

REPORT 4

The 13th General Election (GE 13) in Peninsular Malaysia: An analysis of issues, outcomes and implications

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The principal objective of this report is to examine key issues, outcomes and implications of the electoral contest that took place between Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in Peninsular Malaysia during Malaysia's 13th General Election (GE13) of May 5, 2013. Being part of a larger study of GE13, this report will unavoidably overlap at some points and in some details with other reports covering respectively the contests for Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies. Moreover, although the overall study does not contrive to divide the national political system into three separate and mutually exclusive parts, as it were, this report focuses on various dimensions of the BN-PR contestation on Peninsular Malaysia that may substantially differ from those of the same contestation in Sabah and Sarawak. Those two issues, notwithstanding, this report complements the others to develop an in-depth study of GE13 as a whole that takes into account shared and varying aspects of contests in different localities and at different levels.

The discussion in this report is organized as follows:

- I. Peninsular peculiarities and stakes
- II. Socio-economic transformation and political dissent: a longer view
- III. On the way to GE13: messages and approaches

IV. Summary of major results

V. Critical questions and interpretations

VI. Power balances and future contests

I. Peninsular peculiarities and stakes

In regional terms, Peninsular Malaysia, which has eleven out of thirteen states and two out of three Federal Territories in the federation, occupies a dominant position within the electoral system. That dominance should in no way impute the ‘primacy of the peninsula’, so to speak, towards which the people in Sabah and Sarawak are correctly opposed (and not just during elections). For that matter, as shall be seen later, the peninsula’s structural dominance in the electoral system must be significantly qualified by the influence that Sabah and Sarawak have exerted on the balance of power between BN and PR since the 12th General Election of March 8, 2008 (GE12).¹ Even so, at the level of national politics, Peninsular Malaysia accounts for 165 out of 222 seats in Parliament, or nearly 75 per cent of the total number of constituencies. That figure (165) alone exceeds by almost 50 per cent the 112 seats needed to have the barest majority in Parliament. For the parliamentary contests in GE13, moreover, approximately 85 per cent of all valid votes (or 9,355,063 out of 11,054,887) were cast in Peninsular Malaysia. Besides, out of a total of 576 State Legislative Assembly seats, Peninsula Malaysia has 445, or 77.2 per cent, with this proportion rising to 88.1 per cent (of 505 seats) for GE13 specifically when 71 seats were not contested in Sarawak which had last held its state

¹ There is no space for an adequate discussion of GE 12 here; see Maznah (2008) for an instructive analysis.

election in 2011. From other qualitative angles, too, Peninsular Malaysia's major states and the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya led in economic, political and administrative power.

For BN and, most of all, for the 'ruling party of the ruling coalition', the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Peninsula Malaysia remained the key site of politics – the location of the largest number of seats that UMNO contested, and home to most of UMNO's strongholds (for example, in Johor, Pahang, Melaka and Negeri Sembilan) and the bulk of its leadership in party and government. At the same time, the position of BN's antagonist, PR, was highly dependent on its electoral performance in Peninsula Malaysia. When PR won 82 seats in Parliament in GE 12, thereby denying BN its customary two-thirds majority for the first time, 80 of those seats were won in Peninsular Malaysia. If PR's performance still left BN with an enormous majority, nonetheless BN's aura of electoral invincibility – in which BN had held itself and had been held by others – had been dented. At the level of the State Legislative Assembly, too, PR's performance was remarkable: it took control of five state governments, adding Kedah, Penang, Perak and Selangor to Kelantan which had been ruled by Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, or Islamic Party) since 1990. Simple profiles of the PR-administered states showed the extent of the opposition coalition's triumph. Kedah has long been the 'rice bowl of Malaysia', Penang the most successful base of export-oriented industrialization, Perak the former tin-mining capital, and Selangor the richest state. And Kelantan under PAS had been the symbolically significant 'Islamic state' for 28 years. Finally, PR won ten of eleven parliamentary seats in Kuala Lumpur, the national, commercial and cultural capital. This was an overwhelming triumph although Kuala

Lumpur's constitutional status as Federal Territory left it still under the administration of an unelected City Hall placed under the BN-led Federal government.

After GE12, the power balance in Peninsular Malaysia was split between BN and PR, making it all the more crucial for each to improve its results in GE13. The BN had strategically to recover its lost ground at both parliamentary and state levels. In the event, Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak declared that BN would seek, among other objectives, to recover its two-thirds majority in Parliament and regain the lost states, and in particular, Selangor. For PR, however, its component parties, Democratic Action Party (DAP), PAS and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) had to demonstrate that they had built an enduring 'second coalition' that had the strongest and most credible claim ever of being a rival to BN for national power. For this, PR sought primarily to extend its victories in Parliament by holding onto its GE12 gains and seizing new constituencies from BN. At the state level, claiming that the PR governments had performed better in administration than BN, PR planned to retain its control of Kedah, Kelantan, Pulau Pinang and Selangor; regain Perak in which the PR government was toppled partly by three defections and BN's constitutional-judicial coup in 2009; and to win Negri Sembilan and Terengganu over which BN's hold was regarded to be insecure.

II. Socio-economic transformation and political dissent: a longer view

Peninsular Malaysia was critical to the outcome of GE13 because of other developments that, strictly speaking, lay largely beyond the control of the competing political parties. It was here, and primarily in Kuala Lumpur, that the most strident and

systematically organized demonstrations of dissent took place against the regime over a six-year period from late 2007 to early 2013. Prior to GE12, three important mass expressions of discontent were particularly important in undermining the support for BN and spreading support for PR. Those were the march of the Bar Council against the further degradation of the judiciary (September 2007), the rally of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH) against electoral manipulation (November 2007), and the demonstration by the Hindu Rights Action Front (HINDRAF) (November 2007) to protest ‘Indian marginalization’ and demand historic restitution for the ethnic Indian community.² These surges of dissent in search of judicial, electoral and social reform were resumed via BERSIH 2.0 (July 2011) and BERSIH 3.0 (April 2012) and reached a crescendo with the *Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat* (Gathering of the People’s Uprising) in January 2013. These protests in some basic ways converged with PR’s aspirations to power and the popular mobilization PR conducted. This issue cannot be recounted in much detail in this report; suffice it to raise and explain three aspects of these popular ‘risings’.

