

# Chronological Formation of the Malay Nation- State of Intent Through Historical Trajectory and Consensus

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## Abstract

The formation of a nation-state is a complex and ever-evolving process, particularly when considering Malaysia's unique historical trajectory and the dynamics of identity formation. This paper explores the intricate interplay of historical events, sociological elements, and cultural values that have shaped Malaysia's journey towards nationhood. The role of consensus-building, conflict resolution, and the establishment of the Communities Liaisons Committee (CLC) in fostering cooperation among diverse ethnic groups is examined. The historical trajectory in Malaysia, from the colonial era to post-independence developments, underscores the significance of shared identity formation among Malay ethnics. Historical knowledge has played a pivotal role in shaping identity, while societal and national change is rooted in understanding the nation's historical trajectory. Conflict resolution and consensus building emerge as instrumental sociological elements in addressing conflicts arising during nation-building. The application of these elements, including negotiation, compromise, and mediation, has contributed to Malaysia's ability to manage diversity successfully. This paper underscores how sociological elements play a crucial role in managing and resolving conflicts, fostering cooperation, and achieving unity in a multi-ethnic society. The CLC's role in accommodating, bridging divides, and committing to maintain unity is analyzed, by highlighting its contribution to the construction of an ideal nation-state. In conclusion, the sociological elements discussed in this paper provide valuable insights into how a diverse society like Malaysia comes together to create a shared national identity and promote unity. This understanding of the sociological dynamics of nation-building is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and citizens alike, as it offers a roadmap for fostering cooperation, resolving conflicts, and forming an ideal nation-state that celebrates its diversity.

**Keywords:** Historical Trajectory, Consensus Building, Identity Formation, Malay Nation-State

**Introduction**

The formation of a nation-state is the main focus of discussions during the era of any nation's independence. The British arrived in Malaysia with a well-thought-out plan to provide an experience of governing a state to the local populations. The nature of a state's transition to democracy is therefore determined by its institutional ability to mitigate conflict (Traniello, 2008). Institutions and organizations are the machinery elements that are operated by a political system. In Malaysia, this system is known as the Parliamentary Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy system, which combines elements of democracy and monarchy. These practices were the implications in Malaysian history since the colonial era, and they remain unchangeable practices. Today, Malaysia is recognized globally as a successful multi-ethnic nation in managing diversity, despite occasional conflicts, particularly during general elections, involving various issues such as religion, language, and the special privileges of the Malay community (Baharuddin, 2015).

Therefore, a consensus model is applied to address conflicts that arise during the nation-building process, as is the case of Malaysia. This consensus model is supported by sociological elements such as compromise, negotiation, and mediation. These elements underpin the methods used to achieve an agreement among different ethnic groups on various issues. It is a method employed by several nations to achieve consensus in the formation of their nation-states.

Research on nation-building acknowledges that Malaysia is a nation without a single ethnicity because the formation of a nation is an ongoing process known as "unity." Noor (2012) argues that Malaysia is a nation woven from an ethno-religious community, with the Malay community as its core, but it also recognizes other ethnicities in Malaysia. Forming this nation has been a long-term endeavor, which can be deciphered and interpreted through historical records or the trajectory of nation-building history. While the emphasis on the Malay perspective is remarkable, it is essential to realize that attempts to 'found a nation' were driven by 'nationalists' as a necessity to interpret history, rather than a desire to question how historical knowledge per se has been constructed. Therefore, historical knowledge in Malaysia is an essential element in shaping identity, based on colonial knowledge (Baharuddin, 2012).

Abdul Rahman (2006) breaks down the discussion of a nation into three arguments. His first argument looks at the definition based on Ghazalie's (1995) research, linking it to the concept of citizenship and emphasizing its legal aspects as defined in the Constitution. The second argument interprets the concept of a nation as synonymous with the concept of race, based on bloodline. The third argument defines a nation as a political community within a specific geographical area, akin to the English term "nation." He also provides the Malay meaning of the word "nation" to signify a political community, referring to Sumit's (1998) research. Abdul Rahman (2006) offers two explanations for the concept of a nation for Malaysia. First, a nation can be explained in the phenomenon of modern times and the formation of a nation in modern times due to historical factors, demographic changes, geographical conditions, and so forth. Second, a nation can also be explained in the interpretation of the nation from the perspective of ethnic diversity, culture, language, and religion, which is commonly used in the classical modernization approach. Both of these explanations are significant in understanding the nation-building process in Malaysia, a diverse nation without abandoning the historical trajectory that underlies societal and national change.

