Globalization, Democratization and Political Change in Malaysia (New Media And 2018 Elections)

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Absatact: *This is a study about the nexus relations among globalisation, democratisation process and its implication upon the political change in Malaysia. Malaysian internal politics is very dynamics and contentious as well as running based on the ethnic consensus. The result recent Malaysian election has changed the Malaysian political landscape. The 61 years regime of Barisan Nasional (BN) has been defeated by the opposition that led by former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad. By applying qualitative library research. The result shows that the globalisation has a direct impact on the Malaysian democratisation progress. It also, therefore, influences on creating a political change in Malaysia. This paper argues that globalisation and democratisation process became a trigger factor of new media development. The non BN-linked government media such as Malaysiakini.com and the Malaysian Insider play a significant role in distributing information related to the corruption scandal of BN elites, notably a corruption scandal of Najib Razak, a former Prime Minister of Malaysia.*
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Introduction

There are many opinions regarding globalization or democratization. In one side, globalization is often interpreted as a continuation of the system of capitalist when democratization and liberalization of the political system often seen as a tool that is used to strengthen the development of global capitalism in the global south countries.

In 1957, Malaysia gained independence from Britain. At that time, Malaysia had practised minimal democracy, but in 1969 Malaysia switched to an authoritarian regime and

in 1971 Malaysia began to re-implement minimal democracy (Doorenspleet, 2000). The change of regime from one model to another as experienced by Malaysia, it indicates a tendency that democratization in the Asian countries occurs as a form of "coercion" of capitalism through the mechanism of globalization as its tool. This argument is supported by (Duong, 2017), he has explained that the presence of democratization progress in the Asian continent and others is more about the strategy to create hegemony of capitalism.

Malaysia is a country in Southeast Asia that has experienced contentious and

dynamics of the political changes. The 2018 elections is a remarkable history of Malaysia, the BN regime which had ruled the country for more than 61 years had to hand over the power to the opposition or Alliance of Hope *(Pakatan Harapan).* An unusual political transition because Malaysia is a country characterized by a semi-democratic political system that requires political stability (Lijphart, 1969) and (Lijphart, 1977).

Furthermore, if we visit this country we often see the slogan of "*Malaysia Boleh*" (Surely, Malaysia can!). A slogan that is indeed needed for countries that seek for nationalism to develop common goals for common development (common platform). In the Mahathir era, development based on nationalism became the style of Malaysian development, this imagination of nationalism was introduced by (Anderson, 2006) as an effort to gather the internal solidity of the newly independent nation.

The slogan *"Malaysia Boleh"* may be heard very often to arouse the nationalism of this country, and its implications, for example, Proton car products can get a fairly significant market. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the *successful* economy condition might be a suitable sentence given to Malaysia as a country that received the category of New Industrial Economic Countries. Together with new Asian industrialized countries such as South Korea, Malaysia's position on the economic world began to attract world attention, this is similar to Mahathir's ability to capitalize on his popularity on the political world.

Mahathir's intellectual capacity and leadership accompanied by the quality of Government policies made Malaysia in the early 2000s be seen as an example of a Malay nation-state that was able to catch up and entering the level of the middle-income country category. At the same time, Indonesia is undergoing a process of recovery out of economic shocks which eroded the base of the Indonesian economy.

The Malaysian Political Leadership under Mahathir has indeed produced various speculations about the democratic model they have built. Semi-democracy with little authoritarianism, elections that are practising a *Gerry Mandering strategy* and of course the use of bureaucracy to influence voters. Further, Gerry mandering is a political strategy that is generally used by the ruling government to set up constituency in accordance with the interests of the party or current regime. The constituency in every elections can be changed based on the interests of the regime and the ruling elite.

All the notions from foreign observers made Malaysian politics considered not to carry out democracy as a whole. (Mauzy, 2013), for example, described Malaysia *as a coercive authoritarian state in an authoritarian state*, a typical country exercising coercive political leadership in an authoritarian state.

Coercive here means political coercion or pressure on opposition groups, this is certainly different from the Indonesian political situation in the Suharto era. Malaysia's military tradition that is not too dominative and the monarchical system makes this country relatively more flexible in managing the political system compared to Indonesia in

the Suharto era. Malaysia 2020 is a vision declared by Mahathir and this is widely spread by Mahathir through his book titled *A new deal for Asia*.

