

The Power of Political Cartoons: A Case Study of Zunar's 'Twit Twit Cincin'

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ABSTRACT

The following study of selected works of art by Zulkiflee Anwar Haque or better known as Zunar, a Malaysian political cartoonist from his book 'Twit Twit Cincin'. This study is guided by the visual rhetoric theory that has three areas of study - nature, function and evaluation. The study looks at selected cartoons that addressed political figures, politics and social issues. The research looked at the way the caricatures portrayed Malaysian politicians, his perspectives on the political and social issues and how these issues were addressed. The researcher also looked at metaphors used by the cartoonist to communicate his ideas to the audiences. The study found that Zunar's portrait of Malaysian politicians is not always positive. He is critical but not in an inflammatory way. The metaphors found in Zunar's work are found to be common themes and simple to understand. They are also very well-known, visually appealing and a tool to tie his messages together and to get his ideas across. Zunar has managed to resist the oppression of the state through his cartoons while looking at institutional reform, puts forth an alternative articulation of history and nation that juxtapose the current government.

Keywords: *Zunar, political cartoonist, political and social issues, Twit Twit Cincin, metaphors.*

INTRODUCTION

Political cartoons have been around since the 18th century. James Gillray (1756-1815) is considered the father of political cartooning who directed his satires against George III and Napoleon during the French Revolution. The invention of the printing press added to the popularity and distribution of political cartoons. Since then, they have been an essential part of every publication. Political cartoons are visuals that comment on political events/issues, while hopefully getting the reader to laugh a bit.

Political cartoons are also an art form that can become a tool to visualize culture that would eventually affect knowledge, identity construction and shape aesthetic sensibilities (Mohd Khalis & Mustaffa, 2017). It can also provoke emotional responses from audiences, the clarity of the messages communicated quickly and precisely make them significant tools of communication. Political cartoons have a rich history of being interesting while visually entertaining. The responses to political cartoons are far-reaching and sometimes have devastating effects. Researchers have found political cartoons to illustrate a particular visual rhetoric of influence that articulates opinions and at the same time, accusations (Brantner & Lobinger, 2014).

This research looks at the political cartoonists Zulkiflee Anwar Haque or better known as Zunar, to identify his depiction of the Malaysian government. Zunar has faced many challenges throughout his 20-year career. His books, *Funny Malaysia*, *Perak Darul Kartun* and *Cartoon-o-*

Phobia, were banned by the Malaysian government, his office raided twice by the police, the printers were also ransacked and vendors across the country were warned not to sell his books. On 24 September 2010, Zunar was arrested by the police and charged for sedition, three hours prior to the launching of his just-published book "Cartoon-O-Phobia" and jailed for one day. He faced possible charges under the Sedition Act of 1948 which carries a maximum of three-year imprisonment. During the arrest, the police seized 66 copies of the book. On 10 February 2016, he was arrested at his home in Kuala Lumpur, and detained for three days without charge. He was later charged with nine political images he had posted online on his Twitter account, with a potential penalty of up to 43 years in prison. Five of his books have also been banned because their contents were "detrimental to public order" (Blackstone, 2015). The charges were eventually dropped after the change of government in 2018.

In May 2016 he was the recipient of the Cartooning for Peace award in Geneva (Crispin, 2015) which makes him an important cartoonist to study. His book *Twit Twit Cincin (TTC)* is the focus of this research. Sample works were analyzed to answer the research questions put forth. The cartoons chosen addressed different topics and themes portrayed in his work.

a) *Background*

The lives of political cartoonists have been under constant threat due to the power they possess in presenting complex ideas and making them easily comprehensible by the masses. The reactions to the Prophet Mohamed cartoons in Danish newspapers and the attacks of Charlie Hebdo are good examples of the ability of cartoons to incite emotional response among the public. More than 10 years after Jyllands-Posten Daily published cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed on September 30, 2005, the shockwaves are still echoing. The 12 cartoons included portrayals of the Prophet wearing a bomb inside a turban and as a knife-wielding nomad flanked by veiled women. The images sparked deadly protests as angry demonstrators burned Danish flags and torched diplomatic offices. The cartoonist was forced to go into hiding as there was a price put on their heads (Navasky, 2013).

Boycotts of Danish products led to a plunge in exports. Foiled terror plots against Jyllands-Posten, as well as the 2015-gun attack against French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, which reprinted the Danish cartoons in 2006. These events altered the conversation on art as a political medium and asserted the power of political cartoons (Hanson, 2011). Cartoonists have been jailed and their lives threatened and taken on more than one occasion. Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali was one of the greatest uncompromising cartoonists who spared no Arab leadership, Israeli or American. After numerous threats, he was gunned down in London by an unknown assailant on July 22, 1987 (Najjar, 2007).

Syrian cartoonist Ali Ferzat was attacked in 2011 by Syrian security forces that broke both his hands and left him by the roadside after telling him that this was just a warning. The Sri Lankan cartoonist Jiffry Yoonoos was beaten and stabbed, his family threatened and terrorized, forcing them to go into hiding; because he drew a series of cartoons critical of President Ranasinghe Premadasa (Navasky, 2013).

In Malaysia, the situation is not as dire. In September 2010, police raided Zunar's office and arrested him under the Sedition Act 1948, a leftover British colonial rule that criminalizes any conduct with a seditious tendency to excite disaffection against/brings into hatred/contempt the ruler or government (Crispin, 2015). This was hours before he could launch his book *Cartoon-O-*

Phobia. The Kuala Lumpur High Court rejected his suit to challenge the government's ban on his book. Zunar's reaction to all the harassment was to compile additional critical cartoons and file a lawsuit against the government to lift the ban. The government refused his request.

Cartoonists often try to locate a character in popular culture or entertainment whose circumstances most resamples the political situation at hand. Sometimes they focus on political figures physical looks and demeanour that is clear in the political cartoon. Cartoons published in newspapers and books are the critiques of these issues while characters and organizations are chronicles of current history. It is a unique form of communication, which edges on the border of fine art (Ashfaq & Hussein, 2013).

The political scientist's Soon Yean wrote several articles on Zunar from a political standpoint focusing on how Zunar has developed his political cartoons within Malaysia's repressive political structures. He has managed to resist the oppression of the state through his cartoons while looking at institutional reform, puts forth an alternative articulation of history and nation that juxtapose the current government. Zunar has his definition and vision of what Malaysia's culture, history, citizenry and nation should be (Yean, 2011).

Most of Zunar's cartoons focuses on the accusation of Prime Minister Najib Razak of deviating the state fund for millions of dollars. He claims that the Malaysian people have been oppressed from voicing out their opinions by the government and therefore adopt other methods to express their feelings through drawings, cartoons, posters, even video clips (Ramli & Muhammad, 2019).

b) Objective

The objective of the study is to investigate the political cartoons in *TTC* and identify how they depict the Malaysian government and politicians. In order to fulfil these objectives, the following questions were asked.

RQ1: Does *TTC* depict a negative and seditious image of Malaysian politicians?

RQ2: What issues are addressed in *TTC*?

RQ3: What metaphorical elements are used in *TTC*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The saying a picture is worth a thousand words is an understatement especially in the case of political cartoons. Found in newspapers across the globe, the medium of cartoons reduces entire articles to one picture. The powerful message in one or a few frames are drawn may be equivalent to or sometimes more effective than several editorials. This is because political cartoons are educational and thought-provoking of current political issues. They are extremely potent due to the straightforward approach they have in dealing with issues. These qualities lead them to be formidable tools in persuading the political public opinions of viewers and empowering or distorting the image of political and public figures (Neighbor, Karaca & Lang, 2003)

Political cartoons address serious issues facing the nation that otherwise would be incomprehensible to the average citizens if discussed in articles through written words. Cartoons are also appreciated as artistic objects and historical records of current attitudes, prized for their

humorous skill, dreaded but also valued for their power to influence public opinion. Cartoons equally boost the reputation and appeal of newspapers. However, cartoons can also trigger social protest and legal action on account of the critical positions they adopt towards powerful personalities and/or organizations. Using tools of satire, humor, symbols, social labels or stereotypes, caricatures and captions in the medium of cartoons get the point of the cartoonist across with precision (Swain, 2012).

a) The Power of Political Cartoons

The invention of the printing press in the 16th century gave the power of reproduction to magnified heights. Political cartoons with a rich history dating back to the 18th century have withstood the test of time as tools of self-expression and were proven instrumental in swaying public opinion. It is said that Benjamin Franklin was the first American to draw and publish political cartoons persuading colonists to revolt against the British (Neighbor, Karaca & Lang, 2003).

The power of political cartoon comes from their accessibility and the ability of the average man to understand them. Cartoons communicate quickly and precisely; those are traits that make cartoons powerful. In the processes, they polarize public opinion and influence economies. They are illustrated by particular visual rhetoric of influence that articulate opinions and accusations. Also present are political messages in a primarily visual, entertaining, humorous form, partly hiding the political and ideological content (Brantner & Lobinger, 2014).

b) The Relationship Between Verbal and Visual in Political Cartoons

The composition and layout on a newspaper page of political cartoons dictate the relationship between verbal and visual elements from an aesthetic point of view. The visual and verbal parts of the dialogue also play complementary to each other. Both help the audience understand the meaning behind a given political cartoon. The caption is consequently seen as a humorous annotation on the otherwise non-humorous drawing while the opposite can be also true. The caption is often a small part but greatly affects the cartoon (Tsakona, 2009). The captions, in text, speech bubbles, signs, placards, seldom consist of more than two clauses and sometimes of a single word but are necessary to the cartoon's coherence (Swain, 2012).

