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Malaysia 13th General Election: How The Election Manifesto And Candidates Influenced The Voters In Penang?

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Abstract

The paper argue that offering comprehensive election manifesto and offering more qualified candidates are the two major factors that determine the outcomes of the 13th general elections. Thus, in order to provide arguments for this assumption, this paper analyzes the election manifesto as the main references. Besides, the study also analyzes the acceptance of the candidates offered by the party especially BN during the election. Third, study then refer mainly to the election results as the main outcome for the elections. The study then shows how the strong and convincing manifesto and qualified candidates as offered by the BN failed to garner the majority supports from the voters towards the party in Penang.

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BACKGROUND

The 13th Malaysia General Election was the first election conducted under the premiership of Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, the 6th Prime Minister of Malaysia. The election was officially announced after he dissolved the Parliament exactly on the 4th year after being in the office. For the Prime Minister, the 13th election was very crucial for several reasons. First, to increase the majority in the lower house obtained by the National Front after the shocking result of 2008 General Election. Second, to regain control the states of Selangor, Kedah, Penang and Kelantan which were controlled by the Pakatan Rakyat. Third, to test the popularity of his government after the launch of the government transformation programmes which were based on several foundations like the government transformation programme and economic transformation programme, based on the principle of One Malaysia (NEAC,2009) . Therefore, after the dissolution of the government, Mohd Najib's government had strongly reiterated the achievements of his transformation agenda. He then made new pledge that more new faces to be nominated for the 13th general election to ensure the better performance for National Front. However, after 15 days of campaigns, the outcome showed that these two major factors did not help his coalition party to increase the seats and votes. In addition, Selangor, Kelantan and Pulau Pinang continued to be ruled by the Pakatan Rakyat with more seats and votes. Only Kedah was successfully returned to the National Front. Penang is a good example of how the strategies of election manifesto and candidates were not successfully accepted by the voters. Thus this paper will provide the brief analysis on the reasons for the failure of those strategies.

WHY PENANG?

Penang has 13 Parliamentary seats and 40 state seats. Total number of voters in Penang is 847,961 as gazette on April 11, 2013. Penang is considered an important state for national coalition or BN and also for the alternative coalition (Pakatan Rakyat) because of several factors:

First, Penang is a multiracial society with the Chinese as the majority ethnic followed with the Malays and Indians. Gaining the supports from Penang indicate an achievement for the multiracial ruling party or PR for their non-communal policies.



Second, Penang is the only state with Gerakan controlling the power since the last 40 years. Gerakan also contested 13 state seats with the hope to be given the mandate to rule the state after the 2008 loss.

Penang is the state where several of the important figures from PR contested. Anwar Ibrahim contested in Permatang Pauh, Lim Guan Eng in Bagan, and Karpal Sing in Bukit Gelugor. Besides, Penang is the state controlled by DAP under the coalition of Pakatan Rakyat. It can be considered as the base for DAP to continue getting the support from Chinese. MCA has made a campaign among the Chinese to reject DAP who works with PAS who was considered as "the loudest party in Pakatan Rakyat and a vote for DAP is a vote for PAS." (STAR, May 2013)

THE PENANG ELECTION RESULTS

In Election 2013, PR has retaining the state by winning 30 out of 40 seats, an addition of one seat from 2008. DAP retained all 19 seats it contested, PAS won one out of five contested and PKR won 10 out of 16 seats contested. The 13th Elections also proved that voters in Penang had rejected Gerakan and the BN. Penang chief of Barisan Nasional (BN), Teng Chang Yeow who was also the Gerakan secretary general was defeated by PKR in Bukit Tengah with more than 6000 majority. It was the first time in the history of election in Penang, BN lost its deposit in Pengkalan Kota to DAP through its candidate Lau Keng Ee who won 15403 votes compared to BN's Loke Poh Chye with 1803 votes. Thus this means BN candidates were not ready or not prepared for the election 2013? Or the PR state policies on good governance in Penang have strongly attracted the support from the voters? For us there are few other important reasons contribute to outcome of the elections and if we look those reasons they are strongly related to the election manifesto and the candidates.

