

REPORT ON REQUEST TO STUDY CHINESE REACTION TO VOTE@18, “WILL CHINESE YOUTH 18-30 VOTE IN NEXT GE?”

Kat W. Wong & Phang Kean Lap

1. PAS and Recruitment of Young Members

A detailed report on the modus operandi of PAS in terms of recruitment, grooming of leaders, grassroots movement and indoctrination of young Malaysians (as early as pre-school) is attached. This paper was written by Ahmad Ali Nurdin who had studied PAS’s history, constitution, and party operations in the state of Kelantan. He observed that the success of PAS in organising its members and in attracting young Malaysians could be attributed to the party’s structured methodology to engage, train and indoctrinate target groups at micro-level.

The political party itself is an Islamic movement that uses *dakwah* to bring together local communities to participate in the party’s activities and at the same time using the same platform to promote PAS’ political ideology. Over the years, they have extended the same indoctrination strategy in Islamic schools and pre-schools with the belief that Islamic education (*tarbiyah*) and movement (*harakah*) should be introduced to all Muslims at a very early age (read: children).

It then becomes natural that as the children grew up under a religious community structure lead by PAS, and its indoctrination, they would be firstly recruited as party members upon reaching the legal age and the party ensured that they would also be registered as voters as soon as they reach the voting age.

Other aspects of PAS’ operations and indoctrination are detailed in the attached paper written by Ahmad (2019).

2. How are other parties attracting new members

INSAP studied the strategies of DAP and other PH parties in terms of their political ideology, and campaign style and messaging which turned out to be the main contributing factor to recruitment of new cadres and young members. Except for PAS, no other parties have openly

recruited minors and it is usual for parties to rely on party member-parents to influence their children at home on politics and party preferences.

3. Minors joining political parties and Chinese reaction to vote@18

According to an online poll by SinChew Daily in Facebook, out of the 3,000 respondents to the poll, 45% expressed support for the lowering of voting age to 18 years, and 55% was not in favour of the move. Among those who supported the move, they also expressed:

- Young people have the right to decide their future, and wanted auto registration and compulsory voting.
- Politics and government should be incorporated as a subject in Malaysia's education system.
- Age alone is not the determinant of maturity to vote, as some felt that older voters were not rational in their political arguments and views as well.
- It is a global trend, and Malaysia should adopt the same in giving voice to the younger generation.

Points raised by those who disagreed with lowering voting age:

- At the age of 18, these young Malaysians are too young and should focus on education and not be concerned with or involved in politics.
- Given the young age and lack of exposure to the workings of government and politics, those below 21 years old would be have the tendency to be swayed by emotions and influenced by peers or social media, and unable to make judgement based on facts and reality.

The same daily also interviewed four students from different ages on the same subject.

21-year old student

"There are pros and cons, but since many of us do not have enough experience, we are easily swayed by trend."

19-year old student

"Will ask parents to get further information about politics in Malaysia since we do not much."

18-year old student

“We have a lot of thought and opinion, but we are not inclusive in the whole situations, cannot choose suitable candidates, but will fulfil responsible as voter.”

17-year old student

“Do not know which parties to choose, as we are not familiar with it.”

There was not comprehensive study on the Chinese community reaction towards voting at 18 years old or these young Malaysians participating in politics, although it is safe to say parents would prefer their children to focus on education and furthering their studies, instead of being involved in active politics.

While the findings of the online poll are inconclusive, it is increasingly hard to stop young people from having an opinion on issues affecting their lives (as discussed in Undi18 paper), and to some extent attaching an emotional reaction to government policies and political developments. By 2023, millions of new and young voters would be included in the electoral roll and MCA should focus on how to capture their support hereon.

4. Getting Chinese youth to become interested in politics (like PAS)

PAS' indoctrination strategy is a useful reference for MCA in the party's political planning but not the answer to MCA's struggle to seek Chinese or Chinese youth support. Politics to the Chinese community in Malaysia could be simplistic or complicated depending on the issues and demographics of the segment of the community affected. The multi-dimensional nature of politics to the Chinese community means there is no “one solution” that could help MCA win more votes or more support from Chinese youth. The fundamental strategy of PAS is religion and the doctrine of “demi agama”.

MCA needs to re-engineer itself to be a dynamic party that connects to modern political dynamics, aspirations of emerging generations and to find the common ground to unite the Chinese community based on the R.A.T.E¹ concept:

Relevant – topics that matter to the masses, and to the younger generation such as costs (education, lifestyle, transport, starting a family, childcare, loans), housing, availability of jobs

¹ Kat W. Wong (2019)

and income growth, opportunities for career progress, work environment, freedom of speech, economic mobility and so on.

Actionable and **Acceptable** – the ability of targeted groups to take action on the topics raised or start / join a citizens' movement to affect change, advocate policy changes and create an impact in their community. The buy-in among youth towards the subject matter also depends how acceptable their action is to their peers and the local community. (*Study: crowd psychology and group consensus*).

Tailored – MCA's strategy and issues must also be tailored to meet the different aspirations, expectations and diverse needs of the various segments of voters – population demographic, geography, business owners vs employees, private vs public sector, education level etc.

