

## Performance of Non-Dominant Political Party in Terengganu: Challenges to Pakatan Harapan in 16<sup>th</sup> General Election

Ilyas Abdullah<sup>1\*</sup>, & Nurul Saadatun Nadiah Mohd Ngah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Fakulti Sains Pentadbiran & Pengajian Polisi,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Kampus Raub, Malaysia*

*Corresponding Author: [ilyasabdullah@uitm.edu.my](mailto:ilyasabdullah@uitm.edu.my)*

---

### Abstract

*Election history shows that Terengganu does not have an effective non-dominant political party. There are several non-dominant political parties involved in the elections in Terengganu such as Barisan Jamaah Islamiah (BERJASA), Hizbul Muslimin (HAMIM), Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46), Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH). The response of the Terengganu Malay voters towards non-dominant political parties other than Barisan Nasional (BN) and Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) was less encouraging. Although other parties were also involved in the elections in Terengganu, the support given to non-dominant political parties was not as consistent as given to BN and PAS. However, the results of the 2022 General Election shows that BN received less support from the voters. After a decline in state seats and parliamentary seats since the 1999 general election in Terengganu (except for the 2004 general election), BN was once again slumped in the 15<sup>th</sup> general election when it failed to win any parliamentary seats in Terengganu. The Malay community's support for PAS is good and consistent since the 1999 general. The PH (Pakatan Harapan) to gain its support in Terengganu was seen as challenging. This is because the political culture of the Terengganu voters is seen as less inclined towards non-dominant political parties although PH receives good support in several states as well as at the federal level.*

**Keywords:** *PAS, BN, PH, Political Pact, Non-Dominant Political Part*

---

### INTRODUCTION

Received: 10 January 2023  
Accepted: 19 May 2023  
Published: 30 June 2023

Terengganu is well known for its history of political rivalry between PAS and BN. The uniqueness of Terengganu's politics is due to the existence of elements of the local Malay tradition, Islamic religious sentiments and the demographic factors of the state which has over 95 percent of the Malay population. This makes Terengganu's politics quite different from the politics of other states. The long rule of BN in Terengganu beginning in 1961 has shaped the political culture of the Terengganu voters. BN through institutions and urban development programmes has managed to control the thinking and behaviour of the voters in the state. Prior to the 1999 election, PAS, which struggled with Islamic ideology in its political movement, still failed to rival BN, which was seen as closer to the voices of the people who were majority living below the poverty level and in dire need of assistance from the ruling government (Mazlan, 2019).

The political culture of the voters in Terengganu is also not radical and less likely to take risks. The voters in Terengganu is conservative and more concerned with

stability. Hence, their tendency is to support the status-quo of BN. In addition, the political culture of the voters in Terengganu is also regional and conservative which is more focused on religious issues and still strongly adheres to the characteristics of local traditions that are more directed towards the closure of the mind and less affected by national issues. Voters in Terengganu are also more focused on two main political doctrines, namely the doctrine of Islam and the political doctrine of Malay-Islamic nationalism.

The majority of voters especially those living in rural areas are conservative. That makes voters more interested in choosing stability and continuity or by other words maintaining the existing status quo. The conservative nature of the electorate needs to be defended especially for states that represent most of the characteristics of conservatism such as Terengganu. Conservative voters are more in favour of the traditional concept that played an important role in winning BN in the previous general election in Terengganu. Tradition is often associated with a continuous element that helps create the stability of the community including the political system, especially the rural Malay electorate. BN is able to maintain the status of voter stability and at the same time continue the modernization process (Wan Abdul Rahman, 1986).