Cartoons have a visual affect that is easily inscribed in the faces, gestures and body postures of depicted participants. Visual approval and judgment capable and authorial are inscribed in iconic gestures and expressions, stereotypes, metaphors, cliché's and symbols, which come with attitudinal meanings familiar to viewers in certain contexts. Visual judgment can be inscribed using caricature marking certain personality traits known or assigned by the cartoonist about political public figures such as stubbornness, shrewdness, dullness or deception. A rich array of visual triggers and resources have been shown to play a major role in the flagging and intensifying attitude of the viewers (Swain, 2012).

The verbal and visual mode in cartoons and how they interact to influence and assess in understanding the meaning works in the same way between ideation and appraisal works (Swain, 2012). In the research conducted by Tsakona, it is concluded that the close examination of the verbal and visual elements of cartoons also revealed that humorous tools, such as embellishment, illogicality and metaphor, are common for the creation of humor. These finding indicate the important role that verbal and visual aspects play in creating humor (Tsakona, 2009).

It seems that once a cartoonist finds a good combination, they tend to hold on to it. A representation of beliefs and a commonly held view of the world becomes a part of the visual literacy of a given society. Tsakona also found in the data examined, that puns and recycled fixed expressions are often combined with visual metaphors. This is based on analogy and conceptual metaphor. Puns and recycled expressions usually play with the literal and the metaphorical meaning of a word or a phrase (Tsakona, 2009).

The study by Ramli and Muhammad (2019) proved that cartoons depicting local political issues have its impact on influencing others which might or might not in any way threaten the position of the current ruling government. The audience could pick-up the meanings that the cartoonist tries to deliver through his artworks depending on the interpretation level and usage of the political cartoon. The audience may use the cartoons as reading materials, entertainment, or a method to develop one's attitudes, behaviours or beliefs.

It is clear why political cartoons are for the most part not universal, as they tend to be representational of one culture, just like humor itself is culture. Also, the subject matter of political figures and concerns defers from one country to another. However, few cartoonists focus on the human element which is common ground among all cultures. Generally, these are the cartoons that tend to touch us the most and we remember them not only because of the perfect balance they create in using visual and verbal but because the point is profound (Neighbor, Karaca & Lang, 2003).

c) Using Popular Culture to Get Points Across

Political cartoonists draw focus on the political issues of the day by using popular culture and entertainment to tie the dry political issues with references to popular and relevant cultural icons that people easily recognize. The use of popular culture makes the cartoonist job much easier by benefiting from the storyline that is already made popular and easily understandable to mass audiences. Popular TV shows, movies, books and advertisements do all the work in laying the foundation of characters and plot out the stories and cement them in the mind of the audiences. Political cartoonists incorporate that back story into their work making an instant connection with the audiences (Conner, 2007).

Cartoon depictions of politicians as superheroes are common because the figures are instantly recognizable, first, due to the skill of the cartoonist as a caricaturist and second, due to the choice of superheroes as a cultural reference that is widely known. This wide knowledge of the subjects and their actions and meaning allows the cartoonists to compare the actions of politicians and superheroes for the audience knowledge. It has been demonstrated that the iconography and aesthetic of the comic-book hero is extremely effective when highlighting the failings of people and politicians in the public eye (Plumb, 2004).

The political cartoonist for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Rob Rogers said that incorporating popular culture into political cartoons adds another connection with readers interested in politics. The audiences do not expect to see political issues tied to popular movies or images, but that unexpected link gets their attention. Decoding any given cartoon depends on the mutual understanding between the audiences and the cartoonist. In order to decode the cartoon, the audiences must be familiar with the literary or cultural source to which it refers (Conner, 2007).

Cartoonists try to locate a character in a popular culture whose circumstances most resemble the political situation at hand, sometimes they focus on a political figure's physical look and manner – this is clear in the political cartoon for the 2004 US presidential elections. Senator John Kerry with his rather long face and standoffish stiff style is often compared to the Frankenstein Monster. In a political cartoon by Steve Benson depicting Kerry announcing his running mate John Edwards, Kerry is depicted as the Frankenstein Monster in need of some political juice or electricity (Conner, 2007).

d) Metaphors in Political Cartoons

Visual metaphors are very contextual. That is especially true in the case of political cartoons that require the audiences to understand the background and socio-political atmosphere where the cartoon is created. The use of the metaphor is a natural language occurrence that allows us to distinguish abstract concepts and ideas through strong comparison by mapping such abstract ideas to concrete, real and prevailing ones. *The Daily Trust*, a Nigerian newspaper published a cartoon on 27th April 2010 that depicted the ruling party as a huge rat sitting on and grasping a big bag of currency while making a phone call. The metaphor of rats as thieves who steal is used to depict the ruling party as corrupt and misappropriating funds of the country (Sani & Yar'aduwa, 2014).

The artist Pammesberger from the *Kurier*, an Austrian paper on January 4, 1998, addressed the immigration problems facing the European Union as a metaphorical concept of a fortress. In this cartoon, a picture of the drawbridge being drawn up to signified closing the fortress and a star falling from the icon of the European Union. The gate for Schengen and the tower perched dangerously on the rocks that act for Italy. The fundamental idea behind visual signs appears to be the lack of unity among European Union countries in the face of an immigration crisis and an increased number of refugees. The caption: '*Europe? Union? Gemeinschaft?*' ['Europe? Union? Community?'], questioning the European Union, implied either through the verbal or visual context (El Refaie, 2003).

e) Gender in Political Cartoons

Women's subservient position in society is so widely implicit that female images have been used as visual symbols for rather weak countries. In political cartoons, the representation of the German Democratic Republic in its process of reunion found that West Germany is portrayed regularly as male and East Germany as female. West Germany has superior economic power, as do men in a patriarchal society, while women occupy a frailer, economically dependent position, as East Berlin (Gilmartin & Burnn, 1998).

All these concepts and elements come into play when drawing an effective political cartoon as with the work chosen from Zunar's *TTC* to see how they aided with communicating his ideas to his audience.

METHODOLOGY

a) Theoretical Framework

The visual rhetoric theory describes how visual images communicate meaning. Visual rhetoric is the term used to describe the study of visual imagery with the discipline of rhetoric. Visual rhetoric refers not only to the visual object as a communicative artefact but also to a viewpoint

scholar take on visual imagery or visual data. The term visual rhetoric establishes a theoretical perspective involving the analysis of the symbolic or communicative aspects of visual artefacts. It is a critical-analytical tool for approaching and analyzing visual data that highlights the communicative dimensions of images or objects (Hill & Helmers, 2008).

The visual rhetoric theory is a new area of study within the ancient discipline of rhetoric. No one author is credited with the development of the theory. In 1970 at the national conference on rhetoric, a formal call to include visual imagery in the study of rhetoric is made, until then rhetoric is conceived exclusively as verbal discourse. The support of rhetorical theorist, Kenneth Burke and Douglas Ehninger whose standings among traditional rhetoricians is undisputed as they proposed definitions of rhetoric that did not privilege verbal symbols but included visual. Ehninger defined rhetoric as how humans may impact each other's opinion and manners through the premeditated use of symbols (Foss, 2005).

Foss stated that while studying visual objects, rhetorical scholars tend to have three areas of study - nature, function and evaluation. These are the factors that guide this study. The **nature** of the image incorporates the literal components, to explain the distinguishing features of an image. Studying the nature of the image involves two sections, the existing elements, and the implied elements. Existing elements are descriptive like shape, sizes and lines while the implied or suggested elements of an image are the ideas, concepts and hints that the audiences are likely to conclude (Hill & Helmers, 2008).

Another area of study is the **function** of the image; a rhetorical perspective the image is communicating. This is a primary focus of visual rhetoric to understand the function of an image; it is necessary to understand the fundamental and stylistic nature of the image itself. For Foss, the function holds a literal definition as it embodies the function or perhaps the purpose of the image for an audience. The emotion an image aims to evoke is its function. The **evaluation** of the image is the third area evaluating the image to determine if it serves its function. For example, if the nature of an image is red, shadowy and tense, the function of the image is to instil fear and horror in the audience, the evaluation would determine whether the audience is scared or affected (Foss, 2005).

Visual rhetoric generally falls under a group of terms, which encompass visual literacy, the use of the word including visualization. This includes understanding creative choices made with the image such as colouring, shading and object placement. Through the analysis of photographs, films, paintings drawings and even sculpture; scholars are exploring many ways in which visual elements influence our daily lives and attitudes. Visual rhetoric looks at images as sensory expressions of cultural meaning, as opposed to purely aesthetic considerations (Hill & Helmers, 2008).

b) Research Design

Zunar's work is an artistic expression of his opinion and therefore open to interpretation by viewers. We seek to explain and understand its phenomena, the narrative in cartoon format postulated through observation and content analysis. The qualitative method of research is exploratory, and it is used when we do not know what to expect, to define the problem or develop an approach to the problem.

