

Regionalism and Electoral Support in Peninsular Malaysia

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ABSTRAK

Kertas ini cuba membincangkan kecenderungan politik di empat wilayah geografi Semenanjung Malaysia. Keputusan pilihanraya kawasan parlimen antara 1969 dan 1990 telah di tabulasi dan di korelasi dengan peratusan komposisi pengundi mengikut ethnik di Wilayah tersebut. Hasil kajian menunjukkan sokongan parti politik adalah mengikut sesuatu wilayah. Sokongan Barisan Nasional (BN) adalah di Wilayah Utara, Tengah dan Selatan, tetapi memperlihatkan bahawa sokongan BN hanya stabil di Wilayah Utara dalam jangka masa kajian. Bagi pembangkang, Parti Islam se Malaysia (PAS) dan Semangat 46 (S46) berpusat di Wilayah Timur Semenanjung. Di kawasan bandar di Wilayah Utara dan Tengah adalah kubu Democratic Action Party (DAP). Ia juga memperlihatkan kebanyakan pengundi Melayu masih menyokong parti BN, sementara sokongan pengundi China terhadap BN tidak berapa menggalakkan dan bagi kaum India sokongan mereka adalah sederhana di semua wilayah. Pada keseluruhannya, pola sokongan parti politik amat berkait rapat dengan jumlah peratusan komposisi ethnik pengundi di sesuatu kawasan.

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to examine the political affiliation in the four geographical regions of Peninsular Malaysia. Election returns for Parliamentary Constituencies between 1969 and 1990 were tabulated and correlated with the ethnic composition of the electorate in respective regions. The finding shows that political party support was regionalised. The Barisan Nasional (BN) support was based in the Northern, Central and Southern Regions, but it seem to be stable only in the Northern Region over the period. On the opposition side, the Parti Islam se Malaysia (PAS) and Semangat 46 (S46) were confined in the Eastern Region. The urban constituencies of the Northern and Central Regions were the Democratic Action Party's (DAP) stronghold. It seems that the majority of the Malay electorate still supported the BN, while the Chinese support towards the BN was not encouraging and moderate for the Indians in all regions. On the whole the patterns of political support were very closely related with the ethnic composition of the electorate in individual region.

INTRODUCTION

Elections are often fought along regional and ethnic lines. They have been recognised as a potent force in the political system of many developing and advanced countries. Being a multi-ethnic country, preserving inter-ethnic and regional harmony has often been the primary ambition of the Malaysian government under the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. Malaysia has successfully conducted eight general elections spanning from 1959-90, and the pattern of party support in Peninsular Malaysia seems to be regionalised. Thus this paper attempts to examine the political affiliation in individual region and its concern is to analyse voting patterns in the four geographical regions of Peninsular Malaysia between 1969 and 1990, and enquires into the reasons for such patterns to exist. Peninsular Malaysia is divided into four geographical regions: The Northern Region (comprises the states of Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak; the Central Region (comprises the state of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Wilayah Persekutuan); The Eastern Region (comprises the states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang); and the Southern Region comprises the state of Johor. The aggregate data from the elections return for parliamentary constituencies in various region between 1969 and 1990 were tabulated and correlated with the ethnic percentage of the electorate. In this paper the focus will be on the four main political parties in Peninsular Malaysia (the BN, PAS, DAP, and S46) because these parties represent the bulk of the three main ethnic groups.

ACCOUNTING FOR REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Table 1 shown the percentage of seats won by each party in the four geographical regions in six consecutive general elections. On the whole the ALL/BN performances were excellent in all regions but were particularly good in the Northern and Central Regions. None the less its percentage of seats won dropped to 12.1 per cent in 1990 election in the Eastern Region but held constant in the Northern and Southern Regions. However it managed to maintain a constant record of seats returned between 1969 and 1990 in the Southern Region (the state of Johor), and lost only one seat to DAP in 1978. On the other hand the opposition parties seemed far behind in capturing seats in all the regions. The PAS gained most of its seats in its bastion states in the Eastern Region but managed to make inroads in the Northern Region by winning 4.3 per cent of the seats in 1969, however it dropped to its lowest of one per cent in 1978. It held no constituency in either Central or Southern Regions during the period. The DAP's main source of seats was in the

TABLE 1. Percentage of Parliamentary Seats Won by Region in Peninsular Malaysia 1969 - 90

| <i>Region</i> | <i>Party</i> | <i>1969</i> | <i>1974</i> | <i>1978</i> | <i>1982</i> | <i>1986</i> | <i>1990</i> | <i>% SS (1969-1990)</i> |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Northern | ALL/BN | 24.0 | 36.3 | 29.8 | 36.8 | 30.3 | 30.3 | +6.3 |
| | PAS | 4.3 | # | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | -4.3 |
| | DAP | 6.5 | 3.5 | 7.0 | 1.8 | 7.6 | 7.6 | +1.1 |
| Central | ALL/BN | 16.3 | 17.7 | 17.5 | 19.3 | 18.2 | 19.0 | +2.7 |
| | PAS | 0.0 | # | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | DAP | 7.5 | 4.4 | 5.2 | 3.5 | 6.8 | 6.1 | -1.4 |
| Eastern | ALL/BN | 15.3 | 23.9 | 22.0 | 20.2 | 22.7 | 12.1 | -3.2 |
| | PAS | 8.7 | # | 3.5 | 4.4 | 0.8 | 5.3 | -3.4 |
| | DAP | nc | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Southern | ALL/BN | 17.4 | 14.2 | 13.2 | 14.0 | 13.6 | 13.6 | -3.8 |
| | PAS | 0.0 | # | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | DAP | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | +0.9 |
| Total | ALL/BN | 73.0 | 92.1 | 82.5 | 90.3 | 84.8 | 75.0 | +2.0 |
| | PAS | 13.0 | # | 4.4 | 4.4 | 0.8 | 5.3 | -7.7 |
| | DAP | 14.0 | 7.9 | 13.1 | 5.3 | 14.4 | 13.7 | -0.3 |
| | S46 | | | | | | 6.0 | +6.0 |

