

*Journal of Nusantara Studies* 2020, Vol 5(2) 411-425  
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin  
ISSN 0127-9386 (Online)  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol5iss2pp411-425>

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## BOOK REVIEW

**NEGARA-BANGSA: PROSES DAN PERBAHASAN BY A. R. EMBONG: PENERBIT  
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA, 2001, 143 PAGES.**

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Received: 1 Jul 2019

Accepted: 20 Jan 2020

## ABSTRACT

*Negara-Bangsa Proses dan Perbahasan* (Malay for Nation-State: Process and Debate) by Abdul Rahman Embong, is a book that brings together nine essays on nation-state discussions written from 1995 to 2000. Five essays developed into Chapters 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9 were essays published in the *Pemikir* journal published by the *Utusan Melayu Group* while Chapters 5 and 6 were conference papers presented by Abdul Rahman in a seminar. All these essays have been updated and improved for the purpose of publishing this book. Additionally, Chapters 1 and 3 are new chapters written specifically for this book, which also debate on and discuss nation-states. Through this work, Abdul Rahman offers a continual, inclusive and semi-controversial perspective on important issues of Malaysia and its nation in particular and the world in general. The book also aims to promote deep discussion of the world of thought with the nation-state of Malaysia and the Malaysian nation as the main focus.

**Cite as:** Razali, N. A., Mohd Suhaimy, K. A., & Jaes, L. (2020). Negara-bangsa: Proses dan perbahasan (Book review). *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 5(2), 411-425.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol5iss2pp411-425>

## REVIEW

According to Abdul Rahman (2000), the essence of Mahathir Mohamad's "The Way Forward" presentation at the Malaysian Business Council on February 28, 1991, which emphasised on the need of having united Malaysian nation (*Bangsa Malaysia*) in the pursue of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020, was a turning point that prompted him to discuss the Malaysian nation (also known as race) and nation-state of Malaysia. Therefore, in Chapter 1, Abdul Rahman takes an approach to discuss the issues and definitions of the Malaysian nation in particular as there was no detail given to the phrase 'Malaysian nation' in the speech. He argues that the phrase is still wide and there is no context or framework that guides the definition of the phrase based on various reactions and views on the Malaysian nation given by various levels of society since the speech was delivered. Apart from that, there is no discussion focused on the Malaysian nation by any individual.

In Chapter 1, Abdul Rahman clearly states the importance of looking at the concept of a Malaysian nation based on two angles, which are on the present politics and history. The present political angle defines the Malaysian nation as "a new race which covers all ethnic groups in Malaysia" (p. 14). While from the historical point of view, it means, "the development of the nation from ethnos linked to the common genealogy, culture, and history of the ethnic group of Malays formed in the territory of the Malay World" (p. 14). These two angles are important in conceptualising the Malaysian nation as Abdul Rahman holds that the state and nation of Malaysia formed today, were not formed in vacancies nor begin with the entry of the Chinese and Indians in the mid-nineteenth century but were formed through broad geographical bases and the old social foundation since the history of the Archipelago. In fact, Tanah Melayu had a whole and sovereign state system, which was followed by the indigenous people before the formation of Malaysia and Malaya.

However, the concept of Malaysian nation today is not holistic if it is only seen from the historical point of view because the formation of Malaysia has undergone unpredictable and undeniable changes. Thus, Abdul Rahman interprets that nation in accordance with the interpretation of the nation that "a mass community (political community) formed in history, which is linked through shared territorial co-existence, collective economy, and subordinate subjective elements [with] shared language, culture, literature, and common names" (p. 13). This chapter also provides a summary of each chapter as a preliminary description of the essence of the discussion of the chapters. Specifically, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 discuss the issues of nation-state conceptually and historically while Chapter 5 discusses the issues of nationality, authority, and limitations of authority based on the teaching of *The Malay History* or *Sulalatus*

*Salatin*. Subsequently, Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 also debate the issues of the nation-state in a contemporary context.