TTC is published in 2017 and sold only online with 128 pages of political cartoons. This study only looked at 20 of these cartoons due to the clear metaphors understood by the international audience. The small amount of Malay language used was translated into English. Each of the cartoons was analyzed to see the relationship between the image, words and the meaning they tried to convey. The metaphors used were also identified and the issues addressed.

Cartoons chosen reflected themes of political or social issues and depictions of political figures. The cartoon's messages were analyzed if they were seditious or showed the government or politicians in a negative light. The analyses were based on the three elements of the visual rhetoric theory that would help understand what the image was communicating.

In political cartoons, visual metaphors are expressed through visual representation of the idea. Cartoons are great at metaphorically representing ideas and illustrating complex and sometimes difficult to understand concepts by showing them in an image format. Metaphor theorists agree that metaphors tend to signify the unknown, unanswered, or difficult in terms of something more recognizable and easily imaginable (El Refaie, 2003).

The metaphorical representational significance retains analogical relations in its creation. Inquiries about the nature of metaphors and the effects of metaphorical methods for awareness and understanding can define visual metaphor as the depiction of an abstract notion through a tangible visual image, thus allows some analogy to that notion (Huxford, 2011).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Zunar often exaggerates or distorts certain elements of his drawings to make a point. Some pictures might include a character's facial features or other parts of the body. He uses several symbols, objects, and characters that frequently appeared within his drawings as placeholders for ideas or themes (Cheema, 2016). These symbols are decoded as below:

- **The Duck** is the symbol of the Prime Minister (PM)
- **The underwear** marked S.S. refers to '*Spender Saiful*', a direct reference to Saiful, the former political aide to Anwar Ibrahim. The cartoon emerged during Anwar's Sodomy II trial in November 2014.
- **The diamond ring** depicts the First Lady (FL). Zunar first included this into his cartoons in 2011 when Rosmah Mansor allegedly bought an RM73million diamond ring.
- **The character KTN** (Ketua Twitter Negara), makes a direct reference to the Chief of Police, Khalid Abu Bakar who said in February 2015 that he is monitoring Twitter (Twit Twit) for seditious comments following the imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim. This is also when Zunar was detained for allegedly making seditious statements regarding the trial on his Twitter account. Since then, the KTN has become a regular feature in Zunar's cartoons.
- Rosmah opened the door to ridicule and fun following a bad public relations blunder where she allegedly complained of the **RM1,200** spent to dye her hair to those present in her speech. In February 2015, the cartoonist boldly started the mockery in his sketches.
- **W.C.M.** the acronym for "*Wa Cari Makan*" (I am just making a living). The character symbolizes a leech that showed up in November 2015 during the Public Accounts Committee's probe on 1MDB. It began appearing following the Public Accounts Committee

chairperson Hasan Arifin saying “*Saya pun cari makan juga*” (I am just making a living too) when questioned whether the committee would probe Najib regarding the scandal.

- The **yellow balloon** started appearing when dancer Bilqis Hijjas was charged under Section 14 of the Minor Offences Act 1955 “with intent to insult” for dropping yellow balloons during a performance at a public event attended by Najib and Rosmah in August 2015. As a show of solidarity to the dancer and activist, Zunar used the tiny yellow balloon as a symbol of perseverance for Malaysians who demanded change in the country.
- **The sleeping Menteri Besar** (Head of State) is a tiny figure in the corner of the cartoon snoring away while his main message takes the limelight. Calling it “Mentidur Besar” (Big Sleepyhead) or “MB” for short. The character first made its debut after a video of the newly minted Kedah MB sleeping during a ceremony that became viral in February 2016.

The **nature** of the image incorporates as guided by Foss (2005), gives the literal components as seen in the cartoons chosen. The analysis of the first cartoon on page 63 (Appendix 1) of the book, labelled **Steal Wars: The Teruk One** (the worst one) across the whole page in prominent letters resampling the font used in the movie poster. The cartoon shows the PM as Donal Dedak Vader quaking and wearing the S.S. underwear over his costume, holding a bag labelled 1MDB in one hand and a lightsaber in the shape of a dollar sign. To his right is Yoda wearing a police cap and holding a phone with the famous Twit Twit in one hand and a key saying in “*Mantin we Maintain*” and below him, a small character of WCW trying to bite. To his left Rosmah is depicted as Ja Mah the Ja Hut with the RM1200 tag on her head and her larger-than-life diamond ring. A tiny man in the background caption is, “*May the fools be with you*”, Walt Disney presents the movie. The composition is simple and, in your face, using the rule of thirds. Primary colours outlining everything in black making it pop out. Proportions indicate importance with the PM’s character in the centre and the largest figure. This cartoon uses the popular movie Star Wars, which is famous pop culture as a metaphor for Malaysian politics. The symbols that were mentioned calls attention to corruption, scandal and misuse of government funds.

The cartoon titled **Malaysia** (Appendix 2), depicts a tree rotted by snakes and worms. There is a hole in the bottom of the tree titled *Putrajaya* (Putrajaya) representing the government. The branches on the tree are each titled with one of Malaysia’s industry and spending obligations like the education fund, Proton, the auto manufacturing company, and Tabung Haji (TH) funds that are all decaying. The snakes at the bottom represent W.C.M and KTN, the tree. The S.S. underwear is portrayed as flaying from the branch. The composition is a central one with the tree vertically placed in the middle of the page. The cartoon is a commentary on how corruption and mismanagement were rotting and destroying Malaysia.

The colourful cartoon titled **BR1M** (Appendix 3) shows the FL is drawn oversized to denote her role and importance, sitting on a cart with tires labelled *Toyol Tyre* (bloodsucking) while carrying a big bag of money labelled billions and expensive items flying around her – the diamond ring, Birkin bag, shoes and jewellery. A starving man is pulling the cart being motivated by a coin hanging from a string by the PM. The starving man is drawn in miniature also indicating his lack of importance. The KTN is also a miniature in black and white and hanging onto the bottom of the cart, followed by WCW crawling on the road. The S.S. underwear is flaying around. This shows how the Malaysian people are pulling along the first family enticed by the BRIM.

The cartoon titled **RM2.6Billion** (Appendix 4) is an unbalanced seesaw. On one side is the FL resting on a pile of money wearing her diamond ring, Birkin bag and her RM1,200 hair versus on the other side, barely hanging on are the education fund, living expenses, transportation fees, GST and petrol prices. The PM is also sitting on the money while singing. A commentary on how the government is misspending the country's resources on the first family instead of the Malaysian people.

Welcome to Malaysia (Appendix 5) shows the PM laughing and wearing the S.S. underwear while holding a bag of 4B Yuan (RM 2.6 Billion). The PM is looking at downtown Kuala Lumpur with all the names changed to Chinese names (Shanghai for Sungai, KL XIE XIE and Shenzhen for KL Sentral). Behind it is the hand of the FL wearing her famous diamond ring. This cartoon highlights the Malaysian China relationship and the selling of Malaysia to China by the PM.

GST (Appendix 6) has a fully coloured cake with 'Happy Birthday GST' written on it. There is also a decorated thief figurine with a mask carrying a bag of money, a diamond ring and a Birkin bag. The underwear is also there with the twit cell phone and the small figure on the ground labelled WCW. The cartoon indicating that the GST on Malaysia's goods and services tax is turning a year old but is nothing but theft by the government.

Debate (Appendix 7) sees four podiums labelled first, second, third week and one labelled weak. The first-week podium has an opposition leader screaming, "I have no fear of a debate". The second week the opposition is much quieter and saying, "*saya tidak wakili*" (I don't represent anyone), by the third week the opposition is hiding behind the podium and saying, "*Debates are not our culture*". The fourth podium is empty and the KTN is saying, "*The debate is cancelled for safety reasons*". The cartoon emphasizes how the opposition is intimidated and backed down from fighting for what they believe in.

The cartoon **Hasil Nilai Cekau 1Malaysia** (Appendix 8) questions the worth of Malaysia in comparison to the FL's belongings. The cartoon has a scale on one side to depict the people's spending obligations like the GST, prices of goods, toll and petrol, which were all going up. Gray blocks that are sad and impersonal represent the education fund cuts. On the opposite scale are jewellery, money, Birkin bag, private jet and the diamond ring is colourfully drawn with detail and care. This shows that government spending is not fair because the scale is balanced between FL's extravagant items and the Malaysian people's needs.

Monopoly (Appendix 9) has muted colours. It portrays the PM playing monopoly with the people. The people lost with cards of GST, rise in prices of good and fuel, transportation, and education fees. On the other side of the table, the PM is sitting with all his winning blocks of Malaysia's revenue and production - pension fund, TH, FELDA (Federal Land Development Authority), EPF (Employees' Provident Fund) and the 2.6Billion. He is wearing the S.S. underwear and is labelled *Donal Dedak*. The cartoon highlights how the government is getting everything while the people are burdened with more tax.

