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Civic Non-Engagement in Malaysia

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Abstract

An exploration of the normative and instrumental value of civic engagement leads to a distinction between civic engagement in service delivery and in accountability. The case study of Malaysia finds real but flawed vertical accountability through the ballot box and institutions of horizontal accountability such as the Election Commission. Public tolerance of the flaws and acquiescence in the top-down approach to public management which the government instinctively prefers are in decline as civil society has grown stronger, but they remain substantial.

Overall, civic engagement in Malaysia has been modest, and is likely to increase only within quite strict limits. The case of Malaysia suggests that the pattern of civic engagement is marked by national political economy. The challenge for advocates in countries like Malaysia is to show how bottom-up civic engagement can be reconciled with top-down traditions of public administration.

Key Words – accountability, civic engagement, co-governance, co-production, Malaysia, public services

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: ACCOUNTABILITY, SERVICE DELIVERY AND CONTEXT

In an article setting out her influential theory of co-production of public services, Elinor Ostrom (2009 Nobel Prize winner in Economics) remarked that

‘Many textbooks on public administration stress managerial skills within the bureaucracy itself and few discuss the skills needed to work effectively in problem-solving activities with citizens’ (Ostrom, 1996: 1083).

This article joins the others in this special issue in addressing that important omission, in our case through a case study of citizen engagement in Malaysia. Since the case study is based on a distinctive view of citizen engagement, we begin with a brief discussion of definitions of civic engagement, and of its scope and the contexts in which we find it.

With practice rapidly evolving piecemeal in many countries, it is perhaps not surprising that we have no agreed definition of civic engagement (though see Centre for Civil Society and Governance, 2007; and Doyle, 2008); its scope is also unclear. Looking from a development studies perspective, civic engagement has two kinds of value, normative and instrumental. The former embodies what Amartya Sen has called the ‘process aspect’ of freedom, which he expresses colloquially as ‘I know you can express my views much better than I can, but let me speak for myself’ (Sen, 2002: 10). In this view, civic engagement may not merely enhance development but be constitutive of it. Civic engagement’s instrumental value, on the other hand, resides in the way that it is argued to increase the allocative efficiency of government (Osmani, 2008). This makes it a potential alternative to NPM approaches such as performance indicators.

Both the normative and instrumental views share a meliorist and voluntarist character: civic engagement tends to be regarded as a free, discrete and self-evident good, in a way that neglects some interesting ramifications. Consistent with this, the experiments of Queensland in Australia have been talked up as producing benefits which include a safer, more effective and consistent road network (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009; Doyle, 2008). However, more critical studies have assessed them as a ‘rhetoric of convenience’ whose purpose has been mainly to unlock central government funds (Yee and Rolfe, 2005) and as an intensely

political response to the electoral success of the One Nation Party (Reddel and Woolcock, 2004). Thus there is a broader context in which we should regard civic engagement as a special case of state-society relations, which may have a dark, or even predatory (Deepak Lall's word) side as well as the benign countenance which civic engagement presents to us.

Even if we confine ourselves to benign civic engagement, we need to distinguish between civic engagement in service delivery – including both the policy process and 'co-production' in Ostrom's (1996) term – and civic engagement in accountability mechanisms. These are very different modes of engagement. The service delivery mode is perhaps self-explanatory, though we may note that as with the network governance model, the state is most likely to turn to civil society where it recognizes that the latter has unique resources which the state lacks and needs. (This is the 'resource dependency' rationale: see Klijn, 2008.)

In the case of civic engagement as accountability, O'Donnell (1994) has made a useful distinction between vertical and horizontal accountability. Vertical accountability is directly from the state to citizens. Elections are its classic expression, but recent innovative accountability mechanisms have included social movements, citizens' associations and the media, and legal instruments like Freedom of Information Acts (Ackerman, 2003).

'Horizontal' accountability as per O'Donnell operates indirectly through officials and agencies answering to intermediate bodies such as audit or anti-corruption commissions. There may be direct civic engagement here as well, as in the elaborate system of citizen participation in Brazil's statutory health councils is an example (Shankland and Cornwall, 2007). Since this entails the agents of vertical accountability participating in horizontal mechanisms, Goetz and Jenkins (2001) have labelled it 'diagonal accountability'.

