

ULASAN BUKU/BOOK REVIEW

Biografi Tun Abdul Razak: Negarawan dan Patriot oleh Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh dan Abd. Ghapa Harun. Bangi, Selangor: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia dan Yayasan Tun Razak, 2011, 401 pp. ISBN 978-967-942-956-5 9 (paperback)

Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein is remembered by Malaysians as the "father of development." In fact he was closely associated with development and changing the mindset of the rural Malays since 1955 when he was acting as Chief Minister (*Menteri Besar*) of Pahang. His name is synonymous with efforts to ameliorate rural poverty through the construction of roads, bridges, community centres, adult education, clinics and midwifery centres and Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA). Due to his intimacy with the rural constituency commentators have pointed him as pro-Malay unlike the Tunku which many identified with multi-culturalism. But Tun Abdul Razak is equally close to other facets of national development that are urban based. He has been described as an introvert, shy and unassuming, but a man who was firm and possessed a deep sense of purpose. He was equally known for his sense of humor although this side of him was often hidden from the public gaze. Former civil servants who served under him remembered "his minutes, comments while his speeches were simple, short and to the point of reflecting his reticence."¹ Others marveled at his firm grasp of management, and his personal style in dealing with government officers especially at the district level.² He lacked charisma and was a poor orator but there is much intellectual substance in his speeches. Yet towards the end of his life, he had to grapple with opposition within United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and from Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun, the Sabah strongman. This followed a struggle for power in UMNO soon after the demise of his deputy, the capable and highly principled Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, in August of 1973.³ He was weighed down both by the coterie of his inner circle, which failed to provide effective advice, and by his deteriorating health.⁴

Despite his stature in post-war Malaysian politics there are not many biographical studies on Tun Abdul Razak. The one written by William Shaw which appeared in 1976 just after his demise was the first to assess him critically.⁵ It was translated into Malay the following year.⁶ For a long time Shaw remained, for many still is, the best account of Tun Abdul Razak and indispensable reference for all subsequent works. However the Malay version must be carefully negotiated due to its woeful translation. Another biography was written by Paridah Abdul Samad entitled *Tun Abdul Razak, A Phenomenon in Malaysian Politics: A Political Biography* which was published in 1998. The third which is a coffee table book, was written by *Utusan Melayu* editor Zainuddin Maidin entitled *Jejak Bertapak Seorang Patriot*. It was published in

1999 and translated into English the same year as *Tun Razak: The Profile of a Patriot*.

Shaw highlights the position of Tun Abdul Razak in Malaysian politics between 1951 and 1976, as well as his stature within Southeast Asia and the developing world. The book is divided into three parts, namely political apprenticeship which covers the time from his birth to his education in London including the Japanese period, his involvement with the anti-Malayan Union campaigns, the road to power beginning with UMNO in 1950 until the 1965 Singapore separation. The last part covers the May 1969 riots, his ascendancy to power beginning with the Director of the National Operations Council or NOC (May 1969–September 1970) and the premiership, the National Economic Policy (NEP) and new foreign policy initiatives. Tun Abdul Razak's views and political thinking on many issues affecting the country since the 1930s and especially after 1955 are discussed throughout the text. Shaw refers to myriad sources, notably official reports, including Tun Abdul Razak's speeches for the period 1965–1967, books and articles, unpublished theses, newspapers, magazines and other publications. The strength of the book lies in the interviews Tun Abdul Razak gave to its author.

Paridah Abdul Samad has updated these sources especially the official documents, memoirs of Tun Abdul Razak's former colleagues, foreign newspapers and magazines to offer new insights on Tun Abdul Razak. Complementing the study by Shaw, Paridah seeks to impress the new generations of Malaysians of the need to be imbued with a "strong foundation, sincerity and commitment to develop the nation" as exemplified by Tun Abdul Razak.⁷ Paridah offers new insights on the different phases of his leadership, his political stance on many issues which many see as uncompromising besides reiterating Tun Abdul Razak's contributions in laying a firm foundation in the economic development of Malaysia. Paridah provides an assessment on some of the projects undertaken by Tun Abdul Razak and the significance of his domestic and foreign policies for subsequent administrations.