The immediate aspect was the broadening dissent that loosely tied an increasing number of ‘ad hoc coalitions’ to the PR’s fundamental objective of displacing BN from power. On the eve of GE13, such color-coded coalitions as BERSIH (yellow), Anak Felda (‘Children of FELDA’, orange), Oil royalty for Kelantan (red) and the anti-Lynas environmental protection (green) were, to all purposes and intent, dedicated to the slogan of yet another campaign, *Asalkan bukan UMNO* (ABU, or ‘Anybody but UMNO’). All these coalitions and their mutually supportive campaigns constituted a *de*

² For a contemporary commentary on these expressions of dissent in 2007, see Khoo (2007).

facto alliance that dissenting civil society formed with PR.³ For that reason, BN constantly faced not merely the organized political parties or, as before, mostly inactive voters, but a highly energized corps of activists and campaigners that contributed time, money, effort and, to a lesser degree, candidates, to dislodging BN from power.

Second, a longer view of the politics of this conjuncture would trace those surges and convergences of dissent to long-term socio-economic development that included industrialization and the structural transformation of the national economy, rural development and poverty reduction, and rapid urbanization and social restructuring. Forty years of deep socio-economic change transformed the political framework of the peninsula (more than they did Sabah and Sarawak). Although they were typically associated with the New Economic Policy (NEP) but separated from industrialization and economic transformation, the poverty reduction and social restructuring were not discrete processes but related to the re-composition of Malay, and thus, Malaysian society. To that extent, the starting point of the analysis of GE13 in Peninsular Malaysia should be briefly related to the broadest outcomes of NEP implementation. The better known of the outcomes realized the two official objectives of NEP – that is, the rural development that was designed to eradicate rural Malay poverty, and the creation of urban Malay capitalist, professional and middle classes to overturn the ethnic division of labor. Successful rural development largely sealed the loyalty of the rural, predominantly (and sometimes exclusively) Malay constituencies that were synonymous with UMNO's social base and claim to rule. Social change as an

³ The first BERSIH rally of 2007 was conceived and coordinated by the DAP, PAS and PKR, the parties not being known collectively as PR then, with the support of NGOs. But BERSIH 2.0 and 3.0 were coordinated by a non-partisan committee, supported by other NGOs and the PR parties.

outcome of NEP restructuring included large-scale Malay rural-urban migration. Not only did that recompose the ethnic structure of urban society, it created the social basis of the electoral revolts of 1999 and 2008 when the urban middle-class Malays were split into pro- and anti-UMNO sections. The anti-UMNO Malay voters formed the core of the opposition parties' attempt to entrench an 'alternative' or second coalition within the political system.

Beyond the official NEP objectives lay a political project of reconstituting the oligarchy that was pursued under Mahathir's 22-year premiership, especially via his *Privatization* and *Malaysia Incorporated* policies. The Mahathirist project spawned an elite Malay corporate segment that was justified by the NEP's vision of creating a 'Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community'. By the final phase of Mahathir's tenure, the rise of the Malay corporate segment had created several socio-political problems. First, the fortunes of powerful Malay UMNO-linked commercial interests were crucially dependent on a state-facilitated nexus of politics and business. Second, as different groups of interests within this segment competed for state projects and contracts, their rivalry manifested itself in outbreaks of intense factionalism in UMNO. Third, and particularly after Anwar's fall in 1998, the cronyism, corruption and waste associated with the capture of NEP restructuring benefits by the Malay 'new rich' (and their non-Malay allies) became the target of public censure, not least by urban, professional middle-class Malays, notably those leading or supporting PAS and PKR. From 2006 onwards, the insecurity of the Malay segment of the oligarchy, still hurt by the financial crisis in 1997–98 but subjected to post-Mahathir reconstitution, aggravated the dissent against the regime. After he succeeded Mahathir as Prime Minister in

November 2003, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi carried out some measures of ‘de-Mahathirization’. Abdullah terminated certain ‘mega projects’ begun under Mahathir and, under public pressure, instituted formal inquiries in selected areas of institutional degradation. Ironically, ‘de-Mahathirization’ also incorporated oligarchic reconstitution by sidelining some of Mahathir’s ‘cronies’ in favor of Abdullah’s camp, including family members and corporate figures close to his son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin. In response, Mahathir publicly denigrated Abdullah’s leadership.

Probably by default UMNO leaders made another de-Mahathirizing move when they publicly scorned the ethnic concord that Mahathir constructed after 1990. The concord was tied to an official, if inconsistent, replacement of the NEP with a National Development Plan that claimed to move beyond ethnic discrimination and quotas in public life. Ideologically encapsulated in *Wawasan 2020* and *Bangsa Malaysia*, Mahathir concord had had a hegemonic hold over the public (and especially non-Malay) imagination even during the 1997–98 financial crisis and the *Reformasi* sparked by Mahathir’s persecution of then Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. But brazen and vulgar ‘Malay first’ displays at the 2006 and 2007 UMNO general assemblies demolished the concord, angering non-Malay communities who increasingly found UMNO to be more illiberal and chauvinistic, and PKR and even PAS to be more tolerant and inclusive (Khoo 2006). Above all, the non-Malay voters retaliated against UMNO by punishing BN’s ‘non-Malay component parties’ – Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan, or Malaysian People’s Movement) – that could not or would not moderate UMNO’s stances.

III. *On the way to GE13: messages and approaches*

Against the background of long-term socio-economic transformation, then, GE13 was a continuation of electoral contestation from the recent past. For UMNO and BN, the landslide victory of 2004 was like an anomaly, sandwiched between losses owing to *Reformasi* in 1999 and to the so-called *tsunami* in 2008. For PR, defeat in 2004 seemed like a lapse between the tentative damage that the Barisan Alternatif (BA, or Alternative Front) made on BN's hegemony in 1999 and the massive injury that PR inflicted upon BN in 2008. Consequently, *both* sides now contended for national power – arguably, the chief distinguishing feature of GE13. This was evident from the frenetic campaigning that virtually began when GE12 had ended and continued for almost five years, beginning from Anwar's return to Parliament at the end of August 2008.

