

Malaysia's 13th General Election: Sabah-Barisan Nasional Fixed-Deposit State?

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I. Introduction

As all are aware, the results of the Malaysia 12th General Election (GE-12) in 2008 have surprised many. Not only the dominant parties Barisan Nasional (BN) were shocked by the loss of significant numbers of seats but for the first time in the history of Malaysia politics, vis-à-vis, electoral affairs, they were denied a two-thirds majority in the Parliament (or Dewan Rakyat, House of Representatives, the Lower House of the Parliament of Malaysia). Notwithstanding the opposition parties such as Parti Islam

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Se-Malaysia (PAS), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR: The People's Justice Party) that form the opposition coalition called Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance: PR), has come to a surprised with the GE12 result, in which they not even think that were able to challenge hegemonic politics of BN, managed to capture and formed a government at the state level namely Kedah, Penang, Perak, and Selangor, except Kelantan which has been under the control of PAS since the 1990 general election.

Most of the political observers and analyst was then agreed that the results of the 12th general election in Sabah and Sarawak are the savior of the continuity of BN political power at the federal level. Especially, Noor (2013) explored the campaign for the 13th Malaysian election as conducted in Sabah, and will offer some observations on the local issues that were deemed particularly important by Sabah voters. It will also address the changing forms of mass mobilization, issue-framing, and the rise of Sabah-centric politics in the state, all of which may have played a part in deciding the outcome of the election results in that state. furthermore, Chin (2014) reviewed political developments in Sabah and Sarawak since independence and argued that the common theme since independence has been an attempt to export the Barisan Nasional (BN)/United Malays National Organization (UMNO) model of government to East Malaysia. The model is essentially based on a Muslim-led coalition government with Ketuanan Melayu (Malay Supremacy), and in more recent times, Ketuanan Islam, as its ideological core. On the other hand, Chin (2013) examined the strategies employed by the ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional (or National Front), and the opposition

alliance, Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance), in the 13th general election held in Malaysia in May 2013. It argues that while the opposition used the right strategy for the 2013 campaign, it lost because it could not overcome the three biggest hurdles for opposition politics in Malaysia: East Malaysia, the rural Malay votes and a biased electoral system. Brown and Lim (2013) conducted the dynamic of the 2013 elections in Sabah, combining qualitative insights fieldwork during the election with quantitative analysis of the constituency level results. They focused on the strategies used by the opposition in the state and also argued that while there was a substantial swing in the popular vote away from the BN in the state, the constituency strategies adopted by the opposition coalition do not appear to have been the main factor exploring this swing and, they suggested, these strategies may ultimately have done more long-run damage to the opposition in the state. In relations to that, Sabah and Sarawak have been labeled as a "fixed deposit" state due to the support given by the majority of voters in both states to BN. Sociologically, in other words, it can be perceived that the voters in Sabah and Sarawak are the last bastion in the context of BN political survival (Zaini 2013).

This article aims to analyze whether Sabah as a "fixed deposit" state is still relevant in understanding the continuity and survival of the BN political hegemony in the context of Malaysia political developments post-13th general election. The said questions proposed based on two socio-political development emerged after the 12th general election, namely (1) Sabah as a "fixed deposit" state for BN political survival has triggered a leadership crisis within the rank of

BN leaders, especially among Sabah BN state leadership with the BN leadership at the center, and (2) the emergence of the movement known as “Borneo Agenda” led by Borneo opposition leaders, fight for socio-political rights and demands of Sabah and Sarawak, using federalism as their platform of struggle.

II. Sabah’s Complex Landscape: Sociocultural, Religious and Political landscape

The question arises: if there was a swing in terms of voters’ sentiments and behaviour in the Malaysian Peninsula, why did a similar swing not take place in the East (Noor 2013: 542) Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak? This already assumes that there exists such a thing as an equalizing national identity and that voters’ behaviour would be the same across the Malaysian Federation. However, one of the most common errors found in the works of scholars who write on Malaysia is the assumption that the sociocultural and religious landscape of East and West Malaysia are alike: nothing could be further from the truth. It ought to be noted here that when the Federation of Malaya was formed in 1957, the ethnic - religious balance in what would later be referred to as West Malaysia was somewhat precarious (Brwon and Lim 2013: 2-3). West Malaysian politics has always been guided by the (sometimes unstated, but nonetheless evident) desire to ensure the numerical dominance of Malay-Muslims over all the other ethnic and religious communities of the Peninsula.

