the British, the Malayan Chinese Association — which possessed powerful financial resources and connections — remained a force not to be ignored. Dato' Onn Jaafar hoped to establish a unified multi-ethnic party that would bring the Chinese community under Malay leadership, whereas Tunku Abdul Rahman ultimately chose the form of inter-party cooperation. Therefore, the disagreement between Dato' Onn Jaafar and the Tunku was closer to a factional struggle than to a difference of principle.[57]

On the other hand, Ahmad Fuad, as a confidant of Onn Jaafar, likewise chose to leave the party, and in November 1951 announced that the Ulama Union then being organized would be renamed the Islamic Party (Persatuan Islam Se-Malaysia). But at the very beginning, PAS could not be counted as a party in the strict sense, but rather a loose political organization: not a few of its members came from UMNO, yet its president, Ahmad himself, cooperated closely with the Independence Party. In order to regularize the party's organization, at the general congress held on 25 August 1953, PAS made clear that its aim was to revive and cultivate the spirit and doctrines of Islam. However, the majority of party members opposed party president Ahmad's proposal to cooperate with the Independence Party — under the political environment of the time, with Malay nationalism running high, a multi-ethnic party had no room to survive. In the end Ahmad an-

[54]Farish A. Noor, *The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951–2013, Islamism in a Mottled Nation*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, pp. 21–24, 28.

[55]Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, p. 104.

[56]Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, jointly published by Kajang: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, New Era College, and Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), 2006, pp. 120–121.

[57]Wong Chin Huat (Malaysia), "Fifty Years of Malaysia," in Sun Hesheng, Tang Nanfa (eds.), *Fifty Tumultuous Years: Party Politics in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Suiren Shiye, 2007, p. 32.

nounced his withdrawal from the PAS that he had organized, and chose to cooperate with Dato' Onn Jaafar to establish the Parti Negara (Parti Negara). PAS, too, did not smoothly reach cooperation with UMNO — UMNO agreed to open citizenship to non-Malays, while PAS held the opposite attitude. Thereupon, PAS declared itself an independent party.[58]

UMNO's first split formed three distinct parties: UMNO, which supported Malay nationalism; the National Party, which espoused Malay nationalism but advocated establishing a multi-ethnic party; and PAS, which adhered to its Islamic advocacy. This split occurred entirely within the political society, and in fact had no impact on the ordinary Malay populace. Soon these three parties met their first election — the 1955 Malayan general election. The UMNO-led Alliance Party won this election, taking 51 of the 52 seats.[59]

Existing documentary materials regard this general election as the source of legitimacy for the Alliance Party's ability to govern in Malaya and later in Malaysia; in reality, however, this election was not open to all Malayans, and its representativeness was therefore very limited: in 1955 the population of Malaya was about 7 million, but only 1.8 million voters were registered, and only 1.28 million actually took part in the voting, of whom the proportion of Malays was as high as 85%.[60] It is not difficult to see that this election did not really reach the broad lower-class populace, but was still a game among the elites who possessed channels of upward mobility. Seen in this light, UMNO's victory was not surprising; the ideology of Malay nationalism conformed very well to the overall social cleavage structure of Malaya at the time. By comparison, the National Party's pluralism was out of step with the times, while PAS was too radical and not only could not win the support of the Chinese, but, in a Malaya where Islam had not yet penetrated daily life as deeply as it does today, also found it difficult to win the support of the Malay elites.

In any case, UMNO, having won this election, gained the leadership to lead the people of Malaya to independence. As the leader of independence, UMNO and its Alliance Party — including their leader Tunku Abdul Rahman — thereby gained enormous political legitimacy. Having grasped state power, UMNO began to shape Malay nationalism from the top down, and, by means of its legitimacy, to fuse the party UMNO itself into Malay nationalism: as the saying goes, "UMNO is the Malays, and the Malays are embodied in UMNO." At the same time, UMNO's leaders had close relations with the traditional Malay royal houses, and they further drew on the image of the royal houses to reinforce this image. The *Sejarah Melayu* (*Malay Annals*) and the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (*Epic of Hang Tuah*) became proofs of UMNO's status as the orthodox leader of the Malays.[61] In 1957, Malaya gained independence; in 1963, the Federation of Malaysia was established. In 1965, with the withdrawal of Singapore, Malaysia in the modern sense was formally established. The National Party, which was defeated in this struggle but likewise espoused Malay nationalism, soon returned to UMNO.

