

## The Rise of Politic Ethnonationalism in the State of Sarawak Borneo

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**Abstract:** Ethnonationalism refers to the convention of ethnic elements in an ethnic group to show their uniqueness and making evaluation using their own ideas and values. These elements include the concept of history, heritage and faith – determined by the group itself. Ethnonationalism attempts to relate history with ethnicity and it is not entirely about the membership of a certain political institution, but rather about giving rights and leaving legacies. The aim is to strengthen the concept of the autonomous region. The objective of this research is to evaluate the rise of politic ethnonationalism in the state of Sarawak by Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem, the new Chief Minister of Sarawak after the era of Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud. This research will study about the factors that triggered the rise of politic ethnonationalism in Sarawak. It also aims to find whether ethnonationalism will be able to unite Sarawakians and how far does it contain political paradox as well as the ability to disintegrate the nation state. This research uses the method of analysing Adenan's actions via all of his policies, decisions and attitude throughout the period of his appointment as the Chief Minister of Sarawak. It appears that Adenan managed to gain votes from various ethnicities in Sarawak to create a 'voice' and used it to gain political mandate as well as demand for more developments in Sarawak.

**Key words:** Ethnonationalism, Ethnic culture, Politics, Sarawak, Putrajaya, Malaysia

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Problem Statement

According to Walker Connor (1994), the concept of ethnic nationalism is similar to the concept of ethnonationalism. Both are based on the creation of a nation state, driven or dominated by similar ethnic identity, whether it gets to expand, combine or assimilate into the majority identity. Political leaders who believe in ethnonationalism celebrate and pledge freedom and democracy. They have a proclivity to transform identity into legality in order to act as representatives of the nation.

In ethnic nationalism, there is a tendency to convene the ethnic elements in an ethnic group to show their uniqueness and making evaluation using their own ideas and values. These elements include the concept of history, heritage and faith – determined by the group itself (Awang Azman Awang Pawi (b), 2014). Ethnonationalism attempts to relate history with ethnicity and it is not entirely about the membership of a certain political institution, but rather about giving rights and leaving legacies. Its aim is to strengthen the concept of the autonomous region.

#### 1.2. Research methodology

This research uses the qualitative approach, mainly by analysing the local newspapers in Sarawak as well as referring to the national newspapers. It also critically analyses Adenan Satem's actions via all of his policies, decisions and attitude throughout the period of his appointment as the Chief Minister of Sarawak. This analysis is from the perspective of ethnonationalism.

#### 1.3. The Relationship between Nationalism and Ethnocentric

William Sumner (1907) introduced ethnocentric, a word that means an inclination to evaluate or interpret other cultures based on the interpreter's own criteria. In the context of universal tendency, the differences in history and ethnography will lead to confusion or digression towards other ethnic groups. In the study of anthropology for example, the views of indigenous or local, prejudices and misinterpretations often occurs when there is a lack of understanding about the community itself. Sometimes it, consciously or unconsciously, shows a failure to recognise that other people's cultures are also important and valuable just because they are different. (Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology, 1986:97). Ethnic nationalism is likely to force ethnocentric behaviours in two situations discussed in this study.

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Firstly, Putrajaya or the central government interprets that the same requirements are needed for the state of Sarawak and other states in Peninsular Malaysia whereas Sarawak has significant differences with regard to history and culture and particularly in terms of ethnicity. There is also a huge geographical gap because Sarawak has yet to be fully explored due its size. Belaga, one of the state legislative assemblies (DUN) in Sarawak, has the same size as the combined states of Kedah and Penang while Hulu Rajang parliamentary constituency has a similar extent of Pahang.

Secondly, due to contrasting views of Putrajaya and the aspirations of Sarawak, the leaders and people of Sarawak often witness ignorance towards their homeland in terms of socioeconomic development. They also feel like they are being neglected as well as marginalised because Sarawak has no major highways, monorail or commuter. It was only when Putrajaya almost lost the 2008 election; Sarawak and Sabah were given attention but it was still insufficient. This void opened up a chance of new leadership for the Chief Minister to progress with an ethnonationalism political agenda in order to shape the voice of Sarawak to negotiate and create a political bargaining chip.