Note: % SS = Percentage of Seats Swing or Changes; # PAS was in the BN coalition.

Northern and Central Regions. It never won in the Eastern Region and only won one constituency in the Southern Region for a brief period. In the case of S46, its debut in the general election seemed to be regionalised. Its support in most of the regions was not encouraging and it managed to win most of its seats in its home ground in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of seat swing by political parties according to region. It can be seen that the percentage of seat swing during the period which was in favour of the BN was only in two regions. The Northern Region recorded a high positive shift of 6.3 per cent while 2.7 per cent was recorded in the Central Region. Whereas the BN percentage of seat swing was not encouraging in the other two regions with a negative 3.2 and 3.8 per cent.

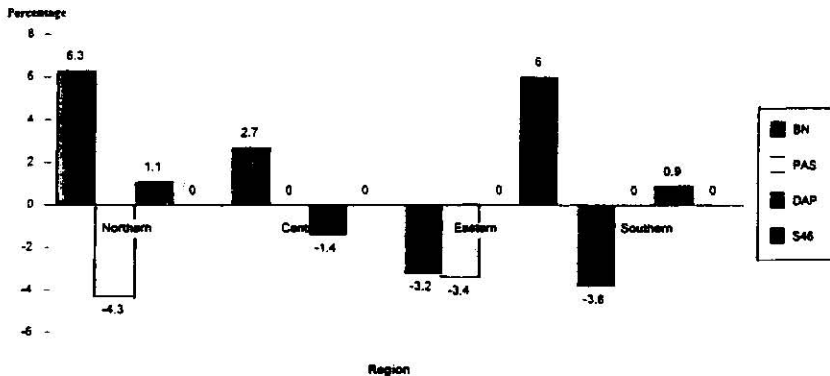


FIGURE 1. The percentage of seat swing by political parties by region in Peninsular Malaysia 1969 – 90

The results provide clear evidence that the geographical pattern of seats won was regionalised. How could this happen? One must remember that BN is the only party that had contested all the constituencies, therefore its chances of winning a large proportion of the seats in all region was not unexpected. In contrast the main opposition parties, PAS, DAP and S46, only put up their candidates in seats where their chances of winning were high. It was to be expected that DAP never wanted to contest any seats in the Malay majority areas at the same time as PAS

would do the exact opposite. In the rural areas or in the Malay majority constituencies, the voters rejected the DAP's struggle for 'Malaysian Malaysia' and its ethnic approach, consequently the DAP could not get much support from the Malays especially in the Eastern and Southern Regions. Obviously, the Chinese voters have always been against the Islamic state which PAS hoped to establish. Consequently both parties have restrictions in gaining support whereas the BN's chances of winning were wide open in all regions because its support came across ethnic lines.

Table 2 provides a closer analysis for the regional variation in party support. It shows that in the Eastern and Southern Regions, the percentage of the electorate which voted for ALL/BN fell between 1969 and 1990. It dropped by 2.4 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively. But in other regions, especially in the Northern Region, the percentage of votes polled increased by 11.6 per cent during the period. This indicates that over the period the ALL/BN coalition party could manage to maintain its remarkable record only in the Northern and Central Regions but its support had increasingly declined in the other regions. It is interesting to note that in the Southern Region especially the BN had always succeeded in maintaining a constant high record of votes polled during the period compared to other regions even though its vote polled declined in 1990. What are the reasons that make the ALL/BN so successful and popular in the Southern Region (Johore state)? Perhaps it was related to UMNO's, one of the BN component parties' historical background. The UMNO was founded in this region, in its capital city of Johor Bahru, by Dato Onn Jaafar in 1946 and thus it has traditionally been UMNO's territory since then. Being a Malay majority region, retaining the UMNO's power in its bastion was the responsibility of its leaders as well as the Malays. The composition of the electorate too was in favour of the BN coalition party. Between 1969 and 1982 the Malay voters formed an absolute majority in 7 and 13 of the 16 Parliamentary Constituencies respectively, and 12 out of 18 between 1986 and 1990. As a result of the swift economic development and urbanization undertaken by the BN state government the voters in this region faithfully voted for the ALL or BN for more than three decades. Perhaps for the Malay voters to uphold the UMNO supremacy in its birth-place is an honour that needs to be preserved forever.