PAS, which had developed out of the Islamic stream, continued to adhere to its own advocacy. Although weaker in strength and short of funds compared with UMNO, PAS nonetheless perceived the class and territorial cleavages within the Malay community. PAS began to establish party branches across the country,

[58] Same as note 56, pp. 122–124.

[59] Francis G. Carnell, "The Malayan Elections," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1955, p. 316.

[60] "Population Pyramids of the World from 1950 to 2100," Population Pyramid, https://www.populationpyramid.net/malaysia/1955/, March 5, 2020.

[61] See Hari Singh, "Tradition, UMNO and Political Succession in Malaysia," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1998, p. 243; Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 58.

and focused its attention on Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu, which had large Malay populations and strong conservative forces. At the outset they still held fast to their position of universalism (universalism), advocating that Malaysia should unite with Indonesia. However, against the broad backdrop of the Cold War, Indonesia — then leaning toward the socialist camp — broke into conflict with Malaysia. In 1964 the Indonesia–Malaysia Confrontation (Konfrontasi) began, and PAS was likewise compelled to turn toward supporting ethno-nationalism (ethno-nationalism).[62]

Besides the religious elites, the supporters of PAS were more numerous among the poor peasants.[63] Yet it was precisely the support from the poor peasants that gave PAS room to survive. These voters, forgotten by UMNO, constituted PAS's lifeline. PAS's strategy was to exploit the existing class cleavage within the Malay community and combine it with Islamic doctrine. They set up the Malay elites as the opposite of the broad mass of poor, lower-class Malay Muslims, while casting themselves as the guardians of the rights and interests of the Malay community. In fact, the views of the Malay populace regarding class, ethnicity, and religion were often jumbled together. As for ordinary PAS members, they liked to link the question of class with ethnic and religious questions and with criticism of UMNO and the government; moreover, in PAS's view, the government had indeed failed the wishes of the Malay masses in these respects.[64]

Unlike PAS, UMNO was a party organized entirely from the top down. Even at the village level, they relied heavily on local Malay leaders such as village heads, rather than, like PAS, relying on the broad mass of ordinary Malay smallholders. In fact, UMNO's grassroots branch-building work at that time was astonishingly inefficient compared with its now-sprawling grassroots system — this can be glimpsed from anthropologists' research accounts in Selangor. The village of Kg Chempaka (Kg Chempaka), located on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, did not have its first UMNO grassroots organization until 1968; likewise in Selangor, the first party branch in Sungai Limau (Sungai Limau) was not established until 1971.[65]

PAS had begun to govern successfully as early as 1964 in the state of Kelantan, where Malay conservative forces were strong. In the 1969 general election, at the federal-parliament level, PAS obtained 20.9% of the popular vote and 12 seats; at the same time, PAS not only retained governing power in Kelantan, but also made breakthroughs in Terengganu and Kedah, winning for the first time 3 federal-parliament constituencies and 8 state-assembly seats in the state of Kedah.[66]

At this point, the configuration of Malaysian party politics under a developing political society had taken initial shape. Among UMNO, the National Party, and PAS — which arose from fragmentation among the elites — UMNO seized state power by exploiting Malay nationalism, and gained legitimacy by leading national independence, consolidating its rule; the National Party, because its supporters were confined to the elites, ultimately failed; by comparison, although PAS's advocacy was at first also disconnected from the ordinary Malay populace, they cleverly exploited the class and territorial cleavage structures within the

[62]Farish A. Noor, *The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951–2013, Islamism in a Mottled Nation*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, pp. 54–60.

[63]Ibid., p. 44.

[64]James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 57–59.

