

ASIAN DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE IN MALAYSIA?

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Introduction

Elements of the style and practise of Malaysian government such as concentration of power in the executive, the implementation of the draconian laws aimed at restricting the actions of the government's political foes all problematic if Malaysian governance is compared to western democracies. But Malaysia's leaders claim these elements are an integral part of a distinctive Asian style of democracy. This Asian democracy model, they argue, is different in important respects from models of democracy promulgated in the West. Rather than emphasising the sovereignty of the people, they claim, Asian democracy gives power to the executive, since Asian democracy values peace, development and prosperity over individual freedom. Rather than guaranteeing the rights of all individuals, Asian democracy concentrates on rights for communities; it is a communitarian rather than an individualistic concept. And rather than emphasising constitutional limits to, and judicial checks on, government power, Asian democracy emphasises executive power to ensure stability. However, the idea of a distinctive Asian democracy is a contested one.

This article will examine whether the model really exists or not particularly in Malaysia. It will begin with the discussion on the values that Asian leaders claimed as an Asian model of democracy. However it raises a few questions whether it is used because of 'the value' itself or as a 'scapegoat' to allow their actions in the government. In

the last section the empirical analysis using SPSS was conducted to find evidence of the model, whether it is existed or not in Asian country, particularly in Malaysia.

The Background

To fully understand the origins of arguments about Asian models of democracy, however, it is necessary to look beyond the confines of Asian societies to the effects of wider developments in world politics arising from the Cold War and its aftermath. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, the two most powerful nations in the world, the USA and USSR, were competing against each other in what came to be termed the Cold War. Although not directly involved in physical conflict with each other, both nations strengthened their weapons and formed alliances with other states in order to better defend themselves against their rival's ambitions. The USA led NATO, a military coalition of states, and the USSR formed another military based coalition, the Warsaw Pact. At times – especially in the 1950s and early 1980s – the Cold War proved tense, and relations between the USA and USSR worsened. At such times, both countries intervened in other parts of the world to prevent client states joining the opposite camp. For instance, during the 1950s, much effort was expended in Malaysia to fight a Communist insurgency. At other times, notably the mid-1970s and late 1980s, relations between the two superpowers improved. However, in the late 1980s, the communist ideology which the USSR and other eastern Europe states embraced collapsed and the Cold War came to an end.

The ebbs and flows of the Cold War had consequences for other countries. Especially at times of heightened superpower rivalry, the Western powers were willing to ignore the authoritarian tendencies of some of their allies in the developing world, so long as they maintained the anti-Communist alliance. A blind eye was therefore turned to human rights violations and anti-democratic tendencies in client states. The Malaysian government benefited from this to some extent during the Cold War, when the country was seen as an important pro-Western ally in a geostrategic region which had seen several countries taken over by Communism. When superpower relations improved (and even more so, when the USSR collapsed and the Cold War ended), however, the western powers became more concerned by the extent to which their allies were democratic. For instance, the 3rd wave of democratization which started in 1974 occurred during the *détente* years of the 1970s, when superpower

relations improved.¹ In this wave, former authoritarian dictatorships and military regimes like Portugal, Greece, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and few others democratized. The wave also hit Asian dictatorships and military regimes like the Philippines, Taiwan and Pakistan. These states started to conduct elections and restored democratic political systems.

According to Huntington, the factors that influenced democratization were the expansion of economy, and the emergence of the bourgeoisie, middle class and the working class.² Then, economic development plays an important role in changing the social structure of the people. They became more educated, open to the outside world and prepared to move towards democratization. However, Huntington also stressed that economic change alone is not the sole factor for the 3rd wave of democratization. The prevalence of Christianity in some societies, the external activities of the European institution, the USA and USSR, and the role of the demonstration effect of democratization in neighbouring countries also helped the democratization process. Meanwhile, O'Loughlin et. al also studied the diffusion of democracy.³ They used a space-time framework to describe the democratization in the world. Their analyses revealed that the realm of democracy has not expanded steadily around the globe over time. The number of democracies grew in the nineteenth century. But there was a change towards more authoritarian regimes between 1920 and 1935, and again between 1950 and 1975. After that, democracy rose again. They showed that democratization is not a one way process and is vulnerable to reversal.⁴ And they demonstrated that democratization is also determined by various factors, such as the extent to which countries in a region share similar characteristics and cooperate in regional economic and political organizations.

