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The Politics of Manipulation: Malaysia 2018-2020

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Abstract

The 14th General Election (GE-14) held on May 9, 2018, ended the 61-year uninterrupted rule of the Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN), since the nation's independence in 1957. The ruling coalition lost to the opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH). The BN lost the power despite all the trickeries used by Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak. Mahathir Mohamad manipulated and lured the opposition coalition and was sworn in as the seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia. However, after 22 months, Mahathir resigned, and succeeded by a new National Alliance. The 2018-2020 crises were triggered by personalities and their political manoeuvrings. This study brings political manipulation to the fore to explain the dramatic political transitions in Malaysia resulting from the general elections held in 2018, and the dramatic change in the political landscape two years after the GE-14. It provides a systematic overview of the electoral process and an assessment of how manipulation shaped the country's political environment. The study is based on a mixture of media studies, library research, and weeks of fieldwork conducting focus group interviews with party activists across Malaysia both before and after the 2018 election. Some of the actors who were affected by this politics of manipulation were interviewed.

Keywords

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