The regional pattern of the opposition parties, PAS and DAP, are largely complementary to that of the BN between 1969 and 1990. The vote polled by PAS was quite high in 1969 in the Northern and Eastern Regions but later all regions then experienced a decrease of votes of between 10.3 to 24.5 per cent during the period, particularly in the 1990 general election. One of the main reasons for this sharp drop was due to the electoral pact with the new Malay opposition party, S46. They had

TABLE 2. Percentage of Vote Polled by Political Parties 1969 - 90 by Regions, Peninsular Malaysia

| Party | Region | 1969 | 1974 | 1978 | 1982 | 1986 | 1990 |
|---------------|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <i>ALL/BN</i> | Northern | 45.4 | 57.3 | 53.3 | 60.3 | 55.7 | 57.0 |
| | Central | 45.4 | 58.0 | 50.0 | 61.1 | 57.0 | 55.2 |
| | Eastern | 50.6 | 70.0 | 60.2 | 56.3 | 59.0 | 48.2 |
| | Southern | 67.6 | 71.7 | 77.5 | 73.7 | 65.7 | 61.5 |
| | <i>Pen. M</i> | 47.6 | 55.5 | 57.1 | 61.3 | 58.1 | 55.3 |
| <i>PAS</i> | Northern | 23.8 | # | 19.3 | 16.8 | 19.5 | 8.3 |
| | Central | 11.4 | # | 9.0 | 6.4 | 7.2 | 1.1 |
| | Eastern | 46.7 | # | 34.2 | 37.0 | 37.0 | 22.2 |
| | Southern | 4.1 | # | 7.5 | 4.3 | 5.4 | nc. |
| | <i>Pen. M</i> | 23.2 | # | 17.7 | 16.4 | 17.5 | 7.8 |
| <i>DAP</i> | Northern | 9.5 | 27.0 | 22.9 | 21.4 | 23.2 | 21.6 |
| | Central | 29.4 | 24.4 | 36.0 | 30.2 | 32.6 | 26.0 |
| | Eastern | nc | 3.4 | 2.9 | 5.6 | 4.0 | 2.3 |
| | Southern | 21.5 | 20.6 | 15.1 | 16.8 | 17.7 | 15.1 |
| | <i>Pen. M</i> | 13.3 | 19.0 | 21.5 | 20.3 | 21.4 | 18.0 |
| <i>S46*</i> | Northern | | | | | | 12.0 |
| | Central | | | | | | 15.8 |
| | Eastern | | | | | | 27.0 |
| | Southern | | | | | | 20.5 |
| | <i>Pen. M</i> | | | | | | 17.5 |

Note: #PAS was in BN Coalition in 1974 general election; nc. = not contested; * contested for first time in 1990 general election.

agreed to divide the seats and not to oppose each other in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu and even in other regions. Consequently the percentage of electorate vote shifted to S46 by 27 per cent in the Eastern Region and between 12.0 per cent and 20.5 per cent in the other regions. It seems that the high percentage of votes polled by S46 were mainly drawn from the Malay-dominated constituencies. As a result of the electoral pact in 1990, the PAS and S46 managed to control the state government of Kelantan, in the Eastern Region after more than 12 years under the ALL/BN rule. This presents evidence of the shift away from the BN in the Eastern Region while it declined in the other regions.

During the period 1969-90, the DAP's percentage of votes polled increased by 12.1 per cent but this refers only to the Northern Region where the support gained was fairly stable throughout. Between 1974 and 1986 it then experienced an increase of 8.2 per cent in the Central Region, 0.6 per cent in the Eastern, and a decrease of 2.9 per cent in the Southern Region. In the recent general election of 1990 in all regions its percentage of vote polled recorded a declining pattern. Evidently the percentage of support gained by DAP was higher in the Central and Northern Regions of the Peninsular, fairly stable in the Southern Region but weaker in the Eastern Region.

To bring the regional variation into full perspective, Figure 2 indicates the change in the percentage of voters supporting the political parties by regions. The ALL/BN vote polled still increased over a period of 20 years in the Northern and Central Regions, but declined in Eastern and Southern Regions. For the PAS and DAP it only shows an increase in the Southern (1.3 per cent) and Northern (12.1 per cent) Regions respectively. The overall percentage changes in Peninsular Malaysia show that the ALL/BN and DAP had managed to maintain the increased percentage of votes over the period. Thus this suggests that the growth in the BN vote over the full period was confined to two regions (Northern and Central), while for the DAP was confined to the Northern Region.

REGIONALISM AND PARTY SUPPORT

In this section, the vote polled by political parties in their respective regions between 1969 and 1990 were correlated with the ethnic percentage of the electorate. This is done to get the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r)¹. The result shows the closeness or the strength of relationship between political parties, support with ethnicity by regions in Peninsular Malaysia.