In the present context, the 2018 Malaysian Election also gives a new narrative when the BN Coalition which has been in power for a long time in Malaysia (for 61 years) has finally fallen and was defeated by the *Pakatan Harapan* (Welsh, 2019). Is this also part of the process of democratization through the Globalization that has swept the world especially after the Arab Spring?

There are several factors that are strongly suspected to be the reason for the defeat of the BN Coalition, including unsatisfactory economic performance and the 1MDB corruption scandal involving former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. In addition, the massive use of new media as part of the implications of globalization also has a significant role in influencing Malaysian voters in the 2018 elections, although this has been explained academically prior to 2013 Malaysian elections (Weiss, 2012).

Based on the description above, the problem that will be examined in this study paper is how the implications of the globalization, democratization and social media on regimes change in Malaysia as a result of the 2018 Elections.

Method

This study is a descriptive qualitative study, a study based on literature study method Library Research. In this context, (Bennet et al, 2005) explained that "The importance of understanding the history and context of a case makes the difficulties of critiquing qualitative research differ from those of

assessing quantitative work. Readers cannot easily judge the validity of the explanation of a case unless they have a degree of independent knowledge of that case". This research will also utilize the theoretical arguments above using independent knowledge to provide an explanation of the research object.

There are 2 (two) methodological assumptions in this study which confirm that regime change in Malaysia is a result of globalization and democratization of politics that occurred in Southeast Asia in the late 1990s. First, the implications of globalization for political democratization are assumed to have started since 1990 since the collapse of the eastern bloc mobilized by the Soviet Union (Huntington, 1993) and Second, this paper essentially departs on the argument of Political Reform in Malaysia in 1998 due to the influence of political globalization in Asia, in the period 1990-2000 and this political reform holds a potential for the same thing to happen in Malaysia in the following period, in this study the researchers refer to the collapse of the BN regime under the Najib Razak Government in 2018 as a repeat of the political reform plot 20 years ago.

In this sense, we have used all the materials that are relevant to analyse the context and study on the current Malaysian politics. Thus, we have used some of the papers that are linked to the closest study and having similar topics with this study. For instance, a research by (Weiss, 2012,) on the new media on the Malaysian Politics, it becomes the main literature that provides a tool of media upon the power shifting in Malaysia. Further, an assessment by (Ishak, 2009) on the media was also used

to widen the context of the research particularly on how the media play an important role in the process of political power in current Malaysian politics. Therefore, library research is a proper method that can be used to analyse the main aims of this research.

Results and Discussions
Globalization, Democratization and Political Change: Framework Analysis

Globalization is a phenomenon that has developed long before Kenichi Ohmae or the founder of this ideology theorized. But as a phenomenon, globalization began to "unfold" after the cold war ended with the momentum of the collapse of one of the strong blocs of the world, the Soviet Union. Globalization actually has many agendas not only perpetuating capitalism in the context of free trade but more than that, globalization is also a pendulum for the development of liberal democracy and all kinds of consequences for global south countries, especially in Asia and Africa.

According to (Embong, 2000), globalization is a concept that is closely related to reducing the role of state sovereignty, a world without borders, the development and civilization of technological sophistication, including trade transactions based on free trade thinking. Another argument is explained by Yoshihara Kunio on his lecture series at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2001, he has claimed that globalization is not only carries a universal definition among the world's population, but also threatens the process of forming a nation state.

Globalization has become an important theme in the last few decades.

The development of science and technology fundamentally also influences change in society. For example, the democratization that took place in several Asian countries and the case of the Arab Spring shows the impact of globalization 'forced' some authoritarian countries have transformed into a more democratic country. Theoretically, the response to globalization also gives different impacts from one country to another. A particular economically weak country, there is a tendency, those weak countries to be a follower of globalization as explained by David Held's, it is known as the Hyperglobalizer, "Hyperglobalizer [...] considers globalization to be fundamentally new epoch in human history, in which old categories and concepts no longer apply "(Lynch, 2000).

