

Abashidze's party – the Union of Democratic Revival – won 47.6% of the vote, with the National Movement-Democratic bloc winning 44.3%. For the first time, Abashidze's party failed to clear the 7% national threshold, gaining parliamentary representation only through victories in six single mandate constituencies. This 'defeat' was of major significance, for the first time signaling popular discontent with Abashidze. With his political invincibility undermined, six weeks later – on 5th May – Abashidze fled to Moscow.

8. Conclusion

The parliamentary election consolidated President Saak'ashvili's power, giving him virtual control over both executive and legislative agendas. The opposition was decimated, in part discredited by its vacillation during the November 'rose revolution'. The parliamentary election also completed the transformation of the political landscape in Georgia, with formerly dominant parties such as the Union of Democratic Revival, the Civic Union of Georgia, the National Democratic Party, and the Labour Party either crushed or on the road to political oblivion. At the same time, the election results show the continuing weakness of political parties and parliamentarianism in Georgia. Leaders, heroes, and action, rather than parties, grassroots activity, and ideology, are still the stuff of Georgian politics. Georgian parties have little organizational capacity or clear political programmes that can sustain support from political constituencies. If Saak'ashvili were to abandon the National Movement-Democratic bloc, it too would soon find itself in the political wilderness.

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The federal and state elections in Malaysia, March 2004

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Less than five months after Mahathir Mohamad retired as Prime Minister of Malaysia, his successor Abdullah Badawi dissolved the Parliament on 4 March and went on to win a landslide victory in the polls on 21 March, 2004. Whilst Mahathir's

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22 years of authoritarian rule had blocked the wind of democratization from sweeping through one of Southeast Asia's most vibrant economies, Abdullah's liberal and reformist appeal has revitalized the 49 years of the ruling National Front's (*Barisan Nasional*, BN) predominance.¹

1. The electoral system

The federal parliament is bicameral, but only the lower house is elected.² All 219 members are elected in single-member plurality constituencies for a maximum term of five years. The constitution allows for an unrestrained 'measure of weightage' in favour of 'rural constituencies', which has been exploited for malapportionment, resulting in the larger constituencies now having electorates 5–20 times the size of smaller ones. Of Malaysia's 16 regional units, 13 states have unicameral legislatures whose members are elected under the same system. The state constituencies are delimited by the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies, which, in turn, are the boundaries of the states.

While the state governments are free to dissolve their assemblies at any time, in most states the federal and state elections are held at the same time. The BN's machinery has always been centralized, with the prime minister heading the national campaign and the chief ministers leading the campaign in their respective states, for both parliamentary and assembly contests. The two state governments run by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), an opposition party at the federal level, would want to avoid holding separate elections, largely to deter intensive campaign by the BN.

At the 2004 elections, 505 state seats (MLAs) were open for contest in 12 states alongside the 219 federal seats. The exceptions were in Sarawak, where the last state election was held in 2001, and three federal territories that do not have elected bodies. The focal point of the 2004 elections was control of the state governments in Kelantan and Terengganu, the only two ruled by PAS.

2. Main contenders

The *Barisan Nasional* (BN) consists of 14 parties, big and small, which present their candidates on a single slate, with a common party logo in each constituency. In reality, 90% of the electorate live in constituencies where the BN assigns the electoral contest to four of these parties: the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and another Chinese-based party, *Gerakan*. The strength of these parties since 1990 *vis-à-vis* their electoral rivals is shown in Table 1. The nine parties in East Malaysia are much less important due to the size of their electorates and fragmentation within the parties.

¹ In Malaysia, Muslims are referred to by their first name, not their 'family' name.

² The upper house consists of 26 members appointed by the 13 states' legislatures and 44 members by the Federal King. In practice, it is used by the ruling coalition to place fading or second-ranking politicians, as well as a back-door to appoint ministers from amongst unelected technocrats or defeated candidates.

Table 1
Vote percentages of major parties in contested constituencies, 1999–2004

Parties	Percentages			
	1990	1995	1999	2004
BN Overall	55.4	65.4	56.5	63.9
Major BN Parties				
UMNO	59.2	68.2	55.6	65.2
MCA	48.9	63.6	56.9	62.3
MIC	60.0	72.8	57.9	64.2
Gerakan	46.8	68.1	51.1	58.6
Opposition Overall	44.6	34.6	43.5	36.2
Major Opposition Parties				
PAS	41.7	27.5	46.6	35.4
S46	39.9	27.4		
Keadilan-PRM ^a			38.8	29.4
DAP	47.6	36.3	42.4	40.1
PBS ^b	61.7	28.8	38.7	

Sources: Election Commission Malaysia (1992, 1997, 2002); Government of Malaysia (2004).