### Historical Trajectory in Nation-Building

The formation of a nation-state is a complex and multifaceted process that involves various sociological elements. Sociological analysis plays a crucial role in understanding the dynamics of nation-building. This discourse explores the formation of a nation-state, particularly focusing on the Malaysian context, through the lens of sociology which can be divided into two elements, namely historical trajectory as well as conflict resolution and consensus building.

Nation-building often begins with a historical trajectory. In the case of Malaysia, this trajectory includes the period of British colonial rule, the Japanese era, and post-independence developments. The process of nation-state formation involves the building of a shared identity among diverse ethnic groups. Understanding this historical trajectory is critical to comprehend the nation's sociological evolution. In summary, the historical trajectory and identity formation of a nation or group are intertwined processes that involve a complex interplay of historical events, cultural expressions, social dynamics, and external influences. Understanding these processes is crucial to comprehending the self-perception and interactions of different communities and nations in our diverse world. These elements do explain the diversity in forms of the state and the ideal nation by labeling stages one to four and yet as a process of Malay nation-building.

Discussion in this chapter unveils the historical trajectory, as elucidated by Shamsul (1996), in the quest for identity through the formation of the ideal nation. Each community in Malaya had its dreams and agendas in defining its ideal nation. This included the British, who were the governing authority and had specific plans to shape Malaya into a colony like the others. The ideas, actions, and planning during that era gave birth to a nation characterized by democracy and modernity, drawing from the development of colonial knowledge.

The rise of Malay nationalism represents an early consensus model for measuring the formation of the ideal nation-state for the Malay community. It is said to have begun in the early 20th century. Roff (1994) divided the development of Malay nationalism into three stages before World War II based on educational backgrounds. This division is believed to have influenced the pattern of the first stage (1900-1920) as being the religiously educated, the second stage (1920-1930) as being the Malay-educated, and the third stage (1930-1941) as being the English-educated (Thukiman, 2002). The fourth and final stage involved collaborative efforts among community leaders with the establishment of the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC) in 1948. The analysis of the establishment of the CLC is also seen as a significant development in implementing the consensus model and subsequently forming the nation-state.

#### a) Identity Formation of an Ideal Malay Nation-State

##### First Stage

The first stage of the rise of nationalism was spearheaded by the *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua*. The struggle of the *Kaum Muda* was rooted in the struggles of the Eastern country, Turkey. History records that during the wars that took place in Terengganu and Pahang, the Turkish national flag became their symbol of resistance (Thukiman, 2002). This is further substantiated by the views of Noor (2010), who found that the Malay states were not united, and their governance systems were based on their own culture and religion. Meanwhile, the *Kaum Tua* consisted of nationalists from the palace circles. Their disagreements were

conveyed through newspapers, where they opposed each other's ideas. Eventually, these disputes were formalized in the Enactment of Islamic Law 1904 by the *Kaum Tua*. This regulation prohibited and completely banned anyone from propagating the teachings of Islam without written permission from the Rulers or *Sultan* (Thukiman, 2002). The 20th-century nationalist movement saw the emergence of the printing press as a significant platform for their struggles. As a result, there was a proliferation of newspapers and novels that explored the realm of Malay literature (Thukiman, 2002).

This nationalist movement was heavily influenced by a religious perspective. The nationalist movement from Turkey had a significant impact on Malay culture, emphasizing religion as a cornerstone of life. The difference in the struggles between the *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* was primarily due to differing educational backgrounds. The strength of this nationalism lay in religion as the identity of the Malay Community, envisioning a Malay Islamic nation.

### **Second Stage**

The second stage of the nationalist movement, in parallel with the development of education in Malaya, was unfolded. Around 1922, several higher education institutions were established to produce future teachers to fulfill the teaching positions in schools (Thukiman, 2002). Among the institutions established were Sultan Idris Teacher's College (*Maktab Perguruan Sultan Idris, MPSI*), Kuala Lumpur Technical College, and Serdang Agricultural College. Starting with the publication of the "*Majalah Guru*", this second wave of nationalism made MPSI the focal point of Malay activities in the 1920s. Eventually, it led to the formation of the *Kaum Muda's* Union (*Kesatuan Melayu Muda, KMM*) in 1938. Its goals were anti-British, anti-feudal, and advocating for independence alongside the Greater Indonesia. Additionally, the growth of other associations colored the Malay nationalist struggle, such as the "*Persatuan Sahabat Pena*", which focused on the economic and social aspects of the Malay community.

