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Political Languages: An Analysis of Mahathir Mohamad's Political Speeches on Muslim Identity

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Abstract

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia is a well-known Muslim leader and was portrayed as the representative of the Muslim world. This paper aims to examine how Mahathir used political languages in his speeches to convey his religious discourse throughout his premierships. This is a content analysis study by adapting Graber's (1981) five functions performed by political languages framework: (1) information dissemination, (2) agenda-setting, (3) interpretation and linkage, (4) projection to future and past, and (5) action stimulation. A total of 144 Mahathir's speeches from 1981-2003 and 2018-2020 focusing on the theme of Muslim identity were analysed. The result of this study showed Mahathir's religious discourse can be divided into three main issues of Muslims: (1) the misinterpretations of Islam by Muslim had created problems and fragment in Muslim society; (2) the problems of Muslims in the modern-day, such as backwardness, weak in knowledge and turmoil in the Muslim world; and (3) to correct the image of Islam and Muslims which had negative prejudice by the non-Muslims. This study argues that Mahathir's discourses on Muslim identity were well structured to address the issues of the Muslim world and to correct the negative prejudice of Islam and Muslims by non-Muslim, such as extremists and terrorists, fundamentalists, backwardness and unpeaceful.

Keywords: Islam, Mahathir Mohamad, Muslim Identity, Political Languages, Speech Analysis

1. Introduction

The purpose of political speech is to "influence people, using rhetoric to persuade, excite and claim leadership" (Klebanov, Diermeier, & Beigman, 2008). Studies on political discourses have in recent years been using various approaches and model. However, well-developed and established studies on political discourses were concentrating on the Western political leaders. Limited studies were done in the contexts of Asian political leaders, particularly leaders in developing countries. Hence, this study selected speeches of Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia for further investigation.

Mahathir was appointed twice as the Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981-2003 and 2018-2020. The achievements of Malaysia's economy and developments were dramatically improved during Mahathir's first premiership. Mahathir was in power for 22 years and retired in 2003, however, he remains influential on domestic politics and Islam religion affairs. Mahathir made a shocking return into politics due to the displeasure and frustration toward Najib Razak's administration. Mahathir was again appointed as the Prime Minister of Malaysia from 2018-2020 after overthrew Najib's regime in 2018 General Election.

Mahathir was known for his representation of world Muslim and bravery criticism on the Western dominance, Western values and rejection of the Western free market (Beeson, 2008). Beng (2006) argues that "Mahathir's ambition to be a front man for the Muslim world is therefore not so much a religious stance as it is a political statement". Moreover, Mahathir successfully initiated several Islamic developments in Malaysia during his first premiership, such as the establishment few Islamic institutions, Islamic banking and insurance system, Islamic values in working ethics, and included Islamic Civilization as a subject in Malaysian universities (Ahmad, 2010). Mahathir's political legacy has been widely investigated by scholars, mainly focusing on

his economic nationalism, authoritarianism, anti-Western dominance and socio-economic context. However, the influences of his religious value on his political agenda was relatively understudied (Schottmann, 2011).

Several studies had been done on Mahathir's political discourse, concentrated on speeches between the late-1990s until mid-2000s (Ahmad, 2010; Alkhirbash, 2016; Alkhirbash, Paramasivam, Muati, & Ahmad, 2014; David & Dumanig, 2011; Ghazali, 2017; Haque & Khan, 2004; Imani & Habil, 2014; Mengyu & Rahim, 2019; Shukry, 2013; Schottmann, 2013). This study found that limited studies (Ahmad, 2010; Haque & Khan, 2004; Shukry, 2013; Schottmann, 2011; Schottmann, 2013) were investigating Mahathir's speeches related to Muslim identity and religious values. It was insufficient to justify how Mahathir combined his Muslim identity agenda and political agenda in his speeches. This draws the attention of the author to further investigate how Mahathir's Islamic view shaped the idea of Muslim identity by using Graber (1981) functions performed by political languages to examine his speeches.