Table 3 shows the Correlation Coefficients for the BN party support with the Malay electorate in respective regions. The correlation was

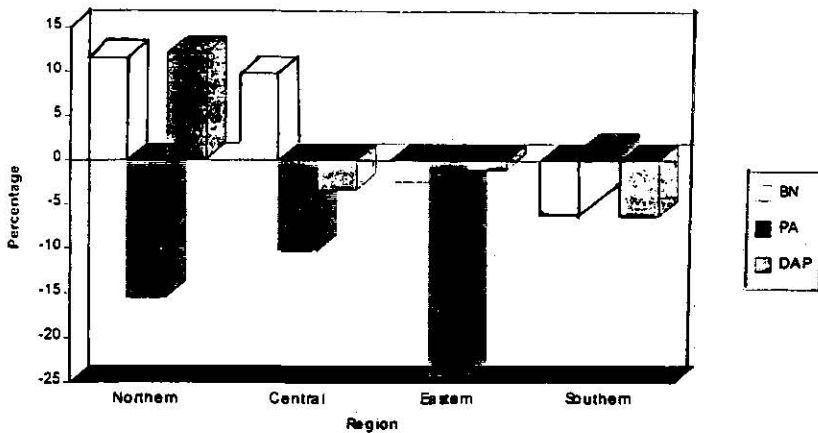


FIGURE 2. The percentage of inter-election changes of vote polled by political parties and region between 1969 and 1990, Peninsular Malaysia

positive in the Northern Region (1969, 1974, 1986 and 1990), Central Region (1969, 1974, 1978 and 1986) and in the Southern Region (except in 1982). This means that an increase in the percentage of the Malay voters is associated with higher support for the BN. This shows the expected pattern with regard to the Malay electorate as a whole. Therefore the greater the proportion of the Malay voters in a constituency, the greater the propensity of members to vote for the ALL/BN. The reason behind this might be that the Malays regard the BN (UMNO) as the only party that could give them assurance for protecting and enhancing their political and economic development. In fact, by supporting the BN (UMNO) implicitly they will retain the political power to lead the country. In the Eastern Region, an increase in the percentage of the Malay voters is associated with a declining support for the BN and shifted significantly high to the PAS. The only positive correlation obtained between the BN party support and the Malay voters, albeit weak, was in 1974 when PAS contested under the BN coalition. It is not surprising that the BN had a weak correlation with the Malays in the Eastern Region, because the PAS originated from this region and has been very influential especially in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu for more than three decades. Therefore it is not easy to weaken or coerce its Malay majority voters. Despite the PAS's failure to achieve rapid economic development in the state of Kelantan, where it had retained the control of the state

TABLE 3. Percentage of the Malay electorate with the parties' support
1969 – 90 by geographical region, Peninsular Malaysia

| Var | Reg/Year | ALL/BN | PAS | DAP | S46 |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| % of Malay Voters | Northern | | | | |
| | 1969 | .6013** (41) | .8901** (25) | -.4460* (7) | |
| | 1974 | .1477 (33) | # | -.8154** (22) | |
| | 1978 | -.2670 (45) | .7953** (43) | -.8139** (25) | |
| | 1982 | -.3997* (45) | .8393** (34) | -.8667** (25) | |
| | 1986 | .2650 (50) | .8853** (37) | -.8964** (23) | |
| | 1990 | .3211 (50) | .4799** (13) | -.8704** (19) | .4011* (18) |
| | Central | | | | |
| | 1969 | .5658* (23) | .8511** (11) | -.6206** (11) | |
| | 1974 | .5463* (22) | # | -.8311** (16) | |
| | 1978 | .1141 (23) | .5978* (16) | -.7839** (17) | |
| | 1982 | -.0694 (26) | .4870* (16) | -.7561** (19) | |
| | 1986 | .2324 (33) | .5044* (16) | -.9083** (20) | |
| | 1990 | -.2657 (33) | -.6159** (3) | -.3564 (13) | .2240 (16) |
| | Eastern | | | | |
| | 1969 | -.0095 (20) | .6784** (20) | nc | |
| | 1974 | .1544 (19) | # | -.7396** (2) | |
| | 1978 | -.5514* (26) | .7494** (25) | -.7667** (3) | |
| | 1982 | -.2718 (27) | .8389** (26) | -.9004** (16) | |
| | 1986 | -.3560 (31) | .6143** (30) | -.7797** (4) | |
| | 1990 | -.4905* (31) | .4097 (13) | -.6381** (2) | .0015 (16) |
| Southern | | | | | |
| 1969 | .2313 (11) | .6992* (2) | -.6799 (6) | | |
| 1974 | .2311 (8) | # | -.7723 (6) | | |
| 1978 | .0872 (15) | .3883 (12) | -.7121* (6) | | |
| 1982 | -.1521 (12) | .4736 (6) | -.6708* (6) | | |
| 1986 | .3213 (16) | .6698* (10) | -.8184** (7) | | |
| 1990 | .3628 (17) | nc | -.7234** (6) | .4305 (11) | |

Note: 1 - tailed Signif: * - .01. () number of seats contested. Var = Variable;
Reg = Region; # PAS was in the BN Coalition; nc = not contested.

government for a decade (1959 – 69), the party still continued to enjoy the support of the Malays as was proved in the 1990 election when it won the state government back from the BN. One of the veteran political leaders (MSA) from this region commented that:

Religion is the main issue played by PAS. It used to say in its campaign 'PAS is an Islamic party' and this has scared the Malay voters not to vote for PAS being Muslims themselves. Its slogan to build an Islamic state and its claim that most of the ways in which the BN runs the country are contrary to the teaching of Islam has captured the hearts and minds of its die-hard followers with strong religious backgrounds. (personal interview with the BN State Assembly members for Ladang, Terengganu, September 1992).

As for the PAS President, the campaign message he delivered also scared many of the voters. During the campaign he told his voters that,

The development programmes promised by the Federal Government would be carried out whether PAS won or lost because it was the government's duty, and that it was a sin not to vote for PAS because it was a religious party. PAS stressed that the aim of a political party was not to bring development but to ensure that Islam was preserved and propagated. (PAS President, Dato Asri Muda, quoted from: *FEER*, 24 March 1978:8).