For voters in Terengganu, supporting a non-dominant party other than PAS and BN is less encouraging. Despite a host of controversial issues, both local and national issues, the electorate's stance remains unchanged. This can be explained that the political culture of the voters in Terengganu is heavily influenced by state-level political issues. Big issues at the national level do not get the attention they deserve from voters. This is because voters in Terengganu feel that issues such as corruption, malpractice, which are stymied by speakers from political parties have nothing to do with their daily lives (Wan Rohila Ganti, 2008). Issues close to the life of the electorate are very significant in shaping the political culture of the voters in Terengganu. In addition, voters in Terengganu are also inclined to make the talk stages as a field for information related to elections. Terengganu is one of the states called "*Malay Belt State*" where the population is 95 percent Malay. Therefore, the political culture of the voters in Terengganu revolves more around Islamic beliefs, emotions and values. The high poverty rate makes the issue of development and assistance from the state and federal governments as the main weapon in the campaign ahead of an election in Terengganu. Some voters in some state constituencies in Terengganu still place high hopes on BN or PAS compared to other parties. The experience of the government especially BN in

Terengganu since 1961 has formed a trust among the voters about the development enjoyed. The politics of development has shaped the political culture of the voters in Terengganu. Voters make physical development a key determinant in the party's election in elections. This shows that the political culture of Terengganu voters is still influenced by neofeudal elements that do not support radical political ideologues (Che Hamdan, 2008)

## **Problem Statement**

As a society that is constantly exposed to change, the conservative Malay voters can also be dynamic and ready to accept change. The individualistic-collective personality among Terengganu voters is now seen to be growing and shaping a new political culture that is self-determining. Terengganu voters are no longer hesitant to change, including the political life. Terengganu voters are also willing to change the government if the ruling government is seen as incapable in fighting for the rights of the people. However, the political changes in Terengganu only involved PAS and BN. Non-dominant political parties other than PAS and BN still fail to get consistent support from voters in Terengganu. For Terengganu voters, any party that does not fight for Malay and Islamic interests as its main political agenda is bound to face rejection. The result of the Terengganu state parliament's GE-15 saw BN fail to win any seats as well as PH. Thus, BN's cooperation with PH in the face of the 15<sup>th</sup> state election in Terengganu would have been the biggest challenge based on the performance of non-dominant political parties that had contested before in the general election in Terengganu.

## **Research Methodology**

This study used qualitative data collection methods through secondary sources to strengthen the findings and further strengthen the discussion of the studies. The data obtained from this method is usually unstructured but has a very deep scope. For secondary, the data collected is obtained through materials such as books, articles, theses, journals, internet and others. All such information is collected and used as a reference material as well as information according to the needs of a section or subtopic in this scientific writing. The study also analysed the performance of non-dominant political parties for the GE of certain years which saw the party also win several state and parliamentary seats in Terengganu. However, the performance of non-dominant

political parties is not consistent in the face of complete rejection from voters in Terengganu from one general election to another.

### General Election (1959): Parti Negara

The result of the 1959 general election saw PAS winning 13 of the 24 state seats contested in Terengganu (Riduan, 2015). PAS's victory in the 1959 election was due to the Terengganu Malay community's bigotry towards Islam. PAS has greatly mobilised its campaign by making local religious figures to attract the support of voters compared to UMNO which relied heavily on leaders from outside Terengganu. UMNO's failure in Terengganu was also due to the fact that the party did not enter the villages to explain the economic achievements made in Terengganu (Alias, 1984).

Table 1.1: Election Results in Terengganu (1959)

Contested Party	State Assembly	Parliament
UMNO/Perikatan	7	1
PAS	13	4
<b>Parti Negara</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: A. Rashid Rahman, 1994. *The Conduct of Election in Malaysia*.

PAS's victory in the 1959 election was also helped by the role of local religious scholars and Malay teachers. The Terengganu Malay community is very easily influenced by PAS campaigns. They always approach rural communities and their position in society is very high. The rural Malay community is a loyal follower of the group. In addition, the Malay teachers also cooperated with PAS out of frustration with the attitude of the Alliance government which was deemed to ignore the implementation of Bahasa Melayu as the National Language. Apart from religious issues, PAS in its campaign also listed the weaknesses of the Terengganu Alliance government (1954-1959). The Alliance government has been described by PAS as failing to bring about major changes in Terengganu. The weakness is evident when out of 191 schools, 117 of them are still sheds while the roads are the worst in the Federation of Malaya. Meanwhile, the lives of farmers and fishermen have not changed much. The Alliance failed to shut down the campaigns carried out by PAS, causing UMNO to lose the 1959 general election. (Mohd Dzaki Jusoh, 1976).