This hyperglobalizer countries become a strong follower of Globalization because these countries are unable to resist the impact and influence of globalization in the context of their internal policies. In this context, globalization is diametrically encouraging active participation in the format of deliberative democracy, the concept of dialogic democracy (Lynch, 2000) further explains:

> ”When thinking about democracy in a global context, is official participation in the deliberations, bargaining, and cutting deals on the inside less relevant than the noisy social movements on the outside? This question insistently points international theory to fundamentally contested debates in democratic theory about elite

democracy and popular participation".

Globalization also has an impact on the spread of massive social media and it becomes a trigger that accelerates the process of democratization in various parts of the world. The ability of social media to deliver news quickly makes this non-conventional media play a major role in the process of democratization in various countries including in the Malaysian context.

The world response to a more dialogical democracy, as a result, the influence of globalization which is then centralized and influences the pattern of world democratic distribution. For example, the Arabs Spring phenomenon began with a mass protest demanding freedom of civil rights. In this context there is a demand arising from the grass roots to encourage an authoritarian state to become more democratic. The democratization that occurred in Arabs Spring indirectly is a continuation of the wave of democratization (Florensa, 2011) which is a continuation of the third wave of democratization projects and popularized by (Huntington, 1993).

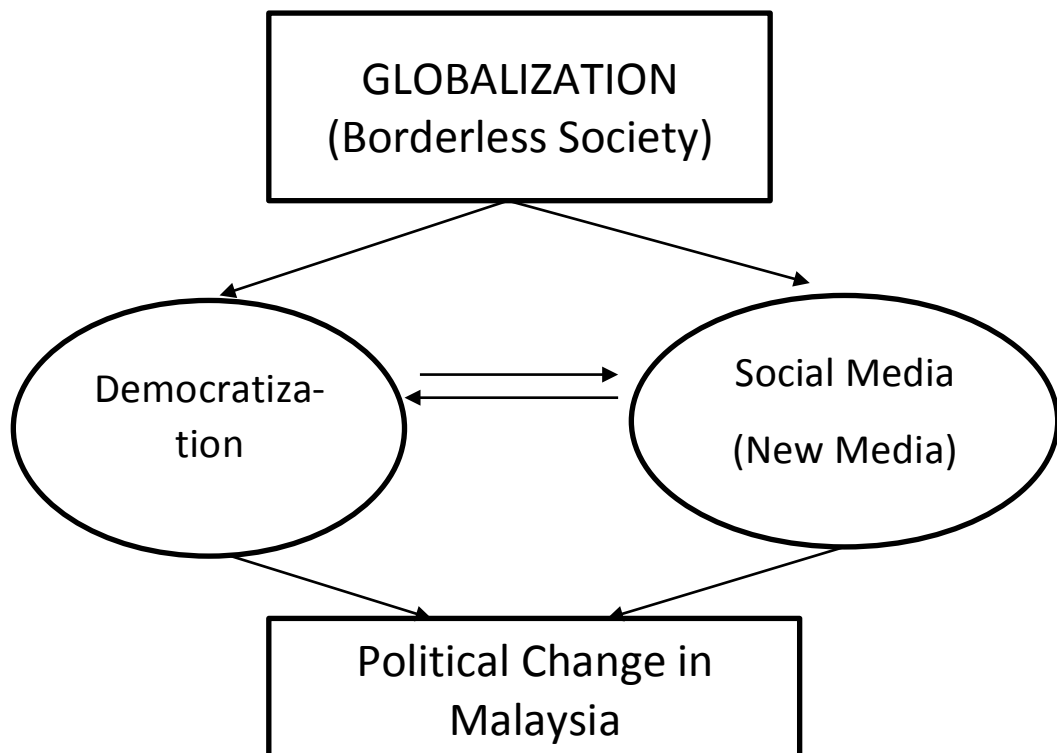**Figure 1. The Nexus Relation of Globalization, Democratization and Social Media**

Figure 1 above explains how globalization influences the occurrence of democratization vis a vis social media which then has an impact on changes in Malaysian politics after the 2018 Election. The above framework is developed by authors and is used to provide an analysis on the present circumstance of the Malaysian Politics. In this context, we argue that the portal *Malaysiakini.com* and *Malaysian Insider* act as agents of political change in Malaysia with the

success of these two media changing the political taste of voters. News about the Najib Razak 1MDB corruption scandal, the lifestyle of the political elite, the rising cost of living and the country's economic problems were conveyed to the public who had been giving limited access to information dominated by pro-government (Najib Razak) mainstream media.

