

Political Legitimacy: Umno kelantan Leadership Crisis 1990-2013

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Abstract

Kelantan is one of the states with the largest number of Malays and acts as a benchmark for the Malay political economy in Malaysia. Kelantan is often associated with its uniqueness owing to its social, cultural, economic and political conditions that are different from other states. In the political context, Kelantan has never shared the same history with other states since it is the only state in Malaysia that has been ruled by an opposition party for the longest time. The opposition party that dominates the state government of Kelantan is Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS). History has proven that UMNO was only able to rule Kelantan for a short period of time, from the 1978 General Election to the 1990 General Election, which was only accounted for 12 years. Until the 2013 General Election, PAS has ruled Kelantan for 23 years, hence proving that the people of Kelantan still support PAS in terms of its Islamic-based struggle with the slogan '*Membangun Bersama Islam*'. UMNO was no longer able to maintain its victory in Kelantan starting from the 1990 General Election, which witnessed the cooperation of PAS with Semangat 46, BERJASA and HAMIM until the 2013 General Election. This disability of UMNO is the primary focus of this study. After almost 23 years of being under the rule of the opposition party, UMNO was seen trying to take back Kelantan but remained unsuccessful. The 2004 General Election demonstrated some promising results when UMNO almost dominated the position of seats in the DUN by obtaining 21 out of 45 seats in the election. However, the hope to dominate it in the 2008 General Election did not materialise when UMNO lost badly in Kelantan since it only won 6 DUN seats and 2 parliamentary seats. UMNO's efforts were seen as unable to match PAS's capabilities. It was observed that the weaknesses in leadership, strategy and workflow, as well as UMNO's internal division, are the main factors that contributed to UMNO's defeat in Kelantan.

Introduction

After winning the first General Election after independence in 1959, PAS succeeded in forming the Kelantan government. Meanwhile, in May 1964, PAS managed to maintain their government in Kelantan in the second General Election, although the number of winning seats decreased to 21 seats from the first election. Furthermore, the third election also witnessed the success of PAS in maintaining its influence. PAS ruled Kelantan for 18 years from 1959 to

1978. After that, UMNO took the ruling of Kelantan for 12 years, from 1978 to 1990. During the 18 years ruled by PAS, various developments took place in Kelantan. At the Kelantan State Assembly Conference on 27 to 28 September 1977, Mohamed Nasir was ousted from the position of Menteri Besar through a vote of no confidence. The motion was made by 20 assemblymen from PAS led by Haji Ishak Lutfi Omar. Following that, another demonstration broke out on 19 October 1977 when about 20 thousand people from Kelantan marched from Padang Merdeka to the State Secretary's Office. As a result, a state of emergency was declared in Kelantan (Ahmad Lutfi, 1996) by DSP Mohd Shariff Oмарdin under the Internal Security Act 1960 (Act 82), Order Under section 52 (1) Kota Bharu Order 1/77 to ensure security in the state.

As a result of implementing the Emergency Act, Kelantan's democratic system was suspended with Kelantan being governed *de facto* by the Federal Government when MAGERAN was enforced on November 8, 1977. For 96 days, Kelantan was under the rule of MAGERAN led by Hashim Aman as Director of the Kelantan Government who was responsible directly to the Department Prime Minister. After the declaration of emergency, PAS was removed from Barisan Nasional in December 1977 for refusing to comply with Barisan Nasional's whip on the Emergency Bill.

The Kelantan State Legislative Assembly was then dissolved in 1978. For facing the election, UMNO Kelantan has promised to bring changes in terms of development in Kelantan. Therefore, the victory has been on the side of UMNO, which managed to obtain 24 seats followed by BERJASA with 11 seats, while PAS suffered a severe defeat with only 2 seats. This victory has allowed UMNO to form a government by placing Mohamed Yaacob as Menteri Besar of Kelantan apart from indicating that UMNO has succeeded in capturing the hearts of the people of Kelantan.

The 1982 General Election once again saw the victory of UMNO Kelantan when they managed to win 22 state assembly seats, while PAS and BERJASA won 10 seats. The main factor in UMNO's victory in Kelantan was the influence and leadership style of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who was still holding the position of Head of UMNO Communications in Kelantan at the time. However, the internal crisis of UMNO Kelantan began to arise when several parties began doubting the leadership of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah after he lost the election for the position of Deputy President of UMNO to Musa Hitam. Nevertheless, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah continued his fight by bringing in development projects in Kelantan.