Civic engagement in context

Like any other public administration model, the new civic engagement approaches have arisen in specific contexts, notably Latin America following democratization from the late 1980s onwards, so the familiar caveat about policy transfer applies (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). That is, like any putative international 'good practice' model (which civic engagement shows signs of becoming), the implementation of

civic engagement will be conditioned by context factors, whether we call the conditioning process 'localization', 'refraction' or 'crossvergence' (respectively Acharya, 2004; McCourt, 2002; Ralston, 2009). It is now widely recognized that the underlying political economy is crucial, and the trajectory of public management in Malaysia has been used to argue that we should view political economy in a historical perspective (McCourt, 2008; McCourt and Lee, 2007). Thus this article seeks to understand the *pattern* of repeated interactions between states and citizens in the context of the way in which those states have developed.

Definition and study questions

The above discussion suggests the need for a definition of citizen engagement which encompasses citizen engagement in both accountability and service delivery, and on both the state's and citizens' terms. We propose the following:

Public involvement, both initiated by the state and by the public itself, in the design and delivery of state services and in holding the state to account

From it we derive three questions which will focus our discussion of Malaysia:

- How should we characterize state-society relations?
- What forms of accountability are practised, and what is the relationship between them?
- What civic engagement is there in public service delivery?

A necessary reliance on largely secondary sources means that the answers to these questions will be partial and suggestive.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN MALAYSIA AS AN ASPECT OF STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

State dominance of civil society

If civic engagement is as an aspect of state-society relations, the power relationship between civil society and the state becomes a useful indicator of the salience of civic engagement. Who whom? In the case of Malaysia, there is something approaching

a consensus that the state dominates the relationship. The state's dominance of its society has been variously characterized: 'soft authoritarianism' (Means, 1996), 'quasi-democracy' (Zakaria, 1989), 'semi-democracy' (Case, 2002) or – perhaps most expressively and most relevantly to this study – a 'repressive-responsive regime' (Crouch, 1996).

Jesudason (1995), whose own characterization is of a 'statist' democracy, uses the state's leading role in economic management, already in place before independence, to argue that the state has been able to insulate itself from civil society influences because the first independent government inherited a well-developed colonial state which faced few autonomous centres of power in society, and that this has remained the case. As McCourt and Lee (2007) have discussed, many writers have preferred a social explanation to Jesudason's political one, identifying a deeply-rooted premium which Malaysian society places on authority. Certainly Jesudason's argument cannot account for the difference between Malaysia and other former colonies, such as Ghana and Morocco which inherited similarly well-developed states at independence at almost the same time as Malaysia, but have not developed in the same way.

It is thrown into relief when we compare Malaysia with another former colony, Morocco, which also gained its independence in the late 1950s. Waterbury's (1970) influential view of Morocco's stability, similar to Malaysia's in some ways, is that Moroccan political society is held together, paradoxically, by its 'segmentation', whereby there is a stable constellation of relatively autonomous forces which it is the state's role to balance, trimming between the different interests, rather than dictating (see Alarkoubi and McCourt, 2004). Far from being a mere referee, the state in Malaysia is a player, with the ball glued to its feet.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Vertical accountability 1: through the ballot box

We now proceed to examine the two major aspects of citizen engagement as we have defined it, starting with accountability.

Classic vertical accountability based on universal suffrage (though local councils are not elected) is well established in Malaysia: Opposition parties operating with few

restrictions had a substantial presence in the national parliament at the time of writing, and were in control of four of the 13 states. The main Malay party, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), has governed in coalition with the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and a shifting cast of minor parties ever since the first general election in 1955, two years before independence; the current coalition is the Barisan Nasional (BN) or National Front.

Vertical accountability in this sense has grown stronger in the last decade. The change began with the 1999 general election in which a rival coalition led by former deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim mounted a serious challenge. While it was contained at the time and even rolled back in the 2003 election, the Opposition's renewed assault in 2008 produced a real electoral reversal for the Barisan, which lost control of five of Malaysia's 13 state assemblies (it has subsequently regained control of one of them).