The process of the nationalist movement transitioned from a religious struggle to a regional Malay struggle. However, the role of religion remained integral to the Malay identity. Religion was a powerful element among the Malay community and was not purely cultural, as practiced in Western societies. Therefore, the Malay struggle was in harmony with the Eastern culture, characterized by a nation woven from ethno-religious threads and indigenous roots.

### **Third Stage**

The third stage of Malay nationalism emerged following the defeat of the Japanese era in Malaya. The result of this nationalist awakening was a response to the British policy known as the establishment of the Malayan Union (MU). The British established the MU to punish the Malay rulers or *Sultans* who had supported Japan during the Japanese era in Malaya. The British returned to Malaya on August 14, 1945, through the British Military Administration (BMA). According to Thukiman (2002), "The BMA was a transitional government that implemented the Malayan Planning Unit (MPU) constitution, which was the establishment of the MU. This administration had two components: the military formation which is responsible for military operations and an organization that oversees the civil administration. The British employed the BMA system to restore peace in Malaya, which was then turbulent and unstable due to deepening ethnic divisions between the Malay and Chinese communities."

In March 1946, a movement of Malay Peninsular in Johor was established under the name of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), led by Dato' Onn. UMNO was

formed as a response to the establishment of the MU. Various plans were made throughout Malaya for demonstrations and a seven-day mourning period to protest and express their dissatisfaction with the MU plan (Thukiman, 2002). The MU was a new constitution for Malaya that aimed to unify the three Malay states under a single administrative unit. Dato' Onn once stated that the Malay Rulers were dissatisfied with the actions of Sir Edward Gent, who forced them to sign the agreement for the MU (GB-0033-MAC 15/6/12 1947). UMNO also did not send its representatives to the Advisory Council meeting (GB-0033-MAC 15/8/2 1947) because they had lost trust in Sir Edward Gent's administration. Chinese leaders also shared the same sentiment and decided not to negotiate with him any longer (GB-0033-MAC 15/8/3 1947). Sir Edward Gent's actions were seen as a military move due to his military background. This action was not well-received, not only by the Malay community but also by the Chinese community. It was considered a British significant failure in forming a unified nation-state.

One of the issues that was strongly opposed was the MU's citizenship constitution, which was seen as a conflict with the Malay community as they felt it did not represent their voice. Furthermore, the issue worsened because the British believed that they had more authority to determine the citizenship of non-Malays based on the majority population ratio. In a personal document excerpt by Sir Malcolm MacDonald, it is stated that the definition of citizenship becomes a conflict when there is labor migration within a government. The definition of citizenship becomes a conflict when there is a group of labor migrants brought by Europeans to Asia and this group is having conflict with their citizenship status between their original country and the country they are residing in. Their only action at that time was to comply and agree to ensure that their citizenship qualifications were not revoked by both parties (GB-0033-MAC 16/9/4 -5 1947).

During this protest, a party called the Greater National Malay Party (*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Raya, PKMM*) was formed, which represented the current nationalist, socialist, and Islamic. PKMM initially aligned itself with UMNO in opposing the MU. However, after several joint efforts, PKMM felt that UMNO was too accommodating to the British administration. Therefore, in 1947, PKMM engaged in a political discussion with non-Malay communities. This is said to be the first-ever dialogue between the two communities in Malaya. The discussion took place between PKMM, led by *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* or *PUTERA*, and the All Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA). The collaboration between these two parties agreed to propose the People's Constitution as an alternative to the MU constitution (Ahmat Adam, 2013). They also recommended the Malays as the national identity (Syed Husin Ali, 2008). The AMCJA-PUTERA collaboration formed a strong partnership among several parties in Malaya at that time. However, this coalition was not recognized by the British, who viewed these associations as the opposition because some parties within this coalition supported the communist movements.

