Towards a New Malaysia?

Towards a New Malaysia?

The 2018 Election and Its Aftermath

Edited by
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Acknowledgements

This book had its genesis in discussions between the two editors, starting well before Malaysia's 14th general election, about the impending, sure-to-be-significant event and our shared interest in gathering together smart people to talk and write about it, ideally in a way that might help move the conversation on Malaysian politics forward. We started to line up potential participants and contributors as we waited for the big day. Having planned the project so far in advance of the election, we neither knew nor (frankly) expected what the outcome would be. The project suddenly became even more interesting!

One week after the 9 May general election, we organized a workshop at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia). Our aim was to put together a book examining the historic general election—one that would go beyond simply recounting what happened and where (however important that task also is), to try to tease out trends, patterns, and implications for Malaysia and for our theories of how politics works. All but two of the chapters in this book (Chapter 6 by Ross Tapsell and Chapter 9 by David Kloos) originated in that preliminary workshop. We are very grateful to IKMAS for hosting and to our participants, who came together before the dust had even fully settled after the election to present sketches of their proposed chapters for feedback, then worked diligently to hone their analyses and deliver their manuscripts unusually efficiently, despite busy schedules. It has been a pleasure working alongside each of them. Our thanks, too, to Francis Loh Kok Wah, former professor of political science at Universiti Sains Malaysia, who participated in our post-election workshop and who contributed valuable suggestions to help guide the authors as they developed their chapters, and to E. Terence Gomez, professor of political economy at Universiti Malaya, who joined the two editors in a related pre-workshop public forum hosted by the University of Nottingham Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur campus.

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Our sincere thanks also to NUS Press—particularly the two anonymous reviewers of the volume, and to director Peter Schoppert and his predecessor Paul Kratoska. We appreciate not just their strong support for the volume, but also their constructive input into how to make it better and their efforts to bring the book into the world as efficiently as possible.

Acronyms and Glossary

1MDB	1Malaysia Development Berhad
ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia
Amanah	Parti Amanah Negara, National Trust Party
APU	Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, Muslim Unity Front
BA	Barisan Alternatif, Alternative Front
Bersatu	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, Malaysian United Indigenous Party (also PPBM)
BN	Barisan Nasional, National Front
BNYV	Barisan Nasional Youth Volunteers
BR1M	Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia, 1Malaysia People's Aid
Bumiputera	'Sons of the soil'; Malays and members of other groups indigenous to Malaysia
CA	Cambridge Analytica
Ceramah	Political speech or rally
DAP	Democratic Action Party
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FMA	First-mover advantage
FPTP	First-past-the-post
Gagasan	Gagasan Rakyat, People's Might
GE14	14th General Election
Gerakan	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, Malaysian People's Movement Party
GHB	Gerakan Harapan Baru, New Hope Movement
GPS	Gabungan Parti Sarawak, Coalition of Sarawak Parties *or* Gerakan Pengundi Sedar, Conscious Voter Movement
GS	Gagasan Sejahtera, Ideas of Prosperity
GST	Goods and services tax
Hudud	Criminal punishments under *sharia*
IIUM	International Islamic University of Malaysia
IKD	Institut Kajian Dasar, Institute for Policy Research
Ikram	Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia, Ikram Association of Malaysia
IKSIM	Institut Kajian Strategik Islam Malaysia, Islamic Strategic Studies Institute of Malaysia

IRC	Islamic Representative Council
ISMA	Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia, Muslim Solidarity Front
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, Malaysian Department for the Advancement of Islam
JIM	Jamaah Islah Malaysia, Society for Islamic Reform
KDM	Kadazan Dusun Murut
Keadilan	Parti Keadilan Rakyat, People's Justice Party; previously Parti Keadilan Nasional, National Justice Party (also PKR/PKN)
Kesatuan	Student Union of Malaysia
KSJT	Komunite Seni Jalan Telawi, Telawi Street Arts Community
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MEGC	Middle Eastern Graduate Centre
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
NEP	New Economic Policy
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party
PBB	Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, United Bumiputera Heritage Party
PBS	Parti Bersatu Sabah, Sabah United Party
PH	Pakatan Harapan, Alliance of Hope
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat, People's Justice Party (also Keadilan)
PPBM	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, Malaysian United Indigenous Party (also Bersatu)
PR	Pakatan Rakyat, People's Pact
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia, Malaysian People's Party
PSM	Parti Sosialis Malaysia, Malaysian Socialist Party
PTPTN	Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional, National Higher Education Fund Corporation
RUU355	Bill to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965
Solidariti	Parti Solidariti Tanah Airku Rakyat Sabah, Homeland Solidarity Party (also STAR)
STAR	State Reform Party (predecessor to Solidariti)
Sharia	Islamic law (also *syariah*)
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UPKO	United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation
Ustaz/ustazah	Religious teacher or preacher
Warisan	Parti Warisan Sabah, Sabah Heritage Party
YADIM	Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia, Islamic Missionary Foundation of Malaysia

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Towards a New Malaysia?

Meredith L. Weiss and Faisal S. Hazis

Malaysia's 14th general election (GE14), held on 9 May 2018, was noteworthy both for its conduct and for its result. After over six decades' control since independence in 1957, Malaysia's ruling coalition, the Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) lost its grip on Parliament and control of nearly all state governments. In its place, a new coalition—Pakatan Harapan (Pakatan or PH, Alliance of Hope)—came into power, backed most importantly also by the state-based Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan, Sabah Heritage Party).[1] Any number of factors played a role in shaping voters' choices, both building support for Pakatan and whittling it away from the BN. These ranged from anger at BN rent-seeking and resentment against incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak, to frustration with rising living costs, concern for communal or regional rights and privileges, the yen for a more Islamist order, the respective parties' records of governance and generosity, and a simple desire for change. That key parties fragmented on both sides also mattered—most importantly, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), lead party in the BN, and Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) each gave rise to offshoots after internal rifts, as described below (see also the chapters here especially by Suffian and Lee, and Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan). Any number of factors moulded how those choices aggregated and translated into seats, from gerrymandered constituency boundaries, to an atypical midweek polling day, to the vagaries of first-past-the-post voting rules (see Wong Chin Huat's chapter). There can be no easy answer, in other words, to the question of either why BN lost or why Pakatan won. Regardless, particularly at a time of both regional and global democratic regression (Parameswaran 2018) or recession (Diamond 2015) and authoritarian backsliding, Malaysia seems to

be moving in the opposite direction, having taken the first step from electoral authoritarianism toward possible democratic transition. This progression is undeniably momentous and worthy of study.

How the campaign transpired, as much as the distribution of votes, offers a wealth of insight into Malaysian political culture and praxis. To what extent was this outcome simply an intensification of past patterns, and how much a change of course? Was Pakatan's win a sign that communal politics is weakening, or that it remains strong? Can new modes and strategies of campaigning change political outcomes? These findings are especially germane when considered in a longer-term context, across regions and population segments within Malaysia, and in light of experience in other countries. In this volume, we aim to do just that: not only to understand what happened, but why, and what the implications are both for Malaysia and for theory-development, whether of the decline of single-party dominance, or of cross-ethnic coalitions, or of the mutability of political Islam, or of how candidates and voters balance competing priorities and pressures. As the chapters gathered here suggest, this election is particularly meaningful for how we study and assess Malaysian politics going forward, but it also sheds light on how a dominant party may lose its edge.

Overview of the Election

The chapters to come offer a comprehensive dive into the data of this federal and state election: all the ways to slice and dice the results. (Suffian and Lee's chapter in particular offers more detailed results, by state and key voter-segments.) However, before we get to that point, a brief sketch of the cast of characters, key dates, preeminent themes, and overarching context will be helpful. Incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak waited about as long as possible before calling the election; parliament dissolves five years after its convening if an election has not already been called (this time: 24 June 2018). Held after a brief campaign (kicked off officially with Nomination Day on 28 April), the election was for the lower house of the federal parliament and 12 of 13 state legislatures; the East Malaysian state of Sarawak has elected its state legislature separately since 1978. Sarawak's state election in 2016 had confirmed the BN's grip on the biggest state in Malaysia. In GE14, however, the incumbent BN secured only about 34 per cent of the popular vote and 79 seats in the federal parliament. Pakatan Harapan won 113 seats, with 48 per cent of the vote, and the affiliated Warisan in Sabah won another 8 seats, with 2 per cent of the vote. Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, the Pan-Malaysian

Islamic Party) won 18 seats, with 17 per cent of the vote. Independents in Sarawak won 3 seats and Parti Solidariti Tanah Airku Rakyat Sabah (Solidariti or STAR, the Sabah-based Homeland Solidarity Party) won one seat.

Not long after the polls, five UMNO legislators left the party; four became independent lawmakers and one jumped to Pakatan. With BN's defeat the coalition nearly collapsed: only the founding partners in the pre-BN Alliance—the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)—stayed in the coalition. None of the parties that left had won seats in Peninsular Malaysia, but their hiving off in Sabah and Sarawak, forming state-specific blocs, mattered more. Meanwhile, at the head of the new government was a man who had substantially forged the system he now supplanted: Mahathir Mohamad, formerly UMNO's longest-serving prime minister (1981–2003) and key architect of innovations from Malaysia's far-reaching preferential policies to the policies of its developmentalist heyday. The plan was, though, that Anwar Ibrahim, de facto, then soon official, leader of Pakatan member Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, People's Justice Party) would take over in around two years from Mahathir—who at the time of the election, was a remarkably hale 92 years old.

While few predicted the BN's loss, the popular vote was a complete surprise to no one—it tracked fairly closely the result in the previous general election in 2013, GE13. (Indeed, in his chapter, Johan Saravanamuttu suggests this outcome and others to be essentially path-dependent.) That year, the opposition coalition won about the same percentage of the popular vote (50.7 per cent), but only three states (Kelantan, Penang, and Selangor) and a minority share of parliamentary seats (89 of 222); in 2008, the same parties had together won five states (Kedah, Kelantan, Penang, Selangor, and—ephemerally—Perak) and, for the first time, denied BN a two-thirds majority in Parliament. That Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Pact) coalition, formed out of 2008's electoral pact, was somewhat differently constituted from Pakatan Harapan. PAS was part of it, together with PKR and the Democratic Action Party (DAP); PR was itself a reworking of an earlier coalition, 1999's Barisan Alternatif.[2] PAS exited PR in 2015, amid heated debates over a PAS proposal to allow states to buttress punishments under *sharia* law and extend them to criminal cases. As Hew Wai Weng details in his chapter, a splinter party, Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, National Trust Party), allied with DAP and PKR in Pakatan Harapan and was joined later by Mahathir's Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu, Malaysian United Indigenous Party), which he and other UMNO exiles launched in late 2016. Whereas the original Pakatan baseline was a noncommunal (or less-communal), justice-oriented politics, Bersatu advocated for Malays' special

status and rights; the prevailing assumption was that Bersatu, and Mahathir specifically, could reassure rural Malay voters in particular that they would not lose their race-based privileges under a new regime (see Faisal Hazis's chapter).

What made the outcome of GE14 potentially predictable were several of the issues galvanizing voters. Looming especially large was Najib himself: he and his wife were embroiled in Malaysia's largest corruption scandal to date, centred around the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) sovereign wealth fund. Other corruption sagas also dampened support for the BN; most salient, considering whose vote changed, seems to have been a botched initial public offering of FELDA Global Ventures, a plantation operator built on the holdings of rubber and oil palm smallholders under the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA). Meanwhile, as Haris Zuan's chapter details, young voters faced rising debt and diminished prospects, while a combination of factors, including an aggressively resurgent Malay-Muslim right wing and dissatisfaction with BN governance, sustained the movement out of the BN, apparent since 2008, among non-Malay, especially Chinese, voters (see Helen Ting's chapter). The fact that it was Mahathir who was leading the opposition charge raised eyebrows, given both his age and dubious reformist credentials, but he also promised a known, steady hand at the wheel—and one likely both to maintain ethnic preferences and tamp down rising Malay-Muslim ethnonationalism. Yet the promise of a more Islamist administration, too, was a continuing pull-factor for many Malay-Muslim voters, both allowing PAS to maintain much of its support and luring voters looking for an alternative to UMNO, particularly as both PAS and Amanah refined their candidate-selection, messaging, and outreach (see Hew Wai Weng's and David Kloos's chapters). States' rights were a key issue in East Malaysia, the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak, but subnational loyalties also mattered on the peninsula; the coalitions crafted state-specific appeals to woo those voters. Still other concerns and prospects motivated other voters. And the opposition invested in new campaign tactics—most notably, big-data-driven appeals, capitalizing on near-universal smartphone penetration, on which Ross Tapsell's chapter focuses.

In short, the chapters to come confirm both the real complexity of the Malaysian electorate and the difficulty of determining the extent to which this result is more than a one-time protest vote. However, as the longer-term trend suggests, the issues and identities salient now have deeper roots dating back at least to the Reformasi movement of 1998, as Johan Saravanamuttu's contribution explains. Antipathy toward Najib or relief at the return of the developmentalist visionary Mahathir surely tipped the scales to some

extent, but GE14 was by no means *sui generis*. It remains a revealing lens on contemporary Malaysia.

Classifying Malaysia

An electoral upset, especially one after such sustained single-coalition dominance, begs examination of what scholarship has missed and offers an especially apt spur to thinking more broadly about the theories and frames we are using. Most studies of Malaysia tend toward exceptionalism—Malaysia as in a category of its own. What can we say after the election about where Malaysia fits among polities: how its institutions and outcomes compare, and what this election adds to our knowledge of political structures and agents?

This election highlighted how familiar, near-habitual frameworks and models continue to dominate discourse, notwithstanding Malaysia's far-reaching economic, demographic, and technological restructuring even in the period of just over 20 years since Reformasi. For instance, slightly over three-fourths of the population is now urban (Department of Statistics [2017]),[3] including a clear majority of the previously largely rural Malay population. Moreover, the digital revolution has transformed everything from how Malaysians receive information and mobilize when aggrieved, to how they receive government payments (increasingly via direct-deposit rather than a hand-delivered cheque).

The study of Malaysian politics has been in something of a rut for decades, during which it has assumed an overwhelmingly communal pattern of political identification and behaviour. In this model, Malays vote for ethnic privilege, patronage, and feudal loyalty; Chinese favour economic rationality; and Indians vote BN to ensure at least some representation. At best, studies nod in the direction also of class politics, but still generally with an overarching ethnic frame. And while readings of a developmentalist politics have long added nuance to the academic literature (e.g., Loh 2003; Aeria 1997), conventional wisdom and most scholarship still usually circle back to race.

First, we might consider how we classify voters in analysing voting behaviour and patterns. The dominant categorization has been in straightforward ethnic terms: Malay, Chinese, and Indian voters support particular parties; the patterns muddle in more demographically complex East Malaysia. Communalism *does* shape Malaysian politics and culture in important ways, these presumptions about ethnic patterns surely have at least some basis in reality, and a straightforward communal logic *has* offered a useful starting point over the years in parsing patterns of electoral politics. Indeed, as the contributions that follow make clear, we *do* see discernible patterns that track ethnic lines

(note the data the chapters in Part I present), even if internally crosscut by other dimensions (for instance, Suffian and Lee's analysis of generational patterns,[4] or Hew Wai Weng's differentiation between urban middle-class and more rural Islamist Malay voters). That said, GE14 demonstrates the extent to which the dominant model and its core assumptions fall short in contemporary Malaysia. The ethnic factor has surely long been overstated.

This election demonstrated the limits of a communal framework even at the most basic level. Malay voters, for instance, as several chapters here illustrate, split along lines of region, approach to religion, and possibly socioeconomic class. Moreover, multiethnic coalitions and constituencies change political alignments. Even if opportunistic politicians return to race-targeted messages at moments, the more inclusive messages they are bound also to offer can still percolate down and become reified through practice, as Helen Ting's discussion of cross-ethnic vote-pooling, drawing on the work of Donald Horowitz (e.g., Horowitz 1989) implies. Meanwhile, candidate effects in various constituencies may override these categories altogether, given the extent to which a personal vote matters in Malaysia. David Kloos, for instance, explores how important personal demeanour and impressive credentials are for Muslim female politicians in particular, even as voters also look to presence and performance on the ground, during the campaign and after elections. The qualities voters seek in their politicians may run at cross-purposes—in this case, both professional and matronly attributes—making it difficult to be sure which aspect turned a given vote.

Indeed, these questions demand critical assessment of how we study political identities and behaviour. Survey data are inconsistently reliable even where researchers have, for instance, painstakingly tested for skew from coded terms or from priming respondents through question order; however well-designed the survey, respondents may be cagey, noncommittal, or simply hard to characterize with a data-point. Surveys in a place like Malaysia may be all the more problematic, with but a handful of survey-research firms and a limited corpus of accumulated findings on which to build and question-smithing to refine. For instance, we have limited large-N information on how varieties of Malaysian voters balance ethnic, economic, ideological, or other considerations in defining themselves or their vote-choices. We know, for instance, from surveys over time, that Malay voters tend to prioritize an ethnic over a national identity, in contrast to non-Malay voters (e.g., Merdeka Center 2017; Parkaran 2018)—yet it is not obvious what that finding might mean for voting, particularly with less than starkly differentiated options (e.g., more than one party promoting political Islam, or Malay rights, or redistributive

policies). Meanwhile, the technology of messaging and the possibilities for self-categorization continue to evolve. New media magnify the difficulty of gauging the full scope of parties' and candidates' outreach and of voters' decision-making processes (e.g., Ross Tapsell's discussion here of candidates' strategic use of WhatsApp to reach voters in their silos). We can approximate identities and interests from electoral results, yet for now, such assessments in Malaysia cannot avoid an ecological fallacy: the finest-gauged data we have are at the level of generally age-defined 'streams' in polling stations; without exit polls, we cannot say for sure how any given voter voted. Coupled with our lack of comprehensive and convincing data on how voters categorize themselves, or the extent to which identity dictates interests among categories of voters, we are left to fall back on assumptions. These analytical dilemmas are clear for, but clearly not unique to, Malaysia.

Second, the results push us to re-evaluate what sort of regime Malaysia now has. Malaysia has long fit the competitive electoral authoritarian model (Levitsky and Way 2010), albeit with a recurrent, if not entirely consistent, drift since the late 1980s, and especially the late 1990s, toward a two-coalition system. The effective number of parties in the federal parliament has not changed much since the last election, but who's who in the rank-order has been flipped—and the states stack up differently. Also, promptly after the election, Pakatan secured registration as a single entity (the BN-era Registrar of Societies' having denied the parties that unambiguous signal of cooperation), but the parties within are more nearly equal in weight than in the UMNO-dominated BN: should we assess them as parties or as a single coalition? How should we take into account the different composition of coalitions at the state level? And does the current system of more than two preeminent parties in office—PAS retains a non-incidental role, and the parties of Sabah and Sarawak seem unlikely to scale up beyond a potential 'Borneo bloc' for the time being—reflect instability, transition, or a fundamental multipolar distribution of voters (recommending a shift away from majoritarian electoral rules, as Wong Chin Huat's chapter proposes)? Lastly in this vein, given how heavily Pakatan has stressed plans to reform the Election Commission, constituency malapportionment, and other features of the electoral playing field, what implications do those amendments have for the number, alignment, and core bases of parties? In other words, what represents the 'natural' state of this polity versus an artefact of electoral skew, likely to fall away as the playing field levels?

The chapters to come broach answers to these questions, from different directions. And these answers matter not just for how we read Malaysian

politics, but for how we understand the regime type broadly. Will the Malaysian experience suggest a new model, of alternating-party dominance, in which either of two well-matched coalitions wins, but holds its advantage with too much manipulation (of electoral rules, of state resources, or of laws) to be considered democratic alternation? This outcome might happen even allowing for some degree of reform under (a less than securely emplaced) Pakatan. Already it does seem that the array of forces in Malaysia recommends a correction to the overwhelmingly nationally focused literature on such regimes: distinct state and regional patterns within Malaysia indicate not just different priorities among voters, but—especially in East Malaysia—arguably structurally different patterns of competition, as politicians and voters navigate a two-level game between state authority and federal leverage.

Third, and relatedly, the results of this election shift where Malaysia fits in the wider elections literature, although it is too soon to tell the polity's long-term placement. Over time, we will be better able to gauge how much GE14 represents a changed *type* of election—with voters responding to different cues—versus the same type of election but featuring a fluctuation in outcome. Only by situating this election among past and future instances can we confirm how we should now brand elections in Malaysia. Thinking comparatively, too, we might ask of what phenomenon we see this election as a case. Most critically, was this an example of democratization-by-election, or a liberalizing electoral outcome, as per Howard and Roessler (2006)? Malaysia's GE14 result seems to strengthen their theory that uniting in coalition and around a common lead candidate (here, Mahathir) can enable victory, despite constraints. And yet what brought BN down was not just Mahathir-led Pakatan's win, but also PAS's gains on the peninsula and Warisan's in Sabah. Nor can we say for sure whether Mahathir's leading Pakatan (a pull) was more salient than Najib's leading BN (a push). Given the complexity of reading outcomes from elections, do these results in Malaysia confirm or tweak theories developed from experience elsewhere? And considering that outcome, including the nature of the parties involved—their structure, orientation, solidity of bases, and programmatic, clientelistic, or charismatic linkages with the electorate (Kitschelt 2000)—what comparative cases are most germane: federal Canada (e.g., Clarke and Stewart 1987), recurrently Liberal Democratic Party-dominant Japan (e.g., Pempel 2010; Scheiner 2006, 2012); previously patronage-driven dominant-party Mexico (e.g., Greene 2007; Magaloni 2006), democratized but weak-party-system Indonesia (Hadiz 2003; Davidson 2018; Aspinall 2010), or somewhere else?

Lastly, with GE14 behind us, social-scientific scholarship on Malaysia will need to find new foci, the better to explore an altered political landscape. We might assess, for instance, whether we see a new dominant-party system developing under Pakatan Harapan. If so or if not, what specific institutional changes or mechanisms prevent or encourage that development? In other words, what specifically reifies, completes, or upends a transition after a change of leadership by election? What sort of regional or state differences account for any variations in this development, if we see patterns pertaining to 'belts', states, or other subnational units? In the absence of long-term electoral authoritarianism, do parties grow stronger or weaker, such that we see, for instance, greater fluidity across party lines (and hence, less clearly defined parties) or a shift in the relative weight of the personal vote? How does a more competitive electoral sphere alter the balance between the formal and informal political spheres, including relative space for, encouragement of, and motivation to participate in civil society, and the extent of those organisations' nonpartisan autonomy? Or more broadly, if Malaysia does consolidate a more liberal order, should we understand that change as being driven by elections and formal politics, or as being rooted in civil society, including the sorts of groups Haris Zuan and Hew Wai Weng note as important here? It remains to be seen what this transition, however deep-set and enduring, changes and what it does not, and where Malaysia's political paths now lead.

Looking Ahead

When we first began work on this volume, in mid-May 2018, just one week after the election, we brought together both established and up-and-coming Malaysianists, all of whom had done exciting research preceding and during the election campaign, across a wide range of topics and issues. We initially identified researchers who could contribute on four key subthemes: voting patterns, key battleground states, campaign issues, and post-election trajectories. Subsequent retooling, for both logistical and substantive reasons, brought us to the current structure. However much ground we cover, our volume remains far from comprehensive. A few topics are glaringly missing, such as exploration of voting patterns among minority groups such as Orang Asli and Indian communities, the role of influential personalities such as Mahathir Mohamad, and specific dynamics in particular states. Some of the chapters here do touch upon these important topics—but they merit more attention than we are able to devote to them.

Beyond breadth in topical foci, we also sought a mix of approaches to the study of elections. The chapters employ a mix of methods, from statistics to ethnography, and extend beyond the conventional ambit of political science. We let the nature of the research question and the academic background of the researcher determine *how* each contributor approached their analysis. That said, the chapters in Part I, which home in on voting trends in GE14, rely largely on quantitative data, allowing both a macro look at election results as well as an examination of specific segments; other chapters rely more on qualitative data and the nuance these allow, or combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

We seek with this volume not merely to tell the story of a Malaysian election—however consequential a moment it was—but rather, to use this election as an entry point into core debates about Malaysian political ideas, identities, and behaviour. Our goal is a volume of interest to scholars of other electoral-authoritarian or transitional regimes. Toward that end, we have organized the volume into three parts. The first part, including contributions by Ibrahim Suffian and Lee Tai De on how best to interpret the results overall, Faisal Hazis on the conditions that led to the dominant party's fall among Malay voters, Helen Ting on cross-ethnic vote-pooling and the implications for ethnic-minority voters' choices, and Johan Saravanamuttu on the rise of Pakatan Harapan, offers a substantially quantitative assessment of what happened: who voted how, and what patterns and trends the data reveal.

The second section digs deeper, for a more qualitative assessment of key issues, campaign strategies and mobilization. Here we have analyses by Ross Tapsell of parties' adoption of 'big-data' tactics for microtargeted voter outreach; Haris Zuan on changing modes of political participation among Malaysian youth and how parties have pursued that critical bloc; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali on the extent to which racial and religious identities and interests (still) drive mobilization and voting, across Malaysian communities; David Kloos on the specific challenges faced by Malay-Muslim women running on Islamist platforms, as they juggle expectations of projecting both professionalism and maternalism; and Hew Wai Weng on the varieties of political Islam that parties promote among different segments of the Malay-Muslim community.

Finally, we look to the future, to consider where Malaysia is going and, more systematically, what this case suggests. First, as the new Malaysian government embarks upon reforms, Wong Chin Huat probes whether first-past-the-post voting is appropriate to ethnically plural polities such as Malaysia, even if cleansed of malpractice such as gerrymandering and malapportionment. Meredith Weiss then concludes the volume by asking what actually constitutes

a democratic transition and what more needs to happen, beyond a change in leadership, for a regime such as Malaysia's to have liberalized.

Taken together, we hope these contributions not only complicate often-studied and elevate too-little-studied dimensions of Malaysian politics, but also suggest agendas for empirically interesting, theoretically relevant further research. Whatever the causes of this recent election result, and whatever the next general election may bring, Malaysia today is clearly not the polity it was when the Alliance/BN first took root in the 1950s, nor in its developmentalist heydays of the 1980s–90s, nor in the increasingly polarized, patronage-fuelled past decade. However optimistic for the possibility of a more representative, accountable, participatory and equitable polity, we take GE14 not as a clear harbinger of full-on liberalization in Malaysia—the actual extent of institutional or normative change will take years to be clear—but more as a clarion call, to spur deeper, more critical, more comparative research on what we know about Malaysia and what this ever-intriguing polity suggests about politics more broadly.

Notes

[1] In Sabah, Warisan and the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) formed a coalition government with Pakatan component parties Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, National Justice Party) and the Democratic Action Party (DAP).

[2] The same parties comprised the BA as PR, except that what became PKR in 2003 was then two separate parties, Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party) and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Party).

[3] Malays outnumber non-Malays in all but 6 of Malaysia's 49 largest cities (see Ong 2015; also McGee 2011).

[4] Malaysia has a secret ballot and no exit polls; as a result, beyond relying on pre-election (or non-immediate post-election) surveys, analysts have little way of assessing how individual voters voted. The structure of polling stations, with assignment to *saluran* (ballot-boxes) structured by age, allows reasonably disaggregated age-cohort-based analyses, as well as ethnicity- or religion-based assessments where the very-local voting population is fairly homogeneous, but still not, for instance, reliable gender-based analyses.

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Part I

Election Results and Voting Behaviour

2

How Malaysia Voted in 2018

Ibrahim Suffian and Lee Tai De

The results of the 14th Malaysian general election (GE14), held on 9 May 2018, were quite unexpected. Many analysts and observers believed that differences among the disparate opposition parties, coupled with the incumbency advantage of the Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN), would be more than adequate to thwart the attempts of the resurgent opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope, PH) led by Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Upon closer examination, however, the defeat of BN and the victory of PH bear similarities to other electoral breakthroughs that brought down long-dominant regimes. In Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, and Mexico (see, e.g., Solinger 2001), long-repressed opposition forces took advantage of cleavages in the dominant ruling party and prevailing public dissatisfaction with government performance to overturn decades-long authoritarian rule. Studies that came out in the wake of these landmark elections underlined factors that contribute towards the success of opposition forces amidst a political environment stacked in favour of the dominant party. These factors, summed up, include regular elections, the presence of opposition parties, continuous pressure for election reform, endemic corruption and/or economic crisis, the emergence of a unifying leader for the opposition, and splintering of the dominant party.

Of these many factors, it was the final one—the splintering of the dominant party—that had the strongest influence on the outcome on voting day in Malaysia. In the lead-up to the 2018 election, Malaysia's two largest Malay parties, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS), both suffered fissures that affected their electoral performance. In 2015, leaders of a PAS faction who lost in the party election had left PAS to form Parti Amanah Negara

(National Trust Party, Amanah), which subsequently became a part of the revamped Pakatan Harapan opposition coalition. In 2016, UMNO factions that lost out in a power struggle against Najib Razak left the party to form Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Malaysian United Indigenous Party, Bersatu) led by Dr Mahathir and former deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin. And in Sabah, ousted UMNO vice president Shafie Apdal left the party to form Parti Warisan Sabah (Sabah Heritage Party, Warisan). The splintering of these large parties sapped the strength of the parent party and contributed to its defeat in the 2018 general election.

This chapter seeks to explain the electoral outcomes of GE14—specifically, which segments of the electorate voted for PH, who stayed on in support of BN, and what explained the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)'s better-than-expected performance. We focus particularly on patterns of ethnic electoral support, arguing that ethnicity alone, while a salient indicator, is an inadequate predictor of voting behaviour, being crosscut particularly by age and location, as well as by individualized support for particular leaders.

Our study relies on Gary King's (1997) ecological inference model. This model helps to determine electoral preferences from specific demographic profiles, including such factors as gender, age, and ethnicity, using aggregate data. Complementing the aggregate data for this study are polling-stream (*saluran*, i.e., within-polling-station) level electoral data. For GE14, the Merdeka Center successfully collected data from all 22,933 polling streams in 165 parliamentary districts in Peninsular Malaysia, categorized into six age-demarcated cohorts.[1] To get accurate estimates of ethnic electoral support, we combined each polling stream's results with electoral-roll (*daftar pemilih induk*, DPI) data. The same method was used to calculate polling-stream level results for the 2013 general election (GE13), which we use as a comparison.

Background to Malaysian Electoral Geography

Malaysian parliamentary constituencies roughly reflect the demographic composition of the country, but more critically, they underpin the realities of power-sharing among the major ethnic groups that make up the population. Since 2006, and up to the 2018 election, the electoral contest has played out across 222 parliamentary districts, of which 165 are located in Peninsular Malaysia, 26 in Sabah, and 31 in Sarawak.

These districts can be classified by their dominant racial profile: 119 Malay, 29 Chinese, 38 Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputera, and 36 mixed ethnicity (see Table 2.1). In classifying districts by ethnic type, we include any district in

which the share of voters from a particular ethnicity exceeded 50 per cent. In mixed districts, no ethnic group constitutes a majority. In the wake of GE13, up to 51 districts were considered marginal BN districts, i.e. those won with less than a 5 per cent popular-vote margin. Of these, 30 were Malay-majority constituencies, situated mostly on the west coast of the peninsula. A further 20 districts were marginal districts for the opposition, which then also included PAS. These districts were scattered in the peninsula's north (mostly in Kedah) and east (largely Terengganu and parts of Kelantan). On Borneo (the states of Sabah and Sarawak), a number of then-BN-held districts were considered marginal, mostly in the non-Muslim Kadazan Dusun Murut (KDM) areas in the western interior of the state, along the Crocker Range.

Table 2.1 Type of parliamentary district by voters' ethnic background and status

Seat status after 2013 general election	Malay majority	Chinese majority	Mixed	Bumiputera	Total
BN safe seat	53	0	4	25	82
BN marginal	30	0	9	12	51
PR marginal	20	4	5	0	29
PR safe seat	16	25	18	1	60
Total	119	29	36	38	222

The results of GE13 showed that despite further erosion of BN's popular vote from 2008, the coalition managed to hold on to its share of the Malay electorate, at the expense of losing further support from non-Malays. Based on this outcome, the next redistricting exercise altered the boundaries of state and parliamentary constituencies so as to give the ruling party a more advantageous position (see Wong, this volume).[2] Because BN lacked the supermajority in parliament needed to change the number of parliamentary districts, these amendments were confined to changing the boundaries of existing constituencies.[3] Upon analysis it was quite obvious that the redistricting process resulted in the consolidation of opposition voters (largely non-Malay) in fewer districts, while increasing the number of pro-BN districts by swapping Malay localities into previously marginal districts. This reshuffling resulted in acute changes in seat-composition by ethnicity in states and territories such as Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Malacca. In addition, a similar exercise was carried out in Terengganu, where the then-BN government controlled the state by a slim two-seat majority. There, boundary changes disadvantaged PAS

(based on GE13 results) in as many as six state constituencies, by reallocating pro-BN villages and localities to marginal constituencies.

The result of this exercise can be seen in Table 2.2, which shows the number of parliamentary districts by ethnic composition in Peninsular Malaysia over the period 1986–2018. Note that the number of parliamentary districts with at least 70 per cent Malay voters increased from 66 (40 per cent of all peninsular constituencies) in 2013 to 71 (43 per cent) in 2018; those with a still-sizable Malay majority of 60 per cent or more increased from 88 in 2013 to 102 in 2018. At the same time, the number of mixed constituencies, in which no ethnic group constituted a majority, declined from 29 to 24 in the same period.

Table 2.2 Parliamentary constituencies by ethnicity, 1986–2018

		2018	**2013**	**2004**	**1999**	**1990**	**1986**
Malay majority	>70%	71	66	60	52	47	47
	60%–70%	31	22	22	19	18	18
	50%–60%	15	26	33	27	27	27
No ethnicity > 50%		24	29	26	22	14	14
Chinese majority	50%–60%	10	7	8	8	11	11
	60%–70%	3	4	4	6	6	6
	>70%	11	11	12	10	9	9
		165	165	165	144	132	132

It should be noted that, per the electoral rolls for GE13 and GE14, between 2013 and 2018, the Malay share of the electorate increased slightly, from 60.4 per cent to about 62 per cent. However that increase did not materially alter the composition of most constituencies because the increase in voter-registration between 2013 and 2018 was much smaller than anticipated. The electoral rolls reveal that only 2 million new voters registered during the period, compared to 4 million between 2008 and 2013. This decline was partly due to voter apathy, especially in the early part of the period, and partly to difficulties imposed on political parties that sought to register new voters: after 2013, the Election Commission barred political parties' registering voters. As a result, over 4.5 million people who were of age did not register to vote in 2018.

Although no tangible evidence has as yet been made available, at the time, conventional wisdom among observers and practitioners of Malaysian politics strongly suspected tacit cooperation between PAS and UMNO in the lead-up

to GE14, particularly at the national level and among some state leaders.[4] At the core of these suspicions was the notion that if PAS did not cooperate with PH, the Malay opposition vote would be split, thus allowing BN to prevail even with a much lower popular-vote share. The source of such thinking was voting patterns in GE13: the opposition coalition's Malay support derived largely from supporters PAS mobilized. The assumption then was that if PAS stood separately from BN and PH, the latter would not garner the numbers to overcome BN, despite attracting superlative non-Malay support. Indeed, PAS's departure from the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact, PR) in 2015 put the coalition's viability in jeopardy as far as garnering Malay votes was concerned, prompting coalition member Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party, PKR) to retain PAS within the Selangor state government, despite having to endure the embarrassment of being openly rejected by the Islamist party during its party conventions (Muzliza 2017).

As the election unfolded, PH's supposed collapse did not materialize, and splits in BN and PAS actually allowed PH to wrest federal power from BN with just a sliver of Malay support, as we discuss below. As Table 2.3 illustrates, while PH was able to perform fairly well even in constituencies with more than 70 per cent Malay voters due to the split in BN and PAS votes, BN was the overall loser. Yet by opting to go it alone in GE14, PAS lost traction in all districts with less than 70 per cent Malay voters and was relegated to being a regional party in the Malay belt (see Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan, this volume). PH, on the other hand, and especially PKR, was able to take advantage of its broad-based support and take the bulk of the mixed-ethnicity districts, with less than 70 per cent Malay voters. The BN, in particular UMNO, bore the brunt of its strategy's failure, because the splits within UMNO that led to the formation of Bersatu led also to the departure of nearly 18 per cent of Malay voters to PH and PAS. At the same time, UMNO and BN also managed to lose even more of the miniscule non-Malay support they had retained from GE13, which dropped from approximately 20 per cent to only about 5–6 per cent in 2018. As a result, UMNO was not able to muster enough support to win in districts in which Malay voters were less than 70 per cent. Overall results showed that BN lost approximately 14 per cent of its prior support from Peninsular Malaysian voters—a decline from 44.7 per cent in 2013 to only about 31.7 per cent in 2018 (see Table 2.4). PAS, on the other hand, also lost some supporters to PH via splinter party Amanah, but with a lower net loss: a reduction of about 7 per cent, compared to GE13.

Table 2.3 Performance of political parties by constituencies' ethnic composition, 2018 and 2013

	2018				2013		
	Total	**Pakatan**	**BN**	**PAS**	**Total**	**Pakatan**	**BN**
Malay > 70%	71	14	39	18	65	17	48
Malay 60–70%	33	27	6	0	23	7	16
Malay 50–60%	13	11	2	0	26	13	13
No ethnicity > 50%	24	22	2	0	29	21	8
Chinese 50–60%	10	10	0	0	7	7	0
Chinese 60–70%	3	3	0	0	4	4	0
Chinese > 70%	11	11	0	0	11	11	0
	165	98	49	18	165	80	85
Share of districts		59.4%	29.7%	10.9%		48.5%	51.5%
Share of votes		48.7%	31.7%	19.4%		53.3%	45.8%

Note: The above composition resulted in the macro-level performance illustrated in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Popular votes by coalition, 2018 and 2013

	GE 2018		GE 2013		Change	
	Votes	**%**	**Votes**	**%**	**Votes**	**%**
PENINSULA						
Barisan Nasional	3,273,222	31.7	4,347,688	45.8	–1,074,466	–14.1
Pakatan Harapan/ Pakatan Rakyat	5,029,539	48.7	5,035,582	53.3	–6,043	– 4.6
PAS[1]	2,006,653	19.4	–	–	+2,006,653	+19.4
Others	28,578	0.3	64,598	0.9	–36,020	– 0.6
SARAWAK						
Barisan Nasional	462,090	52.5	481,038	58.9	–18,948	– 6.4
Pakatan Harapan/ Pakatan Rakyat	381,863	43.4	304,508	37.3	+73,355	+ 6.1
PAS[1]	10,591	1.2	–	–	+10,591	+ 1.2
Others	25,984	3.0	31,681	3.8	–5,697	– 0.8

Table 2.4 (*cont'd*)

	GE 2018		GE 2013		Change	
	Votes	**%**	**Votes**	**%**	**Votes**	**%**
SABAH[2]						
Barisan Nasional	335,587	39.8	434,522	55.0	–98,935	–15.2
Pakatan Harapan/ Pakatan Rakyat[3]	417,435	49.5	283,866	36.0	+133,569	+13.5
PAS[1]	13,295	1.6	–	–	+13,295	+ 1.6
Others	76,784	9.1	71,227	9.0	+5,557	– 0.1

Notes:
1. PAS was a component party in Pakatan Rakyat for GE13.
2. FT Labuan is included in the state of Sabah.
3. Parti Warisan Sabah is included in Pakatan Harapan of Sabah.

How It Happened

The sense that emerged after GE14 was that a large cross-section of Malaysians, regardless of race, had risen up to vote out BN and Najib. If social media are to be believed, this event also included large numbers of Malay voters who switched sides in the late stages of the election to reject BN on account of their trust in Dr Mahathir, PH's intended prime minister. A senior politician advanced the notion that PH likely gained over one-third of the Malay vote (Lim 2018). Such a claim signifies the latent concern for the coalition of having to prove it commanded adequate Malay support in order to appear legitimate in the eyes of the majority voting-segment.

To assess how different segments voted was difficult in the initial period after the election because large numbers of voters, particularly Malays, had refused to disclose their non-BN party of choice in pre-election surveys, marring the results. However, in the wake of the election, analysis of detailed results, by polling station and stream (ballot-box, assigned by age), allowed a far more accurate picture of voting trends. Once analysed, the data show a starkly polarized Malaysian electorate, which, when coupled with pervasive multicorner electoral contests, resulted in the defeat of BN and preservation of PAS. What we uncovered at this stage was:

1. As expected, Malay voters chose the second-strongest party over BN within their local and state context, resulting in stark differences within each state and between the Malay-belt states and the rest of the peninsula;

2. While younger voters generally, from across ethnic backgrounds, preferred PH over BN or PAS, the pattern among younger Malay voters specifically followed regional lines: those in the Malay-belt states favoured PAS over BN and PH by a large margin;
3. In Sarawak, non-Muslim Bumiputera voters from the Bidayuh, Iban, and Orang Ulu majority areas saw a significant swing away from BN, toward PH and independent candidates; and
4. In Sabah, where the emergence of Shafie Apdal as an opposition leader persuaded Muslim Bumiputera voters to switch sides, thus eroding the last bastion of support for BN, strongman politics remains in place.

Voting Patterns in Peninsular Malaysia

The election results in Peninsular Malaysia were counter-intuitive, given many PH supporters' and leaders' views—many asked how they could have won as many as one hundred districts with such low support from Malay voters—and thus merit further examination. While non-Malay votes for PH were uniformly high across the country, the coalition's Malay vote was reasonably high in the west coast of the peninsula (adequate to deliver enough districts to win), but dismal in the northern and east-coast areas. We discuss these and other findings from our analysis of the election results below.

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout in GE14 was the second-highest in Malaysia's electoral history. However, the 2018 turnout showed a marginal decline, especially among voters under 50 years old. In all, the drop in voter turnout was quite small—only 2.8 per cent, from a very high 84.9 per cent in 2013 to 82.1 per cent in 2018. These findings show that Malaysians take politics and elections very seriously, enough so to make the effort to vote, despite election day's being a Wednesday. Yet the decision to have the election on a Wednesday (although it was declared a public holiday) did depress turnout among working-age adults by about 4 per cent, compared to the same age group in 2013 (Table 2.5).

Voting Patterns by Major Ethnic Groups

Support for PH from non-Malay or minority groups expanded further in 2018 from the already high levels recorded in 2013. In 2013, we estimated that about 84 per cent of ethnic-Chinese voters supported PR. That figure ballooned to as high as 93 per cent in 2018. Turnout among minority voters

was also very high in 2018, reaching 81 per cent, only marginally lower than the 81.5 per cent recorded in 2013.

Table 2.5 Voter turnout by age group in 2018 and 2013

Mean age	2018 turnout (%)	2013 turnout (%)	Variance (%)
21–29	80.1	84.0	–3.9
30–39	80.3	84.3	–4.0
40–49	83.8	86.5	–2.7
50–59	85.9	87.0	–1.1
60–69	84.4	85.7	–1.3
70++	74.7	75.8	–1.1

Ethnic-Indian voters' support for PH also increased, from about 53 per cent in 2013 to 82 per cent in 2018. It should be noted that, as further analysis shows, predominantly non-Malay minority voters generally avoided casting votes for PAS. It was only in some select locations such as Ladang Bukit Ijok in Kuala Selangor and Tanjung Rhu in Sepang that PAS attained sizable support among ethnic-Indian voters. Ethnic-Chinese voters, as a rule, avoided casting votes for PAS altogether. For example, in the parliamentary district of Kapar, Chinese votes for likeable PAS candidate Dr Abdul Rani Osman were estimated at less than 1 per cent.[5]

Table 2.6 Electoral support for BN in 2018 and 2013 by ethnicity, Peninsular Malaysia

	GE 2018 (%)			GE 2013 (%)		BN change
	BN	PH	PAS	BN	PR	
Malay	43.5	22.3	34.0	60.4	39.1	–16.9
Chinese	6.5	93.3	<1.0	16.0	83.9	– 9.5
Indian	15.5	83.5	1.0	45.0	53.0	–29.5
TOTAL	31.7	48.7	19.4	45.7	53.3	–14.1

Among Malay voters, however, the level of support shows a more mixed reaction to the multicorner contests that prevailed in 2018. Analysis of polling-stream data shows that Malays' political inclinations had changed from the BN–Pakatan duopoly into a three-way mix among BN, PH, and PAS. Intersecting this three-party preference are regional and generational

factors that appear to underpin shifting allegiances and priorities among Malay voters. At the onset, one discernible pattern was the difference in party-preference along generational lines. We discuss this dimension further below.

Overall, the results of GE14 showed some patterns rooted in pre-existing party affiliation and perhaps also in socio-political orientations among the Malay electorate, which differed along state and regional lines. As we noted in reviewing surveys prior to the general election, Malay voters ranked their preference first for BN, followed by PAS, and only then PH.[6] This situation presented itself on 9 May 2018, but with regional variations.

GE14 results showed that Malay voters did not exhibit a national pattern, as ethnic-Chinese and Indian voters did. Instead, there was a clear east-west orientation within the peninsula: Malay voters in the east-coast states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and to a lesser extent, Pahang, showed a higher preference for PAS than PH. The same was the case in interior, Malay-dominant, areas of Kedah, where PAS candidates gained a distinct majority over BN and PH—allowing the Islamist party to secure a significant 15 seats in the state assembly. In these areas, PH's share of Malay votes was a paltry 9.2 per cent in Kelantan, 7.0 per cent in Terengganu, and 13.7 per cent in Pahang.

PH's share of the Malay vote rarely exceeded one-third of the segment, with the sometime exception of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, where the highly urbanised environment and strong presence of PH forces enabled the then-opposition front to contest prevailing messages from BN and PAS (see Hew, this volume). Overall, Malay support for PH could be clearly demarcated, allowing the coalition to make gains in constituencies stretching from southern Kedah to Johor Bahru in the south—where its support was in the range of 20–25 per cent. It should be noted that by leveraging superlative levels of non-Malay support, PH was able to make gains in districts in which Malays comprised under 70 per cent. In such areas, the split in Malay support between BN and PAS allowed PH to win with just 20–30 per cent of Malay votes. In the east-coast states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang, in contrast, Malay support was significantly lower, as noted above. Table 2.7 offers details of Malay vote shares for the main parties in Peninsular Malaysia.

While we were not able to extract voting estimates with much certainty for Indian voters at the state level, due to constraints in the dataset, we were able to analyse the ethnic-Chinese vote. Overall, we found that the level of Chinese support for PH/PR increased by a further 10 per cent in 2018 compared to 2013. With the exception of Perlis (84.4 per cent), Pahang (86.5 per cent), and Terengganu (86.5 per cent), we estimate that more than 90 per cent of Chinese voters throughout Peninsular Malaysia voted for PH (see Table 2.8).

Table 2.7 Estimated Malay electoral support in 2018 and 2013 by state (Peninsular Malaysia)

State	GE 2018 (%)			GE 2013 (%)		BN variance
	BN	PH	PAS	BN	PH	
Perlis	41.8	29.9	28.3	60.0	39.6	–18.2
Kedah	34.8	23.8	41.4	54.5	44.2	–19.7
Kelantan	39.1	9.2	50.9	45.6	51.0	– 6.5
Terengganu	42.0	7.0	51.0	51.5	48.3	– 9.5
Penang	47.4	26.3	23.1	64.2	34.8	–16.8
Perak	47.9	20.1	32.0	62.9	36.7	–15.0
Pahang	50.3	13.7	36.1	64.1	35.4	–13.8
Selangor	34.2	37.1	28.7	58.0	39.8	–23.8
Kuala Lumpur	41.5	37.5	20.9	64.3	34.9	–22.8
Putrajaya	48.3	36.0	1.7	68.0	32.0	–19.7
Negeri Sembilan	55.6	29.3	15.1	72.1	25.2	–16.5
Malacca	54.9	0.5	14.5	74.9	25.1	–20.0
Johor	61.2	28.2	10.6	83.3	16.6	–22.1
PENINSULA	43.5	22.3	34.0	60.4	39.1	–16.9

Table 2.8 Estimated Chinese electoral support in 2018 and 2013 by state (Peninsular Malaysia)

State	GE 2018 (%)			GE 2013 (%)		BN variance
	BN	PH	PAS	BN	PH	
Perlis	15.6	84.4	<1	30.6	69.4	–15.0
Kedah	5.9	94.0	<1	20.1	78.5	–14.2
Kelantan	9.5	90.0	<1	41.3	58.5	–31.8
Terengganu	12.9	86.5	<1	26.0	74.0	–13.1
Penang	5.6	94.3	<1	7.5	92.4	– 1.9
Perak	11.0	89.0	<1	17.5	82.1	– 6.5
Pahang	13.4	86.5	<1	18.1	81.8	– 4.7
Selangor	4.0	96.0	<1	10.4	89.1	– 6.4
Kuala Lumpur	5.8	94.0	<1	9.0	89.7	– 3.2
Putrajaya	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Negeri Sembilan	9.9	91.0	<1	11.8	87.7	– 1.9
Malacca	10.5	89.5	<1	14.3	85.7	– 3.8
Johor	9.5	89.5	<1	15.6	84.3	– 6.1
PENINSULA	6.5	93.3	<1	16.0	83.9	– 9.5

Voting Patterns by Generation

Voters under 40 years old made up 43.5 per cent of all voters in GE14 (versus 44.2 per cent in GE13) (see Table 2.9). As the results unfolded, this segment proved to have been pivotal in delivering the outcome (Haris, this volume).

Table 2.9 Voter age groups and proportion in 2018 and 2013

Mean age	2018 proportion (%)	2013 proportion (%)
21–29	18.8	19.5
30–39	23.2	22.8
40–49	21.3	23.1
50–59	17.2	16.5
60–69	12.5	12.9
70+	7.1	5.2

Voters' age and their propensity to vote for BN correlated starkly. By calculating the average age of voters by polling stream, we were able to estimate how voters from different age groups made their choices. The decline was most precipitous from among voters in the younger age groups. Our analysis found that about 16 per cent of voters under 40 years old switched sides away from BN, to either PAS or PH. At the same time, fewer than 10 per cent of voters aged above 60 years changed the way they voted in 2018. On the other hand, we noted a sizable change among voters in the middle, between 41 and 59 years old; Pakatan Harapan secured more than 50 per cent support in this category.

The analysis also showed an inverse relationship between voter age and support for PAS: the younger the voter, the more likely they were to vote PAS. Given that we know non-Malay voters did not cast votes for PAS, this finding indicates that PAS captured nearly one-half of the under-40-years-old Malay vote across Peninsular Malaysia. Interestingly, PAS's contestation in most constituencies in the peninsula diminished support for both BN and PH in every generational category—although the Islamist party performed best among the youngest generation, especially voters aged 30 or below (see Tables 2.10A and 2.10B).

Malay voters clearly bisected along age lines, with those under 50 years old largely opting to vote either PAS or PH, while the majority of the older generation stayed with BN. Polling-stream data also show that support for BN among Malay voters in their 20s dipped to less than one-quarter. Beyond this line, the differences begin to tell.

Tables 2.10A and 2.10B Electoral support in 2018 and 2013 by generation, Peninsular Malaysia (all ethnic groups)

A. 2018

Mean age	Proportion (%)	Turnout (%)	BN (%)	PH (%)	PAS (%)	Other (%)	Spoilt (%)
21–29	18.8	80.1	27.7	45.5	26.3	0.5	0.6
30–39	23.2	80.3	27.2	51.1	21.0	0.7	0.6
40–49	21.3	83.8	30.0	49.8	19.6	0.6	0.9
50–59	17.2	85.9	31.7	52.3	15.3	0.7	1.3
60–69	12.5	84.4	38.2	45.5	15.6	0.7	2.2
70+	7.1	74.7	36.7	51.3	11.3	0.7	2.9
TOTAL PENINSULA		82.1	30.7	49.3	19.3	0.7	1.1

B. 2013

Mean age	Proportion (%)	Turnout (%)	BN (%)	PH (%)	Other (%)	Spoilt (%)	BN +/- (%)
21–29	19.5	84.0	44.7	54.3	1.0	1.0	–17.0
30–39	22.8	84.3	42.6	56.4	1.0	1.0	–15.4
40–49	23.1	86.5	44.7	54.3	1.0	1.2	–14.7
50–59	16.5	87.0	44.1	55.0	0.9	1.5	–12.4
60–69	12.9	85.7	49.3	49.7	0.9	2.4	–11.1
70+	5.2	75.8	43.2	56.0	0.9	3.0	– 6.5
TOTAL PENINSULA		84.9	44.7	54.4	1.0	1.4	–14.0

Undi Rosak/Spoilt Votes Movement

The lead-up to GE14 saw news coverage of a group of social-media influencers who mooted the idea of spoiling ballot papers in order to protest the poor choices among parties and candidates available in the election (Martinez 2018). Data from detailed election results show that this campaign had no impact on the minds of voters throughout the country, let alone younger voters. Overall, 1.1 per cent of the votes cast in Peninsular Malaysia were spoilt in 2018, lower than the 1.4 per cent recorded in 2013. Additionally, only 0.7 per cent of voters under 40 years old spoiled their ballots, as compared to 1 per cent in 2013.

Voting Patterns in Sarawak

BN Sarawak was confident of retaining its parliamentary districts (and also winning back a few more districts from the opposition) in Sarawak leading up to GE14 (*Dayak Daily* 2017). Our conversations with researchers tasked with soliciting voter-feedback as the election approached found that they assumed only four urban districts then held by the DAP would be out of BN's reach. Merdeka Center did not conduct any surveys specifically in Sarawak in the lead-up to the election. However, as the counting of the ballots began in the early evening of 9 May, it became apparent that voters in a number of districts previously deemed safe had voted for PH or prominent independent candidates. The BN's loss of 12 districts in Sarawak and 15 in Sabah led directly to BN's capitulation as the federal ruling party.

In the wake of the election, BN Sarawak, comprising Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS), Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), and Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), left the coalition and formed their own coalition called Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS, Coalition of Sarawak Parties). In terms of overall performance, GPS (previously BN Sarawak) lost about 6.4 per cent of the popular vote compared to its performance in GE13, declining from 58.9 per cent attained in 2013 to 52.5 per cent in 2018.

As noted above, the electorate in Sarawak has been found to vote along ethnic lines, as elsewhere in Malaysia. In the past several decades, the political dichotomy in Sarawak has been drawn between Bumiputera and Chinese voters. The former have tended overwhelmingly to support BN, while sizable majorities of the latter have been supporting DAP and Pakatan since 2006. The division of Sarawak parliamentary constituencies by voters' ethnic backgrounds is given in Table 2.11.

In GE14, however, a clear schism within the Bumiputera block of voters became evident—Melanau and Malay voters remained steadfast in their support for BN Sarawak (now GPS), while other largely non-Muslim Bumiputera, such as the Bidayuh, Iban, and Orang Ulu communities, all registered sizable declines in their support for GPS/BN Sarawak. This rift explains why the PH parties were able to double their gains, from only 6 districts in GE13 to 12 in GE14.

In order to work out these shifts in voting patterns, we compared the GE14 results with those from Sarawak's most recent state election, in 2016.[7] To put this election into context, the 2016 state election was held under the popular chief minister, the late Adenan Satem, who campaigned on a platform of Sarawak exclusivity and autonomy. Support for BN soared then, showing

marked improvement compared to GE13; the BN's popular vote increased from 58.9 per cent in 2013 to 62.3 per cent in 2016.

Table 2.11 Sarawak constituencies by ethnic breakdown and winning party in GE14

Malay/Melanau-majority districts 8 seats		**Dayak (Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu)-majority districts 14 seats**		**Mixed ethnic districts 3 seats**		**Chinese-majority districts 6 seats**
BN	**PH**	**BN**	**PH**	**BN**	**BN**	**PH**
Santubong	nil	Serian	Mas Gading	Bintulu	nil	Bdr. Kuching
Petra Jaya		Sri Aman	Pck. Borneo	Sibuti		Stampin
K. Samarahan		Betong	Lubok Antu*	Limbang Lawas		Sarikei
Batang Sadong		Kanowit	Saratok			Lanang
Batang Lupar		Kapit	Julau*			Sibu
Tg. Manis		Hulu	Selangau			Miri
Igan		Rajang				
Mukah		Baram				

Note: *Independent candidates won the Lubok Antu and Julau parliamentary districts: Jugah Muyang and Larry Sng, both of whom joined PKR after the election.

Thus when comparing GE14 results with those of the 2016 state election, we note a deflation in BN support. For example, we find that Iban and Bidayuh voters registered the largest swing to PH, of 8 per cent and 12 per cent respectively, compared to these communities' votes in 2016. Ethnic-Chinese voters also increased their support for PH and DAP, producing a swing of about 17 per cent. Only Orang Ulu and Malay/Melanau voters held steady, as Table 2.12 illustrates.

Table 2.12 Estimated BN Sarawak vote share in 2018 and 2016

Sarawak ethnicity	**BN/GPS support, 2018 general election (%)**	**BN Sarawak support, 2016 state election (%)**	**Variance (%)**
Malay/Melanau	82	85	– 3
Chinese	14	31	– 17
Iban	57	65	– 8
Bidayuh	55	67	–12
Orang Ulu	54	55	–1

Support by Generation

It was rather difficult to extract vote-shares via polling-stream information for Sarawak to enable us to estimate voters' age groups and how they voted, as only urban polling stations there had multiple polling streams. In rural areas, which predominate in Sarawak, most voters in any particular community voted in a single polling stream or ballot box. This limitation was especially germane to the Bumiputera community, most of whom voted in rural polling stations.

In order to give a flavour of possible voting patterns, we chose five polling districts where voters from different ethnic backgrounds voted (Table 2.13). While this information cannot be generalized for the whole state, it is intended to provide some insight as to how voters from different age groups and ethnic backgrounds made their choices.

Table 2.13 Vote shares in selected Sarawak parliamentary polling districts by generation, 2018

Parliament	Petra Jaya	Bandar Kuching	Puncak Borneo	Selangau	Lawas
Polling districts	Patinggi Ali	Bazaar	Bunuk	Bawan	Tuma
Largest ethnicity	Malay	Chinese	Bidayuh	Iban	Orang Ulu (Lun Bawang)
Ethnic %	91.75	98.69	87.94	82.49	75.04
Average age					
21–40					
BN	**59.9**	12.6	19.0	27.8	36.4
PH	33.2	**87.4**	**80.4**	**72.2**	**63.6**
Other	6.9	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0
41–60					
BN	**69.9**	11.2	24.3	27.5	40.6
PH	26.6	**88.8**	**75.0**	**72.5**	**59.0**
Other	3.5	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.4
60+					
BN	**81.7**	22.5	31.6	28.1	**54.9**
PH	16.6	**77.5**	**65.4**	**71.9**	45.1
Other	1.7	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0

Table 2.13 suggests that younger voters tended to favour PH more than BN, with the exception of Iban voters in Selangau, where we see no difference between younger and older voters. Even among the Sarawak Malay voters in the state-administrative seat of Petrajaya, younger voters, while favouring BN, did so at significantly lower rates than older voters. This pattern may have implications for BN Sarawak/GPS in the future.

Sarawak holds its state elections separately from parliamentary elections. It will be at least another two years (at the time of writing) before the state goes to the polls again to elect state representatives. The results of GE14 for BN Sarawak are similar to the fate of BN in Peninsular Malaysia. The GPS/BN Sarawak won 19 of the 31 parliamentary districts they contested. Of these, PBB won 13; the remainder were split among SUPP (1), PRS (3), and PDP (2). Thus, like UMNO in the peninsula, PBB is now the core party of the GPS, and its strength, in turn, rests mostly on the continued support of the Malay/Melanau segment of the electorate. PBB remains fairly strong in its districts, with over 68 per cent of the popular vote, on average. The other parties are in precarious positions, barely registering above 50 per cent of the popular vote (Table 2.14).

