DILEMMAS OF OPPOSITION: BUILDING PARTIES AND COALITIONS IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

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Approximately one third of the world's states are competitive authoritarian regimes, where opposition parties compete against powerful incumbents that skew political and electoral institutions to their advantage. A key challenge for opposition parties in such regimes is to expand their electoral support and work with other opposition actors to win greater power. Under what conditions are they successful in building broad-based and coordinated challenges to authoritarian rulers?

This dissertation argues that opposition success hinges on their strategic choices in elections and in office – and how they navigate key tradeoffs and dilemmas of expansion. Individual opposition parties face diverging incentives and costs to expand based on the identities and issues around which they initially build support. At the collective level, opposition parties often seek to coordinate their electoral challenges against the incumbent to build broader power. But when opposition parties work together, they face strong pressure to stick with their existing niche identities, since pursuing strategies of party broadening – changes to party image to appeal to new constituencies – risks encroaching on the electoral terrain and core constituencies of their coalition partners. As a result, parties frequently struggle to navigate conflicting incentives of individual and collective electoral strategies to win power.

The dissertation tests the theory empirically using evidence from Malaysia, until 2018 the world's longest-running dominant party authoritarian government. It analyzes the strategies and variable success of the country's opposition parties in pursuing their core electoral and policy goals and coordinating their efforts in this environment – and why they were ultimately successful in securing substantial electoral support. Additional case studies illustrate how individual and collective dilemmas of expansion inform opposition behavior in other competitive authoritarian regimes. The study offers new insights into why opposition parties have difficulty in unseating even weak authoritarian incumbents, and the conditions under which they successfully scale up their power.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sebastian Dettman received his Bachelor of Arts degree in International/Intercultural Studies at Pitzer College and his Master of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Michigan. He is a 2018-19 Postdoctoral Fellow in Contemporary Asia at the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University.

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This dissertation is dedicated to all those in Malaysia who fought for change and are currently shaping its future.

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1MDB	*1Malaysia Development Berhad*; State-owned development fund
Bumiputera	"Sons of the soil"; umbrella term used to describe all indigenous groups in peninsular and East Malaysia, along with Malays
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
Hudud	Traditional criminal punishments in Islamic law
NEP	New Economic Policy

Political Parties, Coalitions, and Social Movements

Amanah	The National Trust Party (Parti Amanah Negara)
Barisan Alternatif (BA)	The Alternative Front
Barisan Nasional (BN)	The National Front
Bersatu	The United Indigenous People's Party of Malaysia (Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia)
Bersih	"Clean"; Electoral reform protest movement
DAP	The Democratic Action Party
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
Pakatan Harapan (PH)	The Alliance of Hope
Pakatan Rakyat (PR)	The People's Alliance
PAS	The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party
PKR	The People's Justice Party
Reformasi	"Reform"; Protest movement begun in 1998
Semangat '46	Spirit of 1946
UMNO	United Malays National Organization

Notes on names and terms used

I adopt the usual practices in Malaysia-focused scholarship and media in using Malaysian names. Malay Muslim names include a personal and patronymic name: Former Prime Minister Najib Razak, for example, is the son of Abdul Razak Hussein. The personal name is the one used in Malaysian discourse; therefore, in the dissertation he is referred to as "Najib," current Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad as "Mahathir", and so on. Chinese Malaysians have their surnames first, meaning that DAP politician's Lim Kit Siang's last name is Lim.

In Malaysian discourse, Malaysians from different ethnic groups are referred to as the "Chinese," the "Malays", the "Indians," and so on. The more accurate rendition would be as Chinese-Malaysians, Malay-Malaysians, and Indian-Malaysians, but I keep the Malaysian style for ease of reading. While Malaysians talk about "race" rather than ethnicity, I use the term ethnicity throughout.

CHAPTER 1

DILEMMAS OF OPPOSITION IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

1.1 Overview

On May 9, 2018, for the first time in Malaysia's history, a change in the national government took place through elections. Polls and political observers had predicted the ruling National Front (BN) coalition would win its 14th consecutive national election, albeit with a diminished share of the vote. After all, the BN coalition, headed by the dominant party The United Malays National Organization (UMNO), had held unbroken power since 1957, the year of Malaysia's independence from Britain. This made it the world's longest-running government.[1] But in a surprise turnaround, the BN lost decisively to the Alliance of Hope (Pakatan Harapan, hereafter PH) opposition coalition.

That night, as the electoral sweep by the opposition coalition became clear, the Elections Commission stopped issuing formal results from the electoral contests. In the hours after the opposition declared victory, Prime Minister Najib Razak initially refused to concede, leaving the King's swearing-in of the new prime minister as the seal of victory. Two days later, Najib and his wife, Rosmah Mansor, both implicated in an enormous corruption scandal involving Malaysia's state development fund

[1] In longevity Malaysia's ruling coalition had spent 10 fewer years in power compared to Mexico's powerful PRI, the longest-running government in modern history. While the member parties of the ruling coalitions have changed over time in Malaysia, UMNO has always held the dominant position in the coalition. Other long-ruling parties include the Colorado Party in Paraguay, which ruled for 61 years, although its reign was punctuated by single-party rule and military dictatorship. Among democratic dominant party systems, Japan's LDP held uninterrupted national power from 1955 until 1993, and has repeatedly returned to power since then. Botswana's Democratic Party has won electoral majorities in every election since 1966.

1MDB, tried to board a private jet to Indonesia. The government barred Najib and Rosmah from leaving the country. In the following weeks, apartments and residences linked to the pair were raided and police confiscated bundles of cash in 26 different currencies and 12,000 pieces of jewelry, and investigations reopened into linked corruption cases.[2] The election results also spurred infighting among UMNO's leadership, and soon after long-time BN parties and personnel began leaving the coalition. It was a sudden and ignominious end to the dominance of a coalition that had steered Malaysian politics and society for an unbroken 61 years.

Yet the story of BN's loss is not understandable without examining how the victorious opposition coalition, the Alliance of Hope, beat the authoritarian odds to win power. To be sure, the opposition coalition was buoyed by a historically unpopular incumbent prime minister, persistent concerns among ordinary Malaysians over cost of living and employment, and the introduction of a new opposition party comprised of regime defectors including former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, the autocratic figure who had led the country for 22 years. But the seeds of opposition victory had been laid much earlier. For decades, Malaysia's opposition parties had honed strategies to win political support among former BN supporters and coordinate their electoral challenges. Even as the material resources and coercive power of the BN were undiminished, the opposition's efforts finally yielded an electoral majority large enough to unseat the government.

[2] Malaysian police estimated the total value from this seizure alone at 900 million to 1.1 billion ringgit (USD $223-273 million at the time of writing), only a fraction of the estimated $4.5 billion USD from the 1MDB fund lost to embezzlement.

How do opposition parties in authoritarian regimes seek to escape the political constraints put on them by coercive institutions, lack of access to resources, and limited popular support? When are they successful in building broad-based and coordinated electoral challenges to the ruling power? This dissertation answers these questions by focusing on the strategic choices of opposition parties within authoritarian constraints. In the chapters that follow, I examine the strategic dilemmas opposition parties face as they seek to scale up their electoral presence. Even as opposition parties in authoritarian regimes face common problems of electoral marginalization and lack of access to state resources, they often struggle to overcome individual and collective dilemmas of party building and coordination. To become politically meaningful actors in constrained institutions, opposition parties must become appealing to a broader base of voters and in many cases cooperate with other opposition actors to effectively extend their electoral appeals and augment meager resources. This study highlights the tensions between these individual and collective strategies, as well as the divergent incentives and constraints different parties face in trying to build up electoral support.

The dissertation takes as its main cases the main opposition parties of Malaysia prior to the 2018 election, analyzing their variable strategies and success. The country's opposition parties faced an uphill battle against the BN government. Typical of other competitive authoritarian regimes, where opposition parties are allowed to contest in elections but face powerful and well-resourced incumbents on an uneven playing field, the ruling government used an array of tools to maintain its power. The BN government concentrated policymaking and fiscal power at the federal level,

restricted freedom of association, and exerted control over the media. The country's opposition parties faced numerous constraints, ranging from restricted access to political finance, selective inducements or repression by the incumbent, and constraints on their ability to campaign and contest in elections.

The BN government's extraordinary success was also due to genuine popular legitimacy. The BN used strategic state intervention to produce consistently high economic growth, managing one of Asia's best-performing economies. It rarely engaged in blatant electoral fraud that has weakened the legitimacy of similar regimes. Instead, its Elections Commission repeatedly redesigned the electoral map to ensure that the BN would retain a substantial parliamentary majority disproportionate to its popular vote. The BN also banked on its image as a moderate multiethnic force in which all the country's diverse populations could be represented – albeit on terms acceptable to the dominant party UMNO and its championing of the ethnic Malay majority. At the same time, it portrayed the opposition parties as extreme, unfit to govern, and beholden to the interests of particular ethnic and religious groups, and absorbed personnel and policies when necessary to blunt the opposition's appeal.

But the BN government began to face increasingly well-organized and coordinated challenges from the country's opposition parties. Long operating in the shadow of the regime, the opposition parties began making serious inroads into state-level governments and parliamentary seats in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s. Significantly, the opposition parties – distinguished by their distinct ethnic, religious and anti-regime identities – were increasingly successful in appealing

to discontented voters across ethnoreligious lines they once found it difficult to cross. The stakes of the fight took on additional significance after 2015, as revelations about embezzlement from the state-owned fund 1MDB came into the spotlight, linking Prime Minister Najib Razak to the misuse of up to $4.5 billion of public funds.

However, the increasing electoral viability of the opposition laid bare long-standing strategic dilemmas. As detailed in the following chapters, the individual parties sought to expand their support among new constituencies by emphasizing valence issues and critiques of the regime but struggled to change their messaging and image in ways that could appeal to a broader national audience. Opposition coalition efforts repeatedly fell apart as the parties put forward competing political visions, even as it allowed the parties to effectively amplify their support beyond limited core constituencies. Even at the height of successful coalition building in 2013 – when a strong, unified opposition won the popular vote – they still fell far short of winning enough legislative seats to form the government. The challenge for the opposition, then, moved to winning over core regime supporters they had previously been unable to reach, and finding partner parties committed to overturning the government. The 2018 election, featuring Mahathir and his new defector party, finally helped the opposition shift core segments of the BN's support into their camp to secure an electoral victory.

The challenges that Malaysia's opposition parties faced are not unique. Approximately one third of the world's states are competitive authoritarian regimes, where opposition parties compete against powerful incumbents that skew political and

electoral institutions in their favor.[3] A key challenge for opposition parties in countries in these regimes is to expand electoral support in pursuit of political office, patronage, and policy aims. To do so, they must *individually* make credible appeals to the wider electorate beyond the constituencies around which they initially built support. But given the barriers that parties face in such regimes, very often opposition parties *collectively* pursue electoral strategies to tap into a broader base of voters and to highlight their common opposition to the incumbent government.

This dissertation argues that opposition parties must navigate these two key dilemmas in seeking to scale up power. First, to become more electorally competitive, parties must expand their base of support among new demographics and regions. But because parties derive support from very different groups of voters and build their images around particular issues and identities, they face different challenges to expanding their power. Second, they often seek to supplement these individual strategies by working together with other opposition parties. But when opposition parties coordinate or build coalitions, they face strong pressure to stick with their existing niche identities, since pursuing strategies of *party broadening* – changes to party image to appeal to new constituencies – risks encroaching on the electoral terrain and core constituencies of their coalition partners. In seeking to resolve both

[3] I draw from Levitsky and Way's definition of competitive authoritarian regimes as "civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents" (Levitsky and Way 2010, 5). Based on data from 2010, 33% of the 186 countries in the Quality of Government dataset are coded as "limited multiparty" systems, where multiple parties compete in elections, but the political system cannot be classified as democratic (Teorell et al. 2015). By this measure, competitive authoritarianism is the second most common regime type after democracy, and much more common than other non-democratic regime types, such as military dictatorships and single party states.

dilemmas, they face counterstrategies by the incumbent that seek to defuse opposition threats through cooptation, coercion, and boxing parties in to their existing marginal bases of support.

These two strategies are the primary pathways for opposition parties to expand their power through constrained electoral and governing institutions. They are more likely to pursue these strategies in earnest as support for the incumbent falters due to political or economic scandal or crisis. Yet many opposition parties fail to transform their party appeals and organizations in ways that can help them attract broader support. They struggle to hold together coalitions with disparate opposition parties that are considered credible to their supporters, but also to add together enough electoral support to be electorally significant.

These dilemmas of opposition are fundamental to understanding the variable strategies and success of parties in current and former competitive authoritarian regimes including Tanzania, Hungary, Mexico, and Singapore. In these countries, opposition parties seek to move beyond their limited bases of support while coordinating with disparate opposition actors in the face of authoritarian counterstrategies. These dilemmas exist across the diversity of issues and identities around which opposition parties build support, and the relevant sociopolitical cleavages in different country contexts. But these dilemmas do not doom opposition parties to marginality. Opposition parties are successful in breaking free from marginal positions when they build sufficient individual support to win over broad national constituencies – or, more commonly, when individual parties build consistent

support while coordinating other parties that help them amplify their electoral strength.

This dissertation seeks to turn the analytical focus in the study of competitive authoritarian regimes away from how hegemonic party dominance is constructed, and towards opposition party strategies. In doing so, it makes three contributions. First, it provides a novel explanation for opposition party strategies in authoritarian regimes that takes into account variation across parties in mobilizing strategies and incentives to expand. I show specifically why opposition parties respond differently to the challenges of building power within the same authoritarian constraints. Second, it provides a detailed description of a country case underrepresented in the larger literature on competitive authoritarianism and dominant parties. It explains how and why the BN endured in power longer than almost any other elected government in the world, and how the opposition finally unseated it through elections. Finally, the argument and findings extend literatures on party competition and electoral strategies in authoritarian regimes, bringing new insights to existing literatures on niche parties and opposition coalition building.

1.2 Existing Explanations

Many influential accounts of political competition in non-democratic regimes have highlighted the ways in which authoritarian rulers keep oppositions weak and divided. Ruling powers use access to state resources to distribute patronage to its supporters and punish those who defect to the opposition (Greene 2007; Magaloni 2008). Though opposition parties are able to win office at the national or subnational

level, autocrats design those institutions to offer limited policy concessions or patronage in order to defuse greater threats (Lust-Okar 2005; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Svolik 2012). Authoritarian rulers use divide and rule policies that weaken opposition parties and deepen divides between opposition actors (Schedler 2013). Borrowing from Schedler's characterization of authoritarian elections as regime-sustaining or regime-subverting (2013, 143), opposition parties in this literature can be considered as performing a regime-sustaining function: They are tolerated by authoritarian regimes to increase their legitimacy and help serve as a "transmission belt" for patronage and policy to head off stronger oppositional challenges (Albrecht 2004).

While this literature demonstrates how ruling powers build their legitimacy and shape the emergence and electoral strategies of opposition parties, it has much less to say about opposition party strategic choices *within* authoritarian constraints. A smaller literature has examined opposition strategies in trying to appeal to new audiences beyond their core supporters but comes to different conclusions about how they do so. The most comprehensive account of opposition party strategies in such regimes argues that they must transform their party profile – in appeals, party organization, and campaigning – from a niche to catchall character to become nationally competitive (Greene 2007). However, other work argues that opposition parties are most successful when they maintain a consistent stand against the incumbent regime, organizing street protests and pressing for democratic reform and "widening the gap" between the opposition and the regime (LeBas 2011). Another set of literature has put aside questions of individual party strategy to highlight collective

strategies. It has noted the frequency by which opposition parties build coalitions to pool resources, put forward candidates with joint support, and present a united electoral front against the incumbent (Howard and Roessler 2006; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Donno 2013; Wahman 2014). In working together, parties can partially overcome significant resource constraints to grow their parties and build sustainable electoral coalitions (Rakner and van de Walle 2009; Levitsky and Way 2010; Arriola 2012).

While these arguments provide insight into the diverse ways opposition parties operate in authoritarian settings, they fail to account for three key dynamics. First, while the literature on ruling power strategies help explain why incumbent regimes are often successful in deflecting national regime change, they provide less insight into how opposition parties make strategic choices within constrained institutions. Authoritarian governments play a significant role in shaping the strategies of the opposition and the broader oppositional landscape, but opposition success is not entirely accountable by focusing on the ruling party. For instance, opposition parties in non-democratic regimes like Mexico, Taiwan, and now Malaysia were able to eventually win national power despite the enormous disparities in party financing and resources between opposition parties and ruling powers (Nelson 2014).

Second, the literature on opposition parties has tended to focus on the overall landscape of opposition parties within regimes (LeBas 2011; Riedl 2014) or a subset of opposition parties (Greene 2007). Another set of works focuses on individual opposition parties in a number of country contexts (Bruhn 1997; Rigger 2001; Wegner

2011). But these approaches tend to overlook the diversity of parties within the same setting, given that they draw from different constituencies and cultivate distinct party images in order to be electorally successful. These different party identities offer different raw material for parties seeking to scale up their challenges and necessitate different strategies to appeal more broadly. They also mean that parties do not face uniform pressures to transform appeals or party organizations in pursuit of political power. As will be shown, these differences are highly consequential to the electoral strategies of opposition parties within the same political system.

Additionally, much of the literature on individual party expansion and coalition building focuses on national executive elections, where parties are incentivized to present (and coordinate) on broadly appealing candidates and platforms. But scholars have noted opposition party wins at the subnational level in diverse settings, including in gubernatorial and mayor elections in Russia (Turovsky 2013), communes in Cambodia (Prak 2017); and municipal elections in Taiwan under the KMT (D. A. Brown, Moon, and Robinson 1998). Many cash-strapped opposition parties seek such offices (Rakner and van de Walle 2009), where they are likely to perform better. Winning subnational office may become a powerful tool for parties to attract new members, business connections, and build up organizational power. But the strategies of winning local office and national power are also different, meaning further attention is needed to how different levels of competition relate to each other.

Finally, existing work does not examine how strategies of individual and collective expansion are interrelated. The literatures on party building and coalition building in authoritarian settings have largely treated these as separate issues. But

party building is a precondition to electorally effective coalitions. If individual parties do not have sufficient mobilizational capacity or ability to win over votes, then even expansive coalition building will not succeed in unseating incumbent governments. As argued in the following sections, these strategies are also conflicting. Parties that invest in coalition building are less likely to undertake risky attempts at becoming broad-based parties, and instead rely on coalition partners to extend their appeal beyond core audiences.

1.3 The Argument

To account for these dynamics, this dissertation develops a theory of the strategies of expansion pursued by opposition parties in authoritarian settings. I argue that opposition parties can pursue two paths to power during elections, and in office: *party broadening* and *collective coordination*. But parties face divergent incentives and constraints in pursuing these strategies, given their different profiles stemming from divergent bases of support, issues and identities used to mobilize voters, and relationships with the regime. I also argue and show that these two strategies are in conflict with each other, as coordination among the opposition inhibits the creation of individually broad-based parties.

The first goal of the theory, developed in further detail in Chapter 2, is to account for the origins of these divergent party profiles in authoritarian systems. Building on the parties literature largely developed in democratic contexts, I outline two broad party profiles. *Niche* parties tend to derive support from demographically limited constituencies and build a strong party image among core supporters and swing voters alike, whereas *catchall* parties tend to build support around diffuse issues

and constituencies. Parties both within and across these categories vary in terms of the size and geographical distribution of core and swing voters, and the issues and identities around which they seek to win over support. They also vary in terms of whether their goals of patronage, policy, and electoral power can be fulfilled under the existing regime or require incumbent removal or regime change.

I then describe how these party profiles provide very different incentives as they pursue *party broadening* – changes to party organization, appeals, and brand in attempts to broaden their core support. Niche parties, which often build support around distinct and electorally limited demographic groups such as ethnic, religious, or regional minorities, are more likely to survive swings in voter sentiment and build enduring party organizations compared to their catchall competitors. But niche parties often face starker limits to their ability to build national support based on their core identities. Niche parties therefore pursue broadening strategies that dilute their strong party brands to appeal more broadly to voters. On the other hand, catchall parties pursue broadening strategies that aim to *strengthen* party brand and project broader geographical reach.

These party profiles also shape how parties pursue strategies of *coordination.* By virtue of shared institutional disadvantages, limited resources, and since they derive at least some of their support from the same pool of anti-regime voters, opposition parties have strong incentives to coordinate their efforts against incumbents. Even as parties must justify "marriages of convenience" to their core supporters, and convince skeptical new audiences through coalition building, coalitions help parties appeal far beyond their existing capabilities. Both niche and

catchall parties pursue coalitions to avoid splitting the anti-regime vote. Coalitions also help niche parties draw attention away from their brands, and help catchall parties supplement their weak campaign and organizational resources.

Finally, the theory argues that strategies of broadening and coordination are conflicting. I argue that parties rely on coalitions as a *substitute* for party broadening. When parties build coalitions, they have strong incentives to divide up the electoral map in ways that maximize their individual and collective chances to winning votes and seats. To do so, they use existing party strengths as a guide to their electoral division of labor. But this only further entrenches existing party identities, hampering the individual parties' efforts to move beyond their core identities. If parties try to broaden their individual base of support, they set themselves up for conflict with their coalition partners over the same pool of voters. Coalition building thus inhibits the ability of individual parties to develop a broad base of support across demographic groups.

Examples of these strategic dilemmas, and the varying success of opposition parties in navigating them, are rife across competitive authoritarian contexts. In Turkey, the dominant AKP party has solidified its grip over legislative and presidential offices since 2002. Seeking to expand its support, the secular opposition party CHP sought to widen its base beyond "narrow, demographically specific niches of voters" and appeal more broadly to religious voters (Ciddi and Esen 2014). Similarly, the Democratic People's Party (HDP), a party based around Kurdish identity, initiated a strategy aimed at broadening its support by an increasing focus on national issues (Kiniklioglu 2015). But the parties have struggled to build a coherent

opposition coalition; the nationalist opposition party MHP, for example, refused to join any coalition featuring the HDP and sought instead to join the ruling government. There have been only limited efforts to build cooperation across ideologically disparate opposition parties (Ayan Musil 2015).

In Hungary, opposition parties facing the ruling Fidesz party sought to both expand their individual appeal and avoid directly competing against each other. Since 2014, the far-right opposition party Jobbik began to emphasize economic issues to shed its existing extremist image (Schultheis 2018). While the opposition parties including Jobbik struggled to build an official coalition across ideological lines, they tacitly agreed in 2018 elections that Jobbik would focus on rural constituencies outside Budapest, while leftist and green opposition parties would contest in urban areas (Dunai 2018). These varying responses of opposition parties to the challenges of shedding existing party image and deciding on an electoral "division of labor" with other opposition parties are returned to repeatedly throughout this dissertation.

In sum, opposition parties do not face uniform pressures to transform appeals or party organizations in pursuit of political power. They struggle to align their incentives to coordinate and maintain a united opposition front against incumbents. But these dilemmas are not inescapable. Opposition parties are more likely to present a threat when they are partially successful in pursuing both strategies, 1) marshalling sufficient individual support in the national electorate *and* 2) building relatively stable coalitions with other opposition parties.[4] The most likely parties to do so are those that

[4] As discussed in Chapter 2 and the comparative cases of Chapter 7, coalitions or informal coordination among the opposition is extremely common but is not always a precondition to winning broader power.

successfully develop the resources and capacity to mount effective challenges within and beyond geographically and demographically limited areas, and harness anti-regime messages to build disparate coalitions of parties and voters. They are also parties that consistently identify incumbent overturn as a more important goal than accommodation under the existing system.

If a handful of parties build a sufficient amount of mobilizing and organizational strength through governing and electoral institutions, their coalitions are much more effective and they are in a better position to resist incumbent cooptation or coercion strategies. In this case, parties can effectively harness the power of other opposition parties to *supplement,* rather than substitute for, their own organizational and mobilizational weaknesses. However, if incumbents are successful at coercing or coopting key opposition members, or if *all* parties in the system fail to build sufficient electoral strength, oppositions are more likely to be marginalized and coopted by the incumbent regime.

This theory helps account for the variation in individual and collective strategies and resultant electoral strength of the opposition in Malaysia and beyond. I will summarize the theory's applicability to Malaysia in the next section, focusing on the strategic choices of the opposition in elections and in subnational office. Chapter 7 discusses additional cases and develops case studies from dominant party authoritarian and dominant party democratic settings – Mexico, Tanzania, and South Africa – to show these dilemmas under different political, social, and electoral environments. Chapter 2 provides a fuller account of the theory and its scope conditions.

1.4 Research Strategy

My theory argues that opposition parties face different dilemmas in pursuing individual expansion and collective coordination, and in reconciling the tradeoffs between the two strategies. I argue that the success of parties in these two arenas – building consistently broad-based support and broadly appealing coalitions – depends on the strategic decisions made by parties.

To evaluate my argument, I use a process-tracing approach to compare the party broadening and coalition building strategies of three opposition parties in Malaysia. Malaysia offers a compelling case for exploring opposition strategies. The country of 29 million people is divided geographically between the Western peninsula, connected to mainland Southeast Asia, and its Eastern half, occupying part of the island of Borneo along with Indonesia and Brunei. Already boasting one of the highest standards of living in Asia at independence (Gomez and Jomo 1999, 15), Malaysia has undergone sustained economic growth to become the third-largest economy in Southeast Asia, with a gross national income per capita of $8,770 in 2011 (World Bank 2013). As noted in the introduction, its extremely durable ruling coalition held power for 61 years, allowing analysis across time in party strategies.

I trace the variable strategies employed by the three main opposition parties in the period from 1999-2016.[5] The electoral environment during the period under consideration provided unprecedented opportunities for the opposition parties to broaden their appeals to disaffected regime supporters. Beginning in the late 1990s, all

[5] In further sections, I extend the argument to 2018 to account for opposition strategies up to the point of incumbent turnover.

three parties faced incentives to take advantage of growing discontent against the regime, albeit at different times. During this period, the three parties engaged in varying levels of electoral coordination and coalition building, as well as party broadening in the context of fluctuating regime electoral strength. Beginning in 2008, all three parties occupied state-level governments, offering an important new venue for the parties to undertake broadening and coalition building strategies.

The three parties also represent distinct party profiles based on mixes of ethnic, religious, and anti-regime messaging. The Democratic Action Party (DAP) is a social democratic party most often identified with its ethnic Chinese leadership and support. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, or PAS) relies largely on Malay Muslim voters in elections, particularly in the ethnically and religiously homogeneous East Coast states. The People's Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat, or PKR) emerged at the turn of the century as the electoral vehicle for the opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim. Its message has been explicitly multiracial, though its leadership has been primarily Malay.

I show that these party brands, and regime counterstrategies tailored to them, shaped how the parties responded to this political environment. Because the DAP faced stark limits on its appeals based purely on its minority ethnic Chinese base, it altered its patterns of candidate recruitment and shifted its messaging to economic and cost-of-living issues to more credibly appeal to the majority voting bloc of Malays and other Bumiputera (indigenous) voters. Nevertheless, the BN continued to successfully paint the party as a "chauvinist" ethnic party.

On the other hand, PAS's Malay Muslim core demographics at least in theory allowed it to appeal to the majority of Malaysia's population. While PAS successfully attracted new voters outside its regional base by making broad claims to represent all Malaysians, its party organization and fundamental orientation were largely untouched. The party later doubled down on a message of implementing Islamic criminal code (*hudud*) and moved closer to the BN seemingly in the hopes of implementing *hudud* in its stronghold states and across Malaysia.

PKR, as a catchall party without the strong ethnic branding of the two other parties, faced very different challenges of scaling up. Instead of attempting to change its brand, the party needed to try to secure a stable base of core voters, while expanding its organization to new regions of the country. In its early years, the party faced high levels of volatility as its share of the vote seemed to wax and wane with overall levels of anti-regime resentment. For the party, winning state-level office proved important to strengthen its resource base and provide cohesion for its fractious leadership. It also expanded its appeal to new constituencies in the demographically distinct region of East Malaysia.

The coalitional strategies of the parties also varied over time. Crucially, all three parties saw electoral benefits to coordinating their efforts, despite fundamentally different party goals. After 1999, the increasingly competitive political environment and weakening of electoral support for the BN led all three parties to engage in forms of coordination and coalition building, including three electoral coalitions since 1999. Coalition building helped the parties to project a collective front and expand the number of voters the opposition could collect through encouraging cross-party voting.

As I will show later, these deeper forms of coalition building helped the parties expand, but paradoxically locked parties into their existing niches. By coordinating with each other based on their existing demographic claims, coalitions dampened the incentives of parties to commit to broadening their individual party identity.

Beginning in 2008, all three parties sought to expand not only through elections, but through governing in subnational office. But again, their different profiles affected strategies and outcomes. Governing subnational offices allowed the DAP and PKR to affirm their competence and ability to deliver in the multiethnic states which they won office. PAS's greatest inroads, however, were in its monoethnic strongholds in the East Coast, where the party sought to craft a track record that resonated with its core constituencies. PAS, therefore, ended up further entrenched in a party strategy that pointed towards ethnic and religious exclusivism.

In May 2018, the DAP and PKR – but not PAS – formed part of the victorious opposition coalition that won national power. I address this election briefly in the empirical and concluding chapters, showing that the argument, developed prior to the election, helps explain this outcome. The success of the parties in 2018 was due both to the efforts of the DAP and PKR to expand their core base of support *as well as* their willingness to coordinate with two other parties that could effectively supplement their geographic and demographic weaknesses. Importantly, all four parties had clearly identified incumbent overturn as a core party goal and were willing to subsume individual goals for the collective regime goal. PAS, by virtue of its strong Islamic identity, was unable to successfully expand its core support or change its core messages without provoking internal conflict. As a result, it was unable to resolve

coordination dilemmas with the opposition and instead sought implicit collaboration with the BN government on policy goals. The election also draws out an additional factor in unseating long-running incumbents: the important role of regime defectors in supplementing existing opposition support and targeting specific groups of regime voters.

The four elections between 1999 and 2016 offer key focal points for examining the two party strategies. Table 1 below shows the variation in election-year strategies employed by the parties.

Table 1: Choices of Electoral Strategies

		Coalition building (Chapter 6)	
		Yes	No
Party broadening (Chapter 4)	Yes	DAP, PKR 1999/2013 PAS 1999	DAP, PKR, PAS 2008
	No	PAS 2013	DAP, PKR, PAS 2004

Table 2: State-Level Governance (Chapter 5)

Party	**State government**
DAP	Penang and Selangor 2008 - present
PKR	Penang and Selangor 2008 - present
PAS	Kelantan 1990 - present; Selangor 2008 - 2018

As noted, these different strategic choices had important consequences for the individual parties. Table 3 shows the cumulative outcomes for the three parties as a result of the strategies employed in previous periods.

Table 3: Individual Party Outcomes

	Electoral success	**Broad base of support**
DAP	High	Partial
PKR	High (volatile)	Yes
PAS	Low	No

I use a variety of sources to document the strategies and variable success of opposition parties. Interviews and participant observation were indispensable in understanding party strategies and campaign methods, the perceptions of politicians about voter behavior, and interpretations of key events and internal party dynamics. I relied on extensive in-depth interviews from 2013, 2014, 2015-2016, and 2018. I conducted interviews with politicians from all major parties from the opposition and UMNO, including party functionaries, state-level politicians to Cabinet Ministers and

the former Prime Minister of Malaysia.[6] I attended the party congresses of PAS, DAP, and UMNO, and the two conventions of the PH coalition. I observed campaign events and meetings of all the major parties in by-elections in Selangor state and state elections in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak. In Sarawak, I joined the national leadership of PAS as they canvassed different constituencies and met supporters.

I collected electoral data from state-level and national elections since 1999 to examine party electoral success, ethnic composition of party candidate lists, and to document increasing seat contestation and vote share by the opposition. These data from state-level and national elections allow me to examine party electoral success, ethnic composition of party candidate lists, and to document increasing seat contestation and vote share by the opposition.

To analyze changes in the ethnic composition of candidate lists, I coded the ethnicities of all opposition candidates by leveraging Malaysia's ethnically distinct names and naming rules to distinguish candidate ethnicity. In Malaysia, names commonly reflect the official categorization of citizens along ethnic lines, and thus offer reliable cues to ethnicity. For instance, individuals of Indian descent often have "a/l" or "a/p" (*anak lelaki*, son of; *anak perempuan*, daughter of) in their names, while Malay politicians may have the equivalent *bin* or *binti* (son / daughter of) between their given name and father's name. While candidate names are not an infallible guide

[6] The identities of interview subjects are kept largely anonymous, for two reasons. At the time of the interviews, the BN remained in power and the opposition parties still occupied a marginal position in politics and governance. Discussing politics with a foreign researcher was a potentially sensitive subject, and some stated that their activities were monitored by the government. Second, the interviews sought to capture viewpoints of political actors on specific topics, themes and events, often directly relating to their own experiences within their parties. As such, the interviews touched on sensitive party matters, and critiques of their own parties. I have sacrificed a measure of transparency to err on the side of protecting source anonymity in a non-democratic context.

to the often complicated ethnic and religious backgrounds of individuals, it provides a way to measure ethnic identity of large candidate lists. Importantly, names are a common way through which Malaysians determine the ethnicity (and religion) of the candidate. I also use secondary sources such as news reports and existing literature in both Malay and English, as well as Malay-language strategy documents produced by a BN-affiliated think tank deposited at Malaysia's National Archive (*Arkib Negara*), which provide insights into BN strategy against the opposition and the BN's perception of its electoral losses during this period.

I rely on what Yom terms "inductive iteration" to develop the causal argument in this dissertation (Yom 2015). The argument was generated and refined by moving between observations and insight in the field and existing theoretical literature. It seeks both to offer an explanation for opposition party strategy that is internally valid to its primary case, but also offers insight into a broader set of regimes. While insights or observations from a single country cannot falsify existing theories, the analytical payoff is to generate new insights into opposition party behavior that are unobservable from "high-altitude" cross-national studies. By bringing in detailed empirical analysis from a country underrepresented in the literature on authoritarian politics and democratization, this dissertation helps to uncover the causal processes connecting strategies and outcomes (George and Bennett 2005, 6).

1.5 Implications

This dissertation contributes to scholarly literatures on political party competition in authoritarian regimes, democratization, and ethnic politics. It also

provides novel empirical evidence from Malaysia, previously one of the most stable competitive authoritarian regimes in the world, yet a case that remained understudied within the larger literature.

By turning the analytical focus to opposition parties, this dissertation demonstrates that opposition party choices in authoritarian regimes are consequential for electoral and regime outcomes. This focus on opposition party agency is important in understanding the course of ordinary politics in authoritarian settings, as well as possibilities for democratization. Recent research on democratization has moved away from structural accounts towards more agent-centered accounts (e.g. Bermeo and Yashar 2016; Haggard and Kaufman 2016). The success or failure of opposition parties in building sufficiently broad-based and coordinated challenges therefore has significant implications for the durability of semi-authoritarian regimes.

Opposition parties that stitch together sufficient support across social divides are more likely to unseat entrenched incumbents through elections (Howard and Roessler 2006; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; LeBas 2011). Even stopping short of regime change, opposition parties play important roles in generating alternative visions, and channeling (as well as stoking) resentment against incumbent regimes. The incumbent turnover in Malaysia in the 2018 elections is an important coda to this dissertation. The primary analysis, however, is focused less on the specifics of this decisive election than on explaining how the opposition could be positioned to win in the first place. Malaysia's highly routinized, meaningfully competitive elections spanned six decades; the single national electoral success of opposition parties needs to be analyzed against this larger backdrop.

Relatedly, this dissertation separates the study of opposition parties from the broader set of opposition actors – social movements, organized protests, civil society organizations, and pro-democratic opposition parties. Opposition parties face a distinct set of incentives shaped by their participation in electoral and governing institutions, and often build up support around issues and political goals which may have an ambiguous relationship with democracy (Bermeo and Yashar 2016). Understanding the interplay between office-seeking, patronage, policy, and regime goals is important to understanding the strategic choices of opposition parties.

Finally, this dissertation has implications for the study of politics of multiethnic societies. Malaysia often featured in classic literature on ethnic power sharing and the politics of divided societies (Lijphart 1977; D. L. Horowitz 1983). Yet this literature, and Malaysia-focused studies, has tended to describe the key features of such systems in an effort to explain stable patterns of ethnic politics. In contrast, this dissertation emphasizes ethnic and religious politics not as descriptive features of Malaysia, but rather as strategies employed by political actors. It follows work that seeks to describe how even ethnically-focused parties must mobilize non-coethnic voters (J. Horowitz 2016). Understanding why parties balance between articulating particular ethnoreligious claims to build power, and transcending them to build broader support, is key to understanding how these issues become and remain politically salient. They are also important to understand whether ethnicized party systems can be "exited out" of by the creation of broad-based opposition coalitions and parties.

1.6 Outline of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, I develop a theory of opposition party strategy that highlights how opposition party profiles structure their interaction with voters, other opposition parties, and the regime. Chapter 3 provides a historical overview of the BN and opposition parties in Malaysia. It shows how divergent party formation and development shaped the core constituencies, geographical bases, founding issues, and thus the brands which the different parties developed. It also demonstrates how the opposition parties kept advancing under the shadow of BN's power, even as the BN honed strategies to keep its dominant position for decades.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how these divergent party profiles and regime counterstrategies shaped the ability and willingness of Malaysian opposition parties to expand their bases of support, and the variable pressures and constraints they faced in doing so. The parties experimented with different strategies to change their party appeals and brand to become more widely accessible. But different core identities and electoral considerations shaped when, and to what extent, they attempted to change their image.

Chapter 5 shows how the increasing wins of the opposition parties at the subnational level opened up new opportunities for them to strengthen their connections to new voters. Like in other cases of successful opposition party building, Malaysia's opposition derived significant support from a strategy of "building up from below." But different party profiles and electoral geographies shaped their behavior in office, and for some parties, ruling at the subnational *constrained* their appeal at the

national level. For other parties, it provided the opportunity to use an administrative and governance-oriented approach to build ties across ethnic and religious lines.

In Chapter 6, I examine the collective strategies of opposition parties in Malaysia. Coordination among the opposition has been a feature of the country's politics since the country's independence. It was also the key to the opposition's eventual success in the 2018 elections. But even so, I argue that coordination among the parties delayed investment in changing organizations and appeals to reach beyond their "natural" constituencies. These dynamics led the opposition parties to imitate the BN's racially and regionally segmented coalition strategy, entrenching the politics of ethnicity and religion even as they sought to transcend these deep-seated issues in Malaysia's politics and society.

Chapter 7 brings the theoretical argument to bear on additional cases. It provides an in-depth examination of three other cases: two dominant party authoritarian systems, and a dominant party democracy. By examining processes of party and coalition building in a diverse set of regimes, the cases demonstrate the generalizability of the argument.

Chapter 8 concludes by describing the eventual victory of the opposition coalition in the 2018 elections. It shows that the halting and incomplete efforts in previous elections had nonetheless left the opposition able to win. By 2018, the diverse identities of the opposition effectively *supplemented* their organizational and brand weaknesses in a way that allowed them to capture a broad range of voter discontent with the regime. It describes the contributions of the dissertation to existing literatures and suggests areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

OPPOSITION PARTY STRATEGIES IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter develops a theory of how opposition parties seek to expand electoral and political power in authoritarian settings, and why they are variably successful in doing so. As described in Chapter 1, existing arguments have largely focused on strategies by the ruling power to constrain competition. Ruling governments do shape political competition and the content of opposition challenges in significant ways, as will be shown in this chapter. But the strategic choices of opposition parties within authoritarian constraints are highly consequential. If successful, they can present significant challenges to incumbent rulers.

The theory focuses on two main claims. First, opposition party profiles – their core constituencies, the strength of their party brand, and their relationship with the ruling government – create different opportunities and constraints for parties seeking to scale up their challenges. Rather than facing a uniform set of incentives, opposition strategies are heavily influenced by where they sit in the broader electoral environment and their niche or catchall profiles. Second, these party profiles influence the investments they make in individual and collective strategies of opposition. But pursuing both strategies, as parties often do during perceived openings for scaling up their challenges, requires tradeoffs. Parties that coordinate over electoral competition are more likely to divide up the electoral map based on existing party strengths, reducing the likelihood that they significantly expand their own core base of support.

Given that competitive authoritarian regimes are hybrids of democratic and authoritarian systems, the dilemmas described below are in part familiar to democratic settings. But authoritarian environments differ in several key ways. First, opposition parties operating in authoritarian regimes face stricter limits on policy making, resource availability, and media access. This significantly constrains their choices of available strategies compared to well-resourced incumbents who can use clientelism and run professional campaigns. Second, ruling governments can abuse institutions, and threaten, harass, or cut deals with opposition voters and party personnel and leaders, to ensure opposition parties face obstacles beyond simply winning votes. Finally, the persistence and visibility of ruling governments in authoritarian societies also makes coordination among their opponents very common. Opposition parties often seek to collectively develop an anti-regime cleavage among voters. While anti-incumbent messaging is common in democratic regimes as well, it is often more salient in authoritarian settings, given the sheer gulf between the incumbent and opposition parties that is reinforced with every election. Indeed, anti-regime messaging in authoritarian regimes always has the potential to move beyond campaign rhetoric into agitating for more fundamental changes to the regime. As such, parties may choose electorally suboptimal strategies when they seek to alter (or preserve) the existing regime (Mainwaring 2003).

Although the incentives and constraints below are in part unique in competitive authoritarian regimes, the theory does have implications for opposition parties in dominant party *democratic* settings where ruling party strategies do not constitute significant subversion of political competition. To demonstrate the theory's

applicability in such a setting, I discuss the case of opposition parties competing against the dominant ANC in South Africa in Chapter 7.

I develop the argument in stages. Before turning to the theory, I first define the scope of parties covered in this dissertation, as well the most salient features of opposition parties. I then discuss the emergence and development of opposition parties in authoritarian settings to argue how these initial stages of party building influence later strategies of expansion. These founding moments shape key characteristics of party profiles, including the type and strength of their party identity and brand, their core and swing audiences, and their relationship with the ruling government.

In moments where parties perceive new openings or opportunities, they will pursue strategies of expansion. The theory then lays out strategies that parties can pursue at the individual and collective level, highlighting how niche and catchall opposition party profiles influence their choices in pursuing these strategies. I discuss the tensions between individual and collective strategies themselves. I then turn to how regimes shape the strategies available to opposition parties, as well as seek to constrain their broader electoral ambitions. I conclude by discussing the scope conditions of the argument, focusing on criteria of regime dominance, the electoral system, and the institutionalization of parties and party systems.

2.2 Defining Opposition

Legalized opposition is a relatively new innovation even in democratic regimes (Dahl 1966); it is increasingly common to authoritarian regimes as well, given that multiparty elections have become more common in such regimes. But what counts as

an opposition party in a competitive authoritarian context, and what features of opposition parties are most salient to understanding their strategies and behavior? Existing approaches to this subject have generally focused on either their relationship to the existing regime or government, or while holding this relationship constant, how opposition parties seek to persevere in the "electoral game." This section argues that both elements are necessary to understand opposition party profiles and how they shape strategic behavior.

A prominent strain in literature on the opposition characterizes political opposition in terms of their relationship to the existing government and regime. In Blondel's conceptualization, oppositions can be arrayed along a continuum, rejecting the regime and political system at one end, and on the other end, offering only limited critiques of the ruling government (Blondel 1997, 469). Drawing on Dahl and Linz's work, Gel'man (2005) places political opposition on a continuum of their ends and means. At one end of the continuum, oppositions simply seek to join the national government without major changes to its policies or political regime – what Linz terms the "semi-opposition" (Linz 1973, 191). At the other end, oppositions seek total control to effect desired changes, often including regime change (Gel'man 2005, 229-29). Oppositions may choose to operate through legal channels; or on the other end of the spectrum, use illegal or violent means to pursue their goals (Ibid.). Similarly, Turovsky describes a continuum of "oppositionness" in whether opposition actors are willing to be brought into the ruling government (Turovsky 2014). Notably, much of this literature focuses on all types of opposition actors, not specifically party-based

opposition.[7] By contrast, Mainwaring offers a specific theory of opposition *parties* as engaging in a two-level game: Seeking to preserve or alter the existing regime, along with the goal of winning elections (Mainwaring 2003).

This literature shows that a key aspect to conceptualizing opposition parties in authoritarian regimes lies both in the goals that they have in regard to the regime, as well as the channels they use to achieve those goals. Importantly, parties may move along the continuum in terms of the level of "oppositionness." But the literature on democratization has tended to assume a fixed regime-changing or democratizing goal of opposition parties.[8] Some studies focus on the study of "democratic opposition" which by definition resists incorporation into authoritarian rule, disputes its legitimacy, and creates a credible democratic alternative (Stepan 1990). In Schedler's conceptualization of the two-level game, for example, "democratic" oppositions participate in elections only in the hope of reforming electoral institutions in the future (Schedler 2002, 109).