In those five years many developments accentuated the political rivalry and sharpened expectations on each side. In Perak in early 2009, three PR defections followed by a part constitutional, part juridical coup, assumed to have been plotted by Najib Tun Razak, returned BN to power. Later in the year UMNO forced Abdullah Ahmad Badawi from its presidency and the premiership and Najib became Abdullah's successor. In 2011, BN retained power in Sarawak after the state election, albeit with some losses to PR. Yet, BN and PR were locked in a stalemate when a string of twelve parliamentary and state bye-elections ended in a 6-6 outcome. For that matter, Anwar was harassed with another trial for sodomy ('Sodomy II'), further accusations of sexual improprieties, charges of corruption, and regularly required to report to the police or

make court appearances. In January 2012, however, Anwar was acquitted in the Sodomy II trial when most observers of the proceedings had anticipated his conviction.⁴ It was popularly assumed that his acquittal was a political decision taken to spare UMNO a repeat of the backlash that came in the wake of Anwar's prosecution and conviction in 1999. Faced with such an unsettled situation, Najib, unlike the three preceding prime ministers, declined to seek a 'personal mandate' by holding an early general election. Despite dropping tentative hints of election in 2011 or 2012, Najib in fact waited until the constitutional time limit had arrived to let GE13 be held in May 2013.

Over that long period of unofficial electioneering, BN and PR adopted strategies that were not difficult to follow. Najib made occasional announcements of new 'policy models' and socio-economic reforms which tried to placate public, business and civil society demands for more transparency, better governance and clearer equity in the regime's policies and practices. Against a series of high-profile corruption and other scandals, however, Najib's reformist and 'transformative' pledges did little to burnish the image of his regime or his party. Najib's deeper if schizophrenic campaign was ethnic in tone and substance, laced with a touch of the prime minister's supposedly high personal popularity. The campaign was organized around parallel efforts undertaken by UMNO, state institutions, bureaucratic agencies, religious departments, parastatal organizations, a new 'Malay firster' organization called PERKASA, various pro-regime Malay and Muslim non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the state-controlled print and broadcast media, and a host of paid and unpaid 'UMNO cyber-troopers'.⁵ In

⁴ For the most authoritative commentary on Anwar's acquittal, see Thomas (2012)

⁵ Rom Nain (2013a and 2013b) provides an updated critical evaluation of the role of the state-owned or state-controlled media in this campaign.

concert and without restraint, they stoked Malay fears and anxieties – over the position of everything ‘Malay’, namely, language, economic status, Islam, the Rulers, etc. Whereas non-Malay voters were cautioned in 1999 that ‘a vote for DAP was a vote for PAS’ (that is, Islamic extremism), now Malay voters were warned that to vote for PR in GE13 was to put the ‘Chinese DAP’ in power, to the point of ‘Christianizing’ the nation.

Meanwhile, through state schemes and funds, Najib’s regime disbursed public money and benefits in kind directly to different target groups in turn, including poorer households, parents with school-going children, taxi drivers, FELDA settlers, civil servants, uniformed and paramilitary forces, youth motorcyclists, etc.⁶ Now and again, individual leaders from UMNO or BN would try to calm non-Malay concerns by referring to BN’s record of protecting non-Malay and non-Muslim rights. However, no UMNO leader, in and out of government, struck any such note with care or conviction. They refused to repudiate Malay-Muslim chauvinism in word and deed. They left little doubt that UMNO had strategically decided to ‘go it alone’ to recover Malay support and UMNO seats lost in 2008. At times, Najib appeared not to despair of retrieving some non-Malay (especially Indian) support but UMNO was prepared, effectively and remorselessly, to doom its non-Malay partners, principally MCA and Gerakan, to more decisive defeat in Peninsular Malaysia. After GE13, in fact, some UMNO veterans even complained that Najib (supposedly misled by ‘amateur’ advisers) should have ‘cut losses’ more determinedly and simply ‘given up on the Chinese voters’.

⁶ Welsh (2013) supplied a considered estimate of the amount of public money expended to ‘commercialize GE 13’.

If UMNO could discard the BN's 'proven multiethnic formula' and pursue a self-centered strategy of tightly securing a narrowed social base of rural and semi-rural constituencies with very high Malay majorities, it was because UMNO had been doubly hegemonic within the political system. Within BN, UMNO dictated to the non-Malay component parties. The electoral system had also been fashioned towards retaining 'Malay supremacy' in UMNO's hands. In contrast, no PR party could have considered a similar strategy. The opposition coalition was not in power, and none of PR's parties was hegemonic. Out of necessity, therefore, but not without conviction, PR had to campaign on a broad multiethnic base. Its parties set out to appeal to voters from all ethnic and religious backgrounds, pledging to help all, and hoping not to set one community against another. Across the peninsula, PR foresaw that the Chinese voters' unflinching 'ABU' sentiment would benefit candidates from all of PR's parties. In urban, non-Malay-majority or ethnically mixed constituencies with large proportions of Chinese voters, therefore, PR (and especially DAP and PKR) would probably devastate MCA, MIC and Gerakan. By the same token, however, PKR and particularly PAS were concerned that the Malay electorate could thereby be alarmed by arguments of a potential loss of Malay power into swinging (back) to UMNO. For PR, this was especially worrisome in the rural and semi-rural Malay-majority constituencies where PR's battle against UMNO mattered greatly. When GE 13 approached, PR's dilemma was dramatically shown when PAS's Vice President, Salahuddin Ayub, and DAP's veteran leader, Lim Kit Siang, led their parties' respective drives into Johor. In this undisputed fortress of BN (and particularly UMNO), PR could not gain a foothold even during the *tsunami* of 2008. But, at PR's *ceramah* and other campaign functions, the support of swelling crowds prepared to make enormous donations to PR (and especially

DAP) presaged a very strong ‘Chinese swing’ to PR. Then it appeared probable that several urban Chinese-majority seats, formerly held by MCA, could fall to DAP which had shifted some of its prominent leaders into Johor. Still, not even this dent into BN’s base could be sufficient to help PAS win Malay-majority constituencies without a corresponding pro-PR shift by Malay voters traditionally loyal to UMNO.