The other biographical account *Tun Razak: The Profile of a Patriot* is a journalistic journey of the *Utusan Melayu* editor (later Minister of Information during the Mahathir administration) with Tun Abdul Razak to every nook and corner of the country in the rural development mission which began in 1959. The book is based on interviews with those closely associated with Tun Abdul Razak and the archives of *Utusan Melayu* and the *New Straits Times*. There are plenty of photographs of Tun Abdul Razak's nation wide tours and the *rakyat* he met. Rightly the author claims the book a "memorial in book form." It is divided into 10 chapters including life history (biography), family, father of development, aspects of his struggle, the Indonesian confrontation, pioneer of globalisation, the final years of his life and demise. Despite his belief in the principle of Malay hegemony Zainuddin claims Tun Abdul Razak stood for balance and justice in a multi racial society.⁸

The most recent and most comprehensive biography to date *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak: Negarawan dan Patriot* (The Biography of Tun Abdul Razak: Statesman and Patriot) appeared in mid-2011. It was published by the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Press⁹ which is well known for its biography series including on the Malay left. The Tun Abdul Razak Foundation funded the research for the book and its publication. A product of intensive and meticulous research the book offers a new political biography of an exceptional Malaysian statesman who, aided by talented and capable advisers, played a crucial role in shaping a nation and the region between 1951–1976. The authors include two historians (one of them passed away in 2010) and an expert on Malay literature who left UKM to join another university mid-way through the project. This study is based on primary documents including private papers located in archives in Kuala Lumpur, Washington and London besides extensive interviews with those who were close to Tun Abdul Razak. Some of these sources, like those located in the Colonial and Foreign Office are open to public scrutiny; other documents from the Prime Minister's Office/Department remained restricted and requires special permission. To his credit Nik Anuar was able to gain access to the latter materials, possibly the only researcher to have done so. Equally significant are the documents located in the Arkib Negara Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur and the state/regional branches. These include the Pahang State Secretariat Files of the 1950s and 1960s and the private papers of Malaysian leaders. These sources are supplemented by interviews and oral recollections of those close to Tun Abdul Razak since his early days in rural Pekan, political leaders and administrators who had worked under him.

More of a political biography, the book is divided into 25 chapters placed in four main sections which coincide with Tun Abdul Razak's life: his youth, his rise within UMNO, the challenging time from the formation of Malaysia to *konfrontasi* and the post-1969 period which the authors denote the new era. There are 50 exquisite photographs on Tun Abdul Razak covering his marriage in 1952, with his family, his parents, the house where he was born, student days in London in the late 1940s, his demise in 1976 and his meeting with foreign dignitaries. Most of these record Tun Abdul Razak's nationwide tour when he personally checked on development programs on the ground. The book benefitted from Shaw. It also corrected Shaw on a few important aspects of Tun Abdul Razak's life including his student days in England. In fact the book is meant to be an update of both Shaw and Paridah although Shaw's influence is pervasive. The use of primary documents that are placed on the restricted list enabled the authors to deliberate on topics hitherto not discussed in depth before including Tun Abdul Razak's handling of regional oppositions to the formation of Malaysia. The book foregrounds Tun Abdul Razak as a leader who rejected racial and religious extremism. The authors had consulted the standard texts and other studies on Tun Abdul Razak although both Paridah and Subki Latif are not included in the bibliography.

