TU-ASEAN Political Outlook

Direk Jayanama Research Center
Faculty of Political Science
Thammasat University

2014
Introduction

The year 2013 witnessed events within Southeast Asia and beyond demonstrative of the continuing struggle with fundamental questions of political and economic development. Politically, how each nation has grappled with challenges of representation, participation, corruption, and regional cooperation continues to drive debates on the nature and pace of globalization desired by both elites and the populace at large.

In Indonesia, Onanong Thippimol reviews the ongoing democratic transition in the lead-up to the 2014 elections, as well as the relatively sanguine view of the country’s economic potential and the expansion of a middle class. While the “glass half empty-half full” question is not fully resolved, Onanong’s prognosis is that major corruption scandals do not detract from the fact that Indonesia has not returned to the authoritarian model of the Suharto period.

Malaysia’s 13th general elections in February 2013 are analyzed by James Gomez as not a “social media” election. Both the Barisan Nasional (BN) and the opposition pushed content through Facebook, Twitter, and video portals. However, the opposition’s social media campaign was overtaken by BN’s mainstream media presence, paid advertising, and direct marketing. More importantly, perhaps, were the policy issues—the high cost of living, corruption, and equal treatment regardless of race or ethnicity—that proved more significant than the medium. Social media has not transcended the race-based politics that hamper the country’s democratic development, but Gomez sees a Malaysian political landscape in flux.
Similarly, Corine Phuangkasem finds Singapore in a continued state of evolution rather than revolution. Political campaigns by the opposition parties and criticisms from an electorate concerned with the rising cost of living, influx of foreign workers, and income inequality, amongst other complaints, has forced the government to take into consideration the new generations’ interests. Long an “outlier” in the region in terms of size and wealth, Singapore may be increasingly viewed as experiencing “normal” industrialized country dilemmas.

Myanmar, once ASEAN’s perennial headache, is cast as the transition of the year by Dulyapak Preecharush. He sees the dispersal of authority from previous military regimes to legislative bodies, civilian ministers, and other executive committees. This, according to Dulyapak, raises the possibility of more broadly informed public sector management and public policy formulation and implementation. He optimistically views this as the basis for national development and reconciliation, and the spread of ethnic nationalism in a country riven by regional conflicts. Despite myriad challenges, Dulyapak concludes that Myanmar’s future is of a “developmental state.”

Finally, Narut Charoensri examines ASEAN connectivity through the lens of transport infrastructure and logistics networks. Here, the role of external partners like China, Japan, and South Korea are vital in developing roadmaps, plans, and providing financial and technical assistance. The question raised is whether slow progress in the development of “soft” infrastructure and people-to-people connectivity--both within ASEAN and Asia as a whole--will impede the “hard” infrastructure.
Overall, the diverse contributions to this volume paint a picture of the region as forward-looking, if challenged by economic and governance issues that increasingly cross nation-state boundaries. Competition and cooperation operate simultaneously to produce a Southeast Asia that continues to define the contours of tradition and modernity, and of unity and diversity.

July 2014
Content

Introduction 5

Singapore’s Political Outlook 7
Corrine Phuangkasem

Myanmar’s Current Political Reform and Development: Progress and Challenges 24
Dulyapak Preecharush

Report 2012: Politics and development in Indonesia 43
Onanong Thippimol

Malaysia’s 13th General Election: Social Media and its Political Impact 57
James Gomez

Regional Connectivity of ASEAN in 2012 73
Narut Charoensri
Introduction

Singapore outshines her neighbours in Southeast Asia in terms of her advanced economic development. Despite her very small size with only 710.2 square kilometers of land and a population of 5.3 million, Singaporeans are described as “the wealthiest, best educated, best housed, and healthiest citizens in this region.” In 2010, Singapore’s economic growth shot up to 14.5 percent with a GDP of 255 billion US dollars, and a GDP per capita of $52,839. The latter was the highest in Asia, exceeding Japan and China, and the third highest in the world. Her foreign reserves ranked the tenth highest globally.

However, Singapore’s political development cannot be compared with the economic progress. The outstanding feature of political stability through extra-efficient government is incomparable to a real democratic model. In 1996, Singapore’s government was ranked as the most efficient in the world; and in 2012, it was ranked as the fifth least efficient.
corrupted regime. Singapore was also classified as a “Hybrid Regime” which was neither a Full/Flawed Democracy nor an Authoritarian Regime but a combination of both, rated number 82 among 167 countries in the Democracy Index list.

Many scholars have advised Singapore to create a balance between economic and political development in order to survive as a legitimate government. Singaporeans have been contented with the “Great Singapore Bargain” between themselves and the government in exchange for their individual rights and freedom with material benefits and political stability provided under the People’s Action Party (PAP). But nowadays, economic success and affluent lifestyles do not always satisfy the younger generation who yearns for more social freedom, greater political participation, and a greater role for the opposition in the Parliament. Such demands were illustrated in the General Election in May 2011 (GE2011) and the Presidential Election in August (PE 2011). Both events have had a big impact on the PAP’s popularity, causing the newly elected cabinet to re-evaluate their adopted way of governance and implement changes in big or small ways as needed.

This article aims to focus on three areas - the political changes in Singapore during 2011-2013; the factors behind such a transition; and the response from the new government to the aspirations and demands of the younger Singaporeans.

---

7 The Economist, Democracy Index 2012.
The 2011 General Election and the Presidential Election

The General Election on May 7, 2011 was the second one under the rule of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and the twelfth since the establishment of the Republic of Singapore in 1965. The results caused little impact on the PAP’s dominance in the Parliament. The PAP won 81 out of 87 parliamentary seats with 60.14 percent of the popular vote, while the Workers’ Party (WP) won five seats and the Aljunied GRC (Group Representation Constituency) with 12.82 percent of the votes. PAP’s popular vote this time was the lowest among the last 11 elections, sliding down 6.46 percent, compared with 66.10 percent in the 2006 election, while WP won three more seats and ousted 2 important PAP contestants in that constituency. Former Foreign Minister, George Yeo, and former second Minister for Finance and Transport, Ms. Lim Hwee Hua, lost their seats to Aljunied GRC.⁹

This election has been analyzed as a pivotal point in Singapore politics. Lee Hsien Loong admitted that “this is a ‘watershed election’... This is a very different world in 2011 as compared to 2006, and a very different Singapore.” ¹⁰ While Low Thia Khiang, the secretary-general of WP, analyzed that the outcome showed that Singaporeans desire “a more responsive, inclusive, transparent, accountable government ... and a more caring leadership.” ¹¹

⁹ *Singapore Elections Department*, 7 May 2011.
¹¹ Ibid.
Four conclusions can be found from the election results: 1) PAP’s popularity is being truly tested for the first time; 2) The Opposition is gaining more recognition and is expected to play a larger role in the Parliament; 3) The two former prime ministers decided to end their involvement in the new cabinet; and 4) the new government has to adjust their policies in order to be more acceptable as a legitimate regime.

There are many explanations for the decline in PAP’s popularity. Firstly, Singaporeans are worried about the “bread and butter” problems regarding the higher cost of living that exceeds the rise in income; a widening gap between the well-off and the poor; limited number of housing with affordable prices; congested public transportation; and insufficient public health services. They blamed the newcomers of foreign workers and foreign professional talents, now numbering over one million persons, as competitors for jobs and housing. The Immigrant Policy became a political issue regarding Singaporeans’ concern about national identity and the value of citizenship. Another sensitive issue is the criticism about the high salaries of cabinet members considered to be the highest in the world and even higher than the annual income of the US President.12

Secondly, Singapore has been so successful in IT development, making it the “intelligent island” and the internet has become a powerful state instrument in national

development and political control as well. However, in the globalized world, social media networks expand throughout Singapore and worldwide. As a consequence, the recent constitutional amendment which allowed the usage of the new media in political campaigning has provided new political space for all political parties to publicize their policies, introduce new candidates as well as criticize weak policies of the government. Moreover, strong counter reactions by PAP candidates touching on the personal sensitive character of their contestants had caused the resentment among the internet users.13

The third explanation is related to the changing nature of the electorate. Among the 2.3 million eligible voters, 46 percent of them are aged between 20 to 44 years and born after 1965. Thus, they lack interest and memory about PAP’s great accomplishment in transforming Singapore from being the third world to the first world. They have no admiration for PAP’s former performance and viewed PAP’s dominance in politics as a strange phenomenon.14

The increasing strength of Opposition Parties is clearly seen in GE2011. There were a total of 170 candidates from seven parties contesting for the 87 parliamentary seats. Opposition parties fielded their candidates in all 12 SMCs (Single Member Constituency) and 14 out of 15 GRCs. In former elections, the numbers of Opposition candidates were limited and many constituencies were automatically won by PAP candidates without competition. Qualifications of opposition candidates are also much better. They come

13 Ibid.
from various sectors of the civil service, businesses, young and older generations, and male and female candidates. WP’s slogan and campaign theme of “Towards a First World Parliament” called for a more democratic parliament with more representatives from other parties besides PAP. WP Secretary-General, Low Thia Khiang, compared the role of the opposition member in parliament as a “co-driver” that “supports and advises the driver from time to time and to make sure that he is alert and well enough to complete the journey.” Another elected WP member, Sylvia Lim, also debated that GDP growth should not be considered as the only indicator of happiness.

While PAP campaigned on the theme “Securing our Future Together”, highlighting past successes in economic development, leadership renewal towards the fourth generation, and the advantages of a strong government. Thus, the voters had to choose between the trusted brand of PAP and the new option of WP for greater government accountability.

This election witnessed the largest vote casting of 2.06 million people or 93.18 percent of eligible voters. All WP candidates at Aljunied GRC were elected, and three more members chosen as NCMPs (Non-Constituency Member of Parliament). The eight WP representatives in

---

16 Hui Yew-Foong, “Singapore”, Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2012-2013, p. 84.
18 NCMPs are chosen from candidates who did not win in any constituency but were the “best losers.” This scheme was introduced in
parliament will now have to prove their worth as a credible opposition to check the reliability of the PAP government.

A significant transition in Singapore’s politics came from the resignation from the cabinet of Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong a few days later. Both made a joint statement that:

“We have studied the new political situation and thought how it can affect the future... The time has come for a younger generation to carry Singapore forward in a more difficult and complex situation...

... After a watershed general election, we have decided to leave the cabinet and have a completely younger team of ministers to connect and to engage with this young generation in shaping the future of our Singapore.19

Lee Kuan Yew served as the first Prime Minister for 25 years since 1965 and continued for 14 years as the Senior Minister in the second cabinet of Goh Chok Tong, and seven more years as the Minister Mentor in Lee Hsien Loong’s administration. He is now 87 years old. Goh Chok Tong was the second prime minister (1990-2004) and served as the Senior Minister for the third government. He is now 70 years old. Singapore has been ruled by three leaders for the past seven years.