To an important degree, PR’s broad-based approach lent credence to its proclaimed anti-chauvinistic stances and suited its flexibly populist platform. The PR parties exposed cases of high-level corruption, opposed oligarchic capture of state projects through non-transparent awards, and denounced UMNO’s abuse of state largesse in the name of NEP. Against what they considered to be jaded zero-sum refrains of competing ethnic rights and privileges that camouflaged interethnic oligarchic collaboration, PR parties jointly presented a populist counter-hegemonic message.⁷ On the whole, PR pledged to remake the political order through honest government, better economic management, easing of economic burdens, leveling of opportunities for the poor and the middle-classes of all ethnic groups, and recovering national competitiveness. Besides, PR supported the specific causes of its allies in different coalitions – BERSIH, Anak FELDA, Anti-Lynas, and Oil royalty for Kelantan. Here PR’s reach into civil society contrasted with BN and particularly UMNO’s reliance on long established and well-funded organizational structures that were intimately linked to institutional infrastructure, official or otherwise. Virtually excluded from any public facility, except in the states it controlled, PR could never hope to match BN in

⁷ The best sources for this PR message were the speeches made by Anwar Ibrahim and Muhammad Sabu, variously available via Youtube. For example, see Muhammad Sabu (2012a and 2012b).

material resources. For compensation, PR improved its networks of social media, some maintained by PR's state governments or parties, and others, no less importantly, by a spectrum of dissenting online media, bloggers and netizens. In the event, PR's most intensive campaign ever was supported by the highest amounts of financial contributions openly given during public events, especially those featuring Anwar, or those organized by the DAP, or quietly made via electronic bank transfers.

IV. Summary of major results

A. Election Results: Parliament

Out of the 165 parliamentary seats contested in Peninsular Malaysia, BN won 85 seats against 80 for PR (Table 1). On the whole, BN performed best in states that had long been supportive of the ruling coalition, namely, Perlis, Kedah, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, and Johor. In contrast, where the opposition had often had a respectable presence or had benefitted from the swing to PR in GE12 – Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang, Perak and Terengganu – PR outperformed BN or gained an equal number of seats.

In Peninsular Malaysia, BN's five-seat-majority victory over PR (Table 1), equivalent to BN's 51.5 per cent of seats against PR's 48.5 per cent, was conspicuously close when contrasted with BN's outright defeat of PR in Sabah (22 seats against three, or 88 per cent to 12 per cent) and Sarawak (25 seats against six, or 80.6 per cent to 19.4 per cent). Hence, BN could crucially draw on its domination in Sabah and Sarawak whereas PR's evident weakness in those two states remained: BN's peninsular seats

constituted 63.9 per cent of its overall representation in Parliament in contrast to PR's corresponding proportion of 89.9 per cent.

Table 1
Malaysia, 13th General Election, 2013
Seats won by BN and PR component parties, Parliament

	State or Federal Territory (FT)	BN	PR				Total
			DAP	PKR	PAS	Total	
1	Perlis	3	0	0	0	0	3
2	Kedah	10	0	4	1	5	15
3	Kelantan	5	0	0	9	9	14
4	Terengganu	4	0	0	4	4	8
5	Pulau Pinang	3	7	3	0	10	13
6	Perak	12	7	3	2	12	24
7	Pahang	10	1	2	1	4	14
8	Selangor	5	4	9	4	17	22
9	Kuala Lumpur (FT)	2	5	4	0	9	11
10	Putrajaya (FT)	1	0	0	0	0	1
11	Negeri Sembilan	5	2	1	0	3	8
12	Melaka	4	1	1	0	2	6
13	Johor	21	4	1	0	5	26
	Peninsular Malaysia	85	31	28	21	80	165
14	Sabah	22	2	1	0	3	25
15	Labuan (FT)	1	0	0	0	0	1
16	Sarawak	25	5	1	0	6	31
	Sabah, Labuan and Sarawak	48	7	2	0	9	57
	Total	133	38	30	21	89	222

Source: SPR (2013a)

This inference gains stark significance when it is placed against the proportions of the total number of votes that BN and PR respectively won at the parliamentary level (Table 2). In Peninsular Malaysia, PR secured a substantial majority in the popular vote,

obtaining 53.8 per cent against BN's 46.2 per cent.

Table 2
Malaysia, 13th General Election, 2013
Comparison of Votes Cast for BN and PR, Parliamentary Contests

	State or Federal Territory (FT)	Votes cast for BN		Votes cast for PR		Total valid votes*
		Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
1	Perlis	64,192	55.4	51,538	44.3	115,956
2	Kedah	451,095	50.6	431,999	48.5	891,575
3	Kelantan	330,382	43.0	413,087	53.7	769,214
4	Terengganu	283,455	51.4	267,112	48.5	551,133
5	Pulau Pinang	229,395	31.5	493,327	67.8	727,244
6	Perak	512,861	45.0	623,860	54.7	1,140,876
7	Pahang	337,596	55.2	271,411	44.4	611,766
8	Selangor	685,557	39.0	1,044,717	59.4	1,759,470
9	Kuala Lumpur (FT)	227,268	34.5	425,352	64.7	657,850
10	Putrajaya (FT)	9,943	69.3	4,402	30.7	14,345
11	Negeri Sembilan	237,011	51.0	219,718	47.3	464,618
12	Melaka	202,885	53.8	174,171	46.2	377,056
13	Johor	750,786	54.9	615,123	45.0	1,366,942
Peninsular Malaysia		4,322,426	46.2	5,032,637	53.8	9,355,063
14	Sabah	421,828	54.7	277,411	36.0	770,466
15	Labuan (FT)	12,694	66.3	6,455	33.7	19,149
16	Sarawak	481,038	58.9	304,508	37.3	817,227
Sabah, Labuan and Sarawak		915,560	57.0	588,374	36.7	1,606,842
Total		5,237,986	47.4	5,621,011	50.8	11,054,887

* Includes votes for independent candidates but their mostly negligible proportions are not given here.

Source: compiled and calculated from SPR (2013a)

Despite winning a higher proportion of the popular vote in Peninsular Malaysia, PR won five seats *less* than BN. This mismatch between the shares of seats and shares of the popular vote was amplified for the whole Parliament: whereas BN only received 47.4 per cent of the *popular vote* against PR's 50.8 per cent, nonetheless BN won 59.9

per cent of the *seats* against PR's 40.1 per cent, an outcome that was influenced, among other factors, by BN's large victories in Sabah and Sarawak (Table 3).

