

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE BARISAN NASIONAL
(1974-1999) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PENANG AND
KEDAH**

**being a Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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By

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine conflict management in the Barisan Nasional from 1974 to 1999. The core of the study focuses on the conflict management during the seat allocation process in elections and the allocation of cabinet posts at federal government level and state Exco level in Penang and Kedah. To elaborate on these two focal points, five main objectives aimed at uncovering the contributing factors to the Barisan Nasional's stability and solidarity to continue ruling a multiethnic society. A total of 28 political figures in the BN and two from opponent parties were identified as interviewees. Results of this study revealed that the Barisan Nasional employed its own, unique approach in handling conflicts. Firstly, Power-sharing shows that the Barisan Nasional applies a formula for seat allocation using three stringent processes to ensure that each of its components receives a fair allocation of seats commensurate with the performance and strength of the party. For the allocation of cabinet and Exco posts, each party is provided with the opportunity and position to hold the post, so that each component party would have an avenue of participation in the development of policies and direction of the national administration. Secondly, the principles practised within the Barisan Nasional, which includes decision-making procedures, the representativeness and confidentiality of discussions on seat allocation and Cabinet/Exco post allocation, are confined only to the main elite groups of the component parties. The involvement and knowledge of other party members, especially those at branch and divisional levels, are extremely limited and restricted in these areas. Thirdly, in the process of allocating seats and Cabinet/Exco posts, some bargaining inevitably takes place, usually by two parties, namely a component party of the Barisan Nasional and an NGO. There are four factors contributing to this bargaining. The scope of this bargaining also involves four areas. Fourthly, the management of conflict in seat and Cabinet/Exco post allocations demonstrates that the Barisan Nasional continuously faces various challenges from time to time. Seven different challenges are outlined, and these often pose as elements that threaten the strength and stability of the Barisan Nasional. The control of these elements is important in ensuring that the Barisan Nasional continues to be sound and stable, whilst failure would put the Barisan Nasional in a quagmire of difficulties in continuing to defend its power. Finally to manage the conflict on seat and Cabinet/Exco post allocations, the Barisan Nasional applies four levels of review. At each level, the conflict is assessed and analysed to ensure that it can be handled well and comprehensively to the satisfaction and justice of all parties involved. In addition, the Barisan Nasional also practises five approaches in managing these conflicts. The study findings provide a comprehensive documentation of the techniques applied by the BN in managing conflicts, and it is hoped that it would describe to the public how each party played its role in maintaining political stability whilst serving as guidelines to countries facing interethnic conflict.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APU	Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (The Muslim Unity Front)
Berjasa	Barisan Jemmah Islam Se Malaysia
BN	Barisan Nasional
CLC	Communities Liaison Committee
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DEB	Dasar Ekonomi Baru (the New Economic Policy - NEP)
EXCO	Executive member
Gerakan	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia
HAMIM	Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
ISA	Internal Security Act
KLSE	Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange
KOMTAR	Komplex Tun Abdul Razak
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
Negara	Parti Negara
NGO	Non Government Organization
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia
PBB	Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu
PBRs	Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah
PBDS	Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak
Perikatan	Parti Perikatan (the Alliance)
PMIP	The PanMalaysia Islamic Party
PPP	Progressive People Party
PSRM	Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia
SAPO	Sarawak People's Organization
SAPP	Sabah Progressive Party
SEC	State Executive Council
Semangat 46	Parti Semangat 46 (the Spirit of 1946 Party)
SINQU	Federation of Chinese Association
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SPR	Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya
SUPP	Sarawak United People Party
UKPO	United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organization
UMNO	The United Malay National Organization (Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu)
USNO	The United Sabah National Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION : CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE BARISAN NASIONAL, 1974-1999 WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PENANG AND KEDAH

1.1 Introduction

Malaysian power politics has, since the first election in 1955, been dominated by the concept of a confederation of racially-based political parties. There was the Alliance, which was represented by the three major races that make up the bulk of the population - UMNO (Malay), the MCA (Chinese) and the MIC (Indian). The Alliance evolved into The Barisan Nasional (BN) in 1974 when other parties, representing other ethnic and regional (Sabah and Sarawak) interests, were brought in. This concept of a confederation of racial parties evolved out of a necessity for political parties set up during the struggle for independence to be race-based¹ And arising out of the need for the major races to work together in governance and nation building, it was expedient for these parties to come together as a coalition. This concept has since been further developed to accommodate other minor ethnic and interest groups and regions through the setting up of the Barisan Nasional (Milne and Mauzy, 1999:1). Such a process of accommodation through a formal umbrella organisation ensures that the interests of the various races and regions are taken into consideration in forging national policies and programmes, without compromising the overriding national interest.

¹ See Indorf (1978), Cheah Boon Kheng (2002), Vasil (1980).

So successful has this formula been that in every general election held since the country gained its independence in 1957, the BN (before that, the Alliance) has always been returned with clear-cut majorities. Even in 1969, when opposition parties managed to make inroads due to the irresponsible and cavalier treatment of racial issues, the Alliance was returned in 90 of the 144 constituencies². And so complete has this domination been that to date, there has been no party that can claim to be a viable alternative to the Barisan Nasional. Although subsequent efforts were made for multiracial based parties, these have not worked because, in practical terms, these parties were still very much racial in nature.

Even in every election, when some effort was made by a number of opposition parties to come together to face the Barisan Nasional, the best they could come up with in cooperation was a very loose electoral understanding not to pit their candidates against one another to ensure opposition votes will not be split to the advantages of the Barisan Nasional. Their objective was limited to denying the Barisan Nasional a two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat (National Assembly). But even with this narrow objective, the opposition parties could not come to clear agreement, resulting in the various opposition parties pitting their candidates against one another and the Barisan Nasional.

Among factors contributing to the BN's success are the existence of a sound political culture³, the competence in good social and economic administration, systematic

² See Bass (1973).

³ See Means (1991).

development planning⁴, the formation of an inter-communal coalition⁵ and the manipulation of the 'rules of the game'.

According to Means, its political culture helped the BN maintain the continuity of its power. From a cursory observation of the Malaysian political life, it does appear that Malaysia's 'two political cultures' are making some adjustments to each other. Over time, there appears to be some areas of consensus and common understanding about politics, especially at the elite level. There has been a greater appreciation for the importance of political bargaining and concern for mechanisms to facilitate inter-communal understanding. The years of experience with electoral politics have given the public a greater appreciation for the reality and the limit of political power.

Although a common civic culture has not emerged, there appears to be some minimal consensus on the basic ingredients for a stable and effective government in Malaysia's multiethnic setting. Basic social trust does appear to be rather low, and there is little empathy extended beyond communal boundaries. There is also little evidence to suggest that either elites or the general public have much appreciation for the role and large segment of the public, and many leaders seem to assume that the answer to nearly all political and social problems ultimately rests with the Prime Minister, who is armed with extraordinary powers at the apex of the political system (Means, 1991:290).

⁴ See Shamsul (1986).

⁵ See Mauzy (1983), Means (1991).

There appears to be a common popular assumption that order and social harmony ultimately depend on unconditional deference given by citizens to a political hierarchy capped by a powerful, benevolent and usually awesome leader. The traditional hierarchical character of Malay society is being extended to other communities as well. Through the heavy use of patronage, those political parties associated with the government have acquired the proximate structure of hierarchical patron-client networks (Means, 1991:291).

In addition, the BN's social and economic administration competence throughout its rule also helped them firmly stay in power. On the economic front, the BN has established systematic economic development policies. Long- and short-term planning strategies⁶ portrayed Malaysia as a respectable developing nation. Furthermore, the ability to handle economic issues was also proof of the BN's competence in economic administration. This is evident from its success in making it through the two critical world economic depressions of 1984⁷ and 1999⁸. From the social aspect, the BN managed to improve the living standards of the people⁹.

⁶ The first long-term plan developed was the New Economic Policy, 1971-1990, followed by the Long-term Plan II (1991-2000) and the Long-term Plan III (2001-2010). Meanwhile, short-term plans include the Five-year Malaysia Plans, which were initiated since Malaysia achieved its independence. Malaysia is now in its Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010).

⁷ In 1980, Malaysia experienced real growth in GNP of 7.8 percent. It fluctuated between 5.9 percent and 7.8 percent until 1984, when it plunged to minus 1.0 percent in 1985 and recovered slightly with a 2.1 percent growth in 1986. The economy slowly began recovering in 1987 with a GNP growth of 4.8 percent, and full recovery was achieved by 1988 with a growth rate of 8.7 percent (Means 1991: 250).

⁸ The Asian financial and currency crisis was the main reason for the sluggish world economic output this year. The crisis spread to Russia, South Africa, Australasia and Latin America, and continued to threaten the world economy and financial systems. Hence, world economy grew weakly at 2.00% in 1998 and strengthened to 2.50% in 1999 compared to 4.10% in 1997. The BN government had taken full advantage of the economic recovery and restabilisation of the financial market to hasten efforts in strengthening the financial system to avoid systemic risks. The establishment of Danaharta, Danamodal and the Corporate Debt Restructuring Committee (CDRC) managed to address the problem of NPLs, increase the banking system's capital and promote corporate restructuring. In addition, the government also introduced control

Meanwhile, the issue of manipulating the 'rules of the game' is classified by Crouch (1996) under the term 'political control', where the government uses various ways to control politics, particularly toward the opposition parties. The elements of political control, frequently regarded as barring the practice of political freedom in its true sense, include repressive legislation¹⁰, constitutional amendments¹¹ and election commission¹². As a result, various interpretations of the implementation of the democratic system in Malaysia emerged, such as 'limited', 'quasi-', and 'semi-democracy' (Zakaria, 1989; Case, 1993). Whatever terminology is suggested, Barry stated that this system is

over selected currencies. Such integrated planning protected Malaysia from suffering more severely from the economic crisis, as did Indonesia and Thailand, both of which were forced to incur debts from the IMF (Welsh, 2004).

⁹ For instance, the BN managed to reduce poverty to only 7 percent in 2004. When Malaysia achieved independence in 1957, poverty was an 'epidemic' involving almost 7.4 million citizens, mostly rural folk. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 'International Trade, Growth, Alleviation of Poverty and Human Resource Development', in 1985, 7 percent of families in Malaysia are categorised as poor. This can be overcome by:

- * Implementing land development schemes by the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) and developing existing agricultural land through land combination.
- * Determining a fixed purchase price for rice bought from farmers.
- * Providing educational support, including financial aid, text books and food.
- * Organising health programmes targeted at rural folk.
- * Offering micro-credit loans through Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) to the poor, especially to those in rural areas (Utusan Malaysia, 11 July 2005).

¹⁰ A number of powerful and discretionary acts have imbued the state with wide-ranging repressive capabilities. Most notorious amongst these is the Internal Security Act (ISA), which allows effectively for indefinite detention without trial, with little legal recourse for detainees. The Police Act requires permits to be obtained for all public gatherings – a requirement stringently enforced for opposition groups, and all but ignored for government parties. Amendments to the Societies Act and the Official Secrets Act, in 1981 and 1986 respectively, fettered even further the arena of public debate.

¹¹ With its consistent two-thirds majority, the regime has amended the constitution to its needs as it sees fit. It has been claimed by the opposition DAP that the government has amended the constitution over a thousand times since independence. Indeed, Means (1991: 142) argues that 'the Constitution is valued for its capacity to provide the rituals of legitimacy, but [its] constitutional limitations on the government provide little more than a temporary check on the exercise of power.'

¹² The Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1962 also increased the government's powers of control over the Election Commission by empowering Parliament to determine the terms of office of members of the Election Commission other than their remuneration. It also made the 1960 amendments to article 114, relating to members of the Election Commission, retrospective to the date of independence and provided that those amendments would have effect notwithstanding anything in the article. This attempt by the government in 1962 to cure its earlier oversight did not, however, result in the removal of the chairman of the Election Commission, because he had by then disposed off his business interests.

appropriate to the extent that stability in a vertically segmented society is the result of the sustained manipulation of subordinate segment(s) by a superordinate segment (1975, 483-86). With this stability, ethnic violence can be avoided.

Another factor in ensuring the continuity of the BN's power and political stability in Malaysia is the formation of an inter-communal coalition. In this context, the coalition of UMNO, the MCA and the MIC within the Alliance party had paved the way towards interracial political integration in Malaysia. This was followed by the establishment of the BN, the coalition that has held power until today.

The BN's strength in maintaining power is most intriguing. The main question is the reason or driving force behind the BN's ability to remain in power as a multiethnic coalition for such a long time. This is rather amazing because opposition parties have also formed coalitions, such as the Gagasan Rakyat¹³ and the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU)¹⁴, but none have been a success. To illustrate this point further, a detailed study needs to be done to analyse the strategies and techniques applied by the BN. In this regard, this study is conducted based on the hypothesis of what procedures or approaches

¹³ The Gagasan Rakyat was the Parti Melayu Semangat 46's second opposition front after the party failed to form a pact with the DAP and PAS. It was an electoral pact formed in an attempt to unseat BN in the 1990 general election. Launched 11 days before the 1990 election on 11 October 1990, the coalition was to concentrate on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Initially, The Gagasan Rakyat comprised of the Parti Melayu Semangat 46, the DAP, PRM, the All Malaysia Indian Progressive Party (IPF) and the Malaysian Solidarity Party (MSP). On 28 April 1992, two other parties joined the coalition, HAMIM and the Kongres India Muslim Malaysia (KIMMA). See Ahmad Atory Hussein, (1997).

¹⁴ The Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) started off as an understanding between the Parti Melayu Semangat 46, PAS, HAMIM and Berjasa. It was formed in a joint attempt with the Gagasan Rakyat to unseat BN during the 1990 general election. Initiated by the Parti Melayu Semangat 46, the APU was officially registered on 5 June 1990. The APU was to be a Muslim-based party, concentrating on the states in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. See Ahmad Atory Hussein, (1997).

were used by the BN in ensuring its internal political unity or stability, such that it is able to remain as the dominant party in the government.

To address this issue, this study focused on two main aspects; conflict management in the allocation of parliamentary seats and cabinet/state Exco posts. This means that other factors contributing to the BN's continued control in the government, such as its political culture, social and economic administration competence, systematic development planning and manipulation of the 'rules of the game' shall neither be taken into account nor discussed in this study.

1.1.1 Focus of studies

This study therefore focuses mainly on the procedures of managing conflict in the BN from its establishment in 1974 to the tenth election in 1999. As mentioned earlier, to explore these procedures of managing conflict, concentration will only be on the process of distribution of seats and of cabinet / Exco posts among the components of the BN. Some of the important matters that would typically be in the main agenda before an election include the issue of seat distribution. This matter arises because the allocation of seats contested in each election is determined by the Election Commission. The BN has to distribute the available number of seats among its component parties, whether at federal or state level. The question is the procedure that the BN is to use in distributing those seats such that each party eventually agrees to the number it is allocated, resulting in the victory of the BN.

After winning the elections, the BN is entrusted with the responsibility of forming the Government. In doing so, the BN had to address the questions of how and whom to appoint for the various posts, and these gave rise to the process of distributing cabinet posts at federal level and Exco posts at state level among its components. Both are equally important, especially in ensuring stability within the BN, which would provide a solid footing to face the opposition. To elaborate on these two focal points, the five main objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the methods and procedures applied by the BN in resolving problems of seat allocation and Cabinet / Exco post allocation.
2. To determine the extent to which each level discusses, knows and gets involved in the decision-making, bargaining and negotiation processes for electoral seat allocation and Cabinet / Exco post allocation.
3. To evaluate if there are any elements of bargaining or reward given to the parties, in the event of rejection or to compensate an unfulfilled demand.
4. To identify the challenges faced by the BN in managing conflict.
5. To identify the approaches taken by the BN in managing conflict.

In order to examine the objectives, this study focused on the areas of Penang¹⁵ and Kedah¹⁶. The selection criteria for these two areas are based on the respective ethnic composition and the reflection of power of the main parties in the BN. Penang is a state whose Chief Minister is from the Chinese political elite, whilst Kedah is headed by a member of the Malay political elite. This will allow us to compare and contrast the management of conflict, particularly in bargaining on any demand or requirement made in these two states. Specifically, the two states are selected based on three specific factors;

1. Ethnicity

¹⁵ Penang is one of the 13 states in the Federation of Malaysia. It is located on the north-western coast of Peninsular Malaysia, and bounded on the north and east by the state of Kedah, on the South by the state of Perak and on the west by the Straits of Malacca and the island of Sumatra (Indonesia). Penang Island became the first British settlement on the Malay Peninsula. It was occupied in 1786 by Francis Light of the British East India Company, initially with the permission of the Sultan of Kedah. After an unsuccessful attempt to later forcefully reclaim the island in 1791, the Sultan agreed on a settlement from the British of an annual stipend. In 1800, he also ceded Province Wellesley. "Pinang", together with Province Wellesley, Malacca, and Singapore, became known as the Straits Settlements. Under the British, Pinang, or Penang as it came to be pronounced and called, grew rapidly as an important commercial centre, although its importance was eventually surpassed by that of Singapore's. Penang became one of the states of the newly formed Federation of Malaya in 1948 but remained under British colonial rule until 1957, when the Federation gained independence. The Federation was enlarged to form Malaysia in 1963. The phenomenon of the Chinese being the majority ethnic group is not surprising, as indeed, this has been the population structure in Penang long before Independence. In fact, this added an interesting facet to the total political picture, and was to characterise the politics in Penang, and the country, then and now. See Gullick (1965), Jamelah Bakar (1997).

¹⁶ Kedah, located in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia, is among the few states with a key historical role in shaping the country's early civilization. This is evident from Kedah's traditional administrative system, namely the Kedah Sultanate, a legacy that has been inherited through many generations. Traditionally, the two-tiered Malay society consisted of the ruling class and the subservient commoners. These two social groups were the basis for the political culture of that era. Rulers were in the exclusive league, whereby condition of entry was blood i.e. ancestry, under the leadership of the Sultan, his Bloodline, and other Members of the Royalty (perhaps of different lineage). They were the traditional 'movers and shakers' in administration and politics, who actually established the ruling class. At the top of the socio-political structural hierarchy was the Sultan. He was assisted by the traditional elites comprising the prominent heads/chiefs at central and district levels. The majority of the Kedah populace then were Malays who resided in kampongs and whose main economic activity was agriculture. The immigrants were mainly made up of small numbers of Chinese and Indians who were involved in trade and labour-related activities. See Kedah dari segi Sejarah (1985).

Based on the plurality of the Malaysian society, the selection of Penang and Kedah symbolises this characteristic. Table 1.1 shows that the majority of Penang's population is Chinese whereas in Kedah, it is Malay. In this regard, this study also looks at population distribution.

Table 1.1: Population distribution in Penang and Kedah by ethnic group

	Malay (%)			Chinese (%)			Indian (%)		
	1991	1997	2003	1991	1997	2003	1991	1997	2003
Penang	38.0	38.9	42.8	49.1	50.2	46.3	10.5	10.8	10.7
Kedah	76.0	75.0	76.6	14.1	15.0	14.9	7.5	8.2	7.1

Source: i). Data 1991 - See Malaysia 1992. Official year book 1991. Vol 28. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix.

ii). Data 1997 - See Malaysia 1998. Official year book 1997. Vol 34. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix

iii). Data 2003 - See Malaysia 2004. Official year book 2004. Vol 40. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix

2. Head of Government

All of the major political parties in Malaysia are mobilised along ethnic lines. The BN coalition has ruled since independence, turning the country into virtually a one-party state. It claims to be a multi-ethnic coalition government, but in reality it is controlled by the Malays under the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). UMNO has headed all BN state Governments except in Penang, where Gerakan (Chinese) heads the government (see table 1.2. By choosing Penang and Kedah, we can analyse the management of conflict within these two states and compare their dominance by parties of different ethnic groups.

Table 1.2: Heads of Government of Penang and Kedah, 1974 -2001

Penang Chief Ministers	Party	Tenure
Dr. Lim Chong Eu	Gerakan	1969 – 1990
Dr.Khoo Tsu Koon	Gerakan	1990 – present
Kedah Chief Ministers	Party	Tenure
Syed Ahmad Syed Mahmud Shahbuddin	UMNO	1967 - 1978
Syed Nahar Syed Sheh Shahbuddin	UMNO	1978 - 1985
Osman Aroff	UMNO	1985 - 1996
Sanusi Junid	UMNO	1996 - 2001

3. Opposition parties

Judging from past elections (for example in the 1995 election, refer table 1.3 in these two states, opposition parties have had strong support, and this was seen as a key element in creating a competitive environment, especially among the component parties of the BN. In Penang for instance, the strength of the Democratic Action Party¹⁷ (DAP) caused uneasiness among Gerakan and the MCA, who continuously strove to win the support of voters (see table 1.3). Bargaining therefore frequently became a weapon to attract supporters.

¹⁷ The Democratic Action Party (DAP) is a multiethnic but predominantly Chinese party formed by a former member of the Singapore People's Party (PAP), following the republic separation from Malaysia on 18 March 1966. See NSTP (1990).

Table 1.3: Total numbers of popular votes obtained by the opposition in Penang and Kedah in the 1995 election.

Kedah	Popular Votes	Penang	Popular Votes
BN	311,647 (55.0%)	BN	282,191 (58.6%)
PAS	233,217 (41.2%)	PAS	30,938 (6.4%)
DAP	18,270 (3. 3%)	DAP	113,053 (23.50%)
Independent	2,509 (0.5%)	Keadilan	54,604 (11.3%)

Source: Election Commission. (1997). Report on The Parliamentary and State Elections, 1995. Percetakan Negara, Kuala Lumpur.

1.1.2 Studies related to Conflict Management in the Barisan Nasional

In-won Hwang (2003) and Ongkili (1985) stated that the existence of a plural society as a result of the British colonialism was the main contributor of communal conflicts¹⁸ in Malaysia. Conflicting demands from different groups complicated the task of creating national unity. These demands were reflected in such areas as education, national language, religion, citizenship and the distribution of economic benefit¹⁹. Studies by Zakiah Awang (1993) and Etty Zainab Ibrahim (1974) found that each ethnic group would go through their respective organisations to fight for their rights and interests – the Malays through the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Chinese through the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Indians through the Malaysian Indian

¹⁸ Gurr (1994) has identified 233 ethnic conflict groups in the world in 1980. Sixty-three per cent of these experienced historical or contemporary economic discrimination and 72 percent experienced political discrimination. In many cases, these inequalities were perpetuated by policies and practices that violated widely-recognised standards of human rights. An indication of the resentment that ethnic groups feel in the face of perceived unequal treatment is the fact that more than 85 percent of these groups organised politically at some time to defend or promote their collective interests against governments and other groups. These protests usually started out peacefully, but in the face of continued denial or repression, escalated into violence and eventually, into protracted violent conflicts (21 percent).

¹⁹ See Kapur. D.K., (1983).

Congress (MIC). To overcome this deadlock and address the demands of forming a government, the leaders of UMNO, the MCA and the MIC adopted the Strategies of Accommodation approach²⁰, where the coalition of the Alliance was an answer to the dilemma faced by all political parties in Malaysia (Clark, 1964, Ratnam, 1965, Leo Ah Beng, 1972).

Kapur's study, *Malaysia Quest for a Politics of Consensus* (1983), and Siow Moli's *Conflict, Consensus and Political Change: A Case Study of Interethnic Divisions in West Malaysia* (1979), found that while under the rule of the Alliance, consensus was an important element in managing the conflicts faced among the component parties. Esman (1972) is of the opinion that the Alliance regulated communal conflict according to what has been called an 'avoidance model' of conflict management. Meanwhile, by using the package deal of the 1957 constitutional contract and the national language bill of 1967 as examples, In Wong Hwang (2003) proposed that compromise and concession are the main procedures applied in conflict management by the Alliance.

The Alliance was later replaced with the establishment of the BN in 1974²¹. In principle, the BN is not much different from the Alliance coalition since it is still based on the ideas

²⁰ In general, there are two main strategies for managing conflict, namely Confrontation and Accommodation. Confrontation refers to the idea of one nation, one state. In the process of implementing that idea (nation building), the state tried to coerce ethnic groups with an identified assimilation policy, which is divided into two extremes; the softest (acculturation-assimilation) and the most violent (genocide). There are also several types of mixed or modified policies: cultural genocide (white genocide); forced migration (deportation or expulsion); ethnic-cleansing; relocation (internal displacement); and replacement. On the other hand, Accommodation is based on the principle of power sharing among several ethnic groups in a plural society.

²¹ There are studies focusing on the background of the BN's establishment at state level, such as in Perak (Chandran, K. 1975. *Coalition politics in Malaysia: A case study of Perak*. Academic Exercise (B.Ec). Faculty of Economics and Administration. Universiti Malaya.), Kedah (Mohd. Taib Ahmad Said. 1974.

of consociationalism and elite accommodation (Mauzy 1983, Kapur 1983, Zakiah Awang, 1983, Mohammad Agus Yusoo, 1992) in which UMNO continues to be the dominant partner (Mauzy 1983, Andaya 2001).

Based on the core concept of power sharing among the races (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989, In Wong Hwang, 2003), the BN had successfully surmounted election after election by retaining a two-thirds majority of Parliamentary seats²²(Chandrasekaran Pillay, 1974, Crouch, 1980, Ismail Kassim, 1978, Hussein Mohammad, 1987, Zakri Abadi, 1986, Khong Kim Hoong, 1991, Gomez, 1996, Mohd Sayuti Omar, 1996, Kamaruddin Jaafar, 2000, Andaya, 2001).

The BN's success is driven by several factors. For Barraclough (1985b), it is based on the cooperation among the main elite groups. In Malaysia the political elites have been able to institutionalise the 'rules of the game' and the procedures for elite cooperation (Mauzy, 1983:138). Crouch (1996) clarified that their success was also supported by government policies that impose restrictions on opposition parties from acting with total freedom, as in a true democracy. This restriction gave rise to the terms quasi-democracy (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989), limited democracy (Ong, 1986) and semi-democracy (Case, 1993). There are also views that the BN has managed to retain power because of its consistency in managing the conflicts among its component parties. This gave the BN an advantage over

Coalition politics in Kedah. Academic exercise (B.Ec). Public Services, Division. Faculty of Economics and Administration, Universiti Malaya) and Penang (Md. Aris Ariffin. 1973. *Coalition government in Penang*. (B.Ec). Faculty of Economics and Administration. Universiti Malaya.)

²² It gained 88 percent of the seats in 1974, 85 percent in 1978, 86 percent in 1982, 84 percent in 1986, 71 percent 1990, 84 percent in 1995 and 76 percent in 1999 (Andaya, 2001:327)

their opponents, who have failed to form cohesive coalitions during elections (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989).

Nevertheless, the study on the **actual procedures of managing conflict** (in the allocation of parliamentary seats and cabinet/state Exco posts) in the BN is rather limited, even though the strategy applied is not much different from those practised by the Alliance. Crouch (1996) stated that the management of conflict by compromise is most essential in handling communal issues in the BN. In Won Hwang's (2003) study regarding UMNO's dominance in the BN suggested the use of the hegemonic method in managing political conflicts. In this context, compromise, bargaining and accommodation played important roles in creating stability within the BN, which then sustained its position in every election it participated in.

1.2 Key Concepts

1.2.1 Plural Society

J.S. Furnivall was the first to distinguish the plural society as a separate form of society (Smith, 1965:75). Furnivall was an economist with considerable experience in the colonial Far East. He summarized this experience as follows;

In Burma, as in Java, probably the first thing that strikes the visitor is the medley of peoples – European, Chinese, Indian and native. It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market place, in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the

community living side by side but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere, there is a division of labour along racial lines (Furnivall, 1948:304).

Lijphart defines a plural society as a social system so structured that political parties, interest groups, media of communication, schools and voluntary associations tend to be organised along the lines of segmented cleavages... (such) cleavages may be of religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial or ethnic in nature (1977:3-4).

The nature of these and similar societies have, however, over time produced two different types of elites; the administrators (who control political and/or administrative power) and the entrepreneurs (who are excluded from effective political participation). While from a normative perspective, the nature of plural societies necessitate that ethnic elites work towards establishing a genuine multiracial society with acceptable mechanisms for defusing and controlling ethnic conflicts, it has been found that generally, ethnic security concerns and the desire to maintain political domination dictate that ethnic leaders, especially the intellectual or elite class, act in accordance with communal pulls. In addition, elites tend to prioritise and pursue interests which are meant to enhance the security and welfare of their own groups. In other words, the collective good of the society is often sacrificed for private or ethnic interests.

Thus, one can argue that irrespective of the administrative structure or systems that are in place in public bureaucracies in these societies, to a large extent the group that occupies the top positions in the public service determines the output and kind of public service delivery. This situation exists largely because the political parties are ethnic based and

therefore when they form a government, problems about the limits and nature of public service reform are bound to arise. Such a situation is clearly seen in Malaysia. Hence analysts such as Vasil (1971), Saunders (1977), Sindhu and Jones (1981), Mauzy (1983), Kiran Kapur Datar (1983), Crouch (1996), In Won Hwang (2003), and use 'plural society' in describing the situation in Malaysia instead of the term 'pluralism'²³. In this regard, in Chapter 2, this study will also adopt the term 'plural society' to describe the social situation in Malaysia.

1.2.2 Consociational Democracy

The Consociationalism Model was first presented by Arend Lijphart (Consociational Democracy) in *Democracy in Plural Societies* (1977)²⁴. Consociation is a form of government based on the cooperation among political elites of the segments of a divided society, within an institutional framework. Its immediate aim is to turn a society with a

²³ Pluralism is 'the doctrine that governmental authority within a community should be distributed among various functional groups and neither monopolized nor shared by a sovereign power in the state (Smith, 1983:45). Pluralism involves complexity, with multiple causation factors and a large number of interactions and inputs to the political process (Mc Farland, 1969:19). Lijphart (1977:12) saw that the subdivisions of a plural society can go in different, and even conflicting, directions and thus disperse the power and limit the authority of the rulership. Dahl (1982:3) saw pluralism as 'polyarchy', the multiplicity of rules. Pluralism refers to organisational pluralism, which is the existence of plurality of relatively autonomous (independent) organisations (subsystems) within the domain of a state. For pluralism to function and to be successful in defining the common good, all groups have to agree to a minimal consensus regarding shared values, which tie the different groups to society, and shared rules for conflict resolution between the groups. The most important value is that of mutual respect and tolerance, so that different groups can coexist and interact without anyone being forced to assimilate to anyone else's position in conflicts that will naturally arise out of diverging interests and positions. These conflicts can only be resolved durably by dialogue which leads to compromise and to mutual understanding. Pluralism can be classified into political pluralism, social pluralism and cultural pluralism. Pluralism explicitly enjoins a holistic view of societies and their culture as units having historical continuity (Smith, 1965:xvi).

²⁴ Lijphart and Gerhard Lehmbruch (A Non-competitive Pattern of Conflict Management in Liberal Democracies: The Case of Switzerland, Austria and Lebanon), working independence at the 1967 World Congress of the International Political Science Association in Brussels. Since then, a broad discussion has followed (Lijphart, 1969, 207-25).

“fragmented political culture” into a stable democracy and to maintain “national unity” (Lijphart, 1969; Gurr, 1993: 310-311).

The consociational approach focuses on the emergence and functioning of elite consensus as a key factor explaining stability in a plural society, while the control approach primarily focuses on how a super-ordinate ethnic group can effectively manipulate or control a subordinate or rival ethnic group. In this theory, the terms domination, repression and hegemonic control are the most common elements in managing ethnic conflict²⁵. Since Lijphart introduced the concept of Consociational Democracy, the literature dealing with consociational techniques for archiving and maintaining political stability in deeply divided societies has expanded rapidly, though not always conforming to Lijphart’s approach²⁶.

In the consociational approach, elites directly represent various societal segments and act to forge political ties at the centre. Elites engaged in political competition for popular support. In order to be elected, political elites must fulfil the wishes of the electorate and maintain the edge in terms of popular support. The leaders engage in a game with other

²⁵ The notion of control had long been illustrated by many other scholars as a means of explaining stability and conflict management in deeply divided societies, as shown in the studies of Furnivall (1939) – the concepts of ‘separate communities’ and ‘external force’, Smith (1965), Esman (1965), Rabuska and Shepsle (1972).

²⁶ The literature on consociational democracy is well developed. While the groundbreaking work is Lijphart’s, particularly his book *Democracy in Plural Societies* (1977a), many other scholars have contributed to the approach. First, consociationalism has its antecedents in the earlier work of Lijphart (1968), which termed the approach “the politics of accommodation.” Landmark works in the school include Daalder (1971), McRae (1974), and Pappalardo (1981). Several scholars, led by Jürg Steiner, have sought to extend the consociational approach to a broader framework of decision making in coalitions. See Steiner’s articles (1981a; 1981b). Other scholars, such as Lembruch and Schmitter, have related consociational theory to the corporatist model, arguing that these approaches are complementary; their views are best stated in Lembruch and Schmitter (1979). Lijphart (1985) catalogues and responds to critics of the consociational approach.

community leaders at the national level (horizontal game). Lijphart (1977) mentioned that horizontal games are 'a basic willingness to engage in cooperative efforts with the leaders of other segments in a spirit of cooperation and compromise.' Lijphart singles out the four characteristics of consociational democracy as:

1. Grand coalition,
2. Mutual veto.
3. Proportionality
4. Segmental autonomy

The Netherlands is a good case to begin with, since in the 1960s, Lijphart used it to develop the consociational theory. At the time, the Netherlands was segmented into the three pillars of Calvinists, Catholics and seculars, and Lijphart argued that it was thanks to consociationalism that despite its segmentation, the country was politically stable. In Belgium, consociationalism has been successful and establishment of three political regions, namely Flanders, Wallon and Brussels, and three cultural communities, one each for the Flemings, the Francophones and the small German-speaking minority in East Belgium. Belgium became de facto subdivided into two monolingual regions (Flanders and Wallon) and one bilingual region (Brussels). Based on these language areas, the second process of several constitutional revisions (1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993) gradually transformed Belgium from a unitary into a federal state. The Parliament was split into

two parliamentary language groups that obtained their own constitutional status and special veto rights in order to prevent major decisions against the will of one side.²⁷

Not all consociational experiments have proven successful and two historical failure states are Cyprus and Northern Ireland, 1973-1974²⁸. The real failure of consociational democracy was in Cyprus in 1960. Despite having the perfect consensus constitution, the country erupted into civil war after only a few years. The major reason for this breakdown was the fact that there was a very large majority Greek segment (78 per cent).

The Turks comprised a mere 18 per cent. But the Turks were awarded the Vice-Presidency, three out of ten cabinet seats and five out of 50 parliamentary seats! The same ratio applied to the Civil Service, while there was a 6:4 ratio for the police and army. In addition, the Vice President had equal powers to the Greek President and an equal veto over the cabinet and legislature on matters of defence, security and Foreign Affairs. The Turks were therefore over represented and tended to stick to the letter of the constitution. The Greeks, on the other hand, had reluctantly accepted the constitution at the time of Independence and their attempt to alter the constitution to achieve stricter proportionality sparked the civil war that led to the breakdown of Power-Sharing. But apart from the internal dynamics, the situation was influenced by the fact that both Greece and Turkey intervened on the sides of their respective nationals.

²⁷ See Lijphart (1981) and McRae (1986).

²⁸ See Ulrich Schneckler, (2000).

Consociational democracy has been criticised for its weak empirical support in Europe and for being undemocratic since elections play little role in allocating power between parties. Nordlinger and Horowitz have also found the model inappropriate for deeply divided societies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, because it is not flexible enough to cope with changes in the balance of power between groups. Consociational democracy may only be practicable in moderately rather than deeply divided societies.

1.2.3 Conflict and conflict management

Conflict is a complex phenomenon. It can be interpreted from various perspectives according to the subject fields²⁹. Conflict generally occurs when there are differing objectives, values or perceptions between two parties, which usually results in opposing interactions between them. This difference would lead to opposition, disagreement or incompatibility, controversy or friction between two or more parties (Deutsch, 1990:237).

In political science, conflict is a norm and it exists when there is an apparent situation in which at least two parties, or their representatives, try to pursue their perceptions of mutually incompatible goals by undermining, directly or indirectly, each other's goal-seeking capability (Sandole, 1998:1). Meanwhile, Wagner defines conflict somewhat loosely as any situation in which individuals or groups with incompatible goals act so as

²⁹ Economist (e.g., Kenneth Boulding), political scientists (e.g., Robert Dahl, S.M. Lipset), students of industrial relation (e.g., Clark Kerr), social theorists (e.g., Ralf Dahrendorf, Jessie Bernand), organisation theorists (e.g., Victor Thompson, James Thompson), psychologists (e.g., Kurt Lewis, Nevitt Sanford) and others have all offered important statements about the nature, dynamics and management of conflict (Leslie, 1972:702).

to interfere with each other's ability to accomplish what they want (1999:337). Wilmot and Hocker explained that conflict can be defined as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals" (2001:41). Several terms of conflict are often used for the different levels or conditions of conflict³⁰. Among them are conflict prevention³¹, conflict management³², conflict settlement³³ and conflict resolution³⁴.

Conflict management is the principle that not all conflicts can necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflict can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for the management of conflict in the environment. The role of conflict management is to either change the parties' perception that their goals are incompatible

³⁰

<i>Conflict Causes and Conditions</i>	<i>Conflict Latent (Pre-MCP) MCP/AMCP</i>	<i>Conflict Intervention 3rd-Party Objectives</i>
Individual Level	Parties	Conflict Prevention
Societal Level	Issues	Conflict Management
International Level	Objectives	Conflict Settlement
Global/Ecological Level	Means	Conflict Resolution

(a) *individual level* (biological, physiological, psychological); (b) *societal level* (political, economical, social); (c) *international level*; and (d) *global/ecological level* (Waltz, 1959; North, 1990).

³¹ Conflict Prevention includes role-set and multiple-position conflicts. A "role-set conflict" is a conflict between two or more parts of the same role; (Thompson and Van Houten, 1970:143-144).

³² Conflict Management refers to the structural dealing with issues that call into question whole systems -- e.g., belief/value (theoretical, behavioural), biological, or physical systems -- or non-structural, dealing with the means for achieving goals within systems. Secondly, among specific categories of issues which may or may not call into question whole systems, Moore talks about data, interest, relationship, and value conflicts (Moore, 1986:27).

³³ Conflict Settlement: This is one of the defining features of the post-Cold War world, characterised in part by a fundamental clash between two aspects of international law; i.e., there are those who want to maintain the territorial integrity of their new states (e.g., Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian Federation, Serbia).

³⁴ Conflict Resolution refers to means that parties can use to achieve their objectives, as suggested by Anatol Rapoport's classic *Fights, Games, and Debates*. In fights, parties define each other as "enemies" to be destroyed; in games, they define each other as opponents to be outwitted; and in debates, they define each other as opponents to be persuaded or converted to their own point of view (Rapoport, 1974:180-183).

(to compatible or to a win-win perception), or to change the goals themselves by making compromise preferable to continued fighting. The negotiators' challenge is to facilitate the transformation of the parties' goals from incompatible to compatible or even super-ordinate (i.e. when a higher, mutual goal replaces the incompatibility). Conflict management refers to the modes used by either or both parties to cope with conflict.

According to Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann (Thomas, 1975; Thomas & Kilmann, 1977), Robbins (1990), Gordon (1985), Borisoff and Victor (1989), Poole and Stutman (2001), conflict management can be seen through the Two-Dimensional Model of Conflicting Behaviours that classifies five modes or styles of resolving conflict. According to them, an individual has a choice of at least five methods in managing conflict, which are force or competition, problem-solving or collaboration, avoidance, accommodation and compromise.

1. Avoidance

Avoidance is one of the five approaches used in resolving conflicts that arise. Through this method of resolution, the parties facing the conflict act passively by trying to avoid or ignore the conflict rather than facing it. In general, the avoidance-oriented method of conflict resolution refers more to those who are not assertive or demanding, and even uncooperative. Both attitudes mentioned above try to ignore the issue that arises by choosing not to pay attention to it. In general, avoidance in conflict management would

create a lose-lose situation, as there would be no avenue of resolution that benefits either party.

2. Accommodation

This style of managing or resolving conflict leans towards accommodation, whereby one of the conflicting parties tries to withdraw from the conflict. The method of resolving conflict by accommodation involves non-assertiveness and a willingness to cooperate with the other party to fulfil the party's desires. Such can be achieved through the process of negotiation on each other's objectives and intentions, eventually reaching a consensus on one selected objective (Gordon, 2002:305). Generally, this form of conflict resolution is rather passive with one party always "giving in" to the opponent. Usually, a win-lose situation would result. This is because one party would try to win by compelling the other party to fulfil its own wishes.

3. Competition

The competition approach or style is another method in conflict management strategy. The parties facing the conflict try to satisfy or achieve their own objectives only. They are firm and confident in their stance and will not budge from their views in order to achieve their objectives. In resolving the conflicts that arise, this approach would involve acting in contrary to the wishes and desires of the opponent party. The parties would compete with each other and in this competition, one party would win while the other would lose (Gordon, 2002:305). This method tends to maximise assertiveness on the

position of a party and seldom involves cooperation with the other party. The priority would be on one's own objective in all aspects and procedures.

4. Collaboration

The style of collaboration achieves a level at which both elements of assertiveness and cooperation are at their maximum, whereby each party is willing to fully cooperate for the sake of obtaining a result that would satisfy both parties' desires. This approach emphasises a situation in which no party would lose when the conflict is resolved, or in other words, a win-win situation. The approach of collaboration is also called the problem-solving style, because it requires the co-operation of both parties to arrive at a resolution that can be agreed upon by the conflicting parties (Hellriegel, 1989:455). The resulting decision not only settles the conflict at hand but can also improve performance and co-operation between both parties.

5. Compromise

Compromise is a method of resolving conflict through negotiations between the two conflicting parties. In a compromise, both parties exercise a lot of give-and-take. Each gives their views, at the same time accepting the view of the other party, and the result will be the combination of both parties' views. Therefore, in this approach, there would not be a clear distinction between the winner and the loser, as the final decision fulfils the

wishes of both parties. This is because both parties will have to compromise and accept an I-Win-Some-I-Lose-Some situation to achieve a joint decision (Gordon, 2002:305). The method of resolving conflict by compromise requires moderation in both assertiveness and cooperation to make it a success. The Barisan Nasional applied several strategies to resolve conflicts on the distribution of seats and cabinet/state exco posts. Attention will be focused on which of these five strategies is the BN's main choice in managing conflicts.

1.2.4 Bargaining

Bargaining transpires when two or more parties come to a conflict that cannot be won unilaterally on each of their respective terms, hence the parties seek to terminate it by means of a settlement to their mutual benefit and therefore commit themselves to bargaining (Pierre du Toit, 1987:420). Bargaining³⁵ is the process of argument, persuasion, threat, proposal and counter-proposal by which the potential parties engage in a transaction to discuss its terms and possibly reach agreement on them. Bargaining is based on the premise that bargainers analyse any bargain settlement in terms of bargaining power³⁶ (Browne, 1973:25).

³⁵ The differences between Bargaining with Negotiation and Diplomacy are:

- a. Negotiation involves more than a decision to confer. There must be an operative desire to clarify, adjust or settle the dispute or situation. All definitions of negotiation agree that the negotiator must engage in a process of joint decision-making (Lall, 1966:31).
- b. Diplomacy is essentially the art of negotiation. In this sense, the distinguishing feature from negotiation is that "diplomacy is an intentional activity carried out between representatives whose role is legitimised by those they represent" (Browne 1973, 25).

³⁶ The concept of bargaining power can be developed from three assumptions;

1. Power is the Essence of bargaining: Bargaining power is the central concept for a general theory of bargaining as it influences and is influenced by all aspects of bargaining. As a result,

The bargaining process is a process of social interaction through which each party tries to maximise its gains and minimise its losses. Each party uses various tactics to accomplish this goal, to manipulate the other party in the desired direction. Those tactics may include bluffs, arguments, concessions, threats, strikes and so forth. The important characteristic about bargaining is the haggling over the terms of give and take (Morley and Stephenson, 1977:34). Principled bargaining is neither integrative bargaining (soft/giving in) nor distributive bargaining (hard/controlling). In general, integrative bargaining tends to be more cooperative, and distributive bargaining more competitive.

Integrative bargaining refers to the approach by which the parties try to make more of something. This is most commonly explained in terms of a pie. Disputants can work together to make the pie bigger, so there is enough for all of them to have as much as they want, or they can focus on cutting the pie up, trying to get as much as they can for themselves. It is based on the criteria for fair negotiation and focused on a win-win for all parties. If a win-win is not possible at the time of negotiation, they can agree to have a win-win or no-deal, set aside the negotiations and return at a time when the parties can search for a third alternative. When using soft negotiations, the participants were friends: seeking agreement, making concessions, trusting others, changing positions easily, accepting, giving things up to reach an agreement, and yielding to pressure.

bargaining power is the product of the bargainers' tactical actions, this being derived from the bargaining relationship.

2. Bargaining is the Process of tactical actions: The potential bargaining power of the bargainers determines the choice of tactics at his disposal. As a matter of fact, the successful bargainer translates potential power into actual power.
3. Bargaining Power is Subjective Power (Pierre Du Toit, 1987, 420).

Distributive bargaining is the approach of bargaining that had been used when the parties are trying to divide something up for distribution. When using hard negotiation, the participants are adversaries. Maintaining the goal of victory, demanding concessions from others, and distrusting are all important elements in the bargaining process. The goal in distributive bargaining is not to ensure that both sides win, but rather that one side (your side) wins as much as it can, which generally means that the other side will lose, or at least get less than what it wants.

Bargaining in a coalition party is a normal phenomenon. This is because every component party uses its demand as an element or weapon to obtain its desires, especially in critical situations, such as when facing elections. In such a scenario, usually the dominant party can gain more tactical concessions from its opponent (for example, forcing them to withdraw their demands) and reach an agreement that is highly favourable to itself. In the extreme case of highly unequal bargaining power, this can amount to decisions by repression. For this reason, Ian Lustick has characterised the consociational system as a distributive bargaining between elites, where deals, once made, are upheld³⁷. In this regard, discussion on the concept of bargaining in this study refers to the concept of interactive bargaining in its effort to facilitate discussion, and understanding bargaining within the BN.

³⁷ Ian Lustick has compared consociational democracy to a so-called control model of decision-making on a number of features. According to Lustick, in control systems, hard bargaining between the super-ordinate and subordinate elites indicates a collapse in the ability of dominant elites to maintain control and stability within the system (Lustick 1979, 325-344).

1.3 Methodology of study

To gather data to understand the conflict on seat and cabinet/Exco post allocations in the BN, the main research methods used were interview and documentary analysis of key primary materials.

1. Interview

The primary information for this study was largely collected from interviews with prominent leaders of the BN's relevant component parties, namely UMNO, the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC, especially those who held posts during the period 1974 -1999. Stedward stated that the interview is a great vehicle for bringing a research topic to life (1997:151). It is also an excellent method for obtaining data about contemporary subjects which have not been extensively studied and for which there is little literature. Interviews can be particularly helpful in fleshing out documents when it comes to reconstructing the roles and methods of personalities, and their relationship with others (Seldon 1988:4). Therefore in this study, the interview is certainly a highly suitable approach for collecting data, especially from the top leadership of the BN's components, namely UMNO, the

MCA, the MIC and Gerakan. The interview method used in this study was elite interviewing.

Elite interviewing

This procedure was preferred because the selected respondents were those directly involved in the process of negotiating, bargaining and decision-making on both the core matters of this study. According to Harrison (2001:94), if we wished to discover how political institutions operate, how important decisions are made and how political power is attained, we are not likely to ask the public at large, but rather those individuals (very often a small group) who have access to this level of information - such as political elites. Meanwhile, according to Leech (2002a:663), elite interviewing³⁸ can be used whenever it is appropriate to treat a respondent as an expert about the topic in hand. This is especially true when it concerns individuals who are directly involved in decision-making, such as Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, the former Prime Minister, or party Presidents such as Lee Liong Sik (MCA), Samy Vellu (MIC) and Lim Kheing Yeik (Gerakan). Furthermore, elite interviewing provides the information that might not have been recorded elsewhere, particularly in view of the sensitive and cautious nature of Malaysian politics when it comes to mentioning or discussing interracial conflict. The method of elite interviewing

³⁸ There isn't a very large amount of literature on elite interviewing. Three of the most useful studies are Dexter (1970); Moyser and Wagstaffe (1987) and Rubin and Rubin (1995).

involves four steps in ensuring that the collection of materials proceeds smoothly (Burnham, 2004:206).

a. select the respondents

According to Mannheim and Rich (1995:164), representative sampling is not as central as in quantitative research because elite interviews have to assume that potential respondents differ in how much they can contribute to the study and that each respondent has something unique to offer. The respondent selection criteria for these interviews at the initial stage include;

- i. The president, secretary or executive secretary of parties at national leadership level (headquarters),
- ii. The chairman, secretary or executive secretary of parties of the State Liaison Committee (Kedah and Penang),
- iii. The executive secretary of the BN,
- iv. Former post-holders who have since retired [however, for this category, only individuals who would really make an impact on this study were chosen based on their involvement with the BN and on the advice of the present party leadership], and
- v. The president or the secretary from the main opposition parties, namely the DAP, PAS and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM). Interviewees from opposition parties are required in order to obtain their views on the BN.

A total of 28 political figures in the BN and two from opponent parties were identified as interviewees. The list of interviewees is given in Appendix A.

b. Get access and arrange the interview

According to Burnham (2004:208), the biggest problem in getting access to a member of an elite group is that such individuals are usually very busy and they have to be provided with some convincing motivation for seeing a researcher. During the early stages of this study, several problems arose, especially the lack of cooperation from the BN's Headquarters at state and federal levels. They perceived the topics of this study as party secrets and strategies. Attempts to make appointments for interviews were also met with rejections and many refused to entertain. This is because it involves:

- i. internal matters of the Barisan Nasional, which are confidential;
- ii. techniques and strategies applied by the BN in elections. This is definitely something that most parties would feel reluctant to disclose or reveal for public knowledge.
- iii. respondents from among the top leaders in each component party of the BN. Political elites can naturally only spare a limited amount of time for interviews.

When government leadership was handed over by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in October 2003, the researcher had tried to obtain Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's views and agreement. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi finally gave the green light for the study to continue. From this point onwards, the BN Headquarters began to cooperate and even assisted in managing data collection for this study. The BN Headquarters also helped arrange interviews with respondents, particularly with leaders of the component parties, such as the MCA, the MIC and Gerakan. As such, in this study, not all these

short-listed respondents could be interviewed, due to their busy schedules. Among them were Samy Vellu, the President of the MIC, and Dr. Lim Keng Yik, the President of Gerakan. Nevertheless, they nominated other individuals to assist in providing the required data. For example, Samy Vellu nominated Dr. Danelson, the Director of the MIC Social Strategy Foundation, as his representative, while Dr. Lim Keng Yik delegated the task to Dr. Koh Tsu Khoo (Vice President of Gerakan).

c. Conduct the interview

To ensure that all discussions were conducted smoothly, before each interview, the researcher requested the respondent's permission for the interview to be recorded. The purpose of the recording is to ensure that all information given can be referred to during the process of transcription. All of the respondents had agreed to allow their interviews to be recorded. At the same time, some of the respondents also recorded the interviews themselves. Among them were Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, Dr. Kho Tsu Khoo and Tun Ghaffar Baba.

During the interviews, three respondents also brought along officers to assist in providing related statistical information. Dr. Kho Tsu Khoo, in the interview conducted on 17 July 2004 at a hotel in Penang, brought with him five officers, namely the Assistant Secretary of Gerakan Penang, the Assistant Secretary of Penang's Gerakan Youth, the Development Officer of PERDA, the Special Officer from the Chief Minister's

Department and his press secretary. Their attendance helped Dr. Koh Tsu Khoon answer and clearly explain questions asked by the researcher.

Dr. Mahathir Mohammad did likewise, and was accompanied by his special officer, who recorded the interview. Muhammad Rahmat brought along his personal secretary as transcriber. Other interviews were done face-to-face between the researcher and the respondent.

d. analyse the result

Based on the qualitative documentary analysis, the taking and recording of important notes from the interview should be done as soon as an interview has been carried out. This is important to ensure that no important questions or required information are left out. Using these notes, a review is done and if any lack of information or certainty was found in the statements based on the questions asked, the researcher would ask for another appointment with the respondent to ensure this certainty. This happened with two respondents, namely Mohammad Rahmat, whose second interview was held on 24 February 2004, and Ibrahim Saat on 10 October 2004. Based on all the notes recorded from the interviewees, classification by theme or study question is done to facilitate analysis and writing. In addition, relevant quotes that supported the study are also identified. In this case, quotes from the elite interviews can do a great deal to enliven a research. (Burnham, 2004:213).

2. Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection was carried out using several key resources that helped in finding answers to the issues presented in this study. These key resources include;

- a. Official Malaysian publications, such as the Report on The Parliamentary and State Elections by the Election Commission. This report was instrumental in reviewing the BN's track records in elections from 1974 to 1999, changes in the number of seats and electorates, and new election regulations that took place during the course of this study.
- b.. The Malaysia Yearbooks (1974-1999), official government data books used in this study to gather information on Malaysia's cabinet members from 1974 to 1999.
- c. Newspaper clippings were an important source of information because the events were recorded at the time it happened. Some of the newspapers used as reference are;
 - i. New Straits Times and The Star: English language dailies with nationwide circulation.
 - ii. Berita Harian, Mingguan Malaysia, Berita Minggu and Utusan Malaysia: Malay language newspapers with nationwide circulation.
 - iii. Watan: Wednesday weekly that ended its publication in 1997.
 - iv. Harakah: Parti Islam SeMalaysia's (PAS) publication sold only to PAS members.
 - v. The Rocket: The Democratic Action Party's (DAP) monthly newsletter.
 - vi. Buletin UMNO: UMNO's monthly newsletter.
 - vii. Buletin Gerakan: Gerakan's monthly newsletter.

A study was also carried out at the National Archives. Particular attention was given to the review of personal files belonging to the main figures in the BN, such as;

- a. Abdul Razak Husein, the force behind the formation of the BN in 1974 and the Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1971 to 1976. A review of his private notes in a file kept by the Malaysian Archives was done to gather and strengthen the facts on the establishment of the BN and the conflicts that arose during his time.
- b. Tan Cheng Koon, the President of the MCA during the establishment process of the BN and Minister of Finance under the leadership of Prime

Minister Abdul Razak Hussein. His file was studied to review MCA's views towards the BN and also to study the bargaining proposed by the MCA to the BN during the time he held this post. (His file reference: 128).

- c. Hussein Onn, the 3rd Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1976 to 1981. A review of his file was done to look at the conflict within the BN during his administration.

Information was also acquired through unpublished data from Kemas (in particular, the composition breakdown of voters by State Legislative Council and Parliamentary constituency) and the Department of Special Affairs in the Prime Minister's Department.

Focus and Framework of the Study

This study focuses particularly on the following;

1. The period from 1974, when the BN was formed, to the 10th election in 1999
2. Conflict management in the BN;
 - a. in allocating seats during each election (1974-1999)
 - b. in appointing Cabinet/Exco members
3. The bargaining process between UMNO, the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC.
4. Conflict management in the BN within Peninsular Malaysia.

The study is divided into ten chapters. The first chapter starts by introduction of the studies. Second chapter discusses the background of the plural society in Malaysia. The discussion then centers upon the political scene in a plural society, which describes the communal approaches. The politics of accommodation is also discussed in this chapter. The third chapter presents the background of the Barisan Nasional from 1974 to 1999, focusing on the BN's participation in general elections, especially in Penang and Kedah.

Chapter fourth discusses the procedures applied by the Barisan Nasional in allocating seats among its component parties. This leads to three bases of evaluation that are arbitrated before a decision is made on which party is to contest for which seat.

The five chapter deliberates on the conflict that occurred within the Barisan Nasional during the process of seat allocation among its component members, mainly UMNO, the MCA, the MIC and Gerakan, at national and state levels. Next, chapter six concentrates on the conflict regarding the selection and appointment of Cabinet members at federal level and state Exco members in Penang and Kedah. Chapter seven specifically looks at the reasons, factors and process of bargaining within the Barisan Nasional, with special focus on Penang and Kedah. It describes the proposals or demands that were forwarded by the components of the Barisan Nasional, requested either as an honorarium or reward, or even a penalty, pertaining to the conflict they faced in the allocation of seats and appointment to the Cabinet or state Exco.

Chapter eight discusses the process and procedures applied by the Barisan Nasional in managing or handling the conflicts it faced, especially with regard to seat allocation and the appointment to the Cabinet and state Exco. Chapter nine touches on the challenges that the Barisan Nasional had to face in handling conflict. Finally, chapter ten concludes the overall discussion on the management of conflict by the Barisan Nasional, and also considers its future based on the two basic elements of this study.

CHAPTER 2

THE PLURAL SOCIETY AND THE POLITICS OF ACCOMMODATION IN MALAYSIA

2.1 Introduction

The discussion in chapter two focuses on three main parts. The first part describes the plural society in Malaysia, comprising the three main racial groups, namely Malay, Chinese, and Indian. The second part is a discourse specifically on the political scene as a result of the society's plurality, which closely examines the approach taken towards racial politics. Finally the third part is on the situation of the politics of accommodation in Malaysia, with focus on the element of Consociational Democracy and election.

2.2 Plural society in Malaysia

Malaysia is a classic example of a plural society in the sense that it is not only divided by race but also by language, religion, culture and economic role. Nordlinger, for example, describes Malaysia as a society whose institutions, cultures and values differ fundamentally (Nordlinger, 1972:112)¹. A plural society² exists in Malaysia

¹ Malaya is only one of several countries for which the definition of a plural society is appropriate. Other examples include former and present British possessions such as Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Ceylon, Guyana, Jamaica and India (Rabushka, 1968:44).

² The history of the development of a plural society in Malaysia has been extensively documented. There are many histories of Malaya containing detailed descriptions of the development of a 'plural society' in Malaya. R.O. Windstedt, (1962). *A History of Malaya*. Singapore: Marican & Sons. N.J. Ryan. (1965). *The making of modern Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. Joginder Singh Jessy.(1961). *History of Malaya (1400-1959)*. Penang. United Publisher and Peninsular Publication. Andaya. [W.B., Andaya L.Y. (1982). *A History of Malaysia*. Hampshire. Palgrave. Hall. (1981). *A History of South East Asia (4th)*. London:Macmillan Press.

because of the three main races, namely Malay³, Chinese⁴ and Indian⁵. Their presence in Malaya, especially the Malays and Chinese, dates far back from the reign of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca in 1408⁶ (Winstedt, 1923:116).

However, it was only after the tremendous influx of Chinese immigrants under British colonial rule, during the period from the 1870s to the outbreak of World War II, that serious friction between the Malays and the Chinese began to develop in Malaya (In Won Hwang, 2003:21). Table 2.1 illustrates how, in 1860, they numbered only around 13.5 percent Chinese and 5.5 percent Indians. But the number of immigrant Chinese and Indians continued to increase to 29.4 percent (growth by 15.9 percent) and 6.7 percent (grew by 1.2 percent) respectively in 1884. By 1911, the Malays majority was reduced to 54.8 percent, while the Chinese were 34.9 percent and the Indians 10.1 percent of a population of 2,672,000. In 1931, the Malays were

³ The Malays, from whom the name Malaya was derived, are thought to have migrated from Sumatera and the neighbouring islands. Prior to the immigration of the Europeans in the fifteenth century, the Malays lived in autonomous Sultanates. The nominal structure of the Sultanate was retained even under British rule, but the control of the economy rapidly passed from the Malays to the Europeans and the newly arriving immigrant groups. (Rabuskha, 1968:46).

⁴ The earliest evidence of Chinese communities in the Straits must be taken to date from Eunuch Cheng Ho's founding of Malacca in 1408. It can be safely assumed that from the time of its founding, the Chinese must have had a regular, if not continuous, residence there. The earlier stages of their straight forward migration to the Malay Peninsula at the beginning of the 19th century, especially in Perak and Selangor, was merely to work in the tin mines. This situation began to change in the middle of the 19th century when Chinese and European merchants began to receive land concessions to develop tin mines in the Malaya Peninsula. The Chinese immigrants came from the southern regions of China, such as Kwantung, Fukien and Kwangsi, and they were sub-divided into several different dialect groups, such as the Cantonese, Hakka, Hanan, Hokkien and Teochew. Population explosion, war breakouts, as well as domestic political problems, were all factors that contributed to the large-scale migration of the Chinese to the Malay Peninsula. The first 30 years of the 20th century saw a massive increase in the number of inhabitants in the Malay Peninsula. See Khoo Kay Kim, (1973), Victor Purcell, (1948) and Ginsburg and Robert, Jr., (1958), Chapter 8.

⁵ The ethnic composition of Malaya was made more complex with large-scale importation of Indian labourers. Indian indentured labourers started arriving in Malaya in 1860, to work in the sugarcane and coffee plantations. The Indians who came to Malaya were mostly from the south sub-Indian continent, from the Tamil, Telegu and Malayam speaking groups. There were also a significant number of Gujeratis, Punjabis, Bengalis and others from northern India. In 1957, there were about 700,000 Indians in Malaya, of which 48 per cent were employed in the cultivation of rubber, on plantations owned largely by European companies. Also see K.S. Sandhu.(1969).

⁶ Chinese intercourse with the Malay Peninsula is very old. According to Winstedt, in the year 1409, the Imperial envoy, Cheng Ho, brought an order from the Emperor and gave to the chief of Malacca two silver seals, a cap, a girdle and a long robe: he erected a stone and raised the place to a city. See Winstedt R.O., (1923).

49.8 percent, the Chinese 34.3 percent and the Indians 15.9 percent of a population 4,385,346.

**Table 2.1: Peninsular Malaysia – Population by Ethnic Group:
1860 to 1970**

Year	Malays (%)	Chinese (%)	Indians/Others (%)
1860	150,000 (81.0)	25,000 (13.5)	10,000 (5.5)
1884	895,239 (63.9)	411,894 (29.4)	93,867 (6.7)
1911	1,437,712 (54.8)	916,619 (34.9)	267,203 (10.1)
1921	1,651,051 (50.0)	1,174,777 (35.6)	471,666 (14.4)
1931	1,863,872 (49.8)	1,284,888 (34.3)	587,399 (15.9)
1947	2,427,834 (50.1)	1,884,534 (38.9)	530,638 (11.0)
1952	2,716,899 (50.0)	2,092,218 (38.5)	617,257 (11.5)
1955	2,967,233 (49.7)	2,286,883 (38.3)	713,810 (12.0)
1957	3,126,706 (50.7)	2,332,936 (37.8)	695,985 (11.5)
1970	4,841,000 (53.1)	3,286,000 (36.0)	981,400 (10.9)

Source: i). Data year s 1911 and 1921 is from *The Census of British Malaya*, 1921.

ii). Data years 1931, 1947 and 1970 is from *The Social Statistics Bulletin* 1988.

iii). Data year 1884 is from Alvin Rabushka. (1973), *Race and Politics in Urban Malaya*. California: Hoover Institution Press: p.21

iv). Data fyears 1952. 1955 and 1957 is from *The Malaysia Yearbooks* 1952, 1955 and 1957.

The influx of immigrants began when the British became interested in a large-scale economic development of Malayan rubber⁷ and tin resources⁸ in the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1870s, British rule modified the political role of the chiefs; the economic aspect of their activity accordingly reduced, and the Malays as a whole ceased to play a significant entrepreneurial part in the economy of their country (Freedman, 1960:161). Because the Malays preferred to remain in their own farms

⁷ By 1920, the export of rubber was 196,000 tonnes or about 53 percent of the total world production. The rubber industry was 'responsible for opening up the countryside and reclaiming vast areas from jungle for cultivation. It has transformed the states from a little explored region to one of the best supplied with means of communication in the East (Mill, 1958:22).

⁸ Malaya was famous for its tin centuries before the first rubber tree was planted. In 1936, the amount of capital invested in the tin-dredging companies was \$68,945,000 or 13 percent of the western capital invested in Malaya. Two-thirds of the ore came from western-owned mines and the rest from Chinese mines. This was 29 percent of the total world production (Mill, 1958:20).

instead of working as labourers in the rubber estates and in the mines of the foreigners, the British recruited willing Chinese and Indian labourers (Cooper, 1951:117). The exodus of immigrant labourers into Malaya was predominantly from India and China, since most of the Malays refused to work regular hours at fixed wages (Mill, 1958:11). Apart from working as labourers, the Chinese and Indians had later also participated in other economic activities, as explained by Emerson,

The Indians work in the rubber estates and in the civil services.
The Chinese run the full economic status gamut, from rubber
plantation coolie to merchant and banker (1937:12).

By virtue of the activities they engaged in, most of the local Chinese were traders and shopkeepers and were therefore proportionately more numerous in towns. (Winstedt, 1923:121). This situation led to a significant geographical segregation as shown in Table 2.2. The majority of the Chinese settled in the towns, likewise the Indians, whereas the Malays, as at 1970, accounted for only 14.9 percent of townsfolk.

Table 2.2: Population By ethnicity and degree of urbanisation in 1947, 1957 and 1970, West Malaysia

Ethnic Group	1970		1957		1947	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Total	28.7	71.3	26.5	73.5	15.9	84.1
Malays	14.9	85.1	11.2	88.8	7.3	92.7
Chinese	47.4	52.6	44.7	55.3	31.1	68.9
Indians	34.7	65.3	30.6	69.4	25.8	74.2
Others	40.8	59.2	49.3	50.7	46.2	53.8

Source: Dept. of Statistic Community Group (1972:33) in Judith Nagata. (1979). *Malaysia Mosaic Perspectives From A Poly-Ethnic Society*. Vancouver. University of British Columbia Press. p. 262.

The colonial government initially assumed that all Chinese and Indians were sojourners who would eventually return to their homelands. The British never attempted to integrate these immigrants with the indigenous population (Zakiah Awang, 1983:3). Nevertheless, this assumption proved incorrect when the majority of them decided to settle in Malaya. An implication of this is that the immigrants brought along their customs and traditions (Ryan, 1967:112) and this caused the Chinese and Indian to be separated not only by residence, but also by workplace, language and social organization (Hirschman, 1980:110). Freedman has described this pretty obvious situation for Malaya particularly well:

Malaya was and remains a culturally plural society... "The Malays" did not interact with "the Chinese" and "the Indians." Some Malays interacted with some Chinese and some Indians. But as the "Malays", "Chinese" and "Indians" came to be realised as structural entities on a nationwide scale, they can begin to have total relations with one another (1960:167).

This situation could be pictured more clearly based on what was inferred by Mahathir Mohammad, in his book 'The Malay Dilemma':

'In Malaysia we have three major races that have practically nothing in common. Their physiognomy, language, culture and religion differ. Besides, how is any one race going to forget race when race is in fact physically separated from the other? For the vast majority of the people in Malaysia, there is no dialogue. Many of them are not even neighbours. They live apart in different worlds - the Chinese in the towns, the Malay in the kampongs and the Indians in the estates. Nothing makes anyone forget the fact of race' (1970: 175).

Today, the plural society scenario that has so long existed is still significant. According to the 1970 census, the Bumiputera made up 55.5 percent (Malay 46.8 percent and other indigenous communities 8.7 percent) while non-Bumiputera

amounted to 44.5 percent (Chinese 34.1 percent, Indians 9.0 percent and others 1.4 percent) (Milne and Mauzy; 1978:3). Malaysia's racial divisions tended to coincide with, and be reinforced by, linguistics⁹, education¹⁰, religion¹¹, pattern of settlement¹², and most importantly, economic divisions¹³ (Crouch, 1996:13). Table 2.3 directly clarifies the situation of this plural society.

⁹ Malays speak a distinct language (Malay), the Chinese speak a number of Chinese dialects and Indians speak mainly Tamil or a variety of other Indian languages (Rabuska, 1973:26).

¹⁰ In education, there was no overall national system catering to the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. According to the Education Committee Report 1956 (the Razak Report), there were 4 different schooling systems in the Malay Peninsular, namely the Malay schools, the Chinese schools, the Tamil schools and the English schools, each with a different education system and curriculum. The education system is still based on racial lines to this very day, and it remains an element that differentiates the mindsets, which could subsequently be the catalyst for conflict.

¹¹ Although the religious inclination of a race did not directly relate to the 'divide and rule' policy of the British administration, this difference also stimulated conflict. Religion was, at times, thought of as an implicit power in the study of racial conflict in Malaysia. The Muslim faith of Islam is the official religion of Malaysia. Almost all the Malays are Muslim. Most Chinese are followers of Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism. The Indian population mostly practise Hinduism (Crouch, 1996:14).

¹² The pattern of settlement of the immigrant population further separated the Malays and non-Malays. The non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, settled primarily in the urban areas of West Malaya in the west coast states of Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Penang, Perak and Selangor. The Malays, predominantly engaged in agricultural activities, were concentrated in the states of Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah. More than 50 percent of the Chinese lived in urban areas, a pattern that persists today. The distribution of settlements showing racial dominance in an area has an impact, particularly from the economic and political aspects. From the economic point of view, urban settlement promised the availability of various facilities to grow and expand business and trade, as compared to urban areas. This helped the Chinese become more dynamic and progressive in controlling the nation's economy. From the political aspect, there exists a significant pattern in voting power between the urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the Chinese voters were always considered to be supporters of the opposition, whilst in the urban areas, the Malays were seen as strong supporters of the ruling party. These contrasting positions had indirectly been the influencing factor in sparking the racial conflict in Malaysia. See Purcell V. (1967) and Ratnam, K.J. (1965).

¹³ In implementing the 'divide and rule' policy, the British administration was clearly, in large measure, responsible for the existence of economic dualism in the Malay States. According to Ratnam, The Malay and non-Malay communities were affected differently by the modern economy. The Malay had always been an overwhelmingly rural community, largely engaged in agriculture and fishing. Only one in five city or town dwellers in 1957 was Malay and most of those were employed by the government. Ownership of wealth by the non-Malays, specifically the Chinese, was most obvious; the Chinese controlled the greatest proportion of the country's economy. The Malays, on the other hand, were getting deeper into the quagmire of poverty as a result of the wider disparity and inequality caused by the greater differences in productivity between the modern and traditional sectors. Meanwhile, nearly 80 percent of the Indians were to be found in manual jobs, mainly unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Only 6 percent were engaged in administrative, professional and managerial categories. See Purcell V, (1967:237) and Rathnam, K.J. (1965:2).

Table 2.3: Plural Society in Malaysia - Segregation by Ethnic Group

	Malays	Chinese	Indians
Economic Sector	Traditional - Agricultural	Modern	Mixed
Education	National Schools	National Type Chinese Schools	National Type Tamil Schools
Settlement	East Coast / Northern region of Peninsular Malaysia - Rural	West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia - Urban	West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia - Mixed
Religion	Islam	Buddhism/Taoism	Hinduism

Source: Vasil (1971), *Politics in a Plural Society; A study of non-communal Political parties in West Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur. p. 3-5.

2.3 Politics in a Plural Society

Malaysian has often been described as a plural society composed of three large ethnic groups, Malays, Chinese and Indians¹⁴. The common values are clearly evident in the efforts by each ethnic group to protect or obtain an asset of importance to their race. As recorded in the history of the formation of political parties, it is obvious that the three earliest major parties were formed on the basis of race. The United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), formed in 1946, represented the Malays. This was followed in the same year by Malayan (later Malaysian) Indian Congress (MIC), representing the Indians and Malayan Chinese Association (MCA)¹⁵, formed in 1949, representing the Chinese, which were all ethnic based.

¹⁴ See K.J. Ratnam (1965), R.K. Vasil (1971), R.S. Milne (1981) and M.J. Esman (1972).

¹⁵ The MCA was formed in 1949 by Tun Tan Cheng Lock. Its initial role was to look after the welfare of the Chinese. In 1951, the MCA was transformed into a political organisation. The MCA first contested with UMNO as partner in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal election held in February 1952. This led to the MCA-UMNO alliance later that year. The MCA is still a partner of the Alliance, now known as the BN. See NSTP (1990).

‘Race remains the constant and dominating factor. Most of the political parties are organised along ethnic lines. They mobilise communal support for essentially communal-oriented programmes’ (Ismail Kassim, 1978:1).

The initial manner and cause in the struggle to obtain and protect common values and identities are indeed rooted in the interests of each ethnic group. To strengthen their demands, they formed associations or organisations that asserted the unity amongst their fellow kinfolk. The separate fights for rights at this initial stage were seen as a result of the supremacy of ethnic politics in Malaysia. According to Crouch:

‘In a democracy, ethnic politicians cannot avoid taking ethnic stands on ethnic issues. To mobilise ethnic votes by their constituents while there is a strong incentive to stir up ethnic feelings further in order to outbid rival politicians from the same ethnic group’ (1996:152).

The attempt to form non-communal parties did not have any apparent impact¹⁶. In the early stages, membership of these parties was multiracial. Later, a particular race became the majority and members of other races subsequently became insignificant. The Independence of Malaya Party (IMP)¹⁷ founded in 1951 was historically the pioneer of non-communal party that opened its doors to all citizens of the Malay States¹⁸. Dato’ Onn Jaafar explains;

¹⁶ See Rabushka A. (1973).

¹⁷ A multi-ethnic Peninsular Malaysia party formed in September 1951 by Dato Onn’ bin Jaafar. It was the first attempt at a multi-ethnic party and it was virtually defunct by 1953. See Feranando (2002).

¹⁸ As early as 1949, Dato’ Onn Jaafar had sought to influence the mindset of UMNO to become a multiracial party. The first step was to grant the status of associate member to the non-Malays. According to Ramlah Adam, the response from the non-Malays was encouraging. Among those who signed up were Teik Ee and Tan Kim Boon in Penang. In Kuala Lumpur, E.E.C. Thuraisingam (President of Malayan Ceylonese) and Tan Siew Sin registered themselves. This idea by Dato’ Onn Jaafar was probably mooted due to his scepticism that the Malays were capable of forming their own government and achieving independence without the cooperation of other races. See Fauzi, 1981:32. The second step taken by Dato’ Onn was to persuade UMNO to legislate its constitution such that it admits non-Malays as members at the general assembly on 27 August 1950. Nevertheless, Dato’ Onn’s efforts and recommendations were rejected and he subsequently resigned as the President of UMNO in 1951. The formation of the IMP introduced the relatively new phenomenon of non-communal politics to the Malayan political system. See Fernando (2002:17).

‘It would be the proper course to prove to the Malays that non-communal organisations can and will work for the Malays as well as for others who declare this country to be their.’ (*New Straits Times*, 6 June 1950).

The first trial for the IMP as a non-communal party took place was during the Kuala Lumpur municipal election in 1951. The IMP obtained 28.2 percent of the Chinese votes, 38.4 percent of the Malays votes and 93 percent of the Indians votes, winning two seats with 6,641 votes¹⁹. Meanwhile, the UMNO-MCA alliance obtained 10,340 votes to win nine seats. This achievement by the IMP, however, did not help the party to sustain its existence, as internal problems caused the party to be dissolved. Dato’ Onn Jaafar next formed Parti Negara²⁰ on the same concept of non-communalism, to contest in the 1955 elections. Unlike the IMP, who received many responses from all races during the Kuala Lumpur municipal election, Parti Negara only contested one Chinese candidate, B.H. Tan, for the Seremban constituency, whereas its 29 other candidates were all Malays.

Following this, various other efforts were undertaken to form non-communal political parties but alas, response was poor. One example is the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a multiethnic but predominantly Chinese party formed by former members of Singapore’s Peoples’ Action Party (PAP)²¹. This is proven by the fact that of the 40,000 registered party members, non-Chinese participation is less than

¹⁹ The IMP candidates: i) the Sentul constituency: Abdul Aziz Ishak, 1,511 and Mohamed Tahir Juteh, 834. ii) Bangsar constituency: K.L. Devaser, 577, Mrs Devaki Krishnan, 570. iii) Imbi constituency: T.R. Marks, 530, Chua Boon Guan, 452. iv) Petaling constituency: Leong Hoe Yeng, 320 and Miss Loke Soh Yip, 299. See Means, (1976:57).

²⁰ Parti Negara, led by Dato’ Onn, despite calling itself an ‘all community party’, adopted a pro-Malay position and hence attracted little support from the Chinese and Indian communities. The MIC, for example, an affiliate of Onn’s IMP, did not join Parti Negara. Other than Parti Negara, the National Association of Perak also stood in the 1955 elections as a non-communal party. However, there was only one Chinese among their 9 candidates, Loh Ah Kee for the Ipoh and Menglembu constituencies. See T.E. Smith, (1955).