Table 2.14 Seats and popular votes BN Sarawak parties won in GE14

	Contested	Won	BN/GPS (%)	PH (%)	Other (%)	Ind (%)
PBB	14	13	68.0	27.1	3.5	1.4
SUPP	7	1	37.0	61.9	0.5	0.7
PRS	6	3	53.9	31.2	0.5	14.5
PDP	4	2	52.0	47.7	0.3	0.0
	31	19	52.5	43.4	1.6	2.6

Implications for State Seats

Given the above results, we have extrapolated the parliamentary election results to state legislative boundaries. Transposing Sarawak's GE14 results onto its state constituencies, we find that GPS/BN Sarawak may retain a slimmer majority of about 51 of the 81 districts that comprise the state assembly, a twenty-seat decline from the 2016 state election. Out of this number, we consider about 19 districts marginal (i.e., with popular votes between 50–65 per cent), as Table 2.15 indicates.

Table 2.15 Implied state seat status based on GE14 results

BN state seats	Estimated BN/ GPS vote share	PBB	SUPP/UPP	PRS	PDP	TOTAL
White	BN > 65%	27	0	5	0	32
Grey	BN 50%–65%	13	1	3	2	19
Black	BN < 50%	6	19	3	3	31
		46	20	11	5	82

Voting Patterns in Sabah

Sabah's electoral geography includes three distinct areas, divided by the ethnic background of the population residing there. Of the 25 parliamentary districts, 17 are considered Muslim Bumiputera districts. This segment is further divided between eastern and western Muslim Bumiputera, differentiated by the concentration of Brunei Malay, Bajau, and Illanun in the west, and Bugis and Suluk subethnic groups in the east. The second area includes seven non-Muslim Bumiputera districts located in the interior of the state, astride the Crocker mountain range, populated by the largely Christian Kadazan, Dusun, and Murut ethnic groups. Finally, the third area consists of two predominantly ethnic-Chinese districts, centred on the cities of Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan (Table 2.16).

Table 2.16 Sabah parliamentary constituencies by ethnic breakdown and winning party in GE14

EAST & WEST COAST Muslim Bumiputera-majority districts		INTERIOR REGION Non-Muslim Bumiputera-majority districts		URBAN CENTRES Chinese-majority-districts	
BN	PH+Warisan	BN	PH+Warisan	BN	PH+Warisan
Kudat	Kota Belud	Kota Marudu	Penampang		Kota Kinabalu
Kimanis	Sepanggar	Tuaran	Ranau		Sandakan
Beaufort	Putatan	Keningau*	Tenom		
Sipitang	Papar	Pensiangan			
Beluran	Batu Sapi				
Libaran	Silam				
Kinabatangan	Semporna				
	Tawau				
	Kalabakan				

Note: *Jeffrey Kitingan won Keningau running under STAR, but the party then endorsed BN Sabah.

In the past, Muslim Bumiputera voters have traditionally provided strong support to BN, generally returning vote shares in excess of 70 per cent, thus forming the backbone of the party's support in Sabah. Those prior high levels of BN support gave the impression that this support was durable. In 2016, differences between then-Chief Minister Musa Aman and then-Rural Development Minister Shafie Apdal, as well as unhappiness over the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) affair, led to Shafie's suspension, then resignation, from the party (see also Faisal Hazis's chapter). Shafie then formed a new party, Parti Warisan Sabah (Sabah Heritage Party, Warisan). He leveraged his stature within the predominant Bajau community along the eastern seaboard of the state and succeeded in converting disaffected UMNO members and attracting new followers to his party with a platform of Sabah autonomy. At the same time, several leaders from PKR and other parties joined ranks with him, allowing him to expand the new party's influence into west-coast Muslim Bumiputera and some Kadazan Dusun communities as well. Our discussions with a senior BN Sabah leader at the time indicated that many acknowledged the influence Shafie wielded through Warisan, but felt that it was only potent in the eastern part of the state.[8]

Contrary to that assumption, and similar to developments in Peninsular Malaysia, Warisan and Sabah PH eventually formed an alliance that capitalized on the split within UMNO, thus enabling them to wrest control of 14 of the 25 parliamentary districts in the state. At the state legislative level, Warisan and Sabah PH were a few districts short of a majority, but were able to secure the defection of representatives from UMNO and the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) in post-election wrangling, thus allowing Shafie to be sworn in as the new chief minister.

The GE14 results in Sabah (Table 2.17) show voter inclinations that roughly correspond to the geographic distribution described above and reflect Shafie's strong influence among eastern Sabah Bumiputera voters. From its epicentre in Semporna, Warisan generated a 22 per cent swing against BN and smaller parties in the eastern region of Sabah. This mobilization of support also pushed BN off the table in interior districts, where its hold was already tenuous. (BN won many KDM seats with plurality votes due to split opposition votes in GE13.)

Analysing voting patterns by ethnic background in Sabah is significantly harder than in the rest of Malaysia because of the diverse number of subethnic groups, which are further divided into various religious subgroups. With the exception of distinct zones such as predominantly Chinese urban areas and a handful of areas that are dominated by one particular ethnic or linguistic

group, most districts in Sabah are composed of many subethnic groups, none of which forms a majority.

Table 2.17 Fluctuation in electoral support by internal regions of Sabah, 2018 and 2013

	GE 2018	GE 2013	Change
West coast			
BN	38.7	51.4	–12.7
PH/PR + Warisan	49.7	41.5	+ 8.2
Other parties	11.6	7.2	+ 4.4
Interior region			
BN	40.6	47.0	– 6.4
PH/PR + Warisan	40.9	30.9	+10.0
Other parties	18.5	22.1	– 3.6
East coast			
BN	41.2	63.1	–21.9
PH/PR + Warisan	52.9	29.7	+23.2
Other parties	6.0	7.2	– 1.2

Yet experience tells us that voters in Sabah do vote for parties that are led by strong leaders (Loh 1996 and 2005; Lim 2008), who are perceived as chiefs of their particular cultural or ethnic group. In order to provide some insight into this tendency, we present here four examples of districts with a predominant ethnic or cultural group, as well as how the recent election may have affected voting dynamics across generations (see Table 2.18).

- Kota Belud represents a case study of a west-coast Muslim Bumiputera district, populated by the Bajau and Illanun subethnic groups, which together comprise 90 per cent of voters there. Here we can see that support for BN correlates with age: younger voters preferred Warisan but older ones had a slightly stronger preference for BN. Smaller, independent parties had minimal traction among these voters.
- In Kalabakan, which was once seen as a BN 'safe-deposit' seat, BN was trounced, again, largely by a swing of younger voters towards Warisan. BN was able to gain majority support only among voters aged 60 and above.
- In the interior seat of Keningau, where 82 per cent of voters are in the KDM subethnic group, a plurality of voters supported neither Warisan nor BN, but an independent opposition party, State Reform Party (STAR), led by Dr Jeffrey Kitingan, the brother of the KDM paramount chief. STAR was

able to win the seat with a tiny plurality (only 45 votes) by taking advantage of the erosion of support for BN via the presence of a Warisan candidate.

- Finally, Kota Kinabalu, with its 64 per cent Chinese voters, saw fairly uniform voting patterns across age groups for the DAP. The result indicates that Chinese voters' inclination towards PH was fairly uniform across the country.

Table 2.18 Political support in selected Sabah parliamentary districts by generation

Constituency	Kota Belud	Kalabakan	Keningau	Kota Kinabalu
Represented community	West-coast Muslim Bumiputra	East-coast Muslim Bumiputra	Interior region Kadazandusun Murut	Chinese
Mean age				
21–29				
BN	35.2	34.6	29.1	22.6
PH/Warisan	57.2	56.8	33.5	68.6
Other	7.6	8.6	34.7	8.9
30–39				
BN	38.3	34.3	30.4	19.3
PH/Warisan	54.6	56.2	30.6	71.7
Other	7.0	9.5	37.2	9.1
40–49				
BN	40.0	39.2	33.5	12.7
PH/Warisan	51.8	53.2	24.7	80.9
Other	8.2	7.5	40.0	6.4
50–59				
BN	45.7	47.8	36.9	14.0
PH/Warisan	48.7	46.5	28.0	79.8
Other	5.7	5.7	31.7	6.2
60–69				
BN	46.2	58.1	41.7	13.6
PH/Warisan	44.7	37.5	26.6	79.6
Other	9.2	4.4	28.6	6.8
70+				
BN	55.0	51.9	33.4	19.1
PH/Warisan	36.5	43.3	25.4	73.0
Other	8.5	4.8	37.5	7.9

Conclusion

Voting patterns in GE14 were complex; despite the prominence of communal explanations among pundits and media, ethnicity alone is insufficient to explain the BN's decline in support. The electorate is multipolar in its partisan leanings, and these patterns are not uniform nationwide. For instance, BN lost further support among young voters in 2018 compared to 2013 across ethnic groups, holding on to just 27 per cent of these votes versus 45 per cent in 2013. PH captured about 45 per cent of the youth vote nationwide and had a clear following among younger voters across Malaysia, with the exception of Malay voters in Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu, as well as the Malay/Melanau community in Sarawak. On the east coast, PAS captured the majority of Malay youth votes in Kelantan and Terengganu, despite multicorner contests.

Meanwhile, the three-way split in Malay votes on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia allowed PH to sweep nearly all mixed-ethnicity and low-Malay-majority districts across Peninsular Malaysia. While, with the exception of elderly Malays, voters uniformly rejected BN in Peninsular Malaysia, support for PH among Malay voters was strong only on the west coast, from southern Kedah to Johor. In other parts of Peninsular Malaysia, PAS emerged as the preferred party among Malay voters.

Although in retreat on the west coast of the peninsula, PAS has consolidated its strength through solid gains in the Malay-dominant parts of Kedah and Pahang, as well as in Kelantan and Terengganu. The Islamist party has emerged as the dominant party among Malay voters in the Malay-belt states. In these states, PAS has a majority following among younger Malay voters.

Support for BN has collapsed in Peninsular Malaysia, except in over 80 per cent-Malay districts. The former ruling coalition has been nearly unanimously rejected by minority voters as well as by younger Malay voters. However, BN continues to hold pluralities or small majorities in interior, rural Malay districts in Peninsular Malaysia and some Muslim Bumiputera districts in Sabah. The loss of government power will weaken the party's hold on such areas, which in the past, was aided by patronage and channelling public projects.

Sabah ceased to be a 'safe-deposit' state for BN with the collapse of support from Muslim Bumiputera voters. While support from the KDM and ethnic-Chinese communities had already been eroding for the past decade, the split within UMNO Sabah caused the remaining Muslim Bumiputera vote to shift towards local strongman Shafie Apdal, his party Warisan, and allies in PH.

In Sarawak, BN's other former 'safe-deposit' state stands in a precarious balance after the largely non-Muslim Dayak vote-bank shifted significantly

towards PH, following the ethnic-Chinese community, which had been supporting PH since 2006. BN Sarawak has since dissolved. Its successor coalition, GPS, stands largely on the back of Muslim support and a portion of the non-Muslim Bumiputera vote.

The results of GE14 likely will bring about a reordering of political affiliations among voters in Malaysia as PH attempts through patronage and defections to wrest away voters hitherto affiliated to BN. Parties such as PAS will likely step up efforts to replace UMNO as the dominant party among Malays, drawing on the Islamic identity that commonly underpins the psyche of Malay voters. PH will attempt to contest in Malay electoral space by drawing on support from younger voters, but its success will depend on how well it fulfils voters' aspirations and immediate practical needs, such as maintaining economic growth and job-creation. Current patterns suggest that no party, however, can take its support for granted.

Notes

[1] This study of ethnic voting patterns focuses only on the 165 constituencies in peninsular Malaysia because the ethnic composition in Sabah and Sarawak (varieties of *Bumiputera*, indigenous groups) is fundamentally different from that of the peninsula, where Malay, Chinese, and Indian are the main ethnic groups. Also, we do not include early and postal ballots.

[2] Merdeka Center's analysis, utilized in the Selangor State Government's lawsuit against the Election Commission in 2016–17.

[3] According to Article 10 of the 13th Schedule of the Federal Constitution, no fewer than half of the members of the lower house must support the prime minister's proposed delimitation of constituencies.

[4] PAS and UMNO cooperation had been a topic of political discussion since 2014, when PAS openly declared its '*taawun*' concept of working with any party for the 'benefit of Islam'. While no formal arrangement was publicly evident, circumstantial activities and statements fed suspicions (e.g., Bernama 2018; FMT 2017).

[5] In 2018 PAS secured the support of an estimated 0.89 per cent of Chinese voters. This result was in stark contrast to 2013, where the same PAS candidate, then running for state representative, achieved 89.7 per cent of the Chinese vote in the state constituency Meru.

[6] We refer to a Merdeka Center survey dated October 2017, and discussion of it at a public forum at the University of Nottingham Kuala Lumpur campus, in April 2018.

[7] All Malaysian states except Sarawak presently hold state elections concurrent with general elections. We were not able to run comparisons with results from GE13 given limitations in the data; data to access and estimate ethnic electoral support were available only for the 2016 state election and 2018 general election.

[8] Interview by author with BN Kota Belud candidate Salleh Keruak during the election campaign.

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3

Elite Fragmentation and Party Splits: Explaining the Breakdown of UMNO in Malaysia's 14th General Election

Faisal S. Hazis

All eyes were on Malay-majority seats as the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) and opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan (PH, Alliance of Hope) squared off in Malaysia's hotly contested 14th general election (GE14). These 'Malay seats' were considered to be the key battleground to win federal power, as they constituted more than half of the parliamentary seats up for grabs. The opposition's failure to make significant inroads in the Malay heartland in the 13th general election (GE13) demonstrated that they needed to win at least half of the 122 Malay seats in GE14 to have any real chance of unseating BN. In GE13, BN won 82 and lost 37 Malay seats. These 82 seats made up more than half the BN's total of 133 parliamentary seats; most of the rest came from Sabah and Sarawak. Clearly, Malay seats saved BN in 2013 and it could not afford to lose them in 2018.

With the departure of Hadi Awang's Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) from former opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Alliance) in 2015 and Anwar Ibrahim's continued imprisonment, PH turned to Mahathir Mohamad to lead the charge against the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the lynchpin party of the BN. The former premier was expected to engineer a 'Malay tsunami' that would break UMNO's stranglehold on Malay seats. He retains influence among Malays, and his track record of bringing progress to Malaysia could appeal to voters disgruntled by rising costs of living, Prime Minister Najib Razak's feeble leadership, and a

host of corruption scandals plaguing the country. However, sceptics, including within PH ranks, believed such a surge in Malay votes would not take place because the Malay opposition was seriously divided, especially since the departure of PAS from PR. As the biggest Malay opposition party, PAS aimed to be a third force in GE14. The Islamic party contested 158 parliamentary seats, far more than the 85 seats it contested in GE13. This decision paved the way for multicornered contests mostly in Malay seats, thus raising serious questions about PH's prospects. In past elections, multicornered contests have usually led to vote-splitting among opposition supporters and have ultimately benefitted the incumbent.

On 9 May, the improbable happened. Against all odds, PH won 113 seats while its Sabah ally, Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan, Sabah Heritage Party) won 8, the total resulting in a simple majority in parliament—enough to end BN's 60-year rule. Out of the 113 seats that PH won, 52 were Malay-majority. PAS also sprang a surprise by winning 18 Malay seats, while UMNO matched PH, with 52. The big question is, why did Malays vote so convincingly against UMNO-BN?

Several possible explanations offer insight into this intriguing question. The economy was a possible trigger. Malaysians, including Malays, had been struggling with stagnant pay and rising prices for quite some time and their patience might have been running low. In particular, the BN's imposition in 2015 of a goods and services tax (GST), set at 6 per cent at the time of the election, could have precipitated the Malay swing. Equally significant was the long list of corruption scandals linked to BN leaders, such as those centred around the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) sovereign wealth fund and the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA). Malays could have rejected UMNO specifically due to resentment against Najib, who had been especially mired in scandal. Another possible explanation is the popularity of Najib's former mentor, Mahathir. The Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu, Malaysian United Indigenous Party) leader's presence in PH could have eased Malays' fear of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), which BN branded as anti-Malay and anti-Islam.

These arguments, although persuasive, are flawed because they are not grounded in a theoretical and empirical understanding of regime change in authoritarian states. Dominant hegemonic parties do not fall merely due to the appeal of short-term issues like GST and 1MDB or the popularity of opposition leaders like Mahathir. Regime change in authoritarian states takes place when structural changes to the countries' socio-economic conditions lead to changes in their political institutions and cultures and/or when

political elites make decisions that weaken the power of dominant parties and eventually force a change of government.

In this chapter, I offer an actor-centred perspective on UMNO's dismal performance in GE14. Utilizing elite theory, this chapter argues that the fall of UMNO in 2018 can be traced back to internal schisms that led to defections and other institutional changes that eventually weakened the Malay party's grip on federal power. To explain the fall of Malaysia's dominant hegemonic party, this chapter employs a historical-institutionalist approach to trace elite fragmentation within UMNO and the institutional changes that happened as a result of that split. Elite division within UMNO occurred due to the country's weakening economy, which had impaired provision of rents to elites. Consequently, some UMNO elites defected and formed new alliances with opposition parties and civil society to unseat the incumbent government. The rest, as they say, is history.

Elite Fragmentation and the Fall of a Dominant Party

There are two main approaches to the study of regime change and democratisation, the functionalist school (assuming structure-led change or adopting macro-level analysis) and the genetic school (emphasizing actor-led change or micro-level analysis) (Rustow 1970). Functionalists theorize that structure has primacy over individual judgement, whereas geneticists believe in the importance of human agency over social structure (Ajagbe 2016). According to the functionalist school, countries that attempt to transition from authoritarianism have to rely on a number of pre-existing socioeconomic conditions. These prerequisites include a vibrant civil society, a certain level of economic development, a democratic political and civic culture, and a range of satisfactory socio-economic indicators. Usually linked to modernization theory, the functionalist school, however, fails to explain transitions that have taken place in countries that are yet to have these prerequisites. It also fails to explain why certain authoritarian regimes remain stable despite having undergone massive socio-economic changes. Recognising these shortcomings, the genetic school offers an alternative perspective on the transition of government in authoritarian states.

The genetic school focuses on the roles of elites in effecting transitions in authoritarian regimes. It analyzes elites' responses to a crisis and how they move to change the political system in ways that consequently produce outcomes extending to regime change. The genetic school thus looks at regime change through the interplay of elites and the kinds of decisions they make. This

approach analyzes the interests of elites and the resources available to them in order to understand how regime change develops and where it leads.

Elites, according to Yamokoski and Dubrow (in López 2013), are actors who control resources, occupy key positions, and interact through power networks. Elites may come from anywhere, as long as they possess these three elements. Business elites, military elites, religious elites, and bureaucratic elites are some of the different types of elites that play crucial roles in authoritarian regimes. However, it is important to note that elites are limited to a small group of people; thus, not everyone can become a member of the elite (López 2013). In this chapter, we look at arguably the most powerful elites, political elites, since they are capable of accumulating near-unlimited resources, occupying the most powerful positions, and establishing the biggest power networks. Hence, political elites play critical roles in the fall of dominant parties and in sparking democratic impetuses.

Scholars, however, disagree on whether consensus among elites is crucial for democratization to occur, or if it is actually elite fragmentation that is necessary. Lijphart's (1977) concept of 'consociational democracy' suggests that cooperation among elites is critical for democratization, as they serve to bridge ruptures and prevent extremist politics. Conversely, Roeder (2001) argues that elite fragmentation in mature authoritarian systems is the necessary push that leads to democratization. More importantly, Anderson (2001) highlights that elite fragmentation produces an erosion of cohesive party identity, making it harder for that party to repress unconducive opinions among the mass public; an ensuing increase in public contestation, in turn, furthers democratization. Accordingly, the literature on elite fragmentation in mature authoritarian systems, including those centred around longstanding hegemonic political parties, provides a strong basis for understanding the fall of UMNO and BN in 2018. Thus, one needs to analyse elite actors, especially those within the ruling party, to understand the collapse of dominant parties like UMNO and its BN coalition.

The two schools of thought—functionalist and genetic—however, are not mutually exclusive. Increasingly, researchers have shown that institutional change can affect the way elites make decisions and vice-versa. Reuter and Gandhi (2010), for example, argue that economic performance can motivate elites to split from the regime party. Disgruntled party members defect in times of economic crisis in order to capitalize upon popular and elite discontent with the regime, in the hope of successfully challenging the incumbent. Another type of work looks at how elites' actions can affect institutions. For instance, Zubizaretta (2013), who analyzes the fall of the hegemonic Colorado Party

in Paraguay in 2008, argues that elite fragmentation and splits within the party led to institutional changes that fostered yet more fragmentation and weakened its hegemony.

Some other research utilizes the actor-network theory, which enables researchers to bring together functionalist- and genetic-school approaches that have heretofore been mostly analysed as pertaining to separate entities in the study of democratization (Ajagbe 2016). This theory makes clearer the importance of the emergence of 'societal forces as a necessary condition for understanding the outcome of social decision[s], such as democratization in a polity' (Ajagbe 2016: 83). In this chapter, I take the position of researchers like Zubizaretta (2013), who claim that elites' fragmentation leads to institutional changes that ultimately affect the dominant party's hold on power. In the following section, I will show that the split in UMNO prior to GE14 led to significant institutional changes, particularly related to the election that produced the historic 2018 results.

Past UMNO Splits

UMNO is the largest and oldest Malay party in Malaysia. Since its formation in 1946, UMNO has staunchly fought for Malay rights and interests, as this community is regarded as the Bumiputera (literally translated 'sons of the soil') or the indigenous people of the country. By championing Malay nationalism, UMNO had successfully dominated elections over a period of six decades, particularly in Malay-majority seats (see Suffian and Lee's chapter). As the backbone of the BN, the Malay party was key in ensuring the coalition's continued grip on federal power. However, UMNO's and the BN's electoral dominance finally came to a halt in 2018 when they were surprisingly defeated by the opposition. This chapter argues that the fall of UMNO and BN was due to elite fragmentation within UMNO that led to defections, creation of new alliances, and changes to institutions, particularly related to elections. Having said that, UMNO is no stranger to internal schisms. What made the pre-GE14 splits different and more destructive, to the extent of affecting the Malay party's grip on power? This section looks at the history of UMNO splits and what distinguished those in the runup to GE14.[1]

UMNO suffered its first split in 1951. Party founder Onn Jaafar had persuaded his party to change its slogan of *Hidup Melayu* (Long live the Malays) to *Merdeka* (Independence) in June 1951 (*The Star* 2007). When he subsequently pushed UMNO to open its membership to non-Malays, most party members rejected the move. As a result, Onn left UMNO and formed

a new, multiethnic party (with support mainly from ethnic Indians), the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), that September. Several UMNO supreme council members who were aligned with Onn also quit the party. According to Ahmad Fawzi (1992: 80), Onn's resignation split not only UMNO, but also the civil service. However, the split did not have much impact on UMNO and its fellow Alliance parties' performance in the 1955 general election, mainly due to the absence of strong opposition parties. The Alliance won 51 out of 52 seats, with UMNO's losing just one seat to PAS. For its part, IMP contested in the 1952 local election and won only one seat, then disbanded in 1953 due to its poor reception among the public. Tunku Abdul Rahman, who took over UMNO's leadership from Onn, then led UMNO again to power in the first post-independence general election, in 1959 (Norshahril 2015).

UMNO faced a second split after a poor showing in the 1969 general election that led to the bloody 13th May riots. Malay 'ultras' (the right wing) in the party took advantage of this crisis by pressuring the Tunku to resign. They were not happy with his 'generosity' toward ethnic Chinese, which they deemed to be at the expense of Malays (Ahmad Fawzi 1992: 84). Facing mounting pressure from this faction, including Mahathir Mohamad—who was his harshest critic—the Tunku resigned the following year. Abdul Razak took over as prime minister. Razak subsequently replaced the Tunku's men in the cabinet and party with his own loyalists, thus cementing his grip on the government and party. Razak further strengthened his position by co-opting opposition parties into a bigger coalition, known as Barisan Nasional, in 1973. In the following year, BN regained its electoral dominance by winning most of the seats the Alliance had lost in 1969.

The Malay party was confronted with another split almost two decades later. This split was triggered by former finance minister and party treasurer Razaleigh Hamzah's determination to depose Mahathir as party president and prime minister. Razaleigh's faction alleged that Mahathir had practiced selective patronage that led to the creation of 'new rich' among his faction in the party, led by Daim Zainuddin and Anwar Ibrahim (Gomez and Kaur 2014: 7). But in the 1987 party election, Razaleigh failed in his bid to unseat Mahathir as party president and was subsequently removed from the party. Just like Onn, Razaleigh formed a new party, albeit a Malay-based one, Parti Semangat '46 (Spirit of '46, recalling the year of UMNO's founding) to pursue his fight with Mahathir and also to replace UMNO. The 1987 split had a more profound effect on UMNO than earlier rifts had, as is evident from the 1990 general election results. UMNO lost twelve seats to PAS and Semangat '46, which were aligned—the worst showing for the BN's leading party since

1969. Nonetheless, UMNO still captured 71 seats, contributing significantly to BN's overall haul of 127 out of 180 parliamentary seats. Semangat '46 failed to survive beyond two elections; it was dissolved after its poor showing in 1995. Razaleigh, along with other Semangat '46 members, subsequently rejoined UMNO.

In the late 1990s, UMNO went through yet another spilt, resulting in the mass-based *Reformasi* (reformation) movement that sought to unseat Mahathir. The latter's decision to sack Anwar Ibrahim as deputy prime minister and deputy president of UMNO in 1998 triggered the split. The falling-out between the two UMNO strongmen was mainly due to their conflicting approaches to managing the country's economy in response to the 1997 Asian currency crisis (Gomez and Kaur 2014). However, Mahathir said publicly that the dismissal was due to Anwar's sexual impropriety and corruption, justifications widely perceived to be fabricated. Many Anwar loyalists left UMNO and formed a new multiethnic party, Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan, National Justice Party), just a few months before the 1999 general election. The 1998 UMNO split had a yet more devastating effect on the party than prior episodes. UMNO lost 17 more seats to the opposition, reducing its share of seats from 89 in 1995 to 72 in 1999. Interestingly, PAS was the biggest beneficiary of the UMNO split, not Keadilan: the former secured 27 parliamentary seats and control of two state governments (in Kelantan and Terengganu). Keadilan, on the other hand, performed quite miserably, taking only 5 parliamentary seats. Nonetheless, unlike other UMNO splinter parties, Keadilan has survived beyond two elections and has even thrived in its pursuit to replace UMNO as the biggest Malay party. In 2003, Keadilan merged with Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM, Malaysian People's Party) to become today's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, People's Justice Party).

As GE14 approached, UMNO found itself again in crisis. Due largely to the 1MDB debacle, the party split once again, leading to the rise of a breakaway party, Bersatu, announced in late 2016 and launched officially in January 2017. This new party has among its ranks former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, former deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, and Mahathir's son, Mukhriz, who was formerly chief minister of the important Malay-belt state of Kedah. Exacerbating this macro-level rift, too, were endemic lower-level party feuds, due to stepped-up crony-based patronage (Gomez and Kaur 2014).

In Sabah in particular, UMNO has experienced continuous splits among its warlords, who command significant personal support among party members and the general public. The Malay party first spread its wings in Sabah in 1991,

through the now-defunct United Sabah National Organisation (USNO), a multiracial party with a Muslim majority. In order to accommodate the non-Muslims in USNO, then-UMNO President Mahathir Mohamad changed the party's constitution to allow non-Malay-Muslim members to join the party. UMNO entered Sabah to wrest back the state from the opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), which it did in 1994 (Hamdan 2017). Arguably the most influential warlord in the state was Musa Aman, who became the longest-serving UMNO Sabah chairman and chief minister. His biggest rival was Shafie Apdal, who had large followings along the east coast of Sabah and among UMNO members in the Peninsula.

Through his powerful chief minister's office, Musa utilized state resources to build a network of clients within UMNO Sabah. When political patronage did not work, Musa employed repressive measures to silence his critics. In 2015, an UMNO divisional leader, Jumat Idris, was suspended from the party for six years after allegedly plotting to unseat Musa. After the exit of Shafie Apdal from UMNO in 2016, Salleh Keruak was seen to be Musa's main competitor. It was popularly believed that Salleh was the main guy behind the plot to topple Musa in 2015, not Jumat Idris. However, Salleh was very cunning and left no traces behind. Furthermore, Salleh's strong link to Prime Minister Najib Razak stopped Musa from making any unnecessary moves against Salleh.

Despite UMNO's past splits, the Malay party and BN remained the dominant party and coalition until GE14. Why did fragmentation among UMNO elites in 1951, 1969, 1987, and 1998 not lead to the party's collapse? Regime change did not take place during the four previous UMNO splits because other BN component parties did not face major crises at the time that could have eroded their own support bases. More than half of the 'Malay seats' that UMNO contested still had significant numbers of non-Malay voters; hence, without a substantial swing in non-Malay votes, the opposition could not seriously challenge UMNO's dominance, even in Malay-majority constituencies. And even when UMNO failed to win two-thirds of Malay seats, like from 1999 until the 2008 general election, other BN component parties could still win their respective seats and deliver the two-thirds parliamentary majority that UMNO had traditionally ensured.

Malay Voters in GE14

A total of 14.9 million voters were registered for GE14, slightly more than half of the total population of Malaysia (*New Straits Times* 2018). As the biggest

ethnic group, Malays formed the largest group of voters, at 54.1 per cent, followed by Chinese (28.1 per cent), Indians (7.1 per cent), Sabah natives (5 per cent), Sarawak natives (4.1 per cent), peninsular indigenous peoples (0.6 per cent), and others (1.0 per cent) (Merdeka Center 2018). In GE14, there were 122 Malay-majority seats (55 per cent), 29 Chinese-majority seats (13 per cent), 19 Sabah native-majority seats (9 per cent), 18 Sarawak native-majority seats (8 per cent) and 34 mixed seats (15 per cent). Although Indians make up about 7 per cent of total voters, given geographic dispersal, there are no Indian-majority seats. Instead, there are 10 seats with about 20 per cent Indian voters, mostly located in the states of Perak, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan. (Almost all peninsular seats, however, include Indian voters, in shares ranging from 1–19 per cent.) Malays are proportionately represented in parliament, while Sabah and Sarawak natives are significantly over-represented. On the other hand, ethnic Chinese are grossly under-represented due to malapportionment and gerrymandering (see Wong's chapter, this volume).

Just prior to GE14, Malaysia's parliament passed a redelineation of electoral boundaries that was criticized for giving added advantage to the incumbent government (Wong, this volume). Although the redelineation did not increase the number of parliamentary and state seats, it did change the boundaries and names of quite a significant number of seats, including Malay-majority seats. Not only did the number of Malay-majority seats increase from 119 to 122 from GE13 to GE14, but the number of seats with only a slim 50–60 per cent Malay majority declined in favour of seats with a higher proportion of Malay voters (see Table 3.1). This shift represented a deliberate strategy on the part of BN to win GE14 by reducing the proportion of non-Malay voters in Malay-majority seats since non-Malays were expected to continue to vote for the opposition, while Malays, faced with a divided opposition, were expected to vote for the ruling party.

This tactic represented a change in strategy. In the past, BN had sought to create more mixed seats, so as to take advantage of non-Malay support for the coalition. After 2008, though, the flight of non-Malay voters from BN introduced 'tsunami' to the Malaysian political lexicon. By 2018, UMNO assumed it would be more advantageous to have more predominantly Malay seats. As Table 3.1 shows, about 40 per cent of Malay seats are considered predominantly Malay (more than 80 per cent Malay voters); these seats are mostly in predominantly Malay states such as Kelantan, Terengganu, and Perlis. However, the distribution of Malay seats ranges from 0 in Sabah to 17 in Johor (see Table 3.2). Although Johor has the most Malay seats, that number represents only about two-thirds of the state's total. All the seats in five

Table 3.1 Number of Malay-majority seats by percentage of Malay voters, 2018 and 2013

Percentage of Malay voters	2018	%	2013	%
>90	27	22.1	25	21.0
80–90	24	19.7	22	18.5
70–80	23	18.9	22	18.5
60–70	33	27.0	24	20.2
50–60	15	12.3	26	21.8
Total	122	100.0	119	100.0

Source: Extracted from *The Star* 2018b; Election Commission 2015.

Table 3.2 Malay-majority seats by state/federal territory, 2018

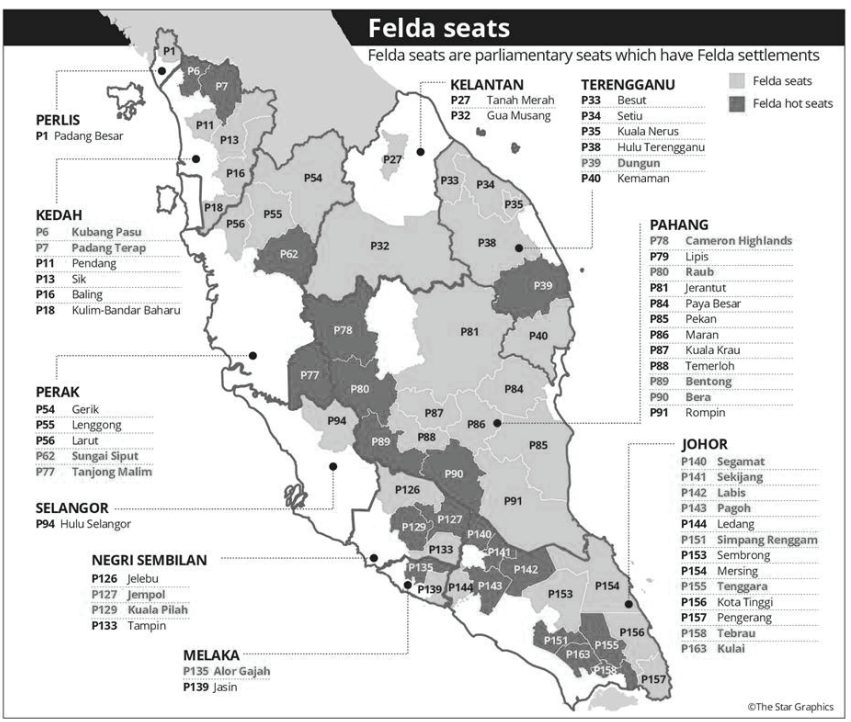
State	No. of Malay seats	Total parliamentary seats	% Malay seats	% Malay population (2000)	% urban population (2000)
Johor	17	26	65	41.7	60
Kedah	15	15	100	58.4	37
Kelantan	14	14	100	89.5	33
Selangor	14	22	64	47.3	83
Perak	14	24	58	40.1	59
Pahang	12	14	86	63.7	46
Terengganu	8	8	100	93.2	48
Malacca	5	6	83	54.8	64
Negeri Sembilan	5	8	63	43.2	53
Kuala Lumpur	5	11	45	39.8	94
Sarawak	5	31	16	25.4	46
Penang	4	13	31	31.2	74
Perlis	3	3	100	77.5	33
Putrajaya	1	1	100	90.0	
Labuan	0	1	0	33.7	71
Sabah	0	25	0	16.3	45
Total	122	222	55	53.3	61.8

Source: Extracted from *The Star* 2018b; Department of Statistics 2001.

states or federal territories, on the other hand, are Malay-majority, given the high proportion of Malays among their population: Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Putrajaya.

The concentration of Malays is higher on the east coast, in places such as Kelantan and Terengganu, and in northwestern states such as Kedah and Perlis in Peninsular Malaysia. In contrast, Chinese Malaysians are concentrated in urban areas of west-coast states, including Penang, Perak, Selangor, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, and Johor. Out of 117 Malay seats on the peninsula, 52 are considered FELDA seats, since they contain FELDA settlements (see Chart 3.1). These FELDA seats are regarded as the Malay heartland. There are an estimated 1.2 million FELDA voters, comprising about 119,000 settlers, both men and women, their children and grandchildren, as well as employees of FELDA and its various companies (*The Star* 2018a). The five parliamentary seats with the most FELDA voters are Jempol in Negri Sembilan, Kuala Krau and Rompin in Pahang, and Kota Tinggi and Pengerang in Johor.

Chart 3.1 FELDA seats, 2018



Source: *The Star* 2018a.

Over the years, Malay demographics have changed in ways that inevitably affect voting behaviour. Malays are increasingly concentrated in urban areas, due to the high level of urbanisation in Malaysia—a shift from around 10 per cent of the population in 1911 to 28.4 per cent in 1970 and 61.8 per cent in 2000 (Usman et al. 2010). The share of Malays specifically living in urban areas increased from 21 per cent in 1957 to already just shy of a majority, 48.3 per cent, by 2000 (Usman et al. 2010). Highly-urbanised states like Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang, Malacca, and Perak have a higher number of Malay urban seats than do less urbanised states like Perlis, Kelantan, Kedah, and Terengganu. Although most urban Malays vote according to their current residence, quite a few return to rural hometowns to vote. Nonetheless, urbanisation has had significant impacts on Malays' livelihood and outlook. As a result, this process has assuredly changed their voting behaviour.

Apart from Malays' being more urbanised, a significantly greater share of the community is now middle class. This development, too, can be expected to have had a significant impact on voting behaviour. Rapid economic growth especially in the approximately two decades after implementation of the New Economic Policy, a programme of preferential policies to benefit Malays and other Bumiputera, hastened the process of shaping a distinct working class, middle class, and capitalist class in Malaysia (Abdul Rahman 2000). The Malay middle class has since continued gradually to gain in size and influence. Many from its ranks, for instance, have been actively involved in social movements pushing for electoral change over the last two decades. However, as Sulaiman Mahbob (1986) cautioned, as urbanisation accelerated in Malaysia, the process also increased the share of Malays in urban low-income groups; Malays from across classes coexist in urban areas.

Malay voters are quite heterogeneous in terms of culture, economic status, and worldview. Quite a number still reside in rural areas, even as increasingly more live in cities across the country. Some are quite well to do, but others still struggle to make ends meet. Hence, it should come as no surprise that Malays have different political cultures, party affiliations, and voting behaviours. These differences were clearly manifested in the voting patterns among Malays in GE14, magnifying the effect of the aforementioned elite rifts.

Voting Patterns in Malay-majority Seats

Polling day saw a big swing to the opposition from all corners of the country, including BN's 'fixed deposit' states, Sabah, Sarawak, and Johor. BN was caught by surprise when they lost 70 Malay-majority seats and won only 52. In GE13,

BN had won 82 of these seats, with UMNO the biggest contributor, with 71 seats, followed by Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB, United Bumiputera Heritage Party) with 5, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) with 4, and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan, Malaysian People's Movement Party) each with one (see Table 3.3). In GE14, UMNO's tally of Malay seats fell drastically, to 46 seats, while MIC and Gerakan lost all the seats they contested and MCA won only 1 (a Malay-majority seat). UMNO Sabah contributed only seven seats out of 46 that the Malay party won, representing a 50 per cent drop from the number of seats that it won in GE13. PBB, on the other hand, maintained its 100 per cent record, by winning all five of Sarawak's Malay seats. Moreover, the BN's popular vote in Malay seats dropped drastically, from 52.3 per cent in 2013 to 38.2 per cent in 2018.

Table 3.3 Number of Malay-majority seats contested and won, 2018 and 2013

	2018			2013			
	Seats contested	**Seats won**	**Popular vote**	**Seats contested**	**Seats won**	**Popular vote**	**Change in popular vote**
UMNO	102	46	38.2	113	71	52.3	–14.1
PBB	5	5		5	5		
MCA	11	1		8	4		
MIC	3	0		2	1		
Gerakan	1	0		1	1		
PAS	116	18	25.6	64	20	24.0	– 1.6
PKR	40	30	36.1	53	17	22.9	–13.2
Amanah	29	9		–	–		
Bersatu	51	12		–	–		
DAP	2	1		2	0		
Total	360	122	99.9	238	119	99.2	

Source: Extracted from *The Star* 2018b; Election Commission 2015.

Against these BN losses, the biggest gainer was PH, securing 52 Malay-majority seats. Among PH component parties, PKR was the best performer, winning 30 of these seats, followed by Bersatu (12), Amanah (9), and DAP (1). PKR is now the biggest Malay governing party, in terms of representation in parliament, while UMNO is the biggest Malay opposition party. The still-

young Bersatu, which aspires to replace UMNO, did not do so well, losing almost 80 per cent of the seats it contested. PAS also sprang a surprise, faring much better than expected. Many pundits had predicted that the Islamic party would be swept away in multicornered contests, but they managed to win 18 seats, mostly at the expense of PH's Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, National Trust Party, formed after a split among elites in PAS), which only captured 9 seats. In terms of the popular vote, PH increased its electoral support from 22.9 per cent in GE13 to 36.1 per cent in GE14. PAS also increased its popular vote, albeit marginally (from 24 per cent in 2013 to 25.6 per cent in 2018), yet it did so while contesting in more than double the seats it had in 2013.

The results are widely considered to represent a changed political landscape. For months leading up to GE14, surveys and polls had shown an unusually high percentage of Malays who were undecided about their vote, leaving pundits and pollsters puzzled as to what to expect, particularly given the new choices available, thanks to rifts among elites in both UMNO and PAS, long the two key alternatives for Malay voters. Chinese voters, on the other hand, had been clear from the start that they remained overwhelmingly against BN, especially UMNO; everyone could see that PH would once again sweep Chinese-majority seats nationwide.

On 9 May, Malays decided to opt for change, voting overwhelmingly against BN and UMNO. Combining the number of seats and votes won by PH and PAS makes the BN's loss of Malay support even more glaring. The then-opposition—PH and PAS—won a total of 70 seats against BN's 52, while their combined share of the vote stood at 61.7 per cent. But the battle for Malay votes specifically was closer than those overall numbers imply, as Table 3.4 indicates. The winners in more than 60 per cent of seats received less than 50 per cent of the vote. Among parties, UMNO won the greatest number of seats with only a plurality vote. In other words, UMNO could have lost up to 35 more seats had there been fewer multicornered contests.

Most of the seats PH won had a higher proportion of non-Malay voters than did those that BN and PAS won (see Table 3.5). About 70 per cent of the Malay-majority seats that PH won have 30–49 per cent non-Malay voters. Meanwhile, all 18 seats PAS won are more than 80 per cent Malay. These seats are mostly in the east coast and northern part of the peninsula. Eighty per cent of the Malay seats UMNO won, too, have more than 70 per cent Malay voters. According to Suffian and Lee (see their chapter in this volume), 93 per cent of Chinese and 83 per cent of Indian voters voted for PH, versus only 22 per cent of Malay voters. This gap explains why PH fared better in less heavily Malay seats. All told, UMNO remains the most popular party among Malays,

having captured 44 per cent of Malay votes, while PAS came in second with 34 per cent. That elite-level rifts are mirrored in the fragmentation of Malay voters among three major political actors—PH, UMNO, and PAS—poses a serious challenge for the new PH government in pushing forward their reform agenda. They will have to be sensitive to Malays' demands and fears, as they still do not command majority support within the community (see Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan's chapter, this volume).

Table 3.4 Number of Malay seats parties won, by margin of votes, 2018

% popular vote won	BN			PAS	PH			
	UMNO	PBB	MCA		PKR	Amanah	Bersatu	DAP
>70	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
60–70	3	2	0	0	3	1	0	0
50–60	8	0	0	9	11	2	5	0
40–50	32	0	1	8	15	4	7	1
<40	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Total	46	5	1	18	30	9	12	1

Source: *The Star* 2018b.

Table 3.5 Malay seats won by coalition/party, by percentage of Malay voters, 2018

% Malay voters	PH		BN		PAS		Total
	Won	Contested	Won	Contested	Won	Contested	
>90	2	27	10	27	15	27	27
80–90	3	24	18	24	3	21	24
70–80	9	23	14	23	0	23	23
60–70	25	33	8	33	0	32	33
50–60	13	15	2	15	0	13	15
Total	52	122	52	122	18	116	122

Source: *The Star* 2018b.

Yet ethnicity is not everything; other factors cut across ethnic identity. For example, apart from the composition of voters in Malay-majority constituencies, the results in these seats are also influenced by regional and urban-rural factors (see Table 3.6). PH generally did well in highly-urbanised states like Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Johor, and Malacca, while BN and PAS

maintained their dominance in rural settings like Sarawak, Perlis, Pahang, Kelantan, and Terengganu. These complex patterns make it all the more plausible that other factors contributed to the pivotal shift in Malay votes, as noted above—particularly economic issues (especially the GST, which PH promised to abolish if elected), and the 1MDB scandal, which clung to Najib, especially once Mahathir simplified its complexity by boiling it down to a few choice words (kleptocracy, robber, thief). Nor were these concerns unique to Malays; they are among the key reasons analysts offer for the longer-percolating anti-BN trend in non-Malay votes (see Ting, this volume). Regardless, on the eve of the election, BN still claimed that it could secure as many as 140 seats, while PH seemed unsure of its own odds. The wave of change crept up so quietly that it caught almost everyone by surprise.

Elite Fragmentation and Party Splits

The 2015 UMNO split—the fifth in its 71-year history—has altered the national political landscape. Led by Mahathir Mohamad, several UMNO leaders defected and formed or joined new political parties and alliances. The 3Ms—Mahathir, Muhyiddin, and Mukhriz—were instrumental in forming a new Malay party, Bersatu, while Shafie Apdal formed a multiethnic party, Warisan, in Sabah. These former UMNO leaders were able to lure a significant number of their followers in UMNO to defect and subsequently join their newly minted parties. Bersatu then entered into an unprecedented alliance with the opposition PH. This strategic decision required and cemented a reconciliation between allies-turned-foes Mahathir and Anwar, and created a coalition including one former premier, two former deputy premiers, and multiple former chief ministers, united in opposition to Najib. This alliance, under Mahathir's leadership, was crucial in breaking UMNO's stranglehold on Malay seats.

UMNO splits signify considerable elite differentiation within the party and the existence of multiple axes of power. Unlike previous UMNO splits, the latest one entailed seriously damaging effects for UMNO and the BN, since other BN component parties also suffered declining popularity and they could not step into the breach, compensating for a downturn in UMNO support, as they had before. A range of specific policy and personality-related factors all contributed to the waning support for UMNO and the BN. However, this chapter argues that without the split within UMNO, GE14 would not have caused Malaysia's dominant party to fall.

Table 3.6 Number of Malay seats won per coalition, by state/federal territory, 2018

State	BN	PH	PAS	Total seats
Perlis	2 (2 UMNO)	1 (1 PKR)	0	3
Kedah	2 (2 UMNO)	10 (6 PKR, 3 Bersatu, 1 Amanah)	3	15
Kelantan	5 (5 UMNO)	0	9	14
Terengganu	2 (2 UMNO)	0	6	8
Penang	2 (2 UMNO)	2 (1 PKR)	0	4
Perak	10 (10 UMNO)	4 (2 Amanah, 1 PKR, 1 Bersatu)	0	14
Pahang	8 (8 UMNO)	4 (2 PKR, 1 DAP, 1 Amanah)	0	12
Selangor	2 (2 UMNO)	12 (8 PKR, 4 Amanah)	0	14
Kuala Lumpur	0	5 (4 PKR, 1 Bersatu)	0	5
Putrajaya	1 (1 UMNO)	0	0	1
Negeri Sembilan	3 (3 UMNO)	2 (1 Amanah, 1 Bersatu)	0	5
Malacca	2 (2 UMNO)	3 (2 PKR, 1 Bersatu)	0	5
Johor	8 (7 UMNO, 1 MCA)	9 (5 Bersatu, 4 PKR)	0	17
Labuan	–	–	–	–
Sabah	–	–	–	–
Sarawak	5 (5 PBB)	0	0	5
Total	62	52	18	122

Source: *The Star* 2018b.

Conclusion

Post-GE14, UMNO faces the possibility of further splits and total collapse due to party defections. From 52 parliamentarians, the Malay party is now left with 37. That number might drop even further, especially since Mahathir has openly invited members of UMNO and other Malay parties to join Bersatu—much to the dismay of other PH leaders, especially from PKR. By luring UMNO members to his party, Mahathir hopes to strengthen his party and, at the same time, boost PH's appeal among Malays.

Realizing PH's poor support among Malays, UMNO plays up the issues of Malay unity and Islamic supremacy by accusing the PH government of undermining Malay interests and the sanctity of Islam. UMNO, as the biggest Malay opposition party, has also taken an expected decision to join forces with PAS in order to consolidate Malay support and, ultimately, to challenge PH. Both PAS and UMNO rely heavily on Muslim and Malay votes: PAS has positioned itself as the defender of Islam in the Muslim-majority country, while UMNO champions Malay nationalism. These support bases account for nearly 70 per cent of the Malaysian population. Since GE14, the two Malay parties have worked together in by-elections and in protesting the government's proposed ratification of a UN anti-discrimination treaty in 2018. Besides UMNO-PAS cooperation, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)—which represent the nation's two other main ethnic groups—have begun to discuss the possibility of a new alliance. The consolidation of Malaysia's opposition may present a viable threat to the PH government. Furthermore, the issue of succession, given Mahathir's plan to hand off power to a younger leader mid-term, could potentially split PH elites and threaten their young coalition's grip on federal power.

The fall of a dominant hegemonic party like UMNO was the result of a process of continuous intra-elite fragmentation and divisions, furthered by institutional elements that sapped its hegemonic dominance and finally brought the party to its epic fall. Although other social forces such as civil society can significantly affect changes in authoritarian states like Malaysia, political elites still play key roles in determining the stability or collapse of a dominant hegemonic party. A divided ruling elite resulted in the fall of UMNO and BN in 2018. If PH fails to take stock of this lesson, they might face the same experience in the next general election.

Note

[1] This chronology draws especially on Norshahril 2015; see also Ahmad Fawzi 1992; Gomez and Kaur 2014.

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4

Cross-ethnic Vote-pooling in West Malaysia: The Malaysian Chinese Association and Democratic Action Party Compared

Helen Ting Mu Hung

The formation of ethnicity-based parties is natural in a society with deep ethnic divisions. An ethnic party is one whose membership and electoral support base rest principally on a single ethnic group (Horowitz 1985). The three founding members of the Alliance, Malaysia's governing coalition since the independence of Malaya[1] in 1957, namely the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC),[2] all profess to be ethnic parties. However, by presenting a single slate of candidates under the Alliance coalition (enlarged to form the Barisan Nasional, National Front or BN, in the early 1970s), the three parties managed to cooperate and function electorally as a multiethnic coalition while retaining their identity as ethnic parties and defending the interests of their respective ethnic groups.

Horowitz (1985, 299) defines a party or coalition as multiethnic only if its support base 'spans the major groups in conflict', regardless what the party professes. In order to meet that standard, component parties representing opposing ethnic groups in a multiethnic coalition are generally obliged to compromise on conflicting demands and expectations. Those political parties that derive their support base from only one side among ethnic 'groups-in-conflict' are regarded as ethnic parties or 'flank parties'. It is important to

note that, based on this definition, a party or coalition with a multiethnic front of leaders and members that receives electoral support principally from a single ethnic group would still be considered a monoethnic party/coalition. Its pronounced Malay bias notwithstanding, the Alliance/BN may be regarded as a multiethnic coalition in terms of its electoral support base, as it has been able to maintain varying degrees of support from all ethnic groups. This ability to draw votes from major ethnic groups, across social cleavages, has been termed 'cross-ethnic vote-pooling'. Scholars have recognised the electoral advantage the BN, as a multiethnic coalition, has enjoyed over other ethnic opposition parties in cross-ethnic vote-pooling during general elections in Malaysia (Ratnam and Milne 1967, 1970; Horowitz 1989).

In a society with a high saliency of ethnic cleavage, Horowitz suggests, only one multiethnic party or alliance can thrive: 'After one such party establishes itself, all the electoral opportunities are located on the ethnic flanks' (1985: 410). In other words, the intended rival multiethnic party or alliance would be 'strongly susceptible to centrifugal stresses' (301), and would end up being supported by one or another of the ethnic groups in conflict. This has effectively been the dynamic that has characterised Malaysian politics since independence. For decades, the main competitors to the Alliance/BN in peninsular Malaysia were monoethnic or 'flank' parties such as the Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), which has maintained strong support mainly in the Malay heartland in the northern and eastern parts of peninsular Malaysia.

It was only during the 1990s, when several opposition flank parties were able to come together to form multiethnic coalitions, that the possibility of defeating BN at the federal level became a realistic one and scholars began to consider the possible scenario of a two-coalition system. Since then, opposition parties have experimented with different configurations for multiethnic coalitions. First, in 1990, a splinter group from UMNO, Semangat '46, managed to form two separate opposition coalitions, one with Malay-based parties (including PAS) known as the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU, Muslim Unity Front) and another, multiethnic one (including DAP) known as Gagasan Rakyat (People's Might). In 1999, Parti Keadilan Nasional[3] (known as Keadilan), led by Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the wife of deposed Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, was established. Keadilan brought together PAS and DAP to form a coalition known as Barisan Alternatif (BA) in 1999. It broke up within three years. In 2008, Keadilan, PAS, and DAP formed Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to form state governments following electoral victories in several states. PR, too, only lasted until 2015, when an estrangement between PAS and DAP

led to its breakup. The current victorious coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH), was then formed in September 2015, when Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah), the product of 'progressive' leaders in PAS who broke away to form their own party, joined hands with DAP and Keadilan. Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), a splinter group from UMNO formed in September 2016, joined PH in 2017. Unprecedentedly, this reconfigured opposition coalition agreed to contest the 2018 general elections using a single logo, hence presenting its candidates in a single slate, just as BN does.

In the meantime, the BN's multiethnic support base had suffered progressive erosion since the 2008 general elections. Even though the DAP, Keadilan, and PAS still used their respective logos while contesting the 2013 general elections as PR, there were indications that PR had begun benefitting from cross-ethnic vote-pooling. The clearest example was that eight PAS candidates won in state seats with less than 60 per cent Malay voters.

By applying the lens of cross-ethnic vote-pooling, this chapter examines the changing ethnic distribution of electoral support for the major 'Chinese parties' on either side of Malaysia's political divide between the 2004 and 2018 general elections, against the backdrop of the evolving ethnic landscape of the party system in West Malaysia[4] since the 1990s. It also assesses the extent of Malay support for the MCA and DAP in seats where they engaged in one-on-one versus three-cornered contests (in the latter cases, with PAS) in 2018, in Malaysia's 14th general elections.[5]

In view of the shifting ethnic pattern of electoral support for PH and BN, this chapter concludes that the advantage in cross-ethnic vote-pooling has shifted from BN to PH. UMNO overplayed race and religion in an attempt to retain Malay support. That stance, together with financial scandals and unpopular economic and financial policies, further alienated Chinese voters, whose support had already diminished in the 2013 general elections. Meanwhile, opposition parties that used to be monoethnic had successfully reinvented themselves to work in a united front, forging a multiethnic consensus for change. An assessment of Malay support for DAP candidates in these constituencies provides an idea of the extent of cross-ethnic vote-pooling DAP candidates enjoyed by contesting as part of PH.

The Evolution of Chinese Support for BN

Most analysts regard Chinese voters as having been overwhelmingly supportive of the opposition PH in the 2018 general elections. Yet this has not always been the case. BN had successfully rallied substantial Chinese support behind

it as recently as the 1990s. In February 1991, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir announced a new policy called Vision 2020. Among other provisions, it entailed liberalizing previously restrictive cultural policies and increasing local private higher-education opportunities, changes that non-Malays welcomed (Loh 2002). This toning-down of the BN government's pro-Malay ethnic policies might have been partly motivated by the growing strength of the Malay opposition in the 1990 general elections, as well as the ability of Semangat '46 to form two coalitions to unite opposition parties. Though BN was returned with a two-thirds majority in 1990, its popular vote dipped to its lowest point since 1969, at 51.95 per cent (Khong 1991: 15).[6] UMNO did not win any parliamentary seats in Kelantan, and also lost control of the Kelantan state government to APU, while MCA won only 18 out of the 32 parliamentary seats it contested, 13 of which were in constituencies where Chinese voters formed less than 50 per cent of the electorate (Khong 1991: 27).

Propagating a more inclusive narrative of the Malaysian nation, *bangsa Malaysia*, as multiethnic and multireligious (Lee 2004) paid off for BN during the 1995 general elections, drawing a surge in Chinese support, leading correspondingly to a significant drop in support for DAP candidates (Gomez 1996). The BN's gain, however, was largely limited to Chinese voters: UMNO did not improve its performance significantly in the heavily Malay northeastern states of Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu when compared with 1990, due both to continued factionalism within the party and to PAS's strong showing in its traditional stronghold.

Table 4.1 Number of parliamentary seats won by MCA, Gerakan, and DAP (1982–2018)

	1982	**1986**	**1990**	**1995**	**1999**	**2004**	**2008**	**2013**	**2018**
MCA	24	17	18	30	26	31	15	7	1
Gerakan	5	5	5	7	7	10	2	1	0
DAP	9	24	20	9	10	12	28	38	42

Sources: Crouch 1982; Khong 1991; Gomez 1996; SIRD 2000; *The Star* [2018].

While the surge of Chinese goodwill towards BN throughout the 1990s did not affect hard-core supporters of DAP, this moderate level of support was sufficient to provide added advantage to BN in seats with relatively evenly distributed ethnic composition. Gomez (1996) notes that the BN government created more such seats with the 1993 constituency delimitation exercise, which probably saved BN from losing the 1999 general elections in the face

of the rising tide of Malay discontent following the onset of the Reformasi movement. Analysis of the 1999 election outcome indicates that both Malay and non-Malay votes were more or less evenly split between BN and BA, depending on constituency characteristics (SIRD 2000). PAS captured the state government of Terengganu while maintaining its grip on the state of Kelantan. BN only barely retained its control over Kedah. Table 4.2 shows that BN lost more frequently to BA where either Malay or non-Malay voters constituted 80 per cent or more of the electorate. BN performed best in ethnically mixed seats where the proportion of Malay voters was within the range of 30–80 per cent (SIRD 2000).

Table 4.2 Electoral performance of BN and its opponents in relation to ethnic composition of constituencies (1999, 2008, 2018)

Malay voters (%)	Number of Parliamentary seats won by coalition in West Malaysia					
	1999		2008		2018	
	Barisan Nasional	Barisan Alternatif	Barisan Nasional	Pakatan Rakyat	Barisan Nasional	Pakatan Harapan
0–19.9	4	7	0	13	0	12
20–39.9	14	3	5	11	1	17
40–59.9	45	0	25	22	3	29
60–79.9	27	4	26	17	18	34
80–99.9	12	28	29	17	27	5
Total	102	42	85	80	49	97

Sources: SIRD 2000; 2008 data compiled by Kenneth Cheng; 2018 data compiled by Wong Chin Huat, Nidhal Rawa, and Kenneth Cheng.

In 2004, barely four months after succeeding Dr Mahathir, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi went to the polls to seek a fresh electoral mandate. He skilfully harnessed the popular desire for political reform and turned the tables on the opposition, who had made gains with their own reformist platform in 1999. Islam, too, became a core electoral issue. Blinded by their popularity in the last general election, PAS leaders aggressively advocated for an Islamic state agenda, showcasing their enactment of hudud laws in Terengganu after they took control of the state government in 1999. Their share of parliamentary seats fell from a high of 27 to 6. PAS also lost control of the Terengganu state government. DAP, which had stayed out of the BA, improved only slightly, gaining 2 parliamentary seats (one of them in Sarawak), for a total of 12. The

2004 general elections effectively marked the peak in terms of parliamentary seats for the Chinese-based BN parties, MCA, and to a lesser extent, Gerakan (cf. Table 4.1). PAS's perceived Islamic extremism, which contrasted with the moderate version of political Islam Abdullah Badawi propounded, labelled Islam Hadhari, provided an added motivation for Chinese voters to support BN (Abdul Rashid Moten and Tunku Mohar Mokhtar 2006).

It was only in the 2008 and 2013 general elections that Chinese voters turned progressively away from BN. After taking office as prime minister in 2009, Najib Razak had tried to woo back non-Malay support by introducing the inclusive concept of 1Malaysia. He also initiated the scaling-back of pro-Malay affirmative-action policies, only to recommit himself shortly thereafter to implementing a 'pro-market affirmative action policy' in the face of protests by Malay-rights groups such as Perkasa. Having failed to regain Chinese buy-in at the 2013 general elections and even having lost the popular vote (though he himself returned as prime minister), Najib recalibrated his political strategy and began to play to the Malay gallery, including emphasizing Islam and making overtures to PAS.