Similarly, literature emphasizing the regime-sustaining characteristics of opposition parties has portrayed them as significantly more interested in goals *other* than regime change or incumbent turnover. Comparing Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt, Lust-Okar (2005) argues that autocratic rulers so manipulate opposition strategies and options that permitted opposition groups only seek to maintain the existing regime and "focus on gaining the most they can while playing within the rules" (83). In return for

[7] Linz's concept of "semi-opposition," for example, was developed through the study of opposition against Franco in Spain, at a time when opposition parties were banned.
[8] One exception is literature on Russian opposition parties that has highlighted the fluidity of opposition parties in their regime stance (e.g. Gel'man 2005).

being allowed to contest, loyalist opposition parties "agree to help maintain the system" which in turn helps incumbents avoid popular unrest (Lust-Okar 2004, 161). Similarly, opposition parties may criticize individual policies of the ruling government but largely "focus on access to [limited] decision-making power and resources" (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004, 383).[9]

These literatures, then, have tended to define opposition parties in their relationship to the regime. But it is clear from another set of literature that opposition party identities and objectives *apart from their regime orientation* matter for understanding their political behavior. As Blondel (1997) notes, "one should not refer the goals of 'the' opposition, but to distinct goals within the opposition" (470). These goals also affect party behavior in elections and in governing in important ways.

The literature on opposition parties engaging in electoral competition has noted several reasons why they face challenges in building support: whether it is because of their ideology (Gandhi 2010, xviii), because they have a limited track record on economic issues (Magaloni 2008), because they are seen as the representatives of particular ethnic or religious groups (Ferree 2010), or because they position themselves at the extreme ends of political competition (Greene 2007). These distinct party identities have been shown to limit the ability of opposition parties to appeal to new audiences (Greene 2007) and hinder the electoral coordination of opposition parties (Haugbølle and Cavatorta 2011).

[9] Although these characterizations fit well with the closed authoritarian regimes which they describe, they appear to have been influential in shaping a broader theoretical literature which encompasses competitive authoritarian regimes (e.g. Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009).

However, this literature *also* generally assumes the goals of opposition parties in relationship to the regime are fixed. But as Bermeo and Yashar note, the issues and cleavages around which opposition parties and movements mobilize may have complex or ambiguous relationships with democratization (Bermeo and Yashar 2016).[10] In other words, opposition party goals matter not only in terms of whether they seek regime alteration – but also whether their goals *require* incumbent turnover or regime change. This shapes the repertoire of strategies that ruling governments use against different opposition parties, ranging from cooptation, coercion, to simply painting opposition parties as out of step with the broader electorate. These motivating issues also form the basis for the types and content of "policy concessions" that authoritarians seek to provide opposition parties through institutions (Gandhi 2010).

The insights from these two literatures – emphasizing both regime orientation and particular party profiles – are important to understand how opposition parties work. [11] As argued below, opposition parties develop a *niche* profile, appealing to voters on the basis of a distinct identity or issue, and often relying on a limited core audience, or a *catchall* profile, offering a broad and diffuse message that in theory appeals to a broad electorate. While the niche and catchall categorization offers a first cut at defining party profiles, there is additional variation within each category: As will be shown in the subsequent sections, parties vary in their core constituencies and

[10] In focusing on opposition in Asian countries, Rodan makes a similar observation that "not all opposition to authoritarian regimes in East and Southeast Asia is imbued with liberal democratic values or aspirations" (Rodan 1996, 4).

[11] Other conceptualizations have sought to emphasize different features of political opposition. Blondel (1997) develops a two-dimensional diagram to capture the overall landscape of the opposition in terms of its concentration/fragmentation, and the distance of opposition goals from that of the government. Dahl (1966) offers the most comprehensive characterization, focusing on level of cohesion, competitiveness, site of opposition, distinctiveness of opposition, goals, and strategies.

brands, and what they pursue through electoral and governing institutions – often a mixture of electoral power, patronage, policy, or regime change goals. Recognizing that parties often pursue "something else" in addition to or in lieu of votes and seats is important to understand electoral behavior.

Parties also vary in their relationship to the ruling government and regime. They can be *pro-regime,* showing willingness to join the ruling government and showing little outward evidence of pursuing regime change, or they are *anti-regime,* seeking not only the overthrow of the incumbent but a change in the overall regime type. These different stances shape whether parties view the ruling government and regime as legitimate, and the extent to which they are willing to accept something other than votes or seats – such as policy concessions, patronage, or political positions – in exchange for lessening their opposition.

Of course, the anti-regime continuum is often fuzzy in practice. Opposition parties frequently accept inducements or policy concessions from ruling governments or reach informal arrangements with governments to access positions or patronage but continue to stump against the government on the campaign trail. Parties may also build their electoral strategy around critiques of the incumbent government based on economic performance or corruption. But even if these messages are primarily anti-*government* rather than anti-*regime,* since they do not focus on fundamental regime characteristics, they leave open the possibility of regime change after winning power.

The choices that parties make in the issues and messages around which they mobilize voters and their regime positioning are key to how they are identified in the eyes of voters. Nevertheless, neither aspect of these dimensions is fixed. Parties may

change their profiles over time as they seek to change expand their support beyond niche constituencies or vacillate between unstinting regime opposition and seeking accommodation or political offers from the ruling government.

It is important to note that these two dimensions of opposition are not dimensions of spatial competition. Greene (2008) argues, for example, that two-dimensional competition occurs in authoritarian settings around a primary cleavage – which may be ethnic, economic, or ideological – and an anti-regime cleavage. In a spatial politics framework, anti-regime stances become a form of *political issue positioning* aiming at obtaining votes, rather than sometimes suboptimal electoral behavior that seeks to alter fundamental aspects of the regime.[12]

In this regard, I build on Mainwaring's insight that electoral and regime games are interrelated (Mainwaring 2003, 11). Even while my focus is primarily on opposition party behavior in electoral and governing institutions, I argue that the extent to which parties define themselves against the regime will shape their behavior in these institutions in ways that have implications for the larger regime question.[13] Regime orientation here reflects part of a party's *profile* in the electoral game.

As has been noted implicitly above, this conceptualization (and the theory below) focuses on *party-based* opposition through *legal institutional channels* of

[12] Mainwaring develops this argument by noting that spatial models "capture an authoritarian versus democratic *value conflict* in electoral competition, but they do not see that parties may be playing a game that eclipses or dramatically alters how they play the electoral game" (2003, 16, emphasis added). He lists two reasons: 1) parties may not seek maximization of seats/votes because they are concerned about a regime game outcome; and 2) spatial models, because they don't take regime games into account, may be "oblivious" as to why some parties engage in strategies that aren't electorally optimal (Ibid.).

[13] Schedler develops a different conceptualization of "two-level" or "nested" games in authoritarian regimes, defining multiparty elections as both a struggle over votes and a struggle over the rules of the game (2013).

elections and governing. While anti-regime opposition parties may pursue extra-institutional strategies in aiming to alter the regime – engaging in electoral boycotts, fomenting protests, engaging in violence, or seeking support from non-government actors like the military – these are not the primary focus of the theory below. It also does not discuss the strategies of non-party opposition actors such as student groups, labor unions, NGOs, religious organizations, and protest movements. Such actors often work together with opposition parties, amplifying their electoral challenges, lending credibility, and smoothing relations between party actors (Weiss 2005; Haggard and Kaufman 2016). They may be linked with political parties themselves by providing a membership base or mobilizing structure (LeBas 2011). Despite the importance of such strategies, however, there are reasons to focus on opposition parties as analytically distinct from non-party actors. In competitive authoritarian regimes, opposition parties have available to them electoral and governing institutions to advance their objectives; they face incentives of winning votes and participating in governing institutions that differ fundamentally from those of social movement actors, with distinct strategies and time horizons.

The theory also presumes that oppositions are not only systematically excluded from the national ruling government and its policy decisions, but also see political benefit to being *oppositional,* in that they position themselves at least rhetorically against the ruling government or political regime, are the targets of incumbent counterstrategies, and contest in elections against ruling parties or personnel. As will be shown in the empirical sections of this dissertation, parties vacillate over time in their level of opposition over time and cooperate with ruling governments with

surprising regularity. However, I largely exclude from this study what might be termed *non-government parties*: parties that may be excluded from national government, but do not seriously contest in elections against the ruling government and whose primary aim is extracting benefits from the government. "Ersatz" opposition parties created by dominant regimes to give the appearance of multiparty competition (March 2009) are also not considered here.

2.3 Why Opposition Parties in Authoritarian Settings?

A number of works have explored the motivations of political elites in creating parties in both democratic and non-democratic contexts (Aldrich 1995; Shefter 1994; Greene 2007; Hale 2007). Given the importance of initial processes of party development to later behavior (e.g. Panebianco 1988), this section will briefly review factors leading to opposition party formation in authoritarian settings.

The role of authoritarian governments in determining opposition party formation is highlighted in several works. Riedl (2014) argues that strong authoritarian incumbents restrict new party formation and induce opposition parties to invest in strong party organizations, while weak incumbents are more likely to face a proliferation of weakly institutionalized parties (Ibid.). Hicken and Kuhonta similarly argue that the most institutionalized party systems in Asia – like Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia – were a result of institutionalized dominant parties that increased the incentives of oppositions to create cohesive and disciplined party organizations (Hicken and Kuhonta 2011). In authoritarian settings where a dominant party holds power, Greene argues that opposition parties are "built mainly by outsiders" to the political regime (Greene 2007, 11). As such, they are classic examples of externally

mobilized parties which tend to build strong party organizations and programmatic appeals that mobilize a mass constituency (Ibid; Shefter 1994, 5).

The timing of party creation also exerts an effect on the type of party created. Opposition "first movers" may look very different than subsequent parties. They may be constructed at the height of regime strength, and seek to invest in party organizations and durable attachments to ensure their survival against a dominant incumbent (Company 2015; Van Dyck 2016). But parties are "designed to solve particular problems in the specific historical context" of their formation (Aldrich 1995, 286). As conditions change, political entrepreneurs may seek new types of parties to address new concerns and constituencies. When parties form in periods of waning regime strength, for example, they may avoid the painstaking process of building programmatic strategies and party organizations associated with niche parties, and instead build catchall parties that can help launch them into office as soon as possible (Company 2015). Economic and political crises in Malaysia have spurred former government insiders to form opposition parties at multiple periods, which have lacked the coherent party organization or programmatic appeals of more niche-oriented parties in the same system.[14] In times of regime or economic uncertainty, building parties that are *not* tied to existing sociopolitical cleavages may help keep parties adaptable to changing circumstances (Lupu and Riedl 2013). Parties with lower levels

[14] Examples from Malaysia include Semangat 46 (created by former UMNO vice president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah), PKR (formed around former deputy prime minister from UMNO Anwar Ibrahim), and Bersatu (formed by former Prime Minister and UMNO president Mahathir Mohamad). While they built via regime insiders, they are not necessarily *internally mobilized parties* per Shefter, since they do not have direct access to state resources nor rely on other types of appeals such as patriotism or religious sentiment (Shefter 1994, 35-6).

of institutionalization can more easily navigate changes in the socioeconomic environment during periods of crisis and change (Levitsky 2003, 3).

Another factor influencing the decisions of political entrepreneurs to form parties are institutional arrangements. A large literature has argued for the "interactive hypothesis": that with sufficiently permissive electoral rules, social diversity will tend to increase the number of parties (see review in (Milazzo, Moser, and Scheiner 2018). Even in single member district plurality systems, which seemingly present high barriers to new party entrants, social diversity increases the effective number of parties competing beyond expectations of two-party competition (Ibid.). Other literature has highlighted the effects of presidential systems on the number of parties, finding that the number of presidential candidates influences the national number of parties in legislative elections (Hicken and Stoll 2011).

As such, the fragmentation of the opposition depends in part on diversity and electoral system type. But other institutional arrangements shape considerations of party formation.[15] Countries may ban ethnic parties (as in Kenya) or religious parties (as in Tanzania), or adopt electoral thresholds that effectively make regional parties difficult to form (Kadima 2008). Greene finds that dominant party systems tend to have a fewer number of competitive parties than fully competitive democracies, independent of social cleavages (Greene 2007, 19).

[15] These institutional arrangements also affect party decisions in other ways. In Singapore, for example, party lists in multi-member districts known as Group Representative Constituencies are required to include at least one candidate who is Malay, Indian, or another minority group (Reilly and Nordlund 2008).

There is an element of contingency in how political entrepreneurs seek to build support, especially in situations of ethnic or religious diversity. Social cleavages and electoral systems do not guarantee parties will form to mobilize around them; rather the question is what cleavages or contingencies offer help politicians win over voters (Hale 2007, 239). Elischer notes that across African states, where almost no country has a single ethnic group that forms more than half the population, two different types of parties have formed: *multiethnic parties* that contest against each other, or *ethnic parties* that build multiethnic governments and coalitions (Elischer 2013, 234).[16] These different forms of ethnic compromise suggest that political elites, particularly "first movers" like the first post-independence parties, can exert a significant effect on the shape of political competition independent of electoral system. Similarly, like other plurality systems, both Malaysia and India have tended towards two-party competition. Shugart and Taagepera note that although the party system is highly fragmented, competition has moved towards two-*coalition* competition at the district level where each coalition puts up a single candidate (Shugart and Taagepera 2017, 84). This dynamic is similar to the one which emerged in Malaysia. Shugart and Taagepera argue that this arrangement is *inherent* to competition in plurality systems, although not all such systems develop this dynamic (Ibid).

[16] Malaysia shows a third option: multiethnic governments and coalitions composed of both ethnic and multiethnic parties.

2.4 Theory

Opposition Party Profiles

To develop a theory focused on the strategic incentives of opposition parties, I first examine the divergent opposition parties that form in authoritarian environments. I argue that opposition parties emerge with either *niche* or *catchall* party profiles.[17] These profiles reflect the strength of their party brand, the territorial or demographic concentration of party supporters and organizations, and their relationship to the regime. The development of niche or catchall profiles is often heavily dependent on the formative phases of party creation. In their initial stages, party leaders "spell out the ideological aims of the future party, select the organization's social base, its 'hunting ground,' and shape the organization" dependent on available resources and prevailing sociopolitical conditions (Panebianco 1988, 53). These characteristics, which tend to be emphasized through campaigns, media coverage, and party activities, solidify into *party brand* – the perception of the party that voters develop "based on what they see parties say and do over time" (Lupu 2014, 568).[18]

This dissertation's conceptualization of niche/catchall profiles derives from existing parties literature, but differs in several important ways. The catchall parties I

[17] Other literature has provided in-depth typologies of political parties across regime type and level of institutionalization/economic development. Diamond and Gunther (2003) identify 15 party types; Elischer (2013) builds on their initial framework to better reflect parties in Africa, identifying five main and three secondary party types. To simplify the discussion and observable implications, I reduce the number of salient categories to three (as developed below). I discuss profiles – rather than party types– to capture both the mixed characteristics of many parties, and the ability of parties to change over time.

[18] An important amendment to Lupu's definition in non-democratic contexts is that party brand is also heavily shaped by how ruling parties and state-aligned media portray opposition parties. Lupu is also focused specifically on what he terms brand dilution – the weakening of voter certainty over party brand – which he argues leads to increasing voter volatility. But as shown below, depending on the core identities of parties, they may purposely seek to dilute their brands to build support beyond niche identities.

discuss in authoritarian contexts are similar to Kirchheimer's foundational description: They downplay distinct issue positions and ideology in favor of valence appeals, try to appeal to the widest possible audience of voters during elections, and have looser connections with their membership (Kirchheimer 1969). However, unlike catchall parties in developed democracies, catchall strategies and organizations in authoritarian settings are not necessarily borne of savvy modern political marketing techniques or in response to public opinion (cf. Wagner 2011). While some catchall opposition parties in authoritarian regimes *do* develop these capacities, most often their catchall orientation is the result of their lack of access to resources to develop party organizations or coherent political messaging, or their formation as the political vehicle for particular elites.

In the literature on European parties, niche parties are often defined in relation to their programmatic offers, and how they form around "extreme" ideologies, focus on non-economic issues, or build support based on a single issue (see discussion in Wanger 2011). Greene's work on niche opposition parties in dominant party authoritarian settings (2007) demonstrates that they similarly tend to have a strong and clearly identifiable party brand built around a programmatic message. The voters from which these parties draw core support are more likely to be committed partisans who are willing to forgo the benefits of being aligned with the dominant regime (Ibid.). But Greene's conceptualization usefully extends niche characteristics into their modes of campaigning and party organizations, given that parties are more likely to develop barriers to entry for activists and politicians rely on grassroots organizing rather than appeals in mass media (Ibid., 184-85).

Departing from Greene's approach, however, this dissertation shows that important variation can be observed between different types of niche identities, with vastly different implications for party strategies. While scholars have long recognized the tradeoffs that niche parties face in building broader appeal (e.g. Przeworski and Sprague 1988; Greene 2007; Meyer and Wagner 2013), this literature has not addressed the difference *between* different niche identities in the same environment.[19] First, the core demographics of niches vary in their presence in the broader population, limiting the maximum possible support parties may derive from that group alone (what Przeworski and Sprague term the party's "carrying capacity" (1988)).

Additionally, niche party bases also differ in terms of their geographical concentration. Parties might develop overwhelming strength in certain regions if their core demographic is geographically concentrated but may remain nationally marginal if their core demographic is a tiny minority in the rest of the country. Parties in the United Kingdom offer a useful illustration of this point. While the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Scottish National Party (SNP) are both niche parties, their core demographics are distributed differently. In the 2015 elections, the SNP won 56 seats (all located in Scotland) in the House of Commons with 5% of the national vote. UKIP, lacking a similar regional concentration of political supporters, won a single seat with 13% of the national vote. For the CUF opposition party in Tanzania, which developed around a religious and territorial identity in the

[19] This approach contrasts with both Lupu and Greene. Lupu examines whether parties are faithful to or inconsistent with their brands but does not examine the content of the brand itself. Similarly, Greene (2007) argues that opposition parties are generally niche – but does not query how different types of niches structure different political behavior.

autonomous region of Zanzibar, its regionally concentrated support has allowed to the party to build substantial local success but little headway elsewhere.

Different niche parties also have different audiences of swing voters. For opposition parties, potential targets of support often include "natural allies" of the party – groups outside their core constituencies who nevertheless share a similar set of interests with their core voters (Przeworski and Sprague 1988, 40–41). Just like core audiences, the size and electoral distribution of these swing voters varies across party. A party built around a religious identity, for example, can at least potentially appeal to all their coreligionists on the basis of a shared identity. But for a niche party advocating ethnoregional autonomy, their swing voters may be much smaller and highly geographically constrained.

Of course, there is no guarantee that swing voters will be attracted to a party based on similarity alone. But the link between party profile and potential voters reduces the potential dissonance between party appeals to these swing voters. It is also less costly in terms of party resources to mobilize swing voters who resemble the party's dependable voting base, given that they represent similar "communit[ies] of interest" whose interests do not directly conflict and can be "strategic objects of simultaneous appeals" (Kirchheimer 1969, 186).

By contrast, catchall opposition parties have a vague or diffuse party brand. Of course, even if these parties have little in the way of an identifiable party platform, they likely offer *something* which drives voters to their party: whether it is a leader's personal charisma, a broad message emphasizing economic populism, anti-corruption,

and anti-incumbent goals, or a combination of these factors. In other words, catchall parties must develop at least *some* brand, even if it is largely based on valence issues.[20]

Despite their looser organization and party identity, catchall parties may *also* derive support from distinct demographics in clearly defined territorial bases. But their problem is largely not the one faced by niche parties, which hew to an ideology or identity out of sync with a broad national population. Instead, catchall parties with limited support are more likely to suffer because of weaknesses in party resources, organization building, territorial penetration, and candidate recruitment. Examples of (theoretically) broadly appealing, but territorially limited, opposition parties abound in authoritarian settings. The Chadema opposition party in Tanzania, for example, has little ideological differentiation with other parties, yet has a clear base in particular regions of mainland Tanzania. The PKR in Malaysia, a broad party that has built its support around a multiethnic and anti-regime message and a charismatic leader, nevertheless was formed and found its consistent base of support largely in the region of West Malaysia, while only belatedly making significant inroads into East Malaysia.

It is important to note that while many of the main party cases in Malaysia discussed in this dissertation developed clear orientations around ethnic and religious identities, niche party identity is not synonymous with ethnic party status. Instead, ethnoreligious identity may be one of a number of distinct profiles around which parties derive support. The opposition parties in Malaysia were not distinct because

[20] Even mostly clientelistic opposition parties, by virtue of having positioned themselves outside the ruling government (or unable to join it for whatever reason), likely pursue something *in addition to* patronage, since party elites would be better served joining the incumbent party if their ambition ended at limited access to material resources (Beaulieu 2014, 19).

they appealed to ethnic identity, given that they often competed against ethnic and religious parties from the ruling government. They differed from their counterparts in the BN government because they had campaign appeals that often failed to capture their own coethnic voters, had limited party membership, and often took stances that did not seek the broad middle of the electorate. More broadly, the theory encompasses opposition parties that remain niche for reason not related to ethnicity, such as parties that hew to a particular ideology or lack resources to build broader party organizations.

Both niche and catchall opposition parties are likely to define themselves in clear distinction to the incumbent. After all, they may seek to receive electoral support from anti-regime voters who may or may not fit in with the typical profile of the party. These consistent anti-regime voters are still part of the party's core, since they consistently offer electoral support in the past and expected support in the future (Cox and McCubbins 1986). To hold on to these voters, parties are more likely to send public signals about their opposition to the regime, even if their behavior may be more ambiguous in practice. Thus, regardless of party profile, opposition parties are likely to share a common set of swing voters – anti-regime voters who can be appealed to on the basis of disaffection with the government and its policies. As shown later, this set of voters is a prime target for expansion strategies.

Table 4 below sums up the most important elements of party profiles. Table 8 in Chapter 3 shows how the opposition parties in Malaysia fall within these categories.

Table 4: Party Profiles

	Party brand	Size/electoral distribution of core and swing voters	Regime relationship/orientation
Niche	Strong	Geographically and demographically limited (for reasons of party identity)	Often combative
Catchall	Weak	Geographically and demographically limited (for lack of resources/effective messaging)	Often combative

Finally, I will address the factor of party organization and internal party dynamics. Some theories of party behavior and party change have sought to move beyond assumptions of parties as unitary actors, highlighting the importance of internal tensions over goals, strategy, and competing ambitions of individual leaders. In his critique of Downsian-derived spatial models, Roemer argues that parties are not only composed of "opportunists" seeking vote maximization, but "reformists" and "militants" who have policy preferences that may conflict with vote goals (Roemer 2006). Similarly, Greene's theory on opposition parties in authoritarian regimes prioritizes the role of new party activists in steering changes to party strategy (2007).

While the role of party factions and internal tensions have had a measurable impact in some of the parties discussed in this dissertation, there is no simple answer about how these factors line up with different party profiles. Some work links the level of party institutionalization to the level of factionalization within the party (e.g. Panebianco 1988, 60-61). However, even well-institutionalized niche parties are not free from internal tensions. In religious parties, for example, there may be significant

tensions between party factions seeking policy goals and pragmatically oriented politicians pursuing greater political space (cf. Wickham 2013). Factions do not always develop around ideological or strategic disputes, but instead around party leaders which develop competing centers of power within the party. As such, while I discuss the important factional tendencies in PAS in detail later on, I argue that these factions do not necessarily line up with a preference towards particular strategies. They are reflective of larger tensions deriving from party profiles and the costs and benefits of pursuing different strategies.

I argue that the other aspects of party profiles discussed in this section are more consequential as to whether parties pursue broadening versus coalition building. Internal organization and the level of factionalization may shape the effectiveness or ability of party leaders to make changes. The existing organizational structure and "internal power games" (Levitsky 2001, 31) are likely to vary in contingent ways across parties, affecting the ability of leaders to mobilize changes to party direction. Strong internal organization can either hamper the ability of leaders to shift the direction of their party, or alternately help them quickly and effectively disseminate new strategies.

Despite their different profiles, then, niche and catchall parties are united by their limited electoral support and political power and rhetorical positioned against the incumbent government/regime. But as will be shown in the following sections, different party profiles shape strategic choices that opposition parties face in appealing to new voters and expanding support.

While certain party profiles are likely to develop based on the institutional and social structural factors identified in the previous section, importantly, *both niche and catchall parties may coexist in the same system.* Even in Malaysia and Mexico, two extremely stable political environments which spatial theories would predict the emergence of only niche opposition parties (e.g. Greene 2007), catchall parties were also formed.[21] As noted in the previous section on party formation, parties may emerge at different times that incentivize either profile.

The party formation section has detailed how parties build up profiles as they seek voters. At their earlier stages of existence, opposition parties will primarily seek to engage in *party building* – turning into "electorally significant and enduring political actors" (Levitsky et al. 2016, 4). This may focus on consolidating power among core demographics, building party organization structure and expanding their branches, and seeking new sources of financial support. As in shown in Malaysia in Chapter 3 and in the comparative cases in Chapter 7, opposition parties often seek to first expand support based on their existing party identities *prior to* periods of weakening incumbent support. Party building strategies help parties build capacity to mobilize political support over time, both of core and swing voters; attract greater funding or political resources.

However, beyond this initial stage and in periods where they perceive opportunities to scale up, opposition parties are better positioned to attract new supporters beyond core constituencies. Parties are in general more likely to shift

[21] Similarly, in Russia's dominant party system, parties emerged "due to both the 'usual' ideological cleavages…. [along with parties] formed around business and other interest groups, [and] certain ambitious or rent-seeking personalities" (Turovsky 2014, 70).

behavior in response to "situational determinants," ranging from changes in the institutional environment, the proximity of elections, and contingent events such as changes in party leadership or political scandals (Strøm and Müller 1999). This sets up a basic dilemma for electorally ambitious parties: how to widen their base of supporters to expand their electoral power. The first major strategy to do so are the *individual strategies* to expand support through what I term party broadening. The second strategy, often pursued simultaneously, is to engage in *collective coordination and coalition building* with other opposition parties. These strategies share a common goal: mobilizing a wider base of electoral support for the opposition that will add a dependable new group of voters alongside existing core constituencies. These strategies can be undertaken during and after elections, as well as in political office.

Party Broadening

One of primary challenges of opposition parties is to expand their core base of support. Expanding core support is a better party strategy over the long term, since core supporters will more reliably turn out for the party and parties will be less dependent on election-specific vote swings. The dilemma of doing so is, in part, familiar to the one parties face in democratic settings. A large literature on distributive politics has explored when, and to what extent, parties focus on mobilizing core support or appealing to swing voters (Cox and McCubbins 1986; Dixit and Londregan 1996; Cox 2008). Unlike parties in democracies, however, opposition parties in authoritarian regimes face stark limits to engaging in what Dixit and Londegran (1996) term "tactical redistribution" – subsidies, tariff protections, pork barreling, and by extension other clientelist strategies such as vote buying (Dunning and Stokes

2007). By and large, these are tactics available to regime parties with access to state resources.

I argue that an important strategy for parties is to engage in what I term *party broadening:* changes to party organization, appeals, and brand in attempts to broaden core support. Importantly, "broadening" refers to the expansion of core support, and not necessarily a dilution of the party brand. A catchall party, for example, may seek to broaden its support by *strengthening* its existing party brand. Party broadening strategies can be thought of as a subset of broader forms of party adaptation: "changes in the strategy and/or structure [of a party] that are undertaken in response to (or anticipation of) changed environmental conditions and that then contribute to the party's capacity to meet its 'primary goal'" (Levitsky 2001, 29).

Parties may undertake several strategies of party broadening that vary in terms of their costs and level of commitment. The least costly strategy for parties is to pursue some form of partial broadening. Parties may make strategic changes to party rhetoric or campaign messages during an election. Parties may also supplement party brands by tailoring segmented appeals to voting groups on dimensions other than the core party identity (Madrid 2012; Luna 2014), bringing in new messaging or campaign styles to appeal to broader audiences. Longer-term strategies may involve changing the composition of party leadership and core membership. They may also take place in the context of governing, as opposition parties seek to develop links with new sets of voters.

Niche parties face greater pressure – and starker dilemmas – in pursuing broadening strategies compared to catchall parties. Niche parties building support

around demographically limited core audiences based on ethnic, religious, or ideological cleavages will face greater pressure to alter their core appeals should they wish to become nationally competitive. They are most easily identified with their core audience and are precisely the parties that face clear limits on their appeal. They are the parties which would benefit most from broadening strategies. However, they also face steeper tradeoffs in appealing to new voters and retaining core support. Such parties face greater skepticism from potential voters and core supporters if they attempt to change core party messages or party image.

Given their strong existing identification, niche parties must counter voter perceptions of their party (and portrayals of their party by the ruling government and in state-aligned media) as being ethnically exclusive, ideologically extreme, or simply not a party that can represent the broad electorate. As argued by Ferree (2010) in the context of opposition parties in South Africa, opposition parties seek to signal changes to their party image not only through campaign messaging but also changing party leadership and candidates. Party leaders and candidates provide a highly visible way for parties to broadcast changes to party brand in the absence of resources and media access (Ibid.). New supporters, members, or party activists can also help parties build stronger links to targeted demographics.

More comprehensive changes to party brand – making serious efforts to broaden the leadership and candidates of a party, for example – are more likely to be taken as more credible signals of party intent by voters. However, the success of these strategies also depends on the perceptions of voters about whether a party has "really" changed. For example, parties in ethnically divided societies often run non-coethnic

candidates, but the strategy is interpreted by voters as a "façade of multiethnicity" (D. L. Horowitz 1983, 320). Of course, even committed parties will find it difficult to change *all* aspects of their party. Rather, parties are more likely to "deliberately choose and switch between niche and mainstream profiles, in part due to strategic incentives" (T. Meyer and Wagner 2013, 1247).[22] It is more common to see parties seek to draw attention away from their existing identities by highlighting corruption, economic mismanagement, or authoritarian policies of the incumbent.

Broadening strategies often take time, not only for voters to update their perceptions about party labels (Ferree 2010), but to work against internal institutional inertia that resists major changes to parties. Changing core aspects of the party profile requires resources and time to cultivate new leaders, disseminate new party messages, and coordinate new strategies across the party.

Broadening is also risky, in that changes to party brands may invite dissent from key party factions or constituencies and leave the party vulnerable to counterattacks or pushback from other opposition parties and the regime. Strategies to appeal to swing voters may alienate core voters: For example, Przeworski and Sprague (1988) argue that for socialist parties in Europe, the numerical minority of the working class in electorate forced them to broaden their appeals to the middle classes – but as they did so, the parties found it harder to mobilize their core constituencies. Broadening strategies may also erode clear perceptions of party brand among voters,

[22] Meyer and Wagner focus on niche or mainstream profiles in terms of issue emphasis, but their point applies more broadly to the other elements of these profiles discussed previously.

leaving parties more vulnerable to swings in voter perception about party performance (Lupu 2014).

On the other hand, parties with a broad, catchall message can theoretically appeal to a broad majority of the electorate based on their existing profile. Therefore, their goal will be more to increase their credibility rather than shed their existing reputation. Catchall parties based around a popular politician or around an anti-regime message will face less contradiction between strategies to appeal to new voters and their own core audience. However, these parties may struggle with party building – securing a stable base of support, creating partisans, and differentiating themselves from alternatives. Therefore, as noted previously, broadening for catchall parties may focus more on *strengthening* their party brand to make more credible and coherent appeals to voters.

The previous discussion argues that niche parties generally face greater pressure to engage in more comprehensive broadening strategies to shed themselves of their existing party brand. But again, the type of niche that parties occupy also affects their strategies, and the costs and benefits to broadening. For example, weakening electoral support for the regime may be unevenly distributed. Urban voters may turn against the ruling power long before rural voters, giving parties with urban bases more opportunity to scale up their electoral support compared to rural-based or regionally constrained opposition. Thus, parties which derive support from different segments of the electorate face different pressures at different times to hew to core identities or to broaden their appeals even within a broad environment of anti-regime discontent.

These dilemmas are amplified in governance as well. As is described in Chapter 6, opposition parties often win control of subnational offices in regionally or demographically distinct areas, where they are most likely to find concentration of their core supporters and voters willing to forgo the benefits of being aligned with the ruling party. In such environments, niche parties with stronger party identities will face more difficult choices in satisfying core supporters in office without alienating the broader voting population.

Coordination and Coalition Building

The previous section has explained how individual parties seek to expand their support. But individual strategies are not the only path forward for opposition parties. Opposition parties in authoritarian settings frequently coordinate their efforts, ranging from "public statement[s] of mutual support…[to] division of electoral districts for each party to contest" (Gandhi and Reuter 2013, 147) – all the way to party merger (Langfield 2014).[23] Collective strategies are also very common: Gandhi and Reuter find that pre-electoral coalitions were formed in a quarter of all authoritarian elections held in the 2000s (Gandhi and Reuter 2013, 140).

In this section I focus on three goals of opposition party coordination: 1) strategic entry, 2) as an alternate strategy to party broadening, and 3) for building governing coalitions at the subnational level. I argue that both niche and catchall parties will pursue these strategies to supplement their electoral weaknesses, although niche parties are more likely to face steeper tradeoffs to pursuing these strategies.

[23] Opposition party mergers have occurred in numerous cases, including in Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa.

First, coalitions help opposition parties reduce the number of candidates running at the district or presidential level. Parties which do not coordinate are at risk of splitting the opposition vote between multiple candidates (Arriola 2012; Gandhi and Reuter 2013, 138). This is brought into stark relief in SMD plurality systems like Malaysia, where opposition parties seeking to win anti-regime voters have strong incentives to coordinate in legislative districts over which opposition party will put forward a candidate against the ruling coalition candidate. These dynamics are also observable in presidential contests, where opposition parties may coordinate around a single presidential candidate while building a coalition that can deliver votes from their respective core constituencies (Arriola 2012).

Second, by pooling material and symbolic resources, *coalition building can act as an alternate form of persuasion of swing voters.* Coalitions help parties create a broader oppositional identity which allows voters "to view the opposition as an alternative governing coalition" (Howard and Roessler 2006, 371). They also allow parties to coordinate over a broadly appealing or nationally popular candidate to represent the opposition.[24]

An opposition coalition with an anti-incumbent or anti-regime message is also attractive since it is likely one of the few issues that links disparate parties together. It also helps parties regardless of their individual brand to appeal more credibly to anti-regime swing voters in a given electoral district.

[24] Greene argues this is the case in Mexico, but around a single candidate and a single party (PAN and Vicente Fox in the 2000 elections). However, this election took place *after* the PRI government had enacted electoral reforms and lost its patronage and repressive strategy. Arguably, a single party pulling off this feat is much less likely where the government does not move first to level the playing the field.

Just as importantly, a broad oppositional identity allows parties to make credible appeals to new audiences without pursuing costly party broadening strategies. Parties in coalition are able to draw attention away from the "negative" aspects of their party brand (from the perspective of swing voters) by highlighting the opposition as a collective alternative to the regime. Coalitions encourage cross-party voting among opposition party supporters by providing a signal to that voting for another party furthers the aim of their own party. This strategy helps parties ride a wave of anti-regime sentiment, even if they do little to change the party's base or core brand.

But just like party broadening strategies, coalitional strategies may alienate core constituencies; or voters may not follow their party's signal to vote for a candidate from another party. These dilemmas are similar to those faced by social movements attempting to build coalitions, in which cooperation with "unreliable or tainted allies" may compromise the identity of a group in the eyes of its members (D. Meyer and Corrigall-Brown 2005). In South Africa, for example, the Coalition for Change, a formal alliance between the Inkatha Freedom Party and Democratic Alliance, suppressed core voter turnout (Langfield 2014). Rather, as one politician noted, "it switched off both our bases" (Ibid., 307). That two ideologically disparate opposition parties would work together simply confirmed the ANC's portrayal of the opposition as "opportunistic power-grabbers" in the minds of voters (Ibid.). As discussed in Chapter 6, Malaysia's opposition parties experienced both the positive and negative electoral consequences of coalitions.

Third, successful opposition parties may form *governing* coalitions at the subnational or national level. Notably, one of the major opposition coalitions in

Malaysia, the People's Alliance (PR), was formed after the individual opposition parties did well in the 2008 elections to form several state governments. Governing coalitions allow opposition parties to form majorities in government which would be impossible without coordination: The victorious Alliance of Hope (PH) coalition contested elections as a single force in 2018 and formed the national government by pulling in several additional parties. Subnational governments also offer a proving ground for opposition coordination, as will be seen in South Africa in Chapter 7.

Theoretical and empirical literatures have identified a number of factors that encourage or inhibit opposition coordination. In her large-n analysis of developed democracies, Golder (2006) finds that pre-electoral coalitions are more likely where parties are ideologically compatible, when potential coalition partners are similar in size, when party system is ideologically polarized; and in the presence of "disproportional electoral institutions" – specifically where district magnitude is low and electoral thresholds are high. Her argument contrasts to earlier literature which saw propensity to coalitions as a direct function of PR or plurality electoral rules (Ibid.). In authoritarian settings, an additional incentive for opposition party coalitions is the perceived strength of the ruling power and likelihood of regime transition (van de Walle 2006)).[25]

[25] Bunce and Wolchik argue instead that vulnerability of ruling government is less important than opposition coordination around pooling resources, campaigns, and deciding on a particular candidate (2011, 254). In any case, opposition coalitions may be recurring features of authoritarian systems regardless of regime strength, but they are more likely to widen in scope and power as regimes are perceived as weak. Conversely, where the regime appears unassailable and electoral or other gains of coalitions appear small, personal rivalries, strategic differences, and ideological divides are more likely to hinder coordination.

I identify several ways in which different party profiles influence the relative interest and ability of parties to form coalitions. (I discuss the tradeoffs of these strategies in terms of party profile in the following section). Niche parties are more likely to face accusations of opportunism from supporters (and from their political opponents) when they coordinate with parties representing very different political visions. They may find it difficult for them to credibly signal their ability to influence policies and politics if they are a marginal party in a crowded coalition. The resulting coalitions are also more difficult to hold together across ideological divides.

Confirming Golder's findings, in authoritarian settings, literature on specific cases has noted that barriers to coalitions are stronger where underlying policy or ideological differences divide niche opposition parties. As Haugbolle and Cavatorta (2011) argue in the case of Tunisia's opposition under the Ben Ali regime, "profound ideological, personal and strategic divisions" repeatedly hampered coordination among the opposition and made governing after transition difficult (326). Ideological polarization along extremes of competition has long been highlighted as a factor in the difficulty of creating an "ends against the center" coalition against a centrally located dominant party (Riker 1976).

On the other hand, catchall parties which enter into coalitions will likely face fewer costs among core voters and are less likely to face internal conflict. As in the Eastern European cases analyzed by Bunce and Wolchik, coalitions allow parties without clear roots in existing social cleavages to band together around common interests in electoral reform and changes in political leadership (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 251). Where opposition parties do not represent programmatic differences,

cross-ethnic coordination might simply be purchased by oppositions with access to resources, as Arriola (2012) argues in sub-Saharan Africa.

In sum, coalitions are a tempting strategy for parties *regardless of party profile* to build power – but for different reasons. For niche parties, coalitions are easier to "exit," and require less individual party transformation, than individual attempts at party broadening. They also help parties with strong brands signal to voters that they are accepted by other opposition actors. For catchall parties, they are able to build national support *without* investing in additional party organization or machinery.

For this reason, opposition coalitions often feature a combination of both niche and catchall parties. In Malaysia, for example, the catchall party PKR anchored coalitions between the two niche parties, PAS and the DAP, who would otherwise find it difficult to work together. Catchall parties or leaders may in fact be a key resource for opposition parties to secure a governing position in subnational office.

Table 5: Summary of Expansionary Strategies

	Individual/collective	*Examples*
Party broadening	Individual	Running more broadly appealing candidates; shifting positions on key issues; shifting emphasis away from niche issues
Coalition building	Collective	Loose electoral coordination; official electoral coalitions; joint statements or strategy around anti-regime message

Table 6: Hypothesized Goals of Expansionary Strategies

	Niche parties	*Catchall parties*
Party broadening	Dilute party brand to become more widely appealing	Strengthen party brand to become more credible
Coalition building	-Draw attention away from existing brand -Reduce number of electoral competitors -Create governing coalition	-Supplement weak campaign/organizational resources -Reduce number of electoral competitors -Create governing coalition

Tensions and Tradeoffs

While oppositions pursue these strategies over repeated electoral cycles, they are more likely to pursue them in earnest when they perceive that electoral inroads at the national level are possible. Favorable electoral environments may arise from national events or trends, such as long-term shifts in support away from the regime, short-term shocks such as financial crises or economic downturns, or the gradual decrease of material capacity of or support for the ruling power.

When regime support weakens, even risk-averse politicians and parties are more likely to target (and win over) ideologically or demographically distant voters registering their protest with the regime. But as noted in the party broadening section, weakening incumbent support may not be evenly distributed across all demographics. As will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4, different demographic groups in Malaysia began turning away from supporting the BN at different times, complicating the alignment of incentives between niche parties who derived support from them.

Another tension lies in the strategies themselves. Investment in party broadening or coalition building often precludes serious investment in the other. Specifically, I argue that greater intra-opposition coordination reduces the likelihood that niche parties with strong party brands will engage in party broadening. For catchall parties with weak brands, it helps them scale up their electoral challenges, but can delay the process of building an identifiable brand that can help them secure a core base of support.

As noted previously, opposition parties are incentivized to coordinate at the district level to present a single candidate who has the best chance against the regime candidate. The reason is that opposition parties often draw support from the same group of anti-regime voters, along with their party supporters located in the district. To win votes both from party supporters along with anti-regime voters, parties will seek to place a single opposition candidate to avoid splitting the anti-regime vote. But to do so, parties must decide which party is most likely to win in a given district. Frequently it is the party that claims to represent the largest demographic in a given district that will make more credible claims about their winnability, since they have a comparative advantage in mobilizing more voters.[26]

As a result, opposition parties which coordinate will tend to contest in regions and among demographics that are already part of their core party brand or base of support. This reduces their incentives to pursue risky and uncertain attempts at party

[26] Other considerations will come into play in deciding how to divide up seats, such as the relative size and strength of the coordinating parties, the viability of candidates, and negotiations among party leaders. But if party leaders have an interest in maximizing the number of seats won by the opposition, they will seek to put up the parties and candidates that are most likely to win.

broadening, especially where it may conflict with other coalition parties that have a perceived comparative advantage over mobilizing support from the same set of voters. Independent of brand, coordination effectively allows parties to shortcut the painstaking and painful process of individual party transformation by relying on coalition partners to help them mobilize votes. This is true even for ostensibly catchall parties, which usually still have a core regional or demographic voting group that they depend on.[27]

The "locking in" effects of coordination are stronger as parties pursue deeper forms of coordination and/or contest greater numbers of seats. If opposition parties only expand to new regions or demographics that are unclaimed by other parties, they will not face tension over seat division or contesting over the same voters. But since seats for legislative or subnational office are a finite resource, opposition parties that are scaling up their challenges will face strong incentives to divide seats rather than continually split the vote against an incumbent. If parties invest in pre-electoral or governing coalitions, they are less likely to upset the internal division of voters around existing demographic groups by making moves towards broadening.

This relationship does not work entirely in one direction; parties in coalition may be forced to moderate over policy stances or key issues in order to work together. Yet if the parties continue to contest seats where voters largely resemble their core demographics, they face much less pressure to pursue deeper party transformation.

[27] In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, the opposition coalition People's Partnership Coalition (PPC), comprised of two opposition parties, was formed in which the "the two component parties *retained their distinct identities*, but did not compete against one another… in any given district, a candidate of one of these parties stood for the PPC and the other party in the alliance abstained from the district's contest" (Shugart and Taagepera 2017, 70, emphasis added).

Though parties may make rhetorical concessions to issues key to party core audiences, for the most part, coalition members "simply coalesce around a shared goal of ousting the ruling party" (Resnick 2013, 736) without engaging in deeper forms of party transformation.

As such, coalitions help opposition parties harness protest votes, but forgo the creation of committed partisans. For catchall parties, coalitions help them appeal to new voters even as they remain organizationally weak or fractious, or resource-strapped. For niche parties, they will be more difficult to enter, but allow them to expand their appeals again without building the messaging and organizational capacity within their party to do so.