^a PRM contested on its own ticket up to 1999. Its vote in 1999 and 2004 is calculated here together with *Keadilan*'s vote because they generally represent the third alternative besides UMNO and PAS (as S46 was in 1990 and 1995) for Malay voters.

^b PBS rejoined BN in 2002.

Given the Malays' demographic strength and nativist claims, UMNO has asserted its dominance in the Alliance Party since its formation, which was based on a coalition with MCA and MIC in 1954, in pre-independence Malaya (West Malaysia). UMNO's hegemony grew after the 1969 ethnic riots, which led to the expansion of Alliance into BN in 1974. Considering the vast inequality of size (and division of electoral labour) amongst BN's members, challenges to the coalition as a whole can be disentangled as challenges to individual blocs of BN's member parties: in 2004, UMNO stood in 53% of federal seats, its West-Malaysian non-Malay partners in 28% of seats, and its East-Malaysian partners in 19% of seats.

The prime challenger to the ethno-nationalist UMNO is the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), which gains from UMNO's infighting. It has captured two states, Kelantan in 1990 and Terengganu in 1999, thanks to the 1987 showdown between Mahathir and Tengku Razeleigh, a Kelantanese prince, followed by the 1998 wave of '*reformasi*' (reform) evoked by Mahathir jailing his once heir-apparent Anwar Ibrahim. Standing in over 40% of the seats in the 2004 election (an all-time high), PAS vows to expand to other states while UMNO hopes to recover the two north-eastern states, which are geographically and economically peripheral.

The main challenger to UMNO's non-Malay/non-Muslim partners, especially MCA, MIC, *Gerakan*, and the Sarawak United People Party (SUPP), is the Democratic Action Party (DAP). The DAP opposes both Malay ethno-nationalism and the zest for Islamisation that underlies UMNO-PAS rivalry. The party had its hey-day as the voice of the economically and culturally alienated minorities from 1970s up to the electoral setbacks in 1995 and 1999. In 2004, DAB contested about 22% of the federal seats.

Trying to take on UMNO and its non-Malay partners in 30% of constituencies, mostly ethnically-mixed seats, is the People Justice Party (*Parti Keadilan Rakyat*,

Keadilan). This new-kid-on-the-block is predominantly Malay but rhetorically multi-ethnic, seeking to differentiate itself from PAS and DAP. Formed in 1999 by Anwar's supporters, the party was led by his wife Wan Azizah. Having won only 5 seats in the 1999 election, and suffering from state suppression, the party has lost a number of leaders and supporters since then. For *Keadilan*, the 2004 election was largely a struggle for survival. Its merger in 2003 with the *Parti Rakyat Malaysia* (PRM),³ a long-time leftist party but unrepresented in parliament since 1964, does help little to boost its electoral fortunes in the short run.

The BN is almost unchallenged in East Malaysia, where a quarter of the federal parliament's seats are allocated. This is particularly the case since the return of *Parti Bersatu Sabah* (PBS) to BN's fold in 2002 after languishing in opposition for 12 years. The opposition parties tried to cooperate but did so inadequately, resulting in 7 multi-corner fights between PAS/*Keadilan* and DAP, as well as 14 walkover victories for BN.

3. The main issues

In term of issues, the 2004 election was an extension of the 1999 election. The two issues major then were *reformasi* and the Islamisation of Malaysia, at both state and federal level. *Reformasi* was very much a response to Mahathir's rule which was characterised by authoritarianism, cronyism, and mega construction projects – such as the world-famous Twin Towers, the largest airport in the region, and a multi-media super corridor – alongside economic development and societal modernization. While rapid economic growth has reduced the salience of Malay/non-Malay redistributive politics, intra-ethnic disparities are growing amongst the Malays.