Table 3
Malaysia, 13th General Election, 2013

% of valid votes and seats won by BN and PR, Parliamentary contests

	State or Federal Territory (FT)	BN's % of		PR's % of	
		valid votes	seats	valid votes	seats
1	Perlis	55.4	100	44.3	0
2	Kedah	50.6	67	48.5	33
3	Kelantan	43.0	36	53.7	64
4	Terengganu	51.4	50	48.5	50
5	Pulau Pinang	31.5	23	67.8	77
6	Perak	45.0	50	54.7	50
7	Pahang	55.2	71	44.4	29
8	Selangor	39.0	23	59.4	77
9	Kuala Lumpur (FT)	34.5	18	64.7	82
10	Putrajaya (FT)	69.3	100	30.7	0
11	Negeri Sembilan	51.0	63	47.3	37
12	Melaka	53.8	67	46.2	33
13	Johor	54.9	81	45.0	19
Peninsular Malaysia		46.2	52	53.8	48
14	Sabah	54.7	88	36.0	12
15	Labuan (FT)	66.3	100	33.7	0
16	Sarawak	58.9	81	37.3	19
Sabah, Labuan and Sarawak		57.0	84.2	36.7	15.8
Total		47.4	60	50.8	40

Source: calculated from SPR (2013a)

B. Election Results: State Legislative Assemblies

As the summary of the results of the State Legislative Assembly contests in Peninsular Malaysia in Table 4 shows, there were several notable outcomes. First, BN

took control of Perlis, Kedah, Terengganu, Perak, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor. This result included the recovery of Kedah. On the other hand, PR retained or consolidated its control over Kelantan, Pulau Pinang and Selangor. Retaining only three states compared to the five it won in GE 12, PR came close to winning Terengganu as well. Perak was something of an odd state; BN retained control of the state but effectively only by maintaining the status quo created by BN's coup in 2009.

Table 4
Malaysia, 13th General Election, 2013
Distribution of State Legislative Assembly seats between BN and PR

	State	BN	PR				Total
			DAP	PAS	PKR	PR total	
1	Perlis	13		1	1	2	15
2	Kedah	21	2	9	4	15	36
3	Kelantan	12		32	1	33	45
4	Terengganu	17		14	1	15	32
5	Pulau Pinang	10	19	1	10	30	40
6	Perak	31	18	5	5	28	59
7	Pahang	30	7	3	2	12	42
8	Selangor	12	15	15	14	44	56
9	Negeri Sembilan	22	11		3	14	36
10	Melaka	21	6	1		7	28
11	Johor	38	13	4	1	18	56
	Peninsular Malaysia	227	91	85	42	218	445
12	Sabah	48	4	0	7	12*	60
	Total	275	95	85	49	230	505*

* Includes one seat won by a minor PR ally contesting only in Sabah.

Source: SPR (2013b)

Second, the State Legislative Assembly contests produced a much closer outcome than is suggested by BN's triumphs in eight out of eleven states, compared to

only six after GE 12. In fact, BN only won 227 seats or approximately 51 per cent of a total of 445 seats on the peninsula while PR took 218 seats or 49 per cent. Naturally the total number of State Legislative Assembly seats, non-uniformly spread over eleven states, cannot be regarded in the same light as the total number of seats that made up just one parliament. For the contending coalitions, winning control of the state government in each of the eleven state elections was, of course, the principal objective and definitive political result. Even so, the actual outcome was not so much a confirmation of BN's traditional strength at the level of state elections as an indication of its decline and, correspondingly, of PR's growing challenge.

Third, as it was for Parliament, so it was for the State Legislative Assemblies as a whole: there was a significant mismatch between the contending coalitions' shares of popular votes and shares of seats that largely worked to PR's detriment. In the peninsula-wide State Legislative Assembly popular vote, BN trailed PR by 46.5 per cent to 52.7 per cent (Table 5). That was a considerable deficit, only slightly lower than BN's deficit in the peninsular parliamentary popular vote. Here, a hypothetical point may be inserted in passing: were Kuala Lumpur to have held a state-level election, PR's 64.7 per cent of the popular vote in the parliamentary contests of the Federal Territory (Table 2) would presumably have secured the opposition coalition an even larger share of the popular vote at the State Legislative Assembly level.

Table 5
Malaysia, 13th General Election, 2013
Comparison of Votes Cast for BN and PR, State Legislative Assembly Contests*

	State	Votes cast for BN		Votes cast for PR		Total**
		Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
1	Perlis	65,221	56.4	48,375	41.8	115,702
2	Kedah	449,278	50.4	434,621	48.7	891,892
3	Kelantan	343,416	44.6	425,291	55.3	769,595
4	Terengganu	282,999	51.3	264,553	48.0	550,944
5	Pulau Pinang	233,305	32.1	490,739	67.5	727,003
6	Perak	506,947	44.4	625,710	54.8	1,141,779
7	Pahang	330,868	54.1	270,230	44.2	611,705
8	Selangor	693,956	39.4	1,050,665	59.6	1,762,318
9	Negeri Sembilan	241,350	51.8	220,929	47.4	465,687
10	Melaka	201,228	53.3	174,232	46.2	377,455
11	Johor	737,876	54.0	625,965	45.8	1,366,906
	Peninsular Malaysia	4,086,444	46.5	4,631,310	52.7	8,780,986
12	Sabah	428,634	55.6	248,164	32.2	770,678
	Total	4,518,018	47.3	4,879,474	51.1	9,551,664

* Sarawak held its State Legislative Assembly election in 2011; the results are not included here.

** Includes votes for independent candidates but their proportion, mostly negligible, are not given here.

Source: compiled and calculated from SPR (2013b)

Fourth, there was a somewhat different dimension to the mismatch between the opposing coalitions' respective shares of popular votes and shares of seats at state level. In any state, the winning coalition typically had a majority of the popular vote together with a considerably (and for Perlis, Pahang, Melaka and Johor, a disproportionately) higher share of the seats (Table 6). This basic pattern disadvantaged the losing coalition, including BN in Kelantan, Pulau Pinang and Selangor. Yet the pattern would not have affected the fundamental outcome of the elections in all states but one. In the anomalous and lopsided case of Perak, BN *won* control of the state government with a three-seat

majority despite *losing* the popular vote by the massive margin of 44.4 per cent to PR's 54.8 per cent (Table 6).

