

Malaysian Political Development in the Era of Najib Razak

Pembangunan Politik Malaysia di Era Pemerintahan Najib Razak

MOHAMAD FAIRUZ MAT ALI & MOHAMMAD AGUS YUSOFF

ABSTRACT

This article utilises Huntington's concept of political development to assess the political development in Malaysia during the era of Najib Razak. Three main indices were used to measure political development, namely institutionalisation, mobilisation, and economic growth. The data for this article were obtained from primary sources through interviews with authoritative informants, as well as secondary sources from books, journals, official government reports and news portals. Findings revealed that in terms of political institutionalisation, Najib Razak failed in forming strong and efficient government institutions in the executive, legislative and judicial branches. This failure suggests that Malaysia's political institutionalisation has been corrupted. In addition, it was discovered that the political mobilisation during this era was passive. This is because Najib controlled the freedom of the media and speech, as well as restricted the civil rights of the people. In terms of economic growth, no significant changes were observed over the previous government in terms of GDP, per capita income, and poverty reduction of the people due to abuse of power, IMDB scandal, malpractice, and secretive governance. The political decay later led to the defeat of Barisan Nasional for the first time in Malaysia's political history since its independence in 1957.

Keywords: political development; Najib Razak; Barisan Nasional; Malaysia; 14th GE

ABSTRACT

Artikel ini menggunakan konsep pembangunan politik Huntington untuk menilai pembangunan politik Malaysia era pemerintahan Najib Razak. Tiga indeks utama digunakan untuk mengukur pembangunan politik tersebut iaitu institusionalisasi, mobilisasi dan pertumbuhan ekonomi. Data artikel ini diperoleh dari sumber primer melalui temu bual dengan informan autoritatif, dan sumber sekunder dari buku, jurnal, laporan rasmi kerajaan dan portal berita. Hasil analisis mendapati dari segi institusionalisasi politik, Najib Razak tidak berjaya membentuk institusi kerajaan yang kuat dan cekap dalam cabang eksekutif, legislatif dan kehakiman. Kegagalan ini menunjukkan institusionalisasi politik Malaysia korup. Mengenai mobilisasi politik, hasil analisis mendapati ia bersifat pasif. Ini kerana Najib mengawal kebebasan media, kebebasan bersuara dan menyekat hak sivil rakyat. Dari segi pertumbuhan ekonomi, pemerintahan Najib Razak tidak menunjukkan perubahan yang lebih baik daripada kerajaan sebelumnya dari segi KDNK, pendapatan per kapita, dan penurunan kadar kemiskinan rakyat disebabkan oleh salah guna kuasa, skandal IMDB, penyelewengan, dan tadbir urus yang tidak transparan. Kereputan politik inilah yang kemudiannya membawa kepada kekalahan Barisan Nasional buat kali pertamanya dalam sejarah politik Malaysia sejak ia mencapai kemerdekaan pada tahun 1957.

Kata kunci: pembangunan politi; Najib Razak; Barisan Nasional; Malaysia; PRU ke-14

INTRODUCTION

There have been many studies conducted examining political development in developing countries, including Salonga (2001) in the Philippines and Gana (2013) in Tunisia. In the Philippines, Salonga (2001) discovered that the people under Marcos' rule were depressed and suffered hardships from his failure to create new jobs, boost economic growth, and tackle corrupt practices among government officials. In addition, Marcos employed martial law to control the political freedoms of the people, arrest opposition leaders, control all media channels, and

commit violence against citizens who opposed his regime. As a result, the people rose against his autocratic rule, causing Marcos to flee to Hawaii in 1986. According to Salonga (2001), regime change is a process that changed the Philippine political development from autocratic to democratic.

In Tunisia, during the beginning of Zine El Abine Ben Ali's 23-year rule (1987-2011), the level of economic growth was good with Tunisia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita growth rising from \$1201 in 1986 to \$3786 in 2008. With this accomplishment, Tunisia was then known as one of the "Lions" of Africa (Gana 2013). However,

afteryears in power, Ben Ali turned into an autocrat. He restricted freedom of speech and used forces against the people who opposed him. He also practised corruption and cronyism by naming his wife as the chairman of 21 state-owned companies. As a result of this practice, the people demanded him to resign. He ignored the people's protests and complaints, causing a vegetable dealer, Mohamed Bouazizi, to set himself on fire in December 2010 as a sign of protest as his stall was confiscated by the authorities. Bouazizi's death had resulted in the rise of the youth that eventually led to his downfall.

The similar case is witnessed in Malaysia. After the 13th general election (GE), Najib Razak's rule faced a more challenging threat when he was linked to the scandal of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a wholly state-owned company established in February 2009 (Sarawak Report 2015; Case 2017). Yet, the US Department of Justice and the Swiss Attorney General's Office revealed that the 1MDB scandal was the biggest criminal mismanagement and corruption, thus portraying Najib Razak as a kleptocrat (Revill 2016). Asia Sentinel (2016) described the 1MDB transaction as one of the largest money laundering cases in history.

To curb the news of this kleptocratic practice, the government acted to block the media from reporting on this issue. For example, the government blocked the Malaysian Insider and Sarawak Report websites as they were among the earliest portals to publish news about 1MDB as well as the RM2.6 billion donation received by Najib Razak (Ong 2016; Dzulkefly 2016). Apart from that, Najib Razak also fired his deputy Muhyiddin Yassin and minister Shafie Apdal in 2015 who were vocal in criticising 1MDB's malpractices (Maksum 2020).

This situation had caused the opposition parties, civil society and various other parties to question the government's sincerity in 1MDB's investment. As a result of the government failure to provide a convincing answer to the people's grievances, a street protest was organised forcing the government to take stern action. Such a political scenario has had a huge impact on the BN government in the 14th general election (GE) where it was defeated at the hands of Pakatan Harapan (PH—The Alliance of Hope) after ruling for six decades since independence. Various factors are said to have contributed to BN's defeat. Among them are the 1MDB scandal, the issue of corruption, the weakness in the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, the failure of economic policies, the rising cost of living, and

the role of Dr Mahathir who led the Pakatan Harapan (Funston 2018; Welsh 2018).

The question is, why did BN lose in the 14th GE? Was it due to Najib Razak's failure in developing Malaysian politics? To address this question, this article focuses its research on Malaysian political development during Najib Razak's rule by evaluating three indices of political development used by Huntington, namely: (i) institutionalisation, (ii) political mobilisation, and (iii) economic growth.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Political development is a broad and diverse concept. For instance, Coleman (1958) defines it as the change of political structure system from traditional to modern and autocratic to democratic leading to the political democratisation of a country. Coleman (1958) aversthat the modern political structure is better at managing the political system of a country as it acts actively compared to the less active traditional political structure. LaPalombara (1963) in his book *Bureaucracy and political development* discusses political development as a change in the national bureaucracy. This is because the efficiency of the government depends on the ability of the bureaucracy in providing services to the people. In Japan, the country's great success was contributed by its political institutions, legislatures, political parties, and the cabinet system that functioned efficiently to develop the country after a severe defeat in World War II.