There are many factors that caused the defeat of BN in the last 2018 Election, aside from the 1MDB Najib Razak scandal, the increase in the price of living necessities, economic instability or in other words the failure of the Najib Razak government to maintain the country's economy, all triggers are well mediated through the medium of new media, this study illustrates that new media have a significant role in the process of Malaysian political change. There are a number of non-mainstream media that influenced road maps and Malaysian politics after the 2018 elections, and some media that were dominant in embellishing Malaysian politics were *Malaysiakini.com* and *Malaysia Insider*.

Economics-Political Situation in Malaysia : A Discussion

Discussing the economic and political aspects of Malaysia cannot be separated from the role of a Mahathir. The basic concept of Malaysian Political Economy policy is summarized in the concept of Look East policy. There is two majors program on how the Look East Policy is elaborated in the country's vision:

First, building human resources by building international standard universities such as Universiti Malaya and Universiti Islam Antarbangsa. In addition, there are facilities for Bumiputera (Malaysian) students to obtain soft loans (without interest) from the Malaysian Government to continue their education and scholarships for outstanding students to continue their study abroad. ***Second***, promoting development in various fields with symbols of the progress of a country, such as the Petronas tower, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, one of the grandest airports in Asia, Putra World Trade Center (PWTC) as one of the world's trade centres, regional development programmed "beautifully" like the Kuala Lumpur City Center (KLCC).

The issues of socio-economic improvement which in several decades became the "Universal Issue" in the era of globalization, it became very impossible in this country (such as issues of cheap education for the people, cheap primary food and other primary needs) the fact is that mathematically has been largely fulfilled and the world has admitted that the during the period Mahathir administration, he has succeeded to increase the level of welfare of its people. Indeed, Look East Policy is a philosophical development of Mahathir. In this case, (Furuoka, 2007) explains:

"Equally important was Mahathir's desire to discard the former colonial master, Britain, and the "Buy British Last" campaign was a part of this drive. At the same time, search for a new role model for Malaysia among East Asian countries began. The introduction of the "Look East" policy became the cornerstone of

Malaysia-Japan relations. Mahathir believed that Japan and South Korea, two East Asian countries that achieved an impressive economic success after World War II, could provide a good alternative development strategy and become role models for Malaysia".

Mahathir's famous policy of western influence on his country, especially the influence of the former British colony, made Mahathir endeavour to find alternative approaches for Malaysian development and Mahathir admiration for the rapid development of Japan and South Korea, making that two countries are practical examples of Malaysian-style Mahathir development.

The concept of *Looking to the East* is a slogan of how Mahathir is very impressed with Japan's rapid development so that it can align itself with several developed countries in Europe and the United States. The momentum of the Japanese who were able to defeat Europe during the first world war became a big inspiration for Mahathir in his slogan. In addition, the most important of his ideas on *Looking to the East* is to promote the ethnic Malays in the domestic economic arena which, in fact, are controlled by non-native people.

Malaysia's anti-western and colonial development and economic policies have made this country try to attract investors from East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. Referring to the concept of look east policy, in the first period of Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia's Foreign Direct Investment or FDI was focused on Japan and South Korea. And this then has

implications for the close relationship between the two countries.

This made Malaysia's relations with Japan so close during the Mahathir era, "*Mahathir sought Japan's assistance in realization of his industrialization programme and encouraged Japanese multinationals to invest in Malaysia and form joint ventures with Malaysian companies*" (Furuoka, 2007). However, the pattern of trade relations between the two countries, Japanese assistance to the development of Malaysia did not run optimally due to the weak implementation of the concept of look east policy, or in the academic term is "lack of governance" or weak in governance aspect.

In several studies, it seems that Mahathir's economic growth is a priority of his leadership vision, the slogan of looking east is the "magic words" Mahathir always brings up in national and international scale forums.

Malaysia is a very exotic country when viewed from an ethnic perspective. Malays, Chinese and Indians are the most dominant races in this country and the most extreme of Malaysia's stratification is the term Bumiputera (native) and non Bumiputera (Non- native) regulated in state law, that what is meant by bumiputera is Malay, people outside Malay (China and India) that are Muslim or convert to Islam, and those who are not Bumiputera are Chinese, Indians and other nations that are not included in the Malay and Islamic categories.