Chapter 2 discusses the relevance of the nation-state, the formation process of the nation, the emergence and development of the Malay nation, and the formation of the Malaysian nation. Under the discussion of the relevance of the nation-state, Abdul Rahman expresses his view that nation-state is a unit of reference that is relevant and important in areas such as politics, economy, social, education, and so on based on Paul Kennedy's statement that nation-state is the main point of identity of most individuals (Kennedy, 1993 as cited in Abdul Rahman, 2000). Abdul Rahman's view on the relevance of the nation-state concept is also a response to break down the argument of Kenichi Ohmae, a strategist and business guru who thinks that nation-state concept is merely the creation of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and is a form of transition organisation to control the economy affairs (Ohmae, 1995). According to Ohmae (1995 as cited in Abdul Rahman, 2000), the nation-state era will come to an end by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as each country is dependent and linked to information flow globally through the technological sophistication that formed a world without boundaries. Nevertheless, it is argued that the views of Abdul Rahman and Kennedy are correct on the relevance of the nation-state concept as it is still referred to as the key unit in many international, national, institutional, and individual affairs. Subsequently, in the discussion of the process of forming a nation, this book states that nation is perceived to form naturally under certain circumstances and develop with its characteristics. Every nation-state formed today deals with different formation processes and needs to be recognised by all parties. The Malaysian nation in particular has undergone a long history and is still undergoing a process of development at present. This is because, according to Abdul Rahman, the nation of Malay or Malaysia was not born simultaneously as Malaya achieved its independence and then formed Malaysia; instead, only a state was born. However, Abdul Rahman emphasises this does not mean that the formation of the Malaysian nation cannot be achieved.

Furthermore, on the emergence and development of the Malay nation in this chapter, Abdul Rahman also traces the Malay nation from ethnic and historical points of view. Based on this point, the Malay nation is "a group of people who have common characteristics in terms of history, culture, language, names, and feelings and inhabit the Malay realms" (p. 27). Abdul Rahman argues that the Malay nation has the potential to be a great nation and a vast state but certain circumstances and history have caused the process to be stunted, resulting the Malay world to be divided into separate countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Brunei at the present time. Hence, there is no Malay nation as in the history of

the Malay world but the Malay ethnic in the places mentioned. Next, in the discussion on the formation of the Malaysian nation, Abdul Rahman once again states the importance of continuity between the historical and present political points in the formation of the Malaysian nation. He noted that even though the Malays had intact collective memory that pushed them to commemorate the greatness of the ancient Malays and carry out the agenda of Malay nationalism, they have to take into account of the changes that have taken place and that are happening. This statement is rather controversial because Abdul Rahman calls on the Malays to tolerate other races. However, his purpose is nothing but just to create a situation that allows the Malays to accept new ideas on the concept of the Malaysian nation. This is because the formation of a united Malaysian nation is vital to the preparation for the development of a strong Malaysian nation-state in the future. Abdul Rahman defines the idea of a Malaysian nation as “all members of the races should have the same feeling with the same collective name (Malaysian nation or race) and share the territory, economy, culture, and fate of the future together with the common race” (p. 30). Through this idea, the Chinese and Indians can feel the national legitimacy of their position and allow them to practise their culture and language in line with the culture of the Malays and other Bumiputeras, thus enabling the formation of a Malaysian nation as respected by all. In addition, Abdul Rahman also states the need to reformulate the Malay nationalism and enhance it to Malaysian nationalism in which the question of Malay culture and *Bahasa Melayu* or now known as *Bahasa Malaysia* must be emphasised as these elements are a special feature of the Malaysian nation that reflects the inherent characteristics of the native characters of the region as well as adapting to the current reality.

Chapter 3 is Abdul Rahman’s debate on the Malay concept in the political struggle of the nation-state in Southeast Asia based on the experiences of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Before debating further on the nation-state’s political struggle in Southeast Asia, Abdul Rahman provides three approaches to the Malay concepts often used by various individuals in discussions related to the Malays. The first concept is the original language and cultural similarity in which the Malays are referred to as the people of brown coloured skin, comprising various tribes inhabiting the Malay world and speaking Malay-Polynesian as the basic language. The second concept is that the Malays refer to the nickname of a human group wherein the Malay group is dedicated to the descendants of the Malacca kings only from Bukit Siguntang. The final concept is Malay as defined by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. Based on Clause 160, Malays are individuals who speak Malay, are of Islamic religion, and practise Malay culture. Abdul Rahman argues that only the first and the third concepts are

