



**THE 2011 SARAWAK STATE ELECTIONS: AN
ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF PAKATAN
RAKYAT (PR) COMPONENT PARTIES (PKR, PAS AND
DAP)**

BY

ARIFF AIZUDDIN BIN AZLAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the performance of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) component political parties (i.e. PKR, PAS and DAP) in the 2011 Sarawak state elections. The 2011 Sarawak state elections was held in April 2011 and it was a tense battle between the ruling BN and the new comer opposition Pakatan Rakyat. The study is based on the assumption that there is a linkage between PR's campaign strategies and election manifesto and the voters' preference. Therefore, the study investigates the linkage between campaign strategies and manifesto of Pakatan Rakyat and its performance in the 2011 Sarawak State elections. It uses Martin Harrop and William L. Miller's theory of competitive elections as a framework for analysis. This study uses qualitative method of research for analysis of data. The data were collected from the primary sources such as formal and informal interviews, party manifestos, newspapers, documents from the Election Commission (EC) and secondary sources such as books and scholarly articles. The study argues that the opposition for the first time collectively campaigned as a single opposition coalition under the name of Pakatan Rakyat. PR's campaign strategies were quite sound and practical as it divided its campaign strategies into traditional and non-traditional campaign strategies. Besides that PR proposed several strategies which can be labeled as a new type of approach. The study found that even though PR did not get the two-thirds majority in the State Legislative Assembly, it succeeded to capture more seats; pointing to the fact that there is a shift of support from the incumbent BN government towards the opposition PR. However, the study also found that the main factor contributing to PR's inability to capture more seats was its inability to reach an understanding with the local opposition political party: Sarawak National Party (SNAP). The study therefore, among others, recommends that PR should work out a strategy to integrate some important local political parties such as SNAP if it wants to control Sarawak state legislative assembly.

خلاصة البحث

تقوم هذه الدراسة بفحص أداء تحالف المعارضة الشعبية في (Pakatan Rakyat) وهي أحزاب ((PKR, PAS و DAP) في انتخابات ولاية سرواك 2011م، التي أجريت في أبريل عام 2011م، وكانت معركة انتخابية مشتتة بين الجبهة الوطنية الحاكمة وبين أحزاب المعارضة (Pakatan Rakyat) القادم الجديد، وتستند هذه الدراسة على فرضية وجود علاقة بين استراتيجيات الحملة الانتخابية لـ (Pakatan Rakyat) والدعاية الانتخابية، وتفضيل الناخبين، ولذلك، فإن هذه الدراسة تقوم بالتحقق من الروابط بين استراتيجيات الحملة والدعاية الانتخابية لـ (Pakatan Rakyat) وبين أدائها الانتخابي في ولاية سرواك عام 2011م، وتستخدم هذه الدراسة نظرية مارتن هاروب و ويليام إل ميلر للتنافس الانتخابي في الإطار التحليلي، وكذلك تستخدم المنهج النوعي في هذه الدراسة لتحليل البيانات، والبيانات التي تم جمعها من المصادر الأولية مثل المقابلات الرسمية وغير الرسمية، والدعاية الانتخابية، والصحف، ووثائق لجنة الانتخابات، (EC) ومن المصادر الثانوية مثل الكتب، والمقالات العلمية، وترى هذه الدراسة أن المعارضة لأول مرة تتحالف في ائتلاف واحد للمعارضة باسم (Pakatan Rakyat). واستراتيجية حملة (Pakatan Rakyat) عملية وقابلة للتطبيق، كما تنقسم استراتيجية حملتها إلى حملة تقليدية وغير تقليدية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك اقترحت (Pakatan Rakyat) عدة استراتيجيات والتي يمكن وصفها بأنها منهج من نوع جديد. تستنتج في هذه الدراسة أنه على الرغم من أن (Pakatan Rakyat) لم تحصل على أغلبية الثلثين في الجمعية التشريعية للولاية. إلا إنها نجحت في الحصول على أكثر المقاعد، وذلك يشير إلى حقيقة أن هناك تحولاً للناخبين الداعمين للحكومة الحالية نحو المعارضة (Pakatan Rakyat)، وهذه الدراسة أيضاً أثبتت أن السبب الرئيس لعدم قدرة (PR) الحصول على مزيد من المقاعد، عدم قدرتها على الوصول إلى التفاهم مع الحزب السياسي لمعارضة المحلية، مثل الحزب الوطني بسرواك (SNAP) وبناءً عليه فإن هذه الدراسة، من بين الدراسات الأخرى، توصي بأن (PR) يجب أن تعمل على وضع استراتيجية لدمج بعض الأحزاب السياسية المحلية المهمة مثل SNAP للسيطرة على المجلس المحلي بولاية سرواك.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Science (Political Science).

