

The Causality of the Regime Change in Malaysia: Barisan Nasional's Authoritarianism and its Malfunction in the 14th General Election

YAGI Nobuaki
Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies
Department of Southeast Asian Area Studies, Kyoto University

Abstract

This paper examines the causality of the regime change and clarifies the conditions in which the authoritarian government in Malaysia collapsed in the 14th general election. Barisan Nasional's 61-year authoritarian regime necessitates the following two parts, namely: (1) populism targeting at Malay voters to retain their political loyalty, and (2) an electoral system marginalising votes of opponents such as Chinese voters, and urban voters. This paper analyses the electoral data of the 14th general election to explain the reason why these two parts did not work advantageously for Barisan Nasional. The analysis is conducted with a two-step analysis. Firstly, the author uses a regression analysis to examine the voting behaviour in Malaysia. Secondly, the process in which votes are converted into seats is examined. The findings show that in the 14th general election, while Chinese votes, and urban votes were cast to Pakatan Harapan, Malay votes, and rural votes were split between Barisan Nasional and PAS. In the 13th general election, due to the winner-take-all First-Past-The-Post electoral system, together with the allocation of electoral districts in which percentages of Malay voters exceed Chinese voters, not a few Chinese votes were marginalised as wasted votes. In the 14th general election, due to the split of the Malays, Malay votes were wasted, and Chinese votes became, on the contrary, strongly influential towards the electoral result, helping Pakatan Harapan become the majority. In addition, this paper examines differences in the voting behaviour among Malay voters and finds that the authoritarian regime of Barisan Nasional had to retain Malay votes by distributing economic merits to them. It is concluded that in the 14th general election, Barisan Nasional could not retain the political loyalty of Malay voters with its authoritarian populism, and simultaneously, it could not marginalise the influence of Chinese voters with its authoritarian electoral system. These two malfunctions of Barisan Nasional's electoral tactics were the main causality of the regime change in Malaysia.

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1.0 Introduction

Malaysia's 14th general election held on 9 May 2018, brought historical change in Malaysian politics. The party coalition that had ruled for 61 years, Barisan Nasional, formerly known as the Alliance, lost its long-standing political legitimacy and became the opposition. Pakatan Harapan, the previous opposition, obtained 113 seats (50.9% of the total seats), sufficiently enough to govern Malaysia (Table 1-1), and became the new ruling party coalition. It became majority in states of Peninsular Malaysia, specifically in the western to southern part. In states and federal territories like Selangor, Penang, and Kuala Lumpur, the percentages of its seats in the region were at least 76.9% (Federal Territories). Barisan Nasional barely became majority in Pahang, and Perlis in Peninsular Malaysia, and Sabah, and Sarawak in East Malaysia. PAS became majority in Kelantan, and Terengganu in the northeastern part of Peninsular Malaysia. This result showed the reason why Pakatan Harapan had drastically expanded its seats from the 13th general election to the 14th general election¹ was because of the wide support from voters in Peninsular Malaysia, specifically in the area from the western to southern part.

Table 1-1
Parliament Seats by States, in the 14th General Election

[No. of Seats]	Pakatan Harapan	Barisan Nasional	PAS	Others
Federal Territories [13]	10	2	0	1
Johor [26]	18	8	0	0
Kedah [15]	10	2	3	0
Kelantan [14]	0	5	9	0
Malacca [6]	4	2	0	0
Negeri Sembilan [8]	5	3	0	0
Pahang [14]	5	9	0	0
Penang [13]	11	2	0	0
Perak [24]	13	11	0	0
Perlis [3]	1	2	0	0
Selangor [22]	20	2	0	0
Terengganu [8]	0	2	6	0

¹ Pakatan Rakyat, the former party coalition of Pakatan Harapan, obtained 89 seats (40.1% of the total seats) in the 13th general election. The difference of seats between 13th and 14th general elections is 24 (10.8%), showing the drastic growth of Pakatan Harapan's seats.

Sabah [25]	6	10	0	9
Sarawak [31]	10	19	0	2
Total	113	79	18	12

Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018).

1.1 Background of the Study: Malaysian Politics and Authoritarianism

Recent electoral results in Malaysia have widely captured the attention of scholars intent on understanding current changes in Malaysian politics (Chin & Wong 2009; Khoo 2013; Leong 2014; Osman 2013; Nakamura 2015; Nakamura 2018; Ng et al. 2015; Oliver & Ostwald 2018; Pepinsky 2015; Sani & Azizudin 2009; Yamamoto 2008). In addition, as the Election Commission ‘has announced that the final voter turnout was 82.32%’ (The Star Online 2018), voters in Malaysia showed their attention to the election². Before the 14th general election, it was estimated that Barisan Nasional would win, meaning that it would be difficult for Pakatan Harapan to bring the regime change. The first motivation of this paper is to answer to a general question: ‘How could Pakatan Harapan bring the regime change?’

The Barisan Nasional regime in Malaysia has been regarded as one of the (competitive) authoritarian regimes (Fritz & Flasherty 2002: 1349; Levitsky & Way 2002: 52; Welsh 2013: 143). It has been pointed that authoritarian regimes do not meet four minimum criteria that modern democratic regimes should meet, such as open, free and fair elections, and ‘violations of these criteria are both frequent enough and serious enough to create an uneven playing field between government and opposition’ (Levitsky & Way 2002: 53)³. Before the election, it was estimated that the likelihood of the regime change would be low, because of the ‘vote-value disparity’ (Nakamura 2018), and the ‘manipulation of electoral boundaries’ (Oliver & Ostwald 2018: 1). In short, Malaysia under Barisan Nasional has been, albeit periodic elections, regarded as a competitive authoritarian country in which its electoral system worked advantageously for the incumbent Barisan Nasional regime, and therefore oppositions have been estimated unable to bring the regime change. The second motivation of this paper is, by analysing

² From the 6th general election in 1982 to the 12th general election in 2008, the voter turnout rate had fluctuated from 68.65% to 75.99% (International IDEA 2018).

³ Levitsky & Way (2002: 53) cited Mainwaring et al. (2001: 39-41) to define four minimum criteria of modern democratic regimes. The criteria are as follows: (1) ‘Executives and legislatures are chosen through elections that are open, free, and fair’, (2) ‘virtually all adults possess the right to vote’, (3) ‘political rights and civil liberties, including freedom of the press, freedom of association, and freedom to criticise the government without reprisal, are broadly protected’, and (4) ‘elected authorities possess real authority to govern, in that they are not subject to the tutelary control of military or clerical leaders’.

the causality of the regime change, to identify factors and conditions in which the authoritarian regime of Barisan Nasional collapsed in the 14th general election.

The research question of this paper that covers the two motivations is therefore: ‘How could Pakatan Harapan bring the regime change, albeit the authoritarian conditions that had favoured Barisan Nasional at least until the 13th general election?’

1.2 Previous Studies, Research Question, and Working Hypothesis

It has been discussed that there were ethnic-voting patterns and urban-rural voting patterns among Malaysian voters. Ng et al. (2015) and Pepinsky (2015) quantitatively studied effects of these ethnic and urbanisation factors on voting patterns of Malaysian voters.

Ng et al. (2015) used interaction effects to observe the urbanisation and ethnic factors predicted to be influential on the shares of votes received for Barisan Nasional in the 13th general election. The researchers started their discussion by proposing the following research question: ‘which of the two factors, ethnicity or urbanisation, provides a stronger explanation for the erosion of BN’s popular votes in GE13 [the 13th general election]’ (Ng et al. 2015: 168). Their findings are summarised as follows: (1) Ethnicity and urbanisation both influenced Barisan Nasional’s vote shares; (2) urban Chinese stayed away from Barisan Nasional; and (3) although most supporters of Barisan Nasional were Malay, the fact that in either urban or rural areas, Malay support was less than 50 percent, meant that Barisan Nasional needed support from the rural Chinese to win rural seats.

Pepinsky (2015) analysed the same issue, but his conclusions differed from those of Ng et al. (2015). Pepinsky’s findings are summarised as follows: ‘(1) ethnicity and urbanisation both predict BN [Barisan Nasional] vote shares at the district level, (2) neither the predictive effects of ethnicity nor of urbanisation can be reduced to the other, and (3) there is no evidence of an interactive effect between ethnicity and urbanisation’ (Pepinsky 2015: 223).

Ng et al. (2015) and Pepinsky (2015) showed the general voting patterns of Malaysian voters in the 13th general election, i.e., on general, Malay voters, and rural

voters voted for Barisan Nasional, while Chinese voters and urban voters voted for Pakatan Rakyat, the former party coalition of Pakatan Harapan⁴.

Oliver & Ostwald (2018: 15-16) pointed that in both the 13th and 14th general elections, there were ‘the manipulation of electoral boundaries’ which favoured Barisan Nasional, but ‘these advantages were simply insufficient to overcome to dramatic erosion of popular support for Malaysia’s former hegemonic party [Barisan Nasional]’. They pointed two reasons of Barisan Nasional’s defeat, i.e., Barisan Nasional could not win small in ‘competitive districts’, and ‘PAS picked more seats from the BN than it did from PH’ (Oliver & Ostwald 2018: 14-15). Suzuki (2013: 18-19) pointed that in the 13th general election, 26 seats obtained by Barisan Nasional were won with 5% of plurality. In other words, in the 13th general election, many of Barisan Nasional’s seats were obtained in electoral districts where Pakatan Rakyat and Barisan Nasional severely fought. And in the 14th general election, as Oliver & Ostwald (2018: 14-15) pointed, Barisan Nasional was defeated in these districts. This paper explains the reason why PAS picked more seats from Barisan Nasional than those of Pakatan Harapan, specifically, factors that motivated voters to switch only from Barisan Nasional to PAS, but not from Pakatan Harapan. An explanation of these factors will help us estimate electoral results in the next and future elections.