The book focuses on Tun Abdul Razak's role in national development and nation building. The authors labelled the man a political entrepreneur—highly innovative, able to take on whatever changes that come his way, willing to tackle problems head on and the ability to utilise all resources including human resources for national development. Tun Abdul Razak is certainly an extraordinary individual. He was born in 1922 in Pekan and attended the village school before moving on to the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) followed by the Raffles College in Singapore and the Lincoln's Inn in London after the war. His school days were remarkable. In Pekan he was the best student in the class. At the MCKK he was good in his studies and excelled in sports (soccer and hockey) and was head boy of the college in his final year. At Raffles he studied liberal arts and in London he managed to finish his law studies in 18 months. At Raffles College he met many friends who later closely worked with him: Hamdan Sheikh Tahir, Taib Andak, Syed Zahiruddin, Ghazali Shaffie and Ungku Abdul Aziz while in London he came to know F. C. Arulanandom, Soviee Shaikh Ibrahim, Hamzah Abu Samah, future Singapore leaders like Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and Maurice Baker and the Indonesian Des Alwi who was to play a crucial behind the scene role in ending *konfrantasi*. At the age of 28 he led UMNO Youth, at 30 he was Deputy UMNO President and Pahang State Secretary, at 35 Deputy Prime Minister and at 48 the Prime Minister. Other than rural development, Tun Abdul Razak also gave his attention to the reformation of the civil service which had a big impact on the pace of development that he had planned. After the racial riots of 1969 he was absorbed with finding new formulas for the nation including the Rukun Negara, the New Economic Policy, the National Culture Policy, National Education Policy and the non-aligned foreign policy which was pursued with renewed vigour.

The first part of the book focuses on his early life or adolescence covering his education, stints in the Malayan Civil Service (Pahang State Secretary followed by acting *Menteri Besar*) before his resignation in 1955 to contest the general election (he won the Semantan constituency with a handsome margin) and marriage in 1951. The book highlights various issues that later influenced Tun Abdul Razak's thinking and subsequent policies namely rural poverty which he had experienced first hand, the racial and religious riots in India, the May 1946 racial riots that erupted in Batu Malim of Raub district where he was assistant district officer, the Malayan Union and the widespread Malay opposition and his flirtation with socialism and the British left while a student in London.

Part two covers Tun Abdul Razak's ascendancy in UMNO and after 1955, the Tunku cabinet, the negotiations towards independence and the promulgation of the Malayan constitution by the Reid Commission in early 1957. After Tun Abdul Razak had taken over the leadership of UMNO youth in 1950 the UMNO slogan of "Hidup Melayu" was replaced by "Merdeka." What was never highlighted, this change came in the wake of the mass entry of former

Malay National Party (PKMM) members into UMNO after it was proscribed by the 1948 Emergency regulations. In 1951 Tunku Abdul Rahman won the UMNO presidency and Tun Abdul Razak the deputy president. This partnership lasted until 1970. With UMNO dominating national politics since the first general elections in 1955 the partnership extended to the government with Tunku Abdul Rahman as Prime Minister and Tun Abdul Razak his deputy. Many observers have taken note of the special relationship between these two men. According to Nik Anuar et al. (2011) "Tunku played the role of leader while Abdul Razak as the implementor. The Tunku was fortunate to have a deputy who was loyal and extremely hardworking" (p. 122). In the prelude towards independence Tun Abdul Razak's previous relationship with segments of the Labour Party was to come in useful in the delicate negotiations with the British government between 1954–1957. As chairman of UMNO's political bureau Tun Abdul Razak was deeply involved in the delicate negotiations for the federal constitution just before independence. The whole exercise proved a divisive issue among the various races and within each ethnic groups. Some of the issues raised by the Pan-Malayan Federation of Chinese Associations for instance (equal rights, privileges and opportunities for all citizens) continued to haunt Malaysian politics ever since and more so during 13th General Elections held in May 2013.

