

REPORT 3

Elections of State Legislative Assemblies in Peninsular Malaysia

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Introduction

In the 13th general election (GE13), state assembly elections except for Sarawak were conducted on the same schedule with the parliamentary election. In accordance with customary practice, all the eleven states in peninsular Malaysia dissolved their state legislative assembly simultaneously with the dissolution of the parliament. Four Pakatan Rakyat-led states, namely Kelantan, Kedah, Penang, and Selangor, were no exceptions.

The majority of voters (52.75%) supported Pakatan Rakyat in the state assembly elections in peninsular Malaysia. However, Barisan Nasional maintained majority seats in seven peninsular states (Perlis, Terengganu, Perak, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, and Johor) as well as Sarawak in Borneo. In addition, it won back the ruling power in Kedah which had fallen into the hands of Pakatan Rakyat following the previous general election (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Number of seats collected by Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat in state legislative assembly elections.

	Perlis	Kedah	Kelantan	Terengganu	Penang	Perak	Pahang	Selangor	Negri 9*	Malacca	Johor	Sabah
Barisan Nasional	13	21	12	17	10	31	30	12	22	21	38	48
Pakatan Rakyat	2	15	33	15	30	28	12	44	14	7	18	11
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	15	36	45	32	40	59	42	56	36	28	56	60

* "Negri 9" means Negri Sembilan.

Sources: Election Commission Malaysia Website (www.spr.gov.my).

I. An Overview of the results

The elections of eleven state assemblies in peninsular Malaysia ended up with a bizarre consequence --- more votes for Pakatan, more seats of Pakatan, and less Pakatan-led state governments compared to the previous 12th general election (GE 12).

A total of 445 seats were contested in the elections of state assemblies in peninsular Malaysia. Barisan Nasional won 227 seats, which is 51.01 percent of the total, with 46.54 percent of the popular votes (Table 3.2). Among the Barisan Nasional component parties, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) obtained most of the seats --- 210 out of 227 (92.5%). When compared to the results of the GE 12, UMNO attained two more seats with less popular votes¹. Non-Malay component parties, especially Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), experienced a catastrophic defeat. MCA contested in 88 constituencies this time but won only 11 seats. Gerakan, whose leader had been a chief minister of Penang state government from 1969 till 2008, got only one seat in GE 13.

Pakatan Rakyat attained 218 seats. It gained 23 more seats than that of GE 12, and most of added seats (21 out of 23) were won by Democratic Action Party. DAP recorded a remarkable winning percentage. It contested in 96 constituencies and won 93 seats.

¹ In the parliamentary elections, UMNO obtained nine more seats with the smaller share of votes compared to GE 12.

Table 3.2 Results of State Legislative Assembly Elections in Peninsular Malaysia.

	Results of GE 13			Results of GE 12	
	Candidates	Seats	Share of the vote	Seats	Share of the vote
Barisan Nasional	445	227	46.54%	248	50.39%
UMNO	307	210	34.73%	208	35.63%
MCA	88	11	7.60%	30	9.72%
Gerakan	29	1	2.11%	3	2.89%
MIC	18	5	1.93%	7	2.06%
PPP	3	0	0.17%	0	0.09%
Pakatan Rakyat	451	218	52.75%	195	48.96%
PAS	226	84	23.98%	83	23.42%
PKR	129	41	12.92%	40	12.08%
DAP	96	93	15.84%	72	13.46%
Others	161	0	0.71%	2	0.65%
Total	896	445	100.00%	445	100.00%

Sources: Election Commission Malaysia, *Report of the General Election Malaysia 2008*; Election Commission website (www.spr.gov.my).

GE 13 gave rise to a fundamental change of Barisan Nasional. It is not a multi-ethnic coalition anymore. Suffering a heavy defeat, the leadership of MCA decided not to participate in the executive branch of the government at both of national and state level. In peninsular states, Barisan Nasional is now almost identical to UMNO.