Trend of Chinese Voters

Chinese voters are the majority in Penang. For the 13th elections majority of them rejected BN compare to the Malays who continue to support UMNO. MCA and Gerakan parties lost to DAP. Meaning to say, BN lost in Penang because of Chinese voters. That means, Chinese voters had

endorsed Lim Guan Eng as the legitimate Chief Minister. The question now is, what influence the majority of the Chinese not to vote BN?

New Voters

The total number of voters in Penang for 2013 is **846,232**. It comprises of the Malays 35.26%, Chinese 53.37%, Indians 10.89% and others 0.48%. This number increase from 704,097 voters for 2008 and **672,362** voters for 2004. It seems that the increase in the number of voters for about 173,870 from 2004 has benefitting the Pakatan Rakyat coalition rather than the Barisan Nasional. The issue here, why BN failed to attract the support from those new voters?

New Seats

The increase in the number of state seats for 2004 had given the advantages to BN. BN won all the new seven seats for 2004.² However, for the 2008 elections DAP won 4 of the new seats (Bagan Dalam, Padang Lalang, Pulau Tikus, and Air Itam), and PKR three of the seats (Bukit Tambun, Pantai Jerejak and Batu Maung). The same result was repeated in 2013 which make possible for the Pakatan Rakyat to form a 2/ 3 majority state government in 2008 and 2013. But why BN cannot retain those seats which were just introduced in the 2004 elections?

Table 1: Election Results For Penang: House Of Representatives

No	Seats	1995	1999	2004	2008	2013
1	Kepala Batas	BN	BN	BN	BN	BN
2	Tasek Gelugor	BN	BN	BN	BN	BN
3	Bagan	DAP	DAP	DAP	DAP	DAP

² Those seven seats for Penang State Legislative Assembly are Bagan Dalam, Padang Lalang, Bukit Tambun, Pulau Tikus, Air Itam, Pantai Jerejak, and Batu Maung.

4	Permatang Pauh	BN	KeAdilan	KeAdilan	PKR	PKR
5	Bukit Mertajam	BN	DAP	DAP	DAP	DAP
6	Batu Kawan	-	-	BN	DAP	DAP
7	Nibong Tebal	BN	DAP	BN	PKR/IND	PKR
8	Bukit Bendera	BN	BN	BN	DAP	DAP
9	Tanjong	DAP	DAP	BN	DAP	DAP
10	Jelutong	DAP	BN	BN	DAP	DAP
11	Bukit Gelugor	-	-	DAP	DAP	DAP
12	Bayan Baru	BN	BN	BN	PKR/IND	PKR
13	Balik Pulau	BN	BN	BN	PKR	BN

Source: Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia, 2013

Table 2: Election Results For Penang: State Legislative Assembly

NO	PARTY	1995	1999	2004	2008	2013
1	BN	32/33	30/33	37/40	11/40	10/40
2	DAP	1/33	1/33	1/40	19/40	19/40
3	Keadilan/ PKR	-	1/33	0/40	9/40	10/40
4	PAS	-	1/33	1/40	1/40	1/40
5	Independent	-	-	1/40	-	-

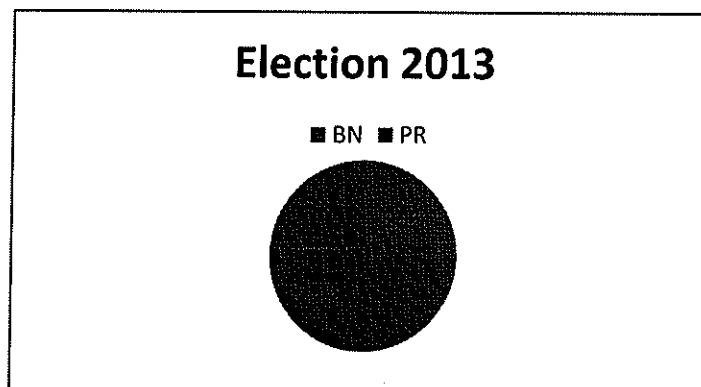
Source: Information Malaysia, 1996, 2002, 2005 and 2009 and Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia, 2013

The result showed that political competition among two parties (BN and PR) has increased since the election 2008 (GE12). New features explain the results:

- a. Penang is already moving toward the **two party system** where both BN and PR have equal chance to form the government.
- b. BN continues to suffer after the 2008 GE which was considered as the worse election.