1984 to enable Parliament to include up to six MPs who are not members of the ruling party but who had done well in the election.

The 2011 Presidential Election

Traditionally, Singapore’s presidents have been selected and appointed by the Parliament. With the constitutional amendment in 1991, presidents are now directly elected by the Singaporeans and gain more active role and power. Ong Teng Cheong became the first elected president in 1993 but Sellepan Rama Nathan, the second president, was not directly elected and remained in position for two terms.20

The Presidential Election in 2011 (PE 2011) on August 27, 2011 is therefore the latest election in 18 years. Although Singapore’s president is not vested with as much power as in Western countries, still the young Singaporeans wanted the next president to become an institutional check on the PAP government. Candidates for presidency should also be non-partisan and no longer affiliated with any political parties.21

There were four candidates: Tony Tan Keng Yam, Tan Cheng Bock, Tan Jay See, and Tan Kin Lian, receiving a total vote of 35.20 percent, 34.85 percent, 25.04 percent, and 4.91 percent, respectively. It was a tight contest between the first and the second candidates with a small gap of 0.35 percent.22 There are three explanations about the outcome of PE 201123:

22 Ibid., pp.273-274.
1) PAP’s credibility still remains as seen by the combined vote of 70 percent for Tony Tan and Tan Cheng Bock. They were formerly affiliated with PAP, with Tony Tan being the former deputy prime minister and Tan Cheng Bock being its Member of Parliament.

2) Special interests groups, such as business conglomerates, trade unions, civic and clan associations gave political endorsement for Tony Tan with the hope of gaining favours from the new president.

3) Tony Tan who campaigned on the political status quo and business interests was seen as representing the “right” ideological group whereas the others were seen as aligned to the “centre” or the “left” groups.

However, we can conclude that while some Singaporeans prefer a president who is not closely related to PAP in order to play a counter-balancing role, the majority sought stability as also important. They wanted a president who can work well with the government. 24

Political, Economic, and Social Changes

Sixteen years ago, a Singaporean scholar had predicted that Singapore could see a political change and that obstacles to the democratization process will disappear with the retirement of Lee Kuan Yew who was still influential in Singapore’s politics. In such an event, the PAP would lose a charismatic leader in order to maintain unity but that could

lead to party conflicts and inefficiency.\textsuperscript{25}

The departure of 2 former leaders and their retreat from power has happened but will PM Lee Hsien Loong be able to solidify his grip of power and make needed changes? A new generation scholar has recently posted the opinion that “in my eyes, he has earned much goodwill and many will be willing to give him a chance to see if these changes work and whether they go far enough.”\textsuperscript{26}

The responses to the voters’ demands during and after GE2011 were done immediately. PAP government didn’t hesitate to solve all the hot issues. Four days before the election date, PM Lee had admitted the following mistakes made by the PAP:

“We are sorry we didn’t get it exactly right, but I hope you’ll understand and bear with us...... We made mistakes, we have slip-ups. We must apologize, acknowledge, and put it right.”\textsuperscript{27}

At the post election press conference, he said that the PAP must do some “soul searching” and promised to “transform PAP” to lessen its perceived arrogance and


\textsuperscript{26} Huang Shoou Chyuan, “Is PM Lee Hsien Loong an agent of change?” nofearsingaporeblogspot.com/2011/05/is=pm=lee=hsien-loong-agent-change.html.

emotional disconnect with the people.\textsuperscript{28} And at the Cabinet’s Swearing-In Ceremony, he talked about the need to evolve in a rapidly changing world in which each successive generation has different experiences so “the Government cannot stand still. It must evolve in tandem with our society and our people.....to serve and to govern, in accordance with the spirit of times and the aspirations and hopes of our people.”\textsuperscript{29} Most importantly, he announced the appointment of a committee to review the basis and level of political salaries.

The Prime Minister formed a more compact cabinet of 15 members instead of 21 as in the previous one. Nine former ministers were excluded and two new MPs were appointed, while more capable and experienced ministers could hold more than one portfolio. Cabinet changes are made to show the Government’s seriousness to carry out adjusted immigrant policies, improved social services, expanded housing and public transportation, as well as increased usage of the Facebook to explain the government policies.\textsuperscript{30}

The review of political salaries was considered necessary to solve the wage gap and emotional disconnect between the leaders and the people. The main reason cited for the high payment is to attract capable persons into the public service and politics and to prevent them from corruption. Thus Singapore’s civil servants and ministers became the highest paid officials in the world. PM

\textsuperscript{28} Terence Chong, op.cit., p.292.

\textsuperscript{29} Speech by Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister, at Swearing-In Ceremony, 21 May 2011, 8.00 p.m. at Istana.

\textsuperscript{30} Hui Yew-Foong, op.cit., p.83.
Lee earned an annual salary of S$3.8 million (about 91.2 million baht) more than 7-8 times of the annual salary of President Barack Obama of US$ 400,000 (about 12 million baht). Senior Minister and Minister Mentor each earned 3.5 million while the President earned 3.9 million. Most of the Ministers earned 2.7 million.  

In January 2012, the Review Committee of Salaries had recommended a cut of 36 percent on the PM salary bringing it down to S$2.2 million, the Minister salary to 1.1 million and the President’s salary would be cut to half. All Ministers should also lose their special pension scheme. PM Lee accepted the recommendations and thus the voters had won on their complaints. 

The Government tried to adopt a more consultative image by engaging the citizens in new concepts and projects. For example, in the “Rail Corridor Project”, a Rail Corridor Consultation Group was set up to approach stakeholders, interest groups and the public in a more consultative and feedback process. Another example of attempts to compromise is the “Our Singapore Conversation” project started in 2012. It encouraged citizens to air their views and listen to the perspectives of others before translating these viewpoints into government programmes aimed at improving of their lives. The Government also seeks consensus on the population issue.

31 “The Top 30 highest paid politicians in the world are all from Singapore,” http://www.yeocheowtong.com/salaries.html.
33 Hiu Yew-Foong, op.cit., p.84.
34 Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s 2013 New Year Message.
The White Paper on Population that was published in January 2013 stated the intention to increase the present population of 5.31 million to 6.5-6.9 million by 2030 and add 52 square kilometers to enlarge its land size to 714 square kilometers.\(^{35}\) Two-thirds of Singaporeans are to hold PMET (Professionals, Managers, and Executives are Talents) jobs while one-third will work in non-PMET jobs. Foreign manpower will still be required to complement the local workforce in the lower-skilled jobs and in areas as construction, social services, conservancy and maintenance work. They will provide businesses with flexibility during both economic upswings and downturns, and also to help set up new high value-added emerging sectors.\(^{36}\)

PM Lee urged the “core” Singaporeans to get married rather than remain single. And to promote families to have more children, he started the “Baby Bonus” program, providing first-time parents with priority in booking HDB flats, allowing longer maternity leaves and also granting paternity leave.\(^{37}\) He called on Singaporeans to “show a generosity of spirit towards one another, including to new arrivals. As for the new arrivals, they also have to make the effort to embrace these values and to commit themselves to Singapore and integrate into the community.”\(^{38}\)

\(^{35}\) “Number of foreign professionals working in Singapore down for the 1st time since 2003,” http://news.xinhuanet.com/English/world2013-01/31/c_132142444.html.

\(^{36}\) Fann Sim, S’pore needs foreign workforce: Gov’t,” yahoo!newsroom, January 29, 2013.

\(^{37}\) Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong”s Chinese New Year Message 2013.

\(^{38}\) Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s National day Rally 2012.
In the economic sphere, Singapore confronted many challenges during 2012-2013. Her economic growth which shot up to 14.5 percent in 2010 dropped to 5 percent, 2.5 percent, and 1.3 percent in 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively. The downturn was the result of the global economic recession with high unemployment in the United States, debt crisis in the Eurozone and slower growth in China and India. Such a deteriorating global economy caused a negative impact on Singapore’s construction, manufacturing, and services sectors. The reduced demand for electronic products, the major export item for Singapore, had badly impacted the economy.\(^{39}\)

To recover from the economic downturn, PM Lee proposed three measures to grow the economy: 1) To attract quality investments which require “higher skills, higher value-added, less intensive manpower, and less land intensive development.” In order to compete with China and Vietnam in manpower costs, Singapore therefore needs foreign workers to reduce investment costs, and foreign talents in PMET jobs to ensure the confidence of foreign investors. 2) To raise productivity and restructure the domestic economy, the government started a Quality Growth Programme to help businesses to upgrade, create better jobs, and share the productivity gains with employees. 3) To invest in the future and the people by restructuring industries and jobs by increased usage of technology in the forms of robots, 3D printing, R&D, and first class education at all levels from pre-primary, primary, secondary schools to polytechnic and universities.\(^{40}\)


\(^{40}\) Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s May Day Rally 2013.
“Bread and Butter” issues are dealt with by several programs. The Retirement and Re-employment Act has extended the retirement age of older workers from 62 to 65 years. Through the Special Employment Credit, the Government subsidizes the employers for part of the wages paid to workers over 50 years of age. The Inclusive Growth Programme was also set up to upgrade 100,000 lower-wage workers by cooperating with NTUC (National Trades Union Congress) to increase jobs, upgrade skills, and raise productivity. At the top level, the professionals, managers, executives will be guaranteed on fair employment and benefits through TAFEP (Tripartite Alliance for the Employment and Practices).\(^4^1\) Moreover, social safety nets are provided for the needy through ComCare, the low-income workers through Workfare, middle-income couples through Housing Grants, and less well-off students through the Opportunity Funds.\(^4^2\)

In terms of transportation, the Government set up a budget of S$60 billion over a period of 10 years to build several train lines connecting Woodlands to Marina Bay, and Bukit Panjang to Changi Expo, as well as improving the bus services through the Bus Services Enhancement Programme.\(^4^3\) On housing, the HDB (Housing Development Board) had constructed 25,000 units of flats in 2011 and another 14,000 units in 2012. Additional 8500 units of executive condominiums were also available that year.\(^4^4\)

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s National day Message 2012.
\(^{43}\) Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s National Day Rally 2012.
\(^{44}\) Eugene HB Tan, op.cit., p.277.
From the mentioned changes, PAP government has claimed that the nation’s success “is defined not just in economic terms” but also by upholding the ideals and values of meritocracy, and a “clean and transparent system of government”. He stressed on the extra need to maintain a balance of material and intangible goals as prompted by the Opposition, but cautioned that we cannot “seek fulfillment and happiness without coming to terms with and responding to the realities of the world around us.”

Conclusion

“Singapore reminds us that economic success does not automatically or easily usher in a democratic era,” and it does not guarantee a lasting power and legitimacy of any regime that lacks democracy and good governance.

