Government and Politics in Malaysia

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Contents

Foreword i
Preface iii
Acknowledgements vii
Contributors ix
List of Acronyms xiii
List of Tables and Figures xxiii
Map of Malaysia xxiv
Malaysian Flag xxv

Chapter 1  **Society, Politics and Islam: An Overview**  1

A Brief History  2
A Plural Society  5
A Constitutional Monarchy  7
A Federation  9
A Parliamentary Democracy  12
A Dominant Party System  15
Civil Society  15
An Islamic State  18
Conclusion  22

Chapter 2  **Development in Malaysia: An Overview**  25

Development Policies  26
Pre-independence Period  27
Independence to 1969  28
1970 to the Mahathir Era  31
Selected Development Policies During the Mahathir Era: A Profile  34
Islamisation Policy  35
Vision 2020  36
Chapter 3  **Constitution and Constitutionalism**  47

Nature and Types of Constitution  47
Constitutional Government  49
Constitution Making: An Overview  51
The Constitution of Malaysia  53
   The Rigid Constitution  57
Constitutional Government in Malaysia  59
Conclusion  61

Chapter 4  **Federalism: Origin and Applications**  63

The Theory of Federalism  63
The Evolution of Federal Idea in Peninsular Malaysia  65
Centrifugal and Centripetal Trends  66
The Formation of Malaysia, 1963  68
Federal Territories  70
Distribution of Legislative Powers  70
Mutual Delegation of Powers  72
Federal Legislation on State Subjects  72
Sabah and Sarawak  75
Federal Power During Emergencies  76
The Federal Character of The 1957 Constitution  77
Conclusion  79

Chapter 5  **Real and Nominal Political Executive**  83

Nature and Functions of Political Executive  83
Political Executive: A Muslim Viewpoint  85
Political Executive in Malaysia  86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Yang di-Pertuan Agong</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Real Executive: Perdana Menteri</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cabinet</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Ministers</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretaries</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Secretaries</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 6 The Bicameral Legislature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislature in Malaysia: A Brief History</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition of the Parliament</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature and Functions of Parliament</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Standing Orders</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure of the House</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of Oath</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Messages</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement by the Speaker or President</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions to Ministers</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral and Written Replies</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure in respect of Questions for Oral Replies</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests to move the Adjournment of the House</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obituary Speeches</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Bills</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Reading</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Reading</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Stage</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Reading</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjournment Speeches</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Immunity</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Opposition</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7  **Judiciary**  
A Brief History  
The Judicial Structure  
The Conflict between Civil and Syariah Courts  
The Judiciary and the Separation of Powers  
Independence of the Judiciary  
The Judiciary Crisis of 1988  
Proposals for Judicial Reforms  
Conclusion  

Chapter 8  **Political Parties and Party System**  
Political Party and Party Systems  
Political Parties in Malaysia  
A Brief History  
The Alliance  
Barisan Nasional  
PAS: The Islamic Party  
DAP: The Social Democratic Party  
Other Opposition Parties  
Coalitions in Malaysian Politics  
The Opposition Coalitions  
The Malaysian Party System  
Conclusion  

Chapter 9  **Elections and Electoral System**  
Nature and Functions of Elections  
Major Electoral Systems  
Plurality Systems  
Majority Systems  
Proportional Representation Systems  
Mixed Systems  
Elections in Malaysia  
A Brief History  
Malaysian Electoral System  
Party System and Voting Trends  
The Elections
Chapter 10 **Human Rights**

Human Rights Defined 191
Muslims and Human Rights 193
Human Rights in Malaysia 194
  Respect for the Integrity of the Person 196
  Respect for Civil Liberties 200
  Respect for Political Rights 203
Government's Reactions to Allegations of Violations of Human Rights 205
Discrimination Based on Race, Gender, Disability, Language, or Social Status 206
The Workers' Rights 209
Conclusion 211

Chapter 11 **Public Administration**

The Administrative Structure 213
Local Government 216
The Civil Service 217
Modernisation and Reform Programmes 219
Trends, Issues And Concerns 222
  Centralisation 222
  Elitism and Generalist Posture 223
  Politics-Bureaucracy Nexus 224
  Lack of Local Democracy and People's Participation 225
  Dominant Executive 226
  Weak Public Accountability 227
Conclusion 228

Chapter 12 **Police Administration**

A Brief History 232
The Structure 234
Chain of Command 235
The Functions 237
Recruitment and Training 239
Successful Police Strategies 241
The Royal Commission of Inquiry 242
Government Response 243
Conclusion 246

Chapter 13 Military Professionalism and Civil-Military Relations 249
Civilian Subordination of the Malaysian Armed Forces 249
Budgetary Allocation, Training, and Military Professionalism 253
The Military's Role in External Defence and Structure of the Armed Forces 256
The Military's Political Role (if any), and Involvement in Policy Development 258
Capabilities, Training and Development, Command and Control 260
Role of the Armed Forces in Nation-building and U.N. Peacekeeping Missions 261
Conclusion: The MAF in the Context of Malaysia's Political Economy 264

Chapter 14 Foreign Policy 269
The Funnel of Causality 269
The Environment and Decision Making Structures 272
Foreign Policy: Tunku Abdul Rahman 274
Foreign Policy: Tun Abdul Razak Hussein 276
Foreign Policy: Tun Hussein Onn 276
Foreign Policy: Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad 277
Foreign Policy: Abdullah Ahmad Badawi 287
Conclusion 291

Further Reading 295
Index 301
A constitution is a body of formal and effective rules and regulations that govern the relationship between people and formal institutions of a state. It is a body of fundamental rules which determines the organisation or structure of the government, and determines the relations among the organs of the government. It also contains a statement of the rights and duties of the citizens of the country. In democratic systems, the constitution is considered a fundamental social contract among citizens, where government receives its powers from the people and is bound by an express set of human rights. The constitution is thus considered a statute superior to "ordinary" statutes, which it can overrule, and is usually protected by special courts. This chapter analyses the nature and features of the Constitution of Malaysia and examines the way the Constitution produces a government limited by law.

**Nature and Types of Constitution**

The term "constitution" derives from the imperial Latin *constitutio*, meaning "establishment", or ordinance, of the Emperor. Some scholars use the Greek word *politeia* for constitution, which means basically any form of government. A *politeia* differs from the modern understanding of written constitutions in two respects: first, not all Greek states had their laws in writing; more importantly, the Greeks did not normally distinguish between ordinary and constitutional legislation.

The most common usage of "constitution" is to describe a fundamental law that defines how a government actually operates and how its power and authority are limited. According to Strong, a constitution "is a collection of principles according to which the powers of the government,