## 2. Factors that Triggered Political Ethnonationalism under Adenan's Leadership

### 2.1. Political Instability in Putrajaya

After 22 years of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's era, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi replaced him as a successor in Malaysia's current political context. The 2004 General Election was held and Barisan Nasional (BN) received 63.9 per cent of popular votes. The percentage was the biggest majority ever won since 1978. It gave Abdullah Ahmad Badawi the largest mandate to administer the government. One of the encouraging factors was the confidence given by the *rakyat* to the new incumbent because the changes were considered long overdue after Tun Dr Mahathir's government was tainted by elements of cronyism, nepotism and collusion. (Tilley, 2001:97).

However, during the 12<sup>th</sup> General Election in 2008, the government led by Abdullah suffered a blow because the popular votes were reduced to 51.39 per cent. The 12 per cent decrease was related to *rakyat's* anger on issues like the 'Level Four boys' which was said to affect Abdullah's administration, the strong influence of social media that drowned social media bloggers or BN's social media, the rising prices of goods, the unresolved issues of teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) that caused Malays to be unhappy, the movements of Bersih and Hindraf, the rising oil prices and cost of living, the issue of Lingam's video clip and so forth.

Public outrage led Barisan Nasional to be denied 2/3 of the seats and only managed to form a government with a simple majority, which was less

than 2/3 but still more than half of the seats. Barisan Nasional lost in Kedah, Penang, Perak and Selangor and failed to acquire Kelantan. Many political figures were defeated including Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Sammy Vellu, Koh Tsu Koon, M. Kayveas and Zainuddin. The holding forts were Sarawak, Sabah and Johor. BN's performance in the election was then considered as the worst in modern-day Malaysia.

**Table 1:** Total Popular Votes in General Election since the Establishment of Malaysia Up to 2013

Era	Election Year	Percentage of Popular Votes
Tunku Abdul Rahman	1964 (GE 2)	58.5
Tunku Abdul Rahman	1969 (GE 3)	44.3
Tun Abdul Razak	1974 (GE 4)	60.7
Tun Hussein Onn	1978 (GE 5)	57.2
Dr Mahathir Mohamad	1982 (GE 6)	60.5
Dr Mahathir Mohamad	1986 (GE 7)	57.3
Dr Mahathir Mohamad	1990 (GE 8)	53.4
Dr Mahathir Mohamad	1995 (GE 9)	65.2
Dr Mahathir Mohamad	1999 (GE 10)	56.5
Abdullah Ahmad Badawi	2004 (GE 11)	63.9
Abdullah Ahmad Badawi	2008 (GE 12)	51.39
Abdul Najib Tun Abdul Razak	2013 (GE 13)	47.38

Source: Extracted and adapted from the Election Commission of Malaysia

Consequently, Abdullah was pressured to step down and Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak took over the reign. He introduced the policy of the National Transformation Programme (NKRA) and Key Performance Indicator (KPI). He also appointed Idris Jala, the former chief executive of MAS, to be the driver of Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), which oversees the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). 1Malaysia slogan was introduced as well as *Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia* (BR1M). However, 'Bersih' movement and cooperation between PAS, PKR and DAP in Pakatan Rakyat had given a big boost for oppositions. The perception of poor governance and the role of urban or middle-class voters who demanded a transparent administration led to the declining of popular votes by 4 per cent, from 51 per cent to 47 per cent.