Religion is likewise a factor that is more complex in Sabah as compared with West Malaysia, for along with the other East Malaysian state of Sarawak, Sabah has the second highest number of Christians in the country. The last survey noted that around 40% of Sarawak's population was at least nominally Christian, and 27% of Sabah's population.) This leads us to the interesting situation where the KDM, who are regarded as native 'sons of the soil' (Bumiputera), also happen to be Christian Bumiputeras, unlike the Malay-Muslims of West Malaysia (Ostwald 2013: 528). The hybrid and composite nature of many Sabahan households also means that it is more common to come across extended Sabah families where family members may belong to several different religious beliefs at the same time; a phenomenon that seems alien to most West Malaysians.

Sabahans have long held the view that as a state within a federation it would be up to Sabahans themselves to preserve their identity vis-à-vis the rest of the Malaysian Federation. Since the 1980s, however, a growing sense of local ethnopolitical consciousness has developed, primarily due to the growing activism among Kadazandusuns, many of whom happen to be Christians. The Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) was, in the 1980s, seen as the proponent of a 'Sabah-for-Sabahans' stance that irked the powers-that-be in Kuala Lumpur. Compounding matters was the manner in which a number of other non-KDM residents were given the status of citizens with the tacit consent of the federal authorities. Many of these non-KDM residents had already been long-time settlers in Sabah, and came from other communities such as the Suluks, Bajaos/Bajo, Ilanun and other settlers from the Philippines (which was then experiencing a

prolonged guerrilla conflict in the south of the country, which in turn led to a refugee crisis that befell Sabah as its closest neighbour). For more than two decades some Sabah politicians and political parties have taken the view that the granting of citizenship to these settlers amounted to a sustained campaign to alter the ethnic - religious balance in the state in favour of Muslims¹⁾.

On the other hand, mechanically, Sabah Parliamentary seats in Dewan Rakyat (the Lower House of the Parliament of Malaysia) are representing 11.3 percent [25 seats] of the total 222 seats in the Dewan Rakyat. While the Dewan Undangan Negeri (Sabah State Legislative Assembly) seats representing 10.4 percent [60 seats] of the total 576 state seats across the country. In the 12th general election, of the total 140 seats won by BN in Dewan Rakyat, 24 seats or 17.1 percent was won by BN Sabah. Table 1 shows that, of the total 307 state seats won by BN, Sabah has contributed the total of 59 seats or 19.2 percent significantly. Similarly, in the context of the 80 Parliamentary seats won by UMNO (United Malays National Organization), Malaysia's largest political party in the 12th general election, a total of 12 seats or 15 percent were won by UMNO Sabah

1) In 1980 Sabah's population was 929,299; but the figure rose very fast in the two decades that followed as a result of the influx of migrants and refugees from the Philippines. Owing to the fact that Malaysia had not agreed to the UN Convention for Refugees, the legal status of many of these migrants remained unclear. The findings of the Royal Commission on 'Project IC' have so far uncovered many cases of Malaysian identity cards and passports being given to foreigners in a less than transparent manner. The fact that many of these refugees also happened to be Muslim was one of the concerns of the Christians of Sabah, who were worried that they would eventually be reduced to an even smaller minority as a result. The population census of 2010 noted that Sabah's population had grown by 400%, thus making it the third most populous state in the federation.

(Election Commission 2008). Thus, the label or term that Sabah is “fixed deposit” state is not only relevant to the BN political survival but also very meaningful and significant to UMNO itself as the backbone party within the National Coalition.