#### **Fourth Stage**

The Malay nationalist movement was further carried on by UMNO and IMP after the role of the Ethnic Relations Committee (*Jawatankuasa Perhubungan Kaum, JPK*) dissolved around 1952. However, both of these organizations included former JPK members. The resurgence of the Malay nationalist movement following the defeat of the Japanese era established the role of community leaders, also known as the elites. Nazirah (2011) argued that a new elite emerged during this phase because the elites in question were those leading communal political parties. These elites were better known as community leaders within the JPK, with

the power to act as negotiators and assist in resolving constitutional, political, and economic issues arising from the diverse demands of various communities. This approach to the struggle of the new elites was more instrumental, by focusing on strategies and tactics to create their political interests (Malesevic, 2004).

The ideal nation-state expressed the movements of the nationalist struggle. This research examines the transformation of nationalist movements through identity formation to build a nation-state. According to Mohamed (2018), in the early stages of Malay nationalist struggles, the nation that they were advocating for was Islam and the Malays, influenced by the nationalist movements of Eastern nations. After the development of education within the Malay community, the concept of the Greater Malay (*Melayu Raya*) emerged as a result of the struggle for independence from Indonesia. Before independence, the formation of a nation was based on cooperation among community leaders representing each ethnic group in Malaya, which emerged while retaining Malay identity and heritage, as documented in the People's Constitution. The fourth stage was a nationalist movement that created a space for consensus among ethnic groups to free the nation and build a new nation. In this stage, the role of the Ethnic Relations Committee, represented by leaders of the Malay, Chinese, Indian, Ceylonese, Serani, and British communities, demonstrated that cooperation was possible and achievable.

### **Nation-State Formation through the Analysis of Sociological Elements**

Sociological elements are instrumental in addressing conflicts that arise during nation-building. Analysis of how societies manage and resolve conflicts between different ethnic, religious, or cultural groups is crucial. Consensus-building mechanisms, such as political negotiations and inter-group dialogues, play a vital role in fostering unity. Conflict resolution refers to the process of addressing disputes or conflicts constructively and peacefully. It aims to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved, ensuring that the underlying issues are adequately addressed. Consensus building is a collaborative decision-making process in which all communities work together to reach a mutually agreeable solution. It is often used in group settings, organizations, and politics. Both conflict resolution and consensus building are essential tools for promoting peaceful coexistence, fostering collaboration, and addressing disputes constructively. They are applicable in a wide range of contexts, from interpersonal conflicts to international diplomacy. These elements explain the role of the CLC in seeking common ground, perspectives, and cultural dimensions throughout the unity process toward independence is of great significance.

The utilization of consensus models, negotiation, compromise, and mediation plays a central and indispensable role in the intricate process of forming an ideal nation-state. These components are of paramount significance as they are instrumental in fostering national unity and harmonious coexistence among diverse ethnic and cultural groups within the national boundaries. This discussion aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the practical applications of these components within the context of nation-building.

Consensus models are structured frameworks designed to facilitate agreement and collaboration among disparate groups or stakeholders. In the context of shaping an ideal nation-state, these models are deployed to ensure that decisions and policies are formulated collectively, with the consent and participation of diverse communities. They are instrumental in accommodating the interests and apprehensions of different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. Consensus models find application in the establishment of constitutional frameworks, legislative processes, and political systems that permit the various demographic groups to

have a voice in governance. Notably, in Malaysia, the political structure incorporates elements of both democracy and monarchy, thereby allowing for power-sharing and equitable representation of diverse ethnic communities.

Meanwhile, negotiation is a complex process characterized by discourse and the achievement of mutually acceptable agreements through dialogue and concessions. In the context of nation-building, negotiation assumes fundamental significance as it facilitates the discovery of common ground on a spectrum of issues, ranging from resource allocation to representation and cultural rights. Negotiation is a fundamental instrument in shaping policies that address the unique needs and aspirations of different community segments. A pertinent example can be drawn from the Malaysian experience, where negotiations have been pivotal in determining the allocation of economic opportunities, the distribution of political representation, and the formulation of language policies, all aimed at fostering unity among Malays, Chinese, Indians, and other ethnic groups.