Islamisation has become an increasingly important cleavage in regulatory politics since 1980s. Along with language and culture, Islam as the religion of the Malays has always been part of the Malay nationalist agenda of homogenizing the multi-ethnic populace, which informs the traditional Malay/non-Malay cleavage on cultural matters. Growing political pluralism amongst the Malays, following modernization, has increased the calls for Islamisation not only of society at large but also of the Malay-Muslims themselves. PAS aggressively advocates the establishment of an Islamic state and penal codes, denouncing as un-Islamic UMNO's nationalist, pragmatic, and materialist approach. Mahathir had responded by co-opting Anwar Ibrahim, the most prominent Islamist, and his followers into government in 1982 to step up UMNO's modernist Islamisation project.

For UMNO and to a lesser extent PAS, the Islamisation agenda is a fine calculation of maximizing Malay-Muslim support but not going so far as to alienate the non-Muslim and liberally-inclined voters where pivotal. In this sense, due to its power-sharing with non-Malay parties in BN and being seen as the more moderate force, UMNO has always had the upper hand *vis-à-vis* PAS. With BN loosening its control

³ The process was not legally completed before the election but the few PRM leaders who stood in the election did so under *Keadilan*'s slate. For the analysis in Table 1, the vote share of *Keadilan* and PRM in 1999 is combined for comparison with 2004 although the PRM candidates stood alone in 1999.

on language and cultural matters in the 1990s, the threat of Islam fundamentalists has become more pronounced for non-Muslims and the liberal minded.

In 1999, although the *reformasi* wave was dominant, Islamisation was an undercurrent at work. In the regional mood of regime change following the East Asian financial crisis, Anwar's attack on corruption and cronyism won popular support; so did his sacking as deputy prime minister in September 1998 by Mahathir, who was not ready to step down. Anwar was subjected to fabricated charges and orchestrated trials for sodomy, which evoked an unprecedented rebellion amongst the Malay population. This led to the formation of *Keadilan*, which joined forces with PAS, DAP, and PRM to form the Alternative Front (*Barisan Alternatif*, BA) in the hope of creating a two-coalition system.

Reformist and Islamist appeals proved to be a winning formula in mostly Malay-majority constituencies in the 1999 election, making PAS the largest opposition party with 27 MPs and in control of two state governments. On the other hand, DAP failed to recover its lost ground in Chinese-majority constituencies, returning only 10 MPs. Many Chinese were weary of political instability and the rise of political Islam associated with PAS and Anwar. Similarly, *Keadilan* did not gain enough non-Malay support to break through in relatively heterogeneous constituencies. Four of its five MPs were elected in PAS-controlled Kelantan and Terengganu; the fifth was Wan Azizah who defended her husband's seat.

The outcome of the 1999 election soon undid the BA project. Seeing the hope of being in power, PAS tried to attack Mahathir's administration from all angles. While appealing to non-Malays with socio-economic and cultural policies that were more liberal than those of UMNO, PAS's main strategy was to outdo UMNO in Islamisation by introducing religious legislation and theocratic policies in Kelantan and Terengganu. Before PAS succeeded in transforming *reformasi* support for the Islamist cause, its theocratic programme, coupled with occasional sexist comments, became a vote-loser amongst non-Muslims, liberals, and women. Whilst *Keadilan*'s original aim was to be the arbiter between PAS and DAP, it was too small to do the job. To save itself from further electoral setbacks, DAP pulled out from BA in September 2001.

The disarray, if not disorientation of the opposition, together with GDP growth of some 5–6%, allowed the media to represent the 2004 elections as about only two issues: Abdullah and moderate Islam. Hence, the issue of reform, which was once a choice between Mahathir and Anwar, became, in effect, a referendum on Abdullah as Mahathir's successor. The oppositions' obsession with attacking Mahathir allowed 'Mahathirism' (a nationalist blend of authoritarianism and capitalism) versus reform to be turned into a valence issue; the difference between BN and the opposition became less their position on reform but their ability to deliver it. With Mahathir's retirement, hatred of the 'great tyrant' since 1998 found no focal point in 2004; rather, the issue was whether the new prime minister, Abdullah Badawi, should be given support to tackle the corruption, extravagance, and authoritarianism of Mahathir's government. The public appetite for accountability was easily satisfied without institutional reform; as illustrated by Abdullah's anti-graft campaign, the prosecution of two high-profile corruption suspects in Mahathir's era was enough.