The same scenario can also be observed in the context of the Malaysia 13th general election 2013. Of the total of 133 seats won by BN in the Dewan Rakyat, 22 seats, or 16.5 percent were won in the state of Sabah, while out of 275 state seats won by BN, Sabah is the biggest contributor to the total of 48 seats, or 17.4 percent (of the Election Commission 2013). In other words, the last two general elections, i.e. GE-12, which is synonymous with the term “political tsunami” –and the GE-13, known as the “Chinese tsunami”, Sabah [including Sarawak], is clearly a stronghold or the last bastion in ensuring and safeguarding BN status-quo within the political structure and process of Malaysia politics. It is a fact that cannot be denied, what more the result of the last two GE have shown that BN has lost its significant control of the two-thirds majority in Parliament; a status it has enjoyed for the past 50 years.

<Table 1> Number of Seats Won According to Party in State In the 12th General Election

States	Parliament			State Assembly		
	BN	Opposition	Ind.	BN	Opposition	Ind.
F.T KL	1	10	0	0	0	0
F.T Putrajaya	1	0	0	0	0	0
F.T Labuan	1	0	0	0	0	0
Perlis	3	0	0	14	1	0
Kedah	4	11	0	14	21	1
Penang	2	11	0	11	29	0
Perak	13	11	0	28	31	0

Selangor	5	17	0	20	36	0
N. Sembilan	5	3	0	21	15	0
Melaka	5	1	0	23	5	0
Johor	25	1	0	50	6	0
Kelantan	2	12	0	6	39	0
Terengganu	7	1	0	24	8	0
Pahang	12	2	0	37	4	1
Sarawak	30	1	0	0	0	0
Sabah	24	1	0	59	1	0
Total	140	82	0	307	196	2

Source: Malaysia Election Commission (2008)

Technically, as far as the practice of parliamentary democracy of Malaysia is concerned, winning 133 seats in the Dewan Rakyat would be more than enough to allow BN to manage the government in a comfortable environment; but if one look at the political history of BN since 1957, its leaders strongly emphasized that the goal of election victory was always to secure the two-thirds majority status. In other words, the GE13 results was a manifestation of the erosion of BN political hegemony and it is a worrying political environment that annoys BN leadership as far as BN status as hegemonic and dominance party in the history of Malaysia political development is concerned. The full result of the 13th general election is shown in <Table 2>.

From sociological and historical dimensions, Sabah is among the main political entities together with the Federation of Malaya, Sarawak, and Singapore, that formed the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. The promise of “development” is the foundation that led Sabah to agree to jointly form the federation of Malaysia. Thus, in the context of the so-called federal relations between Sabah and Kuala Lumpur-popularly known in various forms and terms such

as Kuala Lumpur-Kota Kinabalu; or KK-Federal; or more often called State-Centre-issues that often linger and become an arena of contestation or conflict is none other than the issue of development. In fact, ever since the formation of the Malaysian federation, starting from GE 1964 up to the 13th general election, development issues is the main political capital presented by various political parties who wanted to “dominate” or wooing Sabah voters (Wah 1997; Othman 2008).

<Table 2> Seats Won by Political Parties Based on State in GE-13, 2013

State	Total Seats	BN	PAS	DAP	PKR	Ind.
Perlis	3	3	0	0	0	0
Kedah	15	10	1	0	4	0
Kelantan	14	5	9	0	0	0
Terengganu	8	4	4	0	0	0
Penang	13	3	0	7	3	0
Perak	24	12	2	7	3	0
Pahang	14	10	1	1	2	0
Selangor	22	5	4	4	9	0
FT K. Lumpur	11	2	0	5	4	0
N. Sembilan	8	5	0	2	1	0
Melaka	6	4	0	1	1	0
Johor	26	21	0	4	1	0
FT. Labuan	1	1	0	0	0	0
Sabah	25	22	0	2	1	0
Sarawak	31	25	0	5	1	0
FT. Putrajaya	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total	222	133	21	38	30	0

Source: Malaysia Election Commission (2013)