appropriate to be adopted and to be applied as the basis of political arcades in the struggle for independence and formation of a nation-state in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Abdul Rahman then describes how Western imperialist colonisation was the cause of the split of the Malay World that had been explored by Malays in this region for the past 35,000 years ago and has its own state system. There were some fighting efforts of the Malay nation-state that were carried out by some fighter figures. Abdul Rahman illustrates that it started from the unification of the Archipelago pioneered by Patih Gadjah Mada from 1334-1364 to Bendahara Tun Perak for 50 years at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Then, it was continued with the fight of Malay nation-states by nationalist figures from each country besides fighting against the colonisers. Nevertheless, the fights of the Malay nation-states, which was aspired by the nationalist figures, was disturbed and buried just like the long colonialism of Spain and the United States of America in the Philippines, the Netherlands and Japan in Indonesia, and Portugal, the Netherlands, the British, and Japan in Malaysia had created a deterrent change. These changes include demographic changes, economic conditions, geography, and ideals of struggle in the political realities faced by the nationalist fighters and people of those countries. Thus, Abdul Rahman states in the current context, the Malays can be viewed politically and culturally. Politically, the Malay concept is seen in the context of a certain nationalism while culturally, it is a vast dimension that includes the clusters of Malay groups in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, particularly, the Malays are one of the races that have become the definition of Malaysian nation along with other races such as Chinese, Indian, Kadazan, Iban, and others in the effort to build a Malaysian nation.

Continuing from Chapter 2 that touches on the cultural and linguistic elements of Malaysia as a distinctive feature of the Malaysian nation; in Chapter 4, Abdul Rahman debates on the relevance of national literature that encompasses both elements as a medium of the Malaysian nation formation. Abdul Rahman highlights on the importance of culture, language and literature as subjective elements that reinforce the objective base of the development of a nation. This argument starts with Benedict Anderson who maintained that race is a human community that is imagined; the image of a race can be created in the human minds (Anderson, 2006). Based on this argument, Abdul Rahman considers that a community cannot be imagined blankly but there should be integration between objective base and subjective elements that support the imagination. Hence, the objective basis refers to a community sharing the same place, running the same economy and having a common subjective element. As such, Abdul Rahman in this book elevates the importance of a national literature in the construction of the

Malaysian race as it is a source that can form national unity and reinforce the continual modern civilisation between history and reality.

Functioning as a unifying ideology tool, the national literature must contain the experiences and aspirations of a nation that reflect both, the elements of history and the present reality. In particular, Abdul Rahman argues that the old national literature should be well-maintained in order to be a reference to the Malaysian nation from a historical point of view, while today's national literary writing and publication should integrate the elements of fundamental history as well as the diversity of elements that exist in the current time by including all ethnic groups that make up the Malaysian nation. According to Abdul Rahman, although *Bahasa Melayu* or *Bahasa Malaysia* is a distributor in national literature due to its status as the national language, it does not mean that the role of Chinese, Tamil, and other languages is marginalised. The use of Malay language is one of the important elements of national literary writing because of its function to unite the Malaysian nation. However, the use of other languages in the national literary writing is celebrated as the reinforcement of the diverse national subjective image of the Malaysian nation. Indirectly, this shows national literature is creatively delivered through a height of language which evidently has risen the dignity of every race in the Malaysian nation.

After debating the importance of national literature as a medium of building and strengthening the Malaysian nation, Abdul Rahman introduces a national literary piece of *Sulalatus Salatin*, also known as *The Malay History* in Chapter 5. *The Malay History* was chosen to be discussed as it is a national literary about the country and the power that is still influential and is still studied until today because of its timeless contents. According to Abdul Rahman, *The Malay History* sets out several lessons from the historical point of view about the state, power, and limitations of authority that are still appropriate to be practiced today and in the future in the context of nation-state discussions. Abdul Rahman discusses in detail of the concept *waad* along with its principles, implementation, and the good and bad effects when complying with and denying the principle of *waad* in issues of the nation, power, and limitations of authority. In the traditional state system, *waad* is the principle of determining the state system and the Malay royal system which clearly places the responsibility and rights of the king, nobilities, and the people. Although it is quite different from the modern Malaysian state system today which uses the democratic representation system in which the general election becomes a verifier of the election of a leader, *waad* which means "the willingness of both parties, which is the ruling party and the ruled party, in reaching agreement and making fidelity" (p. 66) is the basis for the sustainability of monarchy institutions, nobility institutions, and people institutions. According to Abdul Rahman, the concept of *waad* is not biased in