This religious issue established a cohesive support for PAS, and a high significant positive correlation recorded between 1969 and 1990 reflected the voters' voting behaviour for each general election. The Malay support for PAS seems to be positively significant in other regions too, particularly in the Northern and Central Regions with a high correlation recorded during the period. This means that more Malays were turning their heads towards PAS. Why did such a phenomenon occur? Is it a new trend developing in Malaysia as a result of the Islamic resurgence in the late seventies? Or is it perhaps due to the voters' migration, or is it dissatisfaction with the system of governing under the BN coalition? The dissatisfaction with the government and the ambition to form an Islamic state became a reality in the Eastern Region especially in the state of Kelantan when the electors totally rejected the government's party and gave the mandate to PAS instead to rule the state government in the 1990 general election. Migration had also an impact on the increase in PAS support in other regions but due to the ethnic composition of the electorate had made it quite hard for PAS to win any seat in other regions (PAS had won a few seats in the Northern Region in 1969 and 1974 general elections) despite the increase in real support received.

The party support among the Malays for DAP in all regions was inversely proportional with both high and negative significant coeffi-

cients. This means that as there were more Malays in the respective constituency, the less was the propensity to vote for DAP in Peninsular Malaysia between 1969 and 1990. This event was not surprising and consistent with those just described. We could not deny that there were DAP supporters among the Malay voters, but it was proven that generally their support will not increase even though the electorate is expanding. The reason for the rejection of DAP among the Malays is simply because of its long standing concept of "Malaysian Malaysia" inherited from the PAP of Singapore, a concept which aimed to attack the system of the Malays' "special rights" guaranteed by the constitution and opposing the creation of a Muslim state. This concept was described by the late first Prime Minister as "mischievous policy aimed at creating antagonism between the Malays and the non-Malays" (quoted in Vasil 1972,29).

As for the new Malay political party, Semangat 46 (S46), formed as a result of the split in the UMNO party in 1987, its support from the Malay voters for the first time was positive with a moderate coefficient but was significant only in the Northern Region. Due to its poor performance in Peninsular Malaysia initially, its future might be very poor. Khoo Kay Jin (1992, 73-74) commented that:

In the event of a convincing BN, hence UMNO victory, S46 will be quickly forgotten, dismissed as an unpleasant and alien irruption fermented by the base ambitions of one man, suitably assimilated to any number of other events in Malay history and consigned to the dustbin of Malay historical memory.

Table 4 shows correlation coefficient for the Chinese voters with the various parties' support in the regions. The party support among the Chinese for the BN showed a negative correlation in most of the constituencies in the Northern, Central and Southern Regions, except between 1978 and 1990 in the Eastern Region. In the three regions the BN had a modest negative correlation and it was significant in 1969 and 1974 for the Northern and Central Regions. This shows that the greater the proportion of the Chinese electorate in the three regions, the lower the propensity of the members to vote for ALL/BN during the period. Nevertheless the Chinese support for the BN was significant in 1982 in the Northern Region and there was a positively moderate and significant correlation in the Eastern Region between 1978 and 1990. Why was the Chinese support for the BN so significant in the Eastern Region? Was it due to its minority status or the environment factors? It was believed that the environment factors influenced their voting behaviour in this region. Normally the Chinese were assimilate with the Malay culture which enable them to speak the local Malay dialect fluently and enjoy most of the Malay dishes. As many commented, the Chinese in the Eastern

TABLE 4. Percentage of the *Chinese* Electorate with the Parties' Support
1969-90 by Geographical Region Peninsular Malaysia

| Var | Reg/Year | ALL/BN | PAS | DAP | S46 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| % of the Chinese Voters | Northern | | | | |
| | 1969 | -.5951** (41) | -.8682** (25) | .4389* (7) | |
| | 1974 | -.1367 (33) | # | .8507** (22) | |
| | 1978 | .2146 (45) | -.7741** (43) | .8564** (25) | |
| | 1982 | -.4447* (45) | -.7972** (34) | .8994** (25) | |
| | 1986 | -.2740 (50) | -.8349** (37) | .9307** (23) | |
| | 1990 | -.3254 (50) | -.4498** (13) | .8970** (19) | -.4014* (18) |
| | Central | | | | |
| | 1969 | -.5708* (23) | -.7691** (11) | .5829* (11) | |
| | 1974 | -.5333* (22) | # | .8735** (16) | |
| | 1978 | -.1417 (25) | -.5666* (16) | .8130** (17) | |
| | 1982 | .0069 (26) | -.4026 (16) | .7475** (19) | |
| | 1986 | -.2995 (33) | -.4710* (16) | .9457** (20) | |
| | 1990 | -.1111 (33) | .2848 (3) | .6302** (13) | -.5571** (16) |
| | Eastern | | | | |
| | 1969 | -.0248 (20) | -.6747** (20) | nc | |
| | 1974 | -.1445 (19) | # | .7416** (2) | |
| | 1978 | .5659* (27) | -.7535** (25) | .7849** (3) | |
| | 1982 | .3097 (27) | -.8158** (26) | .9118** (6) | |
| | 1986 | .4455* (31) | -.5545** (30) | .8137** (4) | |
| | 1990 | .5552** (31) | -.4049 (13) | .6945** (2) | -.0030 (16) |
| Southern | | | | | |
| 1969 | -.2162 (11) | -.6578 (2) | .7030* (6) | | |
| 1974 | -.3018 (8) | # | .6808 (6) | | |
| 1978 | -.1128 (16) | -.3386 (12) | .6820* (6) | | |
| 1982 | -.1014 (12) | -.3491 (6) | .6422 (6) | | |
| 1986 | -.2406 (16) | -.7190** (10) | .6982* (7) | | |
| 1990 | .5152 (17) | nc | .4520 (6) | -.3766 (11) | |

Note: 1-tailed Signif: * $-.01$ ** $-.001$; Var = Variable; Reg = Region; () Number of seats contested.