Table 7: Tensions Between Strategies and Expected Outcomes

	Benefits	**Costs**	**Expected Outcomes**
Party broadening ***(benefits and costs vary by party profile)***	Expand base of core support; shift perceptions of party brand among potential new voters	Risks alienating core supporters and factions; draws organizational and campaign resources away from core; less flexible than entering/exiting coalitions	Parties that broaden are more likely to conflict with opposition parties over the same pool of voters, hindering coordination
Coalition building	Reduce costly splitting of opposition voters and encourage cross-opposition voting; Create broad opposition identity that allow	Coalitions often unstable; limited returns if combined opposition strength is still low; "Marriages of convenience" may erode public	Parties that coordinate are more likely to divide up the electoral map based on existing strengths and thus less likely to

	parties to harness voter resentment against regime; Draw attention away from "extreme" positions by highlighting regime cleavage	perception of principled opposition parties; heightens tensions and contradiction between disparate party platforms	pursue party broadening

Strategies of the Ruling Power

The discussion above has focused on opposition party strategic choices. But how do incumbents alter these strategies and seek to defuse political opposition? In this section, I argue that the ruling power plays a key role in raising the costs for expansionary strategies and raising the benefits for parties to lessen their anti-regime stance. Incumbents seek to keep the electoral threat of individual opposition parties low, as well as pull apart fragile opposition coalitions. However, opposition party strategies are still guided by the characteristics described in previous sections, and are not purely reactive to ruling power strategies.

As noted in the first section, ruling powers shape political competition and patterns of cleavage politics. Opposition parties often lack the resources or political power to make significant alterations in these patterns (Way 2012), even as they try to build new identities or politicize new cleavages. In other words, the opposition parties must respond to the agenda-setting and policy choices of the ruling government. The incumbent also sets the rules of the game, which influence the relationships between opposition actors, as well as their relationships with the regime itself (Lust-Okar

2005). Ruling powers may play opposition forces off each other by selectively encouraging certain types of opposition or deepening their divisions (Ibid.).

But within this space of coercion and cooptation, opposition parties seek to position themselves to maximize their vote, office, or policy-seeking goals (Strøm and Müller 1999). These goals vary in terms of the necessity of regime alteration or preservation to achieve them. An Islamist party that has a strong policy agenda to enact Islamic policy or legal institutions, for example, may be willing to see these changes in either a democratic or authoritarian regime, making possible policy concessions by the ruling government around these issues in exchange for a lessening of anti-regime behavior. A party whose identity is based solely on its goal of democratization or incumbent overturn is less likely to be cooptable through policy concessions. Similarly, parties organized around loose party identities may face less internal resistance to patronage or powersharing offers by the incumbent.

Of course, parties often vary in their response over time to ruling power counterstrategies. The PAN in Mexico, for example, which developed a strongly niche and anti-PRI identity, tacitly supported the PRI's electoral fraud in exchange for negotiated political reforms (Magaloni 2008, 241–42). But PAN did not move away from winning greater power: A dozen years later, a PAN presidential candidate won against the PRI candidate, unseating the PRI from national executive power. Regardless of motivating issues, parties that accept the incumbent's offers and publicly or implicitly align with government may suffer significant erosion of their oppositional brand and may be electorally punished, even as cooperating may offer non-electoral benefits (Levitsky and Way 2010, 31).

For opposition parties that seek to use broadening and coalition strategies against the incumbent, ruling governments employ a variety of tactics. First, they can repress increasingly popular opposition parties, jailing prominent party personnel or harassing and punishing opposition supporters. The ruling government may selectively coopt opposition parties through targeted inducements. In heterogenous societies like Malaysia, the regime has incentives to counter opposition party attempts to build coalitions, since a divided opposition proves less of a threat than a united one. This can be done through techniques of repression, or accommodation – if parties can be induced to work with the regime on issues of importance for the party.

Second, incumbents often try to amplify the risks for opposition parties seeking to expand their support. The ruling government may highlight the alleged hypocrisy of "extreme" parties trying to win over new audiences across ethnic, religious, or regional lines. Such strategies increase the costs of supplementing core appeals with targeted messages to different groups (Luna 2014). In an important account of unsuccessful opposition party expansion in South Africa, Ferree (2010) argues that strategic media and campaign counterattacks by the ANC against opposition parties were a key factor in why they were unsuccessful in garnering cross-ethnic support despite significant attempts to broaden their appeal. By repeatedly portraying opposition parties as made up of opportunistic defectors, or as ethnically exclusive and extreme, or opposition coalitions as simply "shotgun marriages," ruling governments have powerful resources to undermine the credibility of the opposition.[28]

[28] The difficulty of opposition parties in broadcasting changes to their party platform or organization to potential supporters, and the ease by which dominant parties control narratives about the opposition, may be another factor in parties choosing coalitions rather than individual party broadening. Coalitions

Third, the strategies that ruling powers use to stay in office also shape the political choices of the opposition. As in Malaysia, ruling governments may control constituency delineation and use gerrymandering and malapportionment to maintain their advantage. Opposition parties may thus contest in constituencies designed to maintain a majority for the ruling government, and only win in disproportionately large electoral districts which are packed with opposition supporters. Ruling governments can also starve subnational offices of fiscal or policymaking resources, making it difficult for opposition parties to satisfy either core audiences or the broader electorate.

Regime strategies may also vary over time. In Malaysia, the incumbent BN vacillated between positioning itself as a moderate uniting force across ethnic and religious divides, and between policies, political campaigns and personnel that reflected strong Malay Muslim appeals in an effort to shore up its support among the majority population. As discussed in Chapter 3, these shifting strategies forced the opposition parties to respond – but also reflected how the ruling government sought to counter opposition strategies.

Measuring Success and Failure

Creating a broad measure of electoral success is complicated by the widely varying electoral systems, electoral thresholds, and levels of government across cases. Rather than employing a particular cutoff point in terms of percentage voteshare or seats, I argue that success or failure results in similar outcomes across political

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can be created quite quickly, even in the weeks before an election – while broadening requires investment over time, long enough for the ruling government to develop an effective counterstrategy.

systems. Low electoral success means that opposition parties have marginal footholds in electoral politics with little ability or willingness to make broad appeals and coordinate to scale up power. High levels of electoral success imply nationally popular parties that attract support from across the country.

Similarly, broad-based parties attract support from diverse constituencies, both demographically and geographically. In countries where ethnic or religious cleavages are strong, they will run diverse candidates and incorporate leadership, and attract at least some membership. They will contest in legislative or subnational seats that are broadly representative. By contrast, parties that fail to build broad-based organizations either rely heavily on a committed group of partisan or are subject to volatile voter sentiment about the incumbent regime. They will stay perpetually stuck in territorial strongholds but struggle to build broader demographic and/or geographic support. They are more likely to stall in key issues of party building, such as developing a membership base or coherent organization. Success in coalition building implies that parties are able to build relatively stable formations that help parties amplify their ability to govern and win elections.

Electorally strong and broad-based opposition parties are better positioned to overturn the incumbent through elections. However, as noted in the discussion above, parties may seek patronage opportunities, policy concessions, or a host of other goals short of regime or incumbent overturn. As such, I do not define regime change as the marker of success or failure. But all else equal, parties will be in a better bargaining position with the government or the opposition if they are electorally stronger. They

will be better able to pursue specific goals identified by party leaders, regardless of their content.

2.5 Scope

In this section, I lay out some of the scope conditions of the theory. To summarize the discussion below, I argue that the argument applies to *competitive authoritarian regimes with a hegemonic ruling party or party coalition and featuring a divided opposition*. As such, the theory applies to political systems where opposition parties are permitted to contest in elections and form stable bases of support without facing extreme levels of repression. In cases where opposition parties are formed or forced to merge by the government, as in Indonesia under Suharto, opposition parties face much more severe constraints. Second, it focuses on regimes where a single party or coalition of parties holds the preponderance of electoral and governing power for at least one electoral cycle. However, it does not only apply to cases above a cut-off point of ruling government longevity. Finally, political opposition in the country is generally channeled through multiple opposition parties, not entirely through independent candidates or social movements.[29] The intensity and root causes for divisions among the opposition, whether they are ideological, tied to ethnic or territorial identities, or rooted in personal ambitions of opposition leaders, vary across cases.

[29] Not all oppositions form multiple political parties; Taiwan, for example, featured a sole opposition party, the DPP. However, independent candidates played an important role in the country's politics and the DPP also faced significant internal factionalism between moderate and radical wings (Tien and Cheng 1997, 16–17). In other cases, opposition parties have sought to merge, as the two main opposition parties in Cambodia merged in 2013 to form the Cambodia National Rescue Party. However, these strategies are relatively rare.

As discussed in section 2.2, the theory assumes that opposition parties have some measure of autonomy over strategic choices. Ruling powers in competitive authoritarian regimes largely rely on what Levitsky and Way term “low-intensity coercion” against opponents – harassment, surveillance, and use of the legal system against opposition politicians and supporters (Levitsky and Way 2010, 58). While violent crackdowns on protesters or parties, dissolution of opposition parties, and other forms of strong coercion may be occasionally employed, they do not characterize ordinary political competition in hybrid regimes. In closed authoritarian regimes – where ruling governments drastically and systematically curb the ability of opposition parties to form, expand, or compete – the strategic incentives of opposition parties will differ. In such settings, opposition parties may not see vote maximizing as important if votes “are not the primary currency of politics" (Mainwaring 2003, 18). As noted in cases such as Egypt under Mubarak, where the opposition parties are “perfectly aware of their own status” as marginal actors, they may focus instead on clientelistic access (Albrecht 2005, 384).

The electoral system (and level of election) shapes the choices of opposition parties and the potential return on investment for different strategies. Malaysia’s parliamentary single member district (SMD) plurality system influenced party strategies in important ways. In winner take all elections, “what matters is where your votes are distributed across the territory, and how many opponents you face” (Shugart and Taagepera 2017, 81). The twin dilemmas of expansion and coordination faced by the opposition in plurality systems like Malaysia were clear. Since their core demographics were concentrated in different regions of the country, they needed both

to ensure they win the plurality of votes in their stronghold districts – but also ensure that other parties didn't enter the contest and end up splitting their core vote. To expand, they needed to win over a plurality of voters in additional districts – a task distinctly different from maximizing their total national vote.[30]

As noted by a classic parties literature, the single member district electoral system in countries like Malaysia and India works to "shrink" the number of competing parties, often to only two competitors. But given the social diversity in both countries, they have tended to have more than two parties. In Malaysia and India, two-party competition has taken place among different parties, depending on demographics and region. In fact, as noted earlier, both countries have featured two-*coalition* competition, with only two candidates representing broad national alliances contesting (cf. Shugart and Taagepera, 82).

Single member district systems are not uncommon in authoritarian settings. Focusing on legislative elections, Barberá finds that 70% of all elections in multiparty autocracies between 1950 and 2008 used SMD plurality (Barberá 2013, 15). SMD plurality systems like Malaysia are therefore the most common type of electoral system in authoritarian settings. In theory, parties in proportional representation systems are more likely to win representation even with small shares of the vote. However, given the electoral rules mentioned in the party formation section, they nonetheless face high barriers to entry. In his study, Barberá finds that roughly one

[30] Shugart and Taagepera state simply that that "national vote totals simply do not matter for allocating seats under FPTP" (Ibid.).

third of PR systems in authoritarian settings have an average district magnitude of five or fewer members, which makes them as disproportional as SMD plurality (Ibid., 16).

Another major difference that alters the calculations of parties in broadening or coalition building is whether there is a directly elected national executive. Presidential systems are common in authoritarian regimes, and also provide a key point of vulnerability. Analyzing all dominant parties since 1950, Templeman finds that dominant parties in regimes with presidential systems are more likely to be defeated in such elections (Templeman 2012).

Presidential systems offer several advantages and disadvantages to opposition parties. On the one hand, opposition parties can nominate a widely popular individual for election, even if they struggle to appeal to voters in legislative elections. An opposition party may thus concentrate its efforts on winning the office of president with significant downstream effects should they be successful (Ibid.). Parties may form legislative coalitions in response to a presidential win, avoiding the difficulty of ironing out pre-electoral coalitions. In fact, nationally popular candidates may simply bypass the party building process entirely by building only transient party vehicles. By contrast, in parliamentary systems like Malaysia, the opposition must consistently win multiple legislative offices to present a credible challenge, requiring intensive party organization building and campaigning.

On the other hand, opposition parties may still struggle to find the resources necessary to run a nationwide presidential campaign. Although presidential offices offered a focal point In Mexico and Tanzania, opposition parties still sought to build

support through subnational and national legislative challenges. Opposition party coordination may also be easier in parliamentary systems, where negotiation over any one seat are lower. By contrast, the benefits for parties to running their own presidential candidate are much greater.

Malaysia, like the other cases discussed in Chapter 7, is a classic case of a dominant party regime. Some of the literature cited above has framed opposition party challenges in view of the dominant parties which structure political competition (e.g. Pempel 1990; Scheiner 2005; Greene 2007; Magaloni 2008; Templeman 2012). This literature has noted specific facets of political competition in both democratic and autocratic variants of dominant party regimes, generally focusing on both the political and resource dominance and longevity of such regimes. However, the criteria for specifying such regimes has varied significantly between scholars (Bogaards 2004). In general, the literature has focused on four criteria: dominant parties must hold the majority of seats and/or dominate the bargaining process around government formation, shape the national political agenda, have access to resources that far outstrips the competition, and hold power for an unusually long time (e.g. Pempel 1990; Greene 2007).

As such, dominant party authoritarian regimes are considered a subset of competitive authoritarian regimes, with their primary distinguishing characteristic their longevity. But the empirical record of dominant party regimes is actually quite mixed. Many cases frequently considered as long-running dominant party authoritarian regimes – including Taiwan's KMT and the CPP in Cambodia – did not

actually face multi-party elections for 20 consecutive years, a common cutoff point employed by the literature (Templeman 2012, 70). They have had varying levels of staying power. Taiwan's KMT, for example, only faced eight years of genuine legislative and four years of direct presidential elections before losing power (Ibid.). Additionally, while niche parties may be more likely to form during long periods of unbroken dominance (Greene 2007), as argued in section 2.3, many important opposition parties have emerged in dominant regimes that do not fit that mold.

In contrast, I argue it is the lopsidedness of political competition and political power – rather than longevity per se – which is a key scope condition of the strategies outlined above. Nevertheless, Malaysia along with the three shadow cases discussed in Chapter 7 (Mexico under the PRI, Tanzania under the CCM, and South Africa under the ANC), all meet a commonly used criteria of dominance: unbroken rule for 20 or more years, preponderance of resources and policymaking power, and a dominant position in elected institutions.

Although the theory encompasses both niche and catchall parties, it presumes at least some level of party system institutionalization and electoral stability. (Dominant party systems offer favorable conditions for the development of these characteristics). Niche parties in the discussion above are generally well-institutionalized parties: they tend to have an identifiable and stable group of supporters in the electorate, coherent internal organization, and a smooth process of leadership succession (Randall and Svåsand 2002). Where parties are fundamentally unable to attract resources to campaign or build party organizations, and/or disappear

between elections, voters are unlikely to develop stable attachments to parties that allow them to build consistent support between elections. Party leaders are less likely to invest in party organizations or cultivate programmatic appeals with voters. All else equal, we would expect niche parties to emerge in settings with higher levels of party system institutionalization.

Of course, institutionalized parties may emerge even in weakly institutionalized party systems (Randall and Svåsand 2002), given the potential benefits of standing out from the crowd. Offering a "niche product" helps parties to differentiate themselves in a crowd of clientelistic parties (Resnick 2012, 1359). Thus, even within weakly institutionalized systems, there is ample room for "party innovation" as parties may seek to politicize new cleavages, such as taking advantage of increasing religious identification (Bleck and van de Walle forthcoming, 116–17).

Party systems which are *too* institutionalized may make it difficult for parties to enact major rebranding exercises given a stability of party attachments. The niche party literature developed in well institutionalized Western Europe, for example, has generally treated niche status as a fixed characteristic of parties (T. Meyer and Wagner 2013, 1247), suggesting stable party competition may make it almost impossible for parties to navigate out of their marginal position. Similarly, even in relatively well-institutionalized party systems like Malaysia, newcomer parties without strong party organizations and funding have repeatedly entered into national political competition and won credible shares of the national vote.

But dilemmas of opposition look very different if *all* opposition parties in a given system lack a clear identity or face chronic resource or organizational weakness. For example, where clientelist short-term considerations predominate in the decision of political entrepreneurs, the willingness of parties to be coopted by the regime are likely much higher (cf. Turvosky). If all parties tend to be loosely affiliated with politicians, and continually struggle to attract resources, they may focus almost entirely on "one shot" coalitional strategies that seek to harness favorable political conditions to win power. Therefore, the theory does presume there are at least some opposition parties within a given political system that persist between elections and have a minimum level of electoral competitiveness.

Finally, in the primary case of this dissertation, ethnic and religious political competition looms large. A primary concern for Malaysia's parties, many of which emerged to represent specific ethnic and religious identities, has been to derive support from voters across ethnoreligious lines. While Malaysia may be unusually polarized in this regard, the theory is applicable to countries where ethnoreligious cleavages are not prominent and other cleavages are prominent. The additional cases discussed in Chapter 7 show that the theory works across countries where cleavage structures do not hinge on ethnic or religious identity.

CHAPTER 3

EVOLUTION AMID STASIS: POLITICAL COMPETITION IN MALAYSIA

3.1 Introduction

Malaysia's victorious opposition coalition did not have an auspicious start. In January 2016, I observed the first public event of what was then the country's newest iteration in opposition coalition building, The Alliance of Hope (PH), held in a cavernous conference center on the outskirts of the capital Kuala Lumpur. Three opposition party leaders – Lim Guan Eng, Wan Azizah, and Mat Sabu – took to the stage before a modest gathering of party members and journalists, their entrance incongruously set to Star Wars' "Imperial Death March." The event took place several months after the previous opposition coalition, the most stable electoral and governing opposition coalition up to that point, had collapsed: A key coalition partner and one of the country's most potent opposition parties, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), had decisively cut its ties with the opposition in favor of working with the ruling government over its policy and (alleged) patronage goals.

The three leaders on the stage were veterans of the opposition. Lim Guan Eng, the Chief Minister of Penang state, is a long-time leader of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a party strongly identified with its Chinese base. Wan Azizah, the wife of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim who entered politics after her husband was jailed over charges of sodomy, heads the multiracial People's Justice Party (PKR). Mat Sabu, a progressive Malay Muslim politician known for his charismatic oratory, is the president of the recently formed the National Trust Party (Amanah), a moderate

breakaway faction from the staunchly Islamic party PAS. Each of these opposition parties, as well as the fourth coalition member that joined a year later,[31] represented a mix of distinct party profiles with varying bases of support and core demographics. But the three party leaders also seemed united in their unstinting opposition to the dominant BN coalition.

The party convention for UMNO held later that year was a very different event. UMNO's building stands tall in the skyline of downtown Kuala Lumpur. Before and during the convention, the media highlighted the most important events and speeches and predictions about its outcomes. The convention took place in UMNO's centrally located multi-level convention center, with carefully scripted speeches and events. Attendants crowding the center represented a fraction of the party's claimed 3.5 million members in 2015, in 12 of the country's 13 states (Ahmad 2015). In between party events, participants milled the stalls set up by major government agencies.

This chapter, as well as the next three empirical chapters, explain both the sources of the BN's extraordinary staying power, and how the opposition parties – without access to significant resources, limited media coverage, and constant pressure from the incumbent – managed to unseat the ruling coalition. In the following sections, I will explain first how the BN and its dominant party UMNO grew out of colonial Malaya to win every election after the country's independence in 1957 until

[31] In 2017, the Alliance of Hope would be joined by a fourth party, The United Indigenous People's party (Bersatu), headed by the 92-year old ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Mahathir reassumed the prime ministership after the victory of the Alliance of Hope in 2018.

2018. I will first provide a brief history of the ruling coalition's origins, how it strategized in elections, and how it maintained its dominance over 61 years.

I will then describe the emergence of the major opposition parties at different periods, showing the characteristics that gave rise to their distinct party profiles. I then discuss how these background conditions shaped opposition party behavior in the increasingly favorable electoral environment beginning in 1999. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, these party profiles inextricably shaped the different dilemmas they faced in scaling up. The electoral opportunities presented by weakening support for the BN were uneven, given the segmented bases of support the parties relied on. The incumbent government found specific strategies to coerce, coopt, or paint the opposition in a negative light based on those profiles. These factors complicated their ability to coordinate, and how they could reach new voters beyond their core bases.

3.2 Colonial Legacies and Patterns of Communal Bargaining

Patterns of political competition that shaped modern-day strategies emerged from what was then colonial Malaya. Beginning in the 18th century, the British controlled territory in what became modern-day Malaysia under different systems of administration: The Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements (Singapore, Penang, and Melaka), the protectorate of North Borneo, and the Malay States under indirect rule. The colonial administration significantly altered the demographics of the region, encouraging migrant labor from India and China to work in the tin and rubber industries, and to build the country's rail and road infrastructure. Malays, by contrast, remained largely employed in the agricultural sector. The state deepened these

divisions by developing a dual system of administration: a system of district officers for administering over Malay communities, and "Chinese Protectorates" for the Chinese community (Andaya and Andaya 2017, 184–85).

The splits between ethnically defined communities deepened under the Japanese occupation of Malaya beginning in 1941. The Japanese administration meted out harsh treatment and violence against ethnic Chinese under their charge, in response to their financial support for the Guomindang and Communist Party in China in the fight against the Japanese (Ibid., 265). At the same time, the Japanese administration treated Malays with less harsh treatment, encouraging Malay nationalist groups in the waning years of the war and offering some limited advancement to Malays in the civil service (Milne and Mauzy 1980, 22).

After World War II, the British sought to consolidate the colonies into a single federal structure in a move towards more direct rule. The proposed Malayan Union, which would have provided citizenship for non-Malays in the colony and diluted the power of Malay sultans, met vociferous protest from Malay nationalist groups. The British scrapped the proposal and instead introduced the Federation of Malaya in 1948, which provided citizenship for non-Malays by application. Importantly, in exchange for these citizenship rights and to assuage fears of Malay marginalization, the colonial administration also guaranteed economic assistance to the Malay population and did not alter the rights of the Malay sultans (Fernando 2015, 539).

The Malayan Communist Party (MCP), a largely ethnic Chinese guerilla force that had formed the backbone of anti-Japanese resistance during the war, returned to armed violence in 1948. This led to the Emergency, a 12-year fight between guerillas

and the British colonial state. Although numerically small in number, the MCP proved difficult for the British to quell. In seeking to cut off support for the MCP, the British forced around 500,000 mostly Chinese inhabitants into more easily monitored "New Villages" (Milne and Mauzy 1980, 32–33).

The supporters of independence for Malaya used the intractable conflict with the MCP as further justification for self-rule. A multitude of political organizations had formed in the wake of agitation against the Malayan Union that pressed for independence. Two of the most important were the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which had its origins as one of the original opponents of the Malayan Union. The second was the Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association (MCA), a political organization encouraged by the British that sought to draw Chinese loyalties away from the communists (Milne and Mauzy 1980, 23). As discussed in the next section, these two political organizations became the founding members of the Alliance political party coalition that eventually became the ruling National Front (BN) coalition.

The British government agreed to hold a Constitutional Conference in London in 1965 that would provide for an independent Malaysia in the following year. After ratification of the new constitution, the country declared its independence on August 31, 1957. Two features of the new state set the stage for post-colonial patterns of political competition. First, it was an ethnically diverse, but divided new state. At independence, a little less than 50% of the population were Malay or indigenous, with 37% Chinese and 12% of the population Indians (Crouch 1996). Malays at independence were a largely rural agrarian class, with ethnic Chinese in tin mining

and agriculture but also dominated urban economic business. Ethnic Indians were employed in rubber estates and held limited roles in the civil service.

Second, the position of non-Malays in the new country, especially the Chinese, was contentious. The MCP continued its guerrilla struggle with the support of ethnic Chinese. However, the constitution extended full citizenship to non-Malay citizens of the country. In exchange for non-Malay citizenship rights, the new constitution enshrined Malay dominance in social, political, and economic spheres. The Constitution laid out special rights for Malays and the "natives" (indigenous ethnic groups) of Sabah and Sarawak. The provisions covered a wide range of issues. Malays were provided ethnic quotas in the civil service, "Malay reserve land" that could not be leased or sold to non-Malays, the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) as the national language, and Islam as the national religion. State-level constitutions in the nine "Malay States" held that the Chief Minister position (equivalent to state governor) could not be held by a non-Muslim.

To bound the beneficiaries of these policies, the Constitution included a definition of Malay identity: A citizen who lives in Malaysia, follows Malay custom, speaks Bahasa Malaysia, the national language, and is Muslim.[32] In the original debates over the constitution, both the British and the Alliance coalition (described below) agreed that that these rights would not be permanent (Fernando 2015). Nevertheless, a time frame was not written into the constitution, and it was agreed that

[32] Other consequential factors were the nature of federalism and the preservation of the monarchy. By virtue of different patterns of colonization of the British, individual states retained institutions such as the local hereditary monarchies in nine of the states. The two states of East Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, have more autonomy, with power over immigration, native customary law, and personal law.

the rights would be subject to review at a later period (Ibid). Despite this, the "special rights" of the Malays became a linchpin of government policy to the modern day.

The Malaysian state took its modern-day form in 1965, with thirteen states in a united federation: 11 states in West (Peninsular) Malaysia and two states in East Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, on the island of Borneo.[33]

From the Alliance to the BN

The origins of the dominant BN coalition were in the first set of elections held prior to independence. UMNO and MCA contested together in the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections in 1952 to defeat a multiethnic party, the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). Given their success, the two parties formed the Alliance coalition along with a third party, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). The Alliance first contested in the 1955 elections. It aimed to showcase the case for self-rule, and to agitate for independence on the basis of checking communism and the Malayan Communist Party (Ongkili 1986, 115).

The Alliance had started not as "the result of any grand vision, idealism or inspiration on the part of its creators [but rather]… purely a temporary electoral arrangement at the local level" (Vasil 1980, 63). But its subsequent success cemented a pattern of political competition centered around a coalition of ethnic parties. The Alliance also helped the parties pool resources: UMNO had little financing given its base of rural Malays working in agriculture. It relied on the MCA, had financial means and was primarily run by businesspeople, to fund its campaigns (Gomez 2012,

[33] Singapore was a state of Malaysia until 1965, when it separated to become an independent nation.

1382).[34] Thus, patterns of cooperation and non-competition between distinct racial parties in coalition were already in place in Malaysia's pre- and immediate post-independence politics.

The Alliance continued to dominate post-independence politics, but with an increasingly authoritarian bent. In 1965, following continuing tensions with Indonesia, the government halted local elections stating that they could be a cover for subversive activity by communists and supporters of Indonesia (Tennant 1973, 355). In doing so, it also deprived some of its opposition, particularly the PAP (the predecessor of the DAP), from a major source of urban electoral strength. Local elections were formally abolished in 1976.

The electoral success of the Alliance was substantially challenged in the national elections held in 1969. In unexpected results, the Alliance lost its 2/3 majority in parliament, and won only 45% of the popular vote. The component parties, particularly the MCA, were simply unable to mobilize their core demographics (Ongkili 1986, 203). Three days after the election, on May 13, 1969, ethnic violence erupted in Kuala Lumpur, leading to looting, arson, and the deaths of at least 196 people. A post-mortem by the government largely blamed ethnic Chinese opposition supporters for "arrogance beyond belief" in celebrating the electoral victory and stated that the electoral results "gave [Malays] cause for fear over their future" (NOC Report quoted in Ongkili 1986, 204). While this viewpoint was adopted by subsequent

[34] MCA had extensive involvement in business activities, including a lottery, cooperative businesses, an investment arm (Gomez 1990, 49–50).

scholarship, some scholars allege that the violence was provoked by UMNO leaders and with the complicity of the army (e.g. Soong 2007).

The ethnic violence of May 13, 1969 marked a significant turning point as the ruling government coalition deepened its authoritarian turn. A day after the violence started, a state of emergency was declared, parliament was dissolved, and elections suspended. In place of the parliament, a National Operations Council (NOC) was created, chaired by then-deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, which lasted until February 1971.

After the resumption of parliamentary activity in 1971, the parliament passed resolutions that banned the discussion of sensitive issues outlined in the Constitution – including the special rights of Malays, the status of Islam, the position of Malay as the national language, and the status of the Malay royalty. The pretext of the policy was to avoid further ethnic tensions, although Chew Huat Hock argues that this ban on public discussion and in Parliament also served to "severely [restrict] the appeal of opposition parties which had made [these issues central to] their platform in the elections" (Chew 1980, 8–9).

In the wake of the election, the Alliance was reformulated under a new, expanded coalition named the National Front (Barisan Nasional, or BN). The formation of the National Front, formally registered in 1974, was useful for several reasons. First, it allowed the Alliance to absorb several of its opposition party competitors, including PAS and the multiethnic (although majority Chinese) party Gerakan (Crouch 1996, 33). Second, it solidified the place of UMNO as the first among equals in the coalition. The effect of joining the coalition was often to weaken

the claims of non-UMNO parties as representatives of their communities, leaving the parties even more dependent on UMNO. UMNO also deepened its territorial penetration, as then-Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak set up UMNO advisory boards in all the country's states to influence the running of state governments.

The new coalition also cemented a decisive turn in politics towards further entrenching Malay dominance. It marked the beginning of "a new social contract… imposed by a new generation of Malay leaders that dramatically changed the balance of ethnic advantage and disadvantage" (D. L. Horowitz 2014, 10–11). I return to one of the most significant policies of this period, the NEP, in the following section.

3.3 Strategies of Authoritarian Legitimacy and Control, 1971-2018

The authoritarian period in Malaysia's politics began in earnest in 1971, although Alliance policies in the post-war period had already moved toward a narrowing of political competition and disadvantaging of its opponents. The BN ruling coalition proved extraordinarily adaptable as it further entrenched its power. Its pole party UMNO transformed into a formidable party organization with enormous resources at its disposal. The ruling coalition weathered corruption scandals, fiscal and economic crises, and oversaw the country's tremendous changes in the country's economy and society. This section will briefly outline the sources of the impressive dominance of the BN from the resumption of elections in 1971 to its fall in 2018. Rather than provide a comprehensive history of this period, I will focus on the BN's strategies to stay in power and how they shaped the opposition it later faced.

One of the primary sources of BN's staying power was its control of electoral institutions that tilted competition in its favor. The disadvantages that the opposition

parties faced were numerous. Open public rallies and political marches were banned after 1969, allowing only small-scale *ceramah* (political speeches) and house-to-house campaigning as the primary venues for opposition campaigns. The campaign periods are extremely short, usually less than two weeks, meaning non-regime parties had little chance to disseminate messages during elections, whereas the BN could use the media to outline its development promises for months beforehand. The BN coalition was allowed to register itself as a party, meaning every candidate put up by the BN would be listed with the coalition logo but not their individual party identification; opposition coalitions were never allowed to do the same.

Accusations of electoral fraud and malpractice have plagued elections for decades, including substantial numbers of "phantom voters," non-citizen voters, and the sudden transfers of voters to ensure a BN candidate wins. In 1999, for example, over 7% of electorate, mostly newly registered voters, were not able to vote (Holst 2012, 68). But as described below, the BN rarely engaged in outright electoral fraud in ways that spurred widespread opposition and anti-regime organization in other contexts (cf. Bunce and Wolchik 2010). Instead, the government was extremely successful in permitting electoral competition that, because of asymmetries of media access, resources, and careful manipulation of electoral competition, could never seriously threaten its hegemony.

The BN government also regularly redesigned the country's constituencies to reflect its changing support base and to pack opposition supporters in large districts. Legislative districts after 1971 reflected the government's increasing emphasis on Malay support. In 1969, Malays were majority of 60% of legislative seats; by 1984

they were majority in 74% seats (Means 1991, 114). More drastically, in the East Malaysian state of Sabah, the federal government sought to dilute the power of the non-Muslim populace by providing citizenship to Muslim immigrants from the Philippines and Indonesia residing illegally in the region (J. Chin 2014). In the state of Sabah, the population of the state increased by 390% from 1970 to 2010 as a result, leading to the state becoming Muslim-majority (Ibid.). At a later period, as Chinese supporters swung back to the BN during a period of economic growth in the 1990s, the BN sought to create more multiethnic constituencies that were favorable to its base of support (G. K. Brown 2005). By the early 2000s, the BN again veered towards a strategy predicated on Malay support and sought to amplify the power of rural majority Malay constituencies through its redistricting strategies.

Malapportionment was another key tool used by the government to amplify its seat allocation out of proportion with its voteshare. BN-voting districts were on average much smaller than opposition-voting districts, meaning that opposition voters were concentrated into large constituencies (Ostwald 2013). By the 2018 elections, the NGO Bersih claimed that the BN could hold the majority of seats with only 16.5% of the national voteshare under proposed redelineation rules (Mohsen 2018).[35]

[35] Wong Chin Huat argues that the stark limits faced by the opposition DAP and PAS within the context of gerrymandering and malapportionment prevented the parties from seeking to broaden their support. Instead of trying to "move to the center of the political spectrum," they "clung on to communal issues and positions" because their only winnable seats were in their ethnic strongholds (Wong 2018, 53). However, this may overdraw the significance of these factors. After all, the opposition made significant inroads despite repeated redistricting exercises. It may only serve to amplify the problems faced by parties in FPTP systems like Malaysia. In the United Kingdom, for example, no party has won the majority of the national vote since 1931, yet a single party regularly wins the majority of seats (Shugart and Taagepera 2017, 81). Labour historically won disproportionately more seats than the Conservatives because of the "underlying geographies" of Labour's core demographics, which were on average stronger in seats with smaller constituency sizes (Johnston and Pattie 2011, 21).

Like Mexico under the PRI, the BN government also sought to constrain national and subnational institutions. Its national legislature was given limited policymaking power. The government practiced a system of "centralized federalism," constraining state-level institutions. As noted previously, the federal government suspended elections for mayors and city and district councils beginning in 1965, and formally eliminated them in 1976. Although it tolerated state-level opposition governments for much of its history, it used a variety of fiscal and institutional punishments against the governments. These institutions and strategies are covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

The BN government also exerted tight control over the media environment, especially television and print media. BN parties directly own widely-read newspapers, with UMNO controlling the Malay-language *Utusan Melayu* and the MCA controlling the English-language *The Star.* BN-aligned media tended to provide uncritical coverage of BN policies, with opposition parties given little or negative coverage. Some scholars have emphasized the importance of online media, which became prominent in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in allowing for alternative viewpoints and criticism of the government (e.g. Steele 2009). But even today, three of the four most visited news sites are ones long aligned with the government.[36] As such, the opposition parties had little space to shape the national political conversation, and instead relied on elections, limited space in governing institutions, and their own party newspapers.

[36] The Star (owned by the BN party MCA) is the most visited website in the country, followed by Malaysiakini, Sinar Harian, Harian Metro, and Utusan Melayu.

Just as importantly, the control of the popular narrative allowed the BN to claim the country as a democracy. Although the regime had for decades been a competitive authoritarian regime by standard definitions of the concept, most Malaysians thought otherwise. In the Asian Barometer Survey conducted in 2014, only 4% of survey respondents identified Malaysia as "not a democracy," while 21% and 58% percent characterized it as a "full democracy" or a "democracy with minor problems." The same survey also suggests that some of the key issues facing the opposition were not clear to respondents: 67% of respondents stated that the political parties in the country have equal access to the media. At the same time, economic issues, employment and corruption were characterized as the most important issues facing Malaysian society; less than 1% said that democracy or political rights were the most important issues.

The BN also benefited from extensive state involvement in the economy. One of the most significant policies implemented by the BN was the New Economic Policy (NEP), passed in 1971 (followed by the National Development Policy, NDP, from 1991-2000). The stated purpose of the NEP was poverty alleviation and the elimination of ethnic disparities in the economy and in education (Lee 2014). But the NEP provided preferential treatment for the Bumiputera population, of which Malays are the majority, across a wide variety of social, economic, and political spheres (J. Chin 2016, 26–28). For example, the country's largest university, known as UiTM, was created exclusively for Bumiputera students, and all government procurement was required to set aside a portion of their business for Bumiputera entrepreneurs (Ibid.).

While these policies were ostensibly oriented toward the larger Bumiputera population, the Malay population was most economically impacted: In particular, the NEP helped create a state-dependent Malay middle class (Giersdorf and Croissant 2011, 8). It provided numerous policies to Malay political and business elites that helped bind them to the government, from providing the exclusive right of Bumiputera businessmen to import foreign cars to the allocation of 30% of shares in IPOs on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange to Bumiputera (J. Chin 2016, 30).

The government itself continually expanded to keep support of ordinary citizens, particularly Malays. The country has one of the largest civil services in the world; and the highest civil servant to public ratio in the Asia Pacific (K. S. Lim 2013). The civil service is largely dominated by ethnic Malays. In 1969-70, Malays made up 64.5% in civil service; by 2009 they were 76.2% of the total (Woo 2015, 234). UMNO traditionally used the civil service as a recruiting ground and source of support during elections.

Party finances are not made public, but UMNO became notorious for the "money politics" that marked both its internal elections and its campaigning in national elections. UMNO benefited from the lax system of party finance regulation, where there are no legal limits on political party spending and political donations are anonymous (Dettman and Gomez forthcoming). As shown later in this chapter, these rules did not explicitly punish the opposition, but made it difficult particularly in their formative years to attract political donations and support.

The BN government used its institutional and economic power to reward supporters and punish opponents. As then-Prime Minister Tun Razak stated on the

campaign trail in 1969, “We must help those people who support us. We reward support through benevolence" (Milne and Mauzy 1980, 108). In 2010, his son and then prime minister Najib echoed the sentiment in a notorious declaration to voters that if “You help me, I help you.”[37]

But Malaysia also coupled its clientelistic strategies with decades of impressive and sustained economic growth. Since the 1970s, Malaysia’s levels of infant mortality, primary education, electrification, and infrastructure have grown much faster than other countries in Southeast Asia. Malaysia joined the ranks of “upper middle income” countries by 1995, far outstripping its regional neighbors (except Singapore and Brunei) in per capita income and industrialization (Lafaye de Micheaux 2018, 5). Government statistics suffer from significant discrepancies (Ibid, p xx) that may be politically motivated. But regardless, economic growth led to significant poverty reduction. Fewer than 5% of Malaysians live below the poverty line, down from half the population in the 1970s (Ibid., 7-8).

The dominant BN coalition did not only keep the elite in line through distributing patronage, mobilizing voters using the party machine, and offering one of the few ways of advancement in politics and business (see (Brownlee 2007; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010). The coalition also played a key role in cementing the legitimacy of UMNO dominance within Malaysia’s multiethnic society. By virtue of its coalitional arrangement, the BN and UMNO could embody contradictory policies and political messaging that veered from broad, moderate, and multi-ethnic, to sometimes extreme

[37] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwNLT428PqU

statements of *ketuanan Melayu* (ethnic Malay dominance) and religious conservativism.

Nevertheless, Malaysia fell far short of a consociational system of government. As argued by Donald Horowitz, Malaysia lacks the features of consociationalism identified by Lijphart: The grand coalition of political leaders representing significant segments of the population, minority veto to protect their interests, proportionality of representation, funds, and civil service appointments, and autonomy of different groups (Lijphart 1977). Instead, Malaysia has been dominated by its ethnic Malay majority population which was "greatly advantaged in government positions and financial allocations" (D. L. Horowitz 2014, 9).

While the BN could claim to capture the "broad middle" during at least part of its tenure, in its last decade in power the BN sought to shore up its support among the Malays, dramatically increasing its outright Malay Muslim appeals. If BN's support was in line with its promoted image, then we would expect its support to rise or decline in roughly similar ways across the broad population over time. But in fact, the BN's gains and losses were often amplified among distinct ethnic groups. This was most starkly illustrated by the "Chinese tsunami" of 2008 and 2013, where ethnic Chinese support for the BN weakened dramatically, and the partial Malay swing in 1999 while ethnic Chinese support was strong.

In essence, the coalition arrangement was key to the flexibility of the dominant party's successful adaptation to changing social and political circumstances (cf. Pempel 1990). The coalition could effectively pursue "segmented strategies" (Luna 2014) – appealing to different bases of its support using combinations of patronage,

economic development, and ethnic accommodation. Given its tight control over the media, contradictions in its policies and pronouncements were rarely highlighted or challenged in public discourse. Notably, the major parties of the BN never deviated from a communal logic to their party profiles, even as BN politicians and media relentlessly criticized the opposition for their "chauvinist" profiles. UMNO could deflect such criticism by calling upon the historical reputation of the BN as a multiethnic coalition; given the much more fragile and contentious opposition coalitions, the opposition was only partially able to rely on the same logic.

This flexible image heavily conditioned the strategies and appeals of both the BN and its opposition. Strong informal norms dictated an ethnic division of labor across political and economic sectors and a political system that accommodated at least some minority representation. As such, the BN effectively turned debate over the proper levels of inclusion and representation for different groups as part of an overall power sharing agreement. For representatives of ethnic or religious groups, it made sense to try to use existing mechanisms within the BN coalition to press for improved access. The BN could also absorb new competitors who represented new issues or leaders, making the regime cleavage (for at least some of its potential opponents) porous and easily crossed.

Ethnic and Religious Politics in Malaysia

> "Malaya is for the Malays and…it should not be governed by a mixture of races."
>
> –Malaysia's First Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, quoted in the Straits Times July 1, 1952 (in Vasil 1971, 62).

As shown in the previous sections, ethnicity and religion[38] have formed key issues around political contestation and the formation of the ruling government. As will be shown in the empirical chapters, ethnic and religious identity were key issues around which the opposition parties sought to mobilize support around or seek to transcend. This section will briefly justify this focus and address alternative explanations of Malaysian politics that focus on non-ethnic issues.

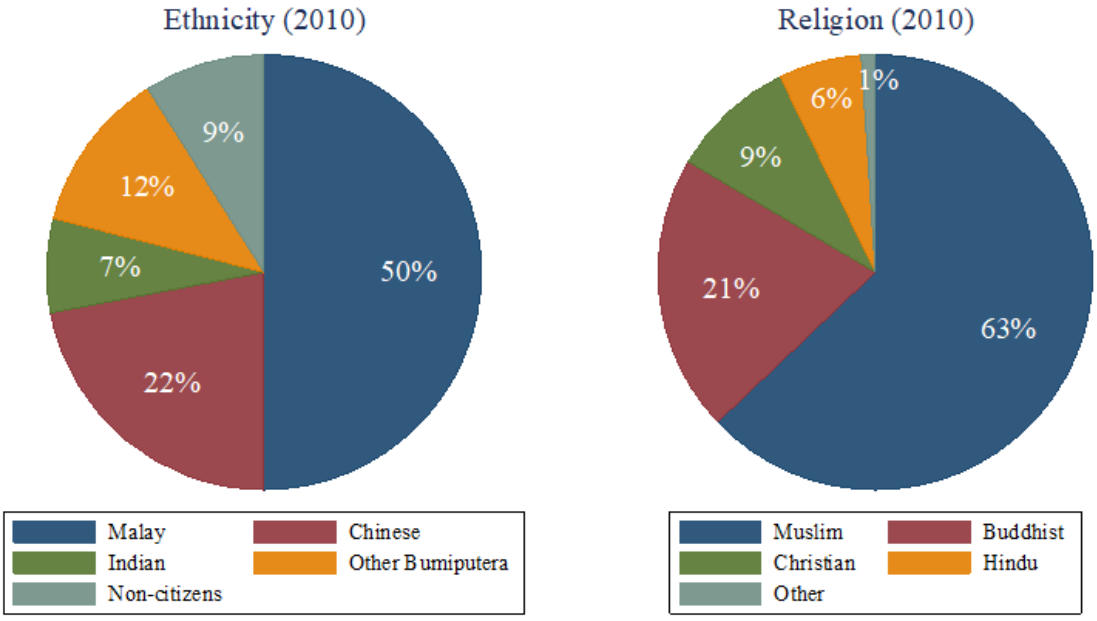
Given the centrality of ethnic representation to the BN's legitimacy, the government sought to shape these cleavages in support of its political goals. Perhaps no better example of this is the term of Bumiputera. After the 1970s, the government began promoting the use of the term Bumiputera (literally "sons of the soil") to refer to all of the country's "indigenous" groups – both Malays and the native inhabitants of East Malaysia. This helped solidify the "native" majority demographic against the significant minority Chinese and Indian populations. Today the Bumiputera collectively make up around 62% of the population. Malay Bumiputera are primarily concentrated in West Malaysia, and Other Bumiputera communities are largely located in East Malaysia on the island of Borneo. "Other Bumiputera" is an umbrella category itself, under which dozens of indigenous ethnolinguistic groups are housed.

Figure 1 below shows the modern-day break down of ethnic and religious groups. I separate Malay and Other Bumiputera into separate categories, although

[38] Although religion is sometimes treated as a subset of ethnicity in the larger literature, I treat these as separate categories given their different articulations and implications in Malaysian society – and more broadly (cf. Grzymala-Busse 2012).

government documents in recent years have increasingly failed to separate groups within this category.

Figure 1: Ethnic and Religious Demographics of Modern Malaysia



Given these dynamics, a large literature on Malaysian politics has emphasized the role of ethnicity both at the elite level (Vasil 1971, 1980; Milne and Mauzy 1980; Crouch 1996; Holst 2012; Saravanamuttu 2016) and in voting patterns (D. L. Horowitz 1983; Pepinsky 2009b, 2015). More recent work has emphasized the increasing role of religiosity, particularly of Islam, in sometimes eclipsing but often reinforcing ethnic divisions (Weiss 2004; Liow 2009; Mueller 2014).