Such statement explains the urgent imperative of the new Singapore Government to transform to a “New Normal” democratic regime after the May 2011 General Election. The Singaporean voters desired a two-party political system and a parliament that is not dominated by the PAP. Political campaigns by opposition parties, electorate’s opinions, criticism, and demands expressed through the new media had forced the government to take into consideration the wishes and desires of the new generation that is younger, more educated, and more liberated.

---

45 Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s 2013 New Year Message
46 Anek Laothamatas, (ed). Democratization in Southeast Asia and East Asia, op.cit., p.17.
47 Eugene KB Tan, Election Issues, op.cit., p.33.
Two years after GE2011, Singapore saw many political transitions. The PAP government is more receptive to the opinions of its citizens and mass media; public demands have been responded to quickly; bread and butter issues are efficiently dealt with; and opposition MPs are allowed to play a bigger role in the Parliament. Have these changes confirmed previous predictions by some commentators that GE2011 will trigger the “Orchid Revolution” similar to the “Jasmine Revolution” in the Middle East? The answer is that “what we saw in GE2011 was not a revolution but an evolution. The passage of generations has catalyzed a change that was inevitable. It was just the tipping point.”

Such comparison is not irrational. In fact, the “Arab Spring” which toppled several rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and more to come, sent “shockwaves” worldwide, including Southeast Asia. The causes of popular uprising in this region are due to political more than economic factors. Corrupt dictators here incited urban anti-government uprisings in Thailand in 1973 and 1992, the Philippines (1986, 2001), Myanmar (1988, 2007) and Indonesia (1998). Existing governments need to lessen the government abuses, soften the authoritarian rule, and begin the democratization process in order to prevent state-society conflict. Considering this “thawing trend” in Southeast Asia, scholars have analyzed that the PAP government “is leading the trend rather than following it”, especially in the aftermath of GE2011.

48 Kevin YL Tan and Terence Lee, op.cit., p.16.
49 Dan Slater, *Southeast Asia’s Security and Political Outlook, Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2012-2013*, pp 3-8.
50 Ibid.
Myanmar’s Current Political Reform and Development: Progress and Challenges

Dulyapak Preecharush

Three years after the national election and two years into the new semi-civilian government, Myanmar has implemented a wide-ranging series of political reforms and development strategies as it embarks on a remarkable top-down structural transition from five decades of military and authoritarian rule. Although most of state machines are still dominated by the military, the political changes are becoming realized and there are some progress that are significant for the country’s political development. Before investigating the main characteristics of Myanmar’s political reform and development, it is still necessary to review the origin of a new political regime in order to ground the general situation.

The Emergence of a ‘Hybrid’ Government and ‘Disciplined’ Democracy

The current configuration of Myanmar’s new political system is a strategic product, carefully designed by state rulers in the previous military regime (SPDC/State Peace

1 Lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University
and Development Council). Under the collision between the classical nature of ‘Praetorian State’ composing of complicated problems, especially the protracted civil wars and the conflicts between ‘state’ and ‘society’, throughout the country’s history and the increasing neoliberal nature in current global conditions, emphasizing more on the rule of law, good governance, human rights, social welfare and democratization, Myanmar state builders (before the national election 2010) had carefully crafted the state constitution and other legal machines (in an attempt to) guide the country into a new era of multi-party quasi-parliamentary government in which the military itself plays a central role in assuring political discipline. The emergence of this ‘hybrid’ character of government and ‘disciplined’ democracy obviously reflects the military elites’ comprehensive calculation in creating a new political formula in which the military could work with the democratic processes in transforming and developing the state incrementally.

Related to the earlier explanation, Myanmar government’s information sources often reveal the bitter historical experiences which heavily influenced by Myanmar military

---


elites’ mentality. There are in total four main political crises that force the military to safeguard the country and endure the atmosphere of a ‘Praetorian State’. The first crisis happened when internal multi-colored armed insurgency broke out in the nation in 1948-49. Due to the spread of civil wars and various political doctrines (Fascism, Marxism, Secessionism and etc.), the newly independent state was on the verge of collapse and was reduced to be called Yangon government (because the state power exercised little control over areas much beyond the capital while many rural areas were controlled by ethnic insurgency groups.)

The second crisis occurred when there were ideological splits between political parties in 1958. At that time, some politicians attempted to accumulate their power against the central government by arming their pocket army troops or even colluding with underground ethnic insurgents. The fragmentation between political parties caused commotion among the public and the people as well. So, the armed forces had to handle the situation and safeguard the state as caretaker government in order not to cause national disintegration.

---

4 For a comprehensive work published by Myanmar government, see Historical Research Centre, Ministry of Culture, *Myanmar Politics 1958-1962* (Yangon: Shwe Minn Tha, 2007) and for the original records concerning with the spread of civil wars in 1948-49, see also, the Executive Committee Report of the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League) submitted to the fourth AFPFL nationwide meeting. 29 April 1960 (Yangon: Mahawthada Press, Federation, 6).

The third crisis emerged between 1958 to 1962 when numerous ethnic armed groups and racial revolutionary forces tried to secede from the Union by taking advantage of the weakness of the 1947 Constitution drawn before independence, which opened a legal channel for ethnic minority groups such as the Shans and the Kachins to secede from the country and establish a new independent state. In this time, the new elected civilian government was no longer in a position to save the country from the danger of disintegration and it was the Tatmadaw or Myanmar armed forces that rose to the occasion and guarded the country.6 The fourth crisis was in 1988. From the military rulers’ perspectives, due to the mass demonstration and various kinds of instigation by destructive elements above ground and underground and within and without the country, the entire administrative machinery came to a stagnation and the whole country was in chaos, anarchy and disorder. State sovereignty was about to be lost. This dangerous crisis forced the Tatmadaw to take the responsibilities to protect the state from the upcoming dissolution.7

According to these bitter historical experiences, the Tatmadaw views itself (with its disciplined organization and cohesive chain of command) as the backbone of state-building and nation-building and being able to handle the country’s political crisis much more effectively than those managed by the civilian governments or other social forces. From this condition, it is not surprising to see the continued presence of the military in civilian governments in Myanmar’s current political contours.

7 Ibid.
Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitri Aung-Thwin, well-known Burmese historians, academically support this politico-historical reality by expressing the idea about an oscillation between civilian and military rule in Myanmar’s political system. Throughout the modern history of Myanmar, both military and civilian regimes have operated in a symbiotic relationship, whereby members of one side invariably participated in the other. Managing a state requires an experienced hand, whether military or civilian.

Moreover, the main factor for the continued existence of the military domination in civilian governments in the post-colonial period was the half-century of civil wars that followed the Second World War, placing the country on a ‘state of strife’ footing until the late 1990s, much like Vietnam, Cambodia and Israel.

---


9 Ibid.


11 Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitri Aung-Thwin, p.283; In fact, Myanmar rulers have not only compared their past political experiences with other countries, but also studies comparative political systems from many developing states. According to the government’s information sources like Soe Mya Kyaw’s work (2007), Myanmar state managers before the national election 2010 had tried to investigate political and governance systems in many countries. From their study towards a parliamentary structure, there are about 30 nations that have appointed and assigned duties to non-elective members at the respective parliament. In the Council of Nation of Algeria, 48 seats, one third of 144 seats have been appointed directly by the President, and the remaining two-thirds have been elected by the Municipal Council. In Chile, there are altogether 48 seats in the
“That symbiosis not only made it relatively easy for personal to move from one to the other, but allowed the government to be ‘both’ without having to go through the trauma of a major revolution each time.”¹² This pattern has resulted in an oscillation between the two forms of government or the formation of a mixed cabinet composed of both military and civilian elites, so that between the Second World War and 2011 four ‘military’ (or authoritarian) forms of government (1945, 1958, 1962 and 1988) were replaced by four ‘civilian’ or ‘semi-civilian’ (or representative) forms of government (1948, 1960, 1974 and 2011).

Although such oscillation has been interpreted as evidence of a ‘struggle’ between civilian and military rule, both scholars suggest perceiving this political pattern as a ‘natural’ movement between stable or strong institutions and unstable or weak ones.¹³

Interestingly, a condition in Myanmar’s protracted and violent political, ethnic and socio-cultural conflicts since the past has made representatives and civilian governments less stable than authoritarian and military ones and in contrast, a condition in international political society which pays more attention to global justice, individual liberties, good governance, decentralization and public sector reforms, has made the civilian governments more important than the military ones. From these circumstances,

Senator and ten have been directly appointed. In addition, the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia was made up of 500, 38 out of 500 had been set aside for the military up to 2004.

¹³ Ibid.
the ‘disciplined’ democracy\textsuperscript{14} in which the military can share some power with civilian political parties is believed to be the most appropriate political regime for the nature of Myanmar state.

\textbf{Current Political Reform and Development: Progress and Challenges}

After the national election in the late 2010\textsuperscript{15} and the establishment of anew hybrid government in the early 2011,

\textsuperscript{14} For the main characteristics of this ‘Burmese Style’ democracy, the principle foundations occurring in a national constitution 2008 is an obvious example. According to Chapter I, article 6 in this latest constitution, the country’s consistent objectives composed of six cores: non-disintegration of the union; non-disintegration of national solidarity; consolidation and perpetuation of sovereignty; emergence of a genuine multiparty democratic system; development of principles of justice, liberty and equality; and military participation in national leadership. For more details, see Ministry of Information, *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2008* (Printing & Publishing Enterprise, 2008).

\textsuperscript{15} The official result of the 2010 election saw the USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party-A military-dominated party) take 884 seats (77 percent), with 259 out of 325 in the lower house of the national assembly (80 percent), 129 out of 168 in the upper house (77 percent), and 496 out of 661 in territorial assemblies (75 percent). For an academic work concerning partly with the 2010 election and the trend of Myanmar’s political reform, see Ian Holliday, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest of Political Reform in Myanmar* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011) pp.81-86, and for general information about the result of the 2010 election, see newspapers and online sources such as Myanmar Times, New Light of Myanmar, Mizzima, Democratic Voice of Burma/DVB and the Irrawaddy.
there appear some significant progress in political reform and political development even though a political stagnation emerges temporarily as a result from protracted turbulent conflicts in the past as well as the power and ideological negotiation between the ‘old’ elites and the ‘new’ elites. From this condition, it is obvious to see the contestation between a ‘progressive’ approach and ‘conservative’ approach throughout Myanmar’s political reform process.

For further details, it is true that the President Thein Sein, along with some reformist politicians have long since undertaken a national reconciliation program in which political differences one put aside in order to enhance the modernity and prosperity of the country. The new government has undertaken a number of steps to expand freedom of expression, particularly in lifting blocks on international and exiled media and advocacy groups. In a series of amnesties, the majority of political prisoners have been released. Moreover, international communities and many countries are taking particular interest in the reform process. As a result, we may yet see a closer connection develop between domestic political development and international donors, given the country’s need to rebuild the political economy and reverse years of isolation.