With his credentials as an Islamic graduate, Abdullah re-packaged UMNO's modernist Islam into '*Islam Hadhari*' (progressive Islam) without evoking hostile reactions from Muslims or non-Muslims. He neither engaged, nor engages, in high profile attacks on PAS, nor repeats Mahathir's Machiavellian declaration – known as '929' – that, as Malaysia is already an Islamic state, PAS's proposals are irrelevant. Indeed, PAS is not alone in finding it hard to attack the soft-spoken fatherly figure of Abdullah; DAP's election slogan 'No 929' has also lost its relevance.⁴

4. Electoral administration

The election was carried out peacefully and calmly. However, without a level playing campaigning field, voters' options were limited. In addition to the shortest campaign period of only eight days, the opposition's campaign was further cramped by police restrictions and no airtime. In contrast, the incumbent's campaign used state resources long before the dissolution of parliament. The opposition accused the BN of bribing candidates to withdraw after nominations,⁵ which resulted in a BN walkover in three parliamentary seats and six state seats.

The major stain on the election was the chaos on polling day in the 17 parliamentary constituencies of Selangor. Many voters there had to visit several polling stations or queue for hours before they could find their names on the electoral roll. Hence, some voters were disenfranchised or gave up trying to vote. In some constituencies, polling was controversially extended for two hours to make up for these delays. While the accuracy of the electoral rolls has always been contentious, the chaos is widely believed to be the result of the Election Commission using 'updated' electoral rolls different from the authoritative copies. Although an enquiry into the chaos was carried out, the report was not made public. Moreover, the number of election appeals filed in court reached a record high, with PAS alone filing 23 cases. In only one case did the court rule in favour of the petitioner, declaring UMNO instead of PAS the winner in the Kelantan constituency of Pasir Puteh.

The provisional results released by the Electoral Commission show a high number of unreturned ballots in some constituencies – exceeding 10,000 in two constituencies – suggesting instances of ballot stuffing, ballot discarding, or tampering with the numbers. The official results published in April changed the data in at least 33 constituencies. While the changes may be simply due to data entry errors, it does not help public confidence. Nonetheless, despite irregularities, the election results should reflect at least the trend, if not faithfully the extent, of popular choices.

⁴ Mahathir made his declaration on September 29, 2001. The slogan 'No to 929' was intended as a rejection of Mahathir's declaration. DAP urged non-Muslim voters to reject BN's non-Malay parties that had been quietly and embarrassingly supporting Mahathir's tactical claim; instead DAP has tried to represent itself as the only credible voice against the Islamisation moves of UMNO and PAS. The slogan has also embarrassed *Keadilan*, which was less vocal in criticizing PAS's theocratic inclinations.

⁵ This was made possible by a new rule allowing candidates to withdraw within three days of nominations closing. If the withdrawal results in no contestation, the only remaining candidate is declared the winner with no poll held.

Table 2
Changes in parliamentary representation, 1999–2004

Parties	1999	% seats	2004	% seats	Change	% change
BN	148	76.7	199	90.9	51	14.2
PAS	27	14.0	6	2.7	–21	–11.3
DAP	10	5.2	12	5.5	2	0.3
Keadilan	5	2.6	1	0.5	–4	–2.1
PBS ^a	3	1.6				
Independents	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.5
Total seats	193	100.0	219	100.0	26	
ENPP	1.64		1.21		–0.43	

Sources: Government of Malaysia (2004); Election Commission Malaysia (2002).

^a PBS rejoined BN in 2002.

5. Election results

In the federal election, with 202 of 219 seats being contested, about 94.8% of the adult population electorate was eligible to vote.⁶ The turnout was 73.5%, slightly higher than the 72.9% turnout in 1999.

BN emerged as the biggest winner with 63.9% of the vote and 90.9% of seats, a rise of 7.4 and 14.2 percentage points, respectively, on its position in 1999. For the first time, UMNO alone now enjoys a majority in the lower house, albeit a bare majority. The opposition parties suffered disastrous defeats. PAS's representation fell from 14% to 3%, was greatly reduced in Kelantan and Kedah, and completely wiped out elsewhere. Not even its president, the outgoing parliamentary opposition leader, kept his seat. *Keadilan*'s delegation was reduced from five MPs to one: the president herself, who won a slim majority. Only DAP made a moderate gain of two seats, recovering ground in Perak and Sarawak but being wiped out in Malacca (see Table 2).

