Routledge Malaysian Studies Series

MALAYSIA'S 14TH GENERAL ELECTION AND UMNO'S FALL

INTRA-ELITE FEUDING IN THE PURSUIT OF POWER

Edited by
Edmund Terence Gomez
and Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman

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"This excellent volume offers a comprehensive account of Malaysia's 14th General Election, underpinned by insightful case studies that grapple with the puzzle of the defeat of a well-funded ruling coalition that had never lost an election run on an uneven electoral authoritarian playing field. In explaining this 'stunning election' amidst 'elite contestations,' the book's contributors offer insightful theoretically-informed thematic analyses and fine-grained studies of voting trends. The book emphasizes how intra-elite Malay feuding undermined once cohesive patronage politics, strengthened the opposition through defections, and helped forge an alternative coalition that ran on a 'cash is king' slogan that targeted the regime's kleptocracy."

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An indispensable guide for scholars studying the politics of Malaysia and of Southeast Asia more broadly, it will be of great interest for all readers with an interest in Malaysian politics.

Edmund Terence Gomez is Professor of Political Economy at the Faculty of Economics & Administration, University of Malaya, Malaysia.

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Preface

The primary aim of this book is to examine the implications of serious intra-elite feuding in the leading Malay-based political parties in Malaysia, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS) during General Election 14 (GE14) in May 2018. Analysts of Malaysian politics have persistently contended that the long-ruling UMNO-led multi-party coalition, *Barisan Nasional* (BN), had managed to consistently retain power because it had functioned effectively as a responsive state, that is as a governing party capable of instituting appropriate policies and actions when under threat of losing power. For example, after the unexpected electoral debacle UMNO encountered in 2008, when the opposition unprecedentedly captured control of five state governments in the federation and won the popular vote in the peninsula, the party's response was three-fold. First, a new Prime Minister, Najib Razak, took office. Second, recognizing electoral trends that called for an end to race-based political discourses, Najib actively advocated "1Malaysia" and introduced a "New Economic Model." Third, UMNO's most controversial response to stem declining support was the introduction of a cash-transfer programme, *Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia* (BR1M), targeted at what the government identified as the "bottom 40%." This meant that, although the government claimed that the poverty rate was 0.4%, at least 12 million Malaysians were still in need of government aid.

In 2013, Najib confidently asked Malaysians to vote for him as this would serve as an endorsement of his policies. BN lost the popular vote, nationwide, but won sufficient seats to form the government, a reflection of gerrymandering and malapportionment of the electoral system, an issue the opposition had unrelentingly claimed hampered its ability to secure power. Najib's response was to blame the Chinese for his poor performance, claiming that he owed the Malays for keeping him in power. To consolidate Malay votes, Najib promulgated his own version of Malaysia's longstanding ethnically-based affirmative action, the Bumiputera Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy. Talk of 1Malaysia ceased.

However, unexpectedly, an astonishing and dramatic intra-UMNO feud emerged that critically jeopardized Najib's plans to consolidate Malay votes. This feud was the result of a series of business controversies encompassing the government-linked companies (GLCs) commissioned to help the Bumiputeras, particularly those in the bottom 40%. These corruption crises led to the

emergence of a breakaway party, *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu), formed by Najib's mentor, former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. In another dramatic turn of events, Bersatu combined forces with *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR), led by former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who had been ousted from UMNO by Mahathir in 1998. A new multiracial opposition coalition, *Pakatan Harapan* (PH), was created with some difficulty, comprising these parties as well as the Democratic Action Party (DAP), which had strong electoral support among urban non-Malays.

In spite of the unexpected creation of PH and the growing discontent with UMNO and Najib, there was still considerable doubt that the fall of BN was imminent. In 1990 and 1999, UMNO breakaways had forged a close alliance with the leading opposition parties but had failed to unseat BN. Moreover, in 2018, there was a fundamental difference in the new opposition coalition. PH did not include the leading Malay-based opposition party, the Islamic-oriented PAS. In fact, PAS announced that it would go it alone and even contest about two-thirds of the parliamentary seats, mostly in constituencies where UMNO was to face its former allies, now foes, even though it had no hope of winning most of these seats. It appeared that UMNO and PAS had created an electoral pact, a claim the leaders of both parties strongly disputed. In these multi-cornered fights, PAS was expected to split the anti-UMNO votes, thus allowing BN to return to power. However, in these intriguing political manoeuvrings, there was another major development: PAS too had been subjected to a monumental break up that had resulted in a breakaway party, *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah), now a founding member of the PH coalition.

A complex scenario had emerged prior to GE14, characterized by an unprecedented simultaneous series of intra-Malay political elite splits in UMNO and in PAS. Meanwhile, Najib's burgeoning unpopularity was because of numerous exposés about his huge personal slush fund, with money coming from his gross abuse of the GLC he led, 1MDB. It was because of 1MDB that Malaysia had come to be known globally as a kleptocracy. These controversies involving slush funds and GLCs reflected the persistent problem of patronage, corruption and rent-seeking in UMNO, a core factor that was now destabilizing the party, even deeply discrediting it in the public domain generally and the Malay electorate specifically. Meanwhile, the implications of the debilitating factional dispute that had erupted between the so-called purists and the mainstreamers in PAS was also unclear. These feuds in UMNO and PAS, that had led to the formation of two new Malay-based parties, Bersatu and Amanah, along with the presence of a predominantly Malay-based PKR, resulted in an unprecedently huge number of powerful Malay-based parties in GE14, the most evident manifestation of serious intra-Bumiputera cleavages that now prevailed in Malaysia.

To facilitate an assessment of intra-Malay political elite feuding during GE14, this study was divided into two levels of analysis: national and subnational. The national-level research was undertaken by the project leaders who visited every state in the peninsula during the campaign period. The subnational research involved intensive research of a selection of key constituencies in each state in

the peninsula and in the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur. There was insufficient time to cover the two Borneo states, particularly Sabah, given the short campaign period. When selecting the constituencies to be monitored, the factors considered were the levels of political competition, the incumbency advantage, the role of charisma, the ethnic and religious dynamics, the socioeconomic levels, the composition of voters and the levels of electoral discontent. At least one academic or post-graduate student was placed in these subnational areas during the entire campaign period, where they observed the campaign rallies and other political events. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken, with the chief respondents being politicians and candidates, campaigners and party workers.

Based on the research done in these areas, this study provides an assessment of the implications of these intra-Malay political elite feuds in GE14, an election described as the "mother of all battles" by both BN and PH leaders. The chapters in this volume include both thematically and state-based analyses of how intra-elite ruptures within key Malay-based parties ultimately led to UMNO's fall.

Acknowledgements

In early 2018, academics at the University of Malaya (UM) in Malaysia and the National Technological University (NTU) in Singapore met to discuss jointly working to assess Malaysia's impending General Election 14 (GE14). The issues reviewed in this book stem from a series of workshops and seminars held in Singapore and Malaysia that were convened to discuss Malaysian politics before and after this unexpectedly momentous general election. The chapters in this volume also constitute part of a research project that was conceptualized and supported by NTU's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and led by Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman. At UM, Edmund Terence Gomez had similarly created a team of academics and students to embark on an assessment of GE14. Funding for this project, primarily for the research to be undertaken by postgraduate students incorporated into this project, was provided by RSIS. Subsequently, additional funding was provided by the Malaysian newspaper, *The Star*. In return, *The Star* would publish articles based on the research undertaken by the project team during the campaign period.

This project's primary focus was the activities of political parties during the campaign period of GE14 in order to investigate electoral processes in terms of modes of mobilization of support as well as campaign coordination between component members of the two main coalitions, *Barisan Nasional* (BN) and *Pakatan Harapan* (PH). Equal attention was devoted to the campaign strategies of the Malay-based opposition *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS). The specific objective was to examine how unprecedented intra-Malay political elite feuds would play out during GE14. Serious feuds in BN's hegemonic party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and in PAS had resulted in the conception of two Malay-based parties, *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu) and *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah).

Our primary gratitude is to the contributors, a number of them postgraduate students and researchers, as well as the academics who were on the ground during the entire election campaign period gathering data. They patiently endured the arduous editing process that entailed numerous rewrites of their chapters. This book would not have been completed had it not been for their commitment and enthusiastic desire to acquire knowledge of Malaysian politics. To assist with the national level analysis and to mentor these postgraduate students, we

incorporated into this project two professors of political science, Johan Saravanamuttu and William Case, both also experts in the area of Malaysian studies. Professors Saravanamuttu and Case travelled around Malaysia with us to visit the academics and the postgraduate students based in different parliamentary constituencies. We thank them for contributing their findings to this study and for their discussions with the research team, which helped the latter analyze their findings.

We thank RSIS for its support of this project. In particular, we acknowledge Professor Joseph Liow, the then Dean of RSIS. Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, the Executive Deputy Chairman of RSIS, was always steadfast in his commitment to projects related to Malaysia. We obtained important insights from discussions we had with our colleagues, Dr Maznah Mohamed, Professor Ahmad Fauzi, Dr Azeem Farouk, Dr Faizal Hazis, Dr Gulizar Haciyakupoglu and Aida Arosoaie. We also acknowledge the support of Iulia Lumina and David Han who provided us with important editorial assistance when we were preparing the manuscript.

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We, the contributors, bear responsibility for the views, interpretations and any errors in this book.

Edmund Terence Gomez and Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman
March 2019

Abbreviations

1MDB	1 Malaysia Development Berhad
Amanah	*Parti Amanah Negara*
APU	*Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah* (Muslim Unity Movement)
BA	*Barisan Alternative* (Alternative Front)
BERJAYA	*Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah*
Bersatu	*Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia*
Bersih	Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections
BN	*Barisan Nasional* (National Front)
BPMS	*Budaya Politik Matang Sejahtera* (Mature political culture)
BR1M	*Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia* (1 Malaysia People's Aid)
CM	Chief Minister
DAP	Democratic Action Party
EC	Election Commission
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FGV	FELDA Global Ventures
GE12	General Election 12
GE13	General Election 13
GE14	General Election 14
Gerakan	*Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Malaysian People's Movement)
GHB	*Gerakan Harapan Baru*
GLCs	Government-linked Companies
GR	*Gagasan Rakyat*
GST	Goods and Services Tax
Hindraf	Hindu Rights Action Force
IKRAM	*Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia*
ISA	Internal Security Act
JASA	*Jabatan Hal Ehwal Khas* (Special Affairs Department)

KBSM	*Kenduri, Bersalin, Sakit, Mati* (Weddings, Delivery, Pain, Death)
KMM	*Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia* (Malaysian Mujahidin Movement)
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MA	Malaysian Agreement
MARA	*Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (Council of Trust for Indigenous People)
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MIDA	Malaysian Investment Development Authority
MRSM	*Maktab Rendah Sains Mara* (Mara Junior Science College)
NCER	Northern Corridor Economic Development
NGO	Non-government organisation
PAN	*Parti Anak Negeri*
PAS	*Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (Islamic Party of Malaysia)
PBB	*Parti Persaka Bumiputera Bersatu*
PGU	*PAS Ganti UMNO* (PAS Replaces UMNO)
PH	*Pakatan Harapan* (Alliance of Hope)
PKR	*Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (People's Justice Party)
PM	Prime Minister
POS	Political Opportunity Structures
PR	*Pakatan Rakyat* (People's Alliance)
PRM	*Parti Rakyat Malaysia*
PSM	*Parti Sosialis Malaysia*
PTPTN	*Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional* (National Higher Education Fund Corporation)
ROS	Registry of Society Malaysia
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
YAPEIM	*Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam* (Islamic Economic Development Foundation)

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Introduction

Malaysia's 14th General Election and UMNO's Fall: intra-elite feuding and the pursuit of power

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Before GE14: Malay elite feuds

An extraordinary phenomenon occurred during Malaysia's general election on 9 May 2018. The Malaysian General Election 14 (GE14) unexpectedly became a momentous event when a change of government occurred for the first time in the country's history after the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which led the ruling *Barisan Nasional* (BN, or National Front) coalition, lost power.[1] Although numerous extraordinary political events had occurred prior to GE14, a change of government was not expected.

This extraordinary regime change was primarily the result of unprecedented simultaneous—and acrimonious—intra-elite feuds in Malaysia's two leading Malay-based parties, UMNO and *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS). A consequence of these elite feuds was that, for the first time in history, five Malay-based political parties were contesting GE14, that is UMNO and its breakaway *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu), PAS and its splinter *Parti Amanah Nasional* (Amanah) and *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR), ostensibly a multiracial organisation but one largely seen as representing the interests of urban middle-class Malays. Never before had UMNO and PAS been split at the same time entering a general election. The implications of serious schisms in both parties on the electorate in Malay-majority constituencies, specifically, and on national politics, generally, were colossal in terms of possible coalition reconfigurations and personal political reaffiliations—and new contestations—within and between parties.

Following these Malay political elite feuds, astonishing overt and covert alliances were created. Opposition parties, in a stunning act, combined forces with their long-standing political foe, Mahathir Mohamad, ex-president of UMNO and Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003, even declaring him their *de facto* leader. Twenty years earlier, these same opposition parties had mounted a *reformasi* (reformation) to remove Mahathir as Prime Minister, accusing him of having restructured the state to concentrate power in the office of the executive. Mahathir had sought to create an alliance with leaders of this *reformasi* and successfully managed to do so, even though it included working with his former protégé and PKR head, Anwar Ibrahim. Mahathir had ousted Anwar as his Deputy Prime Minister in 1998 on what was widely believed to be trumped-up charges of sodomy

and corruption. Other prominent ex-UMNO leaders in the opposition included another former Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin. Well-known ex-PAS leaders, also long critics of Mahathir's creation of a single party dominant state,[2] emerged as key actors in a newly-formed opposition coalition, *Pakatan Harapan* (PH, or Alliance of Hope), that comprised these parties as well as the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a multiracial organisation though one with a great deal of Chinese and urban support.

Malaysian politics had never witnessed such a diverse number of prominent Malay leaders and rather strange bedfellows collectively coming together to take on BN, and Prime Minister Najib Razak in particular. Najib, as Finance Minister, had also concentrated economic power in his office, which he allegedly abused to serve his personal interests.[3] Although BN under different Prime Ministers, including Mahathir, had been accused of serious corruption, for the first time in Malaysian history Najib's government was widely seen, domestically and globally, as a kleptocratic state.[4] This unprecedented alliance of Malay political elites, long at loggerheads over how to govern Malaysia, was the core reason why leaders of the PH argued that they were capable of triggering an unprecedented Malay electoral swing that could unseat the unpopular Prime Minister, topple BN and create a meaningful consociational political system where all major parties could collectively debate how to forge a "New Malaysia," one governed by a democratic and accountable government.

Such discourses of a reformed political system emerging from this phase of intra-elite Malay feuding coincided with a critical juncture in Malaysian politics, namely, the reformulation of an already formidable coalition of opposition parties that had denied BN, over the past two general elections, its customary command of a super-majority in parliament.[5] However, this coalition was also in a state of flux as one of its core members, PAS, had cut its ties with the opposition parties. In fact, strong rumours subsequently emerged that UMNO and PAS leaders had formulated a secret agreement, one unknown even to party members, that focused on how parliamentary and state constituencies were to be contested during GE14.[6]

Najib's deep unpopularity, by his own admission when the results were announced,[7] was because of the controversies surrounding exposés about his personal—and extremely substantial—slush fund, with the money believed to have been generated from his flagrant exploitation of a government enterprise, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). Allegations also emerged of widespread corruption that implicated UMNO leaders of major government-owned Malay-based institutions, specifically the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), a land redistribution scheme introduced in 1956 whose settlers had long been hardcore UMNO supporters, and *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (MARA, or Council of Trust for Indigenous People), established in 1950 to enhance Malay participation in business as the first concerted attempt to develop entrepreneurs from among members of this ethnic group by providing them with access to credit facilities and business training.[8] This concurrent exploitation of government institutions, though an indication of persistent patronage, corruption and rent-seeking, deeply destabilized UMNO and undermined its electoral support as a prominent

leader, Mahathir, was now repeatedly stressing that these scandals amounted to a betrayal of the Malays by a party that was created to protect and develop the community's economic interests.

Mahathir's criticisms were, however, not expected to deeply impair UMNO's electoral performance. After all, intra-UMNO feuds about the abuse of publicly-sanctioned Malay patronage to serve vested interests and selectively distribute concessions to well-connected businesses had, on two previous occasions in 1987 and 1998, similarly prompted the emergence of breakaway parties led by prominent leaders. It was also significant that it was under Mahathir's watch that UMNO politicians had actively entered into business, with contracts, licences, loans and other sorts of government-generated concessions. UMNO eventually became a party of a multitude of businesspeople, embedding the practice of patronage in the party. Inevitably, patronage emerged as the most important mechanism for party leaders to sustain support as well as prevent members from defecting. This suggested that Mahathir was responsible for the current problems in UMNO. These UMNO splinter parties, though led by formidable ex-leaders, had fared poorly in electoral politics in constituencies with a Bumiputera[9] majority as well as in Malay heartland states, with the primary beneficiary being PAS.[10]

Moreover, there was deep suspicion whether Mahathir and Anwar, who had agreed to transcend their differences to take on UMNO and who were primarily focused on what they alleged as Najib's kleptocratic form of governance, could sustain their alliance. Another factor that undermined the possibility of a PH victory in GE14 was PAS's presence as a third contestant in Malay-dominant constituencies in Kedah, Johor, Terengganu, Kelantan, Selangor, Perak and Negeri Sembilan. One possible outcome of these electoral contests was that a number of these state governments would fall to the opposition, specifically to PH, while PAS would lose control of Kelantan to BN but unseat it in Terengganu and Kedah. However, UMNO was expected to retain sufficient support at the federal level in three-cornered parliamentary contests, given the electoral boundary realignments that had just been concluded,[11] while BN was also confident of securing a majority of the seats in Sarawak and Sabah. It was unclear how the rural Malay electorate would react to Mahathir's presence in a coalition comprising the formidable DAP. Mahathir had long critiqued DAP as a Chinese-chauvinist party that would undermine Malay economic interests if it captured political power.

Meanwhile, the implications of the debilitating factional dispute in PAS between so-called purists and mainstreamers, which contributed to the ouster of the prominent leaders who now led Amanah, on the Islamic party's performance in multi-cornered electoral battles were difficult to gauge. In this mix was *Parti Persaka Bumiputera Bersatu* (PBB), the Bumiputera-based party in Sarawak that was expected to easily retain its dominant presence in this state. PBB was expected to emerge as a key player in the post-election period if UMNO or PH failed to secure a majority of the seats in the peninsula.

Given the various permutations of electoral outcomes, specifically in Bumiputera-majority constituencies, understanding state-society relations was imperative, with specific reference to the leading Malay-based parties in control of the federal or

the state governments, i.e., UMNO, PAS and PKR. There was a need to assess the impact that prominent ex-leaders of the federal and state governments now leading Bersatu and Amanah would have on the Bumiputera electorate. Important questions emerged: what would be the content of the political discourses by these Malay politicians—once bitter rivals and now strange bedfellows—and their parties during the campaign period? How would Bumiputera society respond to calls for support from them? How would this segment of Malaysian society make sense of these new, extraordinary, political alliances and cleavages, as well as three-cornered fights involving BN, PH and PAS? These questions, which provide insights into how the pre-GE14 intra-Malay elite tussles impacted on parties as well as coalition politics at both the federal and state levels, are core dimensions of this study.

Understanding intra-elite feuds

The UMNO split

Malaysia's consociational model had served, since its independence in 1957, as a mechanism for the UMNO leaders to engage with Chinese and Indian elites from the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) while retaining hegemonic control of the government. In 2008, in an epochal general election, an unprecedented swing in Indian support to the opposition contributed to BN's loss of the popular vote in the peninsula as well as control of five of the country's thirteen state governments.[12] BN retained power only because of the support it had obtained in the two Borneo states. The opposition's unexpected federal and state-level victories in the 2008 election contributed to a decisive turning point in consociational Malaysian politics. An opposition coalition, *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR, or People's Alliance), was created that went on to win the popular vote nationwide in the 2013 general election, although BN retained power by securing more seats in parliament, reflecting Malaysia's heavily gerrymandered electoral system. In this election, after BN was overwhelmingly rejected by the urban middle class, UMNO's position in the coalition was, interestingly enough, further strengthened as non-Bumiputera voters had swung their support to the opposition.[13] However, in the altered BN consociational model, UMNO carried a much heavier load as the MCA and the MIC could only win seats on the backs of Malay voters. This also meant that in future general elections, the outcome of electoral battles would be determined in the Bumiputera-majority constituencies in the peninsula and the Borneo states. As such, it was imperative that UMNO register a good electoral performance in the 2018 election, as any failure on its part to deliver Malay votes would change the shape of Malaysian politics. Inevitably, a feud between UMNO elites created the possibility of the fall of BN.

While the UMNO leaders remained confident that the Najib–Mahathir feud was nothing new,[14] there was one major difference in this election. PAS, now unaligned with any coalition, was running in a majority of the parliamentary and

state constituencies. History suggested that the consequences of this did not augur well for Bersatu. In 1988, a fiery contest for UMNO's top leadership culminated in the formation of Semangat 46, a party led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.[15] In the 1990 general election, with Razaleigh's support, PAS won control of Kelantan's state government. While PAS has held on to power in Kelantan since then, Razaleigh returned to UMNO's fold in 1996 after Semangat 46 fared badly in the 1995 general election. Another split occurred in 1998 after Anwar, then Deputy Prime Minister, was unceremoniously expelled from UMNO.[16] This intra-Malay elite fracture resulted in BN losing substantial Malay support in the 1999 general election, which resulted in the fall of the state of Terengganu to PAS. However, Anwar's party secured a mere five parliamentary seats. It was becoming evident that intra-UMNO feuds benefited PAS, while UMNO breakaways struggled to secure support.

The most recent split within UMNO occurred after Najib was accused of channelling RM2.67 billion from 1MDB to his personal bank accounts.[17] This exposé led to cracks within UMNO and resulted in the sacking of two senior leaders, the party's Johor-based Deputy President Muhiyddin and Vice-President Shafie Apdal from Sabah, two states that BN had struggled to win in the 2013 election.

One key difference between the 2016 UMNO split and the previous intra-Malay elite fractures was the presence in the opposition of one former Prime Minister and two Deputy Prime Ministers who commanded enormous support in Kedah, Penang, Johor and Selangor. Another crucial factor was the implications of this feud on UMNO politics in Sabah. In this state, Shafie decided to form a regional party, *Parti Warisan Sabah* (Sabah Heritage Party, Warisan). Shafie's party quickly emerged to challenge Sabah UMNO, led by Chief Minister Musa Aman. This intra-elite feud was not new as Sabahan politics had long been overshadowed by disputes between the Musa and Shafie factions; however, until now both men were UMNO members.[18] Shafie had been known to covet the Sabah Chief Minister post. Incessant political bickering between these two factions had become the order of the political day in Sabah before Shafie's expulsion from UMNO.

Another issue within UMNO was growing evidence of deep differences between Najib and senior party leaders. Indeed, there was widespread talk of a rift between Najib and his deputy, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, as well as some division leaders widely seen as party warlords.[19] These differences were linked to concerns within UMNO that the party was entering a difficult general election led by Najib, who was clearly unpopular as he was mired in serious and widespread allegations of corruption. The UMNO leaders had encountered considerable problems justifying their support of Najib to the Malay electorate. To divert attention from national level politics, one common theme espoused by the BN leaders, in particular those from UMNO, was that "all politics is local," stressing that this was the reason why their candidates were chosen from among people living in the constituencies they were nominated to serve.[20]

However, with Najib's administration deluged with allegations of grand-scale corruption, this became a matter that UMNO grassroots could not defend in

meetings with the rural electorate. In this situation, Mahathir offered UMNO members as well as the party's once hardcore supporters in rural constituencies an alternative, his "*pribumi*" party, Bersatu. To counter Mahathir's move, Najib resorted to distributing money and other forms of patronage, his primary method to prevent defections and keep the warlords with him.[21] When questioned about UMNO warlords, Najib's intriguing response was: "Don't forget, I am the biggest warlord" (*South China Morning Post* 1 August 2015), one which indicated that he planned to deploy the resources he had to keep UMNO dissidents in check.[22] Mahathir, in response to this situation, would use as his key rallying cry the slogan "cash is king," to describe how Najib actively abused money to retain as well as muster UMNO support. However, even Najib, with his access to what was clearly a huge war chest, had limited resources as he had three million UMNO members to pacify.[23]

The split in UMNO further intensified when a number of party stalwarts, including Daim Zainuddin (the influential and extremely wealthy ex-Finance Minister), Rafidah Aziz (who had long served as leader of the party's Women's Wing and as Trade & Industry Minister) and Rais Yatim and Syed Hamid Albar (both former Ministers), openly campaigned for PH. Although there had been disputes between ex-UMNO presidents and the incumbent—former Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman and Hussein Onn had jointly criticized Mahathir following the UMNO crisis in 1987—never in Malaysian politics had such a diverse number of former government leaders collectively gathered to challenge UMNO.

The ideological battle within PAS

The roots of the cleavages in PAS can be traced to an influx of members into the party following Anwar's sacking in 1998. The Islamic party subsequently saw the emergence of the purists and the moderate factions within it.[24] These factions represented an ideological difference over the implementation of Islamic criminal law, or hudud, and the party's approach to coalition politics. The conservatives saw the implementation of hudud as crucial to the party's principles and were generally suspicious of working with DAP. On the other hand, the moderates held the view that it was more important for PAS to focus on accountable development-based governance, while also entering into a coalition to secure federal support in a multi-religious country. PAS, moreover, had fared best in elections when in a coalition, most evident during the 1990 and 1999 general elections.[25]

In 2015, after the death of Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the party's highly-respected spiritual leader who had played an important role in balancing the two factions, an open conflict emerged between them that culminated in a major contest at the 2016 party elections. Following their humiliating defeat in the PAS elections, leaders from the party's moderate wing, including its former Deputy President, Mohamed Sabu, formed Amanah and subsequently became founding members of the PH coalition. This debilitating factional dispute that erupted between the purists and moderates led to a bitter conflict between PAS and Amanah, one reminiscent of the UMNO–PAS Islamisation race, in which both sides employed

Islam as a political tool.[26] Amanah members and leaders were chastised as being *munafiq* (deviant) for having betrayed PAS's cause. PAS alleged that Amanah was hoodwinking Malay-Muslims by espousing an unacceptable form of liberal Islam. PAS leaders further alleged that Amanah was functioning as DAP's stooge in order to secure electoral support, a clear act of betrayal of Malay-Muslims.[27]

The formation of Amanah represented an intriguing development within Islamist politics in Malaysia. This split reflected earlier trends within the Muslim world which saw the formation of parties that some scholars referred to as post-Islamist parties, such as the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), which broke away from the more conservative Saadat Party.[28] One of the key ideologues of Amanah, Dzulkefly Ahmad, went on to argue that Islamist politics needed to be updated and that a new generation of Muslim democrats had to be more concerned with governance infused with Islamic values, rather than the formal application of Islamic criminal law in Malaysia.[29]

PAS splinter parties, like UMNO breakaways, had generally descended into oblivion. However, the large number of prominent PAS leaders joining Amanah and the support it received from the other opposition parties meant that the possibility it would survive was high. On its part, Amanah—and PH—denounced PAS as being a mirror image of UMNO. An issue Amanah persistently raised was the allegation that PAS had received RM90 million from UMNO, and specifically Najib. Amanah argued that the channelling of this RM90 million to PAS from UMNO indicated that it was a mere minion of the ruling party. Inevitably, therefore, a vote for PAS was a vote for UMNO.[30] Interestingly, serious differences prevailed between PAS leader Abdul Hadi Awang and his deputy, Tuan Ibrahim, presumably because of the former's seemingly close relationship with Najib. Amanah further highlighted that PAS had avoided criticizing UMNO and that by contesting a huge number of parliamentary and states seats, many of which the Islamic party had no hope of winning, it was assisting BN in winning GE14.

This widespread allegation of a covert alliance between Najib and Hadi had little or no impact in Kelantan.[31] In Terengganu, Hadi's home state, there were signs that UMNO and PAS had reached an understanding of how to run the campaign with much focus by both parties on two core issues that they felt could undermine the well-being of Malay-Muslims, Mahathir and DAP.[32] During the campaign, Amanah evidently had little impact in Kelantan and Terengganu. However, Amanah's emergence deeply undermined PAS's clear attempt to create a strong political base in the rest of the peninsula, particularly in the more industrialized states in the south. Meanwhile, assertions of the pact between Najib and Hadi—and money transfer—were never proven, though the strategy of equating PAS with UMNO worked better in urban areas than among the rural electorate where PAS remained popular.[33]

PKR and the jostling for power

Within the newly-formed PH, reports quickly emerged of disputes between Mahathir and Anwar over the former's nomination as the coalition's candidate as Prime

Minister. Anwar had insisted that Mahathir's nomination was only acceptable if Bersatu contested fewer seats than PKR in the General Election.[34] Following Mahathir's entry into the ranks of the opposition, Anwar appeared threatened by his presence as the key Malay leader in PH and the consequence of this on Anwar's rise to the premiership.

However, one core difference between PH and BN was that of the strong leadership by Mahathir as opposed to the struggle by Najib to maintain control, which he managed primarily by distributing concessions to contain defections and dissent. Mahathir filled a clear leadership vacuum in the opposition with the incarceration of Anwar, while also compelling the component party leaders to work more cohesively and make decisions quickly. However, the issue of who would govern Malaysia in the event of a PH victory persisted, hampering prompt decision-making including that of the distribution of seats between component party members. The top five leaders in PH where decision-making power was centralized, Mahathir, Lim Guan Eng, Mat Sabu, Wan Azizah and Muhyiddin, collectively reached a compromise: Anwar would succeed Mahathir as Prime Minister in the event of an electoral victory. This compromise paved the way for them to enter the General Election as a unified coalition.[35]

After a resolution had been obtained between PKR and its partners in PH over the distribution of seats, a battle between PKR's top leaders became public days before the General Election. Two powerful factions had emerged, led by its deputy president Azmin Ali and by Anwar's proxy PKR president while he served his jail term, Wan Azizah. The PKR divide had its roots in what had now come to be infamously known as the "Kajang Move," a plan by Anwar's faction for him to replace Khalid Ibrahim as Chief Minister of Selangor.[36] When the plan culminated in the unanticipated appointment of Azmin as Selangor's Chief Minister, this led to further schisms between Azmin and Rafizi Ramli, reputedly the architect of the Kajang Move, who was acting on Anwar's behest. Rafizi accused Azmin of betraying the party when he accepted the appointment as Selangor's Chief Minister. Since then, relations between Azmin and Rafizi as well as their respective supporters degenerated into a feud between two powerful factions.

This divide between Azmin and Anwar/Rafizi became public when PKR's candidates were announced for the Selangor state elections as the nominees were different from those in the original list agreed upon by party leaders. A number of individuals deemed to be allied with Azmin were not fielded. Two of Azmin's senior aides, Khalid Jaafar and Mohd Radzlan Jalaluddin, were rejected as candidates.[37]

Evidence of this spilt eventually emerged in the list of candidates nominated to contest in other states. The most glaring example of this feud was the party's decision to drop N. Surendran, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Padang Serai and former PKR Vice-President. This widely criticized decision to drop Surendran, also a prominent human rights lawyer, was deemed a purge of leaders aligned with Azmin.[38] In fact, the list of candidates in Selangor was only finalized the night before nomination day.[39] The elite feud in UMNO and Mahathir's

entry into the opposition had clearly exacerbated already serious friction among PKR elites, though the ex-Prime Minister remained PH's best hope of wresting control of the government from BN.

Elite contestations and the GE14 results

UMNO split, Malay constituencies and contradictory outcomes

UMNO was expected to lose some support in GE14 because of Najib's unpopularity, caused by controversies surrounding exposés about his personal slush fund as well as allegations of serious corruption involving FELDA, whose settlers have long been hard-core UMNO supporters. However, what was not expected was a swing to the opposition that was substantial enough for UMNO to lose 34 of its parliamentary seats and control over the federal government.

PH registered unusually heavy support in Johor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka—BN lost all three state governments for the first time—that collectively resulted in victories in 17 more parliamentary seats for its component members. Sensing a change in the mood of the electorate in these states, PH had deployed former key UMNO figures, such as Mahathir, Rafidah and Daim, to their *ceramah*, or public rallies, in these states. These ex-UMNO leaders played a vital role in assuring Malay voters that the position of Islam and Bumiputera privileges would continue to be protected. Elsewhere, however, in Kedah and Perak, the influence of these former UMNO elites was not as significant, though Mahathir registered victory in Langkawi with a resounding majority and PH managed to wrest control of these state governments by slim margins. Another important shift was registered in Sabah. The ability of Shafie to transform Warisan into a multiracial party secured him strong support from the Chinese, Muslim-Bumiputera and Kadazan-Dusun-Murut (KDM) communities. Warisan won a large number of Muslim- and KDM-majority parliamentary and state seats, enough for it to contribute to PH's total tally at the federal level and for the party to make a serious bid to form the state government in Sabah.

Contrary to expectations, the formation of Bersatu, led by Mahathir, did not help PH galvanize substantial Malay support. In the Malay heartland states of Kelantan and Terengganu, Mahathir and his allies had little or no traction with the contests there remaining strictly between PAS and UMNO. In Pahang and Perlis, BN retained control of these states with little trouble. In fact, in Kelantan, Terengganu and Sabah, Mahathir was deemed a liability for PH. The PH campaign in these states underplayed Mahathir's role in the coalition. Mahathir appeared to be well-received by urban Malay voters in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur where the coalition won by resounding majorities, even in primarily Bumiputera-majority constituencies like Shah Alam. However, the number of Malays who had decided to switch their support from UMNO to PH was marginal. If UMNO and BN had captured about 64% of Malay votes in the 2013 elections, only 35% to 40% of Malays voted for the incumbents in the 2018 elections according to a survey by a polling enterprise, the Merdeka Center. However, the same survey indicated

that only 25% of Malays supported PH, suggesting that a substantial segment of UMNO voters switched their support to PAS.

The practice of patronage to retain party unity appeared to have backfired on UMNO. As Mahathir persistently stressed his key slogan, "cash is king," a contention supported by a growing number of prominent former UMNO leaders, the topic of patronage and money politics sowed further discontent among the electorate. Within UMNO the issue of patronage, consistently associated with party warlords–usually division heads–who were responsible for ensuring that the grassroots remained loyal to the party, did not help ease party tensions. This issue was further exacerbated by factional disputes when warlords were not selected to stand as candidates.[40]

The failed "national consensus"

In terms of inter-party cooperation, one intriguing dimension of the Malay elite feuds and new political alliances that emerged prior to GE14 was that between PAS and UMNO. PH leaders would persistently allege that Hadi and Najib had achieved a "national consensus." This led to a new electoral strategy for PAS, one that saw the party fielding candidates in an unprecedented 158 parliamentary seats, assuming that in three-way contests the opposition votes would be split and lead to a BN victory in most seats. On its part, UMNO would field weak candidates in seats contested by major PAS figures. The expected outcome of this alleged agreement between Najib and Hadi was that PAS would secure the state governments of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah and, in return for splitting the opposition votes, BN would retain power at the federal level. However, this "consensus" was not conveyed to UMNO or the PAS's leadership and grassroots. At the grassroots level, there was no evidence of any cooperation between PAS and UMNO. While it is true that PAS muted its attack on UMNO, party leaders in the three northern Malay-majority states were clear that their target was PH, not BN.

Indeed, in the public domain, PAS members challenged the assertion that their party was giving way to UMNO at the parliamentary level. They cited examples of UMNO parliamentary seats held by senior UMNO leaders that PAS had won.[41] In Kedah and Terengganu, PAS did field candidates with the intention of winning at both the parliamentary and the state levels. In Jerai, PAS nominated a popular local religious scholar for a parliamentary seat in Kedah held by the then Religious Affairs Minister, Jamil Khir, and successfully wrested the seat from UMNO. In Terengganu, PAS fielded another popular local religious scholar for the seat of Kemaman, held by then Minister of Agriculture, Ahmad Shabery Chik, and once again successfully wrested the seat from UMNO. In Kelantan, PAS fielded Ustaz Johari Mat, a member of the party's powerful ulama council, in the UMNO stronghold of Tanah Merah with a clear aim of taking the seat from the BN.

It is also important that PAS adopted a "soft" approach in in its campaign in Terengganu to wrest control of the state from UMNO. PAS argued that its soft approach resonated with Malay culture, involving the need to be subtle in the

conduct of its politics. This approach did not involve discussing high level corruption or the need to name and shame corrupt politicians. Indeed, there was little in their election paraphernalia about these issues.

Another dimension of this soft approach was PAS's focus on policies promoting infrastructure and rural development with an emphasis on agriculture and small industries–sectors that would directly impact their economically disenfranchised constituents. PAS planned to introduce a *kerajaan teknokrat*, or technocratic government. This soft approach involved little talk of Islam.[42]

PAS also made much of its nomination of a new breed of highly-educated young professionals, unlike BN's candidates who the Islamic party referred to as "old faces."[43] PAS leaders stressed that these technocrats who would lead the state government, if the party formed it after the election, would not replicate mistakes made in the recent past. PAS was not able to hold on to the state government in Terengganu—and Kedah—after just one term in office. Noteworthy too was the fact that PAS's leader, Hadi, who had served as Chief Minister of Terengganu for one term between 1999 and 2004, was not running in a state seat. This was done to further convince the electorate that he would not be returning to lead the Terengganu state government.

Although PAS was aware that its soft approach did not help them win over fence sitters, the party saw this is as a good way to capture the support of UMNO members who were disgruntled with their leadership. Indeed, PAS thought that it could get the support of as much as 20% of UMNO members in Terengganu, aided also by a clearly serious factional dispute within this BN party.

However, it was evident that Hadi's seemingly close relationship with Najib had contributed to serious differences between him and his deputy, Tuan Ibrahim, which were observed as early as 2016. That year, PAS veteran Mustafa Ali was brought back to head a new PAS advisory board. Hadi had removed Mustafa as PAS's election director.[44] Other public statements made by both leaders also seemed to contradict each other. Tuan Ibrahim had been far more critical of Najib's alleged corruption than Hadi, who at times was viewed as defending the Prime Minister. PAS leaders and members, however, denied this supposed national consensus. Idris Ahmad, a PAS Vice-President, explained the party's strategy as being in line with Hadi's new political vision dubbed, *Budaya Politik Matang Sejahtera* (Matured, Progressive Political Culture). Here, PAS strategically positioned itself to replace UMNO as the leading Malay party because:

> UMNO is a decaying tree waiting to collapse. We need to try saving whichever parts of this tree. If we are going to employ our old strategy of aggressively opposing UMNO, it is unlikely that UMNO members and supporters would join us. However, this softer approach will put us in an excellent position to win over some of their supporters who are sickened by the corruption of UMNO leaders.[45]

At the grassroots level, there was no sign of cooperation between PAS and UMNO members and they were adamant that their parties were not cooperating in the

election. In fact, PAS argued that its fielding of the unprecedented number of candidates served as a way for the party to test its strength throughout the country.

When the results were announced, PAS emerged second in contests for 8 parliamentary and 21 state seats in Pahang, 5 parliamentary and 13 state seats in Perak and 6 state seats in Selangor, all constituencies that were won by UMNO. This suggested that UMNO members were more likely to support PAS instead of other parties.[46] PAS captured most UMNO voters, as indicated by the overall better performance of the party and its ability to wrest several Malay majority electoral districts previously won by PH. This further suggested that in the event of an UMNO collapse, the biggest benefactor would be PAS. Given its impressive performance in the northern states, a new green belt encompassing Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Pahang and northern Perak will likely emerge.

After the election, UMNO leaders acknowledged that there was a high possibility that PAS leaders "had played UMNO out" by not keeping to their side of the deal, leading to BN's poor performance in the northern states.[47] Subsequently, one key BN figure and then MIC President, S. Subramaniam, confirmed this consensus noting that Hadi had agreed to form a tacit alliance with UMNO as he was grateful to Najib for allowing him to table the RUU 355 bill in parliament.[48]

Diffusion of Islamism in Malaysia

The outcome of the election confirmed that there was indeed a diffusion of Islamism in Malaysia. Amanah sealed its place within the political landscape by winning 11 parliamentary and 34 state seats. However, these electoral victories were generally in the urban areas and in seats with a sizable non-Muslim populace. With the exception of the Pokok Sena and Shah Alam constituencies, where the Malay population was more than 75%, the rest of the parliamentary seats were located in mixed areas where there was a sizable presence of non-Muslim voters. As Amanah could no longer be dismissed as a PAS offshoot that would dissipate with time, the party failed to accomplish its aim of replacing PAS. Besides being completely wiped out in the northern Malay states (with the exception of Kedah), Amanah also failed to capture the support of the traditional PAS voters, a base the party sought to deliver to the PH. Amanah was thus voted in through the support of non-Muslims.

PAS's version of traditional Islamism appeared to be more popular with Malay voters. PAS and UMNO remained the parties of choice for Malays, with more than 75% of them continuing to support the two parties.[49] Amanah's share within PH was even lower, especially in PAS's strongholds of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah. This, too, indicated that PAS's support base had remained intact. However, Amanah had traction with Malay voters in urban areas as seen in the party's fine performance in the Shah Alam, Kota Raja and Hulu Langat constituencies in Selangor. The grassroots support that Amanah received from the *Persatuan Ikram Malaysia* (Ikram), which has its support base among urban Malays, assisted the party in achieving these results.

One concern about Amanah was that the party did not have in its ranks an ulama of significant repute. Amanah's leader, Mat Sabu, did not have the standing of "Tok Guru" of the stature of Nik Aziz or Hadi. This was one reason why Nik Omar, the son of Nik Aziz, became an important Amanah ally when he fell out with PAS.[50]

A factor that worked against Amanah and PH was the effective use of the DAP bogeyman among Muslim voters. PAS leaders warned Malaysians that it was *haram* (prohibited in Islam) for Muslims to vote for DAP. Nik Abduh Nik Aziz, a PAS Vice-President, defended this contention by arguing that DAP was opposed to Islam because of its opposition to the implementation of hudud in Malaysia.[51] This view was also the position taken by the Malaysian religious bureaucracy.

In June 2016, the Mufti of Pahang, Abdul Rahman Othman, labelled DAP as *kafir harbi* for opposing *hudud* laws being applied in Malaysia.[52] *Kafir Harbi* (belonging to war) is an extremely controversial term in classical Islamic law, which refers to a non-Muslim who does not live under the protection of an Islamic state. The famed scholar of Sunni Islam Yusuf al-Qaradawi was of the view that the blood and property of Kafir Harbi was not protected as they were hostile towards Muslims.[53] The Mufti was thus implicitly suggesting that DAP members were enemies of Islam and that it was permissible for them to be killed. Although such views might seem extreme, this further advanced the prevailing distrust of the DAP, particularly in Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Pahang.[54] PAS's strategy of conflating Amanah with DAP proved effective in convincing Malay voters in the northern states to avoid voting for the PH, a factor that worked in favour of the Islamic party, not UMNO.

Conclusion

In a competition between two unequal actors, BN and PH, with the ruling coalition extremely well-funded, which helped aid an already well-oiled machinery, what accounts for these stunning election results? The mode of voting by the electorate, particularly in the Bumiputera-majority constituencies in the peninsula and the Borneo states, did not pan out as expected by UMNO. A core reason for this swing against BN was that it was one consequence of the intra-Malay elite feuding, though what remained constant was the idea of political continuity in spite of a regime change, a theme that came up before and during the campaign.[55] Former Prime Minister Mahathir was seen as a leader who had long advocated and pursued an agenda favouring Bumiputeras, including the implementation of ethnically-based policies that endorsed selective patronage. In this context, a regime change, if it occurred, would result in a government led by traditional elites, specifically Mahathir and Anwar, who had governed Malaysia together for more than half a decade in the 1990s.

GE14 could thus be seen as an UMNO versus UMNO battle, with new, even strange, political pacts being forged, as two powerful leaders fought for control of the government, one presumably to bring about regime change, the other to retain the state of play. Mahathir, however, clearly had problems working with

opposition parties and even getting them to work together as a cohesive coalition. Opposition parties appeared wary of Bersatu, which was seen as it correctly was as an UMNO faction. In UMNO, in spite of Najib's concerted attempts to keep the party unified through the extensive practice of patronage, elite as well as grassroots splits had occurred even though they knew they were better off going into this difficult election as a unified institution that would enforce its image of invincibility. A reason for this UMNO disharmony was that it appeared unlikely that BN would fall as a range of measures had been undertaken to undermine the opposition from mounting an effective campaign, including instituting a redelineation exercise to ensure victory in a sufficient number of parliamentary constituencies.

Another evident reason for this stunning electoral outcome was that two core events occurred concurrently. First, the unprecedented and simultaneous splits in UMNO and PAS, fractures that led to the rise of powerful new parties in the opposition. Second, these feuds coincided with an electoral demand made of BN, very clearly registered in the 2008 general election: the need for reforms. This call for reforms had first been made in 1999, through the *reformasi*, and when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi promised change on securing the premiership in 2003, he received overwhelming support in the 2004 general election. Abdullah was punished for not delivering on this promise of change in the 2008 election, when BN registered an unexpectedly huge fall in support. When Najib came to power in 2009, he responded to this call with a slew of policies that he said would "transform" Malaysia. Najib's failure to deliver resulted in BN's loss of the popular vote in 2013. When BN continued to fail to introduce appropriate policies after this election—indeed, the government went on to become increasingly authoritarian—this marked a crucial point in history.[56] BN was no longer acting as a "responsive state" (Slater and Wong 2013)[57] as it had consistently done in times of crises, a strong feature of this coalition.[58] This refusal to change, accompanied by authoritarian reactions from the threatened ruling elite, culminated in BN's loss in 2018.

Crucial institutional differences prevailed between PH and BN. PH entered the electoral campaign as a proper consociational-based coalition where no party had hegemonic power and issues were actively debated, unlike UMNO's dominance of BN. Policies obviously mattered. BN had backtracked on what Najib had repeatedly once emphasized as "inclusive" policies. Equally damaging was Najib's active pursuit of what was widely seen as controversial foreign direct investments from China in projects deemed against Malaysia's interests, some of them allegedly to help Najib deal with financial crises that had emerged from the 1MDB scandal. Meanwhile, the timing of the introduction of a goods and services tax (GST), a seemingly logical policy response to expand the government's revenue generation base, had major implications for a ruling coalition under serious critique for abusing government resources. PH mounted an effective campaign to show how the GST had contributed significantly to a rise in cost-of-living expenses, while also claiming that the revenue generated helped the government deal with debt crises attributed, again, to the 1MDB scandal. What was noteworthy, however, was that there was little hint of a novel

policy framework in PH, one distinct from BN's simultaneously interventionist and neoliberal-type programmes.

Although many analysts spoke of a Malay swing to PH prior to GE14, what was unexpected was a wave against BN not just across the peninsula but also the Borneo states. However, the nature of the change demanded by the voters varied from state to state. It was evident in the Malay heartland states that Malay-Muslim political dominance was important. This was not the case in the Borneo states where the demand for change was most evident in Sabah—this was also the trend in the 2013 election[59]—while in Sarawak there was a clear attempt to send a message to the hegemonic UMNO on a variety of issues. In the industrialized states in the peninsula, particularly among the urban middle class, the demand for real change was most striking, building on trends first seen in 2008. A rational but distinct way of voting that served their own interests while also making a statement about BN's mode of governance was made by the electorate in different states.

These spatial differences draw attention to another important factor, i.e., the sorts of issues that unite or divide people, including Islam, development, form of governance, and what shared meaning Malaysians held about their relations with others and their place in the country varied from state to state. These spatial differences also indicated that in Malay-majority constituencies, the appeal of PH was not as significant as the results suggested. In fact, even in the Malay heartland states of Kelantan and Terengganu, the issues raised by PAS, BN's key opponent, were remarkably different. Such was the difference in terms of how the Islamic party ran its campaign in these two states that one analyst posed this question: will the real PAS please stand up?[60] As for Mahathir's reputed significance in this stunning PH victory, it was evident that he, Bersatu and Amanah had no currency in the Malay heartland and Borneo states. PKR too had an insignificant presence in Kelantan and Terengganu, though it had a burgeoning machinery in Sabah.

Ultimately, UMNO's fall was due to the serious division that had emerged within the party that was precipitated primarily by the 1MDB scandal and the channelling of substantial funds to the hands of its president. Although factions were not uncommon in UMNO, Najib's decision to exclude, rather than engage with dissenting voices in the party, including his formidable former mentor, Mahathir, contributed to BN's fall. Najib's strategy to co-opt UMNO's longstanding nemesis, PAS, into a covert alliance backfired, allowing the Islamic party, though also deeply fractured by factionalism, to register a remarkable victory although one limited to the Malay heartland states.

This volume, comprising about a dozen chapters, focuses on this theme of intra-Malay political feuds, analysing how this issue contributed to UMNO's unexpected fall. This study provides thematic analyses of particular importance to decipher the implications of intra-Malay elite feuding, along with an assessment of the campaign in all of the states in the federation as well as the conduct of politics by key actors within BN and PH. These articles also assess the links forged between parties and voters, tracing the different mechanisms employed in different states to capture votes.

Notes

1 In GE14, BN's popular support dipped to its lowest level ever. In Sarawak and Sabah, hailed as fixed deposit states in the federation for BN, its performance was shockingly bad. This was especially so in Sabah, where BN lost control of the state to the opposition.
2 The history of the rise of UMNO under Mahathir as a single dominant party operating in an electoral authoritarian political system is provided by Case (2009). For a broader review of this authoritarian system where regular elections were held that could lead to the fall of dominant parties, see Levitsky and Way (2010).
3 The study, *Minister of Finance Incorporated*, by Gomez et al. (2017), traces this concentration of economic power in the office of the Finance Minister. It was under Mahathir's tenure that the practice of the Prime Minister serving concurrently as the Finance Minister had first occurred.
4 For a review of the factors that led to the issue of kleptocracy as a key factor in GE14, see Gunasegaram and KiniBiz (2018). See also Brown (2018) and Wright and Hope (2018).
5 The *reformasi* that had emerged 20 years ago because of a feud between Mahathir and Anwar had, arguably, given rise to this new trajectory of Malaysian politics. This "new politics," as some scholars had then begun to advance, was also responsible for the unprecedented engagement of civil forces in electoral politics, marked subsequently by the rise of other major issues- and ethnically-based social movements such as Bersih and Hindraf (Hindu Rights Action Force), respectively. For a discussion on the *reformasi* movement and new politics, see Loh and Saravanamuttu (2003). See Singh (2009) for a review of the Hindraf movement in this election. Weiss (2005) assesses the role of social movements such as Bersih.
6 In this volume, most of the chapters on electoral politics in the states in the peninsula deal with this covert alliance between UMNO and PAS, an issue denied by leaders of both parties.
7 As the GE14 election results were being announced and it became clear that BN faced major losses, Najib reportedly told his close allies that he did not realize how unpopular he was with the electorate. This issue is discussed in Chapter 1 of this volume by William Case.
8 For a discussion on FELDA and UMNO politics, see Khor (2015). For a brief history of MARA, see Gale (1981).
9 Bumiputera, which means "sons of the soil," is the term used in reference to ethnic Malays and other indigenous peoples. Of Malaysia's 30 million multi-ethnic population in 2018, Bumiputeras accounted for 65%, Chinese 26%, Indians 8% and the rest comprising other ethnic groups.
10 For a review of these elections, see Saravanamuttu (2016).
11 For a discussion on the realignment of parliamentary boundaries such that they favoured BN, see the chapter by Kai Ostwald in this volume.
12 This swing against BN was seen as a response to the Hindraf movement that drew significant attention to the marginalisation of poor Indians, particularly those situated in the plantations sector.
13 See Mohd Azizuddin (2009). For a thoughtful discussion on the one-party dominance system created by UMNO, see Case (1996).
14 This point was stressed by Shahrir Samad during a meeting with him on 30 April 2018 in his parliamentary constituency in Johor Bahru, which he expected to easily retain. In this contest, Shahrir was heavily defeated by a political novice, as he described his opponent.
15 For a discussion on this serious fragmentation of UMNO, see Shamsul (1988).
16 The impact of the *reformasi* on Malaysian politics has been reviewed by Weiss (1999).

17 See Brown (2018). See also Wright and Hope (2018).
18 See Mohamad Nawab (2017).
19 This point was made by BN politicians we met in Kelantan on 4 May 2018, as well as PAS leaders in Terengganu (interview on 3 May 2018).
20 This point was repeatedly stressed during a BN campaign rally in Johor's Iskandar Puteri constituency held by DAP leader, Lim Kit Siang. All BN speakers stressed that their parliamentary and state candidates were "locals" who were well aware of the problems of the people of this constituency, while Lim was an "absentee MP" seldom seen in the constituency. This rally was held on 29 April 2018.
21 For an in-depth review of the politics of patronage in UMNO before GE14, see Chapter 3 by Sri Murniati in this volume.
22 For the full report on this issue of UMNO warlordism, see: www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/1845743/analysis-najib-razak-biggest-warlord-malaysia-sends-message). Another point of view was provided on the relationship Najib had with division heads. Najib had been a leader in UMNO since the mid-1970s, soon after his father, then Prime Minister Abdul Razak, passed away. Since Najib had entered politics at a young age, he knew well most division heads as they were of his generation, enabling him to command their loyalty (interview with Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018). This point was confirmed by an ex-UMNO member, now with the DAP. He claimed that Najib's camp was strong as it was "Club 1987." However, he also claimed that when Najib became Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, nobody thought that he was ready to be Prime Minister (interview in Alor Star, 6 May 2018). Najib had been appointed Deputy Prime Minister by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, though at the behest of the retiring Prime Minister, Mahathir.
23 One PKR leader argued that UMNO divisional chiefs who were in business were "suffering" as they were not getting sufficient concessions from Najib or the federal and the state governments. Interview on 29 April 2018 in Melaka.
24 See Liew (2007).
25 For an assessment of the 1990 election, see Khong (1991). See Gomez (2004) for a review of issues related to the 1999 general election.
26 For a background of the PAS–UMNO Islamisation race, see Liow (2004). See also Maszlee Malik and Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri (2018).
27 In a meeting with PAS leaders in Terengganu on 3 May 2018, we were told that with the departure of the moderate faction, the party had succeeded in throwing out the "DAP boys." Indeed, we were surprised at the extent of dislike and distrust of DAP in Terengganu and Kelantan, mainly because this party was seen as not supporting the promotion of Islam.
28 For a discussion on post-Islamism, see Bayat (2013).
29 Interview with Dzulkefly Ahmad, Amanah leader, Tunis, 20 May 2016.
30 Parti Amanah Negara (2018), "PAS akui mengambil duit UMNO," www.facebook.com/amanahnegara/videos/pas-akui-mengambil-duit-umno/1902530563124973/ (accessed 20 October 2018).
31 An analysis of the elections in Kelantan is provided in Chapter 13 of this volume.
32 See Chapter 12 of this study, where an in-depth analysis is provided of electoral issues in Terengganu.
33 The chapters on Kelantan and Terengganu in this volume deal in-depth with these allegations of an alliance between UMNO and PAS, with funding by Najib to help the BN win parliamentary seats. In return, Najib would help Hadi table a bill on hudud in parliament.
34 This account of negotiations over the distribution of seats among component PH members was provided by a senior DAP leader—interview on 1 May 2018.
35 This account of events in PH was recounted to the research team during an interview with Saifuddin Abdullah on 2 May 2018 in Kuantan.

36 The plan failed as Anwar was found guilty of sodomy and disqualified from standing as a candidate in the Kajang by-election, a state seat that had been vacated with the aim of allowing him to stand as the party's nominee. Wan Azizah replaced Anwar as PKR's candidate in this by-election and though she won the seat, she failed to be appointed Chief Minister. The Sultan of Selangor had not favoured PKR's nomination of Azizah as Chief Minister, leading to Azmin's appointment.
37 Interview with Radzlan Jalaluddin of the PKR, Kuala Lumpur, 8 May 2018.
38 Rashvinjeet S. Bedi and Victoria Brown, "Padang Serai rep N. Surendran dropped from PKR line-up" *The Star*, 24 April 2018. Accessed on 15 October 2018 from www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/04/24/padang-serai-rep-n-surendran-dropped-from-pkr-lineup/#D6AKu6SROcegrFZd.99
39 This information was obtained from a leader of the DAP (interview on 1 May 2018).
40 See Chapter 3 in this volume, where the issue of patronage in this election is analysed.
41 Interview with Kamaruzzaman Mohamed, Press Secretary to PAS President, Kuala Lumpur, 8 May 2018.
42 This point was stressed to us in interviews with PAS leaders held on 3 May 2018 in Kuala Terengganu. See also Chapter 12 in this volume, where the point is made that the issue of hudud had little currency in Terengganu.
43 Interview with PAS leaders on 3 May 2018 in Kuala Terengganu.
44 Kamles Kumar, "PAS replaces Mustafa Ali as election director in new line-up," *Malay Mail*, 6 May 2017.
45 Interview with Idris Ahmad, Vice-President of PAS, 20 April 2018.
46 See Mohamed Nawab (2018).
47 Interview with Abdul Rahman Hussin, former UMNO Youth Executive Committee, Singapore, 2 September 2018.
48 The bill sought to amend the Shariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965, or Act 355, which limits the Shariah courts' sentencing powers to a maximum of three years' jail, RM5,000 fine and six lashes. PAS proposed increasing the Shariah courts' maximum sentencing limits to 30 years' jail, RM100,000 fine and 100 strokes of the cane. "PAS' hudud bill: What is it and why is there concern over it?" *Today*, 7 March 2017. Interview with S. Subramaniam, former MIC President, Singapore, 15 September 2018.
49 Looi Sue-Chern, "Pakatan still far behind Umno, PAS in Malay support" *The Malaysian Insight*, 13 August 2018. Accessed on 15 October from www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/87183.
50 This point was stressed by an academic based in Kelantan. Interview on 4 May 2018 in Kota Baru.
51 Interview with Nik Abduh Nik Aziz, Vice-President of PAS, Kota Bharu, 7 May 2018.
52 For a discussion on this, see Gomez et al. (2017).
53 Muhammad Qasim (2012: 124–125).
54 This was evident to the research team following interviews conducted with the electorate in these states. See the chapters in this volume on these states for details about this issue.
55 Before GE14, an active "Spoil Your Vote" campaign was mounted by Malaysians who felt that with Mahathir leading PH, there was little difference between this coalition and BN.
56 After the 2013 election, countering his initial "1Malaysia" slogan, Najib promulgated his own version of Malaysia's longstanding ethnically-based affirmative action, the Bumiputera Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy, as a means to consolidate Malay support. Najib stressed that he would use his control over an extensive number of government-linked companies (GLCs) to implement the BEE

suggesting that the practice of selective patronage would become more widespread through the exploitation of state-owned enterprises that were key players in the economy.

57 See Slater and Wong (2013).

58 There is much evidence in history that BN functioned well as a responsive state when confronted with demands for change by the electorate, i.e., after the 1969 crisis with the formation of BN and the introduction of progressive reform policies; in 1986–1987 during a serious recession with effective economic liberalisation policies; in 1997 after the Asian currency crisis with unorthodox policies; and in 2008 after the global financial crisis. BN's effectiveness as a responsive state was most clearly manifested after the unexpected electoral debacle it encountered in 2008. First, a new Prime Minister, Najib, took office. Second, recognizing electoral trends that called for an end to race-based political discourses, Najib began strongly advocating "1Malaysia," a response that initially garnered him much support. A third and more controversial response was the introduction of a cash-transfer programme, BR1M, targeted at what the government called the "bottom 40%." This meant that at least 12 million Malaysians would be privy to government aid.

59 For an assessment of this issue in the 2013 election, see Gomez (2016).

60 Interview on 4 May 2018 in Kota Baru.

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1 Democratization in an age of authoritarianism

Theorizing Malaysia's GE14

William Case

Introduction

Few pundits or practitioners predicted the transformative outcome of Malaysia's General Election 14 (GE14). The long-time ruling coalition, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)-led Barisan Nasional (National Front), was ousted. A gimcrack opposition, *Pakatan Harapan* (Alliance of Hope), rose to power. The aim of this chapter is to engage with a "classic" literature on hybrid regimes and democratic transitions in order to better understand Malaysia's "stunning election," GE14. At the same time, it considers the implications that this election might hold for this literature's theories of transition.

The analysis begins by placing Malaysia's democratic experience in comparative context, highlighting the country's distinctive trajectory. Second, it specifies the hybrid regime that Malaysia long operated in finer terms of electoral or competitive authoritarianism and single-party dominance. Next, the analysis turns to the recent trajectory of elections in Malaysia, evaluating the cumulative, yet ambiguous impact of the 12th and 13th general elections on GE14. Rather than any straightforward progress toward democratic change, a dialectical pattern emerges, often locally denoted as a pendulum effect.

Fourth, in focusing more closely on GE14, this study records UMNO's tightening of electoral manipulations and its extending popular distributions, especially for rural constituents. This appeared to raise the bar that Pakatan needed to surmount. However, new manipulations also grated on many voters. And the popular resonance of new distributions, especially through cash transfers, i.e., the *Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia* (BR1M), was diminished by the imposition of a goods & services tax (GST) and the retraction of fuel subsidies.

Fifth, a range of outcomes for GE14 is canvassed. Electoral outcomes and their implications for Malaysia's hybrid politics are collated in terms of Andreas Schedler's notions of "regime-sustaining" and "regime-subverting" elections. Further, upon interpreting GE14 as a subverting event, a question arises over how much of its transformative impact can be understood as a process of "democratization-by-election" (Lindberg 2009). In this perspective, "subversion" delivered through electoral defeat raises the costs of continuing repression that an incumbent government acquiesces in turnover and democratic change.

However, though subverting, even "stunning" elections may exert independent effects; they are less determinative than catalytic, adding in the manner of a "flywheel" to momentum (Case 2010). Elections and any democratic change are thus nested in complex sets of inter-elite and elite-mass relations. Much depends, then, on the extent to which elites are split, widening the fissures for popular upsurge.

Today, in analyzing democratic recession, especially in the West, analysts focus intently on elite-level divisions, the vilification of establishment elites, populist mobilization and democratic recession. In this volume too, thematic attention is given to elite-level divisions. But in examining Malaysia, contributors examine these tensions as a precursor to popular upsurge and democratic transition. As such, little guidance can be obtained from recent mainstream literature. Thus, this chapter revisits the classic writing of Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, Samuel Huntington and others. At base, it asks whether Malaysia's transition—catalyzed by a subversive GE14 but principally driven by elite-mass interactions—is best conceptualized as bottom-up or top-down in its dynamics, a "Malaysian tsunami' or a bolt from on high.

GE14 in comparative context

Most analyses of regime change today chart democracy's decline. Ever more alarmist titles include "Facing up to Democratic Recession," "Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy" (Freedom House 2017), *How Democracies Die* (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018) and *Fascism: A Warning* (Albright 2018).

Executive abuses and populist mobilization form the core of these studies. Demagogic behaviours are described as socially rooted in the attitudinal shift among many citizens today, from yearnings for political freedoms to "to be[ing] told where to march" (Albright 2018). They are set in a global context of United States indifference and Chinese encouragement.

In addition, democracy's decline is no longer a matter of shattering executive and military coups. It involves instead an insidious discrediting and undermining of judicial independence and press freedoms, the valorizing of nativism and nationalism and the slowly corrosive imposition of authoritarian controls (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018).

Malaysia's GE14 stands in striking contrast to these trends. Indeed, the country's longer trajectory marks it as a persistent outlier. First, throughout democracy's Third Wave, Malaysia perpetuated a paradigmatic form of hybrid regime, its democratic procedures inflected with authoritarian controls (Case 1994). In 1974, the very year in which the Third Wave's vanguard cases, Portugal and Ecuador, embarked on democratic transition, Malaysia installed a hybrid regime under which it held its first highly manipulated election. As Tun Abdul Razak, the new Prime Minister, candidly advised, "so long as the form of democracy is preserved, the substance can be changed to suit the conditions of a particular country" (Zakaria 1989: 349).

Second, as the Third Wave ebbed in democratic recession, Malaysia's elections grew startlingly more competitive. In 2008, Larry Diamond (2008) warned of "democratic rollback [and] the resurgence of the predatory state." But in that same year, Malaysia held its momentous General Election 12 (GE12), with voters denying the UMNO-led Barisan for the first time ever its two-thirds majority in parliament, thereby helping to inaugurate a two-party system (Chin and Wong 2009). Presciently, Levitsky and Way (2002) had already classified Malaysia's hybrid regime as a competitive form of authoritarianism, wherein the opposition's winning had grown imaginable. And, though haltingly, this trajectory advanced across the two elections that followed, finally bringing Pakatan to power in GE14.

Further, even more than at the global level, Malaysia's democratic change is thrown into relief by the uncongenial neighbourhood in which it unfolds. In brief, electoral turnover in Malaysia stands in stark contrast to stalled democratization in Myanmar, persistent single-party or single-party dominant systems in Vietnam, Laos and Singapore, a resurgence of personal dictatorship in Cambodia and military government in Thailand, an ever more absolute sultanate in Brunei Darussalam, hideous abuses of human rights in the Philippines and gross majoritarianism and religious intolerance in Indonesia. Accordingly, in its 2017 report, Freedom House regards none of the countries in Southeast Asia as "politically free." Democratic change in Malaysia has been unaided by any regional demonstration effects or "snowballing" (Huntington 1992).

In sum, Malaysia's trajectory has varied inversely with global trends. Its hybrid regime withstood democratic transition during the Third Wave. Its transition takes place today amid democratic recession. This dissonance in Malaysia's record evokes the distinctiveness of its hybrid regime and underlying dynamics of elite-mass relations. Let us specify this regime type more closely for it bears on the kind of transition that is underway in Malaysia today.

Hybrid politics in Malaysia

Malaysia had long operated a particular kind of hybrid regime. Featuring an uneven playing field of truncated civil liberties and mildly competitive, but grievously manipulated elections, it amounted to what Andreas Schedler (2006) classified as electoral authoritarianism. In these conditions, though the opposition might win a share of parliamentary seats and control over several state-level assemblies, it was systematically hindered from winning so big that it could form a new government. Rather, the incumbent government was reliably returned to power, its base re-energized by campaign activities and its legitimacy refreshed by victory. Thus, despite its competitive aspects, this practice of hybrid politics so dampened uncertainty that it was difficult to imagine UMNO's defeat—at least while elites in the party remained united (Crouch 1996: 75). Indeed, this regime involves the selective adoption of democracy's institutions in order to substantively avoid democracy. Accordingly, rather than any "diminished" kind of democratic politics, it is best examined as a sub-type of authoritarian rule (Schedler 2006).

Electoral authoritarianism, through its limits on civil liberties and electoral competitiveness, can broadly underpin a government's long-term ascendancy. It can also be more finely elaborated with a single-party dominant system, thereby increasing the efficiencies by which to mobilize mass-level support. Further, more than marshalling voters, a dominant single party can help in regulating elites in their internal competitions over positions and constituencies. Svolik (2012) shows how, highlighting the ways in which patronage can be syncopated across elites and over time, hence perpetuating elite-level loyalties (see also Brownlee 2007). A dominant single party can raid the state bureaucracy too, amassing the patronage resources that elites demand. Indeed, in Malaysia, party and bureaucratic apparatuses grew fused with UMNO freely extracting from ministerial agencies and government-linked corporations (GLCs) the sinecures, funds and assets which, when granted or withheld, discourage defections by elites.

To be sure, given the rapacity and ferocity with which elites in UMNO compete, party discipline is never ironclad. UMNO's historical record bristles with epic splits between leaders, notably Tun Razak's purging of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Hussein Onn's jailing of Harun Idris, Tengku Razaleigh and Musa Hitam's challenging Mahathir Mohamad, followed a decade later by Anwar Ibrahim's challenging Mahathir, then Abdullah Badawi's ouster by Najib Razak (see Case 2015). Further, these schisms typically reverberate throughout the party apparatus, crystallizing in factions or *kem* (camps).

However, as GE14 approached, the project team was advised by Shahrir Samad, long a top position-holder in UMNO and incumbent in the parliamentary seat of Johor Bahru, not to make overmuch of party rivalries. As he dryly observed, "UMNO has always been divided," implying that fractiousness between elites was managed by paramount leaders. In this regard, Shahrir continued, "Najib is under-appreciated. He reacted [effectively] to the electoral setback in 2013." Further, even if Najib might slip, Shahrir declared his own unshakeable loyalty: "However much the leaders screw up the party, I will stay with the party."[1]

Even so, in surveying the political terrain, the project team detected elite-level tensions. To be sure, the UMNO president and Malaysian Prime Minister, Najib Razak, in possession of immense patronage resources, kept his vice-like grip over his party's Supreme Council members, division leaders and Cabinet ministers. But in alienating Mahathir, his one-time benefactor, then expelling Mahathir's son, Mukhriz, from the party, as well as his own deputy, Muhyiddin Yassin, Najib fuelled new political opposition. Indeed, Mahathir would gradually recruit defectors from UMNO into a new personal vehicle, the Malaysia United Indigenous Party (PPBM or 'Bersatu'), with which he might spearhead Pakatan's challenge.

At the same time, as the project team would discover, though Najib kept favour among the elites in UMNO, he was helpless to stay the frenzy among second-echelon leaders over candidate selection, especially in Perak, Kedah and Johor. If patronage was still binding divisional leaders to Najib, it was profoundly

alienating aspirants who were excluded and its lavishness, spotlighted by the scandal over 1MDB, began to anger ordinary citizens who were beset by hard times.

In sum, hybrid regimes are typically durable forms of authoritarian rule. They long survive harder, more brittle variants of military government and personal dictatorship, attaining an average life expectancy of 23 years (Geddes 1999). But Malaysia's hybrid regime, more finely articulated in terms of electoral authoritarianism and single-party dominance, lived longer still. By alloying democratic freedoms with authoritarian controls, electoral vibrancy with deadening manipulations and the UMNO apparatus with state patronage resources, hybrid politics in Malaysia reached a ripe old age of 44 years. Even so, elite-level divisions and mass-level grievances intensified during Najib's tenure. And they were catalysed by GE14.

Old pathways and shifting terrain

So, what caused Malaysia's hardy amalgam of hybrid politics, braced by electoral authoritarianism and single-party dominance, to finally wither and collapse? In the wake of long-term durability, a static institutional account that stresses intrinsic durability can hardly suffice. We must begin instead with shifts in socioeconomic dynamics, cumulating in popular discontents that were finally uncorked by elite-level splits.

As elsewhere in the developing world, ordinary processes of modernization have been at work in Malaysia, hallmarked by breakneck urbanization, a new middle class and social media outlets. In this context, some of the practices integral to a hybrid regime's durability began to weaken it, with electoral manipulations and patronage flows now so alienating many middle-class citizens that civil society organizations sprouted up in protest, particularly the electoral reform group, Bersih (see Weiss 2018).

But countervailing pressures have also been present, with Malaysia demarcated by a uniquely divided but ever more skewed ethnoreligious structure. Class affiliation has thus been obscured by ethnic identification, impeding any straightforward modernizing trajectory. It is worth reviewing these societal configurations briefly, for they impact strongly on mobilizing strategies and party positioning.

Historically in Malaysia, an ethnic "bipolar" face-off prevailed, pitting mostly rural Malays, established as "indigenous," against "non-Malays," largely Chinese, often denigrated as "migrants" (Milne 1981; Horowitz 1985). In managing this social edifice, UMNO political leaders had traditionally engaged Chinese elites from the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and allied business enterprises in an evenly matched posture of "consociationalism" (Lijphart 1977), the basis during the 1960s for their coalescence as the "Alliance." Holding the centre ground, the Alliance confronted the largely ethnic Chinese, secular and nominally socialist Democratic Action Party (DAP) on its left and the

avowedly sectarian Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) on its right. This configuration is charted here:

1960s—Historic consociationalism

DAP	*UMNO (+Alliance)*	*PAS*
non-Malay secular nominal socialism	consociationalist moderate Malay-Muslim nominal free markets	Malay-Muslim hegemony

However, as Malaysia's ethnic Malay segment grew larger and more urban, frictions with the Chinese erupted at the end of the decade in the May 13th violence. UMNO leaders responded to the slippage in Malay support by moving "right," therein adjusting their relations with the Chinese. Now seizing the lion's share of political and cultural power, while making deep inroads into the economy, UMNO leaders struck a new posture of "hegemony with accommodationist elements" (Zakaria 1989). This formed the basis during the 1970s–1990s for a skewed, but sustained coalescence in the Barisan Nasional. At the same time, increasingly disaffected Chinese fled to the DAP. And amid jarring socioeconomic change, Malays seeking deeper spiritual moorings gravitated to PAS, as the following chart outlines.

1970s–1990s—Hegemony with accommodationist elements

DAP	*UMNO (+BN)*	*PAS*
non-Malay secular nominal socialism	Malay-Muslim hegemony w/ accommodativeness intense rent-seeking	Malay-Muslim hegemony

Rapid industrialization during the 1990s, followed by electrifying financial shock at the end of the decade, quickened dynamics among the Malays. A political *reformasi* movement, galvanized by the charisma and personal plight of Anwar Ibrahim, spawned a predominantly Malay middle-class, yet ethnically mixed party, eventually badged as the People's Justice Party (PKR). In confronting UMNO, it centred a new, though informal coalition. PKR thus gathered with the DAP on one side and PAS on the other in an omnibus vehicle that was christened *Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front), making gains against the UMNO-led Barisan in the 1999 general election.

This progress was interrupted by a new and emollient Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who, in the next election in 2004, led Barisan to its grandest victory margin ever. But Abdullah's success, derived from pliancy and accommodativeness, soon reignited ethnic confidence and fervour among other UMNO leaders. And in pursuit of yet stronger Malay hegemony, they began to drive the party further "rightward" toward a more exclusionary nativist pole (Welsh

and Chin 2013). But as UMNO left much of the Malay middle class and other Barisan component parties behind, it ceded yet more of the centre ground to the PKR and its partners.

UMNO thus grew ever more attuned to its rural Malay supporters in the heartland states of peninsular Malaysia, as well as in the interior of Sarawak and Sabah. UMNO had long ensnared these constituents in what Magaloni and Kricheli (2010: 128) describe as a "punishment regime." In this approach, UMNO disbursed enough largesse in the form of low subsidies and rude housing that it retained popular loyalties. But it resisted ceding enough to permit autonomy and empowerment. Accordingly, "the punishment regime . . . trap[s] poor voters into supporting the dictatorship, because their livelihood depends on state transfers." UMNO's dependents, then, were traditionally gratified by meagre handouts. They were deterred from defecting by fears over losing even scant benefits.

In visiting the "*parit* areas" of semi-rural western Johor, cross-hatched by irrigation canals and oil palm, the project team gained a sense of the intensity of UMNO's social networks and cultural controls.[2] UMNO's candidate for the local parliamentary seat, who asked to remain anonymous, was contesting in the region for the first time. As the team travelled with her, one was struck not only by the material poverty of the village settings but also the patterns of nearly familial affection with which the warmly charismatic candidate was greeted.[3] She stood illumined in upcountry and beachside appearances. Her table companions and retinues pulsed with UMNO identification and sparked with hopes of electoral victory and village-level reward.

The punishment regime gained more material grounding through BR1M, a redistributive scheme for the needy that was administered by UMNO offices through arbitrary cash tranches and payments. In an interview, Anthony Loke, the DAP's national organizing secretary and Pakatan's parliamentary candidate for Seremban, evoked the effectiveness of BR1M in attracting rural Malay supporters. As he noted, "BR1M without GST would be a disaster for us."[4] Later in the fieldtrip, the project team would learn how these personal and party-based exchanges had been more deeply institutionalized through the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) settler schemes, discussed later.

Soon after Abdullah's 2004 victory, forged in a renewed but momentary ethnic accommodativeness, the prior sociopolitical trajectory resumed toward exclusivism. UMNO leaders, newly emboldened, focused attention more closely on their rural Malay supporters held captive in the punishment regime. Meanwhile, PKR and its partners, eventually rebadged as *Pakatan Rakyat* (Alliance of Hope), firmed their centre-ground positioning. They appealed, then, to an increasingly self-reliant and professional Malay middle class, as well as to a more deeply alienated Chinese community. These shifts were first crystallized, but then clouded by GE12 and GE13, respectively, signifying both the ratifying and causally independent effects that electoral events can impose. Let us review these two electoral contests briefly in order to evaluate their trajectory leading up to GE14.

In GE12, held in 2008, large parts of the Chinese community swung against the UMNO-led Barisan; with the opposition coalition having been joined by

PAS, a smaller swing of perhaps 5% of Malay voters did the same (Pepinsky 2009). In this election, Barisan retained power with 51.5% of the popular vote, amplified by district malapportionment and gerrymandering into 60% of the seats in parliament. But this was not enough for Barisan to retain its two-thirds parliamentary majority and control over five state assemblies. Hence, the most significant effect of GE12 was its inauguration of a "two-party" system that featured a pair of evenly matched, though dissimilar, coalitions. UMNO would now grow more openly exclusivist, denouncing Malays who voted against it as traitorous. Pakatan hewed to its centre positioning, embracing elements of the middle-class Malay and Chinese communities.

In the next election, GE13, the Chinese voted in even greater unison against the UMNO-led Barisan. But though still joined by much of the Malay middle class, many Malay voters now took fright, returning to UMNO in a significant reverse swing. Barisan clung to power in parliament and claimed back two state assemblies. Though only winning 47.5% of the popular vote, electoral manipulations enabled Barisan again to retain some 59% of the seats in parliament. Party positioning, distinguished by UMNO's growing still more exclusionary, is charted here:

2000s—From Barisan hegemony to UMNO exclusion

DAP >	<*PKR (+BA/PR)*>	<*PAS*	>*UMNO (+BN)*
moderate non-Malay secular reformist	Malay hegemony w/ accommodativeness moderate Islam reformist	Malay hegemony w/ accommodativeness revivalist Islam reformist	exclusionary Malay intensifying Islam intense rent-seeking

In these circumstances, though *Pakatan Rakyat* increased its popular vote total to claim a narrow majority, GE13 did not amount to a "liberalizing electoral outcome" (Howard and Roessler 2006), ushering in opposition victory and democratic transition. GE13's lessons for voters and parties were instead more ambiguous.

First, electoral manipulations were so great that only if the UMNO-led Barisan was severely weakened could any opposition coalition hope to win. Second, this outcome was inhibited by a dynamic in which when ethnic Chinese voted heavily in favour of the opposition the Malays were taken aback, thus negating any straightforward trajectory of democratic change.

On this score, several Pakatan candidates with whom the project team met during the campaign for GE14 described a deep "fear" among the Malays over a loss of material benefits and political and cultural standing to the Chinese. Shamsul Iskandar, a PKR Vice-President and candidate for Hang Tuah Jaya, evaluated his electoral chances as weak: "Malay voters are very afraid [of supporting Pakatan]. They do not want others to know how they vote. . . . We know that we cannot win."[5]

Similarly, Maszlee Malik, Bersatu's parliamentary candidate for Simpang Renggam, described a unique Johor culture, a deep dependence on UMNO and a "Malay fear" of the DAP and nearby Singapore. Referring to Lim Kit Siang's victory in 2008 in Gelang Patah, Maszlee contended, "yes, he won, but he scared away the Malays. We lost five other seats." In these circumstances, observed Maszlee, "if I join DAP, they call me 'kafir'. The Malays are not ready for change."[6] These fears among the Malays were duly reinforced by a drumbeat of UMNO-owned media outlets, harping throughout the campaign period about the DAP's "racism." They warned that if Pakatan won the election, the government would be dominated by the DAP. Pakatan would then work ceaselessly to strip the Malays of their birthright and Islam of its standing.

In these conditions, UMNO leaders viewed the punishment regime as even more necessary for their mobilizing strategies. Thus, the project team observed the renewed attention heaped on FELDA settlers. During discussions, Shahrir Samad, UMNO's incumbent parliamentarian for Johor Bahru and the new chairman of FELDA, described "our thinking [toward the settlers]. We still have responsibility for them. We spoil them . . . They are special." He then enumerated the reforms that he would introduce after the Barisan victory that he roundly predicted. However, Shahrir also acknowledged the punishment regime's harder edge, with UMNO warlords traditionally looking upon the settlers as their "FELDA empire." And upon this rural base, he described a "Mike Tyson strategy [by which high level party officials would] build and enrich [UMNO] division leaders, teach them to misbehave, corrupt them."[7] On this score, in a later interview, a Bersatu agent for Muhyiddin Yassin in Alor Setar appeared to substantively intuit the punishment regime, remarking that UMNO was "living off the people's misery."[8]

In turn Pakatan, drawing on lessons from GE13, calculated that in order to make electoral gains UMNO must be weakened in its rural bailiwicks. To this end, Mahathir campaigned tirelessly across FELDA estates, striving to crack the punishment regime. The project team witnessed his efforts in the FELDA estate of Bukit Goh in Pahang.[9] In high afternoon heat, under a low tent, his wife seated before him, no security in view, Mahathir spoke softly but earnestly to an admiring front-yard gathering. He adorned his messaging with village charm, resonantly off-colour humour and stinging criticisms over 1MDB.

Among some so-called "second-generation settlers," Mahathir's barbs appeared to hit home. One settler in Bukit Goh vigorously declared to the team his disgust over persistently low earnings. For him, the punishment regime had grown threadbare, with the small homes and modest estates acquired through FELDA now taken for granted. Thus, as Saifuddin Abdullah, Pakatan's candidate for the Indera Mahkota parliamentary seat declared to the project team, "we have made some inroads into FELDA areas."[10] Indeed, in past elections, opposition candidates had been blocked by settlers even from entering. But in GE14, they were able to penetrate what Saifuddin characterized as the "Malay Belt."

However, though Pakatan would win the parliamentary seats of Indera Mahkota and Kuantan, Mahathir gained no wider traction in Pahang. Nor did he make much headway in the neighbouring states of Kelantan and Terengganu.

As Raja Kamarul Bahrin, Pakatan's candidate for the parliamentary seat of Kuala Terengganu, disclosed to the project team, "it is difficult for us in Terengganu. This is the PAS heartland." He then described how after leaving PAS for Amanah, he had been shamed at the mosque by long-time companions: "Leaving PAS is like committing treason."[11] Even so, though Pakatan might win few seats in these states, PAS would even more grievously undercut UMNO.

Thus, in the context of Pakatan's seeking to strategically weaken UMNO, it is worth pausing to review accounts of the dealings that seemed tacitly to be undertaken by UMNO and PAS and the implications for their respective electoral fortunes. By holding out the prospect of *Sharia* law and an "all-Muslim" government, UMNO had succeeded in detaching PAS from Pakatan Rakyat in mid-2015 (*The Straits Times*, 18 June 2015). The project team thus looked intently during the campaigning for GE14 for evidence of deeper collaboration.

In an illuminating discussion with a young PhD student and a member of a loyal "PAS family," the team learned of widespread speculation over an inter-elite arrangement between PAS and UMNO, coded as the "national consensus."[12] The student advised that Hadi Awang, PAS's president, aspired to only win in Kelantan and Terengganu. Meanwhile, Najib was so "weak that he must sacrifice states in order to retain national power." In order to aid UMNO in parliamentary contests, PAS then put up some 158 candidates across the country. In an interview afterward with Samsuri Mokhtar, PAS's candidate for the Terengganu state seat of Rendang and, if victorious, the party's choice for Terengganu *menteri besar*, the team was frankly told that "in reality, we know we cannot win at the federal level." PAS's aim, then, appeared to be to proliferate three-corner contests, dividing opposition votes cast for Pakatan and PAS so that UMNO might be advantaged.

In turn, UMNO reciprocated by deliberately selecting weak candidates in Kelantan and Terengganu, therein clearing state constituencies on the east coast for PAS. One example, said the student, involved UMNO's again selecting its unpopular Terengganu *menteri besar*, Ahmad Razif, as a candidate despite his bleak prospects. Indeed, as the team would learn in an interview later with the Pakatan candidate for Kuala Terengganu, Ahmad Razif "was not popular with the Sultan or even with Barisan,"[13] thereby leaving the door open for Samsuri. But during his interview, Samsuri remained coy over this executive promotion in store for him. When asked why, he replied that were this known, it would stimulate challenges in the party even prior to the election: "They will go all out to defeat you."[14] This seemed to again signify the intensity of division between Malay political elites, though this time within PAS.

Samsuri, an instructor in aeronautics, was thus a member of PAS's "professional" faction. And he called for a "soft approach" in campaigning, with "less confrontation, less aggressive rhetoric," especially over Islam, in order to appeal to rural Malays. But he advised too that this "softness does not extend to DAP." Samsuri was also a former political secretary to Hadi. While declaring his enmity toward DAP, he denied any notion of collaboration between Hadi and Najib.

The project team also met with Ahmad Amzad, PAS's candidate for the parliamentary seat of Kuala Terengganu.[15] As a former CEO of a shipbuilding firm, he, like Samsuri, was a member of PAS's professional wing. Indeed, he was an

advocate of a "Dubai model" and *kerajaan teknokrat* (technocratic government). In addition, he showed much tolerance on inter-ethnic relations and cultural issues. But he too castigated the DAP for spreading "fitnah" (slander) about PAS, such that "they become our enemies . . . Mahathir also did many bad things to PAS—Memali, ISA detentions, petroleum royalties."

But despite his contempt for Pakatan, Amzad insisted that there was "no UMNO–PAS deal. . . . Why should PAS be content to be kingmaker when it can be king? UMNO is splitting. UMNO and Amanah leaders are returning to PAS. PAS will get its best result ever." Thus, there would be no "Malay tsunami" but instead a "Muslim tsunami." This was the first indication that the project team received that the terms of any collaboration between UMNO and PAS were ambiguous, complex and even unknown to many party members, and further, might fail to redound in UMNO's electoral favour.

In assessing the lead-up to GE14, let us briefly recount the consequent shifts in party positioning and new patterns of coalescence. The tension between modernized middle-class demands and gathering ethnoreligious fears complicated these dynamics.

First, as UMNO trumpeted ethnoreligious appeals more loudly, PAS grew enticed. However, as UMNO moved rightward, a faction broke back to form Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM, usually denoted as "Bersatu"). This became the personalist vehicle of Mahathir and Muhyiddin Yassin. In addition, as PAS moved rightward in pursuit of UMNO, an Islamist yet progressive faction broke back to form the Parti Amanah Nasional (PAN).

Next, PKR and DAP were joined by Bersatu and Amanah, broadening their grip on the centre ground. These four parties then gathered under a new but laxly formed umbrella, Pakatan Harapan. Accordingly, GE14 pitted a new exclusionary association between UMNO and PAS against a broadly accommodative front anchored by PKR. This configuration, denoted simply as "polarization," is charted here:

2013—Polarization

DAP>	*<PKR (+PH)*		*PAS>*		*UMNO>*
nominally multiracial reformist	Malay hegemony w/ accommodativeness		exclusionary Malay-Muslim		exlusionary Malay-Muslim intense rent-seeking
		V			V
		<Amanah moderate Malay tolerant Islam reformist		**<Bersatu** moderate/ exclusionary Malay moderate Islam nominally reformist	

GE14: Barisan and Pakatan

Malaysia's constitution required that a general election be held by August 2018. Parliament was duly dissolved by the Prime Minister on 7 April that year. But even as GE14 approached, we recalled the lessons from the previous election that seemed this time to depress voter sentiments: (1) even when the opposition wins elections, manipulations ensure its defeat; (2) even as the opposition makes gains among Chinese voters, Malay voters draw back, fearful of losing institutionalized privileges.