This situation influenced the decrease of Putrajaya's power. Their political viability was only aided by the states of Sarawak, Sabah and Johor. This can be seen through the ranks of the new federal cabinet announced in May 2013 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. Seven from the appointed full ministers were among the MPs of

Sarawak. Four were MPs from Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) namely Datuk Fadillah Yusof (Minister of Works), Datuk Rohani Karim (Minister of Women, Family and Community Development), Dato' Sri Douglas Uggah (Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities) and Nancy Shukri (Minister in Prime Minister's Office). Datuk Joseph Entulu Belaun of Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) on the other hand was appointed as Minister in Prime Minister's Office and Datuk Richard Riot Jaem of Parti Rakyat Bersatu Sarawak (SUPP) as Minister of Human Resources. Another minister from Sarawak, Senator Datuk Seri Idris Jala was also appointed as Minister in Prime Minister's Office.

The other three appointed deputy ministers from PBB were Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (Deputy Minister of Home Affairs), Datuk Alexander Nanti Linggi (Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development) and Datuk Seri Dr James Dawos (Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment). Another appointment from Sarawak was Datuk Joseph Salang Gandum (PRS) as the Deputy Minister of Tourism. (BorneoPost, May 13, 2013) Previously, there were only two full ministers appointed and seven elected deputies. But soon after, Datuk Wan Junaidi was promoted as a minister as well as Datuk Masir Kujat in July 2015. All of these appointments corresponded with the fact that the state of Sarawak has a great influence in national politics because they are the current government's 'fixed deposit'.

Apart from dealing with the oppositions, especially PKR, DAP and PAS, Putrajaya is currently under fire due to brickbats by Tun Mahathir Mohamad, particularly on the issues of 1MDB. Tun Mahathir is an influential figure with many supporters. UMNO's internal unrest on the issues of 1MDB also led to the dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin; the Chief Minister of Kedah, Dato' Mukhriz Mahathir and the Senior Minister for Rural and Regional Development, Datuk Shafiee Apdal. The internal split had put UMNO in an unsafe position and might lead to losing the upcoming 14<sup>th</sup> General Election. Unfortunately, Johor's support is now segregated due to Tan Sri Muhyiddin's dismissal. UMNO Kedah and UMNO Sabah are each facing troubles as well, mainly because the ones dismissed have their own strong influences.

Thus, the state can only hope and become a major dependency. To prove this, the Prime Minister has visited Sarawak for 53 times and this was never done by any of his predecessors. This dependency was also an excellent opportunity for Adenan to start political bargaining. Adenan wants Sarawak to get back its 'lost' power as per agreed during its incorporation into Malaysia. That is the reason why he needs a strong mandate from the people of Sarawak. Should he win, they will have a great power to enter any negotiation with Putrajaya (BorneoPost, 30 April 2016).

Adenan also emphasized that, "If my mandate is very weak, they will not listen to me." (Borneo Post,

5 Mar 2016). This sentiment was played a number of times by Adenan and finally granted him the mandate needed to negotiate with Putrajaya.

## **2.2. Dreaming of 'freedom' and 'independence': Bounded by preceding conditions**

Adenan exercises the concept of ethnonationalism because he feels that the movement will be able to give them a bigger voice. Adenan managed to persuade the State Legislative Assembly (DUN) to unanimously give full authorisation to the state government to take all steps and measures in protecting the rights and interests of Sarawak as well as to urge the Federal Government to fully adhere to Malaysia Agreement 1963. This motion was tabled by the Minister of Land Development Tan Sri Datuk Amar James Masing together with four other motions submitted by Chong Chieng Jen (DAP-Kota Sentosa), See Chee Haw (PKR-Batu Lintang) and David Wong (DAP-Pelawan) that contained the same subject matters to what Masing had tabled. It was proposed that 'the state government to take all measures and action under Article VIII of the Malaysia Agreement 1963 with the Federal Government to ensure the complete implementation of all the recommendations of the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) Report for the advancement and safeguard the special interests of the state and the peoples of Sarawak'. Thus, the state assembly awarded the mandate to the state government to negotiate with Putrajaya to review and restructure the federal policies in education, health and official language so that they are consistent with the constitutional safeguards and the terms of the IGC Report. (BorneoPost, December 9, 2015). In addition to passing the motion, the mandate was given to the Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem to review all federal legislations, including amending or repealing laws that affect Sarawak's rights to their natural resources. The mentioned laws are the Continental Shelf Act 1966, the Territorial Sea Act 2012 and the Petroleum Act 1966. Territorial Sea Act 2012 restricts the territorial waters of Sarawak within three nautical miles from shore. Continental Shelf Act 1966 and the Petroleum Act 1996 that might affect the state government's claims to obtain revenue from petroleum sources were also reviewed. Reviews should also include decisions made and policies of the Federal Government which were found to be inconsistent with the aspirations of the people of Sarawak as noted in the Cobbold Commission Report and the IGC Report. The mandate was also given by the Council of State for Adenan to initiate a review of grants and other income paid to Sarawak. (BorneoPost, December 9, 2015)