On the other hand, Pakatan Rakyat maintains its multi-ethnic character. During 1970s and 1980s, Chinese-led DAP was a main opposition to Malay-dominant, but still multi-ethnic Barisan Nasional. DAP got back to the biggest opposition party again after GE 13. However, the traditional constellation of political competition has drastically changed. Opposition coalition has much more multi-ethnic character than substantially *bumiputra* ruling coalition.

II. Do voters differentiate between national elections and state elections?

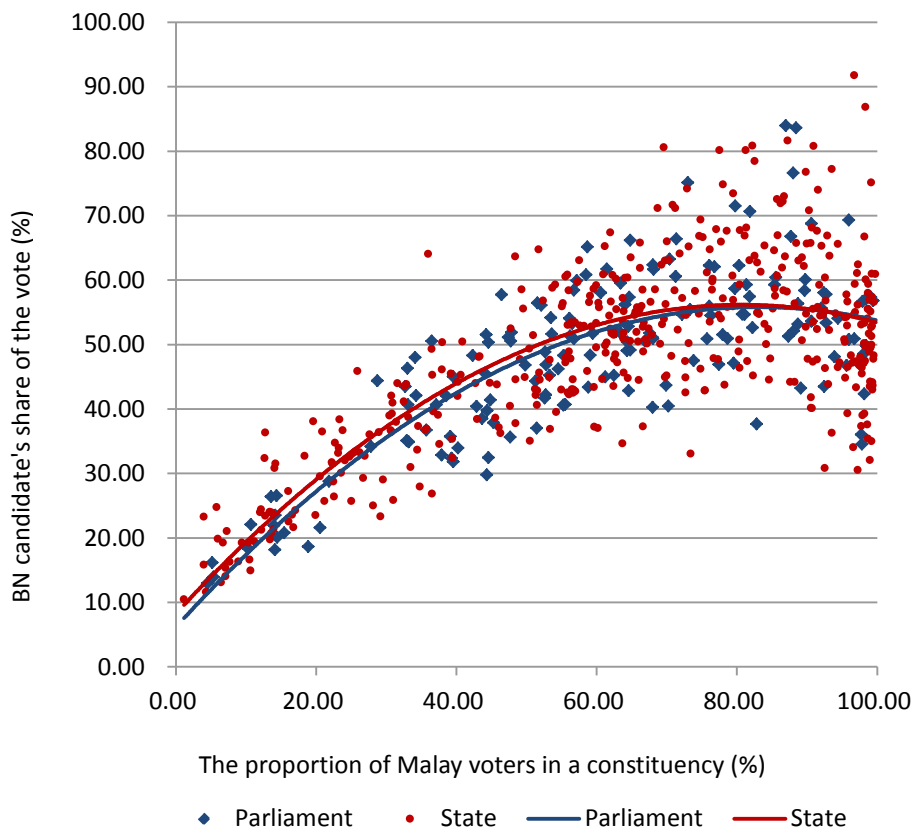
Since independence, elections of state legislative assemblies have been always held simultaneously with parliamentary elections in peninsular Malaysia. Institutional settings and main actors concerning state elections are also completely consistent with those of national elections. Both of national and state governments are based on a parliamentary cabinet system. Members of Parliament and state legislative councilors are elected through first-past-the-post system. The constellation of political competition is also identical. All the major political parties field candidates in both of national and state elections.

Accordingly, the results of parliamentary elections and state legislative assembly elections have been very similar. GE 13 is not an exception. Figure 3.1 depicts the relation between the proportion of Malay voters in peninsular constituencies and Barisan National candidate's share of the votes in GE 13. The blue line is an OLS regression curve (quadratic) that represents the relation between two variables concerning the parliamentary election. The red line is the one that concerning state legislative assembly elections. Two lines are almost identical. This congruency of voting patterns at national and state levels implies that voters don't differentiate between national elections and state elections when they cast a vote.

Figure 3.1 shows a clear-cut tendency that the higher proportion of Malay voters, the higher BN's share of votes. This pattern of voting is a repetition of the previous general election, but it is something relatively new. From the first general election in

1959 till GE 11 in 2004, the ruling coalition's strong holds had been ethnically mixed constituencies².