The fact of division based on race is reflected in the context of political reality, political parties in Malaysia are generally divided into racial categorizations such as UMNO (United

Malay National Organization) is a party for most Malay people, MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) party of people Malaysian Chinese, MIC (Malaysian Indian Community) Malaysian Indian parties, and various other small parties all of which the members are part of the Barisan Nasional (BN) political force, BN is a political force that has ruled for more than 61 years, and BN authority ended in the 2018 elections. In this context (Mauzy, 2013) states that:

> *"Since the early 1980 and the accession of DR. Mahathir Muhammad as prime minister, the state has become more repressive accomodation has been marginalized and ethnic relationship have deteriorated although there have been no serious ethnic clashes."*

We can see the fact that dominance of UMNO who represented the Malays in Malaysian political arena. Within a few decades UMNO became the majority party in Malaysia and was formatted to represent the political interests of the Malays. On the other hand, the opposition in Malaysia consist of various parties such as the PAS (Malaysian Islamic Party), Justice Party and other small parties. Before the 2018 general election both forces "fought" to seize Malaysian voters, primarily Malays.

In the last few decades before the results of the 20018 Election, what the observers were concerned about was the competition between the two Malays Based Parties UMNO and PAS in winning the hearts of Malay voters. Various tactic carried out by the two major parties to win the hearts of the constituents in national elections, even in one of his studies Zainah Anwar described for the sake of embracing Malay voters as if there was a "pious war" and fighting to be the most pious between the UMNO elite and PAS. This context also links that Islam is an important factor in political contestation in Malaysia (Hamayotsu, 2002).

There are at least two periods of Malaysian politics. First, the *political foundation* that occurred between 1957 and 1978 and the period of *political and economic development* under Mahathir's leadership between 1981-2003. As an independent country after the Second World War, the character and nations building built by Malaysian Elites present an accommodative political style. Ethnic diversity as a result of colonization, this also has an impact on the configuration of the political elite, a special feature of Malaysia which certainly displays a political pattern based on ethnicity or ethno-based politics; moreover this is supported by a variety of political parties that accommodate diverse of Malaysian ethnicities (Warganegara, 2018).

Research conducted by (Nadzri, 2019) provides an overview of Malaysia's political development since the country's independence, a political development model of "one-party dominant rule in 1957 evolving to a two-plus-one party system by mid-2018". A very dynamic political escalation, aside from being a relic of the British colony, relations between the three major ethnic groups of Malay, Chinese and Indian descent are also an inseparable part of Malaysian political development.

As developing countries, religious-political issues are very popular in Malaysia, such as the 'political selling' of the application of Islamic law, the behaviour of non-Islamic government officials and other matters of a religious nature and these are capitalized by Islam-based parties in Malaysia, though in the last few decades Malay nationalism or Malay Nationalism has become the dominant issue in various political events.

PAS claimed that UMNO was a secular and un-Islamic party due to the ruling party was based on some of Mahathir's thought which was considered a secular party. This campaign was indirectly successful, especially among Islamic Malays and this was indicated by the results of the 1999 General Elections, Kelantan and Trengganu states which was successfully overpowered by PAS. However, UMNO responded to the PAS campaign and gave a widely circulated statement in the media that PAS was a party of the opposition and did not have nationalism because it had divided the Malay nation.

Before the 2018 elections, the strategy of capitalizing the issue of Islamism by the opposition in Malaysian political landscape was intensively carried out especially in the political campaigns in Mahathir government, from 1981 to 2003. However, the incumbent position made Mahathir's bargaining power unobstructed by sectarian issues launched by the opposition. Meanwhile, the development of the Malaysian economy under Mahathir also convinced the public of the existence of the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Previously, a dynamic political transition process occurred when Mahathir surprisingly withdrew from politics in 2003, at that time, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over political leadership from 2003 to 2009. In the following period Najib Razak was in power from 2009 to 2018. Mahathir returned to Prime Minister in 2018 at a fairly old age as a political leader after the Pakatan Harapan coalition won the election by a majority vote in 2018.