By most measures, Malaysia remains a society highly polarized along ethnicity and religion. These divisions are found in the educational system: Malaysian youth are largely educated in separate primary and secondary schools in their language, assigned

by racial categories. As of 2011, 96% of Chinese students attended Chinese-medium primary schools and 56% of Indian students attended Tamil-medium schools (Khalid 2014, 40), with the remaining students attending Malay-medium schools. Occupational divisions remain salient: 85% of the civil service, for instance, is ethnic Malay (The Economist 2013). Even the NGO sector largely reflects ethnic divisions in society, with most secular NGOs mostly comprised of Chinese and Indian Malaysians, while Malays tended to join Muslim organizations (Weiss 2005, 110).

These divides are given significant force by the reinforcing cleavage of Islam. Per Malaysia's constitution, all ethnic Malays are by definition followers of Islam. Thus, the 2010 Malaysian census records 100% of all Malays in the country as Muslim. The number of citizens from other ethnic groups that practice Islam are very small: In the 2010 Census, out of 28 million Malaysians, only 42,000 Chinese Muslims and 79,000 Indian Muslims were recorded.[39] For the Other Bumiputera population largely in East Sarawak, however, only about 40% are Muslim (Census 2010).

The connection between ethnicity and religion is so strong that Muslim converts are known to *masuk Melayu* – become Malay. Ethnic Chinese are legally Malay if they convert to Islam and use the Malay language and follow Malay customs. In 2015, a Chinese convert to Islam, Lim Jooi Soon, was the first Chinese Muslim in Malaysia allowed to keep his name (Malay Mail 2015). Muslims face significant legal difficulties to renouncing their religion, and are generally unsuccessful in doing so

[39] Taburan Penduduk dan Ciri-Ciri Asas Demografi 2010

(Samuri and Quraishi 2014). The vast majority of Chinese Muslims are converts (Ma 2005). The result is that over time, Chinese converts intermarry with other Muslims and thus are absorbed into the Malay category (ibid.).

Since the Islamic resurgence of the late 1960s and 70s across the Muslim world, Malaysia too has increasingly practiced a conservative form of Islam (Liow 2009). This took place not only through the "Islamization race" between the ruling UMNO and its long-time opponent PAS (described in the next section), but also through an increasingly powerful religious bureaucracy (Ibid.). As a result, opposition parties have often had to cross both religious and ethnic cleavages to appeal to voters.

Islam-influenced laws play an important part in the social and political lives of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Muslims in Malaysia are subject to a dual legal system of both civil and sharia courts. The latter can dispense fines or caning punishment and impose brief periods of imprisonment. Under Malaysian law, Muslims are required to pay an annual nominal tithing fee (*zakat fitrah*) during the fasting month under penalty of fining or imprisonment. The Islamic criminal code (*hudud*), which includes harsh punishments up to stoning and amputation, has been a central political project for the opposition PAS and was passed in the state legislatures it controlled, but has yet to be implemented.

The ethnic and religious map described so far is broadly applicable to West Malaysia, the most populous and economically developed region of the country. However, the dynamics of East Malaysia are different. Despite being much less dense than West Malaysia, the two states of East Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, have been

important for national politics given that they provide a quarter of all parliamentary seats. In East Malaysia, ethnicity and religion are not so tightly linked. In Sabah, because of its diverse ethnic makeup religion (at least for Muslim groups) was a stronger political bond than ethnicity (R. Lim 2008).

What are the implications of this ethnic map on voting choices? Like Greene argues in the case of the larger Mexican electorate (2007, 10), Malaysia's voters have displayed a generally pragmatic streak in their political choices. As is shown in this and subsequent chapters, voters have shown a repeated willingness to cross ethnoreligious and ideological boundaries to vote for candidates and parties. Contrary to an early primordialist bent to Malaysian political analysis, the willingness of voters to cross ethnic lines in favor of candidates was a feature even of early Malaysian elections (Vasil 1980, 177). The logic of the BN coalition, in fact, was predicated on the fact that at least some percentage of BN voters in each district would vote along partisan, not ethnic lines (as is explored further in Chapter 6). The ability of the BN's ethnic parties to mobilize their core constituencies has also fluctuated greatly over time.

More recent scholarship has pushed against the primacy of ethnicity as the central explanatory variable of Malaysian politics. After the 2013 elections, Weiss argued that "conventional assumptions of intractable identity politics no longer offer substantial analytical leverage in Malaysia…. Migration, mingling across previously segregated language streams, and issues that cross communal lines all bring to the fore alternative identities and interests that are not well captured by simple geography.

Increasingly, it seems to be these issues and (especially economic) interests, not identities, that win and lose support" (Weiss 2013, 1145).

As noted in the final section of this chapter, voting patterns along ethnic lines have indeed loosened. But communal issues still loom large in political articulation. By their very branding –party names, symbols, historic bases of support, and the way parties and elections are discussed in the media – Malaysian political parties have not entered a "post-racial" era. Even as new issues such as economic and cost-of-living concerns were key in the opposition parties appealing to voters, the issue of *who* they would represent was one that the BN constantly raised in their political discourse. Given that ethnic categories in Malaysia also have significant overlap with occupation and religion, it is not surprising that voters would take these categories into consideration.

Both the opposition and BN parties frequently emphasized valence issues in their political campaigns, and particularly in recent campaigns sought to downplay ethnic and religious sentiments in the majority of their statements. But the centrality of ethnic and religious branding still matters. The DAP, for instance, conducted election campaign speeches (*ceramah*) in both vernacular Chinese languages and in Malay – both a political necessity as well as a recognition that communities divided by ethnicity, religion, and language required different approaches.

Moreover, as will be shown in Chapter 6, opposition parties often limited their individual challenges to districts that already match their core ethnic and religious constituencies. As Maznah Mohamad notes, in Malaysia "there are very few test cases

in which voters can exercise their choice 'across the grain,' or for the 'best' candidate or the best party, regardless of race" (Mohamad 2015, 152).

3.4 Opposition Party Emergence and Profiles

How did opposition to the BN's careful crafting of dominance emerge and develop over time? This section briefly outlines the emergence of the three main opposition parties discussed in the following three empirical chapters of this dissertation. It will describe the key elements of their party profiles to show the mixture of niche and catchall positioning and relationships to the regime as described in Chapter 2. I will discuss their emergence, organizations and funding, the characteristics and distribution of their core support, and how the BN sought to alternately coopt, undercut, or repress the parties based on their profiles. As has been noted, coalitional strategies were also key to the advancement of opposition. These strategies and their history are detailed in Chapter 6.

The Democratic Action Party (DAP)

The Democratic Action Party (DAP), a social democratic party most often identified with ethnic Chinese leadership and support, is one of the Malaysia's oldest parties. The party was registered in 1966 as the Malaysian successor to the People's Action Party (PAP) after Singapore gained independence. The DAP's founding document declared the party's struggle for a democratic, socialist Malaysia "based on the principles of racial equality, and social and economic justice" (DAP 1967).

But despite its multiethnic trappings, the DAP found its greatest initial support in its ethnic Chinese urban base. Registration documents from the early period of the

party show a leadership that consisted almost entirely of working class ethnic Chinese Malaysians (National Archives of Malaysia 1986). The party's early growth also centered around mobilizing ethnic Chinese votes; while the Chinese population was initially a significant presence in rural areas, it increasingly made up the largest ethnic group in the country's dense urban settlements.

The DAP could also mobilize the Chinese community's grievances in light of the pro-Malay policies such as the NEP that helped the BN attract Malay votes (Chew 1980, 5). One of the major issues was that of education. Strict racial quotas in government universities meant that many ethnic Chinese found it difficult to enter government universities (Chin 1996, 400). The preservation of Chinese-language schooling was also a key issue for the DAP. Apart from issues of concern to non-Malays, the DAP and its party newspaper *The Rocket* consistently raised issues of democratic reforms. In parliament and to some extent in the media, the DAP's leadership was known for its advocacy around corruption issues, such as financial scandals during the long reign of Mahathir Mohamad (Wain 2009, 63).

The DAP's mobilization of ethnic Chinese support around issues resonant within that community, as well as its concentration on a core voter base of urban Chinese voters, created a strong niche party brand around non-Malay and ethnic Chinese identity. In the first elections held after the resumption of parliament in 1971, for example, the DAP was the best performing opposition party, but only one of its nine parliamentary seats, and three of its 23 state seats, had a Malay electorate that was greater than 25% (Kassim 1978, 33).

The DAP's reliance on an ethnic Chinese base formed the basis of the BN's counterattacks over the decades. The DAP called for a "Malaysian Malaysia," where no community would have supremacy over another – a message that the BN portrayed as a communal slogan seeking to unseat the rightful place of Malays in the country. The party's professed goal was to build a strong urban presence which would then allow it to build support among the Malay community outside urban areas (Vasil 1980). But as shown in Chapter 4, its efforts to do so largely stalled over time.

Another key aspect to the party's identity was its unstinting criticism of UMNO and the BN. Apart from a rumor early in the party's history that it sought to displace the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) as the primary ethnic Chinese party in the ruling coalition, its policies and strategies were strongly anti-BN. As a result, the DAP faced significant challenges in its early years against the onslaught of BN. After the 1969 ethnic riots, long-time party leader Lim Kit Siang was detained for 18 months and lost politicians to the BN. Lim claimed in 1973 that "of all the opposition parties in Malaysia, no other party has suffered greater persecution or suppression than the DAP" (K. S. Lim 1973). Therefore, the party's consistent anti-regime rhetoric placed it firmly on the other side of the political divide from the BN.

The DAP funded its party and electoral campaigns through what it termed "grassroots financing" - membership fees and donations, as well as compulsory portions of allowances from state assemblymen and parliamentarians (Gomez 2012, 1383). Particularly after 2008 after winning state-level governments, the DAP and the other parties began attracting greater business donations (returned to in Chapter 5).

The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

Only one party had played the role of opposition longer than the DAP, but had a significantly different niche orientation and relationship with the BN. The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) emerged as a factional splinter from UMNO's religious wing in the 1950s (Noor 2014, 40). While initially identifying as a left-wing and anti-colonial Malay organization, its image and base shifted over time towards a conservative Malay Islamic orientation.

PAS' rhetoric and demographic base at least theoretically put the party in a strong position to appeal to the Malay Muslim majority population in the country. But for much of its existence, the party derived its primary support in the East Coast states, a band of three states facing the South China Sea. Two of those states, Kelantan and Terengganu, quickly became the stronghold states for the party after its formation. Both states are overwhelmingly Malay Muslim, largely agrarian, and economically underdeveloped.

During its long existence, the party's messaging included a mix of religious policy, strong critiques of the BN, and economic populism. As described in Chapter 5, this identity was cultivated in the state of Kelantan, where it held power for decades, and Terengganu, where it held office from 1999-2004. In the two states, the party implemented religiously-oriented policies governing social life, law, and the economy.

Between 1973 and 1978, PAS joined the BN government, but soon fell out with what it saw as BN's interference in its state level government (as detailed in Chapter 5). After 1978, and before 2015, the party consistently attacked the BN. In

1981, the future president of PAS Hadi Awang gained notoriety for stating that UMNO supporters were *kafir,* or unbelievers. PAS leaders attacked the BN government both for its repressive strategies towards PAS, as well as its insufficient commitment to Islam.

The PAS, much more than the DAP, faced a government that at least nominally represented their interests as a Malay-Muslim dominated organization. But PAS was positioned in clear antagonism to the BN for many years; only in certain times were their ideological and other goals seemed to give them much more in common with the BN than with the opposition. Unlike the DAP, too, there existed a long-standing tension within the party between the "moderates" willing to moderate PAS's stances to align with the other opposition parties and broaden its support among non-Malays and non-Muslims, and the *ulama*, a conservative faction more dedicated to religious policy.

But over the years, under Hadi's leadership PAS increasingly aligned itself with an Islamic platform that alienated its opposition partners and suggested a rapprochement with the BN, especially UMNO. In PAS's vocabulary, the party had engaged in *tahaluf siyasi* (political agreement) with the opposition but increasingly moved towards *ta'awun siyasi* (cooperation to advance the interests of Islam) with UMNO.

However, the *ulama* approach also dovetailed with electoral strategies to maintain its state-level strongholds, as described in Chapter 4. The party was rumored to have been offered ministerial positions by the government, although these

allegations have never been substantiated. In 2015 party elections, the moderate faction was decisively voted out and PAS broke with the opposition to pursue a non-aligned approach towards the BN. (These dynamics are returned to in Chapter 4).

PAS is known in Malaysia for its strong grassroots orientation and reliance on its supporters for funding. It claims its largest sources of funding have been collected during its party speeches and congresses, and through sales of the party newspaper, *Harakah*.

The People's Justice Party (PKR)

In contrast to the DAP and PAS, the People's Justice Party (PKR) hews to a much more catchall profile, given its heavy emphasis on valence issues and multiracial membership, looser party organization, and factions tied to particular leaders within the party. The party also has a much more recent lineage. PKR's predecessor, the National Justice Party, was formed in 1999.[40] The party was formed after Anwar Ibrahim, Deputy Prime Minister and protégé of Mahathir Mohamad, fell out with Mahathir. Anwar was removed from his position and then tried and jailed on charges of sodomy. PKR attracted a multi-racial base of support based on Anwar image as a pro-democratic reformer and disaffection with Mahathir's long reign (Saravanamuttu 2016, 161). The party also drew many of its politicians and key personnel from activists and civil society campaigners involved in the *reformasi* (reform) movement in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis (Weiss 2005).

[40] I refer to the party as PKR throughout the dissertation for ease of reading.

The party has drawn explicitly on its identity as a multiracial party, as the party that can bring Anwar to the position of prime minister, as well as the vehicle for discontented regime supporters. It has long oriented itself both as a pro-democratic and anti- regime party.[41] Although the party has contested large number of seats across the country since its founding, it has tended to win seats in the most densely populated and urbanized multiethnic states such as Selangor, the capital Kuala Lumpur (located in Selangor in its own administrative territory), and Penang. These districts tend to be mostly mixed, with high proportions of Malays but significant minority Indian and Chinese populations. Increasingly, the party has contested and won seats in East Malaysia, as described in the next chapter.

The PKR's profile, then, had a multiracial orientation with a popular leader and a broad anti-regime message. Its organization was similarly broad, with rival politicians often building competing centers of power. Unlike the DAP and PAS, PKR did not struggle with a negative image among swing voters. However, it struggled to contain its competing factions and maintain a consistent base of support over time. The party was buoyed by state-level power to help build its organization, as detailed in Chapter 5.

[41] It was also rumored that ministerial positions were offered to PKR. Seemingly the only public attempt at rapprochement with the BN occurred in the wake of the 2013 elections, when Anwar briefly called for a dialog with the BN on various issues including religious and racial issues, economic issues, crime and the high cost of living. At the time speculation centered around whether it was the prelude for a Unity Government including both the then-opposition coalition PR and the BN. However, Anwar was convicted on sodomy charges in March 2014. He then withdrew the offer, saying it was better for PR to "declare war" on the BN (Ghazali 2004).

Table 8: Summary of Opposition Party Profiles

	DAP	**PAS**	**PKR**
Party profile	Niche	Niche	Catchall
Demographic base	Non-Malay (predominantly ethnic Chinese), urban	Malay Muslim, rural	Multi-ethnic, urban
Size and geographical distribution of core voters	Small, primarily concentrated in urban areas	Potentially large, primarily in East Coast states	Potentially large, diffuse
Relationship with the BN	Consistently anti-regime	Anti-regime (1978-2015); Collaborative (1973-78; 2015 - present)	Consistently anti-regime

3.5 The 1999 Elections and a New Electoral Environment

The following chapters will show how the opposition parties moved from contesting at the margins to significantly scaling up via elections and governing at the subnational level. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of the period that is the focus of this dissertation.

The shift in the fortunes of the opposition began in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis, which severely damaged the economy and provoked a split among ruling UMNO elites. As a popular Malay leader with extensive party connections and strong Islamic credentials, deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim posed a threat to then-PM Mahathir Mohamed and the solidity of UMNO. Anwar was sacked by Mahathir and subsequently jailed on charges of corruption and sodomy. His mistreatment in prison was seen as a key factor in propelling widespread discontent

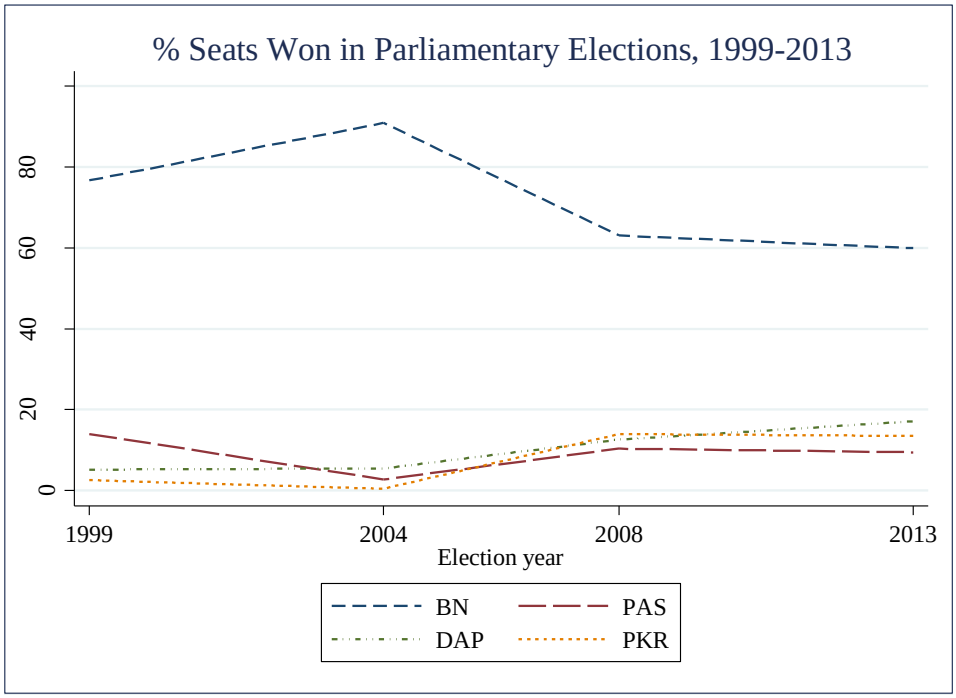
with the regime.[42] These events gave impetus to the creation of the *reformasi* movement, a broad collection of opposition parties and activists that channeled discontent against the long-running BN government (Weiss 2005).

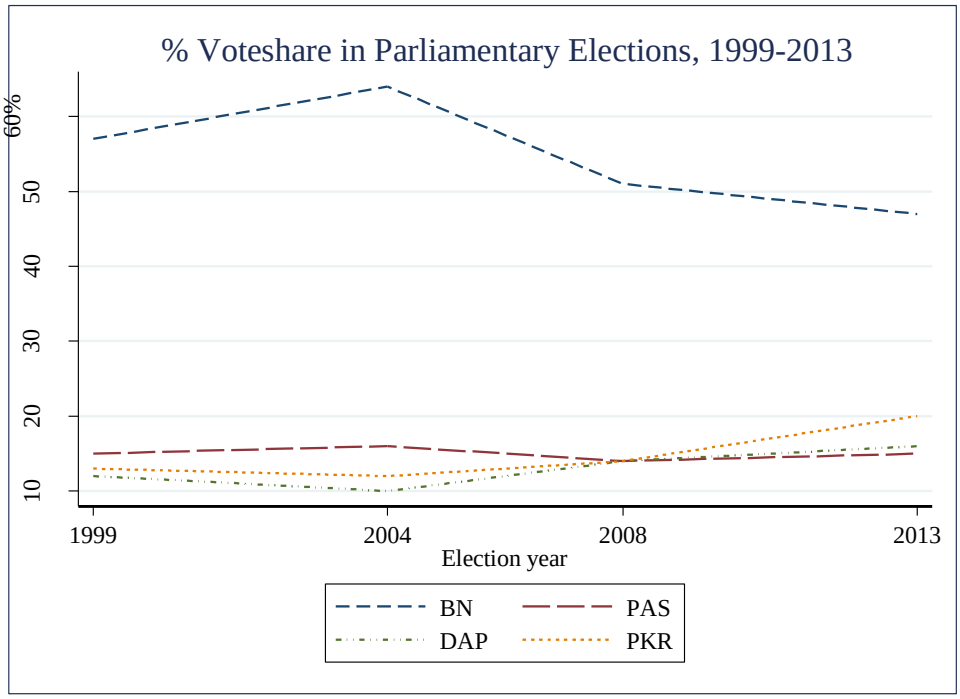
More broadly, structural shifts in Malaysia provided new opportunities for the opposition. The increasing ubiquity of internet access and the rise of online media provided an alternative platform for opposition parties to disseminate their messages and receive coverage. The country's economic development had spurred rapid urbanization, from 28% urban in 1970 to 70% urban in 2010, just forty years later (Masron et al. 2012). An increasingly urbanized Malay middle class which had benefited from the NEP also provided a potential new source of support for the opposition.

The reformasi movement also provided the disparate opposition parties, particularly the DAP and PAS, the environment to work together in a new electoral coalition, the Alternative Front (*Barisan Alternatif)*, with Anwar Ibrahim as the uniting candidate for prime minister. The coalitions created by the opposition parties are discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

[42] An internal post-mortem commissioned by the Prime Minister's Office in the state of Penang after the 1999 elections found that the issue of Anwar Ibrahim was paramount in the Malay voter turn against BN parties (National Archives of Malaysia 2013).

Figure 1: Changes in support for BN and opposition parties, 1999-2013





While voting patterns in Malaysia have traditionally fallen across ethnic lines, the post-1999 period saw evidence of cross-ethnic voting, as opposition parties won in ethnically mixed seats the BN considered unwinnable by the opposition (National Archives of Malaysia 2015b). Particularly in the 2008 and 2013 elections, the BN registered downturns across virtually all demographics and regions; internal post-mortems written by a BN-linked research organization blamed weaknesses at the local, state and national level: the relative unpopularity of BN politicians leading to weakness of BN mobilizing machinery, lack of state-level evidence of economic progress, and national economic issues (National Archives of Malaysia 2015a).

Throughout this period, the government remained resistant to calls for electoral reforms by a broader set of opposition actors. In 2007, a protest movement called Bersih ("Clean") was jointly formed by opposition politicians and NGO representatives to highlight demands for electoral reform. In 2010, the movement was reformulated to make it independent of opposition parties, and it held a total of five massive protest marches in favor of electoral reforms. Although the Elections Commission made nominal changes to reduce fraud by introducing transparent ballot boxes, indelible ink, and access to full electoral rolls by the parties, these practices fell far short of leveling the playing field.

The fiscal and resource base of the ruling government was also largely undiminished. The BN had avoided substantial electoral losses in the wake of the economically destructive Asian Financial Crisis by increasing its redistributive efforts towards its Malay supporters, both at the elite and mass level (Pepinsky 2009a). In later elections, the BN continued with a mix of alleged vote-buying (often in rural and

remote areas), subsidies and special allocations for civil servants and other targeted groups, all predicated on its access to state funds (Gomez 2016). In 2012, the BN launched annual direct cash transfers through the 1 Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) program which in some areas was directly channeled through local UMNO politicians (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, the 2008 and 2013 elections provided the greatest evidence that a larger segment of the Malaysian electorate was moving their support away from the BN. The Malay-first economic policies of subsequent governments, and increasingly conservative Islamic policies and programs, engendered resentment among minority populations. By 2010, at least one million Malaysians had sought work or residency abroad (The World Bank 2011). Ethnic Chinese Malaysians make up 73% and 90% of Malaysian-born residential populations in Singapore and Australia (Ibid.). The World Bank survey among this diaspora finds that a sense of social injustice and discrimination around unequal access to scholarships and higher education and higher occupational positions were cited as prime reasons for their exodus (Ibid.).

The political landscape, particularly in West Malaysia, shifted starkly in the 2008 elections. The BN, for the first time since 1969, failed to gain a two-thirds majority in the Parliament. Of the 12 state assemblies with elections that year, five states were won by the opposition. While these state-level wins were quickly whittled down to three, the opposition held on to control of Penang and Selangor, the wealthiest, most populous and economically developed states in the nation. While the opposition had by that point only agreed to an electoral pact to avoid "three corner fights," the unprecedented wins of the opposition spurred the creation of the PR

coalition, in particular to rule the states the opposition had won. The opposition's wins also took place in an environment where the regime was unwilling to use more coercive measures, including electoral suppression or hardline tactics (Pepinsky 2009b, 109–10).

Despite the apparent "Chinese tsunami" against the BN, changes to pro-Malay policies proved difficult in the short-term. After his assumption of the position of prime minister, Najib Razak proposed a replacement for the NEP, the New Economic Model (NEM), that would shift from ethnically-based affirmative action towards more needs-based. The public reaction from Malay groups was strongly critical, and the change was shelved.

In 2013, the BN lost additional ground as the opposition won 40% of the seats in parliament and won 51% of the popular vote. It also marked the high point of opposition coordination, with the PR coalition fielding a single candidate in each of the country's 222 parliamentary seats, and almost all state-level seats.

Unlike Mexico, where changes to campaign finance laws and economic liberalization allowed greater resource availability, Malaysia's opposition wins up to this point were not driven by a leveling of the playing field. Importantly, the financial resources of the opposition were a *lagging* rather than leading indicator of success. Winning additional seats, and state-level governments in 2008, helped the opposition attract more resources. The more seats the parties won, the greater number of legislators would be able to give part of their salary to the party. In 2008, the three main opposition parties won enough seats to form the government of two of the country's wealthiest states, which then positioned them to attract additional resources.

The DAP, for example, only expanded its party organization haltingly before 2008. After their strong win in 2008, the party added 817 new party branches around the country in the following four years, an almost four-fold increase. The PKR, a party which in 2004 held on to a single seat, managed to win 31 seats in the 2008 election with no significant change to its finances.

Even while the BN lost the national popular vote, it still controlled the redistricting of constituencies. The BN continued to simply pack opposition voters into ever-larger districts, while increasingly turning to Malay-dominated constituencies that offered a substantially higher proportion of seats for votes. In the 165 constituencies in West Malaysia, 114 were Malay majority and 34 had at least a one-third Malay electorate (Wong 2016). In the 2013 elections, there were 37 constituencies that BN won by 10 percentage points or lower. Of these constituencies, 31 had at least 50 per cent Malay voters (Leong 2017).

It was in these constituencies that the opposition needed to win in order to have a chance of winning national power. By targeting and winning these seats, the opposition could also counter the BN's narrative that its losses were due solely to an ethnic Chinese swing. As Prime Minister Najib stated, "Even though a huge percentage of [ethnic Chinese] supported the opposition, the government did not change, the BN government is still here. Because the reality is you cannot change the government without the support of the Bumiputeras" (Zahid 2013).

The increasing concern about economic and cost-of-living issues became key for the opposition. This included issues like the goods and services tax (GST) introduced in 2013. Despite the generally positive view of the GST from IMF and

World Bank and credit ratings agencies, it was very unpopular among citizens. Asia Barometer Survey data confirmed that economic issues remained paramount; in the fourth wave of the survey in October 2014, 56% of respondents said they were "very concerned" about the loss of their or their family's major source of income in the next year, and 33% identified inflation as the most important problem facing the country, by far the most common response. Malaysian households were also increasingly indebted and in precarious financial situations; by 2018 the country had the highest household debt to income ratio in Asia (Tong 2018). Finally, the 1MDB scandal described in the introduction (and returned to in the concluding chapter) provided a focal point of opposition criticism. The missing money allegedly paid not only for a lavish lifestyle for Najib and his allies but were also used in funding UMNO's electoral campaign.[43]

After 1999, then, but particularly after 2008, the parties needed to figure out how to increase their support across demographic lines and win in districts previously considered unwinnable. As will be shown throughout the subsequent chapters, in their public statements and writings, party leaders did not see their electoral success as depending entirely on the strength or weakness of the regime. Instead, they repeatedly identified particular electoral strategies as having effects on their ability to reach new audiences.[44]

[43] The scandal resulted in the defection of prominent UMNO leaders, including former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, the sitting deputy prime minister, and Mahathir's son Mukhriz Mahathir, quit UMNO in protest. In September 2016, they formed a new party: The United Indigenous Party of Malaysia (Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, or Bersatu).

[44] The writing of the DAP's Lim Kit Siang, for instance, emphasizes the role of different strategies undertaken by the party in their success in particular elections (e.g. (K. S. Lim 2001)). Academic literature on PAS has highlighted the effects of campaign-specific strategies ((e.g. Liew 2007).

As will be shown in Chapter 4, the parties sought to individually broaden their support to address their particular organizational weaknesses or image problems. Chapter 5 describes how they used state-level governments to build material links to constituents and voters and secure greater party resources. Chapter 6 describes how they built unlikely coalitions across party and demographic lines to effectively amplify their challenges. In doing so, the parties faced persistent dilemmas in building broader support for their parties while coordinating their strategies with each other. Both were indispensable to their efforts to unseat the incumbent government but represented conflicting goals.

Nevertheless, as detailed in the subsequent chapters, the opposition parties struggled to broaden and coordinate their challenges. Most significantly, the opposition party PAS, a key member of the PR coalition, decisively shifted away from the other opposition parties. A new opposition coalition was quickly formed to take its place, but it only had two well-established parties: DAP and PKR. Another member of the coalition was Amanah, splinter party from PAS populated by moderate PAS politicians who had lost in PAS's internal elections some months earlier. Amanah had only assumed its name, logo and flag just two weeks before the announcement of the new coalition. Mahathir's party, just six months old, joined the coalition in March 2017. Although the economic environment and corruption scandal created new uncertainty, it seemed unlikely that Najib and the BN would fall in the short term. Polling and expert surveys suggested voters were still behind the BN. The 2018 elections are returned to in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 4

DILEMMAS OF EXPANSION: DIVERGING INCENTIVES FOR THE OPPOSITION

"[Party adaptation] is a tough road, because no one knows how to do it. No one knows how to rebrand ourselves to appeal to everyone." – DAP legislator, Penang

4.1 Introduction

As Chapter 3 has shown, Malaysia's political environment shifted dramatically at the turn of the new millennium. Elections in 1999, 2008, and 2013 saw the three main opposition parties win unprecedented popular support, gain control of two key state governments, and build increasingly durable electoral and governing coalitions. Yet the overall increase in the electoral viability of the opposition was accompanied by deep divergence over strategy. Both within and between the opposition parties, debates emerged over how and whether to capitalize on their new sources of support, and to what extent it signaled that the parties should pursue concerted attempts to transform their core party profiles.

This chapter examines the strategies of the three main opposition parties – the DAP, PAS, and PKR – during the period 1999-2016. The goal of the chapter is twofold: both to document *how* the parties sought or avoided adaptation to a changing political environment, and *why* they chose different strategies, with varying levels of electoral success and organizational change. In doing so, it helps explain why some parties seemed unable to move beyond core issues and identities even as the electoral map shifted in their favor.

Despite their very different party profiles, the parties employed similar strategies to attempt to alter their appeals. This chapter focuses on organizational changes made to incorporate new demographics, changes in the types of candidates run by the parties, and changes in messaging meant to appeal to new demographics. In each section, I highlight three factors to explain the costs and constraints that informed party strategy and variable success. The first is their party profiles. As explained in Chapter 2, these profiles – and the party brands which emerged alongside them – structured different core and swing audiences for parties. With the proportion and geographical distribution of current and potential voters differently distributed along electoral boundaries, the parties faced different pressures to hew to core identities or to broaden their appeals.

These party brands also shaped the timing and implications for vote swings against the BN – as well as losses among core at different periods. As Harmel and Janda (1994) note, external shocks like electoral results have the potential to precipitate party change. Losses or gains among core and swing voters provide a powerful (but not all-encompassing) incentive to undertake different strategies in subsequent elections. As this chapter shows, even as support for the BN became more volatile, the growth or decline of opposition party support varied by party, providing the parties with different electoral incentives at different times.

Second, the BN had developed effective strategies at boxing in its opposition. These took on different forms among the parties, particularly between the DAP and PAS. For the DAP, the BN consistently painted the party as beholden to its core audience of ethnic Chinese voters and leadership. Even as the party made changes to

its candidates and messaging, the BN and its aligned media portrayed the DAP as an extreme "chauvinist" party, making it difficult for the party to change the narrative. However, its increasing focus on economic messages, including at the subnational level (Chapter 5), allowed the DAP in particular an opportunity to deemphasize its existing branding. For PAS, the BN both sought to give PAS space to implement Islamic policy, allowing it to portray PAS as an extremist religious party, but also shifted its own policies closer to PAS to lessen the party's appeal. The BN sought to lessen the challenge from PKR both by jailing its leader Anwar Ibrahim, as well as inducing lower-level PKR politicians to cross over, as in 2009 when the BN regained control of Perak state after two PKR politicians declared themselves as independents.

A third factor, the role of intra-opposition coordination in influencing party behavior, is explored in depth in Chapter 6. The chapter shows how party strategies of expansion have been inextricably shaped by how parties negotiate the divvying up of the electoral map along existing demographic or regional strengths.

This chapter first discusses the strategies of the DAP and PAS in turn, focusing on how they sought to reach voters outside their demographic and geographical bases in West Malaysia. Given its saturation of its minority ethnic audience, the DAP committed to party broadening to increase its appeals to Malay and non-Malay Bumiputera voters by altering its campaign messages, organization, and candidate recruitment. Despite building increasingly significant support outside its traditional demographic and regional base, PAS left its party organization and fundamental orientation largely untouched, and instead used rhetorical appeals to non-Muslim audiences and coalitions (as explained later) to reach new audiences. Within PAS,

tensions between catering to core and swing factions contributed to a major split and the creation of a new party Amanah, as well as the breakdown in coalitions detailed in Chapter 6. These varied results contributed to the disjointed electoral strategies undertaken by the parties.

The challenges faced by the third major opposition party PKR were different. As detailed in the previous chapter, PKR's challenges lay more in containing factionalism, attracting stable sources of finance, and building credibility that could back up its message. Like the other two opposition parties, PKR was formed and found its greatest strength in West Malaysia, the more populous, urban, and economically developed region of the country. But PKR, along with the DAP, saw opportunity to expand their challenges in East Malaysia. Thus, the final section in this chapter traces the strategies of the three parties in this region, focusing on the state of Sarawak. Sarawak was a new frontier for the opposition, and thus an important case through which to evaluate party strategies in a very different political, social, and economic environment.

The section shows that the lack of any one opposition party to claim Sarawak's sizable Bumiputera community as their own allowed the parties to experiment with substantial changes to messaging and candidates to appeal to new audiences. The DAP sought both to focus on Chinese voters in the state, as well as expand its appeals among non-Malay Bumiputera. Its reputation as a non-Malay party hindered its expansion in West Malaysia, but helped it build a new base of support in East Malaysia. The PKR, too, could take advantage of its more flexible identity to combine national issues with locally credible messages and candidates. However, PAS's

hardline image and closed recruitment processes effectively left it unable to attract support in the state. Just as their strategies varied, the outcomes varied as well. Following the discussion of party strategies, I lay out their variable success, both electorally and in terms of party adaptation.

4.2 DAP: Saturated Core Support, Organizational Broadening

This section details the efforts by the DAP to target Malay voters in West Malaysia. As discussed in Chapter 3, the DAP's policy positioning and organization have long reflected its dependence on urban non-Malay, particularly Chinese, support – even as the party was organized around a mission of social democracy and multiracial equality. But the increasing electoral successes of the party, and its prominent position in governing two major states after 2008, provided new impetus for the party to deepen its appeals to new audiences. In particular, it raised the long-standing issue within the party about its outreach to Malay voters, and the extent to which the party could overcome racially charged messaging from the BN and its dependence on Malay-majority coalition partners to become more appealing to this demographic. The party's outreach to the non-Malay Bumiputera community in East Malaysia is discussed in the final section.

The DAP's core brand of non-Malay urban voters structured the timing and implications for shifting voting patterns in the electorate. While the 1999 elections saw a swing of Malay voters to the opposition, the DAP did not benefit from a similar swing of Chinese voters. The party's overall poor performance stemmed from factors including reluctance of party supporters to sign on to the Barisan Alternatif, where the

DAP was aligned with the staunchly Islamic PAS.[45] The *reformasi* movement was also spearheaded by Malay leaders, with limited intervention of non-Malay communities apart from individual leaders (Khoo 2003, 138). The 2008 elections were different. The DAP (along with PKR) began decisively winning against BN parties, in large part because of a non-Malay swing away from the BN (Pepinsky 2009b). Even more significant were the 2013 results, where commentators and Prime Minister Najib Razak called the apparent mass defection of ethnic Chinese voters away from the BN a "Chinese tsunami." The sentiment was quickly echoed in BN-controlled newspapers, including UMNO-owned *Utusan Melayu's* infamous editorial entitled "Apa Lagi Cina Mahu?" (What more do the Chinese want?). In 2013, the DAP won 88% of all parliamentary seats it contested where Chinese constituents comprised 40% or more of the population (Wah 2014).

The second reason the party sought to diversify its base stemmed from larger demographic trends, which changed the composition of the party's core and swing audiences. In the past few decades, the DAP's urban strongholds have shifted from majority Chinese to increasingly multiethnic, with a growing Malay urban population in the peninsula's big cities. The Malay urban vote is thus becoming an increasingly important new constituency given their increasing presence in DAP's seats. Additionally, the ethnic Chinese population in Malaysia has declined over time. In 1970, ethnic Chinese made up 35.6% of the population in West Malaysia; by 2016,

[45] Party leader Lim Kit Siang argued that DAP's poor 1999 showing was a result of the BN Chinese parties MCA and Gerakan playing the "Islamic State 'trump card'" (K. S. Lim 2002, ii). Other factors included a party rift and ensuing negative publicity over the continued leadership of Lim Kit Siang and his grooming of his son Lim Guan Eng to head the party.

they were 23.4% of Malaysia's total population. As one DAP legislator put it, unless the party changes its image to appeal to a broader audience, "[the DAP] is on its way to closing shop in the future."[46] Nevertheless, the ethnic Chinese vote is still a potent force in electoral politics; in 2013, 23% of the 222 parliamentary seats had an ethnic Chinese voting population of 40% or more; an opposition party (mostly DAP) won 85% of those seats.[47] Chinese voters cast approximately 30% of the total votes in the parliamentary elections that year. Yet especially in the immediate wake of the 2013 elections, where the opposition gave their best electoral performance to date, but still were unable to win enough seats to form the government, the issue became how the DAP and the opposition more generally could shift an additional few percentage points of the vote to win power.

The DAP's saturation of the ethnic Chinese vote, and awareness of the limits that the party's niche brand put on its appeal to new voters, spurred the party to attempt greater changes to its fundamental appeals. The DAP was explicit about who it would appeal to: As Secretary General Lim Guan Eng stated in a 2008 speech that the DAP's "challenge… [is] to transform Malaysia through making DAP more inclusive in terms of ethnic profile… Our challenge is to consolidate existing support while reaching out intensively to urban Malays, as well as Bumiputras of [East Malaysia]."

The following sections detail how the party tried to do so through incorporating new candidates and new appeals to Malay voters. However, major

[46] Interview, DAP legislator February 2, 2016.
[47] Of the 33 seats with 50% ethnic Chinese voters or higher, the opposition won 97%.

obstacles remained to the party's incorporation of Malay issues and voters, in part because of organizational inertia and resistance to change, as well as a successful counterstrategy by UMNO and BN component parties. The final section recounts the mixed outcomes of its broadening strategies. The party was increasingly successful in winning over Malay voters, and opposition voters nationwide: the 2013 elections saw the DAP become the second-largest party in the country in terms of seats. But its public image had not kept up; racially-tinged attacks in the media appear to have successfully painted the party both as an enemy of Malay voters, as well as insufficiently caring for the interests of the Chinese community. The other factor hindering the party's growth is that its swing audience of Malay voters are largely concentrated in Malay-majority districts, which the DAP's opposition partners lay claim to. I discuss this dynamic further in Chapter 6.

Changes to Organization and Candidates

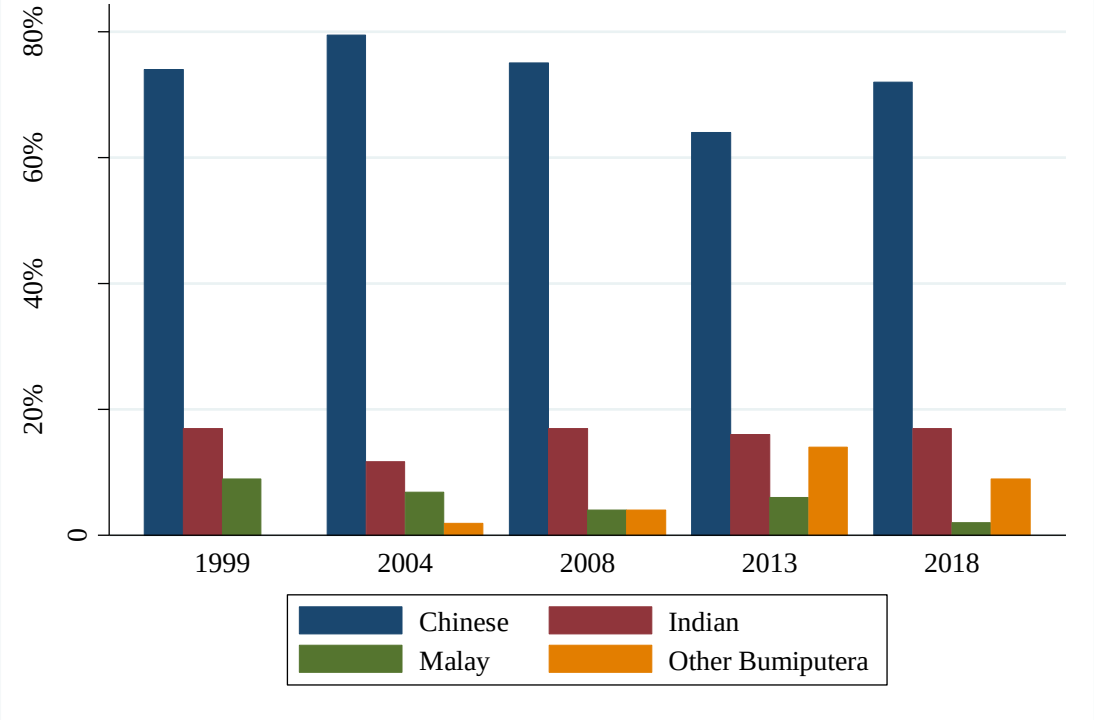
The DAP long identified the Malay community as a potential source of support, though its focus on an ethnic Chinese base reflected not only the main issues facing non-Malays at the time but also the urban demographics of post-independence Malaysia. In the 1960s, the urban population was largely non-Malay, with Malay voters largely concentrated in rural areas. This created a communication gap between the party's urban non-Malay base and potential Malay support, both because the party perceived that had limited appeal among the rural population, and also simply because of logistical concerns of reaching remote rural voters (Chew 1980, 248).

To more credibly appeal to Malay constituencies and discredit UMNO's consistent attacks on it as a largely ethnic Chinese party, the DAP sought to recruit Malay politicians and intellectuals (Chew 1980, 249-50). One of the primary sources of Malay politicians for the party were disaffected members or losing candidates from regime-aligned Malay-majority parties (M. Ong 1986, 10). These candidates were of variable quality and were often targeted by the BN for defection back into the ruling government (Chew 1980). In the 1978 elections, the DAP ran "more Malay candidates in the State of Perak than UMNO itself" although many had little hope of winning (Ong 1986, 16). In that election, a number of DAP's Malay candidates resigned just before and after nomination day (Ibid., 10). The proportion of Malay candidates seemed unrelated to the larger campaign issues put forward by the DAP. For example, in 1969, an election at the height of inter-ethnic tensions and a combative DAP campaign platform, the party ran nine Malay candidates, 16% of all the state candidates it ran that year. In 2013, only one of the party's 95 state candidates were Malay; yet its messages were arguably of much broader appeal than in previous years.

After 1999, DAP continued to face similar challenges in expanding its candidate profiles. Tunku Abdul Aziz, a businessman who also founded the local chapter of Transparency International, joined the DAP in 2008 and was appointed vice-chairman of the party and senator from DAP one year later. In 2012, he left the party, and then featured regularly in the BN-aligned media critiquing DAP. The party promoted a series of several Malay politicians, including Dyana Sofya Mohamad Daud, Zairil Khir Johari, and Zaid Ibrahim, a former law minister from UMNO. DAP's Malay candidates faced counterattacks from the BN as being part of a public

relations effort on the behalf of the DAP. For example, the politician Zairil Khir Johari, who is ethnic Chinese but grew up in a Muslim household, was attacked in the media as not being a "real" Malay.[48] They also faced attacks as opportunists; especially as the ladder to the higher levels of UMNO became increasingly difficult to climb, they faced the accusation that Malay politicians see the DAP as a way to quickly ascend party ranks (Zainudin 2016).