PAS was in the BN Coalition; nc = not contested.

Region are different from those in the other regions for being in a minority, they have assimilated the Malay ways of life, are more courteous, less developed and less critical of the political development of the country and therefore most likely to be more pro-BN or MCA. Eventhough they had shown support towards the BN, their support towards DAP was much stronger and this is shown by a very high positive correlation, particularly in 1982.

On the whole in all regions the support of the Chinese voters towards the BN (MCA) was inversely proportional and instead shifted toward the DAP between 1969 and 1990. It had recorded almost a perfect positive correlation in 1986 and 1982 in the Northern, Central and Eastern Regions respectively. These phenomenon were expected but a question might be asked as to why the Chinese voters prefer to give their support to the DAP rather than the MCA (being a government partner)? The fundamental reason was that they were dissatisfied with the ways the MCA was handling and managing the Chinese problems. This dissatisfaction was in fact shown since its early stages in 1957 when the constitution was being drawn up. A Chinese newspaper commented on this issue and is quoted as saying:

We feel we can no longer rely on the MCA to accomplish this task (of fighting for the Chinese rights) because it is a political party and not an organisation to represent public opinion. Moreover because of its association with the Alliance it has many difficulties in this matter ... This is to say that MCA will support the common views of the Alliance and can do nothing else. Unfortunately, the views of the Alliance and demands of the Chinese are still greatly divided. (Ratnam 1965,344)

The disillusionment with the MCA was also felt by the Chinese guilds and associations. They claimed that the MCA, as a member of the ALL, was in no position to protect their particular interests (Vasil 1971, 9). The MCA, being a coalition partner in the government, was continuously blamed for not having fought strongly enough in the interest of the Chinese community, especially in educations, language, jobs and shares in the economy under the New Economic policy. The MCA too was labelled by the DAP as the 'running dog' of UMNO (Faaland, Parkinson, Saniman 1990,166), and it was often seen by its members that its top leaders enjoyed the benefits of holding government positions which forced them to defend government policies, hence they were largely unmindful of Chinese interests. Thus Vasil (1972, 43) noted that:

The non-Malay communities were, by and large, disenchanted with the Alliance and their own communal organisations which were members of Alliance, and in order to register their opposition to the Alliance and its policies they themselves sought out the opposition parties and voted for the candidates.

So the Chinese voters in all regions chose the DAP rather than the MCA because it was the DAP that always voiced the issues faced by the Chinese community and so support for DAP was an expression of their dissatisfaction with the MCA. Pillay (1974, 11) stressed that:

.... to support the DAP precisely because of its consistent, persistent articulation of Chinese interests. Restrained by law demanding official status for the Chinese language or opposing the constitutional position of the Malay language, the DAP succeeded nonetheless to project itself as the only genuine champion of Chinese education and Chinese culture. 'The Rocket (the DAP symbol) protects Chinese culture' was a popular and effective campaign slogan. At the same time warned that the 'dacing' (the BN symbol) destroys Chinese education, that it changes the character of Chinese school and urges determination to oppose the BN By expressing fears and misgivings present within the Chinese community and strengthening its own image as an effective bulwark against any attempt to erode Chinese culture, the DAP secured a lot of support in a number of Chinese constituencies.

Khong Kim Hoong (1991, 31) added that:

Many reasons for the poor performance of the MCA were also the reasons that could explain the DAP's success. Since its formation the DAP had championed the rights of the Chinese and Indians to equal opportunity in Malaysia's political life. It aggressively criticises the government for discriminating against the non-Bumiputera communities, the party's message struck a sympathetic chord with the aspirations of large sections of the Chinese and Indian population particularly those for the lower classes whose chances for social mobility have been stymied by government policies. The DAP was therefore in a position to reap benefits from the frustrations and 'anti-establishment' mood of the people.

As a result the DAP used to claim that it was the only party that championed the interest of the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, but the second MCA President, the late Tan Siew Sin, viewed it contrarily as the "Chinese destroyer" and anti-Malay party, as quoted from Vasil and Drummond and Hawkins who said respectively;

the DAP posed a greater threat to the Chinese interest than PMIP. Indeed the DAP is a destroyer of the Chinese unity. It is a wonderful tool for dividing the Chinese and making them fight one another. (Vasil 1972, 29)

.... DAP was anti-Malay party that could never attract the Malay vote and thus never be in a position to form a government. Drummond & Hwakins (1970, 322)

But as *FEER* (16 August 1974) described this MCA-DAP friction as "the clash between a party with ideology and no power (DAP) and a party with

power and no ideology (MCA)". Therefore whatever remarks were made towards the DAP, the party still represents an avenue for expressing dissatisfaction by the majority of the Chinese and this was reflected in their voting behaviour in all regions between 1969 and 1990.