which only one party will benefit, but it supports the principle in which the power of the king, the king's right to demand loyalty, and the king's responsibility is a reward for the loyalty offered by the people. If the king neglects his responsibility to the people, they can cancel the loyalty. Based on some stories about the king and the people in *The Malay History*, the power of the king will remain respectful if the king cares for the people's interests and cares for their welfare and vice versa. This chapter is well developed as Abdul Rahman provides examples of leadership from the Malacca government. For example, in the Malay kingdom of Malacca, the reign of Sultan Muhammad Syah, Sultan Muzaffar Syah, Sultan Mansor Syah, and Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah received unwavering loyalty and respect from the Chinese, Siamese, and Majapahit governments for the well-being of the people. Meanwhile, Sultan Mahmud and Sultan Ahmad were rejected for neglecting their responsibility and not taking care of the welfare of the people, which eventually caused the Malacca government to disappear in the world. According to Abdul Rahman, the largest lesson of *The Malay History* is the interdependence between the king, the nobilities, and the people during the Malay Sultanate of Malacca era, making Malacca a powerful kingdom. The betrayal committed by one party led to the destruction of the Malacca Malay nation. Abdul Rahman associates the lesson with the context of nation-state today, noting on the importance of the country's leaders to safeguard the welfare of the people and carry out good responsibilities when given the mandate and trust of the people to hold the post.

Next, Abdul Rahman discusses the socio-cultural and political transformation and the nation-state's competitiveness in Chapter 6. According to Abdul Rahman, country's competitiveness needs to be enhanced from every angle as a proactive and positive strategy in the face of globalisation. As a developing country; if Malaysia does not take that step, internal force moves can jeopardise the aspired nation-state's unity. The discussion of this chapter is divided into two parts: first, on the socio-cultural and political transformation, and second, on a major challenge in facing the transformation. Abdul Rahman argues that in terms of socio-cultural and political transformation, there were some significant changes experienced by Malaysia. From an economic point of view, Malaysia progressed from an agricultural-based and raw material producing country to a large manufacturing and services-based industry economy. In order to clarify this statement, Abdul Rahman provides an example of the pattern of employment undergoing changes where there is an increase in the percentage of white- and blue-collar workers who drive the industrial and service sectors. Meanwhile, agricultural workers showed a decrease in numbers. In addition, he also provided an example of significant changes in the structure of the Malaysian societal class, where majority of the Malays who

once worked as farmers had begun to engage in other sectors of professional and managerial employment with the Chinese, Indians and others. These three changes are an evidence of the existence of the socioeconomic and political transformation in Malaysia which also shows that the New Economic Policy is a successful socially-engineered plan. Abdul Rahman argues that this transformation is important because it had contributed positively to the development process of a Malaysian nation or race and creating unity between them. According to Abdul Rahman, the socioeconomic transformation that has taken place had raised Malaysia's competitive climate and among its causes are the improvement in education, the socio-cultural changes and government strategies to adjust industrial needs and modernisation.

In terms of big challenges facing the transformation, Abdul Rahman quotes on the government, university leaders, and scholars as important parties who have the credibility to address the challenge. Abdul Rahman outlines six transformational challenges that need to be addressed by them. First, pursuing the process of democratisation or empowerment of the education system, especially at high levels in order to accommodate the increase in the number of students. Second, focusing on a broader emphasis on science and technology education in order to align with high technology-based economic changes. Third, ensuring the under-privileged groups have the same opportunity and are not marginalised so that they are able to get out of a difficult life and become more successful as well as creating ethnic balance. Fourth, ensuring the quality of education is maintained, despite an increase in the number of students so that educational institutions are able to accommodate more students and they are empowered with quality knowledge that is in line with the market demand. Fifth, ensuring the coordination between policy planning and actual market needs by policy planners on human resource requirements in order to provide appropriate human capital supply by educational institutions can be well managed in line with market needs. The last challenge is to ensure that the education system assists in the development of human beings and the advancement of human civilisation rather than simply improving the skills and knowledge of the students. After highlighting these challenges, referring to the fourth challenge, Abdul Rahman emphasises that scholars in particular, play an important role in providing quality and up-to-date education. Scholars are urged to constantly update and deliver creative knowledge through discourse, research and writing because the educational system seems to affect the competitive climate. Abdul Rahman adds to the very end of this chapter; in order to enable a country's competitive climate to grow steadily, healthy competition among regional countries is needed, which may start with good cooperation between countries. Therefore, cooperation between Malaysia and member countries of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in particular in the



fields of politics, economy, commerce, culture and education is a positive mechanism to jointly enhance the current competitive climate and in the future in the face of globalisation.