Figure 2: DAP Parliamentary Candidates by Ethnicity



As noted by some observers, DAP's Malay candidates have almost always been run in predominantly non-Malay districts (Chew 1980, 250). But the party does

[48] See, for example, http://www.sinarharian.com.my/politik/zairil-saya-tidak-akan-khianati-ayah-saya-1.121240 Other DAP Malay candidates faced similar challenges. Dyana Sofya, the DAP's candidate in the Teluk Intan by-election, met criticism for her progressive agenda (including her anti-*hudud* stance and for not wearing the headscarf), and later for her close connections to the hardline Malay rights organization Perkasa, an organization her mother helped found.

not contest predominantly Malay seats, although the seats where the party ran Malay candidates feature large Malay populations. In the 2013 state and federal elections, for example, three out of its four Malay candidates were run in districts with around 50% Malay population.

While the party rhetorically committed to greater appeals to the Malay community, the leadership of the party remained largely unavailable to the party's Malay members. The ethnic composition of the party's main governing body, the Central Executive Committee (CEC), has remained consistent over time; in 1965, the party's CEC was 12% Malay, 62% Chinese, 22% Indian, and 4% Other (MacDougall 1968, 319). In 2018, out of the 23 top positions in the party, 9% of the party leaders were Malay, 78% Chinese, 13% Indian, and 0% Other.

Malay leaders also faced barriers to their election or appointment to the CEC. Ahmad Ton, a veteran Malay DAP leader since 1975, contested six times for a CEC position but won only once (The Star 2012). A Penang-based NGO run by a Malay DAP member expressed his frustration with the inability of Malay candidates to be elected, stating "DAP has failed to transform itself into a multiracial party." He later quit (Ibid.). The Malay political representation in the DAP's CEC was largely through its appointment mechanism. The party's membership may have presented a further barrier preventing Malay politicians from ascending the ranks through internal elections; in 2013, the DAP was reported to have around 10% Malay membership (The Star 2012). This represents a drop from 1971, where Lee Lam Thye, organizing secretary for DAP, claimed that the party's membership was 20% Malay (Chew 1980,

208 fn 90). Chew argues that this number of Malay members was "likely inflated" (Ibid.).

New Issue Appeals

Given the party's ethnic Chinese base, one of the DAP's first targets for expansion were rural ethnic Chinese voters. Around independence, there was still significant a Chinese population in rural and semi-rural areas. In 1970, 47% of Malaysia's Chinese population lived in towns or cities with more than 10,000 people (Crouch 1996, 72). A significant proportion, 30%, lived in towns of less than one thousand people (Ibid.). Some of this rural Chinese population in the early period were concentrated in former New Villages, the forced resettlement areas established by the British during the Emergency.

The DAP, however, faced stiff competition with the BN's Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) for ethnic Chinese support in rural and semi-rural areas. MCA was well positioned to distribute patronage from the BN towards the Chinese community, which the DAP could not (Crouch 1996, 73). The DAP raised issues of government neglect of the problems of New Villages and accused the MCA of not helping ethnic Chinese. However, the party remained unable to successfully penetrate these areas. This rural Chinese constituency faded in electoral significance over time; by 2000 only 9.7% of the Chinese population lived in rural areas (Zhang 2011).

The party also sought to establish support in rural Malay FELDA communities. FELDA was a project aimed at relocating rural poor to produce cash crops in areas newly opened land (Crouch 1996, 41). Its settlers were expected to support UMNO; large proportions were UMNO members, and those who did not support UMNO or

opposed the government were expelled from the program (Ibid.). The DAP largely sought to critique the particulars of the FELDA scheme, arguing that it aggravated poverty among the largely Malay communities it purported to help and calling for greater non-Malay incorporation into the program (Chew 1980, 180; 220).

Rising discontent with FELDA management and its investment scandal, as well as national economic issues, again raised the idea of DAP targeting FELDA settlers. In 2017, the DAP formed a FELDA parliamentary bureau. Seats where FELDA settlements are concentrated, however, were still largely contested by PAS and PKR rather than DAP. In 2013, DAP contested only five of the 49 "FELDA seats" identified by Maznah (2015). Even so, FELDA constituencies remained important for the DAP to try to win support. For example, the BN's redistricting after the 2031 elections relocated a FELDA settlement into a district where the BN party barely won against the DAP (Liew 2016).

The most notable shifts in the party's discourse over the past two decades were in its increasing emphasis on economic issues. This strategy also mirrors the increasing use of "developmentalist" issues by the BN to appeal to voters (Loh 2001).[49] One of the ways the BN parties, particularly MCA, sought to target potential voters in urban areas were through "service centers," where constituents could request services or register complaints of any kind. Liew Chin Tong, a DAP politician, credited the MCA's penetration of urban areas in the early 1990s with this model, and

[49] Despite the predictions of Loh and other observers, however, the BN (and particularly UMNO's) strategy has not decisively shifted toward economic performance, but still relies heavily on a mix of ethnic/religious and economic appeals.

urged the DAP to adopt a similar approach.[50] The 2008 and 2013 wins of the opposition in Selangor and Penang increased the opportunities for opposition politicians to compete with the BN in this type of service provision. In his 2008 speech to the DAP Annual Congress, Secretary General Lim Guan Eng saw the party's mission to "prove that we can take care of the Malays and deliver what BN cannot do in 50 years," including in eliminating "hard core" poverty in Penang, as "an important first step in attracting a sizable Malay core support." Given the DAP's existing support base in urban areas, the growth of Malay communities amid the country's urbanization gave the party easier access to Malay voters: In 1970, ethnic Malays made up 28% of the population of all towns with 1,000 and more inhabitants (Hirschman and Suan-Pow 1979, 12). By 2000, they were 33 % of the urban population.

The DAP also sought to extend this service-oriented approach beyond its urban core. Beginning in 2013, the party supported small-scale infrastructure and assistance in states across the country under the Impian (Dream) project, including projects in Sabah, Sarawak, Kelantan, Johor, Kedah/Perlis and Perak. While seeking to distance the outright connection between the DAP's electoral ambitions and Impian, it was clear that electoral expansion was at least part of the program's rationale. In launching the Impian Kedah/Perlis project, for example, DAP leader Lim Kit Siang appeared to connect the project to trying to win broader support after polarizing ethnic and

[50] Internal DAP memo, 2013.

religious campaigning in 2013.[51] Although Impian projects were announced in multiple states, they were primarily concentrated in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, where DAP sought to expand its reach, and its campaigning and party activities in rural areas were less likely to attract controversy compared to outreach in Malay communities.

On issues of ostensible importance to the Malay community, the DAP employed what Wong Chin Huat termed "strategic ambiguity." It rhetorically committed to preserving Malay special rights and the position of Islam, with the caveat that the economic and religious rights of non-Malays would also be respected. The party had long critiqued government policies aimed at Malays. The party critized the NEP, for example, for enriching Malay elites while locking out opportunities for ordinary citizens (Chew 1980, 225). Instead, the party called for the non-communal practice of democratic socialism, highlighting class exploitation among the Malay population and deemphasizing its association with the ethnic Chinese population (Chew 1980, 204; 230). These critiques continued to the present day; DAP Secretary General declared in 2008 that the NEP encouraged corruption, cronyism and inefficiency.

The party also maintained an ambiguous position on Islamic law and hudud; while repeatedly stating its opposition, the DAP closely worked with one of the main proponents of these issues, PAS, on an "agree to disagree" basis. The party also made

[51] https://blog.limkitsiang.com/2015/06/15/dap-launches-impian-kedahperlis-as-part-of-impian-malaysia-to-promote-an-inclusive-vision-to-rally-all-malaysians-regardless-of-race-religion-region-or-class-to-unite-on-a-common-agenda-of-malaysi/

public declarations that sought to minimize its position in government in a way that would not upset Malay dominance: The leader of the Democratic Action Party declared in the party's 2015 congress that the party only sought a certain proportion of seats in the parliament and would never seek to place an ethnic Chinese prime minister in power.

Outcomes

As documented in Chapter 3, DAP was one of the most electorally successful of the opposition parties. But while the party made some progress in incorporating new personnel, it consistently faced challenges in expanding its base of Malay politicians. The proportion of Malay candidates and politicians within the party remained at a low level for the party's history. The DAP continued to retain a core membership and leadership that was overwhelmingly Chinese. Instead, as detailed in the final section of this chapter, the party more successfully increased its incorporation of Bumiputera communities in Sabah and Sarawak.

The comparison with the DAP's incorporation of the Indian community is also instructive. In many ways, DAP was successful in incorporating another ethnic minority into its support base. Importantly, there is not a rival Indian-majority opposition party that can lay claim to the demographic, and the DAP's existing identification with non-Malay voters makes appeals to Indian community less controversial. Nevertheless, the party faced critiques for cutting off opportunities for ethnic Indian politicians to rise beyond lower echelons of leadership (e.g. R. A. Brown 1993, 260–61).

The party made progress in its attracting of the Malay vote, but in part because of the demographic shifts taking place in urban areas. At its National Congress in 2008, DAP leader Lim Guan Eng claimed the party received an average of 20% or higher of the Malay vote in urban areas.[52] The party has also made progress in seats with "unfavorable" demographics: In 2013, at both the state and federal level the party won five seats with more than 40% Malay population; four of the seats had 50% or more Malay voters. But as redistricting by the BN increasingly favored Malay-majority districts, the party largely ceded these seats to other opposition parties (further elucidated in Chapter 6). Since the party largely contested in non-Malay majority seats, it was less necessary to force through changes to the party. Instead, coalitions provided the party a multiracial legitimacy and tool for electoral mobilization among Malay voters. To put it simply, the costs were high and benefits uncertain to attracting greater Malay support, especially as the party continued to contest largely non-Malay districts.

The BN repeatedly linked the DAP's potential national success as threatening the special rights for Malays, despite the rhetorical commitment of the party to the preservation of those rights. Perceptions of the party's brand, particularly among the Malay community, appeared resistant to change. In a 2015 survey in the state of Selangor, where DAP is one of the three parties controlling the state government, 72% of Malay respondents perceived the DAP as a "racial" party, and that it only looked after the interests of the Chinese community (A. J. Hamid 2016). As one legislator put it, broadening the DAP's appeal is a "tough road, because no one knows how to do it.

[52] Policy Speech by Lim Guan Eng, 15th DAP National Congress, August 23, 2008.

No one knows how to rebrand ourselves to appeal to everyone…. UMNO has successfully painted us into a corner. We are seen as party that will threaten the Malay race. No matter how much you do on everything else, [it's] so hard to get rid of that image."

Despite the challenges the party faced in expanding its appeals, the changes undertaken by the party did not incur significant electoral costs from core audiences. Core support remained strong for the party; during the four elections in this period, the DAP held on to more seats than any other opposition party. Rather than facing punishment from communally-minded core voters, the party has had more trouble winning over swing voters beyond core demographics.

4.3 PAS: High Costs to Broadening, Retreat to Niche Identity

In contrast to the DAP, PAS's party profile structured a very different swing audience: Non-Muslim and Muslim voters outside East Coast states in which the party traditionally contested seats. As detailed in Chapter 3, after its move into party politics in the 1950s, PAS quickly emerged as a strong contender among Malay Muslims in the East Coast states of Malaysia. Like the DAP, PAS has long struggled with the dilemma of retaining its distinctive appeals to its core audiences versus trying to win over voters from the larger multiethnic electorate. Unlike the DAP, these tensions were overlaid with an ideological and pragmatic schism over PAS's Islamic struggle, crystallized into two competing party factions and overlaid over local and national competition (as detailed in the subsequent chapter). The party's increasing inroads among voters outside its core demographics and regions – a result of its coalition building with other opposition parties and increasing anti-UMNO sentiment, as well as

its rhetorical appeals to new audiences – increased the tensions between two competing visions for the party. As a result, the attempts by the party to incorporate new constituencies into its core identity were inconsistent and halting, and the party resisted broader changes to its core organization.

PAS faced a changed electoral environment at the turn of the millennium. The party's brand as a non-corrupt, staunchly Islamic party allowed it to benefit greatly during the *reformasi* movement. PAS saw substantial growth across the country during this period, particularly from disaffected UMNO activists and Muslims angered by the government's treatment of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim. But significantly, the party's wins in this initial period were largely in its regional strongholds: The party formed the state governments in Kelantan and Terengganu after substantial wins in both states. At the federal level, 25 of the party's 27 MPs were all elected in East Coast states.

After the party's 1999 success as part of a more united opposition, it seemed "the momentum of Malay support is with the party and it could afford to make… concessions [on its Islamic stance] without fear of any backlash from the Malay community" (Hing 2004, 93). However, within the party a more hardline approach won out. One factor appeared to have been Prime Minister Mahathir's attempt to deepen the government's Islamic approach, spurring PAS in 2003 to issue its notorious "Islamic State Document" which laid out the party's vision for an Islamic state for multiethnic Malaysia. In 2004, UMNO made significant headway back into Kelantan, though PAS narrowly kept its hold on the state government. UMNO won 49% of the votes and 21 state seats, compared to winning only 2 seats in 1999;

analysts attributed the party's overall poor performance in 2004 to its revived Islamic image.

The party's poor showing in the 2004 elections again seemed to confirm the electoral value of moderation. "We have to make the party more relevant to [a] multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious Malaysia," Deputy President Nasharuddin Mat Isa stated at the time (Case and Liew 2006 in Hwang 2010, 651). As detailed in the following section, after electoral gains beginning in 2004, PAS seemed poised to transform its brand to a less Islamic image. In 2008, PAS not only defended Kelantan, winning control of Kedah as well as increasing its votes in Terengganu, but also winning urban Malay-dominated seats in Selangor and Penang.

In the wake of the elections, some observers argued a substantial change had occurred within the party. "It seems that PAS has finally resolved the dilemma of retaining its support in the Malay heartland and yet remain[ing] relevant at the national level," argued Osman (2008). By 2008, especially as the party's fortunes improved outside its strongholds, the moderates of the party appeared ascendant. Osman argued that "PAS is likely to transform itself into a "post-Islamist" party [and]… may lead the party to totally forego its pledge to implement strict Islamic laws in the country... [and] focus on the more egalitarian aspects of Islam such as social justice, protecting human rights and establishing a corruption-free political system" (2008, 3). Other analysts suggested that PAS was engaged in a process of "political learning" where it had seen the electoral gains to be made with a more moderate stance (J. C. Hwang 2010).

But those within the party saw a new challenge in incorporating new supporters: “The general election brought a new spectrum of political support for us, and our future depends on how we respond to them,” stated PAS MP Dzulkifli Ahmad (Tan 2008). One of the most significant aspects of this expansion was geographical: In 2004, 94% of the state seats won by PAS were in its stronghold East Coast states, reduced to 45% in 2013. Dynamics were similar at the federal level. In 2004, all of the party’s parliamentary seats were in the states of Kedah and Kelantan. By 2013, 35% of its seats were won outside the East Coast, with seats in multiethnic Selangor being the largest addition.

The following section details how PAS responded to new electoral opportunities in incorporating non-Muslim and non-Malay communities. In marked contrast to the DAP’s broadening strategies, PAS did little during the same period to change its niche ideological orientation, and increasingly retreated from appeals to non-Muslim audiences as it risked party conflict over strategies to build new support. Even as the party made rhetorical appeals to new audiences, PAS continued pursuing policies that alienated voters beyond its core audience. The final section discusses the reasons for halting attempts at broadening the party, and its varying success.

Changes to Organization and Candidates

In seeking to extend support beyond its core regional and demographic base, PAS did not make significant changes to party organization or candidates. Even as the party expanded to compete in more religiously heterogeneous districts, the party never fielded significant numbers of non-Muslim candidates. For the first time in 2008, the party ran an Indian Malaysian candidate at the state level; though she ran under the

PKR ticket because PAS did not allow non-members (i.e. non-Muslims) to run as their candidate (Weiss 2009, 250). By 2013 the party fielded three non-Muslim candidates, none of whom won a seat. The party did recruit politicians from the country's very small minority of non-Malay Muslims. Anuar Tan Abdullah, an ethnic Chinese Muslim convert, won in 2008 and 2013 as a PAS candidate for Kelantan state representative in the state's only constituency with a sizable Chinese population. The party also appointed Nizar Jamaluddin, PAS state secretary in Perak, to a short-lived tenure as Chief Minister of Perak in 2008. Nizar's mother was ethnic Chinese, and he was raised in a Malay-Muslim household; Nizar himself speaks Mandarin (Tan 2008). These candidates were rare in the party's overall slate of candidates, however.

The characteristics of the party's candidates did shift in other ways. The party began including more women candidates into its ranks. In 2008, out of 296 candidates at the state and federal level, the party ran 13 women candidates, seven of whom won (Hwang 2010, 654). That same year, four women were elected to PAS's central committee (Ibid.). Its candidates outside the East Coast strongholds were often less ideological and more pragmatic; many of these politicians became the basis for the splinter party Amanah.

PAS membership increased from 400,000 to a million at the height of the *reformasi* movement, bringing an influx of middle class urban Muslim professionals (Liow 2009, 77). As support for the opposition increased, spontaneous "support clubs" comprised of non-Muslims emerged across the country (Hwang 2010, 654). However, party leaders resisted the full inclusion of this new support group into the party. Instead, the party created the "PAS Supporter's Club" for non-Muslims, whose

members could join but would not have voting rights within the party. In 2010 it upgraded the Club into a wing of the party in 2010 (Mueller 2014, 63).[53] The party claimed in 2017 to have 60,000 members of the Club across the country (Berita Harian 2017). Other attempts to incorporate non-Muslim constituencies into the party appeared largely symbolic. At its annual meeting in 2008, for instance, the party put on a Chinese lion dance and appointed an ethnic Chinese "special officer" to provide advice on the Chinese community (Liow 2011, 684).

New Issue Appeals

During the period of 1999-2016, PAS consistently espoused issues of interest to the broader Malaysian population while advocating for and implementing policies in contradiction to those statements. Beginning in the 1999 electoral campaign, PAS began downplaying the issue of the Islamic state in favor of broad concerns on social justice and good governance (Liow 2009, 79). Yet following its wins in Terengganu in 1999, and in line with its policies in Kelantan, PAS implemented a variety of conservative Islamic policies not long after (detailed further in Chapter 5). These policies provoked enormous controversy and belied the party's rhetorical commitments to multiculturalism. A variety of other policies implemented in PAS-held states attracted controversy, including restrictions on public entertainment, public service dress codes, restrictions on the sale of alcohol and gambling, and a proposed land tax on non-Muslims (Harding 2012, 230).

[53] This was not the first time the party had sought to target new constituencies; in 1986, the party formed the Chinese Consultative Council (CCC) as a means of broadening support among the Chinese community. Internal opposition to the Council, including reluctance to allow CCC members to contest as PAS candidates, led to its dissolution (A. F. A. Hamid 2017, 56)

PAS continued to pursue these segmented and often contradictory strategies aimed at both its core demographic base and the broader Malaysian electorate. This strategy was not always successful. In anticipation of the 2004 elections, PAS announced it would pursue a two-pronged strategy whereby the Islamic state issue would only feature in PAS' campaign in its strongholds in the East Coast states (Liow 2004). In response, the BN highlighted the party's actions in its home states, specifically to make them part of the national debate.

In subsequent elections, PAS's statements continued to signal rhetorical broadening. The themes of *PAS Untuk Semua* ("PAS For All") and *Negara Kebajikan* (the "Welfare State" or "Caring State") were floated in the 2008 election campaign (Weiss 2009, 750), and the "Caring State" became the theme of the 2011 PAS annual meeting. While PAS leaders emphasized that the goals of the Islamic criminal code (*hudud)* were still a part of the Caring State and rooted in political Islam, *hudud* was not explicitly raised in the accompanying policy document produced by the party, nor in the joint policy manifesto agreed upon by the parties in the PR opposition coalition formed in 2008 (Mueller 2014, 81).

Outcomes

While the period from 1999-2013 saw the overall growth of PAS's electoral support, its support was limited by its commitment to its core issues and identities. Like the other opposition parties, PAS's support had never exclusively been from its core demographics. As Liow and Chan argue, PAS appealed to a "dual constituency of religious supporters and protest voters" (Liow and Chan 2014, 99). This mix only

increased as the party contested outside of its ethnically homogeneous strongholds. Yet the seats the party contests remained heavily Malay Muslim; of 70 parliamentary seats contested by the party in 2013, only two had a Malay voting base below 50%.

PAS's explicit orientation around Malay Muslim identity made broadening a costly strategy. Given the party's founding mission around the promotion of Islam, and the tight interlinkage between Malay ethnicity and Islam, the party could only make limited inroads along ethnic lines without compromising its religious image. It also competed with UMNO over the same group of voters; while the DAP also faced competition with BN component parties, the DAP's founding goals of democratic socialism and rhetoric around multiethnic inclusiveness made broadening strategies less costly.

Within PAS itself, there were clear divisions over pursuing its (evolving) core agenda and its appeals to moderate Muslims and non-Muslims. Party leaders in the party's *ulama* (religious scholar) faction, increasingly aligned with the powerful PAS Youth wing, were discontented with moves to change party image away from Islam, and clashed with moderates in the party's progressive faction over whether to widen its appeals to non-core constituencies (Liew 2007; Mueller 2014). This debate revolved in part around how to interpret PAS's variable electoral fortunes. After 1999, some within the party interpreted its gains as a mandate to pursue an Islamist agenda (Liow 2009, 80).

The party's incomplete broadening strategies were significantly influenced by three factors: the dependence of PAS on its regional strongholds for votes, its reliance

on coalition partners to reach new audiences, and a strategy by the BN to alternately match PAS on its conservative policies or to paint it as extreme. These issues are covered in Chapters 5 and 6.

As a result, PAS moved decisively away from broadening strategies after the ascendance of the hardline *ulama* faction in internal party elections in 2015. After being soundly defeated, many in the party's progressive faction left the party and formed Amanah, a new political party seeking to project a more moderate Islamic image. This shift precipitated an exodus of some of the party's non-Muslim supporters. A number of defections from the non-Muslim DHPP (PAS Supporter's Wing) followed, including a threatened mass exodus of 17,000 members (The Malaysian Insider 2015). In 2018, the party lost significant ground in multiethnic and multireligious areas.

The efforts by its breakaway party Amanah to commit to party broadening shows a different strategic path taken by a party with a similar brand. Soon after its formation, Amanah announced that non-Muslims could join the party as full members with voting rights and hold office at all levels in the party; albeit with president and deputy vice president positions de facto reserved for Muslims (The Star 2015).

After the internal electoral rout and subsequent exodus of progressives, PAS was a changed party. As the Prime Minister was increasingly entangled in the 1MDB corruption scandal, the party shifted away from openly calling for his ouster. The party also began pursuing implementation of Islamic criminal code again, encouraged by the federal government's increased willingness to pursue amendments to existing civil

laws that would lay the way for the hudud to be implemented in the country. In 2016, the BN-dominated national legislature suddenly fast-tracked PAS leader Hadi Awang's long-dormant private bill seeking these amendments. In its 2017 party congress, PAS passed a motion at its meeting stating it would seek an amendment to the constitution that stipulated that only Muslims should be allowed to become Prime Minister. PAS president Hadi Awang also attracted controversy by stating that the cabinet members of an Islamic country should all be Muslim, and under an envisioned PAS-led government, non-Muslims would be given separate duties.

Scholarship on PAS has tended to foreground the ideological component of these long-standing tensions within the party. Most accounts of party moderation or political learning emphasize a largely one-way process towards abandonment of more "radical" goals (e.g. Wickham 2004). But PAS's vacillating and sometimes contradictory stances makes this a less compelling explanation. Nik Aziz, the spiritual adviser and long-time Chief Minister of Kelantan, often cast as a moderate within the party, exemplifies this ideological flexibility. In 1999, he stated that the party could support a non-Malay as Prime Minister, a remark from which he later seemed to retreat from after public criticism from UMNO (Guan 2002, 185). Three years later, he declared that the Taliban in Afghanistan were an example of correct Islam in the world, and that PAS would not prevent its members from traveling to Afghanistan to join its struggle (Hwang 2010, 650).

Additionally, there were more pragmatic electoral reasons for the party to only haltingly pursue broader support. Unlike the DAP, PAS does not face the same type of

demographic limitations in pursuing a core audience of Malay Muslims. PAS can contest against UMNO, another Malay majority party, in a high number of seats without needing to transform itself into a broad multiracial party. The party has long been the beneficiary of anti-regime sentiment, particularly from the Malay Muslim community. As scholars have noted, PAS's best performance was when it seemed to downplay its Islamic state agenda and coalesce with other parties (e.g. Osman 2008). However, by doubling down on its religious identity, the party can still create a path toward significant national power. Like the DAP, the party can also rely on coalitions to appeal to new audiences, rather than organizational change (discussed in Chapter 6). As Mustafa Izzudin argues, "there is an element of truth in the claim that PAS' fixation with *hudud* was a political ruse to fish for Malay votes" (Izzuddin 2015, 6).

These pragmatic questions also extended into the party's open rapprochement with UMNO beginning in 2013. As described in Chapter 3, it was not the first time that UMNO and PAS had engaged in mutual courting with each other, though after PAS was out of the BN coalition it was decades before the subject came to the fore. After 2008, UMNO began a renewed courtship of PAS, and there was internal debate at PAS's annual meeting about the proposal (Liow 2009, 201). These developments were encouraged by party president Hadi Awang, and accelerated greatly after the death of Nik Aziz, the party's "spiritual leader" who had been more inclined to pursue opposition coalition building.

As described in the next chapter, PAS has long relied on its state government in Kelantan. Importantly, many of the prominent politicians of Amanah are based outside PAS's territorial stronghold of Kelantan, leaving in place PAS personnel who

hold a stake in maintaining the party's seats in overwhelmingly mono-ethnic constituencies. PAS now has only a single member of parliament in multiethnic Selangor, and the majority of its remaining MPs represent Kelantan.

4.4 Nationalization Strategies: The Opposition Goes East

This section describes the dynamics of the East Malaysian state of Sarawak from the period of 1999 – 2016. By detailing the distinct dynamics of party expansion in this new opposition frontier, it demonstrates how existing party profiles, as well as the increasingly crowded opposition field in West Malaysia, drove the DAP and PKR to expand their support there.

Socioeconomically and demographically, Sarawak is significantly different terrain than West Malaysia. Sarawak (and neighboring Sabah) are poorer, less populated, and more rural than most areas in West Malaysia. Political party competition is quite different, with local parties continuing to play an important role in East Malaysian politics. UMNO itself has no party presence in Sarawak. Racial dynamics also differ from West Malaysia: In the 2010 Census, Sarawak's Malay and Chinese populations each made up 23% of the total; 48% of the population is Other Bumiputera.

The choice to expand into East Malaysia was a fraught one for the opposition parties. All three major opposition parties, as well as more recent additions, originated in West Malaysia. For decades, Sarawak was a distant frontier for opposition parties. The opposition party branches that did exist in Sabah and Sarawak were in many ways franchise organizations, exercising considerable autonomy far away from the central party organizations in Kuala Lumpur.

A number of factors make expansion particularly difficult. One of the biggest problems is resources. As the largest state in the country, campaigning and maintaining party presence in Sarawak was extremely resource-intensive given high transportation costs to remote areas. These areas were also far from media scrutiny. Malapportionment was also very high in Sarawak, creating a number of electorally significant yet numerically small and difficult to reach rural seats. Finally, political competition in East Malaysia long centered on issues of autonomy, indigenous rights, and other state-level concerns, issues that the opposition has historically not campaigned on.

Nevertheless, the region offered important opportunities for the opposition parties. First, while shifts in East Malaysian voting patterns away from the BN lagged those in West Malaysia, and swings to the opposition were much less pronounced, East Malaysia offered a new site of expansion. The region lacked the increasingly calcified dynamics of intra-opposition seat negotiation in West Malaysia. Unlike the regularized political competition of West Malaysia, none of the Western Malaysian parties could make a claim to be the most attractive to East Malaysian voters. In addition, the urban areas of the region were still under BN control, giving opposition parties natural extensions to areas fitting with their strengths. Crucially, by gaining a foothold in Sarawak, local parties there and in Sabah could be encouraged to defect from the BN to form a ruling government with the West Malaysian parties, as took place in 2018.

The opposition began making limited inroads into Sarawak. In 2008, the DAP won a single federal seat in Sarawak. In 2013, the parties of the PR coalition won six

of the federal constituencies in Sarawak; it also marked the first time that all 31 parliamentary constituencies were contested by opposition candidates (Aeria 2013).

The parties also made inroads on their respective core constituencies, particularly the DAP and PAS. Both parties have used ethnically targeted appeals to win over their core constituencies living in Sarawak. The DAP promised Chinese voters that school allocations and clan associations would be kept intact and argued without the party, Chinese would be left out of top positions in the state government (Welsh 2016). PAS engaged the small Malay population located in urban areas through emphasis on religious and educational issues, arguing that the chief minister of Sarawak should remain Muslim.

These wins prompted some within the opposition to argue for making greater inroads into the state. One proponent of this strategy has been Anwar Ibrahim, leader of PKR. At the PKR congress eight months after 2008 election, Anwar declared that "Sarawak would be the opposition's key to [the administrative capital] Putrajaya" (Hazis 2011, 281).

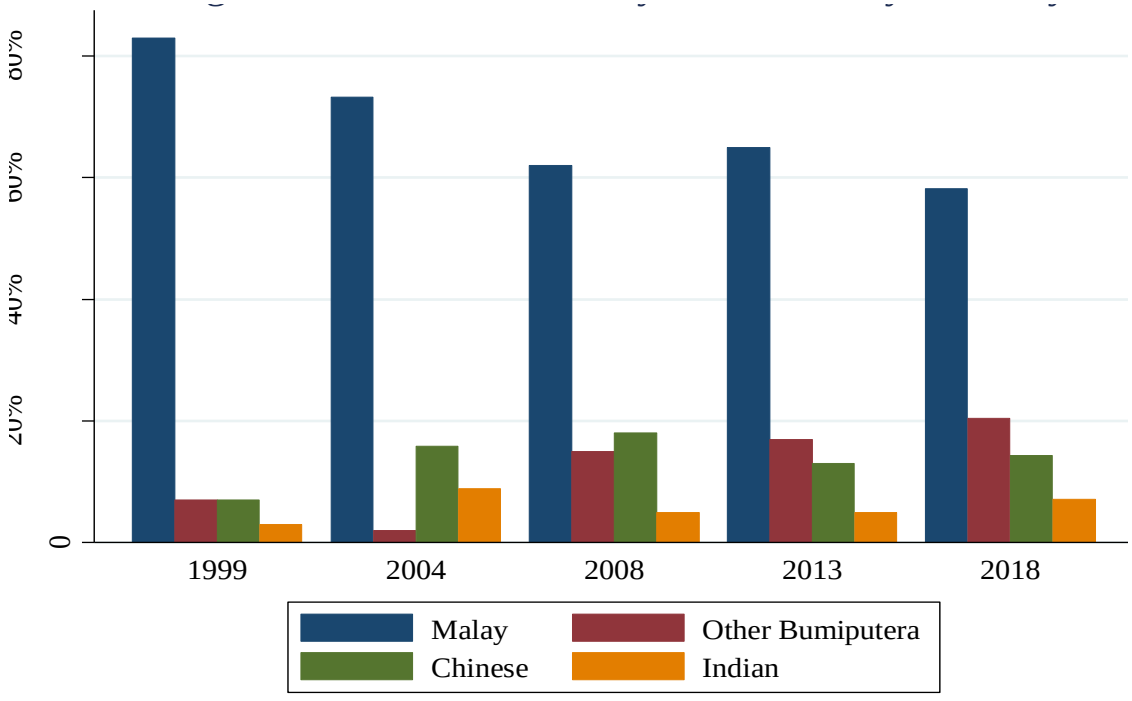
Changes to Organization and Candidates

As in West Malaysia, the opposition parties made new attempts to integrate local Bumiputera candidates and members. The DAP had a long but marginal presence in Sarawak, with its local branch formed in the late 1970s by defectors from the local Chinese Sarawak party SUPP (J. Chin 2011). As the party's fortunes improved nationally, it began establishing local party branches, holding membership drives and fundraising dinners, as well as creating community projects to provide basic infrastructure (Hazis 2011, 21; Aeria 2013). The party also established two

consultative councils to bring in indigenous leaders from East Malaysia into the party organization. The ethnic composition of the party's slate in the 2016 state elections in Sarawak reflected greater attempts at outreach to the Bumiputera community: almost 60% of the candidates the DAP ran were Non-Malay Bumiputera candidates, and the remaining 40% Chinese.

Like the DAP, PKR sought to build consistent support in Sarawak's very different demographic and political conditions. The party began running Bumiputera candidates in 1999, and expanded its organization into East Malaysia beginning in 2001 (Jawan and King 2004). 70% of the candidates the PKR ran in the 2016 state elections were non-Malay Bumiputera. As shown by Figure 3 below, PKR, like the DAP, increasingly ran Bumiputera candidates in East Malaysia.

Figure 3: PKR Parliamentary Candidates by Ethnicity



Source: 1999 and 2004 data compiled by author; 2008 and 2013 data from (Pepinsky 2009b) and (2015); 2018 compiled with assistance of Joshua Meyer-Gutbrod.

PAS also made some modest efforts to expand its organization. In 2016, the party ran a single Christian Dayak candidate; its other candidates were largely local, but all Muslim.

New Issue Appeals

In the first few elections after 1999, the opposition parties initially campaigned on anti-regime issues similar to its West Malaysia campaigns but quickly pivoted to emphasize local issues that resonated more with the electorate (Hazis 2011, 163). In particular, the parties sought to tie local and regional issues to national concerns and discontent. In the 2016 election campaigns I observed, the slogans and campaign speeches often sought to link local leaders and BN parties to the unpopular incumbent Najib Razak, as well as the unpopular GST, cost of living issues, the 1MDB corruption scandal, and East Malaysia's neglected economic status compared to the West. The parties also incorporated locally important issues, including traditional claims to land in the region.

Both the DAP and PAS created local service projects to extend their brand. DAP's local Impian project targeted semi-rural and rural areas through organizing community development projects and offered free services such as medical camps to potential voters. PAS ran a more modest program, For You Sarawak (*Untukmu Sarawak*), that also combined service provision and community projects.

Outcomes

The opposition parties had mixed success in Sarawak. From 2008 to 2013, the opposition parties went from holding two to nine seats in Sabah, Sarawak, and the small federal territory of Labuan. In state elections in 2016, however, the opposition lost ground. In those elections, the DAP lost several of its urban seats, a move one scholar argues was a result of increasingly multiethnic urban constituencies that eroded the Chinese majority votes that the party had depended on (Welsh 2016). The Impian project and "go rural" approach of DAP showed mixed results. DAP was able to increase its majorities among Dayak voters. However, the enormous investment of the party's resources in the program, with only limited results, sparked debate within the party about whether the strategy was effective given its costliness.[54] The PKR maintained its three seats but failed to make headway in additional seats against the BN. Attempts to establish local credibility for PAS proved largely ineffectual. The party's candidates were soundly defeated in the 2016 state elections.[55]

While party brand has not proved as large an impediment for the PKR and DAP in expanding into Sarawak, it has also provoked conflict between the parties over which party can claim hold over which seats. In 2016, the PKR and DAP both ran candidates in six constituencies, and the ensuing debate over which party or candidate was the more suitable one played out over the media. In part, the PKR built up more rural indigenous support while the DAP had saturated its urban support; the only

[54] Interview with DAP legislator, May 19, 2016.
[55] PAS did, however, almost win the Beting Maro seat in 2011. PAS was not the only party to face resounding defeat in Sarawak in the most recent state elections in May 2016; its splinter party Amanah also failed to make headway. Amanah, however, had only officially been founded in September 2015, some nine months before, and appeared to have little name recognition among voters.

constituencies DAP could expand were in rural seats, which PKR laid claim to.[56] The debate between which party was more favorably viewed spilled out into public, as the parties released survey results which showed the relative favorability of parties and candidates.

But overall, both PKR and DAP showed evidence of incorporating new constituencies into the organizations and local leadership. For DAP, its efforts have been more far-reaching than its equivalent incorporation of Malay candidates and members in West Malaysia.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the strategies and variable success of Malaysia's opposition parties in expanding their electoral appeal during a period of broad electoral change. It has shown the costs and risks of expansion, and their potential benefits, were not distributed evenly across parties. Party brand structured the size and geographic distribution of core and swing audiences, meaning that the parties faced very different electoral landscapes even in the face of overall weakening of support for the incumbent. The incumbent's counterstrategies also varied by the party's base of support and core issues. The BN portrayed the DAP as a Chinese party that threatened the special position of Malays in the country. By contrast, as shown further in Chapter 5, the BN adopted a strategy with PAS of allowing it space to implement hardline policy while criticizing its policies as extreme.

[56] Anonymous interview.

Even as parties face different incentives, they used roughly similar strategies to attempt to appeal to new voters and alter long-standing party images. They sought rhetorical incorporation of new issues and shifted their issue emphasis; in some cases, they pursued deeper changes to organizations and candidates. Tracing these shifts helps provide a fuller picture of the capacity and willingness of opposition parties to undertake changes needed to become truly broad-based.

More broadly, it shows the increasing convergence of parties like the DAP on issues of the economy and corruption to make broader appeals. As shown in the next chapter, for the DAP, focusing on issues of economic performance and service, traditionally the campaign issues of the BN, offered one way for the party to downplay its ethnicized image.

The chapter has focused on strategies employed by the parties to appeal to new ethnoreligious and regional demographics. This is not the only way in which the parties sought to respond to the new electoral environment. There is some evidence that the influx of voters to the opposition meant the parties attracted more capable and professional candidates. PAS, for example, absorbed an influx of moderate, urban-oriented politicians after 1999. Greene (2007) in particular argues that the absorbing of pragmatic opposition candidates is key for their transformation from a niche to catchall profile. By focusing on demographic change or continuity within the parties, this chapter does not explicitly address these other changes. But given how salient ethnic and religious issues remain in Malaysia's politics, cross-demographic appeals remain important for voters as well for the parties themselves. Political discourse in

the media often highlights demographic representation as a yardstick by which to judge the behavior and intentions of the parties.

A second limitation is that disaggregated information about voting in Malaysia remains largely unavailable to researchers and the public. This complicates the tracing of voting patterns among different ethnic and religious groups. There is also little publicly available evidence about the perceptions of voters towards the opposition over time. As such, it is difficult to trace the connection between opposition appeals and subsequent electoral success. But this chapter demonstrates that the opposition parties were not simply passive recipients of national regime discontent; they played an important part in channeling and articulating issues and sought to connect their long-standing missions to new audiences even as the regime sought to prevent their scaling up. Yet the parties faced a continuous dilemma of both depending heavily on core support among particular communities, while simultaneously seeking to transcend their communal identities.

In Chapter 5, I continue discussion of these dilemmas of expansion from the perspective of subnational governance. As shown in the chapter, while the parties have benefited from the patronage opportunities of subnational office, they face the challenge of reconciling local and national strategies while governing with severe fiscal and policymaking constraints.

CHAPTER 5

DILEMMAS OF EXPANSION: SUBNATIONAL OFFICE AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

"Local government has become our training ground." *(Kerajaan tempatan menjadi medan latihan.)*

-- Mohamad (Mat) Sabu, President of Parti Amanah Negara, December 2016

5.1 Introduction

In competitive authoritarian regimes, opposition parties frequently win office at the subnational level, even while national power remains elusive. This was true in Malaysia as well: Despite the unbroken dominance of UMNO in Malaysia's ruling coalitions in the federal government since 1957, the opposition parties made increasing inroads at the state level. After 2008 and prior to the elections in 2018, the opposition parties formed the governments of three states, including two of the most economically and politically important states in the country. Beginning in 2008, approximately 29% of Malaysia's population lived under opposition state rule.

In the previous chapter, I examined the ways in which the opposition parties sought to expand support beyond core constituencies, and how different party brands influenced the dilemmas they face in doing so. But how does this dilemma play out when parties win local office? This question is important for three reasons. First, while opposition parties in authoritarian regimes frequently seek to build support at the subnational level, less research has focused on the factors which determine whether parties are able to use local office as a stepping stone to national power – or alternately, become mired in local politics. Second, given that subnational

governments often preside over regionally or demographically distinct areas, the dilemmas that parties face in catering to core supporters and the broader electorate become overlaid with tensions between local and national political considerations. Third, holding subnational office requires opposition parties to navigate between ambitious reform- or regime-oriented goals and the realities of local administration and the ruling government's cooptation and boxing in strategies. It thus provides an excellent lens through which to view how parties navigate the "dual game" of participating in authoritarian institutions while also seeking their overturn.

Using interviews, news sources, and secondary literature, this chapter analyzes how the three opposition parties have sought to use subnational government toward their own objectives. I find that even though the BN severely limited political and financial control at the state level, opposition wins in state office were crucial for party building. Local office provided important organizational resources and strengthened ties with local political and business elites through patronage.

However, diverging party strategies in office based both on the party's existing profiles, and the distinct regions where they won, had different implications. For the DAP and PKR, and to a limited extent PAS, winning in multiethnic states with substantial non-Chinese populations helped them cement their connections with a multiethnic electorate. Even while the DAP quickly built a strong base of support in the state of Penang, with a "majority minority" population of non-Malays, the considerable resources of the state and its large Malay minority allowed it to showcase

governance and policies that emphasized economic growth, administrative efficiency, and direct material links to constituents.

However, for PAS, its inroads in a single state government outside regional strongholds made little dent on its national reputation. Since PAS won its greatest support in monoethnic rural states, using a fusion of Islamic and populist governance that emphasized nationally controversial Islamic policies, it built a distinct and enduring identity in local government – but in doing so, limited its broader appeal and exacerbated coordination problems with other opposition parties.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I describe the constrained system of federalism in Malaysia, and the opportunities available for opposition parties at the state level. I then draw on diverse materials to show the tensions between local and national strategies of opposition. Finally, I discuss the implications of subnational governance for opposition party organizations, electoral returns, and coordination.

5.2 Subnational Office in Malaysia

Like many competitive authoritarian regimes, Malaysia would seem an unlikely case to study opposition subnational control. Its constitution provides limited powers to the country's 13 state governments and three federally administered territories. It is also a system with limited electoral choice: as noted in Chapter 3, local elections were halted in 1965 less than two decades after the British colonial state had introduced them. As such, state legislatures and the lower house of the national parliament are the only two elected offices in the country.

State governments maintain limited policymaking power over the citizens in their constituencies. Table 9 below shows some of the formal distribution of responsibilities between state and federal levels. State legislatures sit in session only a few days each year. State legislators complain that little of their time is spent on legislation, and the bulk of their time is spent on constituent issues. As a quirk of their historical incorporation into the British colonial state, only four Malaysian states – Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu – are allowed to appoint most of their own civil servants through their State Public Services. For all other states, civil servants are federally appointed and seconded to state governments.

Table 9: Responsibilities of State and Federal Governments in Malaysia

Federal	**State**	**Jointly managed**
Foreign affairs	Laws related to Islam	Social welfare
Finance	Lands and mines	Town and country planning
Trade and industry	Agriculture and forestry	Public health
Education and health	Local governments	Water
Print media	Markets	Housing
Labor and social security	State administration	
Transport	Native laws and customs	
Communication		

Sources: Loh 2010; Siddiquee 2013

Malaysia's states also face serious fiscal constraints. Selangor, the most economically developed and populous state in Malaysia, where almost a fifth of the country's population resides, had a state budget in 2016 of 2.88 billion ringgit (around USD $655 million), equaling approximately 1% of the federal budget. By contrast, the Prime Minister's Office, the "mini government within the federal government" through which the Prime Minister wielded increasingly centralized control, had an

estimated budget of 23.2 billion ringgit the same year (Chua 2016). States can raise some additional revenues from land and forests, mines, entertainment duties, and taxes. Nevertheless, the size of state revenue remains limited: In 2006, the total revenue of all states was 9 billion ringgit, compared to federal revenues of more than 120 billion ringgit (D. J. Chin and Harding 2015, 27). States are not allowed to borrow money from non-government institutions, leaving many states indebted to the federal government (Narayanan, Lim, and Ong 2009).

Malaysia's federal system also reflects the racialized institutions of the country. In Malaysia's nine "Malay states" – those states with a Malay Ruler (hereditary monarch) drawn from the state's royal families – have state constitutions requiring that the Chief Minister (in some states given the title *Menteri Besar*), the top political position in the state, must be a Malay Muslim. Ethnic Chinese politicians in only two states have ever been able to assume the position of Chief Minister (Tay 2018). Given that both the PKR and DAP field non-Malay Muslim candidates, this can prevent the parties from assuming the head of government –and did so in 2008 elections in the state of Perak, where PAS instead was allowed to put forward a Muslim politician as Chief Minister).

