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DR. LIN SAKRAWATHI

Editor-in-Chief,
Asia School of Business (Senior Academic Manager)
University of Nottingham Malaysia (PhD)
editor-in-chief@akademitenggara.com
admin@akademitenggara.com

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PREFACE
FROM THE TABLE OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Multidisciplinary in Action Journal, published by Akademi Tenggara Enterprise.

This issue is a result of a collaborative effort with academics and students of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Department of History & Civilisation, for the course Public History (HIST 2303).

It brings together twelve insightful articles that reflect various themes, from cultural identity and public history to educational advancements and political movements. Each piece offers a unique perspective, contributing to the understanding of our shared heritage and contemporary society.

The first article, "Batik Thursdays: Exploring Cultural Preservation in Government Workplaces through a Public History Lens", discusses how the practice of wearing batik among public servants emphasizes cultural pride and national identity. The article highlights how this traditional attire remains relevant within the evolving professional landscape.

The second article, "KLCC Twin Towers Through the Lens of Public History: A National Icon Reflecting Malaysia's Aspirations and Realities", examines Malaysia's iconic landmark, reflecting its role as a symbol of national progress and the complexities tied to modernization efforts.

The third piece, "Fall of Barisan Nasional in GE14 and Media Framing: Revisiting the Event through Public History ", examines one of Malaysia's key political turning points, exploring the influence of media narratives during this crucial general election.

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In the fourth article, "Perceptions on the Establishment of AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM Through the Lens of Public History", the authors explore the historical and societal impacts of this institution, shedding light on its contributions to Islamic education and intellectual growth.f the student union has shaped student representation and contributed to campus dynamics.

The fifth contribution, "Reclaiming the Glory of ISTAC: A Journey Through Public History", reflects on the historical significance of ISTAC and its role in advancing academic excellence, offering a thoughtful narrative on the institution's transformation over time.

Following that, the sixth article, "Undi18 Reform: Exploring Youth Participation, Political Literacy, and Media Influence through a Public History Lens", highlights the impact of the Undi 18 movement, demonstrating the growing political engagement among Malaysia's younger generation.

In the seventh article, "Public Perception of the Establishment of IIUM Student Union: Relevance, Challenges, and Future Directions", the authors investigate how the establishment of the student union has shaped student representation and contributed to campus dynamics.

The eighth piece, "Significance and Sustainability of Communiversity at IIUM: A Public History Project", focuses on how the concept of "*communiversity*" nurtures stronger community ties and highlights the university's role as a societal partner.

The ninth article, "The Phenomena of Ayam Gepuk: Culinary Assimilation and Identity Through Public History Lens", narrates the story of this popular dish, emphasizing its cultural significance and how it serves as a reflection of local identity and entrepreneurship.

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The tenth article, "Evolution of Learning and Malaysian Education Industry Digitization in the Pandemic Era (2020-2024): A Public History Project and Literature Survey" discusses how digital transformation has reshaped the education sector in recent years, with a focus on IIUM's experiences.

The eleventh contribution, "Evaluating the Impact of COVID-19 on SPM 2020 Candidates: A Comparative Public History Analysis", explores the pandemic's impact on education, highlighting the resilience and adaptability shown by students and educators during unprecedented times.

Lastly, the twelfth article, "Visa Challenges at IIUM (2020-2024): Bureaucratic Hurdles and Their Impacts on International Students' Enrolment", provides an in-depth account of the administrative challenges faced by international students and their impact on access to education and inclusion.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I extend heartfelt thanks to all contributors and reviewers whose efforts have brought this issue to fruition. We hope these articles will spark meaningful discussions, inspire future research, and serve as a resource for students, academics, and society at large.

Warm regards,
Dr. Lin Sakrawathi
Editor-in-Chief, Multidisciplinary in Action
by Akademi Tenggara Press,
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Fall of Barisan Nasional in GE14 and Media Framing: Revisiting the Event through Public History

Ammar Irsyad Mohd Fazlili, Muqri Kamaruzaman, Nola Refa Melya, Nurfajatul Mohd Yusuf, Nurfariha Akmal Fawwazah Abdullah Fauzi and Siti Hadija Mohd