UMNO leaders' support of a PAS-proposed parliamentary initiative to enhance the punitive power of the sharia courts appeared to have created high expectations among PAS leaders convinced they could push their advantage further (Ting 2017). Hoping to play the role of kingmaker in the 2018 general elections, they decided to contest as linchpin of a third bloc, named Gagasan Sejahtera, fielding candidates in an unprecedented 157 seats nationwide. This extraordinary PAS effort appeared to be orchestrated by Najib, as a shrewd move to split opposition support by increasing the number of three-cornered contests, in which incumbents have usually prevailed in the past (Ting 2017). In the meantime, newly delineated electoral constituencies gazetted in 2018 increased the share of seats with high concentrations of Malay voters, such that almost two-thirds of the seats in the peninsula were at least 60 per cent Malay (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). This change, together with other measures, proved insufficient to stem the tide of opposition against BN. BN lost federal power for the first time, after six decades of political dominance. As Tables 4.3 and 4.4 make plain, PH has replaced BN as the main beneficiary of cross-ethnic vote-pooling.

It may be seen in Table 4.3 that a majority of BN candidates (107 seats of 165 the coalition contested in West Malaysia) received less than 40 per cent of the popular vote. BN candidates fared especially poorly in three-cornered fights with PAS and PH candidates, winning only six of these contests. BN candidates were relatively more successful when contesting in seats with 80

per cent or more Malay voters. They won 27 out of 50 such contests, although they secured less than a majority even in most of these seats. This pattern offers a clear indication that BN has lost its political appeal and identity as a multiethnic coalition.

Table 4.3 Ethnic distribution of BN electoral support in Peninsular Malaysia (2018)[7]

Malay voters (%)	Voter support for BN (%)						Total seats contested	Total seats won
	<20	20–39.9	40–49.9	50–59.9	60–79.9	80–99.9		
0–19.9	12						12	0
20–39.9	9	7	2				18	1
40–59.9	6	19	7	1			33	3
60–79.9		35	16	1			52	18
80–99.9		19	23	5	3		50	27
Total	27	80	48	7	3		165	49

The electoral results affirmed voters' perception of PH as a multiethnic coalition (albeit also one that performed best in overwhelmingly non-Malay seats), and showed BN to be, in practice, a Malay-based coalition. This transformation was responsible for the electoral victory of PH, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Ethnic distribution of Pakatan Harapan electoral support in Peninsular Malaysia (2018)

Malay voters (%)	Voter support for PH (%)						Total seats contested	Total seats won
	<20	20–39.9	40–49.9	50–59.9	60–79.9	80–99.9		
0–19.9						12	12	12
20–39.9		1	1	2	12	2	18	17
40–59.9		1	9	11	11		32	29
60–79.9		15	24	12	1		52	34
80–99.9	30	15	4	1			50	5
Total	30	32	38	26	24	14	164	97

PH swept up most seats less than 60 per cent Malay, while winning 34 of the 52 seats with between 60 and 80 per cent Malay voters. It is only in the category of seats more than 80 per cent Malay that its performance was

lacklustre. This pattern of performance, in effect, mirrors the BN's electoral performance in 1999: strong results within the middle range, seats with less than 80 per cent of voters of a single ethnicity (cf. Table 4.2). Nonetheless, in order to examine the extent to which PH's component parties (in this case, specifically DAP) benefitted from cross-ethnic vote-pooling, it is necessary to examine the ethnic distribution of the popular vote for MCA and DAP.

The following section will examine the extent of the shift in cross-ethnic vote-pooling in contests involving the two strongest Chinese-based parties, MCA and DAP. The analysis compares the parties' performance in the 2004 general elections, when MCA was at its peak, and the 2018 general elections, when MCA was wiped out except for one narrowly won seat.

Cross-ethnic Vote-pooling for MCA and DAP: 2004 and 2018 Compared

2004 General Election

The 2004 general election saw MCA's political fortune reaching new heights. The party won 31 out of the 40 parliamentary seats and 75 out of the 90 state seats it contested (Abdul Rashid and Tunku Mohar 2006: 330).[8]

Table 4.5 Ethnic distribution of MCA electoral support in relation to the Malay electorate in Peninsular Malaysia (2004)

Malay voters (%)	Voter support for MCA (%)						Total seats contested	Total seats won
	<20	20–39.9	40–49.9	50–59.9	60–79.9	80–99.9		
0–19.9		4	5		1		10	1
20–39.9			1	2	8		11	11
40–59.9				1	16	2	19	19
Total		4	6	3	25	2	40	31

Table 4.5 tabulates the percentage of the popular vote MCA candidates obtained, by the proportion of Malay voters per constituency. MCA contested 40 seats, in all of which Malay voters constituted less than 60 per cent of the electorate. It performed poorly only in seats with less than 20 per cent Malay voters—in other words, in overwhelmingly non-Malay seats. Half of the seats MCA contested (19) were seats in which Malay and non-Malay voters were more or less evenly distributed (40–60 per cent Malay). It is notable that MCA was 100 per cent successful in the 30 seats with 20–60 per cent Malay

voters, winning at least 60 per cent of the popular vote in all but four of them. Hence it is clear that MCA candidates received substantial support from both Malay and non-Malay voters, benefiting from voters' goodwill towards Abdullah Badawi.

DAP, on the other hand, was far less successful in the 2004 general elections. DAP was contesting separately from Keadilan and PAS, and even contested against Keadilan in four seats. DAP won only 11 out of the 36 parliamentary seats it contested in West Malaysia (Table 4.6). It was only 100 per cent successful in the five seats with less than 10 per cent Malay voters. DAP even lost two of the eight seats it contested with between 10 and 20 per cent Malay voters.

Table 4.6 Ethnic distribution of DAP electoral support in relation to the Malay electorate in Peninsular Malaysia (2004)

Malay voters (%)	Voter support for DAP (%)						Total seats contested	Total seats won
	<20	20–39.9	40–49.9	50–59.9	60–79.9	80–99.9		
0–9.9				3	2		5	5
10–19.9		2	2	4			8	6
20–29.9		2	2				4	0
30–39.9		10	2				12	0
40–49.9		5					5	0
50–59.9	2						2	0
Total	2	19	6	7	2		36	11

Table 4.7 calculates the average vote MCA obtained in one-on-one contests against DAP, Keadilan, or PAS. (The number of seats each pair contested is in parentheses.)

In contests between MCA and DAP, MCA's vote share increased in direct proportion to the share of Malay voters (Table 4.7). In other words, when given the choice between DAP and MCA candidates, Malay voters were likely to vote for the latter, a case of cross-ethnic vote-pooling due to MCA's being part of BN.

Interestingly, this trend was reversed when MCA candidates faced off with the Malay-led multiethnic Keadilan as the opponent (also Table 4.7). MCA's vote share decreased as the proportion of Malay voters increased, which may indicate that more Malay voters preferred a Keadilan candidate to MCA than preferred a DAP candidate to MCA. Nonetheless, MCA candidates prevailed over Keadilan counterparts in all 12 such seats.

Table 4.7 MCA popular vote in relation to the size of the Malay electorate in two-way contests (2004)

Malay voters (%)	Average popular vote for MCA (%)*		
	MCA v. DAP (23)	MCA v. Keadilan (12)	MCA v. PAS (4)
0–9.9	38.0		
10–19.9	47.4		
20–29.9	56.6		
30–39.9	60.8	74.6	
40–49.9	68.9	68.1	
50–59.9	79.2	63.7	72.7

Note: *Average popular votes are calculated based on the total number of votes cast (inclusive of spoilt votes).

In four constituencies, all with a bare majority of Malay voters, MCA candidates engaged in one-on-one contests with PAS candidates. The MCA performed particularly well in these ethnically balanced seats (their electorates averaged 54.2 per cent Malay) against PAS candidates, polling an average of 72.7 per cent. If a Keadilan candidate could attract more Malay votes than MCA in a direct contest, a PAS candidate contesting against MCA should arguably have received as much if not even more Malay support. Hence MCA's excellent performance in these seats was likely due in part to increased support from Chinese voters, responding to a choice between PAS and MCA.

Similar analysis of the performance of DAP against MCA, Gerakan, and MIC in straight contests for the 2004 general elections (Table 4.8) indicates that DAP commanded only slightly over half the Chinese community's support. Hence, the DAP could not sustain its advantage over MCA in constituencies with less than 70 per cent Chinese voters.

Table 4.8 DAP popular vote in relation to the size of the Chinese electorate in two-way contests (2004)

Chinese voters (%)	Average popular vote obtained by DAP (%)*		
	DAP v. MCA (23)	DAP v. Gerakan (6)	DAP v. MIC (2)
90–99.9		49.7	
80–89.9	61.1	54.4	
70–79.9	50.8	40.4	
60–69.9	45.4	62.0	
50–59.9	33.7	25.2	

Table 4.8 (*cont'd*)

Chinese voters (%)	Average popular vote obtained by DAP (%)*		
	DAP v. MCA (23)	DAP v. Gerakan (6)	DAP v. MIC (2)
40–49.9	29.4	27.9	35.0**
30–39.9	18.8		26.1**

Notes: *Average popular votes are calculated based on the total number of votes cast (inclusive of spoilt votes)

**This seat, Cameron Highlands in Pahang, is especially mixed, with an almost even proportion of Chinese and Malay voters as well as 16 per cent each Indian and Orang Asli voters.

The 2018 General Election

As shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, the ethnic distribution of electoral support between BN and PH reversed in the 14th general election. Tables 4.9 and 4.10 present the shift in ethnic support for MCA and DAP candidates respectively. What is notable for the MCA is its shrinking support among both Malay and Chinese voters: about half its candidates could not obtain even 20 per cent of the popular vote. DAP, on the other hand, largely withstood the dilution of Malay opposition votes by PAS candidates and managed to make much greater inroads into mixed seats than in 2004.[9]

Table 4.9 Ethnic distribution of MCA electoral support in Peninsular Malaysia (2018)

Malay voters (%)	Voter support for MCA (%)						Total seats contested	Total seats won
	<20	20–39.9	40–49.9	50–59.9	60–79.9	80–99.9		
0–19.9	9						9	0
20–39.9	5	4	1				10	0
40–59.9	5	9	3				17	1
60–79.9		3					3	0
Total	19	16	4				39	1

In 2018, PAS's strategy of fielding candidates in a large number of seats in West Malaysia as vote-spoilers resulted in a great number of three-cornered contests with BN and PH. PAS candidates were able to attract sufficient Malay votes to affect some electoral outcomes. All fourth-party or independent candidates obtained less than 2 per cent of votes cast, except in the seat of Batu. There, the disqualified Keadilan candidate, Chua Tian Chang, endorsed

an independent, who won. Hence for simplicity, we exclude these additional candidates, focusing only on DAP, MCA, and PAS. Only 12 of the 39 seats MCA contested were one-on-one contests between MCA and DAP, while another 12 seats were MCA-DAP-PAS three-cornered contests. MCA faced off against Keadilan or Bersatu and PAS in its other 15 seats. In all one-on-one contests against MCA, DAP was triumphant, while in three-cornered fights, DAP lost one seat (Ayer Hitam) to MCA. Table 4.11 indicates the proportion of the popular vote MCA and DAP each obtained in their 12 one-on-one contests, in relation to the proportion of Chinese voters in these seats.

Table 4.10 Ethnic distribution of DAP electoral support in Peninsular Malaysia (2018)

Malay voters (%)	Voter support for DAP (%)					Total seats contested	Total seats won
	30–39.9	40–49.9	50–59.9	60–79.9	80–99.9		
0–9.9					5	5	5
10–19.9					7	7	7
20–29.9				6	1	7	7
30–39.9	1		2	5		8	7
40–49.9		1	3	2		6	6
50–59.9		2				2	1
Total	1	3	5	13	13	35	33

A cursory look at Table 4.11 suggests that at least some DAP candidates received substantial Malay support. Nonetheless, it is impossible to get an accurate assessment of the proportion of Malay support each candidate received in any given seat without polling station data more detailed than are available.

Table 4.11 Vote share in relation to the size of the Chinese electorate in DAP-MCA two-way contests (2018)

% Chinese voters	Average popular vote (%)*	
	MCA	DAP
80–89.9 (2)	10.5	89.5
70–79.9 (6)	14.7	84.7
60–69.9 (2)	12.0	87.7
57.11 (1)	26.0	72.7
49.79 (1)	30.8	69.2

Note: *Average popular votes are calculated based on the total number of votes cast (inclusive of spoilt votes).

Following Ratnam and Milne's precedent (1967, 1970), we can compute a rough estimate of Malay support based on the following assumptions. First, we assume the turnout rate to be more or less the same for all ethnic groups.[10] Secondly, Merdeka Center reportedly found that 95 per cent of Chinese voters voted for PH while 70–75 per cent of Indian voters supported PH. On the other hand, 35–40 per cent of Malay voters reportedly supported BN, while another 30–33 per cent supported PAS, and only the remaining 25–30 per cent voted for PH (*Malaysian Insight* 2018). These rates presumably vary depending on the seat, candidate, and opponent party involved. Given a choice, a Malay voter would arguably be the least inclined to support a DAP candidate among the four component parties of PH. Hence we estimate Malay support in DAP-MCA straight fights as well as in three-cornered DAP-MCA-PAS contests by assuming that 95 per cent of Chinese voters and 75 per cent of Indian voters voted for DAP.[11]

In the one-to-one contests, we calculated the proportion of Malay support for MCA and DAP separately. First, we estimated the number of non-Malay voters who supported the respective candidates (based on the two aforementioned assumptions) in each of the 12 seats, and derived each candidate's estimated number of Malay votes by deducting those non-Malay votes from the total votes each candidate obtained. Since we know the ethnic breakdown of voters in each constituency, we can express our estimated Malay vote in terms of the percentage of Malay support.[12] Table 4.12 lists the computed percentage of Malay support for each MCA and DAP candidate.

The percentages of Malay support for DAP and MCA should sum to 100 per cent; that they do not, coming within 2 per cent of the mark in only five constituencies, confirms that the ratio of support by ethnic group varied across seats, likely due to local features or issues. Nonetheless, the figures give a rough idea of the distribution of Malay votes. Estimated support for MCA ranges from 24.0 to 69.4 per cent, with an average of 52.1 per cent, while that for DAP hovers between 19.8[13] and 81.2 per cent, with an average of 50.2 per cent. In other words, Malay support for DAP and MCA appears to be quite evenly split, albeit with a slight edge for MCA. This indicates a greatly enhanced acceptance of DAP candidates among Malay voters on Peninsular Malaysia's west coast (where these constituencies are located). This shift is quite an achievement for DAP, which UMNO has demonised for decades as anti-Malay.

Table 4.12 Estimation of Malay support in MCA-DAP contests* (2018)

Constituency	Malay (%)	Chinese (%)	Indian (%)	MCA votes	DAP votes	% Malay support for MCA based on MCA vote (A) (%)	% Malay support for DAP based on DAP vote (B) (%)	(A)+(B)
Cheras	9.7	82.9	6.7	7,006	56,671	53.4	53.4	106.8
Seputeh	9.0	82.0	7.9	7,035	63,094	43.8	67.9	111.7
Bukit Bintang	12.5	75.1	11.0	7,256	44,516	58.7	42.8	101.5
Batu Gajah	10.0	75.0	14.6	8,982	52,850	69.4	19.8	89.2
Bukit Gelugor	14.3	73.9	11.3	9,671	65,622	43.7	56.3	100.0
Ipoh Timur	21.0	72.0	6.4	13,722	56,519	68.3	34.6	102.9
Bagan	13.4	71.3	15.0	7,751	51,653	42.6	57.7	100.3
Bukit Mertajam	19.3	70.4	10.0	10,907	63,784	44.5	57.4	101.9
Damansara	19.7	69.4	9.4	14,380	121,283	24.0	81.3	105.3
Ipoh Barat	11.8	63.2	24.4	9,889	55,613	49.3	55.7	105.0
Kota Melaka	37.4	57.1	4.0	27,343	76,518	59.1	41.2	100.3
Iskandar Puteri	36.7	49.8	12.5	35,862	80,726	68.6	34.4	103.0

Note: * Based on the assumption that DAP obtained 95 per cent of Chinese votes and 75 per cent of Indian votes.

In three-cornered fights, when PAS intervened, it can be safely assumed that its candidates attracted almost 100 per cent of Malay voters. In the absence of a PAS candidate, strongly anti-BN Malay voters would have voted for DAP while those who were strongly anti-DAP would have voted for MCA. A comparison of the average popular votes MCA and DAP each obtained in one-on-one (Table 4.11) versus three-cornered contests (Table 4.13), given a similar Chinese share of the electorate, indicates that both parties lost Malay votes to PAS: both obtained lower average popular votes when PAS also contested.

Table 4.13 Vote share in relation to the Chinese electorate in MCA-DAP-PAS three-cornered contests (2018)

Chinese voters (%)	**Average popular vote (%)***		
	MCA	**DAP**	**PAS**
50–59.9 (4)	23.1	67.5	8.3
40–49.9 (4)	29.9	59.3	9.4
30–39.9 (4)	23.5	58.1	17.3

Note: *Average popular votes are calculated based on the total number of votes cast (inclusive of spoilt votes).

Table 4.14 estimates Malay support for MCA and DAP in the 12 three-cornered contests, based on the same twin assumptions as in the one-on-one contests, but assuming also that PAS derived its support solely from Malays. Three of the constituencies in Table 4.14 (Kampar, Labis, and Bentong) stand out, as our estimated rate of Malay support for DAP in each is in the negative. In Bentong, MCA president Liow Tiong Lai, who had held the seat for four terms and was a long-time minister, contested; Labis was contested by two-term incumbent Chua Tee Yong, who is an MCA vice president and was the deputy minister for international trade and industry. The MCA candidate for Kampar, Lee Chee Leong, is another vice president of the party and was a four-term state assemblyperson from 1990 to 2004. He won the Kampar parliamentary seat in 2008 and was appointed a deputy minister during that term. The year 2018 marked his second unsuccessful attempt to retake Kampar. The identities of these candidates make it likely that they would have received a much higher proportion of Chinese support than just the 5 per cent otherwise assumed. The resulting overestimation of Chinese votes for the DAP in these seats yields an underestimation of Malay support.

Table 4.14 Estimation of Malay support in MCA-DAP-PAS contests (2018)

Constituency	Malay (%)	Chinese (%)	Indian (%)	MCA	DAP	PAS	PAS support (A) (%)	Malay support for DAP (B) (%)	Malay support for MCA (C) (%)	(A)+(B)+(C)
Klang	26.4	55.3	17.1	19,506	98,279	9,169	27.0	42.7	30.9	100.6
Rasah	29.7	47.8	21.0	14,939	61,806	8,260	32.3	35.3	32.6	100.2
Kulai	35.0	54.0	0.4	22,564	55,312	6,667	22.3	37.3	67.4	127.0
Kluang	41.6	47.5	9.4	24,618	47,671	8,242	24.3	15.3	61.3	100.9
Bakri	44.2	53.1	2.2	15,507	38,718	7,575	27.4	22.4	48.9	98.8
Seremban	48.4	36.8	13.3	24,809	55,503	11,506	25.6	30.8	44.6	101.0
Bangi	48.5	39.0	11.1	19,766	102,557	33,789	44.3	40.8	16.1	101.2
Raub	52.1	38.1	6.2	17,500	20,659	7,866	32.3	6.4	65.2	103.9
Ayer Hitam	57.7	38.0	4.0	17,076	16,773	4,975	21.9	6.1	70.2	98.2
Kampar	33.4	55.4	9.2	18,415	30,216	3,864	21.7	–8.5	88.2	
Labis	38.0	44.9	14.7	13,567	16,977	2,034	16.2	–6.2	92.4	
Bentong	46.5	41.7	9.2	23,684	25,716	5,706	22.0	–1.0	81.7	

The estimated Malay support for DAP in two other seats, Ayer Hitam and Raub, is only around 6 per cent, far below the figures for other seats. Contesting in these two seats were, respectively, Wee Ka Siong, the constituency's three-term incumbent and the MCA deputy president; and Chew Mei Fun, a vice-president of MCA and formerly a deputy minister. Both these candidates probably received more than 5 per cent of Chinese votes, too. During the campaign, MCA had attacked DAP for wanting to get rid of Chinese representation in the cabinet, based on the assumption that BN would be returned as the federal government, but without Chinese representatives to take up ministerial portfolios. A higher rate of Chinese support for MCA would have similarly reduced the DAP's share of Chinese votes below our rule-of-thumb percentage, causing us to underestimate Malay support there.

For all seats apart from those five, rates of Malay support for the two parties tally to close to 100 per cent, deviating by less than 2 per cent in all except Kulai (Table 4.14). If we exclude the aforementioned five 'anomalous' seats (in which we might have cause to expect a higher than average level of Chinese support for MCA), the average Malay support by party is, respectively, 43.1 per cent for MCA, 29.0 per cent for PAS, and 32.1 per cent for DAP. It is interesting that, in this case, DAP obtained a higher slice of the Malay vote than PAS, though trailing behind MCA. Some scholars have noted the lack of significant hardcore Malay support for PAS in the west-coast states such as Selangor and Johor. This pattern may also indicate substantial numbers of Malay voters not averse to the DAP and determined to get Najib out of the office by supporting PH, via a DAP candidate or otherwise. Granted, this pattern of support is specific to the situation on the west coast of peninsular Malaysia; none of these seats were on the PAS-leaning east coast.

Conclusion

Before election day in 2018, there was a general consensus among political analysts and pollsters that BN would definitely have lost the election had PAS stayed in the opposition coalition and contested against BN on a one-on-one basis. The economic hardship ordinary voters had experienced due to rising costs of living, despite reported economic growth; the numerous financial improprieties happening in government agencies and reported or leaked to the media (with the 1MDB scandal the most momentous); and the spread of information critical of the government via the internet and social media that could not be censored effectively were key factors contributing to rejection of BN. On the ethnic front, Najib's playing of ethnic and religious cards to shore

up his political credentials among Malay voters and his cordial relationship with PAS national leaders had the reverse effect of driving away non-Malay fence-sitters. The only uncertainty was the effect of having so many three-cornered contests, which were presumed able to dilute Malay opposition votes to the advantage of UMNO. This apparent strategy seems to have succeeded: PH received a lower share of Malay votes than PAS or UMNO, especially on the east coast of the peninsula. However, as detailed above, Malay support for PH on the west coast was uneven, but could reach high levels even where PH fielded DAP candidates, to the extent of exceeding Malay support for PAS in some constituencies. In addition, overwhelming non-Malay support, even when non-Malays did not constitute a majority of voters, was crucial in ensuring PH's victory.

Horowitz's (1985) notion of a multiethnic coalition provides a useful lens through which to understand electoral politics in Malaysia. Cross-ethnic vote-pooling has provided an important electoral incentive for interethnic conciliation and cooperation despite deep ethnic cleavages in the society. Horowitz (2014) categorizes the Malaysian case as centripetal, a model encouraging interethnic power sharing, but has cautioned against its susceptibility to degradation over time, as the initial conditions that had encouraged voluntary interethnic cooperation may decline in importance or disappear over time. Many observers, including Horowitz (2014) himself, have noted that the BN formula of interethnic power sharing and conciliation has deteriorated and become increasingly ineffectual due to the overbearing domination of UMNO leaders. The outcome of the 2018 general elections seems to demonstrate that the centripetal impetus in Malaysian politics remains resilient, in the sense that a contender for federal power can succeed only if it commands sufficient support from both sides of the ethnic divide. PH's ability to foster such multiethnic consensus contributed to the demise of BN.

DAP had benefitted from cross-ethnic vote-pooling as a component party of PH. While PH's other component parties are mainly Malay-based (Keadilan's multiethnic membership notwithstanding), a professedly noncommunal DAP is not content to remain as a Chinese-based party, and internal debates on the right approach to cultivate a friendly image among Malay voters have been ongoing since the 2013 elections. Since its significant electoral gains in 2008 (see Table 4.1), DAP managed to retain and expand its support among non-Malay voters, in part thanks to Najib's political manoeuvres, which unwittingly further solidified Chinese rejection of BN. DAP has also been attempting to reach out to Malay voters and has been fielding more Malay candidates. In

their public statements, DAP leaders have consciously emphasized seeing themselves first and foremost as Malaysian citizens, albeit without denying their cultural identity as Chinese. During the campaign, DAP candidates also tried to woo Malay voters by showcasing the decade-long track record of the DAP-led Penang state government, which had not neglected the welfare of the Malay community or the state Islamic bureaucracy. Moreover, DAP's decision to set aside its rocket symbol to adopt a common logo for electoral contests was not without strong objections from some of the party's grassroots leaders, but might well have helped some Malay voters to overcome psychological barriers to supporting a DAP candidate.

Horowitz (1985: 410) remarks that the emergence of genuine competition between two multiethnic parties or alliances would be an indication either of 'the presence of broad sectors of moderate opinion' or that 'ethnic divisions were declining in importance'. We are now at a juncture, waiting to see whether BN as an opposition multiethnic coalition will survive until the next general elections. It should be borne in mind that conditions in Malaysian society are no longer the same as they were during the 1950s and 1960s. Socio-economic inequality, despite its persistence, no longer corresponds so clearly with ethnicity and the urban–rural divide, nor does the urban–rural divide itself follow such stark ethnic lines as in the past. How likely is it now that Malaysian politics will stabilise around PH and BN, sustaining two multiethnic coalitions? Within mere months after the elections, BN appeared to be rapidly disintegrating, losing parties and seeing component parties contest by-elections under their own flags, while the new UMNO leadership had gone even further than under Najib toward forging a closer connection with PAS. The new UMNO president, who seems reticent to distance himself from Najib and has dismissed the allegations of Najib's wrongdoings as political persecution, appears to be preoccupied with recuperating the party's lost Malay support rather than carrying out any soul-searching within BN on what went wrong. Given the fragmented nature of Malay voters in particular on the west coast, UMNO may end up like PAS, as an ethnic flank party, playing the role of the opposition, except if PH breaks up. Those leaders within both UMNO and PAS who recognise that building a multiethnic coalition and moderating their ethnic position could offer a more feasible path (back) to Putrajaya remain a minority. The prospect of a stable two-multiethnic-coalition political system remains uncertain.

Notes

[1] Known as peninsular Malaysia or West Malaysia after it joined with Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore to form Malaysia in 1963.

[2] MCA and MIC changed the word 'Malayan' to 'Malaysian' after the formation of Malaysia.

[3] Keadilan was renamed Parti Keadilan Rakyat in 2003, after merging with Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

[4] This chapter confines its analysis to peninsular Malaysia, due to the fact that the analytical framework applied here does not work in Sabah and Sarawak, both of which have much more complex ethnic compositions and fluid electoral dynamics than peninsular Malaysia. In addition, there are no strictly race-based political parties there in terms of membership, even though UMNO had established a strong grassroots presence in Sabah.

[5] Unless stated otherwise, the tables are computed by the author from raw data, using Excel. The author wishes to express her appreciation to Wong Chin Huat and Kenneth Cheng of Penang Institute for kindly providing election data for 2004, 2008, and 2018. Data on the ethnic composition of constituencies in 2004 come from undi.info. 2018 data were compiled by Kenneth Cheng from https://election.thestar.com.my/.

[6] This was partly due to the last-minute withdrawal of Parti Bersatu Sabah from the BN, depriving the BN of the opportunity to contest in 14 seats in Sabah (SIRD 2000).

[7] In all tables that compute the ethnic distribution of electoral support for specific parties or coalitions, the percentages of electoral support listed are per the total number of ballots issued.

[8] The MCA's share of parliamentary seats was actually larger in 1995, as the 30 seats it then held were out of a total of only 144 seats (Table 4.1).

[9] DAP's performance improved slightly in 40–60 per cent Malay seats, from winning 3 out of 6 contested in 2013 to 7 out of 8 contested in 2018. Nonetheless, some of the candidates may have been incumbents in locations the ethnic profile of which changed due to migration or the delineation exercise.

[10] The 27 seats with 90 per cent or more Malay voters had an average turnout rate of 82.4 per cent. The average turnout rate in the 4 seats with more than 80 per cent Chinese voters (no seats top 90 per cent Chinese in West Malaysia) was 82.2 per cent. The two figures are near enough to justify the assumption of equal turnout rates across ethnic groups.

[11] As the extent of Malay support is computed here by deducting the share of non-Malay supporters from the total vote the candidate obtained, setting the Indian support rate at 75 per cent rather than 70 per cent would give a lower estimate of Malay support for DAP. This rough estimate is not able to account for the variation in Chinese and Indian support rates in different constituencies, which is clear from the last column of Table 4.12.

[12] The equations for the calculation of the proportion of Malay voters supporting, respectively, a DAP and MCA candidate are: $[tv_{DAP} - (95\% \times v\%_{Chinese} \times tvc) - (75\% \times v\%_{Indian} \times tvc)] / v\%_{Malay} \times tvc$; and $[tv_{MCA} - (5\% \times v\%_{Chinese} \times tvc) - (25\% \times v\%_{Indian} \times tvc)]$

/ $v\%_{\text{Malay}}$ x *tvc*, where $v\%_{\text{n}}$ is percentage of electorate of *n* ethnicity, tv_{m} is total number of votes *m* party obtained, and *tvc* is total votes cast.

[13] It is plausible that the unusually low estimated rate of Malay support for the DAP in the constituency of Batu Gajah results from higher than average Chinese support for the specific MCA candidate, as discussed below. But this cannot be ascertained with the available evidence.

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5

Politics of Reform and the Triumph of Pakatan Harapan: Continuity in Change

Johan Saravanamuttu

This chapter argues that progressive steps along a path valorised by institutional, ideological, and programmatic developments will lead to increasing returns on that path. Specifically, it posits that the outcome of the 14th general election in Malaysia (GE14) was on such a path. A path-dependence approach serves to illuminate trajectories of electoral successes and also explains how electoral successes are continued and enhanced. Such an approach draws from the seminal work of Paul Pierson (2000, 2004)[1] who adapted notions used in economics and business studies to the analysis of politics. Path-dependence theorizing puts the accent on the potential for progressive institutional change in contrast to a broad genre of work that stresses the authoritarian stability and resilience (Slater 2010) of 'semi-democracies' like Malaysia (Case 1993). In my own earlier work, I have tried to show the relevance of path dependence in framing a trajectory of democratization in Malaysian electoral politics (Saravanamuttu 2012 and 2016: 12–13). The present essay on the outcome of GE14 draws on this previous work, which argued that such a process was path-dependent and largely substantiated by a new politics of reform that has driven electoral change and transition since the late 1990s.

An important notion of path-dependence theory is 'first-mover advantage' (FMA), normally used in business studies to refer to the technological advantage of a pioneering firm or a new entrant in a field of enterprise. Coupled with FMA is the notion of 'increasing returns', which, in brief, refers to the probability that further steps along a particular path tend to lead to increases down that path (Pierson 2000). Both concepts are central

to path-dependence theorizing. The Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) achieved electoral successes for some six decades by the fact that its policies of ethnic power-sharing were on a trajectory of increasing returns, capitalizing on actions and policies which were electorally successful and which further enhanced the coalition's model of multiethnic politics. Such path-dependent success continued in spite of ruptures of the hegemonic Malay bloc in 1969 caused by the 13 May racial riots, the 1987 internal United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) elite struggles leading to the formation of 'UMNO Baru' (New UMNO) by Mahathir Mohamad, and Anwar Ibrahim's 1998 sacking from UMNO, leading to the Reformasi movement.

Overcoming major political ruptures was made possible by the BN's earlier well-managed and well-executed mediated communalism.[2] Mediated communalism is defined as a process or political stratagem of power-sharing that softens the most extreme ethnic, religious, and cultural demands and presses its actors towards win-win or variable-sum outcomes rather than zero-sum ones. As the idea of mediated communalism implies, consociational arrangements (Lijphart 1977) and centripetal policies (Reilly 2006) function to create bridging rather than just bonding dimensions of ethnic relations.[3] The notion of mediated communalism incorporates various forms of bridging arrangements in social policies as a stratagem for electoral success, concomitantly moving political actions and outcomes to a moderate centre. The BN's model of mediated communalism was effective up until 2008 but was increasingly hobbled by UMNO dominance and Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) weakness and, moreover, was severely challenged when the opposition coalition began to deploy a similar stratagem (Saravanamuttu 2016: 10–12).

The first serious rupture of the BN's path-dependent success due to eroded multiethnic support occurred in the landmark 2008 general election. The ruling coalition lost its two-thirds command of parliamentary seats and five state governments fell to the opposition coalition, subsequently formalized as Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Pact), leading to the emergence of an incipient 'twin-coalition' party politics (Saravanamuttu 2012: 103–7). As suggested above, the opposition alliance had developed its own effective politics of mediated communalism that was further mediated or influenced by a 'new politics' that valorised citizens' participation (Loh and Saravanamuttu 2003; Weiss 2009). The two-coalition system prevailed until the 2013 general election, when BN lost the popular vote to its nemesis, PR.

Thus, it would be fair to say that both BN and the successor to PR, Pakatan Harapan (PH, Alliance of Hope), have been heirs to major multiethnic

coalitions of electoral politics, one with a longer path-dependent success than the other, although the latter was ascendant. While the BN model dates back to the 1959 general election and its progenitor coalition, the Alliance, the PH model had its genesis in the Reformasi movement of 1998. While the BN's legacy and domination of Malaysian electoral politics had thus spanned some six decades, its loss of FMA in 2008, reinforced in 2013, led to its ultimate defeat in 2018. As will be shown, a comprehensive vote swing of about 19 percentage points against BN, including votes for PAS (Parti Islam SeMalaysia, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) and its Gagasan Sejahtera coalition, as well as Parti Warisan Sabah (Sabah Heritage Party, Warisan), translated to approximately 66 per cent of the popular votes going against the BN. Extrapolating ethnic patterns from overall electoral results on the peninsula and plausible survey research, such as from the Merdeka Center, suggests that more than 90 per cent of Chinese, around 60–70 per cent of Indians, and between 25–40 per cent of Malays voted for regime change, depending on the electoral terrain one analyses.[4]

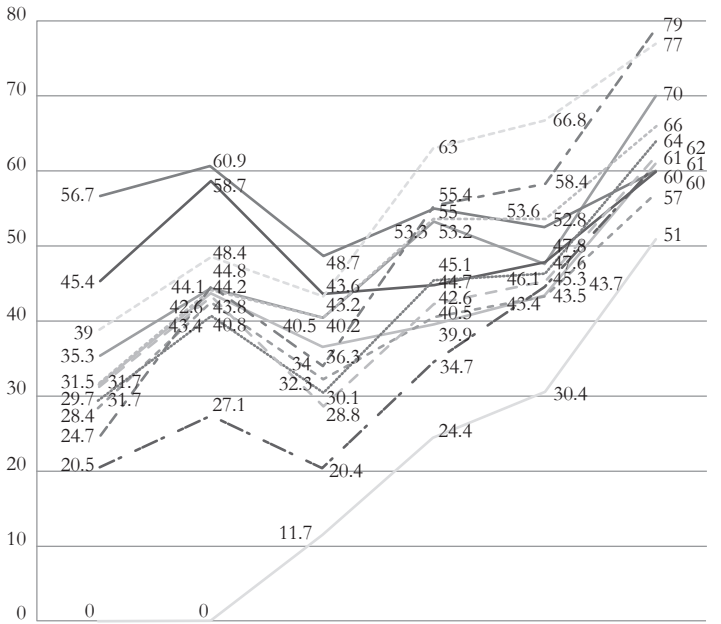
Chart 5.1 shows the trend line of parliamentary elections for peninsular states since 1995. The path-dependent character of the swing of votes against BN is evident from 2008 onwards, as I suggested earlier. What is remarkable is that the swing from 2013 to 2018 occurred in all states, tipping the scales such that more than half the voters in each state—even in the federal territory of Putrajaya, which comprises mainly civil servants—voted against the BN. The massive swing in votes in Malaysia's two most urban states of Selangor (79 per cent) and Penang (77 per cent) and in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (80 per cent) presages a trend that will be hard to overturn in the next election and possibly well beyond that.

The second set of charts (Charts 5.2 and 5.3) shows the overall vote-shares of the two main coalitions and of PAS and Warisan. It should be noted that PH only won about 46 per cent of the overall vote and thereby is the beneficiary of a 'manufactured majority', that is, winning a majority of seats without winning the popular vote, as an artefact of the electoral system (Rae 1967: 74–7).[5] It is also evident that PAS has re-established itself as a strong third force in peninsular politics (Azmil 2018), as has Warisan as a new political force in Sabah, both drawing on stable bases of anti-BN voters.

The three-way fragmentation of Malay voters had a major impact on GE14 and will be analysed fully in a later section. PAS's splitting of Malay votes affected BN more than it did PH. PAS supporters largely perceived PAS as in 'opposition' to BN despite evidence that there may have been UMNO–PAS elite collusion. As such, PAS voters eroded BN strength in three-cornered and multicornered contests. Thus, BN faced three strong rivals: PH in the west-coast

states, PAS in the east-coast states, and Warisan in Sabah. These coalitions' and parties' capture of new state governments follows a trajectory of popular-vote swings after 2008. PAS's departure from the previous opposition coalition, PR, did not affect its fortunes in Kelantan and Terengganu. However, that PH split the Malay vote in these two states did contribute to a more comprehensive defeat of UMNO by PAS.

Chart 5.1 Popular votes against BN in Peninsular states, 1995–2018



	1995	1999	2004	2008	2013	2018
Perlis	31.5	43.8	36.3	39.9	43.5	61
Kedah	35.3	44.2	40.2	53.2	47.6	70
Kelantan	56.7	60.9	48.7	55	52.8	60
Terengganu	45.4	58.7	43.6	44.7	47.8	60
Penang	39	48.4	43.2	63	66.8	77
Perak	31.7	44.1	40.5	53.3	53.6	66
Pahang	28.4	42.6	32.3	40.5	43.4	57
Selangor	24.7	44.8	34	55.4	58.4	79
Putrajaya	0	0	11.7	24.4	30.4	51
N.Sembilan	29.7	40.8	30.1	45.1	46.1	64
Melaka	31.7	43.4	28.8	42.6	45.3	62
Johor	20.5	27.1	20.4	34.7	43.7	61

Reconstituting Reform Politics—Pakatan Harapan's Emergence

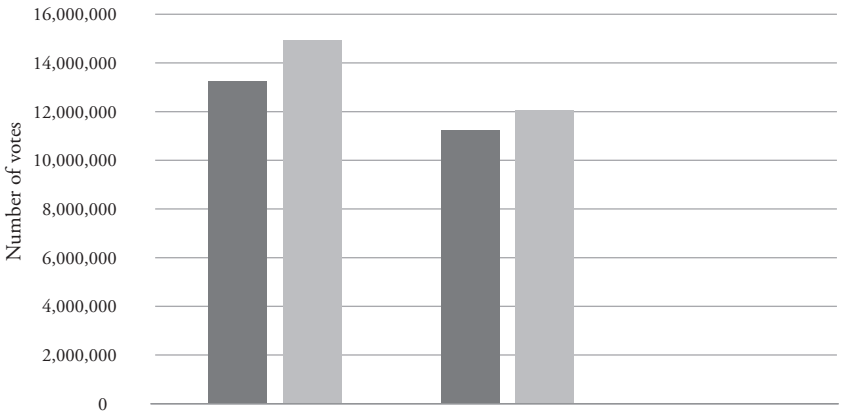
In this section I will attempt to show that progressive steps on a path valorised by institutional, ideological, and programmatic developments ultimately led to the PH's success. Opposition coalitions prior to the PH, including its progenitor PR, were unable to rupture the path-dependent success of BN because these dimensions of oppositional continuity were weak.

The 1999 formation of the Barisan Alternatif (BA) electoral coalition—comprising Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan, later renamed Parti Keadilan Rakyat or PKR), DAP, and PAS—provided the major thrust of path-dependent political-reform agendas on the electoral stage. Malaysia's electoral history has been strewn with shifts in and breakups of coalition politics from the 1950s onwards, but one major ruling coalition, the Alliance, emerged to dominate politics in the 1950s, succeeded by the Barisan Nasional from the 1970s to the early 2000s. This two-stage movement of BN-crafted politics created a path of electoral success premised on the BN's institutional strength and on its programmes and policies of ethnic accommodation, which I term mediated communalism. This trajectory of success has been difficult to displace. Considering the second stage, oppositional coalitions since the 1950s have lacked sustenance owing to failures in crafting coalition strategies, particularly with a view to establishing effective ways of accommodating ethnic differences for electoral success. Importantly, in the 1960s, the leftist Socialist Front coalition, comprising the Chinese-supported Labour Party and the Malay-based Parti Rakyat, mounted a veritable challenge and then self-destructed, not without considerable help from government repression, such as detentions under the Internal Security Act. In this case, ideological similitude was an inadequate factor to ensure the two left-leaning parties' coherence, in the face of the coalition's weak rural base.

Minor electoral pacts followed, but it was only in the 1990s that one saw the formation of fairly well-institutionalized opposition coalitions. One such attempt was the parallel formation of Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU, Muslim Unity Front) and Gagasan Rakyat (People's Might) for the 1990 election, bringing together Muslim and non-Muslim political parties into two electoral pacts. The inability of the pact to create a single coalition of political parties showed that ideological and religious differences obstructed the creation of the necessary institutional arrangement for a successful coalition. The much more formalized coalition of BA was cobbled together for the 1999 election and, in 2008 and 2013, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) presented a more institutionalized reform-oriented coalition that held firm until 2015. Even then, just as we witnessed the breakup of the BA on religious/ideological

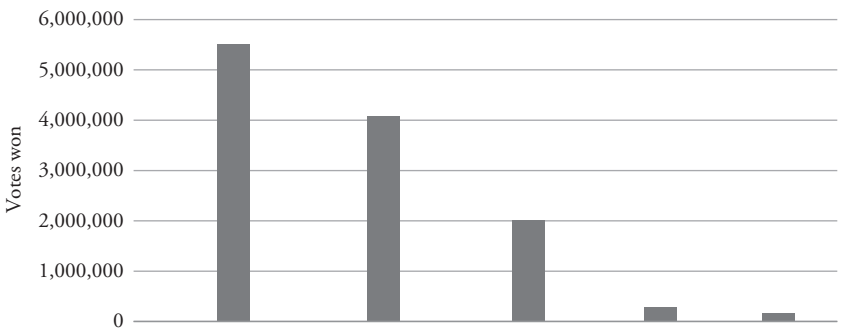
grounds when the DAP took issue with PAS's Islamism, the same issue led to the breakup of the PR in 2015. The reconstitution of PR as PH, however, enabled the opposition alliance to maintain effective institutional cohesion and to continue its agenda of reform politics in 2018.

Chart 5.2 Voter turnout in GE14 and GE13



	Total Voters	Total ballots cast	Turnout
2013	13,268,002	11,226,417	84.85%
2018	14,912,268	12,075,182	80.97%

Chart 5.3 Votes won by parties in GE14



	PH	BN	PAS	Warisan	Others
Votes	5,517,658	4,080,797	2,026,255	277,169	173,303
Percentage	45.69%	33.79%	16.78%	2.30%	1.44%

A series of political events eventually led to the first rebooting of the coalition pact that had been the BA as PR to contest the 2008 election. The PR coalition achieved a critical change in 2008, reinforced in 2013, namely, the denial of BN's two-thirds parliamentary majority. PR broke up in 2015, with the departure of PAS yet again, but that shift led to the extraordinary series of events culminating in the formation of Pakatan Harapan (PH), which perhaps could be conceived of as a rebooting of Pakatan Rakyat. A brief recounting of the developments leading to the breakup of PR is germane for comprehending the liminal nature of opposition coalition politics in Malaysia and why institutional and programmatic continuity is crucial to successful political coalitions.[6]

Politicking within the Pakatan alliance and other events linked to PAS and its growing spat with the DAP over *hudud* legislation, or Islamic criminal law, led to the formal breakup of the Opposition alliance in June 2015. First, a major internal PKR feud led to the so-called 'Kajang move', which saw Anwar's wife and PKR leader, Wan Azizah Ismail, elected to a Selangor state seat. This event left the PKR fairly intact, if still split by factionalism.[7] Things started unravelling for the PR when PAS indicated its intention in April 2014 to revive earlier efforts to implement *hudud* in Kelantan. PAS planned to introduce enabling legislation for *hudud* in Parliament. To aggravate matters, PAS sought the cooperation of the Najib government, which approved the setting up of a national-level technical committee, including PAS members, to study the long-term feasibility of *hudud*. The enabling legislation known as RUU355 (Act 355) was tabled in parliament in 2016 and amended that November. However, the controversial bill failed to see passage in the last sitting of parliament in 2018, which could be seen as a duplicitous tactic by BN to hurt PAS before GE14 (*The Star* 2018).[8]

Matters came to a head at the 61st PAS Muktamar (party congress), held from 3–6 June 2015. Abdul Hadi Awang retained the president's post easily despite a challenge from a relatively unknown opponent, and candidates of the *ulama* group won all major offices except for one. PAS moderates or 'progressives' were soundly defeated; in particular, Mohamad (Mat) Sabu lost the deputy presidency to Tuan Ibrahim, and others, like Husam Musa, Sallehudin Ayub, Dzulkifli Ahmad, and Khalid Samad, failed to retain or win any post. It was a devastating defeat for the 'Erdogans'[9] who had advocated strong Pakatan collaboration. Worse was to come for the fate of the opposition coalition when the Ulama Council passed a motion to sever ties with the DAP. In the aftermath of these results and the action of the Ulama Council, DAP Secretary General Lim Guan Eng announced on 16 June, after a meeting of the party's central committee, that the PR coalition was formally dead.[10]

With the results of the 61st Muktamar, which effectively disempowered PAS's moderate or progressive leaders, it seemed inevitable that another new organisation would be formed under the aegis of this group, with the prospect of eventually becoming an alternative Islamic party to PAS. This nascent political development came about by way of the formation of Gerakan Harapan Baru (New Hope Movement, GHB), led by former PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu. The new party would later be named Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, or National Trust Party). On 22 September 2015, the new opposition coalition was launched and renamed 'Pakatan Harapan' with the participation of PKR, the DAP and the new party, Amanah.

UMNO went into the throes of a major crisis as the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal unravelled in 2015 and 2016. Najib Razak was under the spotlight after revelations that a vast sum of money (at least RM2.6 billion) had found its way into his private bank account in 2013, allegedly to fund that year's BN election campaign.[11] This scrutiny led to unceasing intra-UMNO friction. The 2015 crisis for UMNO revolved around the 1MDB scandal and the debt of some RM42 billion the government-sponsored fund owed. In late July 2015, Najib, in a reshuffle of his cabinet, sacked his deputy, Muhyiddin Yassin (also deputy president of UMNO), and others critical of his handling of the 1MDB scandal. Kedah Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) Mukhriz Mahathir was removed and UMNO vice president for Sabah, Shafie Apdal, also lost his post. A host of reports and commentaries on the 1MDB scandal appeared, particularly in the portal, *Sarawak Report*. The business media company The Edge, which carried out investigations of its own into 1MDB, saw two of its publications, *The Edge Financial Daily* and *The Edge Weekly*, slapped with three-month suspensions in July. Malaysia's attorney general, Gani Patail, who had put together a task force to investigate possible malfeasance with respect to 1MDB, was summarily removed from office in July. Former judge Mohamed Apandi replaced Gani and cleared Najib of any wrongdoing connected to the 1MDB scandal in January 2016.

The series of events brought about the launching of a 'Citizens' Declaration' on 4 March 2016 calling for the removal of the incumbent prime minster, Najib Razak. The declaration was initiated by Mahathir Mohamad, who headed Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM or Bersatu), registered in September that year. The fact that Anwar Ibrahim, Mahathir's former deputy in UMNO and government, endorsed the declaration from his jail cell made the event even more bizarre. The coming together of opposition leaders and civil society actors with their long-time nemesis gave a new fillip to the politics of reform. Mahathir, in initiating the move, made it clear during the Q & A session that the primary goal of the Citizens' Declaration was the removal of Najib and his

toxic regime. Events just before the eve of GE14 saw the temporary suspension of Bersatu, which led to PH's highly important decision to use as its common logo that of PKR.

As can be seen from the foregoing account, the backdrop to GE14 was a fractious struggle in UMNO, causing the formation of Bersatu, which ultimately led to the strengthening of the PH coalition after PAS's damaging departure. UMNO feuding also led to the formation of Warisan in Sabah, mainly by Shafie, which in the aftermath of GE14, contributed to the severe collapse of BN coalition politics in the Borneo states. PH's triumph can be seen as continuing on the path of the two preceding elections, itself blazed by the Reformasi moment, which was a critical juncture in Malaysian politics. The reconstituted PH remained basically faithful to its reform agenda of combating corruption, symbolised by its making the 1MDB scandal the central plank of its campaign. PH largely maintained ideological and institutional continuity in the sense of retaining agendas of reform politics and institutional change, basically as advocated since the Reformasi movement. Control of state governments was crucial, particularly in Selangor and Penang. The two state governments had demonstrated 'increasing returns' to governance by posting annual surplus budgets, managing state corporations well, and introducing beneficial socioeconomic programmes, and thereby contributed to voters' confidence regarding PR's governance capability. It should be noted that neither state government escaped criticism from civil-society groups, such as for policies favouring housing developers (Penang) or poor water-management (Selangor). I would argue, nonetheless, that PR performance in these state governments on the whole ensured continuity on a path of reform politics and contributed a model of reformism that PH explicitly adopted in 2018. The adoption of a common logo was highly symbolic of the continuity of such reform politics.

Explanations of BN's defeat—Continuity in Change

Without a doubt, the entry of Bersatu into PH allowed this alliance to have a strong claim to mediated communalism, underpinning a basic path-dependent premise of multiethnic power-sharing heading into GE14. With the departure of PAS, the opposition coalition needed to buttress its Malay base. Interestingly, Mahathir's later years at the helm of BN politics had seen some progressive developments, away from Malay dominance to the notion of 'Bangsa Malaysia' (a Malaysian nation) in his Vision 2020 agenda. The Reformasi movement, with its agenda of more radical reform, overshadowed this broad multiethnic

consensus the Mahathir administration initiated. In spite of this challenge, the post-Mahathir BN administrations of Abdullah Badawi and Najib Razak failed to refurbish any high level of multiethnic consensus or to undertake genuine reform agendas. Najib promoted his own 30-year vision with his plan of National Transformation (TN50), which, while paying lip service to Vision 2020, effectively scuttled it. As a multiethnic power-sharing arrangement, BN was highly lopsided because of the dominance of UMNO and weak non-Malay partners. It also relied heavily on its East Malaysian political support. Najib's 2010 New Economic Model (NEM), styled to moderate features of the economy introduced under the New Economic Policy's (NEP) affirmative-action framework, failed to yield any real results, mainly because Najib backtracked and within three years, reverted to NEP policies like the Bumiputera Enterprise Empowerment Programme (BEEP).

The BN and development plans seemed to shift backstage as Najib personalised his power through populist welfare-oriented policies and programmes such as BR1M (*Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia*, 1Malaysia People's Aid) cash handouts, the aforementioned BEEP,[12] and the Indian Blueprint programme (*Malaysiakini* 2017a). The BR1M programme was the largest ever direct cash-handout scheme ever implemented in Malaysia. Started in 2012, the programme first paid a one-off RM500 payment to 80 per cent of Malaysian households, amounting to a sum of RM2.6 billion, disbursed to around 5.2 million households (BR1M 2016). By 2016, the programme had benefited 7.3 million recipients with a massive disbursement of RM5.4 billion. All households with incomes below RM3,000 monthly (increased to RM4,000 in 2017) and unmarried adults earning less than RM2,000 were eligible. Eligibility also extended to low-income senior citizens, single parents with dependents, and married couples living with parents. By 2018, Najib's government pledged to pay up to RM1,200 to each of the poorest households (*Malay Mail* 2016).

However, as Najib moved into his second term after GE13, the 1MDB scandal had already taken centre stage and eclipsed his flaunted plans of national transformation. By the time of GE14, an unpopular GST of 6 per cent introduced in April 2015 had already blunted the impact of Najib's welfare and cash-payout schemes. The rising cost of living proved to be a crucial factor in BN's collapse. Although the perpetuation of money politics, corruption, and mismanagement in Najib's government was symbolized by the 1MDB scandal, other major scandals surfaced, too, including the mismanagement of FELDA Global Ventures (FGV), which led to the sacking of its chairman. FGV was formed in 2012 in one of the largest-ever public-share offerings,

second only to Facebook, but its earnings declined some 30 per cent by 2018. Its latest available audit, for 2014, showed that FGV was RM6 billion in the red.[13] Other calculations have put FGV's accumulated losses at RM8.7 billion (*Malaysiakini* 2017b). FELDA voters proved to be a crucial factor as by some calculations, BN lost 27 of the 53–54 FELDA-area seats in GE14 (Pakiam 2018). Added to this were a plethora of China-funded megaprojects, such as the East Coast Rail Link, which involved a loan of RM55 billion from China's Exim bank, and projects linked to ports, property developments, and industrial parks, which Mahathir and the PH exploited to a maximum degree as surrendering Malaysia's sovereignty to China (Saravanamuttu 2017). This foreign policy 'turn' of high dependence and cosiness towards China was also linked to a purported bailout by the Asian superpower of Najib's 1MDB debt.

On the PH side, a pledge to hand over power to Anwar after a transitional period under Mahathir can be viewed as bandwagoning on the reform agendas of PKR and DAP. The plan underlined the need for continuity with the reform agendas originally set out by the 'Reformasi generation', reforms which resonated with new voters. (Arguably PAS had also benefited from a path-dependent legacy of reform, as evidenced by its strong performance in Malay-belt states.) Growing disenchantment with Najib and UMNO, especially in the urbanised west coast states, compensated for the fact that PH had poorer resources and party machinery than BN. Najib's purported collusion with PAS and his willingness to cooperate with the Islamic party's leader on RUU355 to facilitate *hudud* legislation lent credence to suspicions of a surreptitious UMNO–PAS pact that would have hurt BN's consociational politics if made public. UMNO's peninsular partners, Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (the Malaysian People's Movement Party, Gerakan), MCA, and MIC, suffered the consequences of these developments. In the end, BN's popular votes plummeted to an historic low of 34 per cent, indicative of the electorate's rejection of BN's non-Malay parties.

The next sections will expand on the theme of continuity in change at the state level of contestation. The continuity in the major swing away from BN since 2008, alluded to earlier, only occurred in full measure in 2018. I will attempt to show how the rupture of BN hegemony played out differently across regions. Overall, I argue that in the west-coast states, the fragmentation of Malay votes benefited PH, not BN and even less so PAS. My hypothesis is that despite PAS's not being in PH, voters considered PAS to be in opposition to BN rather than to PH. Thus two opposition groups drastically eroded BN's vote share. This idea helps explain the comprehensive vote swing against BN in all states, by suggesting that PAS voters added to a nationwide anti-BN swing.

Selangor is an exemplar of this trend, as of course is Penang, albeit *sui generis* because of its Chinese demographic. The latecomers are Johor, Negri Sembilan, and Malacca, with Johor largely assuming the early Selangor template of 2008. In the east-coast states of Kelantan and Terengganu and in significant areas of Kedah and Perak, PAS benefited from three-way Malay vote-splitting. PAS's strength—which, I argue, is highly path-dependent—shows Kelantan and Terengganu to be significantly different from west-coast states. The situation in East Malaysia is exemplified by the emergence of Warisan, the outcome of a major rupture of UMNO hegemony that enhanced the unique character of Sabah politics.

West-coast Patterns: Selangor, Johor, and Kedah

In this section I will examine specific factors leading to the BN's loss in west-coast peninsular states by examining the voting patterns and outcomes particularly of three-cornered contests in three representative states, Selangor, Johor, and Kedah. Path analysis suggests that PKR benefited greatly from increasing returns in Selangor because its two terms of good governance enhanced institutional strength and political legitimacy despite elite tussles and transitions. In Johor, BN's earlier path-dependent success, albeit eroded after 2008, was further greatly damaged by Najib's toxic image and the sacking of the state's own Muhyidddin Yassin; in Kedah, PAS was able to ride on its role as a champion of Islamic polices—even though it had lost state control in 2013—to retain strong support in this Muslim-belt state.

In Selangor, to the surprise of many, the final tally of the 56-seat contest saw the following result: PKR 28 seats, DAP 13, Amanah 5, Bersatu 5, UMNO 4, and PAS 1. Because of the Election Commission's (EC) redelineation exercise and PAS's exit from PR, various analysts had suggested that PH would either lose the state or drastically decline in strength. The independent survey-research company, Politweet, which undertook a study of the gerrymandering of seats, observed that DAP-held seats had grown in size by 26 per cent (with a 77.4 per cent increase in non-Malays in those seats); that the shift of Malay voters to PKR-held seats resulted in three of those seats' becoming Malay-majority; that PAS-held seats were reduced in size by 17 per cent; and that BN-held seats were reduced in size by 5 per cent. All these measures were aimed at helping BN win seats.[14]

Analysis of the election results offers the following observations and conclusions: first, the redelineation exercise had little effect because of the comprehensive vote swing; second, Menteri Besar Azmin Ali's popularity and

effectiveness in the state, due to a clutch of welfare-oriented populist policies, reassured voters after the removal of former Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim; third, PKR institutions, policies, and programmes enhanced performance legitimacy; and, finally, UMNO showed poor leadership, had a poor past record, and had no apparent leader to take over the state. Thus, that PKR prevailed in Selangor can be said to have been path-dependent.

Chart 5.4 shows the impact of three-cornered contests among PH (PKR and Amanah), BN (mainly UMNO), and PAS. About 70 per cent of the PH victors received half or more of the popular votes. In three-cornered fights in the state, PAS was likely to have eroded BN's voter-support base, such that neither party was able to achieve 50 per cent voter support in any seat.

Chart 5.5 shows how the three-way Malay vote split benefited PH and eroded UMNO support, while inflicting the largest hit on PAS in Malay-majority seats. The outcomes in these two state constituencies show that UMNO could still win those seats with a high percentage of Malay voters, such as Sabak Bernam. However, that PAS eroded UMNO support probably helped PH in Sungai Besar. The contest in the large Chinese-majority seat of Seri Kembangan in Chart 5.6 shows the hopelessness of the MCA's situation.

The extraordinary outcome in Johor is underlined by the fact that it was the birthplace and bastion of UMNO and boasted hitherto uninterrupted BN success. PH's victory was a major rupture along the historic path of BN state control, launching the coalition onto a phase of reformist politics in this state. UMNO's collapse saw an unprecedented swing of voters to PH. UMNO won only 17 seats, MIC 2, and PAS 1. The MCA was wiped out in a state in which they had previously provided the most significant Chinese presence to BN. In large part, this comprehensive defeat was due to the sacking of Johor leader and former deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin over his questioning of 1MDB, plus the fact that Najib's name had become toxic in the state.[15] Mahathir and the appeal of Bersatu no doubt contributed to UMNO's losses, as did the FGV scandals and woes of FELDA settlers.

UMNO's humiliation was symbolized by UMNO veteran Shahrir Samad's defeat in the Johor Baru parliamentary seat and the defeat of incumbent Menteri Besar Khalid Nordin in both his state and parliamentary seats. That Malaysian voters living in Singapore, many of whom voted in Johor, did not find it so difficult as voters coming from farther afield to vote on a Wednesday may have been another factor contributing to the anti-BN vote swing. My hypothesis is that Johor has basically adopted the Selangor template of PH victories in mixed seats, although PH also won seats with middling Malay majorities. In contrast to Selangor, PAS strength is even more minimal in this state. This outcome is evident in Chart 5.7.