Nevertheless, since Malaysia's independence, opposition parties won control of a number of state governments (Table 10). Prior to state-level wins in 2008, opposition state governments were unstable and prone to collapse, often due to political instability and intrigue instigated by the federal government.[57]

[57] The notable exception to this trend has been Kelantan, which despite weathering its own political crises, has largely remained in PAS's hands since the country's independence.

Table 10: States in Malaysia under Opposition Control, 1957 - 2018

State	Years under opposition party control
Kedah	2008-2013
Kelantan	1959-1978; 1990-present
Perak	2008-2009
Penang	1969-1971; 2008-present
Sabah	1986; 1990-1994
Selangor	2008-present
Singapore (prior to independence)	1963-1965
Terengganu	1959-1961; 1999-2004

The discussion that follows largely focuses on opposition control in the three states that the opposition parties controlled for the longest period of time: Kelantan (since 1990), Selangor and Penang (since 2008). Two of the states, Penang and Selangor, are wealthy and highly urbanized, with a multiracial population and a strong industrial base. The third state, Kelantan, is poor and rural, and its population is almost entirely ethnically Malay. The states also vary in terms of the composition of parties in government. PAS has dominated the state government of Kelantan since 1990, and previously controlled the state from 1959-1978. The state government of Penang is largely controlled by the DAP. By contrast, Selangor's state government had its seats almost equally divided between PAS, the DAP, and PKR. The state-level wins of the three major opposition parties in 2008 had spurred the creation of the PR opposition coalition discussed in the next chapter. The electoral coalition fell apart in 2015, but the state government of Selangor was still nominally run by the coalition government.

Figure 4: Malaysian States under Opposition Control, 2008 - Present

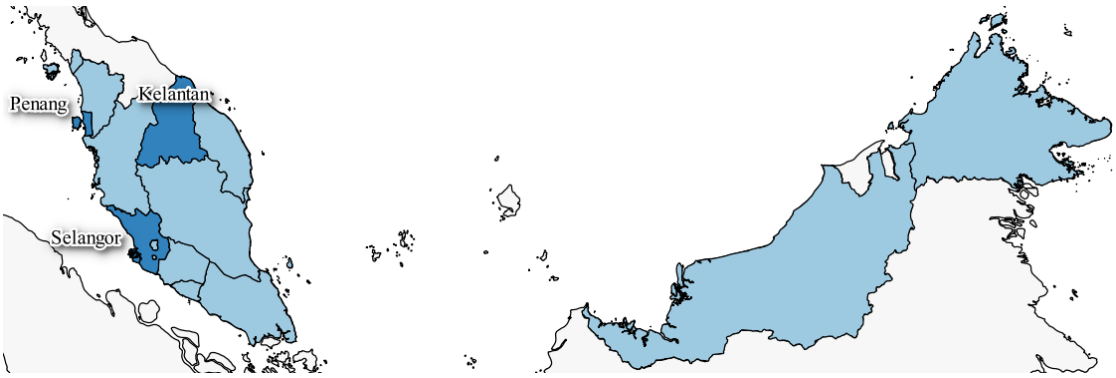


Table 11: Characteristics of Opposition-Held States (prior to 2018)

	Penang	**Selangor**	**Kelantan**
GDP per capita	$10,600 (USD)	$10,000	$2,900
Population demographics (2015)[58]	Total population: 1.6 million Malay: 42% Chinese: 40% Indian: 10% Non-Citizens: 8% Urban pop.: 91%	Total population: 6.1 million Malay: 53% Chinese: 15% Indian: 12% Non-citizens: 10% Urban pop.: 91%	Total population: 1.7 million Malay: 94% Chinese: 3% Non-citizens: 3% Other: 1% Urban pop.: 42%
Parties in state legislature	DAP: 48% PKR: 40% PAS: <1% BN: 25% Chief Minister: Lim Guan Eng (DAP)	DAP: 25% PKR: 23% PAS: 23% Amanah: 4% BN: 21% Independent: 4% Chief Minister: Azmin Ali (PKR)	DAP: 0% PKR: 2% PAS: 69% BN: 27% Independent: 2% Chief Minister: Ahmad Yaakob (PAS)
Opposition tenure in office	2008-present	2008-present	1959-1978; 1990-present

[58] These are the four largest ethnic categories in each state; "Other" indicates non-Malay Bumiputera.

Sources: Department of Statistics Malaysia 2014, 2015, State websites

Malaysia's ruling government used various strategies to constrain and occasionally destabilize opposition-held state governments. The first strategy was through fiscal punishment. In Kelantan and Terengganu, the two oil-rich states where PAS has won control, the state governments were denied 5% profits from oil as stipulated by federal law. In its place, the federal government belatedly disbursed what it termed "goodwill money" (*wang ehsan*), though the funds were a fraction of total profits owed to the states (The Sun Daily 2009). The funds were also not given to the state government but directed through federal government agencies and development projects in the state, and in Terengganu the local UMNO branch (The Edge 2012).[59] In 2010, the Kelantan state government sued the state oil company Petronas for failing to pay 800 million ringgit in royalty payments since 2005. These punishment strategies were used even in Penang and Selangor, the two wealthy and economically important states won by the opposition in 2008. After the opposition won the Penang state government, federal payments to local councils were reduced and payments were made directly the councils, bypassing the state government (Narayanan, Lim, and Ong 2009).[60]

[59] These fiscal punishments were particularly severe given that PAS had campaigned on ridding local government assessment taxes in their election manifesto, on the assumption that petroleum royalties would offset lower revenue (Siddiquee 2012). But on assuming power, those royalties never materialized, and local agencies and municipal councils were left with severely limited funds (Kuppusamy 2013, 207).

[60] Arguably PAS-controlled governments faced the most significant constraints. In the 12 year interregnum of PAS's power in Kelantan between 1978 and 1990, the BN-led state government incurred more than $630 million in debt to the federal government, which the PAS state government inherited (Yusoff 2011). PAS' top state-level officials were excluded from economic development meetings; refused additional financial assistance beyond constitutionally mandated annual budgets; and faced halts on foreign direct investment (I. Hwang 2003, 229).

To make up for limited funds, the states were forced to find revenue generating activities. For instance, in Kelantan, the PAS state government relied heavily on revenue from its logging industry to pay for state maintenance and civil servant salaries. Some commentators have blamed excessive logging under the PAS administration for devastating floods in 2014, in which 200,000 residents were displaced (Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism 2016). In 2017, 77% of the revenue generated by the state government of Selangor came from property and land taxes (Jalil 2018). Similarly, Penang has generated much of its state revenue from land sales.

Opposition state governments repeatedly clashed with federal authorities over transportation, infrastructure development, and water management, and complained that funds and federal approval for infrastructure development are blocked. Federal-state tussles also occured in BN-controlled states, as Hutchinson (2015) demonstrates in the state of Johor. But these conflicts tended to be more muted, given that state politicians were often seeking to move up the organizational ladder within UMNO and sought to stay in the good graces of higher ups in the national government (Ibid.).

Another strategy used by the federal government was to further channel resources and power away from state government agencies by extending federal power into the states. The State Development Office, a federal unit directly controlled by the Prime Minister's Office, was physically relocated from the state secretariat buildings in Penang and Selangor after the opposition government took control in 2008, and began operating independently of the state governments (Yeoh 2010). The PAS-controlled state of Kelantan was simply passed over for many development

opportunities. A long-planned highway connection for the state was repeatedly delayed after PAS won the state back in 1990.[61] The PAS government also blamed federal punishment for the reasons why the state continues to lack proper port facilities and an international airport (S. M. Abdullah 2018).[62]

Opposition state wins also constituted a threat to UMNO's political presence which extended down to the village level. Village heads, traditionally the chairman of the local UMNO party branch, dispensed government assistance and goods for farmers, and have historically played a key role in electoral mobilization (Crouch 1996, 40). After their win in 2008, the newly elected opposition government in Selangor forbade village heads from holding a party position (Bernama 2008).[63] In response, the federal government created a parallel system of federally-appointed village heads that answer directly to federal agencies. The result was a "psychological war" between the competing village heads, according to one state legislator, with both eager to play a role in local affairs and display their largesse.[64] These strategies were used in a different form in Kelantan, where the federal government created a Federal Development Department to bypass state governments, and used service centers set up

[61] Such projects often formed the basis for campaign promises by the BN, including the highway in Kelantan and a monorail project in Penang. Neither project was realized in the two states after BN failed to win power.
[62] These types of punishments came in forms large and small. In April 2017, approximately a year before the national election, the Local Government Department director-general reportedly halted all small-scale infrastructure projects – including road and drain construction, public toilets, and multi-purpose halls– in all constituencies not held by the BN.
[63] In a similar strategy in Terengganu, to loosen the grip of BN-appointed village heads, the newly elected PAS government created a new JSR (Jawatankuasa Syura Rakyat) system to parallel the village head system. After PAS lost the state again in 2004, the new BN state government disbanded them.
[64] Interview with Selangor state legislator, March 2, 2016.

by UMNO division heads for the purpose of development projects (I. Hwang 2003, 229).

The BN also sought to undermine or wrest control from the opposition by more overt means. After the opposition won the state of Perak in the 2008 elections, the government reportedly offered direct payments to state legislators to defect away from the opposition, leading to the collapse of the opposition government and formation of a BN-led state government (Case 2013a, 171). Opposition politicians in the opposition-held states have also long complained that they are excessively targeted for corruption inquiries by the federal government (Case 2011, 451).

5.3 Organizational Benefits of Subnational Office

Despite these significant resource constraints, subnational office holding nevertheless allowed the parties to develop patronage relationships, strengthen ties of loyalty within state political institutions, and attract new political financing from the local business community.

The significant number of patronage appointments available to state governments appeared to be an unintended consequence of the country's high level of political centralization. Since elections below the state level are banned, Malaysia's state governments wield extensive control over political appointments down to the lowest levels of government. State governments appoint the state executive council, which manages a variety of economic and political portfolios, city councilors in urban areas and district officers and village heads in rural ones. These local authorities in turn manage many of the day-to-day operations of cities and districts, including public space management, sanitation, town planning and land development. State

governments also appoint the directors on the boards of the local GLCs (Government-Linked Companies). These patronage positions became an important resource for opposition parties, as evidenced by the extensive wrangling among parties over dividing up the rights to appoint positions among governing parties.

Opposition party politicians appointed to the position of Chief Minster, the head of state government elected by a majority vote in the state legislature, also wielded significant political and economic clout. In opposition-controlled Selangor, the Chief Minister and State Secretary controlled approximately 10% of the state budget and exerted a considerable informal role in the legislative process.[65] Particularly in the wealthy states of Penang and Selangor, the Chief Minister position holds important oversight positions in land use and economic development and control substantial state assets. In the state of Selangor, for instance, the Chief Minister controls 74 state GLCs, and state assets such as golf courses, hotels, as well as property and construction companies (K. M. Ong 2015). The directorships of these companies were also divided among the parties (Ngui 2016).

After they began controlling economically important states and resources, the opposition parties increasingly attracted donations from businesses seeking influence and hedging their bets should the opposition be successful at the national level (Dettman and Gomez forthcoming). Information on donations and party finance is not public in Malaysia, but interviews with party politicians suggest that holding state government increased their ability to attract campaign and party donations.

[65] Author interview with Selangor state legislator, February 2, 2016.

By controlling state government, opposition parties in power also sought to widen their influence over institutions to weaken the strong grip of the federal government. This is most evident in the civil service, a group that UMNO long depended on for support (Crouch 1996, 132–33). Ensuring civil service loyalty was particularly significant in Selangor and Penang, where the majority of civil servants are federally appointed and seconded to state governments (Yeoh 2010). In an apparent bid to shore up support among civil servants, Penang and Selangor began offering more generous benefits than BN-controlled states, including greater Ramadan bonuses, housing allowances, and paid leave (Teik 2006, 171).[66] Paying for these civil servants is significant: In Selangor, 38% of the annual budget goes towards salaries for civil servants, and in Penang 36% of the budget (Yeoh 2010). To bypass BN legislators, the Penang state government created "constituency coordinating officers" to work directly with the public in all 10 constituencies held by the BN (The Edge 2013).

5.4 PAS: Mobilizing Local Support, Conflict with National Goals

But the political implications of local office for Malaysia's opposition are only partly to be found in the institutional arrangements. The opposition governments still had considerable choice in how they utilize local office to fulfill party goals. In this section, I examine how PAS in government sought to mobilize and maintain support at the local level but subsequently made it difficult for them to build broad national appeal.

[66] The timing of the announcement in Selangor and Penang was not long after the PM Najib had announced a one-off payment for all civil servants in the country in the 2018 budget.

After the party's formation in the late 1950s, PAS quickly emerged as an important political force in Malaysia's rural northern states. Most notably, in 1959, the party won control of the poor rural state of Kelantan, whose population is almost entirely Malay Muslim. As would be replicated among the opposition parties in Penang and Selangor years later, PAS quickly began using its position to strengthen its links with supporters, favoring them with land concessions, contracts, and government jobs (Crouch 1982, 39).

As the party held state power, compromise with the BN government became increasingly appealing, given that it would smooth contentious relationships with the federal government, offer access to national government posts, and lessen the punishment and subversion strategies by the government aimed at toppling the state government (Milne and Mauzy 1980). In 1973, PAS joined the recently formed BN coalition. The fragile rapprochement with the federal government lasted only four years, as PAS politicians accused UMNO of seeking to undermine its hold on Kelantan, and in 1977 cast a vote of no confidence for the Chief Minister of the state. Widespread rioting broke out in the state, leading the federal government to declare a state of emergency and take over administration. In 1978, elections were called and PAS was routed, losing its hold in state government.

After a 12-year interregnum in PAS's control of the state, PAS returned to win Kelantan state government in the 1990 elections.[67] PAS again returned to strategies

[67] PAS's regaining of Kelantan was only possible with its electoral coalition with Semangat 46, a breakaway party from UMNO led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, an opponent of then-PM Mahathir Mohamad.

aimed at its regional base of support. PAS's spiritual leader Nik Aziz Nik Mat then held Chief Minister of Kelantan for 23 years, beating even Mahathir's 22-year reign as Prime Minister. PAS later won enough seats to form the state government in neighboring Terengganu state in 1999, holding it for one election cycle.

The two states PAS was able to derive its greatest electoral and organizational strength were demographically very different than the rest of Malaysia. In Kelantan and Terengganu, the Malay Muslim population is 94% and 95% respectively, compared to 50% of the national population.[68] In order to maintain support among its core constituencies, then, the party's campaign appeals and activities in local government were tailored toward a very homogenous population in these states.

The governing style that PAS chose in the states was a fusion of populist and religiously-inspired policy. Most notorious were the hardline Islamic policies the PAS government implemented after its return to power. The PAS-controlled state legislature in Kelantan passed a *hudud* criminal code in 1993 that included traditional punishments found in the Quran and hadiths, including amputation for thievery and execution for adultery. Because the law conflicted with the existing powers of Malaysia's Syariah Courts and exceeded the powers of state governments in enacting new criminal penalties, *hudud* laws were never implemented in the state. PAS governments also instituted various other religiously-oriented policies. After winning control of the state of Terengganu in 1999, the PAS government cracked down on public entertainment, introduced public service dress codes, and banned gambling and

[68] 2015 figures.

the sale of alcohol (Harding 2012, 230). It also adopted a land tax (*kharaj*) on non-Muslims, a measure that was later scrapped (Wain 2009, 209). Other policies include the prohibiting of any bank branch in the state which charges interest, and the banning of traditional *Makyong* dance performance for its un-Islamic roots.[69]

These policies became enormously controversial in Malaysia. PAS's promotion of Islamic policies, made real by its actions in government, was a significant barrier to coordination with the DAP. As described in Chapter 6, PAS's stated interest in implementing an Islamic state made the DAP's first coalition with the party lethal to its core voters. PAS sought to downplay these tensions, announcing in 2003 that it would follow a "two-tier strategy," where it would only seek the Islamic state in PAS-controlled states, but not at the federal level where it would rule as part of the then-active opposition coalition the Alternative Front (BA) (Liew 2008, 119–20). This followed its earlier strategy of issuing "supplementary manifestos" in Kelantan and Terengganu confirming its commitments to hudud law (Case 2013b, 140). These strategies failed to resolve the contradictions between the party's regionally-oriented Islamic messaging and the national imperatives of appealing to a multiethnic electorate.

PAS's also remained a source of tension for PAS state legislators who won seats outside the northern strongholds of PAS, in more ethnically and religiously heterogeneous areas. These legislators, while largely promoting more moderate policies and much less visible in promoting Islamic policy, were a key constituency

[69] Interview state government worker, August 17, 2016, Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

for defecting to the splinter party Amanah in 2015. PAS's policies also appeal to urban Muslim audiences outside its regional strongholds.

Nevertheless, its Islamic image helped it win Malay Muslim voters across West Malaysia. As shown in the previous chapter, in 1999 PAS was able to build broader support outside its regional strongholds following a wave of Malay Muslim resentment against the BN. Yet outside of majority-Malay seats, the party struggled to increase cross-ethnic and cross-religious appeals to win electoral majorities.

PAS's support in Kelantan and other northern states cannot be attributed entirely to its Islamic policies. As Crouch noted, while "PAS describes its ultimate goal as the establishment of an Islamic state in Malaysia….it responds to the more mundane aspirations of its supporters" (1996, 67).[70] PAS's state control has seen populist policies such as the abolishment of toll roads and housing assessment taxes (Yaacob 2008). The party also implemented an extension of maternity leave, and implemented various housing and assistance measures aimed at the poor (A. B. bin Abdullah 2011). Despite its reputation as a rural-oriented party, in recent years the party struggled to hold on to rural areas in Kelantan. Indeed, prior to the 2018 elections the federal government dramatically increased its support of economic development in rural areas, seeking to gain a greater foothold in the state (Bernama 2018).

Islamic-inspired policy initiatives were nevertheless part of its distinct appeal. In interviews, PAS politicians in Kelantan stated explicitly that they see the party's

[70] In its earlier period in control of Kelantan, when the party was more aligned to a nationalistic Malay-Islamic leadership, the prioritizing of Islam of the state was not a priority of the PAS government.

emphasis on Islamic governance as key to maintaining their power in the state.[71] This is particularly true given the sluggish economic growth of the state under PAS's tenure, which included the BN's significant economic and fiscal punishment and isolation strategies described previously. The BN's electoral campaign in Kelantan often focused on PAS's "misuse" of Islam, and that only UMNO could bring development to the state (J. Chin 1996, 403). However, PAS appeared undaunted in its focus on Islamic issues; in January 2018, Kelantan's government announced it would spend 1 million ringgit to study Qatar's hudud implementation.

In sum, holding subnational office in an ethnically homogeneous, rural region shaped the core support of PAS, its policy implementation, and its broader reputation in the electorate. As shown in Chapter 4, this Islamic image has stymied its growth outside its core areas. Even as its promotion of hudud repeatedly sunk opposition coordination and limited its appeals to the broader population, the party appeared tied to its hold on state-level power, where it can satisfy patronage and policy aims. The party's improved national electoral support after 1999 served to exacerbate tensions between factions within the party who sought to broaden the party's appeal to the broader multiethnic electorate, and those who sought a more "pure" Islamic agenda (Liow 2009). While recent work on the party has tended to prioritize the ideological component of this struggle (e.g. Noor 2003; Liew 2007; Liow 2011), these tensions over policy and ideology were overlaid with its strategic electoral considerations at the local and national level.

[71] Interview August 16, 2016 in Kota Bharu, Kelantan; Interview August 17, 2016 in Kota Bharu, Kelantan

5.5 The DAP and PKR: Administrative Strategies

The previous section has shown how PAS's distinct base of support at the subnational level, while providing an important resource for holding local power, conflicted with incentives with winning over a broader set of voters. However, the DAP and PKR faced a different subnational environment. They built support in multiethnic states that not only provided patronage opportunities, but also the chance to implement Yemile Mizrahi termed in the Mexican context "administrative strategies" of opposition governance (Mizrahi 1997). Through these strategies, the DAP in particular was able to emphasize an economically-focused strategy to govern over a racially and religiously diverse electorate, even while holding on to core supporters.

After the 2008 elections, opposition governments formed in the states of Penang and Selangor. In both states, PAS, PKR, and the DAP – the winning parties in the state – formed the PR governing coalition. As noted in Table 11 in section 5.2, both were wealthy states with a large urban population and significant non-Malay populations. PAS' representation in Penang was minimal, but it was a significant member of the government in Selangor.

The PR coalition's policy framework emphasized its commitment to transparency, good governance, social justice, and "genuine democracy." In office, the opposition governments in Penang and Selangor implement modest policies aimed at better governance, including asset declaration by top executives in state government, holding public town halls, and instituting open tender for state government contracts

(Harding 2015, 152).[72] The states also passed Freedom of Information enactments to allow public access to state documents, though there appears to be low public awareness of the provision and "hiccups" in their administration (Lin 2015). The state governments in Penang and Selangor have consistently received high marks from the National Audit Department, though many BN-controlled states also won these plaudits.

But the parties faced challenges in implementing more far-reaching reforms. One of the promises of the PR after 2008 was to reintroduce local elections for city and district councils. The lack of elected officials below the state level has been considered a significant impediment to well-run or responsive governance, and civil society groups have long lobbied opposition-controlled state governments on the issue (Wong 2010, 43).[73] After opposition parties came to power in Penang and Selangor in 2008, the state governments engaged in small-scale experiments to introduce local elections, first for village heads.[74] In 2012, the state legislature in Penang passed an enactment which would provide for local elections. But in 2014, the Federal Court ruled the law invalid, putting an end to local-level electoral experimentation (Tariq 2014).

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[72] These initiatives are absent from the PAS-led state government in Kelantan, where information about contracting and procurement, as well as details on the significant logging activities in the state, have been unavailable to the public since the PAS government regained power in 1990.

[73] Not all opposition parties were on board; PAS's leader Hadi Awang hinted that ethnic Chinese would dominate local elections, since much of Malaysia's ethnic Chinese population has historically lived in urban areas, and this ethnic imbalance would lead to racial violence (Harding 2015, 157). Yet PAS apparently resisted the idea of trying local elections even in its homogenous electoral strongholds of Kelantan and Terengganu during its long tenure in office (see: https://www.bersih.org/the-sun-ballot-watch/) .

[74] During the 2008-9 period of opposition control in Perak, before the state government collapsed, the opposition-held government set up elections for village heads. But after the state government was retaken by the BN in 2009, all the elected village heads were fired (Harding 2015, 162).

But even prior to the court ruling, civil society members critiqued the opposition government for not doing enough in enacting fundamental change. As one activist put it, "Penang and Selangor have done fairly well, but they've never changed the basic tenets of governance: never replaced errant civil servants, never changed the system of procurement and contracting… We realized that the pledge for good governance and more participation was… at the surface level, not something institutionalized." [75] Civil society activists were also boxed out of promised city council appointments in Penang and Selangor; despite previous commitments by the two governments to appoint 25% NGOs and professionals (Rodan 2014). However, there was little evidence that opposition supporters, or potential swing voters, were disillusioned by the lack of more fundamental reforms in state government.

But more significantly, control of state government dovetailed with an increasing emphasis on service strategies. The parties could build more significant ties to constituents, emphasize their economic and administrative performance, and focus on service provision. In doing so, parties may potentially shift the evaluation of voters away from broad racial and religious profiles – or stereotypes – and towards an economically-oriented performance evaluation. In other words, the evaluation of the opposition would begin to converge on the issues – of service delivery, administrative efficiency and responsiveness, and economic performance – that the BN has long claimed ownership over.

[75] Interview with civil society activist, Kuala Lumpur, June 6, 2016.

These administrative strategies were particularly evident in Penang and Selangor. In Selangor, the opposition-controlled government launched a 17-point program called "Creating a People's Economy in Selangor" (*Merakyatkan Ekonomi Selangor*). In exchange for registering at state-run community centers, state citizens received a mix of direct subsidies and benefits ranging from educational funds to one-time payments for married couples (Yin 2013). In Penang, the opposition government implemented its "Social Economic Agenda" (*Agenda Ekonomi Sosial*), which includes similar subsidies as well as budget allocations to top up household income below a minimum level. The program's expenditures were modest – in 2015, AES spent 304,000 ringgit (approximately $74,000)–but served to support 1,142 families.[76]

State legislators in opposition-controlled states also benefited from increased access to resources to deliver services to constituents. Like their BN counterparts, opposition legislators at both the state and federal level are frequently pressed into fulfilling constituent demands – ranging from direct assistance for medical bills, mediating contacts with bureaucratic institutions, and responding to small-scale infrastructure problems. In Selangor and Penang, opposition legislators received 500,000 RM annually to use toward constituent services. These funds were denied to BN legislators, who themselves received far larger allocations from the federal government unavailable to opposition legislators.

These programs and subsidies provided several benefits for state governments. First, they allow state governments to build up a database for future election

[76] The demographics of the families also reflect the confluence of poverty and race in Penang: 82% of the families were Malay, 11% Indian and 7% Chinese [Rocket Newspaper citation - Image DSC01367]

campaigns.[77] Second, they allowed the parties, particularly the DAP, to demonstrate their competence to a broader multiracial population. In their techniques of delivery and focus on direct material benefits, some scholars have argued that they imitate the "political culture and norms" that the BN has cultivated over decades to maintain its power (Weiss 2016). But while they undeniably provide material links to potential voters, there appeared to be little implicit threat that their implementation depends on political support. Some of the state government programs were populist but also progressive, such as a medical card scheme, bus fares for the children of plantation workers, and food aid for low-income women (Mahavera 2017).

State policies also reflected an attempt by opposition parties, particularly the DAP, to head off critiques of ethnic particularism. The PR manifesto pledged an increase in allocations to the state-level Islamic departments in the states, and the parties were careful to emphasize policies oriented towards Malay populations. Zairil Khir Johari, a Penang DAP MP, noted the state government's record of 70% of state procurement contracts and projects toward Malay contractors, and that more than 90% of beneficiaries of the state's poverty eradication program are Malays – but both on merit or need, rather than ethnic targeting (Johari 2016).

5.6 Conclusion

The previous sections have outlined the implications of subnational control for the organizational capacity, material ties, and broader national strategies of the opposition. They demonstrate that the profiles of Malaysia's main opposition parties

[77] Interview in Penang, July 2, 2013.

mapped out onto local and national competition. For PAS, its emergence and consolidation of subnational power in ethnically and religiously homogeneous regions magnified the conflicts it faces between satisfying local constituencies and appealing to a broad national audience. These conflicts are much less evident for the DAP and PKR, which after 2008 won state governments presiding over multiethnic areas, which allowed the parties to pursue administrative style strategies to increase support outside their core constituencies.

To what extent did subnational office represent a stepping stone for the opposition, or a safety valve to defuse their national threats? Despite the successes of the DAP, PKR, and PAS in governing Penang and Selangor., it is unclear how much their experiences contributed to their eventual success. In the 2013 elections, five years the three parties won, all three parties deepened their hold on the two states. The PKR and the DAP sought to use Penang and Selangor as models of governance to use in political campaigns. As one DAP MP writes about Penang, "it is imperative that the DAP continuously communicates its successful track record in government… [to] set the foundations for a new political narrative that promises prosperity and development based on the principles of good governance, transparency and, more importantly, a non-communal approach of needs-based policies and meritocracy" (Johari 2016). PAS was able to cultivate a set of moderate politicians in Selangor

Yet the further electoral growth of Malaysia's opposition was not solely tied to its performance at the subnational level. The first challenge faced by the parties is connecting local outcomes to their parties in the mind of voters. In general, while survey evidence is scant, opposition state governments and their programs appear to

enjoy support among local citizens. A survey of voter perceptions of Selangor government programs rated them highly, and Selangor residents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the performance of local councils (Musa 2017). An opinion survey in Kelantan in 2008 found that respondents were largely satisfied with state government performance, with 63% responding they were satisfied with performance of the state government; though with 15% responding they were dissatisfied with the ability of the Kelantan state government to "meet the aspirations of the people."[78]

But "administrative strategies" also set the opposition to be evaluated by the same criteria as BN parties, with a fraction of the resources. Indeed, the BN government has sought to undermine the appeal of the opposition by imitating their policies. Opposition politicians allege that the BN took on the populist welfare policies of PAS in Kelantan; the current Prime Minister Najib Razak said that the BN government "had already been implementing the welfare state policy in Malaysia and was doing it better than the PAS government of Kelantan ever could" (Yeoh 2011). The popular government BR1M program, which provides direct cash payments to the poor, is also alleged to have been a response to opposition policy initiatives (Liew 2013, 13; Weiss 2016, 6). In this sense, by shifting competition to the same issue areas as the BN, opposition governments faced the daunting task of proving their abilities with a fraction of the resources and political power of the federal government.

A second challenge is that state and national voting patterns have tended to converge (Pepsinky 2009). In 2013, the percentage of the electorate voting at the state and national level for the opposition in West Malaysia was within 1-2 percentage

[78] Merdeka Center Jan 2008 poll.

points of each other. In other words, voting, particularly in urban areas, is being driven more by national politics and events rather than local government performance.

The opposition parties still faced the full power of the federal government in trying to use local office to springboard to national power. The incident of the "Kajang Move" illustrates this well. In 2014, a politician in the PKR opposition party sought to engineer the ascension of party leader Anwar Ibrahim to the Chief Minister position of Selangor, the top position in the state. In doing so, Anwar would be poised to cement his position as a national leader in waiting by presiding over the wealthiest and most populous state. To maneuver Anwar into this position, the PKR asked one of its state legislators to vacate their seat, triggering a special election that Anwar would have almost certainly won. But two weeks prior to the election, the Court of Appeals overturned Anwar's acquittal on sodomy charges and convicted him to five years in prison. In doing so, the conviction ensured he could not contest in the election.

Finally, for PAS, it appears clearer that the BN tolerated its state-level presence for decades because it effectively kept the party tied to a regional base. PAS bet heavily on keeping its stronghold states, particularly Kelantan, though its electoral performance in the state has fluctuated over time. Its electoral support has been vulnerable to national trends, particularly in 2004, where the party was barely able to hold onto Kelantan. PAS's main policy push for *hudud* is broadly popular amongst Malaysia's Muslim population. In a 2014 poll, 71% of respondents expressed support for hudud implementation (Merdeka Centre 2014).[79] However, it is not clear that

[79] Given that Malaysian Muslims may perceive support for *hudud* as part of their religious obligation, there is likely a disconnect between *hudud* as principle and actual policy. Only 30% of Malay respondents in the same survey said the country was ready for the implementation of *hudud*.

PAS's state-level realization of these policies strengthened its electoral support among Malay Muslims. It is further complicated by the fact that much of Kelantan's population lives and works outside the state, reflective of the state's poor economic status; "outstation" voters make up at least 15 percent of Kelantanese voters.[80] It is clear that these policies severely limited the party's support among non-Malay and non-Muslim demographics.

After the progressive faction of PAS split off to form the splinter party Amanah, PAS's top leadership was concentrated in the party's traditional state strongholds. As the party began pursuing tacit agreement with the BN to hold on to power in a few key states, the strategic decisions of PAS mirrored its choices almost 50 years prior: Focus on the defense of subnational office and win policy concessions and political appointments with the existing government, while downplaying strategies for national power aimed at unseating the BN coalition.

This chapter has demonstrated how the challenges of opposition parties in expanding their appeals play out in local and national political competition. The different party profiles of the three main opposition parties map out onto different styles of governing, amplified by the very different regions in which the parties have won. In emphasizing economic and administrative performance, the strategies of the parties in Penang and Selangor show a strategic convergence with the national government. This reflects both their increased electoral success, as well as the resources available to them in state governments. But by seeking to weaken the issue

[80] Based on figures in Pasuni (2015).

ownership of the federal government on economic performance and service, the opposition may leave themselves vulnerable to being evaluated on the same criteria but with a fraction of the resources and policy authority of the federal government. Nevertheless, the parties benefited from control at the local level in attracting new sources of financial support, a host of patronage positions in government and government-linked businesses to distribute, and political positions that could appease party factions.

In more democratic contexts, opposition parties at the local level were able to implement significant changes. For the left parties in Latin America, for example, even as national power remained beyond reach, opposition parties were able to implement some of core goals in office by introducing local democratic innovations (Fox 1994; Goldfrank 2011; Levitsky and Roberts 2011). This was largely not the case in the states under opposition control in Malaysia, given the significant institutional barriers erected by the BN. However, there appeared to be little electoral penalty for the parties not implementing their reformist goals at the local level.

In the following chapter, I describe another element of the dilemmas faced by opposition parties: the imperatives of intra-opposition coordination. These considerations inform and frequently exacerbate the individual dilemmas faced by the parties in reaching new audiences.

CHAPTER 6

DILEMMAS OF COORDINATION: LOCKING IN CORE IDENTITIES

6.1 Introduction

On December 3, 2016, Malaysia's ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad appeared on the stage at the Democratic Action Party's annual party meeting. The country's political history has seen many moves across the divide from the ruling government to the opposition, and vice versa, but this was perhaps the most unexpected. Mahathir's legacy of developmental authoritarianism had been cemented during his 22 years as Prime Minister, and he had spent almost 70 years as a member and later president of UMNO. Now, at 91 years old, he sat on stage with some of the opposition politicians whom he had jailed multiple times during his tenure. Several months later, Mahathir's new party, The United Indigenous Party of Malaysia (Bersatu), joined the DAP in an opposition coalition against the BN.

Such improbable alliances repeatedly crop up in authoritarian settings. Coordination across ideological, ethnic, and religious divides is an important avenue by which opposition parties can build national presence, and sometimes bring about democratic transition (Howard and Roessler 2006; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Donno 2013; Wahman 2014). But in contrast to the individual party building efforts described in Chapters 4 and 5, coordination represents a distinct strategy for opposition parties. What benefits do strategies of coordination provide for opposition parties, and what effects do these strategic alliances have on attempts to build broad-based opposition parties?

As Chapter 2 argues, opposition coordination offers three benefits: a) reducing the number of contesting opposition parties in electoral districts; b) helping parties appeal to voters on the basis of a broader oppositional identity and c) governing at the subnational level (as Chapter 5 has discussed). Malaysia's opposition parties had long engaged in loose forms of coordination to avoid splitting the vote. But since 1999, the major opposition parties engaged in deeper and more explicit forms of cooperation, including in three electoral coalitions and, after 2008, governing coalitions in opposition-led states. By 2018, a new opposition coalition won national power, unseating the BN government for the first time in Malaysia's history.

Using information about the demographics of electoral districts, as well as interviews, news sources, and secondary literature, this chapter makes two arguments about coordination. First, I show that opposition coordination shifted over time from a strategy aimed only to avoid splitting the vote towards a strategy of persuasion, helping the parties significantly expand their pool of potential voters. Second, I show that even with this success, coalition building involved a significant tradeoff. The more that the parties coordinated, the more tightly linked they were with the core constituencies which they sought to expand beyond. The reason was that the parties had strong strategic incentives to divide up the electoral map based on their existing demographic strengths and perceptions of winnability. As a result, the deeper the coordination, the less likely they were to fully pursue the individual broadening strategies discussed in Chapter 4. In periods where coordination is "off the table," parties were more likely to pursue broadening.

Three broad factors make cooperation a recurrent strategy in Malaysia. The country's SMD plurality electoral system makes splitting the anti-regime vote likely if opposition parties do not coordinate. Second, the ruling National Front (BN) coalition and its predecessor, the Alliance, provided a template for coalitions of race- and regional-based parties to form governments, share resources, and appeal to voters across cleavage lines. Finally, and relatedly, multiracial parties have been relatively rare in Malaysia's history, meaning that most opposition parties grew around ethno-territorial and religious identities.

In the recent past, any sign of collaboration between opposition parties of disparate demographic and ideological leanings, particularly between PAS and the DAP, was seen as electorally damaging. But in the years leading up to the successful unseating of the BN, coordination became more explicit, public, and an electoral advantage to the opposition. As one scholar wrote of coalition building in Britain, coalitions benefited cooperating parties "not only providing a crutch to get around problems of demographic and geography but also mutually enhancing the overall popularity of both parties through the act of coalition" (Wager 2017).

But even as the campaign messages of a coordinated opposition were made more persuasive, coordination also had the unintended effect of locking parties into their own niches. Malaysia's opposition parties divided their seats and campaign efforts largely along ethnic lines, reducing the individual incentives for parties to build deep links to new communities. In doing so, it allowed them to delay organizational adaptation on their way to becoming nationally viable electoral forces. The effect of coordination in Malaysia, then, incentivized the opposition parties to incorporate

ethnic and religious difference through coordination and coalition building, rather than expanding their core base of support.

This argument has implications for how we think about coalitions and their democratizing benefits in countries like Malaysia. Ethnically inclusive "grand coalitions" have intuitive appeal in both authoritarian settings and multiethnic polities: they provide political incentives for elites to seek votes across different groups by moderating their political views. They allow parties to effectively multiply their electoral support with a lack of resources and present a united front against entrenched incumbents that claim to be broadly representative. These coalitions are sometimes able to overturn incumbents, as in Malaysia's 2018 elections. But rather than building broad-based parties, parties in coalition may win electoral support *without* necessarily building mass appeal. In societies where ethnic cleavages are salient, like Malaysia, multiethnic *coalitions* may allow ethnically-based opposition parties to contest at the national level, while retaining their individual ethnic character. In doing so, the opposition parties retained the type of ethnicized political competition that had been entrenched by the BN ruling coalition, even as voting patterns suggested that Malaysia's elections were not simply an "ethnic census."

This chapter begins by briefly reviewing opposition coordination in Malaysia from before independence to 2018. As will be seen, the determinants of coalition building (and their stability) were due to a complex mixture of political environment, ideology, the BN's counterstrategies, and the political proclivities of individual leaders. But the analytical focus of this section is primarily not to untangle the specifics of coalition building and breakdown. Rather, it is to show empirically the

patterns of political competition that emerged from Malaysia's particular mix of opposition parties and their differing political strategies. It also shows the tension and conflicts with the strategies of individual party broadening described in Chapters 4 and 5.

I then show how coalitions act as a mechanism of persuasion and mobilization by proxy for other parties. The section that follows draws on electoral data to show how parties have been "locked in" by coalitions, even as they built enough electoral support to win national power. I then discuss how coalitions worked in the incumbent National Front (BN) coalition prior to turnover. Finally, I discuss the implications of the argument for the new ruling government in Malaysia.

6.2 Coordination and Coalitions Prior to 2008

The roots of inter-communal and inter-ideological bargaining can be traced to colonial Malaya. As described in Chapter 3, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), later to become key political parties in the future ruling government, represented their respective ethnic groups in negotiation with the British colonial authority over their restructuring plans. The first successful electoral coalition, the Alliance, was formed by the two parties along with the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC).

Opposition party cooperation soon emerged to contest against the successful Alliance coalition. In the 1959 elections, two parties, the Malaysian People's Party (Parti Rakyat Malaysia) and the Labor Party of Malaya (Parti Buruh Malaya) formed the Socialist Front (SF). Despite their shared ideology, the parties derived support from different ethnic groups: the Labor Party derived support from a largely non-

Malay voting base, in part because it had built support through local council elections, where non-Malay populations were predominant. The coalition helped the parties attract inter-ethnic support: as Weiss argues, the Labor Party "could not attract Malay votes, and [the Malaysian People's Party] attracted very little else" (Weiss 2005, 95). The Socialist Front also collaborated informally with the largely ethnic Chinese United Democratic Party (UDP) to avoid contesting in the same districts and splitting the vote (Weiss 2005, 266 note 21).

The following national elections in 1964 saw opposition coordination break down, as multiple opposition parties contested the same seats. The PAP (predecessor to the DAP) contested outside its home base in Singapore by running candidates in West Malaysia. The PAP's candidates ran in seats that were also contested by the Socialist Front, likely costing the latter coalition victories in five parliamentary seats (Leifer 1965, 62). After the costly example of 1964, the 1969 elections saw increased coordination over strategic entry. For that election, three opposition parties - the DAP, Gerakan, and PPP - agreed to coordinate over contesting seats based on their conjectured electoral strength among different constituencies (Vasil 1971, 164). This also took on a geographic dimension: PAS and the Malaysian People's Party agreed not to contest in the state of Penang in deference to Gerakan.

In 1969, the opposition also coordinated in ways to split the ruling Alliance vote (Mauzy 1979, 141 fn 158). In elections which featured the MCA and the DAP, both dependent on ethnic Chinese support, PAS entered candidates to draw away the Malay vote that otherwise would go to MCA since it was part of the ruling coalition

(Ibid.).[81] The opposition coalition was very successful in the 1969 elections, allowing Gerakan to capture the state of Penang and for the first time depriving the ruling Alliance of a 2/3 majority in parliament. Nevertheless, as described in Chapter 3, this success was quickly cut short, as the May 13, 1969 communal violence led to the suspension of parliament and deepening authoritarianism.

Opposition cooperation was a sporadic feature of subsequent elections. In 1978, PAS and DAP were rumored to have forged a secret "unholy alliance" for the elections (Mauzy 1979, 285). Then-Prime Minister Hussein Onn characterized the alleged deal as between a "deer and tiger in a cage," with PAS as the deer (Kassim 1978). While both parties denied they were cooperating, the election saw the parties putting up candidates in seats where they had little hope of winning, seemingly in an effort to split the BN vote (Ibid.). Overall, the election saw 26 districts where both the DAP and PAS contested against a BN candidate.

It was not until 1990 that substantial opposition coalition building emerged in Malaysia.[82] But the parties created two separate opposition coalitions to accommodate both the DAP and PAS. Similar to the role played by the PKR in later elections, the linchpin in both coalitions was Semangat 46,[83] a breakaway party from UMNO led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, a former UMNO vice president who had lost against Mahathir in elections for party presidency in 1987. Semangat 46 featured in both

[81] The 1969 election included a number of electoral contests that featured rare combinations of parties compared to subsequent elections. PAS contested eight seats in multicorner fights against the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), with the DAP and Gerakan, both predominantly ethnic Chinese parties, as the third contender. The DAP and PAS contested against UMNO and MIC in two seats.
[82] The 1986 election also saw a coalition between PAS and several minor parties in the People's Justice Movement (Harakah Keadilan Rakyat). The coalition did not result in seats for the minor parties, and PAS did poorly in the election.
[83] Semangat 46 means "The Spirit of '46" – referring to the year of UMNO's founding.

opposition coalitions: the Muslim Unity Movement (APU, *Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah*), which included PAS and other small Islamic parties, and the People's Concept (*Gagasan Rakyat*), which included the DAP, a small Malay and a small Indian party (Crouch 1996, 122–23). While the APU coalition was successful in helping PAS regain power in Kelantan, it did poorly elsewhere. Overall, the opposition was unsuccessful in denying the BN a two-thirds parliamentary majority despite their hopes to do so (Ibid., 125).[84] By the time of elections in 1995, the schism between the DAP and PAS over Islamic policies made cooperation increasingly difficult. The DAP pulled out of the People's Concept Coalition while the APU coalition lasted until 1996.

The *reformasi* period provided the impetus for the parties to pursue deeper forms of coordination. Opposition cooperation was certainly aided by the swift erosion of confidence in the government after the Asian Financial Crisis affected currency, employment and growth rates – and the jailing and trial of UMNO's Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, for sodomy and corruption (Weiss 2005, 15). But equally important in aiding this process was a revitalized civil society that provided the political space for the parties to work together, and the template around which the parties could agree on a common platform (Ibid.). This was also not the first time that civil society actors helped the parties coordinate; former DAP member and activist Kua Kia Soong argues that Chinese civic associations helped dialog with PAS leaders

[84] Semangat 46 did poorly in the elections and by 1996 many of its personnel were reabsorbed into UMNO. James Chin argues that the party had an "image problem" in the Malay electorate, given its less clear political platform. Razaleigh later added Melayu (Malay) to the parties name – Semangat Melayu 46 – to emphasize its ethnic and religious identification (J. Chin 1996, 398).

in 1985; during the 1986 election, they also appealed to the Chinese electorate to vote for the opposition, including PAS (Kua 2016, 112).

In April 1999, the DAP, PRM, KeADILan,[85] and PAS signed a cooperation agreement, and the Alternative Front (*Barisan Alternatif*) coalition was formed in October 1999, just one month prior to the national election. Out of 504 electoral contests for seats in state elections, there were only seven three-way contests - where two opposition parties contested against a BN candidate in a single legislative district. At the national level, only one legislative seat was contested by two parties.

The coalition was significant given it was the first time that the DAP and PAS publicly engaged in cooperation. The DAP's long-time leader Lim Kit Siang also argued that the coalition signified that his party had launched "into the Malaysian political mainstream from the non-Malay political compartments it had been entrapped" (K. S. Lim 2001, 25). He went on to argue that it was the first time in the nation's history where the opposition had a chance to break the two-thirds parliamentary majority of the BN (Ibid.).