Vertical accountability 2: the Internet

We also see one of Ackerman's new forms of vertical accountability operating in Malaysia. The Internet has been a very important driving force in civil society's political role, in part because the mainstream media are effectively government captives. That is true in many places, but especially in Malaysia, where *The Economist* (2008) has noted the unusual combination of high Internet usage and widespread dissatisfaction with government-controlled mainstream media. Half a million of Malaysia's 28 million people accessed the independent political website *Malaysiakini* on election night in 2008.

The Internet sidesteps government press restrictions in several ways. First, government press control in Malaysia has been mainly through ownership, not censorship. Unlike in China, the government has never tried to censor the Internet. Second, the critical mass for political activism is lower through the Internet than for conventional political activism, and the Internet's relative anonymity allows critics to be more outspoken than they would usually be, an advantage in Malaysia's normally polite public discourse. Third, the Opposition has taken to the Internet much more quickly than the government. At the time of the 2008 general election there were 7500 blogs and websites that were run by or sympathetic to the Opposition. BN had only three (Wu, 2009) - though the prime minister now has a presence on both Facebook and Twitter.

Horizontal accountability 1: the Election and Public Service Commissions

There has been less recent change in the state's dominance of the mechanisms of horizontal accountability, where there is very little of Goetz and Jenkins' diagonal accountability. That is markedly true of the Election Commission. The Commission is nominally independent, its members appointed by the King. But in practice the king accepts the opaque nominations of the Prime Minister.

This weakness in the Commission's remit is by no means academic. A principal task of the Commission is to fix electoral boundaries. The original boundaries established by the British already contained a built-in bias to rural constituencies, populated disproportionately by Bumiputeras. The pro-UMNO bias to which this gave rise has subtly increased over the years. In 1990, the average constituency in the state of Penang, where the opposition tends to be strong, held 50,838 voters. In pro-UMNO Perlis, on the other hand, the corresponding figure was 33,032 (Grace, undated). In the 2008 general election, A 4% difference in voting translated into a 16% difference in seats. BN secured 50.3% of the vote and 63.1% of the seats. The main opposition grouping, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) or People's Pact, won 46.8% of the vote but only 36.9% of the seats. In keeping with our analysis in the previous section, there is greatly increased awareness in civil society of this gerrymandering. But with civil society having no involvement in the Election Commission – no 'diagonal' purchase, so to speak - increased public awareness has not ended the abuse.

We contended earlier that citizen engagement is not a cost-free good. The Public Service Commission (PSC), the official body responsible for civil service appointments illustrates this. Having equally little public representation, its insulation means that public appointments are mostly fair, unlike, say, in Sri Lanka, whose PSC's inability to resist political pressure has led to widespread use of public appointments as a form of political patronage (McCourt, 2007; McCourt and Lee, 2007).

Horizontal accountability 2: The Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission and the Public Complaints Bureau

Two other accountability mechanisms are relevant. The first is the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), which grew out of the National Integrity Plan, a

flagship initiative of Abdullah Badawi after he came to power in 2003. It replaced the Anti-Corruption Agency, a discredited body which had investigated only 3761 of the 38,471 complaints it received between 2001 and 2004 (Abdullah, 2008). MACC's remit, featuring an independent advisory panel, was modelled on Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption, whose former Deputy Commissioner Tony Kwok Man Wai gave it his blessing (The Star, 2009).ⁱ

However, at the time of writing, only 16 months after its launch in January 2009, MACC had already run into difficulties. Critics pointed to its inability to launch prosecutions, for which it had to rely on the Attorney-General, who is not answerable to parliament. This, and the fact that the bill was not consulted on at the drafting stage by a lame duck prime minister who faced incessant sniping from his predecessor Mahathir and who had resigned by the time of the MACC launch, made MACC's critics suspect that Badawi had lacked the strength to prevent MACC's powers from being watered down by opponents in his own party (Kuppusamy, 2008). More damaging still to the infant MACC's credibility was the death of an Opposition aide who fell late at night out of a window in the tower block where he was being detained by MACC; his mass funeral only a matter of months after MACC's launch became a public demonstration of disbelief in the official version of his death (Economist, 2009). With Malaysia having fallen from 23rd in 1995 to 56th in 2009 in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, it was in a spirit of pure irony that one of Malaysia's vigorous political websites made MACC its Malaysian of the Year (Din Merican, 2009).