Figure 3.1 Correlation between the proportion of Malay voters and Barisan Nasional candidate's share of the votes in peninsular constituencies.



Sources: *New Straits Times*, May 7, 2013; Election Commission Malaysia Website (www.spr.gov.my).

The mechanism behind BN's past dominance in mixed constituencies was called 'vote pooling' (Horowitz 1989; 1991). While opposition parties had campaigned for themselves outside of a few exceptional occasions, BN affiliated parties have always

² The dominance of the ruling coalition (Alliance / Barisan) in ethnically mixed constituencies has been repeatedly pointed out in literature (Ratnam & Milne 1967; Vasil 1972; Crouch 1982; Brown 2005; Ong & Welsh 2005).

mobilized their members to support allies. Thus MCA, Gerakan, and MIC candidates could expect support from UMNO members, and UMNO could expect Chinese and Indian votes.

This mechanism has not functioned since GE 12. Malays still tend to prefer BN component parties to DAP, but their votes are not enough to make BN candidates win because MCA and Gerakan seriously lost confidence of Chinese voters. In GE 13, non-Malay voters preferred not only PKR but also PAS to UMNO especially in Selangor³. Vote-pooling mechanism is now working among Pakatan Rakyat affiliated parties⁴.

Figure 3.1 does not necessarily mean that most of Malays supported Barisan Nasional because the variance is high in Malay dominant constituencies. We will examine the characteristics of UMNO strongholds in the next section.

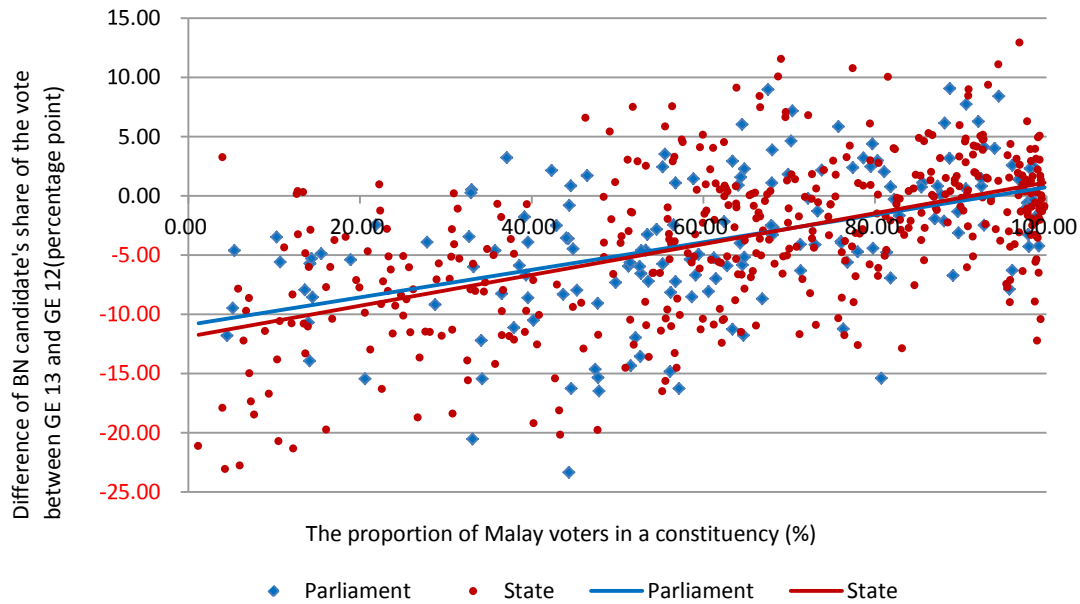
When we look at the difference between GE 13 and GE 12, we find that Najib Razak's assertion about 'Chinese tsunami' is only half true. Figure 3.2 shows the relation between the proportion of Malay voters and the difference of BN candidates' share of the vote in GE 13 and GE 12. While BN candidates lost votes in most of the constituencies where Malays are minority, they got larger share than they had got in GE 12 in some Malay majority constituencies. This trend seems to support Najib's assertion.