In April, 2012, Myanmar held a by-election for the 45 vacant seats in the bicameral parliament, of which Aung San SuuKyi and her party won 43 seats. These elections would see a prominent opposition leader hold the country’s highest

---

16 See Ian Holliday (2011) for a comprehensive analysis about Myanmar’s current political reform.

17 For more details, see Myanmar Times or other newspapers about this by election during April 2012.
office legally; a first in Myanmar political history. In another aspect, President Thein Sein had also prioritized the end of the protracted ethnic conflicts as one of the top agendas in his tenure, and the current government has continuously escalated efforts to bring about a ceasefire between 11 major armed ethnic groups. A key success includes the signing of a peaceful ceasefire agreement with several such groups.

In a state structural configuration, Myanmar’s authoritarian leadership has undertaken initiatives to remove the military regime from power and in turn to introduce new political and governance reform. For the first time in fifty years, the country has seen the establishment of a bicameral Union Parliament and elected government through means of multiparty democratic election. Key to such development is reform of the country’s governmental and public administrative structure. Under the new constitution, the state structure now consists of three levels: a bicameral Union Parliament and Union Government; Regional Parliament and Government in the seven states and seven regions and other special administrative areas composing of one Union territory, one Self-Administered Division and five Self-Administered Zones. Furthermore, there are a number of new institutions at the Union level, such as the National Defense and Security Council, Constitutional Tribunal, and Supreme Court.18

18 According to the 2008 constitution and Priscilla Clapp’s article in 2010, the structure of the new government will be based on: 1. Seven states, seven regions, one Union territory (Naypyidaw), and six self-administered areas for ceasefire groups (Wa, Danu, PaO, Palaung, Kokang and Naga nationals). 2. A bicameral national parliament, with the lower house (Pyithu Hluttaw) elected by
All of these represent a significant partial achievement in terms of political reform yet undertaken by President Thein Sein’s administration. However, as the current reform process is of a top-down nature with the military’s stand in politics wholly unclear, such reforms could be reversed at any time. Ideological and interest conflicts between reformist (so-called ‘soft-line’) and conservative (‘hard-line’) power elites yet remain throughout the country’s political contour. Chronic problems related to governance reform, such as the centralization and decentralization processes, widespread corruption and slow public service delivery from the center to the peripheral areas (stemming from the influence of military-dominated bureaucracies in the previous regime) yet continue to obstruct and freeze effective public administrative reform in the country. Similarly, military skirmishes between the Tatmadaw and some ethnic insurgency groups remain ongoing along the country’s borderlands.
However, despite the fact that there are political skirmishes in political reforms and it seems to be that Myanmar current state managers might confront the ‘politics of stagnation’ in this transitional period. Nevertheless, a comprehensive political architectural design in crafting a state constitution and establishing a hybrid government could pave the way for a better democratization process and political reform in some aspects. In an attempt to elaborate deeper details about this contestation (between the ‘progress’ and the ‘stagnation’ or the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ politics in Myanmar’s political reform), there are some issues with worth explaining:

First, although it is apparent that the military is embedded firmly in the political landscape under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief who commands all the military representatives in parliament, and could nominate the ministers of defense, home affairs, and border affairs and their equivalents in states, regions, and self-administered areas, some state power, in this transitional period, has been continuously diffused among the presidency, military, parliament and dominant party.19 The authority that came from the previous military regime will be dispersed to legislative bodies, civilian ministers, and other executive committees, introducing the possibility of more broadly informed public sector management and public policy formulation and implementation, especially with regard to economic matters, and also in health care services, education, infrastructure development and social welfare. From this scenario, the core or brunt of continued military control over the state apparatuses will be concentrated only on

---
national security and some kinds of foreign policies while, for other policies and development strategies, there would be more spaces for civil servants and other social forces to participate in forming or shaping various national planning agendas.²⁰

Moreover, due to the increasing role of younger and more technocratic figures assigned or elected to function in managing state affairs or formulating development strategies inside key ministries and the continuous vertical expansion of civil societies or even more civic engagement activities after the current national election, most areas of national-decision-making process might no longer be conditioned strictly by a military-commander psychology. From this incremental transformation, a handful of generals, who used to play a dominant role in policy making in the old regime will be incrementally replaced by the new power groups in the new hybrid regimes, especially a small number of crony businessman, technocrats, civil servants and young or reformist military leaders and politicians.²¹

Second, the establishment of at least quasi-parliamentary procedure, particularly the multi-party and multi-level politics, offers the promise of pulling a more diverse ethnic group of people into the government than has been the old practice under the predominantly Burman male-chauvinistic military regime.²² According to Priscilla Clapp, the racial diversity of the new governance system will present

---

²¹ Ibid.
²² Priscilla Clapp, p. 39.
additional challenges to military control.\textsuperscript{23} During the old regimes, ethnic minority nationalities have been largely excluded from national politics and their responsibility for local governance has been subject to the consideration of regional commanders in most frontier areas. However, the 2008 constitution opens more space for them to participate in legislative organs, public management activities and development projects at the state/division level.\textsuperscript{24} Although all of these are important in terms of national development and reconciliation, in another dimension, these may become a strong foundation for the cultivation of self-determination and the spread of ethnic nationalism over their homeland and natural resources as well.

For another challenge, although the constitution is clearly designed to increase the state-society interaction and the incremental expansion of a ‘bottom-up’ governance model in the rural frontiers inhabited predominantly by ethnic minority groups, some insurgency forces such as the Wa, Kachins, and others (who have managed to develop considerable autonomy in managing their areas that were granted by ceasefire agreements) are clearly dissatisfied with the Tatmadaw’s intention to transform numerous illegal ethnic militia into the new border guard forces and are strongly resisting the regime’s efforts to force their militias under Burmese Armed forces’ control.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} For more details, see Ministry of Information, \textit{Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar} 2008.
\textsuperscript{25} Priscilla Clapp, p. 40.
Third, when the military rulers finally stop meddling in economic management, major powers and neighboring countries are likely to intensify pressure to correct the serious macro-economic distortions that have been inhibiting economic development for decades. China, Japan, US and key ASEAN countries will undoubtedly see this as an opportunity to encourage economic reforms. Moreover, global financial institutions will come into play and donor states will have to reassess the objectives for continuing their restrictions on IMF, World Bank, and ADB advice and assistance to Myanmar. Under these circumstances, the international community could make a valuable contribution to improved governance reforms, particularly in the areas of economic orientation, educational development and social welfare, by training civil servants to strengthen the competence of semi-civilian government structures that may no longer be burdened by strict military control.

When genuine economic prosperity emerges, a more potent free-market business class (or middle class) is likely to develop. This, along with a continuing effort to promote social justice, community development and fair income distribution, could serve to strengthen the skills and independence of elected officials. “It could also force the development of a sense of downward responsibility to communities and constituencies on the part of elected officials.”

---

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid, p. 42.
Fourth, based on a state-led development model, Myanmar, like most of other developmental states (DS)\(^{29}\) in Asian region, was authoritarian in nature and the processes of political institutionalization have been assumed to be undemocratic.\(^{30}\) However, there were some dimensions that could be perceived as components of a democratic regime, such as the holding of elections, a level of political participation, the existence of social movements, the expansion of political freedom, and market economy orientation. Interestingly, in Myanmar, democratization and greater political developmental activities are the features that coexist in the state-building processes. In fact, development projects or public administrative reforms in many Asian

\(^{29}\) Developmental state (DS) is a state-led development model that was often practiced by Asian countries like South Korea under General Pak, Taiwan under the Kuomintang Party, and Indonesia under Suharto Regime. In another aspect, it is a political phenomenon which is understood as a state that has the capability to shape and lead governance by cooperating with other stakeholders for national development. Prominent scholars like Peter B. Evans and Andrian Leftwich have also articulated the theory of DS through observing evolution of the state under strong or authoritarian rule. For further details about this theory, see Adrian Lefwich, *States of Development: On the Primacy of Politics in Development* (USA: Polity Press, 2000) and Peter B. Evan, *Embedded Autonomy: State and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

developmental states have been widely believed to be the output of power negotiations and consultations with other major stakeholders.\textsuperscript{31}

Moreover, although the rule of law, good governance, peace processes, and reconciliation have become the widely accepted norms in the political reforms of Myanmar, there is still evidence which demonstrates that dominant political actors in Myanmar yet resist adopting the liberal democratic concept into their political systems and, hence, stick partially to maintaining the strong state by adjusting reluctantly to the changing global context.\textsuperscript{32} This is due to the belief that the country still has chronically turbulent problems relating to state integrity, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, corrupt or incompetent politicians, or even foreign political intervention. In terms of public administration, Myanmar is becoming a delivery state whereby effective governance means better service delivery and the government is the entity that knows what the people want.\textsuperscript{33} However, although the Thein Sein administration tries to focus more on managerial effectiveness, technocratic efficiency, and constructive processes for the delivery of public services, the continued existence of old bureaucracies dominated by patron-client relations and chronic corruption problems\textsuperscript{34} still obstructs the development of

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} For a detailed discussion of corruption in the Myanmar context, see U Myint, “Corruption: causes, consequences and cures,” \textit{Asia-Pacific Development Journal}, December 2000.
‘representative’ bureaucracies inside the state governance structure during this recent transitional period.

Finally, the confrontation between the old legacy (from the previous military regime) and the progressive outlook, stimulated by current political reforms has obviously become a major consideration for Myanmar’s recent political development. This mixed transformation is undoubtedly suitable for the changing contemporary global circumstances (which emphasizes the democratic culture) and more advanced than sticking to maintaining a strong state with an ignorance to the changing democratic and modern developmental environments. From this standpoint, Myanmar as a ‘developmental state’ will become a core of the country’s political reform and development in the twenty-first century.

References


Report 2012: Politics and development in Indonesia

Onanong Thippimol

Background

Indonesia is the fourth-biggest country and the biggest Muslim country in terms of its population. Indonesia had a population of 237,641,326 in 2012. Sukarno, the first president, declared independence from the Netherlands in 1945. Political conflict and economic problem led to the end of Sukarno’s regime after the attempted coup failed in 30 September 1965. Suharto took control over the state authorities after the coup. Legally he had replaced President Sukarno’s position in 1967. Suharto governed over three decades of authoritarian government. During New Order era under president Suharto, Indonesia was known as one of Asian tiger economies. However, the Asian financial crisis in 1997 that badly struck Indonesia caused economic collapse. Consequently, New Order regime was ended in 1998. After that, Indonesia has entered into reformasi era. There are many significant changes from the result of reformation. The first direct presidential election took place in 2004 during which Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was

1 Lecturer, Department of History, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University
elected as president. He succeeded to a second term in 2009. However, according to the new election law, president is able to be in office only two terms. Therefore, for the next election in 2014, Yudhoyono cannot run for the presidential election. In recent years, Indonesia is seen as a hopeful country, especially for western countries. Major powers, including the United States, have paid more attention to Indonesia.