Abstract

This public history project looks at how people in Malaysia remember the fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) during the 14th General Election (GE14) in 2018. The study focuses on how Malaysians view this important moment, what factors were thought to have contributed to it, and how media framing played a role in shaping public opinion. Using historical research methods like netnography and surveys, this project dives into the reasons behind BN's downfall by analysing key news articles and opinions, along with responses from 31 participants. The findings show that public opinion on BN's fall was not highly divided, but there was agreement that the defeat happened due to several factors. The loss in GE14 also highlights the significance of good governance, youth participation, and coalition building in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Public history, Fall of Barisan Nasional, GE14, Media framing, Political change*

Introduction

This project was done as part of the Public History (HIST 2303) course during Semester 2, 2023/2024, under the Department of History and Civilisation, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The purpose of the course is to give students a chance to apply public history methods to real-life events, so that important moments in our history, especially political history, can be better understood and preserved for future generations.

One of the main events that this project focuses on is the fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) during the 14th General Election (GE14) in 2018. BN had been in power for over 60 years, so when they lost, it shocked many people in Malaysia. This defeat was an important turning point in Malaysian politics, and it showed that the political landscape was changing. Many voters, especially the younger generation, were becoming more aware of issues like corruption, governance, and the need for political reform. As Ahmad Zakuan et al. (2018) discussed, voting behaviour in some regions, particularly in the north of Malaysia, was strongly influenced by dissatisfaction with economic conditions and policies of the BN government. This local dissatisfaction was part of a bigger picture that eventually led to BN's downfall.

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Numerous studies also have shown, including that of Moniruzzaman and Kazi (2018), that the newly enlightened generation of Malaysia has been eager to change the political status quo, as the BN-ruled government's weaknesses have been made more transparent since 2004, way before GE14. However, it was only in 2018, with the reappearance of Mahathir — with his newly formed coalition party called Pakatan Harapan (PH) along with another giant player, Anwar Ibrahim — that the BN government was finally unseated.

The role of social media also played a significant part in this election. During GE14, platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp were heavily used to spread information, opinions, and even misinformation. Social media allowed voters to see different viewpoints, challenge mainstream narratives, and engage with political discussions in ways that traditional media could not offer. As shown by Kasmani (2020), Twitter became a space where election-related discussions, especially around the hashtag #PRU14, helped shape people's thoughts about the election. This showed how powerful social media had become in influencing political opinions. Moreover, the involvement of youth in GE14 was very impactful. Many young Malaysians were frustrated with the BN government and wanted change. As Rahman (2018) points out, the youth vote was one of the main reasons why BN lost. This shows that the younger generation was starting to demand more transparency and accountability from their leaders. This project looks into these issues and explores how the fall of BN is remembered and understood by the public, with a special focus on how the media framed the event.

In terms of research methods, this project used netnography and surveys to study the public memory of the election. By analysing news articles, online posts, and survey responses from 31 participants, this project tries to understand the key factors that contributed to BN's defeat. It also examines how media coverage shaped public perception of the election results (Koay & Khairiah, 2022). In light of all the above variables, this project aims to address three main research objectives. Firstly, it seeks to understand public opinion on the fall of Barisan Nasional in GE14, focusing on whether there is any division or polarisation in how the public views the defeat. Some may think the outcome was justified, while others might feel it was unwarranted. Secondly, this project aims to explore what factors the public believes contributed to BN's loss. Was it due to governance issues, youth activism, or perhaps dissatisfaction with economic policies? Lastly, the project investigates how media framing played a role in shaping public opinion and whether this influenced the final results of the election.

By tackling these objectives, this study hopes to answer key questions such as: What were the public's reactions to BN's defeat in GE14? Why does the public think BN lost the election? How did media framing impact public perception, and in turn, affect the election results? These questions form the backbone of this research and will guide the analysis in better understanding how a significant political shift like GE14 continues to shape Malaysia's political landscape today. Overall, the Public History course allowed students to learn about the importance of preserving historical events and applying their knowledge to modern-day political events like GE14. By studying this election, we can contribute to the understanding of how important political changes happen in Malaysia and make sure that future generations have access to these insights.

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Objectives

This study has three main objectives. First, it seeks to find out what the public thinks about the fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) in the 14th General Election (GE14). It is important to explore whether people have different views about the defeat — are there some who feel the loss is unfair or unjustified? Second, this study will look into the public's understanding of the reasons behind BN's loss. What are the factors that they believe contributed to it? Finally, the research will examine how media framing influenced public opinion and whether this had an effect on the GE14 outcome. To guide the research, these are the key questions:

1. What are the public's opinions and reactions to BN's defeat in GE14?

2. Why does the public think the reasons for BN to have lost in GE14?

3. How did media framing shape public perception, and how did it influence the GE14 results?

These questions will help to clearly define the focus of the research and lead to a deeper understanding of the events surrounding GE14.

