

Family Politics in Malaysia

Yi Le NG

Graduate student

Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies

National Chengchi University

106260018@nccu.edu.tw

Tsai-wei SUN

Associate Professor

Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies

National Chengchi University

tw0418@nccu.edu.tw

Election and Family Politics in Southeast Asia Conference

University of Canterbury, New Zealand

August 3rd, 2018

I. Introduction

Political family, patronage, nepotism and dynasty have long been present in democracies (as well as semi-democratic regimes), and Southeast Asia is no exception.

Early in 1982, Camp has already observed that high percentages of Mexican political leaders between 1935 and 1980 belonged to the established political families. In Bó, Bó and Snyder's paper (2009), scholars also showed that dynastic prevalence in the Congress of the U.S. is higher than that in other occupations. As Southeast Asian countries experienced the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in the past decades, both traditional political dynasties in the old regimes as well as emerging political families in the new era have used their political power and wealth to benefit from the opportunities produced by the process of democratic elections. In the Philippines today, three quarters of the members of the House of Representatives and 84 percent of senators come from political families (Tadem and Tadem, 2016). Case studies from Mietzner (2016) and Purdey (2016b) of Indonesia's current two most powerful political families – the Sukarno and Djojohadikusumo families – also show that with the introduction of direct elections, the families of previous presidents and regional and local elites have all been central to Indonesia's decentralized and increasingly personality-driven democracies. In Singapore, along with the debate in 2017 of whether or not to demolish the founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's family home, more and more people worry that a political dynasty, the Lee family, is emerging as the ruling force in this country, which would destroy this country's generations-long governing principle of meritocracy and professionalism.¹

By definition, political family, or political dynasty, refers to “the ability of a family to inherit and to accumulate power and wealth from one generation to the next and frequently functions across a variety of political systems and across time.” (Purdey, 2016a: 320). Their power is patronage-based and includes vital links with bureaucracy, business, media, political parties or other formal and informal institutions of the state. It is unusual that Malaysia had not been discussed despite the fact that its political landscape includes some examples that correspond to the definition of political family or dynasty. Despite the fact that Malaysia's

¹ However, Barr (2016) argues that the Lee dynasty has already established in the early 1980s and consolidated nowadays. As to the dispute over late PM Lee's house, see Channel News Asia (2017).

family politics appears to be in its tender stage when compared to other Southeast Asian countries, it is still undeniable that family ties are recognizable in the political arena of Malaysia.

Before the unexpected turn of events in Malaysia's 14th General Election, Najib Razak was continuing the legacy his father, Abdul Razak. The father-son duo were the 2nd and 6th Prime Minister of Malaysia respectively. In addition to this, the 3rd Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, was in fact the uncle of Najib Razak. Another example of family ties in Malaysian politics is Mahathir Mohamad and his son Mukhriz Mahathir. Mahathir, who is also once a mentor to Najib, was the 4th and now the 7th Prime Minister of Malaysia. His son Mukhriz is Chief Minister of Kedah and holds a high rank in his party. Mahathir's former protégé, Anwar Ibrahim, had his family deeply involved in politics as well. Anwar's wife is the current Deputy Prime Minister, a first for Malaysia to have a woman at this position. His daughter, Nurul Izzah Anwar is a rising star in the party.

The cases above are just some of the examples of family politics in Malaysia. Their ability to pass on the accumulated political prowess or influence reflects a resemblance to family dynasties in other countries. They are also similar in terms of the families' position of political power when accumulating their strength. In other words, most of the families are from the ruling party and/or closely related to the ruling class. However, after examining various cases of family politics in Malaysia, we found an interesting case that is different from the traditional process of how family politics were formed. This particular case is the case of the family politics in the former largest opposition political party in Malaysia: Democratic Action Party (DAP). Of particular interest is the family influence that branches out from the party leader Lim Kit Siang. The distinctiveness of this case is especially noticeable when put into comparison with another Chinese-based political party: Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA). Both parties consist of members who are mostly ethnic Chinese, yet only DAP have significant traces of family politics influencing the development of the party.

This paper believes that by examining the Lim family from DAP, we will uncover a different form of family politics and further deepen our understanding of the role of family politics as a political institution. In addition, the comparison of DAP and MCA will give us an insight on the circumstances that might lead to family politics thriving in a party. This paper will be divided into 3 sections and present its findings. First, this paper will briefly introduce the formation of the two political party concerned and major historical events leading up to the emergence of Lim Kit Siang. Next, this paper shall present its case study on the Lim family.