The main issues of government policy in 2012 in Indonesia were the target of government to focus on economic development and to eliminate corruption. Nationalist appears in economic policy toward the 2014 elections. The Indonesian parliament also experienced the struggle between reform and conservative wings.

**Political Update**

The year 2004 was important to the changing of the structure of government in Indonesia. Apart from the president and vice-president being directly elected, the directly elected People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) has decreased the number of members from 700 members in New Order Era to 692 members comprised of 560 members from House of People’s Representatives (DPR) and 132 members from Regional Representatives’ Council (DPD).

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was very popular when he won the second term of his presidential election in 2009 due to his anti-corruption campaign. To cope with corruption, Indonesian government established the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in 2002. Its chairman
in 2012 was Abraham Samad. The work of the KPK is always controversial. In 2012 the popularity of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has decreased due to the scandal of corruption by senior members in his own party. In April 2012 Muhammad Nazaruddin, a former treasurer of the party, was sentenced to imprisonment for accepting Rp 4.6 billion linked to the construction of the SEA Games athletes’ village in South Sumatra. On 7 December 2012, KPK has accused Indonesia’s Sports Minister Andi Mallarangeng as a suspect in a multi-million-dollar corruption case, the construction of a huge sports complex in the town of Bogor in West Java. Consequently, Andi Mallarangeng resigned from this graft allegation. He is the first minister to resign on graft allegations since KPK began operating in 2003. These incidents have been seen as a humiliation of PD and also Yudhoyono himself. Although the president himself has not been implicated in the scandal, he has lost supporters as many view that Yudhoyono is the one who has to be responsible for these scandals as the PD’s leader. The latest scandal proves a challenge to the President Sulilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s party for the 2014 presidential election.

There are also signs that solidarity among coalition parties is also weakening. There are rival factions within coalition parties between Yudhoyono’s underlings and conservatives. PD also has found it difficult to deal with other parties in the coalition, especially the views on reform within the governing coalition. Even though President Yudhoyono controls around two-thirds of the seats in the DPR, the voting for proposed policies is not always feasible.

President Yudhoyono began his second term with a strong mandate from the Indonesian people, having gained over 60 percent of the vote. His candidacy was supported by a coalition of parties, and once elected he broadened the coalition to include parties that had previously competed against him. Grand coalitions also have their merits, stability of government being one. But broad coalitions bring their own problems, including a possible loss of coherence and discipline. In 2012 the controversial bill to reduce fuel subsidies that would have led to steep increases in the price of fuel was not approved among coalition parties.\(^5\) However, the proposal was finally passed.

In 2012 legislators also issued a new social security law that requires workers to pay for health service. As a result, there were mass protests in Jakarta and in big cities throughout the country over this law and low wages.\(^6\)


The conservative ministers, led by the coordinating minister for the economy, Hatta Rajasa, will increase their influence during the next two years (2013-2014) at the expense of reformers. Progressive ministers who will struggle to make their voices heard include Mari Pangestu, who was transferred from the Ministry of Trade to the Ministry of Tourism by President Yudhoyono in late 2011, and the vice-president, Boediono, who has come under renewed attacks from conservatives. The KPK is investigating claims that Bank Indonesia (BI, the central bank) deliberately amended takeover rules to allow the bail-out of a mid-sized lender, Bank Century, in 2008, when Boediono was BI governor. The commission has returned to the case in 2012; the vice-president was cleared of wrongdoing by the State Audit Agency in 2010.\(^7\)

According to the 2009 presidential election law, only political parties or groups of parties that win at least 20 percent of parliamentary seats or 25 percent of the vote in the legislative election are eligible to nominate presidential candidates. So the possibility of the winner in next election would be from three parties, PD, PDI-P and Golkar.

In April 2012, the DPR passed an amended election law that increased the vote threshold for parties to enter the parliament from 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent, making it more difficult for small parties to win seats in the upcoming 2014 elections.

The Party of the Functional Groups (Golkar) formally announced Bakrie as its presidential candidate in mid 2012. It is practiced as a norm (while not formally mandated in the constitution) that presidents have to be Muslims and of Javanese ethnicity. Because Bakrie is Sumatran parentage and descent, he is likely to choose a Javanese to join in his team as a vice-presidential candidate. The PD has not yet announced who its candidate for the next election will be. It has said that it will not name its candidate until closer to the election. It is quite certain that the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) has two choices between the former president, Megawati Sukarnoputri and the new governor of Jakarta, Joko Widodo. Apart from these candidates, there are also some figures who have close relationships with Suharto’s regime and will run for the presidential election in 2014. For example, Suharto’s son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto, who headed the Special Forces (Kopassus) during New Order Era and was involved in many case of human rights abuses both in East Timor and in Jakarta during the crisis in 1997-8. Currently, Subianto is a member of the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Garindra). Wiranto, the former commander of the military, is the leader of the People’s Conscience Party (Hanura). There have been reports that Suharto’s youngest son, Tommy Suharto, is also considering a run for the presidency. The United People’s Party (Partai Serikat Rakyat Independen) would send Sri Mulyani Indrawati as its nominee.

If Prabowa Subianto, son-in-law of Suharto, succeeds in the 2012 election many observer would be concerned about the issue of human rights and perhaps the relationship with the provinces that have potential conflicts with central
government such as Aceh and West Papua. After signing in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Indonesian central government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), the relationship between them has been restored and the Acehnese people have experienced peace that was lost for almost three decades. Yudhoyono was not as important a figure in the peace process in 2005 as Jusuf Kalla, his former vice-president. However, he supports the peace in Aceh and is accepted as the best choice by most Acehnese elites.

One of the most prominent issues in 2012 was about the win of Joko “Jokowi” Widodo who is backed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and the Greater Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) in the Jakarta gubernatorial election.8 He is a very popular politician. The result of the election indicates that Jakarta people desire change. The voters decided to vote for individual candidates rather than parties or coalitions of parties. Jokowi won the election despite the exit polls suggesting that up to 35 percent of supporters would vote for other candidates who were backed by coalitions of parties.

**Economic Update**

After experiencing severe financial crisis in 1997-98, Indonesia has recovered and reached GDP growth of 5-6 percent per year. Real GDP in 2012 was 6 percent. The exchange rate was 9,679 Rupiah per 1 US Dollar. In 2012

---

the Indonesian government has aimed to raise economic growth and investment including decreased unemployment. The government has expressed a desire to link local fuel prices to movements in global oil prices, but a switch to market pricing of fuel is unlikely.

There are also signs that economic policy is becoming increasingly nationalistic, a trend that is likely to increase in the run-up to the 2014 elections. The government is growing increasingly nationalistic with regards to the extractive sector, limiting foreign ownership of local mines and preparing to impose a moratorium on exports of raw resources. In February 2012 the government issued a regulation to control all of the country’s mines. The owners of mines have to be locals with at least 51 percent share during the first ten years of operation. In May the Ministry of Finance imposed a 20 percent tax on exports on mineral ores ahead of a moratorium on all such shipments, which is due in 2014. The government also seeking to increase the rate of royalties it receives from large foreign mining firms. Meanwhile, the upstream oil and gas regulator, BP Migas, was disbanded in November 2012 following a decision by the Supreme Court that it was unconstitutional. The court’s concern revolved around the involvement of foreign companies in Indonesia’s natural resource sector. However, the DPR has approved legislation aimed at making it easier for the state to acquire land for development purposes. The law, which was signed by President Yudhoyono in August 2012, sets dispute resolution and agreeing on compensation. It should eventually remove one of the major obstacles to a number of much-needed infrastructure projects.
The fiscal deficit was 2.4 percent of GDP in 2012. Bank Indonesia has left its main policy interest rate at a record low level of 5.75 percent since February 2012. The Economist Intelligence Unit believes that it will hold the rate steady until mid-to late 2013. Indonesia’s fiscal position has improved in recent years, leading to a decline in government debt as a share of GDP, but volatile oil prices remain a source of fiscal uncertainty, given the government’s heavy fuel subsidy bill. In 2012 the government had expected to record a budget deficit equivalent to 1.5 percent of GDP, but that forecast was revised up to 2.2 percent after the DPR vetoed an increase in the subsidized price of fuel products that had been scheduled for April 1st. The finance minister, Agus Amartowardjo, told a parliamentary budget committee in July that the government was likely to miss even its revised fiscal budget, stating that the deficit would widen to 2.3-2.4 percent of GDP this year. Although fuel subsidies mainly benefit Indonesia’s middle class, legislators have baulked at proposals to allow fuel prices to rise and fall in line with market trends. The Economist Intelligence Unit estimates that fiscal deficit in 2012 at 2.4 percent of GDP, but the government’s history of underspending means that a narrower deficit is possible. We then expect the fiscal deficit to shrink steadily over the next few years, as tax-office modernization improves revenue collection, to stand at 0.5 percent of GDP by 2017.
**TU-ASEAN Political Outlook**

### Key Indicators Year of 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Indicators</th>
<th>Year of 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real GDP growth (%)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer price inflation (av;%)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget balance (% of GDP)</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current account balance (% of GDP)</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deposit rate (av;%)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange rate Rp:US$</td>
<td>9,679</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistic Indonesia (2012), Statistical Yearbook 2012*

Indonesia is often seen as a future driver for global economic development. Indonesia has the right model to sustain growth, with its low inflation, low debt (about 26 percent of GDP), young demographics, and the insulation provided by two-thirds of its DDP being derived from domestic consumption. Anthony Reid suggests that the population structure is the reason why some people are optimistic about Indonesia’s economic growth performance and see Indonesia becoming Asia’s third-largest economy (after China and India) in 2050. The proportion of the population of productive working age is expected to peak in 2020. The most important source of Indonesia’s current growth is domestic consumption, deriving in turn from the expansion of a middle class with increasing amounts of disposable income.

---


International Relations

The United States has had a close relationship with Indonesia. The US government appears to view the country as a potential bridge between the developed and Islamic worlds. Indonesia has become more prominent in international organizations in recent years, serving as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2006-2008 and making its voice heard at G20 meetings. As the world’s advanced economies are set to grow slowly in 2013-2017, Indonesia will rely increasingly on China as an export market. But there will be opposition to closer economic ties with China, as shown by the backlash among local manufacturers against a free-trade agreement between China and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) that came fully into effect in 2010. The government’s foreign policy will continue to be influenced by the principle of non-alignment, and it will resist becoming too closely aligned with either the US or China. This stance has been evident in its neutral position in recent regional disputes over territorial claims in the South China Sea. There will be intermittent disputes with Malaysia and Singapore over a range of longstanding issues.