Problem statement

The defeat of Barisan Nasional (BN) in the 14th General Election (GE14) was a turning point in Malaysia's political history. For more than 60 years, BN held power, and its sudden fall in 2018 shocked many. This event gave rise to many questions about what went wrong and how a party that was once so dominant could lose. As we look back from 2024, this moment gives us a chance to re-examine how the public views the fall of BN. Has the public's memory of the event changed over time, or do people still remember it the same way? It is important to understand how Malaysians today think about BN's downfall and whether opinions about it are divided or polarised. At the same time, this situation offers an opportunity to explore what factors the public believes led to BN's defeat. Many different issues have been raised over the years — corruption, bad governance, youth activism, and the rising role of social media. Yet, there has not been enough research into the role of media framing and how it might have shaped public perception. The media played a major role in delivering news and shaping opinions during the election period, but we still do not fully understand its influence on the GE14 results. Therefore, this project aims to dig deeper into these areas. By looking at public opinion, the factors behind BN's defeat, and the impact of media framing, this research hopes to provide a clearer picture of the dynamics that contributed to this historic political change. Through this research, we can better understand how Malaysia's political landscape has shifted since 2018 and how public opinion continues to shape our current political environment.

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Methodology

With the aim of the general public perception about the fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) in the 14th General Election (GE14), the study utilised mixed methodology; by combining both survey and online content analysis. This approach helped in collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a clearer picture of how people felt about the event and how media shaped their views. The first method was a public survey, which was designed to gather opinions directly from the public. The survey was shared through social media platforms to reach a wide range of Malaysians. A total of 31 respondents participated, which provided valuable insights into their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about BN's defeat in GE14. The survey questions aimed to capture people's opinions on why BN lost, whether they thought the defeat was fair or not, and their overall attitude towards the event. From the survey responses, we collected statistical data, which helped to identify any trends or common themes in how the public saw the fall of BN. This data aided in understanding whether there was any polarisation in opinions, where some people might feel strongly about BN's defeat being unjustified while others thought it was expected.

The second method was netnography, where we looked at online content such as news articles, public comments, and social media posts that were posted during the time of GE14. Netnography helped us to analyse how people discussed the event online and how the media covered it. We focused on gathering opinion pieces and public discussions to understand the narrative that was built around BN's defeat. This included how the media framed the event and how it might have influenced public perception. In that digital age, the media and social media played a big role in shaping opinions, so by analysing these sources, we gained a better understanding of the media's impact during GE14.

The analysis process involved a few steps. First, we analysed the survey data by looking for patterns and trends in public opinions. This quantitative data allowed us to see if there were certain factors that the public commonly believed contributed to BN's defeat. After that, we conducted a content analysis of the online materials. This involved closely examining the media coverage and public comments to identify common themes, how the media framed BN's loss, and how this framing might have affected public perception. By analysing the data collected, we aimed to understand how the media played a role in shaping political events and public opinions, particularly in the context of elections. Additionally, the findings from both the survey and netnographic analysis were combined to provide a complete historical understanding of BN's defeat in GE14. This combination of data from public opinions and media analysis helped to unravel how BN's fall was remembered by the public and how media framing influenced that memory. The data collected also aimed to enhance understanding of the role of media in shaping political events and public opinions, particularly in the context of elections.

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Analysis

The fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) in the 14th General Election (GE14) marked a turning point in Malaysia's political landscape, and media framing played a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of this historic event. The defeat of a party that had ruled for over six decades can be attributed to various factors, including youth engagement, dissatisfaction with governance, and the strategic use of social media by the opposition. This analysis revisits BN's fall through the lens of public history, exploring how media narratives and public awareness have contributed to understanding this focal moment in Malaysian politics.

