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The 1995 Malaysian general election

Reaffirmation of Barisan Nasional dominance

Hari Singh

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In 1995, the Barisan Nasional (BN) attained its greatest electoral victory ever when it won four-fifths of the parliamentary and state assembly seats as well as the popular vote. Its success is all the more significant given that the coalition was plagued by political and financial scandals and intra-party divisions. While a bustling economy, the advantage of incumbency and an ineffectual opposition may have contributed to its spectacular performance, a more coherent explanation would focus on the shift in majority Chinese support from the opposition to the BN in response to the significant concessions made by the Malay-based government to the Chinese community. These concessions symbolized a strategic adjustment to the national agenda, and were motivated partly by the BN's concern with its eroding political hegemony, but also by the immediate interests of Malay political elites.

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