2. Research Objective and Research Question

2.1 Research Objective

The purpose of this research is to examine the use of political languages in Mahathir's political speeches on the theme of Muslim identity. This study also aims to examine the changes of ideas in his speeches throughout 1981-2003 and 2018-2020.

2.2 Research Question

The core question that this study aims to answer is:
How does Mahathir use political languages in his political speeches on Muslim identity?

With that five sub-questions follow: -
a. What information does Mahathir convey in his speeches?
b. How does Mahathir set his agenda in his speeches?
c. How does Mahathir use interpretation and linkage in his speeches?
d. How does Mahathir use the projection of past and future in his speeches?
e. How does Mahathir stimulate the audience's action in his speeches?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Political Languages

Political discourse is about politics, used of words, and how political agenda will be affected by languages (Dylgjeri, 2017). Politics and language are interrelated; because political activities cannot occur by itself without the combination of language (David & Dumanig, 2011). Graber (1981) described politics as "word games", where politicians' daily job involves mostly verbal activities - when they communicate about political matters and achieving their political agenda. What turns language into political is not judged by the vocabulary or grammar, but is about the message itself, conveyed in which type of political setting and how the functions of language performed in the political scene. Political discourse is a process of persuasion and it cannot exist without the audience. The process involved speakers try to persuade their audiences about something related to his political agenda (Ädel, 2010), explains the problems, and then influences their audience. Hence, speakers must understand the audience's needs, values and expectations to ensure obtain the support of their audience (Degani, 2015).

3.2 Major Function Performed by Political Languages

The functions of political languages coined by scholar Doris A. Graber in 1981 specifically limited to the discussion on the forms of "presentation of verbal

symbols". She highlighted five major functions performed by political languages: (i) information dissemination; (ii) agenda-setting; (iii) interpretation and linkage; (iv) projection to future and past; and (v) action simulation. Some political messages contained the mixture of these five functions mentioned above.

3.2.1 Information Dissemination

The audience is unable to experience and involved in politics directly. They heavily rely on explicit information regarding political situations, political problems, and events provided by politicians. This helps to develop public political perceptions and their political actions without needed to experience it. The information may contain connotation meanings, where messages and words convey "special meanings that define relationship or progress" and "connote desirable meanings". Connotation words and phrases are extended meanings from their dictionary meaning (Graber, 2004). Messages can also function as inferences to provide clues and reveal information that is not publicly announced. This allowed the audiences to obtain the hidden messages that are not expressed directly by the speakers. However, words can also be merely symbolic, without any meaning or providing information in a message.

3.2.2 Agenda-Setting

Politicians often select certain topics that align with their political agenda to attract the audience's attention, make it become the discussion among the public and then stimulate the audience's action. With some experience, politicians can manage to control over the information dissemination based on their interests, either to include or exclude certain people or issues in their political agenda. Due to limited time and resources, and the limitation of the audience to absorb large amounts of political information, politicians must limit their information to manageable volumes - only messages that are

important for their political agenda. They have to carefully choose the suitable topics and avoid choosing topics that will cause negative effects, losing the audience support and promises that are difficult to fulfil.

Traditional agenda-setting theory in mass communication studies is used to analysis media effects on the audience. However, recent literature review on the agenda-setting theory argued that the theory alone is not sufficient enough to explain the effect of the media content exposed to the audience (Moy & Bosch, 2013; Mateus, 2019; and Moy, Teweksbury and Rinke, 2016). Researchers then borrowed the priming effect from psychological theory tom further examine the agenda-setting theory. Priming effect argued that the audience tends to rely on memory-based processing of information (Moy & Bosch, 2013). Priming examines the power of media to effect changes in the standards that people use to make [political] evaluations (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Studies showed that priming effect and agenda-setting are categorized as "accessibility-based model", where "how much" (repetition) or "how recently" (recency) an audience has been exposed to certain information over the time (Mateus, 2019). Conclusion, Agenda-setting focused in which topics or issues are selected for the news content, priming focused on the audiences use those selected issues to evaluate political performance, and framing focused ways social problems are presented (Scheufele, 2000).