²¹ The People’s Action Party (PAP) is a Chinese-based Singaporean moderate socialist party formed in 1954 by Lee Kuan Yew. See NSTP (1990).

one percent (Election in Malaysia, 1994:1). Likewise, the Party Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN)²² opened its membership to all Malaysians but received only minimal participation from other races. The same situation was experienced by other such parties, namely Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM)²³ and Parti Keadilan Malaysia (Keadilan). A different scenario is seen when we look at the response given to communal parties that represent each ethnic group. The development of communal parties seemed to be inevitable and it has eventually been identified with Malaysia (see table 2.4). On the practice of communalism in Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohammed has said that:

‘Communalism has long existed and despite claims to the contrary, there were no truly non-communal political parties in Malaysia. It was not until after the 1969 election that most Malaysians learned just how serious the problem was... Let us take the “sweep it all under the carpet” school first. Protagonists of this school try to forget race and carry on as if there is no such thing. They point an accusing finger at the openly communal political parties and charge them with keeping race loyalties and communalism alive. But is it easy to forget race? Are the races in Malaysia unique in that they can easily forget their racial origins when we know that all over the world race or ethnic grouping is a force maker both in internal as well as external politics? The evidence seems to indicate that Malaysia is not unique. Indeed Malaysians are more conscious than most people’ (1970:174).

²² Party Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN) was founded by intellectuals from Universiti Malaya and former leaders of the Labour Party and the United Democratic Party. Their objective was to form a multi racial party which would offer a social reform as an alternative to the then Alliance Party. Its followers are essentially Chinese and its support is mainly confined to Penang. See Appendix C.

²³ Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) was founded on 11 November 1955. It is essentially a Malay-based socialist party. The name changed to Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia in 1969. It won 3 state seats in the election held that year but since then, PSRM has not been able to win any single seat either at state or federal level. The party, under the leadership Dr. Syed Husin Ali, was dropped on 3 August 2003 and combined with Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR). See NSTP, (1990).

Table 2.4: Political Parties in Malaysia

Party	Established at	Status	Ethnic
UMNO	1946	Communal	Malay
MCA	1948	Communal	Chinese
Independence Malays Party	1951	Non communal	Malay
MIC	1951	Communal	Indians
DAP	1966	Non-communal	Chinese
PAS	1951	Communal	Malay
GERAKAN	1968	Non communal	Chinese
Semangat 46	1988	Communal	Malay
Parti Rakyat Malaysia	1964	Non-communal	Malay
Indian Progressive Front	1990	Communal	Indian
Kongress Indian Muslim Malaysia	1976	Communal	Indian
Parti Kemajuan Rakyat Malaysia (PPP)	1953	Communal	Indian
Parti Negara	1954	Non-communal	Malay

Source: *Election in Malaysia: A Handbook of Fact and Figures on The Elections 1955 1990*. 1994. NSTP Research and Information Services. Kuala Lumpur. New Strait Times (M) Berhad. p. 11-24.

This identity was embedded as each party practised the concept of inter-communal accommodation in their effort to protect the interests of their own race, and at the same time, create harmony and stability among races. This is seen in the formation of the Alliance. Cooperative ties between communal parties were explored from as early as the late 1940s, when suggestions were put forward on gaining independence from the British.

By 1955, the need for inter-ethnic political compromise led to the formation of the Alliance. UMNO, the MCA and the MIC came together at national level to form the Alliance organisation, but each party maintained their communal bases, and retained its separate status, identity, and membership. It was a unique solution to the peculiar

problem of Malaya's plural society (Kapur 1983:12). The Alliance represented a unique consensus between the leaders of the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Important decisions affecting the communities would be worked out as a process of compromise at top-level closed-door meetings, instead of being subject to the process of democratic debate at the grassroots level. It was important to retain communal harmony. However, this process was not easy to implement. Challenges and hurdles constantly appeared. The political process in a plural society showed that there were three main elements that played important roles in determining whether a community was heading towards stability or conflict;

- a. The growing salience of race and the rise of the political entrepreneur
- b. Outbidding and the decline of the multiracial coalition
- c. Electoral manipulations and the politics of redistribution (Rabushka, 1973:49-51).

In particularly, an intriguing solution to the puzzle of political stability in deeply divided societies has been proposed by scholars who have adopted 'consociational analysis'. Consociational analysts derived an empirical and normative model called consociational democracy from the study of stable Western European democratic regimes with severely fragmented societies, for example the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium and Austria²⁴. The empirical application of this approach has

²⁴ This statement by Lijphart is backed by studies on other countries that also take the consociational approach in managing the conflicts they face. The Netherlands is a good case to begin with, since in the 1960's Lijphart used it to develop the consociational theory. At the time, the Netherlands was segmented in the three pillars of Calvinists, Catholics and seculars, and Lijphart argued that it was due to consociationalism, despite its segmentation, that the country was politically stable. In Belgium, consociationalism has been successful in the establishment of three political regions, Flanders, Wallon and Brussel, as well as three cultural communities, one each for the Flemings, the Francophones and the small German-speaking minority in East Belgium. Belgium became de facto subdivided into two monolingual regions (Flanders and Wallon) and one bilingual region (Brussel). Based on these language areas, the second process of several constitutional revisions (1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993) gradually transformed Belgium from a unitary into a federal state. The Parliament was split into two

also covered the post-colonial plural society of the Third World, for example, Malaysia (1955-1969), Lebanon (1943-75) and Fiji (1970-87)²⁵ (Lijphart, 1969:207-225).

2.4 Consociational Democracy in Malaysia

The consociational approach has also been widely applied to Malaysia's society. The political science literature on consociational analysis in Malaysian studies is therefore not lacking²⁶. Studies informed by this analysis in Malaysia basically suggest that what is required is greater attention to inter-ethnic accommodation, bargaining and negotiation between ethnic elites in order to solve complex socio-political conflict. According to those studies, even under unpromising circumstances, consociational politics are still operative in Malaysian politics. Ethnic balancing in elite recruitment and the allocation of resources are essential indications of consociational politics.

parliamentary language groups that obtained their own constitutional status and special veto rights in order to prevent major decisions against the will of one side. See Lijphart, A. (1981).

²⁵ A country with almost the same background as that of Malaysia, and applies the approach of consociational democracy is Fiji. Fiji achieved independence in 1970, and its society is similar to Malaysia's. Its main inhabitants, Fiji's indigenous people (50.7 percent) and Indian Fijians (43.7 percent) are distinctly separated by ethnicity, religion, language, culture and economy²⁵. Under the coalition of the Alliance Party, led by Queen Sir Kamisee Mara, the early stages of implementing the consociational democracy were smooth. Political conflict soon erupted in Fiji when the Alliance Party, under the leadership of Dr. Bavada, won the 1987 elections. The election results caused anxiety among the natives of Fiji who lost their political power. On the other hand, this victory provided security to the Indian population, who now had control over both the politics and economy of the country. The peak of the discontent among the natives led to a revolution, headed by Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, in 1987, after negotiations among the ethnic leaders failed. The problem in achieving consociational democracy among Fiji's main ethnic communities originates from the interaction of two key factors. Firstly, the difference in population between the indigenous people of Fiji and the Indian Fijians was too tiny (51 percent : 49 percent). Thus, the position of political power of the native Fijians could easily be challenged by the process of democracy. Compare this with Malaysia, whose large difference in population between the Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras (61 percent : 39 percent) indirectly secures the political power of the Malays. See Quentin-Baxter, A. (1999).

²⁶ See Case W., (1993), Ongkili, James P., (1985), Mauzy, D.K., (1983 and 1993), Von Vorys, K. (1975), Milne, R.S., (1967), Ratnam, K.J. (1965) and Gullick. J.M. (1964).

Since the 1970s, the notion of consociation as the primary way of analysing the nature of the Malaysian politics has been challenged, as the new generation of Malay leaders appeared to move away from the compromise, and division became intra-ethnic during the 1980s. The consociational approach, nonetheless, has continued to be a dominant framework for the analysis of Malaysian political structures and process.

2.4.1 The Element of Consociational Democracy in Malaysia

As stated by Lijphart, Malaysia is among the nations²⁷ that have succeeded in managing its ethnic conflict through the Consociational Democracy approach²⁸. To further scrutinise the implementation of the politics of accommodation that has brought about political stability in Malaysia, it is only natural to study the main characteristics of consociational democracy itself. Lijphart singles out the four characteristics of consociational democracy²⁹.

²⁷ Arend Lijphart, the leading proponent of consociationalism, has claimed success for his theory in: Canada 1840-1867; the Netherlands 1917-1967; the Lebanon 1943-75 and since 1989; Switzerland since 1943; Austria 1945-66; Malaysia since 1955 apart from 1969-71; Colombia 1958-1974; Cyprus 1960-63; Belgium since 1970; Czecho-Slovakia from 1989-93; South Africa 'according to its interim constitution'; and now apparently also India. Consociationalism has also been used for explaining many other political systems, including: Venezuela; Suriname; Italy; Nigeria; Gambia; Kenya; Sri Lanka; former Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union. According to Lijphart, consociationalism had 'a decisive influence in the shaping of South Africa's 1994 power-sharing constitution.' See Paul Dixon. 1997. Consociationalism and The Northern Ireland Peace Process: Is The Glass Half Full or Half Empty? National and Ethnic Politics, Vol. 3 No. 3 Autumn 1977. <http://www.nipolitics.com/consociationalismnep.html>, (Accessed 27 March 2004).

²⁸ The literature on consociational democracy is well developed. While the groundbreaking work is Lijphart's, particularly his book *Democracy in Plural Societies* (1977a), many other scholars have contributed to the approach. First, consociationalism has its antecedents in the earlier work of Lijphart (1968), which termed the approach "the politics of accommodation". Landmark works in the school include Daalder (1971), McRae (1974), and Pappalardo (1981). Several scholars, led by Steiner Jürg, have sought to extend the consociational approach to a broader framework of decision making in coalitions. See Steiner's articles (1981b). Other scholars, such as Lembruch and Schmitter, have related consociational theory to the corporatist model, arguing that these approaches are complementary; their views are best stated in Lembruch and Schmitter (1979). Lijphart (1985) catalogues and responds to critics of the consociational approach.

²⁹ In order for consociationalism to be implemented successfully, (a) the political leaders from the rival segments should have the ability to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of their own community and they must have an effective control over it; (b) they should be able to transcend

- a. grand coalition of political leaders that represent all the significant communities and allow elite cooperation to develop;
- b. veto power of all communities on legislation that affects their vital interests;
- c. a system of proportionality in parliament, civil service, and governmental agencies; and
- d. a high degree of segmental autonomy so that each community has a desirable degree of freedom to run its own internal affairs (Lijphart 1969: 216-211).

a. The Grand Coalition

The main idea in the politics of accommodation is the tendency to form grand coalitions that include representatives of all or most of the main groups or subcultures in the society³⁰. A grand coalition amongst minority elites groups facilitates elite cooperation and collaboration. The coalition can take a variety of institutional forms, including a coalition cabinet in parliamentary system, a distribution of different offices amongst groups of each minority or equitable representation on council and advisory boards that support the government. Nordlinger³¹ regards a 'stable coalition' that includes representatives of opposing groups as one of the most salient methods of resolving conflict in a 'deeply-divided' society. The coalition partnership itself does not explain by what means the

cleavages and to work jointly, to cooperate to a great extent with the elites of the rival segments; (c) they should be committed to the continuance of the system and to its stability; and finally (d) the elites should understand the perils of political fragmentation (Lijphart, 1969: 216).

³⁰ Grand coalition refers to a 'summit diplomacy forum', a 'coalescent style of leadership', a 'coalition cabinet' or a 'grand coalition council', where bargains are struck by 'a cartel of elites' (Dadrendorf, 1967:269, Boule 1984:46-47 Powell 1982:214).

³¹ See Nordlinger, (1972), Dahl, (1966) and Lijphart, (1971).

representatives of the various coalition groups resolve their disputes and preserve the stability of the coalition and the political system as a whole.

Lijphart states that the most important consociational device of Malaysia is the Alliance, a grand coalition of the principal Malay, Chinese and Indian political parties (1977, 15). The Alliance party has its roots in a 'serendipitous' local electoral pact between the branches of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) in 1952 (Chee 1991:58). The ad-hoc alliance performed very well and developed into an UMNO-MCA national alliance³² the next year. In 1954 the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was accepted as a third partner. The spirit for political compromise among the major ethnic groups on key communal issues, which political scientists have termed consociation, was that on which the formation of the Alliance was based. The three groups accepted a series of explicit and implicit understanding about the responsibilities of the communities to one another³³.

The effectiveness of the Alliance's teamwork and compromise was proven in the results of the 1952³⁴ Kuala Lumpur Municipal election and the 1955, 1959 and 1964 general elections (see table 2.5). The success in winning majority seats at parliamentary level paved the way for the Alliance to form a government.

³² H. S Lee wrote to Tan Cheng Lock: "I have no doubt in my own mind that no self-government for Malaya would be successful, unless we have a united Malaya, but to obtain a United Malaya it is in the first instance necessary to obtain the mutual understanding and co-operation between the Malays and the Chinese, the biggest racial groups in the country. If the UMNO-MCA alliance could be established in other parts of the country, it would go a long way to achieve a united Malaya." (Tan Cheng Lock Papers, TCL/9/33).

³³ The first meeting between the Malay and Chinese leaders was held at Dato' Onn's house in Johor on 29 December 1948 (Oong Hak Ching, 2000:151).

³⁴ The Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council Election in February 1952 largely decided that the configuration of political set-up would be independent. Accordingly, the apparently unlikely alliance between the two communalistic parties, UMNO and the MCA, won nine out of 12 seats in the elections, while the Independent Malay party (IPM) won only two seats. After the successful application of this electoral 'Alliance formula' in the other areas of the country, the arrangement became institutionalised (Hua Wu Yin, 1983:102).

Table 2.5: The Alliance in The Malaysian Federal Elections (1955-1964)

Year	Number of seats Contested	Number of Seats won	Number of Seats lost
1955			
UMNO	35	34	1
MCA	15	15	0
MIC	2	2	0
1959			
UMNO	70	52	18
MCA	31	19	12
MIC	3	3	0
1964			
UMNO	68	59	0
MCA	33	27	6
MIC	3	3	0

Source: Goh Cheng Teik, (1971), *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. p.12

The Grand Coalition carried on under the umbrella of the BN, established in 1974. This establishment of the BN is a continuation from the Alliance party and its membership has joined together various parties, including those from Sabah and Sarawak. Like the Alliance, the BN inherited continuous ruling power when it won two-thirds majority at every election (see table 2.6). This situation indirectly proved that the Grand Coalition, established under the alliance party and the BN, has helped maintain a stable course of politics within Malaysia's plural society.

Table 2.6: The Barisan Nasional in The Malaysian Elections (1974-1999)

Year	Number of seats Contested	Number of seats Won	Number of seats Lost
1974			
UMNO	61	61	-
MCA	23	19	4
MIC	4	4	-
GERAKAN	8	5	3
1978			
UMNO	75	70	5
MCA	28	17	9
MIC	4	3	1
GERAKAN	8	4	4
1982			
UMNO	73	70	3
MCA	28	24	4
MIC	4	4	-
GERAKAN	7	5	2
1986			
UMNO	84	83	1
MCA	32	17	15
MIC	6	6	-
GERAKAN	9	5	4
1990			
UMNO	86	71	15
MCA	32	18	14
MIC	6	6	-
GERAKAN	9	5	4
1995			
UMNO	92	79	13
MCA	35	30	5
MIC	7	7	-
GERAKAN	10	7	3
1999			
UMNO	92	60	38
MCA	35	28	7
MIC	7	7	-
GERAKAN	10	7	3

Source: 1) Election data from 1974 to 1982; Hussein Mohammed, (1987), *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari. p. 102.
2) Election data from 1986 to 1999; Yusof Khan Loth Khan, (2001). *Nostalgia Pilihanraya 1955 - 1999*. Pulau Pinang.

b. Proportionality

The Second aspect of Lijphart's consociational democracy theory is the principle of proportionality. The principle of proportionality means that 'all groups influence a decision in proportion to their numerical strength'. The proportionality can be applied in various fields such as the allocation of parliamentary seats, administrative position and the distribution of scarce resources. Insofar as the principle decreases the potential for communal tension in the allocation of resources, it appears to serve as an effective conflict-regulating practice (Steiner, 1971:63). The Alliance regime can be said to have adhered roughly to the rule of proportionality as far as the formal structure of its decision making body is concerned.

The Alliance, in terms of the structure of its authority, is made up of two supreme bodies; the national Council and the National Executive Committee (NEC), which comprise representatives from the three communal parties. Members of the National Executive Committee include six from UMNO, six from the MCA and three from the MIC. The NEC acts as the main body whose role is to make important decisions regarding the administration of the Alliance. Among its authorities and important functions are to select candidates and chief party administrators, to initiate party policies and to recommend disciplinary action.

The National Council is also composed of proportionally balanced numbers of representatives from each party, 16 of its members are from UMNO, another 16 are from the MCA and six are from the MIC. When compared to the population ratio, such a composition shows that some parties are over-represented in these bodies. But to uphold the proportionality principle, representation in the National Council was

distributed as such to ensure the involvement of every party in the process of decision making.

The proportionality principle may also be applied in the establishment of the Alliance Action Committee, formed to address the mutual difference and internal conflict within the Alliance. The committee comprises eight UMNO members, nine MCA members and four MIC members. This body is responsible for discussing and providing views relating to sensitive issues, such as the Special Rights of the Malays, second-class citizenship, education and the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia (Nordlinger, 1972: 113-116).

The establishment of a committee in the Alliance, with members of every race, shows that there is always an avenue and an opportunity to participate in decisions, especially those pertaining to mutual interests, although in reality, UMNO exercised far more influence than its numerical representation would suggest. For UMNO, this committee is not merely a make-up to try and attract the support of the other races. Instead, it always gives serious attention to any matter raised by the other members of the Alliance.

Another element to highlight in implementing the proportionality principle has to do with the cabinet appointment, which allocates a ratio to each race. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. At the first glance, the figures in federal public service also support the principle of proportionality in the Alliance government. The multiracial involvement (of the Malays, Chinese and Indians) in the government's administration system has indirectly provided an avenue of decision making on mutual interests. As shown in Table 2.7, in 1957, the composition of manpower in federal service (division 1) was dominated by

expatriates (61.0), but ten years after independence, this percentage has changed, where the main races, namely the Malays and Chinese, have taken over control of the Federal Public Service, at 36.3 percent and 36.1 percent respectively. At the same time, the involvement of the Indians also rose from seven percent (1957) to 21.5 percent (1968).

Table 2.7: Ethnic Composition of Federal Public Service (Division 1), 1957 – 68

	1957 (%)	1962 (%)	1968 (%)
Malays	14.1	29.3	36.3
Chinese	13.2	34.0	36.1
Indians	7.0	15.9	21.5
Expatriate	61.0	14.1	0.9
Others	4.6	6.7	5.2

Source: Gibbon D.S and Zakaria Hj. Ahmad, (1971), 'Politics and Selection for Higher Civil Service in New States: The Malaysia Example'. *Journal of Comparative Administration* 3, no.3. p.336.

In terms of breakdown by field, the Chinese dominated and enjoyed large numbers in the federal civil as compared to their overall proportion of the population during this period. This can be seen in Table 2.8, which shows the percentage distribution in selected public services by race in several government departments, such as Customs and Excise, prison, police, education, medical, Malaysia Civil Services (MSC) and immigration.

Table 2.8: Ethnic Composition in Selected Public Services (Division 1) 1968

	Malays (%)	Chinese (%)	Indians (%)	Others (%)
Medical	10.1	40.7	44.6	4.6
Telecoms	17.9	44.3	41.1	6.7
Education	32.2	40.3	24.0	3.5
Malaysia Civil Services (MCS)	86.7	6.4	6.4	0.5
Police	43.2	30.8	21.7	4.3
Customs	63.4	32.7	4.9	-
Immigration	50.0	41.7	-	8.3

Source: Milton J. Esman. (1972), *Administration and Development in Malaysia: Institution Building and Reform a Plural Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p.76.

However, it is a fact that in politics, the Malays dominated the top appointments to the public service and substantially controlled government and administrative organisations, as shown in tables 2.9.

Table 2.9: Ethnic Composition of Higher Administrative Officials in the Malayan/Malaysian Civil Service³⁵ 1957-1968

	1957 (%)	1962 (%)	1968 (%)
Malays	35.5	79.0	85.1
Chinese	2.5	6.1	7.4
Indians	0.8	5.4	6.4
Expatriate	61.1	9.4	0.2

Source: Gordon P. Means, (1972), 'Special Rights as a Strategy for Development: The Case of Malaysia'. *Comparative Politics* 5. No. .I. p. 47

Briefly , while statistics might suggest that the Malays and non-Malays were more or less proportionately distributed throughout the government and administrative services, the key question is whether numerical proportionality resulted in a matching degree of influence. The principle of proportionality is generally very important in avoiding any feeling of frustration or deprivation among the less

³⁵ The Malayan Civil Service (MCS) was the administrative elite of the public service and the super ordinate positions were held by members of the MCS. See Khasnor Johan (1984).

fortunate. Lijphart has correctly pointed out that the failure to allocate the country's resources equitably in a divided society will lead to an outbreak of racial violence. This is true in the case of Lebanon in 1975³⁶, where civil war erupted and also true in the case of Fiji, where the government's failure to create viable politics to protect the economically backward indigenous Fijians led to the military coup and ouster of Dr. Bavadra as the Fijian Prime Minister³⁷.

c. Segmental Autonomy

The Autonomy principle refers to the right of various groups (community) or subcultures to act according to their values and ways of life. These groups are given a free hand in running their institution and enterprise. Another word, segmental autonomy, provides each minority with the security it needs to ensure that its distinctive interests are protected, and minimises the degree to which it must coordinate, compromise and negotiate with other groups. Lijphart describes it as 'good fences make good neighbours'.

Under the coalition agreement, each party of the Alliance allows full membership only to their respective ethnic group. They are committed to protect the positions and interests of their respective ethnic following. For example, the constitution of UMNO proclaimed the following to be its major aim and objective:

³⁶ See Seaver Brenda M, (2000).

³⁷ See Quentin Baker A., (1999).

- i. To safeguard and preserve the constitution of the Federation of Malaya, particularly the provisions relating to the Muslim religion, the Malay language and customs, the dignity and prestige of Their Highnesses the Malay Rulers and the special rights or privileges of the Malays.
- ii. To promote the advancement of Islam and to foster its growth as the modus vivendi for all Muslims living in the Federation of Malaya (Vasil, 1971: 2).

Similarly, the MCA's and the MIC's constitutions lay down as objectives of their association, 'to foster, safeguard, advance and secure the political, social, educational, cultural, economic and other interests of their members by legislative and constitutional means, and furthermore as a whole'. Because of their communal appeal, the separate parties went their own way and perpetuated their mutual rivalries. As pointed out by Margaret Roff:

'The ordinary link between the Alliance and the members of each of its component parties was the apple of communalism. The strength of communalism is the very basis of the Alliance's existence (1964:3).'

d. Mutual veto

Lijphart has argued the case for a mutual veto³⁸ on the following grounds (Dahl 1966: 358). Although the grand coalition rule gives each segment a share of power at the central political level, this does not constitute a guarantee that it will not be out-voted

³⁸ Dahl (1966) defines a mutual veto in government policies as a method that enables each of the rival parties to veto changes in the status quo involving his subculture. This method enables the disputants to refrain from making decisions that are liable to lead to bitter clashes and profound crises in the political system .

by a majority when its vital interests are at stake. In many cases, status quo practices are based on accommodation reached in negotiations among groups in the pre-state period. The status quo can be used to preserve political agreement through the explicit or implicit consent of all parties involved, to an issue that is dealt with by those arrangements. In this way, the status quo can be regarded as complementing the other conflict resolution methods by helping sustain and stabilise accommodation based on them.

Nordlinger (1972:24) suggests that the status quo method may, under certain conditions, give the parties involved an incentive to strive for a compromise solution, with the knowledge that an inconclusive state of affairs may make effective operation of the system extremely difficult and produce immobility. A mutual veto acts as the ultimate weapon of the minority in order to protect its fundamental interests. In general, Malaysia's ability in handling and managing communal conflict through this consociational approach is acknowledged by Lijphart, who stated that;

‘The Case of Malaysia (1955-1969) provides theexample of reasonably successful consociational democracy in the Third World, although the nature of its plural society and the kind of consociational institutions it developed differ considerably both from Lebanon and from the European cases (1977:150).

2.4.2 Political Elites in Malaysian Politics

In this context, political elites play a major role in shaping the framework and the style of politics in Malaysia. Political parties in Malaysia continued to revolve around the garnering of communal support. Race had become the basis for mobilisation and action among the people. This led Malaysian politics to be

characterised as communal politics, and the maintenance of inter-communal harmony became the primary aim of the government.

In this regard, elite (political leaders) cooperation became the principal mechanism of successful conflict management in deeply divided societies. Consociationalists suggest that even if there are deep communal differences, overarching elite cooperation is a necessary and sufficient condition to assuage conflict.³⁹ In the consociational approach, elites directly represent various societal segments and act to forge political ties at the centre. Elites engaged in political competition for popular support. In order to be elected, political elites must fulfil the wishes of the electorate and maintain the edge in terms of popular support. The leader engages in a game with other community leaders at the national level (horizontal game). Lijphart mentioned that horizontal games are 'a basic willingness to engage in cooperative efforts with the leaders of other segments in a spirit of cooperation and compromise'. In this case, Lijphart identifies four prerequisites for elite cooperation⁴⁰:

- a. awareness of the dangers inherent in fragmented systems;
- b. commitment to system maintenance;
- c. ability to transcend sub-cultural cleavages; and
- d. ability to forge appropriate solutions that can meet the demands of the subgroups⁴¹.

³⁹ Nordlinger (1972: 73) goes so far as to argue that elites "alone can initiate, work out and implement conflict-regulating practices, therefore they alone can make direct and positive contributions to conflict-regulating outcomes."

⁴⁰ See Lijphart, A. (1977:53-103).

⁴¹ In addition to these prerequisites, Lijphart introduces five favourable conditions for elite cooperation and the stable support of non-elites: first, a multiple balance of power - all segmental groups are minorities and three or four subgroups are preferable to two subgroups of roughly equal power or one hegemonic subgroup; second, size of country - small is better; third, the presence of overarching loyalties (moderate nationalism); fourth, segmental isolation (even federalism); and finally, a prior tradition of elite accommodation. In his older works he suggests five other favourable

This procedure had indirectly positioned the elites as the principal backbone and pulse in regulating and balancing the conflict that prevailed between the ethnic groups. In other words, the competence and acumen of the elites in carrying out their roles of the four conditions of Lijphart would certainly assist the nation in attaining stability and harmony.

The Kuala Lumpur Local Government Election⁴² on 16 February 1952 was of great significance to the history of cooperation between political elites in Malaysia. Through this election, an understanding was achieved for the very first time between the two main parties, UMNO and the MCA, which consequently paved the way to an overall new look of the country's politics through consociation. Announced on 8 January 1952, the agreement to collaborate, which was attained through negotiations between the Chairman of the Kuala Lumpur UMNO Election Committee, Yahya Abdul Razak and H.S. Lee, Selangor MCA's chairman⁴³, led to the establishment of the first political party alliance (Fernando, 2002:21). Tunku said;

conditions: First, the unifying effect of external threats; second, widespread support of the elite cartel system; third, distinct lines of cleavage; fourth, socioeconomic equality among segmental groups; and finally a low decision-making load on the political system. See Matthijs Bogaards. (1998).

⁴² In 1951, the colonial government introduced another major political change in Malaya: election at the local and municipal level and subsequently at the state level. The first to be held was for the Melaka Municipality Election in November 1951. However the response from the people to this election was poor. All nine candidates to the new Municipal Council were returned unopposed. There were four candidates from the Progressive Party, three from the labour party, one from UMNO and the other was an Independent candidate. See Ong Hak Ching, (2000:189-190). The Second Local Government election to be held in the Federation was the Georgetown municipal election in Penang on 1 December 1951. The Georgetown election did not have much national political significance because it was largely contested by regional parties such as the Penang Labour Party, the Penang Radical Party and the Muslim League (Means, 1976:132). The Kuala Lumpur municipal election, on the other hand, took on an added political significance when the IMP, UMNO and the MCA declared that they would participate. See Von Vorys, (1975:107).

⁴³ This statement which was signed by the Selangor MCA Chairman, H.S. Lee and Yahya, surprised political observers, largely because the objectives of both these communal parties were diametrically opposite and they were rivals for political power. Further, it had been clear for some time that the top MCA leadership had publicly expressed their support for Dato Onn's IMP. See Fernando, (2002: 22-24).

UMNO could win the Kuala Lumpur election even if UMNO and the MCA did not collaborate⁴⁴, but what is being done is not only intended to gain victory in the election, but to test and to experiment to see if two large establishments of two races with large populations in this country can unite to achieve one big ambition (Ahmad Fawzi Basri, 1992:44).

The combined success in this local Kuala Lumpur election continued in other local elections⁴⁵, which led to UMNO-MCA winning 94 of the 119 seats contested from 1952 to 1953. Their closest opponent, the IMP, won only three seats⁴⁶ while the remaining seats went to independent candidates. After the local council electoral successes, the national leadership of UMNO and the MCA began holding round table conferences to work at the national level and establish a more permanent basis. Tan Cheng Lock's official response: 'The UMNO-MCA cooperation is a very admirable thing and I naturally support it'⁴⁷. At their conference in March 1953, the two parties reached definite agreement on setting up a National Alliance Organisation and this was formally instigated on 23 August 1953 (Mauzy, 1982:17). The new political relationship was based on the understanding that their respective communal organisational structure would remain intact. More significantly, both parties realised the importance of continuing their relationship if they hoped to emulate their success

⁴⁴ The election contesting 11 seats covered four areas: Sentul, Bangsar, Imbi and Petaling, saw the victory of UMNO-MCA with a total of 10,340 votes (of which UMNO candidates won 4,155 votes, whilst the remaining votes were obtained by MCA). Opposition party IMP won two seats with a total of 6,641 votes. See Fernando, (2002: 22).

⁴⁵ Two day after the Kuala Lumpur election, H.S. Lee urged the MCA president, Tan Cheng Lock, to extend the co-operation nationwide. If the UMNO-MCA could be established in other parts of the country," he said "it would go a long way to achieve a united Malaya. Two weeks after the Kuala Lumpur election, Tunku Abdul Rahman held talks with Tan Cheng Lock on extending the UMNO-MCA co-operation to the other municipal and town council election scheduled for later that year and in 1953. See Heng Pek Khoo, (1988:167).

⁴⁶ In December 1952, UMNO-MCA won 35 of the 46 local government seats contested in Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Batu Pahat, Muar and Malacca. The following year, UMNO-MCA also controlled seats in Seremban, Alor Setar, Sungai Petani, Kota Bharu, Segamat and Kluang. See Von Vorys, (1975:109).

⁴⁷ The forming of the UMNO-MCA Alliance was a more unexpected, as Tan Cheng Lock, apart from holding Committee of the IMP. He actively involved himself with the setting up of the IMP branches throughout Malaya. It was Tan Cheng Lock's intention to form a 'pyramidal' type of political organization with the non-communal party superimposed with the communal bodies. This proposal was not secret. It was discussed at the meetings of the MCA central committee (C0 537/7346).

at the Kuala Lumpur municipal election and strengthen the hard-earned political advantage⁴⁸.

In the 1955 federal election, they again worked together, this time with the participation of the Indian party, the MIC⁴⁹. The elites of these three groups could work together because they had confidence and trust in one another. Furthermore, they shared common interests: they were rational and pragmatic, they were essentially conservative, they were drawn mainly from English language schools and had many shared values and experiences, and they appreciated that direct electoral confrontation between unabashedly communal parties would very likely lead to inter-ethnic conflicts (Bedlington, 1978:87).

The reasons for the establishment of the alliance were multiple. Firstly, independence from British rule was greatly desired and the leaders of UMNO realised that this was unlikely to be achieved unless they had the support of the non-Malays. This was because the British Government had made it clear that independence would not be granted until such a time when the various ethnic groups in Malaya could prove that they could work together in harmony. Thus, the formation of the Alliance was an admirable opportunity to demonstrate this ability. Secondly, the Emergency in 1948, when communist insurgents resorted to armed struggle, had reinforced the idea with a sense of urgency that all the ethnic groups must work together in the face of the guerrilla menace.

⁴⁸ CO1022/183, File on UMNO.

⁴⁹ In 1954 the MIC was on its own and seeking political allies, though its members were not in agreement as to which ally they wanted. The MIC approached both the Alliance organisation and Parti Negara. However, Parti Negara would only accept direct members whereas the Alliance agreed to party affiliation. On October 17, 1954 after keenly contested votes, the MIC Executive Committee elected to join the Alliance. (see Mauzy.D. 1983:17).

Thirdly, the Alliance's experiment of the cooperation between UMNO, the MCA and the MIC in thrashing out of electoral compromise itself provided bargaining experience as well as an established forum that helped foster a self-perpetuating process, especially to the extent that it created close personal ties between top leaders (Fernando, 2002:35-37). It was therefore hoped that associating together the three parties would lay the foundation for future political stability and racial harmony in an intensely multi-ethnic society like Malaysia. The first President of the MCA, Tan Cheng Lock, noted in his inaugural address;

'It is a matter of supreme significance and indisputable necessity that a basic purpose of this organisation must be the attainment of inter-communal understanding and friendship, particularly between the Malays and the Chinese ... Wake up and unite not only among yourselves, but also with the Malays and other communities to make this land one country and one nation' (Ratnam, 1965:154).

Similary, V.T Sambanthan, the President of the MIC, the third Alliance partner, stressed that:

'We have a genius for finding simple solutions to complex problems. Here indeed, is a nation in which there can be trouble and trouble is plenty too. But we have considered the existence of a multifarious people in our nation as a challenge to our genius for finding solutions and we have, with the emergence of the Alliance, not only been able to unite the people towards common allegiance to the nation, but common allegiance has been achieved by a very simple formula - the simplicity of this formula being based on three words - goodwill, tolerance and brotherhood' (Karl Von Vorys, 1975: 205-206).

This spirit for political compromise between the major ethnic groups on key communal issues, which political scientists have termed consociation, was the basis

for the formation of the Alliance⁵⁰. In terms of political practice, the Alliance was grounded on the autonomy of the elite and their ability to convince the rank and file to abide by the decisions made at the top. Between the Alliance there was sometimes intense bargaining but this was conducted in an atmosphere of trust and in the spirit of accommodation. Once a decision was taken, it had to be defended by all the component parties. Decisions reached between the Alliance leaders were generally not publicly explained. As one Chinese federal minister put it;

‘The only answer lies in mesyuarat (meeting). Chinese and Indians political leaders must sit down with their Malay counterparts and talk, talk, talk. Since all off them have one common denominator - they are all Malaysians - they should be able to see one another’s viewpoint and defend the time bombs.’ (Goh Cheng Teik, 1978:34)

The other key was compromise, as well as the ability to discuss a problem until a consensus is reached. This style of elite accommodation was accompanied by a constant effort to depoliticise communal issues and to use the power of government and party to suppress unmanageable claims. The establishment of the Alliance, although formed within a short time, was in reality achieved through a tensed

⁵⁰ The first steps toward elite compromise or accommodation were taken in late December 1948, at an informal meeting between Dato’ Onn Jafaar and twenty-one ethnic community leaders in Johor Bahru. On 10 January 1949, the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC) was formed with six Malays, six Chinese, one Indian, Ceylonese, Eurasian and European each as members. CLC carried an important role in the political development in Malaysia: First, the CLC itself represented a new awareness on the part of some of the top ethnic leaders of the need for inter-ethnic compromise. Second, the CLC demonstrated that the possibility among the ethnic leaders to solve the ethnic conflict through negotiations and agreement. Third, it appears to have encouraged the British authorities to believe that political advancement in Malaya was possible through inter-ethnic collaboration. Fourth, the CLC was the first inter-ethnic experience to use the technique of conducting sensitive bargaining by semi-secret negotiations. Fifth, the idea of communal rolls and reserved seats to protect minorities was dismissed and never again seriously considered. Sixth, the legitimacy of the principle of inter-ethnic cooperation to improve the economic position of the Malays was accepted. Finally, the CLC apparently significantly influenced the thinking of Dato’ Onn and this in turn was to affect the history of UMNO and the country (Mauzy, D. 1983:10-11).

negotiation process⁵¹ but ended finally with consociation and compromise between both parties. Tunku said:

‘We want our friends to acknowledge that the rights of our race take priority in this country as its native people and according to past and current agreements entered into by the Malays and the English’ (Fernando, 2002:31).

Tunku further added;

‘...the Chinese with more rights than the Malays are to give some of those rights to the Malays and similarly the Malays with more political rights must give some to the Chinese’ (Yusuf Ngah, 1983:63).

2.5 Elections in Malaysia

As a nation that practises democracy, subjects are given the opportunity to elect a government every five years. Based on Article 119 of the Constitution, a citizen above the age of 21 years has the right to elect a government every five years, with the campaign period increasingly shorter at each general election (see table 2.10). The number of eligible or registered voters is given in table 2.11. From the time Malaysia gained independence, various parties have contested in general elections and among the parties that have survived long and had won seats in parliament and in the state legislative assemblies are the Alliance/BN, the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)⁵², and the Democratic Action Party (DAP).

⁵¹ The process of formalising and expanding the UMNO-MCA Alliance was not altogether. The Alliance faced several obstacles during this phase of extending and consolidating their influence throughout the country. First UMNO and the MCA had to overcome resistance from within their organisations and second they had to guard against the challenge from the IMP, which was still influential in the Federal and State Legislative councils. See Fernando, (2002).

⁵² The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), was previously known as the Pan Malayan Islamic Party and claims to be the only Islamic party around. Their strong support comes from the east coast of the Peninsular where Malays form an overwhelming majority. In the 1990 general election, Semangat 46, through their coalition in Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, won all seats in the State Assembly and 13

Table 2.10: Date of Elections in Malaysia

Year of Election	Date of Election	Campaign period (days)
1955	27 July	42
1959	19 August	34
1964	25 April	34
1969	10 May	34
1974	24 August	15
1978	8 July	16
1982	22 April	14
1986	3 August	9
1990	21 October	8
1995	24 April	9
1999	29 November	9
2004	21 March	8

Source: a) 1955 to 1982: Hussein Mohammed. (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari .p. 24

b) 1986 to 1999: Election Commission., (1988,1992, 1997, 2002), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1990,1995,1999*. Percetakaan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

c) Data 2004: Scorecard Special Election 2004: New Strait Times. 19 March 2004, p.4.

Table 2.11: Number and percentage of voters in the Federated Malay States, 1955 – 2004

Election Year	No. of Voters	Percentage of Voters		
		Malay	Chinese	Indian, etc
1955	1 280 865	84.5	11.2	4.6
1959	2 144 338	56.8	35.9	7.4
1964	2 763 007	54.1	38.0	7.9
1969	3 302 187	55.7	36.3	8.0
1974	3 523 687	57.9	34.5	7.6
1978	4 323 516	55.6	36.5	7.9
1982	5,209,627	55.6	36.5	7.9
1986	6,977,863	55.3	35.4	9.3
1990	7,958,640	54.9	35.6	9.5
1995	9,012,173	55.4	35.1	9.5
1999	9,564,071	55.1	34.8	10.1
2004	10,284,591	55.4	34.2	10.4

seats in Parliament for Kelantan. PAS also won the general election in Terengganu in 1999. See Kamaruddin Jaafar (2000).

- Source: a) 1955 to 1982: Hussein Mohammed. (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari p. 24
- b) 1986 to 1999: Election Commission., (1988,1992, 1997, 2002), *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1990,1995,1999*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.
- c) Data 2004: Scorecard Special Election 2004: *New Strait Times*. 19 March 2004 p. 4

In the elections conducted by the Election Commission⁵³, an independent body nominated by Yang Dipertuan Agong (The Constitutional King), the people will elect representatives to two houses, namely the House of Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly. Election at Parliamentary level determines which party is able to obtain the majority vote and eventually govern the country. The number of seats allocated pursuant to Article 46 of the Federal Constitution is subject to authorised amendment. In fact the number of seats was amended from time to time as shown in table 2.12:

⁵³ Articles 113 to 120 of the Federal Constitution provides for the setting up of the Election Commission (EC) as an independent body to conduct General Elections for the House of Representatives and the State Legislative Assemblies. The Election Commission consists of the Chairman, a Deputy Chairman and three members. They are appointed by His Majesty the Yang Dipertuan Agong after consultation with the conference of rules and after taking into consideration the importance of an Election Commission that has the confidence of the public. Refer to *the Report of The General Election Malaysia 2001*. Kuala Lumpur : Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia. p. 55.

Table 2.12: Distribution of Parliament seats in Malaysia, 1959 – 2004

State	1959	1964	1969	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1995	1999	2004
Perlis	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Kedah	12	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	15	15	15
Kelantan	10	10	10	12	12	12	13	13	14	14	14
Terengganu	6	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8
Penang	8	8	8	9	9	9	11	11	11	11	13
Perak	20	20	20	21	21	21	23	23	23	23	24
Pahang	6	6	6	8	8	8	10	10	11	11	14
Selangor	14	14	14	11	11	11	14	14	17	17	22
FT of Kuala Lumpur	-	-	-	5	5	5	7	7	10	10	11
Negeri Sembilan	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	8
Malacca	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	6
Johore	16	16	16	16	16	16	18	18	20	20	26
Sabah	-	-	16	16	16	16	20	20	20	20	25
Sarawak	-	-	24	24	24	24	24	27	27	27	28
FT of Labuan	-	-	-				1	1	1	1	1
FT of Putrajaya											1
Total	104	104	144	154	154	154	177	180	192	192	219

- Source: a) 1955 to 1982: Hussein Mohammed. (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari p. 24
b) 1986 to 1999: Election Commission., (1988,1992, 1997, 2002), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1990,1995,1999*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.
c) Data 2004: Scorecard Special Election 2004: New Strait Times. 19 March 2004 p. 4

In 2004, the Dewan Rakyat had 219 members, consisting of 164 from Peninsular Malaysia, 28 from Sarawak, 25 from Sabah, and one each from Labuan and Putrajaya. Normally, the leader of the political party with the most seats becomes Prime Minister. The Prime Minister then chooses a cabinet. The Alliance Party, which was later known as the BN, emerged as the party that dominated two-thirds of parliamentary seats since the 1959 election.

Section 4, Schedule Eight, Part 1 of the Federal Constitution stipulates that each State Legislative Assembly shall consist of such number of elected members as its Legislation may, by law, provide and the number shall be the same as or a multiple of the Federal (Parliamentary) Constituencies of that state. The numbers of members of the State Legislative Assemblies by state are as follows;

Table 2.13: The distribution of members in the State Legislative Assemblies in Malaysia, 1959-2004

State	1959	1964	1969	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1995	1999	2004
Perlis	12	12	12	12	12	12	14	14	15	15	15
Kedah	24	24	24	26	26	26	28	28	36	36	36
Kelantan	30	30	30	36	36	36	39	39	43	43	45
Terengganu	24	24	24	28	28	28	32	32	32	32	32
Penang	24	24	24	27	27	27	33	33	33	33	40
Perak	40	40	40	42	42	42	46	46	52	52	59
Pahang	24	24	24	32	32	32	33	33	38	38	42
Selangor	28	28	28	33	33	33	42	42	48	48	56
FT of Kuala Lumpur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Negeri Sembilan	24	24	24	24	24	24	28	28	32	32	36
Malacca	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	25	25	28
Johore	32	32	32	32	32	32	36	36	40	40	56
Sabah	-	-	32	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	60
Sarawak	-	-	48	48	48	48	48	48	56	62	62
Total	282	282	362	408	408	408	447	447	498	498	567

Source: a) 1955 to 1982: Hussein Mohammed. (1987). Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari p. 24

b) Election Commission., (1988,1992, 1997, 2002), Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1990,1995,1999. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

c) Data 2004: Scorecard Special Election 2004: New Strait Times. 19 March 2004 p. 4

2.6 13 May 1969 Riot

The federal election of 1969 was one of the major turning point in the Malaysian political history. The unique Consociational Democracy in Malaysia which had been worked out by the political leadership was to receive traumatic jolt when the fourth general election took place on 10 May 1969. In this election, the Alliance lost much of their popular support, although not their parliamentary majority to a number of opposition parties. In the 1969 parliamentary elections, the Alliance won 66 out of 104 seats, 23 seats less than in 1964 (tables 2.14), with 48.5 percent of the popular vote. UMNO won 51 out of the 68 seats it contested, the MCA won 13 out of 33 and the MIC won two out of three seats. Meanwhile, the opposition parties , DAP won 13 seats, PAS 12 seats, Gerakan, eight and the PPP four seats. The results are shown in tables 2.14 below;

**Table 2.14 : The Malaysian Federal Election Results
by Party (1964 and 1969)**

Party	Election 1964	Election 1969
<i>Alliance</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>66</i>
UMNO	59	51
MCA	27	13
MIC	3	2
PAS	9	12
PPP	2	4
DAP	0	13
Gerakan	0	8
SF	2	0
PAP	2	0
UDP	1	0
Vacant	1	0
Total	104	104

Source : Goh Cheng Teik. (1971). *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. p.13.

This is the first election where the Alliance was facing an effective non-Malay opposition parties like the DAP and the party Gerakan which were contesting the election for the first time. To understand, the Alliance party's performance in the 1969 election and the subsequent riots, one has to look at the period between 1964 and 1969. According to Mauzy;

The period from 1964 to 1969 was one of the unprecedented ethnic political militancy, partly the result of the PAP's articulation of the 'Malaysian Malaysia' theme, partly because confrontation was winding down and ended in 1966, and partly because one of the pro-Malay parts of 'the bargain' came due: the national Language Bill of 1967. Whereas the Chinese had immediately benefited from the 1957 citizenship provisions, the language agreement to make Malay the sole official language had called for a ten year interim period before implementation (1983:34).

The Chinese community appeared less willing to accept the National Language provision. The union of Chinese Teachers, Chinese guilds and associations were the groups most against the implementation of this provision. They believed that their cultures and language were more superior than the culture and language of the Malay (Ratnam and Mile, 1965:126). These groups also demanded the establishment of a Chinese University and these demands put MCA in a dilemma.

Communal tensions were further heightened by the PAP's campaign issues which contained anti-Malay innuendo (Funston, 1980:59). The party called for a 'Malaysian Malaysia' and indulged in racial arithmetic's which implied that the Malays were not the majority group. The aggressive campaign produced results. The Malay was alarmed by the challenge to constitutional bargain and racial arithmetic's while the Chinese were excited by the prospect of political realignment (Mauzy, 1978:134). This period witnessed increasing communal polarization, ethnic military

and outbidding. Issues of race and communal were the most dominant issue of the election campaign in 1969. When the Alliance contested the 1969 elections, its internal cohesion had been eroded by the consequences of the political events between 1964-1969.

An unspoken result of the 1969 general election was the complete loss of support for the Chinese component of the Alliance party, especially in Penang, Selangor and Perak⁵⁴. Due to the fact that the MCA was not given the badly needed votes by the Chinese voters, the MCA central committees decided at noon on 13 May 1969, that it would not join the new Alliance Cabinet. In his statement to the press, Tun Tan Siew Sin, the then President noted;

‘The Chinese in this country have rejected the MCA as their representative in the government, if the results of the general election so reflect their wishes. As politicians practising parliamentary democracy, the MCA must accept this to be the case. Under the circumstances, the MCA has no alternative but to refrain from (participating in) the government, in that no MCA representative will accept any appointment in the Cabinet or in the respective state assemblies. However, the MCA will remain in the Alliance and all its representatives will be in the government, in order to give it the majority required for the Alliance to continue in power, both at federal and state levels’ (Goh Cheng Teik, 1971:28).

When the MCA decided not to be included in the new Alliance Cabinet, the DAP and Gerakan had a joint ‘victory’ celebration and procession throughout the streets of Kuala Lumpur with slogans such as *Melayu sudah jatuh* (the Malays have fallen) and

⁵⁴ In the 1969 state election, the Alliance won a total of the 277 seats, but failed to recapture Kelantan from PAS, and nearly lost Trengganu. In Trengganu, out of 24 seats, the Alliance won 13 seats and PAS 11. In Penang, the Alliance controlled government lost its state power to Gerakan. Party Gerakan achieved its greatest triumph by winning 16 out of 24 seats in the state legislature, thus controlling the state government. Other seats were won by the Alliance, 4 (the MCA and MIC lost all the seats they contested) DAP 3, and Party Rakyat 1. In Perak and Selangor, the Alliance failed to win even a simple majority- 19 out of 40 seats in Perak and it won only 14 out of 28 seats in Selangor. In the Parliamentary elections, the Alliance had won 66 of 103 seats, with 48.5 per cent of the popular vote. UMNO had won 51 of 67 seats it contested, the MCA 13 of 33, and the MIC 2 of 3 seats. In the opposition DAP won 13 seats, PAS 12, Gerakan 8 and PPP 4. See Goh Cheing Teik (1971), Vasil (1972), Ratnam and Milne, (1970:203-226).

Melayu sudah tiada kuasa lagi (the Malays are no longer in power) shouted at the Malays (Muhammad Agus Yusof, 1992:30-31). As a consequence of this victory demonstration by the opposition, a group of a few hundred angry young Malay activists, mainly from Kampung Baru and Kampung Keramat (both located in the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur), retaliated. As a result, tension built up between the ethnic races and on 13 May 1969, violence erupted and in this racial riot, houses and property worth millions of dollars were damaged or destroyed and several hundred people died⁵⁵. Ismail Abdul Rahman, the Minister of Home Affairs, viewed the 1969 racial riots as the 'death of democracy' at the hands of the opposition. It shows that consociational practice, which had worked successfully prior to 1969, had deteriorated at the time of the 1969 general election. As a result of the riot, parliamentary government was suspended and ruled by the National Operations Council (NOC) was instituted under the directorship of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Razak Hussein⁵⁶.

The 1969 election can be considered as a black mark in the history of Political Consociation in Malaysia. This situation was triggered by the difficulty faced by the leadership of political elite, UMNO, MCA and MIC, in controlling their supporters, especially the radicals, in making certain demands or requests that placed more emphasis on racial issues. The relaxation of control over the political elite in the

⁵⁵ See Tuanku Abdul Rahman, (1969); Karl Von Vorys, (1975); Mehmet, (1971:210-218); Rabushka, (1970:345-356) and Reid, (1969:258-272).

⁵⁶ The NOC was modelled after the operations council that existed during the state of emergency from 1948-1960. It was originally designed to coordinate the work of the army and police in the restoration of law and order, and not to supersede the cabinet. The NOC members, headed by Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, were: Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman, Minister of Home Affairs; Hamzah Abu Samah, Minister of Information and Broadcasting; Tun Tan Siew Sin, MCA President; Kadir Shamsuddin, Director of Public Services; Ghazalie Shafie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs; General Tengku Osman Jiwa, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces; and Mohammad Salleh, Inspector General of Police. Lieutenant General Ibrahim Ismail was appointed Chief Executive officer of the NOC when Tengku Osman retired. The post of Chief of Staff and the seat on the NOC were taken over by General Hamid Bidin. See Goh Cheng Teik, (1971:27).

Alliance may be due to on pressures by opposition parties who were aggressively put demands without consideration for limits or boundaries built by the previous leadership during the process of gaining independence. UMNO had to face competition from PAS, whilst MCA had to contend with a new party led by Dr. Lim Chong Eu, Parti Gerakan, which campaigned very aggressively throughout the election in their effort to fight for their demands. These were all done to win the support of voters. As a result of this action, consociation ties weakened whilst racial spirit strengthened to fight for ethnic rights.

The riots of 1969, painfully revealed how strong were the undercurrents of distrust running through the various ethnic communities. According to Mauzy the May 13 riots led to change in the political system designed to curb the excesses of uncontrolled political competition, and its led to a new formula for political rule (1983:37). After twenty one months of NOC rule, parliamentary process was restored in February 1971. Prior to that in September 1970, the Tunku Abdul Rahman announced his retirement from the post of the Prime Minister and he was succeeded by Abdul Razak Hussein with Dr. Ismail Abd. Rahman as the Deputy Prime Minister.

The first task of Parliament in 1971 was to pass the Constitution (Amendment) Bill which was designed to permanently remove certain ethnically provisions from public discussion. For this purpose, the Bill proposed the amendment of Article 10 (which deals with freedom of speech) whereby the parliament would be empowered to pass laws which made it illegal to question any matter, right, status, privilege or sovereignty established or protected by the provisions of part 111 of the institution

(which deals with citizenship), Article 152⁵⁷ (the National Language), Article 153⁵⁸ (special position of the Malays and legitimate interest of other communities) (Milne and Mauzy, 1980:96)⁵⁹. The government also took steps to control publication which it felt had inflamed communal feeling. Speech or writing that considered likely to incite ethnic hostility was banned (Andaya, 2001:299).

The government justified its repressive apparatus largely on the grounds that it was necessary for maintenance of order in a multi communal society where racial tensions could flare up and turn into violence at any time. In practice, however the repressive machinery was used to reduce the scope for political opposition to the government. Although the government permitted a substantial degree of political freedom, it was always ready to intervene whenever opposition rose to the point where it could begin to threaten the government's grip on political power (Crouch, 1996:95).

⁵⁷ Article 152 of the Malaysia constitution states that Malay shall be national language provided that;

- a. no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (other than for official purpose) or form teaching or learning any other language;
- b. Nothing in this clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study on the language of any other community in the federation. See Federal Constitution (1990).

⁵⁸ Article 153 relates to the special powers of the Malays and empowers the King to ensure reservation of seats to Malays in public service, scholarship, education or training facilities and licence for the operation of trade or business. See Federal Constitution (1990).

⁵⁹ The amendment of Article 152 involves defining the term 'official purpose' which was not defined previously. Amendment to article 153 provides the King with the power to give directions to universities, colleges etc., to reserve certain propositions of place for the Malays as deemed necessary. Amendment to article 63 and 72 removed the protection previously provided to members of parliament and State legislative Assemblies against court proceedings for anything they say. Amendment to Article 159 stipulated that the provisions under Articles 10, part 111 of the constitution, Articles 63, 72 and 152 cannot be amended without the consent of the Conference of Rulers. See Federal Constitution (1990).

2.7 Conclusion

The principal key of success, based on the discussion above, can be assumed to be due to a few factors. First is the competency in managing conflicts triggered by any demand or requirement made by the various ethnic groups. Second is the role of political party leaders (political elites) in monitoring their supporters to ensure compliance with demands, and the mutual agreement reached among leaders. And third, the acceptance and the success of the process of bargaining and negotiation for core elements, such as the issues of citizenship and special rights of the Malays, which form the basis in maintaining trust between ethnic groups. To study these three factors in greater detail, the next chapter discusses how the Barisan Nasional functions to unite the political elites among the Malays, Chinese and Indians, leading to the origins of conflict management with focus on the process of bargaining and negotiation.

CHAPTER 3

THE BARISAN NASIONAL AND ELECTIONS

3.1 Introduction

The discussion in chapter two gives special focus on the background of the BN's formation. It begins with the initial negotiation process among the various political parties, including those from Sabah and Sarawak. Special focus is also given to the establishment of the BN in Penang and Kedah. In addition, discussion also highlights the principles upheld by the party in its effort to safeguard the coalition among its components. The BN's involvement in general elections is discussed by reviewing its performance in elections from 1974 to 1999. In this regard, its success factors throughout this period are also elaborated.

3.2 The Barisan Nasional

The period following the re-convening of Parliament saw a significant political development – the broadening of the base of the Alliance to accommodate most of the constitutional opposition within a broad national front, the BN. In 1971, parliamentary government was restored. Having realised that communal conflict had to be resolved, the Alliance took a step forward by offering the opposition parties a chance to join the government¹. Cooperation in the form of a mixed government

¹ The first step in translating the new ideas into concrete action was taken in setting up the National Consultative Council (NCC) in January 1970. Invitations by Abdul Razak Hussein were sent to all major political parties to participate. The NCC was a widely represented body ethnically, politically,

between the Alliance and the opposition parties (except the DAP) was achieved. On 7 July 1970, the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP)² and the Sarawak alliance³ agreed to the establishment of the first mixed government in Sarawak⁴. In the Peninsular, particularly in Penang, a mixed government was established between Gerakan and the Alliance on 13 May 1972, between the Alliance and the PPP in Perak on 15 February 1972 and on 1 January 1973, the Alliance and PAS jointly governed Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah. It was indeed this positive action taken by the opposition parties, who answered the call and eventually joined the Alliance, that resulted in the coalition of political parties under the banner of the BN, which replaced the Alliance (Mauzy 1983:51-74).

The chief goal of creating the BN to reduce politicking, or in other words, to mitigate misunderstanding due to differing opinions. Time and money would then be channelled towards national development to improve living standards, especially the status of the Malays who were far behind the other races in terms of socio-economy,

occupationally and territorially. It included in its ranks spokesmen for all of the ethnic communities (except for a sector of the Chinese community which regarded the DAP as its legitimate spokesman). It included the leaders of the two states held by the opposition and top representatives from five (originally six) major opposition parties. NCC's membership by ethnic group was never officially cited. From the list of 64 members: Malays 27, Chinese 17, Indians 8, others 8 and unknown (but not Malays) 4.(see *The Malaysian Digest*, Vol 2, no. 1 (14 January 1970). The NCC had three key features: representativeness, confidentiality and consensus. The method of negotiation in the NCC was 'to meet and talk until consensus was achieved'. see Mauzy (1983)..

² The Sarawak United People's Party – A Sarawak multiethnic but predominantly Chinese party formed in June 1959. According to Datuk Stephen Yong (the SUPP's top leader), there were no official coalition talks between the SUPP and the Alliance in the 1967-1969 period, although there was an understanding between him and Abdul Razak Hussein that if the 1969 election yielded no clear majority in the state (as forecast) it would be best to have a Sarawak Alliance-SUPP coalition. The SUPP was becoming more 'respectable' in the eyes of the federal government (Mauzy, 1983:51).

³ The Sarawak Alliance was founded in October 1962 and originally consisted of five political parties: Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (PESAKA), Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak (BERJASA), Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS) and the Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA). See NSTP (1990).

⁴ The Sarawak Alliance-SUPP coalition government was formed with Bumiputera and the SUPP as major partners and PESAKA and the SCA as minor ones. Datuk Patinggi Hj. Rahman Yacob of Bumiputera was named the Chief Minister and Bumiputera was given one other post in the six-member cabinet. The SUPP was given a Deputy Ministership (Datuk Stephen Yong) and one other Cabinet post, equal control in theory over policies and appointments, and the promise that policies enumerated in its Election manifesto would be implemented (Mauzy 1983,53).

education and society. The absence of conflict among the political parties would create peace, stability and security which are important for the country. Moreover, the BN coalition would solve existing problems through negotiation, cooperation and compromise, eventually resulting in racial solidarity for the benefit of the people and the country. (Crouch, Lee, Ong, 1980: 1-10). The BN was registered as a coalition of political parties with the steelyard scale as its symbol, shown on a deep blue background signifying equality, justice and prosperity for the country. Among the BN's objectives are;

- 1.. To foster and maintain a united and harmonious Malaysian nation;
 - 2.. To strive for material and spiritual development, and to maintain Islam as the official religion of the Federation, although other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the federation; and to uphold and practise the principles of the Rukun Negara;
 - 3.. To strive for the establishment of a fair and just society; and
 4. To promote closer relationship among the member parties
- (Mohammad Rahmat, 2001:63).

The BN, which was officially registered as a political party on 1 June 1974, was basically an association of political parties. The nine parties in the BN were UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, PAS, the People's Progressive Party (PPP)⁵, Gerakan, the

⁵ The People's Progressive Party (Parti Kemajuan Rakyat Malaysia) was founded in 1955 by the Seenivasagam brothers and rallied lower class non-Malay voters. It was once a strong opposition party but lost its steam when it failed to secure any seats in the House of Representatives during the 1974 general election. Now a component of the BN, the party with an estimated 180 active branches is involved with a messy court battle over party leadership. See NSTP (1990).

SUPP⁶, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu⁷ (PBB) and the Sabah Alliance Party. Abdul Razak was appointed the Chairman, with Michael Chen (MCA) as Secretary and Asri Mohammed (PAS) as Treasurer. The number of member parties in the BN later changed from time to time as parties left and joined following current political developments. Among the parties that had joined and later left the BN were PAS, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelita Sabah (Berjaya)⁸, Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat Bersatu (Akar)⁹, The United Sabah National Organization (USNO)¹⁰, Barisan Jemmah Islam Se Malaysia (Berjasa)¹¹ and Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia (HAMIM)¹².

Presently, component members of the BN are UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, the party Gerakan, the PPP, the SUPP, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), Sarawak National Party (SNAP)¹³, Parti Bangsa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS)¹⁴, Liberal

⁶ Parti Rakyat Bersatu Sarawak (SUPP) was founded in 1959 by Ong Kee Hui and Amar Stephen Yong. The SUPP joined the ruling coalition in Sarawak after the 1970 state election and has continued through ever since, consistently winning about a quarter of the State Assembly seats. SUPP joined the BN in 1976. See NSTP (1990).

⁷ Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu Sarawak (PBB), consists of the Iban-based PESAKA and the Malay-based Bumiputera (which was itself merger a of the Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak (Berjasa) and Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS). It was established in 1973. It is the largest component of the BN Tiga (BN3), followed by SUPP and SNAP.

⁸ A Sabah multiethnic party formed in July 1975 to oppose the Sabah Alliance. It won control of Sabah in the 1976 state election and joined BN in 1977. Berjaya left the BN in 1999.

⁹ Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat Bersatu (AKAR) was registered on 15 September 1989 and was launched in Kundasang, Sabah on 24 September of the same year. It was headed by Kalakau Untol, Pandikar Amin Mulia and six ex-PBS members. In November 1989, Mark Koding was appointed as the president of the party. On November 1990, AKAR applied to join the BN. AKAR left the BN in June 1998.

¹⁰ A Sabah Muslim party formed in December 1961. It was headed by Datu Mustapha Datu Harun.

¹¹ BERJASA was founded by the former PAS Kelantan Chief Minister Mohammad Nasir and other PAS dissidents in September 1977. It joined the BN in December 1977. Together with the BN, Berjasa governed the state government in Kelantan in 1982. In the 1986 general election, Berjasa decided not to take part because of its dissatisfaction over the acceptance of HAMIM into the BN. Berjasa left the BN on 25 May 1989.

¹² Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia (HAMIM) was formed by a former PAS leader and led by Mohammed Asri Muda, who was the PAS Chief for 18 years. In July 1986, HAMIM was accepted in principle into the BN fold and allotted one parliamentary seat and two state seats in the 1986 election. In August 1989, HAMIM ceased to be a member the BN.

¹³ The Sarawak National Party (SNAP) is an Iban-based party with some Chinese support. Formed in 1961 by Stephen Kalong Ningkan, SNAP applied and was accepted into the BN in 1976.

¹⁴ Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) is a Dayak-base party, formed in 1983 by elected representatives who broke away from SNAP. It joined the BN in January 1984.

Democratic Party (LDP)¹⁵, Sabah Progressive Party (SPP)¹⁶, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs)¹⁷, United Pasok Momongun Kadazandusun Organisation (UPKO)¹⁸ and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS)¹⁹ (Mohammad Rahmat, 2001:43).

3.2.1 Penang - The Coalition between the Alliance and Gerakan

The marriage between the Alliance and Gerakan became an obvious possibility at the end of December 1971 and was announced by Abdul Razak Hussein on Sunday, 13 February 1972 (*Straits Times*, 14 February 1972). On Wednesday, 6 February 1972, Dr. Lim Chong Eu, as Penang's Chief Minister, announced that the two parties - the Alliance and Gerakan - had decided to form a coalition, "in the interests of national unity, stability and security" (*Straits Echo*, 17 February 1972). What brought about the turnaround? After the racial riots of 13 May, Dr. Lim Chong Eu realised rightfully that it was just not the time for the Opposition to be militant or uncooperative, as that would not be tolerated. He also realised that such a hard line stance would be ultimately detrimental to the cause of national unity, which meant that it was absolutely necessary for the Penang State Government to cooperate with the Federal Government.

¹⁵ The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is a Sabah Chinese based party formed in 1989 by Hiew Ming Kong, Chong Kah Kiat and a group of Chinese from various political and non-political backgrounds, mostly professionals. The LDP was accepted into the Sabah BN in July 1991.

¹⁶ The Sabah Progressive Party (SPP) was founded on 20 January 1994 by a splinter group in the PBS. In the 1994 Sabah state election, the SPP, as a BN component, won three seats out of seven.

¹⁷ Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs), a Kadazan Dusun based party, was initiated by former PBS vice president, Clarence Bongkos, who is its pro-tem Chairman. The president of the party is Joseph Kurup, a former PBS secretary general. The PBRs was accepted into the BN on 11 June 1994.

¹⁸ The United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (UPKO) was formed by former PBS leader, led by Bernard Giluk Dompok. In July 1999, the UPKO was accepted into the BN.

¹⁹ Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) was founded on 15 March 1985 by Joseph Pairin Kitingan and other dissident BERJAYA member shortly before the state election of April 1985. The PBS joined the BN in June 1986. The PBS left the coalition shortly before the national election in October 1990 and allied with Semangat 46. In October 2003, the PBS joined the BN for the second time.

When a call was made from Abdul Razak Hussein to Dr. Lim Chong Eu at the height of the riots, Dr. Lim Chong Eu assured Abdul Razak Hussein that Gerakan would be fully cooperative and would not support any anti-Alliance coalition in either Perak or Selangor. The rest is history, as Abdul Razak Hussein and Dr. Lim Chong Eu eventually announced an agreement in principle for a coalition government in Penang (Mauzy, 1983:56-58). Under the agreement for the coalition;

1. The Alliance members in the Penang State Assembly shall participate in the government of the state. Dr. Lim Chong Eu shall remain as Chief Minister and Gerakan will retain overall control of the state government.
2. Gerakan members in the Dewan Negara (Senate), the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) and the various State Assemblies under the Alliance, shall give their full support to the Alliance government.
3. A consultative committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Lim, will be set up to advise the Chief Minister.
4. A coordinating council, under the chairmanship of the MCA president, Tan Siew Sin, will be set up to coordinate the policies of the coalition (Md. Arif Ariffin, 1973:45).

Meanwhile, Dr. Lim Chong Eu is of the opinion that Gerakan must indeed join the BN, owing to several factors, including;

1. To preserve party Gerakan's control of the Penang State Government.
2. To enable implementation of development projects:

- i). To ensure the smooth implementation of industrialisation programmes and development projects in Penang.
 - ii) Difficulty in carrying out rural development and rural urbanisation, especially in areas controlled by the Alliance. Projects involving rural urban development simply required the cooperation of the Alliance.
3. To obtain the considerable financial assistance needed from the Federal Government, as there was concern for the social and economic problems facing Penang. As at 25 February 1973, outstanding loans amounted to \$70 million (*The Star*, Thursday 26 April 1973).
 4. To further achieve the goals he envisaged for Penang.
 5. Because he had been in the opposition for too long a time.
 6. Because he was actually on good personal terms with Abdul Razak Hussein and Dr. Ismail Abd. Rahman (Mauzy 1983:62).

The party Gerakan's decision to join the BN had attracted the attention of the MCA, who was, up till then, the sole component party representing the Chinese community.

The Reaction of the MCA

The MCA initially protested against a potential Gerakan-Alliance coalition because the Gerakan did not consult the Penang MCA on the matter, but instead only consulted UMNO on the idea of forming a coalition government. Another reason why the MCA did not approve the coalition was that it had nothing to gain from the

union, by virtue of the fact that it had no representation in the Legislative Assembly. Be as it may that the MCA was not represented, it felt that the Alliance as a party was regaining strength as indicated in the by-election. It was also felt that the Gerakan, on the other hand, was losing ground. It was obvious therefore that the MCA, in opposing the idea of the Gerakan-Alliance coalition, was of the view that any coalition with the Gerakan was akin to joining a sinking ship, which would merely serve to enhance the Gerakan's political future. (*Straits Echo*, 1 January 1972).

It is important to note, however, that the objection from the MCA was only voiced at the very initial stage when the idea of a coalition was first mooted. Any grievances and apprehensions were eventually allayed, with the matter treated as settled and closed, when the MCA National President, Tun Tan Siew Sin presented and clarified its case to the Penang MCA. (*Straits Echo*, 15 February 1972). The MCA fully and responsibly considered the common good and accepted that it was time for the party to participate more effectively through a coalition government, to ensure that the interests of the people could be better served. The MCA attached further importance to the coalition when its national president, Tan Siew Sin, was appointed the Chairman of the Gerakan-Alliance coordinating council, and would be taking a key role in formulating the policies of the state government. Support from the MCA for the coalition was total when it became obvious that the Gerakan would be implementing what were once the policies of the Alliance Party that were planned before the 1969 General Elections. In effect, the Penang MCA regarded Tan Sri Wong Pow Nee as the planner, and acknowledged Dr. Lim Chong Eu as the implementer of these policies. (Md. Arif Ariffin, 1973:58).

Establishment of the Coalition Government and the Barisan Nasional in Penang

The success of the formation of the coalition government²⁰ between the Alliance and the Gerakan in Penang became the platform towards greater efforts in uniting the various component parties under one omnibus Party, known as the BN, which was formally launched on 1 June 1974. On the establishment of the BN, Abdul Razak said:

‘A new era in the political development of our country has begun with the establishment of the National Front, and that the result of the next general election would determine our relationship with the other parties of the National Front.’ He explained that elections would no longer be in the name of the Alliance and concluded that the setting-up of the BN was the climax of the country’s political strategies in the 1970s’ (Mauzy, 1983:77).

3.2.2 Kedah - Establishment of the Coalition Government and the Barisan Nasional in Kedah

On 28 December 1972, Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein and Asri Muda jointly announced that the Alliance-PAS coalition would be formed on 1 January 1973 (Mauzy, 1983:70). This coalition was an important point in Malaysian politics and there were many contributing factors that enabled such a coalition to be formed. The Alliance-PAS coalition greatly erased the political conflict within the Malay community. The formerly intense, hectic and aggressive political rivalry no longer existed among the Malay masses. There were less politicking and the Malays were more united.

²⁰ The other coalition governments successfully formed under the leadership of the Alliance Party were with the PPP in Perak on 15 April 1972, with PAS in Kelantan, Kedah and Terengganu on 1 January 1973 and with the Sarawak Alliance on 8 July 1970. See Mauzy (1983).

The Alliance-PAS coalition was a political trade-off between the PMIP leadership in Kelantan and the Alliance. The PAS's willingness to accept the coalition was to ensure the party's survival in the state of Kelantan, at the expense of the PAS's position and influence in the state of Kedah, Perlis and Terengganu. The PAS had grand designs of recapturing Terengganu and establishing a PAS state government in Kedah, the first in the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, in the following election. Besides this, the PAS's prospects in Perlis were also quite bright. This political 'horse-trading' indeed strengthened UMNO's position in those three Malay states.

The first test for the BN-PAS coalition took place during the by-election in Kuala Kedah, the constituency vacated by former and first Premier of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al Haj. The Alliance, especially UMNO, felt that this by-election was a crucial test for the three-week-old BN-PAS coalition government since it would measure how far this concept was understood at the grassroots level (Mohd Taib Ahmad Said, 1974:32). The results eventually showed a very high commitment towards the coalition when BN candidate, Senu Abdul Rahman defeated independent Cik Siti Nor. These incidences forged the way to a new political alliance in Kedah under the Alliance-PAS, later known as the BN.

3.3 The Principle of the Barisan Nasional

To build a common administration in a multiracial country is not easy. Many countries have succeeded but equally many have failed²¹. This can more or less be

²¹ According to Lijphart, among the countries that have succeeded in managing their interethnic conflicts are Switzerland since 1943, Belgium since 1970, the Netherlands since 1950, Malaysia from 1950 to 1969, Lebanon from 1943 to 1975, and Surinam from 1958 to 1973. Countries that have failed in doing so are Cyprus, Lebanon after 1975 and Fiji (see Lijphart 1999).

associated with the management of the conflicts that arise, as each ethnic group has individual inspirations and aspirations. Such is the case experienced by Malaysia, beginning with the collaboration formed under the Alliance party, which lasted only from 1955 to May 1969. This coalition was later broken up by the incident of 13 May 1969, which saw interracial tension, especially between the Malays and the Chinese.

The bitterness and pain of the incident during this period of interracial tension served as a lesson to all, particularly the elites of each race, on how it would be impossible to live in stability and harmony if each race only cared about their own interests. Thus, the rejoining of the spirit of consociation, portrayed through a new image under the BN, opened a new chapter in the politics of Malaysia. The concept of the BN's establishment is truly unique. It was achieved because each party on its own was not strong enough to rule and had to cooperate with another party, but it is based on equal opportunity for each race to join the government. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad²² explained that;

The BN's sacrifice is not for glory nor for power, but for the wellbeing and prosperity of the people and the nation.

3.3.1 The Spirit of Solidarity

The spirit of solidarity refers to mutual assistance, mutual cooperation and mutual understanding in any matter, followed by mutual agreement to execute or realise an objective. As observed by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, the BN can maintain its position for a very long time if this solidarity is nurtured and maintained. UMNO, the

²² Interview with Mahathir Mohammad, the longest-serving Prime Minister of Malaysia, holding power for 22 years (1981-2003). He was the Chairman of the BN (1981-2003) who went through 5 elections (1982, 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999). He had also previously held the posts of Deputy Prime Minister (1976-1981) and the Minister of Education. See appendix A.

pillar of the BN, had infused this spirit since the time of the Alliance party on the issue of seat allocation for the general election. Because of this spirit of solidarity, UMNO would never form a government on its own, even though it could do so, in the event it won all seats contested in a general election. UMNO would always place importance on the spirit of solidarity and cooperation with the other component parties of the BN.

Table 3.1: The ability of UMNO to form a government based on the number of seats won in the 1974 – 1999 elections

Election year	Number of seats for simple majority to form a government	Number of seats contested by UMNO	Number of seats won by UMNO
1974	58	61	61
1978	58	75	70
1982	58	73	70
1986	67	84	83
1990	67	86	71
1995	73	92	79
1999	73	92	60

Source: a) Data 1974 to 1982: Hussein Mohammed, (1987), *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari p. 24.
b). Data 1986 - 1999: Yusof Khan, (2002), *Nostalgia Pilihanraya 1955-1999*. Pulau Pinang: Butterworth.

Based on table 3.1, there is no doubt that UMNO was capable of forming a government on its own without having to share the power with the other parties, should it desire so. The only exception was the 1999 election in which UMNO failed to achieve the number of seats required to form a government, winning only 60 of the 73 required.

On this matter, Ghafar Baba²³ stated that the BN flourished because of the spirit of solidarity shouldered by the component parties representing the various races, religions and political beliefs. Each party should observe and abide by this principle. With this element at hand, each component party concentrated its effort on fighting for a single cause based on a common principle. For example, in the BN, the MIC candidates would receive full backing from UMNO and the other coalition partners, and this is our strength. At the same time, UMNO may need help from Indian voters for seats in which the Malays are split (between the BN and the opposition). This is when the MIC's support would be vital. (*New Straits Times*, 24 July 1994). In the spirit of solidarity, every component party strives in the name of the BN regardless of the party the candidate is from. In other words, the question of who the candidates are does not matter, as long as they represent the BN (*Utusan Malaysia*, 28 April 1986). Mohammad Rahmat emphasised that;

‘What is important is the party’s victory. We (the candidates) are only instruments of the party and its mission. All must cooperate to ensure success of the party in a general election²⁴.’

Winning is of prime importance to the BN, as this would eventually determine the formation of government at state and national levels. In Penang, according to Ibrahim Saat, even if UMNO had won all State Legislative Assembly seats, it would be meaningless if candidates from the other component parties of the BN lost. A BN government cannot be formed. In this respect, the Malays must work hard and give full support to candidates from the other component parties to ensure that they too

²³ Interview with Ghafar Baba, Deputy Prime Minister (1986-1994) and the former Secretary-General of the BN for 22 years from its establishment in 1974 to 1996. He was also the longest-serving UMNO Vice President for 25 years, after which he served as the Deputy President for one term before retiring from politics. See appendix A.