Chart 5.4 Three-cornered contests in Selangor by vote share, 2018

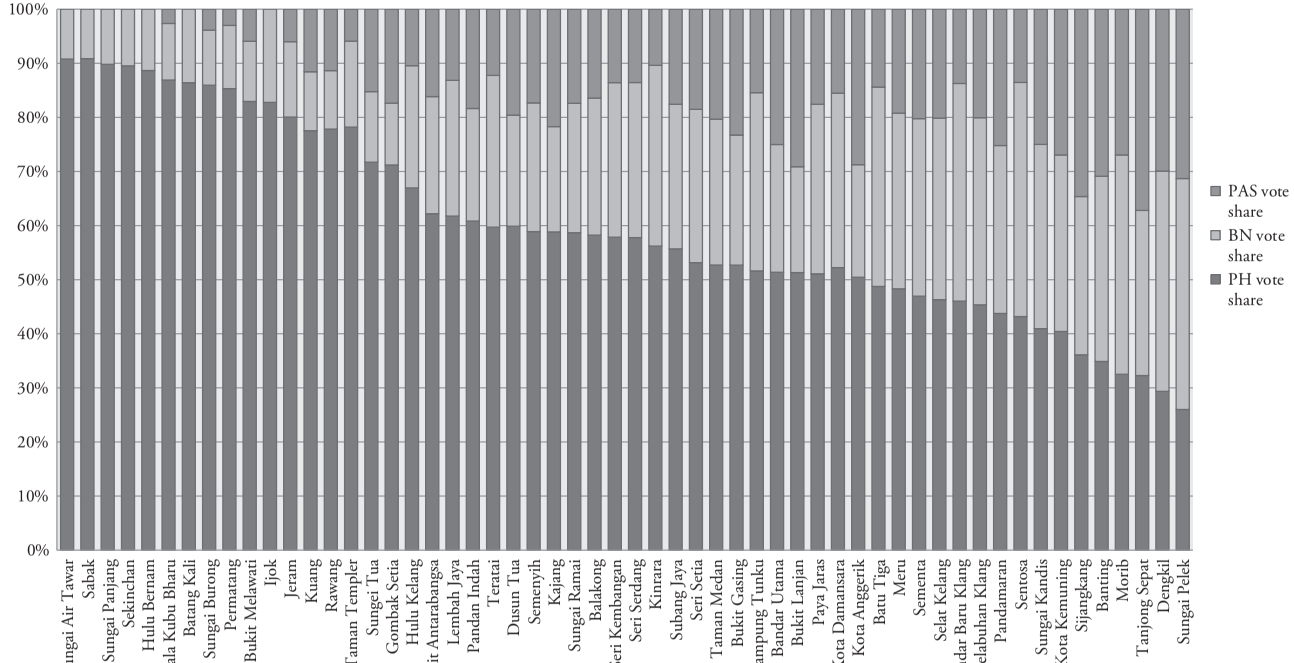


Chart 5.5 Outcome in two Malay-majority Selangor parliamentary seats, 2018

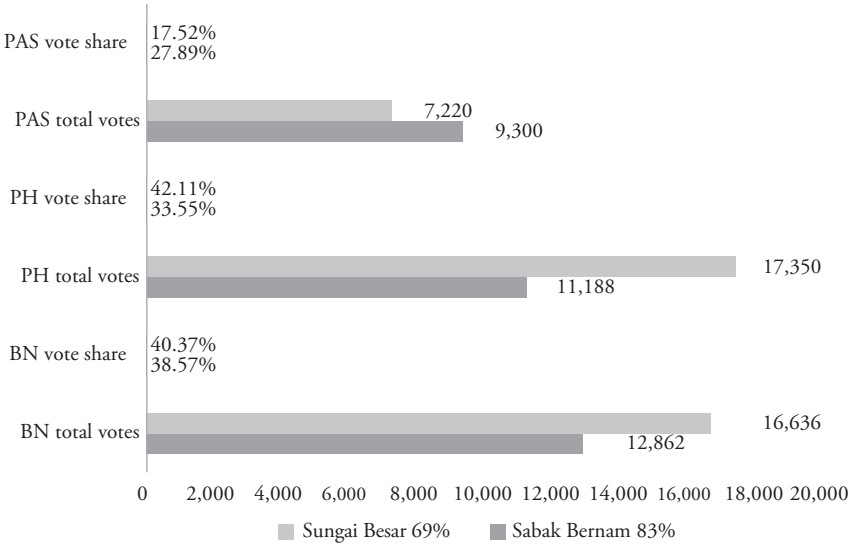


Chart 5.6 Seri Kembangan state seat Selangor, 2018

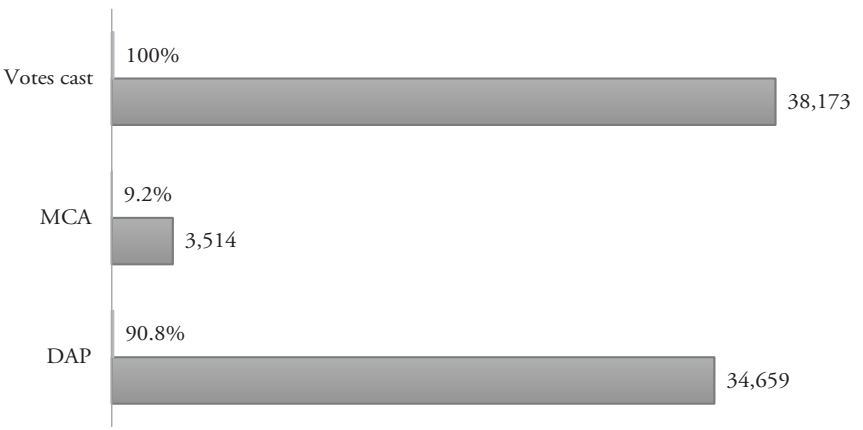
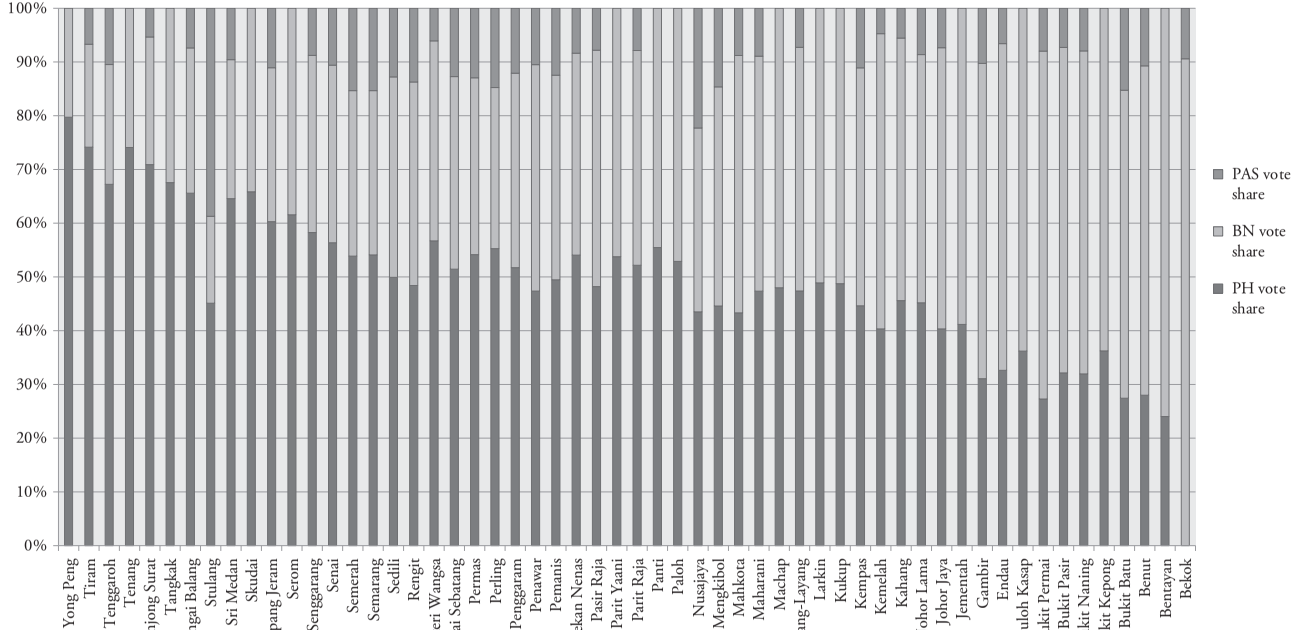


Chart 5.7 Three-cornered contests in Johor by vote share, 2018



A comparison of the Johor outcome with that in Kedah shows some stark differences in patterns of contestation and concomitant results. In complete contrast to Johor, PAS's presence in Kedah was highly salient, as they were the lead party in a PR government after the 2008 general election. PAS's strength remained evident in Kedah in 2018 even after PR lost control of the state in 2013. This factor contributed to PH's merely razor-thin victory in this state. The final distribution of seats was: PAS 15, Bersatu 5, PKR 8, Amanah 3, UMNO 3, and DAP 2. Eventually, with exactly half the seats and a modicum of support from PAS, PH was able to form the government. Chart 5.8 shows the vote-share splits. What is interesting is that with Malay vote-splitting, PH was able to capture some seats with just around 40 per cent of the popular vote, as shown in the chart. BN wins were almost entirely confined to constituencies with Malay majorities of 60 per cent and above.

Two other seats UMNO won were Kasap (57 per cent Malay), by a majority of only 877 votes, and Layang-Layang (54 per cent Malay), by a mere 364 votes (Chart 5.9). In Kedah, PAS wins were also confined to seats with Malay majorities of 80 per cent and above (Chart 5.10).

Vote-share Patterns on the East Coast: Terengganu and Kelantan

The east-coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan saw the collapse of UMNO and the reassertion of PAS strength. Both states evinced the emergence of a two-party system of PAS and UMNO with a weak third party, Amanah, which failed to gain any seats. The result in Terengganu was 22 seats for PAS and 10 for UMNO; in Kelantan, it was 37 PAS and 8 UMNO. PAS hegemony in Kelantan over more than two decades is evidence of an enduring strength anchored on its Islamism, a path which often reproduces a binary politics of 'good' Muslims (PAS) versus 'bad' Muslims (UMNO) suggesting that a 'Manichean view of combating evil' still animates PAS's success in politics (Azmil 2018: 234). The manner in which Amanah candidates were sidelined and perceived as secondary opposition to UMNO or even irrelevant in the two heavily Muslim-dominated states was evident in my field visits to the two states. However, given that Amanah candidates were former PAS stalwarts and known personalities, they had some level of traction, which helped to reduce the UMNO vote share and deliver landslide victories to PAS. The absence of PAS leader and new 'Tok Guru' Hadi Awang in the state-level contest allowed for the local leadership to pursue a campaign based on a theme of '*kerajaan teknokrat*' (technocratic government) and a 'soft approach' to Islamisation.[16] Hadi's absence spoke to an underlying elite tussle between *ulama* and

Chart 5.8 Three-cornered contests in Kedah by vote share, 2018

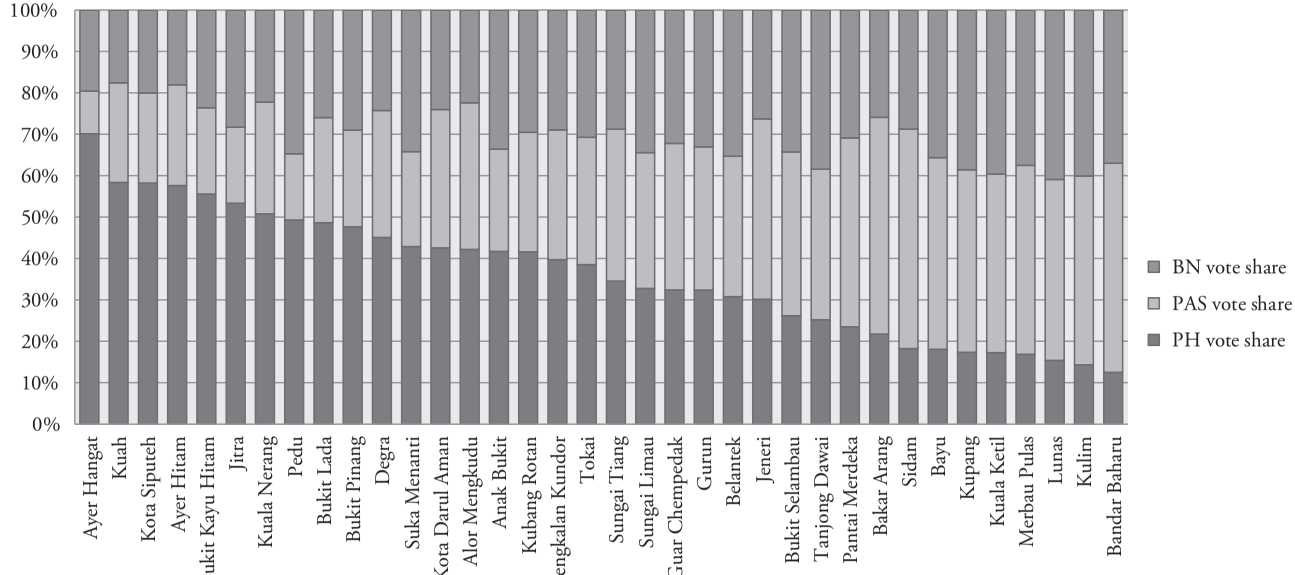


Chart 5.9 Johor by percentage of Malay voters

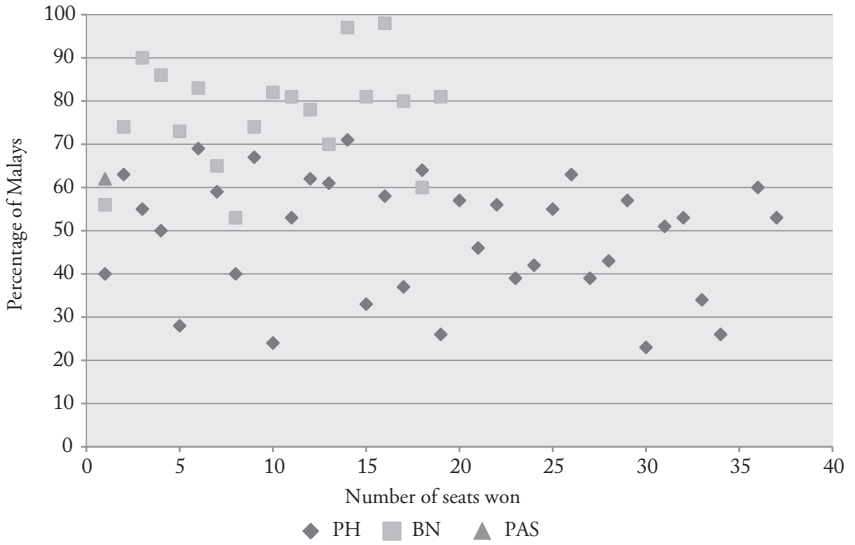
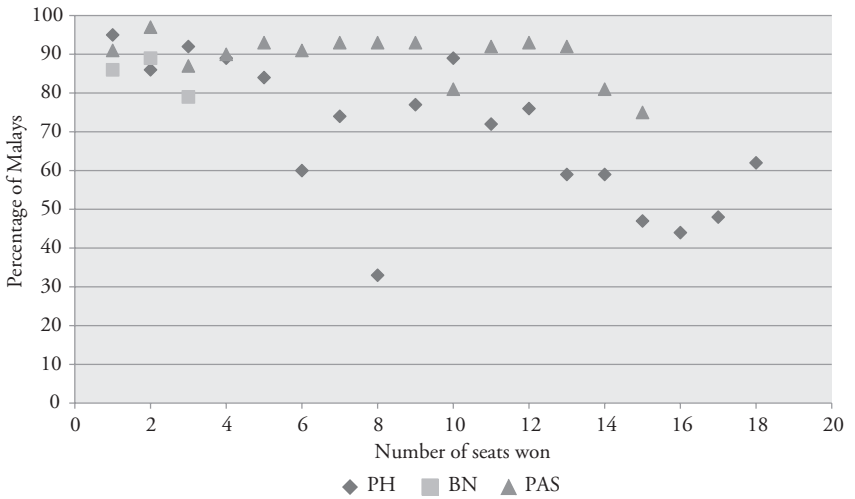


Chart 5.10 Kedah by percentage of Malay voters



technocrats in the party. A so-called 'National Consensus', or political deal between Hadi and Najib, was apparently known to insiders but did not seem to percolate to the PAS base, which still regarded UMNO as its main rival.[17]

Charts 5.11 and 5.12 show the extent of PAS victories measured by vote-share, as well as the minimal impact of PH's Amanah candidates.

Rise of Warisan in Sabah

The emergence and meteoric success of Parti Warisan Sabah, or Sabah Heritage Party, probably deserves a study of its own. However, this section will suffice to show the importance of its rise in terms of Sabah's complex multiparty electoral politics. Since I offer no analysis here of Sarawak, which had only a parliamentary contest in 2018, this brief Sabah analysis will illustrate the uniqueness and special circumstances of East Malaysia in electoral politics. Warisan was founded on 17 October 2016 by former UMNO Vice President Shafie Apdal and former PKR politician Ignatius Darell Leiking. The UMNO crisis brought about by the 1MDB scandal saw the sacking of Shafie Apdal from the party and thus a major weakening of UMNO Sabah. PH leaders were able to cobble together an electoral pact with Warisan on the eve of GE14, ultimately contributing an additional eight members to PH's majority in Parliament. For Warisan, the pact with PH allowed it to ride on national issues such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the 1MDB scandal although, without a doubt, local issues such as Chief Minister Musa Aman's poor leadership were more crucial in drawing people away from BN.

Warisan's rise was predicated on the long-standing disaffection of the Borneo states with the federal government on matters of states' rights and autonomy. In Sabah's case, the '20 points' agreement Sabah inked with the central government[18] when it joined Malaysia in 1963 remained as an undercurrent of politics (Loh 2005; Chin 2018). As in Sarawak, federal–state relations were necessarily anchored on a relationship that allowed for a high degree of autonomy and control by the state governments. UMNO's presence and domination as a proxy federal party in Sabah led to seething resentment against the central government, but Sabahans, divided by their ethnic diversity, tolerated federal dominance, regardless. The sacking of Sabahan leader Shafie Apdal by Najib Razak was the spark that reignited sentiments of Sabah 'nationalism' that impacted greatly on GE14. Coupled with concerns felt across a variety of regional indigenous groups too complex to explicate here, the time seemed ripe for an overturn of BN control in the state. I would consider the Sabah development as yet another critical break

Chart 5.11 Three-cornered contests in Terengganu by vote share, 2018

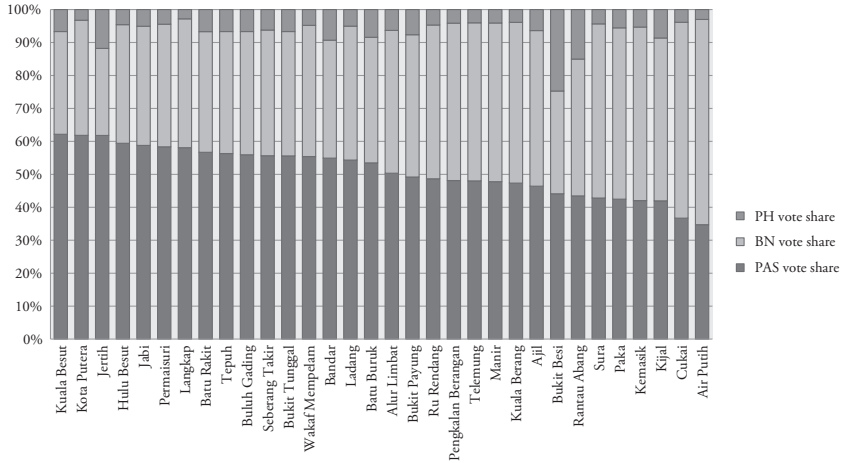
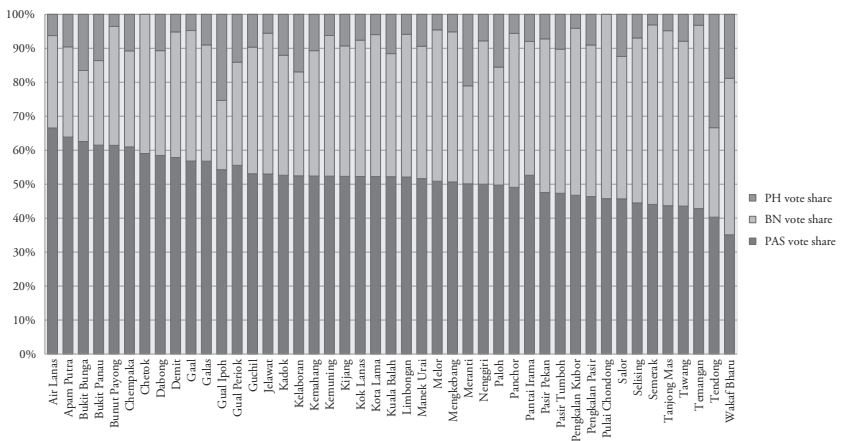


Chart 5.12 Three-cornered contests in Kelantan by vote share, 2018



along BN's electoral path. Earlier collapses of Sabah governments were usually due to leadership tussles, but since UMNO's establishment in the state, BN dominance had stabilised, premised on well-executed power sharing. This latest rupture represents a collapse of the BN model of power-sharing with a severely denuded UMNO due to Shafie Apdal's ouster.

The final distribution of seats in the state contest shows the complexity of the Sabah outcome: Warisan won 21 seats, UMNO 17, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) 6, DAP 6, United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) 5, PKR 2, Parti Solidariti Tanah Airku (Solidariti) 2, and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) 1. UMNO and Warisan captured the major vote-shares, as Chart 5.13 indicates. PH parties emerged as the most significant third force. In terms of popular votes, UMNO won a plurality of 42 per cent, while Warisan and PH combined garnered just over 47 per cent. The other parties, not shown in the chart, managed to garner some 10.4 per cent of the vote, showing the rather plural terrain of Sabah politics underlying its well-known fluidity. In the aftermath of the election a series of bizarre events occurred, including the illegal swearing-in of Musa Aman, the incumbent UMNO chief minister, who then absconded from Sabah for a period of time and resurfaced in August 2018 at Subang Jaya Hospital for treatment for an unspecified ailment. In the end, UPKO's five candidates threw their weight behind the Warisan-led government.

Conclusion

The triumph of the PH coalition in Malaysia's GE14 represents a major change in electoral politics, premised on the reform agendas of the Reformasi era of twenty years earlier, howsoever modified those reforms were to adapt to the changing dynamics of Malaysian politics and its revolving political doors. Central to this argument is the fact that PKR, a child of Reformasi, was at the core of the PH coalition, which itself must be viewed as continuous with a form of politics which had begun with the Barisan Alternatif and its successor, Pakatan Rakyat. The inclusion of Mahathir's party, Bersatu, when PR was reconstituted as PH with the loss of PAS, represented a development along the path of reform politics, necessary to the toppling of the BN ruling coalition. The spark came with BN's loss of its two-thirds majority of parliamentary seats in 2008. The 2013 election saw BN's popular vote reduced to about 47 per cent, then in 2018, it plummeted to 34 per cent.

The PH coalition of political forces also valorised a path-dependent consociational or centripetal politics of power-sharing, which I term mediated

Chart 5.13 Multi-cornered contests in Sabah by vote share, 2018

communalism, a political stratagem that required broad-based multiethnic coalitions occupying the middle ground for ethnic vote-pooling. BN had lost most of this middle ground by the time of GE14. It has been shown that this loss was comprehensive across regions—in the west-coast peninsular states and also in the Borneo state of Sabah. In the east-coast states, UMNO's Muslim ground was greatly eroded. National politics have always called for a 'minimal winning coalition' (Riker 1962) that is needed to garner support across regions. The fact that the Islamic party PAS has emerged as the major force in Terengganu and Kelantan because of their heavily Muslim demographic confirms its regional rather than national base of support. Exclusive ethnically based parties in Malaysia can only be regional in character and can only attain limited electoral success if they are not in power-sharing arrangements with other parties with a broad national base. State-based parties continue to be significant in East Malaysian politics, but still require nationally endorsed coalitions to win power and to be effective in governance.

With the conclusion of GE14, the coalition with the broadest multiethnic base is the PH, replacing the BN, which had held this base arguably for the past six decades, albeit with progressive erosion since 2008. Already evident is the tendency toward a national two-coalition electoral system in Malaysia since 2008. The changed character of the BN coalition in the aftermath of GE14 (with the departure of Gerakan and Sabah- and Sarawak-based parties) serves as the new backdrop to the puzzle of whether two-coalition politics will persist beyond the 2018 election. Essentially the answer to this question will depend on how and whether UMNO can reinvent itself as a force for ethnic power-sharing.

Notes

[1] Work on path dependence cast in terms of historical sociology is found in Mahoney 2002.

[2] I draw on classic early work on Malaysian politics in using the term 'communalism' (Ratnam 1965), adding the adjective 'mediated' to depict my notion of the concept.

[3] See the work of Putnam (2000) on the US and Varshney (2002) on India.

[4] I base this hypothesis on a simple calculation made of the outcome of the Bangi parliamentary constituency, the country's largest, with 178,790 registered voters. PH's Ong Kian Ming won this seat with total of 102,557 votes. The ethnic distribution in Bangi rounds up to roughly 50 per cent Malay, 40 per cent Chinese, and 10 per cent Indian. Analyses suggest that Ong's victory drew support from 40 per cent of Malay, 95 per cent of Chinese, and 70 per cent of Indian voters. Other permutations are, of course, possible, but given our knowledge of the overall electoral outcome and field conversations with candidates, this hypothesis is highly plausible. Faisal Hazis (2018:

274) shows that overall, only 39 per cent of Malays voted for the BN in Malay-majority seats. The caution here is that the BN's vote share includes votes from non-Malays; nonetheless, the slippage since 2013, when BN won 52 per cent, is considerable. See also Suffian and Lee's chapter in this volume, which suggests an overall figure of 22 per cent of Malays' support for PH.

[5] Malaysia's first-past-the-post (FPTP) system had regularly given manufactured majorities to the BN. In the 2013 general election, that system conferred victory on BN with about 47 per cent of the popular vote. This time around, PH is the beneficiary of the FPTP system.

[6] I draw from my account of events in Saravanamuttu 2016: 243–66.

[7] The 'Kajang move' occurred after the party had ousted its own Selangor Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) Khalid Ibrahim on grounds that he was financially beholden to UMNO. Anwar sought to lead the state. A court case disqualified Anwar from the Kajang contest. Wan Azizah stood in his place and duly won the seat. However, PAS objected to her becoming menteri besar. After a convoluted sequence of events, PKR deputy president Azmin Ali emerged as menteri besar with PAS support and the all-important approval of the Selangor sultan.

[8] The bill would have allowed for *sharia* punishments to be raised to a maximum term of 30 years' imprisonment, a RM100,000 fine, and 100 lashes of the whip.

[9] The term had come to be used to depict moderates, supposedly based on Turkish politics.

[10] See Saravanamuttu 2016: 246–47 for an account of the impact of the 61st Muktamar.

[11] The *Wall Street Journal* (2016) revised the figure to over US$1 billion.

[12] The Bumiputera Economic Empowerment Programme (BEEP) launched in 2013 was criticised as a measure to appease the Malay right-wing group Perkasa (Malaysiakini 2013). See also Lee 2013.

[13] Space does not allow for a full rendering of the complex web of FGV controversies that have implications for thousands of FELDA smallholder families who have been loyal UMNO voters. For an analysis of FGV's woes and their relevance to shifting political dynamics, see Khor 2015 and Maznah 2015.

[14] Politweet predicted the probable result to be 23 seats for BN, 15 DAP, 14 PKR, and 10 PAS, without Bersatu and Amanah's having been factored in yet. The study is available at https://politweet.wordpress.com/2016/11/09/the-impact-of-redelineation-on-the-selangor-state-elections/ [accessed 10 January 2018].

[15] Interviews conducted during the campaign period with politicians on both sides of the divide indicated that BN's campaign assiduously avoided using Najib's name; his image was also noticeably absent from BN posters.

[16] I reached this conclusion through interviews during the campaign period in early May 2018 with PAS leaders in Terengganu and Kelantan and also from conversations with Amanah leaders in the two states. Interviews were with Ahmad Shamsuri (PAS), Ahmad Amzad (PAS), Husam Musa (Amanah), and Raja Kamarul Bahrin (Amanah).

[17] This insight comes from conversations with research assistants who were located in the two states during the election period.

[18] For Sarawak, it was 18 points of agreement, which likewise ranged from constitutional, to religious, immigration, education, and citizenship issues and proscribed secession.

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Part II

Issues and Campaign Strategies

6

Big Data Campaigning

Ross Tapsell

Malaysia has been a crucial site for examining the role of 'new media' in election campaigning. Since the emergence of the internet in the late 1990s, urban Malaysians have been highly innovative in adopting new media technologies to push for reforms. Email lists, alternative news sites, blogging, and social-media discourse have all been central to campaign strategies, particularly for opposition parties looking to outflank the generally pro-government mainstream media. It is unsurprising then, that, as 'big data' companies—organisations that collate information to analyse voter behaviour—become central to election campaigns globally, they would find their way to Malaysia. All the major political parties employed big data companies in Malaysia's 14th general election of 2018 (hereafter GE14), using data-driven algorithms to identify 'swing' voters and advertise accordingly on social media.

This chapter incorporates empirical research throughout Malaysia's GE14, including personal interviews with campaigners in political parties as well as employees inside big data companies. In Malaysian political parties, respondents talked of GE14 as a 'referendum' on big data campaigning. While campaign professionals spoke of big data as 'the future of campaigning', it is difficult to ascertain whether big data companies were in whole or part responsible for the GE14 result. Regardless, their emergence raises significant moral and theoretical questions for election campaigns and democracy. Many Malaysians (as well as foreign observers) see the unprecedented regime change of 2018 as laying the foundations for a democratic path, which makes it all the more pertinent to ask: what is the role of 'big data' campaigning in shaping the contemporary political environment and electoral democracy?

This research exposes some of the work done by big data companies in GE14—one of the first scholarly fieldwork-based analyses to do so in Malaysia, or indeed globally. Big data companies have serious potential to undermine democracy; my findings here resonate with debates around big data companies' potential to encourage 'echo chambers', target unwilling or unaware voters through intrusive algorithms, and generally to promote *dis*information campaigns (Gromping 2014; Lim 2017). While arguments elsewhere around big data remain relevant, this chapter focuses on the local context of Malaysian politics and society.

What is a 'Big Data' Company?

At its core, a big data company collates and combines various forms of information, analyses the information, and produces conclusions for its client. Increasingly, social-media platforms are central to the way big data companies gather data, because social media allow for more personalised forms of information to be collated in order to 'target' clients the company or party wants to reach. In short, big data companies' argument is that the more information an advertising company knows about you, the more likely they are to sell you a product. This can occur by targeting the *right product* to you, or by sending the *right message* about a particular product in order to convince you to buy it. The term 'big data' has become popularised as more and more information is collated online and on digital platforms, and is thus synonymous with the information-technology revolution that began in the late 1990s.

As more of us turn to social media for our daily news intake, political parties and interest groups have attempted to influence people via these platforms. While 'big data' campaigning has been prevalent at least since Obama's 2008 campaign (Vaccari 2010), it became prominent after making global headlines in the wake of Donald Trump's 2016 election victory in the US. One particular company, Cambridge Analytica, claimed credit for 'running' Trump's digital campaign and for correctly predicting the outcome of the election. In early 2018, Cambridge Analytica employees were the subject of a British journalism investigation, in which they claimed to have won campaigns for clients in numerous countries around the world, including Malaysia (see *The Guardian* 2018).

The logic for big data in politics is similar to its logic in advertising: the more information big data companies collect about voters from information they put online, the better candidates' messages can be tailored to appeal to

voters' needs and desires. Cambridge Analytica, for example, with the help of academic researchers, developed a way to profile social-media users using OCEAN, a system for classifying personality type by measuring for openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Grassegger, Hannes, and Krogerus 2017). The researchers claimed that on the basis of an average of 68 Facebook 'likes', it was possible to predict a user's skin colour (with 95 per cent accuracy), sexual orientation (88 per cent accuracy), and affiliation to the Democratic or Republican party (85 per cent) (Grassegger and Krogerus 2017). Cambridge Analytica became engrossed in an international scandal because of the way they gathered Facebook data and because of the responses their employees gave in a UK Channel 4 television undercover investigation: they claimed to use nefarious tactics to win elections. But the broader tactics of big data companies' gathering online data for political parties better to understand voters are now widespread.

Can big data companies decide elections? To date, no academic research has provided a comprehensive answer. Big data campaigning is so new that researchers are still grappling with scientific methods to understand its impact (Belfry Munroe 2018). Given that this is the first academic analysis on big data campaigning in Malaysia, for this chapter I am more interested in whether political parties and groups *thought* big data companies were pointless, useful, or crucial (which gives us an indication of whether they will use them again) and to identify the professional practices of big data companies and campaigners in Malaysia. Further research could examine whether big data companies actually had an impact upon GE14's outcome.

Malaysian Opposition Parties and Big Data Campaigning

This section focuses on how opposition parties utilised big data campaigning in GE14. I argue that opposition politicians see big data companies as facilitating 'innovative' and 'cutting edge' campaigning that can win elections. In this regard, it is important to understand the context in which Malaysian opposition parties arrived at big data companies. These parties see big data campaigning as an *extension* of other 'liberation technologies' (Diamond 2010) used to undermine an electoral-authoritarian regime. Opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan was far more concerned with the question of whether big data companies could assist them in an unlikely election victory in an unfair campaign environment than with the ethical questions that employing a big data company might raise.

Opposition parties have long utilised new media to enhance their campaigns. The restricted and partisan nature of mainstream media has meant that Pakatan Harapan parties and figures have had to adapt swiftly to new communications strategies in order to get their message across. In many ways they have been highly successful. In 2008, then-Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi famously said 'we lost the internet war' of GE12 (*Malaysiakini* 2008), while in 2013, Najib declared to urban campaigners that GE13 would be 'the social media election' (*Free Malaysia Today* 2013). Social-media campaigning has been an essential part of the strategy of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih), which holds rallies to call for free and fair elections in the country. Each time its opponents adopted a new tactic to campaign more openly, the Malaysian government found ways to harden its regime and crack down on the various ways the internet could upstage their own messages (Tapsell 2013a). It is in this context that some Pakatan Harapan figures turned to big data campaigning as a new communications strategy (or set of strategies) that could potentially assist them in winning the election campaign—strategies that they knew the government had yet to regulate tightly.

But big data campaigning is different because it is not only about pushing information *out,* but also about gathering information *in.* Previous new-media innovations Pakatan Harapan utilised successfully centred largely around disseminating messages to audiences in ways to usurp government control of the message. Big data campaigning allows parties to gather more information about voters, to then target them with their political messages. Fahmi Fadzil, who has been an integral part of PKR's new-media campaigning since 2013, explains how big data *extends* the new-media techniques Pakatan Harapan used previously: 'There is a general consensus that we can't rely on previous measurements of voter sentiment. It [big data] might help gauge voter interest. Social media has helped us reach a wider audience, but at the same time might help us target the audience that we need to focus on' (Fahmi Fadzil, personal interview, Kuala Lumpur, February 2018).

In an electoral-authoritarian regime, the ruling power has a vast infrastructure at its command, of state-linked or friendly telecommunications companies, polling data, intelligence reports (including from police and army intelligence), and much more. In addition, it has significant funds to pay for local face-to-face polling. Big data allows the opposition the kind of information-gathering that has previously been the realm of the ruling power. Big data companies with access to online and social-media content can be utilised to level the playing field. Those with the best algorithms and campaign strategy for targeting swing voters can win the election.

At the heart of this new effort was Invoke, headed by Pakatan Harapan politician Rafizi Ramli, launched in August 2016. Rafizi hired campaign professional Andrew Claster, who had worked on Barack Obama's 2012 presidential re-election campaign. Rafizi initially spent RM300,000 but the costs kept rising; he had put in RM800,000 by the time the official campaign began (Muliza Mustafa 2017). Invoke call-centre staff and volunteers also asked for donations from citizens, raising some RM1 million (Muliza Mustafa 2017). Rafizi seemed to believe this type of campaigning could win the election for the opposition Pakatan Harapan, but it was also a way of giving him more say in the party machine itself, and thus improving his own standing as innovator and key actor within the opposition coalition. By election year, Invoke had 13 offices in Malaysia and around 90 full-time employees, of whom 50 worked from the Kuala Lumpur office (interviews with Invoke staff, Kuala Lumpur, February 2018). After the election, Rafizi claimed Invoke consisted of 40,000 volunteers (*The Sun Daily* 2018). The issue of paid staff versus volunteers is important, and a question which I will return to later in the chapter, in analysing the impact of big data companies on democracy.

Invoke's model was multifaceted. Invoke initially carried out live phone interviews but later claimed to use Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems to collect responses. A number of interviews with some of their staffers suggests the model is as follows: a list of phone numbers is acquired through telecommunications companies in seats that the party identified as marginal. Volunteers or paid staffers then call these numbers, hoping to talk to actual people. Of course, not all phone numbers connect (one staffer estimated 30 per cent do). If the phone were answered, Invoke would identify themselves and talk with the person. They then acquired information from these people. They would then (hopefully) get some social media details from them or even identify their Facebook page through their phone number (if settings were not private) or their Twitter account. Their aim was to identify undecided voters, whom they estimated to number around 1,000–1,500 in each electorate (depending on size). Invoke could then target these people through Twitter or Facebook advertisements, creating what one staffer said was a 'meaningful impact' (interviews with Invoke staff, Kuala Lumpur, December 2017 and February 2018), providing important details and analysis for candidates in swing seats.

Facebook data on age, gender, and location of voters was used to complement Invoke's methodology. Rafizi clarified, 'Facebook will come back to us and say: "of the 50,000 people we submitted only 10,000 have Facebook accounts"; but they won't tell us which ones. They will then tell us the cost of

sending a post to these people' (Tan 2018). Invoke then gathered other data, such as at which polling station a certain individual voted in the last election and whether they worked in the public or private sector. They also used traditional polling companies in order to gather more information. Invoke collated 'monthly national tracking' specific to each electorate, then provided certain candidates with funds if they thought they needed support to win these seats. After the election, Rafizi claimed Invoke spent RM11.2 million assisting the campaigns of 44 parliamentary candidates and 60 state candidates (*The Sun Daily* 2018).

Invoke was not without critics. Some within Pakatan Harapan believed Invoke was claiming to be a 'big data' company but that the central modus operandi still involved cold-calling citizens on their mobile phones and asking their voter preferences, which was never reliable, particularly in a semi-democracy where citizens can be more reluctant to openly declare support for opposition parties. Others I interviewed questioned how much information they could garner from people's Facebook posts, even if their privacy settings were minimal. Putting together a 'sentiment analysis' sounds impressive, but Invoke was always rather vague about how they determined such 'swing' voter sentiment, even to other members of Pakatan Harapan. Prior to the election, Invoke held a public event, broadcast on Facebook and YouTube, where they predicted 'a slim win for Harapan' and 'wipeout for PAS' (*Malaysiakini* 2018). Because Invoke was part big data analysis, part political vehicle for Rafizi, most saw this forecast as a pre-election stunt. But on the basis of these predictions, in the aftermath of the election, Rafizi trumpeted that Invoke was the only organisation to predict that Harapan would win the election (Lim 2018), even if it was clearly wrong on the 'wipeout' of PAS.

What can we say about the ethics of a company like Invoke? First, Invoke is somewhat different from other big data companies in that it is a big data company established by a politician. Much of Invoke's methodology has been openly discussed by Rafizi (indeed, loudly) in the mainstream media. Rafizi even published accounts of Invoke's finances online (Muzliza Mustafa 2017). Rafizi's team met with me on three occasions and were generally very open in their discussions. This is somewhat different from many big data companies that are private businesses and prefer not to disclose their clients, and who do not want their methods published, in case competitors copy them.

Invoke's methods certainly have similarities to those of Cambridge Analytica. They are using social media and other data which many people do not realise are being used in this way. Yet Rafizi claimed there were significant differences between Invoke and Cambridge Analytica. The first was that

Invoke did not produce discriminatory, sexualized, or fake content, and the second centred around the issue of privacy:

> The biggest issue with Cambridge Analytica is that it illegally data-mined. That's not what we do here [at Invoke]. What we do here are surveys and from there we do regressions and other data analysis to profile potential voters. Then we pick one [group] from a constituency, which we think are fence-sitters, and then we submit them to Facebook [for microtargeting]. It's very different and we don't actually know who is who (Tan 2018).

This may be true, but it's the blending of a number of functions that makes Invoke's business model a rather uncomfortable addition to the political campaign realm. In justifying Invoke's business model, Rafizi said Invoke would be supported because of 'the lack of independent news and lack of access that politicians like me have or do not have on local media, so people turn to Facebook, and I have to read the news.… So much of what we do is a reflection of the frustration arising from the stranglehold Barisan Nasional has on the free flow of information' (Tan 2018). As stated earlier, this is largely how Pakatan Harapan sees big data companies—as cutting-edge alternatives to a shackled, unfair electoral system.

This reasoning is complicated. Malaysian citizens can want a free media environment in which they are not targeted by big data groups. They may want to donate to Pakatan Harapan and provide their phone number without having their Facebook site trawled. They may be happy to provide information on a survey but not want to be targeted for political advertising on Twitter. In short, Invoke's business model to marry big data campaigning with news and information, political donations, and phone-polling surveys leads to a more complex web of interactions with citizens who may not understand that these facets are all interlinked. Furthermore, if Pakatan Harapan justifies these strategies as a response to semi-democracy and shackled mainstream media, now that they have won and democracy is a realistic proposition in Malaysia, will these companies still be used? If so, how will they be justified?

Of course, Invoke was not the only big data company in Malaysia that was used to counter the semi-democratic system. The Democratic Action Party (DAP) also hired the Taiwanese company Q Research, which in similar ways to Invoke has a 'crawling tool' to obtain people's phone numbers and Facebook IDs (interview with DAP staffer, Kuala Lumpur, December 2017). The *Malay Mail* reported a number of other companies that were providing social-media content analysis and campaign advice, including AutoPolitic (based in Singapore) and Meltwater (based in San Francisco, US) but they did not disclose their clients (Boo 2017).

The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), formerly part of the opposition Pakatan Harapan but which ran independently in GE14, also used big data techniques. PAS's Iskandar Abdul Samad of Selangor explained: 'We have some sort of programme by which we can analyse what people are talking about with regard to PAS. We can work out what we are saying and if it "clicks" with the people, and that is very important.' He said big data has become 'very useful' to know voter 'sentiment' and to 'test out polices' to see what kind of policies people want. He said the most important aspect is being able to profile people by age and geographically because, 'certain messages are only applicable to certain groups of people—where they live, how old they are—we don't just send one message to everybody. You have to pick the group and which message to send. You need to be detailed on that' (personal interview, Shah Alam, February 2018).

The argument here is that opposition parties have used big data companies as a new campaign tactic that they considered essential in election campaigning in 2018. Their use was justified solely by their ability to help win elections in a system that is rigged towards the ruling party. Some Pakatan Harapan figures I spoke with suggested that it was indeed cheaper to hire big data companies than it was to build grassroots community campaigners and pay regular professional polling institutes to survey voters on-the-ground. While I was not able to compare figures, even considering that Rafizi himself put in RM800,000 for Invoke, this argument that big data campaigning is more cost-effective does make sense. The larger issue, and one explored later in this chapter, is the paradox that the opposition's uptake of these companies undermines their very objective: a broader democratic environment and more open, pluralistic public sphere.

The Barisan Nasional and Big Data

A feature of any authoritarian regime is the role of surveillance in monitoring its citizens. Being able to keep a close watch over its citizens enables a regime to stifle dissent before it arises or to repress civil-society forces. The Barisan Nasional's 60-year success has long been from pursuing the politics of patronage (Weiss 2013). Gathering precise information on constituencies and individuals, particularly in rural constituencies, is central to this patronage-based system. Given the intelligence networks of the police and military, and access to public service information-gathering departments and services, there seems little need for BN to adopt new big data campaign tactics. They already led Pakatan Harapan in information-gathering systems. BN's resorting to big

data is thus in part because their electoral dominance was seriously challenged in 2008 and 2013, hence they needed to use different strategies to win people's support in 2018.

The question then becomes: how useful are social media and online content in providing information and insights that BN did not already have through their own vast infrastructure of government-obtained data? Much of BN's new-media communications election tactics have been reactionary rather than visionary, and they often lag behind Pakatan Harapan in introducing new-media campaign innovations. For example, after the success of bloggers in the 2004 election, BN decided to invest more in them for the following election, in 2008—but by then, social media had arrived and new-media campaigning had moved on from blogging. By 2013, BN had entered the realm of social-media campaigning, having seen its impact in 2008, but as Tun Faisal, a key figure in BN's online cyber-campaigning, admitted, 'In 2013 we did not have people involved in strategic communication. Response times were long. It took half a day or one day to answer, in comparison to [2018], it takes only half an hour [to respond online]. Now every government department has a small [cyber] unit that can at least give a quick response. Before we were struggling' (Tun Faisal, personal interview, Kuala Lumpur, February 2018).

BN's 2018 communications strategy was to be less 'reactive' to what Pakatan Harapan was undertaking and to try to compete on a level-playing field, indeed, even to 'win' online cyber-battles. As UMNO Youth's Khairul Azwan told the *Malay Mail*, 'In the past, we failed to utilise the richness of the data. We are rich in data, but we didn't use it then. Maybe that time, data analytics consultants didn't exist then. Even this one consultant who came to see me—he said "Azwan, you just give me all the data—telephone number, IC, addresses, names. The rest we'll do it for you, what we need is just the personal details"' (Boo 2017).

BN campaigners grappled with the question of whether social-media analytics are more reliable than BN's tried-and-tested on-the-ground information gathering. International consultants claiming to be specialists in online campaigning had previously tried to sell Najib their services (Tapsell 2013b) but in 2018, Najib wanted to keep up with Pakatan Harapan in establishing new campaign techniques. He knew he needed to do more in online space if the result was going to be better for BN than GE13's, which was his ultimate aim.

In the midst of the GE14 campaign, the Cambridge Analytica (CA) scandal broke internationally, making headlines worldwide. CA stated on their website they 'supported Barisan Nasional (BN) in Kedah state with a targeted

messaging campaign' which resulted in BN's 'landslide victory' in 2013 (Leong 2018). The opposition had previously won the state of Kedah in 2008, and BN was looking to recapture it in 2013. The site also featured an accompanying picture of Prime Minister Najib. CA's website stated that it maintained an office on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur as its 'Southeast Asia' base, although it was never clear if this office was actually used.

CA's Southeast Asia representative was Azrin Zizal. I interviewed him in February 2018 in Shah Alam, a few months prior to the CA scandal. He described CA's activities in Kedah in this way:

> Kedah was in a general election mood. It is a very rural state, internet usage is minimal—but the target was the external voters. Kedah doesn't offer many job opportunities for the young. Lots of retirees (there are many retirees living here). These are strong Malay heartlands. They either vote for BN or for PAS. Small percentage of non-Malay voters there. The often forgotten voters are those who stay in KL or Johor or Sabah. How do we get them over to come back and vote in Kedah? Among the voters in Kedah for the target group we employed some tactics so that we can start propaganda across the internet and mass media knowing very well the local voters don't use it, but it persuades the more modern and younger voters from other states to come and vote. It worked. There was a rise of 'grey voters' who could be persuaded [to vote for BN]. You start giving reality to the current economic situation. We say if BN doesn't come back these are the big possibilities or trends. If they don't make an effort you are going to have more trouble for your parents. It's nice to have your parents in Kedah while you enjoy yourself in KL or wherever, but you don't want them staying with you [if they lose money]! We started to identify Kedahans in KL, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak – giving them periodic messages.
>
> (Interview, Azrin Zizal, Shah Alam, February 2018)

Kedah's chief minister at that time was Mukhriz Mohamad, Mahathir's son. Mukhriz was forced to step down as chief minister of Kedah in February 2016, eventually leaving BN and joining his father and former Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin in creating a new party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM or Bersatu). The CA scandal played out front and centre in GE14, with Najib accusing Mukhriz of hiring CA alone, and Mukhriz saying CA was funded by BN (Leong 2018) or even the Malaysian royals (Azrul Hakimie 2018).

In 2016 Azrin said CA was involved in the state of Selangor in the Sungai Besar by-election, working with Barisan Nasional candidate Budiman Mohamad Zodhi, who went on to win the election convincingly (53 per cent of votes). The by-election was held in June 2016 after the sitting member of

parliament, Noriah Kasnon, died in a helicopter accident. In GE13, Noriah Kasnon had won with only a tiny majority of 399 votes, of which 66 per cent were Malay and 31 per cent Chinese (*Malaysiakini* 2016). In the aftermath of his victory, Budiman expressed 'surprise' he won so convincingly, and thanked his 'election machinery' (Chan 2016). Azrin said the point of being involved in Sungai Besar was 'a case study to prove to the PM we can win a larger contract. It was a showcase of behavioural data. We build psychological profiles of the voters. We start analysing their behavioural pattern. How data could be used to persuade votes.' CA presented this work to Najib prior to 2018, asking for a price of USD12 million. Their final pitch was similar in Malaysia as it was elsewhere in the world post-2016: 'We won Trump', says Azrin. 'Despite all the odds, we won Trump. When everyone else said Trump would lose, we were confident that he would win. We did the data-crunching, we knew about a week before that Trump would win. And we were spot on' (interview, Azrin, Shah Alam, February 2018). But the pitch did not work. Even before the CA scandal broke out, Najib never responded to their offer.[1]

In the aftermath of GE13, newly re-elected Prime Minister Najib realised he needed to do more work in the social-media realm. He employed the company ORB Solutions, which would later be renamed Resonate Asia. This company hired around 30 staff, mostly developers and programmers in their twenties. They reported directly to Najib, providing social-media sentiment analysis and state-by-state predictions of election outcomes, and gauged voter groups by examining Facebook content in at least five languages: Malay, Hokkien, English, Iban, and Tamil (interviews with BN staffers, Kuala Lumpur, February and April 2018).

Exactly what kind of information was gathered and used to target undecided voters? Obviously social media were central, but BN staffers talked of having significant amounts of data that could be analysed to target voters (Boo 2017). Azrin Zizal explained that, 'We already have a good stash of scattered data. We just need to get it organised. There are ways to purchase data. We are slowly building the data landscape' (interview, Azrin Zizal, Shah Alam, February 2018). Other BN staffers I spoke with discussed the wide range of data possibilities for BN—hypermarket cards collect data on what people purchase, cable-television companies provide data on what people watch, telecommunications companies Maxis and Telekom apparently provide some information and data that can be purchased. One big data campaigner claimed that, 'if we need to we can buy through the side door'. BN's Tun Faisal noted, 'There are so many sources that they can mine the information from—like handphones, GPS, social media. You can see trends.

You can know everyone's profile, what they do, how they act. It's easy to analyse the behaviour of people. It's powerful for us and significant if they can get sentiment' (interview, Tun Faisal, Kuala Lumpur, February 2018). Others spoke of Malaysia's not having *enough* data to produce reasonable findings: 'rubbish in, rubbish out' was often used by sceptics of big data companies or even those who had been part of the big data collection process (interview, anonymous BN campaigner, Kuala Lumpur, February 2018). Many Malaysian companies are only starting to understand the value that big data can bring to their companies, so the infrastructure is still being built. But clearly, GE14 was the start of big data analytics for Malaysia and BN was just as active in this space as was Pakatan Harapan.

To a large extent, BN's big data companies operated undercover, sometimes under a veil of secrecy, because their tactics are considered more useful when people do not understand how they work. During the CA scandal, Najib and Mukhriz's public battle over who hired CA in Malaysia shows that employing a foreign big data company was understandably considered nefarious. But even prior to the CA scandal, most staffers were not keen to speak on the record. BN's use of big data companies could be seen as the advancement of monitoring of society crucial to the maintenance and reproduction of an electoral-authoritarian regime's rule. Had BN won, scholars of media and politics probably would have continued to argue that regimes *adapt* to new technologies (see Carothers 2015) and remain 'resilient' in the face of broader social, political and technological change (see, for example, Welsh and Lopez 2018).

But BN lost comprehensively, and while Rafizi's Invoke claimed it was central to Pakatan Harapan's success, independent scholarship has yet to confirm the precise impact of the big data strategy. Nevertheless, the point in this chapter is not about 'who won' online or in the big data space, but rather to use GE14 as a case study to raise questions about the role these companies have in allowing for a flourishing of democracy, or whether their professional practice might actually lead to a more insular, sceptical society, and weaken democracy. Now that we have established the professional practice of big data companies in GE14, the task remains to analyse these practices in terms of their impact on democratic discourse and their role in shaping the public sphere.

Questioning Big Data's Impact on Democracy

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to framing some of the issues prompted by the arrival of big data companies in election campaigns. Many of the broader arguments about big data companies' impact on democracy

were discussed and debated in the international media in the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal (*The Guardian* 2018). I do not wish to repeat these arguments here, other than to say that the issues they raise around tighter regulation of social-media companies remain highly relevant in Malaysia, as well. Here I wish to focus on the Malaysian context, in the hope that a more detailed analysis of a Southeast Asian country, from empirical research throughout an election campaign, can add to the broader literature of big data and democracies.

Monetizing Big Data

Money is central to any election campaign. As online campaigning has become more prominent and influential, companies are now selling themselves as having a winning formula to catapult their client to victory. As Iskandar of PAS acknowledged,

> There are millions of [pieces of] information on voters, and voter interests. All that requires money. A lot of folks [big data companies] come and ask if we want to hire them on or not. During an election there are a lot of people who can make money. But it is important. You need to be in step with what is going on in IT.
>
> (Interview, Iskandar, Shah Alam, February 2018)

Thus, even the traditionalist, conservative party PAS, known for spreading messages through mosques and *ceramah,* knows the importance of keeping up with other parties to hire big data professionals.

There are two main concerns with regard to financing big data companies. The first is whether smaller parties with minimal campaign funds have less ability to get their message out than they did prior to the arrival of big data companies. Social media have proven to be a highly impactful way for grassroots communities to challenge powerful political and business elites. In the digital era, the institutions who can afford to access data and pay big digital media conglomerates like Google, Facebook, and Twitter will be far more likely to be business and political elites than grassroots communities or smaller political parties. Grassroots activists simply cannot afford to fund further promotion of their causes online. Facebook's response to the CA scandal was to reduce content in users' newsfeeds from advertising, brands, and political groups. In its place, Facebook said, the company would return to its original concept, which was to prioritise content in newsfeeds that came from family and friends (Chaykowski 2018). Malaysian opposition parties claimed the result of this

change of strategy within Facebook was simply to make political parties pay a lot more to have their material promoted, funds which only the wealthier parties could provide.

The second concern is that big data further enables money to trump ideology in campaign strategies. Big data companies generally contend that victory lies in the algorithm a big data company develops. CA trumpets its 'OCEAN' model to Najib as superior to all others based on Trump's election victory, Andrew Claster sells his services to Invoke on the back of Obama's 2012 victory, and so on. These companies are not fussed about their client's ideology—they usually extend their services to the highest bidder. Of course, most political consultants have been this way since long before the digital era, but the political economy of big data campaigning seems to have encouraged an understanding of elections in which the 'coders' and data analysts with the best algorithm are the key, rather than the party that has the most campaigners or volunteers who believe in their message. As one Pakatan Harapan MP said, 'Give me 10 million ringgit for Facebook and I could win the election' (interview with DAP candidate, Kuala Lumpur, December 2017). This exemplifies how some political candidates see their ability to win elections in the digital era: algorithms trump grassroots activism.

The shift from grassroots volunteers to 'coders' as the actors most in demand was evident in GE14. The majority of employees working for big data companies I met in Malaysia declared themselves generally apolitical. Both government and opposition big data campaigners in their twenties spoke about GE14 as a stepping stone to going on to work for Google or Facebook. Staffers in BN's big data companies were disappointed that they could not publicly state they worked in the world of digital-media campaigning. Invoke staffers talked about the potential of the company to 'turn private' in the aftermath of GE14. They said they were 'building what we have now to commercialise it' towards job-matching or volunteer-management software, and said that some NGOs were already interested in buying their programme. This is not to say that all Invoke employees did not care if the opposition lost, nor is it to downplay their other volunteers, but it does show that professional election campaigners in Malaysia are now more likely to be IT specialists or 'coders' developing algorithms to sell to parties than those who have worked their way up through political-party structures.

Indeed, big data companies like to think they are apolitical. CA's now disgraced former CEO Alexander Nix said that CA was 'not a political agency. We've never been a political agency. We're a tech company, and we want our technologies to help companies grow and develop' (Cam 2017). Fahmi Fadzil

described Invoke as 'the professionalisation of politics—it's what happens in the US with political consultants' (interview, Fahmi Fadzil, Kuala Lumpur, February 2018). Invoke's move from party machine to private company in the aftermath of the election raises the question of whether Malaysians gave funds and information to big data companies in order to support their party choice—indeed, even to support a democratic movement in Malaysia—assuming they were supporting a not-for-profit organisation. When the company becomes for-profit, is the information volunteered by citizens still available? In the immediate aftermath of the election, Rafizi only announced, 'Invoke will move on to focus on other missions that are in line with what we set out to do, to promote and harness grassroots volunteerism for social, economic and political empowerment' (*The Sun Daily* 2018). What this means explicitly is unclear. Most of these companies aim to be involved in elections in other countries in the region; almost all were scoping out candidates in Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest democracy, for work in the 2019 presidential elections. Where do these data go?

This brings us to the broader question of privacy. Many voters in Malaysia, and indeed globally, have little or no idea how big data companies are using their data and social-media content to attempt to sway their vote. This research has shown that campaigners and political-party officials believe that big data companies exert reasonable influence in gathering data on voters, and in targeting voters for political campaign advertisements. More research needs to be conducted on the extent to which Malaysians *consent* to such information being used for political-campaign purposes. Even if Malaysians do not consent to some data being sold to political parties, there is the still the issue of data being sold through a 'side door' anyway. The monetization of data for political purposes raises serious issues for privacy that will possibly require a whole new regulatory system and urgent studies from researchers exploring potential solutions to improving election campaigns in the digital era.

A Sectarian Public Sphere

As we have seen above, microtargeting from big data companies groups people in terms of religion, race, language, family background, and/or age. Recent literature questions the role of digital media in encouraging a rise in sectarianism, insularity, and xenophobia in Southeast Asia (Gromping 2014; Lim 2017). The rise of ethnonationalistic campaigning in the United States, for example, can be encouraged by big data companies who microtarget citizens in areas of underemployment, using foreigners as scapegoats (Gonzalez 2017;

Persily 2017). Below I use some examples from Malaysia's GE14 to extend this argument.

The first issue concerns the microtargeting of voters. In explaining how Invoke works, Rafizi Ramli used an example of female full-time workers in Johor. He said big data companies categorized these voters as having only a '30 per cent chance of voting Pakatan'. The result is to 'ignore her. Our candidate will not even talk about her because it takes so much effort to convert her. You just focus on who falls in the marginal—it's those issues you focus on' (Boo 2017). Tactically this makes sense because targeting swing or undecided voters is often the key to winning an election. To be sure, voters have been ignored in other constituencies for similar reasons prior to the digital era. But should political parties 'ignore' certain voters, categorized by gender, ethnicity, or location, because of big data companies' algorithms? Doing so could lead to greater discontent around the process of elections and democratic institutions, if some voters are being ignored and others, consistently wooed.

Alternatively, it could be argued that big data companies enable political parties to understand details and nuances of particular groups within a democracy. For example, a big data company could ascertain that female workers in Johor would largely vote for BN because they think that it is the best option to reduce immigration and maintain employment levels. The problem here is how political parties might respond to this information. A political party could run a scare campaign on immigration on Facebook, while they might run completely different pro-immigration campaign messages elsewhere, according to the voters they are microtargeting.

Let's use a more concrete example. PAS's Iskandar said each year he organised a Chinese New Year event, and he creates a system whereby he sends out Happy New Year messages on WhatsApp to ethnic-Chinese members of his community. He explained, 'In the Malay community there are some who are very conservative. For example, even me organising a Chinese New Year Event, some Malays will not be able to accept that. You have to be very selective in terms of the information to various groups' (interview, Iskandar, Shah Alam, February 2018). Big data can also target a group of voters and use race and religion to win them over, which could further polarize Malaysians.

It is not difficult to see how a politician could say one thing to one ethnic group (telling Chinese communities on WhatsApp that they are pluralist), yet say another to another ethnic group on WhatsApp (telling a Muslim group the Chinese are a problem). Of course, politicians could advertise in a Chinese-language newspaper stating they are pro-pluralism, while at the same advertise in *Utusan Malaysia* in Bahasa Malaysia claiming the Chinese

are a threat to Bumiputera dominance. But there seems little evidence that big data is *improving* the situation of 'echo chambers' of ethnic and religious divisions. Rather, these 'echo chambers' might be further polarised in online and social media 'bubbles', all encouraged by political campaigning that aims to microtarget groups in order to win elections.