The electoral system favouring Barisan Nasional, e.g., the manipulation of electoral boundaries, indicates authoritarianism in Malaysia. In addition to such an electoral system, *populism* is frequently used in order to retain votes. Uyama (2017: 39) found that in Russia and China which are classified as authoritarian states, political leaders have to win overwhelmingly in general elections in order to retain their political legitimacy. And these authoritarian states tend to resort to populism. In his essay, Uyama (2017: 40) wrote that the very essence of populism as politics is ‘to symbolise the people as one body that should be guided by certain leaders, and, by satisfying the majority, to marginalise minorities who are unsatisfied with the leaders’. His argument raised two strongly related issues regarding authoritarianism in Malaysia, i.e., (1) partiality towards the majority, and (2) marginalisation of minorities. In Malaysia, as we can see in the case of recognition of the Malay ‘special privileges’ (Jomo 1997: 241), it is the Malays, the largest ethnic group in Malaysia, who have been, de facto, regarded as the most important ethnic group. Zakaria (1997: 35) has referred to the political reason in protecting the largest ethnic group.

⁴ These are the general voting patterns. Ng et al. (2015: 185) pointed that ‘the Bumiputera [Malay] predicted vote to BN is less than 50 percent’.

Elections require that politicians compete for people's votes. In societies without strong traditions of multiethnic groups or assimilation, it is easier to organise support along racial, ethnic, or religious lines. Once an ethnic group is in power, it tends to exclude other ethnic groups (Zakaria 1997: 35).

The state has favoured Bumiputera (or more precisely, the Malays) to retain their political loyalty (Kua 2015: 2). While Barisan Nasional had protected interests of the Malays, it had made efforts to marginalise the Chinese from the political realm, e.g., MCA and Gerakan members were sidelined from 'all the key ministries such as foreign affairs, treasury, trade and industry, education, and defence' which were held by UMNO (Chin 2001: 81). In general elections, more importantly, there was a system that enabled Barisan Nasional to marginalise votes of the Chinese.

Malaysia uses the First-Past-The-Post (hereinafter, First-Past-The-Post is referred as 'FPTP') system in which 'the candidate with majority vote or, if there is no majority, with the largest minority vote wins' (Lijphart 2012: 14), e.g., if a candidate of Barisan Nasional obtains 51% of votes, and a candidate of Pakatan Harapan obtains 49%, the Barisan Nasional candidate will win, and those votes cast to the Pakatan Harapan candidate will be wasted. This system had successfully nullified votes of the Chinese in the 13th general election.

Nakamura (2015: 110-111) has discussed that in elections from 1959 to 2004 'candidates of Barisan Nasional in ethnically-mixed (electoral) districts had obtained relatively higher vote shares'⁵. Nakamura (2015: 247) has pointed that it was because in these districts, voters who could not vote for candidates from their ethnicity would vote for Barisan Nasional's component parties, e.g., in an ethnically-mixed electoral district with 60% of Malay voters, and 40% of Chinese voters, and with an UMNO candidate, and a PAS candidate, Chinese voters are expected to vote for UMNO which is relatively moderate, compared with PAS.

There was another effect in these districts, i.e., the marginalisation of Chinese votes. In the 13th general election in Peninsular Malaysia, out of 93 ethnically-mixed districts, 45 districts had more than 55% of Malay voters (Table 1-2). In these 19 districts with 65%-75% of Malay voters, Barisan Nasional obtained 51.9% of votes, and 13 seats, and 26 districts with 55%-65% of Malay voters, it obtained 51.0% of votes, and 18 seats.

⁵ Nakamura (2015: 103), for convenience, defined electoral districts with less than 25% of Malay voters as non-Malay districts, with 25-to-75% of Malay voters as ethnically-mixed districts, and more than 75% of Malay voters as Malay districts.

And in these districts, the other 48.1%, and 49% of votes were wasted. Adding these 31 seats to the 42 seats obtained for Barisan Nasional in 57 Malay-majority districts, it obtained 73 seats out of 85 seats it obtained in Peninsular Malaysia. In the other 63 districts where percentages of Malay voters were lower (0%-55%), it only obtained 12 seats, indicating that while Chinese votes were cast to Pakatan Rakyat, these votes were mostly wasted in 102 districts where percentages of Malay voters accounted for more than 55%.

Due to the racism of UMNO-led Barisan Nasional, and the impotence of MCA and Gerakan, it is pointed that Chinese (and some non-Bumiputera or non-Malay) votes have been cast to DAP, an opposition party (Chin 2001: 81-83). It is, on the other hand, pointed that in spite of the discriminatory policies like the New Economic Policy, ‘the non-Malay elements of the new middle class will probably also remain supportive of the present regime as long as economic growth continues’ (Torii 2003: 241). Regarding to this relationship between the state and voters, Loh (2002: 48-49) pointed that ‘a vote for the BN was a vote for stability, for uninterrupted economic growth, for rising incomes, for maintaining certain standards of living and consumerist lifestyle’. Thus, in spite of the marginalisation, Malaysia under Barisan Nasional regime had retained votes from both the Malays and non-Malays with the proviso that it could deliver economic merits to them. In other words, the populist authoritarianism in Malaysia necessitated economic growth perceived by voters.

Table 1-2
Vote Shares, and Seats Obtained by Barisan Nasional, in the 13th General Election in Peninsular Malaysia.

Electoral District	Percentage of Malay Voters	No. of Electoral Districts	Shares: %	Seats
Malay-Majority	Malay [75-100%]	57	53.8%	42
	Malay [65-75%]	19	51.9%	13
	Malay [55-65%]	26	51.0%	18
Ethnically Mixed	Malay [45-55%]	21	46.1%	9
	Malay [35-45%]	18	38.7%	2
	Malay [25-35%]	9	40.2%	1
Non-Malay-Majority	Malay [0-25%]	15	20.6%	0
Total	113	165	49.5%	85

Source: Data are from undi info (2018).

If uninterrupted economic growth is the sine qua non of Barisan Nasional's legitimacy (Wong & Cheong 2015: 8), how does it affect recent general elections? Radcliff (1992: 445) noted that in the developing world, 'income is inversely related to turnout such that when things are bad, citizens tend to vote in greater numbers'. And urban citizens are prone to react sensitively to economic trends (Pacek & Radcliff 1995: 754). Therefore, the recent political change has been possibly driven by urban voters.

Bank Negara Malaysia in 2018 advocated the concept of a 'living wage' to define 'an income level needed for a household to afford a minimum acceptable living standards, which includes the ability to participate in society, the opportunity for personal and family development, and freedom from severe financial stress' (Chong & Khong 2018: front page). Bank Negara determined 'estimates of a living wage in Kuala Lumpur in 2016', ranging from MYR2,700 for a single adult to MYR4,500 for a couple without children and MYR6,500 for a couple with two children (Chong & Khong 2018: 4-5). Chong & Kong (2018: 6) estimated that 'households earning below the living wage were mostly secondary school graduates with low-to mid-skilled jobs'. In fact, 57.5% of Kuala Lumpur citizens in 2016 were secondary school graduates, primary school graduates, or without formal education (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2018). Additionally, 56.3% of its citizens in 2016 had low-to mid-skilled jobs (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2018). As a result, the expected average wage in Kuala Lumpur in 2016 was RM2,416, indicating that there was a gap between the average wage and the cost of living in urban areas. The case of Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia, indicates the possibility of Barisan Nasional's losing legitimacy. If the economic adversity exists in Malaysia, as (Pacek & Radcliff 1995: 754) noted, an increase in turnout rates, and punishment for the incumbent, i.e., Barisan Nasional, should be observed, specifically in urban areas. And the data of recent elections confirm it (Table 1-3).

Yagi (2019: 32-49) has pointed that there has been a clear correlation between Malaysia's recent economic adversity and the decline in Barisan Nasional's vote shares, specifically in urban areas. Yagi (2019: 36-38) estimated the average salaries, wages, and numbers of workers in the manufacturing sector, and business in the service sector, finding that during the 10-year period from 1987 to 1997, before the Asian Financial Crisis, the average salary in the manufacturing sector had grown by 6.9% annually, but the growth rate had declined to 4.3% during the period from 1997 to 2015⁶. In 2015, the average wage in the manufacturing sector was MYR30,906 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2018). While workers in the manufacturing sector had experienced the decline

⁶ The average annual wage in the manufacturing sector was MYR7,478, MYR14,524, and MYR30,906 in 1987, 1997, 2015 respectively (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2018).

Table 1-3
Voter Turnouts and Vote Shares of Barisan Nasional by States in Peninsular Malaysia, from the 7th to the 14th General Elections

Turnouts	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th
Kuala Lumpur	65.3%	68.3%	68.8%	72.2%	69.8%	73.7%	83.7%	83.0%
Selangor	69.7%	73.1%	71.6%	73.8%	73.0%	77.2%	87.1%	86.2%
Penang	73.0%	76.5%	76.2%	75.7%	76.0%	78.6%	87.0%	84.4%
Malacca	73.2%	77.3%	77.1%	77.9%	78.9%	79.9%	87.4%	85.2%
Johor	71.4%	74.1%	72.7%	73.0%	73.0%	73.5%	86.7%	84.5%
Perak	68.2%	69.8%	67.3%	66.6%	70.0%	73.0%	82.5%	80.1%
Negeri Sembilan	72.5%	75.2%	73.5%	73.5%	73.4%	76.4%	85.2%	83.4%
Kedah	73.0%	75.7%	73.9%	76.5%	86.2%	79.9%	87.0%	83.4%
Terengganu	78.7%	82.4%	81.0%	81.2%	87.9%	85.0%	87.9%	85.3%
Perlis	73.4%	76.2%	85.0%	79.8%	83.2%	81.3%	85.9%	82.3%
Pahang	71.1%	73.8%	73.7%	73.7%	76.2%	77.0%	84.6%	82.1%
Kelantan	75.5%	78.2%	76.9%	76.7%	80.7%	82.6%	84.9%	80.1%
Average	71.3%	74.2%	74.4%	73.7%	75.4%	77.6%	85.8%	83.3%