Discussing Malaysian politics cannot be separated from two main factors. First, the political model and system in this country is a British colonial legacy, political division that accommodates the interests of diverse ethnicities is one way how Malaysian do day to day politics (Warganegara, 2018), in other contexts there is indeed a tendency that ethnic sentiment began to (Mohamad, 2008) explains

"Its play of the 'Malay-hegemony' card is already losing currency among Malay-Muslim voters. However, does this spell the end of race-based politics? Here we have to distinguish ethnic concerns from ethnic representation. Racial rights and religious rights will continue to be aired by political lobbies and civil society although the representation of such concerns may not necessarily be taken up by the ethnic champions".

However, it is not easy to leave behind religion-based and ethnicity-based politics in Malaysia, even though space and time barriers provide a great opportunity for politicians to capitalize on these two issues for their personal and political party interests. The political

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division based on ethnicity is also an accommodation carried out by the British colonial authorities to provide opportunities for the entry of Chinese and Indian ethnicities brought by the British colonies as part of the trade compensation of the British East Indies in Malaysia.

The democratic consociational model is considered the most relevant model to accommodate the diverse interests of Malaysian political elites who are familiar with the political framing of ethno-based political interests or ethnic-based political interests. In this context, (Warganegara, 2018) also explained:

"To some extent, the interplay of ethnic politics and political patronage in South East Asia shares similarities with ethnic politics and patronage democracy in South Asian countries such as India. In India, another former British colony, a plural society with various ethnic groups and languages was maintained by British colonial administrations through a policy of ethnic segregation not at all dissimilar to that implemented in Malaysia and Singapore".

Second, the sustainability of Malaysian politics is very dependent on the presence of charismatic figures on the political stage. In the last decades, for example, the stage of Malaysian democracy has always been embellished by political contests between two important figures, Mahathir Mohammad and Anwar Ibrahim. Today's Malaysian politics actually giving alternative figures

outside the two figures as a result of the coalition between the two figures who had long clashed in the Pakatan Harapan coalition.

Today's Malaysian political landscape brings out the possibility of a process of rapid political regeneration. At present, there are many young figures in Malaysia's political space, for example, Syed Saddiq's existence as Minister of Sports or Nurul Izzah Anwar, daughter of Malaysian political figure, Anwar Ibrahim. Malaysia has begun to rejuvenate politicians by providing opportunities for the younger generation to fill important political posts in the country, the impact may not be instant, but in general, the future of Malaysian politics will not appear to be short of many young cadres for 5 or 10 years forward.

Globalization, Democratization and New Media: *Malaysian Kini* Channels, the Malaysian Insider and the Pro-Democracy Movement

Traditionally the media in Malaysia focuses on the creating harmony and having a conservative view on particular issue such as the nexus relation on politics, religion and ethnicity. The presence of the BN coalition has forced the Malaysian media sitting on the back seat.

Rather than opposed the government agenda on behalf of the people interest, the Malaysian media in Malaysia tends to be a strong supporter of the ruling government. However, the impact of democratization and globalisation on media development, it has been giving a huge opportunity to the presence of the new media that opposed the Malaysian government such as

Malaysiakini.com and The Malaysian insider.

The presence of new media that are not BN-linked media such as Malaysiakini.com plays a role in providing balanced news on the political position of the BN Government which has so far been supported by conventional major media such as the *Utusan Malaysia* newspaper and *Berita Harian*. Thus, the presence of new media has an impact on the increasingly large political choices of Malaysians in the 2018 Election. The various community choices in the last 2018 Election reflect that non BN-Linked media was giving insight and able to persuade Malaysian voters for changing their political preferences.

(Weiss, 2012) has argued that the presence of new media has played in three substantial aspect of Malaysian political landscape, those are "media for information, identity-building and mobilization". Theoretically, the popularity of the BN has actually been noted in the 2013 elections but it appears that the Government of the BN under Prime Minister Najib Razak did not respond well to the potential losses and as a result seen in the 2018 election results, the BN suffered massive losses at the level of national and local elections. In fact, the use of social media as part of new media as tool of political socialization has been attempted by the BN Government Coalition (Agustino and Mohamed 2015), but it is considered not effective enough to boost the popularity of the BN Coalition to raise the news stream of other media that intensively informs the activities of violations or political fraud activities of the elite BN Coalition.