.....
Wahabuddin Ra'ees
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Science (Political Science).

.....
Muhammad Fuzi bin Omar
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Political Science and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Human Science (Political Science).

.....
Tunku Mohar Tunku Mokhtar
Head, Department of Political Science

This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Science (Political Science).

.....
Ibrahim Mohamed Zein
Dean, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed
Knowledge and Human Science

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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Signature

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I dedicated this work to the people below:

*My Late Grandfathers
Hj. Idris b. Elias and Hj. Ismail b. Abdul Jalil*

*My Grandmother
Salami bt. Ahmad*

*My Mother
Suzana bt. Idris*

*My Father
Hj. Azlan b. Hj. Ismail*

*My Brothers
Ariff Azwan b. Hj. Azlan
Ariff Amirul b. Hj. Azlan
Muhammad Asyraf b. Hj. Azlan*

*My Beloved Companion
Nurul Fashahah bt. Hj. Mohamad Amri*

“To Atoks, Mak, Abah, Juwan, Ayie, Mamat, Anun”

- This would never be possible without your shared love, indeed-

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page	iv
Declaration	v
Copyright Page	vi
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
List of Abbreviations	xv
CHAPTER ONE: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3 Significance of the Study.....	2
1.4 Research Objectives.....	3
1.5 Research Questions.....	3
1.6 Literature Review	3
1.6.1 Literature on State Elections in Malaysia: General Overview.....	4
1.6.2 Literature on Sarawak State Elections	8
1.7 Theoretical Framework: Theory of Competitive Elections	13
1.7.1 Competitive Elections	13
1.7.2 The Parties and Elections.....	15
1.7.3 The Candidates.....	16
1.7.4 The Campaign Strategies and Manifesto	17
1.7.5 Party Performance.....	18
1.8 Research Methodology	20
1.9 Chapterization.....	21
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF STATE ELECTIONS IN SARAWAK	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Sarawak State Legislative Assembly (Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak) (DUN).....	22
2.3 Normal Elections In Sarawak During Difference Faces.....	27
2.3.1 Stephen Kalong Ningkan, 1963-1966.....	29
2.3.2 Penghulu Tawi Sli, 1966-1970.....	33
2.3.3 Abdul Rahman Yaakub, 1970-1981.....	35
2.3.4 Abdul Taib Mahmud, 1981-2014.....	36
2.4 Political History of Pakatan Rakyat (PR): An Overview	41
2.5 Pakatan Rakyat (PR) At Sarawak State Level	43
2.6 Conclusion	46
CHAPTER THREE: ETHNICS, PARTIES AND CANDIDATES IN 2011 SARAWAK STATE ELECTIONS	48
3.1 Introduction.....	48