Barisan Nasional Shares	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th
Kuala Lumpur	40.4%	42.7%	56.7%	48.7%	57.3%	42.9%	34.3%	22.1%
Selangor	60.5%	56.2%	71.6%	53.4%	64.0%	42.8%	37.8%	20.8%
Penang	48.2%	50.4%	59.1%	50.1%	55.7%	35.9%	30.7%	22.5%
Malacca	66.5%	58.7%	64.8%	54.4%	69.2%	59.6%	53.0%	38.1%
Johor	62.8%	59.2%	75.6%	70.5%	77.2%	63.2%	53.9%	38.2%
Perak	53.8%	54.4%	64.7%	52.8%	57.2%	44.9%	44.0%	34.8%
Negeri Sembilan	62.5%	58.6%	66.5%	56.3%	67.2%	53.0%	50.1%	36.1%
Kedah	58.4%	60.5%	61.8%	53.9%	58.4%	45.6%	49.8%	30.0%
Terengganu	58.5%	52.7%	52.7%	40.4%	55.2%	51.3%	50.8%	40.7%
Perlis	64.8%	62.3%	55.6%	54.8%	62.2%	58.7%	54.5%	38.8%
Pahang	62.4%	60.8%	66.6%	51.8%	65.7%	57.8%	53.2%	43.2%
Kelantan	52.9%	31.9%	42.0%	43.3%	48.8%	43.8%	45.9%	39.1%
Average	57.3%	53.4%	65.2%	56.5%	63.8%	51.4%	47.4%	31.6%

Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018), undi.info (2018), and Election Commission of Malaysia (2018).

in wage growth, workers in the service sector, c.f., workers in the service sector accounted for 54.9% (4,800,000) of the total labour force in 2015 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2017), had experienced an income disparity during the 10-year period from 2004 to 2014. While workers in some business earned more than twice the average wage in the manufacturing sector, e.g., MYR76,320 in the telecommunication service, and MYR65,737 in the computer service, most of the workers in the service sector earned little, e.g., MYR21,899 in the retail trade service, and MYR23,215 in the accommodation service in 2014. While numbers of workers in the highly-paid business account for a small portion, most of the workforce in the service sector is low-paid, e.g., 45,967, and 60,831 in the telecommunication service, and computer service, respectively, and 1,019,397, and 110,630 in the retail trade service, and accommodation service, respectively. The recent economic adversity mostly hits urban citizens. Due to it, the estimated monthly average wages in Kuala Lumpur, and Selangor in 2016 are MYR2,440, and MYR2,332 (Yagi 2019: 41). The gap between the living wage and the actual average wage has demotivated urban citizens from voting to the incumbent, i.e., Barisan Nasional⁷.

Table 1-3 shows turnout rates and vote shares of Barisan Nasional from the 7th general election to the 14th general election. Before the 11th general election, average voter turnout rates had fluctuated from 71.3% to 75.4%. The rates rose to 85.8% in the 13th general election and kept 83.3% in the 14th general election. Concurrent with it, vote shares of Barisan Nasional have drastically fallen from 63.8% in 11th general election to 31.6% in the 14th general election. These political changes have been intense in urban areas, e.g., Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Penang.

Voters in urban areas showed their political awareness and punishment for the incumbent. This phenomenon was irrespective of ethnicity, e.g., Selangor where Malay voters accounted for more than 51.9% recorded Barisan Nasional's lowest vote share. In rural areas, there was a variance in voting patterns among Malay voters. The order of states listed in Table 1-2 was based on their level of urbanisation, e.g., levels of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor which are listed on the top are 100 and 91.4, while those of Pahang and Kelantan which are on the bottom are 50.5 and 42.4 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2011). It is easily understandable that vote shares of Barisan Nasional were lower in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang than those in Perlis, Pahang, and Kelantan. However, shares in Kedah were extremely low, and as Table 1-1 shows, Barisan Nasional could not win in Kelantan and Terengganu. Instead, PAS won in these two states.

⁷ Yagi (2019: 45-49) also referred to an effect of the fuel subsidy removal on the approval rating of the Nab cabinet.

Compared with that in urban areas, the Malay population in rural areas is higher, c.f., according to the data of Department of Statistics Malaysia (2011: 16-17), the Malays accounted for 50.8% of the urban population, and 63.9% of the rural population in Malaysia in 2010. It implies a variance in voting patterns of Malay voters in rural areas. In other words, in some electoral districts in rural areas, Malays voted for Barisan Nasional, but in other districts, they did not.

Shiozaki (2013: 40-43) explained that while UMNO's stronghold is built among Malay civil servants, GLCs workers, and FELDA settlers, PAS has been strongly supported by Malay voters everywhere from urban to rural areas in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah, due to its strong party organisation. According to Jabar (2006: 1-2), four states in the northern to northeastern area of Peninsular Malaysia are referred as the 'Malay-belt' where general elections have been severely fought between PAS and UMNO. In other words, Malay voters are not a monolithic group, and therefore Barisan Nasional had to retain their political loyalty by delivering economic merits to them, e.g., employment of the Malays in the public sector, and provision of various schemes and facilities to FELDA settlers, i.e., populism as politics that satisfies Malays, the largest ethnic group in Malaysia.

The variance in Malay voters, specifically in rural areas, was due to PAS' breaking up from Pakatan Rakyat. In the 13th general election, when PAS belonged to Pakatan Rakyat. Out of 165 seats in Peninsular Malaysia, PAS only ran 65 candidates. And in areas where PAS ran candidates, other component parties did not. In the 14th general election, PAS ran candidates in 145 electoral districts, leading to its competitive relationship with Barisan Nation over Malay votes. By verifying the existence of such a competitive relationship between Barisan Nasional and PAS in the 14th general election, this paper proves that Barisan Nasional's strategy to enclose Malay voters, i.e., populism became ineffective in collecting votes from them in the 14th general election.

The previous studies have indicated several important insights on the general voting patterns of Malaysian voters. Table 1-4 summarises the findings.

Table 1-4
*General Voting Patterns of Malaysian Voters*⁸

	Ethnicity		Urbanisation	
	Malay Voters	Chinese Voters	Urban Voters	Rural Voters
Pakatan Harapan	Do Not Support	Support	Support	Do Not Support
Barisan Nasional	Support	Do Not Support	Do Not Support	Support
PAS	Support	Do Not Support	Do Not Support	Support

This paper has discussed that authoritarianism of Barisan Nasional regime was two-fold: (1) populism that had targeted Malay voters to retain their political loyalty, and (2) the electoral system that had favoured Barisan Nasional and had marginalised Chinese voters. In the 13th general election, due to such electoral system, Barisan Nasional secured approximately 60% of seats with only 47.4% of votes in Malaysia (Khoo 2013: 17). This result indicates two things, i.e., (1) Barisan Nasional was no longer supported by half of the population, and (2) the electoral system strongly helped Barisan Nasional. In the 14th general election, Barisan Nasional obtained 35.6% of seats (79 out of 222 seats) with 33.8% of votes, indicating that populism of Barisan Nasional became malfunctioning, and the electoral system did not work favourably to Barisan Nasional in the 14th general election. Thus, this paper assumes the following working hypothesis: ‘The regime change brought by Pakatan Harapan, and the landslide defeat of Barisan Nasional were due to the malfunction of the authoritarian populism, and the electoral system in the 14th general election’.

In addition to the malfunction of both authoritarian populism and electoral system in the 14th general election, importantly, compared with the sudden decline in rural areas, Barisan Nasional’s vote shares in urban areas have declined continuously since the 12th general election (Table 1-3). And as discussed by Ng et al. (2015) and Pepinsky (2015), generally, Chinese voters tend to support the opposition, in the 14th general election, that is, Pakatan Harapan. Therefore the discussion above is summarised as

⁸ Shiozaki (2013: 40-43) explained that PAS has been strongly supported by Malay voters everywhere from urban to rural areas in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah. Although some electoral districts in these states are highly urbanised, on general, these states are comparably rural (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2011). Therefore, this paper considers that PAS is widely supported by voters in rural areas.

follows: (1) as a medium-term trend (from the 12th general election to the 14th general election), Pakatan Harapan had obtained votes from Chinese and urban voters, and (2) as a short-term trend (in the 14th general election), Barisan Nasional lost votes from Malay citizens due to the divide of Malay votes, specifically in rural areas, caused by the competitive relationship with PAS drastically in rural areas. This paper will also verify it.

To verify the working hypothesis, this paper validates two conditions. Firstly, this paper investigates that populism which had targeted the Malays became ineffective in collecting votes. This paper considers as a medium-term trend, due to this populism, Barisan Nasional have lost supports from both urban and Chinese voters since the 12th general election⁹. And as a short-term trend, in the 14th general election due to the competitive relationship with PAS, it lost votes from Malay voters mainly in rural areas. Secondly, this paper confirms that the electoral system which once had marginalised votes of those whom opposed to Barisan Nasional did not work advantageously for Barisan Nasional, i.e, the reason and mechanism in which Pakatan Harapan could obtain more seats than Barisan Nasional, albeit the electoral system which had worked advantageously to Barisan Nasional. And to measure them, this paper operationalises them into measurable indicators. Kume (2016: 56) discussed that ‘it is unable to measure an abstract concept. It is needed to *operationalise* such an abstract concept. The important first step to verify hypothesis is to operationalise general, theoretical hypothesis into concrete, measurable hypothesis’.

Regarding the first condition, this paper measures the correlation between percentages of specific voter groups and vote shares of each party coalition, e.g., percentages of Malay voters and shares of PAS in each electoral district, level of urbanisation of each district and shares of Pakatan Harapan, and so forth.

