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MALAYSIA'S 2022 GENERAL ELECTION

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MALAYSIA'S 2022 GENERAL ELECTION

Crafting Power in a Crowded Arena

Edited by

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FOREWORD

For long-time observers of Malaysian politics, the last six years have delivered surprise upon surprise. Many events that looked improbable, if not impossible, have not only come to pass but now look strangely inevitable as long-held positions were dissolved or re-formulated in the face of urgent political needs and harsh ground realities.

This began during the fourteenth general election (GE2018), which saw Barisan Nasional (BN) lose power after six decades and Dr Mahathir Mohamad return for a second stint as prime minister, this time heading a non-BN coalition. It continued with the notorious Sheraton Move and the bitter infighting that followed, bringing in two short-serving prime ministers—namely, Muhyiddin Yassin and Ismail Sabri. Those who expected the drama to end with those developments would be proven wrong.

Unlikely as it may seem, Anwar Ibrahim would move in just a few years from prime-minister-in-waiting to Mahathir—for a second time—to becoming the unfortunate almost-there-but-missed-out-again figure, to suddenly achieving his lifelong ambition against the odds in an unexpected turn after the fifteenth general election (GE2022). The allying of Pakatan Harapan (PH) with BN owes much to the calculus of how to secure a share of the spoils of power in a hung parliament. But even that would not have been possible without the longstanding personal friendship between Anwar and Zahid Hamidi, the incumbent United Malay Nationalist Organisation (UMNO) president. UMNO and the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP) would make for even more uncomfortable bedfellows, but this has not proven to be a deal breaker since both sides see benefits in cooperation.

This book tells the story of how events, at times stranger than fiction, unfolded during the GE2022 campaign and its immediate aftermath as the new government was formed.

Francis Hutchinson, Lee Hwok Aun and their collaborators, who include several GE candidates, analyse this fascinating episode in Malaysia's political history, tracing the personalities, parties and coalitions as they went through the paces in the contest and manoeuvred for maximum advantage. Among the lessons are these: things are often not what they seem, and when the chips are down, personalities in key positions can have an outsized influence on outcomes.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to think that the big national picture accurately represents the sum total of all that is happening in the country during this period of political fluidity. The interest-group and state-level analyses in this book are insightful both as indicators of what is happening and as harbingers of what is to come. While Malay-majority voters are still key to political power in Malaysia, they are not a homogeneous or static group. Factors such as religiosity, age, income, urban-rural status and state affiliation each make a clear difference to their political choices. Similarly, the states of Sarawak and Sabah in East Malaysia have their own complex political structures, and they are taking on increasingly critical kingmaker roles with their growing clout. Non-Malay voters in the peninsula also have an important impact, and their evolving attitudes towards various Malay parties and coalitions will have a bearing on whether the latter can make the leap to national power. These themes are explored in this book and add richness to the understanding that readers can draw from all that has come to pass.

Without a doubt, Malaysia is still in the midst of wrenching change. It is not yet clear what its political future will be like, but the days of BN-UMNO dominance and the stability that it once provided are unlikely to return any time soon, if ever. Readers will discover fascinating insights into ongoing trends and dynamics that are crucial to understand, even if they cannot in any way define the political road ahead. Happy reading!

Choi Shing Kwok
Director and Chief Executive Officer
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

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Any research on a Malaysian general election is a laborious project spanning time and space. The anticipation of parliament's dissolution—which triggers the Election Commission's determination of nomination day, campaign period and polling day—can stretch across weeks and months, and even years. To gather data for description and analysis, nothing replaces fieldwork, with researchers attending campaign events, observing the electoral mood, and gathering insights from participants.

The challenge of coordinating research on the fifteenth general election was compounded by Malaysia's political instability and the Covid-19 pandemic. From March 2020, the wafer-thin parliamentary majority of the government led by Perikatan Nasional (PN) and infighting within the coalition made for a tenuous grip on power under both Muhyiddin Yassin and Ismail Sabri Yaakob. Within months of Muhyiddin's ascension to the prime ministership, whispers of the impending general election began to percolate, although holding a general election during the pandemic was a risky move and a potential public health debacle about which Malaysia's king had signalled deep displeasure. Notwithstanding the mystery surrounding the likelihood of elections, we had to take heed. Thus, we began, from late 2020, making preparations to study an election that could be called at any time and possibly under pandemic-induced travel restrictions and physical distancing regulations.