3.2 Ethnic Composition In 2011 Sarawak State Elections	48
3.2.1 The Malays/Melanaus	49
3.2.2 The Chinese.....	50
3.2.3 The Dayaks/Ibans.....	51
3.3 Political Parties in the 2011 Sarawak State Elections	54
3.3.1 Sarawak Barisan Nasional (SBN).....	54
3.3.1.1 Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (United Native Pesaka Party) (PBB)	55
3.3.1.2 Sarawak United People’s Party (Parti Rakyat Bersatu Sarawak) (SUPP).....	56
3.3.1.3 Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (Parti Progressif Demokrasi Sarawak) (SPDP)	57
3.3.1.4 Parti Rakyat Sarawak (Sarawak People’s Party) (PRS) ...	59
3.3.2 The Opposition: Pakatan Rakyat (PR), SNAP AND PCM.....	60
3.3.2.1 Democratic Action Party (Parti Tindakan Rakyat) (DAP).....	60
3.3.2.2 Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People’s Justice Party) (PKR).....	62
3.3.2.3 Pan-Islamic Party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia) (PAS).....	63
3.3.2.4 Sarawak National Party (Parti Negara Sarawak) (SNAP)	65
3.3.2.5 Parti Cinta Malaysia (Malaysia Love Party) (PCM)	66
3.4 Pakatan Rakyat (PR) Candidates: An Analysis	66
3.4.1 New Face Candidates.....	67
3.4.2 Old Face Candidates	69
3.4.3 Non-Overlapped Candidates	70
3.5 Conclusion	73

CHAPTER FOUR: PAKATAN RAKYAT (PR) CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AND MANIFESTO	75
4.1 Introduction.....	75
4.2 Pakatan Rakyat (PR) Electoral Campaign Strategy.....	75
4.2.1 “Import-based” Strategy	76
4.2.2 “Adoption Plan” Strategy.....	77
4.2.3 <i>Ceramah</i> (Public Sermon)	77
4.2.4 Polling and Counting Agents (PACAs)	79
4.2.5 Utilizing Radio Free Sarawak (RFS)	79
4.3 Pakatan Rakyat (PR) Elections Manifesto.....	80
4.3.1 Good Governance	81
4.3.2 Freedom of Belief	81
4.3.3 Land Reform and Native Land Commission	81
4.3.4 Eradication of Poverty	82
4.3.5 Federal-State Relations	83
4.3.6 Greener Sarawak	83
4.3.7 A Fair Deal For All Sarawakians.....	83
4.3.8 Culture and Education.....	84
4.3.9 Rights of Women and Those With Special Needs	84
4.3.10 Investment for the Future.....	84
4.4 The Ruling BN Responses to PR Manifesto	85
4.5 Conclusion	88

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ELECTIONS RESULTS AND FACTORS OF PR PERFORMANCE.....	89
5.1 Introduction.....	89
5.2 The Elections Results	89
5.2.1 Analysis of Votes Obtained	91
5.2.2 Analysis of Seats Won	92
5.3 Factors of PR Performance	96
5.3.1 Internal Factors: Lack of Cooperation with Local Opposition (SNAP)	96
5.3.1.1 Seats Arrangement.....	96
5.3.1.2 Leading the Opposition Coalition.....	97
5.3.2 External Factors: Peninsular-Based Politics and BN Machinery	99
5.3.2.1 Influence of Peninsular-Based Politics.....	99
5.3.2.2 Machinery of the Ruling BN Government	101
5.4 Conclusion	101
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	103
BIBLIOGRAPHY	108

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
2.1	Total of Seats Won By Ruling Government Parties In State Elections,	26
2.2	The Results of June 1963 District Council Elections	30
2.3	The Results of 1987 Sarawak State Elections	38
2.4	The Results of 2001 Sarawak State Elections	39
2.5	The 2006 Sarawak State Elections	40
2.6	The 2008 Sarawak Parliamentary Elections Results	45
3.1	Political Parties That Contested In 2011 Sarawak State Elections	54
5.1	The Number of Seats and Percentage of Votes Obtained By Political Parties and Independent Candidates in 2011 Sarawak State Elections.	91
5.2	The Number of Electoral Constituencies Won by BN and the Opposition	94

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
1.1	Framework of Competitive Elections*	19
3.1	List of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) Candidates and Its Ethnicity	53
3.2	List of Opposition Candidates and Seats Contested in 2006 State Elections	70
3.3	List of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) Candidates and Constituency Contested	73