Undoubtedly, the period after Merdeka was the most challenging time in Tun Abdul Razak's political career when he was deputy premier while holding other ministerial portfolios including rural development and defence. Part three of the *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak* highlights the major challenges that he faced which include rural development and concerted efforts to uplift the rural Malays and to change their mindset, the formation of Malaysia in September 1963, followed by the Indonesian confrontation the following year, the expulsion of Singapore from the federation in 1965, the Philippine claim to Sabah in 1968 and the May 1969 riots that ushered in a new episode in Tun Abdul Razak's public life and his elevation to the premiership in September 1970 after Tunku Abdul Rahman's resignation. In many of these issues and problems Tun Abdul Razak was involved in their resolutions which further increased his stature as statesmen within the region and the developing. The passing of the Sedition Act which disallowed any discussion of myriad sensitive issues including the privileges of the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, citizenship, the Malay language and the special privileges of the Malays and other Bumiputeras might be a short term measure but the act had great ramifications on subsequent Malaysian politics.

Perhaps the most controversial part of the book is the last section which the authors denote as the new era in Tun Abdul Razak's political life. It was also a new era for the nation while its genesis was laid down when Tun Abdul Razak was the Director of the National Operations Council that was set up in the aftermath of the 13th May riots. To the government these riots indicate of the need for change in the way nation building was being pushed. Tun Abdul Razak had argued for radical social engineering to put the nation building agenda back

on its track and to create a united Malaysia. These include the National Culture Policy which came into place in 1971, the National Education Policy, the New Economic Policy, efforts to improve the public service and the politics of consensus through the the National Front (Barisan Nasional) that he created. These policies were capped with the foreign policy of non-alignment in contrast to Tunku Abdul Rahman's era of alignment with the western powers. The biography ends with a short conclusion.

There are many issues raised that are glossed over while other aspects are never touched at all. On the question of Tun Abdul Razak's ideological orientation his close friends have rejected the idea that he was a socialist while one scholar claims as unthinkable for someone from the traditional aristocracy to be a socialist. Nik Anuar reiterates Tun Abdul Razak was a Malay nationalist with the soul of a socialist and internationalist (p. 92). This stemmed from his membership of the British Labour Party and the Fabian society which was popular among British intellectuals since the early 20th century. Other indicators are the books that he read many of which are closely related to socialism in China and the Soviet Union. These are presently kept in the Tun Abdul Razak Memorial library. Many of his advisors were avowed socialists since their student days in Singapore or London. These include P. G. Lim and Dr. Agoes Salim. Tun Abdul Razak's economic and social policies have a strong element of state planning something that he was fascinated with since his association with the left intellectuals from the London School of Economics in the late 1940s.

This leads to the next point, the type of advisors who were instrumental in many of Tun Abdul Razak's policy formulation. The political entrepreneurship in Tun Abdul Razak enabled him to utilise effectively human resources for national development. But the book gives only a few names like Taib Andak, Ghazali Shaffie, P. G. Lim, Dr. Agoes Salim, Dr. Rais Saniman, Dr. Juus Faarland, the Harvard academic who was attached to the Prime Minister's Department and Tunku Shahrman Tunku Sulaiman while the Indonesian Des Alwi (wrongly described as Hatta's adopted son as he was the adopted son of Sutan Shahrir) was instrumental in bringing the Indonesian confrontation to an end. But there were many more advisors and others who were involved in less formal mode and who were equally crucial to Tun Abdul Razak. For FELDA (Federal Land Development Authority) the role of Raja Muhammad Alias was instrumental while his highly principled and capable deputy Tun Dr Ismail had contributed inputs including the formation of FELDA and the foreign policy of non-alignment. Scholars like James Puthuchearry have also contributed to the genesis of the NEP through his highly critical study of the Malayan economy and involvement with a study group that recommended the NEP. These are never highlighted in the *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak*.