The exceptional conditions, nonetheless, dovetailed with intellectual curiosity. The overturning of the 2018 general election stirred interest in revisiting the themes and places covered in our edited volume, *The Defeat of Barisan Nasional: Missed Signs or Late Surge?*, which was published in 2019. For academic reasons, this current project adopted many themes of its predecessor, which was structured around campaign dynamics, interest groups, states, and personal perspectives. Of course, new topics came to the fore in 2022, notably political fragmentation, youth and newly enfranchised voters, post-2018 reforms, "green" conservative voters, and social media. A fresh batch of candidates accepted the invitation to give their accounts of participating in the election.

The chapters of this book on interest groups and the five states and regions of Johor, Kelantan, Selangor, Sabah and Sarawak closely mirror the template of *The*

Defeat of Barisan Nasional. The plan to return to sites we had studied four and a half years earlier also enabled us to lay the groundwork for field research and expand our network of Malaysia-based scholars should Covid-19 travel restrictions still be in place when the election was called. Happily, the fifteenth general election was not held until November 2022. We look back with relief at the timing. In the end, we were able to travel and witness the proceedings firsthand.

The long and winding journey magnifies our gratitude to this book's contributors. We thank our ISEAS colleagues and the various scholars who came on board the project at the early stages, amid uncertainty. We thank our friends who joined later as new topics of interest emerged. We are grateful to the election candidates who shared candidly their GE2022 experience, providing us with unique insider perspectives. We also extend our appreciation to Tindak Malaysia for collating election data and for the public service of making such resources freely available as open-source documents.

The ISEAS – Yusof Ishak library has been a steadfast companion to all of us during this period. Its steady stream of carefully curated daily updates on events in Malaysia and the region is exceptional, and its special coverage of the fifteenth general election and the August 2023 state elections was particularly useful.

We held a public conference at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute in April 2023 for draft papers to be presented and critiqued. Nurul Iffah Johar, Gael Soh, Tong Ping Kum and Lee Ling Ling deserve huge thanks for their meticulous administrative and logistical support that ensured a smoothly run event. We must also record our appreciation to the conference participants for providing valuable feedback to the writers and contributing to robust discussions that enhanced this project.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

ABU	Asal Bukan UMNO
AFC	Asian Financial Crisis
Alliance	The precursor to Barisan Nasional, comprising UMNO, MCA and MIC
Amanah	Parti Amanah Negara / National Trust Party
AVR	Automatic Voter Registration
B40	Bottom Forty (low-income households)
BA	Barisan Alternatif / Alternative Coalition
BARJASA	Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak / Sarawak Native People's Front
BERJAYA	Parti Bersatu Jelata Sabah / United Sabah Folks' Party
BERSIH	Coalition for Free and Fair Elections
BM	Bahasa Malaysia
BN	Barisan Nasional / National Front
BR1M	Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia / 1Malaysia People's Assistance
bumiputera	A term referring to Malays, indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak
<i>ceramah</i>	political rally
CIJ	Centre for Independent Journalism
CM	chief minister
CPI	consumer price index
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DBOS	Development Bank of Sarawak
DNAA	Discharge Not Amounting to Acquittal
Dong Jiao Zong	Malaysian Chinese Education Movement
DOS	Department of Statistics
EC	Election Commission, or SPR (Surahanjaya Pilihanraya)
ECRL	East Coast Rail Link
EIP	Electoral Integrity Project
EPF	Employees' Provident Fund
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority

FGD	focus group discussions
FPTP	first-past-the-post electoral system
GBS	Gabungan Bersatu Sabah / United Sabah Coalition
GDP	gross domestic product
GE2022	2022 Malaysian general election
Gerakan	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia / Malaysian People's Movement Party
GE2018	2018 Malaysian general election
GOTV	Get out the vote
GLC	Government-linked corporation
GPS	Gabungan Parti Sarawak / Sarawak Parties' Coalition
GRS	Gabungan Rakyat Sabah / Sabah Coalition
GS	Gabungan Sabah / Sabah Coalition
GS	Gagasan Sejahtera / Alliance of Prosperity, coalition comprising PAS and several minor parties. Contested in GE14.
GST	Goods and Services Tax
GTA	Gerakan Tanah Air
HINDRAF	Hindu Rights Action Force
<i>huatuan</i>	Malaysian Chinese associations
<i>hudud</i>	A set of punishments established under Shariah law for offences such as theft, robbery, consumption of alcohol, apostasy, and illicit sex
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Ethnic and Religious Discrimination
IDE	Institut Darul Ehsan
IGC	Inter-Government Committee
IKBN	Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara / National Advanced Youth Vocational Institute
1MDB	1 Malaysia Development Berhad
IPF	All Malaysia Indian Progressive Front
ISA	Internal Security Act, replaced by SOSMA in 2012
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia / Department of Islamic Development Malaysia
JHEAIPP	Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Pulau Pinang / Penang Islamic Religious Affairs Department
JKM	Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat / Social Welfare Department
KDCA	Kadazandusun Cultural Association Sabah
KDM	Kadazan Dusun Murut
KLCI	Kuala Lumpur Composite Index
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LGBT	lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals
LHDN	Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia / Inland Revenue Board