And yet the second condition is difficult to observe directly. Thus, this paper finds some *observable implications* regarding this condition. If the working hypothesis is true, there should be some observable implications (King et al. 1994), i.e., we have to find some observable phenomena related with the hypothesis. For example, if the electoral

⁹ Urban voters include Malay voters in urban areas. The case of Selangor shows that in urban areas even Malay voters have gradually become not to support Barisan Nasional. This is because the populism is to provide material merits to the Malays in order to retain their political loyalty. As long as Barisan Nasional provides merits to them, e.g., hiring them as civil servants, GLCs workers, and so forth, their political loyalty will be higher, e.g., Barisan Nasional’s vote share in Putrajaya, the administrative centre of Malaysia, in the 14th general election was 44.5%. Nevertheless, mainly, the material merits distributed by Barisan Nasional had been mainly shared by the Malays in rural areas, and not in urban areas (Yagi 2019: 25). The variance among Malay voters is shown in Tables 3-4; 3-5 in Section 3.

system could marginalise votes of minorities, or specifically votes of Chinese voters in the 13th general election, it will be measured that votes of Chinese voters were wasted. If this marginalisation did not work in the 14th general election, wasted votes of Chinese voters should have shrunk. Subsequently, it is inferred that due to the rising presence of Chinese votes in deciding the electoral result, specifically to seats obtained for each party coalition, Barisan Nasional's losing seats in ethnically-mixed electoral districts where seats were severely contested (Table 1-2 shows that in the 13th general election, Barisan Nasional barely won in these electoral districts) will be observed.

There are two conditions should be investigated, and therefore, this paper divides the following discussion into two parts. Step 1 analyses voting patterns of each voter group, to verify that Chinese and urban voters voted for Pakatan Harapan, and there was a competitive relationship between Barisan Nasional and PAS, mainly over Malay votes (and partly rural votes). Step 2 classifies all electoral districts based on the voting patterns of Malaysian voters. And it compares vote shares and numbers of seats obtained for each party coalition, in order to confirm that Chinese votes were influential in the result of the 14th general election, and due to it, Pakatan Harapan obtained most of seats in ethnically-mixed electoral districts.

As a side note, this paper focuses on the result in Peninsular Malaysia, and voting patterns of Malay and Chinese voters. Reasons are as follows: (1) Pakatan Harapan's seats were mainly obtained in Peninsular Malaysia (97 out of 113 seats), (2) PAS ran candidates mostly in Peninsular Malaysia (145 candidates in Peninsular Malaysia, and 12 candidates in East Malaysia), and (3) Malay and Chinese voters account for 89% of the population in Peninsular Malaysia. Therefore focusing on them will highlight the factors and mechanism that brought the regime change.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Statistical Analysis: Why Ordinary Least Squares Regression?

Before explaining the detail of the methodology, it is important to address the reason why this paper uses statistical tools to study the electoral result of the 14th general election. Ordinary least squares regression (hereinafter, Ordinary Least Squares Regression is referred as 'OLS Regression') precisely reflects a correlation between election results for a party coalition and each independent variable (Pepinsky 2015: 203). Moreover, it is widely used in political science because of its 'intuitive, theoretical, and descriptive appeal' (Krause 1994: 187). Kruger & Lewis-Beck (2008: 4) noted that 'OLS

offers common coin, easily exchanged among most scholars in the discipline. It is simple to run, simple to understand'. For the two reasons: (1) an OLS regression widely provides the common basis for political scientists, and (2) precisely reflects the causality of the regime change, similarly, this paper adopts an OLS regression.

2.2 Two-step Analysis: Voting Patterns and How Votes are Converted into Seats

In Step 1, this paper analyses voting patterns of each voter group, e.g., Malay voters, urban voters, and so forth. Their voting patterns are measured with a quantitative methodology. This paper uses a regression analysis to measure voting patterns of (1) Malay, and Chinese voters, (2) urban, and rural voters, (3) Malay-belt, and non-Malay-belt voters, and (4) FELDA, and non-FELDA voters¹⁰. If the assumptions of this paper are true, correlation between those variables and vote shares of each party coalition will show the following results summarised in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1
Expected Voting Behaviour of Malaysian Voters

	Pakatan Harapan	Barisan Nasional	PAS
Ethnicity	Malays: Negative	Malays: Positive	Malays: Positive
	Chinese: Positive	Chinese: Negative	Chinese: Negative
Urbanisation	Positive	Negative	Negative
Malay-Belt / Non-Malay-Belt	Negative	Negative	Positive
FELDA	Negative	Positive	Negative

The dependent variable, i.e., shares of each party coalition, is percentages of votes obtained by each party coalition in each electoral district. The data are obtained from The Star Online (2018). The independent variables are as follows: (1) percentages of the Malays and the Chinese (% Ethnicity), (2) area sizes which are measured with square kilometers of each electoral district (Urbanisation), (3) the classification of the Malay-belt and non-Malay-belt areas (Malay-Belt), and (4) the classification of the FELDA and

¹⁰ Shiozaki (2013: 40-43) explained that while UMNO's stronghold has been built among Malay civil servants, GLCs workers, and FELDA settlers. There are only, to the best of my knowledge, data of FELDA areas regarding the component elements of each electoral district (Attorney General's Chambers 2016), and there is no data about numbers of civil servants and GLCs workers in each electoral district. Nevertheless, the variable of FELDA will show the relationship between Barisan Nasional's populism and the political loyalty of the beneficiaries.

non-FELDA areas in each electoral district (FELDA). The data regarding the ethnic composition and voter size are obtained from The Star Online (2018), and Chacko (2018) in Tindak Malaysia (2018), the classification of the Malay-belt and non-Malay-belt area is based on the classification in Jabar (2006: 1-2), and the classification of the FELDA and non-FELDA areas is from Attorney General Chambers (2016). The correlation between independent variables is shown in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2
Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables

	%Malays	%Chinese	Urbanisation	Malay-Belt	FELDA
%Malays	1.000				
%Chinese	-0.965	1.000			
Urbanisation	-0.290	0.262	1.000		
Malay-Belt	0.578	-0.522	0.018	1.000	
FELDA	0.246	-0.272	-0.302	0.019	1.000

Table 2-2 shows that the variables regarding ethnic composition are highly correlated, and therefore they should lead to the issue of multicollinearity. And some independent variables are also correlated, although their correlation does not exceed the limit of 0.8 which indicates the possibility of multicollinearity. Thus, this paper uses these variables with caution. This paper bypasses the former problem, i.e., the high correlation between percentages of the Malays and the Chinese due to the issue of compositional data, by only entering the data of one ethnic group's percentages into a regression¹¹, i.e., this paper makes two regression models for each party coalition, e.g., there are (1) a model for Pakatan Harapan which uses data of percentages of the Malays, (2) a model for Pakatan Harapan using data of percentages of the Chinese. Regarding other variables which are correlated, this paper uses the variance inflation factor (VIF) of each variable to check the possibility of multicollinearity¹². The full model is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{PartyCoalitionShare} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \% \text{Ethnicity}_i + \beta_2 \text{Urbanisation}_i + \beta_3 \text{Malay - Belt}_i \\
 & + \beta_4 \text{FELDA}_i + \varepsilon \dots (\text{Equation1})
 \end{aligned}$$

¹¹ This methodology is based on the solution of Pepinsky (2015: 205) regarding the same issue.

¹² Variance inflation factor (hereinafter, variance inflation factor is referred as 'VIF') is used to detect the degree of multicollinearity between independent variables (Robinson & Schumacker 2009: 7). The standard error of coefficients increases when VIF exceeds 10, and 'it is usually considered as a problem' (Farahani et al. 2010: 1459; Tu 2005: 459).

Party Coalition Share is a dependent variable indicating shares of each party coalition in each electoral district. %Ethnicity, Urbanisation, Malay-Belt, and FELDA are independent variables that represent percentages of each ethnic group, degrees of urbanisation, the classification of the Malay-belt and non-Malay-belt, and the classification of the FELDA and non-FELDA in each electoral district, respectively¹³. The results of the statistical analysis are shown in Section 3 (Table 3-1). The classification of urbanisation in each electoral district is given by Election Commission of Malaysia. The classification is based on two aspects, namely: (1) voter size, and (2) area size, of each electoral district. Election Commission of Malaysia considers that when a voter size, i.e., a number of voters, of a district is large, the district is classified as an urban area, and simultaneously, if an area size which is measured with surface area (km²) is small, the district is classified as an urban area. This paper uses the latter classification as an Urbanisation variable¹⁴.

Step 2 firstly classifies all electoral districts, based on the voting patterns which are investigated in Step 1, e.g., if the Ethnic variable, and the Urbanisation variable are significant, the electoral districts will be classified based on the ethnic composition, and the level of urbanisation. And Step 2 explains the reason and mechanism in which Pakatan Harapan could obtain more seats than Barisan Nasional, albeit the electoral system which had worked advantageously to Barisan Nasional. In other words, Step 2 investigates how votes are converted into seats.

3.0 Results

3.1 Step 1: Voting Behaviour in Malaysia

Step 1 investigates the voting patterns of Malaysian voters with an OLS regression analysis. This paper refers to the Akaike information criterion (AIC) to choose models. The result is shown in Table 3-1. As mentioned in Section 2, there is a risk of multicollinearity. Table 3-2 shows VIF of each model. VIF does not exceed 2. Therefore this paper deems that there is no risk of multicollinearity.

¹³ Malay-Belt and FELDA are dummy variables. If an electoral district is in Perlis state, Kedah state, Kelantan state, or Terengganu state. it is classified with Malay-belt. And electoral districts in other states are classified as non-Malay-belt. If an electoral district contains FELDA areas, it will be classified as FELDA, and electoral districts without a FELDA area are classified as non-FELDA.

¹⁴ Putrajaya is one of the most urbanised area in Malaysia (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2011). The former classification, i.e., voter size, categorises Putrajaya as a rural district because of its small population. With consideration for the prediction accuracy of the urbanisation level, this paper uses the latter classification (surface area) which categorises .

Results show that, except for the FELDA variables in Pakatan Harapan and PAS models, all of the variables are significant (at least $p < 0.05$ level). The Ethnic variables, Urbanisation and Malay-Belt variables accord with the assumption. FELDA variables are slightly different from the initial assumption, indicating that vote shares of Pakatan Harapan, and PAS were unrelated with the difference in FELDA and non-FELDA districts.