In addition, PAS also raised many issues of the 1956 Constitution, the position of the Malay language and the Islamic religion. Among other things, PAS urged that the 1956 constitution be re-examined to guarantee the sovereignty and rights of the Malays as indigenous. The Alliance government was also urged to make Malay as the medium of instruction in national schools as well as the question of making Islam the official religion entirely in the Federation of Malaya. The strategy used by PAS in the 1959 election was very effective for the state of Terengganu. PAS's success in Terengganu is also due to its Islamic political struggles being accepted by the Terengganu Malay community who look up to religious teachers who are election candidates. The strong spirit of turmoil among the Malay community contributed to PAS's victory in Terengganu (Ismail Said, 1969). As a result of the victory, PAS formed a state government with a small majority of 13 seats compared to seven for the Alliance and four for Parti Negara. Parti Negara's attempt to influence the voters in Terengganu, especially the fishermen, failed when it won only 4 state seats and 1 parliamentary seat. Parti Negara's performance in the political competition in Terengganu ended in 1959 when the party failed to gain any support from voters in Terengganu in the next general election.

### **General Election (1974): Parti Bebas**

The 1974 election saw PAS become a partner in the coalition government and form Barisan Nasional. The year 1974 was the year of unity between UMNO and PAS. The merger of the two main Malay-Islamic based parties was a relief to UMNO, which had to face opposition from PAS in planning and carrying out development projects in Terengganu. Political competition in Terengganu in the 1974 election saw the participation of the Socialist Party (PSRM). The overwhelming response of the Terengganu Malay community to the general meeting series organised by PSRM surprised UMNO. This is because UMNO has faced an unexpected situation such as the emergence of Parti Negara and the sudden presence of PAS which led to the defeat of UMNO in the 1959 election. In the 1974 General Election, PAS was part of the component party that formed BN. The merger between UMNO and PAS in the election saw the opposition role in Terengganu taken over by the PSRM (Hasrom Hassan, 1973). The result of the 1974 election saw BN win 27 state seats and seven parliamentary seats with a percentage of 71.3 votes compared to PSRM which secured 29.7 percent of the vote. The votes that PSRM obtained in most of the contested seats were much larger than expected (Wan Mokhtar, 2008). PAS's participation in BN has

created a calm political culture in Terengganu coupled with promises to bring rapid progress to Terengganu.

Table 1.2: Election Results in Terengganu (1974)

Contested Party	State Assembly	Parliament
UMNO/BN	27	7
<b>Bebas</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: A. Rashid Rahman, 1994. *The Conduct of Election in Malaysia*.

However, in the 1974 general election, the Independent Party candidate Abdul Mutalib Salleh defeated the BN candidate in Batu Buruk by defeating Ghazali Ahmad as the candidate from PAS with a majority of 145 votes while PSRM managed to get 1023 votes. The defeat of BN was due to sabotage among supporters who disagreed with the candidates from PAS to represent BN. In addition, the voter support for PSRM was also quite good in Seberang Takir and Kuala Berang despite failing to win any state seats and parliament. In the 1974 election, BN risked many candidates who were close to the hearts of the people. The opposite happened when opposition candidates from PSRM risked many non-local candidates as well as from outside Terengganu such as Siti Noor Abdul Hamid Tuah who was a former candidate for the Kuala Kedah by-election in 1973.

### General Election (1990): Parti Melayu Semangat 46

The 1990 election was the first election in the 1990s. In this election, PAS has formed a political partnership with several parties from UMNO and PAS such as the 46, Berjasa, and HAMIM Malay Party known as the Ummah Unity Force (APU). In Terengganu APU managed to capture 10 state seats. Of the total state seats, eight of them were won by PAS candidates while the remainder were won by candidates from the 46-strong Malay Party. At Parliamentary level, APU only managed to win two seats, each of which was won by PAS and Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (Mohd Izani, 2005).