This brings us to a final aspect of the impact of big data companies on democracy: the broader public sphere. At the heart of Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere was the question of whether democracy can work in large-scale, modern societies (Habermas 1989). In Athenian democracy, the public sphere of the streets was accessible in different ways than the contemporary public sphere, where large-scale nation-states impose a challenge. Habermas did not say there was a perfect public sphere, but argued that we should aspire to a 'regulative ideal', to move towards a better space for accessible debate (Calhoun 1992). Richard Sennett's *Fall of the Public Man* (1976) argues that the achievements of the great multicultural cities of London, Paris, and Venice in the 18th century were due to the streets' accessibility, making interaction among races and ethnicities easier. These groups did not always mix at dinnertime or intermarry, but the mere sight of each other on the streets led to a better interracial society and some understanding of each other's daily lives. Thus, people's being exposed to each other's demands (and political parties' responses to these demands) during an election time is essential for a more plural and democratic society.

Now, if we take the two examples from Malaysia's online-campaign realm, it would seem that big data does more to segregate the online public sphere than to intermesh segments therein. Big data companies can take advantage of this segregation and try to appeal to particular groups' interests, or, at worst, exploit their fears and insecurities. Through algorithms that target specific ethnic or religious groups, they have the potential to reduce those audiences' exposure to other groups online.

Conclusion

If GE14 was a referendum on big data, then we can conclude that Malaysian politicians found big data companies essential to political campaigning and are highly likely to use them again. Candidates made it clear that big data allows for more real-time analyses and provides insights that traditional polling data cannot. Even as BN suffered a landslide loss, members of UMNO said that they would expand on these technologies. For example, UMNO's Lokman Adam asserted, 'We are going to … use the mechanism they [Pakatan Harapan] used

to topple us. We are going to use all the technologies that some of our leaders had failed to leverage on before this. Now they realise how technology can play a role and can also ensure you have a different result' (Kamles 2018). As stated earlier, BN campaigners tend to be reactionary, and by GE15 the game may have changed once again, such that cutting-edge new technologies occupy a completely different landscape. For example, many Malaysians may look to make their social media settings more private. Others will realise if they engage in anything on a public social media page, that provides data-analytics firms with essential material. Once they realise this material is being used to target them, they may be less interactive in these spaces.

Pakatan Harapan finally achieved success in defeating an electoral-authoritarian regime through a peaceful transition in the ballot box. Many of these voters expect a healthier democracy, a more pluralistic society, and a more transparent political process to flourish as a result. If big data companies and the strategies they promote have the potential to undermine these goals—and this research argues that they do—then Malaysia's new government will need to think more about how they should be regulated and what broader forces can be introduced in order to counter a more sectarian, polarised society.

Note

[1] In interviews conducted before the CA scandal, every big data campaigner working with BN, and every BN official interviewed for this research, on or off the record, said CA was not involved in GE14.

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7

Youth in the Politics of Transition in Malaysia

Haris Zuan

Before the 14th General Election (GE14), Malaysian media carried a substantial amount of pessimistic commentary about youth. Youth were said to make up the bulk of unregistered voters, be fickle-minded as to which coalition to support, or be politically apathetic. Yet, by the conclusion of the election, youths—meaning those aged 21 to 40—were found to have played major roles not just as voters, but also in political campaigns of various forms. This chapter seeks to understand the politics of Malaysian youth in an historic election. It starts by mapping out the forms youth activism has taken, including changes over the past 20 years since the 1998 *Reformasi* movement. The analysis then turns to efforts by political parties to approach youths, particularly their shift away from programmes often linked to youths, such as concerts and sports. Political parties have recognised that youths are less inclined than in the past to join organisational structures such as associations, clubs, and parties themselves, seeing these as rigid and inflexible. To deal with this change, political parties have turned to seeking to empower youths via political-education programmes. The final part of this chapter deals with youth involvement in GE14, starting with the ways political parties from both sides focused on capturing young voters through youth-friendly manifestos and by fielding younger candidates, then highlighting the efforts of a few youth groups who campaigned around specific issues or directly for young candidates.[1] Overall, the chapter argues that there are significant changes happening in youth activism in Malaysia, in both orientations and strategies, to which political parties from both sides are trying to adapt. This process underlies the importance of youth as a political

force in Malaysia and raises the question: has youth activism, which tends toward 'small p' informal politics, in Francis Loh's terms (2018), embraced 'big P' formal Politics?

Political Parties and Political Education for Youth

Reformasi launched a new trend—or reinvigorated efforts—toward political education, initially under the aegis of independent youth organisations, many of them connected with universities and involving *mahasiswa* (undergraduates). This phenomenon is partly because of the restrictions faced by youth inside and outside campuses. The introduction of the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 prohibited students from political activity. Meanwhile outside campuses, most youth organisations—whether seemingly political or not (including sports associations)—are dominated by politicians. In response to the lack of democratic space in the public realm, for the last 20 years, youth social and political activism has evolved to favour small groups with informal structures in order to navigate the political barriers set up by the state. Through these activities, youths have sought more meaningful modes of participation, in which they are free to explore and discuss various issues, have full control of the programme, and are involved in every stage of decision-making processes. These are values they hardly can experience in more formal organisations, be they youth organisations or political parties. The popularity of this approach persuaded Malaysian political parties from both sides to set up their own versions of 'youth activism' via political education, moves that could be seen as efforts by political parties either to empower or co-opt youth.

Since Reformasi in 1998, a few youth and student groups have been seen as pro-opposition and critical of the government. Some of these groups, such as Universiti Bangsar Utama (UBU, referring to a neighbourhood near the University of Malaya), Gerakan Mahasiswa Lantang Negara (National Movement of Outspoken Students), and the Malaysia Youth and Students Democratic Movement (DEMA), emerged as reactions against the restricted democratic space both on and off campus (Haris 2012, 2013, 2014; Fauzi and Haris 2014). Despite being perceived as oppositional and having some of their leaders—such as Lee Khai Loon from DEMA, now a Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, People's Justice Party) state legislator—make the jump to formal partisan politics, these groups have always maintained their distance from political parties and have wanted to be seen as independent.

During this period, opposition political parties, except for Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS), rarely organised programmes

to approach youth or students. The Islamist party had already long-previously established a cadre system on campus, where its proxy student wings, Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia (GAMIS, Pan-Malaysian Muslim Students' Association) and Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam (PMI, Muslim Students' Union), had consistently participated in campus elections. These campus organisations were guided by an unofficial committee acting as liaison with the Youth wing of PAS, Dewan Pemuda PAS.

At that time, several non-party organisations actively carried out civic education among youths. Among them were Komunite Seni Jalan Telawi (KSJT, Telawi Street Arts Community), formed in 2003, and the Middle Eastern Graduate Centre (MEGC), formed in 2007. Although both of these organisations are not directly under the influence of any political party, they are part of Institut Kajian Dasar (IKD, Institute for Policy Research), which is closely linked to PKR. IKD is a think-tank established in 1985 under the auspices of former Malaysian deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, whose subsequent ouster sparked Reformasi. It is widely known for its intellectual endeavours and participation in the policymaking process.

While other organisations were also important—especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM, Voice of the Malaysian People), Pusat Komunikasi Masyarakat (KOMAS, Centre for Popular Communications), and Aliran Kesedaran Negara (Aliran, National Consciousness Movement)—KSJT and MEGC were among the first groups focusing systematically on political education for Malay youths after Reformasi.

After Reformasi 'failed' to bring down the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) and its lead component party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), after two general elections,[2] IKD realised that more effort was needed outside electoral politics, especially to advance discourses of democracy among Malays. Malay youths became their focus. While KSJT focused on culturally critical issues, MEGC focused on promoting more progressive interpretations of Islam among Malays. Some of the key persons in KSJT and MEGC had formal Islamic-education backgrounds. Their resemblance to the roles of the nationalist *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) during the 1940s added a tinge of romanticism and made KSJT and MEGC more appealing to Malay-Muslim youths.

After the 12th general election in 2008, which saw opposition parties' snatching control of five states and coming together as Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact, PR), these political-education training programmes began to mushroom, becoming more structured and organised. MEGC and IKD, both sponsored

by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), began to conduct organised and structured political education. With KAS's financial backing, IKD and MEGC published and translated books and held forums and political training workshops.[3] In 2010, IKD (into which MEGC had by then merged) organised a more structured political training and education programme named *Sekolah Politik* (Politics School).

Sekolah Politik offered youths a series of political training sessions, with emphasis on universal values. The programme introduces participants to political thinkers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Locke, as well as basic concepts such as the separation of powers, federalism, and checks and balances. Participants are then directed to reflect on these concepts in the context of Malaysian politics. Most of the programme's participants are university graduates from the Klang Valley. Sekolah Politik focuses not just on building understanding of political thinkers and concepts, but also on training participants to become politicians by learning how to debate, build arguments, and develop their rhetoric. Indeed, PKR made efforts to use Sekolah Politik's modules and model as the basis for its own political training programme, *Program Kursus Pendidikan Politik Negarawan* (Statesman Political Education Course), but it fizzled out after some time.

In 2011, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) launched its own initiative, called Sekolah Demokrasi. Its objective was to deepen participants' understanding of democracy while introducing the DAP and its social-democratic ideology. Just like Sekolah Politik, Sekolah Demokrasi had several stages (called Forms 1, 2, and 3). Form 1 was the introductory stage. Forms 2 and 3 were specifically for those interested in learning more about the party's ideology and history, with potential to register as members. After the 13th general election in 2013, Sekolah Demokrasi began to be organised more efficiently and consistently. Form 1 classes were held twice a month. Edry Faizal, who was subsequently elected state legislator for Dusun Tua in the 14th general election, served as coordinator. While the DAP is generally assumed to be dominated by Malaysians of Chinese ethnicity, its membership is open to all Malaysians and Sekolah Demokrasi's participants were overwhelmingly Malay. One explanation is that the sessions were in the Malay language, leading to allegations that the programme aimed specifically to recruit Malays to the DAP.

The '*sekolah*' (school) approach was so popular that it got the attention of the ruling Barisan Nasional, who formed their own political-education programme, called the School of Politics, under the new Barisan Nasional Youth Volunteers (BNYV). Previously, BN seemed content to employ government

agencies such as Biro Tata Negara (National Civics Bureau) to conduct political education for the public, specifically government staff and students in schools and universities. Khairy Jamaluddin, who was then the UMNO Youth Chief and Malaysian Youth Minister, formed BNYV in 2012 as part of BN efforts to rebrand Barisan Nasional to appeal to young professionals in urban centres who were not interested in joining any BN component parties. BNYV has a clear structure, with a national committee and several state ones.

Formed in 2016, the School of Politics was implemented in several states, including Johor, Penang, Perak, and Pahang. Its modules covered history, ideologies of Malaysian political parties, technical skills for organising social and political activities, and data-management. The programme was also a platform for BN leaders to interact with participants, who were predominantly Malay. Before this, in 2015, Barisan Nasional Youth had formed the *Akademi Kepimpinan Kapten Hussein* (AKHI, Captain Hussein Leadership Academy) to recruit young members by holding a series of leadership training sessions and open forums for youths. AKHI was led by former Deputy UMNO Youth Chief Khairul Azwan Harun. It courted controversy when it held a forum on Anwar Ibrahim's second sodomy case featuring the lead prosecutor in the case himself, Muhammad Shafee Abdullah. By the end of 2017, Budiman Mohd Zohdi, a BN member of Parliament (MP), added yet another initiative of his own by forming the School of Political Communication (SKOP) to attract non-UMNO youths. He openly stated that SKOP was a cadre system for party members, intended to compete with the DAP's Sekolah Demokrasi:

> The cadre training (*proses pengkaderan*) is central to the engagement of political machinery by its party or political leaders. That's why we see the opposition has its Sekolah Demokrasi. For SKOP, we are giving value-added knowledge in terms of political communication (quoted in Amin 2018).

Apart from political-education programmes, most political parties also started rolling out internships, whether with an MP or assemblyperson's office or with the party's headquarters. At the forefront was PKR. PKR's programme adopted a two-pronged approach: the party gave interns specific themes to research and write policy papers on, or had them work directly under assemblypersons and MPs. Interns received a monthly stipend, with internships ranging from two months to a year. The DAP, too, had an internship programme, called 'Know an MP'. Starting in 2013, the programme selected ten youths, giving them opportunities to work with DAP elected representatives. Some DAP representatives, such as MP Dr Ong Kian Ming, also had their own internship programmes. Meanwhile, PAS also has a Practical Training Programme (PTP),

housed under the party's research wing. The PTP lasts for three months and exposes participants to election-management and parliamentary affairs.

On the BN side was the Mahasiswa Turun Parlimen (MANTAP, Students at Parliament) programme, open to university undergraduates. Participants worked in the Malaysian Parliament as interns to BN MPs, including the prime minister, deputy prime minister, other ministers and deputies, and speaker of the House. MANTAP was led by former Muar MP and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Razali Ibrahim. In addition, BNYV Perak organised the Amanjaya Internship, the first political cadre system under Perak BN Youth, with the full backing of the Perak state government. The programme placed interns in the offices of BN assemblypersons to gain exposure and aimed to appeal to Perak youths.

On the whole, political-education programmes and internships with political offices are rather novel on both sides of the political divide in Malaysia. Generally speaking, these programmes aim to empower youth by exposing them to political ideas and understanding. Although organised by political parties, the programmes do not over-emphasize party propaganda, but aim more toward providing parties with an opportunity to engage with youth. For example, youths coming from an 'Islamic background' joined the DAP-organised Sekolah Demokrasi. They used sessions with party leaders to question the DAP's opposition to *hudud* (Islamic laws) proposed by PAS. On the other hand, the DAP saw this questioning as an opportunity for them to engage with and explain the party's stand to the predominantly Malay-Muslim participants.

These programmes go beyond party members; they are open to any youths, regardless of affiliation. While some of the participants might eventually join the party, in truth, the majority of them did not. In fact, a youth who was affiliated with UMNO and BN participated in Sekolah Politik and Sekolah Demokrasi, only later to run for the National Youth Parliament as an 'UMNO candidate' and subsequently become one of the key people in the School of Politics UMNO initiated.

Among those who joined political parties, quite a number ended up as city councillors (politically appointed) and state assemblypersons. Notable participants like Amin Ahmad, who joined the MEGC programme in 2007, not only became a member of Parliament in 2018, but is currently actively promoting and organising his own political-education training, called *Sekolah Merdeka* (School of Independence) under his NGO, Institute for Leadership and Development Studies (LEADS), launched in 2014. The novelty of these programmes and the fact that so many parties adopted similar models raise

questions of whether this is simply the latest approach by political parties to engage with Malaysian youth, or a reaction to changes happening among youth themselves.

Political Education as a Reaction to Changes among Youth?

To answer this question, we turn to political parties' previous strategies, which did react to changes happening among activist youths. The discussion starts with the failure of BN strategies in the 12th general election in 2008 (GE12). Then, youth participation in formal politics remained low, although the government had allowed university students to join political parties and several political parties had set up 'student' wings on campuses. By the lead-up to GE14, in which youths were expected to be a significant political force, political parties had changed their approach. These 'new' approaches and their impact are worthy of examination.

After a major shock to BN in GE12, the ruling coalition realised the significance of youth as a critical voting bloc, focusing accordingly on the 13th general election (Mohd Azizuddin 2014; Afif 2014; Dzuhailmi et al. 2012; Yang Razali 2014; Nga et al. 2014; Mohd Fauzi and Ku Hasnita 2015). As such, leading up GE13, BN spent an historic amount of resources to win the hearts of young voters. Apart from the targeted training programmes and internships, as described above, the ruling coalition not only became more active on social media such as Facebook and Twitter, in part to reach youths, but also began producing short videos explaining current issues and criticising Pakatan Rakyat. In fact, Prime Minister Najib amassed the highest number of Twitter followers among political leaders. At the same time, BN organised concerts throughout the country as part of their election campaign, in what it called the Achieving Promises Tour (*Jelajah Janji Ditepati*), featuring famous local and international artists, including bringing Korean sensation Psy to Penang, a Pakatan stronghold (Haris 2014).

Nonetheless, despite all it had spent, not only did BN fail to maintain its GE12 performance in 2013, it lost the popular vote for the first time since 1969. Pakatan Rakyat maintained its grip on Penang, Selangor, and Kelantan, while recording its best electoral showing to date across other states' elections. The situation forced BN yet again to reconsider its strategy to capture the youth vote. It is therefore not surprising that the coalition launched several new programmes to rejuvenate itself, including introducing online UMNO membership-registration (Elly Fazaniza 2014), advocating a spirit of

volunteerism among members (Astro Awani 2016), and fielding more young candidates in GE14 (Mohamed Basyir 2017).

After GE12 in 2008, with two of the richest states, Selangor and Penang, under Pakatan control, Pakatan's component parties were now able to carry out the kind of better-organised training for the public and its members described above. Indeed, the coalition's unexpectedly strong showing in 2008 made the situation urgent, as Pakatan's top leadership worried about the quality of its elected representatives and members. Pakatan leaders concluded that they needed to hold a series of internal training sessions, while also providing avenues for the public to get to know their parties better.

Youth participation in partisan political activities remained low, however. Rather than only withdrawing their support from BN, youth were increasingly critical of political parties on both sides, with a corresponding decrease in their interest in becoming political-party members. Only a few participated in activities held by political parties, such as *ceramah* (rallies), fundraising dinners, and social events (Junaidi et al. 2012; Marshelayanti et al. 2016; Norshuhada et al. 2016).

Despite amendments to the University and University Colleges Act in 2012 that made it legal for students to participate in party politics, campus youths remained especially uninterested in joining political parties or participating in campus politics. Several reinstated campus 'speakers' corners' went almost unused. Despite political parties' setting up student wings on campus, such as PKR's Mahasiswa Keadilan, they were not well-received. Anti-establishment political coalitions (often referred to as 'pro-Mahasiswa' or 'pro-student') on campus dwindled. For instance, Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (Malaysian Students Solidarity), after having reorganized as the Student Union of Malaysia (Kesatuan), folded in 2015. As a result, most campus elections became easy wins or walkovers for the 'pro-Aspirasi' (pro-government) group.

One explanation for this shift is that youth, including university students, prefer to participate in off-campus programmes that are more relaxed, without strict structures, and more cultural or social in nature. Indeed, since 2008, Malaysian youths have shown increasing inclination to organise themselves in small groups known as 'collectives'. This trend of students' taking their activism out of the campus and abandoning campus politics could be caused by 'intellectual containment'—the suppression of academic freedom and institutional autonomy (Weiss 2011)—and 'depoliticisation', which removes students' ability to organise themselves collectively and disconnects them from the historical narrative of student activism (Haris Zuan 2013, 2014). This preference for cultural and social activities, free from clearly-defined

structures, is also consistent with development trends among the 'new left' of earlier decades, as described by Marcuse: 'they do not yet possess any new organisational forms, are without a mass base and are isolated from the working class' (Marcuse 1979: 1).

Youth in GE14: Inside and Outside Political Parties

Faced with this challenge, Malaysian political parties tried to make themselves more appealing to youths by introducing 'youth manifestos' and fielding a higher number of younger candidates than previously in 2018. Moreover, youths outside political parties also participated in GE14, taking on active roles, contrary to media reports that claimed that youth are uninterested in electoral politics. Surveying these developments will allow us to assess whether these trends suggest that youths are moving back to formal politics, but with a new dynamic.

As in GE13, the 2018 general election saw all participating political parties giving particular attention to younger voters. The aforementioned negative media coverage for a few months leading up to the election claimed that youths were uninterested and apathetic (Mohd Husni 2017; Azman 2017). Moreover, media reported heavily on an #UndiRosak (Spoilt Vote) campaign by a small group of youths, calling for people to spoil their votes in protest against both BN and Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope, PH) coalitions, neither which they believed capable of bringing systemic changes—prompting many political leaders from BN, PH, and PAS to issue statements encouraging voting (Boo and Shazwan 2017; Chandra 2018). Even so, the turnout rate in GE14 was among the highest in history (82 per cent or 12,299,514 voters). Spoilt votes stood at only 1.76 per cent, among the lowest share in recent decades (Koh 2018).

GE14 also saw high youth participation specifically, in terms of voter-registration and votes cast. According to the Election Commission, the number of registered voters increased by 1,672,622, to 14,940,624. That total included a 10 per cent increase in voters from the ages of 21 to 39 (Table 7.1). (The voter list used was from the fourth quarter of 2017, so those who registered in the first quarter of 2018 were not gazetted in time to vote [G. Tong 2018].) In terms of voter-turnout, high percentages of both youth age-cohorts, 21–29 and 30–39, voted: 80.1 per cent and 80.3 per cent, respectively (see Suffian and Lee, this volume, for details). This result repudiates earlier claims that youth were apathetic and not interested in voting.

Table 7.1 Registered voters as of 4th quarter 2017

Age	Share of registered voters (%)
21–29	17.0
30–39	23.9
40–59	39.0
60–79	18.0
80 and above	2.0

It should therefore come as no surprise that all political parties gave particular emphasis to youth issues. Pakatan Harapan's manifesto offered 60 promises across four main categories, including a list of ten promises it pledged to fulfil within its first hundred days in office. Issues such as resolving concerns regarding Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN, National Higher Education Fund Corporation) student loans were on that list—one of the main issues galvanising young voters. Pakatan Harapan promised to defer loan-repayment for graduates earning monthly salaries of less than RM4,000 and to stop blacklisting defaulters.

All in all, Pakatan Harapan tailored five commitments specifically for youth in their manifesto. Earlier, in January 2018, Pakatan Harapan Youth had come out with *Tawaran Anak Muda* (Offer to Youth), a ten-point platform focused on rights to decent employment, quality education, lower costs of living, affordable housing, and sports and recreation (Tang 2018). The initiative became sensationalised when PH proposed to air the popular Premier League, Spanish La Liga, and other sports series on state-owned Radio Television Malaysia for free, as part of fifth core focusing on sports and recreation.

Meanwhile, Barisan Nasional also introduced a youth-specific manifesto, called *Jaminan Orang Muda* (JOM, Youth Guarantee), with themes covering economic, social, and political issues. PAS-led Gagasan Sejahtera also gave emphasis to youth issues such as jobs, home ownership, private vehicles, costs of living, and education. These manifestos showed the extent to which political parties on both sides emphasised youth (Table 7.2).

As the most affected group, youth overall felt Malaysia was heading in the wrong direction (Chow 2017; Merdeka Center 2017). Although BN managed to come out with an exclusive manifesto for youth, it was rather late—it was launched just a month before polling day. The youth unemployment rate in 2017 was over three times higher than the overall unemployment rate, at 10.8 per cent (Dass 2017); that same year youth aged between 25–40 formed the largest segment among those classified as bankrupt (Tong, A. 2018). Thus, it

Table 7.2 Comparison of the main coalitions' GE14 youth-related manifesto items

	Pakatan Harapan	**Barisan Nasional**	**Gagasan Sejahtera (PAS)**
Education	Defer payment of student loans for those earning under RM4,000/month. Mainstream Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes.	Increase Internet reach in public universities. RM1,500 one-time payment to children of BR1M[4] recipients who are enrolled in public universities.	Abolish PTPTN (student loans). Reinstate special schools for low-income students.
Cost of living	Allocate RM1 billion for young entrepreneurs.	Improve and expand BR1M. Offer a public-transport pass.	Restructure payments to toll concessionaires. Aid for first-time car purchases.
Jobs	Minimum wage of RM1,500. Create one million high-quality jobs.	Create jobs via the Malaysian Vision Valley. Create 50,000 jobs via a TVET Bootcamp	Make agriculture again the main sector of the national economy. Create centres of excellence for young graduates.
Housing	Create rent-to-own schemes via commercial banks nationwide. Increase affordable housing quotas.	Create specific banks to fund purchase of affordable housing (under RM300,000). Increase the number of 1Malaysia Youth transit homes for B40[5] youth.	Review system of awarding land to developers. Reduce price of affordable housing to be between RM50,000 and RM180,000.

is no wonder that one survey points to the economy as a much bigger concern among youth than other issues, including the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal (Kamles 2017). This focus is why all political parties' manifestos focused on economic agendas and why even youth themselves criticised PH Youth's idea of airing the English Premier League.

In terms of candidacy, having more young candidates appeared to be a good selling point, even for the ruling party, which used to highlight more experienced candidates as a strength in previous elections. In GE14, BN fielded 28 candidates who were under 40 years old, out of 222 candidates for parliamentary seats, and 79 young candidates for state seats (PakDin.my 2018). For Pakatan Harapan, 104 youth candidates contested across both parliamentary and state seats, with 23 of them competing at the federal level—8 PKR, 7 Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM, Malaysian United Indigenous Party), 6 DAP, and 2 Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, National Trust Party)—and 81 in state constituencies (24 PPBM, 22 DAP, 19 Amanah, and 16 PKR). Among these Pakatan Harapan youth candidates, 13 won parliamentary seats (6 PKR, 5 DAP, and 2 PPBM) and 45 won state seats (22 DAP, 11 PKR, 7 Amanah, and 5 PPBM) (Nik Nazmi 2018). Moreover, many were quite young: nine of the DAP's candidates for state constituencies, for instance, were under 30 years old (Lim 2018)

The trend in East Malaysia echoed that of peninsular Malaysia. Contesting political parties fielded younger candidates, especially under 35 years old. In Sabah, for example, among the prominent young candidates contesting in parliamentary seats were Caesar Mandela Malakun, 28, from the BN's United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) in Penampang; Chrisnadia Sinam, 34, from PKR in Tuaran; Raymond Ahuar, 33, also from PKR in Pensiangan; and Jo-Anna Sue Henley Rampas, 28, from Warisan in Kiulu. In Sarawak, the DAP fielded Mordi Bimol, 33, in Mas Gading. Most of these candidates won their seats.

Yet not all youth engagement was via parties. Approaching GE14, a group of youth activists under the banner of Gabungan Anak Muda Demi Malaysia (Coalition of Youth for Malaysia) had organised a *Kongres Anak Muda Malaysia* (Malaysian Youth Congress), attended by several hundred people, either representing youth organisations or coming as individuals. The congress produced a thirteen-point Declaration of Malaysian Youth 2017, covering education, academic freedom, gender equality, the environment, and institutional reforms. This group later formed the Liga Pemuda (Youth League), led by prominent youth activists such as Adam Adli (former student activist), Mandeep Singh (former secretariat manager for Bersih 2.0), Anis Syafiqah

(former Kesatuan chairperson), and Shazni Munir (former chairperson of Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia). Liga Pemuda endorsed six of its members who ran for elections at the state level. All contested on the Pakatan Harapan ticket. All agreed to uphold the Declaration of Malaysian Youth 2017. In return, Liga Pemuda organised a coordinated campaign for the candidates, including crowd-funding efforts, setting up online campaigns, and assigning their members to run on-the-ground campaigns for the candidates. Four of them won.

Another noteworthy group was Malaysia Muda (Young Malaysia), which formed in 2017 after organising the 71st commemoration of Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API, Aware Youth Corps), the youth wing of the first Malay political party, Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM, Malay Nationalist Party). Unlike API, Malaysia Muda consisted not only of Malay members, but also Chinese and Indian. Malaysia Muda aimed to promote counter-narratives to dominant discourses on issues related to society, politics, religion, and ethnic relations. They claimed not to be associated with any political party and were seemingly very critical of both BN and PH. They even criticised Pakatan for appointing former UMNO Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad—whom they considered as authoritarian when he was in power previously—to lead the coalition.

However, during the campaign period, Malaysia Muda took a clear stand and campaigned for change, despite maintaining that they were not affiliated with or supportive of any political party. Throughout the two weeks of the campaign period, Malaysia Muda 'staged' street-theatre performances all over peninsular Malaysia, starting from Bentong in Pahang; then returning to Kuala Lumpur, to Lembah Pantai; then going to the east coast, to Dungun, Kuantan; then heading to the southern states of Malacca and Johor (Muar, Simpang Renggam, Paloh); then travelling back to Selangor (Semenyih, Paya Besar) before finishing in the northern states of Penang (Permatang Pasir) and Kedah (Alor Setar). These performances were staged *ad hoc* in the midst of *ceramah*, provoking the crowd on the goods and services tax (GST), rising cost of living, student loans, and other issues Pakatan stressed. Other than Pakatan *ceramah*, they also went to those of Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM, Malaysian Socialist Party). These street theatre performances garnered attention not just on the ground, but also in the media (Nadia Azam 2018).

Borneo Komrad, a Sabah-based youth group that advocates on stateless children and education issues, likewise declined to endorse any candidates, to remain nonpartisan. However, during the campaign period, the group helped to provide critical analysis of the incumbent government's performance to help

the voters to make informed decisions. They also criticised candidates who failed to address issues concerning stateless children in their manifestos. Prior to the campaign period, Borneo Komrad co-organised a forum with Bersih 2.0 to educate voters on key electoral issues.

Youth mobilized online, as well. Especially notable was an online campaign started just after the Election Commission announced that the polling day would be mid-week, called '*Jom Balik Undi*' ('Let's go home and vote'). The polling date was expected to prove difficult for the many voters who live and work far from where they vote, including in Singapore. The initiative started on Facebook, where car-owners, regardless of ethnicity, posted their travel plans for GE14, such as their destination, departure time and date, number of seats available in their vehicle, and time and date of their return journey. A group of university students also organized an online crowd-funding campaign, #PulangMengundi (go home to vote), to sponsor bus rides for fellow students to return home to vote. Their #SponsorAStudent raised funds both from Chinese associations across Malaysia and the public (Loh 2018). Hence, GE14 saw creative efforts to mobilize young voters and stepped-up youth involvement with formal politics, both within and outside political parties.

Conclusion

Just after the historic 9 May result, an UMNO youth leader (later elected the new UMNO Youth chief) acknowledged that UMNO's and BN's failure to secure the youth vote was one of the reasons for the coalition's first defeat after being in power for 61 years (Utusan 2018). Pakatan Harapan is well aware that, for the time being, the youth vote is in their favour. It is therefore not surprising that the PH government proposed lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 (Syahredzan 2018). Even UMNO, having suffered its worst-ever defeat, announced that it would lower its membership age from 18 to 16 (Khairil 2018). BN component-party the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), too, noted in August 2018 the need for political-education programmes to cultivate successors to its current leadership (Palansamy 2018). Yet sparking young people's interest and granting access to youth form only part of the issue; empowering youth to participate in decision-making also matters. PH has an advantage not only among young voters, but also in fielding younger candidates. The PH parties' comparatively relaxed structure and absence of steep hierarchies facilitate their promoting young talent. These qualities are in contrast with the older UMNO and PAS, both of which have in place rigid structures that make it difficult for youths to make it to the top.

As Malaysia's historic transition proceeds, it is important to monitor these interconnecting patterns of youth participation in political parties, elections, and decision-making. How will the new PH government perform on these metrics? Will PH give more democratic space to youth, or will old political elites regroup and come back to power? Based on the new trends and policies the new Pakatan Harapan government has proposed—lowering the voting age to 18 years old, introducing a youth parliament programme for students in school, reinstating local government elections—there is a good possibility we will see more youths participating in electoral politics over time. In short, the trend since Reformasi is, as Francis Loh (2018) describes it, one of youths' turning from the 'small p' politics—informal politics, to which they had retreated after the early 1970s—back to 'formal "Big P" Power Politics'. At this point, while it will take more time and data to draw firm conclusions, it is clear that youth activism is changing rapidly, in both formal and informal politics, and is contributing to Malaysia's transition to democracy.

Notes

[1] This chapter adopts a qualitative approach in analyzing youth political involvement. Hence, most of the data were gathered either by participatory observation (by joining youth activities on the ground) or in-depth interviews (especially with various party leaders and trainers for political-education programmes). In addition, some information was also obtained from online resources such as political parties' websites and news portals.

[2] Despite the movement, the opposition did not gain much ground in the general election of 1999: BN won 148 of 193 parliamentary seats nationwide. In the next general election, in 2004, BN won 198 of 219 of Parliamentary seats, or 90.4 per cent (Loh 2004). Opposition parties were very weak and most focused on consolidating internally. Only PAS, as the oldest and the most grassroots-based opposition party in Malaysia, had the machinery and resources to recruit among youth.

[3] KAF has been accused of sponsoring anti-government subversion and promoting 'religious pluralism' (which Malaysian Muslim authorities see as deviant). KAF involvement became a major issue in debates over foreign political funding in Malaysia (for details, see Muhamad Takiyudin and Abdul Muein 2017).

[4] Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M, 1Malaysia People's Aid) is a means-tested unconditional cash transfer programme.

[5] 'B40' refers to the lowest 40 per cent of the population in terms of income.

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8

Islam and Its Racial Dynamics in Malaysia's 14th General Election

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali[1]

That Malaysian politics has been coloured by race and religion reflects the composition of the population. Political Islam, or Islamism, in Malaysia has traditionally pitted the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), conventionally viewed as a secular Malay nationalist party, against Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party), which has undergone transformation from being an offshoot of UMNO's religious wing in 1951, to a party that combined the ideals of both Islam and Malay nationalism in the 1960s, to a fundamentalist party during the post-Iranian revolution years of the 1980s, to a major component of the cross-ethnic post-1998 *Reformasi* (reformation) movement. Reformasi saw PAS throw in its lot with the Barisan Alternatif (BA, Alternative Front, 1999–2001), then Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Pact, 2008–15) opposition alliances. Supplanting PR—with the new Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, National Trust Party) in place of PAS, and now in government—is the Pakatan Harapan (PH, Alliance of Hope) coalition.

A cardinal feature of contemporary Malaysian Islam has been an upsurge of Islamism, corresponding to the Islamic resurgence phenomenon of the 1970s–80s, when Islamic values, norms, figures, and institutions penetrated into the country's corridors of power. The reassertion of Islam in public life transformed the nature of both inter-religious and intra-Muslim relations and political activities. Especially important to Islamist politics in Malaysia have been the versatility, emergence, phasing out, and re-emergence of diverse nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that do not take part directly in electoral politics, but instead strive to live up to the ideals of what they

conceive as a true Islamic polity. However much attention centred on political parties and key personalities in Malaysia's 14th general election (GE14), these organisations played significant roles, as well, in shaping electoral discourse and strategies. Nevertheless, while race and religion remain key factors in Malaysian political priorities and affiliations, the sort of Islamist framing UMNO and its NGO allies promoted proved insufficient to rescue a troubled BN from a fortified opposition challenge in GE14.

The Background Setting

For Islamist activists to make the jump to parties was not new. For instance, many former Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia) activists had joined UMNO following then-soon-to-be Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in the early 1980s. When in 1999, under the banner of BA, PAS collaborated with the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the new Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan, National Justice Party), led by Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, wife of the now-deposed Anwar, this ABIM cohort was among the core leaders of Keadilan, which in 2003 morphed into Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, People's Justice Party). Former ABIM stalwarts have also appeared consistently within the ranks of other Malay-Muslim-led political parties (Aljunied 2016). Adoption of Islam as a primary plank of national governance has been attributed to these ABIM activists, many of whom remained in UMNO and the government after Anwar's humiliating exit (Ahmad Fauzi 2008). Their impact upon decision-making reverberated throughout federal-level Islamic institutions such as the Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM, Islamic Missionary Foundation of Malaysia) and the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), effectively transforming Malaysia into a quasi-Islamic state during Dr Mahathir's first prime ministerial tenure (1981–2003), *sans* the formal installation of *sharia* as the country's definitive law (Martinez 2001).

By the time Dr Mahathir retired as prime minister in October 2003, forces of Islamism and religious conservatism had burgeoned into a new class of religio-political elites who regarded themselves as Islam's internal agents in realizing Malaysia's seemingly destined path towards an 'Islamic state'. Abdullah Badawi's subsequent administration faced numerous difficulties in controlling a burgeoning Islamic officialdom that was increasingly defining, in rigid terms, the boundaries of Muslim–non-Muslim engagements and intra-Muslim relations in Malaysia's pluralistic society (Mohamed Nawab 2017). Najib Razak, Abdullah Badawi's successor, exacerbated the already worrying

situation by welcoming scholar-activists from the conservative Wahhabi-Salafi[2] school into UMNO (Mohamed Nawab 2014; Ahmad Fauzi 2016). In February 2015, the Islamist trajectory of UMNO and its Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) coalition reached an apogee when the government, in self-congratulatory mode, launched a *sharia* index that would reputedly function as a scientific measure of the extent of Malaysia's adherence to Islamic law (Mohd Azizuddin 2015). Developed jointly by the Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM, Malaysian Department for the Advancement of Islam, the hub of Malaysia's federal Islamic bureaucracy), IIUM, and YADIM, the index claimed to assess Malaysia's compliance with Islamic principles within the broad framework of *maqasid sharia* (higher objectives of the *sharia*) in such diverse fields as education, the economy, politics, health, legal affairs, infrastructure, environment, culture, and society (Razak 2017).

As Najib Razak's era progressed, it became increasingly clear that an Islamist conservatism that peculiarly combined Wahhabi-Salafi literalism with traditional Malay-Muslim religious ethnocentrism was fast overtaking Malaysia's earlier *wasatiyyah* (moderation) agenda (Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan 2015). Rigid Islamization proceeded apace even as Najib continued to gloat over Malaysia's accomplishments as a supposedly moderate Muslim nation-state that renounced all forms and manifestations of extremism, as showcased, for example, in its hosting the Kuala Lumpur-based Global Movement of Moderates initiative (El-Muhammady 2015). Evincing Malaysia's mainstreaming of Islamist conservatism has been even previously secular-minded UMNO politicians' widespread acceptance of *hudud*[3] as an indispensable measure of a true Islamic polity.

The mainstreaming of Islamism has had a significant effect on how Malay-Muslims view race and religion, providing cues for electoral blocs' strategies as GE14 neared. A September–October 2016 attitudinal survey of a sample of 1,504 adult citizens in peninsular Malaysia discovered that Malays and non-Malays did not share a common conception of, let alone aspiration toward, what it meant to be Malaysian (Al Ramiah et al. 2017). Worryingly, while Malaysians generally—but especially Malay-Muslims—valued their religious identities highly, the way those identities were nurtured devalued religious 'others'. Comparing different cohorts of religious groups in Southeast Asia, Mikami (2015) similarly found that Malaysian Muslims identified most strongly with their religion, to the extent of prioritizing their religious over national identity. Reflecting these priorities, an Islamic state had arguably become a shared goal of both UMNO-based Malay-nationalists and PAS-based Islamists (Norshahril 2014).

As GE14 approached, Mahathir reconciled with Anwar, although rather than join Anwar's multiracial party, he formed a new party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM, Malaysian United Indigenous Party). PPBM accommodated mainly disillusioned UMNO defectors who were either expelled by Najib Razak or voluntarily left UMNO on account of its allegedly corrupt ways and practices—although at this stage, it was not clear whether PPBM really differed from UMNO. However, PH's elevating Mahathir as prime minister-designate as GE14 neared was a risky experiment, Mahathir himself having been tainted by allegations of an unsavoury role in financial scandals, exposed in the past by detractors including none other than Anwar Ibrahim (Penang Kini 2017). The stage was set, then, for a reconfigured intra-Malay contest in GE14.

PAS, Amanah, and Islamist NGOs: Pre-GE14 Islamist Political Realignments

These shifting tides left PAS particularly affected by an identity crisis. The party was torn between wanting to project an ethnocentric Malay-Muslim image and aspiring to showcase a more inclusive Malaysian identity while remaining loyal to Islamic political ideals. This dilemma had been developing since Reformasi activists, whose allegiance some veteran PAS ideologues suspected was more to Anwar Ibrahim than to PAS's *kepimpinan ulama* (religious scholars' leadership), first flowed into PAS (Hamayotsu 2010). The demise of Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS's widely respected *Murshid al-'Am* (General Guide) and Kelantan chief minister from 1990 until 2013, removed any lingering doubts as to the party's intended trajectory identity-wise. By June 2015, progressive reformists within PAS found themselves sidelined from party leadership, triggering an exodus that gave birth to Amanah three months later (see Hew, this volume).

While a handful of Amanah leaders, including party President Mohamad Sabu and Deputy President Salahuddin Ayub, were veteran PAS activists, others were post-Reformasi converts to the PAS cause. A significant number of them, such as Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa, and Dr Hatta Ramli, trace their Islamist genealogy to the NGO Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia (Ikram, Ikram Association of Malaysia), whose precursors were Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM, Society for Islamic Reform) and the covert Islamic Representative Council (IRC) (Lemière 2009; Maszlee 2018). To this crop of activists, virtually all of whom profess fealty to the ideals of past reformist PAS leaders such as Yusof Rawa, Fadzil Noor, and Nik Aziz Nik Mat, and who propounded the ethnically inclusive 'PAS for All' motto during their

PAS days, Islam, operationalized and implemented via a *maqasidic* approach, emphasizes mercy for all humankind. Adopting the slogan, *Progresif dan Peduli* (Progressive and Caring), Amanah Islamists vowed to discard the divisive doctrines of *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) and Muslim nationalism in favour of Muslim democracy, following the examples of highly acclaimed Tunisian activist Rashid Ghannouchi (b. 1941) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (b. 1954) (Dzulkefly 2016; Maszlee 2017a; Mujahid 2018). Such an approach, while not rejecting *sharia* as a plank of an Islamic state per se, did not prioritize its immediate implementation, on account of yet-unrealized higher objectives.

PAS and vocal fellow Islamists like Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA, Muslim Solidarity Front) have suspected that Amanah's coalition, PH, is harbouring secularist, liberal Muslim and Christian evangelical elements within their midst (Wartawan Menara 2017). This supposition was despite many Amanah and ISMA activists' sharing the same IRC roots during their formative Islamist days (Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan 2016). ISMA deputy president and chief of the secretariat of umbrella group Gerakan Pembela Ummah (Ummah, Ummah Defenders' Movement), Aminuddin Yahya, deemed PH to be an unholy pact cobbled together just for the sake of toppling Najib Razak, which would sacrifice Islamic interests and thereby benefit Muslim advocates of allegedly deviant liberal and pluralist doctrines and non-Muslim haters of Islam (Athirah Huda 2018).

ISMA and Ummah, as new organisations intent on influencing voters, masterminded the Gerakan Pengundi Sedar (GPS, Conscious Voter Movement) campaign to back Malay-Muslim candidates, mostly from PAS, who would provide a bulwark against rising anti-Islamic forces. However, as PAS's dismal performance on the west coast of peninsular Malaysia showed, urban and semi-urban Malay-Muslim voters paid GPS less heed than did rural and east-coast counterparts (Zurairi 2018a; Hew, this volume). Upon PH's GE14 triumph, ISMA President Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman grumbled that the much-hyped New Malaysia was now helmed by liberal and secular leaders (*Malaysiakini* 2018b).

IKSIM and the Christian Bogeyman of GE14

Although they make up only about ten per cent of Malaysia's population, many Malaysian Christians are well-educated, middle-class urbanites and normally politically conscious. However, they have never mobilized in a specific political party. With the opening up of public space since BN suffered an electoral

setback in 2008, losing its parliamentary super-majority, Christian politicians and civil-society activists have become more politically visible (Sia 2010). Christian activism presents a unique opportunity to unite non-Malays, as Malaysian Chinese and Indians are equally involved in Christian-based groups. However, Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution circumscribes Christian outreach to Malay-Muslims, authorizing state and federal governments to restrict the propagation of religious doctrines or beliefs among Muslims. The presence of such a constitutional protection clause has not prevented scaremongering about purportedly rampant Christian evangelizing among Malays, to the point of accusing Christians of hatching a long-term plot to install Christianity as Malaysia's official religion. *Causes célèbres* such as the well-publicized effort of a Muslim convert to Christianity, Lina Joy, to have her conversion legally acknowledged in her identity card and widespread rumours of large-scale baptisms of Malay children raised the spectre of an impending Muslim-Christian conflict (Ahmad Fauzi and Muhamad Takiyuddin 2014). In that vein, in 2011, the UMNO-linked daily *Utusan Malaysia* implicated DAP parliamentarian Jeff Ooi in a story about a supposed gathering among priests in Penang, pledging to turn Malaysia into a Christian state (Rokiah and Mohd Khuzairi 2011).

The presence of many Christians among the DAP leadership made DAP, and by extension, PH, easy targets for political mudslinging by both PAS and UMNO propagandists. A GE14 circular issued by the Malacca and Johor Catholic diocese's Bishop Bernard Paul, openly requesting Christians to pray for God's intervention in favour of change, spread like wildfire over the internet (Paul 2018), sparking off hostile accusations of Christians' being intent on doing whatever possible to ensure the downfall of Malay-Islamic sovereignty. In response, PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang attacked Paul's call as a poisonous DAP-linked, church-backed design to retain secularism as practised in the colonial order, by subtly subverting the constitutional safeguards pertaining to Islam's sacrosanct position and the Malay Rulers[4] as heads of the Islamic religion in their respective states (Abdul Hadi 2018). Indeed, for some time, Christian leaders had considered the secular state vital as a bulwark against Islamization that might potentially erode minority rights in Malaysia (Yeoh 2011). In what was widely seen as a move to diffuse rising tension, Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim of the Kuala Lumpur archdiocese made a less provocative public call simply to make Christians' votes count, as participants in the country's democratic process (Leow 2018).

In portraying the DAP as anti-Islam and pro-Christian, the BN-UMNO ruling establishment drew upon statements by researchers linked to state

institutions. The JAKIM-linked Institut Kajian Strategik Islam Malaysia (IKSIM, Islamic Strategic Studies of Malaysia), which Najib had launched to champion Islam's stature, was especially central. For instance, mainstream media gave anti-DAP statements by Dr Kamarul Zaman Yusoff of Universiti Utara Malaysia (Northern University of Malaysia) and IKSIM wide coverage, even though he was openly sympathetic to PAS (Kamarul Zaman 2017).[5] Via mainstream-media articles by other IKSIM fellows, too, IKSIM openly declared war on ideologies such as secularism, liberalism, and pluralism, which it perceived as deviant, a threat against Islam in Malaysia, and associated with PH (cf. Rehan Ahmad 2016; Mahamad Naser 2017). IKSIM senior fellow Abdul Karim Omar even accused PH of being a covert vector of Christian symbolism, claiming the term *Harapan* (Hope) carried evangelical connotations (Abdul Karim 2018b). PH supporters, in turn, attacked both IKSIM and JAKIM online for their anti-pluralist agendas, framing these as potentially threatening Malaysia's fragile ethno-religious equilibrium.

In November 2017, IKSIM lodged a police report against constitutional expert Professor Shad Saleem Faruqi for accusing IKSIM in a column in *The Star* daily of expounding a radical message that disparaged religious diversity (Shad 2017; Athirah Huda 2017). Muslim women's rights group Sisters in Islam (SIS) and the Group of 25 (G25), a group of retired civil servants who had been thrown into the limelight for expressing reservations against the allegedly unconstitutional intrusion of *sharia* into civil space, praised him for his courage in exposing IKSIM (SIS 2017; *Malay Mail* 2017). SIS, G25, and the NGO Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF), whose founding chairman, Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa, was a former vice-chairman of the electoral reform group, Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih, *Gabungan Pilihan Raya Bersih dan Adil*) and who enjoyed a close relationship with Anwar Ibrahim,[6] made up the major 'liberal' Muslim groups that JAKIM frowned upon for compromising the integrity of Malaysia's Sunni-based Islam (Aina 2017). Dr Ahmad Farouk, for instance, chastised PAS for tabling RUU355 in Parliament, for which he earned IKSIM's rebuke (Rehan Ahmad 2017).

A few months prior to GE14, IKSIM's Engku Ahmad Fadzil and his compatriot Zamihan Mat Zin, a JAKIM official on secondment to the Prisons Department and President of the Pertubuhan Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah Malaysia (ASWAJA, Malaysian Association of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah), crossed the political line by espousing the view that voting DAP—and by default, for its PH allies—was *haram*, i.e., religiously illegal (Engku Ahmad Fadzil 2018a). While both Engku Ahmad Fadzil and Zamihan were officially apolitical, their conservative viewpoints jived with UMNO's racial-religious

rhetoric. Anti-PH activists earnestly exploited these statements to paint a gloomy picture of communal relations that could only deteriorate should a regime change occur, and so convince Malay-Muslims not to switch their loyalty to PH (Engku Ahmad Fadzil 2018b).[7] Perhaps more dramatic still, in October 2017, Zamihan landed in hot soup for a speech in a mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor (a video recording of which went viral online), not only chiding the Johor sultan for disallowing a Muslim-only launderette in Muar, Johor, but also, with racially inflammatory tone and vocabulary, labelling the Chinese in particular as 'unhygienic' (Amar Shah 2017). Although the police detained the unrepentant Zamihan briefly for sedition investigations, both the BN's non-Malay component parties and the sultans of Johor and Selangor censured him, and both states revoked his religious *tauliah* (teaching credentials), Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said that he was still needed for his role in Malaysian security forces' terrorist deradicalisation programmes (*The Star* 2017b).

From Sniping to Campaign

These efforts to rally Malay-Muslim sentiment to remain loyal to UMNO and BN by branding the DAP, and hence PH as a whole, as dangerously Christian, presaged the incumbent coalition's approach in its GE14 campaign. Spearheaded by UMNO, BN's campaign strategy against PH centred on portraying the opposition coalition as dominated by DAP. BN strategists hoped that, with DAP's image as a supposedly anti-Malay and anti-Islam party not only already etched in Malay-Muslims' minds via half a century of state-controlled propaganda and political indoctrination, but now burnished by IKSIM's and other allies' latest sallies, Malay voters would be dissuaded from casting protest votes for PH. Campaign messages argued against changing the regime, insisting that the stakes were too high for the future of Islam, Malay institutions, and the status of Malay-Muslims in their native country (*Malaysiakini* 2017; *The Star* 2017a). Indeed, having long been backed by the Chinese working class, the DAP found it hard to shed its image as a 'Chinese party', despite its growing ranks of non-Chinese members and candidates, its record of contesting and cooperating with Malay and multiethnic parties in BA and PR, and its newly forged PH-based friendship with PPBM, whose chairman Dr Mahathir and president Muhyiddin Yassin were once rather notorious for their Malay-first rather than Malaysian-first leanings. In portraying a less communal image, DAP risked losing votes from among the Chinese grassroots. In fact, the BN-member Malaysian Chinese Association

(MCA) tried to capitalize upon this possibility by criticizing the PH manifesto for neglecting Chinese interests. According to the MCA's tally, the manifesto mentioned 'Chinese' only 5 times, in contrast to *Bumiputera* (Malay and other indigenous Malaysians) 25 times, 'Malays' 35 times, 'Indians' 48 times, and 'Orang Asli' (indigenous peoples) 24 times (*Malaysiakini* 2018a).

Dr Mahathir Mohamad's position as PH chairman was vital in reassuring Malay-Muslims that Islam and Malay rights would not go down the drain in the event of a PH victory in GE14. After all, as PH Chief Secretary Saifuddin Abdullah conceded, to many rural and lower-class Malays, Dr Mahathir was and would always be the 'ultra-Malay' of old.[8] It is difficult to deny Dr Mahathir's role as prime minister-designate in boosting PH's odds in heavily Malay areas, although his impact was felt more among Malays on the west coast than the more rural east coast, PAS's traditional heartland (Amin 2018). In contrast, while veteran Chinese civil-rights campaigners such as former DAP parliamentarian Kua Kia Soong also saw Dr Mahathir as not so changed, for them, it was his autocratic image that would never disappear in spite of his apparent defection to the opposition (Kua 2017). In fact, during his first stint as prime minister, Dr Mahathir had perennially played up the issue of the DAP's Chinese ethnocentrism and PAS's penchant for an Islamic state in which non-Malays would lose out, aiming to disrupt efforts at cooperation between DAP and PAS (Brown 2004). Officially, though, Dr Mahathir made a complete about-turn with his admission, upon launching PH in Johor, that it had been a mistake to label the DAP a chauvinist party in the past (Mahathir 2017; Kaur 2018). DAP then made a key sacrifice by agreeing to drop its much-cherished 'rocket' logo in favour of the PKR 'eye' symbol as the common logo for all PH candidates (Abdul Hakim 2018). In line with its pre-election rhetoric of DAP duplicity, though, BN and UMNO insisted that DAP's adoption of the PKR logo for its candidates was no more than an electoral ploy to win over Malay voters (Mohd Fahmi 2018).

GE14 Results and Aftermath

The question of Islam, and whether a coalition less decidedly Malay-led than BN posed a risk to Malay-Muslims, continued to loom over the campaign to its very end. The BN campaign received a last-ditch boost from former Chief Justice Tun Abdul Hamid Mohamad, who questioned in his blog on the eve of the election whether the agreement reached between Dr Mahathir's PPBM and the larger PH structure[9] would not undermine Islam's primacy in the Federal Constitution by allowing non-Muslims full freedom to practise their religions

(Haika 2018). Yet lest its religion-baiting scare away non-Malay voters, BN also had to step up its incentives to those constituents. UMNO's biggest concession to the Chinese community was a promise finally to recognise the United Examinations Certificate (UEC), a privately operated certification scheme among Chinese independent high schools for entry into public universities—a long-held aim of Chinese educationists, many of them in the DAP, and a position that even PAS had espoused for a time, during its more progressive phase in the early post-Reformasi era (Fathi Aris 2001; Nasrudin 2018). The BN camp remained confident until the very late stages of campaigning, with many polls, including those of the usually credible Merdeka Center, predicting a win for BN, albeit a slim one (Zurairi 2018b). The eventual outcome—that PH won, with a simple majority victory of 113 parliamentary seats, boosted further by 8 seats from ally Parti Warisan Sabah (Sabah Heritage Party), led by former UMNO Vice President Shafie Apdal—turned out to be perhaps the rudest shock of the contesting BN politicians' lives.

That GE14 would see a neck-and-neck fight between the incumbent BN and PH was a foregone conclusion, with most pundits fully expecting that PH could win only if it could lure sufficient Malay-Muslims to join the non-Malays already ranked against BN. In the end, analysts, including even BN politicians,[10] seemed to agree that BN's defeat was triggered by a shift in votes that cut across ethnicity, religion, and region (Gomez 2018); contrary to what many in UMNO seem to have anticipated, Islamist scaremongering had only limited impact. A constellation of factors—including the still-potent legacy of the Reformasi movement Anwar Ibrahim propelled in the late 1990s; Dr Mahathir's statesman-like aura as an esteemed Malay-Muslim nationalist, widely respected by Malaysians of all ethno-religious stripes; and disappointment in Najib Razak's mismanagement of national coffers—combined to deliver BN its lowest parliamentary seat-count (54 out of 222) and lowest share of the popular vote (36 per cent) ever (see Suffian and Lee's chapter for details). In the months ahead, BN would suffer further blows with the withdrawal of all its component parties except the original UMNO, MCA, and Malaysian Indian Congress; the exit from UMNO of influential personalities such as former Minister of International Trade and Industry Mustapha Mohamad and former Foreign Minister Anifah Aman; and ramifications from Najib Razak's 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal, in connection with which many UMNO and even PAS figures are said to be under investigation by a revitalized Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission for allegedly benefiting from the proceeds of money-laundering on a global scale (Chin 2018).

While for many Malaysians, the outcome of GE14 was certainly cause for rejoicing, deeper analyses indicate that race and religion remain politically potent in Malaysia. Merdeka Center surveys indicate clearly racialized voting patterns: Malay votes for PH stood at only 25–30 per cent, as compared with 95 per cent of Chinese and 70–75 per cent of Indians. The Malay vote split three ways, with 35–40 per cent supporting BN and the balance backing PAS (Hazlin 2018; see also Ting's and Hew's chapters in particular, this volume). In peninsular Malaysia's strongly Malay-majority north and northeast, PAS did exceptionally well, maintaining the reins of government in Kelantan, trouncing BN in Terengganu, and almost forcing the Kedah state legislature into a hung assembly by bagging 15 seats to PH's 18 and BN's mere 3. Although Dr Mahathir helped in the rural Malay heartlands, PH still suffers a credibility deficit in Malay-majority areas (Cheng, Ng, and Faris 2018). However much UMNO focused before the election on stoking unease with DAP's presence in PH among the Malay-Muslim masses, it stands to benefit more from a different dynamic: those voters continue to find it difficult to identify with their urban-based, middle-class counterparts in PH's Malay-led parties, even openly Islamist ones such as Amanah (Sheith Khidhir 2018; Ong 2018).

All the same, post-GE14, that same scaremongering seems likely to persist and increase, as UMNO and PAS share both a common enemy and a common denominator. The positions of orthodox Islamists in PAS and bureaucratic Islamists in UMNO continue to converge as they together face a newly dominant non-Islamist PH ruling bloc. To an extent not seen since their brief alliance under BN in the mid-1970s, PAS and UMNO collaborated for Selangor state by-elections in Sungai Kandis on 4 August and Seri Setia on 8 September 2018. The parties refrained from both putting up candidates, so as to avoid splitting opposition votes against the incumbent PH (Azman 2018; *Malaysiakini* 2018d; Mohd Anwar 2018). Moreover, at Sungai Kandis, UMNO former Deputy Minister Tajuddin Abdul Rahman spewed IKSIM-like racial-religious rhetoric, referring to the PH government as Christian-controlled. (Former UMNO Youth leader Khairy Jamaluddin, who has been trying to push UMNO toward a more inclusive position, was aghast [Lee 2018; *Malaysiakini* 2018e].) Such sentiments coloured IKSIM's strident opposition, too, to the PH government's appointment of Tommy Thomas, an ethnic-Indian, Christian Malaysian, as attorney general (Wartawan Menara 2018a; Abdul Karim 2018a). If anything, PH's having more non-Muslim than Muslim MPs and its decision to appoint non-Muslims to hold strategic positions such as finance minister[11] and chief justice[12] have added fuel to

UMNO's doomsday prognostications that Malay-Muslims will lose out in PH's New Malaysia (Parkaran 2018).

With regard to Islamist politics, if PAS members get dragged, as well, into the 1MDB scandal as alleged beneficiaries of money-laundering activities, great disappointment will prevail among the Malay masses. Such a development might prove enough to overcome ethno-religious fears, making possible a scenario of conservative Malay-Muslims' transferring their loyalties to Malay-led PH component parties. According to former PAS deputy president, then inaugural Amanah president, Mohamad Sabu, illicit funds were, in fact, channelled to PAS through influential young leaders within the party, for the specific purpose of chasing out PAS's 'progressives' from the party, thus breaking it up (Parti Amanah Negara 2018).

IKSIM, meanwhile, has been embroiled in a war of words with PH's new minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of religious affairs, Mujahid Yusof Rawa, who is also Amanah vice president and son of PAS's first Murshid al-'Am, Yusof Rawa, under its post-1982 *kepimpinan ulama*. Branded a 'liberal' in IKSIM roadshows prior to GE14, Mujahid has not been on good terms with IKSIM since his earlier days as an opposition politician, even questioning its combative approach in Parliament (Chow 2017; Khairil 2017). Once PH assumed power at the federal level, IKSIM complained that its staff salaries had been frozen (Bernama 2018), to which Mujahid replied by raising issues of financial impropriety on IKSIM's part (Choong 2018). Undeterred by the fact that it is a federal agency, IKSIM responded unrepentantly on its website to Mujahid's allegations (IKSIM 2018a, 2018b) and netizens contrasted Mujahid's brash treatment of IKSIM with the courtesy he extended to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community (Wartawan Menara 2018b). IKSIM has pushed back against allegations that, having served as a tool of BN and UMNO, it should be dismantled (*Kosmo* 2018; Ku Faris 2018), yet continues to reiterate its suspicion of DAP's ulterior motives and belief that the party threatens the status of Islam as state religion (Engku Ahmad Fadzil 2018c). In other words, while UMNO may have lost the election, for its allies outside the party, the battle continues.