A related accountability institution, the Public Complaints Bureau, has faced similar criticisms. It is not even nominally independent, coming under the Chief Secretary; and, having no legal powers, is obliged to rely on persuading government departments to respond to the complaints which the Bureau receives from the public (Abdullah, 2008).

Horizontal accountability 3: international comparisons

Two international comparisons are instructive. Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) is an instance of diagonal accountability in action which sharply contrasts with its Malaysian counterpart. The nine members of its General Council have to gain the support of two-thirds of the legislature. IFE has demonstrated its independence by mounting an investigation of the sitting President, Vicente Fox (Ackerman, 2004).

After the 2006 election, IFE embarked on a national survey which elicited 3,420 responses which were the basis for a reform package approved by Mexico's Senate in 2007 (Carrillo and Navarro, 2008). Within Asia, Nepal's Public Service Commission as it existed in the late-1990s had members who, as in Malaysia, were appointed by the king, but unlike in Malaysia acting on the advice of a committee whose members were the leader of the parliamentary opposition, the cabinet secretary and the chief justice in addition to the prime minister of the day (McCourt, 2001). In a society riddled with patronage, public appointments were mostly fair (McCourt, 2001). Some limited diagonal accountability was not at the expense of increased patronage.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN SERVICE DELIVERY

State dominance and the development of public services

Whether we prefer to explain state dominance in political or social terms, state actors have had considerable latitude to act as they see fit. We see that with the most dramatic event in Malaysia's post-independence history, the rioting that broke out on May 13 1969, and which led to official tallies of at least 196 deaths and 6000 people made homeless. The state's response was a typically 'repressive-responsive'ⁱⁱ mixture of security measures and censorship on one hand and pro-Bumiputera affirmative action measures on the other.

Moreover and crucially, we also see it in the state's approach to public services. We should recall that our interest in civic engagement is based in part on its assumed instrumental value for improving public services. The Malaysian state has instinctively preferred to improve them under its own steam, stressing its role as the guardian of the public interest, in deliberate isolation from civil society. Malaysia's fundamental planning tool has been the Five-Year Plan. The first was written and implemented under British rule, with a boost from a major World Bank economic mission in the run-up to independence (Fisher, 1957). That planning regime has continued unbroken up to the present; the powerful Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's department is its repository, and Malaysia's much-imitated 'Vision 2020' its apotheosis.

However, it does not follow that public services have stagnated. Over a period of at least 15 years there have been many initiatives, notably under former Chief

Secretary Ahmad Sarji (1995), who was responsible for the introduction of client's charters and Total Quality Management. These initiatives have continued up to the present, with the personal interest of the two most recent prime ministers, under whom a regime of key performance indicators has been introduced, and a new consultative body bringing government and business leaders together, and chaired by the current Chief Secretary (Adam, 2009).

These NPM-style initiatives are exceptional among the developing countries, especially when it is realized that unlike many of those countries, Malaysia was not introducing them under pressure from any international donor. However, there has been very little civic involvement in them. Despite formal consultation in some areas, for financial service regulation, the voice of civil society is weak, and priorities are still decided from the top down (Siddiquee, 2006). Even when the Secretary-General of the Public Service Department (PSD), the government department with overall responsibility for service delivery, outlined the new Prime Minister's performance indicator regime in a press article, there was no mention of any role for the public in them (Adam, 2009).

The imperviousness to civic influences extends to the government's own line ministries. Although the Secretary-General wrote that targets for departments are set jointly with department heads, the view of line department staff as of 2007 was that PSD dictates to line ministries: *'Whatever comes from . . . PSD, that's it, without any thought for the objectives (or) the impact,'* as a senior official remarked in a research interview (McCourt and Lee, 2007). This has created a culture of dependence in which 'most departments are overly dependent on the PSD to solve issues that they could solve themselves' (Shafie, 1996: 347). This is in marked contrast with South Africa, another middle-income country where affirmative action is a prominent element of public policy, and where PSD's counterpart, the Department of Public Service and Administration, has a flagship policy, Batho Pele or 'People First', with provision for elaborate consultation mechanisms.