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Barisan Alternatif/ Alternative Front, refers to coalition of opposition political parties: KeADILan, PAS and DAP
BARJASA	Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak (Sarawak Genuine People's Front)
BBS	Barisan Bersatu Sarawak (Sarawak United Coalition)
BN	Barisan Nasional (National Front)
BPS	Barisan Pemuda Sarawak (Sarawak Youth Front)
BR	Barisan Rakyat (People's Front)
CM	Chief of Minister
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DUN	Dewan Undangan Negeri (State Legislative Assembly)
EC	Election Commission
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MoCS	Movement for Change Sarawak
MP	Member of Parliament
NCR	Native Customary Land Rights
PACA	Polling and Counting Agents
PANAS	Parti Negara Sarawak (Sarawak National Party)
PAP	People's Action Party (Parti Tindakan Rakyat)
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Pan-Islamic Party of Malaysia)
PBB	Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (United Native Pesaka Party)
PBDS	Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (Sarawak Dayak People's Party)
PCM	Parti Cinta Malaysia (Malaysia Love Party)
PERMAS	Parti Persatuan Rakyat Malaysia Sarawak (Sarawak Association People's Party)
PESAKA	Parti Pesaka Anak Sarawak (Sarawak Son Pesaka Party)
PKR	Parti KeADILan Rakyat (People's Justice Party)
PMS	Persatuan Melayu Sarawak (Sarawak Malay Association)
POD	Politics of Development
PPM	Pergerakan Pemuda Melayu (Malay Youth Movement)
PR	Pakatan Rakyat (People's Coalition)
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia (People's Party of Malaysia)
PRS	Parti Rakyat Sarawak (Sarawak People's Party)
PSM	Parti Sosialis Malaysia (Socialist Party of Malaysia)
SBN	Sarawak Barisan Nasional (Sarawak National Front)
SCA	Sarawak Chinese Association
SDA	Sarawak Dayak Association
SLA	State Legislative Assembly
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SPDP	Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (Parti Demokrasi Progressif Sarawak)
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party (Parti Rakyat Bersatu Sarawak)
TDC	Triennial Delegate Conference
UMNO	United Malay National Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a country consisting of 13 states and a Federal Territory. Sarawak, one of the thirteen states, is located in East Malaysia. Gifted with a vast land area, Sarawak has its own political setting and what makes Sarawak different from the other states is the way the state elections are held. The election system in Malaysia operates based on two levels: Federal/National level and State levels. The 13 states and the Federal Territory in Malaysia conduct their own elections. Since the formation of Malaysia in 1963, Sarawak has held several state assembly elections in every 5 years.¹

The most recent State Assembly or Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) was dissolved on 21st March 2011 and the “Tenth” Sarawak state elections were held on 16th April 2011. The elections were tensely contested by the Ruling National Coalition or Barisan Nasional (BN) and the opposition People’s Coalition or Pakatan Rakyat (PR). Within the framework of Malaysian political system, Sarawak is one of the states where the ruling BN government and its several component coalitions have maintained its majority of seats. The PR, despite making significant inroads into Malaysian political setting, could not pose serious challenge to the ruling BN government in the state.

¹ Abdul Rashid Moten, *Government and Politics in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Cengage Learning Asia, 2013), 8.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The 2011 Sarawak state elections had witnessed the defeat of the opposition political parties and at the same time paved the way for Barisan Nasional to once again have its own grasp upon the state of Sarawak. While a serious contender to BN elsewhere in the country, PR could not be perceived as an alternative force in Sarawak. PR could not hold the ground except to fall beneath the stronghold of Barisan Nasional. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the performance of PR coalition parties (PKR, PAS and DAP) during the 2011 Sarawak state elections by examining the background, campaign strategies and issues that affected the performance of the PR coalition parties.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study examines the performances of PR political parties in the 2011 Sarawak state elections. This study is important because of the following reasons. Many scholars have written about parliamentary and state elections in Malaysia. Moreover, state elections at different time interval have been studied. However, not much has been written about the performance of the opposition political parties, the reason being that it is the first time that the opposition collectively challenged the incumbent ruling BN in Sarawak state elections. Hence, this study provides an analysis of the performance of the opposition coalition parties. This study is also important in that it can provide a better insight into the factors that influenced the performance of the parties in these elections in Malaysia.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To analyze the campaign strategies and manifestos of the PR component parties (PKR, PAS and DAP) in the 2011 Sarawak state elections.
- 2) To discuss the factors that affected the performance of the PR component parties (PKR, PAS and DAP) in the 2011 Sarawak state elections.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the campaign strategies and manifestos of the PR component parties (PKR, PAS and DAP) in the 2011 Sarawak state elections?
- 2) What are the factors that affected the performance of the PR component parties (PKR, PAS and DAP) in the 2011 Sarawak state elections?