Conclusion

Despite over 60 years of uninterrupted nation-building under BN, consensus on the character of Malaysia's national identity still eludes the various ethnic and religious groups that make up the country. Since Malaysia's political reconstruction post-1969 in particular, Malaysian nationhood has veered

between a civic-territorial ideal and an ethnic-Malay genealogical vision (Loh 2017). Not least given BN's efforts to secure Malay-Muslim loyalties by raising racial and religious bogeys, GE14's extraordinary denouement has brought to the forefront debates over what type of nation-state Malaysians desire: an inclusive civic nation or an ethnocracy driven by identity politics (Alagappa 2018).

It would be naive to think that through GE14, by changing a regime that had long thrived upon the ethno-religious sentiments of a Malay-Muslim community bombarded daily with state-manufactured fears of being overwhelmed economically and politically by their non-Malay countrymen, racial and religious politics would correspondingly disappear. As lawyer Syahredzan Johan, also the political secretary to long-time DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang, noted, in telling his boss that the majority of Malay-Muslim votes still eluded PH, changing the government was much easier than reforming 'mindsets, cultures and deep seated prejudices' (Chong 2018). What happened on 9 May 2018 was a convergence of interests among a majority of non-Malays and just enough Malays to bring down the kleptocratic regime of BN-UMNO under Najib Razak. GE14 saw the coming together of three forces that together sufficed to vanquish BN at last: a pro-Reformasi Anwar Ibrahim wave, a pro-Mahathir wave, and an anti-Najib Razak wave. Given that none of these forces directly addresses the Islamist fears UMNO and PAS seem determined to elevate ever further, PH's victory could well prove a one-off affair.

GE14's historic outcome was not an emphatic endorsement of progressive reforms that many Malay-Muslims see as 'liberal', which might herald a new openness in socio-political interaction, and which might threaten the religio-cultural values Malay-Muslims hold dear, and whose entrenchment confirms the community's grip over the country's institutional and political make-up. If the PH government cannot reassure Malay-Muslim voters that it will protect their interests, the coalition risks losing what support it has from Malaysia's majority racial and religious group. Such an eventuality is a recipe for political short-termism. Within months of the polls, worries were being openly expressed at the brashness with which 'liberal' elements in PH were pushing through their agenda. Even Anwar Ibrahim soon warned against 'super-liberal' elements out to hijack his moderate Reformasi agenda—a programme that respects Malaysia's Malay-Muslim and Islamic ethos (*The Star Online* 2018). Statements by Dr Mahathir Mohamad amounting to placating Malay-Muslim concerns over the whittling away of privileges previously accorded to them can be read in a similar light (FMT Reporters 2018; Augustin 2018). Before the dust had fully settled, reports started to emerge indicating intense

mobilization on the part of Malay-Muslim ethnocrats from both UMNO and PAS to galvanize the Malay masses into defending what they perceive as their inalienable birthright (*Harakah Daily* 2018; *Malaysiakini* 2018c; Syed Jaymal 2018). Those pressures make it all the more important that PH tread its path carefully and find new ways to promote its civic-nationalist vision without stoking Malay-Muslims' fears, lest concerned Malaysians' hard-earned GE14 triumph be derailed when it has still yet barely begun.

Notes

[1] This study is based on interviews and participant-observation of campaigning during GE14. The discussion is restricted to Peninsular Malaysia and excludes Sabah and Sarawak due to the limited resources available to the researchers. We presented preliminary findings at seminars at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) and the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, on 16 May 2018 and 1 June 2018, respectively.

[2] This term refers to the puritanical stream pioneered by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92) of Nejd in the Arabian Peninsula. The school's advent in Malaysia is fairly recent, powered by Saudi petro-dollars amassed following the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' oil crises of 1973–74—a period coinciding with the rudimentary phases of Islamic revival in Malaysia. Historically, reform-oriented Malay-Muslims have been more familiar with the version of Salafism imported from the Al-Manar school of Egypt, as expounded by Jamal al-din Al-Afghani (1838–97), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rasyid Rida (1865–1935). But expanding Saudi influence in the Muslim world has brought a marriage of sorts between Salafism in general and its more rigid Wahhabi version, including in Malaysia. For details, see Ahmad Fauzi 2016 and Maszlee 2017b.

[3] Literally meaning 'limits', *hudud* are scripturally mandated criminal punishments following convictions in *sharia* courts. Examples are amputation of the hand for thieves, eighty lashes' flogging for libel and one hundred lashes for fornication, and stoning to death for adultery.

[4] Malaysia has nine hereditary Malay Rulers who rotate among themselves every five years to become the *Yang diPertuan Agong*, the federation's constitutional monarch. The Rulers are themselves sultans of their respective states. Each of the remaining four states without Rulers—Penang, Malacca, Sabah, and Sarawak—has a *Yang diPertua Negeri*, or governor, as its titular head. Together, the thirteen heads of state make up the *Majlis Raja-raja* (Conference of Rulers).

[5] A few months later, in May 2017, Kamarul Zaman lodged a police report against Selangor state assembly speaker Hannah Yeoh of DAP for allegedly propagating Christianity through her book, *Becoming Hannah: A Personal Journey* (Sinar Harian 2017).

[6] Interview with Dato' Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa, Kuala Lumpur, 25 March 2017.

[7] Both preachers were already notorious for vociferous attacks against Wahhabi-Salafists who were cosying up to UMNO figures (Zamihan 2016; Engku Ahmad Fadzil 2018b).
[8] Interview with Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah, Indera Mahkota, Pahang, 2 May 2018.
[9] The PPBM-PH cooperative agreement can be accessed at *Roketkini* 2016.
[10] See, for example, the interview with M. Saravanan, former MIC vice president and Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports in Najib Razak's administration, in Noraini 2018.
[11] Dr Mahathir handpicked Lim Guan Eng, Penang chief minister from 2008–18, to become finance minister a few days after PH's victory on 9 May 2018.
[12] Richard Malanjum, a Sabahan Christian and ethnic Kadazandusun, as well as chief judge of Sabah and Sarawak from 2006–18, assumed Malaysia's highest judicial post on 11 July 2018 after Md Raus Sharif, whose extension of tenure had been constitutionally disputed a year earlier, agreed to resign.

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9

Personal Touch, Professional Style: Women in Malaysian Islamist Politics

David Kloos[1]

Seri Indah, Sunday, 29 April 2018. Ati listens attentively as the candidate starts her speech. Like many Malaysians, she votes in the first place for a party or alliance. Individual politicians matter less. Yet it is candidates who present their parties' plans and persuade voters so it is difficult to disentangle the two at an occasion like this, a *ceramah kelompok* (literally 'group talk', a campaign speech in front of a specially targeted group or community) in a low-cost housing area in the state constituency of Seri Serdang, Selangor. Ati, she tells me afterwards, makes a living by preparing food for a hospital and other such places. She manages but it is a precarious existence and life has become more expensive, especially since the government introduced a goods and services tax (GST) in 2015. One of the obvious problems, she explains, is that election promises seldom materialize. And politicians are often untrustworthy. In 2013, she voted for Noor Hanim Ismail, the candidate for the opposition and a politician of the Pan-Malaysian Islamist Party, Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS). Hanim won the state election but, according to Ati, did little for the people afterwards and was never seen again by the occupants of the flats in Seri Indah.

The politician who has come this time round is Siti Mariah Mahmud. Her candidacy is special because, while Seri Serdang is a state seat, she is a national figure (although many people in the audience confess to me afterwards that they had not heard of her before). 'Dr Mariah', as she is commonly known, was one of only two female members of Parliament (MPs) for PAS (representing the district of Kota Raja, Selangor) until, in 2015, she left the party to help establish Parti Amanah Negara (National Trust Party, Amanah for short), a

new and more progressive Islamist party. Together with my research assistant, Nabillah Hijazu, I follow her campaign for a few days. Dr Mariah, one could say, epitomizes Amanah. A medical doctor and university lecturer by profession, she was recruited as a PAS committee member, a stepping stone toward the higher echelons of the party leadership, in the late 1990s. At that time, PAS was ratcheting up its attempts, started earlier in the 1980s, to shake off its image as a party for rural folk led by traditional religious scholars. It did so by attracting leaders and active cadres with secular, or mixed religious and secular, educations, pedigrees, and outward styles. After Amanah's founding, Dr Mariah became the head of the new party's women's wing. She has played a prominent role in public debates about women, women's issues, and public morality, often taking relatively liberal positions that differ markedly from the increasingly conservative outlook of PAS.[2]

A mixed-gender audience of some 30 to 40 people has gathered for the speech. Since this is a new constituency for Dr Mariah, she takes time to introduce herself, explaining her professional background and the unfolding of her career. She emphasizes her experience and track record as a parliamentary representative for the semi-urban, relatively poor, and ethnically diverse district of Kota Raja. This is followed by an outline of the major election promises of the opposition alliance Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope, PH), of which Amanah is part, including the fight against corruption and the abolishment of GST. She proceeds with a note on identity politics. Dr Mariah raises her voice as she criticizes what she sees as the dividing emphasis on race and scaremongering of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and PAS. 'They say that the [ethnic] Chinese will rule over Malaysia and that Islam is under threat. In fact, Malay rights are safeguarded in the Constitution and the *fatwas* to protect Islam are all there'. She concludes by acknowledging the classed and gendered composition of her audience. She draws a murmur of approval among the women around me as she announces the PH plan of a support programme for single mothers, then adds that 'we will have to think of the fact that there are single fathers as well'.

Ati is impressed. She would have voted for the opposition anyway, out of frustration with the government, the economic situation, and the corruption scandal revolving around Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, but she feels grateful that Dr Mariah has come to compete in her constituency. Her style pleases Ati. Dr Mariah seems 'warm and friendly' (*mesra*). And she is clearly very knowledgeable (*berpengetahuan*): 'She is a doctor and a lecturer. She knows what she is talking about.' In an era of rising populism, with politicians around the world stressing, acting as if, or imagining that they are 'of the people', such

a positive evaluation of a politician's academic background and professional expertise is not assured. But in Malaysia, a place where perceptions of personal success and projects of national development are deeply embedded in techno-political language, it makes sense. At the same time, Ati's analysis of Dr Mariah's performance evokes a gendered tension I found to be salient among women candidates of both PAS and Amanah. This is the tension between, on the one hand, the perception—strongly connected to ideas about motherhood and domesticity—that a woman is more able than a man to 'touch the hearts' of voters, and, on the other hand, the supposed electoral advantages, emanating from an increasingly highly-educated and socially mobile electorate, of a professional 'aura'.

Figure 9.1 Dr Mariah Mahmud speaks at a night market. Taman Puchong Prima, Selangor, 30 April 2018 (personal collection of David Kloos).

In this chapter I use Malaysia's 14th general election (GE14) in May 2018 as a lens to analyse this tension and the ways in which it has affected the careers and campaigns of women candidates of PAS and Amanah. I argue

that in order to be successful in Malaysian Islamist politics, a woman must somehow reconcile stereotypical ideals of Malay-Muslim femininity, including the need to cultivate a soft voice and a modest, caring, or 'motherly' character and appearance, with a professional persona. This tension is predicated on changing, and to some extent contradictory, trends and perceptions regarding the role of Muslim women in the public sphere. While Malaysia and Southeast Asia more broadly are characterized, culturally and historically, by relatively high levels of female autonomy, prestige, and public visibility, the formal domains of politics and religion have long been seen as quintessentially 'male'. An important change is taking place, however, in terms of the credentials that both men and women bring to those realms and use to legitimize their positions. Women have caught up with men in higher education, both secular and religious, and have even surpassed them in terms of student numbers (Wan 2018). While there is a gap, especially among Muslim women, between university enrolment and workforce participation (Sloane-White 2017: 103), it is a fact that women's agency has expanded from public yet traditional roles in spaces associated with the domestic realm (villages, neighbourhoods, markets, local prayer rooms, community centres, etc.) to spaces of professional authority (offices, hospitals, universities, conference halls, television studios, etc.). This trend goes hand in hand with changing religious forms, including increasingly dominant ideas about personal piety, modesty, and public morality geared, at least partly, toward the governance of women and women's bodies (e.g., Frisk 2009). Overcoming these tensions is central to the political ambitions of all women who have tried to secure a state or parliamentary seat for PAS or Amanah.

The tension is not limited to these two parties. PAS and Amanah are Malaysia's only self-proclaimed Islamist parties, but there are distinctly Islamist elements in UMNO and PKR (Parti Keadilan Rakyat, People's Justice Party) as well (see, e.g., Hew, this volume; Liow 2009). For instance, one may note the conspicuous similarities, both in terms of religious outlook and in terms of the performance of a professional 'style', between Dr Mariah Mahmud and prominent PKR MP, former chair of the women's section of the Islamist organisation Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM), and current Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Fuziah Salleh. I nonetheless have good reasons for focusing on Islamist parties. Historically, the claim to religious authority has been much more pronounced in PAS than in other Malay-Muslim parties. At the same time, PAS's GE14 slogan of building a 'technocratic country' (*negara teknokratis*) goes back to religious and political contestations bearing on class and gender that have animated the party since the 1980s (see Noor 2014). The

figure of the professional Muslim woman is a factor in all Malaysian political parties that have advanced an Islamic agenda, but it draws substantially on images and discourses that originated in the Islamist movement.

The rise to prominence of women activists and leaders is a remarkable aspect of contemporary Islamism (see, e.g., Clark and Schwedler 2003). Anthropological accounts of the role of women in Islamist social and political movements, while producing some of the most important advances in our thinking about agency and normative Islam, have focused on informal or 'behind-the-scenes' spaces and contexts (e.g., Arat 2012; Deeb 2006; Iqtidar 2011; Mahmood 2005; Rinaldo 2013). Looking at election campaigns, this chapter instead engages with women who have moved to the very forefront of Islamist politics. An in-depth analysis of the relation between constructions of Malay-Muslim femininity and performances of professional authority requires a certain level of ethnographic detail and a variety of perspectives. It requires, in other words, grounded fieldwork. I conducted extensive life-history interviews with Mariah Mahmud and Siti Zailah Yusoff, PAS's only remaining female MP after the 2015 split, in 2016–17. I spent time in Dr Mariah's office in Kota Raja, observing day-to-day affairs, interviewing her staff, and collecting documents. I visited Siti Zailah in her constituency of Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, following her and her entourage in their daily activities. The section after this introduction offers an account of the re-emergence since 2004 of women as PAS MPs and the party's connection to professional identities and performances. This is followed by a discussion of the career of, and challenges faced by, Mariah Mahmud, partly in comparison to the case of Siti Zailah.

The fourth section presents examples from GE14. Together with Nabillah, I followed the campaigns of Mariah and Zailah. In addition, we observed the campaigns of prominent leaders of Muslimat PAS ('Women of PAS', the party's women's wing), and of candidates with a distinctly professional outlook. We focused on constituencies in Selangor, Kelantan, mainland Penang, and Kuala Lumpur. Generally, our choice of campaigns was based on the stature and profile of individual candidates rather than the assumed importance of the seats they contested or the chance they had of winning. On average, we spent two full days in each constituency, observing campaign activities; holding interviews with candidates, members of their team, party activists, and voters; collecting printed materials; and following social media. My position as a male, white, non-Muslim researcher did not, generally, create big problems in terms of managing access. As said, I already knew most candidates personally. However, working with Nabillah during the campaign played a role as well. As a Malay-Muslim woman, she navigated the places we visited with ease

and the interviews she carried out were sometimes quite different from mine. Our experiences generally turned out to complement rather than contradict each other. The chapter concludes with a plea for a comparative approach to professional styles as a factor currently recalibrating the role of women in Islamist politics in and beyond Malaysia.

Women and Political Representation in PAS

PAS has a long but poor history of female representation. In 2004, people in Pasir Puteh, Kelantan, chose Kalthom Othman as their MP, making her the second female elected representative for the party, after Khadijah Sidek in the early 1960s. While Islamist movements generally are not known for their openness to female leadership, the gap is still surprising in some ways. Khadijah Sidek's story points to the fact that women played a rather prominent, albeit under-recognised role in early Malay (radical) nationalism; PAS has gone through various 'radical' and 'nationalist' phases in its history.[3] With regard to PAS's grounding in religious authority, Farish Noor (2014: 40) provides the fascinating detail that the 'third UMNO-led Ulama Congress' in 1951, an event that would lead eventually to the birth of PAS, was attended by '[m]ore than two hundred ulama … with twenty female representatives from all over the country'. He does not elaborate on these women's role or on why this early involvement did not translate, in subsequent decades, into a more central role for women in the party structure or a larger number of women candidates during general elections.

The sudden change in 2004 must be seen in the context of a transformative movement within the party in the later decades of the twentieth century. In the 1980s, a new generation of leaders inspired by the global Islamic revival rejected the party's parochialism of the previous decade and embraced an agenda of religious renewal combined with a call for social, political, and economic reform. PAS diversified its ranks and tried to appeal more to younger, urban, and higher educated voters. It was in this period that the party 'experienced its first major influx of university-educated activists and intellectuals from the local and foreign campuses' (Noor 2014: 126). Complicating this quest for a broader reach were internal ideological contestations and the tense electoral competition between PAS and the ruling (Malay-nationalist) UMNO. In the 1980s and 1990s, both sides increasingly saw and presented the struggle for the Malay vote as a struggle for the Muslim vote. Aware of the electoral threat PAS posed in times of religious resurgence, UMNO in the 1990s came to project, more than ever before, a certain Islamic style, combining a claim on 'modern'

religious interpretations with a professional outlook, as expressed through the use of certain language and dress.[4] In response, PAS leaders emphasized that their party was guided by *ulama* (religious scholars) and that, in their hands, Islamic norms were safe from detrimental compromises, pragmatic moderation and surrender to western-style capitalism and consumption.

In the run-up to the 1999 elections, UMNO tried to discredit PAS by consistently portraying its competitor as out of touch with modern realities. Part of this strategy was to '[paint] PAS as unsupportive of women's rights' (Ng, Maznah, and tan 2006: 96). Pushed to the defensive, and feeling pressure within the party as well, leaders, including party President Fadzil Noor and Kelantan Chief Minister and PAS 'spiritual leader' Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat agreed to create more space for women. Wary of resistance from conservative elements in the party, they operated cautiously. Instead of fielding women candidates immediately, they prepared the ground by appointing female senators and allowing the women's wing (Dewan Muslimat PAS) to strengthen its operations, attract women with professional and leadership skills, and act more autonomously from the male leadership. A key driving force in this process was Hajjah Jamilah Ibrahim, head of Muslimat PAS from 1992-2001 and a senator from 1997–2000. Among the women she recruited were Dr Mariah Mahmud and Dr Lo' Lo' Mohd Ghazali (also a medical doctor), both of whom were elected to the party's central executive committee in 2001. More visible in the eyes of the public was the decision to field ten women candidates in the 2004 election. Dr Mariah and Dr Lo' Lo' were both defeated, but, as mentioned, Kalthom Othman won a seat in parliament, as did Rohani Ibrahim at the state level, both of them in Kelantan.

If 2004 was a breakthrough year in terms of women's candidacy, for PAS and the opposition as a whole, the election was a disaster from the opposition's point of view. The ruling coalition, led by new prime minister and UMNO leader Abdullah Badawi, won a landslide victory. The crisis sparked a rather sharp divide within PAS between a reform-minded, relatively progressive faction known as the *golongan professional*, 'professionals group', and a conservative faction known as the *golongan ulama,* 'ulama group' (see Noor 2014: 188–9, 199–210; Müller 2014: 72–8). Leadership positions, including the board of the women's wing, shifted back and forth between factions until, finally, at the 2015 party congress, the progressive faction suffered a decisive blow. Emphasizing its power, the conservative faction, led by President Abdul Hadi Awang, severed formal ties between PAS and the Democratic Action Party (DAP), thereby blowing up the opposition alliance, Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact, PR). In response, a large number of progressive leaders and

cadres, including Hajjah Jamilah and Dr Mariah, left PAS to join the Parti Pekerja-Pekerja Malaysia (the Malaysian Workers' Party, PPPM). The latter was reformed and rebranded as a party for progressive Islamists and renamed Parti Amanah Negara. As part of a new opposition alliance, Pakatan Harapan, Amanah became one of the winners of GE14.

The remainder of this chapter analyses women politicians' roles in terms of what I have called the mutual constitution of religious authority and professional expertise (Kloos 2019). How, and to what extent, do contemporary cultures of professionalism break ground for women as religious authorities both in and beyond formal religious and political settings? The intersections of gender, religion, and class signify changes that fall largely outside the purview of electoral politics. Yet these categories are also at the basis of powerful (or convenient) labels—such as 'women' or 'professionals'—and thus subject to contestation between Islamists and others, between PAS and Amanah, and within each of these parties. Nominations and campaign strategies, both in GE14 and in previous elections, reveal the 'female professional' as a site of struggle, open to appropriation and strategic deployment by parties and individual politicians, both male and female, across the political and ideological spectrum. The next section elaborates upon this idea of the female professional as a contested figure by contrasting it with the idea of the politician as preacher.

The Politician and the Preacher

Mariah Mahmud was born in 1958 in a small town in the northern state of Kedah. She grew up in what she calls a 'typical Malay family'. By this she means that her family had long earned their living predominantly from farming and that religion was 'at the core' of their life. Her mother, who studied at the famous Islamic reformist Al-Mashoor school in Penang, was 'very religious'. Her father, the son of an *imam*, took on various voluntary tasks in the local mosque and a religious school besides his main work as a teacher and headmaster in a secular school. Mariah was the first person in her family to obtain a tertiary degree and the first woman in her family to pursue a professional career. The New Economic Policy (NEP), an affirmative action programme aimed, among other goals, at the social and economic uplift of ethnic Malays, particularly in rural areas, enabled her to study in one of the country's most prestigious girls' schools, the English-medium Tunku Kurshiah College in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. Subsequent degrees from Cairo University and King's College in London paved the way for a career as a doctor, lecturer, and head of department at the National University of Malaysia Medical Centre.

Mariah quit her job in 1998 out of a desire to join the movement, growing louder and stronger in the wake of the sacking and subsequent arrest of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, for social and political reform. She was not the only one. The so-called *Reformasi* ('reform') movement aroused the interest of many 'young educated professional women who used to be apolitical' (Zaireeni Azmi 2016: 121). Mariah had been a member of PAS since 1993 but her job as a civil servant combined badly with an active role in the opposition. Now that her children had reached a certain age, Mariah gave in to Hajjah Jamilah's repeated requests. Together with Dr Lo' Lo', she quickly rose to prominence.[5] As professionals, it was their job to be unlike the 'typical' *muslimat* (members of Muslimat PAS), many of whom had religious backgrounds, were active as religious teachers or preachers (*ustazah*), or joined the party mainly because of their husbands (who were also, in many cases, religious scholars or preachers). Dress played an important role. In the 1990s, a sartorial style had developed that was recognised as 'typically PAS', with a long surtout (*jubah*) and a white rather than black *kopiah* (close-fitting, brimless cap) for men—dress that used to be associated primarily with pilgrims returning from Mecca—and wide dresses, socks, and long headscarves covering the front of the body (*tudung labuh*) for women. The expectation was that Mariah and other newly recruited professionals would change this dominant image of excessive outward piety. For men, this meant a (re-)turn to 'coat and tie' (Noor 2014: 158). For Mariah, who had never worn a *tudung labuh*, and whose style had always been 'light' (*ringkas*), it meant experimenting with new colours, materials, and trendy designs such as the '*tudung* Wardina', a way of folding the headscarf named after a famous TV presenter. 'My wardrobe became very full with many different *tudung*', she recalls.

Complicating these attempts at changing the image of the party, however, was the fact that, in the ideological discourses of the global Islamic revival, every devout Muslim is seen, potentially or ideally, as a preacher of sorts. While it was important to look worldly, Mariah explained, outward appearance should not reach the point where it could be perceived as unlawful embellishing (*tabarruj*). 'Do not adorn yourself (*menghiaskan diri*). Do not be loud. Do not be showy.' Here, Dr Mariah's account resembles the experiences of numerous popular or 'celebrity' preachers (*ustazah seleb*) I interviewed.[6] An anecdote emphasizes this point. The first time Mariah was asked to speak at a party event, she planned to adopt the common practice (*kelaziman*) of reciting a few verses from the Quran and hadith (traditions of the Prophet). Although she had prepared verses that were very familiar, she felt nervous and awkward. When the moment came, she failed to get them right. Deeply embarrassed, she decided that she was 'not a preacher' (*bukan muballighah*) and that it was

wrong for her to try and act like one. Her duty was to 'do good' (*mengamalkan*), to give her audiences the right example, and to talk about 'what she knew best', referring to her status as an educated professional. When I asked her what she meant by 'being an example', she said: 'I should not be harsh (*kasar*). I have to be careful not to raise my voice'—although she agreed that 'of course' it was necessary for a politician to raise her voice occasionally. The challenge was to avoid the use of a voice that 'entices' (*menggoda*). As a politician and a Muslim woman, she was to cultivate a voice that was 'soft yet firm' (*halus tapi tegas*). This was a phrase I heard time and time again in my conversations with female popular preachers. Thus, although Mariah took care not be mistaken for an ustazah, when it came to public speaking, she practiced similar norms.

The development of a female professional persona, these anecdotes show, is riddled with tensions centred partly on the ustazah as a 'figure of Malaysian modernity'.[7] Let me explain this further by comparing Dr Mariah to her allies. Together with Dr Lo' Lo', Mariah spearheaded a progressive faction within Muslimat PAS that sought to empower women within the organisation. They were joined by Siti Zailah Yusoff, who was elected as an MP in Rantau Panjang, Kelantan in 2008 and who became the head of the women's wing in 2011, as well as Mumtaz Md. Nawi, elected as an assemblyperson in Demit, Kelantan in 2004. Zaireeni Azmi (2016; 2017) has written in detail about these women, their struggles, and the ways in which they shook up the Muslimat way of campaigning. Suffice it to say here that their achievements included securing a stronger role within the party and more financial and other forms of autonomy, the establishment of intra-party initiatives focused on providing welfare to women (called *Nisa'*) and training for female political talents (called *Ameerah*), as well as an ongoing and forceful advocacy for female leadership and candidacy during elections. Together, they formed a smoothly running team. Zailah, as the head of Muslimat, toured the country to maintain relations with local chapters and speak to, and sometimes out against, the party's influential ulama. Mariah and Lo' Lo', less focused on cadres and divisions, built on their professional skills to discuss policy, strategize with allies within the opposition, and lobby other members of the party's executive committee. Mumtaz was responsible for reaching out to, and cultivating links with, youthful cadres.

Of these women, Zailah came closest to being regarded as an ustazah. In Malaysia, the figure of the ustazah is associated with a caring, motherly approach toward those who seek her knowledge and guidance. I observed the close connection between this understanding of religious authority and the personal relations that Zailah—or Kak Lah ('Older Sister Lah'), as she is affectionately known—maintains both with ordinary people in

her constituency and with PAS cadres. She is seen as a representative who 'really cares' about people and guards maternally over political assistants and volunteers. She is, in Dr Mariah's words, a master of the 'personal touch', who has the 'stamina and energy' to go around, 'entertain' (*melayan*) party activists, hear concerns, iron out internal conflicts, and so forth. Mariah, in contrast, is not so comfortable with the often time-consuming customs, manners, and comportment expected in meetings with (especially female) cadres and Malay-Muslim voters. She ascribed the difference to her rational and pragmatic personality, but an arguably more important explanation lies in the different social environments in which these women grew up and made their careers. Unlike Mariah, Zailah was not a sleeping member parachuted into the party to help professionalize the women's wing. Instead, she became immersed in the party at an early age. Although she followed a secular education, like Mariah, it was not professional experience that allowed her to build a political career but her long, personal, and active engagement with the party. It is this engagement, also, that enabled her to style campaign speeches after religious lessons (*usrah*) and pass down religious admonitions (*tazkirah*) to fellow muslimat, giving her that 'ustazah-like' quality.

Figure 9.2 Siti Zailah Yusoff passes down religious admonitions (*tazkirah*) after a funeral. Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, 5 May 2017 (personal collection of David Kloos).

It would be wrong to categorize this styling, uncritically, as 'traditionally' Malay, even though this is a view often heard in Malaysia. In a brilliant discussion of ethnographic materials she and other scholars have collected over time, Patricia Sloane-White shows that, for a long time, rural Malay women were able to subvert patriarchal norms through strategies like bantering and ridiculing men. In recent years, this ability to speak out and bend official gender norms has been, quite literally, 'silenced' as the result of an increasingly conservative and dominant interpretation of Islamic law as a guiding principle in everyday life (Sloane-White 2017: 113–21). Female popular preachers, my own research shows, are among the main exemplars of this new pious persona, that is, of women who are 'gentle' (*halus*), not 'crude' (*kasar*), and who are patient, caring, and restrained. Politicians in PAS and Amanah, belonging to the same generation and speaking partly to the same audiences, need to respond to this modern culture of cultivating a 'soft' and subdued public presence.

Let me add some nuance. The transformation of the subversive rural 'Malay' woman into the subdued urban 'Muslim' woman should not be understood in terms of religious interpretation only. It also results, as Sloane-White's work suggests, from the fact that women have moved, gradually and successfully, from the domestic spheres of village and family to the (semi-)public spheres of salaried work, associational life, business, and politics. The transformation is contingent, in other words, on both the 'feminization' and the 'Islamization' of the public sphere in Malaysia (Kloos 2019: 166–8). Secondly, this shift does not mean that the subversive potential of Malay womanhood has entirely disappeared. The generally masculine world of politics is an example of a sphere in which it still thrives. Ordinary voters, assistants, members of their entourages, and other politicians described Mariah and Zailah as fearless, upfront, confident to speak in public and with men, and—particularly Zailah—as 'loud'. I was also told, on multiple occasions, that their performances were 'untypical' for Malay women (a euphemism, perhaps, for 'inappropriate'). A young man in the PAS communications office in Kota Bharu impressed on me the corporeal aspects of this, particularly in the minds of men. In characterizing Zailah, he praised her strength, energy and commitment, referring several times, in a chat that lasted less than ten minutes, to her 'big body' (*tubuh besar*). 'Look', he said, grabbing my shoulders and giving me a good shaking, 'you're just small!'

In GE14 both PAS and Amanah continued the trend of fielding women professionals. Returning to the recent election, I will examine two specific moments, in two different campaigns, that manifested the tension between this strategy and the dissemination of conservative ideals of Malay womanhood. I concentrate on campaigns in socially and demographically unfavourable

contexts. Although this choice leads to a somewhat distorted view and a focus on candidates who lost, it allows me to analyse the salience of professional appearance as a shared conundrum among women Islamists.

Campaigning for GE14

When Amanah was formed in 2015, PAS celebrated the return to its status as a 'party of ulama'. However, in GE14 the party continued its policy of nominating 'women and professionals', often announced jointly as such. In the urbanised and industrialized state of Selangor, the party stated, nominations consisted of '70 per cent professionals and 30 per cent ulama' (Roslan 2018). Compared to the elections of 2013, PAS's total number of state and federal female candidates rose from 22 to 36, including both professionals and figures with religious backgrounds. These numbers must be interpreted with care. The rise in the number of women candidates becomes less impressive when considering, first, the fact that PAS, competing on its own instead of in alliance with a larger opposition bloc, contested many more seats in 2018 than in 2013 (meaning that the percentage of women candidates decreased rather than increased), and secondly, that many women candidates were nominated in places where PAS stood little chance, including, tellingly, the district which Ustazah Nuridah Mohd Salleh, the head of Muslimat PAS, contested.[8] It should be noted also that an ongoing lack of women candidates was not limited to Islamist, or even Malay-Muslim parties, but rather was a general feature of GE14. Although I could not find aggregate data on candidates' educational or professional backgrounds, at least one newspaper noted that women candidates overall seemed to have 'impressive academic qualifications' (arguably suggesting 'more than men').[9]

Amanah, though born from the progressive 'professionals' faction in PAS, invested in its religious credentials and neglected the agenda of advancing women. Great fuss was made over the candidacy of the 'ulama-like' Nik Omar Nik Abdul Aziz, one of the sons of Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, even though he contested a seat in Kelantan where PAS was virtually unbeatable and some of his campaign activities were actually focused on Selangor (see Hew, this volume). The party fielded ten women in state seats (out of a total of 104 nominations) and no women for parliament (out of a total of 34 nominations). Hence, like other parties, it remained far from Pakatan Harapan's own target, following the norm set by the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), of 30 per cent women's representation. In Kota Raja, party president Mat Sabu replaced

Dr Mariah. This is ironic, because it was Mariah's popularity—resulting in a record-breaking victory in 2013—that convinced the Amanah leadership that Kota Raja was the ultimate 'safe seat' for their president. Dr Mariah did not object. She had even suggested it herself, contemplating that a step down might be good for her after ten years in parliament. Seri Serdang, meanwhile, was a seat she was confident to win (rightly so, it turned out). She did, however, acknowledge that replacing her in the more prestigious parliamentary seat of Kota Raja sent a bad message to the members of the new party's active women's branch, Wanita Amanah, which she led. While the reluctance to field women in safe or high-status seats constitutes a real constraint—a point I will return to below—it is important also not to be overly fixated on numbers and outcomes. Candidates who lose their bid, or who are 'demoted', are not necessarily without influence and, as I will show, there is value in reflecting on their campaigns and strategies.

Figure 9.3 Ustazah Nuridah Mohd speaks to voters. Subang Indah, Selangor, 30 April 2018 (personal collection of David Kloos).

On the night of 29 April, I listened to a speech by Dr Rosni Adam, deputy head of Muslimat PAS and one of the standard-bearers of women professionals in her party. A dentist with a clinic in Cheras, she was the PAS candidate in the parliamentary seat of Bandar Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur, running against PKR heavyweight Kamaruddin Jafar (who won the seat). Rosni spoke for about 45 minutes. I was struck by the near-complete absence of religious content and language, which she left to other speakers, including the master of ceremonies, candidates for the state assembly, and a young religious teacher, all of them men. Instead, she focused on issues like corruption, social problems, education, the humanitarian crises in Syria and Myanmar, and the importance of having more women representatives. To reinforce her arguments, and in line with the fact that political campaigns in Malaysia, like campaigns elsewhere, have become heavily personalized, she talked extensively about her background and career. She came across as earnest, if not stern, no-nonsense, and matter-of-fact. However, in Facebook videos and other social media outlets, she featured in performances that can only be described as 'ustazah-like'. In one video—a live recording of a house visit—she used an ostensibly 'soft' voice to convey a religious message buttressed by extensive referencing of the Quran. As I have argued, neither one of these images—the woman expert on a stage, the ustazah-like figure in a home—is remarkable in the context of Islamist politics in Malaysia. The striking aspect was, rather, the seemingly effortless shifting between both repertoires, presenting a simultaneous mastering of different appearances and forms of 'verbal performance' (Carr 2010: 19).

A few days later we travelled through Kelantan. In this state, the rivalry between PAS and Amanah was more intense than elsewhere. PAS considered Kelantan as its own territory, but the outcome was uncertain; since PAS formed the incumbent state government and had its own criticisms and scandals to deal with, opposition alliance Pakatan Harapan was considered a serious threat.[10] PH fielded many candidates from Amanah. While this made sense in a place with many PAS voters, it also created dilemmas. More than elsewhere, for instance, Amanah candidates struggled with the 'fake-PAS' label PAS used to discredit them in the eyes of voters. They were forced to ask themselves, therefore, whether they should look more, or rather less, like PAS.

One of the candidates we followed was Dr Hafidzah Mustakim, a general practitioner with a clinic in Kota Bharu and a well-known face in local NGO circles. She contested the state seat of Tanjung Mas, a semi-urban area not far from the state capital of Kota Bharu. Her opponents, the incumbent Rohani Ibrahim (PAS) and Madihah Aziz (UMNO), were both also women. Hafidzah's strategy was to stand out rather than emulate the image of the

popular Rohani, who was seen as a soft-spoken, motherly, and 'typically Malay' candidate. As one PH strategist explained to me, they wanted to capitalize on the differences by emphasizing Hafidzah's status as a doctor and a leading figure in local welfare initiatives, such as the establishment of a local shelter for abused women. Her campaign poster and social media profile pictures showed her in a doctor's white coat. Her campaign centre (*bilik gerakan*) was made into an outpatient clinic that offered free medical check-ups to local residents and other visitors.[11] She did not hide her academic approach. At her *ceramah kelompok* she distributed the PH Kelantan manifesto and kicked off, after a word of welcome, by asking attendees to 'open the booklet on page one'. Of all the women candidates we followed, Dr Hafidzah was also the most outspoken and passionate advocate of women's empowerment.

Figure 9.4 Dr Hafidzah Mustakim's campaign poster. Tanjung Mas, Kelantan, 4 May 2018 (personal collection of David Kloos).

We joined Hafidzah for a day of house-to-house campaigning, a strategy that PAS has long excelled in and which both parties also refer to as *ziarah* (courteous visits, a term with strong religious connotations because it is also

used for visits to sacred graves and other religious sites). These visits were an important element in her team's efforts to win over fence-sitters and to build her image, or 'personality' (*personaliti*), as some campaigners call it. The team struggled, however, to combine the standoffish expert and caring figure in the same image. 'In the village', assistants told her, it was important to 'try and touch people'. Thus, she spoke little about party or policy and concentrated instead on listening to people's concerns. She also brought stethoscope, sphygmomanometer, and packets of medication so she could combine these conversations with brief medical examinations. While I saw something decidedly touching about these encounters, the obvious challenge was to make the whole thing look genuine. Hafidzah found it tiring, she confessed to me between houses. While she believed both gender and profession worked to her advantage ('I'm used to house calls, so this is like a second nature to me'), it was also clear that she was more comfortable giving speeches than 'doing ziarah'. The campaign leader told me this was the only area—'whom to speak to, what to say, how to behave'—in which she really needed their advice.

That awkwardness brings me back to the ironies implicated in women's candidacies. As noted, for PAS and Amanah, fielding women professionals kills two birds with one stone. It engages party members and voters critical of overly conservative interpretations, but it is also partly a branding exercise, a way to show that these parties are inclusive with regard to gender and secular education. That merely symbolic aspect helps to explain these women's often unpropitious placements and approaches. Dr Rosni Adam, for instance, although second in rank in Muslimat PAS, was fielded in an area of downtown Kuala Lumpur where the composition of the population left PAS little chance of winning, regardless of candidate. Amanah's Dr Hafidzah Mustakim, perhaps the most vocal candidate when it came to the need to strengthen the role of women in politics, campaigned in a place where religion was deemed important, yet to maximize the contrast between her and a competitor known for her outward piety, she de-emphasized her own religious knowledge, which is actually impressive. Also ironic is the tendency in Malaysia, not exclusive to PAS and Amanah, to have women compete against women. While a female elected representative thus becomes the certain outcome in some constituencies, it also means that capable women eliminate each other. According to some of my interlocutors, this tendency is a problem because it decreases women's opportunities to change people's perceptions and the electoral landscape by showing that they can take on, and defeat, men. As one of Hafidzah's assistants told me—surprisingly, because following on a brutal critique of their competitor Rohani's sugary image and 'lack of vision'—fielding women against women 'is just a bloody waste'.

Conclusion

The (re-)appearance of women in Malaysian Islamist politics is a relatively new development. Since the 1990s, changes ranging from huge advances in women's education to mounting criticism of PAS's 'fanatical' image have prompted the party to reconsider its practice of excluding women from formal politics. The term 'appearance' may also be taken more literally, as a visual communication. Ambiguities surrounding women's visibility and (bodily) exposure are at the core of patriarchal structures and female Islamist activists' own reluctance to demand a more public role. Tracing the struggles of women candidates and representatives from the early 2000s through GE14, I have tried to draw out the tensions and counterintuitive juxtapositions of images and languages produced in the context of contemporary debates about female Islamist leadership and political representation. I have argued that individual candidates' success depends not just on space granted or demanded —in other words, on 'agency'—but also on the creative blending and strategic alternation of different outward styles, including the manifestation of the woman as a caring or motherly figure (a central trope in the global Islamic revival and its social and intellectual pedigrees; see, e.g., McLarney 2015) and a professional persona.

I conclude with two brief reflections. First, the tensions and connections between gendered norms and cultures of professionalism reflect a broader development in both Malaysian and global Islamism. One of the conspicuous aspects of GE14 was a modest shift in balance away from the big rallies (*ceramah mega*) that characterized the election of 2013 and (certainly in the case of PAS) back towards a focus on grassroots campaigning (*ceramah kelompok*, house-to-house canvassing or 'walkabouts').[12] This shift can be ascribed to PAS's decision to leave the larger opposition bloc and the need for Pakatan Harapan's component parties to challenge UMNO and PAS in the places in which these parties feel most comfortable, that is, rural and semi-urban areas dominated by ethnic Malays. Grassroots campaigning, commonly described in Malaysia as the strategy of the 'personal touch', is traditionally considered a major strength of PAS. It is also seen as a strategy in which women are particularly important because of their intimate knowledge of, and informal networking in, local, village, or neighbourhood settings, as well as families and households. Parties know, but seem reluctant to emphasize, that their women's wings are, or can be, extremely effective campaign machines (see also Zaireeni Azmi 2016: 119). Seen from this perspective, Muslimat PAS, with its neo-traditionalist etiquette, may be regarded as a trendsetting organisation in Malaysian politics.

Secondly, and more self-reflexively, although I am convinced that grounded research is imperative in understanding these changes, there is also a risk in glossing over the fact that the tensions between Islamic concepts of femininity and performances of professionalism are, in themselves, also to some extent patriarchal constructions, contingent on the steady rise of normative Islam across the board. The cases I have presented call, and offer material, for a more comparative approach. I would be curious to learn, for instance, whether and to what extent these tensions are found in Tunisia, where the rise of the Islamist party Ennahda has seemed to coincide with the presence of successful, mediagenic, and highly educated women.[13] Such questions point to the need for ongoing innovation in the study of women in Islamist politics.

Notes

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[2] Recent examples include Dr Mariah's support of protecting unwed women against domestic violence (*The Star* 2017).

[3] On women in (radical) Malay nationalism, see, e.g., Aljunied 2013; Ting 2013; Manderson 1980. Khadijah Sidek was the head of Kaum Ibu, UMNO's women's wing, until she was expelled in 1956 for being too outspoken about the need to advance women within the party (Manderson 1980: 112–14). She then joined PAS, which she represented in parliament from 1959 to 1964. She rejoined UMNO in 1972. For a personal account, see Khatijah Sidek 1995.

[4] One of the main exemplars of this outlook was the former Islamic activist and rising star in UMNO, Anwar Ibrahim, a public intellectual who advocated the Malay language yet also spoke and wrote in English, and who combined western suit and tie with a black *songkok*, a head covering associated with both Islamic modernism and earlier expressions of Malay and Indonesian nationalism and modernity. On Mahathir's early formulations of 'modern' Islam, see Noor 2014: 129–30.

[5] For a discussion of Dr Lo' Lo's career and style of campaigning, see Zaireeni Azmi 2016: 124–9.

[6] The resonance is not limited to preaching in Malaysia but encompasses, more generally, the role of women in the Islamic revival, especially when it comes to mass-mediatized forms of proselytization (*dakwah*). See, e.g., Bucar 2017; Jones 2010; McLarney 2015; van Nieuwkerk 2013.

[7] In my use of the term 'figure', I take inspiration from the work of Joshua Barker, Erik Harms, and Johan Lindquist, who define it as 'someone whom others recognise as standing out and who encourages reflexive contemplation about the world in which the figure lives' (2014: 2–3). Figures, in this approach, are not social types. They refer to real people and situations, even if they extend beyond specific individuals.

[8] Nuridah Salleh was (re-)elected as the head of Muslimat PAS in 2015. In GE14 she contested, unsuccessfully, the parliamentary seat of Sungai Buloh, Selangor.

[9] Among a total of 2,333 candidates fielded for state and parliamentary seats in GE14, 251 were women (10.76 per cent). BN fielded 92 women (out of 727), PH fielded 85 (out of 660), and Warisan fielded 9 (out of 61). Shares ranged between 6 per cent (PAS) and 15 per cent (Warisan) (*The Borneo Post* 2018).

[10] The election results confirmed the status of Kelantan and Terengganu as PAS strongholds. Few people outside PAS predicted this outcome. Most pollsters and political analysts thought that the 'three-way battle' among PAS, BN, and PH would be closer. Take, for example, Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman's assessment of the situation in Kelantan: Mohamed Nawab 2018.

[11] Dr Lo' Lo' pioneered the strategy of making free medical services part of the campaign. See Zaireeni Azmi 2016: 125.

[12] See, e.g., Badrul Hisham 2018; Malaysiakini 2018. I write 'modest' because big rallies featured in GE14, as well, particularly in urban areas.

[13] See, e.g., Raghavan 2018. For other examples, see the brief portraits in Wolf 2017: xviii, xx, xxii–xxiii.

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10

The Battle of Bangi: The Struggle for Political Islam in Urban Malaysia

Hew Wai Weng

> PAS is the only party that fights for Islam.… Voting for PAS might not directly guarantee you a ticket to heaven, but you will get *pahala* [rewards in the afterlife].
>
> – Ustaz Ahmad Dusuki, Shah Alam, 25 April 2018

> PAS is only one of several vehicles for Islamic struggle and is not the religion itself.… I am not asking the people to go against Islam. I am asking Malaysians to vote for PH.
>
> – Ustaz Nik Omar, Bangi, 4 May 2018

In Malaysia, religion is an important factor, although not the only one, in determining how Malay-Muslims vote. As other chapters in this volume explain (e.g., those by Suffian and Lee or Saravanamuttu), the majority of Malaysians voted against Najib Razak and his United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in Malaysia's 14th general election (GE14) due to such issues as rampant corruption scandals and the introduction of a goods and services tax (GST), which contributed to rising costs of living. Yet, debates surrounding various issues related to Islam also shaped Muslim public opinion and contributed to Malay voters' choice between Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope, PH) or Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS) as an alternative to UMNO. Therefore, both PH and PAS incorporated Islamic messages in their campaigns. I focus in this chapter on these messages, through

a close look at the Malay-majority townships of Shah Alam and Bangi, in the state of Selangor. Challenging the view that PAS is more 'Islamic' than PH simply because the party won many seats in Malaysia's Malay-majority northeast (Nambiar 2018), this chapter argues that PAS and PH—and within PH, especially Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah, National Trust Party, a splinter party from PAS)—represent different visions of political Islam in contemporary Malaysia. As the results of GE14 indicated, PAS appears to be a more Malay-oriented Islamic party, with strongholds in the state of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah, while Amanah is a more inclusive and reformist-inclined Islamic party with a solid support base in the urbanised Klang Valley. This does not mean PAS has limited influence in the Klang Valley, but it faces stronger competition from Amanah and other Islamic forces in urban areas such as Bangi and Shah Alam. In other words, PAS has many loyalists in the east-coast states, yet in the Klang Valley, PAS is only one of many influential actors in political Islam.

This chapter explores how different actors articulate Islamic narratives in urban contexts, considering in the process how Islamic movements evolve with political developments, while still holding to certain ideological commitments. It engages with other studies of political Islam in Malaysia and elsewhere (Ahmad Fauzi 2018; Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan 2016; Liow 2009; Mohamed Nawab 2017; Müller 2014; Noor 2014), but suggests that these works have underplayed dynamics that were particularly central to the outcome of GE14. The term 'political Islam' has many connotations (Boubekeur and Roy 2012). Here, I mainly use it to refer to the political mobilization of Islam by political parties and other social actors. As I will describe, one of the key changes in GE14 was that the political competition for urban Malay votes has evolved from 'PAS versus UMNO' to 'PAS versus PH' (especially Amanah); the role of UMNO in this newly-configured contest is uncertain.

With the support of Muslim preachers and organisations, PAS and PH offer different visions of political Islam. Various terms could be used to describe Amanah's vision of political Islam, such as 'post-Islamism' (Bayat 2013), 'second-generation political Islam' (Dzulkefly 2016; Maszlee and Zulkifli 2016), 'Islamic resurgence 2.0' (Zulkifli 2016) and 'democrat Muslim' (Maszlee 2017a)—but this is a topic beyond the scope of this chapter. Generally speaking, PAS tends to be more exclusive, conservative, 'Malay-centric', and focused on the stricter implementation of Islamic laws, while Amanah appears to be more inclusive and progressive, emphasizing the greater objectives of an Islamic agenda and willing to work together with non-Muslims. Acknowledging that the terms 'conservative' and 'progressive' are

loaded concepts, this chapter uses them mainly to compare PAS and PH's social and political engagements, given that Muslims from both sides of the divide might share certain conservative moral viewpoints.

To illustrate the competition between these visions of political Islam, this chapter focuses on the election campaign in the state seat of Sungai Ramal (also known as Bangi, as the constituency was called until 2018). Sungai Ramal, a seat with more than 80 per cent Malay voters, is not representative of other seats in the Klang Valley, but it serves as an apt indicator to examine voting patterns among urban Malay-Muslims, especially those who see Islam as one of their key voting considerations. This chapter draws upon extensive fieldwork during the election campaign in Bangi and, to a lesser extent, nearby Shah Alam, including talking to various actors (election candidates, party members, campaign activists, NGO leaders, and ordinary voters), following election campaigns, attending *ceramah* (talks), as well as observing discussions on social-media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. It builds upon my ongoing research on the cultural politics of urban middle-class Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia, in which Bangi is one of the key research sites. In this chapter, I first outline the key actors articulating visions of political Islam during GE14, including political parties, Muslim organisations, and popular preachers. Second, I describe electoral dynamics and election campaigns in Bangi, exploring how PAS and Amanah, together with the aforementioned actors, competed against each other to win over urban Malay support. Lastly, drawing on the election results, I analyse the ongoing transformation of political Islam and how such changes contributed to PH's winning the election. I briefly point out some post-election developments to show how competition for Muslim votes will continue to shape and be shaped by Malaysian politics.

Articulating Political Islam

At present, there are five main Malay-majority parties in Malaysia: UMNO, PAS, Amanah, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, People's Justice Party, a Malay-majority multiethnic party) and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu, Malaysian United Indigenous Party, a splinter party from UMNO). In GE14, these five parties competed against each other under three main coalitions—the UMNO-dominated Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front), PAS-dominated Gagasan Sejahtera (GS, Ideas of Prosperity), and PH, which includes PKR, Amanah, Bersatu, and the Democratic Action Party (DAP, a Chinese-majority multiethnic party). Both PAS and Amanah openly claim the label, 'Islamic party', yet there are also elements of Islamism in PKR,

UMNO, and Bersatu. In this section, first, I briefly discuss these political parties, especially PAS and Amanah, both of which contested the state seat of Sungai Ramal, the main case study of this chapter. Then, I explore three key Muslim organisations that are closely linked to these parties, as well as a few Muslim preachers who are either directly or indirectly affiliated with the parties (Hew 2018a). Mapping out the interactions among these actors, I argue that they comprise two loose coalitions, both consisting of political parties, Muslim organisations, and preachers, each offering a vision of political Islam and seeking to secure Malay support.

Founded in 1951, PAS is the oldest Islamist party in Malaysia. The party has transformed itself repeatedly over the years, its ideological foci ranging from anticolonialism, to communalism, to democratization (Noor 2014). The party congress and election of 2015 saw a heated contest between a relatively progressive faction and a more conservative faction within PAS. The conservative faction, led by party president Tuan Guru Hadi Awang, secured a landslide victory, while the progressive faction was wiped out from party leadership. With the progressive faction ousted, PAS leaders asserted the party's commitment to implement *hudud* (criminal punishments under *sharia*, Islamic law), took a more communitarian tone and exclusionary stand on a number of issues, and eventually broke up with DAP in the Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Pact), leading to the collapse of that coalition.

In GE14, positioning itself as a 'third force' and kingmaker, PAS was struggling to keep its support base intact and ensure it remained Malaysia's only influential Islamic party. Besides Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah, Selangor is another state in which PAS has a strong base among Malays, its supporters ranging from blue-collar workers to the middle class and professionals. On many occasions, PAS *ulama* (religious scholars) and *ustaz* (religious teachers) have declared that PAS is the only party upholding an Islamic agenda in Malaysia, claiming '*Undi PAS, dapat pahala*' ('Vote PAS, gain rewards in the afterlife'), implying that a vote for PAS is akin to buying a ticket to heaven. Even though the PAS manifesto does not highlight the controversial parliamentary bill to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (better known in public debate on *hudud* as RUU355), PAS leaders often mentioned it in *ceramah* to justify the party's split from PR and its criticisms both of DAP for 'not respecting Islam' and of Amanah for 'being liberal' (in that they did not support the bill Hadi Awang tabled).

The enactment of RUU355 was a contentious issue. PAS leaders have publicly reiterated that the main aim of the proposed amendment was not *hudud*, but merely the strengthening of existing *sharia* laws, while

opponents have claimed it is an unconstitutional move and a precursor to the implementation of *hudud* (Hew 2016). Najib Razak, the former prime minister and UMNO president, allowed Hadi Awang to table the controversial bill in Parliament in 2016, in order to win over support from the Islamist party and to split PR. From then on, rumours that UMNO and PAS leaders intended to form a unity government became more widespread. Although UMNO and PAS contested against each other in many constituencies during GE14, rumours of an electoral pact between the parties were prevalent, making some PAS supporters uneasy.

As mentioned earlier, the progressive faction in PAS lost almost all its positions during the party's 2015 election. On 16 September 2015, its most prominent figures left the party to establish Amanah, which positioned itself as an 'Islamic alternative' to PAS (Hew 2016; Maszlee 2017b). The party also claimed to represent the spirit and to carry on the legacy of the late Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS's former spiritual leader and former chief minister of Kelantan. A month later, Amanah, together with the DAP and PKR, formed a new opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan, which Mahathir Mohamad's Bersatu later joined. Amanah's founding President Mohammad Sabu, deputy president Salahuddin Ayub, and one of its three vice presidents, Mujahid Yusof Rawa, all held key positions in PAS before their defeat in the party election. Another Amanah vice president, Hasanuddin Mohd Yunus, was a leader of Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM, Malaysian IKRAM Association), while its secretary-general, Anuar Tahir, was an activist in Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM, Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement). Together with former PAS leaders, these two organisations, especially IKRAM, were central to the formation of Amanah.

There are three key themes in Amanah's vision of political Islam: *maqasid sharia*, a concept that highlights Islamic values such as social justice, good governance, and multicultural co-existence; inclusive or compassionate Islam (*Islam rahmatan lil-alamin*); and *fiqh Malaysia* (the interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence within a Malaysian context). Instead of concentrating on divisive issues such as *hudud,* Amanah emphasises *maqasid sharia*. Their articulation of an inclusive Islam does not mean that Amanah leaders have abandoned Islamist ideologies. Instead, it demonstrates their wish to make Islam relevant in contemporary contexts and to promote social inclusivity within an Islamic framework. During my fieldwork, several Amanah and IKRAM members expressed to me the sentiment that, 'we are not as dogmatic as PAS, yet we are not as liberal as SIS [Sisters in Islam, a feminist Muslim organisation]. And unlike UMNO, we are not racist' (Hew 2016).

Often overlooked as a party with Islamic credentials is PKR. ABIM played an important role, along with more secular forces, in establishing this multiethnic party in 1999. The party's key leader, Anwar Ibrahim, positions himself as a 'Muslim democrat' and the party includes many Malay-Muslim leaders with strong Islamic backgrounds, many of them activists from ABIM and IKRAM. There are also Muslim activists in other parties, such as Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki in UMNO and Maszlee Malik in Bersatu, both of whom were academics at the International Islamic University of Malaysia. Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki is also the former president of Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM, the student wing of ABIM) and now is the UMNO Youth chief. Maszlee Malik was a central committee member of IKRAM and now is a member of Parliament for Bersatu and the minister of Education. In short, there are elements of political Islam in all Malay-majority political parties in Malaysia.

As I have indicated, Islamic organisations such as ABIM, IKRAM, and Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA, Malaysian Muslim Solidarity) have played important roles in shaping discourses and practices of political Islam in Malaysia, including during GE14 (see also Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan, this volume). These three urban-based *tarbiyah* (education) and *dakwah* (preaching) organisations have, in different ways and to different extents, been influenced by the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Closely associated with Anwar Ibrahim, ABIM has pursued different political engagements over the years. ABIM has taken a moderate approach to political Islam, balancing global Islamic aspirations with local traditions. Many of its politically active current and former members are with PKR, some are in Amanah, and some, but fewer, are in PAS and UMNO. Some ABIM leaders also play key roles in the operation of Institut Darul Ehsan (IDE), a think-tank associated with the PKR-led Selangor state government. Prior to GE14, for instance, IDE organised a seminar entitled 'Maqasid Sharia in the Elections', which included speakers from PH, ABIM, and IKRAM.

IKRAM, formerly Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM, Society for Islamic Reform), is another key actor in political Islam. IKRAM is more ideologically rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood than ABIM or ISMA. It has close relations with the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. Yet, unlike PKS, which is perceived in Indonesia as being exclusive of non-Muslims and more 'secular-minded' Muslims, IKRAM is seen in a Malaysian context as being inclusive. It has developed close relationships with non-Muslims in social movements such as electoral-reform group Bersih. A wing of IKRAM, Hidayah, has also organised Chinese New Year celebrations in mosques, to promote the idea of Islam as a

blessing for all. Since 1998, when the sacking and jailing of Anwar Ibrahim sparked off the *Reformasi* (reformation) movement in Malaysia, some activists from what is now IKRAM joined opposition politics, mainly in PAS and PKR. Working closely with other progressive PAS leaders, IKRAM activists transformed PAS into a more inclusive party. Indeed, some conservative PAS leaders accused these progressive leaders of '*mengikramkan PAS*' (Ikramising PAS) and 'making PAS too liberal'. After the split within PAS in 2015, together with former progressive PAS leaders, IKRAM activists played a vital role in forming Amanah. Almost half the grassroots leaders of Amanah have IKRAM backgrounds and many other members campaigned for PH, especially for Amanah candidates, in GE14. Instead of an 'Islamic state', IKRAM proposed the idea of a '*negara rahmah*' (compassionate state), in line with Amanah's idea of 'compassionate Islam'. Following GE14, a few members of the PH cabinet have IKRAM backgrounds, including Minister of Health Dzulkefly Ahmad (Amanah) and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Fuziah Salleh (PKR).

Lastly, even though its exclusionary messages do not represent the views of many Malay-Muslims, ISMA has made news headlines for its controversial statements, for example, insulting Chinese Malaysians by calling them *pendatang* (immigrants). ISMA shares features with IKRAM, as both groups are influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and members of both are mostly educated, urban, middle-class, and professional Muslims. Yet ISMA is more Malay-centric and less inclusive than IKRAM. ISMA has tried to stimulate moral panic over such issues as LGBT rights and alcohol consumption, including through online campaigns, and encourages a siege mentality among Malay-Muslims over issues such as alleged 'Christianisation' and losing political power to 'foreigners'. In the 13th general election (GE13), ISMA contested in some seats as a 'third force' under the flag of BERJASA (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Front), a small Islamic party, because it disagreed with PAS's electoral pact with DAP. In GE14, ISMA withdrew from contesting, instead positioning itself as an electoral pressure group. It launched a campaign called Gerakan Pengundi Sedar (GPS, Voter Awareness Movement) and urged Muslims to vote for *calon Muslim berwibawa* (credible Muslim candidates). According to ISMA, a credible Muslim leader should be free from corruption, morally good, and committed to upholding a Malay-Muslim agenda. Even though it claims to be neutral, ISMA has often criticised the DAP and Muslim leaders in PH. Most of the 'credible Muslim candidates' ISMA endorsed were from PAS. To counter ISMA, a group of young IKRAM activists mimicked ISMA's campaign, releasing their own list of 'credible Muslim candidates', most of them from PH.

Besides political parties and NGOs, many Muslim preachers have contributed to the shaping of Muslim public opinion. Popular preachers Ustaz Ahmad Dusuki Abd Rani and Ustaz Nushi Mahfodz ran for PAS in Kota Anggerik, a state seat in Shah Alam, and Sungai Ramal, a state seat in Bangi, respectively. The former, a nephew of the late Nik Aziz, is a well-known religious figure, as he often gives religious talks in mosques and on television and radio, and has a large number of social-media followers—more than one million on Facebook and 200,000 on Instagram. Yet, Ahmad Dusuki's popularity did not translate into electoral support—indeed, he lost in GE14. Another celebrity preacher, Ustaz Azhar Idrus (known as UAI), did not contest, but frequently appears at PAS events. Of course, not all Muslim preachers were PAS supporters. For example, followers of Perlis Mufti Mohd Asri Zainal Abidin (Dr MAZA) and popular preacher Rozaimi Ramle seem both to be critical towards PAS and sometimes subtly supportive of PH. Ustaz Nik Omar, a religious teacher and the eldest son of Nik Aziz, and Ustaz Fazwan Fadzil, the son of former PAS President Fadzil Noor, not only publicly endorsed PH in GE14, but Nik Omar stood (unsuccessfully) as PH candidate for Chempaka, a state seat in Kelantan. Both Ahmad Dusuki and Nik Omar claimed to carry on the legacy of Nik Aziz: the former emphasized Nik Aziz's religious conservatism, while the latter stressed his social inclusivity.