## **2.3. Building brand new politics after 33 years of Taib's legacy**

Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud became the Chief Minister of Sarawak from March 1981 to 28 February 2014, which is about 33 years. The long period has made Taib's name synonymous with Sarawak politics. During his reign, Taib Mahmud has introduced numerous political labels. This includes politics of development policy, politics of development's new wave, the new political reality, Anak Sarawak and so forth. Taib is known as Sarawak's Father of Development. He developed the state from various developmental strategies. In 1980, only 31.8 per cent of Sarawak residents have access to clean water. But this figure rose to 85 per cent in 1995. In 1995, 31.9 per cent of the population was still living in poverty while another 10 per cent were in extreme poverty. However, in 1997, the number reduced to 7.5 per cent and 0.7 per cent respectively. In 10 years, poverty was reduced from 50,000 (1990) to 25,000 (2000). 5000 longhouses in various places were also given attention (Abdul Taib Mahmud, in Effendi Ariffin & Jameson Ahip Nawie 2007: 307,351). With the legacy left by Abdul Taib Mahmud in various implementation of planning and development concepts, Adenan was in need of a new political brand.

Keeping up with Taib Mahmud's model was not an easy feat. Adenan had to distinguish his ability as chief minister from anything that has been done before. And *rakyat* felt that it might be difficult for him to get out of Taib Mahmud's shadow. Therefore Adenan must carefully demonstrate his own leadership style (Awang Azman Awang Pawi, June 2014). He proved that his approaches and his administrative style are different in developing the state of Sarawak.

#### **2.4. The most important weapon in raising support from the people of Sarawak**

Ethnonationalism was an important political weapon for Adenan to capture the hearts of Sarawakians. That way he could use ethnic politics to unite all ethnic groups in Sarawak under his leadership. SNAP had been using ethnic politics since 1961 where they empowered the spirit of Dayakism and the spirit of Sarawak for Sarawak. Pesaka also used the elements of Dayakism to unite all Dayaks in pursuing common goals and interests, increasing political, economic and social awareness as well as ensuring that their ethnic group will have constitutional rights during the formation of the Federal Government (Leigh, 1988: 37). For Adenan, politics based on ethnicity are too narrow and should be viewed within a larger framework. When each ethnic fights for the interest of their own group, a combination of all ethnic groups will provide a stronger impact.

This narrow ethnic politics may remove inter-ethnic conflicts or rivalry within regions. The interest is focused on the consolidation of all ethnics in Sarawak and mobilised in the name of nationalism. The advocated unity and solidarity may

be used as a powerful weapon in dealing with Putrajaya.

#### **2.4. Ethnonationalism under Adenan and the Paradox**

##### ***Outsiders Rejected***

Adenan use Sarawakisme or the sentiment of ethnonationalism as the opportunity to reject any politics from the outside, especially political parties from Peninsular Malaysia. In his peroration of Operating Bill (2016) during the State Legislative Assembly (DUN), MPs from the opposition parties repeatedly tried to bombard the Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem with provoking questions related to the possibility of UMNO opening a branch in Sarawak. Adenan, who always calmly replied the provocation, claimed that he managed to persuade UMNO not to enter the state, at least as long as he lives. He said that UMNO has openly announced that it will not open its branch in Sarawak and this is not only his way of refusing UMNO but dismissing other parties as well.