One factor fostering the process of rapid political change in Malaysia is the role of non-conventional media that directly affects public space. The Malaysiakini.com portal, for example, presents alternative and opposed news that fills public space and this effectively provides a different news options for its citizens. Regarding the role of the Malaysiakini.com portal, (Ishak, 2009) explains:

"Malaysiakini.com presents daily news and views in four languages namely English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. Readers from different races and religions have actively participated in the debate and discussion in the portals. Sensitive subjects and viewpoints deemed taboo by the mainstream media such as racial quota systems, the monarchy, apostasy, shariah law, language, education and migrant workers have generated a new understanding on these issues".

With readership across ethnic, the Malaysiakini.com portal quickly enters the public sphere and indirectly provides political education to the Malaysian public. The news delivered by this portal also features news that is almost impossible to become a central issue in the publishing of Malaysian mainstream media. For example, discussions on sensitive issues such as suing the monarchic system, Islamic law and the quota system based on ethnic distribution, this is widely spread and discussed by Malaysiakini.com (Ishak, 2009).

Furthermore, Malaysiakini.com also became a news page with many readers in July 2018 and this defeated the pages Malaysian conventional media such as The Star whereas in the middle of May 2009 this media page was only ranked 4th and was less popular than *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* (Ishak, 2009).

Figure 2. Malaysiakini.com Portal

Source: Malaysiakini (2019)

The indirectly public mind is 'adorned' by the arguments circulating in the public sphere and this has an impact on the changing voter map in the 2018 Malaysian Elections. Owned by Steven Gan and Premesh Chandran, Malaysiakini.com was first appearance on public in November 1999 (Ishak, 2009). Steven Gan is a Malaysian independent journalist that is not linked to any Malaysian politician.

Beside Malaysiakini.com portal, another new media that became a reference for Malaysian voters was The Malaysia Insider portal, in 2016, local authorities blocked this media because it presented news of Prime Minister Najib Razak's 1MDB corruption scandal that harmed the country. Like Malaysiakini.com, the Malaysian Insider portal also presents news that opposed the news content that presented by pro-government media.

Blocking made by the Malaysian Government at that time was considered useless because of the current situation when technology is more advanced, it would be very difficult for national censors to limit the space for internet users and it happened in Malaysia, precisely with blocking made by the Najib Razak Government, this make Malaysians aware of the situation that is happening in their country. Figure 3 below is the news about blocking conducted by the Najib Razak Government on the news portal of The Malaysian Insider in mid of 2016.

In another context, the blocking actually led to a rejection of the wider community, some Malaysians actually sought the truth of the news which indirectly had an impact on public awareness of the political events that were taking place in Malaysia. And from political calculation actually makes the BN Government increasingly lose its popularity in society.

The Malaysian Insider was established by Png Hong Kwan and Sreedhar Subramanian (Ishak, 2009), both are senior journalist, and the latest name has "a close relations" with the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi. As a form of new media,

the news patterns delivered by The Malaysian Insider similar to Malaysiakini.com, presenting news that is prohibited from being exposed by major BN-linked media. Those two media have been attracting many subscribers across the Malaysia, putting them as the "successful independent online news sites with substantial numbers of Malaysian subscribers" (Tamam et.al, 2012).

In other hands, what these two media done is actually a symbol of resistance to conventional media, which is pro-Najib Razak's Government, and this is theoretically a thing that cannot be denied as an impact of the development of globalization and democratization that occurred in several Asian countries including Malaysia.

The borderless of information that is cannot be separated by distance and time, and easies access toward the internet causes the process of distributing the information, it subsequently makes a democratization process take place quickly. In this sense, it becomes very natural if Malaysiakini.com and The Malaysian Insider become the media that play a major role in changing the landscape of Malaysian politics, departing from the argumentation on the ability of the media to influence the public sphere. This was confirmed by research conducted by (Salman and Hasim, 2011) they stated that:

"The government can no longer under estimate the power and influence of the new media, especially the use of blogs as experienced in the run-up to the March 2008 General Elections. It has indeed become a force to be

reckoned with. This is an indication of the power of the Internet as an alternative media platform. We are experiencing what one may call the new and emerging democratic and political landscape made possible by the new media. The new media provide an alternative channel where the masses can air their grievances and concern without having to go through cumbersome procedures or without interference or 'gate-keeping' from editors resulting in the message not reaching the audience".