Our survey data shows that the majority of respondents (51.6%) were below the age of 25, indicating that younger voters played a major role in the outcome of GE14. The data also reveals that 58.1% of respondents were from the general public, while 41.9% had affiliations to other groups, reflecting the diverse interested demographic groups who were quite engaged in the election development and outcomes. Among these respondents, 80.6% were already aware of the political landscape prior to the election. This data reflects the importance of the youth vote, which was characterised by a desire for change and frustration with BN's handling of key issues, such as corruption and economic management. As Rahman (2018) pointed out, the youth electorate was particularly affected by economic hardships and the perception that the government was not addressing their concerns. These frustrations were compounded by widespread discussions on social media, where youth were able to express their dissatisfaction and mobilise for change. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter became spaces where younger voters could share their frustrations with BN's governance, contributing to a shift in public sentiment (Hutchinson, 2018; Kasmani, 2020). The use of social media as a tool for political communication enabled voters to access information that was previously controlled by traditional media outlets. According to Mohamed and Abdul Manan (2020), online platforms, especially Facebook, allowed opposition parties to directly communicate with voters and challenge the narratives put forth by BN. This direct access to political information contributed to a more informed electorate, as evidenced by the high levels of awareness. Social media platforms also served as an avenue for voters to critically analyse political issues, which is consistent with the findings of Kasmani (2020), who noted that Twitter became a space for lively political discussions during GE14.

One of the key issues driving BN's defeat was widespread dissatisfaction with governance and corruption. The survey shows that 74.2% of respondents felt they had a positive experience during the election process, while 58.1% had not participated in previous elections, suggesting that a significant portion of the electorate was newly engaged. The 1MDB scandal, in particular, became a focal point in the election campaign, with both traditional and social media amplifying its impact on public perception. As Nadzri (2018) explained, the 1MDB scandal severely damaged BN's credibility, and opposition parties used this issue to build their campaign against the ruling coalition. This focus on corruption and governance failures resonated with voters who had grown increasingly disillusioned with BN's leadership. Moreover, Koay and Khairiah (2022) pointed out that the opposition's political marketing strategy effectively highlighted these issues, using both traditional media and social media to shape the narrative around BN's failures.

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The role of media framing cannot be overlooked in understanding BN's fall. During the election campaign, media outlets, both traditional and new, played a critical role in shaping public opinion and framing the election as a referendum on BN's governance. Opposition parties, particularly Pakatan Harapan (PH), leveraged social media to bypass traditional media channels, which were seen as being pro-BN. As Mohamed and Abdul Manan (2020) noted, the opposition's use of social media allowed them to reach voters directly and counter the narratives pushed by BN-aligned media outlets. WhatsApp, in particular, became a key tool for spreading information, with users sharing political messages and news stories that were critical of BN (Nizah & Bakar, 2019). This use of social media helped to create an alternative narrative around the election, one that framed BN as corrupt and out of touch with the needs of the people. In addition to dissatisfaction with governance and corruption, BN's defeat was also influenced by its inability to connect with younger voters. As the data shows, 87.1% of respondents expressed interest in future elections, demonstrating a sustained engagement with political processes, particularly among the youth. This disconnect between BN and younger voters was exacerbated by the party's reliance on traditional media, which was less effective in reaching the youth electorate. In contrast, opposition parties were able to use social media to engage younger voters and present themselves as a viable alternative to BN (Warganegara et al., 2023).

The survey data indicates that 87.1% of respondents believed BN's defeat was fair, while 12.9% thought it was not. This overwhelming agreement suggests that most voters viewed the election results as a justified outcome, likely due to dissatisfaction with BN's governance. However, this small minority who felt the defeat was unfair may reflect BN's continued support among certain demographics, particularly in rural areas or among older voters. As Ahmad Zakuan et al. (2018) explained, voting behaviour in Malaysia is influenced by a range of factors, including ethnicity, religion, and economic conditions. In northern Malaysia, for example, female voters tended to be more conservative and were less likely to support opposition parties. This division in public opinion highlights the complexities of Malaysian politics and the challenges that the opposition faced in appealing to a broad electorate. Overall, the fall of BN in GE14 can be understood through the lens of media framing and public engagement. The rise of social media allowed for greater political awareness and mobilisation, particularly among younger voters, who played a significant role in BN's defeat. Media coverage of corruption scandals and governance failures further fueled public dissatisfaction with BN, while the opposition's effective use of social media helped to create an alternative narrative around the election. By revisiting this event through public history, we gain a deeper understanding of how media framing shaped the outcome of GE14 and how it continues to influence public perceptions of BN's fall.