[65]See Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, *From British to Bumiputera Rule: Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986, p. 161; Mohamed Salleh Lamry, "Economic Change and Social Stratification in Kampung Sungai Limau, Selangor, Malaysia," *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1988, p. 197.

[66]Farish A. Noor, *The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951–2013, Islamism in a Mottled Nation*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, p. 62.

Malay community and, combining these with their own religious ideology, consolidated their own survival.

(2) Malay-Dominant Party Fragmentation under the Expansion of Civil Society: The Suddenly Risen, Swiftly Perished Semangat 46 and the "Reformasi" PKR

After undergoing coronary bypass surgery in February 1981, Malaysia's third prime minister, Hussein Onn, resigned from the premiership after only four years in office, and UMNO formally entered the Mahathir era. As Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister since independence, Mahathir Mohamad formed a new team with Musa Hitam in July 1981 to take charge of UMNO and the government, then dubbed the "2M regime." "Central concentration of power" is the best description of this era. Ironically, however, it was precisely during such a period of centralized power that the most serious split in UMNO's history occurred. To be sure, at this stage factional struggle had also once occurred within PAS, causing a split, but the split existed only among the leaders, and the Hizbul Muslimin Party of Malaysia (Parti Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia) that it produced had no lasting influence. By comparison, the two major intra-party splits within UMNO under Mahathir's rule — Semangat 46 and the People's Justice Party — reflected the importance of cleavage structures under civil society for the survival of parties.

Before analyzing these two splits, it is necessary first to give a brief description of the environment in which UMNO found itself during this period. In the 1970s, on the basis of the results of the two Bumiputera Economic Congresses of 1965 and 1968, UMNO introduced the New Economic Policy. The New Economic Policy had two main goals: first, to gradually reduce and ultimately eliminate poverty among all ethnic groups; second, to restructure Malay society, correct economic inequality, and at the same time decouple ethnicity from the economic division of labor.[67] Clearly, the New Economic Policy sought to thoroughly eliminate the social cleavage structures that had long existed between and within ethnic groups in Malaysia, thereby achieving the government's complete control over society.

In order to achieve this goal, the New Economic Policy introduced patron-client politics into modern Malaysian politics.[68] A patron-client relationship is a relationship of mutual exchange between roles, in which a person of higher socioeconomic status (the patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or favors, or both, to a person of lower socioeconomic status (the client), and the client reciprocates by providing general support and assistance (including personal services).[69] Specifically, UMNO, by means of promoting poverty-alleviation programs, used the government bureaucracy that it controlled as an intermediary to distribute economic benefits to the lower classes in order to win the support of the Malay masses. These intermediaries had close ties with UMNO's leadership.[70]

In the rural areas, UMNO actively increased infrastructure construction, expanded public-investment expenditure, and built schools, mosques, irrigation facilities, and the like. All of this was interlinked with elections, and UMNO's candidates would remind local voters at general-election time not to forget the favors UMNO had bestowed. Of course, where the countryside is concerned, one inevitably touches upon land. However,

[67] Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, *From British to Bumiputera Rule: Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986, p. 161.

[68] Ibid., p. 189.

[69] James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, No. 1, 1972, p. 92.

[70] Lian Kwen Fee, Jayanath Appudurai, "Race, Class and Politics in Peninsular Malaysia: The General Election of 2008," *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2008, p. 72.

UMNO did not carry out land reform — those landlords and rich peasants who possessed large tracts of land were for the most part UMNO's loyal supporters.[71] Nonetheless, UMNO did provide the landless poor peasants with a possibility of changing their fate — a program that had begun to be implemented in the 1960s was successfully preserved at this stage, namely the "land settler" program (that is, the "Federal Land Development Authority Land Settlement Scheme"). The villagers selected under the "land settler" program would gain resettlement qualifications and, with government funding, would clear the rainforest in their new homeland to plant cash crops such as rubber and palm trees. At the same time, the government funded the construction of infrastructure such as housing, roads, and schools.[72] This segment of resettlers became a new vote bank for UMNO.