Mediation encompasses a structured process in which a neutral third party assumes the role of a facilitator, aiding in the communication and negotiation processes between conflicting parties. In the context of nation-building, mediation is a crucial tool for the resolution of disputes and conflicts among different groups, with the overarching goal of preventing the escalation of conflicts. Mediation can be effectively employed to address interethnic conflicts and disputes. Malaysia, for instance, established entities like the CLC to serve as platforms for mediation, fostering understanding, and bridging gaps between divergent communities.

In summation, the application of consensus models, negotiation, compromise, and mediation in the formation of an ideal nation-state is an indispensable facet of the process, particularly when the objective is to attain unity in a heterogeneous society. These components serve to ensure that decisions and policies are made through collective deliberation, taking into account the interests of all communities, and facilitating the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The Malaysian experience serves as a noteworthy illustration of how these principles have been effectively applied to form a nation-state characterized by harmony and inclusivity.

### **The Role of the CLC in Fostering Consensus and Nation-Building**

The value of consensus or cultural consensus is ingrained in the Malay identity. This part will examine the role of the CLC, which was established in 1948, as a sociological element in nation-building, particularly for the Malay community and other ethnic groups. Therefore, the role played by the Malay community, especially as members of the CLC, has had a significant impact on creating a history of cooperation among various ethnic groups, including Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians, Ceylonese, and the British. While this cooperation was planned by the British, throughout the CLC discussions, it was evident that the Malay community was capable of compromising on several requests from other ethnic groups. The role of the CLC in seeking common ground, perspectives, and cultural dimensions throughout the unity process toward independence is of great significance. The focus is on the CLC because it was established in 1948 to foster cooperation among ethnic groups before independence in Malaya. Among the roles of the CLC, as classified in Mohamed's study (2018), are recognized as sociological elements such as accommodation, bridging divides, and committing to maintain unity, thus contributing to the formation of the ideal nation-state. The concept of consensus and cultural values are deeply ingrained in the Malay identity. This discussion analyzes how JPK played a crucial role in the historical cooperation among various ethnic

groups, including Malays, Chinese, Indians, Serani, Ceylonese, and the British, with a primary focus on the Malay community.

The establishment of JPK marked a critical moment in the nation's journey towards independence. While it was initiated by the British, the deliberations and actions of JPK demonstrated the Malay community's capacity for compromise and accommodation in response to the demands of other ethnic groups. JPK's role was pivotal in seeking common ground, shared perspectives, and cross-cultural dimensions throughout the unification process leading to independence. Key roles of CLC, as discussed by Mohamed (2018), are integral sociological elements in the nation-building process:

i) Accommodation

JPK played a central role in facilitating accommodation among different ethnic communities. This involved understanding and addressing the diverse needs, concerns, and aspirations of various groups. The ability to accommodate these differences and work toward consensus was a vital sociological element that contributed to unity. The definition of accommodation according to Baharuddin (2012) is a process by which each group is aware of and respects the norms and values of other ethnic groups existing in a society. The long-standing norms and values nurtured in Malay society have fostered a sense of tolerance among one another. Sir MacDonald acknowledged that conflicts arose during the process of cooperation among the ethnic groups, sometimes even escalating to violence in terms of actions and words (GB-0033-MAC 120 1970: 148). However, the efforts to free the Federation of Malaya from British rule provided an opportunity and space for each ethnic group involved with the JPK to understand their own culture, customs, and religion, aiming to achieve a consensus.

ii) Bridging Divides

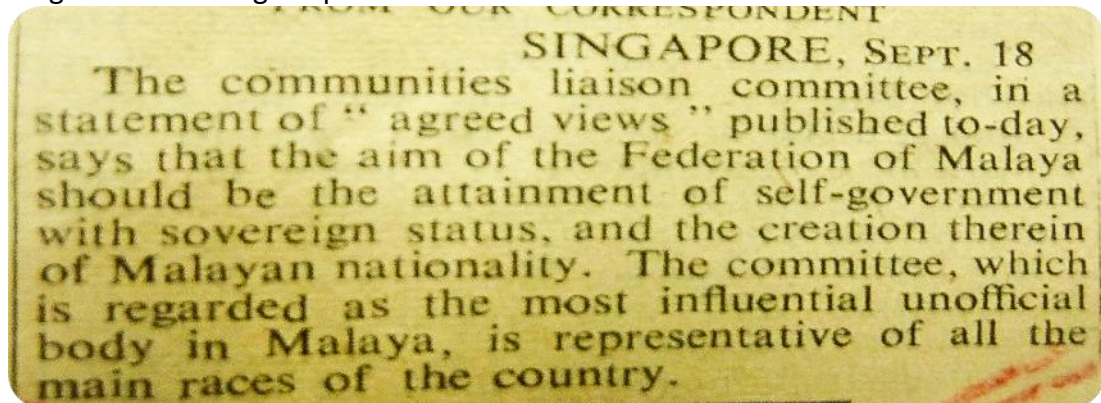
JPK's efforts extended to bridge the gaps that separated ethnic communities. The committee worked to diminish the divisions, whether they were cultural, linguistic, or historical, to bring about a sense of togetherness. This process of bridging divides was instrumental in promoting social cohesion.