The Alternative Front was unevenly successful in advancing its component parties in the 1999 elections. But it also brought into the public spotlight the very different political aims and objectives of the DAP and PAS. In 2001, PAS released its infamous "Islamic State" document, which offered a blueprint for the implementation of *hudud*, or punishments under Islamic criminal law, to which the country's Muslim population would be required to adhere. The document and subsequent media

[85] Later to become PKR after its merger with Parti Rakyat.

attention triggered a crisis for the coalition. In 2001, the coalition held a Leadership Dialogue where the DAP stated that the parties needed to confront the issue of the Islamic state, despite the coalition elections platform omitting any mention of the issue. The DAP's Lim Kit Siang argued for clarity on the Islamic state issue was necessary "and not by everyone keeping mum on the subject or pretending that this is a Barisan Nasional-created problem" (K. S. Lim 2001, 99). PAS refused to sign a joint statement assuring voters it would not seek to establish an Islamic state at the federal level. This provided impetus for the DAP to withdraw from the coalition in September 2001. The Alternative Front name was still carried on during the 2004 elections through PAS and PKR.

6.3 Post-2008 Opposition Coalitions: Deepening Coordination

Malaysian politics saw the emergence of two major opposition coalitions after 2008: Pakatan Rakyat (The People's Alliance, PR) and Pakatan Harapan (The Alliance of Hope, PH). This section will briefly detail the formation of the two coalitions, and the circumstances which led the PR to collapse.

The Rise and Fall of the Pakatan Rakyat Coalition

The 2008 general election saw a confluence of factors not seen since 1999, including an unfavorable economic environment for the BN and an unpopular prime minister, a mobilized civil society, and increased opposition coordination (Ufen 2009, 617). But coordination in 2008 was still unable to bridge the divide between the DAP and PAS. PKR campaigned both with PAS and the DAP, but the two latter parties did

not coordinate apart from agreeing on avoiding contesting in the same districts (Weiss 2009, 748).

But the results of the 2008 election saw significant electoral advances for the opposition, spurring the formation of a new opposition coalition after the elections between PAS, PKR, and the DAP. The formation of PR was aided by several factors. First, PKR had won the most seats of opposition in 2008, giving PKR's leader Anwar Ibrahim a strong position as leader of the coalition. He quickly took up the role of mediator of the coalition, particularly between the DAP and PAS (K. M. Ong 2010, 143). Second, as discussed in the previous chapter, after winning enough seats to form the governments in five states, a governing coalition was necessary.[86] Finally, civil society actors and activists again provided some of the glue to bring opposition parties together, pressing the parties to sign on to a declaration calling for a variety of reforms around democracy, free press, transparency, and a united opposition front (Weiss 2009, 749).

Politicians in the PR coalition quickly termed themselves the "government in waiting," while BN politicians including Mahathir Mohamad labeled them a "marriage of convenience." Indeed, the gulf between the DAP and PAS over ideology and policy, along with jockeying for power and political positions, were ever-present issues.

[86] The fifth state won by the opposition, Perak, was soon wrested from their control through a "constitutional crisis" as detailed in Chapter 4.

Despite this, for the first time the PR coalition contested the 2013 elections as a joint force. The 2013 elections were a high mark for opposition coordination. The parties signed a joint manifesto, the parties' top leadership jointly campaigned in several areas, and campaign materials prominently featured the party logos together (Aeria 2013). The three parties even attempted to register as a formal coalition, thus allowing the coalition to use a single coalition logo on ballot papers – mirroring the BN strategy of using a single coalition logo rather than individual party logos. Their request was rejected by the Elections Commission (Teik 2013). This coordination also featured high levels of discipline in coordinating electoral contests. In 2013, there were no three-way contests among the three opposition parties for 222 seats in the national legislation, giving the BN a single PR challenger in each district.[87]

The coalition, however, lasted only two years beyond the 2013 elections. Perhaps the most decisive factor in the coalition breakup were the internal tensions within PAS over the direction of the party, as described in Chapter 4. Much of PAS's post-1999 strategy relied on clashing messages of pluralism (albeit under the umbrella of Islam) and its stated intention to realize an Islamic state in Malaysia. It resembles what Carrie Wickham described as a "discourse of generalities" put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, where the contradictions between democratic and religious practice were never fully resolved (Wickham 2013). This allowed PAS to build cross-cleavage coalitions with secular parties, while remaining rhetorically committed to goals of building Islamic state and implementing *hudud* criminal code.

[87] Some electoral contests, particularly in East Malaysia, featured smaller opposition parties and independent candidates, none of whom won in the election.

Both the previous Alternative Front coalition, as well as the PR coalition, avoided clear messages on Islamic law. In both cases, the coalition parties agreed to respect PAS's religious messaging while not taking a clear stand on the role of Islam beyond what is already written in the constitution.[88]

Ideological differences over the role of Islam undoubtedly contributed to the instability and tensions of coalition building, but were not predestined to do so, given that PAS and the DAP had worked in coalition for years without splitting over the issue. But PAS president Hadi Awang, whose support derived from the increasingly ascendant *ulama* faction of the party, had long made pronouncements that suggested he was less interested in working with the opposition parties and more amenable to working with BN. In 2013, for example, after the opposition's most wide-ranging wins, he called for PAS to engage in discussion with UMNO over issues including economic issues and implementing Islamic policies in the country (The Star 2013).

Hadi also pushed forward Islamization policies at the state and federal level that proved controversial, apart from his own role in putting forward *hudud* legislation in the state of Terengganu as his time as Chief Minister of the state. One year after the 2013 election, PAS announced Hadi's intention to put forward national legislation to pave the way for *hudud* implementation in its state stronghold of Kelantan. It was aided by the BN government, which organized a technical committee to study the

[88] In the Alternative Front coalition, Chandra Muzaffar of Keadilan stated that the coalition would "respect the ideological commitment of the various (opposition) parties." (Utusan 1999) An April 29, 2013 Facebook posting from Hadi Awang's account appeared to show a signed letter from between Lim Guan Eng, DAP Secretary General, and Hadi agreeing that "PAS had the right to fight for *aqidah* (Islamic religious beliefs) and the Islamic state concept on its own."

proposal which included PAS representatives from Kelantan (Malay Mail 2016b). In March 2015, the Kelantan government passed amendments to existing *hudud* legislation to finally allow for its implementation in the state, passed with support by UMNO state legislators. Hadi's private bill lay dormant until May 2016, when Prime Minister Najib Razak and the deputy prime minister ordered the bill to be moved to the top of the parliament's agenda (Malay Mail 2016a). Soon after, the DAP stated they would no longer work directly with Hadi Awang. By June 2015, PAS progressives were defeated in internal party elections and the party decided to sever ties with the DAP. (Internal developments within PAS are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4). Shortly thereafter, the DAP's leader Lim Kit Siang also declared the PR coalition dead.[89]

While the divide between the DAP and PAS over *hudud* received significant media attention, other factors likely contributed to the coalition's collapse. Some commentators have argued that the "Kajang Move," the failed attempt by PKR to maneuver its leader Anwar Ibrahim into the Chief Minstership of the state of Selangor (described in the previous chapter) further frayed relations between PAS and the other opposition parties. The 2013 elections also seemed to make clear PAS's electoral limit without further changes to party platform – and thus, the limit of its power within any future governing coalition. After 1999, while the party's fortunes improved, it solidly established a consistent pattern of 14-16% of the national vote, making it by 2013 the third-largest seat getter in the coalition. While the balance of power of a future

[89] Sarawak DAP chairman Chong Chieng Jien declared Pakatan Rakyat dead in the state in March 2015, months before the national events.

national governing coalition was never spelled out, given the limits on its appeals it did not seem PAS would ever be positioned as the leading partner.

Pakatan Harapan: New Parties, Familiar Patterns

The collapse of the PR coalition was met with quick action by the DAP and PKR. By September 2015, just months after PR was declared dead, a new coalition – Pakatan Harapan, or the Alliance of Hope (PH), was inaugurated.

The DAP and PKR were joined in the coalition by Amanah, the splinter party from PAS populated by moderate PAS politicians who had lost in PAS's internal elections some months earlier.[90] The splinter party was still a fraction of the size of PAS but offered the opposition a viable contender against PAS and UMNO in district-level contests. The party's much smaller size, and more pragmatic stance on Islamic issues, likely contributed to its embrace by the PKR and DAP. PAS reacted to the new pact and the defection of PAS politicians to Amanah with bitter public recriminations. Some PKR leaders made public and private attempts to woo PAS leaders into the coalition, but with little effect.

While the pattern of cross-ethnic and cross-religious alliances was familiar, the introduction of another new party soon changed the dynamics of the coalition. The precipitating event was increasing defections from UMNO as the 1MDB corruption scandal (to be described in chapter 3) engulfed Prime Minister Najib Razak. The most prominent of the defectors was Mahathir Mohamad, the long-reigning Prime Minister of Malaysia, and a long-time critic of the Najib government. Mahathir had

[90] Amanah had only taken its name, logo and flag on September 8, 2015, just two weeks before the announcement of Pakatan Harapan.

increasingly made public criticisms against Najib, and in February 2016, quit UMNO – the second time he had done so since May 2008.

Initial reports and commentary cast doubt on the permanence of the move, and whether he would rejoin UMNO should Najib be unseated as prime minister.[91] But soon after, Mahathir decisively signaled his move to the opposition. Four days after quitting UMNO, Mahathir and prominent figures from opposition parties and civil society signed the Citizens Declaration, which demanded the removal of Najib as Prime Minister. The Declaration later gained a claimed 1.4 million signatures and was submitted to the King of Malaysia. During the "roadshow" promoting the Declaration, Mahathir was repeatedly and pointedly criticized by audiences for his responsibility in creating the conditions for Najib's corruption scandal (and never facing repercussions for his own corruption scandals).

Mahathir then became the main engine behind the creation of a new party, The United Indigenous Party of Malaysia (*Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia*, or Bersatu), formed in September 2016. Its top leadership comprised several high-level UMNO politicians, including former deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin and former Chief Minister of Kedah (and Mahathir's son), Mukhriz Mahathir. Echoing the paternalistic language which marked his prime ministership, Mahathir was explicit about the need for a race-based party: "We need some party that can counter [UMNO], that can have the same kind of support from the indigenous Malays, that can promise them that we will look after their worries, and we will attend to them… We

[91] In 2015, long-time DAP leader Lim Kit Siang argued that Mahathir's critiques of Najib were not motivated to "stop the rot which was started by him during his premiership, but for an agenda personal to himself."

are going to form a coalition [because] we know that the Malays feel more comfortable with a race-based party… we also point out to [them] that we will look after the interests of the Malays in the coalition."[92]

Bersatu formally announced its joining of the coalition in March 2017. The potential electoral appeal of the party was obvious for the opposition coalition. The party offered some elements that echoed the role of the defunct Semangat 46 party in the 1990 elections: A breakaway party of UMNO elites that could effectively appeal to regime supporters, particularly Malay Muslims. But on a policy level, Bersatu represented a different vision for Malaysia than the other coalition parties. As a race-based party, Bersatu seemed to explicitly reject the vision of non-communal politics that the opposition parties and civil society had painstakingly crafted during the past two decades. In interviews with the media, Mahathir claimed that rural Malays "feared" multi-racial parties, leading to the opposition's failure to win in their constituencies (Malaysiakini 2018b).

Bersatu also posed an unknown quantity in its commitment to the reformist mission of the other opposition parties. While Mahathir's rhetoric quickly evolved as the new party took shape, he initially insisted that the common ground was only getting rid of Najib. "All the opposition parties have accepted...the need for each one of us to make some sacrifice [to defeat Najib]… In order to do that, you must forget some of your pet projects and pet struggles. They are not as important as defeating Najib," Mahathir stated (Malaysiakini 2017). However, the opposition parties already

[92] Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, October 16, 2016.

signaled their willingness to look at new leaders. During the "Save Malaysia" campaign, the DAP's Lim Kit Siang stated that the country needed a "post-BN and post-PR Grand Coalition" that seeks to return to "constitutionalism and rule of law with a new Prime Minister and a new Malaysian Government." Significantly, he argued that the new PM can come from either BN or PR (K. S. Lim 2015).

6.4 Coalitions as Persuasion

The previous sections have demonstrated the empirical regularity with which Malaysia's opposition parties have engaged in coordination. This section focuses on the intended goals of coordination, and its shifting electoral effects.

Electoral coordination prior to 2008 functioned in several ways. First, as noted in the description of the 1978 elections, coordination sometimes meant *encouraging* multiple opposition candidates to contest in a single district to split the BN vote. In 1978, for example, the parties contested well outside their demographic strongholds – PAS contested in 16 state and parliamentary seats where Malays were less than 1/3 of the electorate, and the DAP contested 17 seats where non-Malays were less than 1/3 of the electorate (Kassim 1978, 46). But this was not a strategy to attract votes from new constituencies. Rather, the BN publicly claimed that this was a strategy of splitting votes, listing in a press release all the constituencies the parties contested outside their demographic strongholds (Ibid.).

More explicit coordination between the opposition, particularly between the DAP and PAS, was used against them by the BN during campaigns. The BN sought to play up the ideological and policy implications of PAS and DAP cooperation. In 1978, to counter the implicit cooperation between the two parties, BN politicians portrayed

the DAP as anti-Bumiputera and anti-Islam, and that voting for PAS was voting for DAP: To non-Malay voters, they stated that "only… multiracial co-operation within the framework of the [BN] could ensure racial harmony" (Kassim 1978, 45).

In the 1999 campaign, the DAP was hit by attacks from the BN component parties with ethnic Chinese bases – Gerakan and MCA – that the creation of a coalition including DAP and PAS would lead to the implementation of an Islamic state. DAP emphasized in press releases and in its campaign that its cooperation with PAS was confined to "issues of justice, freedom, democracy and good governance and does not extend to the issue of Islamic state," and that PAS would not gain enough seats to impose an Islamic agenda (Cornell Rare Collections Archive n.d.).

These attacks created uncertainty over whether more explicit opposition coordination helped the opposition parties win over more voters or whether it was anathema to core voters who resisted unlikely partnerships. DAP leader Lim Kit Siang wrote about the internal debates of his party over the effects of the coalition prior to the 1999 elections. Party leaders were unsure whether the election would be "a historic victory for the party, or be even worse for the party than the unprecedented defeats the party faced just 4 years ago, in 1995" (K. S. Lim 2001, 25). In the event, DAP was "the biggest casualty in the Alternative Front in the general election" (Ibid., 26). While the DAP made modest gains at the parliamentary level, party leaders felt that the coalition with PAS drove ethnic Chinese voters wary of the Islamic party back to the BN (Ibid.). By contrast, it appears there is little evidence that PAS suffered from erosion of its core vote because it had worked with the DAP.

But in subsequent elections, the stigma of cooperation appeared to decrease. Instead, coalition building became another form of *persuasion* aimed at swing voters. This was evident to some extent in the runup to the 1990 elections, where the leader of Semangat 46, the breakaway UMNO party, was successful in mobilizing DAP voters to support his favored candidates in a series of byelections (Crouch 1996, 122). The PR and PH coalitions allowed the parties to project a collective front through joint appearances, campaigning, and symbolic cooperation. In doing so, parties create a broader opposition identity which at best allow voters "to view the opposition as an alternative governing coalition" (Howard and Roessler 2006, 371). Through coalition agreements and joint manifestos, the parties signaled a level of commitment toward shared issues including sensitive issues of the special rights of Malays alongside economic and populist programs. Coalitions also encouraged cross-party voting among supporters of particular opposition parties by providing a signal to that voting for another party furthers the aim of their own party. Anecdotal evidence suggests all three parties benefited from the coalition in winning seats outside their traditional constituencies. In other words, coalition building allowed the opposition parties to increase their voteshares in the seats they respectively contested.

The 2018 elections saw the most coordinated collective front yet. This was in part an unintended consequence of the ruling BN's strategies against the opposition. Following the Elections Commission's rejection of their attempt to register the PH as a coalition, the opposition parties agreed in February 2018 to contest under a single party logo. Two months later, the Elections Commission temporarily deregistered

Mahathir's Bersatu party on technical grounds. This led the parties to decide on the PKR party logo as their common symbol in the election.

The use of a common logo was significant given that voters would see a single opposition logo at the ballot box rather than four individual party logos. It also meant that parties could avoid some of the negative stigma – or lack of existing reputation – associated with their party brands. In a post-election interview, DAP leader Lim Kit Siang credited the dropping of DAP's "rocket" party logo for the party's successes, saying that using the PKR logo "…was a clear message not only to those in [the PH] but to everyone, that we will be able to rise above race, religion, region and political party" (Malaysiakini 2018a).

Nevertheless, the coalition left the parties open to familiar counterattacks from the BN about the coalition's "true" leading party and source of support. This narrative often focused around the position of the DAP and sought to portray its position as leading to ethnic Chinese political dominance. For example, Prime Minister Najib claimed that the swell of supporters appearing at Alliance of Hope rallies (ceramah) were not Malays, only "DAP supporters" – that is, ethnic Chinese Malaysians. UMNO politician Khairy Jamaluddin assailed the DAP's decision to use the PKR logo, calling it "a tactic to confuse… Malay voters" (The Sun Daily 2018).

In response, the DAP appeared at pains to show that they were taking the backseat in the coalition. The DAP supported Mahathir as its prime ministerial pick, in line with its stated position that it has "never asked for a Chinese to become Prime

Minister."[93] Similarly, despite its electoral successes in 2013, the party contested five fewer parliamentary seats in 2018. In statements to the press, DAP Secretary General Lim Guan Eng stated that the party would only contest 35 seats in West Malaysia compared to Bersatu's 53. But BN politicians noted that the DAP was only highlighting its seat allocation in West Malaysia, attacking this framing as the DAP trying to downplay its position in the coalition (Malay Mail 2018).

The power of coalitions on voting behavior can be most easily measured in the 2018 elections. In particular, the three corner fights between PAS, the PH, and the National Front provide a rough test of voter intentions. In 2013, PAS contested as part of the People's Alliance (PR) coalition. In 2018, PAS returned to contest many of the same seats – but in the same election, the new PH coalition *also* contested those seats. This raised the concern among opposition parties that the three-way electoral battle would lead to PAS siphoning away voteshare from the PH coalition. But it appears that anti-regime voting trumped support for PAS. Even as strategic entry failed, strategic voting allowed voters to solve the coordination problem by choosing the clear regime alternative (Cox 1997, 4).

6.5 Strategic Entry and the Locking in of Opposition Parties

The last section demonstrates that coalition building increasingly functioned as a tool of persuasion for voters and allowed the parties to benefit from cross-party support and a broader oppositional identity. But what are the other effects of coordination on opposition party challenges? As argued in Chapter 2, when parties

[93] Speech by Secretary General Lim Guan Eng, DAP Party Congress, December 2016.

coordinate electorally, they face less incentive to pursue risky and uncertain attempts at broadening their political support. This section provides evidence for this argument.

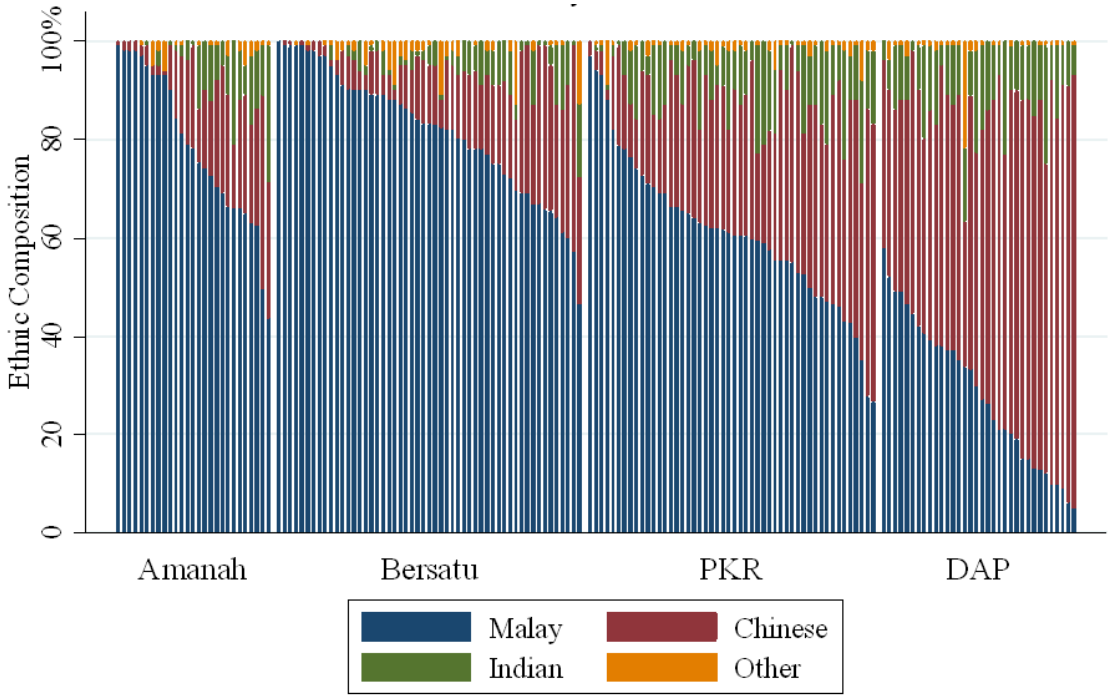
Electoral coordination over strategic entry involves dividing a finite and limited resource. As such, the parties sought to balance the number of seats they contest, particularly in West Malaysia, where all the major opposition parties originated.[94] From the outset of opposition coalition building, the division of labor was based on their respective demographic strengths. In the Socialist Front of 1959, "there emerged an understanding between the two member parties…. that Party Raayat [The People's Party] would concentrate on enlarging the area of its support within the Malay community and the Labour Party would restrict its effort to gathering greater support among the non-Malays" (Vasil 1971, 125). The "crucial consequence was that the Labour Party more or less completely gave up all ideas of attracting Malay support" and shifted more towards building a mass base among non-Malay, especially Chinese, voters (Ibid.).

The PH coalition formalized the strategic entry strategies of the opposition. In the coalition declaration signed in December 2015, the agreement states that the coalition will jointly field a single candidate per constituency, and "in deciding which party shall represent Pakatan Harapan [PH]…the Presidential Council shall take into account the factor as to which party has the *highest probability of an electoral victory in the said election*" (emphasis added).[95]

[94] Even including East Malaysia, by 1999, the DAP, PAS, and PKR collectively contested 84% of the seats at the parliamentary level.
[95] Pakatan Harapan Agreement, Clause 5.2/5,3.

As shown in Figure 5 below, in 2018 (as in previous elections), the demographic composition of the seats that the parties in the PH coalition contested largely lined up with their core demographic strength. The DAP contested in seats without a large Malay voting population, and virtually all seats where the ethnic Chinese are the majority. Amanah and Bersatu contested in seats with the largest proportions of Malay voters, and rarely contested seats with a large Chinese population. PKR showed the widest distribution of seat types, contesting both heavily Malay seats and seats where the population is more mixed.

Figure 5: Ethnic Composition of Districts Contested by PH in the 2018 Elections



Note: The above figure covers only electoral districts in West Malaysia.

Amanah and Bersatu, the two new opposition parties in the PH that could make claims on the core Malay Muslim constituencies of PAS, were essentially slotted

in to the seats that PAS had contested when it was part of the previous coalition. Of the 73 seats that PAS contested in 2013 as part of the PR coalition, Amanah and Bersatu contested 66 of those seats in 2018. (PAS returned to contest virtually all the same seats, and more, in 2018).

This segmenting of the electoral map appears not only to be a bet on the primordial sentiments of voters. It also reflects the different mobilizing machinery of the parties in contesting particular seats. PAS is known for its strong network of religious leaders and Islamic schools, and its house-to-house organizing. Its strength in contesting Malay Muslim seats, then, is not simply that it represents the "right" party to do so, but because the party could claim it would be effective in getting voters to the polls.

The strength of demographics in determining seat allocation is all the more remarkable given the protracted horse trading which the opposition parties engage in prior to elections. News stories printed in BN-aligned media often highlighted conflict over seat negotiations, which frequently extended into last minute negotiation. Other factors, including the strength of potential candidates, party popularity in a given area, or the balance of seats among the opposition parties, appear not to trump demographic considerations.

The demographic nature of political contests is heightened by the matchups with BN parties. Opposition parties overwhelmingly contest against their racial and religious counterparts in the ruling BN coalition. For example, in 87% of the parliamentary constituencies PAS contested in 2013, a candidate from PAS faced off

against a candidate from UMNO. This encourages opposition parties, particularly PAS, to play up its Muslim and anti-regime credentials to contrast with UMNO. While its Islamic message can help win over Malay voters at the district level, they likely hurt its ability to appeal to non-Malay voters. While the DAP consistently fielded Malay candidates, those candidates were run in districts where the majority of the population is non-Malay. Even in the 31 "mixed seats" in West Malaysia (those with no ethnic group making more than 50% of the electorate), 80% of the seats featured coethnic political competition.

These dynamics extend into state-level competition as well. In the 2013 state elections in West Malaysia, 94% of 445 elections pitted candidates from the same ethnic group against each other.

As one DAP politician put it:

> "Because we started to have political coalitions [and] electoral arrangements… [the DAP] kept getting boxed in… If you're going to have a coalition or electoral arrangement, the other parties are going to say 'No no no, why don't you concentrate on these seats because you're stronger here, and we'll take these because we're more rural'…. Suddenly [the DAP] saw itself for very obvious strategic reasons… reducing its scope and becoming boxed in to a very urban non-Malay majority kind of party. It's ironic – in trying to break the whole of the BN, in trying to make Malaysia break free from the BN image, we got boxed in to the whole ethnic politics as well, whether we like it or not." [96]

By 2013, 100% of parliamentary seats were contested by one of the three opposition parties. Thus, coordination over strategic entry also constrained the parties in contesting *additional* seats, particularly those that include "frontier" constituencies.

[96] Author interview with DAP legislator, Penang, June 24, 2016.

Those constituencies are the ones where they would face tough choices about messaging should they want to have the chance to win.

In 2018, at the height of opposition coordination, coalition building appears to have stalled party broadening attempts. In the 2018 election, the DAP put forward fewer Malay candidates than in the previous four elections. The party also ran fewer non-Malay Bumiputera candidates, likely because the party contested fewer overall seats in East Malaysia. The average district ethnic composition of the seats that the DAP contested was almost identical to that of 2013.

PKR continued to broaden its candidate base in East Malaysia, as the party ran increasing numbers of non-Malay Bumiputera candidates. But like the DAP, the average district ethnic composition in the seats it contested was virtually unchanged from the previous election. The party which showed the most dramatic change in the demographics of the seats that it contested was PAS. In 2018, the average composition of the seats that PAS contested in were 67% Malay, 21% Chinese, and 8% Indian, compared to 80% Malay, 15% Chinese, and 5% Indian in the 2013 elections.

Was this the adoption of a broadening strategy by PAS? It appears not. Rather, the party put up many more candidates for parliamentary seats than it ever had before – and more than any other party in the country. In 2013, the party ran 73 candidates. In 2018, it ran 156 candidates, in 70% of all parliamentary districts. By doing so, PAS run in districts well outside its usual demographics – but lost in all of them. The only parliamentary seats the party picked up were in overwhelmingly Malay districts in Kedah and Terengganu, in addition to its usual support in Kelantan. Overall, the party won only 12% of the seats that it contested.

The inability of PAS to retain its inroads in new constituencies appears to be directly related to its withdrawing from opposition coordination. During its expansion, PAS was perhaps most reliant on coalitions rather than party broadening to expand its appeals. Liow and Chan note that apart from the Alliance, "PAS has been a member of just about every other political alliance that came into being in Malaysia's postcolonial history" (Liow and Chan 2014, 99), including the BN. PAS's 2018 electoral results were a culmination of the party's hewing to its core party brand as well as gradual disassociation from the anti-regime position that had defined the party for decades.

While I have argued thus far that coalitions kept parties locked to their niches, they may also force parties to moderate their policy stances or key issues to work together. This dynamic has been observable in Malaysia's coalitions. The early opposition coalition experiments, including the Socialist Front, saw the Labor Party, a largely non-Malay party, make a substantial shift in its policy positions by accepting the position of Malay Rulers and the special position of Malays in order to enter the coalition (Vasil 1971, 125). PAS made rhetorical concessions on issues of the Islamic state as well. Yet it is significant that these were rhetorical concessions. Since the parties continue to contest seats where voters largely resemble their core demographics, they face much less pressure to pursue deeper party transformation. This seems evident in PAS's "dual track" of policy and campaigning around implementing Islamic law alongside slogans emphasizing its ability to represent all of Malaysia's religious groups. That the party never had to fully resolve this tension is arguably a result of its ability to rely on coalitions to project a moderate image.

The previous discussion has centered largely on West Malaysia, which has featured a remarkably stable set of opposition parties, and patterns of cooperation over time. But the argument generalizes to East Malaysia, even despite its more volatile party system and very different demographic map. As the three West Malaysian-based opposition parties began expanding into East Malaysia after 1999, similar dynamics have emerged. The DAP, for instance, laid claim to the ethnic Chinese urban seats in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak. Similarly, PAS contested in Malay-majority seats. However, the non-Malay Bumiputera population of East Malaysia is comprised of both Muslims and non-Muslims, and its Muslim population is less orthodox than West Malaysia, creating challenges for PAS to appeal to Bumiputera constituencies.[97]

Determining the "right" party to contest in different seats is complicated by the more fractured ethnic map in East Malaysia. This led to greater conflict between parties over the division of seats, as evident in the 2016 state elections in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak. The election was the first test of a new mechanism of the PH coalition – a pre-election survey conducted by an independent firm that would determine the relative popularity of parties and candidates in contesting in a given district. In a fight that spilled into the media, the DAP and PKR clashed over whether candidate or party popularity should drive seat allocation. The debate never fully resolved, and a number of seats were contested by both parties along with a BN party.

In Sabah state, coordination strategies were also driven by the division of seats along ethnic lines. In the runup to the 2018 elections, several local parties in Sabah,

[97] In the 2013 parliamentary elections, 19 out of 25 Sabah seats were contested by PKR; 4 by DAP and 2 by PAS. In 2008, DAP contested 5 seats, PKR 20 seats, and PAS no seats.

including a new breakaway party, Parti Warisan Sabah, faced the challenge of dividing up seats to contest. The head of Pari Cinta Sabah, Wilfred Bumburing, outlined his party's plan to divide up seats among the opposition parties around Malay voters as well as voters from the local indigenous ethnic group the Kadazandusun Murut. Bumburing declared that "what we want [are] only the Kadazandusun Murut (KDM) seats and not the Malay seats or the areas in the east coast, where [local opposition party] Warisan can contest…. If we are to agree on seat allocations with Warisan, they have to let us contest in the KDM areas and they can take the others" (Free Malaysia Today 2018).

6.6 The Coordination Strategies of the National Front (BN)

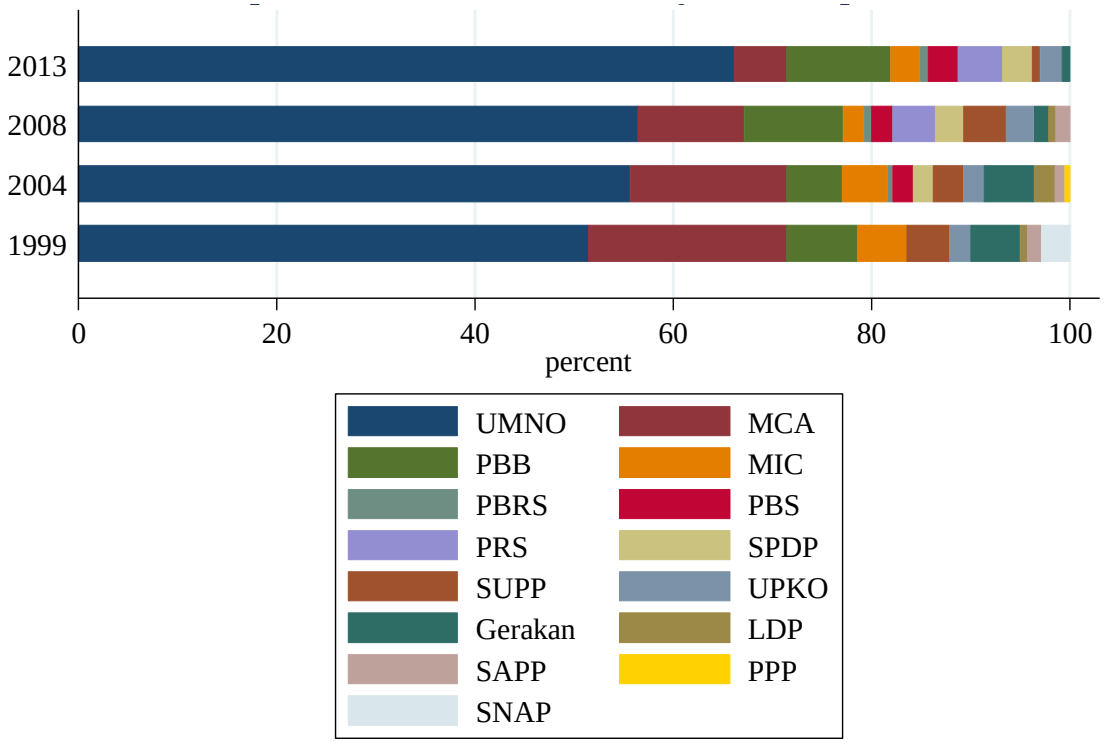
How did these coordination strategies and tensions play out in the dominant ruling coalition? Answering this question is important not only to understanding the stability of the ruling coalition compared to its fractious opposition, but also in whether the strategic division of labor among the former governing parties led to similar constraints.

A number of features make the BN coalition different. First, the majority of the ruling coalition parties were strictly race-based, with rules that closed membership to other ethnic groups. There were several prominent exceptions, including PBB, the dominant party of Sarawak, and Gerakan, an ostensibly multiracial party. However, the dominant party of BN, UMNO, and its historical partners, the Malaysian Chinese

Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), make no claims to multiracial membership. [98]

A second feature is that UMNO was the dominant player in ruling coalitions, even as the composition and number of parties fluctuated over time. The Alliance coalition, first formed in 1955, cemented the subordinate position of other parties, and by extension, other racial groups, below the leadership of UMNO. This dominance continued in to the National Front (BN) coalition, created in 1974.[99]

Figure 6: Composition of BN Coalition by Seats in Parliament



[98] One exception is that in the state of Sabah, where UMNO allows non-Muslim Bumiputera to become members (Shamsul 1996, 22).

[99] UMNO also played an outsize role in governance and decision making. With few exceptions, UMNO politicians have been appointed into ministerships with significant duties, and BN partner parties into marginal portfolios. 61% of all ministerial positions are held by UMNO politicians, though this is not out of line with their voteshare in the last election.

**Note: This figure reflects the seat distribution at the time of election and does not take into account byelections or changes in seats during the parliamentary term. BN direct candidates, who won one seat in 1999, are not shown.

UMNO's dominance reduced some of the tensions around seat and policy negotiation experienced in the opposition, given its clear position at the head of the coalition. Seat allocations were ultimately decided by the chair of BN, traditionally from UMNO. As MIC president Samy Vellu stated before the 2004 elections, the party would announce its candidates "after the Prime Minister decides how many seats the MIC will get."[100] While spats between component parties over the allocation of seats or promotion of candidates sometimes emerged into public view, they were quickly settled. BN member parties historically enjoyed patronage flows which smooth over conflicts; and during cash flow problems, such as in the economic crisis of 1986 and 1998-99, disputes within UMNO and the BN emerged (Ufen 2009, 608).

The BN in power long relied on its coalition as a mechanism of persuasion for voters. The coalition helped in image management for the BN, creating a "representation of multi-ethnicity within the reality of UMNO domination" (Chai 2006). The BN's scales (*dacing*) symbol was the one seen by voters at the ballot box, not the individual party label. The pressure to preserve its image as a multiracial coalition seemed to force the coalition to continue fielding parties with weak mobilizational capability. For example, the MCA became a chronically weak party in recent elections, particularly after 2008. In 2016, an MCA politician revealed that 70% of the party's 4,900 branches were "in a state of hibernation" (Nanyang Siang Pau

[100] The 2018 elections were typical in this regard. The MCA submitted a list of candidates to BN and publicly deferred to Najib over the final selection and allocation. See: "Najib to decide on BN seat allocation issues, says Liow," New Straits Times, April 17, 2018.

2016). Yet the party continued to contest a number of seats on the BN label up to 2018.[101]

Like the opposition, the BN often placed ethnically "representative" parties into ethnic majority districts. But from its inception, the BN appeared much more reliant on cross-cleavage voting to help race-based parties win majorities at the constituency level. For example, the MCA, the ethnic Chinese party of the BN, long contested in seats with large Malay voting blocs. From an early period, the MCA faced critiques from the Chinese community for failing to influence BN policies over issues like Chinese-language schooling and the status of Mandarin (Vasil 1971). The MCA's lack of popularity among Chinese voters meant that the top leaders of the MCA would contest in Malay-majority or mixed areas to ensure MCA politicians could assume Cabinet positions.[102] The party would be given support via UMNO's mobilizational machinery.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that strategies of coordination are interlinked with the individual strategic dilemmas identified in previous chapters. To win broader

[101] Indeed, the MCA has long been weak among ethnic Chinese voters. Even in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the party would run candidates in districts with large Malay minorities, or even majorities. Tan Siew Sin, later to become MCA president, ran in a 67% Malay district in 1959, and received 75% of the vote. This meant he had help from a "disciplined bloc of pro-UMNO Malay votes" (McDougal 1968, 232).

[102] In the media, MCA portrayed its difficulty in mobilizing ethnic Chinese votes compared to the DAP as reflecting its more multiracial orientation. It could then attack the opposition DAP for allegedly not being willing to contest Malay-majority seats. As MCA politician Ti Lian Ker stated to the media, "DAP leaders claim to be multiracial but fear to stand in any cosmopolitan area with an equal number of Malays and Chinese, for they know that they play on and thrive on Chinese political sentiments alone" (The Star 2018). The DAP could then accuse the MCA of having little mandate in the Chinese community; in 2018 party leader Lim Guan Eng pointed out that Malay voters were the largest ethnic group in six of the seven parliamentary seats that the MCA won in 2013 (Malaysiakini 2018c).

power, parties working alone must transform their party organizations and campaigns, and governing, to become more broadly appealing. But parties working together can draw on a more diffuse collective identity – and in doing so, avoid explicitly addressing the gaps in racial and religious representation as described in Chapter 4.

The victory of the PH coalition in the 2018 election shows the power of coalitions in scaling up opposition challenges in Malaysia. They made cross-ethnic voting more likely as voters see their favored parties working together. Over the past two decades, coalitions forced the opposition parties into the political mainstream and created new incentives and opportunities for them to reach new voters. In sum, coalition building allowed opposition parties to win additional swing voters at the district level among new demographics. However in doing so, parties sacrificed spatial expansion – the opportunity of contesting in new seats outside familiar demographic bases.[103]

In building perhaps the strongest collective coalition identity yet, the majority of the PH paradoxically preserved the elements which defined them in opposition, including the reliance on discrete ethnic blocs support. This will have implications for decision making by the new ruling government and the lines of divide that emerge around policy issues including the role of Islam in society and government and affirmative action policies aimed at the Bumiputera majority. I return to the PH's

[103] Coalitions also constrained the choices of voters. For instance, in many Malay-majority districts, for decades the only choice voters could make were between two parties with strong racial and religious messaging– UMNO and PAS – without the opportunity to vote for a secular or multiracial party.

victory in the concluding chapter. The following chapter will draw on comparative cases to examine dynamics of coordination and coalition building outside Malaysia.

CHAPTER 7

DILEMMAS OF OPPOSITION IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

7.1 Introduction

As argued in this dissertation, opposition parties face dilemmas in both expanding their individual support as well as in coordinating with each other. These dilemmas vary based on the types of voters they mobilize, the issues and identities they use to build support, and their relationship with the incumbent. The previous chapters focused on building a detailed explanation for the varying behavior of Malaysia's opposition parties in seeking to maintain and scale up their political power. But how do these dynamics play out in a comparative context?

This chapter considers this question through detailed case studies, applying the argument to opposition parties in the competitive authoritarian regimes of Tanzania and Mexico under the PRI, as well as in the dominant party democracy of South Africa. Each of these cases help show the theory's applicability beyond Malaysia, and how the dilemmas of expansion and coordination identified throughout this dissertation exist across a diversity of cleavage structures, levels of economic development, and ruling power strategies. The case studies help build the case for the theory's external validity and show that the variation in Malaysia among parties is representative of "a broader and explicitly defined population of cases" (Slater and Ziblatt 2013, 12).[104]

[104] The case study approach is also necessary given the lack of available cross-national data on opposition parties in authoritarian regimes. Perhaps because of the difficulty in interpreting the significance of vote and seat share totals across regimes, to my knowledge only the Quality of Government (QoG) dataset records the seats and votes of opposition parties in authoritarian settings.

The case studies specifically show how the theory travels across regional context, electoral rules, level of economic development, and cleavage structure. They provide insight into how opposition parties shift support outside their core regions and demographics even under conditions of resource scarcity. Each case highlights particular facets of opposition dilemmas in these regimes, including the importance of subnational bases of support, coalition building and broadening, and different regime counterstrategies.

The three cases, one from North America and two from Africa, show that the dynamics of party broadening and coalition building are not region-specific. The countries also vary in terms of the types and salience of social cleavages. In Mexico, economic and regional factors have dominated political competition; in South Africa ethnic politics predominates political competition but is not accompanied by a reinforcing religious cleavage as in Malaysia; and in Tanzania valence issues are intertwined with ethnoreligious and regional appeals.

The cases also vary in terms of their electoral rules the presence of an elected national executive. The three additional case studies are of presidential systems, given that the majority of competitive authoritarian regimes are presidential. South Africa's president, however, is elected by the National Assembly. All three cases (along with Malaysia) are at least nominally federal, although all display characteristics of "centralized federalism" given the concentration of power and resources in the national government.

However, the dataset contains a number of anomalies in the coding of opposition voteshare at the time of writing, which may be rectified in future versions.

Finally, the cases vary dramatically in their level of economic development. Malaysia, South Africa, and Mexico are upper middle-income countries, per the World Bank. Tanzania is a low-income country, with 80% of its population working in agriculture. In countries like Tanzania, we would expect that the low industrial base would make attracting resources for party building and organization, and for holding on to members. Yet as will be seen, these did not hinder the development of relatively well-institutionalized, rooted opposition parties.

As a dominant party democracy, South Africa is an outlier from the other cases. South African opposition parties do not face the types of coercive barriers that those in competitive authoritarian settings do. As argued in Chapter 2, the theory relies on some amount of dominance in terms of asymmetry of resources and electoral competition. As such, South Africa allows a view of how oppositions try to broaden and coordinate where parties face similar challenges of building cross-cleavage coalitions of voters and parties – but where authoritarian constraints are relaxed.

The three cases discussed below confirm three of the observable implications of the theory. First, in each country, resource constraints as well as the geographic concentration of core demographic groups entailed opposition party emergence and support built around subnational and regional strongholds. As a result, both niche and catchall parties in all three countries rely on territorially concentrated support that shapes later strategies of expansion.

Second, different parties within each country faced different constraints in trying to scale up their party depending on their existing identities. I describe how individual parties try (or not) to expand their appeal, whether it is through party

merger, coordination, and/or emphasis on valence issues. I also describe the strategic responses by the ruling government, which in each case sought to coerce and coopt its opposition, and more subtly, box the opposition parties into their existing brands.

Third, opposition coordination and coalition building at the subnational and national level was variably successful across the three cases. However, in line with the theory, the find shows that opposition challenges largely took place along lines of existing strength even while coordination was restricted to strategic entry. In other words, parties sought to retain their distinct identities while seeking to reap the benefits of coordination.

Table 12: Comparison of Case Studies

Country	**Opposition party brands/core constituencies**	**Electoral system**
Malaysia	Ethnoreligious, territorial	Parliamentary; SMD plurality
Mexico	Economic, territorial	Presidential; Since 1977, two-tier system: 300 SMD plurality, 2000 MMD, party-list vote in second tier (all SMD plurality prior to 1965)
Tanzania	Ethnoreligious, territorial	Presidential; SMD plurality (reserved seats for women elected through party-list PR)
South Africa (Dominant party democracy)	Ethnic, territorial	Presidential (indirect election); Party-list PR

7.2 The Opposition in Mexico

The most prominent two recent accounts of opposition parties in Mexico are by Greene (2007) and (Magaloni 2008). Given that Greene's argument in particular is referenced throughout this dissertation, and that these two books offer extensive detail on aspects of opposition party challenges, I will briefly summarize Greene's interpretation and then highlight differences and new implications that derive from my argument. Magaloni's argument is used for specific points throughout.