Security

After the Indonesian central government and GAM had signed an MOU in 2005, conditions in Aceh have been normal as mentioned above. In April 2012 former GAM foreign minister Zaini Abdullah was elected governor as he won in the region’s second election since 2005. However, there are still the problems in Papua Province. The eastern
province of Papua where exploitation of natural resources by the central government has harbored separatist sentiment. Jakarta continues to control the area with security forces, which causes more violence and distrust between security forces and local communities. Moreover, corruption has undermined the central government’s efforts to improve economic conditions in Papua.\(^\text{11}\)

The terrorist threat in Indonesia will remain an important consideration for foreign investors. The country experienced a series of large-scale bombings in 2002-2005 that specifically targeted foreigners. In mid 2009 there was a major attack at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta that killed nine people. In 2011 there was a series of small-scale attacks, including the suicide bombing in September of a Protestant church in Surakarta, Central Java. In 2012 there were two incidents indicating that there is still a risk of large-scale attacks against foreigners. In March 2012 the police uncovered and foiled several terrorist attacks, while in October a series of planned attacks against US and Australian embassies in Jakarta and the US consulate in Surabaya by a new group called the Sunni Movement for Indonesian Society (HASMI) was foiled.

In July the National Commission on Human Rights released reports indicating that government authorities were involved in human rights abuses, especially the mass killing of alleged communists in the 1960s.

Conclusion

There are two opposite opinions about the future of Indonesia. Some Indonesianists view that even with the political difficulties of corruption scandals, Indonesia still has witnessed impressive democratic development since the end of the New Order Era. On the contrary, some experts argue that even if Indonesia has held elections since 1999, the quality of democracy is still ambiguous. Some experts believe that the popularity of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono during his second term has decreased due to the many corruption scandals in his party, and the coalition has weakened. Nevertheless, the country has not returned to the military or authoritarian models as in the Suharto period.

References


*Australia Network News*

*Straits Time*

*The Jakarta Globe*

*The Jakarta Post*
Malaysia’s 13th General Election: Social Media and its Political Impact

James Gomez

Introduction

In February 2013, two-and-half months before Malaysia’s 13th general elections (GE13), Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was quoted widely in the media that the country will experience its first “social media election” (Zahiid, 2013). The significance of his remarks lies in the exponential growth of social media users in Malaysia over the preceding five years. During the previous election in 2008, there were 800,000 Facebook and 3,429 Twitter users in Malaysia. However, by 2013 these numbers had increased to 13,220,000 for Facebook and 2,000,000 for Twitter users (Forest-interactive.com, 2013).

Since the last general elections in 2008, Malaysia’s internet penetration had consistently risen year by year. Total internet penetration in Malaysia rose from 15,868,000 in 2008 to 17,723,000, while its population had grown from 27,302,348 in 2008 to 29,239,927 in 2012 (World Bank, 2011). The rise in internet penetration also pointed towards how Malaysians were accessing their news. According to the Malaysian Digital Association’s (MDA) February 2012 report, websites of the mainstream media, such as thestar.com.my, utusan.com.my and bharian.com.my, collected
2,221,763, 1,171,578 and 769,772 unique browsers respectively. Alternative news websites such as malaysiakini.com and themalaysianinsider.com collected 1,858,649 and 1,117,124 unique browsers respectively in the same period, demonstrating strongly their comparative strength.

### Table 1: Malaysian Internet Penetration by Online Media on February 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Online Media</th>
<th>Number of Penetration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thestar.com.my</td>
<td>2,221,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utusan.com.my</td>
<td>1,171,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bharian.com.my</td>
<td>769,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malaysiakini.com</td>
<td>1,858,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themalaysianinsider.com</td>
<td>1,117,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Malaysian Digital Association’s (MDA)*

Meanwhile, Malaysian newspapers, particularly the Malay and English-medium ones that have traditionally reported on local political news saw a drastic drop in circulation since the last general elections held in 2008. The two main Malaya language Bahasa Newspapers, Berita Harian, (weekend edition Berita Minggu) and Utusan Malaysia and (weekend edition Mingguan Malaysia), had suffered a decline from 1,147,126 in 2008 to 890,446 subscribers in 2012. Similarly, English language newspapers such as *The New Straits Times*, *The Star* and *The Edge* saw their combined circulation drop from 936,664 in 2008 to 813,994 in 2012.
Hence, in the run-up to GE13, both media and online data pointed towards social media as the platform where the online communications of the general elections would likely be transmitted. This paper examines the relationship between social media and electoral campaigns of the 13th Malaysian general election. In particular, it seeks to evaluate if the reach of the competing parties over social media during the official campaign period in 2013 determined the electoral result in any significant way.

**Social Media and Electoral Campaigns**

Social Media refers to a collection of online social interaction tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube which are among the most popular ones both globally and in Malaysia. However, the use of social media in general has evolved beyond its initial social purposes to include economic and political functions. For politics, it is often used as an advocacy and campaign tool to mobilize support both on and offline. An oft-cited example in the academic literature is the use of social media in Obama’s presidential election campaigns in 2008 and 2012. Beginning with activating volunteer and donor networks via social media in 2008 (Metzgar and Maruggi, 2013) to using social media to connect with audiences who get their political news via social networking sites.

Research on social media and electoral campaigns has since expanded beyond the US presidential elections. In the Asia-Pacific region, studies point towards the use of social media for political purposes during elections, particularly the use of Facebook in President Benigno
“Noynoy” Aquino III’s election in the Philippines to the use of Twitter by the Red Shirts in Thailand (see Behnke 2010).

However one of the main research foci of academics studying the relationship between social media and electoral campaigns is whether social media can influence voter behavior and impact electoral outcomes. Studies from the U.S. have shown that the number of social media users or supporters online does not translate into electoral success. In the case of the U.S. mid-term elections in 2010, researchers found that that predicting winners based on Twitter requires further investigation (Livne, Simmons, Adar and Adamic, 2011:208). Similarly, findings from the Swedish case demonstrate that the volume of tweets on Twitter do not show a correlation to electoral outcomes (Larsson and Moe, 2010:14). From studies based on examples in Asia, in the case of Facebook, it was noted that popularity on social networking sites such as Facebook do not result in electoral success (Leng Ho 2012:108). While in the case of Twitter, some authors start on the premise that tweets hold predictive power in forecasting election results but conclude that in the case of the 2011 general elections in Singapore, it is not conclusive and recommend further research (Scoric, Poor, Achananuparp, Lim and Jiang 2012:2589-2590). One reason for these inconclusive results is that most countries do have a large digital divide and hence political parties and politicians have to rely on other means of communication for campaigning purposes.

To date, however, research from civil society and voter mobilization research suggest that social media’s best use lies in its capacity to mobilize and politicize the citizenry. Here the term “social media election”, first equated
with the 2008 Obama campaign, attributed the large voter turnout to his campaign’s use of social media and new technology. Writing a little later on the South Korean case, authors Chang and Bae argue that social media such as Twitter turn elections into “social elections”. The significance lies in the way social media influence those who traditionally do not vote to turn out during an election (Chang and Bae 2012:36). In Malaysia’s 13th general election, this difference between impact on electoral result and voter mobilization holds explanatory potential to understand the influence of social media on voter behavior during an election.

**From New Media in GE12 (2008) to Social Media in GE13 (2013)**

In the 2008 general election, it was widely accepted that alternative online content determined the result. A range of scholars writing about the 12th general elections observed that the internet helped the opposition score electoral success (Rajaratnam 2009; MohdSani and Zengeni 2010; Suffian 2010; Ndoma and Tumin 2011; Weiss 2012). The country’s opposition coalition was credited in using new media to overcome a hostile mainstream media owned by establishment political interests to secure a much improved showing at the polls. This prompted the former Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi to admit that his “biggest mistake” was to ignore the cyber-campaigning over the internet, and this was a “serious misjudgment” that resulted in the loss BN suffered at the 2008 polls (AFP, 25 March 2008).

In the 2008 general election, the new media electoral landscape was comprised of blogs, party websites and
alternative news portals and not really “social media” as we it know today. The social media tool that was most effectively used by the opposition in GE2008 was YouTube. The opposition and civil society posted videos on YouTube in their online negative campaign against the ruling coalition’s negative campaigning in the mainstream media. In 2008, BN was the clear outsider in social media terms. In fact, BN literally had limited online presence and was said to have learnt its lesson. They understood the importance of new media as they began preparing for the next general elections.

In the interim year, political parties, their leaders and key members began to slowly sign up to the different social media platforms. In 2008, the only parties who had established a YouTube Channel were BN and a Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition member, the Democratic Action Party (DAP). Later, another PR coalition member, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) created its channel in 2009. Some parties such as DAP and BN, a little later, added further new channels to YouTube. In contrast, both BN and PR coalition did not have a Facebook account in 2008, although Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) established a Facebook page after the 2008 general election. Over the course of the next years, other parties and their leaders established their Facebook accounts. Similarly with regards to Twitter, DAP was the only party that joined Twitter one month after the 2008 general election was over. As for party leader Anwar Ibrahim, he was the only party leader who had a Twitter account before 2008 general election even though Twitter was not used as a political campaign tool in the 2008 Malaysian general election.
By April 2013, the landscape was very different. BN had made strong inroads onto social media and had carved itself a competitive position. Its fan page on Facebook boasted 55,000 likes while supporters of the PR had 92,000. For both coalitions there were also several other fan and supporter pages reflecting smaller numbers. Party leaders’ “like” numbers on Facebook are on the other hand much higher. BN’s Najib has 1,580,000, while PAS’s Nik Aziz has 889,000; Anwar Ibrahim has 480,000 and DAP’s Lim Kit Siang has 120,000. The combined numbers of the three PR leaders are a good 80,000 likes below Najib.

**Table 2**: Fans Page on Facebook of Political and Leader Parties in Malaysia on April 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>“Like” Fans Page</th>
<th>Party Leader</th>
<th>“Like” Fans Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barisan Nasional (BN)</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>Najib (BN)</td>
<td>1,580,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>PR Leaders</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parti Keadilan-Rakyat (PKR)</td>
<td>29,177</td>
<td>Anwar Ibrahim (PKR)</td>
<td>480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)</td>
<td>138,317</td>
<td>Nik Aziz (PAS)</td>
<td>889,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Action Party (DAP)</td>
<td>510,230</td>
<td>Lim Kit Siang (DAP)</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: www.facebook.com (17 April 2013)*
Meanwhile on the Twitter front, the number of followers was: BN 24,000, PKR 27,000; DAP 27,000 PAS 1200 and PR supporters 1,900. Individual twitter followers for Najib stood at 1,460,000. For the Pakatan coalition leaders, Anwar Ibrahim has 267,000, Nik Aziz has 94,000 and Lim Kit Siang has 89,000 followers. Put together, Pakatan leaders combined only muster a third of Najib’s followers\(^2\).