Hot Billion (Appendix 10) is labelled with all the Malaysian revenue-generating funds - FELDA, TH and EPF. The balloon is carrying the FL dressed in all her expensive jewellery, Birkin bag and RM1,200 hairstyle. She is holding on to the PM who is hanging down to cut off the weight with big scissors. The weight is the spending obligations represented by a student in his graduation cap labelled education fund. All the other strings have tiny people holding on to them

with labels - fare, sugar and petrol subsidies. The cartoon is a commentary on the disruption of wealth and government spending.

Rakyat vs Jimah (Appendix 11) is a stark comparison between the needs of the people represented by a family and a list of the expensive belongings of the FL. On the people's side is poor, deceived, no pension, paying bills, bargains and GST. On the FL's side is her Birkin bag, 2.6Billion, diamond ring, billons, Botox, jet rides and stealing. The cartoon shows the differences in the lives of the people and the FL.

SPR (Election Commission of Malaysia) (Appendix 12) is a farming tractor driven by the PM. He is singing and turning the soil. The KTN helping push while the Malaysian people were holding on to the bottom of the tractor. The cartoon addresses the use of the election commission by the PM to cultivate votes for himself.

The cartoon in Appendix 13 used actual pictures of the PM and the FL and other government officials sitting in a traditional Malay house surrounded by people. The top part of the cartoon is labelled **Before elections** while the bottom cartoon **After elections**. This time sitting alone and little figures running off with the Birkin bag and diamond ring. This cartoon is perhaps wishful thinking by the artist that elections would change the power dynamics and the people would get back the wealth.

JIMAH (Appendix 14) is portrayed with a big black shoe with shiny gold buckles and red socks. Kneeling and licking the bottom of the shoe is the Speaker while saying "*IMDB tak boleh tanya RUU tak boleh bahas*" (You cannot ask or debate the IMDB). Other tiny figures are also licking the shoes, including the KTN with his cell phone. The cartoon addressed the lack of political wellness and democracy by showing the speaker submitting to the PM. Another indication is the size of the PM's foot being bigger than everyone and taking up most of the frame, a testament to his power and control.

Another great play of pop-cultural is **Fast for Ros** (Appendix 15) with the PM speeding in a car full of money-generating schemes like TH, pension fund, EPF and FELDA. He is also holding a bag of 2.6Billion and driving towards the FL who is wearing the diamond ring and Birkin bag. The cartoon used the popularity of the film franchise Fast and the Furious and likens the PM to a thief stealing Malaysian wealth.

Dorae Mah in London (Appendix 16) depicts a line of students in school uniforms carrying an oversized shopping bag with designer names like D&G, Dior, Prada, Versace, Giorgio Armani, Chanel and Tiffany & CO. The student's dialogue - "*How come every time she comes around my London Bridge wants to go down*". Another group of students are following along carrying the FL, drawn as a fat lady with big hair and the RM1,200 tag on her head, diamond ring in hand, Birkin bag and holding a yellow bag labelled *'the people's money'*. Far off in the distance is the city of London with Bond Street and Big Ben. The cartoon highlighted the shopping trips the FL took and how these trips took away from the Malaysian students' funds.

Page 123 shows the Malaysian peninsula divided with big hands labelled **Beijing** (Appendix 17), taking a big part in one hand and handing a bag of money to the PM and FL with the other. This shows the selling of Malaysia to China. The cartoon is an opinion on the land sale deals between China and Malaysia.

Appendix 18 is another cartoon commenting on the Malaysia-China relations, titled **China Beijing**. The PM is operating a crawler bulldozer taking from Malaysian landmass and adding to China. The PM is holding big bags of money labelled '*going to his private account*' for the sale of Malaysia to China.

Appendix 19 depicts the incident of Saudi Arabian royals donating money to the PM's account. It shows the **Arab King** talking to the PM who is wearing the S.S. underwear over his suit and has a camel head on his shoulders. He is asking, "*Can I take everything and use your name as the donor*". The PM is carrying two big bags on his back marked RM2.6B in 2013 and another in 2017. The tag line '*I rob you Arab*' is on the bottom while the *rakyat* watches in shock. The cartoon is commenting on the PM being a pet for the Arabs and his payments.

Wilayah China (Chinese region or states) (Appendix 20) shows a map with all the different Chinese provinces including Inner Mongolia, Xin Jang, Yunan, Tibet with Malaysia added to the map. This is another cartoon commenting on the Malaysia-China relationship and the domination of China over Malaysia.

The themes that emerge clearly from the cartoons chosen were government misspending and unfair distribution of government assets clearly show the **function** of the image; a rhetorical perspective which Zunar wants the image to communicate. Zunar is also worried about the future of Malaysia-China relations and is aware of the heavy Chinese investment and land acquisitions. The FL is also designated many cartoons, to address her control over the government as she is a force of power and influence. Her lifestyle and spending habits are also rich sources of commentary.

The Seditious Act in the Malaysian Law has very vague legislation, and that unclearness has created problems for artists like Zunar. However, it does state that for sedition to apply, it must bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against any Ruler or any Government; in that regard, the research concludes that Zunar's cartoons in *TTC* are not seditious but critical in his portrayal of Malaysian officials and politicians as the discussion is on current events and issues that Malaysia is facing. Zunar's work also stays clear of calling any of his audiences to action; the cartoons are presented as his personal opinions. In a way, they are a manifestation of his concern for the future of Malaysia and its people.

The themes and issues that emerge in *TTC* discussed the living conditions in Malaysia. The hike in the prices of everyday goods and how that effects everyday people. The misspending and unfair distribution of government assets and funds. Also, of concern is the Malaysia-China relations in the form of heavy Chinese investment and land acquisitions. FL's lifestyle and spending habits are also sources of commentary. The relationship of the PM with the Saudi Arabian royalty and all the money they donated to him is also a point of concern. An overarching theme that is apparent in every cartoon is the W.C.M that is the representation of the Malaysian people whether they are active participant or innocent bystander. All these topics are central themes to the cartoons in *TTC*. Therefore, the overall message and **evaluation** of the use of his cartoons and the findings address the research questions.

Zunar uses visual metaphors throughout his cartoons but they are easily identified. A visual metaphor is the representation of a person, place, thing, or idea using a visual image that suggests an association or point of similarity. Zunar uses pop culture icons to get his message across, elements and symbols that are familiar to most audiences. The movie *Fast and the Furious* is about car thieves to show the PM driving away with Malaysia's wealth in a cartoon with a

similar title, using that visual metaphor to put forth the idea that what is taking place in Malaysia is similar to what happened in the movie. Also using the weighing scales immediately invokes the audiences to think about whether this situation is fair.

Using a seesaw shows the unstable positions in the government. The children's toy in most parks depends on the weight balancing of the players on either side. By using it in the cartoon as an icon it is a clear commentary on the balance of power in the country in which in this case is in the hands of the FL as she holds more weight over the Malaysian people. The KTN holding a cell phone, as a representation of government monitoring social media and specifically Zunar's, is another visual metaphor that is very strong and easily understood.

The relationship between verbal and visual in Zunar's cartoons are clear in terms of clarification and identification. His use of words is limited to short taglines and titles and depend on the visual part of the cartoon to communicate messages. The cartoonist uses metaphors in his political cartoons that are easily understood by his intended audiences. He used simple symbols like a seesaw for the unstapled government and a hot air balloon for empty promises. A game of monopoly is also used to symbolize the games in politics.

The way gender is dealt with in Zunar's cartoons in *TTC* is dimensional, the women are either addressing increasing prices of household goods or FL with her characteristics, which is always drawn larger in stature adding on to the fat woman stereotype. Her shopping and affinity for jewellery and handbags are also highlighted extensively.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the power of the political cartoon is undisputed, and it comes from the nature of the medium itself and as a tool of communication, it is remarkable with its construction and composition, directness and universality. The ability of cartoons to reach different audiences with different levels of comprehension is also astounding. For that to take place, a level of mutual understanding of social and political knowledge must be present between the cartoonist and his audiences. This study has proven that cartoons depicting local political issues are impactful in influencing the intended audience, which might or not threaten the position of the current government. Zunar uses cartoons as an artistic expression to highlight these issues and his opinions with the Malaysian people. The audience They choose to accept, reject or ignore the message, but when the right techniques of persuasion in political cartoons are employed successfully, it might be difficult to turn a blind eye to what is happening in the illustrations.