²⁴ Interview with Mohammad Rahmat, Secretary-General of the BN (1996-2004) and former UMNO Secretary-General for 6 years. Among the cabinet posts he held was Minister of Information. See Appendix A.

win and thus, further strengthen the political power of the state government (*Berita Harian*, 14 December 1993).

In line with the basic desire of the BN to place priority on its effort of forming a combined administration or government, the spirit of solidarity is more evident in Kedah. Constituencies in Kedah mostly consist of Malay majorities, accounting for almost 86 percent, with 16 percent Chinese majorities and four percent mixed voter constituencies. But based on the policy of ensuring that every ethnic group is represented in the government, the top leaders of the BN, in the spirit of solidarity, have agreed that due allocation of seats be made to minority component parties. Thus, the allocation agreed upon was 80 percent for UMNO, 16 percent for the MCA and Gerakan, and MIC, with absolutely no majority constituencies, was allocated four percent. The concept applied by the BN was adopted early in its establishment. This was clearly evident when its founder, Abdul Razak Hussein²⁵, invited all political parties to participate in a parade. The invitation was extended without any qualifying conditions upon the parties. This had attracted most of the political parties to participate in the BN, except for the DAP and Parti Rakyat.

The diversity in the backgrounds of parties under the umbrella of the BN later combined in the adoption of power-sharing²⁶. Using this method, they

²⁵ In January 1970, Abdul Razak Hussein invited all major political parties to participate in 'the new political order' through representation on the National Consultative Council (NCC). Originally, all of the parties, except for the DAP, agreed to participate but PR (PSRM, now combined with Parti Keadilan - Parti Keadilan Rakyat) withdrew its representative (Means 1983:47).

²⁶ The concept of power sharing has long been debated within political science, notably by Nordinger (1972), Lijphart (1977, 1991, 1999), Lehmbruch (1993), McRae (1974), Alcock (1994) and McGarry and O'Leary (1993). The term 'power-sharing' has been defined by scholars, such as Arend Lijphart, as a set of principles that, when operationalised through practices and institutions, provide every significant identity group in a society with representation and decision-making abilities on common issues, and a degree of autonomy over issues of importance to the group. Lijphart's principle of power-sharing is known as consociational democracy (Lijphart, 1977a). There are a few points to be noted here. First, power-sharing is likely to be most effective if it is constitutionally mandated. In this case, Power-Sharing is not a simple coalition or marriage of convenience but it is a "grand coalition"

proportionately shared with each component party, the power given to them by the people through elections. This could be seen at every election, when together, they allocated seats to each party and later collectively established the State Exco. It was evident that the application of this concept was indeed successful and resisted the test of time to become the backbone of the BN.

The common commitment and acceptance of the importance of power-sharing developed a sense of collaboration among the component parties, to enable it to continually rule the country since its establishment in 1974 by maintaining its two-thirds majority in Parliament. Such a success alone is, in fact, not easily achievable, especially with several parties representing each racial group in Malaysia. Conflict is inevitable in the comings and goings of the BN as each party would certainly aim to make demands and obtain rights in their own interests. This ability to manage the frequent conflicts in the BN is indeed intriguing. Based on the allocation of seats and the appointment of Exco members, it is clear that the BN has a unique formula in maintaining stability and unity among the component parties to ensure integrity and strength of solidarity in their struggle against the opposition, but most importantly, in ruling the country. In this regard, the BN uses several approaches in ensuring the integrity of the unity among the component parties and in facilitating the

cabinet comprising the representative parties, and Cabinet positions are divided in proportion to the percentage of votes acquired at election. What differentiates power-sharing from simple coalition is that the former is constitutionally mandated while the latter is not. Second, any grand coalition must be premised on an agreed national direction that includes agreement on a broad national developmental program. Third, the leaders of the various segments must have a deep and abiding commitment to the unity of the nation and must be prepared to uphold the laws and the democratic process. Cooperation and compromise must be the guiding principles and must be predicated on a willingness of the leaders of one segment to work with the other segments. The prototypes of power-sharing are the Netherlands from 1917 to 1967 (Daalder and Irwin, 1989, Mair 1994), Belgium since 1970 (Zolberg, 1977), Austria from 1945 to 1966 (Luther and Mullaer, 1992), Switzerland since 1943 (Lehmbruch 1993, Steiner 1990) Lebanon from 1943 to 1975 and again after the 1989 Taif Accord (Dekmejian 1978), Power sharing in South Africa (Lijphart, 1985), Malaysia since 1955 with a temporary breakdown from 1969 to 1971 (Von Vorys 1975, Zakaria 1989) and Colombia from 1958 to 1974 (Hartlyn, 1988).

management of conflict that often arose. The approaches or principles being referred to are the applications of the three key elements in the administration of the BN. The importance of these three elements led to these being written in the constitution of the BN. Among the main formulas that formed the bases of the BN's strength at national and state levels, are Decision-making Procedures, Representativeness and Confidentiality.

3.3.2 The Three Principles

The upholding of these three principles of the BN came about from the realisation by the political leaders when the party was formed, that any difference in ideologies should be put aside and instead, the interest of the nation should be put first. The principle includes Decision-making Procedures, Representativeness and Confidentiality. According to Ong Kee Hui;

‘We agreed, as a matter of policy, that all parties be equal and have the same number of representatives on the supreme council. And any decision must be made by consensus. These were the basis of the national front’ (*New Straits Times*, 24 August 1994).

3.3.2.1 Decision-making

One approach taken to ensure that power-sharing can be implemented with success is decision-making by consensus²⁷ (Ulrich Schneckener, 2000:1). This means that the

²⁷ In Malay political culture, *musyawarah* (discussion), *muafakat* (consensus) and *gotong-royong* (cooperation) are important elements. Because these have become synonymous to everyday life, it is no surprise that they also influence conflict management in politics. In electing the village chief (the top leadership unit at branch level) through *musyawarah*, consensus among the entire community on the proposed candidate is often essential. Likewise for the appointment of higher posts, such as the *Penghulu* (the top leadership unit at *mukim* level, which covers 8-12 villages). And the same is true when organising any function. Through *muafakat*, tasks and dates are determined, and through *gotong-royong*, the function is made a success. This has become a deep-rooted culture among the

decision of a meeting shall only be adopted if it is unanimously agreed by all component parties. In doing this, the main component parties leading the coalition must swallow their pride and look beyond their status. In other words, they must put themselves on equal grounds with the smaller parties in the coalition when a decision is being made. Mahathir Mohammad explained that:

‘The BN, which uses consensus in making decisions, has ensured that the interests of all, including the minority parties or races, are not neglected.’ (Ulrich Schneckener, 2000:1).

For the BN, the practice of decision-making by consensus has become its core and principal pillar from the time of its establishment. This is clearly emphasised in the BN’s constitution under Article 12:

Decisions at the meetings of the Supreme Council shall be by unanimity, provided that decisions taken under Articles 14 (Discipline) and 21 (Interpretation of Rules) shall be by majority, in which case each member shall have one vote (Mohamed Rahmat, 2001:66).

Based on Article 12 above, Ghafar Baba²⁸ elaborated that all decisions made by the Supreme Council of each party are based on consensus or unanimity, and not by vote. According to him, should any component party disagree with a decision, the council would not approve of the decision despite receiving a high vote, and it shall be postponed. Even if only one party disagrees, the council would still not proceed with the decision, and would instead postpone the meeting until such a time the party changes its mind and agrees.

traditional Malay. Hence, it is customary that in decision-making, the people would, by consensus, abide by whatever decisions made by their superiors. See Ahmad Atory Hussein (1999).

²⁸ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

This proves that each party is given an equal say in decision-making, regardless of the subject of the decision, or the size of the party. Through this practice of discussion and mutual consultation, and decision-making by consensus (and not by vote or by a simple majority of half or more), no single party can dominate nor force the other parties to do anything by sheer strength of force or numbers. With regards to this, Mohammad Yaacob²⁹ said that there were several reasons why decisions at the Supreme Council meetings of the BN are not made by vote (show of hands) or via other means³⁰.

1. A multiracial country cannot be ruled by a single race; instead it requires cooperation among the different racial groups. In this respect, a voting system would only tend to lead to domination by a single race. The main parties, i.e. UMNO, the MIC, Gerakan and the MCA, would surely have the advantage over the other races. This would cause the other races to claim injustice and react by leaving the coalition.
2. A voting system could also lead to groups forming within the coalition, which, in turn, would indirectly weaken and break up the coalition.

Based on the approach of consensus, each component party would usually be given the chance to speak and present their views on matters being discussed, either from the positive or negative angle. Following this, each component party would find the

²⁹ Interview with Mohammad Yaacob. Current Executive Secretary to the BN since 1995. He is the person responsible for the fulltime administration of the BN. See appendix A.

³⁰ Johnson and Johnson (1997) mentioned there being seven methods of decision-making, which are; decision by consensus, decision by majority vote, decision by minority, decision made by authority after group discussion, decision by averaging individual's opinions, decision by expert and decision made by authority without group discussion.

best solution in their common interest. Although reaching a mutual decision through this procedure can sometimes be time-consuming, it is effective in helping the component parties understand and examine the matters arising.

Collective decisions were arrived at through an effective and fair communication process (all team members spoke and listened, expressed their thoughts and feelings, and all were valued) (*Berita Harian*, 26 August 1994).

This would indirectly improve understanding and foster closer ties among the component parties. In Penang, the appointment of Chief Minister in 1990 is a good example of how the decision-making process was carried out.

3.3.2.2. Representativeness

Each member party of the BN would be given equal representativeness regardless of its size or its membership. This meant that UMNO, with a membership of 2.9 million, would have a total of three representatives, as many as that of Parti Bangsa Dayak Sarawak, with a membership of 35,200 only³¹. This was explicitly written in the BN's constitution under Article 7(e): 'Three representatives from each member party, including any member appointed as Vice Chairman'. Within this context, Dr. Mahathir stressed that if we believed in the voice of the majority, we must equally obey the minority³². Therefore it is not surprising that the concept was well accepted by all component parties.

³¹ Memberships of the component parties of the BN: UMNO 2,915,331, MCA 884,840, MIC 540,340, PBB 183,212, SUPP 100,000, Gerakan 300,000, PPP 302, 639, SNAP 118,604, PBDS 35,200, LDP 71,549, SAPP 41,744, PBRS 93,784 and UPKO 94,551. See Mohamed Rahmat. (2001). *Barisan Nasional, Balancing Communal Rights*. . Kuala Lumpur: Dasar Cetak Sdn.Bhd.

³² The structure and membership of BN were somewhat different from those of the Alliance party. In the Alliance, there were two main bodies, the National Council and the Executive Council. The National Council consists of 16 representatives of UMNO, 16 representatives of the MCA, and 6 representatives of the MIC. The Executive Council consists of The Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General, and twelve other representatives elected from among the

That is why the BN is an ideal form of Government for this country. Almost all races are represented in the coalition. Everyone has a place, whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim, a Bumiputera or a non-Bumiputera (*New Straits Times*, 5 April 1986).

The rationale behind this regulation is to ensure that;

1. every party felt comfortable in any meeting or discussion because none felt small.
2. they each had equality in status and voice in the BN.

With regards to this, the component parties of the BN, regardless of its membership size, need not feel inferior, but instead should stand proud as a member of the BN. If a component party were to act alone, then that party would feel inferior and pressured when the other parties, including its member components, criticised its actions. This would indirectly create disharmony in the relationships within the BN and can lead to its break-up.

3.3.2.3. Confidentiality

All discussions at the Supreme Council of the BN are confidential (Means, 1983:47). This meant that every issue and demand discussed, such as on seat allocation in elections, Exco membership and the issue of education, cannot be mentioned outside the meeting without discretion. This is important as a measure to preserve inter-party relationships and to promote mutual trust and cooperation. As such, each party representative in the BN is given a mandate to discuss any matter arising without fear,

members of the National Council, out of which UMNO has five, the MCA 5 and the MIC two representatives. At state level, the State Alliance Liaison Committee consists of 6 members each from UMNO and the MCA, and 3 members from the MIC.

provided it is for the purpose of overall national development. In the absence of such condition, it is feared that the freedom of speech outside the party would cripple the BN since any dissatisfaction or weakness expressed during the meeting would be freely mentioned and this could offend the other component parties. This would, in turn, sour relationships between one another, leading to the collapse of the party.

In addition, the level of confidentiality is evident. In the event that any member party ceases to be a member of the BN or that any of its representatives withdraws from his/her party thus vacating his/her seat in the Supreme Council or any other committee, then such a party or representative shall be obliged to return to the Secretary-General, all documents received by the party or its representatives from the Chairman, the Secretary-General or the Treasurer-General during his/her tenure of office. A written undertaking to this effect shall be given by any other individual member of the Supreme Council to the Secretary-General upon his or her election, co-option or appointment of office. The concept adopted by the BN is indeed different from the coalition concept of the other parties in Malaysia³³, where establishment is done based on prior cooperation and not during elections. These three principles or guidelines in regulating conflict management in the BN make every component party feel comfortable enough to cooperate with one another.

³³ The opposition parties in Malaysia also often formed coalitions among themselves, especially each time an election was held. Among the opposition's coalitions are Barisan Sosialis (1957-1965), Malaysian Solidarity Convention (1965), Barisan Rakyat (1974-1982), Harakah Keadilan Rakyat - HAK (1986-1988), Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (1989-1996), and Gagasan Rakyat (1990-now). These coalitions mostly did not last long due to factors of ideology, leadership and finance. See Ahmad Atory Hussein (1997).

3.4 The Barisan Nasional and Elections

Through the BN, this political coalition was proven to be most effective and this was clearly evident in the continuous capture of two-thirds majority in parliament, which indirectly gave the BN ruling power in Malaysia for 25 years (see table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Results of Parliamentary Elections, 1974-1999

Year	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1995	1999
Barisan Nasional	135	130	132	148	127	163	148
PAS*		5	5	1	7	7	27
DAP	9	16	9	24	20	9	10
Keadilan							5
Semangat 46					8	6	
SCA		1					
SNAP	9						
Pekemas	1						
PBS					14	8	3
Independent		2	8	4	4		
Total	154	154	154	177	180	190	193

*PAS was a member party of BN in the 1974 general election

Source: a). Data 1974 - 1990: *Election in Malaysia: A Handbook of Fact and Figures on The Elections 1955-1990*. 1994. NSTP Research and Information Services. Kuala Lumpur. New Strait Times (M) Berhad
b). Data 1995-1999: Yusof Khan. (2002). *Nostalgia Pilihanraya 1955-1999*. Pulau Pinang: Butterworth

The details of the BN's achievements by component party are shown in table 3.3, which clearly shows that UMNO continued to be its pillar of the strength, dominating a large number of seats in Parliament. This is followed by the MCA and Gerakan. The MIC, although allocated a smaller number of seats, often achieved 100 percent successes.

Table 3.3: Results of Parliamentary Elections by Component Party of the Barisan Nasional in Peninsular Malaysia

	UMNO	MCA	Gerakan	MIC	PAS/Berjasa/ Hamim	PPP	Total
1974	61	23	8	4	14	4	114
1978	74	27	6	4	1	1	114
1982	73	28	7	4	2	-	114
1986	84	32	9	6	2	-	133
1990	85	33	9	6	-	-	133
1995	92	35	10	7	-	-	144
1999	92	35	10	7	-	-	144

Source : a). 1955 to 1982: Hussein Mohammed. (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari , p. 24.
b). Data 1995-1999: Yusof Khan. (2002). *Nostalgia Pilihanraya 1955-1999*. Pulau Pinang. Butterworth

When studied based on vote count, the performance of the BN is indeed remarkable, since it managed to gather the people's trust through elections by obtaining an average of 59.3 percent of the popular vote (see table 3.4). The most impressive victory achieved was in the 1995 general election under the leadership of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, in which it garnered 65.2 percent of the popular vote. Its weakest performance was in the 1990 general election, winning only 53.4 percent of the popular vote.

Table 3.4: Seats and Votes Won by the Barisan Nasional in Parliamentary (Dewan Rakyat) Elections

Year	No. of seat Won	Total Seats	Seats (%)	Popular Votes (%)	Difference (%)
1959	74	104	71.2	51.7	19.5
1964	89	104	85.6	58.5	27.1
1969	85	144	66.0	49.3	16.7
1974	135	154	87.7	60.7	27.0
1978	130	154	84.4	57.2	27.2
1982	132	154	85.7	60.5	25.2

1986	148	177	83.6	55.8	27.8
1990	127	180	70.6	53.4	17.2
1995	162	192	84.4	65.2	19.2
1999	148	193	76.7	56.5	20.2

Source: Funston J. (2000). 'Malaysia's Tenth Elections: Status Quo, Reformation or Islamization?', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 22(1). p.49

Meanwhile, at the State Legislative Assembly level, the BN obtained an overall average of 82.8 percent of the seats allocated to the states (table 3.5). The most brilliant performance by the BN was in the 1974 election, with 91.3 percent State Legislative Assembly seats won, whereas the lowest was in the 1990 election with only 70.5 percent³⁴.

Table 3.5: Votes Won by the Barisan Nasional in the House of Representatives, 1974-2004

Year of Election	% seats in the House of Representatives
1974	91.3
1978	82.5
1982	86.8
1986	83.6
1990	70.5
1995	84.3
1999	77.2
2004	86.3

Source: a). Data 1974-1999: *Sunday Star*. 10 June 2001 p.22

b). Data 2004: Data 2004: *Gerakan Bulletin* June 2004. Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia. Jutaprint, Penang. p. 8

³⁴ The 1974 election saw the Barisan Nasional competing for the first time as the umbrella for 9 political parties. In Peninsular Malaysia, the Barisan Nasional had to face only two opposition parties, namely the DAP and Pekemas. The landside began on nomination day when 47 parliamentary candidates and 43 state candidates from the Barisan Nasional were returned unopposed. See Mauzy (1983). The 1990 election saw stiff competition between the BN and several coalitions among the opposition, such as the Gagasan Rakyat (the coalition between the Semangat 46, the DAP, the PRM, the AMIPF and KIMMA) and the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (Semangat 46 and PAS). The election results at State Legislative Council level showed that both these coalitions succeeded in taking Kelantan from the BN (Zakry Abadi, 1990; Ahmad Atory Hussein, 1997).

Throughout the history of the State Legislative Assembly in Malaysia, only three states were ever dominated and subsequently ruled by opposition parties, namely Kelantan, Terengganu and Sabah (see table 3.6). All the other states have always been controlled by the BN.

Table 3.6: States dominated by the opposition, 1974-1999

Year of Election	State	The ruling political party
1985	Sabah	PBS
1990	Sabah / Kelantan	PBS / PAS
1995	Kelantan	PAS
1999	Kelantan / Terengganu	PAS
2004	Kelantan	PAS

Source: Election Commission., (1988,1992, 1997, 2002), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1990,1995,1999*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur and Scorecard Special Election 2004: *New Strait Times*. 19 March 2004 p. 4.

According to Muhammad Rahmat, the success achieved by the BN undeniably resulted from the integrity of the coalition among its members. It is also owing to the ability of the BN to manage the internal conflicts that occurred within its ranks and to inspire each party to work hand-in-hand to ensure success for the BN in every election. Another important contribution towards the strength and harmony in the BN is the presence of basic principles that guarantee unbiased justice and equality to every component party. However, in actual fact, several factors, direct or indirect, need to be considered in evaluating the absolute victory achieved by the BN. Among them is the implementation of political control, which gave the BN a broad scope in defending its excellent record in every election.

Political control here refers to the possession of Emergency Powers under article 150 of the Malaysian Constitution, the power of Detention without Trial under Article 149 of the Internal Security Act (ISA), The Sedition Act and the Official Secrets Act

as well as the controls in Press and other Publications (Crouch, 1996:77-90). Apart from these, other elements that also need to be considered include:

1. Campaign Period

The campaign period was significantly shortened to 15 days during the 1974 general election. This was the result of the 1969 general election experience, when the lengthy campaign period of 34 days allowed for a myriad of issues to be brought forth leading to the emergence of communal sentiments, among which triggered the incident of 13 May 1969 (Mauzy, 1983:36). For the 1986 general election, the campaign period was further shortened to 9 days. This reduction was a disappointing blow to the opposition parties, which required a longer campaign period to win voters³⁵. The constraints in spreading their propaganda and disseminating their party objectives are further compounded when public gathering, which was the traditional platform for communicating such information, was no longer permitted in the 1978 general election. For the ruling party, neither the reduction in campaign period nor the abolishment of public gatherings affected its ability to campaign in its capacity as the authority of the government administrative structure and the vast communication media.

2. Electoral gerrymandering

The process and conduct of elections themselves is also often highly dubious. A Commonwealth observer group somewhat reluctantly invited to oversee the 1990 general elections concluded that the conduct of elections in the country was 'free but

³⁵ Interview with Sanusi Osman, the former secretary of Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) for 18 years before its dissolution and merger with Parti Keadilan Nasional in 2004.

not fair'. Regular constitutional redelineation exercises, carried out by the nominally independent Elections Committee, invariably favour the regime, including increasing over-representation in traditional government strongholds, such as Johor and Sarawak (Lim, 2004:4). In the 1999 general election, for instance, the government won more than three-quarters of the seats on a popular vote of barely fifty-six percent. Actual fraud during elections has also been widely alleged, though such claims are hard to substantiate. Former Sabah Chief Minister Joseph Pairin Kitingan has claimed that 'pollution in the electoral role' was the main reason for the BN's continued success in the state.

3. Money politics

Initially, under the guise of the 1971 promulgated New Economic Policy, the regime developed fearsome machinery for dispensing patronage to supporters of the government. This 'money politics' involved both state and private funds – the BN parties controlled between them a massive corporate empire – and operates on the individual, corporate and even state levels. The abuse of public funds is often unabashed. In the run up to the March 1999 state elections in Sabah, for instance, it was declared that the federal government 'would not be generous (with funding) if the state was under an opposition government' (*The Star*, 11 March 1999). A similar threat was made in relation to Kedah, one of the states that PAS had the greatest possibility of capturing at the 1999 general election.

3.5 Conclusion

The BN has characterised the Malaysian political image since its inception in 1974 by winning all elections. Its ability to capture a two-thirds majority of Parliamentary seats during these 25 years (1974-1999) is a victory rarely achieved by any ruling political party in the world. Even though this success was made possible by the various political mechanisms as discussed, such as the existence of political control, yet it cannot be denied that the BN, which is regarded as not much different from the original Alliance party, has its own strength to which its successes owe. Among them is the adoption of its unique principles in safeguarding the coalition among the parties, such as the spirit of solidarity as well as the practice of the principles of decision making, representativeness and confidentiality. Within this context, the BN could not avoid facing the various challenges and conflicts among its component parties. Hence in subsequent chapters, attention will be focussed on how the BN faced those conflicts, especially those on the distribution of seats and cabinet posts determined after each election.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCEDURE OF SEAT DISTRIBUTION IN BARISAN NASIONAL

4.1 Introduction

The official establishment of the BN in 1974 opened a new political chapter in Malaysia. The compromise that brought about an overall alliance provided more room for political parties to combine under one umbrella: BN. The uniqueness of this coalition when compared with the Alliance Party is that it not only includes the alliance of main parties representing the Malays, Chinese and Indians, but it also encompasses a consensus among the various parties representing common ethnic groups, such as Gerakan (Chinese) and PAS (Malay), as well as other ethnic groups such as Kadazan (Sabah), Dayak and Melanau (Sarawak)¹.

This union of parties with diverse racial backgrounds makes conflict inevitable in the BN. Based on his experience in overseeing the BN as Secretary General for seven years, Mohammad Rahmat² explained that there are generally two categories of conflict faced by the party.

1. The first is silent negotiation and bargaining in conflict management: because it is not done in writing. Specifically, it was an understanding that the Malays would have control over politics and government while

¹ Ethnic groups Party from Sabah: United Pasok Momongun Kadazandusun Organisation (UPKO) - and From Sarawak - Parti Pesaka Buniputera Bersatu (PBB) - Melanau, and Parti Bangsa Dayak Sarawak - Dayak.

² Interview with Mohammad Rahmat. See appendix A.

the non-Malays, especially the Chinese, would be allowed a free hand in the economic and commercial spheres. An example of this is in determining the allocation of seats in a general election and determining cabinet posts. This matter had to be settled through meetings and negotiations among the component parties.

2. The second part of the bargaining is explicitly stated in the constitution.

Example: Citizenship, Language, Special Privileges of the Malays, New Economic Policies (NEP). For these issues, the BN's function is to manage and coordinate to obtain a consensus before they are tabled or approved by a higher authority, the Parliament³.

In line with the objectives of this study, the review of the discussion on conflict management is related to the conflict of seat allocation in general elections and the conflict in the Appointment of State Executive Council member in Penang and Kedah. Hence, the discussion in this chapter is focused on the procedure of determining the distribution of electoral seats among the component parties of the BN.

4.2 Seat Allocation

Seat allocation is an important element in determining the position and influence of a party in the BN. In general, the stronger the position of a party, the more likely it is to secure the number of seats it desires. As such, the issue of seat allocation has always been a principal element of conflict in the BN, particularly at every election,

³ Interview with Muhammad Rahmat. See appendix A.

when each party will make every effort to increase its number of seats. Seat allocation in the BN is difficult business at the best of times. In an election which promises to be test, there are bound to be coalition partners who will want more at someone else's expense (*Sunday Star*, 8 June 1986:8). According to Ghafar Baba⁴ who had been involved in the BN's seat distribution process for 25 years, demands from every party for more seats in elections are common. This is due to several factors;

1. General elections inevitably become yardsticks to measure a party's capability and image. The number of seats obtained is seen as a symbol of the party's influence and strength. For example, the MCA always obtains a bigger allocation of seats than Gerakan at every general election. This implied that the MCA is overall stronger and more influential than Gerakan. Within this context, membership seniority in the BN is not an issue, more important is the current ability of the party to prove that it can garner the support of voters in order to secure the seat that it is allocated.
2. The more seats a party is allocated, the better their chances of getting a cabinet post.
3. A large allocation of seats would also often give recognition to the party as the representative of a particular ethnic group. This would make it easier for the party to voice their opinions and suggestions, even in bargaining.

This was more apparent when seats were increased following the re-delineation exercise at least every eight years. If every one wants more seats, some or more

⁴ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

likely all, will be disappointed to some extent. Was the coalition in danger of coming apart?. Not really. It is one thing for party leaders to talk tough. To overcome this problem, the BN adopted a core formula to be adhered to by each of its component parties to maintain harmony and stability in the party.

In general, Mohammad Rahmat and Yacob Mohammad⁵, who was the BN's executive secretary, agreed that the initial process of allocating seats among the component parties begins about two years prior to each general election. This lengthy period ensures that planning and strategies as well as decisions are accurate and would ensure the victory of the BN. There are three procedures in determining seat allocation, which required cooperation between the BN at state and central levels.

1. At the first stage, the state government will prepare a proposal on seat allocation in their respective states, which is then submitted to the BN headquarters.
2. In the second stage, the BN headquarters is responsible for the overall documentation and coordination of seat allocation. At both the state and national levels of the BN, the two main elements that must be focused on in allocating the seats are the distribution of electorates by constituency and the performance of each party at elections.
3. The third stage involves the submission of the results to the Chairman of the state BN for further fine-tuning and review, and for the purpose of identifying eligible candidates in a given constituency, based on the share of agreed parties.

⁵ Interview with Muhammad Rahmat and Yaacob Muhammad. See appendix A.

The steps for determining seat allocation among the component parties of the BN are detailed as follows:

4.2.1 Stage One

As previously stated, at this stage, the state BN is responsible for initiating and preparing the proposal for seat distribution in their respective states. A committee is established, helmed by the state BN Chairman with members comprising the chairman of each component party. The principal basis in determining the number of seats for the component parties in the BN is the percentage of registered voters⁶ by race in the constituency⁷. This means that the number of registered voters in a constituency is an important benchmark in determining the parties and candidates standing for election. The three categories usually used as benchmarks are the Malay-majority constituencies, the Chinese-majority constituencies and the mixed voter constituencies (between the Malays, Chinese and Indians).

Therefore, the constituency with the majority number of voters from a particular ethnic group will usually be given to that ethnic group. The majority number of

⁶ Registered Voters by Race in Peninsular Malaysia, 1955 – 1986.

Election Years	Total Voters	Malays (%)	Chinese (%)	Indians (%)
1955	1 280 865	84.5	11.2	4.6
1959	2 144 338	56.8	35.9	7.4
1964	2 763 007	54.1	38.0	7.9
1969	3 302 187	55.7	36.3	8.0
1974	3 523 687	57.9	34.5	7.6
1978	4 323 516	55.6	36.5	7.9
1982	5,210,000	56.0	36.0	8.0
1986	5,869,000	55.0	36.0	8.0

Source: Election Commission., (1961), (1967), (1972), (1977), (1981), (1984) and (1988).

⁷ The implementation of the electoral system in Malaysia, which is the "Simple, First-past-the-post" system, required the re-delineation of constituencies as a main criterion. An important characteristic of the electoral system was based on the formula where parliamentary seats will be obtained by candidates who received the highest number of votes in his/her constituency. A difference in electoral systems will create a difference in the majority system.

voters that is taken as a basis is more than 50.0 percent for any race⁸. This means that in principal, if a constituency has a majority of Malay voters, then it is the candidate and the party from the Malay component that will be standing for election in that constituency. The case is the same for other races. In addition, according to Dr. Khoo Tsu Koon, who handled the system of seat distribution in Penang (1995 and 1999 general election) and Osman Arof, who was responsible in conducting the general election in Kedah for three terms (1990, 1995 and 1999), each state will also assess the performance of component parties standing for election in their respective states. Next, the number of state-level seats is usually proposed by the BN Chairman of each state⁹. This proposal is then submitted to the highest level of management in the BN, chaired by the Chairman of the BN.

3.2.2 Stage Two

At this second stage, initial data and reports submitted by the state BN are closely scrutinised to facilitate and expedite the process of seat distribution among the component parties of the BN. At this level, there are three key elements, or primary references, on which the BN headquarters depends on in assisting its decision-making process. Muhammad Rahmat and Yaacub Muhammad¹⁰ mentioned that at this second level, the BN would make a decision after reviewing the strengths and weaknesses based on:

⁸ However, this wasn't the actual situation. In states with an extremely high percentage of a certain race, such as in Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu where Malay voters exceed 75 percent, compromise is made to enable these areas to be represented by other races.

⁹ Interview with Osman Arof, Former Kedah Chief Minister (1984-1995) and Former Chairman of the Kedah BN (1985-1996). Also the Chairman of Kedah UMNO Liaison Committee for 11 years. and Dr. Khoo Tsu Koon, Penang Chief Minister from 1995 to present. Also currently the Chairman of the Penang BN. He also holds the post of Vice President of Gerakan from 1995 to present. See appendix A.

¹⁰ Interview Muhammad Rahmat and Yaacub Muhammad. See appendix A.

1. A review of the distribution of electorates by constituency
 - a. Assessment by zone
 - b. An analysis of nationwide voter distribution
2. The performance of every party in each election
3. Quota

4.2.2.1 A review of the distribution of electorates by constituency

Before the allocation of seats among the component parties of the BN is finalised, two approaches involving a process of review are applied for each constituency, and these are an analysis by zone and an analysis of nationwide voter distribution.

a. Assessment by Zone

At this level, before the overall decision is made, it is customary for the BN to perform a review in greater detail, based on the approach by zone. There are three state zones established:

i. Zone one

Falling in the first zone are states with a Malay majority, consisting of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang¹¹. In these states, the population of Chinese and Indian voters is small. In other words, a large number of registered voters in the parliamentary areas of these states are Malays. Such a situation can be described by the voter data of the 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections.

¹¹ Where each state has a Malay population of 79.4% (Perlis), 70.7% (Kedah), 92.8% (Kelantan), 93.9% (Terengganu) and 61.2% (Pahang). See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1990, 1995 and 1999*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

Table 4.1: Distribution by Voter majority in Parliamentary areas of Zone One

State	1990 Election			1995 Election			1999 Election		
	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M
Perlis	2	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-
Kedah	14	-	-	14	-	1	15	-	-
Kelantan	13	-	-	14	-	-	14	-	-
Terengganu	8	-	-	8	-	-	8	-	-
Pahang	8	1	1	9	-	2	9	-	2
Total	45	1	1	48	-	3	49	-	2
Total Percentage (%)	96.0	2.0	2.0	94.0	-	6.0	96.0	-	4.0

MM - Malay majority constituencies, CM - Chinese majority constituencies, M - Mixed constituencies.

Source: *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Table 4.2: Distribution by Voter majority in State Assembly areas of Zone One

State	1990 Election			1995 Election			1999 Election		
	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M
Perlis	13	-	-	14	-	1	14	-	1
Kedah	25	1	2	30	2	4	31	1	4
Kelantan	39	-	-	43	-	-	43	-	-
Terengganu	32	-	-	32	-	-	32	-	-
Pahang	26	4	3	31	5	2	30	6	2
Total	135	5	5	150	7	7	150	7	7
Total Percentage (%)	93.0	3.5	3.5	92.0	4.0	4.0	92.0	4.0	4.0

MM - Malay majority constituencies, CM - Chinese majority constituencies, M - Mixed constituencies.

Source: *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Table 4.1 shows that an average of 95.0 percent of Parliamentary constituencies in all five states of Zone One were dominated by Malay voters. Only during the 1990 election was there one Chinese majority seat in Pahang. However, in the next election, this became a mixed constituency. Based on table 4.2, for State Assembly constituencies, more than 92.0 percent was controlled by Malay voters, with the Chinese controlling around four percent. The case is the same for mixed constituencies.

ii. *Zone Two*

The second zone consists of states in which the number of non-Malays exceeds the Malays. This includes the states of Penang (67.6 percent), Perak (56.8 percent), Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan (67.6 percent).

Table 4.3: Distribution by Voter majority in Parliamentary areas of Zone Two

State	Election 1990			Election 1995			Election 1999		
	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M
Penang	4	6	1	4	6	1	4	5	2
Perak	10	7	6	12	6	5	11	6	6
Selangor	9	1	4	10	4	3	9	2	6
Wilayah Persekutuan	2	4	1	4	5	1	4	4	2
Total	25	18	11	30	21	10	28	17	16
Total Per cent	46.0	33.0	20.0	49.0	34.0	17.0	46.0	28.0	26.0

MM - Malay majority constituencies, CM - Chinese majority constituencies, M - Mixed constituencies.

Source: *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Table 4.4: Distribution by Voter majority in State Assembly areas of Zone Two

State	Election 1990			Election 1995			Election 1999		
	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M
Penang	16	15	2	12	17	4	12	19	2
Perak	29	15	2	34	16	2	35	15	2
Selangor	28	5	7	32	9	7	33	10	5
Wilayah Persekutuan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	73	35	11	78	42	13	80	44	9
Total Per cent	61.0	29.0	10.0	59.0	31.0	10.0	60.0	33.0	7.0

MM - Malay majority constituencies, CM - Chinese majority constituencies, M - Mixed constituencies.

Source: *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

In tandem with the population distribution, only about 46.0 percent of constituencies are Malay majorities at the parliamentary level, while Chinese majority areas made up 33.0 percent in the 1990 election, 34.0 percent in the 1995 election, and dropped to 28.0 percent in the 1999 election (see table 4.3). As shown in table 4.4, of the State Assembly constituencies, 59.0 percent were Malay majority areas in the 1995 election and this increased to 60.0 percent in 1999. Non-Malay areas make up only around 29.0 percent to 33.0 percent.

iii. Zone Three

The third zone is termed as a mixed state because the percentage differences between the two main ethnic groups of Malays and Chinese are relatively small. This includes the states of Johor with 53.4 percent Malays, Malacca (51.8 percent) and Negeri Sembilan (50.4 percent). The final results of states by racial majority are around 65.0 percent Malay majority areas and 16.0 percent Chinese majorities at parliamentary seat level (see table 4.5). As for State Assembly, the percentage of Malay majority areas was higher especially in the 1999 election, while the Chinese majority areas increased from 19.0 percent in the 1990 election to 24.0 percent in the 1999 election (see table 4. 6).

**Table 4.5: Distribution by Voter majority in Parliamentary areas of
Zone Three**

State	Election 1990			Election 1995			Election 1999		
	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M
Malacca	4	1	-	4	-	1	4	1	-
Negeri Sembilan	5	1	1	4	1	2	4	1	2
Johor	11	3	4	12	3	5	13	4	3
Total	20	5	5	20	4	8	21	6	5
Total Per cent	66.0	16.0	16.0	62.0	13.0	25.0	65.0	19.0	16.0

MM - Malay majority constituencies, CM - Chinese majority constituencies, M - Mixed constituencies.

Source: *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

**Table 4.6: Distribution by Voter majority in State Assembly areas of
Zone Three**

State	Election 1990			Election 1995			Election 1999		
	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M	MM	CM	M
Malacca	13	4	3	17	5	3	18	5	2
Negeri Sembilan	18	5	5	22	7	3	21	9	2
Johor	23	7	6	28	8	4	29	9	2
Total	54	16	14	67	20	10	68	23	6
Total Per cent	64.0	19.0	17.0	69.0	21.0	10.0	70.0	24.0	6.0

MM - Malay majority constituencies, CM - Chinese majority constituencies, M - Mixed constituencies.

Source: *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

According to Mohammad Rahmat¹², the streamlining by zone is considered important by the BN in allocating seats because each zone has a different political approach and history.

Zone One, whose population is largely Malay, places greater emphasis on practicing religion in politics. Here, PAS is the opposition party that gives fierce competition to the BN in every election. Other opposition political parties, such as PRM and DAP, face difficulty in gaining support here. Kelantan and Terengganu had both once been

¹² Interview with Mohammad Rahmat. See appendix A.

under the administration of the opposition party PAS. Kelantan fell under PAS in the 1959, 1964, 1969, 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections, and Terengganu in 1964 and 1999. From 1974 to 1999, PAS in Kelantan succeeded in securing 32.0 percent of seats at Parliamentary level and 41.0 percent at State Assembly level, with 21.0 percent (Parliament) and 23.0 percent (State Assembly) in Terengganu. Meanwhile, in Kedah, the challenge by PAS caused several State Assembly (11.4 percent) and Parliamentary (12.6 percent) seats to be captured (In Won Hwang, 2003:324-325) (see table 4.7). In Perlis and Pahang, although the BN has a strong position, precautions are always taken. The BN is particularly careful with seat allocation in these states to ensure that it does not suffer defeat and loss of ruling power.

Table 4.7: The Number Of Parliamentary And State Assembly Seats Won By The Barisan Nasional and PAS in Zone One elections, 1974 - 1999.

		Kelantan		Terengganu		Perlis		Kedah		Pahang	
		BN	PAS	BN	PAS	BN	PAS	BN	PAS	BN	PAS
1974	P	12	-	7	-	2	-	13	-	8	-
	State	36	-	27	-	12	-	24	-	32	-
1978	P	10	2	7	-	2	-	11	2	8	-
	State	34	2	28	-	12	-	19	7	32	-
1982	P	8	4	7	-	2	-	12	1	8	-
	State	26	10	26	6	11	1	24	2	31	1
1986	P	12	1	8	-	2	-	14	-	10	-
	State	29	10	30	2	14	-	25	3	32	-
1990	P	-	6	6	1	2	-	14	-	10	-
	State	-	24	23	7	14	-	26	1	31	-
1995	P	2	6	7	1	3	-	15	-	11	-
	State	7	24	25	7	15	-	34	2	37	-
1999	P	1	10	-	7	3	-	7	8	11	-
	State	2	41	5	27	12	3	24	12	30	6
Average	P	50.0	32.0	79.0	21.0	100.0	0.0	88.6	11.4	100.0	0.0
(%)	S	50.0	41.0	77.0	23.0	96.0	4.0	85.0	12.6	94.5	3.0

P - Parliamentary seats, State - State Assembly seats

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections*. 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1992, 1995, 1999. National Printing Department.

Based on table 4.8, opposition parties, such as DAP, easily enjoyed voter support at both the Parliament and State Assembly levels in Zone Two, where voter majority is made up of non-Malays (Cruoch 1996:107). In the 1969 election, Penang was captured by Gerakan (before forming alliance with the BN), whilst in Perak and Selangor, the DAP's success was so significant that the Alliance had difficulty in forming the state government. This became a lesson for the BN to place greater attention in contesting for elections in the central zone, where economic development is far more advanced than in other zones. The allocation of seats with component parties in mind is necessary in ensuring the continuity of power in these states.

In this situation, Muhammad Rahmat said that negotiations and demand for seats in Penang, Perak and Selangor among the component parties of the BN took place without fail in every election. The situation sometimes became somewhat complex when demands clashed between the component parties, usually between the MCA and Gerakan. Nevertheless, matters were always resolved and a fair allocation of seats between component parties was able to be achieved, which indirectly helped the BN maintain power in Penang, Perak and Selangor in elections from 1974 to 1999.

Table 4.8: The number of Parliamentary and State Assembly seats won by the Barisan Nasional and PAS in Zone Two elections, 1974 – 1999.

		Penang		Perak		Selangor		Wilayah Persekutuan	
		BN	DAP	BN	DAP	BN	DAP	BN	DAP
1974	P	9	-	17	4	10	1	2	3
	State	23	1	31	11	30	1		
1978	P	5	4	17	4	10	1	2	3
	State	19	6	32	9	29	3		
1982	P	7	2	21	-	11	-	2	3
	State	25	2	38	4	31	1		
1986	P	5	6	19	4	12	2	3	4
	State	23	10	33	13	37	5		
1990	P	5	6	19	4	11	3	3	4
	State	19	14	33	13	35	6		
1995	P	8	3	23	-	17	-	6	4
	State	32	1	51	1	45	3		
1999	P	6	4	20	1	17	-	6	4
	State	30	1	45	4	41	1		
Average P		63.0	35.0	88.0	11.0	93.0	7.0	49.0	51.0
(%) S		80.0	16.0	82.0	17.0	89.0	7.0		

P - Parliamentary seats, State - State Assembly seats

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections*. 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1992, 1995, 1999. National Printing Department.

Although the trend in Zone Three shows that voter majority is rather balanced, this is one of the zones in which the BN is politically the strongest. In Johor, 99.0 and 97.0 percent respectively at Parliamentary and State Assembly levels were controlled by the BN from 1974 to 1999. Johor also obtained a hundred percent victory in the 1982, 1995 and 1999 elections (*Berita Harian*, 25 August 1994:2) As for Malacca and Negeri Sembilan, the competition from DAP caused the BN to be more careful in seat allocation exercises (see table 4.9).

Table 4.9: The number of Parliamentary and State Assembly seats won by the Barisan Nasional and PAS in Zone Three elections, 1974 – 1999.

		Johor		Malacca		Negeri Sembilan	
		BN	DAP	BN	DAP	BN	DAP
1974	P	16	-	3	1	6	1
	State	31	1	16	4	21	3
1978	P	15	1	3	1	5	1
	State	31	1	16	4	21	3
1982	P	16	-	3	1	6	-
	State	32	-	18	2	22	2
1986	P	18	-	4	1	5	2
	State	35	1	17	3	24	4
1990	P	18	-	4	1	4	1
	State	31	4	18	2	17	3
1995	P	20	-	4	1	7	-
	State	40	-	22	3	30	2
1999	P	20	-	4	1	7	-
	State	40	-	21	4	32	-
Average	P	99.0	1.0	78.0	22.0	87.0	13.0
(%)	S	97.0	3.0	85.0	15.0	82.0	8.0

P - Parliamentary seats, State - State Assembly seats

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections. 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1992, 1995, 1999.* National Printing Department.

The analysis by zone is important in helping the BN study its strengths and weaknesses, and also those of the opposition. This is an important measure before determining which component party will compete in a constituency. In reality, most of the opposition parties in Malaysia still do not possess the all-round strength needed to compete with the BN. The capabilities of the opposition are still limited and focused only in a particular area. This forced the BN to study its seat allocation strategies by zone to ensure that it is better prepared to face the elections.

b. An analysis of nationwide voter distribution

By the spirit of consociation and the concept of power sharing that are common practices in the BN, after the study by zone, seat allocation was analysed to ensure a good balance between the overall allocation of seats and the population distribution by race. Based on the formula of voter majority, the number of Malay majority constituencies exceeded those of other races by far, i.e. three quarters at both parliamentary and State Assembly levels. This can be seen in table 4.10. In the elections from 1974 to 1999, 68.0 percent of parliamentary constituencies were Malay majorities, 18.0 percent Chinese majorities and the remaining 13.0 percent had mixed voters of Malays, Chinese and Indians. The control by the Malay electorates is more apparent when analysed at the State Assembly level. On average, 75.0 percent of seats allocated were controlled by Malay voters, whilst Chinese voters only made up 17.0 percent and mixed voters eight percent.

Table 4.10: Ratio of Parliamentary and State Assembly seats by voter majority in Peninsular Malaysia, 1974 – 1999

	Parliamentary seats by racial majority			State Assembly seats by racial majority		
	Malay majority seats (%)	Chinese Majority seats (%)	Mixed Seats (%)	Malay majority seats (%)	Chinese Majority seats (%)	Mixed Seats (%)
1974	80 (70.0)	21 (18.0)	13 (12.0)	234 (75.0)	50 (16.0)	24 (8.0)
1978	79 (69.0)	22 (19.0)	13 (12.0)	234 (75.0)	51 (16.0)	25 (8.0)
1982	77 (68.0)	22 (19.0)	15 (13.0)	232 (74.0)	52 (17.0)	28 (9.0)
1986	92 (70.0)	26 (20.0)	14 (10.0)	261 (75.0)	61 (17.0)	29 (8.0)
1990	90 (68.0)	24 (18.0)	18 (14.0)	264 (75.0)	56 (18.0)	31 (7.0)
1995	98 (68.0)	26 (18.0)	20 (14.0)	295 (75.0)	69 (18.0)	30 (7.0)
1999	98 (68.0)	23 (16.0)	23 (16.0)	295 (75.0)	69 (18.0)	30 (7.0)

Note: a. Malay majority seats refer to areas in which more than 50 percent of the voters are Malays.
b. Chinese majority seats refer to areas in which that more than 50 percent of the voters are Chinese.

- c. Mixed seats refer to areas with a mixed voter distribution, i.e. comprising Malays, Chinese and Indians (with no single ethnic community making up a majority of more than 50 percent)

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982 and 1986*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

If this basis were applied as it is, dissatisfaction would eventually arise among the other races. This situation would lead to political instability, introducing the possibility of interracial conflict. It is here that demand and negotiation become the pillars of strength among the component parties of the BN. Based on this fact, seat allocation in Malay majority and mixed voter constituencies were done at every election between the Chinese component parties of the BN. Table 4.11 shows the allocation implemented among the component parties of the BN from 1974 to 1999.

Table 4.11: Parliamentary and State Assembly seat allocation of the Barisan Nasional based on voter majority in Peninsular Malaysia, 1974 – 1999

	Parliamentary seats by racial majority			State Assembly seats by racial majority		
	Allocation of seats to the Malays in Malay majority constituencies (%)	Allocation of seats to the Chinese in Chinese majority constituencies (%)	Allocation of seats to the Indians in mixed voter constituencies (%)	Allocation of seats to the Malays in Malay majority constituencies (%)	Allocation of seats to the Chinese in Chinese majority constituencies (%)	Allocation of seats to the Indians in mixed voter constituencies (%)
1974	69 (66.0)	30 (29.0)	4 (4.0)	221 (71.0)	74 (24.0)	17 (5.0)
1978	75 (66.0)	34 (30.0)	5 (4.0)	191 (67.0)	78 (28.0)	15 (5.0)
1982	75 (66.0)	35 (30.0)	4 (4.0)	232 (74.0)	52 (17.0)	28 (9.0)
1986	84 (64.0)	41 (31.0)	7 (5.0)	240 (68.0)	91 (26.0)	13 (6.0)
1990	86 (65.0)	41 (31.0)	6 (4.0)	246 (71.0)	85 (25.0)	13 (4.0)
1995	92 (64.0)	45 (31.0)	7 (5.0)	275 (70.0)	102 (26.0)	15 (4.0)
1999	92 (64.0)	45 (31.0)	7 (5.0)	275 (70.0)	102 (26.0)	15 (4.0)

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

At Parliamentary level, an average of five Malay majority seats were handed over to the MCA or Gerakan in elections from 1974 to 1999 (table 4.12). The highest number was during the 1986 election, i.e. a total of eight seats. For mixed voter constituencies, an average of 10 seats was allocated to the Chinese, the highest number being during the 1999 election. The party was also given seats in the mixed voter category.

Table 4.12: A comparison between Parliamentary seat allocation by race, based on voter majority category in each constituency, 1974 – 1999

Election	Malays (%)			Chinese (%)			Mixed (%)		
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
1974	80 (70.0)	75 (66.0)	-5	21 (18.0)	31 (27.0)	+10	13 (12.0)	8 (7.0)	-5
1978	79 (69.0)	75 (66.0)	-4	22 (19.0)	34 (30.0)	+12	13 (12.0)	5 (4.0)	-8
1982	77 (68.0)	75 (66.0)	-2	22 (19.0)	35 (30.0)	+13	15 (13.0)	4 (4.0)	-11
1986	92 (70.0)	84 (64.0)	-8	26 (20.0)	41 (31.0)	+15	14 (10.0)	7 (5.0)	-7
1990	90 (68.0)	86 (65.0)	-4	25 (18.0)	41 (31.0)	+16	18 (14.0)	6 (4.0)	-12
1995	98 (68.0)	92 (64.0)	-6	26 (18.0)	45 (31.0)	+19	20 (14.0)	7 (5.0)	-13
1999	98 (68.0)	92 (64.0)	-6	23 (16.0)	45 (31.0)	+22	23 (16.0)	7 (5.0)	-16
Average (%)	88 (68.0)	83 (64.0)	-5	24 (19.0)	39 (30.0)	+15	17 (13.0)	6 (5.0)	-10

- Note:
- Malay majority constituencies
 - Allocation of seats to the Malays in Malay majority constituencies
 - Malay majority constituencies allocated to a Chinese party
 - Chinese majority constituencies
 - Seats allocated to the Chinese
 - Total number of seats allocated to the Chinese
 - Mixed voter constituencies
 - Allocation of seats to the Indians
 - Mixed majority seats allocated to the Chinese

Meanwhile, for seats at the State Assembly level (see table 4.13), the number allocated was higher than that at parliamentary level. The average number of seats allocated to Malay majority areas was 17 while the 14 mixed seats were allocated to the MCA or party Gerakan.

Table 4.13: A comparison between the State Assembly seat allocation by race, based on voter majority category in each constituency, 1974 - 1999

Election	Malays (%)			Chinese (%)			Mixed (%)		
	a	b	c	d	e	f	G	h	i
1974	238 (75.0)	221 (71.0)	-17	50 (16.0)	74 (24.0)	+24	24 (8.0)	17 (5.0)	-7
1978	234 (75.0)	219 (70.0)	-15	52 (17.0)	78 (25.0)	+26	26 (8.0)	15 (5.0)	-11
1982	232 (74.0)	220 (70.0)	-12	52 (17.0)	80 (26.0)	+28	28 (9.0)	12 (4.0)	-16
1986	261 (75.0)	244 (68.0)	-21	61 (17.0)	91 (26.0)	+37	29 (8.0)	16 (6.0)	-16
1990	264 (75.0)	249 (71.0)	-15	56 (18.0)	90 (25.0)	+34	31 (7.0)	12 (4.0)	-19
1995	295 (75.0)	275 (70.0)	-20	69 (18.0)	102 (26.0)	+35	30 (7.0)	15 (4.0)	-15
1999	295 (75.0)	275 (70.0)	-20	69 (18.0)	102 (26.0)	+35	30 (7.0)	15 (4.0)	-15
Average (%)	260 (75.0)	243 (70.0)	-17	58 (17.0)	88 (25.0)	+31	28 (8.0)	15 (5.0)	-14

- Note:
- Malay majority constituencies
 - Allocation of seats to the Malays in Malay majority constituencies
 - Malay majority constituencies allocated to a Chinese party
 - Chinese majority constituencies
 - Seats allocated to the Chinese
 - Total number of seats allocated to the Chinese
 - Mixed voter constituencies
 - Allocation of seats to the Indians
 - Mixed majority seats allocated to the Chinese

Overall, the allocation of seats can be described through table 4.14. For Malay majority areas, an average of five parliamentary seats and 17 State Assembly seats were allocated to the MCA or Gerakan. In mixed voter constituencies, the averages were 15 parliamentary seats and 31 State Assembly seats. The seat allocation process

between component parties had indirectly closed the power gap to be in alignment with the racial profile of the population in Malaysia. At pre-allocation level, the percentage ratios by voter majority at Parliamentary level were 68.0 percent Malays: 19.0 percent Chinese: 13.0 percent mixed. Following allocation among component parties, the seat ratios contested were 65.0 percent Malays: 31.0 percent Chinese: four percent Indians. For State Assembly seats, pre-allocation ratios were 75.0 percent Malays : 17.0 percent Chinese : 8.0 percent mixed (75:17:8). After negotiations on the allocations, the ratios were 70.0 Malays : 25.0 Chinese : 5.0 percent Indians (71:26:4).

Table 4.14: Distribution of Parliamentary and State Assembly seats among the main components of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 – 1999 General Elections, based on voter majorities

Year of Election	Malay majority seats allocated to the Chinese		Mixed seats allocated to the Chinese		Total Chinese seats (from Malays and mixed seat quotas)	
	Parliament	State	Parliament	State	Parliament	State
1974	-5	-17	-5	-7	+10	+24
1978	-4	-15	-8	-11	+12	+26
1982	-2	-12	-11	-16	+13	+28
1986	-8	-21	-7	-16	+15	+37
1990	-4	-15	-12	-19	+16	+34
1995	-6	-20	-13	-15	+19	+35
1999	-6	-20	-16	-15	+22	+35
Average	-5	-17	-10	-14	+15	+31

Penang

Following the incident of 13 May 1969, Penang became a state that underwent change in political administration. Of significance is the change of power from the MCA to Gerakan, who won 16 of the 24 seats contested. Beginning from here, there

was stiff competition between Gerakan and the MCA, who fought to regain the reigns of power, and not to mention UMNO, who had always wished for the position of Chief Minister. The 1974 election had nine Parliamentary seats and 27 state level seats. Based on the data in table 4.15, an analysis by voter majority in each constituency showed that almost 52.0 percent of constituencies were controlled by Chinese voters, 37.0 percent Malays voters and 11.0 percent mixed voters. These percentages can be said to have remained unchanged, with any changes being insignificant.

The increase in Malay voter majorities in the 1982 election from 10 seats to 13 seats was due to a re-delineation exercise by the Election Commission. As a result of this revision, the two new areas that became Malay voter majority areas were Ara Rendang and Teluk Kumbar¹³. The expansion of Chinese majority areas included Kebun Bunga and Batu Lancang. The highest number of Malay voter majority areas was 14 during the 1990 election. This was owing to the change in electorates in Seberang Jaya, which was previously categorised as a mixed voter area, and Sungai Bakap, which was a Chinese majority area in the previous election. However, the increase in Malay majority seats was later reduced once more to 12 seats in the 1995 election when the total number of voters decreased, and later categorised as a mixed voter area. This involved Sungai Bakap and Bayan Lepas¹⁴. Constituencies by racial

¹³ New constituencies in the Penang State Election (six seats)

N4	Ara Rendang	80.7%	11.7%	7.6%	UMNO
N9	Perai	27.0%	48.1%	23.8%	MIC
N10	Seberang Jaya	49.3%	31.9%	18.4%	UMNO
N21	Kebun Bunga	10.3%	73.7%	13.4%	Gerakan
N27	Batu Lancang	5.1%	89.1%	5.3%	Gerakan
N32	Teluk Kumbar	66.1%	32.8%	0.9%	UMNO

¹⁴ Sungai Bakap: 1990 Election - Malays 51.7%, Chinese 36.5% and Indians 11.8%, 1995 Election - Malays 48.5%, Chinese 36.3% and Indians 15.2%. Bayan Lepas: 1990 Election - Malays 55.5%, Chinese 37.2% and Indians 7.3%, 1995 Election - Malays 48.9%, Chinese 42.7% and Indians 7.9%. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1990, 1995 and 1999*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

majority at parliamentary level did not change except when re-delineation of constituencies were made in the 1986 election, whereby the increase in seats from nine to eleven had increased the Malay majority seats by one and created one mixed voter seat.

Table 4.15: The proportion of Parliamentary and State Assembly seats by voter majority in Penang, 1974 - 1999

Year of election	State seats by racial majority			Parliamentary Assembly seats by racial majority		
	Malay majority seats (%)	Chinese Majority seats (%)	Mixed Seats (%)	Malay majority seats (%)	Chinese Majority seats (%)	Mixed Seats (%)
1974	10 (37.0)	14 (52.0)	3 (11.0)	3 (33.0)	6 (67.0)	-
1978	10 (37.0)	14 (52.0)	3 (11.0)	3 (33.0)	6 (67.0)	-
1982	10 (37.0)	15 (55.0)	2 (7.0)	3 (33.0)	6 (67.0)	-
1986	12 (36.0)	17 (49.0)	4 (12.0)	4 (36.0)	6 (54.0)	1 (1.0)
1990	14 (42.0)	17 (52.0)	2 (6.0)	4 (36.0)	6 (54.0)	1 (1.0)
1995	12 (36.0)	17 (52.0)	4 (12.0)	4 (36.0)	6 (54.0)	1 (1.0)
1999	12 (36.0)	18 (54.0)	3 (10.0)	4 (36.0)	6 (54.0)	1 (1.0)
Average Percent	37.0	52.0	10.0	35.0	59.0	5.0

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

The process of seat allocation between the component parties of the BN in Penang was filled with compromise, especially between the Malay party (UMNO) and the Chinese parties (Gerakan and the MCA), and also between the Chinese parties themselves, i.e. between the MCA and Gerakan. Based on Table 4.16, the distribution of Parliamentary and state seats basically adhered strictly to the principle that an area dominated by a particular ethnic group must be represented by that ethnic group. At Parliamentary level, seat allocation was in tandem with voter majority. A constituency whose voter majority was Malay was given to the candidate

from UMNO, and likewise for the Chinese majority constituencies. Meanwhile, mixed voter areas, i.e. Nibong Tebal¹⁵, was given to Gerakan.

As for seat distribution at state assembly level, a mixed voter constituency tends to be given to the Chinese. This resulted in the Chinese receiving an allocation of 59.0 percent (table 4.16) even though the average majority of Chinese voters was 52.0 percent (table 4.15). The extra seats given to the Chinese is not a surprise considering the stiff competition between the two main Chinese parties, namely the MCA and Gerakan. For the Malays, the difference between the percentage of Malay majority constituencies (37.0 percent, table 4.15) and seat allocation (36.0 percent, table 4.16) was negligible, accounting for only one percent.

On the history of the State Assembly elections, only in the 1990 election were there two Malay voter majority constituencies given to a candidate from Gerakan. They were Sungai Bakap and Bayan Lepas¹⁶. The Chinese majority constituencies had to hand over one of its majority seats to the Indians, who were represented by the MIC, and this seat was Bagan Dalam¹⁷ in the 1974, 1978 and 1982 elections and Perai in the 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections. The mixed voter constituencies were mostly entrusted to candidates from the Chinese component parties. In the 1974 election for example, there were three mixed voter constituencies: Sungai Bakap,

¹⁵ Distribution of voters in Nibong Tebal was 36.0% Malays, 47.9 % Chinese and 15.9% Indians. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1990, 1995 and 1999*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

¹⁶ Sungai Bakap: 1990 Election - Malays 51.7%, Chinese 36.5% and Indians 11.8%, 1995 Election - Malays 48.5%, Chinese 36.3% and Indians 15.2%. Bayan Lepas: 1990 Election - Malays 55.5%, Chinese 37.2% and Indians 7.3%, 1995 Elections - Malays 48.9%, Chinese 42.7% and Indians 7.9%. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1990, 1995 and 1999*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

¹⁷ Bagan Dalam: Malays 28.3%, Chinese 61.0 % and Indians 10.7%. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

Bukit Tengah and Machang Bubuk¹⁸, which were represented by candidates from Gerakan.

Table 4.16: Distribution of Parliamentary and State Assembly seat allocations in Penang, 1974 – 1999

	State seats (%)			Parliamentary Assembly seat (%)		
	Malay	Chinese	India	Malay	Chinese	India
1974	10 (37.0)	16 (59.0)	1 (4.0)	3 (33.0)	6 (67.0)	
1978	10 (37.0)	16 (59.0)	1 (4.0)	3 (33.0)	6 (67.0)	-
1982	10 (37.0)	16 (59.0)	1 (4.0)	3 (33.0)	6 (67.0)	
1986	12 (36.0)	20 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	4 (36.0)	7 (64.0)	-
1990	12 (36.0)	20 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	4 (36.0)	7 (64.0)	-
1995	12 (36.0)	20 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	4 (36.0)	7 (64.0)	-
1999	12 (36.0)	20 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	4 (36.0)	7 (64.0)	-
Average Percent	36.0	59.0	4.0	35.0	65.0	

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Studying the breakdown of component parties at Parliamentary level, the number of Malay majority seats were all secured by UMNO. But for the Chinese, the total of six seats (1974 – 1982 general elections) and seven seats (1986 -1999 general election) had to be split between the two component Chinese parties, as shown in table 4.16. With this allocation, the Chinese parties, with the approval of the BN headquarters, distributed the seats between the two main parties, namely the MCA and Gerakan. Table 4.17 shows the parliamentary seat distribution breakdown by party.

¹⁸ Voter distribution in the 1974 Election - Sg. Bakap: Malays 48.0%, Chinese 48.2% and Indians 3.8%. Bukit Tengah: Malays 44.4%, Chinese 47.8% and Indians 7.8%. Machang Bubuk: Malays 44.3%, Chinese 45.3% and Indians 10.4%. *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1974* Report by UMNO Headquarters.

**Table 4.17: Allocation of Parliamentary Seats in Penang among
the component parties of the Barisan Nasional**

Year of election	Umno	Gerakan	MCA	Total
1974	3	4	2	9
1978	3	3	3	9
1982	3	3	3	9
1986	4	4	3	11
1990	4	5	2	11
1995	4	4	3	11
1999	4	4	3	11

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

The same concept was applied for allocations at State Assembly level, especially in the 1974, 1978 and 1982 elections. In the 1986 election and thereafter, UMNO gained two additional seats whilst the Chinese parties obtained three new seats. For the first time, the Indians, represented by the MIC, was given a seat to contest, which is in Perai, whose voter distribution is mixed: 20.9 percent Malays, 48.4 percent Chinese and 31.2 percent Indians. The breakdown by BN component is shown in Table 4.18. The three main parties each received its allocation based on the population distribution of the area.

**Table 4.18: State Assembly seat allocation by component party of
the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 – 1999 elections.**

	Umno	Gerakan	MCA	MIC	Total
1974	10	13	3	1	27
1978	10	11	5	1	27
1982	10	11	5	1	27
1986	12	11	9	1	33
1990	12	11	9	1	33
1995	12	11	9	1	33
1999	12	11	9	1	33

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Kedah

Kedah is a state in the northern region whose majority population are Malays. Throughout the 1974 – 1999 elections, Kedah was a significant contributor towards the nation's politics with the BN winning numerous parliamentary and State Assembly seats. The BN had to compete mainly with PAS in all these elections. Although the DAP has won a few seats in the elections, the influence and ability of PAS was greater. This is natural, considering the scenario in Kedah, where most of the population lived in rural areas, as compared to Penang, which was largely urban.

With this population profile, most of the voter majority areas for election seats were controlled by the Malays. At Parliamentary level, a hundred percent of seats were controlled by Malay voters. Although the constituencies were re-delineated twice in the 1986 and 1995 elections, there were no seats with voter majorities being Chinese or mixed. Meanwhile, at State Assembly level, an average of 86.0 percent of the seats contested at each election was in constituencies with Malay majority voters. The Chinese voters only controlled about five percent whilst mixed voters controlled around eight percent of seats (table 4.19).

Table 4.19: Proportion of Parliamentary and State Assembly seats by voter majority in Kedah, 1974 - 1999

Years of election	State seats by racial majority			Parliamentary Assembly seats by racial majority		
	Malay majority seats (%)	Chinese Majority seats (%)	Mixed Seats (%)	Malay majority seats (%)	Chinese Majority seats (%)	Mixed Seats (%)
1974	22 (85.0)	2 (8.0)	2 (8.0)	13 (100.0)	-	-
1978	22 (85.0)	2 (8.0)	2 (8.0)	13 (100.0)	-	-
1982	23 (88.0)	2 (8.0)	1 (4.0)	13 (100.0)	-	-
1986	25 (90.0)	1 (3.0)	2 (7.0)	14 (100.0)	-	-
1990	25 (90.0)	1 (3.0)	2 (7.0)	14 (100.0)	-	-
1995	30 (83.0)	2 (5.0)	4 (11.0)	15 (100.0)	-	-
1999	30 (83.0)	2 (5.0)	4 (11.0)	15 (100.0)	-	-
Average Per cent	86.0	5.0	8.0	100.0	-	-

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Although there was control over seats by the Malay majority who were dominant in Kedah, the spirit and essence of consociation in the BN allowed and enabled seat allocation to other races. This approach was clearly seen when at Parliamentary level, the MCA, whose majority represented the Chinese in Kedah, was given two seats to contest for. At State Assembly level, although the number of Chinese majority voters did not increase, during the re-delineation exercise in 1995, the Chinese gained two more seats, bringing the total to six. Likewise, the Indians was allocated one additional seat, giving it a total of two seats contested since 1995 (table 3.20).

Table 4.20: Parliamentary and State Assembly seat allocation in Kedah, 1974 – 1999

	State seats (%)			Parliamentary Assembly seats (%)		
	Malay	Chinese	India	Malay	Chinese	India
1974	21 (81.0)	4 (15.0)	1 (4.0)	11 (85.0)	2 (15.0)	-
1978	21 (81.0)	4 (15.0)	1 (4.0)	11 (85.0)	2 (15.0)	-
1982	21 (81.0)	4 (15.0)	1 (4.0)	11 (85.0)	2 (15.0)	-
1986	23 (82.0)	4 (14.0)	1 (4.0)	12 (86.0)	2 (14.0)	-
1990	23 (82.0)	4 (14.0)	1 (4.0)	12 (86.0)	2 (14.0)	-
1995	28 (78.0)	6 (16.0)	2 (5.0)	13 (87.0)	2 (13.0)	-
1999	28 (78.0)	6 (16.0)	2 (5.0)	13 (87.0)	2 (13.0)	-
Average Per cent	80.0	15.0	5.0	86.0	14.0	-

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

At Parliamentary level, based on the allocations, this meant that UMNO, who dominated the politics in Kedah, only obtained 86.0 percent (table 4.19) of the 100 Malay majority seats whilst the MCA obtained 14.0 percent (table 4.20). Seat distribution by party is set out in table 4.21.

Table 4.21: Kedah Parliamentary seat allocation by component party of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 – 1999 elections.

Election	Umno	MCA	Total
1974	11	2	13
1978	11	2	13
1982	11	2	13
1986	12	2	14
1990	12	2	14
1995	13	2	15
1999	13	2	15

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

At State Assembly level, of the 86.0 percent Malay majority areas, UMNO was only allocated 80.0 percent whilst the remainder was given to the Chinese component parties. This had indirectly caused the percentage of seats contested by the Chinese to increase to almost 15.0 percent, or a difference of 10.0 percent from its total voter majority constituencies. The number of seats allocated also decreased in mixed voter areas. Of an average of eight percent mixed voter areas, only five percent was allocated to the Indians. The remaining seats were given to candidates from other component parties. Overall, the distribution of seats by component party of the BN is represented in the table below. Each main party representing the Malays, Chinese and Indians received an allocation based on the population distribution of the area.

Table 4.22: Distribution of State Assembly seat allocations in Kedah, 1974 - 1999

	Umno	Gerakan	MCA	MIC	Total
1974	22	1	3	-	26
1978	21	1	3	1	26
1982	21	1	3	1	26
1986	23	1	3	1	28
1990	23	1	3	1	28
1995	28	2	4	2	36
1999	28	2	4	2	36

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

4.2.2.2 An analysis of party performance in the elections

Besides looking at voter distribution of an area, according to Mohammad Rahmat¹⁹, the decision on seat allocation among the component parties of the BN was also based on the party's performance in an election. This ensures that the BN would win every seat allocated to its components. It would be a waste if a seat were awarded to a party who loses owing to poor performance. Thus, an assessment of the performance in past elections was used as a benchmark to determine the number of seats to allocate in the following election. This matter was taken very seriously, especially in states with high competition from the opposition. Usually, some of the performance assessments discussed would be focused on the strengths and weaknesses of each party, especially those on current achievements, a comparison between party and an analysis of achievement factors. The statement by Mohammad Rahmat was supported by Dr. Khoo Tsu Koon and Osman Aroff²⁰, emphasised that there are two assessment categories in looking at the overall performances of component parties:

- a. The first category includes parties with a nationwide influence or membership, which are the main parties in the Barisan Nasional, such as UMNO, the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC.
- b. The second category includes parties with the majority of memberships very focused in a particular state, such as the PPP in Perak and Party Berjasa in Kelantan.

¹⁹ Interview with Mohammad Rahmat. See appendix A.

²⁰ Interview with Osman Aroff, Mohammad Rahmat, and Koh Tsu Koon. See appendix A.

i. Performance Evaluation of the Main Component Parties

The performance evaluation of component parties is more focused on studying current achievers and developing measures to improve and enhance strategies to compete in future elections. This process was done at top management levels of state and national BN. It is customary for parties that had achieved excellent victories to make certain demands. First is in terms of posts, such as the appointment to hold office at cabinet, Exco or other levels, for example the appointment as senator in the House of Lords. Second is the request to be given additional seats in the next election. Still, all these, according to Mahathir Mohammad²¹, must be scrutinised in detail. Because a party's performance may change at every election, it would complicate the administration of the BN and the nation should every demand be granted. Hence, what has been practised in the BN in addressing this matter was to give a second chance to poor-performing parties to increase their capabilities and for high-performing parties to prove their capabilities once again. Only after two elections is serious consideration given to any demand put forward. It cannot be denied, however, that there were also demands fulfilled immediately at the discretion of the Prime Minister²².

For UMNO, the backbone of the BN, its victories and defeats all the more demand that it relies on its own efforts to improve its performance. Likewise is the situation for the MIC. This is because for these parties, there were no internal competitions among parties of the same ethnic group within the BN. The situation is rather different for the MCA or Gerakan because each defeat suffered puts pressure on the party. Based on past elections, particularly the experience between the MCA and

²¹ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

²² Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammed. See appendix A.

Gerakan, for each loss, the competing party would attempt to demand that the seat be handed over to it. Thus, the conflict of seat allocation is utmost critical between both parties. An overall performance evaluation, especially among the main parties of the BN, is therefore a necessity in facing the opposition, such as the DAP in Penang (see tables 4.23 and 4.24).

Table 4.23: Status of Parliamentary seats contested and won in Peninsular Malaysia by the Barisan Nasional during 1974 – 1999

	UMNO		MCA		MIC		Gerakan		Total seats in Peninsular Malaysia	
	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won		
1974	61	61	23	19	4	4	8	5	114 ²³	89
1978	75	70	28	17	4	3	8	4	114	94
1982	73	70	28	24	4	4	7	5	114	103
1986	84	83	32	17	6	6	9	5	133	111
1990	86	71	32	17	6	6	9	5	133	99
1995	92	79	35	30	7	7	10	7	144	123
1999	92	60	35	28	7	7	10	7	144	102

Note: Con. – Number of seats contested Won – Number of seats won

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Table 4.24: Status of State Assembly seats contested and won in Peninsular Malaysia by the Barisan Nasional during 1974 – 1999

	UMNO		MCA		MIC		Gerakan		Total seats in Peninsular Malaysia	
	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won		
1974	170	168	56	43	8	7	18	13	312	283
1978	185	175	60	43	11	9	16	12	312	240
1982	207	196	62	55	9	9	18	15	312	312
1986	240	228	69	43	13	12	22	17	351	299
1990	246	196	69	34	12	12	21	11	351	253
1995	275	230	75	70	15	15	27	23	392	338
1999	275	176	75	68	15	15	27	22	392	281

Note: Con. - Number of seats Contested Won: Number of seats won

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

²³ The remaining eight seats were allocated to PAS, then a member of the BN.

ii. Performance Evaluation of Local Parties

Since the establishment of the BN, there were several situations in which component parties faced loss of seats due to underperformance. This happened particularly among local parties, such as the PPP, Party Berjasa and Party Hamim.

People's Progressif Party (PPP)

The entry of the PPP in the BN was undeniably due to its brilliant performance during the 1969 election, when it controlled four parliamentary seats and 12 State Assembly seats (Election Commission, 1969:41). As a result of this achievement, the PPP was entrusted to contest in several seats in the following election. In 1974, a total of four parliamentary seats and nine State Assembly seats were entrusted to the PPP. But alas, the election results were truly a disappointment for the BN, where the PPP only succeeded in securing one parliamentary seat and two state assembly seats.

This drop in the PPP's performance was significant when a large number of constituencies contested suffered defeats. This underperformance can be described by the results of the 1969 and 1974 elections contested by the same PPP candidates, R.C.M Rayan and S.P. Seenivasagam (see table 4.25 and table 4.26).

Table 4.25: Performance of PPP in the 1969 General Election

Majority Area (Parliament)	Candidate Standing For Election	Party	Votes Obtained	Majority
Ipoh	R.C.M. Rayan	PPP	23,979	18,748
	Tan Seang Eng	Perikatan	5,231	
Mengelebu	S.P Seenivasagam	PPP	29,089	22,271
	Hew Chai Ke	Perikatan	6,818	

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections. 1969.* National Printing Department.

Table 4.26: Performance of PPP in the 1974 General Election

Majority Area (Parliament)	Candidate Standing For Election	Party	Votes Obtained	Majority
Ipoh	Lim Cho Hock	DAP	23,050	10,775
	R.C.M. Rayan	PPP	12,283	
	Too Joon Hing	Bebas	1,781	
Mengelebu	Fan Yew Teng	DAP	22,505	10,748
	S.P Seenivasagam	PPP	11,757	
	Khoo Eng Huang	Bebas	1,731	

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections. 1969 and 1974.* National Printing Department.

Based on the data in table 4.27, the PPP had to suffer the consequences of its poor performance in the 1974 election, whereby in the 1978 election, it was only allocated one parliamentary seat and four State Assembly seats²⁴. Its continuous drop in performance eventually resulted in the PPP no longer being allocated any seats since

²⁴ It was surprising in 1973-1974 how well the PPP seemed to be adjusting to its new posture as part of the government team. By the same token, the PPP appeared to have lost the political fire and enthusiasm it once had as an opposition party. Its leader concentrated almost entirely on the running of the Ipoh Municipal Council and with implementing municipal projects which now received state and federal cooperation. Formal party organisation was never exactly a model, and virtually ceased to exist on paper. Within the party, S.P. Seenivasagam was unable to control the conflict between his two principal lieutenants, Secretary-General Khong Kok Yat and Vice President R.C.M Rayan, and this had divided the party into antagonistic factions. The PPP was unable to mount even a mildly energetic campaign as the general election neared, hoping instead to be carried along by the Barisan tie. See Mauzy (1983:84).

the 1990 election, although it remained a component party of the BN. The seats previously allocated to the PPP were subsequently allocated to UMNO, the MCA and Gerakan.

Table 4.27: A comparison between PPP's performance before and after its entry into the Barisan Nasional

General Election	Parliament		State	
	Con.	Won	Con.	Won
1959	19	4	39	8
1964	9	2	26	5
1969	6	4	16	12
1974	4	1	9	2
1978	1	-	4	1
1982	-	-	3	-
1986	-	-	3	1

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections. 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1978, 1982 and 1986.* National Printing Department.

Party Berjasa

The fate suffered by the PPP also befell party Berjasa²⁵, who was entrusted to contest for a few seats in Kelantan. In two consecutive elections, i.e. in 1978 and 1982, Berjasa failed to win a single seat and as a result (table 4.28), in 1986 it withdrew from contesting in the election.