In Chapter 7, Abdul Rahman examines the value, education, and development of a nation-state where these three factors have an important link. Abdul Rahman emphasises the importance of education in inculcating the cultural value of the local community which is the foundation of the Malaysian nation-state in the context of rapid social changes and globalisation. This is because education can produce individuals who grow with a sense of balance and holistic, equipped with knowledge and skills, and have a superior value system and noble character. Indirectly, it can provide human capital that does not only meet the job market but also provides citizens with value and character that are in line with the aspirations of human development, nation-state development and strong civilisation. Therefore, universities and scholars or academicians are expected to be the institutions and individuals responsible for the generation and dissemination of knowledge, the guardians of superior civil values and the intellectual proliferation.

In the discussion of the value and globalisation process; it connects humans around the world without any boundaries, except for physical presence, which has resulted in the crisis of value and social change. Abdul Rahman expresses concern over this situation as value plays an important role in the local cultural, economic and political system. He cites on Daniel Bell's argument on the importance of value by saying that "the thing that gives direction to the economy is the cultural value system that serves as a platform for the economy. Economic policy is only efficient as a means; however, whether the economic (system) can be fair depends on the cultural value system that used it" (1996, as cited in Abdul Rahman, 2000). This argument shows that values do not just drive the local economy but also determine the direction of the economy. Based on this argument, Abdul Rahman debates for the importance of cultural values at strengthening the Malaysian nation, in particular its cultural value through long history; cultural unity and indigenous traditions, then in harmony with the lives of local communities from time to time. Abdul Rahman states that the Asian set of values underlying the values of Malaysian nation such as respecting parents, collectivism, harmonious, caring, and upholding religion are also impacted by the process of globalisation. Abdul Rahman states that this is because of cultural values can change according to the situation, thus there are some challenges that the Asian and Malaysian societies face. Among the challenges pointed out by Abdul Rahman are that firstly, local communities are ashamed to practice their own identity and local traditions but are excited to follow other cultures in the pursuit of modernity. Secondly, they are adhering to the values of consumerism without any limits. Therefore, as a

precautionary measure to the detrimental impact of globalisation on cultural value systems, Abdul Rahman calls for the education system through public education at universities to highlight components such as the philosophy of knowledge and the history of thought, civilisation studies, elements of globalisation, nation-state and nation building, cultural, value, identity and gender elements, technology and community elements as well as critical and creative thinking. With these components, general education will be more holistic in providing basic solid education to students as a complement to their chosen area of expertise.

Postmodernism and nation-state are the main point of discussion in the following chapter, Chapter 8. Abdul Rahman argues that postmodernism is a threat to the nation-state as it questions the paradigm of nation-state born in social sciences. In general, postmodernism disputes almost all modern social theories. There are four main points discussed by Abdul Rahman in this chapter: first, the birth of modern-industry and social sciences societies; second, the birth of post-industrial and postmodernism thinking societies; third, the challenge of social science knowledge by postmodernism; and fourth, social science responses to postmodernism challenges. Under the discussion of modern-industrial and social sciences societies, modern-industrial societies are modern and industrialised communities. According to Abdul Rahman, 'modern' refers to modern and intellectual culture; while 'industry' refers to rapid economic and technological advances. With the birth of these societies, social science is also born and developed to assert and shape modernity projects that are said to provide better lives and humanity in general. The social science and modern-industrial societies have important relevance as the basis of close ties between the social order needs that must exist in the new society and the needs of the entities responsible to ensure the order of social order. The state and relevant institution are the required entities. However, Abdul Rahman explains that modern-day industrialisation has undergone a transformation process from the industrial economy to the post-industrial economy where the economy is enhanced into service and information technology economy. This economy has caused the market to deregulate and liberalise and apply the digital system. According to Abdul Rahman, the economy and post-industrial society was born together with the postmodernism thinking which threatened and challenged the position of built modern social theory. This is because postmodernism questions the system of the country, especially under modern social theory which is seen to confine and limit individual's rights and desires.