BIODATA

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APPENDIX: LIST OF CARTOONS

Appendix 1 - Page 63

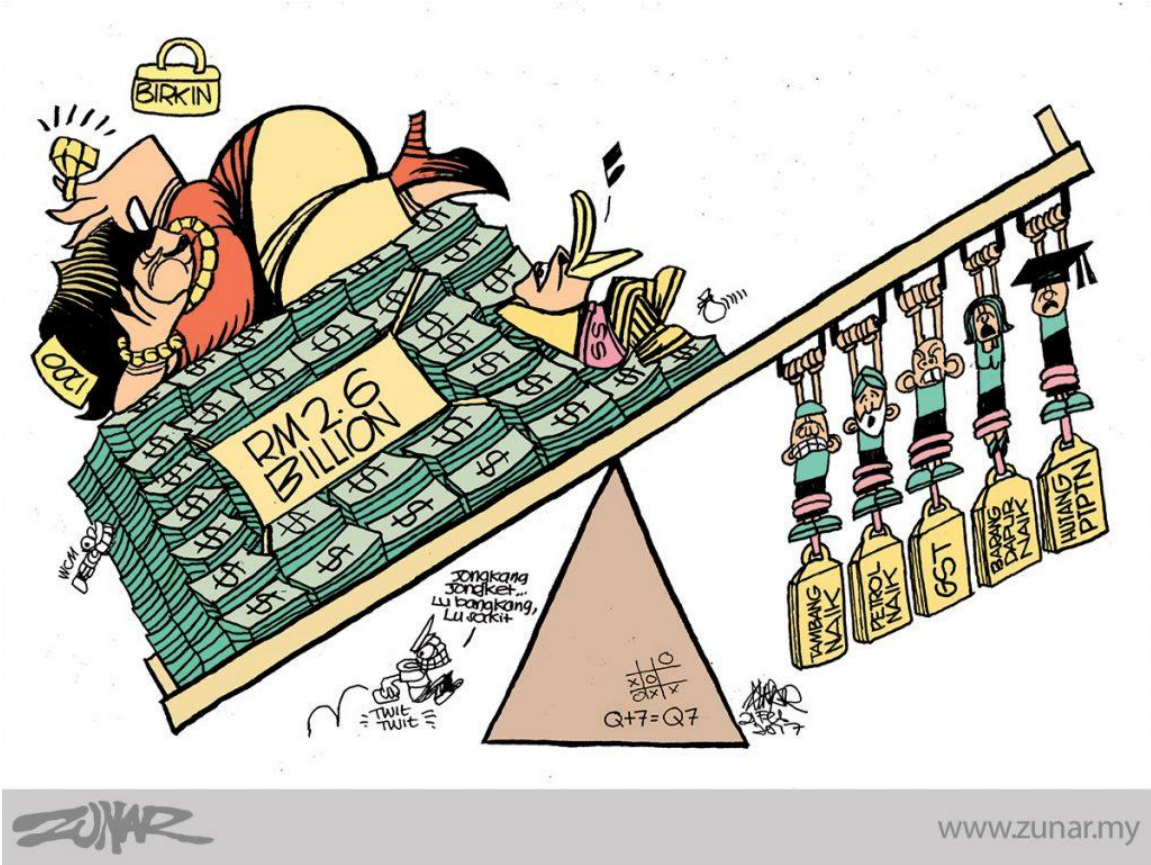


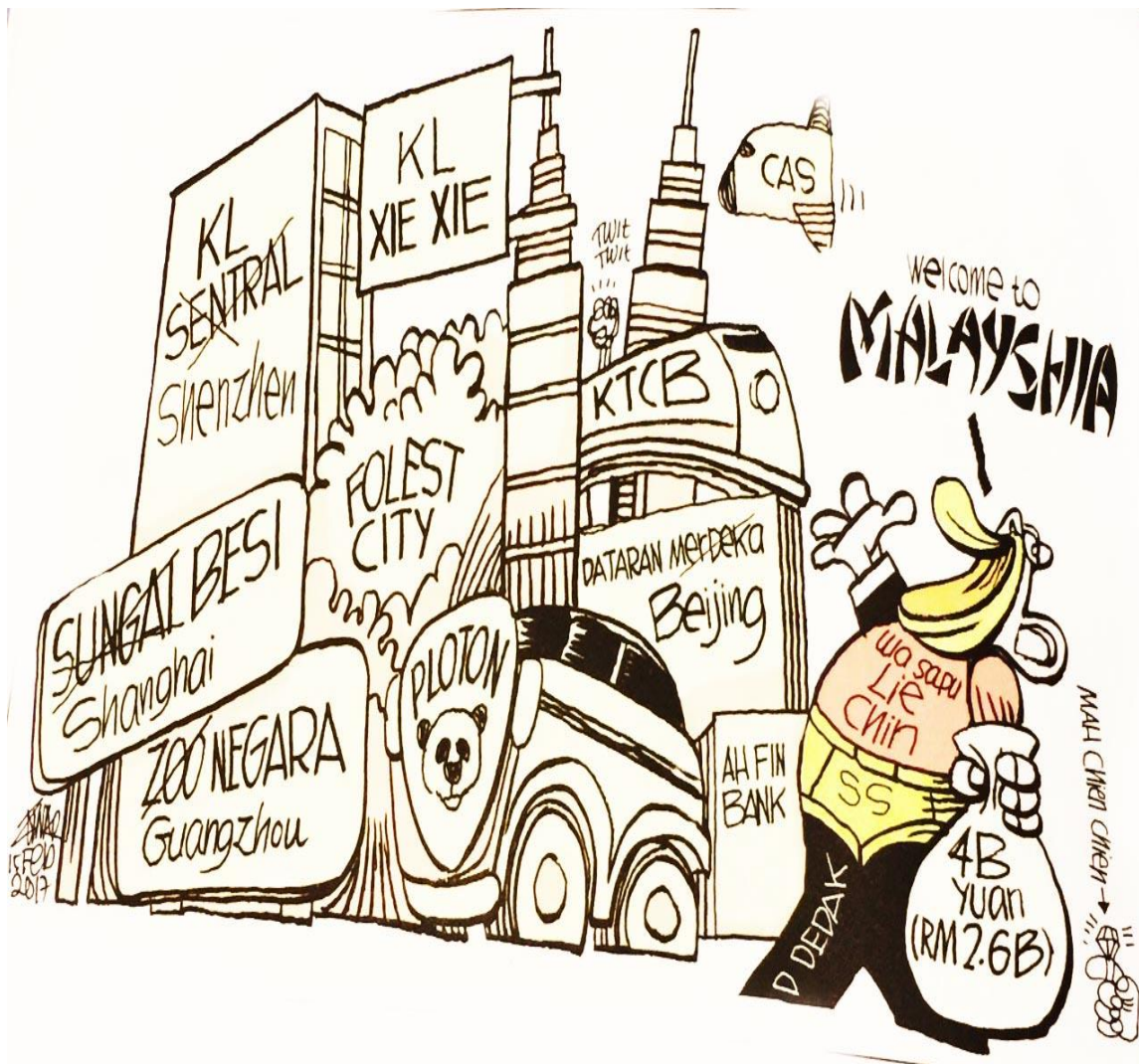
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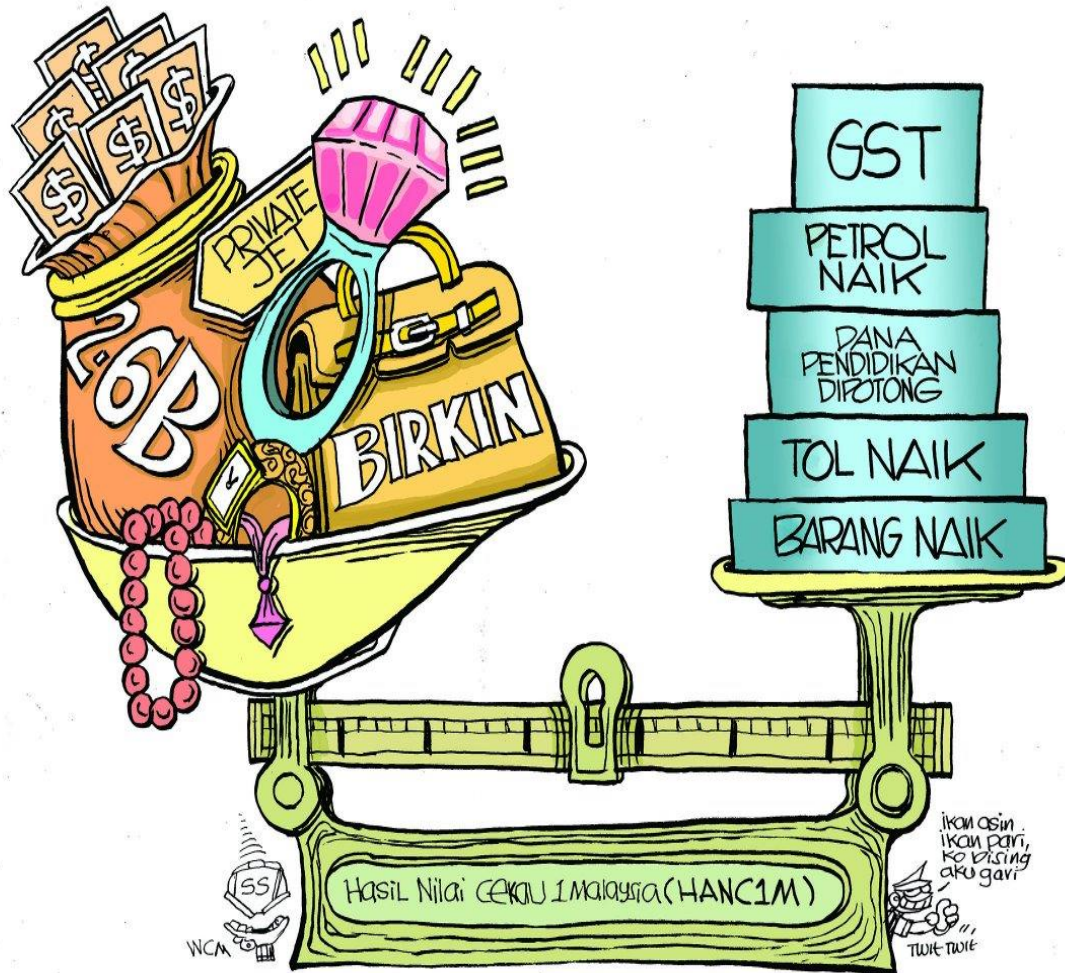
ZUNAR