Ahead of the 1986 General Election, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was retained as UMNO Kelantan Head of Communications since there was no suitable candidate to replace him to lead UMNO Kelantan at this point. However, Mahathir Mohamad has outlined a new rule that the position of UMNO Head of Communications for each state must be held by the respective Menteri Besar (Chief Minister, MB). The appointment of Mohamed Yaacob as Head of Communications for UMNO Kelantan has caused UMNO Kelantan to split into three groups, which were those led by Tengku Razaleigh, Mohamed Yaacob and Hussein Ahmad (Mohd Ali, 2004). This split has given PAS the strength to retake Kelantan in the upcoming election, thus putting together a strategy that would allow them to succeed in governing the state of Kelantan. However, ahead of the 1986 election, Mohamed Yaacob who at that time was the State Election Director also appointed Tengku Razaleigh as the Joint Director of the 1986 election. This appointment of Tengku Razaleigh then brought victory for UMNO Kelantan when it managed to win 12 parliamentary seats compared to PAS with only one seat, which is the Pengkalan Chepa parliament. As for DUN seats, UMNO managed to win 29 DUN seats, while PAS with 10 seats.

The internal division of UMNO Kelantan once again occurred when Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah challenged Mahathir Mohamad to compete for the position of UMNO President in the 1987 election. Mahathir won narrowly in the 1987 UMNO election, but his victory also questioned the validity of the vote disputed by Razaleigh until it led to the banning of UMNO by the Kuala Lumpur High Court on 4th February 1988 (Lotfi, 1990).

The problem became more complicated when Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the leader of UMNO responsible for overthrowing PAS in 1978, led a new party known as the Parti Melayu Semangat 46. Semangat 46 then joined PAS, HAMIM and BERJASA to form the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU), which was established in 1989. The agreement between these two parties caused UMNO's defeat in Kelantan during the 1990 General Election. It was very surprising when UMNO Kelantan led by Mohammad Yaakob fell according to the election results announced on 21 October 1990. The ability of the people of Kelantan to make this surprising decision and change the leadership of the state government shows the maturity of the people of Kelantan regarding politics (Muhammad Agus Yusoff, 1994:41). This is where the unfortunate episode of UMNO Kelantan began when PAS-S46 won in 39 DUNs while UMNO failed to get a single seat in the 1990 General Election. The severe defeat of UMNO Kelantan was a result of many UMNO supporters switching to support Parti Semangat 46.

This study has determined the relationship between the political legitimacy of UMNO/BN in Kelantan and the leadership crisis that has impacted the results of the General Election. Simultaneously, it has highlighted the factors contributing to the defeat of UMNO/BN in Kelantan. The newfound discoveries from this study will play a significant role in strengthening the position of UMNO/BN in Kelantan. The victories of PAS in Kelantan from 1990 to 2013 were not solely due to the strength of the party but also the weaknesses that UMNO/BN in Kelantan needed to acknowledge. Thus, the empowerment of UMNO/BN in Kelantan should be carried out as effectively as possible to provide an opportunity for them to become the state government.

The Concept Of Leadership

The effectiveness of political leadership is the main indicator and basis of a stable political system either when overcoming internal conflicts or as policy planners and strategies for increasing the development of a country. A political system will not be successfully developed as a generally accepted system if its leadership is weak, corrupt and does not have a strong commitment to the interests of its nation. The change is driven by various potential situations until a complex pattern of change occurs. As an anchorman, the leader is responsible for all elements that exist in any aspect, whether political, social or economic (Jamaie, 2003).

Many researchers defined leadership based on their perspectives and aspects of the phenomenon that are most interesting to them (Yuki, 1981). Within a community atmosphere, for instance, a social group, one of the members of the group will be appointed as the leader and is given indirect responsibility to organise the group in question (Keesing, 1989). Fiedler (1967) defined leadership as an effort towards influence between individuals where power and influence are distributed unequally so that an individual can direct and control the actions of others more than their control over the individual. Stone (1974) classified two types of leadership, namely face-to-face leadership where the leader achieves his position through interaction with small groups like labour groups and neighbour villages, while remote leadership involves a wider geographical context where the leader attracts a wider audience or is better known personally. For example, the Prime Minister is a long-distance leader to the people of Malaysia.