Riggs (1963) in his book *Bureaucrats and political development: A paradoxical view* sees political development as a change of political participation from passive to active. He added that this participation can be assessed through the involvement of the people in a political party, elections, and other political activities including political talks. With that being said, if the people are actively involved, political development would take place and the society would be considered modern. However, if the situation is otherwise, political development would be hindered and the society is said to be traditional.

The above discussion relates three conditions that can lead to political development: Coleman (1958) sees it from a change in political structure, LaPalombara sees it from a change in bureaucratic structure, and lastly, Riggs evaluates it in terms of political participation.

Huntington (1965) completed the definition of political development of these three scholars. In his article *Political development and political decay*, he stated that political development is a change in political institutions from the old pattern (particularism) to politics that is broader and universal (universalism). With this definition, he outlines four characteristics of political development. The first feature is rationalisation, that is, the change from old-fashioned politics to universal politics, and from traditional politics to rational politics. The second feature is nationalism, which is closely related to the change in the attitude of the people from separated to united as well as practising national integration and being patriotic. The third feature is democratisation, which is the change of the political system from autocratic to democratic. Huntington argued that changing a political system to democracy requires the state to create elements of democracy such as pluralism, competition, and equality of power in its political system. The fourth feature is mobilisation and political participation.

To achieve political development, Huntington (1965) emphasised that the role of executive, legislative, and judicial institutions is important in creating political stability. When these three institutions become strong, efficient and clean from corruption, the administration of the country would become credible and fair. Finally, when a stable institution exists, a country with a high political development would be created, while a low political institution has a corrupt government and a primitive administration. Another index of political development noted by Huntington (1968), but not debated by previous scholars, is economic growth. He explained that it is difficult to achieve democratisation if the level of Gross National Product (GDP) per capita is low as democratisation takes place in high-income countries. Huntington (1968) mentioned that when a country has a high income, a high level of education, a large middle class, and high political participation, democratisation would occur, hence changing the country from an autocratic to a democratic regime.

Huntington (1968) also added, if the indices of institutionalisation, political mobilisation and economic growth are corrupted, passive, and low, political decay would occur in the country. Therefore, he placed these matters as the main indices to measure political development since the data showed that only countries with civic, active, and high levels of all these three indices witnessed

the occurrence of political development. Therefore, Huntington's model of political development above was used in this article to assess the level of achievement of Malaysia's political development during the ruling of Najib Razak.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article employed a qualitative research design owing to its suitability with this study, which examines the political development of Malaysia during the ruling of Najib Razak. In addition, qualitative design was utilised as this method provides three other advantages. First, this design is open-ended in nature, which offers flexibility for researchers to interpret statistical and field data on the political developments of the Najib Razak era. Second, it allows researchers to enter data based on experiences and observations of the people's views on political issues during Najib Razak's rule. Third, this method allows study subjects to be evaluated in detail to obtain valid and reliable findings.

In terms of data collection, this article used primary data obtained through interviews with authoritative informants including Anwar Ibrahim, the leader of the Malaysian opposition, Mohamad Sabu, former defence minister and president of the Amanah party, Mahdzir Khalid (minister of rural development), and Mustapa Mohamed, minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy). In addition, secondary data in the form of books, journal articles, official government reports and news portals were utilised. This article employed the concept of political development as an analytical tool and Najib Razak's government as its unit of analysis.

NAJIB RAZAK AND HIS POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Najib Razak is the eldest son of Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second prime minister. He was born on 23 July 1953 in Kuala Lipis and is a Pahang aristocrat. His involvement in UMNO began when he won unopposed in the Pekan parliamentary by-election in February 1976 after the death of his father (Paridah 2010:21). He became the youngest member of parliament in Malaysian political history at the age of 22. This victory had taken him up the ladder of rapid success in Malaysian politics. In May 1988, he was appointed by the president without

contesting to be the UMNO youth chief. On 11 July 1993, he contested the post of UMNO vice-president, winning it and holding the post until 2000 (Chamil 2006:77). After that, he won without contesting for the post of UMNO deputy president. He held this post until he was appointed prime minister (PM) in April 2009 after Abdullah Badawi resigned from the post. He won the UMNO presidency unopposed in 2009 and held the post until BN lost in the 14th GE in 2018.

Throughout Najib's long involvement in politics, many scholars have written about his political achievements. Zawiyah and Mohammad Agus (2015) in their article *The process of democratisation during Najib Razak's time* stated that democratisation took place in a more positive direction in Najib Razak's era compared to previous leaders. Among them, Najib implemented the demands of the BERSIH civil society group that demanded reforms in the general election process. He also repealed the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960 and replaced it with a new law. Not only that, Najib's administration also improved existing acts such as the Police Act 1967 and the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971. Zawiyah and Mohammad Agus (2015) concluded that Najib Razak has made some positive changes that led to Malaysia's political development. However, their analysis was only up to the first term of Najib's rule before the news of the 1MDB scandal spread, and therefore incomplete to conclude about the entire political development of Malaysia in the era of Najib Razak until 2018.

Chin (2010) in his article *Malaysia: The rise of Najib and 1Malaysia* stated that Najib Razak has brought positive political development to Malaysia. To strengthen race relations, Najib introduced the 1Malaysia concept. He also announced the awarding of government scholarships using merit and performance compared to the previous quota system. To boost the country's economy, he undertook 27 liberalisations measures on sub-sector services for enhancing economic competitiveness. As a result, exports and the stock market improved with the help of the government's stimulus packages worth around RM67 billion and the economy recorded GDP growth of between 4% and 7% in 2010. In addition, he also announced the Government Transformation Program (GTP) comprising six national key results areas (NKRA) namely quality education, crime reduction, fight against corruption, improvement of living standards, rural development

and improvement of public transport. Chin's (2010) analysis is interesting, but the scope of his analysis is limited only to 2010, causing his conclusion on the success of Malaysia's political development to be incomplete and comprehensive. Therefore, this article fills the lacuna by discussing Najib's rule until the end of his premiership in 2018.