The end of the Cold War left the USA as the single most powerful nation in the world. An influential argument prevalent at the end of the Cold War therefore claimed that western-style democracy had 'won' and that it would now be only a matter of time before it was universally adopted in all states. The promotion of democracy overseas became an important policy goal of the USA and of other western governments from the late 1980s and so on.⁵ Western-controlled international economic institutions such as the IMF and World Bank began to insist on the achievement of at least some level of democratization as a condition for providing loans and grants to developing nations. Authoritarian regimes whose civil rights records western states had previously turned a blind eye to during the Cold War when their leaders were allies in the fight against Communism

now found themselves under unwelcome scrutiny and under pressure to democratise.

Partly as a result, the efforts for further democratisation led by the USA were not universally welcomed, particularly by the Islamic world and in Asian nations.⁶ Consequently, it was looked on as interference in domestic affairs by some Asian countries. The leaders of Malaysia, Singapore and China defended themselves by arguing that the western democratic approach was not suitable for Asian countries. It was claimed that two worlds were different from each other in many ways such as historical background, customs, religions, cultures and values.

For instance, the Chinese government stated in its official document on Human Rights that: "owing to tremendous differences in historical background, social system, cultural tradition and economic development, countries differ in their understanding and practise of human rights".⁷ And a Governmental Declaration of Asian heads of state, endorsed at the 1993 Bangkok Asian regional preparatory meeting for the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, stated, "human rights must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds".⁸ Both statements signalled that some (but not all) Asian countries were not prepared to accept the concept of democracy and human rights as understood by Western countries.

In the early 1990s, there was an open debate between an Asian diplomat and a Western academic on democratic and human rights practises.⁹ Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean diplomat, claimed while they practised liberal democracy, the Europeans turned a blind eye to the ethnic violence surrounding them in North Africa and the Balkans. That crisis had been long-lasting and had involved many innocent people. He added that the West should not criticise the practise of democracy in Asia when Western democracy was itself also not perfect. In reply, Christopher Lingle, an American who was at that time a visiting scholar in one of Singapore's universities, stated that at least European democracies still reported their failings to their public and did not hide them from the wider world. He argued this would be unlikely in some Asian states, where incidents involving repression in Myanmar and Tibet, the post-Tianamen crackdown in China and the crisis in East Timor. Even as inescapable and public phenomenon as the widespread air pollution and smog which affected Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia in 1994 and which had been created

by unregulated burning of the tropical rainforest poorly handled by the region's states, as their governments would rather 'save face' than save the lives of their people.¹⁰ Lingle also criticized intolerant Asian regimes that suppressed their own people. But he did not mention Singapore directly. Even so, Lingle's writing was taken seriously by Singapore's government and although he did not mention any government, he still faced a libel suit brought by the government of Singapore and was finally found guilty of contempt of the Singaporean government.¹¹

The Practise of Asian Democracy

The Asian values which are the core of the concept of Asian democracy are discussed by writers such as Hague and Harrop, Robison and Rodan and Hewison. Some Asian leaders such as Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir used the Asian values and Asian democracy concept to defend their style of leadership.

Hague and Harrop stated the Asian values and Asian democracy concept was based on respect for authority, avoiding public conflict and accepting the primacy of certain groups in society.¹² The concept assumes that the people normally put the leaders first and give their full support to governments that bring prosperity and development to them. This supposed 'special' relationship helps certain governments retain power for long periods of time. Any criticism of the leaders is seen as a criticism of the government itself and it has to be avoided. Asian values also mean accepting the domination of certain groups in the country. The concept applies at least in Singapore and Malaysia. In Singapore, political power is controlled by the Chinese. The Prime Minister and other important posts are always held by Chinese politicians. As for Malaysia, the Malays control political power and always hold important posts such as the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister. The Malays also have privileges compared to other ethnic groups under the New Economic Policy (NEP) that was launched in 1970 and the New Development Policy (NDP) that replaced the NEP in 1990. Under both programmes, Malays are given considerable help to start businesses: government agencies have been set up to help market their products; most government contracts are given to Malay businessmen; training and personal skills are provided to Malays; and Malay students can enter university with minimum qualifications.