Manning Nash (1974) explained that the political unrest in Kelantan involved aspects of leadership, especially in the lives of the farming community and the elites. He also added that there was a conflict between the new elites and the traditional elites. Since PAS was seen as a ruling party that defends the life values of the Malay community in Kelantan, the party received support from the traditional elites. On the contrary, the new elites were more comfortable being in the UMNO/BN party and acting as the party's main leader. Nevertheless, the study by Manning Nash only observed the structure of Kelantan society but did not touch upon the political situation of UMNO/BN in Kelantan.

Possessing the legitimacy of power can enable a leader to fulfil the interests of his supporters. A leader emerges when there is a willingness among members of a community to become followers and support other individuals on their own choice freely and rationally. For example, a leader is elected through elections without being forced. Rational acceptance means that members will accept the authority factor of individuals who are honest, dedicated, responsible, sensitive to the surrounding problems and prioritise the people they lead. In this study, the concept of leadership is apparent when leaders such as Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Mohd Nasir, Annuar Musa, Mustapha Mohamed, Awang Adek Husin, Hussin Ahmad, Mohamad Yaacob, among others, made an impact on Kelantan state politics. In fact, this leadership factor is seen to have been the main factor in the defeat of UMNO Kelantan in the election. The change of leadership in Kelantan can be assumed to affect the support of the people of Kelantan towards UMNO.

The Concept Of Political Legitimation

Legitimacy can be defined as a legitimate state or position. Legitimacy is referred to when the people of a political system willingly accept the group that exercises power over them. If this happens, then the ruled not only acknowledge the power of their rulers but also feel that the power holders deserve to have power and to be obeyed. A strong political system must be accepted by the people. In other words, the people who accept a political system would make a legitimate and strong government. A political system of a country must have legitimacy either legally or by force, which is important to allow all government or government actions to be accepted and supported by the people.

Legitimacy is a pillar of strength for a political administration, especially in the context of a leadership transition or the continuation of political leadership at the mainstream level. The presence of legitimacy will allow the leadership structure of a country to remain stable even if certain challenges and responses will disrupt the country's administrative process. Among developing countries, political legitimacy is important to ensure that the leadership inheritance process is not compromised by incidents of riots, demonstrations or the overthrow of power (Sivamurugam, 2004:31).

Legitimacy, in English, is a form of recognition or acceptance by people who are ruled by a government. According to John Locke, in his writing *'Two Treaties of Government'* (1689),

"... a ruler needs the consent of the ruled".

The failure of a government to have legitimacy would invite conflict between the government and the ruled. It cannot be denied that both groups, the government and the ruled, are interdependent and that the absence of legitimacy will lead to chaos and a power struggle from the ruling party by the ruled as the ruling government is not accepted by the ruled as a legitimate government. The legitimacy of a government will lead to the agreement

and acceptance of the government by the ruled. Therefore, it can be mentioned that legitimacy requires consent and is among the conditions for giving power to the authority by the ruled. Without legitimacy, authority cannot be accepted.

According to K. Ramanathan (1988:139-140), legitimacy generally refers to the Latin word meaning 'according to the law' or 'valid under the law'. He further explained that legitimacy is the basis of the government's powers that provide confirmation and provide the right to rule as well as recognition from the people being ruled.

Legitimacy is very important for a political system to continue planning the agenda and public policy of a country. For example, the Brunei government has its own legitimacy since it practices an absolute monarchy government system. It means that no one can dispute the Sultan of Brunei's decision. With this legitimacy, the government can easily implement its development plans and administer the country safely. Legitimacy can also be seen as a form of power where the people allow themselves to be ruled by a certain ruler.

Sivamurugam Pandian in his book entitled "*Mahathir's Legacy*" explains that legitimacy can be measured using several factors. The first factor is to look at the formation of authority through the role of the personality of the leader. The second factor is to evaluate the economic factor, which is the extent to which capitalist development requires support from this aspect to enable the government not to be replaced. Economic growth also allows science and technology to develop and become the basis for a new source of legitimacy. Therefore, the development of science and technology is the third factor in determining the legitimacy of leadership. The fourth factor is to look at the application pattern of ideology or the belief factor as the basis for the political system that is practised to continue. While the last factor, which is the fifth factor, is related to the influence and effectiveness of the international recognition factor in determining a person's leadership style.

Legitimacy can also be seen through a political crisis experienced by a leader or leadership. The crises that occur throughout the leadership of a leader can weaken his leadership, but there are still crises that help strengthen or increase community support for the individual's leadership. Therefore, it can be concluded that political legitimacy allows it to be adapted to the general definition of legitimacy, which is the people's acceptance of the individual's leadership.