3.2.3 Interpretation and Linkage

Political messages often linked with significant events or facts which aims to influence and manipulate certain issues for the audience to interpret. This linkage allowed politicians to create a certain reality that brings a positive impact on them. However, it is depending on the understanding and the interpretations of the audience, which might also create a negative impression. The politicians need to have the ability to control over definition which allowed them to verbally define the political situations based on their own beliefs and interests. The allowed politicians have the advantage to

construct and limit the audience's interpretations of the messages. Besides, messages can manipulate the expectations of the audience by manipulating their achievements and performances. Politicians often understated their expected achievements and performances, then use the actual achievements to impress their audience. Messages can also create non-existent realities where politicians create false information for the audience to believe and react according to their expectations.

This function aligned with the framing effect theory where it examines the content of the messages, such as phrases, metaphors, visual images, keywords, concepts symbols or analogy that used to communicate the essence of an issue or event to help audiences understand (make sense) the news they are encountering (Entman, 1993; Moy, Teweksbury and Rinke, 2016; and Mateus, 2019. Framing effect examines how people understand certain issues and social phenomena through the highlight in the media messages (Moy & Bosch, 2013). Hence, framing is considered as "applicability-based model" which suggests that audiences are not influenced by messages but rather through semantically (languages), how messages are presented and described (Mateus, 2019).

3.2.4 Projection to Future and Past

Political messages consisted of a large number of issues and events from the past and future, where the audience cannot physically experience but only through words. Projection to the past rely mainly on the past evidence, it may or may not be the true events that occurred in the past. Projection of the future is heavily pictured through verbal predictions, promises and imagination. Effective projection of future and past can be categorized into formal or informal projections. Informal verbal projection involves mostly foretelling and promises about future political activities. It is subjective, bias and different for people to people, depending on their goals and selected topics; while formal verbal projection is appropriately presented in a

structured form, where promises and plans are carefully structured and also served as political guidelines and blueprints. This includes the projection of the politician's views, long-term vision, future goals to be achieved, prediction and political action plans.

3.2.5 Action Stimulation

A message can be either in written or verbal form, it has the direct appeals ability to persuade, command, or call on people to react and take action. Most of the major political movements were beginning with verbal expressions, then stimulating political action. Although it is just a verbal reality, it can influence the audience to participate and give their commitment. Besides, words itself able to create certain moods, such as fears, hopes, hates, proud, etc. to influence the audience's reaction, provide confidence and assurance, and gain support from the audience. In addition, words serve as action surrogates where politician emphasize the threat they are facing, reinforce their promises, or in most cases, they blamed their opponent. Words can also serve as a symbol of rewards, by giving promises and reassurances to the audience. However, the promises should not be a lie or giving false hope to the audience, which will create a negative effect.

4. Methodology

This study will apply a qualitative method - content analysis. The data source will mainly rely on Mahathir's speeches in written text format. Total of 143 Mahathir's speeches on Muslim identity from 1981-2003 and 2018-2020 were analysed for this study. The sources are available to obtain and download from the Prime Minister Office (PMO) official website, under the column of "Koleksi Arkib Ucapan Ketua Eksekutif" (Collection of Chief Executive Speech Archive) at http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/. The PMO official website provided complete transcript texts of Mahathir's speeches (both English and Malay languages) during his first and second premierships. Additionally,

Mahathir's speeches before 1981 and between 2004-2017 were not recorded in the PMO website and there are no other reliable sources that have been identified. This study drew upon Graber's (1981) five major functions of political languages as the fundamental approach and examined line by line of each speech based on each function criteria.