Dr. Mahathir served as Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003 and was the longest serving Prime Minister the country ever

had. During his early years in politics, he was considered as an ultra Malay. In his book, *The Malay Dilemma* he wrote, "I contend that the Malays are the original or indigenous people of Malaya and the only people who can claim Malaya as their one and only country. In accordance with practise all over the world, this confers on the Malays certain inalienable rights over the forms and obligations of citizenship which can be imposed on citizens of non-indigenous origin".¹³ The other ethnic groups in Malaysia like the Chinese and Indians are still given a position (albeit a subordinate one) in the politics and administration of the country and they (or their leaders) have accepted the situation. In addition, the coalition government in Malaysia contains parties from different ethnic backgrounds: the Malay party, UMNO, is the core of the coalition, and is joined by the Chinese-dominated MCA, the Indian MIC and several other parties.

Meanwhile, Robison and Rodan and Hewison suggested Asian values normally, look forward to stable leadership rather than political pluralism, have an intuitive respect for authority and social harmony and are opposed to dissent or confrontation, support a government that will deliver economic prosperity and are more concentrated on communitarian rather than individualistic values.¹⁴

Furthermore, Dr. Mahathir claimed democracy in Malaysia was healthy and operated according to an Asian style of leadership because, the government directly represented the people, a majority ruled through a government of elected representatives, periodic elections were contested by a multitude of political parties, allowing for the replacement of individual representatives or a change in government, separation of powers existed between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, conferring institutional checks and balances upon one another and elected representatives and the government were responsive to public opinion.¹⁵

However, he still faced criticism of his style of leadership from inside and outside the country. He was criticized for using the ISA, the act that can be used to detain anyone without any reason or trial. During his tenure, he usually used the ISA to silence his critics, but he claimed he used the act to stabilize the political situation. Its use was in line with his claims regarding Asian values emphasising stable government and respect for social harmony. In 1987, he used the ISA to detain 119 people including the opposition and NGO leaders because they debated communal issues. The communal issue is considered sensitive in Malaysia and its public discussion could lead to racial tension as happened in 1969. And in 1998, when his sacked Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, was about to start a campaign

around the country to explain why he was sacked by Dr. Mahathir, he was detained under the ISA. At that time, some of the people sympathized with Anwar and many protested against Dr. Mahathir's decision.¹⁶ In the name of political stabilization and worried about the public disquiet, Dr. Mahathir ordered Anwar's detention under the ISA, even though he was then trial in an open court. Consequently, Dr. Mahathir had an answer for his decision to use the ISA during his tenure: "this government has gone to numerous elections where the ISA was an issue and the people voted for this government with a big majority which means that the people as a whole approve of the ISA. If democracy means majority opinion, then the majority supports the ISA, simply because the majority wants a stable and orderly society".¹⁷

In addition, individual freedom, press freedom, civil liberties and human rights in Malaysia also became a focus of criticism of the Mahathir administration's democratic record. His critics claimed Dr. Mahathir did not allow much room for freedom, with many laws that restricted the people. He replied, "the curbs on individual freedom and liberties were checks and balances,.... maintained as between individual rights and the public good with the government of the moment determining what constitutes the public good".¹⁸ And he also added, "while a citizen is free... the society must have the right to object to individuals who offend the sensitivities of the society".¹⁹

Before Dr. Mahathir became a politician, he was a medical doctor trained at the University of Malaya in Singapore. Unlike the Prime Minister before him, he received his education locally. When he became Prime Minister in 1981, he launched a 'Look East' policy, looking to Japan and South Korea to be examples to Malaysians. Dr. Mahathir was not interested in taking examples from the West. In his speech to the 1982 UMNO general assembly, he said: "for centuries we have been awed by Western strength and ability. We have not only been impressed but we have also accepted the view that it is impossible for us or any Eastern nation to compete with the Westerners". He added, "while generally the Western nations cannot solve the oil crisis and other problems, several Eastern nations can overcome them especially countries like Japan and South Korea". And he continued, "the West had 'failed' in the matter of economic competition and therefore we must adjust our attitude and direction, the West can no longer be an adequate example, those fail cannot be made examples to follow".²⁰ In addition, he also commented on the push of more democracy to Hong Kong when Britain was preparing to return the territory to China. In *Asia Week*, May 1997, he said: "I

think it is the height of hypocrisy. For more than one hundred years, the British never thought of ruling Hong Kong as a democracy. Now, just before it has to hand Hong Kong back to China, it suddenly decides there must be democracy, and that it is going to defend democracy to the last drop of the Hong Kong people's blood".²¹