III. Sabah and 'Agenda Borneo' Post GE-12

As mentioned briefly at the beginning of the discussion, the effect of “political tsunami” that hit the BN political hegemony during the 12th general election, and the role of Sabah and Sarawak BN as a savior to the survival of the BN status-quo have triggered a leadership crisis among the rank of BN political leadership. Sabah BN leadership has put pressure on BN central leadership, vis-à-vis, Kuala Lumpur, to commensurate them [read Sabah BN leaders] a fair and greater role within the federal government positions as part and partial of “return the favor” on Sabah BN “contribution” in maintaining the BN status quo during the 12th general election. Anifah Aman, Ghafur Salleh, and Bernard Dompok are among Sabah BN political leaders that were vocal in urging and putting the pressure on BN central leadership. According to them, based on the current political developments in the country, it is absolutely desirable for Sabah BN political leadership been given a more constructive role, as compared to before, within the structure of the country administration, especially in the cabinet (Daily Express 2008/06/20; 2008; Borneo Post 2008/06/21; the Daily News 2008/06/22).

In so doing, an extreme pressure was given to the BN leadership. It was said that there is a large number of Sabah BN political leadership will join the opposition coalition led by Anwar Ibrahim if central leadership failed or reluctant to meet their demand. The situation and atmosphere have given political advantage to the Sabah BN political leadership to express and pursuing their “political demands” as BN central leadership in a “weak” position. For purposes

of easing the “storm in a teacup”, the political leadership of BN and also to offset the agenda to “Capture Putrajaya” by PR, the BN government cabinet members after the 12th general election, the majority consisting of either BN political leaders from Sabah and Sarawak. This decision was seen as a measure to avoid any further deeper crisis within the BN leadership rank.

However, the above decision is seen as a solution to resolve the internal crisis within BN alone. Apart from political pressure and crisis within BN political leadership, political pressure that is outside the circle of political leadership BN; driven by the socio-political leadership of Sabah and Sarawak as a whole under the “Agenda Borneo”, emerge to compete with and further threaten the BN political hegemony. Borneo Agenda is a form of political pressure from the leadership of Sabah and Sarawak is much linked and has symbiosis relations with the question of Sabah and Sarawak within the Malaysian Federation. Political pressure under the umbrella of “Borneo Agenda” also received a support from the political leadership at the national PR. For instance, PKR deputy president, Azmin Ali said that if Pakatan Rakyat (PR) won the 13th general election, the status of full autonomy to be given to Sabah and Sarawak (Malaysiakini 2010/12/13).

To further express the seriousness of Borneo Agenda as a political movements of Sabah-Sarawak social-political leadership, in December 2011, Jeffrey Kitingan, the founder and President of STAR Party (State Reform Party) declared the formation of United Borneo Alliance (UBA), a combination of local opposition parties in Sabah and Sarawak as well as civil organizations of both states. Technically,

the formation of UBA is merely focus as an “engine” for the realization of Borneo Agenda, in particular, the demands for full political autonomy of Sabah and Sarawak, as enshrined in the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (Malaysiakini 2010/12/20). Political pressure under the terms of Borneo Agenda, driven by UBA becomes more “sensitive” when on May 4, 2012; Jeffrey highlighted the issue of “Sabah-Sarawak separated from Malaysia federation” through the proposed formation of Borneo-Malaysia state (Free Malaysia Today 2012/05/04).

On 16 September 2012, the Parti Pakatan Rakyat Sarawak, has structurally received support from PR leadership at the national level, vis-à-vis, Anwar Ibrahim, Lim Kit Siang and Abdul Hadi Awang to sign the Declaration of Kuching (Kuching Declaration), a written statement of PR national leadership towards the Borneo Agenda to obtain the status of full autonomy for Sabah and Sarawak in accordance with the spirit of the Malaysia Agreement of 1963. In other words, the Borneo Agenda driven by UBA is a form of “political bargaining” in the context of political developments post GE-12. In addition, Borneo Agenda is a major political capital of the local political leadership in Sabah and Sarawak to mobilize support among local voters in the 13th general election. It is within this context—Agenda Borneo and Sabah-Sarawak as a “fixed deposit” for BN—the 13th Malaysia GE in Sabah and Sarawak took place. This situation has attracted a large number of observers, whether academic or non-academic groups to carried out their observations (Chin and Tsin 2012).