Table 4.28: Performance of Berjasa in the Barisan Nasional

General Election	Parliament		State	
	Con.	Won	Con.	Won
1978	2	-	6	-
1982	2	-	13	-

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections. 1978 and 1982.* National Printing Department.

²⁵ Berjasa (Barisan Jama'ah Islamiah seMalaysia) was founded by the former Kelantan Chief Minister, Datuk Hj. Mohammed Nasir and other PAS dissidents in September 1977. It joined the BN in December 1977. Together with the BN, Berjasa formed the state government in Kelantan in 1982. See Zakry Abadi, (1986).

HAMIM²⁶, under the leadership of PAS ex-president, Mohammad Asri Muda, also only lasted in the 1986 election, after which it was no longer allocated any seats owing to its poor performance (table 4.29).

Table 4.29: Performance of Hamim in the Barisan Nasional

General Election	Parliament		State	
	Con.	Won	Con.	Won
1986	2	-	4	2

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia. *Report on The Malaysian General Elections, 1986*. National Printing Department.

Overall, the performance of a party was an important benchmark in determining the total number of seats that it would be allocated in the following election. Continued weakness in elections would cause a party to lose its rights to compete for seats in elections. This is the main principal in ensuring that the BN continues to maintain its overall performance in every election.

Penang

The Chinese component parties on the overall performed rather erratically. Gerakan and the MCA, the BN's strongest allies in this segment, were at times worrying when they had to face DAP. At Parliamentary level, the BN lost seats several times when the candidates from Gerakan and the MCA lost. This was more apparent in the

²⁶ HAMIM (Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia) was formed by a former PAS leader, led by the late Datuk Hj. Mohammed Asri Muda, who was the PAS chief for 18 years. In July 1988, most of the party leaders, including Asri, wanted HAMIM to be dissolved. At a special assembly, the motion to dissolve the party was denied by one vote. Soon after that, Asri and 12 others of the 21 supreme council members quit to join UMNO. See Mohammad Rahmat (2001).

MCA's performance. In the 1986 and 1990 elections, the MCA lost all seats entrusted to it. This caused Gerakan to demand that it be given the seats contested by the MCA to help improve the performance of the BN. The influence of performance was truly effective when in the 1990 election, the BN allocated, five seats to Gerakan, as compared to two to the MCA (Crouch 1996: 74-75).

In particular the traditional gauge of UMNO's ability to regain a majority in parliament. UMNO has won a hundred percent of all seats contested since the 1974 election, except in the 1978²⁷ and 1999 elections, when it lost one seat to party Keadilan, which was represented by Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the wife of former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim²⁸ (table 4.30).

Table 4.30: A comparison of performance achievements at Parliamentary level between the component parties of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 - 1999 elections

	Umno Con. Won		Gerakan Con. Won		MCA Con. Won		DAP Con. Won		Total
1974	3	3	4	4	2	2	6	-	9
1978	3	2	3	1	3	1	6	4	9
1982	3	3	3	2	3	2	6	2	9
1986	4	4	4	1	3	-	7	6	11
1990	4	4	5	1	2	-	7	6	11
1995	4	4	4	2	3	2	7	3	11
1999	4	3	4	2	3	1	7	4	11

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

At the State Assembly level (see table 4.31), this strategy of seat allocation based on performance became increasingly confidential, especially when it was linked to the process or ability to form a state government. The MCA, who always regarded

²⁷ UMNO lost Permatang pauh seat to Hj. Zabidi Ali from PAS with 860 majority vote. See *Election Commission*, (1980).

²⁸ See In-Won Hwang, (2003).

Gerakan as its competitor and enemy who reclaimed the throne of state ruler that it once controlled prior to 1969, often put on pressure that it be awarded more seats (*New Straits Times*, 28 November 1993:12). This advantage in the number of seats would indirectly help in reclaiming the title of Chief Minister. However, this demand would certainly displease Gerakan, who was already comfortable in this position. Hence, the measurement by performance achievement would always be significant in determining the party eligible to be allocated a greater number of seats, although in actual fact, this number had never changed except following the re-delineation exercise in 1986.

Table 4.31: A comparison of performance achievements at State Assembly level between the component parties of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 - 1999 elections

	Umno		Gerakan		MCA		MIC		DAP		Total
	Con. Won		Con. Won		Con. Won		Con. Won		Con. Won		
1974	10	10	13	11	3	1	1	-	17	2	27
1978	10	9	11	8	5	2	1	1	17	5	27
1982	10	10	11	8	5	6	1	1	17	2	27
1986	12	12	11	9	9	2	1	-	17	10	33
1990	12	12	11	7	9	-	1	-	17	14	33
1995	12	12	11	10	9	9	1	1	17	1	33
1999	12	10	11	10	9	9	1	1	17	1	33

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

Kedah

As nearly three quarters of constituencies were controlled by Malay voters, the competition regarding seat allocation among the component parties of the BN is small here when compared to that in Penang. Thus the performance element emphasised here leaned towards the effort to improve the internal abilities of the

party to enhance its competitiveness in the following election. UMNO, who had dominated the seats at Parliamentary and State Assembly levels, plays a role in showcasing its performance as a symbol of the strong support received from the Malay community, to be compared against its competitor, PAS. The performance highlighted here has more to do with enhancing the image of the party than the effort of increasing its seat allocation in an election (Scott 1985:134).

At Parliamentary level (table 4.32), only two of the component parties of the BN have been participating in elections since 1974, namely UMNO and the MCA. UMNO, who controlled a large number of seats, showed a stable performance when it won a hundred percent of seats allocated to it in four of the seven elections held. The most significant performance upset happened only in the 1999 election, when it only managed to win five of the 13 seats contested. Meanwhile, the MCA, who was allocated only two parliamentary seats, won both at every election.

Table 4.32: A comparison of performance achievements at Parliamentary level between the component parties of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 - 1999 elections

	Umno		Gerakan		MCA		MIC		Total	
	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won	Con.	Won
1974	11	11	-	-	2	2	-	-	13	13
1978	11	9	-	-	2	2	-	-	13	11
1982	11	10	-	-	2	2	-	-	13	12
1986	12	12	-	-	2	2	-	-	14	14
1990	12	12	-	-	2	2	-	-	14	14
1995	13	13	-	-	2	2	-	-	15	15
1999	13	5	-	-	2	2	-	-	15	7

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

At State Assembly, all four main component parties of the BN equally showed excellent performances to ensure that the BN was able to form a State government.

Gerakan and the MIC recorded hundred percent victories since the 1974 election. The MCA lost one seat in two elections, in 1974 and 1990. UMNO, who faced PAS, also performed well. Although it had never won a hundred percent of the seats allocated to it in elections, UMNO was still able to take a two-thirds majority, except in the 1999 election when it won only half of the 28 seats contested (table 4.33).

Table 4.33: A comparison of performance achievements at State Assembly level between the component parties of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 - 1999 elections

	Umno Con. Won		Gerakan Con. Won		MCA Con. Won		MIC Con. Won		Total Con. Won	
1974	22	21	1	1	3	2	-	-	26	24
1978	21	14	1	1	3	3	1	1	26	19
1982	21	19	1	1	3	3	1	1	26	24
1986	23	20	1	1	3	3	1	1	28	25
1990	23	22	1	1	3	2	1	1	28	26
1995	28	26	2	2	4	4	2	2	36	34
1999	28	16	2	2	4	4	2	2	36	24

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia 1974, 1978, 1982*. Report by UMNO Headquarters. *Scorecard New Strait Times*, 24 August 1990, 24 April 1995 and 28 November 1999.

The complexity and tension in seat allocation in Penang were indeed difficulties that had to be faced by the BN at every election. It is true that seat allocation was cored upon the distribution of voters in a constituency and that party performance was given due consideration, but demands to gain extra seats have always been a norm between the MCA and Gerakan. At the same time, UMNO had sometimes also insisted on its rights to seats where the majority of voters were Malays or mixed. This competition for seat allocation became critical during elections when facing the opposition, particularly the DAP, who has a record of good support from voters, and who could therefore threaten the position of the BN in Penang.

In Kedah, although the conflict of seat allocation in elections was not as critical as that in Penang, areas that had a majority of Chinese voters also often became the subject of the tug-of-war between Gerakan and the MCA. In mixed voter constituencies, demands sometimes arose from UMNO that the seat be given to them, in addition to demands by the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC.

3.2.2.3 Quota

The concept of quota in the BN serves more as a nomination channel for the minority parties to be represented in the majority community. Because of the unequal distribution of the population, states such as Terengganu and Kelantan have a high Malay majority. If it were based on the concept of seat allocation by voter distribution, no Chinese candidate would have been eligible to contest in these states. Thus in the concept of power sharing, the BN has stipulated that a quota be given to the Chinese, either through the MCA or Gerakan, to contest in these states. This was emphasised by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad;

The BN has always provided assistance, and we support this nomination because in other places they support us, and for this reason, when we nominate a component candidate, we expect there to be no questions about who that candidate is (*Utusan Malaysia*, 28 August 1990).

Mohammad Rahmat²⁹ stressed that the placing of non-Malay candidates in Malay constituencies was done to ensure that he/she wins so that he/she can be a part of the government, either at state or national level.

²⁹ Interview with Mohammad Rahmat. See Appendix A.

4.2.3 Stage Three

After going through the process of lobbying, negotiating and bargaining between one party and another to secure victory in the constituency contested, the BN headquarters will determine the number of seats allocated by state. Then, a decision would be made and this would be communicated to the state BN, who would discuss with the component parties on the constituency that they would be allocated based on the given quota. Usually, the list received by the state BN is final. Nevertheless, the decision is sometimes reviewed and amended in certain cases. Based on Othman Aroff's experience³⁰, a few situations gave rise to the possibility of changing the decision made, such as;

1. There were agreements made among the component parties of state BN to swap constituencies that were allocated to them.
2. There were protests among component parties on the constituencies given to them.

The revision of seat distribution is done not only to fulfil the quota of a certain ethnic group but more importantly, to meet the aspirations of the local electorate. If the number of protests from the electorate is high, the chance of winning is slim, therefore it is necessary to change the party contesting. In such cases, the state BN presents the issue once again to the BN headquarters for consideration and agreement. Even so, this only involved isolated cases. The procedure that has been followed in seven elections has indeed helped the BN maintain integrity in handling any conflict faced at each election.

³⁰ Interview with Othman Aroff. See appendix A.

4.3 Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the BN has a unique procedure for formulating a strategy to ensure victory in the general elections it contests in . The basis of seat distribution among the component parties also requires strict adherence to ensure that the constituency given to a particular party has a real potential to be won by that party. In other words, the BN put up a candidate in a constituency not only to fulfil the wish of a certain party but also to ensure the victory of the candidate in that constituency. As such, in spite of bargaining from the component parties for a certain constituency, the request sometimes had to be denied due to specific reasons. In view of this, conflict is an inevitable part of the process of seat distribution in the BN. This matter will be discussed further in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

THE BARISAN NASIONAL AND CONFLICT IN SEAT ALLOCATION

5.1 Introduction

The fact that the BN has established specific procedures in determining the allocation of seats does not necessarily mean that it is able to fulfil all aspirations or satisfy all its component parties. In principle, bargaining still takes place, especially when each party feels that it has special reasons for getting a bigger allocation of seats. In fact, a party may simply make such a demand to fulfil the wish of supporters, without any solid reason whatsoever. Any demand submitted to the Supreme Council of the BN would usually be met by response from the other parties. This is the cause of conflict in seat allocation. Discussion on this conflict will be the main focus of this chapter. A review of this topic is based on the era of the Alliance Party, because although it was dissolved and replaced by the BN, its conflict management core and basis are still adopted and practised.

5.2 Factors conflict in seat allocation

5.2.1 Constituency Boundaries

The implementation of the electoral system in Malaysia is based on the “first past the post”¹ approach and gerrymandering². The Constitution stipulates that the Election

¹ The first-past-the-post electoral system is a voting system for single-member districts, variously called first-past-the-post (FPTP or FPP), winner-take-all, plurality voting, or relative majority. In political science, it is known as Single-Member District Plurality or SMDP. See Cox , (1997).

Commission shall be the body responsible for ensuring that the election would run smoothly, according to the gerrymandering method. Pursuant to Clause 2 Article 113 of the Federal Constitution, the Election Commission, among others, shall be responsible for reviewing and defining the electoral boundaries of parliamentary and state constituencies. It is also responsible for recommending any necessary changes it deems fit, to comply with the provisions given in schedule thirteen. Accordingly, Clause 2 Article 113 (ii) states that this process needs to be exercised within the stipulated period;

“There shall be an interval of not less than eight years between the completion of a review and the starting date of the next review under this clause”³.

Since the first election in 1959, the Election Commission has completed four revisions and boundary definition, i.e. in 1960, 1974, 1984 and 1994⁴. Normally, two major elements are performed during the Review and Boundary Definition process, which are;

² Gerrymandering is a controversial form of redistricting in which electoral district or constituency boundaries are manipulated for electoral advantage, usually of incumbents or a specific political party. Gerrymandering may also be used to advantage or disadvantage a particular racial, linguistic, religious or class group. The word gerrymander serves both as a verb meaning to perpetrate the abuse and as a noun describing the resulting electoral geography. See Bernard Grotman ed. (2003).

³ See Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia mengenai Ulangkaji Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihanraya Parlimen dan Negeri, 2003, (2004).

⁴ A study on the latest revision and boundary definition was carried out in 2003 and was subsequently adopted and applied in the 2004 election, which saw an increase in Parliamentary seats from 194 to 219 (additional 25 seats) with 63 State Legislative Council seats. See Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia mengenai Ulangkaji Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihanraya Parlimen dan Negeri, 2003, (2004).

1. Change of Boundaries

At this stage the Election Commission studies the appropriateness of the change in the boundary of a constituency. If the number of voters in that area is too big, then a boundary change may be done by relocating it to another constituency. This process may not require there to be a new parliamentary or state council constituency, as only a boundary adjustment has been done.

2. Creation of New Boundaries / Constituencies

The creation of new constituencies is normally done based on current situation, which may be due to large increases in the number of voters in that area, thus requiring the creation of a new constituency.

Table 5.1: Changes in Parliamentary Seats and State Council Seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1974 – 1999

	Parliament Number of seats			State Legislative Council Number of Seats		
	1974	1984	1994	1974	1984	1994
Peninsular Malaysia	114	132	144	312	351	392
Increase in seats	-	18	12	-	39	41

Source: *Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia mengenai Ulangkaji Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihanraya Parlimen dan Negeri*, (1995). Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur. p.22.

The increase in seats that occurred at every two elections (table 5.1), as allowed under this constitution, is indeed a helpful exercise for BN, which often faced the conflict of seat allocation, as discussed earlier. Even though the Election Commission is said to be an independent body whose decisions, especially in

reviewing and redistricting constituencies, are not under the influence of anyone, this was alleged to have happened before 1967. The government continued its 'assault' on the Election Commission by making clearly partisan appointments to the commission to counterbalance its overly independent Chairman before his retirement in 1967⁵. When the Chinese member retired in 1964 and the Indian member a year later, they were replaced by an MCA member and an MIC member respectively. The member appointed from East Malaysia was also a member of the ruling Alliance in Sarawak. It has been noted that by these appointments ...the ruling coalition 'sought to penetrate the Commission'... and gradually make it more responsive to Alliance interests (MacDougall, 1968:196-198). MacDougall noted the Commission's practice of providing the Prime Minister with a preliminary report of its proposals, thus giving him a privileged opportunity to vet the proposal before they were made known to the public. This situation indirectly helped in planning the allocation of seats each time boundary redefinition is carried out (1968:201).

Penang

In Penang, the review and redefinition of boundaries had twice suggested a change in the number of Parliamentary and State Legislative Council seats. The first amendment took place in 1984 involving an increase of two Parliamentary seats and six State Legislative Council seats (see table 5.2 and 5.3).

⁵ The members of the Election Commission in 1964 were Dr. Mustapha AlBakri (Chairman), Lee Ewe Boon and Ditt Singh. The members of the Election Commission 1969 were Ahmad Perang (Chairman), Dr. R. Sathiah, Boey Kok Keat, J.J. Raj and Abang Hj. Marzuki. See Election Commission, (1967).

**Table 5.2: Changes in Parliamentary Seats and State Legislative Council
Seats in Penang 1974 – 1999**

	Parliament Number of seats			State Legislative Council Number of Seats		
	1974	1984	1994	1974	1984	1994
Penang	9	11	11	27	33	33
Increase in seats	-	2	-	-	6	-

Source: *Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia mengenai Ulangkaji Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihanraya Parlimen dan Negeri*, (1995). Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur. p.173-174, 181-182.

**Table 5.3: Increase in Parliamentary and State Legislative Council seats in
Penang after the 1984 process of boundary redefinition**

State Legislative Council Constituencies	Percentage of Malay Voters	Percentage of Chinese Voters	Percentage of Indian Voters	Contesting Party
<i>Parliamentary seats</i>				
P39 Tasek Gelugor	76.0	15.5	6.5	UMNO
P47 Bayan Lepas	25.0	66.2	8.8	MCA
<i>State Seats</i>				
N4 Ara Rendang	80.7	11.7	7.6	UMNO
N9 Perai	27.0	48.1	23.8	MIC
N10 Seberang Jaya	49.3	31.9	18.4	UMNO
N21 Kebun Bunga	10.3	73.7	13.4	Gerakan
N27 Batu Lancang	5.1	89.1	5.3	Gerakan
N32 Telok Kumbar	66.1	32.8	0.9	UMNO

Source: *Malaysian Parliamentary and State Elections Held on August 2nd and 3rd 1986 including Analysis of 1984 Electoral Delineation Exercise*. (1986). Office Automation Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur. p. Table edes1:2

The second amendment suggested by the Election Commission in 1994 was rejected by the Penang State Legislative Council on 3 November 1992. This rejection of three additional seats in the State Legislative Council occurred when 13 members of the opposition DAP voted against the proposal resulting in there being no two-thirds majority, as required, to amend the constitution. BN obtained 19 votes whereas a two-thirds majority required 22 votes from the 33 members of the council (*Berita*

Harian, 4 November 1992). This resulted in the State Legislative Council maintaining its 33 seats.

Kedah

In Kedah, the review and redefinition of boundaries resulted in an increase of Parliamentary and State Legislative Council seats. As indicated in the table, this increase indirectly helped BN allocate additional seats as requested by the component parties, especially by MCA, MIC and Gerakan. In the 1984 revision, a new parliamentary constituency, Pendang, was created, and two State Legislative Council seats, Tanjong Dawai and Derga, were created. The 1994 revision resulted in an additional Parliamentary seat for Jerlun and eight new State Legislative Council seats for Padang Mat Sirat, Kota Seputeh, Bukit Lada, Tanjung Seri, Anak Bukit, Belantik, Kuala Ketil and Sidam (see table 5.4 and table 5.5).

Table 5.4 : Changes in Parliamentary Seats and State Legislative Council Seats in Kedah 1974 – 1999

	Parliament Number of seats			State Legislative Council Number of Seats		
	1974	1984	1994	1974	1984	1994
Kedah	13	14	15	26	28	36
New seats	-	1	1	-	2	8

Source: *Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia mengenai Ulangkaji Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihanraya Parlimen dan Negeri*, (1995). Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur. p. 22

Table 5.5: Increase in Parliamentary and State Legislative Council seats in Kedah after the 1984 and 1994 process of boundary redefinition

State Legislative Council Constituencies	Percentage of Malay Voters	Percentage of Chinese Voters	Percentage of Indian Voters	Contesting Party
1984				
<i>Parliamentary seats</i>				
P9 Pendang	87.0	7.2	0.8	UMNO
<i>State Seats</i>				
N8 Derga	58.2	37.8	3.7	Gerakan
N18 Tanjong Dawai	58.1	22.4	18.5	UMNO
1994				
<i>Parliamentary seats</i>				
P5 Jerlun	89.0	6.4	2.3	UMNO
<i>State Seats</i>				
N1 Padang mat Sirat	98.5	1.5	1.0	UMNO
N4 Kota Seputeh	91.0	9.5	0.1	UMNO
N9 Bukit Lada	89.6	8.7	1.6	UMNO
N11 Tanjong Seri	91.5	1.8	0.1	UMNO
N15 Anak Bukit	87.2	11.5	1.0	UMNO
N22 Belantik	92.9	2.6	1.0	UMNO
N29 Sidam	33.7	42.2	22.7	Gerakan
N32 Kuala Ketil	71.0	9.8	18.5	UMNO

Source: *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1986 and 1995*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

5.2.2 Freedom in demanding for seats

The component parties of the BN are given the freedom to demand the number of seats they desire. Ghafar Baba stated that⁶;

“It is not wrong for each component party to want additional seats in an election. But this matter must be submitted to the BN Supreme Council for decision.”

Nevertheless, demands made by the component parties are usually based on their past performance and ability. Therefore, at every election, each party would not fail

⁶ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

to make a demand on the number of seats they desire, either at Parliamentary level or at State Legislative Council level. As for the component parties, the opportunity to make this demand would not be simply wasted. This is because as more seats are obtained, the party is being recognised as being among the main parties of the BN.

5.3 The historical background of conflict in seat allocation

Under the Alliance party among the biggest challenges that had to be overcome was in formulating and establishing guidelines for consensus regarding seat allocation in general elections. Early challenges were encountered by the Alliance on 1 March 1955, when the Election Office agreed to hold a federal election on Wednesday, 27 July 1955. At this moment, the leadership of the Alliance, particularly UMNO, was put to the test especially with regard to seat allocation. UMNO and the MCA tried to determine the number of seats each should be allocated in order to satisfy their respective party's needs. Various suggestions on seat allocation were proposed by each party.

UMNO requested that the 52 seats be allocated according to the percentage ratio of voters. Malay voters made up 84.0 percent, Chinese 11.0 percent and Indians five percent. Based on UMNO's formula, seat allocation would be UMNO 44, the MCA six and the MIC two seats. The MCA and the MIC objected to UMNO's suggestion because;

This would mean closing the doors on those who participated actively and effectively in the country's political development. The MCA and the MIC also reasoned that the Chinese and Indians participated in political, economic and social development (Means, 1976:162).

The MCA explained that proper seat allocation could be more fairly done by taking into account the total population and not just the number of voters⁷ (Von Vorys. 1975:146). The politics of seat distribution was extremely critical because the Alliance had to focus its attention from various angles before a decision could be made through the negotiations held. Fernando said;

The Alliance's dilemma in trying to maintain a balance between the communal demands was also reflected in their election manifesto, which promised something for each of the communal groups (Fernando, 2002:60).

Recognising the importance of the negotiation results in the determination of seat allocation was in itself of the utmost importance in planning the future of the party and the country. Agreement was finally achieved with seats allocated as in the table below:

Table 5.6: Alliance Candidates in the 1955 Election

Party	Seats allocated for contest	% seats contested	% Voters by race
UMNO (Malay)	35	67.0	84.2
MCA (Chinese)	15	29.0	11.2
MIC (Indian)	2	4.0	3.9

Source: Hussein Muhammed, (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur. Karya Bistari. p. 59 and 101.

The leadership of the Alliance decided to compromise on the allocation above to ensure the success of the newly formed coalition, besides eliminating other more critical issues, such as citizenship and special privileges of the Malays (Ong Hak Ching, 2000:188). As a result of this consociation, the Alliance won 51 of the 52 seats with 81.7 percent popular votes . This victory was highly significant because it

⁷ See also Gullick.1965:133. It has been estimated that three quarters of the 600,000 eligible Chinese voters did not register themselves on the election rolls.

indirectly affirmed the people's acceptance of the concept of the spirit of party consociation introduced, whilst functioning as a catalyst towards the planning of the country's independence. Mauzy stated;

'The victory was generally attributed to the Alliance organisation... too few non-Malays were eligible to vote for it to be regarded as a real test of non-Malay support. However it proved the Alliance concept; enough Malays voted for the Alliance for all 17 non-Malays to win' (Means, 1976:126-127).

The convincing victory of the Alliance proved to the British government that the key ethnic groups could work together under one banner and as a result, on 31 August 1957, Malaya was granted political independence. The first post-independence election held saw the consociation of the Alliance continuing to face challenges as in the previous election. Seat allocation in the 1959 election was hit by crisis as critical demands were received from the MCA. This was because after independence, Chinese voters increased from 25.0 percent to 36.0 percent whilst Indian voters rose to seven percent. On the other hand, the percentage ratio of Malay voters dropped from 84.2 to 56.8 percent. This became the main stimulant for the MCA to demand more seats than those in the 1955 election (Yusof Khan Loth Khan, 2002:6).

Table 5.7: Comparison of number of voters, number of seats and Urban and Rural voter breakdown

	1955 election			1959 election		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Number of voters (%)	84.2	11.2	4.6	56.8	35.9	7.4
Number of seats contested (%)						
a) Parliament	67.3	28.8	3.9	67.3	29.8	2.9
b) State Legislative Council	-	-	-	67.7	27.6	4.7
Population ratio (2) (%)						
a) Urban	7.3	31.1	25.8	11.2	44.7	30.6
b) Rural	92.7	68.9	74.2	88.8	55.3	69.4

Source:- 1) Hussein Muhammed, (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur. Karya Bistari. p 59 and 101
2) Department of Statistics, Malaysia, (1970). p. 72.

In addition, the change in the MCA's leadership in March 1958 also changed the negotiation and bargaining procedure among the Alliance party's leaders. Dr. Lim Chong Eu defeated Tan Cheng Lock with 87 versus 67 votes for the position of Party President. The success was seen as a victory by the young generation (new Blood, also called Chinese-firsters) who were more aggressive in making and demanding requests in the Alliance. They were ready to make bigger demands on seat allocation in the 1959 election, besides fighting for the review of the previously-agreed language and education policies (Mauzy, 1976:26-27).

In June 1959, Dr Lim Chong Eu sent a letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman, which stated, among others, the demands of the Chinese community to allocate 40 seats to the MCA. For this purpose, Abdul Razak Hussein held a series of negotiations with Dr Lim Chong Eu to reach a compromise on the demands but this concluded without a positive result. The situation became critical when a secret letter from Dr. Lim Chong Eu to Tunku Abdul Rahman was distributed, especially to the press. This situation forced Tunku Abdul Rahman to warn the MCA;

It is obvious that your intention is to break from the Alliance and it offers others and me no room for discussion, particularly as you have the terms of your demands public and unequivocal (Mauzy 1976:28).

At the same time, Tunku Abdul Rahman also put in a word or two to the MCA to drop their radical demands, which were not consociational. Finally on 12 July 1959, about a month before the election on 19 August, the MCA's Central Committee voted with a result of 89 for and 60 against accepting Tunku's suggestion that all those early demands be withdrawn. At least, in the Federal election held two years after independence, the Alliance fielded 70 UMNO, 31 MCA and three MIC

candidates. The Alliance campaigned on its record of communal accord and as the party that had won independence. The Alliance won convincingly with 74 of the 104 seats and with 51.5 percent of the popular vote. UMNO won 52 seats, the MCA 19 and the MIC all the three seats it contested for. Not surprisingly, the MCA fared the worst in heavily Chinese urban areas and in the new villages. In the 1959 election, the opposition parties won 13 seats by PAS, eight by the Socialist Front, four by the People's Progressive Party (PPP), one each by Parti Negara and Malaya Party and three by independent candidates (Hussein Muhammed, 1987:101).

The conflict that arose between UMNO and the MCA, although resolved, left significant marks on the Alliance. The first was doubt over UMNO's capability to uphold and fight for the rights of the Malays as a whole. This doubt was proven by UMNO's defeat to PAS at State Legislative Council level, in areas with a majority of Malay voters, i.e. Kelantan (92.8 percent) and Terengganu (93.9 percent). Secondly, although the seat allocation crisis was resolved, the threats eventually led to a break-up in the MCA. In January 1961, Dr. Lim Chong Eu announced his exit from the MCA.

The 1959 election was challenging and left a profound effect on the Alliance. The conflict on seat distribution in actual fact tested the integrity and consociation of the parties in the Alliance. What was significant was the ever-strong racial spirit among the parties in the Alliance. At the same time, the process of negotiation and bargaining to resolve any demand became the perfect training ground for party leadership. Significantly, the 1959 election demonstrated consociation in the Alliance having to make unpopular compromise to ensure continuity of the collaboration. Tunku's action to threaten the MCA, although displeasing, was necessary especially

as a final step to prepare for the approaching election. The situation resulted in an overall support, although popular vote of the Alliance declined from 81.7 percent to only 51.5 percent.

The ability to surmount the bitter test in the 1955 and 1959 general elections was truly meaningful to the Alliance Party. During these two general elections, the Alliance had established its very own principle, which later became the basis in determining the allocation of seats in the following general elections. This was clearly demonstrated in the 1964 and 1969 general elections, when the management of seat allocation was successfully carried out with little of the hassle and problem that were encountered previously.

5.4 The Barisan Nasional and Conflict in Seat Allocation

The situation of conflict faced by the Alliance in fact continued even after the BN took over as patron to several parties, including parties from Sabah and Sarawak that joined the coalition. The seat allocation scenario can more easily be understood based on past events during elections from the very first time BN contested in 1974 until 1999, especially in Penang and Kedah.

5.4.1 1974 Election

The 1974 General Election was a crucial test to the new BN coalition, which replaced the Alliance in practising consociational democracy in Malaysia. After a difficult process of establishment filled with negotiations and bargaining, BN, under Abdul Razak Hussein as the second Prime Minister of Malaysia and Chairman of the BN, naturally expected support from the people. For this purpose, cooperation and

consociation among the component parties were appropriately exhibited as a symbol of the people's confidence. By the time of the 1974 general election, an important element of consociation was seat allocation among the component parties. Within this context, formal allocation by the BN was not possible due to time constraint.

According to Mauzy, the BN organisation was not fully functional until well after the August election. Ghafar Baba was appointed Secretary General of the BN in September 1974⁸. Thus, in facing the election on 24 August 1974, seat allocation among the component parties was done informally through negotiation and bargaining. As the backbone of the BN, UMNO played an important role in coordinating and monitoring the process of seat allocation such that each party felt appreciated and important in ensuring BN's first victory.

The 1974 general election presented BN with a new challenge in the negotiation and bargaining process. While negotiation and bargaining power were more focused between the different ethnic-based parties (UMNO, the MCA and the MIC) in the previous election, the process also involved issues within the same ethnic group this time around. For instance, UMNO had to compete with PAS, and the MCA with Gerakan, to obtain and maintain its allocated seats in the election. This phenomenon eventually became an element of continuing conflict in the BN. Nevertheless, the fundamental principle of seat allocation in the BN was based on the performance of each party in the last election, especially in 1969.

⁸ The Barisan Nasional Supreme Council (Dewan Tertinggi) met for first time on 6 November 1974 to discuss ways of bringing the component parties closer together. Even before the constitutional amendments were approved, work started on setting up state and divisional level organisations. However, there was confusion as to whether the Alliance committees and coalition coordination committees should still function, should simply undergo a name change or should be dissolved. Meanwhile, on 30 November 1974, the Secretaries General of the nine component parties held their first meeting, chaired by Ghafar Baba and in January 1975, the Supreme Council approved the new constitution. See Mauzy,(1983: 98-99).

During the election that saw an increase of ten parliamentary seats from 104 (in 1969) to 114 in Peninsular Malaysia, most of the component parties were allowed to defend the seats they won in 1969 with proportionately additional seats according to the area of contest (Election Commission, 1972:3). For instance, PAS, having won many seats in Kelantan and Terengganu in 1969, were allocated more parliamentary and state seats in those states, whereas UMNO concentrated on other states.

The MCA, having to face Gerakan for the first time in the process of seat allocation, was indeed a problem when it came to negotiation and bargaining power in the BN. As a long-time ally of UMNO in the Alliance and the biggest party representing the Chinese community, the MCA demanded that it be allocated more seats than Gerakan. UMNO was somewhat worried over the MCA's poorer performance in the 1969 general election. However, Gerakan succeeded in winning the votes of the Chinese, especially in Penang and Perak in 1969, and demanded that it be given priority in the seat allocation, particularly in these two states.

This made the task of negotiation difficult because intra-racial conflict could jeopardise the BN's aspiration of winning an election, and at the same time, had to counter the influence of the opposition party, the DAP. Nevertheless, through negotiation and compromise, the process of seat allocation between the MCA and Gerakan was finally settled. The MCA was allotted 23 parliamentary seats, 10 less than those allotted to it in the 1969 general election, and Gerakan retained its eight parliamentary seats which it won, while continuing to defend its majority in state seats in Penang (13 seats). Meanwhile, the PPP was allowed to retain the four seats it won in 1969, whereas the MIC obtained an additional seat (see table 5.8).

Table 5.8: Comparison of seats contested and won in the 1969 General Election and the number of seats contested in the 1974 General Election

Party	1969 Seats contested		1969 Seats won		1974 Seats contested	
	P	S	P	S	P	S
UMNO	68	188	52	134	61	170
MCA	33	82	13	40	23	56
MIC	3	10	2	3	4	8
GERAKAN	14	37	8	26	8	18
PPP	6	16	4	12	4	9
PAS	62	185	12	40	14	51

P – Parliament S – State

Source:- 1) Data 1969: Goh Cheing Teik.1971. *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur. Oxford University Press. p.12.

2) Data 1974: Diane K. Mauzy. 1983. *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur .Marican & Sons.. p. 95.

Even though there was internal conflict on the allocation of seats, the BN eventually won a landslide victory in its first attempt. It captured 104 of the 114 parliamentary seats in Peninsular Malaysia, equivalent to about 87.0 percent of seats, and about 59.0 percent of popular votes. This achievement by the BN was not totally unexpected because even from the time of candidate nomination, signs of victory were obvious when the BN won 47 parliamentary seats and 43 state seats⁹. The Malay community gave solid support to the BN. Both UMNO and PAS won all the Parliamentary seats they contested, (61-UMNO, 14-PAS) and only four of the BN Malay state candidates lost (all to independent) (*New Straits Times*, 5 November 1974).

Likewise with the support of the Chinese, who reveal their trust in the MCA, which won 19 of the 23 parliamentary seats and 43 of the 56 state assembly seats. Gerakan

⁹ It cannot be denied that this success by the BN, apart from total commitment by the component parties, was boosted by manipulation throughout the election period. An example is manipulating the 'rules of the game' by the BN in its election campaign. See Case (1993), Harold (1996), Gomez (1991), and Ahmad Atory Hussein (1997).

won five of the eight parliamentary seats and 11 of the 13 state seats in Penang. The MIC obtained a hundred percent success by winning all four parliamentary seats and all seven state seats it contested. Only the PPP experienced a decline compared to the 1969 general election. It only won one of the four parliamentary seats and two of the nine state seats (Hussein Mohammad, 1987:101). This excellent achievement by the BN was an outright proof that the concept of politics of accommodation, the core of the three previous elections, was the best recipe for political harmony and stability in this country.

Penang

In Penang, the 1974 election, seat allocation among the component parties of the BN was mostly based on the performance and achievement in the 1969 election¹⁰. As a result, Gerakan, which won many seats in the 1969 election, was entrusted to contest for more seats than its competitor, the MCA. At this stage, the MCA did not have much choice and had accepted its poor performance in winning the votes of the Chinese¹¹. In 1974, the MCA had been given three seats but won only one. Gerakan had thirteen but lost two while UMNO won nine out of ten.. But after the election, the MCA gained three more when the sole Pekemas (Bagan Ajam) and two DAP members (Bukit Tambun and Pekan Bukit Mertajam) crossed over. The nine Parliamentary seats were divided evenly among the three, all of them won all the seats.

¹⁰ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

¹¹ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

Kedah

In the state of Kedah, the election was a battleground between the BN, comprising UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, the Party Gerakan and PAS (PIMP), and between the DAP, the PSRM and Independent. The election pact among the BN components was based on 1969 position where each party retained its constituencies, while the two newly-created state constituencies were given to UMNO and PAS.

In this 'sharing of seats', it was evident that the MCA's allocation was reduced from five seats since 1959 to only two seats. Not a single seat was allocated to the MIC and hence the MIC has not been represented in the State Assembly since 1969 (Husein Mohamed, 1987:101). On the nomination day, eight of the BN's candidates were returned unopposed (Election Commission, 1977:15). Four were from UMNO and two each from the MCA and PAS. Out of these, five state executive council members were returned unopposed.

5.4.2 1978 Election

The allocation of seats within the BN in the 1978 general election, as expected, became the main principle adhered to, just as in 1974. Each component party in the BN would retain the seats it held in Parliament and the state assemblies, leaving only those held by the opposition being subject to bargaining. Opposition seats comprised 23 at parliamentary level and 77 at state level in Peninsular Malaysia. For the 1978 general election, those allocated to PAS in 1974 would go mainly to UMNO, as these were mostly Malay-dominated constituencies. For the 1978 general election in Peninsular Malaysia, 79 of the 114 parliamentary constituencies had an absolute

Malay majority. Twenty-two were Chinese majorities and 13 were mixed with non-Malays forming the majority (see chapter four).

The 1978 general election introduced a new element in bargaining power and seat allocation within the BN. Previously, the request and demand for seat allocation only involved negotiation and bargaining between the different ethnic-based groups. The bone of contention this time was not between the Malay and Chinese partners, though there were some minor differences; the difficulty was the conflict between intra-ethnic groups, especially the MCA and Gerakan, each with the desire to become the sole representative of the Chinese. The focus of the dispute were Penang, Perak and Selangor. As early as January 1978, the MCA state liaison committee chairman, Mr. Lim Kean Siew, expressed the possibility of the MCA contesting under its own banner if it was allocated only two seats by the BN (*Watan*, 25 January 1978).

The same threat was reiterated over the next few months, with Perak MCA joining in the demand for more seats at both levels. In Penang, the MCA leader demanded eight state seats, five more than in 1974, and when he discovered that the party would get five, Lim Kean Siew announced that he would not be standing for election (*New Straits Times*, 20 June 1978). He complained that the allocation did not reflect the true strength of the parties in the BN. In the bargaining, the final decision rested with Hussein Onn, the then supreme of BN.

This demand and bargain by the MCA was set off by its apprehension that the BN may give more seats to Gerakan, which had maintained a stable 11 stands in the two previous general elections in 1969 and 1974, especially in Penang. If that happened,

the status of the MCA as the main representative party for the Chinese would be threatened.

Table 5.9: Comparison of seats contested and won between MCA and Gerakan in the 1969 and 1974 General Elections.

Party	1969				1974			
	Seats Contested		Seats Won		Seats Contested		Seats Won	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
MCA	33	84	13	30	23	56	19	43
(% success)	-	-	(39.3)	(35.7)	-	-	(82.6)	(76.7)
Gerakan	14	37	8	26	8	18	5	13
(% success)	-	-	(57.1)	(70.2)	-	-	(62.5)	(72.2)

P – Parliamentary S – state

Source:- 1) Data 1969: Goh Cheing Teik.1971. *The May Thirteenth Incident and Democracy in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur. Oxford University Press. p.12
2) Data 1974: Diane K. Mauzy. 1983. *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur .Marican & Sons.. p. 95

Meanwhile, the allocation of seats in Kelantan after PAS's withdrawal from the BN did not pose any problem. This was following the agreement made by the BN when accepting Berjasa as a component member, which were:

1. All seats contested by PAS in the 1974 general election shall be given to Berjasa;
2. Berjasa should be allowed to carry out its activities in all parts of Malaysia, and the BN should not harbour any suspicion towards such activities;
3. The posts of Minister, Deputy Minister and Parliamentary Secretaries held by PAS after the 1974 general election shall be given to Berjasa;
4. Berjasa representatives shall sit in all statutory bodies; and,

5. Berjasa MPs who are not holding any post in the government shall not be under the party whip (Ismail Kassim, 1979:32).

Finally, with consensus from its component parties, the seat allocation among BN shown in table 5.10.

Table 5.10 : Seat Allocation among Barisan Nasional Parties in the 1978 election

Party	1978	
	Parliament	State
UMNO	75	185
MCA	28	60
MIC	4	11
GERAKAN	8	18
PPP	1	4
Berjasa	2	6

Source :Diane K. Mauzy (1983), *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur .Marican & Sons. p.123.

The election results gave the BN 131 of the 154 parliamentary seats with 57.6 percent of the total valid vote. In Peninsular Malaysia, the BN won 94 of the 114 parliamentary seats. Among the Barisan components in Peninsular Malaysia, UMNO lost only five seats to PAS, while the MCA, the MIC, Gerakan and the PPP lost a total of 15 seats, all to the DAP (Husein Mohamed, 1987:101).

Table 5.11: Barisan Nasional's performance in the 1978 elections

Party	1978	
	Parliament	State
UMNO	70	175
MCA	17	43
MIC	3	9
GERAKAN	4	12
PPP	-	1
Berjasa	-	-

Source: Diane K. Mauzy, (1983), *Barisan Nasional: Coalition Government in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur .Marican & Sons.. p.123.

Penang

The Gerakan performance in the 1974 general election troubled the MCA, which was worried about its loss of status as the spokesperson of the Chinese in the government. The MCA then urged and pressured the BN to allocate more seats to it in the election, especially in Penang. The BN therefore increased the number of seats allocated to the MCA at the expense of Gerakan. The biggest disappointment for Gerakan in the 1978 election was that it failed to get additional parliamentary and state seats in Penang. It was given only 11 seats, two seats less than in 1974 and only three parliamentary seats (Tanjong, Nibong Tebal and Jelutong)¹².

In Penang, the registration of seven MCA officials to contest as independents was a direct outcome of the longstanding conflict between the MCA and Gerakan. Early in 1978, the former Labour Party leader, Lim Kean Siew who joined the MCA in 1974, was appointed Chairman of the Penang MCA, apparently with the intention of embarrassing Gerakan. If this was the intended role of Lim Kean Siew, then he performed it most effectively in the months preceding the election. His attacks on the BN state government led by Gerakan were hardly disguised (*The Star*, 9 May 1978). He demanded that the MCA be given more seats in the coming election and warned that if it were not done, the MCA would field candidates under the party's own symbol. The result was a sustained exchange of angry statements between Gerakan and the MCA. In a press conference on 9 May 1978, Lim Kean Siew challenged

¹² The party Gerakan also failed to get the constituency of Kinta for its Deputy President, Dr. Lim Kheng Yaik (a former MCA leader and one time minister for New Villages). For Gerakan, gaining Kinta would provide a base to expand its influence in the Kinta area as it was envisioned to be linked economically with Taiping and Penang. Among supporters of Gerakan, there was upset and considerable disappointment. Many were convinced that since joining the BN, the party had been forced into a weaker election position. Certainly the number of seats given to Gerakan in 1974 and 1978 was considerably less than in 1969 when it first took part in the election. See Ismail Kassim (1978).

Gerakan to contest under its own symbol. "Let the people choose between Gerakan and the MCA" (*The Star*, 10 May 1978). This situation of conflict indeed challenged the BN. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad himself stated that;

'There are members of the BN who may not be on talking terms with each other, but I am certain that they will use the steelyard symbol and that is not a problem.' (*Utusan Malaysia*, 22 March 1978).

As events turned out, the MCA was given two more state seats to contest - a total of five - but this was still insufficient, as even if all were won, it would remain in a minority¹³. At the same time, seven members of the MCA resigned to stand as independents. Of these, two had their nominations disqualified for technical reasons, but the remaining five contested as the so-called People's Independent Front¹⁴. Gerakan reacted angrily and accused the MCA of being behind the Front. It would seem that the MCA was supporting not only the five MCA members accepted as official candidates of the BN but also the five independents and that this was aimed at wresting the political initiative from the Gerakan¹⁵. Even if the independents failed to win the seats, it was possible that they would at least steal away enough votes to deny crucial seats to party Gerakan.

As a result, in the 1978 election, opposition party, the DAP, was most impressive in Penang where it took four parliamentary seats and five state seats compared to no

¹³ They were the state seats of Sungei Bakap, Kampung Kelan, Padang Kota, Datuk Keramat and Paya Terubong. *The Star*, 1 June 1978.

¹⁴ They were Dr. Khoo Soo Kheng (Nibong Tebal/Parliament, Sungai Bakap/State), Mr. Mah Cheok Tat (Kampung Kolam), Mr. Gan Kah Peng (Padang Kota), Mr. Lim Kah Pin (Datuk Keramat), Mr. Khoo Huat Hin (Paya Terubong), Mr. Tan Chong Hooi (Sungai Pinang) and Mr. Hoo Kee Ping (Tanjung/Parliament). See Ismail Kassim, (1979).

¹⁵ The People's Independent Front candidate campaign was guided by MCA and was aimed mainly at Dr. Lim Chong Eu. One of their main issues was KOMTAR (Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak, a scheme to group all the island's businesses under one controlling body). In a joint press statement, PIF asked five questions on KOMTAR, implying that Dr. Lim was guilty of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency. See Ismail Kassim, (1979).

parliamentary and two state seats in the 1974 election. The party Gerakan's performance disappointed its leader. Of most concern to them was the loss of seats in Penang. Even before the election, an important state leader, Khoo Kay Por, had lost their state seat with her disqualification and when the final result came, it held only nine state seats, a loss of three seats. This meant that Gerakan had fewer seats than UMNO and this led to sections of the state UMNO to question the position of Dr. Lim Chong Eu as Chief Minister. Dr. Lim Chong Eu himself had considerable difficulty in his state seats and won by only a very narrow margin. Gerakan also lost the parliamentary seats of Tanjong and Jelutong but managed to hold on to Nibong Tebal (Ismail Kassim, 1979:78).

Moreover, all the candidates from the People's Independent Party, who allied with the MCA, lost. Dr. Goh Cheng Teik survived a difficult election in Nibong Tebal against Dr. Khoo Soo Kheng, the former head of MCA Nibong Tebal division, who contested as a People's Independent Party candidate. Dr. Goh Cheing Teik polled 11,077 votes against Dr. Khoo Soo Kheng, 7,272 votes. Likewise, the Gerakan candidate who lost in Paya Terubong, also issued a statement that blamed the MCA for his defeat. In Paya Terubong, Gerakan's candidate had to contend with opposition not only from the DAP but also from the People's Independent Front. Lim Kean Siew, at whom much of Gerakan's criticism had been directed, responded by denying that he had campaigned against Gerakan candidates. He reiterated that his dispute was over the allocation of seats (*New Straits Times*, 10 July 1978).

The strongest criticism came from Penang MCA leader, David Choong, who placed much of the blame on Lim Kean Siew for the MCA-Gerakan dispute. David Choong himself lost the state seat of Ayer Itam and alleged that Lim was more preoccupied

with attacking Gerakan than the DAP¹⁶. The DAP almost benefited from the tense relationship between the MCA and Gerakan. The BN lost the seat that it won in the 1974 election due to the conflict between its two component parties. The very important lesson learnt here was that when the spirit of consociation in the BN was lost, a third party (the opposition) would benefit.

Kedah

The 1978 election saw PAS withdrawing as a component member of the BN on 16 December 1977¹⁷. This event probably did not affect Penang much but for Kedah, it was a very challenging step because now PAS was once again UMNO's competitor in the Malay voter majority constituency, where it won nine State Assembly seats contested previously (while still in the BN). As all of the seats won by PAS were Malay majority constituencies, it was therefore now contested by UMNO. At the same time, UMNO surrendered the constituency with mixed voters, i.e. the State Assembly of Kuala Ketil, to MIC. In the 1974 election, UMNO contested in this constituency with its candidate, Mohammad Muslim Othman, defeating the Parti Rakyat Malaysia candidate and the Independent candidate. The MIC was not allocated a single seat in the 1974 election.. The party Gerakan and the MCA retained the seats previously entrusted to them.

¹⁶ Refer to Lee Kam Hing, *The Peninsular Non-Malay Parties in BN*, in Crouch H., Lee Kam Hing and Micheal Ong, (1980).

¹⁷ BN's move to expel PAS was the peak of the crisis between UMNO and PAS, which had been going on since early 1973. This became more evident when in the 1974 election, there were PAS supporters who had openly supported independent candidates in several constituencies in Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu. PAS's opposition of the BN clearly surfaced when 20 State Assembly members of PAS in Kelantan demanded that the Chief Minister of Kelantan, who was supported by UMNO, resign. The situation led to doubtful votes in the State Assembly that eventually led to serious political conflict in Kelantan, which resulted in a state of emergency being declared. See Mauzy, D. K. (1983).

The 1978 election results at Parliamentary level saw the BN winning 11 of the 13 seats contested. Two of these seats, Parliamentary seats of Kota Star and Baling, were controlled by PAS. At State Assembly level, the BN's components, the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC, won all their seats. UMNO, who contested 21 seats, lost only seven seats to PAS.

5.4.3 1982 Election

Seats allocation in the 1982 general election was perhaps the first challenge faced by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who was elected the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, who chaired the BN Supreme Council for the first time, announced that there would not be much change done in seat allocation. The 1982 general election saw existing seats being maintained by the same parties, for the following reasons;

1. The formula used for seat allocation did not result in much conflict, especially between the component ethnic-based parties, although internal conflict within the same ethnic group that had existed since the 1974 general election continued between the MCA and Gerakan in Penang.
2. Seats won by a component party in 1978 would still be represented by that party. Subsequent allocations of seats were based on seats lost or won by the opposition.
3. There was no increase in electoral seats either at Parliamentary or State Assembly level.

As a result of this agreement, of the 114 parliamentary seats in Peninsular Malaysia, both the MCA and the MIC received the same number of seats as in 1978, i.e. 28 and four respectively. The PPP, which lost the only seat it contested in 1978, was not re-nominated and the seat was given to the Party Gerakan, which thus had seven candidates compared with six in 1978. The Party Berjasa was given two seats while UMNO's allocation was reduced from 74 to 73 (Crouch, 1982:58).

At the state level, UMNO obtained 207 of the 312 seats, two less than in 1978, while the Party Berjasa had 13, one more than in 1978. The MCA obtained three extra seats from Gerakan in Penang, increasing its total from 59 to 62. The party Gerakan obtained four extra seats outside Penang to compensate for the three lost to the MCA, and thus increased its seats from 17 to 18. The MIC was left with only nine seats compared with the eleven it had contested in 1978, while the PPP had three seats compared with four in the previous election (Crouch, 1982:24). The 1982 general election saw close cooperation among the component parties in planning a strategy to ensure victory for the BN. For example, the MCA agreed to take over the Damansara seat contested by the MIC in 1978, which it lost to the DAP. At the same time, the MCA agreed to surrender the Segamat parliamentary seat, which was considered safe, to the MIC.

As mentioned earlier, the conflict, negotiation and bargaining during the 1978 general election was mainly between the MCA and Gerakan. Gerakan, the ruling party in Penang since the 1969 general election, certainly had better bargaining power in obtaining seats based on its ability to win seats in the 1974 and 1978 general elections as compared to the MCA. However, this situation obviously did not please the MCA. The conflict and negotiation on seat allocation between the MCA

and Gerakan became complicated in several states when party MPs changed sides. For instance, when Michael Chen of the MCA, who won the Ulu Selangor constituency in 1978, joined Gerakan. Likewise, when Dr. Tan Tiong Hong, who won the Kepong seat under the Gerakan ticket, left the party to join the MCA (Crouch, 1982: 9).

Gerakan naturally wanted Michael Chen to remain at Ulu Selangor while the MCA insisted that Ulu Selangor was an MCA seat. Finally, as a solution, Michael Chen contested under the Gerakan ticket in Beruas, Perak, which was won by the DAP in the 1978 general election, while Dr. Tan Tiong Hong let go of the Kepong seat to his former party. Although agreement was achieved, in reality dissatisfaction between the MCA and Gerakan still existed, which led to Michael Chen putting his former political secretary to contest as an independent candidate against the MCA in Ulu Selangor, as a sign of protest. This had a negative implication on the spirit of camaraderie in the BN. In his analysis of the 1982 general election, Crouch found that;

The election was also a test for the non-Malays, especially the Chinese parties in the government. In the past, support for UMNO from the Malay community had always been stronger than the support for the MCA and Gerakan from the Chinese community. The influence of the non-Malay parties in the government depends in part on their capacity to demonstrate their electoral strength against their main challenger in the opposition, the DAP (Crouch, 1982:3).

Table 5.12: Barisan Nasional's performance in the 1982 election

Party	Seats contested		Seats won	
	P	S	P	S
UMNO	73	207	70	195
MCA	28	62	24	55
MIC	4	9	4	9
GERAKAN	7	18	5	15
PPP	0	3	0	1
Berjasa	2	13	0	5

P – Parliament S – State

Source: Hussein Mohammed. 1987. *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur. Karya Bistari. p. 60 and 102.

Even though saddled with persistent conflict, the BN, as expected, had a grand victory. It won 103 of the 114 parliamentary seats in Peninsular Malaysia with 61.3 percent of the popular vote and 280 of the 311 state seats, which also gave it control of all state assemblies. The Malay vote was convincingly won by UMNO, which succeeded in 70 of the 73 parliamentary seats and 196 of the 205 state seats, thereby winning the majority of the Malay votes plus a substantial portion of non-Malay votes. The 1982 election also saw the BN recording its best performance in the Chinese majority constituencies since the 1964 election (see table 5.12). Of the 15 parliamentary areas in which the Chinese votes totalled six percent or more, the BN won nine in 1982 compared to only two in 1978.

Penang

In 1982, the main problem in seat allocation involved the conflict between Gerakan and the MCA, centred on the Penang State Assembly. Gerakan had controlled the state government since 1969, firstly as an opposition party and then as a member of the BN. Both Gerakan and the MCA tried to demonstrate that each was better able

than the other in winning seats from the DAP¹⁸. Although Gerakan and the MCA were given three parliamentary seats each to contest in Penang in 1978, Gerakan was allotted eleven seats compared with the MCA's five, which meant that there was no possibility that the MCA could regain control of the government. Unable to advance through negotiations, the MCA resorted to supporting Sabah-style 'independents' against Gerakan candidates in the 1978 election and called for an open banner rather than as a partner in the BN. The national BN leadership rejected the MCA's proposal but allocated eight state seats each to the MCA and party Gerakan instead.

The party Gerakan then put forward protests against the proposal of equal allocation of seats. This meant that the party who wins all seats will cause the other to lose, therefore there is potential for it to take over the formation of the government in Penang. Should the MCA and party Gerakan be able to win all seats contested, then the conflict to obtain the position of Chief Minister would continue. The 1982 election saw the best performance of the government in the Chinese majority constituencies since the 1964 election. The party Gerakan won all eight while the MCA lost two, including the seat contested by its state leader, Lim Kean Siew, who would have become the Chief Minister had the MCA done better than party Gerakan. Thus party Gerakan retained control of the Penang state government.

¹⁸ Three groups of people joined Gerakan during 1981-1985. The first was led by Michael Chen Wing Sum and ex-MCA members. Of much significance was the second group of Chinese educationists who had been closely associated with the United Chinese School Committees' Association and the United Chinese School Teachers' Association, popularly known in its Chinese acronym as the 'Dong Jiao Zong' group. It included Kerk Choo Ting, Ong Tin Kim, Dr. Kang Chin Seng, Dr. Koh Tsu Koon and others. On joining the party on 31 March 1982, the group categorically stated its stand on language, education and culture to create an integrated Malaysia. The third group comprised well-known trade unionists headed by former CUEPACS President, T. Najendran. It helped strengthen their relationship with the Malaysian working class (Interview Goh Cheing Teik. See appendix A)

Kedah

In Kedah, the 1982 election did not bring a single change in seat allocation. The same allocation as in 1978 was maintained. Just as other states obtained excellent results due to the change in leadership from Hussein Onn to Dr. Mahathir Mohammed, Kedah also recorded success at parliamentary and State Assembly levels. Only two of the seven State Assembly seats that were previously controlled by PAS were not won.

5.4.4 1986 Election

The 1986 general election saw an increase in the number of parliamentary and state seats due to a revision carried out by the Election Commission on constituency boundaries. This amendment and resulting additional constituencies indirectly gave cause for an open debate among the BN's component parties to clamour for additional seats. However, the situation still hinged on the old formula, which depended heavily on ethnic majority or ethnic composition in each constituency.

Statistically, the percentage of voters by ethnic group in Peninsular Malaysia in 1986 was about 55.0 percent Malays, 36.0 percent Chinese and nine percent Indians and others. While for ethnic majority at parliamentary level, 92 constituencies had a majority of Malay voters, 26 with Chinese majorities, and 14 regarded as mixed (Malay and Chinese). At the State Assembly level, 261 constituencies were Malay majorities, 61 were Chinese majorities, and 29 were mixed (Malaysian Parliamentary and State Elections Held on August 2nd and 3rd 1986 including Analysis of 1984 Electoral Delineation Exercise. 1986:1, Table R2A).

Overall net increases in the final number of Malay-majority seats were 13 at the parliamentary level and 25 at the State Assembly level. Chinese-majority seats increased by four at the parliamentary level and 10 at the State Assembly level. In the mixed-majority constituencies, where the percentage of voters from both ethnic groups was less than 50.0 percent, there was only one additional seat at parliamentary level and four more at the State Assembly level (table 5.13).

Table 5.13: Constituency by Ethnic Majority of Voters in the 1986 General Election in Peninsular Malaysia

State	Malay		Chinese		Mixed		Total	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
Perlis	2	13	-	-	-	1	2	14
Kedah	14	25	-	1	-	2	14	28
Kelantan	13	39	-	-	-	-	13	39
Terengganu	8	32	-	-	-	-	8	32
Penang	4	13	6	16	1	4	11	33
Perak	11	28	6	15	6	3	23	46
Pahang	8	27	1	5	1	1	10	33
Selangor	8	26	3	7	3	9	14	42
K. Lumpur	2	-	4	-	1	-	7	-
N. Sembilan	5	18	1	5	1	5	7	28
Malacca	4	14	1	4	-	2	5	20
Johore	13	26	4	8	1	2	18	36
Total	92	261	26	61	14	29	132	351

P – Parliament S – State

Source:- *1986 Malaysian Parliamentary and State Elections Held on 2 and 3 August 1986, Including an Analysis of the 1984 Electoral Delineation Exercise*. 1986. Office Automation Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur. p.6-7.

The negotiation and bargaining scenario from the aspect of seat allocation in 1986 revealed a challenging test to the BN leadership, due to several factors;

1. Demands by the Party Gerakan

The party Gerakan aggressively demanded that it be given more seats. This was granted in the previous election, but this time the Gerakan threatened to withdraw from the BN coalition if its demand was not fulfilled. The party Gerakan's seriousness was demonstrated before the announcement of the general election was made, when they emphasised their threat to pull out, in addition to Dr. Lim Chong Eu himself retiring from politics (*Berita Harian*, 6 June 1986:2). This incident certainly posed as a crisis to the BN, especially in Penang, where it had to face the opposition party, the DAP, which had launched its Tanjung two project aimed specifically to capture Penang. BN handled the Gerakan's demand in the usual manner as previously, based on performance and achievement during the last election. Thus, the Gerakan eventually received an additional two parliamentary seats and four State Assembly seats.

2. Party Hamim

On 18 July 1986, party Hamim, led by former PAS President, Asri Hj. Muda, was accepted as a component member of the BN. This new entry strategically strengthened the BN, especially in contesting against PAS in Kelantan and Terengganu. Yet party Hamim's membership did not please party Berjasa, another of PAS's fragment parties, which had been in the BN since the last two electoral terms. The BN's move was interpreted to imply that party Berjasa's influence was ineffective and that party Berjasa was being regarded as less and less important. For this reason, although they did not threaten to withdraw from the coalition, party Berjasa announced on 22 July that it would not be contesting in the election. This

automatically transferred all of Berjasa's proposed and allocated seats to party Hamim (table 5.14). (Sankaran & Hamdan, 1987:62).

Table 5.14: Comparison of seats contested and won in the 1982 General Election with the number of seats contested in the 1986 General Election.

Party	1982 Seats contested		1982 Seats won		1986 Seats contested	
	P	S	P	S	P	S
UMNO	73	207	70	195	84	240
MCA	28	62	24	55	32	69
MIC	4	9	4	9	6	13
GERAKAN	7	18	5	15	9	22
PPP	0	3	0	1	0	3
Berjasa	2	13	0	5	(wd)	(wd)
Hamim	-	-	-	-	2	4

(wd) – withdrew from contest

Source:- *1986 Malaysian Parliamentary and State Elections Held on 2 and 3 August 1986, Including an Analysis of the 1984 Electoral Delineation Exercise*. 1986. Office Automation Sdn. Bhd. Kuala Lumpur. p.Table P1

The status of the MCA, especially in competing and demanding for seats in the 1986 general election, was generally weaker than the party Gerakan's, owing to internal party problems. Firstly, the MCA President, Tan Koon Swan, faced a business crisis in his Pan Electric Company in Singapore, resulting in him being charged in court. Secondly, the MCA had experienced a leadership crisis over the last 20 months, since June 1983, during the leadership of Dr. Neo Yee Pan (Lao Zhong, 1984: 63-95). Under these circumstances, the MCA was apparently trying to mend its image by not making any demands for additional seats and by not being as vocal as the party Gerakan. The MCA put the allocation of seats in this election totally in the hands of the Chairman of the BN.

Apprehension over the performance of the BN as a result of this internal conflict and bargaining from component parties, especially the party Gerakan, was soon cleared

when it secured 148 of the 177 parliamentary seats and regained control over all state governments in the Peninsular. Of all the BN's component parties, UMNO performed the best by winning 83 seats contested (98.8 percent). The BN component parties that fared badly (in comparison with other partners) were the MCA and Gerakan, each with 53.1 percent and 55.6 percent success rates respectively. The MCA suffered one of its most humiliating defeats, winning only 17 of the 34 parliamentary seats allocated and 44 of the 70 state seats (62.9 percent). The party Gerakan lost four of the nine parliamentary seats allocated, although it did slightly better at the state level, especially in Penang where it won nine of the 11 seats allocated to them (Sankaran & Hamdan, 1987:45).

The pattern of defeat by the MCA and Gerakan was clearly influenced by the geographical distribution of the Malay and non-Malay voters. Both were badly defeated by the DAP in areas with Chinese-majority voters, such as Bukit Bendera (73.8 percent), Tanjung (86.6 percent), Jelutong (66.0 percent), Ipoh (66.4 percent), Kota Melaka (72.0 percent) and Seputeh (83.1 percent). Meanwhile, the MIC succeeded in retaining all the seats it contested (Sankaran & Hamdan, 1987:57-60).

Penang

The review of boundary designation of constituencies made in 1984 led to an increase of two Parliamentary seats and six State Assembly seats in Penang. This increase saw the establishment of the Parliamentary division of Tasek Gelugor and Bayan Baru. Meanwhile, at the State Assembly, the new areas were Ara Rendang, Prai, Seberang Jaya, Kebun Bunga, Batu Lanchang and Telok Kumbar (Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia, Ulangkaji dan Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-

bahagian Parlimen dan Negeri bagi Negeri-negeri Tanah Melayu, 1994: 63). These newly created constituencies had indirectly dragged the component parties towards a conflict on seat allocation. The MCA and Gerakan, who had all this while been competing to demand for additional seats, continued to pose greater challenge to the BN. Furthermore, the BN had to face fierce competition from the opposition, namely the DAP, who launched the Tanjong II Project, aimed at capturing Penang (*News Strait Times*, 4 July 1986:4). This challenge, however, did nothing to ease the conflict on seat allocation, especially between Gerakan and the MCA. According Dr. Lim Keng Yaik;

‘this party could no longer work with the MCA and would even field candidates against it if Gerakan was allowed to contest under its own symbol in the general election’ (*The Star*, 2 June 1986).

The party Gerakan asked for more state and federal seats and threatened to withdraw from the coalition in July 1986 unless its demands were met (Chung Kek Yoong, 1987:29-31). MCA did the same with the hope to gain the additional newly created seats. On this matter, the MCA President, Tan Koon Swan said that;

‘The MCA requested for a fair and balanced seat allocation following the addition of seats. The MCA would never make any unreasonable demands to the BN but it did not want the number of seats allocated to it to be reduced this time’ (*Berita Minggu*, 29 June 1986:8).

However, after allocation was made by the BN, Gerakan was disappointed to see that no additional seats were given to them (*New Straits Times*, 14 July 1986). Instead, of the five additional seats, two were given to UMNO and three to the MCA, whilst Gerakan remained with the same 11 seats that were allocated to them previously. The 1986 election saw the DAP winning all six of the urban constituencies and the

Chinese majority seats in Penang¹⁹. Although the DAP did not realise its target of gaining control of the Penang State Assembly, it revised its representation from the previous two to 10 seats, becoming the second largest party after UMNO (12 seats), having one seat more than Gerakan. Gerakan suffered a rather embarrassing defeat when the Penang Gerakan President, Tan Gim Hwa lost to Tan Joo Liat with a large majority of 4,499 in Batu Lanchang. The same fate befell state MCA leader, Lee Jong Ki, who lost by a 262 majority to Peter Paul in Padang Kota (Election Commission, 1988:96).

Meanwhile, UMNO won all 12 state seats to emerge as the party with the majority at State Assembly. The situation had indirectly introduced a new element of conflict regarding position. Based on the number of seats won, UMNO was eligible to claim the title of Chief Minister. Demands were thus made for the position to be given to UMNO. But eventually, the BN leader, Dr. Mahathir, decided to hand the position directly to Dr. Lim Chong Eu, although Gerakan won only nine seats, as a strategy to ensure that Penang did not fall into the hands of the opposition in the next election (*News Strait Times*, 29 August 1986:8).

Kedah

In Kedah during the 1986 election, there was one additional Parliamentary seat in Pendang and two State Assembly seats in Derga and Tanjong Dawai. This increase, however, did not raise much conflict in seat allocation in Kedah because the

¹⁹ Bukit Bendera 73.8 % Chinese voters, Tanjong 86.6 % Chinese voters, Jelutong and Bayan Baru 66.0 % Chinese voters, Nibong Tebal 47.0 % Chinese voters. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 19869*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

registered voters were mainly Malays²⁰. Even though there were requests that Derga be given to the Chinese, it was later dropped due to objections from UMNO in that division²¹. The first People's Representative of Derga. Finally, all the three newly created seats were given to UMNO.

In this election, State Assembly seats were also swapped by mutual agreement between the MCA and the MIC. The MCA, who had previously contested in Lunas, moved to Gurun (now known as Kuala Ketil) and vice versa. This procedure had indirectly exhibited high compromise between the component parties through common interest. Meanwhile, Gerakan remained in the State Assembly constituency of Tikam Batu. Results of the 1986 election showed that Kedah BN did not have any problems to continue maintaining its performance, except for UMNO, who lost three seats to PAS, which were for State Assembly areas Bukit Raya, Sala and Langgar (Election Commission, 1988:86-87).

5.4.5 1990 Election

If the 1986 election had tested the MCA after its critical leadership crisis, the 1990 General Election saw UMNO being tested by voters following the serious conflict involving a large number of its stalwarts²². The emergence of the Parti Melayu

²⁰ Pendang Parliamentary constituencies - Malay 86.9%, Chinese 7.15% and Indian only 0.89%. State Assembly Derga, Malay 58.6%, Chinese 37.3% and Indian 3.88%. State Assembly Tanjong Dawai, Malay 57.2%, Chinese 22.6% and Indian 19.5%. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 19869*. Report by UMNO Headquarters.

²¹ Interview with Abdul Rahman Ibrahim, Former Secretary-General of the Kedah Barisan Nasional and former UMNO secretary (1985-1996). Held the post of Kedah State Government Council member for 14 years.see appendix A.

²² The source of the UMNO leadership crisis was the contest for the post of President (Dr. Mahathir Mohamad versus Tengku Razaleigh) and other main positions during the UMNO general assembly in 1987. The competition caused UMNO to break up into two camps known as Team A and Team B. This led to dissatisfaction among some members, who later brought this case to court, which finally resulted in UMNO being banned on 4 February 1988. Dr. Mahathir Mohammed consequently formed

Semangat 46²³, led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, gave competition to UMNO in ensuring that the BN continued as the ruling Government in the following term. Furthermore, this election also saw the coalition of opposition parties into the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) and the Gagasan Rakyat. Both coalitions, led by the Parti Melayu Semangat 46, had formulated plans and strategies to usurp the BN rule.

The Angkatan leader stated that an implicit by-product of the seat allocation formula was that, should Angkatan gain enough seats to take over a state government, the Chief Minister would come from PAS, while Semangat would provide the Prime Minister should the opposition win enough seats in the national Parliament (Khong Kim Hoong, 1991:23).

In the history of election, this was the first time ever that opposition parties had collaborated as a single cohesive front to challenge the BN. With the APU concentrating on Malay-majority constituencies in eastern Peninsular Malaysia and the Malay Cluster areas of western Peninsular Malaysia, a difficult task ahead awaited the BN, which was already beset by internal problems. With respect to this, in facing the challenge from the opposition front, the BN leadership tried to address its internal conflict, particularly on seat allocation. Hence, the BN decided to maintain the number of seats allocated to each component party, as it did in the previous election. This was accepted with tolerance and without conflict among the component parties (mainly between the MCA and Gerakan), which enabled each party to plan a more effective strategy, as they were more familiar with those constituencies already under their control (*Utusan Malaysia*, 27 March 1990:3). This

UMNO (Baru) whilst Tengku Razaleigh formed the new Semangat 46. See Ahamd Atory Hussein (1997).

²³ The Semangat 46 (The spirit of 46, harking back to the year 1946 when the old UMNO was formed to 'protect the survival' of the Malay race in the face of the 'threat' arising from the British proposal to liberalise citizenship requirements for the non-Malay communities under the Malayan Union.

was in line with the challenge ahead, where most of the seats contested were on a one-to-one basis between the BN and the opposition. The move thus taken by the BN, with consensus from its component parties, resulted not only in ensuring that it remained in power, but also in proving its ability to maintain its two-thirds mandate in parliament.

The BN won 127 of the 180 parliamentary seats contested. UMNO obtained 71 of the 86 parliamentary seats, while at State Assembly level it won 196 of the 246 (80.0 percent) seats. Nevertheless, for the second time in history, the opposition captured Kelantan when the Semangat 46 (14 seats), PAS (24 seats) and Berjasa (one seat) dominated the State Assembly by defeating all UMNO candidates (Election Commission, 1992:84-85). In this election, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) was allocated 32 parliamentary seats to contest, the same number as in the previous election. After their disappointing performance in 1986, the party had hoped that the pendulum would swing back to its favour. However, the results proved to be the contrary. There was only a marginal improvement, with an addition of one seat. In the Federal Territory and Penang, all the party's seven parliamentary and nine state candidates were defeated. In Perak and Selangor, it only managed to win a minority of seats it contested, three of seven and two of five respectively. It was notable that 13 of the MCA's candidates were returned in constituencies where the Chinese voters formed less than 50.0 percent of the electorate (Yusof Khan Loth Khan, 2002:160).

In the state election, the party experienced a further decline from the two previous elections. It contested in 64 constituencies throughout the country and won only in 34, compared to 43 in 1986. The weakness of the party in the urban Chinese

constituencies at the parliamentary level was also reflected at the state level. There was high rejection of the MCA, particularly in two states. In Penang, all the nine candidates were defeated and in Perak, there were nine defeats of the twelve constituencies.

In 1990, the Party Gerakan contested in nine parliamentary constituencies, as it did in the previous election, and held on to the same five seats it won in 1986; three in Perak and one each in Penang and the Federal Territory. In Penang, considering its stronghold, the party lost in three of the four constituencies. In state elections, Gerakan won only 11 of the 21 seats it contested in the various states. The most significant slide was in Penang, where it held on to only seven seats (Khong Kim Hoong, 1991:32).

The Indian component of the ruling coalition, the MIC, was the only Barisan member that had held its ground over the last few elections. In 1990, the party won all six parliamentary and twelve of the thirteen constituencies it contested throughout the country (Khong Kim Hoong, 1991:33). Since the Indian electorate was thinly spread out, there was no Indian-majority constituency. At the most, the Indian voters constituted about 20.0 percent of the electorate in the constituency. Thus, the party was very dependent on the assistance of its coalition partner, especially UMNO (Baru)²⁴, since all the MIC constituencies had high proportions of Malay voters.

Penang

²⁴ In Malay, *Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (Baru)* or *UMNO (Baru)* - a political party founded by Mahathir Mohamad, Ghafar Baba in 1988 in Malaysia. The original UMNO was declared illegal by the High Court judge Harun Hashim after irregularities were discovered involving the election of party officials in 1987. In 1989, UMNO Baru was formally announced as being the legal and financial successor of the original UMNO. See Ahmad Atory Hussein, (1997).

In the 1990 general election, the DAP launched its 'do-or-die' battle to take over the Penang state government by moving its party stalwarts from their safe seats to contest against the strongmen from the ruling coalition. Backed by the assumption that the DAP would win in its traditional strongholds anyway, this step was deemed necessary for the party to gain additional seats at the expense of the ruling coalition. The calculation was that with the Semangat 46 winning in a few constituencies, an opposition takeover was not an impossible target. In the 1990 election, the BN maintained its seat allocations with no change (*Utusan Malaysia*, 27 March 1990). The issue of seat allocation eased down and there were no threats on leaving the party or any other threats during this election. As a result, the BN only won 19 seats compared to 25 in 1982 and 23 in 1986. If the BN had lost another three seats, it would have lost control of the state government. If it were not for the support of the Malay voters, many more of the Chinese leaders from the MCA and party Gerakan would have been defeated.

In this election, the MCA tried to win back the disaffected voters it lost in 1986, by tackling some issues that were salient to the Chinese community. While the same promises were made in the BN manifesto regarding the freedom of worship and the maintenance of Chinese schools as they existed, the party was not able to get the laws repealed before the election. However, the guarantees were not believable, given the experience of the 1982 election. On that occasion, the party campaigned on the issues of the strong Chinese representation in the government to ensure its effectiveness. It was given an overwhelming mandate when almost all the parliamentary and state candidates were returned. Despite these victories, the MCA leadership did not succeed in effecting any change in government policy on issues

which were of concern to the Chinese. Since then, the party had not been able regain its credibility and this was detrimental to the party at the polls. As a result, the MCA suffered losses in nine of the twelve constituencies, a performance worse than that in 1986.

Meanwhile, Gerakan also suffered its worst defeat ever since its involvement in the 1969 election. Even the party Gerakan Chief Minister, Dr. Lim Chong Eu, was defeated in the very constituency that he had represented for 22 years (Khong Kim Hoong, 1991:33). The weak performance and the departure of the Chief Minister have raised doubts about the capability of the party to provide leadership under the Barisan government in Penang. Although the Chief Executive's position still went to Gerakan for continuity and expediency, the party knew that it would have to depend on the goodwill of UMNO, which won all the ten seats it contested.

Kedah

The political tension in Penang did not have much impact on the politics of Kedah. By maintaining the same seat allocation that has been determined for each component party, the 1990 election occurred without any tug-of-war for seats. Likewise with the results obtained, UMNO succeeded in winning over two of the three seats previously controlled by PAS. Only the Bukit Raya State Assembly could not be taken (Election Commission, 1992:81). This was unexpected, especially since UMNO previously had to face a difficult situation when it was banned on 4 February 1988. The MCA, who had all this while recorded a hundred percent success, had to hand over its long-standing Kota Darulaman State Assembly to the DAP. Gerakan and the MIC continued to maintain its seats.

5.4.6 1995 Election

The 1995 election was generally held in a national atmosphere of political stability, and encouraging economic development. After the leadership crisis that beset UMNO (Baru) was resolved, and inspired by the ability to retain its two-thirds absolute power in parliament in the 1990 election, BN felt that it would not encounter much problem in the coming election. The 1995 election saw an increase in the number of seats contested, both at parliamentary and state levels.

After the re-delineation exercise was completed in 1993, the number of parliamentary seats was increased from 180 to 192, of which 145 were in Peninsular Malaysia. The number of state seats was increased to 498; of which 394 seats were in Peninsular Malaysia (Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia, Ulangkaji dan Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Parlimen dan Negeri bagi Negeri-negeri Tanah Melayu, 1994:22). Despite the increase in the number of seats, seat allocation among the BN components did not pose many problems. The demands for additional seats by these parties were neither too difficult nor serious. This was because the increase of seats was mostly in areas where the majority was made up of a particular race.

Following the re-delineation, the number of Bumiputera-majority constituencies increased from 76 to 82. The total number of Bumiputera constituencies now constituted 61.0 percent of the seats in Parliament. The number of seats with non-Malay majorities in Peninsular Malaysia reduced from 34 to 33. This indirectly reduced the conflict and friction between the two major Chinese parties, namely the MCA and Gerakan. Nevertheless, for constituencies that there evenly divided

between the Malays and non-Malays, the number increased from 22 to 29 seats (see table 5.15).