To be sure, UMNO's leadership had grown deeply unpopular. Widespread contempt focused on the party president and Prime Minister, Najib. But owing to electoral manipulations and the punishment regime, as well as severe rivalries in Pakatan, UMNO was widely predicted to win. Accordingly, a mood of popular resignation seemed pervasive.

Hence, the project team observed early in the campaign period that while party banners were everywhere on display, large rallies and *ceramah* were rare. Indeed, Khalid Jaafar, who was denied candidate selection in Selangor, observed forlornly that *ceramah* had grown obsolete in the age of social media.[16] What is more, the DAP candidate for the Seremban parliamentary seat, Anthony Loke, noted that during the campaign even the flow of "money politics" had dried up, with fewer stakeholders bothering to invest. "The tycoons are staying away . . . though this is less a sign of reform than disinterest,"[17] he remarked.

In these conditions, though the UMNO-led Barisan was divided and unpopular, its grip on electoral procedures and rural constituencies ensured its victory, leaving citizens subdued. Voter turnout had reached 85% in GE13. Participation was expected to be much lower in this election. Yet late in the campaign period, livelihood issues sparked a surge in citizen resentments and commensurate voter interest.

The following section begins by going over the UMNO-led Barisan's internal dynamics, its further skewing of the playing field and its more generous funding of the punishment regime. It then reviews the dynamics within and across the parties in Pakatan. It concludes by briefly enumerating the popular grievances by which UMNO was weakened.

UMNO factionalism

Najib Razak kept a firm grip on the UMNO Supreme Council, his Cabinet and the party's division leaders. But both he and many of the party "warlords" were widely loathed. Accordingly, with their victory uncertain, some division leaders were dropped as Barisan candidates. And duly embittered, they often responded by "sabotaging" those who had been selected in their stead. Indeed, politics in UMNO are often characterized by extensive "backstabbing."

One example encountered by the project team involved Puad Zarkashi, UMNO's longtime divisional head in Batu Pahat and the director-general of

JASA. Reviled for his rapacity, he was dropped by UMNO as a candidate in preparation for GE14. As Shahir Samad explained to the project team, "we got rid of Puad," framing this as evidence of UMNO's reform commitments.[18] But an embittered Puad then went on to make vicious use of social media, sabotaging the prospects of the candidate who had replaced him by dredging up an old case of *khalwat* in which she had been involved (see *Malaysiakini*, 27 April 2018). Roundly castigating the candidate for what he portrayed as "personal moral issues," Puad caused the candidate much evident distress.

Electoral manipulations and the punishment regime

But notwithstanding UMNO's internal ructions, party elites retained control over the electoral procedures and many rural constituencies. And they tried now to tighten their hold on both. With respect to electoral manipulations, the UMNO-led Barisan government had undertaken a redelineation exercise prior to the election in order to more grossly malapportion and gerrymander constituencies. In referring to the redelineation, as well the relocation of an army base from Johor Bahru to Batu Pahat, Shahrir Samad blithely divulged that "we move votes." He then breezily predicted UMNO's new candidate in this district, duly boosted by postal votes, would win in her constituency.

Other manipulations involved the Barisan government's hurried passage of an "Anti-Fake News" law, which was widely understood as an effort to inhibit the criticisms over 1MBD. The Registrar of Societies placed a temporary ban on Bersatu, casting doubt on Mahathir's eligibility. Also, the Election Commission scheduled polling day in the middle of the workweek in an effort to diminish turnout.[19] As a final resort, the government had passed new security legislation by which it could suspend the electoral process or rescind the results.

At the same time, the government made sundry concessions, adjusting the terms of the punishment regime. Civil servants, while intimidated by threats of dismissal or even jailing under the Official Secrets Act, were treated to pre-election salary top-ups. Low-income earners were promised another tranche of BR1M payments. Indeed, the UMNO-led Barisan pledged in its manifesto that another RM10.3 million would be allocated to households after its victory (*Edge Financial Daily*, 28 August 2018). For good measure, those under the age of 26 were informed that they would be spared all income taxation.

Pakatan factionalism

If UMNO suffered internal elite-divisions and party sabotage, rivalries within and between parties in Pakatan seemed worse. Thus, it is worth recalling that in explaining the iterated victories of incumbent governments under hybrid regimes, the explanation is often rooted less in a government's strength than in the disunity and seeming unviability of the opposition.

PKR was the mainstay of the Pakatan opposition. Saifuddin Abdullah, a PKR candidate who also served as the Pakatan chief secretary, found the opposition's possession of a common logo and constitution evidence of its coherence.[20] He also claimed to the project team that the leadership of Mahathir, "who gets things done," had had a "catalysing impact." Even so, he sketched out the fault lines in PKR between Anwar, Wan Azizah and Azmin Ali, as well as between Azmin and a PKR Vice-President, Rafizi Ramli. Indeed, Rafizi's independent fund-raising, formation of Invoke, and allegations of corruption within the party were seen as "undercutting PKR."

At an individual level, PKR's candidate for Hang Tuah Jaya, Shamsul Iskandar, complained to the project team that when he saw the party's candidate list, "I was shocked." As a Vice-President of the party, Shamsul felt deserving of a safe seat. Instead, he was pitted against one of the most fearsome UMNO warlords, Rustam Ali. Although he had bested Rustam in GE13, "I didn't want this hardship seat again."[21]

Shamsul was accompanied by a colleague, who also declared his indignation toward PKR for passing him over as a candidate. He too described the enmity between the PKR's founder and de facto leader, Anwar, and his deputy, Azmin. Referring to the so-called "Kajang move," he contended that "Anwar is responsible for this intrigue, not Wan Azizah . . . What game is he playing?" He then turned his ire on the DAP, arguing that the "DAP pushes too far. It must understand. Its demographic base is shrinking."

Strains also appeared between PKR and Amanah over seat allocation. Saifuddin recounted how initially, Amanah demanded that it be allocated every constituency that had earlier been contested by PAS. He noted that for symbolic reasons each party insisted on a constituency in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. A Bersatu candidate in a semi-rural constituency in Kedah also complained over his seat allocation.[22] Based in the Federal Territory, he had expected to be awarded a candidacy there. But he had been "backstabbed" by rivals and forced into a complex multi-cornered fight in a faraway northern state where, as a "parachute candidate," he stood little chance. "Let's face it, Bersatu is made up of UMNO rejects," he lamented. Hence, in surveying the disunity within and across the parties in Pakatan, project team leader Edmund Terence Gomez concluded that Pakatan, like Barisan, was wholly "dysfunctional."

Livelihood issues and discontents

Barisan and Pakatan might both have been fissiparous groupings, but given UMNO's hold on electoral procedures and rural constituencies, as well as the seeming voter resignation, Barisan was predicted to win. However, though the campaign was initially tepid, opinion polling began to finally detect smouldering grievances over livelihood issues. Indeed, surveys have long identified economic "precarit"' as the chief concern of Malay respondents. In GE14, discontents focused on a rising cost of living amid persistently low wages yielded what in Malaysia is

commonly designated as a "middle income trap." More emotively, the modest livelihoods of most Malaysians were thrown into jarring relief by the high-living of Najib, his family members and his extended retinues. Thus, as the campaign gained pace, widespread bewilderment over the intricacies of 1MDB began to sharpen in fascination and resentment.

In these circumstances, while some Pakatan candidates bemoaned their fates, key strategists began to plot scenarios for a surprise victory. In an extended discussion with the project team, DAP's candidate for the parliamentary constituency of Ayer Hitam, Liew Chin Tong, specified in exact terms the thresholds that Pakatan would need to meet.[23] He described the economic lassitude of young Malays and the perennial despondency of the Chinese. And he gauged the voter swings that could result. However, Liew stated that he was under no illusion: "This is not a pro-opposition election. This is an anti-Najib election." But he understood that by weakening UMNO's appeal, the party's electoral manipulations and the punishment regime might be overcome.

In what follows, this essay engages with a classic literature on elections and democratic transitions. Its aim is to forge a more theorized account for the unexpected outcome of Malaysia's GE14 and the catalyzing, even pivotal implications for the country's political regime.

Regime-sustaining and regime-subverting elections

Unlike in advanced industrial democracies, elections held under conditions of hybrid politics do much more than overturn or procedurally refresh an incumbent government. They can impact deeply on the regime's institutional framework, either adding reinforcement or cracking open new fissures. And where incumbents operating hybrid regimes are defeated, elections become "a vehicle of democratization as well as the goal of democratization" (Huntington 1991: 174). Thus, they invite added levels of scrutiny.

Drawing from Schedler (2013), the following sections sketch a series of possibilities and sub-variants over how Malaysia's GE14 might have turned out. At base, Schedler characterizes elections held under conditions of electoral authoritarianism as commonly regime "sustaining," but occasionally "subverting."

Regime-sustaining elections

Re-legitimating victory: In this scenario, the UMNO-led Barisan regenerates the large popular majority that it won in the 2004 election, so allaying resentments over its abuses that it re-legitimates its hold on state power.

De-legitimating win: The UMNO-led Barisan's margins remain the same as in the 2008 or 2013 elections or slip even further. But electoral manipulations still boost its totals into a parliamentary majority, making a "mockery of the election" (Huntington 1991: 183). In addition, eking out a win may require murky transactions in a hung parliament or state-level assemblies or even dramatic impositions

of emergency rule across some states or districts. Popular resentments over manipulations mount proportionately, but so does a mood of debilitating fatalism, especially when conditioned by a pervasive sense of "normalized" corruption.

Regime-subverting elections

Liberalizing electoral outcome: In this scenario, the UMNO-led Barisan's margins are even more severely eroded. While electoral manipulations enable it to cling to power, popular resentments grow so inflamed that the cost of coercion rises steeply. The government acknowledges its need to "listen to the people," leading it to make substantive reforms over procedures and policies. In this pattern, so long as the opposition remains united and resonant, demands only increase for yet greater concessions, paving the way later for electoral turnover and democratic change.

Democratization-by-election: Despite the barriers thrown up by electoral manipulations and sundry other stratagems, the UMNO-led Barisan loses outright in a "stunning election." Huntington (1991: 180) further observed that in this situation, "the electoral defeat of authoritarian rulers . . . usually meant the effective end of the authoritarian regime." "Stealing" or renouncing the election would so add to the costs of their remaining in power that it was now "cheaper" to relent, allowing turnover to go forward (Lindberg 2009). UMNO estimates that by retreating peacefully into opposition, its machinery and historical messaging, as well as its successor's unavoidable policy failings, will enable it to again contest effectively and return to power.

GE14

So how are we to understand the institutional impact of GE14 and Malaysia's unfolding democratic transition? As mentioned, most pundits and practitioners plumped for the second scenario, i.e., that the UMNO-led Barisan's margins would be reduced, but that its enhanced manipulations would enable it to cling to power, an outcome amounting to a "de-legitimating win." But in a stunning election, the government was defeated outright. Barisan's popular vote total plummeted from 47.5% in GE13 to barely 35% in GE14.

However, Pakatan Harapan's total dropped too, from the 51.5% of the popular vote that its predecessor, Pakatan Rakyat, had won in GE13 to 48.5%, a mere plurality. This was mostly attributable to PAS's having abandoned the coalition as it recoiled from DAP and drew closer to UMNO. But in mounting three-cornered fights across the country, PAS did indeed take fewer votes from Pakatan than it did from UMNO. PAS won 18% of the popular vote. Pakatan declined by 2% of the popular vote. Thus, the erosion in UMNO's appeal that Pakatan needed to win seemed to be instigated inadvertently by PAS. UMNO's electoral manipulations and the punishment regime were thus surmounted by Pakatan, despite the coalition's own severe disunity.

Pakatan was buoyed by the electoral event itself, as the concept of democratization-by-election connotes. Even if delayed, the bland sentiments of contempt and resignation were finally galvanized by the election into concerted voter action. It did this in two ways. First, impressionistic evidence suggests that the government's use of increasingly petty manipulations, rather than subduing citizens instead drove them to cast ballots in protest, helping to weaken UMNO in just the way that the DAP strategist, Liew Chin Tong, had projected. As one example, the Election Commission in growing desperation ordered Mahathir's visage to be cut away from Pakatan's campaign posters. The ghostly canvasses that remained, looming high over city streets, attracted widespread derision. What is more, the intricate gerrymandering that the Election Commission had carried out, a key electoral manipulation, failed in many constituencies to restrain Pakatan's late surge. The gerrymandering designed to backstop UMNO was often negated by the three-way fights that PAS had so rashly instigated (Tindak Malaysia 2018).

Second, the election's offering space for participation, irrespective of the seeming futility, finally motivated citizens to act on their grievances in the scant space that was allowed. This is common under hybrid regimes, as they offer few outlets for political release other than casting ballots. Thus, in the end, the Election Commission's efforts to depress turnout seemed to stimulate it. As the project team returned southward to Kuala Lumpur on the eve of the election, team members were taken aback by the highway traffic headed north, with voters streaming home to their constituencies.

Transitional pathways

Elections held under conditions of hybrid politics are not determinative, but catalytic. Thus, however muted the political activity seemed prior to GE14, many more drivers were at work than the causal weight of the electoral event itself. These complex prior dynamics can be elaborated abstractly in terms of inter-elite and elite-mass relations, firing an engine that gained momentum from a stuttering, then reversing electoral flywheel.

This conceptualization helps us to see that democratization-by-election does not amount to any separate mode of transition. It is instead a supplementary strand of varying causal force. It helps us also to address this chapter's major theme of rivalries between political elites. At this juncture, some of the early Third Wave literature on transitions can be fruitfully engaged, given the primacy that its writers once attached to elite-level relations. As O'Donnell and Schmitter vividly described, every democratic transition involves the break-up of the authoritarian coalition, ushering in founding elections that may exert "stunning" effects.

In a brief schematic, we recall two ideal-type trajectories. First, in a process of "replacement," an authoritarian coalition is populated by unyielding hardliners (Huntington 1991: 142). Often led by a "personal dictator," this coalition has so personalized political and economic power that it finds no institutional redoubts

to which to retreat. Thus, if democratic transition is to take place, it must be "pushed" (Thompson 1996), demanding an opposition-led and societally-driven dynamic depicted as bottom-up. Under pressure, the authoritarian coalition thereafter "splinters." This process may precede or be catalyzed by elections. But either way, the institutional and policy reforms that follow may be rapid and far-reaching, risking authoritarian backlash. Based on the emblematic case of the Philippines, this mode is often associated with eruptive "people power."

Next, in a process of "transformation," an authoritarian coalition features hardliners and more amendable soft-liners. Usually led by a single dominant party or military junta, soft-liners recognize that they can best retain some of the institutional bases they possess by sharing political and economic power. Hence, in preparing for democratic transition, soft-liners bargain with the opposition and the societal leaders, extracting guarantees while issuing concessions. This produces an elite-initiated but negotiated dynamic approximated as top-down. In this trajectory the timing is different, with the authoritarian coalition having split prior to transition. It may also be preceded or catalyzed by elections. But the institutional and policy reforms that follow are usually tepid, avoiding authoritarian backlash but risking popular disillusion.

Do either of these processes capture Malaysia's democratic transition? Were hardliner elites in UMNO "pushed" by opposition and societal forces through GE14? Or did these elites split, with soft-liners then bargaining with the opposition and mobilizing societal forces? As Huntington (1991: 115) observed, transitional pathways are always clouded by ambiguities: "every historical case combined aspects of two or more opposition processes." In Malaysia, we surely find such synthesis, with GE14 featuring prominently. But the process seems to tilt with weighty elements of transformation.

Replacement

An analyst for *StarTV* (10 May 2018) characterized GE14 as "people power through the ballot." Another, writing for *Channel News Asia* (11 May 2018) described Pakatan's victory as "powered by people. *Edge Weekly* (24 May 2018) credited this outcome to "the people's indomitable will for change." A distinguished contributor to *Malaysiakini* (14 May 2018) described "citizens [who] put the love of their country over self-interest . . . a coming together." And analysts at the University of Melbourne portrayed Malaysia's voters as "frankly, heroic" (*Pursuit*, 17 May 2018). Collective imagery thus evoked a joyous "Malaysian tsunami"' of popular upsurge.

In this interpretation, the much despised Najib can be cast as a hardliner, even a personal dictator, maintaining his hold over the UMNO Supreme Council, the Cabinet and the party's divisional leaders, the dreaded warlords. To be sure, as reported earlier, the project team encountered much evidence of spurned party aspirants who sabotaged the campaigning of their fellows who had been selected as candidates. But at the topmost levels within the authoritarian coalition, Najib kept his grip. No soft-liners emerged, willing to negotiate

meaningful institutional reforms. Rather, with Najib having so personalized state power and assets, to the point of shifting 1MDB funds into his own accounts, there were no institutions beyond his grasp to which they might retreat. As Najib had once famously intoned, "don't forget, I am the biggest warlord of all."[24]

Accordingly, if democratic transition was to go forward, Najib and his authoritarian coalition "had to be pushed," even if this was achieved within the electoral parameters of Malaysia's hybrid regime. Najib's lack of preparedness grew plain on the night of the GE14, for neither he or his peers had secured any amnesty, "exit guarantees" or continuing "reserve domains" of state power. Rather, as election results were begrudgingly released by a shell-shocked Election Commission, Najib stood dumbfounded. He was overheard to utter, "am I really so hated?"[25] He and his wife were then barred from journeying overseas as their possessions were confiscated and investigations begun. His first rings of defence, the Attorney-General and the director of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency, were swiftly deposed. The police staked out his home. Najib's failure to imagine, much less prepare for defeat stemmed from the "false confidence of dictators" (Huntington 1991: 182) that was bolstered in this instance by trusty electoral manipulations and an entrenched punishment regime.

But many other aspects of Malaysia's transition fail to align with key dimensions of replacement. If anything, elites in Najib's authoritarian coalition remained more cohesive than their counterparts did in Pakatan, the latter barely papering over their differences in order to contest GE14. As noted throughout this analysis, the project team discovered severe rivalries that simmered within and across Pakatan's component parties over candidate selection and seat allocation, negating any solidarity image of "people power." On this score, Malaysia's transition featured no clear "triggering event" or any sustained sequencing of "mass demonstrations, protests, and strikes" that typically precipitate and hallmark popular upsurge and replacement (Huntington 1991: 145).

Malaysia's transition departs from replacement in another, less favourable way. People power evokes an uplifting unity in mass-level yearnings. But GE14 was mostly won instead by Pakatan through UMNO's weakening, in particular, its backfiring electoral manipulations, its malfunctioning punishment regime and its bad bet placed on "national consensus" with PAS. Liew Chin Tong was thus right in daring to hope that at best, Pakatan would win through protest votes. And even this was a near thing. Ethnic Malays today make up nearly 65% of Malaysia's population. Among those who cast ballots in GE14, 70% delivered their votes to UMNO and PAS. Pakatan was not brought to power with the support of most Malaysian citizens.

Hence, a characterization of GE14 as a bottom-up process of replacement is fraught. There was no encompassing popular upsurge. Democratic change in Malaysia, then, although vastly satisfying at the onset, remains shaky in its foundations and vulnerable to emaciating *desencanto*. But we should not be surprised that Malaysia's democratizing experience fails to accord with replacement.

Among the Third Wave countries, only East Germany was identified by Huntington as a case of replacement deriving from a single-party system.

Transformation

Can Malaysia's democratic transition be better interpreted, then, as a process of top-down transformation? If we track back further from the electoral event of GE14, we espy soft-liner elites in UMNO's authoritarian coalition who plainly did break with, or were purged from, Najib's authoritarian coalition. Anwar, ever in pursuit of *reformasi*, and Mahathir and Muhyiddin, alienated over the gross mismanagement and waste of 1MDB, defected to the opposition. There they were embraced by "minimalists" in Pakatan Rakyat and the DAP—minimalist in the sense that while calling for democratic change and good governance, they sought no more fundamental restructuring of the sociocultural order.

Indeed, Mahathir, we recall, had been recruited through the strategizing of DAP leaders, notably, Lim Kit Siang and Liew Chin Tong. They gauged that Mahathir and Bersatu might attract many Malays to vote for Pakatan through assurances that policy making would remain in safe hands, assuaging "Malay fears" by pledging to leave ethnic privileging intact. Mahathir, then, crafted mobilizing appeals in ways that swayed many Malay voters to behave in ways that they otherwise would not have (but with many keeping a foot in UMNO's punishment regime and PAS's theocratic embrace). This capacity to alter mass attitudes and instigate political change evokes the causal predominance of elites. PKR and Amanah extended Pakatan's reach, appealing to urban, middle class and often pious Malays. And the DAP captured the deep-seated grievances of nearly the whole Chinese community.

In addition, evident bargaining between soft-liners and minimalists took place. Thus, despite the bitterness within Pakatan over seat allocation and candidate selection, Mahathir succeeded in keeping the coalition's components sufficiently together that they avoided pitting candidates against one another. Elite-level pacts also took place, with agreement reached over Mahathir's taking the reins from Anwar, gaining the Prime Ministership, then turning over the office to Anwar. As of the time of writing, this highly sequenced accommodation looks likely to endure (*Edge Financial Daily*, 21 August 2018). Additionally, as expected of a transition conducted by soft-liners and minimalists, Pakatan granted policy making suzerainty during its first 100 days in power to a rather opaque coterie of elites labelled the Eminent Persons Group. And many elements of its campaign manifesto were duly postponed, perhaps to be abandoned, evoking the heavily modulated pace of reform that attends democratic transformation.

In sum, the project team was right in its instincts to focus during its field trip on divisions between elites. Though team members were unsure of its significance at that time, such fractiousness is integral to any process of transformation, splitting the authoritarian coalition, summoning opposition minimalists and then forging a new coalition—brought to power in Malaysia by the catalysing effects of GE14.

Notes

1 Shahrir Samad, Johor Bahru, 30 April 2018.
2 Liew Chin Tong, who contested two general elections in Johor, observed that "UMNO is strong as a social organization in semi-urban and rural districts." Yong Peng, 1 May 2018.
3 Batu Pahat, 29 April 2018.
4 Pekan Titi, Negeri Sembilan, 28 April 2018.
5 Kota Melaka, 29 April 2018.
6 Simpang Renggam, 1 May 2018.
7 Johor Bahru, 30 April 2018
8 Alor Setar, 6 May 2018.
9 Bukit Goh FELDA estate, Pahang, 2 May 2018.
10 Kuantan, 2 May 2018.
11 Kuala Terengganu, 3 October 2018.
12 Kuala Terengganu, 3 May 2018.
13 Raja Kamarul Bahrin, Kuala Terengganu, 3 October 2018.
14 Samsuri Mohtar, Kuala Terengganu, 3 May 2018.
15 Kuala Terengganu, 3 May 2018.
16 Kota Melaka, Malacca, 29 April 2018.
17 Pekan Titi, Negeri Sembilan, 28 April 2018.
18 Johor Bahru, 30 April 2018.
19 Kuantan, 2 May 2018.
20 Kuantan, 3 May 2018.
21 Melaka, 29 April 2018.
22 Kedah, 6 May 2018.
23 Yong Peng, 1 May 2018.
24 Reference.
25 Quoted in [Wikipedia: GE14]. Huntington (1991: 144) is again on beam, having observed that "authoritarian leaders [are] often unaware of how unpopular they [are]."

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Channel News Asia
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Edge Weekly
Malaysiakini
StarTV
The Straits Times

2 Elite contestations, politics of reform and new voting dynamics of peninsular states in GE14

Johan Saravanamuttu

Introduction[1]

This chapter examines General Election 14 of Malaysia (GE14) as part of a trajectory of elite contestations, struggles and tussles that sparked a politics of reform since the late 1990s with the onset of the *Reformasi* Movement. *New politics* developed as a concomitant of these elite contestations, which began with the infamous sacking of Anwar Ibrahim as deputy premier and leader of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).[2] Mahathir Mohamad, who had sacked him and caused his incarceration through a sodomy trial became the lynchpin of a coalition of political parties that included Anwar's reformed-oriented Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR). which defeated the Barisan Nasional (BN). Thus, paradoxically, the politics of reform in Malaysia was an outcome of severe elite contestation within and across Malaysian political parties with yet another concomitant effect of the opening up of the public sphere with sustained and deep civil society engagement in electoral politics. The emergence of new politics led to the major critical juncture of the 2008 general election when the BN lost its customary two-thirds majority control of parliamentary seats, reinforced by the 2013 election which saw the BN losing the popular vote.

Further elite contestations in the lead-up to GE14, along with a set of bizarre events and incidents (which included Anwar's second incarceration), were unable to check the tide of reform politics in the run-up to GE14. Amazingly, the very man who had sparked the *Reformasi* Movement was in the thick of a new phase of reform politics and heading a new political party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), which resulted from a rupture of UMNO owing to the 1MDB scandal. Bersatu was the outcome of an elite tussle that saw the sacking of UMNO deputy leader Muhyiddin Yassin, Vice-President Shafie Apdal and Kedah Chief Minister Mukhriz Mahathir. It was this latest phase of elite contestations within UMNO that led to a further valorizing of reform politics leading to the emergence of the new political opposition coalition of Pakatan Harapan (PH). The predecessor of PH, Pakatan Rakyat (PR), had seen the departure of the Islamic party, PAS, because of differences with the Democratic Action Party (DAP). This inter-elite contestation or altercation of PAS and DAP dates back to the break-up of the Barisan Alternative (BA) formed soon after *Reformasi*

to contest the 1999 election and was exacerbated during the PR period of new politics.[3]

The rupture of the PR was caused by the results of the 61st *Muktamar*, or general assembly, of PAS, which effectively sidelined its moderate or progressive leaders, such as Mohamad (Mat) Sabu who lost the deputy presidency to Tuan Ibrahim, and others like Husam Musa, Sallehudin Ayub, Dzulkifli Ahmad and Khalid Samad who failed to retain or win any post. It seemed inevitable that another new organization would be formed under the aegis of this group, with the prospect that eventually it would be an alternative Islamic party to PAS. This nascent political development came about by way of the formation of Gerakan Harapan Baru (GHB), led by former PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu. The new party would later be named Parti Amanah Negara (PAN, or National Trust Party).[4] 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, PAN. Later PH was joined by bersatu. The death in 2015 of the venerable and Muslim moderate "Tok Guru" Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, the long-standing *Mursyidul Am* (spiritual leader) of PAS had much to do with changes to the PAS leadership and its departure from the PR coalition. Here again, elite contestations led to the new trajectory of reform politics that saw the coming together of PAS progressives, UMNO dissidents and PKR and DAP reformists. The successes of PR in 2008 and 2013 may have also caused the suppression of PAS and DAP differences, but with the absence Nik Aziz, Hadi Awang and the ulama faction within PAS effectively took control of the party.

The "Citizens' Declaration" of 4 March 2016 calling for the removal of the incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak was initiated by Mahathir and endorsed by Anwar from his jail cell. The coming together of two long-time political enemies and civil society actors made for a bizarre event, underpinning that above all else the primary goal of defeating the BN trumped past rivalries and struggles. Events just before the eve of GE14 saw the temporary suspension of bersatu, which led to the important decision of the PH to use the common logo of the PKR, yet another unexpected development for the trajectory of reform politics. As can be seen from the foregoing account, the backdrop to GE14 also saw a fractious struggle in UMNO, causing the formation of bersatu. It also saw intra- and inter-elite tussles in the reformist parties that led to the melding of a new coalition of reform politics.

It is, without doubt, the protracted elite contestations in Malaysian politics that had brought electoral politics to its current phase. This chapter focuses on the outcome of GE14 in several peninsular states, with the view to showing that elite tussles had varying outcomes and consequences for the different political parties. It should be noted that elite contestations and tussles often had to be managed or suppressed in PKR, whereas in bersatu and DAP, where strong leadership prevailed, the potential for elite differences to affect the electoral outcome was minimal. The main argument of this is that the trajectory of reform politics overcame the surfacing of the deleterious consequences of the elite struggles within the PH component parties. By the time of the campaign period of GE14,

PH and PAS benefited from the trajectory of reform politics and their elite differences were successfully suppressed.[5] The Islamic party was especially able to close ranks and consolidate the strength of its conservative wing after the departure of its progressive elements. That said, PAS consolidation was more evident in the east coast than in the west coast states after the loss of its moderate wing. Finally, in analysing the actual outcome, it will become evident that fragmentation of the Malay vote (as a result of intra-Malay elite struggles) even proved to be beneficial to the reformist parties, whereas it tended to negatively impact on UMNO.

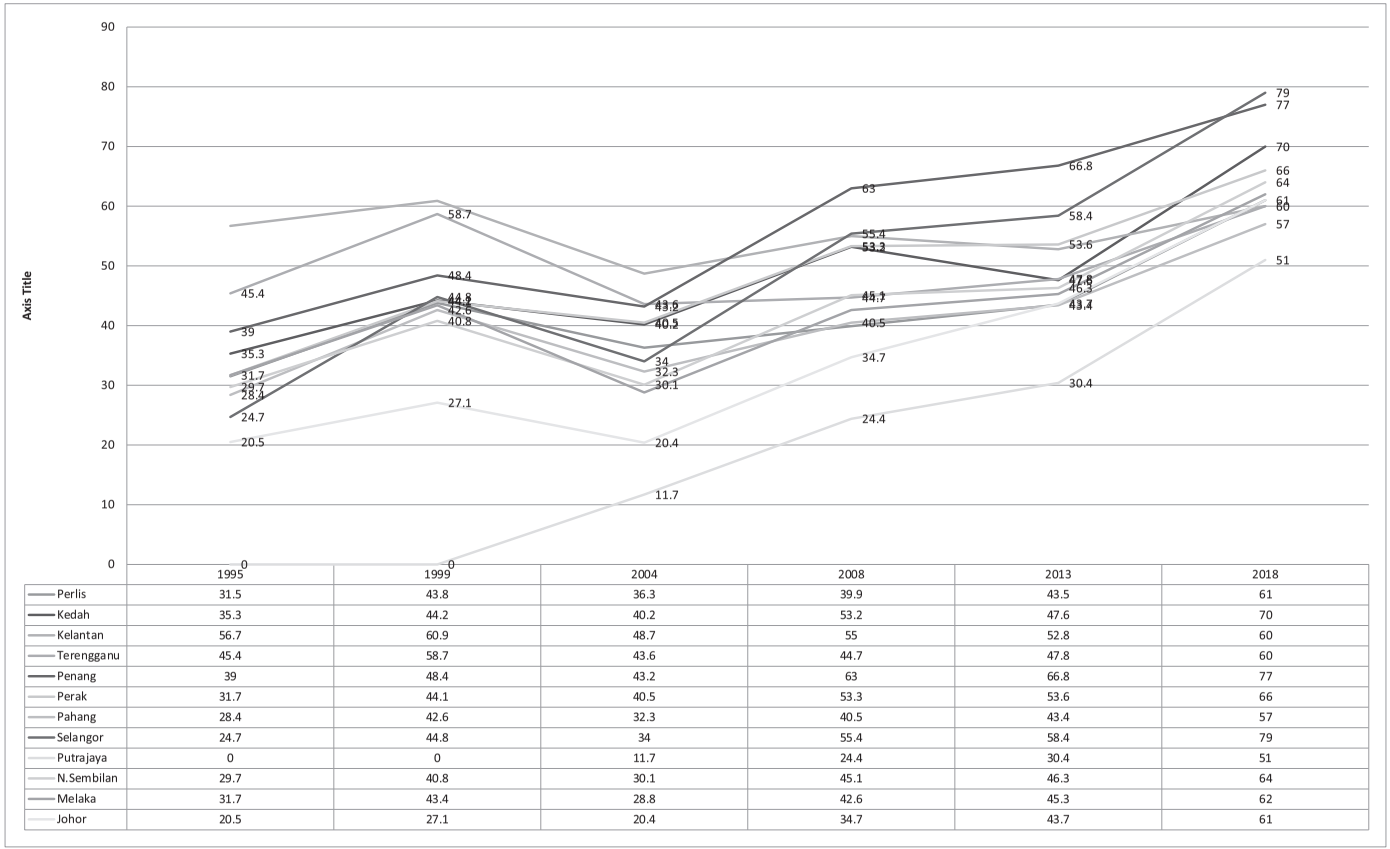
Peninsular swing against the BN

Figure 2.1 shows the trend line of parliamentary elections for peninsular states since 1995. The path-dependent character of the swing of votes against the BN is evident from 2008 onwards. Remarkably, the swing from 2013 to 2018 occurred in all states tipping the scale to more than half of the electorate voting against the BN, even in the federal territory of Putrajaya comprising civil servants. The comprehensive swing of votes in Malaysia's two most urban states of Selangor (79%) and Penang (77%) and in the Federal Territory (80%) presage a trend that would be hard to overturn in the next election and possibly beyond that.

The three-way fragmentation of Malay voters had a major impact on GE14 and will be analyzed more substantially in subsequent sections. PAS's splitting of Malay votes affected BN more than PH. PAS was largely perceived by its supporters as an "opposition" to BN despite the evidence that there may have been UMNO–PAS elite collusion as was gathered in fieldwork during the campaign. The idea did not percolate to the ground, perhaps intentionally. PAS voters eroded BN strength in three-cornered and multi-cornered contests. In sum, the BN faced three strong rivals, PH in the west coast states, PAS in the east coast states and Warisan in Sabah (which will not be analyzed in this chapter). PAS's exit from the previous opposition coalition, PR, did not appear to undermine its fortunes in Kelantan and Terengganu. However, the PH splitting of the Malay vote in these two states contributed to a more comprehensive defeat of UMNO by PAS, as will be analyzed further later.

The PAS pattern of victories on the east coast was mirrored in the northeast states of Kedah and Perlis and in some parts of Perak. In the more ethnically-mixed states of the west coast, such as Perak, Selangor, Johor and even Pahang, the PH parties appeared to be effective in checking the splitting of Malay votes by PAS. In Negeri Sembilan and Melaka, PAS was completely shut out, with no wins. My hypothesis is that, for the most part, PAS supporters in most states were already on a path-dependent trajectory of voting against UMNO and thus their votes cut into BN support rather than that of PH.

The Mahathir factor in GE14 had the impact of galvanizing urban middle-class politics of reform in the west coast states. While there can be no direct evidence of how much of a swing was attributable to Mahathir's leadership of the PH, it is suggested that this factor explains most of the variance of electoral success in the urban mixed west coast states while conversely it may have contributed to



	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	46.3	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

Figure 2.1 Popular votes against BN in peninsular states, 1995–2018

the renewed strength of PAS in the predominantly Muslim east coast states. As a whole, Mahathir's dominating presence and leadership helped greatly to quell or suppress potential intra-party tussles from surfacing or vilifying cooperation in the PH coalition, leading to its overall victory in GE14.

PKR preponderance in Selangor

Selangor is an interesting example of how a PR state government overcame or managed inter- and intra-party tussles and struggles and was able to consolidate PKR strength and its long-term success in the state. A protracted series of political developments, fortuitous and otherwise, led to the dominant position of the PKR in Selangor on the eve of GE14. Let me only briefly touch on the episode of intra-elite politicking known as the "Kajang Move."

This episode brought PKR to the brink of internal collapse after the party had ousted its own Selangor *Menteri Besar* (MB, Chief Minister) Khalid Ibrahim on grounds that he was financially beholden to UMNO. The former MB had, inter alia, inked a controversial agreement with the BN government over the management of water resources in Selangor. The Kajang Move was allegedly orchestrated by Rafizi Ramli, Secretary-General of the party, to allow for Anwar Ibrahim to take over leadership of Selangor. And although endorsed by most members, it also led to a split between supporters of Rafizi and supporters of the deputy leader of the party, Azmin Ali. However, Anwar was sentenced to a five-year jail term for sodomy on 7 March 2014, just before the Kajang by-election nomination day.[6] In the event, Wan Azizah, his wife, stood in his place and won the seat with a reduced majority of 5,379 against the Malaysian Chinese Association's (MCA's) Chew Mei Fun after Anwar was disqualified on technical grounds because of his court case.

The apparent party decision was then to swear in Wan Azizah as the new Menteri Besar. However, PAS objected to her becoming the MB and after a convoluted sequence of events PKR deputy president Azmin Ali emerged as the Menteri Besar with PAS support and the all-important approval of the Selangor Sultan. The episode turned out to be fortuitous for the PKR as a whole as Azmin's political ascendancy led to a consolidation of PKR state power through his effective control of the Selangor state. However, by the same token, it proved disastrous for the Rafizi camp. By most accounts, Azmin's management of Selangor reduced the damage that had been incurred during Khalid's tenure. At the same time, the episode and its consequences led to the temporary marginalisation of the Rafizi faction and also allowed Azmin to eventually ease PAS out from the Selangor government by the eve of GE14.

On the run-up to GE14, there were various suggestions that parliamentary and state candidates preferred by Azmin had been dropped.[7] A newspaper report suggested that as many as eight names submitted by Azmin were not accepted and that Wanita chief Zuraidah Kamaruddin aligned to Azmin sought and had a meeting with party president Wan Azizah to resolve the mini crisis on 22 April. Incumbents that were to be dropped included PKR stalwarts Tian Chua (Batu)

and Tan Kee Kwong (Wangsa Maju), while state lawmakers that were actually dropped were Yaakob Sapari (Kota Anggerik), Hanizah Mohd Talha (Taman Medan) and Gan Pei Nie (Rawang).[8] In a press conference that Tian Chua called on 22 April, before he was disqualified for technical reasons on nomination day, his much anticipated resignation from the party did not materialize; instead he called for closing ranks but not without alluding to the danger of the party leadership rejecting good candidates because of political lobbying.[9] In the event, all the chosen PKR candidates succeeded in taking their seats and Tian Chua endorsed and campaigned for a young law student, Prabakaran, who easily captured the Batu seat of Kuala Lumpur. It would seem that in the PKR contests where incumbents were dropped, the choice of party rather than the attributes of the candidate proved to be a more crucial factor to the voters in GE14.

The PKR "tsunami" in Selangor seems to attest to the partial validity of the narrative that party trumps personality thus mitigating elite tussles, which caused the dropping of certain PKR candidates preferred by a particular faction. It would seem that the overall tendency of voters to return non-BN candidates was the main driver of the electoral outcome in Selangor (and also in the federal territory, Kuala Lumpur). The consolidation of PKR-led rule by Azmin, his effective governance of the state and implementation of welfare-oriented policies would have also been a major factor for electoral success in spite of earlier hiccups when Khalid held the reins of power. By the time of GE14, Selangor posted annual revenues exceeding RM2 billion, an annual budget of about RM3 billion and had implemented a slew of pay-outs to denizens of the state, including a three-month bonus to state civil servants, RM200 for food supplies to mothers whose families earned less than RM2,000 a month, an allocation increase of RM50 million to help middle-income groups to own houses, RM15 million for the Smart Selangor First Home Buyers programme, RM30 million special funds to replace old lifts in low-cost flats and RM20 million for repainting old flats.[10]

The final tally of the 56-seat contest in Selangor was PKR (28), DAP (13), Amanah (5), Bersatu (5), UMNO (4) and PAS (1), a landslide victory for PH. Analysts had suggested that because of the EC's redelineation exercise and PAS's exit from the coalition, PH would face a narrow loss of the state or a drastic decline in strength. The independent survey research company, Politiweet, which undertook a study of the gerrymandering of seats observed that DAP-held seats would grow by 26% (with a 77.42% of non-Malays); that the shift of Malay voters to PKR-held seats would result in three seats becoming Malay-majority; that PAS-held seats were reduced in size by 17% and that BN-held seats were reduced in size by 5%. All these measures were aimed at helping the BN win seats.[11] Figure 2.2 shows the impact of three-cornered contests between PH (PKR, Amanah), BN (mainly UMNO) and PAS. About 70% of the PH victories received half or more of the popular votes. In three-cornered fights in the state, PAS was likely to have eroded the BN voter support base with both parties not able to achieve a 50% voter support in any seat. From the perspective of this chapter, inter-elite struggles leading to PAS standing as a third party worked in PH's favour because

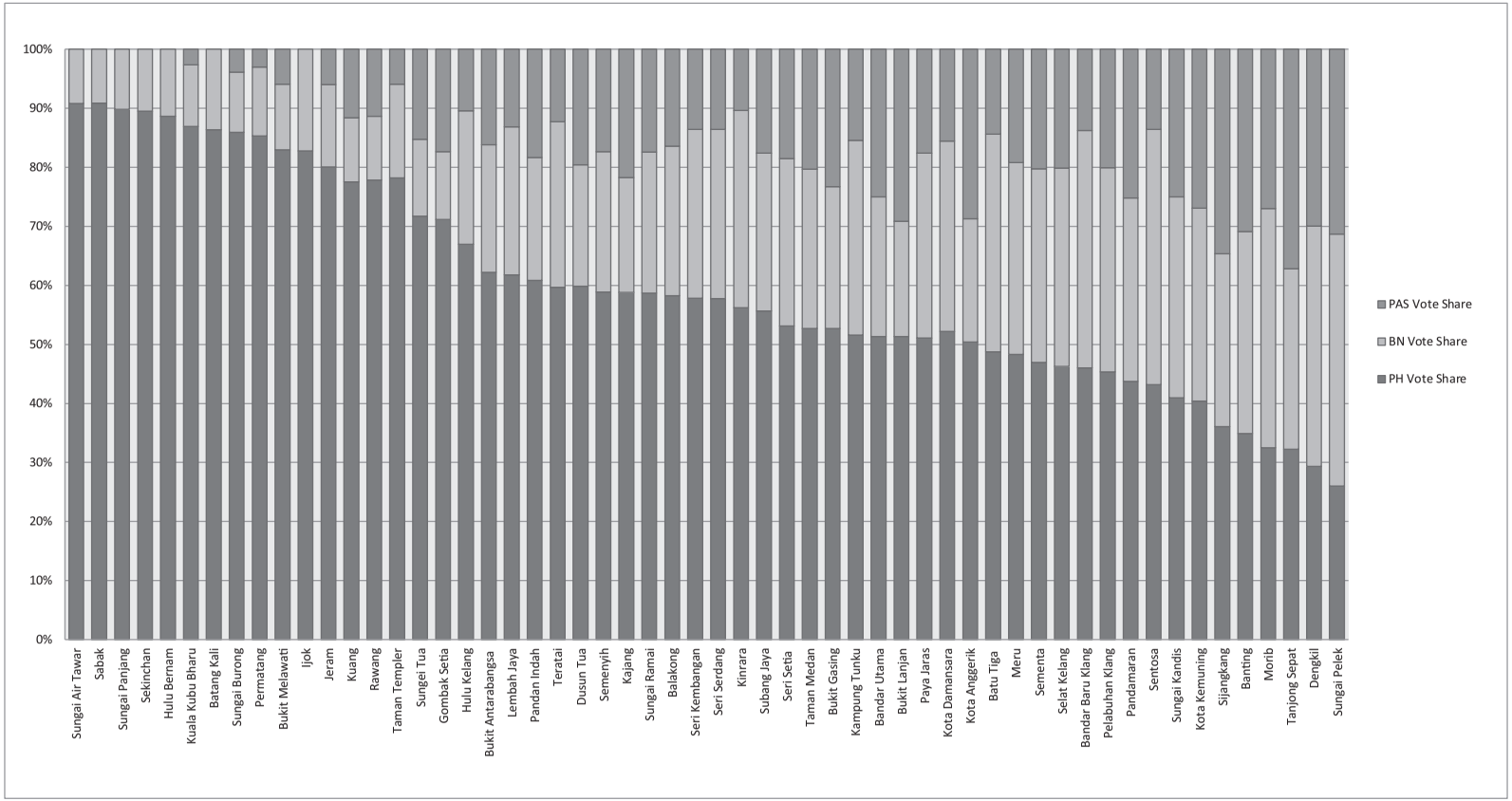


Figure 2.2 Three-cornered contests in Selangor by vote share, 2018

it would seem that the large majority of Selangor voters had already made a clear choice of how they would cast their votes.

Johor: UMNO collapse, PH ascendancy

Johor offers the putative example of UMNO decline as a result of elite contestations. Most seriously, Muhyiddin Yassin, UMNO's deputy leader and Johor strongman, was removed by Najib because he had raised questions about the 1MDB scandal; he later became president of Bersatu. The defeat of UMNO's incumbent Menteri Besar Khaled Nordin in both his state (Permas) and parliamentary constituency (Pasir Gudang) was particularly humiliating and symbolic of UMNO's collapse in Johor. To cap it all, UMNO veteran and FELDA Chairman Shahrir Samad crashed to an ignominious defeat in his erstwhile parliamentary stronghold, Johor Bahru, to PKR newcomer Akmal Nasrullah Nasir by a margin of 19,782 votes. Also humbling for UMNO was the loss of the Muar parliamentary seat held by Deputy Minister Razali Ibrahim to Bersatu's Youth chief, the 25-year-old Syed Saddiq.

The final tally of state seats saw the following distribution: UMNO (17), DAP (14), Amanah (9), Bersatu (8), PKR (5), MIC (2) and PAS (1), giving the PH parties a clear majority to run the state. Bersatu's presence had clearly impacted on Johor with Muhyiddin easily winning both his parliamentary seat, Pagoh, and state seat, Gambir. Especially damaging for BN was the toxic image of Najib[12] and the problems and woes of FELDA settlers. An intra-UMNO elite feud that involved JASA director general Puad Zarkashi,[13] who was dropped as a candidate for the parliamentary seat of Batu Pahat, was another factor that eroded considerably UMNO's social capital in the state. Puad, closely associated with Najib, threatened to contest as an independent candidate but finally did not do so. However, the damage was already done with Puad digging up an alleged 2011 "khalwat" case involving UMNO's chosen candidate Haliza Abdullah.[14]

Johor was already identified as a so-called frontline state or a "domino" for PR in the 2013 election by DAP strategist Liew Chin Tong (Liew 2013; Saravanamuttu 2015). Johor's voter profile of 53% Malays, 39% Chinese, 6.5% Indians and 1% others makes it somewhat similar to Selangor's demographic of roughly 50-34-14-1 percentages of Malays, Chinese, Indians and others. According to Liew's thesis, with Johor's large number of mixed seats, Malay support at about 35% was needed for victory if Chinese and Indian support was 75% or above. Johor did not fall to the PR in 2013, but did so in 2018, I would argue, confirming what Liew had broadly predicted earlier.[15] However, what seemed to have also occurred in 2018 was an even larger swing of Malay voters against the BN along with the continued upward trend of non-Malay votes for the PH parties.

The extraordinary outcome in Johor was underlined by the fact that the MCA was wiped out in the state contest, when Johor was a state in which they had previously provided a significant Chinese presence to BN. The DAP's penetration since 2008 and the Mahathir and Bersatu factors no doubt contributed to

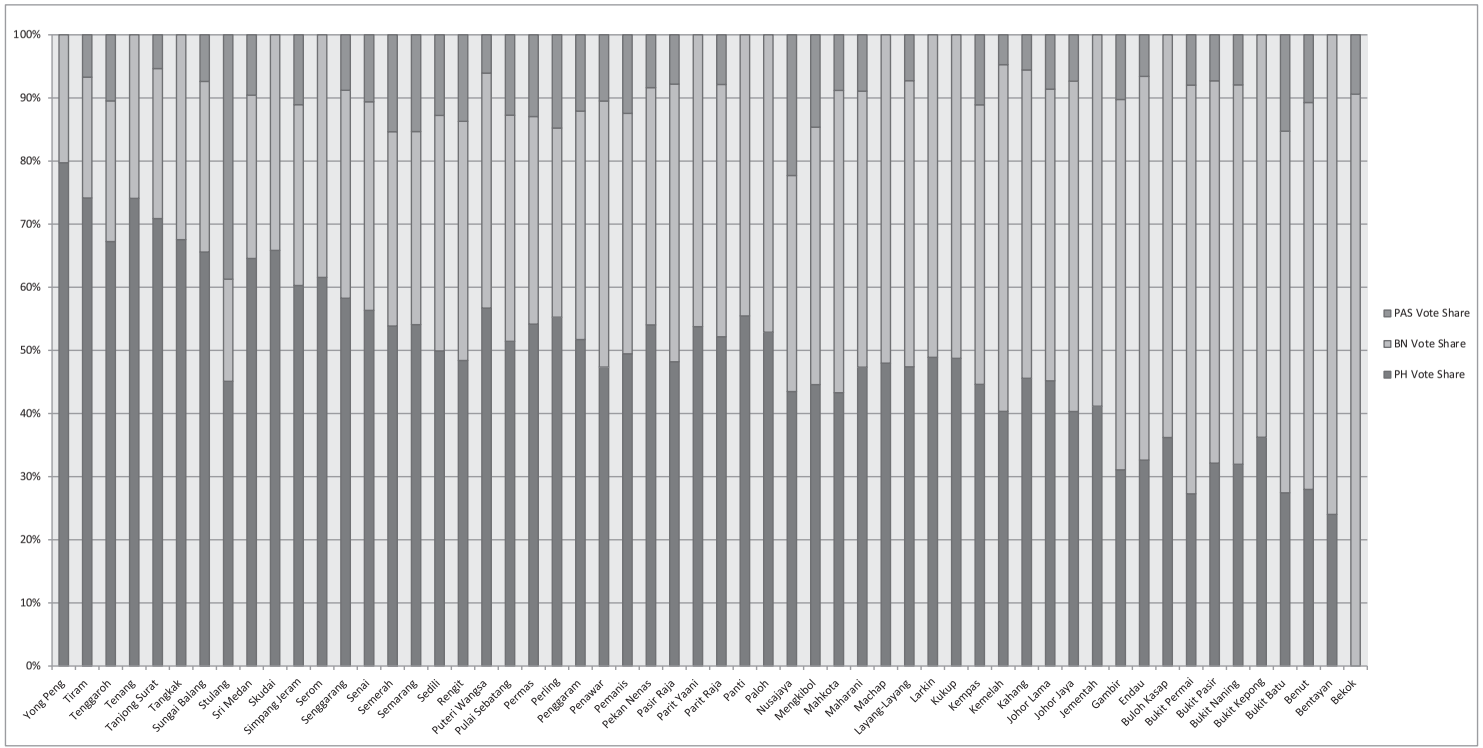


Figure 2.3 Three-cornered contests in Johor by vote share, 2018

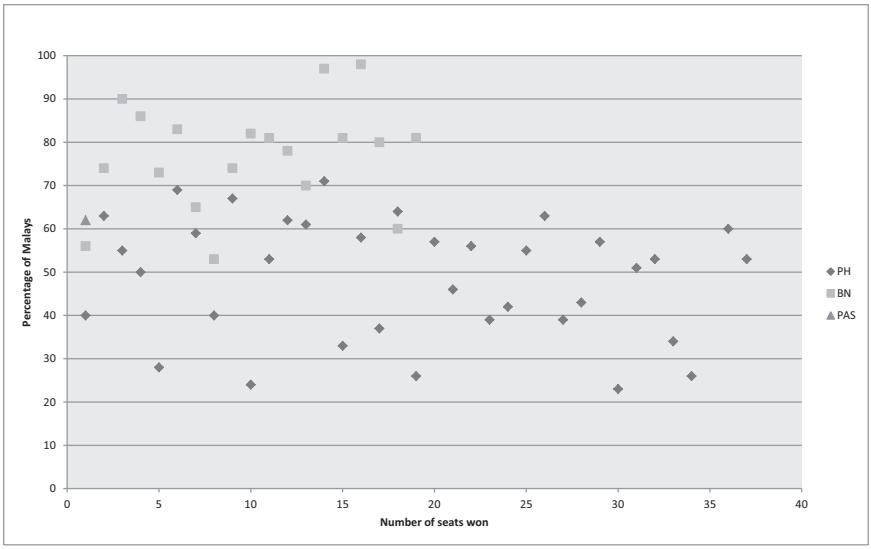


Figure 2.4 Johor by percentage of Malay voters

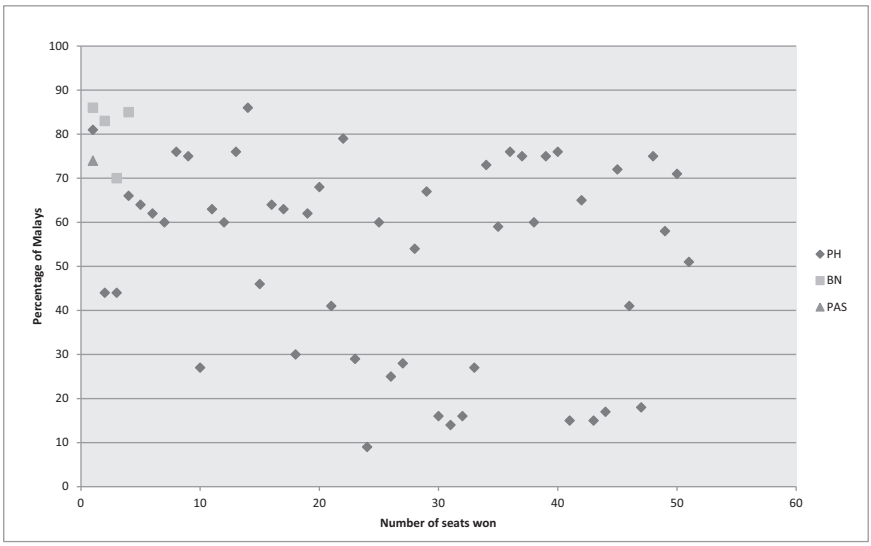


Figure 2.5 Selangor by percentage of Malay voters

Johor's collapse, while the FGV scandals and woes of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) settlers added to the debacle. FELDA settlers, a large proportion of whom were settled in Johor and Pahang since the mid-1950s, were traditional BN voters and considered to be a "vote bank" of UMNO (Maznah

2015), but over the years the 50-odd parliamentary constituencies in FELDA areas saw the erosion of UMNO strength and some 27 seats fell to the PH in 2018 (Pakiam 2018a, 2018b).[16]

The difficult access to voting on a Wednesday by Malaysian voters living in Singapore may have also been another factor contributing to the anti-BN vote swing. Johor has basically adopted the Selangor template of PH victories in mixed seats but has also succeeded in winning seats with middling Malay majorities. In contrast to Selangor, PAS strength is even more minimal in this state. This outcome is evident from Figure 2.3. The rising tide of PH wins in mixed seats is a trend that was already seen in Selangor.

Figure 2.4 shows the broad spread of mixed seats won by PH in Johor, a pattern that is similar to that of Selangor shown in Figure 2.5, the main difference being the larger number of wins for PH in the higher Malay belts of above 60%. Selangor shows wins above the 70% Malay belt, indicating the probability that a plurality if not a majority of Malays supported PH.

Kedah and Perak: weak PH states

A comparison of the Perak outcome with that in Kedah shows some similarities in the pattern of contestations, but also some obvious differences. Both states are in stark contrast to Johor, where the electoral strength of PAS was minimal as shown earlier. PAS's political presence in Kedah was evident as they were the lead party in a PR government after the 2008 general election. This path-dependent strength of PAS remained evident in Kedah in 2018 and contributed to a dicey state of affairs with PH winning exactly half the seats in this state. The final distribution of seats was: PAS (15), Bersatu (5), PKR (8), Amanah (3), UMNO (3) and DAP (2). In the aftermath, as the leader of the coalition with the largest plurality of the seats, Mukhriz Mahathir was sworn in as Mentri Besar.[17]

The vote share splits are shown in Figure 2.6. What is interesting is that with the Malay vote splitting three ways, PH was able to capture some seats with just 40% of the popular vote as shown in the figure. In terms of Malay belt voters, BN wins were almost confined to Malay-majority constituencies of 60% and above. However, UMNO did win two seats below the 60% margin, namely, Kasap (57% Malay) by a majority of only 877 votes and Layang-Layang (54% Malay) by a mere 364 votes. This indicated that UMNO did not fully depend on heavy Malay belt seats, unlike PAS with success confined to seats of almost exclusively 80% Malay majority and above (Figure 2.7).

What one may be able to surmise about the impact of inter-elite tussles in Kedah is that UMNO lost its major vote share because of the Mahathir-Mukhriz factor. However, PAS, as a Muslim-based oppositional force, remained formidable, with Amanah only able to win in mixed seats. It is interesting to note that in the parliamentary constituency of Pendang, with a demographic of 89% Malays, Bersatu's first-time candidate Wan Saiful Wan Jan took a distant third to UMNO and PAS candidates. This showed that the three-way tussle for Malay votes in Kedah often favoured UMNO or PAS. In other seats, like Jerlun, a Malay belt

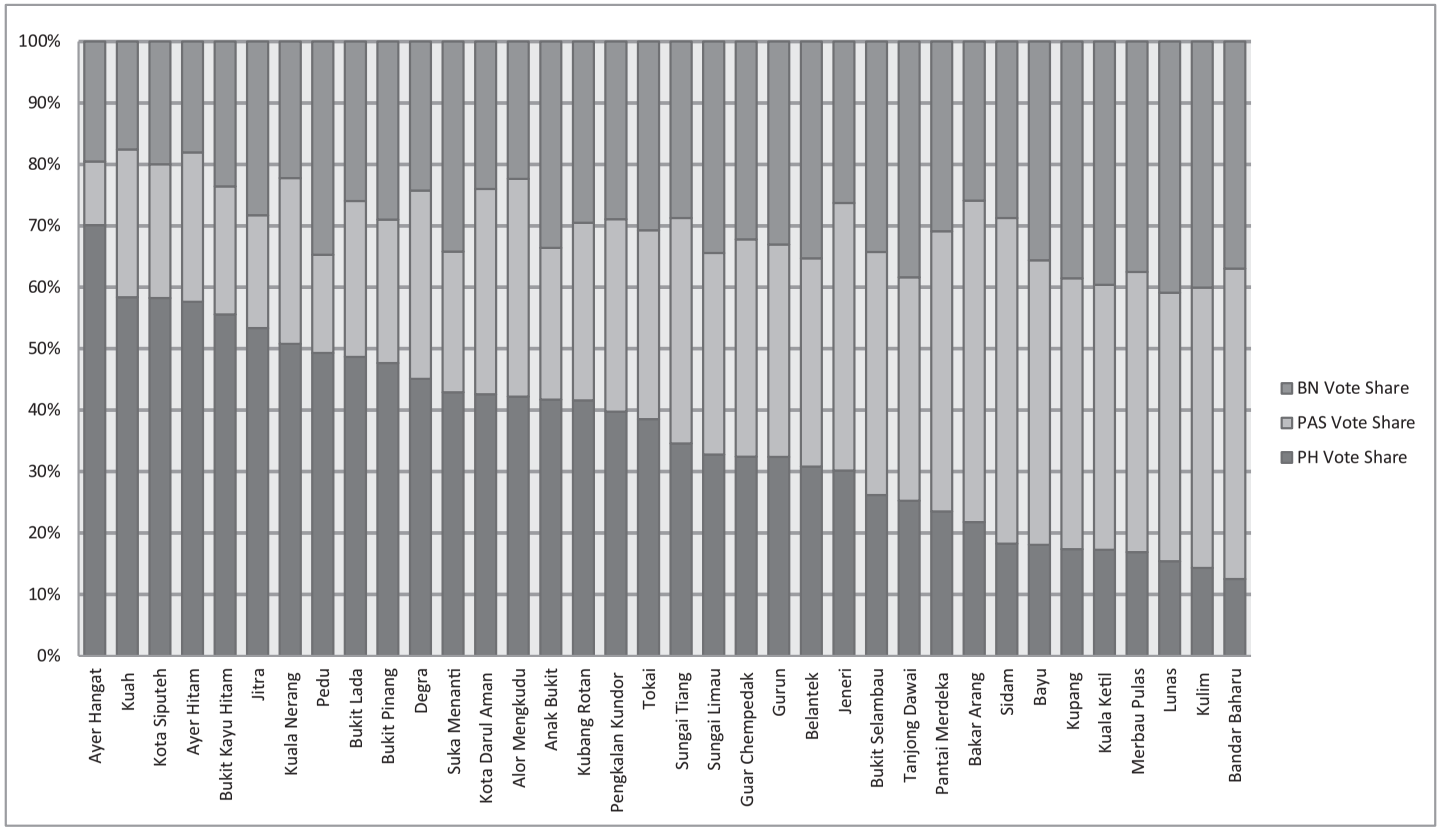


Figure 2.6 Three-cornered contests in Kedah by vote share, 2018

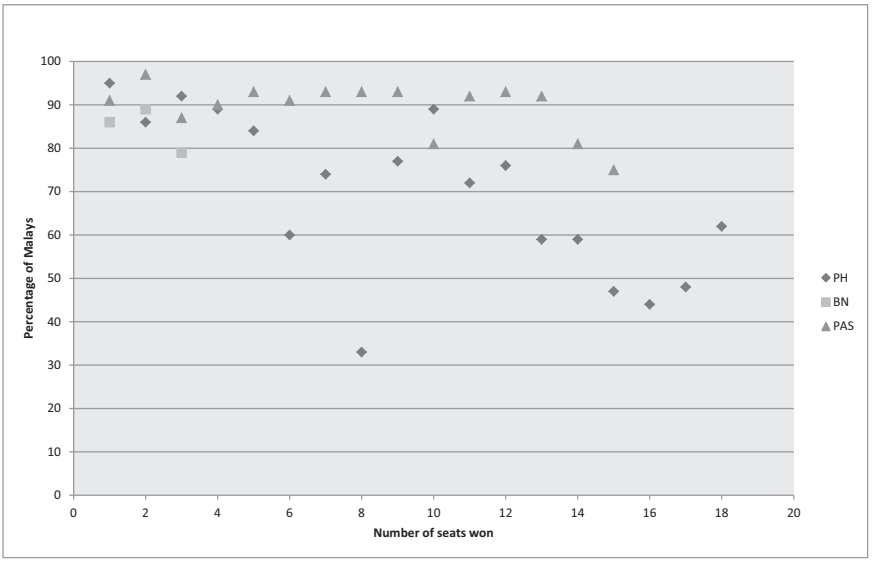


Figure 2.7 Kedah by percentage of Malay voters

seat of 91%, Mukhriz romped home easily, showing that Bersatu personalities do affect electoral outcomes as well.[18]

The Perak situation is similar to Kedah in the sense that PH's capacity to prevail remains challenged. The major difference here is that the lack of major elite tussles within UMNO on the eve of GE14 meant that the party would retain a significant presence. Suggestions that UMNO Mentri Besar Zambry Abdul Kadir had attained a certain level of performance legitimacy also helped the UMNO cause. The final tally of results was: UMNO (27), PAS (3), Amanah (6), Bersatu (1), PKR (4) and DAP (18) (see Figure 2.8). The outcome where UMNO is significantly stronger than PAS is the obverse of the situation in Kedah. In addition, the state's demographic of a strong Chinese presence has benefited the DAP (see Figure 2.9).

As in Kedah, UMNO and PAS victories are in the upper reaches of the Malay voter demographic belt. Evidently, Malay intra-party PKR tussles had not affected the non-Malay vote in Kedah and Perak. Wins for PKR in the upper reaches of the non-Malay demographic accounted for the large number of wins by DAP in Perak and the consistent performance of PKR in mixed seats and Amanah gains in similar seats.

Kelantan and Terengganu: strongholds of PAS

In the northern east coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan, with Hadi Awang's ascendancy as the new "Tok Guru" and undisputed leader of a party shorn of its

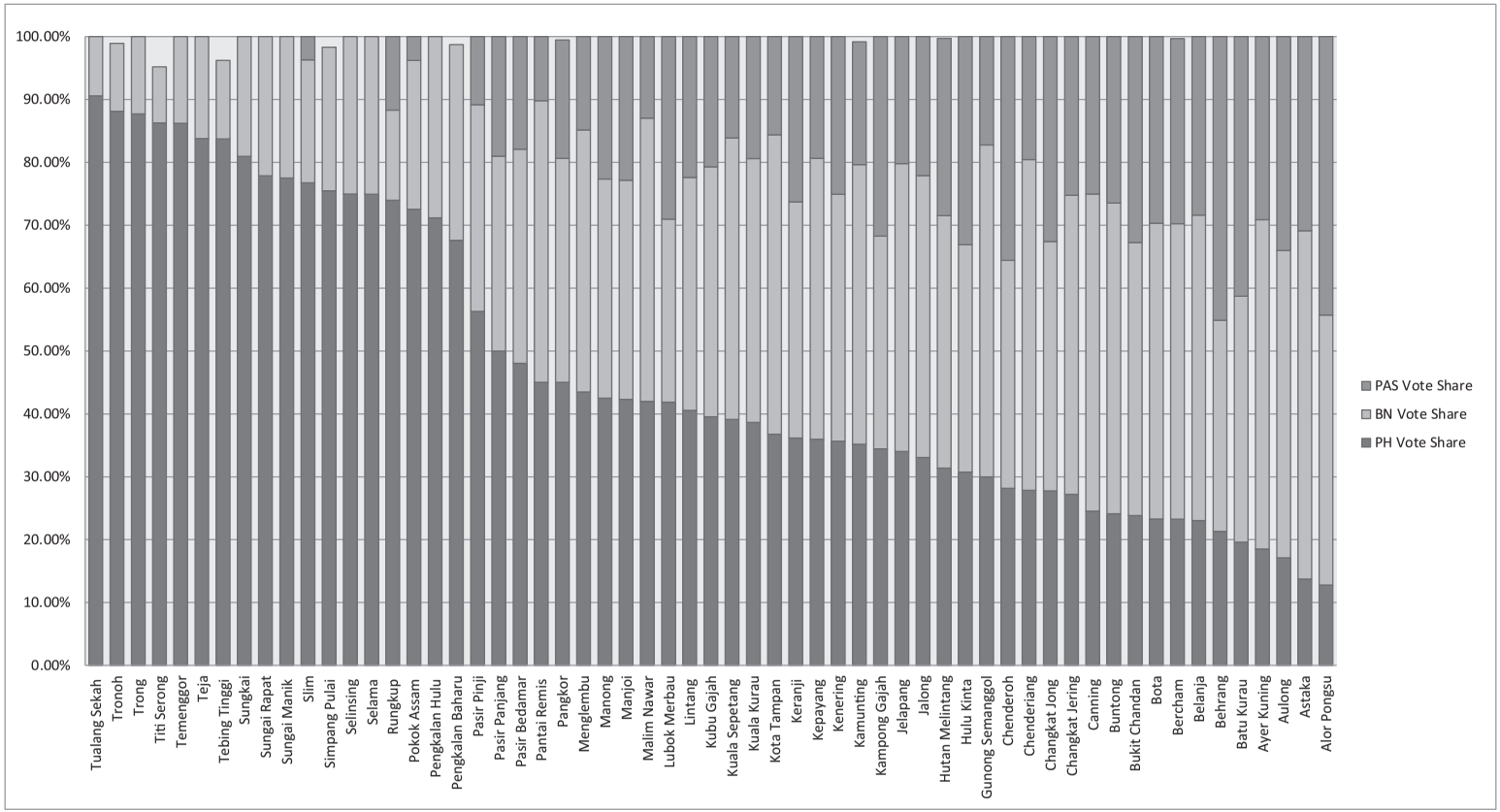


Figure 2.8 Three-cornered contests in Perak by vote share

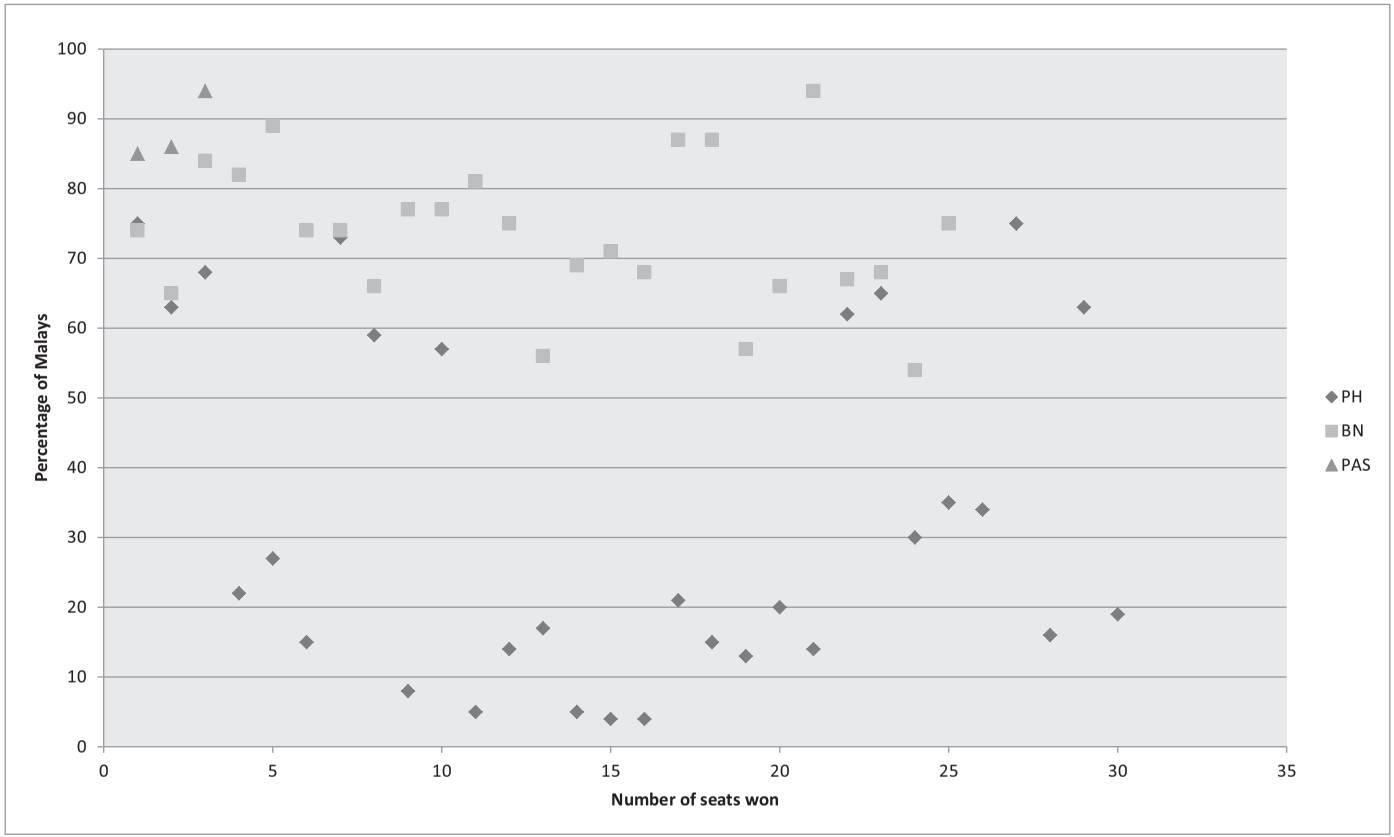


Figure 2.9 Perak by percentage of Malay voters

"moderates," Muslim hegemony in these Malay belt states was re-established. This was sealed by PAS landslide victories, with the party winning 22 seats to UMNO's ten in Terengganu and 37 seats to UMNO's 8 in Kelantan. What had emerged was PAS as the dominant party in a two-party system, with a weak to non-existent PH presence. It would seem that the departure of Amanah from PAS only affected ethnically-mixed west coast states, whereas the exit of its leaders strengthened the hegemony of PAS in both of these states.

As the Islamic party of Malaysia, PAS was able to consolidate its strength after the death of Nik Aziz with Hadi's rise. Given this development, it was predictable that the moderates would be disempowered within the party. With the exit of the so-called "Erdogans,"[19] PAS under Hadi was able to reassert its Islamic credentials which, while courting electoral decline in the west coast states, conversely helped to establish PAS predominance in the east coast. It should also be noted that the PAS–UMNO rivalry has persistently been the underlying narrative of politics in Kelantan and Terengganu. Although it is true that PAS's performance has always peaked when it was part of electoral coalitions, a toxic UMNO under Najib in 2018 allowed for the Islamic party's resurgence as the single dominant party in these two states.

The tussle of the two second-generation "Niks" showed Hadi Awang's stamp of authority in PAS or alternately that the legacy of Nik Aziz had either faded or had benefited the conservative wing of the party. In the complex feud between brothers, the younger Nik Abdul prevailed over his elder brother Nik Omar, mirroring the PAS–Amanah political tussle in Kelantan. The elder Nik had chosen at the eleventh hour to contest on a PH-Amanah ticket in the Chempaka state seat of Kelantan, long held by his father Nik Aziz since 1995.

By intent or design, Nik Omar became particularly prominent in PH's campaign, invoking the legacy of Nik Aziz's moderate and inclusive Islam, the badge of honour of Amanah politicians. At a much publicized campaign rally on 4 May 2018 in Putrajaya, which also featured Mahathir, Nik Omar spoke in moderate tones with words to the effect that voters should not be making a choice based on religion but rather should choose the team capable of leading the country to a better future.[20] Not only was Nik Omar upbraided by PAS stalwarts for a betrayal of his father's legacy, his candidacy sparked a family feud causing his own mother to side with Nik Abduh while denying the elder son her blessings to contest the Chempaka state seat. Nik Abduh, who is closely aligned to Hadi, had earlier insisted that Nik Omar would not join PH and expressed shock over his brother's subsequent action. Nik Omar, on the other hand, had appealed to his brother to accept their differences.[21] In the end, Nik Omar ran a distant third to PAS and UMNO candidates in Chempaka, while his brother won his seat in Bachok, defeating former UMNO Deputy Finance Minister Awang Adek.

The episode of the tussle of the two Niks shows that while Nik Aziz's legacy may have been enduring,[22] the manner in which it was manifested in Kelantan during GE14 benefited the parent party, PAS, more than its splinter, Amanah. This narrative is also largely true for the northern state of Kedah.[23]

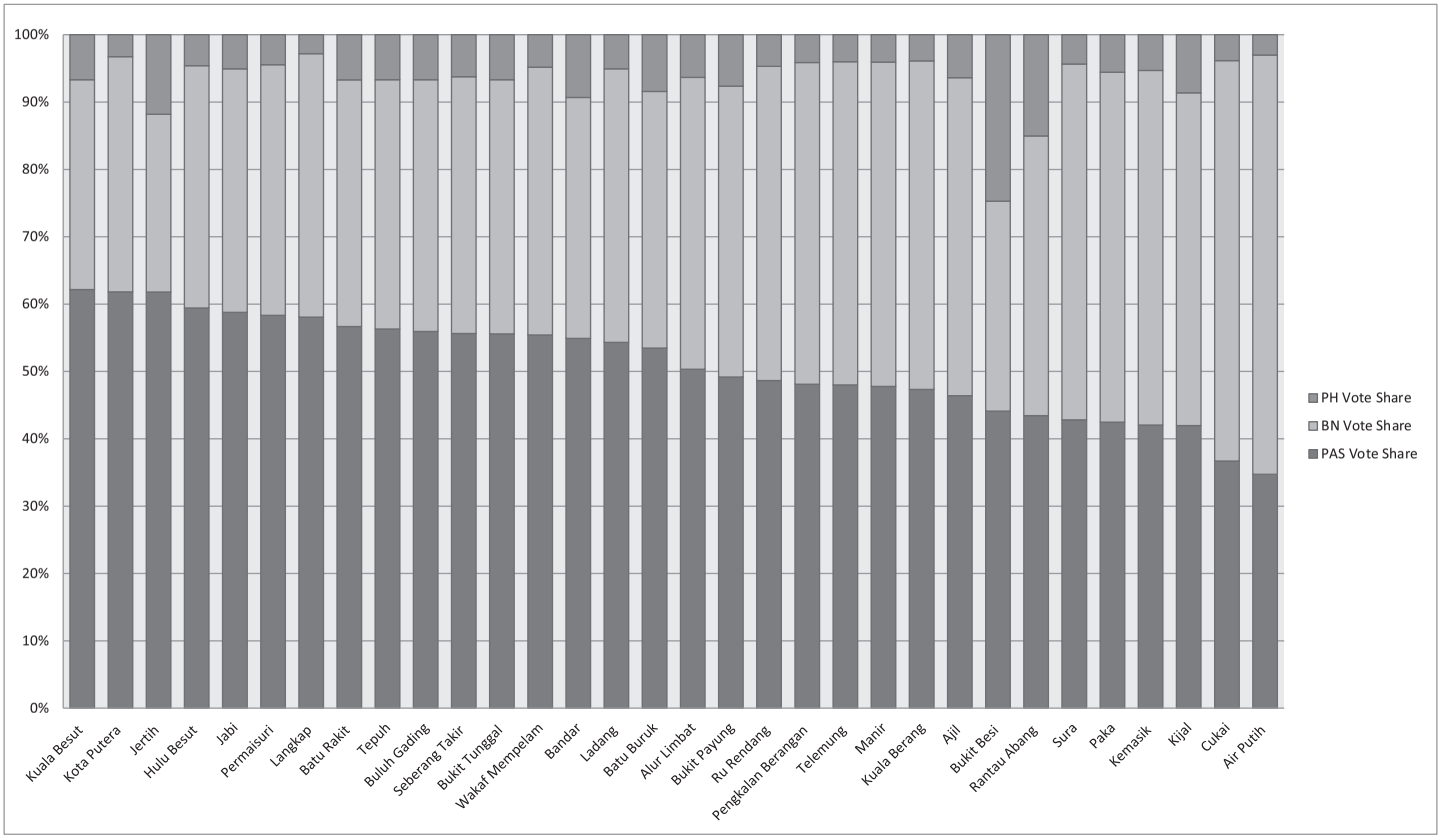


Figure 2.10 Three-cornered contests in Terengganu by vote share, 2018

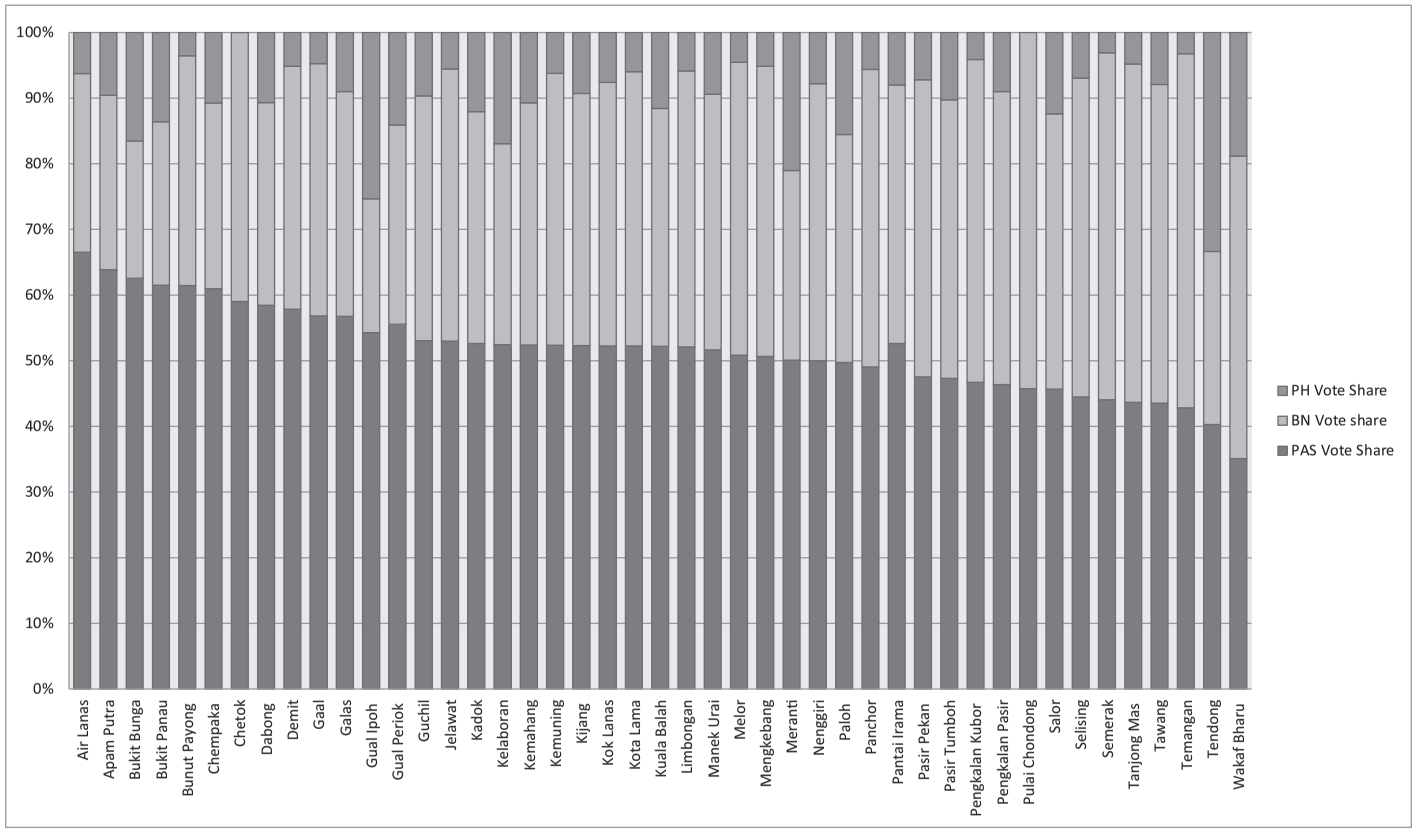


Figure 2.11 Three-cornered contests in Kelantan by vote share, 2018

Thus, the east coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan saw the collapse of UMNO and the re-emergence of PAS as a third force in Malaysian electoral politics, albeit confined to Malaysia's "Muslim belt." Figures 2.10 and 2.11 show the extent of PAS victories measured by vote shares as well as the minimal impact of PH–Amanah candidates. The success of PAS meant that Amanah candidates were perceived as secondary opposition to UMNO or even irrelevant to voters in these two heavily Muslim-dominated states. However, given that Amanah candidates were former PAS stalwarts and known personalities, some level of traction of these personalities would have helped to reduce the UMNO vote share and concomitantly deliver the landslide state victories to PAS.

Another factor of PAS success could be adduced from interviews with east coast politicians. The absence of the new "Tok Guru," Hadi Awang, as a state-level candidate allowed for the local leadership to follow a softer approach on Islamic goals and pursue a campaign based on the "Kerajaan Teknokrat" (technocratic government) slogan.[24] The lack of any overt campaigning by Hadi perhaps also spoke to a possible underlying elite difference that still existed between ulamas and technocrats in the party.

Hadi was also linked to a so-called "National Consensus" or political deal with Najib, which while known to PAS insiders, did not seem to percolate to the PAS base that still regarded UMNO as its main rival.[25] Hadi also seems to have directed some of his efforts at the so-called "Gagasan Sejahtera" (Alliance of Peace), which was a vague coalition comprising PAS, Parti Ikatan Bangsa Malaysia, Pan Malaysian Islamic Front (Berjasa) and Parti Cinta Malaysia.[26] This ersatz coalition had no presence whatsoever in the east coast states.

Concluding remarks

This chapter argues that elite contestations were at the root of the igniting of the politics of reform sparked by the *Reformasi* Movement of the late 1990s. A trajectory of such reform politics led to the major critical juncture of the 2008 general election when the BN lost its customary two-thirds majority control of parliamentary seats, reinforced by the 2013 election that saw the BN losing the popular vote for the first time. Elite contestations in the years before GE14 saw another major rupture of UMNO that led to the formation of Bersatu, headed by the former premier Mahathir, no less. At about the same time, the rupture of Pakatan Rakyat, the reformist front led by Anwar, saw the Islamic partner of PAS exiting this coalition. Mahathir's party, Bersatu, and the other PR parties and PAS splinter Amanah were reconstituted into the Pakatan Harapan—the Alliance of Hope—thereby forging a new effective coalition for the politics of reform on the eve of GE14.

The argument is advanced here that in spite of inter- and intra-party contestations and tussles right up until the run-up of GE14, PH was able to ride on its reform politics to overcome the deleterious consequences of elite struggles between and within PH parties, although the tussles did have an impact on

candidate selection. The larger purpose of toppling a toxic BN, which had lost legitimacy because of egregious malfeasance by its leader, impelled PH's electoral success. The unlikely alliance of Mahathir with his former nemesis Anwar symbolized how elite contestations and tussles were suppressed for the larger goal of reform politics.

The chapter shows that owing to the fragmentation of the Malay vote but also the continued support of non-Malay voters for the politics of reform, PH parties were able to chalk up a broad spread of wins, not just in mixed seats but also in Malay belt constituencies. This pattern of outcomes occurred throughout most of the west coast states of the Peninsula. However, in the predominantly Muslim states of Kelantan and Terengganu, and to a lesser extent in Kedah, an ascendant PAS also benefitted from its previous association with the politics of reform. PAS deployed its Islamic credentials to establish a renewed hegemony in the Muslim belt.

Notes

1 The use of honorifics and titles such as "Tan Sri" or "Dato" has been dropped.
2 The term "new politics" has come to be used to depict the impact of social movements on Malaysian politics and has generally been dated to the onset of the *Reformasi* Movement of the late 1990s. In some interpretations, it refers to a shift away from ethnic politics, sometimes to "developmentalism," but mostly it refers to the rise and role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in electoral politics. See among various writings on the subject, the following: Loh and Saravanamuttu (2003); Weiss (2009); Loh (2009); Yang Razali Kassim (2015).
3 The PAS–DAP rift had its roots in the days when former DAP chairman, the late Karpal Singh, had famously stated that PAS's implementation of an Islamic state would be "over his dead body." After Karpal's passing in a car accident, PAS, which had come under Hadi Awang's leadership, pressed for hudud, or a shariah-based penal code, to be implemented through an enabling bill (ACT 355) in Parliament with UMNO support. PAS participated in a joint technical committee with UMNO, established for this purpose. UMNO members in Kelantan showed that they were fully behind the hudud amendments passed unanimously in the state assembly on 19 March 2015. This no doubt spurred Hadi's move to work further with UMNO on hudud at the national level. With such unilateral action on the hudud policy on the part of PAS, the damage done to relations with the DAP was irreparable (Saravanamuttu 2016: 248–249).
4 The formation of Amanah was preceded by the earlier splinter of PAS known as PasMa (Persatuan Ummah Sejahtera Malaysia), led by Kedah politician Phahrolrazi Zawawi, which initially replaced PAS in PH. Interestingly, its youth leader, Sheikh Omar, had opted to join DAP, following the much-publicized news of national literary laureate A. Samad Said, joining the DAP on 13 June 2015 (Saravanamuttu 2016: 247).
5 It was gathered from an interview with Saifuddin Abdullah, Secretary-General of PH, that Mahathir was able to stamp his authority and had established a particular decision-making procedure in the coalition by insisting that should there be an impasse on important decisions because of differences among the parties or their leaders a deadline would be set for a consensus on a final outcome that all parties had to accept. This form of consensual decision-making may well have overcome

or suppressed potential conflicts and inter- and intra-party feuds from surfacing. Saifuddin was PKR's winning candidate in Indera Mahkota, Pahang, and has been appointed as Foreign Minister under the new government. Interview, Saifuddin Abdullah, 2 May 2018, Kuantan.