Finally, before concluding this paper, it will clarify the possible reasons why family politics blossomed in DAP (and not MCA).

II. Malaysia's Political Landscape: An Overview before the 1970s

Before Malaysia, there was the Federation of Malaya (hereinafter Malaya)²; before Malaya's independence, there was the negotiation for citizenship. Malaya was formed under the British colonial rule and one of the most important issue at the time was citizenship. In fact, the British formed Malaya as an alternative to a previous proposal: The Malayan Union. The proposal was met with substantial objection from Malays especially when UMNO was established in 1946 as an opposition towards this proposal. The UMNO-led opposition also garnered the support of the Malay rulers (sultans) and put up an effective rejection to the Malayan Union proposal. One of the crucial reasons why the Malays object this proposal is the equal citizenship for the Chinese, who made up 43 per cent of the total population in Malaya and Singapore in 1941³. The Malays feared that they would be dominated by the Chinese both politically and economically (Heng, 1988: 46).

The fact that communist insurgency led by militants who are mostly Chinese did not help ease the uneasiness of the Malays. In the same year Malaya was formed, a state of emergency was also declared by the colonial government. The Malaysian Communist Party (MCP) under the leadership of Chin Peng decided to carry out guerrilla operations in hopes of toppling the government. Consequently, the turbulence caused by this uprising led to a shift in the balance of power within the Chinese community (Heng, 1988: 50). Prior to the state of emergency, there were protestations from the Chinese community and MCP was part of it. On the other hand, the Chinese Chambers of Commerce (CCC) who at first opposed the idea of Malaya as well, turned to accept the federation when it was clear that the colonial government would proceed with the plan. CCC was an organization formed in the early 1900s which was primarily used as a platform to promote commerce and Chinese nationalism among the overseas Chinese (Suyama, 1977). Over the years, it grew into an important organization representing the interest of the Chinese community in Malaysia. Thus, when the guerilla warfare between the MCP and the British government broke out, the British needed a helping hand in their effort to crush the insurgents. The British realized the MCP was getting support

² Malaysia refers to the combination of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak (before 1965 it includes Singapore). Malaya refers to Peninsular Malaysia (or West Malaysia).

³ See Victor Purcell. 1948. *The Chinese in Malaya*. Oxford University Press. Appendix II.

from a large proportion of Chinese population. Therefore, a plan was drawn to resettle the Chinese and put them under watch. The anti-insurgency campaign required a centralized and pro-British Malayan Chinese party to provide effective assistances. Thus, a majority of imminent figures from CCC formed the MCA in the midst of warfare (Heng, 1983).

In the events leading up to the independence of Malaya, MCA played a major role in the “bargain” with the Malays in order to retain their economic power while also attaining limited political power in the new nation (Milne, 1970). They did so by entering into an alliance with UMNO and the two contested together in the elections before independence. The coalition was later joined by the Malaysian Indian Congress, which represents the Indian community in Malaya, and together they were simply known as the Alliance. This combination of three race-based parties became the basis of Barisan Nasional⁴ (BN); a coalition formed in 1973, when Malaysia had already took its first few steps and suffered major setbacks.

After Malaya gained its independence, talks about the formation of Malaysia began with Lee Kuan Yew in 1961. Lee Kuan Yew led the People’s Action Party (PAP) to its first victory in Singapore’s first election. He became the first prime minister in 1959 and proposed to join Malaya in forming Malaysia. After Singapore gained its independence, it joined the Federation of Malaysia along with Sabah and Sarawak. PAP subsequently became an opposition party at federal level, but it remained as the government of Singapore state. Even though PAP promised not to challenge the influence of Malayan political parties, the centrality of Malays in the nation-building process led to the extension of PAP into the political arena of Malaya and came up with the slogan “Malaysian’s Malaysia” as oppose to “Malay Malaysia” (Lee, 1965). Again, we see the struggle of national identity in this situation. Much like the proposal of the Malayan Union by the British, it did not went well with Malay rulers and the Malay community. Singapore and PAP was ultimately booted out of the federation in 1965, just 2 years into the formation of Malaysia. However, this did not imply that the racial tension and struggle for the consensus of national identity was resolved (Milne, 1966). Besides, when Singapore was still a part of Malaysia, PAP’s extension into the political scene of Malaya was enough to plant a seed that grew to become Malaysia’s longest opposition party.