The statement in the Times newspaper dated September 18, 1949, refers to document 1.0 below and explains the significance of the establishment of the JPK regarding its role in bridging the gap between ethnic groups. The relative outcomes demonstrate that cooperation between the two sides was successful even in tense situations. The collaboration of all ethnic groups reflects a concerted effort that requires determination, patience, and trust to achieve the goal of self-governance. JPK members represented a diversity of ethnicities and their ability to understand the surrounding circumstances and have a voice in the hierarchy gave them an advantage in facilitating discussions between communities and the government (Mohamed, 2018). Tan Cheng Lock (TCL 25, 1949) also acknowledged that the relationship between the two major ethnic groups had improved from the past. Ethnic boundaries were gradually fading as a result of the meetings in the CLC. These meetings paved the way for them to understand each other's sentiments and try to find a path to build understanding and cooperation.

MacDonald's statement also supports the establishment of the JPK as being "to contribute to understanding and friendship among communities" and "to reconcile the complex relationships and sometimes conflicting interests of the various communities residing in the



country" (GB-0033-MAC 18/2/15 1950: 16). Fostering this understanding and friendship is a complex endeavor as it involves both leadership and the grassroots communities. Such a complex effort undoubtedly requires leaders who can influence their respective communities to work together in making cooperation and reconciliation between communities a success.



Document 1.0 Significant of JPK Establishment *Times* 18 September 1949

Sources: CO 717/183/2/14 (52) 1949: 52.

### iii) Commitment to Unity

JPK exhibited a strong commitment to maintaining unity among the various ethnic groups. This commitment was crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity. It emphasized the common goals and aspirations that transcended ethnic boundaries through the roles of community leaders.

#### 1) Personality

The CLC also demonstrated a commitment to maintain unity among community leaders and the people as a whole. Community leaders have roles and responsibilities within their respective communities. These roles involve actions within the social system through the effects of the behavior or character of each community leader involved as a CLC member (Moore, 1986). Consequently, they also play a role in preserving the power-sharing system in politics and implementing unity among ethnic groups through accountable commitment. Therefore, the personality of each community leader contributes to the success of negotiations and bargaining within the CLC. The personality of the Malay community leader, Dato Onn, is of particular interest because he played a significant role in building and shaping a cooperative alliance with Tan Cheng Lock, representing the Chinese community. Dato' Onn was known for his firmness and extensive political knowledge. He had a far-reaching vision but sometimes acted on emotion, which led to his actions being misinterpreted, such as when he left UMNO to establish the *Parti Tindakan Negara* (PTN). The British viewed Dato' Onn as a creative statesman who believed that cooperation among ethnic groups could form a nation. Moreover, he believed that political parties should not be based on ethnicity and that UMNO should open its membership to other ethnic groups to achieve independence (GB-0033-MAC 120 1970: 130).