To sustain its legitimacy the MCA was placed at the cross-roads. It has to please both its allies the UMNO and at the same times its Chinese political base. It could not voice Chinese grievances aggressively or openly because it was against the rules of the game or ethnic elite bargaining. Lee Kam Hing (1980, 208) explained that "the difficulty of the MCA and GERAKAN here is that their ability to push for communal causes, even they want to, is severely limited by being in the government and being confronted with practical realities of the political situation. As an opposition party, the DAP can raise issues of concern and criticize those policies of the government with which it disagrees; in this role it has been relatively successful". Nevertheless sometimes the MCA just could not prevent itself from voicing the Chinese issues when it received too much pressure from the Chinese community by and large. The MCA has on occasion turned round and attacked some of the major decisions made by the government. For example in 1969 the MCA came to support the establishment of a Chinese-medium Merdeka University just a few days before the election. In 1982 the MCA also joined and openly backed the DAP and Chinese Associations to protest against the introduction of a new primary education curriculum called the 3R. The curriculum was attacked by many educationists and opposition leaders as a device gradually to abolish the teaching of Chinese in primary schools. The MCA President Lee San Choon voiced his frustration quoted as saying:

I feel very insulted and very belittled by the proposed implementation. I think the Prime Minister and other members of the (cabinet) committee will feel likewise. I can only say at this moment we will not accept the proposed implementation as it is and that we will do whatever possible to dissociate ourselves from the proposed implementation... (which is) a deviation from the Cabinet report. (*FEER* 22 January 1982,10)

Subsequently in 1986 the MCA participated again in protest against the government appointment of the non-Mandarin speaking deputy head teachers to Chinese school, which they feared further threatened the use of their Chinese mother-tongue (*FEER* 12 November 1986 & 19 November 1987) and eroded its community's basic right. It also sometimes attacked the NEP and campaigned for its early abolition (Faaland, Parkinson & Saniman 1990,169).

The Chinese support of the PAS was negative and all its coefficients were high and significant. These results were as anticipated, that is as the

number of Chinese voters in a constituency increases so the vote for the PAS declines. This pattern simply reflects the rejection of PAS and of its aim to establish an Islamic state, an aim against the will and aspiration of the Chinese voters in Malaysia. In the meantime one interesting result emerged from the correlation table, particularly in the Central Region in the 1990 election results. There was a weak positive correlation between Chinese support and the PAS. In other words, there were a substantial number of Chinese who voted for PAS in the 1990 election in the Central Region. How could this possibly happen, was it an exceptional case or is it indicative of a trend? Logically, the Chinese will not vote for PAS knowing of its struggles to form an Islamic state which is against the Chinese will. So what are the actual reasons behind this? Perhaps one of the reasons was to express their anti-government or anti-party feelings, or they were merely meant as protest votes. Or the results might be biased because of the small number of seats contested (3) to represent the region. Barraclough (1986, 92) argued,

Nevertheless, the fact remains that some voters in their eagerness to record a negative vote against the government, are apparently willing to support opposition parties regardless of the ideological orientation of these parties. Such phenomenon has significant ramifications for Malaysian electoral politics Yet the protest vote represents a ready source of support which may be tapped by an enterprising opposition. Indeed, this has been recognised by PAS in recent years and is reflected in its drive to win the votes of the Chinese who are disgruntled over official policies such as the NEP. PAS has gone so far as to claim that under a truly Islamic system there would be no discrimination against legitimate interest of non-Muslims.

Goldman (1971, 599) stated that;

In some cases this wave of feeling probably caused some non-Malay voting for the PMIP (PAS). In localised areas in Kelantan, the Chinese may have considered it to be in their interest to vote for the PMIP rather than the Alliance, since their existence in this state may not have been as uncomfortable as one might suppose. The voters may have believed that it was some what useless to vote for the Alliance, as the party had very little chance, in their opinion, of gaining the seats.

Ismail Kassim (1979, 97) stated that this phenomenon had occurred in the urban constituency of Petaling Jaya (Central Region) in the 1978 general election, where a large number of Chinese preferred to vote for PAS or purposely spoiled their ballot papers rather than cast their votes to the BN. Those non-Malays who voted for PAS were actually demonstrating their protest against the ALL/BN because there was no candidate preferable to them or simply as a reflection of general 'anti govern-

ment' feeling in the country (Goldman 1971, 592). A senior government State Assembly representative was also asked to comment on this matter and said that;

The Chinese vote for PAS was not an abnormal and new phenomenon in the Malaysian politic. I am not suprised. Even in my constituency a substantial number of Chinese voters voted for PAS in the 1990 general election. This was purposely done as a protest vote for disliking either the government or the party's candidates. This could easily be checked because at present the votes counting system is done at individual polling station. (Personal interview with a State Assembly representative of Bera, Pahang, 4 Feb. 1994, at the Malaysian Student Centre, Brighton).

BN State Assembly veteran also commented that,

Even in my constituency some of them voted PAS if they do not like the BN. (Personal interview with a State Assembly members for Kg. Raja Terengganu, 13.8.92).