Furthermore, Dr. Mahathir also insisted Malaysia's style of government was better than the Western system especially the American system. For him the Malaysian system produced a strong and stable government which was chosen democratically by the people, although it was dominated by a single coalition party. He also suggested the two party system practised in America produced a weak and an unstable government with a small majority government. The two party system for him, also denied the voice of those people whose opinions and interests differed from the two parties concerned. But as usual, his statements are quite controversial and not agreed by all parties. For his critics, Dr. Mahathir's claims about a distinctive Asian model of democracy were little more than an attempt to provide an ideological justification for his own style of leadership.

Democracy and Development in Asia and Malaysia: An Empirical Test

As discussed by Huntington, Japan and South Korea were the earliest two Asian nations to move towards democratization in the 2nd wave between 1943 and 1962.²² The other Asian nations that started to implement an element of democracy in their respective governments in the same wave were Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. However, a few Asian nations such as Pakistan, Korea, Indonesia, India and the Philippines moved backward by changing from democracy to the semi authoritarian and military rules between 1958 and 1975, a process referred to by Huntington as the second reversed wave.²³ The process repeated itself when in the 3rd of democratization (which started in 1974), the nations like India, the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan changed back to democracy. As for Malaysia, from independence in 1957, it has been considered as a quasi democratic state, except in the period from 1969 to 1971 which was one of emergency rule.

Some writers do not agree that Malaysia is truly democratic because regular elections alone are not enough evidence to support the arguments. For instance, Zakaria classified Malaysia as a quasi democratic country²⁴ and Case categorized Malaysia as a semi democracy.²⁵ They reached these conclusions for two reasons. First, the Malaysian government suspended local government elections for

city councils and district councils in 1964 and totally abolished them in 1971 (to date, they have not been reinstated). Second, the government used the constitution to introduce (and never subsequently repealed) emergency laws which the government has power to apply whenever it wants. In addition, Malaysia has also experienced a period of non democratic rule between 1969 and 1971. It happened after the racial riots in 1969 when the parliament was suspended and Malaysia was put on emergency rule. At that time the control of government was taken over by the National Operations Council (NOC) which consisted of politicians from the government parties and of civil servants. After the 1969 riots, the government imposed tight restrictions on civil liberties and procedures governing the elections were also tightened. The people are not allowed to speak freely on certain issues like the Malay ethnic group's special rights and the position of Islam as a national religion. The government also helped and supported the ethnic Malays under a new programme, the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was set up after the racial riots. In addition, the government has also used the Internal Security Act (ISA) aggressively. Originally, the ISA was used to prevent racial tension but on several occasions the government used it to silence their critics. One example is the famous 'operation lalang' in 1987, when several opposition leaders were arrested under the ISA, although they were not involved in public debate between UMNO and MCA members about Malay special right.

In addition, Case has also stated Malaysia was a pseudo democracy.²⁶ In a pseudo democracy, the government still tolerates the existence of an opposition and holds election regularly but does not provide the same level of support and a fair field for all the parties who contest the elections.²⁷ And the electoral constituencies, as a result of malapportionment and gerrymandering, normally designed to ensure the government victories.²⁸ The election campaign is short (in the Malaysian 2004 election, only 8 days were permitted to all parties to campaign) and in the campaign period, the government parties are given full coverage from the mass media but this is not for the opposition and other parties.

Then, Means went further when he classified Malaysia and Singapore as examples of soft authoritarianism.²⁹ The national government in Malaysia has full power to control the state and power is centred on the Prime Minister, who has to be Malay and the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) President. The Prime Minister has the power to declare emergency law whenever required as happened in 1969 (following that year's race riots) and in 1978 (when

a state of emergency was declared in Kelantan following an internal crisis in the state government). And the Home Minister (a post usually held by the Prime Minister) can request the detention of anyone without reason under the ISA. Other than that, most of the main media (not all) are controlled by the government, and the opposition parties were very difficult to reach their supporters. The opposition publications are very rare and limited in circulation. And, all publications must be licensed and reviewed annually by the government and their license can be cancelled at any time without any reason.