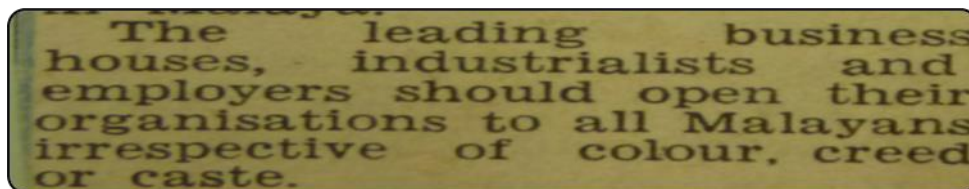
#### 2) Negotiation, Bargaining, and Mediation

Throughout the process of negotiation and bargaining, the CLC members raised seven key issues that needed to be collectively addressed. These issues included interethnic relations, politics, elections, citizenship, social matters, economics, and education (Mohamed, 2018). Several sensitive issues were discussed, such as the economic status of the Malays, political

participation for other ethnic groups, the language of delivery in schools, the types of schools to be established, and citizenship requirements for the inhabitants of the Malay Federation. These discussions were rooted in the diverse demands and preferences of the multiethnic society in Malaya. The negotiation process employed negotiation, bargaining, and mediation approaches before reaching a consensus known as "agreed views".

A series of meetings were conducted to discuss those issues. Throughout the negotiation process, the CLC committee members acted as representatives of their respective communities. The bargaining process between the Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities was evident in addressing issues related to providing economic opportunities for the Malays. Meanwhile, the Chinese and Indian communities were granted citizenship status based on international law practiced by the British and the recognition of local laws enforced by the Malay Rulers before the establishment of the Federation of Malaya in 1948.

For instance, during the third meeting of the CLC committee, they discussed the economic situation of the Malays. This discussion involved a bargaining process with the Chinese community to assist the economic advancement of the Malays. At that time, the Chinese community leader, Tan Cheng Lock, agreed to help in improving the Malay economic status. The discussions and negotiations spanned four sessions to examine economic adjustment issues for all ethnic groups in Malaya at that time. The lengthy discussion was due to the CLC members' involvement in shaping the planning through the proposals to enhance the economic position of the Malays. Among the consensus outcomes in the economic domain, as shown in Document 1.0, was providing opportunities for Malay participation in the industrial and business sectors with a formula deemed capable of improving the economic status of the Malays. To monitor the implementation of this policy, the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) was established in August 1950, chaired by Dato' Onn Jaafar.



Document 2.0: Industrial and Business Opportunity on the Malays  
Sources: CO 717/183/2/36(1) 1949: 36.

The formation of consensus emerged as all members endeavored to respect the diversity of ethnicities and celebrate their respective cultures in their communal life (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2006). This effort was a prolonged one, and the positive environmental factors played a significant role in realizing the process of power-sharing. The duration taken serves as a measure of the success of the power-sharing process, with a longer negotiation and bargaining period resulting in greater success in maintaining and stabilizing ethnic unity and relations within a nation. The key role played by community leaders in shaping and implementing power-sharing throughout the negotiation, bargaining, and subsequent agreed views in the CLC is well-recognized.

"The human principal, social, and political problem here is to join these various racial and religious communities together in the spirit of mutual tolerance, confidence, and friendship" (GB-0033-MAC 22/5/66 1949: 40). This statement underscores the significance of the establishment of the CLC in shaping and cultivating political sharing among community

leaders. The values of tolerance and compromise, shared to attain independence and self-government, are evident. Internal and external pressures, as well as opposition to the Malayan Union, forced the British to consider a plan to unify the population of Malaya at that time. The British acknowledged their own mistakes, as noted by Sir MacDonald: "It is not our political but our social policy that has tended to spoil our relations with the Asiatic countries" (GB-0033-MAC 118/4/4 1950).

### **Methodology**

The research explored historical records and sociological dynamics. This entails describing the sources of data, the methods employed for data collection, and the analytical techniques used for the study. The study begins by exploring historical records, which is a fundamental aspect when delving into the historical trajectory and sociological dynamics of nation-building. Historical records may include documents, archives, texts, and materials from the past that shed light on the historical development of the nation-state. Researchers typically access these records from libraries, archives, government repositories, and other relevant sources. To delve into the sociological dynamics, the research methodology encompasses a sociological approach. This involves the use of sociological theories, concepts, and frameworks to understand how society functions and evolves. It entails analyzing the interactions, behaviors, and relationships between different groups within the nation-state.

The data resources for this study are primary and secondary data. Primary data focuses on official government documents such as meetings and reports about CLC from 1940 to 1952. The series of documents in archival research mainly focuses on new political developments in Malaya. Whereas the secondary data focuses on the books and articles that discussed the identity formation of the ideal state for Malay. When dealing with historical records, the research methodology may involve a historical analysis. This includes the examination of primary source materials to reconstruct events, identify trends, and interpret the historical trajectory of the nation-state. For analyzing texts, content analysis involves systematically examining the content of documents to identify recurring themes, sentiments, and linguistic patterns. This method helps in understanding the sociological dynamics depicted in the documents.