The proposition that the Chinese have voted PAS was also proven in the Jertih (in the state of Terengganu) consituency. Its PAS candidate personally admitted that:

The Chinese votes in this area are not numerous, only to the nearest 4,000. So they could support any party they want. In the past the Chinese did not like the PAS, but due to their dissatisfaction with the BN, the majority of them have voted PAS in the 1990 general election. (Personal interview with State Assembly member for PAS, Jertih, Terengganu, August 1992).

Perhaps the argument about the Chinese electors voting for the PAS was not suprising anymore and it had been statistically proven in the 1990 general election in the Central Region of Peninsular Malaysia. As for the S46, the support from the Chinese voters was significantly negative in all regions.

Table 5 shown the Indian voters support for the BN was generally moderate in all regions. It was significantly negative in 1969 in the Central Region but significantly positive in 1978 and 1990 in the Central and Northern Regions with a moderate negative correlation. Nevertheless a striking result was recorded in the Central Region with a significant moderate positive correlation with the PAS in the 1990 election. The support given to DAP was also moderate and significant in the Eastern Region. What are the explanations for this phenomenon? The answers are probably not much different from the Chinese situation where this might also be the protest vote meant to express their

TABLE 5. Percentage of the Indian electorate with the parties' support 1969-90 by geographical region, Peninsular Malaysia

| Var | Reg/Year | ALL/BN | PAS | DAP | S46 | |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| % of the Indian Voters | Northern | | | | | |
| | 1969 | -.3411 (41) | -.5504** (25) | .2505 | (7) | |
| | 1974 | -.1324 (33) | # | .3057 | (22) | |
| | 1978 | .3555* (45) | -.4855** (43) | .2381 | (25) | |
| | 1982 | .0137* (45) | -.5121** (34) | .2595 | (25) | |
| | 1986 | -.0316 (59) | -.4636** (37) | .2270 | (23) | |
| | 1990 | -.1089 (50) | -.3028 (13) | .2401 | (19) | -.1503 (18) |
| | Central | | | | | |
| | 1969 | -.4915* (23) | -.6238** (11) | .3771 | (11) | |
| | 1974 | -.1357 (22) | # | -.0261 | (16) | |
| | 1978 | .0721 (25) | -.1901 (16) | .0233 | (17) | |
| | 1982 | .1803 (26) | -.2346 (16) | .0079 | (19) | |
| | 1986 | .2049 (33) | -.1186 (16) | -.0934 | (20) | |
| | 1990 | .6218** (33) | .5622** (3) | -.2572 | (13) | .4661* (16) |
| | Eastern | | | | | |
| | 1969 | .1963 (20) | -.6755** (20) | nc | | |
| | 1974 | -.2252 (19) | # | .7077** | (2) | |
| | 1978 | .4066 (27) | -.6652** (25) | .5425* | (3) | |
| 1982 | .0692 (27) | -.6310** (26) | .5695** | (6) | | |
| 1986 | -.0057 (31) | -.5827** (30) | .4334* | (4) | | |
| 1990 | .1746 (31) | -.3054 (13) | .2831 | (2) | -.0010 (16) | |
| Southern | | | | | | |
| 1969 | -.2059 (11) | -.6083 (2) | .3909 | (6) | | |
| 1974 | .0264 (8) | # | .8623* | (6) | | |
| 1978 | .0176 (16) | -.4254 (12) | .5919 | (6) | | |
| 1982 | .2489 (12) | -.6683* (6) | .4751 | (6) | | |
| 1986 | .1248 (16) | -.3906 (10) | .1450 | (7) | | |
| 1990 | .4131 (17) | nc | .3436 | (6) | -.2822 (11) | |

Note: 1-tailed Signif: * -.01 ** -.001; () Number of seats contested; Var=variable; Reg=Region.

PAS was in the BN Coalition; nc=not contested.

dissatisfaction with the BN or with the MIC itself. This was particularly the case prior to the 1990 general election when there was a leadership crisis in the MIC which probably caused some of its followers to cast votes for PAS to reveal their discontent.

CONCLUSION

The study have clearly indicated the existence of regional variations in party support over the period 1969-90 in Peninsular Malaysia. The ALL/BN support from the Malaysian electorate declined in the Central, Eastern and Southern Regions, but support was stable in the Northern Region over the period. The PAS too experienced a decrease of support in all the regions while the DAP recorded an increase only in the Northern Region. The majority of the Malay Voters in Peninsular Malaysia supported the BN except in the Eastern where they have supported the PAS. The Chinese voters support for the BN was not encouraging in the Northern, Central and Southern Regions, but their support was very high to the DAP in all the regions. In the case of Indian voters, their support in all the regions towards the BN was moderate as well as for the DAP.

NOTES

1. Correlation Coefficient (r) will show whether the relationship are negative or positive. A negative illustrates that as one variable increase the other decreases, and a positive relationship illustrates that one variable increase associated with an increase in the other variable. A relationship of -1 or $+1$ would indicate a perfect relationship, negative or positive respectively, between two variables (Bryman and Cramer, 1990:168). Cohen and Holliday (1982) have suggested the following scale of relationship: below 0.19 is very low; 0.20 to 0.39 is low; 0.40 to 0.69 is modest; 0.70 to 0.89 is high; and 0.90 to 1 is very high. It indicates a linear relationship between the two variables.

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