

**The fracturing of the Malay community**  
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**S Thayaparan**

COMMENT Umno's interaction with "multiracial parties" has so far been with Anwar Ibrahim's PKR - ostensibly a multiracial party but for the most part, an organisation filled with ship-jumping Umno rejects - and the Islamic PAS, often used as a bogeyman by Umno to keep the non-Muslims in line.

That Umno considers PKR a threat to its power has more to do with the fact that it was always perceived to be the third moderate way of the Malay polity and not for any multiracial reasons.

Umno is fighting a battle on two fronts, against vocal liberal Malay voices of PKR and the more religious tones from PAS.

In both these cases, the fight for the Malay soul is confined within the Malay community and the non-Malays have been collateral damage in the ongoing shadow war that will determine the fate of this country.

NONESo it should come as no surprise that Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin (left) is concerned over the possible influx of moderate Malay voices into the routinely demonised DAP.

If more Malays enter this political party, the Malay vote will be further fractured into a diverse range of political aspirations that don't neatly fit in the bigoted ethnocentric agenda of the ruling Umno regime.

If the point of the Umno game is to limit the choices of the Malay population then any attempt to provide avenues for different forms of political expressions is a threat to the natural order of their reality.

There can be no plurality of voices when it comes to expressing Islam. Anything which is a threat to Malay unity, which should be read as Umno hegemony, should be shot down in a hail of racial, religious or cultural bullets.

#### Unfolding DAP dilemma

Just as Umno fears the breaking away of Malays from the three manufactured roads made available to them, the DAP should take into consideration that with an influx of Malay members into their party, they are finally achieving a possible majoritarian mandate.

This is a rather ominous possibility considering the multicultural demographic of this country.

The political landscape would also change, since it is now possible for the DAP to achieve a certain degree of influence without the need of its coalition partners.

The reality is that the Malays (constitutionally created or otherwise) are the largest demographic and in the end, it is the Malay vote - either in unison with a coalition or by themselves - which will determine the form of governance this country will have.

dap convention shah alam 080112 nga kulasegaranAny successful multiracial party which is reflective of the aspirations of this multicultural demographic would have to comprise a sizeable Malay voting base.

This is an axiom that is rarely acknowledged by opposition parties for various political reasons.

A fractured Malay community free from the vicious grip of Umno is exactly what this political landscape needs and the possible influx of Malay members into the DAP should be encouraged but carefully watched.

If the DAP is truly to be a multiracial party (and I have argued that it is many times) then the reality is that it should prepare itself (if it is not doing so already) for a time when it becomes a Malay-dominated party or rather for a time when it becomes so successful in attracting Malay membership because of its ideological perspective, that the racial make-up of the party changes.

We speak the language of race

The possibility of Malays dominating this venerable party no doubt fills the hearts of non-Malays with dread and rightly so. Of course, we conflate the aspirations of the Umnoputras and the larger Malay community.

But when we understand how non-Malays have been marginalised not only from the political process but also education opportunities and other social programmes, our voices stifled by the system, is it any wonder that we view the Malay community, which has benefitted the most from the ruling Umno regime, as detrimental to the liberties we are desperately fighting for?

We, of course, forget that when it comes to the social policies of Umno, everything is smoke and mirrors, be it the gilded cages that they use to ensnare the urban Malay population or the stagnating Felda settlements that house the disenfranchised rural Malay population kept going with promises of fortune from the taxes of the much-maligned non-Malays.

dap conference shah alam 080112 aspan aliasMalays who join the DAP should be fully aware that they are not only bound to whatever Islamic principles they hold true but also to the egalitarian principles of the party.

This should not be a difficult proposition since there is nothing in the political agenda of the DAP which is at odds with core Islamic values or any other religion, for that matter.

And since the language of race is the only way this country has communicated for so long there will no doubt be communal problems within a large multiracial party that is dominated by Malays, just like there is in the PKR, where non-Malays have felt they have been excluded from the political decision-making process within the party.

The inconvenient truth

However, what the DAP has going for it is a long history of political opposition within a fairly secular framework, unlike say the Islamic PAS.

It is a polyglot of class-based interest that has felt the shift in political fortunes over many years of fierce just opposition unlike say the fairly recent PKR, which is dominated by the personality of one man and the baggage of an Umno mindset of most of its members.

malay bloggers join dap 080112 03This would mean that non-Malay communal interests (which the DAP has rightly championed over the years) would have to be replaced by a broader Malaysian perspective, one that encompasses the rights and aspirations of all communities.

This should not be a problem because the core philosophies of the DAP already embraces such a concept of Malaysia-ness.

It would however be an uncomfortable situation for the non-Malays and Malays because this would mean that the Malays would have to abide by the egalitarian principles established by the DAP, principles that are in conflict with long cherished state sanctioned racialist policies and the non-Malays would have to live with the fact that DAP would no longer be perceived by the larger Malay electorate as a Chinese (mostly) based entity because the Malays would probably have a big influence on how the party is run.

As long as all members are faithful to the ideals and constitution of the party, then any short-term tensions would subside in the long run and this country would be better for it.

This perhaps is the only measure of success that really means anything when it comes to the reality of political life here in Malaysia.

That is to say that an influential political party would have the memberships of a sizeable fraction of the Malay population, able to attract votes based on not only its coalition relationships with other "Malay-based" parties but on its own.

This is an inconvenient truth about an end game that most observers wish to ignore.

A new kind of mindset

We have been stuck in this mindset that a ruling coalition of race-based parties is the future of this country despite the fact that the past 50-odd years of a post-Merdeka landscape has proven that this formula for ruling this country has had a deleterious effect on the citizens of this country.

If we continue down this road of race-based parties or rather parties closely associated with race, then we will stagnate politically and the minorities in this country will never truly be a part of the political process.

We will continue claiming little victories and slide deeper into a possible racial clash between the Malays brought upon by the machinations of a corrupt federal government.

What needs to be done right now is a concerted effort not only by the DAP but also PKR into establishing multiracial parties in substance rather than form and be cognisant of the fact that Malays would naturally make sizeable voting blocks of such parties but not necessarily lead these political organisations.

hadi awang, anwar ibrahim, lim kit siang, pakatan leaders What the DAP offers is an alternative to both the personality-driven PKR and the Islamic PAS, with its democratic socialist roots the anchor for a new kind of mindset that hopefully will take root first amongst the urban Malays and then the rural communities.

The DAP will then truly become a multiracial party reflective of the demographic of this country.

The DAP has said that no member of its party will ever have aspirations to the office of prime minister and perhaps this could be starting point where Malays who join this party acknowledged this dubious concept of 'Kepimpinan Melayu' put forward by the honourable gentleman from Rembau and constrain their aspirations for the highest office in the land until the day any member of their party, regardless of race, can occupy that seat.

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