IV. Sabah and GE-13: “Fixed Deposit” vs “Borneo Agenda”

The election for the Sabah State Assembly 2013 was held concurrently with the 13th general election on 5 May 2013, which saw 60 seats were contested. The Sabah State Assembly was dissolved on 3 April 2013 parallel with the announcement of the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat, which was announced by Najib Razak on the same day. As briefly touched earlier, during the 12th general election, BN won 59 state seats out of 60 contested seats, while one seat was won by the DAP. However, after the 12th general election, the People's Progressive Party (SAPP), one of Sabah BN component parties, led by former Chief Minister, Yong Teck Lee, acted out of state BN coalition. SAPP's action resulted in the composition of Sabah state seats held by BN reduced to 57 seats, a loss of two seats represented by the SAPP representatives. This means that by the GE-13 the Sabah State Assembly Seats composition is as follows, Sabah BN 57, SAPP 2 seats and DAP 1 (Election Commission 2008).

The Sabah election landscape as manifested in the background of its composite and complex society, witnessing multi-cornered fights in every seat either at the state or federal level. BN, as an incumbent party [State & Federal level], has contested in all level of seats. PR is also contesting in all state seats. While local party such as SAPP putting 41 candidates; STAR staked 47 candidates; Parti Kesejahtera an Insan Tanah Air (KITA) field up 1 candidate; Parti Bersatu Sasa Malaysia (BERSAMA) contested in three seats; and a total of 49

individual stands as an independent candidate. This makes a total of 261 candidates are contesting for state seats. This represents the highest record in the history of election candidates contested in one single state election affairs in Sabah. For example for Sg. Sibuga, Sandakan seat (N42), represented by Musa Aman (the Chief Minister), saw him being challenge in four-corner fights with other candidates. In fact as far as GE-13 is concerned, Sabah registered the most multi-cornered contest (please refer to <Table 3>) as compared to other states (Election Commission 2013).

<Table 3> Total Seat Contested by Party in Sabah GE-13

Political Parties	Total Seat Contested/(Seat Won)
BN	60/ (48)
DAP	8/ (4)
PKR	43/ (7)
PAS	9/ (0)
STAR	47/(1)
SAPP	41/ (0)
BERSAMA	3/ (0)
KITA	1/ (0)
Independent	49 / (0)
Total Seats	60

Source: Malaysia Election Commission (2013)

A public opinion survey conducted a month from the date of the 13th general election by the Merdeka Center gives the impression that the leadership of Najib Razak received 70 percent of the popular vote compared to Anwar Ibrahim, the opposition leader. However, based on the current situation before and approaching the election period GE-13, various issues pertaining to Sabah within Malaysia Federation such as illegal immigrants (PATI), Sabah poverty, as well the

continuing marginalization of Sabah from the mainstream of national development, has been seen as the determination factor towards Sabahan voting behavior. Therefore, the Merdeka Center opinion poll findings cannot be used as a constructive symbol or input that BN will get an easy win in Sabah.

For example, based on field notes made among the Sabah middle class, average agreed that ever since the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, Sabah economic sector (between 1963-1989), has experienced rapid growth with low inflation. However between the periods of 1991-1996, the Sabah economic growth rate declined significantly to only 3.4 per cent per annum. Since then until the period of the Ninth Malaysia Plan 10 (2011-2015), the growth rate of the state economy is hovering around 3-4 percent per annum. Sabah's economic growth rate has led to lower unemployment and poverty in this country [Sabah]; the higher as compared to the overall rate of unemployment and poverty for the whole of Malaysia (Othman 2013).

Based on the mid-term report of the 9th Malaysia Plan shows that the incidence of poverty and hardcore poverty in Sabah are each at 23 per cent and 6.5 per cent in 2004. Despite efforts to eradicate poverty carried out by the state government since 2007, the rate is relatively much higher than the rate of poverty at the federal level. This situation has caused anxiety among the people of Sabah, especially the middle-class intellectuals group. For them, logically, Sabah should not be recorded as a state that has low rates of economic growth and high rates of poverty compared with other states in the federation. Naturally, Sabah is among the states in the

Federation of Malaysia that not only blessed with an abundance of natural resources—both land and maritime—but also known very high in quality. Therefore, despite the natural resources, the economic growth in Sabah still well below the Malaysian average. Therefore, this group claims that it is difficult to accept the annual Report of Malaysia Economic Growth that Sabah is among the poor states; on another note of 2010 economic growth report, clearly stated that Sabah is the poorest states in the Federation of Malaysia (9th Malaysia Plan Mid-Term Report 2008).