**Table 3**: Twitter Followers of Political and Leader Parties in Malaysia on April 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Party Leader</th>
<th>Followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barisan Nasional (BN)</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>Najib (BN)</td>
<td>1,460,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat (PR)</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>PR Leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parti Keadilan-Rakyat (PKR)</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>Anwar Ibrahim (PKR)</td>
<td>267,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan- Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Nik Aziz (PAS)</td>
<td>94,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Action Party (DAP)</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>Lim Kit Siang (DAP)</td>
<td>89,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) (17 April 2013)*

\(^2\) While these numbers are impressive, it is important to note that there are accounts that can be set up to artificially amplify messages or shore up a party or leader’s popularity. Digital News Asia, which reported on the use of an online tool to investigate the veracity of social media networks argued only that only 20 or 40 percent of a leaders’ Facebook followers in Malaysia are genuine (Asohan, 16 April 2013).
When the numbers of BN and Najib were combined with that of PR and its leaders, it put the ruling coalition well ahead in social media numbers on the eve of elections.

**Social Media and its Impact on GE13**

YouTube was the only Social Media Platform that was used in the 2008 General Election, as both parties and party leaders had YouTube accounts and used them during the 2008 general election. By 2013 the usage of social media was increasing as both parties and party leaders had joined Facebook and Twitter before the 2013 general election was held. In the 2008 general election, PR was one step ahead of BN, both online and in the usage of social media. In 2013, Barisan Nasional finally managed to catch up largely through the dominance of Najib’s online presence.

In the 2013 elections, Najib Razak was the most popular political leader based on his Twitter followers and Facebook fans. In terms of images and messages over social media, the content shows that BN is able to project a singular branding with a single image in Najib as the leader. On the other hand, PR was unable to effectively portray a singular coalition branding or a convincing single coalition leadership icon. For instance, in all its posters online and offline, the opposition coalition featured all three of its leaders and maintained separate social media platforms at the party level. Hence as a coalition, PR remains visually and in terms of messaging as three fairly distinct components over social media.
However, in spite of closing the gap on the social media front, in electoral terms the BN’s result slid further in 2013 compared to 2008. In the May 2013 general elections, the ruling BN secured 133 seats compared to 89 by the opposition PR. It was the BN coalition’s worst electoral performance since 1969, dropping further from its 140 seats in the 2008 general elections. On the other hand, PR made an improvement of five seats over its 2008 results of 82 seats. For two elections running, the opposition was able to deny the ruling BN a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

In terms of numbers, in Malaysia’s 12th General Election in March 2008, the number of people who registered to vote was 10,740,227, but total vote received was only 7,942,803, with 177,256 spoiled votes and 40,980 unreturned ballots. The numbers escalated in the 13th general election to 13,268,002 registered voters with a total of 11,256,545 people casting their votes.

Table 4: Malaysian Voters, 2008 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matter</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td>10,740,227</td>
<td>13,268,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoiled Votes</td>
<td>177,256</td>
<td>173,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes Received</td>
<td>7,942,803</td>
<td>11,256,545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spr.gov.my(16 August 2013)

In terms of popular votes, PR overall did better with 53.5 percent, improving by 6.8 per cent from 46.75 percent in 2008. Meanwhile BN only secured 45.5 percent compared to 50.2 percent in 2008. Hence in terms of net seats and popular vote, the 2013 results showed that BN
fared worse than in 2008.

**Table 5: Popular Votes for Political Parties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barisan Nasional</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakatan Rakyat</td>
<td>46.75%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: spr.gov.my (16 August 2013)*

But in terms of state legislatures, in 2013 BN won nine out of the 12 states\(^3\). Kelantan, Penang and Selangor were won by PR with increased majorities, while it lost Kedah to BN. States such as Perak and Terengganu were won by a narrow majority by BN with three and two seats respectively. In 2008, BN lost five states, namely Kelantan, Penang, Selangor, Perak and Kedah, which were won by PR. However, Perak was lost to BN a year later when three PR legislators crossed over to BN.

When evaluating the social media-related outcomes of the 13\(^{th}\) Malaysian general elections, it is the net impact of social media’s political influence in the last five years and not merely the campaign period that analysts need to consider. Hence, whether or not Najib’s proclamation that GE13 would be a “social media election” would ring true was already determined by election day. Malaysia’s 13\(^{th}\) general election was also not a “social media election”, at least not for the ruling BN when we consider the electoral results. If it was, BN certainly lost the “social media election”.

---

\(^3\) There were legislative assembly elections only for 12 states. The Sarawak State Legislative Assembly was not dissolved as the last election was held in 2011 and its term is due to end only in 2016.
This result is consistent with the research emerging from studies related to social media and electoral campaigns that conclude tentatively that popularity on social media platforms need not necessarily translate into votes (Leng Ho 2012:108).

Other the other hand, from the context of voter mobilization, social media’s impact on GE13 may lie in its ability to have played an important part in encouraging high voter turnout. For instance, compared to the 2008 elections when turnout was only 76 percent of the 10,740,227 eligible voters. In 2013 the voter turnout was highest in Malaysian electoral history where more than 84.8 percent of 13,268,002 eligible voters cast their ballots. In terms of published research about other countries (Chang and Bae 2012:36), the findings of the Malaysia GE13 suggest that social media does influence more voters to turn out during elections. However, the influence of social media needs to be coupled with the importance of key election issues and corresponding impact of the mainstream media.

Table 6: Voters in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Eligible Voters</th>
<th>Actual Turn Out</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10,740,227</td>
<td>8,161,039</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>13,268,002</td>
<td>11,256,545</td>
<td>84.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: spr.gov.my (16 August 2013)

While the above findings do provide some understanding of Malaysia’s 13th general elections, observers need to be aware that the social media campaign can only form one part of the media narrative. There are other
Malaysia’s 13th General Election:  
Social Media and it’s Political Impact

narratives being formed by the mainstream print and broadcast media as well as through paid advertising and direct-marketing that researchers also need to consider for a fuller picture of the Malaysian general elections in 2013.

**Conclusion: Not a Social Media Election**

Social media in Malaysia has been influential in keeping important political issues in the forefront in the last five years prior to the 2013 elections. Thus both sides pushing content through the various Facebook pages, video portals and Twitter, did not significantly alter the results in BN’s favor. On the whole it appears that PR’s social media could fend off the BN’s media onslaught on social media, but the opposition social media campaign overall was eclipsed by BN’s mainstream media presence, paid advertising and direct marketing fueled by large financial resources.

Yet in spite of the time and resources dedicated by both the BN and Najib in improving their online presence in time for the 2013 general election, they still could not arrest the erosion of support from Malaysian voters. It seems that Malaysian voters were keen to hear significant movement in policy areas related to the high cost of living, governmental corruption and equal treatment and opportunities for all Malaysians, regardless of race or ethnicity. Hence, it was the political issues that have been simmering over the past five years that were more important than the medium.

However, the opposition coalition has disputed the election results, in particular in over 30 marginal seats, citing electoral fraud, the presence of phantom voters and
problems with the inedible ink. Since 5 May 2013, Pakatan Rakyat has organised 15 public gatherings billed as “Blackout 505” country-wide to voice their dissatisfaction (Malaysiakini, 22 June 2013). A primary demand by PR is that the current heads and commissioners of the Election Commission be replaced by new leadership. These rallies have been labeled illegal by the police, who cite the absence of permits and the use of public spaces for these activities. Instead, the opposition has been asked to file election petitions in court to legally dispute the results. Pakatan had filed 35 elections petition challenging the results in 25 parliamentary and ten state seats. Meanwhile, BN has filed 21 parliamentary seat petitions (Puah Wee Tse, 2013). At the time of writing in mid-August 2013, the bulk of the petitions on both sides have been dismissed on technical grounds and with costs to named respondents (Wall Street Journal, 16 August 2013).

Depending on how the election result dispute play out, it is likely that social media will continue to be an important tool for the ruling and opposition coalitions in the interim years leading up to the next elections.

References


Rajaratnam, U. 2009. Role of Traditional and Online Media in the 12th General Election, Malaysia. The Journal of the South East Asia Research centre for Communications and Humanities, 1 (1).


Regional Connectivity of ASEAN in 2012

Narut Charoensri

In 2012, the progress of regional connectivity in ASEAN was smooth but not significant, as there as no great change in terms of strategies and policies. The hard and soft infrastructure\textsuperscript{2} of ASEAN Connectivity was pushed by the meetings, but the facilitation of the free flow of people was not brought to the table of discussion in 2012.

Two meetings, namely ASEAN Transport Officials, and the ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting, have been held to intensify the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) and to discuss about how to strengthen connectivity in the region. The ASEAN Highway Network, Singapore Rail Link, and Master Plan and Feasibility Study on Placement of ASEAN Roll-On/Roll-Off (RoRo) Networking and Short Sea Shipping had become the top priorities of ASEAN plan.

What progressed meaningfully was the collaboration between ASEAN and China. In 2012, China furthers her relations with ASEAN more than any other country when compared to Japan and South Korea. At the same time, the

\textsuperscript{1} School of International Affairs, Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, Chiang Mai University

\textsuperscript{2} ‘Hard Infrastructure’ refers to physical infrastructures e.g. roads, railways, airports, deep seaport, telecommunication systems; while ‘soft infrastructure’ refers to procedures, regulations, laws.
collaboration with Germany and the European Union (EU) were also strengthening the future of the logistics network of ASEAN.

The development plan of Dawei deep seaport in Myanmar also progressed but gradually. There was no striking milestone or outstanding investment in the project. Thailand, as Myanmar is neighbor and the foremost investor in the project, moved slowly to deepen the collaboration.

This paper tries to summarize the progress of ASEAN Connectivity in 2012. The first part will give a very brief background of ASEAN Connectivity. Next, it will elaborate on the progress of ASEAN Connectivity in 2012 by looking at related meetings in 2012. This part will study ASEAN meetings and relationships with external partners.

A Brief Background on ASEAN Connectivity

The idea of ASEAN connectivity was adopted in 2010 during the 17th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi, Vietnam. The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) was submitted by the High Level Task Force on ASEAN Connectivity. The objectives of the plan are to support the ultimate objective of ASEAN that tries to form the ASEAN Community in 2015; and to boost shipping, rail and air networks in the region, in an effort to be a regional power. To reach its goals, ASEAN needs to facilitate the realization

---

of the ASEAN community through ‘connectivity’. The leaders also approved an ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the MPAC. Ten ASEAN member countries adopted the MPAC to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Master Plan.

The MPAC aims at building up three linkages in ASEAN: namely, physical connectivity, institutional connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity.

(1) Physical Connectivity: Doing business in ASEAN is hard due to the unsatisfactory ‘hard and soft infrastructure.’ In terms of hard infrastructure, roads, railways, deep seaports, and both domestic and international airports, are not in good condition, and poorly maintained.