6 Read more at www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/09/07/latheefa-koya-rafizi-ramli-kajang-move-blame/#oorbox1XtGe69ZJK.99. Retrieved 28 July 2018.

7 Although this internal schism of the party was never publicized or acknowledged by the party leadership, it is now well established that Rafizi and Azmin headed two major groups or factions within the PKR. Through conversations with journalists and politicians, one could further gather that the party president herself represents yet another group, which naturally owes unequivocal allegiance to Anwar. The lines of factionalism in political parties are never fully clear and individuals and groups could sometimes overlap. However, the Rafizi–Azmin rivalry developed as a clear division along with what has been dubbed "Istana Segambut" (Segambut Palace), a reference to Wan Azizah's group. As indicated in interviews with PH politicians, the schism greatly impacted on the negotiation of their own candidacies, whether they were part of the two camps or not. Seeming to validate such a split in the party, in August 2018, Rafizi indicated that he would challenge Azmin for the post of deputy leader of PKR.

8 Three others allegedly put up by Azmin were also rejected, including press aide Hilman Idham, proposed for the Gombak Setia state seat, and Azmin's trusted aide Khaled Jaafar, who was proposed for the Hulu Selangor parliamentary seat. Read more at: www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/04/22/crisis-brewing-in-pkr-over-candidate-list/#UYOr2TkkZ3Wet1Lq.99. Retrieved 28 July 2018.

9 For more read, www.malaysiakini.com/news/421072. Retrieved 28 July 2018.

10 See "Azmin tables RM3b S'gor budget for 2018": www.malaysiakini.com/news/400669. Retrieved 7 November 2017.

11 Politweet predicted the probable result of 23 (BN), 15 (DAP), 14 (PKR), ten (PAS), without Bersatu and Amanah 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/. Retrieved 10 January 2018.

12 In interviews with politicians on both sides of the divide, it came across that BN's campaign assiduously avoided using the Najib name and his image was significantly absent from BN posters.

13 JASA, the Special Affairs Department of Malaysia, is known to be a propaganda arm of the government, the Director General being appointed by the Prime Minister himself. Puad was thus aligned with Najib but resigned from his post after the Johor leadership dropped him as a candidate. He had won the Batu Pahat seat in 2008 but lost it in 2013. In interviews with UMNO politicians, it was gathered that he had not been an effective MP with more than a hint of being corrupt as well.

14 See www.malaysiakini.com/news/421870. Retrieved 29 July 2018. Although there was no allusion to internal sabotage, it was evident that her candidacy in Batu Pahat was the result of internal dissension within the party and that she was just merely doing the party's bidding to be fielded in that seat, a decision that she herself did not particularly appreciate. Interview, Haliza Abdullah, UMNO candidate, 29 April 2018, Batu Pahat, Johor.

15 It was apparent that Liew held on broadly to his earlier thesis of Johor as a winnable state. He was proven correct this time around. But Liew himself suffered a defeat, taking a risk in Ayer Hitam, a seat of 58% Malay majority, losing narrowly to MCA's deputy leader Wee Ka Siong by 303 votes. It is evident that the percentage of Malay voters is an overall factor that could determine an outcome for PH

candidates—the higher the percentage, the more likely a PH loss. These points were surmised from interviews with Liew Chin Tong, 14 April 2018, Batu Pahat, and 1 May, Yong Peng, Johor.

16 In an interview with FELDA Chairman Shahrir Samad, it was gathered that he had undertaken a considerable amount of damage control of FELDA problems. Najib had appointed Shahrir to replace Isa Samad who was alleged to have mismanaged both the FELDA parent body and its Global Ventures company (FGV). Shahrir intimated that among the matters he was attending to were the housing issues of the second-generation settlers, including their housing loans. Interview, Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018, Johor Bahru. In an interview with the PH candidate for Simpang Renggam, Maszlee Malik, addressing the FELDA issues was seen as an important campaigning strategy for PH. Maszlee intimated in his visits to FELDA areas that settlers were more than ready to pour out their problems to PH. Interview, Maszlee Malik, 30 April 2018, Simpang Renggam, Johor.

17 Mukhriz insisted that he did not head a "minority" government as PH held half of the seats. There was also the suggestion that there could be defections from PAS or UMNO to PH. See: www.malaymail.com/s/1629751/mukhriz-sworn-in-as-kedah-mb. Retrieved 30 July 2018.

18 In an interview with Wan Saiful, academic turned politician and former Director of IDEAS, a private think tank, the impression came across that he faced an uphill battle with the prevalence of UMNO money politics and that Bersatu seats contested in the heavy Malay belts were among the hardest to win for PH parties. He suggested that were it a straight fight with UMNO, he would win his Pendang seat. Wan Saiful would clearly have done better in a somewhat more mixed constituency, such as Titiwangsa in the federal territory of KL, but he intimated that internal Bersatu politics made it difficult for him to secure such a seat to contest. Interview with Wan Saifulruddin Wan Jan, 6 May 2018, Pendang, Kedah.

19 An odd allusion to Turkish politics and its president, which came to be used to depict the PAS moderates. See Mueller (2014: 72–75).

20 The event reportedly saw a crowd of 10,000 cheering on the lucid but soft-spoken Nik Omar. It was evident that Nik Omar's impact was among moderate urbanites of the west coast rather than religious zealots of the east coast states. See the report below, which includes a video recording; http://says.com/my/news/we-re-not-choosing-religion-nik-omar-s-ge14-speech-wins-netizens-praise. Retrieved 31 July 2018.

21 There was a stream of reports on the episode. See, for example: www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/05/03/lets-stop-fighting-nik-omar-tells-brother-late-nik-azizs-sons-contesting-on-opposite-sides-and-caugh/. Retrieved 31 July 2018.

22 Overall, because of its disadvantage as a splinter party, redelineation politicians had more work in articulating a new sense of direction while PAS, without much effort, largely benefited from the legacy of the Tok Guru. Interview with Halim Salleh, former Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) academic, 4 May 2018.

23 In interviews with redelineation politicians, it came across that PAS supporters saw redelineation leaders as abandoning the cause and that PAS was still symbolically the party of Muslims. Redelineation leaders, Husam Musa (Kelantan) and Raja Kamarul Bahrain (Terengganu) gave the impression that redelineation had a massive uphill task of overcoming the negative impact of the redelineation split from PAS in Kelantan and Terengganu. Husam alluded to the importance of getting support from returning Kelantanese voters from west coast states outside the state whereas Raja Kamarul indicated that he was in damage control mode to deal with the anti-redelineation sentiments of the voters. Despite Husam's standing

in Kelantan and close association with Nik Aziz, he suffered defeat at the hands of PAS Secretary-General Takiyuddin Hassan. As incumbent, Raja Kamarul only took third place in a three-way contest with PAS and UMNO in his seat of Kuala Terengganu. Interviews with Raja Kamarul Bahrain 3 May 2018, Kuala Terengganu; Husam Musa 5 May 2018, Dabong, Kelantan.

24 This was gathered in interviews with PAS leaders in Terengganu and Kelantan and also in conversations with redelineation leaders in the two states. Interviews were with Ahmad Shamsuri (PAS) 3 May 2018, Kuala Terengannu; Ahmad Amzad (PAS) 3 May 2018, Kuala Terengannu.

25 This was gathered from conversations with research assistants who were located in the two states during the election period.

26 Read more at www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/05/08/hadi-final-push-give-chance-to-gagasan/#Qf9YVrxXfImfo6VB.99. Retrieved 31 July 2018.

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3 Elite feuds, patronage and factions

UMNO's demise

Sri Murniati

Introduction

The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) went into Malaysia's General Election 14 (GE14) while confronted with a major party crisis. One reason for the crisis was the transfer of a substantial volume of foreign funds to the personal account of UMNO President and Prime Minister Najib Razak. It was also alleged that these funds had originally been from 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a Malaysian government-linked company that was mired in huge debts.

When news broke in July 2015 of the fund transfer to Najib, a handful of party elites in addition to UMNO's former president, Mahathir Mohamad, who had criticized 1MDB earlier, raised their concerns openly. By mid-2016, political pundits were predicting that Najib would step down as Prime Minister because of the gravity of this crisis (Chin 2016; Kassim 2016). However, Najib turned out to be more politically shrewd in managing these dissenting elites. To prevent defections to the new parties, Najib instituted a Cabinet reshuffle that allowed him to co-opt key UMNO leaders, or "warlords," a term used loosely to refer to party leaders who could influence the grassroots and shape party decisions on important matters because of their long rule as division chiefs or their significant access to patronage resources. These warlords were appointed by Najib as Federal Ministers or Deputy Ministers, while others were appointed as directors of government-linked companies (GLCs). There were also rumours of cash being distributed to UMNO division chiefs and important party elites to prevent them from revolting (Case 2017; Funston 2016). Subsequently, those on UMNO's Supreme Council, as well as 191 division chiefs, openly voiced their support for Najib (*Utusan Malaysia* 20 July 2017). By the end of 2017, Najib had secured a strong grip over UMNO. The same political analyst who had raised concerns in 2016 over Najib's position as Prime Minister was arguing a year later that he was "in a solid position to be re-elected" in the impending general election (Chin 2017).

However, GE14 posed a fresh challenge to Najib's grip over UMNO elites. Election candidacy had long been a source of tussles and feuds among UMNO factions as the number of seats in parliamentary and state constituencies is limited and only a small number of politicians can be nominated. Being a parliamentarian or state assemblyman boosts one's profile within the party, while it also serves

as a crucial avenue to secure access to government-generated concessions. Such nominations are recognition of either the strength and influence of a candidate in his area or his close relationship with UMNO elites. Being a candidate also provides one with access to election funding. An assemblyman candidate is said to be provided with RM500,000 and a parliamentary candidate with RM1 million for election campaigns.[1] The accountability system for these funds appeared to be extremely minimal. The volume of funds spent was rarely accounted for, allowing the candidates to keep the balance, if any. If a candidate won the election, his position in the party was further strengthened. An assemblyman or parliamentarian receives a decent salary and a substantial annual allocation for his constituency, which he could use to further boost his profile in his area. As party elections are usually held after a general election, those elected as assemblymen and parliamentarians had a better chance of being elected as division chiefs or members of UMNO's Supreme Council.

Stories of backstabbing and sabotage by those who were unhappy that they were not nominated as candidates had emerged in previous elections.[2] Najib could not afford to let such feuds occur because it would further jeopardize the possibility of the ruling coalition, the *Barisan Nasional* (BN, or National Front) winning GE14. Therefore, the distribution of seats had to be carried out carefully to avoid internal backlashes. One way to curb infighting was to accommodate division chiefs and members of the party's Supreme Council by appointing them as candidates. These elites would be even more prioritized if they were incumbents or were known to be warlords. These elites were likely to command respect and support from the UMNO grassroots and larger electorate, making it crucial for them to be nominated as election candidates to ensure UMNO's victory.

To further strengthen the influence of these elites among UMNO grassroots and general voters, Najib used his position as Prime Minister to distribute development projects and various other material benefits to voters in key constituencies. Welsh (2018) calculated that UMNO's election pledges in early 2018 alone were around RM100 billion. The 2018 budget, the last budget before the election, showered voters with many "goodies," from a tax reduction and abolition of tolls on selected highways to bonuses and payments for civil servants, pensioners, paddy farmers and FELDA settlers (*The Edge* 7 November 2017). Additionally, various measures were taken to weaken opposition parties, such as the redelineation exercises that gave UMNO and BN an unfair advantage. These measures were carried out to create what Magaloni (2006) refers to as "the image of invincibility:" an impression that the party cannot be defeated. By creating such an image, UMNO could also deter the defection of party elites and members as well as the voters to the opposition.

However, the invincibility image that UMNO tried to project was not well received by the voters. BN suffered a major loss, securing a mere 79 out of 222 parliamentary seats, effectively ending its 60 years of ruling. At the state level, BN lost control of six states. UMNO obtained control of only two state governments: Perlis and Pahang. This turn by the voters, from Magaloni's perspective, can be attributed to changes in the faith they had in the ruling party, particularly

over the way the economy was managed. As the trust of voters in the ruling party deteriorated, the image of invincibility crumbled and they would "vote the rascals out."

A comparison of opinion polls carried in the months when GE12, GE13 and GE14 were held confirms this theory. In March 2008, when GE12 was conducted, 66% of the voters were satisfied with the direction of the country (Merdeka Center 2007). In May 2013, the month when GE13 was held, 56% of the voters viewed the country as moving in the right direction. In May 2018, that number had dropped to 44% (Merdeka Center 2018), indicating a further decline in the faith of the voters in UMNO.[3] Although Magaloni's theory provides insights into BN's fall, it does not explain UMNO's victory in 54 seats.

This study builds on Magaloni's concept of "image of invincibility." However, instead of applying it to just trace the link between economic performance and election results at the national level, the study looks into local-level dynamics and links the "image on invincibility" to the elites chosen as candidates as well as the patronage resources available to them. Using four case studies, the study will show the different methods that the elites adopted to mobilise these patronage resources to project the irreplaceable image of the party as well as to overcome factionalism in their divisions. These case studies will also assess the factors that prevented UMNO from projecting this image. Before discussing these case studies, a review is provided of UMNO's efforts to accommodate as many elites as possible as election candidates and the outcomes of this accomodation strategy.

GE14 candidates: patronage to accommodate elites?

UMNO contested 121 of the 220 parliamentary seats and 343 of the 505 state assembly seats. The remaining 101 parliamentary seats and 162 state seats were contested by UMNO's partners in BN. Najib made a concerted effort to accommodate high-ranking party elites, especially if they were incumbents or warlords, to prevent defections and to garner grassroots support. Najib's strategy to accommodate them can be seen in the following ways.

First, at the parliamentary level, nine incumbent MPs were dropped to make way for the division chiefs. UMNO won 86 parliamentary seats in GE13. Two of the parliamentarians had passed away about six months before the election,[4] leaving UMNO with 84 incumbents. Sixty-seven of these incumbents were picked to defend their seats; most of them were division chiefs or members of the Supreme Council. Two incumbents were moved to different seats: in Sabah, Abdul Rahman Dahlan relinquished his Kota Belud seat to Salleh Said Keruak, the Kota Belud UMNO division chief. Rahman was given the Sepanggar seat. In Johor, Halimah Sadique was moved from Tenggara to Kota Tinggi to make way for the Tenggara UMNO division chief, Adham Baba. Not all incumbent MPs who were dropped were as lucky as Rahman and Halimah. Four were demoted to state seats, while the remaining ten were not nominated at all. Like Rahman and Halimah, these MPs were dropped or demoted to make way for their

division chiefs to contest. Ahmad Fauzi Zahari in Setiawangsa (Kuala Lumpur) was dropped to make way for Zulhasnan Rafique, Normala Abdul Samad in Pasir Gudang (Johor) for Khaled Nordin, Ismail Daut in Merbok (Kedah) for Tajul Urus Mat Zain, Che Mohamad Zulkifly Jusoh in Setiu (Terengganu) for Jidin Shafee and Raime Unggi in Tenom (Sabah) for Rubin Balang.

Secondly, division chiefs were prioritized to contest in the 35 remaining seats assigned to UMNO. In some places, these chiefs had contested the seats in previous elections, such as Awang Adek Hussin (Bachok, Kelantan) and Abdullah Mat Yasim (Rantau Panjang, Kelantan). Some had contested as state assemblymen in the previous election, such as Abdullah Hasnan Kamaruddin (Kuala Kedah). However, most of them had not been nominated before,[5] such as the chiefs of Pokok Sena (Said Ali Syed Rastan), Bukit Gantang (Syed Hussin Abu Fasal), Pengkalan Chepa (Zaluzi Sulaiman) and Kubang Kerian (Muhammad Abdul Ghani).

Thirdly, almost all division chiefs who were the incumbent for state assembly seats were retained as candidates. In parliamentary seats assigned to UMNO's BN partners, such as in Selangor and Penang, the chiefs were chosen as state candidates in their areas.

Finally, accommodating division chiefs did not mean nominating only them as candidates. In some areas, their family members stood as candidates instead of the chiefs. In GE14, at least five candidates were related to the chiefs in their constituencies: Mastura Yazid (Kuala Kangsar, Perak), Yamani Hafez Musa (Sipitang, Sabah), Fikran Hamshi Mohd Fatmi (Kota Bharu, Kelantan), Nizam Abu Bakar (Apas, Sabah) and Nolee Ashilin (Tualang Sekah, Perak). Mastura is the widow to Kuala Kangsar's former MP and division chief, Wan Khairil Wan Ahmad. Yamani is the son of Musa Aman, then Chief Minister of Sabah. Fikran is the son of Kota Bharu's chief, Mohd Fatmi Che Salleh, who was also Najib's former political secretary. Nizam is the brother of the late Tawfiq Abu Bakar Titingan, former state assemblyman for Apas. Nolee is the daughter of Mohd Radzi, Kampar chief.

Seventy percent of the elites (150 people out of 213), i.e., division chiefs and members of the Supreme Council, were nominated as candidates. The accommodation of division chiefs saw seasoned politicians, such as Zulhasnan Rafique, Khaled Nordin and Ali Rustam, selected as parliamentary candidates. Although their nominations indicated Najib's serious effort to accommodate elites to win the election, it also revealed his relatively weak control over the selection of candidates as warlords asserted their power for their own benefit.

Although they tried to secure a nomination, 63 high-ranking elites (division chiefs and Supreme Council members) were not selected as candidates. There were various reasons for their exclusion. One reason was because seats had to be assigned to UMNO's BN partners. About one-third of the seats contested by BN (263 out of 727 seats) were assigned to UMNO's partners in BN.

Another reason for the exclusion of elites was because some had been appointed as senators until at least 2019, such as Hanafi Mamat (Pasir Mas, Kelantan), Yahya Mat Ghani (Batu, Selangor), Mustapa Kamal (Seputeh, KL) and John Ambrose (Penampang, Sabah). Some warlords were not nominated owing to their problematic

track records, such as Isa Samad and Rizalman Mokhtar. Isa was embroiled in various business scandals, whereas Rizalman was caught in a nightclub three weeks before nomination day. It was unclear why several elites were not nominated such as Puad Zarkashi (Batu Pahat, Johor),[6] Jailani Johari (Hulu Terengganu, Terengganu) and Zaim Abu Hasan (Parit, Perak). Jailani was Deputy Minister of the Communications and Multimedia Ministry from 2013 to 2018 and he was not affected by Najib's major Cabinet reshuffle in mid-2015. Yet, he was dropped as a candidate. They were probably not nominated because of party factionalism, which was serious in these three states.

Those who were not accommodated reacted differently. Some expressed their disappointment elegantly such as Jailani and Zaim, the incumbent MPs for Hulu Terengganu and Parit. These two MPs were not happy about being dropped, but they were committed to helping UMNO defend these seats; UMNO did successfully defend Hulu Terengganu and Parit. Some expressed their unhappiness openly and angrily, such as Puad. Others did not express their disappointment openly, but there were rumours that they went against party directives by sabotaging the chosen candidates, as in Pokok Sena.

The strategy of accommodating high-ranking elites did not work well for UMNO. The party won only 54 of the 121 parliamentary seats it contested. In the state assembly contests, UMNO only managed to win 150 out of 343 seats (see Table 3.1).

UMNO only managed to defend 53 of the 86 parliamentary seats that it won in GE13. Of the 67 incumbents picked to defend their seats, only 44 of them were successful. Among those who lost were MPs who had held their seats for more than three terms, such as Shahrir Samad (Johor Bahru, Johor), Othman Abdul (Pendang, Kedah), Shabery Chik (Kemamam, Terengganu) and Shaziman Abu Mansor (Tampin, Negeri Sembilan). Interestingly, UMNO's new candidates performed well. Among the nine who won were Hafiz Musa (Sipitang, Johor), Shahar Abdullah (Paya Besar, Pahang), Jalaluddin Alias (Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan) and Zakaria Edris (Libaran, Sabah). Among the prominent UMNO veterans who lost were Zulhasnan Rafique, in Setiawangsa and Johor's Chief Minister Khaled Nordin, in Pasir Gudang. To understand the success and the failure of incumbents in defending their seats, this study will use Kuala Kangsar and Jerai as case studies.

Of the 35 seats UMNO hoped to capture from the opposition, only one seat was successfully won: Bukit Gantang, in Perak. The remaining 34 candidates,

Table 3.1 Seat allocations and results for BN

	Parliament		*State Assembly*	
Total Seats Contested	222		505	
	UMNO	Non-UMNO	UMNO	Non-UMNO
Seats Allocated	121	101	343	162
Seats won	54	25	150	16

who were mostly division chiefs, failed to win their seats. Bukit Gantang will be assessed to understand why UMNO won this seat, whereas Pokok Sena will be reviewed as a failure case. The four cases will show how the nomination of candidates and other forms of patronage, which was intended to retain political allegiance, can backfire by deepening party factionalism.

Case studies

Bukit Gantang

UMNO's victory in Bukit Gantang was historic. Out of the 54 seats that UMNO won, Bukit Gantang is the only seat the party managed to wrest from the opposition. In fact, not only did UMNO wrest this parliamentary seat from PAS, it also took the state assembly seats of Changkat Jering and Kuala Sapetang from PAS and PKR, respectively, and retained Trong. UMNO also won big; its majority for the parliamentary seat was 4,089 votes, while in the two state seats, the margin of victory was by more than 1,800 votes (see Table 3.2).

This victory was by Syed Abu Hussin bin Abu Fasal,[7] the Bukit Gantang UMNO chief. This was his first nomination as an election candidate. However, he had a massive and effective election machinery.[8] BN paraphernalia (flags, buntings and candidates' pictures) flooded the streets of his constituency. They were not only displayed in urban centres like Changkat Jering, but also in kampung roads in Trong. BN's *pondok panas*, temporary structures erected for campaign purposes, in Bukit Gantang were decorated nicely with a consistent theme: military struggles. In one spot in Kuala Sapetang, the *pondok panas* featured an old unused military helicopter and a statue in a military uniform. According to locals, Syed organized a one-time bazaar to provide locals with cheaper daily supplies. Before the election period, his foundation, Yayasan al-Fasal, donated RM300,000 to orphans and children from poor families in Trong (*Perak Today* 15 June 2017).

Table 3.2 Bukit Gantang GE14 result

	BN	*PAS*	*PH*	*Majority*
P59—Bukit Gantang	22, 450 (32.1%)	16,052 (23.0%)	18,361 (26.3%)	4,089
N13—Kuala Sapetang	8,993 (30.7%)	6,296 (21.5%)	8,664 (29.6%)	334
N14—Changkat Jering*	8,818 (32.8%)	6,199 (23.1%)	6,896 (25.7%)	1,992
N15—Trong	5,139 (37.4%)	3,241 (23.6%)	2,546 (18.5%)	1,898

Source: Election Commission of Malaysia, 2018

*An independent candidate ran in Changkat Jering, but he only secured 60 votes.

Syed was not just a division chief;[9] he is also the CEO and the largest shareholder of Gunung Capital Berhad, a publicly-listed company that partially owns Perak Hydro Renewable Energy Corporation (PHREC). PHREC was mandated by the Perak government to develop small renewable energy hydro-projects in the state. A Water Rights Agreement (WRA) that PHREC signed with the state government in December 2012 (*Gunung Capital Berhad Annual Report 2013*) gave the company the rights to build, operate and own (BOO) small hydro-power plants at 31 pre-identified sites for a period of 21 years. Gunung Capital's involvement in PHREC started in October 2013 with the acquisition of an 85% stake in Pusaka Hijau Sdn Bhd, a company that owned 60% of PHREC. PHREC's remaining 40% stake was owned by the Perak government's MBI.

Syed's entry into Gunung Capital was facilitated by the company he owned, GPB Corporation Sdn Bhd. GPB Corp's main business is to provide transportation chartering services to private and public entities. In January 2010, GPB Corp agreed to sell 51% of its stake to Gunung Capital, whose then largest shareholder was Low Bok Tek. Gunung Capital, a latex concentrate trading firm, was facing financial difficulties and taking major steps to address them. One step was to take over GPB Corp. The reason for the takeover was because Gunung Capital was once engaged in transportation and GPB Corp could utilize the land to expand its operation. Another reason was that GPB Corp was a profit-making entity. In May 2009, a year before the sale-and-purchase agreement between Gunung Capital and GPB Corp was signed, the company inked a contract with the Ministry of Defence to provide transportation services for the National Service Programme for five years. This contract, from 26 December 2009 to 25 December 2014, was valued at RM321.57 million (*Circular to Shareholders 22 April 2010*).

The issuance of Gunung Capital's new shares allowed Syed to become a major shareholder of the company. He started with buying 7.96% of the company's shares on 8 November 2010. By March 2017, he owned 21.68% shares of the company (*Gunung Capital 2017 Company Report*). Meanwhile, Low Bow Tek reduced his stake from 37.01% in April 2010 to 11.79% in March 2017. Syed was appointed the company's CEO on 8 December 2010 (*Gunung Capital Bhd: Turnaround story in the offing* 2011).

After becoming a part of Gunung Capital, GPB Corp continued to receive substantial contracts from the state and federal governments. For example:

- In November 2010, GPB Corp, through its subsidiary Bas Rakyat Sdn Bhd,[10] signed a contract with the Perak state government to operate public bus services in Manjung from May 2011 to April 2018. The value of the contract was RM4.32 million
- In April 2011, GPB Corp signed an agreement with 1MDB to supply and operate mobile clinic services in Segamat, Johor, for a period of two years. 1MDB then purchased two additional mobile clinic units from Gunung Capital for the price of RM4.1 million (*Gunung Capital Bhd: Turnaround story in the offing* 2011).

- In December 2014, the contract to provide national services was extended until 2017. The value of the extension was RM165,951,885 (*Gunung Capital 2017 Company Report*)
- In January 2016, GPB Corp inked another contract with the Ministry of Defence to provide transportation services for children of members of the armed forces. This contract, from February 2016 until 30 November 2016, was valued at RM14,657,500. The contract was renewed in January 2017. Based on this new contract, GPB Corp was to provide the service until 30 November 2019. The value of this new contract was RM43,904,850 (*Gunung Capital 2017 Company Report*).

Given his access to such resources, Syed was able to create a massive election machinery as well as obtain solid control over his division. Syed put his people as candidates for all state assembly seats in Bukit Gantang: Trong, Changkat Jering and Kuala Sepetang. The incumbent for Trong, Dr Zabri Abd Wahid, had to make way for Syed's candidate, Jamilah Zakaria, who was also Puteri Chief for Bukit Gantang. Zabri was apparently upset that he had been bypassed as a candidate.[11] Meanwhile, former Bukit Gantang chief, Rosli Husin, who was the candidate for Trong in 2008 and Changkat Jering in 2013, was not accommodated at all. Instead, Syed supported Bukit Gantang Youth chief, Ahmad Saidi Daud, as the candidate. As for Kuala Sepetang, a traditionally MCA seat, Syed managed to nominate his deputy as the candidate.

Syed was not the only person eyeing the Bukit Gantang seat. Other local leaders such as Shahril Azmir Ahmad Shaffie (Youth chief of Taiping Division) and Zahir Abd Khalid (Kamunting Assemblyman, 2008–2018) were also interested in the seat.[12] None of these leaders, however, had access to massive resources like Syed. They could not mount a challenge against him, nor sabotage him during the election. Bukit Gantang is a good example of how patronage had enhanced the position and authority of those awarded lucrative concessions, helping them to win the seats for UMNO.

Kuala Kangsar

Like Bukit Gantang, Kuala Kangsar was a parliamentary constituency UMNO had won, along with its state seats. Mastura Yazid, the candidate who had been the MP for Kuala Kangsar since 2016, defeated candidates nominated by PAS and Pakatan Harapan (PH), but with a slim majority of 731 votes. Meanwhile, Maslin Sham, Bukit Chandan's state assemblyman for the 2013–2018 term, retained his seat, while Zuraimi Razali won the Manong state seat for the first time. Interestingly, Mastura, though the parliamentary candidate and incumbent, was not the division chief. Her nomination in 2016 caused disputes within the division. Mastura was the widow of the sitting Kuala Kangsar MP who had passed away in a helicopter crash in 2016. Following his death, a by-election was called and Mastura was chosen as BN's candidate. Over the next two years, Mastura established her position in the division, securing her candidacy in GE14. Mastura

did not obtain huge contracts like Syed in Bukit Gantang, but her husband had left her with strong connections to national leaders and local aristocrats. With such connections, Mastura managed to overcome factionalism in the division and successfully defended the seat for UMNO (see Table 3.3).

Mastura was not politically active when her husband, Wan Khairil Anuar Wan Ahmad, passed away. She was not holding a party position in Kuala Kangsar or in Negeri Sembilan where she comes from. She was, however, a committee member in the UMNO branch in Chembong, Negeri Sembilan, before moving to Kuala Kangsar with her husband. For this reason, many opposed her candidacy, among them former UMNO Kuala Kangsar chief, Ramly Zahari (*Sinar Harian* 14 June 2016). Ramly had been proposed by Nazri Aziz, an UMNO Federal Minister, as the candidate for the by-election (*Malaysiakini* 10 May 2016). An UMNO member in the Pandan Division in Kuala Lumpur, who claimed to be from Kuala Kangsar, also expressed his interest to be nominated as the candidate (*Astro Awani* 1 June 2016).

Despite opposition from local leaders, the central leadership went ahead with Mastura's candidacy in 2016; it was announced by UMNO's then Vice-President, Zahid Hamidi. According to Zahid, Mastura fulfilled all criteria required of a candidate: she was a professional, knew local politics, was involved with the local electorate, did not contradict the leadership's decisions and represented the Women's Wing of UMNO. But, most importantly in Zahid's view, Mastura "does not have any baggage" (*Bornoe Post* 8 June 2016). Mastura practiced law at her family's legal firm, Yazid Baba & Partners, run by her father, Yazid Baba, former state assemblyman for Chembong (1974–1986) and deputy president of MUBARAK (*Majlis Bekas Wakil Rakyat Malaysia*, or Association of Former Member of Legislatures of Malaysia).

But some speculated that Mastura was chosen to safeguard the interests of her late husband's political camp in Kuala Kangsar (*FMT* 7 June 2016). There reportedly were two camps in Kuala Kangsar: one, that of Mastura's late husband, Wan Khairil, and the other led by Kuala Kangsar's former chief, Ramly Zahari. Both camps had been eyeing the parliamentary and division chief positions since 2008. In fact, there were rumours that Wan Khairil and Ramly, in addition to Zambry Abdul Kadir, were nominees for the post of Menteri Besar of Perak during the constitutional crisis in 2009. Zambry, however, was the preferred choice. Zambry

Table 3.3 Kuala Kangsar GE14 result

	BN	*PAS*	*PH*	*Majority*
P67—Kuala Kangsar	12,102 (40.2%)	6,583 (17.8%)	11,371 (21.9%)	731
N34—Bukit Chandan	5,929 (34.2%)	2,743 (15.8%)	5,465 (31.6%)	464
N35—Manong	6,267 (31.9%)	4,004 (20.4%)	5,696 (29.0%)	571

Source: Election Commission of Malaysia, 2018

included Ramly in his state Cabinet and involved Wan Khairil in a small hydro-project plan, run by the state government's holding firm, MBI.[13] In 2013, Wan Khairil's camp won both positions. He was elected as a Member of Parliament for Kuala Kangsar in 2013, replacing Rafidah Aziz, who had been the MP for the constituency since 1982. That same year, Wan Khairil won the election as division chief. His demise opened an opportunity for the other camp to take over one of these positions.

Although Mastura, who was still in mourning, had limited backing from local UMNO leaders, she received support from the party's central leadership and aristocrats in Kuala Kangsar during the campaign (6–17 June 2016). Khairy Jamaluddin, Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and Rahman Dahlan, prominent national leaders, had programmes in the area during the campaign period, as did Fadilah Yusof and Nancy Shukri of Pesaka Pribumi Bersatu (PBB), both Cabinet ministers. Najib came to Kuala Kangsar on the fourth day of the campaign to announce an allocation for the Manong Bridge that was to connect the furthest area in Kuala Kangsar to the town. A local aristocrat, Megat Ahmad Shahrani, acted as Mastura's representative on nomination day. Megat Ahmad was Chairman of the Malay Contractors Association in Perak and a descendant of Megat Terawis, an influential aristocratic family in the state. Mastura won the by-election by a landslide, capturing 54.3% of the total votes in a three-cornered fight, with a majority of more than 6,500.

As GE14 approached, rumours abounded that Mastura would not be re-nominated. An online news portal reported that such demands were also made by the grassroots who were not happy with Mastura's performance (*FMT* 22 April 2018). But those who nominated her in the by-election in 2016 remained supportive of her.[14] UMNO leaders who loudly rejected her candidacy in 2016 had moved on: Ramly had registered in a Master's Programme in Universiti Azlan Shah and Kamilia had joined PAS in April 2018. Mastura was able to consolidate her position in Kuala Kangsar too.[15] Kamil Shafie, the person who replaced Wan Khairil as division chief, was the state assemblyman for Manong. However, he was not nominated. Instead, Zuraimi Razali, a local leader, was chosen as the candidate.[16]

Judging from the pictures and buntings displayed, as well as the presence of *pondok panas* in Kuala Kangsar, Mastura's machinery was not as strong as Syed's in Bukit Gantang. However, compared to those in Pokok Sena, Kuala Kedah and Jerai, her outreach was better. Her pictures were plastered all over Kuala Kangsar, even on a quiet road in Manong. She emphasized the legacy of her husband during the campaign and stressed her mission to continue his work.

All UMNO candidates in Kuala Kangsar won their contests with a slim majority. Mastura captured only 40.2% of the total votes, though she secured just 230 votes less than the total number that she had obtained in 2013. This suggested that the voters did not share the sentiments of some party activists against her. Amanah's candidate gained a substantial increase in support, but it was not enough to top the votes secured by Mastura.[17] The resources available to her, given her position as an MP and the connections she had with local aristocrats,

allowed Mastura to quell a potential dispute in the division and helped UMNO win all the seats in this parliamentary constituency.

Pokok Sena

Pokok Sena, like Bukit Gantang, was an opposition-held constituency. Mahfuz Omar, representing PAS, won this parliamentary seat in elections held in 1999, 2008 and 2013. While UMNO had won the Bukit Lada state seat in 2013, the two other seats in this constituency, Derga and Bukit Pinang, were won by DAP and PAS, respectively. In GE14, UMNO did not manage to wrest Pokok Sena and lost the only state seat it had there.

Said Ali Syed Rastan, UMNO's parliamentary candidate for Pokok Sena, shared similarities with Syed Husin, the Bukit Gantang candidate. Said was elected as division chief in 2013 and was a first-time candidate. A chartered accountant, he worked for a number of accounting firms while active in politics. Said did not receive major business contracts from the government like Syed, although he was appointed a director at Permodalan Kedah Berhad in 2013 and, during the party crisis in 2015, he was appointed Chairman of Mara Liner, a subsidiary of MARA, that was engaged in transportation services. His charity foundation, Yayasan Al-Abrar, appears in a list of individuals and organisations that had received money from SRC International, a subsidiary of the scandal-ridden 1MDB, a government enterprise controlled by Najib (Ramli 2017).

The split within PAS in 2015, which resulted in the establishment of Amanah and the party's departure from the opposition coalition, created an opportunity for UMNO to win more seats in the constituency. In fact, Said was confident BN would win all the seats in the constituency (*Bernama* 24 April 2018). According to Said, UMNO had actively served the Pokok Sena community, irrespective of race and political affiliation, and a number of important infrastructure projects had been implemented before the election. A new water treatment facility, funded by the federal government, had been operating since November 2017 (*New Straits Times* 29 October 2017), and a state-owned

Table 3.4 Pokok Sena GE14 result

	BN	*PAS*	*PH*	*Majority*
P8—Pokok Sena	18,390 (21.2%)	23,401 (26.9%)	28,959 (33.3%)	5,558
N9—Bukit Lada*	8,288 (27.6%)	9,573 (31.9%)	6,337 (21.1%)	1,285
N10—Bukit Pinang	6,289 (21.7%)	10,432 (35.9%)	7,220 (24.9%)	300
N11—Derga	4,916 (17.7%)	5,967 (21.4%)	11,232 (40.3%)	5,265

Source: Election Commission of Malaysia, 2018

* Bukit Lada saw a four-cornered fight. The independent candidate won only 444 votes.

company was finally able to hand over the house keys to the buyers in September 2017; this housing project had been delayed for more than ten years (*Berita Harian* 26 September 2017). Three weeks before the election, Najib announced a new project to build houses for civil servants in Pokok Sena (*New Straits Times* 22 April 2018).

However, patronage accorded to Said and to Pokok Sena did not fully enhance his authority in his division. Pokok Sena's former division chief, Ahmad Lebai Sudin, was still influential.[18] Ahmad had led the Pokok Sena division from 1998 to 2013 (*Utusan Malaysia* 7 September 2008). He was defeated by Said in the UMNO election in 2013. Ahmad was the incumbent assemblyman for Bukit Lada, but he was not re-nominated. The leadership instead chose Said's deputy chief, Ariffin Mann, as the candidate. Ariffin was not a new face to politics. In fact, he was the assemblyman for Bukit Lada from 2004 to 2008. In 2008, he ran against a PAS candidate and lost. In GE13, Ariffin's place was taken over by Ahmad who had represented Bukit Lada in 1999. Ahmad had apparently been eyeing for Kedah Chief Minister's position for quite some time.[19] Mukhriz's departure in 2016 opened the way for Ahmad to realise his ambition. Ahmad was seen to be the man behind Mukhriz's fall. He had started the call for Mukhriz to resign in April 2015, when the latter refused to state his support for Najib (*Malaysiakini* 3 February 2016). Ahmad's bid to be the Chief Minister failed as the central leadership preferred Ahmad Bashah Hanapiah over him. Before GE14, Ahmad's name was dropped from the list of candidates.

Ahmad was reputed to have a history of sabotaging UMNO during elections. In the 2008 election, he had allegedly helped PAS's Mahfuz Omar win the parliamentary seat and for that reason his UMNO membership was suspended for two years (*The Star* 23 December 2008). The Bukit Lada seat saw a four-cornered fight in GE14 election; the independent candidate, Mohd Ismail Othman, was suspected to be Ahmad's man.[20] Ismail, the former treasurer of the Pokok Sena UMNO division, denied his decision to run had anything to do with Ahmad's failure to be nominated (*Berita Harian* 27 April 2018). However, Ahmad was apparently intent on stopping Ariffin from winning the seat.[21] These two UMNO leaders had a personal conflict. In 2015, Ahmad won the case against Ariffin for defaming his name during an UMNO meeting in 2013. Ahmad won the case and Ariffin was ordered by the High Court to pay him RM150,000 in damages (*The Star* 2 September 2015).

UMNO failed to win the Pokok Sena constituency. Mahfuz Omar, who ran as an Amanah candidate in this election, retained the constituency with a higher majority than in 2013. Bukit Pinang and Derga remained with PAS and DAP, respectively, while Bukit Lada was taken by PAS. The Pokok Sena case indicates how factionalism, triggered by patronage distribution, brought about UMNO's electoral demise. Patronage awarded to elites in UMNO could not weaken the influence of warlords who still had access to other sources of patronage. The failure of Najib to accommodate Ahmad, the local warlord, had resulted in UMNO losing the only state seat it had in the Pokok Sena parliamentary constituency.

Jerai

Jerai is one of the seven seats that UMNO lost in Kedah. Jerai's BN candidate, Major General Jamil Khir Baharom, the incumbent MP and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, failed to defend the seat. However, unlike in Pokok Sena, Jamil's defeat was not because of the intervention of other warlords. Instead, Jamil was seen as incapable of providing leadership in the division.[22]

Jamil is a Jerai native, but he was not active in politics until 2009 when Najib appointed him as a senator and then to the Cabinet to take charge of Islamic Affairs. Whereas other ministers had been moved to different portfolios during the several Cabinet reshuffles that Najib exercised, Jamil remained in his portfolio until GE14. Before his appointment as a senator in 2009, Jamil was a military man whose career led him to lead one division in the army, the Religious Affairs Division. He was also a prominent figure in the media, appearing every Thursday night in a religious programme aired on the government's RTM1, *Forum Perdana Ehwal Islam* (*The Nut Graph* 9 April 2009). Despite having no formal position in UMNO, he was chosen as a BN candidate for GE13. He managed to win the election with a majority of 1,196. This victory paved the way for him to win the UMNO division chief post in October 2013. He was elected as a member of UMNO's Supreme Council that same year.

As an incumbent MP and division chief, Jamil was the natural candidate for GE14. However, his candidacy in 2018 was not received well by local members. Jamil was apparently not interested in building the party institution in Jerai. Many young members were no longer interested in UMNO's activities because they were not given a fair chance to lead. "*Dia pangkah semua tunas*" (he cut off all emerging leaders) lamented this informant.[23] According to another ex-UMNO member, Jamil was only interested in securing his own interests, as seen in a road project connecting a neglected bridge in Pulau Bunting to the PLUS Highway. Since this road project passed through private properties, the government had to buy them. Jamil personally benefited from the project because it passed through land that he had bought from the locals.[24]

Jamil's lack of support from local UMNO chapters was apparent in the way he ran his campaign.[25] Jamil's pictures were initially not seen on the main street, appearing only later. Jamil appeared to be relying more on his position as a Federal Minister, instead of his position as division chief, to muster support. An online news portal reported that a number of sharia judges provided free legal advice on sharia-law-related issues in Jerai during the campaign (*Malaysiakini* 5 May 2018). Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia (YAPEIM), a foundation established by the federal government in 1976 to develop and support the Muslim community in Malaysia that was placed under the portfolio in-charge of religious affairs, held a sales event during the campaign period.

UMNO's leadership at the state and federal level recognized Jamil's weaknesses. In addition to the highway linking Pulau Bunting and PLUS that was expected to be completed in October 2018, Jerai received allocations for a floating mosque (*masjid terapung*) in Yan and for improvement of public facilities in

a beach area (Pantai Murni) in Yan. Najib, who visited the constituency in March 2018, was briefed on several development projects there. On the same day, Kedah Menteri Besar Ahmad Bashah announced an allocation of RM70,000 for the Chinese community in Gurun. A month earlier, Khairy Jamaluddin, UMNO Youth chief, also visited the area and announced an allocation for a sport complex in Jerai. Important as well, Jamil managed to persuade the son of the late Ustaz Azizan, a prominent PAS leader, to join UMNO a day before the election (*MStar* 8 May 2018). These development projects and the PAS connection did not help raise Jamil's popularity.

The GE14 results revealed Jamil's somewhat low popularity. He lost to his cousin, PAS's Ustaz Sabri Azit, though by only 539 votes (see Table 3.5). Other incumbent MPs who were defeated by either PAS or PH candidates in Kedah had lost by much larger margins. UMNO incumbents who contested in Langkawi, Jerlun, Kubang Pasu, Merbok, Pendang and Sik lost their seats to either PAS or PH by more than 5,000 votes. Although the vote difference in Jerai was much smaller, the percentage of votes that went to Jamil was less than those that went to other prominent UMNO Kedah candidates such as Othman Abdul and Mansur Rahman, who were also defeated by PAS candidates: 33.1% compared to 33.3% and 35.4%, respectively. Jamil's lower popularity seemed to be because of the prominence of his opponent, the PH candidate Akramsyah Sanusi Juned, the son of a former Kedah Menteri Besar and longstanding UMNO leader, who also garnered about 33 per cent of the total votes.

UMNO's defeat in Langkawi and Jerlun was expected as Mahathir and Mukhriz contested there. So too in Kubang Pasu and Merbok, two constituencies with deep ties to Mahathir and former Finance Minister, Daim Zainuddin. However, UMNO's chances in Sik, Jerai and Pendang were slightly better because PH candidates were either not coming from these areas or were new candidates. Besides, in a three-cornered fight, it was expected that votes would be split, possibly favouring PH. However, PAS turned out to be a formidable contender in these three areas. It won the parliamentary seats of Jerai, Pendang

Table 3.5 Jerai GE14 result

	BN	*PAS*	*PH*	*Majority*
P12—Jerai	21, 773 (33.1%)	**22,312** (33.9%)	21,651 (32.9%)	539
N20—Sungai Limau	7,075 (24.6%)	**13,048** (45.3%)	4,493 (15.6%)	5,973
N21—Guar Chempedak	**6,518** (28.8%)	6,259 (27.6%)	5,686 (25.1%)	259
N22—Gurun*	6,525 (22.9%)	5,257 (18.4%)	**10,732** (37.6%)	4,207

Source: Election Commission of Malaysia, 2018

*Gurun saw a four-cornered fight. An independent candidate won only 167 votes.

and Sik. PAS only won with a small minority in Jerai, but it managed to retain most of the votes it garnered in 2013 in Pendang and Sik, suggesting that the three-cornered fights in these two areas were disastrous for UMNO because it had to split the remaining votes with PH candidates. Jerai has a higher non-Malay population than Sik and Pendang, a factor that may have contributed to PAS's lacklustre performance in this constituency.

At the state level, the UMNO candidate who stood for Guar Chempedak managed to defend the constituency, but won by a small majority of 259 votes.[26] However, UMNO failed to capture Sungai Limau that was firmly behind PAS. UMNO's partner in Gurun, MCA, lost the seat that the party had held for decades to PH. The Jerai case shows that patronage distribution to both elites and voters did not benefit UMNO.

Conclusion

In a single dominant party's effort to project an image of invincibility, the practice of patronage involving elites and voters is crucial. Patronage in the form of positions in government and GLCs or through the award of contracts and licenses can prevent party members from defecting to the opposition during times of crisis. Patronage in the form of development projects and individual benefits, such as cash handouts, will compel voters to think that the government is managing the economy well and that they would not obtain better benefits, or might even be worse off, if they voted for the opposition.

Patronage was not the only tool that UMNO/BN used to stress the image of invincibility. A redelineation exercise, the de-registration of Bersatu, not allowing the PH coalition to have a common logo and various measures to curb freedom of speech and expression served to project the idea that UMNO/BN was unbeatable. Moreover, UMNO/BN talked about the completion of major infrastructure projects and healthy economic growth to project the idea that it was indispensable while also picturing itself as the only protector of Malay privileges. Such racialized discourses, suggesting that only UMNO had the interests of Malays at heart, were employed to undermine the other Malay-based parties it was up against, i.e., PAS, Bersatu and Amanah. However, UMNO's image as protector of the Malays was seriously undermined by significant allegations of corruption against the Prime Minister and several UMNO leaders involving Malay-based institutions such as MARA and FELDA.

Factors undermining UMNO's invincible image can explain the demise of UMNO/BN in general, but it is inadequate to provide insights into the different results for each constituency, especially to answer the questions of why UMNO managed to defend 53 constituencies, lost 33 of them and only took one out of 35 seats from the opposition as was expected by its leaders and many analysts. Additionally, the issues of the choice of candidate and the local politics, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas, were important when determining the results of the election. This study of four constituencies, where UMNO successfully defended and took over Kuala Kangsar and Bukit Gantang and failed to

defend and take over Jerai and Pokok Sena served to provide insights into the party's performance.

In these four constituencies, UMNO distributed patronage to both elites and voters to augment its invincible image. The four cases point to two factors at the local level that could boost or undermine the image of invincibility that UMNO was trying to create nationally. The first factor is the management of local internal friction. All four constituencies experienced disputes over the choice of candidates. The division chief was not the only person interested in the position; there were lower ranking elites or elites who were not holding top positions who were also interested in being nominated as candidates. Those not selected as candidates were not happy with the leadership and wanted to jeopardize the selected candidate's hope of winning the seat. In Jerai and Kuala Kangsar, the disputes were somewhat resolved, whereas in Pokok Sena the dispute escalated. In Bukit Gantang, where the candidate had access to enormous resources, factionalism was not as serious as in the other four constituencies.

Evidently, resources owned by the elites played a significant role in the settlement of elite feuding. Syed Hussin in Bukit Gantang was significantly more financially resourceful than his UMNO contenders owing to various government contracts awarded to his companies, compared to previous division chiefs who had stronger political influence than him. Jamil Khir, as a Minister, had direct access to government machineries, an access that those who were unhappy with his candidacy did not have. Also crucial for him, two former division chiefs[27] in Jerai had already secured other important positions, stymieing further factional divides.[28] As for Mastura, in addition to her incumbency she had better resources than her contenders as she had the support of local aristocrats. Her contenders, Ramly Zahari (former division chief) and Kamil Shafie (acting division chief), did not have such support. Besides, her husband was quite popular and well-liked in Kuala Kangsar. Said Ali Rastan, Pokok Sena's division chief and candidate, was an anomaly. He was not an incumbent and was not as financially resourceful as Syed Hussin. Moreover, the previous division chief who had not been accommodated as a candidate in the election had more political and financial resources than Said Ali. The former chief had a history of sabotaging elections, allegedly also doing so in GE14 by supporting an independent candidate. With relatively poor resources, Said Ali was not able to establish his authority in the division, a factor that undermined UMNO's already troubled image in his constituency. As a result, UMNO could not take over Pokok Sena from the opposition, even losing the only state seat it had in this parliamentary constituency. This series of outcomes indicates the dilemmas the central leadership had to confront when dealing with warlords, including when deciding the nomination of candidates, now that the patronage system had become embedded in UMNO.

Access to resources helped Mastura and Syed Hussin resolve candidacy disputes in their constituencies, augmenting UMNO's winning image that then resulted in them winning their seats in a difficult election. This was not the case with Jamil Khir though he was almost equally resourceful. He was able to quell disputes over choice of candidates in his division, but he could not mobilize the support

of members to create an effective election machinery, as seen in the display of the party's paraphernalia's, candidate's image and running of numerous *pondok panas*. Compared to the election machinery in the other three constituencies, it was clear that Jamil was lagging behind although UMNO was flush with funds.

Single dominant party patronage is obviously important to pacify factions, curb feuding and project the winning image of the party. However, local dynamics determine whether patronage can deliver the intended outcomes. The case studies indicate that the way political elites handle internal feuds will ultimately determine whether they can win parliamentary and state seats during elections.

Notes

1 Information from an UMNO political operative, Perak, 30 April 2018 (Interview Perak 1).
2 Acts of sabotage during elections can be done in different ways, i.e., by being an independent candidate or supporting one, secretly campaigning for other parties, inciting UMNO members to spoil their votes and refusing to support the election machinery. In 2013, 58 UMNO members ran as independent candidates while the party's Disciplinary Board received at least 11 complaints of sabotage (*The Star* 18 May 2013). In 2008, UMNO identified 100 UMNO members in Perak who had sabotaged the party during the election (*The Star* 8 April 2008).
3 Merdeka Center, however, did not use this sentiment to predict the result of GE14. The centre predicted that BN would win the election without a majority of the popular vote, citing voters' concern over economic resilience and protection of their rights (*The Straits Times* 8 May 2018).
4 The MP for Paya Besar, Abdul Manan Ismail, passed away on 12 February 2018 and the Jelebu MP, Zainudin Ismail, passed away on 6 December 2017.
5 In fact, the chiefs in these areas had been pushed aside to accommodate candidates preferred by the national leadership in GE13. The candidates for Bukit Gantang, Kuala Kedah and Pokok Sena in GE13 were Ismail Saffian, Zaki Zamani Abd Rashid and Shahlan Ismail, respectively. They were not division chiefs in their constituencies.
6 For a discussion on why Puad was not nominated, see Chapter 1.
7 Syed Abu Hussin is no longer a Member of Parliament representing UMNO. On 27 June 2018, three weeks before the first sitting of the new parliament, he announced his departure from UMNO to be an independent MP. He cited internal fighting over the positions of Youth and Women chief in Bukit Gantang as the reason for his departure. His position as division chief, however, was uncontested.
8 My observation, after two days of fieldwork in Bukit Gantang. I only realized that the volume of resources used in Bukit Gantang were exceptionally huge after visiting other constituencies in Perak (Taiping, Kuala Kangsar, Padang Rengas) and Kedah (Pokok Sena, Pendang, Jerai, Jerlun, Kuala Kedah and Kubang Pasu).
9 Syed won the Bukit Gantang Chief election in 2013, defeating the then incumbent chief, Rosli Husin. Syed was deputy chief of the division from 2001–2005. Before becoming active in politics, he worked for the National Civil Bureau. He was the director of the Bureau office in Perak in 1993.
10 Bas Rakyat Sdn Bhd was initially a joint-venture between GPB and the Perak government, in which the former held 75% of the company's equity, while the latter, through its holding company, Menteri Besar Incorporated (MBI), held the remaining 25%. However, by the end of 2013, GBP fully owned Bas Rakyat.

11 When I met Jamilah in Trong on the second campaign day, she told me that she had not been able to secure Zabri's support, but she was trying her best to accommodate his supporters. This interview was conducted on 1 May 2018 in Perak.
12 Interview Perak 1; *Astro Awani* 2 February 2018.
13 In 2010, the government's holding company, MBI, established Perak Hydro Renewable Energy Corporation (PHREC) to spur development of small hydropower plants in Perak with Pusaka Hijau Sdn Bhd. Wan Khairil owned shares of this company.
14 Interview with a party activist in Kuala Kangsar, 30 April 2018 (Interview Perak 2).
15 I was told that Mastura had managed to influence the decision for state seat allocations and she was the one entrusted by the state and the central leadership to manage the election funding for Kuala Kangsar (Interview Perak 2, 30 April 2018).
16 Interestingly, the party activist in Kuala Kangsar did not mention any rumours of potential sabotage. He said that "the leaders are focusing on winning the election first" (Interview Perak 2, 30 April 2018).
17 In the 2016 by-election, votes for Amanah and PAS combined could not exceed votes for Mastura. But in GE14, if these votes were combined, Mastura would have lost the seat. This three-cornered fight in Kuala Kangsar appeared to have benefited BN.
18 Information obtained from a source in this constituency. Interview Kedah 2, 4 May 2018.
19 Numerous people I talked to in Kedah had mentioned Ahmad's desire to secure this post.
20 Interview Kedah 2, 4 May 2018.
21 Knowing the slim chance of an independent candidate to win or even secure a substantial number of votes, I asked locals about Ismail's intention to run. They voiced the opinion that Ismail was running at Ahmad's behest. Interview Kedah 2, 4 May 2018.
22 This feedback was based on information from my sources.
23 This point was made to me by an UMNO member who had joined Mahathir's Bersatu. Interview Kedah 3, 5 May 2018.
24 Interview Kedah 1, 3 May 2018.
25 I was in Jerai in the 5th and 6th day of the campaign period (3–4 May 2018).
26 In fact, Guar Chempedak is one of the three seats that BN managed to defend in Kedah.
27 In many places, former chiefs were usually interested in running as candidates.
28 Suhaimi Abdullah, Jerai Chief before Jamil Khir, was appointed a senator in 2014 and his appointment was extended in 2017. Meanwhile, Jerai's chief before Suhaimi Abdullah, Badruddin Amiruldin, is Permanent Chairman of UMNO and was Chairman of Tabung Haji during Najib's premiership.

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4 Electoral boundaries in Malaysia's 2018 election

Malapportionment, gerrymandering and UMNO's fall

Kai Ostwald

Introduction

Malaysia's General Election 14 (GE14) on 9 May 2018 broke with the previous thirteen in a fundamental way: the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and its coalition partners were defeated for the first time, bringing about an unprecedented transition of power after over six decades of political dominance. Despite the unpopularity of UMNO Prime Minister Najib Razak and widespread frustrations with the cost of living, the outcome was not anticipated. This is largely due to the extensive partisan manipulation of Malaysia's electoral process, which provided the ruling *Barisan Nasional* (BN) coalition with far-reaching advantages in electoral competition.

Of the many advantages, perhaps the most powerful came through biased electoral boundaries that use malapportionment and gerrymandering to provide the BN with a reliable and significant seat bonus over the opposition. This bias was enough to fundamentally distort outcomes, for example in the 2013 general election (GE13) where the BN lost the popular vote by 4% but still emerged with a 20% seat advantage in parliament (Wong 2018; Lee 2015; Ostwald 2013). Redelineation exercises concluded just prior to GE14 increased malapportionment further and showed signs of extensive gerrymandering. Critics from the opposition and civil society feared that they would make a turnover of power through the ballot box nearly impossible.

Relative to brazen manipulations like phantom voting or ballot box stuffing, biased electoral boundaries do not easily rouse cries of electoral malpractice. However, their effects are powerful. Malapportionment creates disparities in the relative weight of votes, amplifying those from districts with fewer voters while diluting those from districts with more voters. So extensive was the malapportionment in the GE14 boundaries that the smallest 112 seats—the minimum required to form a government in the 222-seat Dewan Rakyat—contained only *one-third* of the country's electorate, making it exceedingly difficult to win the election without success in the smaller districts. As the BN captured the vast majority of these seats in past elections, defeating them required unseating the country's hegemonic coalition *in its own strongholds*. Gerrymandering added to these difficulties. In the Malaysian context, it functions primarily by altering

the demographic composition of districts to bring them into alignment with the BN's preferred political strategy. The pre-GE14 redelineation made use of this as well by increasing the number of Malay-dominant districts, which changed the composition of the electoral audience to favour the BN's pro-Bumiputera agenda while constraining the appeal of the multiracial elements of *Pakatan Harapan's* (PH's) platform.

Despite these advantages, the BN found itself with an unexpected and insurmountable seat deficit on the morning after the election. With few options on the table, it was forced to watch UMNO-defector and leader of the opposition Mahathir Mohamad declare victory for PH. This chapter provides a broad overview of the role that electoral boundaries played in GE14. After establishing the political context that led up to the pivotal election, it shifts focus to the controversial redelineation process itself. Following this, it compares malapportionment and gerrymandering in the electoral boundaries from GE13 and GE14; this makes evident that the new boundaries either perpetuated or exacerbated existing distortions, thereby providing the BN with fundamental advantages *even in GE14*. The simple conclusion is that the BN lost not because electoral boundaries became less biased, but rather because the advantages they conferred could not make up for the widespread discontent with Prime Minister Najib Razak and UMNO politics under his leadership. The final section suggests that reform of electoral boundaries requires a hitherto elusive agreement on the role of ethnic privilege in Malaysian politics. Given the divisive nature of this issue, it constitutes one of the fledgling government's most daunting challenges.

Political context

The peninsular states of Malaya gained independence from the British in 1957. They were joined by the territories of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore in 1963, forming the Federation of Malaysia.[1] In the six decades following independence until GE14 in 2018, the country's politics were thoroughly dominated by UMNO and its coalition partners, known as the Alliance prior to 1973 and *Barisan Nasional* (BN) since then. So complete was UMNO's control of politics, that Malaysia has been classified as competitive authoritarian (Levitsky and Way 2010), single-party dominant (Case 1996) and a one-party state (Wong, Chin, and Othman 2010).

UMNO's resilience can be attributed to numerous factors. Malaysia's rapid development, especially in the decades prior to the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, meaningfully improved the living standards of most Malaysians, granting UMNO a measure of performance legitimacy. A high degree of elite cohesion around the time of independence also facilitated UMNO's consolidation of power (Slater 2010). In turn, UMNO used its control of Malaysia's strong state to shape political competition in ways that reinforced the authoritarian equilibrium. This includes implementing nearly every item on Schedler's (2002) "menu of manipulation" through which electoral authoritarian regimes secure extensive advantages in electoral competition.[2]

Although UMNO and its coalition partners faced challengers in every general election, the 1998 *Reformasi* movement marked a watershed moment in the nature of that challenge, as it saw three major opposition parties work in close partnership to unseat the BN under the name *Barisan Alternatif*. Importantly, this coalition included constituent parties that were able to effectively challenge the BN in both urban and rural areas, though it struggled to make inroads in the politically distinct East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak.[3] A similar trio known as *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR)—made up of *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR)—achieved an electoral breakthrough in the 2008 election by capturing nearly half of West Malaysia's seats and depriving the BN of its customary two-thirds legislative super-majority, the threshold needed to amend the constitution (Ooi, Saravanamuttu, and Lee 2008; Chin and Wong 2009; Pepinsky 2009; Ufen 2009). The coalition won the symbolically important popular vote and again denied the BN its legislative super-majority in GE13, but the biased electoral process prevented PR from capturing enough seats to form the government (Weiss 2013; Welsh 2013; Osman 2015).

The narrative around the BN's decline in popularity in the run-up to GE14 has been extensively covered elsewhere. In short, frustrations with growing inequality and the rising cost of living were directed squarely at the BN. Poor management of key schemes like FELDA, which provides land to Malays for smallholder farming, shook the previously secure linkage between the BN and key voting blocs. Furthermore, Najib made international headlines for his alleged involvement in the massive 1MDB financial scandal. Coverage of his wife's opulent lifestyle further fuelled voter anger.

Najib's unsteady management also precipitated challenges from within UMNO itself. His reaction, which in retrospect appears to be a fatal miscalculation, was to secure his position at the helm by purging opponents, including UMNO elite whose personal loyalty he suspected. The brazen manoeuvres led Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister and UMNO premiere from 1981 to 2003, to form an UMNO-clone opposition party known as the *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (PPBM, but often referred to as *Bersatu*) that provided a welcome home for former UMNO members, including key figures like Najib's former deputy Prime Minister. Shortly thereafter, Mahathir emerged as the *de facto* leader of the PH coalition.

The growing scale of discontent with the BN, together with the potential appeal of a Mahathir-led opposition, led Najib to double down on existing electoral manipulations as well as unveil new ones, most notably the strategic manipulation of electoral boundaries. Majoritarian systems like Malaysia's naturally produce distortions in the translation of votes into seats by (typically) providing the winning party with a seat share above its vote share. In short, the winning party receives a mechanical "seat bonus" above what it would receive in a proportional representation or mixed system.[4] Distinct from this natural bias, majoritarian systems are also vulnerable to partisan manipulations through malapportionment and gerrymandering, both of which can provide additional seat bonuses to the

ruling party that are unavailable to opposition parties at a given vote share, making them explicitly partisan in nature.

The logic of these two manipulations is straightforward. Malapportionment arises when districts have unequal numbers of voters. Since each district in a typical majoritarian system sends one representative to parliament, smaller districts require fewer votes to secure a seat than do their larger counterparts. In a hypothetical district *A* with 10,000 voters, for example, the impact of each vote is ten times greater than those from a hypothetical district *B* with 100,000 voters. When electoral districts in pro-government areas are made consistently smaller than those in pro-opposition areas, a government can amplify the weight of its supporters' votes while diluting the weight of opposition supporters. Taken to an extreme, this allows an incumbent to capture the plurality of parliamentary seats needed to retain power without commanding a plurality of the popular vote.

Gerrymandering, by contrast, affects the composition rather than the size of electoral districts. It can be employed towards distributional and/or strategic ends. The distributional end involves drawing district boundaries so as to maximize the efficiency of incumbent votes; ideally, the incumbent wins by relatively small margins (so as to minimize the number of its "surplus" votes) but loses those districts it cannot feasibly capture by a large margin (so as to minimize the number of "wasted" votes). This is achieved through "cracking" and "packing," where "cracking" is the splitting of opposition supporters into smaller parts that are then integrated into surrounding districts where they form a minority. By contrast, "packing" creates districts in which opposition supporters constitute an overwhelming majority, which increases the opposition's proportion of surplus votes. The strategic end involves altering the demographic makeup of districts in such a way that it aligns with the incumbent's electoral strategy, for example creating relatively homogeneous districts to align with a campaign strategy that emphasizes ethnic difference.

Redelineation

Malapportionment and gerrymandering played an important role in perpetuating the BN's dominance, particularly in the last two decades. Given the high stakes of GE14, the BN had a clear interest in ensuring that both forms of manipulation would provide it with additional security against the Mahathir-led opposition. It was therefore no surprise that the redelineation exercise concluded just prior to GE14 was grossly partisan and widely seen as a likely death knell for the opposition's aspirations.

According to the Malaysian constitution, the nominally independent Election Commission (EC) is responsible for carrying out the redelineation exercises that establish district boundaries. Separate exercises are conducted for three territories—the peninsular states, Sabah and Sarawak—at intervals of not fewer than eight years. The process involves multiple stages. It begins with up to two rounds of public display of recommendations and solicitation of objections from subnational authorities and clusters of affected voters. Following this,

a recommendation is passed to the Prime Minister, who can make amendments before tabling a comprehensive report in parliament. A simple majority is sufficient to pass boundary changes, whereas adding new seats requires a two-thirds super-majority.[5]

Malaysia's electoral districts have been malapportioned since independence on the basis of two principles. The first suggests that districts in sparsely populated rural areas should have relatively fewer voters than their urban counterparts, following the logic that infrastructural constraints and the substantial distance between a representative and their constituents inhibit contact relative to more urbanized areas. This contributes primarily to disproportionality *within* states, though demographic changes and internal migration, often to the more urbanized areas along the peninsula's western coast, also exacerbate inter-state disproportionality. Second, the 1963 federal agreement established the over-representation of the Bornean territories of Sabah and Sarawak relative to peninsular states, thus also contributing to inter-state disproportionality.

The origins of Malaysia's electoral rules were established by the 1956 Reid Commission, which capped variation in district size at 15% above or below a given state's mean in terms of voters. However, these limits were relaxed in a 1962 constitutional amendment and replaced entirely in a 1972 amendment that ambiguously requires districts to have "approximately equal" numbers of voters, but otherwise gives an unbounded endorsement of rural over-representation. There is little doubt that these changes were driven at least in part by partisan motivations. Although the EC was initially envisioned as an independent and non-partisan body, it was almost immediately under pressure to "consult the government while carrying out its functions" (Lim 2002: 113). As it is constituted by the Prime Minister, members have typically had clear UMNO connections; several have spoken openly about their partisan persuasions following the end of their terms (Welsh 2014). Unsurprisingly, the EC's actions and recommendations often clearly favoured UMNO and its coalition partners. The BN's control of parliament, including a consistent two-thirds super-majority prior to 2008, allowed it to readily implement those recommendations, completing the circle.

In regards to the pre-GE14 redelineation, the EC released its first round of recommendations for the peninsular states and Sabah in mid-2016.[6] Those recommendations were subject to almost immediate criticism for their violation of several legally specified principles.[7] Foremost, they did little to redress existing levels of malapportionment, even increasing them in some areas. Existing community ties were also widely disregarded in an effort to increase the number of Malay-dominant districts; the EC chairman, in fact, openly admitted that ethnicity was a strong factor in producing the recommendations. While legal challenges proceeded in several states—even securing a temporary injunction in Selangor—and the EC appeared to address some concerns in its revised recommendations, hopes that the new electoral boundaries would be relatively free of partisan bias were ultimately dashed when the EC released its final report, which reverted back to many of its initial recommendations.[8]

The government was clearly intent on contesting GE14 under the new boundaries, calling for a parliamentary vote only a week after the voluminous report was tabled. Despite opposition objections, little time was allotted for debate. The vote passed and shortly thereafter Najib called for the dissolution of parliament, triggering GE14. The BN's success in passing the new boundaries in time for the election raised concerns that "the opposition may lose not only the prospect of winning [the] election, but even its veto power on constitutional amendment that derives from having at least one-third of parliamentary constituencies. Malaysia's political system may then sink into a deeper crisis of legitimacy if [as feared] the scandal-embroiled premier [Najib] emerges stronger with a weaker mandate" (Wong 2018: 78).

Few anticipated the shock that unfolded in the late-night hours between 9 May and 10 May: as results rolled in, it became increasingly clear that the 3Ms—money, machine and media—that had so reliably bolstered the BN's popular support in the past were insufficient to stem the erosion of votes in GE14. Even if the BN had entertained the idea of losing a few marginal seats in a worst-case scenario, its leadership could not fathom a decline so drastic that even the fallback plan of wooing potential defectors was off the table. UMNO and its shell-shocked coalition partners had lost control of parliament, bringing to an end their decades-long domination of Malaysian politics.

What happened? And given the focus of this chapter, what role did the new electoral boundaries play? The clearest starting point is an assessment of the vote share and seat share received by the major contestants of GE14. Table 4.1 captures the relevant figures, adding the GE13 results as a benchmark. *Seats* is the number of seats won. *Seat share* is the percentage of the *Dewan Rakyat's* 222 seats won. *Vote share* is the percentage of the popular vote won, and *Difference* is the gap between the seat and the vote share. A positive gap indicates a seat "bonus" in the translation of votes into seats.

Several points are noteworthy, beginning with the BN's dramatic decline in vote share: its 4% deficit against PR in GE13 sent shockwaves through the country; in GE14, it barely secured *two-thirds* of PH's vote share and only twice that of PAS, a niche party that has often struggled beyond its Malay heartland strongholds. Though those results overshadow other results, the difference in seat and vote shares reveals important insights. Majoritarian systems

Table 4.1 Seat and vote share in GE13 and GE14

	GE13		*GE14*			
	BN	*PR*	*BN*	*PH*	*PAS*	*Other*
Seats	133	88	79	121	18	4
Seat share	59.9	40.1	35.6	54.5	8.1	1.8
Vote share	47.4	50.9	33.8	47.9	16.9	1.3
Difference	12.5	–10.8	1.8	6.6	–8.8	0.5

Source: Calculation based on official data from the Election Commission

typically amplify the seat share of the party or coalition that secures the plurality of votes, thereby providing a quasi-*mechanical* seat "bonus" above the popular vote share.[9] Additional disproportionality between vote and seat shares can be introduced through *partisan* malapportionment and gerrymandering, though the seat bonuses these confer typically accrue only to the party or coalition they are designed to benefit.

In GE13, PR would have secured a roughly 4% seat margin under a proportional representation or mixed system. In a majoritarian system *without* partisan electoral boundaries, PR would likely also have benefited from the seat bonus associated with capturing a majority of the popular vote, thereby increasing the seat margin above 4%. Instead, it emerged from polling day with almost 20% *fewer* seats than the BN, indicating massive pro-BN distortions because of malapportionment and gerrymandering.

In GE14, PH's significant popular vote victory margin did translate into a modest seat bonus. More remarkable, however, is that the BN *also* received a seat bonus, despite the 14% popular vote deficit that—in the absence of significant pro-BN bias—*should* have depressed its seat share significantly below its vote share. In that sense, boundary manipulations *did* function as the BN hoped they would, at least in that they continued to provide substantial pro-BN advantages in the translation of votes into seats. Had the BN managed to keep the popular vote reasonably close, the boundary manipulations would undoubtedly have delivered another large seat advantage for the BN. The simple conclusion is that the transition is not a result of boundary manipulations "failing," but rather of BN votes not materializing at levels necessary to make the election competitive. Having established that the boundaries used in GE14 continued to exhibit partisan bias, the next two sections examine in greater detail the nature of malapportionment and gerrymandering, as both have implications for Malaysian politics in the post-GE14 era.

Malapportionment

All indications suggest that the BN leadership anticipated an election close enough to allow its many structural advantages, including biased electoral boundaries, to tilt the final outcome in its favour.[10] As we can assume that this expectation informed the strategic considerations behind the redelineation process, this section begins with a comparative assessment of malapportionment in the GE13 and the GE14 boundaries, before considering the impact of malapportionment on the GE14 outcome itself.

Overall malapportionment

Table 4.2 provides a compact overview of the variation in district sizes for GE13 and GE14. The first columns indicate the number of voters in districts across the spectrum, while the final column *Mal* is a measure of malapportionment proposed by Samuels and Snyder (2001); it indicates the proportion of seats that

Table 4.2 Variation in electorate size across districts in GE13 and GE14

	Smallest	*25%*	*Median*	*Mean*	*75%*	*Largest*	*Total electorate*	*Mal*
GE13	15,791	41,588	56,000	59,765	78,174	144,159	13,268,002	.172
GE14	19,592	46,300	63,152	67,300	85,411	178,790	14,940,624	.175

Source: Calculation based on official data from the Election Commission

need to be shifted from over-represented to under-represented areas in order to equalize vote and seat shares across all districts.[11]

Several observations are notable. First, the size differences across districts are large. Although the ratio between the largest and smallest districts is an incomplete and potentially problematic measure of malapportionment, it provides an effective first-cut indication of scale: the ratio of approximately 9.1 to 1 in Malaysia is far greater than comparator countries with similar electoral systems and stays roughly unchanged from GE13 to GE14. Second, while the total electorate in GE14 is approximately 1.6 million voters larger than that in GE13, the total number of parliamentary seats is unchanged at 222, requiring the new voters to be distributed across the districts. This accounts for the observed increase at all measurement points. Third, the increased malapportionment score (*Mal*) between GE13 and GE14 clearly indicates that already high levels of malapportionment were exacerbated by or at least not corrected through the redelineation process. Interpretation of the scores is straightforward: 17.2% (GE13) and 17.5% (GE14) of seats would need to shift—mainly from East Malaysia and rural BN strongholds to more urbanized areas in the peninsula—in order to align vote and seat shares.

It is useful to bring the malapportionment measure into cross-national perspective. Malaysia's scores of .172 and .175 are substantially higher than regional neighbours like the Philippines (.014), Thailand (.045) and Singapore (.081); they are, in fact, among the highest in the world using an index from 2013. Other data sources are consistent with this view: the Electoral Integrity Project's *Global Perceptions of Electoral Integrity* index, for example, ranks Malaysia's electoral boundaries as the most manipulated in the world, with only Singapore approaching similar levels of manipulation among regional neighbours (Norris and Grömping 2017). A range of academic work has documented how this extreme level of malapportionment affected the outcome of GE13 (Wong 2018; Gomez 2016; Lee 2015, 2013; Ostwald 2013).[12]

Inter-state malapportionment

The geographic location of smaller and larger seats across Malaysia's political map strongly impacts electoral politics. Table 4.3 captures inter-state malapportionment, i.e., the malapportionment *between* states. The first column displays the percentage of the *Dewan Rakyat's* 222 seats that are allocated to each of

Table 4.3 Inter-state malapportionment in GE13 and GE14

		GE13		*GE14*		
	% Seats	*% Voters*	*Seat Difference*	*% Voters*	*Seat Difference*	*Change*
Perlis	1.4	1.0	0.7	1.4	–0.2	–0.9
Kedah	6.8	7.8	–2.4	7.7	–2.0	0.4
Kelantan	6.3	6.9	–1.4	7.0	–1.6	–0.2
Terengganu	3.6	4.8	–2.6	4.9	–2.9	–0.3
Penang	5.9	6.4	–1.1	6.3	–1.1	0.1
Perak	10.8	10.6	0.5	10.1	1.6	1.1
Pahang	6.3	5.5	1.7	5.5	1.8	0.1
Selangor	9.9	15.4	–12.2	16.2	–13.9	–1.7
Negeri Sembilan	3.6	4.2	–1.3	4.1	–1.0	0.3
Melaka	2.7	3.3	–1.3	3.3	–1.4	0.0
Johor	11.7	12.1	–0.9	12.2	–1.0	–0.2
Sabah	11.3	7.4	8.5	7.5	8.4	–0.1
Sarawak	14.0	8.2	12.7	8.2	12.9	0.1
Kuala Lumpur FT	5.0	6.0	–2.2	5.7	–1.6	0.6

Source: Calculation based on official data from the Election Commission

Malaysia's 13 states and the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur. As there was no increase in the number or allocation of seats, the *% Seats* remains unchanged from GE13 to GE14. The *% Voters* column is the percentage of the total electorate that resides in the given state or territory, while the *Seat Difference* column indicates the number of seats a state or territory has above or below its hypothetical share *if seats were apportioned solely according to electorate size*. For example, Kedah has two seats fewer than it should have according to its vote share in GE14, so it would require an additional two seats to equalize its vote and seat share. The final column captures the change in over/under-representation in seats from GE13 to GE14; Perlis, for example, was over-represented by .7 seats in GE13 but under-represented by .2 seats in GE14, indicating a "loss" of .9 seats between elections according to its proportion of total voters.

Inter-state differences in the apportionment of seats are substantial and most pronounced in three cases. East Malaysia is heavily over-represented, with Sarawak having nearly 13 seats more than it would if seats were allocated based on the proportion of total voters, and Sabah having over 8 more by the same criterion. As there is a general consensus that the over-representation of Sabah and Sarawak is a foundational element of the terms of federation, few voices have called for a reallocation of seats to the peninsula. Within the peninsula, Selangor stands out: it would currently require nearly 14 additional seats to align its seat representation with its proportion of total voters. Unlike the case of East Malaysia, there is no obvious political justification for the severe malapportionment, which results from a disproportionately high growth rate and the practice under

the BN of distributing new seats on a rotational basis—often favouring states with BN strongholds—rather than as a function of state-level population and voter growth.[13] Although nearly all of the remaining states have some degree of disproportionality between their seat and vote shares, it is relatively modest in comparison. Similarly, although the change in inter-state malapportionment from GE13 to GE14 generally worsened the disproportionality, the changes were relatively marginal.

Intra-state malapportionment

Malapportionment occurs not only between states, but also within them. Figure 4.1 shows the size (in number of voters) of the 222 *Dewan Rakyat* seats arranged by state for GE13 and GE14. Two observations are notable. First, the variation within states is substantial: for most states, the larger seats contain several times as many voters as the smaller seats. Second, the change from GE13 to GE14 does not appear symmetric: while most of the smaller seats in each state stay approximately equal in size, many of the larger seats increase substantially for GE14.

What accounts for the pattern of change? Part of the answer lies in the unusual nature of the recent redelineation process, which did not alter boundaries in a

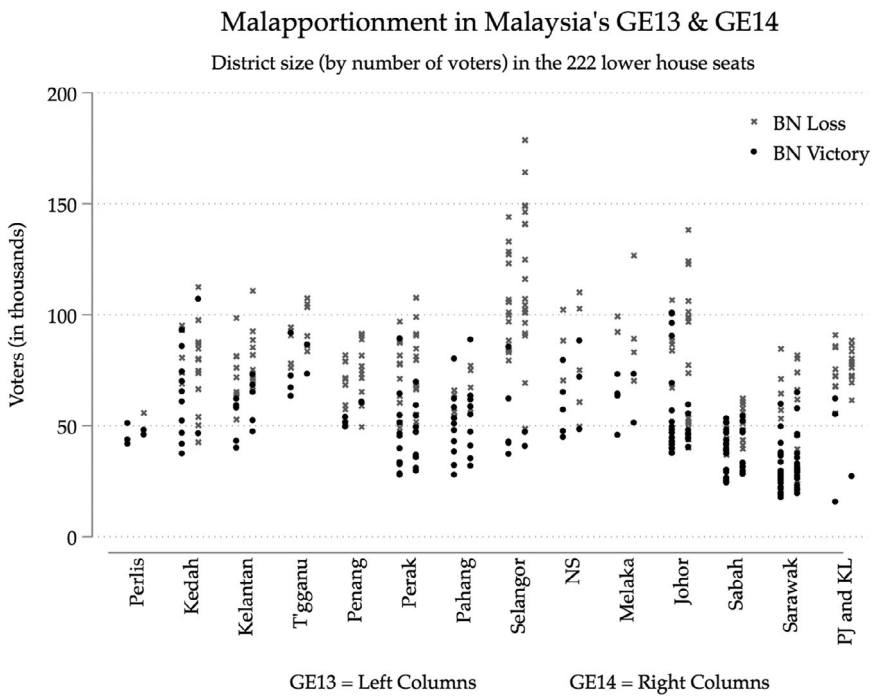

Figure 4.1 Voters per district in GE13 and GE14

significant number of districts, including the entire states of Perlis, Penang and Pahang. In those cases, asymmetric population increases—mainly but not exclusively in relatively urban areas—increased disproportionality between seats.

As widely noted, partisan considerations almost certainly also played an active role. Figure 4.2 illustrates the relationship between the district-level election results in GE13 and the change in district size for GE14, limited to the 11 peninsular states. The *y*-axis is the victory margin in GE13 as a proportion of total votes, where a positive value indicates a PR victory and a negative value a BN victory. Stated differently, all districts above zero on the *y*-axis were won by PR, whereas all below zero were won by the BN; districts closer to zero indicate a narrow margin of victory, whereas those farther away from zero indicate a larger margin of victory. The *x*-axis captures the change in district size from GE13 to GE14.

The vast majority of districts increased in size between the elections. Interestingly, of the ten districts that decreased, all were won by PR in GE13, mostly by a relatively safe margin. Yet the pattern is dissimilar across BN- and PR-held districts: while BN districts all increased in size, the magnitude of the change is generally quite small. By contrast, the size increase of the PR districts appears less uniform, with a number of districts experiencing a disproportionately larger increase. The numbers bear out this observation: seats won by the BN in GE13 had a mean increase of 5,909 voters (6,569 when limited to the peninsular states). In contrast, PR seats increased by 10,008 voters (11,130 in the peninsular states).

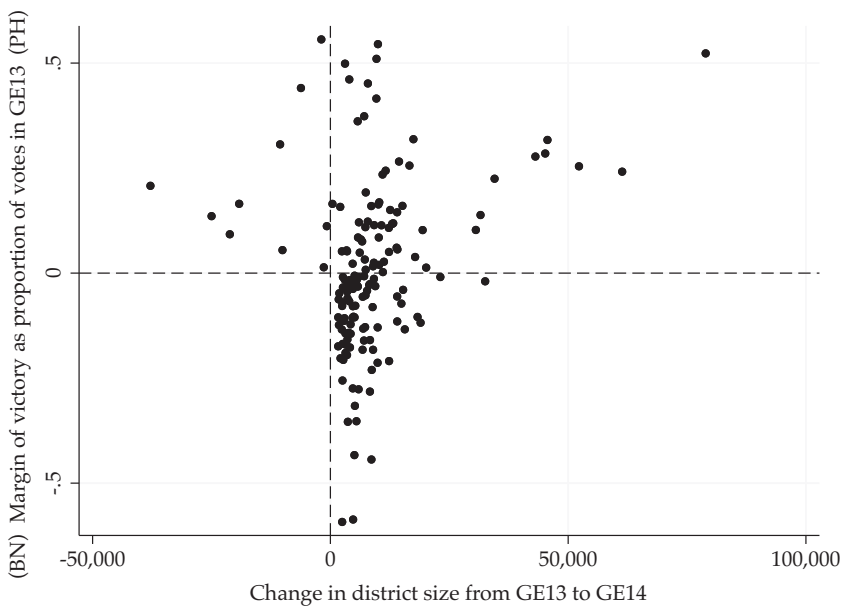

Figure 4.2 Change in district size from GE13 to GE14

The difference is even more pronounced in Selangor, which received arguably the most attention by the EC: BN seats grew on average by 7,430 voters, relative to 19,384 voters in PR districts.

Although this pattern is suggestive of a partisan motivation, the unequal increase in seat size is not conclusive on its own, as it disregards other potentially important district characteristics that might also contribute to malapportionment. A simple ordinary least squares (OLS) regression provides insights. Results are displayed in Table 4.4. The model estimates the effect of the district-level victory margin in GE13 on the change in number of voters for GE14, while controlling for the proportion of Malay voters and voter density in the given district. These are important attributes because they capture the constitutionally-endorsed rural-weightage and the vaguely specified special position of the Malays. *Victory Margin in GE13 (PR)* is the victory margin as a proportion of total voters in the district: it ranges from "1" to "–1" where "1" would represent a district in which all voters supported PR and "–1" a district in which all voters supported the BN. *Malay Proportion* is the proportion of a district's voters that are Malay. *Voter Density* is a proxy for the distribution of voters in a district where higher values indicate urbanized areas and lower values indicate rural areas. As before, the model is limited to districts from the 11 peninsular states.

Even when controlling for the proportion of Malay voters and voter density at the district level, there is a strong and statistically significant correlation between support for PR in GE13 and an increase in district size for GE14. Some portion of that effect may result from dissimilar population growth rates caused by ongoing urbanization in areas that leaned PR in 2013. Even this benign contributing factor, if present, would not exculpate the EC, as the main stated purpose of the redelineation process is to address demographic changes of this kind. There are strong indications, in other words, that a significant portion of the asymmetrical size increases were driven by efforts to disadvantage the opposition, rather than by other, constitutionally-endorsed factors.

Table 4.4 Change in district size from GE13 to GE14

Increase in district size	*(1)*
Victory Margin in GE13 (PR)	12,626*
	(6,431)
Malay Proportion	–648
	(3,438)
Voter Density	.570
	(1.355)
Constant	8,616
	(2,961)
Observations	153
R-squared	.059

Note: Robust standard errors.

* $p < .1$

Election results

In previous elections, the BN capitalized on variations in district size by winning a large share of small districts, thereby increasing its seat share well above its popular vote share. It clearly anticipated a continuation of this pattern in GE14. Figure 4.3 illustrates the relative success of main contestants in GE13 and GE14 across the spectrum of district sizes. The 222 districts are arranged from smallest to largest according to number of voters and then divided into sextiles of 37 districts each. In other words, seats 1–37 are the smallest 37 seats, whereas 186–222 are the 37 largest seats. The *y*-axis indicates how many seats a given coalition/party captured per sextile.

Beginning with GE13, the contrast between the BN and PR is remarkable: the BN won every seat in the smallest sextile, the vast majority in the second sextile, and a strong majority in the third, ultimately capturing 100 of the smallest 111 seats. PR, on the other hand, is vastly over-represented in the two largest sextiles. Despite the very different outcome in GE14, the pattern is generally similar. The BN remains dominant in the smallest sextile of districts—winning 30 of the 37—and over-represented in the next 37 smallest seats. PH is again over-represented in the largest three sextiles, winning a clear majority in each. It does, however, have considerably more success than its predecessor in the second and third sextiles. This is due in part to the success of the Malay-centric Bersatu and Amanah parties, which account for nearly *half* of the coalition's victories in those sextiles. By stark contrast, they contribute only three of the 80 seats PH won in the largest three sextiles. PAS contested GE14 as a third-party, presumably with the BN's support under the assumption that PAS might split the anti-incumbent vote. Its largely rural Malay base suggests that it would fare well in smaller districts, which tend to be rural and Malay majority. All but one of its seats, however, are from the largest three sextiles of districts. The explanation is simple. PAS won seats only in its northern strongholds, which have not fared well in past redelineation exercises that saw them increase in size significantly more than their demographically similar counterparts in areas where UMNO is stronger. Notably, as long as its strongholds remain under-weighted, the value of PAS as a coalition partner—at least in purely mechanical terms as a contributor towards a parliamentary majority—is weakened.

These observations are clarified further through an OLS regression that estimates the correlates of district size in GE14. The dependent variable is *District Size*, measured by numbers of voters. *Pakatan Harapan* is a dummy that takes a value of "1" in districts won by PH and "0" otherwise. The same coding is used for *PAS*, making BN the reference category. *Bumiputera* is the proportion of Bumiputera in a district. *Voter Density* proxies for the geographic characteristics of a district, where high values indicate urban areas and low values rural areas. Model 1 includes all 222 districts, model 2 is limited to the peninsular states and model 3 is limited to East Malaysia.