Table 6
Malaysia, 13th General Election, 2013

% valid votes and % of State Legislative Assembly seats won by BN and PR

	State	BN's % of		PR's % of	
		valid votes	seats	valid votes	seats
1	Perlis	56.4	86.7	41.8	13.3
2	Kedah	50.4	58.3	48.7	41.7
3	Kelantan	44.6	26.7	55.3	73.3
4	Terengganu	51.3	53.1	48.0	46.9
5	Pulau Pinang	32.1	25.0	67.5	75.0
6	Perak	44.4	52.5	54.8	47.5
7	Pahang	54.1	71.4	44.2	28.6
8	Selangor	39.4	21.4	59.6	78.6
9	Negeri Sembilan	54.0	61.1	47.4	38.9
10	Melaka	53.3	75.0	46.2	25.0
11	Johor	55.6	67.9	45.8	32.1
	Peninsular Malaysia	46.5	51.0	52.7	49.0
12	Sabah	55.6	80.0	32.2	20.0
	Total	47.3	54.4	51.1	45.3

Source: compiled and calculated from SPR (2013B)

Throughout Peninsular Malaysia, BN was marginally ahead of PR in terms of parliamentary seats, marginally ahead in terms of state legislative assembly seats, but substantially ahead in terms of the control of state governments. Of course, BN had won power according to a 'first-past-the-post' system, not a system of proportional representation (that had never been adopted by Malaysia). In a sense, PR's popular-vote majority was a 'moral victory', albeit not one that could technically or legally support any claim by PR to have won the election. However, GE 13 marked the first time ever

that BN had unmistakably lost the support of a majority of all voters for Parliament (Table 7), at the principal electoral site of Peninsular Malaysia, and to a cohesive opposition that had positioned itself as a ‘second coalition’.⁸ This historic setback has caused BN to be labeled a ‘minority government’ (Thomas 2013). Minimally that imputed a sense of loss of legitimacy for BN that would be testing when PR strove to link its own failure to take power at the national level to irregular, unfair and ‘unclean’ electoral practices allegedly undertaken by BN and abetted by the Election Commission.

Table 7
Malaysia, General Elections 1959–2013
% of total vote compared with % of Parliamentary seats

Election Year	Alliance/Barisan Nasional			All opposition parties			Total no. of seats contested
	% total vote	No. of seats won	% seats*	% total vote	No. of seats won	% seats	
1959	51.7	74	71	48.3	30	29	104
1964	58.5	89	86	41.5	15	14	104
1969	49.3	92	64	50.7	51	36	143
1974	60.7	135	88	39.3	19	12	154
1978	57.2	130	84	42.8	24	16	154
1982	60.5	132	86	39.5	22	14	154
1986	55.8	148	84	41.5	29	16	177
1990	53.4	127	71	46.6	53	29	180
1995	65.2	162	84	34.8	30	16	192
1999	56.5	148	77	43.5	45	23	193
2004	63.8	198	91	36.2	21**	9	219**
2008	51.4	140	63	48.6	82	37	222
2013	47.4	133	60	50.8	89	40	222

* Rounded to nearest 1%. ** Figure includes one independent candidate.

Sources: Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya, *Election Report*, various years; SPR (2013a and 2013b)

⁸ In 1969, the Alliance was estimated to have taken just less than a majority of the popular vote (Table 7), but the opposition parties then did not form a cohesive coalition to challenge for national power.

V. Critical questions and interpretations

As general elections go, GE 13 has, arguably, been the most complex. This has partly been due to the protracted pre-election maneuvers and campaigning, and partly to the vast expansion of issues and contestants that took place over a five-year period, so to speak, practically as soon as GE 12 was over. Much of the complexity of the peninsular portion of the GE 13 results cannot be covered adequately in this relatively brief report; it can only be suggested here by referring to certain lines of reasoning without reducing the entire BN-PR battle to a matter of a few key ‘reasons’.

One revelation of GE 13 was the importance of spatial differences in voting patterns which suggested a rural-urban divide that had started with GE 12 and stiffened in GE 13. In general, the divide was manifest in BN’s (but essentially UMNO’s) domination of the rural constituencies against PR’s entrenchment in the urban constituencies. Public discourse tended to frame the divide sharply in terms of the social, political and ideological attributes of the voters on either side. On the one hand, rural voters were typically profiled as being less educated, less informed, less ‘digitally connected’, less amenable to change, and, hence, more conservatively pro-regime. On the other hand, urban voters were roughly cast in just the opposite terms. Yet, the differences in BN’s and PR’s respective performances, spatially considered as it were, rested on more than essentialized conformities of rural and urban voting blocs to rehearsed dichotomies of discarded modernization theory. The rural constituencies remained largely UMNO’s preserve because of the UMNO-led regime’s monopoly of state resource allocations, sustained record of providing diverse forms of ‘rural

development’, and maintenance of direct subsidies and material benefits to rural households. At the same time, UMNO’s deeply and extensively embedded presence and ‘vigilance’ within its party organizational structure, a matrix of official departments and parastatal networks (JKKK, RELA and KEMAS, for instance)⁹, and all print and broadcast media (owned by the state, or BN component parties or companies aligned with BN). These advantages helped UMNO immensely despite being challenged by PAS in the rural constituencies of the ‘Malay heartland’ for a long time. Although PAS could be successful in key areas (such as predominantly rural Kelantan and Terengganu) at critical moments (like 1990 and 1999), UMNO has effectively kept a large proportion of rural constituencies ‘immunized’ from or otherwise impenetrable to PR. In GE 13, UMNO and its allied organizations additionally denied PR parties access to rural constituencies by low-scale violence and harassments.

In one crucial respect, the rural-urban divide in Peninsular Malaysia did not starkly correspond to an ethnic, that is, Malay-Chinese, divide as had been seen in past elections, such as in 1986 (Khoo 1995: 236–239). Immediately after GE 13, various spokespeople from UMNO and UMNO-owned media claimed that BN’s setbacks were due to a ‘Chinese *tsunami*’. Anxious to reject UMNO’s interjection of a post-electoral narrative of Malay loyalty versus Chinese disloyalty (towards BN), some PR leaders denied that there was a ‘Chinese *tsunami*’. Of course, there was one: Chinese voters caused a tidal wave of anti-regime sentiment that brought MCA to its electoral nadir, reaffirmed Gerakan’s irrelevance, and strengthened DAP as never before. Yet the

⁹ The abbreviations respectively stand for Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (Village Security and Development Committee), Pasukan Sukarelawan Malaysia (Malaysia Volunteer Corps), and Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (Department of Social Department).

