

## THE DEMAND AND BARGAINING IN BARISAN NASIONAL

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**Abstract:** *This paper discusses the demand and bargaining among the races in Malaysia also the requests managed by the Barisan Nasional (BN) government through negotiation and bargaining. The main aim is to look at the role played by political parties and Chinese organizations in submitting various forms of claims against the government. For the government, to safeguard national security the demands need proper management. Interestingly, these racist claims are not only from the opposition political parties, but also from the Chinese political parties of the BN itself. The BN consists of a combination political party represent all Malaysians regardless of race, religion, tribe or ethnic group, the main party is the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). However, tracing its history, the government receives the various requests for MCA and MIC and the UMNO as an anchor party in the BN extended negotiations and bargaining. Additionally, the government should not only extend negotiations with political parties, but also from many Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Huatuan.*

**Keywords:** *Demand, Bargaining, Political Parties, Huatuan*

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### Introduction

The Perikatan (Alliance) began and grew in a situation of bargaining. The first election of 1955 has started bargaining with the distribution of seats and the selection of candidates. Similarly, the phenomenon of demand, pressure and bargaining with the component part of the Alliance also eventuated on the elections of 1959, 1964 and 1969. The demand and bargaining situation have also continued and expanded upon the BN era. For Cheah Boon Kheng (2004), bargaining remains the foundation of nation building efforts. The demand and bargaining situation have also continued and expanded on the BN era. For Cheah Boon Kheng (2004), bargaining remains the foundation of nation-building efforts. At the same time the nature of the grand coalition in the Perikatan and Barisan Nasional (BN) opens a forum for negotiation, cooperation, and coordination, but in achieving it, various requests and demands must be addressed, especially

through bargaining settlement. Nevertheless, the process of demand and bargaining also creates a conflict situation among the various races in the country and in an effort to resolve the conflict, lies in the hands of the Perikatan and the BN elites. In the Perikatan era, the foundation or the premise of the bargaining process received by all races at that time (1955-1969), was formed as an unwritten agreement when the Malays dominated politics and government, despite the Chinese played a major role in terms of economy and business. However, as the backbone of the government, UMNO is not only responsible for the interests of the Malays, but also the needs and interests in other races such as Chinese and Indian. This paper describes some demand from China political parties of the country to what degree the government extended negotiations and bargaining.

### **The National-Type Chinese School**

In addition to the issue of the drafting process of the 1957 Constitution, the issue of education and language were also involved in the arena of compromise and bargaining between the races in the Perikatan. The position of the National-Type Chinese School (NTCS) is a political and social agenda of Chinese political parties such as MCA and Gerakan. This is often the issues of the election campaign, especially since before Independence until the 1999 general election. Interestingly struggle to maintain and improve the NTCS is not only a struggle with political parties, but also by various NGOs such as Huatuan (consists of Chinese Teachers and Administrators Associations such as Dong jiao zong, Suqiu). On August 5, 1985, in efforts to strengthen the unity among the races, the government implemented Integration School Program (ISP) that is to place the national primary schools, National-type Chinese and Nation-type Tamil primary school at one area. The Chinese parties protest the establishment of the Integration School Program as its intention to wipe out the Chinese and Tamil national schools identity. Its implementation started in 1986 received great opposition to Dong Jiao Zong and Chinese political parties, MCA and Gerakan. The government extended negotiations and bargains. Finally, on November 7, 1985, the Ministry of Education came up with a compromise to replace the program with Student Integration Program for Unity that encouraged joint extra-curricular activities among students from different streams of schools (cpsps.org.my).

In the meantime, in 1987, the Ministry of Education announced that school administrators are not qualified Mandarin could also be placed in Chinese schools. This move is getting the widespread opposition to the Chinese community. The Chinese parties, MCA and Gerakan unit with Huatuan, have also received support from opposition parties like DAP and PRM, voiced protests and begged the government to stop the placement. In spite of the government extended negotiations through cabinet forums and the special committees formed in addressing this issue, UMNO Youth, supported the government and calling for action settlements continues. The conflict peaked at Malay-Chinese furthermore, this situation pushed to the threat to national security. Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad launched Operation Lalang with a series of arrests on October 27, 1987. Finally, the government instructed the school administrators that were not qualified as Chinese-type schools stopped on April 27, 1988. In the 1995 election, again the issue of Chinese-Tamil national schools, including the Vision School Program raised by MCA and Gerakan to attract Chinese support. This is due to the announcement by the Education Minister, Najib Tun Razak in August 1995 to build the Vision School in a new housing area in the Seventh Malaysia Plan beginning from 1996-2000. The idea of integration is the same step as the 1985 School Integration, which is Malay, Chinese and Indian schools will be under one roof by sharing the same facilities.