In Asia nowadays, there are still states that practise military rule or are semi authoritarian and at the same time democracy is expanding in the region. The expansion of democracy led by and based on the western model and its values puts pressure on the Asian nations. A few Asian leaders rejected the western style of democracy and they came up with the idea of Asian values and Asian democracy. But does a distinctively Asian model of democracy that is based on shared beliefs, cultures, life styles and values really existed? If it does exist, then states like Malaysia, Singapore and China that promote the term will stand out from general trends of democracy and development.

To put the general trends of Asian democracy and development in context, I have created indicators of democracy and development. As much of the literature discusses a possible link between socio-economic development and democracy, the first step was to construct a country-level measure of socio-economic development (I am grateful to Professor Pippa Norris of Harvard University for access to her dataset, which is available from www.pippanorris.com, and from which most of the variables below were derived). The development index was created from six variables, each available for a wide range of countries. The first is the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), human development index (hdi 2003) that measures every country's achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and standard of living. The second variable, gross domestic product per capita (gdp 2000) measures overall economic growth and was derived from the World Bank. The third variable, population growth (popgrow) measures the annual population growth also from the World Bank. Urban population (urban) is the next variable and measures the urban population as a percentage of the total population in each country (World Bank). Then, an education index (edindex) measures the adult literacy rate and combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary school. The last variable, new media, measures

the percentage of people online, the percentage of personal computer owners and the percentage of the web hosting. Meanwhile for the democracy index, the first variable is the Kaufmann voice and accountability (voice02) obtained from World Bank which is also available from the same site. Next, is the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (cpi03) that measures the levels of corruption in the world. The next two variables are: allhouse, which measures how far the executive controls all the relevant house in the political system; and govseat, which measures the governing party in the house seat, from DPI 2000 – database of political institution.

The development index is created using a principal components factor analysis of the variables described above, the human development index, the gdp per capita, the population growth, the education index, the urban population and the new media. Principal components analysis aims to look for the underlying relationship between all the variables. Only one component was extracted, accounting for 70% of the variation in the original variables, indicating that all original variables are measuring the same underlying thing. And all the original variables are strongly correlated with the underlying indicator, suggesting it is a measure of development index (Table 1)

Table 1: The Component Matrix of Development Index

Variables	Component 1
Human development index	0.95
Gdp percapita	0.89
Population growth	-0.69
Urban population	0.79
Education index	0.89
New media	0.80
% of variance accounted for Eigenvalue	70.33

Then, the democracy index is also created using a principal components factor analysis of the variables described above, Kaufmann voice and accountability, the TI levels of corruption, the allhouse and govmaaj variables. Once again, only one component was extracted, accounting for nearly 58% of the variation in the original variables, indicating that all original variables are measuring the same

underlying thing. And same with the development index, all the original variables are strongly correlated with the underlying indicator, suggesting it is a measure of democracy index (Table 2).

Table 2: The Component Matrix of Democracy Index

Variables	Component 1
Voice and accountability	0.91
Corruption level	0.87
Allhouse	- 0.71
Govseat	- 0.28
% of variance accounted for Eigenvalue	54.40

Then the development index was used as the independent variable in a regression analysis with the democracy index as the dependent variable. Table 3 shows in more detail how the democracy index is directly related to development index.

Table 3: The Democracy and Development Index: Regression Analysis

	b	p
Constant	-2.68	
Development index	0.91	0.00
R ²	0.83	

b – constant value

p – probability of error (significant at 0.05)

R² - Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

The results in Table 3 show that the higher a country's value of the development index (and hence the more affluent the society), other things being equal, the higher it will score in the democracy measure. A one point increased in the development index was associated with an increase in the democracy measure of nearly one point. Overall the development index accounts for about 80% of the variation in the democracy index. The analysis shows that

the higher a country's score on the development index and hence the more affluent the country, the higher it scores for the performance of democracy.