Table 1: Function and Characteristic of Political languages

Functions of Political languages	Characteristic
Information Dissemination	- Explicit Information - Connotations - Inferences - Symbolic Meaning
Agenda-Setting + Priming Effect	- Control Over Information Dissemination - Priming effects - repetition and recency
Interpretation and Linkage + Framing Effect	- Reality Creation - Control Over Definitions - Manipulation of Expectations - Framing effects - phrases, metaphors, visual images, keywords, concepts symbols or analogy
Projection to Future and Past	- Informal Projections - Formal Projections
Action Stimulation	- Direct Appeals - Mood Creation - Words as Action Surrogates - Words as Symbolic Rewards

5. Findings

5.1 Information Dissemination

5.1.1 Islamic Teachings

Mahathir's speeches focused on the importance of adherence to the fundamental teachings of Islam in their life. Fundamental teachings of Islam in Mahathir's perception included Islam is a way of life or Ad-deen, fardhu kifayah and peace value in Islam. These three fundamental teachings served as explicit information and inference in Mahathir's Muslim identity discourses. First, Islam is a way of life for Muslims that applies to all individuals, families, society, economic, businesses and laws. Islam religion and Muslims could not be separated and everything in a Muslim's life is guided by the Islamic teachings; second, fardhu kifayah is the responsibility of Muslim to Muslim community where Muslims should contribute to the developments of their community and protecting other Muslims and Islam religion; third, Islam is a peaceful religion and emphasised on Muslim brotherhood.

However, Mahathir argues that some of the fundamental teachings in Islam had misinterpreted by Muslims. The misinterpretations of Islam had caused Muslims today became backwards and often fight against each other. According to Mahathir, the misinterpretations were caused by three major factors: first, the Ulamas or religion teachers are lack of knowledge in the religion teachings; second, the original version of Quran in the Arabic language is difficult to be understood by Muslims; and third, the political Islamists misused the teachings for personal agenda.

5.1.2 Problems of Muslims in the Modern Era

The problems of the modern-day Muslims are regularly highlighted in Mahathir's speeches. The problems of Muslims according to Mahathir are the weaknesses of Muslims and turmoil in the Muslim society. The weaknesses of Muslims include backwardness, lack of knowledge and skills, and unable to protect themselves and other Muslim brotherhood. The backward mindset of Muslims who care only about their merit in the afterlife, they believed that the current life does not belong to them and focusing only on their religious duties. They ignored all kinds of developments for their society and misinterpreted that modernization is against the Islamic teachings. They also rejected all kinds of non-religion knowledge, such as mathematics, arts, sciences etc. and become lack of modern knowledge and skills. With all those ignorant of modern developments and acquire knowledge, the Muslims become weak and unable to protect other Muslims and themselves from their enemies. In addition, the turmoil in Muslim society also the major problems of the Muslim world. The Muslim world had been divided into different Muslim sects with different beliefs in Islam. The differences between Muslim sects had caused the Muslims to fight with each other. The turmoil became more chaotic when the political Islamists misused the name of Islam for their political agenda and some extreme Islamists committed terrorist' attack against their own Muslims brotherhood. Mahathir believes that the Muslim community today is unable to become advance, develop and disrespect by the non-Muslims are the fault of Muslims themselves.

5.1.3 Non-Muslims Prejudice towards Muslims

The non-Muslims prejudice towards Muslims can be frequently found in international events and meeting, specifically addressing to world Muslims leaders and non-Muslims audience. Mahathir in his speeches brought up the frustrations and mistreatments facing by Muslims. He admitted that part of the negative prejudice by non-Muslims should be blamed on the Muslims,

especially when some Muslims used violence settlements and terrorism to express their anger and frustration. However, the non-Muslims should equally be blamed as well for the negative image of Islam. Mahathir argues that negative prejudice and anti-Muslim propaganda began in the late-15th century in Western Europe. The fears and wrong perception of the non-Muslims towards Islam had been there for centuries Besides, Mahathir also argues that the Western tries to use their ideology and values, such as human rights and democracy system to justify the problems of Islamic nations and also interfere into Islam affairs. The Western media often had a bias report on the conflict in Islamic nations and negative projection of Muslims. As a counter-argument, Mahathir argues that Western propaganda is often injustice towards the Muslim world, in most case the Western-supported the enemy of Islam to oppress the Muslims. For example, the Western do nothing to stop the intervention of Israel into Palestine, and at most case the Western supporting the act of Israel.

