In this paper, national identity is conceptualized in terms of competing representations of the putative "nation" based on which socio-political contests unfold and bureaucracy functions.

Two key historical happenings marked the politics of national identity in West Malaysia: the 1969 racial riots and the Islamization policies. After 1969, comprehensive ethnic-based preferential policies were formalized, while Malay political primacy justified on the basis of indigeneity became entrenched. The Islamization Policy implemented from the 1980s mainstreamed the idea of Malaysia as a negara Islam. Executive curtailment of judicial autonomy led to institutional mutations dubbed by a scholar as the "silent re-writing of the Constitution."

During the 1990s, despite selected socio-cultural measures of "liberalization" more accommodative of non-Malay interests, ethnic preferential treatments remained prevalent. Moreover, the conflation of the logic of Malay primacy with that of Islamic supremacy in institutional practices resulted in a rise in inter-religious contentions. Historic regime change became conceivable following recent political development. Nonetheless, prospects for radical revision of existing inter-religious dynamics remain dim because Islamic conservatism among Malay politicians transcends party-lines.
The Islamization of Malay identity and the continuation of Malay affirmative action in Malaysia have left its minorities in marginalized positions socio-politically. Singaporeans do not want to see such developments inversely replicated in Singapore and thus support limits on freedom for chauvinistic activisms. In 1960, the Housing Development Board (HDB) was created, which became part of the Ministry of National Development. Between just 1960 and 1965, the HDB built over 50,000 housing units for low-income Singaporeans to rent. The Home Ownership for the People Scheme eventually transformed these units, and others after them, from rentals into potential real property. National identity, to whatever degree it exists, is constituted by the interlacing forces of history and collective choice (Parekh, 1994). For media producers, the prominence of national identity in the media content is encouraged by the knowledge that they are constructing news for a national audience with which they share national membership (Entman, 1991; Rivenburgh, 1999). Secondly, as a primary domain of the public sphere, the media produce and reinforce the relational opposition of ‘us’ and the ‘others’.