Greene (2007) argues that the two main opposition parties, the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), were classic examples of niche parties. Emerging in the shadow of the PRI, both the PAN and the PRD formed niche organizations which attracted supporters willing to forgo the benefits of PRI affiliation. The parties were arrayed on the extremes of left-right political competition, with the PRD hewing to a clear left orientation and PAN to the right. The electoral playing field was gradually leveled and resource dominance by the PRI diminished as a result of electoral reforms and financial liberalization. This allowed the two parties to attract moderate politicians who helped the parties transform from niche to catchall profiles competing in the moderate center. Nevertheless, the ideological gulf between the parties over economic issues led to the failure of the PAN and PRD to coordinate over a single presidential candidate in the 2000 elections, although ultimately the PAN put forward a successful presidential candidate (221).

By contrast, Company (2015) offers a persuasive alternate characterization of the PRD that places the party much more towards a catchall model of competition. He argues that the PRD's main leaders identified *from the beginning* that winning national power was their goal. As a result, the party bypassed the investment of resources into party building; survey evidence shows that voters tended to place the PRD towards the center of political competition along with the PRI (not towards the left, as a party with a clear niche identity would expect). The PRD also relied heavily on clientelism, not simply programmatic appeals, in its electoral strategies. If this interpretation is correct, then Mexico (like Malaysia) saw the rise of both niche *and* catchall parties in the shadow of the dominant party.

If the PRD was less ideological than the PAN, why did the two parties still have difficulty in coordinating their efforts? Mexico's electoral system erected a large hurdle to coordination: In 1993, the government passed a law that required cross-party endorsements of presidential candidates *to be complemented by a single coalition manifesto and inter-party coordination around a single candidate for all 628 legislative seats* (Greene 2007, 221). In other words, Mexico's electoral laws *required* that opposition parties build the type of electoral coordination that Malaysia's parties built over time in order to jointly field a single presidential candidate.[105] Magaloni argues that Mexico's mixed electoral rules also inhibited legislative coordination, since they rewarded parties that could win the majority of the vote in SMD districts

[105] The source of this policy was not solely from the PRI. In fact, the PAN supported the rule change in a congressional coalition with the PRI. Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni argue that this is because previous presidential alliances had benefited the PRD more than the PAN, and that the PAN had also received benefits relating to certification of electoral results (Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni 2001, 278).

but also rewarded minority parties with seats in multimember districts, inhibiting their incentives to coordinate and making voter coordination more difficult (Magaloni 2008, 177).

A further problem with coalitions at the presidential level is that unlike Malaysia's successful coalition in 2018, the opposition parties in coalition could not effectively *supplement* each other's resources and strengths. In legislative elections, public funding was received only in relation to the largest constituent party, rather than receiving the sum of the financing for all parties in the coalition (Magaloni 2008, 265). Although the PAN and PRD failed to build a coalition in 2000, they were successful in building coalitions with other parties. At the presidential level, the coalitions were simply too small to present a credible threat. In 2000, the PAN contested with the Green Party to create the Alliance for Change, and the PRD created the Alliance for Mexico with four minor parties "whose ideological profiles ranged from left-wing opportunism to right-wing obscurantism" (Schedler 2000, 9).

Importantly, coordination and coalition building *did* take place at both the national and subnational level, including between the PAN and PRD. Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni note that the PAN and PRD had built a coalition in gubernatorial elections prior (2001, 279).

An important difference between opposition parties in Malaysia and Mexico were that Mexico's opposition parties were not arrayed along ethnic lines. Instead, ideological differences defined their positioning. Yet the PAN and PRD were similarly tied to regional bases where their core demographics were concentrated. Even as they became increasingly nationally competitive, they performed best in the North and

South of the country respectively (Klesner 2005). And like the opposition in Malaysia, even when they did not build formal coalitions, they coordinated around strategic entry. Rather than compete against each other, political competition effectively revolved around PAN-PRI and PRD-PRI matchups (Ibid.). The reason was the same as in Malaysia: in local and state elections where opposition parties did not coordinate, they tended to lose against the PRI candidate (Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni 2001, 280).

During their period of party building, opposition parties made significant inroads *prior* to the period of waning resource dominance or loss of repressive capacity. Similar to Malaysia, Mexico's opposition parties faced a severely restricted set of institutions at the local level. During the PRI era, the federal government held tight control over finances and gave states limited policy leeway (Mizrahi 1997). The PRI cut funds to punish opposition-held municipalities, forcing opposition municipalities to raise taxes and govern with fewer resources; in part leading to low rates of reelection of opposition parties (Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, and Weingast 2007, 11).[106]

PAN pursued what Lujambio terms the "municipal-federalist route to political change in Mexico" (Lujambio 2002, 51), pursuing municipal offices for decades even during the most uncompetitive periods of Mexico's politics. The opposition party PAN scored major electoral wins in the late 1980s, which allowed it to negotiate major electoral reforms with the government, including an independent electoral

[106] Malaysia's parties arguably face an even more daunting challenge, given that municipal elections are banned. In Mexico, municipal offices were key for opposition parties to consolidate power and scale up to winning state-level gubernatorial offices (Gibson 2012, 132).

commission, that ended up severely constraining fraud by PRI in subsequent elections (Magaloni 2008, 244). PAN's wins allowed it to extract policy concessions including privatization of the banking sector and a halt to agrarian form.

As in Malaysia, the electoral geography of political competition also provoked tension between national and regional goals in governing at the subnational level. PAN's behavior in office reflects both its socially conservative platform as well as its territorial base in the strongly Catholic North. In municipal offices, PAN implemented social policies aimed at restricting abortion, prostitution, alcohol licensing, policies that "played well to [regional] audiences" but elicited national "reactions of outrage" (Shirk 2004, 182). While popular with local communities, these policies ultimately made PAN's expansion outside traditional strongholds difficult (Ibid.).

Yet subnational office also provoked tensions between the ambitious goals of opposition parties and the narrow institutional space in which they operated. Mizrahi (1997) notes that in Mexico, opposition parties in office had "to demonstrate [to] their political supporters that they are capable of introducing substantive changes without really having the economic and legal resources to bring them about" (3). In examining the fates of two PAN governors, she notes that neither moderation nor confrontation from subnational positions of power benefited the opposition: the pragmatic PAN governor was punished at the polls for working with the PRI and the confrontational governor lost financial support from the central government. Similarly, in her study of the PRD in the state of Michoacán in Mexico, Bruhn finds that subnational control led the PRD into intra-party splits and tying up energy over small policy issues, while

providing few new opportunities for greater participation (Bruhn 1999, 30). She argues that the PRD was unable to implement major programs given resource constraints, leaving them vulnerable to attacks from the PRI to diminish their legitimacy in the eyes of voters.

Despite this, like in Malaysia (and as shown later in South Africa), opposition parties were successful in pursuing an "administrative" strategy at the local level, focusing on efficiency, lack of corruption, and transparency (Mizrahi 1997; Shirk 2004). To a certain extent, opposition municipal governments were able to put their platform into practice. Shirk argues that PAN governments at the state and municipal level "brought innovative approaches to public administration, fierce advocacy of subnational governmental autonomy, improvements in the provision of public works and services that were long overdue, and created new expectations with regard to the conduct of both government officials and average citizens" (Shirk 2004, 3).

The opposition in Mexico made dramatic subnational gains in the waning years of PRI dominance. In 1988, 2 percent of the population lived in an opposition-held municipality, which jumped to 62% by 2000 (Lujambio 2002, 85). Ironically, the PRD began making rapid inroads at the municipal level, even outpacing the PAN (Ibid.). These gains also included gubernatorial wins; by 2000, almost half of Mexico's states were governed by an opposition party (Gibson 2013, 117). Magaloni argues that electoral victories in gubernatorial and municipal elections had a "powerful demonstration effect, creating a growing belief among Mexican voters that the long-ruling hegemonic party could effectively be defeated and that the opposition could gain political office peacefully" (Magaloni 2008, 94).

Undoubtedly, Mexico's presidential system offered an important focal point for opposition parties. Unlike Malaysia's parliamentary system, presidential offices allow parties to win at the national level even if they had not solved their existing weaknesses. As Greene argues, the 2000 election was determined in part by a presidential candidate, Vicente Fox, who successfully *separated* his campaign from the PAN's niche-oriented party. Although the PRD also presented a presidential candidate who hewed to leftist appeals, Greene argues that only Fox and PAN were able the centrist pro-democracy position that could appeal the most broadly (Greene 2007, 211). But the 2000 election also shows that party building efforts at lower levels were not in vain. In 2000, the PAN and PRD presidential candidates did best in their regional strongholds; but PAN's Fox was simply more a appealing candidate nationally (Klesner 2005, 114).

A final dimension is PAN's negotiation with the PRI government and its implications following the PRI's fall. Just like PAS in Malaysia, the PAN openly negotiated with the PRI government but did not incur significant costs from its core voter base (Magaloni 2008, 241-2). It is unclear if PAN like PAS suffered losses from anti-regime swing voters because of this negotiation. This fluidity continued after the 2000 elections, including a PAN-PRI coalition in power. The coalition did not enact key reforms in the Army, police, or the Attorney General's Office – an office that Fox used to harass his political opponents (Trejo 2018).

7.3 The Opposition in Tanzania

Although Tanzania has been dominated by a single party since 1964, it only moved to a competitive authoritarian regime after new political parties were allowed to form in 1992 and multiparty elections were held in 1995. Since then, the dominant party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has continued to command significant electoral power, maintaining its 2/3 majority in legislature and garnering between 65 - 80% of presidential vote. The CCM espouses a broad nationalist message that has historically downplayed sources of difference such as ethnicity and language (Miguel 2004). It also relies on a permeable line between the state and party that allows it to use state resources in campaigns, mobilize voters, and constrain the opposition (Ewald 2013).

The country's two main opposition parties, the Civic United Front (CUF) and Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (The Party of Democracy and Development, Chadema), emerged around very different social bases and constituencies, which have played a part both in their efforts to broaden support and to coordinate their challenges. Both parties have hewed to broad catchall and valence appeals since their formation in 1992. Morse argues that there is little ideological differentiation among the parties and that they "campaign on a platform of economic liberalization and state welfare and stress government reform and competency" (Morse 2014, 669). Religious groups are prohibited from forming parties. Survey evidence from AfroBarometer suggests that Tanzanians overwhelmingly identify themselves first with their occupational category, rather than with their ethnic group – in contrast to countries featuring significant ethnic cleavages like Nigeria, Namibia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe (Miguel 2004, 338).

Nevertheless, in seeking to differentiate themselves and draw a clear line from the CCM, the opposition parties have sought to mobilize support around issues of autonomy, religion, and ethnoterritorial identity. The opposition CUF has developed a strong ethnoreligious and territorial brand, building its regional stronghold in the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar, an archipelago of islands off the mainland.[107] The region is almost entirely Muslim, compared to the majority Christian mainland. Since 1992, political competition in Zanzibar has centered around two-party competition between the CUF and the dominant CCM, reflecting "rigid political identities structured around ethnic, social and regional factors" – in particular, divisions between Unguja and Pemba island, the two largest islands of Zanzibar (Roop, Tronvoll, and Minde 2018, 248). The CUF also draws support from Muslim communities on the mainland coast (Morse 2014). Its uses campaign messaging including Zanzibari nationalism, Arab identity (Zanzibaris of Arab descent are part of CUF's support base), and religious identity in opposition to the Christian mainland (Brents and Mshigeni 2004, 68). The CUF and CCM have engaged in repeated clashes over time, leading to various failed power-sharing accords.

By contrast, the center-right Chadema has a more catchall orientation. The party was founded by ethnic Chaga businessmen in Kilimanjaro. The party itself is multiethnic and does not use ethnic rhetoric, but nevertheless draws from several strongholds in Arusha and Dar-es-Salaam (Elischer 2013, 196). It has little presence in

[107] The country was formed as a merger of the Republic of Tanganyika and the Republic of Zanzibar in 1965, and Zanzibar was granted its own constitution, regional president, and legislature. Despite its ostensible national coverage, the CCM has remained a much stronger presence on the mainland (Makulilo 2016, 175).

Zanzibar. The Chadema, unlike the CUF, receives the bulk of its support from Christian voters (Cooke 2015, 108).

Available case study evidence shows some evidence of the effects of party brand and incumbent counterstrategies on party broadening. Although the CUF's leadership is primarily Muslim, the CUF has run Christian candidates and it does derive some support on the mainland (Machipisa 2000). However, the party gradually began contesting fewer constituencies in the national legislature over time; from 75% of all seats in 1995 to 50% in 2010 (Elischer 2013, 196). While the reasons for this decline are not immediately clear, the CUF has faced constant police harassment and disruption of campaign activities, as well as monetary inducements from the CCM for politicians to cross over, as well as a lack of resources for campaigns and organization (Ewald 2013).

However, Chadema was more successful in building up branches throughout the country. One reason was the party's success in attracting additional funding from a wealthy party supporter in government although it largely relies on private donors (Paget forthcoming). Nevertheless, the Chadema has struggled to win in primarily Muslim areas (Cooke 2015, 108) and does not appear to have a presence in Zanzibar.

These two different identities have shaped the CCM's counterstrategies against the two parties. The ruling CCM has frequently sought to portray the CUF as an Islamist party with associations with terrorism, accusing the party of a series of bombing attacks in Zanzibar in the early 2000s (Human Rights Watch 2002). The CCM secretary general recently argued that if the CUF would win, Tanzania "stands to become a new front for terrorists" (Kinana 2015). The CCM has sought to link

Chadema with a Christian religious agenda, and accused the Catholic Church of campaigning on behalf of the party (Cooke 2015, 108). The goal of the CCM strategies, one scholar argues, are to "accuse its opponents of undermining the secular state and stirring up religious discord." (Ibid.).

Like United Russia, the CCM has used regional government to alternately coopt or repress the opposition. Continuing elections-related violence and dissatisfaction with the non-independent electoral commission in Zanzibar brought the CUF to the bargaining table with the CCM. It led to the formation of a Government of National Unity in 2010, which was a powersharing agreement between the two parties later cemented by popular referendum in Zanzibar that year (Roop, Tronvoll, and Minde 2018, 251). Results from the referendum suggest that CUF supporters were overwhelmingly in support of the agreement, with CCM voters divided (256). The agreement allowed for constitutional amendment which created new positions within the Zanzibar government, and new language in the Zanzibari constitution aimed at strengthening its position within the country (Ibid.). The unity government only lasted until 2014.

The CUF has maintained a stable but small share of the seats in parliamentary elections remained over time: the party won 10% of the seats in 1995 and 8% in 2005 (Nyang'oro 2006). But its electoral strength was geographically constrained: In 2005, 18 out of the 19 seats that CUF won were all on the island of Pemba in Zanzibar. Prior to 2015, Chadema and the CUF made only limited inroads in presidential elections. In 2005, the CUF's presidential candidate won 12% of the vote and Chadema's won 6%.

This political environment suggests the limits on party broadening faced by the two parties. The CUF faced heavy repression from the CCM in its attempts to expand its support, and it fell back to its ethnic, religious, and territorial support base. It also saw the advantages to a unity government with the ruling party at the national level. While Chadema had successfully attracted resources that helped it expand its support, its electoral returns suggested the party would fail to win greater inroads. As a result, coalition building between CUF and Chadema would help the two parties avoid splitting the presidential vote, but *also* help them coordinate strategic entry in legislative contests.

Coalition building attempts up to that point had been sporadic. In 2005, the opposition failed to present unified candidate list and did not unite behind single presidential candidate. Five years later, the CUF and Chadema, along with two other smaller opposition parties, supported a single presidential candidate in 2010 elections. But this situation changed in 2014 after the Ukawa opposition coalition was formed. The immediate reason was a constitutional review process initiated by the government that would potentially alter the balance of power between the mainland and Zanzibar (Minde 2015). Four opposition parties boycotted the review process and instead formed the coalition. Notably, the CUF, which until that year had been part of a powersharing government with the CCM in Zanzibar, broke away from the government and joined the opposition coalition. Roop, Tronvoll and Minde argue that this change in strategy came after CUF leaders saw that they would perpetually be "second fiddle" to the CCM, and that the CCM showed no commitment to implementing electoral reforms (Roop, Tronvoll, and Minde 2018, 264).

The member parties of Ukawa signed a pre-election agreement in October of that year, agreeing to present a single candidate for all electoral posts at the presidential, parliamentary, and council level (Minde 2015). Significantly, the division of electoral labor within the coalition reflects similar dynamics as Malaysia. The coalition parties chose candidates and parties "with respect to party strengths in all regions of Tanzania" (Ibid.).

Electoral records from the Election Commission of Tanzania confirm that the CCM and Chadema divided the electoral geography of the country according to their existing bases of support. A little more than half of the seats that the CUF contested, 70 out of 130 seats (54%), were located in a coastal district or in Zanzibar, all areas where Tanzania's Muslim population is concentrated.[108] Chadema concentrated on mainland seats, contesting only 17 coastal seats and none on Zanzibar.

The Ukawa coalition parties largely campaigned on valence issues in the 2015 elections, including strengthening the economy and improving social services, and putting forward constitutional reform as the way to combat corruption and improve governance.(Commonwealth Observer Group 2015). But CUF leaders also mixed in stronger demands than previously: 2015 was the first time that CUF party leaders that Zanzibar should secede from Tanzania. It was not clear whether voters would respond to the united front of the coalition: Pre-election polling suggested that voter awareness of the coalition was low, with almost half of respondents believing the coalition was a registered party (Twaweza 2015).

[108] National Electoral Commission of Tanzania, 2015 results. 40 of the seats (57%) contested by the CUF were in Zanzibar. The CUF won 42 seats total in the election.

But the Ukawa coalition was extremely successful. In part, the coalition had attracted a defector from the CCM to serve as its presidential candidate: Former prime minister Edward Lowassa, who had lost his bid to become the candidate in the CCM. In 2015 elections, Lowassa gained 40% of the vote, more than any other opposition candidate previously - although the opposition claimed that his true voteshare was 62% of the votes (Ubwani 2015).

The victorious CCM candidate, John Magufuli, won with 58% of the vote, down from an 80% vote for CCM presidential candidate in 2005. After his win, Magufuli embarked on a crackdown on opposition parties and protests as well as the media. In Zanzibar, the CUF had likely won the election for president of Zanzibar but the elections commission nullified the results, leading to a March 2016 rerun of the election which the CUF boycotted.

While newspaper reports privileged the role of Lowassa as former regime insider and the multi-party coalition as leading to the results, Paget (forthcoming) argues that "steady and large increases in Chadema's electoral support should be attributed less to elite splits and the formation of a pre-electoral coalition, and more to the processes of organizational change that it underwent in this period" (23). It seems that Chadema had faced much less coercive opposition from the CCM.

In sum, Tanzania's main opposition parties showed variable ability to scale up their electoral challenges. Despite its ethnoregional base, Chadema managed to build a nationally viable opposition party that rivalled even the CCM for organizational strength. The CUF, both due to its strong identification with Zanzibari issues and Muslim identity as well as repressive efforts by the CCM, remained largely confined

to Zanzibar and coastal areas. The CUF also appeared amenable to work with the CCM in exchange for a lessening of repressive crackdowns, potential electoral reforms, and to secure their place in subnational government. However, after this agreement broke down, Chadema and the CUF built the strongest opposition coalition yet. Their coalition not only put forward a single presidential candidate but coordinated strategic entry in elections at all levels of government. Like Malaysia's parties, they relied on their existing geographic and demographic strengths to divide up seats. Like Malaysia, the opposition also attracted a prominent regime defector to be the leader of the coalition.

Despite the coalition's success, they did not manage to unseat the CCM. The opposition alleged their inability to win the presidency was due to electoral fraud, although their lack of sufficient popular support still appeared to contribute to the outcome. After the 2015 elections the CCM cracked down significantly on the opposition.

7.4 The Opposition in South Africa

From the "founding election" of ANC dominance in 1994, South Africa has been characterized by a democratic system coupled with continuing one-party dominance. Its opposition parties do not encounter the repressive constraints faced by their counterparts in authoritarian settings. But like Malaysia, South Africa's opposition has faced similar dilemmas in trying to individually expand their bases of support given strongly ethnicized party brands. While some parties sought to rebrand by bringing in new candidates and leaders from across racial lines, they were only partially successful in doing so in light of the ANC's counterstrategies. The parties

also embarked on a coalitional strategy at the subnational level that allows them to highlight their administrative competence and deemphasize their individual identities, although their ability to scale up from subnational power has yet to be seen.

The following discussion will focus on three opposition parties representing distinct ethnic and regional bases of support: The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the Democratic Alliance (DA), and Cope. At the beginning of post-apartheid democracy, the IFP had an identity rooted in Zulu nationalism, which "constrained its ability to expand its constituency base far beyond its core community and sympathetic whites" (Sisk 1995, 184). It was also geographically constrained, given its dependence on a largely rural poor constituency in the province of Natal. During the constitutional negotiations that took place in 1991, the government adopted a proportional representation system to better allow inclusion of minority groups, including right-wing white parties, to ensure that such groups would not seek extra-institutional means of wielding power (Sisk 1995, 190). The IFP's preferences in the process were clear; it pushed for a PR system that would allow it to preserve its geographical power base and allow it to form a coalition with other parties (Sisk 1995, 185). The reason was that the party expected to remain a minority party (Ibid.). As such, the party acknowledged the implicit "division of labor" among opposition as shown in the case of Malaysia and elsewhere.

By contrast, both the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Cope are more recent party entrants. The DA was formed first as a coalition between the Democratic Party (DP) and New National Party (NNP) in 2000.[109] Despite its largely white constituency

[109] Although the NNP disbanded in 2005, the DP kept the DA moniker going forward.

base, the new party sought explicitly to attract more black voters (Southall 2001, 128). Cope, a party composed of ANC defectors, was formed in 2008.

How would these different parties seek to scale up their support? Scholars including Ferree (2010) and Langfield (2014) argue that the "racial census" view of elections in South Africa did not reflect voting patterns. African voters in South Africa were not strong partisans of the "black parties," but largely independents who voted for the ANC (and turned out for elections) in declining numbers (Langfield 2014, 293). Therefore, there existed a large swing voter population the opposition parties could potentially pick up.

Like in Malaysia, the opposition parties sought visible signals to "rebrand" themselves to voters in the absence of patronage and policy (Ferree 2010). Focusing on the "white parties," Ferree argues that the parties sought to use electoral campaigns and manipulation of leadership demographics – by recruiting nonwhite politicians – to become more broadly appealing. She notes that voters were concerned not only with race but with quality: The opposition parties, by virtue of their smaller size, had problems with candidate retention since candidates had a low likelihood of getting elected. The opposition lost candidates to the ANC, particularly black candidates, but almost never attracted them (Ferree 2010, 22).

In order to broaden its appeals, the DA "relaunched" itself in 2008, declaring that it was a "party for all people." The party elected its first black leader, Mmusi Mamiane, and diversified its top leadership. As of this year, four of the top six DA leaders were non-white; the party also claims membership is majority black but membership is secret (Africa Check 2013). However, the party has struggled to move

beyond its existing party reputation. Ferree (2010) argues that the ANC has successfully boxed the DA into its existing "white" brand, regardless of the personnel changes that the party has made.

Like in Mexico and Malaysia, the opposition parties in South Africa saw subnational growth as a way to build support. Rather than trying to expand nationally and potentially jeopardizing their regional bases, the parties instead shifted to expanding support in their subnational areas "to build competitiveness with geographically defined bases rather than demographic ones" (Langfield 2014, 297). At the subnational level, the parties could emphasize good governance, competent service delivery, and lower levels of corruption (Ibid.).

As the first black-majority opposition party, Cope seemingly posed a major threat to the ANC: Like in Malaysia, the most threatening defector personnel and parties were able to counter the dominant party's claims to represent the dominant ethnic group. But despite a broad message and optimistic predictions of its ability to steal away major portions of the ANC's support, Cope did poorly. Ferree argues this was a result not only of its inability to shed itself as a party made up of ANC losers, but also structural challenges. The party was slow to set up branches, raise money, and craft a compelling message to the electorate (Ferree 2010, 215-216).

The parties also engaged in coalition building. In 2004, the IFP and DA announced the Coalition for Change that centered on joint campaigning and sharing of resources, joint policy positions, and the potential to form a governing coalition (Langfield 2014). Cope also joined in governing coalitions with the Democratic

Alliance at the municipal level after elections in 2016. The parties differed in the benefits they could derive from coalitions. For the IFP, it allowed them to gain nationwide resources, and for the DA, it helped them counter perceptions that it was a party for whites (Ibid., 296). The Coalition for Change, however, failed to make headway in the face of continuing ANC dominance.

In sum, South Africa's opposition parties have faced similar challenges to Malaysia's in broadening their support base at the national level and changing perceptions of their party brand. The ANC successfully countered their strategies without the coercive strategies discussed in the other cases. Instead, it sought to re-emphasize their existing ethnic brands regardless of the personnel changes the parties undertook. But like Malaysia, a focus on valence issues and corruption in the ANC government allowed the opposition parties to shift attention away from their individual party brands. Subnational governance, too, helped demonstrate their capability in this regard.

CHAPTER 8

STRATEGIC CHOICES AND OPPOSITION PATHS TO POWER

8.1 Introduction

The variable strategies and success of Malaysia's opposition parties in their decades outside national power has offered a unique opportunity to analyze two crucial questions in this dissertation: How do opposition parties become formidable electoral forces in authoritarian settings? In building up their electoral and political power, how do they deal with strategic dilemmas of individual expansion and collective coordination?

To answer these questions, this dissertation has argued and shown that even as opposition parties in authoritarian regimes are united by their common position outside national power, they face very different dilemmas of party building and expansion. Opposition parties which seek overturn of the incumbent must individually be able to undertake risky broadening strategies to craft messaging and build organizations that help their appeals beyond the communities that give them initial support. Additionally, they attempt to use governing institutions at the subnational level to build up support and organizational resources but struggle to reconcile limited policymaking power and resources to help scale up their challenges. They must also resist coercion and cooptation strategies by the regime.

But parties do not undertake these strategies in isolation, since they often operate alongside (and sometimes in conflict with) other opposition parties. At a minimum they engage in informal forms of coordination not avoid splitting the opposition vote among each other. Yet parties are often incentivized to deepen their

coordination to amplify their appeals to new constituencies and emphasize their collective anti-regime orientation.

Each of these strategic choices involves tradeoffs. Parties that choose to accept the ruling government's offers may ensure their survival but lose their support among anti-regime voters. Parties that build tight coalitions are less likely to transform into broad-based parties, relying on coalition partners to expand their appeals among new constituencies. Yet in some cases, opposition parties can effectively build sufficient electoral support that enables them to enter broad-based coalitions that supplement their weaknesses, laying the path for significant electoral challenges.

In the preceding chapters, I traced in detail how three of Malaysia's opposition parties sought to overcome dilemmas of expansion at the individual party level, in subnational office, and in coordination with each other. In each case, the different "origin stories" of the opposition parties shaped how they approached these strategic dilemmas, making a united strategy against the BN elusive even as its support began to weaken. As a result, a crucial source of the BN's extreme longevity in office was not only its access to state resources and control over institutions, but the long-standing difficulty of the opposition parties to build support and converge on a single strategy.

In Chapter 7, I brought the theoretical argument to bear on the cases of Tanzania, Mexico, and South Africa. Despite diverging cleavage structures, sources of regime dominance and legitimacy, and socioeconomic conditions, opposition parties encountered similar dilemmas of individual party broadening and coalition building. In all three cases, opposition parties faced different constraints to scaling up their

electoral challenges based on how they attracted core support. Although the opposition parties were variably successful in building formal coalitions, in each case they sought to coordinate their entry into political contests dictated in part by their existing bases of support.

In the case of Malaysia, the opposition's strategies were successful enough to help them capitalize on the eroding support of the BN and win victory. The following section will consider how the opposition parties successfully combined broadening and coordination strategies in the incumbent-toppling election of 2018. In doing so, it addresses the alternative explanations commonly used in existing literature on authoritarianism and sheds additional light on the interrelated fates of opposition in Malaysia and elsewhere.

The success of the Malaysian opposition offers a powerful demonstration of these strategies working in concert. To become electorally successful, parties must be able to marshal enough support, organizational coherence, and broad appeal to endure beyond a single election. But given significant institutional barriers and resistance from the ruling government, strong parties are necessary but not sufficient to build electoral majorities that have the power to unseat incumbents. Parties then seek to coordinate their efforts to pool rather than divide their electoral support, share resources, and build a broader opposition movement.

8.2 Malaysia's Opposition Declares Victory

In a region that has seen little democratic advance in recent years, the victory of the Alliance of Hope (PH) opposition coalition in Malaysia in May 2018 was

unexpected. To be sure, the BN – in particular incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak – were facing a unprecedented challenge in the form of a massive corruption scandal. In 2015, investigations by the *Sarawak Report,* a UK-based blog, and the *Wall Street Journal* revealed that $681 million from 1MDB, a state development agency, had been deposited into the personal bank account of Prime Minister Najib. Later revelations by the US Department of Justice estimated that approximately $4.5 billion had been misappropriated from the fund, allegedly by Najib and his close allies. The 1MDB scandal was in part one of campaign financing: While Najib, his family, and his associates allegedly used the money for personal gain, a significant portion of the funds was directed to UMNO officials and BN political parties for campaign spending in the 2013 elections.

The revelations sent shockwaves through Malaysia, eventually triggering the defections from UMNO of Mahathir Mohamad and his close allies (described in Chapter 6). However, the government's control of the press and institutions meant that investigations were shut down and media coverage kept to a minimum. Najib also appeared successful in reshuffling politicians within UMNO to hold on to power. The opposition parties in the wake of the revelations seemed to struggle to sell the issues in ways that resonated with ordinary Malaysians. That same year, the opposition coalition also split apart as one of its core members, PAS, appeared to move towards the BN and muted its critiques of Najib and the 1MDB scandal.

During the 2018 election, the BN's appeals were similar to previous ones: It employed a mix of both sophisticated new political marketing strategies through social media and WhatsApp with traditional get out the vote strategies, relying on party

machinery and politicians to reach out in all corners of the country. The BN had also not lost control of the ample state resources or coercive capacity. If anything, its patronage networks had *deepened* over recent years. Between 2000 and 2009, the government increased the number of federal civil servants by 25%, and increased emoluments for the civil service by 160% (Woo 2015, 232). By 2017, 30% of the total government budget went toward salaries, benefits, and allowances for the civil service (Chua 2017). Its campaign manifesto included familiar promises for infrastructure development and targeted subsidies.

The ruling government also sought to further stall the opposition using tried-and-true institutional methods. The government passed constituency realignments in parliament several months before the election that further amplified the disproportionality of the system. In the weeks before the campaign, the Elections Commission deregistered Bersatu, the major new opposition party run by Mahathir Mohamad, and rejected the opposition's attempt to register a new party flag. Prime Minister Najib had put into place policies that seemed to be insurance against greater opposition wins, creating in 2015 the National Security Council that would be appointed by the government. The council was given power to declare "states of emergency" in designated areas and powers of detention and arrest over any threats to sociopolitical and economic stability as well as national unity (SUARAM 2016).

But in this environment, the PH won a massive victory, claiming 122 of the 222 parliamentary seats – 33 more than the previous coalition's results in 2013. By contrast, the BN won only 79 seats, leaving the positions of the BN and opposition almost reversed from the previous election.

The victory would not have been possible without a combination of the two strategies – party broadening and coalition building – described in this dissertation. The PH coalition represented a mixture of parties like the DAP, which although was electorally successful but had struggled to change its party image, along with two new parties – Amanah and Bersatu – both recently formed by party defectors from PAS and UMNO respectively, who sought to specifically capture the same segments of the electorate as their previous parties. The PKR was the fourth partner in the coalition, still providing an electorally potent challenge although its leader Anwar Ibrahim was still in jail.

The PH victory shows that the opposition were not inextricably bound by dilemmas of individual party building and collective coordination that had plagued their efforts before. Rather, what was different in 2018 was that the parties had built the right mix of support. At the collective level, the PH successfully appealed beyond the dependable segment of the electorate that had previously rejected the BN. In doing so, the PH appealed to new voters across ethnic and religious lines by successfully shifting the focus toward the regime cleavage, triggering what some commentators referred to as a "Malaysian tsunami" rather than the ethnic "tsunamis" of elections past.

But the willingness of voters to switch away from the BN and towards the opposition coalition was also due to painstaking party and coalition building efforts of the past several decades. After the arrival of the *reformasi* movement in 1999, the task for the opposition was both in individually appealing to broader audiences, but a

gradual recognition of the necessity of coordination on an anti-regime cleavage. Nevertheless, this coordination proved fragile as ideological difference and concerns about the electoral benefits of coalition repeatedly led to the breakdown of coordination.

In 2018, the coalition gave an image boost to the DAP given that Mahathir Mohamad, a staunch Malay nationalist and ultimate regime insider, joined the DAP repeatedly in campaign events. Mahathir's party Bersatu, despite its strongly ethnic image and lack of opposition credentials, was made palatable to non-Malay voters by Mahathir's stature as a popular national figure. Even as Bersatu was limited in the personnel and resources that it could transport to the opposition, Mahathir's legitimacy offered a potent addition to the pre-existing capacity that the parties had built up. As such, the coalition was positioned in a way that downplayed the individual liabilities and limited reach of the parties. It could collectively appeal to voters motivated to change a corrupt government and get rid of its prime minister.

Given that UMNO defectors like Mahathir, his son Mukhriz, and Najib's former deputy prime minister Muhyiddin had joined the opposition, it is important to note that this victory is not solely explainable as the result of their split. Instead, Mahathir's party joined two well-organized opposition parties that had been part of the most successful previous coalition. In decades past, other prominent UMNO elites who had split from the party had foundered without strong opposition partners.

Why did the BN accept their loss, rather than crack down to ensure they stayed in power? For one, BN-aligned media and pollsters, at least publicly, did not expect

the BN to lose. In the week before the election, the Merdeka Center, an independent polling firm, predicted the PH opposition coalition would win 5 fewer seats than in 2013, due to BN's support among Malay voters and the role of PAS as spoiler. It seems this perception was shared at the highest levels. In a post-election interview, Najib stated that "I didn't expect it to be this catastrophic. I thought we could possibly lose some seats, but I didn't expect this sort of dramatic result, this calamitous result" (Reuters 2018). As a result, the set of strategies available to the BN significantly narrowed in the post-election environment. The size of the opposition victory also meant that opposition parties or personnel would have to defect en masse to the BN to ensure its victory. More repressive strategies would have incurred significant costs and met strong resistance.

Yet for the opposition, the tensions and tradeoffs between the two strategies identified in this dissertation were still amply evident even in victory. In an election marked by close coordination of the main opposition parties, and sharp downturns in electoral support for the BN across the electorate, the parties again segmented their political competition along ethnoreligious lines. In building the strongest collective coalition identity yet, the majority of the PH parties paradoxically preserved many of the elements which defined them in opposition, including the reliance on ethnicized party support. In the 2018 election, the DAP put forward fewer Malay candidates than in the previous four elections. Bersatu's slate of winning candidates are entirely Malay. Yet perhaps this brand protection by parties like the DAP helped it hold on to

its existing support, rather than diluting it in a way that would have eroded their core support.[110]

After years of increasing dealignment with the other opposition parties and internal tension, PAS returned to its niche status with a steady percentage of the electorate, but largely bound by its conservative policy stances and territorially-based support. PAS had also completed its swing back to an ambiguous or collaborative relationship with the BN after spending several decades as its staunch opposition. It had finally resolved the tension between its ethnoreligious message and regime stance: It would highlight collaboration with the BN where it advanced its ethnoreligious goals and critique the BN (and later the PH) government not on the basis of regime overturn, but of imperfectly embodying the goals of an Islamic-oriented state. In doing so, the party cut itself off from accessing the anti-regime swing voters which it had depended on to become a national force. As noted in previous chapters, this effectively shrank its support back into its traditional regions of support.

As noted in the previous chapter, PAS contested against both PH and BN across the country. But ironically, in trying to position itself in the ambiguous center between the regime and opposition, the party may also have inadvertently helped bring down the BN. Rather than siphoning votes away from the PH, PAS siphoned away voters from the BN. This effectively reduced the majorities that the PH needed to win across the country.

The results decisively show how opposition strategies mattered to the outcome. First, had PAS not moved out of the opposition, the new Malaysian government would

[110] Thanks for Dan Slater for this point.

look very different. Only five years prior to 2018, PAS had been a key member of the most successful opposition coalition in Malaysia's history. By 2013, the Malaysian electorate appeared to be so motivated by the anti-regime cleavage that despite PAS's unstinting commitment to advancing *hudud* law, its anti-regime stance and coalition with other opposition parties won it significant support among non-Malay Muslim voters and outside its core strongholds. If the new government had incorporated PAS, it would have faced significant tensions over policies that touched on the role of Islam in government and society.

Second, the preservation of PAS's agenda was in part because it had willing coalition partners. All of the most of significant opposition coalitions had featured PAS *despite* its strong Islamist brand. Although heavily criticized by partner parties like the DAP, the DAP did not exit coalitions with PAS until it was clear the break was decisive. This led one MCA politician to complain that "DAP's vehement protest when PAS mooted *hudud* was equivalent to a burlesque show to deflect from the fact that DAP shared a big part of the responsibility in advancing *hudud* in Malaysia." Although the DAP and PKR had placed themselves in clear distinction to the BN, the final coalition included a party of former UMNO elites and party members with a racial orientation that appeared little different than UMNO itself. Mahathir himself was the primary architect of many of the institutions that stifled opposition and kept the BN in power for decades. Coalition building, then, both allowed the parties to preserve their existing niche characteristics as well as incentivized the parties to narrowly target particular constituencies.

What are the implications of these strategic choices on post-BN Malaysia? Importantly, Malaysia's opposition did not ultimately come to power on the basis of a narrow platform of ethnoreligious particularism, even if legacies of these policies still patterned its behavior. Instead, it put forward a broad populist platform for institutional reform and anti-regime discontent. Mahathir's actions as prime minister thus far suggest commitment, or at least non-resistance, to institutional reforms. But different electoral results could easily have led to a more staunchly status quo prime minister and a dominant party in the coalition that was interested less in regime change than in rearranging power amongst the ruling elite. Ironically, it may have been Mahathir's insistence in the initial stages of his defection that the only task of the opposition coalition was to unseat Najib that helped clarify the importance of moving past other ideological and policy divides.

As discussed earlier in this dissertation, the victorious PH closely followed the model of coalition politics first developed by the BN and then by subsequent opposition coalitions, although with important differences. The PH represents a continuation of a powersharing model whereby different parties sought to win votes from distinct constituencies, preserving their distinct ethnic appeals while drawing voters from allied parties. It therefore continues the strong informal norm in Malaysian politics of being consociational by appearance. It is clear that Malay politicians and Malay rights are to be kept in front for the short term, and ethnic balancing has pervaded debate over key appointments. However, the largest part of the new ruling coalition is PKR, a multiethnic party, and the coalition lacks a dominant ethnic party

in the style of UMNO. As such, it may move toward a more democratic and genuinely consociational model of governance.

The BN's loss and significant post-election erosion also offers a potential lesson for the victorious coalition. As the dismal results of the BN became clear, some of its major component parties, including the PBB in East Malaysia, had defected from the BN coalition. At the time of writing, the BN coalition was reduced to UMNO, the MCA, and MIC – the three original coalition partners which had won the first elections in Malaysia beginning in 1955. Without coalitional support, UMNO lost a significant amount of its demographic and geographical reach. As such, while coalitions helped the parties over the electoral threshold necessary to win, it also makes them dependent on consistent partnerships to attract national support across all demographics.

The collapse of the BN as an electoral force also has significant repercussions for its position in opposition. The PH coalition now has access to the tools that the BN had for decades that helped it cement its power through the distribution of political appointments, patronage, and other state resources. It faces a weak and disarrayed opposition that has been discredited in the short term. The victorious coalition's politics will be the true test. Will the reliance of the parties on coalition partners to extend their reach mean that they will answer to distinct constituencies in the electorate with different preferences? Will the coalition dismantle the economic and social policies aimed at the Bumiputera majority, or instead will the "Malay parties" feel pressure to maintain them in the face of a changing society? These questions will

likely define the legacy of the PH government and shape its ability to hold its position in subsequent elections.

This dissertation was largely written in the months leading up to the decisive victory of Malaysia's opposition in May 2018. Further analysis of electoral results (now available at disaggregated levels below the district level) will help uncover more specifically the connections between ethnicity and voting patterns, as well as the sources of support that the opposition gained in the election.

8.3 Contributions and Further Research

The intensive analysis of Malaysia's opposition parties is not only important to understand how beat the authoritarian odds to unseat one of the world's longest-running governments. The theory and findings presented in this dissertation also help shed light on other potential aspirants to power in authoritarian regimes. In conclusion, I will discuss the implications of the argument, and three contributions of the dissertation to the study of competitive authoritarian regimes, elections, and political parties.

The dissertation has demonstrated how opposition strategies are consequential to their success in authoritarian settings. In authoritarian regimes, opposition parties navigate "a set of unusually diverse, difficult, and therefore divisive strategic choices" (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 229). Understanding these choices have significant implications not only for the study of democratization, but also for the quotidian politics of authoritarian regimes given that opposition parties sometimes hold significant proportions of elected offices even while ruling governments remain stable.

In doing so, it underscores the need for greater scholarly attention to opposition parties as political agents in authoritarian settings.

These strategic choices also help illuminate the behavior of oppositions in cases where they win national power. Opposition parties that win power by unseating the incumbent through elections face the choice of implementing democratizing reforms, or preserving the advantages of authoritarian incumbency (Wahman 2014). As such, the study of opposition parties prior to regime change or incumbent overturn are important to understanding later policy preferences and patterns of political competition. This research thus complements the emerging study of authoritarian successor parties (Loxton 2016; Loxton and Mainwaring 2018), given that former opposition parties must also adjust to competition under changing political circumstances.

Existing theories of incumbent resources, repression and cooptation have illuminated the constraints under which opposition parties operate. But this study demonstrates that opposition strength is not the mirror image of regime weakness. The success and strategic choices of opposition parties *within* those constraints varies in the cases discussed throughout this dissertation. The case of successful regime overturn in Malaysia discussed in the previous section also illustrates this point. In Malaysia, the combined electoral support of the pre-existing opposition and defectors was decisive in its incumbent overturn in 2018. Their efforts were significantly aided by a massive corruption scandal and an unpopular prime minister. But as argued previously, the 2018 election success was an *improvement* on existing opposition wins

rather than solely due to economic concerns of ordinary voters and disillusionment with the prime minister's connection to a corruption scandal. The defection of prominent regime insiders was necessary but not sufficient for winning power through elections, highlighting the importance of understanding pre-existing levels of opposition support.

This study also presents a novel conceptualization of opposition parties that seeks to capture both their contentious and contested relationship with the ruling government, as well as the characteristics of their formation and base that shape their ultimate electoral, policy, and patronage goals. The empirical and theoretical literature on opposition parties even in democratic regimes has remained limited (see discussion in Helms 2004 and Garritzmann 2017). The explanation of opposition identities provided here helps highlight the complex and sometimes contradictory behavior of opposition parties in elections and in office. It suggests further attention is needed to the context-specific characteristics of opposition party formation and party building in understanding their potential not only to unseat incumbent governments or fight for regime change, but also in shaping the quotidian politics of stable authoritarian regimes.

Finally, the dissertation extends literatures on political parties and coalition building in both authoritarian and democratic settings. It shows that the context-specific emergence and identities of parties are important to understand their strategic choices and varied challenges. Departing from existing work on niche parties in both democratic and authoritarian contexts, the study demonstrates that variation in the

constituencies and issues around which niche parties build support shape later strategic choices in important ways. It also highlights an unintended consequence of coordination and coalition building, an opposition strategy which has received attention for its effectiveness in a broader literature on opposition parties (Howard and Roessler 2006; Wahman 2010; Arriola 2012; Donno 2013; Gandhi and Reuter 2013). Coalitions help parties deepen an anti-regime cleavage among the electorate and help them work across deep divides over policy and ideology. But even as they aid in collective electoral victories, this study has shown that they inhibit the individual expansion of parties beyond their existing niches. These two insights – that niche identities themselves contain important variation, and that coalitions delay processes of party broadening – are areas for further research in both democratic and authoritarian contexts.

In sum, the argument and findings of this dissertation relate both to scholarly and normative concerns about democratization and the role of opposition parties. The relationship of opposition parties to democratization and regime change cannot be assumed but must be interrogated by examining the varying ways in which oppositions build support and construct their legitimacy. Their strategic choices in seeking to gain power often involve uneasy alliances with non-democratic actors, as illustrated well by Malaysia's victorious opposition coalition featuring an autocratic former prime minister. These strategic choices have significant implications for the analysis of incumbent overturn as distinct from democratic transition. In addressing both of these issues, this study highlights the importance of understanding the often twisting and ambiguous paths to power for political opposition.

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