In October 1965, Democratic Action Party (DAP) was formed by the members of PAP in Malaysia. The formation of DAP also meant PAP’s opportunistic slogan of achieving equal status for all Malaysians had a continuation in the political landscape of Malaysia (Kua, 2007).

⁴ Translated to “National Front” in English.

The slogan was used to attract the votes of non-Malays, and attract it did. When DAP entered its first election in 1969, it won 13 Parliamentary seats and 31 State Assembly seats. However, the jubilation of a considerable success in the elections was cut short when the infamous May 13 Racial Riots erupted. It was a dark time in the history of Malaysia. The official statistics of casualties show that 137 people were killed in the riots (18 Malays) and 342 people injured, though other sources show that the figures might be even higher (Kua, 2007). May 13 became a political tool of the ruling coalition, used to warn the voters of the possibility of another similar incident if they do not cast their vote to them. It was also later used as a justification to the introduction of a series of pro-Malay policies, such as the New Economic Policy (Milne, 1976). Malaysia after May 13 entered a new era when people were silent, yet some were sparked. People like Lim Kit Siang began his rise to prominence behind bars.

III. Case Study of Lim Family

A. Lim Kit Siang

In February 20, 1941, Lim Kit Siang was born in Batu Pahat. Both his parents came from China, thus making him one of the first generation in his family to be born and raised in Malaysia. Little did his family know that this youngest son in the Lim family would grow up to become one of the most important figure in the democratization of Malaysia.

This paper's case study on Lim Kit Siang is based on the works of Thock Kiah Wah (1999; 2003). Lim Kit Siang was interviewed by Thock and shared about how he grew up, the ups and lows in his political career and what are his plans for his future. Thock also combined his research on the speeches made by Lim Kit Siang over the years to elucidate the political ideology, beliefs and most of all, the incredible perseverance of the DAP leader. For nearly 5 decades, Lim Kit Siang and DAP stood firm as an opposition party when others come and go. He steered the party through the dangerous waters of Malaysia politics. In the end, DAP managed to achieve what was seem as unachievable: become the federal government.

Before Lim Kit Siang entered the ranks of DAP, he was working in Singapore. He was in his twenties and he worked as a journalist for the Straits Times. It was at this crucial time of his life, he got his training on analyzing facts, not to mention the spirit of uncovering the truth and exposing wrong doings. Although he was not yet involved in a political party, he was already active in labor unions and even became rise to leadership. His active role in labor unions while in Singapore led him to meet Devan Nair, one of the members from PAP Malaysia

who formed DAP when Singapore was ousted from the federation. A few crucial events were happening at the time. First, the debate of “Malaysian’s Malaysia” and “Malay Malaysian” is creating tension between Singapore and Malaya. Lim Kit Siang felt like he was caught in the middle as he had work for years in Singapore while his hometown is in Malaya. Then, the break-up of Singapore and Malaysia happened. At the same time, Lim Kit Siang was promoted to the position of editor in the news agency. As Lim Kit Siang only finished his secondary education, the position as an editor meant a lot to him. However, an event occurred and it changed the course of his life. Devan Nair was the only PAP member to be elected as a member of parliament when Malaysia just formed. The sudden ousting of Singapore left him in an awkward situation but he continued to work on the formation of a new political party. While occupied with the preparations for the formation of DAP, Devan Nair needed to find a suitable person for the position of National Organizing Secretary. He asked Lim Kit Siang to accept this position and assist him in DAP.

After much consideration, Lim Kit Siang decided to take the job and officially stepped into politics. In his interview with Thock, he explained that it was because of the break-up of Singapore and Malaysia that made him worried about his career development in Singapore as he is from Malaya. More importantly, he thought about the role he could play in the process of nation building in his country. Thus, Lim Kit Siang quit his job and joined DAP in 1965. The political development in the 50s and 60s greatly influenced his decision on becoming a politician as he pointed out in the interview, “those were the formative years”. He understood the decision of becoming a full time politician meant that he was “burning the bridge” (to return to other careers). Such a move allowed him to become one of the earliest members of DAP. Although he was not one of the founders of DAP, he was considered one of the earliest leaders of DAP. His rise to the top ranks of the party is closely related to the political development of the early years of Malaysia.