Figure 3. The Malaysian Insider Portal Which Is Blocked By The Najib Razak Government Because It Continually Reports The 1MDB Scandal

Source: Aliran (2016)

Indications of the presence of new media influence on Malaysian politics have begun to appear in mid-2008, referring to research conducted by Salman and Hasim (2011). For example, the results of the 2011 study were based

on the 2008 Election, arguing that the results of the 2008 election proved that the government cannot underestimate about the influence of new media on Malaysian domestic politics, this research particularly highlights the role of personal blogs in the same context Salman and Hashim's research also explains that the existence of the internet and new media alternative will foster democracy and can change the landscape of Malaysia's political map.

The 2008 election can be seen as the beginning of Malaysia's political turmoil, (Nadzri, 2019) explaining that in the 2008 election, the BN lost several seats mainly in urban areas and at the same time the BN also lost control of some areas on the west coast of the Malaysian Peninsular and did not able to take control of political power over the Penang and Selangor regions, two large areas in Malaysian Peninsular, and this continues until the next election. In the 13th election in 2013, for example, BN lost many seats and began to be indicated experiencing a political weakened in the national parliament (Weiss, 2013).

Blocking conducted by the Malaysian Government against non BN-linked media is also ineffective in suppressing 'bursts' of information about the political attitude of the Malaysian elite itself. Instead of the role of new media, another factor that cannot be denied and is capable of changing Malaysia's political map is voters who consider the country's economy as the reason for voting particular party. Theoretically, personal scandal and economic performance are also another reason for the occurrence of swing voters or the transition of the choices of Malaysians and leaving the

Barisan Nasional Government. Research by Lee (2019, p.16) for example explains that:

> *"The 14th general election (GE-14) in Malaysia was a watershed event. The election witnessed the defeat of the Barisan Nasional coalition which had ruled the country since its independence in 1957. A number of factors are likely to have driven the outcomes in the GE-14. Overall, the robust economic growth was not a positive factor in voter support for BN in the election. Unemployment and inequality (measured by Gini coefficient) are likely to have negative effects on voter support for BN. Contrary to the findings of media reports and surveys, inflation was not a significant determinant. It is possible that official consumer prices indices (CPI) did not capture cost of living issues adequately".*

Lee's research (2019) illustrates that good economic growth does not have a positive impact on voter sentiment in the 2018 Elections, but in fact, unemployment and economic inequality rise as measured by the Gini coefficient. These two factors are the economic performances contributes to bringing the Malaysian swing voters. Based on the research, Lee (2019) also explained that the inflation factor also did not affect the changing patterns of choice of Malaysians, but Lee explained that it was likely because the consumer prices indices (CPI) failed to capture the increasing of the citizen's cost of living.

Conclusion

Talking about Malaysian politics cannot be separated from the big idea about ethnic politics but in other side of the political changes that occurred after the 2018 elections indicate there are significant changes about ethnic sentiment. Malaysian elections are no longer dependent on ethnic and religious sentiments, government performance has begun to be considered by voters, as has theoretical studies on incumbent by Trounstine, 2011, 2013. The latest Malaysian election results show that ethnic factors remain the main thing to consider as there are no ethnic divisions and political parties explain this, for example, UMNO supporters changed their political choices to the Malaysian Indigenous Party (Partai Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia-BERSATU), a new party made by Mahathir who both relied on Malay ethnic support. The latest results of the Malaysian Election also changed the political map of the elite, the elite Pakatan Harapan who had been in the position of opposition now is in the Government.

On the other side, the issue of 1MDB corruption in the Najib Razak regime and the country's weak economic performance made the main factors of political change in Malaysia. Globalization and the process of political democratization that took place in various parts of the world also made Malaysia as the affected country. Borderless society makes the information vis a vis a new media, it made so-called "the elite scandal" that has been previously controlled by the mainstream media can be revealed to the public and it becomes a public consideration in the 2018 Election. Finally, BN regime which ruled in Malaysia during 61 years must give national political leadership to the coalition of the opposition party.

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