None of this means that the state ignores feedback: the repressive/responsive state has shown a capacity for policy learning. We have noted that the affirmative action measures of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1971 were the state's strategic response to the 1969 riots. The NEP itself evolved into the National Development Plan, which removed some affirmative action restrictions which private investors found onerous; and there is currently some movement under the new prime minister

away from race to income as the basis for social targeting. More recently and dramatically, the state rejected the IMF's advice during the East Asia crisis of the late 1990s. And at the micro-level, Malaysia was prepared to drastically revise performance-related pay in the civil service, even though in 1992 it had been happy to soak up the kudos of being the first developing country to introduce performance-related pay in the civil service on any scale. But none of this alters the impression that up to the present, the state has believed that there it is the job of the state rather than the public to set priorities.

Environmental policy

This pattern of top-down action in isolation from civil society is repeated when we move down to the individual policy level. We see the same pattern in environmental policy of increasing civil society voice that we noted for society as a whole. Certainly there is a wide range of environmental NGOs, with remits that range from service delivery through community awareness to policy advocacy. The National Committee on Sustainable Development, established in 1990, did consult NGOs and other stakeholders in producing its first National Report, and there are anecdotal reports of individual departments that have listened to civil society views.

However, Hezri and Hasan (2006) have argued that at an early stage in the development of environment policy, in the 1980s, environmental activism and public campaigns were stymied by the Government, locking policy into a path-dependent, top-down mode. Thus the experience of Ramakrishna, who is now Co-ordinator of Malaysian Environment NGOs (MENGO), an umbrella group for environment NGOs, is that government consultations are 'mere formalities', and that government dislikes NGOs which play an advocacy role rather than a more docile community awareness role (Ramakrishna, 2003: 128). An officer at the Penang Consumers' Association, whose initiatives include the Penang Report Card modelled on the similar well-known initiative in India, commented that 'Some departments just consult NGOs because they are required to' (personal communication).

Government, for its part, restricts the supply of information to the public: Malaysia has an Official Secrets Act with a wide scope. Readers of this article may remember the controversy surrounding the 'haze' caused by forest burning in Borneo at the time of the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998. Yet information on air quality was an official secret until 2006, when Abdullah Badawi semi-publicly

overruled his deputy prime minister and allowed the information to be published for the first time (Centre for Independent Journalism, 2007).

Legitimization and improvement

To some extent the driving force behind the state's reforms has been legitimization through mimetic isomorphism (Common, 1999). But anecdotally, senior civil servants report that the performance regime is substantively challenging. Their report is corroborated by the World Bank's governance indicators, in which Malaysia's score for 'government effectiveness' bucks the declining trend in international indicators which we commented on earlier, with Malaysia climbing from the 69th percentile among the world's countries in 1998 to the 84th percentile ten years later. With no civil society group entitled to claim any responsibility, positive feedback like this reinforces the state's already strong preference to reform from the top down.

CONCLUSION: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

Civic (non-)engagement in Malaysia

This article began by exploring approaches to civic engagement: firstly, its imputed normative value as embodying the 'process aspect' of freedom, and secondly its instrumental value in improving the state's allocative efficiency. That led us to question the citizen engagement assumption that civic engagement is a cost-free good. We went on to distinguish between civic engagement in service delivery (co-production) and civic engagement in accountability, and to make a further distinction between vertical, horizontal and 'diagonal' accountability. Considering civic engagement as an aspect of state-society relations led us to view it in the light of political history.

Turning to the case of Malaysia, we saw that classic vertical accountability through the ballot box exists, though with significant democratic blemishes. Citizens' willingness to tolerate the blemishes has diminished as the 'performance legitimacy' of fast economic growth, and the 'social legitimacy' that the government's skilful response to the 1969 riots engendered, have faded; and because the voice of civil society has grown louder, with the Internet as its amplifier. Meanwhile, the bureaucracy has tried, with some success, to retain its own performance legitimacy

through characteristically top-down initiatives as opposed to measures to involve the public in a meaningful way, despite growing civil society activism in areas like environment policy.

When measured against the civic engagement initiatives in Australia, India and, most of all, Latin America that have attracted so much attention, Malaysia's actions are puny. But our contention has been that civic engagement is no more and no less context-dependent in Malaysia than in other countries. Malaysia's initiatives, such as they are, have been shaped by Malaysia's political economy just as the dazzling initiatives elsewhere have been shaped by theirs. Moreover, non-engagement in the guise of bureaucratic insulation which the mainstream public administration tradition has prized for over a century, has given officials room to make improvements that would not have been possible otherwise.