*"...With this, I hope that Lim Guan Eng and Lim Kit Siang will make similar statements,"* (Sarawakiana, December 16, 2015). In the end, DAP was trapped in their own bubble when Adenan, as BN state chairman, challenged them to support the motion made during State Legislative Assembly which is to ban UMNO, DAP and PKR from entering Sarawak.

*"If you are not sure whether to permanently prevent UMNO from entering Sarawak, why don't we make a motion to ban UMNO, DAP, PKR and PAS altogether? Will you guarantee your support?"* (Sarawakiana, December 16, 2015)

Adenan's argument could not immediately given response by the opposition. Often in his speech, he called on the people in this country to stop giving support towards the oppositions from Peninsular Malaysia during the upcoming State Elections (PRN), especially Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) as well as Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH). He said that those parties were disrupting the harmony and peace which have been their longstanding pride. Adenan declared:

*"I don't want UMNO to come over to Sarawak or for other political parties that originate from outside Sarawak. Who understand Sarawak matters better than Sarawakians themselves? Sarawak was well known for its religious and racial harmony and that the various ethnic groups in the state had been co-existing peacefully; had high respect for each other's religion, culture and tradition, which had been the state's uniqueness and strength. Racial and religious polarisation that is happening in Peninsular Malaysia right now is not healthy and I want to keep Sarawak out of all that. I do not want extremists and religious bigots to come to Sarawak and spread their poison,"* (BorneoPost, 30 April 2015)

The reasons why Adenan denied any interventions from other political parties are to provide the advantages and strengths to Parti

Bumiputera Sarawak which has long been the backbone of Barisan Nasional Sarawak. Rejection towards external parties such as PKR and DAP would benefit Barisan Nasional component. This is because the main competitors of Sarawak BN are those from Peninsular Malaysia with branches in Sarawak. Oddly enough, even more UMNO leaders are now being allowed to travel to Sarawak without rigid restrictions.

## 2.5. Open Policy of Sarawak for Sarawak Movement and the Autonomy

Sarawak for Sarawak is an NGO movement claiming for full independence before the formation of Malaysia. In 2013, there was a sovereignty movement known as Sarawak Sovereignty Movement (SSM) which is a civil movement that demands equality in accordance with the agreement between Malaysia and Sarawak. The movement stressed the need to respect the sovereignty of state in laws including natural and marine resources as well as to affirm the identity of Sarawak as part of Malaysia. Tanah Melayu, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak were then consolidated into Malaysia and eventually became 13 states. This movement considers full autonomy is in accordance with the constitutional framework of Malaysia. (The Star, April 14, 2013).

A survey by Merdeka Centre found that 54 per cent of Sarawakians thought that they were being sidelined by Putrajaya. The sentiment is very strong, especially in urban areas among highly educated young people. The study also revealed that the Chinese ethnic prefers to be autonomous in the economic management while the indigenous Muslims prefer greater autonomy in royalty from oil and gas. But in overall, 85 per cent of Sarawak prefers better royalties. (Star Online, 16 April, 2013). The anxiety and dissatisfaction were used by Adenan to evoke a sense of ethnonationalism. However, he never agrees to separate from Malaysia. He knows that Sarawak has been part of Malaysia for a long time and it has provided great prosperity and benefits to the people and the state.

