

*Fifty Years* is not a feel-good book about the triumph of perseverance, nor does it even represent a condemnation of war. It is a story of doing what needed to be done, of helping others where possible, and of survival, faith and luck (or Providence). There are no propositions for peace at the end of the book, and no recommendations for unity or conflict resolution. A call for true federalism, where a Burmese state exists alongside Karen, Shan and other states, is the furthest Saw Ralph ventures (p. 111). There is no real exhortation to continue the struggle; there is no real bitterness. *Fifty Years* will enthral readers looking for an honest, non-sensationalized account of the costs of rebellion for soldiers and civilians alike in ethnic minority areas of Burma. It is a story of continuity; as Saw Ralph puts it: “We could lose a hundred battles but it didn’t matter so long as we won the war ... we were in this for the long term. After sixty-seven years, the war is still going and we still haven’t lost” (p. 53).

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*Towards a New Malaysia? The 2018 Election and Its Aftermath.*  
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Malaysian politics, particularly under the Barisan Nasional regime, often attracts the attention of observers. With the state’s spectacular economic performance, especially from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, many observers were baffled by the overarching dominance of Barisan Nasional despite the rapid growth in the middle-class, increasing urbanization and industrialization, and the incremental curtailment of fundamental freedoms. In fact, for Malaysia during those decades,

economic progress was one of the foundations that sustained the regime rather than threatened it. Hence, Malaysian society is seen to prioritize economic interests over political freedom.

This phenomenon, however, which is sometimes regarded as Malaysian “exceptionalism” (p. 5), has been under threat since the 2008 general election. Stronger cooperation among opposition parties, the existence of fundamental issues (particularly the rising cost of living and the management of the national economy) and advances in internet technology have transformed the Malaysian political landscape, particularly in terms of political competition, media freedom and citizens’ participation in the public sphere.

Eventually a so-called political earthquake occurred in the 2018 general election (GE 2018), where the Barisan Nasional, under the Najib Razak administration, was defeated by a relatively new opposition coalition—the Pakatan Harapan. To reflect on this dynamic, a group of political scientists from both abroad and within Malaysia, both senior and rising academics, have collaborated to produce this timely compilation.

The book of twelve chapters is divided into three parts. Part I discusses the election results and voting behaviour. In Chapter 2, Ibrahim Suffian and Lee Tai De offer a fairly comprehensive quantitative analysis. They see the ethnic factor as not conclusive enough in describing the voting trends in GE 2018. Instead, they recognize that there are other important factors that account for the results. Among them are the trends of cross-ethnic voting (as discussed by Helen Ting in Chapter 4) and the middle ground effect (Johan Saravanamuttu, Chapter 5). The breakthrough in GE 2018 was also affected by the fragmentation of the elite group and the split in the ruling party—the usual suspects in the discourse on democratization by-elections.

In Part II, the discussion focuses on issues and campaign strategies. Against a backdrop of increasing access to the internet and the use of smartphones among Malaysians, Ross Tapsell in Chapter 6 reviews the use of big data campaigning among the main competitors in GE 2018; namely, Barisan and Pakatan. The use of big data has enabled

the opposition—particularly Pakatan, through their big data companies such as Invoke—to conduct strategic and focused campaigns on their target groups based on the latter’s behaviour in social media platforms. This strategy allowed Pakatan to obtain real-time data about the target groups as opposed to official reports, which tend to lag. According to Tapsell, the Barisan had also openly used this strategy (pp. 118–22), albeit with limited success compared to that of Pakatan.

In Chapter 7, Haris Zuan discusses the dynamic relationship between youth engagement by a party through political education programmes and its impact on a more vibrant form of political activism among youth in Malaysia. The argument is in line with the work of Ibrahim Suffian and Lee Tai De, who reported on the increasing desire for political reform among young voters.

David Kloos (Chapter 9) employs a political anthropology approach to highlight the reappearance of women leaders in the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), a group often seen as passive subjects in Malaysian politics. The liberalization of education in Malaysia since the last quarter of the twentieth century has seen an increase in the number of women in professional positions in Malaysia and in their involvement in politics. The chapter shows that grass-roots campaign strategies utilizing informal networks and personal contacts had been integral and innovative in accommodating the challenges for female PAS leaders to campaign in public in GE 2018.

Islam and identity are always at the core of Malay politics in Malaysia. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali (Chapter 8) view the change of government in GE 2018 as a “convergence of interests among a majority of non-Malays and just enough Malays to bring down the kleptocratic regime of BN-UMNO under Najib Razak” (p. 161), as opposed to an increasingly liberal voting pattern. Also, Hew Wai Weng, in Chapter 10, complicates the ideological battle of political Islam in an urban Malay majority constituency in Selangor. Although PAS’s splinter party, Amanah, had some trouble making a breakthrough on the East Coast and in northern areas in peninsular Malaysia, its progressive version of

Islam has attracted a substantial number of supporters in the West Coast, particularly in the urban centres.

In Part III, Wong Chin Huat (Chapter 11) traces some of the problems in the majoritarian system to the multi-ethnic and multi-regional character of Malaysian society. He underlines some important issues for reforming the electoral system and considers whether it needs to be repaired or re-engineered. In closing, Meredith Weiss (Chapter 12) critically highlights four arenas of transformation in consolidating the political transition in Malaysia, with the reformation of political culture considered the most difficult challenge.

This edited volume is comprehensive, with political and electoral analyses on various dimensions of GE 2018 and beyond. The findings highlighted by the authors of various backgrounds and approaches largely complement each other, although there are also conflicting thoughts among them, which demonstrates diverse views. Although lacking in terms of a comparative analysis from East Malaysia, a historical perspective or coverage of minority politics, the book is well-structured, includes a variety of insightful discussions and contributes to the academic corpus of Malaysian politics in particular and the discourse of transitology in general. Hence, despite many works that have been published to unravel the political phenomenon of GE 2018, this book is definitely an important contribution to the field.

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*Everyday Justice in Myanmar: Informal Resolutions and State Evasion in a Time of Contested Transition.* Edited by Helene Maria Kyed. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2020. 367 pp.

This collaborative collection edited by Helene Maria Kyed makes an important and timely contribution to discussions about Myanmar's