The idea to foster unity among the multiracial community, more over begin at the school level approved by the Cabinet. The Chinese community opposed the School Vision Project and manipulated by Chinese educators and Dong Jiao Zong emerged, leading opposition to this idea by prophesying that this was a government effort, especially UMNO to abolish Chinese and Tamil national schools. The DAP took advantage of this issue as trying to lure votes in the 1995 elections also this situation made MCA and Gerakan worried, especially with DAP's aggressive attitude that sought to gain popularity through the issue. In fact, Dong Jiao Zong publicly expressed support for working with the DAP in the 1995 elections, in the time Dong Jiao zong had long-established a close relationship of the MCA in championing the issues of the Chinese community.

The MCA and Gerakan were "pinched" finally enter into negotiations with Dong Jiao Zong. The government stated that the concept of Vision School can be revised or canceled, provided the Chinese voters support BN in the 1995 elections. BN won a 2/3 majority of the 1995 election, but the Vision School was only dissolved in 1999. Subsequently, the Education Bill of the Year 1995, which became the Education Act 1996, continued to worsen the Chinese and Indian communities. According to the provisions of Section 17 (1), English is the medium of instruction in all educational institutions, including the Chinese and Tamil school's exception approval from the Minister of Education. The Dong Jiao Zong leaders point out that the new act (Article 21 (2) and 26 (A) of the Education Act 1961) restricts Chinese education and calls on the Chinese community to champion and defend Chinese education. Even in such circumstances, the voices Dong Jiao Zong often heard after the Parliament endorsed the amendment. (Thock Ker Pong, 2007).

### **The Merdeka University**

The Chinese Business Association in 1967 submitted the proposed establishment of the Merdeka University, which was the same year that the Malay language recognized as a national language and the Merdeka University established by April 14, 1968. The main goal of the university is in giving students the opportunity to pursue higher education and non-racial politics. However, the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman rejected the proposal on the grounds that its establishment was purely for the Chinese and did not bring benefits to ethnic integration in the country (Thock Ker Pong, 2007). In 1969, the idea of establishing the Merdeka University appeared again and continued to flourish until the 1970s. The main aim of the Merdeka University, for the Chinese community, is also due to the denial of non-Bumiputera opportunities in public universities. The Chinese community, including the Perikatan component party, MCA fully supported this attempt and in the 1969 election, the Merdeka University became a political issue between opposition parties. However, after the May 13 May riots, the campaign was temporarily halted.

Meanwhile, the Chinese political parties raised out the issue of establishing the Merdeka University in the 1978 election campaign and again there was bargaining with the MCA and the UMNO government. Minister of Education, Musa Hitam, during the UMNO Conference in September 1978, strongly opposed the proposed establishment of the University of Merdeka because of the first, Mandarin as the medium of instruction as it contravened the National Language Act 1967 (Bahasa Melayu is the medium of instruction in public universities). Second, the Universities and University Colleges Act, 1971 the set up private universities. Thirdly, students' entry that is only open to Chinese ethics is extremely

discouraging national unity. Due to the failure to get the approval for the University Merdeka, MCA then shifted to Tunku Abdul Rahman College's (KTAR) upgrading as a university on February 24, 1969 to offer higher education opportunities to the people, especially in technical and business fields, but the college only managed to attract students from Chinese ethnicities. Finally, the Tunku Abdul Rahman University established in 1999 after the immediate insistence on the MCA and the Chinese community.

In order to realize the recommendations of the Khir Johari Report (1967), the government has established several higher educational institutions such as Institut Teknologi Mara (1967), Kolej Tuanku Abdul Rahman (1969), Universiti Sains Malaysia (1969), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (1970), Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (1971) (Sufean, 2004). These efforts coincide with the goals of the NEP is to provide opportunities for Malay students to further their studies to a higher level, especially in the field of science and technology. However, the MCA questioned the ratio of non-Bumiputra students to the public universities was lower than that of Bumiputra students. According to Lee (2006), the percentage of Malay students in public institutions of higher learning were 54.1 percent compared with Chinese students - 40.3 percent and India-5.6 percent (in 1970). MCA expressed dissatisfaction with this issue by suggesting that the ratio of 50:50 for the Bumiputra and non-Bumiputra. By the 1978 elections, the government announced that the ratio of Bumiputera and non-Bumiputras admission to public university was at 55:45. For the Prime Minister, Hussein 50:50 ratio is difficult to carry out as provisions of the Constitution gives the privilege of the Malays, including education. Nevertheless, the non-Malays were not satisfied with the quota and made an issue in the election. In addition to protests and insistence, Chinese and Indian political parties continue to raise demand and bargain with the government. Therefore, in 2001 Prime Minister Mahathir announced discontinuation of a quota system for students' entry into public universities and to proceed with a meritocracy system. Finally, the Ministry of Education decided that starting 2002/2003 academic session, admission of students to universities based on meritocracy and abolished the quota system. (Utusan Malaysia, 19 June 2003). This decision was later found to have opposition to the Malays and made a political issue by opposition parties Malay.