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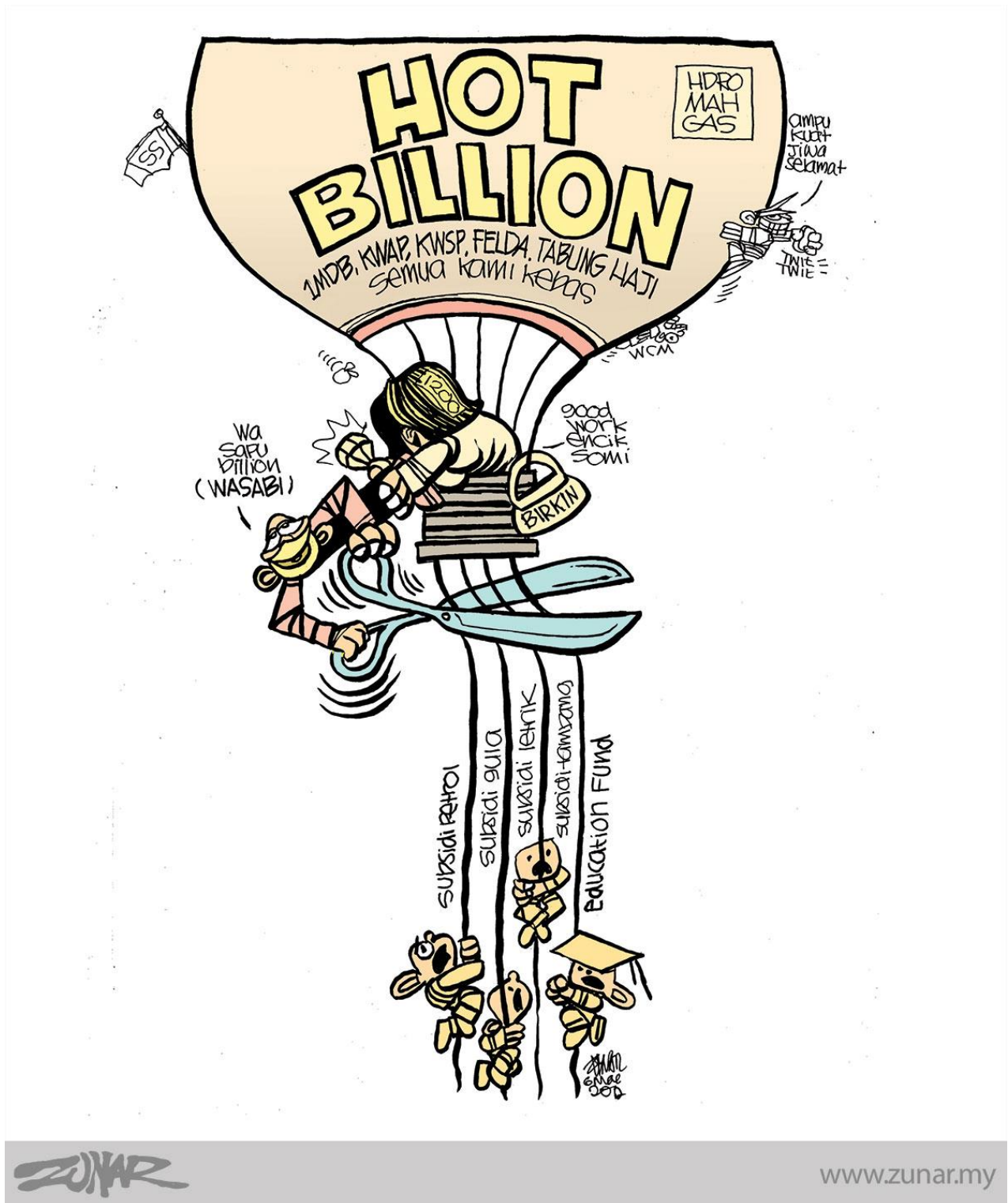


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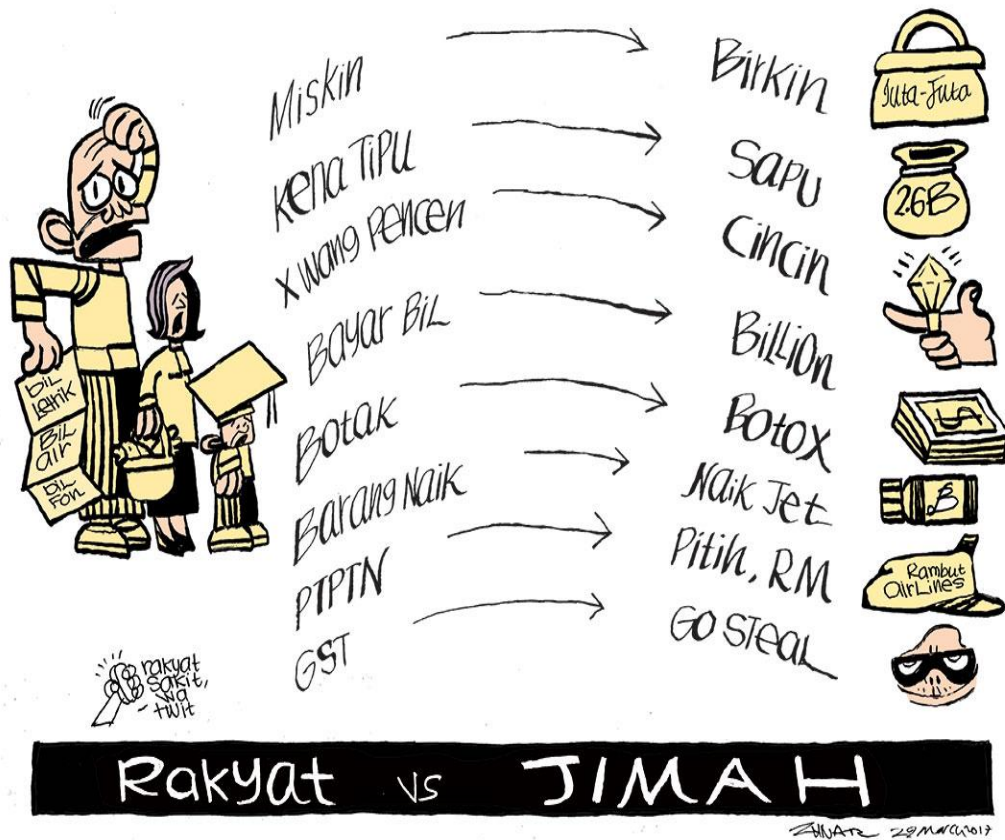