Table 5.15: Impact of the re-delineation exercise on ethnic distribution in parliamentary constituencies between the 1986 and 1995 General Elections

Parliamentary Constituencies	Bumiputera-Majority Constituencies		Non-Bumiputera Majority Constituencies		Evenly Divided Constituencies	
	1986	1995	1986	1995	1986	1995
Perlis	2	3	-	-	-	-
Kedah	9	14	-	-	5	1
Kelantan	13	14	-	-	-	-
Terengganu	8	8	-	-	-	-
Penang	4	4	7	7	-	-
Perak	10	10	11	9	2	4
Pahang	7	8	1	1	2	2
Selangor	6	8	3	4	5	5
Kuala Lumpur	2	1	4	5	1	4
N. Sembilan	3	3	2	2	2	2
Malacca	3	2	1	1	1	2
Johore	9	7	5	4	4	9
Total	76	82	34	33	22	29

Source:- *The Star*, 5 August 1986; *Utusan Malaysia*, 27 April 1995

Of the 12 new parliamentary seats that had been created by the re-delineation exercise before the 1995 General Election, the BN eventually allotted UMNO seven seats, its main partner in the ruling coalition, the MCA obtained three seats, and Gerakan and the MIC obtained one each. Thus the number of seats contested by UMNO in Peninsular Malaysia now totalled 92 at parliamentary level and 268 at state level; by the MCA, 35 parliament and 75 state; by the MIC, seven parliament and 15 state; and by Gerakan, 10 parliament and 27 state (table 5.16).

Table 5.16: Peninsular Malaysian parliamentary and state seats contested by main BN component parties in 1995

State	UMNO		MCA		MIC		Gerakan	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
Perlis	3	13	-	2	-	-	-	-
Kedah	13	28	2	4	-	2	-	2
Kelantan	14	42	-	1	-	-	-	-
Terengganu	8	31	-	1	-	-	-	-
Penang	4	12	3	9	-	1	4	11
Perak	11	30	7	14	2	3	3	5
Pahang	8	28	3	8	-	1	-	1
Selangor	8	30	6	12	3	3	-	3
N. Sembilan	4	30	2	8	1	2	-	1
Kuala Lumpur	3	-	4	-	-	-	3	-
Malacca	3	16	2	8	-	1	-	-
Johore	13	25	6	11	1	2	-	2
Total	92	275	35	75	7	15	10	27

Source:- *New Straits Times*, 27 April 1995. p. 13

As expected, the BN achieved outstanding results compared to that of the 1995 election. They won 123 of the 144 parliamentary seats contested and 338 of the 385 state seats in Peninsular Malaysia (table 5.17) (Election Commission, 1992:16).

Table 5.17: Barisan Nasional's performance in the 1995 General Elections in Peninsular Malaysia

	Parliament		State	
	Contested	Won	Contested	Won
UMNO	92	79	268	230
MCA	35	30	75	71
MIC	7	7	15	15
Gerakan	10	7	27	22
Total	144	123	385	338

Source: Yusof Khan Loth Khan. 2001. *Nostalgia Pilihanraya 1955 - 1999*. Penang.

In this election, UMNO won 79 of the 92 parliamentary seats allocated to them. At state level, UMNO captured 230 of the 268 seats. The most significant factor in the BN's overwhelming victory was the considerable support it drew from the Chinese

voters. This is reflected in the BN's performance in Peninsular Malaysia, particularly in Penang, Perak, Selangor, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur and Johore. The urban Chinese's swing to the ruling coalition was also reflected in the performance of the Chinese-based BN parties, especially the MCA. In total, the party managed to win 101 of the 110 state and parliamentary seats it contested nationwide 30 of the 35 parliamentary seats and 71 of the 75 state seats. The MCA's candidates won all the nine seats it contested in Penang and only lost one parliamentary seat. Gerakan won seven of the ten parliamentary seats and 22 of the 27 state seats it contested (*Utusan Malaysia*, 4 November 1995: 11).

The historical and poorly concealed animosity between Gerakan and the MCA had obviously been temporarily resolved before the election, which worked in their favour, particularly in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. However, since this was probably a forced reconciliation insisted upon by UMNO before the general election, it was unlikely that the cordial relations between both parties would prevail in the long term.

Penang

The 1995 election saw the BN having to face hard challenge, either from within or outside its component parties. The internal challenge involved the routine matters that it faces at every election, i.e. the allocation of election seats among its component parties. In Penang, on the concept of seat allocation based on past performance, it is indeed appropriate for Gerakan and UMNO to demand more seats than that of the MCA. The disappointing achievement in the 1986 and 1990 elections forced the MCA to accept that it is in a tight position on whether or not to firmly

hold on to the constituencies it contested or to hand them over to other component to contest for the sake of the BN, whose priority it on overall victory.

UMNO, who had been able to consistently maintain its performance in all past elections, besides being able to retain the highest number of seats, had every reason to negotiate and bargain for seats previously contested by the MCA to be taken over by them, especially in Malay majority constituencies. Gerakan was also able to retain its seats, albeit not a hundred percent, but firmly wanted to take over the MCA's seats to ensure that Penang did not fall into the hands of the opposition. This concern had a basis in view of its performance in the 1990 election, where the DAP only needed three seats to capture Penang by a simple majority.

In the 1995 general election, the DAP's slogan, 'Chief Minister with Power', under the special project, Tanjong III, placed a target to capture Penang based on its excellent performance in the 1990 and 1986 elections (Mohd. Sayuti Omar, 1995:21). It implied that the real power holders in Penang were UMNO leaders and not Chief Minister Koh Tsu Khoo, as UMNO had the most number of state seats in Penang and that this situation had emerged because a Chinese party had not been given a strong mandate. Instead, the Chinese gave their support to the MCA and Gerakan. The slogan also appeared to alienate the Penang Malays, forcing the DAP to later claim that the most powerful political figure in Penang was not Deputy Chief Minister Ibrahim Saad but the Penang Gerakan leader and the island's municipal president, Tan Gim Hwa²⁵.

²⁵ Interview with Goh Cheing Teik. Former Vice President of Gerakan. Experienced as a Deputy Minister and Penang Exco member. Was also Vice President of Gerakan for five years. See appendix A.

Nevertheless, following a complicated negotiation and bargaining process between UMNO, party Gerakan, the MCA and the MIC, a decision was made to maintain the same allocation of seats as in the 1990 election. This agreement was important in acknowledging the MCA as the second largest party while protecting the interests of the Barisan National at the national level. This meant that seat allocations that denied the role of the MCA in Penang would only have a negative implication. Certainly this would cause disappointment among the MCA leadership and voters, who would probably threaten the seats contested nationwide. Hence, by the spirit of cooperation in the BN, the MCA was still entrusted to contest for seats that it had previously contested, without reallocation to the other component parties.

As a result of this negotiation, compromise and balance in bargaining, the 1995 election finally brought a decision that strengthened the position of the BN as a respected party forming the administration of the country. UMNO maintained excellence by winning a hundred percent of seats contested at both parliamentary and State Assembly levels. For the MCA, the 1995 election returned to it the credibility that it is the second largest party when it won all State Assembly seats contested and lost only one parliamentary seat. Gerakan retained the seats it contested to allow it to form the state government.

Kedah

The 1995 election saw Kedah getting an additional Parliamentary seat in Jerlun and eight State Assembly seats. This scenario was certain to provide room for every component party to put forward demands that each receive more than its existing seats. The MCA stressed how appropriate it was to be given two new constituencies,

Derga and Sidam, both with a high number of Chinese voters. Gerakan, which only had one seat all this while, also requested for additional seats. The same demand was made by the MIC, who had been contesting in Bukit Ketik²⁶. The space provided by this re-delineation exercise indeed demanded for a new and accurate formula to be developed to ensure political stability in Kedah in particular and the nation in general. According to Osman Md Aroff²⁷, from his experience in the administration of the BN, the question of seat allocation in 1995 was considered complex because several aspects had to be considered before a decision could be made.

In line with the concept that stressed ownership of a constituency based on the number of registered voters in that area, seat allocation was resolved harmoniously. UMNO was given the responsibility to control the new Parliamentary constituency of Jerlun to avoid it from falling into the hands of the opposition. Of the eight new State Assembly seats, seven were given to UMNO, i.e. Padang Mat Sirat, Kota Seputeh, Bukit Lada, Tanjong Seri, Anak Bukit, Belantik, and Kuala Ketil (*Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia, Ulangkaji dan Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Parlimen dan Negeri bagi Negeri-negeri Tanah Melayu.*, 1994:22). The remaining one, Sidam, was given to the party Gerakan.

Seat allocation in Kedah also showed high tolerance among the component parties. This is based on mutual agreement among them to swap seats. Gerakan, for example, readily released the constituency that had long been its fort, Bakar Arang, to the MCA. In return, Gerakan was given two seats, Sidam and the Derga State Assembly, another constituency previously owned by UMNO. UMNO's decision to let go of Derga was not surprising for ever since the 1990 election, the constituency was

²⁶ Interview with Abd Rahman Ibrahim. See appendix A.

²⁷ Interview with Osman Aroff. See Appendix A.

demand by the Chinese. To strengthen the demand, according to the voter analysis by race, Chinese voters have become the majority in this area²⁸.

In the 1995 election, UMNO sacrificed two constituencies that it previously owned, to other component parties. Besides Derga²⁹, UMNO also let go of Bukit Selambau³⁰. This gave the MIC two seats in this election, Lunas and Bukit Selambau. Although there was dissatisfaction about the seats allocated to the MIC, the Chairman of BN said;

‘The component parties with voter majority in a constituency should be ready to sacrifice them to an associate member with voter minority. This sacrifice would be a proof of our cooperation to enable the MIC to contest’ (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 March 1995:3).

As a result of this long term compromise, the BN succeeded in controlling a hundred percent of Parliamentary seats, while at State Assembly level, UMNO lost two seats to PAS, i.e. Anak Bukit and Bukit Raya. The MCA, party Gerakan and the MIC all achieved victory, where they won all their seats, including a few new ones. The leadership ability of the BN in Kedah in handling compromise and going on to win were indeed spectacular events in the nation’s political history.

²⁸ Racial breakdown of voters of the Derga State Assembly in the 1995 election: Malay 42.1 percent, Chinese 50.1 percent and Indian 16.9 percent. The racial breakdown of voters in the 1990 election: Malay 57.4 percent, Chinese 38.4 percent and Indian 3.1 percent. See *New Straits Times*, 27 April 1995.

²⁹ In the 1990 election, Abdul Rahman Ibrahim was the UMNO candidate who won the seat with a majority of 1,162. See Election Commission., (1992).

³⁰ Badri Yunus was the UMNO people’s representative assigned to this constituency after winning the seat in the 1990 election with a majority of 4,357. See Election Commission., (1992).

5.4.7. 1999 Election

The 1999 election was regarded by most scholars as the most critical election faced by the BN, especially UMNO. This could be due to several factors. The Malaysian economy, like many other Southeast Asian economies, was badly hit by the domino effect of the economic downturn in the region that first began with the devaluation of the Baht in 1997. Although the situation was improving and the government's 1999 budget was a pro-people budget, the consequences of the economic malaise were still causing many problems³¹. Other than the economic challenge, there was another big problem confronting the government: the much-publicized sacking and subsequent court trial of Mahathir's former deputy, Anwar Ibrahim³². When Dr. Mahathir Mohammad announced the election date on 10 November 1999, it was uncertain to what extent he could mobilize the voters to his government's side, given the severity of the above two principle challenges confronting him and his leadership of the BN government. The emergence of the Barisan Alternative, the opposition coalition that combined PAS, Keadilan, the DAP and other small parties, coupled with the reformation movement, was seen as a force that could topple the BN rule.

The 1999 election saw more than the traditional competition between political parties. It in fact also measured Dr. Mahathir's strength of influence and charisma against Anwar Ibrahim's. As a result, apart from the usual discussion on seat allocation among the component parties in the BN, a new trend in determining suitable candidates to stand for election was equally emphasised. This new phenomenon was intended to ensure that the chosen candidate was not an Anwar Ibrahim supporter.

³¹ See Welsh, B. (2004).

³² Dr. Mahathir Mohammad removed Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and had him expelled from UMNO in 2 September 1998, on the grounds of immoral behaviour. Anwar Ibrahim was then detained under the ISA, before being tried in court and sentenced to six years' imprisonment on charges of corruption (abuse of power). See Abdul Aziz Bari., (2002).

This factor was deemed more critical during discussions as compared to the element of seat allocation, which had been generally agreed that the same distribution among the component parties of the BN as in the 1995 election be retained. As a result, in Peninsular Malaysia, the BN won 102 of the 144 seats they contested (see table 5.18). This gave the BN 70.8 percent of the seats, 4.2 percent more than what they needed to retain their two-thirds majority in Parliament³³.

Table 5.18: Comparison of Barisan Nasional's performance in the 1995 and 1999 General Elections in Peninsular Malaysia

	1995		1999		Total wins/losses (%)	
	P	S	P	S	P	S
UMNO	79	230	60	176	-19.1	-23.48
MCA	30	70	28	68	-6.67	-2.86
MIC	7	15	7	15	0	0
Gerakan	7	23	7	22	0	-4.35
Total	123	338	102	281		

Source: Yusof Khan Loth Khan. 2001. *Nostalgia Pilihanraya 1955 - 1999*. Penang.

Even so, in this election, UMNO was seen as the main reason for the BN to obtain the worst result ever in a national election since 1959. The fact was that UMNO, the 'big brother' of the coalition government, had indeed lost tremendous ground³⁴. UMNO actually lost four cabinet ministers³⁵ and five deputy ministers, while most other ministers had their majorities severely cut. UMNO lost more than half of the parliamentary seats (eight of the 15) in Kedah. In Kelantan, PAS and Keadilan again defeated UMNO, with the former Parti Semangat 46's Tengku Razaleigh securing

³³ With the Semangat 46 seats they won in East Malaysia, BN sailed in comfortably with 148 seats, 20 more seats than what was required to maintain the two-thirds majority and 52 more seats than what they need to form the government with a simple majority. See Yusof Khan Loth Khan. (2002)

³⁴ See Maznah (2003), Yusof Khan loth Khan (2002) and Hussain Yaacob (2000).

³⁵ Mustafa Mohamed, Second Finance Minister; Megat Junid Megat Ayob, Domestic and Consumer Affairs Minister; Annuar Musa, Rural Development Minister; and Hamid Othman, Minister in Charge of Religious Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister. See *News Strait Times*, 4 Disember 1999.

the BN's sole victory with 13 defeats. UMNO also suffered a historic defeat in Terengganu where it lost all eight parliamentary contests.

At the state level, the BN won 281 of the total 394 seats in Peninsular Malaysia, a result that translated into a 17.0 percent decline from the BN's command of 339 seats in 1995 (Election Commission, 1997:64). Of the 58 seats lost, UMNO alone accounted for 55 seats. Once again, UMNO failed in Kelantan, the party being able to win only two of the 43 seats. And 40 years after winning the Terengganu state election in 1959, PAS regained control of the state government by winning 28 of the 32 seats. A PAS candidate defeated the long-serving UMNO Chief Minister of Terengganu, Wan Mokhtar Wan Ahmad. The MCA's achievement in the 1999 election could still be considered somewhat of a success since only two parliamentary seats were lost³⁶. Whereas Gerakan only lost a seat compared to the 1995 election. Meanwhile, the MIC maintained its successful run by retaining all seats won previously.

Penang

The Malay political tension in 1999 due to the expulsion of Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, cause the 10 election (1999) to be one of the most bitter elections ever for the BN. Since Anwar Ibrahim came from Penang, many external observers had predicted that party Keadilan would gain a place in this state (Yusof Khan Loth Khan, 2002:234). To tackle the situation, the component parties consociated to give support and priority to ensure the victory of the BN. As a result, they had agreed for the seats allocated to them in the 1995 election to be maintained. Upon this

³⁶ See Kamaruddin Jaafar (2000).

agreement, the conflict on seat allocation did not arise at all. As a result of this integrated cooperation, the component parties of the BN managed to win their respective seats in Penang. At the Parliamentary level, UMNO retained three seats and lost one to party Keadilan, while the MCA and Gerakan each lost two seats to DAP. At State Assembly level, UMNO only failed to defend two State Assembly seats, which were in Penanti, won by a PAS candidate, and in Permatang Pasir, won by party Keadilan. The party Gerakan retained 10 seats and lost one seat to the DAP. The MCA won a hundred percent of the 10 seats it contested. Likewise, the MIC retained its single seat in the Perai State Assembly.

Kedah

Kedah also retained its seat allocation formation, formed during the 1995 election. Even so, because of the Anwar Ibrahim issue, UMNO lost 12 seats to PAS, while the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC retained the seats it contested.

5.5 The Conflict In Seat Allocation

As discussed earlier, one of the factors that led to the conflict in the allocation of seats among the component parties of the BN is the creation of new constituencies following re-delineation by the Election Commission. Secondly, conflict was also made possible by the freedom of each party to demand for choice seats. In general, based on the discussion by year of election, conflict on seat allocation can be summarized as in Table 5.19;

Table 5.19: Summary of Conflicts on Seat Allocation Among the Component Parties of the Barisan Nasional, 1974 – 1999.

Electi on	Seat conflict among the parties in the Barisan Nasional	Status of conflict	Factors
1974	MCA/Gerakan	Conflict on seat allocation	Gerakan defended the seats it obtained in the 1969 general election from being taken by the MCA
1978	MCA/Gerakan	Conflict on seat allocation	The MCA demanded the return of seats taken by Gerakan (particularly in Penang)
1982		Agreed to compromise, gave their commitment to the PM	First general election held with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad as the Prime Minister
1986	UMNO/MCA/ Gerakan	Conflict on seat allocation	Re-delineation of constituencies
1990		Commitment to the Barisan Nasional	Confrontation from the coalition of the opposition parties, namely the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah and the Gagasan Rakyat
1995	UMNO/MCA/ Gerakan	Conflict on seat allocation	Re-delineation of constituencies
1999		Commitment to the Barisan Nasional	Confrontation from the coalition of opposition parties – the Barisan Alternatif

In the early years following the establishment of the BN (general elections of 1974 and 1978), conflict was concentrated on the tussle for seats between the MCA and Gerakan, each trying to regain the seats formerly controlled by them. Conflict brought about by the re-delineation of constituencies, which resulted in new constituencies, occurred in the 1986 and 1995 general elections. In the 1982 general election, when leaders of the component parties compromised to allow for a comfortable win by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, who was elected as the fourth Prime Minister, the conflict became less intense. But in the 1990 and 1999 general elections, the components of the BN had reached a consensus among themselves to consolidate

its position by putting aside the issue of seat allocation (except for isolated cases) due to the stiff competition from the opposition coalitions, such as the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, the Gagasan Rakyat and the Barisan Alternatif.

5. 6 Conclusion

Based on the elections from 1974 to 1999 discussed above, it was clear that in every election, each component party in the BN would discuss the allocation of seats either at parliamentary or state level. On the overall, the BN indeed encountered several conflicts on seat allocation. The conflicts varied in every election according to demands and the current political situation of each component party. What was important in this context was how to make a decision, in view of the many demands, in order to satisfy everyone so that attention would be focused on the agenda of the up-coming election. This was where negotiation and bargaining power come into play in tackling the existing conflict. The only certainty about any request made by each party is that some will succeed while others will fail in getting what they ask for. In order to maintain harmony and stability within the BN, the party whose request could not be fulfilled is usually given some form of compensation or reward, usually according to the party's request or awarded by the BN leadership. The form of compensation given as a result of this bargaining will be discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER 6

THE CONFLICT IN THE APPOINTMENT OF CABINET AND STATE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

6.1 Introduction

Discussion in this chapter is focused on the subject of conflict regarding the appointment of cabinet and State Executive Council members in Penang and Kedah, beginning with an explanation on the procedure of appointment. The discussion will also touch on the method of distributing the posts among the component parties of the BN. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the bargaining at state level in Penang and Kedah.

6.2 Cabinet Appointment Procedure

In Malaysia, The Prime Minister is the head of Government. The Constitution¹ stipulates that at the federal level, the Constitutional King can only appoint someone from the popularly-elected House of Representatives to be the Prime Minister (Abdul Aziz Bari, 2003:54). Since independence in 1957, the Prime Ministers of Malaysia are as follows;

¹ Federal Constitution, Article 43 (2) (a, b). See Federal constitution (1990).

1. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj (31 August 1957 - 21 Sept.1970)
2. Abdul Razak Hussein (22 September 1976 - 13 January 1976)
3. Hussein Onn (14 January 1976 - 15 July 1981)
4. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad (16 July 1981 - 31 October 2003)
5. Abdullah Ahmad Badwi (1 November 2003 – now).

The elected Prime Minister would be responsible in establishing a cabinet line-up² that will assist him in administering the country. The cabinet members head various ministries established through the wisdom of the Prime Minister (see Appendix D). In this respect, the Prime Minister will also determine the number of cabinet members and the ministries to be created³. Tunku Abdul Rahman, The first Prime Minister wrote;

‘The cabinet has grown almost twice since my time. We started off in the pre-independence days with thirteen members and continued (minus the three expatriates) with thirteen ministers and two deputy ministers after independence. Today (1983) there are 24 ministers and 20 deputy ministers. The number of ministers has multiplied but so has the work’ (1983:32).

However, the number of cabinet members needed to assist him govern the country is left to the discretion of the Prime Minister. Incidentally, this flexible arrangement gives the Prime Minister freedom in appointing his own Deputy and ministers according to the current method. Table 6.1 shows an increase in the number of ministries. However, the number of ministerial posts does not correspond, since the Prime Minister and Deputy Ministers usually head one or two ministries. From 1974

² The Malaysian Cabinet consists of the Minister, Deputy Minister and Parliamentary Secretary. However, only the Minister attends the cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister every Wednesday. See Abdul Aziz Bari (2002).

³ See Abdul Aziz Bari. Grounds for establishing a Federal Territory Ministry. *Sunday*. 10 May 1998. p.17.

to 1981, some ministries had no Deputy Minister, but from 1984 onwards, under the leadership of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, more than one Deputy Minister was appointed in some ministries. This clearly demonstrated that the Prime Minister has the prerogative to determine the number of members in his cabinet.

Table 6.1: Number of Ministries, Ministers and Deputy Ministers from 1974 to 1999.

Year	Total of ministries	Total of ministers	Total of Deputy Ministries
1974	22	22	18
1976	22	20	17
1979	22	22	16
1980	22	22	16
1981	22	22	15
1986	24	25	28
1989	25	22	31
1992	25	23	30
1994	25	22	31
1999	25	22	30

Source : a). Data 1974 - *Dewan Masyarakat*, Vol.XII, No. 8, August 1974 and *Dewan Masyarakat*, No. 9 September 1974, pp. 24-25.

b). Data 1976 - See Abdul Aziz Zakaria. 1976. *Pengenalan kepada Jentera Pentadbiran Kerajaan di Malaysia*. p. 130-132.

c). Data 1979 - See Malaysia .1982. *Official year book 1980*. Vol 17. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 454-457.

d). Data 1980 - See Malaysia .1983. *Official year book 1981*. Vol 19. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 569-571

e). Data 1981 - See *Dewan Masyarakat*. Vol. XIX. No. 9 September 1981. p.6-8

f). Data 1986 - See Malaysia 1988. *Official year book 1986*. Vol 24. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 348-350.

g). Data 1989 - See Malaysia 1991. *Official year book 1989*. Vol 27. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 245-249

h). Data 1992 - See Malaysia 1992. *Official year book 1992*. Vol 29. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix.

i). Data 1994 - See Malaysia 1994. *Official year book 1994*. Vol 31. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix

j). Data 1999 - see *Sunday Star*. 10 January 1999. p.2

This flexible number of cabinet members actually allows the addition of posts should there be a demand or bargaining from any component party. The Prime Minister, who is usually also the Chairman of the BN, may use his discretion to accede or deny requests from the component parties for inclusion in the list for government administration. Such a situation would indirectly give every component party an opportunity to acquire or increase the number of cabinet seats from time to time. Even though there has been no significant increase in the number of cabinet posts since the formation of the BN, the important thing is that every component party is given a place to jointly administer the country. This method is consistent with the basic objective of the BN, which characterises the sharing of power as joint administration of the country.

6.3 Bargaining in Cabinet Post Composition

In general, two main conflict-causing elements often surface during the contemplation on post allocation in the cabinet formed by the Prime Minister immediately following a general election. The first issue is on the number of posts to be allocated to each component party, and the second is the portfolio held by the party. Apart from this, the appointment of Deputy Prime Minister is also an issue, especially by the component party MCA. Nevertheless, this was always resolved through negotiation. Besides, the post is the prerogative of the Prime Minister, who decides on the person to be appointed;

The holder of the post of Deputy Minister is either the person who commanded the strongest support among party members or someone trusted by the Prime Minister to be his/her assistant⁴.

⁴ Interview Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

6.3.1 Cabinet Post Allocation in The Alliance

The cabinet⁵ composition since the first, in 1955, the distribution of portfolios and the appointment of ministers indicated the needs as well as the emphasis and style of each Prime Minister. The Prime Minister enjoyed a commanding position: He selected ministers and he may move ministers from one post to another in a reshuffle. He also dismissed ministers or called upon ministers to resign from the government. The Reid Commission had recommended that it is:

For the Prime Minister to choose the ministers to be appointed... He will be entitled at any time to request for the resignation of any minister because ministers hold office at the pleasure of the Yang Dipertuan Agong and the Latter must rely these matters on the advise of the Prime Minister (Abdul Aziz Bari, 2002: 43).

Although officially, the Prime Minister may appoint anyone he deems qualified and able to work with him, it is still subject to the elements of consociation balance. With regards to that, it is no surprise if the composition of the first cabinet established was multiracial (six Malays, three Chinese and one Indian). Formally, there was no written agreement on the appointment of the cabinet, which represented each race; nevertheless it was in the spirit of consociation that this was done with each component party putting forward a qualified candidate. Subsequent appointments were made at the discretion of the Prime Minister. Still it cannot be denied that at times, the component parties also put pressure to give in to the candidate put forward, or not to appoint anyone not considered fit. In this case, Funston explained during Tunku's administration:

⁵ The authority of the Cabinet in Malaysia is based on the Constitution, (see Article 39 of the Federal Constitution which is about the executive authority of the Federation). See Abdul Aziz Bari (2002).

‘The MCA was said to have been able to influence the composition of the Cabinet. Popular and nationalistic UMNO leaders like Syed Jaafar Albar and Syed Nasir did not get full minister posts because of the MCA pressure’ (Funston, 1980:13).

Table 6. 2: The first cabinet line-up as at 3 August 1955

Name	Position	Party
Tunku Abdul Rahman	Prime Minister and Home Affairs Minister	UMNO
Abdul Razak Hussein	Minister of Education	UMNO
Suleiman Abdul Rahman	Minister of Local Government, Housing and Town Planning	UMNO
Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman	Minister of Land and Mines	UMNO
Col. H.S. Lee	Minister of Transport	MCA
Sardon Haji Jubir	Minister of Works	UMNO
V.T. Sambanthan	Minister of Labour	MIC
Leong Yew Koh	Minister of Health	MCA
Ong Yoke Lin	Minister of Post and Telecommunication	MCA
Abdul Aziz Ishak	Minister of Agriculture	UMNO

Note: In this cabinet there were two deputy ministers: Mohammad Khir Johari from UMNO and Too Joon Hing from the MCA.

Source:- Tunku Abdul Rahman. 1978. *Looking Back*. Kuala Lumpur. Pustaka Antara p. 54-55

Having won the election, the government that was set up was then composed of the three parties of the Alliance. This reliance on political coalition was important in order to ensure that each of the ethnic groups was represented in the key decision-making body of the country. The composition of the Alliance cabinet in 1955, after independence and in November 1968 is shown in the table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Cabinet Minister Composition in The Alliance (1955 - 1968)

	UMNO	MCA	MIC	Total
3 August 1955	5	3	1	9
31 August 1957	9	3	1	13
1961	9	3	1	13
1963	10	4	2	16
1968	10	5	2	17

Source: Abdul Aziz Bari. 2002. *Cabinet Principles in Malaysia: The Law and Practice*. The Other Press: Kuala Lumpur. p. 127-128.

6.3.2 Cabinet Post Allocation in the Barisan Nasional

As explained earlier, although the power to appoint cabinet members lies with the Prime Minister, it does not mean that the Prime Minister will arbitrarily appoint a minister without regard to the various factors. What was clear since the days of the Alliance to the days of the BN was that the same formula used for appointing members of the cabinet to represent ethnic groups was still practised. The table 6.4 shows the overall breakdown of cabinet posts throughout reign of Prime Ministers Abdul Razak Hussein (1972-1976), Hussein Onn (1976- 1981), and Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003). In general, two issues were regularly raised during negotiation and bargaining sessions among the component parties of the BN, regarding cabinet posts. Firstly, the number of cabinet members to be appointed, and secondly, the portfolio held by each post. This could be observed through what the component parties voiced out after the first election under the steelyard symbol (BN). For instance, the MCA;

‘The MCA, while happy with its performance, was not pleased with the new Cabinet. Its total number of ministers did not increase, although it gained two additional Deputy Ministers and a new Parliamentary Secretary’ (Mauzy, 1983:97).

During Hussein Onn's time, the same sentiment was again expressed, whereby the component parties felt that they were given an insignificant role in the cabinet based on the portfolios given to them.

In the formation of a new cabinet following the final result, the MCA President, Lee San Choon, was removed from his old Ministry of Labour and Manpower to what was generally considered the less important function portfolio of Works and Utility (*New Straits Times*, 29 July 1978).

The same matter surfaced during Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's era. The overall distribution of positions among the parties remained unchanged, with UMNO holding thirteen of the twenty-four posts. The MCA had four while Gerakan and the MIC had one each. At the level of deputy minister, thirteen deputy ministers were from UMNO, six from the MCA, two from the MIC and one from Gerakan. The MCA, MIC and Gerakan are always believed that their excellent performance in the election, at least in terms of seat, merited not only an increase in Cabinet post but also the appointment to key departments.

1. Cabinet Membership

Throughout the history of the Malaysian government, the cabinet composition of Malays, Chinese and Indians became the main core of political strength. Here was the platform and venue where ethnic leaders realised the aspiration and needs of their communities. The reality was that the Malays, represented by UMNO in the BN, dominated the cabinet. Beginning from the first BN cabinet appointed in September 1974 until the final reshuffle at the end of 1999, UMNO held three quarters of the total number of minister and deputy minister posts.

In Abdul Razak Hussein's cabinet, the MCA received three ministerial posts and three deputy minister posts, the MIC had one minister and one deputy minister, and Gerakan only one deputy minister. The situation underwent a change during Hussein Onn's cabinet where the MCA was given additional cabinet posts, resulting in four ministers and four deputy ministers, the MIC one minister and two deputy ministers while Gerakan had another minister and deputy minister post. During Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's tenure, the status of ministerial posts in the MCA, the MIC and Gerakan did not change. Nevertheless, the number of deputy minister posts increased significantly, with the MCA six, while the MIC and Gerakan had two each.

**Table 6.4: Distribution of Ministers and Deputy Ministers
in the cabinet, 1974 -1999**

Cabinet	UMNO	MCA	MIC	Gerakan
<i>Abdul Razak Hussein</i>				
Sept 1974 M	12 (75.0%)	3 (18.7%)	1 (8.0%)	-
DM	8 (66.0%)	2 (16.6%)	1 (8.0%)	1 (8.0%)
August 1975 M	14 (77.7%)	3 (16.6%)	1 (5.0%)	-
DM	9 (64.5%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)
<i>Hussein Onn</i>				
March 1976 M	13 (72.0%)	4 (22.2%)	1 (5.0%)	-
DM	9 (60.0%)	3 (20.0%)	1 (6.6%)	2 (13.0%)
Dec 1977 M	12 (70.5%)	4 (23.5%)	1 (5.8%)	-
DM	11 (57.8%)	4 (29.4%)	2 (5.8%)	2 (5.8%)
April 1979 M	13 (68.1%)	4 (21.0%)	1 (5.0%)	1 (5.0%)
DM	10 (58.8%)	5 (29.4%)	1 (5.8%)	1 (5.8%)
Feb 1980 M	13 (68.1%)	4 (21.0%)	1 (5.0%)	1 (5.0%)
DM	9 (60.0%)	4 (26.6%)	1 (6.6%)	1 (6.6%)
<i>Dr. Mahathir Mohamed</i>				
July 1981 M	12 (66.6%)	4 (22.2%)	1 (5.5%)	1 (5.5%)
DM	14 (66.6%)	5 (23.8%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)
April 1986 M	12 (66.6%)	4 (22.2%)	1 (5.8%)	1 (5.8%)
DM	8 (53.0%)	5 (33.0%)	1 (6.6%)	1 (6.6%)
January 1989 M	14 (70.0%)	4 (20.0%)	1 (5.0%)	1 (5.0%)
DM	13 (59.0%)	6 (27.8%)	2 (9.0%)	1 (4.5%)
April 1992 M	15 (71.4%)	4 (19.0%)	1 (4.7%)	1 (4.7%)
DM	15 (60.0%)	6 (24.0%)	2 (8.0%)	2 (8.0%)
August 1994 M	15 (71.4%)	4 (19.0%)	1 (4.7%)	1 (4.7%)
DM	15 (60.0%)	6 (24.0%)	2 (8.0%)	2 (8.0%)
August 1998 M	17 (73.9%)	4 (17.4%)	1 (4.3%)	1 (4.3%)
DM	17 (63.0%)	6 (22.2%)	2 (7.4%)	2 (7.4%)
May 1999 M	17 (73.9%)	4 (17.4%)	1 (4.3%)	1 (4.3%)
DM	15 (60.0%)	6 (24.0%)	2 (8.3%)	2 (8.3%)

M - Minister, DM - Deputy minister,

Source :

- i). Data 1974: *Dewan Masyarakat*, Vol.XII, No. 8, August 1974 and *Dewan Masyarakat*, No. 9 September 1974, pp. 24-25.
- ii). Data 1975: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1975*. Vol 15. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 485-486
- iii). Data 1976: Abdul Aziz Zakaria. 1976. *Pengenalan kepada Jentera Pentadbiran Kerajaan di Malaysia*. p. 130-132.
- iv). Data 1979: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1977*. Vol 17. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 454-457.
- v). Data 1982: Malaysia 1982. *Official year book 1979*. Vol 19. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 569-571
- vi). Data 1984: Malaysia 1984. *Official year book 1980*. Vol 20. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 201-203
- vii). *Dewan Masyarakat*. Vol. XIX. No. 9 September 1981. pp.6-8
- viii). Data 1988: Malaysia 1988. *Official year book 1986*. Vol 24. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 348-350.
- ix). Data 1991: Malaysia 1991. *Official year book 1989*. Vol 27. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 245-249
- x). Data 1992: Malaysia 1992. *Official year book 1992*. Vol 29. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix.
- xi). Data 1994: Malaysia 1994. *Official year book 1994*. Vol 31. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix
- xii). Data 1998: Malaysia 1998. *Official year book 1998*. Vol 35. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix
- xiii). *Sunday Star*. 10 January 1999. p.2

Based on the table above, for the post of minister during Abdul Razak Hussein's government, the percentage ratio of Malay ministers was the highest. This percentage later declined during Hussein Onn's era. In fact, even during the transition period in July 1981, from Hussein Onn to Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, this percentage was the lowest at 66.6 percent. During Hussein Onn's era, the MCA received one additional seat in the cabinet from three to four, whereas Gerakan was for the first time given a full ministerial post during the cabinet reshuffle in April 1979. During Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's era, the participation of UMNO in the cabinet was increased from 66.6 percent to 73.9 percent. There was no increase in seats for other BN component parties reviewed during Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's rule. UMNO also dominated the posts of deputy minister, but with a lower percentage than that of the ministerial posts. On average, UMNO controlled 60.3 percent, whereas the MCA 25.0 percent, the MIC 7.2 percent and Gerakan 7.4 percent of the total number of Deputy Ministers appointed from 1974 to 1999.

2. Cabinet Portfolio

As explained earlier, each Prime Minister uses his own approach in determining the number of ministries to have in order to run the country. In the early days (1971), Abdul Razak Hussein, after taking over leadership from Tunku Abdul Rahman, established 18 ministries⁶. He later increased the number to 22 ministries in 1974. This number gradually increased over time to 25 portfolios during Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's time.

⁶ The day Abdul Razak was appointed Prime Minister after Tunku Abdul Rahman resigned. See Buku Rasmi Tahunan . (1970). Vol. 4

The portfolios held by each component party of the BN often became an issue because of a paradigm that views the status of one's portfolio as a reflection of the significance of its administrative powers. In this instance, Mayerchak (1975:59) described the process of cabinet formation, from the time the country achieved independence, as being divided into two stages;

- a. Those in the first group operate over what may be best thought of as politically sensitive areas. In most cases these portfolios are quite significant for the Malaysian political system as a whole⁷. Many are of particular importance to UMNO, the dominant Alliance party.
- b. Portfolios in the second group are, in general, service ministries which oversee the necessary but non-controversial tasks, such as technical and social services, and house keeping operations, which must be performed by every political system⁸.

The enigma is acknowledged by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, the Prime Minister for 22 years, as a sort legacy and tradition.

‘It is common for every Malaysian to know the holder of a post when the post is mentioned. For example, the post of Minister of Transport is associated with the Chinese, Minister of Education with the Malays, and Minister of Works with the Indians⁹.’

This conception was perceived because people viewed that behind each portfolio is a national agenda that strove to develop the Malays to be equal to the other races in economic, besides issues of the security and ownership of the Malays. Due to this, it

⁷ For example; Ministry of Defence, Education, Home affairs, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Industry and Information and Broadcasting. See Mayerchak, Patrick Martin. (1975).

⁸ Example; Ministry of Agriculture, Transport, Labour, Culture, Youth and Sport, National Unity, Social welfare and all Minister with special function and without portfolio. See Mayerchak, Patrick Martin. (1975).

⁹ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

is no surprise a change in portfolios is rare. In general, there was little change in the portfolios entrusted to the MCA, the MIC and Gerakan from the time of the inception of the BN until year 1999.

The portfolio changed most significantly in Hussein Onn's era, during the cabinet reshuffles in April 1979 and February 1980. The reshuffle in April 1979, including portfolio changes, involved the main components of the BN. UMNO handed over two portfolios it has held over the years; Primary Industries was given to Gerakan whilst Works and Utilities to the MCA. The loss of these two portfolios was nonetheless replaced for UMNO with the creation of two new portfolios, namely Minister of Agriculture and Minister of the Federal Territory. As for the MCA, they obtained the Works and Utilities portfolio, although simultaneously losing the abolished Minister Without Portfolio. The MIC also changed portfolios when the portfolio of Minister of Communication (later known as the Minister of Energy, Communication and Post) was given to the component party from Sarawak, PBDS¹⁰, in exchange for the portfolio of Minister of Transport¹¹. The cabinet reshuffle in February 1980 involved only the MCA and the MIC, where a portfolio switch took place between the two. The MCA, which held the Works and Utilities portfolio, received the Transport portfolio held by the MIC, and vice versa.

¹⁰ Party Bangsa Dayak Sarawak is a Dayak-based party, formed in 1963 by the elected representative who broke away from SNAP. It joined the BN in January 1984 and the state Barisan Coalition in March 1987 to team up with the opposition Maju group to challenge the coalition in a snap election called after their failure to topple Chief Minister Tan Sri Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud. PBDS however remained a member of the BN at national level. See Mohamed Rahmat, (2001).

¹¹ See Malaysia 1982. *Official year book 1979*. Vol 19.

6.3.2.1 MCA

During the early days, when the first cabinet was formed under Tunku Abdul Rahman, there was no formula to define who was to take charge of the various portfolios, such as economy, transportation and so forth. In those days, portfolios were allocated to the individual who was willing to take on the responsibility. As a result, portfolios in the first cabinet could be 'selected' to match each minister's expertise and strengths. Uniquely, their selections coincided with the image of their respective communities (Ramlah Adam, 1992:108).

For example, the Chinese have been given a relatively free hand in the area of business and commerce. This bargain has been evident at the government level in that the Alliance parties generally have controlled those portfolios in the cabinet that best serve the interests of the community they represent. Thus UMNO has always held the Rural Development portfolio, while the leader of the MCA, Dr. Tan Siew Sin, held the Finance portfolio for his party from 1959 to 1973. This governing arrangement worked extremely well through most of the first decade of the Alliance rule. It was the basis for cooperation between the three parties (Mayerchak 1975:9).

For this reason, it is not surprising that the MCA had expressed its dissatisfaction towards the portfolios given to them ever since the early days of the cabinet formation in the BN. The MCA lost several strategic portfolios it previously held, such as Finance, and Trade and Industry, which it held during Tunku Abdul Rahman's time. During Abdul Razak Hussein's rule, the MCA was only given Labour and Manpower, Housing and New Villages, and Health (Mauzy, 1983:97).

They regarded those portfolios as 'second-level in importance within the national administration system'¹².

Although the MCA was disappointed, it had to accept what was given and took on the post to re-establish the temporarily severed relationship with the BN. Ghafar Baba, who was known as the negotiator between UMNO and the MCA, clarified the reason behind the existence of such a situation; After facing defeat in the 1969 general election, the President of the MCA, Dr. Tan Siew Sin decided to withdraw the MCA from the Alliance;

'The Chinese in this country have rejected the MCA to represent them in the government, if the results of the general election reflect their wishes. As politicians practising parliamentary democracy, the MCA must accept this to be the case. Under the circumstances, the MCA has no alternative but to refrain from participation in the government' (*Straits Times*, 14 May 1969).

This move was subsequently accepted by Abdul Razak Hussein;

'We told the electorate that if they did not vote for the MCA there will be no Chinese representatives in the Government. Now there will be none at all' (*Straits Times*, 14 May 1969).

The action provided flexibility in restructuring the cabinet list without considering the MCA as a major ally on 21 May 1969 (*Straits Times*, 21 May 1969). The post that was previously held by the MCA was allotted to UMNO. In early 1970, Tunku Abdul Rahman announced the return of the MCA into the cabinet, albeit without holding the post it previously held. The changing of portfolios continued during the Abdul Razak Hussein era. The MCA was given three portfolios for Labour and

¹² Second-level status implies that the ministry is a non-sensitive portfolio of smaller significance, compared to the ministries of finance, trade and industry, which are categorized as a highly significant portfolios. See Mayerchak, Patrick Martin, (1975).

Manpower, Local Government and Environment as well as Health. The Finance Ministry continued to be held by the UMNO representative, Hussein Onn (*Dewan Masyarakat*, 9 September 1974).

This resulted in dissatisfaction by the MCA, who demanded that the portfolio be returned to them. The portfolios later underwent change under Hussein Onn, when the MCA obtained another portfolio in the cabinet, that of Minister Without Portfolio, during the cabinet reshuffle in December 1976. During the April 1979 cabinet reshuffle, the MCA was made responsible of the Works and Utilities portfolio, formerly held by UMNO (Minister Without Portfolio was abolished). Subsequently, in the cabinet reshuffle of February 1980, an exchange of portfolios took place, where the portfolio of Minister of Transport, held by the MIC, was handed over to the MCA, and likewise the portfolio of Minister of Works and Utilities was handed over to the MIC. This was the final change in portfolios for the moment.

During the early days of Dr. Mahathir Mohammed as Prime Minister, the still hopeful MCA submitted a petition to be given a chance to be returned the portfolio it held during Tunku Abdul Rahman's era, but the request was rejected. Basically, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad gave two reasons;

- a. The country had less than 10 years to achieve the objectives of the New Economic Policy (1990). As the major part of this objective involved the restructuring of the Malay community, the Finance Minister should be from UMNO.
- b. The MCA could still continue to contribute because it was included in the Finance portfolio as Deputy Minister¹³.

Therefore in Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's era, there was neither any addition nor change in portfolios, except for the change in portfolio names, such as from Labour and Manpower to Human Resources. This caused the MCA to continue expressing their dissatisfaction. As it turned out, the MCA representatives remained in the 'second-level' departments of Transport, Health, Labour and Manpower, and Housing and Local Government, although the party gained an extra deputy minister. Several leading MCA figures, such as Tan Kwon Swan, and the MCA youth leader, Lee Kim Sai, remained on the backbenches.

¹³ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

Table 6.5: Cabinet portfolio in the MCA from 1974 to 1999.

Cabinet	Minister	Deputy Minister
<i>Abdul Razak Hussein</i> August 1975	Labour and Manpower Housing and New Villages Health	Education Finance Transport and Works
<i>Hussein Onn</i> Dec 1976	Labour and Manpower Housing and Village Development Minister Without Portfolio Health	Education Finance Culture, Youth and Sports
Dec 1977	Labour and Manpower Housing and Village Development Minister Without Portfolio Health	Education Finance Culture, Youth and Sports Public Utilities
April 1979	Labour and Manpower Housing and Local Government Health Works and Utilities	Education Finance Information Trade and Industry
Feb 1980	Labour and Manpower Housing and Local Government Health Transport	Education Finance Information Trade and Industry
<i>Dr. Mahathir Mohamed</i> July 1981	Labour and Manpower Housing and Local Government Health Transport	Education Finance Information Trade and Industry
April 1986	Labour and Manpower Housing and Local Government Health Transport	Education Finance Information Trade and Industry
January 1989	Labour and Manpower Housing and Local Government Health Transport	Education Finance Prime Minister Department Trade and Industry Youth and Sports National and Rural Development
April 1992	Housing and Local Government Health Transport Human Resources	Education Finance Prime Minister's Department Trade and Industry Youth and Sports
August 1994	Housing and Local Government Health Transport Human Resources	Education Finance Prime Minister's Department Trade and Industry Youth and Sports

Cabinet	Minister	Deputy Minister
August 1998	Housing and Local Government Health Transport Human Resources	Education Finance Youth and Sports Culture, Arts and Tourism Home Affairs Energy, Telecommunications and Post
May 1999	Housing and Local Government Health Transport Human Resources	Education Finance Youth and Sports Culture, Arts and Tourism Home Affairs Energy, Telecommunications and Post

Source :

- i). Data 1975: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1975*. Vol 15. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 485-486
- ii). Data 1976: Abdul Aziz Zakaria. 1976. *Pengenalan kepada Jentera Pentadbiran Kerajaan di Malaysia*. p. 130-132.
- iii). Data 1979: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1977*. Vol 17. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 454-457.
- iv). Data 1982: Malaysia 1982. *Official year book 1979*. Vol 19. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 569-571
- v). Data 1984: Malaysia 1984. *Official year book 1980*. Vol 20. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 201-203
- vi). *Dewan Masyarakat*. Vol. XIX. No. 9 September 1981. pp.6-8
- vii). Data 1988: Malaysia 1988. *Official year book 1986*. Vol 24. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 348-350.
- viii). Data 1991: Malaysia 1991. *Official year book 1989*. Vol 27. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 245-249
- ix). Data 1992: Malaysia 1992. *Official year book 1992*. Vol 29. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix.
- x). Data 1994: Malaysia 1994. *Official year book 1994*. Vol 31. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix
- xi). Data 1998: Malaysia 1998. *Official year book 1998*. Vol 35. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix
- xii). *Sunday Star*. 10 January 1999. p.2

For the posts of deputy ministers, in reality only two important portfolios¹⁴ were permanently held by the MCA, Education and Finance, since 1974. But the other portfolios kept changing. Among the ten deputy minister portfolios the MCA has held are: Youth and Sports; Culture, Arts and Tourism; Home Affairs; Energy, Telecommunications and Post; Information; Trade and Industry; Transport and Works; Prime Minister's Department; National Development; and Rural Development.

¹⁴ The terminology of these two important portfolios are based on the highly significant portfolios as categorized by the MCA. See Mayerchak, Patrick Martin, (1975).

6.3.2.2 MIC

In the first cabinet line-up under Abdul Razak Hussein, the MIC was given the portfolio of Communications. It was then changed to Works and Utilities during the April 1992 cabinet reshuffle, towards the end of Hussein Onn's rule. Dr. Mahathir Mohammed subsequently changed it to Energy, Telecommunications and Post and finally in August 1998, this portfolio was changed to Minister of Works, which remains until today. In general, the MIC was not happy with its position in the Cabinet, believing that based on its election performance, it should have been awarded more than just one minister post (Mauzy, 1983\;97). However, both the MCA and the MIC were basically acquiescent and the other BN parties expressed satisfaction with the line-up. For the deputy minister posts, the MIC, like the MCA, has had held several portfolios. The eight deputy minister portfolios it has held are: Law; Prime Minister's Department; Labour and Manpower (Human Resource); Health; Housing and Local Government; Agriculture; Rural Development; and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs.

Table 6. 6: Portfolios held by MIC from 1974 to 1999.

Cabinet	Minister	Deputy Minister
<i>Abdul Razak Hussein</i> August 1975	Communications	Law
<i>Hussein Onn</i> Dec 1976	Communications	Prime Minister's Department
Dec 1977	Communications	Prime Minister's Department Labour and Manpower
April 1979	Communications	Prime Minister's Department
Feb 1980	Works and Utilities	Labour and Manpower
<i>Dr. Mahathir Mohamed</i> July 1981	Works and Utilities	Health
January 1989	Works	Health Housing and Local Government

Cabinet	Minister	Deputy Minister
April 1992	Energy, Telecommunications and Post	Agriculture Human and Resource
August 1998	Works	Rural Development Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs
May 1999	Works	Rural Development Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs

Source :

- i). Data 1975: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1975*. Vol 15. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 485-486
- ii). Data 1976: Abdul Aziz Zakaria. 1976. *Pengenalan kepada Jentera Pentadbiran Kerajaan di Malaysia*. p. 130-132.
- iii). Data 1979: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1977*. Vol 17. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 454-457.
- iv). Data 1982: Malaysia 1982. *Official year book 1979*. Vol 19. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 569-571
- v). Data 1984: Malaysia 1984. *Official year book 1980*. Vol 20. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 201-203
- vi). *Dewan Masyarakat*. Vol. XIX. No. 9 September 1981. pp.6-8
- vii). Data 1991: Malaysia 1991. *Official year book 1989*. Vol 27. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 245-249
- vii). Data 1992: Malaysia 1992. *Official year book 1992*. Vol 29. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix.
- ix). Data 1998: Malaysia 1998. *Official year book 1998*. Vol 35. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix
- x). *Sunday Star*. 10 January 1999. p.2

6.3.2.3 Gerakan

Compared to the MCA and the MIC, Gerakan was late in securing Ministerial portfolios in the cabinet. Only at the April 1979 cabinet reshuffle during Hussein Onn's era was Gerakan given the Primary Industries portfolio, and uniquely, this portfolio remained with them until today without any exchange being made with other component parties. As for the deputy minister portfolios, among the posts they have held are: Primary Industries; Works and Utilities; Transport; Prime Minister's Department; Works; National Unity and Social Development; International Trade and Industry; and Land and Cooperative development.

Table 6. 7: Portfolios held by Gerakan from 1974 to 1999.

Cabinet	Minister	Deputy Minister
<i>Abdul Razak Hussein</i> August 1975	-	Primary Industries
<i>Hussein Onn</i> Dec 1976	-	Primary Industries
Dec 1977	-	Primary Industries Works and Utilities
April 1979	Primary Industries	Transport
<i>Dr. Mahathir Mohamed</i> July 1981	Primary Industries	Prime Minister's Department
April 1986	Primary Industries	-
January 1989	Primary Industries	Agriculture
April 1992	Primary Industries	Works National Unity and Social Development
August 1994	Primary Industries	Works National Unity and Social Development
August 1998	Primary Industries	International Trade and Industry Land and Cooperative Development
May 1999	Primary Industries	International Trade and Industry Land and Cooperative Development

Source :

- i). Data 1975: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1975*. Vol 15. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 485-486
- ii). Data 1976: Abdul Aziz Zakaria. 1976. *Pengenalan kepada Jentera Pentadbiran Kerajaan di Malaysia*. p. 130-132.
- iii). Data 1979: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1977*. Vol 17. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 454-457.
- iv). Data 1982: Malaysia 1982. *Official year book 1979*. Vol 19. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 569-571
- v). Data 1984: Malaysia 1984. *Official year book 1980*. Vol 20. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 201-203
- vi). *Dewan Masyarakat*. Vol. XIX. No. 9 September 1981. pp.6-8
- vii). Data 1991: Malaysia 1991. *Official year book 1989*. Vol 27. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 245-249
- vii). Data 1992: Malaysia 1992. *Official year book 1992*. Vol 29. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix.
- ix). Data 1998: Malaysia 1998. *Official year book 1998*. Vol 35. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. appendix
- x). *Sunday Star*. 10 January 1999. p.2

In certain case, the implementation of consociational democracy in Malaysia indeed required every party to exercise compromise with one another. The elite particularly plays an important role as a model to the minority groups, that there exists unity among them. Even though crisis was encountered and dissatisfaction was felt on

certain decisions, it needed to be concealed as far as possible, to ensure that the confidence of supporters was not shaken and that they would continue to give support.

Based on the ratio of ministers to deputy ministers, undeniably there was often dissatisfaction among the component parties on the allocation of posts, which was dominated by UMNO. Even so, the situation was resolved through negotiations among the political elites: UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, and Gerakan. In the process of negotiating to determine a fair distribution of seats, many factors obviously needed to be considered. Usually, demands would not be flatly refused. The bargaining power wielded ensured that every demand would not end up without some reward or penalty in resolving the conflict. In other words, as a form of compensation or consolation to demands that were turned down or acceded, a benefit may be given to the party concerned in a different form. This is rather interesting and merits further study and scrutiny, especially in understanding the efficient management of conflict in the BN.

6.4 The Conflict in the Appointment of State Executive Council members

Regarding the status of the Exco, there are two distinct differences in the Laws of the Constitution for Kedah and Penang.

In the nine Malay states, the Ruler can only appoint a Muslim Malay member of the unicameral state assemblies to be the Chief Minister¹⁵. There is no such condition for the post of the Governors of Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak¹⁶.

¹⁵ Article 35(2) of the Laws of the Constitution of Kedah. See Abdul Aziz Bari (2003).

¹⁶ Indeed there is no requirement that Governors themselves should only be appointed from the Malays who are Muslims. See Federal Constitution, Eighth Schedule, s. 19A. (1990).

As for Penang, the appointment of Chief Minister from among the non-Malays is allowed under the establishment enactment for the state of Penang. As a result, anyone is eligible to hold the post provided he/she has majority support in the State Legislative Council. The Chief Minister post often became a tussle among the BN component parties, UMNO, the MCA and Gerakan, especially after the 1986, 1990 and 1999 elections. But within the context of cooperation and consultation exercised among the component parties, the Gerakan representative was eventually entrusted to continue ruling the state, ever since the formation of the BN to this very day. As compensation in view of the scramble for the Chief Minister post, the other component parties are usually given other forms of reward, including more seats in the Exco and the post of Deputy Chief Minister¹⁷. In Kedah, only a Malay Muslim can be appointed to the post. Therefore, the demand for the Chief Minister post by the other component parties of the BN never arose, as Kedah's state establishment enactment does not provide for this.

This scenario clearly illustrates that the present Constitution or enactment would provide guidelines for the BN in solving any emerging conflict. The parties should know what may and may not be requested. Likewise, what may and may not be compromised. Compliance to what has been established by the constitution and the state establishment enactment would simplify the handling of conflict. Members of the State Executive Council (SEC) are executive administrators who are appointed to oversee states headed by a Chief Minister (Ketua Menteri or Menteri Besar)¹⁸.

¹⁷ As far as the states are concerned, only the laws of Kelantan and Selangor mention the post of Deputy Chief Minister. But in some states, despite the fact that there is no requirement to appoint a deputy, the post of deputy to the Chief Minister exists. See Abdul Aziz Bari (2003).

¹⁸ The title of Menteri Besar refers to Chief Ministers of states with a Sultan or Raja, such as Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Perlis, while Ketua

Appointments under the enactment of Administrative Members and State Assembly Members are made among State Assembly Members who were elected through elections. Their role and function, like the federal government's Cabinet, is to manage and run the state. Therefore each Exco member appointed will be assigned to committees with specific terms of reference and responsibilities. The number of Exco members appointed is subject to the enactment being passed by members of the Administration and State Assembly.

In the 1974 to 1990 elections, the number of Exco members in each state was at least nine. An amendment in 1995 adjusted this number to 11, after taking into account the additional duties and responsibilities due to the rapid development in each state¹⁹. This number, however, does not include the three Exco members by virtue of their posts, namely the State Secretary, the State General Counsel and the State Financial Officer. In principal, the appointment of Exco members is centred upon the spirit of power sharing among the component parties of the BN, which provides each party with the opportunity to be a part of the state government administration. According to Ghafar Baba²⁰;

Every component party should be a part of the state government administration to ensure that minority groups are not simply ignored. This was agreed in concept, but it depends on the current situation of a state. For example, in states whose majority of voters is Malay, such as Kelantan, the appointment of state Exco member may not be appropriate at this time because there isn't a representative in the state assembly from all ethnic groups, such as the Indians. Perhaps this will be done in future based on changes in the local profile of electorates and the population.

Menteri refers to states headed by a Governor (Yang Dipertua Negeri), which are Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak.

¹⁹ The number of State Exco members appointed is at the discretion of the Chief Minister, although the enactment determines the maximum number. In Perlis, there are only five Exco members, in line with the 15 State Assembly seats there.

²⁰ Interview with Tun Ghafar Baba. See Appendix A.

**Table 6. 8: The number of State Exco (SEC) members in
Peninsular Malaysia, 1995 -1999**

	Number of state exco	Deputy Chief Minister	Ex officio	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Perlis	5	-	3	4	1	-
Kedah	11	-	3	8	2	1
Kelantan	11	1	3	11	-	-
Terengganu	11	-	2	11	-	-
Penang	11	1	3	4	6	1
Perak	11	-	3	7	3	1
Pahang	11	1	3	9	2	-
Selangor	11	-	3	7	3	1
Melaka	11	-	3	8	2	1
Johor	11	-	3	8	2	1

Source : *Exco Member File 1959-1999/No.18*. Office of the Chief Minister of Penang.

Only Kelantan and Terengganu do not have Exco members among the Chinese and Indians. In other states, there are representatives from both races (except in Perlis and Pahang, with no Indian representative) using the formula determined by each state.

Penang

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Exco membership of the Penang state government totally changed from the Alliance (under the MCA) to the opposition party, Gerakan, following their success in winning the majority of State Assembly seats in the 1969 election. This was a drastic transition, where all state Exco members appointed from 1969 to 1974 were from Gerakan. Nevertheless, when the BN was formed and Gerakan became its main component party, state Exco members were appointed from among all component parties, such as UMNO, the MCA and the MIC.

Planning the establishment of the SEC was done through a negotiation between Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, the Chairman of the BN and Dr. Lim Chong Eu, the President of Gerakan, before the 1974 election. Dr. Lim Chong Eu explained that the negotiation was important in strengthening interracial relationships in Malaysia;

‘At that time, Abdul Razak Hussein and I discussed how we must widen our concept of multiracial co-operation and these discussions led to the groundwork that paved the way for the establishment of the the Barisan Nasional’ (*New Straits Times*, 24 August 1994).

An understanding and agreement was achieved on a 4:3:1:1 ratio for SEC allocation, whereby UMNO would be allocated four SEC posts, Gerakan three posts with the posts of Chief Minister²¹ and Dewan Speaker being theirs, and one post each for the MCA and the MIC²². An early agreement on this allocation formula was seen as essential to strengthen the ties between component parties, particularly between UMNO and Gerakan. Dr. Lim Chong Eu said that;

‘The new coalition is an example of one of the most interesting formulas of a democratic political practice in a developing country. It is unique. The interpretation and application of the concept of consensus provide for a great possibility of future development to enable an elected government to interact more closely with the people’ (*New Straits Times*, 24 August 1994).

The formula was basically derived by looking at the current political situation in addition to performance indicators in the 1969 election. The victory in controlling 25 of the 27 seats contested in 1974 election by the BN led to it forming the first SEC using the agreed formula. But when the sole representative of the MIC was

²¹ The Chief Minister of Penang under BN: Dr. Lim Chong Eu (1970 - 1995) dan Dr. Koh Tsu Koon (1995- now).

²² Ghafar Baba was also present in the discussion held at a hotel in Penang during Abdul Razak’s 10-day visit to the state.

defeated by the DAP, the SEC member quota for Indians was given to Gerakan through a mutual agreement that it will be returned to the MIC should there be a representative in future elections. This agreed formula continued to be applied when the BN maintained its majority at State Assembly in the 1978 and 1982 elections to address the conflict that arose. But applying the formula became challenging when the component parties of the BN experienced a turn in performance in the 1986 and 1990 elections.

Table 6.9: Breakdown of Penang State Exco members, 1974-1999

	Number of state Exco members	UMNO	Gerakan	MCA	MIC
1974	9	4	4	1	-
1978	8	4	3	-	1
1982	9	4	3	1	1
1986	9	5	3	1	-
1990	9	5	4	-	-
1995	11	4	4	2	1
1999	11	4	4	2	1

Source: *Exco Member File 1959-1999/No.18*. Office of the Chief Minister of Penang.

a. The 1986 Request

A great, open conflict on the appointment of SEC members broke out after the 1986 election, when UMNO succeeded in winning a hundred percent of the seats it contested, whilst the other component parties, particularly the MCA, recorded huge drops in performance. Following this victory, the Penang UMNO submitted its request, through its state UMNO relations Chairman, Abdullah Hj. Ahmad Badawi, that the post of Penang Chief Minister be held by a Malay (*Utusan Malaysia*, 7 August 1986). According to Ibrahim Saat;

‘This could have been the guiding light that prompted the Malays, especially the rural folk, to develop their land on a large scale²³.’

The request for the post of Penang Chief Minister was submitted after the decision was made during the party meeting on 6 August 1986²⁴. This was the result of UMNO’s success in securing 12 State Assembly seats in the election of 3 August 1986. Thus, UMNO had a higher number of seats than that of other component parties, namely Gerakan who won nine seats and the MCA, two seats. The announcement on this post indeed triggered reactions from various parties, including members of UMNO itself. According to the Penang UMNO, several matters deserved due consideration as to why UMNO requested for the post.

- i. The state constitution stipulated that the right to form a government must be executed by the winning party according to several principles. Should the winning party be a coalition of several parties, then the opportunity to head the state government would usually be offered to the party that had won the most seats among them, and they would then govern the state collectively. It was this principle that allowed Gerakan to lead Penang after joining a mixed government with the Alliance following the incident of May 1969. And it is this principle that qualifies UMNO to take on the post of Chief Minister, after receiving the biggest mandate among the component parties of the BN. As a token of appreciation for the loyalty given to them all this while, the parties whose voices were not loud enough must, in turn,

²³ Interview with Ibrahim Saat, Former Deputy Chief Minister of Penang (1990-1995). Deputy Chairman of the UMNO Liaison Committee for 4 years. Also held the post of Deputy Chairman of the BN at Penang state level. See appendix A

²⁴ Interview with Ibrahim Saat. See appendix A.

support the winning party in order to uphold the concept and spirit in the BN.

- ii. Before the General Election, Penang UMNO had decided that if Gerakan and the MCA together won more seats than UMNO, then a Chinese should be appointed Chief Minister. Otherwise the post should go to UMNO.
- iii. UMNO explained that the Malays did not cast their votes based on race. This had indirectly contributed to the victories of the BN candidates from Gerakan and the MCA. The maturity of UMNO electorates was apparent in five of the nine constituencies won by Gerakan, where it was the votes of the Malays that determined the winner. Sungai Bakap and Bayan Baru had Malay majorities²⁵, while Batu Uban, Sungai Pinang and Machang Bubok had almost equal numbers of Malay and Chinese voters²⁶. This shows that Gerakan's victories were largely owing to the support of the Malays, and that the Malays in these constituencies voted for the BN. Likewise, the MCA's victories were also dependent on the Malay voters, i.e. 24.3 percent in Mak Mandin and 15.7 percent in Paya Terubong.
- iv. UMNO continued to perform outstandingly by winning seats in the past election.

²⁵ Electorates of Sungai Bakap were 52.2 Malays, 37.1 Chinese and 10.7 Indians; Bayan Baru 51.7 Malays, 41.3 Chinese and 6.8 Indians. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1986* Report by UMNO Headquarters.

²⁶ Electorates of Batu Uban were 42.5 Malays, 43.8 Chinese and 12.9 Indians; Sungai Pinang 41.2 Malays, 44.5 Chinese and 14.0 Indians; Machang Bubok 41.8 Malays, 51.0 Chinese and 7.0 Indians. See *Scorecard Parliament and state seats in Peninsular Malaysia, 1986* Report by UMNO Headquarters.

- v. UMNO had agreed to give certain seats in Malay dominated areas to the other component parties. Now it is the other parties' turn to show that they supported UMNO, who won the most number of seats in the election.

UMNO's efforts to gain the post of Chief Minister received various responses, either among the leaders of UMNO, Gerakan, the MCA and even from the opposition, the DAP²⁷. UMNO's suggestion, underlining their arguments to secure this post, was later interpreted as a racial issue. The request for the post had transformed into a fight for position between the Malays and the Chinese, and not between the component parties of the BN, i.e. UMNO and the party Gerakan. This accusation was particularly publicised by the DAP (*Utusan Malaysia*, 19 August 1986).

The party Gerakan's Central Work Committee had stated and urged that Dr. Lim Chong Eu be re-appointed as Chief Minister, in view of his ability and effectiveness in leading Penang for four terms. At the same time, Gerakan was aware of its poor performance in elections, therefore they would not protest should the Chairman of the BN appoint a candidate from UMNO as the new Chief Minister (*Berita Harian*, 8 August 1986). The party Gerakan stressed on why the Penang Chief Minister should be a Chinese:

²⁷ Lim Kiat Siang had openly pledged his support towards the DAP to Dr. Lim Chong Eu as Chief Minister. The statement was uttered publicly and published in *The Star* on 5 August 1986. What puzzled the leaders of UMNO in the state was the attitude of the Secretary General of the DAP, who had suddenly and openly stated his support, when it was public knowledge that the DAP was the political enemy of Gerakan and leaders of both the DAP and Gerakan often battled with each other.

- i. The BN leaders were aware that it would be difficult for UMNO to lead the State Government as Penang is a predominantly Chinese state. Although UMNO won 12 state seats, its votes made up only about 16 percent of the total votes cast in Penang.
- ii. This has always been the case and no UMNO leader had so far seen fit to alter the existing arrangement - that is the Chief Minister should be a Chinese. There is nothing in writing that this should be so but this has been the understanding since 1969. Penang UMNO is unlikely to succeed in its request since it will upset the fragile balance between UMNO, Gerakan and the MCA. If a change should be made at this stage, it could even lead to the break-up of the BN since this was a serious issue for the Chinese.

The conflict on the post of Penang Chief Minister did not, however, last long. Negotiation after negotiation was held to ensure that the issue would be resolved quickly and that it would not raise any implications on the BN as a party. Hence, on 8 August 1986, a meeting was held between the Chairman of the BN, Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Anwar Ibrahim to discuss the request. The discussion concluded with a new formula for this request. Next, Dr. Mahathir met with Dr. Lim Chong Eu and Dr. Lim Keng Yeik (President of party Gerakan) to discuss the request and also the new formula devised by the Penang UMNO. As a result of this meeting, on 9 August 1986, Dr. Lim Chong Eu received a letter of appointment from the Chairman of the BN, Dr. Mahathir, to the post of Chief Minister. On this issue, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad explained that there were several

important factors taken into account during the negotiation and decision process²⁸.

Among them:

- i. Appointment was made in the interest of the nation and not in the interest of any particular party or race. The party Gerakan, particularly Dr. Lim Chong Eu, had served and led Penang well, and there was no reason why they should not continue to head the state government.
- ii. UMNO's request should not only be based on current elements or situations. It was not appropriate for UMNO to request for that post based only on its victory of winning all State Assembly seats in the 1986 election. If this was made a reason, a misunderstanding could result among the component parties in coming elections. The situation could become a reality if component parties acted by boycotting one another to ensure that no party obtains a higher majority than their own. This would most definitely have a long-term effect on the BN.
- iii. Nevertheless, UMNO's success with the support from Malay voters should be appreciated. The negotiations therefore concluded with the agreement for the Exco seat previously owned by the MIC to be given to UMNO. This indirectly showed that the component parties of the BN have always truly practised compromise.

²⁸ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

Although UMNO failed to secure the post of Chief Minister in forming the Penang State Government, the failure turned out to be a blessing in disguise. As compensation, UMNO was instead given:

- i. additional Exco seats, bringing their total to five
- ii. housing and land portfolios, previously owned by the party Gerakan

The two new portfolios were most significant to the Malays of Penang because they related to the squeeze on land and housing issues faced by the Malay community here. The Chairman of UMNO Relations in Penang, Abdullah Hj. Ahmad Badawi, later mentioned that the compromise achieved during the negotiation rested upon:

- i. The willingness of UMNO to sacrifice the post of Chief Minister through the spirit of camaraderie.
- ii. UMNO's belief that it was gaining stronger support among the voters in Penang. Thus, Gerakan must never neglect to put in every effort in resolving the problems faced by the Malays in Penang²⁹.

b. The 1990 Request

In the 1990 election, UMNO again controlled all 12 seats contested. The opposite was suffered by Gerakan, who only managed to win seven of the 11 seats contested, while the MCA lost all seats allocated to it. This outstanding achievement once again prompted the Penang UMNO to request for the post of Chief Minister. Its request this time was on the basis that:

²⁹ Interview with Ibrahim Saat. See appendix A.

- i. The Chinese of Penang reject Gerakan and the MCA as their representative. Dr. Lim Chong Eu's defeat was a clear sign of rejection of these parties.
- ii. UMNO should rightfully be given the opportunity to hold the post because of its ability and capability, which were proven in the two previous elections (1986 and 1990).

In the negotiation, the party Gerakan appealed for the post to remain with them. They supported this with several factors:

- i. This would be their last chance to improve the situation, especially the effort to win back the support of the Chinese to support the BN. This was an appropriate step in ensuring that the Chinese voters in other states see the harmony and sincerity of the BN in protecting the interests of their electorates.
- ii. This would allow the new leaders of party Gerakan to strategise changes in Penang to restore the authority of the BN. Following the defeat of former Chief Minister, Dr. Lim Chong Eu in the 1990 election, party Gerakan implemented a revamp led by the youth to restore the party's image. The MCA also expressed their agreement that the post remains with party Gerakan to win back the support of voters in Penang for the BN.

A fair and just consideration would certainly prove difficult in fulfilling the requests of both parties, each with strong arguments on why the post should be given to them. If UMNO's request were not met, it would surely affect loyal voters who had helped

UMNO win all seats contested in two elections. On the other hand, if the party Gerakan's request were ignored, party Gerakan in Penang would be weakened, particularly when facing the main opposition, the DAP, who had won almost half the State Assembly seats. The threat posed by the DAP was indeed serious as judging from the results of the 1986 and 1990 elections, the influence and supporters of the DAP have increased to the extent that the DAP won 10 and 14 seats respectively.

Consideration of these matters eventually brought about a new formula for ensuring political stability in Penang. Negotiations between Gerakan, headed by Lim Keng Yeik, with Anwar Ibrahim, who acted as the Chairman of UMNO Relations in Penang³⁰ led to the following agreements:

- i. To create the post of Deputy Chief Minister, that would be given to UMNO³¹. The new post was established pursuant to Section 7 of the Enactment of Administrative Members and State Assembly Members, 1980, that provided for a State Exco member represented by all or any authorities and duties of the Chief Minister, to be appointed and named Deputy Chief Minister for an agreed period. This indirectly ensures that the post of Chief Minister remains with Gerakan.
- ii. It was felt necessary that the post of Chief Minister remain with Gerakan as a strategy to re-strengthen the new leadership led by Dr. Koh Tsu Koon in facing the challenge by the DAP.

³⁰ Anwar Ibrahim replaced Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who had resigned as Chairman of UMNO Relations in Penang, when crisis erupted in UMNO in 1988. See Ahmad Atory Hussein, (1997).

³¹ The post of Deputy Chief Minister of Penang was created on 1 January, and was held by Harun Sirat (Gerakan), but two months later, this post was abolished. Deputy Chief Ministers of Penang include:

- | | | |
|----|-------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | 1990 - 1995 | Dr. Ibrahim Saad (UMNO) |
| 2. | 1995 - 2000 | Dr. Shariff Omar (UMNO) |
| 3. | 2000 - 2004 | Dr. Hilmi Yahya (UMNO) |
| 4. | 2004 - now | Abdul Rashid Abdullah (UMNO) |

- iii. The post of State Assembly Speaker will be held by UMNO³².
- iv. Gerakan would also hold the Exco post allocated to the MCA, who lost in all constituencies contested. This would be a temporary change and the post would be returned to the MCA at the next election, if an MCA candidate wins.

The resolution of this internal the BN issue, achieved through consociation and cored upon the concept of power sharing, is truly unique. Still, according to Koh Tsu Koon, matters such as this are not extraordinary, owing to the spirit of teamwork in the BN without regard to the party each is from³³.

c. The 1995 Request

A revision of the Enactment of Administrative Members and State Assembly Members was made in 1995 to increase the number of SEC members from nine to 11. The change entirely covered most states in Peninsular Malaysia. The bigger base in SEC members took into account the swiftness and progress of development, in addition to the population increase in each state. The two additional seats had indirectly caused each party to lobby for the posts. To avoid crisis and conflict among the component parties of the BN, a decision was made for the allocation of the two new SEC seats to be determined after the election. But after the election, the results caused a conflict that was more open, when each component party of the BN,

³² Penang State Assembly Speakers from 1974 to 1999.

1.	Sulaiman Hj. Ahmad	1959, 1964	UMNO
2.	Harun Hj Sirat	1969, 1974	Gerakan
3.	Hassan Md. Noh	1978	UMNO
4.	Teh Ewe Kim	1982	Gerakan
5.	Ooi Ean Kwong	1986	Gerakan
6.	Abdul Rahman Hj Abas	1990	UMNO
7.	Yahaya Abdul Hamid	1995/1999	UMNO

³³ Interview with Khoo Tsu Koon. See appendix A.

i.e. UMNO, Gerakan, the MIC and the MCA, recorded excellent victories³⁴. While the SEC appointment status based on party quota was seldom fulfilled before this, this time all parties were entitled to their rights, in addition to two additional new SEC member posts.

The MCA, for the first time achieving a hundred percent success by winning all seats contested, was the first party to voice out the opinion that it should be granted additional SEC memberships based on its achievements. This request was to attract the Chinese voters to continue supporting the MCA in the future, and also as a token of appreciation for the support of the voters. UMNO, who had made several requests in the 1986 and 1990 elections, did not act aggressively this time although they had maintained the same performance as in the last election. UMNO's action this time was easily understood because the number of seats won was less than the total of 20 seats won by Gerakan and the MCA. This weakened its bargaining power somewhat.

Dr. Khoo Tsu Koon from party Gerakan, who was reappointed Chief Minister, had worked towards resolving the issue of SEC member status by negotiating with the chairman of each component party of the state BN. Thanks to the spirit of camaraderie, the formula for the appointment of SEC member was set at a ratio of 4:4:2:1; four SEC members for UMNO, four for Gerakan, two for the MCA and one for the MIC. This meant that the MCA had obtained an additional SEC post, as requested³⁵.

³⁴ Only one seat contested by party Gerakan was lost to the DAP, i.e. the Batu Lancang State Assembly. Gerakan candidate Lee Boon Ten obtained 7508 votes whereas Chong Eng from the DAP obtained 7570. The DAP only won by a majority of 62 votes. See Election Commission, (1997).

³⁵ Interview with Khoo Tsu Koon. See appendix A.

In the 1999 election, the 4:4:2:1 formula continued to be applied when each component of the BN maintained their performances in winning State Assembly seats in Penang. However, during the early stages prior to the reappointment of Dr. Khoo Tsu Koon as Chief Minister for the third term, the MCA, winning a hundred percent of the State Assembly seats for the second time, expressed their request for the position to be given to the MCA. The request was made through an appeal submitted to the Prime Minister cum Chairman of the BN, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. Dr. Ting Chew Peng stated that to guarantee continuous support for both the MCA and Gerakan, it was appropriate for the post to be held alternately between both parties³⁶. But to Gerakan, this appeal appeared to be the MCA's effort to redeem the moral defeat it has suffered since it lost to Gerakan in the 1969 election³⁷. The appeal, however, was not agreed, and therefore the post of Chief Minister and SEC members remained unchanged.