As BN is the reference category, districts won by PH have on average 15,421 more voters than BN districts, even after controlling for the constitutionally-endorsed weightage for rural areas and the proportion of Bumiputera, when

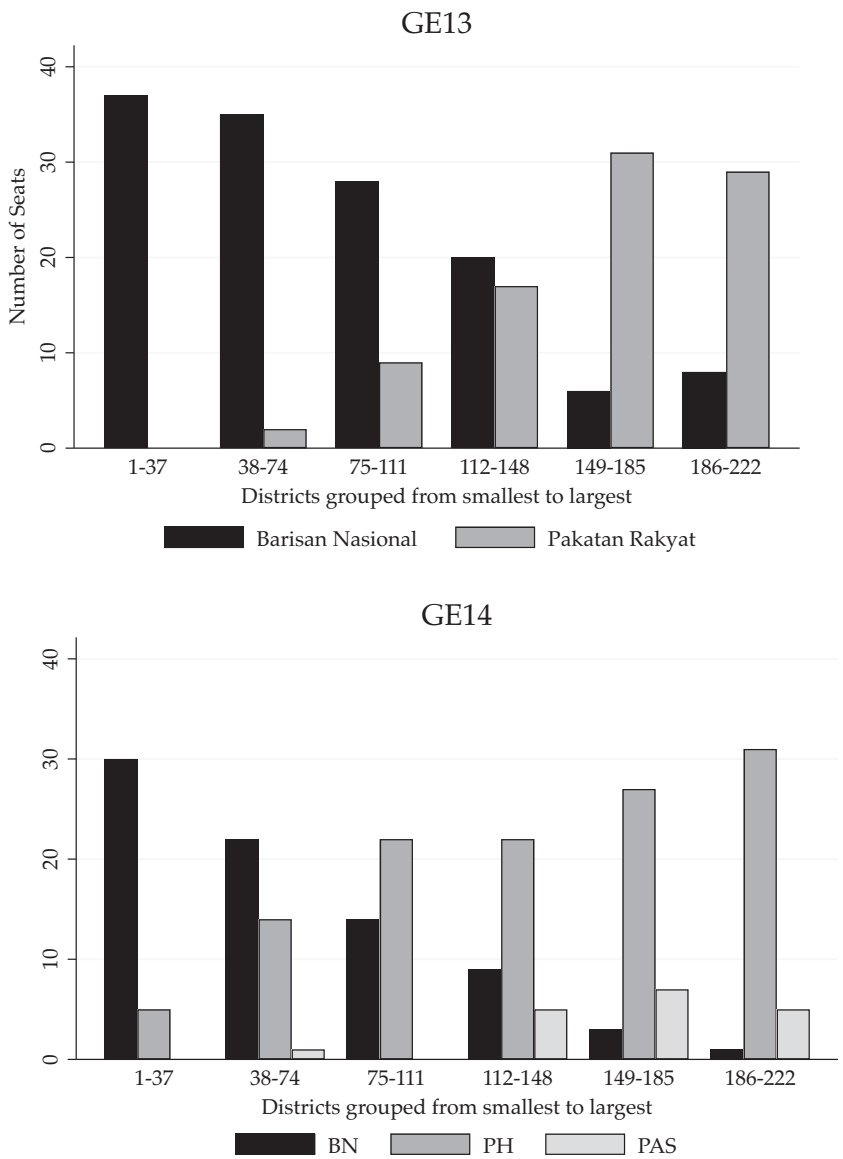

Figure 4.3 Election results by district size

considering all 222 districts. Districts won by PAS were even larger, with 22,932 more voters on average than a BN district with other district-level attributes held constant. Districts in East Malaysia have on average 16,446 *fewer* voters than their peninsular counterparts, controlling for voter density and proportion of Bumiputera. The correlations are all statistically significant. Interestingly, despite

Table 4.5 Determinates of district size

District Size	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*
	Voters	*Voters*	*Voters*
Pakatan Harapan	15,421**	19,597**	8,527*
	(3,223)	(4,629)	(3,774)
PAS	22,932**	23,009**	
	(4,564)	(5,229)	
Bumiputera	–8,653	–482	–16,928*
	(6,812)	(11,377)	(5,084)
Voter density (log)	5,238**	5,735**	3,943*
	(955)	(1,263)	(1,124)
East Malaysia	–16,446*		
	(2,819)		
Constant	42,062**	31,632**	37,482**
	(6,875)	(11,157)	(5,137)
States	All	Peninsula	E. Malaysia
Observations	222	165	57
R-squared	.518	.343	.488

Note: Robust standard errors.

*p < .05; **p < .001

the BN's ubiquitous rhetoric about protecting Bumiputera rights, there is no clear correlation between district size and Bumiputera proportion in peninsular districts after controlling for voter density and party.

What do these findings suggest? Simply stated, malapportionment continued to provide the BN with fundamental advantages in GE14. The redelineation exercise perpetuated previous biases: whereas voter density was a clear factor in determining district boundaries, partisan bias almost certainly kept districts in BN-leaning areas smaller than those with similar attributes in opposition-leaning areas. Without the advantage this provided the BN in the translation of votes into seats, PH would have secured an even larger seat margin in GE14. The boundaries ultimately were most disadvantageous to PAS, which was competitive only in districts that previous redelineation exercises had allowed to grow far larger than appropriate based on their geographic and demographic attributes.

Gerrymandering

Gerrymandering is the strategic manipulation of district boundaries to the advantage of one party or coalition without substantially altering the number of voters in the district. As noted, it has two potential objectives. The first is to increase the efficient usage of votes for the incumbent while decreasing the efficiency for the challenger. This is achieved by either "packing" opposition supporters into districts where they form an overwhelming majority (increasing the opposition's

surplus votes), or "cracking" areas where opposition supporters form a majority into new districts where they do not (increasing the opposition's wasted votes). The second objective is strategic and involves altering the composition of district demographics to align with the incumbent's strategic orientation.

There is ample evidence that both objectives were pursued in past redelineation exercises, as well as clear indications that they also impact the boundaries used in GE14. However, the effects of gerrymandering need to be viewed in a broader context. Gerrymandering as a means of affecting the translation of votes into seats is less powerful than malapportionment; as such, the effect of gerrymandering is overshadowed by malapportionment in contexts like Malaysia's where there are few practical limitations on variation in district sizes. An application of Brooke's method in Oliver and Ostwald (2018) suggests that the vast majority of the *partisan* seat bonus captured by the BN in GE13 and GE14 comes through malapportionment rather than gerrymandering, supporting the notion that the latter plays a secondary role.

Nonetheless, gerrymandering can still affect the efficacy of political discourse by altering the demographic composition of districts. This is especially true in a multi-ethnic country like Malaysia, where ethnic and religious cleavages provide a ready foundation for political mobilization. Previous redelineation exercises have made use of this by increasing or decreasing average district diversity to correspond with the BN's broader strategic orientation. The 2002 peninsular redelineation, for example, created districts that were on average more diverse than their predecessors, which was thought to advantage the BN based on voting behaviour from the previous election in 1999 (Lee 2016).

Substantial concerns were noted about similar partisan changes to district composition prior to GE14 (Saravanamuttu 2018). Specifically, it appeared that district boundaries were redrawn in ways that reduced the ethnic diversity of districts. The EC's chairman openly admitted this when stating that some boundaries followed ethnic lines so as to "avoid dividing the races."[14] This would appear to advantage the BN, given the clearer alignment between homogenous districts and the race-based parties that comprise the BN in the peninsula, relative to PH's generally more multiracial politics. East Malaysia's distinctive pattern of politics means this form of manipulation was relevant primarily in the peninsula.

It is empirically clear that peninsular districts *did* become less diverse in GE14. Table 4.6 shows key indicators of district-level ethnic diversity in GE13 and GE14. Whereas 48 of the 165 peninsular districts in GE13 could be considered mixed as defined by being between 40% and 60% Malay, this number decreased to only 33 in GE14. By contrast, there were 102 Malay-dominant districts, defined as those with a Malay proportion greater than 60%, in GE14; this is *16 more* than in GE13. This shift presumably aligned with UMNO's strategy of positioning itself as the true defender of the Malays and Islam relative to the more explicitly multiethnic opposition. The ELF, a widely-used measure of ethnic diversity where higher values denote more diversity, further supports the notion of decreasing district-level diversity in GE14.[15]

Table 4.6 Ethnic composition of districts

	Mixed districts	*Malay dominant*	*Minority dominant*	*ELF*
	40–60% Malay	*>60% Malay*	*<40% Malay*	
GE13	48	86	31	.416
GE14	33	102	30	.408

Source: Calculation based on official data from the Election Commission

In GE14, the BN essentially conceded all districts in which Chinese and other non-Bumiputera minorities formed greater than 60% of the electorate, following its lack of competitiveness among that demographic in GE13. That focused the BN's efforts in the peninsula on the 135 mixed and Malay-dominant districts. Figure 4.4 illustrates the district-level relationship between the proportion Bumiputera and the BN's performance in those districts. The *y*-axis is the winning (or losing) margin for the BN over the top performing non-BN party as a proportion of total district-level voters. In other words, districts above the reference line at "0" were won by the BN, whereas those below were won by the largest opposition challenger; the closer a district is to the reference line, the smaller the margin of victory.

Clearly, the BN was far more competitive in Malay-dominant districts than it was in mixed districts; in fact, the BN managed to win only three mixed districts in the peninsula, all of which were just below the 60% Bumiputera threshold. Its average margin of defeat was also substantially larger in the mixed districts than in districts where Malays constitute a large majority. This suggests that the EC's decision to create more ethnically homogeneous districts—shifting, in effect, 15 districts from mixed to substantial Malay majority—made the BN more competitive than it would have been under the previous boundaries.

Analysing malapportionment and gerrymandering

The electoral boundaries used in Malaysia's watershed 2018 general election continued to provide the previously hegemonic BN with fundamental advantages against challengers. The redelineation process concluded just prior to the election, in fact, exacerbated levels of malapportionment by allowing or actively creating even larger size differences between districts where the BN was competitive and those where it was not. Gerrymandering, while of secondary importance, also favoured the BN by increasing the number of Malay-dominant districts in which UMNO's thinly-veiled appeals for *ketuanan Melayu* and *ketuanan Islam*—i.e., Malay and Islamic pre-eminence—were more likely to receive a positive reception. In conjunction, these manipulations left the BN confident that it would maintain power despite continued erosion of popular support. As in past elections, they effectively delivered a seat bonus to the BN beyond its "fair" allotment based on the popular vote.

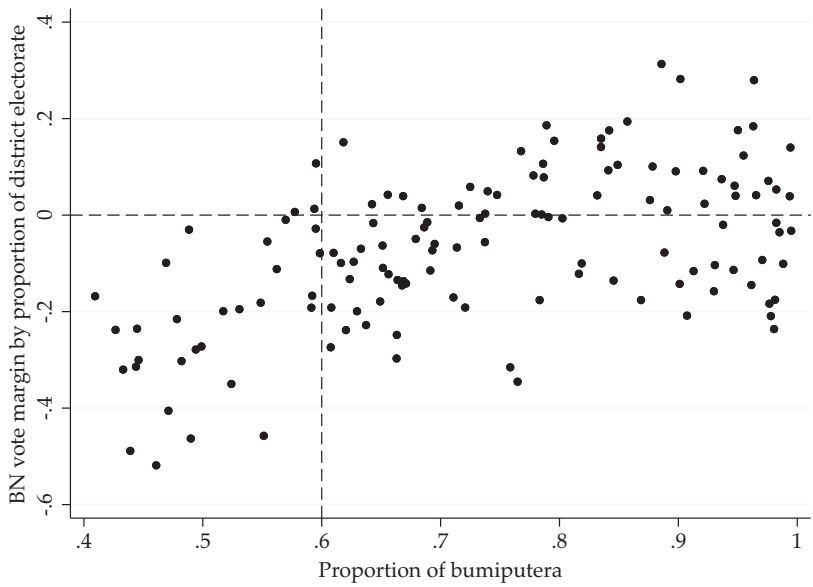

Figure 4.4 Ethnic composition and BN performance in mixed and Malay-dominant peninsular districts

The BN's unanticipated defeat in GE14 did not result, in other words, from a moderation of the pro-BN bias that characterizes Malaysia's electoral boundaries. PAS's decision to run as a third-party in most peninsular districts, seen by many as a BN-supported ploy to split the anti-incumbent vote, likewise did not "backfire" in a manner that caused the BN's defeat, as outside of its own strongholds in Terengganu and Kelantan, PAS was unable to attract votes in sufficiently large numbers to affect results beyond the fringes (Ostwald, Schuler, and Chong 2018). Rather, the BN lost despite the grossly tilted playing field because the votes it anticipated simply did not materialize: the widespread discontent with Najib's leadership depressed the BN's vote share to barely more than one-third, an amount so anaemic that it overshadows all other factors in explaining the unanticipated transition.

Though manipulated electoral boundaries were not sufficient to rescue the BN, they profoundly shaped the nature of the competition in GE14 and will continue to influence politics in the post-transition period. The over-representation of traditionally BN-leaning rural Malay districts in the peninsula and most East Malaysia districts makes it exceedingly difficult to win elections without some success in them; they have become, effectively, the king-makers of Malaysian politics (Ostwald and Oliver 2019). Recognizing this, the BN strategy focused on limiting opposition gains

in those districts. The under-weighted urban and mixed districts, by contrast, were all but conceded long before polling day. The BN's fall, ultimately, was enabled by changes in voting behaviour in the districts it viewed as traditional strongholds.

Over-weighted districts received a disproportionate share of attention in the BN's desperate efforts to shore up support through money and machine politics in the election run-up. This included an announcement made just days before the election of incentives worth RM4,000 for selected FELDA settlers; a bonus salary increment, additional religious leave and new pension association grants for civil servants; and a proposed doubling of BR1M payments. The targeted distribution of goodies ranging from rice and cooking oil to bicycles and washing machines was also especially widespread in pivotal districts.[16]

Simultaneously, the BN amplified its warnings, again targeting largely Malay voters in over-weighted districts, that an opposition victory would mean an end not only to the privileged position of the Malays and the entailing material benefits, but also to the sanctity of Islam in Malaysia.[17] Najib stated this plainly at a party gathering in 2016: "What will happen to our race" if UMNO loses? "Malays will no longer have anywhere to hang their hopes, they will fall and lie prone, and will be considered lowly and be vagabonds, beggars and destitutes in their own land," since under a non-UMNO government, the "rights and privileges advocated and defended by UMNO over the years—including the institutions—will become extinct and disappear. Malays and Bumiputera will be engulfed in a nightmare."[18]

The erosion of popular support for the BN speaks to the limitations of the traditional 3Ms, at least in the face of fundamental discontent with Najib and UMNO's politics under his leadership. As importantly, a subtle change in the nature of the opposition was critical in swaying a subset of former BN voters. In the prior two general elections, the opposition coalition was led by PKR—an explicitly multiracial party—with the predominantly Chinese DAP sharing centre stage. Although the opposition contested GE14 under the PKR banner, the presence of Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister designate was instrumental in pivotal areas that UMNO previously viewed as its strongholds. Mahathir's *Bersatu* party is essentially an UMNO clone: its leadership is comprised almost exclusively of former UMNO elite that learned their craft within UMNO's ranks, and party membership is, similar to UMNO but unlike other PH parties, restricted to Bumiputera. In short, making Mahathir and other establishment Malay elite—who built their political careers on containing parties like the DAP and defending Malay privilege—the face of the opposition in over-represented rural areas undermined UMNO's alarmist rhetoric around race and religion, thereby opening space for focus on the BN's governance failures.

Just as winning a general election in Malaysia is exceedingly difficult without success in over-weighted districts, capturing those predominantly rural and Malay districts is unlikely without adopting elements of UMNO's Bumiputera-centric orientation. The Mahathir-led coalition acted accordingly, the implications of which will linger long after the election. This begins with the disproportionately

high value of the rural Malay and East Malaysian vote shaping PH's internal distribution of power, which is reflected in the first Cabinet. Table 4.7 captures relevant dimensions where *effective votes* is the number of votes garnered in districts won by the respective parties. With 14 Cabinet positions, over half of the Cabinet come from Bersatu, Amanah and Warisan, even though these parties initially accounted for only 32 of PH's *Dewan Rakyat* seats. By contrast, the DAP and PKR, who are less competitive in the over-weighted districts, account for 89 seats but received only 13 Cabinet positions. This means that the former received approximately one Cabinet position for every *two* seats, while the latter's ratio was approximately one to *seven*. The Cabinet position to effective vote ratio is similarly skewed. The driver behind this asymmetry is clear: Bersatu, Amanah and Warisan, while contributing a relatively small portion of total PH seats, are all able to challenge their BN counterparts in over-weighted districts that PKR and the DAP were less likely to capture. Sustaining an asymmetric balance of this magnitude over the longer-term will demand considerable patience from the underrepresented parties.

More fundamentally, reducing malapportionment presents the new government with a vexing dilemma. The vast size differences between districts are clearly problematic from a normative perspective, especially where they are a function of partisan orientation. The policy distortions they create impede progress on PH's governance reform agenda. Furthermore, short of a major change to the composition of PH, some within the coalition will be apprehensive about contesting future elections under the GE14 boundaries, as PKR and the DAP clearly underperformed in the smallest one-third of districts.

This does not mean that reform is forthcoming, as major—indeed, potentially insurmountable—obstacles stand in the way. By systematically under-weighting areas in which Chinese and other non-Bumiputera minorities are concentrated, extreme malapportionment is an effective guarantor of Bumiputera political primacy. This makes even preliminary attempts to shift influence away from over-represented areas a risky endeavour, as they can be easily depicted by resurgent adversaries as a betrayal of PH's implicit commitment to preserve elements of Malay and Bumiputera privilege, without which victory would have been

Table 4.7 Cabinet positions by party

	Cabinet Positions	*Seats*	*Effective Votes*	*Cabinet to Seat Ratio*	*Cabinet to Effective Vote Ratio*
PKR	7	48	1,868,632	1 : 6.8	1 : 266,947
DAP	6	41	1,986,632	1 : 6.8	1 : 331,105
Bersatu	6	13	301,681	1 : 2.2	1 : 50,280
Amanah	5	11	441,779	1 : 2.2	1 : 88,355
Warisan	3	8	183,336	1 : 2.7	1 : 61,112

Source: Calculation based on official data from the Election Commission and initial Cabinet and election results

unattainable. Any missteps in this area would provide both UMNO and PAS valuable ammunition with which to attack the new government, as well as a powerful platform on which to mobilize their base and contest the next general election. The anti-ICERD rally in early December illustrates this clearly. The magnitude of this vulnerability should not be underestimated. Despite pronouncement of a "Malaysian Tsunami," polls suggest dramatic differences in political support across the demographic spectrum. Most strikingly, the Merdeka Center estimates that 95% of Chinese but less than 30% of Malays voted for PH in GE14.[19] Such thin support among the majority ethnic group does not make for a strong and viable long-term political foundation.

Moreover, equitable seat apportionment would also see the PAS strongholds receiving new seats. Given PH's abysmal performance in Kelantan and Terengganu—where they were essentially shut out—and the continuing acrimony between PAS and the DAP, few within the new government will feel comfortable empowering PAS further. This is especially true in light of a potential Malay unity-type coalition between UMNO and PAS.

Meaningful reforms would be divisive even within the coalition itself: since an equitable apportionment of seats requires the redistribution of influence from rural Malay districts to more multi-ethnic urban districts, as well as from East Malaysia to the Peninsula more broadly, it would have implications for the relative power balance within the coalition and create clear winners and losers. Put differently, Bersatu, Amanah and Warisan would see their position significantly weakened vis-à-vis the more established PKR and DAP. As the three relative losers are newly-founded splinter parties that have yet to effectively institutionalize, it is difficult to imagine them voluntarily ceding ground to their more established coalition partners, at least without far-reaching concessions that would impose distortions of their own.

This does not mean that the electoral process will remain unchanged. Efforts to restore the independence of the EC began almost immediately after PH took power. A more neutral EC should ensure that polling day procedures are less subject to partisan bias. It will also improve the deeply problematic voter and party registration procedures that undermined the legitimacy of elections under the BN. The 3Ms—money, machine and media—may be toned down in future elections. These reforms should have a strongly positive effect on the integrity of Malaysia's electoral process.

However, malapportionment goes beyond these types of reforms: whether through the redistribution of seats or adoption of new electoral rules, the translation of votes into seats directly impacts the relative influence of the groups that comprise Malaysia's diverse population. These reforms, in other words, force PH to confront the substantially different positions its constituent parties have on Malay and Bumiputera political primacy, and more broadly, on the role of ethnicity in politics itself. As a coalition of unlikely bedfellows representing different segments of Malaysia's fragmented polity—each of which hold their own visions for *Malaysia baru*—it is unclear whether and where the common ground for consensus can be found. In that sense, while malapportionment may have originated

as a tool to facilitate UMNO's consolidation of power, it has become so deeply woven into the fabric of Malaysia's political landscape that its fundamental reform would require nothing less than a coordinated departure from the existing foundations of mass politics in Malaysia. There is little to suggest that this is feasible in the relative short term. GE14 is undoubtedly a watershed moment in Malaysia's political history. It is not, however, likely to mark an end to the ethnic politics that defined Malaysia during UMNO's long reign.

Notes

1 Singapore became independent in 1965.
2 See Ostwald (2017) for an overview of manipulations to Malaysia's electoral process. It is too early at the time of writing to assess how reforms planned by the new government will alter the electoral process.
3 See Chin (2004) for a comprehensive discussion of the distinctive nature of East Malaysian politics.
4 For a comprehensive discussion, see Lijphart (1994) and Norris (1997).
5 See Sothi (1993), Lim (2002) and Wong (2018) for more detailed discussions of the procedure.
6 The most recent exercise for Sarawak was concluded in 2015. The prior exercises for the peninsular states and Sabah were concluded in 2003 and for Sarawak in 2005. Wong (2018) notes that several *de facto* boundary changes occurred outside the scope of the EC's redelineation exercises.
7 See the series of reports by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections, otherwise known as Bersih 2.0, available online at: www.bersih.org
8 The legal challenge against the EC's recommendations in Selangor eventually came to an end when the Court of Appeal overturned the previous injunction in October 2017, paving the way for the redelineation exercise to proceed in time for GE14.
9 The actual effect is conditional on the distribution of votes.
10 In an interview with *Bloomberg* just prior to the election, Najib stated "We are reasonably confident of a good result. There is no movement for changing the government, I don't see that. That's not saying we will win with a huge majority, no I am not going to predict that, but I am going to say that we are reasonably sanguine about the result." See "Najib Predicts He'll Extend Grip on Power in Malaysia Election" from 25 April 2018.
11 The formula is $MAL = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)\sum|s_i - v_i|$ where s_i is the district-level seat share and v_i is the district-level vote share.
12 See also the extensive work conducted by the Penang Institute, as well as similar work on earlier elections, including Ong and Welsh (2005), Liow (2004) and Lim (2003).
13 Liow (2004: 4) describes a clear partisan motivation in the peninsular redelineation that preceded GE11: "Gerrymandering was another major factor in the 2004 election, where the constituency delineation exercise . . . ensured that pro-BN states such as Johor and Sabah had increased seat allocations while states where the opposition was stronger, such as Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis, received no additional seats. Moreover, constituencies with large BN majorities in 1999 were broken up in a fashion that allowed the EC to transfer certain districts to prop other weaker constituencies."
14 See *Malay Mail* "EC chief admits racial redelineation, says ethnic groups can't be split" from 29 March 2018.

15 ELF is the ethno-linguistic fractionalization index that captures the probability (between 0 and 1) that two people chosen at random from a given area will come from different groups. It uses a descending Herfindahl index: $ELF = 1 - \sum_{i}^{n} s_i^2$ where s is the proportion of each ethnic group.
16 See Gomez (2012) for an overview of money politics in Malaysia, Pepinsky (2007) for an evaluation of electoral cycles in federal expenditure and Lim and Ong (2006) for distribution of goodies. The electoral watchdog group PEMANTAU compiled an extensive list of related election offences, available on its website www.pemantau.org/
17 See Barr and Govindasamy (2010) for a discussion of how narrow communal appeals have helped UMNO retain support, but have reduced the space for religious pluralism in the public sphere. See also Ahmad Fauzi (2013), Osman (2014), Norshahril Saat (2016) and Osman (2016) on Islam as a political vehicle in Malaysia.
18 Quoted in *Bloomberg* article "Najib warns Malay base of threat to Islam if opponents win power" published on 30 November 2016.
19 See *FreeMalaysiaToday* story entitled "Report: 95% Chinese but less than 30% Malays voted for PH" from 14 June 2018.

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5 "10 years under Pakatan is better than 50 years under UMNO/BN"

Pre-electoral conflict and campaign rhetoric in Selangor

Elvin Ong

Electoral landslide for Pakatan Harapan in Selangor

Before Malaysia's General Election 14 (GE14) in May 2018, the Barisan Nasional (BN) had ruled the country for more than sixty years, making it one of the most enduring electoral authoritarian regimes in the world (Crouch 1996; Milne and Mauzy 1999; Slater 2012; Gomez 2016). In such regimes, dominant, autocratic incumbents use various means to secure mass acquiescence and to deter potential elites from challenging their authority (Lust 2005; Magaloni 2006; Gandhi 2008; Svolik 2012; Slater 2010; Morgenbesser 2016). They build parties to manage intra-elite dissent, use parliament to co-opt their rivals and hold elections to distribute patronage and signal their dominance. Elections, in particular, are heavily manipulated to suppress the opposition and to secure overwhelming victories (Schedler 2002, 2006; Birch 2011; Simpser 2013).

For Malaysia's GE14, it was widely acknowledged that extensive gerrymandering had occurred throughout the country, particularly in Selangor (Lee 2018; Ostwald 2017; Welsh 2018). In the state in general, non-Malay voters were packed into enlarged pro-opposition constituencies, while Malay voters were shifted into the more marginal constituencies.[1] This dual movement relied on gross malapportionment to benefit BN.[2] On the one hand, the BN government had reasoned that they would never be able to recover the non-Malay vote since their decisive shift away in the 2008 and 2013 general elections. Hence, by packing non-Malay voters into super-sized constituencies, BN had hoped to dilute the impact of their vote. On the other hand, BN assumed that they could rely on the continued loyalty of Malay voters to recapture marginal state and parliamentary seats (Chin 2010; Khalid and Loh 2016). Thus, by shifting Malay voters into more marginal constituencies, BN could enjoy a higher probability of winning those constituencies by appealing to the Malays through a campaign highlighting the continued supremacy of Malay and Islam. Moreover, Parti Islam se-Malaysia's (PAS's) exit from the Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition and entry into the electoral arena in Selangor to field candidates in 46 out of 56 state seats further promised to split the pro-opposition Malay vote. The resulting multi-cornered contests (see Table 5.1) increased BN's confidence that it could win back a significant share

Table 5.1 Number of multi-cornered contests in Selangor state assembly constituencies*

Number of Candidates in Each State Electoral District	*Number of State Electoral Districts*
5	6
4	14
3	32
2	4

* Compiled from undi.info.

Note: Includes candidates from smaller parties such as Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM), Parti Socialis Malaysia (PSM), Ikatan and independent candidates.

of Selangor state assembly seats or even recapture the state government from the opposition.

The final results revealed that BN's pre-electoral manipulation and tactics did not work and that its optimism for recapturing the Selangor state government was misplaced (see Table 5.2). The *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) opposition alliance—composed of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu), *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR) and *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah)—won Selangor at both the parliamentary and the state levels in a landslide victory. Of the 22 parliamentary seats in Selangor, PH won 20 seats, up from 17 seats under the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) that had PAS as a component party. This meant that not only did PH manage to win over all of PAS's four parliamentary seats in Hulu Langat, Shah Alam, Kota Raja and Sepang, it also won over BN's parliamentary constituencies in Sungai Besar, Hulu Selangor and Kuala Selangor. Only the more rural northwestern parliamentary constituencies of Sabak Bernam and Tanjung Karang remained within BN's fold.

Of the 56 Selangor state assembly seats, PH won 51 seats, trumping the PR's 44 seat victory in 2013. This time around, PH flipped 14 out of PAS's previous 15 state assembly seats, as well as eight out of BN's previous 12 state assembly seats. BN's remaining four state seats again came from the more rural northwestern region of Selangor (i.e., Sungai Air Tawar, Sungai Panjang, Hulu Bernam, Sungai Burong), while PAS's sole state-level victory was in Sijangkang.

In terms of vote share, at the parliamentary level BN obtained only 21% of the votes in Selangor, while PH obtained 64% of the votes. PAS obtained only 15% of all votes. Vote shares at the state level were largely similar. Ultimately, the results indicated that Malaysians in Selangor overwhelmingly supported PH and decisively rejected the BN and other parties. PAS was very nearly completely wiped out in the state.

If we break down the results further by the component parties within each of the duelling coalitions, we can see that PKR clearly emerged as the dominant party within the state. It controls 21 out of the 51 state assembly seats in Selangor, or just over 40% of all state seats, as well as exactly half of the 20 parliamentary seats won. Within the state assembly, DAP is the major partner with 16 state assembly seats, while Bersatu and Amanah are junior partners with six

Table 5.2 Final electoral results in Selangor*

Political Alliance	*State Assembly Seats Won*	*State Assembly Vote Share (%)*	*Parliamentary Seats Won*	*Parliamentary Vote Share (%)*
BN	4	21	2	22
PH	51	64	20	63
Others	1	15	0	15
Total	56	100	22	100

*Compiled from undi.info.

and eight seats, respectively. The new opposition within the state of Selangor will be solely made up of politicians from UMNO, with none from the MCA, MIC or Gerakan.

From the point of view of pre-electoral polling forecasts and analyses, the landslide electoral result for PH was a complete surprise and deeply puzzling. Although almost all of the analysts with whom I spoke on the campaign trail expected PH to retain Selangor, they also thought that PH's seat majority in the Selangor state assembly would decline from PR's 44 seats to somewhere in the mid-30s. This was primarily because of the redelineation imposed by BN just prior to the elections as well as PAS's entry in splitting the pro-opposition Malay votes (Lee 2018). Politweet, for example, predicted that PH would win a minimum of 33 state seats and a maximum of 39 seats.[3] Praba Ganesan predicted in a blog post on *New Manadala* that PH would only win 31 state seats.[4] Even Bridget Welsh noted that Selangor, like many other states, was "in play," suggesting that PH was potentially in danger of losing control of the state.[5] Only Rafizi Ramli, Member of Parliament from Pandan and founder of Invoke, a polling and pro-PH electoral campaign organization, came close to predicting the final results. In a seminar at the Swiss Garden Hotel on 9 March 2018, he correctly predicted that PH would win 20 parliamentary seats in Selangor and even underestimated PH's victory at the state level, forecasting that PH would only win 50 state assembly seats when it would go on to win 51 state seats just two months later.

PH's landslide victory in Selangor is even more surprising and puzzling considering that there were severe conflicts within the PH coalition and within PKR in the run-up to the elections. For many months, PH component parties were locked in extensive negotiations over which parties would contest in which districts at the state level. Even after PH managed to resolve their intra-coalition differences, PKR lurched into another crisis when conflicts emerged over candidate nomination in Selangor. Leaders of opposing factions within PKR fought to nominate candidates aligned to themselves ahead of candidates aligned to the other faction. The open discord between both PKR leaders dismayed many opposition supporters and even prompted former Bersih leader Ambiga Sreenevasan to criticize the feud as "nonsense" and "unforgivable."[6] Why voters in Selangor ignored these conflicts and continued to vote for PH is a puzzle that should be explained.

Table 5.3 Final electoral results in Selangor breakdown by component party*

Political Party	*State Assembly Seats Contested*	*State Assembly Seats Won*	*Parliamentary Seats Contested*	*Parliamentary Seats Won*
Pakatan Harapan				
PKR	21	21	10	10
DAP	16	16	4	4
Bersatu	9	6	3	1
Amanah	10	8	5	5
Total	56	51	22	20
Barisan Nasional				
UMNO	35	4	9	2
MCA	14	0	8	0
MIC	3	0	4	0
Gerakan	4	0	1	0
Total	56	4	22	2

* Compiled from undi.info.

This chapter will argue that the perceived competent management of the Selangor state government by Chief Minister Azmin Ali for the four years between 2014 and 2018 played an important role in galvanizing support for PH in both Selangor and in the rest of Malaysia. In particular, notwithstanding BN's gross mismanagement of the economy and manipulation of the electoral process that generated significant anger in the electorate, the numerous populist policies that the Selangor state government implemented and promised to continue post-elections attracted Malay voters who were previously weakly supportive of BN to switch their votes to PH in these elections. These populist policies and the perceived economic stability and growth of the Selangor state signalled to BN supporters that the PH alliance could govern the country well should it prevail over the BN at the national level. Moreover, Mahathir Mohamad's national leadership of the PH coalition as well as Azmin's leadership of the Selangor state government reassured Malay voters that Malay dominance would be preserved, thus rendering the electoral contest more about governance competency than about race and religion. As a result, even as PH lost a significant number of votes to PAS (about 15%) owing to the latter's split from the opposition, PH was able to compensate for those loses and do even better by convincing an even larger proportion of BN supporters to defect to them.

I provide evidence for this argument by triangulating a variety of qualitative evidence gathered during the ten days of electoral campaigning: semi-structured interviews with candidates at both the state and the parliamentary level and participant observation of nightly *ceramahs* and campaign events as well as campaign materials distributed by the candidates. Specifically, I focused my interviews and observations in three parliamentary constituencies—Gombak, Hulu Langat and Kuala Selangor. These constituencies were chosen because they are all Malay-majority districts, and all saw three-cornered fights between PH, BN and PAS.

Hence, they are ideal constituencies to assess the fight for Malay votes in Selangor amongst the different Malay parties. Where there is variation, however, is in the competitiveness of the seats, the degree of urbanization and the partisan identity of the incumbents. Kuala Selangor is a very competitive, rural district with a BN incumbent who won in GE13 by only 460 votes. Hulu Langat is a safe, semi-rural district with a strong PAS incumbent who won in GE13 with a 58% vote share. Gombak is a semi-competitive, urban district with the Selangor Chief Minister, PKR's Azmin, as the incumbent. Azmin won the previous elections with a slim 52% vote share. I investigate whether variation across these dimensions led to variation in electoral campaigning and outcomes.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows: First, I explicate the significant pre-electoral conflicts that occurred within PH and PKR, while briefly touching on similar, but lower level conflict within Bersatu. Specifically, I clarify the reasons for the conflicts and assess their respective resolutions. Second, I explain empirically why voters in Selangor demanded governance competency, specifically competency in economic management, from their political candidates, and how they assessed the electoral campaigns of BN and PAS. I then clarify theoretically how doubts over an opposition's governance competency under electoral autocracy can lead to depressed voter support and explain how the opposition can potentially use its experience in subnational governance to overcome this obstacle. Third and finally, I assess how PH leveraged on the weaknesses of BN and PAS to campaign to voters. I explain why their proposed plans and candidates came across as much more credible and convincing for the majority of voters as compared to BN and PAS. A short conclusion summarizes this chapter's most salient arguments and findings.

Pre-electoral conflict in Selangor: PH and PKR in turmoil

In January 2018, PH began generating significant momentum for its cause by announcing the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister candidates and the parliamentary district allocation among all the alliance's component parties for Peninsular Malaysia.[7] If PH was victorious, Mahathir was to be the Prime Minister, while Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was to be the Deputy Prime Minister. Bersatu was to contest in 52 parliamentary constituencies, PKR in 51, DAP in 35 and Amanah in 27. In Selangor, PKR was the dominant party. It would contest in ten parliamentary seats, with Amanah contesting in 5, DAP in 4 and Bersatu in 3.

It was the first time ever that any opposition coalition in Malaysia had successfully agreed on the top two leadership positions and on electoral district allocation over parliamentary seats many months before the actual elections. This development was positive for the overall national public perception of PH for two reasons. In the first instance, naming Malay-Muslim candidates for the top two posts in the executive branch reassured Malay-Muslim voters, who form the largest ethnoreligious group of voters in Malaysia, that pro-Malay-Bumiputera rights would be preserved, and that Islam would continue to be the dominant

religion in the country. This effectively took the sting out of UMNO's and PAS's rhetorical attacks on PH as being dominated by the Chinese-majority "Christian" DAP. Henceforth, the battle of electoral rhetoric would be more about which party is more competent at economic management and reducing corruption, and less about which party would preserve Malay rights and the dominance of Islam (Weiss 2013). Moreover, successful intra-coalition allocation of the parliamentary seats also signalled to voters that the PH coalition had minimized their differences and was united in seeking to defeat the BN.

Although intra-coalition allocation of parliamentary seats appeared to be a general success, state level district allocation among the component parties of PH was far from settled. In mid-January 2018, there were still rumours that that Selangor Chief Minister Azmin was still in talks with PAS leaders about state level cooperation to avoid three-cornered contests against BN, even when the PH leadership had already disavowed all ties with PAS in late 2017.[8] According to a PH candidate in Selangor, Azmin was less confident of PH's electoral success if PAS were to force three-cornered contests in Selangor and draw votes away from PH.[9] Hence, Azmin was hoping to convince PAS's local leaders in Selangor who disagreed with PAS's national leaders to switch to contest in the elections under PKR's banner. If this logic was true, then it clearly pitted Azmin and PKR against their fellow allies in PH, particularly DAP and Amanah, who were by now sworn enemies of PAS. To recall briefly, Amanah was formed by a group of ex-PAS members and leaders who split from the party in late 2015, whereas the social democratic, Chinese-dominated DAP long had differences with PAS over the latter's long-standing agenda to implement Islamic *hudud* law in the country.

It was only in mid-February 2018 that Azmin, in an interview with *Nanyang Siang Pau*, finally publicly declared unequivocally that there would be no more cooperation with PAS. He explained that in the past he "tolerated PAS not because I like its president Abdul Hadi Awang, but because they had not deviated from our (state government) policies, which treated the people fairly."[10] Azmin's public disavowal of PAS thus set the foundation for the first great uncertainty of the upcoming elections both at the national level and in Selangor—how multi-cornered contests within each electoral district would complicate voter decision-making and impact the final results. As I explain later, this uncertainty subsequently increased intra-coalition conflict significantly.

Throughout February and March 2018, the four PH component parties in Selangor—DAP, PKR, Bersatu and Amanah—were still locked in negotiations over which parties would contest in which state seats.[11] They missed several deadlines imposed by the PH national leaders to conclude the negotiations and were also the last of the states to decide on seat allocations. Reports of the negotiations and interviews with PH candidates revealed several obstacles. Initially, PKR wanted to contest in more than half of the 56 state seats on offer in Selangor so that it could have the flexibility to form a state government without partnering with any other PH component parties. If this was not possible, then at the minimum Selangor PKR wanted to win enough state seats along with Bersatu and Amanah to be able to form a state government, either reducing or completely

eliminating DAP's influence. This was because of the DAP's generally acrimonious relationship with Azmin over past conflicts in the Selangor Chief Minister crisis in 2014 as well as seat negotiations over the Sarawak state election in 2016 (Mohamed Osman, Oh, and Pasuni 2014).[12]

To be more specific, the main conflict emerged over which parties should contest against the existing 12 UMNO state incumbents, and which parties should contest against the existing 15 PAS state seats. It appeared that Bersatu wanted to contest against all the 12 UMNO incumbents at a minimum, Amanah wanted to contest three more state seats than the mere nine it was rumoured to be allocated, and DAP wanted to contest a hefty eight more seats in addition to the 15 that it had won in the previous general elections.

In previous negotiations, the principle underlying seat allocation negotiations was the "winnability" of each seat. Parties would use the results of the previous elections and surveys commissioned as well as the relative proportions of different ethnicities within each electoral constituency as proxy measures to determine which opposition party would have the highest probability of winning against the BN. Even if parties were prone to exaggerating the popularity of their potential candidates in certain electoral districts, these proxy measures served as a benchmark that everyone would ultimately rely on to justify their bargaining positions. This time around, however, the proxy measures were much less useful because of the uncertainty of PAS as a third party forcing three-cornered contests against the BN. Even if any PH component party was confident of securing all the non-Malay votes in their constituency, there was tremendous uncertainty over how the Malay votes would swing.

Multiple surveys commissioned in the run-up to GE14 could not paint a definitive picture of "winnability." There were significant disputes over the results from the different surveys published by Merdeka Center, Invoke, Institute Darul Ehsan and the Ilham Centre not least because of the different methods through which all of the survey firms modelled how three-cornered contests would manifest themselves.[13] Even more confusing were the contrasting outcomes that these surveys painted, with Merdeka Center being the most conservative in predicting the likelihood of BN victories to be higher and Invoke being the most optimistic in predicting the stronger likelihood of PH victories over both BN and PAS. Because of the great uncertainty over the "winnability" of each seat, therefore, all the parties were locked into a game where no one party wanted to back down from their demands (Ong 2016).

It was only in mid-April 2018 that PH finally resolved the thorny issue of Selangor state seat allocation, just one week before nomination day.[14] PKR was allocated 21, DAP 16 (just one more than the previous election), Bersatu nine (three less than its demands) and Amanah ten (one more than its demand). Hence, it appeared that PKR was the overall winner emerging out of these negotiations. It gained the lion's share of the state seats to contest and could potentially form a state government with Bersatu and Amanah if they won the majority of their seats. Despite this unbalanced outcome and with nomination day looming ahead, all parties reasoned that it would be in their own self-interest to back down,

rather than to continue waging a disastrous intra-coalition war with each other (Fearon 1995; Reiter 2009). Continued intra-coalition conflict in Selangor up to nomination day would have hurt all parties. The public perception of PH unity would falter, and the parties would have a tremendously difficult time allocating candidates to the seats already bargained for.

But a second and final crisis in Selangor promised to unravel all the good work that had been done—intra-party disputes over which candidates should contest in the seats already bargained for. Whereas DAP and Amanah had more centralized state and national leadership structures that facilitated a smoother candidate nomination process in Selangor, the same could not be said for Bersatu and PKR. Bersatu's national leadership was heavily focused on the party's electoral mobilization in Kedah and Johor; its state-level leadership in Selangor was somewhat weaker and more fractured than DAP and Amanah. For PKR, it was well known that the party was split across two camps at the national level, one sphere of influence orbiting around Selangor Chief Minister Azmin and the other allied to Member of Parliament for Permatang Pauh and Anwar Ibrahim's wife Wan Azizah and Member of Parliament for Pandan Rafizi Ramli (Mohamed Osman, Oh, and Pasuni 2014). The latter two were generally thought to be acting as proxies for PKR's incarcerated leader Anwar Ibrahim. Thus, for both Bersatu and PKR, intra-party conflict manifested itself in significant clashes over candidate nomination. In terms of the degree of media attention, however, the overt factional conflict within PKR gained much more attention than the low-level conflict in Bersatu.

In PKR, disagreements over candidate nomination spilled out into the public after Tian Chua (Batu) and Gan Pei Nei (Rawang) both held press conferences on 22 April and 23 April denouncing the party's candidate nomination process.[15] Both PKR politicians were aligned to Azmin. Tian Chua, threatening to quit his party just before the press conference, warned his own party leaders, Wan Azizah and Anwar Ibrahim, to "be very careful not to drop or put people in (the candidates' list) just to accommodate lobbying from various factions."[16] An emotional Gan Pei Nei decried a poison pen letter alleging that she had misused funds allocated for her constituency, and also underlined her commitment to the party by referring to her continued constituency work even though she was pregnant and had taken only two weeks off after giving birth.

The fires of open conflict among PKR leaders were further stoked when Wan Azizah and Azmin were pictured seated apart from each other with an empty seat in between them at a PKR event in Seberang Jaya, Penang.[17] Just as Azmin was invited to give his speech on stage, Wan Azizah quickly left the event.[18] The animosity between the both of them would recur throughout the week leading up to nomination day. Further revelations in various news reports suggested that up to eight names put forward by Azmin were likely to be dropped, including Azmin's aides and allies Muhammad Hilman Idham, Khaled Jaafar and Mohd Razlan Jalaluddin.[19] The other three incumbents likely to be dropped, in addition to Tian Chua and Gan Pei Nei, were Tan Kee Kwong (Wangsa Maju), Yaakob Sapari (Kota Anggerik) and Hanizah Mohd Talha (Taman Medan).

Ultimately, the final list of PKR's candidates resembled a lopsided truce between Azmin on the one hand and Anwar and Wan Azizah on the other. Only two of Azmin's allies were retained. Specifically, Muhammad Hilman Idham was eventually fielded as the candidate for the Selangor state constituency of Gombak Setia, which is a state constituency under Azmin's Gombak parliamentary seat. Tian Chua was also retained by the party, but he was eventually not nominated on nomination day because of a technicality with a previous court conviction. The other six of the eight mentioned previously were dropped. Despite being dropped, however, Yaakob Sapari actively campaigned for his replacement candidate Najwan Halimi.[20]

PKR's intra-party conflict was not insignificant for the actual election campaign. Supporters of incumbents who were dropped were reluctant to campaign for the new candidates. Some voters also treated new candidates with suspicion. Interviews with PKR party activists revealed that a portion of voters had expressed doubts about voting for PKR's new candidates for various reasons.[21] Some voters felt that they had little experience interacting with them and were unsure about their capabilities. Other voters had done some research online and found out that some of these new candidates were mired in corruption allegations. In any case, PKR party activists worked hard to soothe the dilemma of these voters by emphasizing the broader goals of PH's overall objective of defeating BN, while highlighting the benefits of a continuation of the Selangor state government's many popular policies.

As compared to PKR, it would be more accurate to describe Bersatu's struggle over candidate nomination as less of an open warfare between competing power holders within the party, but more of small arms skirmishes among new personalities who were trying to establish a foothold within a new organization. Out of 12 Bersatu candidates announced on 23 April to be competing in Selangor at both the parliamentary and state level, only five candidates were successfully fielded as originally announced. Interviews with some party candidates and party activists revealed that the candidates were replaced within a few days for different reasons across the various constituencies.

For the Semenyih state constituency, for example, Rais Zulkifli was supposed to be the Bersatu candidate. Yet it was Bakhtiar Mohd Nor who turned up eventually at the nomination centre on nomination day. When asked when and why Rais Zulkifli was replaced, the reply was that he was replaced as the Bersatu candidate for Semenyih just three days prior to nomination because he was "too young" and "not ready."[22] In contrast, for the parliamentary seat of Sungai Besar, Cikgu Muslimin was the last minute Bersatu candidate who replaced Mohd Asyraf Basri for a different reason. Interviews revealed that Cikgu Muslimin was actually a very well-received local UMNO politician. He was a former political secretary to the Sungai Besar UMNO parliamentarian Noriah Kasnon who passed away in a helicopter crash in Sarawak in 2016 and was subsequently assistant to the political secretary of then Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.[23] He defected to Bersatu and became the party's Sungai Besar candidate just 48 hours prior to nomination when he learned that he was not nominated to be UMNO's

Table 5.4 Announced and fielded Bersatu candidates in Selangor*

Electoral District	*Announced Candidate*	*Actual Fielded Candidate*	*Nomination Outcome*	*Electoral Outcome*
Sabak Bernam*	Kalam Salan	Warno Dongol	Different	Lost
Sungai Besar*	Mohd Asyraf Basri	Muslimin Yahaya	Different	Won
Tanjung Karang*	Zulkafperi Hanapi	Zulkafperi Hanapi	Same	Lost
Sungai Air Tawar	Mohd Hamizar Sulaiman	Mohd Hamizar Sulaiman	Same	Lost
Sungai Burong	Mohd Azmil Misman	Mohd Tarmizi Larzim	Different	Lost
Batang Kali	Harumaini Omar	Harumaini Omar	Same	Won
Jeram	Mohd Najib Itam Othman	Mohd Shaid Rosli	Different	Won
Kuang	Mejar Abd Wahid Bidin	Sallehudin Amiruddin	Different	Won
Semenyih	Rais Zulkifli	Bakhtiar Mohd Nor	Different	Won
Sijangkang	Roszani Roslan	Mohd Hamidi Abu Bakar	Different	Lost
Selat Klang	Abdul Rashid Asari	Abdul Rashid Asari	Same	Won
Dengkil	Adhif Syan Abdullah	Adhif Syan Abdullah	Same	Won

* Refers to parliamentary constituency. All others are state seats.

Source: Compiled from "GE14: Selangor Pribumi to contest three parliamentary, nine state seats." *The Star Online*. Last accessed www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/04/23/ge14-selangor-pribumi-to-contest-three-parliamentary-nine-state-seats/ on 8 June 2018 and verified against data on www.undi.info.

candidate for the constituency.[24] Corroborating this story, party activists from other component parties of PH complained that Bersatu's candidates in Selangor were mostly "UMNO-rejects" who did not secure nomination to be UMNO candidates.[25]

Despite these intra-party battles within PKR and Bersatu, however, the electoral results revealed that no serious harm was inflicted on either party. PKR won all the 21 seats that it contested. For Bersatu, Table 5.4 reveals that there is no discernible pattern in the electoral outcomes between fielded candidates who were the same as or different from those that were announced. Why did Selangor voters choose to overlook the intra-coalition and intra-party conflicts in PH and still vote for this coalition anyway? The next two sections seek to answer this question.

Demand for governance competency under electoral authoritarianism

Preliminary analysis of the overall GE14 voting results by Tom Pepinsky found that there was a precipitous decrease in baseline support for BN across the entire country, thus justifying labelling the GE14 outcome as a "Malaysian tsunami."[26] For a state like Selangor that was already in the control of the opposition the

overall drop in BN support was even steeper, which manifested itself in PH's landslide win. In order to explain this result, we have to look at the factors that "pushed" voters away from BN, and the factors that "pulled" voters towards PH, even when PAS was available as a third option to Selangor's voters.

With regards to the "push" factors, there is little doubt that extensive voter dissent against the corrupt and repressive BN administration of Prime Minister Najib Razak was a key "push" factor that swung voters away from BN. The 1MDB scandal was a key catalyst that splintered UMNO and provided the focal point around which opposition parties could rally their supporters. Extensive pre-electoral manipulation by the BN government also increased voter anger. The hasty manner in which the redelineation and Anti-Fake News legislation were pushed through in parliament just days before parliament was dissolved raised public perception that Najib was attempting to steal the elections through gross electoral manipulation. That multiple analysts stressed that the redelineation's effects impacted Selangor the most likely further antagonized voters in the state. Finally, Najib's decision to designate a weekday as a polling day also provoked voters. Many candidates and party activists whom I spoke to mentioned that voters in their constituency were outraged that Najib was attempting to leverage on a low turnout of urban voters to win. Many Malaysians thus began organizing themselves online through social media to find ways to get back home to vote.[27]

Although the 1MDB scandal and Najib's pre-electoral manipulation were indeed deeply distressing for many voters, multiple surveys also showed that voters were particularly unhappy with the state of the economy.[28] In particular, voters were most worried about the rising costs of living, stagnant wages and the lack of good-paying jobs. Inflation because of imposition of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the removal of petrol subsidies was especially problematic for rural and semi-rural voters in particular, because it meant that their lives were reduced to that of "daily survival" (Rahman 2018). In Selangor, informal conversations with voters as well as candidates in the more rural and semi-rural constituencies revealed that many voters in these districts also felt the same.[29] More than half of the state seats that flipped from BN to PH were in the rural and semi-rural districts in the north and northwest of the state—Batang Kali, Permatang, Bukit Melawati Jeram and Kuang. The other three state seats that flipped from BN to PH were Semenyih, Kota Damansara and Dengkil.[30]

Given that the common voter perceived BN's management of the economy to be detrimental to their own welfare, the coalition's stated manifesto for Selangor was also perceived as not credible. BN's manifesto for the state was launched on 8 April 2018, with the snazzy hashtag #BetterSelangor.[31] The manifesto advanced a ten-point programme with 100 initiatives that the BN government promised to implement should it recapture the state. Nine out of the ten programmes appealed directly to voters with various promises to improve their particular economic positions in areas such as public transport, affordable housing and education. Yet, throughout my informal conversations with Selangor voters, few voters truly believed Selangor Barisan Chairman Noh Omar's claim that "Selangor will be much better if BN takes over in GE14."[32]

For their part, PAS leaders and candidates in Selangor whom I spoke to also readily acknowledged the demand for better governance and management of the economy from voters in the state.[33] PAS candidates first emphasized that the party running 46 candidates in the 56 available state assembly seats in Selangor signalled to voters their "sincerity" and "seriousness" in taking over the state government and implementing the policies that they proposed. Second, PAS candidates also emphasized that as part of the Pakatan Rakyat Selangor state government for the past ten years, they had a good track record of implementing good policies for the people. This track record would ensure that voters took their promises of good governance seriously. Third, they believed that discerning voters would not only choose with care about their choice of parties but that they would choose "sincere" local candidates who could serve them at the local level to improve their lives.

In order to appeal to voters in Selangor about their governance competencies, then, PAS's campaign materials not only highlighted the party's state manifesto but also the individual candidate's plans for the specific constituencies that they were contesting in. For example, the campaign leaflet for Tuan Haji Mohd Fakaruddin Haji Ismail, the candidate for the competitive rural district of Kuala Selangor, showed that the candidate was attuned to the deficiencies and demands of different neighbourhoods in the district and how he made promises to rectify them. Lastly, to try to seal the deal with voters, PAS candidates also sought to rely on their friendly relationship with former Selangor Chief Minister Khalid Ibrahim to help them campaign. Khalid was observed holding up the hands of the PAS candidates from Kuala Selangor and Ijok on a stage at an event in a community centre in rural Ijok.

In the final analysis, however, the majority of Selangor voters whom I spoke to were not convinced by PAS's claims of potential better governance in Selangor. Their reasoning was two-fold. They first doubted the party's ability to take over the Selangor government, given that the party had only managed to win 15 state seats in the last elections and was unlikely to win more without the support of non-Malay voters. If voters were to vote for PAS but the party was unable to form the state or federal government (which was very likely to be the case), then their vote would be a wasted vote as their PAS representative "cannot do anything" as part of the opposition to a new government.[34] Even if PAS were to win enough seats to form a coalition government with the BN at the state or federal level after the elections, then voting for PAS was as good as voting for BN, which was tantamount to a vote for the status quo. This was also an unpalatable option.

A final tell-tale sign during the campaign was that I generally found PAS events to be poorly attended with about half of the available space left empty. At a "high tea" in Ijok with former Selangor Chief Minister Khalid, for instance, the community hall was only 40% filled at the peak of the event. There were no more than 100 constituents in attendance, with most speaking in hushed tones and helping themselves to the food available even as Khalid was speaking. Contrast this with a similar PKR "high tea" event that I witnessed in Hulu Kelang, where Azmin was giving a speech on another day at the same time. The event venue, a

medium-sized car park space, was packed to the brim, with more than 200 voters in attendance. Everyone listened to Azmin speak for close to an hour with full attention. Even a similar "high tea" event organized by Ustaz Hasanuddin, the Amanah candidate in Hulu Langat, drew a similar crowd size to the PAS event in Ijok. Ustaz Hasanuddin's crowd, even though modest, was relatively surprising, given that he was a relatively unknown candidate in his semi-urban seat of Hulu Langat and when compared to the famed PAS machinery as well as the supposed "star power" of Khalid Ibrahim.

My interpretation of the relative crowd sizes is that the majority of Selangor voters, especially the majority of the Malay voters in the state to be more precise, had already made up their minds not to support PAS. As Ustaz Hasanuddin and other PH candidates presciently pointed out to me, many PAS supporters in Selangor were actually "harum manis," a reference to the sweet-smelling mangoes that were green on the outside but orange on the inside.[35] PAS's party colour is green, whereas the party colour of Amanah is orange. Only the most sincere believers of PAS would continue voting for the party. This section of voters, the candidates calculated, was only about a quarter of Malay voters in their constituency.

The non-credibility of BN and PAS's campaign promises thus opened up the rhetorical opportunity and space for the PH alliance to "pull" voters to their side by signalling their governance competency. Not only must PH candidates convince a significant portion of BN supporters to vote for them, they also need to convince enough of the "harum manis" PAS supporters to abandon PAS and switch to PH. Specifically, PH needed to persuade and cajole these PAS supporters to vote strategically—instead of voting for their sincere preference for PAS or staying at home on polling day, they needed to turn out and vote strategically for PH candidates. Before describing how the PH opposition coalition accomplished this task in Selangor, it is worthwhile explicating the theoretical logic behind why an opposition party or coalition may encounter significant challenges in signalling to voters their governance competency under electoral authoritarianism.

Theoretically, under electoral authoritarianism, voters cannot take at face value an opposition party's claims of governance competency (Bleck and van de Walle 2011, 2013). By definition, opposition parties in electoral authoritarian regimes lack governing experience at the national level. This considerably diminishes the credibility of any claims that they will be able to effectively implement the policies that they propose. For instance, during the GE14 campaign in Malaysia, many voters and analysts expressed significant scepticism about whether a PH-controlled future government could successfully balance the budget if they eliminated the deeply unpopular Goods and Services Tax (GST).[36] Moreover, the lack of governing experience at the federal level also sparked some fears that a PH-controlled future government could not swiftly exert control over the police force or the military. Thus, there may be an increased likelihood that riots may break out onto the streets in an event of an opposition victory, just like there was street rioting after the 1969 General Elections.[37] With PAS as a potential third-party "kingmaker," uncertainty about which party or alliance would emerge as

the clear winner in the immediate aftermath of the elections could also add fuel to a smouldering fire.

We can therefore hypothesize that an opposition's lack of governing experience under electoral authoritarianism leads to at least some voters withholding their support, even if they wished to defect from the dominant incumbent. Thus, in order to win the support of voters who may be sympathetic to the opposition's cause, opposition parties must somehow credibly signal their governance competency. At the minimum, they must somehow convince voters that they have concrete plans about how to implement the alternative policies that they propose and that general societal stability can be preserved.

One method through which opposition parties can credibly signal their governance competency is by campaigning on their track record in subnational governance. In various electoral autocracies around the world as diverse as Taiwan, Mexico and Egypt, opposition parties regularly appeal to voters by claiming their substantial experience in successfully governing small towns or regions, or by successfully managing large country-wide organizations (Cheng 1989; Rigger 2001; Greene 2007; Magaloni 2006; Albrecht 2010; Blaydes 2011). If organizations, regions or districts governed under the National Action Party (PAN) or the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in Mexico, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan, or the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt thrive both economically and politically, then there are fewer reasons for voters to doubt the opposition's governance competency. The opposition can even leverage from the resources (whether human, financial or otherwise) generated from these "stronghold" organizations or localities for use in their endeavour to capture national power.

In Malaysia, the PH-controlled state governments of Penang and Selangor play such exemplary role models for signalling the opposition's future governance competency. Not only is extensive economic development in both states frequently mentioned by opposition politicians, inter-racial and inter-religious harmony in both states are repeatedly emphasized. As Selangor Chief Minister Azmin himself argued, "The people will be full of confidence with the coalition, given our track record in administrating Penang and Selangor, that we definitely can govern Putrajaya and Malaysia."[38] Furthermore, if one takes into account the fact that the non-Malay vote for PH is secure and that this coalition needs a substantial swing in the Malay votes for it to win national power, then the exemplary role of Selangor is even more important than Penang. Since Penang is controlled by the Chinese-majority DAP, its governance success story is discounted in the eyes of Malay voters. Malay voters are more likely to be convinced by the successful management of Selangor, which is controlled by the multi-ethnic but Malay-majority PKR, under a Malay-Muslim Chief Minister.[39] Hence, the successful subnational governance of a critical state like Selangor, the most economically developed state in Malaysia, lends significant weight to the opposition's cause in mobilizing voters. I now move on to describe how the PH alliance leveraged on their track record in Selangor to convince voters to vote for them, which was a key reason for their landslide victory in the state and the more than positive results in the rest of the country.

PH's rhetorical supply of governance competency

At the national level, the PH coalition "pulled" BN supporters and induced strategic voting among PAS supporters by sending a variety of signals indicating their anti-BN unity and compromises to each other (Ong 2017). At least two signals went significantly beyond previous signals of opposition unity sent by previous Malaysian opposition alliances, thus demonstrating the deeper cooperation among opposition parties this time around. First, PH campaigned and contested in the elections using one opposition logo—PKR's logo. By giving up their respective party logos, DAP, Bersatu and Amanah made significant sacrifices. For DAP in particular, there were significant fears that their support would decrease without their iconic "Rocket" logo.[40] Yet, at the same time, campaigning and contesting using one logo also induced voters who were previously put off by the individual opposition party's partisan logos to vote strategically for the opposition alliance's candidates in GE14. Throughout the entire 11-day election campaign period, I observed no candidates from DAP, Bersatu and Amanah using their own individual party logos to campaign. Party activists for a DAP candidate for the Selangor state assembly confirmed that using the PH joint logo was an advantage, because it reduced Malay anxieties of interacting with and voting for a DAP candidate.[41] Moreover, if they were ever asked which political party they were from, they would say "Mahathir's party" or "Mahathir's alliance."

Second, PH also campaigned heavily on fulfilling ten popular promises within 100 days if it took over power, backed by a detailed common manifesto, the *Buku Harapan*, that was almost 200 pages long. Previous opposition unity manifestoes launched by the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA) in 1999 and Pakatan Rakyat in 2013 were all less than 50 pages. Crucially, the new manifesto addressed the electorate's key issues of concern regarding the cost of living and corruption and demonstrated that PH had a viable working plan to clean up the mess created by BN.[42] When I attended the manifesto launch in Shah Alam in early March 2018, the various politicians speaking repeatedly emphasized that this was the manifesto of a "government-in-waiting" and not that of an opposition alliance. Interviews with the drafters of the manifesto also revealed that the document was in the making for more than six months. Although all parties largely agreed on the major institutional and economic reforms proposed, there were compromises made to allow a continued emphasis on maintaining Malay and Bumiputera dominance and rights within a multiracial and multi-religious country (see for example promise 11 and promise 30), as well as significant sections emphasizing the growth of Sabah and Sarawak (promises 40 to 48).[43] A ubiquitous campaign leaflet highlighting PH's ten key promises was also frequently distributed.

On top of these ten promises, however, Selangor's PH candidates also worked hard to signal to voters their future governance competency by campaigning heavily on the opposition's track record of good governance in Selangor. This manifested itself in three forms during the campaign—(1) highlighting the very popular policies that Selangor has implemented; (2) emphasizing that only a PH-controlled Selangor state government can continue implementing these policies;

and (3) these popular policies could be implemented in other states across the entire country to benefit fellow Malaysians.

Over the past two terms, the Selangor state government had implemented a range of policies that had proven to be very popular with its citizens. These include the Kasih Ibu Smart Selangor (KISS) programme that provides RM200 subsidy per month for women with children to subsidize their cost of living, the Skim Peduli Sihat integrated healthcare scheme providing up to RM500 in subsidies per year for treatment at a clinic and the Hijarah Selangor scheme providing small business loans for entrepreneurs up to RM50,000. Every PH candidate that I interviewed had campaign flyers highlighting those policies, alongside flyers publicizing PH's ten key promises in its coalition manifesto. Many flyers were distributed listing the policies deemed to be successful and worthy of publicity. In fact, these policies proved so popular that they were also replicated in the policy promises of PAS candidates in the campaign materials that they distributed.

PH's Selangor candidates then leveraged on these successful and popular policies to appeal to voters. I observed on multiple occasions how candidates explained the policies in detail to potential voters during their walkabouts and at their nightly ceramahs. At the aforementioned "high tea" event held in Hulu Kelang, a state-level constituency within his Gombak parliamentary constituency, Azmin stumped for himself and for the state candidate Saari Sungib from Amanah. Occasionally peppering his speech with supporting verses from the Quran, Azmin derided BN's corrupt practices and the biased reporting in the mainstream media and branded UMNO supporters as "traitors" for selling out the country to investors from China. At the same time, he also repeatedly highlighted how the Selangor state government under PH had implemented good governance and popular policies for the people. He praised how the Selangor public transport system was getting better, how more than 50,000 small businesses had benefitted from loans approved and reiterated how the KISS programme was very popular among women. He extorted the people, "Selangor is improving, and so if Selangor can do it, so too can Putrajaya, under the condition that Pakatan Harapan prevails in Putrajaya." He summarized his speech by claiming that "10 years under Pakatan is better than 50 years under UMNO, Barisan Nasional."

Other PH candidates and activists interviewed also utilized the same rhetoric, this time against PAS.[44] They appealed to voters, particularly PAS supporters, to reconsider the credibility of PAS's manifesto for Selangor because PAS could not possibly fulfil those promises. Previously, PAS could make good on their electoral promises because it was part of the PR coalition government both in Selangor and as part of the national opposition alliance. Now, on its own outside of the PH coalition, it was inconceivable that PAS would be able to win enough seats across Selangor to form the state government, even if they were contesting 46 out of 56 state seats. Hence, their electoral promises could not be trusted.

Finally, Selangor's numerous popular policies also found their way into the PH national manifesto itself as well as the PH manifesto for other states like Johor. This supported the PH's claims that Selangor's success can be replicated at the national level, thus further persuading voter turnout for PH. For example, in the

PH national manifesto, the *Buku Harapan*, there were seven instances in which Selangor is mentioned. In six of those instances, Selangor's successful implementation of a particular policy was mentioned to legitimize the potential feasibility of that particular policy's expansion to the rest of the country. Selangor's three successful policies were mentioned in those six instances—the Skim Peduli Sihat integrated healthcare scheme, a RM500 marriage incentive for couples younger than 35 years old for their first marriage and Universiti Selangor. A typical justification read like this: For Promise 9 to "Improve access to quality of health services," the key policy proposed is written as "The Pakatan Harapan Government will introduce Skim Peduli Sihat, similar to what was implemented in Selangor, to the rest of the country. The scheme provides RM500 per year for B40 families to visit private clinics for basic treatment (primary care)."[45] This policy was re-emphasized in PH's manifesto for Johor, alongside the proposed creation of the "Universiti Johor," just like Universiti Selangor.[46] In contrast, Penang only found itself mentioned three times in PH's manifesto, highlighting three of its policy successes—its Hindu Waqaf Council model for helping Indian single mothers, the George Town Festival and a RM150 contribution to every senior older than 60 living in Penang.

Conclusion

The final electoral results revealed that PH candidates had won in all the parliamentary districts and state seats that I observed in Kuala Selangor, Hulu Langat and in Gombak. In all districts, except for Gombak Setia, BN candidates all came in second place, while PAS candidates all came in third place. With the benefit of hindsight, many analysts pointed to the unprecedented role of Mahathir Mohamad leading the PH coalition as the most crucial factor leading to its electoral victory. Others focused on how unpopular the utterly corrupt BN government was, alongside Malaysians' extensive resentment over the rising cost of living and their declining quality of life.

This chapter has focused on the under-appreciated role of PH's successful subnational governance of a crucial state like Selangor. PH's candidates in this state repeatedly emphasized Selangor's achievements and popular policies throughout their campaigns and highlighted how voters could continue to enjoy such policies only by voting for PH candidates at both the federal and the state level. In so doing, PH's parties and candidates were attempting to signal their prospective governance competency in the hopes of attracting both BN supporters on the one hand and PAS supporters on the other. Although significant pre-electoral intra-coalition and intra-party conflict in Selangor threatened to diminish PH's credibility for unity and competency among voters, they did little to truly tarnish PH's perceived track record of governing Selangor competently. The electoral results in Selangor revealed that a significant proportion of BN and PAS voters were willing to switch to PH not just because of national developments but also because of the assurances that they got at the state level for good governance in the future.

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6 A tale of intra-Malay elite feuds in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya

Prashant Waikar

Introduction

While the outcome of the Malaysian General Election 14 (GE14) shocked observers, Pakatan Harapan (PH) was expected to win most of the seats in Kuala Lumpur (KL). After all, in the 2013 election, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) won nine of the 11 seats in KL. One was retained marginally, four were won with super majorities ranging from 72.8% to 85.7% and the remaining were won with simple majorities between 54.4% and 64.6% (Attorney General's Chambers 2013a). Given this backdrop, there was little doubt that PH candidates would win most of KL again. What has proven surprising, however, was PH's clean sweep of KL and BN's underperformance in the Federal Territory seat of Putrajaya (see Table 6.1).

As Table 6.1 indicates, BN fielded four experienced candidates from the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in seats they were expected to win. Zulhasnan Rafique (Setiawangsa), Raja Nong Chik (Lembah Pantai), Johari Abdul Ghani (Titiwangsa) and Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (Putrajaya) are seasoned politicians. Going into GE14, they were well resourced. All of them have held ministerial positions. Apart from Nong Chik, all had been Members of Parliament for between one and three terms. Nong Chik was previously a senator. Setiawangsa and Lembah Pantai have significant military and police voters, while Putrajaya is a civil service constituency. This segment has traditionally been a vote bank for BN (Chin 2013).

All four candidates were running against comparatively inexperienced opponents. PKR fielded a popular assemblyman, Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, in Setiawangsa, but he was untested at the federal level. In Lembah Pantai, PKR's Fahmi Fadzil was a political newcomer who was expected to lose in a landslide after the Bukit Aman police station was re-drawn into the constituency, resulting in an increase of nearly 7,000 police voters (*Malaysiakini* 11 June 2018). In Titiwangsa and Putrajaya, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's (Bersatu's) Rina Harun and Samsu Adabi Mamat were inexperienced. Three of the Parti Se-Islam Malaysia (PAS) candidates were political novices, with only Mohammed Noor having been fielded previously (1999, 2004) in Titiwangsa where he lost (*The Star* 30 April 2018).

Table 6.1 2018 election results in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya*

Seat	*Winner*	*Votes*	*Majority*	*Opponent(s)*	*Votes*	*Spoilt*	*Turnout*	*Incumbent's Vote Share (GE13)*	*Incumbent*
Batu	P. Prabakaran (IND)	59.9%	36.9%	Dominic Lau (BN-Gerakan) Azhar Yahya (GS-PAS) P. Muthusamy (IND)	21.5% 16.7% 0.6%	1.3%	83.3%	57.9%	Chua Tian Chang (PR-PKR)
Wangsa Maju	Tan Yee Kew (PH-PKR)	56.6%	32.5%	Yeow Teng Look (BN-MCA) Razali Tumirin (GS-PAS)	24.1% 18.1%	1.2%	84.2%	54.4%	Tan Kee Kwong (PR-PKR)
Setiawangsa	Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (PH-PKR)	55.7%	23.2%	Zulhasnan Rafique (BN-UMNO) Ubaid Abdul Akla (GS-PAS)	32.5% 10.6%	1.6%	85.8%	50.8%	Ahmad Fauzi Zahari (BN-UMNO)
Titiwangsa	Rina Harun (PH-PPBM)	46.9%	8.1%	Johari Abdul Ghani (BN-UMNO) Mohammed Noor (GS-PAS)	38.7% 13.5%	0.9%	82.6%	50.6%	Johari Abdul Ghani (BN-UMNO)
Lembah Pantai	Fahmi Fadzil (PH-PKR)	49.7%	8.3%	Raja Nong Chik (BN-UMNO) Fauzi Abu Bakar (GS-PAS)	41.3% 7.9%	1.1%	83.5%	51.0%	Nurul Izzah Anwar (PR-PKR)
Bandar Tun Razak	Kamarudin Jaffar (PH-PKR)	58.6%	28.4%	Adnan Seman (BN-UMNO) Rosni Adam (GS-PAS)	30.2% 11.2%	1.4%	85.1%	56.4%	Khalid Ibrahim (PR-PKR)
Putrajaya	Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (BN-UMNO)	48.8%	13.6%	Samsu Adabi (PH-PPBM) Zainal Abidin (GS-PAS)	35.2% 14.6%	1.3%	91.1%	69.0%	Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (BN-UMNO)

*Data is tabulated from the official results released by the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia. For Kuala Lumpur, see Attorney General's Chambers (2018a). For Putrajaya, see Attorney General's Chambers (2018b). For 2013 results in Kuala Lumpur, see Attorney General's Chambers (2013a) and for Putrajaya, see Attorney General's Chambers (2013b).

PKR expectedly retained Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak, but with only marginal increments. The more intriguing outcome was, in fact, that PAS's candidates—all politically inexperienced—split the vote with their relatively experienced counterparts from Gerakan (Dominic Lau, Batu), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA, Yeow Teng Look, Wangsa Maju) and UMNO (Adnan Seman, Bandar Tun Razak) (see Table 6.2).

As noted in Table 6.2, apart from Putrajaya, all of the seats under discussion in this chapter are ethnically mixed, but with significant Malay populations. The obvious importance of the Malay vote meant that three-cornered contests between a combination of Malay parties (PAS, UMNO, Bersatu), Malay candidates (PKR—Nik Nazmi, Fahmi), non-Malay candidates with Malay nationalist allies (Gerakan, MCA, PKR-Tan Yee Kew) and the appearance of an alliance between UMNO and PAS would be significant to the election outcome. These dynamics were unprecedented in KL. Competition for the Malay vote inevitably led to the emergence of contestations between Malay political elites. This chapter shall discuss four manifestations of intra-Malay elite feuding in these seven seats.

First, the outcomes in Putrajaya, Lembah Pantai and Setiawangsa reflect the existence of a contest between Najib, Mahathir and PAS for the civil service vote. Second, intra-party contestations between warlords, candidates and party leaders within UMNO in Lembah Pantai, and to a lesser extent Setiawangsa, not only undermined the electoral chances of BN candidates but enabled PH candidates to expand the reach of their campaigns. Third, the apprehension among PAS's supporters towards the notion of an UMNO–PAS alliance drove a significant number of them to Bersatu in Titiwangsa. Finally, PAS candidates in Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak positioned themselves as the anti-BN ethno-nationalist party to win unprecedented proportions—between 25% and 50%—of BN's ethno-nationalist Malay core. The culmination of these rivalries, particularly the first three, were instrumental in enabling PH to win the swing seats of Lembah Pantai, Setiawangsa and Titiwangsa. At the same time, they also caused BN to severely underperform in Putrajaya. That PAS managed to gain traction in seats where it historically had a negligible presence is also an important development. These analyses are a product of a mixed-methods approach:

Table 6.2 Ethnic composition of seats

Seat	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*
Batu	42.5%	38.3%	17.5%	1.6%
Wangsa Maju	59.8%	29.6%	8.2%	2.4%
Setiawangsa	61.1%	25.9%	10.4%	1.9%
Titiwangsa	70.5%	17.3%	9.4%	2.8%
Lembah Pantai	62.1%	18.9%	16.2%	2.7%
Bandar Tun Razak	61.1%	29.1%	8.3%	1.1%
Putrajaya	94.1%	0.9%	3.2%	1.8%

Source: *The Star* 9 May 2018

in-depth interviews with the candidates, members of campaign teams and voters; an evaluation of voting data in the various polling stations across the different constituencies; and a content analysis of secondary sources such as newspapers, opinion pieces and academic articles. The next sections provide a discussion of each of the forms of intra-Malay elite feuding and conclude by suggesting that PH should treat its victory with cautious optimism.

The Najib-Mahathir-PAS contest for the civil service

Members of BN and PH estimate that, depending on the constituency, 70% to 90% of Malaysia's 1.6 million civil servants have traditionally voted for BN.[1] As such, the methods employed by BN to ensure that these civil servants remained firmly with them did not deviate significantly from its previous strategies. BN's campaign for the support of the civil service entailed four strategies that significantly relied on Najib's role as Prime Minister. First, Najib used the tried and tested strategy of patronage. In the lead up to GE14, he used the annual budget announcement to promise a slew of benefits for civil servants: an RM1,500 one-off bonus, promotions for support staff, full benefits for those forced into early retirement by health problems, 360 days of maternity leave and in-house post-graduate programmes (*Channel News Asia* 19 November 2017). Shortly before Parliament was dissolved, Najib promised to set aside close to RM1.5 billion for salary increments to civil servants if BN retained power (*Today* 4 April 2018).

Election results from 2008 and 2013 demonstrated that extensive use of patronage had the effect of securing the civil service vote even as Pakatan Rakyat (PR) gained significant ground with non-civil servants. Indeed, civil servants voted *en masse* for BN candidates in both elections in Lembah Pantai, Setiawangsa and Putrajaya. Thus, Najib believed that even if the political mood among the rest of the electorate was moving against him, patronage would effectively insulate civil servants from these shifts.

Second, Najib used his influence over the Election Commission to re-apportion both Setiawangsa and Lembah Pantai and to increase the electoral weightage of military and police voters—groups whose loyalties he believed he had secured through patronage. After the 2018 redelineation exercise, 1,243 civilian voters were removed from Setiawangsa (*The Star* 29 March 2018) to increase the electoral significance of the 15,000 or so military voters (see Table 6.3). Additionally, 6,635 police voters from Segambut's Bukit Aman station were shifted to Lembah Pantai to join the constituency's existing police voters at the Jalan Travers station. Nearly 7,000 residents who voted there in GE13, generally for PKR (*Malaysiakini* 11 June 2018), were shifted to other constituencies to make way for the police voters. Clearly, Najib's objective was to win both seats on the back of military and police personnel. Indeed, Table 6.3 shows that in GE13, nearly 80% of military voters and between 90% to 95% of police voters had supported BN candidates.

Third, Najib placed candidates who he believed possessed considerable influence over civil servants in each of the seats. Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor

Table 6.3 Election outcomes among civil service voters only*

Seat	*Majority (Civil Servants)*	*Votes*	*Opponent(s)*	*Votes*	*BN's Share in GE13*	*Estimated Civil Service Population*	*Seat Winner*	*Other Notes*
Setiawangsa	Zulhasnan Rafique (BN-UMNO)	58.9%	Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (PH-PKR) Ubaid Abdul Akla (GS-PAS)	23.8% 17.4%	79.4%	15,667	Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (PH-PKR)	BN's share was 87% in GE12
Lembah Pantai	Raja Nong Chik (BN-UMNO)	81.8%	Fahmi Fadzil (PH-PKR) Fauzi Abu Bakar (GS-PAS)	10.6% 6.4%	90% to 95%	8,157	Fahmi Fadzil (PH-PKR)	Turn out among police voters was 5% less than the national average. Over 6,000 police voters cast their ballot in Segambut in GE13
Putrajaya	Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (BN-UMNO)	48.8%	Samsu Adabi (PH-PPBM) Zainal Abidin (GS-PAS)	35.2% 14.6%	69.0%	24,558	Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (BN-UMNO)	NIL

*I obtained the 2013 and 2018 results of civil service voters in Lembah Pantai and Setiawangsa from members of the PKR campaign teams in the two constituencies. Since Putrajaya is a civil servants' constituency, the civil service vote is approximately the same as the eventual outcome for the seat. For the 2013 outcome in Putrajaya, see Attorney General's Chambers (2013b) and for 2018, see Attorney General's Chambers (2018b)

(Putrajaya), Zulhasnan Rafique (Setiawangsa) and Raja Nong Chik (Lembah Pantai) had served as the Federal Territories Minister at different junctures of their careers. To Najib, their tenures as a Minister would have given these three candidates significant exposure to the civil servants under their charge while also ensuring that they could access and draw upon resources from the ministry should they need it. Indeed, the latter is a common feature of Malaysian politics (Welsh 2013).

Given that Tengku Adnan was the incumbent Minister, he was likely to have been strategically located to exploit the resources at the ministry's disposal to secure Putrajaya and to assist Zulhasnan and Nong Chik with campaign financing. Importantly, voters in Putrajaya perceived Tengku Adnan to be a popular figure because he worked hard and spoke with his constituents regularly to understand and address their concerns.[2] In Setiawangsa, the BN candidate Zulhasnan had stellar credentials, having been a former Air Force Major, a former Ambassador to the United States and a former MP for the seat (*The Edge Malaysia* 4 May 2018). To Najib, his credentials were significant because they would have, theoretically, ensured he could secure the military vote. Indeed, when Zulhasnan ran in Setiawangsa in 2008, he won 87% of the military vote.[3] Similarly, Nong Chik won 90% of the police vote in Lembah Pantai in GE13.[4] Finally, BN Ministers exploited the politics of fear by issuing statements that effectively warned civil servants that they risked losing their jobs if they participated in opposition politics (*The Malaysian Insight* 23 January 2018).

Quite clearly, Najib's methods proved underwhelming. Table 6.3 shows that BN failed to amass voters it historically secured in Setiawangsa, Lembah Pantai and Putrajaya, the latter being a constituency for civil servants (Moser 2010). BN's share of the vote declined by between 10% and 15% in Lembah Pantai and by roughly 22% in both Setiawangsa and Putrajaya. Tengku Adnan retained Putrajaya in what was his worst showing to date. The added surprise was his failure to get over 50% of the popular vote. Though Raja Nong Chik fared better than his BN colleagues among civil servants, the turnout among police voters was 5% less than the national average (*Malaysiakini* 11 June 2018).

Here, a comment from a PAS official from the party's Federal Territories division is worth noting. He characterized the outcome of GE14 as a product of a nationwide "tsunami *jatuhkan* (oust) Najib," adding that "even if the opposition placed a chair against the BN candidate, the chair would win."[5] Hyperbole aside, nationwide resentment against Najib was clearly salient among a minority of civil servants. For this reason, PH's campaign for civil servants centred around dramatizing the juxtaposition between Mahathir's 22-year reign as Prime Minister with Najib's. Interviews with civil servants who voted for the PH candidates revealed that their decision-making reflected their internalization of the coalition's Mahathir-centric discourse. A retired diplomat voting in Putrajaya described Mahathir as being responsible for "reducing poverty, building infrastructure, launching the national car and defending Third World countries."[6] A colonel with the Malaysian armed forced voting in Setiawangsa made a similar point when he stated that Mahathir made him proud of being Malaysian "because

his various achievements made the country a respectable one internationally."[7] Importantly, they relied on the failures of Najib's leadership to articulate their memories of Mahathir's tenure as Prime Minister. Claims such as "Najib has only made Malaysia a Kleptocracy"[8] or "Najib has only made Malaysia famous for scams, like 1MDB, Altantuya, and the submarines"[9] were the prism through which they understood Mahathir's past achievements.

Notably, they were also either willing to ignore or downplay the numerous corruption scandals that peppered Mahathir's reign. Even when criticizing policies such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), civil servants who voted PH would focus blame on Najib for having made their expenses costlier.[10] Another retired civil servant also suggested that Najib may have introduced GST in order to bail 1MDB out of its debts.[11] Another interview revealed that an entire contingent of military drivers would be voting against BN because they could not cope with rising costs, irrespective of government handouts.[12] Even UMNO members who voted for Tengku Adnan did so more out of allegiance to the historical significance of their party rather than loyalty to the party's leadership. One such member recognized Najib's leadership "violated the spirit of the party by permitting personal interests to override the country's interests."[13] Across the political divide, voting decisions were driven by grievance with Najib's leadership and not for a nostalgic longing for Mahathir *per se*.

In other words, Mahathir was far from a causal factor in shifting the voting patterns of civil servants. Even after Mahathir took multiple steps to co-opt the civil service—telling them not to fear voting for the opposition (*The Star* 11 April 2018), reminding high ranking officials to ensure that those under their charge are at liberty to vote freely (*Channel News Asia* 2 May 2018) and leading a mega-*ceramah* with 10, 000 attendees in Putrajaya shortly before the early voting day (*The Sun Daily* 4 May 2018)—PH still did not manage to get more than 35% of the civil service vote. In both Setiawangsa and Lembah Pantai, PKR fielded two popular candidates, Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad and Fahmi Fadzil. Over the last decade, Nik Nazmi had established himself as a prominent state assemblyman and PKR Youth chief. Fahmi's popularity had grown substantially in Lembah Pantai after it became apparent that he may replace Nurul Izzah Anwar as the seat's candidate. Though they won their seats, their respective support from civil servant voters was unremarkable. In Lembah Pantai, Fahmi only received 10% of the police vote (see Table 6.3). It is notable that in Putrajaya, Bersatu candidate Samsu Adabi Mamat significantly outperformed his coalition partners among civil servants even though he was a political novice. Many who voted for Samsu did so without knowing his name, let alone his political credentials.[14]

Of imporance, the swing in the civil service was rendered possible because of PAS's participation in the three seats, *even though* it did not have a concerted strategy to co-opt civil servants into its electoral fold. For one, each of PAS's three candidates—Zainal Abidin Kidam (Putrajaya), Ubaid Abdul Akla (Setiawangsa) and Fauzi Abu Bakar (Lembah Pantai)—were politically unknown figures. Second, PAS's primary message to civil servants was a promise that "if the PAS formed government, they would not punish civil servants who had previously

persecuted PAS members and supporters on the government's behest."[15] Quite clearly, this was not a party that took its chances with civil servants seriously. Yet, it was able to sharply split the opposition civil service vote with PH. This trend is crucial to note. Although civil servants who voted for PH candidates perceived Mahathir as an answer to their resentment of Najib, the opposition vote was far from homogeneous. Indeed, PAS's share of the vote indicates that a smaller but nonetheless significant segment of civil servants did not perceive either BN or PH as palatable options.

A civil servant who voted for PH stated that whereas in the past he would never have voted against BN because he was distrustful of opposition figures such as Lim Kit Siang, he was happy to cast his ballot for PH now because of Mahathir's association with the coalition.[16] Yet, the fact that many still chose PAS implies that, at minimum, they were apprehensive of Bersatu's partnership with a non-Malay party that openly refused to play second fiddle in Malaysia's racially hierarchical consociational system of politics. Consequently, the fact that PAS was "unshackled" by its exit from PR likely enabled it to consolidate support among a small group of civil servants who found PAS to be the only viable outlet through which they could express their resentment against Najib. This also implies that neither BN nor PH would have benefited significantly if PAS had not run in these seats as there was little to guarantee that PAS's vote share would be transferrable to either coalition. In other words, even though PAS performed worst in each seat, this suggests that the fullest electoral expression of resentment against Najib was only made possible *because* it turned them into three-cornered contests.

UMNO's intra-party rivalries: Lembah Pantai and Setiawangsa

Intra-party contestations between warlords, candidates and party leaders in UMNO in Lembah Pantai and to a lesser extent, Setiawangsa, not only undermined BN's electoral chances but enabled PH candidates to expand the reach of their campaigns. Notably, PH election teams were surprised to receive unprecedented access to parts of constituencies colloquially known as "black areas," or residential spaces seen as BN strongholds. Traditionally, opposition parties and candidates have been physically denied access to these spaces by BN division chiefs (warlords) and members. In this election, however, PH candidates reported finding no barriers to entering, campaigning and conducting rallies in these areas.