These various actors aligned in two loosely organised camps for political Islam during GE14. On one side was a grouping of PAS, ISMA, and preachers such as Ahmad Dusuki and Azhar Idrus; on the other was a combination of PH (especially Amanah and PKR), ABIM, IKRAM, and preachers such as Nik Omar and Fazwan Fadzil. Since GE14, both camps have continued to articulate different Islamic discourses and to seek to influence Malay-Muslims. It is important to note that these are not official or coherent coalitions. Each camp is itself marked by competition among ideas and strategies, as well as power-struggles among actors—thus, it is difficult to characterise either camp with a tidy label. Generally speaking, though, as mentioned earlier, the PAS version of political Islam remains more exclusive and focused on the stricter implementation of Islamic laws, while Amanah's vision is more inclusive and oriented toward the higher objectives of sharia.

Competing for Urban Malay Votes

The case of Sungai Ramal, a Malay-majority urban state seat in Selangor, serves to illustrate how different actors shaped Muslim public opinion during the election campaign period, as well as how PAS and PH competed over urban Malay voters (Hew 2018b). PAS won the seat in 1999, 2008, and 2013, but PH

captured it in 2018. Bangi, and especially the section called Bandar Baru Bangi (Bangi New Town), started as an urban-development project under the New Economic Policy (NEP) to increase the urban Malay population. ISMA's main office is located in Bangi, while many ABIM and IKRAM activists also reside in the township. Today, Bandar Baru Bangi is largely middle-class and Malay, with many middle-class housing areas (some of them gated) and a number of low-cost apartments for the less well-off. Sungai Ramal also includes older sections of Bangi and parts of a neighbouring town, Kajang. Bangi is known as a '*bandar ilmu*' (knowledge township), as it is home to the National University of Malaysia (UKM), Selangor Islamic University College (KUIS), and many Islamic institutions, schools, and kindergartens; it is also considered a '*bandar fesyen*' (fashion town), for its many Muslim fashion boutiques. Indicative of local Muslim sentiment is the fact that Bangi's local council disapproved plans to open a cinema there (Hew 2018c).

After controversial redelineation exercises nationwide by the Election Commission (EC) shortly before GE14 (see Wong, this volume), the state constituency of Bangi got not only a new name (Sungai Ramal) but also an increase in Malay voters, from about 66 per cent to 80 per cent. Such a demographic change might have enabled UMNO to wrest the seat back. However, Bangi was instead a battleground between PAS and Amanah; perceived as corrupt, UMNO was not popular among many urban, educated, middle-class Malay-Muslims. Representing PAS was Ustaz Nushi Mahfodz, a KUIS lecturer, celebrity preacher, and son of a veteran PAS leader. Having graduated in Islamic Studies in Jordan and appearing frequently on Islamic-themed television and radio programmes, Nushi Mahfodz appealed to voters with his religious credentials and down-to-earth approach. Amanah's candidate was Mazwan Johar, a lawyer and former local PAS leader. Inspired by the late Nik Aziz's commitment to implementing hudud in the 1990s, Mazwan Johar had joined PAS about twenty years previously. Formerly a personal aide to former PAS assemblyman for Bangi Shafie Ngah, Mazwan quit to join Amanah in 2015. He stated that he would like to continue Nik Aziz's struggle in Amanah by upholding the Islamic cause within the multicultural context of Malaysia (interview, Mazwan Johar, 23 April 2018). UMNO's candidate for Sungai Ramal was Abdul Rahim Mohd Amin, a local party leader.

Both PAS and PH campaigned on the issues of the GST and corruption to attack UMNO. The parties' leaders also verbally attacked each other: PAS labelled PH as 'dominated by DAP' and 'not Islamic enough', while PH criticised PAS for 'using Islam for political gain' and 'having a deal with UMNO'. To appeal to Bangi voters, religion was central to all three parties'

campaigns. Even UMNO organised an event, called *Geng Ustaz Turun Padang*, featuring religious teachers and Islamic scholars affiliated with the party. However, UMNO's campaign was very low-key otherwise. In contrast, both PAS and Amanah candidates campaigned very actively, engaging voters through events such as *ceramah*, house visits, and praying at local mosques and *suraus* (places of worship for Muslims, smaller than mosques). As a well-established party, PAS has strong control over many mosques, suraus, religious schools, and kindergartens in Bangi. PAS also used tactics such as planting a giant banner emblazoned, 'This is PAS Territory: Greener and Safer' (written in English) in one section of Bandar Baru Bangi, to reassert its influence in that middle-class Malay neighbourhood. The party also relied on the aura of the late Harun Din, a popular religious teacher and healer, who ran a surau and Islamic healing centre in Bandar Baru Bangi.

Even before the start of the official campaign period, PAS had organised many ceramah, one of them featuring Azuar Md. Tasi, better known as Zuar. Zuar, a member of XPDC, a Malaysian heavy metal band, transformed himself from a non-practising to a practising Muslim in 2011. At the PAS *ceramah*, Zuar played a few Islamic-themed songs and shared his journey toward becoming a better Muslim. He asserted that PAS is the only political party in Malaysia that is truly fighting for Islamic causes. Sharing the stage with Zuar was Ustaz Ridzuan Mohd Nor, a religious teacher and PAS central committee member (fieldnotes, 17 April 2018). During the election campaign, Nakhaie Ahmad, a former PAS vice president who left the party for UMNO in 1989, also backed PAS in a few ceramah in Bangi. Blaming UMNO for being 'corrupt' and accusing PH of being 'liberal', he suggested that PAS was the best option for Muslim voters. Some local ISMA leaders also attended PAS talks in Bangi. In its online campaign, ISMA endorsed many PAS candidates as 'credible Muslim candidates', yet its activists did not actively run an offline campaign to support PAS's candidate in Bangi.

PAS leadership knew religious credentials alone would not be enough to convince middle-class and youth members, as well as to win support from a broader set of urban Malays. Thus, party strategists introduced the idea of 'technocratic government' (*kerajaan teknokrat*) and ran town hall meetings featuring the party's youth leaders from professional backgrounds. (On PAS's elevation of 'professionals', see also Kloos, this volume.) One of these meetings was held in Bangi Convention Centre and screened live on Facebook. In front of 800 young Muslims, PAS youth leaders insisted that PAS can not only champion the Islamic cause, but can also run the federal government according to Islamic principles, if given a mandate. Yet not all those in the audience were

convinced. During the question and answer session, members of the audience posed challenging questions, asking the speakers about the likelihood of PAS's winning the federal government or the Selangor state government without working together with non-Muslims and about the alleged UMNO-PAS partnership.

PAS ceramah attendees I met evinced different levels of support for the Islamist party. Some were hardcore PAS members, some were dissatisfied supporters considering voting for PH, while others were unhappy with the party leadership but still stayed loyal to the party. For an example, during a *ceramah*, a PAS member told me:

> … one-third of PAS members in our neighbourhood have left the party and joined Amanah quietly, another one-third are PAS loyalists, while the rest are fence-sitters. If PH can convince the fence-sitters that they could also champion Islamic causes, they might vote PH.… Personally, I prefer Nik Aziz's approach in upholding Islam; Hadi Awang is a bit too *keras* [hard-line]. Yet, the party comes first to me. I will still campaign for PAS.

Another PAS member sitting next to him interrupted to elaborate with an analogy of a classroom: 'the teacher might be wrong, but the textbook is always correct.… We can criticise the teacher, but we can't throw away our textbook. PAS is our textbook. PAS is about Islamic struggle that we can't abandon' (fieldnotes, 29 April 2018).

PH was well aware that in order to capture Sungai Ramal, it had to convince Malay fence-sitters who are PAS sympathisers but not loyalists. It realised that it would be difficult to break through PAS control over many mosques and suraus in Bangi. Therefore, it ran an extensive campaign on social-media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, and also organised many *ceramah* to engage with voters face-to-face—both strategies PAS used, too. One Amanah online campaign poster, for instance, outlined the party's commitment to ensure Bangi remained a *Bandar Ilmu* (knowledge township), *Bandar Islam Melayu* (Malay Islamic township), and *Bandar 'Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar'* (township that 'enjoins good and forbids wrong'). Tajul Ariffin, a former academic, PAS member, and ABIM activist, and among the key speakers in many PH ceramah, stated that PH would promote Bangi as *Bandar Rahmatan lil-Alamin*—an inclusive Islamic township that is a blessing for all. This statement invoked Amanah's tagline, *Islam Rahmatan lil-Alamin*, a slogan that simultaneously reaffirms its commitment to upholding an Islamic agenda and to promoting social inclusivity. According to Tajul Ariffin, as an 'Islamic township', Bangi should offer clean and safe residential neighbourhoods, as well as be free from *maksiat* (vices)—thus, it should not allow development of

places that do not reflect an 'Islamic lifestyle', such as casinos, bars, nightclubs, and karaoke outlets (fieldnotes, 11 April 2018).

PH organised two talks entitled '*Bicara Ummah: Menjawab Persoalan Agama dan Isu Semasa tentang Pakatan Harapan*' (Ummah Talk: Answering Questions on Religion and Current Issues of Pakatan Harapan) to reassure Sungai Ramal voters that the party is committed to upholding Islam, albeit in a more inclusive way. I attended the first talk, on 18 April 2018, featuring Amanah candidate Mazwan Johar; its *timbalan penasihat umum* (deputy general advisor) Ustaz Abdul Ghani Samsuddin (who had issued a statement that same day entitled '*Mengundi Pakatan Harapan dari Perspektif Siasah Syar'iyah*', Voting Pakatan Harapan from a Perspective of Sharia Politics); Bersatu local leader Azita Amrin; PKR Perak chief and ABIM's fourth president, Muhammad Nur Manuty; as well as ABIM's first president, Razali Nawawi. Both Nur Manuty and Razali Nawawi are long-term residents of Bangi. As the line-up of speakers for this event suggests, given the lack of Malay grassroots members in PH after PAS left PR, IKRAM and ABIM activists played important roles in PH's campaigns in Bangi and many other constituencies. The PH campaign team in Bangi included many youth activists from IKRAM, while a local PKR leader who ran one of the campaign offices there was from an ABIM background.

One of the highlights of PH's campaign was a dialogue with Nik Omar entitled, *Legasi TGNA di Bandar Baru Bangi* (Legacy of Tok Guru Nik Aziz in Bangi New Town). After being nominated as a PH candidate in Kelantan, Nik Omar spent a few days in the Klang Valley. He gave talks in places such as Bangi, Shah Alam, and Putrajaya—places with high concentrations of middle-class Malay voters. Nik Omar's sharing the same stage with Mahathir Mohamad and other PH leaders in Putrajaya was meant to reassure Malay voters that PH would not abandon Islamic causes if it took over the federal government. Educated in religious studies in Egypt and Jordan, soft-spoken Nik Omar has in-depth Islamic knowledge that he is able to communicate to public audiences in a humble way. These appearances were reminiscent of his father, Nik Aziz; PH promoted that image to convince Malay voters that Amanah, not PAS, is the party that continues the struggle of Nik Aziz. By capitalising on the aura of the late Nik Aziz and hailing him as an exemplary Muslim leader, PH emphasised social inclusiveness and working with people from all walks of life, including non-Muslims. Yet, at the same time, it maintained conservative religious and moral viewpoints.

During the dialogue in Bangi, Nik Omar suggested that his father was not only fighting for his party (PAS) per se, but more importantly, for Islam and for *dakwah*. For him, dakwah was 'Islamic outreach' towards both the broader

Muslim community and non-Muslims. Compared to 'inward-looking' and 'Malay-centric' PAS, PH, opined Nik Omar, had a better platform for Islamic struggle in the Malaysian context. He let potential PAS supporters know that even though he and other leaders had left PAS, they had not given up their Islamic agenda. In other words, PAS is only one of several vehicles for Islamic struggle and is not the religion itself—thus, 'anti-PAS' is not equal to 'anti-Islam' (fieldnotes, 4 May 2018). Indeed, one of Nik Omar's popular remarks was, in Kelantanese Malay, '*Ambo tidak ajak rakyat lawan Islam. Ambo ajak rakyat Malaysia khususnya pakah Pakatan Harapan*' (I am not asking the people to go against Islam. I am asking Malaysians to vote for PH).

Meanwhile, in Kelantan, Nik Omar's brother, Nik Abduh, the PAS candidate for the Bachok parliamentary seat, expressed his disappointment with Nik Omar for going against their mother's advice not to join a rival party to PAS. Nik Omar was labelled 'pro-IKRAM' and 'a traitor to PAS's struggle'—sentiments that caused him to suffer a heavy defeat in Kelantan, the home of many PAS loyalists. In contrast, in the Klang Valley, Nik Omar received positive feedback from many Muslims as well as non-Muslims, suggesting that urban, west-coast Malays are more open to the vision of political Islam that PH championed (see also Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan, this volume). His talks in places such as Bangi and Shah Alam were well-attended, warmly received, and widely covered in the media. Arguably, he played an important role in helping PH win over fence-sitting Malay voters who would otherwise have voted for PAS.

Some of the Klang Valley voters who have supported PAS in past elections, especially since 1999, have been PAS sympathisers, but not loyalists. These non-loyalist PAS voters have included PKR supporters, ABIM and IKRAM activists, and ordinary Malays who dislike UMNO. In GE14, they faced a difficult choice: whether to vote for PH or for PAS. My conversations with some PAS *ceramah* attendees made clear that they realised that PAS could not win control of the government on its own, yet they worried that PH might not be able to safeguard Muslim interests. As one of them told me, 'I know it is difficult for PAS to win in Selangor after leaving PR.… UMNO is corrupted and PH has no clear Islamic agenda.… I have no option but to support PAS' (fieldnotes, 28 April 2018). Together with the support of ABIM and IKRAM activists, Nik Omar's endorsement boosted PH's much-needed 'Islamic credentials'. If Mahathir Mohamad, with his 'Malay nationalist' outlook, convinced many potential UMNO voters to switch their support to PH, then Nik Omar, with his 'Islamic credentials', persuaded a significant number of PAS voters, such as those in Bangi and Shah Alam, to vote for PH. Nik

Omar admitted that his entry into electoral politics was intended for national impact, especially on Malay voters in the Klang Valley, acknowledging that PAS supporters on the east coast were highly loyal to the party (interview, Nik Omar, 23 May 2018).

In the end, PH's Mazwan Johar defeated PAS's Nushi Mahfodz and UMNO's Abdul Rahim in Sungai Ramal (see Table 10.1). PH won with 24,591 votes, PAS secured 13,961 votes (slightly under half its tally in GE13), and UMNO only 9,372 votes (just over half its 2013 total)—PAS and UMNO together won fewer votes than PH. PH won in all polling stations, including those in overwhelmingly Malay Bandar Baru Bangi, where PAS has strong influence. These results suggest that PH gained votes from anti-Najib UMNO supporters. At the same time, PAS also lost almost all its non-Malay votes and a significant portion of the Malay votes it had gained in GE13.

Table 10.1 Election results in Sungai Ramal (formerly Bangi) in 2018 and 2013

DUN Sungai Ramal (formerly Bangi)	2018 Total voters: 54,961 Malays:80% Chinese:9% Indians: 10% Others: 1%	2013 Total voters: 53,268 Malays: 66% Chinese: 19% Indians: 13% Others: 1%
BN-UMNO	9,372 (19%)	17,362 (37%)
PAS	13,961 (29%)	29,200 (62%)
PH	24,591 (51%)	–
Spoilt	442 (1%)	454 (1%)
Total votes polled	48,366	47,016

A closer look at the polling station of Section 1 of Bandar Baru Bangi, in which over 90 per cent of residents are Malay, clearly exemplifies this change in voting patterns. In GE13, PAS won 1,916 votes (about 63 per cent) and UMNO 1,126 votes (37 per cent). In GE14, PH secured 1,378 votes (43 per cent), PAS won 1,249 votes (39 per cent), and UMNO 572 votes (18 per cent) in the same polling station. Polling stations across Bandar Baru Bangi saw similar patterns; these tallies indicate that UMNO lost half its Malay votes and PAS lost one-third to PH. Such a result might hint that a significant number of Malay voters in Bangi now accept PH, especially Amanah, as an alternative to PAS and UMNO. Nevertheless, PAS is not totally wiped out: it retained around 30–40 per cent Malay support across Bangi. A few PAS members who live in Bangi also voted for PAS in states such as Terengganu and Kelantan.

Hence, PAS still has considerable influence among urban Malays in the Klang Valley. Therefore, it might be premature to conclude that PAS is only a regional party with influence in the east coast and northern states.

Political Islam Contested

Many analysists have emphasized the role of Mahathir Mohamad in triggering a 'Malay tsunami'—a swing among UMNO supporters, especially those in rural areas, towards PH. However, few of them have paid attention to the roles of PH component parties and their allies in Muslim organisations in using Islamic messages, albeit more inclusive ones, to convince urban Malay voters to choose PH instead of PAS. As the GE14 results indicated, both PAS's and PH's visions of political Islam have their followers and are well-represented in parliament. PAS won 18 parliamentary seats, most of them in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah, while Amanah secured 11, more than half of them in Selangor. The element of political Islam in the winning PH coalition is salient also in component parties PKR and Bersatu, since there are ABIM and IKRAM leaders in both parties. Capitalising on the aura of the well-respected Nik Aziz through the endorsement of his eldest son, Nik Omar, has also given PH 'religious credentials'. Therefore, this chapter challenges the perception that only PAS voters constitute a 'moral constituency' (Nambiar 2018), by showing that Malay-Muslims in the Klang Valley are not less 'Islamic' than those in the east-coast states just because many of them did not vote for PAS. Moreover, as noted above, despite not being able to win seats such as Sungai Ramal, PAS managed to keep its hardcore base intact, securing significant Malay support in these areas.

To conclude, the GE14 results reflect the enduring influence of PAS. The party remains a key player in political Islam in Malaysia. Yet at the same time, PH has also offered a viable 'Islamic alternative' for urban Malay voters. Relevant actors have realigned in pursuit of distinct Islamic agendas, hoping to win Malay-Muslim support, with the camp that PAS anchors more exclusive and conservative-inclined, and the one PH anchors more inclusive and progressively inclined. Such struggles around political Islam continue as ordinary Muslims from various backgrounds engage, and through interactions with non-Muslims. Initial post-GE14 developments indicate that the competition over Muslim votes will continue to shape and be shaped by political developments and religious discourses in Malaysia. For instance, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has stated his intention to revamp Islamic administration, while Minister in the Prime Minister Office (Religious Affairs)

Mujahid Yusuf Rawa has committed to promoting a 'compassionate Islam'. Many ABIM and IKRAM activists are actively expanding their influence through television programmes, mosque events, campus activities, and social-media outreach. Yet at the same time, there is also a conservative backlash, led by PAS and ISMA, using racial and religious issues to attack PH. In short, post-GE14, political Islam in Malaysia has entered a new chapter, with a realignment of existing actors. It is no longer an UMNO-PAS rivalry, but a competition between PAS and PH, especially Amanah, each backed by Muslim preachers and organisations, and each with a credible foothold.

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Part III

Post-election Trajectories

11

Reconsidering Malaysia's First-Past-the-Post Electoral System: Malpractices and Mismatch

Wong Chin Huat

Characterised by excessive malapportionment and gerrymandering, the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system has been central to Malaysia's electoral authoritarianism (Wong 2018a). The end of Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN) rule after over 60 years and the coalition's succession by Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope, PH) on 9 May 2018 provide a golden opportunity to revisit and correct the malpractice FPTP introduces. However, it is important to ask if FPTP, once cleansed of malapportionment and gerrymandering, works for Malaysia.

One benefit of FPTP is a healthy two-party system with centripetal competition, but neither that nor a similarly benign two-coalition system has yet emerged in Malaysia, after fifteen elections.[1] Constituency malapportionment and gerrymandering only began in 1974, with that year's delimitation review—but there had been no two-party or two-coalition system for the preceding four elections, from 1955 to 1969. We should therefore keep an open mind, recognising the possible mismatch between FPTP and Malaysia's ethnically divided society.

This chapter introduces the malpractices of inter-state malapportionment, intra-state malapportionment, and gerrymandering before building a case for mismatch and discussing four consequences: lack of a two-party system, lack of centripetal competition and inherent uncompetitiveness, punishment of

competitive politics, instability of permanent coalitions, and gender imbalance and weak issue-representation. Methodologically, the analysis is based on a longitudinal study of election data and party positioning.

Malpractice 1: Inter-state Malapportionment and an Expanding Legislature

Malapportionment of constituencies entails the manipulation of electorate sizes across constituencies such that some constituencies have substantially more voters than others and suffer under-representation, violating the 'one person, one vote, one value' premise of democratic elections.

Because parliamentary constituencies cannot be drawn to span across state boundaries, their malapportionment can be divided into two parts. The first is inter-state malapportionment, i.e., when national parliamentary constituencies are not proportionally allocated among each of the states and territories. The second is intra-state malapportionment, when the total number of voters within a given state is not evenly divided across constituencies. In contrast, malapportionment of state-legislative constituencies is only single-layered, because their boundaries are not constrained by intra-state divisions.

Malaya's original constitution in 1957 started with mathematics to apportion constituencies at both the inter-state and intra-state levels. First, it allocated parliamentary seats to states based on their shares of the electorate and population. Then, each state's electorate was divided into the allocated number of parliamentary constituencies, which were further divided into state constituencies,[2] with approximately equal numbers of voters. The allowed deviation across constituencies was just 15 per cent from the state average (Lim 2002).

Constitutional provisions for constituency delimitation were soon amended three times, in 1962, 1963, and 1974. The 1962 amendment widened the range of permissible deviation from 15 per cent to 33.33 per cent and shifted the basis of comparison from the state average to the national average.[3] The 1963 amendment deliberately introduced inter-state malapportionment to underrepresent Singapore and overrepresent the Borneo states. As recommended by Paragraph 19(2) of the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) Report in 1962, allocation of parliamentary seats was no longer based on demographics, but explicitly spelled out under Article 46:

> Article 46 (1) should be amended to increase the number of elected members of the House of Representatives from one hundred and four to one hundred and fifty-nine (including the fifteen proposed for Singapore). Of the additional

> members sixteen should be elected in North Borneo [Sabah] and twenty-four in Sarawak. The proportion that the number of seats allocated respectively to Sarawak and to North Borneo bears to the total number of seats in the House should not be reduced (except by reason of the granting of seats to any other new State) during a period of seven years after Malaysia Day without the concurrence of the Government of the State concerned, and thereafter (except as aforesaid) shall be subject to Article 159 (3) of the existing Federal Constitution (which requires Bills making amendments to the Constitution to be supported in each House of Parliament by the votes of not less than two-thirds of the total number of members of that House).

Collectively, the new states were given 55 seats (disproportionally distributed among them), vis-à-vis Malaya's 104, to give them a one-third veto power (Table 11.1).[4]

The allocation of seats under Article 46 is both idiosyncratic and undemocratic, because the lower house in a parliamentary system is to reflect the popular will and deliberate disproportionality undermines the political equality of citizens. Federations may over-represent smaller or special states, but normally through the upper house, which serves as the guardian of state interests.[5] (In line with international norms, efforts to empower Sabah and Sarawak would be better directed at an elected and empowered Senate, in which the two states and Labuan could legitimately be granted sufficient seats for a collective veto.) Subsequent amendment in 1973 made Article 46 worse, by specifying parliamentary seats for each state and federal territory, not just Sabah, Sarawak, and West Malaysia as a whole.

Table 11.1 The deliberate inter-regional malapportionment in 1963

Territory	Population as of end 1964	Population share (%)	Parliamentary constituencies, number	Parliamentary constituencies, share (%)	Over/under-representation by population
West Malaysia	7,919,055	71.41	104	65.41	0.92
Singapore	1,844,200	16.63	15	9.43	0.57
Sarawak	819,808	7.39	24	15.09	2.04
Sabah	506,628	4.57	16	10.06	2.20
Total	11,089,691	100.00	159	100.00	1.00

Source for population data: Means 1976: 294, Table 12.

Expansion of the legislature became partner to interstate malapportionment, as the number of federal and state seats increased with constituency

delimitation exercises in 1974, 1977, 1984, 1987, 1994, 1996, 2003, 2005, 2015, and 2016 (Table 11.2). Instead of moving seats from demographically shrinking states to expanding ones, which might invite backlash from affected incumbents, seats were added to all states over time. Increasing the number of seats served both to overrepresent BN's stronghold states and to maintain coalitional unity in BN by creating tailor-made constituencies suitable for its component parties to contest.[6] For instance, in 2003, of 20 seats added in West Malaysia, over-represented Pahang gained three while under-represented Selangor gained only five (Table 11.3).[7]

The distorted allocation of parliamentary seats avoided parliamentary scrutiny and public backlash because the Election Commission (EC) put the cart before the horse, first proposing new boundaries based on a new number of seats and only then getting Parliament to amend Article 46. In the 2003 review, for instance, the EC's first proposal, on 8 August 2002, added 20 extra seats to West Malaysia. Its final proposal was approved on 8 April 2003 but amendment to Article 46 was only passed on 19 June 2003 and came into force on 14 August. From August 2002 until August 2003, Article 46 provided for only 145 parliamentary seats for West Malaysia (including Putrajaya), yet the EC's proposals carved out 165 parliamentary constituencies (Table 11.4).

Even after the BN lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority in 2008, and hence the ability to amend the constitution at will, the EC tried to continue this unconstitutional practice by lobbying the opposition (Shahanaz 2014; Lakshana 2014). Electoral-reform movement Bersih 2.0, however, warned the EC that it would challenge such practices in court (Melati 2014). The EC conceded, as Sabah and Sarawak first amended their state constitutions to increase state-legislature seats before commencing the delimitation process.

Malpractice 2: Intra-state Malapportionment

The 1973 constitutional amendment paved the way for uninhibited intra-state malapportionment. The amendment emasculated section 2(c) of the Thirteenth Schedule of the Federal Constitution by leaving only the clause, 'the number of electors within each constituency in a State ought to be approximately equal' and removing another clause which allowed that 'in some cases a rural constituency may contain as little as one half of the electors of any urban constituency'. That phrasing shields the EC from legal action if the ratio of voters between the largest and smallest constituencies exceeds two. The EC, however, has exploited that change by interpreting any electorate sizes as 'approximately equal' in its proposals. For the 2003–05 delimitation

Table 11.2 Expansion of federal and state legislatures accompanying constituency delimitation exercises, 1958–2018

Delineation exercise	Year concluded	Parliamentary seats						State seats		
		Total seats	Increase	Increase (%)	National total	Total increase	Total increase (%)	Total seats	increase	Increase (%)
Malaya	1958	104	0	0.00	144	0	0.00	282	0	0.00
Sabah	1966	16	0	0.00				32	0	0.00
Sarawak	1968	24	0	0.00				48	0	0.00
West Malaysia	1974	114	10	9.62	154	10	6.94	312	30	10.64
Sabah	1974	16	0	0.00				48	16	33.33
Sarawak	1977	24	0	0.00				48	0	0.00
West Malaysia	1984	133	19	16.67	180	26	16.88	351	39	12.50
Sabah	1984	20	4	20.00				48	0	0.00
Sarawak	1987	27	3	11.11				56	8	14.29
West Malaysia	1994	145	12	9.02	193	13	7.22	394	43	12.25
Sabah	1994	20	0	0.00				48	0	0.00
Sarawak	1996	28	1	3.57				62	6	9.68
West Malaysia	2003	166	21	14.48	222	29	15.03	445	51	12.94
Sabah	2003	25	5	20.00				60	12	20.00
Sarawak	2005	31	3	9.68				71	9	12.68
Sarawak	2015	31	0	0.00	2	0	0.00	82	11	13.41
Sabah	2017	25	0	0.00	22			73	11	13.41
West Malaysia	2018	166	0	0.0				445	0	0.00

Note: Seats in the Sabah State Assembly increased from 60 to 73 following an amendment to the state constitution as of August 2016. The EC submitted the delimitation proposal for Sabah in February 2017 to Prime Minister Najib Razak, who shelved it. Hence, the old constituency maps with 60 state constituencies were used in 2018. The proposal was finally tabled in the Parliament in July 2019 (Wong 2018b).

Table 11.3 Worsened inter-state malapportionment with 2003 parliamentary expansion in West Malaysia

State	Seat increase	Electorate per 2003 delimitation exercise	Before seat increase			After seat increase		
			Seats	Average electorate	% deviation from average	Seats	Average electorate	% deviation from average
Perlis	0	109,750	3	36,583	–36.73	3	36,583	–27.94
Kedah	0	791,943	15	52,796	–8.69	15	52,796	4.00
Kelantan	0	655,602	14	46,829	–19.01	14	46,829	–7.76
Terengganu	0	411,453	8	51,432	–11.05	8	51,432	1.31
Pulau Pinang	2	659,155	11	59,923	3.64	13	50,704	–0.12
Perak	1	1,138,010	23	49,479	–14.42	24	47,417	–6.60
Pahang	3	554,321	11	50,393	–12.84	14	39,594	–22.01
Selangor	5	1,368,693	17	80,511	39.25	22	62,213	22.55
Kuala Lumpur	1	664,233	10	66,423	14.88	11	60,385	18.95
Negeri Sembilan	1	417,712	7	59,673	3.21	8	52,214	2.85
Malacca	1	331,327	5	66,265	14.61	6	55,221	8.77
Johor	6	1,223,532	20	61,177	5.81	26	47,059	–7.30
West Malaysia (excluding Putrajaya & Labuan)	20	8,325,731	144	57,818	100.00%	164	50,767	0.00%

Table 11.4 The 2003–05 legislature expansion: Increase in seats before amendment of the Federal Constitution

	Peninsula and Labuan	Sabah	Sarawak
Constituency redelimitation			
1st notice of display	2002.08.08	2002.08.08	2005.01.07
2nd notice of display	2003.01.16	2002.12.26	2005.04.22
EC report submitted to prime minister	2003.03.21	2003.03.21	2005.06.10
EC report laid before Parliament	2003.04.03	2003.04.03	2005.06.23
Draft order passed	2003.04.08	2003.04.08	2005.07.04
Order gazetted	2003.05.01	2003.05.01	2005.08.01
Seat increase			
Amendment to Article 46 passed	2003.06.19	2003.06.19	2005.09.29
Amendment to Article 46 gazetted	2003.08.14	2003.08.14	2005.12.31

exercises, it produced a five-class scale, expanded from the 'urban' and 'rural' references in section 2(c) (Table 11.5)—yet the EC did not even abide by its own scheme. In Kedah, for example, the EC created a 'metropolitan' parliamentary constituency with 72,387 constituents in the hilly border town of Baling, with 30 per cent more voters than Alor Setar (56,007 voters), the state capital.

Malapportionment continued in 2015–18, although the guidelines disappeared. Despite two rounds of public input, malapportionment hardly declined and sometimes even worsened. Before the review, Malacca's largest parliamentary constituency, Bukit Katil, had 104,234 voters, or 2.17 times the 47,972 voters in the state's smallest, Masjid Tanah. The EC's first proposal made Kota Melaka the largest constituency, with 105,067 voters, and kept Masjid Tanah untouched, yielding a ratio of 2.19. After the first round of objection and inquiry, its second proposal *increased* Kota Melaka to 117,161 voters, while Masjid Tanah remained the same, yielding an even higher ratio of 2.44. After the second round, and despite a legal challenge by voters, the EC continued to expand Kota Melaka, to 120,071 voters, while maintaining the super-small Masjid Tanah, raising the ratio to 2.50. Worsened malapportionment similarly marked the delimitation exercises in Kedah, Selangor, and Johor for parliamentary constituencies and in Terengganu and Johor for state constituencies (Tables 11.6 and 11.7).

Table 11.5 EC malapportionment guidelines by number of voters and geographic area, 2003/05

Class	2003 (Peninsula and Labuan)		2003 (Sabah)		2005 (Sarawak)	
	Parliamentary constituencies	**State constituencies**	**Parliamentary constituencies**	**State constituencies**	**Parliamentary constituencies**	**State constituencies**
Metropolitan/ Town centre	70,000–90,000	30,000–49,000	40,000–50,000	18,000–25,000	60,000-–69,000	25,000–35,000
	8–26 km^2		8–60 km^2		11–26 km^2	
Urban	50,000–69,000	25,000–29,000	30,000–39,000	15,000–18,000	50,000–59,000	20,000–25,000
	27–49 km^2		61–500 km^2		27–49 km^2	
Semi-urban	40,000–49,000	15,000–24,000	25,000–29,000	10,000–14,000	40,000–49,000	15,000–20,000
	50–99 km^2		501–1000 km^2		50–90 km^2	
Semi-rural	30,000–39,000	10,000–14,000	20,000–24,000	8,000–10,000	30,000–35,000	10,000–15,000
	100–250 km^2		1001–1500 km^2		100–250 km^2	
Rural	20,000–29,000	7,000–9,000	<=20,000	<=8,000	20,000–29,000	7,000–10,000
	>250 km^2		>1500 km^2		>250 km^2	

Source: Delimitation review reports by the Election Commission for 2003 and 2005.

Table 11.6 Malapportionment of parliamentary constituencies by state, before and after 2015–18 delimitation exercises

State	Before delimitation	1st proposal	2nd proposal	Final proposal
Perlis	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Kedah	2.53	2.70	2.70	2.70
Kelantan	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42
Terengganu	1.45	1.44	1.45	1.45
Penang	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68
Perak	3.59	3.43	3.43	3.43
Pahang	2.93	2.93	2.93	2.93
Selangor	3.94	4.05	3.94	4.05
Kuala Lumpur	1.75	1.56	1.45	1.45
Negeri Sembilan	2.27	2.18	2.18	2.18
Malacca	2.17	2.19	2.44	2.50
Johor	3.05	3.08	3.17	3.17
West Malaysia, excluding Putrajaya and Labuan	5.25	5.39	5.39	8.53
Sabah	2.40	2.22	2.22	2.22
Sarawak	–	4.34	4.53	4.53

Note: The 2015 constituency delimitation exercise for Sarawak did not include pre-delimitation electorate sizes.

The entry of new voters after the delimitation review only worsened malapportionment for the 2018 election. In the final delimitation proposal, the nation's largest parliamentary constituency was Damansara in Selangor, with 150,439 voters. By May 2018, Damansara's electorate had grown to 164,322, but Bangi, also in Selangor, overtook it as the nation's largest, with 178,790 voters—nine times the 19,592 voters in Igan, Sarawak, the nation's smallest constituency. The government's recent move to lower the voting age to 18 years and implement automatic voter registration will only worsen this problem.

Constituency malapportionment has been both excessive and partisan. The largest 112 parliamentary constituencies contained 68 per cent of voters while the smallest 112 comprise only 33 per cent.[8] Theoretically, a party or coalition could win a simple majority in Parliament with a mere 16.58 per cent of the popular vote if they won just 50 per cent plus one vote in each of the smallest 112 constituencies.[9] Undeniable proof of the EC's partisan delimitation: the

89 constituencies the opposition coalition won in 2013 averaged 88,981 voters, while the 113 constituencies BN won averaged only 52,792 voters, or 41 per cent fewer (Chart 11.1).

Table 11.7 Malapportionment of state constituencies by state, before and after 2015–18 delimitation exercises

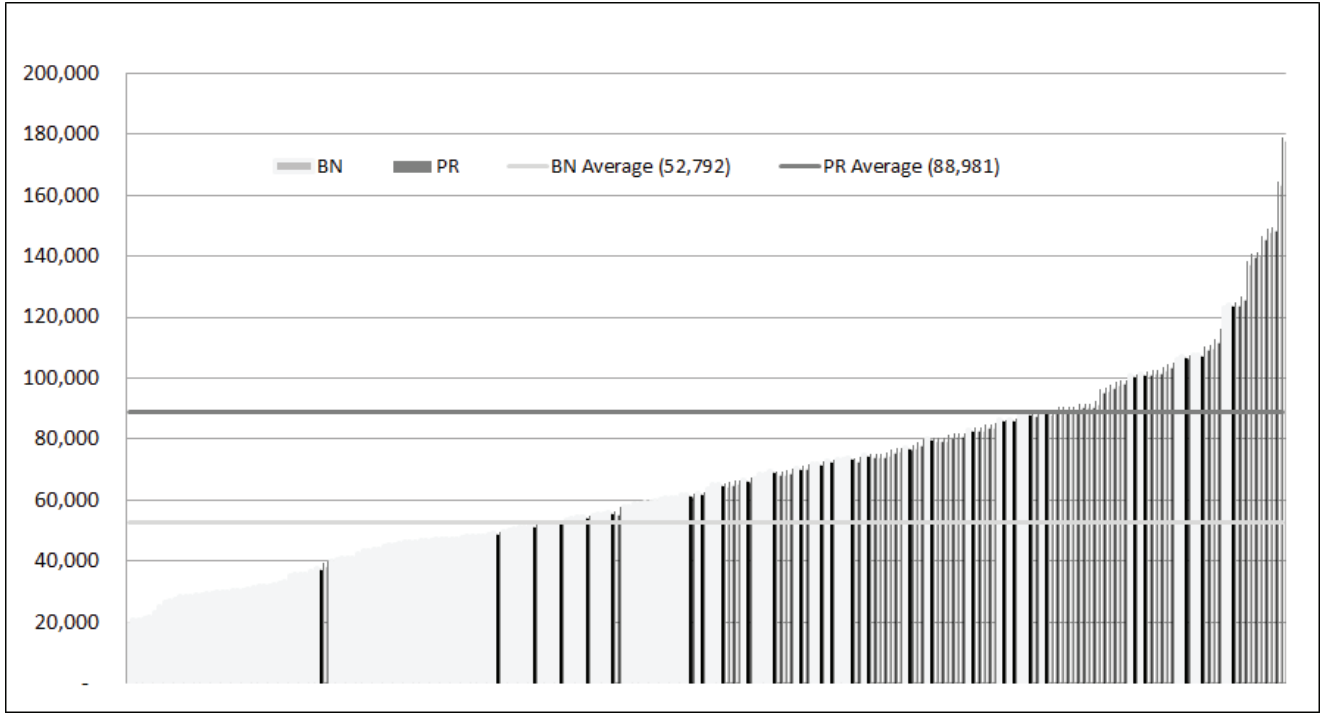
State	Before delimitation	1st proposal	2nd proposal	Final proposal
Perlis	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68
Kedah	3.31	2.40	2.40	2.40
Kelantan	2.66	2.70	2.66	2.66
Terengganu	2.14	2.52	2.23	2.21
Penang	3.27	3.27	3.27	3.27
Perak	4.44	4.24	4.24	4.24
Pahang	4.08	4.08	4.08	4.08
Selangor	4.96	4.39	4.96	4.39
Negeri Sembilan	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Malacca	4.36	3.14	3.81	4.17
Johor	3.76	4.38	4.72	3.82
Sabah	4.55	4.58	4.58	4.58
Sarawak	–	4.95	4.68	4.68

Note: The 2015 constituency delimitation exercise for Sarawak did not include pre-delimitation electorate sizes.

Malpractice 3: Gerrymandering

While malapportionment involves manipulating constituency size, gerrymandering refers to manipulating the composition of the electorate. Mainly through interrelated methods of 'cracking' and 'packing', gerrymandering shifts 'wasted votes', or votes won by losing candidates that do not translate into seats, across constituencies to affect the total number of seats won by favoured and disfavoured parties. Cracking happens to marginal constituencies, by moving sufficient supporters of disfavoured parties to other constituencies to deny those parties victory; their remaining supporters' votes become 'wasted'. Packing is when supporters of disfavoured parties are shifted into parties' strongholds from other constituencies. Since the disfavoured parties secure many more votes than they need to win those seats, the result is not wastage, but 'inefficiency'.

Chart 11.1 Electorate sizes in the 2008 election for all 222 parliamentary constituencies by winner in the 2013 election



Unlike malapportionment, gerrymandering cannot be mathematically identified, as there is no universal rule on how constituency boundaries should be drawn. Prevention of gerrymandering then rests on how effectively criteria and constraints tie the hands of gerrymanderers. Some systems place restrictions on the shape of constituencies, mandating that they be contiguous and compact. Others underline the importance of common interests; administrative, sociocultural, and economic linkages; or natural boundaries—but these systems cannot perfectly rule out gerrymandering if proposed boundaries satisfy imposed criteria.

Section 2(d) of the Thirteenth Schedule of Malaysia's Constitution calls for 'regard' for 'the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies and to the maintenance of local ties', without further defining 'inconveniences' or 'local ties'. The EC officially acknowledges administrative, infrastructural, and natural boundaries as legitimate constraints but has had no qualms about ignoring them. Despite the abrogation of local elections since 1965, local councils' policies colour local life and shape 'communities of interests'. Logically, single-council constituencies are representationally and administratively superior to constituencies that span across local authorities, but the EC has arbitrarily carved out many parliamentary and state constituencies containing fragments of municipalities and districts. The worst case is the parliamentary constituency of Sungai Buloh, Selangor, which spans across four local authorities: Selayang, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, and Kuala Selangor.

Gerrymandering renders boundaries often arbitrary even for constituencies carved out from a single local council. Perak's Manjung municipal council area was divided into two parliamentary constituencies: Lumut and Beruas. In 2013, the opposition won Beruas with a margin of 5,057 votes and Lumut with 8,168 votes. Within Lumut, the opposition carried a state constituency, Sitiawan, with a whopping 12,220-vote margin. The township of Sitiawan is about 30 minutes east of Lumut town and 45 minutes south of Beruas town. In term of socioeconomic ties, Sitiawan is closer to coastal Lumut than to inland Beruas. The latest delimitation exercise, however, moved Sitiawan (renamed Astaka, with slightly revised boundaries) from Lumut to Beruas (Map 11.1). Unmistakably, the EC hoped to crack Lumut and to pack Beruas, making it a PH super-stronghold. Thanks to the anti-BN electoral surge, PH carried Beruas with a margin of 27,954 votes (greater than the 17,000-lead gerrymandering granted), and managed to narrowly retain Lumut with a margin of 400 (overturning the 4,000-vote deficit gerrymandering caused).

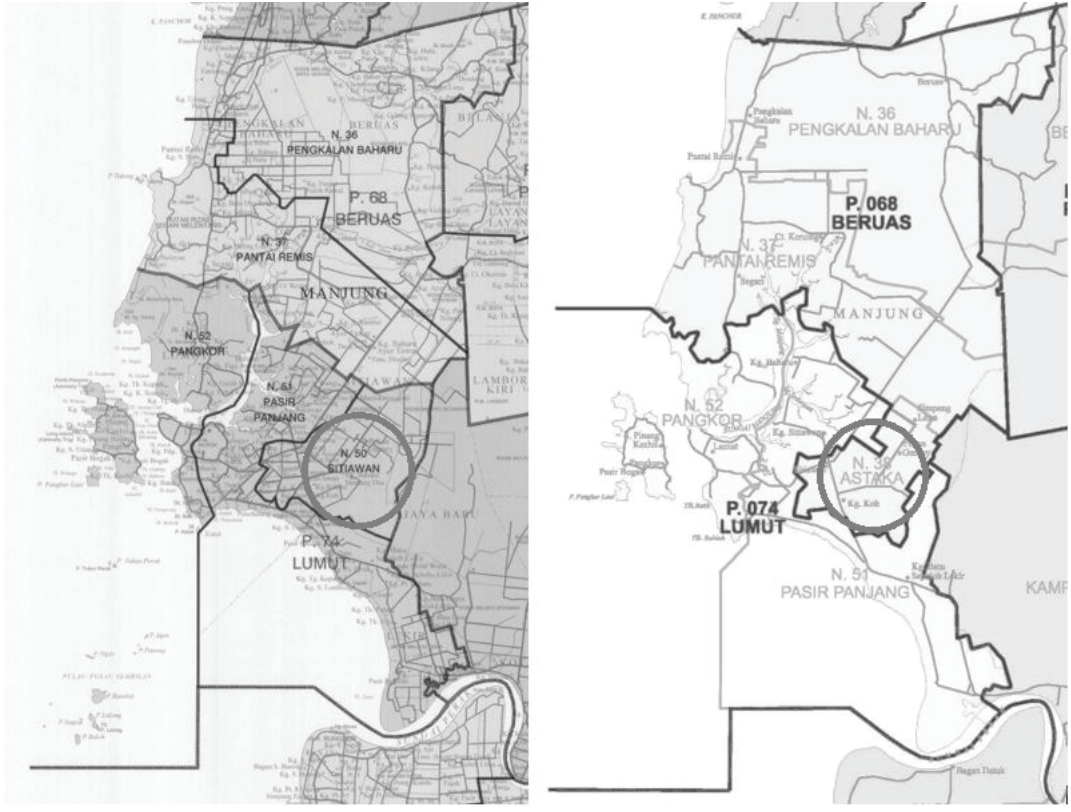
Gerrymandering can take place covertly before delimitation exercises, too, even to constituencies which delimitation supposedly leaves untouched. As the building blocks for parliamentary and state constituencies, polling districts in Malaysia are not administrative units like boroughs or villages with fixed boundaries, but purely electoral subdivisions created to organise polling. The EC can freely change their boundaries. Map 11.2 shows the expansion of the parliamentary constituency of Sungai Siput in Perak between 2013 and 2018, despite its being unchanged in the EC's delimitation review. While all its polling districts remained on the same electoral roll as in 2013, Pos Piah, a hilly polling district of Orang Asli (indigenous) settlements, had been moved northward to cover an entirely different area, previously in Lenggong. Such covert boundary changes escaped both public scrutiny and parliamentary approval, giving the EC an even freer hand in gerrymandering.

Consequence of Malpractices: Seat-vote Disproportionality

Along with uneven distribution of partisan support, malapportionment and gerrymandering of constituencies result in seat-vote disproportionality across parties, such that a vote for a favoured party may be equivalent to a few votes for a disfavoured party. Tables 11.8–11.10 show, respectively, the vote share, seat share, and ratio between these for each major party in the 15 elections in Malaya/Malaysia since 1955. In Table 11.10, a value of 1 indicates absolute equality; the further above 1, the more underrepresented a party is; the further below 1, the greater its overrepresention. Table 11.11 then compares the value of a vote for the ruling coalition versus for the top three opposition parties, measured by vote share. As malapportionment and gerrymandering only became rampant after 1974, we may attribute disproportionality largely to uneven distribution of partisan support for early elections through 1969 and to malpractices since 1974.

Already obvious before 1974, the distortion of the electoral mandate worsened post-1969 because of malapportionment and gerrymandering. Until 1969, one of the biggest victims was the Socialist Front, which needed 12.25 votes to offset a vote for the Alliance in 1964. Post-1969, PAS fared the worst when it had to win 40 votes to match one for BN in 1986, followed by PKR in 2004, when it took 26 votes to match one for BN. The absolutely worst-off, though, were Parti Negara, the largest opposition party in 1955, as well as Pekemas and PSRM, third largest in 1978–86, none of which got any seats. This means no quantity of votes they won could match one vote won by the

Map 11.1 Boundaries of Beruas, Lumut, and Sitiwan/Astaka in 2013 (left) and 2018 (right)



Map 11.2 Boundary changes to parliamentary constituency Sungai Siput and polling district Pos Piah in Perak

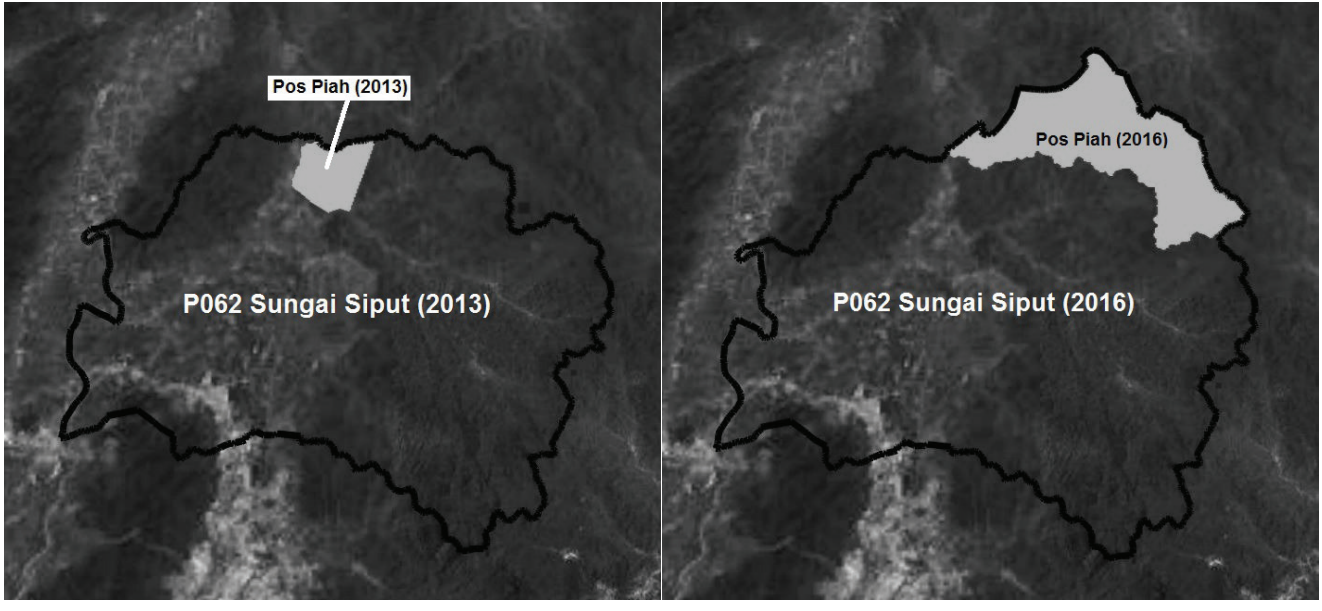


Table 11.8 Percentage of valid votes in parliamentary contests for major parties, 1955–2018 elections

	Alliance/ BN	PAS	PN	Labour/ SF/ PSRM/ PRM	PPP	PAP/ DAP	Gerakan	SNAP	Pekemas	S46	PBS	PKN/ PKR	Amanah	Bersatu	Warisan	PH	STAR/ Solidariti
1955	81.68	4.06	7.88	0.48	0.11												
1959	51.77	21.27	2.11	12.91	6.29												
1964	58.53	14.64	0.36	16.08	3.40	2.05											
1969	46.29	20.91		1.13	3.37	11.96	7.47	2.69									
1974	60.73			3.97		18.30		5.54	5.13								
1978	57.23	15.48		0.63		19.13			0.68								
1982	60.54	14.46		0.93		19.58			0.01								
1986	57.28	15.50		1.28		21.09											
1990	53.38	6.72		1.01		17.61				15.06	2.29						
1995	65.16	7.30		0.64		12.06				10.19	3.32						
1999	56.53	14.99		1.04		12.53					2.16	11.67					
2004	63.85	15.69				9.94		0.41				8.43					
2008	51.50	14.58		0.28		14.17		0.11				18.56					
2013	47.38	14.78				15.71						20.39					0.41
2018	33.72	16.89				17.37						17.57	5.04	5.75	2.32	48.05	0.18

Notes: 1. For 2018, PH includes PKR, DAP, Amanah, Bersatu, and Warisan.
2. Full names of political parties:

Alliance: Parti Perikatan
Amanah: Parti Amanah Negara
BN: Barisan Nasional
Bersatu: Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia
DAP: Democratic Action Party
Gerakan: Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia
Labour: Parti Buruh
PAP: People's Action Party
PAS: Parti Islam SeMalaysia
PBS: Parti Bersatu Sabah
Pekemas: Parti Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia
PH: Pakatan Harapan
PKN/PKR: Parti Keadilan Nasional/Rakyat
PN: Parti Negara
PPP: Perak/People's Progressive Party
PRM: Parti Rakyat Malaya/Malaysia
PSRM: Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia
S46: Parti Melayu Semangat '46
SF: Socialist Front
SNAP: Sarawak National Party
STAR: State Reform Party (2013)/Parti Solidariti Tanah Airku (2018)
Warisan: Parti Warisan Sabah

Sources: Wong, Chin, and Othman (2010: Table 7.1) with 2013 and 2018 data updated, extracted from Election Reports published by the Election Commission of Malaysia, various years. Data-input and calculation errors, where identified, have been corrected. (All values are percentages.)

Table 11.9 Percentage of parliamentary seats won by major parties, 1955–2018 elections

	Alliance/ BN	PAS	PN	Labour/ SF/ PSRM/ PRM	PPP	PAP/ DAP	Gerakan	SNAP	Pekemas	S46	PBS	PKN/ PKR	Amanah	Bersatu	Warisan	PH	STAR/ Solidariti
1955	98.08	1.92	0.00	0.00	0.00												
1959	71.15	12.50	0.96	7.69	3.85												
1964	85.58	8.65	0.00	1.92	1.92	0.96											
1969	62.50	8.33		0.00	2.78	9.03	5.56	6.25									
1974	87.66			0.00		5.84		5.84	0.65								
1978	84.42	3.25		0.00		10.39			0.00								
1982	85.71	3.25		0.00		5.84			0.00								
1986	83.62	0.56		0.00		13.56											
1990	70.56	3.89		0.00		11.11				4.44	7.78						
1995	84.38	3.65		0.00		4.69				3.13	4.17						
1999	76.68	13.99		0.00		5.18					1.55	2.59					
2004	90.87	2.74				5.48		0.00				0.46					
2008	63.93	10.50		0.00		12.79		0.00				14.16					
2013	59.91	9.46				17.12						13.51					0.00
2018	35.59	8.11				18.92						21.17	4.95	5.86	3.60	54.50	0.45

Notes: See Table 11.8.

Sources: Wong, Chin, and Othman (2010: Table 7.2) with 2013 and 2018 data updated, extracted from Election Reports published by the Election Commission of Malaysia, various years. Data-input and calculation errors, where identified, have been corrected. (All values are percentages.)

Table 11.10 Ratio of seat share/vote share for major parties, 1955–2018 elections

	Alliance/ BN	PAS	PN	Labour/ SF/ PSRM/ PRM	PPP	PAP/ DAP	Gerakan	SNAP	Pekemas	S46	PBS	PKN/ PKR	Amanah	Bersatu	Warisan	PH	STAR/ Solidariti
1955	1.20	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.00												
1959	1.37	0.59	0.45	0.60	0.61												
1964	1.46	0.59	0.00	0.12	0.56	0.47											
1969	1.35	0.40		0.00	0.82	0.76	0.74	2.32									
1974	1.44			0.00		0.32		1.05	0.13								
1978	1.48	0.21		0.00		0.54			0.00								
1982	1.42	0.22		0.00		0.30			0.00								
1986	1.46	0.04		0.00		0.64											
1990	1.32	0.58		0.00		0.63				0.29	3.40						
1995	1.29	0.50		0.00		0.39				0.31	1.26						
1999	1.36	0.93		0.00		0.41					0.72	0.22					
2004	1.42	0.17				0.55		0.00				0.05					
2008	1.24	0.72		0.00		0.90		0.00				0.76					
2013	1.26	0.64				1.09						0.66					
2018	1.06	0.48				1.09						1.20	0.98	1.02	1.55	1.13	2.50

Notes: See Table 11.8.

Sources: Wong, Chin, and Othman (2010: Table 7.3) with 2013 and 2018 data updated, extracted from Election Reports published by the Election Commission of Malaysia. Derived from Tables 11.8 and 11.9.

Alliance/BN, mathematically yielding the value of infinity. The imbalance in vote values dropped to its lowest point in 2008, when the opposition did exceptionally well. If we hold that democracy should be based on political equality of citizens, then FPTP elections in Malaysia were not democratic from 1974–2004.

Table 11.11 Imbalance in vote values between the ruling coalition and largest opposition parties, 1955–2018 elections

	Largest opposition party	Votes to = 1 for ruling coalition	2nd largest opposition party	Votes to = 1 for ruling coalition	3rd largest opposition party	Votes to = 1 for ruling coalition
1955	PN	Infinity	PAS	2.54	NAP	N/A
1959	PAS	2.34	SF	2.31	PPP	2.25
1964	SF	12.25	PAS	2.47	UDP	6.65
1969	PAS	3.39	DAP	1.79	Gerakan	1.81
1974	DAP	4.52	SNAP	1.37	Pekemas	11.39
1978	DAP	2.72	PAS	7.03	Pekemas	Infinity
1982	DAP	4.75	PAS	6.30	PSRM	Infinity
1986	DAP	2.27	PAS	40.41	PSRM	Infinity
1990	DAP	2.10	S46	4.48	PAS	2.28
1995	DAP	3.33	S46	4.22	PAS	2.59
1999	PAS	1.45	DAP	3.28	PKN	6.11
2004	PAS	8.15	DAP	2.58	PKR	26.08
2008	PKR	1.63	PAS	1.72	DAP	1.38
2013	PKR	1.91	DAP	1.16	PAS	1.98
2018	BN	1.07	PAS	2.36	STAR	0.45

Notes: See Table 11.8.
Sources: Wong, Chin, and Othman (2010: Table 8) with 2013 and 2018 data updated, extracted from Election Reports published by the Election Commission of Malaysia, various years. Derived from Table 11.10.

A Long Overdue Debate: Does FPTP Suit Malaysia?

Disproportionality is not necessarily a democratic defect if we recognise that democracy may take different models, such as Westminster/majoritarian democracy and consensus democracy, as Lijphart proposes.[10] In his analysis

of party-reduction, Cox illustrates that disproportional electoral outcomes—whether through an executive presidency or parliamentary government with FPTP—necessitate strategic voting and drive political forces to amalgamate into two groups. In contrast, a parliamentary polity with a less demanding electoral system that yields proportional electoral outcomes reduces the need for strategic voting, thus sustaining many parties, representing diverse interests. In this light, disproportionality that marginalises small, often radical parties is an evil necessary to produce a two-party system.

Modelled on the British two-party system, a two-coalition system has been Malaysian democratisers' main objective since 1990.[11] Beyond allowing party alternation, the British party system is well-known for two advantages: first, centripetal competition, as the two main parties pursue the median voter; and second, 'responsible government', as voters can easily hold single-party governments accountable. By unleashing hope that power could peacefully change hands between the BN and a second multiethnic coalition, much like it does between the Conservatives and Labour in the UK, that narrative provided legitimacy and motivated the repressed opposition.

However, in adopting the FPTP electoral system in 1955, Malaysian democrats hoped to emulate the British party system without much debate on its feasibility or suitability for the local context. Can FPTP produce a hoped-for two-coalition system on Malaysian soil? If it does, will the two main parties compete centripetally? Are ethnoreligious communities rewarded or penalised for multiparty competition? Will the coalitions be stable internally? Lastly, two-coalition system or not, can a fair number of women be elected and issues be represented effectively? These questions of potential mismatch are long overdue for debate but had been little considered before the BN's fall. It is time to seek answers.

Consequence of Mismatch 1: No Two-coalition System

An alternative multiethnic coalition has succeeded in ending the BN's rule in its fourth attempt, but it still has yet to establish a sustainable two-coalition system. With its Chinese and Indian votes depleted nationwide, BN was practically reduced to UMNO and its Borneo-based allies. However, within a week of the BN's defeat, all its Sabah allies ditched UMNO, followed barely a month after by the entire Sarawak BN, which rebranded itself as the independent Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) with 19 parliamentarians. Worse, UMNO has since lost 17 of its parliamentarians to defection and exodus, with its Sabah chapter virtually gone by the end of 2018. As of

this writing, BN is left only with 36 parliamentarians from UMNO on the peninsula, one each from UMNO Sabah, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and an Orang Asli direct member who won a by-election.