5.2 Agenda-Setting

5.2.1 *Correct Interpretations of Islam*

Correct interpretations of Islam became importance agenda-setting for Mahathir as he argues that interpret the teachings correctly is the only way for Muslims to overcome their weaknesses and problems. This information can be found in most of his speeches, specifically addressing a Muslim audience. Mahathir argues that Islam teachings will never be wrong, however, the Muslims who interpreted the teachings will make mistakes. He controls over the information that the misinterpretations of Islam are the reason for the Muslims becoming weak and backward. The misinterpretations had caused the Muslims only to care about their religion duties (fardhu 'ain) and gaining merit for the afterlife. In contrast, Mahathir tries to justify that the Muslims have also the responsibility to the Muslim community (fardhu kifayah), such as acquiring knowledge, development and protecting the Muslim world. He

believes that correctly interpret the teachings of Islam is important for Muslims to understand the messages of Islam, acquiring secular knowledge, and modernize the Muslim community.

5.2.2 Peace in Islam

The turmoil and fragment of Muslims had disunited the Muslim world, created more conflicts and violence in the Muslim world and weakening the Islamic governments. Mahathir believes that peace in Islam is important to unite and end the conflict of the Muslims world. He primes that Islam is a religion that emphasised peace value and Islam rejects all kinds of violence settlements, including the fight against other Muslims, killing and terrorism acts. Mahathir argues that wars and terrorism are not the ways of Islam and those Muslims who involved in terrorism were not following the actual teachings of Islam. Besides, Mahathir also primes peace in Islam also emphasized on Muslim brotherhood and unity among Muslims. He argues Islam says that all Muslims are brother and brother should not fight with each other. He believes that peace and unity among Muslims are the only ways to solve the violence in Islam and strengthen the develop the Islamic nations.

5.2.3 Correcting the Image of Islam and Muslims

Mahathir argues that Islam is the most misunderstood religion in the world by the Muslims themselves and the non-Muslims. His agenda is to correct the negative image of Islam and Muslims, especially the negative prejudice of non-Muslims and the terrorism acts of certain Muslim groups. Mahathir primes that the Muslim extremists who over-emphasising on the Islamic practices, rejecting secular knowledge and isolating themselves from others had caused the non-Muslims believed that Islam is a backward religion. He believes that Muslims should be responsible for correcting their own image. However, Mahathir also primes that parts of the negative image of Islam are due to Western propaganda. He argues that the Muslims had been long-time

oppressed by non-Muslims and the Western's anti-Muslim sentiment had further damaged the image of Islam. Besides, Mahathir also argues that the Western purposely spread a negative image of Islam through their media, especially labelling the Muslims as "Muslim terrorism" in their news.

5.2.4 Correct Interpretations of Islam

Mahathir frames the Ulamas were responsible for the confusion and misinterpretations in the teachings. He tries to redefine that the teachings of Islam are not merely for religion duties, but it also emphasised on the responsibility of Muslims to their society. He also controls over the definition that Islam will never be wrong, only the Ulamas will be wrong during the interpretation process. Besides, Mahathir frames that the correct interpretations of Islam should also emphasise on acquiring knowledge. He argues that knowledge in Islam does not limit only on religion, but also the knowledge that able to develop the Muslims society, such as sciences and technology, medicine, administrations, laws, defence, etc. He tries to create a reality that only through acquiring knowledge can modernize and develop the Muslim community, especially modern development and technology required secular knowledge.