### **Public Sector**

Meanwhile, the public sector played an important role in developing countries like Malaysia. Prior to independence, high government officials consisted of British expatriates, but after independence was inherited by Malay bureaucrats through the Malayization program. In 1970, the number of Malayan Civil Service (MCS), also known as Administrative and Diplomatic Officer (PTD) among the Malays is 86.6 percent, at the same time the number of non-Malays did not reach 20 percent. In 1975, the percentage of Malay PTDs did not change much, at 85.6 percent and in the early 1980s. (Crouch, 1996).

According to Esman (1972), the total number of civil service members of the Malays in the early 1970s were 454 360 compared with the Chinese only 64 867. Malay domination in government services has disturbed the non-Malays. According to Agus (1992), the quota system in the civil service is the cause of conflict between Malays and non-Malays. Not surprisingly ahead of the 1982 general election, MCA urged the non-Malay number of civil servants to be upgraded. In the 1990's, the Gerakan Party demanded that the post of District Officer and Assistant District Officer normally held by the Malays be opened to the Chinese. The BN leadership at that time faced with the DAP's aggressive campaign, in the Tanjung 11 project (seized the Penang

government), made President of the Penang Municipal Council to Gerakan. In February 1992, the President of the Penang Municipal Council awarded to Gerakan's Deputy Tan Gim Hwa.

### **Re-Delineation of Electoral Boundaries**

The Chinese have questioned the way for re-delineate the electoral boundaries which said to have “greater” impact on the rural areas and this means that the Malay vote are bigger than the non-Malay vote. The 1957 Constitution provides that the imbalance in the number of voters in the constituencies does not exceed 15 percent. However, the amendment of the constitution in 1962 allowed the inequality, not to exceed 50 percent. At the same time in 1973, the drafting of the Parliamentary Act 206 abolished the matter of irregularities in the number of voters in a constituency (Crouch, 1996). According to Thock (2007), rural weight means that rural Malay votes are three times more valuable than non-Malay votes in the city. During 1973, the drafting of the Parliamentary Act 206 abolished the matter of irregularities in the number of voters in a constituency (Crouch, 1996). According to Chin Yong JL (1999), the election system in Malaysia based on the first past the post either the single-member district formula gave the BN a favor, such as in the 1990 election, BN won a 2/3 of the majority, though only 50 percent fewer popular vote.

According to Thock (2007), rural weighty means that rural Malay votes are three times more valuable than non-Malay votes in the city. Thus, MCA is demanding that the state of imbalance of rural and urban voters had to be amended and the Huatuan has given strong support. For Huatuan to restore the Chinese underrepresented in the electoral system the zoning system of constituencies must be amended. The role of government in considering a huge imbalance in terms of the number of voters among different constituencies needed. (Quoted from Thor Ker Pong, 2007). By the election of September 1999, the Chinese Association of Elections Appeals Committee (Suqiu) groups, urged the government to consider the rights of non-Malay equality with the Malays. According to Cheah Boon Kheng (2002), this includes the elimination of Malay privileges and the quota of education to achieve the vision of 2020. Suqiu represents 2095 Chinese organizations, including the United Chinese School Committees Associates of Malaysia (Dong Zong), the United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong) and The Nanyang University Alumni Association of Malaysia.

The appeals to Huatuan not only received full support from the Chinese community but also from Chinese political parties. DAP fully supports Suqiu, while MCA and Gerakan endorse the basic spirit of Suqiu and expressed their willingness to work together so the appeals be realized. In fact, MCA vice-president Ong Ka Ting believes that much of the Suqiu content accordance with the goals of the MCA (shock Ker Pong, 2007). MCA president Ling Liong Sik stated that Suqiu's matters were more appealing and non-claims. According to him, "The appeal is submitted with a feeling of inferiority and is a demand that has reasonable grounds". (Utusan Malaysia, October 14, 1999). Admitting the 83 types of demands regarded as a common claim, it is actually questioning the rights and privileges of the Malays and the social contract that exists on the various races in the country. The government concerned that they entertained the Suqiu's claim, it will invite interracial conflict, instability and threats to national security. In the meantime, the government sought to negotiate and bargain with Suqiu despite the allegation regarded as extreme and had a massive opposition to the Malays.