There are three cores of modern social theory being challenged and deconstructed by postmodernism according to Abdul Rahman. The cores are state, history, conformity and deviants as well as race and nationalism. Abdul Rahman points out that postmodernism

criticises the country in managing the social order excessively and intolerant with noncompliance and disrupting individual freedom. In the context of history, postmodernism sees history under modern social theory as a great narrative that only raises those in power and win but lowers those who lose while history shows the dynamics of development and change of community that can be learned in the future according to modern social theory. The same thing about conformities and deviants; based on Abdul Rahman, modern social theory argues the interests of the people of a nation to abide and follow the norms and values accepted by the common people. Deviants are those who do things that are contrary to those norms and values. However, postmodernism rejects the set of norms and values by raising the concept of relativity. They regard no absolute limit for norms and values in society as it is a constructive social and changing in nature. The final postmodernism challenge to the modern social theory described by Abdul Rahman is on the basis of race and nationalism. Postmodernism says that the nation is a group of people who are united through the imagination of its origins whereas nationalism is a common dislike of neighbors. Although postmodernism thinking is challenging the foundation to the idea of a nation-state development specifically, Abdul Rahman states that there are several things that postmodernism can be discussed critically and placed in the right place. This is because Abdul Rahman holds that "... postmodernism must be addressed not as an antithesis or alternative to modernity, but as the latest dimension in modernity or extension to modernity." (p. 113).

In the last chapter, Chapter 9, Abdul Rahman discusses the role of the intellectual tradition, the nation-state building and the revival of Asia. According to Abdul Rahman, due to the old occupation of the West, problems such as setbacks, poverty, national unity segregation and nation-statehood are still faced by most Asian countries including Malaysia. Hence, he states that the construction of a nation-state is essential and that the involvement of individuals who fought for nationalism for their own nation-state is also indispensable. Nationalism figures such as Soekarno and Hatta in Indonesia; Rizal, Mabini and Vinzons in the Philippines; Ibrahim Yaacob, Burhanuddin Helmi and Onn Jaafar in Malaya; Sun Yat Sen, Mao Ze Dong and Chou En Lai in China; and Gandhi and Nehru in India are also considered an intellectual pioneer groups because they founded the fight for justice, freedom, prosperity and excellence for their respective nations and Asia generally. Abdul Rahman argues that their fights formed an intellectual tradition. This is because, in his opinion, these groups of fighters had been pushing economic growth in Asia and injecting new confidence into the local community to set the direction of the nation's progress and its own society without the West's indication. Abdul Rahman also associates the fights with the rise of Asia or called as the *Asian renaissance* and

quoted Mahathir as one of the major introducers of *Asian renaissance*. While agreeing with the rise of Asia, Abdul Rahman has also argues the cautious measures of the Asian community in general and Malaysia in particular on the adverse effects of confidence in the rise of Asia. The adverse effects that he expressed are the existence of self-esteem that leads to the neglect of society and nations. As such, Abdul Rahman emphasises the strengthening of the intellectual traditions and critical discourse culture among policy-makers and intellectuals to analyse and assess the weaknesses in successes achieved in order to preserve the successes gained and drive new successes in the future. He also noted that the cultivation of this culture is indispensable and its empowerment at institutions of higher learning such as universities should be supported by the government.

Subsequently, in the debate on the development of intellectual traditions and the role of the university in strengthening the rise of Asia and the construction of nation-states, Abdul Rahman states two important points to be addressed. First, intellectuals need to understand in detail the dangers of neo-liberal globalisation aimed at crippling the idea of nationalism and nationality. Second, be vigilant with the Western consumerism ideology that includes intellectual products as well as goods and services. He argues that the rejection of the first matter is as a reflection of rejecting new colonialism (neo-liberal globalisation) that permeates and conquers the minds, values, cultures and nations subtly. Whereas rejection of consumerism is a reflection to reduce and eliminate the tendency of Asian society and intellectuals as a major consumer of Western material, spiritual and intellectual products. In order to make the rejections a success, Abdul Rahman has stated that the Asian community should create and produce its own goods, services and knowledge for the nation, own civilisation and even the world's civilisations based on positive values. This is because he feels this has indirectly made intellectuals to work harder in strengthening the field of knowledge and thereby reducing the practice of pursuing western scholars and intellectuals. Before closing his writing, Abdul Rahman has insisted on the importance of the role of the intellectuals in the process of nation-state building by stating "... we must continue to strive to create and add something to the treasures of knowledge and civilisation to create excellence in the field of knowledge on the one hand as well as to uphold justice, prosperity and the progress of our country's society in particular and Asia in general on the other side." (p. 122). In the final paragraph Chapter 9, referring to the call of Usman Awang, Promoedya Ananta Toer and Soedjatmoko on the importance of the intellectuals in the process of nation-state building, Abdul Rahman closes his writing with the phrase "... the tasks and challenges outlined ... over two decades ago still apply to us to see and practice today." (p. 123).