This issue becoming increasingly difficult to be accepted, especially when further discusses the aspects of quality of life in Sabah. There is no doubt that ever since the approval of Sabah to form the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, generally, average income and standard of living of the people of Sabah from various ethnic and religious backgrounds showed an improvement's along the parameter of the country's continued economic growth. Nevertheless, progress and quality of life achieved by Sabah compared to other states within the Federation is still lagging behind. For example, taking the example of the most fundamental basic facilities, namely the road network, according to a statistical report of road development 2007, Sabah is the highest state that has a network of gravel roads and earth class in Malaysia (Othman 2013).

While the quality of life in all states was found to have improved, but there are significant differences in terms of achievements for Sabah state over the period of 50 years. This statement can be viewed and evaluated by examining the socio-economic indicators report for each state as stated in every annual report of Malaysia Development

Plan. For example, the literacy rate in Sabah is much lower than the literacy rate in each state of the Federation, which is 78.4 per cent for Sabah, while 89.3 percent for the whole country. Similarly, in the context of infant mortality rate in Malaysia, Sabah is a state that had a high mortality rate per 1,000 live births in Malaysia (Sipalan 2012).

The issues outlined above are the most central elements or campaign materials in the context of the GE-13 Sabah. If observed, the issues mentioned clearly stated in the Borneo Agenda political pressure spearheaded by UBA. For the purposes of mobilizing and strengthening the electoral support of the Borneo Agenda—illegal immigrants—an issue that is so critical in the socio-political context of Sabah, was also highlighted. BN, on the other hand, harping and harnessing on the issues of development and Sabah-progress within federation as their main “political capital” in trying to woo the voters. Borneo Agenda campaign approach, led by the opposition is center around the philosophical right of Sabah in the context of Malaysia federal system; in which according to them Sabah after 50 years of its inception within federated Malaysia are still marginalized, limp and manipulated by the political elites of BN. Whereas, as far as BN leadership is concerned, Sabah within federated Malaysia require an agenda of sustainable development spearheaded by the party and leadership that has a history of proven management.

However, when the GE-13 results for Sabah were announced, as has been predicted by many parties, BN has emerged as the winner. BN generally dominate all seat, either at the state or federal level. However, the opposition in Sabah showed a positive performance improvement compared with the results obtained in the GE-12 Sabah

2008. Mechanically off 60 state seats, BN won 48 seats, PR won 11 seats, the STAR Party through its President, Jeffrey Kitingan won 1 seat. SAPP and all independents candidates failed to win any seats. Mechanical analysis based on Table 4 data shows that, although the BN still dominate in terms of number of seats won, but when compared with the number of seats it won during the 12th general election in 2008, it experienced a sharp deterioration. BN lost 11 seats out of 59 seats it won in the GE-12, 2008. While, the opposition coalition won 11 seats compared to 1 state seat they won in GE-12, 2008.

<Table 4> Result of Sabah State, GE-13

	Total Vote	% Vote	Seat	% Seat	+/-
BN	427,890	55.78	48	80.00	▼ 11
Pakatan Rakyat	248,185	32.36	11	18.33	▲ 10
STAR	43,167	5.63	1	1.66	▲ 1
SAPP	28,305	3.69	0	0.00	▼ 4
Independent	19,484	2.54	0	0.00	—
Valid Vote	767,031	97.76	-	-	-
Void Vote	17,607	2.24	-	-	-
Total	784,638	100	60	100	-
Total Registered Voters	982,337	79.87	-	-	-

Source: Malaysia Election Commission (2013)

<Table 5> below shows the comparative performance of BN and opposition parties. Based on the overall percentage of the popular vote won by BN in the GE-13, clearly indicates a significant decline compared with the number of popular votes it won during GE-12, 2008. In the 13th general election, the number of popular votes garnered by the BN for the federal seat is 53.3 percent; declined by 24 percent off 77.3 percent of the popular vote obtained in the GE-12.