Kedah

The appointment of Kedah State Exco member in elections from 1974 to 1999 was mostly dominated by UMNO. This was fitting and in line with the voter composition, whose majority was Malay. In this regard, Kedah generally did not face much conflict related to the appointment of its state Exco members.

³⁶ Interview with Dr. Ting Chew Peng, The MCA Secretary-General (1988-now). Was once the minister holding the housing and local government portfolio for 8 years. Formerly a professor of sociology at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia see appendix A.

³⁷ Interview with Khoo Tsu Koon. see appendix A.

Table 6.10: Breakdown of State Exco members in Kedah, 1974-1999

	No. of state Exco members	UMNO	Gerakan	MCA	MIC
1974	10	9	-	1	-
1978	9	8	-	1	-
1982	9	8	-	1	-
1986	9	7	-	1	1
1990	9	8	-	1	-
1995 (Until May 1996)	9	7	-	1	1
1996 (From June 1996)	11	8	1	1	1
1999	11	8	1	1	1

Source: *Kedah Exco Member File No 16/1982 (for 1974-1982 Exco members)*, 24/2004 (*for 1986-1999 Exco members*). Office of the Chief Minister of Kedah.

Early appointments of the SEC members in 1974³⁸ were made after agreement was achieved between UMNO and PAS in the BN through the agreement reached between the Alliance and the PIMP signed by Abdul Razak Hussein and Mohd. Asri Hj. Muda³⁹. Through this coalition, an allocation was agreed on the condition that;

Two state assemblymen from the PIMP in the states of Terengganu and Kedah, who were forwarded by their parties, will be appointed as Exco members for their respective states (Mohd. Taib, 1974:43).

However, the first SEC line-up, following the establishment of the BN under the leadership of Syed Ahmad Shahbuddin al-haj Syed Mahmud Shahbuddin, later appointed three members of the PAS, one more than agreed⁴⁰. In addition, the MCA was also given one seat, held by Soon Cheng Leong, and UMNO six SEC members,

³⁸ Listed Kedah Menteri Besar from 1974-1999: Syed Ahmad Syed Mahmud Shahbuddin (14 December 1967 - 11 June 1978), Syed Nahar Syed Shahbuddin (8 July 1978 - 27 November 1985), Osman Arof (28 January 1985 - May 1996), Sanusi Junid (June 1996 - May 2001).

³⁹ The agreement was entered into on 28 December 1972, when Abdul Razak Hussein was the President of UMNO, Chairman of the Alliance and Prime Minister of Malaysia, and Mohd. Asri Muda was the President of PAS and Chief Minister of Kelantan. See Mohd. Taib Ahmad Said. (1974).

⁴⁰ The three Exco members from PAS were Abu Bakar Omar, Ismail Abd Wahab and Ismail Kassim.

bringing the total to 10. In the 1978 election, the PAS was expelled from BN, thereby giving UMNO control over the SEC membership, together with the MCA, which was allocated one seat. The formula applied was 8:1, i.e. eight Exco members from UMNO and one from the MCA. The formula, however, changed after the 1986 election. As discussed earlier, the 1996 election indeed saw the increase in new constituencies due to the re-delineation exercise by the election commission. Hence, the component parties of the BN that performed well began making requests on the virtue of their good achievements. The MIC did not hesitate to also take advantage of the situation.

In the Parliamentary-level election in 1986, the MIC won all six seats contested, whereas at State Assembly level, it won 12 of the 13 seats allocated to it⁴¹. The victory prompted the MIC to attempt gaining an additional post at the top level of government administration, i.e. the post of Deputy Minister of Education. For the MIC, this request was not only because of its past performance, but also as an effort to improve the standard of education among the Indians, who were seen to be behind the other races. An Indian holding the position of Deputy Minister of Education would help increase the quality of education among Indian students. Furthermore, the request was also made to replace the post of SEC member in Penang that had to be given to UMNO due to the defeat of its sole candidate in Prai. As a result, there were no Indian candidates in the membership of SEC in Penang.

However, this request could not be fulfilled by Dr. Mahathir as Chairman of the BN, because 50.0 percent or three of the six Parliament members from the MIC were already holding the posts of minister, deputy minister and parliamentary secretary.

⁴¹ The constituency which MIC lost to DAP was the State Assembly of Prai-Penang with the following voter distribution: 26.5 Malays, 47.5 Chinese, 25.9 Indians. See Election Commission., (1988).

The additional one post would give the MIC a high ratio of 67.0 percent among its parliamentary members. This created dissatisfaction among the other component parties. Hence, to ensure stability in the BN, this request was rejected⁴².

The rejection of the MIC's request did not end there, and to acknowledge the MIC's commitment and achievements, the Chairman of the BN, upon discussing with the Chairman of State BN, Osman Aroff, finally agreed to give one SEC member seat to the MIC. As a result, the composition of the SEC members in Kedah changed to seven Malays, one Chinese and one Indian. To Osman Aroff⁴³, the resolution procedure could not have been better in the effort to maintain harmony and the spirit of unity in the BN. As such, the representative from the Lunas State Assembly, Dr. S. Subramaniam, was appointed the first MIC State Executive Counsellor since 1969. In the 1990 election, not a single request was made regarding the membership of the SEC. Nevertheless, the internal crisis within the MIC⁴⁴ caused the post to be vacated upon the request of party President, Samy Vellu. The vacancy was filled temporarily by a candidate from UMNO and after the 1995 election, it was returned to the MIC.

In mid-1996, Osman Aroff, the Chief Minister of Kedah since 28 June 1985, resigned and was replaced by Sanusi Junid. The appointment also saw a reshuffle in the state SEC membership in Kedah. Just as other states had appointed 11 SEC members, Sanusi Junid followed suit. The additional two posts were allocated to UMNO and Gerakan, who was given the post for the first time ever, and was held by Cheung Kai Yan from the Derga State Assembly. Gerakan being granted this post

⁴² Interview Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

⁴³ Interview with Osman Aroff. See appendix A.

⁴⁴ In 1989, MIC held an election for several leadership posts, including the post of President, which saw Samy Vellu (in defending the post) competing with S. Subramaniam (Deputy President). The competition was won by Samy Vellu but it affected the party negatively, in that it significantly divided the party into supporters of each leader. Dr. S. Subramaniam was seen as a leader who supported S. Subramaniam, who lost in the competition. See Mokhtar Muhammad (1998).

was rather surprising. First, in the 1995 election, Gerakan had only just been given an additional seat in Sidam, in addition to the Derga State Assembly it already owned. Second, the total number of MCA State Assembly members of four is twice that of Gerakan. This was, in actual fact, a compromise achieved earlier in the BN at headquarters level. It was based on Gerakan's early request to obtain more seats in the Penang 1995 election, especially in constituencies assigned to the MCA but lost to the DAP. However, the request was not fulfilled to uphold the overall spirit in the BN at national level. At the same time, to maintain good relations with Gerakan, it was promised one SEC membership if its candidate won in any states thought fit.

During the early stages of the SEC, Osman Aroff had rejected the proposal to appoint a State Assembly member from Gerakan as recommended by the Chairman of the BN. But after Sanusi Junid took over in June 1996, the appointment of SEC members from Gerakan was implemented⁴⁵. In this respect, the formula for appointing SEC members in Kedah was eight for UMNO, one Gerakan, one MCA and one MIC.

⁴⁵ Interview with Rahman Ibrahim. See appendix A.

5.5 Conclusion

The conflict in the allocation of posts and portfolios at cabinet and Exco levels in Penang and Kedah is indeed something that needs to be addressed carefully because it involves the administrative system of the nation and the states. Thus, even though the BN is bound by national and state constitutions on appointments, to preserve racial stability and harmony. Conflicts in Penang and Kedah related to the SEC appointment certainly required an appropriate resolution procedure. The conflicts that took place were apparent when the members of the SEC in each state were increased. Here, the additional vacancy would always cause a fight among component parties. Moreover, there were also situations where the uncertainty in the performance of a party in an election caused it to lose its SEC membership and this, in turn, also caused conflict.

Conflict must be resolved according to a Malay proverb that means, 'A just and skilful judge settles a dispute to the satisfaction of both parties'. Each resolution aims to satisfy all parties as far as possible. Towards this end, the Chairman of the BN at national level and at every state plays an equally important role in helping resolve the conflict, especially interstate conflicts. Another important issue in managing conflict is considering other demands that accompany the original demand made by each party. Some parties realise that they would not be granted any of their demands, but still submitted those demands with the hope of getting other concessions. This will be discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER 7

BARGAINING IN THE BARISAN NASIONAL

7.1 Introduction

Having looked, in chapters four and five, at how the BN handled conflict on electoral seat allocation and the distribution of State Exco posts, the following discussion focuses on another important aspect closely associated with conflict management, which is the process of bargaining. In this chapter, the historical background of the process of bargaining is described, beginning from the days of the Alliance Party to the current BN. The chapter touches on the factors leading to the bargaining process and also demands that emerged during the process of finding a solution to the conflicts being faced. Those presented here are only minor demands made by the component parties, the two major demands having been discussed in earlier chapters.

7.2 Factors Affecting Bargaining

Several factors affect the practice of bargaining in the BN. These factors prompt a party to demand from another party. According to Ghafar Baba¹, in the early stages of interracial coalition under the canopy of the Alliance Party, bargaining was influenced by economic and political factors. The obvious domination of sectors at this point, whereby the Malays dominated politics whilst the Chinese dominated the economy, gave each community the bargaining power to champion its own cause.

¹ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

Such a situation undeniably had great implications on the elections of 1959, 1964 and 1969. In his study, Vasil support this argument;

“Cooperating with UMNO means that the MCA will continue to survive and be able to use its power and economic standing to exert effective pressure on UMNO” (1971:81).

During the early days of the coalition between UMNO, the MCA and the MIC, UMNO’s finances were in bad shape. According to an intelligence report indicates that UMNO had a bank balance of 35 Malayan dollars in July 1950². But UMNO’s annual accounts for 1951 showed that it had an income of \$138,570 and an expenditure of \$106,375, leaving a healthy balance of \$32,195³. Further, UMNO’s income for 1952 was \$137,610 and its expenditure \$102,940, leaving a balance of \$34,670. The cost of election campaigns at the municipal level during this early stage was small⁴.

UMNO’s financial weakness and disability were highly significant when Tunku Abdul Rahman himself expressed his worry over UMNO’s poverty, especially over members’ attitudes in settling fees and giving donations. Tunku Abdul Rahman stressed this matter during a Youth conference in 1952 in Seberang Prai;

‘UMNO depends on fees and even if these fees were fully paid up, it would still not be enough to finance UMNO’s struggles, what more when only a third of the fees are currently paid up’ (Ahmad Fawzi Basri, 1991: 47).

² The Intelligence report is contained in CO537/4790 (13).

³ UMNO/ Sel. No 3/52, UMNO Files, Arkib Negara, Kuala Lumpur.

⁴ In the first federal election of July 1955, for example, each candidate was limited to a maximum of \$5,000 (Malayan dollars) for their election campaign. See T.E Smith. 1955. *Report of the First Election of members to the Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer. Tunku Abdul Rahman also noted that the total cost to UMNO in the 1955 election was 150,000 (Malayan dollars). See Tunku Abdul Rahman.(1982).

As at the end of 1952, fees and donations collected did not even amount to one percent. Sarcastically, Tunku Abdul Rahman said;

‘We plan to build our own government, yet do you think it’s reasonable that we can indeed build it when even building the UMNO headquarters in Kuala Lumpur is so difficult?’(Ahmad Fawzi Basri, 1991:48).

This financial weakness was clear when, during several CLC meetings up to April 1949, there were debates and suggestions over necessary steps to help strengthen the economy of the Malays. Among others, the outcome of the discussion included the decision that;

‘The Government should subsidise Malay business ventures and set up trade schools to train the Malays, in order to enable them to participate in the modern economic sector. Preferential treatment should be given to the Malays in the allocation of educational and employment opportunities. Non-Malay businessmen and employees should increase the proportion of Malay participation in all economic sectors, such as the tin mining and rubber industries, as well as retail traders’ (Heng Pek Koon, 1984:220).

As a comparison with the economic status of the Chinese, during the Japanese Military rule, ‘sook ching’ and ‘expiation’ payments were imposed on the Chinese amounting to \$50,000,000.00 payable to the Japanese ruler. On 6 June 1942, under the leadership of Lim Boon Keng, president of the Malayan Overseas Chinese Association, a total of \$28 million finally managed to be collected in very short order⁵.

⁵ The targets for every state were as follows; Singapore and Selangor 10 billion each, Perak 8 billion, Penang 7 billion, Johor and Malacca 5.5 billion, Negeri Sembilan 2 billion, Kedah 800,000 thousand, Pahang 500,000 thousand, Kelantan 300,000 thousand, Terengganu and Perlis 200,000 thousand each. See Oong Hak Chiang (2000, 48-49).

UMNO's financial weakness was seen as an advantageous element to the MCA, especially while negotiation and bargaining processes were underway. Through financial aid channelled either to UMNO or the Alliance, the MCA was seen to be able, as well as continuously putting pressure on UMNO, to give in to their requests and demands. This weakness of UMNO was at the same time exploited up to the point where the demands made exceeded the limits agreed upon in the noble pact or *quid pro quo* package between the country's ethnic groups (Mauzy. 1983:20).

This situation caused discomfort among UMNO members towards their ever-compromising party leader, whereas the MCA hadn't ceased from demanding their share from the consociation. The Malays saw their leader's reluctance to implement Malay as the country's national and official language. Malay-medium secondary schools were also not implemented by 1957 and special privileges of the Malays were still unclear until after the tragedy of 13 May 1969. After this tragedy, a new look in the building of political consociation between UMNO, the MCA and the MIC was formed through the establishment of the BN. Under the BN, a shift in the government policy, especially through its New Economic Order, had opened the way for the Malays and UMNO in particular, to strengthen their economic and financial status⁶. This change was most evident under Dr. Mahathir Mohammad's administration.

During the Dr. Mahathir period, political power had become more closely equated with economic power. The financial gains of political office have been well-documented. Licensing, contracts and stake-holding in ventures have all enhanced the rewards of victory. Higher stakes have led to greater use of private capital to

⁶ UMNO, either directly or indirectly, had ventured into business to strengthen its financial standing. Among UMNO's nominee companies are Fleet Holding, Paremba, Hatibudi, and Renong. See Mohd. Foad Sakdan, (1988) and Gomez .E.T, (1990).

support special candidates. Businessmen, at times, generating funds on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE) in the pre-election stock boom that often accompanies election, back individual candidates with hope that betting on the candidate will reap economic rewards and essential political access when their candidates hold office (Welsh, 2004:126). As a result, economic and political factors were no longer seen as the principal elements of bargaining power between the Malays and the Chinese. During the 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections, bargaining was greatly influenced by other factors, such as competition between component parties, pressure by the NGOs and competition from the opposition parties.

7.2.1 Competition among the component parties

As discussed in chapters four and five, the seeds of conflict are ever present among the component parties of the BN, as they compete to prove that theirs is the primary party fighting for the rights of their community. This created competition amongst them, the most obvious being between the MCA and Gerakan. The party Gerakan's membership in the BN has led to constant conflict with the MCA, as it naturally challenged the MCA's position as the leading Chinese party in the government. The MCA has demanded that it be restored to the leadership of the state government in Penang. As partners in the BN however, they have not been able to compete with each other openly in elections, but have mainly limited themselves to attempts in persuading the UMNO leadership on the merits of their respective cases. While both are component parties of the BN coalition, the MCA and Gerakan have for a long time been engaged in a struggle to be the primary Chinese political party in Malaysia;

‘Chinese-based political parties primarily compete for the same pool of Chinese votes and fight among themselves for limited power within the ruling coalition. In Short, Chinese-based parties remain ‘boxed in’ fighting zero sum contests,’ (Ong Kian Ming, 2004:189).

Both parties actively made claims to show that they were the one fighting for the welfare and the rights of their community (Lee Kim Heng, 2004:181);

‘If the MCA wishes to represent the Chinese community in the true sense of the word, it needs to act to win the hearts of the community. Voters, especially Chinese voters, would usually only pledge their support to the party that contributes in improving and uplifting the community in the various areas’ (*Utusan Malaysia*, 7 April 1994).

This competitiveness forced the BN to accept the inevitability of conflict and bargaining among its own component parties.

7.2.2 Pressure from the NGOs

The role of NGOs in Malaysian politics is rather difficult to define⁷. Even so, it is clear that the Chinese-based NGOs have a distinctive significance in influencing the direction of support by their followers, either in favour of or against a party in an election. Organisations such as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Dong Jiao

⁷ Various non-governmental bodies had actively fought to make several demand, especially those related to the policies and objectives of its organisation. Among others, these include organisations related to business, such as the Malaysian Business Chamber, the Malaysian Malay Business Chamber, the Malaysian Chinese Business Chamber, religious organisations such as the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, Jemaah Islam Malaysia, Persatuan Ulama Malaysia, and human rights organisations such as the Aliran (Berita Harian, 21 August 2001). Most of these NGOs made separate demands in their own interests, in line with its own establishment policies. This is unlike what was done by Dong Jiao Zong, because although it is basically an educational federation, it fights for the rights of the Chinese at national level. With a total of 2,095 organisations under its umbrella, it is most influential indeed when making demands. It has followers that are able to influence the voting pattern, especially among the Chinese voters in Penang. This can be seen during the 1990 and 1995 elections, when the demands made were clearly political.

Zong, are among the NGOs that possess the power to pressure certain political parties in meeting an objective.

Of much significance was the second group of Chinese educationists who had been closely associated with the United Chinese School Committees' Association and the United Chinese School Teachers' Association, popularly known in its Chinese acronym as the 'Dong Jiao Zong' group. It included Kerk Choo Ting, Ong Tin Kim, Dr. Kang Chin Seng, Dr. Koh Tsu Koon and others. Upon joining the party on 31 March 1982, the group categorically stated its stand on language, education and culture to create an integrated Malaysia. It assumed the form of a joint statement with the Central Committee which promised to co-opt it as part and parcel of the party's political programme (*New Strait Times*, 26 March 1984). Together with the 'Dong Jiao Zong' group came along a group of young, concerned and committed intellectuals who would soon emerge as the 'think tank' of the party with regards to its stand on national social, economic and political issues.

In the 1999 election, Suqiu, an association representing a group of Chinese NGOs, believed that the Chinese community should demand more influence. Prior to the 1999 election, Suqiu had presented the BN with a list of election requests that was tacitly accepted. These requests included many points which echoed the Barisan Alternatif manifesto in calling for greater transparency, respect for human rights and the like, but also included more controversial points such as revising the constitutional provision regarding Malay rights. After the elections, Suqiu pushed for their request to be honoured and this incurred the wrath of UMNO (Ong Kian Ming, 2004:194).

7.2.3 Competition from the opposition parties

The challenge posed by opposition parties had indeed frequently prompted the component parties to submit demands as a move to gain support from their communities. The MCA and Gerakan, for instance, often made demands in their effort to face the challenge from the DAP, usually for the purpose of influencing the community they represent. On the role of the MCA, Tan Chee Khoon⁸ stated that:

‘The MCA under the new leadership⁹ has chosen to speak on behalf of the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese. If they don’t, then perhaps they will face a disastrous defeat at the hands of the DAP’ (Das, 1987:102).

In Penang, the party Gerakan, which governed the state since the 1969 election, had to constantly compete with the DAP, which has shown keen interest in wresting the throne of the Penang government via its Tanjung 1 (1986 election), Tanjung II (1990 election) and Tanjung III (1995 election) projects. Based on table 7.1, it is clear that the BN had to face stiff competition from the DAP. The DAP performed its opposition role by raising a wide range of general issues. At the same time, the DAP became the most vocal defender of specially Chinese interests, particularly those relating to language, education and the Chinese place in the economy under the New Economic Policy. The party appears to have an almost impervious base of support in the urban areas where the Chinese working class and lower middle class make up the majority vote.

⁸ Highly respected as a tolerant and liberal opposition leader, Tan Chee Khoon was the President of PEKEMAS who won the Batu seat in the 1986 election. See Election Commission, (1988).

⁹ The MCA General Convention held on 2 March 1986 elected Ling Leong Sik as the new President to replace Tan Kwoon Swan. See Heng Pek Soon., (1988).

Table 7.1: The Chinese Electorate in Penang 1990 and 1995.

State Seats	Chinese % of Electorate, 1990	Party	Chinese % of Electorate 1995	Party
Tanjong	86.6	DAP	87.0	DAP
Bukit Bendera	73.8	DAP	73.8	BN
Bukit Mertajam	66.6	DAP	67.3	BN
Jelutong	66.5	DAP	65.3	DAP
Bagan	62.5	DAP	64.4	DAP
Bayan baru	66.2	DAP	64.3	BN
Nibong Tebal	47.0	BN	48.0	BN

Source a) Data 1990: Election Commission (1992). *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections, 1990*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.

b) Data 1999: Election Commission. (2002). *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections, 1999*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.

Despite their differing bases of support, all three parties respond generally to the same frustrations felt by the Chinese community.

7.3 Bargaining during the Alliance Party era

Under the grand coalition, there had been a willingness among the various ethnic groups to co-operate on dividing the ethnic communities, as was evident in the original bargain concerning the relative share of political and economic powers. Despite the political dominance of the Malays, the Malay political elites have been willing to share government power with the non-Malays, and to bargain and compromise on diverse issues. This bargain has proven to be advantageous to both parties, and through this bargain, the people of Malaysia have enjoyed relative political harmony and stability. As Esman wrote:

‘The Malays gain political independence, control of government and policy which was to be Malay in style and in its system of symbols. In return the Chinese gained more than the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia had dreamed of - equal citizenship, political participation and office holding, unimpaired economic opportunity and tolerance for their language, religion and cultural institution’ (1972:25).

The study by Mayerchak¹⁰ on the distribution of Rewards in The Malaysian Alliance in 1975 clearly stated that the process of bargaining was a very important formula in maintaining cohesion and stability within the Alliance Party.

‘The bargain was a workable formula for the Alliance parties. It allowed them to shelve the difficult problem of what to do about rising demands of the Malays for greater economic equality and the call from other communities in the nation for greater political equality’ (1975:42).

In connection to that, the cornerstone of the Alliance, which is usually referred to as the bargain, is a particularly important factor in the success of this coalition over the years. Under the terms of the bargain, each coalition party represents the specific interests of one of the three ethnic communities, which makes up the bulk of the country’s population. Thus, UMNO, while leading the Government, has always represented Malay interests at the national level. The MCA has done the same for the Chinese of the country and particularly for Chinese business and commercial interests. The MIC in the same manner works for the interests of the Indian community.

The BN inherited a government ruled by the Alliance party, in which several issues and demands from the various ethnic groups were successfully resolved mainly through the approach of the Constitution. The Reid Commission, responsible for formulating the constitution, took this seriously into account. Among others, the ‘honourable pact’ that became a symbol of interracial conflict management in Malaysia, was established. The honourable pact is an agreement of compromise on the grounds of mutual interests, as well as the respect for the rights of others. In this pact, there are five basic factors affecting political development, namely the status of

¹⁰ See Mayerchak, Patrick Martin (1975).

the Malay Rulers, the religion of Islam, the Malay language, the special status of the Malays, and citizenship.

During the stages of forming this honourable pact, the issue of citizenship (Article 22) was one of the main factors that became controversial¹¹. The non-Malays wanted the principle on citizenship to be based on *jus soli*¹². This citizenship principle accords equal rights to all citizens of the Federated Malay States. During a time when the country was still facing the Emergency, Tunku Abdul Rahman was under pressure from UMNO, which still doubted the loyalty of the Chinese. In the end, the Malay leaders in the Alliance agreed to compromise and accept the *jus soli* principle (Ong Hak Ching, 2000:158).

Subsequently, in reciprocating the attitude of compromise by the Malays, who agreed to accept the relaxation of conditions for citizenship on the non-Malays, the non-Malay leaders in the Alliance agreed to accept four important factors, which are the status of the Malay Rulers (article 181), Islam as the official religion of the Federation (article 3), Malay as the National Language (article 152) and the special status of the Malays (article 153). These four factors are actually traditional elements that had already existed in the country. These elements, found in our constitution, are

¹¹ During the bargaining process, Tan Siew Sin realised that the MCA and the Chinese needed to sacrifice a portion of the Chinese interests as trade-offs in order to obtain citizenship based on *jus soli*. Tan Siew Sin therefore decided that education, the Chinese language and the acceptance of the special status of the Malays shall be the trade-offs. With this offer, Tunku Abdul Rahman and UMNO agreed that domiciles of the Federated Malay States born after Independence Day on 31 August 1957 shall be citizens of the federation. See *Straits Times*, 19 February 1957. Also see Chan Heng Chee (1998:64).

¹² *Jus soli* (Latin for "right of the territory") is a right by which nationality or citizenship can be recognised to any individual born in the territory of the related state. It contrasts with *jus sanguinis* ("right of blood"). The Communities Liaison Committee (CLC) had proposed a constitutional amendment on article xi 1948, recognising *jus soli* as the basis for citizenship in the Federated Malay States (now Malaysia). See Ahmad Fawzi Basri (1991:32).

rather unique when compared with the constitutions of other commonwealth countries, such as India and Canada¹³.

Even after resolving the most critical stage of the bargaining and negotiation sessions, involving the principles and core of the Constitution, the Alliance Party continued to face trials and tribulations from time to time, as one bargain after another was thrown in by the component parties, especially as an election draws closer. One of the most drastic bargains received by the Alliance Party soon after the country achieved independence in 1957, was made by Lim Chong Eu, the then leader of the MCA¹⁴, who submitted several extreme demands on behalf of the Chinese community;

‘Firstly, we want equality in this country. Secondly, we are seeking assurance for our way of life, our language and our school. Thirdly, we express the hope that we shall find economic advancement and economic equality’ (Vasil, 1972:4).

This demand by the MCA was regarded as extreme because the matter had only recently been agreed upon by the consensus of all races when they had together established the Constitution. This caused UMNO to disagree and reject the demand, thereby triggering a serious crisis between UMNO and the MCA. The situation was, however, eventually resolved when Dr. Lim Chong Eu resigned as the MCA President, and the party was taken over by a more moderate group led by Tan Siew Sin.

¹³ See Glanville Austin (1966). s, pp. 25-49 and Wheare (1960).

¹⁴ In 1958, the MCA faced leadership crisis when the younger, more aggressive group took over from the founding leaders. The MCA President, Tan Cheng Lock lost to Dr. Lim Chong Eu in the 1958 party election. See Heng Pek Soon, (1988).

Under the leadership of Tan Siew Sin, the MCA once again displayed its attitude of compromise and cooperation¹⁵. In order to obtain better concessions for the Chinese, Tan Siew Sin preferred to establish close relationships and engage in closed-door negotiations with the leaders of UMNO. This method, he felt, was the most effective way to secure concessions to fulfil the needs of the Chinese. Tunku Abdul Rahman portrayed Tan Siew Sin's approach by saying;

‘... I heard with delight that he had changed his view about this party (UMNO) and decided to throw in his lot with us - the Alliance... This young man devoted much time and energy and gave his complete loyalty to the party which he at first rejected’ (Dawson, 1969:vi).

However, in time, this soft approach in making demands caused dissatisfaction among the Chinese community, who expressed their displeasure by causing the defeat of the MCA in many of the seats contested in the 1969 election¹⁶. An important event after the 1969 election that led to the 13 May tragedy was the change of leadership within two of the main component parties, namely UMNO and the MCA. This new leadership, which led to the establishment of the BN, in actual fact had to continue managing various demands from the component parties.

¹⁵ There was also criticism that Tan Siew Sin in fact did not understand the Chinese language nor have the mentality of a Chinese. He was therefore unqualified to champion for the cause of the Chinese. This criticism has to do with his being a descendent of the *Baba Melaka* (pioneer Chinese domiciled in Malacca who adopts the Malay customs, dressing, and language). See Report on the 1969 General Election in Spare Copies of Liaison of Office Report, KK SP 45/1169, and NF8, National Archives.

¹⁶ MCA's weakness in aggressively championing the demands of the Chinese community was exploited by the opposition parties, particularly the DAP. In the 1969 election, the DAP succeeded in arousing the anger of the Chinese voters against the MCA. Among others, they claimed that due to the MCA's weakness under the rule of the Alliance Party, the Chinese would become second-class citizens who would be prohibited from rearing pigs, eating pork and serving pork in canteens. See Report on the 1969 General Election, by Ngeo Ger Keng, Spare Copies of Liaison of Office Report, KK SP 45/1969, and NF8, National Archives.

7.4 Bargaining during The Barisan Nasional Era

Making demands in the interest of a party or community represented in the BN has never been prohibited. Nevertheless, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad stated that demands based on radical racial sentiments have no place in the country¹⁷. If a demand was made with the aim to defeat an opposition party in its strongholds, then further demands may very well be submitted. But if a demand were granted yet the party failed to win the targeted support from the community, then the leaders of that party ought to examine themselves. This failure could be due to their incompetence as leaders. In general, according to Ghafar Baba and Mohammad Rahmat¹⁸, most of the demands made by the component parties revolved around five main elements:

1. Education
2. Demand for posts
3. Re-delineation of electoral constituencies
4. Abolition the quota system
5. Bargaining from Suqiu

A study on the various demands confirms that the demands revolved around basic issues which were mutually agreed upon *quid pro quo*. (Ahmad Fawzi Basri, 1991:60).

¹⁷ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

¹⁸ Interview with Ghafar Baba and Mohammad Rahmat. See appendix A.

7.4.1 Education

Education seems to be the most important issue to crop up in demands made by the MCA and Gerakan. Tan Tiong Hong stated that the Chinese community is especially sensitive about the issue of education because it is seen as a symbol of continuity in their ethnic identity¹⁹. Thus, the issue of education has never failed to attract the attention of any Chinese political party, as an issue that is frequently fought for and highlighted to be used as a platform to draw support from the Chinese voters at every election. Among the demands often put forward are the continued existence of national-type primary schools and the entry of Chinese students into university.

7.4.1.1 National-Type Schools

Throughout the administration of the BN, this issue has been used either by BN itself or by the opposition to reach out for votes. In fact, there were times when the component parties of the BN, especially the MCA and Gerakan, had to be in opposition to the government in order to ensure that the Chinese voters see them as fighting in favour of their interests, where the education issue was concerned. Although the issue was handled mostly at the national level of the BN, it was mainly Penang and Kedah that suffered or benefited from its effects and implications.

¹⁹ Chinese education for the Chinese had its emotional overtones. The Chinese are well known throughout the world for their deep-rooted devotion to education. This is due to the Confucian structure of their traditional society, which placed the scholar at the pinnacle of society. The tales of the Chinese enduring incredible hardship and deprivation to obtain scholastic excellence are legend in Chinese folklore. Similarly, their willingness to sacrifice for the sake of ensuring a good education for their children has been engrained in their psyche throughout the millennia of Chinese civilisation. See *The Malaysian Chinese: Towards National Unity*, (1982).

In the history of its establishment since 1957, Chinese schools initially had “freehold” positions under the 1957 Education Ordinance²⁰. The Chinese education system at primary and secondary levels was recognised by the authorities. Under the Education Act, 1961, the status of Chinese education was lowered such that Chinese primary schools could be converted to national primary schools at any time the Ministry of Education feels fit²¹. The Education Act, 1996 further lowered the status of Chinese primary schools, which were increasingly being neglected, to having no legislative description or status (Tan Tiong Hong, 1982: 39).

This change in policy was the outcome of an exercise aimed at achieving national unity through education. The National Education Policy²², cored upon the Razak Statement, 1956, presented 17 proposals to achieve that target. Among them are;

²⁰ The national education policy recommended by the Abdul Razak Report 1956 was incorporated wholesale into the Education Ordinance 1957 the following year. The 1957 Ordinance came into force on 15 June 1957, shortly before the attainment of Independence on 31 August 1957. The Education Ordinance 1957 re-produced almost verbatim the recommendation of the 1956 Razak Report. s3 of the Ordinance provides: "The education policy of the Federation is to establish a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy the needs to promote their culture, social, economic and political development as a nation, with the intention of making Malay language the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of peoples other than Malays living in the country." One will note that this provision is the fine-tuned version of the recommendation of the Abdul Razak Report 1956 for a national education policy designed to promote multiculturalism. What is conspicuously absent in this 1957 Ordinance was the proposal for the "ultimate objective". The "ultimate objective" was dropped as a result of a general consensus among the various ethnic communities on the eve of Merdeka. If ever there was any so-called "social contract" as often referred to by the ruling elite, the Education Ordinance 1957 was the genuine "social contract" in respect of the national education, entered into on the eve of Independence, among the various ethnic communities living in this country.

²¹ Within a short span of hardly 4 years, the national education policy based on multiculturalism as embodied in the Education Ordinance 1957 was re-converted to one of mono-culturalism under the Education Act 1961. "The education policy of the Federation is to establish a national system of education ... which will satisfy the needs to promote the culture, social, economic and political development as a nation, with the intention of making Malay language the national language of the country ..." The end result was that, the 1957 national education policy advocating multiculturalism was replaced by one of mono-culturalism, thereby doing away with the preservation and sustenance of the growth of the language and culture of other ethnic communities. See *Laporan Jawatankuasa Kabinet Mengkaji Pelaksanaan Dasar Pelajaran, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, (1988).

²² The development of the national education policy implemented since 1951; i) Barnes Report 1951 ii). Abdul Razak Report 1956 iii). Education Ordinance 1957 iv). Rahman Talib Report 1960 v). Education Act 1961 vi). Education Act 1996. *Laporan Jawatankuasa Kabinet Mengkaji Pelaksanaan Dasar Pelajaran, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, (1988).

- a. All local schools shall use a single syllabus
- b. The Malay language shall be the National language and shall be the principal medium of instruction
- c. The Malay and English languages shall be compulsory subjects studied at all primary and secondary schools
- d. For national type schools, English, Chinese and Tamil shall be the mediums of instruction
- e. Primary schools shall be converted to national schools with Malay as the principal medium of instruction
- f. The establishment of only one type of school shall be open
(Laporan Jawatankuasa Kabinet Mengkaji Pelaksanaan Dasar Pelajaran, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia , Kuala Lumpur, 1988: 24-32).

The proposals were not implemented drastically, but were instead carried out in stages. Even so, the Chinese felt that some of these proposals should not be implemented at all, especially those on establishing a single and uniform²³ type of school, which is the Malay school, as this would indirectly abolish all Chinese and Tamil medium schools sooner or later. The proposal finally could not be accepted by the Chinese community. Thus, in the Education Act, 1961, these phrases were amended to 'national schools' (Malay medium) and 'national type schools' (Chinese and Indian mediums).

But still the issue did not end there, and an even bigger issue emerged. The Education Act, 1961 (21), authorised its minister to convert Chinese schools into

²³The proposals imply that Chinese and Tamil medium schools would be abolished and only Malay medium schools would ultimately exist.

national schools, and this prompted greater unity among the Chinese from all levels of society. The Act indirectly meant that national type schools could at any time be converted under the authority given to the minister. The concern grew when in 1970, the medium of instruction at all English-medium national type schools were changed to Malay. The implications of the Education Act, 1961 (21) on Chinese education now truly worried the Chinese;

‘It was this concern that drove the Chinese to continue protecting Chinese schools in any way they could. They were willing to put aside their differences in politics and background, to pool their efforts and resources to continue promoting Chinese schools. This was the main factor that was rarely understood by the non-Chinese when the issue of Chinese education was raised’.²⁴

For this reason, it is hardly surprising that even to this very day, Chinese political parties would include the issue of education as an agenda in their missions. Hence parties in the government or the opposition would always make education a political routine to try and win the support of voters, especially among the Chinese. In this respect, Dong Jiao Zhong played a truly unique role.

i. Dong Jiao Zhong’s Request

Dong Zong²⁵ is actually a national association and not a non-governmental organisation (NGO), whereas Jiao Zong²⁶ is an association of teachers, established at every school, and registered as an NGO. Both associations are responsible for managing and administrating Chinese schools, collecting donations, funding the facilities and discussing with the government, on issues involving Chinese education. Both cooperate and their combined name is Dong Jiao Zhong. On issues regarding

²⁴ Interview with Dr. Ting Chew Peng. See appendix A.

²⁵ Jiao Zong was established in 1951.

²⁶ Dong Zong was established in 1954.

education, Dong Jiao Zhong speaks as one voice²⁷. The association represents 1,284 Chinese national type primary schools and all teachers of Chinese schools in Malaysia.

In their struggle to protect the existence of Chinese national type schools and the usage of the Chinese language as the medium of instruction in schools, Dong Jiao Zhong used the election as a stepping stone to fulfil its wishes through demands. This approach was often used as a strategy to corner BN into granting their requests, at the same time gaining the support of Chinese voters, particularly in the 1986, 1995 and 1999 elections. Dong Jiao Zhong's requests usually received responses from political parties of either BN or the opposition.

ii. The 1986 election demand

In 1985, the government planned to establish Integrated Schools to realise the vision of the Razak Statement, 1956. The basic concept of this school is to merge national schools with Chinese and Tamil primary schools within the same area. The approach failed to win the agreement of Dong Jiao Zhong, who felt that schools should not be made the target in merging exercises, even for the purpose of "promoting the spirit of integration among students". Dong Jiao Zhong was also of the opinion that it was good to promote interaction in order to instil the spirit tolerance and unity among students of all races through co-curricular activities.

²⁷ This demand regarding education became most significant when a large number from the main Dong Jiao Zhong leadership joined Gerakan during the 1982 election. It included Kerk Choo Ting, Ong Tin Kim, Dr. Kang Chin Seng, Dr. Koh Tsu Koon and others. Upon joining the party on 31 March 1982, the group categorically stated its stand on language, education and culture to create an integrated Malaysia. It assumed the form of a joint statement with the Central Committee which promised to co-opt it as part and parcel of the party's political programme. Together with the Dong Jiao Zhong group came along a group of young, concerned and committed intellectuals who would soon emerge as the 'think tank' of the party with regards to its stand on national social, economic and political issues. See Ye Lin Sheng (2003).

By coincidence, Dong Jiao Zhong's protest was made just before the 1986 election. This had triggered various reactions, some positive and some negative. DAP, who had launched the Tanjung 1 project to capture Penang, used this issue to its advantage. As a response to the protest and as a measure to settle the issue, at the same time winning the support of voters, a trilateral negotiation was held between the Ministry of Education, Dong Jiao Zhong and the MCA, who acted as the moderator. The ministry was headed by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the then Minister of Education whereas the MCA was headed by Ling Liong Sik, the then Deputy Minister of Education. As an outcome, the ministry implemented the Student Integration Plan For Unity, provided by the Ministry of Education in 1986²⁸. Thanks to their cunning in exploiting the issue, the DAP achieved outstanding success in Penang by winning eight more seats than in the previous election. The integrated school plan was eventually terminated in 1987.

iii. The 1995 election demand

In 1995, 10 years after the Integrated School project was abandoned, the government announced the Smart School idea. The integrated school approach was adopted, where Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools would share the same facilities. This time, the Ministry of Education acted more drastically by implementing it at two pilot schools in Lurah Bilut, Bentong, Pahang, and Kota Tinggi, Johor (*Berita Harian*, 21 April 2003:4). The Malaysian Cabinet implemented the smart school concept to promote racial understanding and harmony among the multiracial people of Malaysia from an early age.

²⁸ Interview with Dr. Ting Chew Peng, See appendix A.

As expected, the project was objected by Chinese educators such as Dong Jiao Zhong, because it leaned towards converting Chinese and Tamil schools into national schools. Initially, the protest by Dong Jiao Zhong was fully manipulated by the DAP, who had launched its Tanjung III project to capture Penang. After winning 14 seats in the 1990 election, the DAP only needed three more seats to form a minority government in Penang. By this time, the MCA and Gerakan were extremely worried about the DAP's stronghold and that Penang would be captured by the opposition.

With the approval of the Chairman of the BN headquarters, the MCA and Gerakan took the initiative to negotiate with Dong Jiao Zhong on a compromise. Within this context, Dong Jiao Zhong stipulated a condition that the government amend the Education Act, 1961 to guarantee the status of Chinese schools. A compromise was reached, and the government agreed to fulfil the request after the election, provided that Chinese voters prove their loyalty to the BN²⁹. This initial agreement eventually contributed to the change in voting pattern of the Chinese in Penang, where transition took place from voting for the opposition (the DAP) to voting for Gerakan and the MCA. The swing in votes became significant when the DAP only managed to defend one of the 14 seats it previously won. The BN, who had succeeded in forming a government, later amended the Education Act, 1961 to revoke the authority given to the Minister of Education to convert Chinese schools to national schools, although the objective of using the Malay language as the medium of instruction remained unchanged.

²⁹ Interview with Ghafar Baba, 21 April 2004. See Appendix A.

iv. The 1999 election demand

By the time of the November 1999 general election, the Dong Jiao Zhong Declaration of Mother Tongue Education stated 12 requests to the authorities. Among others, their second request was “to reject the single language policy of education”.

‘The mother tongue is the essence of a race and a means of continuing the legacy of its culture. It is closely related to the status, dignity and identity of a race. Acceptance of the existence and freedom of development of education in the mother tongue is the realisation of interracial equality in education. For Chinese children, this would mean being educated in Chinese. For Indian children, this would mean being educated in Tamil. This is a human right’ (*Utusan Malaysia*, 4 November 1999).

The situation had shocked many parties, especially UMNO. In the two previous elections (1986 and 1995), Dong Jiao Zhong’s demands were always submitted as a response to an action by the government (such as the proposal to implement integrated and smart schools), but this time they had acted more aggressively by submitting demands that are not protests in nature. In addition, the demands were made together with the Suqiu and in total contained 83 demands under 17 headings, which represented an effort to fulfil the rights of the Chinese in this country. Suqiu’s demands were signed by 2,095 organisations nationwide (*The Star*, 14 September 1999). Indeed, these demands were deliberate and their timing perfect, as it was submitted just before an election. Mahathir Mohammad stated that;

‘If this were not entertained, they would tell the Chinese people not to support BN. If we rejected it, we would be defeated in the election. This is their intention, to make us lose in the election... an unreasonable demand submitted just before the election...’³⁰.

³⁰ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A

In this regard, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad reprimanded the leaders of the Suqiu and Dong Jiao Zhong, who had challenged the social contract and had attempted to obtain everything for a single ethnic group by making various unreasonable demands. This would, in fact, damage and destroy the nation's harmony and stability. Each ethnic leader should always be aware of the boundaries beyond which certain demands should not be made, to avoid misunderstanding and potential conflict among the different ethnic groups, as had happened on 13 May 1969.

To this end, a comprehensive discussion was held among the component parties of the BN and later, a decision was made that the matter be brought to the Cabinet. The President of Gerakan, Dr. Lim Keng Yaik and the President of the MCA, Lee Liong Sik, later announced that the demand was accepted in principle at the Cabinet meeting on 22 September 1999, but it would be subject to some necessary amendments (*Utusan Malaysia*, 24 September 1999:2). As expected, this decision helped the BN continue controlling the government and defending the seats it won in Penang in 1995.

The education issues had easily attracted the attention and sympathy of voters, as it involved grassroots interests, especially in constituencies where the voter majority was a single race. The BN must therefore grant attention to demands for the sake of safeguarding national harmony and stability, particularly in Penang. In Penang, where there are many private Chinese schools and national type schools, it would have been especially easy to sway voters had the BN not acted to negotiate with the requesting party. And within this context, the party Gerakan and the MCA were the two parties to be credited for realising the matter.

7.4.1.2. The Establishment of a University

The Chinese community has indeed always been greatly concerned over education, so it is far from surprising that among the demands proposed was the establishment of the Merdeka University with the Mandarin language as its major medium of instruction. This request has been made ever since the MCA era of Tan Siew Sin. The Merdeka University issue re-emerged and gained wide publicity in the Chinese press. Governors of the University launched a nationwide signature campaign to get Chinese guilds and associations to give their full support in an effort to get the Royal Assent for its establishment (Chin Hon Min, 1994:266). On April 12, Party President Lee San Choon explained that the University and University College Act, 1971 specified that the Chinese language could not be the medium of instruction in local universities. As such, the proposed University did not comply with the Act which made its registration impossible. The fight and demand, however, did not just end there. The MCA did not give up, and instead continued to demand that the status of the Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College³¹ be upgraded to a University. This demand was finally acceded by the government with the establishment of the University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) as the private university long sought by the MCA.

³¹ Tunku Abdul Rahman College (TARC) was established on 24 February 1969 under the leadership of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA). The College was named after the late YTM Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Father of Malaysian Independence. The College is 50% subsidized by Government for all its recurrent and capital expenditure. The other 50% is borne by the Trustees. The vision of MCA was to establish an institution of higher learning for young Malaysians who have, for one reason or another, been deprived of the opportunity to seek education, as well as to meet the rising demand from the private sector for trained professional, sub-professional and technical personnel in the task of nation building. The College started with the commencement of classes in the School of Pre-University Studies in 1969 and followed by the School of Business Studies in 1971. In 1972, School of Technology, School of Arts and Science and Extra-Mural Studies Department were established. The School of Social Science and Humanities was established in 1999.

7.4.1.3. Student Admission into Public Tertiary Education Institutions (PTEI)

Requests and demands on the quota or number of Chinese students given entry to tertiary education institutions first emerged during the 1978 election. The MCA President, Lee San Choon, expressed dissatisfaction over the reducing number of Chinese students entering the five local universities. The MCA leaders were concerned and angry that new intakes of Chinese students into the five local universities³² have increased by only two percent. He suggested that the ratio of intake should be 50:50 between Bumiputras and non-Bumiputras. This demand was most difficult to fulfil, being in conflict with the principle of special rights of the Malays, which specified a quota for the intake of Malay students into universities. In handling this demand, the Chairman of the BN, Hussein Onn, postponed the decision until after the 11 March 1978 election.

On 28 June 1978, Party President Lee San Choon led an MCA top-ranking delegation to meet the UMNO leadership led by the Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, to discuss the matter. It was agreed at the meeting that the ratio of future intakes should be 55% Bumiputra and 45% non-Bumiputra. As a result of this negotiation, study placements in higher education increased from 25 percent in 1977 to 45 percent in 1983³³ (Do you know, undated:8).

³² The number of universities had increased to five with the establishment of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the upgrading of the College of Agriculture to Universiti Pertanian Malaysia and that of the Technical College to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The total student enrolment in degree and diploma courses increased from 11,000 in 1970 to about 34,300 by 1980.

³³ Total number of Chinese students in tertiary education institutions from 1969 to 1980;

Year	Total
1969	764
1971	1124
1973	2182
1975	4633
1977	5990
1979	6193

7.4.2 Demand for Posts

7.4.2.1 Public sector

As discussed in chapter one, the Malays are also allocated a special quota for posts in the public sector. But this did not prevent the MCA from demanding that the quota and opportunity be expanded for the Chinese to work in the public sector. In the 1982 election, the MCA submitted a demand to this end, after discovering that the Chinese were under-represented in important public sector posts. As an example, for super scale A-F posts³⁴, the Chinese only made up 22.9 percent compared to 57.8 percent Malays. Likewise, only a very small number of 64,867 Chinese were employed in the civil service whilst the Malays totalled 454,360³⁵ (Esman, 1972:76). The situation for uniformed units, such as the Police, was even more critical. It was found that of the total 84,526 police personnel in the country, only 2,579 or 3.1 percent comprised Malaysian Chinese against 66,928 Malays (79.2%), 3,051 Indians (3.6%) and 11,968 Others (14.1%).

The imbalanced racial composition of the public sector automatically creates a monopoly by one particular race in making and implementing major national policies. This could threaten the interests of the races that were under-represented and such a case should not happen in a multiracial country³⁶. In response to this demand, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad clarified that the government is in fact liberal and provides room to the other races to join the public service according to the stipulated quotas.

1980

6272

See Chan Teck Chan. (1982).

³⁴ Under the public service scheme, scales A, B and C are considered Principal Public Service Positions, and typically consist of posts such as Secretaries to the Ministries and Heads of Departments (Customs & Excise, Immigration and so on). Scales E and F consist of senior posts whose holders are usually Heads of sections in certain departments. See Khasnor Johan (1984).

³⁵ The number of Indians in the public sector was 38,514.

³⁶ See Tan Teck Chan (1982).

Yet it is actually the attitude of the Chinese themselves, who have poor regard for and looked away from “salaried” jobs or working with the government, that brought about this lopsidedness. This was proven by the revelation by the Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Department, in his reply during the July 1999 session in Parliament, that “only two percent of the applicants for civil service jobs came from the Chinese community” (*The Star*, 28 July 1999: 2).

Knowing that their demand was not considered by the Prime Minister, the MCA Youth demanded in retaliation that the government appoint a Chinese as District Officer and Assistant District Officer, posts traditionally held by the Malays. But this was also rejected, with Dr. Mahathir emphasising that although the posts were not untenable, the MCA should not try to change the existing status quo (*Watan*, 18 December 1981:4).

Despite the demand being rejected by UMNO as leader of the BN, the Chinese component parties were not dampened from raising the same demand again and again at every election. In Penang, Gerakan relentlessly demanded that posts traditionally held by the Malays also be given to the Chinese. In the 1990 election and in facing the Tanjung II project by the DAP, Gerakan again made the demand that a quota for the post of District Officer or Assistant District Officer be allocated to the Chinese. According to Dr. Koh Tsu Khoon, this demand was based on development and communication factors in Chinese majority areas³⁷.

The same issue could be used as a weapon to win the votes of Chinese voters in favour of Gerakan. As an effort to ensure that Gerakan continued getting support, the BN finally agreed to give the post of Penang Municipal Council President to the

³⁷ Interview with Dr. Koh Tsu Khoon. See appendix A.

Chinese. This was in exchange to the demand for the post of District Officer, which UMNO felt would create problems among the Malay voters if given to another race. Thus, on 20 February 1992, Tan Gim Hwa was appointed as President, a post traditionally held by the Malays³⁸.

7.4.2.2 Political Appointments

a. Appointment of Deputy Prime Minister

As explained earlier, the objective of some demands took a long time to achieve. A clear trend among the party Gerakan and the MCA was the tendency to pursue an unfulfilled demand at another, more suitable time, as long as it was not granted. The demand for appointment to the post of Deputy Prime Minister is one such example. This demand was first made in February 1966³⁹, then repeated in 1973⁴⁰, 1981⁴¹ and 1987⁴². It is true that there is actually no article in the Federal Constitution that provides for the head of government to be a Muslim Malay. Article 43(2) of the 1957 Constitution states that:

³⁸ Interview with Ibrahim Saat. See appendix A

³⁹ In February 1966, there were rumours that Tunku (the Prime Minister) was going to resign, and would be replaced by Abdul Razak Hussein. Tan Siew Sin was nominated to replace the Deputy Prime Minister through a demand by the MCA. The *Guardian*, the official MCA publication, published the demand, stating that there is no provision in the Constitution preventing a non-Malay from becoming the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister. This, however, was left unresolved when Tunku Abdul Rahman did not resign. See *Straits Times*, 3 February 1966, 26 June 1967, and 23 October 1967.

⁴⁰ The second demand surfaced before the 1974 election upon the death of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman. As a senior minister with 14 years' experience in the finance ministry, the MCA once again nominated Tan Siew Sin to take over the post. But the demand was rejected and finally Tan Siew Sin resigned and retired from politics on 28 April 1974, just 3 months before the next election. See Chin Hon Min (1994).

⁴¹ The third demand for the post of Second Deputy Prime Minister was submitted by the MCA in September 1981, about 10 months away from the 1982 election. See *Watan*, 9 October 1981.

⁴² The fourth demand arose out of the interpretation of the terms 'indigenous' and 'non-indigenous' put forth by Lim Kim Sai, the MCA Deputy President. The terms were said to have divided society into first- and second-class citizens, the latter not enjoying certain privileges of the former. This was seen to imply that the non-indigenous people (the non-Malays) were unqualified to be the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. As a result, the MCA demanded that the post be open to the non-Malays. See Law Fong Yuen (1987).

‘The Assembly of Ministers shall be appointed in the following manner: (a) The Yang Dipertuan Agong shall first appoint a Prime Minister to lead the Assembly of Ministers, from among the members of Parliament and whom, in His Majesty’s opinion, will gain the trust of the majority in Parliament, and (b) on the advice of the Prime Minister, the Yang Dipertuan Agong shall appoint members of the Parliamentary Council’ (Federal Constitution, 1990:52-53).

Nevertheless, the practice in Malaysia since independence has always been that the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister are appointed from among the Malays⁴³. This is known as Convention, a practice applied in Malaysia⁴⁴. Furthermore, the Deputy Prime Minister should either be the person who commanded the strongest support among party members or the person trusted by the Prime Minister to be his assistant. Even though this demand was not fulfilled by the BN, it was still given attention due to its potential implications, especially among the young voters.

b. Appointment of Senate Members and House Speaker

Excellent performance in an election usually earns a party good bargaining power. Such was the case with the party Gerakan, who submitted a demand commensurate with its achievement after achieving a most encouraging victory in the 1990 election. Among the demands were that a quota be given to party Gerakan for the post of Senate Member⁴⁵, or even House Speaker at Parliament or the Senate. The Party

⁴³ Deputy Prime Minister since 1957: Abdul Razak Hussin (1957-1972), Dr. Ismail Abd Rahman (1972-1974), Hussein Onn (1974-1976), Dr. Mahathir Mohammed (1976-1981), Musa Hitam (1981-1986), Ghafar Baba (1986-1993), Anwar Ibrahim (1993-1999), Abdullah Ahmad Badwi (2000-2003) and Najib Abdul Razak (2003-now).

⁴⁴ Constitutional laws are divided into written and unwritten laws. Generally, constitutional laws of Malaysia are written, whereas in comparison, much of the laws in the United Kingdom are not in print but based on convention. Therefore, Convention is also a form of legislation.

⁴⁵ According to Article 45 of the Federal Constitution, the Senate has 69 members appointed by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong from among citizens who are successful professionals and representatives of

Gerakan demanded that it be given seats at federal level appointed by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong and also at State level elected by the State Legislative Council (*Berita Harian*, 30 December 1991). The same demand was made by the MIC, hoping that an appointment to the Senate would open the way for minority parties (*New Straits Times*, 26 May 1994). The Party Gerakan's demand for the post of speaker was fulfilled with the appointment of Chan Choon Tak of party Gerakan as Deputy President of the Senate, replacing Tan Peng Khoo of the MCA (*Berita Harian*, 30 December 1995). Meanwhile, the MIC obtained a quota in five states.

7.4.3 Re-delineation of electoral constituencies

The MCA bargained for the electoral constituencies to be revised to remove the superiority of a single race as well as chauvinism in politics. The MCA stressed that the present system immensely benefited UMNO, i.e. the Malays, because the majority of residents in many of the constituencies were Malays. This enables, and in fact ensures, that Malay candidates win in elections. With regards to racial distribution of the constituencies, Crouch noted that in 1982, the large constituencies were generally rural and Malay, and that:

‘Although Malays form only 54.0 percent of the Peninsular population, they make up a majority of votes in 79.0 (69.0 percent) of the peninsular parliamentary constituencies and an even larger proportion of the 312 state constituencies. It is only in Penang that Malay-majority constituencies are a minority’ (Crouch, 1982:37).

minority ethnic groups, such as the aborigines. In making these appointments, the Yang Di Pertuan Agong would adhere to the advice of the Prime Minister. 29 senators are chosen by the State Legislative Councils from the 13 states, two from the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and one from the Federal Territory of Labuan. A senator must be at least 30 years of age and his tenure is for three years (Federal Constitution, 1990).

The MCA demanded a change and after the 1974 re-delineation, MCA leaders voiced concern over the resulting debasement of urban non-Malay votes. One of them complained that the electoral system has 'grossly' under-represented the Chinese community. He argued that the weightage should not be so skewed such that in some places the value of a rural vote is more than double the value of an urban vote and that this has aggravated the Chinese political dilemma, heightened perception of political inequalities and worsened racial polarisation (Yeoh, 1988:27-28). So in order to create a more just situation, the MCA suggested that;

'By 1990, the size of a constituency would not differ from the average-size constituency by more than 15.0 percent; at least 50.0 percent of the constituencies would have no one race as a majority in the constituencies; in the constituencies where the majority of one race is inevitable; (i.e. in very rural seats or city core seats) they would be delineated in such a way that the ratio of Malay majority seats to Chinese majority seats is approximately equal to the overall population ratio' (Yeoh, 1982:78-81).

When the situation in Penang is scrutinised objectively, the demand by the MCA does indeed hold some truth. Table 7.2 and 7.3, clearly shows the difference in the number of voters between Parliamentary seats held by the Malays and those held by the Chinese. For example, in 1990 election, parliamentary seats held by Malay representatives have 39,375 voters each whereas the non-Malay seats have an average of 57,384 each. The average number of voters in non-Malay constituencies is obviously very large for Parliamentary seats in Penang, i.e. 51,000 voters, in comparison to the average number of voters for Parliamentary constituencies at national level, i.e. 47,000 voters (The Election Commission, 1994:99).

**Table 7.2: The average of Malay electorates in Penang
Parliamentary 1978, 1990 and 1999**

	Total of voters in the 1978 Election	Total of voters in the 1990 Election	Total of voters in the 1999 Election
Kepala Batas	24,277	31,068	37,059
Permatang Pauh	24,840	40,526	50,502
Balik Pulau	34,712	50,680	62,839
Tasek Gelugor	-	35,227	39,213
Average electorate	27,943	39,375	47,403

Source: a) Data 1978: Election Commission. (1988). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1986*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
b) Data 1990: Election Commission. (1992). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1990*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
c) Data 1999: Election Commission. (2002). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1999*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.

**Table 7.3: The average of non-Malay Electorates in Penang
Parliamentary 1978, 1990 and 1999**

	Total of voters in the 1978 Election	Total of voters in the 1990 Election	Total of voters in the 1999 Election
Bagan	38,462	56,494	73,009
Bukit Bendera	48,265	57,027	70818
Tanjong	47,665	60,888	61389
Nibong Tebal	28,006	43,221	54276
Bukit Mertajam	34,936	54,350	67,631
Jelutong	50,989	62,126	60239
Bayan Baru	-	67,582	85506
Average electorate	41,387	57,384	67,552

Source: a) Data 1978: Election Commission. (1988). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1986*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
b) Data 1990: Election Commission. (1992). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1990*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
c) Data 1999: Election Commission. (2002). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1999*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.

The situation is the same at the State Legislative level (See table 7.4 and 7.5). For example, on average in 1990 election, Malay voters numbered only 11,407 whereas non-Malays numbered 20,697 on the overall. The average number of voters for the Penang State Legislative Council seat was 17,000 and at the national level the average was 15,900 voters⁴⁶. It was based on this situation that the MCA demanded the revision of voter distribution in constituencies at the Parliamentary and State Legislative levels.

Table 7.4: The average of Malay electorates in the Penang Assembly 1978, 1990 and 1999

	Total of voters in the 1978 Election	Total of voters in the 1990 Election	Total of voters in the 1999 Election
Penaga	9,483	9,207	12,552
Bertam	8,415	13,854	11,613
Sungai Dua	8,258	11,292	12,752
Penanti	9,445	11,691	14,378
Sungai Acheh	12,036	10,994	13,747
Average electorate	9,527	11,407	13,008

Source: a) Data 1978: Election Commission. (1988). *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1986*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
b) Data 1990: Election Commission. (1992). *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1990*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
c) Data 1999: Election Commission. (2002). *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1999*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.

⁴⁶ See *Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia mengenai Ulangkaji Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihanraya Parlimen dan Negeri 1994*, (1995). Jilid 1 – Syor. Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur

**Table 7.5: The average of non-Malay Electorates in Penang
Assembly 1978, 1990 and 1999**

	Total of voters in the 1978 Election	Total of voters in the 1990 Election	Total of voters in the 1999 Election
Bagan Jermal	18,282	22,569	23,129
Bagan Dalam	17,123	19,833	23,261
Bukit Gelugor	21,949	16,805	24,102
Sungai Penang	20,801	21,930	19,347
Kampung Kolam	17,638	18,727	21,100
Pengkalan kota	18,559	25,220	22,215
Datok Keramat	17,505	19,797	20,298
Average electorate	18,836	20,697	21,921

Source: a) Data 1978: Election Commission. (1988). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1986*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
b) Data 1990: Election Commission. (1992). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1990*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.
c) Data 1999: Election Commission. (2002). *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1999*. National Printing Department, Kuala Lumpur.

According to Ghafar Baba, revision of voter distribution, however, lay within the jurisdiction of the Election Commission as set out in Clauses 9 and 10 of Article 113 of the Federal Constitution⁴⁷. Hence, the BN may forward the said demand to the Commission. But an aspect of the MCA's demand that attracted UMNO's attention was the political strategy planned by the MCA as disclosed by Yong Poh Kon in his article entitled 'The Direction for the Future – A New Perspective Plan'. In this strategy, Chinese voters who were concentrated in Chinese-majority areas were to shift to Malay-majority areas through new housing projects to be developed. Within 16 years, the Malay-majority areas would expectedly become mixed areas (Malay and non-Malays) (1982:79-85). When such mixed areas exist, then, pursuant to the procedures of seat distribution in the BN, demands can be made that these areas be represented by the non-Malays. This process would increase the number of non-

⁴⁷ See *Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia mengenai Ulang Kaji dan Persempadanan Semula Bahagian-bahagian Pilihan Raya Parlimen dan Negeri bagi Negeri-negeri Tanah Melayu*. 1994. Volume 1.

Malay representatives and indirectly enable the demand for increase in the number of Cabinet and State Exco seats. According to Mohammad Bakri⁴⁸, as a result of this strategy, UMNO became very cautious and more sensitive when any re-delineation exercise was carried out. This was to ensure the continuity and integrity of Malay politics.

7.4.4 Abolition of the quota system⁴⁹

The interracial understanding and coalition established through the spirit of *quid pro quo* during the early stages of independence actually faced continuous challenges all the time. This was evident, judging from the demands that could have led to the destruction of that spirit. For example, when the New Economic Policy (NEP) ended in 1990, the MCA and the party Gerakan together demanded that the quota system in the NEP be abolished. They were of the opinion that the country should not practise any policy that differentiates the community, in order to avoid disunity and so as not to threaten the goodwill among its citizens. The quota system assigned to the Malays should rightfully be replaced by a system of 'need and merit' irrespective of race (*Utusan Malaysia*, 1 November 1989:2). This demand, however, was rejected in the end.

⁴⁸ Interview with Mohammad Bakri, Former Executive Secretary of the Kedah BN from 1985 to 1998. See appendix A.

⁴⁹ Article 153 was duly amended to introduce the quota system for Malays in institutions of higher learning. Clause (8A) specifically provided for the reservation of places for bumiputra in any university, college and other educational institutions. See Chapter 1

7.4.5 Bargaining from Suqiu

Prior to the November 1999 election, the Coalition of Chinese Associations (Suqiu⁵⁰) submitted 83 demands under 17 headings⁵¹ on 17 August 1999. These demands were regarded as an effort to fulfil the rights of the Chinese community in this country, which covered such diverse subjects as human rights, housing, environment and universal values, also touching on sensitive issues, such as “the rights of the indigenous people enshrined in the Federal Constitution” which is “so sensitive and should not be discussed openly”, with regards to:

- a. Steps to abolish the differentiation between indigenous and non-indigenous people in all sectors.
- b. Abolishment of the ethnic-based quota system, to be replaced with a system of distribution based on merit (*Utusan Malaysia*, 20 December 2000).

The repercussions emanating from these demands are many, especially when it touches on the rights of the Malays. Should all 83 demands be accepted, not only would the social contract established among the Malays, Chinese and Indians be ignored, but the Malaysian constitution would also be pushed aside. Various

⁵⁰ The associations affiliated with Suqiu include 11 Chinese national associations of Malaysia (Jiao Zong), Federation of Malaysian Chinese School Alumni Associations, Nanyang University Alumni Associations of Malaysia, Taiwan Graduate Alumni Associations of Malaysia, Selangor Chinese Guild, Federation of Guangdong Associations of Malaysia, Federation of Guangzi Associations of Malaysia, Federation of Fuzhou Associations of Malaysia, Federation of Sanjiang Associations of Malaysia, and the Huazi Research Centre. Before the 1999 election, these demands were agreed upon and supported by 2,095 Chinese associations in Malaysia. See *The Star*, 18 December 2000.

⁵¹ The 17 demands submitted by Suqiu cover the following subjects; 1. Encourage National Unity, 2. Enhance Democracy, 3. Defend Basic Human Rights and Establish Justice, 4. Eradicate Corrupt Practices, 5. Implement Just Economic Policies, 6. Review the Privatization Policy, 7. Implement A Progressive and Liberal Education Policy, 8. Encourage the Development of Various Cultures, 9. Protect the Environment, 10. Modernize and Establish New Villages, 11. Realize Housing Policy For Everyone, 12. Protect Basic Women's Rights, 13. Establish a Just and Fair Media, 14. Restore Public Confidence Towards The Police Force, 15. Improve Welfare Services, 16. Respect Workers' Rights, 17. Provide Financial Assistance to the Aborigines. See *Utusan Malaysia*, 20 December 2000.

objections were presented by Malay associations and political bodies against what was voiced by the Suqiu⁵². The demand made by Suqiu with the intention to use the election as a stepping stone to acquire gains, by applying pressure on the BN, eventually died down when the Chinese political parties complied with the Prime Minister's instruction to stop promoting the Suqiu demands.

7.5 Managing the Bargains

The variety of demands, especially those that became the bases for giving support in an election or otherwise, was a big challenge to the BN leadership. The pressure received as a result of these demands, if ignored, would most certainly have implications on the support of voters in the election. Albeit reluctantly, all demands were processed, filtered and scrutinised to determine if they could be accepted or should be rejected. The varied demands, particularly those that are presented as a basis for giving support, or otherwise, during an election, is a great challenge to the BN leadership. There was pressure to entertain these demands and, if ignored, it would surely influence the support of voters in elections. UMNO, as the key component of the BN, become the recipient of these demands with the other components (the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC) being the parties making the demands. At the same time, there emerged a third group, namely the NGOs (especially the Sinqu), that also actively made demands, especially as each election draws close. It is difficult to deny that the role played or the demand made by the Sinqu is somewhat similar to what is desired or fought for by the MCA, or even Gerakan.

⁵² Among the protests planned was the proposal to organise a big demonstration sponsored by the Federation of Peninsular Malay Students (GPMS), including the gathering of 100,000 Malays in Kuala Lumpur. This proposal received positive reaction from other parties, such as the President of 4B, a youth organisation with 300,000 members, which pledged to send at least 10,000 members to the gathering (*Utusan Malaysia*, 20 December 2000).

All demands are processed and screened anyway, then studied to determine if they can be accepted or should be rejected. The only certainty here is that the party making the demands would want all their demands fulfilled as far as possible. But UMNO, being the Chair of the BN, would definitely scrutinise these demands from every point of view, including from the constitutional angle, from the aspect of quid pro quo that was agreed among the different communities, as well as in terms of the government's capability of implementing it should the demand be accepted. Therefore, negotiating (soft/giving in) is the best way to arrive at a common point of reference in analysing the demands made to achieve a win-win situation so that all groups would be contented. The party making the demand gets what it wants, and the BN (UMNO) maintains its dominance over the country's governance.

Even so, the distributive bargaining approach (hard/controlling) was sometimes preferred as the method of controlling the requests and demands that were put forward. As an example, the Suqiu was labelled as a communist group⁵³ by the BN Chairman, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, when they submitted their 18 demands (refer to the Suqiu demand 6.5.5). Dr. Mahathir's action was deemed harsh and clearly did not please the Chinese community, especially the younger generation⁵⁴. Strict action

⁵³ The term *communist* in Malaysia is defined as a radical organisation that prefers force as an approach to fulfil its demands. The activities of a communist organisation known as the Communist Party of Malaya were banned since 1948. The Marxist-Leninist Communist Party and the Revolutionary Group Communist Party of Malaya were also banned in 1969. However, in 1984, all three parties merged as an 'underground movement' to form the Communist Party of Malaysia, led by Ching Peng. The involvement of the communist party in pursuing its struggle by 'taking up arms' resulted in a state of emergency being declared in Malaysia for 12 years from 1948 to 1960.

⁵⁴ The Chinese today, particularly the generation born after Independence, genuinely and sincerely regard Malaysia as their native land. This is the land of birth they call home. Generations of Chinese have been born in Malaysia and generations have died here. The Chinese contributed in developing the economy and politics, participated in the overall development of the nation together with the Malays, Indians and the other races. They do not reject the terms *Malay* or *non-Malay*. These are ethnic terms that have existed all this while. They are only unable to accept the terms *bumiputera* and *non-bumiputera*. The usage of the term *bumiputera* has widened following the implementation of the

was sometimes taken when handling certain demands, yet it never led to the collapse of the coalition. According to Lee Liong Sik, in the management of demands, usually not all demands made today would be granted today, but do not forget that politics is a long journey.

‘So, all parties must accept whatever decision made by the BN, because it was done in accordance with the Barisan Nasional’s practice, and this proves that we appreciate such a practice’⁵⁵.

Table 7.6 briefly shows the decisions made on the demands by political parties and NGOs as discussed earlier. Some have been fulfilled (though not totally) while others have yet to be fulfilled.

New Economic Plan in 1970. To the Chinese, the term *bumiputera* carries an explicit element of discrimination. It almost implies that the *non-bumiputeras*, like the Chinese, Indians and other races, are regarded as second-class citizens of Malaysia. On the other hand, some Malays still cannot bring themselves to accept the reality that the Chinese, Indians and other races are also citizens at the same status as them, having same rights and responsibilities as them, in the eyes of the law and the national Constitution. Some Malays still regard that the concept of Malay ownership is the reality and not just an illusion, that it truly exists and is not merely a myth, that it therefore needs to be maintained and further strengthened in this country. They continue to regard Malaysia as the Land of the Malays and the exclusive birth right of the Malays. All other races are thought of as foreigners. Hence they feel that the term *bumiputera* must be maintained. This, in turn, is all about the special privileges of the Malays, as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. See MCA (1982).

⁵⁵ Interview Lee Leong Sik. See Appendix A.

Table 7.6: The government's decisions on demands made by political parties and NGOs

Bargaining	The election year in which the demand was made	The election year in which the demand was fulfilled
Education		
a. Authorised its minister to convert Chinese schools into national schools (Act 1961 (21))	1986	1996 ⁵⁶
b. The Chinese and Tamil languages were allowed as mediums of instruction in schools	1986	1996 ⁵⁷
c. The Integrated School concept was abolished	1986	1999 ⁵⁸
d. The Smart School concept was abolished	1995	1999 ⁵⁹
e. A University was established	1971	1999 ⁶⁰
f. The Quota system was introduced	1978	1978
Demand for Posts		
a. Public sector	1982	1992 ⁶¹
b. Deputy Prime Minister	1966, 1973, 1981 and 1987	Demand not acceded yet
c. Senate Membership	1990	1995
Re-delineation of electoral constituencies	1982	Demand not acceded yet
The quota system was abolished	1990	Demand not acceded yet
Bargaining from the Suqiu	1999	Demand not acceded yet

⁵⁶ The Education Act, 1961 (21) empowers its minister to convert the status of Chinese schools to national schools. Education in Chinese-medium schools became an issue in 1970 when the medium of instruction in all English-medium national-type schools was changed to Malay. The Education Act, 1961 (21) and its implications on the overall Chinese education clearly alarmed the Chinese community. This caused a massive migration of Chinese students from English-type national schools to Chinese schools. At the same time, there was an obvious proliferation of private Chinese schools being set up." The Education Act, 1996 takes into consideration the rights of all communities by maintaining the status quo of national-type primary schools as well as the 60 Chinese private schools. In addition, the Unified Examination sat by these schools and the boards of governors of conforming and mission schools were also maintained.

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A significant implication on the management of bargains can be gleaned from the 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections. It was obvious that when demands submitted prior to the 1986 and 1990 general elections were not fulfilled, the percentage of seats won by the BN dropped from 83.6 percent to 55.8 percent, and continued to drop to 53.4 percent in the 1990 general election. But when the BN government took

⁵⁷ Section 2 of the Education Act, 1996 provides that Chinese and Tamil languages may be taught in National Primary and Secondary Schools on one condition: it is requested by 15 parents or more. This makes it easier to provide the facilities for teaching the Chinese and Tamil languages. Under the Education Act, 1961, the Chinese and Tamil languages can be taught on two conditions:

1. it is requested by 15 parents
2. it is found to be reasonable and practical.

⁵⁸ The Cabinet agreed to defer the Abolishment of the Integrated School Concept.

⁵⁹ The Smart School Concept was abolished by the Cabinet on 23 September 1999.

⁶⁰ The Tunku Abdul Rahman College was upgraded to the Tunku Abdul Rahman University.

⁶¹ The BN agreed to give the post of Penang Municipal Council President to Gerakan. On 20 February 1992, Tan Gim Hwa was appointed as President, a post traditionally held by the Malays.

steps to fulfil several demands made (see table 7.6), the total percentage of seats won in the 1995 general election increased by 13.8 percent to 84.4 percent. The same occurred at the State Legislative Council level. Most certainly, several other factors also contributed to the fluctuations in the number of seats controlled by the BN during the 1986⁶², 1990⁶³ and 1995 elections, yet the role of fulfilling bargains in the BN cannot be totally denied. When demands are acceded to, the process of seat allocation can be better arranged. In the 1995 election, although the number of seats increased following re-delineation, seats were allocated without any conflict among the component parties of the BN. The MCA and Gerakan received the number of seats determined by the BN leadership (see chapter four). Their victory in the 1995 general election, with an 84.4 percent majority, representing 162 of the 192 seats contested, somewhat reflects that fulfilling the demands made by political parties (the BN component parties) helps in managing the conflicts within the BN.

7.6 Conclusion

Bargaining is an approach that may be used by political parties and NGOs to try and get whatever they desire, especially when the time and situation are favourable, such as during an election. Based on the above discussion, there are various factors driving a party to submit its demands. If all the demands are managed well, the resulting implication may be positive and likewise with the opposite. Nevertheless, the component parties of the BN naturally must know the boundaries of demands

⁶² Among other factors of equal importance that caused the reduction in the number of seats won by the BN in the 1986 general election was the internal crisis faced by the MCA as a result of a tussle for the post of President between Neo Yee Pan and Tan Koon Swan. See Lao Zhong, (1984).

⁶³ In the 1990 general election, the BN had to tackle a situation in which UMNO was experiencing a serious internal conflict when a split occurred, leading to the emergence of Team A (later forming the new UMNO) and Team B (which formed the Semangat 46 party). The conflict was caused by the tussle for the post of President and Deputy President as well as other key party posts in 1987, especially between Dr. Mahathir Mohammad and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. See Hilley, J. (2001).

made on behalf of their sympathisers or supporters. This would prevent the weakening of the bond within the BN as a result of any component party making demands or taking actions beyond reason. Thus, apart from managing conflicts that arise in the allocation of electoral seats and State Exco posts, the bargaining that frequently accompanies these conflicts need to be managed equally efficiently to ensure that the BN gains the trust it needs to win the election and subsequently form a government. How this bargaining is handled is captured within the process of managing conflict as explained in chapter eight.

CHAPTER 8

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE BARISAN NASIONAL

8.1 Introduction

Based on the discussion on allocation seats and cabinet/exco posts among the component parties, the BN is evidently never free from being confronted by conflict from time to time. To manage these conflicts, many elements need to be considered, such as demands submitted by the various quarters, as discussed in the previous chapter. But whatever the situation, these conflicts need to be resolved, especially those on the allocation of seats, which is a crucial factor in the strategy of competing in elections. In this respect, it cannot be denied that while there would be some satisfaction, there is also bound to be some dissatisfaction about the decision made in managing the conflict. Regardless of what the case may be, the BN needs to come to a decision to be prepared to face its opponents during a general election.

