Contemporary Electoral Trends among Malaysian Chinese Voters

Changing Political Socialisation and Orientation in the post 2008 General Election

Khadijah Md Khalid
University of Malaya
dijut@email.com

Jason Loh Seong Wei
HELP University, Kuala Lumpur
jason.loh@help.edu.my

Abstract

General elections in Malaysia have traditionally been configured along ethnic lines. Yet this description makes for a complex analysis of the electoral landscape. Chinese votes have gone back and forth at every general election since 1969. Nonetheless, there were three significant occasions when the pendulum swing pattern was disrupted. The 1995, 1999 and 2004 general elections showed decisive Chinese support for the ruling coalition, only for a drastic reversal to occur in favour of the opposition in 2008. In making sense of current Chinese electoral trends, it is argued that patterns of continuity and discontinuity influenced by political consciousness and socialisation are critical factors to be considered.

Keywords

political socialisation – political culture – ethnic politics – voting behaviour – Malaysian general elections

Introduction

This paper seeks to unravel and make sense of the current general Chinese voter trend in Malaysia by arguing that the patterns of continuity and discon-