Chin's (2010) lack of analysis was later complemented by Chan (2018) in his article *Democratic breakthrough in Malaysia: Political opportunities and the role of BERSIH*. In his analysis, Chan discusses the role and impact of the BERSIH movement on GE-14 by examining three main issues, namely: (i) the 1MDB scandal, (ii) electoral fraud and manipulation, and (iii) delimitation of election constituencies. He mentioned that the fall of BN in GE-14 was due to voters' frustration over corruption, the 1MDB scandal, and the rising cost of living. He categorised the 1MDB scandal as the worst corruption in Malaysian history. This caused BERSIH to work closely with the opposition political alliance to demand institutional change and mobilise the community to protest Najib's government. To ensure that the 14th GE runs fairly and independently, BERSIH launched *Pemantau*, an observer for the election to ensure that no vote manipulation and irregularities occur during the election period. At the end of his analysis, Chan outlined the factor that led to BN's defeat in GE-14 was the role played by BERSIH.

Case (2017) in his article titled *Stress testing leadership in Malaysia: The 1MDB scandal and Najib Tun Razak* discussed the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, a government strategic development company aimed at boosting Malaysia's development, but suffered losses. Najib Razak is the chairman of 1MDB's advisory board and has authority over the management as well as the board of directors. Case (2017) stated that Najib Razak used 1MDB as a source of patronage to strengthen his position and manipulated the election to ensure that the UMNO government won it. Case (2017) stated that the 1MDB scandal had shattered UMNO elites. This can be seen from Najib's actions in getting rid of leaders who criticized him such as Muhyiddin Yassin, Shafie Apdal and Mukhriz Mahathir. Najib also controlled the internet using the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) to shut down the Sarawak Report website for reporting on 1MDB. In this regard, Case (2017) has shown that Najib's government was undemocratic and corrupt.

In his next article *Politics in Malaysia today: Demise of the hybrid? Not So Fast*, Case (2019) further emphasised that Najib Razak utilised government resources to be distributed to the UMNO elite, especially division heads to ensure continued political support for his leadership. However, the 1MDB scandal was too big, thus leaking various information revealing that some of the funds channelled to Najib Razak's account were used to support his family's lifestyle. He also saw Najib as the worst finance minister in Asia. This resulted in BN's defeat to Pakatan Harapan in GE-14. However, Case (2019) stated that this change of government does not mean a complete change of democracy as it is still hindered by the political system of authoritarianism and the division of society. Case's (2019) article is interesting as he discusses the party system in Malaysia that is dominated by hybrid political regimes and how these regimes eventually fell. For Case (2019), the fall of BN shows the failure of Malaysian political development in the era of Najib Razak.

Radzuwan and Abdul Hamid (2020) in an article *Malaysian democratic dilemma in the era of Najib Razak* stated that Najib Razak was a good man, but fought otherwise when in power. There were three wrong steps he has taken, namely implementing the Goods and Services Tax (GST), reducing subsidies to society resulting in rising cost of living, as well as using his power as prime minister to detain or sue anyone who criticises his rule. These three weaknesses, coupled with the 1MDB crisis and abuse of power, caused BN to lose in GE-14 and displayed the decay of political development during his reign.

The highlights above discussed scholars' assessments of Najib Razak's rule. They agreed that Najib Razak was a successful leader in the first term of his rule, but after GE-13, several issues emerged that caused his government's policies to fail to be translated into good implementation. Among them are the rising cost of living, the implementation of GST and most notably the 1MDB scandal. These issues are what led to the fall of BN in GE-14, the first time in the history of general elections in Malaysia since independence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The 13th GE held on 5 May 2013 contested a total of 222 parliamentary seats and 505 state seats. In this GE, the parties contesting are a coalition of Pakatan Rakyat opposition consisting of Parti Keadilan

Rakyat (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS). Meanwhile, the government party is a coalition of 13 parties that use the Barisan Nasional (BN) symbol. In the GE-13, BN once again won it by obtaining 133 parliamentary seats, while the Pakatan Rakyat coalition won 38, 21, and 30 parliamentary seats, respectively. At the state legislative assembly (DUN) level, BN ruled 10 states, DAP 1 state, PAS 1 state, and PKR 1 state (Chin 2013).

After winning the GE, Najib introduced the government transformation programme, the country's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) through the NKRA program, Najibomics and several other programmes to develop the country. The question is, to what extent are the policies of Najib Razak's government successful? Using Huntington's concept of political development, this article assesses this with reference to three main indices namely institutionalisation, participation and economic growth.

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONALISATION

Huntington (1965) provided four aspects of measurement to assess the development of political institutionalisation in a country, namely the challenges of adaptation, complexity, autonomy, and cohesion. During the reign of Dr Mahathir, Malaysia faced this challenge as his actions in interfering in the affairs of the executive, legislative, and judicial institutions led to the corruption of these institutions. For example, Mahathir used executive institutions to interfere with government bureaucracy and the civil service to strengthen BN's position (Hwang 2003; Dettman 2020). Legislative institutions were used to amend acts and laws that can threaten his authority. Not only that, but he also intervened in the judiciary, the Election Commission, and the police force to maintain his power (Hwang 2003).

During Najib Razak's time, after being appointed the sixth prime minister on April 3, 2009, he took drastic steps to restore the people's trust in the government. Among them was to transform the executive body by forming a cabinet line-up that reflects its administration's slogan of "1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now." The concept and slogan of 1Malaysia are to show that his government truly cares about the people regardless of race, especially the Chinese and Indian communities who have denied BN a two-thirds majority victory since the 2008 GE (Chin 2010; Abdul Aqmar & Mohammad Agus 2020).

He had announced his first cabinet line-up of 28 people as full ministers and 40 as deputy ministers, made up of politicians and technocrats who can contribute creative and thoughtful ideas (Gomez 2016). However, when 1MDB reached its peak, Najib reshuffled his cabinet on July 28, 2015, by sacking several senior ministers who were not in line with him. This is because there was no aspect of unity between Najib Razak and his deputy and some senior ministers who did not agree with the 1MDB case and the RM2.6 billion donations he received. As a result of the crisis, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was announced as the new deputy prime minister to replace the ousted Muhyiddin Yassin (Funston 2016).

In terms of legislative institutions, Najib Razak also made some changes at the beginning of his rule. He repealed the Internal Security Act (ISA) and replaced it with the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) 2012 and the Security Offences Act (Special Measures) 2012 (SOSMA). PAA 2012 is an act to provide the right to assemble peacefully without arms with certain restrictions in the interests of public order and safety in accordance with the rights enshrined in Article 10, Federal Constitution. The minister of rural development in an interview with him stated that SOSMA is a good act to replace the repealed ISA to control “violent actions of demonstrators that can threaten public order” (Mahdzir Khalid 2021). However, opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim (2021) had a different view. He stated that:

The PAA cannot solve the problem as this act still does not give freedom to the people to express themselves. What is free if the place that allows them to gather is not strategic. Similarly, the notice period is too long for inappropriate notifications as well as the use of full discretion on the part of the police to impose restrictions and conditions on an assembly. Therefore, this act is not the best way to prevent the people from holding rallies and protests.