In 1969, the tension between the Malays and non-Malays reached its breaking point in the general elections. The newly formed DAP continued the works of PAP, promoted the slogan “Malaysians’ Malaysia” and achieved a decent victory in the general elections. Lim Kit Siang was one of the victors in DAP and became the Member of Parliament for Bandar Melaka. In fact, most of the opposition parties at the time performed well in the elections. The Alliance was denied a two-third majority in parliament and lost control over several state governments. After the results were announced, celebration on the streets quickly turned into violent clashes.

The riots of May 13 shocked the nation but it became another turning point in Lim Kit Siang's political career.

As the racial riots were said to be caused by the ideology upheld by parties like DAP, Lim Kit Siang being one of the outspoken politician naturally became a target of the ruling government. When the riots broke out in cities like Kuala Lumpur, he was blacklisted by the police. However, he valiantly returned to the capital city despite being warned not to. He was arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA)⁵ and was stripped of his freedom for more than a year. The young politician's heroic acts was in contrast to the leader of DAP at the time, Goh Hock Guan. When Lim Kit Siang was thrown into jail for upholding the party's ideology, Goh Hock Guan was accused of staying overseas in order to avoid persecution (Thock, 2003). DAP members were disappointed with Goh and this led to his resignation a year later. The resignation of Goh resulted in Lim Kit Siang being elected as the 3rd Secretary-General of DAP while he was still in jail.

His act of valor is what gave him the basis to build upon during his years in the political arena. The people know him as a politician unafraid of the possibility of persecution (Thock, 1999). Regardless of his actions calculated or not, the incident of his imprisonment is a key factor in how he secured political influence. His image of standing up against oppressors with perseverance and bravery was further strengthened when he was arrested yet again under the ISA in 1987. However, before that, Lim Kit Siang's leadership also established a few important reputation for himself. Thock concluded that Lim Kit Siang became the face of DAP not only because of his suffering in jail, but also the persistency of his political views, coupled with his tireless efforts towards his job and a keen eye for the development of politics in Malaysia.

B. Lim Guan Eng

The second time Lim Kit Siang was imprisoned, he was one of the many victims of the ill-famed Operation Lalang. Among the people deemed as "threat[s] to national security" (Kua, 2010) is an individual of particular interest. He is the beloved son of Lim Kit Siang, Lim Guan Eng.

⁵ The Internal Security Act was introduced in 1960 (later revised in 1972) as a mean for the Malaysian government to detain persons indefinitely without trial. For a more detailed explanation, see Kua Kia Soong, 2010. *445 Days Under the ISA: Operation Lalang 1987-89*. Suaram Komunikasi: Appendix I.

Lim Guan Eng is the eldest son of Lim Kit Siang. At the time when the racial riots erupted and Lim Kit Siang was detained under the ISA, Lim Guan Eng was at a tender age of 8 years old. According to the biography published by DAP (2011), Lim Guan Eng did not understand why his father was imprisoned and even felt shameful among his peers as his classmates taunted him, calling his father a criminal. He even started to question whether his father was truly a criminal or not. It wasn't until Lim Kit Siang's release after 16 months of imprisonment did Lim Guan Eng realized his father was a hero in the eyes of others.

This incident in the early years of Lim Guan Eng did not inspire him to pursue the same path as his father. Instead, during the years when his father was detained, the Lim family was in poverty and often skipped meals. The short but harsh hardship he and his family had to endure in those months was a great influence in his decision to further his studies in accountancy and become a banker afterwards. In other words, he hoped to bring wealth to his family. His eventual entry into politics had a similar progression as his father. First, he went overseas to pursue his studies. He finished his higher education in Australia and it was during this period, he learned more about politics in the sense of ideologies and civil right movements. The dissimilar political environment of Australia and his hometown had a great impact on him. When he was back in Malaysia and successfully become a banker, he was still active in DAP⁶, albeit he only did some voluntary work such as setting chairs or putting up flyers. In his biography, he pointed out that his father remained neutral on whether Lim Guan Eng should fully devote himself to politics or not, yet party president Chen Man Hin constantly encouraged him to become a full time politician. As to what truly motivated him to put down his high salary job and become an opposition politician, this paper found no credible explanation. However, much like his father's experience, he campaigned for his first election at the young age of 26 years old.