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malaysia, the proper conduct of an election is a must; therefore, it is a tool to measure the level of democracy and also as an indicator of democracy. Nowadays, elections stand as a famous trend towards the consolidation of democracy. Elections involve a process of selecting qualified people or government who are accountable to the people. The literature reviewed in this study is divided into two types: literature dealing with state elections in Malaysia in general and literature dealing with state elections particularly in the state of Sarawak. According to Edmund Terence Gomez,

in Malaysia, “two kinds of elections are held on the regular basis: parliamentary and state elections”.²

A parliamentary election is known as general elections or one election for all while state elections refer to the conduct of elections at the state level. Gomez further adds that “federal and state elections are conducted through the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system in single member territorial constituencies”.³ This argument is supported by Lowell Barrington where he states that in FPTP, voters usually do not vote for political parties.⁴ Voters in this situation choose candidates contesting for positions in the districts allocated for them to cast the votes. In the Malaysian electoral systems, this FPTP is considered as widely used at national and state levels.

1.6.1 Literature on State Elections in Malaysia: General Overview

In the Malaysian political system, the conduct of elections also occurs at the state level. In an analysis, Gordon P. Means found that, the shift of power at the federal level was also reflected in the state-level elections.⁵ The study conducted by Means focused on the 1990 state elections in Terengganu. He adds that in the state legislatures, BN representation dropped from 32 to 28 in the 1990 state elections. Before the 1990 Terengganu state elections, the state was under the control of the ruling government. Hilley further adds that, “the BN was ousted and replaced by PAS, winning 28 out of 32 state seats and all of Terengganu’s federal seats”.⁶ PAS has made great contributions to the state of Terengganu and at the same time pose as an

² Edmund Terence Gomez, *Political System in Malaysia in Political Party System and Democratic Development in East and Southeast Asia* edited by Wolfgang Sachsenroder and Ulrike E. Frings (England: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998), 261.

³ *Ibid*, 261.

⁴ Lowell Barrington, *Comparative Politics: Structures and Choices* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010), 385.

⁵ Gordon P. Means, *Political Islam in Southeast Asia* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2009), 141.

⁶ John Hilley, *Malaysian: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 260-264.

impenetrable threat towards the ruling BN government. PAS has risen unexpectedly where it succeed in retaking the state of Terengganu from BN in the 1990 state elections.

Bruce Gale has studied the 1981 Sabah state elections. Gale indicates that there is a growing concern for the performance of the Sabah ruling government; the Berjaya. Gale further adds that, “the Berjaya received 60.2 percent of the popular vote, compared to 53.6 percent in 1976, and increased its representation in the State Assembly from 37 to 43 of the 47 contested seats. Despite the rhetoric of Pasok and the SCCP, the majority of Kadazans and Chinese supported Berjaya”.⁷ Gale, on why the results favoured the Berjaya, points out that, “one of these was the Malaysian election regulations which tended to work in favour of the party in power. Political rallies were banned so that parties were forced to use posters and pamphlets, campaign from house to house and hold closed-door oratory sessions (*ceramah*). Berjaya, being the government party, had easy access to community-halls whereas the Barisan Sabah candidates had to hold their *ceramah* in the homes of party supporters”. Another important factor working in Berjaya’s favour was the attitude of the Federal Government which, although officially neutral, could not hide the fact that its sympathies were clearly with Berjaya.⁸ The pattern of the BN ruling government could be seen even at the state level and this is not something new within the realm of Malaysian political history. The success story of Berjaya has been associated closely with the hidden hand provided far from the Peninsular.