What he subscribed to is the sentiment brought in by the movement, and he believes improvements are on-going. The state government will not entertain or approve any action that leads to separation, including making a referendum. The most important thing to him is the devolution of federal power to the state government. He will not accept a form of domination or hegemony by Putrajaya. Greater autonomy is crucial because the state should not be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. Nevertheless, the spirit of autonomy is in accordance with the framework of federal constitution and Malaysia Agreement 1963 as well as Cobbold Commission. Adenan gave an outline as follows:

*"We, however, believe in the full autonomy for Sarawak under the Constitution, we believe in devolution of more power to the federal state which*

*we are now negotiating with the Federal Government. Malaysia is a federation of equality and not domination by Kuala Lumpur or some other party. We have not ceased to be a British colony controlled by London just to be controlled by another power, and we must insist on our autonomy. Let me repeat that while we sympathize with the sentiments expressed as there is a ground swell of opinion in Sarawak insisting on autonomy and so on, and we subscribe to and welcome that, but not to the extent of ceding from the federation. We are Malaysia, one, we are Malaysia now and we shall be Malaysia forever in the years to come,"*(Bernama, 23 July 2015)

## 2.6. Negotiating Autonomy/Devolution of Central Power to the State

Adenan established a review committee to thoroughly examine the devolution of power to the state government. He said, *"We are no longer ignorant people, we are responsible people and we have shown that we can do things on our own without other people's assistance and we can achieve things,"* (Bernama, 23 July 2016). The committee will be tasked to review and assess the 18-point memorandum, negotiating power in various ways. In early January 2016, negotiations were held between the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem on the devolution of power from the central government administration to the state government. All 13 claims by Sarawak were approved. The first thing that was agreed is for the state law officers to be authorised by the Public Prosecutor to give prosecution under the Criminal Procedure Code for offences under state regulations, from the charges in the subordinate court until appellate stage. The Federal Government also agreed to give authorisations for the state government offices to represent the Public Service Commission and Education Service Commission in the appointment of federal public service officers, including teachers and medical staff. (Utusan Malaysia, 22 January 2016). The above agreements are both associated with the effort to strengthen the governance of Sarawak.

In addition, the Prime Minister also agreed to approve 100 new positions in the Sarawak Immigration Department to enhance the enforcement functions in the country in which the full deployment will be completed in late February 2016. It was also agreed that Sarawak-born teacher ratio in the country will be increased to 90 per cent of the total number of existing teachers by 2018. Substitute teachers in the open market will be considered to be absorbed into permanent posts from time to time and given the opportunity to obtain a Diploma in Education while teaching (Utusan Malaysia, 22 January 2016). The Federal Government agreed that the state will be consulted before an application for a Deep Sea Fishing Permit is forwarded to the Deep Sea Permit Evaluation Committee for consideration. The Sarawak state government will be consulted in the drafting of

Federal legislation which has bearing or impact to the Sarawak state government, where provided by law.

The planning of Federal development projects in Sarawak will give priority to the Five-Year Sarawak State Development Plan based on the approved budget. Implementation of the projects will be referred or negotiated between the Ministry and the state government, such as determining the location of schools, hospitals and other development projects. Increased intake of students from Sarawak into medical degree programmes in public universities and foundation studies programmes in UNIMAS. The state government is empowered to manage the Social Welfare Department (SWD) with all positions being transferred to the State Civil Service, while the Federal Government to bear 50 per cent cost as decided by the National Finance Council (The Star, January 22, 2016).

This is the first phase or the beginning. There are three phases in the negotiation on power devolution. The second and third phase is expected to be in place after the Sarawak state election where the state is expected to be stronger after receiving the big mandate from the people of Sarawak. Thus, the second and third phase of discussion will be held to continue the negotiation, including addressing on the issue of the increase in oil royalty claim.

### **2.7. Malaysia Agreement as the basis of any unfulfilled claim**

Adenan supports the movement to regain the power to Sarawak as stated in the Malaysia Agreement 1963. However this does not mean that Sarawak wants to get out of Malaysia. In fact, he clarified that he is neither against the Federal Government leadership nor against the population of Peninsular Malaysia. What he is fighting for is the equality for all Malaysians, including the state and the people of Sarawak. He wants Sarawak to receive the same development as enjoyed by the states in the peninsula. Malaysia Agreement 1963, Cobbold Commission Report and the Report of the Intergovernmental Committee in 1962 have provided the basis of this power devolution.

