

# Malaysian Politics in the New Media Age

Pauline Pooi Yin Leong

# Malaysian Politics in the New Media Age

Implications on the Political Communication  
Process

 Springer

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# Foreword

The Internet, social media, smartphones, and tablet computers are playing a leading role in our daily lives. People are increasingly dependent on the Internet and social media in many aspects of their lives – from communication, entertainment, financial transactions, news update, education, and government services. In Southeast Asia, governments are spending billions on infrastructure to ensure that the next generation will be on par with developed countries when it comes to the information superhighway.

One area where social media has transformed the region is the political arena. In most of contemporary Southeast Asia, the polity gets their political news through social media. Traditional media, such as newspapers, is fast becoming obsolete when it comes to political propaganda. Malaysia is a prime example of this. The standard joke among Malaysianists goes like this: The 2008 general election was won by political bloggers. The 2013 election was decided by Facebook. The 2018 election was largely due to Twitter and WhatsApp. Social media played the persuasive role in the first regime change in Malaysia after six decades of independence.

This book provides a valuable window on the Malaysia case and how social media decisively shaped the political narrative from 2008 until regime change in 2018. There is a clear consensus that without access to social media, there would be no regime change in Malaysia. Pauline Leong's work is original in that she dissects the story of social media and politics in Malaysia through the different lens of media literacy, public sphere in a digital age, and e-campaigns. She speaks of all the key players as well. The lessons from Malaysia resonate with what is happening with other parts of Southeast Asia. Traditional elites in the region who do not embrace the new politics will probably be swept away by the end of this decade.

The big challenge going forward is obviously fake news and the manipulation of social media to create more cleavages in society. Political change using social media carries with it enormous risks and benefits. How do we impose transparency and accountability in cyber communities that are often riddled with fake identities? Can

you win elections using social media alone? While there are no easy answers, a good place to start understanding the larger issues at stake is this volume.

In short, Pauline Leong's work deserved to be read by all those interested in political change in Malaysia and the wider region.

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# Preface

This book is the culmination of interest and research in the areas of media and politics in Malaysia which started since the landmark results of the 12th General Election in 2008 that saw the beginning of the breakdown of *Barisan Nasional's* leadership and control of politics since the country's independence in 1957. The subsequent developments which ensued eventually led to the regrouped opposition alliance *Pakatan Harapan* finally wresting political control from the behemoth *Barisan Nasional* 10 years later in the 14th General Election. The objective of this book is to attempt to understand and analyze the role and impact of media in facilitating political change in Malaysia. It also looks at how the political process has been media-ized in Malaysia and examines the communication strategies as well as its impact on the voters.

It is hoped that this book will be able to contribute to the field of knowledge in the area of political communication in Malaysia, especially among media students, academics, political communicators, and observers who are interested in Malaysian media and politics. The author would like to acknowledge the support of her PhD supervisor, Professor James Chin, whose encouragement led to the genesis of the book, Sunway University for providing the resources which facilitated the writing process, and Monash University Malaysia, where the author initially conducted her field work for her PhD. The author would also like to thank her family for their support and express her gratitude to Springer Nature for the publication opportunity.

Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

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