

The Effects of the internet and local socio-economic issues on elections: A case study of southern johor, Malaysia (2008-2018)

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Abstrak

Based on the author's continuous observation, fieldwork, and oral interviews carried out in the Southern part of Johor, Malaysia, the article highlights how local socio-economic issues-including public safety and the impact of Singapore on the economy and society of Southern Johor-have gradually become the main electoral focal points during the 12th, 13th and 14th Malaysian general elections (GE12, GE13, GE14) held from 2008 to 2018. The article also investigates how access to the Internet has become universal in Southern Johor since the beginning of the 21st century. Online platforms gradually replaced traditional media as critical platforms during elections, thereby changing the way campaigns were run. The longterm impacts of these two factors-local issues and the Internet-have ultimately contributed to the first regime change in Malaysian history in 2018.

Lastly, the article argues that Pakatan Harapan's (PH) victory did not solely rest on the cooperation of political party elites; the role of local issues and the impact of online platforms were also indispensable. A proposed hypothesis states that these structural changes (local socio-economic issues and the Internet factor) at lower levels have led to power transition at the top level (politics). This hypothesis does not only apply in Southern Johor, Malaysia, but also in other places such as Taiwan.