As for the Security Offences Act (Special Measures) 2012 (SOSMA), this act was enacted and approved by parliament on 17 April 2012 to curb any violence committed by a person or group. SOSMA, like the ISA, provides special aspects for authorities to deal with terrorism. Commenting on this act, Mohamed Sabu (2021) in an interview with him stated that:

SOSMA is a way of abuse of power since the individual or accused is not tried according to the legal process. For detainees without trial for 28 days, it is not unusual because countries like the United Kingdom (UK) also use the same measure. However,

the detention process in the UK must be taken to the court and is allowed by the court. In the UK, the police have to show prima facie evidence, but the SOSMA by Najib Razak is all under the power of the police, which could lead to abuse of power.

The quotation above shows that the development of legislative institutions in the era of Najib Razak’s rule was corrupted. Moreover, this corrupt institution can also be seen in the case of the investigation into the 1MDB scandal. The Auditor-General’s Report and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Report on the 1MDB company were not tabled in parliament. Therefore, there was no adjustment in the legislative institution during Najib Razak’s rule since the legislative institution does not only act as a place to enact laws but also as a monitor to the executive institution. Interviews with informants also showed that legislative institutions were corrupted and failed to form a stable and democratic government.

In terms of judicial institutions, executive intervention in this institution was quite rampant especially during the reign of Dr Mahathir. This can be seen through the 1988 judicial crisis, which saw the chief justice, Tun Salleh Abas, being sacked (Harding & Whitting 2012). This situation illustrates the extent to which judicial institutions are corrupt based on Huntington’s measures. During the reign of Abdullah Badawi, improvements were made in the executive-judiciary relationship, which saw the latter enjoys its freedom. He has done two important things. First, paying gratuities to Salleh Abas and other senior judges who were sacked during Dr Mahathir’s time. Second, the establishment of the Royal Commission to investigate the alleged video clip on judge fixing by V K Lingam, thus ensuring that the autonomy of this institution is upheld (Dressel & Inoue 2020). This illustrates that Abdullah Badawi was serious about ensuring that autonomy in the judiciary, which has been tarnished because of the video clip recording of V K Lingam’s conversation with a senior judge on the matter of the appointment of judges, is restored.

During Najib Razak’s rule, executive interference in the judiciary resurfaced. Article 145(3) of the Malaysian Constitution states that the attorney general has the discretionary power to initiate, conduct or stop any proceedings for an offence, but in some cases, there was evidence of executive interference in determining whether or not the case is prosecuted. For example, in 2013, Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail did not prosecute Ibrahim Ali over allegations of misconduct under the Sedition Act (Foo & Tan

2018), which destroyed the people's confidence in the judicial system because, in the case of Ibrahim Ali, the judiciary cannot adjudicate the case when there is no prosecution as a result of an executive intervention.

The impact of this executive intervention is huge on the country's image and the international community's confidence in the Malaysian judicial system. This can be seen from the judicial freedom index released by the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (2020), which shows that Malaysia's independence score declined during Najib Razak's rule. During Abdullah Badawi's rule, Malaysia's judicial independence index score was 5.24 in 2007, but the score decreased during Najib Razak's rule to 4.21 in 2009. This score was at 4.65 in 2017 before the fall of BN in GE-14. Some of the issues that caused the failure of the judiciary in Najib Razak's time were the Altantuya murder case involving two Najib Razak security officers. The results of the murder case found both members of the Special Action Unit (UTK) elite team guilty, but another, Abdul Razak Baginda, who was accused of abetting the policeman, was released (Yoong 2009). Thus, there were doubts over the court's decision. Doubts like these show that Najib Razak has failed to change the corrupt judiciary in Malaysia for so long.

MOBILISATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political mobilisation and participation are very important in Malaysian politics since it adopts a system of parliamentary democracy. The strength of political mobilisation and participation is largely determined by the influence of the media to convey messages to attract people to learn about politics and increase their participation in politics. In Malaysia, the mass media and civil society play a major role in influencing political mobilisation and participation. Huntington measures the mobilisation and political participation of the people on the basis of active or passive.

During the reign of Dr Mahathir, he made full use of the advantages of the media to strengthen his administration and politics by controlling and manipulating the media, especially in managing the crisis during his reign (Tapsell 2013). For example, in March 2000, Mahathir limited the publication of the *Harakah* newspaper from once every two weeks to once every two months. Three major newspapers, 'Bintang' in English, 'Sin Chew Jit Poh' in Chinese and the weekly 'Watan' in Malay have had their licenses revoked (Tapsell 2013). This action has

hindered the mobilisation of the media during the reign of Dr Mahathir from moving as expected by the people. Based on Huntington's (1965) measurements, the mobilisation of the media during the reign of Dr Mahathir is passive as he used legal provisions to restrict media freedom.

During the reign of Abdullah Badawi, he continued the way Dr. Mahathir controls the media. First, he used the law to control media freedom. Second, he maintained the ownership structure of mainstream newspapers to ensure that the mainstream media continues to support the government. For example, newspapers such as *Berita Harian* (BH), *Utusan Malaysia* (UM), *New Straits Times* were controlled by UMNO, while the MCA party controlled *The Star*, *Sin Chew*, *Nanyang Siang Pau* and *China Press*. He also benefitted from the information ministry to control government television stations such as TV1 and TV2 (Mohd Azizuddin 2005). Therefore, the mobilisation of the media during the reign of Abdullah Badawi also became passive as there were laws restricting the media.

During Najib Razak's rule, government control over the media was tightened. For example, Yahya's (2018) study found seven 'sensitive' matters that were prohibited from being discussed on RTM radio programs, namely opposition party politics, sex, race, language, religion, monarchy, and criticism against the government. When Najib Razak became prime minister, NTV7 talk show producer Florence Looi was given a warning letter by her management for violating NTV7's 'editorial policy'. This happened because she asked one of her guests on the *Point of View* show, dated July 5, 2009, to evaluate Najib Razak's performance in the first 100 days. The guest, Leslie Lau, a consulting editor, gave Najib Razak a 'C' or 'D', which is a bad rating (Surin 2009). Apart from that, Najib also used legal provisions to restrict media freedom such as the Sedition Act, the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Broadcasting Act, and the Communication and Multimedia Commission Act. This situation caused mobilisation in Malaysia during Najib Razak's rule to be passive. As a result, Freedom House (2018) reported that Malaysia was ranked 145th in the media freedom index in 2018, down from 132nd in 2009.