The similarity shared between the father-son duo did not end there. Lim Guan Eng won his first election splendidly in 1986 and was officially a Member of the Parliament. Unfortunately, those were times of political turbulence with UMNO having an internal power struggle sending shockwaves to the political landscape of Malaysia (Lim, 1990; Lee, 2008). In October 27, 1987, Lim Guan Eng was suddenly arrested under the ISA. Apparently, he was the first among the many individuals who were also suddenly arrested, all in the name of ISA. It was pointed out by Kua (2010) that these were people from different backgrounds such as

⁶ In 1982, Lim Guan Eng joined DAP when he was still completing his studies.

opposition leaders, church pastors, Chinese educationists, Islamic fundamentalists and many more. Lim Guan Eng got his first taste of imprisonment not long after his achievement in the elections, much alike his father during the 1969 racial riots. What is even more noteworthy is that Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng were both jailed at the same place, at the same time during Operation Lalang. They were also the last two people to be released.

However, since Lim Guan Eng was imprisoned along with many other important figures, his arrest in 1987 seems less significant when compared to the second time he was thrown into jail. After regaining his freedom in 1989, Lim Guan Eng was not in any way intimidated; rather he was motivated to commit even more of his effort. At the time, people often request the help of their constituency's representative to solve their legal problems. As Lim Guan Eng was the Member of Parliament from Melaka, he was approached by a Malay woman who asked him to help expose a crime done on her granddaughter. Apparently, the granddaughter was sexually offended yet she was instead arrested for suspicion of a connection to another crime. Moreover, the sexual offender suspect was actually the Chief Minister of Melaka (Rahim Tamby Chik) at the time. Lim Guan Eng agreed to help and held a press conference, accusing the Chief Minister of statutory rape. The news rattled the leadership of UMNO and caused widespread unrest among society on how the case was handled by authorities. In the end however, the suspect was not charged against because of "insufficient evidence". According to Amnesty International (1997), Lim Guan Eng was instead charged under the Sedition Act for his allegations towards Rahim Tamby Chik and Printing Presses and Publications Act for "maliciously printing" a pamphlet containing allegedly "false information" concerning the case. It was also noted in his biography (2011) that these charges were politically motivated.

Lim Guan Eng eventually lost the court case and was sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment. 11 years after his first time in jail under the ISA, he found himself once again locked away in a cell. The entire narration of how Lim Guan Eng defended a Malay girl and ended up in jail represents an intriguing case. First, the point that Lim Guan Eng was in jail because he defended a Malay girl was not accepted as fact by some. Independent bloggers and UMNO supporters claimed that Lim Guan Eng was more concerned about attacking his political opponent, rather than defending a Malay girl⁷. They point to the fact that the charges

⁷ Various bloggers/online news with UMNO background, see for example: Malaysia Today. 2016. "Did Lim Guan Eng Really Go To Jail For Defending A Malay Girl?" <http://www.malaysia-today.net/2016/12/19/did-lim-guan-eng-really-go-to-jail-for-defending-a-malay-girl/> (Accessed on July 25, 2018)

against Lim Guan Eng was about the defamatory acts and the trials were in accordance to the law⁸. Secondly, DAP retracted their allegations towards Rahim Tamby Chik in a press statement⁹. The announcement of retraction of allegations was made after several other similar retractions were made as well, such as the victim herself¹⁰. Whether the allegations about the statutory rape case were made based on truth and facts are of no concern of this paper. However, the paper is more concerned about the fact that Lim Guan Eng was hailed as a hero who stood up for a Malay girl by DAP even after the retraction of allegations¹¹.

Lim Guan Eng's second time in prison produced a similar outcome to his father's experience, especially when he completed his sentence and regained freedom. Both were hailed as DAP's political martyrs and rose to the top. After Lim Guan Eng's release in 1999, he was prohibited by the law from joining the elections for 5 years and ended up missing two elections. After nearly a decade, he was back at the frontline and led the attack in Penang. In 2008, DAP successfully won the state election in Penang and became the government. It was the first time ever in their history that they had become a ruling government. Lim Guan Eng was then appointed as the Chief Minister of Penang. This position is naturally of great importance to the party and the already popular Lim Guan Eng had a chance to prove that he can be a leader as well as how he was as an opposition politician. His leadership in Penang is comparable to his father's leadership in the party. During the 1970s and 80s, it was under the leadership of Lim Kit Siang did DAP managed to develop into the largest opposition party at the time.