The book is ominously silent on the relationship between Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak and Abdul Aziz Ishak, the Agriculture Minister who was dismissed (Abdul Aziz Ishak claimed he resigned) from the cabinet in 1963

and later interned under the ISA during the Indonesian confrontation. As the first Minister of Agriculture (1955–1963) Abdul Aziz Ishak had directed much of his energy in ameliorating the plight of the rural farmers and fishermen while some of his policies (to establish cooperatives) were not in line with Tunku's capitalist ideas that would affect the interests of the Chinese towkays who formed the backbone of the MCA then. Both Abdul Aziz Ishak and Tun Abdul Razak basically pursued the same policy of pandering to the rural Malays and both were strongwilled men while Tunku Abdul Rahman's cabinet could only accommodate one of them. The soured relations between Tunku Abdul Rahman and Abdul Aziz Ishak after 1956 added fuel to the controversy. In the biography by Shaw, Tun Abdul Razak had touched on Abdul Aziz Ishak and the man's contributions in rural development while a study on the bureaucracy and development by Ness¹⁰ had indicated the personality differences of both Tun Abdul Razak and Abdul Aziz Ishak. However *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak* was ominously silent on the issue while Abdul Aziz Ishak had touched on the matter in 1977.¹¹

The post-war racial riots that took place in Malaya including those in Batu Malim were of much greater scale than the May 1969 riots. Its origins are related to the Japanese wartime policies that further eroded racial harmony. As for the Batu Malim riots communist leaders have blamed it squarely on the British and their instigation of the Malay rights including those who were closely associated with Wataniah. Others blamed it on communist actions of indiscriminate killings of collaborators after the war that turned into a racial bloodbath. The truth is probably somewhere in between although Malay apprehension of the Chinese numerical dominance had already manifested itself in the mid-1930s at a time when colonial authority made no serious attempts to stem non-Malay immigration so that by then non-Malays had already outnumbered the Malays in Malaya.

Efforts to improve the civil service and the government's delivery system was something that Tun Abdul Razak had taken much interest in since the early 1950s. As the Pahang State Secretary, he had launched a campaign "*Sedia berbakti*" (Ready to serve) in 1951 among the civil servants in the state to enable them to play a more meaningful role in improving the life of the people. In the 1960s Tun Abdul Razak was concerned with the civil service as it was still imbued with the mentality of a colonial bureaucracy which merely provided services and maintenance. He saw the civil service as "lacking a sense of urgency, a spirit of initiative and the desire to serve" (p. 336). He saw the state bureaucracy as anti-development. To ameliorate the negative public perceptions of the bureaucracy Tun Abdul Razak revised the general order that barred civil servants to be active in politics and requiring them to be loyal to the king. In 1972 Malaysian Administration, Modernisation and Man Power Planning Unit (MAMPU) was formed to increase the professionalism of the civil service while corruption among civil servants were given attention through the formation of the Anti Corruption Agency in 1970. Despite these efforts changes were slow. As it

is the civil service was still grappling with a change of mindset among its officers while civil servants remained politicised as never before. There are drawbacks or abuses. Despite the anti-corruption drive the case of Dato' Harun Idris was only brought to court by his successor Dato' Hussein Onn while the case of the Terengganu *Menteri Besar* was left to his deputy Tun Dr. Ismail to handle the matter. The subsidies mentality which was put in place during Tun Abdul Razak's time had wide ramifications on the rural Malays and their ability to compete with the other races as pointed out by state party leaders like Dr. Muhammad Said, the former chief minister of Negeri Sembilan.

Biografi Tun Abdul Razak does not exhaustively discuss the implications of the new policy initiatives undertaken by Tun Abdul Razak such as the NEP and the National Culture Policy. Much has already been written on the NEP but *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak* has not discussed its shortcomings. There were also abuses, notably the creation of a new business class, while the district development machinery had become an integral part of the ruling party apparatus. Scholars like Gomez and Jomo have highlighted its negative side, notably the increasing influence of political patronage on the business sector, inequitable distribution of wealth, the increase of corruption and abuse of power, increasing racial polarisation and income inequality even among the Malays and the rise of crony capitalism which became more pronounced during Tun Dr. Mahathir's administration.¹² Many of the state economic development corporations were also faced by mismanagement and corruption while the regional development bodies were also faced with similar problems. Any evaluations of the NEP must take into account the policy's failings much as the failure of the earlier policies that necessitated the introduction of the NEP in the first place.