More importantly, UMNO created a large new Malay middle class in the urban areas. The first point to make clear is that the middle class within the Malay community can be broadly divided into two batches: the first batch is the traditional middle class, who were rooted in the countryside, were generally small industrial and commercial proprietors, and benefited from the New Economic Policy; the other batch is the new middle class, most of whom had received higher education. The New Economic Policy stipulated that the share held by Malays in enterprises could not be lower than 30%; thanks to this policy arrangement by UMNO, this new middle class was able to enter enterprises to work and to take root in the cities. In addition, many Malays were directly employed by government departments. Before the 1990s, this new middle class remained staunch supporters of UMNO.[73] In this way, UMNO, by strengthening its control over society, briefly bridged the cleavage structures within the Malay community. In the 1978 general election, the UMNO-led National Front won power in all the states of West Malaysia.

As the strength of Malaysian civil society gradually rose, the strength of the traditional Malay elites, including the royal houses, was checked; the newly rising Malay capitalists and middle class, including the technocrats serving in government, began to challenge the authority of the traditional elites. For precisely this reason, the elected Menteri Besar who represented the new political elites began to come into conflict with the traditional spokesmen: constitutional crises occurred in succession in the state of Perak (1974–1977), the state of Pahang (1978–1981), and the state of Johor (1981).[74]

Among the newly rising groups, the most powerful force was the new Malay capitalists. The New Economic Policy had at the outset been proposed by the first batch of Malay capitalists. After the "13 May Incident" of 1969, they persuaded the government to implement the new policy and exploited state resources to expand their own strength.[75] To a certain extent, the fact that Mahathir was able to succeed Hussein Onn as UMNO president in 1981 and subsequently take over as prime minister was itself a mark of the rise of the new Malay capitalists. At that time, the Malay capitalists who had already grown up before the implementation of the New Economic Policy began to play a more powerful role within UMNO.[76]

[71]James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 54–55.

[72]Keith Sutton, "Malaysia's FELDA Land Settlement Model in Time and Space," *Geoforum*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1989, p. 341.

[73]Lian Kwen Fee, Jayanath Appudurai, "Race, Class and Politics in Peninsular Malaysia: The General Election of 2008," *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2008, pp. 72–73.

[74]Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail, "The Monarchy and Party Politics in Malaysia in the Era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2003–09): The Resurgence of the Role of Protector," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 52, No. 5, 2018, p. 928.

[75]Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, *From British to Bumiputera Rule: Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986, p. 191.

[76]R. S. Milne, Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 25.

Mahathir's support came chiefly from the Malay capitalists, and he hoped to cultivate a powerful Malay capital bloc. For this purpose, Mahathir simultaneously strengthened his control over both the political society and the civil society as a whole. Politically, Mahathir began to use the state machinery and the legislative organs to constrain the space for the survival of opposition parties and civil society. The National Front government under his leadership passed the *Amendment to the 1966 Societies Act*, prohibiting all social groups, including religious groups, from participating in politics. In 1982, the federal parliament further passed the *Amendment to the Persecution and Crimes Ordinance*, prohibiting anyone from using religion to create social division. Similar laws also included the *Sedition Act*, the *Printing and Publishing Act*, and the *Assembly Act*.[77] Economically, the scope of the "suzerains" of patron-client politics was narrowed without limit. If, during the period of the New Economic Policy, UMNO used the state machinery to channel economic benefits and resources to the entire nation, then under Mahathir's rule only a small number of UMNO leaders possessed this privilege, and resources were channeled in large quantities to a small number of capitalists, so that patron-client politics became increasingly privatized. After Mahathir became prime minister, he repeatedly spoke of how the New Economic Policy model was unsustainable; on the contrary, he began to promote state-led industrialization, hoping to engender a batch of high-tech-based enterprises dominated entirely by Malays, the specific method being to privatize a batch of government-linked enterprises. Soon a batch of companies with close ties to UMNO's key leaders came into being; among these, the large enterprises controlled by the Mahathir family alone numbered more than ten. Mahathir also, through leaders such as Daim Zainuddin (Daim Zainuddin), controlled a large quantity of assets in industries such as the media and banking.[78] By 1987, 30% of UMNO's members belonged to this continually rising Malay capital bloc.[79]