C. Findings

As previously mentioned, Thock concluded that Lim Kit Siang's reputation in the party is based on two main elements: A fearless personality in the face of oppression (imprisonment) and inventive political maneuvers which brought improvements to the party (leadership). Lim Guan Eng's progress of rising to the top ranks of DAP appears to have followed the same

⁸ One of the judge who changed the sentence from a fine to a custodial sentence explained that the panel of judge acted out in accordance to precedent cases, see: Free Malaysia Today. 2018. "Sri Ram tells why he sent Guan Eng to jail". <http://www.malaysia-today.net/2016/12/19/did-lim-guan-eng-really-go-to-jail-for-defending-a-malay-girl/> (Accessed on July 25, 2018). Also, see full judgement: G.E. Lim vs PP, [http://www.ipsfactoj.com/DecidedCases/archive/1998/part01/arc1998\(01\)-001.htm](http://www.ipsfactoj.com/DecidedCases/archive/1998/part01/arc1998(01)-001.htm) (Accessed on July 25, 2018)

⁹ See Democratic Action Party. 2003. "Rahim Tamby Cik withdraws case against DAP". <https://dapmalaysia.org/all-archive/English/2003/oct03/bul/bul2287.htm> (Accessed on July 25, 2018)

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ See DAP published book: *Lim Guan Eng – MP in Jail*

pattern as his father's. The father-son duo from an opposition party presents an interesting case among the backdrop of conventional family politics in Southeast Asia.

Firstly, oppression from the ruling party is a key catalyst for the rise of particular individuals in the opposition party. Apart from the Lim family case, we can also see this in Karpal Singh's case. He was an illustrious leader in DAP and was one of the victims in Operation Lalang as well. His sons are well-established politicians in DAP too with his eldest son Gobind Singh becoming the first Sikh Cabinet Minister in Malaysia. The Anwar family had only emerged as political stars when Anwar was persecuted in the late 1990s. Oppression and persecution suffered by politicians led to their rise, while at the same time brought their family members into the fray against the oppressor.

Next, inheritance of political power of one generation from the previous occurred ambiguously or almost non-existent. The rise of Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng were not entirely connected to their family tie. One could say that Lim Guan Eng's promotion in the ranks of the party were partly influenced by his father's position, but Lim Guan Eng successfully attracted the attention of voters and media by achieving "heroic" feats (his second imprisonment). Furthermore, inheritance of political power in an opposition party is far different from a party in the ruling government, as they do not share the same level of wealth, influence and power. This will be further discussed in the next section where we will compare MCA and DAP.

Finally yet importantly, performance is a stronger factor than family connection. This is evident in the method DAP adopted when portraying the case of defamatory charges against Lim Guan Eng, where the emphasis was put on his actions. After becoming Chief Minister of Penang, the emphasis was put on the achievements he made in that position. As Purdey (2016a) quoted former President of Philippines, "*surname alone does not assure victory...those who belong to the a political clan are not assured of winning unless their parents, siblings or relatives have done a good job in their elective positions.*" The politicians from opposition parties may reflect the fact that Malaysian voters may vote according to family ties unless the situation is related to oppression or persecution, but performance from the politician is still needed to ensure the continuation of their political prowess.

IV. Comparison between MCA and DAP

Most researches on family politics were conducted on political parties in the ruling governments. At the same time, emphasis have been put on the wealth, influence over institutions and important connections, as these were key factors to the continuation of family politics. When Malaysia's political parties are put under scrutiny, one would naturally expect family politics to exist and thrive in parties belonging to the ruling government. Among the political parties with Chinese as their majority component, MCA appears to be a prime candidate for the study of family politics. Not only did MCA served as the ruling government in the BN coalition, the party members were primarily from higher social class. Wealthy businessmen and entrepreneurs mostly joined MCA, yet family politics did not seem to exist in the party. On the other hand, the other Chinese majority political party DAP had Lim family as a growing dynasty and minor signs of family politics as well such as the Singh family. DAP represents a socialist party with members mostly from middle and lower social class. The sharp contrast between MCA and DAP provides us with an interesting comparison and this paper discovered a few important differences served as a factor for the emergence of family politics in one and not the other.