As for the National Culture Policy *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak* had discussed the rationale for its implementation and the outright rejection of the non-Malays. This position had not changed and the National Culture Policy remains contested¹³ even among the younger Malay intellectuals. The National Culture Policy also impacted on the way culture is represented in museums which is rather lopsided with the non-Malay culture confined to ethnic weddings, dress and musical instruments. As for the Malay cultural representation there are inherent weaknesses. Not only were unIslamic elements excluded, the neutral ones such as the many ceremonies associated with the Malays and *kenduris* (feasting) suffered a similar fate. The museumising also avoids religiously controversial issues like the *bomoh/dukun/pawang* (medicine man, shaman) who still have a place in Malay society including the educated urban class. If these individuals represent the anti-thesis of the "progressive, democratic and rational Malaysian society" one finds it hard to understand the rationale for the exhibition of ghosts which was held at the National Museum between June August 2002. The same exhibition went on the provincial museum circuit the following year which proved popular with local visitors.

The many shortcomings of the book are not meant to deny the importance of Tun Abdul Razak in the national history. He is definitely the political entrepreneur par excellence while his utilisation of the nation's human resources was superb and has not been surpassed by subsequent administrations. Tun Abdul Razak seemed to have a knack for selecting highly capable and dedicated officials, who fit well into his vision of national development. His loyalty to his boss the Tunku Abdul Rahman and sacrifice to the nation are legendary and difficult to be imbibed by contemporary politicians. He died in early 1976 a rather poor Prime Minister unlike the hordes of politicians during his time or even for the post 1976 period. Despite these shortcomings *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak* is still a good read on the Second Prime Minister and his place in Malaysian history. In terms of documentary sources it is the best book thus far and it is hoped that more researchers will be given access to these classified materials to undertake research on various aspects of the national history.

NOTES

1. Tun Abdul Razak Foundation (compiler) and Suhaini Aznam (ed.), *Tun Abdul Razak: Potret dalam Kenangan* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributors, 2006), 60, 277–278.
2. Victor J. Morais. *Strategy for Action: The Selected Speeches of Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein Al-Haj, The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Minister of National and Rural Development of Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Centre for Development Studies, Prime Minister's Department, 1969), 176–186.
3. Dharmala N. S. *Tun Abdul Razak: Bapa Pembangunan (Kebenaran di Sebalik Perjuangan)* (Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2005), 176–180.
4. Subki Latif. *Suka Duka Politik Tun Abdul Razak* (Kuala Lumpur: Amir Enterprises, 1976).
5. William Shaw. *Tun Razak: His Life and Times* (Kuala Lumpur: Longman, 1976).
6. William Shaw. *Tun Razak: Riwat Hidup dan Zamannya* (Kuala Lumpur: Longman, 1977).
7. Paridah Abdul Samad. *Tun Abdul Razak, A Phenomenon in Malaysian Politics: A Political Biography* (Kuala Lumpur: Affluent Masters, 1998), 4.
8. Zainuddin Maidin. *Tun Razak: The Profile of a Patriot* (Kuala Lumpur: Tun Abdul Razak Foundation, 1999), 116.
9. Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh dan Abdul Ghapa Harun. *Biografi Tun Abdul Razak: Negarawan dan Patriot Negara* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2011).

10. Gayl D. Ness. *Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Malaysia: A Study of Complex Organization in Stimulating Economic Development in New States* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).
11. Aziz Ishak. *Special Guest: The Detention of an Ex-Cabinet Minister* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977).
12. Terence Gomez and K. S. Jomo. *Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics, Patronage and Profits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
13. Kua Kia Soong. *Defining Malaysian Culture* (Petaling Jaya: K Das Ink, 1987); Kua Kia Soong. *National Culture and Democracy* (Petaling Jaya: Kersani Publication, 1985).

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