Table 3-1
Results of the Regression Analysis

	Pakatan Harapan	Pakatan Harapan	Barisan Nasional	Barisan Nasional	PAS	PAS
%Malays	-0.72*** [0.03]		0.41*** [0.03]		0.35*** [0.04]	
%Chinese		0.79*** [0.04]		-0.43*** [0.04]		-0.41*** [0.05]
Urbanisation	-0.00*** [0.00]	-0.00*** [0.00]	0.00*** [0.00]	0.00* [0.00]	0.00** [0.02]	0.00* [0.00]
Malay-Belt	0.04* [0.00]	0.08*** [0.02]	0.11*** [0.02]	0.09*** [0.02]	-0.14*** [0.02]	-0.15*** [0.02]
FELDA			0.06*** [0.02]	0.06*** [0.02]	-0.03 [0.02]	-0.03 [0.02]
Intercept	0.92*** [0.03]	0.21*** [0.02]	-0.03 [0.03]	0.37*** [0.01]	0.08* [0.04]	0.42*** [0.01]
Adjusted R ²	0.88	0.85	0.67	0.62	0.74	
AIC	-836.31	-798.5	-857.59	-835.47	-754.12	

Note: Each model is an ordinary least square regression with shares of each party coalition as the dependent variable. Standard errors are in parentheses.

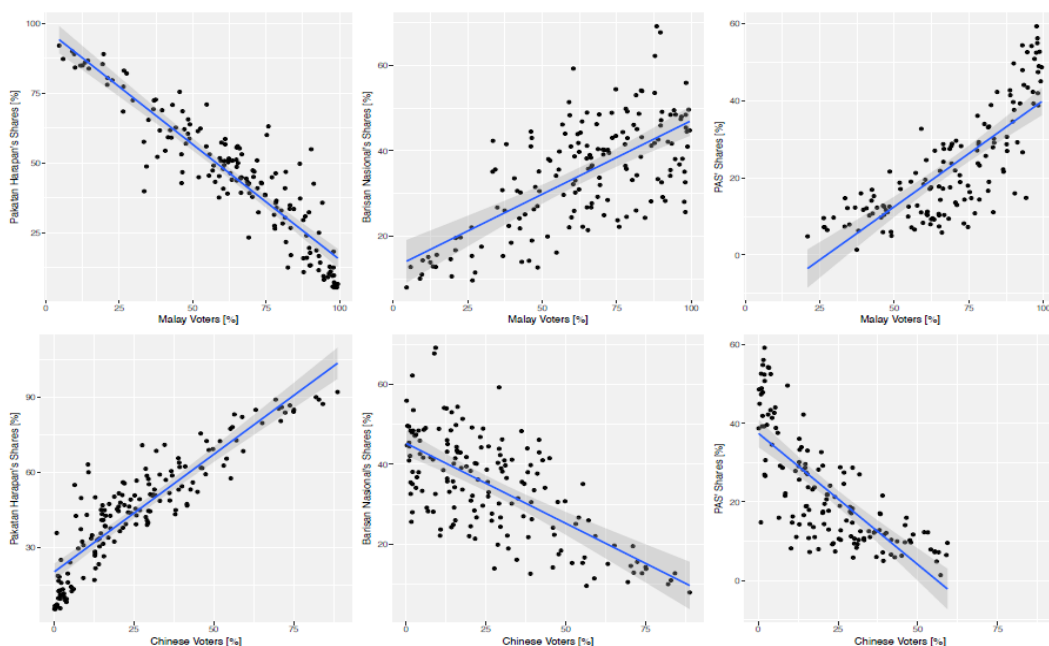
* indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$.

Table 3-2
VIF of Each Independent Variable

	Pakatan Harapan	Pakatan Harapan	Barisan Nasional	Barisan Nasional	PAS	PAS
% Malays	1.640		1.678		1.733	
% Chinese		1.549		1.580		1.645
Urbanisation	1.101	1.134	1.667	1.692	1.648	1.678
Malay-Belt	1.517	1.392	1.539	1.409	1.660	1.529
FELDA			1.649	1.647	1.614	1.615

3.2 Visualisation of the Results: Ethnicity, Urbanisation, Malay-Belt, and FELDA

Ethnicity affects voting behaviour of Malaysian citizens (Figure 3-1). As shown in Figure 3-1, Chinese voters voted for Pakatan Harapan, while Malay votes were split between Barisan Nasional and PAS, indicating that there was a competitive relationship between them. More interestingly, it is clear that PAS avoided putting up a candidate in electoral districts where a percentage of Chinese voters exceeds approximately 60%. It was because PAS is an Islamist party which has been only supported by muslim (mostly Malay) voters. And we can observe the competitive relationship between Barisan Nasional and PAS over Malay votes.



Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018).

Figure 3-1: Ethnicity and Vote Shares of Each Party Coalition, in the 14th General Election

Correlation between the urbanisation factor and shares of Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, and PAS is shown in Figure 3-2¹⁵. Urban districts are smaller in square kilometres¹⁶. Figure 3-2 describes that, on general, urban voters voted for Pakatan

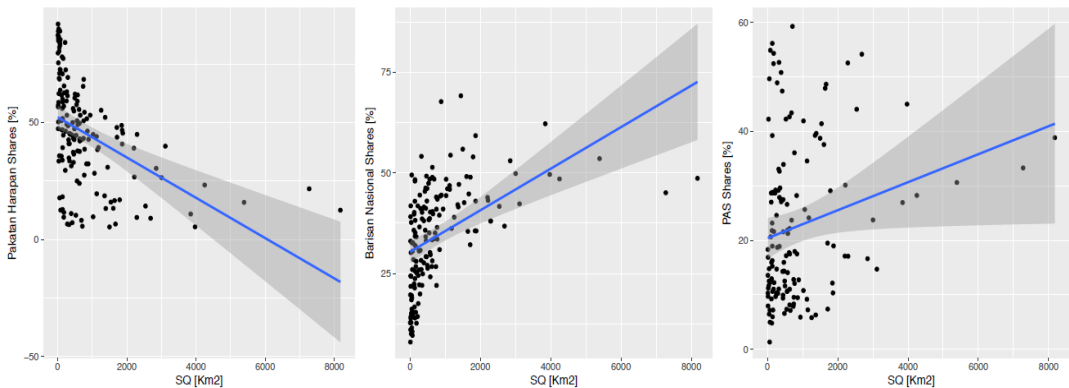
¹⁵ There is no correlation between the urbanisation factor and shares of PAS (correlation coefficient = -0.034).

¹⁶ According to the categorisation of urbanisation by Election Commission of Malaysia, electoral districts are classified with their area sizes. If a district's area size is (1) 8-49km², it is classified as urban, (2) 50-250km², it is classified as semi-urban, and (3) 250km² and above, it is classified as rural.

Harapan, and rural citizens supported for either Barisan Nasional or PAS. It was irrespective of ethnicity.

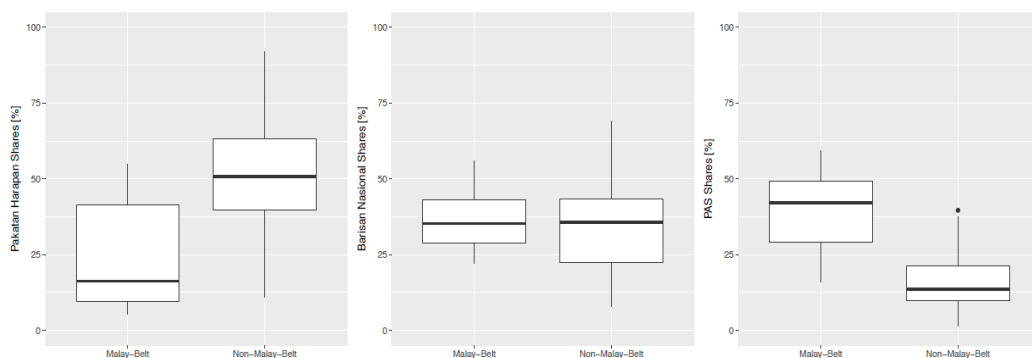
Predictably, the Urbanisation variable reflects the economic voting patterns among Malaysian voters, i.e., ‘a sour economy has a more pronounced impact on the vote than a strong economy, such that there is more punishment than reward’ (Pacek & Radcliff 1995: 753). Voters who benefit from the incumbent party coalition continue voting for it, but once they personally feel that economic performance is bad, they will punish the incumbent. Urban citizens are sensitive to economic trends (Pacek & Radcliff 1995: 754). As expected in Table 1-3, urban voters in Malaysia, a developing country, did not support the incumbent, and instead, supported the opposition, Pakatan Harapan.

The Malay-Belt variable is significant in all models. Figure 3-3 plots vote shares of each party coalition in the Malay-belt and non-Malay-belt. In the Malay-belt, medians of Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, and PAS are 16.3%, 35.3%, and 42.1%, respectively, while in non-Malay-belt, they are 50.1%, 35.7%, and 13.8%, indicating that the Malay-belt was PAS’ stronghold, and Pakatan Harapan obtained more than a half of the votes in non-Malay-belt, while Barisan Nasional’s position was the second in both areas. Malaysia uses the FPTP electoral system in which only one candidate who obtains the largest votes in an electoral district is elected, and this might lead to Barisan Nasional’s loss of its seats.



Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018), and Chacko (2018) in Tindak Malaysia (2018).

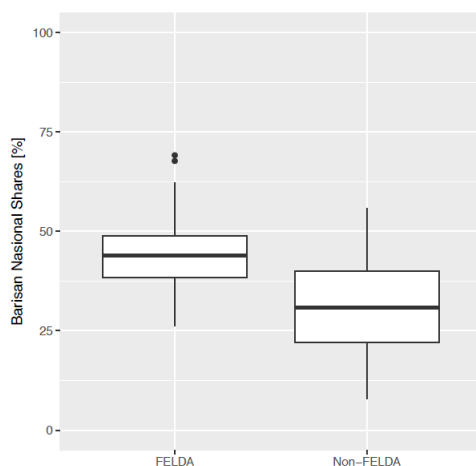
Figure 3-2: Urbanisation and Vote Shares of Each Party Coalition, in the 14th General Election



Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018).