It can be said that in the 1980s UMNO successfully transformed from a traditional elite-type party into a party that relied on the Malay capital bloc and the urban Malay middle class — though, of course, UMNO still retained a certain strength in the countryside, especially among the rich peasants and in the land-settlement areas. However, the restructuring of UMNO's voter base greatly squeezed the survival space of the traditional political elites. These traditional elites had once been UMNO's backbone, and had close relations with the Malay royal houses and aristocracy, but they found it difficult to win the support of the new middle class. Not a few young Malays were greatly dissatisfied with the royal houses' arrogation of power and corrupt lifestyle.[80] Coupled with Mahathir's excessively centralized means of rule, which led to the uneven distribution of political and economic resources within the party, the survival of the traditional elites within UMNO became extremely difficult. Therefore, in the 1987 party election, UMNO split internally into the A Team led by Mahathir and the B Team led by Tengku Razaleigh (Tengku Razaleigh), who was of royal lineage, and the former deputy prime minister Musa. In the end, Mahathir won the party election by an extremely slim margin. Tengku Razaleigh thereupon led his followers in establishing Semangat 46. Semangat 46 can be regarded as a grand reunion of UMNO's traditional elites; even political figures including the father of

[77] Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, jointly published by Kajang: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, New Era College, and Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), 2006, p. 217.

[78] See Edmund Terence Gomez, "Political Business in Malaysia Party Factionalism, Corporate Development, and Economic Crisis," in Edmund Terence Gomez ed., *Political Business in East Asia*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 86–92, 98; Edmund Terence Gomez, "Resisting the Fall: The Single Dominant Party, Policies and Elections in Malaysia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 46, Iss. 4, 2016, p. 4.

[79] R. S. Milne, Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 25.

[80] Ho Khai Leong, "Malaysia: The Emergence of a New Generation of UMNO Leadership," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 21, 1994, p. 180.

the nation, Tunku Abdul Rahman, gave Semangat 46 no small support.[81]

UMNO's split and the birth of Semangat 46 were, in essence, because the survival space of some of the traditional elites within UMNO had been squeezed — the very name Semangat 46 ("Spirit of '46") was meant to commemorate the year UMNO was first founded, carrying a certain nostalgic air. At the same time, because UMNO at this point invested large quantities of resources in the cities, its support for the rural poor peasants became relatively thin, and the rural Malay voters whom UMNO had gradually forgotten also began to seek new agents within the political society.

Semangat 46 changed Malaysia's political map. Its establishment brought about, for the first time, an alliance between the Democratic Action Party and PAS. In the 1990 general election, there appeared for the first time in Malaysia an opposition quasi-coalition jointly composed of Malay-dominant and Chinese-dominant parties, the Gagasan Rakyat (Gagasan Rakyat, "People's Front"). Unexpectedly, however, Semangat 46 did not gain electoral victory from UMNO's split. On the contrary, the new agent chosen by the rural Malay voters was PAS, which had long been rooted at the grassroots.[82] Gagasan Rakyat performed poorly in the 1999 federal-parliament election, but won a sweeping victory in the state of Kelantan. PAS won 24 state-legislative-assembly seats, while Semangat 46 won the remaining 15, and UMNO was completely routed. At the same time, Semangat 46, relying on the support of voters from that state, won 8 federal-parliament seats. Considering that Kelantan was itself PAS's stronghold and also the home state of Tengku Razaleigh, Semangat 46's electoral performance was not remarkable. In the 1995 general election, Semangat 46's political map shrank further.[83] Semangat 46 not only failed to prevent the voters who ought to have been won over by it from flowing to PAS, but also failed to resist absorption by UMNO. Because Semangat 46 was itself a product of fragmentation among the elites, many leaders who had failed to gain the expected benefits in the general election soon chose to return to UMNO. In October 1996, as the party's influence continued to decline, Tengku Razaleigh formally announced the dissolution of Semangat 46, and the party members ultimately divided into two factions, one returning to UMNO and the other joining PAS.[84]