From the comparison, this paper finds party ideology a major factor in influencing the development of the party, therefore affecting the environment for emergence of family politics. MCA began with their prime objective of ensuring the presence of Chinese interest in the formation of the ruling government. In other words, MCA joined hands with UMNO knowing that this is the combination most likely to become the ruling government. MCA believed that UMNO, known for its Malay-supremacy ideology, would build the nation based on Malays. As such, MCA "bargained" with UMNO in order to refrain their economic power and attain limited political power (Milne, 1970). MCA had then become part of the ruling coalition, but always subjected to compromising Chinese's interest from time to time. The function of the party meant that they had trouble coming into agreement on their goals as Chinese interest and UMNO's objective varies over time. To put it simply, MCA did not have a consensus on the ideology of the party. This led to constant power struggles and conflicts between factions. On the other hand, DAP had a clear goal in mind since its formation. Although its voter base is primarily Chinese voters, DAP's ideology is to build a Malaysia with equal rights and privileges, not prioritizing Chinese interest. "Malaysian's Malaysia" became the uniting factor in the party. Although Lim Kit Siang displayed hints of

authoritarianism during his time of leadership and caused clashes among the leaders, DAP remained relatively united throughout the years (Thock, 2003). Consequently, the stability DAP had internally made it easier for individuals to accumulate political power.

Furthermore, the comparison reveals that the types of resources available in the party are dissimilar and provide different incentives for the recruitment of next generation members. MCA politicians are mostly well established in both the business sector and politics. Moreover, the relationship they have with UMNO, in addition to their position as the ruling government provided them opportunities in profit-making schemes. MCA is rich in resources, but the resources are mainly useful for commerce purposes. There is a high possibility that the incentive for joining the party is to gain new business opportunities. Correspondingly, there is also a deterrent for MCA leader's second generation as the balance of power within BN limits the growth of MCA. The combination of the two is why party leaders have their next generation or close relatives involved in commerce, rather than pursuing a political career. As an opposition party for such a long time, DAP's resources are different in nature and scope. Resources are limited in DAP as they have little to no access to key institutions. This type of party may prevent opportunists from joining the party. Moreover, the constant fear of persecution may well be a deterrent for people with dishonest intentions.

V. Conclusion

Even though family politics might not be the driving force behind the politics of Malaysia, its traces is still observable. From the ruling coalition to the opposition parties, this paper showed just some of the examples of politician from the same family having great influence over the development of the party. Among all political families, this paper finds the Lim family from DAP noteworthy as it appears to be distinctive from traditional family politics. Literatures concerning family politics put more emphasis on ruling governments as they were the ones with political strength, wealth, control over key institutions and crucial connections. DAP on the other hand is a long-time opposition party with a predominantly Chinese voter base, yet it witnessed the rise of Lim Kit Siang and subsequently Lim Guan Eng. The Lim family became the face of DAP and occupied some the most important positions of the party. It is reasonable to conclude that a political family is formed in an unconventional place.

However, after a round of examination, this paper noticed the rise of Lim Kit Siang and his son had some intriguing similarities. Both of them were political martyrs and their suffering

of persecution led to their rise in the party and the political arena. Upon reaching high ranks within the party, they exhibited great skills of leadership and cunning political maneuvers. In terms of opposition parties, this paper discovered three factors behind the formation of family politics in the case study of Lim family. First, oppression and persecution was a driving force behind the rise of individuals. Secondly, the inheritance of political power was vague or almost non-existent in opposition parties. Third, performance played a more important role than family ties. The distinctiveness of the family politics in DAP is further emphasized when compared to a similar political party, MCA. Both parties primarily consists of Chinese members, albeit from different social classes. As MCA belongs to a long time ruling coalition, one would naturally assume family politics to thrive in this party. In spite of this, MCA presented no recognizable political family; yet DAP had more than one. This paper suggests that the difference in the two parties' ideology affected the rise of family politics. In addition, the types and scope of resources available in the party also have an effect on the formation of politics.