Since 2008, both parties especially BN had made better preparations to win the people heart since the competition for the seats is very high. To win people heart, both parties have released their manifestos and promised the new face candidates for the election.

Chart 1



CANDIDATES

The results of the 13th general election showed that, the candidates offered by the Pakatan Rakyat are more acceptable compared to the candidates by the Barisan National. Several observations can be made based on the candidates contesting in the last election.

First Time Candidates for Malay Majority Seats

The main reason why BN lost in Penang in election 2013, because there were many new faces in election 2013. These candidates were the first time candidates and might not have experience for the election. Experienced candidates might help the party to win the election especially during the crucial time. As we know, about 83% voters are the senior voters (more than one time). Usually the voters want to vote the candidates that have experiences and well-known to them. For example in Permatang Pauh, BN choose Mazlan Ismail as a candidate to compete with Anwar Ibrahim. BN think that they can have support from Pas supporters due to Mazlan past link in PAS as election director in Penang for 1999 and 2004. However since Anwar is having more experience and well-known to them he won.

BN new candidates for the parliamentary seats suffered lost except the seat of Kepala Batas won by Datuk Reezal Marican. While for the state seats only new faces at the Malay majority seats won by them like in Penaga, Bertam, Permatang Berangan, Sungai Dua, Bayan Lepas, and Teluk Bahang. The presence of the new faces among the BN candidates especially in the Chinese majority areas give more advantages to the PR especially DAP. The following are the examples of the seats;

Table 3: Example of Seats with New Face Candidates

Seat	Candidate	Result
Kepala Batas (P)	Datuk Reezal Marican	won
Permatang Pauh (P)	Dr. Mazlan	lost
Penaga (s)	Mohd Zain Ahmad	won

Bertam (s)	Sharipul Azhar	won
Permatang Berangan (s)	Omar Abd Hamid	won
Sungai Dua	Muhammad Yusof	won
Bagan (P)	Chua Teik Siang	lost
Sungai Puyu(s)	Sum Yoo keong	lost
Bagan Jermal (s)	Tan Chuan Hong	lost
Bagan Dalam (s)	Karuppanan Malairaja	lost
Seberang Jaya (s)	Mohamad Nasir	lost
Permatang Pasir (s)	Anuar Faisal	lost
Penanti (s)	Ibrahim Ahmad	lost
BM (P)	Gui Guat Lye	lost
Machang Bubuk	Tan Lok Heah	lost
Perai (s)	Krishnan Letchumanan	lost
Bukit Tengah (s)	Teng Chang Yeow	lost

Old Face Candidates For Malay Majority Seats

BN had maintained some of the candidates for the elections especially those won in the 2008 like Pinang Tunggai, Teluk Air Tawar, Sungai Aceh, Pulau Betong. These candidates had successfully won the seats. However, it only took place in the Malay majority seats.

Candidates for the Chinese Majority Seats

The candidates for the Chinese majority seats comprises of new and old faces. However, the result showed that they failed to convince the voters to support them.

Politics of Senior and Dominant Partner

Another reason that can be used to explain the rejection of BN candidates is the practice of politics of senior and dominant partner (Vasil R.K,1971). It means that within the BN coalition, UMNO is always considered the senior and dominant power. The worse scenario happened during the election where the UMNO President who is also the Chairman of BN has the full and final decision for the election candidates. This may be seen as weaknesses for MCA and Gerakan who have to depend on UMNO for their candidate in the election. Compare to PR, the DAP is seen as more independent party to decide on their candidates for election.

THE MANIFESTO

Election manifestos and campaigns are the important aspects of an election strategy. They convey the messages that a political party try to implement if they win in the elections. These are the promises and usually designed to attract voters (Muhamad Fuzi, 2007). Before the election, several visits were made by the prime minister and his deputy. Therefore, the ruling party had come out with new manifesto which aimed to wrest control the state government from the PR.