With the single-member plurality system in operation, some 35% of valid votes were wasted. Translated into party representation, the oppositions' voters are so under-represented that the 'worth' of a BN voter is matched only by three DAP voters, seven PAS voters, or 28 *Keadilan* voters. This is partly the result of the new constituency boundaries drawn in 2002, which exacerbated malapportionment and gerrymandering. Had BN's seat-vote advantage remained at the 1995 level, BN would have won only 82% of seats (18 fewer). The number of women MPs increased from 20 to 22, but their proportion parliamentary seats fell from 11% to 10%.

In the state elections, BN recaptured Terengganu, almost toppled the PAS government in Kelantan, weakened PAS's representation in the Perlis and Kedah's legislatures, and wiped it out in Perak, Selangor, and Pahang. *Keadilan* lost all four

⁶ The remaining 5.2% of voters lived in the 17 uncontested federal constituencies. Thus, in 2004, the percentage of electors disenfranchised due to no contest reached an unprecedented high (0.4% in 1990, 3.6% in 1995, 0.2% in 1999). While the growth of uncontested seats generally reflects BN's popularity and poor coordination among the opposition, the new electoral rule allowing for 'post-nomination withdrawal' is not inconsequential: a total of 94,270 voters (0.9%) in three federal constituencies could not exercise their vote due to candidate withdrawals among the opposition.

Table 3
Seats and votes in parliamentary and state elections, Malaysia 2004

State	Parliament					State			
	BN	PAS	DAP	Keadilan	Others	BN	PAS	DAP	Others
F.T. Kuala Lumpur	7		4						
F.T. Labuan	1								
F.T. Putrajaya	1								
Johor	26					55	1		
Kedah	14	1				31	5		
Kelantan	9	5				21	24		
Malacca	6					26		2	
Negri Sembilan	8					34		2	
Pahang	14					41		1	
Penang	8		4	1		38	1	1	
Perak	21		3			52		7	
Perlis	3					14	1		
Sabah	24				1	59			1
Sarawak	27		1						
Selangor	22					54		2	
Terengganu	8					28	4		
Total	199	6	12	1	1	453	36	15	1
Uncontested seats	17								
Seat Share (%)	90.9	2.7	5.5	0.5	0.5				
Vote Share (%)	63.9	15.2	9.9	8.9	2.1				
Seat/Vote Ratio	1.42	0.18	0.55	0.05	0.22				
Turnout ^a						73.5%			
Invalid Votes						2.4%			
Wasted Votes						35.0%			

Sources: Government of Malaysia (2004); <http://www.thestar.com.my>.

^a Changes in seat and party vote shares following the Election Court's decision (June 23) on Pasir Putih are incorporated in the table. However, the Election Commission declined to disclose whether the numbers of rejected votes and unreturned ballots have changed. The turnout is calculated here assuming no change in rejected votes.

state seats won in 1999. DAP made moderate gains in Perak and Selangor but lost ground in Malacca. BN now holds all but one state government (see Table 3).

6. The broader political context

At a glance, UMNO-BN's predominance is strengthened, with the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) falling from 1.64 to 1.21. But an examination of the major parties' electoral strength (see Table 1), measured as the percentage of votes in contested constituencies⁷ in the last 15 years, suggests a cyclical pattern. The BN's electoral downturns in 1990 and 1999 were the result of

⁷ The conventional measure of national vote share is misleading as it is determined by, amongst other things, the percentage of seats a party contests. For example, PAS's national vote share rose in 2004 despite fading support simply because it contested more seats.

UMNO's power struggle, which led to the rise of new parties. In particular, it led to the appearance of Tengku Razaleigh's 46 Spirit Party (*Semangat 46*, S46) and Anwar's *Keadilan*, which then brought together PAS and DAP. The break-up of the opposition fronts in the 1995 and 2004 elections saw BN rebounds.

Despite the phenomenal sea-change in Malay and Malaysian politics prior to 1990 and 1999, no voter realignment has taken place. Even so, voters' desertion of BN was larger in 1999 than in 1990, whilst their return to BN was less marked in 2004 than in 1995. Having said that, we should be cautious about inferring any particular pattern in the next election. With Anwar Ibrahim now cleared of the sodomy charge and freed by the court on 2 September, the sixth anniversary of his sacking, Malaysian politics is full of new possibilities.

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South Africa's third post-apartheid election, April 2004

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The third post-apartheid national and provincial elections in South Africa coincided with the celebration of a decade of democracy. The announcement of the election date on 9 February triggered the dissolution motions in the national and

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