disaffection of the Chinese voters, escalating between GE 12 and GE 13, had gone beyond the ambit of an older ‘Chinese politics’ that was bounded by issues of Chinese language, education and culture, and dissatisfaction with NEP discrimination. No one would have expected many Chinese voters not to have retained ‘Chinese sentiments’ over those issues. However, they were far more angered by pervasive corruption, failing governance, rising crime and increasing officially sanctioned ethno-religious chauvinism. They overwhelmingly supported candidates from all PR parties in pursuit of ‘regime change’. The most telling sign of their commitment to the ‘ABU’ stance came when the Registrar of Societies (RoS) notified DAP barely two days before the nomination day that the RoS did not recognize the validity of DAP’s Central Committee. The RoS notification threatened DAP with the loss of the use of its party symbol. When DAP defiantly declared that all its candidates, if compelled to, would contest under the PAS symbol in Peninsular Malaysia,¹⁰ Chinese voters evinced not their old abhorrence for the ‘Islamic fundamentalist party’ but unprecedented goodwill towards PAS. That was perhaps the moment of ‘the *Reformasi* of the Chinese’, reminiscent of the Malay voter’s readiness during *Reformasi* in 1999 to vote for DAP (castigated by Malays as the ‘Chinese chauvinist party’) if that would help to oust UMNO from power.

The Malay voters were rather more divided, supporting UMNO or supporting PAS and/or PKR. One part of UMNO’s strategy was to call for ‘Malay unity’ amidst a barrage of scaremongering over an impending ‘Chinese’ or even ‘Christian’ takeover if PR were to win GE 13. The PR’s Malay candidates, sensitive to Malay voters’ anxieties

¹⁰ To complete the picture, DAP candidates were ready to stand under PKR’s logo in Sabah and Sarawak.

over economic, political and religious issues, feared a Malay backlash in retaliation against any ‘Chinese *tsunami*’. To some extent, the scaremongering by UMNO and its Malay NGO allies forestalled an advance from GE 12 for PR’s Malay candidates by generating a pro-UMNO Malay swing in constituencies where the winning majority was small, as several PAS losses suggested.¹¹ Yet, UMNO’s improved performance over GE 12 in Peninsular Malaysia was less reassuring to the party than it seemed. The total estimated Malay vote for UMNO was even short of its claimed membership figures.¹² At any rate, only substantial Malay support for PR, augmented by the ‘Chinese *tsunami*’, could have gained PR its majority in the popular vote. Another part of UMNO’s strategy involved showering material benefits in cash and in kind on various socio-economic groups within the Malay community – probably a fairly productive move. Whereas PR’s Malay leaders could challenge the ideological barrage, they had scant reply to the material assault beyond promising a better economic future if PR were to topple BN. Still, PAS triumphed comfortably in Kelantan and came close to winning Terengganu, evidence that UMNO’s strategy of generating ethno-religious anxieties and fears was not effective in predominantly Malay-majority areas where ethnicity was rarely a factor in the elections (Halim 2000).

Finally, Indian voters did not swing further to PR as they did in GE 12, or decisively swing back to BN as UMNO had hoped by negotiating late deals with HINDRAF factions and offering token material benefits to the Indian community.

¹¹ It is worth considering PAS’s Dzukefly Ahmad’s post-GE 13 reflections on this issue, as reported in Hafiz (2013).

¹² This argument has been most consistently made by the blogger, Sakmongkol AK47. See, for example, Sakmongkol AK47 (2013).

Before GE 13, HINDRAF was already too fragmented to replicate the Indian voting bloc effect of GE 12. The MIC fared better than MCA or Gerakan in GE 13, partly from Indian support but crucially from Malay support since MIC candidates contested constituencies that had no Indian majorities. For all that, DAP or PKR alone had more ethnic Indian MPs and State Legislative Assembly representatives than MIC.

Despite the persistent (but often changing) significance of ethnicity in Malaysian elections, one theme of GE 13 captured an unpredicted convergence of long-term socio-economic transformation with contemporaneous political change which led to the emergence of populist dissent against oligarchic domination. Going by recent general elections as markers, the dissent began with the *Reformasi* battle of 1999, retreated in the first post-Mahathir election of 2004, returned with the *tsunami* of 2008, and consolidated with ‘ABU’ conviction in GE 13. The dissent has dynamically spread across rigid ethnic, class, spatial, party, and ideological boundaries. And yet, its socio-political core is a Malay revolt against the *UMNOputera*, a label that Malay dissidents use to deride a regime that abused UMNO’s political power and the NEP to concentrate ‘*Bumiputera* assets’ in the hands of Malay oligarchs. Hence, the etymology of the term, *UMNOputera*: ‘Bumi [soil] represents the ordinary people while Putera [prince] represents the Malay elite, aristocracy, children of rulers, children of UMNO leaders and so on’ (Sakmongkol AK47: 2012b, translated). And, the *bumi*, left with crumbs while the *putera* moved far ahead with largesse, had been opposing the ‘*korupsi, kolusi, nepotisme*’ (corruption, collusion and nepotism) of the *UMNOputera* since *Reformasi*.¹³ Of course, masses of urban yuppie, middle-class, working-class, and

¹³ This slogan was borrowed from the Indonesian *Reformasi* which preceded the Malaysian movement.

lumpen Malays responded to the *UMNOputera* in a variety of ways. Some joined or worked for them, indifferent to their excesses or receptive to their blandishments.¹⁴ There were also Malays in the civil service¹⁵ and the lower to middle strata of the BCIC whose dependence on their connections to UMNO and the regime for employment and different forms of assistance made them insecure vis-à-vis the Chinese. These Malays accepted UMNO's discourse of an unattained Malay corporate ownership rate, a timeless Malay agenda, and, if it came to it, UMNO's rule on its own. Yet other Malays opposed UMNO and supplied counter-hegemonic articulations that spread through BERSIH in 2007, emerged in the *tsunami* of 2008, advanced through BERSIH 2.0, BERSIH 3.0, and the *Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat* of January 2013, and persist to GE 13 and after.

Over about fourteen years and four general elections, Malay resentment towards the oligarchy simmered. Yet it largely went unnoticed because intra-Malay politics was assumed to revolve around UMNO-PAS 'religious competition'. But the UMNO-PAS rivalry went beyond ideological differences or theological disputes to embrace material disputes. For example, the Federal government had brazenly denied direct development funding to the PAS government in Kelantan and refused to pay oil royalties to Kelantan and also to Terengganu (when the latter was ruled by PAS from 1999 to 2004). Likewise changing was the character of UMNO-PAS animosity because its social basis had been altered as PAS penetrated urban constituencies and fielded younger, urban and

¹⁴ As Anwar charged at several *ceramah*, those would include Malay youths 'being paid RM20 each' to harass the PR events and speakers.