Figure 3-3: Vote Shares of Each Party Coalition in the 14th General Election, in the Malay-Belt and Non-Malay-Belt

The FELDA variable is significant in the Barisan Nasional model. Figure 3-4 plots it. In FELDA districts, a median of Barisan Nasional’s vote shares was 43.9%, while it decreased to 30.8% in non-FELDA districts, indicating that, as Shiozaki (2013: 42) discussed, Barisan Nasional’s strongholds were in these areas.



Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018), and Attorney General’s Chambers (2016).

Figure 3-4: Vote Shares of Barisan Nasional in FELDA and Non-FELDA Districts

Table 3-3
Voting Patterns of Malaysian Voters

	Pakatan Harapan	Barisan Nasional	PAS
Malays	Non-Support	Support	Support
Chinese	Support	Non-Support	Non-Support
Urban	Support	Non-Support	Non-Support
Rural	Non-Support	Support	Support
Malay-Belt	Non-Support	Do Not Change	Support
Non-Malay-Belt	Support	Do Not Change	Non-Support
FELDA	Do Not Change	Support	Do Not Change
Non-FELDA	Do Not Change	Non-Support	Do Not Change

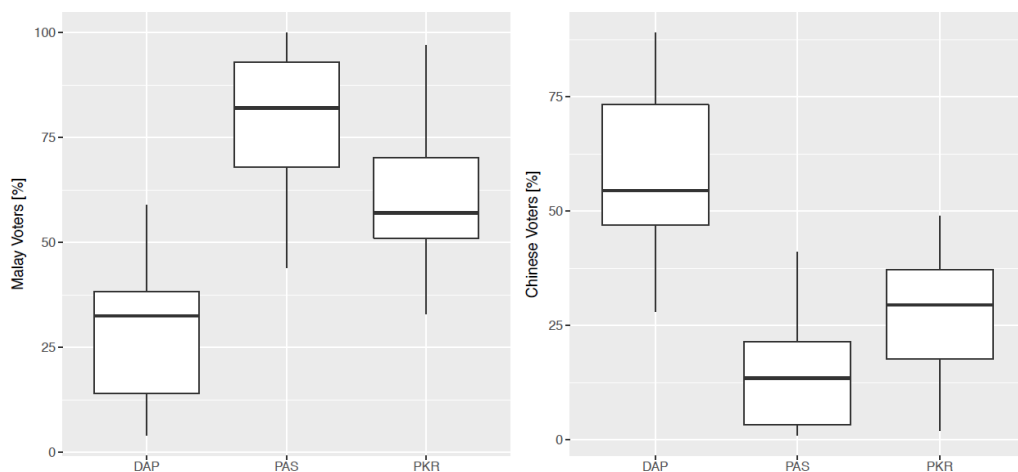
Table 3-3 summarises the discussion. On general, (1) Malay voters supported either Barisan Nasional or PAS, while Chinese voters supported Pakatan Harapan, (2) urban voters supported Pakatan Harapan, and rural voters supported either Barisan Nasional or PAS, (3) PAS's shares increased in Malay-belt, Pakatan Harapan's shares did in non-Malay-belt, while Barisan Nasional's shares did not change in numbers in both areas, and (4) FELDA districts were Barisan Nasional's strongholds.

The members are elected in single-member districts according to the plurality method, which in Britain is usually referred to as the 'first past the post' system: the candidate with majority vote or, if there is no majority, with the largest minority vote wins. This system tends to produce highly disproportional results (Lijphart 2012: 14).

Lijphart, in his prominent book, pointed the characteristics of the FPTP system. In the FPTP system, a candidate with the largest vote wins. Barisan Nasional has utilised this system to magnify its seats with small votes, leading to the skewed results in every elections (at least until the 13th general election), e.g., in the 13th general election, Barisan Nasional obtained approximately 60% of seats with only 47.4% of votes (Khoo 2013: 17). An explanation of such a mechanism will clarify the reason why Pakatan Harapan obtained the largest seats in the 14th general election.

In Section 2, we have discussed that there was a competitive relationship between Barisan Nasional and PAS over Malay votes in the 14th general election. This relationship was, compared with the 14th general election, not decisive in the 13th general election when PAS belonged to Pakatan Rakyat. Out of 165 seats in Peninsular Malaysia, PAS only ran 65 candidates. And in areas where PAS ran candidates, other component parties did not. There was a two party coalition system, at least in Peninsular Malaysia (Khoo 2013: 32), but in the 14th general election, there was a three-cornered fight.

Figure 3-5 plots the relationship between districts where the component parties of Pakatan Rakyat ran candidates, and percentages of Malay and Chinese voters in the same districts. In the 13th general election, PAS ran candidates mostly in districts where percentages of Malay voters were higher, while DAP ran candidates mostly in districts where percentages of Chinese voters were higher, and PKR did in the middle. As the strategy of Pakatan Rakyat indicates, PAS strongly targeted at Malay votes (and Table 2-5 indicates rural votes as well), while DAP targeted at Chinese votes, and PKR aimed at votes from both ethnic groups. If this party coalition, i.e., Pakatan Rakyat, sustained to the 14th general election, it might be difficult for the opposition to bring the regime change, for most of the electoral districts are ethnically-mixed. In the 13th general election, Barisan Nasional obtained seats mostly in districts where percentages of Malay voters were higher (Table 1-2).

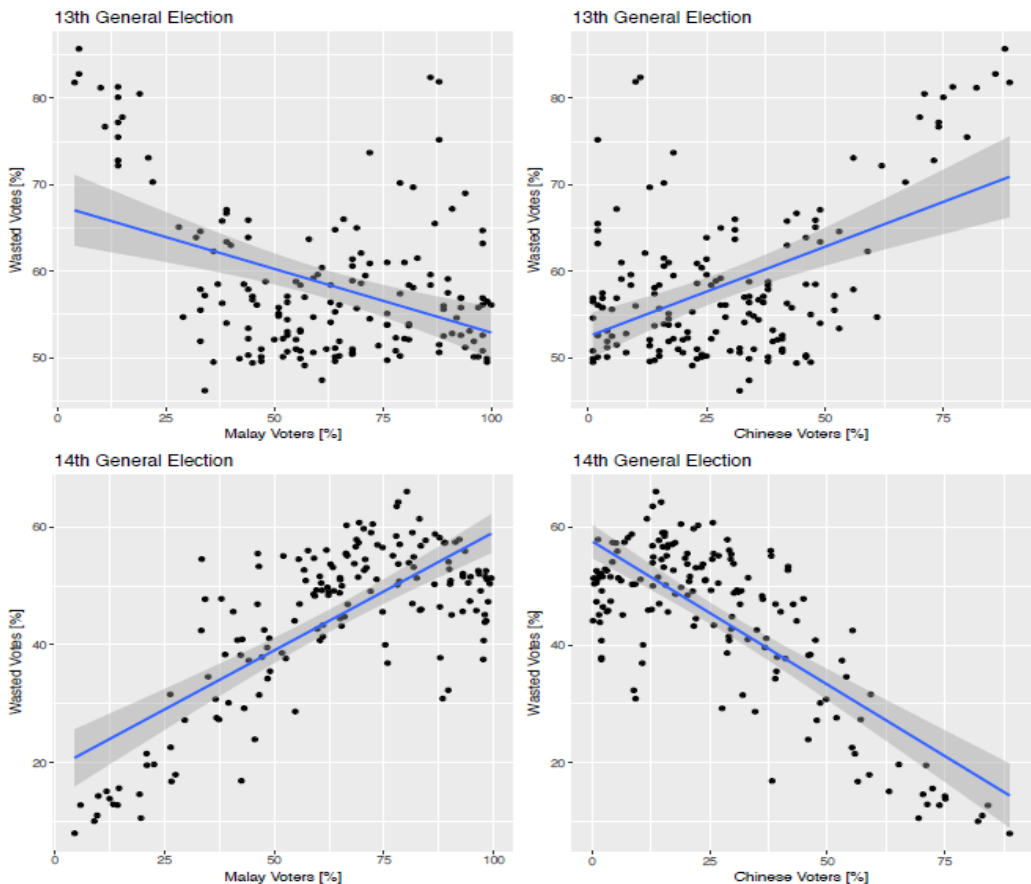


Source: Data are from undi.info (2018).

Figure 3-5: Relationship between Percentage of Ethnicity, and Distribution of Candidates among Pakatan Rakyat Component Parties, in the 13th General Election

As Table 1-2 shows, most of electoral districts were distributed to ethnically-mixed areas, i.e., neither percentages of Malay voters, nor those of non-Malays exceeded 75%. In these areas, votes of non-Malays, specifically Chinese voters, were nullified (Figure 3-6). Figure 3-6 plots the correlation between wasted votes and ethnic groups in the 13th and 14th general elections. In the 13th general election, wasted votes were widely seen in districts where percentages of Chinese voters were higher. It was because of Barisan Nasional’s strategy to nullify the political influence of Chinese voters. In the 13th general election, by focusing on Malay voters, Barisan Nasional obtained seats in both Malay-majority and ethnically-mixed districts, leading to the production of massive

wasted votes of Chinese voters, e.g., in the 13th general election, in an electoral district where percentages of Malay voters and Chinese voters were 60% and 40%, respectively, by obtaining 90% of Malay voters support ($60\% \times 90\% = 54\%$ of votes), Barisan Nasional could win, and other 46% of votes were wasted. However, in the 14th general election, due to the competitive relationship between Barisan Nasional and PAS, wasted votes were widely seen in districts where percentages of Malay voters were higher, increasing electoral presence of Chinese voters, e.g., in the 14th general election, in the same electoral district, if Barisan Nasional and PAS obtained 65% and 35% of Malay votes, while Pakatan Harapan obtained 100% of Chinese votes, shares of each party coalition were 39% ($65\% \times 60\%$), 21% ($35\% \times 60\%$), and 40% ($100\% \times 40\%$), respectively, and wasted votes were 60% (all of Malay voters' votes).



Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018), and undi.info (2018).

Figure 3-6: Ethnic Groups and Wasted Votes, in the 13th and 14th General Election

There is not only the ethnic factor, but also the urbanisation factor and so forth, leading to the difference between the estimation and the actual result. Nevertheless, this estimation is not an impractical proposition. In fact, the results of P93 Sungai Besar (Selangor) where percentages of Malay and Chinese voters were 66% and 31%, respectively in the 13th general election, confirm it. In the 13th general election, Barisan Nasional, and Pakatan Rakyat obtained 49.6%, and 48.6% of votes, and Barisan Nasional won. In the 14th general election, Barisan Nasional, Pakatan Harapan, and PAS, obtained 40.3%, 42.1%, and 17.5%, leading to the victory of Pakatan Harapan. In this district, 57.8% of votes were wasted. Although there is not only an ethnic factor affecting the voting patterns, Malay votes towards PAS lowered the hurdles of Pakatan Harapan's victory.

Until the 13th general election, the nullification of Chinese votes by resorting to the combination of ethnically-mixed electoral districts and the FPTP system had effectively worked to magnify Barisan Nasional's seats. In the 14th general election, however, the nullification of Chinese voters became malfunctioning, i.e., in ethnically-mixed electoral districts, party coalitions had to obtain their votes. It is more serious in urban areas, where not a few Malay votes were cast to Pakatan Harapan. Tables 3-4 and 3-5 confirm it. Table 3-4 is a list of results in the Malay-belt, and Table 3-5 illustrates those in non-Malay-belt. 40 districts (24.2%, out of total districts) and 125 districts (75.8%) are distributed in the Malay-belt and non-Malay-belt, respectively. In precisely the same manner as the distribution of the 13th general election, most of electoral districts were distributed to ethnically-mixed areas (100 out of 165 districts, accounting for 60.6%). FELDA districts were 47 (28.5%). And 24, 38, and 103 districts were distributed to urban (14.5%), semi-urban (23.0%), and rural (62.4%) areas. Many groups did not, in fact, exist, e.g., Malay-belt Malay-majority Urban FELDA. In Chinese-majority electoral districts, Pakatan Harapan obtained 89% of votes, and 100% of seats, while Barisan Nasional merely obtained 11% of votes, and 0% of seats, meaning that Chinese voters were strongly supportive towards Pakatan Harapan. Malay voters did not only show their split between Barisan Nasional and PAS, but also voted for Pakatan Harapan in urban and semi-urban districts. It is true that in rural and Malay-majority districts, most of Malay votes were cast towards either Barisan Nasional or PAS, e.g., in Malay-belt Malay-majority Rural FELDA where only 16.5% of votes were cast to Pakatan Harapan which only obtained 1 seats out of 11 seats in the same districts.

In spite of the Malay dominance, in Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Semi-Urban Non-FELDA, Pakatan Harapan obtained 46.7% of votes¹⁷. Chinese voters, and urban voters helped Pakatan Harapan obtain seats in Chinese-majority and both urban and semi-urban districts, specifically in ethnically-mixed districts.

While Pakatan Harapan and PAS were widely supported in non-Malay-belt and the Malay-belt, respectively, Barisan Nasional could not obtain seats in both areas. Barisan Nasional had lost 35 seats from the 13th to 14th general election, in Peninsular Malaysia. These seats were mostly in ethnically-mixed districts. In the 13th general election, it secured 43 seats in the same districts, but its seats decreased by 26 to 17. Pakatan Harapan, on the contrary, increased its seats in the same districts from 50 in the 13th general election (Pakatan Rakyat) by 33 to 83 in the 14th general election. In these districts, Pakatan Harapan obtained more than 42.6% of votes (Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Rural FELDA). As Lijphart pointed, the electoral system in which the candidate supported by the largest number of voters wins is really a winner-take-all system. Due to it, previously, the political influence of Chinese voters (and urban voters) had been nullified (Table 1-2). Nevertheless, they became influential, and moreover, votes from Malay voters (and rural voters) became less effective, in terms of securing Barisan Nasional’s seats. Why did it become helpful to magnify Pakatan Harapan’s seats? Figure 3-6 showed that votes from Chinese voters became less wasted in the 14th general election, compared with Malay votes. The next section explains the mechanism in which securing Chinese and urban votes helped Pakatan Harapan boost its seats.

Table 3-4
Electoral Results of Each Party Coalition, in the 14th General Election in the Malay-Belt

Malay-belt / Ethnicity / Urbanisation / FELDA	No. of Electoral Districts	Pakatan Harapan Votes[Shares: %] Seats[Shares: %]	Barisan Nasional Votes[Shares: %] Seats[Shares: %]	PAS Votes[Shares: %] Seats[Shares: %]
Malay-belt Malay- majority Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Malay- majority Semi-Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—

¹⁷ In the Malay-belt, albeit the stronghold of PAS, Pakatan Harapan obtained 33.5% of votes in Malay-majority Urban Non-FELDA.

Malay-belt Malay-majority Rural FELDA	11	111,983[16.5%] 1[9.1%]	284,168[41.8%] 6[54.5%]	283,159[41.7%] 4[36.4%]
Malay-belt Malay-majority Urban Non-FELDA	1	22,422[33.5%] 0[0%]	16,256[24.3%] 0[0%]	28,291[42.2%] 1[100%]
Malay-belt Malay-majority Semi-Urban Non-FELDA	9	125,491[17.8%] 2[22.2%]	185,092[33.4%] 2[22.2%]	250,132[49.6%] 5[55.6%]
Malay-belt Malay-majority Rural Non-FELDA	14	145,732[17.5%] 3[21.4%]	323,765[38.7%] 3[21.4%]	367,785[43.9%] 8[57.1%]
Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Semi-Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Rural FELDA	1	23,159[42.6%] 1[100%]	18,299[33.7%] 0[0%]	12,885[23.7%] 0[0%]
Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Urban Non-FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Semi-Urban Non-FELDA	1	32,575[50.8%] 1[100%]	14,181[22.2%] 0[0%]	17,275[27.0%] 0[0%]
Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Rural Non-FELDA	3	108,158[46.2%] 3[100%]	60,242[25.7%] 0[0%]	65,289[27.9%] 0[0%]
Malay-belt Chinese-majority Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Chinese-majority Semi-Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Chinese-majority Rural FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Chinese-majority Urban Non-FELDA	—	—	—	—

Malay-belt Chinese-majority Semi-Urban Non-FELDA	—	—	—	—
Malay-belt Chinese-majority Rural Non-FELDA	—	—	—	—
Total	40	569,520[22.8%] 11[27.5%]	902,003[36.1%] 11[27.5%]	1,024,816[41.1%] 18[45.0%]

Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018).

Table 3-5

Electoral Results of Each Party Coalition, in the 14th General Election in Non-Malay-Belt

Malay-belt / Ethnicity / Urbanisation / FELDA	No. of Electoral Districts	Pakatan Harapan Votes[Shares: %] Seats[Shares: %]	Barisan Nasional Votes[Shares: %] Seats[Shares: %]	PAS Votes[Shares: %] Seats[Shares: %]
Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Semi-Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Rural FELDA	13	118,308[22.6%] 1[7.7%]	276,866[52.8%] 12[92.3%]	129,415[24.7%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Urban Non-FELDA	1	8,776[35.7%] 0[0%]	12,148[49.5%] 1[100%]	3,634[14.8%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Semi-Urban Non-FELDA	3	92,138[46.7%] 1[33.3%]	63,106[32.0%] 2[66.7%]	42,205[21.4%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Rural Non-FELDA	8	159,641[41.0%] 1[12.5%]	148,382[38.1%] 7[87.5%]	81,343[20.9%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—

Non-Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Semi-Urban FELDA	1	19,559[51.7%] 1[100%]	18,278[48.3%] 0[0%]	—
Non-Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Rural FELDA	21	548,994[49.2%] 14[66.7%]	425,903[38.2%] 7[33.3%]	139,224[12.5%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Urban Non- FELDA	17	784,253[66.0%] 16[94.1%]	276,460[23.3%] 1[5.9%]	85,592[7.2%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Semi-Urban Non- FELDA	24	1,398,757[68.2%] 24[100%]	427,514[20.8%] 0[0%]	220,194[10.7%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Ethnically-Mixed Rural Non-FELDA	32	1,035,840[51.3%] 23[71.9%]	691,047[34.2%] 9[18.1%]	290,565[14.4%] 0[0%]
Non-Malay-belt Chinese-majority Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Non-Malay-belt Chinese-majority Semi-Urban FELDA	—	—	—	—
Non-Malay-belt Chinese-majority Rural FELDA	—	—	—	—
Non-Malay-belt Chinese-majority Urban Non- FELDA	5	255,460[89.0%] 5[100%]	31,249[11.0%] 0[0%]	—
Non-Malay-belt Chinese-majority Semi-Urban Non- FELDA	—	—	—	—
Non-Malay-belt Chinese-majority Rural Non-FELDA	—	—	—	—
Total	125	4,421,726[56.4%] 86[68.8%]	2,370,953[30.3%] 39[31.2%]	992,263[12.7%] 0[0%]

Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018).

3.3 Mechanism to Expand Seats: Ethnically-Mixed Electoral Districts and First-Past-The-Post Electoral System

Barisan Nasional won in the 13th general election where there was a two-party coalition system, by nullifying Chinese votes and urban votes¹⁸. In the last section, this paper assumed that the rising influence of Chinese voters and urban voters, and Malay voters' decrease in influence helped Pakatan Harapan expand its seats. It was specifically in ethnically-mixed districts. To verify this assumption, this section explores the mechanism which made the split of Malay votes problematic for Barisan Nasional.