### **2.8. The Opposition Failed to Bring Forward the Agenda of Ethnonationalism**

The opposition was also trying to use some aspects of the autonomy by expressing sympathy towards the 'Sarawak for Sarawak' movement to the point of violating their permit just to get attention. Parti Keadilan Sarawak is purportedly able to hold a referendum even though our law do not have a legal referendum. This is actually influenced by the direct democracy style in Europe as appeared in Scotland Referendum, Greek Referendum, Crimean Referendum etc. (The Ant Daily, February 7, 2016). But the effort is unsuccessful. First, it caused doubt on their sincerity as a party. Second, most of the party members are of Chinese ethnic DAP and this

gave concerns towards bumiputera ethnic who do not want their rights being threatened. Parti Keadilan Rakyat is also considered a new party that has not been widely accepted by the people of Sarawak. Therefore, the party or the component that can play this role and be given confidence to raise the agenda is Barisan Nasional Sarawak. Adenan took over the reins of power fairly recently from Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud. The opportunity given to Adenan to enter into negotiations with Putrajaya is considered a new agenda in accordance with the new leadership in Sarawak.

### **2.9. The Evidences on the Ability of Ethnonationalism to Build Sarawak**

With no less than 53 basic and important decisions, Adenan tried to prove that the policy of ethnonationalism politics is able to provide the benefits and interests for the people of Sarawak (Sarawak Politics Brochure, 2015). In this context, all Sarawakians are important, regardless of their race or religion. Among others:-

1. Bumiputera in Sarawak shall not be classified as 'Others'.
2. The Chinese are not 'immigrants'.
3. Putrajaya was reminded that during any reference, or when making Bumiputera status in any documentation or communication, the status must cover all the tribes in Sarawak except Malay.
4. Many illegal immigrants (PATI) were expelled - the Immigration Department was ordered to stay alert and active. The abolition and reduction of Charges include;
  - The reduction in electricity rates based on unit consumption:
    - The reduction of 2% to 40% for Domestic users (effective January 1, 2015)
    - The reduction of 15% to 50% for Commercial users (effective June 1, 2015)
    - The reduction of 8% to 11% for Industrial users (effective June 1, 2015)
  - All ferry fares are standardised from RM5/RM10 to RM10/RM15 (effective July 1, 2015).
  - The abolishment of Lanang Bridge toll plaza in Sibul (May 24, 2015), ASEAN Bridge in Miri (June 1, 2015) and Tun Salahuddin Bridge in Kuching (January 1, 2016)
  - No goods and services tax (GST) levied on services provided by the Local Authority. The abolition of land tax for residential and agricultural land less than 100 acres
  - The reduction of 10% to 100% in property tax assessment

### **2.10. Greater Autonomy and Devolution of Power to Sarawak**

1. July 22 was declared as a public holiday to recognise the formation of Sarawak as a state with its own state government in 1963.

2. The State Government is committed to continue the negotiation on the increase in oil royalty claim from 5% to 20%.
3. Sarawak wants greater autonomy as provisioned in the Federal Constitution, Malaysia Agreement 1963, Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) Report and Cobbold Commission Report.
4. Sarawak gets 13 of its wishes fulfilled under the first phase of devolution of powers negotiations between the Federal and the state government
5. The second phase will focus on the conflicting rights of the State under the Federal Constitution.
6. The third phase will involve financial matters.

### 2.11. USE OF ENGLISH

1. Sarawak state government will support the formation of English-medium mission and private schools. The plan is still being discussed. Both Bahasa Malaysia and English are used in the state government's official correspondence.
2. The use of English as Sarawak's second official language (*Brochure No. 53 : Policy and Decisions of Sarawak State Government, 2016*)

### 3. Analysis and discussion

To what extent that ethnonationalism politics give benefits to nation building? In the long run, ethnonationalism politics may give advantages to the state in several aspects of autonomy, but the erosion of national sovereignty will limit the role of a key factor in the path towards modernity. Nevertheless, this implementation will ensure the rights of people in Sarawak is preserved and in line with constitutional requirements.