Compared with the split of Semangat 46, UMNO's other split was presented in a more radical manner — Anwar's expulsion from the party and the birth of the People's Justice Party were the result of changes in the social cleavage structure, rather than a simple conflict among political elites. While Mahathir was shaping the support of the capital bloc, the strength of the new middle class likewise continued to grow, and combined with the long-formed "Malay nationalism–Islamism" cleavage structure — a batch of voters who hoped that Malaysia would move toward Islamization likewise emerged within the middle class. In March 1982, at Mahathir's cordial invitation, Anwar chose to join UMNO, symbolizing the combination of UMNO and the Islamic revival movement. In April of the same year, Anwar formally contested a federal-parliament seat on behalf of UMNO — this was unprecedented in UMNO's party history. A comparable example is that Malaysia's eighth prime minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, who was the same age as Anwar, did not contest a federal-parliament seat on behalf of the party for the first time until five years after joining UMNO.[85]

[81] Hari Singh, "Political Change in Malaysia: The Role of Semangat 46," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 8, 1991, pp. 712–717, 721.
[82] Ibid., pp. 723–724.
[83] Francis Loh Kok Wah, Boo Teik Khoo, *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 95.
[84] Ian Stewart, *The Mahathir Legacy: A Nation Divided, a Region at Risk*, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003, p. 28.
[85] Chen Zhonghe (Malaysia), *Islamic Party Politics in Malaysia: A Comparison of UMNO and the Islamic Party*, jointly published by Kajang: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, New Era College, and Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), 2006, p. 153.

If in the 1970s and early 1980s the new middle class among the Malays consisted chiefly of young people who had received higher education in the cities, then over time the composition of the Malay new middle class became increasingly complex. Because the level of rural agricultural production rose, large quantities of labor were freed up, and not a few rural Malays, especially males, migrated en masse to the cities and entered the secondary and tertiary industries.[86] This change caused the new middle class to begin to enter into an interactive relationship with the traditional class cleavage structure within the Malay community. Furthermore, the old patron-client politics had been open to the great majority of Malays, whereas the patronage resources of the present day were channeled to only a small number of Malays, and a new division (division) formed between the Malay capital bloc and the masses. One fairly obvious sign is that by the late 1980s the Malays no longer complained that the Chinese controlled the nation's wealth, but instead began to criticize some Malay capitalists for embezzling excessive resources.[87] Likewise, because Mahathir favored big entrepreneurs, not a few small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who had failed to win his favor began to seek new agents within UMNO, and these people later became Anwar's supporters.[88]

With the support of the new Malay middle class, Anwar subsequently rose rapidly within UMNO and the state apparatus. In the 1993 party election, Anwar, then finance minister, led the "Young Turks" (Young Turks) in formally challenging the candidate for deputy president supported by Mahathir, Ghafar Baba (Ghafar Baba). Ghafar Baba, who already had 42 years of party seniority, ought to have had broad support at UMNO's grassroots, but the rise of the Malay new middle class was rapid and unstoppable. Responding to the demands of this group, Anwar raised the slogan of the "New Malays" (Melayu Baru) and combined it with the "Vision 2020" proposed by Mahathir, calling his own faction the "Vision Team." In the end, Anwar won almost three-quarters of the votes and became UMNO's number-two figure. During the same period, the batch of traditional Malay middle class who had profited at the outset of the New Economic Policy were nearing retirement, and the whole of Malaysian society entered the era of the new middle class — a fact that even Mahathir could not prevent.[89]