It was difficult for political parties in Kelantan to be legitimate when the ruling government often changed. From 1955 until the 2013 General Election, the state government changed leadership and the party ruling the state several times. From 1959 until the 1969 General Election, the PAS party dominated the Kelantan state government. During this period, several changes in the internal leadership of the UMNO party also changed to achieve victory in the election until the appearance of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in the political arena of UMNO Kelantan in 1971 to face the 1974 General Election. As a result, Kelantan UMNO succeeded in seizing the Kelantan state administration from the hands of PAS, thus enabling the appointment of Mohamed Nasir as a member of the Tendong District Legislative Assembly to be appointed as Menteri Besar Kelantan. However, this calm situation turned bad when Mohd Nasir was overthrown in a vote of no confidence and allowed the Kelantan State Assembly (DUN) to be dissolved in 1978. This election saw the victory of UMNO Kelantan until the 1990 General Election. However, during that period, various disputes and power struggles ensued. As a result, PAS succeeded in recapturing the state administration of Kelantan in the 1990 General Election under the cooperation of Semangat 46 (S46) and BERJASA, which formed the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU). From then until the 13th election in 2013,

UMNO was still unable to gain the support or votes of the people of Kelantan to govern the state despite various promises and development that had been given to its people.

The legitimacy of the leadership is seen as the leading cause of the people's rejection of UMNO in Kelantan since there have been several changes in the leadership of UMNO Kelantan accompanied by the culture of the people of Kelantan itself. This study attempts to study more deeply and carefully the legitimacy crisis of UMNO Kelantan politics caused by the leadership factor, of which the initial picture can be seen from the election results.

The Impact Of Legitimation In The Context Of Leadership And Political Culture Of Kelantan

The difference in leadership of a country can be seen from the position of a leader in managing the administration of a country or state. Legitimacy refers to the people's legitimacy towards leaders regardless of which political party they belong to. Legitimacy and leadership are closely related to each other to observe the people's support for the leader or party. People's acceptance of a leader or political party confirms whether or not the leader or political party is legitimate. The problem in explaining legitimacy and leadership lies in how to judge whether or not the leader has legitimacy from the people. The continuation of the relationship between these two things can be explained by the situation of leaders together with the people or community in continuing their social and economic life. The weakening or strengthening of legitimacy will affect the leadership of a leader. If the legitimacy is weak, then the leader will become weak, hence affecting his or her political role.

The function of a leader in an organisation is to control, organise and help the people; nonetheless, to create a two-way relationship between these two parties, an element of legitimacy is needed to ensure the continuity of the relationship in the politics of a social structure. Building a good nation or state requires leaders to gain legitimacy from the people to continue leading. The legitimacy will also affect a country. The failure of national or state governance is caused by the legitimacy of the authorities or leaders. The actions of leaders in governing the country or state in the right way will have an impact on the level of legitimacy of its people.

The politics of Kelantan state is not a new thing that is difficult to understand, in fact, it has been going on since the early 1970s. The deteriorating state of politics in Kelantan was clear after the 1990 General Election when the UMNO party was no longer accepted by the people of Kelantan until the 13th General Election in 2013, which started when they put the leadership crisis factor as the cause of UMNO's defeat after 1990. Whereas the political culture of the people of Kelantan prefers leaders over political parties. Since then, PAS has been dominating the state government of Kelantan. The relationship between leadership factors and political culture is the main core of political legitimacy in Kelantan.

The legitimacy of leadership is seen as the leading cause of the people's rejection of UMNO in Kelantan since there have been several changes in the leadership of Kelantan UMNO accompanied by the culture of the people of Kelantan itself. This study aims to study more deeply and carefully the existence of a legitimacy crisis in UMNO Kelantan politics caused by the leadership factor, of which the initial picture can be seen from the election results.

The difference in the Kelantan political culture compared to other states makes it a unique state, which can be seen through the elections that took place showing the change of the state government several times. This is because they feel that they will get a lot of advantages when they vote for a party; the party that wins the majority in the DUN seats will then form the state government. At the same time, the selection of candidates in each parliamentary and DUN also affects the vote and culture of the people of Kelantan. They will

not work for the party in question if they do not like the leader, coupled with the attitude of the leader who does not care about the people in the area. In fact, this attitude has shown that the people of Kelantan are very concerned about the changes happening in their area.