BN's fast meltdown after losing power is comparable to how three previous opposition coalitions—Gagasan Rakyat/Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, established in 1990; Barisan Alternatif in 1999; and PR, formed after the opposition's 2008 surge—disintegrated after standing together in just one election. Instead of a united multiethnic rival in BN, the PH government now faces a fragmented opposition of three communal/regional blocs: BN with 40 seats (37 of which are from UMNO), GPS with 19, and PAS with 18 (Table 11.12) (Wong forthcoming).

The persistent failure of Malaysia's opposition coalitions to cohere after electoral setbacks recommends revisiting the concept of party-reduction. Cox points out that while FPTP elections force voters to support only two parties in their constituencies, the two parties need not be the same across constituencies, hence possibly resulting in more than two parties overall with local niches. What drives a national two-party system is the concentration of national executive power, in an executive presidency or single-party government in a parliamentary system, where a single large political prize forces political players into two large blocs, with the hope to share power (Cox 1997: 181–202). Such FPTP ruthlessness, however, has its limits in a divided society like Malaysia, as medium-sized parties may survive on communal or regional bases and party-reduction can, at best, produce two permanent coalitions instead of two parties.

The sustainability of a two-coalition format then hinges on parties' cost-benefit calculations regarding coalition membership. The cost of compromising one's ideological positions and goals may be outweighed by two benefits: vote-pooling in elections and power-sharing in government, but they play out in six different scenarios (Table 11.13). Parties contesting in communally-mixed constituencies but without a majority vote-base always need coalitions, as is evident for Malaysia's Indian-based parties, which have not a single Indian-majority constituency to contest. Parties contesting in homogenous constituencies, however, may find an electoral pact that dilutes their ideological appeals not beneficial or even counter-productive, as was the case for PAS and DAP, which shied away from any overt electoral pact until 1990. The benefits of power-sharing are obvious for parties in government and a strong coalition, but non-existent for opposition parties in a weak position. This explains both

Table 11.12 Changing configuration of ruling and opposition coalitions in Malaysia, 1990–2018

General election (GE) or period	Ruling coalition	Main opposition			
	Multiethnic	Malay-based		Multiethnic	Non-Malay based
1990 (GE8)	Barisan Nasional	Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah		Gagasan Rakyat	
		In effective election pact, led by S46			
1995 (GE9)	Barisan Nasional	Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah			DAP
1999 (GE10)	Barisan Nasional			Barisan Alternatif	
2004 (GE11)	Barisan Nasional	Barisan Alternatif			DAP
2008 (GE12)	Barisan Nasional	PAS		PKR	DAP
		In effective election pact, led by PKR			
2013 (GE13)	Barisan Nasional			Pakatan Rakyat	
2018 (GE14)	Barisan Nasional	PAS		Pakatan Harapan	
Post-2018 (GE14)	Pakatan Harapan	PAS	Barisan Nasional		Gabungan Parti Sarawak

why opposition parties had formed united fronts to capitalise on UMNO's schisms and why the Borneo parties left BN.

The favourable conditions needed for FPTP to shape a two-party system are clear. If all constituencies can be made communally mixed, then the necessity of vote-pooling will sustain a two-coalition system even when the opposition is at low tide. This result is, however, impossible given the prevalence of Malay-majority constituencies, especially in Kelantan and Terengganu, where even gerrymandering cannot create mixed constituencies. FPTP can still work its magic if the losing coalition remains upbeat despite defeat, but that was not the case for Malaysia's three previous opposition coalitions and now BN.

Table 11.13 Calculation of the benefits to parties of joining a coalition

Considerations and contexts		Power-sharing consideration		
		In government	In strong opposition	In weak opposition
Vote-pooling consideration	In communally mixed constituencies	Yes for both	Yes for both	No for power-sharing; yes for vote-pooling
	In communally homogenous constituencies	Yes for power-sharing; no for vote-sharing	Yes for power-sharing; no for vote-sharing	No for both

Consequence of Mismatch 2: No Centripetal Competition

While a national two-coalition system may be unattainable, regional two-coalition/two-party systems are emerging in post-GE14 Malaysia. PH and BN combined secured about 90 per cent of votes and all but three of 57 parliamentary seats in East Malaysia. Across West Malaysia, PH, BN, and PAS split 99 per cent of votes and all but one of 165 parliamentary seats. Seen more closely, PAS and BN firmly dominated 95 per cent-Malay Kelantan and Terengganu, while west-coast states from Penang to Johor, in which non-Malays comprise half the electorate, were divided between PH and BN. In three buffer-zone states—Perlis, Kedah, and Pahang, where Malays constitute three-quarters of the electorate—PAS won nearly 30 per cent of votes, yielding three-party competition (Table 11.14).

The emergence of regional bipartism fits perfectly with theory. FPTP successfully forces voters to converge in all regions except the borderline states of Perlis, Kedah, and Pahang, which are neither predominantly Malay nor heavily multiethnic. Strategic voting was certainly incomplete, producing

minority winners in as high as 87.5 per cent of seats in the three borderline states, 50 per cent in Kelantan and Terengganu, and 46 per cent in Sabah (not shown in the table). This result could be due to voters' failure to predict the top two candidates to whom to channel their support. If voters can see more clearly in future elections, PAS may be wiped out in the southwest and PH, in the northeast.

Table 11.14 Emerging regional two-party systems, by votes and seats, in 2018 parliamentary contests

Region	First bloc	Second bloc	Third bloc
Kelantan and Terengganu (95% Malay)	PAS V: 48.70% S: 68.18% (15)	BN V: 39.76% S: 31.82% (7)	PH V: 11.17% S: 0.00% (0)
Perlis, Kedah, and Pahang (76% Malay)	BN V: 35.68% S: 40.63% (13)	PH V: 35.59% S: 50.00% (16)	PAS V: 28.64% S: 9.38% (3)
Remaining states of West Malaysia (50% Malay)	PH V: 58.88% S: 70.27% (78)	BN V: 28.98% S: 28.83% (32)	PAS V: 11.44% S: 0.00% (0)
Sabah (including Labuan)	PH V: 49.30% S: 53.85% (14)	BN V: 40.00% S: 42.31% (11)	–
Sarawak	BN V: 52.48% S: 61.29% (19)	PH V: 43.37% S: 32.26% (10)	–

The most important post-election development, however, turns out to be UMNO and PAS's formalising their alliance to take on PH, which they allege has fallen under the control of DAP and the Chinese. Bitter rivals for nearly four decades from 1977 to 2015, the two Malay-Muslim opposition parties now zealously champion Malay-Muslim unity, in the name of defending Islam, the Malays' special position, the Malay Rulers, and the Malay language (Wong forthcoming). This strategy would normally seem suicidal: an ultra-Malay-Muslim position will alienate both non-Malays, who constitute one-third of voters in 87 of 165 constituencies in West Malaysia, and East Malaysians in another 57 seats. Even if UMNO and PAS won all the remaining 78 Malay-majority constituencies in West Malaysia, they still could not form the government. This reasoning, though, disregards UMNO's first priority now:

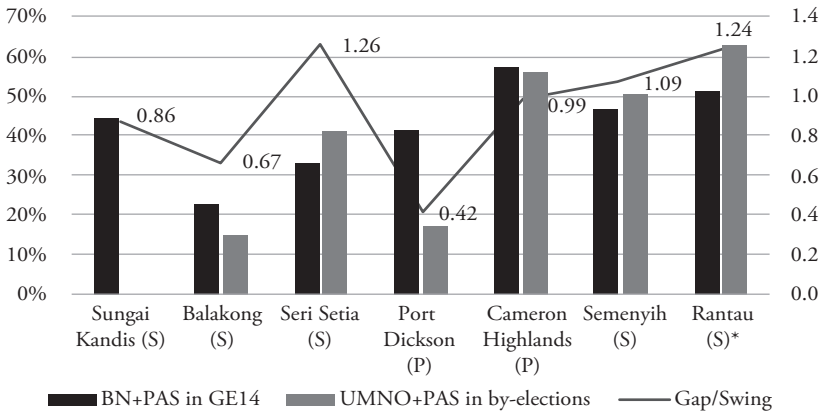
to hold on to its home turf in the Malay heartland, not to win power from the middle ground. British political scientist David Robertson (1976: 42) offers a powerful insight into centripetal competition: when competition is idle, the party may choose to please the median party member rather than the median voter because 'vote maximisation, over and above what is necessary to win, will not take place'. Precisely because UMNO and its allies have already lost the Chinese, Indian, and Borneo votes, a middle-ground positioning will not help in winning back mixed constituencies but will instead reduce its appeal vis-à-vis PH in the Malay heartland. In this sense, the exodus of UMNO parliamentarians to Bersatu only makes UMNO more short-term-minded and dependent on PAS for its survival.

FPTP encourages unity by punishing losers but it has no normative preference between inter-communal inclusion or exclusion. In 2018, Prime Minister Najib Razak hoped to use PAS as spoiler to divide the opposition's Malay votes and enable BN's victory as plurality winner in marginal constituencies. This spoiler strategy did work in BN's favour in 38 West Malaysian constituencies where the combined votes for PH and PAS outnumbered those for BN but, unintendedly, worked in PH's favour in 30 others (Table 11.15). Conceding the miscalculation, Najib is convinced a formal pact between UMNO and PAS will immediately secure 30 additional seats (*Today* 2018). In such a scenario, UMNO-PAS would then flip PH's now-solid lead (from 98:67 to 68:97 seats), putting UMNO-PAS in a strong position to co-opt East Malaysian parties or even PH defectors to form the next government. The two parties have indeed employed this strategy for all by-elections since GE14, winning the last three in West Malaysia (Chart 11.2) (Wong forthcoming).

Table 11.15 Parliamentary constituencies in West Malaysia with plurality winners

Largest party	Second-largest party	Third-largest party	Total	
PH	BN	PAS	24	30
	PAS	BN	6	
BN	PH	PAS	22	38
	PAS	PH	16	
PAS	PH	BN	1	9
	BN	PH	8	
Total			77	77

Chart 11.2 Vote-pooling by BN/UMNO and PAS in GE14 and seven by-elections



Note: Gap/Swing = Votes for UMNO's and PAS's joint candidate in by-election ÷ (votes for BN + votes for PAS in GE14)
(P): Parliamentary constituency; (S): State constituency
* As the N27 Rantau state constituency was a walkover in the 2018 general election, the parties' vote shares were taken from the vote figures for the P131 Rembau parliamentary constituency, within the area of Rantau.

Consequence of Mismatch 3: Penalty for Competitive Politics

FPTP's ruthlessness in encouraging 'political unity' puts a heavy price on losers, which has the unintended consequences of discouraging intra-communal competition and exacerbating communal anxiety in divided societies. Electoral systems can essentially be distinguished by how far they force political convergence by encouraging strategic voting instead of sincere voting. The need for strategic voting is, in turn, determined by the magnitude of 'wasted votes': those cast for losers and therefore not translated into representation. A proportional representation (PR) system guarantees representation for a vast majority of voters, hence voters can afford to vote sincerely and even small parties with niche electoral bases may flourish. In contrast, FPTP sets no ceiling for wasted votes; even the vast majority of voters may be denied representation if they cannot unite. Voters are forced to vote strategically until there are only two viable parties. However, even then, an evenly-fought battle will guarantee nearly half the electorate is unrepresented. In a deeply divided society, that means half of a community's strength is a spent force. For

a community feeling embattled, the obvious solution is then to trade political pluralism for communal strength, and competition for representation.

Table 11.16 Wasted votes in West Malaysia, 1999–2018

Party	1999 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
UMNO	26.32	5.54	36.39	34.48	57.73
MCA	16.18	16.39	56.60	78.51	97.39
Other BN parties	15.94	7.67	82.10	76.91	91.30
PKN/PKR	84.38	96.03	45.23	49.92	6.79
DAP	67.23	55.02	13.26	6.14	1.45
Bersatu					58.32
Amanah					29.98
PAS	43.36	88.40	38.68	40.43	69.59
West Malaysia					
Total	40.62	35.11	40.23	40.68	42.87

Note: Table counts P115 Batu, where PKR backed an independent candidate in 2018 as substitute for its disqualified candidate, as won by PKR.

The dynamics of communal anxiety in Malaysia can therefore be understood from the changing pattern of wasted votes in West Malaysia (Table 11.16). Before 2008, it was common to hear Chinese lamenting their 'political division' while envying Malays' 'political unity'. In 1999, notwithstanding strong pro-Anwar sentiment, only 26.3 per cent of votes for UMNO were wasted, preserving UMNO's still-solid grasp on political power. The main beneficiary of Malay division then was PAS. Even PAS, though, registered 43.4 per cent of wasted votes (winning 14 per cent of federal seats), but that was far better than the 84.4 per cent wasted for the Malay-dominant but multiethnic Parti Keadilan Nasional (PKN, now PKR) and 67.2 per cent for the Chinese-dominated DAP. That changed in 2008, when non-Malays, especially Chinese, started to concentrate their votes on DAP and PKR, whose proportion of wasted votes dropped to merely 1.5 and 6.8 per cent, respectively, by 2018. In contrast, the three-cornered fights for most-Malay heartland constituencies among UMNO, PAS, and Bersatu then resulted in high wasted votes: respectively, 57.7, 69.6, and 58.3 per cent. It makes sense that the three parties would be talking about Malay-Muslim unity. Ideological positioning aside, they are propelled by the punishment FPTP enacts for failure to unite target constituencies, as DAP and PKR have done.

Consequence of Mismatch 4: Built-in Instability of Permanent Coalitions

Although necessitated by vote-pooling under FPTP, permanent coalitions make Malaysian parties structurally uncompetitive, highly centralised, and prone to factional warfare and/or electoral malpractice. In Britain, because parties can contest in any constituency, candidate-selection can be left to party branches. With local support, maverick politicians and those from minority factions can continue to stand in elections. For instance, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was never denied candidacy despite having defied party whips 428 times during the 13 years his party was in government (Cowley and Stuart 2016). Beyond enabling 'backbench revolts' for check-and-balance, bottom-up candidate selection keeps the parties competitive and stable in long run.

In contrast, Malaysia's coalitions allocate constituencies to component parties on a near-permanent basis, often based on ethnic composition. This practice breeds parties' complacency and is not a guarantee that the coalition is always represented by the locally most-competitive component. Further, because each component party can contest only in a limited number of constituencies, the need for coordination to optimize placements gives top leadership enormous power to dictate candidates. Often, senior leaders parachute protégés or relatives to safe constituencies while denying dissidents candidacy, fuelling factional warfare or internal sabotage during elections. BN's solutions to overcome built-in uncompetitiveness and quarrels over constituencies were patronage for voters and politicians, malapportionment, gerrymandering, and legislature-expansion. Structurally speaking, BN's continuous decline since 2008 after its peak performance in 2004 showed the limits of these remedies (Wong 2018c, 2018a). In any case, these remedies must not remain in the playbook if Malaysia wants real democracy after the transition.

Consequence of Mismatch 5: Gender Imbalance and Weak Issue-representation

FPTP has contributed to Malaysia's failure to achieve a minimum 30 per cent women's representation in government. Women's participation rates in and after GE14—10.9 per cent of candidates, 14.4 per cent of members of parliament, and 18 per cent of federal frontbenchers—are the highest ever, but still appallingly low by international standards (Table 11.17). Amongst FPTP countries, India reserves one-third of village-council chief positions for women, rotating amongst villages in a five-year cycle (Datla 2013), while the

British Labour Party has voluntarily adopted 'all-women shortlists' to reserve a portion of winnable constituencies for female candidates (Kelly and White 2016). Replicating the Indian and British measures might be more difficult than moving away from FPTP in Malaysia, where the calls for a 30 per cent candidacy quota have fallen on deaf ears since 1999. The single-member nature of FPTP makes enforcement of gender quotas personal to male incumbents and aspirants; parties have little incentive to enforce quotas, which also risk voters' backlash.

Table 11.17 Women's under-representation in/after the 2018 election

Coalition/Party	Women as parliamentary candidates		Women as MPs		% women as ministers and deputy ministers	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
PH	**28**	**12.7**	**21**	**15.0**	**9**	**18.0**
PKR	14	18.4	11	22.4	3	27.3
DAP	8	17.4	8	19.5	4	50.0
Bersatu	3	5.8	1	8.3	1	100.0
Amanah	1	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Warisan	2	11.8	1	12.5	1	100.0
BN	**26**	**11.7**	**11**	**13.5**		
UMNO	9	7.4	6	11.1		
West Malaysian components	9	15.3	0	0.0		
Sabah components	2	18.2	0	0.0		
Sarawak components	6	19.4	4	21.1		
PAS	**10**	**6.3**	**1**	**5.6**		
Other parties and Independents	11	12.8	0	0.0		
TOTAL	**75**	**10.9**	**33**	**14.4**	**9**	**18.0**

This limitation makes it politically impossible for PH to fulfil its election promise to appoint 30 per cent women to its fifty-person administration. Doing so would require appointing 15 out of 21 female parliamentarians (71.4 per cent) but only 35 from among 100 male lawmakers (35 per cent) to the frontbench. To make it worse, with only one woman parliamentarian each in Bersatu and Warisan and none in Amanah, PKR and DAP would have to over-compensate, greatly distorting their internal balance of power.

DAP's administrative posts could go to as many as 75 per cent of female parliamentarians (six out of eight) and only 18.4 per cent of male ones (seven out of 38) (Yeung 2018).

Gender quotas must therefore start with candidacy. Quotas stand a better chance with multi-member constituencies, where competent women may displace weaker male politicians without threatening stronger ones—as under Indonesia and East Timor's party-list PR and Singapore's party-block-vote group representation constituency (GRC) system.[12]

By its nature, FPTP prioritizes geographically-organised interests, which in Malaysia are emphasized by the salience of communalism because of predominantly monoethnic settlements in most parts of the country. Noncommunal identities and issues such as class, gender, and the environment, the support base for which may be geographically scattered, cannot find adequate representation in federal and state legislatures. Not only does Malaysia not yet have a green party, but the 'red' party, Parti Sosialis Malaysia, was wiped out in multi-cornered contests in the 2018 elections, including its sole incumbent, who fell prey to anti-BN strategic voting in Sungai Siput. Historically, the system likewise has punished left-wing parties like Pekemas and PSRM (see Table 11.11).

Despite the highly communal nature of Malaysia's party system, weak issue-representation also stems from the exclusion of tiny minority communities, which are too small or too scattered to hold sway in FPTP constituencies. Thanks to coalition politics, ethnic Indians, who made up 4.4 per cent of registered voters in 2018 but constituted the majority in no federal or state constituency, were represented by 16 parliamentarians (7.2 per cent) in the federal lower house and four ministers (14 per cent)—including the first Sikh—in the Cabinet (Little India Desk 2018; PTI 2018). Similarly, politicians from the tiny Portuguese community in Malacca and the wider Eurasian community gain representation through parties like DAP. The same, however, cannot be said of West Malaysia's indigeneous peoples (Orang Asli), the Siamese, or small Borneo communities (Orang Asal) like the Penan. It was only in 2019 that the first Orang Asli member entered Parliament, having defeated an ethnic-Indian DAP candidate in a by-election.

The Choice Between Repair and Reengineering

Post-transition Malaysia should consider carefully whether the electoral system needs only piecemeal repairs or reengineering. Even if electoral-system change remains a long-term goal, being open to both options is warranted for two reasons.

The first consideration is the constitutional and political hurdles that need to be overcome, either way. That PH lacks a two-thirds parliamentary majority means that any constitutional amendment necessitates cross-party consensus. The only way to fix the excessive malapportionment and gerrymandering in the last delimitation reviews without any constitutional amendment is to let the eight-year interval before the next review lapse, then remedy constituency allocation and boundaries in 2023 (Sarawak), 2025 (Sabah), and 2026 (West Malaysia). A much-discussed option of increasing federal seats to circumvent the eight-year interval not only necessitates amending Article 46, but may open the door to states that are already over-represented to demand greater over-representation. Instead of fixing the system, Parliament may end up trading reduced intra-state malapportionment and gerrymandering for aggravated inter-state malapportionment. Alternatively, adding seats in state legislatures where PH is constitutionally or politically empowered to do so may trigger partial delimitation, to up to 90 out of 222 parliamentary constituencies, but not, for instance, in the badly malapportioned and gerrymandered state of Perak. To reset parameters for future delimitation exercises, Parliament may opt to pass an act (in place of a constitutional amendment) to cap deviation from equal apportionment and define 'area weightage' and 'local ties'.

Properly fixing the current mess would require substantial amendments to the Thirteenth Schedule and Articles 46 and 113–117—essentially the same remedy as to introduce a new electoral system. Furthermore, malapportionment was instituted to entrench Malays' (and UMNO's) political dominance; its proposed removal may trigger Malay-Muslim nationalists' existential fear. A new electoral system may be more viable politically if it can address the communal anxiety the current winner-takes-all system engenders. Even politicians' resistance to equal inter-state apportionment of federal seats—because their own constituency may disappear with the shrinking weight of their state's electorate—may be reduced if a mixed-member system allows them to continue in politics by crossing over from constituency to party-list election.

The second consideration is that the perils of FPTP may strike by the next election, not the next generation, even if the system is cleansed of malpractice. First, if PH is set to face an UMNO-PAS alliance in the next election, ethno-religious issues will dominate the election campaign in West Malaysia, with probable countermoves in East Malaysia. However reluctant, the Malay-based parties in PH may be forced to match UMNO-PAS in their communal appeals, which may, in turn, drive minorities to prioritise their own communal interests. Keeping FPTP will not avoid a hung parliament, but may make the political landscape more fragmented than it is now, with no broad-based

multiethnic coalition left standing. A weak and unstable federal government may then be susceptible to blackmail by its partners, resulting in an ill-planned and politically expedient spree of decentralisation, possibly even threatening the viability of Malaysia.

Second, while FPTP was instrumental in sustaining decades of stability with some degree of inclusion under BN's electoral authoritarianism, the same structure may be detrimental for PH's functioning in a multiparty democracy. Under FPTP, coalition politics in Malaysia both disallows friendly competition between coalition members and concentrates power among top leaders within individual parties. Both tendencies can induce infighting and implosion, ironically more so if PH controls a strong majority, whether through election or defection, leaving no external enemy to necessitate cohesion and compromise. PH is disadvantaged not just by the absence of a hegemonic core like UMNO, but also by the delicate relations among Prime Minister Mahathir, his heir-apparent Anwar Ibrahim, and Anwar's deputy in PKR, Azmin Ali. With currently 50 parliamentarians, PKR has only seven ministers and seven deputy ministers in Mahathir's 50-member frontbench. In contrast, Bersatu secured six ministerial and one deputy minister posts, despite initially winning only 13 seats (now doubled thanks to UMNO defections). Inter-party allocation of both frontbench positions under the new prime minister and of constituencies to contest in the next election will test inter-ally relations in PH, which might be harder to settle through behind-closed-doors horse-trading than through open competition on a level playing field, via a mixed-member system. If another battle-royal erupts, disillusioned Malaysians may look to fringe parties or untested outsider politicians.

Granted, few Malaysians have thought about these questions. For exactly this reason, it is pertinent to start a national conversation now.

Notes

[1] Using the FPTP system, Malaya held its first national election in 1955, two years before independence. The 52 federal constituencies in 1959 were each halved in 1959, to create 104 constituencies. 'Malaya' refers both to the federation prior to its merger with Sabah, Sarawak, and (briefly) Singapore in 1963, and to the 'States of Malaya', which includes the peninsular states and all Federal Territories (including Labuan, offshore from Sabah).

[2] The nesting of state within federal constituencies allows the use of the same electoral rolls for both.

[3] The original Article 116(3)-(5) stipulated:

> (3) Constituencies shall be allocated to the several States in such manner that the electoral quota of each state is as nearly equal to the electoral quota of the

> Federation as it can be without causing undue disparity between the population quota of the state and the population quota of the Federation.
> (4) Each state shall be divided into constituencies in such manner that each constituency contains a number of electors as nearly equal to the electoral quota of the State as may be after making due allowance for the distribution of the different communities and for differences in density of population and the means of communication, but the allowance so made shall not increase or reduce the number of electors in any constituency to a number differing from the electoral quota by more than fifteen per cent.
> (5) In this Article,
> (a) 'electoral quota' means the number obtained by dividing the number of electors in the Federation or a State by the total number of constituencies or, as the case may be, the number of constituencies in that state;
> (b) 'population quota' means the number obtained by dividing the population of the Federation or of a State by the total number of constituencies or, as the case may be, the number of constituencies in that state.

The 1962 Constitutional Amendment replaced these clauses with Sub-section 2(c) of the newly-inserted Thirteenth Schedule:

> … the number of electors within each constituency ought to be approximately equal except that, having regard to the greater difficulty of reaching electors in the country districts and the other disadvantages facing rural constituencies, a measure of weightage for area ought to be given to such constituencies, to the extent that in some cases a rural constituency may contain as little as one half of the electors of any urban constituency.

The last clause implies a ratio of 2 for the electorate sizes of the largest and the smallest constituencies, which is mathematically equivalent to a maximum deviation of 33.33 per cent from the average.

[4] As the IGC Report provided no population or citizenry figures, the 1964 population figures are used here to estimate inter-regional malapportionment.

[5] Claims, however, that Sabah and Sarawak, with one-sixth of the national electorate, were to inherit veto power after Singapore's departure in 1965 by their seats' being raised from one-quarter to one-third of the total, are unfounded.

[6] Before the 2008 election, national news agency Bernama (2008) reported that Perak's then-BN chief minister promised to 'allocate' a new parliamentary constituency to the People's Progressive Party, the coalition's smallest component party in West Malaysia.

[7] The same constitutional amendment gave one federal seat to the newly carved-out Federal Territory of Putrajaya and five more to Sabah. The total number of parliamentary seats rose from 193 to 219.

[8] A simple majority of the 222-member parliament requires 112 seats, not just 111. That overlap causes the sum of smallest and largest to exceed 100 per cent.

[9] FPTP allows a party to win a majority of seats despite winning a minority of votes, an effect called a 'manufactured majority'. With equal apportionment, the theoretical minimum vote share to win a parliamentary majority is just above 25 per cent, or 50

per cent of votes in 50 per cent of constituencies. Malaysia's 16.58 per cent shows the severity of malapportionment.

[10] Lijphart 1984 uses 'majoritarian democracy'; Lijphart 1999 uses 'Westminster democracy'.

[11] The Civil Rights Committee (CRC) set up by Chinese organisations like the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall and Dong Jiao Zong first mooted this idea in 1986 (Thock 1994).

[12] Singapore's ruling People's Action Party created GRCs to ensure minority representation, but includes a woman in every slate.

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12

The Road Ahead: How to Transform Malaysia's Regime

Meredith L. Weiss

The wee hours of 10 May 2018 brought Malaysia's incumbent Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) a rude shock and opposition Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope) a jolt of exuberance. For the first time ever, the BN had fallen, both at the federal level and, once the dust settled, in most states. As the foregoing chapters make clear, this rare display of 'democratisation by elections' was not entirely unexpected, yet a Pakatan victory still relied on a precarious mix of contingent factors. A combination of shifting interests, alignments, and grievances; new strategies for mobilising and targeting voters; and new party alternatives, revamped alliances, and reshuffled teams all played their part. Indubitably, Malaysia's government has changed; new leadership is at the helm. But given what brought us to this point—the latest critical juncture on the path Johan Saravanamuttu traces—what will it take to move, in the jargon of political science, from democratic transition to consolidation?

Consolidation of a new regime will require far-reaching, if incremental, changes in four key domains: laws, institutions and institutional frameworks, political economy, and, most difficult of all, political culture. Even a partial shift could carry substantial impact. Simply ousting corruption-tarnished Najib from executive office satisfies many protest-voters' key objective, without necessarily defusing the communal fears and other uncertainties that Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali, for instance, suggest could yet sink Pakatan's ship. But Malaysia has the potential to go much farther, to rework key premises of political loyalty and legitimacy, the standards to which voters hold politicians accountable, and the expectations

ordinary voters have of their state and its leaders. And of course, should the rules change, even just for elections—as Wong Chin Huat recommends Malaysians consider—we might need to rethink fundamental premises about the sorts of coalitional considerations and voting behaviours Helen Ting details, the strategic posturing Haris Zuan or David Kloos explore, the elite alignments Faisal Hazis traces, and the ideological framings Hew Wai Weng compares.

To assess Malaysia's possible trajectories requires a grasp of long-percolating root causes for the changes now underway—the underlying patterns the preceding chapters reveal—and not just late-breaking catalysts. (Of course, the latter do also matter to election outcomes, as the chapters by Ibrahim Suffian and Lee Tai De or Ross Tapsell, for instance, make clear.) Understanding what has happened over the span of recent elections and what remains constant illuminates the potential and options for legal, institutional, economic, and cultural transformation.

The Roots of Transition

As Johan Saravanamuttu's path-analysis illuminates, much of this transition has been very long in coming. Although Mahathir Mohamad served as an important spur to jolt the margins, to give him and his party *too* much credit slights history. Indeed, doing so could be disheartening, not just given Mahathir's own spotted history as a democratic reformer. To assume it was the fact of his return alone that tipped the scales presumes an unyieldingly feudal political culture, in which rural Malay voters (the focus of so much pundit attention) follow their 'protector' out of habit rather than in light of grievances they share with non-Malay or urban, wealthier voters. Mahathir did help to sway votes, but by his messaging, his association with past developmentalist glory, and what he signalled for the coalition's objectives, not just his presence per se. And he represents one of several much-discussed one-off causes or contingent last straws. These matter but are not, by their nature, recurrent—particularly the 1MDB mega-scandal and the wide breadth of the gap between rank-and-file United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) members' support for Najib and the extent to which a sclerotic party structure propped him in place, even as UMNO's capacity to weather another serious rift diminished (see Faisal's chapter in particular).

Deeper-rooted, longer-developing features within the polity reveal more about what could make this election a sign of a tectonic shift rather than a 'tsunami', as commonly labelled. Recurrent tsunamis are not really desirable, given the destruction they wreak, but it is only to be expected that the political

landscape will shift and settle in new patterns over time. We can identify five such interrelated elements; taken together (but in no necessary sequence), they offer insight into why and how Malaysia has reached its current point and how it might continue.

The first factor is increased availability of political information, feeding rising political awareness. Mainstream media are not only subject to constraining laws, but nearly all are state- or BN-owned or controlled. They have long been effusively one-sided in their coverage and editorial slant (see, among others, Zaharom 2002, 2008; Abbott 2011; Mustafa 2013). However, Internet-based and social media are key features in Malaysia's contemporary media landscape—making possible new data-mining and advertising strategies, among other implications. Moreover, that activists purposefully channel, develop, and deploy these platforms, engaging in what Cherian George (2006) labels 'contentious journalism', helps to increase their impact.

The numbers alone are startling, and reveal the impossibility of the state's controlling the flow of information and ideas in present-day Malaysia. As of May 2018, about 81 per cent of Malaysians were on Facebook; 58 per cent of Malaysians say they read news there. Another 6 per cent were on YouTube, on which 26 per cent consume news, and 5 per cent were on Twitter. WhatsApp is also ubiquitous: over half of Malaysians now say they read or share political news on the platform. Overall, 86 per cent access news online, most commonly free sites, via smartphones, dwarfing the share who prefer television (54 per cent), newspapers (45 per cent), or radio (15 per cent). Nor is online access so skewed as in the past by an ethnic digital divide; the share of Malays with smartphones, including in rural areas, approximates the overall figures (StatCounter [2018]; Tapsell 2018). WhatsApp is especially inscrutable, since encrypted, favouring less easily parseable videos and images (T. Tan 2018).

Moreover, various efforts within civil society sought to leverage the Internet to crowdsource election-specific information. News site *Malaysiakini* had supported undi.info, a compilation of election statistics and maps, since 2004; other initiatives have appeared since then. For 2018, these included Sinar Project, with a public database on politicians; a reprise of 2013's 'Watching the Watchdog' initiative on the scope and quality of media coverage; Tindak Malaysia, which developed detailed, online electoral maps and trained polling, counting, and polling-booth (*barung*) agents, termed PACABA; and Bersih Pemantau, an offshoot of electoral-reform group Bersih (Movement for Clean and Fair Elections), which both organized campaign- and election-observation efforts and asked members of the public to submit observed offences, to investigate and add to an online map.[1] Particularly given the surge in surveys and

big-data approaches to campaign-targeting and predictions, as Ross Tapsell's chapter explores, the average Malaysian could readily access information from across a range of political perspectives—however much social media encourage siloization. Crucially, voters could more easily find evidence that they were not alone in having doubts about the BN.

The second of our five elements of long-term change is the continuing incremental broadening and deepening of civil society, generating not just ideas and social capital, but also ranks of new leaders. Civil society and political parties have developed concomitantly over the decades in Malaysia, on tracks less parallel than intersecting and overlapping in personnel, ideas, and strategies. It was that extra-party backdrop—the space civil society afforded for political thought and action, the alliances non-party groups built around issues, and the people politicized through social activism—that facilitated the formation of electoral coalitions from the 1990s on (Weiss 2006). That pattern has persisted, fostering ideas, social capital, and organisational infrastructure. Impossible to generate quickly, these resources proved essential in 2018's electoral upset, particularly in helping parties to frame the BN's redistricting, midweek election date, and other decisions as unfair and anti-democratic, then getting voters to turn out on 9 May. The youth-training initiatives Haris Zuan examines are thus part of a larger pattern, albeit a particularly important niche.

Furthermore, civil society at least as much as parties can be seen to lie behind the youth effects Haris identifies as having an impact in this election. Much of the influx of new contenders was that of young candidates with activist inclinations or backgrounds. In part, given ongoing sociopolitical mobilization, talking and doing politics have become less *verboten,* supplemented by amendment of the Universities and University Colleges Act in 2012 to allow undergraduates to take part in formal politics. Moreover, as Pakatan's Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR, People's Justice Party) developed a clearer policy focus, some of their younger, newer legislators in particular found ways to rope NGOs into governance. Such collaborations already in train include, for example, efforts to implement participatory budgeting initiatives in Penang.

In other words, the long-term development of civil society has fostered autonomous structures that may both stimulate political participation and feed into opposition-party strengthening. Maintaining independence and the ability to serve as a check may be difficult, particularly if parties resist what usurps their prerogatives. We can see this dilemma in the fact that Pakatan parties rank restoring local-government elections much lower a priority than do NGOs (Rodan 2014). But taking seriously the role of players like Bersih in

galvanizing enthusiasm for change through elections, and also the role of the ranks of other activist initiatives over the years, helps temper assessments of how much one-time, contingent factors added.

Third, Malaysia has experienced extraordinary movement of people with intensifying industrialization and globalization since the 1980s–90s. Over 75 per cent urban, Malaysia is the most urbanised country in the region, after Singapore. By 2012, only 11 per cent of the workforce was in agriculture, down from 25 per cent in 1996, with nearly all the rest in services (53.6 per cent) or manufacturing (28.9 per cent) (UNESCO et al. 2018: 2). Those migrating to cities are mostly young (60.9 per cent aged 15–34), comparatively well-educated, and predominantly Malay—Malays are nearly half the urban population (UNESCO et al. 2018: 4). Malaysia has long experienced a brain-drain, too, especially of well-educated, non-Malay professionals, who see better opportunities and rights overseas. About 1 million Malaysians were living overseas as of 2011 (of a total population of around 30 million), and around 20 per cent of Malaysian professionals eventually move abroad, the largest share to Singapore. The government's Talent Corporation, launched in 2011, has had little success in luring them home (Sukumaran 2017; Nadaraj 2016).

Economic implications aside, this movement disrupts political loyalties, in a political culture that still prioritizes the 'personal touch' in binding leader to flock (Weiss 2014: 8–9). These relationships tend to be more about familiarity than money, however much candidates splash out as elections approach or pledge to do so post-polls. In one state seat in Perak, for instance, although UMNO could point to its having distributed fertiliser and food and promised a new health clinic and recreation centre, Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) had visited over a thousand local homes since the last election, to build personal ties (Loghun 2018). Both appeals follow essentially the same logic, of a clientelistic, or personalised, direct, sustained relationship between politician and voter. It is natural for voters to be inclined to support politicians they know, and to judge them on their 'home style' (Fenno 1977) or character as well as, or even instead of, on their party or policies. That need to cultivate just the right image may be especially challenging for women, as David Kloos proposes: professional, devout Malay women tread an especially fine line as they seek to convey competence, ideological rigour, and a reassuring personal touch, all at once.

But migration within or out of Malaysia leaves an increasing number of voters without recourse to those cues, particularly since so many *balik kampung*, or return to their family home, to vote. One estimate was for 1.7–3.5 million voters, or 11–23 per cent of registered voters, to be on the move for polling day, though the Wednesday election was expected to depress turnout (Khor

2018). (In the end, as Suffian and Lee note, turnout reached a robust 82.1 per cent, only slightly lower than 2013's record 84.9 per cent—suggesting that most voters *did* travel, even midweek, and that pundits were correct in predicting that urban and Singapore-based voters who *balik kampung* do tend to be less loyal to the BN than are those who experience the party's local efforts.) One former BN MP complained that outstation voters, especially those living overseas, are 'as good as semi-phantom voters': they do not know him or what he has done for the community, even as the party continues to focus on maintaining its local network.[2] Politicians still work the ground in much the same way as ever, but this secular demographic change means personal ties and local patronage are likely becoming less effective.

The fourth root cause of change is economics, and specifically, the vagaries of both transnational dilemmas and Malaysia's own development. Malaysia has experienced largely rapid, sustained economic growth since the 1980s. However, distribution of that growth has been uneven. Although Malaysia has made strong strides in terms of the UNDP's Human Development Index, approaching highly developed status, income and wealth inequality are among the highest in the region (Lim 2005), and inflation and unemployment both tipped upwards in advance of the election (Lee 2019). For 2016, for instance, whereas GDP grew by 4.2 per cent, wages and salaries grew by less than 1 per cent, while unemployment increased by 13 per cent; moreover, savings rates were a perilously low 1.4 per cent in 2013 (Bhattacharjee and Ho 2017). The Gini coefficient is lower now than in 1970, prior to the New Economic Policy (from .51 then, it has declined as low as .401, in 2014), but holdings under the state-run Employees Provident Fund reveal stark disparities between a tiny group of the wealthy and the mass of those with inadequate savings. Also, Malaysia's low rate of absolute poverty changes with a slight adjustment to the official poverty line—an implausible RM930/month per household averaging 4.3 members (Bhattacharjee and Ho 2017). Moreover, Malaysia invests less than 5 per cent of GDP in social expenditures, far below the OECD average of over 20 per cent (Bhattacharjee and Ho 2017).

Perhaps even more important in electoral terms is that *perception* of unequal opportunities and of the pathologies of capitalism is endemic. Official statistics suggest improvements in household-level income inequality since 2000, yet public and even policy discourse suggest a worsening trend, in part reflecting statistical measures' overemphasis on income (Lee and Muhammed 2016). Government officials had noted the seeming intractability of Malaysia's Gini index, stuck above .4, higher than its neighbours', since the late 1980s (*The Star* 2013).

A 2014 Pew study found sharply declining optimism among Malaysians for their children's prospects; nearly half saw inequality as a major problem (albeit lower than the 60 per cent median for emerging or developing economies) and nearly two-thirds (worse than the median value) saw success in life as determined by forces they could not control (Pew 2014: 3, 7, 9). About equivalent shares ranked 'knowing the right people' as equal to 'working hard' in their odds of getting ahead (Pew 2014: 11). 'Progress', it had come to seem, however beneficial, could not keep pace with rising costs of living for many or most.

The unpopular goods and services tax (GST), enacted in 2015, only heightened many Malaysians' sense of disadvantage: large numbers of citizens who had never paid income tax before were now expected to subsidize a state in which they did not feel themselves to be thriving. Pakatan's framing the GST as introduced by the government to compensate for losses to corruption magnified these effects—even as Mahathir had personified headier days of broadly rising tides, at an earlier stage of export-oriented development, two decades earlier.

Simmering discontent translates into at least two vectors toward electoral change. First, it brings into sharper relief questions of development priorities or directions. Malaysia's economy has been changing over the long-term, with rising developmentalism and concentration of capital and economic power not just in the hands of the wealthy few, but also in state- and party-linked enterprises. It also has shifted inequality from being primarily inter-ethnic to being even starker within communities: a 2014 World Bank study found that within-group inequality accounted for 96.4 per cent of the total (Gil Sander 2014: 2). Such restructuring can be expected to raise interest in considering other paths. Second, discontent may make even those who ostensibly benefit from status-quo policies, such as Malaysia's racially structured preferential policies, increasingly receptive to change, even at the risk of losing what less-than-adequate advantages they have.

Still, it bears stressing that the ways economic grievance plays out electorally are not straightforward, considering the roles of affirmative action policies and patronage in Malaysia's system. Elsewhere, we tend to speak of 'economic voting': that those whose personal economic position has declined since the last election will seek to vote incumbents out. The racialized and particularistic nature of Malaysian economic policies and praxis skews those calculations. If one's economic position has deteriorated, but the alternative might remove a helpful interlocutor or communal privileges that help to blunt the pain, voters may be less likely to risk seeking change (see Weiss 2019b). The net result of this questioning of economic progress and direction, though, especially with

costs of living consistently Malaysians' top priority for a new government,[3] was increasing openness to alternatives.

Fifth and finally, Malaysia's federal system has long provided a training ground for opposition parties, even as the lack of local elections decreases the odds for smaller or coalition-less parties. At the state level, voters can test out opposition parties; those parties, in turn, can develop economic prowess, leadership, ideas, machinery, and networks. They have also been able to experiment with coalition formulas (see Ting's chapter in particular), albeit laying bare tensions in the process; collaboration among DAP, PKR, and PAS—the Pakatan Rakyat that retained control of Penang, Selangor, and Kelantan in 2013—was hardly smooth-sailing. The DAP's record of governing at the state level also helped to refute BN-fed presumptions that the party would be anti-Malay or anti-Islam in office. Lessons from Pakatan's experience in Penang and Selangor peppered campaign rhetoric nationwide in 2018, including economic growth statistics, litanies of welfare policies they had developed, and reminders of their other policy initiatives. Pakatan legislators could promote, too, their approach toward governance—for instance, legislators in Penang who experimented with new consultative forums or innovative tools for surveying and mapping constituency needs.[4] Malaysia's federal system thus allowed opposition parties and coalitions to sink roots and mature, in the process cultivating new expectations and awareness among citizens.

These trends and conditions laid the ground for a transition. That a sufficient number of voters, distributed so as to circumvent gerrymandering, would change their votes was still not a given; as noted above, complementary short-term catalysts helped to tip the scales. But these qualities shed light on what Pakatan would need to foster to keep the transition going, why we should not deem this result a fluke or flash-in-the-pan, as well as why Malaysia's experience, however inspiring to reformers elsewhere, is not so readily replicable: this change has been a long time coming.

From Transition to Consolidation

If this election result is to amount to more than a change in leadership—if it is to be a step toward further liberal democractic reform—then aspects of the system that promote more open, accountable governance will need to be amplified. Countervailing tendencies will need to be obviated. In rough sequence of what is easiest and/or quickest to change to further liberalization, we turn to four arenas for reform: addressing current laws, institutional forms, political economy, and political culture.

Laws

The easiest changes to make are those that can be effected with straightforward legislative action, particularly in repealing or amending existing laws. It is in this domain that we see the clearest distinction between BN and Pakatan. Even here, though, the path forward is not entirely clear—almost immediately, for instance, Mahathir vacillated on whether he would repeal an unpopular 'fake news' law steamrolled through Parliament shortly before the elections (Naidu 2018). (The law was, however, repealed at last in October 2019.) Shortly thereafter, new Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu backtracked on eliminating a National Security Council law critiqued for granting the prime minister extraordinary powers (Palansamy 2018). The laws which activists and politicians have proposed or promised to change are plenty, from restoring the civil liberties enumerated in Article 10 of the Constitution; to instituting a national freedom of information act to supplement state-level prototypes in Penang and Selangor; to rules on party financing and electioneering. Two weeks after Pakatan's win, 20 civil society organisations submitted a joint 'road map for reforms', starting with 'meaningful consultations with civil society', and extending to the repeal of laws limiting freedom of expression, lifting travel bans and blocks on websites, ratification of human rights treaties, and strengthening institutional mechanisms for safeguarding rights, such as more substantially empowering the National Human Rights Commission (Article 19 et al. 2018). Especially key to improving accountability and expanding civil liberties is amending or repealing the Communications and Multimedia Act and Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Official Secrets Act and Sedition Act (the latter of which in particular has featured in a host of recent lawsuits against opposition politicians, activists, and journalists), the Peaceful Assembly Act (the problematic replacement for the Internal Security Act; Whiting 2011), and provisions of the penal code that criminalize broad categories of speech and assembly (Lakhdhir 2015).

Changing these laws is complex in practice; the constitutional and political hurdles Wong identifies in his chapter as stymieing electoral reform apply across policy domains. Laws related to religious teaching, proselytization, or praxis, for instance, may have 'alienated non-Muslims … constricted the development of Islamic thought and emboldened religious bureaucracies' (Shah 2018), but to challenge them might make Pakatan appear insufficiently solicitous of the place of Islam in the polity. Particularly with PAS a still-strong rival, and an UMNO-PAS alliance centred on Malay-Muslim rights seemingly cemented (as Wong also elaborates), Pakatan is likely to tread carefully around matters of race and religion, however sincere their promises to respect and reinforce

minority rights (e.g., *Economist* 2018; Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan, this volume). Regardless, even moderate changes to legislation will help to clear the air, suggesting a less punitive approach to governance and a receptivity to critique—and in the short term, they could serve to exculpate a number of prominent figures from Pakatan parties and civil society facing cases or convictions for their prior statements or actions.

Institutions

Legal reforms overlap with institutional ones. Recognising the complexity and breadth of institutional reform possible, the unelected Council of Eminent Persons, which the incoming Pakatan government near-immediately named as advisors, recommended formation of an Institutional Reforms Committee (IRC). Promptly constituted, the latter committee brought together two retired judges, the National Human Rights Society president (also the former head of Bersih), an emeritus professor of constitutional law, and the president of the National Patriots Association of Veterans (Shazwan 2018). In mere months, the IRC drafted a comprehensive and voluminous policy agenda—unfortunately not released to the public, but its recommendations disseminated amongst relevant government ministries and agencies, and embodied in initiatives such as an encompassing National Anti-corruption Plan launched in January 2019 (Weiss 2019a: 56–7). The most germane institutional changes for democratic consolidation are likely those related to (re-)placing checks and balances and to recalibrating the federal system, although the full range extends from renovating the bureaucracy to depoliticizing university administration.

Over years of single-party-dominant, electoral-authoritarian governance, checks and balances had weakened significantly. Power had become increasingly centralized under the executive. Especially important: constitutional amendments under Mahathir in the late 1980s had whittled away independent judicial authority (Shah 2018). Changes such as a Judicial Appointments Commission sketched in 2009 legislation helped little: the Commission not only over-represents senior judges, but it cannot hold the prime minister, who has final say, to its recommendations (Shad 2018b). Other guidelines are also problematic, such as the provision by which the chief justice may advise the king to appoint an 'additional judge'—with insecure tenure and without a mandatory retirement age—entailing 'conversion of the judicial leadership into one of political patronage' (Shad 2018b).

Parliament had likewise evolved in such a way as to limit both its power of executive oversight and scope of debate on and participation in legislation.

A 2015 initiative developed a list of proposals to reform both houses of parliament, from restructuring the Senate to revamping rules for debate (GCPP 2015). Other voices, such as the G25, a group of former senior civil servants, have echoed and amplified those calls, for example by advocating for select committees to improve parliamentary procedure and accountability (G25 Malaysia 2016). Some such proposals started almost immediately to circulate, from making the attorney general accountable to Parliament, to centring law reform in a parliamentary commission to preclude executive interference, to enacting transparency in and parliamentary scrutiny of public-service appointments, including for statutory boards and government-linked corporations (Shad 2018b). Pakatan's election manifesto mentioned specific provisions for institutional reform, including nonpartisan speakers for each chamber, separation of the roles of attorney general and public prosecutor, suitable standing for the leader of the opposition, adequately long sittings, structured opportunities for public input into policies, and greater Parliamentary oversight over key appointments (Pakatan Harapan 2018a: 53–7: Janji 15 & 16). And a narrower subset of institutional reforms has begun or is likely imminent, such as the establishment of bipartisan select committees and revamping ministerial question times.

At a minimum, meaningful democracy will require that more legislation, oversight, and budgeting rest with Parliament as an institution. As Shad Saleem Faruqi lays out, and in line with earlier proposals, those roles require earlier circulation of draft legislation and examination, including expert feedback, in bipartisan committees; provisions to ensure that the executive answers difficult questions from the legislature and that committees both participate in nominations for key posts and evaluate ministries' performance; rules to ensure fair time for opposition and private members' bills and nonpartisan parliamentary administration; greater parliamentary insight into and control over monetary policies; fair allocations for opposition MPs and an independent ombudsman to look into citizens' complaints; and better training for and autonomy in hiring staff, broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, and ideally, an impartial temporary head of government once parliament is dissolved before an election (Shad 2018a). Yet some of these provisions seem already unlikely. For instance, although Mahathir broke with decades-long precedent to name a non-Malay-Muslim attorney general, that official still doubles as public prosecutor, potentially complicating prosecution of members of the government the attorney general advises be charged (IDEAS 2018). Nor do all MPs receive equal constituency allocations, to allow them equal opportunity to serve their constituents (and to avoid punishing those

citizens who voted against Pakatan). The incoming government announced that Pakatan MPs would receive RM500,000 annually and opposition MPs, RM100,000 (Augustin 2018)—an improvement over the BN's denying opposition MPs funds altogether, but still against the spirit of bringing parliament up to a liberal-democratic standard.

A key step in restoring checks and balances will be developing a fairer, representative electoral process. Electoral reform has been a core issue for civil society since 2007, under Bersih[5]—but now the government has the opportunity and, perhaps, impetus not only to rectify irregularities in election administration, but even to restructure voting rules, as Wong Chin Huat details in his chapter (see also K. Tan 2018). Among potential reforms in this domain are barring party-hopping immediately post-polling, clarifying the process for constituting governments, and ensuring the Election Commission is independent and reliably efficient in certifying results. These measures would help to avoid uncertainty at critical moments. For instance, in recent years—and immediately following the recent elections—Malaysia's monarchs (the hereditary sultans in each of nine states and the king elevated from among them), as well as Sabah's counterpart governor, seemed to claim undue say in selecting executives, contravening constitutional expectations, or have been waylaid by legislators shifting sides and changing the balance of power between parties (Harding 2018; Neo 2018). An Electoral Reform Committee was formed soon after the election, with a two-year mandate. Administrative adjustments are already underway, for instance to nomination-day procedures; revisions to party- and campaign-finance rules, voter-registration and absentee-voting procedures, and more are almost surely imminent. With bipartisan support, too, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 in July 2019.

The second core area for institutional reform is Malaysia's federal structure. Three key prongs to this effort are redistributing authority between federal and state tiers, revisiting and renewing the agreements by which Sabah and Sarawak joined the federation in 1963, and reinstituting local-government elections.

Under the long stretch of BN rule, the central government usurped greater authority over state governments than would otherwise be common—although opposition gains over the two previous elections have already tested the limits of federal-government say over state-government matters. Now, BN and PAS each control two states, Sabah and Sarawak have their own Pakatan-aligned coalition governments, and Pakatan controls the rest. This division suggests that state governments may increasingly define their own profiles and

agendas—most notably on Islam, since constitutionally, Islam is within states' rather than federal jurisdiction (Neo 2018). But also, the combination of a mix of governments at the state level and the fact of a new coalition in power at the federal level allows, and may oblige, a clearer exposition of what authority states have in a more democratic order. Moreover, Pakatan's vow to increase the share of oil revenues returned to Sabah, Sarawak, and other oil-producing states entails some amount of redistribution of resources between tiers and may increase pressure for more, particularly since Pakatan situates this promise in its articulation of means to redistribute national wealth more fairly (Pakatan Harapan 2018a: 19–21: Janji 3).

Resources aside, Pakatan is likely to be pressed to revisit the terms on which Sabah and Sarawak joined Malaysia. (An initial, premature attempt at a constitutional amendment toward that end failed, however, in April 2019; Palansamy 2019.) While not necessary to democratic consolidation per se, the push for autonomy has become increasingly vehement in both states over recent electoral cycles, indicating the extent to which current political institutions fall short of being inclusive and responsive to East Malaysian concerns. Natural-resource revenues are central to those demands, and Sarawak had already asserted mining rights prior to the election that federal-government-controlled national oil and gas company Petronas is now contesting (Neo 2018). But states'-rights claims extend also to issues of religion, language, and other domains. Both to stave off potential secessionist pressures—not imminent, but also not absent (e.g., Malay Mail 2016)—and to ensure non-coercive governance, Pakatan will need to reach an institutional balance between peninsular and East Malaysia.

Lastly, Pakatan is under pressure to restore local-government elections, which Malaysia has not held since the 1960s. Although earlier a Pakatan Rakyat promise, and a core demand within civil society especially in previously Pakatan-held states, 2018's Pakatan manifesto sidesteps the issue, nor have the parties been so consistently focused on this reform (Rodan 2014). Reintroducing this third tier of elected government presents a key step toward democratic consolidation, particularly given pathologies in the system of appointed local councils (e.g., as detailed in WDC 2008). No longer could parties hold appointments out as rewards for the party faithful, regardless of qualifications; small, regional, or new parties would stand a better chance of getting a foot in the door and developing leadership and policy experience (perhaps also facilitating women's access to public office); and voters could enforce accountability at the local level to an extent not currently possible (see Cheng 2018). Although Mahathir himself has expressed hesitation, based

on the (outdated) assumption of ethnic-Chinese domination of urban areas (Augustin 2017; Ong 2015), and government officials have offered conflicting statements on plans and timing (Nuradzimmah et al. 2019), it appears that Pakatan may move toward local elections within this term of government (Mering 2018).

Political Economy

Economic restructuring will need to feature within the process of democratic consolidation, given the extent to which the Malaysian state intervenes in the economy and economic control cements political authority. Beyond obvious questions of the need for greater transparency and accountability in distributing government contracts and managing state resources—and the crowd-pleasing promise, promptly fulfilled, of eliminating the GST—broader, more difficult shifts might help to deepen popular commitment to a new system. Pakatan's initial plans focus on the former changes, including a range of steps 'to enhance fiscal equity, transparency and accountability, and support accelerated productive investments and economic growth': better procedures for tender and accounting, improvements in managing the treasury and markets, revenue-sharing across tiers of government, review of public projects and expenditures, and so forth (Pakatan Harapan 2018b). These efforts extend beyond government finances per se, to the wide range of government-linked corporations and investment companies. As Jayant Menon (2018) notes, that push needs to start with an assessment of what role the new government wants these bodies to play in a revamped economy, recognising a role for government in business, but also its limitations in that guise.

The deeper changes needed are less concrete, broached in Pakatan's goal of 'fiscal conduct that is more sustainable, inclusive and growth enhancing' (Pakatan Harapan 2018b). One aspect of this revisioning is to focus less on top-line economic expansion than on distribution. Welfare gains aside, and in light of the persistent majority of voters who name costs of living as their chief political priority, such a reframing might make voters less willing to settle for short-term payoffs in the form of electoral patronage, including over-the-top promises of development projects and other 'incentives' before each election.[6] Part of this effort, too, might entail substantive deliberation on what sort of foreign investment is beneficial and for whom, bearing in mind, for instance, the resonance of campaign-trail critiques of Chinese investment that does not create jobs, retail opportunities, or other benefits for Malaysians. This effort could consider options, too, for party finance beyond the BN mode of political

party–business links, which not only raise parties' stakes and distance their core objectives from their constituents', but also generate all-too-ready resources for money politics (Gomez 2012). Taken together, efforts to reform Malaysia's political economy could not only help advance economic development over the long term, but also broaden commitment to a political order less lubricated by episodic, contingent dispensations in lieu of ongoing accountability.

Political Culture

Finally, the most challenging changes needed to further democratic consolidation are to Malaysia's prevailing political culture. Pakatan's stance on Malay privileges and Islam tends to steal the limelight here—and indeed, as Ahmad Fauzi and Che Hamdan urge, Pakatan will need to develop a coherent stance.[7] Balancing majority and minority rights is key to Pakatan's stability and represents a shift from an increasingly Malay-centric polity under BN. Pakatan relies upon interethnic vote-pooling (Ting, this volume): they do not ignore ethnicity, but they cannot alienate any ethnic group. Toward that end, as Horowitz (2018) describes it, the coalition, for instance, speaks of *ketuanan rakyat* instead of *ketuanan Melayu* (the people's rather than Malay supremacy) and has avoided an exclusivist approach to Islam.

But consolidated democracy requires more than simple recognition of minority rights. Despite how deeply civil society and social media permeate, as described above, Pakatan still must do more to cultivate open debate, institutionalise consultation, and sustain an autonomous public sphere. Post-election initiatives such as a late June 2018 NGO-organised forum between parliamentary backbenchers and civil society activists (Choong 2018) represent steps in this direction. Yet the trend globally is toward state and private-sector co-optation of political space—the condition of 'post-democracy' (Crouch 2004).

Also important will be curbing personalism in politics in favour of evaluation on the basis of issues, including parties' cultivating rather than fearing new ideas and young talent. However much Mahathir and anointed-successor Anwar orient politics around themselves, and however fraught questions of succession and 'camps' remain (e.g., Ng 2019), both their parties have far out-performed UMNO at advancing new leadership, even if, as Haris Zuan suggests here, contemporary youth tend to be sceptical of party politics. Yet the larger struggle will be to change how candidates woo votes. Already some Pakatan politicians have tried to wean their constituents off over-reliance on personal intervention and assistance. Still, less than one per cent of

respondents to a commissioned 2016 Merdeka Center survey saw their federal or state legislator's chief priority as legislating. So long as most voters prefer that politicians focus on 'going to the ground' (*turun padang*) and serving the local community (e.g., the sort of assiduous outreach and image-management Kloos explores in his chapter), the incentives candidates face will not change, obliging them still to cultivate a personal vote.

But especially important for policy-based differentiation, allowing responsible party government, is the fact that Malaysian voters clearly *are* divided, along more than one axis. So long as Malaysia has a multipolar distribution of votes—Pakatan, BN (really, UMNO), PAS (to ally with UMNO), and a potential 'Borneo bloc'—parties may see benefit in maintaining, not obscuring, their distinct ideological profiles, policy priorities, and messaging. That balance could help to move Malaysia past its emphasis to date on the opposition's achieving a solidary coalition about as encompassing as the BN. Fostering partisan differentiation rather than coordination in pursuit of the lowest common denominator would allow closer approximation of sets of voters' distinct preferences. As it stands, though, as Wong's chapter emphasizes, Malaysia's first-past-the-vote system precludes the sort of partisan turf-staking proportional representation encourages.

So what to expect? Democratic consolidation is never instantaneous; indeed, its core indicator is regular changes of government by elections, which can only play out over decades. That the new Pakatan government will enact reforms is sure; what is less certain is that such changes will permeate each of the dimensions above equally deeply. But the long-term genesis of the changes now afoot, and the complex, often cross-cutting or even contradictory shifts the chapters here examine, suggest that current affinities and objectives have deep roots and buy-in. Just as a transition in government has been long in coming, its effects will not be so readily reversed.

Notes

[1] 'Hacks/Hackers KL Forum: Vote Like a Pro', Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2018.

[2] Interview, Gan Ping Sieu, 17 July 2014, Kuala Lumpur.

[3] The Merdeka Center found economic concerns (followed by corruption and housing) ranked the highest priority nationally and in each state they surveyed as the election approached (Merdeka Center 2018: slide 9).

[4] For instance, Steven Sim and Lee Khai Loon's participatory budgeting initiatives, or Yap Soo Huey's approach to improving traffic flows. Interviews, 3–4 January 2015, Penang and 9 January 2015, Petaling Jaya.

[5] Bersih's post-GE14 Election Reform Action Plan is available at http://www.bersih.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Action-Plan-100-Days.pdf [accessed 28 June 2018].
[6] For instance, beyond the BN government's October 2017 'election budget': Azril 2018.
[7] Capturing current disagreement: *Free Malaysia Today* 2018; Ng 2018.

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