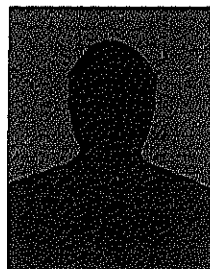
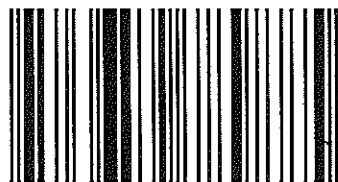


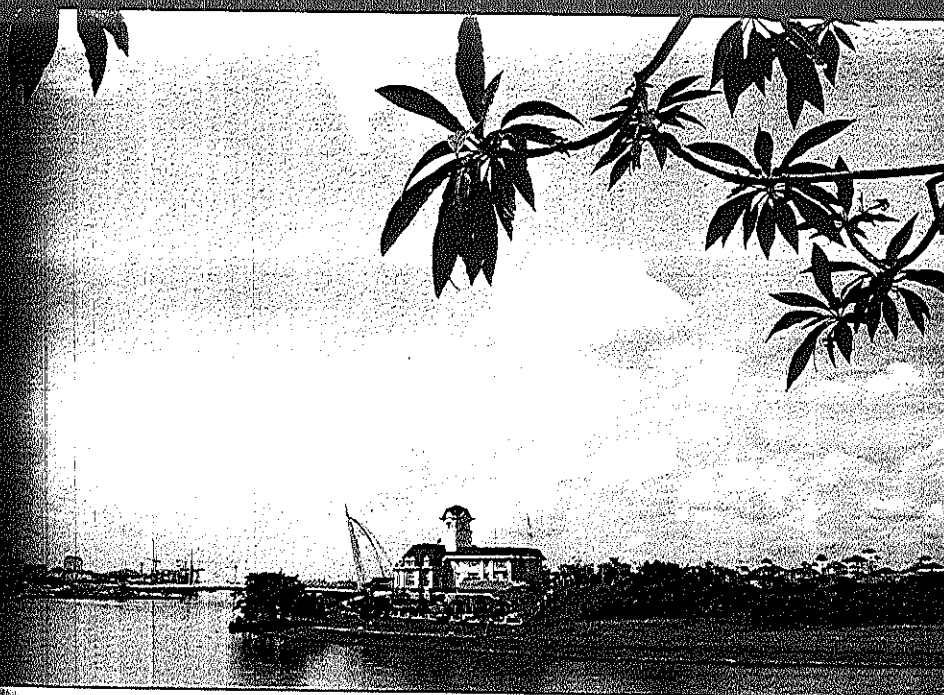
This study examines the strategies and tactics of political mobilisation by the opposition political parties in Malaysia during Mahathir's era. The study is based on two major arguments. First, the electoral performance of the opposition political parties is related to the ways in which they accommodate each other objectives. Second, opposition strategies and tactics have evoked different types of responses by the members of ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional. This study is based upon the framework which explains the features of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies. It examines the linkage between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies, the performance of opposition parties and the responses of the ruling coalition. The study found; (1) opposition parties were not effective in achieving their goals when they pursued divergent strategies. (2) opposition parties did combine and pursued similar strategies and succeeded in mobilising mass support during the elections. However, such cooperation has been rare and did not last long. (3) the government response of the ruling coalition varied. They were repressive when the opposition resorted to extra-parliamentary.



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978-3-659-78988-5



Muhamad Fuzi Omar

# Strategies and the Tactics of Mobilisation

Opposition Political Parties in Malaysia, 1982-2003

 **LAP**  
**LAMBERT**  
Academic Publishing

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### **Impressum / Imprint**

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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Coverbild / Cover image: [www.ingimage.com](http://www.ingimage.com)

#### **Verlag / Publisher:**

LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing  
ist ein Imprint der / is a trademark of  
OmniScriptum GmbH & Co. KG  
Heinrich-Böcking-Str. 6-8, 66121 Saarbrücken, Deutschland / Germany  
Email: [info@lap-publishing.com](mailto:info@lap-publishing.com)

Herstellung: siehe letzte Seite /

Printed at: see last page

ISBN: 978-3-659-78988-5

Zugl. / Approved by: International Islamic University, Malaysia, 2007

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## **STRATEGIES AND TACTICS OF MOBILISATION: OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES IN MALAYSIA, 1982-2003**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### OPPOSITION POLITICS IN MALAYSIA: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

#### INTRODUCTION

Opposition political parties are integral to Malaysian parliamentary system. Their existence is essential in parliaments like Malaysia even though most of the time they are regarded more by the ruling party to delay proceedings, ridicule the government or simply unnecessary.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to these notions, the opposition political parties in fact, carry the tremendous burden of upholding democracy in the Malaysian government. They make the government the subject of scrutiny and control.<sup>2</sup> The opposition parties can also constructively point to the flaws or ambiguities in bills or policies, and disclose irregularities or suspected graft or corruption, and can articulate genuine communal grievances and apprehensions.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, both the government and the opposition actually form a symbolic relationship in that they need each other for the education of the people.<sup>4</sup>

The parliamentary system as practised in Malaysia as in other democracies, allows competitive elections for seats in the Parliament. However, in the Malaysian case, the opposition political parties have never obtained less than 30 per cent of votes during the elections, even though their seats in Parliament have never reached 30 per

<sup>1</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysia: Tradition, modernity and Islam*, (U.S: West View Press, 1986), 123. Also in a remark made by Syed Jaafar Albar, as quoted in Lim Kean Chye's commentary in "Does our constitution provide for adequate representation for opposing and varied interests in Parliament," *The Malayan Law Journal*, vol.1, (April 1976): 82

<sup>2</sup> Shad S.Faruqi, "Parliamentary government in Malaysia: Some reflections," in *The Malayan Law Journal*, vol. 1, (April 1976):19.

<sup>3</sup> Milne and Mauzy, 124.

<sup>4</sup> Raja Abdul Aziz Addruse, "Does our constitution provide adequate representation for opposing and varied interests in Parliament?" *The Malayan Law Journal*, vol.1, (April 1976): 79-80.

cent except in 1969. Several opposition political parties are still active playing their roles in Malaysian politics, whether inside or outside Parliament. The three major opposition political parties are *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* or PAS, the Democratic Action Party or DAP and *Parti Keadilan Nasional* or KeADILan which have representatives in the House of Representatives (*Dewan Rakyat*). These three opposition political parties are the target of criticisms by the government leaders. Some of the government policies are also directed to weaken these parties and reduce the people's support for them.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Realising the importance of these opposition political parties, especially the potential challenge that they can pose to the ruling parties, this study is conducted to analyse the strategies and tactics of these three opposition political parties. In particular, the study pays attention to the strategies and tactics of these opposition political parties to mobilise public support and to achieve their goals in influencing government decisions. The study is limited to the Mahathir's period since there were many developments that took place during this period that affected the opposition political parties.

This study addresses the following questions:

First, what are the strategies and tactics employed by the opposition political parties i.e DAP, PAS and KeADILan to achieve their goals?

Second, how successful are these strategies and tactics in mobilising public support?

Finally, what are the policies adopted by the government in response to the opposition demands?