The factors of political legitimacy and leadership are crucial in determining the success of a party in elections. In general, it can be observed that through the six series of General Elections held, UMNO/BN Kelantan still failed to take over the state government from the hands of the PAS administration. The factors of political legitimacy and leadership crisis were the main reasons for UMNO/BN's defeat in Kelantan. However, it is undeniable that there were other factors at play in UMNO/BN's inability to govern Kelantan as a state government since contemporary issues and internal party dynamics also played a significant role in contributing to the party's defeat.

Analysis Of General Elections 1990 - 2013

PAS, which has been dominating the Kelantan government for the second time in 1990, has given birth to a new PAS that is different from before. Something new and positive has been contributed by UMNO after the party's defeat in the 1990 election. The change in leadership in PAS was seen as a new transformation for this party in addition to the change in the ideology of the struggle. UMNO's rule from 1978 to 1990 gave PAS time to recover and rebuild after going through a phase of defeat in the 1978 election.

Nik Abdul Aziz was appointed as Kelantan PAS Commissioner and has made the main figure after the Mohd Asri era. His rule as the Menteri Besar of Kelantan was indeed looked forward to by the people of Kelantan as they were eager to see the type of government he will bring. The Islamic Development Policy was introduced as the basis of his administration. Changes after changes were made by Nik Abdul Aziz, but before the 1995 election, the political situation of the PAS and S46 coalition was a little shaky when some members of the DUN and Parliament rejoined UMNO. As a result of this, the 1995 election showed increased support for UMNO. However, APU still ruled Kelantan when PAS still controlled 24 DUN seats, while S46 gained 12 DUN seats and UMNO won seven DUN seats compared to losing all seats in the 1990 election.

The role of the S46 party decreased after the 1995 election when PAS began to strengthen its position. On 3 October 1996, the S46 party was officially dissolved by Tengku Razaleigh and all members of the party returned to UMNO again. The situation was getting worse when the country is experiencing an economic and financial crisis that has changed the country's economic and political situation. The impact of the crisis has become the starting point of Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim's political crisis. The dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister has thrown Malaysian politics into disarray when Anwar Ibrahim's supporters set up a new party known as Keadilan to oppose UMNO. Kelantan is no exception to the political chaos that has hit the country. PAS once again seized the Kelantan DUN seat after successfully winning 41 DUN seats compared to that UMNO only won two DUN seats. Additionally, the issue of Anwar Ibrahim gave PAS an advantage in Kelantan in the 1999 election.

By the year 2000, Malaysia's economic situation improved. Mahathir's resignation as Prime Minister in October 2003 made way for Abdullah Badawi to assume the position. The Anwar Ibrahim issue controversy was also seen easing. Reforms were carried out by Abdullah Badawi as soon as he took office as Prime Minister. The 2004 General Election was soon held, displaying the huge winning of UMNO and BN with 198 Parliamentary seats. Meanwhile, DAP won 12 seats, PAS managed to win 7 seats and Keadilan only got 1 parliamentary seat. As

for the DUN seat, the PAS government in Kelantan almost fell when there was only a difference of 2 seats. PAS has won 23 DUN seats while UMNO managed to win 21 DUN seats. The narrow difference in seats gave UMNO an opportunity and space for the next election.

Nonetheless, the 2008 General Election saw PAS return to action. The UMNO leadership issue played a role once again in the downfall of UMNO in Kelantan. PAS maintained the government in Kelantan by winning 38 DUN seats and 9 parliamentary seats. Meanwhile, UMNO's internal crisis was seen to be getting more pronounced. They blamed each other until it led to a change in the country's main leadership when Abdullah Badawi handed over the post of Prime Minister to Najib Razak in 2008. At the same time, PAS' dominance in Kelantan in maintaining the government for 22 years has shown the party's excellent record.