M40	Middle Forty (middle-income households)
MA 63	Malaysia Agreement 1963
MACC	Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat / People's Trust Council
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCMC	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MCO	Movement Control Order
MB	<i>menteri besar</i> / chief minister of a state government
MIB	Malaysian Indian Economic Blueprint
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MUDA	Malaysia United Democratic Alliance
MP	Member of Parliament
MPOB	Malaysian Palm Oil Berhad
NCR	Native Customary Rights
NDP	National Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NVP	National Vision Policy
OPOVOV	One Person One Vote One Value
OSA	Official Secrets Act
PAADIAN	Persatuan Kadayan Sabah / Sabah Kadayan Association
PANAS	Parti Negara Sarawak / Sarawak National Party
PAP	People's Action Party (Singapore)
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia / Islamic Party of Malaysia
PBB	Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu / United Bumiputera Heritage Party
PBDS	Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak / Sarawak Dayak People's Party
PBM	Parti Bangsa Malaysia
PBRs	Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah / United Sabah People's Party
PBS	Parti Bersatu Sabah / United Sabah party
PCDS	Post Covid-19 Development Strategy 2030 (PCDS 2030)
PCS	Parti Cinta Sabah / Love Sabah Party
PD	polling district
PDP	Progressive Democratic Party
PESAKA	Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak / Sarawak Native's Heritage Party
PERKASA	Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia / Malaysian Indigenous Empowerment Organisation
PH	Pakatan Harapan / Alliance of Hope, the coalition comprising PKR, DAP, AMANAH and UPKO. This coalition is a member of the Unity Government led by Anwar Ibrahim.
PHRS	Parti Harapan Rakyat Sabah / Sabah People's Hope Party
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat / People's Justice Party
PKS	Parti Kebangsaan Sabah / Sabah National Party

PMET	professional, managerial, executive and technical
PMIP	Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, the precursor to PAS
PN	Perikatan Nasional / National Alliance
PNB	Permodalan Nasional Berhad / National Equity Limited
PPBM	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia / Malaysian United Indigenous Party
PPP	Parti Progresif Penduduk Malaysia / Malaysian People's Progressive Party
PPPA	Printing Presses and Publications Act
PPRS	Parti Perpaduan Rakyat Sabah / Sabah People's Unity Party
PR	Pakatan Rakyat / People's Alliance, the coalition comprising PKR, DAP and PAS; in operation from 2008 to 2015.
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia / Malaysian People's Party
PRS	Parti Rakyat Sarawak / Sarawak People's Party
PSB	Parti Sarawak Bersatu
PSM	Parti Sosialis Malaysia
PSRM	Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia / Malaysian People's Socialist Party
PTPTN	Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional / National Higher Education Fund Corporation
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
ROS	Registrar of Societies
SAPP	Sabah Progressive Party
Sarawak BN	Sarawak Barisan Nasional
SCA	Sabah Chinese Association
SCA	Sarawak Chinese Association
SE2023	Malaysian August 2023 State Elections
SIC	Sabah Indian Congress
SLA	State Legislative Assemblyperson
SNAP	Sarawak National Action Party
SOSMA	Security Offences (Special Measures) Act
SPDP	Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party
SSE2021	Twelfth Sarawak state election, held in 2021
SST	Sales and Services Tax
STAR	Parti Solidariti Tanah Airku / Sabah Homeland Solidarity Party
STFC	Selangor Task Force Covid-19
SUF	Sarawak United Front
SUPA	Sarawak United People's Alliance
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
T20	Top Twenty (high income households)
TERAS	Parti Tenaga Rakyat Sarawak / Sarawak People's Energy Party
UEC	United Examination Certificate

UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UPKO	United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Organisation
UPP	United People's Party
USNO	United Sabah National Organisation
USA	United Sabah Alliance
VP	vote popularity
Warisan	Parti Warisan Sabah / Sabah Heritage Party
WHO	World Health Organization