5.2.5 Peace in Islam

Mahathir links the fragment of Muslim had triggered the peace in the Muslim world. He uses this information as reality creation to show the unpeaceful in the Muslim world had caused many innocent Muslims who not involved in the wars or conflicts where been killed, tortured, under-developed and easy to oppress by enemies. He also links the Islamic history on how Islam brought peace and united the past Jahiliah Arabs as a reality creation. Besides, Mahathir often frames Islam in Malaysia is peaceful and Muslims are united to his international audience. He argues that Malaysia able to maintain peace is because Muslims in Malaysia are following the fundamental teachings of Islam.

5.2.6 Correcting the Image of Islam and Muslims

Mahathir frames the Western often used their propaganda to claim that Islam nations did not have human rights and democracy; however, when Muslims around the world were oppressed by the enemy, the West did not help the Muslims but instead helping the enemies to suppress the Muslims. Mahathir uses Israel-Palestine case and Bosnia-Herzegovina case to create the reality that Western propaganda is to damage the reputation of Islam, especially bias news report by the Western media. He argues that the Western media often selected the negative news to be reported and ignored to report the suffering and injustice treatment faced by Muslims and Islamic nations. Mahathir also controls over the definition that the labelling of "Muslim terrorism" by the West and their media had enhanced the fear towards Islam by non-Muslims. He justifies that the terrorist attacks were committed by a small group of Muslims and it do not represent the world Muslim community. He frames that terrorism also committed by other religious, but their acts will never be linked with their religion. He argues that terrorism should not associate with religion and the international community should work together to counter against the terrorists instead of blaming on the Muslims.

5.3 Projection to Future and Past

5.3.1 Informal Projection to Past Islamic Civilization

The projection to the past Islamic civilization that often used by Mahathir can be divided into three historical moments. First, Mahathir projects the situation of Jahiliah Arabs during the pre-Islam before the 7th century. This projection shows how Islam brought peace, unity and development to the Arabs. Second, Mahathir projects the glory of Islamic civilization and Islam successful transformed the Arabs into the most knowledgeable and respected society in during the Dark Age of Western Europe (7th-15 century). This projection shows how Islam able influenced the Arabs to modernize and able

to spread fast to other regions. Third, Mahathir projects the fallen of Islamic civilization due to the fragments in Islam and the misinterpretations of Islamic teachings in the late-15th century. This projection shows how Muslims became backwards, ignoring knowledge, weak and oppressed by the enemies.

5.3.2 Informal Projection to Future Muslim Society

This study found that projection to the future was not often used by Mahathir in his speeches. In some speeches, Mahathir only mentioned the possibility for the Muslims to restore the past glory of Islamic civilisation in the future. Mahathir believes that the only way to restore the glory of Islam is to interpret Islam correctly and the Muslim world needs to be united.

5.4 Action Stimulation

5.4.1 Modernization of Muslim Society

Modernizing the Muslims society is the outcome that Mahathir aims to stimulate his audience to achieve. He believes that modernization is important for the development of the Muslim world and regain the reputation of Islam. Acquiring knowledge is the only hope for the Muslims to achieve modernization and protect Muslims from being mistreated by their enemies. Besides, Mahathir also urges his audience must prepare for the fast-changing of the modern world and globalisation. Muslims should not isolate themselves from the outside world and ignore modern development. Mahathir argues that the Muslims should not blame others for their less fortunate and backward, instead the Muslims should try their best to change their faith and improve their situation.

5.4.2 Unity in Muslim Society

Unity in Muslims society is another action that Mahathir wants to stimulate as he believes that unity able to strengthen and solve the conflict within the Muslims community and Islamic nations. This information can be found in speeches that he addressed "correct interpretations of Islam". He urges his Muslim audience should not ignore the messages of Islam, especially peace and Muslim brotherhood. Besides, Mahathir aims to stimulate solid cooperation among Islamic nations. This includes cooperation in political, economic, social, common shared interests and strengthens the Muslim alliance. He also urges his audience that the Muslim world should unite to help each other and to against the oppression of their common enemies, for example, the conflict of Palestine-Israel.