Civil society also plays an important role in determining social mobilisation. During the reign of Dr Mahathir, a reform movement emerged out of dissatisfaction with the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim as deputy prime minister on 2 September 1998

(Weiss 1999:25). During Abdullah Badawi's rule, he made some changes at the beginning of his rule including not interfering with the Federal Court's decision to acquit Anwar Ibrahim of sodomy charges in September 2004. However, when entering the second phase of his rule, he failed to implement the promised changes. This provoked the anger of the people, which in turn led to the occurrence of a political tsunami in the 2008 GE (Chin & Wong 2009; Mohd Mahadee et al. 2020; Mohd Irwan & Balqis 2021).

Abdullah then resigned and was replaced by Najib Razak on April 3, 2009. Najib took several actions to mobilise civil society support. Among them was the release of 13 ISA detainees, and the restoration of the publishing rights of two major opposition newspapers, namely *Harakah* (PAS) and *Suara Keadilan* (PKR) (Oon Yeoh 2009:5). In September 2011, he repealed the ISA and replaced it with the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011 and the Security Offences Act (Special Measures) 2012. However, people felt cheated in the end as the new act still restricted the civil and political freedoms of the people. The mobilisation carried out by Najib Razak was only in the early stages of his rule. As a result, BERSIH held demonstrations on July 9, 2011, and November 2016 demanding improvements in the electoral system and governance of the government (Mohammad Agus & Mashril 2019).

Restrictions on civil society groups became even stricter when the issue of Altantuya's murder and misappropriation of 1MDB funds emerged, which involved Najib Razak. To control this issue from gaining public attention, the government tightened its control over civil society by setting up monitoring teams against groups such as *Suara Rakyat Malaysia* (SUARAM), BERSIH, and the Bar Council. Najib Razak's restrictions and pressure on civil society made mobilisation in his time passive. According to Huntington (1965), a passive stage of mobilisation indicates a failed political development. This situation is very similar to the time of Dr Mahathir and Abdullah Badawi who blocked the development of civil society to bring social mobilisation in Malaysia at a passive level.

In terms of political participation, Huntington (1968) stated that the wider the participation, the better the democracy of a country. This shows that in a democratic society, political participation is an important aspect in determining the political development of a country, which should be done voluntarily, without coercion or pressure from anyone.

In Malaysia, in terms of people's participation in elections, the data shows that the percentage of people who go out to vote is high. For example, in GE-10 in 1999, the percentage of people who went out to vote was 69.3%, which then increased to 73.9% in GE-11, 74.7% in GE-12, 84.8% in GE-13, and 82.3% in 2018 in PRU-14 (Weiss 2000; Moten & Tunku Mohar 2006; Moten 2009). The turnout was further increased during Najib Razak's rule in GE-13 as the highest turnout ever recorded in the history of national elections (Weiss 2014).

The increase in the number of voters turnout in the 2018 GE proves the active participation of the people during Najib Razak's rule (Junaidy 2021). The 2018 GE result is a historic decision and the first to happen in the country when the people chose to reject Najib Razak's leadership. *Pakatan Harapan*, which comprises PKR, DAP, AMANAH and BERSATU, managed to win the hearts of the people. According to Yusoff and Jalil (2019), the influence of soft actors consisting of the media, young people, civil society and NGOs played a big role in influencing the people to reject BN. These data support Huntington's (1965; 1991) concept of political development, which states that social mobilisation played by civil society has a significant role in bringing about political change in a country.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Huntington (1991) states that economic growth is an important aspect that determines the political development of a country. Therefore, to develop Malaysia, Najib Razak introduced several programmes as soon as he took over the government from Abdullah Badawi in 2009 such as 1Malaysia, Government Transformation Programme (GTP), New Economic Model and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) that aimed at improving economic growth, living standards, as well as reducing unemployment and the cost of living of the people.

On the concept of 1Malaysia, Najib explained that the idea, which adheres to the principle of "People First, Performance Now", is important to create a united Malaysian nation to face global socio-economic and political competition and challenges. He said, to achieve national unity, the people must instil a sense of acceptance between the races. Weak national integration causes nation-building to stagnate and hinders the country's transformation to political modernisation. Since then, all incentives and development programmes during his reign have

been linked to 1Malaysia (Chin, 2010). For instance, the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M), Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA), Kedai 1Malaysia, and Klinik 1Malaysia. The incentives or programmes introduced are to help reduce the cost of living and burden of the people.

In addition, to regain the confidence of the people after the political tsunami in the 2008 GE, Najib Razak has introduced the GTP as a strategy to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. The GTP uses Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in seven National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) that serve as tools to measure and improve government service delivery. The seven areas are: (i) reducing crime, (ii) fighting corruption, (iii) ensuring quality education, (iv) improving living standards for low-income households, (v) improving rural basic infrastructure development, (vi) improving public transport, and (vii) addressing the cost of living. To spearhead the implementation of the GTP, Najib Razak has established the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) (Prime Minister's Department 2010).

In the early stages to reduce crime, the government took several actions such as implementing the Safe City Programme, increasing the number of RELA members and the Civil Defence Department (JPAM) who cooperate with the police force and installing CCTV in high-risk areas. As a result, crime has been successfully reduced at a rate of 306.15 per 100,000 population compared to 352.07 per 100,000 population set in 2016 (Prime Minister's Department 2010). To combat corruption, the government installed CCTV in areas involving official government affairs and introduced the Whistleblower Protection Act to encourage whistleblowers to cooperate with the government. As a result, between 2010 to 2017, 58.9% of corruption cases were successfully disposed of, whereas courts managed to resolve 80.7% of the total number of cases (Prime Minister's Department 2010).

To improve the country's education system, Najib developed High-Performance Schools and allocated RM3 million to ease the burden of childcare fees besides channelling RM18 million in fee assistance to children from low-income families to enrol in private preschools. This action has resulted in a positive achievement to the number of children enrolled, which increased from 4% in 2010 to 6.92% in 2017, and the national preschool enrolment increased from 72.4% in 2010 to 84.26% in 2017 (Prime Minister's Department

2010). In terms of improving the living standards of low-income households, the government has done two important things. First, assisting 44,643 poor households to reduce poverty, develop 2,000 women entrepreneurs, and 44,146 low-cost houses to existing tenants. Second, assisting through the 1AZAM Program to create employment opportunities to increase the people's income. With this program, the government managed to reduce the poverty rate from 3.8% in 2009 to 0.4% in 2016 (Prime Minister's Department 2010).