In his study of the 1985 Sabah state elections, Mohammad Agus Yusoff argues that, “the electoral victory of PBS (or Parti Bersatu Sabah) in the April 1985 Sabah

⁷ Bruce Gale, *Politics at the Periphery: A Study of the 1981 and 1982 Election Campaigns in Sabah* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1986), 38.

⁸ *Ibid*, 40.

state elections was a remarkable event in post-independence Malaysian politics, because it marked the first time since 1976 that an opposition party had been able to detach a state government from the ruling BN coalition and had done so barely seven weeks after it was formed”.⁹ The 1985 Sabah state elections witnessed the tremendous defeat of the ruling government, the Berjaya. According to Mohammad Agus, “the growing of anti-federal sentiment due to the federalisation of Labuan and the large influx of aliens into the state contributed to the downfall of BN-led government in the state of Sabah”.¹⁰

In their study of the 2008 Perak state elections, Zulkanain Abdul Rahman and Amer Saifude Ghazali argue that issues such as contested seats, candidates, voters, method of campaigning, duration of campaign, “hot seats” and other issues during the campaign played significant role.¹¹ The pattern of voting in the 2008 Perak state elections was interesting. The overall results of the elections was seen as an “unacceptable” towards the ruling BN government - Malay voters distanced themselves from voting the UMNO/BN, Indians voters did the same and Chinese did not opt for GERAKAN and MCA and so the obvious victory was of PAS, PKR and DAP.¹²

Another improvement made by the opposition could be seen in the study by Joseph M. Fernando on the 2008 Selangor state elections. According to Fernando, “the state of Selangor clearly pictured its change of manifestation in the voting patterns. The BN in this time had a poor performance and having the biggest defeat in the history of Selangor state elections and for the first time, the opposition parties

⁹ Mohammad Agus Yusoff, *Malaysian Federalism: Conflict or Consensus*, 263.

¹⁰ Ibid, 267.

¹¹ Zulkanain Abdul Rahman and Amer Saifude Ghazali, *Perak dalam Pilihan Raya Umum ke-12: Kesenambungan dan Perubahan* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2011), 98-107.

¹² Ibid, 110.

collectively defeated the BN since the first elections held in 1959 after the Independence”.¹³ The opposition coalition, somehow, has made progress in the elections they contested and at the same time, it started to be accepted by the masses. In addition, Fernando points out that in the results, “the opposition secured 36 state seats out of 56 state seats. PKR gained the highest among the opposition which is 15 state seats, DAP gained 13 state seats and PAS gained only 8 state seats”.¹⁴ The defeat of BN was not expected by BN itself and even the opposition felt the same. The victory of the opposition coalition in the 2008 Selangor state elections indicates the growing sense of new alternatives as citizens become more educated and realistic in their thinking.

Based on the opposition’s performance in state elections, scholars have pointed out that the rise of the opposition could be traced back even to the 2008 Penang state elections. According to Azharudin Mohamed Dali, the opposition won 29 out of 40 state seats contested where DAP gained 19 state seats, PKR gained 9 state seats and PAS only 1 state seat. He further adds that, “the DAP won decisively in the history of DAP’s politics”.¹⁵ Soon after the opposition assumed the state government of Penang, Lim Guan Eng, a member of DAP, was appointed Chief Minister of Penang and the results of the 2008 Penang state elections indicated a strong relationship between the opposition coalition; the DAP, the PKR and the PAS. To conclude, the PR is still considered as the latest and the newest formation of opposition coalition and the performance of the PR coalition parties has been evident throughout the literature reviewed especially at the state level except for Sarawak.

¹³ Joseph M. Fernando, “*Urban Swing*” dalam *Pilihan Raya Umum ke-12: Kajian Kes Negeri Selangor* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2011), 141.

¹⁴ Ibid, 142.