The regression analysis gives the general pattern for all countries in the world. But how do Malaysia and other Asian states compare within this general trend? Is the Malaysian government more or less effective than we would expect given the country's score on the development index? And what of other Asian states? If there is a distinctive Asian model of democracy, we might expect to see some clustering of Asian states on the democracy index. But does this happen in practice? In order to find the answer, I have plotted the location of Malaysia and other Asian states on a graph that shows the relationship between the democracy and development indices (Figure 1)

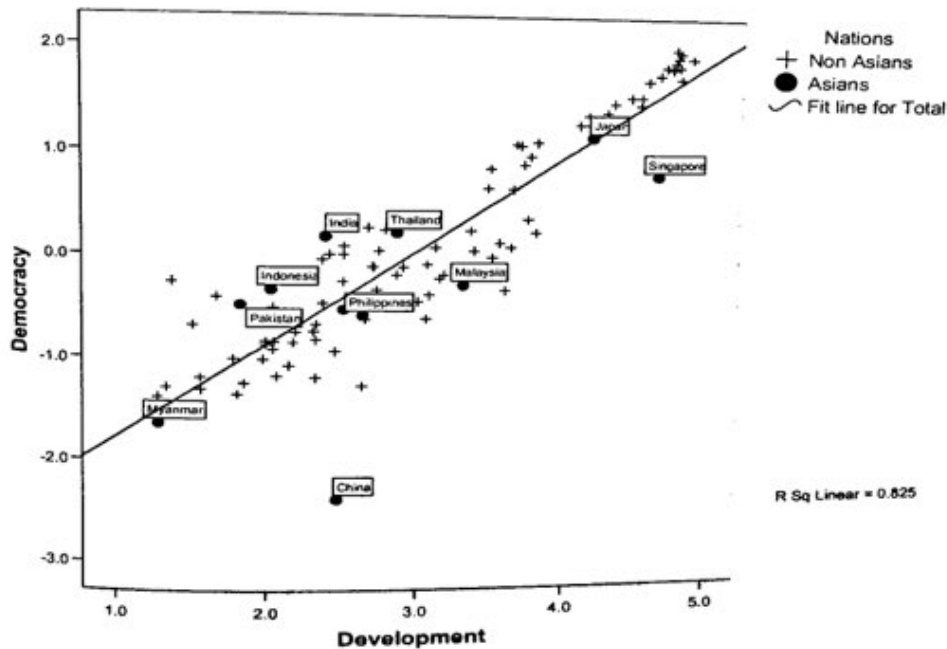


Figure 1:
The Relationship Between Democracy and Development Index in The World

Figure 1 illustrates the strong positive relationship between democracy and the development index as shown by the regression model. There is a group of nations in the top right hand corner of the graph which score high on both the development and the democracy indices. Most of these states are in the most developed world. Meanwhile, there are more states in the lower left hand corner of the graph, suggesting these are less developed and less democratised.

Most of the Asian nations in the data set are in lower left hand corner of the graph including Malaysia. Indeed, several of the Asian states – including Malaysia – are below the regression line, implying that they enjoy less democracy than their level of development might imply. Only Japan and Singapore are in a better position.

A further question relates to how Malaysia compares to other Asian countries. The graph therefore identifies other Asian countries in the data base. As can be seen there is no clear clustering or pattern in Asian states' scores on the democracy index or in its relationship with the development index. It does not seem, at first glance, that there is anything distinctive about Asian states in particular on this measure of democracy and development index. But to test this more precisely, I have added a dummy variable to the regression model reported in Table 3. The dummy variable is coded 1 for Asian countries and 0 for others. The new model shows the same strong, positive and significant relationship between the democracy and development index, accounting for 76% of the variation in the democracy index scale. But the Asian dummy variable is negative and not significant (Table 4). The similar results would suggest probably there is no distinctive Asian model of democracy.

Table 4: The Democracy and Development Index: Regression Analysis (with the Dummy Variable)

	b	p
Constant	0.09	
Development index	0.85	0.00
Dummy Asian countries	-0.14	0.41
R ²	0.76	

b – constant value
 p – probability of error (significant at 0.05)
 R² - Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

The next stage is to see how the relationship between the democracy and development indices trends among the Asian countries only. The trend can be shown clearly in a scatterplot (Figure 2).