To enhance rural development, the government continued to provide the basic needs of electricity, roads, and clean water supply in rural areas aimed at improving the living standards of local people. For example, in 2017, the government supplied water to more than 90% of the rural population, as well as built and repaired nearly 100 thousand houses for the rural poor from 2010 to 2017. The success of this program planned by the government led by Najib Razak has helped improve the quality and well-being of 6.2 million Malaysians in rural areas, thus enabling the people to participate in the development of the country (Prime Minister's Department 2010). In terms of improving public transport, the government has succeeded in reducing road congestion in major cities including Kuala Lumpur by increasing the number of buses, reviewing travel times, and creating the Southern Integrated Terminal (Department of Information Malaysia 2014).

In terms of addressing the cost of living, the government has introduced several initiatives such as 1Malaysia clinics for people's health at low cost, Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) for cheap and affordable basic necessities, Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA) for middle-income people to own a home, Kebajikan Rakyat 1Malaysia (KARISMA) to look after the welfare of the elderly, the disabled, and single parents who are less able, and BR1M to those earning RM3,000 and below (Prime Minister's Department 2017).

Apart from the GTP, Najib Razak also launched a new economic plan, known as the New Economic Model (NEM) on 30 March 2010. The NEM aims to make Malaysia a high-income country based on sustainable, inclusive growth and increased productivity (Star Online, 2010). To make this NEM a success, Najib Razak established the National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) to monitor the NEM to be on the right track and successful. The NEAC then introduced eight strategic reform initiatives, namely: (i) revitalise

the private sector, (ii) develop a quality workforce and reduce dependence on foreign workers, (iii) create a competitive domestic economy with no subsidies, controls prices and various incentives, (iv) strengthen the public sector to improve the efficiency of government service delivery, (v) strengthen transparent and market-friendly affirmative action, (vi) build knowledge-based infrastructure through an economic transformation in the industrial, agricultural and services sectors, (vii) increase sources of growth with high output, and (viii) ensure the sustainability of growth by preserving and protecting natural resources for the sake of future generations (NEAC 2010).

To further enhance economic growth, Najib Razak launched the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) on 25 October 2010 to transform the country into a high-income nation. The ETP highlighted 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs), namely oil, gas and energy, palm oil, financial services, tourism, business services, electronics and electrical, wholesale and retail, education, health care, communication and infrastructure content, agriculture as well as Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley (Prime Minister's Department 2012). The ETP is led by the private sector where the government only acts as a facilitator supervised by PEMANDU (Sabel & Jordan, 2015). The ETP is an economic program measured by three achievements until 2020, namely (i) achieving a per capita income of US\$15,000, (ii) creating 3.3 million jobs, and (iii) achieving US\$444 billion worth of investment by 2020 (Prime Minister's Office, 2018). Some of the successes of the ETP are that the average monthly income of B40 households has increased by 12.0% compared to the highest 20% income households (T20 households), which increased by 7.5% for the period 2009 to 2014 (Berita Harian Online 2014).

For the education sector, Malaysia continues to be the choice of foreign students with an increase of 170,068 students in institutions of higher learning in 2017 compared to only 70,000 students in 2010. In the tourism sector, a total of 25.7 million tourists came to visit Malaysia in 2017 when the government introduced e-Visa for 10 countries, including China, India and Bhutan. Revenue from the tourism sector had reached RM81.4 billion in 2017. This achievement was due to the government's efforts to improve tourism offerings and attractions, which in turn has received recognition from CNN Travel (2017) naming Malaysia among the 17 must-visit destinations in 2017.

The above data shows that the ETP has succeeded in boosting the country's economic growth. As a result of its success, the country's gross per capita income has increased by more than 50% in 2017. The deficit level has been reduced from 6.7% in 2009 to 3% in 2017, while the debt-to-GDP ratio was at 55%. Economic growth recorded a growth rate of 5.9% in 2017 (Malaysian Gazette 2017).

According to Huntington (1965), another important index for assessing political development is the economic growth and GDP of a country. In his statement, he noted that most of the high-income countries are geared towards democratisation, which in turn leads to political development. However, if a country's economy is weak, it will be easier to expose the country to external threats and internal turmoil that hinder political development.

In terms of GDP growth, the Malaysian economy at the beginning of Najib Razak's rule showed a positive sign since he managed to increase the national GDP to 7.4% in 2010, compared to only 5.6% in 2006 and 6.3% in 2007 during the rule of Abdullah Badawi. In addition, the per capita income of the population was also an index used by Huntington (1968) to measure the actual level of political development of a country. During the reign of Dr Mahathir in 1984, the income rate of the population was RM1,573 in urban areas and RM842 in rural areas. In 2002, the household income in urban was RM3,652 and rural was RM1,729. During Najib Razak's rule in 2014, the increase continued with RM6,833 in urban areas and RM3,831 in rural areas. In 2016, household income in urban areas was RM7,671 and RM4,359 in rural areas (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). With the increase in the people's income, the people's poverty rate has decreased from 20.7% in 1984 to 0.4% in 2016 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2018).

However, at the end of Najib Razak's rule, there was a high increase in the cost of living due to the increase in oil prices, which led to a rise in the prices of basic goods and other necessities. This had affected the low- and middle-income groups in the country. Although the government provided BR1M assistance with an allocation of RM25.62 billion since 2012, it still failed to reduce the hardships of the people's lives (Bank Negara 2018).

The country's economic condition however was getting worse with the involvement of Najib in the 1MDB scandal. This scandal has had a huge impact on the country's economy as it is a corruption crime involving tens of billions. This scandal has later contributed to the fall of Najibomics, the

implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) that raised the cost of goods, and the rising cost of living that troubled the people. This resulted in the people's frustration, which was finally shown by the voting against BN in the 14th GE.

CONCLUSION

Huntington (1965) used three main indices namely institutionalisation, mobilisation and political participation, and economic growth to assess the political development of a country. Using the Huntington concept, this article assesses the political development of Malaysia during the ruling of Najib Razak.

The results of the analysis found that at the beginning of his reign, Najib had brought about changes to the executive, legislative, and judicial institutions by introducing several transformations. However, in the middle and end of his reign, the executive and legislative stages turned corrupt, and social mobilisation became passive. This decay was all due to allegations of misconduct and misappropriation of state funds in the 1MDB case causing Najib to exploit his position to block the case from being known to the people and from legal allegations. Similarly, in terms of political mobilisation, the results of the analysis found that Najib did not give space to media freedom. This situation is similar to previous leaders who restricted media freedom, which led to mobilisation being passive. In terms of participation, although the data showed that the people's participation in politics is high and active, especially if seen from the people's involvement in GE-13 and GE-14, the people's involvement is still limited as they are controlled by laws and police actions that restrict a fair campaign and clean elections.