In conclusion, in this book, Abdul Rahman provides suitable statements, ample explanations and clear examples of the relevance of the nation and nation-state in general as well as the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia in particular. The book successfully explains in detail the meaning of the nation and nation-state which should be understood and embedded in the hearts of every Malaysian. The definition of Malaysian nation, Malaysian nationalism and the nation-state of Malaysia by Abdul Rahman clearly illustrates the continuity of history and the present reality that must be recognised and agreed upon by all Malaysians. Without forgetting Malaysia's origin which is rich with the ancient history of the Malays and the natives as well as the cultures of the Malay Archipelago, Abdul Rahman integrates the presence of Chinese and Indians who have chosen to settle in Malaya (now Malaysia) in defining the Malaysian nation, Malaysian nationalism and Malaysia as a nation-state. The definitions provided by Abdul Rahman are in line with the narrative of the nation according to Etienne Balibar. She also debates the importance of historical aspects in the definition and narrative of the nation. According to Balibar (1990), "the history of nations, beginning with our own, is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject. The formation of the nation thus appears as the fulfilment of a "project" stretching over centuries." (p. 329). This passage shows that Balibar also agrees that the historical aspect is important in defining nation or race and is regarded as an interconnected project across the ages. The parallelism of nation's definition and narrative between Abdul Rahman and Balibar shows the significance of historical continuity in defining nation and nation-state of today.

Abdul Rahman is among the Malaysian scholars who clearly explains the meaning of the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia and in our opinion, he has succeeded in giving the holistic and inclusive definitions of the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia. Although some of his statements are rather controversial for touching on the sensitive issue of the largest race in Malaysia, the Malays; however, the things he speaks are true and focusing for the Malays to accept openly the presence of other races who are actually proud and patriotic towards Malaysia as their country. In addition, he has been expressed the semi-controversial statement because, in my opinion, he wanted to induce the enthusiasm from the Chinese and Indians to love Malaysia without them forgetting and questioning the privileges of the Malays and Bumiputeras as the original settlers of the region. Among other goals of Abdul Rahman is foremost for the sake of Malaysia's development. His view for this is very clear. He is firm in the idea of continuity between the history and the present reality in defining the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia. His definition of the Malaysian

nation describes a situation in which various races will be united and mobilised together in an effort to ensure Malaysia's development and modernisation process. This definition is decent, transparent and critical because the absence of unity among all races is believed to be able to bury Malaysia's desire to achieve a developed country status by 2020. Mahathir's proposed notion as well as a turning point on why the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia are defined by Abdul Rahman.

In addition, through the writing of this book, the tendency of Abdul Rahman as an academic expert can be observed. He pointed out the importance of academic duties in the discussions on nation-state. It is clear that he has often stated the importance of knowledge, critical and creative discussions among scholars, the importance of university as the centre of expansion and dissemination of knowledge, as well as sharing of knowledge among scholars across the globe in discussing the nations and nation-states. His call to other scholars showed his deep seriousness and keenness as an academician who wanted to empower knowledge and educate the public on the importance of knowledge in life for the sake of the nation and nation-state progress. In our opinion, based on the present situation, where there is a boisterous discussion among Malaysians who question the rights of privilege of the Malays and the fight for the rights of other races, especially in New Malaysia; it is a requirement for Malaysians to know the definitions and the essence of the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia discussions as outlined by Abdul Rahman in this book. This is mainly because the book is able to clearly explain the fundamental aspects of the discussion. This is vital so that any discussions on nation and nation-state are discussed based on the guided framework. Finally, this book is an essential manuscript on the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia and it should be read by individuals, students and academicians who are keen to know and study the Malaysian nation and nation-state of Malaysia as the narration is considered acceptable by the policy-makers, political analysts, academicians and public. Nevertheless, Malaysians are highly encouraged to read this book in order to better understand the roles and functions of citizens as well as for the sake of the people's unity and the progress of the country.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This book review is supported by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) 1/2017 (project Vote 1650), University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

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