5.4.3 Correcting the Image of Islam and Muslims

Mahathir aims to correct the negative image of Islam and Muslims through his speeches. For Muslims audience, he often urged the Muslims must try to prove to the non-Muslims that Muslims is not a backward society and Islam is a peaceful religion. In the 1990s, Muslim terrorism had become the biggest challenge of the Muslim world, especially non-Muslims believed that all Muslims are involving in terrorism activities. Mahathir urges the Muslims must always follow the fundamental teachings of Islam and should always seek a peaceful settlement. Besides, he also tries to convince the non-Muslims that Islam is a peaceful religion and terrorism is not the teachings of Islam. He urges the non-Muslims should try to understand the Muslims without any prejudice and should not link that terrorism with Islam. He argues that those terrorists are not the real Muslims and they misused the Islamic teachings to justice their action.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study identified that Muslim identity is crucial in Mahathir's discourses. Mahathir's arguments had not much related to performing religious rituals or worships, but heavily highlighted on the misinterpretations of Islam, weaknesses of Muslims and negative image of Islam. Mahathir does not shy to acknowledge the problems and dilemma of Muslims in his speeches. Although most of his projections of the Muslims and Islamic nations were negative, however, this study argues that Mahathir's objective is not to shame the Muslims, but he intended to create awareness for the Muslims to change. Based on Mahathir's speeches, his goal was to encourage the Muslim world to develop into modern society and well-respected by the world community. His speeches on Muslim identity were arguable that it motivated many Muslims and world leaders to acknowledge the weaknesses and turmoil in their community. The evidence of this study shows that Mahathir put much effort into his speeches to address the problems in the Muslim world.

Besides, Mahathir's discourses between the 1990s and 2000s began more often touched on the injustice and misunderstanding of Western towards Islamic nations. His open criticism of Western propaganda had caught the Western politicians and media attention. He argues that the Western tries to pressure the Islamic nations to follow their Western values and intervened into Islamic affairs. Mahathir also criticizes the Western media had a bias report on Islamic nations and damaging the reputation of Islam. This evidence showed that Muslim identity was not just about religion in Mahathir's speeches, but it also linked to political Islam issues and his political agenda. Moreover, this study also argues that Mahathir's arguments were contradicting with his actions. Mahathir's speeches often criticized the Ulamas and political Islamists misused the Islamic teachings for personal political interests. Indeed, Mahathir himself also frequently used the teachings of Islam in his political discourses. His arguments often cited the history of Islam and verses from the Quran. For example, Mahathir regularly used the

Islamic teachings to criticizes the actions of PAS (Malaysia Islamists opposition political party). He argues that PAS is a radical Islamists party who is not following the actual teachings of Islam and always misused the teachings in Islam to influence their Muslim supports. He openly criticizes that PAS's political agenda was un-Islam and misused Islam for their benefits. Hence, this study acknowledges that Mahathir did also used Islamic teachings in his discourses for his political agenda like any other political Islamists.

This study tried to expand the literature on Mahathir's speeches, specifically on Muslim identity (Haque and Khan, 2004; Schottman, 2013) by focusing on "how" Mahathir conveys the Muslim identity in his discourses. This study also examines Mahathir's speeches from 1981-2003 and 2018-2020, both English language and Malay language texts. Besides, this study had identified new information, such as prejudice of non-Muslim and Western propaganda. This study argues that Mahathir included non-religion teachings into his speeches, for example, Mahathir argues that Muslims should not ignore the prejudice of non-Muslims as it will further create more misunderstanding to Islam religion and Muslims.

However, this study had only limited to textual analysis and Mahathir's non-verbal communication and spontaneous presentation was unable to examine in this study. This study also unable to examine Mahathir speeches between 2004 and 2017 due to limited reliability sources are available. Besides, this study found that Mahathir's Muslim identity speeches often presented together with issues related to Malays ethnicity. Unfortunately, this study looks beyond Malaysia's contexts and focuses on global Muslims' issues in Mahathir's speeches. This study suggests that future study may compare the Muslim identity and Malays identity in Mahathir's speeches.

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