The assessment of this article, therefore, is that dramatic developments in civic engagement in Malaysia will require more dramatic political changes than we have seen up to now. Such changes appeared possible as recently as a year before this article was written, as the momentum of Pakatan Rakyat's general election performance carried through to a series of by-election successes, including by the Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim himself. But the indications at the time of writing were that Anwar had overplayed his hand, while the new Prime Minister, Najib Razak, at the head of a coalition whose electoral dominance remains intact in much of the country, was taking just sufficient corrective action to check the Opposition's momentum.

Developing civic engagement in Malaysia

The two conclusions which we will draw from this study must be tentative in view of data limitations. The first is pitched at the national level in Malaysia, and takes the form of a prediction. Academic predictions are usually only accurate when it is the past that we are predicting. However, I will don the mantle of a false prophet to suggest that barring some unforeseen exogenous shock, or the emergence of a new leader of Mahathir's calibre, Malaysia is likely to remain a peaceful consociational polity founded on balancing ethnic interests (Lipjhart, 1969), with a continuing tilt to the Bumiputera interest, for some years to come. Pressure from civil society may well continue to increase, and the government will perhaps not seek to suppress it in the way it did formerly. From its position of relative strength (bear in mind the

continuing strength of the Barisan in much of the country), the state still has room to make its own weather. Likewise, the essentially top-down character of Malaysian public administration seems set to continue, albeit at a level some way below that of the 'golden age of bureaucracy' in the 1970s (Crouch 1996; Esman 1972; Puthuchery 1987. In some ways that will be beneficial for Malaysians, and in others not: bodies like the Election Commission will not respond to public awareness of the abuses they preside over, while bodies like PSC will preserve their insulation from political interference. In either case, reformers are likely to find that civic engagement, just like politics at large, is the art of the possible. They will be most effective when they are most aware of the limits placed on their freedom of action, and work constructively within them.ⁱⁱⁱ

Reconciling bottom-up civic engagement with top-down public administration

My second conclusion is pitched at the international level of the Special Issue in which this article appears. We must, as always, be careful about reading too much into an $n = 1$ case study, especially in view of this article's data limitations. That said, our analysis suggests that we would be wrong to suppose that national political economy and patterns of civic engagement are in free variation. On the contrary, the character of the relationship between them may be closer to determinism than the *amour propre* of public reformers will care to admit. It follows that civic engagement, as it shows signs of hardening into the latest international best practice model, is no more readily transferable than the earlier models such as NPM which it may be on the way to replacing. Malaysia's experience shows that the civic engagement instrumental goal of improved public services can be achieved from the top down, in isolation from citizens. That puts those of us who have an ethical or normative commitment to civic engagement on our mettle to show how bottom-up civic engagement approaches which emerged in congenial political environments like Latin America can be reconciled with top-down systems of public administration in countries like Malaysia in a way that preserves the benefits of bureaucratic insulation. Perhaps it is appropriate to end on a voluntarist note, and to suggest that in Malaysia at least, the governing coalition's continuing strength gives it room to manoeuvre which may provide an opening for committed and sophisticated civic engagement advocates to influence it.

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ⁱ This is an appropriate point to observe that 'mimetic isomorphism' is one of the Malaysian state's key legitimization tactics. MACC is an example, and we will see others later.

ⁱⁱ And also effective: there was no serious recurrence of the riots. Readers may compare Malaysia's experience in this respect with Northern Ireland's, which endured riots at almost the same time in 1969 which were much less serious, but which inaugurated 30 years of low-level civil war in which over 3000 people lost their lives.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'By stating the narrowness of the limits of action, is one denying the role of the individual in history? I think not ... I would conclude with the paradox that the true man of action is he who can measure most nearly the constraints upon him, who chooses to remain within them and even to take advantage of the weight of the inevitable, exerting his own pressure in the same direction. All efforts against the prevailing tide of history – which is not always obvious – are doomed to failure.' (Braudel, 1973: 1243-4)

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