While the opposition won 44.7 percent of the popular vote compared with 22.7 percent of the popular vote won in the GE-12.

<Table 5> Comparison of Popular Vote by Political Parties in GE-12 and GE-13 Sabah

Party	Parliamentary Seat				State Seat			
	2008		2013		2008		2013	
	Seat	Vote (%)	Seat	Vote (%)	Seat	Vote (%)	Seat	Vote (%)
BN	24	77.3	22	53.3	59	76.2	48	55.8
People's Alliance (PR)	1	17.7	3	36.1	1	17.7	11	32.2
STAR	-	-	0	5.4	-	-	1	5.7
Others	0	5.0	0	3.2	0	6.1	0	6.3
Total	25		25		60		60	

Source: Malaysia Election Commission (2013)

In other words, in terms of parliamentary seats, the overall number of popular votes received by the opposition in the GE-13 showed an increase of 22 per cent. In the context of the state seat, the same scenario can be seen when the number of popular votes received by BN is clearly declined by 20.4 per cent from 76.8 per cent of the popular vote it won during the 12th general election in 2008. Similarly, the number of popular votes obtained by the opposition parties in Sabah clearly indicated a very constructive percentage, an increase of 20.4 percent compared to 23.8 percent of the popular vote obtained in the GE-12, 2008.

Based on the statistical results of the 13th general election and its relations with the status of "fix-deposit" state to the survival of BN political hegemony; sociologically it can be argued that the BN hegemony or domination in Sabah since 5 years ago is being eroded.

In order to have a constructive understanding of the scenario raised above, it is absolutely vital that we understand the tripartite sociological relationship between BN-Hegemony-Modernization. On the outset, the said tripartite relationship must be understood through the modernization process experienced by the people of Sabah for the past 5 decades. No doubt that 65 per cent people of Sabah are still a rural community depending on the agrarian system as a source of income. However, the rapid modernization driven by information technology not only consolidates and exposing their intellectual mind with new ideas but has also enhanced their engagements and behavior towards apolitical system that is part of their socio-political life.

Changes and developments taking place in Malaysian politics since 1999, sociologically has also affected Sabahan political behavior. It is understood and cannot be denied that within the context of Sabah local political affairs, traditional political elements such as patron-client and parochialism is very strong underlying democratic polity of Sabah. Through this idealism, vanguard party ideas are strongly inculcated and highlighted in the context of societal political orientation. UMNO has obviously practiced this idea in the context of the cultural and political orientation of society after independence. The political elements such as Huguan-Siou, Janang Gayuh or ‘War-lord’ is symbolically represented the political interests of the peoples.

Demand for loyalty and political support not only highlighted the continuation of parochialism values and norms contained in the context of Malaysian feudalism society but also reveals the intellectual hegemony of UMNO-BN across the public in the context

of the democratic system post-colonial era. The phenomenon of UMNO-BN intellectual hegemony and the construction of state cultural and political orientation is a factor that contributes to the ability of UMNO-BN abstractly emerged as an image of vanguard party in protecting the political interests of the society and subsequently received political loyalty.

However modernization brought or pursued by the BN had brought along the development of modern idealism and openness or savvy political behavior among and within society. In this context, sociologically, the position of Sabah as a “fixed deposit” for the BN political survival is seen experiencing structural erosion. In other words, the post GE-13 saw that Sabah as a “fixed deposit” state for BN is very much cosmetic in nature. In nutshell, as far as the aspect of political behavior is concerned, it appears that the result of Sabah state 13th General Election shows that the state cannot be labeled as a “fixed deposit” for BN.