> Last time, it was impossible to go in there. If we tried, we would get chased out. There have even been cases of our guys being chased out by people carrying *parangs* (machetes). So, if you had told me that I can go in without any problems I would tell you you're crazy. But it is completely different now, seriously. Nobody gives us any problem. The turnout is still low. Maybe people are still scared. But if we can go in, that already tells you something.[17]

BN leaders often had to curry favour with their warlords in each constituency and seek their blessings first before conducting a walkabout, a rally or even selecting people as election candidates. To make clear the clout these individuals possess, one UMNO said that in the lead-up to GE14, some warlords had forced senior party leaders to select certain candidates who were not even up for consideration in the first place.[18] Little could happen within a constituency without the consent of a warlord. If BN warlords can be hostile towards their own party leaders, then it is hardly surprising that, if the need arises, they may threaten the opposition with violence. Yet, the fact that the opposite occurred—PH campaign teams entering "black areas" *without* facing resistance—implies BN warlords were effectively permitting them to do so. At the same time, Fahmi and Nik Nazmi both stated that in many campaign walkabouts and rallies, people identifying themselves as BN members would approach them and whisper to them that they would be voting PH instead of BN.[19]

The implications of this were profound. The fact that Fahmi's margin of victory was nearly five-times larger than Nurul Izzah's indicates that support among BN had been dwindling within its stronghold areas. Fahmi was already guaranteed to dwarf Nong Chik's performance in Lembah Pantai's urban cosmopolitan polling stations of Bangsar. However, the more important contest for the seat lay in the low-income housing areas of Pantai Dalam, where BN warlords supposedly exercised greater influence relative to urban districts. Yet, their unwillingness to limit PH's "ground game" (i.e., walkabouts and house visits) in these areas enabled Fahmi to expand his campaign's outreach efforts. This was pivotal because Fahmi himself noted that in these areas, a well-executed "ground game" was a far more effective method of voter mobilization relative to online tactics (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp).[20] He ended up outperforming Nurul Izzah[21] in most of the low-income voting districts by a few percentage points.[22] A similar voting pattern occurred in Setiawangsa as well.[23]

To make sense of how and why this happened, it is important to understand the political contexts that warlords need to navigate. Warlords and their allies occupy positions of strategic importance to party leaders. This gives them access to various rewards—direct cash payments, favourable business opportunities or a combination of both (Fernandez, Tong, Usha Devi, Wong, and Gomez 2010). At the same time, they operate in an environment of intra-political rivalry—among warlords, with candidates and with the party's leadership, each competing to further their respective political and financial positions within the party (Case 2005; Gomez 2016). Their grassroots presence also renders them advantageously located to sense the shifting political mood of voters away from BN. Although it would be unsurprising if many underestimated the extent to which people across the political divide were frustrated with the Najib administration, many were cognizant that his rhetoric did not resonate with the living experiences of Malaysians. Numerous UMNO members acknowledged Najib's leadership to be problematic for BN's sustainability as the dominant coalition.[24] One member openly stated that BN would "better off without Najib."[25] There were reports of many members defecting to PH component parties.[26] The fact that

some UMNO members filed a court case to declare the party illegal for delaying party elections (*Free Malaysia Today* 20 April 2018; *The Edge Malaysia* 1 May 2018), implied the internal anti-Najib sentiment to have been widespread.

This context is crucial to understanding various acts of dissension within the BN grassroots—from enabling PH campaigns to enter "black areas," to secretly telling PH candidates of their intention to vote for them. These allude to the prevalence of a risky scheme among some of the grassroots members to oust Najib *after* the election more so than catalyze a loss for BN. If BN won the election with a reduced parliamentary majority, as was the expectation among some grassroots members,[27] then they would have sufficient reason to force Najib to resign, as was the case with Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2009. Indeed, the fact that senior UMNO leaders have openly denounced Najib since GE14 (*Channel News Asia* 15 May 2018) underscores a willingness at various levels of the party to make a move against him.

Sabotaging the campaigns of individual candidates was thus a sacrificial move to forego some seats in order to undermine Najib's grip on the coalition. It is unlikely that Najib was aware of the internal plots against his leadership. A former confidante of Najib's stated that his advisors kept him insulated from political currents—factionalism in the party, nationwide resentment against 1MDB and the cost of living, etc.—which threatened his legitimacy.[28] An UMNO member similarly claimed that Najib's advisors kept him in a bubble that rendered him out-of-touch with the sociopolitical realities of party politics and the electorate.[29] These statements suggest that Najib either underestimated the extent of dissension against him, or at worst, that he was oblivious to these dynamics.

Although the anti-Najib position was likely to have been a dominant opinion shared by many in the grassroots, it was not hegemonic. In some cases, campaign decisions were also made that reflected Najib's personal interests—even if it would be detrimental to the electoral chances of specific BN candidates. A clear example of this occurred in Lembah Pantai two nights prior to polling day. On the evening of 7 May, BN facilitated a *ceramah* in which Arul Kanda, the then Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), delivered a speech to "clear the misconception" that the company was wrecked by billions of ringgit worth of fraudulent activities.[30] The *ceramah* was held at Taman Lucky in Bangsar, an affluent district where Nurul Izzah won between 60% and 75% of the vote in the different polling stations in GE13.[31] Throughout the event, attendees heckled Arul, challenged most of the arguments he made and criticized him for speaking on a BN platform even though he claimed to be independent of the coalition. Multiple news organizations recorded the full event and segments in which Arul received stiff criticism went viral online (*Malaysiakini* 7 May 2018), rendering the spectacle open to scrutiny nationwide.

Although Arul has separately labelled his nationwide tour a success (*Bernama* 8 May 2018), he received no such fanfare in Bangsar. Educated urban voters tend to be politically informed and discerning. Most had an unfavourable opinion of 1MDB, Arul, Nong Chik and BN.[32] It was inevitable that they would treat the 1MDB *ceramah* as little more than a propagandistic attempt to obscure

the veracity of the allegations against 1MDB and Najib—to confuse, rather than clarify. It is difficult to imagine that BN members who approved the event were unaware that voters in Bangsar would be hostile to the 1MDB *ceramah*. Given that the event was going to receive significant media attention, it is also unlikely that they were aware of the possibility that it would gain traction online. In spite of the risks, BN went ahead with the event.

The fact that Nong Chik did not attend the *ceramah* even though a nationally recognized figure was leading it implies that he was aware how voters in Bangsar would react to the event. He did not want to give voters an opportunity to berate him. Nor did he did want to be associated with the 1MDB *ceramah*. There is little doubt that Najib would have supported the "1MDB *ceramahs*" because he had been the focal point of the corruption allegations. Yet, Nong Chik's apathy towards this event underscores the notion that although he may not have wanted the event to run—particularly just before polling day—it is clear that his local interests were trumped by Najib's personal interests. BN members who went ahead with the "1MDB *ceramah*" may not have intended malice against Nong Chik. They may have acted out of loyalty to Najib and were compelled by leaders above them. The execution of the "1MDB *ceramah*" demonstrates the prioritization of Najib's personal interests relative to Nong Chik's, to the latter's detriment. It is no coincidence, then, that Fahmi won between 75% and 80% of the vote in the urban polling stations[33]—a marked increase from Nurul Izzah's 2013 performance.

To fully appreciate the significance of internal rivalries and competing interests in diminishing BN's electoral chances, it is important to understand the weaknesses of PH's campaign. This will support the argument that the election outcome in the Federal Territories was fundamentally a protest vote against BN, rather than an enthusiastic endorsement of PH. For instance, Nik Nazmi's campaign in Setiawangsa was almost exclusively reliant on his partnership with Invoke Malaysia, a non-governmental organisation led by then PKR Vice-President Rafizi Ramli. He made full use of Invoke's resources—voter data compiled through extensive phone surveys and social media strategists—to identify, approach and win over potential fence sitters.[34] At the same time, however, his campaign lacked the concerted inter-party coordination that was a feature of the PR coalition in GE13 (Weiss 2013). Instead, Nik Nazmi's campaign was primarily driven through the Rafizi faction of PKR. He did not appear to receive concrete support from factions of PKR unaffiliated with Rafizi. Since Setiawangsa was a swing seat with both a sizeable civil service presence and a population that is 60% Malay, the efficacy of his campaign would have been boosted with cooperation from Bersatu. It is also worth noting that barring the eve of election day, many of the *ceramahs* he hosted attracted only a handful of attendees. One such rally I went to had an audience size of no more than ten people.

Relative to this, Fahmi's campaign in Lembah Pantai was better coordinated. His team had members of Bersatu, including Tariq Ismail, the grandson of former Deputy Prime Minister Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, former UMNO members and even a Singaporean. Former Minister for International Trade and Industry Rafidah

Aziz campaigned for Fahmi, both at a *ceramah* and during visits to low-income residential areas. He was perhaps given greater support because PH fancied its chances of winning in Lembah Pantai relative to the other swing seats. It also helped that he was unwilling to openly pick sides in PKR's intra-party disputes.[35]

Even then, his campaign faced logistical constraints. On one occasion, he was unable to make a scheduled walkabout with Rafidah because she had delayed proceedings by spending too much time in a different voting district. On the eve of the election, Rafizi failed to make a scheduled stop at Fahmi's *ceramah* despite being advertised as the event's headliner. More significantly, Nong Chik's resources far outweighed Fahmi's. During the campaign, Nong Chik's team conducted a petrol distribution drive to incentivize low-income residents to vote for him.[36] Tactics akin to this were commonplace in UMNO campaigns.

BN also put up signposts in low-income housing districts to explicitly take credit for urban redevelopment initiatives conducted by the Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (Kuala Lumpur City Hall, DBKL), a civil service organisation administered under the Ministry of Federal Territories. Similar signs taking credit for infrastructural redevelopment projects were put up across KL. The underlying logic was to impress upon voters that since BN was ultimately responsible for these projects, their allegiance should not waver.

Fahmi was unable to execute a similar strategy because of a resource mismatch even though PKR was the incumbent party for the seat. Thus, while Fahmi generally outperformed Nurul Izzah in most low-income districts, in six areas he still only received between 38% and 42% of the vote. Collectively then, it is clear that PH's campaign was marked by a mix of inter-party contestation, logistical constraints and resource limitations. These factors underscore the notion that PH's wins in KL were more a function of BN's own internal afflictions than PH's ingenuity.

Titiwangsa: PAS loses Malay base to Bersatu

Apprehension among PAS's supporters of the notion of an UMNO–PAS alliance drove many of them to Bersatu in Titiwangsa. In GE12 and GE13, PAS contested in Titiwangsa under the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) umbrella, winning with a slim majority in 2008 only to lose marginally in 2013 (Choong 2014). Undoubtedly, a significant number of those who voted for PAS, particularly the non-Malays, did so because it was allied with DAP and PKR. Also significant, barring 1990, PAS had contested every election in Titiwangsa since the constituency was created in 1986, with its share of the vote increasing in each election. PAS's two-decade presence in Titiwangsa suggested that it had managed to cultivate a significant support base.

Here, PAS's 2004 election performance in Titiwangsa is instructive. That contest was not only BN's best nationwide showing in 26 years, it was also one where PAS was part of the highly dysfunctional coalition, Barisan Alternatif (BA) (Gomez 2006). Confronted with these challenges, PAS received 32.6% of the vote (Lee 2008). Given that PAS was ineffective in mobilizing cross-racial

support prior to 2008 (Saravanamuttu 2008), its 2004 performance suggests that it had traction among half of the constituency's Malay voters.

With reference to Table 6.4, PAS only received 13.6% of the vote in GE14, indicating a substantial loss of support among the Malay base. Since Titiwangsa was a competition among three ethno-nationalist Malay parties, the contest over the Malay vote was of fundamental importance. While Bersatu won the seat, the fact that non-Malays, as indicated in Table 6.5, comprised slightly under 30% of the electorate meant that it needed to mobilize significant support among Malay voters too. It is therefore very likely that it benefited from the fact that PAS lost all but negligible numbers of non-Malay supporters and nearly 20% of the Malay vote. Bersatu will have undoubtedly co-opted Malay voters from BN too. Bersatu's presence in this seat would have presented some Malay voters, who traditionally opted for UMNO, with an alternative option. Given that Johari received slightly above 50% of the vote in GE13, his loss of the Malay vote is likely to have been half of PAS's losses.

However, Johari was a popular figure—particularly among low-income voters (*The Malay Mail* 27 April 2018). Thus, like Tengku Adnan in Putrajaya, he was likely a victim, not so much of a swing in the Malay vote against him, but of a nationwide anti-BN and anti-Najib political climate. The more compelling inquiry would therefore concern how and why a significant swing away from PAS voters to Bersatu was possible. Rina Harun noted:

> Over the last few days, we have been going around different neighbourhoods, talking to people and trying to get their support. We actually spoke to quite a few PAS supporters. They told us that they are unhappy and will be voting for me instead. Maybe, they realize that if they want to get rid of Johari they need to vote for me. So, we are quite confident.[37]

Her interactions with PAS supporters reveal the latter's intention show their dissent of their leaders' decision to align with UMNO. The rationale suggested in Rina's comment is grounded in pragmatism. These voters appeared to have realized that if they wanted to oust BN, it was expedient to vote tactically and opt for Rina rather than the PAS candidate because he would have little chance of winning the seat anyway. In other words, the drive to force BN out of Titiwangsa superseded the need for party loyalty.

At the same time, however, the significance of political pragmatism in decision-making by PAS voters should not be overestimated. The PAS brand of Islamism has cultivated an ethos among supporters that effectively equates a vote for PAS as a vote for God's will, with the party's interpretation of the Quran and the Hadith deemed to contain solutions to every political problem (Müller 2014). Loyalty to PAS was therefore loyalty to God. For this reason, two UMNO grassroots members refused to dismiss the possibility that PAS could gain significant ground in some seats in KL.

> Have you met a PAS supporter before? Those guys literally think they are doing the work of God. Voting for PAS is like voting for God. They are hard

Table 6.4 Election outcome in Titiwangsa*

Seat	*Winner*	*Votes*	*Majority*	*Opponents*	*Votes*	*Spoilt*	*Turnout*	*Incumbent's Vote Share in GE13*	*Incumbent*
Titiwangsa	Rina Harun (PH-PPBM)	46.9%	8.1%	Johari Abdul Ghani (BN-UMNO) Mohammed Noor (GS-PAS)	38.7% 13.5%	0.9%	82.6%	50.6%	Johari Abdul Ghani (BN-UMNO)

*Data is tabulated from the official results released by the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia. For Kuala Lumpur, see Attorney General's Chambers (2018a). For 2013 results, see Attorney General's Chambers (2013a).

Table 6.5 Ethnic breakdown in Titiwangsa

Seat	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Notes*
Titiwangsa	70.5%	17.3%	9.4%	2.8%	Rina Harun's candidacy was controversial because she was fielded even though Wan Saiful Wan Jan was expected to contest the seat.

Source: *The Star* 9 May 2018

> to break. If you meet one you will know what I mean. They will do anything for their party. It would be a mistake to write them off.[38]

The fact that PAS suffered its worst outcome in Titiwangsa since the 1995 election suggests that many PAS supporters switched their support to PH, raising the need to interrogate the implications of the election pact between Najib and PAS leader Hadi Awang. Indeed, rumours of this pact were widespread in Malaysian political discourses (*Malaysiakini* 25 August 2017). Although a formal alliance did not materialize, both leaders sought to send signals to their supporters urging them not to jeopardize the chances of either party (Chin 2017). However, the very idea of such a pact, no matter how informal or superficial, did not appear to have sat well with PAS supporters. UMNO and PAS have been mutually hostile for decades. Historically, PAS has framed UMNO candidates as un-Islamic (Liow 2004a, 2004b), with Hadi himself labelling UMNO a party for *kafirs* (unbelievers) (Noor 2014). By aligning PAS with BN, it suggested that Hadi condoned allying with those he once denounced as *kafirs*. This effectively eroded PAS's political legitimacy, grounded as it was on the notion that the party is *the* champion of Islam. Importantly, a senior official in the PAS Federal Territories division noted that many party supporters who swung to Bersatu were under the impression that the party would formally join BN after the election.[39] Though he attributed the prevalence of such sentiments to PH's propaganda, PAS's attempts to address them were ambiguous at best.

Indeed, in one *ceramah* held in Titiwangsa, Hadi insisted that PAS would be open to cooperating with any party that implemented a model of governance underpinned by Islamic principles. Hadi did not dismiss the possibility of working with BN. However, he also stated that this would only come to fruition if BN shifted ideologically towards PAS's vision of Islamism. That Hadi felt compelled to make these statements *only* in Titiwangsa implies that he was concerned that the idea of an UMNO–PAS pact would lose the party much support in that seat. If this was truly a non-factor, he would have had little reason to raise the issue at all.

Also interesting, Rina's campaign strategy lacked coherence. She did not have an organized social media campaign that provided timely updates on where she would be speaking, which districts she would be visiting and how voters could reach her. In the last two elections, opposition leaders had relied heavily on social media to circulate campaign information, because they lacked access to traditional media platforms (Choong 2014). There was also significant disagreement within Bersatu over the decision to field Rina in Titiwangsa. Since Wan Saiful Wan Jan was supposed to contest in Titiwangsa, his omission was met with "shock" by party insiders (*Malaysiakini* 10 April 2018). These trends indicate that members of her own party perceived Rina to be a weak candidate. Indeed, some believed that she would be incapable of wresting Titiwangsa from Johari. In this context, rather than making deft tactical moves to win the seat, Rina is more likely to have won on the back of PAS's support.

Losing Malays to PAS in Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak

As Table 6.8 indicates, Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak are ethnically-mixed constituencies, with Malays forming a relative majority in each seat. BN had generally fielded non-Malay candidates in each of these seats through either Gerakan or MCA, although UMNO occasionally contested in Wangsa Maju. In this election, as noted in Table 6.6, UMNO ran again in Bandar Tun Razak. Given that PH-component parties won substantial Chinese votes nationwide in GE12 and GE13 (Lee 2014), the ethnic proportions were recalibrated to reduce the national weightage of Chinese voters and increase the significance of Malay voters, thus favouring BN candidates.

Following GE14, BN, PH and PAS members estimate that PH won nearly 95% of the Chinese vote nationwide.[40] PH's share of the Chinese vote would have likely reflected this national trend in the three seats. PKR would have received an important slice of the Malay vote too. Yet, the Malays here would have likely been predisposed towards a *reformasi*-inspired ideology, rendering them partisan towards PKR. They would have thus cast their votes with little interest or concern for racial politics. On the whole, however, the vote share of each PKR candidate only increased by about 2% (see Table 6.6).

Yet, as Table 6.7 indicates, BN's share dipped by 11%, to 20.8% in these seats. Not only did the increase in Malay voters fail to help BN consolidate ground, the ethnic recalibration was likely to have backfired on BN because of PAS's decision to contest in these seats. Indeed, with the Chinese vote a moot point, the only explanation for BN's underwhelming performance is that the Malay vote was split sharply between BN and PAS. Indeed, after PAS left PR, its ability to mobilize cross-racial support, including that of the Indians, would have dwindled considerably. PAS estimates to have received no more than 2% of the non-Malay vote this election.[41]

Since PAS and BN (through UMNO) practice contesting variants of ethno-nationalism, Malays who voted for either party would, at the very least, be sympathetic towards the notion that Malays should sit atop the sociopolitical hierarchy. In other words, the political dispositions and interests of these voters are distinct from Malays who opted for PKR. More clearly, BN and PAS were competing for the ethno-nationally conscious Malays in Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak. Apart from Titiwangsa, these were the only seats that had a noticeable split in the ethno-nationalist vote. PAS did not possess significant support in any of these seats prior to GE14. It had never contested in Wangsa Maju and last ran in Batu and Bandar Tun Razak in 1986 and 1995, respectively. Both outcomes were disastrous for PAS. Suffice it to say then that this time, PAS managed to carve out a support base among the ethno-nationalist Malay voters who were hitherto loyal to BN component parties because of their affiliation with UMNO. Four reasons explain this.

First, BN was plagued with factionalism in Wangsa Maju. In the lead up to nomination day, there was significant disagreement within UMNO over the

Table 6.6 Outcomes in Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak*

Seat	*Winner*	*Votes*	*Majority*	*Opponents*	*Votes*	*Spoilt*	*Turnout*	*Incumbent's Vote Share in GE13*	*Incumbent*
Batu	P. Prabakaran (IND)	59.9%	36.9%	Dominic Lau (BN-Gerakan) Azhar Yahya (GS-PAS) P. Muthusamy (IND)	21.5% 16.7% 0.6%	1.3%	83.3%	57.9%	Chua Tian Chang (PR-PKR)
Wangsa Maju	Tan Yee Kew (PH-PKR)	56.6%	32.5%	Yeow Teng Look (BN-MCA) Razali Tumirin (GS-PAS)	24.1% 18.1%	1.2%	84.2%	54.4%	Tan Kee Kwong (PR-PKR)
Bandar Tun Razak	Kamarudin Jaffar (PH-PKR)	58.6%	28.4%	Adnan Seman (BN-UMNO) Rosni Adam (GS-PAS)	30.2% 11.2%	1.4%	85.1%	56.4%	Khalid Ibrahim (PR-PKR)

*Data is tabulated from the official results released by the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia. For Kuala Lumpur, see Attorney General's Chambers (2018a). For 2013 results, see Attorney General's Chambers (2013a).

Table 6.7 Swing away from BN from GE13 to GE14*

Seat	*BN share GE13*	*BN share GE14*	*Swing*
Batu	39.4%	21.5%	17.9%
Wangsa Maju	44.9%	24.1%	20.8%
Bandar Tun Razak	41.2%	30.2%	11.0%

*Data has been tabulated by comparing election outcomes from GE13 and GE14. For 2013 results, see Attorney General's Chambers (2013a). For GE14, see Attorney General's Chambers (2018a).

decision to field MCA candidate Yeow Teng Look. After MCA insisted on fielding a candidate in Wangsa Maju (*The Sun Daily* 31 March 2018), the constituency's UMNO division chief Shafei Abdullah issued a statement that effectively claimed that MCA was a selfish coalition partner (*Free Malaysia Today* 20 March 2018). Table 6.8 shows that after Wangsa Maju was re-apportioned, there was a 7% increase in Malay voters with a corresponding 7% decrease in Chinese voters. UMNO likely believed it was strategically better placed to contest the seat. Although division leaders of both parties reconciled publicly and made a show of unity (*Metro News* 28 April 2018), it would be unsurprising if some UMNO grassroots members either became uncooperative during the election campaign or voted against the party. This would have inevitably diminished MCA's chances of winning a larger proportion of the increasingly important Malay vote, thus handing a significant advantage to PAS.

Second, in Bandar Tun Razak UMNO initially announced its division chief, Rizalman Mokhtar, as the seat's candidate. However, he made the blunder of getting caught in a drug raid on a night club (*Astro Awani* 26 April 2018). Although he denied having consumed drugs, UMNO promptly removed him and fielded the division's youth leader Adnan Seman (*Astro Awani* 26 April 2018). Like Wanga Maju, Bandar Tun Razak also saw an increase in the proportion of Malay voters (see Table 6.8), augmenting the importance of the candidate's and the party's image of religiosity. Adnan's political inexperience—he himself noted his surprise at being selected—coupled with the unceremonious circumstances around Rizalman's exit may have hurt both him and his party's credibility with the more religiously conscious members and voters. Again, PAS benefited from the debacle that trapped UMNO.

Third, PAS candidates Azhar Yahya (Batu), Razali Tumirin (Wangsa Maju) and Rosni Adam (Bandar Tun Razak) primarily campaigned on national issues, indicating their primary contenders to be BN. Azhar called for the need to oust BN because its leadership had become corrupt. Razali criticized BN's GST policy as unjust and offered an alternative taxation model based on *zakat*. Rosni promised

Table 6.8 Ethnic breakdown in Batu, Wangsa Maju and Bandar Tun Razak*

Seat	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Notes*
Batu	42.5%	38.3%	17.5%	1.6%	Shifts in ethnic composition since GE13 are negligible
Wangsa Maju	59.8%	29.6%	8.2%	2.4%	Since GE13, there has been a 7% increase in Malays and a 7% decrease in Chinese
Bandar Tun Razak	61.1%	29.1%	8.3%	1.1%	Since GE13, there has been an 8% increase in Malays and an 8% decrease in Chinese

Source: *The Star* 9 May 2018

* Shifts in ethnic composition are based on comparing data from *The Star* with the data provided by Tindak Malaysia (GE13 ethnic breakdown) (Tindak Malaysia 2018).

PAS would provide a waiver to those with outstanding loans to the Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (National Higher Education Fund Corporation, PTPTN) and also outlined plans based on Islamic principles to create a subsistence fund for housewives through their husbands' incomes. Their campaigns did not overtly challenge PH even though the incumbents were from PKR. In other words, they knew it was unlikely that they would win their contests, and so there was little to gain from attacking PH. Instead, they leveraged on the nationally salient anti-BN mood in order to frame themselves as viable alternatives to the ethno-nationalist Malay base who, though disgruntled by corruption and cost-of-living issues, would never vote for PH. Riding the anti-BN and anti-Najib wave also enabled the PAS candidates to compensate for the fact that they were severely underfunded relative to their party members in the northern and eastern states. Indeed, compared to BN and PH, PAS's banners, flags, tents and information booths were few and far between. It was common to find only one PAS flag amidst a sea of BN's and PH's. PAS's tents and booths were frequently unmanned as well.

Finally, using ideas inspired by Islam to propose practical policy measures was also tactically astute as it enabled the candidates to remind voters of their religious credentials *without* having to fall back on zealous rhetoric that the party has become notorious for. This sought to minimize the risk of pushing away Malay ethno-nationalists. Their decision to focus their campaigns as such was significant because PAS had historically done poorly among voters outside of the north and east precisely because it was perceived as religiously dogmatic (Hamid 2006). The culmination of these events allowed PAS to gain small but tangible ground in seats where it otherwise possessed a negligible presence. More significantly, rather than reflecting the UMNO–PAS pact, the outcome is indicative of an UMNO–PAS contest that culminated in PAS winning between 25% and 50% of the ethno-nationalist Malay base from BN.

Conclusion

Since 9 May 2018, members of the new government have insisted that their reform agenda and Mahathir's decision to steer the coalition were central to PH's election victory. Although they may certainly believe this to be true, this chapter demonstrates neither of these factors to have been pivotal. PH's victory was the culmination of a protest vote against Najib's premiership. Indeed, PAS also benefited from the dissatisfaction voters felt towards Najib in some seats.

The drive to oust Najib was pervasive across multiple segments of the electorate. The civil service had traditionally been beneficiaries of BN's rule. Every election, successive BN governments had distributed financial incentives to civil servants in order to maintain their loyalties. GE14 was no different. Yet, in Putrajaya, Setiawangsa and to a lesser extent, Lembah Pantai, civil service voters were sharply split between BN and either PH or PAS. The fact that those who voted against BN were similarly split between PH and PAS underscores the relative insignificance of PH's promise for reform and Mahathir's candidacy as Prime

Minister-designate. PAS's poor showing also elucidates that it possesses little traction among civil servants.

Beyond civil servants, UMNO warlords and candidates also appeared to be bounded in intra-party contestations, arguably driven by internal frustration with Najib's leadership. Consequently, PKR candidates Fahmi Fadzil (Lembah Pantai) and Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (Setiawangsa) were able to win their seats even though BN's campaign machinery significantly outmatched their own. At times, their campaigns lacked logistical coordination with their coalition partners. BN members and supporters also appeared motivated by internal discontent to vote against their party. In Titiwangsa, a similar dynamic of internal frustration led PAS to lose a significant number of Malay-Muslim supporters to Bersatu candidate Rina Harun. Rina's candidacy was unremarkable. Quite simply then, hers was a victory spearheaded more by PAS voters frustration with the party's apparent alliance with UMNO. Rina also benefited from the fact that UMNO candidate Johari Abdul Ghani was a victim of a general discontent towards Najib.

Significantly, PAS also gained from internal discontent within BN in Bandar Tun Razak, Wangsa Maju and Batu. There, the notion of a PAS–UMNO alliance did little to prevent voters from opting for PAS. Since PAS had little support in these seats, their gains here reflect their capacity to co-opt disillusioned ethno-nationalist BN voters. At the same time, their performance among non-Malays remains poor and their ability to win mixed urban seats will remain limited unless they enter into a credible multiracial coalition.

Each of these themes are anchored by the notion that BN's loss was the product of a protest vote—not support for PH or PAS *per se*. In retrospect, many BN leaders and members recognize Najib's leadership as foundational to their loss. Why then were no moves made to remove him before the election? A former Minister stated that their own research teams indicated BN would be returned to government quite comfortably. A former Deputy Minister hired independent researchers who came to a similar conclusion. Other members believed that, at worst, BN would lose some seats and the popular vote, but not enough to lose the election. At the same time, it is difficult to dismiss the possibility that many recognized that they stood to gain much by ensuring Najib remained in power. Their experience from GE13 would have shown them that Najib was a potent distributor of funds to his allies. Financially, it was only logical that they kept him in the leadership even as signals of protestation emerged. Clearly, this was a miscalculation. That said, it would be prudent for PH not to overestimate the importance of its manifesto and reform agenda in swinging the election. Indeed, for elections to come, it will need to construct a unifying symbol that moves beyond leveraging on the frustrations towards Najib—or else it will struggle to remain in government.

Notes

1 Interview with former UMNO youth exco, 14 July 2018. Interview with DAP member, 14 July 2018.

2 Interview with UMNO member in Putrajaya, 13 July 2018.
3 Results obtained from the PKR campaign team in Setiawangsa.
4 Results obtained from the PKR campaign team in Lembah Pantai.
5 Interview with PAS member, 16 July 2018.
6 Interview with retired diplomat in Putrajaya, 10 July 2018.
7 Interview with Colonel in Setiawangsa, 3 May 2018.
8 Interview with retired diplomat in Putrajaya, 10 July 2018.
9 Interview with Colonel in Setiawangsa, 3 May 2018.
10 Interview with civil service voter in Putrajaya, 16 July 2018.
11 Interview with retired senior civil servant in Putrajaya, 13 July 2018.
12 Interview with military personnel in Setiawangsa 3 May 2018.
13 Interview with UMNO member in Putrajaya, 13 July 2018.
14 Interview with retired senior civil servant in Putrajaya, 13 July 2018.
15 Interview with PAS member in Federal Territories, 14 June 2018.
16 Interview with a middle-management civil servant in Kuala Lumpur, 17 June 2018.
17 Interview with member of Fahmi Fadzil's campaign team, 14 April 2018.
18 Interview with UMNO member, 8 April 2018.
19 Interview with Fahmi Fadzil, 7 May 2018. Interview with Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, 5 May 2018.
20 Interview with Fahmi Fadzil, 7 May 2018.
21 Many low-income voters perceived Nurul Izzah as having been ineffectual in delivering redevelopment projects to their housing estates. So, it would be unsurprising if she performed worse had she sought to retain Lembah Pantai (interview with PKR member, 30 January 2018).
22 A comparison of the breakdown of the voting patterns in different polling stations in Lembah Pantai from 2013 and 2018 makes this clear. Access to this data was provided by the PKR campaign team.
23 Access to data comparing voting patterns across polling stations from 2013 to 2018 in Setiawangsa was provided by a member of that constituency's PKR campaign team.
24 Interviews with UMNO members, 9 May 2018.
25 Interview with UMNO members, 15 May 2018.
26 See, for example, *Borneo Today* 11 November 2016, *Free Asia News* 31 December 2016, *Malaysiakini* 23 September 2016; 10 August 2017; and 27 February 2018 and *The Star* 4 July 2016.
27 Interviews with UMNO members, 15 May 2018.
28 Interview with former advisor to Najib, 16 June 2018.
29 Interview with UMNO member, 15 May 2018.
30 This was one of Arul's final legs in his nationwide "1MDB *ceramah*" tour.
31 Access to this data was provided by the PKR campaign team in Lembah Pantai.
32 Interviews with attendees at the rally on 6 May 2018.
33 Access to this data was provided by the PKR campaign team in Lembah Pantai.
34 Interview with Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, 5 May 2018
35 Interview with member of Fahmi Fadzil's campaign team, 3 May 2018.
36 Interview with PKR member, 4 May 2018. Interviews with UMNO members, 15 May 2018.
37 Interview with Rina Harun, 5 May 2018.
38 Interviews with UMNO youth members, 8 May 2018.
39 Interview with senior member of PAS Federal Territories, 16 July 2018.
40 Interviews with senior MIC leaders, 4 October 2018. Interview with PAS member, 16 July 2018. Interviews with PH members, 23 October 2018
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7 Gambling on grievances
Melaka in GE14 and after

Amalina Anuar and Chan Xin Ying

Introduction

In the run-up to the Malaysian General Election 14 (GE14), Melaka received little attention or commentary from political pundits and observers. Many, including Melaka's Barisan Nasional (BN) administration led by Chief Minister Idris Haron, assumed that the state would not turn red, i.e., fall to Pakatan Harapan (PH). Likewise, though some in PH predicted they would make further inroads, they maintained that capturing Melaka remained unlikely. Significant swings in Malay votes, as predicted by Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) strategist Rafizi Ramli, were necessary for PH to win the state.[1] Even top PH leadership such as *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah) President Mat Sabu acknowledged that Malays in the southern industrialized states of Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Johor were difficult to change.

Yet Melaka did fall. With wins in four out of six parliament seats and 15 out of 28 state seats, PH clinched a narrow victory and captured the Seri Negeri Complex, the seat of the state government. This chapter aims to understand the factors that affected the emergence of this political change. In analysing the election results and the evolution of Melaka's electoral patterns, we examine how elite feuding catalyzed political opportunities—and conversely, risks—and facilitated a wave of political change. Specifically, we focus on the impact of these factors on Malay parties and the Malay vote, as discussed in the case studies.

Firstly, we postulate that intra-elite feuding translated into several "political opportunity structures" (POS) (Meyer 2004) or windows of opportunity for political change, although the ramifications of inter-party and intra-party elite (in)cohesiveness as well as intra-coalition and inter-coalition elite dynamics should arguably be distinguished. Intra-party rivalries translated into elite defections from then-incumbents BN. In turn, this created a smorgasbord of alternative Malay-based party options that could potentially split the Malay vote bloc and capture Malay votes from the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Elite-level defections from BN, which exacerbated inter-party elite competition, further delegitimized its rule in the public eye and shifted resources, such as election machinery, to PH. Additionally, intra-party and intra-coalition fractionalisation potentially affected campaign effectiveness. Ergo, the salience of whether, how and on what level this intra-elite competition explains Melaka's

election results is further explored, as not all entities can successfully capitalize on emergent POS (Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

Secondly and consequently, we analyze whether and how this wider range of political choices became the conduit for Malaysian society to express a constellation of grievances after assessing the incumbent's legitimacy and worthiness of support. In this sense, we examine voter frustrations at various levels of governance–individual, local, state and federal–as well as their inter-sectionality across generational, ethnic and urban–rural dimensions, where relevant. This includes patterns of economic voting (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Anderson and Roy 2011; Reidy, Suiter, and Breen 2018), where incumbents are punished or rewarded for economic performance, and ethnoreligious voting. Protest voting in Melaka's context, for example, casting ballots to oppose the incumbent, is also explored along with how political parties mobilized campaign strategies to capitalize on such issues and voting patterns.

In studying Melaka's Malaysian tsunami, the first section will examine the overall campaign trajectories prior to 9 May 2018. The second section focuses on the effects of intra-elite feuding and the aforementioned grievances, along with the concomitant themes, electoral issues and campaign strategies, on the election results before concluding.

GE14 campaign: strategies, machineries and election moods

PH and BN adopted different campaign approaches, reflecting the different challenges faced by both coalitions. PH focused more on federal issues such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the rising costs of living that the coalition also linked to local issues such as corruption, state-level tax hikes and high debt levels, which have been estimated at RM1 billion for Melaka.[2] The state's Chief Minister Idris Haron's refusal to disclose the amount of state debt, his denial of corruption as its cause and his inability to resolve rampant graft exacerbated grievances. Though some PH members dismissed the Melaka Gateway as a non-issue, other candidates used it in their campaigns among the Chinese community.[3] Overall, focusing on bread-and-butter issues constituted PH's main strategy. Protest voting also compounded economic voting as leaders seemed incapable and unwilling to tackle rampant corruption.

If PH's strength was issue targeting, its challenge was internal campaign coordination as its component parties were working together for the first time. Although manpower was shared within the coalition, there existed no central mechanism to facilitate campaigning activities. PKR state chief and candidate for Hang Tuah Jaya, Shamsul Iskandar, stated that the parliamentary constituency candidate would monitor and formulate campaign strategies, while the state candidate would assist during the campaigns.[4] Nevertheless, some observers such as ex-DAP member Sim Tong Him described PH's cooperation as uncoordinated as each component party was seen running the campaign individually. Attacks on

BN at the local level were not obvious either, which may be because of PH Melaka only expecting to make further inroads rather than capturing the state.[5]

Financial resource sharing was also absent in PH. The Bersatu candidate for Alor Gajah, Redzuan Yusof, indicated that each component party was coordinating their own financial resources. New parties like Bersatu and Amanah suffered from such arrangements compared to DAP and PKR, which had extensive networks. DAP held fundraising dinners in nearly every state. This could be contrasted with Redzuan from the Bersatu who had to resort to selling personal properties to raise campaign funds.[6]

Nonetheless, PH attempted to mask resource imbalance within the coalition. Extensive social media usage for cost-friendly campaigning was a prime example, as was the use of one logo.[7] This helped to reduce the chances of resentment towards one party for having a more significant presence than others.[8] Furthermore, PKR had a more centrist agenda compared to the other three parties. Hence, the adoption of the party's logo counterweighed the race-based agenda promoted by Bersatu, the Islamist politics of Amanah, and the strong ethnic Chinese presence in DAP.

Conversely, despite attacks on PH candidates and dismissing the *Buku Harapan* manifesto as unrealistic promises, BN did not have a clear strategy to counter the opposition. Certainly, BN had launched an aggressive and strategic campaign in some respects. Mahathir suffered the brunt of many attacks, being accused by UMNO of betraying the Malays, creating the foundations of Malaysia's present institutional decay under his dictatorship, and being two-faced for cooperating with Anwar, the very man he jailed two decades past. DAP too was BN's anti-Malay scapegoat. BN also systematically redesigned elements of the electoral architecture in its favour to hamper PH's campaign and chances of victory that included gerrymandering; passing the Anti-Fake News Bill; and banning the use of Mahathir's image in campaign material, aggravating protest voting.

For its part, BN's campaign was muted. It did not address the intensifying societal grievances that had been percolating for years before GE14. Allegations of corruption were often glossed over. BN also emphasized its track record in managing the economy as in previous elections, despite mounting dissatisfaction with rising costs of living and the handouts offered. Instead, it chose to put on offer the same fare as in previous elections despite knowing that its best election results were delivered on the back of promised reforms, as in GE11's landslide and Najib's initial popularity. This included dependency on ethnoreligious voting with its racialized campaign and inviting celebrities like Nora Danish to campaign,[9] as in Alor Gajah.

This partially stems from overconfidence. A mix of multi-cornered fights with a supposed tacit PAS–UMNO alliance, electoral manipulations and the initial silence of Malay voters lulled BN into a false sense of security. BN's campaign advisors relayed that the coalition was set to regain its two-thirds majority, with few expecting the loss of the southern industrialized states. Idris was certain that Bukit Katil's redelineation would deliver UMNO a victory as this exercise packed Malay voters into the newly-named Hang Tuah Jaya constituency.[10] In this sense,

BN predominantly counted on Malay support, largely discounting attempts to garner non-Malay votes, especially in Malay-majority areas; the houses of those pegged as staunch PH supporters received no visits. In constituencies like Alor Gajah, this meant that Chinese houses were often skipped, with handouts also stopping short of reaching Chinese hands. Certain PH candidates took advantage of this overconfidence: in Hang Tuah Jaya, Shamsul spread misinformation to the BN camp, feigning fears of an imminent defeat to boost BN's overconfidence.

Traditional strategies such as door-to-door visits and food and potluck sessions were operated by the strong machineries BN had on the ground, especially UMNO Puteri (UMNO Women Youth Wing) and UMNO Wanita (UMNO Women's Wing).[11] Comparatively, mega *ceramah* (rallies) were rare in Melaka[12] as BN preferred door-to-door visits, mostly in Malay areas. The attendance for such events was less significant as compared to previous elections. Money politics was still widely practiced: goodies including food were distributed for an equal trade-off. However, visits and handouts were targeted at the Malays; candidates such as Khoo Poay Tiong revealed that the Chinese received little from BN. Visits were only paid to Chinese fence sitters.[13] However, BN failed to address the rising costs of living. The Melaka Gateway was touted as heralding job opportunities, but no clear details were given.[14] Rather, BN's manifesto promises were inclined to infrastructure and technology development, such as the development of wireless technology and high-speed railways.

The initial overwhelming number of silent Malay voters also problematized reading ground sentiments among the community. As with elsewhere in Malaysia, Malay voters only started showing their enthusiasm in the last few days before the election. This was apparent by the crowd size at Mahathir's televised speech on 8 May, the night before the election. The perception of a changing tide heading towards 9 May elicited last-minute panic among some UMNO ranks. Indeed, in Sungai Udang, handouts were given only at the 11th hour when it became apparent that the odds were not in BN's favour.[15] The quiet pre-election landscape was also what contributed to PH's apprehension in achieving a Melaka victory, despite the growing discontent with BN.

Results analysis: factors behind the numbers

Intra-elite feuding

Intra-elite feuding impacted Melaka's election results through several avenues. Firstly, defections allowed for PH's elite appeal to increase while also facilitating the conversion of indigenous parties' election machinery to PH's cause. In GE14, the Mahathir factor helped to shore up support for PH. The quality or influence of the elite defectors proved as crucial, if not more so, than the number of defections. Mahathir's recanting of support for Najib, along with his subsequent forming of Bersatu and joining PH to remove Najib from power, eroded the latter's credibility within both UMNO–BN circles and the nation. Ground sentiments suggested that the Mahathir factor was instrumental in attracting

enormous crowds to PH's *ceramahs* during the Jelajah Pakatan Harapan Melaka (PH Melaka Tour). According to PKR State Chief Shamsul, PH benefited from Mahathir's frequent visits to the state as Mahathir had full conviction that Melaka was on the verge of turning red.[16] Indeed, Khoo Poay Tiong noted that Najib's attempts to attack Mahathir had backfired, though this was also partly because of Najib's declining credibility.[17]

A former Prime Minister and a defender of Malay rights, Mahathir's popularity could be gauged across the board, but especially among the senior citizens and the youth—some of the most critical demographics for high voter turnout in GE14. A sizeable segment of the older generation was swayed by nostalgia. This stemmed from the rapid development experienced by Melaka under Mahathir's premiership, including the expansion of basic services and public goods such as roads and schools.[18] Interviews conducted with former Puteri UMNO members and Bersatu volunteer workers revealed that Saluran 1 (Channel 1) results for senior citizens showed that the group voted for Bersatu in Alor Gajah.[19]

A significant number of the youth also interpreted Mahathir's attempt as sincere. As a 93-year-old nearing the end of his life, Mahathir's cause was seen as a last-ditch effort to save his country. Mahathir's video explaining his return to politics to a little girl was widely considered touching and extremely popular. Younger voters were also attracted to supporting Mahathir's PH as they had grown up on tales of Malaysia's prosperity under his 22-year premiership while suffering under the yoke of rising youth unemployment, unaffordable cost of living and exorbitant housing prices beleaguering both the Abdullah and Najib administrations.[20] Exogenous shocks, e.g., the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, falling oil prices and subsequent austerity drives during the latter eras exacerbated these sentiments. The 93-year-old's savvy campaigning via blog writing and his Facebook page further appealed to them, as it increased his interactions with the younger generation. The qualifier for such support, however, is that older members of the below-40 group, specifically those who had experienced, remembered and opposed Mahathir's iron-fisted premiership, were perhaps more cautious.

PH also benefited from defections when the majority of Melaka's PAS leaders chose to join Amanah, with the ex-PAS state chief and now-Amanah state chief and Chief Minister Adly Zahari being elected to helm PH's campaign. PAS's election machinery was converted for PH's use, although observers noted that the machinery was weak. On Amanah's end, these outcomes may be partly attributed to the weak foothold PAS had in the southern states, including in Melaka (Gomez 2016).

Relatedly, intra-party and intra-coalition disagreements potentially hampered political opportunities from being maximized as intra-elite feuding served to jeopardize campaigns and derail election victory. Tensions within PH, for instance, materialized via the tussle over seating allocations. Former Bersatu Hang Tuah Jaya Vice-Chairman Kamarulzaman Mohd Jidi left the party because PH ultimately chose PKR's Farhan Ibrahim to contest the Ayer Molek seat despite Mohd Jidi's efforts in priming the constituency for Bersatu.[21] Farhan would go on to lose the seat by a 10.2% margin.

The Jasin parliamentary constituency also depicts how intra-elite feuding affected voting patterns, as an UMNO versus ex-UMNO battle took place. Although BN retained Jasin in GE14, the seat was won by a mere 219 votes, a marked difference from GE13's 11,763 vote margin of victory. Interestingly, BN considers Jasin a stronghold and the incumbent, UMNO's Ahmad Hamzah, had a long history in Melaka. From 1995 to 2004, Ahmad served as Serkam state assemblyman before contesting the Jasin parliamentary seat and defeating two Pakatan Rakyat candidates, PKR's Zulkefly Othman and Rahmat Yusof, in 2008 and 2013, respectively.[22]

A former UMNO Batu Kawan divisional leader, Amanah's candidate Khairuddin was ousted from the party in 2015.[23] Khairuddin later joined Bersatu and helped found the party in 2016, though he later resigned without any explanation.[24] He later claimed that he wanted to concentrate on his court cases. Khairuddin warned Bersatu not to press for details unless they wanted the party's dealings exposed,[25] hinting at intra-party feuds. Previously, Khairuddin admitted that he was not confident in Bersatu's leadership.[26] In August 2016, he stated that he would not join a party led by Muhyiddin Yassin as president[27] and opposed Bersatu's factionalism (*berpuak*) and importation of UMNO's bad habits.[28]

Despite his fame, Khairuddin faced clear disadvantages. Firstly, he was not a local and was largely active in Batu Kawan, while his opponent had built a reputation in Jasin for years.[29] Furthermore, his departure from Bersatu was also utilized by BN leaders to attack the party in national Malay media, reporting Khairuddin's resignation as a sign of factionalism and no confidence towards Bersatu.[30] Overall, however, it is debatable if this intra-elite feuding led to Jasin's electoral outcome. BN's vote share declined from 59.5% to 36.2% but so did PH's by 2.8%. Conversely, PAS attained 12.1% of Jasin's votes, splitting votes from both BN and PH. Hence, UMNO and Bersatu feuding did not necessarily benefit PH or BN, with the PAS factor acting as a double-edged sword for both PH and BN in certain constituencies, an issue discussed in later sections in this chapter.

Conflicting orders from PH's top leadership also potentially hindered campaign effectiveness, in terms of delaying or cutting short campaigning time on the ground in prime constituencies. For instance, Shamsul was first announced to contest Hang Tuah Jaya and Rembia. However, he then exited the latter race to focus on winning against ex-Chief Minister Ali Rustam in Hang Tuah Jaya. Thereafter, PKR's central leadership ordered him to replace Azmi Khamis in Rim on 27 May, hours before nomination day.[31] The explanation given was that PKR leaders wanted a potential pick for the post of Chief Minister of Melaka if PH clinched a victory, implying that PH itself was perhaps either uncertain of victory in the state and/or that Shamsul, a member of the Azmin faction, was a pawn, shifted from one constituency to the next because of feuding among PKR leaders.[32] Surprisingly, however, Rim was the only mixed seat PKR failed to win. Shamsul had not spent time in this constituency, having focused instead on Hang Tuah Jaya. Rim is also located in the Jasin parliamentary constituency, which is a relative UMNO stronghold.

On BN's end, party infighting also cost the coalition seats. Najib himself had been battling the ascension and advance of UMNO warlords who had been

continuously undermining his reform attempts and inclusive 1Malaysia policy. The accommodation of such UMNO ultras to consolidate his standing within the party, including their right-wing ethnoreligious conservatism that supported PAS's hudud agenda, eroded non-Malay support for BN. Najib's attempt to remain UMNO President despite the onset of serious and severely damaging kleptocracy and corruption scandals may have also been detrimental to the BN campaign.

When candidates loyal to Najib were fielded in GE14 despite grassroot opposition, this exacerbated BN infighting. In Alor Gajah, for example, Najib's former political secretary Wong Nai Chee was parachuted in to the ire of local MCA branches. Rather, they wanted incumbent Koh Nai Kwong to re-contest the seat instead of his being moved to Machap Jaya. Koh's supporters posted on Facebook to boycott BN for making such arrangements. Koh was discontented with Idris' decision for him to contest in Machap Jaya as the decision was made within 24 hours. Koh himself boycotted the event to announce Melaka's BN candidates. The Chinese were also angered by the fact that most MCA candidates were not consulted by BN in the seat allocation process.[33] For instance, Lee Chong Leng was not notified that he would be the Bandar Hilir candidate; therefore, he fled from the candidature announcement ceremony as he did not want to take his letter of appointment.[34]

In terms of how this translated into votes, having a local candidate with intimate knowledge of and longstanding presence in the constituency, in line with voter preferences (Weiss 2013), may have upped the odds in BN's favour. Nonetheless, MCA's perennial Achilles heel, its subservience to UMNO, had yet to be addressed effectively. Other local candidates fielded by MCA like Lim Ban Hong in this party's Melaka strongholds also suffered defeat, many by landslide margins. This indicated the continuation of BN's inability to capture non-Malay votes and ebbing tides of support for MCA. Likewise, it remains debatable if either MIC or MCA could have held on to seats such as Gadek and Bemban had their popular incumbents been retained as candidates, as the desire for a change in government may still have outweighed the rural folks' loyalty towards these incumbents.[35]

In UMNO, Najib specifically warned UMNO Melaka members to show loyalty to the party instead of betraying each other ahead of GE14,[36] indicating the seriousness of intra-party factionalism.[37] Tensions were visible, for instance, in the case of Latipah Omar's re-nomination in Taboh Naning, which stirred discontent among UMNO grassroots. UMNO members called for a local candidate from the area to be fielded, rather than the outsider incumbent Latipah.[38] Also of interest, Ali Rustam failed to secure the Hang Tuah Jaya seat for the second time despite his popularity among the electorate and the use of money politics. Allegations that UMNO members were no longer loyal to Ali Rustam had steeped for years: his appointed candidate for the Bukit Baru seat in GE13 lost by 47 votes, leading to speculation that UMNO members refused to vote for his allies.[39] Rumours of Najib trying to get rid of Ali Rustam also circulated, as did speculation within BN circles that Najib wanted to install a new Chief Minister

and drop long-standing people's favourites like ex-Tangga Batu MP Abu Bakar Diah.[40] Ultimately, Ali Rustam was fielded and Abu Bakar was moved to Paya Rumput, considered an opposition stronghold by BN,[41] where he ultimately lost by a 17% margin. In fact, Abu Bakar was not in the original line-up, reporting that he had only been informed of his candidacy 30 minutes before the official announcement of candidates.[42] This move gained dissent from his supporters who were angered by the decision to move him from a parliament seat to a state seat,[43] although others speculated that this ploy would allow Najib to replace Idris with Abu Bakar as Chief Minister.[44]

With regards to Gagasan Sejahtera, PAS benefited and suffered from the rampant intra-elite feuding. In certain areas of Melaka, the financial difficulties usually plaguing PAS campaigns appeared less prominent leading to the widespread belief that BN financed its campaign.[45] Yet BN–PAS cooperation as reflected via the elite-level Najib–Hadi partnership also served to dissuade PAS fence sitters from voting for PAS as it symbolized, in a sense, a betrayal of PAS's principles. This shaky alliance between long-time foes received little support, let alone approval, from the grassroots. A dearth of encouragement especially held true for older generation PAS supporters, who witnessed first-hand the bitter historical rivalry between UMNO and PAS as manifested via events such as the Memali Incident. Unlike younger generation members, some viewed PAS as an UMNO proxy and were not as easily persuaded into collaboration by PAS's top leadership, potentially leading to lost votes. Indeed, PAS's consistent vote share across constituencies, as discussed later, indicates that its performance is owing to loyal, hardcore PAS supporters.

Finally, intra-elite feuding affected Melaka's results by splitting the Malay vote bloc in multi-cornered fights. Despite the fact that PH won Melaka and other states across Malaysia, GE14 is perhaps more accurately characterized as a rejection of BN rather than an embrace of PH per se. Post-election analysis corroborates this: although 95% of Chinese supported PH, the Malay vote was split three ways among BN–PH–PAS nationwide even if PH made further inroads into the Malay vote bloc in states like Melaka.[46] To analyze the effect of these multi-cornered fights in Melaka, we present a brief overview and three case studies to examine the evolving Malay vote: one in a mixed area where higher Malay votes tipped the balance in PH's favour, one in a Malay-majority area that PH won and one in a Malay-majority area that BN retained.

Overall, although PH won Melaka by a razor-thin majority, the bulk of its won seats were ethnically-mixed or featured non-Malay areas. In this respect, UMNO retained 12 Malay-majority seats, defined as seats with less than a 70% Malay majority, to PH's two as noted in Table 7.1. For PKR, all three state constituencies won were mixed seats: Rembia, Machap Jaya and Kelebang. The other five contested seats were Malay-majority areas lost to UMNO with margins of victory of at least 10%, barring Rim that was contested by Shamsul. Of the two parliamentary constituencies, Hang Tuah Jaya, a mixed area, was won with a 9.7% margin in Shamsul's favour. Rusnah Aluai won Tangga Batu, which has a 70.98% Malay majority, with a 5.6% margin of victory.

Table 7.1 PH Malay party performance in Malay-majority areas*

Contesting Party	*Contested Malay-majority Seat*	*% of Malays*	*Facing BN Incumbent*	*Margin of Loss*	*Margin of Victory*
PKR	P136 Tangga Batu	70.98	No	–	5.6%
	N1 Kuala Linggi	73.83	Yes	12.5%	–
	N2 Tanjung Bidara	93.86	Yes	28.5%	–
	N11 Sungai Udang	79.71	Yes	10.0%	–
	N18 Ayer Molek	87.94	No	10.2%	–
BERSATU	P134 Masjid Tanah	83.17	Yes	15.8%	
	N23 Telok Mas	73.39	No	–	6.3%
	N3 Ayer Limau	91.29	Yes	13.2%	–
	N4 Lendu	77.18	Yes	6.1%	–
	N28 Sungai Rambai	83.75	Yes	14.1%	–
AMANAH	P139 Jasin	73.5	No	0.3%	–
	N5 Taboh Naning	79.3	Yes	8.5%	–
	N12 Pantai Kundor	80.05	No	4.9%	–
	N26 Serkam	90.21	Yes	17.3%	–

*Authors' own calculation from published GE14 results.

Source: Compiled from "GE14: Melaka." *The Star Online*. Last accessed https://election.thestar.com.my/malacca.html on 20 June 2018.

Bersatu also won one Malay-majority state seat, i.e., Telok Mas. However, its only other victory was in the mixed Paya Rumput seat, which has a 61.25% Malay electorate, alongside the mixed parliamentary constituency of Alor Gajah (60.84% Malays). All its losses were in Malay-majority seats—Ayer Limau (91.29%), Lendu (77.18%) and Sungai Rambai (83.75%)—with the exception of Asahan (63.77%), though all four were contests against incumbents. In Amanah's case, it won in mixed seats only, i.e., in Bukit Katil (64.23%) and Durian Tunggal (68.88%). Mirroring Bersatu, all of its losses were also in Malay-majority seats—Taboh Naning (79.3%), Pantai Kundor (80.05%), Serkam (90.21%) and Jasin (73.5%)—with the exception of Merlimau (69.41%). Considering PAS's weaker foothold in Melaka, margins of losses and victories were only between UMNO and PH component parties. As in Table 7.1, PH's Malay-based parties had relatively small margins of victory in Malay-majority areas whereas margins of loss ranged anywhere from 0.3% to 28.5%. We find that these margins of losses were larger, i.e., more than 5%, in areas with a higher percentage of Malay electorates as well as with the presence of an incumbent UMNO opponent.

In a similar vein, BN performed better and won by a higher margin in areas with more Malays and where it fielded incumbents. The removal or transfer of incumbents to new constituencies, sometimes because of intra-elite feuding, thus affected GE14 results. Moreover, PAS's vote share as a spoiler party was generally consistent across several factors, including whether it was a mixed or Malay-majority seat, the presence of a BN incumbent and regardless of which PH component party it faced as seen in Tables 7.2 and 7.3. When contesting against DAP, PAS's vote share is consistently above 10%; however, no clear pattern emerges against

Table 7.2 PAS vote share in parliamentary constituencies*

Contested Parliamentary Seat	*% of Malays*	*Facing BN Incumbent*	*Party Opposing PH*	*Vote Share %*
P134 Masjid Tanah	83.17	Yes	BERSATU	9.1
P135 Alor Gajah	60.84	No	BERSATU	8.7
P136 Tangga Batu	70.98	No	PKR	10.8
P137 Hang Tuah Jaya	62.39	No	PKR	7.9
P139 Jasin	73.5	No	AMANAH	12.1

* Ibid.

Table 7.3 PAS vote share in state constituencies*

Contested State Seat	*% of Malays*	*Facing BN Incumbent*	*PH Party*	*Vote Share %*
N1 Kuala Linggi	73.83	Yes	PKR	8.5
N2 Tanjung Bidara	93.86	Yes	PKR	14.9
N3 Ayer Limau	91.29	Yes	BERSATU	10.6
N4 Lendu	77.18	Yes	BERSATU	11.2
N5 Taboh Naning	79.30	Yes	AMANAH	12.7
N6 Rembia	65.96	Yes	PKR	7.7
N7 Gadek	59.70	No	DAP	14.4
N8 Machap Jaya	43.74	No	PKR	6.1
N9 Durian Tunggal	68.88	Yes	AMANAH	10.6
N10 Asahan	63.77	Yes	BERSATU	8.5
N12 Pantai Kundor	80.05	No	AMANAH	12.3
N13 Paya Rumput	61.25	No	BERSATU	6.2
N14 Kelebang	66.35	Yes	PKR	11.3
N15 Pengkalan Batu	65.4	No	DAP	10.5
N16 Ayer Keroh	40.27	No	DAP	10.1
N17 Bukit Katil	64.23	No	AMANAH	8.9
N18 Ayer Molek	87.94	No	BERSATU	17.4
N21 Duyong	60.11	No	DAP	16.2
N23 Telok Mas	73.39	No	BERSATU	15.5
N24 Bemban	61.22	No	DAP	15.0
N25 Rim	66.08	Yes	PKR	9.2
N26 Serkam	90.21	Yes	AMANAH	21.7
N27 Merlimau	69.41	Yes	AMANAH	8.7
N28 Sungai Rambai	83.75	Yes	BERSATU	11.9

* Ibid.

other Malay parties. PAS could thus be considered a spoiler party, but whose votes it stole depended on the constituency as aforementioned in the Jasin case.

These patterns also emerge in our three case studies of Alor Gajah, Tangga Batu and Jasin. In Alor Gajah, a mixed area, Bersatu's Redzuan was elected as parliament member for the area spanning FELDA land, isolated villages and relatively sizeable semi-urban towns across its five state constituencies of Rembia, Gadek, Machap Jaya, Durian Tunggal and Asahan[47]—the first four of which also

fell to PH. Here, we see that BN's hegemony on votes in this area has been diminishing over time, with PAS eating into MCA's Wong's votes in GE14 (see Figure 7.1). Though this is a mixed area where PH obtains consistent non-Malay support, the election results indicate that a higher number of Malays are voting for PH, thus carrying it over the threshold to electoral victory. Still, this cannot yet be interpreted as a shift in allegiances among the Malays. For the Chinese and Indians, GE14 was a continuation of "Ini Kalilah!"; for the Malays, according to DAP state chairman Tey Kok Kiew, GE14 was a case of "Cuba satu kali; ini kalilah!" (Try one time; this is the time!).[48] Hence, it remains to be seen if PH is able to build the same loyal base among the Malays as BN has for the past 60-odd years.

PH also made inroads into the parliamentary constituency of Tangga Batu, where Rusnah won the seat with a 5.6% margin of victory over Melaka UMNO Youth chief Zali Mat Yasin (see Figure 7.2). This encompasses ex-Chief Minister Idris' constituency of Sungai Udang, along with Pantai Kundor, Paya Rumput and Kelebang; PH lost the former two state constituencies to UMNO. Home to one of Malaysia's largest army camps, PH's Tangga Batu victory suggests that

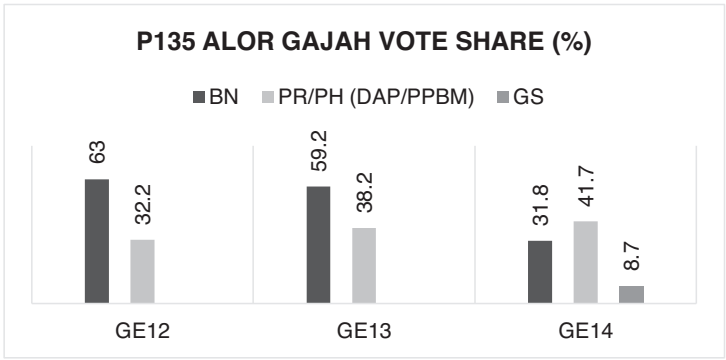

Figure 7.1 Alor Gajah vote share, 2008–2018

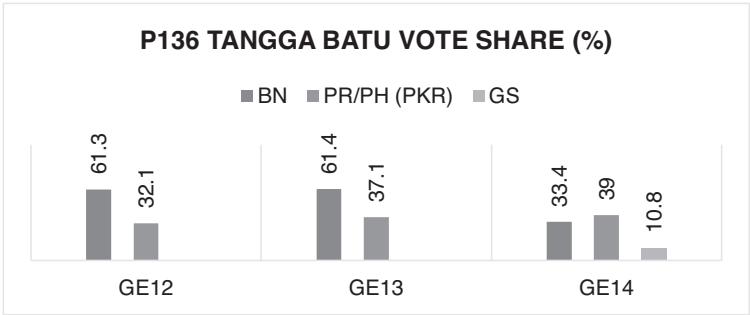

Figure 7.2 Tangga Batu vote share, 2008–2018

social change is occurring among this traditional BN voter base. According to DAP's Ong Kian Ming, a significant number of the area's 11,741 early postal votes had to have given PH an edge considering that only 4,659 votes separated PH's victory from BN's loss.[49] Indeed, as in Figure 7.2, it is apparent that the PKR's vote share increased by 2% alone since GE13; however, UMNO's vote share has dropped significantly from 61.4% (GE13) to 33.4% (GE14), with PAS attaining the remainder of the 83.2% voter turnout. Similarly, these decreasing margins of victory for UMNO are also present in the Jasin case study (see Figure 7.3). Won by a 0.3% vote margin,[50] Jasin was also a constituency defended by an UMNO incumbent, who generally retained their seats across the board.[51] Here, UMNO's vote share declined markedly by 23.3% and PH by 2.8%, while PAS acted as a spoiler party for UMNO by garnering 12.1% of the vote. This suggests that, despite emerging victorious, Malay support for PH is incremental rather than exponential; GE14 is a rejection of BN rather than an undisputed embrace of PH.

Nonetheless, though not always victorious, this does not mean that the availability of alternative Malay parties had no bearing: the fact that PAS won one seat in GE13, i.e. Bukit Baru, and that the Bersatu–Amanah–PKR alliance made further inroads in GE14 indicates social change among the Malay electorate. If UMNO could previously consider these areas fixed deposits, it now had to contend with ever-decreasing margins of victory even in stronghold seats, resulting in what Welsh (2018) deemed the "tightening UMNO belt." The diminishing UMNO hegemony is perhaps most clearly evinced by the straight fight between UMNO and PKR in Sungai Udang, wherein Chief Minister Idris Haron was only declared victorious with a 10.0% margin of victory after 17 recounts.[52] This marks a dramatic reversal from GE13, when Idris won with a 59.5% margin of victory against PKR's Asri Buang.

In the context of these case studies, with an eye towards the larger state-wide picture, this begs the question then of why these alternative Malay-based parties, offshoots of UMNO and PAS, have attained this level of support. Bersatu, for instance, is replete with similar thrusts of protecting Malay-Muslim rights.

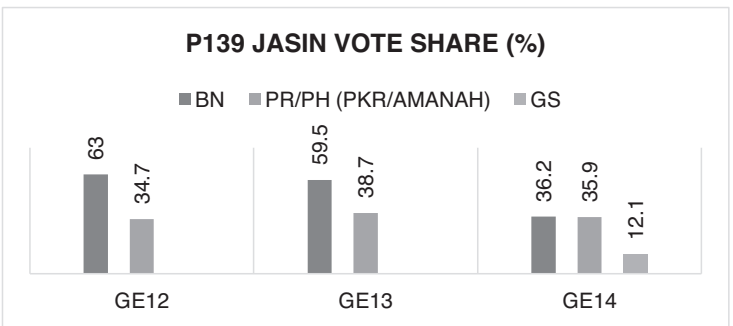

Figure 7.3 Jasin vote share, 2008–2018

Yet, even the magic of Mahathir did not cascade into an overwhelming success for Bersatu in Melaka, though this party has become more accepted. Why did UMNO retain its seats and why did it lose others to PH? If voters wanted to reject PH, why not choose PAS instead for Seri Negeri?

Part of this can be explained by societal grievances and how each coalition capitalized (or not) on these issues through effective campaigning; this will be explored later in the chapter. Part of it, however, also stems from the reaction towards these alternative parties. For example, some perceived Bersatu as a mirror image of the "good old UMNO" during Malaysia's post-independence period, when it was led by previous key UMNO leaders including Mahathir who called for UMNO to reform and revisit its roots. Interviews with Bersatu workers and volunteers revealed that many acknowledged the similarity between UMNO and Bersatu in terms of agenda (protecting Malay rights) and also symbolic aspects (party colours). In this sense, expectations of Bersatu as an UMNO substitute pushed significant swathes of the Malay community to opt for UMNO's alternative. Bersatu Youth chief Syed Saddiq noted that the party appeals to ex-UMNO voters who believe that UMNO can no longer be the party of modern, progressive Malays, i.e. the Malays in the southern industrialized states, capable of being defenders of the religion, race and country without making hard shifts towards conservatism.[53] This may explain why PAS, despite its consistent vote share across constituencies, was not elected to be the government and its relatively weak foothold in the Southern Malaysian peninsula. Amanah, with its PAS-offshoot reputation, may have also suffered by virtue of its association with its parent party. However, it does not explain why PKR, which is seen as less conservative, did not win many Malay-majority areas, whether in GE14 or in the four elections prior (see Table 7.4).

Support for UMNO hints at several trends. Firstly, it suggests Melaka remains a relative UMNO stronghold, though the UMNO belt has tightened, and secondly, that the new parties have yet to become distinguishable, representative options among the Malay electorate. In the run-up to the election, Sim noted that since rural "constituents are quite happy with [BN]," voter swings towards PH were unlikely in such areas,[54] a prediction that has been largely accurate. Gomez (2007) notes that in certain rural, predominantly Malay areas, voter swings occur between UMNO and PAS because both offer steady platforms on core issues of race and religion, with neither viably representing the electorate's interests. Melaka, however, has never featured such oscillating election outcomes. Until GE13, PAS failed to win even one seat in Melaka. As mentioned, PH parties excelled in mixed seats but could not scale the obstacles of UMNO incumbents and high Malay-voter concentration to clinch a larger victory.

The Chinese majority constituencies: DAP and MCA

Just as MCA struggled with intra-party tensions, DAP's Melaka chapter also suffered from party infighting that first surfaced during the 2005 party state election.[55] According to Sim, the factions in DAP have persisted since then. On 12 February 2017, Sim, along with three other DAP Melaka state assemblymen

Table 7.4 Election results, 1999–2018*

Party/ Election (Seats Won/Seats Contested)	*GE10 (1999)*		*GE11 (2004)*		*GE12 (2008)*		*GE13 (2013)*		*GE14 (2018)*	
	Parl.	*State*	*Parl.*	*State*	*Parl.*	*State*	*Parl.*	*State*	*Parl.*	*State*
UMNO	3/3	16/16	4/4	18/18	4/4	18/18	3/4	17/18	2/4	13/18
MCA	1/2	4/8	2/2	6/8	1/2	4/8	1/2	3/7	0/2	0/8
MIC	–	1/1	–	1/1	–	1/1	–	1/1	–	0/1
GERAKAN	–	–	–	1/1	–	0/1	–	0/1	–	0/1
MyPPP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0/1	–	–
Total (BN)	4/5	21/25	6/6	26/28	5/6	23/28	4/6	21/28	2/6	13/28
DAP	1/1	4/8	0/2	2/9	1/2	5/8	1/2	6/8	1/1	8/8
PKR	0/2	0/8	0/2	0/7	0/3	0/7	1/3	0/7	2/2	3/8
BERSATU	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1/2	2/6
AMANAH	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0/1	2/6
PAS	0/2	0/9	0/2	0/14	0/1	0/13	0/1	1/13	0/5	0/24
Total (BA/ Opp/ PR/PH)	1/5	4/25	0/6	2/30	1/6	5/28	2/6	7/28	4/6	15/28

*Author's (Anuar) own calculation. Compiled from "GE14: Melaka." *The Star Online*. Last accessed https://election.thestar.com.my/malacca.html on 20 June 2018; "Peta kawasan pilihan raya Melaka." *Utusan Malaysia*. Last accessed www.utusan.com.my/berita/politik/pilihan-raya/pilihan-raya-umum-ke-14/peta-kawasan-pilihan-raya-negeri-melaka-1.647870 on 20 June 2018; and "Pilihan raya umum kali ke-sepuluh 1999." *Geocities*. Last accessed www.geocities.ws/hualian_studentclub/pilihanraya/1999_melaka.htm on 20 June 2018.

namely Goh (Duyong), Lim Jack Wong (Bachang) and Chin Choong Seong (Kesidang) announced their resignation from the party to be Independents citing lack of trust in DAP leadership. [56]

However, the inner feuding within DAP did not impact Chinese voters' choices. Sim is respected by Melaka's citizens, especially in Kota Melaka. Indeed, Sim never defected to any other political party and even rejected Idris' offer to speak about DAP on a BN stage in 2017.[57] Nonetheless, the "save Malaysia" motto offered by PH overwhelmed the Chinese community's respect for the 70-year-old politician. On Sim's Facebook page, netizens left comments asking the politician to "endure for the country." Yet the Chinese community has traditionally voted along party lines and Melaka is no exception. Although concerned over DAP's infighting, intense distrust of what was widely seen as a corrupt federal government and grievances over bread-and-butter issues swung votes against BN.

Additionally, the Chinese, according to Khoo, were unhappy with Idris and perceived him as biased against the community.[58] Generally seen as subservient to UMNO, MCA was a "no hope" party to the Chinese. Additionally, the voluntary departure of Lim Guan Eng from Melaka to Penang in 2008[59] was a wise choice for DAP Melaka as the Kota Melaka electorate did not favour him.[60]

As the DAP central leadership had to intervene in the feuds,[61] the electorate was aware of the party's internal conflict, with Sim highlighting that the Chinese in Melaka held some degree of concern on this issue. However, DAP's results

have improved steadily since GE12. Both Sim and Wong noted that any existing concern pales in comparison to a corrupt BN.[62] Further, PAS's Islamic agenda fails to appeal to the Chinese and it did not garner many non-Malay votes, especially after leaving the PR consociational alliance.[63]

Besides that, Sim highlighted that ground sentiments rather than ideology were paramount in voters' minds.[64] Younger generations accepted DAP's collaboration with Mahathir, though some older DAP members who experienced the *Reformasi* period disapproved. This willingness to work with Mahathir appealed to both Chinese and some non-Chinese communities. Albeit parts of the Malay community remained wary about DAP, the decision to adopt PKR's logo and leave behind the "Rocket" symbol earned respect from the Malays. The "saving Malaysia" agenda thus outweighed concerns on internal conflict.

Election issues and campaign trajectories

Protest voting

Bottom-up forces via societal grievances constitute the other side of the Malaysian tsunami equation, significantly pushing for electoral liberalisation and change within the country. Though party or coalition infighting hardly featured in the electorate's voting calculus, the existence of an elite figure that significantly polarized and aggrieved the general society did. Just as the Mahathir factor enabled critical mass to install a PH government, so did a counterweighing Najib factor encourage critical mass to dislodge the incumbent regime from power. Protest votes were thus cast to topple Prime Minister Najib and his administration by extension.

Issues of electoral manipulation and corruption augmented dissent both nationally and locally. Protest voting patterns that denied BN's two-thirds majority in GE12 culminated in a rejection of BN among the wider populace in GE14. BN administrations under Abdullah Badawi and Najib had promised a spate of reforms: some were implemented, yet unmediated institutional inertia and policy reversals meant a growing trust deficit with BN. Plummeting approval ratings for BN and Najib underscored growing dissatisfaction with the regime, hence sparking desperation to stack the electoral deck in its favour to keep the regime in power. This included the mid-week polling day to discourage out-of-state voters and the banning of Bersatu and Mahathir's image by the RoS in GE14.

In Melaka, the redelineation exercise moved an estimated 25,000 Malay voters into the marginal former-Bukit Katil and current-Hang Tuah Jaya seat, a move Idris called for and lauded as giving BN "light at the end of the tunnel."[65] When the Election Commission released the new voter lists, constituencies such as Bachang and Bukit Baru also received "phantom voters." The village of Solok Baroh in Bachang saw 134 new voters from a nearby UMNO branch registered to non-existent addresses.[66] In Alor Gajah, early postal voters traditionally aligned with the BN, such as soldiers, were given multiple ballots to amplify the coalition's vote share in the area.[67]

Judging by these tactics, BN was aware of its deteriorating comparative advantage in dominating elections. Even in BN fortresses such as Sungai Udang, the foundations of BN's GE14 victories were shaky. Yet blatant plays to maintain power aggravated protest voting, given the rakyat's dwindling tolerance for such foul play: Melaka was one of the few states to legally challenge the EC's redelineation, with seven Bukit Katil and Kota Melaka voter representatives bringing up the "unconstitutional" matter to the high court in April 2017.[68] However, the appellate court ruled that the court cannot usurp that function.[69] During the election itself, moreover, suspicions of tampered ballot counting elicited protest in Melaka, with small riots occurring outside the Melaka International Trade Centre.[70]

From a macro perspective, voters worried for the country's reputation, something many felt had been tarnished by the long procession of scandals, as seen through, *inter alia*, Najib's 1MDB scandal, along with the permeation of corruption and the "cash is king" mentality at all levels of governance, issues that frequently made news headlines. If Najib himself had now transformed into a liability, so too had many BN elites become toxic derivatives by virtue of association, in addition to their personal charges of corruption at state and local levels. The overarching theme of these protest issues was Seri Negeri's lacking good governance and included the following:

I General abuse of funds and leakages occurring even at the *kampung* level.
II Corruption under various Chief Ministers:

- **Ali Rustam**: his work as Chairman of Perbadanan Usahawan Nasional Berhad (PUNB) was targeted by state PKR chief Shamsul. Specifically, Shamsul brought up how PUNB entered into an arrangement to produce a book about Najib, wherein RM400,000 was paid upfront using funds allocated for Sabah, but no book was produced.[71] The extravagance of Seri Bendahara, the Chief Minister's quarters built under Ali Rustam, was also under scrutiny.
- **Idris Haron**: Several faults were found with his administration by the electorate. Firstly, there was recurring discontent regarding Idris's leadership style. Unlike his predecessor, who always made himself available to the Melaka people, Idris' strictly office-hours approach earned dislike among the electorate.[72] Using a two-pronged approach, PH both pointed out Ali's corruption while also highlighting his approachableness as Chief Minister in contrast to Idris.

  Secondly, Idris was portrayed as an ineffective and corrupt leader by PH for his policies. One example used by PH was how welfare policies were not only less effective than those executed in PH-governed states such as Penang, but that funding allocations for these programmes—such as the RM2.8 million for renovating all low-income houses across all 28 state districts—were miniscule compared to the funds used to renovate the Chief Minister's quarters alone, which totalled at least RM3 million over a span of five years.[73]

> Idris was also embroiled in corruption allegations. Under his administration, Yusof Soros, an ex-special officer to the City Mayor, was charged with money laundering and 15 graft charges amounting to nearly RM20 million.[74] In 2017, an Idris-appointed politician was charged with high-profile corruption while holding a "special position" in UMNO Melaka. Idris later denied the position as "important" and argued that the politician was in fact only tasked with monitoring party machinery administration.[75]

Najib's unpopular figure was strikingly absent in this election. In a reversal from GE13, when Najib's approval ratings had outranked BN's, GE14 campaigning either skirted around this elephant in the room or made false promises. The MCA, for instance, chose to minimize featuring Najib in promotional material within Melaka. On UMNO's end, certain high-profile leaders like Ali did attempt to rally support around Najib,[76] consistent with other leaders who asked to show gratitude to Najib.[77] This failed, however, to account for his deep unpopularity and likely aggravated protest voting. Indeed, Puteri UMNO, which constitutes the bulk of grassroots machinery along with Wanita UMNO (Weiss 2016), also campaigned by promising potential voters that Najib would be removed from BN so long as the coalition was still voted into power.[78]

Economic voting

Yet, it is the intersection of various societal grievances that lies at the heart of the voting trends. One trend that cropped up often was economic voting, one intimately linked to corruption. Despite glowing statistics on Melaka's overarching economic circumstances (see Figure 7.4), a two-speed economy proved difficult to elude with growth trickling down insufficiently. Dependent on tourism, Melaka's economic fortunes are largely seasonal. Rising costs of living due to the GST introduced in 2015, falling oil prices and a weak currency exchange rate were exacerbated by wages that failed to increase apace with mounting prices. Chinese businesses in Melaka are retrenching or unable to expand.[79] Complaints of unreceived *zakat* aid had also increased, according to Shamsul, as well as complaints of reduced aid to recipients of Melaka's Education Fund, Tabung Amanah Pendidikan Negeri Melaka.[80]

Youth unemployment, despite being lower in Melaka at an average of 3.23% over the four-year period compared to 10.45% in the rest of Malaysia (MIDF 2017), remained a significant push factor against BN. Lack of job opportunities had driven youths to seek employment in other states or in the near abroad, i.e., Singapore, resulting in a wave of returning voters during GE14. Nonetheless, the dire economic situation meant that visits home had decreased, as had remittances.[81] This created a higher rate of dependency of rural communities on government social safety nets, which potentially explained the large number of rural constituencies voting in BN's favour. However, this may also partly stem from the high levels of loyalty of the rural Malay women, traditionally targeted by the

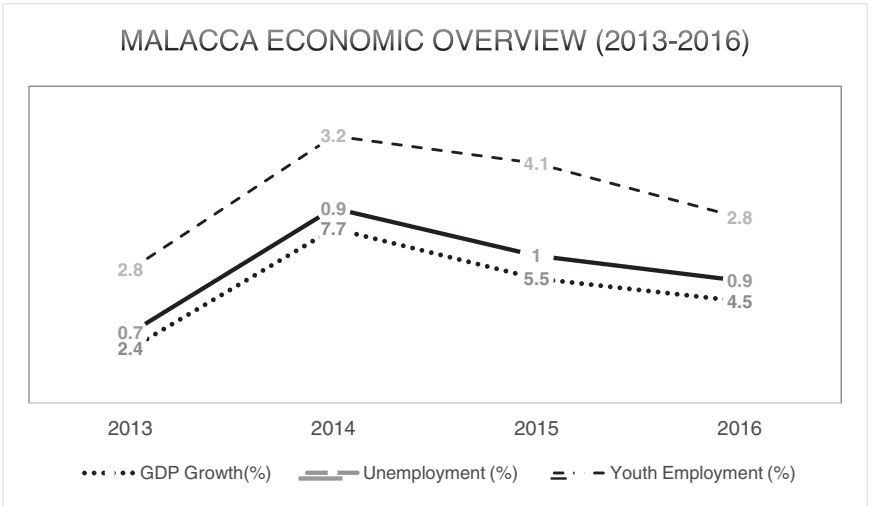

Figure 7.4 Economic statistics[82]

Wanita and Puteri UMNO wings. Wong notes that some quotient of this hardship is also because of higher standards of living, which are more expensive to maintain.[83] Though this holds some degree of truth, ground sentiments largely show increasing grief and frustration over inabilities to afford basic necessities rather than luxury items. State government policies such as property tax hikes did little to alleviate matters and were subsequently targeted by PH campaigns.

The strength of economic voting was reinforced by a mix of the Najib factor, protest voting and campaign effectiveness. Having a clear target to blame facilitates punishing incumbent governments for the crime of unsatisfactory economic performance (Reidy, Suiter, and Breen 2018): in this case, it was Najib's role as Prime Minister and Finance Minister as well as the face of 1MDB. This allowed for the convergence of societal grievances around one figure. This ultimately translated into a visceral desire to topple Najib and his administration, especially among the Chinese who, in addition to perceiving the BN state government as unfair to them, voted against GST. Protest voting bolstered economic voting owing to the conceptual link between elite-level leakages and rice-bowl issues: juxtaposed against deteriorating standards of living, whether real or perceived, the lavish lifestyles enjoyed by the power elite made for powerful campaign material and visuals that PH capitalized on. In Melaka, information on BN's financial integrity and transgressions were consistently disseminated, especially those focusing on both Najib and Rosmah, whose pink diamonds and Birkin bags among other luxury expenditures made for easy targets.

In terms of campaign effectiveness, PH worked to keep 1MDB squarely in the public sphere and recent memory, despite then Attorney-General Apandi Ali

clearing Najib of any wrongdoing in 2016. This campaign trajectory maintained the issue of corruption in public discourse, potentially translating into more protest votes from Malays. After nomination day and during the campaign period, i.e., from 29 April to 12 May, Google Trends showed a spike in searches on "corruption" nationwide and statewide, with the term "rasuah" (bribery) reaching higher levels of interest online for that period.[84] The coalition also rode on the back of people's anger: the Jelajah PH *ceramah* in Bukit Piatu, for example, specifically featured a skit where a man dressed as Malaysian Official 1, sporting a Najib-clown mask as depicted by Fahmi Reza, was seen to be influencing BN politicians to promote GST because it was good. The crowd was then repeatedly asked, "Kalau tak turun ke kampung, macam mana tahu rakyat susah?" (If you never step foot into the villages, how do you know how the rakyat suffers?) Speakers like Tey also asked the crowds to "marah hingga ke Putrajaya" (use your anger to reach Putrajaya).[85]

In Melaka, as with elsewhere, the coalition also capitalized on new media since political communication may alter the contours of election discourse and sentiments (Hart 2016). Though Facebook is a relatively urban phenomenon, the use of Whatsapp, WeChat and other private social media platforms has proliferated in Malaysia with greater Internet availability and mobile phone penetration rates. This boosted PH's campaign not only because social media enables information to go viral, but because news on channels such as Whatsapp rely on horizontal trust networks, wherein peer-to-peer rather than hierarchical sharing occurs. With a breakdown in governmentality and trust in authority figures, e.g., the traditional media spaces dominated by BN, this translates into the perception of an individual's social networks having greater credibility. Thus, when it came to information crucial in shaping perceptions of economic circumstances (Anderson and Roy 2011), BN could no longer control the narrative of the state of the economy through dedicated channels such as MelakaTV. PH's warnings of GST and oil prices rising even more under a re-elected BN federal government were able to spread relatively uninhibited.

Conversely, BN did not fully mitigate the political risk of punishment via economic voting. Rather, BN's continued promotion of GST as a necessary tax, complemented by insufficient stop-gap handouts to alleviate economic suffering, also garnered dissatisfaction. For instance, in Paya Rumput, Abu Bakar tried to explain BN's economic policies, e.g., how some portion of GST returned to the people in the form of Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M); however, this had little pacifying effect and failed to address the problem of how the *rakyat* could not make ends meet even with BR1M.[86] This signalled, in some sense, insensitivity on the part of the incumbent government to the *rakyat*'s plight. Initiatives to directly reduce the cost of living were glaringly absent in BN's Melaka manifesto. Under "Protecting the Rakyat's Livelihoods and Generating a Prosperous Economy,"[87] it only listed efforts such as infrastructure upgrading, youth upskilling and one-off handouts to farmers and fishermen. Nor did BN's national strategy of emphasizing its track record in managing the economy do the trick when ground sentiments clearly indicated dissatisfaction over the economy. National

and Melaka survey data by from independent pollster Merdeka Center, for example, repeatedly showed that undercurrents of economic distress bubbled beneath waves of stable macroeconomic growth (Merdeka Centre 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

BN also operationalized money politics to mitigate this political risk. In Melaka, this took the form of micro- and macro-particularistic handouts (Weiss 2014). Macro-particularistic handouts, i.e., institutionalized and programmatic subsidies, formed a key component of all coalitions' campaign in Melaka. On PH's end, targeted fuel subsidies, healthcare and affordable housing comprised the vehicles of macro-particularistic policies; the state-level focus was on assisting the existing 28,000 citizens registered under the State Welfare Department.[88] BN's continuation of BR1M constituted the backbone of programmatic subsidisation, generally implemented on a means-tested basis. Micro-particularistic money politics or individual handouts, however, remained the turf of BN though not necessarily because of virtue. Rather, both PH and Gagasan Sejahtera are comparatively underfunded, with PH's own campaign partially bankrolled by crowdfunding and serviced by an army of volunteers. On an individual level, GE14 saw, for instance, the distribution of 5kg rice bags featuring the image of ex-Chief Minister Ali Rustam in the Hang Tuah Jaya constituency.[89]

However, given increasing disapproval of corruption, using money politics arguably made BN's task of winning hearts and minds in Melaka harder. The effectiveness of money politics has further been eroded by an increasing paradigm shift in the electorate. In what Weiss (2016) labels "an unravelling of a money-based political order," money politics is being de-linked to loyalty and patronage in the minds of Malaysians. Citizens may still accept handouts and goodies from the incumbent, but this no longer necessarily guarantees a vote in the incumbent's favour, thus creating a political opportunity for regime change. According to Shamsul Iskandar, the distribution of rice bags was not well received because voters were insulted at not only the act of handouts itself, but also the insignificant sum of handouts meant to buy votes.[90] PH also worked to convince Melaka's electorate that whatever benefits accrued from BR1M would be meaningless with rising costs of living, which would only be higher if BN were re-elected.

This worked to erode the lure of money politics unless GST were abolished, which was a dominant feature if not the pièce de résistance of PH's campaign. PAS too ran welfare and GST-free campaigns,[91] but the more conservative brand of Islamist politics it wielded perhaps deterred votes; in this sense, the PH and BN campaigns were more generally acceptable owing to their centrist approaches.

Ethnoreligious voting

Despite the acceleration of both protest voting and economic voting, the end of communal politics is not yet nigh. Though PAS was wiped out in Melaka, this does not necessarily translate into the diminishing importance of communal politics. Rather, PAS's consistent vote shares of 6%–15% indicate that their hardcore supporters remain loyal and have not abandoned them for other alternatives. For voters who do not believe in PH's ability to protect the Malay-Muslim agenda

but still wish to reject BN, PAS remains a viable third alternative for protest voting. Moreover, BN's strong showing in more rural areas partly stems from distrust in PH's ability to secure Malay-Muslim rights outweighing the desire to vote for change—a trend reflected nationwide.[92] Allaying these concerns will be further challenged by PH's pursuit of a liberal, progressive agenda, one increasingly perceived as infringing upon respect for royalty and Malay-Muslim rights and that may alienate more Malay-Muslim support in the future.