¹⁵ Yet, in Putrajaya, 'almost entirely populated by government officials and senior civil servants and their families, who are under enormous pressure to vote for the BN' (Brown 2005: 433), about 25 per cent of the valid votes cast in 2008 went to the PAS candidate.

professional candidates from 1999 onwards. Showing different political sensibilities and mobilizing capabilities from the party's *ulama* leadership, PAS's new candidates were as moved by the profane as the sacred, as ready to dispute economic matters as moral ones. In parallel, an UMNO-PKR rivalry emerged. Temporarily camouflaged by the singularity of the 'Anwar affair', this rivalry was disregarded after Mahathir's departure from office, PKR's defeat in April 2004 and Anwar's release in September of the same year. The UMNO-PKR rivalry, however, was soon prominent for the impact of a group of young, urban and professional Malays who were just the social types to stress merit, competence, equity, and good governance as the goals of political reform.¹⁶ Yet other Malay politicians challenged UMNO from what was once an almost unthinkable base: DAP. Of several Malay candidates whom DAP fielded for both Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly, three won. Consequently, dissident Malays who opposed the oligarchy did so as pious, anti-corruption Islamists, or civil-society-based institution-oriented reformists, or 'Hayekian' and neo-liberal anti-statists, or even putative 'Greens'. They denounced the *UMNOputera* for being corrupt, rent-seeking, wasteful, inefficient, and immoral. They helped to shred UMNO's supposedly monolithic 'Malay agenda' and blunted the ethnic edges of dissent. In common with DAP (and not only its Malay representatives) they attained a powerful convergence of populist discourses and mobilization via PR and ad hoc coalitions in civil society. For the foreseeable future, peninsular politics will still revolve very greatly around 'Malay politics'. But it is Malay politics with reorientations of oppositional foci and narratives: from rural to urban areas, from ethno-religious to multiethnic populist, from NEP-linked

¹⁶ Of course, PKR has non-Malay leaders, too, but the point here is to stress an intra-Malay political conflict pitting UMNO against PKR.

anti-statist to middle-class anti-oligarchic, and from older to younger voters.

For PR, those were shifts in ideological reinvention and mobilizational realignment on a grand scale that secured a majority in the popular vote of GE 13. Against all that, UMNO has known no better than to essentialize ‘*agama, bangsa, raja*’ (religion, race and ruler) as the core of Malayness that UMNO must protect against ‘traitorous Malays’ and ‘non-BN-supporting non-Malays’. That tactic was no more than UMNO’s desperate abandonment of its former (and once credible) claim to represent all Malaysians, even when it was repackaged as Najib’s ‘1Malaysia’. Yet, GE 13 was not simply a matter of posting the ‘correct’, the ‘best’ or even the most ‘fearful’ of political messages. In many ways, an ideologically exhausted UMNO could do without reinvention because of its unchecked deployment of public resources for direct political gain, and its unchallenged control of institutions and departments that were crucial to the conduct of ‘clean and fair’ elections. The Election Commission, long deprived of autonomy, was not an impartial custodian of the electoral process; the Commission had evolved, as one commentator mocked, into BN’s fifteenth component ‘party’ (Sakmongkol AK47: 2012a). The RoS caper against the DAP was merely the latest evidence of the partisan anti-opposition intervention of state departments and agencies. Not only have the controlled print and broadcast media refused to heed the demands for fair journalism and coverage, they have become wilder and more reckless in spreading calumny and fabrications, as the principal culprit in this matter, the UMNO-owned *Utusan Malaysia*, had demonstrated by losing lawsuit after lawsuit for libel against PR leaders. In this context, GE 13 in the peninsula surely stood out as a contest of opposites; contests between reinvented parties and platforms against exhausted ones;

between freer social internet-based media against controlled media; between the opposition's appeal to their supporters for financial contributions against the incumbent regime's monopoly and abuse of public resources; and, most of all, between popular demands for electoral reforms against the manipulation of the electoral process. On that last point, the increasingly lop-sided voter mal-apportionments in constituency demarcation, gerrymandering, the manipulative distribution of postal votes, the refusal to clean up tainted electoral rolls, the worsening practice of money politics, the resort to official and 'outsourced' intimidation, the denial of voting fraud, etc., involved to different degrees the complicity of the Election Commission, the uniformed forces, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy. As it were, these behaved as appendages of the regime, supplying an institutional dimension to PR's defeat in many keenly contested seats and GE 13. Ironically, if, despite all their institutional advantages, UMNO-BN no longer represents the majority – formerly its unanswerable claim – then the regime's legitimacy is being strained. Presently the BN's peninsular structure is moribund. As they try to stave off the ignominy of irrelevance, MCA, Gerakan and MIC cannot but blame their disasters on UMNO whose conduct and policies they could not influence or moderate. Successive defeats of the BN's 'Chinese-based' and 'Indian-based' component parties in GE 12 and GE 13 also owe to structural shifts in urban-non-Malay-middle-class voting patterns that will not allow those parties to recapture their lost support. At any rate, there will not be a pendulum-like swing back to the 'BN formula' of ethnic politics and cooperation, not with UMNO leaning even more to a PERKASA position.

For the time being, PR has found in DAP's triumphs an almost complete hold over the non-Malay-majority constituencies. Even so, given its aspiration to national

power, PR has to look upon GE 13 as a defeat at a very favorable conjuncture. The coalition's addition of seven seats in Parliament was an improvement. Its expansion in the State Legislative Assemblies was remarkable. And its majority in the popular vote – albeit a peninsular gain – conferred credibility on PR, highlighted the inherent injustice of an unreformed electoral system, and forced the regime on the defensive in terms of the 'legitimacy' of its 'minority' government. The coalition of PR remains intact despite some disputes over seat allocations and flaws in election campaign cooperation. There is in PR a younger, multiethnic and popular leadership capable of expanding their respective parties' different social bases strategically – unlike UMNO/BN whose absence of young leaders is starkly exposed by its captivity to aging 'warlords'. To that extent, in Peninsular Malaysia, if not yet in Sabah and Sarawak, a two-coalition system is in place, in practice at last, and in the voters' imagination no less.

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