In conclusion, the research methodology employed in this study is a combination of historical research, sociological analysis, data collection from primary and secondary sources, and the use of various data analysis techniques. This comprehensive approach ensures a robust exploration of the historical trajectory and sociological dynamics related to nation-building. It allows researchers to draw meaningful conclusions and insights from a wide array of sources and data.

### **Results and Findings**

The political medium used as the platform for negotiation, bargaining, and mediation reveals a significant relationship in power-sharing. The elements used in this platform are known as elements of social cohesion. It serves as an analytical tool to demonstrate that the CLC adopted a consensus model, as discussed above. This model has shaped the democratic political system in Malaysia today, where the formation of the government is based on power-sharing through agreements within political parties.

This unity process took a long time, and it evolved rather than being forced or rushed. This lengthy process was successful due to the contributions of many parties and is a significant part of Malaysia's history. The pinnacle of these events was that each ethnic group

could sit together and discuss sensitive issues during CLC meetings. The British idea of forming a government based on their colonial references and knowledge resulted in a combination of two identities. The modernization identity brought by the British was interwoven with the identity of the natives. This process fostered cooperation among ethnic groups and gave rise to values of consensus and, subsequently, reconciliation in communal politics (Mohamed, 2018). This established process was achieved through the roles of actors who emerged as community leaders within communal political parties.

Many local scholars acknowledge that the concepts of negotiation, bargaining, and mediation form the foundation of nation-building. Some of those scholars include Baharuddin (2011); Abdul Rahman (2006); Keng (2002), as well as (Abdul Rahman & Sakdan, 2013). The arguments in their studies confirmed that the habit of negotiation and bargaining involves issues that represent the wishes and needs of all ethnic groups in Malaysia. The issues represented in this process change according to the changes and developments within the country. For example, during the CLC meetings, the issues discussed throughout the process involved citizenship, economics, politics, and education (Mohamed, 2018).

The success of CLC in fostering cooperation and consensus among ethnic groups, particularly the Malay community, served as a significant sociological element in the nation's path toward independence and nation-building. It exemplified the capacity for intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared objectives, all of which are essential for the formation of an ideal nation-state. In conclusion, the CLC played a pivotal role in forging consensus and cooperation among Malaysia's diverse ethnic groups, contributing significantly to the nation's sociological dynamics and the formation of an ideal nation-state.

## **Conclusion**

The dynamics of nation-building in Malaysia have always been confronted with change. From the Malay states to Malay Sultanates before the pre-colonial era, the formation of a nation-state in Malaysia evolved, introducing new elements such as the structure of state formation and waves of migration to the country. The development of education in Malaya also contributed to the struggle for Malay nationalism. The Malays established UMNO to reject the Malayan Union in 1946, which colored the nationalist movement, demanding Malay hegemony. Nationalism is a nation-state narrative that aims for unity. The emergence of the nationalist movement among the Malays was also influenced by culture as an indicator of identity. The culture of compromise or consensus has long been an identity of the Malays. These values and culture also helped expedite the process of unity after independence.

The process of nation-building began in the early era of nationalism and continued until the brink of independence, demonstrating the strength of the culture of compromise and tolerance among the people of Malaya at that time. Malay community leaders played a crucial role, especially in the negotiations of the Committee of Unity (1948-1952), proving that Eastern values such as compromise and tolerance were the pillars of successful negotiations between the ethnic groups. Moreover, these values created a new culture in the emerging society after Malaya achieved independence. Today, Malaysia still upholds the values and culture of tolerance and compromise. New challenges may arise, but their solutions continue to utilize elements of negotiation and compromise.

The National Unity Index (IPNaS) 2019 study also measures unity as a narrative of nation-building. The model of structural IPNaS explains the nature of ethnic relations in Malaysia in three phases: integration, cohesion, and unity. IPNaS is further divided into seven dimensions, which are the values measured in Malaysian society from pre-independence till

today. IPNAS has demonstrated that the cohesion achieved before independence was the result of values such as tolerance and a culture of consensus among the ethnic groups.

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