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Outcome

The outcomes of this project have highlighted important aspects of the fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) during the 14th General Election (GE14) in Malaysia, focusing on the influence of media framing and public engagement. First, the research has shown that first-time voters played a significant role in BN's defeat. Many of the young participants (51.6% of respondents) expressed their views on the election and were aware of the candidates and coalitions involved. This demonstrates that young voters were not just passive observers but active participants who wanted change. The general data revealed that respondents believe first-time voters contributed to the election results, indicating that their voices and opinions were crucial in shaping the outcome. This aligns with previous studies that highlight the impact of youth engagement in Malaysian elections (Hutchinson, 2018). In fact, according to Waikar (2020), one of the major strategies used by the opposing party at that time, the Pakatan Harapan (PH), was to advocate its capability in representing the youth. This included promoting an array of youth candidates and campaign messages specifically curated to gain the youth's sympathy.

Secondly, public discontent regarding issues like corruption and governance has become a central theme in understanding the context of BN's defeat. Many respondents felt that the defeat was justified, with 87.1% believing that BN's fall was a fair outcome of the election, while 12.9% disagreed. This overwhelming majority indicates that the general perception of the election was that it was fair, reflecting the broader sentiment of frustration with BN's governance. This perception reflects widespread dissatisfaction with the government's handling of various issues and the call for political reform. The awareness of these problems among the electorate is essential in understanding how media framing influenced public opinion. Previous research has shown that issues surrounding governance and corruption were key drivers of change during the election (Nadzri, 2018; Rahman, 2018). Moreover, the importance of coalition-building became clear during this election. The survey results indicated a strong awareness of political coalitions among respondents, with 74.2% acknowledging their significance. This suggests that voters are looking for unity and alignment with their leaders, indicating that political parties need to engage more effectively with the electorate. The election results illustrated how BN's failure to connect with the public's needs and desires led to their decline in support. Studies on political marketing and coalition strategies support this observation, indicating that parties need to be responsive to the electorate's expectations (Koay & Khairiah, 2022; Warganegara et al., 2023).

Lastly, the election's impact on Malaysia's international standing cannot be overlooked. The defeat of BN signals a shift in the political landscape and reflects broader geopolitical dynamics. As political attitudes evolve, Malaysia's role in the international arena is also influenced by domestic sentiments (Yaakub, 2021). The findings suggest that the public is increasingly aware of how local governance issues tie into international relations, affecting how Malaysia is perceived abroad.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, this project has shown many prongs of public opinion about the fall of Barisan Nasional (BN) during the 14th General Election (GE14) in 2018. Most respondents agree that BN's defeat happened for several reasons; for one, the presence of first-time voters was crucial. With more than half of the participants being young voters, their voices were really important in pushing for change and reform. The findings also highlight that good governance is very important. Many voters felt unhappy with the issues of corruption and poor management, which influenced their decision to support other parties. This shows that people want leaders who are accountable and transparent. Voters are not just looking for any party; they want to feel that their concerns are heard and addressed. Moreover, the study emphasises the need for coalition formation. Many respondents understand that political alliances are important. Voters want parties to come together to better represent their diverse interests. Political parties should take this seriously and focus on building coalitions that can effectively meet the needs of the people.

Overall, this project helps us understand the reasons behind BN's fall and what it means for Malaysian politics going forward. It highlights the importance of governance, youth involvement, and coalition-building as key elements for shaping the future of our political landscape. It also emphasises the value of public history in encouraging a more informed and engaged citizenry, which is essential for improving our political system and ensuring that it serves everyone. Additionally, this project has provided valuable insights into the fall of Barisan Nasional in GE14, illustrating how media framing and public awareness shaped electoral outcomes. The engagement of first-time voters, the demand for political reform, the need for coalition-building, and the significance of international relations all contribute to a deeper understanding of the changes occurring in Malaysian politics. Through this research, we see the importance of public history in analysing past events and how they resonate in today's political climate, reinforcing the need for ongoing dialogue about governance and representation in Malaysia.

Using a public history framework helps us understand this event more deeply. By examining how people remember and interpret BN's fall, we can see how public memory shapes our understanding of political events. Public history allows us to connect the past to the present, helping us understand the causes and developments that led to BN's defeat. This lens is important because it shows us that history is not just about facts and dates but also about how people feel and think about their experiences. This project can benefit the people by encouraging discussions about governance, representation, and civic engagement. By understanding the historical context of BN's fall, people can become more informed about their political environment and the importance of their voices. Public history aims to connect communities to their past, enabling them to learn from it and apply those lessons to current challenges.

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