Content of the Manifesto

The manifestos become important for the voters. Voters need to know what is the planning for them if they decide to vote the party. As we look from the past in election 2008, the opposition parties won in four states assemblies and have denies 2/3 majority in the federal parliament.³

The BN Manifesto for 2013 election was based on the theme of " A Promise of Hope" which differed from the 2008's Slogan, " Security, Peace, prosperity." Once it was launched the

³ The four states are, Kelantan, Kedah, Selangor and Penang. This study focus on result of election in Penang.

Manifesto was considered as inclusive and people centric(NST, August 8, 1) It promises improvement in just about every area, be it public transport, housing, education, easing the cost of living, making health services accessible, enhancing security and public safety, fighting corruption, promoting Islam, religious freedom and harmony and strengthening women's participation. In addition to the Federal Manifesto, the BN also launched the Manifesto for the State. The State BN Chairman, Teng Chang Yeow said that the manifesto for Penang is tailored to accelerate its economic growth to bring prosperity to the people. It covers all aspects, with emphasis on a new engine of growth that will stimulate the economy, apart from the manufacturing sector. The manifesto themed '**Pulau Pinang Yang Unggul**' (Distinguished Penang) outlines 19 core thrusts and 26 pledges.

How the BN Manifesto differ from PR?

Comparison on the Theme

There are many comparisons that can be made between the BN and PR manifesto. For example the theme of manifesto also differed from each others. Table No.4 showed the differences in term of the themes.

Table 4

	GE12 (Election 2008)	GE13 (Election 2013)
BN	Security, Peace, Prosperity	A Promise of Hope (31 pages)
DAP	Malaysia Can Do Better	Manifesto Rakyat: Pakatan Harapan Rakyat (35 pages)
PAS	A Trustworthy, Just and Clean Government	
PKR	A new Dawn for Malaysia	

Source: Malaysia's GE13: A Tale of Two Manifestos, by Cassey Lee

This table compares both parties. The BN election's manifestos was launched on 6 April 2013. While PR election's manifesto was launched on 25 February 2013. So, there have been talking that BN has copied some point from the PR manifesto. By having this issues on who copied who, so it also might give effect to the voters.

Comparison on the contents:

Both parties offered different content for the Manifesto. The PR's manifesto for some people was considered closer to voters. For example there was a study which focused in two criteria which affect the voters in Penang. The criterion that has been focus was in economy and education. According to the study, the majority of voters in Penang are Chinese. So, the economic agenda was more important compare to others. The second variable that affects the voters in Penang is the education. Education was very important to young people or for the first timer voters. The study compared those two variables to identify which party offered better promises to the voters.

Table 5

	GE12				GE13	
	BN	DAP	PAS	PKR	BN	PR
Economy						
Employment		✓			✓	✓
Inflation / cost of living	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Lower fuel prices			✓	✓		✓
Income support		✓			✓	✓
SME/ SMI	✓				✓	✓
Budget deficit	✓					
Tax reforms			✓		✓	✓
Minimum wage			✓	✓		✓

Foreign workers		✓				✓
Competition policy		✓		✓		✓
Education						
Free education			✓	✓		✓
National schools	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Scholarships / PTPTN	✓		✓	✓		✓
University autonomy	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Innovation, R&D	✓		✓	✓		✓
Public safety						
Crime rate	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Illegal immigrations	✓				✓	
Police force reforms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Malaysia's GE13: A Tale of Two Manifestos, by Cassey Lee

Politics as values: Employment and Transportation

Table 5, highlighted the BN's economic manifesto, which did not include the issues of fuel prices and minimum wages. When we talk about economy, these two variables were factors that contribute for the voters to vote. In cases in Penang states, there are many job opportunity. So, the major concern for the people in Penang is about minimum wages. People go to their work places using their own vehicles. So, they really in need for lower fuel prices. However, BN did not highlight this issue. For the opposition party (PR), these two issues, lower fuel prices and minimum wages were their main concern. So, voters feel that PR's manifestos are closer to them. For this reason, they still support PR in the last election.