¹⁵ Azharudin Mohamed Dali, *Pilihan Raya Umum ke-12 di Pulau Pinang: Ke Arah Politik Baru Pasca Reformasi?* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2011), 135.

1.6.2 Literature on Sarawak State Elections

In Sarawak, state elections are contested by numerous ethnic-based political parties. Few scholarly studies have been conducted on the 2011 Sarawak state elections. There are several studies related to state elections in Malaysia but not much is found particularly on the 2011 Sarawak state elections. In Sarawak alone, there are two types of elections held which are parliamentary and state elections. According to Nelson Ilan Mersat, “Sarawak is the only state where federal and state elections are held separately”.¹⁶ The situation in Sarawak state elections is quite different from the nature of elections in the rest of the country. In a study conducted by James Chin, where he maintains that, “In Sarawak this practice started in 1978 when Rahman Yaakub decided to delay the state election due to problems of seat allocation among Sarawak BN members”.¹⁷ The Sarawak state elections started as early as 1979 and after that, Sarawak parliamentary elections and Sarawak state elections are not held simultaneously; in between the federal and the state elections, there is a two-year gap.

In studying Sarawak state elections, there are several factors which are deemed necessary and their influence cannot be ignored. Michael B. Leigh, in his study on the 1970 Sarawak elections, argues that, “the strength of association between ethnicity and voting for each party is described”.¹⁸ Leigh makes a comparison between the 1970 elections and 1963 elections. He found that, “in 1963 SUPP was more closely correlated with Chinese voters in the urban than in the rural districts”.¹⁹ Here, there was an increase in terms of Chinese voters who supported the SUPP. Ethnicity had

¹⁶ Neilson Elan Mersat, *Blue Waves versus Political Tsunami: Sarawak and the 2008 Malaysian General Elections* (Akademika 77, (Disember), 2009), 113-132.

¹⁷ James Chin, *Chinese Politics in Sarawak: A Study of Sarawak United People's Party* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996), 155.

¹⁸ Michael B. Leigh, *The Rising Moon: Political Change in Sarawak* (Kuala Lumpur: Antara Book Company, 1988), 135.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

been evident in many literature especially in literature dealing with Sarawak state elections. Jayum A. Jawan analysed the state government of Sarawak during the reign of Iban or Dayak under the leadership of Kalong Ningkan (1963-1966).²⁰ The policy adopted by Chief Minister Kalong Ningkan concentrated mostly on the rural areas as they were the places where his ethnic supporters resided. Later in 1970, this policy drastically changed after Rahman Ya'kub assumed the position of Chief Minister, and he was inclined to making a wealthy group of bumiputera. Faisal S. Hazis, in highlighting the role of ethnicity as the motivating factor, argues that the appointment of the first Muslim Melanau Chief Minister Abdul Rahman Ya'kub indicated the resurgence of Muslim *bumiputera* politics in Sarawak.²¹ Over time, elections in Sarawak were shaped by the sense of ethnicity and at the same time it blended with the sense of nationalism; the outcome of the bond was expressed throughout the elections held.

James Chin in his study of the 1979 Sarawak state elections examined the electoral performance of the Sarawak Chinese voters.²² Parties such as Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and Democratic Action Party (DAP) were systematically analysed by Chin. He points out that the first DAP candidates made an attempt in the 1979 state elections in Sarawak. The battle between DAP and SUPP was viewed as the toughest during the 1979 state elections in Sarawak. Even though both were Chinese-based parties, those parties depended much on Chinese voters to elect the one considered as an alternative and could better serve the interests of the Chinese voters. Chin argues that in the 1996 state elections in Sarawak, "DAP

²⁰ Jayum A. Jawan, *The Ethnic Factor in Modern Politics: The Case of Sarawak, East Malaysia* (London: Centre for South-East Asian Studies, 1991), 44.

²¹ Faisal S. Hazis, *Domination and Contestation: Muslim Bumiputera Politics in Sarawak* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012), 270.

²² James Chin, *The Sarawak Chinese Voters and Their Support for the Democratic Action Party (DAP)* (Singapore: Southeast Asian Studies, 1996), 396.