V. Conclusion

The most evident outcome of this complex contest between the parties of the BN, PR and the local Sabah parties was that many of the seats were contested by several parties and independent candidates at the same time (Noor 2013; Chin 2014). Across Sabah, in both rural and urban constituencies, there were instances of three- four- and even five-cornered fights where several parties and independent candidates were contesting at the same time, thus splitting the vote. Adding to

the tumult was the fact that up to the last minute the allocation and division of seats remained unclear in some constituencies, even among the PR parties. This invariably led to split votes in many of the seats contested. The issues at the election, however, were largely local ones, as noted earlier. The final results of the elections proved predictable: both the local Sabah-centric parties SAPP and STAR failed to make an impact, but it is probable that by contesting the same constituencies where the parties of the opposition PR chose to contest, they had effectively split the vote. The result was in favour of the incumbent, therefore, and this was reflected in the final tally of seats that were won at the Parliamentary and State Assembly level. Though the MCA performed poorly in East Malaysia (as it did in West Malaysia), it was the East Malaysian BN-aligned KDM parties who benefited by default from the confused state of affairs. In terms of parliamentary seats gained and lost, the PBS won four seats (up by one), UPKO won three seats (down by one), while the United Sabah People's Party won one parliamentary seat. Along with UMNO, the KDM parties had managed to prevent Sabah from switching hands from the BN to the PR—and the same could be said of the outcome in Sarawak as well.

Overall, the GE-13 results of Sabah clearly show that, despite the BN's ability to maintain political dominance in the state, the non-mechanical analysis, on the other hand, suggests that the behavior of Sabah voters has sociologically changed to a form of behavior that is no longer confined to the parochialism mind set. In this context, this article argues that to conceptualizing Sabah as a "fixed deposit" state in safe-guarding the status-quo of BN is not so relevant and

should be applied critically. The election is a “business” of human political behavior and in a sociological sense human behavior is not saturated, it is dynamic. Hence, the modernization and industrialization process that are taking place within the socio-political and economic structure of Sabah societies to date, in return, would also affect the behavior and their political world view.

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<국문초록>

말레이시아 13대 총선: 사바주(Sabah)는 국민전선의 텃밭인가?

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말레이시아 사바주(Sabah)의 12대(2008)와 13대(2013) 총선의 결과는 독립 이후 말레이시아에서 여당 연합을 형성해 온 국민전선(Barisan Nasional: BN)은 서서히 사바주의 정치에서 지배력이 이전과 다름을 보여주는 의미있는 결과를 보여준다. 12대 총선 이후 사바주는 국민전선의 정치적 텃밭에서 서서히 정치적 영향력(특히 주의회 선거)이 약해짐을 보여준다. 비록 13대 총선에서 국민전선(BN)이 걸음으로는 사바주의 연방의회 의원 의석을 가져가는 등 정치적 텃밭으로 보여주지만, 이전에 비해 득표력이 떨어졌음을 알 수 있다. 본 연구는 사바주의 13대 총선 결과는 사바주를 여당 연합인 국민전선(BN)의 텃밭(fixed-deposit state)로 부를 수 있는지를 말레이 총선 결과를 토대로 살펴보았다. 이를 위해 본 연구는 문헌 연구를 중심으로 하여 말레이시아의 12대와 13대 총선 결과를 토대로 하여 이전의 총선의 결과와 비교하여 정치적인 변화와 함께 사바주의 사회문화적·종교적 환경을 바탕으로 한 변화의 조짐을 분석하였다.

주제어: 말레이시아 총선, 국민전선(BN), 사바주

<Abstract>

**Malaysia's 13th General Election:
Sabah-Barisan Nasional Fixed-Deposit State?**

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As all are aware, the results of the Malaysia 12th General Election (GE-12) in 2008 have surprised many. Not only the dominant parties Barisan Nasional (BN) were shocked by the loss of significant numbers of seats but for the first time in the history of Malaysia politics, *vis-à-vis*, electoral affairs, they were denied a two-thirds majority in the Parliament. Notwithstanding the opposition parties such as Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR: The People's Justice Party) that form the opposition coalition called Pakatan Rakyat (People's

Alliance: PR), has come to a surprised with the GE-12 result, in which they not even think that were able to challenge hegemonic politics of BN, managed to capture and formed a government at the state level namely Kedah, Penang, Perak, and Selangor, except Kelantan which has been under the control of PAS since the 1990 general election. This article aims to analyze whether Sabah as a “fixed deposit” state is still relevant in understanding the continuity and survival of the BN political hegemony in the context of Malaysia political developments post-13th general election.

Key Words: Malaysia’s General Election (GE-13), Barisan Nasional (BN), Sabah State