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In their immediate reaction to the 13th General Elections (GE13) results, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) leaders blamed lack of Chinese electoral support for the poorer results they obtained. This was despite the efforts of Najib Razak, the Prime Minister, in his campaign to win the Chinese over. That the Chinese largely voted against Barisan Nasional (BN) was evident in seats which were Chinese-majority. Nevertheless the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) also did well in mixed constituencies where the Chinese were not the majority. Opposition leaders and many commentators argued that the voting pattern in GE13 reflected not an ethnic but a regional as well as a class divide. Urban votes and a significant proportion of middle-class Malaysians, they insisted, supported Pakatan Rakyat (PR), the opposition, which gained a majority of the popular votes. This paper looks at the voting pattern of the Chinese as reflected in the results, changes in the politics of the Chinese since GE12, and ascertains what issues and concerns influenced the way the Chinese voted. It would also consider the implications the results have on Chinese representation in government and in opposition.

Keywords: Barisan Nasional (BN), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Pakatan Rakyat (PR), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)

INTRODUCTION

"A Chinese tsunami" was how the outcome of the keenly-contested Thirteenth General Elections (GE13) came to be described by Najib Razak and other Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders on the evening of 5 May 2013 (Tan, 2013). The imagery was a strong expression of disappointment by BN leaders of how the lack of Chinese support had led to a loss of seats by the ruling coalition. Of the 30 Chinese-majority seats, all went to the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR). Of these 29 were won by the largely Chinese-based although avowedly multi-ethnic