Adenan uses the ethnic sentiments and a collective memory of Sarawak ethnic to build a large fort, that allegedly, in the name of protecting the people's rights. This move may also be seen as a threat to Sarawak's good political relationship with other states. While politics in Peninsular Malaysia mainly use religion and ethnicity for its political gain and campaign, Sarawak tends to use regionalism politics. Needless to say, there are also interests from other states to follow its footsteps. There are some implications to note now that the state Education Department has started making plans towards realising the 90:10 ratio of Sarawak to Peninsular Malaysia teachers by 2018. Firstly, in terms of accommodating the large numbers of teachers in training and secondly, the effect it has on national integration. But the supporters of ethnonationalism believe that intensive training can accommodate the teachers' need and many other efforts can be done in addition to exchange of teachers. Foster care projects, youth meetings and formal occasions are also parts of efforts for national integration. Other service workers in sectors such as military, law enforcements and health will continue to play their roles because thousands of them, who are natives of Peninsular Malaysia, are still residing in Sarawak. Of course, in comparison, there is also quite a number

of teachers from Peninsular Malaysia who finds it difficult to adapt to serving in longhouses or remote areas and riding boats to reach their destination. Due to this issue, in 2014, eight Penan students underwent a year-long Bachelor of Teaching Preparatory Programme (PPISMP) at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG) Sarawak Campus in Miri. They later continued with the Bachelor of Teaching programme with the hope that they will be an example and motivator to the rest of the Penan children in her community.

Although this allegation is denied, Sarawak's autonomy over immigration, can be easily abused for political purposes. Section 67 of the Immigration Act states that a citizen cannot be restricted from entering an East Malaysian state for the sole purpose of engaging in legitimate political activity. Therefore, any visit to Sarawak for such campaign is not against the Act. But there were a number of political figures who were refused entry based on the idea of protecting the peace and harmony of the state and the interest of the people. This issue irked not only the oppositions but also one of UMNO's division leaders with an academic title of Professor who was banned from entering Sarawak after the tightening of its immigration rules. This has led to criticism and is considered as contrary to the spirit of democracy. Yet, the state government insisted that it is within the jurisdiction of the state and they have the rights to define it as immigration autonomy.

One interesting point to discuss is the extent to which the form of ethnonationalism will be accepted by Putrajaya, on the verge of its political instability. Sabah and Sarawak will continue to be a 'fixed deposit' for BN under the current Prime Minister. Johor on the other hand has been divided into two, following the issue with Tan Sri Muhiyiddin. Winning Sabah and Sarawak, with their 22 and 25 parliament seats respectively, are very crucial to ensure the political survival of Putrajaya. As long as this instability remains, Putrajaya has nothing much to offer in order to demand for the autonomous power unless there is a change of leadership in Sarawak due to age or health concerns or a challenge in running for the presidency of the Pesaka Bumiputera Sarawak party – which is highly unlikely.

### 4. Summary

It has become obvious that the politics of ethnonationalism was coined by Adenan to create a new political landscape after the lengthy era of leadership by Abdul Taib Mahmud. Undoubtedly, competing with the legacy of 33 years is a tough job. Adenan Satem is only asking for another 5 years. He took over the state when he turned 70 while his predecessor became the Chief Minister at the age of 45 years old. The most effective way to win the hearts of the people of Sarawak is by using ethnicity or ethnonationalism politics. The idea evoked a sense of solidarity amongst all ethnics throughout Sarawak and consequently become their voices. Independent surveys confirms that Adenan Satem's

popularity has increased to over 80 per cent recently to receive the big mandate in the upcoming elections, securing at least 70 out of 82 contested seats.

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