

**BN should only have three component parties**  
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An old working formula can still be relevant if Barisan Nasional wants to stay relevant in the present political disarray. Nothing is old or conservative when it comes to numbers and figures. When Malaya achieved independence in 1957, there were only Umno, MCA and MIC in the Alliance Party, also known as Parti Perikatan.

The Alliance Party was a pillar of strength in which the major races in Malaya then, and Malaysia later, were well represented in the Malaysian political set up. Credit should be given to the farsighted Father of Independence – Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-haj – and the first prime minister of Malaya.

The Alliance Party stayed strong under his leadership and never swayed when attacked by the opposition parties such as PAS and PPP - helmed by the Seenivasagam brothers. So strong was the Alliance Party that it lived sturdy until 1969 when DAP and Gerakan made an impact on the Malaysian political scene.

After 1969 came the Barisan Nasional with many more component parties boarding the political ship headed by the dominant party, Umno. Then the political tear started. In Barisan Nasional the Chinese were represented in MCA and Gerakan. The Indians were represented by MIC and later on PPP. Gerakan no doubt was peppered with some Malays and Indians as party members.

The beginning of the century saw another prominent party coming into existence – Parti Keadilan Rakyat, a multi-racial party, representing the Malays as well as other races. It claims itself to be a non-race based party. Presently, Malays are predominantly represented in Umno, PAS and PKR, the Chinese in MCA, DAP, Gerakan and the Indians in MIC, IPF and PPP.

There are too many component parties representing both the ruling and the opposing parties. This may not augur well for a multi-racial Malaysia. It only ends up with too much politicking for a country of less than 30 million people.

Barisan Nasional should get back to the spirit of the early post-independence era where there were only three major parties in the Alliance. The bumiputera of Sabah and Sarawak can be under Umno. Apparently, the major races in the country have never 'melted' to become a single race despite the 31 years of independence, unlike the scenario in some other developed countries.

The racial sentiment is still strong among people of all races despite all the rhetoric on national unity and the promulgation of Bangsa Malaysia. This, unfortunately, is mere lip service to flatter the people. The spirit is still that the people of Malaysia are still divided by racial and religious sentiments.

Looking into the diverse racial and religious spectrum in the country, it appears like the spirit of give-and-take and the principle of tolerance are still the best prescriptions to see the country progress. Even the opposition that claims to be non-raced based has to use this formula to handle all the races in the country. Nonetheless, the less bigoted politicians are, the better it is for the country.

Barisan Nasional with only three component parties should see to it that explicit racial and religious rhetoric is no more the card to play. Umno must have learnt a bitter lesson of late that drove away many non-Malays from Barisan Nasional. Umno should stay as a moderate Malay-based party. Any form of extremism to exhibit a 'holier than thou' attitude to please the Malays and to compete with PAS should be totally discarded.

The non-Malays should see Umno as a moderate party for Barisan Nasional to remain relevant. There has to be a paradigm shift of politics in the country. The opposition is able to do this - at least from what we all perceive - and certainly Barisan Nasional should be able to do the same.

We are now on the way to a two-party system in the country and this bodes well for all Malaysians.

After all, what is important is not who governs the country but which party can offer its best to the people. It's not personality cults that we should cherish in politics. If a leader can deliver, we choose him to lead. The people are the stakeholders and they deserve to be served well. The present generation of Malaysians have become more realistic. They want a choice.

With the blessings of many intermarriages taking place in the country, the present generation of Malaysians have become a mixed lot. They are becoming more tolerant of each other because of the blood relations they have with people of different races and religion.

Maverick Anwar Ibrahim has helped the country by neutralising PAS and DAP. Seemingly, many Malays are able to accept DAP and also many non-Malays are able to accept PAS. It is Anwar's charismatic personality that has brought these parties together. This is an achievement indeed and it bodes well for the country. We hope that the people of Malaysia are able to live in peace with a lot more understanding and tolerance for each other. We should see to it that each race is willing to help another race to strive in the country.

To match the opposition now, Barisan Nasional should reinvent itself to become a party that does not harp on chauvinistic or communalistic ideology to get the support of the people. The basis has to be negotiation and tolerance with opportunities for all the races in the country to contribute to the well-being of the nation.

Every sphere of Malaysian life has to be represented by all the races from the school to the university and the workplace. There has to be a genuine political will to achieve this. With this measure, Barisan Nasional will stay relevant in Malaysian politics.

Or else, the opposition will make its way to become the people's choice. In a democracy, let it be this if it is what the people want.