(2) Institutional Connectivity: Another focus of MPAC is to improve the ‘soft infrastructure.’ The varied regulations, laws, procedures, non-tariff barriers (NBTs) of ASEAN member countries are needed to be revised, and some are even eliminated, in order to expedite and facilitate trade and investment in the region.

(3) People-to-People Connectivity: Not only is the integration and completion of hard and soft infrastructure important to the ASEAN integration, but also the mobility of people is also a key strategy of deepening the ASEAN integration. Thereby, the MAPC also aims to undertake the relaxation of visa requirements and

---

development of mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) among member countries.

Since the awareness of ASEAN Connectivity was devised, countless meetings and conferences have been held by both state and regional level organizations. In regional level, there are two chief meetings that pay close attention to the ASEAN Connectivity: ASEAN Senior Transport Officials (STOM) Meeting, and the ASEAN Transport Minister Meeting.

(1) 33rd ASEAN Senior Transport Officials (STOM) Meeting

In May 2012, senior delegates from ten ASEAN member nations took part in the 33rd ASEAN Senior Transport Officials (STOM) meeting in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, to finalize the MPAC. The meeting was expected to help member nations make their goals congruent and generate measures for the plan’s execution. The meeting concerned three transportation sectors which are water, land and air.

The meeting emphasized the ASEAN Highway Network, the Singapore Rail Link, and the Master Plan and Feasibility Study on Placement of ASEAN Roll-On/ Roll-Off (RoRo) Networking and Short Sea Shipping. The ASEAN Ro-Ro’s feasibility study is to be looked after by Indonesia and the Philippines as project coordinators. On land transportation, the delegates have a debate about upgrading the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link (SKRL) and the ASEAN Highway Network Project. In addition, the
delegates discussed the finalization of the Eight Package of Commitments on Air Transport Services and the ASEAN Single Aviation Market that includes economic and technical cooperation. It was hoped that if the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity can be finalized, ASEAN can be a regional power due to its robust economic growth.5

(2) 18th ASEAN Transport Minister Meeting

During 29-30 November 2012, the delegates from ten member countries and ASEAN transport dialogue partners gathered in Bali, Indonesia, to discuss ASEAN connectivity. Delegates reaffirmed their commitment towards timely and effective implementation of the measures and initiatives for enhanced ASEAN transport connectivity set out in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint, the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity, and the Brunei Action Plan, ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan 2011-2015. The Ministers recognized the importance of close collaboration between ASEAN Dialogue Partners, international organizations, and related private sectors responsible for dealing with the implementation of comprehensive transport initiatives to reinforce the attempts to form the ASEAN Community in 2015.6

---


The meeting held a discussion on three dimensions of transportation in ASEAN: aviation, land, and maritime transportation system. In terms of aviation, the meeting considered and endorsed the vision developed under the Air transportation Technical Cooperation (ATTC) Work Plan for a ASEAN Single Aviation Market (ASAM). The objectives of ASAM are to harmonize the interoperable procedures and operations of airspaces in the Asia-Pacific. Sharing databases is also the priority of this scheme.\footnote{Ibid.}

In order to support transport facilitation, the meeting initiated a framework to try to facilitate seamless movement of people and support the establishment of the Expert Group on the Finalization of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Cross Border Transport of Passenger (CBTP). The CBTP aims to simplify and complement transport procedures to assist cross border road transport of people between and among ASEAN member states.

At the same time, in order to enhance ASEAN Maritime and Marine Environment Protection Cooperation, the delegates also noted the importance of the recognition of the seafarer education and training in the region to the shipping sector and welcomed the establishment of a Task Force to look into possibility of formulating a MOU on Recognition of Near-Coastal Voyage (NCV) certificates issued by the ASEAN Member States.\footnote{Minister of Communications attended the 18th ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting in Bali, Indonesia <http://www.mincom.gov.bn/index.php/news-center/press-releases/516-minister-of-communications-attended-the-18th-asean-transport-ministers-meeting-in-bali-indonesia> (accessed June 2, 2013).}
The meeting expected that the three projects consisting of the network of Trans-ASEAN toll roads, the Singapore-Kunming railway line, and the ASEAN ferry network would automatically contribute to the achievement of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.9

The Trans-ASEAN Toll Road Network, or ASEAN Highway Network, will expand from the border of the South China to Indonesia and the Philippines. Meanwhile, a railway line will link Southwest China with Southeast Asia. The line will start from Kunming passing through Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia all the way down to Singapore. At the same time the route will have alternatives via Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

(3) External Partners

To enhance comprehensive network of transportation systems in the region, China, Japan and South Korea have been playing vigorous roles in supporting that objectives. During the 18th ASEAN Transport Minister Meeting in Indonesia, on the last day of the meeting, it was preceded by the Senior Transport Officials Meeting between ASEAN Member States and China, Japan and South Korea. Each country has broadly discussed about their concerns on the connectivity of ASEAN. External countries committed their projects, funds and collaboration with ASEAN member countries. Also, there were meetings on the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) that discussed the strengthening the

---

issue of economic corridors to strongly support the logistics system in the region.

**China:** At the end of the meeting of the eleventh ASEAN and China Transport Ministers Meeting (11th ATM-China), the ASEAN Ministers supported the Leader’s mandate for the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Connectivity and Chinese Working Committee on Connectivity to discuss and identify key areas for connectivity cooperation. The Ministers welcomed China’s proposal to set up a RMB 3 billion China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund to provide financial support to ASEAN-China Cooperation in the areas of maritime scientific research, connectivity and navigation safety, particularly to implement cooperative activities and projects within the DOC framework. Furthermore, China was also willing to contribute USD 5 million to the China-ASEAN Cooperation Fund to support the implementation of transport infrastructure projects linking ASEAN member States and China.10

Meanwhile, in 2012, China also strongly expressed her willingness to support the construction and development of the GMS Economic Corridor. At the fourth GMS Economic Corridor Forum held in June 2012, China furthered a series of proposals on the construction of the GMS economic corridors, including promoting the construction of the transport corridor, Pan-Asia railway, industrial parks, cross-border cooperation zone, trade facilitation and information superhighway, realizing full

---

connectivity, and strengthening the capacity building on economic corridor cooperation.  

*Japan:* At the same time, at the tenth ASEAN and Japan Transport Ministers Meeting (10th ATM-Japan), Japan initiated the project that would further develop safe, green and user-friendly transport under the ASEAN-Japan Transport Partnership (AJTP), which was kicked off in 2003, in particular the completion and launching of the ‘Best Approaches Book.’ The Best Approaches Book is a collection of successful experiences and stories of environmental transport policies in ASEAN and Japan, which will serve as a useful reference to further develop Green Transport.  

*South Korea:* The fourth ASEAN and ROK Transport Ministers Meeting (4th ATM+ROK) was also held alongside with the two meetings mentioned previously. The significant outcome of the meeting was that the Ministers welcomed the notable progress made in implementing the ASEAN-ROK Transport Cooperation Roadmap including the successful conclusion of the:

1. Conduct of the International Program on Port and Logistics (IPPL) for ASEAN Countries;
2. Conduct of HRD Program for Performance Based Navigation (PBN) Implementation Plan Requirements; and

---


The Ministers also requested South Korea to extend technical assistance in other strategic projects, for example, railway and port development that will help to facilitate the implementation of ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan (ASTP) / Brunei Action Plan (BAP) and MPAC.\textsuperscript{13}

It is not only China, Japan, and South Korea that develops strategically with ASEAN to strengthen ASEAN Connectivity, but India is one of the top partners of ASEAN. During the 18\textsuperscript{th} ASEAN Transport Minister Meeting, ASEAN acknowledged the strategic importance of having greater physical connectivity between ASEAN and India, including both land and sea connectivity. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway is extending the route to connect with Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.\textsuperscript{14}

Germany is also having closer collaboration with ASEAN. Germany supports the implementation of the Sustainable Port Development in ASAN Regional Project and the Project on Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Mitigation in the Land Transport Sector. The commencement of the operations of the ASEAN Regional Integration


Support form the EU (ARISE), the EU-ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project (EU-AATIP) and the ASEAN Single Aviation Market (ASAM) were also welcomed during the meeting.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{(4) Dawei Deep Seaport in Myanmar}

In the past few years, what has been attracting international intention was the openness of Myanmar. The re-regulation process and democratizing progress in Myanmar have persuaded international investors to look at Myanmar. What is striking to international investors most is the deep seaport in Dawei. The deep seaport is located in the South of Myanmar, which is approximately 130 kilometers away from Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
Dawei: Burma’s planned regional trade hub

Map 1: Dawei deep seaport and the expected connections with Myanmar-Thailand-Cambodia-Vietnam

This project is expected to increase the competitiveness of Myanmar and spur up business opportunities for international investors. Moreover, the other driving force was that the military junta realized that Myanmar could not escape the changing global economic system. Thus, this mega-project would integrate Myanmar into the global economic system and enhance the image of Myanmar as a promising destination for business.

In 2012, Thailand and Myanmar agreed to sign an MOU when Thein Sein visited Thailand. The MOU shifted the status of the mega-project from a government-to-private sector to a government-to-government basis.

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) – a Japanese research organization – will join Thailand and Myanmar in developing the Dawei deep seaport. Setsuo Iuchi, the president of Bangkok JETRO – confirmed Japanese awareness in the project during a meeting with the industry minister, offering a JETRO financial distribution for infrastructure development and investment by the Japanese private sectors for some projects.17

(5) World Economic Forum

In 2012, the importance of the development of physical infrastructure and particular laws and procedures in ASEAN was also recognized by the World Economic Forum (WEF) on East Asia which was held in Bangkok, Thailand. Many CEOs and leaders who were attending the meeting accentuated the importance of ASEAN member countries in speeding up the development of infrastructure in the region.18 The meeting recognizes that the improvement of domestic and international connectivity will improve the


quality of life, eradicate poverty, and help ASEAN’s target of connectivity. Rajat Nag, Managing Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has commented that ASEAN countries have now realized that they need infrastructure to develop the region’s economy. But they cannot afford the investment alone. Accordingly, the project should be a collaboration between governments and private parties.\textsuperscript{19}

Conclusion

In 2012, there was no excessive alteration of strategies or principles on ASEAN Connectivity. What we have seen from the meetings was that ASEAN as a regional organization was not the only actor involved in the development plan on ASEAN Connectivity. External actors such as China, Japan, and South Korea are also playing supportive roles by loans, grants, investment, and technical assistance. This progress signifies the importance of a logistics system in this region which is located in an area that has the potential to link two vast oceans together. The ‘people-to-people’ connectivity of ASEAN, however, has been marked by slow progress. A substantial development in people-to-people connectivity was not taken into consideration by member countries at any regional level meeting.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
Regional Connectivity in ASEAN

References

ASEAN Secretariat. 2010. *Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.