8.2 The Forum for Conflict Management in the Barisan Nasional

As emphasised from the beginning, the BN is an association representing various ethnic groups, established with the willingness to jointly govern the country. Every component party is willing to take the middle path and to compromise as well as to cooperate, because what is foremost is not a component party or even the BN, but national development and the overall welfare of the people. This conforms to the commitment of the BN, which rejects confrontational politics and replaces it with

discussional politics. According to Yaacob Mohammad¹, the executive secretary of the party, the BN utilised discussional politics on two main platforms, namely:

1. Barisan Nasional Supreme Council
2. Government Administrative Meeting

8.2.1 Barisan Nasional Supreme Council²

The BN supreme council meeting is generally held at least twice a year, but may be held more often depending on the current situation. During Dr. Mahathir's tenure as the BN's Chairman, an average of four meetings were held a year. Special meetings were also held to discuss arising issues that required consensual settlement by the component parties. The functions, power and responsibilities of the Supreme Council are as follows;

1. To formulate policies for the BN,
2. To coordinate matters connected with parliamentary, State and Local Authority elections,
3. To make decisions on disciplinary matters affecting member parties,

¹ Interview with Mohammad Yaacob. See appendix A.

² The BN's affairs shall be administered by the Supreme Council, which shall function as the supreme executive body of the BN. The Supreme Council shall consist of the following: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary General, Treasurer General and three representatives from each member party. See BN 2001. The structure and membership of the BN are slightly different from those of the Alliance party. In the Alliance, there were two main bodies, namely the National Council and the Executive Council. The National Council consists of 16 representatives of UMNO, 16 representatives of the MCA, and six representatives of the MIC. The Executive Council consists of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the Secretary General, the Treasurer General and twelve representatives elected from among the members of the National Council, out of which UMNO makes up five, MCA five and MIC two representatives. At state level, the State Alliance Liaison Committee consists of six members each from UMNO and the MCA, and three members from the MIC. See Mohammad Rahmat (2001).

4. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, to make standing rules and orders, as it may consider necessary, for the proper conduct of BN business,
5. The Supreme Council may delegate its power to any of its committees which it may set up,
6. To approve the formation and specify the membership of the state and divisional coordinating committees (Mohammad Rahmat 2001:65).

It is in this meeting that problems or conflicts faced are normally discussed and worked on to find the best resolution. Ling Leong Sik said that the BN discussed and debated in the meetings to find a suitable solution that is fair to all. The attitude of moderation and tolerance by leaders of the component parties in BN is the key to a harmonious society and national development³.

a. Special Meeting for Seat Allocation and Nomination of Candidate

This meeting is held just before a general election, which means it may be held once every four or five years. The meeting is conducted in two stages. The first stage involves a meeting of all component parties to discuss any requests or proposals regarding seat allocation, accompanied by the list of candidates. Every party is eligible to submit a request to contest in a constituency where it expects to be able to obtain support and thus win that seat. At this level, every party would basically be given a rough idea of the number of seats to be contested. The second stage is decision-making. At this level, separate meetings are held by each component party. It is presided over by the Chairman of the BN and held with members, including the

³ Interview with Ling Leong Sik. See appendix A.

Deputy Chairman cum Chairman of the Management Committee of the BN, and the Secretary General. The President of each component party would discuss with each committee in turn. The discussion focuses on the allocation of seats by component party of the BN. Following this, every Chief Minister or his representative takes turns to face the committee to determine the allocation of seats at each state level, together with its distribution by component party. It is here that the final decision is made by the committee regarding the number of seats and who will contest⁴. Goh Cheing Teik said that;

'The BN leaders then meet just before the election date is announced to make the final decision on the allocation. The Federal level meeting is normally held to endorse the State decision, where minor changes may be made. The federal leader would not want to make changes that could upset the state component party leaders, as this may result in dissatisfaction, which could, in turn, affect the BN at the polls'⁵.

After all the seats have been fully allocated, usually the Prime Minister, who is also the BN Chairman, would set a suitable date for the dissolution of Parliament to allow the Election Commission to arrange for the general election. Dr. Lim Leong Sik said that based on his experience, the dissolution of Parliament would occur within a week to ten days after the allocation of seats among the component parties. "I have had a lot of experience. So, as soon as the allocation of seats is settled, it may be a week later that parliament is dissolved."

⁴ Under Article 11 (a), under the Alliance Party system, allocation of seats is determined by the Executive Council; to consider candidates for the Parliamentary and State elections for West Malaysia and submit them for approval by the National Council.

⁵ Interview with Goh Cheng Teik. See appendix A.

b.. BN State Council Meeting

In this context, the BN is actually strategically advantaged compared to the opposition parties, particularly in determining when an election is to be held. After the dissolution of Parliament, the BN Secretary would be responsible to issue a letter of authority to the chosen candidates to contest under the BN banner. Following this, the Chief Minister would announce or present the candidates to the electorate.

c.. Special Meeting for Major Issues

Other than the special meetings to determine the allocation of seats among the component parties, the BN would sometimes also hold meetings to decide on major issues, especially those of racial interest. In other words, these meetings also discuss racial and religious issues that require immediate commitment from all segments of the various ethnic groups, such as the racial issue in Kampung Medan and the religious issue in Kampung Rawa, Penang⁶.

⁶ Malaysian people are still sensitive in certain issues, particularly on race and religion. Even though Malaysians have mutual respect between one race and another, each still holds on fast to its own race and religion. Two vivid incidents that proved this sensitivity among Malaysians are the racial riot of Kampung Rawa in Penang on 27 Mac 1998 and the tragedy of Kampung Medan in Jalan Kelang Lama that continued for fifteen days (15) from 8/2/2001 to 21/2/2001.

8.2.2 Government Administrative Meeting

The government administration under the rule of the BN, directly or indirectly, is always jointly supervised, except in states without an Exco quota in the state government, such as for the Indian community in Terengganu and Perlis. In other words, the BN practises the collective administrative system. At the national level, the Cabinet, whose membership consists of the key leaders of the BN, holds weekly Cabinet Meetings on Wednesdays. Everyone is given the opportunity and the freedom to express their feelings regarding their interests, either directly or indirectly. The discussional atmosphere here is similar to that in the BN meetings. The final decision is reached when all the cabinet ministers assent.

In the BN, there are various avenues to voice dissatisfaction regarding a policy or its implementation. In fact, for the major parties, the cabinet or the Exco can be used as an avenue. In this way, the development of a policy and a detailed explanation can be made without offending any party, member or lower-ranking leaders of the component parties of the BN⁷.

Hence, any conflict arising would have a good chance of being resolved because there exists a suitable forum such as for issues involving education. At the state level, the BN also provides adequate room to monitor or thrash out problems in managing existing conflicts, especially those in connection with the establishment of state policies. In view of the fact that there are states which are not represented by all the component parties of the BN, like Terengganu and Perlis which have no Indian Exco member, their involvement structures are still being arbitrated because there are four levels to pass before a policy or enactment is enforced at the state level;

⁷ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

1. State Assembly Meeting
2. Adoption of minutes of meeting
3. Pre-council BN state meeting
4. State Legislative Assembly Meeting

The pre-council BN state meeting is important and regarded as the final screening of proposals or policies for approval at the State Legislative Assembly of each state. This meeting would serve as a forum for every component party to voice their respective opinions before approval by the State Legislative Assembly. Usually, this meeting would be crucial for discussing sensitive issues concerning relationships or the affairs of a community that would become a policy in the state. It touches on matters such as the special rights of the Malays, Religion, Language, and those that involve the sovereigns. Through the approach of discussional meetings, the BN not only managed to govern but also succeeded in strengthening their administration. Additionally, every party would enjoy a positive sum game, in which it is a win-win situation for all the members of the BN.

It is therefore clear that any decision made by the BN government is not that of any single component party. Any accusation that only one component party makes all the decisions while the others merely obeyed subjugate or nodded assent can be disputed. In fact, in the Government and within the BN, any subject brought up by any component party would be discussed thoroughly beforehand. It would be analysed detail by detail. It would be fully discussed from every possible angle including its repercussions on the community concerned, the population, and the nation. This is the occasion when the component parties would 'argue' among

themselves until a final decision is reached unanimously⁸. The cardinal question is: What is the real approach adopted by the BN in managing the conflicts?

8.3 Decision-making in conflict management within the Barisan Nasional

To understand the decision-making process in conflict management within the BN, two levels must be studied, namely;

8.3.1 Administration level in the component parties of the BN

In general, each component party of the BN has four levels of administration, which are the branch, Divisional, State and federal levels. According to S Sothianatan (the Secretary-General of the MIC)⁹, Teng Chew Peng¹⁰ (the Secretary-General of the MCA) and Muhammad Rahmat¹¹ (the Secretary-General of the UMNO), seat allocation matters typically only involve discussions or debates at Committee level, or party Liaison committee meetings at state level, and the Supreme Council of each party at federal level. This is because not all party members understand the true essence of the BN, in the sense of how and why the BN was formed, and what the advantages of the BN's administration are. This sometimes caused them to not focus on the BN, but instead put too much focus on their respective parties (*Berita Harian*, 14 August 1990:2). Hence, it is natural for party members to look only at the benefits or advantages that they could get without taking into account the interests of other parties. When this happens, sensitive sentiments are easily triggered, especially if the proposal or demand touches on interracial relations. This situation may create

⁸ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

⁹ Interview with S. Sothianathan Secretary-General of the MIC from 2001 to present. Experienced as a Parliamentary Secretary from 2004 to present.. See appendix A.

¹⁰ Interview with Teng Chew Peng. See appendix A.

¹¹ Interview with Muhammad Rahmat. See appendix A.

tension and pose a threat to racial stability and unity. It has therefore become a tradition of each party in the BN not to openly discuss such sensitive issues among the party members. And as a control measure, it can be said that every party would only discuss matters relating to seat allocation and ministerial/Exco post allocation at the party's supreme committee level (state and federal). Any decision reached within a component party would then be brought to the BN Supreme Council for discussion and mutual agreement.

8.3.2 Administration levels within the BN

As previously discussed, it is evident that the BN employs a structured approach in handling any problem or conflict it faces. Formally, two platforms, namely the BN Supreme Council and the Government Administrative Meeting, are the main bodies responsible for the coordination and management of conflict within the BN. The management of conflict within the BN is facilitated by the practice of three principles that function as the pulse or code in decision-making, namely Decision-making Procedures, Representative ness and Confidentiality, as discussed in chapter two.

Based on these principles, the BN generally does not openly provide opportunities to every branch or division of every party¹² to discuss the issues related to the allocation of seats and the allocation of ministerial/Exco posts. In other words, involvement at grassroots level is minimal, especially where Policies are concerned. In this case, Ghafar Baba and Muhammad Rahmat explained that several factors contribute to the

¹² In general, the component parties of the BN are organizations with uniform structures. The lowest level is the branch, followed by Division, State and Federal at the top. For example, UMNO has a branch level (headed by a branch head), Divisional level (headed by a Divisional head), state level (headed by a state Liaison head) and federal level chaired by the party President.

reason party members are not encouraged to be directly involved in matters such as seat and ministerial/Exco post allocations.

- a. Being a multiracial country, interracial problems can easily arise. If these are not handled carefully, it can lead to trouble, such as racial violence. Thus, any matter considered sensitive, that may cause misunderstanding or create dissatisfaction among the people, must be avoided. Such is the case with electoral seat allocation and ministerial/Exco post allocation.
- b. Traditionally (since the days of the Alliance party), only the top leaders would decide on such matters. The decision would be adopted by party members without much protest.

At the Penang and Kedah state levels, The State BN Liaison committee is responsible for coordinating and discussing matters related to seat allocation. According to Osman Aroff and Koh Tsu Khoon¹³, the committee regularly discusses any matter brought up by the liaison committees of each component party in their meetings. Grassroots involvement (particularly at Divisional level) in the BN is therefore more concentrated on operational matters. They are the backbones that ensure that the BN stands strong while acting as the driving force behind the victory in an election. With reference to the UMNO Division's annual report in Penang (Bagan, Tasek Gelugor and Bukit Bendera divisions¹⁴) and in Kedah (Alor Setar,

¹³ Interview with Osman Aroff and Koh Tsu Khoon. See appendix A.

¹⁴ Reference to the annual report sent to the Headquarters of the federal UMNO: Bagan, Tasek Gelugor and Bukit Bendera divisions, 1990 and 1995. Information Division of Bagan, Tasek Gelugor and Bukit Bendera divisions, 1990 and 1995.

Sungai Petani and Padang Serai¹⁵) in 1991 and 1995, it was found that discussions on seat and ministerial/Exco post allocations never took place. Activities carried out were more focused on operational matters aimed at strengthening the relationship between component parties¹⁶.

8.4 Management of Conflict

Based on the interviews held with prominent veterans who have experienced and embroiled themselves in managing the BN for decades, such as Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, Ghafar Baba, Mohammad Rahmat, Dr. Koh Tsu Koon and Osman Aroff¹⁷, there are basically four steps in confronting the conflict of seat allocation and appointment to the cabinet and exco, which are:

1. Analyse the conflict
2. Determine management strategy
3. Negotiate
4. Post-negotiate¹⁸

¹⁵ Reference to the annual sent to the Headquarters of the federal UMNO: Alor Setar, Sungai Petani and Padang Serai, 1990 and 1995. Information Division of Alor Setar, Sungai Petani and Padang Serai divisions, 1990 and 1995.

¹⁶ i). Annual statement of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Seberang Jaya Bukit Bendera branch. Branch Head: Tn. Hj. Hafidz Mohd. Hanan. Deputy Head: Tn. Marzookhy Taif
Report on activities concerning the BN:

5 November 1990: sent 10 members to a BN dinner in Tanjong Tokong

20 November 1990: sent 15 members to a Penang BN dinner in Tapak Ekspo, Seberang Jaya.

ii). Annual statement of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Kampung Baru branch. Branch Head: Tn. Ahmad Rodzli Hashim. Vice Head: Tn. Sarajuddin Maidin.

19 September 1990: sent 10 representatives to a political talk in KOMTAR.

11 October 1990: sent 25 people to be with BN candidates on the candidate nomination day.

¹⁷ See appendix A

¹⁸ In the approach proposed by Carpenter and Kennedy, there are five steps in managing conflict. These steps are: 1). Analyse the conflict, 2). Determine management strategy, 3). Pre-negotiate 4). Negotiate 5). Post-negotiate. Upon analysing the statements and explanations through interviews held regarding the steps taken by the BN to manage conflict, it was found that only the pre-negotiation step was not applied. See Susan L. Carpenter and W.J.D. Kennedy, (1988).

8.4.1 Analyse the conflict

It has become a tradition in the BN to analyse every conflict that it faces. This analysis is done together, mainly during Supreme Council meetings. Each party is given the opportunity to present its arguments and views on the said conflict, as done in the case of seat allocation among the parties before general elections. As discussed in chapter three, the decision on seat allocation among the component of the BN goes through a lengthy process of analysis of not less than two years before it is finalised. It is during this period that the management of the BN, both at national and state levels, is able to evaluate and manage potential conflict. In addition, screening is done in three stages to shortlist suitable constituencies to be allocated to each party, which shows how aware and alert the BN is, and how it constantly analyses these conflicts. According to Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, this exercise has shown very good results, because each time an election date is announced, the BN would already have reached agreement on the allocation of seats among the component parties. This indirectly gives the BN an edge to campaign early and fish for votes more effectively.

In the political scenario of Malaysia, a nation with a plural society, the methods employed by the BN are likened to a powerful and invincible weapon. This is because conflict, or even seat allocation, is a difficult issue to resolve. This point can be clearer appreciated when a comparison is made with opposition parties that had faced similar predicaments. The opposition alliances¹⁹, often established in a

¹⁹ Opposition alliances: In the 1986 election, PAS formed a formal coalition with the Chinese Consultative Council (CCC), and an informal coalition with the DAP in determining the constituencies to contest in. In the 1990 and 1995 elections, a few opposition parties combined forces under the umbrella of the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) [Semangat 46, the PRM, PAS] and the Gagasan Rakyat [Semangat 46, the DAP, the PRM]. In the 1999 election, opposition parties formed the Barisan Alternatif [PAS, the DAP, Parti Keadilan Rakyat]. Further reference: Yusof Khan Loth Khan, (2001).

hurry just before an election, always lead to their failure due to their inability in working out a systematic allocation of seats.

Table 8.1 shows the percentage of cases in which the opposition parties were forced to face each other to compete against the BN. In the 1986 general election, of the 132 seats contested in Peninsular Malaysia, 27.3 percent were subjected to three-way contests between the BN, PAS and the DAP. Another example is shown in table 8.2, where the DAP and PAS competed with each other in Kedah and Penang. This is a contributing factor in their defeat²⁰. Without coordination, there would be clashes among themselves, eventually resulting in uncontested victory in certain constituencies by the BN.

Table 8.1: Competition among the opposition parties against the Barisan Nasional at Parliamentary level, 1986-1999 in Peninsular Malaysia.

Election	Peninsular Malaysia (including Penang and Kedah)	Per cent (%)	Clashes between opposition parties
1986	36 of 132 seats	27.3	PAS, SDP and DAP
1990	16 of 132 seats	12.1	PAS and DAP
1995	27 of 144 seats	18.8	PAS, DAP and PBS
1999	36 of 144 seats	25.0	PAS, MDP and DAP

Source: a). Election Commission., (1988), *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1986*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

b). Election Commission., (1992), *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1990*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

c). Election Commission., (1997), *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1995*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

d). Election Commission., (2002), *Report on The Parliamentary and State Election 1999*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

²⁰ For example, in the 1986 election, in the Parliamentary constituency of Lumut, Perak, the BN faced two opposition parties, namely the DAP and PAS. This seat was won by the BN with a majority of 1,508 votes. However, the combined number of votes obtained by the opposition exceeded this (the DAP obtained 14284 and PAS obtained 2400, totaling 16684 votes). See Election Commission., (1988).

Table 8. 2: Competition among the opposition parties against the Barisan Nasional at state level in Kedah and Penang

Election	Kedah)	Per cent (%)	Penang	Per cent (%)	Clashes between opposition parties
1986	2 of 28 seats	7.0	3 of 33 seats	9.0	PAS, SDP and DAP
1990	1 of 28 seats	3.5	-	-	PAS and DAP
1995	1 of 36 seats	2.7	4 of 33 seats	12.0	PAS, DAP and PBS
1999	-		1 of 33 seats	3.0	MDP and DAP

Source: a). Election Commission., (1988), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1986*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

b). Election Commission., (1992), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1990*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

c). Election Commission., (1997), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1995*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur

d). Election Commission., (2002), *Report on The Parlimentary and State Election 1999*. Percetakan Negara. Kuala Lumpur.

8.4.2 Determine management strategy

On the management of conflict, several methods can in fact be applied to achieve the best results. Kilmann and Thomas (1975)²¹, Robbins (1979)²², Gordon (1996)²³ had suggested five methods in managing conflict, which are through Competition, Collaboration, Avoidance, Accommodation and Compromise. Based on interviews and study of research material on the procedures of problem solving, it is clear that the BN had applied all of these approaches, though a particular approach is chosen based on the type of conflict faced. The most significantly dominant approaches adopted by the BN in managing conflict are Compromise, Collaboration, Accommodation, Avoidance and Competition.

²¹ See R.H.Kilmann and K.W. Thomas, (1975).

²² See Robbins. Stephen P. (1996).

²³ See Gordon, J.R. (2002).

8.4.2.1 **Compromise**

The Compromise is a traditional approach normally adopted to resolve inter-group conflicts. In general, the Compromise approach can be defined as a method of settling conflict through consultative dialogues between the two conflicting groups. In Compromise, both parties must give and take, in other words they exchange views but must also listen to and accept the other party's point of view (Gordon,2002:305). The outcome is a combination of the desires of both parties. The procedure of decision-making by consensus, as practised by the BN, actually provided an avenue for the component parties to participate in making decisions. However, it wasn't all that easy to arrive at a common consensus. Every component party must have a give-and-take attitude - compromise in ensuring that every matter brought up is resolved quickly and precisely. This is true especially in connection with the allocation of seats, for which there is only a short time within which a decision must be made. As was emphasised by Ghafar Baba,

‘What’s the point of jostling for the one or two seats only to disturb and threaten the harmony nurtured all this while, such that it would eventually cause the disintegration of society? The component parties of the BN realise that it is the victory of the BN candidate that is of primary importance rather than the number of seats allocated to a component party. What is the point of being given a lot of seats only to lose them? We want to win, because when we win, all will benefit. What is the benefit of losing? However, they must compromise and consider their positions in the light of the BN as a whole. They must be willing to give and take²⁴.’

Dr. Mahathir Mohammad stated that the give-and-take attitude is all-important in ensuring victory for the BN to form a government, at the same time maintaining the two-thirds majority in the general election.

²⁴ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

‘This sacrifice, cooperation and compromise are necessary especially for the component parties with majority voters in a given constituency, who may have to surrender that constituency to a member of the coalition with a minority group of voters. What is obvious is that the Malay and Chinese majority constituencies were willing to sacrifice for the MIC to allow the MIC to contest²⁵.’

Through this give-and-take attitude, the BN has succeeded in resolving the numerous pertinent issues constantly faced by members of its coalition. This attitude is especially apparent in UMNO, the pillar of the BN. As discussed in chapter four, UMNO had compromised a lot and had given to other parties constituencies with its majority supporters, in spite of some protest from its members. Yet UMNO held on to this concept of compromise, based on its realisation that UMNO is not only responsible for the Malays but also for the other races. By giving seats to the other races, it meant bringing other people into Parliament, the State Legislative Assembly, and the Cabinet, to establish true cooperation. Thus, compromise is indeed essential for any of the component parties of the BN. Whenever a decision is made, consideration is given not only in the interest of its own party, but also in the interests of others parties it is in coalition with.

Penang

Compromise is the recipe that enabled the BN in Penang to form a strong and stable state government. The squabble between the component parties, particularly between the MCA and the party Gerakan in Penang, cannot be ignored. Yet the firm practice of compromise cleared the situation and eventually succeeded in repulsing the DAP’s plan to win enough seats in the State Legislative Assembly to rule Penang.

²⁵ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

a. *Allocation of seats*

According Ibrahim Saat, Ex Deputy Chief Minister Penang (1990-1995), the concept of compromise clearly became the pulse of political stability in Penang. Primarily, in the allocation of seats for the general election, there are constituencies in which the voter majorities are Malays or mixed, but those seats were finally contested by a candidate from the MCA or Gerakan. In this instance, UMNO understood that the majority of the population in Penang is Chinese, and therefore took a compromising stand.

This unique phenomenon of compromise in the allocation of seats in Penang does not only involve UMNO and the Chinese-based parties, but also occurred between the MCA and Gerakan. After securing 16 State Legislative seats in the 1969 general election, Gerakan naturally then had the right to be allocated the same number of seats in the 1974 general election. Had the allocation been maintained, UMNO would have 10 seats, Gerakan 16, the MIC only one, and none for the MCA. However, through negotiation and compromise, the MCA was allocated three seats, taken from Gerakan's share (*Utusan Malaysia*, 13 May 1985). This compromise was reached on the grounds that Gerakan was formed for all races but was dominated by the Chinese, at both leadership and membership levels. This meant that Gerakan does not one hundred percent represent the Chinese as compared to the MCA, whose membership is made up of the Chinese community only. Based on this justification, Gerakan therefore had to give way to the MCA to contest in Penang. Compromise between the component parties is clearly demonstrated not only by the surrender of seats by a party with racial majority to another party of a different race, but going beyond this gesture is the effort put in to ensure that the chosen candidate from the

other party wins. To further illustrate, this can be gleaned from the results of the 1986 election (see tables 8.3 and 8.4).

Table 8.3: State Legislative Assembly seats won by Gerakan in Penang

State Legislative Council Constituencies	Percentage of Malay Voters	Percentage of Chinese Voters	Percentage of Indian Voters
N8 Mak Mandin	24.3	56.5	18.9
N14 Machang Bubuk	41.8	51.0	7.0
N15 Bukit Tengah	26.8	60.4	12.6
N19 Tanjung Bunga	22.7	65.6	9.7
N22 Padang Kota	5.3	83.1	10.8
N25 Datuk Keramat	24.3	62.7	12.1
N29 Paya Terubong	15.7	79.3	4.9
N33 Bayan Lepas	51.7	41.3	6.8
N16 Sungai Bakap	52.2	37.1	10.7

Source: Zakry Abadi.1990. *BN&APU. Siapa Berkuasa*.Kuala Lumpur. Percetakan Setia Maju.p.196-207

Table 8.4: State Legislative Assembly seats won by DAP in Penang

State Legislative Council Constituencies	Percentage of Malay Voters	Percentage of Chinese Voters	Percentage of Indian Voters
N7 Bagan Jermal	13.7	78.8	7.0
N13 Berapit	6.4	85.4	7.9
N17 Jawi	15.9	85.8	18.3
N20 Ayer Hitam	9.0	91.7	8.6
N21 Kebun Bunga	10.3	73.7	13.4
N23 Pengkalan Kota	1.2	92.2	6.5
N24 Kampong Kolam	8.2	83.9	7.4
N27 Batu Lanchang	5.1	89.1	5.3
N28 Bukit Gelugor	14.6	74.4	9.3

Source: Zakry Abadi.1990. *BN&APU. Siapa Berkuasa*.Kuala Lumpur. Percetakan Setia Maju.p.196-207

Based on the tables 8.3, five of the nine areas won by Gerakan can basically be described as areas in which the Malay and Indian voters had the power to determine the outcome. Two areas, Sungai Bakap and Bayan Lepas, had a majority of Malay

voters. Meanwhile, in Mak Mandin, Bukit Tengah and Machang Bubok, the number of voters is about even between the Malays and the Chinese/Indian. Compare this to the 10 seats won by the DAP (table 8.4), which shows that they depended on the support from Chinese majority areas and relied neither on the Malay nor the Indian voters for support. This phenomenon indirectly shows that the spirit of solidarity within the BN became an important pillar in ensuring victory for its candidates.

Besides this, the application of this spirit of solidarity is even more clearly demonstrated when the BN stipulated that in the event that a seat contested by a component party was won, and that candidate then switched to another party, the seat would still belong to the former party at the next election. This close compromise in Penang is further exemplified by the victory of BN candidate V. Muthusamy of the MIC, who defeated Karpal Singh of the DAP in the 1994 by-election. This victory is unique, because:

- i. Prai had been the DAP's stronghold in the 1986 and 1990 elections.
- ii. This constituency consists of Chinese majority voters at 51.0 percent, with 25.5 percent Indian and 22.5 percent Malay voters. Two housing estates, namely Chai Leng Park and Prai Garden, are Chinese majority areas that were traditionally DAP strongholds, but the influence over its voters swayed them to support the BN instead.
- iii. The strong cooperation between Gerakan and UMNO was eventually able to assist the MIC candidate in winning this seat (*The Star*, 4 December 1994).

b. Post of Exco member

As discussed in chapter five, the issue of Exco posts frequently became a source of conflict, especially during the process of appointing new council members after a general election. The tussle for the post of Chief Minister is the most significant conflict between UMNO and Gerakan (*Utusan Malaysia*, 21 November 1986). This took place in the 1986 and 1990 general elections, when UMNO won one hundred percent of the 12 State Legislative Assembly seats. The situation became critical when the MCA and Gerakan performed poorly compared to the DAP. Even so, this conflict did not last long and was resolved within a short time, thanks to the tolerance and compromise among the components of the BN. UMNO had more State Legislative Assembly seats than that of the other component parties, yet it was still willing to compromise by giving way to Gerakan to lead the state government since 1969. On the overall, the process of compromise that took place in allotting the Exco posts in Penang can be referred to the table below.

Table 8.5: Exco conflicts and conflict management in Penang

Election	Conflict	Conflict management
1974	Exco Membership	Compromise
1978	-	-
1982	-	-
1986	Exco Membership	Compromise
1990	Exco Membership	Compromise
1995	Exco Membership	Compromise
1999	-	-

The attitude of compromise displayed by UMNO was well received by the other racial communities in Penang and this indirectly made it difficult for the opposition, particularly the DAP, to find an opportunity to use this issue against them to win the votes of the population. The failure by DAP to exploit the racial issue as a political strategy was, in actual fact, one of the reasons for the failure of the DAP's Tanjung I, II and III projects.

Kedah

a. Seat Allocation

In line with the basic desire of the BN to place priority on its effort of forming a combined administration or government, the compromise is more evident in Kedah. As explained in chapter four, the constituencies in Kedah mostly consist of Malay majorities, accounting for almost 86.0 percent, with 16.0 percent Chinese majority and four percent mixed voter constituencies. But based on the policy of ensuring that every ethnic group is represented in the government, the top leaders of BN, in the spirit of solidarity, have agreed that due allocation of seats be made to minority component parties. Thus, the allocation agreed upon was 80.0 percent for UMNO, 16.0 percent for the MCA and the Gerakan, and the MIC, with absolutely no majority constituencies, was allocated four percent. An example of seat distribution among the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC are as follows:

Table 8.6: Allocation of seats in Kedah

State Legislative Assembly Constituencies	Percentage of Malay Voters	Percentage of Chinese Voters	Percentage of Indian Voters	Contesting Party
N 11 Derga	53.0	41.7	4.8	Gerakan
N 13 Kota Darulaman	29.1	63.9	6.6	MCA
N 24 Bukit Selambau	48.3	22.0	28.8	MIC
N 28 Bakar Arang	42.2	44.6	12.6	MCA
N 29 Sidam	34.5	44.6	20.1	MCA
N 34 Lunas	44.2	31.4	24.0	MIC
N 35 Kulim	59.5	24.6	15.6	MCA
N 25 Gurun	52.8	28.7	17.7	Gerakan

Source: Scorecard *New Strait Times*, 28 November 1999. p. 6-7

b. Post of Exco Member

The compromise to provide a place for the minority to be among the majority is truly obvious during the establishment of the Kedah Exco and appointment of its members. Even though UMNO dominated in terms of number of Exco members, every other component party was also invited to rule Kedah. The MIC, with only one State Legislative Assembly seat, was given an Exco post from 1986²⁶. The same treatment was extended to Gerakan, which was given one Exco post even though it only had two state seats compared to the MCA, which has four seats, yet was still given only one representative in the Exco since the 1974 election. Such situations indirectly strengthened the spirit of compromise among the component parties of the BN. As also explained in detail in chapter five, the management of conflict in Kedah can be examined based on the table below.

²⁶ Nevertheless, from 1990 to 1995, there were no MIC candidates in the Exco because its candidates lost in the 1990 election. From the 1995 election onwards, the MIC got an additional seat, Bukit Selambau, while retaining the Lunas seat.

Table 8. 7: Exco conflicts and conflict management in Kedah

Election	Conflict	Conflict management
1974	Exco Membership	Compromise
1978	-	-
1982	-	-
1986	Exco Membership	Compromise
1990	-	-
1995	Exco Membership	Compromise
1999	-	-

8.4.2.2 Collaboration

The Collaboration approach is adopted when both the elements of affirmation and cooperation are at its highest levels, i.e. each party is willing to fully cooperate to reach a decision that would fulfil the desires of the contending parties. This approach emphasises a situation whereby no party shall lose as a result of the resolution, or in other words, this would bring about a win-win situation (Hellriegel, 1989:455). Collaboration has long been the tradition and essence in the BN's struggle, as the saying goes, "together through thick and thin". The belief that collaboration is core in the BN is clearly demonstrated by the sense of coherency among its component parties to achieve excellence and success in an election. In spite of this, at times conflicts do cause dissatisfaction during the process of seat allocation. Dr. Mahathir Mohammed, the Chairman of the BN explained that:

“No single race would get 100 percent of their requests fulfilled. We don’t even fulfil 100 percent of the requests made by the Malays... because in our country, entertaining any race 100 percent would mean injustice to the other races²⁷.”

This statement reflects that as each election approaches, certain parties would definitely feel slighted when their demands were not met as expected. But in the spirit of collaboration, such sentiments are subdued to ensure that the main objective of the BN in winning the general election is achieved. Lim Kim Sai, Deputy President of the MCA, in 1986, stated,

‘No one is 100 per cent satisfied, not even the MCA. But I am confident that the BN can work together to face the opposition’
(*The Star*, 21 July 1986).

Likewise, the Deputy President of the MCA, Chan Kong Choy, reminded members of the MCA not to contest against any BN candidate just because of a dispute with the BN. As a clearer example, critical situations involving seat allocation and also appointments to state government exco posts were constant issues faced in Penang, where several decisions made between the MCA and party Gerakan caused dissatisfaction with each other. In the 1978 general election, the MCA proposed to use its own symbol to contest against the party Gerakan;

“The MCA would not allow any of its members to do so, no way! Therefore, we ask our members throughout Malaysia to respect and to render solid support to the decision by the top leaders of the party and to the nominee.” He added, “We are aware of the feelings at the grassroots, but this is one party discipline that must be observed by all. No one shall escape disciplinary action if they transgress. In the end, we will only acknowledge ‘the steelyard scale’, and not personality. The party is the more important” (*New Straits Times*, 12 July 1978).

²⁷ Interview with Dr. Mahathir. See appendix A.

It is thus obvious that when a decision has been made on any subject, for instance on the allocation of seats, all parties must act in one accord to support the aspiration. And in the history of the BN, this spirit of collaboration was violated only once by the PBS party in the 1990 general election²⁸. Yet it still did not erode the spirit of coalition and collaboration embedded in the component parties. This can be proven and has in fact been proven since the inception of the BN, as it has not only been able to form a government, but has always succeeded in dominating two-thirds majority in Parliament. This spirit of collaboration continued to be appreciated by the comrade-in-arms of the BN, as the saying goes, "Birds in their little nest agree - so why can't we?"

8.4.2.3 Competition

In inter-party conflict management, one of the parties, or its members using this approach, is likely to act contrary to the wishes or aspiration of the other party. It would compete with the other party and would obtain either victory or defeat (win-lose situation) in this competition. In trying to achieve this desire and objective, it would sometimes act with aggression ((Gordon,2002:305) . As the ruling party, the BN undeniably makes use of the laws, either directly or indirectly, as a tool to settle conflicts. One such law used is the Internal Security Act (ISA), 1960²⁹. The Internal

²⁸ Five days before the election, The Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) leader, Pairin Kitingan, withdrew PBS from the BN. This move was most shocking and frustrated the spirit of collaboration because it was done after the nomination of candidates. The PBS, which was allocated 14 seats in Sabah felt disappointed because some of its demands submitted to the BN were not fulfilled. The PBS then gave its support to the coalition of the Gagasan Rakyat and the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, with the hope that all its demands would be met when they won the election. See Ahmad Atory Hussein (1997).

²⁹ ISA was created on 22.6.1960 to replace the Emergency Act of 20.6.1948 by a draftsman named Prof. Hugh Hickling. In an interview with *The Star* on 17.4.2001 [at the age of 81], he commented that even though the ISA is still needed, a judicial review needs to be held. Further, he said that the ISA was formulated to combat premeditated crimes perpetrated by the communist during the Emergency [1948 - 1960]. During the early implementation of the act, many communist activists and sympathizers were detained, the majority of whom were Chinese. During the 1960 and 1970 eras, prominent leaders of the opposition and the unions also involved mostly the Chinese, and from the

Security Act empowers the government to detain without trial anyone deemed as a threat to national security, for 60 days for investigation. Hence, anyone can be detained under this Act as long as the person is calculated to be a threat to the stability and harmony of the people and the nation. This act is necessary to bridle the elements of racial discord that could erupt into racial conflict, as in the 1969 tragedy.

The existence and use of this Act have great significance in controlling the conflicts faced by the BN. With this Act, the component parties of the BN as well as the opposition would always exercise caution to ensure that issues brought up would not be interpreted in a way that could merit detention under the ISA. One of the biggest operations utilising the ISA as a preventive measure to control conflict was the “Lalang Operation” on 27 October 1987. The conflict started from a statement by Lim Kim Sai who was of the opinion that no racial group is ethnic to Malaysia, therefore there was no need to stigmatise people as ‘Bumiputera’ and ‘Non-Bumiputera’ (*News Straits Times*, 16 November 1987). This statement was objected to by UMNO. The issue was then hotly debated between the MCA and UMNO³⁰ until the peak of this conflict led to the ‘Lalang Operation’ (or weeding), detaining several leaders of both parties and also leaders of the opposition parties involved. This action under the ISA eventually calmed the volatile situation and the political scenario, especially among the component parties of the BN (In Won Hwang, 2003:150).

1980 era onwards, it spread to all races and religions including students in universities. In 1988, section 8B, 8C and 8D were amended, that the detention order against anyone cannot be questioned [reviewed] by the courts unless the conduct or condition of the arrest is not in accordance with the Constitution.

³⁰ Among the UMNO leaders arrested were Ibrahim Ali, Tajuddin Abd.Rahman and Fahmi Ibrahim. Whereas those from the opposition parties included Mohamad Sabu, Mahfuz Omar, Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh. See Ahmad Atory Hussein (1997).

Apart from the ISA, another key enactment also used as a tool to control conflict was the Printing and Publishing Act, 1984. This gives the Minister of Internal Affairs the power to act against any printer, publisher, editor or writer involved in publishing any article deemed prejudicial to national security. Also used were the Criminal Penal Code and the Official Secrecy Act (OSA), 1973. The Act defines that a government document is classified if declared so by the minister in charge of any ministry, an officer-in-charge at the ministry or an officer in certain departments of the Public Service, or the Chief Ministers or senior officials responsible for specific administration in each state (Khoo Boo Teik, 2001:276-277). Conflict control undertaken by the government cum BN was indirectly able to prevent conflict from spreading thus giving undesirable implications on the BN at state level, as had happened in Penang and Kedah.

8.4.2.4 Accommodation

This method of managing or resolving conflicts leans more towards self-accommodation, whereby a party in the conflict would try to withdraw from continuing the conflict with the other party. This method is characterised by non-assertion and a willingness to cooperate to fulfil the desires of others (Gordon, 2002:305). Such an action can be achieved through a process of consultation regarding the objective and purpose of each party and consequently arriving at a common consensus on one of the chosen objectives. As discussed in chapter one, Malaysia is a country in which the politics of accommodation is practised. The politics of accommodation is based on a weakness and cooperation among the elite level. The success of this system depends to a large extent on the leaders' joint efforts at maintaining peace and peaceful change. Lijphart mentioned that horizontal

games are 'a basic willingness to engage in cooperative efforts with the leaders of other segments in a spirit of cooperation and compromise'(1977:42).

Thus, the elites of each race should play their roles by ear in overseeing their supporters to prevent conflicts that could lead to tension in racial harmony. Thus the BN stressed that the root of a discussion to be put forward by a component party should not exceed the boundaries of democracy such that it threatens the system of democracy being practised. As such, the basic principles that traditionally support democracy in Malaysia must be upheld. These include points agreed upon in the pact made within the national constitution. Principles need to be steadfastly held on to. Some matters can be openly discussed, and some must be done in confidence, while others need not be discussed at all. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad explained that:

‘...demands such as to eliminate or remove the difference in status between Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras... is something that is very sensitive and cannot be discussed’³¹.

Thus, the BN continues to practise the concept of discussion and holds dialogues with the component parties, together finding ways to resolve any problem. In this context, it cannot be denied that every elite group would inevitably voice issues of importance to its own community in its effort to garner and win over voters to support its party, especially when election time is drawing near. The elites of UMNO would usually highlight issues that could attract Malay voters to continue voting for them, especially when contesting against opposition party PAS. Sensitive issues, particularly regarding the special rights of the Malays and language, as always, are often brought forth as a subject for debate to attract supporters.

³¹ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

Likewise with the MCA party elite, who would always bring up sensitive issues to attract Chinese voters. Among these issues are equality through the abolishment of the quota system, the terms “Bumiputera” and “non-Bumiputera”, etc (*Utusan Malaysia*, 1 September 1999:1). Within the MCA political elites, several dilemmas arose, the first being the competition against opposition party DAP, who would surely defend the rights of the Chinese community from the perspective of the opposition. Secondly, the MCA would also be up against their own colleague from the BN, namely the party Gerakan, in building an image as the sole champion for the welfare of the Chinese.

The political elite must therefore always take care to ensure that sensitive issues used in gaining support from voters would not result in bad implications that could impact the party and the country in the long-term. It is here that the spirit of accommodation must be stressed so that the elites exercise caution when discussing a particular issue to avoid upsetting another community. Every elite group, be it UMNO, the MIC or Gerakan, should, accordingly, control and supervise the conduct of its followers so as not to trigger any source of racism that could cause the existing cooperation and national stability to collapse. This does not mean that any issue raised pertaining to a particular community would be ignored. As explained by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, the BN feels that the best solution would be;

‘...in a country with a plural society, “sensitive” issues need to be resolved through diplomatic means and with sincerity so that the issues would not be used as tools to cause problems to the people. For this reason, the BN preferred to discuss such issues courteously, behind closed doors, to seek a solution that is impartial but acceptable by the majority of those involved’ (*New Straits Times*, 10 February 1991).

Any problem, especially racial problems, would be impossible to solve if those involved only listened to one side and negotiated based on sentiment. It cannot be denied that in a multiracial country like Malaysia, interracial problems are prone to occur. But with care and caution, all problems can be overcome. The Spirit of Accommodation plays an important role indeed in dealing with the multiracial politics in Penang. With each community fighting to champion and demand its rights, serious conflict can easily flare up, if control were not exercised by the elite group. An example is the demand made by UMNO for the post of Chief Minister after the 1986 and 1990 general elections. In both these elections, the Malays actually fought hard to get that post, and this was, in a way, evidenced by their success in securing 100 per cent of the state assembly seats it contested. Furthermore, the quest for the Chief Minister's post became the subject of their campaign to win the support of the Malays not only for UMNO in particular, but also for the BN in general³². It appeared as though the fulfilment of this demand was within their grasp based on the poor performance of the other BN component parties, namely party Gerakan and the MCA, both of whose performance declined significantly.

Nevertheless, when this request was rejected by the BN Supreme Council on certain grounds, logically, conflict could easily erupt, judging from the fierce fighting spirit of the Malays prior to this. In actual fact, it did not, and the Malay community in Penang remained calm and accepted the reasons given on why the post of Chief Minister should not be given to a Malay. Within this context, the role of the Malay elites in bridling their followers and explaining the true situation helped establish political stability. What is clear is that the Accommodation approach can be

³² Interview with Ibrahim Saat See appendix A.

implemented easily by the elite groups of each racial community as long as there is still room for compromise and bargaining between one another.

8.4.2.5. Avoidance

Avoidance is one of the five approaches in conflict management that can be utilised in resolving inter-party conflicts. The party faced with the conflict acts passively by evading or ignoring the cause of the conflict rather than confronting and resolving it. Within the context of the BN, the Avoidance approach in conflict management is used to ensure that any internal issue or problem is not brought up for open discussion. With the mechanism for, or the principle of transparency (refer chapter two) practised in debates during meetings or negotiations, logically there should not be any outside talk by the component parties. An example is the open debate between the leaderships of the MCA and party Gerakan on the topic of seat allocation in Penang³³. Another example is the conflict between UMNO, the MCA and Gerakan on the post of Chief Minister of Penang that was published in the newspapers in 1995³⁴. Such practices are most definitely unhealthy and should be avoided. Ling Leong Sik, President of the MCA said that;

‘Making open statements or demands that could spark anxiety among the people must be avoided. We must not argue in front of the people about sensitive issues or policies. Discussion with all the component parties of the BN is the best course. This is a part of the spirit that is encouraged by the BN³⁵’.

³³ Examples of open conflict between the MCA and Gerakan in the local media: Siti Mariam Md. Zin. (18 December 1999). “MCA-Gerakan Power Struggle”, *Massa*, p. 20-21. Norzahizan Ismail and Ani Awang, MCA, Gerakan tension: *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 December 1999:1&2

³⁴ See Jamhariah Jaafar dan Johnny Giles Senin, MCA gagal dapat jawatan Timbalan Ketua Mentari Kedua: *Berita Harian*, 16 Disember 1999: p.1-2. Ketua Menteri Hak Gerakan *Utusan Malaysia*, 25 Julai 1986. p.2 See Jamhariah Jaafar dan Johnny Giles Senin, MCA gagal dapat jawatan Timbalan Ketua Mentari Kedua: *Berita Harian*, 16 Disember 1999: p.1-2. Ketua Menteri Hak Gerakan *Utusan Malaysia*, 25 Julai 1986. p.2

³⁵ Interview with Lim Leong Sik. See appendix A.

Actually, internal matters or domestic conflicts need to be resolved through mutual goodwill and consultation, instead of publicising it. When such a subject is known to the public and openly talked about, it would surely become more complex to resolve. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad commented thus:

‘If an opinion or stance is discussed in public, it would be difficult for those who expressed it to compromise and they would defend their stand although its basis was clear wrong³⁶’.

In studying the potential negative effect due to open discussion, especially within the context of a plural society, it is thus appropriate that each component party tries to avoid using reporters as tools to draw the attention of the public to its problems.

8.4.3 Negotiate

The third stage in conflict management is the process of implementing the consensual decision. There are two key elements involved, namely;

- a. Written agreement - Document areas of agreement and disagreement to ensure common understanding. This helps ensure that agreements can be remembered and communicated clearly.
- b. Commitment - Every partner must be confident that the others will carry out their parts of the agreement. Discuss and agree upon methods to ensure partners understand and honour their commitments³⁷.

³⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

³⁷ See Carpenter and Kennedy, (1988).

However, written agreements are not done within the BN. Instead, negotiation is based on trust and commitment among its members. As the longest serving secretary of the BN, i.e. 25 years, Ghafar Baba disclosed that the secret of the BN's mutual understanding and effectiveness in resolving conflicts is the concept of trust. This meant that every component party must have mutual trust for each other. This required honesty and openness. Component parties must express all explicit and implicit elements in any action that involved the common interest of the BN, particularly to the Supreme Council. In other words, no ethnic group should have any hidden agendas behind any action and demand, to ensure that all parties understand the true motive of another party, without harbouring any doubts towards each other.

According to Ghafar Baba;

‘... if there are feelings of doubt or distrust among the races, it would become a source of dissent, and this is what we want to avoid. That is why every party must refer back to the original purpose of establishing the BN, and that is to facilitate joint administration, in order to ensure that each party is sincere in anything they do’³⁸.

Based on this concept of trust, any conflict that arises among the component parties could be more easily managed, and must continue to be maintained. The component parties of the BN should also understand the explicit and implicit objectives in the implementation of a plan. Thus, any endeavour in the interest and for the benefit of every race could be implemented easily and smoothly without obstruction or interruption. With regard to this, Dr .Mahathir Mohammad explained that:

‘The important thing during negotiations is mutual trust and sincerity as well as listening to opinions expressed by the various factions. If we only agreed to our own opinion, it would be impossible to resolve problems, especially those that involve racial issues (*New Strait Times*, 4 July 1994,5)’.

³⁸ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A

This is the basis every party applies during negotiations for seat allocation, Exco posts, and issues on education, which involve presenting facts and reasons to justify any claims. For instance, when UMNO made a claim for the post of Chief Minister after the 1990 and 1995 general elections, it elaborated the reasons for this claim. Likewise, the party Gerakan needs to state reasons for retaining the post³⁹. This is the method practised by the BN, which contributed to the common attitude of trust among the component parties, which in turn, eased the management of any conflict.

8.4.4 Post-negotiate

The final process in conflict management is Post-negotiation, which is the stage where every action taken is studied and reviewed⁴⁰. In other words, this is when a post-mortem is carried out to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the planned implementation. According to Yaakob Mohammad⁴¹, post-mortems are a must in the BN, especially regarding elections. It is through post-mortems that the BN then lays out plans for the next election. Based on the above discussion, as a party established more than 30 years ago, the BN indeed has a wealth of in experience in facing conflicts especially in allocation of seats before an election and in the appointment to state government Exco posts. Its experience in seven general elections had made the BN more mature in managing conflict. This argument is based on its achievements as well as the continuing trust by the people shown in the elections.

³⁹ Refer chapter four for reasons of the tussle for the Chief Minister post between UMNO and Gerakan.

⁴⁰ See Carpenter and Kennedy (1988).

⁴¹ Interview with Yaacob Mohammad. See appendix A.

8.5 Conclusion

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that the BN employed various approaches in its effort to manage the conflicts it faced. On the overall, this can be summarised into two major levels. The first level is the control of conflict through internal means and the second is the external method. The internal management of conflict concentrates more on the process of controlling conflict within the component parties of the BN itself. In this context, the discussion elaborated on the elements that acted as a solid base in managing conflict in the BN, including the existence of formal guidelines such as procedures for decision-making, representativeness and confidentiality. In addition, emphasising and promoting the spirit of accommodation, compromise, trust, and solidarity also further helped in the smooth settlement of conflicts faced by the BN.

The external method focused on the use of other elements that helped strengthen the position of the BN in managing conflict. These include such elements as the use of the constitution, which covers matters such as Boundary Delineation and the appointment of Cabinet members and state Excos, the use of enactments such as the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Official Secrecy Act (OSA), and the Printing and Publishing Act, and the use of its authority in establishing policies. The competency in conflict management mastered by the BN looks easy and simple, but in actual fact it is difficult to apply without that basic solidarity among the component parties. This argument can be further strengthened when compared with the efforts by the opposition parties to emulate the BN, but which always resulted in deadlock or failure. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad commented that:

‘Many attempts were made by the opposition parties to form a coalition – an alternative alliance like the BN – but the efforts were finally met with deadlock and failure because of the absence of sincerity among the members and too much haggling due to selfishness⁴².’

Along with its ability to manage arising conflicts, a culture that is synonymous with the BN, especially in tackling the question of compromise and camaraderie, is the culture of bargaining and negotiation. This made the BN always dynamic in handling conflict because this element of bargaining enhances a party’s maturity and skill to better deal with its component parties. Even so, it cannot be denied that the BN is not without challenges in managing conflict. The question is, what are the challenges, and how do they maintain the traditional leadership that has been established in managing this conflict? This is discussed in detail in chapter nine.

⁴² Interview with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See appendix A.

CHAPTER 9

THE RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE BARISAN NASIONAL

9.1 Introduction

Having broadly examined the subject of conflict and the procedures of managing it, chapter eight will now focus on the challenges that the BN would face in the future based on past experience. The challenges discussed in this chapter are on the aspects of change in the top leadership of the BN, internal conflict within the component parties of the BN, communalism, protests, and the management of demands made by the component parties of the BN.

9.2 Leadership Style of the Prime Minister (Chairman of the Barisan Nasional)

The personality¹ of a leader plays an important role in influencing the management or handling of conflict within the BN (Mauzy 1983:139). Within this context, the leaders of the BN form the core and the force behind the style or pattern adopted in managing the conflicts that arise. In addition, close relationship or rapport among the leaders may also influence the management of conflict. To understand how far personality plays a role, the following discussions will focus on the approach taken by each Prime Minister cum Chairman of the BN in handling the issues of seat

¹ Personality refers to a dynamic integration of people, regarding the physical, mental and social aspects of an individual, which portrays how the individual would act towards himself, others and the things around him. Surrounding factors, such as culture, religion, family and relatives, neighbors, friends, the surrounding community, teachers and other elements that we experience while growing up can have a profound effect on shaping our personalities. Our values, beliefs and perceptions are all heavily influenced by family members, relatives, religion and the culture of our communities. See Barbara Engler, (1985).

allocation and distribution of Cabinet posts as well as the appointment of the Members of the State Exco.

9.2.1 Tunku Abdul Rahman²

Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister, succeeded in persuading the various races to accept the plural nature of the Malaysian society;

‘He convinced the Malays that their identity would not be diminished by the acceptance of a multiracial society. The Merdeka Compact that Tunku helped negotiate continues today to provide the guiding principles for the management of race relations in the country’ (H’ng Hung Yong, 2004:20).

Under the administration of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the technique of handling conflict within the Alliance Party was largely based on the personal relationship among the top leaders of the party. This was confirmed by Tan Siew Sin, who acknowledged that conflicts were mostly resolved amicably through good interpersonal relationships. Tan Siew Sin was very close to Tunku Abdul Rahman³, known by nature to be a ‘happy-go-lucky playboy’ who was not known to assert himself (Vasil, 1980:90). This made it possible for Tan Siew Sin to gain better ‘bargaining’ power with Tunku, than with Onn Jaafar who was perceived as a ‘tough man’;

² Born on 8 February 1903 at Pelamin Palace, Alor Setar, Kedah, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-haj was had been involved in UMNO ever since its initial inception in 1946 and was elected to be the second President of UMNO on 26 August 1951, when Dato’ Onn Jaafar relinquished the post. Tunku succeeded in securing full independence for the Federated Malay States on 31 August 1957 and was subsequently appointed as the first Prime Minister. Tunku resigned as Prime Minister on 22 September 1970 and as President of UMNO during the party’s General Assembly on 23-24 January 1971.

³ Refer detail in Chin Hon Min. 1994. *Tun Tan Siew Sin: Kegiatan dalam Politik dan Ekonomi Malaysia*. Dessertation (M.A) Jabatan Sejarah Fakulti Sastera dan Sains Sosial. University Malaya. p. 124-128.

‘Onn established the principle that the essential character of the nation must be Malay... while Tunku convinced the Malays that their identity would not be diminished by their acceptance of a multiracial society’ (H’ng Hung Yong, 2004:18).

In distributing electoral seats among the component parties of the Alliance, Tunku Abdul Rahman had shown an exceptional attitude of compromise towards the MCA. He took great pains to coax UMNO members to give 15 of the 52 seats contested to the MCA⁴. For the sake of his friendship with Tan Siew Sin, Tunku Abdul Rahman even threatened to resign as UMNO President if his proposal were not accepted (*Straits Times*, 5 June 1955). According to Tan Siew Sin;

‘...I well remember that in those days, Tunku himself had a pretty rough time in persuading the UMNO rank and file to be more than fair’ (Dawson, 1969:16).

Tunku Abdul Rahman had such trust in Tan Siew Sin that he appointed the latter as a Cabinet member in 1957, holding the post of Trade and Industry Minister. Based on this friendship, Tan Siew Sin practised the political strategy of ‘bargaining’ or *quid pro quo* with Tunku Abdul Rahman until 1969, despite objections from the Chinese community and from among members of the MCA⁵. In other words, the management of conflict during Tunku’s time relied more heavily on the close relationship between the leaders, to resolve any issues or problems that arose. At the same time, Tunku Abdul Rahman viewed the universality and well being of the Alliance Party as utmost important when managing conflict.

⁴ UMNO, in the 1952 election, vehemently demanded that 90 percent of the Alliance candidacy be given to the Malays. This was based on the composition of voters, where the Malays constitute 84.2 percent, Chinese 11.2 percent, and Indians and others 4.6 percent. The Chinese only had two majority constituencies, namely Ipoh and Georgetown. This meant that the MCA was given about 30 percent of the total number of seats despite having only about 11.2 percent voters. See Vasil., (1971).

⁵ Tan Siew Sin’s approach in managing conflict with Tunku Abdul Rahman had indeed caused dissatisfaction, among others on the issues of *jus soli*, the special rights of the Malays, language and education. See Vasil, (1969). p. 103-106. Ratnam & Mile, (1967). p.86.

9.2.2 Abdul Razak Hussein⁶

The change in leadership also influenced the method of conflict management in the BN, and this was significantly evident in the experience of Tan Siew Sin and Abdul Razak Hussein. It was true that Tunku Abdul Rahman highly regarded and fully trusted Tan Siew Sin, but this changed when Abdul Razak Hussein became the second Prime Minister. This can be seen in two situations. First, due to Tunku's trust in him, Tan Siew Sin, who held the post of Minister for 14 years, tried to demand for the post of Deputy Prime Minister when Ismail Abdul Rahman died in 1973. But that demand was not entertained by Abdul Razak Hussein, and instead aroused the latter's anger, expressed through this statement;

'Prepare to consider the possibility of forming a government without the MCA (and without Tan Siew Sin).' (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 September 1973:23).

Second, Tan Siew Sin once asked Abdul Razak Hussein not to appoint Michael Chen as Executive Secretary of the BN, but Abdul Razak Hussein rejected it. (Goh Ka Hian, 1987:46). Both these incidents demonstrate that the bond of friendship or personal relationship among the top leaders is crucial in managing conflict within the BN⁷.

⁶ Abdul Razak Hussein was Malaysia's second Prime Minister (1971-1976), having previously served as Deputy Prime Minister for over 13 years. During that time, he had held several portfolios, including those of the Ministry of National and Rural Development, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Domestic Affairs. At the time of the 13 May 1969 tragedy, he was appointed as the Director of the National Operations Council (MAGERAN), the body having total authority over the country's administration then. Among his most comprehensive national development policies was the New Economic Policy, whilst his most brilliant and dynamic political development idea ever was of course, the establishment of the BN.

⁷ Tan Siew Sin felt rather embarrassed by the treatment given by UMNO (Abdul Razak Hussein) following that incident, and on 3 April 1974, submitted his resignation as Finance Minister and as the MCA President. See *Straits Times*, 9 April 1974.

In managing these conflicts, Abdul Razak Hussein was seen as more inclined towards the dominance of UMNO as the core. In other words, UMNO must be put before the BN. Hence, conflicts within the BN would first be referred to the UMNO Supreme Council⁸. According to H'ng Hung Yong;

'Razak left little room for any politics besides the elitist accommodation and administrative formulas based on the "consensus" of the UMNO-dominated BN' (2004:52).

Table 9.1 : A Comparison of the Appointment of Ministers between Tunku Abdul Rahman's and Abdul Razak Hussein's Cabinets

Cabinet	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Tunku's Cabinet			
1957	9 (69.0)	3 (23.0)	1 (8.0)
1963	10 (63.0)	4 (25.0)	2 (12.0)
1968	10 (59.0)	5 (29.0)	2 (12.0)
Abdul Razak Hussein's Cabinet			
1974	12 (75.0)	3 (19.0)	1 (8.0)
1975	14 (78.0)	3 (17.0)	1 (5.0)

Source: a). Data 1957 - Abdul Aziz Bari. 2002. *Cabinet Principles in Malaysia: The Law and Practice*. Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press. p. 127
b). Data 1963 - *Federation of official Year Book*, Vol 3. p. 427
c). Data 1968 - *Buku Rasmi Tahunan 1968*, jilid 2. p. 644
d). Data 1974 - *Dewan Masyarakat*, Vol.XII, No. 8, August 1974 and *Dewan Masyarakat*, No. 9 September 1974, pp. 24-25.
e). Data 1975: Malaysia 1979. *Official year book 1975*. Vol 15. Malaysia Government Kuala Lumpur. National Printing Department. p. 485-486

This principle of prioritising UMNO is further evidenced in the selection of Cabinet members, when Abdul Razak Hussein, having the prerogative power to appoint at his discretion, increased the number of UMNO members in his Cabinet. The increase was most significant as shown in table 9.1 , where the number of UMNO ministers in Tunku Abdul Rahman's last Cabinet was 59.0 percent, but rose to 75.0 percent in 1974 and 78.0 percent in 1975 during Abdul Razak Hussein's era. The number of

⁸ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

Chinese Cabinet ministers decreased accordingly from 29.0 percent to 19.0 percent. Likewise, the number of Indian Cabinet ministers dropped to only eight percent from 12.0 percent previously. This change in composition has relevance to the demand by campaign managers of UMNO that only one leader be appointed as Cabinet member⁹ (Chin Hon Min, 1994:288). This focused concern in managing conflict through UMNO's dominance in the BN clearly became the principle of Abdul Razak Hussein when he fulfilled the demand of UMNO members by appointing Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman as the Deputy Prime Minister¹⁰.

The situation caused the MCA leaders and many Chinese to be unhappy about the erosion of Chinese influence in the Cabinet and the Government, and the steady decline of the Chinese percentage in the Malaysian population. The status and credibility of the MCA in the eyes of UMNO had faded to a very low level. In fact, Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman stated that it would be better for UMNO to separate from the MCA and the MIC if both these parties were "neither dead nor alive" (*Straits Times*, 18 January 1971). The same was practised in the process of electoral seat allocation in which the MCA and party Gerakan, both representing the Chinese, received a smaller allocation than they did during Tunku Abdul Rahman's era.

⁹ The demand was made following the 1969 election results, in which the MCA won only 13 of the 33 parliamentary seats allocated to it. On the other hand, UMNO retained 51 of the 67 parliamentary seats contested.

¹⁰ UMNO members insisted and demanded that the two leaders of UMNO who were highly regarded because of their firm stand in defending the rights of the Malays, namely Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman and Syed Nasil Ismail, be given Cabinet posts.

Table 9.2 : A Comparison of Electoral Seat Allocation between Tunku Abdul Rahman's era and Abdul Razak Hussein's era.

Election Year	Malays	Chinese	Indians and others
Tunku Abdul Rahman's Era 1969	68 (65.0)	33 (32.0)	3 (3.0)
Abdul Razak Hussein's Era 1974	75 (66.0) UMNO - 61 (54.0) PAS - 14 (12.0)	31 (27.0) MCA - 23 (20.0) Gerakan- 8 (7.0)	8 (7.0) MIC - 4 (3.5) PPP - 4 (3.5)

Source: Hussein Mohammed. (1987). *Membangun Demokrasi: Pilihanraya di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Karya Bistari. p.59

Facts on the election of ministers and allocation of electoral seats clearly show that the decision-making procedures in handling conflict during Abdul Razak Hussein's time was greatly influenced by the element of UMNO's dominance (In-Wong Hwang, 2003:133). Under the BN, as initiated by Abdul Razak Hussein himself, partners of the coalition, namely the MCA and the MIC, did not receive as many privileges as they did during Tunku Abdul Rahman's era. The MCA, Gerakan and the MIC continued to participate in the BN even though the treatment accorded was different from before, inspired by several factors;

- a. The political current then flowed towards integration, especially with the entry of political parties from Sabah and Sarawak into the BN. Being part of the old political coalition under the Alliance Party, it would be going against the current had they not joined the BN.
- b. They, especially the MCA, had to accept the reality that their performance in the previous 1969 election was poor. In this regard, it

would only be fair that they accept what was seen as punishment, in order to improve their performance in the forthcoming election¹¹.

9.2.3 Hussein Onn¹²

During his short administration of about five years, Hussein Onn preferred to run a one-man-show and resolve problems in managing conflict on his own, without relying on close relationships with leaders in the BN (like Tunku Abdul Rahman) nor leaning towards UMNO's dominance (like Abdul Razak Hussein). According to H'ng Hung Yong (2004:83), he relied more on facts and rationality in decision-making be it friend or foe (whether involving UMNO or even the MCA, the MIC or Gerakan). His actions in managing conflict based on rational sometimes did not take into consideration its political implications, either on UMNO or on the BN. A few prominent cases demonstrated this, such as his action of dragging Harun Idris to court on corruption charges¹³ and expelling PAS from the BN;

'Hussein, son of Onn, was uncompromising and immovable, despite the huge political risks, in ensuring that the former Chief Minister of Selangor, Datuk Harun Idris, was tried and convicted in court for corruption. (Harun later got a royal pardon)' (H'ng Hung Yong, 2004:87).

Lee San Choon, the President of the MCA who replaced Tan Siew Sin, shared this experienced when making a demand regarding the quota system of student entry into

¹¹ Interview with Ghafar Baba. See appendix A.

¹² Hussein Onn, UMNO's fourth President, became Malaysia's Prime Minister on 15 January 1976. Hussein resigned as Chairman of the Barisan Nasional on 15 July 1981 and on the following day, he relinquished his post as Prime Minister.

¹³ Hussein Onn was convinced that Harun Idris was corrupt and should pay penalty. In March 1976, Harun was expelled from UMNO and heavy pressure was applied to UMNO members of the Selangor legislative assembly to pass a motion of no confidence in the Chief Minister. Harun was then brought to trial and in May was convicted of receiving a bribe of \$250,000 from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, for which he was sentenced to a few years' imprisonment. See Crouch, (1996)

universities. Hussein Onn, using his rational approach, directly made a decision on the conflict without referring to UMNO;

‘In 1979, dispute over university intake became a hot issue. On 28 June, Tan Sri Lee led an MCA delegation in a four-hour talk with Tun Hussein Onn. As a result of the talk, the ratio of university intake was fixed at 55.0 per cent for Bumiputeras, and 45.0 percent for non-Bumiputeras’ (Do you Know, undated:9).

9.2.4 Mahathir Mohammad¹⁴

Dr. Mahathir Mohammad is Malaysia’s fourth and longest serving Prime Minister (1981-2003)¹⁵. In managing conflict, Dr. Mahathir Mohmmad used the indirect ‘check-and-balance’ approach and the sense of loyalty (In Won Hwang, 2003:212). Any conflict can be analysed through indirect checks, provided there was balance in the conflict, which can finally be resolved by the sense of loyalty in the conflicting parties. If a study were made on cases of conflict within the BN, the application of this element is clear during his 22-year administration through five elections¹⁶. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad said that the concept of seat domination in Parliament is important as it symbolises the Malay power befitting the spirit of ‘Malay sovereignty’ in this country. The assembly of ministers is seen as a vital machinery in planning and implementing policies to help the Malays improve their economic

¹⁴ Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is the fifth UMNO President and the third Chairman of the BN. Once labeled as ‘ultra Malay’, he became the President of UMNO on 26 June 1981 and was sworn in as Prime Minister on 16 July 1981. Dr. Mahathir made various drastic changes to policies in terms of administration, mindset and mission. Among his innovations are the Look East Policy, Clean-Efficient-Trustworthy, Leadership By Example, Corporatisation of Malaysia, production of the first national car, incorporation of Islamic values in public service, standardizing the time for Peninsular Malaysia, East Malaysia and Singapore, and Vision 2020. After serving as Prime Minister for 22 years, he resigned on 31 October 2003 and handed the post to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to be the sixth Prime Minister.

¹⁵ His appointment had initially created anxiety among the non-Malays because of the ‘ultra Malay’ label attributed to him. This was the result of his firm stance in championing Malay political agenda, such as language and education (Utusan Malaysia, 29 March 2005). Hence, when he became the Prime Minister, there was concern that he would favour the Malays and ignore the other races.

¹⁶ Election 1982, 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999.

status, which lags behind the other races. Therefore, these two elements must be guarded without compromise.

By looking at the five elections held by him, there is truth in Dr. Mahathir's statement above and these principles have truly become his belief. The allocation of electoral seats among the component parties of the BN did not change very much from the ratio of 64.0 percent Malays, 31.0 percent Chinese and five percent Indians (see chapter three). Meanwhile, the percentage of Malays appointed to the Cabinet increased when compared to other races. During his 22 years, Dr. Mahathir made seven Cabinet reshuffles and each time, the percentage of Malay ministers moved up. In his first Cabinet of 1981, the ratio by race was 67.0 percent Malays, 28.0 percent Chinese and five percent Indians, whereas in his last Cabinet, the ratio changed to 74.0 percent Malays, 23.0 percent Chinese and four percent Indians (see chapter five).

This demonstrates that in managing conflict regarding seat allocation and ministerial appointments, Dr. Mahathir was very firm with his principles. This should have caused uneasiness among the other races, but strangely enough, at every election, particularly in 1995 and 1999, the Chinese and the Indian communities continued to support his leadership. This phenomenon was actually the result of the second element in managing conflict practised by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, and that is the element of balance. To counterbalance the firmness of the two elements closely guarded by him, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad granted a large portion of the demands submitted by the Chinese and the Indians. Knotty and problematic demands regarding language, education and culture are among those frequently made by the Chinese and the Indians, especially as an election draws closer (see chapter six).

These had already been unravelled and resolved through the implementation of the liberalisation policy. It is this initiative that secured the loyalty of the Chinese and the Indian communities to continue supporting the BN throughout Dr. Mahathir's administration, causing a deep impact on the opposition parties, particularly the DAP. This situation is acknowledged by Lim Kiat Siang himself who stated that;

‘The DAP's defeat in the last 1995 election was not because the DAP did not make reform... BN's great victory was because Mahathir was more liberal on several issues, like language, culture and education, which the DAP fought for before it was adopted and practised by the BN government’¹⁷.

9.2.4.1 Education

In relation to Chinese education, further liberalisation steps were taken by the government under Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. In particular, UMNO leaders became more supportive of national-type Chinese primary schools, whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, these institutions were regarded as counter-productive to the fostering of national unity. The government even encouraged Malay and Indian families to send their children to Chinese-medium primary schools and the number of non-Chinese enrolments increased dramatically in the 1990s. Mid-1995 statistics show that there were over 35,000 non-Chinese students, including 25,000 Malays, enrolled in 1,281 national-type Chinese primary schools. The figure represents an increase of more than 400 per cent from 1985 when there were fewer than 8,000 non-Chinese pupils in Chinese schools nationwide (*New Strait Times*, 7 April 1995).

¹⁷ Quoted in Francis Loh Kok Wah, *Pluralism and Democracy in Malaysia: Political, Cultural and Social Challenges*. Paper presented at Islam, Culture and Democracy: A Regional Roundtable, 17-18 August 1998. Kuala Lumpur. p.10

Under the Sixth Malaysian Plan (1991-1995), the government's support for Chinese education grew. In the case of the MCA-sponsored Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College, the government allocation was increased tenfold from RM2 million under the Fifth Malaysian Plan to RM20 million. TAR expanded its main campus in Kuala Lumpur and opened new branch campuses in Johor and Penang in the mid 1990s (*Sixth Malaysian Plan*, 1991-1995:183).

In addition, as one of the government approaches to liberalisation in education, the new Private Higher Educational Institutional Act, 1996 was enacted, leading to the establishment of private universities and branch campuses of foreign universities. As an effort to encourage the private tertiary education system, by mid-1997, the government had approved approximately 335 private higher educational institutions throughout the country (In-Wong Hwang, 2003:247).

9.2.4.2. Language

Language has always been a sensitive issue, often straining interracial relationships, especially regarding the implementation of Malay as the official language as well as the language of instruction in schools. Under Dr. Mahathir's administration, the conflict waned following his move in promoting the usage of English (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 December 1991). In the mid 1990s, the government finally allowed English to be the medium of instruction in local universities for subjects such as science, technology, mathematics and medicine. In addition, Malay was no longer used as the sole medium of instruction for many other subjects. This was a complete retraction of the one-language policy introduced in 1971 under the UMNO government led by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad.

9.2.4.3 Culture

In relation to cultural policy, non-Malay culture became quite liberally accepted as part of the national culture by most Malay intellectual and cultural organisations. In particular, the increased flexibility towards Chinese cultural activities was a noticeable sign of greater communal tolerance than that of the 1970s and 1980s (Rustam A. Sani, 1993:105). The overall management of conflict within the BN under Dr. Mahathir Mohammad is unique in style and approach as it adopts a two-pronged strategy, successfully resolving conflicts on seat allocation and ministerial appointments, at the same time granting demands. This gave assurance to the Chinese and Indian communities and induced loyalty, as reflected in elections. Lim Kim Sai acknowledged this by saying;

‘During my time (the 1980s), the MCA as a political party representing Chinese interests, faced a lot of controversial issues so we had to fight it out. But now no more issues are left and the MCA can live happy under UMNO’s big Umbrella... even the DAP is supporting the PM’s approach. Now we can see that the DAP leaders talk as if they were already a component party of the BN’ (In Won Hwang, 2003:263).

It can be concluded that the management of conflict in the BN (Alliance) under four Prime Ministers each had its individual style and approach (see table 9.3). Indirectly, this also has an implication on the BN. This shall be a challenge that the BN needs to tackle in the future, which is to modify and adjust its conflict management approach to the leadership style of the current Prime Minister.

**Table 9.3 : Conflict Management Approaches by Four Prime Ministers /
Chairmen of the Barisan Nasional /The Alliance**

Prime Minister	Conflict Management Style in the Barisan Nasional
Tunku Abdul Rahman	Personal relationship approach
Abdul Razak Hussein	UMNO dominance approach
Hussein Onn	One-man-show and rational approach
Dr. Mahathir Mohammad	Check-and-Balance and loyalty approach

9.3 Conflict within the Barisan Nasional

A major challenge faced by the BN is the issue of internal conflict within a component party. When such conflicts take place, it shakes the stability and harmony of the party. If it happened within the main parties of UMNO, the MCA, Gerakan or the MIC, then its consequences would no doubt be equally felt by all. So it is not surprising that Dr. Mahathir Mohammad came up with this short anecdote;

‘When the MCA is sick, UMNO would suffer from fever and the BN would have a headache. When UMNO is ill, the MCA would have a fever and we would all have a headache’ (*The Star*, 11 August 2003:3).

Aside from this, the situation usually prompts the BN to manage conflicts more effectively and efficiently. Even more so when certain conflicts take a long time to resolve. Generally, conflict within the BN can be discussed from two aspects. First is the internal conflict within a party and second is the inter-party conflict within the BN.

9.3.1 Internal conflict within the Barisan Nasional

9.3.1.1. Internal conflict within UMNO

Internal conflict within UMNO is clearly inevitable, more so because it is the core party whose leader would become the Prime Minister. According Ghafar Baba and Mohammad Rahmat in interview, most of the conflicts within UMNO arise from the process of electing the top leaders especially when it involves a contest for the top posts of President, Deputy President and Vice President¹⁸, personal conflict and conflict on the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister¹⁹. Of these sources of conflict, the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister usually involves the main UMNO elites and only a small number of subordinates. Conflict on the major posts of the party naturally have a more total effect as it covers the election process from the lowest to the highest ranks. Thus, the implication arising from conflicts on the tussle for posts are more profound and more colourful. There were two major conflicts in the history of UMNO during its tenure with the BN, the implication of which brought about the emergence of new political parties, namely Semangat 46 and Parti KeADILan Nasional.

¹⁸ The UMNO Constitution specified that election for the top posts in UMNO be held every 3 years. According to tradition, the post of President shall be inherited and remain uncontested. Nevertheless, on two occasions during the history of UMNO, the chair of President was contested, i.e. in 1978 between Hussein Onn and Sulaiman Palestin, and in 1987 between Dr. Mahathir Mohammad and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

¹⁹ The appointment of Deputy Prime Minister occurs when there is a vacancy as a result of the death or resignation of its holder. According to tradition, the Deputy Prime Minister is appointed from among the Vice Presidents of UMNO. As there are 3 Vice Presidents in UMNO, conflict is bound to erupt in the process of lobbying to obtain the post. Among such conflicts are the appointment of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, who was considered a junior, as Deputy Prime Minister under Hussein Onn, and the appointment of Musa Hitam and Anwar Ibrahim under Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. See Ahmad Atory Hussein (1997).

The first conflict that besmirched the history of UMNO's struggle happened in 1987 culminating in the party being declared as illegal by the High Court on 4 February 1988. It started with a conflict concerning the scramble for the UMNO top posts of President, Deputy President, Vice Presidents and members of the Supreme Council. The contest for these posts created two distinct vying teams named 'Team A' headed by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad and Ghafar Baba, and 'Team B' headed by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Musa Hitam (Khoo Boo Teik, 1995:262-266).

The hard-fought election resulted in a narrow victory for the Mahathir-Ghafar duo. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad won 761 (51.45 percent) of the votes against Tengku Razaleigh's 718, a margin of only 43; Ghafar baba won 739 against Musa Hitam's 699, a majority of 40 with an additional 41 ballots being spoilt. In the contest for the three elected Vice President positions, Dr. Mahathir's candidates, Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, the veteran Chief Minister of Terengganu and Anwar Ibrahim came first and third respectively while a Musa Hitam supporter, Abdullah Badawi came second. Of the twenty-five elected positions on the party's Supreme Council, supporters of either Razaleigh Hamzah or Musa Hitam won eight. Following his victory in the party election, the Prime Minister purged his Cabinet of the remaining supporters of Razaleigh and Musa Hitam (Crouch,1996:118-119).

Immediately after the UMNO election in 1987, supporters of Razaleigh Hamzah came to know that ineligible delegates had participated in the UMNO general assembly. A group of UMNO members known as "UMNO 11" then filed a case seeking a court declaration that the 1987 UMNO general assembly be made null and void. When the court was satisfied that ineligible delegates had indeed participated in the UMNO general assembly, the judge had no choice but to declare UMNO as an

illegal organisation – which made UMNO, the party dominating the BN alliance, to be deregistered under the Association Act. The judge's decision was based on the fact that UMNO had clearly contravened its own constitution 9 (*New Strait Times*, 10 August 1988).