The Suqiu's claim was finally discussed at a Cabinet meeting on September 22, 1999, and cabinet representatives, Ling Liong Sik together with MCA, Gerakan and SUPP party leaders directed to hold talks with Suqiu Committee on September 23, 1999. Out of these discussions, the government finally accepted the memorandum Suqiu it (only the basic principles). But for the Prime Minister, Mahathir, who was so unhappy about 18 claims, described it as contrary to social contracts as enshrined in the Constitution (Zainal, 2006). The Cabinet had to serve and fulfill Suqiu's demands (just as basic principles) as the 1999 elections were approaching and the BN worried about losing votes from the Chinese (Utusan Malaysia, December 12, 2000; Flow, December 2000). However, MCA president Ling Liong Sik for the first time (after the 1999 election) openly urged Suqiu to retract their claim because it was sensitive (Utusan Malaysia, 20 December 2000).

Meanwhile, after 1990 issues with the demands from Chinese political parties and Huatuan were somewhat sluggish. This is due to Mahathir's liberalization policy on sensitive issues such as language, education, religion and culture of non-Malays. Citing, the government allowed the use of English in teaching science and technology at local universities. Second, the of Section 21 (2) of the Education Act 1961 which authorizes the Minister of Education to change the status of Chinese and Tamil national schools to national schools dissolute. Thock Ker Pong (2007) in his book *Ketuanan Politik Melayu: Pandangan Kaum Cina* underscores the reasons of influence in the 1991-1999 era deteriorate as follows:

1. The BN Government Liberation Policy.
2. A breakdown of Huatuan movement.

According to Thock, the government's liberation policy, especially after the 1990 elections, such as cultural liberation, language, education, economy, politics and so forth has succeeded in attracting Chinese support to the government, thereby reducing Huatuan's influence. Despite the demands of the 1995 and 1999 elections, it was not "as hard" as in the 1980s. Even after the reform era of 1999, Huatuan tend to fight over communal principles to non-communal, when Huatuan also obtained the support of the Malays, the Malay NGOs and political parties like PAS and Keadilan. As a major political party coalition comprising various large and small component parties, representing various races and ethnicities, the BN faces many requests for these races. To avoid conflicts the demand raised through bargaining and compromise formula and in a country of consensus democracy, BN should serve or not serve the demand of those component parties, in other words, the demand and bargaining must well organize. It is important to reduce and avoid conflicts, foster unity also understanding among the people, defend party unions, create harmony among the people moreover the stability of the country insured. According to the Prime Minister, Mahathir, the government should wisely manage the claims. This is due to the demand for a race while making other races also make various claims. In the meantime, often the demands of a race by other races will be contested (Mohd Fitri, 2012). Apparently, most request voices to ahead of elections as a consequence the election results to depend on how the government serves these demands.

## **Conclusion**

In fact, demand and bargaining also to arise as a result of competition between component parties, each demanding to accentuate themselves as a hero for their race and this usually occurs to the MCA with the Gerakan. The MCA party, which together with UMNO founded the

Alliance, wanted to be seen as the only party that could represent and champion the fate of the Chinese in this country. Gerakan, meanwhile, joined BN in 1974, which actually is not a racist party, but to attract voters, trying to be the hero of the Chinese. Thus, to attract the support of the Chinese, MCA, and Gerakan, raises various issues and make requests for the sake of the BN-led UMNO. Meanwhile, demand from communities for the benefit and interests of those in the country, not only channeled through political parties, even into NGOs. Basically, NGOs are not a political body, but looking at the situation, some NGOs often urge certain matters that need political solutions, especially ahead of elections. Indeed, when there is demanding and a bargain, too often the opposition parties to intervene, manipulating the issue regarded as racist. However, the inter-ethnic demand and bargaining bearing lies in the wisdom of the BN élite to control and manage it in order not to trigger racial conflict. In practice, the BN by of consensus and power-sharing is always received and listened to every request made. The BN evaluates every request, deliberated at the BN Supreme Council or in other forums. BN always had to ensure harmony among the component parties, won the trust of the peoples, win the next election and continue to rule the country.

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