Politics as Values: Education

The second factor that affects the voters to vote for PR party is about education. Education is so important to us especially to become a develop country. Education starts when a person is still in his childhood stage. People usually get their first education at the early age of five years old. When the children reach the age of seven, they will enter primary education. Malaysian education system makes this six years primary education compulsory before they can proceed to the next five years secondary level. This total of eleven years of free primary and secondary education are provided by the government. These eleven years of education are still free to us.

After the eleven years of primary and secondary education, students can continue their studies to tertiary level using their SPM qualification. With a multi-ethnic population of about 28.3 million, Malaysia had 20 public universities, 53 private universities and six foreign university branch campuses; 403 active private colleges, 30 polytechnics and 73 public community colleges. These HEIs offer a wide range of tertiary qualifications at affordable prices. Table 6 shows the number of higher educational institutions in 2011.

Table 6

Number of Higher Educational Institutions in 2011	
Public university	20
Polytechnic	30
Community college	72
Private university & University college	50
Foreign university branch campus	6
Private college	About 400

(Source: www.mohe.gov.my)

Few Malaysians cannot afford to continue their study to higher level because of financial constraints. Majority continue their study by taking loan (PTPTN). Sometimes, people feel hard to

pay back the loan. When PR's manifesto promise to make free higher education at public institution it makes people feel delighted. The support among the young voters increased because of this promise.

Thus by looking at all those contents it might be suggested that those two variables, economic factor and educational factor may have the highest influence on the voters in Penang. However, since other values offered by BN may be similar to PR, we do believe that another important value that influences the majority to defend PR's government is the value of power.

Politics as Values: Power

What we mean by power here the people's judgment on the worth of the government and also their ability to defend the PR government as a legitimate government. For many voters in Penang, the PR's rule is much better or equal compared to BN through Gerakan. The PR had introduced clean governance based on the CAT principles of Competency, Accountability and Transparency. Several new measures were introduced such as open competitive tenders, assets declarations, disallowing family members from doing business with the state government. The state government also has managed to garner the largest investments ever in the history of Penang. In the last 5 years from 2008-2012, it received RM 36.1 billion in investments, compared to only RM 18.7 billion in the preceding 5 years from 2003-2007. In addition to that some popular policies like financial support to all families who receive less than RM770 a month, yearly cash aid to schools, senior citizens, single mothers, the disabled, school students, university students and trishaw pullers. Even though PR had been attacked severely before and during the election, but the voters felt that they are compelled to defend the existing government in order to ensure continuous prosperity in the state. As a result of this, PR is not only managed to form the government but the support to the party had also increased. Penang PR recorded an increase in popular votes from 63% to 66% and won all our seats with increased majorities. Penang PR also managed to win an additional state seat in Seberang Jaya, increasing the 29 state seats won to 30.



"Ubah" Slogan Promoting the Manifesto

Lastly, PR had directly influenced the psychological perspectives of the voters through its propaganda using the theme "Ubah.... IniKalilah" (Change....This is the time). It then gradually became very popular during the Election 2013. It becomes the maxim in promoting the content of PR Manifesto. It make the voters feel excited for the change and vote for PR.. Eventually, the slogan had successfully benefiting the PR compare to the concept of "1 Malaysia" which was publicized earlier by the Premier Najib Tun Abdul Razak.

CONCLUSION

Elections are not the means to proof the popularity of a party. Instead, they are the means to render the government accountable to the governed and provide legitimacy to the government (Abdul Rashid Moten,2009). Therefore, if the party is only aim to win for the sake of party, it may not get the good support from the people. Not all of them are members of political party but all of them are citizens of the state. Thus, a good party must proposed good manifesto for the state and good candidate who will work for the state. For us, the BN, still have the chance to continue ruling the state in future. Few suggestions for that; First, BN must change it character as coalition party and not only as a merger of parties. The cooperation must be seen at all levels especially at the state level and not only at the federal level. State BN must be seen to be independent to make decision especially to choose the candidate. Second, Gerakan should accept that they are no longer be able to lead the state. Let the MCA or UMNO lead. It will be better to change the tradition rather than to loose in the election.



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