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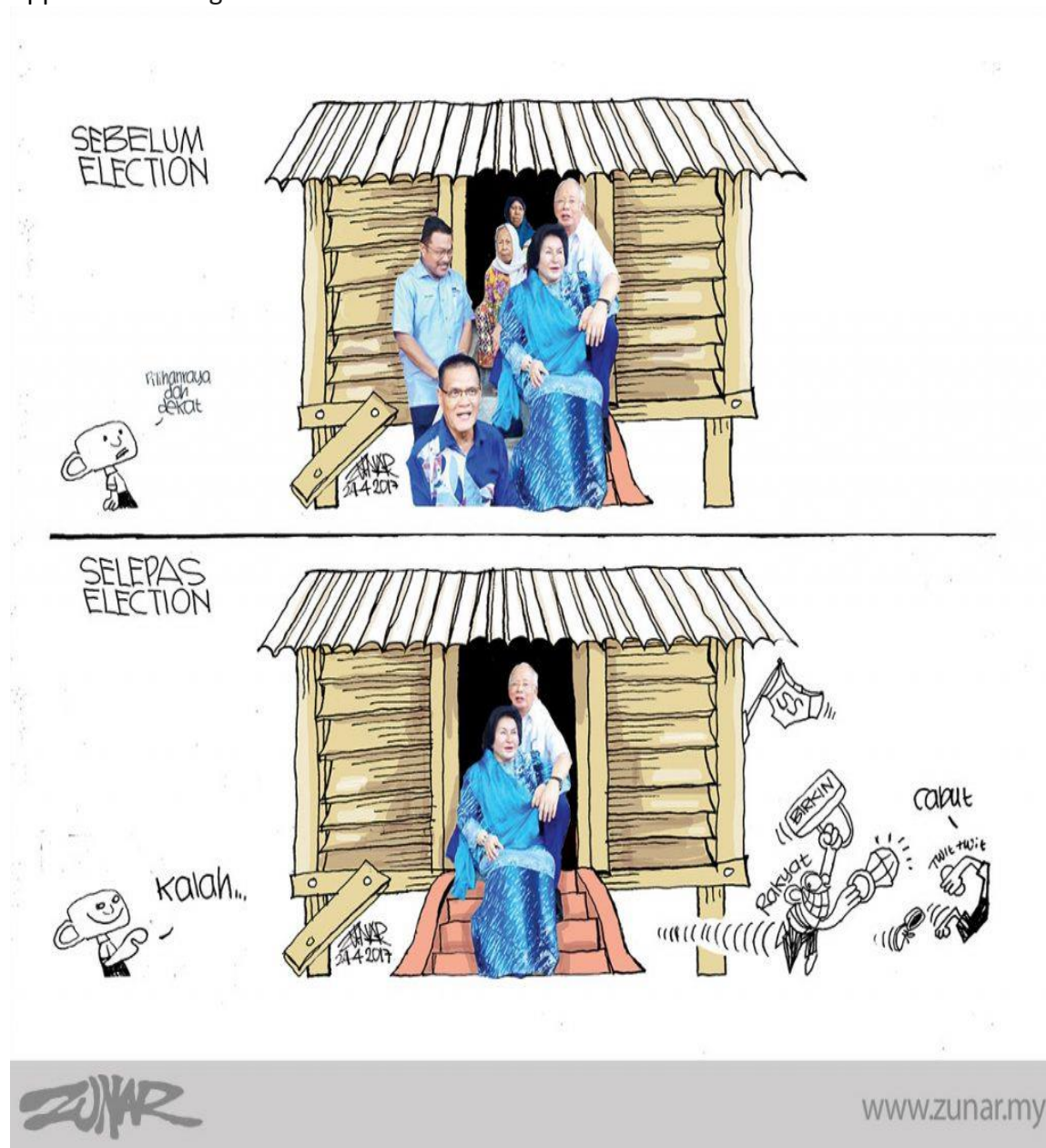


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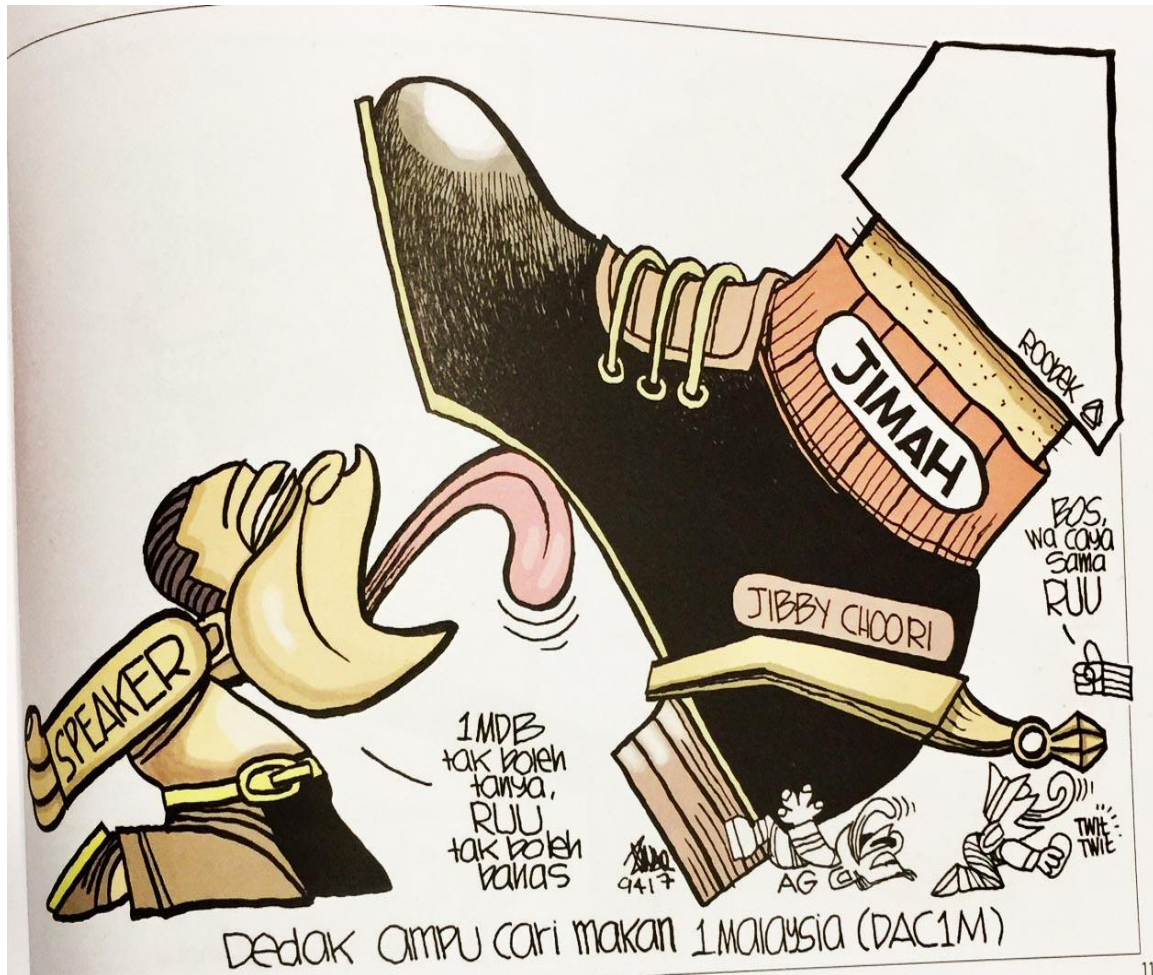
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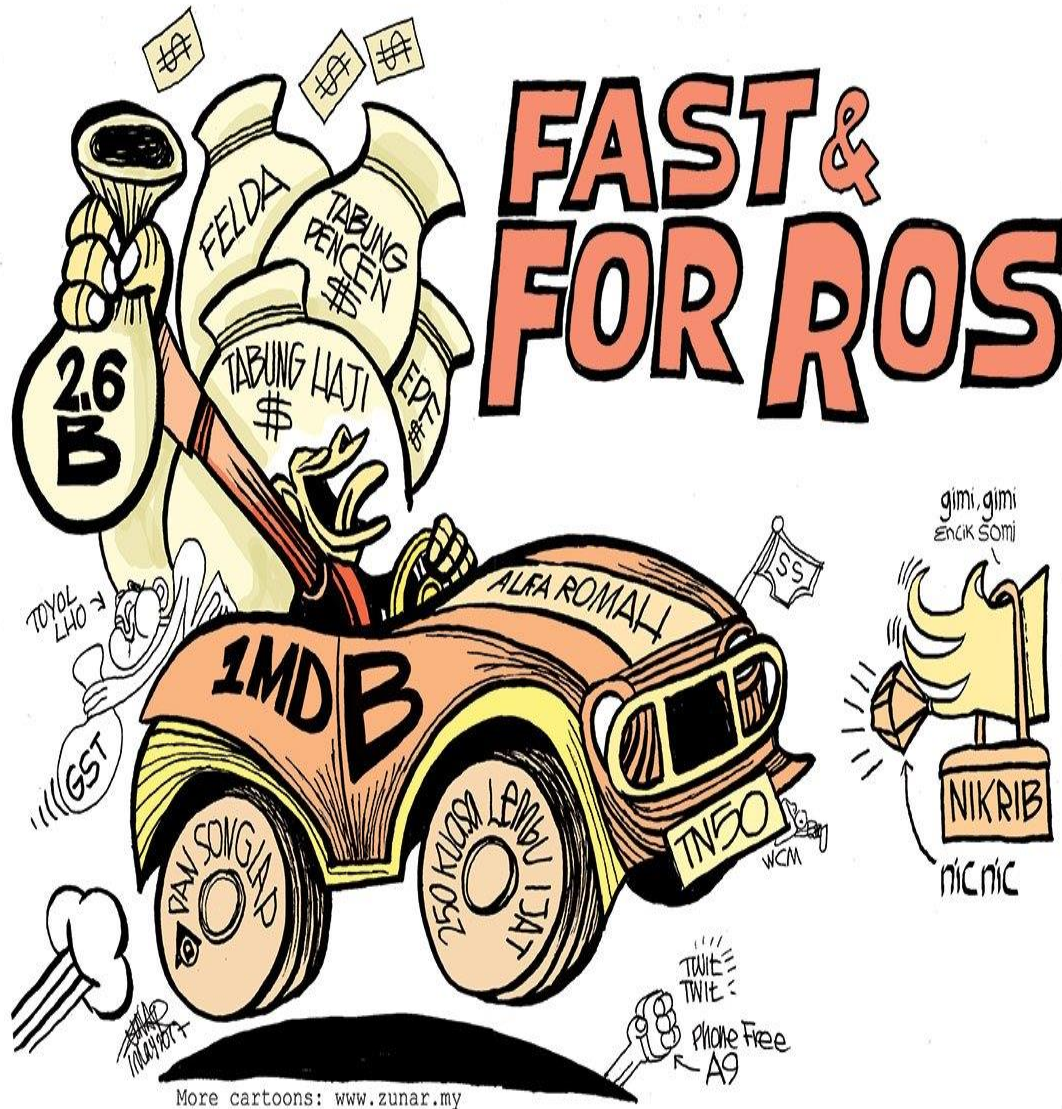