Both PAS and UMNO used DAP as a bogeyman, playing on fears of an economically dominant Chinese community monopolizing political power. Attempting damage control, Khoo ran advertisements in local Malay newspapers to reaffirm that any candidate for Melaka's Chief Minister would be chosen from the ranks of PH's Malay MPs.[93] However, this issue likely failed to gain traction in mixed areas; its impact was also blunted by the fact that the party has attracted high-profile Malay leaders and cooperated with prominent Malays, including PAS in PR's heyday. On the religious front, BN and PAS manually microtargeted voters by going door-to-door in constituencies like Alor Gajah to peddle their campaign platforms on religion and *hudud*.

On PH's end, the Mahathir factor helped to assuage some degree of ethnoreligious concerns. Not only is Mahathir considered a strongman political figure capable of keeping Chinese political influence in check, but his track record in protecting Malay-Muslim rights potentially persuaded Malay fence sitters. Melaka's PH leaders were also careful to reassure Malay voters that their rights would remain intact during campaigning, as only the rights of UMNO cronies and henchmen would disappear. Amanah further highlighted that BN's form of governance was not true to Islam because it did not make the people prosper or *sejahterakan rakyat*, a similar tack taken by PAS, whose 11-principle campaign was themed *Melaka Sejahtera*.[94] Issues of religion were thus tied to economic voting because, as put by Adly Zahari, a starving population and lack of prosperity reflects the government's failure; hence, to bring prosperity back to the people in accordance with Islamic governance, PH would abolish GST.[95]

Conclusion

A confluence of intra-elite feuding and societal grievances lies behind Melaka's GE14 results. Intra-elite feuding manifested via intra-party and intra-coalition tensions that affected campaign effectiveness, e.g., through seat allocation tensions, splitting the Malay vote by creating alternative Malay-based political parties and new political alliances seen between UMNO–PAS and PH component parties. However, the effects of this intra-elite feuding were not always direct or simple: not all opportunities for electoral liberalisation were maximized fully. Rather, the results were mediated by factors such as growing societal grievances, the incumbents' ability to manage such frustrations and the ability to campaign effectively to mitigate or emphasize such issues.

Though societal grievances in terms of protest and economic voting attracted votes to PH, it cannot be said that these factors were overwhelming pull factors

in all constituencies. As shown in our Tangga Batu and Jasin case studies, as well as the overall results analysis, BN is still favoured in Malay-majority areas as reflected in Melaka's nearly hung state assembly composition. Despite not winning any seats in GE14, PAS's consistent vote share does indicate that, along with BN's rural popularity, ethnoreligious voting to protect Malay-Muslim rights still holds some weight in voters' minds. Overall, however, it underscores that GE14 is not necessarily an embrace of PH but more significantly a rejection of BN.

Notes

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3 DAP candidate Kota Melaka, Khoo Poay Tiong interview, 5 June 2018.
4 PKR candidate for Hang Tuah Jaya, Shamsul Iskandar Akin interview, 6 June 2018
5 Ex-DAP member and founder of the Justice League, Sim Tong Him interview, 3 June 2018.
6 Bersatu candidate Alor Gajah, Redzuan Yusof interview, 2 June 2018.
7 After the Registry of Societies Malaysia (ROS) denied usage of the PH logo, the coalition decided to adopt PKR's 'Mata Biru' (Blue Eye) logo.
8 PKR candidate Machap, Ginie Lim interview, 5 June 2018.
9 Nora Danish is a Malay celebrity and daughter-in-law of Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Mohamed Nazri Ahmad Aziz. Bersatu member interview, 2 June 2018.
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12 The author (Chan) had encountered difficulties getting the schedule of BN's ceramahs after nomination day.
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The Star Online
The Straits Times
The Sun Daily
Utusan Online

8 Bangsa Johor

Factions, feuds and the fall of UMNO

Rashaad Ali

Introduction

Historically, Johor has always been a state that has seen itself as a maverick. Under Malaysia's current federated system, this was most pronounced in the expression of *bangsa Johor* ("the nation of Johor"), a state-level nationalism espoused by people of this state that centred around a Johorean identity that suggested a sense of common belonging (Rahman 2017a: 3). However, coming into the election, Johor was already attracting significant interest because of its billing as a potential battleground state among old and new Malay-based parties comprising prominent Johoreans who once were staunch allies. This feuding had generated much discussion, if mainly for the fact of its repercussions. Johor, after all had always been considered a stronghold of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), a reason why the opposition would find it difficult to defeat this party.

UMNO's association with Johor is longstanding, being the birthplace of the party and the place where many of the country's top leaders emerged (Stockwell 1997: 485). While other highly industrialized states with a mixed demography, like Penang and Selangor, had fallen under opposition control, it was Johor that remained a bastion for UMNO—and the coalition it led, the *Barisan Nasional* (BN)—following the 2008 and 2013 general elections. Major opposition parties such as the Islamic-based *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS) had struggled to make in-roads into Johor over the years. This was not for a lack of highly concentrated Malay-majority constituencies, as the east-based seats of Tenggara, Pengerang and Mersing can testify. However, seats with high Malay majorities tend to house FELDA settlements that have traditionally been UMNO voting blocs. Additionally, Johor's proximity to Singapore lends an additional complication as sharing a border with another country has a direct and indirect influence on the state, whether economically or culturally. Many Johoreans—as many as 400,000—work in Singapore and in recent years traffic between the two countries has increased significantly with Malaysians seeking higher wages and Singaporeans looking for cheaper goods and services (*The Straits Times* 10 April 2018). Finally, the presence of a very active royal family in Johor adds another layer of complexity to the dynamics of local politics which, in turn, affects developments at the national level. The Sultan of Johor and the royal family have many active business

investments in the state and participate in politics and current affairs far more frequently than their counterparts from across the country.

Johor's growth as an economic powerhouse has similarly been mirrored by developments in the political arena. Johor is Malaysia's third largest state, housing over three million people and has a fairly mixed population of 60% Malay, 33% Chinese and 7% Indian. This is complemented by a level of urbanization of over 70%, making it a reasonably developed state, with initiatives such as the Iskandar Puteri township and the Pengerang Integrated Petroleum Complex as standard bearers for Johor's larger role in the nation's economy (Rahman 2017b: 2–5).

These ingredients together make for a fascinating case study in the general elections of 2018. When considering *bangsa Johor*, a state-level identity, and how the state government co-opted this idea of Johor's exceptionalism, a key question emerges: how did intra-elite Malay feuding play out in Johor, given its unique context? This chapter illustrates the various ways that intra-elite feuding in both coalitions, BN and *Pakatan Harapan* (PH), manifested itself in Johor, specifically in three areas: conflict within the coalitions during campaign preparation; factionalism within parties; and how Prime Minister candidates, Najib Razak and Mahathir Mohamed, were managed by their respective coalitions in the election narrative. This chapter will also review campaigning techniques on both sides and how each coalition sought to win over the electorate in Johor. Finally, the chapter will account for BN's comprehensive defeat in Johor, suggesting that despite the extensive preparations made by this coalition and the disorganization of PH, the state fell because of a protest vote against Prime Minister Najib.

BN in Johor enjoyed significant popularity through its state government, as politicians such as Shahrir Samad and Chief Minister Khaled Nordin were popular. The 2013 general election had turned out to be a watershed moment for the state where the opposition gained a foothold by winning five parliamentary and 18 state seats (Mohamed Osman 2014: 3). Johor has 26 parliamentary seats, making it the second largest contributor of seats to parliament after Sarawak. Of those 26 seats, 20 were won by BN in 2013, with 14 going to UMNO and six to its BN component party members. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) won 4 seats, while the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia each won one seat.

For PH, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) had 4 seats, while *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR) and the newly-formed *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu), led by UMNO dissidents, had one each. Johor had as many as 13 marginal seats, the majority of which were under the BN. As for the legislative assembly, there were a total of 56 state seats: 37 of these were held by BN, 31 by UMNO and the rest by its BN partners.[1] The opposition, on the other hand, had 16 seats: 13 by DAP and one each by PKR, Bersatu and the PAS breakaway faction, *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah). Outside of the two coalitions, PAS had 3 state seats.

There were a fair number of marginal seats in Johor, at both the parliamentary and the state level. Of the 26 parliamentary seats, as many as 19 were considered marginal, fairly evenly distributed across the political divide. Although

this affected both coalitions, as the incumbent BN was more at risk. The margin ranged from 1% to 5%, with some seats won by a mere few hundred votes. By 2018, Johor had developed into a "battleground" because of opposition advances into the state provided by a major factional split in UMNO. Mahathir's departure from UMNO over the 1MDB scandal, claiming the party had become one dedicated to supporting what he saw as a corrupt Prime Minister, Najib, was followed by the sacking of his son, Mukhriz Mahathir, and former Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin. This schism eventually led to the formation of Bersatu with Mahathir as Chairman and Muhyiddin as President, the catalyst for many disgruntled UMNO members to join a new political party that presented itself as a credible alternative to their own. This political migration allowed Bersatu to break ground in many areas, including Johor, drawing support away from UMNO's traditional voter base while Muhyiddin himself was a seven-term MP for the Pagoh constituency in the state.

The campaign

UMNO claimed to be well prepared coming into the election, especially in Johor given the precariousness of the state and knowing full well that PH was likely to mount a significant challenge (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 369). PH was bolstered by the presence of the Johor favourite, Muhyiddin, who was contesting in his traditional seat, Pagoh, along with DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang, who was seeking re-election in the re-delineated seat of Iskandar Puteri. The redelineation exercise in Johor saw changes to 19 out of 26 parliamentary constituencies and 34 out of 56 state constituencies. Based on the voting patterns in GE13, these changes generally saw the movement of Malay and/or Chinese-dominated polling districts that either created super-majorities in opposition held seats or increased the number of Malay voters in marginal seats. This was the case in the Bakri and Muar parliamentary seats. Chinese voters in Muar were moved to the opposition-held Bakri in order to give BN candidate Razali Ibrahim a better chance of retaining his seat, which he won in 2013 by a mere 4% margin (*Malaysiakini* 24 Apr 2018). In the Pulai parliamentary constituency, five polling stations were moved out to give incumbent Nur Jazlan Mohamed a better chance of winning, while in Pasir Gudang similar machinations saw the Malay population in the constituency rise from 47% to 52%.[2] Another tactic saw army camps from various constituencies moved into Batu Pahat to raise the number of early voters. Batu Pahat was a marginal parliamentary seat narrowly won by PKR in the 2013 elections.

BN's preparation for the elections also seemingly extended to how PAS set itself up in the state. Much pre-election analysis focused on how detrimental three-cornered fights would be to PH. PAS contested 41 out of 56 state seats, winning just one, and contested 20 out of 26 parliamentary seats, failing to win any. A PAS–UMNO unofficial pact had been alluded to by many opposition members and PAS's decision to contest an unprecedented number of seats in a state where the party traditionally had little support suggested that there was

some truth to the matter. Campaigning was muted or virtually non-existent, with candidates failing to avail themselves in public or simply not turning up when expected.[3]

The appeal of a local candidate was a constant point made by BN, with the slogan *muafakat Johor* (referring to 'collective effort'), part of its *bangsa Johor* state branding. This theme was stressed in all speeches to remind Johor voters of the party's focus on local issues (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 374). BN emphasized its candidates were local Johoreans who were born and bred in the constituencies that they were contesting, such as Jason Teoh and his state seat candidates, MIC's S. Kanan and UMNO's Mohd Khairi Malik, who were referred to as *anak jati Gelang Patah* (Gelang Patah natives). This point was especially made to criticize incumbent Lim Kit Siang of the DAP, who BN claimed was a parachute candidate despite the fact that he was born in Johor. Similar local virtues were advocated elsewhere in Johor through candidates like Khaled Nordin, born in Muar, Ahmad Maslan, a native of Pontian, Azalina Othman from Johor Bahru and Shahrir Samad, a non-local but one who was involved in Johor Bahru for decades. Local issues featured prominently, including pledges to resolve traffic issues in Gelang Patah. In this way, BN conflated the concept of *muafakat Johor* with that of *bangsa Johor* in order to appeal to the local sentiments of voters in the state (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 374).

PH also similarly sought to embrace the state-level nationalism of *bangsa Johor*, albeit to a lesser degree compared to their BN counterparts (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 374). Candidates were brought in because of their Johor links: Syed Saddiq of Johor Bahru contested in Muar, Maszlee Malik also of Johor Bahru was sent to Simpang Renggam, Yeo Bee Yin contested in her native Bakri and Akmal Nasir contested in his constituency of Johor Bahru. Even Rashid Hasnon, who was born in Johor but left early on to eventually make his political bones in Penang, was brought in to replace the ailing Idris Jusi in Batu Pahat. References were made about their local credentials, but associations to the concept of *bangsa Johor* were not made, perhaps for fear of conflating their efforts with BN's existing *muafakat Johor*. Much of the criticism directed at PH in the past revolved around "parachute" candidates, a problem that they attempted to resolve by fielding locals.[4] Attention towards local issues was present but not exceptional, with much time devoted to federal issues such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and corruption scandals of the Najib administration. This is not to suggest *ceramah* (rallies) and campaign materials were devoid of Johor issues, as evidenced by a video released by Muar candidate Syed Saddiq who highlighted the difficulties associated with working and travelling daily to Singapore (*Channel News Asia* 21 March 2018).

Inter-party relations within PH presented their own problems. Many within DAP and PKR were wary of working with Bersatu members as they had just crossed over from UMNO.[5] Bersatu members themselves did not rule out joining UMNO in the future, suggesting they did not see a long-term future for themselves with Mahathir's party.[6] These Bersatu members brought with them the organizational structure of their former party, but notably lacked the funds

for much of their campaigning. There was much reliance on DAP, as the most established party in Johor Bahru, particularly for its resources and manpower. However, the DAP was reluctant to share these resources with its coalition partners.[7] The case in Johor Bahru saw a PKR candidate for the parliamentary seat, alongside a candidate each from Bersatu and DAP for the respective state seats. A distinct lack of coordination among the parties over issues involving protocol with the Election Commission highlighted how poorly organized their efforts were. Bersatu also experienced significant problems paying its members and staffers, and many of its stations were deserted leading up to polling day. PH component parties worked independently with little to no coordination among them, unless candidates were attending the same *ceramah*. This can be contrasted to BN, whose candidates campaigned as a single cohesive unit throughout the state, supporting each other regardless of party.

BN's campaign in Johor mirrored the national campaign that, in general, was muted; there was a clear strategy to stay away from large-scale *ceramahs*, whether involving national or local leaders. UMNO candidates preferred small-scale gatherings at local low-cost flats in urban areas and *ceramah kelompok* (modest-sized neighbourhood rallies) in rural areas. In many instances, candidates themselves did not appear at these events that mostly featured local-level leaders speaking with each other in a forum-like setting. These events also lacked "organic" audiences as most attendees were party members themselves, decked out in their blue and white party colours. Additionally, audience members tended to come from the three main component parties that was indicative of a well-oiled machinery capable of mobilizing support when necessary, especially when members of the public failed to show up in significant numbers. Elsewhere, BN candidates focused their efforts on closed-door events and ceremonies, typically involving local organisations and district-level interest groups, overseen by a BN local division chief. Candidates' campaign schedules were difficult to obtain, whether through social media channels or via mobile phone messaging such as Whatsapp. Such information had to be directly obtained from the candidate's personal assistant or other staffers.

PH employed campaign tactics used in the past, such as large-scale *ceramahs* involving national leaders, to draw the crowd. The most notable *ceramah* in Johor happened ahead of the campaign period, on 6 April in Pasir Gudang. Attended by a reported ten thousand people, the *ceramah* was for the purpose of announcing the use of the PKR logo as the common symbol for all component parties in PH for the election. Attending the event were Mahathir, Lim Guan Eng and Kit Siang of the DAP, Mohamed Sabu of Amanah and Wan Azizah Wan Ismail of PKR, all leaders of their respective parties. Public *ceramahs* were a regular feature every night from nomination day, with candidates tending to make multiple appearances at different locations each night. The size of these events ranged from big neighbourhood *ceramahs* featuring national leaders, corner-lot coffeeshop gatherings in smaller neighbourhoods, to small-scale events in apartment blocks, all of which were indicative of PH's clear attempt to be as broad-based as possible with their *ceramah* reach. Established opposition politicians, including

DAP's Gobind Singh Deo and PKR's Rafizi Ramli, made appearances to support local candidates. Information about candidates' whereabouts were quickly and efficiently disseminated through social media and Whatsapp, with daily schedules usually released a day in advance. Accessibility of candidates in this sense was easy and convenient, allowing voters to track the movements of their respective candidates or to keep abreast with the day's events, resulting in higher turnouts. It was not uncommon to see local vendors setting up stalls selling food and drinks to take advantage of the large crowds. Social media was used extensively throughout the campaign, such as the use of Facebook to broadcast *ceramahs* live, with viewers often numbering in the thousands.

The difference in approach for *ceramahs* between BN and PH also reflected how the electorate reacted to their campaign styles. The crowds at BN events consisted mostly of coalition members, clearly identified by their party attire, while members of the public were few. A majority of the public appeared disinterested and disengaged, with most of the noise and slogan-chanting coming from BN members themselves. MIC and MCA were reliant on UMNO's extensive election machinery for assistance, exemplified in their use of members to boost crowd numbers and drum up support at *ceramahs.* This was the case in Iskandar Puteri, where scores of UMNO volunteers turned up midway through a *ceramah* at a local coffee shop to lend their support to the MCA candidate for the seat, Jason Teoh, inflating the audience size to make it appear that the candidate was popular in the constituency. These volunteers also did well to liven the proceedings with musical performances and songs, instantly improving the atmosphere at a flat event.

This was in clear contrast to PH *ceramahs,* which consisted of a handful of party members typically present to manage traffic or collect donations, with a majority of the audience consisting of members of the public who were engaged throughout the *ceramah*, chanting slogans, donating money to PH and buying their own food and drinks to stay long into the night. PH events tended to draw mixed but predominantly non-Malay crowds. Turnouts for *ceramahs* with national leaders drew sizable numbers, although mostly attended by non-Malays. This indicated strong non-Malay support for PH, while Malays tended to stay away from openly declaring their allegiance. PH candidates contended that this suggested that Malay voters were moving away from supporting UMNO, but were reluctant to openly show support.[8]

The PH narrative was clear and consistent throughout the campaign period in Johor, mirroring the messaging at the national level. The themes of "*hapuskan GST*" ("get rid of GST") and overthrowing a scandal-ridden Prime Minister were repeated. 1MDB was cited as an example of a scandal that had burdened the people with a higher cost of living, with the intricacies and details of the scandal avoided. The FELDA scandal and the fall in the share price of FELDA Global Ventures were recurring topics that were properly dissected and discussed. These topics were supplemented with campaign promises of reducing foreign workers, addressing housing issues, subsidizing petrol and abolishing tolls. PH's messaging was also consistent throughout, in stark contrast to the jumbled narrative of

BN, and was disseminated far and wide particularly through social media. PH was able to address issues relevant to voters, while BN Johor was unable to do so because any discussion of problems would be an admission of responsibility.

BN's campaign in Johor distinctly lacked a clear narrative from one *ceramah* to the next, with the only discernible themes being its espousal of the success of the local state government, the benefits of continued BN rule in the state and the need for stable governance. The campaign also actively attempted to distance itself from the federal government, avoiding Najib's image on campaign materials or bringing up any merits of his tenure (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 371). As the popularity of the BN state government was less in doubt compared to that of Najib and the federal government, a pivot toward the Johor government leveraged on BN's strengths in the state. However, an inability to engage with national issues such as cost of living, influx of foreign workers, or the corruption scandals of 1MDB or FELDA hamstrung the ability of BN to appeal to voters. The effect was more pronounced for the MIC and the MCA as these BN component parties were not able to successfully harness the popularity of the state government, which was largely perceived to be the work of UMNO and Khaled Nordin, the popular Chief Minister. As a result, MCA and MIC danced awkwardly around issues that were of direct concern to their voting communities, whether their concerns with the federal government or the increasing marginalization of non-Malays, focusing instead on the importance of local politics.

UMNO–BN's persistent reliance on the Malay vote saw them employ old strategies in the election (Arakaki 2009: 9). BN used party members, assigned them to a group of voters of typically 10–20 individuals and tasked them with ensuring their groups' continued support and votes for the coalition. This approach served BN well in the past, with money politics and political patronage at the local and communal level proving effective. However, it proved insufficient in this election as the electorate felt less obliged to vote for BN despite receiving money or gifts, and civil servants and other early voters were less beholden to support the government with as much as 50% voting for PH.[9]

Finally, a reliance on this network to gauge voter sentiment was seriously flawed with many BN supporters either changing their minds or not going out to vote. An election strategy not backed by any method or data contributed to BN largely operating within a bubble, oblivious to voter sentiment until the last few days before the election. This approach was based on Malay voting patterns from past elections, failing to account for the vast split in the Malay vote owing to the emergence of Bersatu and Amanah as alternatives to UMNO and PAS, respectively.

Conflicts within coalitions

A recurring theme throughout the election cycle and prevalent within both BN and PH was the turbulence within the coalitions and how this stymied election efforts on both sides. For BN, the consociational agreement that saw power unevenly skewed in favour of UMNO at the expense of other component parties

on the peninsular was exacerbated by the election results in 2008 and 2013 (Saravanamuttu 2016: 13–15). With the MCA and the MIC jointly having barely a dozen parliamentary seats coming into the 2018 elections, it was clear that the balance of power in BN was heavily centralized with UMNO.

Despite strong talk of a "comeback" in Johor by the MCA, some UMNO candidates expressed scepticism about MCA's ability to deliver the required Chinese votes. In 2013, MCA notably did well off the back of Malay support for BN, not from its core Chinese voter base. For the election in 2018, there was an expectation on their part to recapture Chinese voters disillusioned with DAP (Izzuddin 2014). In Johor Bahru, the UMNO candidate for the state seat of Larkin was dismissive of MCA's chances and openly stated his preference to rely on his own party and the votes of Malays.[10] This is an interesting concession given the Chinese population in the constituency was considerable at 40% and that victory in the seat would have to draw from this base, a reality the UMNO candidates seemed confident of achieving.

The selection of PH parliamentary candidates in Johor, particularly by PKR, seemed to suggest other issues were more important than defeating BN. Considering PH's desire to win control of Johor, PKR's lack of national leaders in the state appeared to be a glaring omission. Their list featured 11 newcomers at parliamentary level, the only notable exception being Rashid Hasnon who was a former Deputy Chief Minister in Penang (*The Star Online* 26 April 2018). PKR's announcement of its candidates was significantly delayed because of disagreements within the party over seat allocation, which saw speculation of national leaders such as Tian Chua contesting in Johor, rumours that were eventually quashed after the PKR Vice-President held a press conference warning of factionalism in the party (*The Star Online* 22 April 2018).

The obvious division in PKR was the rift between Vice-President Rafizi and Deputy President Azmin Ali. Much of the internal struggle to name candidates arose from these two factions battling for ascendency in the election, represented by candidate selection. These schisms reflected poorly on the party, considering the importance of Johor in the election where the decisive contribution of national leaders as candidates in key seats would have significantly increased the pressure on BN to deliver in a state on the frontlines of the election (*Malaysiakini* 8 January 2018). Reports suggested that coalition partners were unhappy with PKR's reluctance to send national leaders to Johor, even going so far as to request to contest the Johor Bahru parliamentary seat (*Malaysiakini* 8 January 2018). Akmal Nasir of PKR was chosen to run in Johor Bahru, derided by his opponent Shahrir Samad as a mere "baby" in politics, reflecting his thinking that he saw the PH's nomination as an insult to his own calibre as a politician.[11] Notably, Akmal was aligned with Rafizi who campaigned for him in the run-up to the election. Rafizi's NGO, Invoke, also used its Johor office for Akmal's campaign. Meanwhile Rashid Hasnon, aligned with Azmin, was moved from Penang, purportedly to dilute the influence of the PKR deputy president in the north, to Batu Pahat to replace the ineffective Idris Jusi.[12]

As DAP were finalizing their candidate list for Johor, another rift emerged within the leadership of the party over seat allocation. Not unlike PKR, disagreements within DAP saw divisions over their strategy in Johor: where some wanted to take more risks by placing high-value candidates in marginal seats, others did not want to risk their own safe seats. No suitable taker could be found for the seat of Labis, deemed too much of a risk despite the margin of victory in 2013 being a mere 353 votes. The seat was passed around the party, declined by Gobind Singh Deo and Teo Nie Ching (*The Star Online* 26 April 2018). The biggest casualty of this tussle was Boo Cheng Hau, then an assemblyman of the Skudai state seat that he had been affiliated with for 20 years. The DAP leadership directed Boo to Labis, although he indicated his desire to remain in Skudai and not contest a parliamentary seat. Boo was dropped as a candidate after he refused to heed the party's instruction and was replaced by his former protégé Tan Hong Ping in Skudai (*The Star Online* 14 April 2018). Boo accused his former assistant and the party leadership of "stabbing him in the back," although ultimately he did not break party rank (*The Star Online* 29 April 2018). Former Johor DAP chairman Pang Hok Liong was eventually confirmed as the candidate for Labis, putting to bed a poor public display of dithering and infighting from DAP.

For BN, a significant episode of factionalism played out in Batu Pahat. The seat was won by PKR's Mohd Idris Jusi in the 2013 elections by a margin of just over 1%. Jusi pulled off a significant upset, dethroning UMNO supreme council member Mohd Puad Zarkarshi. Jusi was dropped in 2018 as a candidate, as he had lost the confidence of his constituency and was replaced by Rashid Hasnon. Puad, the former head of Jabatan Hal Ehwal Khas (JASA), a special affairs department under the Prime Minister's office, was similarly dropped as the candidate and replaced by Batu Pahat women's chief Haliza Abdullah, as he was perceived to have lost the support of the people (*The Star Online* 24 April 2018). This did not go down well with Puad, who broke party ranks and claimed the candidate selection process was fatally flawed and that candidates in Johor were picked as a result of cronyism. After resigning from JASA, he threatened to run in Batu Pahat as an independent candidate. It was only after the intervention by the Sultan of Johor that he stood down from the contest, although Puad made veiled personal attacks against Haliza (*Malaysiakini* 27 April 2018).

Senior leaders in UMNO including Deputy Prime Minister Zahid Hamidi and Chief Minister Khaled were unsympathetic to Puad, warning him that any contest as an independent candidate would be grounds for expulsion from the party (*Free Malaysia Today* 28 April 2018). According to BN Johor leaders, Puad was nominated for the seat by national leaders but BN-Johor had vetoed this decision.[13] BN-Johor was confident of winning the seat, considering the slim margin of PH victory in 2013 alongside their own preparations of increasing the number of voters potentially in their favour; all that was left was a preferred candidate to lead the charge. State BN leaders appeared willing to suffer the blowback of dropping Puad, but the consequences of the entire episode suggest that pushing him out backfired considerably. The participation of the Sultan drew considerable attention as this covertly illustrated the royal family's own political preferences.

Managing coalition leaders

In Johor, the presence of Najib as part of BN's campaign narrative was detrimental to the coalition, which actively sought to distance itself from his administration while playing up their own achievements. Najib himself refrained from visiting Johor during the campaign period, perhaps cognizant of the damage it might cause to the chances of retaining the state.

BN Johor had its own manifesto, specific for the state, that although not dissimilar with BN's aims at the national level focused very specifically and comprehensively on local solutions to local problems. The manifesto comprised five key areas of focus: economic prosperity; infrastructure; talent and skill development; leadership development; and developing a sustainable, Islamic culture.[14] However, distancing themselves from the federal government prevented BN Johor's narrative from resonating and unifying with the narrative in Peninsular Malaysia, a factor that contributed to its overall incoherency, especially in contrast to PH. BN Johor was reliant on the successes of the state government to win over voters but, importantly, was unable to address major concerns relevant to Johor. Their failure to address the topics of the cost of living, the GST and the presence of foreign workers played directly into the hands of PH, who centred their campaign on these topics.[15] This lack of engagement, although understandable given the perception that BN was responsible for these problems in the first place, ultimately proved costly as voters struggled to resonate with the coalition.

Although this was problematic for BN as a whole, it was worse for component parties MCA and MIC. As with the trend over the past few elections (Hutchinson 2018: 39), MCA and MIC continued to struggle to gain support from their respective communities for their association with a party that had increasingly marginalized non-Malays and for their failure to correct these transgressions.[16] These parties also did not have the full support of UMNO, who viewed them with distrust and their perceived inability to get the votes required for a BN victory.[17] It was also clear that a large part of the vote against BN was as a form of protest against Najib, with the biggest losers being BN component parties alongside the state government. This protest was most evident in the big losses suffered by those who had aligned themselves with Najib in the past, including Shahrir Samad and Nur Jazlan Mohamed.

The popularity of Mahathir tended to be more mixed in Johor. Although still popular with Malays, with many eventually leaving UMNO for Bersatu, a fair number in the state felt that he had betrayed UMNO by leaving the party.[18] Mahathir's image was not helped by Muhyiddin, who had a mixed track record during his time as Chief Minister of the state and thus was not wholly popular in Johor, especially in the south. Mahathir did not make an appearance in Johor during the election campaign despite travelling to other states in the peninsular including Kedah, Melaka and Pahang; indeed, his only appearance in Johor was in Pasir Gudang at a mass rally to announce the use of one logo for the election, which happened before nomination day (*New Straits Times* 7 April 2018). Mahathir had famously clashed with the Johor royal family in the past (Ibrahim 2012:

107–108) and more recently questioned the need for *bangsa Johor* (*New Straits Times* 30 August 2016). This, alongside Chinese distrust of Mahathir, saw many rallies in Johor refer to the Prime Minister candidate as a necessary evil to be endured for the sake of achieving a common goal. DAP *ceramahs* regularly called Mahathir a "tool" to use to win the elections, one that was required to bring over more Malay support for PH. The oft-cited campaign video of Mahathir speaking to a young girl of his past mistakes and his hopes for the country was played at virtually every *ceramah* as an attempt to convince Johoreans of the leader's sincerity. Clearly, throughout the campaign PH candidates treated the issue of Mahathir very carefully, concerned that local sentiment may work against them should they shower his name with praise.

A Malay leadership vacuum had clearly emerged in Johor following the departure of Mahathir and the sacking of Muhyiddin from UMNO and given that the unpopularity of Najib had fractured Malay support. Many UMNO supporters harboured disdain for their leaders, but the lack of a replacement presented an obstacle to either reconciling within the party or moving to PH altogether.[19] This vacuum was filled by the Sultan and the Johor royal family, especially after the 2008 elections (Ahmad Fauzi and Muhamad Takiyuddin 2012: 946); the family regularly engaged with sociopolitical issues while enjoying the support and popularity of Johoreans (Saat 2017: 3–5). However, although this led to the belief that Johoreans would align themselves with the Sultan's position, the opposite occurred. In early April, following the PH rally in Pasir Gudang, the Crown Prince of Johor, Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, launched a veiled attack against Mahathir on the Facebook page of the Johor Southern Tigers Football Club. In the statement, he warned Johoreans to be wary of the "forked tongue individual" who sought to curb the powers of the royalty, damage royal institutions and disband the Johor Military Force. He also referenced personal stories, including that of Private Adam who ran amok with an assault rifle in 1987 as an act of revenge for the alleged death of his younger brother by the then Sultan of Johor, Sultan Iskandar Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ismail (*New Straits Times* 12 April 2018). His lengthy statement ended by urging Johoreans not to be deceived and to trust him.

Johoreans reacted extremely negatively toward the perceived bias of the crown prince. As the royalty are meant to be politically impartial, with immediate members of the royal family not allowed to vote, the crown prince's open contempt for Mahathir, who was still respected by many, rankled Malaysians who let their feelings be known on social media (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 375). Many social media users respectfully disagreed with the crown prince, stating that it was the right of Malaysians to decide their own political future, while suggesting that perhaps the royal family was out of touch with the sociopolitical reality of life in Malaysia. Facebook data indicates that this episode caused massive organic engagement by individuals, reflecting the significance it had on voters' opinions.[20] Many took issue with the various intimate anecdotes of disdain against Mahathir that displayed a personal contempt instead of a professional disagreement with the former Prime Minister. The crown prince himself appeared to recognize the unpopularity of his opinions and sought to rectify his actions by

releasing another statement the day after, which did little to placate the mood. A few days later, he turned up at a shopping mall and spent more than RM1million buying groceries for others, hoping to placate the mood.

With the Johor electorate turning away from the Sultan, Bersatu with Mahathir as its leader was primed to address this new gap and to present the party and its leaders as viable options for the Malay electorate.[21] Bersatu leaders were confident of Mahathir's ability to draw Malay support, although coalition partner PKR was more hesitant to give him too much credit.[22] UMNO leaders such as Shahrir Samad, on the other hand, were dismissive of Mahathir's influence on the Malay electorate, insisting that "splits happen all the time" and that Bersatu's success would be dependent on PH's non-Malay support.[23] Additionally, the split between PAS and Amanah further compounded this issue and PAS's Hadi Awang's increasingly close relationship with UMNO was another cause for concern for PAS voters. In the past, when UMNO leaders left the party, the alternative for supporters was usually PAS.[24]

Results and analysis

Given Johor's makeup—mixed-voter demographics, semi-urban development with urban and rural pockets and the existence of FELDA settlements—this allowed for parallels to be drawn between the state's election results and national trends. PH captured the majority of the non-Malay vote and used this as a solid platform for winning seats, especially in mixed areas. Along with a 15% to 20% swing in the Malay vote to PH, this helped contribute to the fall of Johor. Despite the movement of Malay voters, suggestions that PH had won over Malays in general remained premature as sizable numbers voted for BN, and in other states, for PAS. In Johor, the BN stronghold in the east of the state was retained by sizable margins of more than 70% of the vote share, such as Pengerang and Kota Tinggi. This contrasts with PH's success in the more developed and urban areas of the west and south. This suggests wholesale rejection of MCA and MIC and enough of a Malay swing to capture the mixed seats.

Table 8.1 Election results

Party	*2013*	*2018*	*Gain/Loss*
UMNO	15	7	–8
MIC	1	0	–1
MCA	4	1	–3
GERAKAN	1	0	–1
PKR	1	7	+6
DAP	4	5	+1
AMANAH	0	1	+1
BERSATU	0	5	+5
PAS	0	0	–

Source: *The Star Online* (2018)

While UMNO's seats were reduced by more than half, of significance is the especially poor results for MIC, MCA and Gerakan, a performance exacerbated by the mixed-voter demographic of Johor that ordinarily would have provided a suitable platform for victory (see Table 8.1). MIC lost its only seat in Segamat by a majority of more than 5,000 votes; the same seat was won by a margin of 3% in the 2013 elections. Meanwhile MCA saw its support slip even further away, only retaining the seat of Ayer Hitam with a razor-thin majority of a few hundred votes. Along with the equally poor performance of Gerakan, BN component parties' performance in Johor indicated that non-Malay voters rejected the coalition, a trend that had been evident since the elections in 2008. PAS, on the other hand, failed to make any in-roads in a state where it had generally struggled to develop a foothold. Contesting in 20 parliamentary seats, PAS was only successful in drawing opposition votes away in Parit Sulong–giving an advantage to UMNO—and to a lesser extent, in Mersing.

UMNO's performance in what was largely considered to be its traditional stronghold flattered to deceive, with the party conceding many seats, mostly in the north, west and south of the state. Most of these parliamentary seats were in mixed seats with a Malay majority, swept up by PKR and Bersatu. UMNO stalwarts suffered heavy defeats, including Shahrir Samad in Johor Bahru, Khaled Nordin in Pasir Gudang and Nur Jazlan Mohamed in Pulai. The party managed to retain the east coast, however, with wins in Pengerang, Mersing and Kota Tinggi. These are constituencies with a much higher Malay majority than others in the state. Bersatu's performance in the election was commendable with wins for five of the eight seats contested. Similarly, PKR won seven of their eight seats, with an impressive victory in Johor Bahru by winning with a majority of 17,000 votes. DAP continued to build on their foothold in the state, adding one seat to their existing tally, defeating Chua Tee Yong of MCA in Labis.

The biggest difference between the elections in 2013 and 2018 was the composition of the parties within PH and the emergence of new Malay parties for the electorate. The split between UMNO and Bersatu saw the latter take two seats from UMNO, three including Muhyiddin's Pagoh seat, while PKR took another four seats. Clearly, the split in UMNO diluted its Malay support, with the biggest benefactor being PKR. Bersatu did well in semi-urban, mixed constituencies in the West, but fared poorly in the East, suggesting much of its success came from non-Malay votes (Wan Saiful 2018: 48–49). PAS's decision to go it alone saw it perform exactly the same in 2018 as it did in 2013—the change being that they no longer rode on the coat-tails of its coalition partners. On the other hand, PAS's splinter party, Amanah, only contested in two seats. Amanah did well in the mixed constituency of Pulai but fared poorly in the more Malay-dominated Parit Sulong, indicating that, like PAS, its popularity in the state was questionable and its victories can only be attributed to non-Malay support.

A lack of observable Malay support for PH, seen in the mixed crowds they drew at both small- and large-scale *ceramahs*, was consistent with suggestions from PH candidates of a "silent majority" of Malays voting in their favour despite not outwardly showing their support. MCA and MIC's failure to draw non-Malay voters

to BN compounds the coalition's reliance on Malay voters for victory, evidenced by the coalition's successes in Malay-majority eastern seats. This cost the BN as the swing of Malay voters in urban and semi-urban areas turn the tide in PH's favour. The notion of FELDA settlements as a "vote bank" for BN only partially rang true in this election, as a minority of these voters broke away from supporting UMNO to vote for PH. Additionally, BN's network to ensure support from its voters proved insufficient as many younger generation voters opted against UMNO, while older voters tended to stay away from voting altogether.[25] BN executed the same election strategy from 2013 without accounting for changes to the political dynamic.

Similar to 2008, the selection of candidates for PH ultimately did not matter as voters decided in droves to vote against BN. This is consistent with suggestions that any candidate could have contested under the PH logo and would have fared well,[26] evidenced by the staggering victory of newcomer Akmal Nasir in Johor Bahru. Likewise, concerns about PH leaders Mahathir and Muhyiddin also proved irrelevant in voter decision-making in a state where their popularity had not always been assured. DAP, despite public disputes over candidate selection and concerns of Chinese disaffection with the party, performed extremely well, indicating support levels for the party among non-Malays remained high.

BN came into the election well-prepared. The redelineation exercises moving voters around constituencies in Johor, the introduction of the Anti-Fake News bill, working with PAS to design three-cornered fights, holding a weekday election, a temporary ban on Bersatu, a truncated campaign period, BR1M as well as concessions for civil servants and the weight of the Sultan's backing ably demonstrate BN did not take their preparations, particularly in Johor, lightly. On the other side, PH offered the electorate no assurances with intra-party problems, lack of coordination within the coalition, in-fighting and indecisiveness over candidates stymieing their chances of mounting a serious challenge. Meanwhile, PAS spread itself all over the state, executing UMNO's election strategy to challenge PH at every turn, but failed to make any inroads.

Regardless, the electorate decided to vote out BN. Much of this can be attributed to the unpopularity of Najib as Prime Minister, as BN enjoyed approval in Johor. Popular UMNO leader Khaled Nordin suffered, while the lacklustre Muhyiddin continued to perform admirably in his home seat. BN Johor did much to dissociate itself from its leader, but this proved insufficient for it to retain power. A failure to address federal issues, including the corruption scandals of 1MDB and FELDA, played directly into the hands of PH as the electorate saw BN's inability to deal with the controversy surrounding Najib.

This decline in support for BN had been evident prior to GE14, with popular support falling from 65% in 2008 to 54.9% in 2013 (Hutchinson 2018: 24). Most of the seats conceded by BN were by MCA as the non-Malay vote continued to abandon BN. The coalition also drew lower levels of support in every parliamentary seat, with the slimmest margins in urban and semi-urban areas. Several marginal seats at both the state and the parliamentary level, including high profile seats such as Pasir Gudang, Pulai, Labis, Muar and Ayer Hitam, indicate that PH

was likely to make some gains in the state. PH could expect to do well in urban areas and those with mixed voter demographics, building on a foundation of strong non-Malay support while BN would have had to draw from the central and eastern seats such as Pengerang, Kota Tinggi and Mersing. Looking at the seats of Johor Bahru, Pasir Gudang and Simpang Renggam, the results indicate a swing of Malay voters across urban and semi-urban areas, while BN held out in the east, illustrating a deeply divided Malay vote.

Conclusion

This election featured a number of missteps for BN, from a weekday election that galvanized many Malaysians to go to great lengths to vote, to the Sultan's public disapproval of Mahathir that caused many Johoreans to turn away from the ruling coalition. Much of BN's tactical moves to win the election were regarded as blatant acts of cheating by an electorate already highly dissatisfied with the administration and its leaders. Johor BN leaders saw the flaws in their own party and their approach, seeking to move away from the patronage politics that defined much of UMNO in the past towards progressive needs-based methods.[27] This came too little too late for BN, with whatever progressive politics that could have been employed vastly overshadowed by Najib and the various problems of his administration.

Many factors worked in favour of PH in the election, although not necessarily of its own doing. Intra-elite Malay feuding provided the catalyst for voters to decide against Najib, providing them with alternatives in new parties and a pretext for taking decisive action. Although splits in parties and coalitions occur all the time, rarely do they occur when the Prime Minister himself is a highly controversial and unpopular figure embroiled in his own scandals. This suggests Malay intra-elite feuding and personality politics were core features, but significant electoral upheaval was contingent on the acceptability and approval of the nation's leaders. BN's resounding defeat demonstrates how factionalism within BN–UMNO at both the elite and the grassroots levels cost it the opportunity to meaningfully contest in a winnable state.

Johor is a complex case study for intra-elite Malay feuding. A vacuum of Malay political leadership, partly filled by the Johor royal family and partly by the BN state government, was quickly dismantled during the elections. Evidently, confidence in BN-Johor (by association with the federal government) was not enough to keep BN in power, while the political opinion of the Johor royal family was summarily ignored. With the election result, this vacuum has not necessarily been filled by PH. Mahathir and Muhyiddin are not universally popular in Johor. UMNO still retained a fair number of seats in the east. PAS continues to struggle to be seen as relevant and Amanah experiences similar problems. This leaves Bersatu and PKR as the main parties in government in Johor; the former, an UMNO faction whose long-term viability is still a question, the latter fractured and beset with division. PKR, as the lead party with seven parliamentary seats, especially benefited from being in the right place at the right time—when the electorate

wanted to get rid of Najib. Questions need to be asked how viable the leadership of PKR is, considering party president and Prime Minister-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim spent the entirety of the election in prison. Should intra-elite feuding in PKR spill over in Johor in the future—a not unlikely scenario—it would do much to damage an already precariously balanced state.

DAP emerged unscathed and confident from the election, adding one additional seat to its previous tally. Ousting virtually all of MCA from Johor has solidified DAP's position in the state, while its popularity has been used as a springboard for other parties to gain ground. DAP did much to hold a fractious coalition together, preventing feuding Malay parties from breaking the coalition. In a mixed state such as Johor, this lent PH much leverage; however, DAP may find itself playing second-fiddle to the other Malay parties in the state. MCA failed to address its voters' concerns because of its alliance with UMNO, and DAP might find itself in a similar position. BN component parties, on the other hand, are arguably the biggest losers and have some way to go to regain the trust of the Johorean electorate.

UMNO's comprehensive defeat in Johor does not yet mark its end in the state. Retaining seats in the east, UMNO managed to cling to seven parliamentary constituencies in total—equal with PKR as the highest number of seats won by a single party. In light of a continuing Malay leadership vacuum, UMNO going it alone and focusing on its core demographic may prove to be a sensible approach. UMNO still wields considerable influence while remaining popular, despite the election result. However, this is hampered by the party's own leadership problems, particularly in the state. UMNO leaders need to readjust to life as opposition. Those at the state level can hope to reassert themselves in the coming years. Johor could have the strong potential to flip back to UMNO, should the new state government prove unsatisfactory to Johoreans.

Notes

1 The MIC had 3 seats, MCA had 2 and Gerakan had one.
2 Interview with Shahrir Samad, BN–UMNO candidate for the Johor Bahru parliamentary seat, 30 April 2018.
3 Interview with Yahya Jaafar, BN–UMNO candidate for the Larkin state seat, 4 May 2018.
4 Interview with Akmal Nasir, PH–PKR parliamentary candidate for the Johor Bahru seat, 30 April 2018.
5 Interview with Stanley from PKR, strategist for the Johor Bahru seat.
6 Interview with Razali, party member of Bersatu, 2 May 2018.
7 Interview with Akmal Nasir, representative for PH candidate in Johor Bahru, 2 May 2018.
8 Interview with Maszlee Malik, PH–Bersatu candidate for Simpang Renggam parliamentary seat, 1 May 2018.
9 Interview with Shahrill Sabarudin, senior manager with Digital Johor, a consulting firm owned by the Johor state government.
10 Interview with Yahya Jaafar, BN–UMNO candidate for Larkin, 4 May 2018.
11 Interview with Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018.

12 Interview with Mohamed Ali Ghazali, representative for PH candidate in Johor Bahru, 2 May 2018.
13 Interview with Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018.
14 A printed copy of the manifesto was obtained by the author during the campaigning period. The 52-page booklet extensively covers issues from a Johorean angle.
15 Interview with Shahrill Sabarudin of Digital Johor.
16 Interview with Stanley from PKR, strategist for the Johor Bahru seat.
17 Interview with Yahya Jaafar, BN–UMNO candidate for Larkin.
18 Interview with Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018.
19 Interview with Liew Chin Tong, PH–DAP candidate for the Ayer Hitam parliamentary seat, 1 May 2018.
20 Interview with Shahrill Sabarudin of Digital Johor.
21 Interview with Maszlee Malik, 1 May 2018.
22 Interview with Akmal Nasir, 30 April 2018.
23 Interview with Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018.
24 Interview with Liew Chin Tong, 1 May 2018.
25 Interview with Shahrill Sabarudin of Digital Johor.
26 Interview with Liew Chin Tong, 1 May 2018.
27 Interview with Shahrir Samad, 30 April 2018.

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9 Penang

Victory by support or defeat by chance?

Chan Xin Ying

Introduction

Penang, widely acknowledged as a *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) safe deposit, was expected to be retained by this opposition coalition. Nevertheless, such predictions have assumed that its strength lies in the strong support of the Chinese and urban communities. The defunct *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR), reconstituted as PH, had encountered difficulties making inroads into key Malay-majority constituencies, including in the Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor constituencies on mainland Penang. On Penang island, Balik Pulau remained a Malay-majority constituency that could be won by any side. With PAS's departure from PR in 2015, concerns that the DAP-led state government would encounter difficulties in capturing Malay votes in the impending general election could not be dismissed.

Malaysia's General Election 14 (GE14) results, however, reflect that Malay-majority constituencies supported the PH government. Support for PH rose owing to intra-elite feuding in the Malay political parties. PH made breakthroughs in Malay-majority constituencies, with *Barisan Nasional* (BN, or National Front), the governing coalition at the federal level, maintaining only two of its parliamentary seats and two state seats. Meanwhile, the *Parti Islam e-Malaysia* (PAS) won only one state assembly seat. BN's vote shares declined because of decreased public support and also because a sizeable number of the members of the hegemonic party in this coalition, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), cast their votes for the opposition as an internal protest of its leaders, specifically Prime Minister Najib Razak. Ultimately, BN only garnered 36.42% of the total vote share (*Today Online* 10 May 2018).

This chapter aims to explore the main drivers behind the shifting voting patterns of the Malay electorate, as well as the factors behind PH's success in maintaining control of Penang. This chapter argues that intra-elite feuding created political opportunity structures that expedited social change. Societal and economic grievances created bottom-up forces for political development wherein protest votes were cast to punish incumbents for economic difficulties. Based on data gathered from fieldwork conducted in Penang and the election results, this chapter argues that elite feuding, which caused the defection of key leaders from UMNO and PAS, contributed to the fall of BN. Splinter Malay-based parties, including *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu) and *Parti Amanah Negara*

(Amanah), which were formed by defectors and led by prominent figures, such as former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, created political alternatives for the Malays. With the entry of Bersatu and Amanah into PH, the Malay vote bloc was split into three, i.e., Mahathir's PH, Prime Minister Najib's BN and Abdul Hadi Awang's PAS. The rivalry among the three blocs thus created a new pattern of Malay votes. Moreover, this chapter also analyzes the importance of societal and economic grievances that shaped the voters' behaviour and choices. It argues that societal grievances, including Najib's corruption scandals and bread-and-butter issues, garnered intense resentment that resulted in protest voting against BN. This chapter is separated into two parts. The first section details election campaigning strategies and issues, and the second section focuses on intra-elite feuding and protest votes after assessing the election results.

The campaign: challenges and strategy

The fieldwork for this research was conducted from the pre-nomination days until the end of the campaign period. More than two weeks was spent researching constituencies in both the mainland and the island, participating in and observing political events in the state. This research includes observations of political events, e.g., rallies and talks by each party's representatives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key local political actors including politicians, candidates, campaigners and party workers. Informal communication was also conducted between the author and grassroots activists to further understand local-level political dynamics. Campaigning strategies and machinery employed by both BN and PH component parties during the election were studied to understand public sentiments and concerns. Narratives from the voters were carefully assessed to determine the factors impacting voting changes, especially in Malay-majority constituencies.

The unofficial campaigning started before nomination day when potential candidates started their walk-arounds in each constituency. Both PH and BN adopted different campaign approaches, highlighting the different challenges they faced. Throughout the 10-day campaign period, PH and BN candidates approached voters to deliver their message directly. Walkabouts were common for both PH and BN. Candidates made rounds in public places such as the morning market, hawker centres and restaurants. Door-to-door visits were conducted on a large scale, usually during the day. While candidates engaged in conversation with the general public, volunteers and party workers would check voters' registration through the Election Commission's (EC's) online systems.

For PH, campaign hurdles included the BN-controlled media and money politics. Besides that, restrictions imposed by the Registrar of Societies Malaysia (ROS) forced PH to adopt PKR's "Blue Eye" (*Mata Biru*) logo. This was because the use of PH's logo was not allowed by the ROS.[1] According to Padang Lalang DAP candidate, Chong Eng, crowds were confused about the missing logos of the other PH component parties and questioned the logic behind DAP abandoning its "Rocket" logo that had been used for decades.[2] Secondly, Penang

DAP faced race-based attacks from BN, which accused the Chinese-dominated party of dominating and controlling the opposition coalition, thus creating a "DAP fear factor" in the Malay community.

A slate of election campaign rulings implemented by the BN federal government also worked against PH. This included the banning of photos of Mahathir and Anwar in campaign materials; the adoption of the Anti-Fake News law; and manipulating the EC to institute gerrymandering and vote packing. In an interview at Batu Uban, PKR party worker Laitifah Hussaina stated that voters had been complaining that the EC had made changes in this constituency without the knowledge of her party. She had personally witnessed BN party workers collecting the identity cards (ICs) of residents in Batu Maung for "election purposes." When the ICs were returned, voters discovered that their addresses had been changed to Batu Uban instead.[3]

Internally, PH faced problems of campaign coordination because of unequal resources and a lack of campaigning experience within the newly-established parties. The component parties under the coalition shared their manpower but did not have a central funding mechanism. Each political party was responsible for raising funds.[4] Among the four PH political parties, DAP was the best-funded party. Before nomination day, donation dinners were held by DAP Penang. Donors included Chinese education activists and key business leaders. Other PH parties did not have this advantage. Both Amanah and Bersatu had little funding and were up against strong BN candidates. For Amanah, other than the candidate in Permatang Pasir, Faiz Fadzil,[5] who is the son of former PAS president Fadzil Noor and a seasoned politician, the other three candidates had little political experience. As for Bersatu, besides Marzuki Yahya, formerly in UMNO, the other two candidates had no prior political experience.

Despite outward displays of cooperation, party workers commented on the tensions simmering beneath the surface between the PH component parties. PKR members complained of difficulties with working with Bersatu members, as many still maintained UMNO-member-like behaviour and expected positions to be given to them: "Bersatu is still the same UMNO."[6] The new parties such as Amanah and Bersatu were considered inexperienced, at times panicking when conducting campaign activities. DAP members also commented that while Bersatu members had much experience conducting events, they faced difficulties in organizing a mega *ceramah* (rally) as UMNO rarely held such huge gatherings during an election campaign. One DAP party worker complained that Bersatu members had no idea how to hold an event without lucky draws.

Nevertheless, PH turned some of its disadvantages to strengths. The adoption of PKR's "Blue Eye" logo helped to mask the imbalance of resources among PH's component parties. A DAP party worker explained that candidates from new parties such as Bersatu and Amanah used the banners and flags obtained from DAP offices in the constituencies they were contesting. This helped reduce perceptions, especially among the Malays, that DAP had a stronger presence than Malay political parties. Adopting the PKR logo further won sympathy from the Malay electorate. PKR's general election facilitator for Balik Pulau (*Pengarah*

Pilihanraya), Mohd Nasarudin Sultan, stated that Malays expressed respect for DAP because of the abandonment of its Rocket logo.[7] The manipulation of voter constituencies had also angered voters and motivated many voters to visit PH's kiosks and offices to ensure that they are registered on the EC electoral roll.

Generally, PH's campaign focused on federal issues, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the rising cost of living. One of PH's main strategies was to organize "*ceramah kelompok*" (clustered talk) or "*Mega Ceramah*" (mega rallies). Mega *ceramahs* took place at the Esplanade (on the island) and in Seberang Perai (on the mainland). Indeed, back-to-back *ceramahs* were common in Penang. Two *ceramahs* were often held simultaneously on the island and the mainland by the same group of candidates and speakers. The speakers were divided into two sessions and interchanged between both *ceramahs*. Hence, PH candidates managed to appear on both the island and the mainland, gaining much publicity. In contrast, smaller *ceramah kelompok* were held in the predominantly Malay rural and semi-rural constituencies, where food was provided at PH's kiosks during speeches.

PH utilized their strength on social media platforms in GE14 to counter the BN-controlled media. Information posted on social media was circulated in Wechats and Whatsapp chat groups to make sure "genuine" information from PH was spread to the public. This strategy aimed to counter "fake news" from the BN government, who controlled the mainstream media. Generally, the campaigning activities of PH candidates were well-promoted in social media, including on the coalition's and each respective component parties' Facebook and Twitter. Updates on the campaign were frequently uploaded to the website and live streaming was generally available for the mega *ceramahs*, allowing for the mass dissemination of campaign messages to various communities across the state.

Events organized by PH were attended by a racially mixed populace of all age groups. Most mega *ceramahs* held by PH attracted huge crowds, especially for sessions attended by Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng. During the *ceramahs*, PH party workers collected donations from the crowd; merchandise items such as the *Ubah* bird soft-toy and PH T-shirts were sold to collect funds, in contrast to BN who distributed free merchandise. On the other hand, BN encountered difficulties owing to its declining integrity. Scandals involving Prime Minister Najib as well as corruption and patronage allegations involving UMNO dented the coalition's reputation. The strong support for PH in urban areas and intense discontent towards Najib's administration constituted the main challenge for BN. Mahathir's entry into PH swayed the Malay voter bloc, especially in mainland Penang. Former UMNO leaders including Mohd Shariff Omar and Marzuki Yahya posed challenges to UMNO candidates in the mainland. Furthermore, federal issues relating to the people's livelihood, especially the GST, affected the poor and rural voters badly, potentially swaying BN's traditional voter base.

Compared to PH, BN's campaigning methods appeared rather muted. BN's focus was on walkabouts and home visits. Gerakan and MCA did organize a few

ceramahs that were not widely promoted.[8] On the other hand, UMNO hardly promoted their campaigning events in Facebook or Twitter, but circulated the details in Whatsapp chat groups considering that this is the most popular social media platform among the rural Malay community.[9] In fact, BN considered it more useful to conduct door-to-door visits to have personal contact with voters rather than political rallies (*The Sun Daily* 29 April 2018). Instead of conducting large political rallies, more "*minum petang*" (afternoon tea) and food sessions were organized, especially in rural areas. *Puteri UMNO* (UMNO Women Youth Wing) and *Wanita UMNO* (UMNO Women's Wing) were mobilized to organize these events, particularly to handle logistics and goodies distribution. They helped to distribute messages to housewives who rarely left their residential areas, particularly in rural areas, during walk-arounds. Potluck sessions were often organized at UMNO kiosks and operation rooms after morning walkabouts. The participants of these sessions normally numbered around 20–30 people.

The disbursement of goodies and money were utilized by BN in its campaign. The coalition's events often provided food and drinks. Besides merchandise with BN logos, basic food items were given as well. According to interviews with respondents in Kepala Batas, 5kg rice bags were given to everyone in the neighbourhood.[10] An interview with a respondent from Tasek Gelugor also revealed that around RM1,000 would be given to each family if they agreed to abstain from voting and transfer their voting rights to "volunteers."[11] One respondent from Bagan stated that BN kiosks provided free food daily, but he complained that the scale of these food kiosks shrank compared to the 2013 election.[12] Another voter in Kepala Batas also noted that the rice given by BN was reduced in quantity compared to previous years. Attendees rarely declined these campaign gifts as it was perceived that these items were bought using the people's money.

If manpower was BN's strength, overconfidence was its weakness. During the campaign period, there were several campaign sessions where the candidate failed to appear; at these events, party workers from UMNO Wanita and Puteri merely served food. For instance, Balik Pulau residents shared that the BN candidate, Hilmi Yahaya, was not in the constituency at the beginning of the campaigning period; as the campaign progressed, new complaints surfaced about his continuous absence and how he was busy campaigning for candidates in other constituencies. Attendees complained about the late arrival of candidates at events.[13] In Bukit Mertajam, one resident complained that MCA's Berapit candidate was not seen campaigning in the neighbourhood, adding that since the latter had received campaigning funds, she should at least put in more effort to campaign.[14]

Furthermore, the local and personal approach of having food sessions in rural and semi-rural areas was also practiced by PH. PH also promised that the BR1M (1Malaysia People's Aid) programme introduced by BN would not be abolished. The PH candidate for Balik Pulau, Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, stated that after GE13, they understood the importance of "being local" in the constituency and many party workers were local residents in the 2018 election. Another example was offered by Bersatu party worker Rohani Husainssa; she emphasized her Balik Pulau heritage (*orang Balik Pulau*)—she was born here—when speaking to the people.

Beyond attacking PH's manifestos for being laden with unrealistic promises, BN's strategy appeared to lack focus. MCA's capitalizing on China's Belt and Road initiative, which helped draw investments into Malaysia, backfired as it created resentment among the Malays. Youths were rarely seen at BN events. The participants were mostly members of BN's component parties and senior citizens. Most of the audience, when asked, stated that they came to receive goodies, including money. Some commented that if BN won, BR1M would increase and they wanted to find out whether this was true from the speakers at the *ceramahs* and meeting sessions.[15]

Overview of results

As seen in Table 9.1, the results showed a clear victory for the PH in GE14. DAP and PKR won every parliamentary and state constituency that they contested in Penang. DAP maintained its results since 2008, and PKR made a huge advance in state constituencies, as the number of state seats won by the party increased from ten to 14. While not gaining any seats at the federal level, Amanah and Bersatu each won 2 state seats out of the 3 they contested.

On the other hand, BN's component parties hardly made any inroads in Penang since 2008. Gerakan, MIC and MCA lost all the parliamentary and state seats contested. Multi-cornered fights with new political parties, such as the Malaysian United Party (MU), Penang Front Party (PFP) as well as revived parties such as Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM), occurred in Chinese-majority constituencies. These new parties failed to gain even 1% of the popular vote (SPR 2018), even when strong candidates like the popular former DAP assemblyman Teh Yee Cheu contested in Sungai Pinang. As for BN, the MCA candidate at Berapit, Tan Teik

Table 9.1 Comparison of Malaysian general elections (2008–2018)

Parties	*2008 (GE12)*		*2013 (GE13)*		*2018 (GE14)*	
	Parliamentary	*State*	*Parliamentary*	*State*	*Parliamentary*	*State*
DAP (PH)	7/7	19/19	7/7	19/19	7/7	19/19
PKR (PH)	4/4	9/16	3/4	10/16	4/4	14/14
AMANAH (PH)	–	–	–	–	0/1	2/3
BERSATU (PH)	–	–	–	–	0/1	2/3
UMNO (BN)	2/5	11/15	3/5	10/15	2/5	2/15
MCA (BN)	0/4	0/10	0/4	0/10	0/4	0/10
MIC (BN)	0/0	0/2	0/0	0/2	0/0	0/2
Gerakan (BN)	0/4	0/13	0/4	0/13	0/4	0/13
PAS	0/2	1/5	0/2	1/6	0/7	1/21

Source: Figures and Data Retrieved from the Official Website of Suruhan Pilihanraya Malaysia

Cheng and Gerakan candidate in Pulau Tikus, Jason Loo, mentioned that they did not expect a major victory, but merely hoped to make an in-road into the state assembly as a check and balance.

The GE14 results indicated noteworthy changes in the voting patterns in Malay-majority constituencies.[16] At the parliamentary level, UMNO only managed to retain two constituencies (Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor), compared to ten constituencies in GE13 and 11 in GE12. It lost the marginal state seat of Sungai Acheh under the Nibong Tebal parliamentary constituency. On the other hand, of the three state constituencies in Kepala Batas that UMNO won in GE12 and GE13, two were lost to PH (Bertam and Pinang Tunggal) and one to PAS (Penaga).

PH won all the parliamentary and state seats in the Balik Pulau constituency.[17] Over the past two elections, Balik Pulau had been a marginal constituency, since the victory margin for both the opposition and BN was always small (~3%). However, the seats were won by much larger margins in GE 14. In 2008, when PKR won the Balik Pulau parliamentary seat, BN was able to retain the three state seats (Bayan Lepas, Pulau Betong and Teluk Bahang). However, in 2018, except for Teluk Bahang (425 vote difference), the vote difference between PH and BN was no longer marginal; each exceeded at least 1000 votes and neared a 10% difference. In contrast, PAS hardly captured more than 10% of the popular vote in Balik Pulau.

On the other hand, PH did not capture all Malay-majority constituencies in the mainland, although the number of seats it held increased from 2013. PH's victories in Bertam and Pinang Tunggal were not landslide victories, as the vote difference was 217 and 124, respectively. Furthermore, the vote difference in Sungai Acheh was also marginal, 221 votes. The presence of PAS was stronger in the mainland compared to the island. The splitting of votes among the three coalitions (PH, BN and PAS) was more obvious in the mainland. Analysing election trends from GE12 to GE14, it can be argued that the reduction of support for BN among the Malays began in 2008. The figures (refer to Tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3) show that the votes obtained by UMNO in Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor had decreased gradually from 2008 to 2018. Further discussion on these trends follows, with a focus on the three Malay majority constituencies of Kepala Batas, Tasek Gelugor and Balik Pulau.

Factors impacting outcome: intra-elite feuding

This section explains the factors behind the voting patterns within Malay-majority constituencies. The three case studies are Balik Pulau, Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor, which had been BN strongholds over the past decades but had fallen to PH in this election.

UMNO versus ex-UMNO

Intra-elite feuding had an impact on Penang's election results, especially in Malay-majority constituencies. Firstly, the defection of respected elites from BN

Table 9.2 Result of Kepala Batas parliamentary and state constituencies (GE12, GE13 & GE14)

Seats	*2008*			*2013*			*2018*			
	PR	*BN*	*Majority*	*PR*	*BN*	*Majority*	*PH*	*BN*	*PAS*	*Majority*
P41 Kepala Batas	Subri Arshad (PAS) 12,199 votes 33.6%	Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (UMNO) 23,445 votes 64.5%	11,246 Voters: 36,328 Malay: 75% Chinese: 21% Indian: 4%	Afnan Hamimi Taib Azamudden (PAS) 20952 votes 44.9%	Reezal Merican Naina Merican (UMNO) 25,128 votes 53.8%	4,176 Voters: 46,665 Malay: 76% Chinese:19% Indian: 4%	Zaidi Zakaria (AMANAH) 17,723 votes 29.3%	Reezal Merican Naina Merican (UMNO) 22,459 votes 37.1%	Siti Mastura Muhammad (PAS) 12,120 votes 20.0%	4736 Voters: 53,127 Malay: 78.56% Chinese: 17.02% Indian: 4.17%
N01 Penaga	Tapiudin Hamzah (PAS) 5454 votes 44.9%	Azhar Ibrahim (UMNO) 6685 votes 55.1%	1231 Voters: 12,314 Malay: 89% Chinese: 10%	Rosidi Hussain (PAS) 6688 votes, 44%	Mohd Zain Ahmad (UMNO) 8359 votes 54.9%	1662 Voters: 15,206 Malay: 91% Chinese: 9%	–	Mohd Zain Ahmad (UMNO) 7398 votes 38.8%	Mohd Yusni Mat Piah (PAS) 8530 votes 44.7%	1132 Voters: 16,801 Malay: 91.92% Chinese: 7.5% Indian: 0.39%
N02 Bertam	Noorsiah Md. Arshad (PKR) 4142 votes 37.8%	Zabariah Abdul Wahab (UMNO) 6794 votes 61.9%	2652 Voters: 11,233 Malay: 65% Chinese: 26% Indian: 10%	Syed Mikael Rizal Aidid (PKR) 6297 votes, 43.5%	Shariful Azhar Othman (BN-UMNO) 7939 votes, 54.9%	1642 Voters: 14,471 Malay: 66% Chinese: 25% Indian: 9%	Khalid Mehtab Mohd Ishaq (PPBM) 6485 votes 35.3%	Shariful Azhar Othman (UMNO) 6268 votes 34.1%	Mokhtar Ramly (PAS) 2986 votes 16.2%	217 Malay: 67.98% Chinese: 22.81%
N03 Pinang Tunggal	Mahamad Hashim (PKR) 4142 votes 37.8%	Roslan Saidin (UMNO) 7848 votes 63.0%	3235 Voters: 12,782 Malay: 70% Chinese:25% Indian: 4%	Ahmad Zakiyuddin Abd Rahman (PKR) 7568 votes 44.6%	Roslan Saidin (UMNO) 9155 votes 53.9%	1587 Malay: 73% Chinese: 23% Indian:4%	Ahmad Zaki Yuddin Ahmad Rahman (PKR) 7754 votes 33.6%	Roslan Saidin (UMNO) 7627 votes 33.1%	Bukhori Ghazali (PAS) 4,622 votes 20.0%	127 Voters: 20,396 Malay: 75.92% Chinese: 20.29% Indian: 3.56%

Source: https://keputusan.spr.gov.my/

Table 9.3 Result of Tasek Gelugor parliamentary and state constituencies (GE12, GE13 & GE14)

Seats	*2008*			*2013*			*2018*			
	PR	*BN*	*Majority*	*PR*	*BN*	*Majority*	*PH*	*BN*	*PAS*	*Majority*
P42 Tasek Gelugor	Ismail Salleh (PAS) 20,448 votes 42.6%	Nor Mohamed Yakcop (UMNO) 15,901 votes 54.8%	4547 Voters: 37,308 Malay voters: 77% Chinese voters: 15% Indian voters: 8%	Abdul Rahman Maidin (PAS) 21,351 votes 44.5%	Shabudin Yahaya (UMNO) 24,393 votes, 50.8%	3042 Voters: 48,009 Malay: 78% Chinese: 15% Indian: 7 %	Marzuki Yahya (PPBM) 18,466 votes 30.3%	Shabudin Yahaya (UMNO) 18,547 votes 30.5%	Rizal Hafiz Ruslan (PAS) 14,891 votes 24.5%	81 Voters: 60,850 Malay: 78.23% Chinese: 14.71% Indian: 6.59%
N04 Permatang Berangan	Arshad Md. Salleh (PAS) 5310 votes 42.1%	Shabudin Yahaya (UMNO) 7295 votes 57.8%	1985 Voters: 12,806 Malay: 80% Chinese: 9% Indian:10%	Arshad Md Salleh (PAS) 7292 votes 44.3%	Omar Abd Hamid (UMNO) 8913 votes 54.2%	1621 Voters: 16,452 Malay: 83% Chinese: 8% Indian: 9%	Mohd Shariff Omar (PPBM) 5021 votes 23.8%	Nor Hafizah Othman (UMNO) 6870 votes 32.5%	Mohd Sobri Saleh (PAS) 6224 votes 29.5%	646 Voters: 18,622 Malay: 84.84% Chinese: 7.15% Indian: 7.82%
N05 Sungai Dua	Mohd Salleh Man (PAS) 5886 votes 47.8%	Jasmin Mohamed (UMNO) 6421 votes 52.1%	535 Voters: 12,485 Malay:84% Chinese: 13% Indian: 2%	Zahadi Mohd (PAS) 7594 votes 47.2%	Muhamad Yusoff Mohd Noor (UMNO) 7951 votes 49.4%	357 Voters: 16,089 Malay: 84% Chinese: 14% Indian: 2%	Yusi Ishak (AMANAH) 5115 votes 24.9%	Muhamad Yusoff Mohd Noor (UMNO) 7314 votes 35.6%	Zahadi Mohd (PAS) 5380 votes 26.2%	1934 Voters: 18,066 Malay: 83.01% Chinese: 14.53% Indian: 2.17%
N06 Teluk Ayer Tawar	Norhayati Jaafar (PKR) 5008 votes 43.5%	Jahara Hamid (UMNO) 6478 votes 56.3%	1470 Voter: 11,705 Malay:65% Chinese: 23% Indian:11 %	Norhayati Jaafar (PKR) 7200 votes 46.5%	Jahara Hamid (UMNO) 8040 votes 52.0%	840 Voters: 15,471 Malay: 67% Chinese: 22% Indian: 10%	Mustafa Kamal Ahmad (PKR) 7072 votes 36.9%	Zamri Che Ros (UMNO) 4869 votes 25.4%	Mohamad Hanif Haron (PAS) 3900 votes 20.3%	2203 Voters: 16,198 Malay:65.8% Chinese:23.21% Indian: 9.96%

Source: https://keputusan.spr.gov.my/

Table 9.4 Result of Balik Pulau parliamentary and state constituencies (GE12, GE13 & GE14)

Seats	*2008*			*2013*			*2018*			
	PR	*BN*	*Majority*	*PR*	*BN*	*Majority*	*PH*	*BN*	*PAS*	*Majority*
P53 Balik Pulau	Mohd Yusmadi Mohd Yusoff (PKR) 15,749 votes 50.2%	Noraessah Mohamad (UMNO) 15,041 votes 47.9%	708 Voters: 31,391 Malay: 61% Chinese: 35% Indian: 3%	Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik (PKR) 20,779 votes 47.5%	Hilmi Yahaya (UMNO) 22,318 votes 51.1%	1539 Voters: 43,709 Malay: 64% Chinese: 32% Indian: 4%	Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik (PKR) 25471 votes 43.1%	Hilmi Yahaya (UMNO) 19,007 votes 32.2%	Muhammad Imran Muhammad Sa'ad (PAS) 5298 votes 9.0%	6464 Voters: 59,564 Malay: 64.9% Chinese: 30.16% Indian: 4.43%
N38 Bayan Lepas	Asnah Hashim (PAS) 6164 votes 48.4%	Syed Amerruddin Syed Ahmad (UMNO) 6563 votes 51.5%	399 Voters: 12,971 Malay: 62% Chinese: 34% Indian:5%	Asnah Hashim (PAS) 8950 votes 47.7%	Nordin Ahmad (UMNO) 9408 votes 50.1%	458 Voters: 18,765 Malay: 64% Chinese: 31% Indian: 5%	Azrul Mahathir Aziz (AMANAH) 12,504 votes 47.1%	Rusli Hashim (UMNO) 7259 votes 27.3%	Zarina Shinta Madar (PAS) 2497 votes 9.4%	5245 Voters: 22,618 Malay: 64.41% Chinese: 29.81% Indian: 5.29%
N39 Pulau Betong	Mansor Othman (PKR) 4696 votes 48.5%	Muhamad Farid Saad (UMNO) 4990 votes 51.5%	294 Voters: 9847 Malay: 60% Chinese: 37% Indian: 3%	Mohd Tuah Ismail (PKR) 6457 votes 47.8%	Muhamad Farid Saad (UMNO) 6854 votes 50.7%	395 Voters: 13,509 Malay: 63% Chinese: 34% Indian: 3%	Mohd Tuah Ismail (PKR) 7675 votes 42.2%	Muhamad Farid Saad (UMNO) 6079 votes 33.4%	Mohd Taufik Hashim (PAS) 1645 votes 9.0%	1596 Voters: 15719 Malay: 64.79% Chinese: 30.53% Indian: 4.02%
N40 Teluk Bahang	Abdul Halim Hussain (PKR) 3969 votes 47.2%	Hilmi Yahaya (UMNO) 4434 votes 52.7%	465 Voters: 8565 Malay: 62% Chinese: 36% Indian: 2%	Abdul Halim Hussain (PKR) 5233 45.8%	Shah Haedan Ayoob Hussain Shah (UMNO) 6034 52.8%	801 Voters: 11,434 Malay: 64% Chinese: 33% Indian: 3%	Zolkifly Md Lazim (PPBM) 5482 votes 38.2%	Shah Haedan Ayoob Hussain Shah (UMNO) 5057 votes 35.3%	Mohd Ali Othman (PAS) 1469 votes 10.2%	425 Malay: 65.94% Chinese: 30.32% Indian: 3.35%

Source: https://keputusan.spr.gov.my/

decreased its legitimacy in the public eye and reinforced PH's appeal. Indeed, the Mahathir factor in GE14 shored up support for the opposition. Most of the PH and BN candidates interviewed commented that, without Mahathir, PH would not have been able to win the election. Mahathir's popularity cut across age and ethnicity. His popularity could be gauged when a 120,000-strong crowd greeted his daughter, Marina, at two mega *ceramahs* in Penang (Esplanade and Butterworth) on 28 April 2018, nomination day (*Malaymail* 29 April 2018).[18] This enthusiastic show of support occurred even though during the campaigning period, Mahathir himself was rarely seen in Penang. During my three weeks of fieldwork in Penang, Mahathir did not feature prominently. Yet, a vast majority of Penangites, regardless of ethnicity, spoke of him in every constituency I visited throughout the election period.

Generally, Chinese voters in Penang showed support for Mahathir and viewed him as a "hero" who had sacrificed his retirement to save the country from corrupt leaders. Most young Penangites, regardless of ethnicity, had little memory of "*Ops Lalang*"[19] and "*Reformasi*."[20] Instead, many remembered him as the "*Bapa Pemodenan*" (Father of Modernisation). Although some were aware that Mahathir started the current debilitating patronage system in the country, they referred to the videos featuring the 93-year-old Prime Minister in tears, stating that he was trying to seek redemption for his past mistakes; overall, they thought that Mahathir was sincere in his statement. One of the interviewees from Permatang Pauh stated:

> It is not easy for a 93-year-old man to admit and apologize for the mistakes he had made. No matter what he did in the past, he wanted to fix it and I think he should be given a chance.[21]

The Malay community's sentiments towards Mahathir were mixed, compared to the non-Malays. In urban and semi-urban areas, the Malays were generally quite positive towards Mahathir, although some remained sceptical of his iron-fisted rule. However, rural Malays displayed several shifts in sentiments and language towards Mahathir throughout the election period. Before the campaign period, UMNO supporters used strong language when referring to him; some used the word "*Pengkhianat*" (traitor) to describe him. There were respondents who shed tears lamenting Mahathir's departure from UMNO, describing it as unacceptable for the Malay community.[22]

Nevertheless, such negative sentiments did not persist. At the same *Kampung Nelayan* (Fishermen Village) that I visited a few times in Teluk Bahang, attitudes toward Mahathir grew progressively softer over the campaign period. The video "*Harapan—Filem Pendek Untuk Malaysia*," which featured Mahathir's apologetic statement to the people and his hope to save the country made some difference. In Penang, the video was not only circulated in social media, but also shared among the people in Whatsapp chat groups. Although they did not openly show support to the Bersatu leader, the honorific of "Tun" was used to address him and less emotions were shown when Mahathir was discussed.[23]

Besides this, the cooperation between Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim also played an important role. In fact, Permatang Pauh is known as Anwar's constituency; it was previously defended by his wife, Wan Azizah and currently by his daughter, Nurul Izzah, who had relocated to Penang. Based on the interviews conducted, many PKR supporters defected from UMNO after Anwar's sacking and jailing in 1999.[24] The fact that Mahathir, who was responsible for Anwar's jailing, was willing to cooperate with Anwar, or vice versa, moved people. Interviewees, such as Mohd Nasarudin Sultan, posed a similarly worded question: "if Anwar was willing to forgive and work with Mahathir, why can't the people do the same?"[25] In fact, Anwar's presence in the election was not as prominent as Mahathir, although Penang was his home state. The former Deputy Prime Minister was often portrayed as a victim of BN's corrupt governance and as a forgiving character, given his willingness to cooperate with Mahathir—a reconciliation that reinforced the latter's legitimacy in saving Malaysia from Najib. Indeed, PH supporters wearing Mahathir and Anwar masks were spotted shaking hands with each other during party walk-arounds in the Penang market (*The Star Online* 4 May 2018).[26] However, compared to Mahathir, little focus was given to Anwar in Malay constituencies, other than Permatang Pauh. Rather, Mahathir was often cited, along with Najib; the people thus described GE14 as a fight between Mahathir and Najib.

Mahathir's departure from UMNO divided the Malays and created an opportunity favouring PH in terms of recruitment and mobilisation. UMNO members who had long been discontented with their leaders saw an alternative in Bersatu. Indeed, according to Tasek Gelugor Bersatu candidate, Marzuki Yahya, Mahathir was the main factor that led UMNO members to join Bersatu.[27] An example is Mohd Shariff Omar, an ex-UMNO Tasek Gelugor division chief, who was sacked from the party in 2013 and joined Bersatu in 2016.

Factionalism in UMNO was an important issue in Penang. In Penang, it showed a disconnect between UMNO grassroots and party elites. UMNO leaders confidently expressed that having incumbent and long-experienced UMNO candidates would assure them victory in Malay-majority constituencies.[28] However, several PH workers, who were previously UMNO members, expressed their discontent with UMNO and complained about rampant cronyism in the party. Feeling marginalized in UMNO, they left the party and joined Bersatu or PKR. One respondent, Mami Tanjung,[29] who joined Bersatu in 2017, stated that important positions, such as the women's chief post, were given to members who provided benefits (material or financial) to party grassroots. She contended that the opinions of ordinary party members were disregarded and that they were considered useless to the party. In another interview, with Matmuda Shamsuddia in Teluk Bahang, she revealed that UMNO members felt mistreated by the party. She left UMNO and joined Bersatu in 2016 because of rampant favouritism within the party (*pilih kasih*).[30]

Malay loyalty to UMNO was an important factor that BN candidates relied on. For instance, according to the Teluk Bahang state seat candidate, Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain, Malay loyalty to UMNO was the party's strength, regardless of who the leader was, including Najib.[31] Indeed, one respondent in Kepala Batas

commented that, as a Malay, it was one's responsibility to vote for UMNO. Another respondent in Teluk Bahang said, "When our flesh is cut, the blood comes out with the colour of UMNO."[32] Nevertheless, such "loyalty" to UMNO was shaken by the existence of Bersatu as well as the ousting and defection of key leaders from the party. In Balik Pulau, three incumbents lost to PH, while in Kepala Batas, the incumbents of all state assembly seats lost to newcomers such as Khalid Mentab Mohd Ishaq (Bersatu), who had no prior political experience.[33]

The entry of Bersatu into PH provided a new outlook for the Malays. BN's campaign to instil fear that the DAP was going to dominate a PH government was not as effective because of the presence of Bersatu. In fact, interviews with locals during the campaigning period revealed that Malays were wary of DAP. A Bersatu member, Kariati Ahmad Akhir, stated that some Malay voters are afraid that DAP would be biased for the Chinese.[34] However, many Malays saw Bersatu as being similar to UMNO. Bersatu leader Mahathir had assured the Malays that their privileges would be guaranteed, even with the presence of DAP. Furthermore, the distrust and discontent Malays now had of UMNO and Najib overwhelmed their fear of DAP. The trust that Bersatu would defend Malay rights led to many Malays voting for PH. One respondent from Penaga confessed:

> I don't like DAP. They do not do bad things, but I don't trust them. But I think Mahathir will not allow DAP to do anything to us; and Bersatu is just the same as UMNO, the colour is the same and the people are the same, but a good one.[35]

Mainland Penang also displayed how intra-elite feuding affected voting patterns in Malay-majority constituencies. UMNO versus ex-UMNO battles took place, particularly in Tasek Gelugor, which was the only parliamentary seat contested by Bersatu. UMNO incumbent Shabudin Yahaya faced his former party comrade, ex-UMNO Youth chief Marzuki Yahya. In fact, both Shabudin and Marzuki are Penangites and had long known each other. Shabudin, a former Shariah Court Judge, was known for his outspoken behaviour and long service in Penang BN. However, Shabudin's famous 2017 remarks, where he argued that there was nothing wrong with a rape victim marrying her rapist, deeply undermined his credibility and caused an uproar throughout the country (*The Star* 4 April 2017). He was subsequently denounced by Islamic scholars for hurting Islam's image (*Free Malaysia Today* 6 April 2017). Although Shabudin won his seat, it was by 81 votes, a marked decrease from the previous two elections when UMNO captured more than 50% of the total votes.

Seats won by PH in mainland Malay-majority constituencies, including Bertam and Pinang Tunggal, were razor-thin victories of less than 1%. UMNO managed to defend its Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor parliamentary seats and Sungai Dua and Permatang Berangan state seats. It is thus debatable whether PH won over Malay support in mainland Penang. The UMNO incumbents who retained the two parliamentary seats, Shabudin Yahaya (Tasek Gelugor) and Reezal Merican Naina Merican (UMNO), were long-time UMNO leaders and held prominent

positions in the government,[36] suggesting that the influence of the party remains in the constituency, albeit at a reduced level.

Multi-cornered fights and the UMNO–PAS pact

It was assumed that PAS, which chose to remain out of any coalition, would pose a threat to PH as it was likely to split the vote. In fact, UMNO candidates including Shah Haedan Ayoob Hussain Shah felt that multi-cornered fights would benefit UMNO; optimistically stating that "*the more the merrier*." UMNO party workers were confident that PAS would help to split support for the opposition based on past election results. One UMNO worker commented that PAS supporters remain very loyal to their party and it was believed that the hardcore supporters would vote for PAS and thus split the votes. He described the cooperation between UMNO and PAS as an "indirect cooperation," with PAS creating a spoiler effect to UMNO's benefit.

The cooperation between UMNO and PAS was also widely speculated during GE14. According to Mohd Nasarudin Sultan, a former PAS member, it was rumoured that UMNO was behind the funding of PAS candidates who contested for a significantly higher number of seats compared to past elections. Indeed, PAS contested six parliamentary seats and 18 state assembly seats compared to GE13 when the party only contested one parliamentary seat and six state assembly seats. In fact, in April 2018, former PAS Vice-President Mahfuz Omar stated that PAS received funding from UMNO, which Hadi Awang denied (*Bernama* 8 April 2018). Based on interviews with Tasek Gelugor residents, the frequency of PAS's events, including carnivals held by the party's Youth Wing, had increased since the end of 2017, and they commented that the events were conducted on a larger scale. Besides, Najib was also seen attacking "PH leaders only" but not PAS during the election period (*Edge Weekly* 27 April 2018). Pulau Bentong assemblyman Muhammad Farid Saad openly stated that Penang UMNO welcomed collaboration with PAS; however, it was rejected by state PAS publicity secretary Iszuree Ibrahim (*New Straits Times* 31 August 2017).

Nevertheless, it was clear that the elites and the grassroots of both parties were not on the same page. Based on observations and semi-structured interviews, the collaboration between UMNO and PAS was not welcomed by PAS grassroots. Most PAS supporters did not believe that such cooperation was possible. Some were unsure about the stance of PAS top leadership,[37] but they were certain that PAS Penang would not cooperate with UMNO. They used words such as "*fitnah*" and "*khabar angin*" (rumours) to describe such claims. Most PAS members showed their discontent with UMNO and Najib, whom they described as corrupt. They rejected all allegations accusing PAS of receiving financial aid from UMNO. One PAS supporter, Sub Onn (nickname) asserted that such financial sources were gained via public donations (*Dana Rayuan*).[38] One PAS party worker stated that collaboration with UMNO could only happen after the election, if UMNO accepted PAS's Islamic agenda.[39] Bukit Mertajam DAP candidate

Steven Sim Chee Keong stated that PAS hardcore supporters would vote for the party, regardless of changes to the party leadership.[40]

Based on the results, the multi-cornered fights seemed to be a double-edged sword for PH and BN. Although it is undeniable that PAS took some votes from PH, such scenarios did not necessarily benefit BN, as PAS supporters did not vote for BN in most constituencies. In Tasek Gelugor and Kepala Batas, PAS took an average of 20% of the total votes; however, in Bertam it was PH that split votes away from UMNO. As a result, UMNO lost all state constituencies in Kepala Batas. The same effect occurred in Tasek Gelugor: although UMNO defended the parliamentary and two state constituencies, the percentage of votes for the party settled at less than 40%. This constituted a massive drop compared to the last two elections, when the party gained more than 50% of the votes. Such results reflected UMNO's overconfidence, as they thought that the multi-cornered fights would benefit them.

PAS suffered from intra-elite feuding too. Some of its votes were taken by Amanah in Kepala Batas, Bayan Lepas and Sungai Dua. Although neither Amanah nor PAS won in Kepala Batas and Sungai Dua, PAS's votes suffered a huge drop, from 44.9% to 20% and from 47.2% to 26.2%, respectively, while Amanah gained 29.3% and 24.9% from the total votes. In Bayan Lepas, PAS's vote share slumped from 47.7% to only 9.4%, while Amanah took 47.1% of the votes. However, PAS maintained its share of 44.7% in Penaga (44% in 2013), since PH's candidate Yaakob Osman was disqualified because of his bankrupt status (*Malaymail* 29 April 2018).

PH's internal feuds

PH's component parties also suffered intra-party tensions prior to the elections. PKR postponed its announcement of candidates as party leaders could not come to an agreement. According to party sources, the list could not be confirmed owing to conflicts between the Azmin Ali and Anwar Ibrahim factions. Mohd Yusmadi Mohd Yusoff stated that he wanted a comeback in Balik Pulau, a seat he won in 2008. However, the party fielded Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik, who lost to Hilmi Yahaya from UMNO in 2013. Party sources stated that Yusmadi was dropped because of his reputation of being "Azmin's man" (*Malaysiakini* 23 April 2018). Furthermore, following clashes between Cheah Kah Peng and DAP's Lim Guan Eng over flood victims at Cheah's constituency, Kebun Bunga, he was dropped as a candidate (*Free Malaysia Today* 23 November 2017).