In the winner-take-all system, the candidate with the largest vote wins. Table 3-6 compares the percentages of votes to be majority, i.e., the condition of candidates of Pakatan Rakyat and Pakatan Harapan to win, in the 13th and the 14th general elections. Obviously, obtaining more than 50% of votes should be majority. In the 13th general election, most of the elected candidates obtained more than 50% of votes, and only 5 out of 34 Pakatan Rakyat's candidates obtaining 45-50% of votes won. In the 14th general election, Pakatan Harapan's candidates won with only 45% of votes. It was because PAS deprived votes which had been cast towards Barisan Nasional, lowering the condition of Pakatan Harapan's candidates to win. Furthermore, even 60% (12 out of 20) of Pakatan Harapan candidates who obtained only 40-45% of votes won.

Table 3-6
Electoral Results of Pakatan Harapan, and Pakatan Rakyat, in the 13th and the 14th General Election

Vote Shares	the 13th General Election			the 14th General Election		
	No. of Candidates	No of Elected Candidate	No of Defeated Candidates	No of Candidates	No of Elected Candidate	No of Defeated Candidates
40% or Below	28	0	28	62	2	60
40-44.9%	28	0	28	20	12	8
45-49.9%	34	5	29	16	16	0
50% or Above	75	75	0	67	67	0

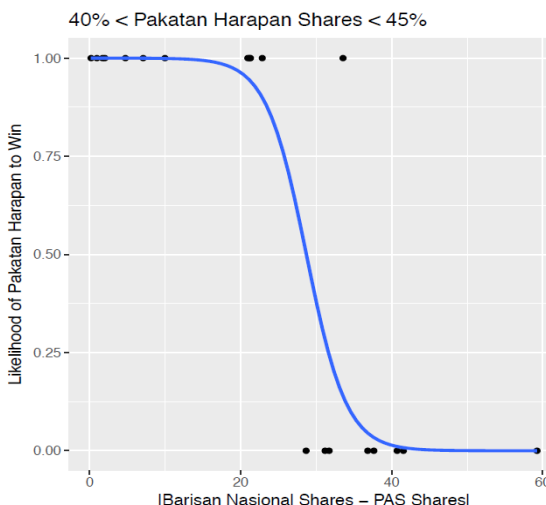
Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018), and undi.info (2018).

¹⁸ The nullification of urban voters was conducted by the gerrymandering, i.e., distributing more seats to rural areas.

Figure 3-7 plots this relationship. The x axis plots differences of votes between shares of Barisan Nasional and PAS candidates in districts where Pakatan Harapan candidates obtained 40-45% of votes. The y axis plots the likelihood of Pakatan Harapan candidates to win. Where the x axis approximates to 0, i.e., in districts where differences were close, candidates of Pakatan Harapan could win with smaller vote shares. It indicates that where votes of Malay voters and rural voters were split, it really rose the likelihood of Pakatan Harapan’s candidates to win. And those votes towards Barisan Nasional and PAS turned to be wasted votes (Figure 3-6).

The causality of the regime change in the 14th general election was therefore as follows: (1) Pakatan Harapan obtained votes from Chinese voters and urban voters, helping it obtain the largest popular vote among the three party coalition, and (2) the competitive relationship between Barisan Nasional and PAS, mainly over Malay votes led to the landslide of Barisan Nasional, and helped Pakatan Harapan obtain seats.

Barisan Nasional’s authoritarianism is composed of two parts, i.e., populism that targeted at the Malays to obtain their votes, and the electoral system that had nullified Chinese votes. In the 14th general election, as can be seen in popular votes, Barisan Nasional’s populism could not collect votes (36.1% in the Malay-belt, and 30.3% in non-Malay-belt) sufficient enough to obtain seats, indicating the malfunction of populism, in terms of vote-collecting effectiveness. And due to the competitive relationship with PAS, not a few of Malay votes were wasted. Instead, Chinese votes became influential, indicating the nullification of nullifying Chinese votes. Although these were highly due to the three-cornered fight between Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, and PAS, the 14th general election showed the malfunction of Barisan Nasional’s authoritarianism.



Source: Data are from The Star Online (2018).

Figure 3-7: Likelihood of Pakatan Harapan Candidates’ Victory in Electoral Districts Where Vote Shares of Pakatan Harapan Candidates Were 40-45%, in the 14th General Election

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Barisan Nasional's Authoritarianism in the 14th General Election

Electoral results in Malaysia have attracted many scholars' attention (Chin & Wong 2009; Khoo 2013; Leong 2014; Osman 2013; Nakamura 2015; Nakamura 2018; Ng et al. 2015; Oliver & Ostwald 2018; Pepinsky 2015; Sani & Azizudin 2009; Shiozaki 2013; Suzuki 2013; Yamamoto 2008). One of the reasons is that Malaysia under the Barisan Nasional regime was an authoritarian state. In authoritarian states, opposition parties are at a disadvantage. Malaysia is no exception, and whether the opposition could bring a regime change has been a big political topic. This paper is themed on a question: 'How could Pakatan Harapan bring the regime change?' and analysed the electoral results of the 14th general election.

This paper surveyed two topics: (1) voting patterns of Malaysian voters, and (2) the process in which votes were converted into seats. The analysis on the voting patterns revealed that (1) Pakatan Harapan was supported by both Chinese and urban voters, (2) there was a competitive between Barisan Nasional and PAS over Malay voters, (3) Barisan Nasional was specifically supported in FELDA districts, and (4) PAS was supported in the Malay-belt. And the analysis on the latter issue revealed that in the 13th general election, Chinese votes were nullified as wasted votes, but in the 14th general election, on the contrary, Chinese votes, and urban votes played a decisive role in obtaining seats.

It is a *sine qua non* for bringing a regime change that opposition obtains more votes and seats than does government. Ng et al. (2015) and Pepinsky (2015) studied the results of the 13th general election by analysing the voting patterns of Malaysian voters. Although there was a difference, but their conclusions have the following common point, i.e., on general, Chinese and urban voters voted for Pakatan Rakyat, and Malay and rural voters voted for Barisan Nasional. It accords with this paper's findings. Nevertheless, the results of the 13th general election indicates an insufficiency of merely knowing the voting patterns. In addition to the patterns, it is indispensable to understand how votes are converted into seats.

Barisan Nasional's authoritarianism is a prerequisite for analysing both factors that affect the voting patterns, and the process in which votes are converted into seats. Authoritarianism in Malaysia is at least composed of two parts: (1) populism that targets at Malay voters, and (2) the electoral system that had nullified Chinese votes as wasted

votes. This paper revealed that in the 14th general election, (1) due to the competitive relationship with PAS over Malay votes, the Malay populism did not collect votes from Malay voters sufficiently enough for Barisan Nasional to assume the reins of government again, and (2) the electoral system that nullified Chinese votes in the 13th general election did not work effectively to nullify their votes in the 14th general election.

The analysis on the voting patterns included ethnicity, urbanisation, Malay-belt, and FELDA variables into the OLS regression equation. The results suggest that the Malay populism works effectively as long as economic merits are distributed to Malay voters, which can be seen in the FELDA variable, and Barisan Nasional's vote share in Putrajaya. In other words, if they do not receive any merits, the populism will lose the unifying force. It brings the possibility for analysing Malaysian voters' voting behaviour from perspectives of not only a mere difference in ethnicity, but also economic factors that have affected them. The electoral results also imply that depending on the conditions, an electoral system works advantageously for an authoritarian government may work differently. In the 14th general election in Peninsular Malaysia, ethnically-mixed electoral districts accounted for approximately 56.4%. It was because Barisan Nasional intended to counterbalance Chinese (opponent) votes with Malay (supporter) votes. The FPTP's winner-take-all principle had legitimately silenced their votes. Nevertheless, in the 14th general election, due to the competitive relationship with PAS, Malay votes were wasted (Figure 3-6), specifically in ethnically-mixed districts (Tables 3-4; 3-5). This result implies the limitation of Barisan Nasional's authoritarian electoral system. A cautionary note is that it may perhaps truly be due to the competitive relationship with PAS, and thus, it is important to check whether the 14th general election's results were transitory. A comparison on results in electoral districts where the incumbent (Barisan Nasional), and opposition parties that are in the competitive relationship with Barisan Nasional (PAS, and S46 may be candidates), and other parties such as DAP fight for seats help this investigation. Including results of past (and future) general elections into the comparison also helps us understand it.

4.2 Conclusion

In summary, this paper clarified that (1) there is a limitation in the authoritarian populism towards the majority (this paper considers the Malays as the majority) that intends to retain their political loyalty, and (2) depending on the conditions, there is a possibility of an unfair electoral system in which a regime change is deemed impossible can be knocked down.

Whether Pakatan Harapan which brought the regime change in the 14th general election will resort to the authoritarian populism, or it will democratise Malaysia, and whether the electoral system, such as skewed electoral districts will be corrected should be continuously checked. The findings of this paper will contribute to it. Firstly, this paper's results suggest that an inclusion of several important variables which have never included into statistical models will highlight another aspect of voting patterns. Secondly, an analysis using matrices such as Tables 3-4, and 3-5 is effective in understanding similarities and differences in voting patterns in each categorised electoral district, and variances in the same category as well. Thirdly, the two-step analysis can be extended to investigate other countries to shed light on another aspect in their elections.

This paper has several limitations. Firstly, this paper assumed the rational homo economicus. In other words, this paper assumed that Malaysian voters chose their own supporting party coalitions based on economic merits, e.g., whether Barisan Nasional could distribute economic merits played an important role. There were many important political movements which must have affected voters' mind. While the assumption of homo economicus helped this paper highlight the aspect of economic voting patterns, aspects of social justice, and movement of democratisation were not included in the discussion. Secondly, this paper focused on the general trend in voting patterns, and therefore did not discuss local, micro factors in each electoral districts. A comparison of electoral districts while controlling their features will contribute to these two issues. Tables 3-4 and 3-5 classified all electoral districts based on their features. Comparing and scrutinising the local factors within the same category, e.g., a comparison of three districts within the Non-Malay-belt Malay-majority Semi-Urban Non-FELDA area, will show the variance within the same category. Those variance will possibly explain some local factors and other aspects that might have affected the voting patterns.

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