In terms of the comparison between MCA and DAP, this paper shall conduct additional researches based on these preliminary findings in the future. Emphasis shall be put on analyzing party archives or literatures on the history of MCA's development in order to testify the fact that MCA is plagued with internal power struggles. Furthermore, data shall be collected on the career paths of MCA leaders' second generation to confirm our hypothesis that the resources in MCA and the power structure of BN caused many to choose business over politics. This paper believes that a future in depth research on the development of MCA will further clarify the factors behind the rise of family politics.

In family politics, it is believed that power begets power. Nevertheless, the opposition party in Malaysia presented an intriguing case challenging the norm. Further investigations shall be conducted on the Lim family to testify our case, preferably through interviews and by examining the archives of DAP. While the tables have turned and the opposition is now the ruling party, their history remains untouched, awaiting new and exciting discoveries.

References

- Amnesty International. 1997. "MALAYSIA The trial of opposition parliamentarian Lim Guan Eng: an update".
<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/160000/asa280031997en.pdf>
- Barr, Michael D. 2016. "The Lees of Singapore: A Quality Brand." *South East Asia Research* 24(3): 341-354.
- Bó, Ernesto Dal, Pedro Dal Bó and Jason Snyder. 2009. "Political Dynasties." *Review of Economic Studies* 76(1): 115-142.
- Camp, Roderic A. 1982. "Family Relationships in Mexican Politics: A Preliminary View." *The Journal of Politics* 44(3): 848-862.
- Channel News Asia. 24 June 2017. "Dispute over 38 Oxley Road: A timeline of events."
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/oxley-road-lee-kuan-yew-home-timeline-8948792>
- Heng Pek Koon. 1983. "The Social and Ideological Origins of the Malayan Chinese Association" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 14(2): 290-311.
- Kua Kia Soong. 2007. *May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969*. Suaram Komunikasi.
- Kua Kia Soong. 2010. *445 Days Under the ISA: Operation Lalang 1987-89*. Suaram Komunikasi.
- Lee, Julian C. H. 2008. "The Fruits of Weeds: Taking Justice at the Commemoration of the Twentieth Anniversary of *Operasi Lalang* in Malaysia". *The Round Table* 97(397): 605-615.
- Lee Kuan Yew. 1965. *The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia, Vol. 1-2*. Ministry of Culture.
- Lim Kit Siang. 1990. *Prelude to Operation Lalang*. Democratic Action Party
- Mietzner, Marcus. 2016. "The Sukarno Dynasty in Indonesia: Between Institutionalisation, Ideological Continuity and Crises of Succession." *South East Asia Research* 24(3): 355-368.
- Milne, R. S. 1966. "Singapore's Exit from Malaysia: the Consequences of Ambiguity". *Asian Survey* 6(3): 175-184.
- Milne, R. S. 1970. "'National-ideology' and Nation-Building in Malaysia" *Asian Survey* 10(7): 563-573
- Milne, R. S. 1976. "The Politics of Malaysia's New Economic Policy". *Pacific Affairs* 49(2): 235-262.
- Purdey, Jemma. 2016a. "Political Families in Southeast Asia." *South East Asia Research* 24(3): 319-327.
- Purdey, Jemma. 2016b. "Narratives to Power: the Case of the Djojohadikusumo Family Dynasty over Four Generations." *South East Asia Research* 24(3): 369-385.

Suyama, Taku. 1977. "Pang Societies and the Economy of Chinese Immigrants: A Study on Communalism in Southeast Asia". *Review of Southeast Asian Studies* 7: 16

Tadem, Teresa S Encarnacion and Eduardo C Tadem. 2016. "Political Dynasties in the Philippines: Persistent Patterns, Perennial Problems." *South East Asia Research* 24(3): 328-340.

Thock Kiah Wah. 2003. "Lim Kit Siang: In the Vanguard of Political Opposition". In *Malaysian Chinese History and Personalities: The Political Elites*, ed. Ho Khai Leong. Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies

Thock Kiah Wah. 1999. "Opposition Leader's Thirty Years". *International Chinese News Weekly* (May 17 – 23, 1999): 31

Trajano, Julius Cesar I. and Yoes C. Kenawas. 2013. "Political Dynasties in Indonesia and the Philippines." <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/02/13/political-dynasties-in-indonesia-and-the-philippines/>