The PKR feuds prevailed during the campaign period. Its Penang Youth chief, Asrol Sani Abdul Razak, quit the party along with 70 members one week before the election because PKR was giving away its seat to Bersatu in Bertam (*Malaysiakini* 2 May 2018). Nurul Izzah, who was contesting in her father's seat, Permatang Pauh, also experienced turbulence owing to party infighting: 200 members quit in protest against PKR chief Mansor Othman (*Malaysiakini* 7 May 2018).[41] The situation took a turn for the worse when Permatang Pauh residents expressed dissatisfaction towards Nurul's mother, Wan Azizah, who was

the incumbent for Permatang Pauh, owing to her inability to develop the constituency (*Yahoo News* 25 April 2018).

Nevertheless, such feuds did not affect PH's campaign. PKR won every seat it contested and Bersatu won the controversial Bertam seat. PH managed to survive the feuds as, firstly, these incidents happened mostly in Chinese-majority constituencies such as Kebun Bunga and Batu Uban where PH had an advantage as this ethnic group traditionally voted along party lines. Besides, the Chinese had intense resentment towards BN and were wary of PAS's Islamic agenda, with many eventually voting for PH. Secondly, the legacy of Anwar in Permatang Pauh, in addition to Nurul Izzah's own fame, also bolstered her chances of winning the seat despite the feuds. Lastly, the resentment towards BN and Najib caused the people to vote against the coalition. Intense discontent towards the BN and grievances over bread-and- butter issues caused the people to vote for PH. The following section will further elaborate on these protest votes.

Protest voting: scandals, GST and bread-and-butter

Societal grievances played a very important role when party dissidents defected to other parties. According to Meyer (2004), threats and grievances are known to be elements of political opportunities. Grievances could be a push or pull factor for voters to either cast against or for political parties who act in favour their interests (Simmons 2014). Nevertheless, bread-and-butter issues had been the main issue played by all contesting parties at both state and national levels. Indeed, the rising cost of living was a major issue in Penang (*The Malaysia Insight* 17 May 2017).

The rising cost of living was encapsulated by the popular slogan "*Rakyat Sudah Susah*" (The People are in Difficulty). The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was a key factor that raised discontent in Penang towards the federal government. Penangites described the GST as "*the main cause of rising living cost.*" Indeed, the GST had become the main topic throughout the campaigning period. Although reports had stated that rural people were unlikely to be affected by the implementation of the GST (*Malaymail* 17 May 2015), the tax's regressive nature meant that the poor paid more than the middle class and the rich in non-urban areas (*Free Malaysia Today* 7 October 2017). Interviews conducted with PH party workers at Kepala Batas revealed that voters complained about the rising costs of living. The abolishment of fuel subsidies worsened circumstances for the poor in rural areas, since many depended on motorcycles for transport.[42] Although BN tried to recapture voters' hearts through the practice of money politics, the distribution of temporary goodies and money could not keep pace with inflation and rising living costs. Most of the voters did not reject the goodies, but did not feel inclined to vote BN merely for receiving such gifts.

Both PH and PAS utilized the GST issue in their campaign strategies. Both national and state level manifestos launched by PH and PAS included the abolishment of the GST. In pamphlets distributed by PH, the GST was prominently featured. One pamphlet by PKR at Balik Pulau used comics to show calculations

of the cost of living with and without the GST for a family (*Parti Keadilan Rakyat* n.d.). This gave a clear sense of the impact of the GST on Malaysians. Most *ceramahs* or informal talks delivered by PH candidates also addressed the GST. Interviews with Bersatu party workers suggested that the GST was an important campaign tool. Mami Tanjung, a Bersatu party worker, explained that many residents in rural areas understood the issue of the GST as its impact was significant.[43]

In addition, the discontent towards Najib was one key factor leading to BN's loss of support. The 1MDB scandal[44] led many to question the legitimacy of the BN government and UMNO, whether they were still "safeguarding" the Malays amidst intense kleptocracy and cronyism. Dissatisfaction towards Najib was very intense throughout Penang. Najib's posters in Penang were vandalized with drawings of PH's flags in his pictures.[45] Although most voters did not necessarily understand 1MDB in depth, they knew that Najib was involved in corruption. This fuelled discontent as the people compared their economic plight to their leaders' luxurious lifestyles. BN component parties' reluctance to feature Najib in their campaigns reflected Najib's declining popularity and its impact on the voters. Gerakan tried explaining to the people that Najib's wrongdoings had nothing to do with the party, but this narrative did not gain traction among voters. Indeed, toppling Najjb was PH's main strategy in its campaign (*Seketeriat Harapan* 2018). Flyers from PH highlighted 1MDB and the luxurious lifestyle of the Prime Minister's wife.

Interviews indicated that the discontent towards Najib did not build up overnight. One interview in Tasek Gelugor revealed many initially had a good impression of Najib because of his father, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak.[46] Some UMNO supporters stated that they were willing to forgive Najib's wrongdoings owing to his father. However, as continuous scandals surfaced throughout Najib's term in office, the hopes for the Prime Minister transformed into disappointment.

Interlude: saving Malaysia or retaining Penang

Penang PH largely played on the motto "*Retain Penang and Save Malaysia*." Penang (together with Selangor) were role models for other states, portraying an image of a developed PH state. This was often mentioned in the speeches and campaign materials given by PH candidates (*Parti Tindakan Demokratik DAP Pulau Pinang* n.d.). Indeed, according to a government report, while all other states in Malaysia including Johor and Selangor were reported to be experiencing an increase in their inflation rate, Penang was not as badly impacted (*The Sun Daily* 20 June 2018). Penang also has the second lowest unemployment rate after Malacca (*Malaysiakini* 13 October 2017) and the state held 8% of Malaysia's total 10% contribution to the world's backend semiconductor output. Manufacturing investment also grew steadily in Penang, recording RM59 billion from 2008 to 2016 (*The Malaysia Insight* 7 August 2017).

Contrary to DAP's "retain Penang" slogan, BN Penang adopted the slogan of "save Penang," i.e., saving the state from PH as Najib claimed that the DAP-led

state government had steered the state onto a path of misery. The 2017 flash flood was one of the main topics used to attack the DAP state government, along with Lim Guan Eng's corruption trial and the Undersea Tunnel Project. Gerakan and MCA used these topics to attack the Chief Minister and PH. However, owing to distrust towards BN, this strategy backfired. Most Penangites dismissed these claims. In fact, according to Facebook comments, the flash flood in 2017 had done Lim more good than harm. The Penangites hailed the CM's efforts in flood relief.[47]

Although some remained sceptical about the DAP government, the intense hatred towards the BN government and Najib prevented them from casting votes for the latter. Although the land sales and land reclamation projects at Gurney Drive, Tanjung Bungah and Pulau Tikus worried Penangites, the discontent was mostly among the elites who resided in the area and constituted a minority of the total population. For the middle class and the poor, bread-and-butter issues mattered more than local issues brought up by an UMNO Pemuda member in Kebun Bunga.[48] Most respondents in the state constituency of Tanjung Bungah (especially Chinese women) displayed dissatisfaction towards the candidate Zairil Khir Johari because of his private life scandal. Yet, he still won by a landslide, with 60.8% of the popular vote (*SPR* 2018). Compared to Najib who was "stealing money" (*curi duit*), Zairil's extramarital affair was considered a lesser evil. Lim Guan Eng enjoyed huge support in the mainland, as many attended events attended by him when he appeared at campaign events.[49] His corruption scandal barely impacted him. His supporters commented on Facebook that it was normal for a person to bargain for a cheaper house and maintained that Lim did not do anything wrong. Some respondents thought that Lim might not be totally innocent but felt that the federal government had politically targeted Lim, especially when compared to UMNO politicians who were more corrupt.[50]

Nevertheless, federal issues clearly outweighed local issues. While environmental and developmental issues were important, bread-and-butter issues topped the priority list. Most interviewees mentioned that they did not remember anything in the manifesto but the removal of the GST. In fact, PH's national manifestos were distributed and promoted more widely than the local manifestos. The following narrative showed the people were more concerned about national issues rather than local politics:

> You are asking me about Penang? No, Penang is Ok, I mean without GST, every state will be ok. If we pay 16 per cent for this and that, then Rosmah is buying a pink diamond with our money, then what is that?[51]

Conclusion: winning by chance?

Intra-elite feuds in the top leadership ranks of Malay-based political parties, UMNO and PAS, created divisions among elites. The defection of Mahathir from UMNO shook the Malays. Thus, it widened political choice for the Malay

electorate in Penang and split votes, as evinced by the election results, e.g., in the case of Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor. However, these trends did not always work in PH's favour. The multi-cornered fights among PAS, BN and PH in the mainland Malay-majority constituencies witnessed a slump of votes for BN. However, in the case of Permatang Berangan and Sungai Dua, the three-cornered fights benefited UMNO as it split votes from PAS and PH. The small margins of victory displayed in mainland Penang also suggested that while PH made inroads into Malay-majority constituencies, BN's influence in these areas remains a force to be reckoned with.

Societal grievances acted in favour of PH in GE14. Despite PH's internal feuding and local issues that arose under the DAP government, the federal government's inability to address bread-and-butter issues, in addition to the kleptocracy controversy, caused the people to vote against the incumbent coalition. Although the Malays remained cautious about the DAP state government, disappointment with UMNO and Prime Minister Najib caused them to vote against BN, as displayed in the case of Balik Pulau. The intense disappointment with the Prime Minister was evident from voters' reactions towards BN's material offers and over the course of the campaign. The Malay electorate in Penang had not embraced PH; rather, GE14 appeared to be a significant rejection of BN.

Notes

1 The initial logo introduced was the word "Harapan" with the "A" shaped as a chevron in white on a red background, but it was rejected by the ROS.
2 Personal communication with Padang Lalang candidate, Chong Eng, 26 April 2018.
3 Personal communication by PKR Ketua Wanita PKR Bayan Baru, Latifah Hussaina, previously UMNO member until 2008, 27 April 2018.
4 I witnessed the DAP's ability to raise funds when I attended the party's fundraising dinner at Dewan St. Anne on 24 April 2018.
5 Muhammad Faiz Fadzil was formerly a PAS member and this party's leader in Negeri Sembilan.
6 Personal communication with Latifah Hussaina, 27 April 2018.
7 Personal communication with PKR's general election facilitator for Balik Pulau (Pengarah Pilihanraya), Mohd Nasarudin Sultan, 28 April 2018.
8 During the campaigning period, I encountered difficulties looking for BN *ceramahs*, even after nomination day.
9 Personal communication with anonymous BN volunteer worker, 19 April 2018.
10 Whatsapp communication with Kepala Batas anonymous respondent (Anonymous), 2 May 2018.
11 Personal communication with respondent (anonymous housewife), Tasek Gelugor, 6 May 2018.
12 Personal communication with respondents in Bagan, 17 April 2018.
13 Respondents in Balik Pulau commented that Hilmi was campaigning in KL for other candidates. He was also not at events at his house.
14 Interview with anonymous businessmen, Bukit Mertajam, 3 May 2018.
15 I have attended and conducted informal interviews with those who attended the MCA Ceramah "Kisah Penang," Dewan Persatuan Tan Si Eng Chuan, Butterworth, 4 May 2018

16 Three tables listing the results of GE12, GE13 and GE14 can be found at the end of this chapter.
17 There have been arguments stating that the vote differences at Balik Pulau's federal and state constituencies were because of more ethnic Chinese moving into the area as a result of housing development plans such as Botanica C.T. and Mansion. However, the Chinese community in Balik Pulau had decreased in proportion between 2008 and 2018, from 35% to 30.16%. Thus, while the Chinese community was larger in Balik Pulau compared to Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor, it is debatable whether this seat was won owing to Chinese votes.
18 I participated in this mega *ceramah* at the Esplanade, 28 April 2018.
19 *Operasi Lalang* was a major crackdown on government critics by the police in October 1987 during Mahathir's tenure as the Prime Minister. The objective of the crackdown was ostensibly to defuse racial tension that had apparently reached "dangerous proportions." The crackdown resulted in the arrest of 106 people including politicians, students, artists, intellectuals and NGO activists. However, it is widely believed that the operation was designed to control Mahathir's political opponents.
20 *Reformasi* was a protest movement against Mahathir's government that emerged in September 1998. The protest was initiated by Anwar Ibrahim after he was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister by Mahathir. The protest aimed to secure the resignation of Mahathir. The movement resulted in the formation of PKR.
21 Personal communication with a businessman in Permatang Pauh, 5 May 2018.
22 Personal communication with (anonymous) lady in Balik Pulau, 29 April 2018.
23 An observation by me at Tasek Gelugor and Pulau Pinang. In Kepala Batas, the support for UMNO remained strong during the campaigning period.
24 In September 1998, Anwar was fired from the Cabinet and charged with sodomy, an offence in Malaysia. He was also expelled from UMNO and was eventually convicted in April 1999 (Wain 2009: 290–293).
25 Personal communication with PKR's general election facilitator for Balik Pulau (Pengarah Pilihanraya), Mohd Nasarudin Sultan, 28 April 2018.
26 I saw DAP volunteers wearing the masks at Bukit Mertajam Pasar in 2 May 2018.
27 Interview with Bersatu candidate Haji Marzuki Yahya, Tasek Gelugor, 6 May 2018.
28 Personal communication with Hashim, UMNO member, Balik Pulau (full name not revealed). 29 April 2018.
29 Personal communication with Mami Tanjung (nickname), Bersatu Ketua Cawangan Wanita Taman Tun Sadun, Former UMNO Member, 27 April 2018. This respondent requested that she be named Mami Tanjung.
30 Personal communication with Matmuda Shamsuddia, former UMNO member, Teluk Bahang, 27 April 2018.
31 Personal communication with Teluk Bahang state seat candidate, Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain, 5 May 2018.
32 Personal communication, Anonymous, Teluk Bahang. 4 May 2018.
33 For the results, see Tables 9.1 and 9.3.
34 Personal communication with Kariati Ahmad Akhir, formerly of PKR and currently a Bersatu member, 28 April 2018.
35 Conversation with anonymous hawker seller (Encik. Ayob), Penaga, 21 August 2018.
36 Reezal Merican was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2015 until 2018. He succeeded former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as division head of UMNO Kepala Batas. In GE14, Reezal defeated Amanah's Zaidi Zakaria, with a vote difference of 4,735. However, his total vote share had decreased from 53.8% to 37.1% in 2018.

37 The respondents were referring to PAS Kelantan.
38 Personal communication with PAS member, Sub Onn (nickname). Balik Pulau, 28 April 2018.
39 Personal communication with anonymous PAS member, 29 April 2018.
40 Personal communication with Bukit Mertajam DAP candidate, Steven Sim Chee Keong, 7 May 2018.
41 These 200 PKR members left the party claiming that they had been sidelined by the party leadership at both the state and national levels; they referred to themselves as "Tunggul Kayu." They then joined the Malaysian United Party.
42 Personal communication, anonymous PH party workers, 30 April 2018.
43 Mami Tanjung is currently Bersatu Ketua Cawangan Wanita Taman Tun Sadun. She had been an UMNO member for 35 years.
44 In 2015, Najib was accused of channelling over RM2.67 billion from 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a government-run strategic development company, to his personal bank accounts. He denied the allegation. The company was found to be mired in debt, totalling nearly RM42 billion (Noor and Qistina 2017).
45 This was seen by me in Penang.
46 Personal communication with anonymous woman voter in Tasek Gelugor, 3 May 2018.
47 Information gathered by DAP Facebook group, Penangite Facebook posts during the flood in November 2017.
48 Informal interview with anonymous member of Pemuda UMNO, 30 April 2018.
49 I have seen crowds rushing to see Lim at various campaigning events in Penang.
50 Personal communication, anonymous NGO volunteer, 19 April 2018.
51 Personal communication with Mr. Ooi, Bukit Mertajam, 26 April 2018.

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10 The battle for Perak

Iskandar Dzulkarnain Ahmad Junid[1]

Introduction

Going into Malaysia's General Election 14 (GE14), in the state of Perak there were 24 parliamentary and 59 state constituencies.[2] Before GE14, the *Barisan Nasional* (BN) felt that it was imperative to focus attention on Perak as it was considered an important but unstable state, one that had experienced a change of government in the 2008 general election. In GE14, BN, through the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), won 27 state seats, while the newly-reconstituted opposition coalition, *Pakatan Harapan* (PH), won 29 state seats. UMNO's partners in the BN did not win any state seats, suggesting that the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) were seen as of little relevance to the electorate. However, the MIC did win one parliamentary seat in the constituency of Tapah.

In the PH coalition, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) won the highest number of seats (18), while the other longstanding opposition party, *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR), won four seats. The UMNO breakaway faction *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu) won a mere seat, a surprising outcome considering how poorly UMNO had fared in this election. The *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah), an offshoot of the Islamic-based *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS), fared much better, winning six seats. PH won one seat more than it had in GE13. However, PAS was then still in coalition with DAP and PKR, through the now defunct *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR).

In the parliamentary contests, UMNO (BN) won ten seats. UMNO's BN partner, the multiracial-based *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Gerakan), like the MCA did not win a seat. PH won 13 seats, with DAP the largest victor with seven seats, PKR three, Amanah two and Bersatu one. In the previous general election in 2013, PR had secured 12 seats, with PAS winning two (Khoo 2013). In GE14, PAS did not win any of the 21 parliamentary seats it contested. Amanah, the splinter party from PAS, garnered more parliamentary and state seats than PAS.

This study will focus on three constituencies, Bagan Datuk, Teluk Intan and Parit Buntar, as case studies to draw out important political developments in Perak. In Bagan Datuk, a constituency with a 60% Malay population, three major parties, UMNO, PAS and PKR, were involved in the contest for this parliamentary

seat. A serious case of factionalism within UMNO was evident in this constituency whose incumbent, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, was the Deputy President of UMNO and the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.[3] In Teluk Intan, where close to 60% of the voting population was non-Malay, the contest was between the two major Chinese-based parties, DAP and Gerakan. An analysis of this non-Malay based constituency would provide a sense of non-Malay voting patterns. In this constituency, there was a clash of giants. The incumbent was Mah Siew Keong, Gerakan's president and a sitting Minister, while his opponent was DAP supremo in Perak, Nga Kor Ming. Meanwhile, in Parit Buntar, a semi-rural 69% Malay-majority constituency, the incumbent was Mujahid Yusof, who won the seat in GE13 when he represented PAS but was now standing under Amanah's banner. Parit Buntar's voters were seen as staunch supporters of PAS, who had fielded a candidate, along with one by UMNO.

The campaign

BN's campaign was well-run in all three constituencies as the coalition's machinery was well-oiled and clearly well-funded. BN flags and posters were seen in all areas of these towns and even the *kampong*, or village areas. In Teluk Intan, PH held a few *ceramah*, or campaigns, whereas BN mostly held closed-door events. Nga was a prominent speaker at these *ceramahs*. He started his campaign in Teluk Intan as the contender to Mah who had won the seat in a by-election in 2014.

PH's machinery was not as well-organized, but this coalition appeared to have enormous support based on the turnouts at its *ceramahs*. PH focused on organizing *ceramahs* at which the turnout was nothing less than 2,000 people. This is also true at the *ceramahs* held in Teluk Intan where the crowds comprised primarily people aged 50 years and older, a sign that the constituents, even the older generation, were willing to listen to what PH had to offer. This did translate into votes as the Teluk Intan parliamentary seat was wrested from Gerakan's Mah, while the Pasir Berdamar state seat remained with PH. In Changkat Jong in Teluk Intan, the PH candidate, Mohd Faizul, was up against BN's Mohd Azhar Jamaluddin who was the incumbent. Mohd Faizul, one of PH's young candidates, focused his campaign on youths who constituted 60% of the electorate. However, many of this young electorate were not living in Teluk Intan, but voted in the constituency.[4] In spite of this apparent support for change in the constituency, what was also evident in PH was a clear lack of strategy by this coalition in certain state seats, suggesting that its component parties were neither united nor ready to mount an effective campaign against an experienced BN election machinery.

Big *ceramah*s, featuring PH's *de facto* leader, former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who toured the state, were organized during the campaign. Mahathir was evidently a pull factor in these *ceramahs*. At these rallies that Mahathir attended, the crowd numbered between 10,000–15,000 people. Other prominent ex-UMNO leaders, such as former Trade Minister Rafidah Aziz and ex-Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin also played a big role in drawing a crowd. Nga

mentioned in his speeches that the support of Rafidah and Daim indicated that BN was wrong to endorse the governance of Prime Minister Najib Razak, then facing serious allegations of corruption, an issue that UMNO had refused to address. Nga's comments were clearly targeted at UMNO members, known to be deeply mired in factional disputes, to muster their support to oust Najib, though his campaign speech also resonated well with the Malay electorate.[5]

BN did not even attempt to organize big rallies in these three parliamentary constituencies, focusing instead on *ceramah kelompok*, events for a targeted audience. In Parit Buntar, BN organized a "Muay Thai" event targeting youths. BN was obviously organizing events that catered to the interests of youths, focusing on first-time voters in this constituency. BN's machinery was also deployed to run *Pusat Daerah Mengundi* (PDM, or voting centres) all over these constituencies, indicating that the coalition had much money to spend and lots of workers they could mobilize.

Najib, meanwhile, had gone campaigning from one constituency to the other, even though this was Zahid's responsibility, the second in command in BN and UMNO. However, Zahid spent more time campaigning in his own constituency, suggesting that he had concerns about retaining his seat. Zahid was always in Bagan Datuk, also actively campaigning for Khairuddin Tarmizi, UMNO's candidate who was contesting the Hutan Melintang state seat in his parliamentary constituency. Khairuddin was up against a tough candidate, PKR's G. Manivannan, formerly the Member of Parliament for Kapar, who was clearly intent on wresting control of this state seat.[6] Zahid focused on his constituency as he needed to win by a huge margin to prove his popularity and that he was capable of taking over as president of UMNO. Following GE14, UMNO had to hold its party elections and there was then talk of a brewing battle for the post of deputy president.

PAS, unlike the PH component party members, had a great deal of experience mounting an effective election campaign, as seen in its well-functioning machinery that was based on volunteerism. PAS, like BN, did not rely on big *ceramahs* to publicize its manifesto. PAS's primary campaign strategy was also the *ceramah kelompok*, where the candidate would meet the electorate in small groups in designated areas in the constituency. However, PAS was evidently not equipped to tackle the electorate in non-Malay-majority state constituencies such as Pasir Berdamar (in Teluk Intan), even though its candidate, S. Kumaresan, was a non-Muslim. Kumaresan himself argued that PAS had to start campaigning earlier if it hoped to muster support in such constituencies.[7] It appeared that PAS's decision to contest in non-Malay-majority seats was not properly planned, more so since its candidate was not prepared for the election. PAS's nomination of candidates in these non-Malay-majority constituencies where the party's legendary well-oiled election machinery was ill-prepared to mount an effective campaign gave much credence to the widespread talk that such three-cornered fights were created as a means to help BN, specifically UMNO.[8]

PAS adopted the strategy of *Budaya Politik Matang Sejahtera* (BPMS), or a mature political culture, which entailed not attacking UMNO publicly.[9] During the campaign, PAS did not critique, or even mention, 1MDB, a government

enterprise linked to Najib that was mired in serious fraud, or any other corruption issue involving UMNO leaders, of which there were many in the run-up to GE14. The main thrust of PAS's rhetoric was to engage in "mature politics" with UMNO, hoping that this was sufficient to get the votes of fence sitters.

PAS's campaign focused primarily on the issue that the party and its candidates were untainted by corruption. Although this strategy worked among PAS's staunch supporters, it did not have much traction with fence sitters who believed that PH was a better alternative to BN. PAS's strategy was to win sufficient state seats to emerge as a "Kingmaker," in the event that no coalition obtained a simple majority to form the state government. This claim was refuted by Misbahul Munir, the candidate for the Hutan Melintang state seat in Bagan Datuk and assistant commissioner of PAS in Perak, who argued that PAS's primary goal was to govern the state, not to be a party that would determine which of the two coalitions should rule.[10]

Politics of development and money

In GE14, the practice of securing support by promising development was evident in these three constituencies. In Bagan Datuk Zahid, an UMNO "warlord," started bringing in development projects, particularly after he was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister, replacing Muhyiddin Yassin who was sacked from this post by Najib. New projects in Bagan Datuk, Rungkup and Hutan Melintang included the building of the Bagan Datuk Waterfront, a *Maktab Rendah Sains Mara* (MRSM, or Mara Junior Science College) and the Bagan Datuk Sports Complex, all signs that Zahid had spent heavily in his constituency. The government had reportedly allocated RM2.3 billion for development projects in Bagan Datuk (*New Straits Times* 18 March 2018). Zahid, a local boy from Bagan Datuk, mentioned in his campaign speeches his success stories in the constituency, lauded himself as always being close to the people and stressed that they could hold him responsible if he did not deliver his promises.[11]

In Teluk Intan, Mah promised development in terms of cheap housing. Najib came to Teluk Intan to officiate a PR1MA-based housing ceremony,[12] seen as a strategy to get the support of the constituency's middle-income group (*New Straits Times* 18 April 2018). Such projects were used by BN to create the idea that the government was bringing about development in rural and semi-urban areas, a strategy to consolidate, even gain, support in such constituencies, as it was unlikely the coalition would fare well in urban areas. The same strategy could not be used in Parit Buntar as BN did not hold that seat. Since BN could not implement projects there, the electorate was promised development if the coalition was given the mandate. The strategy of launching development projects close to elections was common with BN, a point evident to the electorate. The position of the candidate in the party and the government would determine how much development could be brought to a constituency. As Zahid and Mah were Cabinet ministers, the idea that they could bring more development to these areas was stressed, while their status as local boys was also used to garner

more support. This strategy of development politics resonated well with people in rural areas.

During the campaign, the activities of the candidates were restricted because of the spending limits stipulated by election legislation: RM200,000 for parliamentary seats and RM100,000 for state seats (Gomez 2012; Gomez and Tong 2017). Such funds were to be used primarily to cover expenses for posters and other materials needed for the campaign. However, during the campaign, BN flags and posters used in these constituencies were colossal in number. In Bagan Datuk, the flags could be seen all over the town. The road from Hutan Melintang to Bagan Datuk was plastered with BN flags and posters. It was alleged by opposition members, without any evidence, that Zahid had spent around RM3 million on flags and the party machinery.[13] This allegation was refuted by the state candidate for Rungkup, in the Bagan Datuk constituency, who claimed that most of the flags were donated by third parties.[14] Some of the flags in the constituency carried the name of a printing company that was located in Shanghai![15] This issue became a topic of much debate, as the BN government was then already highly criticized for being far too dependent on China for investments to generate economic growth.

PH's candidate for the Bagan Datuk parliamentary seat, Pakhrurrazi Arshad, argued that Zahid had abused his position as Minister of Home Affairs to secure the help of a huge entourage of workers that included public servants while he was campaigning. Zahid was seen with a convoy of at least ten cars at every event he attended in Bagan Datuk.[16] Zahid was also seen distributing gift packs bearing the logo of the Deputy Prime Minister's office to participants at one event in Bagan Datuk. The situation was different in Teluk Intan and Parit Buntar, with fewer BN flags compared to Bagan Datuk. Clearly, Zahid's position in BN and UMNO made a huge difference in terms of spending during the campaign period. In Teluk Intan, Mah's position as Gerakan president allowed him to use the party machinery to its fullest. Free medical check-ups were offered at his *Bilik Gerakan*, seen as a strategy to gain the support of the poor.[17]

On the other hand, PH held many public events, including a concert in Parit Buntar on 6 May 2018 that featured local celebrities such as Aishah and Mus May.[18] At the Parit Buntar concert, even though the event catered primarily to the Malay electorate, the Chinese were seen lending support by staying on for the speeches. This event had managed to garner the presence of a large multi-ethnic crowd. It was different in Teluk Intan where PH organized *ceramahs* to cater to different target audiences: in Chinese-dominant areas and Malay-dominant areas. BN's strategy was similar in the Bagan Datuk constituency where there were performances by local artistes almost every night. Zahid stressed in his speeches that he did not pay the 160 celebrities who were in Bagan Datuk to help his campaign. Obviously, the situation was different from one constituency to the other; however, entertainment shows and *ceramahs* were the primary tools used by BN and PH, respectively, for their campaigns in rural or semi-urban constituencies.

The issue of UMNO funding PAS was played up before the campaign period. Many quarters believed that UMNO was funding PAS so that BN could win in

three-cornered fights. PH's candidate in Bagan Datuk questioned how the PAS candidate, Mohd Misbahul Munir, who was contesting the Hutan Melintang state seat, could afford to drive a Toyota Vellfire.[19] Mohd Misbahul's response was that while PAS was contesting in many parliamentary and state seats across Malaysia, his party was receiving cash donations from its members.[20] He further argued that PAS had almost a million members and that membership fees and donations were sufficient to fund the party's campaign in GE14. Mohd Misbahul also pointed out that a fundraising dinner for PAS members raised half a million ringgit.

However, this allegation persisted, that UMNO had been funding PAS since the latter's 2015 *muktamar*, or general assembly, during which the "Erdogans" were ousted from the top leadership of the party.[21] However, although PAS was seen to be friendly with UMNO, there were times when the Islamic party had opposed BN, for example with regards to Act 164.[22] If UMNO was indeed funding PAS to win in three-cornered fights, this was not a successful strategy as the Islamic party did not manage to swing votes in most of these seats, particularly in non-Malay-majority seats such as Teluk Intan, Pasir Berdamar and Hutan Melintang. Clearly the strategy to contest all the seats in Perak was not advantageous to PAS as its performance declined compared to GE13.

Warlords and factions

BN Perak encountered problems pertaining to candidate selection. The BN Chairman in Perak, Zambry Kadir, also the Chief Minister, had a tough time choosing the candidates. Perak was home to numerous UMNO "warlords" such as Zahid, Zambry, Nazri Aziz, Tajuddin Abdul Rahman and Ahmad Husni. These warlords were very vocal and had strong UMNO grassroots support. When the deputy leader of UMNO Youth, Khairul Azwan, was denied a seat even though he was ready to contest in Perak, this was attributed to the warlords. Indeed, because of UMNO warlordism, certain members, especially those of the younger cohort, were not allowed to stand as candidates. The power of these warlords was such that they could dictate where they would contest, while also threatening UMNO with loss of support from the grassroots if they or their faction members were not selected.[23]

Najib, though BN's chairman, did not interfere with any of the decisions taken by leaders in Perak, a situation similar to other states. Najib had resorted to a plan to stay above these factional disputes, allowing these warlords to sort out who should run in the election. Since Zahid and Zambry were responsible for deciding on the final list of nominees, this meant that the warlords could not blame Najib if they or their allies were not nominated. Najib dissociated himself from decisions regarding candidate selection as he did not want this issue to backfire on him given his already precarious position in UMNO because of the 1MDB scandal. Najib's plan appeared to cause much discontent within the party, further exacerbating factional cleavages. However, it was evident that Zahid, not Zambry, was primarily responsible for handling issues pertaining to seat allocation in Perak.

The factional dispute was so serious that Zahid had to ask those selected as candidates to "console" the hopefuls who were not, as well as get all members to focus on winning the election (*Suara Perak* May 2018). Zahid was worried that there might be problem of sabotage by party members, an issue that had occurred in previous elections. The problems involving seat allocation were most evident in Hutan Melintang, a traditional MIC seat that was given to UMNO. This was one example of many of last-minute changes. Crucially too, since the MIC's Hutan Melintang seat was given to UMNO, there were also concerns whether BN component parties would cooperate during the campaign period.

Similar serious factional issues arose in PKR, including in relation to candidate selection between the faction led by Azmin Ali, PKR's deputy president and Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the party's president. When some candidates who belonged to the Azmin camp were not chosen and new faces were brought in to replace prominent incumbents, this was attributed to the division between the two camps. This was quickly rebutted by Wan Azizah who claimed that there was only one camp in PKR, her camp (*The Star* 24 April 2018).

Factionalism was also evident within the DAP in Perak.[24] The Nga Kor Ming camp was seen as the leading DAP faction in Perak. Evidence of this factionalism was evident during the allocation of seats, when the decisions taken were presumably to allow key leaders to position themselves for a leadership role in the state government. Nga was nominated to stand in the Teluk Intan parliamentary constituency but was to simultaneously contest the state seat of Aulong in the Taiping constituency. This was aimed at giving Nga a potential safe seat since he had parachuted into Teluk Intan and was going up against the rather popular local boy Mah. However, this did not seem to concern Nga as he was confident that he could whip up sufficient support in Teluk Intan. Meanwhile, the move by Aziz Bari to contest the state seat of Tebing Tinggi in the Ipoh Timur constituency was perceived as a move by DAP to lay claim to the Chief Minister's post if PH won the state election. However, Hasnul Zulkarnain, the Amanah Perak Youth chief argued that DAP could not request for this post, even if they won the election.[25]

Key actors

The key leaders in BN and PH, though both UMNO products, had a deeply contentious relationship. Najib, UMNO's president, was mired in serious allegations of abuse of power to personally enrich himself (Case 2017). In PH, Mahathir, the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, argued that he had come out of retirement to lead the opposition coalition to remove his protégé, Najib, who was globally seen as a kleptocrat (*The Telegraph* 2 May 2018). Najib was, undoubtedly, the talk of the electorate in Perak given the well-publicized dispute between him and Mahathir. In fact, Mahathir had left UMNO in protest, arguing that the party had changed under Najib, becoming an institution mired in corruption.

Interestingly, in Perak, the electorate was not focused on the issues of 1MDB and corruption. The foremost concern of the local electorate was about the

economy and how local leaders like Zambry were helping the people, especially in rural areas.[26] For example, the electorate in Bagan Datuk was concerned about the high cost of living, attributed to the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The BN manifesto did not help in addressing this issue. PH candidates used the GST and the high cost of living as issues to win the hearts and minds of the rural electorate. Mujahid Yusof of Amanah and the parliamentary candidate for Parit Buntar argued that national issues such as the 1MDB scandal did not impact poor people, whereas the GST and the high cost of living did.[27] Mujahid's assessment was correct as many locals spoke of how the escalating cost of living was becoming a serious burden, while 1MDB was just too complicated an issue for them to understand.[28]

When the campaign began, BN component members did not address the issue of corruption or 1MDB. They tailored their campaigns to the areas they were contesting. For example, in Bagan Datuk, Zahid promised development and to focus on fighting the issue of drug dependency among the young. Shahrul Zaman, the incumbent in the state seat of Rungkup, focused on the principle *Kenduri, Bersalin, Sakit, Mati* (KBSM),[29] a campaign slogan to stress that BN was concerned about the welfare of its constituents.[30] In Parit Buntar, UMNO leaders, led by Abdul Puhat Mat Nayan, who was BN's candidate for the seat, did not draw any attention to 1MDB.

In Teluk Intan, Mah did not publicly address the issue of 1MDB and the corruption charges directed at Najib. BN posters focused on the issues of education and investments from China.[31] Whereas a lot of posters and campaign material in Mandarin dealt with issues related to education, some showed the picture of Liow Tiong Lai, the President of MCA, shaking hands with the President of China, Xi Jinping.[32] In Bagan Datuk, developments owing to investments from China were highlighted and used as campaign materials in the non-Malay majority constituencies. Chief Minister Zambry Kadir raised the issue of the large volume of investments from China in the state. Since these investments had been channelled to development-based ventures, even though Mahathir had stress that Malaysians should be wary of fund flows from China, this did not come across as a major campaign controversy during the campaign.

Meanwhile, the electorate's perception of Mahathir was mixed. Some remembered his reputation as a "dictator" throughout his 22 years as Prime Minister (Khoo 1995). However, the turnout of voters for Mahathir's *ceramah* was huge, including in rural areas. People, regardless of ethnicity, appeared to accept his presence as opposition leader. The Chinese in Parit Buntar were seen applauding a short video of him that was played during a *ceramah* organized by Mujahid Yusof.[33]

Zambry, then a two-term Menteri Besar, was a central figure in Perak. He was extremely popular among rural Malays as he had run many activities catering to them. As he hailed from a poor family himself, he was viewed as a legitimate champion of the rights of rural folk.[34] Zambry's leadership of Perak had not been undermined by any major scandal, whereas most UMNO leaders in this state had been at work long before the campaign period began.[35] Khairuddin, the

candidate for Hutan Melintang, mentioned that he had been seeing to the needs of the people of this constituency over the past four years, even though this was not a BN seat.[36] Shahrul Zaman, the incumbent and candidate for the seat of Rungkup in Bagan Datuk, also claimed that he was not doing seasonal work, but had been working in the area since he won the constituency in 2013.[37] Zambry's influence among the candidates in Perak was evident, except for the state seats in Bagan Datuk. Most UMNO candidates used the tagline "#TeamDrZambry" in their posters;[38] however, the other BN component parties such as MCA and MIC did not. Zambry's influence among the electorate was so significant that some UMNO leaders believed that if he did not run in a state seat, and only contested a parliamentary seat, the BN would fall in Perak.[39] Zambry contested the Lumut parliamentary and Pangkor state constituencies.

Hadi Awang, the President of PAS, emerged as a central figure in GE14 after he announced that PAS would contest almost all parliamentary seats in Perak. His statement that PAS wanted to be the "Kingmaker" caused the electorate to view him and his party as UMNO's puppet. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, a key UMNO leader, argued that with PAS as the third force in multi-cornered fights, this would be an advantage for UMNO and BN (*The Sun Daily* 26 January 2018). After Hadi was accused of receiving RM90 million from UMNO, he won an interlocutory injunction in the United Kingdom High Court and used this as proof of his innocence (*Berita Harian* 1 May 2018). This injunction was used in PAS's campaign materials to convince the electorate that the party was not doing UMNO's bidding. However, PAS's decision to contest in non-Malay constituencies raised many eye brows. In the Pasir Berdamar state seat, PAS nominated a non-Malay candidate, perceived as a move to give BN the advantage.

The results

Since there were no major scandals involving Zambry's leadership and he was viewed as promoting development and drawing large investments into the state, there was no reason to expect a people's revolt against his government.[40] The Perak BN had prepared well for GE14 with strategies such as BR1M handouts (or cash transfers), not allowing PH to register as a party and scheduling the elections on a weekday in an attempt to gain an advantage even before the campaign period had begun. By refusing to allow PH to be officially recognized as a coalition, the opposition parties were denied the use of a common symbol, a strategy perceived to favour BN. By scheduling the election on a weekday, BN hoped that fewer members of the electorate would return to Perak to vote.

BN did well in Bagan Datuk, winning the parliamentary constituency as well as both state seats. Zahid won with more than a 5,000-vote majority, compared to GE13 when his margin of victory was just over 2,000 votes. Shahrul Zaman retained the Rungkup state seat with a 3,069 majority, though Khairuddin, the candidate for Hutan Melintang, won by a slim 741 majority. Evidently, under Zahid's leadership, BN did very well, specifically in Bagan Datuk, though this

could also be attributed to the volume of development funds poured into the constituency.

In Parit Buntar, Perak BN fielded a high-profile state leader who was the State Secretary, Abdul Puhat. Sending new and fresh faces as candidates in the election was a strategy by BN to deal with allegations of corruption among top UMNO leaders. However, the incumbent in Parit Buntar, Mujahid Yusof, had strong support from the locals even though he contested under a different party, Amanah. Mujahid retained his seat with a smaller majority of 3,098 votes. As for the state seat, Titi Serong, PH candidate Hasnul Zulkarnain managed to win the seat with a slim 140-vote majority, even though he was not a local boy from Parit Buntar. In Kuala Kurau, Abdul Yunus from PH retained his seat, though with a smaller majority of 2,643 votes. This clearly indicates that three-cornered fights in these constituencies were not advantageous to PH as all their candidates won by smaller majorities. However, it is also evident that three-cornered fights did not give BN the usual huge advantage it had experienced in the past.

In Teluk Intan, BN's Mah lost his seat by more than 11,000 votes to PH's Nga. In the state seat of Pasir Berdamar, a non-Malay majority area, the PH incumbent, Terence Naidu, won the seat with a massive majority of 14,520 votes. In contrast, in the Malay-majority Changkat Jong constituency, BN candidate Mohd Azhar Jamaluddin retained his seat, though by a mere 67 vote majority.

Appendix A clearly illustrates that BN component parties did not win any state seats and won only the Tapah parliamentary seat, through MIC's M. Saravanan, then the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports. BN, through UMNO, won ten other parliamentary seats.[41] The trend was that in non-Malay constituencies, the Chinese voters had rejected BN. In Teluk Intan, Mah won the seat back in a by-election in 2014 and since he was originally from the constituency, this gave him the advantage in this constituency. However, in GE14, the voters chose Nga. In fact, Nga had announced his candidacy only a few days before the campaign period. Nga also contested and won the Aulong state seat in Taiping.

In the PH coalition, DAP maintained its performance compared to GE13, with 18 state seats. However, the number of seats held by PKR was reduced from five to four. A similar trend was evident in the parliamentary seats with DAP retaining seven constituencies and PKR retaining three. Amanah and Bersatu managed to secure two and one parliamentary seats, respectively. The results indicate that in Malay-majority constituencies, there was a shift in support to Amanah from PAS. This is further evidenced by Amanah's victory in two of the four parliamentary seats it contested as well as in six of the 12 state seats where it fielded candidates. Rumours that PAS had been working with UMNO may have cost the Islamic party some grassroots support, a factor that swung support to Amanah.

The issue of candidate selection for the state seats was one reason why BN performed poorly. The bickering between BN component parties also contributed to BN's loss in Perak. In GE14, most of the candidates were professionals who had not stood before in an election. This strategy, of fielding clean candidates, was used by Perak BN to circumnavigate the national issue of corruption. This

strategy did not work well as some of the candidates had no experience, whereas parachute candidates from different constituencies were not well-regarded. Moreover, these candidates failed to address the issues of corruption and the high cost of living during their campaigns. Additionally, since many warlords were not selected as candidates, this led to unhappiness and sabotage within the BN coalition, but there were interesting differences here.

Chief Minister Zambry encountered an unexpected revolt. This was evident in the fact that he won the Pangkor state seat with a majority of 1,626 votes while losing the parliamentary seat in Lumut to Mohd Hatta Ramli from Amanah by a mere 400 votes. The strategy to garner votes from the navy did not materialize as he did not gain from the three-cornered fights in Lumut and Pangkor. Interestingly, when Zahid won with an increased majority of 5,000 votes in Bagan Datuk, this was attributed to the personnel from a new army camp that was brought in to his constituency to increase support for him (*The Malay Mail* 7 November 2017). However, Zahid's influence among the Indian and Chinese electorate was strong, a reason why he could whip up the votes for himself as well as allies like Khairuddin, his ex-secretary and candidate for Hutan Melintang that had a 43% non-Malay electorate. Zahid had fared well even though the MIC did not help his campaign. Most of the campaigning for Indian support was anchored by NGOs aligned with BN.[42]

PAS, on the other hand, was hoping it would secure sufficient state seats to position itself as the "Kingmaker" in the election (*The Straits Times* 31 March 2018). However, PAS's performance in Perak was dismal. The party contested 44 state seats and 21 parliamentary seats, but did not win any parliamentary seats compared to two seats in GE13 and only three state seats in GE14 compared to the five it won in the previous general election. PAS did not manage to emerge as the third (viable) option for the people, as the party had initially hoped. The major split between the main Malay parties, PAS and UMNO, was regarded as the reason why both parties could not win with huge majorities in GE14. With the formation of Amanah, PAS lost its monopoly as the only party fighting in the name of Islam.

PAS's decision to contest all seats in Perak was a move widely seen as advantageous to BN. However, three-cornered fights, especially those in constituencies with a strong non-Malay presence, clearly did not work in favour of BN and PAS, as almost all these seats were won by PH. In Teluk Intan, PAS contested the parliamentary seat, but this did not alter the results. BN and PAS lost the seat by a huge majority. There was clear evidence too of PH's influence that was strong under the leadership of Nga Kor Ming, who managed to swing the votes to the coalition in the Pasir Berdamar state seat and Teluk Intan parliamentary seat. This also indicated the lack of non-Malay support for PAS, even when the party nominated a non-Muslim candidate. In Malay-majority Bagan Datuk, where there was a three-cornered fight, PAS's presence did impact the results, giving the advantage to BN, particularly in the state seats in these constituencies. PAS took away sufficient votes in Hutan Melintang in particular, allowing BN to win by a very small margin.

Prior to the campaign period, the main components of PH, comprising DAP, PKR, Bersatu and Amanah, faced their first obstacle when they were denied the use of the PH logo. They quickly agreed that all candidates of PH component parties would use PKR's logo, a move that reinforced the idea of a united front against BN. Candidates were chosen from the four main component parties for all the constituencies in the peninsular as well as the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak. Issues of corruption, 1MDB and the GST that were highlighted by PH throughout the campaign was a strategy that worked well for the coalition. The support of the people for the issues raised by PH was seen during the huge turnouts at PH *ceramahs*.

Conclusion

The results of GE14 in Perak indicate two important issues. First, feuds within and between Malay-based parties, involving key political elites, had had an enormous impact on the voters, a key factor contributing to the fall of BN. Second, the Malay electorate appeared rather evenly split, with no clear indication which Malay-based party had the most support.

These issues stand out in the results tabled in Appendix A. The split within PAS had evidently reduced its support base in Perak, with a shift in allegiance to its splinter party, Amanah; this trend was evident in other states in the west coast of the peninsula during GE14. However, Bersatu did not perform well as an alternative to UMNO in Perak. Bersatu only managed to secure one parliamentary seat and one state seat, compared to UMNO's ten parliamentary seats and 27 state seats. Clearly, Bersatu, with few if any well-known candidates in Perak and an ineffective party machinery, could not mount a viable campaign let alone convince the Malay electorate that it could champion their interests in this state.

Meanwhile, national issues such as corruption and 1MDB did not have a big impact on rural and semi-urban voters, who were more concerned with the issue of the GST and the high cost of living. However, corruption involving UMNO elites was a primary reason why BN was rejected at the national level, while in urban areas in Perak, support for BN declined further. Undoubtedly, even with the massive development and promises such as the building of a new airport in Seri Iskandar and numerous PR1MA housing schemes in rural areas by BN, this was insufficient to convince these constituents to stay with the ruling coalition, particularly after PH had promised to abolish the GST.

Even though the PH registered a massive victory at the national level, this coalition did not do extremely well in Perak. DAP managed to deliver results, as it had in the previous general election, while PKR showed only a minor increase in the number of seats it had won (Lee and Thock 2014). Moreover, it was evident during the campaign that PH's party machinery was not very effective. This suggested that although PH had managed to win control of the Perak state government, the electorate support it secured was not because of its manifesto but because there was a huge protest against BN.

PAS's poor performance in Perak indicated a flawed strategy of wanting to be a "Kingmaker" by ensuring that there were many three-cornered fights. Such

multi-cornered contests did not advantage PAS in any way as the party lost badly in all non-Malay seats, such as in Teluk Intan, with no indication that this was also a viable method to secure victory in Malay-dominant parliamentary constituencies.

How PH will fare in Perak after GE14 would be interesting to watch as it does not appear that this coalition has huge support in this state. How BN in general and UMNO in particular will attempt to reform as a coalition and as a party, respectively, would also be of interest given that it still has significant electoral support. The position of PAS is extremely interesting as this party clearly needs to revisit its electoral strategies in Perak and the west coast of the peninsula if it hopes to create a presence for itself outside Kelantan and Terengganu.

Notes

1 I wish to extend my gratitude to HELP University for the research grant provided to undertake this study. This article benefited from the guidance and support provided by Professor Edmund Terence Gomez who was also responsible for including me in this project.
2 Appendix A provides the details about the election results in the 2018 general election.
3 See Appendix B for a list of all the parliamentary and state candidates in these three constituencies.
4 Conversation with Mohd Faizul, Changkat Jong, 4 May 2018.
5 This was observed in Teluk Intan, during *ceramahs* held on 3 and 4 May 2018.
6 Manivannan contested in Hutan Melintang, shifting out of Kapar which now had more Malay voters following a redelineation process.
7 Interview with S. Kumaresan, Changkat Jong, 4 May 2018.
8 For a discussion on what was widely believed to be a covert election pact between leaders of UMNO and PAS, see the Introduction of this volume.
9 Interview with Mohd Misbah, Bagan Datuk, 1 May 2018.
10 This was conveyed by Mohd Misbah during an interview in Bagan Datuk on 1 May 2018.
11 This was observed at a BN event in Hutan Melintang, 30 April 2018.
12 PR1MA had been created by Najib to provide for high-quality housing, with the price of houses ranging from RM100,000 to RM400,000. It serves to help Malaysians with an average monthly household income of between RM2,500 and RM15,000 to secure housing.
13 Feedback obtained from a conversation with a PAS supporter, Selekoh, 29 April 2018.
14 Interview with Shahrul Zaman, Rungkup, 30 April 2018.
15 This was observed in Bagan Datuk, Teluk Intan and Parit Buntar.
16 Observed in Bagan Datuk, 30 April 2018.
17 Observed in Teluk Intan, 2 May 2018.
18 Aishah is a local celebrity. She had contested under the PAS ticket in the Jempol parliamentary seat in GE13. Mus May is a Perak-born celebrity, known for his rock music.
19 Interview with Pakhrurrazi, Selekoh, 30 April 2018.
20 Interview with Mohd Misbahul, Bagan Datuk, 1 May 2018.
21 Interview with Hasnul Zulkarnain, Parit Buntar, 7 May 2018.
22 This Act 164 was an amendment on marriage laws that allowed a couple to dissolve their marriage in civil court. This Act was tabled by a BN MP in 2017.
23 These warlords needed to be selected as candidates and win in order to continue receiving government-generated concessions (Gomez 2016). See Chapter 3 by

Sri Murniati in this volume for an in-depth discussion on the conduct of this patronage system in UMNO.
24 Such DAP factionalism was also serious in Melaka and Johor. See Chapters 7 and 8, respectively, in this volume for a further discussion on DAP factionalism.
25 Interview with Hasnul Zulkarnain, Parit Buntar, 7 May 2018.
26 Interview with UMNO leader, Seri Manjung, 2 May 2018.
27 Interview with Mujahid Yusof, Parit Buntar, 7 May 2018.
28 Information obtained from locals in Bagan Datuk, 29 April 2018.
29 Translation for KBSM: Weddings, Delivery, Pain, Death.
30 Interview with Shahrul Zaman, Rungkup, 30 April 2018.
31 Information obtained from observation of posters around Teluk Intan.
32 Observed in Teluk Intan.
33 Observed during *ceramah* on 5 and 7 May 2018 in Parit Buntar.
34 Interview with UMNO leader, Seri Manjung, 2 May 2018.
35 Interview with UMNO leader, Seri Manjung, 2 May 2018.
36 Interview with Khairuddin, Hutan Melintang, 2 May 2018.
37 Interview with Shahrul Zaman, Rungkup, 30 April 2018.
38 Information obtained from an observation of posters around Taiping.
39 Interview with UMNO leader, Seri Manjung, 2 May 2018.
40 Interview with UMNO leader, Seri Manjung, 2 May 2018.
41 In GE13, MCA and MIC contributed one seat each, won by Ong Ka Chuan and M. Saravanan, respectively.
42 Observed in Bagan Datuk.

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Newspapers and magazines

Berita Harian
The Malay Mail
New Straits Times
The Star
The Straits Times
Suara Perak
The Sun Daily
The Telegraph

Appendix A

Table 10.1 Results for Perak

Parliament		
Parties	*Contesting*	*Won*
BN	24	11
PH (DAP)	7	7
PH (PKR)	5	3
PH (Amanah)	4	2
PH (Bersatu)	8	1
PAS	21	0
TOTAL		24

State		
Parties	*Contesting*	*Won*
BN	59	27*
PH (DAP)	18	18
PH (Amanah)	12	6
PH (PKR)	14	4
PH (Bersatu)	15	1
PAS**	44	3
TOTAL		59

Notes:

*After two UMNO members shifted their support to PH, they were sacked from the party.
** PAS stood alone, not aligning itself with BN or PH.

Source: *The Star Online*, 2018, https://election.thestar.com.my/perak.html

Appendix B

Table 10.2 Results for Bagan Datuk, Teluk Intan and Parit Buntar

Constituency	*Party*	*Candidate*	*Votes*
P075: Bagan Datuk	Incumbent—BN	Ahmad Zahid Hamidi	
Total Voters: 47,309	BN—UMNO	Ahmad Zahid Hamidi	18,909
Malay: 60%	PKR—PKR	Pakhrurrazi Hj Arshad	13,836
Chinese: 18%	PAS	Ata Abdul Muneim	4,061
Indian: 22%			
Others: 1%			
N053: Rungkup	Incumbent—BN	Shahrul Zaman Yahya	
Total Voters: 16, 067	BN—UMNO	Shahrul Zaman Yahya	6,529
Malay: 69%	PKR—Amanah	Hatim Musa	3,460
Chinese: 22%	PAS	Mohd Mokheri Jalil	2,430
Indian: 8%			
Others: 1%			
N054: Hutan Melintang	Incumbent—PKR	Kesavan a/l Subramaniam	
Total Voters: 31,242			
Malay: 55%	BN—UMNO	Khairuddin Tarmizi	10,961
Chinese: 15%	PKR—PKR	G. Manivannan a/l Gowindasamy	10,220
Indian: 28%			
Others: 1%	PAS	Mohd Misbahul Munir	3,150
P076: Teluk Intan	Incumbent—Gerakan	Mah Siew Keong (by-election)	
Total Voters: 66,487			
Malay: 41%	PKR—DAP	Nga Kor Ming	29,170
Chinese: 40%	BN—Gerakan	Mah Siew Keong	17,991
Indian: 19%	PAS	Ahmad Ramadzan Ahmad Daud	6,494
Others: 1%			
N055: Pasir Berdamar	Incumbent—DAP	Terence Naidu a/l Vraja	
Total Voters: 31,439	PKR—DAP	Terence Naidu a/l Vraja	19,480
Malay: 16%	BN—MCA	Kong Sun Chin	4,960
Chinese: 70%	PAS	Kumaresan a/l Shanmugam	939
Indian: 14%			
N056: Changkat Jong	Incumbent—BN	Mohd Azhar Jamaluddin	
Total Voters: 35,048			
Malay: 64%	BN—UMNO	Mohd Azhar Jamaluddin	11,216
Chinese: 13%			
Indian: 23%	PKR—Bersatu	Muhammad Faizul	11,149
Others: 1%	PAS	Mohd Azhar Rafiei	5,834

Constituency	*Party*	*Candidate*	*Votes*
P057: Parit Buntar	Incumbent—Amanah (PAS previously)	Mujahid Yusof	
Total Voters: 51,860			
Malay: 69%	PKR—Amanah	Mujahid Yusof	16,753
Chinese: 26%	BN—UMNO	Abdul Puhat Mat Nayan	13,655
Indian: 5%	PAS	Ahmad Azhar Sharin	12,312
N08: Titi Serong	Incumbent—PAS	Abu Bakar Haji Hussian	
Total Voters: 26,726	PKR—Amanah	Hasnul Zulkarnain	7,600
Malay: 75%	BN—UMNO	Norsalewati Bt. Mat Norwani	7,460
Chinese: 17%			
Indian: 8%	PAS	Abu Bakar Haji Hussian	6,993
N09: Kuala Kurau	Incumbent—PKR	Abdul Yunus Jamahri	
Total Voters: 25,134	PKR—PKR	Abdul Yunus Jamahri	8,655
Malay: 63%	BN—UMNO	Shahrul Nizam Razali	6,012
Chinese: 35%	PAS	Abdul Baharin Mat Desa	5,997
Indian: 1%			

Source: https://undi.info/perak

11 Parties versus personalities in Kedah politics

Unstable and hung state assembly in Kedah's GE14

Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani

Introduction

On 31 March 2018, in a programme entitled "With the People" in Pendang, then Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi reminded the residents of Kedah that they should not repeat the mistake of the General Election 12 (GE12)—when *Barisan Nasional* (BN) lost to the opposition for the first time in Kedah's history—in General Election 14 (GE14). He argued that this mistake would have a detrimental effect on the people (*Free Malaysia Today* 1 April 2018). Zahid urged the electorate to continue supporting BN as the Kedah state government had an excellent record of championing the welfare of the people. One key reason identified for BN's defeat was the internal splits within BN. Zahid's assertions proved prophetic when BN, once again, lost the state of Kedah after GE14, largely owing to its internal problems. This chapter will examine the electoral campaign in Kedah, the key parties and personalities in the state and factors that led to the fall of BN. The key argument of this chapter is that intra-elite competition among Malay leaders explains the result of the election in Kedah. The empirical data for this study was gathered through field research conducted in all 15 parliamentary constituencies in Kedah, from 28 March 2018 to 9 May 2018.

The intrigues of Kedahan politics

Based on the 2017 census, Kedah has a population of 2.15 million, with Malays accounting for 79.31%, Chinese 13.26 % and the rest being Indian, Siamese and other smaller ethnic groups. The state's unemployment rate is low, at about 26,400 or 2.8% of the labour force (Department of Statistic Malaysia 2018). Kedah is known as the nation's rice bowl as it is a state reliant on agriculture. Kedah's economy is also diversified with a burgeoning tourism and manufacturing sector (*Malaysian Digest*, 2018). Politically, Kedah has always been a centre for political struggle between the BN and PAS. In GE12, BN only won four out of the 15 parliamentary seats and 14 out of the 36 state seats, while the opposition-based *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* or Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) won 16, *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR) 4 and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) 2 (Daniels 2013). As noted earlier, the key reason behind BN's defeat was the infighting within the BN and the United Malays National Organisation

(UMNO) and the loss of non-Malay support (*Free Malaysia Today* 1 April 2018). In the General Election 13 (GE13), BN re-captured Kedah because of infighting in the opposition and a united UMNO who stood behind Mukhriz Mahathir as *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) of Kedah. After the 2013 General Elections, the one and only state that saw the transition of power from *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR) back to BN was Kedah, in which BN won with 452,498 votes (50.3%) or 21 state assembly seats vis-à-vis PR's 434,641 votes (49.7%) and 15 state seats, with a majority of 17,857 popular votes. Out of 36 seats, for BN, UMNO took 19 and Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) took two. Within PR, PAS won nine seats, PKR got four and DAP won two (Mohd Sani 2014; *The Star Online* 10 March 2018). However, owing to the fielding of weak candidates, internal sabotage, crippled election machinery and rejection by urban voters, especially the Chinese, BN lost in a number of seats, including Sungai Petani, Kuala Kedah, Padang Serai and Alor Setar. A major contributor to BN's victory in the state was the weak and inexperienced PAS-led administration (Mohamed Osman 2014; Daniels 2013). Two factions had emerged within PAS. One faction was led by *Menteri Besar* Azizan Abdul Razak who was suffering from poor health and the other was led by state leaders such as Ismail Salleh and Phahrolrazi Zawawi (Mohd Sani 2014). The helm of the state administration was taken over by the new *Menteri Besar*, Mukhriz Mahathir, who was later replaced by Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah in 2016. The change in the Chief Ministership was because of a disagreement between Prime Minister Najib Razak and former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad that sparked a leadership crisis in the state. Mahathir then quit UMNO and formed a new party *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu) that later set up a new opposition coalition, *Pakatan Harapan* (PH), with PKR, DAP and *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah), following the collapse of PR after PAS left the coalition (Mohd Sani 2014). UMNO and BN were somewhat concerned about disgruntled Kedah UMNO leaders and members loyal to Mukhriz, following his removal as *Menteri Besar*.

Pre-GE14: party or personality

Voting trends in previous elections in Kedah showed that Kedahans tended to vote along party lines and less according to candidates or personalities. Before PH rolled out its manifesto, many Kedahans were sceptical of its ability to form a state government as its plan for Kedah seemed unclear. Owing to the dominance of UMNO and PAS in previous elections, the purported UMNO–PAS alliance was expected to usher in victory for both parties. PH could win only if the Malay votes were split. Mahathir and Mukhriz were seen as divisive figures and voters were clearly divided in choosing party or personalities in GE14.

From my observation, there were several factors that determined the results of GE14. First, during UMNO divisional and state-level meetings in 2017, it was obvious that the party was striving to foster a united front to ensure BN's victory in GE14. As the incumbent, BN had strengths in defending Kedah through the federal and state machineries that it had created, whereas the print

and broadcasting media was controlled by this ruling coalition. In Kedah, if BN, in particular UMNO, went into the election united, the opposition would have found it extremely difficult to threaten the coalition's control over the state. However, BN had to deal with UMNO members who voted against the party because of disagreements over the selection of candidates, as well as concern over local and national issues, including the 1MDB scandal, that had undermined the credibility of the party (Mohd Sani 2014).

Secondly, UMNO had hoped that PAS's covert cooperation with BN would strengthen its position in the state. However, this notion of a collaboration was dispelled by leaders of both parties during GE14. PAS's decision to contest all seats in Kedah contributed to three-cornered contests that split the Malay vote. On its part, PAS had to ensure that there was no backlash from its members and supporters against the party leadership. If a large number of PAS members quit the party to join Amanah or Bersatu, it would invariably threaten PAS's position in the general election. My observation suggests that PAS grassroots opposed the coalition with UMNO and the party leadership in Kedah took note of these sentiments, which could explain PAS's decision to contest all seats in Kedah.

Thirdly, the issue of young and new voters was important. As of September 2017, there were a total of 500,120 young voters between 21 and 40 years of age who were seen as fence sitters who would likely vote for any party that would meet their needs. According to Kedah UMNO Youth chief Shaiful Hazizy Zainol Abidin, the state BN government was expanding the young generation's access to the economy, providing almost RM1 million for suitable food truck sites in Jitra, Sungai Petani, Kulim and Alor Setar in order to give an opportunity for young entrepreneurs to start their own businesses in addition to creating jobs for youths (Mohd Sani 2014). PH and PAS engaged young voters through social media in order to attract them to vote for their respective parties.

Fourthly, racial and religious issues remain important in the state. More than 80% of the state's two million population are Muslim. The racial-religious agenda was of tremendous importance for them. The Islamisation policy by the BN state and federal governments were generally well received by the Malays in Kedah. PH, however, did not specify its Islamic policy clearly, making it hard for them to assure Kedahans that they would protect and fight for the Islamic agenda in Kedah.

Fifthly, Mahathir played an important role in Kedah because of his long-term influence in his home state (*The Edge Malaysia* 24 May 2018). Indeed, Mahathir's influence was important in determining the outcome of GE12 and GE13, and there is no denying that such influences would affect the final outcome of GE14. Mahathir's decision to form a breakaway party, Bersatu, which subsequently joined the PH opposition coalition ruptured the elite cohesiveness of UMNO.

Results of GE14: hung state assembly

According to Election Commission (EC) of Malaysia (EC 2018), Kedah had 1,148,997 registered voters. Malays accounted for the highest number of voters,

with 892,547 electorate members. Further, there were 164,462 Chinese voters, or 14.31%, while there were 74,292 Indian voters, or 6.47%. Other ethnic groups included the Siamese who numbered about 17,696 voters, or 1.53% of the electorate (SPR 2018). The youth voters, younger than 40 years old, constituted about 43% of the electorate. There were 17,312 registered early voters, of whom 10,211 voters were military personnel while the remaining 7,101 voters were from the police (*The Star* 5 May 2018).

When the official results were announced, out of 15 parliamentary seats, BN won two, PAS got three and PH captured ten (see Table 11.1 for details on the parliamentary seats contested and won by PH component parties). Besides naming Mahathir as the PH candidate for Prime Minister, the decision by the coalition to use the PKR logo worked positively for them. PH won the seats of Langkawi, Kubang Pasu, Jerlun, Merbok and Kulim-Bandar Baharu from BN and retained Alor Setar, Pokok Sena, Sungai Petani, Kuala Kedah and Padang Serai. BN only managed to retain Padang Terap and Baling. PAS re-captured Jerai, Sik and Pendang from BN. It is clear that the Malay-dominated constituencies (with 80% of Malay voters) were shared among three dominant parties, but all mixed constituencies (with more than 20% non-Malay voters) were won by the PH such as Padang Serai (40.93% non-Malay voters), Alor Setar (36.38%), Merbok (33.07%), Sungai Petani (38.44%), Kulim-Bandar Baharu (22.32%) and Kuala Kedah (21.81%) (EC 2018). Hence, non-Malays contributed significantly to the victory of PH candidates while Malay votes were divided among PH, BN and most importantly PAS that won most Malay-dominated seats.

According to Ong Kian Ming (2018), DAP Member of Parliament for Bangi, the anti-BN swing was felt in all of the states in Malaysia. The largest swing against the BN occurred in Kedah where support for the coalition fell by 19.8%, from 49.8% in GE13 to 30% in GE14. Ong (2018) argued that unlike in GE13 where Malay support for the BN actually increased slightly compared to GE12 in 2008, Malay voters abandoned the ruling coalition in unprecedented numbers.

For the state seats, BN contested in all 36 seats, but managed to win only three seats, in Bandar Baharu, Guar Chempedak and Sungai Tiang. This was BN's

Table 11.1 Parliamentary seats

PARTIES	*WON*	*CONTESTED*
PKR (PH)	6	6
Bersatu (PH)	3	6
PAS	3	15
BN	2	15
AMANAH (PH)	1	3
INDEPENDENT	0	1
PRM	0	1
Total Seats	15	

Note: PRM—Parti Rakyat Malaysia

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia (2018)

worst performance in Kedah's electoral history. PAS was able to win 15 of the 36 seats that it contested (Table 11.2 indicates the total seats contested and won by all parties). The clear winner was PH with 18 seats out of all seats contested. PH won all mixed seats (with more than 20% non-Malay voters), except for two constituencies; one was narrowly won by PAS, i.e., Merbau Pulas (28.75%) with a majority of 438 votes, while the other was narrowly won by BN, i.e., Bandar Baharu (20.84%) with a majority of 377 votes. In those two constituencies, strong personalities played a significant role as both winning candidates, Siti Aishah Ghazali from PAS and Norsabrina Mohd Noor from BN were the incumbents. Mixed-seats won by PH were Kota Darul Aman (68.35% of non-Malay voters), Bakar Arang (53.4%), Lunas (51.17%), Bukit Selambau (42.73%), Derga (41.95%), Gurun (40.69%), Sidam (38.44%), Kulim (38.07%), Alor Mengkudu (36.38%), Suka Menanti (29.54%), Kubang Rotan (28.27%) and Pengkalan Kundor (21.81%). Non-Malay votes contributed to PH's victory in 12 of the 18 state seats that they won. Only six Malay-dominated seats were won by PH, including Kuah, Ayer Hangat, Kota Siputeh, Bukit Kayu Hitam, Jitra and Anak Bukit. PAS won the most Malay-majority seats in Kedah, with 14 constituencies. It can be concluded that in Malay-dominated areas, PAS prevailed.

The results also triggered a hung state assembly with no party possessing the minimum 19 seats to form the state government (*Malaysiakini* 2 May 2018). PH was permitted to form a minority government by the Sultan of Kedah, as it had won the greatest number of seats. PH was at first unable to name a Speaker for the state assembly owing to the lack of seats. PAS had offered a unity government, combining all members of the state assembly without any opposition in Kedah. This proposal was rejected by PH. PH also rejected the idea of a re-election in Kedah for control of the state assembly (*Bernama* 4 July 2018). PH obtained the support of all three BN members in the state assembly to agree on its proposed Speaker in order to avoid a re-election. On 5 July 2018, former Member of Parliament from Kuala Kedah, Ahmad Kassim, was elected as the Speaker after voting was carried out in the state assembly. BN and PH members of state assembly voted for Ahmad Kassim from PKR who received 21 votes.

Table 11.2 State assembly seats

PARTIES	*WON*	*CONTESTED*
PAS	15	36
PKR (PH)	8	11
Bersatu (PH)	5	14
BN	3	36
AMANAH (PH)	3	9
DAP (PH)	2	2
IND	0	4
PRM	0	4
TOTAL	**SEATS**	**36**

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia (2018)

Table 11.3 Popular votes in Kedah

Parties	*Votes in Parliament*	*Percentage*	*Votes in State Assembly*	*Percentage*
BN	282,273	30	278,694	29.6
PH	362,256	38.5	343,519	36.6
PAS	295,413	31.4	82313,171	33.7
Others	360	0.01	930	0.1

Source: Election Commission, Malaysia (2018)

Kedah PAS commissioner Ahmad Fakhruddin Sheikh Fakhrurazi received 15 votes from all PAS members of state assembly.

Several trends can be observed from GE14 in Kedah. Compared to GE13, BN lost a further eight parliamentary seats and 17 state seats. In GE13, BN won ten parliamentary seats and 20 state seats. Moreover, PH managed to add six more parliamentary seats and nine more state seats from its four parliamentary seats and nine states seats in GE13. PAS on the other hand won an additional two parliamentary seats and eight state seats, compared to the one parliamentary and seven state seats it received in GE13. PH captured the highest popular votes (see Table 11.3). It was thus not a convincing win for PH because the coalition was only able to garner slightly over one-third of the votes. Voter turnout in Kedah was also very high, in total 82% out of 1,146,492 eligible registered voters. Almost all constituencies saw a turnout of 80%, except in the state seat of Kota Darul Aman with 78.1% votes.

In terms of parliamentary seats, Mahathir, as expected, won the Langkawi parliamentary seat and his son, Mukhriz, won both the Jerlun parliamentary and Jitra state seats. However, a number of BN stalwarts such as the *Menteri Besar* of Kedah, Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah, as well as Cabinet ministers including Jamil Khir Baharom and Mohd Johari Baharum lost their seats. PH in Kedah won a number of seats by a simple majority. Based on the popular votes, 1.9% of voters who supported PH for parliamentary seats supported PAS for state seats. PAS gained 2.3% of votes in state seats compared to parliamentary seats (EC 2018). This contributed to the outcome of a hung state assembly in Kedah. The next section will examine the factors leading to the outcome of GE14 in Kedah.

Assessing the GE14 outcomes

PH won unconvincingly

Before GE14, Liew Chin Tong (2017), the former DAP MP for Keluang, predicted that PH could win control of Putrajaya. In fact, in Peninsular Malaysia, Liew predicted PH could gain 40 more parliamentary seats. In Kedah and Perlis alone, PH could win ten additional seats. The Deputy Head of Bersatu in Kedah, Anuar Abdul Hamid, noted that: "From the total of 36 state assemblies, PH can add additional 15 more seats" (*Malaysia Dateline* 14 September 2017). Statements from

these two leaders clearly indicate that PH was confident that they could topple the BN government in Kedah because of the presence of Mahathir and Mukhriz.

Kedah PH announced their GE14 manifesto on 20 April 2018, outlining its key policies for the state. The essence of the manifesto themed "Our Dreams to Prosper Kedah Together" was read by the chairman of the manifesto committee Johari Abdul, Member of Parliament for Sungai Petani. The manifesto, which was populist in nature, included clauses such as providing basic amenities and public housing while also prioritizing the people's welfare and health (*Bernama* 21 April 2018). PH also promised to deliver certain policy changes, including establishing a chronic diseases fund and a dialysis centre as well as setting up a special women's fund within the first 100 days of its administration (*Bernama* 21 April 2018).

The developmental agenda of the PH, as enshrined in its manifesto, gave confidence among some Kedahans to vote for PH. This is especially owing to Mahathir's track record of developing Kedah in his first term as Prime Minister. Many Kedahans also identified closely with Mahathir and still remembered his contribution in developing Langkawi, making it an important tourist destination. Mahathir's legacy and contribution to the state was to be found everywhere, his supporters would contend. Kedah was also "Rumah Kelahiran Mahathir," or "Mahathir's Birthplace," that served as an attraction spot for tourists visiting the northern state (*Malay Mail* 10 April 2018). Many Kedahans also wanted to see Mukhriz back as *Menteri Besar* to complete his unfinished policies, especially in the economic and development plans realms. However, the Mahathir and Mukhriz factor was not strong enough to help PH form a more stable government or win by a big margin in Kedah.

Wrong strategy: three-cornered fights

Menteri Besar of Kedah Ahmad Bashah was confident that with three-cornered contests, BN could win big in GE14. He said that "I want to win Kedah, that is my aim. And I am confident after all the hard work during my term, we can win 30 out of 36 state seats" (*The Star* 28 March 2018). From a total of 15 parliamentary seats, he was confident of winning 13 seats. However, not all BN leaders shared Ahmad Bashah's views of his administration of Kedah.

During the UMNO's General Assembly in 2017, Acting Deputy President of UMNO Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Minister of Culture and Tourism Nazri Aziz reminded UMNO that a three-cornered fight did not guarantee BN winning the election easily or achieving a two-thirds majority in parliament (Liew 2017). Liew Chin Tong (2017) echoed this view when he argued that a three-cornered fight among BN, PH and PAS would not necessarily help BN or UMNO win at the federal level, let alone the state of Kedah. A three-cornered contest divided Malay votes three ways. The assumption was that since non-Malay voters would support PH, this meant that a three-way divide could well lead to PH winning seats. There was justification for this argument. It is clear in the result of GE14

that most mixed seats in urban and suburban constituencies were won by PH. Almost all 18 seats won by PH were located in these urban and suburban areas.

As mentioned earlier, the supposed national consensus between PAS and UMNO did not materialize as an open strategy by both parties. This national consensus was a problematic issue because there was rejection of it from PAS and UMNO's grassroots leaders and supporters. It was difficult for the grassroots of both parties to accept the idea of collaboration with their traditional enemy. Besides, there appeared to be no evidence that UMNO had a clear intent to invite PAS into collaboration with it. UMNO desired to maintain its dominant presence among the Malays and did not want PAS intruding into this domain, one already under threat.

In Kedah, there was no evidence of direct discussion and consensus between leaders of UMNO and PAS. Without any consensus, current UMNO elites led by Ahmad Bashah had hoped Kedah would always be under his control. Moreover, PAS leaders, especially Deputy President Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man. were suspicious and cautious of the PAS–UMNO relationship. He, together with Iskandar Abdul Samad (PAS Vice-President and Selangor commissioner) and Idris Ahmad (Vice President), strongly rejected cooperation and stressed that there would be no merger between PAS and UMNO. They stated bluntly that any PAS leader or member who wanted to merge with UMNO should be expelled from the party (*The Malaysian Insider* 25 December 2015).

In fact, many UMNO leaders wanted PAS to leave the opposition's coalition as this would weaken the PH. The perception was that in a three-cornered fight, PAS would split the opposition votes which will benefit BN. However, this strategy was in fact beneficial to PAS rather than BN and the party won seats in both rural and semi-urban areas by stressing the issues of Islam and *hudud*. State PAS commissioner Ahmad Fakhruddin noted that PAS was stronger than it was in the previous election and this, he said, meant that the party was not worried with Mahathir's constant visits to the state to garner support. Fakhruddin argued that "PAS is stronger and that scares BN and Pakatan (PH). They (PH) can bring in the big names here, but I doubt it will give PPBM (Bersatu) any benefit" (*Malay Mail* 10 April 2018).

On 26 February 2018, PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang launched the party's manifesto at the Kedah PAS Complex in Kota Sarang Semut. PAS believed that its manifesto was key in attracting support for PAS. The manifesto, with the theme "Solutions for the People's Well-being," contained 15 core agendas that encompassed, among others, administration, religious affairs, education, welfare, economy, water and housing, women and family development, youth and human development, racial integration, security and environment (*The Star Online* 26 February 2018). The success of PAS, and even PH, was not only because of their own strength but also because of protest votes against BN. Besides, BN's failure to address many national issues, including scandals involving government enterprises such as 1MBD and FELDA, lost it much Malay support.

Infighting and protest votes against BN

Based on the results of GE14, BN performed poorly because of infighting within UMNO. It was caused by silent support among UMNO members for Bersatu and PH and because of the choice of candidates. Many UMNO members were quietly supporting PH, partly because of disappointment with BN's character assassination of Mahathir and the removal of Mukhriz as *Menteri Besar* in 2016. The huge support for Mahathir in Langkawi and the success of Mukhriz in Jerlun and Jitra were clear examples that UMNO members decided to vote for PH. Without doubt there was an intra-Malay elite fissure in Kedah. Kedah had long been dominated by a group of elites headed by Mahathir and his family. BN Kedah led by Ahmad Bashah, who was supported by Najib at the federal level and many warlords who were anti-Mahathir and his family, was trying to counter the dominance of Mahathir and his allies in Kedah. This was difficult for BN because Mahathir had strong appeal across ethnic groups among Kedahans. The best way to defeat Mahathir and PH was to have the most winnable candidates in every constituency.

BN Kedah nominated 18 new candidates, though it also retained 33 incumbents (*The Sun Daily* 21 April 2018). BN thought that this would help maintain stability within UMNO, in particular. Unfortunately, this backfired on BN. Many BN leaders, such as UMNO division heads of Sungai Petani, Pokok Sena and Pendang, were disappointed that they were not nominated as candidates. These warlords sabotaged the fielded UMNO candidates to ensure that the latter would lose and thus not pose a threat to their own positions in UMNO. Internal sabotage caused BN to lose parliamentary seats such as Jerai, Pendang, Merbok, Sik, Kuala Kedah and Kulim-Bandar Baharu as well as state seats such as Padang Terap, Pantai Merdeka and Bukit Pinang. For instance, the incumbent of the Padang Terap state seat, Badrol Hisham Hashim, lost the seat to PAS. In my visit to Padang Terap, some UMNO members close to the Padang Terap MP, Mahdzir Khalid, informed me that many UMNO members and supporters were going to vote for the PAS candidate because they were disappointed with Badrol's performance as state assemblyman for Kuala Nerang since GE13. They were also supporting the rival camp led by leaders who were not being picked as candidates in that constituency because they believed that if Badrol won the election, he would emerge as a threat to their leader's position in the impending UMNO election, scheduled for July 2018. Hence, it was clear that UMNO votes went to PAS in rural areas and to PH in urban seats. Therefore, most seats won by PAS in rural areas, in Sik and Jerai in particular, were not only because PAS was strong in these areas, but because of the weakness of BN.

PAS was divided prior to GE14 after several leaders and supporters defected from the party and formed Amanah. Many prominent Kedah PAS leaders such as Mahfuz Omar, Ismail Salleh and Phahrolrazi Mohd Zawawi had joined Amanah. Another PAS figure, Amiruddin Hamzah, decided to join Bersatu. With the split in PAS, the party was weakened and open to sabotage during GE14. However, PH and Amanah failed to form a strong electoral machinery, particularly in rural

and suburban areas. This was one reason why many PAS members and local leaders decided to continue supporting PAS instead of Amanah.

Kedah has the biggest PAS membership of ~170,000 members and, according to the party's state chief, Ahmad Fakhruddin, only about 3% of their members left to join Amanah (*The Star* 25 March 2018). Nonetheless, PAS still faced internal sabotage, though at a smaller scale. Many PAS supporters decided not to join Amanah, but decided to support several prominent PH candidates. PAS commissioner Ahmad Fakhruddin lost to Amanah's Ismail Salleh in Pengkalan Kundor, while Phahrolrazi Mohd Zawawi won in Alor Mengkudu and Mahfuz Omar won in Pokok Sena. A significant number of non-Malay voters voted for these leaders as well. Amiruddin Hamzah's win in the Anak Bukit state seat (in Kubang Pasu's parliamentary seat) with 1,579 majority votes was contributed by some PAS supporters who voted for PH, not because they liked the opposition coalition but because they favoured this incumbent candidate. Overall, it was clear that protest votes against BN led to victories for PH and PAS candidates in many constituencies. Protest votes against PAS gave PH victory in some state seats in Kedah.

Parties' election machineries

Hishammuddi Bakar postulated that BN's defeat in Kedah was because of the weakness of UMNO's electoral strategy. He said that the caretaker state government did nothing to defend or tackle criticisms against UMNO (*Berita Daily* 17 April 2018). My observation on the ground in Kedah indicated that BN's machinery was weak because of poor support from the federal and state governments. BN employed several campaign strategies such as house-to-house visits and small-scale public meetings with the electorate in rural areas, as well as through traditional and new media such as the press, broadcasting media and online social media. During my meeting with Mahdzir Khalid, then Minister of Education and BN candidate for the Padang Terap parliamentary seat, he explained that BN's key threat was PAS, not PH, in rural areas, including in his constituency. PH's machinery was non-existent. Thus, there was anxiety among UMNO leaders that their supporters might vote for PAS because they disapproved of Najib and Ahmad Bashah's leadership.

BN also used money politics to lure votes. Then Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, while campaigning in Sungai Petani, offered a RM25 million allocation for this parliamentary constituency and its three state constituencies if BN won these seats. The amount of RM10 million would be allocated to the Sungai Petani parliamentary constituency for the construction of a 2,000-capacity hall and sports complex. The Sidam, Pantai Merdeka and Bakar Arang state constituencies would be given RM5 million each (*Free Malaysia Today* 5 May 2018). BN had a big and well-funded machinery, but the coalition had failed to target the swing voters such as the youth and non-Malay voters who were likely to vote against them. Instead, UMNO targeted only party members and those known

to be their supporters. UMNO's main concern was the internal infighting and defection of party members and supporters.

The Anti-Fake News Act 2018 introduced just before the election, though criticized by PH and civil society for limiting free speech, was not able to deter people from circulating information, whether the truth, half-truth or falsehood, especially on social media. Having said that, BN failed to address convincingly many questions and criticisms against BN on a range of issues such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), 1MDB, price hikes, graft and poverty among rubber tappers. Failing to answer all those questions made the voters believe the propaganda from PH and PAS.

Meanwhile, PH was lacking a well-functioning machinery, especially in rural areas. In urban and suburban areas, the PH machinery depended heavily on social media. Another strategy employed by PH was the use of big rallies in Guar Chempedak, Jerlun, Pokok Sena, Kubang Pasu and Langkawi. Big rallies and social media were effective in creating momentum for PH. PH's strategy was to bring forth issues of integrity, as well as failed policies such as the GST and FELDA, while also drawing attention to core matters such as good governance, poverty and the high cost of living. Based on my observation in rural areas such as Padang Terap, Pendang and Pokok Sena, PH's utilisation of big public gatherings and social media were not as effective. In fact, poster campaigning was also limited throughout the state of Kedah. In rural areas, face-to-face and house-to-house campaigning were still the most effective methods, but PH could not employ this strategy owing to the lack of manpower and other resources. As a result, PH lost all seats in rural constituencies.

PAS had the most organized and effective machinery. PAS members focused on racial and religious issues, especially the *hudud* issue, to gain support from Muslims in rural and suburban areas. Based on my observation in Jerai, Merbok, Padang Terap, Pendang, Baling and Sik, these issues were important to the voters. They saw BN as corrupt because of the scandals faced by the party while many saw PH as too liberal and propagating religious pluralism that they deemed to be contrary to Islamic belief.

Unlike BN's campaigning which targeted their own supporters, PAS was trying to reach out to youths, supporters from other parties and non-Malays as well. They used social media to attract support from youths but focused on house-to-house campaigning in rural areas, particularly among fence sitters and supporters of UMNO. PAS had little success in attracting non-Muslims as they were put off by the party's brand of politics that was seen as traditionalist, embracing Islamic conservativism. However, PAS made headways with some UMNO supporters and was able to secure their votes.

When commenting on the results, Pendang parliamentarian candidate Wan Saiful Wan Jan of Bersatu, said: "The support we (PH) received was overwhelming. This is a new phenomenon and it is clear there is a storm coming and a wind of change. UMNO tried to deny this and Najib Razak even said there will be no Malay tsunami, but he is acknowledging that there will be a tsunami. The signs are clear and the people of Kedah are mature enough. They voted for BN when

they felt PAS was not good and they will do it again this time" (*Berita Daily* 17 April 2018). Wan Saiful, however, lost in Pendang to a PAS candidate.

Bread-and-butter issues

In Budget 2018, the Kedah BN government allocated about RM1.3 billion to expanding its social security network for the people, while giving much focus to catalyst projects to sustain economic growth and also striving to further reduce its deficit. According to Ahmad Bashah, a total of RM855.22 million was allocated for administrative expenditure, while RM257.54 million was being set aside for development expenditure. The state government was projecting a higher revenue of RM779.50 million for 2018 and aiming to trim down the budget deficit from 10.28% in 2017 to 9.71% in 2018 (*New Straits Times* 12 November 2017).

In tackling bread-and-butter issues, Ahmad Bashah explained in the budget, entitled "Continuing Development, Realising Dreams," that there were several important initiatives, including allocating RM9.1 million to improve people's livelihood, a further RM5 million to repair houses of needy families and RM1 million to upgrade houses of worship to promote racial integration. The populist nature of the budget indicated that it was an election budget aimed at ensuring BN stayed in power. However, many critics suggested that the BN government failed to address core bread-and-butter butter issues. Amiruddin Hamzah, the Bersatu candidate for the Kubang Pasu parliamentary and Anak Bukit state assembly seats, said that "Bread-and-butter issues are what affects them, made worse after the 6% Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced. These are regular people who face daily the rising cost of living and petrol prices. Of course, they want a change if there is a choice. A lot of people feel this way" (*The Edge* 16 April 2018). Amiruddin further argued that "Everywhere we go, even in the hinterland like Sik, Padang Terap and Baling, people are complaining about the cost of living, whether it is the traders or consumers. They can't wait for a change in the government, so they tell us" (*The Edge* 16 April 2018).

Amiruddin believed that the PH was attracting UMNO supporters who were unhappy with problems involving 1MDB, state investment fund and FELDA. Issues of integrity, such as abuse of power and corruption, and the state of the economy were utilized by PH to show that BN had failed as a government and needed to be replaced. Prime Minister Najib was portrayed as the main reason behind the people suffering in Kedah. Failing to address the bread-and-butter issues was one of key reason for BN's defeat in Kedah.

The rupture in Malay political elite cohesion

Ultimately, the results of the election were reflective of the rupture in Malay political elite cohesion. In Kedah, the results were the outcome of ruptures which occurred within the two major Malay political parties, UMNO and PAS. Despite Kedah's reputation as a swing state, BN was badly defeated in this state. This was largely because of the fissure within UMNO that saw a sizable number of

seats swinging to PH owing to Mahathir's strong influence. The UMNO elites in Ahmad Bashah's faction, supported by Prime Minister Najib, were unable to withstand the onslaught posed by Mahathir, a factor that led to the fall of parliamentary seats such as Jerlun, Langkawi and Kubang Pasu. The rupture of Malay elite cohesion was also reflected in the divide between Ahmad Bashah and several UMNO warlords in the state. Ahmad Bashah removed the candidacy of several warlords who aimed to challenge and replace him as *Menteri Besar*, such as UMNO Pendang Division Head Md. Rozai Shafian and the Prime Minister's political secretary Ghazali Ibrahim and Pokok Sena Division Head Ahmad Lebai Sudin. This created anger among UMNO's grassroots leaders and supporters. Despite the intervention from UMNO federal leaders such as Najib and Ahmad Zahid, the party in-fighting continued, leading to the loss of parliamentary seats where these conflicts occurred. Interestingly, the rupture among UMNO elites did not automatically lead to a PH victory. Despite Mahathir's influence, PH was still unable to win in most Malay-majority constituencies.