In terms of economic growth, Najib Razak has made several transformation programmes such as the 1Malaysia concept, GTP, ETP and the NEM. As a result, Najib Razak's government has succeeded in improving the living standards of low-income households by reducing the poverty rate from 3.8% in 2009 to 0.4% in 2016 and enhancing the development of basic rural infrastructures such as electricity, roads, and clean water supply. The ETP programme has shown that the average monthly income of B40 households has increased by 12.0% compared to the highest 20% income households (T20 households), which increased by 7.5% for the period 2009 to 2014. In short, in the first term of

his rule, Najib has managed to boost the country's economic growth at a better level than the previous rule.

However, the results of the discussions have shown that Najib Razak's success was only up to the first term of his rule. After 2016, these achievements and successes declined. The people were dissatisfied with the government's GST policy, rising prices of goods and oil as they raised the cost of living and increasingly stifled human rights. The results of this analysis showed that this decline was due to the 1MDB scandal, which has damaged the country's economy. As a result of the people's anger, the people voted to reject the BN led by Najib Razak in the 14th general election in 2018. In the final analysis, by using Huntington's concept of political development, this article has shown that Najib Razak failed to bring about political development in the country but instead, created political decay and the fall of BN.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for funding this study through UKM Research Grants Code SK-2020-005 and SK-2020-015 and to the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UKM for providing facilities to conduct this research.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Aqmar Ahmad Tajudin & Mohammad Agus Yusoff. 2020. Challenges of multinational federation: The case of Malaysia, 2008-2020. *Intellectual Discourse* 28(2): 649-673.
- Anwar Ibrahim. 2021. Parliamentary opposition leader and PKR president. Interview at his office, Petaling Jaya on September 18.
- Asia Sentinel. 2016. *Power, Najib's money and Malaysia's corrupt system*. March, 3. <http://www.asiasentinel.com/politics/power-najibs-money-and-malaysias-corrupt-system>.
- Bank Negara Malaysia. 2018. Bank Negara Malaysia Annual Report 2017. Bank Negara Malaysia Annual Report 2017 - Bank Negara Malaysia (bnm.gov.my)
- Berita Harian Online. 2014. Pendapatan isi rumah 2014 tunjuk corak positif. Oktober, 10. Pendapatan isi rumah 2014 tunjuk corak positif (bharian.com.my).
- Case, W. 2017. Stress testing leadership in Malaysia: the 1MDB scandal and Najib Tun Razak. *The Pacific Review* 30(3): 633-654.
- Case, W. 2019. Politics in Malaysia today: Demise of the hybrid? *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 15(2): 1-29.

- Chan, Tsu Chong. 2018. Democratic breakthrough in Malaysia: Political opportunities and the role of Bersih. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 37(3): 109–137.
- Chamil Wariya. 2006. *Najib Razak 30 tahun dalam politik*. Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing.
- Chin, J. 2010. Malaysia: The rise of Najib 1Malaysia. *South-East Asian Affairs*, 165-179.
- Chin, J. 2013. So close and yet so far: Strategies in the 13th Malaysian elections. *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 102 (6): 533-540.
- Chin, J. & Wong, Chin Huat. 2009. Malaysia's electoral upheaval. *Journal of Democracy* 20(3): 71-85.
- CNN Travel. 2017. CNN named 17 best places to travel in 2017 include Penang, Malaysia. January, 10. CNN Named 17 Best Places to Travel in 2017 include Penang, Malaysia | Pamper.My
- Coleman, J. S. 1958. *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dettman, S. C. 2020. Authoritarian innovations and democratic reform in the "New Malaysia". *Democratization* 27(6): 1037-1052.
- Dressel, B. & Inoue, T. 2020. Politics and the federal court in Malaysia, 1960-2018: An empirical investigation. *Asian Journal of Law and Society*, 1-32.
- Dzulkefly Ahmad. 2016. *Najibnomics: Rahmat atau Malapetaka?* Nilai: Ilham Books.
- Foo, R. & Tan, A. 2018. Separation of powers in 'New Malaysia': Hope and expectations. *Journal of International and Comparative Law* 5(2): 529-567.
- Freedom House. 2018. World Press Freedom Index 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>.
- Funston, J. 2016. UMNO: From hidup Melayu to ketuanan Melayu. In *The end of UMNO?*, edited Welsh, B., 11-146. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.
- Funston, J. 2018. Malaysia's 14th general election (GE14): The contest for the Malay electorate. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 37(3): 57-83.
- Gabriel, C. 2018. The rise of kleptocracy: Malaysia's missing billions. *Journal of Democracy* 29(1): 69-75.
- Gana, Nouri. 2013. *The making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, Prospects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gomez, E. T. 2016. Resisting the fall: The single dominant party, policies and elections in Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 46(4): 570-590.
- Harding, A. & Whitting, A. 2012. Custodian of civil liberties and justice in Malaysia: The Malaysian Bar and the moderate state. In Halliday, T.C., Karpik, L. & Feeley, M.M. (eds.). *Fates of political liberalism in the British post-colony: The politics of legal complex* (pp. 247-304). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huntington, S. P. 1965. Political development and political decay. *World Politics* 17(3): 386-430.
- Huntington, S. P. 1968. *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Huntington, S. P. 1991. Democracy's third wave. *Journal of Democracy* 2(2): 12-34.
- Hwang, I.-W. 2003. *Personalized politics: The Malaysian state under Mahathir*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Ismail Noor. 2009. *Najib Razak: A sense of mission*. Petaling Jaya: Thinker's Library.
- Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia. 2018. *Buku tahunan perangkaan*. Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Nasional.
- Jabatan Perdana Menteri. 2010. *Laporan Tahunan 2010: Program Transformasi Kerajaan*. Putrajaya: Jabatan Perdana Menteri.
- Jabatan Perdana Menteri. 2012. *Ringkasan Eksekutif Program Transformasi Ekonomi: Hala-Tuju untuk Malaysia*. Putrajaya: PEMANDU.
- Jabatan Perdana Menteri. 2017. *Laporan Tahunan 2017: Program Transformasi Kerajaan*. Putrajaya: Jabatan Perdana Menteri.
- Jabatan Perdana Menteri. 2018. *Laporan Tahunan 2018: Program Transformasi Ekonomi*. Putrajaya: Jabatan Perdana Menteri.
- Junaidi Awang Besar. 2021. Sentimen kepartian dan personaliti pemimpin pada pilihan raya umum 2018: Kajian di kawasan DUN Chempaka, Kelantan. *Akademika* 91(1): 81-96.
- LaPalombara, J. 1963. *Bureaucracy and political development*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Mahdzir Khalid. 2021. Minister of Rural Development. Interview at his office, Bangunan MARA, Kuala Lumpur on October 9.
- Maizatul Haizan Mahbob & Wan Idros Wan Sulaiman. 2014. Advokasi dan penerimaan pengundi terhadap Program Transformasi Kerajaan (GTP) dalam PRU-13. *Geografia Online Malaysia Journal of Society and Space* 10: 1-14.
- Maksum, Ali. 2020. 1MDB (1 Malaysia Development Berhad), scandal, and its impact on Malaysian domestic politics. *Politika Jurnal Ilmu Politik* 11(2): 198-218.
- Malaysian Gazette. 2017. BBCC, successful project of ETP—Najib. June 20. BBCC, successful project of ETP – Najib (malaysiagazette.com).
- Mohamad Sabu. 2021. President of Parti Amanah and MP for Kota Raja. Interview at Berjaya Times Square, Kuala Lumpur on September 26.
- Mohammad Agus Yusoff & Mashril Jalil. 2019. Pengaruh aktor campur tangan halus dalam PRU-14. *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies* 46(2): 178-195.
- Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani. 2005. Media freedom in Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 35(3): 341-367.
- Mohd Irwan Syazli Saidin & Balqis Bazilah Othman. 2021. Perkembangan politik Malaysia pasca PRU-12: Satu tinjauan menerusi perspektif etnosentrisme. *Akademika* 91(3): 53-62.