Mahathir and Anwar formed distinct factions, and their disagreements grew ever greater. To be sure, had Malaysia's economy at the time been able to keep growing, ensuring that both groups could continue to profit, then the new middle class — which called for social fairness and the raising of social welfare — and the Malay capital bloc could have coexisted peacefully. But the outbreak of the 1997 financial crisis witnessed the split of UMNO's factions, and also witnessed the rupture between Mahathir and Anwar. This financial crisis, which began in Thailand, soon swept over Malaysia — almost every time Mahathir delivered a speech, the ringgit would plunge once more. It was not until September 1998 that the Mahathir government formally announced restrictions on capital outflows and the implementation of a fixed exchange-rate system, while at the same time launching a series of large-scale economic stimulus policies.[90] However, this policy had undergone a prolonged contest before it was rolled out. At the very beginning of the 1997 financial crisis, Anwar had suggested cutting "soft" government expenditure on a large scale and halting some "non-critical" gov-

[86]Gillian Hart, "Engendering Everyday Resistance: Gender, Patronage and Production Politics in Rural Malaysia," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1991, pp. 102–103.

[87]Edmund Terence Gomez, "Political Business in Malaysia Party Factionalism, Corporate Development, and Economic Crisis," in Edmund Terence Gomez ed., *Political Business in East Asia*, London: Taylor and Francis, 2004, p. 86.

[88]William Case, "The UMNO Party Election in Malaysia: One for the Money," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 10, 1994, p. 923.

[89]Ho Khai Leong, "Malaysia: The Emergence of a New Generation of UMNO Leadership," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 21, 1994, pp. 181–182.

[90]Thomas B. Pepinsky, *Economic Crises and the Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes: Indonesia and Malaysia in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 119–120.

ernment projects, but he had at the same time promised that investment in the fields of education, health, and rural development, which concerned the middle class, would not be reduced. Thereafter, Malaysia further cut back its investment in government-linked companies, hoping thereby to demonstrate the government's confidence in Malaysia's economic development and so to attract more foreign capital into Malaysia. In 1997, the finance ministry under Anwar's control reduced much unnecessary public expenditure while safeguarding the interests of the ordinary Malay populace, complemented by a loose monetary policy, so that Malaysian enterprises were still able to maintain their cash flow.[91]

Anwar's policy soon met with strong opposition from the Malay capital bloc. Some UMNO leaders opposed the fiscal-austerity policy and restored some government-supported large-scale projects.[92] Under pressure from the capital bloc, Mahathir began to consider an expansionary fiscal policy and to further restrict Anwar's room for maneuver. In 1998, Mahathir appointed Daim Zainuddin as Minister of Special Functions in the Prime Minister's Department, and began to transfuse resources on a large scale to the Malay capital bloc under his patronage.[93] The contradiction between Mahathir and Anwar gradually developed to an irreconcilable point. In September 1998, Anwar was relieved of all his posts by Mahathir, and was subsequently expelled from the party; Daim Zainuddin replaced him as finance minister. Anwar — this leader highly esteemed by the Malay new middle class and the younger generation — soon mobilized the grassroots forces that supported him and launched a series of social movements demanding change: the "Reformasi" movement.[94] After being dismissed, Anwar repeatedly held public lectures denouncing Mahathir's "crimes," criticizing the patron-client politics, cronyism, and nepotism of Malaysia, and calling for political reform. Before long, Anwar was arrested on charges including corruption, abuse of power, and sodomy. After Anwar's arrest, the "Reformasi" movement spread further, and "Seek Justice for Anwar" became the new slogan of the street movement. Anwar's wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (Wan Azizah Wan Ismail), seized this opportunity to unite a portion of the political elites who had followed Anwar in leaving UMNO, and founded the Justice Party (keADILan).[95]

Both of the party-fragmentation cases above occurred during the period of civil-society expansion. During this period, under the joint action of elite fragmentation within the political society and cleavage structures within the civil society, two major splits occurred within the ruling party, UMNO. If in the first set of cases UMNO's internal split was caused entirely by contradictions among the elites, then in the second set of cases, in addition to elite struggle, changes in the social cleavage structure of the Malay community played an even more crucial role. At the same time, the People's Justice Party in the second set of cases did not, like PAS, actively shape a social cleavage structure, but rather actively combined itself with the newly produced social cleavage structure, thereby surviving.

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[91] Ibid., p. 129.

[92] Ibid., p. 125.