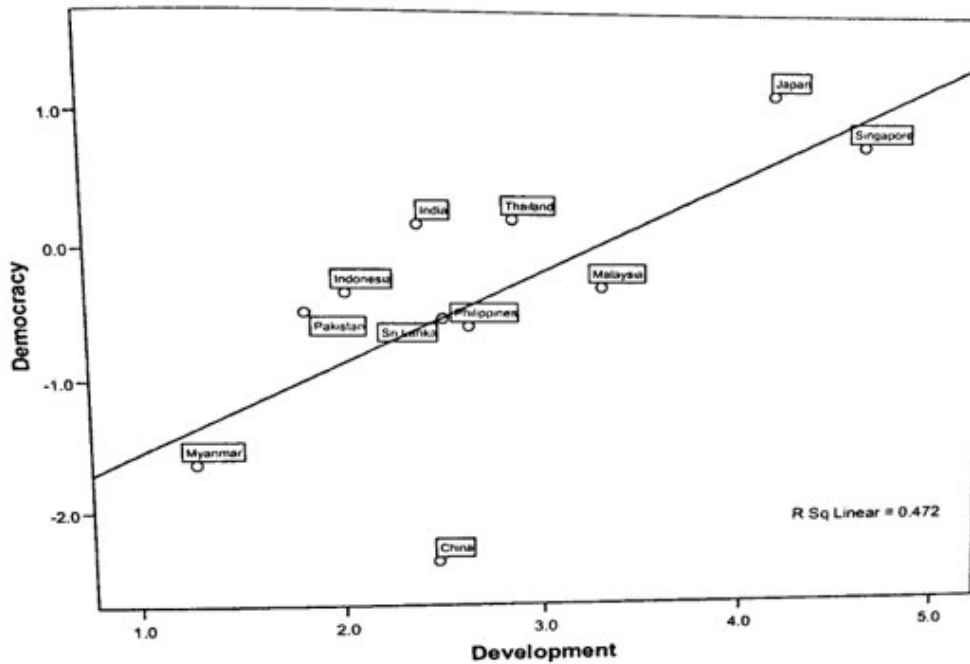


Figure 2:
The Relationship Between the Democracy
and Development Index in Asian

The graph still illustrates a similar pattern to that in Figure 1. Most of the states are in the same cluster except for Japan, Singapore, Myanmar and China. The trend also typified by the lower level of democracy and development. Both Japan and Singapore are in another cluster of their own, with higher levels of democracy and development compared to other Asian states in the dataset. The former leaders in Malaysia, Singapore and China always claimed they practised a distinctively Asian style of democracy, although leaders in other Asian countries did not talk much about that. The evidence presented here, suggests that if a distinctive Asian model of democracy really existed, Malaysia, Singapore and China should be in the same cluster. They are not. We can therefore conclude that Asian democracy, in the form discussed by many politicians, does not exist. Indeed, levels of democratization in Asian countries is not much different from what might be expected based on levels of development and on trends between democracy and economic development in other parts of the world.

Conclusion

Malaysian politics and democracy as described above are in an ambiguous state. The country has adopted democratic processes and practises such as conducting election, governance by the people's choice and allowing the existence of opposition parties. But at the same time, Malaysia applies many restrictions to democracy itself, like violating human rights by using draconian laws, and exercising an undue concentration of executive power. The national leadership justify their actions with reference to what they terms as the Asian style of democracy. But the analyses reported above find little to support a claim that Asian democracy is in any way a distinctive model of government.

The government should accept openly criticism of them especially by the opposition parties and not try to silence them by using any laws. It is a democratic responsibility of the opposition to give a second opinion on any government decisions in the spirit of checks and balances. All the people including the opposition should have the same human rights regardless their race, religion, social or historical background. Whether they were in Asia, Europe, Africa or anywhere, they should be treated as a human being who is free to express their opinions, free to move or free to form an organisation. Malaysian politics falls short of this ideal.

Furthermore, the concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister shows that the position is the most powerful in Malaysia. Although the Yang Di Pertuan Agong (YDAP) is the head of the state, the Prime Minister is above him in certain circumstances such as the making and amendment process of the laws in parliament and the proclamation of the state emergency. The executive which is headed by the Prime Minister also have huge influence over the legislative and judicial decisions. In political perspectives, the current situation is important for the survival of the incumbent government.

Notes

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- ²³ Ibid., p. 19.
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