Thus, UMNO, the political party for the majority of the Malays, met a “sudden death”. The situation caused the leaders of UMNO to be party-less, and Dr. Mahathir Mohammad resigned as Chairman of the BN, though he remained as the Prime Minister. This marked the first time in the nation's history when an ordinary Member of Parliament without a party held the post of Prime Minister. Following this incident, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad then registered New UMNO as an alternative to the ‘old’ UMNO (*Utusan Malaysia*, 8 May 1988). A brief meeting of the BN Council was held, chaired by Dr. Ling Leong Sik, to accept New UMNO as a component of the Alliance, followed by Dr. Ling Leong Sik vacating his seat as Chairman of the BN to allow Dr. Mahathir Mohammad to occupy the post held by him previously. This episode would also definitely be etched in the country's history as the shortest period a BN Chairman held the post. Meanwhile, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's ‘Team B’ had set up a new party named ‘Parti Semangat 46’ as a platform to continue his struggle (Crouch, 1996:121). During the 1990 election, the influence of Semangat 46's cooperation with PAS handed the BN, particularly UMNO, its defeat at State Legislative Council and Parliament in Kelantan, the party's stronghold²⁰. This represented the first 100 percent defeat ever experienced by the BN in its history of contesting in elections at State and National levels.

²⁰ The President of Semangat 46, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, originates from Kelantan. The coalition of Semangat 46 and PAS won all 39 State Legislative Council seats in Kelantan, obtaining 14 (Semangat 46) and 24 (PAS) seats. At Parliamentary level, 13 seats contested were also won; 7 by Semangat 46 and 6 by PAS. See Election Commission, (1992).

The second critical conflict faced by UMNO was between Dr. Mahathir Mohammad and his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim. The Mahathir-Anwar conflict was an unprecedented event in Malaysian politics. After several years of leadership conflict speculation within UMNO, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammad dismissed Anwar Ibrahim from his posts as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on 2 September 1998. Anwar Ibrahim was abruptly dismissed from office, expelled from the party, imprisoned under the ISA, beaten while in custody and eventually charged in court of five counts of sodomy and five counts of corruption²¹ (*Berita Harian*, 30 September 1998:1). Anwar Ibrahim believes he was in fact the victim of a high-level political conspiracy designed to finish his political future, a conspiracy that began more than a year before his downfall. People allegedly kept telling Dr. Mahathir Mohammad that Anwar Ibrahim was planning to challenge for the party presidency in the forthcoming party election of 1999 using the economic crisis as a spur. These allegations of leadership challenge caused Dr. Mahathir Mohammad to feel paranoid. To kill Anwar Ibrahim politically, a close associate of Anwar Ibrahim says, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad used the issue of immorality to cover the power struggle (Crouch, 2003:282).

The crisis caused a split in UMNO between supporters of Dr. Mahathir Mohammad and Anwar Ibrahim. Finally, on 4 April 1999, KeADILan (Parti KeADILan Nasional or National Justice Party) was formed under the leadership of Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, wife of Anwar Ibrahim. Like the split in 1988, the establishment of KeADILan, whose members were originally UMNO followers and supporters, also had an effect on the BN. In the 1999 election, the BN experienced a severe defeat in

²¹ Anwar was charged under: 1) Corrupt practices under Section 2 (1) of Ordinance Number 22 (Essential Powers) Emergency 1970, which carries a jail sentence of up to 14 years or a fine of RM20,000 or both. 2) Sexual intercourse against human nature under Section 377B of the Penal Code, which carries a jail sentence of up to 20 years and caning. See *Berita Harian*, 6 October 1998. p 1.

Terengganu. The cooperation between the party KeADILan and PAS won them 28 of the 32 State Legislative seats contested (Election Commission, 1999: 140-141).

9.3.1.2 Internal Conflict within the MCA

The MCA's first major internal conflict occurred in 1959 when its new president, Dr. Lim Chong Eu, unsuccessfully demanded that the party stand up to UMNO over the allocation of seats on the Alliance ticket. In the late 1970s the party was again bitterly divided when its new leader, Lee San Choon, was challenged by Michael Chen, who was narrowly defeated. Lee San Choon won with a convincing 218-vote majority, but the party itself emerged from the Assembly torn and scarred by claims of foul play. Michael Chen left the Cabinet and joined Gerakan in 1981 together with several State Assemblymen (Lao Zhong, 1984:41).

Following Lee's resignation from the party presidency in 1983, another debilitating leadership struggle broke out. On 19 March 1984, a row over alleged 'phantom' members in the MCA exploded into a serious crisis²². On that day, Acting MCA President Neo Yee Pan and his allies within the party stunned observers by expelling their main rival, Vice President and self made millionaire Tan Kwoon Swan. The expulsion of 14 MCA leaders, however, clearly ranked as the most serious in the party's history. Three members of parliament (including two deputy ministers) and a senator were involved.

²² Since Neo Yee Pan became Acting President in 1983, it was almost inevitable that the two factions would clash eventually. As it happened, the issue which brought on the clash were allegations that phantom members were being deliberately created by ambitious politicians. Voting in the MCA's elections was based on the delegate system. Each division was allowed to send one delegate to the general assembly for every 100 members registered in it. Therefore, the more members a division had, the more delegates it could send. The AGM in turn selected the President and other senior party officials. See Lao Zhong. (1984).

After two years of upheaval and the intervention of UMNO, which was worried about the BN's electoral prospects if the MCA remained in disarray, a party election was held in November 1985 that resulted in an overwhelming victory for Tan Koon Swan, who had succeeded in presenting himself as the herald of a new era for the MCA. But Tan Kwoon Swan did not last long as the MCA leader. Tan was involved in another recession-hit company, the Singapore based Pan-Electric Industries (Pan-El), which faced bankruptcy in late 1985. Tan was arrested in Singapore on fifteen counts of criminal breach of trust, cheating and fraud, and was eventually sentenced to two years' imprisonment (Khoo Boo Teik, 1995:215-217). The leadership of the MCA passed to one of Tan's lieutenants, Ling Leong Sik, whose tenure as party president was relatively uneventful following an early unsuccessful challenge.

9.3.1.3. Internal conflict in the MIC

Like UMNO and the MCA, leadership conflict in the MIC occurs due to crisis in the tussle for the top posts of the party. Under the leadership of Samy Vellu, the President since 1979, several conflicts on the tussle for posts caused the party to split with the dissidents forming new parties. Among the new parties that emerged were the Democratic Malaysian Indian Party (DMIP)²³, the Kongres Indian Muslim Party (KIMMA)²⁴ and the Indian Progressive Front (IPF)²⁵.

In addition, conflict on the clamour for the post of President occurred between Samy Vellu and his deputy, S. S. Subramanian, and this dragged on such that it often

²³ Established by Govindaraj, the former Vice President of the MIC who lost in 1984. The party was registered on 19 October 1985. See Fact and Figure, (1994).

²⁴ KIMMA was formed on 4 October 1977 by some former members of the MIC, who felt that the Indian Muslim interests were not looked after by the party. See Fact and Figure, (1994).

²⁵ The All-Malaysia Indian Progressive Front (IPF) was formed by an expelled MIC Vice President, M.G. Pandithan in 1990. See Fact and Figure, (1994).

threatened the position of the MIC in the BN. The contest in 1989 caused S. S. Subramaniam to be excluded from the 1990 election, but was brought in to join the government as a senator, and appointed as Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

9.3.1.4. Internal conflict within Gerakan

Among the four component parties of the BN discussed here, Gerakan faced the least internal conflict within its party. Since leadership changed hands from its second President, Dr. Lim Chong Eu to Dr. Lim Keng Yik on 17 August 1980, there wasn't much conflict, especially those regarding party posts. The conflicts faced by Gerakan were mostly inter-party, particularly against its rival, the MCA.

Based on the discussion above, we can see that the BN is never free from internal conflict within its components. In fact, conflict seems to happen one after another, as if in turn. These internal conflicts caused instability within the BN, especially when it involved the main component parties of UMNO and the MCA. When such a situation arises, the performance of the BN in elections is impacted. The situation is worse when a new party born from within the BN later becomes an opposition party (Semangat 46/Parti KeADILan), winning the support of the people. This was clearly portrayed through the events that unfolded during the 1990 and 1999 elections. Thus, it is a challenge for the BN to stop internal conflicts that could induce a much wider conflict, from ever surfacing. The control of internal conflict, if successful, would make the overall conflict management in the BN more stable and sound.

9.3.2 Inter-Party Conflict in the Barisan Nasional

Conflict between the MCA and party Gerakan has mostly to do with who is actually representing the Chinese, especially in fighting for the rights of the community. In this regard, each works hard at spreading its influence to be acknowledged as the principal representative of the Chinese community. At the national level, the party Gerakan seemed displeased about the status of the MCA as the second largest component after UMNO in the government. On the other side, it can be said from the very beginning that the MCA never approved of the party Gerakan joining the BN and participating in the government. The entry of the party Gerakan into the BN seemed more like a situation that the MCA was forced to put up with. With the membership of party Gerakan, the MCA no longer became the sole representative of the Chinese community in the government. Considering this scenario, in spreading influence, the question of who is the greater in fighting for the issues regarding the interests of the Chinese community, or otherwise, is often argued between the two parties. They would blame each other when an issue met a dead end. But when an issue showed signs of being reasonably resolved, each would claim that they were responsible for it and it was them who deserved the applause of the Chinese community.

If the party Gerakan were uncomfortable with the MCA's position at national level, the situation is the opposite at the Penang state level, where the party Gerakan played the leading role in the mixed government formed in 1971. The MCA had no choice but to be happy with the supporting role given to them based on the spirit of consociation within the BN. Still, their marred image after their position was snatched away by party Gerakan in the 1969 election caused the MCA to arrogantly

continue to challenge the integrity of party Gerakan in Penang via various means, using either open or hidden techniques.

For example, in the 1978 election, with the supposed blessings of the leaders at national level, the MCA was said to have presented a team of seven independent candidates to contest against Gerakan for seven State Legislative Council seats. Four years later, in the 1982 election, the MCA demanded for an equal distribution of seats between the two parties. Such conflict, from the positive view, is good for the BN. It can provide competition for each party, to spur it to greater heights of service quality so that it may subsequently be acknowledged by the community they are representing. According to Dr. Mahathir Mohammad;

‘If they want to leave and fight their own battle, they are free to do so and if the two parties, meaning Gerakan and the MCA, wish to remain in the BN, they must abide by the coalition rule. The party policies must be observed by which all internal problems must be resolved within the coalition (*The Star*, 2 June 1986)’.

Nevertheless, if conflict happened too often and were not controlled well, the BN would be impacted negatively. Therefore, proper control is a critical challenge for the BN in the coming decade.

9.4 The Management of Bargains

Politics in Malaysia has been dominated since independence by the Alliance coalition, which, under the leadership of UMNO, had at times ruled with a heavy hand. UMNO, the party whose President is entrusted to be the Chairman of the BN and the Prime Minister, indeed shoulders a heavy responsibility in managing a multiracial union, with each one naturally fighting to gain benefits in the interests of

their own parties. Apart from handling the allocation of seats and later forming the Cabinet of ministers, UMNO is also faced with the never-ending demands from components.

Under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the leaders of the MCA attempted in making various demands in the interests of the Chinese community but was rejected by Tunku Abdul Rahman on the grounds that it could anger the Malays, at the same time enabling the influence of PAS to grow even wider should the demands be met (refer chapter six). In other words, the Malays would go against UMNO if the demands of the MCA were entertained or fulfilled. As it is, the Malays already felt that UMNO gave too much face to the MCA. This, however, did not mean that the demands would disappear just like that. It would often and continually be brought up during the administration of Abdul Razak Hussein and Hussein Onn. Some were granted while others were not. As discussed earlier, during Dr. Mahathir Mohammad's era, a large number of these demands were fulfilled through his liberalisation policy. Even so, this did not stop other demands, such as those submitted by Suqui and supported by the MCA and party Gerakan.

The crux of the matter is, when will these demands stop? To make matters worse, it looked like all these demands were one-sided. To put it explicitly, it appeared that while the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC all continued to fight for the rights of their communities, UMNO was expected to just accept everything. This brought up the question of how far UMNO could tolerate these demands, which at times had no limit.

Within this context, the challenge faced by UMNO as the backbone of the BN is most difficult, especially in ensuring that the country remains stable and harmonious by managing situations of conflict in a wise manner. UMNO leaders may have pursued a deliberate policy of limiting rewards distributed to its partners. (Mayerchak. 1975:174). UMNO will face two choices;

- a. It may elect to maintain the present distribution configuration through moderately coercive tactics if necessary. Should this happen, the very future of Malaysia as a nation may be imperilled if the other alliance parties allow their dissatisfaction to be aired in public.
- b. UMNO will yield and allow an equitable distribution of rewards to come about. Because the 1969 election riots brought this nation to the brink of disaster, it now seems that the latter strategy will eventually be adopted, even if reluctantly (1975:177).

Bargaining strategies are not as highly developed in relatively young political systems. It may be particularly hard for small parties (e.g. the MIC) in relatively new governing arrangements to muster the courage necessary to face a dominant coalition partner with demand for a greater share of the bargain. Indeed, whether one refers to a bargaining configuration as equitable or proportional, both may be attainable only after an evolutionary period within any particular political system. The Malaysian political system may be one in which the optimum strategies for coalition building are not yet possible because of such things as reliance on coercion as a tool for coalition maintenance (Mayerchak, 1975:183). This is the challenge that must be faced by UMNO and the other component parties of the BN in managing conflict to ensure its ability to maintain authority and administration of the country.

9.5 Communalism

Diane Mauzy, in her book, 'Coalition Government in Malaysia' says that after May 13th, Abdul Razak Hussein, Ismail Abd Rahman, Ghazali Shafie and Khalil Akasah as secretary met in Cameron Highlands for this purpose;

'They decided that the Alliance policy had been good in its day but it was no longer enough just to respond to communal pressures without having a firm policy (1983:46)'.

This implicitly symbolises that the Alliance Party or the BN may very well manage and formulate good policies, but they can never assure that communalism among the main races in the country can be eliminated. For this reason, a significant challenge in managing conflict within the BN is that at times, communalism is placed before consociation. Dr. Mahathir Mohammad said;

'The politics of this country tends to be racial whether you like or not, so whenever you talk about anything that has some identification with race, chances are politics will be dragged in. You cannot tell people that this is culture and that is politics, so let's keep the two separate' (*New Straits Times*, 23 February 1973).

Dr. Mahathir's words has basis, judging from the demand made by the Malays for the post of Penang Chief Minister in the 1990 election. There were rumours that the party Gerakan would even shift its support from the BN to the opposition only to prevent a Malay from holding that post. The truth of the matter was further confirmed when Lim Kit Siang, the leader of the main opposition, expressed his support for Dr. Lim Chong Eu to be re-elected as the Chief Minister of Penang. It was a bit strange that all of a sudden, the DAP expressed their support, and right after UMNO made the demand for the post. Lim Kit Siang's support was puzzling since he knew that he did not have the authority to decide on the holder of the post (*Utusan*

Malaysia, 8 August 1986). The National President of the DAP, Dr. Chan Man Hin, also supported the party Gerakan advisor Dr. Lim Chong Eu to continue his service as the Chief Minister of Penang because it would be what the people of the state wanted (*Utusan Malaysia*, 8 August 1986). The situation hints that communalism was still strong within each race, and could not be weakened even by differences in political convictions.

Communalism was also demonstrated when the MCA and party Gerakan made a pact with the DAP, i.e. the opposition, on the issue of promoting non-Mandarin educated teachers in October 1987. In September, the Minister of Education promoted several Chinese, but non-Mandarin educated teachers, as Headmasters and senior assistants, and posted them to Chinese schools in Malacca, Penang, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. This truly shocked UMNO, viewing this as going against the spirit of unity and the value of trust, which form the core of the BN. This cooperation looked both like a blow and a threat to the BN (*Utusan Malaysia*, 13 October 1987).

On 11 October 1987, about 2,000 leaders and representatives from the MCA, party Gerakan, the DAP, Dong Jiao Zong and Chinese associations and guilds held a meeting at the Thean Hou Temple in Kuala Lumpur to reaffirm the Chinese community's stand on the issue. UMNO, however, regarded the MCA's (and to a lesser extent, party Gerakan's) 'collaboration' with the DAP as a breach of the BN discipline, if not a betrayal of its principles.

9.6 Party Crossovers

The spirit of solidarity is threatened whenever the subject of 'crossovers' or switching parties crops up among the components of the BN. There are members of

one party jumping over to another party within the BN. This often became an issue when it involved top party officials. The parties clearly facing this issue are the MCA and the party Gerakan²⁶.

At national level, party Gerakan Acting Chairman announced on 19 December 1973 that Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, Paul Leong Khee Seong, Alex Lee Yu Lung, Dr. Tan Teong Hong, Soong Siew Hoong and thousands of former MCA reformists had joined the party. All of them joined party Gerakan shortly after their expulsion²⁷. The second wave of expulsions occurred in 1981 when Michael Chen²⁸, a senior MCA Vice President and Minister of Housing and New Villages, left the Cabinet and joined the party Gerakan. This situation naturally upset the MCA, which felt that Gerakan had deliberately influenced its members to change sides. This turn of events inadvertently cast an image of weakness in the MCA, at the same time showing that Gerakan has a strong influence over the Chinese community. Following this incident, the cold war resulting from this party-hopping issue left an implication on the spirit of solidarity, especially between the MCA and party Gerakan.

In Penang, two incidents of party switching between the components of the BN caused relationships to sour. The first switch involving prominent leaders took place after the 1995 election. Khor Gark Kim²⁹, former government Exco member cum

²⁶ Conflicts that involved 'party-hopping' between Gerakan and the MCA at the main leadership level started with the departure of Datuk Paul Leong from the MCA to Gerakan in 1974, and of Michael Chen, former Gerakan Vice President, to the MCA in 1982.

²⁷ Since its formation in 1949, the MCA has taken disciplinary action against its members on various occasions, with many of them being expelled. The first mass expulsion took place in 1973 when the then President, Tun Tan Siew Sin, took action against a group of young leaders who seemed to be out to challenge his leadership. See Lao Zhong, (1984).

²⁸ Michael Chen was challenging Lee San Choon directly for the MCA presidency in 1979. At the same time, Richard Ho and MCA Vice President and Minister of Labour decided to throw in his lot with Michael Chen. Michael Chen's bid failed but Richard Ho won as the Deputy President. See Zhong, (1984).

²⁹ Won in the 1978 election in DUN Tanjong Bungah with a majority of 5,173, defeating Khoo Soo Hoe, DAP and Gopal Nair from the SDP. See Election Commission, (1981).

former Vice President of Penang the party Gerakan and Khoo Boo Yeang³⁰, former State Legislative Council candidate for Ayer Itam, crossed over to the MCA.

The second incident of party switching took place after the 1999 election. Lim Chien Aun and Lim Boo Chun³¹, both members of the State Legislative Council who won as Gerakan candidates, left to join the MCA. The action of the two 'Lims' invoked serious reaction from many quarters, because it resurrected the demand for the Penang Chief Minister post by the MCA. In the 1999 election, the MCA and party Gerakan each won nine State Legislative Council seats. Thus, when the two Lims switched parties, the number of seats owned by the MCA automatically increased to 11 while Gerakan's seats reduced to only seven. The acceptance of the two Lims by the MCA did not please Gerakan. Its Secretary-General, Chia Kwang Chye, described the MCA's move as 'an unfriendly act'. In his statement, he said it was against the spirit of cooperation and understanding among the BN component parties. However, Ling Leong Sik said the switching of parties within the BN was neither uncommon nor new. "However, the practice should not become a habit." (*News Straits Times*, 12 December 1999).

The MCA used the extra number of seats it owned as a weapon to demand for the Chief Minister post. Nevertheless, this was ignored by the BN, which eventually entrusted party Gerakan to govern Penang. The action was seen as favouring a particular party and not the BN as a whole, and this was capable of threatening the

³⁰ Khoo Boo Yeang contested under Gerakan in the 1990 election. He contested in the Ayer Itam constituency but lost to Ong Hock Aun from the DAP with a majority of 3,100. See Election Commission, (1992).

³¹ Lim Chien Aun, a Legislative Counselor, represented Gerakan in the 1990 and 1995 elections in N33, Bayan Lepas and in the 1999 election, he shifted to N37 Batu Maung. Lim Boon Chang became a Legislative Counselor representing Gerakan for the Datuk Keramat area in the 1995 and 1999 elections.

existing spirit of solidarity. Even though there was no explicit regulations forbidding a party from accepting a member of another party who wished to switch (between the component parties of the BN), this sensitive inter-party element should be considered. In Kedah, the subject of party switching, especially among the top party leaders (particularly between the MCA and Gerakan), did not happen. This may be due to the political scenario in Kedah, which was dominated by UMNO. Any party switching would not affect the formation of a state government, as it does in Penang.

9.7 Lodging a Protest

Undeniably, satisfying every component party on the issue of seat allocation in elections is not easy. As a result, there would be protests from disgruntled parties. One recourse is to sponsor another candidate to contest as an independent³². An alternative is to create a protest vote during the election. The process of protesting the decision of the top leaders of the BN is an element that could threaten the spirit of solidarity. If this matter were not contained, it could become a 'peat ember' that can insidiously spread or flare up the suppressed feelings of animosity among the component parties.

In the election that saw the establishment of the BN in 1974, the sponsorship of independent candidates was already evident. Tan Siew Sin³³ disclosed that there were three areas in Penang where independent candidates were sponsored by a party that was not satisfied with the allocation of seats (table 9.4).

³² Two factors can usually indicate that a person is a sponsored candidate of a party. First, he is the leader of a party who resigned when his party did not contest in an area as requested. The second, during campaigning, the candidate would not be criticising the opposition party, but instead will attack the party selected by the BN.

³³ Notes from the personal files of Tun Tan Siew Sin, Malaysian Archives, File number 128.

Table 9.4: Candidate Sponsored by a component party of the Barisan Nasional in the 1974 Election in Penang

Constituency	Barisan Nasional Candidate	Sponsored Independent Candidate	Sponsoring Component Party of the Barisan Nasional
Bukit Tambun	Teoh Chaing Hor - Gerakan	Ong Bock Chuan	MCA
Sungai Nibong	Dr. Choong Sim Poey	Tan Jit Seng	MCA

Source : The personal files of Tun Tan Siew Sin, Malaysian Archives, File number 128

In Kedah, the leaders of an UMNO division who were dissatisfied with the decision of central-level leaders to surrender the Tikam Batu seat to party Gerakan (Ong Boon Seng) had nominated Harun Haji Chik as an independent candidate. Even though all the sponsored candidates lost, this had stimulated a feeling of prejudice among the component parties towards the sincerity of the party that sponsored those candidates³⁴.

In the 1978 election, candidate sponsorship became more intense, especially by the MCA and party Gerakan. The MCA, as though still unable to accept the fact that it lost to party Gerakan in the 1969 election, reacted by sponsoring independent candidates when its demand for additional seats in Penang was rejected. As a result, a large number of former MCA members formed the People's Independence Front (PIF), with the intention of contesting against the candidate put up by Gerakan³⁵.

They were Dr. Khoo Soo Kheng (Nibong Tebal/Parliament, Sungai Bakap/State), Mah Cheok Tat (Kampong Kolam), Gan Kah Peng (Padang Kota), Lim Kah Pin (Datuk Keramat), Khoo Huat Hin (Paya Terubong), Tan Chong Hooi (Sungai Pinang)

³⁴ Muhammad Bakri. See appendix A.

³⁵ See Ismail, K. (1978).

and Hoo Kee Ping (Tanjung/Parliament). The actions of these sponsored candidates clearly showed that during their campaigns, they attacked Gerakan more than they did the DAP, the arch enemy of the BN;

‘The PIF candidate’s campaign was guided by an MCA top gun and their fire was aimed mainly at Dr. Lim Chong Eu. One of their main issues was KOMTAR (Komplex Tun Abdul Razak), a scheme to group all the businesses on the island under one controlling body. In a joint press statement, the PIF asked five questions on KOMTAR, implying that Dr. Lim Chong Eu was guilty of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency.’ (Ismail Kasim, 1979, 64).

As a result of the MCA’s action, like those of the PIF candidates, Gerakan retaliated by not appointing MCA candidates as Exco members after the 1978 election. Instead, the MIC, with only one seat, was given that post and not the MCA, which had won two state legislative council seats. The 1978 elections had indeed put the spirit of solidarity to the test, especially between the MCA and Gerakan, from which any repercussions would be felt by the BN. It was based on the experience in the 1978 general election that the top leaders of the BN then focused on pacifying the internal conflict between the MCA and Gerakan.

9.8 Conclusion

It is a difficult duty and challenge for any coalition party, such as the BN, to maintain stability and harmony devoid of any conflict. In reviewing the 30 years of the BN’s rule over Malaysia, it is true that the party is never free of conflict, especially in its effort to allocate seats and posts in the cabinet among its component parties. At the same time, it also has to contend with other issues and challenges that are ever-present and can threaten the stability of the BN, as discussed in this chapter. As the

principal component, UMNO has to tackle a myriad of unrelenting demands and conflicts prior to every general election, made either by the component parties or by groups within its own party. Nevertheless, it is unfair that only UMNO acts to control the situation. Cooperation from the other component parties is vital especially in controlling recurring demands during each election. Each component party should also take appropriate action to maintain harmony within its own party by avoiding any serious conflict. At the same time, each party should restrain its supporters to control interracial issues. Cooperation between the component parties is vital to the BN in maintaining stability so that it is capable of competing against the opposition, who are constantly trying to defeat them.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE BARISAN NASIONAL (1974-1999) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PENANG AND KEDAH

This research revealed the strategies and actions that were used by the BN to manage conflict. These strategies have helped the BN rule the country even though they were spiked by conflicts that have become part and parcel of its organisation by configuration, regarding the issues of seat allocation and the appointment of ministers/Exco members. To reconsider these as important elements of Malaysian politics, this thesis also analyses the cases at the state level, particularly in Kedah and Penang. Five objectives of this study were set in the introduction to address both seat allocation and the appointment of ministers/Exco members.

10.1 To examine the methods and procedures applied by the Barisan Nasional in resolving problems of seat allocation and Cabinet/Exco post allocation

As explained in chapters four and six, the BN clearly has a systematic approach and structure in managing the conflicts on seat and Exco post allocations. The soundness and stability of these procedures have provided significantly an incentive to help safeguard the stability and solidarity of the BN. In examining the methods and procedures applied in seat allocation, it is clear that the method being practised has brought the BN repeated victories in elections to subsequently form a government.

- a. **the methods and procedures applied by the Barisan Nasional in resolving problems of seat allocation**

The performance-driven method of seat allocation spurred the component parties to continuously strive towards better achievements in subsequent elections. An excellent or dismal performance would surely influence the allocation of seats to that party in the next election. Indirectly, this caused;

- i. Every component party to be cautious about its request for the allocation of seats because if the allocation requested exceeds its capability, the consequences would certainly look bad for that party in the next round. Thus the component parties would usually make requests based on past performance and its expectation of winning in a particular constituency;
- ii. Every component party to also make every effort to maintain the seat in the constituencies allocated in order to prevent any problems that could cause its defeat in those constituencies. Should this happen, the party's performance would indeed be jeopardised.

The procedure of seat allocation according to racial composition thus creates a situation in which a constituency with a majority population of a particular race would be represented by that race. This, in turn;

- i. Reduces the conflict in the tussle for constituencies among the component parties of the BN.
- ii. Ensures that each party understands that this formula limits its options in the demand and allocation of seats to constituencies with a majority of a particular race only. For instance, the parliamentary seats of Bukit Bendera, Bagan, and Tanjong¹ in Penang all have majorities of Chinese residents, so it is not possible for UMNO to demand that it represents these constituencies.
- iii. Ensures that the component parties understand that only constituencies with mixed racial majorities are eligible for demand.

Based on the approach taken in allocating seats, as discussed in chapter four, the one principal factor in this process is race. In other words, the racial element is always the main pivot in seat allocation. This is based on the approach by which the BN places priority on the formula to determine the racial majority/minority in a constituency before deciding to whom that seat is to be given. Consideration based on performance is not a priority here. This argument is further strengthened when the BN allocated seats by race first – Malay, Chinese or Indian – before breakdown by party was determined. For instance, seats allocated to the Chinese would be divided among the MCA and the party Gerakan. This situation actually helped mitigate conflicts on seat allocation, narrowing it to certain cases only, thus easing the management of conflicts. The seat allocation procedure based on quota is an approach that guarantees that parties with minority racial compositions would have a representative in the government. In reality, it is difficult for the MIC to obtain an allocation based on the racial composition method because there is no area in which

¹ The Chinese majorities in these areas: Bukit Bendera 73.7%, Bagan 64.4% and Tanjong 87.0%.

the majority is Indian (see chapter three). Thus, through this quota system, the MIC receives an allocation to ensure that there is a representative from the Indian community in the government. This serves to attract Indian voters to continue voting for the BN as their party of choice.

The three procedures and approaches utilised by the BN obviously display high rationality in establishing a formula for the allocation of seats among the component parties of the BN. The concept of sharing and consensus gives the BN strength and support from the various communities in Peninsular Malaysia in particular, and the entire Malaysia, in general. The cooperation of each political party in this allocation concept means that no party is sidelined or ignored. Instead, every party is appreciated and respected. Therefore it is no surprise that although there was conflict in the allocation of seats initially, every component party eventually converged cohesively to cooperate with one another to ensure that the BN wins the election.

The findings of this study also show that although the BN has established several guidelines on the allocation of seats through the three stages of seat determination, as discussed in chapter three, in reality this only clouds the situation. This is because from the era of the Alliance to the era of the BN, the seat allocation formula has not changed much from the first election of 1955, to the implementation in the 1999 election. Two approaches were applied by the BN, namely the General Allocation formula and the Allocation by State formula.

i. The General Allocation Formula

Table 10.1 shows a consistent formula being applied by the BN in Peninsular Malaysia, whereby an average of 65.0 percent of seats is allocated to the Malays, 31.0 percent to the Chinese and four percent to the Indians.

Table 10.1: Breakdown of parliamentary seat allocation in Peninsular Malaysia by race

Election Year	Malay (%)	Chinese (%)	Indian (%)
1955	67.0	29.0	4.0
1959	67.0	30.0	3.0
1964	65.0	32.0	3.0
1969	65.0	32.0	3.0
1974	66.0	27.0	7.0
1978	66.0	30.0	4.0
1982	66.0	30.0	4.0
1986	64.0	31.0	5.0
1990	64.0	31.0	4.0
1995	64.0	31.0	5.0
1999	64.0	31.0	5.0
Average seat allocation formula	65.0	31.0	4.0

Likewise during the stage of determining seats in the State Legislative Council, where the formula for allocating seats did not change much from the 1974 general to the 1999 election. For the Malays, this formula allocates to them an average of 70.0 percent of seats at state level. The Chinese received 25.0 percent whereas the Indians were given five percent. Although there was change in the seat allocation percentages, it was clear that this change was small in terms of numbers. This clearly strengthened the argument that the allocation of seats as a means of managing

conflict is assisted by the formula agreed by consensus, which is 65:31:4 per cent at Parliamentary level and 70:25:5 per cent at State level (on the overall - see table 10.2).

Table 10.2: Breakdown of state seat allocation in Peninsular Malaysia by race

Election Year	Malay (%)	Chinese (%)	Indian (%)
1974	71.0	24.0	5.0
1978	67.0	28.0	5.0
1982	74.0	17.0	9.0
1986	68.0	26.0	6.0
1990	71.0	25.0	4.0
1995	70.0	26.0	4.0
1999	70.0	26.0	4.0
Average seat allocation formula	70.0	25.0	5.0

ii. The Allocation by State Formula

Conflict on seat allocation occurs more often in areas with mixed populations, compared with areas populated by a majority from a single race. This is clear in the case of Penang, whose population is mixed (refer to introduction), where there is frequent conflict during every election, especially between UMNO and party Gerakan, and also between the MCA and party Gerakan. The scenario is different in Kedah, where the majority of residents are Malay, making conflicts on seat allocation much less complicated. This implicitly shows that population mix also influences the rate of conflict on seat allocation. The higher the mix in racial composition in a state, the more frequently seat allocation conflicts occur during

elections. Conversely, the lower the racial mix in a state (the majority of residents is from a single race), the less the conflicts on seat allocation during elections. At this level, the BN relies on a constituency's racial majority/minority before deciding to whom the seat belongs. Thus in a state with a Malay majority, most of the seats would be held by the Malays. Likewise, if a state has a Chinese majority, most of the seats would be held by the Chinese. So, based on the studies in Penang and Kedah, it is clear that each state has a different formula (tables 10.3 and 10.4). An interesting point is that the number of seats allocated was consistent and did not change much from the 1974 election to the 1999 election.

Table 10.3: Distribution of Parliamentary and State Assembly seat allocations in Penang, 1974 – 1999

	State seats (%)			Parliamentary Assembly seat (%)		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Malay	Chinese	Indian
1974	37.0	59.0	-	33.0	67.0	
1978	37.0	59.0	-	33.0	67.0	-
1982	37.0	59.0	-	33.0	67.0	
1986	36.0	60.0	4.0	36.0	64.0	-
1990	36.0	60.0	4.0	36.0	64.0	-
1995	36.0	60.0	4.0	36.0	64.0	-
1999	36.0	60.0	4.0	36.0	64.0	-
Average seat allocation formula	36.0	59.0	5.0	35.0	65.0	

**Table 10.4: Distribution of Parliamentary and
State Assembly seat allocation in Kedah, 1974 – 1999**

	State seats (%)			Parliamentary Assembly seats (%)		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Malay	Chinese	Indian
1974	81.0	15.0	4.0	85.0	15.0	-
1978	81.0	15.0	4.0	85.0	15.0	-
1982	81.0	15.0	4.0	85.0	15.0	-
1986	82.0	14.0	4.0	86.0	14.0	-
1990	82.0	14.0	4.0	86.0	14.0	-
1995	78.0	16.0	5.0	87.0	13.0	-
1999	78.0	16.0	5.0	87.0	13.0	-
Average seat allocation formula	80.0	16.0	4.0	86.0	14.0	

To ensure that every component party is served justice in every conflict concerning seat allocation, the ‘cake’ to be shared is enlarged so that every party gets a piece. By using the Election Commission as the main tool to ensure that this allocation formula maintains the status quo, new parliamentary or state legislative council constituencies are created every eight years and allocated to the BN component parties. But it is the re-delineation of constituencies carried out by the Election Commission every eight years that is the main mechanism that sparks conflicts among the BN components. It is also an element that binds and rewards each component party. Each component gets an increase in the number of seats but there is no difference in the percentages held before.

b. **the methods and procedures applied by the Barisan Nasional in resolving problems of Cabinet/ Exco post allocation**

In managing cabinet post allocation, as explained in chapter six, the Prime Minister is responsible for appointing anyone he chooses to assist in establishing and running the government. This means that the method and procedure of doing so is left to the discretion of the Prime Minister, and he will choose whom to appoint. But looking at the BN's experience, the findings of this study shows that each component is still given the chance to hold the post of the minister whose role is to make decisions and execute National policies.

Table 10.5: Allocation of Cabinet Posts among UMNO, MCA, MIC and Gerakan

Prime Minister	UMNO (%)	MCA (%)	MIC (%)	Gerakan (%)
Abdul Razak Hussein	76.0	17.6	6.4	-
Hussein Onn	69.0	22.0	4.5	4.5
Mahathir Mohammad	70.0	21.4	4.3	4.3

The distribution of cabinet posts by component party shown in table 10.5 clearly indicates that UMNO controls a large majority of the posts, followed by the MCA, the MIC and Gerakan. This breakdown is obviously not very different from the ratio of seat allocations obtained by those component parties in elections. Furthermore, to address the demand for more ministerial posts from the component parties, the Prime Ministers resorted to adding more ministries, as can be seen from the increase in the number of ministries from 22 in 1974 to 25 in 1989.

On the other hand, the allocation of portfolios by minister among BN's component parties did not change much. This resulted in a ministry being almost synonymous with a party. The MCA, for example, is virtually synonymous with the ministry of Housing and Local Government, Health, Transport and Human Resources, Gerakan became synonymous with the ministry of Primary Industries whilst the MIC with the ministry of Works.

At the state level, the responsibility for Exco appointment lies with the Chief Minister, who is given the mandate by the Prime Minister to govern a state. Based on what happened in Penang and Kedah, it appears that the appointment of Exco members also uses a given formula (see table 10.6). This formula is, however, flexible and dependent upon the performance of each party during an election, as explained in chapter five;

Table 10.6: The formula for Exco post allocation in Penang and Kedah in the 1974 to 1999 elections

State	1974-1990 elections UMNO:MCA:MIC:Gerakan	1995-1999 elections UMNO:MCA:MIC:Gerakan
Penang	4:3:1:1	4:4:1:1
Kedah	7:1:1:0	8:1:1:1

10.2 To determine the extent to which each level discusses, knows and gets involved in the decision-making, bargaining and negotiation processes for electoral seat allocation and Cabinet/Exco post allocation

As discussed in chapter seven, the discussion, bargaining or negotiation process for electoral seat allocation and Exco post allocation officially involves only the main elite groups of each party at state and federal levels. This means that these issues are never discussed openly at branch or divisional levels. Furthermore, the Supreme Council of the BN is the responsible and influential body in determining the allocation of electoral seats. This Council receives proposals and requests from the representatives of every component party. Then, based on the BN's principles, which include decision-making procedures, representativeness and confidentiality, the decision would be made by this body. This illustrates that the debate and participation in decision-making only involve the main elites of the party.

What is unique within this context is that every component party of the BN, based on the last election, would accept whatever has been decided by the BN Supreme Council. Even though there may be objections, these are minimal. This implicitly exhibits the capability of the BN's leadership, especially at the main elite group level, to steer members to consensually agree with any decision taken by the leadership. This is of great importance in ensuring the success of the BN. To have a successfully functioning coalition like the BN, there must be sound support from the masses. The political elites must have security, which the sound support of their followers ensures, in order to make compromises. At the very minimum, the non-elites must not work against the agreement reached by the elites. (Nordlinger, 1972:74). It was the failure to control followers that brought about the incident of 13 May 1969.

10.3 To evaluate the existence of elements of bargaining or reward given to a party, in the event of rejection or to compensate an unfulfilled demand

The findings of this study strengthens those of earlier studies explored by previous researchers, where in the process of resolving conflicts regarding the allocation of seats and posts, there was the element of bargaining by the component parties, that submitted a variety of requests in return for their support for the BN in elections. Earlier studies on the Alliance Party by researchers Mayerchak (1975) and Esman (1972) revealed that the element of Bargaining already existed as an approach for compromise among the component parties to acquire something. Further, Mauzy in his study on the BN, 'Coalition Government in Malaysia' (1983) also explained the existence of this process of bargaining as a procedure to fulfil a specific request submitted by a component party.

As explained in chapter seven, the bargaining comes from various sources. The first is the component parties of the BN itself. Here, the bargain is usually an alternative to unfulfilled demands for seat or post allocations. This is clear in the case of Penang, where UMNO's demand for the post of Chief Minister was rejected. As a substitute, UMNO demanded for the post of Deputy Chief Minister, which was later granted after the 1995 election. Demands from component parties were also made to attract voters to support the BN in elections. The second source is NGOs that have close relationships with political parties. The connotation frequently used on these NGOs is *opportunistic*, using the election to fulfil their desires. They bargain for something as a condition for giving support to the BN. This was obviously being done by the Dong Jiao Zhong Society. They were almost always submitting various demands during every election as a reward for supporting the BN candidates, especially in Penang.

In managing conflicts regarding the allocation of seats and posts, a quick decision made within a short period of time is usually required, due to time constraints nearing the date of election. But in the case of the bargaining mentioned here, usually the decision (or the act of fulfilling a demand) may or may not be made within a short time. This would depend on the political strategy formulated by the Prime Minister as Chairman of the BN. For example, as explained in chapter six, the bargaining for a quota for non-Malay students by Lee San Choon, the MCA President, was decided on the spot by Hussein Onn. On the other hand, the demand for the amendment of the Education Act, 1996 made in 1985 was only fulfilled after the 1995 election. According to Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, this was because;

‘We have our conversion tables to avoid miscalculations. We need to look at the overall situation. This matter sometimes cannot be understood by the party making the demand because that party would usually not understand the actual political conversion table’.

On the whole, it can be seen that bargaining is a norm and an avenue for the component parties or the NGOs to obtain what they want. This can be explained through table 10.7.

Table 10.7: Conflict Management and Bargaining

Election	Bargaining	Approach
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for Posts Deputy Prime Minister 	Avoidance
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balance in the quota for university intakes 	Compromise
1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-delineation of electoral constituencies • Demand for the Post of Deputy Prime Minister 	Avoidance Avoidance
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorised its minister to convert Chinese schools into national schools (Act 1961 (21)) • The Chinese and Tamil languages approved as mediums of instruction in schools • The Integrated School concept was abolished • Demand for the Post of Deputy Prime Minister 	Compromise Compromise Avoidance Avoidance
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quota system was abolished • Demand for the Post of Senate Member 	Avoidance Compromise
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Smart School concept was abolished 	Compromise
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bargaining from the Suqiu 	Competition

In managing demands from its component parties, the BN applies two main approaches, namely Compromise and Avoidance. What is clear here is that not all demands submitted will be fulfilled by the BN leadership, especially by the dominant party, UMNO. For demands that can be fulfilled, negotiations are carried out and a compromise is then achieved. These are such demands as shown in the above table 10.7. This does not mean that demands would end, because it would be

submitted again in the future, as in the case of the demand for a Chinese Deputy Prime Minister.

By carefully scrutinising cases of demands from the component parties (particularly by the MCA, Gerakan and NGOs), it can be clearly concluded that any demand involving an attempt to reduce 'Malay dominance' would be rejected. Demands such as the review of the general election, as proposed by the MCA, was rejected because the allocation system proposed would reduce the number of seats held in majority by the Malays. Such was also the case with the demand for the post of Deputy Prime Minister and the abolition of the quota system.

10.4 To identify the challenges faced by the Barisan Nasional in managing conflict

The BN undeniably faces all kinds of challenges in managing the conflicts on the allocation of seats and posts among the component parties. As discussed in chapter nine, the challenges faced by the BN form an important determinant in assessing the future of the party. In other words, if these challenges could be resolved well and comprehensively, then the BN is seen as capable of continuing its role as the leader of the nation and, conversely, incapable of doing so should it fail in handling such challenges. This study has identified seven challenges that must be tackled by the BN. Among them are the leadership style of the Prime Minister, conflict within the BN, the management of bargains, communalism, party crossovers and lodging a protest.

10.5 To identify the approaches taken by the Barisan Nasional in managing conflict

In line with the objective to study the conflict management technique applied by the BN, this study therefore also concentrates on the approaches usually practised in managing these conflicts. As discussed in chapter eight, the BN is found to have used all five conflict management approaches that include Competition/Force, Collaboration, Avoidance, Accommodation and Compromise. Among these five approaches, the methods of Compromise, Accommodation and Avoidance are the most frequently used in handling the conflicts among party components. This argument is based on the study and findings regarding the conflict on seat allocation and the conflict on cabinet membership and portfolios.

a. Conflict on seat allocation and its management

Based on the conflicts discussed in chapter four, it can be generally concluded that in handling conflict on seat allocation, the BN used two main approaches, namely Compromise and Accommodation. By using the approach of Compromise, every component party would negotiate or discuss to achieve an agreement on the allocation of seats. The process of Compromise was clearly used in the 1974, 1978, 1986 and 1995 elections, in which there were demands from each component party for allocations of seats. These demands were made by UMNO, the MCA and Gerakan.

The second method applied is Accommodation, by which all component parties would jointly agree to uphold the cause of the BN first by putting aside the cause and objectives of their own parties. Each component party neither exerted any pressure

nor demanded for any seats for itself. Throughout the history of the BN's involvement in general elections, two factors gave rise to such a situation. The first took place in the 1982 general election, in which all the component parties cohesively agreed to ensure that the BN achieved a resounding victory as a mark of support to the new Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad who was appointed in 1981. The second happened in the 1990 and 1999 elections. In both these elections, the BN faced stiff competition when the opposition parties cooperated with one another to form a coalition to win as many seats as possible and also to end the dominant power by the BN. As a result, the component parties relaxed their demands regarding seat allocation and instead united to face the challenge from the opposition. Thus it was not surprising then that in the 1990 and 1999 general elections, the number of seats allocated to the component parties did not differ from that in the previous election. The approaches of Compromise and Accommodation have clearly helped the BN settle the conflicts on seat allocation, which eventually provided a comfortable environment for contest in the general election (see table 10.8).

Table 10.8: Conflict on seat allocation and its management

Election	Conflict	Approach
1974	Demand for allocation of existing seats	Compromise
1978	Demand for allocation of existing seats	Compromise
1982	Demand for allocation of existing seats	Accommodation
1986	Demand for allocation of new seats	Compromise
1990	Demand for allocation of existing seats	Accommodation
1995	Demand for allocation of new seats	Compromise
1999	Demand for allocation of existing seats	Accommodation

b. Cabinet conflicts and its management

The conflicts that arose from the demands for cabinet posts revolved around two issues; firstly, to acquire more members in the Cabinet, and secondly, to hold portfolios categorised as key portfolios (refer to chapter six). These conflicts are managed through two approaches: Compromise and Avoidance (see Table 10.9). For the posts of Minister, Compromise is widely used by the Prime Minister soon after he is elected. For instance, Hussein Onn compromised on Cabinet membership upon his appointment as Prime Minister in 1976. Likewise with Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, who took the same approach after being appointed in 1982. Following this initial stage, they had the tendency to maintain the Cabinet memberships and portfolios without change, as done by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, who rejected (Avoidance) demands made by the component parties in the 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections. As for the post of Deputy Minister, there was a lot more compromise in terms of Cabinet portfolio or even Cabinet membership. In fact, based on the discussion in chapter five, there were actually changes in the post of Deputy Minister.

This is not unexpected for a party with multiracial members, as Compromise and Avoidance are effective and good methods to ensure that each party is satisfied with the solution of every problem faced. On the other hand, the method of Competition, that leans towards the use of force through the implementation of certain Acts, such as the Internal Security Act (ISA), is seldom used although it is very effective in suppressing negative elements that may be detrimental to inter-party or interracial relations. What is clear is that the BN will use any of the five approaches deemed the most appropriate to the nature of the conflict it is managing. Based on past

experience, all these approaches have been very helpful in managing conflict within the BN.

Table 10.9: Cabinet conflicts and its management

Election	Conflict	Minister	Deputy Minister
1974	Cabinet Portfolio Cabinet Membership	Compromise Avoidance	Compromise Avoidance
1978	Cabinet Portfolio Cabinet Membership	Compromise Compromise	Compromise Compromise
1982	Cabinet Portfolio Cabinet Membership	Avoidance Compromise	Avoidance Avoidance
1986	Cabinet Portfolio	Avoidance	Avoidance
1990	Cabinet Portfolio Cabinet Membership	Avoidance -	Compromise Compromise
1995	Cabinet Portfolio	Avoidance	Avoidance
1999	Cabinet Portfolio Cabinet Membership	Avoidance -	Compromise Compromise

10.6 Research contribution and direction for future research

Research contribution

This thesis represents the very first study on how the Barisan Nasional manages the conflicts that have become part and parcel of its organisation by configuration, touching on the issues of seat allocation and the appointment of ministers/Exco members. It is based on previous studies mainly focused on the establishment process² as described in studies related to Conflict Management in the Barisan

² Examples:

Nasional (refer to the chapter one). Other than these, any discussion on the issue of seat allocation and the appointment of ministers/Exco members were only explained briefly³. As such, the contribution of this research is as follows;

- i. According to Ghafar Baba and Mohammad Rahmat, during their tenures as the Barisan Nasional's Secretary, this will be the first ever study carried out on the procedures of seat allocation among its component parties. This is, in fact, considered the BN's main strategy, which is confidential information, but such a matter merits documentation for the benefit of future generations.
- ii. To document the BN's procedures of seat allocation, which has never been done even after almost 30 years of its establishment;
- iii. Upon documentation, the generations of today and tomorrow would be able to understand how seat allocation is carried out in an effort to maintain harmony among Malaysians;
- iv. Upon documentation, generations of Malaysians would also be able to appreciate that every ethnic group played a role in the process of this country's political development, and every ethnic group has been equally willing to sacrifice certain interests for the sake of ensuring the nation's overall stability.
- v. To establish a greater understanding on the politics of a multiracial country such as Malaysia.

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- i) Mauzy, Diane K., (1978). *Consociationalism and coalition politics in Malaysia*. Thesis (Ph.D). University of British Columbia.
 - ii) Md. Aris Ariffin . (1973). *Coalition government in Penang*. (B.Ec). Faculty of Economics & Administration, Universiti Malaya.
 - iii) Mohd. Taib Ahmad Said. 1974. *Coalition politics in Kedah*. Academic exercise (B.Ec). Public Administration Division, Faculty of Economics & Administration, Universiti Malaya.
 - iv) Chandran, K., (1975), *Coalition politics in Malaysia: A case study of Perak*. Academic Exercise (B.Ec). Faculty of Economics & Administration, Universiti Malaya.
 - v) Mohd. Isa Hussein. (1982). *Penyertaan PAS dalam Barisan Nasional*. Academic Exercise (B.A). Teleology and Sociology, Islamic Higher Education Foundation, Kelantan.
 - vi) Razaman Mohammad. (2002). *Permuafakatan politik Islam: satu tinjauan terhadap sumbangan PAS terhadap kerajaan Barisan Nasional antara tahun 1974-1978*. Academic exercise (B.A). Department of Credo & Islamic Thinking, Teleology Studies Division, Islamic Studies Academy, Universiti Malaya.
 - v) Zakiah Awang. (1983). *Coalition Politics In Malaysia*, MA. Western Michigan University.

³ Examples:

- i). In Won Hwang (2003), *Personalized Politics: The Malaysian State under Mahathir*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- ii). Crouch, Harold., (1996), *Government and Society in Malaysia*. Talisman Publishing Pte. Ltd. Singapore.

Future avenues of research

The Malaysian political scene was charted on the world map when Lijphart put Malaysia on a pedestal as an example of the consociationalism model in action⁴. The Alliance Party established under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman with the coalition of UMNO, the MCA and the MIC placed political maturity under the patronage of the grand coalition that was its pride until the tragedy of 13 May 1969.

In a way, this racial riot had collapsed the political superiority of the grand coalition. However, with a determination and ideas like none other, Abdul Razak Hussein, the second Prime Minister, rebuilt the union of power-sharing by establishing the BN. The formation of the BN had a somewhat positive impact in managing ethnic conflict in Malaysia. This is because according to Horowitz, 'in an environment of ethnic conflict, there is room for only one multi-ethnic party or alliance' (1985: 410). Basically, the BN provides a venue for racially-orientated political parties (UMNO, the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC) to collaborate and reside under one roof, which is acceptable by the plural society. The 1974 general election, won by the BN with 87.7 percent of the votes (the highest in Malaysian history), is an indirect proof of the acceptance of the concept of a grand coalition government, which is the most

⁴ However, there are also clear cases where power-sharing has worked successfully in ethnically divided countries – Switzerland since 1943, Belgium since 1970, Lebanon from 1943 to 1975, Malaysia from 1955 to 1969, and a few more countries which I also regard as power-sharing cases but that are more controversial – Colombia from 1958 to 1974, and India since 1947 (Lijphart, 1999:6). Even so, there was an argument that the Barisan Nasional is not the same as the Alliance, which was the pride under the consociation model. This matter arose because according to Lijphart, Malaysia under the Alliance was democratic enough to be considered as relevant for this model. Under the Barisan Nasional, however, Lijphart says that;

Because of the limitation on the freedom of expression and the increasing political power (domination at the hands) of the Malays, it is doubtful that Malaysia after 1971 can be regarded as fully consociational (1977:153).

Similarly, an argument that was put forward by Musolf and Springer states that;

The practice of accommodative politics in Malaysia would be 'too much' Malay dominance. The Malays will carry their dominance beyond limits tolerable to other ethnic groups (1977:116).

important of the consociation devices. Under the grand coalition government, there has been willingness among the various ethnic groups to co-operate on the difficult issues dividing the ethnic communities, as evidenced in this study, the management of conflict on the allocation and appointment of ministers/Exco members. The ability to manage these conflicts also helped the BN maintain internal political stability among its components. With stability being maintained among the component parties, the BN is free to face the opposition parties. Lijphart (1968), Gerhard Lembruch (1993), Jurg Steiner (1998) and Eric Nordlinger (1972) have all deliberated on the importance of stability, which is necessary in forming a coalition and a solid democratic system. A different terminology, such as accommodative, consociational, proportional or concordant, all of which stress the aspect of stability, is used as an important basis in a country with a plural society, to ensure the smooth administration of its ethnic conflicts.

Donald Rothchild (1970:615) recommended that concepts such as compromise, bargaining, balancing, reciprocity, and cooperation be practised in order to maintain stability and integrity in a plural society. As this study shows, these elements are being explicitly applied in the BN as one of the main approaches in managing the conflicts it faces. The allocation of electoral seats is done thoroughly with each community or party getting its fair share. Likewise, the cabinet of the BN has always had representatives of the major ethnic groups. Proportionality operates in varying degrees. It operates roughly in the allocation of cabinet appointment and access to government decision-making bodies in general, in patronage posts and in the allocation of electoral seats among the component parties (Mauzy, 1983:137). As a result of the chosen approach in managing conflict, the BN has managed to achieve continuous victory in getting two-thirds majorities in all elections between 1974 and

2004. Future research should seek to further explain the factors behind the BN's ability to maintain its coalition. In view of the findings of this thesis, future research should be focused on:

- i. Further studies on the management of conflict on seat allocation and appointment of cabinet and state executive council members in other states. This is a warranted approach because every state has different political backgrounds and histories. For example, Johor is known as the 'backbone' of the BN, Perak has the biggest number of parliamentary and state legislative council seats in Peninsular Malaysia, and Selangor has the most balanced population breakdown among the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The different identities of each of these states could very well contribute to a difference in their management of conflict on seat allocation and the appointment of cabinet and state executive council members.
- ii. Comparative studies on conflict management between the BN's component parties in Peninsular Malaysia and those in Sabah and Sarawak. The choice of Sabah and Sarawak as subjects of further research is interesting because together, both these states contribute almost 25 percent (47 seats) of the seats in the House of Representatives in Malaysia. In addition, the multi-ethnicity of its people, such as the Dayaks and the Kadazans, provides a different dimension on the management of conflict on seat allocation and the appointment of cabinet and state executive council members.

The findings of these follow-up studies would further complement the answers and arguments on how the BN manages conflicts, as well as its ability to win elections and thus rule Malaysia for such a long period of time.

APPENDIX A

Brief profile of the interviewees

Interviewee	Interview date	Profile
Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed	12 July 2004	The longest-serving Prime Minister of Malaysia, holding power for 22 years (1981-2003). He was the Chairman of the Barisan Nasional (1981-2003) who went through 5 elections (1982, 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999). He had also previously held the posts of Deputy Prime Minister (1976-1981) and the Minister of Education.
Tun Ghafar Baba	21 April 2004	Deputy Primer Minister (1986-1994) and the former Secretary-General of the Barisan Nasional for 22 years from its establishment in 1974 to 1996. He was also the longest-serving UMNO Vice President for 25 years, after which he served as the Deputy President for one term before retiring from politics.
Mohammed Rahmat	10 February 2004 and 26 February 2004	Secretary-General of the Barisan Nasional (1996-2004) and former UMNO Secretary-General for 6 years. Among the cabinet posts he held was Minister of Information.
Dato' Yaacub Hj. Muhammad	3 and 25 March 2004	Current Executive Secretary to the Barisan Nasional since 1995. He is the person responsible for the fulltime administration of the Barisan Nasional.
Tan Sri Osman Arof	22 April 2004	Former Kedah Chief Minister (1984-1995) and Former Chairman of the Kedah Barisan Nasional (1985-1996). Also the Chairman of Kedah UMNO Liaison Committee for 11 years.
Abdul Rahman Ibrahim	24 March 2004	Former Secretary-General of the Kedah Barisan Nasional and former UMNO secretary (1985-1996). Held the post of Kedah State Government Council member for 14 years.
Tan Sri Azhaari Taib	30 March 2004	Former Kedah Exco member (1965-1978). A veteran UMNO fighter alongside Tunku Abdul Rahman.
Dato Shariff Hj. Omar	4 April 2004	Former Deputy Chief Minister of Penang (1995-1999). Deputy Chairman of the UMNO Liaison Committee for 4 years. Also held the post of Deputy Chairman of the Barisan Nasional at Penang state level.

Dato Ibrahim Saad	17 April 2004 and 10 Oct 2004 (London)	Former Deputy Chief Minister of Penang (1990-1995). Deputy Chairman of the UMNO Liaison Committee for 4 years. Also held the post of Deputy Chairman of the Barisan Nasional at Penang state level.
Abd Latif Mirasa	24 February 2004	Former Penang State Exco member for 6 years. Chief of UMNO Bagan Division.
Dato Bakri Ahmad	15 April 2004	Former Executive Secretary of the Kedah Barisan Nasional from 1985 to 1998.
Dr. Ling Liong Sik	24 April 2004	Former MCA President (September 1986-May 2003). A cabinet member for 16 years, mainly as Minister of Transportation.
Dr Sak Cheng Lum	21 February 2004	Chairman of MCA Penang.
Dr. Ting Chew Peng	2 April 2004	The MCA Secretary-General (1988-now). Was once the minister holding the housing and local government portfolio for 8 years. Formerly a professor of sociology at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Dr Loh Hoch Hun	19 February 2004	Penang Exco member representing MCA for 4 years from 1995 to 1999.
Lim Chein Aun	23 February 2004	Was among the controversial characters competing for Gerakan who won in the State Legislative Council election of 29 November 1999 for Bayan Lepas, but joined MCA Penang three days later. He is the son of former Penang Chief Minister, Lim Chong Eu.
Dr. Beh Heng Siong	24 February 2004	Deputy Chairman of the Kedah MCA and Kedah Exco member for 9 years from 1995 to 2004.
Yong Pau Chak	17 February 2004	Kedah Exco member and Chairman of the MCA for the Kulim Bandar Baru branch. Once held the Kedah Exco post for two terms (8 years) from 1986 to 1995.
Chong Itt Chew	2 March 2004	MCA Kedah committee member who contested as member of the Kulim State Legislative Council in 2004 and was appointed as Exco member after the election to present.
Tan Sri Koh Soo Koon	17 July 2004	Penang Chief Minister from 1995 to present. Also currently the Chairman of the Penang Barisan Nasional. He also holds the post of Vice President of Gerakan from 1995 to present.
Dr. Goh Cheng Teik	20 July 2004	Former Vice President of Gerakan. Experienced as a Deputy Minister and Penang Exco member. Was also Vice President of Gerakan for 5 years.
Lim Cheng Eng	9 Mac 2004	Executive Secretary of Penang Gerakan from 1995 to present.

Lim Kim Weng	17 February 2004	Executive Secretary of Kedah Gerakan from 1987 to present.
Dato S. Sothinathan	4 July 2004	Secretary-General of the MIC from 2001 to present. Experienced as a Parliamentary Secretary from 2004 to present.
Dato' V. Saravanan	3 July 2004	Chairman of the Kedah MIC (1987-present). Served as a Kedah Exco member for 17 years.
Dato ' Dr Rajapathy a/l Kuppusamy	14 July 2004	Chairman of the Penang MIC. Has been a member of the Perai-Penang State Legislative Council since 1999. Appointed as Penang Exco member in 2004.
Dr. Danelson	16 April 2004	Director of Yayasan Strategy Social MIC.
K.Karuppiah	18 April 2004	Former Perai MIC Youth Exco member (1997-2003).
Dr. Sanusi Osman	18 July 2005	Former secretary Party Rakyat Malaysia, Vice President Party Keadilan Malaysia
Kamaruddin Jaffar	27 July 2005	Secretary Party Islam Malaysia (PAS), Former UMNO Chief Division in Kelantan

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

The interviews are conducted in Malay/English, at a location agreed upon by the interviewee. Prior to the date of the interview, the researcher will communicate with the subjects to remind them of the interview dates and times. The researcher will also seek permission to audio-tape and/or write notes pertaining to the conversation. The interview is conducted via open-ended questions, i.e. it is an unstructured interview, which is more free-wheeling. The researcher can ask the same sort of questions as in the structured interview, but the style is free-flowing rather than rigid. Unstructured interviews do not follow a standard procedure in the administration of questions or the scoring. Questions may even vary from candidate to candidate, but the questions or statements should only be directly related to the research questions and themes reflected in the review of the literature.

Objective 1: To examine the methods and procedures applied by the BN in resolving problems of seat distribution and Exco post allocation.

Question Objective

To understand and examine the approaches and procedures applied by the BN in managing the allocation of seats and cabinet/Exco posts among its component parties.

Questions

- a. Describe your involvement in politics and your role in your party.
- b. What is the strategic vision or mission of the party as a whole in the Barisan Nasional?
- c. How are seats usually allocated among the BN's component parties during elections?
- d. How are cabinet/Exco posts usually allocated among the BN's component parties during elections?
- e. Were there changes in the approach used at every election, or was the same method used each time?

Objective 2: To determine the extent to which each level discusses, knows and gets involved in the decision-making, bargaining and negotiation processes for electoral seat allocation and Exco post allocation.

Question Objective

To gather information on who are involved in the decision-making and at which level is a person involved in the bargaining and negotiation processes within the BN.

Questions

- a. Who was involved in the development of the party's vision?
 - Were you involved?
 - Was the process limited to only a few key people or was input provided by the different parties within the Barisan Nasional?
- b. Who participates in the discussion and decision-making process in the Barisan Nasional at every stage?

Objective 3: To evaluate if there are any elements of bargaining or reward given to the parties, in the event of rejection or to compensate an unfulfilled demand.

Question Objective

To determine how often negotiation and bargaining are used in the Barisan Nasional to solve problems in seat distribution and cabinet/Exco post allocation.

Questions

- a. Do the component parties submit demands during the discussion on seat distribution and cabinet/Exco post allocation at every election?
- b. What demands are usually put forward?
- c. Does the procedure for submitting demands on the various issues help in resolving the problems of seat distribution and cabinet Exco post allocation?
- d. What if demands are not fulfilled? Will the party that made the demand be compensated if their demand was rejected?
- e. What are your views on demands made by other quarters, such as NGOs, during elections?
- f. Are tactics of reward, threat or coercion successful strategies in the Barisan Nasional?

Objective 4: To identify the challenges faced by the BN in managing conflict.

Question Objective

To understand the challenges in the conflict management structure and the mechanisms in place that are implicitly or explicitly assumed to be required for the success of the Barisan Nasional's strategic plan.

Questions

- a. What challenges are faced by the BN in handling conflicts on seat distribution and cabinet/Exco post allocation?
- b. What is the extent of the implications of these challenges on the BN in elections?

Objective 5: To identify the approaches taken by the BN in managing conflict.

Question Objective

To understand the approaches taken by the BN in managing conflicts on seat distribution and cabinet/Exco post allocation.

Questions

- a. What are the strategies used by the BN in managing conflicts on seat distribution and cabinet/Exco post allocation?
- b. What are the different approaches/styles of conflict management used by the BN in resolving the issues of seat distribution and cabinet/Exco post allocation?
- c. What are some examples of conflict management styles used by the BN?
- d. How helpful have these conflict management styles been to the BN in winning elections and forming the government during the period 1974-1999?

APPENDIX C

THE MAINS COMPONENT PARTY IN BARISAN NASIONAL

UMNO

UMNO¹ was established on 11 May 1946 following a historical meeting of the Malay Congress held at the Sultan Sulaiman Club and attended by 107 delegates from 41 Malay organisations, pioneered by Dato' Onn Jaafar² (Ishak Tadin, 1960:61). Leaders that have led UMNO since its inception are Dato' Onn Jaafar, Tunku Abdul Rahman Al-Haj, Abdul Razak Hussein, Hussein Onn, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and currently Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

In 1955, under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra in targeting the first general election, an Alliance of UMNO-MCA-MIC was formed as a symbol of consensus and close cooperation between the races. With this solid combination, the British finally agreed to grant independence to Malaya on 31 August 1957. During the leadership of Abdul Razak Hussein, UMNO actively and continuously played a part in stabilising the political scene and national administration with the creation of the Barisan Nasional. Subsequently, UMNO as leader, continued to play its part in administering the country.

¹ UMNO was not registered as a political party until April 27, 1950. The party's Malay name is Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (PKMB), but this is virtually never used. In 1970, a party spokesman reported that because of the fame and popularity of its English abbreviation, UMNO this would be retained.

² See Ahmad Fawzi Basri, Mohd. Idris Salleh & Shafee Saad., (1991), *Bumi Dipijak Milik Orang*. Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka. Kuala Lumpur.

In the history of UMNO's struggle, the date 4 February 1988 marks an unforgettable event when the party was declared illegal by the Kuala Lumpur High Court³. This happened as a result of a technical hitch that occurred during the General Assembly in 1987. Nevertheless, UMNO's struggle continued when UMNO (Baru) was registered by Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad on 13 February 1988. To this very day, UMNO is still the bastion for all the parties in the Barisan Nasional coalition, governing the country through its excellent achievements in elections. Today, UMNO is acknowledged as the biggest party, the core of national rule with the largest number of seats, its leaders involved in promulgating policies, becoming role models in the Barisan Nasional. As at 2001, UMNO has a membership of 2,915,331 (Mohammad Rahmat, 2001: 49).

MCA

During the 1950s, the Chinese community in Malaya did not have any active association representing the Chinese. Nevertheless, as a result of the efforts by Tan Cheng Lock and another Chinese political activist, Tun H.S. Lee, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was formed on 27 February 1949⁴, following consultation with Dato' Onn Jaafar (Oong Hak Ching, 2000:147).

³ Harun Hashim, the High Court Judge, had invoked Section 12(1) of the Association Act to declare UMNO as illegal and invalid by law. This section states that: "No registered association shall hereon establish a branch without prior approval from the Registrar." Section 12(3) of the same Act states that: "When a registered association establishes a branch without prior approval from the Registrar, that registered association, including its branches, is deemed illegal."

⁴ After nearly three months of discussion preparation, an inaugural meeting of the MCA was held in Kuala Lumpur. It was sponsored by the sixteen Chinese members of the Federal Council. The majority of them were prominent Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Chinese guilds and associations (huay Kuan) leaders. Among them were H.S Lee, Leong Yew Koh and Khoo Teik Ee. The Straits Chinese leaders who sponsored this meeting was Tan Cheng Lock, Tan Siew Sin, Ee Yew Kim, Dr. Lee Tiang Keng and Mrs . B.H.Oon. Tan Cheng Lock appointed chairman of the Protem Committee and the first president, Yong Shook Lin was the Secretary General and Khoo Teik Ee was treasurer (Ong Hak Ching, 2000:147). See Oong Hak Ching. (2000). *Chinese Politics in Malays 1942-1955*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Bangi., and Heng Pek Soon., (1988), *Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese Association*, Singapore: Oxford University Press.

In 1952, the MCA officially became a political organisation and was accepted by UMNO as its partner, with Tan Cheng Lock as the first President of the MCA party. The political cooperation between UMNO and the MCA in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal General Election in 1952 became the first step towards political cooperation⁵. Their victory in that general election encouraged UMNO and the MCA to meet at a round table conference in 1953, and seek the consensus of these two biggest majorities, in order to achieve independence as well as to establish an Alliance. Tun H.S. Lee was said to have played an important part in achieving the consensus between the two parties. He was also responsible for strengthening the Alliance Party. The Alliance succeeded in achieving an excellent victory in the National General Election of 1955 (*Massa*, 29 August - 4 September 1998: 28 & 38). The MCA continued to cooperate with UMNO and later, also with the MIC, to join forces in the Alliance and later in the Barisan Nasional.

Throughout its history, the MCA became one of the parties frequently confronted by leadership crises. It began with Tan Cheng Lock and Lim Chong Eu in 1952, (Vasil, 1972:4) followed by the crisis between Neo Yee Pan and Tan Koon Swan⁶, as well as between Ling Leong Sik and Lee Ah Lek (*New Strait Times*, 14 August 2003: 6). It also had frequent conflict with the Gerakan Party, which it regarded as its rival in the Barisan Nasional. Until 2001, the MCA was the second biggest party in the Barisan Nasional, with a membership totalling 884,840 (Mohammad Rahmat, 2001: 50). Among the main leaders of the MCA were Tan Siew Sin, Lee San Choon, Neo Yee Pan, Tan Koon Swan, Ling Liong Sik and currently, Ong Ka Ting.

MIC

⁵ The most adequate explanation of the sudden turn-about of the MCA must take into account the personalities of Dato Onn Jafaar and Tan Cheng Lock. Both men were very dynamic, and both possessed too much of the quality of a prima donna on the political stage to be able to work together very well. Furthermore, personal animosities had developed between them during the extended political controversies over the Malayan Union and the federation Agreement. See Oong Hak Ching. (2000). *Chinese Politics in Malays 1942-1955*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Bangi., p.190-191

⁶ See Lao Zhong., (1984), *The Struggle of The MCA*. Kuala Lumpur. Pelanduk Publication. and Teng Chew Peh & Goh Tech. (1980). *Krisis MCA: Ujian Prinsip Demokrasi*. Penerbit Abadi. Kuala Lumpur.

In August 1946, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was established as the first political party to represent the Indian community in this country, which continued to grow due to migration from the Indian continent. The first MIC President was John A. Thivy (Sellapah, 1988:3). Since becoming the MIC President in 1955, Tun Sambanthan brought many changes to the MIC as a political party. Under his leadership, the MIC became more popular and stronger. Before the 1955 general election, the MIC joined the Alliance and cooperated in the first general election. (*Massa*, 29 August - 4 September 1998: 37) As a result of its coalition with the Alliance and later, with the Barisan Nasional, the MIC won several seats in the general election. In 2001, the MIC membership reached 540,340 and among its main leaders were V.T Sambanthan, V. Manikavasagam and currently Samy Vellu ((Mohammad Rahmat, 2001: 51).

Gerakan Party

The Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN) was established on 25 March 1968, and later joined the Barisan Nasional in 1972 (Mauzy, 1983:58). This party is not communal in nature because it is composed of leaders from different groups, such as the former leader of the United Democratic Party, former members of the Labour Party and intellectuals. Its first President was Prof. Syed Hussin al-Attas. Even though the Gerakan tried to defend its stand as a non-communal party, it is still regarded as a Chinese party since the majority of its members are Chinese. The party was formed mainly because of the dissatisfaction with the Alliance government in resolving issues that arose at the time.

In the early days, Gerakan was a strong opposition party especially after it succeeded in capturing the Penang State Legislative Assembly seat in the 1969 election.

However, Gerakan later joined the Barisan Nasional in 1972, with Lim Chong Eu becoming Penang's first Chief Minister. Gerakan is now among the key parties, besides the MCA, representing the Chinese community in the Barisan Nasional. Its membership in 2001 totalled 300,000. Among its main leaders were Lim Chong Eu and currently, Dr. Lim Kheng Yik and Dr. Koh Tsu Koon ((Mohammad Rahmat, 2001: 54).

APPENDIX D

Malaysia Background

The Federation of Malaya Agreement was signed in August 1957. At the end of the month, Independence was finally achieved with Tunku Abdul Rahman as the first Prime Minister. Malaysia was formed on September 16, 1963. At that time, Malaysia comprised of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore. Singapore separated from Malaysia on August 7, 1965. Malaysia is a multi-racial country. According to the 2000 census, Malaysia has a population of 23.27 million consisting of 61.0 percent Malays, 30.0 percent Chinese, eight percent Indians and one percent of other ethnic groups. Other significant groups are the indigenous races of Sarawak and Sabah, that is, the Dayaks, Kadazans (Dusuns), Bajaus, Melanaus and Muruts; and the aborigines of Peninsular Malaysia. There are also Europeans and Eurasians.

Constitution And Separation Of Power

Malaysia practises a system of parliamentary democracy and is ruled as a Constitutional Monarchy, with His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the Head of the country. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is elected to the throne for a five-year term from one of the hereditary Rulers of the nine states in the Federation which are ruled by Sultans. The states are Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. In the other states, namely Melaka, Pulau Pinang, Sabah and Sarawak, the Head of State is the Yang di-Pertua Negeri or Governor of the State. The Yang di-Pertua Negeri is appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for a four-year term. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia clearly

divides the authority of the Federation into its Legislative Authority, Judicial Authority and Executive Authority. The separation of power occurs both at federal and state levels, as in keeping with the concept of federalism, which form the basis of the government administration.

a. Executive Authority

Executive Authority that is, the power to govern, is vested by Article 39 in the Yang di-Pertuan Agong/King but is exercised by a Cabinet of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The Cabinet is responsible to the Yang di Pertuan Agong. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is the Head of Executive Authority in the country. Every executive act of the Federal Government flows from the Royal authority, whether directly or indirectly. But, in accordance with the principle of a democratic ruling system, the Chief Executive is the Prime Minister. Therefore, in this section, emphasis is given to the role of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the government administrative machinery which has been set up to carry out the executive functions.

Prime Minister

Article 402(2[a]) of the federal Constitution assigns discretionary power to the King to appoint the Prime Minister. As the Head executive of the government, the Prime Minister is responsible to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for all government matters. The Prime Minister is appointed from the leader of the party that has a majority in the Dewan. He is also the head of the Cabinet of Ministers, where he is *primus inter pares*, the first amongst equals. As leader of the party with the most members in the Dewan Rakyat, the Prime Minister is the most important elected representative of

the people in Malaysia's democratic ruling system. The Prime Minister's main function is to preside over the Cabinet and to coordinate policies and efforts of the various portfolios in the government. The Prime Minister also has certain constitutional and statutory functions. He advises the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the appointment of Judges, the Service and Election Commissions and the filling of certain senior posts in the Civil Service. The post of Deputy Prime Minister is a conventional one (i.e. it is not established under the Constitution or any written law). The Deputy again enjoys a high measure of confidence within the Cabinet and the party, and is available to take over the administration in the event of the absence or disability of the Prime Minister.

Cabinet and Ministers

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong appoints a Cabinet (a council of Ministers) to advise him in the exercise of his functions. It consists of the Prime Minister and an unspecified number of Ministers who must all be members of Parliament (Members of the Dewan Rakyat or the Dewan Negara). The Prime Minister must be a citizen, born in Malaysia, and a member of the Dewan Rakyat (not Senator) who, in the opinion of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong commands the confidence of the majority of that House. Ministers are appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Cabinet meets regularly, generally once a week, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, to formulate the policy of the government. The Ministers hold different portfolios and are collectively responsible for all decisions made by the Cabinet, which is the highest policy-making body in the country.

b. Judicial Authority

By virtue of Article 121 (1) of the Constitution, the judicial power of the Federation is vested in the High Court of Malaya and the High Court of Borneo and in such inferior courts as provided by federal law. The Judiciary is empowered to hear and determine civil and criminal matters, and to pronounce on the legality of any legislative or executive acts. The Law also confers on it the authority to interpret the Federal and State Constitutions. The Judicial Authority of the country is vested in the Federal Court, the High Courts and Subordinate Courts. Presently, the Federal Court is the highest court in Malaysia. The Head of the Judiciary is the Lord President of the Federal Court. To enable it to perform its judicial functions impartially, the Judiciary must be independent. This means the independence of the individual Judges in the exercise of their judicial functions and the independence of the Judiciary as an institution.

c. Legislative Authority

Legislative Authority is the power to make laws and also the power to raise taxes and authorise expenditure. At Federal level, legislative power is vested in a bicameral Parliament headed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and comprises the Dewan Negara (Senate) and Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives). The Dewan Negara has 69 members, of whom 40 are nominated by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, 26 are elected by the State Legislative Assemblies and three members represent the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan. Members of the Dewan Negara are appointed for a term of 3 years in the first instance and their appointment may be extended for another term. No person shall be appointed for more than two consecutive terms. The Dewan Rakyat is fully elective and has 219 members

(election 2004). Elections for the Dewan Rakyat, where the parties with a majority form the government, must be held every five years. Each state has unicameral legislature for which elections are held every five years. The distribution of legislative power between the Federal and State Government is enumerated in the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution; and is set out in a Federal List, State List and a Concurrent List. The main subjects in the Federal List are external affairs, defence, internal security, civil and criminal law, citizenship, finance, commerce and industry shipping, communications, health and labour. The State List comprises matters such as land, agriculture, forestry, local government, riverine fishing, Muslim law, etc. In the Concurrent List, where both Federal and State Governments are, competent to legislate are subjects such as social welfare, scholarships, protection of wildlife and town and country planning.

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