Engagement – Engagement not only with interest groups and voters, but with MCA members on a regular basis. Weekly gatherings, albeit in small groups, are one of PAS' most effective ways of ensuring party loyalty and continuous buy-in from grassroots on the party's political decisions and for them to appreciate the party's considerations in high-level meetings. It is also a method used by DAP especially in the run-up to GE13 by having at least one "influencer" in party grassroots groups, and also numerous local community groups including Christian cell groups. Party front liners should also walk the ground to gather intelligence and feedback on the party, the government and its policies. A channel for all levels of party members to convey the feedback to the party must be put in place.

5. Potential changes to Parliamentary and state seats, and MCA seats

As described in the Undi18 paper, the challenge in analysing the impact of Vote@18 on MCA seats or Malaysia's Parliamentary seats are:

a) The number of new voters is based on National Registration Department (NRD) records, and the Election Commission (EC) has yet to publish where the new voters would be voting and which constituency they belong to, thus how the new voters would change the demographics of the seats.

b) While it is possible for INSAP to estimate the additional 20-40% votes in every constituency, the access to MCA's general election database where there are records of composition of voters by ethnic groups and by locality is necessary to enable INSAP to map out the votes for analysis.

c) There is no baseline study on how youth will vote and their current sentiments towards politics, hence INSAP is recommending one to be conducted.

Possible scenarios

Scenario 1: Sharp increase in the number of young voters in MCA seats in particular the ones in urban and semi-urban areas. Without enforcement of compulsory updating of address by NRD, most of these young voters above 20 years old would be outstation voters – studying or working outside home state, making voter engagements harder especially for parties using traditional methods of campaigning.

Scenario 2: Areas which have dense population of one ethnic group would likely see higher number of voters from that particular group in the next general elections – emergence of super-Chinese or super-Malay seats. Similar to the outcome of the 2018 delimitation exercise, votes would reflect the support of dominant ethnic group for a party, and not necessary the overall interest of all Malaysians and there would be greater divide among Malaysians along political tones. Hence, ERC's proposed delimitation is necessary to ensure constituencies with balanced ethnic groups.

Scenario 3: Mixed seats becomes Malay or Chinese dominant constituencies, and negotiations for seat swap may be raised and negotiated between parties.

To answer the question on, *“What is the response of Muslim community towards minority seats after Vote@18. Will current mixed seats which turned Malay majority be acceded to non-Muslim parties?”* – Yes, there is such possibility and the outcome depend on negotiations between parties.

In a nutshell, official EC data on the voting areas of 7.7 million new voters and an estimate of support rate in every constituency is needed to help INSAP project the outcome of the next elections, or if there will be significant shifts in the demographics of the MCA seats.

6. Recommendations for MCA

Refer to Undi18 paper.

ATTACHMENT

Facts compiled by Phang Kean Lap (Chinese media & observation)

PAS recruitment method

Source: Ketua Penerangan Pemuda PAS Wilayah Persekutuan.

1. What is PAS doing to get youth interested?

PAS got a lot of activities to attract the youth such as:

- Established Unit Amal PAS (PAS' Youth's Unit Amal) as a volunteer welfare and security group that operates under PAS youth.
- Established Department of Art, Culture and Sport (DACS), Alternative Riding Club (ARC), Alternative Cycling Club (ACC) to attract the youth to join as PAS member
- Under Dewan Pemuda PAS, they have specific units for recruitment activities such as Jabatan Pembangunan Pelajar to cater the program for those below 17, Jabatan Pembangunan Mahasiswa for university students and Jabatan Pembangunan Graduan for graduates activities.

2. What did they do with 12 year old youths?

- Usually PAS members will send their children to their own pre-school known as Taman Asuhan Kanak-Kanak Islam (TASKI) or Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam (PASTI).
- Organizing "Usrah" (a gathering for the conduct of a religious activity, such as a discussion regarding a certain topic) to keep the togetherness. Using top to bottom approach. Having their own reading material or module called as Manhaj Tarbiyah PAS to be discuss during the Usrah.
- Having team building session which is called as Tamrin to increase the knowledge of member about the party.

Chinese reaction to Vote@18?

KEYWORDS (FB, Group leaders, Interview, news)

Stands	Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Majority Does not support (Sin Chew facebook voting: 45% Agree / 55 Disagree%) 3000 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strict & Evolutional• Emotional & easy to be influenced
Actions	Possible alternative influencer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not know what to do• Must start from teacher, so that the students will be educated• Dong Zong starts to plan the syllabus on the text book	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will listen / asking parents in decision making
Trends	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hard to say, would it focus on racial politics, because local University still have smell of racial.• Racial composition analysis of GE 14 will become not effective, because more candidates joining.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More Youth skills to be implemented (Entertainment)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese vote Is low compared to Malay youths (Population) 	
<p>Conditions</p>	<p>Attrative / Push point</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Maturity in Politics • Focus on Study • Do not concern on politics and limited knowledges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be educated • Thinking it as one of the government skills to secure their power