

**The new Malay dilemma**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Apr 2, 2008**  
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The recent watershed 2008 general election has emboldened many Malaysians to call for a truly Malaysian Malaysia. MCPX

Advocates of this approach, which include an increasing number of Malays, would argue that in such a scenario, where every race is treated equally, a more united Malaysia means greater competitiveness globally. This also means that there will be more money and other resources to filter down to poorer Malaysians, irrespective of race.

Malays like me are therefore faced with a new dilemma.

Do we give up the NEP, abolish Article 153 of our constitution on Malay rights and go for a Malaysian Malaysia? Where every race is equal? Where Malaysia becomes truly a multiracial, multi-religious country, where all are to be treated equally?

Or do we go for a more watered-down approach, recognising the special position of the Malays as enshrined in the constitution of Malaysia, rightly or wrongly, by virtue of historical facts. Advocates of this approach would still take the more equitable route of distributing the economic pie irrespective of race/ religion, based more on meritocracy, but keeping the special position of the Malays intact and thereby ensuring that political power of Malaysia remains in the hand of the Malays, however much we yearn for the rise of Bangsa Malaysia.

Despite the appeal of the Malaysian Malaysia approach to our sense of equity and justice, I would go for the latter approach is due to following reasons:

1) My goal is to see a safe, secure and vibrant Malaysia for my children and my children's children. Rightly or wrongly, history shows that the majority of Malays in Malaysia feel strongly that Malaysia is rightfully their land, and harbour distrust that if they do not hold on to whatever rights and powers they currently have, the other races will usurp their rightful position. As long as this feeling persists, Malaysia's security cannot be guaranteed if the notion of Malay dominance is challenged.

2) My other goal is to see a vibrant and prosperous Malaysia able to stand her own ground in the global arena similar to the likes of other equally small but innovative and prosperous nations such as Ireland, Sweden and our dear neighbor Singapore. For this to occur we must have a more merit- based system where the best talents in the country are nurtured and rewarded and not shunned away.

This means the dismantling of race-centric economic practices (not to mention corrupt and non-transparent practices), but it does not mean the doing away with the special position of the Malays, as long as the particular leaders from the politically dominant Malay race are enlightened enough and fair to the other races.

Let me emphasise here that I am not advocating the continuance of the 50-year race-centric political approach which has admittedly served our country quite well. I am one of those who would dearly like to see the emergence of an alternative, strong and credible multi-racial party that represents the interest of all Malaysians, to challenge the current race-based political approach.

I do not see this to be at odds or compromising on the special position of the Malays as enshrined in our constitution, as long as the members of this party acknowledge and continue to respect these rights by adopting appropriate policies.

It may not be the best solution in the sense that we must acknowledge that to be truly competitive globally, we must be prepared to accept leaders from any race, as long as they are the best. Look at America where Barack Obama is being touted as future US president. By having a truly free political system, perhaps only then can we have the necessary truly enlightened leadership that is required to take our country forward.

Perhaps there are individuals like Barack Obama in our midst, who are non-Malays, but yet enlightened enough to look after the interests of all Malaysians and can be trusted in doing so. However, until the majority Malays are prepared to accept this scenario, it will remain an ideal for us to work towards. Until that time comes, perhaps it is wiser that we all accept the second best solution.

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