³ There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the proportion of Malay voters in constituencies and the UMNO's share of votes in Selangor ($r=0.6362$, $n=35$).

⁴ The proliferation of internet media bolstered agenda-setting power of opposition parties and the moderation of opposition parties in ethnic issue dimension made class-related issues salient. This change of the issue space broke up BN's dominance in ethnically mixed constituencies which was dependent on uni-dimensional constellation of political competition (Nakamura 2011).

However, in many other Malay majority constituencies, BN candidates got only diminished share.

Figure 3.2 Correlation between the proportion of Malay voters and the Difference of Barisan Nasional candidate's share of the votes between GE 13 and GE 12



Sources: *New Straits Times*, May 7, 2013; Election Commission Malaysia, *Report of the General Election Malaysia 2008*; Election Commission Malaysia Website (www.spr.gov.my).

III. *Tsunami goes to the South (calmed down in the North?)*

Table 3.3 shows how many seats political parties got in each peninsular states. In Kedah UMNO succeeded in getting back what it lost in GE 12. It also expanded its clout in Kelantan. However, UMNO suffered a heavy loss in Selangor. Having observing these results, some political pundits pointed out an urban-rural divide among Malays. But it is not a divide between Selangor and north-east rural states. UMNO lost nearly half of the seats in Terengganu. Constituencies that elected Pakatan candidates

are located in a coastal area where small cities are located. There is an urban-rural divide of political orientations inside Malay dominant rural states, too.

Table 3.3 The numbers of the seats of political parties in peninsular states

	Perlis	Kedah	Kelantan	Terengganu	Penang	Perak	Pahang	Selangor	Negeri 9	Malacca	Johor
Barisan Nasional	13 (-1)	21 (+7)	12 (+6)	17 (-7)	10 (-1)	31 (+3)	30 (-7)	12 (-8)	22 (+1)	21 (-2)	38 (-12)
UMNO	12 (±0)	19 (+7)	12 (+6)	17 (-7)	10 (-1)	30 (+3)	28 (-1)	12 (-6)	21 (+2)	17 (-1)	32 (±0)
MCA	1 (-1)	2 (+1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	1 (±0)	2 (-4)	0 (-2)	0 (-1)	3 (-1)	2 (-11)
Gerakan	0 (±0)	0 (-1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (-1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	1 (±0)
MIC	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (-1)	0 (±0)	1 (±0)	1 (±0)	3 (-1)
PPP	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)
Pakatan Rakyat	2 (+1)	15 (-6)	33 (-6)	15 (+7)	30 (+1)	28 (-3)	12 (+8)	44 (+8)	14 (-1)	7 (+2)	18 (+12)
PAS	1 (±0)	9 (-7)	32 (-6)	14 (+6)	1 (±0)	5 (-1)	3 (+1)	15 (+7)	0 (-1)	1 (+1)	3 (+1)
PKR	1 (+1)	4 (±0)	1 (±0)	1 (+1)	10 (+1)	5 (-2)	2 (+2)	14 (-1)	3 (-1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)
DAP	0 (±0)	2 (+1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	19 (±0)	18 (±0)	7 (+5)	15 (+2)	11 (+1)	6 (+1)	15 (+11)
Others	0 (±0)	0 (-1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (-1)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)	0 (±0)
Total	15 (±0)	36 (±0)	45 (±0)	32 (±0)	40 (±0)	59 (±0)	42 (±0)	56 (±0)	36 (±0)	28 (±0)	56 (±0)

* The number in parenthesis shows the difference between GE 13 and GE 12.

Sources: Election Commission Malaysia, Report of the General Election Malaysia 2008; Election Commission Malaysia Website (www.spr.gov.my).