[93] Ibid., pp. 126–127.

[94] Meredith L. Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 127.

[95] Ibid., pp. 129–130. The Justice Party, that is, the "National Justice Party" (Parti KeADILan Nasional). In 2003, the National Justice Party merged with the Malaysian People's Party (Parti Rakyat Malaysia) to form the People's Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat), abbreviated "PKR."

Concluding Discussion: Revising Social Cleavage Structure Theory on the Basis of Malaysia's Empirical Facts

By tracing back the history of Malay-dominant party fragmentation, one can see that the fragmentation of the relevant parties was not, as with the Western European parties, caused entirely by social cleavage structures, but rather passed through two distinct stages (as in Figure 3).

[Figure 3: Malay-Dominant Party Fragmentation under the Social Cleavage Structure — figure omitted; see original]

Source: Created by the authors.

The first stage is the stage of political-elite fragmentation, in which parties were caused chiefly by elite fragmentation within the political society. Both UMNO and PAS were products of elite struggle; they shaped from the top down the territorial cleavage and class cleavage left over from the colonial period, fused their respective ideological contests into them, and created the long-term opposition between UMNO and PAS. UMNO used its capacity to control the state machinery to promote patron-client politics, suppressing the emergence of new cleavage structures while at the same time restricting PAS's survival space. During this period some other new party splits also appeared, but the parties produced by the splits ultimately could not survive because they failed to combine with a social cleavage structure.

The second stage is the stage of civil-society cleavage, in which UMNO, while promoting patron-client politics, also created a powerful capital bloc and engendered batch upon batch of the Malay new middle class and small and medium-sized capitalists. These "New Malays" formed an increasingly powerful civil society, and the civil society in turn interacted with the existing social cleavage structures, engendering diversified demands within the middle class. The new middle class caused a dealignment to occur between the old parties — UMNO and PAS — and engendered new parties such as PKR, BERSATU, and AMANAH.[96] At the same time, because the resources of patron-client politics became increasingly limited, the big capital bloc also ceased to be a staunch supporter of UMNO.

On the basis of Malaysia's empirical facts, it can be found that the role of political elites in shaping social transformation and cleavage structures is very powerful. Some middle-range theories or analytical frameworks developed on the basis of Southeast Asia — for example, patron-client politics — are in fact a manifestation of elites manipulating and shaping social cleavage structures. At the same time, from the study of Malay-dominant party fragmentation in Malaysia, this article is also able to respond to another question — why some parties produced through a split are able to survive while others are not — the difference lying in whether these parties are able to combine with an existing social cleavage structure, or whether they have the capacity to shape a cleavage structure. If they can combine with a cleavage structure or shape a new cleavage structure, then the party survives; otherwise it cannot.

To be sure, social cleavage structure theory cannot be directly applied to Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries, but it does provide a useful perspective and framework for understanding the political development of Southeast Asian countries as represented by Malaysia. Even more valuably, Malaysia's empirical facts provide an extremely rich array of cases of interaction between political society and civil society, which is

[96] On the split of PAS and the establishment of AMANAH, see in detail Fu Congcong, Chen Rongxuan, "Social Transformation, the Dispute over Routes, and the Split of Malaysia's Islamic Party," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, No. 1, 2020.

highly meaningful for transcending Lipset and Rokkan's assumption that social cleavage structures remain unchanged over the long term. At the same time, Southeast Asia's empirical facts help to combine the institutionalist approach and the political-sociological approach in a better way. Although political scientists such as Sartori have long called for attention to the role of political institutions in shaping civil society, how parties shape social cleavage structures has not received sufficient attention. This article has made a certain attempt in this regard, but these attempts are still inadequate. Southeast Asian countries, and even Malaysia internally, still possess a rich array of cases that have not yet been excavated, which can provide abundant research material for the development of social cleavage structure theory and indeed of comparative politics.

[Responsible Editor: Wu Hongjuan]

Notes

[The journal also printed an official English abstract; it is omitted here because it is unrecoverable from the source file. The above is a translation of the author's Chinese abstract.]