Kedahan's rejection of UMNO benefitted PAS, which remains the most dominant and popular Malay party in this state. PAS's Islamic agenda appealed to many of them. Nonetheless, PAS itself faced its own elite fracture, with the formation of its splinter party, Amanah. Kedah was also a frontline state in this split as key leaders of the moderate faction of PAS such as Mahfuz Omar, Amiruddin Hamzah and Phahrolrazi Mohd Zawawi hailed from Kedah. This translated to a chunk of its support being chipped away and is reflected in its losses in the parliamentary seat of Pokok Sena and the state seats of Alor Mengkudu and Pengkalan Kundor. Despite the high percentage of Malays in these constituencies, Amanah candidates won in these seats indicating that a substantial number of Malay voters rooted for these candidates. It must, however, be noted that the success of these leaders could be because of incumbency advantage and the fact that they were deemed to have served their respective constituencies well. PAS was further hampered by the fact that it did not have the strength of incumbency, making it difficult for the party to manoeuvre to enhance local support. PH, in spite of the presence of Bersatu, PKR and Amanah, could not match PAS's electoral strength in Kedah.

Several months beyond the election, it seems that PH has been unable to strengthen its position and limit the influence of PAS. Ultimately, the ability of PH to form a government in Kedah stemmed from elite fractures within both UMNO and PAS. PH component parties took a portion of votes from both PAS and UMNO giving it enough seats to reach the halfway mark. UMNO and BN suffered the most significant loss of support being nearly completely wiped out from the state. Despite the brouhaha surrounding Mahathir's supposed influence, the Mahathir factor was significant only in certain areas of Kedah and would not have made a difference had the elite fracture not occurred. With the appointment of Mukhriz as Kedah *Menteri Besar*, Mahathir will attempt to safeguard his legacy and his family's dominance against any elite contestations within the state. However, it will be difficult to see the future trajectory of the PH government in the post-Mahathir era as Mukhriz is viewed as a weak leader and does not have the gravitas to helm the state leadership.

Conclusion

In GE14, BN not only lost badly in Kedah but for the first time in Malaysian history also at the federal level. However, PH won with a minority government in Kedah, after failing to get a simple majority of 19 seats. But because of its control of the federal government, PH can assist its Kedah state government in policy implementation, as well as through financial support and development plans designed to muster and consolidate support. For BN, it will be difficult for the coalition to wrest back the state. BN, especially UMNO, will have to rebrand and rectify its tarnished image as a corrupt, feudalistic political party. The issues of race and religion will not help UMNO to recover its lost support from the people in Kedah.

PAS will need to do a lot more to gain support of not only the Malays but also the non-Malays. PAS is also fortunate to have won 15 state seats and three parliamentary seats. The outcome of GE14 and previous elections indicate that Kedah is now a swing state and Kedahans are adept in using the ballot box to decide on the political coalition that best serves their interest. The intra-Malay elite rivalry in Kedah is likely to continue deciding the future trajectory of Kedahan politics.

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Utusan Malaysia

12 The green tsunami in Terengganu

The re-emergence of *Parti Islam se-Malaysia*

Wan Rohilla Ganti

Introduction

The state of Terengganu, located in eastern Peninsular Malaysia, had eight parliamentary seats and 32 state constituencies in General Election 14 (GE14) in 2018. The politics of Terengganu and its electoral trends were one of the most difficult to gauge. It was a state that Malaysia's leading Malay-based parties, *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS) and the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), targeted to win in GE14. The political trends in Terengganu did not follow national trends and were not necessarily affected by national issues.

In 1959, PAS unexpectedly won the first general election in the state, at a point when the other states were won by a coalition led by UMNO. In General Election 12 (GE12) in 2008, when the UMNO-led *Barisan Nasional* (BN) coalition was denied its two-thirds majority and five states fell to the opposition alliance, Terengganu was still solidly won by UMNO. Similarly, in General Election 13 (GE13) in 2013, PAS was expected to capture the state, but it failed to do so. PAS managed to win 15 seats compared to BN's 17 seats (Pasuni 2015). Denying BN a two-thirds majority in the state legislative assembly and securing 51.47% of popular votes in GE13 were still an impressive achievement by PAS in Terengganu. Moreover, since GE12 there had been incremental support for PAS.

Voters in Terengganu are highly participative, which is reflected in the high voter turnout that is generally more than 80%. Politically, Terengganu is considered an UMNO stronghold state, given that the party won 11 out of 13 electoral contests. However, the strength of PAS cannot not be underestimated. Other political parties contesting in the state have historically not garnered traction from the electorate. Splinter parties like *Parti Negara* led by Onn Jaafar and *Semangat 46* led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah did not last long in Terengganu, even though they won a few seats. *Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia* (PSRM) had a presence in urban areas, but never won any seats in this state.[1]

This chapter examines the political situation in Terengganu, in the context of the political parties' approaches and strategies in GE14. It includes an analysis of the implications of intra-elite feuding in Malay political parties in Terengganu. Next, it investigates the nature and content of campaign appeals and debates prior to elections and their implications for the emergence of a new political

culture and style of politics, with special reference to PAS. Finally, it analyzes important factors that led to the success of PAS and what the election outcome suggests about the prospect of this Islamic party in Terengganu.

Political rivalry between UMNO and PAS in Terengganu

The PAS–UMNO rivalry in the state started when the PAS-led government was ousted in 1962 as a result of internal friction and cross-overs that were skilfully exploited by UMNO leaders with some assistance from the Sultan of Terengganu (*Malaysiakini* 2015; Kamlin 1977). Under the UMNO government, PAS supporters were subjected to unjust treatment. Many were denied state assistance and subsidies, positions in the state government and welfare aid (Ahmad Zaki 2003). The rivalry became worse when the PAS-led state was denied oil royalty payments (Mohammad Agus 2004). In 2000, for example, after PAS had secured control of the state government in the general election in 1999, funds amounting to US$200 million had effectively been cut off by the federal government; this constituted about 80% of Terengganu's annual budget (Stark 2004) and thwarted PAS's efforts to showcase its version of administration. The royalty was then converted to *wang ehsan* (goodwill money) managed by UMNO Terengganu. It eventually became the most strategic election weapon to buy votes in the 2004 elections when PAS Terengganu was defeated in that election.

The ultimate political contestation in the state revolved around the issues of Malay supremacy and Islam. PAS's outstanding victory in the first elections in 1959 reflected the mood of the electorate in wanting the strong application of an Islamic order in the state (Mohamad 2013). In order to salvage its declining popularity, UMNO began championing Islam. Even though PAS criticized UMNO's efforts in promoting Islam as mere rhetoric, the latter continued to receive a big mandate from the people. Nonetheless, UMNO's clear rejection of the establishment of an Islamic state (Kamarulnizam 1999) and its reluctance to implement *hudud* (punishments under Islamic laws) (Miller 2004) had led to the serious politicisation of the "*kafir-mengkafir*" (referring to a Muslim as infidel owing to different political beliefs)[2] issue (Mohamad 2013). The accusation of *takfir* became louder when young graduates from the Middle Eastern universities who were heavily influenced by Islamist movements in the Middle East led the party (Farish 2003). One such figure was Abdul Hadi Awang,[3] currently the most influential PAS leader. His persona has shaped the worldview of party members who view PAS as an Islamic movement, not a mere political party. Hadi served as Menteri Besar of Terengganu when PAS governed the state from 1999 to 2004.

Developments leading to GE14: intra-Malay elite clash

Following the unceremonious dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998, PAS contested the 1999 elections under the banner of

the *Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front, or BA). The loose coalition consisted of Anwar's *Parti Keadilan Nasional* (Keadilan), the Chinese-dominated social-democratic Democratic Action Party (DAP), the socialist-oriented *Parti Rakyat Malaysia* (PRM) and PAS. The pact garnered 40% of the popular vote, won 42 parliamentary seats, captured the state government of Terengganu and retained the Kelantan state government. PAS achieved its greatest election victory by capturing a commendable 27 parliamentary and 98 state seats. However, the pact broke in 2001 when the DAP left the BA after tensions with PAS over its Islamic state vision (Liow 2011).

In 2008, because of the weak performance of the BN government, the opposition successfully denied the ruling coalition a two-thirds majority in parliament and captured four states, namely Selangor, Penang, Perak and Kedah, and retained Kelantan. The opposition parties then formed *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR), a re-institutionalized pact of BA. PAS led the state government in Kedah and assumed executive power in Perak. PAS strategically dropped its cherished ideal of an Islamic state and campaigned instead for a transparent, accountable and benevolent government, which changed its image as a rural-based fundamentalist party to a broad-based reformist party, commanding the confidence of the young, middle-class and professionals (Ahmad Fauzi 2011). PAS won 23 parliamentary seats in the 2008 elections and 21 in the 2013 elections as a result of this alliance.

The success of PAS, however, was not celebrated by its hardcore supporters as the party had alienated rural Malay-Muslim voters, especially in Terengganu and Kelantan. The party was viewed as being lenient when dealing with Malay-Muslim issues such as the confiscation of the Bible by the JAIS. The Malay voters had turned to UMNO as their protector against a perceived non-Malay onslaught (Ahmad Fauzi 2015).[4] PAS's poor performance in the Malay-belt states during the 2013 election when it lost Kedah, failed to capture Terengganu and lost six state seats to UMNO in Kelantan was reflective of this. Given its status as the oldest and most experienced party in the coalition, there was a perception that PAS should lead PR but was perceived as a sycophant of the DAP. Many accused PAS of compromising on its avowed objectives of instituting Islamic state and *Shariah* laws; it was also seen as the weakest party in the coalition (Ahmad Fauzi 2015; Muhammad Faiz Mukmin and Wan Fariza Alyati 2015).

The "Kajang Move"[5] marked the point when PAS's conservative *ulama* elite called for a re-assessment of its political alliance with PR, while the progressive-professional camp attempted to strengthen the party's position in the coalition (Maszlee 2017b, 2017a; Yang Razali 2015). PAS's 61st *Muktamar* (Annual General Meeting) in 2015 witnessed the *ulama* camp capturing all key leadership positions and all its pro-progressive leaders were wiped out.[6] The delegates also accepted the motion to sever ties with the DAP after the party criticized PAS for pushing a bill on *hudud* without consulting its coalition partners. The progressive's attempts to bring PAS to a more modernist outlook failed (Maszlee 2017b).

The elite clash in PAS led to the formation of *Parti Amanah Negara* (Amanah) in September 2015, led by former PAS Deputy President, Mohamad Sabu.[7]

Amanah subsequently founded a new opposition pact, *Pakatan Harapan*, together with the PKR and DAP, while PAS decided to cooperate with any party that agreed with its principles. However, several statements from PAS leaders hinted at a mutual cooperation between PAS and UMNO. This became clearer when the two parties, among others, shared the stage during a solidarity programme to condemn the atrocities perpetrated against the Rohingyas. PAS also took a neutral stand on the 1MDB issue and joined UMNO in criticizing the PR governments in Selangor and Penang. Prime Minister Najib Razak went so far as to allow PAS president Hadi to table a private member's bill seeking amendments to Article 355.[8] PAS softened its attacks against UMNO and targeted Amanah by belittling it as a DAP stooge. Amanah, the new rival to PAS after UMNO, was predicted to receive the same fate as other PAS splinter parties such as the Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Se-Malaysia (BERJASA) and Parti Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia (HAMIM) that had failed to make a political impact.

The election campaign: issues and strategies

PAS: Lok Koho Punoh

PAS's grassroots preparations for GE14 in Terengganu began shortly after the 2013 election ended. Mega party rallies such as the Himpunan Harapan Semua (HARAP 1.0, 2.0, 3.0), Himpunan Pemuda Terengganu (HIMPIT), Himpunan Anak Muda (HIKAM 1.0, 2.0) and Fastaqim 2.0 were held over the span of five years to boost the morale of party supporters.[9] The 2018 election campaign of PAS in Terengganu was led by Ustaz Ariffin Deraman, Election Director of PAS Terengganu, and Alias Razak, the party strategist. The mission to recapture the state was a challenging feat as most Terengganites still recalled unpopular PAS policies under the leadership of Hadi, when the party ruled the state in 1999–2004.[10] Presumably, Hadi was not fielded at his stronghold, the Ru Rendang state seat, to further convince the electorate that he would not be re-nominated as Menteri Besar if PAS won the state.

The party also took a softer approach to capture Malay votes. PAS leaders ended decades of rivalry with UMNO and stopped divisive politicking by promoting a new political strategy dubbed as the *Budaya Politik Matang Sejahtera/*BPMS (Mature and Progressive Political Culture). Through BPMS, PAS called for the shunning of divisive politicking and advocated constructive engagement with all organisations, including UMNO. PAS would not be an opposition party opposing government just because it was on the other side of the fence. The BPMS concept would reduce the current narrow-minded polemic based on mere perception, abuse of power and slanderous politicking. Hadi, during the launching of PAS Election Machinery on 3 February 2018, explained that party campaigners had to persuade UMNO members and fence sitters with a softer approach. In accordance with the BPMS concept, there would be no naming and shaming of corrupt politicians and character assassination of UMNO leaders. However, PAS was criticized as being a political

hypocrite when it boycotted and admonished Amanah leaders, an act that went against the principle of BPMS.

PAS avoided the *takfiri* label against UMNO members during the campaign. PAS's strategy to soften its attack of UMNO resonated with Malay culture in Terengganu and was positively accepted by many undecided voters. This strategy also softened the perception that PAS and its members were exclusive, punitive and unapproachable. Interviews with PAS grassroots members revealed that they understood the BPMS concept and were able to explain the differences between this concept and unity government with UMNO. They firmly understood mutual cooperation for a common cause between PAS and UMNO, but rejected an official alliance with UMNO.[11]

Another interesting move was the omission of *hudud* in its manifesto underscoring the party's understanding that bread-and-butter issues were much more important to the electorate than the matter of religion.[12] Instead of focusing on *hudud*, the manifesto of PAS Terengganu underlined 20 populist policies including to provide 20,000 job opportunities within four years, provide free water supply to underprivileged groups, RM50 pension per month for senior citizens, exemption from the assessment tax, no hospital charge for third class ward services in government hospitals and *kad sejahtera* (prosperity card) amounting to RM500 a year for every underprivileged family.

Thirdly, the PAS campaign was steered by the catchy slogan "*Lok Koho Punoh*" (to let it be is to let it be destroyed). It called on Terengganu voters to not vote for UMNO as letting them rule the state would cause more destruction. PAS changed its election campaigns by focusing more on impactful programmes such as organizing small-scale talks by popular preachers like Ustaz Azhar Idrus, soccer and futsal tournaments, barbeques with residents at night and hi-tea events with candidates. Ustaz Azhar was a crowd puller, much like the 2013 election (Afif 2015). He appeared at almost all open talks and forums that attracted a young crowd. Those talks were successful in reaching the target audience as they were held at public parks and the turnout was high. PAS did not hold any mammoth rallies featuring popular speakers at night, as they were generally attended by party supporters.

Another effective strategy was *ceramah kelompok* (small group meeting), attended by a 10–15 target audience held at selected houses. It was conducted by PAS *muslimat* (Women's Wing) and started with a prayer recitation, followed by speeches by candidates or their representative. The door-to-door campaign method was especially important among PAS *muslimat*. Months before the election, these *muslimat* collected the necessary data to determine houses in their areas that were white (PAS supporters), black (BN supporters) and grey (fence sitters). They obtained this information through their house-to-house visits as well as feedback from local PAS supporters.[13] The data included the number of occupants in a house, the education background and the occupation of the household members, whether they were privy to the federal government's cash-transfer programme, BR1M, and whether they were working in or outside the state. This data was helpful in the project election campaign. The door-to-door

campaign was also followed by a visit by a medical doctor who offered basic medical check-ups.

Another unique campaign strategy was the creative decoration of a replica of Wisma Darul Iman, petroleum platforms, army tanks, jet fighters, warships, helicopters, the Quran and giant moon kites to signify that PAS would win the election war and capture a state rich with natural resources. These creative decorations attracted many passers-by who stopped to take photos while the party workers on site took the opportunity to hand them campaign pamphlets. These replicas sent an indirect message to the voters about issues affecting the state. Giant flags as big as a futsal court could be seen at big junctions throughout the state. Bridges and roundabouts also became their focus point to hang party flags and there were bridges and roundabouts solely dominated by PAS like Jambatan Sungai Marang and Bulatan Batu Enam. It was reported that party workers took three shifts to guard the bridge to prevent the flags from being removed by their opponents or the local council and also prevent opponent parties from hanging their flags there. No BN flags were seen in a radius of 4 kilometres in Rusila where Hadi's mosque is situated, as it was already declared on a giant banner, "*Ini wilayah PAS*" (This is PAS territory). PAS Bukit Payung division alone spent about RM45,000 buying and preparing flags, banners, posters and replicas. As much as RM4,000 was spent for a replica of a giant kite (*Sinar Harian* 18 April 2018). Interestingly, the money spent was donated by party supporters and the party branch did not receive any cash from the PAS headquarters.

PAS Terengganu also fully utilized social media. The official online television, Haraptv.com and official Facebook of PAS Terengganu, Jabatan Penerangan PAS Terengganu, kept updates of all activities involving their candidates, invited guest speakers to explain its manifesto, updated important events and countered accusations made against the party. Dedicated party cyber-troopers updated stories and shared positive information about the party and candidates. They clarified misinformation spread by opponent parties using facts and figures written in a creative way. All of postings on social media related to PAS were accompanied by the hash tag #UP (Undi PAS). Another important medium was Facebook Live where Facebook users could watch party programmes and listen to party *ceramahs* and talks without the need to be physically present. Random observations of Facebook found 1,000 to 10,000 views for every Facebook Live session.

UMNO: Terengganu Molek Doh

UMNO rejuvenated the spirit of *Gelombang Biru* (Blue Wave), the battle cry in the 2004 general election, with a new slogan called *Terengganu Molek Doh* (Terengganu is doing well). It symbolized the state government's efforts to assist the people and that BN had developed the state to a satisfactory level. Menteri Besar Ahmad Razif boasted that the people of Terengganu were the luckiest citizens as they received numerous forms of aid and enjoyed many privileges such as receiving festive contributions for Aidilfitri, new school uniforms and school items for the poor, monetary incentives and participation in the National

Education Savings Scheme (SSPN) for excellent students and financial assistance for housing, patients with chronic diseases and single mothers.[14] Voting for UMNO was a way for them to express their gratitude and ensure these benevolent policies continued.

However, beyond such rhetoric, poverty remained an endemic problem. Many Terengganites live below the Malaysian poverty line. The state's average monthly household income of approximately RM4,694 is below the national median income a month of RM5,228 in 2016 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2017). The average Terengganite earns RM1,500 a month compared to the national average income of RM1,703 (*The Edge* 2018). On the other hand, the income of 20.39% of its people was below the poverty level, at RM780 per month. This group was particularly affected by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) that was introduced on 1 April 2015. The prices of basic goods increased, resulting in increased feelings of dissatisfaction and anger towards the ruling government.

The development of mammoth projects like the RM3million amphibious bus, Amphicoach, the RM320 million Taman Ilmu at Besut and the RM600 million Kenyir Lake free trade zone and Islamic Civilization Park failed to achieve the intended spill-over effect for the people and many saw this as a waste of state funds. Many new offices and residential properties including Paya Bunga Mall at Kuala Terengganu remained unoccupied proving this property development in the state was done imprudently. The slow economy had resulted in a high unemployment rate in the state that was higher than the national rate of 4% to 3.2% in 2015 and 4.2% to 3.4% in 2016, a factor that had contributed to massive migration to Selangor, Penang and Johor.[15]

The candidates

A total of 24 candidates contested the eight parliamentary seats and there were 95 candidates for the 32 state legislative assembly seats equally representing three parties namely UMNO, PAS and PH. This election witnessed three-cornered contests that many observers speculated would benefit UMNO. The basis of this speculation was the results of three-cornered contests during the 2013 general election among UMNO, PAS and PKR in Kota Damansara and Sungai Acheh that worked in favour of UMNO.[16] It was expected that PAS would lose a significant number of votes, including non-Muslim voters, middle-class Malays and the young to Amanah (PH). PAS was confident that Amanah would not impact their support owing to poor reception of the fledging party, reflected by low turnouts at their party programmes. A case in point was how only 50 Amanah supporters turned up on nomination day to rally behind their candidate in the Kuala Nerus parliamentary seat.[17] Therefore, UMNO and PAS regarded this election as a fight between them.

UMNO nominated 19 incumbents, three former state exco members, two women and 19 new faces. Menteri Besar Ahmad Razif contested the state seat of Seberang Takir. Among the new faces were former Terengganu State Secretary, Wan Nawawi Wan Ismail, for the parliamentary constituency of Kuala

Terengganu and Tengku Asmadi Tengku Mohamad, a renowned motivator as the candidate for the parliamentary seat of Kuala Nerus. Interestingly, two former Menteris Besar of Terengganu namely Idris Jusoh and Ahmad Said also remained as candidates for the parliamentary seat of Besut and state seat for Kijal, respectively. The Deputy Minister of Communications and Multimedia, Jailani Johari and Setiu Member of Parliament, Che Mohamad Zulkifly, were dropped. Jailani, based on party succession plan, was rumoured to be the new Chief Minister if the party won the election.

The recycling of old faces like Mohamed Awang Tera and dropping of Jailani had stirred internal disputes within UMNO. The *cah keting*[18] culture was a virus in UMNO that had yet to be cured. This could be seen through the erection of banners, which was believed to be perpetrated by the Ahmad Said faction, in Chukai town, signalling members' rejection of the nomination of Awang Tera. Ahmad Said openly expressed his dissatisfaction over the re-selection of Awang Tera and called him a traitor because he had contributed to the failure of Wan Ahmad Nizam in the Chukai seat to PAS in the 2013 election.[19] The exclusion of Jailani, the only UMNO division chief who was not re-nominated, had caused conflicts in the UMNO's Hulu Terengganu division. Strangely, Tengku Putera, who lost the Hulu Terengganu division chief election to Jailani, was nominated. The re-selection of two former Menteris Besar and their loyal supporters like Rosol Wahid, Din Adam, Halim Jusoh and Mohamed Awang Tera (linked to Idris) and Ghazali Taib and Roslee Daud (Ahmad's men), also signalled the party's utmost efforts to avoid political turbulence between the different UMNO factions in Terengganu. At least three candidates had dubious academic credentials having received diplomas and master's degrees from dubious tertiary institutions. It was also observed that UMNO fielded unpopular candidates in PAS strongholds like Ru Rendang, Batu Buruk, Manir, Sura, Bukit Tunggal and Wakaf Mempelam, leading to speculation about a PAS–UMNO pact.

PAS Terengganu fielded 15 new faces for the state seats and four for the parliamentary seats. In order to realize its technocratic-style leadership, about 60% of them had an educational background in Islamic studies where 11 of them were al-Azhar graduates, almost 22% were professionals and almost 35% were young candidates. Hadi explained that under a technocratic government, each state portfolio would be chaired by an executive councillor based on their professional expertise and academic qualifications. This was in sharp contrast to the previous practice where most state portfolios were randomly held by an executive councillor based on their ranking in the party. Hadi gave way to his political secretary, Samsuri Mokhtar, to contest in his state assembly seat of Rhu Redang. Fielding Samsuri, a PhD aero-engineer, in Hadi's stronghold signified that he would be the Chief Minister if the party won the election. His selection also signalled the party's discernment about the importance of a younger, credible and technocratic candidate for the Chief Minister post (*Buletin Online* 7 May 2018).

PH fielded 40 candidates comprising a mix of new and experienced personalities including former UMNO and PAS assemblymen. PH Terengganu chairman, Raja Kamarul Bahrin, contested both parliamentary and state seats, while Azan

Ismail, Terengganu PKR chairman, retained his Bandar state seat. The coalition fielded 11 candidates from PKR, 11 from Amanah and ten from Bersatu. They also fielded two women candidates from PKR.

Results and analysis

Political analysts and surveys had wrongly predicted the election results in Terengganu.[20] Opinions polls did not favour PAS winning control of Terengganu, but this state's politics proved unpredictable. Terengganu voters tend to guard their electoral preference. In the 2013 General Election, UMNO won four parliamentary seats, down from seven in the previous election, and 17 of 32 state seats, down from 24 in the 2008 general elections. UMNO members expected that they would defend their seats and wrest some PAS seats. Surprising the pundits, PAS performed beyond expectation. They won six parliamentary seats, adding two seats from the previous election and captured a two-thirds majority in the State Legislative Assembly by capturing 22 state seats. PAS retained all their parliamentary and state seats. The party also received 58% of the popular vote, compared to 51.4% in the 2013 election, marking its best performance in the history of Terengganu. Hadi retained his parliamentary seat of Marang with a whopping majority of 21,954. UMNO, on the other hand, retained two parliamentary seats, namely Besut and Hulu Terengganu, and won ten state seats. All former UMNO Chief Ministers, Idris, Ahmad Said and Ahmad Razif, won their respective seats in Besut, Kijal and Seberang Takir, respectively. However, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister, Shabery Chik, lost to a PAS lightweight, Ustaz Alias Hamid with a 2,163 majority in Kemaman.

PAS also defeated PH as they failed to secure a single seat. 23 PH candidates (three parliamentary seats and 20 state seats) lost their election deposits when they failed to obtain one-eighth of the total votes cast in the constituency. This election result defied all predictions that there would be a split vote between Amanah and PAS as voters preferred PAS to Amanah. The key reason behind the Malay-Muslim voter rejection of PH was because of the presence of DAP in the alliance. It was the often-repeated narrative from UMNO that a strengthened Chinese DAP would threaten the position of the Malays and Islam in Malaysia (*Malaysiakini* 7 March 2018). PH's position on several religious issues, such as rejecting Hadi's Syariah bill, haphazard response to a beer festival being held and their association with liberals supporting LGBTs (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) and Sister in Islam (SIS) had led to suspicion among some Malay voters. A PH mega-rally in Dungun did not attract a significant crowd even though it was attended by PH stalwarts like Mahathir Mohammad and Mohamad Sabu. Unlike PH rallies in other states that had massive turnouts, the response from people in Terengganu was fairly muted. A poor showing might also be because of the fanatical attitude of some PAS supporters who had demeaned Amanah supporters with nasty names and boycotted them, thus stopping some people from openly expressing their support for Amanah. The coalition was also not financially well-resourced and had only a small base of grassroots activists.

However, the impact of the three-cornered contest affected five UMNO traditional state seats, Kota Putera, Pengkalan Berangan, Jabi, Air Putih and Ajil. All these seats were won by PAS with a marginal majority and the votes received by PH were higher than the majority won by PAS. Without a three-cornered contest, UMNO would win 15 seats instead of ten and PAS would win 17 seats, similar to trends in 2013 elections. Of the three component parties in PH, the results showed that Bersatu was the most influential party in Terengganu, defying the general opinion that Amanah would offer a tough challenge. As shown in Table 12.1, out of seven seats that scored the marginal majority (less than 500), six were contested by Bersatu, signifying a considerable number of protest votes from UMNO supporters. Clearly, PAS benefitted from the three-cornered contest and UMNO was the most affected.

PAS has been historically strong in 12 state seats, based on its track record since the 1990 General Elections. The party won handsomely in these seats and tightened its grip in another three neutral-status state seats, namely Rantau Abang, Bandar and Cukai, the seats they had won in the previous election. PAS also managed to penetrate UMNO strongholds, namely Kemasik, Air Putih, Pengkalan Berangan, Kuala Berang, Ajil and Jabi, owing to massive protest votes. Ajil, Air Putih and Kemasik were state seats with a significant number of FELDA voters. There were 13 out of a total of 21 FELDA settlements in these three constituencies. FELDA is politically an UMNO vote bank but its legacy in Terengganu was fading despite the numerous initiatives recently introduced for the settlers. UMNO was strong in 17 state seats, but managed to retain only ten of them. Even though Besut is neighbouring Kelantan, a PAS state, the green tsunami did not hit this parliamentary seat. Strong leadership and minimal internal conflicts were the recipe for UMNO Besut's success under the leadership of Idris Jusoh. Three seats had a significant number of Chinese voters, namely Bandar (34.5%), Cukai (12.67%) and Ladang (8.15%). Similar to 2013, PAS won all these seats. Interestingly, PH received substantial popular votes (more than 10%) in these seats with substantial Chinese voters. PH had received significant Chinese support, a trend also seen in other states. Table 12.2 compares the results of these three seats with the 2013 election results.

Table 12.1 State seats with majority less than 500

Seat	*PAS*	*UMNO*	*PH*	*Majority*	*Previous Majority*
Kuala Besut	7,983	**8,126**	1,095 (Bersatu)	143	2,434 (U)
Jabi	**8,061**	8,006	690 (Amanah)	55	782 (U)
Batu Rakit	9,747	**10,046**	800 (Bersatu)	299	1,635 (U)
Ladang	**8,201**	7,838	2,836 (Bersatu)	363	924 (P)
Pengkalan Berangan	**11,896**	11,406	1,145 (Bersatu)	490	1,848 (U)
Ajil	**8,132**	8,128	679 (Bersatu)	4	2,782 (U)
Bukit Besi	5,724	**5,770**	487 (Bersatu)	46	2,558 (U)

PAS's success in recapturing this oil-rich state was mainly because of three factors. First, it was an indication of the voters' rejection of former Prime Minister Najib, and PAS was deemed to be the most credible alternative opposition party. The government failed to professionally tackle economic issues that affected people's daily lives like higher cost of living, weekly petrol price increases and lack of jobs. The GST was perceived by the voters as the main factor in the price hike of goods. The negative impact of the GST was felt by people from all walks of lives, including older voters in rural areas who were loyal UMNO supporters. The informed voters were critical of unfulfilled GE13 promises such as the reduction of car prices and the creation of thousands of job opportunities, the scandals plaguing FELDA and 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), integrity and corruption issues and worrying concerns about China's investments. Government aid such as the cash transfer-based Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) could not secure people's votes as many were aware that these cash handouts did not fundamentally address their economic woes. One voter revealed that he would vote for PAS for the first time in his life because he wanted to remind UMNO's top leadership that the feelings of the people should count.[21] Staunch UMNO supporters untied their loyalty and loosened their affiliation to the party to express their protest that led even prominent figures like Ghazali Taib of Ajil to lose to PAS's Ustaz Maliaman Kassim in an UMNO fortress.

PAS strategies to soften their fanatical and uncompromising approach were successful in capturing some UMNO voters. The party's policy to promote BPMS was successfully practiced by its followers, hence obscuring the dividing lines between the hardcore supporters of PAS and UMNO. One such instance was when Hadi, as the Marang Member of Parliament, attended a function organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry.[22] This gave him access to FELDA settlements and rural areas that were previously inaccessible to PAS. Realizing that the political thinking in the state was not very complicated and fence sitters were likely to vote for candidates who can solve persistent issues such as the rising cost of living and the lack of job opportunities, the pluralist manifesto of PAS was already catching on.

The loyalty of PAS supporters towards the party is genuine in that they consider party work as a path to heaven. Unlike UMNO, they were ready to work for any candidate the party fielded. One party activist noted that the biggest problem among PAS party workers was that they were not willing to be fielded as leaders,

Table 12.2 Comparison between 2013 and 2018 election results in seats with significant Chinese voters

Seat	*PAS*	*UMNO*	*PH*	*Majority*	*2013 Results*	*Majority*
Bandar	7,133	5,042	3,996	2,091	9,413 (PAS)	2,159
Cukai	12,428	7,547	5,104	4,881	12,457 (PAS)	2,446
Ladang	8,201	7,838	2,836	363	9,066 (PAS)	924

but would go all out to help the party behind the curtain.[23] Loyalty (*wala'*) towards the party is strongly built through the party's education system, starting with kindergartens (Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam/ PASTI), primary schools like Sekolah Rendah Islam (SRI) Kiblah, secondary schools like Ma'ahad Tahfiz Wal Tarbiyyah (MTT), *madrasah* like Madrasah Darul Quran and higher institution like Kolej Universiti Darul Quran Islamiah (KUDQI). These institutions have also become a platform to nurture cadres and future leaders and to effectively mobilize grassroots support (Liow 2011). The alumni of these institutions are now party loyalists that have direct access to a wide network of religious circles and mosques in the state.

Conclusion

The decline in support for UMNO in Terengganu in 2013 finally culminated with its fall in 2018. Political trends in Terengganu have generally differed from national trends, but disgruntlement with the incumbent BN government nationwide has also affected people of this state. Unlike voters in the southern and central regions who voted for PH, the electorate in Terengganu opted for PAS. This surprised political observers who expected PAS to lose support after leaving PR. The decision to leave PR was motivated by worry over its declining support in the 2013 elections, owing to its political alliance with DAP.

Some observers argued that PAS's victory in Terengganu was not solely based on its own strength and strong support base but because of protest votes against UMNO. The protest votes against UMNO may persist if the party does not rectify its mistakes. However, without state resources in the highly patronage-based political culture of UMNO, it would likely be extremely difficult for the party to recover. The second view was that the PAS victory was mainly owing to the strength of the party itself. The signs that PAS would have a shot at winning the state were evident for some years. Party rallies like Fastaqim 2.0 and PAS Ganti UMNO (PGU) received huge crowds and the number of Friday morning sermons state-wide increased with a large volume of attendees, an avenue that opened the doors for PAS to explain its political views, especially to older voters. The best conclusion on the victory of PAS in Terengganu is the combination of anger towards UMNO's central leadership and the desire for a clean, socially conservative and development-based government. The re-emergence of PAS in Terengganu signified that this party is a new torchbearer of Malay-Muslim politics that should not be underestimated by other political parties.

Notes

1 Parti Negara was the multi-ethnic party, led by Onn Jaafar, the former President of UMNO. In 1951, he left UMNO because the party had refused to accept non-Malay members. In the 1959 general election, Parti Negara won one parliamentary seat, Kuala Terengganu Selatan, and four state seats, Langkap, Ladang, Bukit Besar and Batu Burok. In the 1964 election, the party lost all seats it contested in Terengganu. The death of Onn Jaafar in 1962 led to the political demise of the

party. Semangat 46 was an UMNO splinter party founded by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. It formed a coalition with PAS under the banner *Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah* (APU) in 1990. The major achievement of APU was that this alliance contributed to PAS securing control of Kelantan in the 1990 General Election. In Terengganu, however, PAS won one parliamentary seat and eight state seats only. The party lost all seats it contested in Terengganu in the 1995 General Election. Semangat 46 was dissolved in 1996.

2 The *takfiri* culture severely divided society when PAS supporters refused to pray behind UMNO imams and eat meat slaughtered by UMNO men, while also rearranging the solemnization of marriage solemnized by UMNO imam.

3 Abdul Hadi Awang argued that "we don't have to change religion. We become *kafir* when we practice a chauvinistic and narrow political approach (*assabiyah*)." Hadi never declared his excerpts of a speech in 1982 as *Amanat*. However, given his respectable religious credentials in the eyes of PAS supporters, the Amanat was interpreted as a green light to politically label UMNO followers as *kafir*.

4 Among PR constituent partners, PAS was the biggest loser, winning merely 21 out of 66 parliamentary seats contested. In comparison, DAP bagged 38 out of the 51 parliamentary constituencies it contested. However, the popular votes received by PAS increased from 14.36% in 2008 to 14.78% in the 2013 elections, owing to the massive support it received from the central region.

5 The Kajang move was purportedly a strategic plan to install Anwar Ibrahim as Menteri Besar of Selangor amidst growing dissatisfaction with the incumbent Chief Minister from PKR, Khalid Ibrahim. PAS went against the spirit of coalition by backing Khalid. The sitting assemblyman for the state constituency of Kajang, Lee Chin Cheh, resigned to pave the way for a by-election. However, Anwar's candidacy was rendered untenable by his conviction for engaging in homosexual activity. PR eventually nominated Anwar's wife-cum-PKR President Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as a candidate, and she won the by-election. See Ahmad Fauzi (2015).

6 The *ulama* line also expanded their dominance to the *Pemuda* (Youth) and *Muslimat* (Women's) wings. The progressive group was out-voted through dirty tactics, where the "chai" lists (preferred candidates) were already circulated on the eve of the party election.

7 Other heavyweights that joined Amanah were Salahuddin Ayub and Husam Musa (former Vice-Presidents of PAS), Mujahid Yusof Rawa, Dzulkefly Ahmad, Hatta Ramli, Khalid Samad, Suhaizan Kayat, Siti Mariah Mahmud and Mazlan Aliman.

8 The PAS President proposed amendments to Section 2 of the Act 355 (RUU355), that is to increase the current "imprisonment of more than three years or fine of more than RM5,000, or more than six lashes" to "jail term of more than 30 years or fine more than RM100,000 or 100 lashes as administered in line with the *syariah* crimes."

9 These mega rallies were held in every parliamentary area to boost the morale of party supporters, collect election funds and to portray the strength of the party. The last mega gathering was a successful Fastaqim 2.0 that attracted more than 200,000 PAS supporters in Kuala Nerus, Terengganu. It was the crucial ultimate party pre-election rally that reflected the solid support and strength of PAS in preparation for General Election 14.

10 Days after PAS won the state, PAS was criticized for being too harsh in dealing with minor issues, among others, locking up the entrances to Wisma Darul Iman for being afraid the previous state executive councillors would take out secret files, seizing the cars of former state exco members at night in the middle of the road, closing the KEMAS kindergartens operated at public premises, chaining up sewing machines for sewing class, disbanding the Jawatankuasa Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK) and changing it to Jawatankuasa Syura Rakyat (JSR), ousting

the pro-UMNO *imam* and *bilal* and declaring the *wang ehsan* as haram (*Berita Harian* 8 May 2018).

11 One PAS grassroots staunch supporter mentioned during the interview that he could not imagine hanging up an UMNO flag. Holding an UMNO flag was an act he never imagined.

12 The state government under PAS in 2002 passed the Syariah Criminal Offences (Hudud and Qisas) Terengganu Bill, which was gazetted a year later. However, the law is not enforceable as it contravened the Federal Constitution.

13 Interview with Ameerah (women youth of PAS), Ajil state assembly woman, on 20 April 2018.

14 Menteri Besar Ahmad Razif appealed to voters to wisely evaluate the contribution of the state to them. Further information on this can be read at www.thesundaily.my/news/2018/02/26/tgganu-molek-doh-resonates-across-state.

15 The State Industry and Trade Committee deputy chairman, Wan Abdul Hakim Wan Mokhtar, explained that the high unemployment rate in the state was because of the fall in steel and oil prices in the world market. Owing to the fall in prices of two major commodities in the world, many Terengganu employees, especially in Kemaman, were laid off, as the factories involved could no longer continue operating. See www.thesundaily.my/news/2018/01/18/tganu-government-refutes-claims-it-has-caused-high-unemployment-state.

16 In the three-cornered contest in Sungai Acheh and Kota Damansara during the 2013 election, UMNO won these seats with slim majorities. It was because of the spilt votes between PKR and PAS candidates, though both were from Pakatan Rakyat. In Sungai Acheh, UMNO received 6,891 votes, PKR 6,083 and PAS 690; the majority was 808 votes. Meanwhile, in Kota Damansara, UMNO received 16,387 votes, PKR 14,860 and PAS 7,312; the majority was 1,527 votes. Menteri Besar Ahmad Razif was also confident that three-cornered contests would benefit UMNO as PAS's traditional voters would split into two. See www.sinarharian.com.my/mobile/politik/tiga-penjuru-razif-yakin-bn-tapau-bersih-1.827706.

17 Field research in the Kuala Nerus parliamentary seat at Majlis Sukan Negeri Terengganu on 28 April 2018, nomination day.

18 The main problem in UMNO was *cah keting* (internal character assassination) because of the existence of many camps. The members would boycott candidates from opposing camps. It was reported that on election night, UMNO supporters received SMS and Whatsapp messages from other UMNO supporters to vote for PAS, instead of UMNO candidates, in the state seats of Ajil, Kuala Berang, Rantau Abang, Sura, Paka, Pengkalan Berangan, Cukai, Air Putih, Kota Putera and Jabi. This was owing to dissatisfaction when their preferred candidates were not nominated. Details about this issue can be read at Saila (2018).

19 Muhammad Awang was not nominated in the General Election 13 as he was not from Ahmad's camp. This had caused him to protest by campaigning for the PAS candidate. The interview with Ahmad Said can be watched at www.astroawani.com/video-malaysia/malaysiamemilih-mat-said-selamat-tapi-protes-203103.

20 The PKR-linked Invoke Malaysia predicted that BN would win Terengganu and PAS would be unable to garner enough support to win any seats. See https://thecoverage.my/news/invoke-predicts-slim-win-pakatan-harapan-111-parliamentary-seats-penisular-malaysia-many-bn-titans-will-fall/. The prominent polling firm, Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, forecasted that BN Terengganu would increase its parliamentary seats to seven while another one seat was too close to call. See www.malaysiakini.com/news/423763. Another research firm, Ilham Center, also expected that BN would retain Terengganu. See http://ilhamcentre.com/100-kerusi-mampu-dicapai-ph/. Professor Abdul Halim Sidek,

the National Council of Professors (MPN), the Politics, Security and International Affairs Cluster secretary, expected that BN would comfortably win over 25 seats. See www.theedgemarkets.com/article/ge14-no-catalyst-change-terengganu. Dr Mazlan Ali of UTM Perdana School predicted a tough contest between UMNO and PAS, but forecasted that BN would have a slight edge. See www.freemalaysia today.com/category/bahasa/2018/05/09/peluang-menang-50-50-di-terengganu-kelebihan-pada-bn/.

21 Interview with veteran UMNO supporter in Ajil on 7 May 2018.

22 For further details on the visit, see www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2017/05/236378/eyebrows-raised-hadi-attends-shaberys-event-marang.

23 Interview with PAS activist in Kampung Binjai Kertas, Kuala Berang on 6 May 2018.

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13 Intra-Islamist elite competition in Kelantan

Najwa Abdullah

Introduction

Malaysia's largest opposition party, *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS, or Malaysian Islamic Party), has been governing the state of Kelantan for much of the country's modern history. However, over the past few years, PAS has been criticized for failing to promote economic development in Kelantan. Other criticisms against PAS leaders include the rising cost of living, poor quality education and a major infrastructural lag. Apart from this, a serious feud in the party, after the demise of its prominent spiritual leader, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, was viewed as a key factor that would shape voting patterns in Kelantan. The much-anticipated three-cornered fights were thought to detrimentally undermine both PAS and the newly-formed coalition, *Pakatan Harapan* (PH, or Alliance of Hope), as the spilt in support for the opposition would allow *Barisan Nasional* (BN, or National Alliance) to return to power in Kelantan.

Nevertheless, findings from the ground indicate that Islam, especially the *ulama* leadership, remained the main driving force in determining the outcome of the election. When the General Election 14 (GE14) results were announced, what transpired in the north of the peninsula, including in Kelantan, went against the national trend where the call for reform led to a PH victory at the national level. In Kelantan, PAS retained power, gaining more state seats. While BN managed to survive because of the support it received in certain rural areas, PH did not win a single seat at either the state or parliamentary levels, despite having high-profile ex-PAS members as its candidates and espousing a call for social justice and Islam-based policies.

The gap between the predictions of pundits and the election results indicates that there was a big failure in understanding PAS and how entrenched Islamism is as an ideology in modern Malaysia. In light of this, the focus of this chapter is to aggregate old and new trends transpiring on the ground and draw attention to factors that shaped the election outcome. It seeks to answer the following core questions: is it accurate to say that the long-developed rhetoric on Islam and *ulama* leadership resulted in electoral loyalty for PAS? How was PAS different from the other two coalitions in translating sentiments on the ground and reaching out to the voters? How much impact did the fracture among elite Malay politicians in UMNO and PAS have on the ground?

Some core issues merit particular attention. First, the demise of Nik Aziz took PAS politics to a new era. After his demise, PAS had to deal with serious internal feuds. These feuds eventually led one faction to split from PAS, contributing to the birth of Amanah, a party formed and led by prominent PAS leaders. One core issue among members during the internal feuding was the increasingly close relationship between PAS and UMNO leaders. Second, analysts underestimated the power of religious identity and belonging by arguing that bread-and-butter issues would be the main determinant of voting behaviour. Third, for a majority of Kelantanese, PAS was a party that represented true Islam. PAS leaders were viewed as living a life that captured the core values of Islam. This association of Islam with PAS and its key leaders were factors that shaped how the Muslim electorate in Kelantan viewed parties and a reason why Amanah was seen to have betrayed PAS's struggle. This issue appeared more important to the electorate than PAS's inability to develop Kelantan's economy. Finally, much like the rest of the country, the intra-Malay elite clash took an interesting shape in Kelantan: while different parties tried to offer their models of Islamic governance, the PAS model prevailed over others at the ballot box.

This study is based on a two-week field observation of the conduct of political campaigns in Kelantan, from 24 April to 6 May 2018. The fieldwork was conducted to better understand the sentiments and opinions of local communities before the election. As part of the fieldwork, informal discussions and unstructured interviews were conducted with various informants such as voters, grassroots party members from PAS, PH and BN as well as party leaders, volunteers and candidates in the areas of Kota Bharu, Kubang Kerian, Pengkalan Chepa, Tumpat, Pasir Puteh and Kuala Krai. Rallies and campaign strategies were observed, including big-scale *ceramah* (or rallies), and the social media machineries used by PAS, BN and PH were monitored to better understand the core issues of the 2018 election. Secondary data was obtained including statistical data of the elections as well as newspaper articles and commentaries on Malaysian politics, Kelantan (Malay) society and Islamic politics. This chapter has three case studies, of the Kota Bharu, Pengkalan Chepa and Pasir Puteh seats, with the data from here used to corroborate the main arguments.

Kelantan election results

In the last 28 years, PAS's support in Kelantan has been unwavering, as seen in its parliamentary and state seats. In the last three elections, 2008, 2013 and 2018, PAS won over 60% of the parliamentary seats (nine out of 14 seats) and over 80% of the state seats (between 33 and 39 out of 45 state seats). Support from young and outside voters were important factors for PAS's major victory in 2013.[1,2] The number of state seats earned by PAS increased from 33 in 2013 to 37 in 2018. It also succeeded in wresting Terengganu from BN, winning six out of eight parliamentary seats and 22 out of 31 state seats and became a major player in a hung state assembly in Kedah.[3] However, at the national level, PAS won fewer seats

compared to the 2013 election (18 parliamentary seats instead of maintaining its previous tally of 21), although it registered an increase in popular votes. Since its takeover of Kelantan in 1990, PAS "has managed to limit BN's increase by only one or two parliamentary seats in most elections," except in 2004 where Kelantan almost fell to BN (Pasuni 2015: 236). In 2018, at the parliamentary level, BN retained five rural constituencies by fielding incumbent candidates Annuar Musa (Ketereh), Ahmad Jazlan Yakub (Machang), Ikmal Hisham Abdul Aziz (Tanah Merah), Mustapa Mohamed (Jeli) and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (Gua Musang). Nevertheless, PAS took significant votes for state seats in most of these constituencies. In Ketereh and Tanah Merah, two out of three state seats were won by PAS, while in Machang, PAS won all the state seats. BN made a clean sweep only in areas with long-standing incumbents, i.e., Jeli and Gua Musang. The fact that PAS had fared so well in 2018 after it had left PH and experienced a split made this win more remarkable. Prior to the 2018 election, there was a sense of worry within PAS given that their supporters were divided between PAS's current candidates and its former leaders now running as Amanah candidates. Moreover, previous studies about PAS noted that the party's centrist position and willingness to cooperate with secular parties such as DAP contributed to its popularity (Pasuni 2015: 239).

GE14's outcome, however, suggests that this might not be the case in the Malay heartland. Some results in previous Malaysian elections showed that PAS need not be associated with secular parties in order to win in Kelantan. For instance, PAS began its long-term rule in Kelantan by forming a Malay-Muslim coalition named *Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah* (Muslims Unity Movement—APU). DAP at the time was part of another coalition, the Gagasan Rakyat (People's Might—GR), and continued campaigning against the Islamisation trend in Malaysia (Khong 1991: 9–10). A similar victory took place in the 1999 General Elections, where PAS expanded its organisational and media apparatuses and espoused the *reformasi* cause (Farish 2014: 157). Therefore, it is more accurate to say that PAS's success in Kelantan relies mainly on its capability to represent itself as an alternative to UMNO and establish Islamic governance. BN tackled this issue most effectively in 2004 during General Election 12, when the then Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi championed the concept of "Islam Hadhari," or Civilisational Islam, that emphasized economic development, education and national unity (Moten 2009: 183). This approach succeeded in rolling back PAS's political advancement (Yang Razali 2004), leading BN to win eight parliamentary seats and 21 state seats in Kelantan.

Standing alone in 2018, PAS played the religious card to distinguish itself from BN and PH. The *kafir-mengkafir*[4] exchanges arose during the campaign period, wherein BN members were seen as bad Muslims and associated with a corrupt government, while PH was criticized for adopting a secular position. On the other hand, BN accused PAS of being hypocritical and stressed its own version of a more moderate, less politicized Islam as well as its contributions to rural Muslim communities. PH slammed current PAS leaders such as Hadi Awang (president of PAS, parliamentary member for Marang in Terengganu) and Nik Abduh

(PAS's parliamentary member for Pasir Mas 2013–2018 and son of Nik Aziz) for abandoning the Islamic legacy of Nik Aziz and cooperating with UMNO in the last few years. Thus, the emotional and psychological aspects of the election in Kelantan centred more on religious debates rather than economic and ethical issues, as seen in the other parts of Malaysia.

The number of voters in Kelantan grew from 918,573 in 2013 to 1,049,527;[5] however, the voter turnout declined from 85.17% in 2013 to 80.17% in 2018.[6] Despite its total defeat in Kelantan, PH did split the votes for PAS and BN. In a majority of seats, votes for PAS and BN decreased by 5% to 20%. PH's exceedingly poor performance in Kelantan seemed rather surprising given the fact that former PAS leaders, such as Husam Musa and important figures such as Nik Omar (another son of Nik Aziz), were placed at the forefront of its electoral strategies and image-building as a viable alternative to PAS. Nevertheless, most of PH's parliamentary candidates (eight out 14) were actually from Mahathir's party, *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (Bersatu, or the Malaysian United Indigenous Party). Amanah fielded five candidates while *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR, or the People's Justice Party) fielded only one candidate. This indicates that PH placed high hopes on Mahathir to secure victory which turned out to be a bad strategy. The coalition was also aware that Anwar Ibrahim's PKR had no traction in Kelantan. On the other hand, for state seats, PH fielded more candidates from Amanah (23) and less from Bersatu (12) and PKR (eight). In two state seats, Kuala Balah in Jeli and Tawang in Bachok, PH did not contest since the two proposed candidates in these areas were disqualified. Given Mahathir's notoriety among Kelantanese Malay-Muslims and PAS's supporters, owing to reasons explained later, PH's chances of winning were indeed rather low. In any constituency except Kota Bharu where Husam was fielded, PH secured the support of less than 10% of Kelantanese voters and in many cases their candidates lost their deposit.[7]

Nature of PAS leadership in Kelantan

Kelantan, situated in the Muslim-Malay heartland, has the reputation of being a "recalcitrant" state as it was an opposition stronghold for almost three decades. Kelantanese are known for their distinct worldview, where Islam has become a way of understanding the world, setting also the benchmark of action and behaviour in society.[8] Against this backdrop, PAS has become "an integral part of the Kelantanese trait of not relying for help (from the federal government) and their sense of independence" (*TODAY Online* 29 April 2018). The contest to win votes between PAS and UMNO had a strong religious flavour in Kelantan in which the debates centred around who was more Islamic.

Between 1990 and 2013, Kelantan's Islamist[9] outlook was constructed by Nik Aziz. As the first *ulama* to become the *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) in Kelantan, Nik Aziz was acclaimed as the unifying force of the party's ideologically diverse leaders as well as the vanguard of "true" Islamic governance, turning Kelantan into a state of piety. His charisma brought victory to the party after a

series of electoral defeats.[10] During his administration, religious lectures, study circles and *ceramah* conducted in the mosques, *surau* and religious schools developed into hubs for PAS to market its political agenda and circulate its reading of Islam (Farish 2003: 208–9). Nik Aziz was widely admired and acclaimed for his attempts in bringing Kelantanese closer to the teachings of Islam. He was also popular among non-Muslim Kelantanese for his inclusive approach and decision to join opposition coalitions—*Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front—BA) and *Pakatan Rakyat* (People's Pact—PR)—comprising multi-ethnic parties (*Today Online* 24 February 2015). Therefore, despite the state's decades-long struggles with development, the level of trust for the pious and inclusive leader among Kelantanese was very high,[11] as reflected in the electoral victories in the general elections of 1990, 1995, 1999, 2008 and 2013 His death in February 2015 was widely speculated as the end of PAS's dominance in Kelantan. Although this prediction did not materialize, this episode indeed brought about major changes in PAS, especially in terms of its leadership, campaign styles and ties with UMNO.

Perceptions of Mahathir and Najib

Both Mahathir Mohamad and Najib Razak had a poor image in Kelantan (Mohamed Osman and Ali 2018: 372).[12] When Mahathir visited Kelantan for a rally on 6 May 2018, he was barred from visiting Nik Aziz's grave by the latter's family, stating that he was not welcome because of his past mistakes.[13] Another topic during the campaign period was the Memali incident. In his *ceramah* in Kuala Lumpur, Mahathir had noted that those who were killed in the incident had "died in vain." Mahathir blamed their deaths on PAS leader Hadi Awang for allegedly encouraging fanaticism among his followers. Hadi had described those who died as "*syuhada*," or martyrs (*Malay Mail* 5 May 2018). Although Mahathir later expressed his apologies to PAS and the victims' families, his image as a repressive leader, especially among conservative, rural-based Muslims, persisted.

The image of Mahathir as the lynchpin for UMNO was still strong. PAS supporters viewed Bersatu as a splinter party of UMNO. Thus, they did not perceive Bersatu's missions and standpoints as different from UMNO, especially with regards to Islam and rural-based Malay-Muslim interests. Besides Mahathir's antagonistic attitude towards Muslim conservatives, the Kelantanese also pointed to his urban-centred development policies in the past that contributed to Kelantan's poor condition as a reason for their refusal to support Mahathir.

During his time in UMNO, Malhi (2003) argued that Mahathir had attempted to embed Islamist opposition in his secular administration and development plans. In doing so, he created a popular image of PAS leaders and supporters as backward-looking Muslims. This political strategy exacerbated the tension between PAS and BN. To counter Mahathir's Islamic policies, PAS shaped an even more decisively Islamic profile, including through the *hudud* bill. Since the beginning of his leadership, Nik Aziz was adamant that UMNO/BN would always be PAS's religious and political nemesis[14] and this was underscored to the electorate. After the creation of Bersatu in 2016, UMNO Kelantan also

developed a critical view of Mahathir and was eager to campaign against him in GE14. UMNO's candidate for the Tanjung Mas state seat in Kota Bharu, Madihah binti Abdul Aziz Madihah said:[15]

> How can someone who was previously a Prime Minister for 22 years become an opposition leader? This is treason. . . . He always feels like this; that he is the best person to lead Malaysia. He always says 'it has to be my way'. If you love your country, you should not do that.

The results clearly show that Mahathir had very little support in Kelantan. Votes for Bersatu rarely went beyond 9% both at state[16] and parliamentary levels. Madihah expressed her concerns that the prevalent extensive use of social media might backfire in the election, referring to the online chastising of Najib's leadership (e.g., the 1MDB scandal).[17] Furthermore, across the country, UMNO's old guard continued to be fielded because of their popularity among certain elites, which prevented younger leaders from taking centre stage. As a consequence, the young and educated were not interested in UMNO. Its campaigns in the rural areas such as Tanah Merah and Pasir Puteh were mainly attended by the elderly. Moreover, in recent years, UMNO/BN's un-Islamic-ness was increasingly associated with kleptocracy. Hence, the idea of fighting against a corrupt government for the sake of Islam was foregrounded in most of PAS's campaigns, rallies and *ceramah* in Kelantan. As an opposition party, PAS sought to replace UMNO's "unclean" politics with the implementation of Islamic codes and conduct. Despite this clear manifestation of a PAS and UMNO contest among party members and grassroots workers during the election period, the speculation about collaboration between the elites of PAS and UMNO was also widely debated.

After Nik Aziz: PAS's leaning towards BN and the birth of Amanah

After PAS left PR in 2015, Amanah was created and supported by prominent ex-PAS figures who wanted to stay in the opposition alliance such as Mat Sabu,[18] Husam Musa,[19] Rosli Yakoop,[20] Mohd Hatta Ramli,[21] Salahudin Ayub[22] and Mahfuz Omar.[23] Not long before the 2018 election, Nik Aziz's son, Nik Omar, decided to contest under the Amanah ticket for the Chempaka state seat in Pengkalan Chepa, where Nik Aziz was the state assemblyman. Amanah/PH in general constructed itself as the successor of Nik Aziz and the only alliance capable of reform, in contrast to BN as a corrupt government and PAS who focused only on Malay-Muslims.[24] For some, the fact that PAS has severed its ties with all other opposition parties before GE14 sparked a question about its stance on UMNO.

There are two main reasons for the split in PAS. Previously, Nik Aziz had the role of balancing out the competing Islamist ideologies in the party and maintaining its bond with the other parties, despite some members' disagreement. For Nik Aziz, it was important for PAS to join a larger political alliance in order to thrive in Malaysian politics and enhance the inclusive image of Islam.[25] Nevertheless, DAP's growing national influence and association with secularism and

liberalism developed into a source of anxiety and discomfort for many conservative members of PAS. According to PAS's partisans, just before his death, Nik Aziz was concerned and questioned whether the party should stick with DAP in the long run if their views continued to become increasingly divergent. This argument was used to justify PAS's decision to stand alone after Nik Aziz's death. Thus, in most campaigns, the problem with DAP was played out considerably when PAS portrayed Amanah as a DAP lackey. There was a widespread view that if one voted for Amanah, it meant they were against Islam and in favour of Western secular and liberal values. For instance, during the campaign period, supporting Amanah was understood as supporting the infidels (*kafir*) and LGBT.

On the other hand, Amanah highlighted the increasingly close relationship between some UMNO and PAS leaders as the reason for the split. The absence of Nik Aziz was highlighted as a factor that made some PAS leaders became more lenient of UMNO, in search for greater power and financial resources. In the last three years, the *hudud* issue was linked to this.[26] There had been claims that PAS and UMNO sought to unify the Malay-Muslim votes and form a supermajority Muslim bloc in the country. Ting argued that the *hudud* bill became a political game that allowed UMNO to opportunistically engage in the issue while weakening PAS's ties to the opposition coalition (*TODAY Online* 7 June 2017). During Najib's administration, Hadi tabled his motion on *hudud* three times without it proceeding to a debate or voting process, a rare case in the history of Malaysian politics. Through this channel, Hadi and Najib interacted more intensively and collaborated for the sake of Malay-Muslims. Furthermore, earlier in 2018, a leaked audio recording featuring the voice of Nik Abduh and other PAS central committee members who confessed to receiving money from UMNO also intensified public suspicion about political deals between UMNO and PAS.[27] Sarawak Report founder and editor Clare Rewcastle-Brown also claimed that a sum of RM90 million from UMNO was transferred to the accounts of top PAS leaders in 2016.[28] In 2017, UMNO and PAS were reported to arrange a deal to win over Selangor from PH, which was speculated to serve as a foothold for further national collaboration.[29] UMNO also gradually showed nerve to reclaim its influence in Kelantan by renaming the Medan Ilmu (The Knowledge Square) religious centre, where the late Nik Aziz had long preached in the area on Fridays, as Medan Tok Pa.

In public discourses, Hadi denied both UMNO's monetary "donation" and the possibility of an alliance between the parties. Hadi insisted that PAS had its own affluent benefactors and did not need UMNO's financial support.[30] In an interview with *Astro Awani*, Hadi said that PAS "had been collecting donations during its *ceramah* for decades, and that it had received even more for GE14 which enabled the party to contest in 158 federal seats" (*The Coverage* 28 May 2018). Hadi sued Rewcastle-Brown and filed the case at the London High Court in April 2017, asserting that the accusation had destroyed his reputation. On 2 May 2018, the London Court dismissed Rewcastle-Brown's statement of defence, suggesting that Hadi had a chance to win the case. UMNO long-standing leader Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah also disapproved of the alleged

cooperation. He felt that this issue of a hefty donation by UMNO to PAS would stir up controversy among both PAS's and UMNO's supporters and members in Kelantan.

Meanwhile, Amanah believed that Hadi's lack of popularity among the Kelantanese gave it a good chance to win seats. During the campaign period, Husam pointed out that Hadi did not have great influence in Kelantan and had shaken people's trust with his proximity to Najib over the past few years. He believed that both leaders had discussed a pact, widely referred to as the "national consensus," ultimately involving a coalition government in Kelantan and Terengganu, as well as posts in the Cabinet.[31] This was triggered by the assumption that the 158 three-cornered parliamentary fights would benefit BN, especially after the redelineation exercise where the demography and arrangement of seats in certain states were manipulated in order to favour BN.[32]

Husam was right in this sense. In Kelantan, images of Hadi were rarely used in PAS's campaign apparatuses—billboards, posters, banners—while Nik Aziz's image persisted. After his passing, PAS built many commemorative facilities and frequently quoted his sayings on their media publications and campaign materials. Frequently, the electorate was asked to vote for PAS to show loyalty to Nik Aziz and maintain his legacy. Therefore, Nik Aziz's influence was still entrenched in the party such that PAS supporters would overlook the disarray between party leaders. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister Ahmad Yaakob was also believed to have a positive image compared to Hadi in Kelantan. He was seen as Nik Aziz's trusted colleague who helped Kelantan achieve its Islamic ideals, including the establishment of Bank Islam.[33] When emphasizing the current leadership, PAS frequently used photos of Ahmad Yaakob, not Hadi, in its campaign materials. These strategies appeared to be effective for PAS in GE14. They also contributed to the fact that PAS supporters were generally loyal to the party and its ideology vis-à-vis Islam, not certain individuals, except Nik Aziz. The results showed that its separation from PR and the issue of tacit agreement with UMNO/BN had little impact in terms of changing voting behaviour. PAS's negative perceptions of other parties like UMNO (distant, corrupt government), DAP (anti-Islam, chauvinistic Chinese party) or Amanah (deceiving, deviant Muslims) were also ingrained in the grassroots.

Campaign machineries and candidates

The campaign strategies of all contestants were more varied and rigorous compared to the previous elections. PAS and BN's campaign blitzkriegs, flags, posters and billboards dominated most places in Kelantan, in contrast to PH whose apparatuses were almost absent, especially in rural areas such as Tanah Merah, Pasir Puteh and Kuala Krai.[34] Kelantanese voters in GE14 remained highly polarized owing to how the battle among the three major parties—PAS, UMNO and Amanah (PH)—was stretched into a religious struggle, particularly of PAS against the so-called secular groups. The 28-year rule of PAS had been long enough to imprint the idea that PAS was the real Islam and that choosing another party

over PAS was against Islam. The manner in which PAS and BN fielded their candidates in Kelantan showed that it was just Hadi and Najib that appeared close, not the parties or even local leaders. For the national consensus to happen, PAS needed to ensure that UMNO stood a better chance to win more seats. This meant PAS had to field weak candidates in several seats where key UMNO leaders stood. In contrast to this logic, PAS continued to field many of its key players in most seats, including in UMNO's fortresses with a clear objective of trying to win these UMNO seats. Consequently, UMNO only managed to retain five parliamentary seats and lost four state seats to PAS. With their total defeat, ex-PAS members in Amanah clearly had no currency, including the members highly associated with Nik Aziz like Husam Musa. The following case studies on three different constituencies confirm these conclusions.

Kota Bharu

As the incumbent, PAS had the most access to high-profile venues compared to BN and PH. Their campaigns were mainly done in stadiums and squares, enabling them to draw large-scale supporters and feature a variety of programmes such as local art performances, free food stalls, bazaars and competitions for kids. Their campaigns were still mostly conducted in big-scale *ceramah* format at Medan Ilmu (the place where Nik Aziz used to hold his religious lectures) and either began or ended with a *sembahyang berjemaah* (mass prayer). Despite the rumours about PAS's declining popularity, its *ceramah* did not cease to attract large number of people, young and old. It was also obvious that PAS had changed its campaign style considerably. PAS did not give free food or door prizes in previous elections, nor had it created a carnival-like atmosphere during the campaigns and ceremonies. Nik Aziz was known for his demure approach to the electorate. He preferred the simple, big-scale *ceramah* format and avoided displaying too much extravagance. This humble quality of Nik Aziz clearly disappeared in PAS's new leadership. PAS organized more entertainment programmes and once featured a talk with a famous Kelantanese artist in a campaign in Kota Bharu. At an event where the party announced its candidates that was held at the Sultan Muhammad Stadium in Kota Bharu, PAS candidates came into the venue in a parade of luxurious cars, a practice usually done by UMNO leaders (*TODAY Online* 29 April 2018). It even featured Malay and Chinese art performances as public entertainment during the campaigns in the Kota Bharu area. Hence, some voters felt that PAS now looked "more modern" and had adapted more creative ways to reach out to people, without compromising Islam.

Compared to other places, PH had a stronger presence in Kota Bharu. It placed more flags and banners of PKR, which substituted for the banned PH logo. PH opened up a free-food corner in the middle of the city and organized a big-scale *ceramah* when Mahathir came on 6 May 2018. Mahathir came to encourage support for the local candidates in the backyard of a restaurant located in the outskirts of Kota Bharu. Yet, unlike PAS's *ceramah* that could easily attract non-members, the crowd in these events consisted of PH members. The enthusiasm given to

their events was not as significant compared to similar events organized by PAS, even when it featured prominent politicians such as Husam and Nik Omar.

On the other hand, BN's Kota Bharu branch seemed to be aware of its poor image in Kelantan: it did not feature Najib in most of its campaign materials and steered clear of large-scale *ceramah* in the capital, stating those would not attract many people. Various strategies, including social media posts, free food, gift giving, door prizes, street convoys and walkabouts, were operationalized instead. To engender a youthful campaign, BN collaborated with a local artist famously known as Poyi Gasi. In the campaign materials for Fikhran Hamshi, the candidate for BN in Kota Bharu, this was quite evident. An upbeat, rap music video themed as "*Dia Adalah Kita*"[35] (translated as He is Us, wherein "He" here refers to Fikhran) was circulated across BN's social media pages. The song was also aired across Fikhran's day-to-day rallies to create a buoyant atmosphere. BN's Facebook page "Media Kota Bharu" was updated regularly, featuring Fikhran's campaign activities and testimonial videos. The considerable effort put into establishing a strong social media presence and creating positive image was also done to reach the silent voter demographic, which was expected to be growing.[36]

BN also sought to attract swing voters by reaching out to PAS-dominant areas using various tactics, including a truck convoy and visits to traditional markets such as *Pasar Kubang Pasu* and *Pasar Siti Khadijah* to interact with

Figure 13.1 BN's free food stall in the Kota Bharu area during the campaign period

the people. During the activities, BN campaigners often played religious songs to attract attention. However, these were met with indifference by the people. PAS, on the other hand, garnered far greater attention even in simple *ceramah* format.

Brief interviews with people of different backgrounds in Kota Bharu revealed the profound loyalty of PAS supporters, rooted in their supposed adherence to the Quran and Hadith. And, as long as Islam remained the basis of its policies and conduct, people believed that PAS would deliver greater justice and benefits for all. In other words, many Kelantanese identified themselves with Islam and PAS provided the channel to embody their political commitment to Islam. Consequently, PAS leaders pervasively used religious idioms and rituals during their campaigns. PAS candidates presented themselves both as administrator and religious mentor, intertwining their political goals with Islamic values and teachings. Catchphrases such as "*Kebangkitan Islam*" (the resurrection of Islam), "*Kekuasaan Allah*" (the power of God), "*Menegakkan Quran dan Sunnah*" (Upholding the Quran and Sunnah) and "*Panji Islam*" (the banner of Islam) were used to describe PAS. As responsible Muslims, Kelantanese were urged to sustain these goals. In his nomination day speech on 28 April 2018, PAS's candidate for Kota Bharu parliament,

Figure 13.2 Chinese art show in one of PAS's campaigns in Kota Bharu

Figure 13.3 PAS's inauguration event for GE14 on 24 April 2018 in Kota Bharu, Kelantan

Figure 13.4 One of PAS's *ceramah* in Medan Ilmu

Takiyuddin Hassan (a long-serving incumbent), urged Kelantanese to assist the PAS struggle. He said:

> Musuh tradisi kita, iaitu Barisan Nasional, telah meletakkan semua calon di seluruh kawasan. Ini bermakna apa? (Ini) bermakna kita (PAS) selamanya akan menentang UMNO/Barisan Nasional, di dalam mana-mana Pilihan Raya. Takbir, Allahu Akbar.
>
> (translation: Our traditional enemy, which is BN, has fielded its candidates in all areas. What does this mean? (This) means we (PAS) will forever oppose UMNO/ Barisan Nasional, in every election. *Takbir*.[37] God is Great).

A PAS member also said:

> *Pada hari ini bukti bahawa kita (PAS) ni bukan menjadi tongkat UMNO. Kita akan terus marah berlawan dengan UMNO dan siapa saja yang menghalangi perjuangan Islam kita*.[38]
>
> (translation: Today we (PAS) proved that we are not UMNO's stick. We will always fight UMNO vehemently and anyone who is obstructing our Islamic struggle.)

Therefore, in public discourses, th*e kafir-mengkafir* exchanges ensued. It was common to hear PAS leaders expound that Muslims who choose any party other than PAS were betraying their religion and community, turning them into *kafir* or bad Muslims. Although it cannot be claimed that these rather symbolic approaches were the single factor behind PAS's victory, they played an important role in re-claiming their Islamic stature in the absence of Nik Aziz and debunking the suspected alliance with UMNO.

Another interesting aspect to examine is how Kota Bharu became the only constituency where UMNO lost to both PAS and PH. In parliamentary seats elsewhere, UMNO came second. For Kota Bharu, UMNO fielded a 32-year-old underdog Fikhran Hamshi against two heavyweight candidates; Takiyuddin Hassan (PAS) and Husam Musa (Amanah). Fikhran was a former banker turned businessman and the son of the UMNO Kota Bharu's division chief Mohamad Fatmi Che Salleh. He was touted as one of the 15 young candidates who contested in Kelantan, a part of UMNO's youth development agenda. Takiyuddin was a PAS top gun, being the PAS Secretary-General, incumbent parliamentary member for Kota Bharu and former Kelantan state executive counsellor. Husam is a native Kelantanese born and raised in Kota Bharu. For GE14, he was the chairman of PH Kelantan and initial Chief Minister candidate. His strength also lay in the fact that he was very close to Nik Aziz and at a point was considered the successor to Nik Aziz. As a result of this rather top-heavy contest, UMNO lost significantly to PAS and Amanah. Husam managed to surpass the volume of votes obtained by Fikhran but lost to Takiyuddin, albeit by a close margin of 5,869 votes (6.6%). Interestingly, in Salor where he also contested as an incumbent,

Husam lost by large margins of 7,589 votes (28%) to Saiful Adli Abd Bakar (PAS) and 2,923 votes (10.8%) to Mohamad Noordin Awang (UMNO). This indicated that Husam's termination from PAS in 2015 impacted his credibility in Kelantan.

Pengkalan Chepa

Pengkalan Chepa was a particularly interesting seat to examine owing to the conflict between Nik Aziz's family members and its implication on the ground. The issue of disagreement within the family began in 2016, when Nik Omar appeared to join Amanah during a ceremony in Petaling Jaya and was offered the Kelantan Amanah Syariah Panel chief post.[39] Nik Omar, who was then a religious teacher and the principal of Madrasah Darul Anuar, a religious school previously led by Nik Aziz, did not accept the offer to venture into politics right away as he was concerned about his mother's blessings, given a long history of tension between his family and Mahathir.[40] In 2001, Nik Omar's brother, Nik Adli was arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for alleged terrorist activities in the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) or Malaysian Mujahideen Movement and participating in Afghanistan-based militant training[41] (*Malaysiakini* 2001). Nik Aziz had strongly criticized the detention of his son, claiming that it was politically motivated (Abuza 2003: 124). His leaning towards Amanah was viewed in a negative light by many PAS sympathizers as they expected Nik Omar to be more involved in PAS and assist the *ulama* leadership in Kelantan. He was frequently portrayed as a dissident or "*anak derhaka*" (ungrateful child) for not following his mother's advice to not join the "enemy." This perception was deepened when his mother was seen campaigning against him by supporting PAS incumbent Ahmad Fathan Mahmood in the Chempaka state seat and her other son, Nik Abduh, who ran for PAS in Bachok parliamentary seat. Besides the family dimension, another factor that prevented Nik Omar from winning the hearts of PAS's traditional supporters was the fact that he did not come from the *tarbiyah* or Islamic caderisation process of PAS. Instead, he had been widely associated with IKRAM (an Islamic NGO, previously named Jemaah Islam Malaysia or Malaysia's Islamic Community) since 2015. IKRAM has a reputation of being the backbone of Amanah and an Islamic organisation closely associated with opposition parties and urban-based middle-class Malay-Muslims.[42] Its support of electoral reform and ideological roots in Muslim Brotherhood did not appeal to the traditional Muslims in Kelantan, at least compared to PAS's advocacy on Islamic governance. This was further exacerbated with PH's ties to DAP and vehemence on toppling the ruling coalition. For instance, in an interview with *The Malay Mail*, Hadi mentioned: "Those in PH are liberal Muslims who are immature politicians and they only wanted to use this to go to Putrajaya."[43]

On the other hand, from PH's perspective, Nik Omar was one of its key people. His picture was frequently used in its campaign materials and juxtaposed with Mahathir's. The biggest challenge for PH in Kelantan was to sway the pro-Islam votes and Nik Omar was one of its key strategies. Being a pious son, during the election Nik Omar was expected to put both a fresh Islamic image and symbolize

a sense of aide-mémoire of Nik Aziz. His clean track record as an *ustad* (religious scholar) and educator was compared to Nik Abduh's apparent support of an UMNO–PAS relationship. Nevertheless, for many Kelantanese, he was not a qualified successor to Nik Aziz. Nik Omar lost massively (only taking 9.8% of the votes) compared to the PAS candidate Ahmad Fathan Mahmood (who won 42.7% of the votes).[44] The supposed national consensus was clearly not evident in this constituency. BN put another young candidate, Mohamed Fareez Noor Amran, against the strong PAS incumbent.

Pasir Puteh

In the rural areas, criticisms against Najib's economic policies and scandals were more pronounced and PAS benefited from this scenario by strengthening its brand of Islam. PAS dubbed the BN government as un-Islamic by referring to the corruption scandals and policies that burdened the people such as the 6% GST (Goods and Services Tax/value added tax) and PTPTN (Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional—National Student Loan Corporation), loans that the young could not afford to repay. Both GST and PTPTN were portrayed as "*haram*"[45] since they added financial pressure on low-income families.[46] A PAS member in Pasir Puteh explained that the GST and PTPTN would not happen should PAS govern Malaysia. He said the fact that PAS based its ideological foundation on the Quran and Sunnah meant that it would always support the rights of poor Muslims. Hence, during the campaign, PAS portrayed itself as the advocate for just Islamic governance, with qualities such as clean governance, high morals and the denunciation of kleptocracy at the core of its narratives and rhetoric. BN, on the other hand, denied the relation between the GST and the rising living costs. The electorate's concerns over PTPTN were rarely addressed and no alternative scheme was offered in the manifesto. The accusations against Najib were disavowed by BN's members as mere *fitnah*.[47] PH, on the other hand, faced different problems. Its presence, flags, banners and billboards in this area was extremely scarce. In his speech during the 6 May campaign in Bachok area, Husam noted that this situation was because of the abrupt 30-day ban on displaying PH's logo and Mahathir's photograph throughout the election. Before the ban, PH was halfway through printing out flags and posters featuring the PH/Amanah logo. Owing to PH's tight campaign budget, it could not afford to reproduce as many new campaign materials. Hence, PH in Kelantan relied on the spirit of reform to topple the BN government. Its strategy in terms of candidacy was also inefficient. For example, in the parliamentary seat PH fielded an ex-UMNO candidate Kamarudin Md Nor who joined Bersatu in 2016.[48] He had a history of defeats during the 1990 and 1999 general elections in Kelantan when he was running for UMNO.[49] In GE14, Kamarudin could only obtain 4,896 votes (5.7%). Likewise, in all state seats PH candidates garnered between 3% and 7.5% of the total votes.

The said national consensus between UMNO and PAS was also absent in this constituency. In fact, PAS retained its control and took over some of the marginal

seats previously won by UMNO. PAS's lynchpin Nik Zawawi won the Pasir Puteh parliamentary seat, defeating BN's candidate Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki, an Islamic intellectual and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia for Islamic affairs, albeit by a narrow margin of 1,360 votes (1.6%) while Bersatu's candidate Kamaruddin Md. Noor took only 4,896 votes (5.7%).[50] PAS's branding of Islam thus made a clean sweep at the state level. Mohd Saripudin bin Ismail, a well-respected *ustad* and Chairman of the Agro-based Industry, Biotechnology, Green Technology and Environment Committee of Kelantan, succeeded in wresting Selising from UMNO by a margin of 3,120 votes (15.05%). This was a remarkable achievement compared to the GE13 result when PAS lost to UMNO by 107 votes (0.7%). In Semerak, PAS's candidate Wan Hassan Wan Ibrahim also defeated UMNO's incumbent Zawawi Othman by a close margin of 632 votes (3%).

Conclusion

The electoral fights in Kelantan were more distinct than elsewhere because of its strong Islamic flavour and how the various intra- and inter-party elite feuds unfolded against this backdrop. The split in votes in three-cornered fights favoured PAS in Kelantan for certain reasons. First, Mahathir, DAP and Najib were increasingly viewed in a negative light by a majority of Kelantanese. These three factors became emblematic for an anti-Islam or un-Islamic stance, as conceived by PAS. Most Kelantanese saw the ex-PAS leaders who joined Amanah and PKR more as traitors than heroes, as in the case of Nik Omar. BN's situation was similarly arduous, as it was constantly associated with corrupt governance both by the members of oppositions and grassroots. Consequently, the grassroots responded with a lackadaisical attitude to BN and PH's campaigns. In certain cases, the question about who was more likely to continue the legacy of Nik Aziz frequently came up in the election debates. The aforementioned observations indicate that those who had broken away from PAS had major difficulties in retaining PAS supporters' trust. The dynamics of elite Malay politicians created ripples among the electorate, especially before the election. However, PAS managed to justify the split from PR by highlighting its Islamic struggle and concerns with DAP's liberal worldview.

Second, voter loyalty was to the party with regard to its long-standing association with Islam, *ulama* leadership and Nik Aziz. However, this was achieved with a clear strategy. Regardless of the apparent conflict that caused the big guns to resign, PAS managed to represent itself strategically and focused on representing other leaders that made a better impression on the electorate. To embody the *ulama* spirit, PAS continued to field its well-respected *ustad* and top guns in many seats. On the other hand, PH overlooked the fact that Mahathir was unpopular in Kelantan and instead fielded more Bersatu candidates on the parliamentary level to achieve its nationwide goal. PAS's Islamic branding also worked out more effectively compared to the other parties' as Nik Aziz continued to be incorporated through the use of his sayings, narratives and photos in the

campaign materials and certain facilities. Because of these strategies, the internal feuding issue was mostly overlooked by the electorate in Kelantan.

Thirdly, the display of the closeness between Hadi and Najib in the past few years did not resonate among the electorate. PAS and UMNO went their separate ways in GE14 because of an absence of support from the parties' members and grassroots. Thus, antagonism between the two parties continued to be articulated during the campaign period, most heavily through religious idioms. These findings suggest that the elite competition and the idea of Islamic governance in Kelantan had become more complex with the three-cornered fights, though PAS's idea continued to be the most dominant and popular.

Notes

1 Pasuni (2015: 237) mentioned that the urban-based voters contributed largely to the opposition's votes.
2 Lopez (2017) said, "Polling houses have estimated that at least 15 per cent of Kelantan voters are workers based outside the state," in *The Straits Times*, "PAS, after six elections, seen losing grip in Kelantan," published on 25 September 2017, accessed on 1 August 2018, www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/pas-after-six-elections-seen-losing-grip-in-kelantan
3 See *TODAY Online*, 2018, 'Why PAS surpassed expectations in Malaysia's GE and is new forbearer of Malay politics,' published on 18 May 2018, available at www.todayonline.com/commentary/why-pas-surpassed-expectations-malaysias-ge
4 "*Kafir*" is the Arabic word for "infidel," *mengkafir* is a Malay term for the act of accusing someone as an infidel.
5 Data sourced from *The Star Online* on GE 14, https://election.thestar.com.my/kelantan.html
6 Calculation based on the data from *The Star Online* on GE14, https://election.thestar.com.my/kelantan.html
7 Data sourced from *The Star Online* on GE14, https://election.thestar.com.my/kelantan.html
8 Based on an interview with Amanah's partisan, on 5 May 2018.
9 The state of Islam becoming a political ideology.
10 Aliran (2017), "Tok Guru Nik Aziz—guardian of the progressive generation."
11 *The Star*, "All eyes on Nik Aziz," published on 1 February 2015, from: www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/analysis/2015/02/01/all-eyes-on-nik-aziz/
12 Based on interview with PAS Kelantan's official on 2 August 2018.
13 *The Sun Daily* (2018), "Dr Mahathir prevented from visiting Nik Aziz's grave," last updated on 6 May 2018, www.thesundaily.my/news/2018/05/06/dr-mahathir-prevented-visiting-nik-azizs-grave
14 Based on an interview with Amanah supporter in the Kota Bharu area on 29 April 2018.
15 Based on an interview on 5 May 2018.
16 Except votes for Ab Rashid Ab Rahman in the assembly seat of Kota Lama (24.7%) and Nasir Dollah state assemblyman for Galas (14.6%). Data sourced from *The Star Online* on GE14, https://election.thestar.com.my/kelantan.html
17 Based on an interview on 4 May 2018 in Kota Bharu.
18 Former Deputy President of PAS, now the founding president of Amanah.
19 Former Vice-President of PAS, now the Vice-President of Amanah.
20 Former managing director of Harakah (PAS's tabloid).
21 Former member of PAS's central committee.

22 Former member of PAS and ex-Malaysian parliamentary member for Kubang Kerian.
23 Former member of PAS for 34 years, once headed the PAS's Youth Wing from 1999 to 2003 and has been a Malaysian parliamentary member for Pokok Sena (Kedah) since 1995.
24 In his speech in Kelantan on 6 May 2018, Mahathir said that PAS's existence from the start had divided the Malays and the British colonial government expected its formation to weaken the unity of the nation.
25 Based on an interview with a group of Amanah/PH partisans in the Kubang Kerian area, on 26 April 2018.
26 See *TODAY Online* (2018), "PAS grassroots still hope for pact after UMNO snub," updated on 8 December 2017, www.todayonline.com/world/pas-grass roots-still-hope-pact-after-umno-snub
27 According to the audio, PAS had been receiving financial assistance from UMNO. See *The Malaysian Insight*, 2018, "Full audio recording of PAS–UMNO cooperation making the rounds online," published on 29 March 2018, www.themalaysia ninsight.com/s/45861/
28 *Sarawak Report*, 2016, "As Najib Denies All Over 1MDB, Let's Not Forget His Many Other Criminal Connections," published on 6 August 2016, available at www. sarawakreport.org/2016/08/as-najib-denies-all-over-1mdb-lets-not-forget-his-many-other-criminal-connections-comment/

    See also *New Straits Times*. "Hadi has good chance of winning defamation suit against Rewcastle-Brown," published on 2 May 2018, www.nst.com.my/ news/politics/2018/05/364808/hadi-has-good-chance-winning-defamation-suit-against-rewcastle-brown
29 *Straits Times*, "UMNO, PAS plan assault on Selangor, woo former chief minister," published on 25 August 2017, www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/umno-pas-working-on-plan-to-take-over-selangor
30 See *The Malaysian Insight*, "PAS has rich donors, doesn't need UMNO's RM90 million, says Hadi," published on 28 May 2018, www.themalaysianinsight. com/s/50586
31 Based on an interview with Husam Musa in the Kuala Krai area on 5 May 2018.
32 See *TODAY Online*, "New boundaries, voter apathy and the slow erosion of democracy in Malaysia," updated on 9 April 2018, www.todayonline.com/com mentary/new-boundaries-voter-apathy-and-slow-erosion-democracy-malaysia
33 Based on an interview with PAS's partisan on 25 August 2018.
34 Based on an interview with Fikran Hamshi's partisan on 29 May 2018.
35 See *Berita Harian*, "'Dia Adalah Kita' jadi viral ('He is Us' has become viral)," published on 30 April 2018, www.bharian.com.my/berita/politik/2018/04/ 418988/dia-adalah-kita-jadi-viral
36 Based on an interview with Fikran Hamshi's partisan on 29 May 2018.
37 The Arabic term for the Arabic phrase *Allāhu akbar* (God is Great).
38 The orator during the nomination day.
39 See *The Star Online* (2018), "Nik Aziz's widow steps in to ensure no friction among sons," published on 15 April 2018, www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/ 2018/04/15/nik-azizs-widow-steps-in-to-ensure-no-friction-among-sons/# OeeT2BGvD0tIDXTK.99
40 His mother is Sabariah Ishak. Based on an interview with Amanah's supporter on 30 April 2018.
41 *Malaysiakini*, "Nik Adli's habeas corpus application dismissed," published on 4 October 2001, www.malaysiakini.com/news/4975
42 *New Mandala*, "Voting for Islamisms beyond the ballot box," published on 30 April 2018, www.newmandala.org/voting-islamisms-beyond-ballot-box/

43 See: *The Malay Mail* (2018) in *TODAY Online* (2018). "Malaysian GE: Son of late PAS spiritual leader will claw Kelantan support for PH, says Wan Azizah," last updated 7 May 2018, www.todayonline.com/world/malaysian-ge-son-late-pas-spiritual-leader-will-claw-kelantan-support-ph-says-wan-azizah.
44 Data sourced from *The Star Online* on GE14, https://election.thestar.com.my/kelantan.html
45 *Haram* here refers to the Islamic concept of what is forbidden.
46 Based on an interview with Mohd. Hafiz Mahmud, Exco member of PAS Kelantan Youth Council and Head of PAS Pasir Puteh Youth Council, at a campaign held in the rural area of Gaal, Pasir Puteh on 1 May 2018
47 The Arabic word for libel or social distress.
48 See *Malaysia Dateline*, "Bekas ketua Umno Pasir Puteh keluar parti, dijangka sertai PPBM (The former Pasir Puteh Umno chief out of the party and expected to join PPBM), published 9 September 2016, https://malaysiadateline.com/bekas-ketua-umno-pasir-puteh-keluar-parti-dijangka-sertai-ppbm/
49 See *Free Malaysia Today*, "Orang besar 3 parti Melayu bertembung di Pasir Puteh (3 big guns of Malay-based parties to contest in Pasir Puteh)," published on 11 April 2018 www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/2018/04/11/orang-besar-3-parti-melayu-bertembung-di-pasir-puteh/
50 Data sourced from *The Star Online* on GE14, https://election.thestar.com.my/kelantan.html

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