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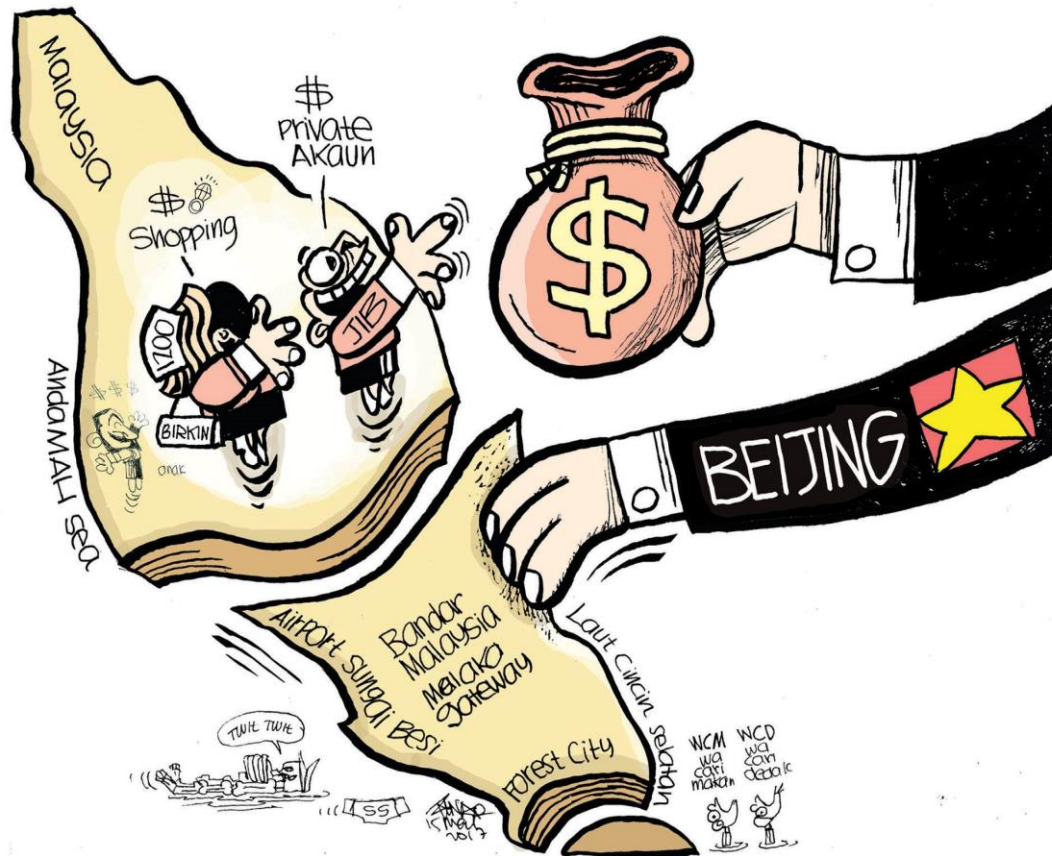
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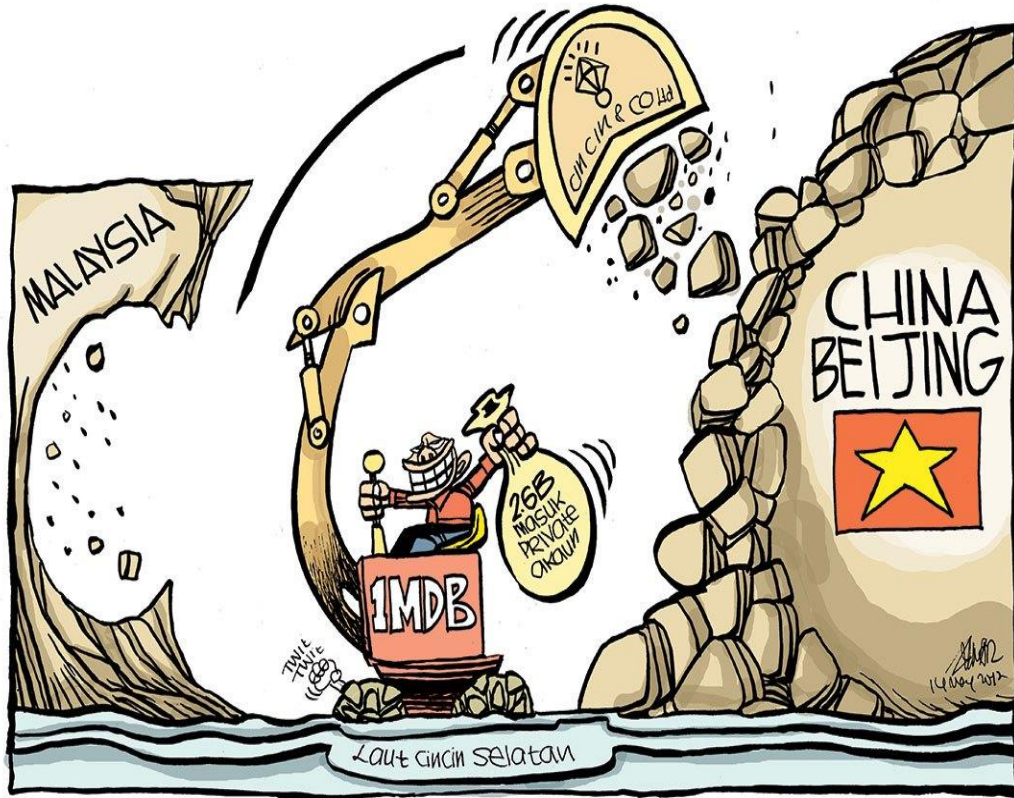
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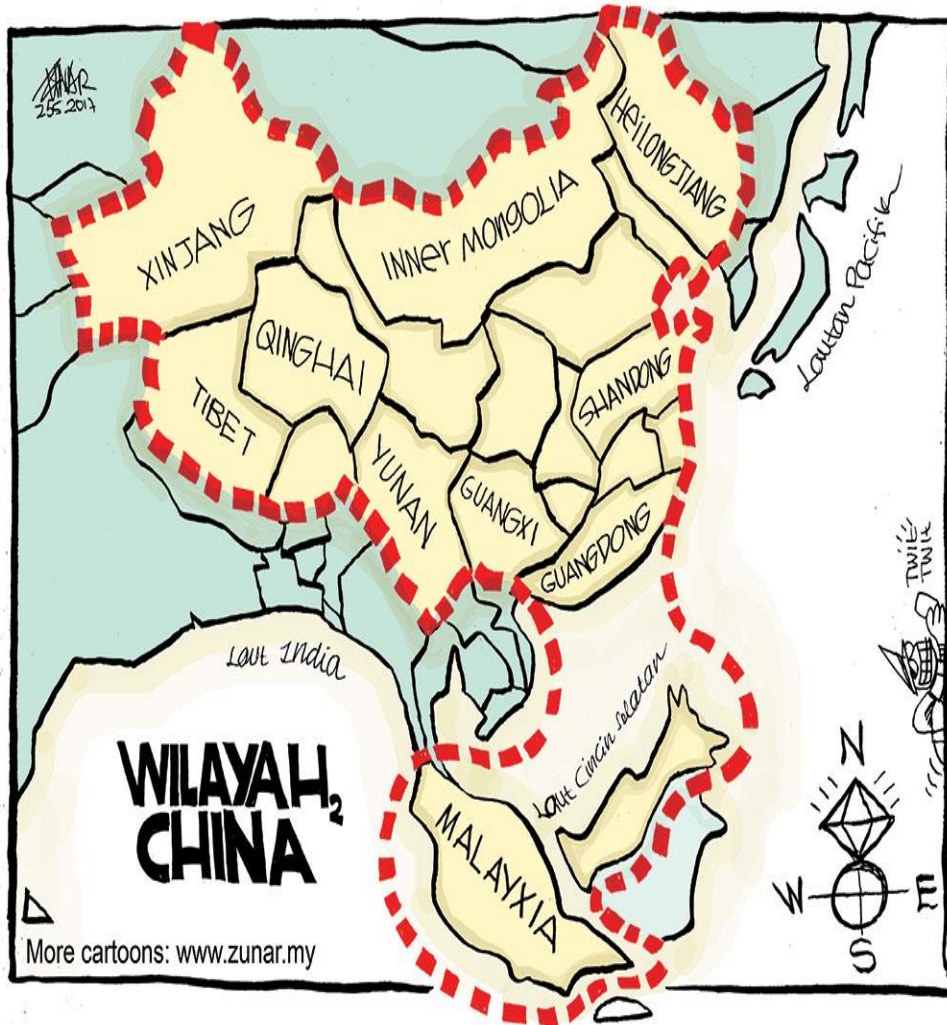
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