- Mohd Mahadee Ismail, Azlina Abdullah, Nor Azlili Hassan & Mohd Sabri Md Nor. 2020. Perkembangan politik era Malaysia Baharu: Pandangan eksklusif belia terpelajar. *Akademika* 90 (Isu Khas 1): 161- 174.
- Moten, Abdul Rashid & Mokhtar, Tunku Mohar. 2006. *The 2004 general elections in Malaysia: A mandate to rule Asian Survey* 46 (2): 319-340.
- Moten, Abdul Rashid. 2009. 2008 general elections in Malaysia: Democracy at work. *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 10(1): 21-42.
- Mustapa Mohamed. 2021. Minister at the Prime Minister Department (Economy). Interview at his office at Putrajaya on September, 6.
- Najib Razak. 2013. Transformasi untuk semua. *Utusan Online*. March 20. http://ww1.utusan.com.my/utusan/Rencana/20130320/re_01/Transformasi-untuk-semua.
- Nur Haniz Mohd Nor, Amira Firdaus & Surinderpal. 2020. Rise of the 5th estate: How online public discourse on Najib Razak's 1MDB scandal foreshadowed Pakatan Harapan's win in the 14th general election. *Jurnal Komunikasi* 36(2): 179-195.
- Ong, Boon Teck. 2016. Laman web kritik 1MDB disekat. *Sinar Harian*, 23 Disember. <http://www.sinarharian.com.my/nasional/laman-web-kritik-1mdb-disekat-1.601995>.
- Oon, Yeoh, 2009. *Najib's first 100 days*. Petaling Jaya: Gerak Budaya Enterprise.
- Paridah Abd Samad. 2010. *Datuk Seri Najib: Liku-liku perjalanan politik daripada seorang anak emas politik negara kepada perdana menteri*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Partisan Publication & Distribution.
- Radzuan, S. & Abdul Hamid, A.F. 2020. Malaysian democratic dilemmas in the era of Najib Razak. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 24(3): 1013-1025.
- Revoll, J. 2016. *Swiss prosecutors investigating 1MDB say Malaysia funds were diverted. 30 January. The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved 13 November 2021.
- Riggs, F. W. 1963. Bureaucrats and political development: A paradoxical view. In *Bureaucracy and Political Development*, edited by LaPalombara, J., 120-167. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Sabel, C. & Jordan, L. 2015. *Doing, Learning, Being: Some Lessons Learned from Malaysia's National Transformation Program*. Washington: Competitive Industries and Innovation Programme, World Bank.
- Salonga, Jovito. 2001. *Presidential Plunder: The Quest for Marcos III-Gotten Wealth*. Manila: Regina Publishing Co.
- Sarawak Report*. 2015. Sensational findings! prime minister Najib Razak personal accounts linked to 1MDB money trail Malaysia exclusive. <http://www.sarawakreport.org/2015/07/sensational-findings-prime-minister-najib-razaks-personal-accounts-linked-to-1mdb-moneytrail-malaysia-exclusive>.
- Star Online*. 2010. NEM will be led by three principles. 31 March. NEM will be led by three principles (archive.org).
- Surin. J. A. 2009. Controlling the media. *The Nut Graph*. <http://www.thenutgraph.com/controlling-the-media>.
- Tapsell, R. 2013. The media freedom movement in Malaysia and the electoral authoritarian regime. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43(4): 613-635.
- Tapsell, R. 2020. Malaysia in 2019: A change of government without regime change. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 190-208.
- Tey, T.H. 2011. The undermining of its fundamental institutions and the prospects for reform. In *Law and Legal Institutions of Asia: Traditions, Adaptations and Innovations*, edited by Black, E.A. & Bell, G.F., 212-261. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weiss, M. L. 1999. What will become reformasi? Ethnicity and changing political norms in Malaysia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 21(3): 424-427.
- Weiss, M.L. 2000. The 1999 Malaysian general elections: Issues, insult, and irregularities. *Asian Survey* 40(3): 413-435.
- Weiss, M. L. 2014. Malaysia's 13th general elections: Same result, different outcome. *Asian Survey* 53(6): 1135-1158.
- Welsh, B. 2018. 'Saviour' politics and Malaysia's 2018 electoral democratic breakthrough: Rethinking explanatory narratives and implications. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 37(3): 85-108.
- World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2020. WJP Rule of Law Index 2020 | World Justice Project. Retrieved 12 November 2021.
- Yahya Abdul Rahman. 2018. Kawalan negara terhadap kebebasan media di Malaysia. Tesis Master Sains, Universiti Putra Serdang.
- Yoong, S. 2009. Malaysia sentences 2 police in Mongolian murder. *Associated Press*. 9 April. Retrieved 19 November 2021.
- Zawiyah Mohd Zain & Mohammad Agus Yusoff. 2015. The process of democratization during Najib Razak's time. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Science* 9(1): 55-64.

MOHAMAD FAIRUZ MAT ALI (corresponding author)
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: fairuzmatali@gmail.com

MOHAMMAD AGUS YUSOFF
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: agus@ukm.edu.my

Received: 22 December 2021
Accepted: 27 January 2022