Chinese votes in Penang and Selangor have already swung to Pakatan Rakyat component parties in 2008. Thus, in these two state, the increase of DAP seats were minimal in spite that it collected more votes in GE 13. In Selangor, PAS got seven more seats compared to GE 12 with the help of Chinese voters. This is the effect of 'vote pooling' among Pakatan Rakyat component parties.

The results of Perak state assembly election were contradictory. While Barisan Nasional got only 44.4 percent of the votes, it got 31 seats out of 59. Pakatan Rakyat's share of the vote was 54.8 percent. One of the reasons behind the gap between seats and votes is malapportionment as is the case with the parliamentary election. There are 51,036 registered voters in Manjoi constituency (N23) while there are only 12,120 voters in Kota Tampan (N4). The value of a vote in Kota Tampan is 4.2 times higher

than that of Manjoi. Most of the constituencies with less than 20,000 voters fell into the hands of UMNO.

However, malapportionment is only one of the reasons. Chinese abstention might have larger impact. Table 3.4 shows pairwise correlation among four variables --- Barisan Nasional's share of the vote, the proportion of Malay voters in a constituency, voter turnout, the number of registered voters. There is strong positive correlation between Turnout and the proportion of Malays. There is also mild positive correlation between Turnout and BN votes. These two facts suggest that in Perak, Chinese voters tend not to go to the polls and it helped Barisan Nasional. PAS and PKR's Malay candidates got less support from Chinese voters than those in Selangor. A considerable numbers of Chinese voters in ethnically mixed constituencies where UMNO and PAS or PKR contested seem to abstain instead of voting for Pakatan Rakyat.

Table 3.4 Pairwise correlations among four variables in Perak*

	BN votes	Malays	Turnout	Voters
BN votes (%)	1			
Malays (%)	0.8747	1		
Turnout (%)	0.5702	0.8069	1	
Voters	-0.4135	-0.3926	-0.0734	1

* n=59.

Sources: Calculated by the author using data collected from the Election Commission Website (www.spr.gov.my).

Chinese abstention in Perak is not without a reason. Although DAP became a leading party of Pakatan Rakyat in the previous general election, its leader was not appointed as *mentri besar* (chief minister) because only Malays are eligible to be *mentri*

besar according to the state constitution⁵. Moreover, Pakatan coalition government was toppled down in 2009 by Barisan Nasional's maneuvering. These events might disappointed Chinese voters and impaired their credit in party politics.

In GE 13, most remarkable change was observed in Johor. Tsunami reached to the South at last. The results of Johor state election in GE 13 are similar to those in Perak of GE 12. UMNO kept a position of a dominant party but other Barisan component parties were almost annihilated. For MCA, Johor was the last resort where it could get 13 seats in the previous general election. What they could keep in GE 13 was only 2 seats.

In case of Johor, correlation between Turnout and the proportion of Malays is weak (0.1719). Correlation between Turnout and the BN's share of the vote is also weak (0.1248). Many of Chinese voters went for supporting Pakatan Rakyat in Johor, but quite high proportions of Malays continued to vote for Barisan Nasional.

IV. Concluding remarks

As we saw in the section 2, it seems that Malaysian voters do not differentiate between national elections and state elections when they cast a vote. Thus analysis here has some implication for the next parliamentary election. First, non-Malay support for PAS and PKR's Malay candidates is a key for Pakatan Rakyat to make a big leap. If

⁵ In all the nine states where sultan or raja reigns, only Malays are eligible to be chief minister of the state.

Chinese voters in Perak support PAS or PKR more vigorously like Chinese citizens in Selangor, Pakatan Rakyat can get a few more parliamentary seats as well as getting back ruling power over the state. Conversely, if Chinese voters in Selangor become disappointed with electoral politics and abstain from a vote, Pakatan Rakyat will suffer serious damage. It will be a very important task for DAP to utilize their increased influence to mobilize supporters not only for itself but also for allies in the next election.

Second, Malay support for UMNO in the Southern states is still quite robust. If Pakatan Rakyat can succeed in cracking UMNO domination in Johor, Malacca, and Negri Sembilan, it will bring a big reward. However, it is not an easy task.

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