The 2013 General Election (GE13) was held on 5 May 2013. Barisan Nasional (BN) managed to maintain its government in Malaysia, but in the state of Kelantan, UMNO/BN continued to be rejected by the people of Kelantan as they kept on giving PAS the mandate for the 6th consecutive term when they managed to control a majority of 2/3 of the DUN seats with PAS winning 32 seats, while UMNO managed to obtain 12 seats. What is unique about the election in Kelantan is that the clash between these two Malay political parties often showed fierce competition. UMNO continued to be rejected by the people of Kelantan, especially in urban areas and small towns in Kelantan. In this 2013 GE, UMNO managed to increase the number of state assembly seats it won to 12 seats. There are other main factors that caused the people's rejection of UMNO in Kelantan, one of which is the image of clerical leadership highlighted by PAS's Mursydul Am, Tok Guru Nik Aziz. The failure of the manifesto by UMNO Kelantan is also a factor in why voters still reject UMNO to establish a foothold in Kelantan. In the election, UMNO introduced the UMNO Kelantan Pledge entitled 'Rakyat Dihati, Janji Ditepati', which also failed to attract the hearts of the people of Kelantan. Apart from that, the candidate's personal factors were also the focus of voters in Kelantan. The corporate and liberal image does not suit the wishes of the people of Kelantan, whose 90% population includes Malay and Muslim. The people of Kelantan want the clerical leadership to continue in this state.

PAS was seen as capable of exploiting the weaknesses within UMNO/BN and made every effort to convince the people that they can perform their tasks and responsibilities better. In Kelantan, UMNO/BN was perceived to have a lack of authoritative leadership as demanded by the people. The weakness in the leadership organisation of UMNO/BN was the main core of their defeat in Kelantan in the six conducted elections. The victories achieved by PAS, which enabled them to govern the state of Kelantan for an extended period, were the result of internal divisions that occurred within UMNO/BN, leading to the emergence of the S46 party around 1990. Since then, UMNO/BN has been frequently plagued by internal issues, particularly within the party leadership.

Conclusion

Leadership plays an important role in determining the political legitimacy of a party. The same situation occurred in the state of Kelantan when the political legitimacy happened due to the factor of leadership, which in turn became the cause of UMNO being rejected by the people of Kelantan over a long period. This point was reinforced by the political culture of the people of Kelantan itself, which is different from other states. They are seen not only rejecting the development politics offered by UMNO but also criticising UMNO leaders who they feel are not fit to be their leaders.

The difference in Kelantan political culture is what makes this study quite interesting to pursue. It is certain that many parties and other political analysts want to know why the people of Kelantan rejected UMNO for a long period, especially in the second phase of the PAS rule in Kelantan (1990-2013). PAS has certainly experienced political changes involving the exchange of key leaders, a new ideology of struggle and a change in leadership patterns, which have given the party a new lease on life. The era of the PAS downfall in Kelantan was very noticeable in the run-up to the 1982 election as a result of the party's leadership crisis involving Dato Asri and Muhammad Nasir. The impact of that event caused the people of Kelantan to reject PAS as a whole and consider the PAS struggle at that time to be running away from the original principles of the party.

However, UMNO's victory in Kelantan did not last long when UMNO fell to the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU) led by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in the 1990 General Election. One of the factors behind UMNO's defeat in this election was the internal split between Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Mahathir Mohammad, which led to Tengku Razaleigh establishing the Semangat 46 (S46), which is allied with PAS, BERJASA and HAMIM. The defeat of UMNO in Kelantan continued until the 13th General Election as the people of Kelantan continued to support PAS in ruling the state of Kelantan despite various agendas and strategies carried out by UMNO Kelantan. Therefore, this study will evaluate the factors that led to the defeat of UMNO in Kelantan, especially the leadership factor, which is the main focus of this study.

The turmoil and divisions within UMNO/BN began at the level of relationships and permeated down to the grassroots, particularly at the branch level. This situation was challenging to control and rectify, thus eventually becoming the primary reason why the people of Kelantan could not accept UMNO/BN. In the fervour of campaigning and making promises to achieve victory in the elections, UMNO/BN leaders unknowingly contributed to their own failure. The management within the organisation, from the relationship level down to the branch level, was perceived as chaotic. In addition, UMNO/BN leaders in Kelantan were seen as more interested in acquiring power, status and wealth for themselves, rather than upholding the values and struggles of the UMNO/BN party itself. They preferred to criticise their opponents, exposing their flaws openly to the public, while inadvertently revealing their own shortcomings at the same time.

The political culture of the Malay community in Kelantan is significantly influenced by their way of life, strong beliefs and educational background. The Kelantanese people's moderate lifestyle, firm convictions and robust religious education shape their identity. These factors also play a role in shaping the electoral landscape. The people's sensitivity and active involvement in politics contribute to the success of specific political parties. The Kelantanese exhibit a high level of political awareness, which fuels their interest in participating in political activities. The dynamism and distinctiveness of the Kelantanese people in political engagement are remarkable, as Kelantan has witnessed the highest number of government changes in the country's history since the first general election in Malaysia.

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