Table 1.3: Election Results in Terengganu (1990)

Contested Party	State Assembly	Parliament
UMNO/BN	22	6
PAS	8	1
<b>Semangat 46</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: A. Rashid Rahman, 1994. *The Conduct of Election in Malaysia*.

UMNO, which was in disarray due to internal divisions that created two camps, Team A and Team B and the UMNO ban in 1988, caused UMNO to lose control of Kelantan and also lose 10 state seats in Terengganu. The increase in seats and the defeat of slim votes in several state seats has burnished the spirit and motivation of PAS members to work hard to retake the state of Terengganu from BN since 1961 (Riduan Mohd Nor, 2015). Most of the seats won by APU in the 1990 election in Terengganu were in urban areas such as Kuala Terengganu, Marang, Jertih, Wakaf Mempelam and Jabi. This is because the political culture of the electorate especially the Malay community in the city is more open and sensitive to current issues that arise in the environment either at the local or national level. The Malay community in the city is also more sensitive to the issue of malpractice and injustice. Apart from that, the existence of many residential areas has also reduced the influence on UMNO and most of the basic amenities received had to be paid by the residents. This has reduced the city's reliance on UMNO.

The 1995 election was the last election in the 1990s. In the 1995 election, the performance of the opposition parties, especially PAS in Terengganu, went backwards compared to the results of the 1990 election. Although PAS's cooperation with the 46-strong Malay Party in the APU continues, it has only managed to win seven state seats. However, all the state seats were won by PAS candidates. The 46-strong Malay Party failed to win any state seats in the 1995 election in Terengganu. The failure of the opposition, PAS and Parti Melayu Semangat 46 in the 1995 election was also due to its less clear manifesto than the more realistic approach by the UMNO party by risking questions related to the lives of the people, namely human-based development and economic character (Ghazali Mayudin, 2014).

### **General Election (2013): Parti Keadilan Rakyat**

The result of the 13th general election in Terengganu saw UMNO-BN almost lose in Terengganu after failing to get a two-thirds majority in the state assembly. In the 13th general election, PAS Terengganu's machinery was more mobile at the local level than the Central PAS's efforts to widen its victory on a large scale. However, the results of the 13th general election showed that Terengganu Malay voters are still with Pakatan



Rakyat (PR). Although PAS Terengganu is seen as not very friendly to PR and often takes a distorted approach from the strategies taken by PAS in other states throughout the country, the fact is that almost all the factors leading to political transformation throughout the country are also evident and exist in Terengganu especially the phenomenon of the rise of young people and the domination of new media by the Malay community in Terengganu. (Junaidi & Mazlan Ali, 2016).

Table 1.4: Election Results in Terengganu (2013)

Contested Party	State Assembly	Parliament
UMNO/BN	17	8
PAS	14	0
<b>PKR</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Laporan Pilihan Raya Umum Malaysia 2013, Kuala Lumpur: SPR

Politics in Terengganu no longer showed total UMNO-BN dominance when it won only 17 of the 32 state seats contested and lost a two-thirds majority of seats. Although UMNO-BN still remains at the helm of the government and administration in Terengganu, the support shown by voters, especially the Malays, is loosening. Although the economic development of Terengganu is still at a low level, its democracy is seen as fertile. The result of the 13th general election saw PKR win one seat in the State Assembly and 1 parliament seat. However, in the 14th general election PAS was no longer part of the PR component party. In the next general election, PKR failed to win any seats with PH either at the state assembly or parliamentary level.

### Challenges to PH in 16<sup>th</sup> General Election

Based on the political uncertainty that occurred during the post 15<sup>th</sup> general election, no one expected that BN could work with PH to form a coalition government together with several other parties. The political pact was formed due to the fact that no party managed to achieve a majority to form a government. The results of the 15<sup>th</sup> general election recorded BN's worst performance when it only managed to win 30 parliamentary seats. Earlier, BN was seen as excited to be again the dominant party in the country's politics based on the results of the previous by-elections (PRK) and the State Elections (PRN) which saw a lot in favour of BN. Based on the history, Terengganu Malay community's response to non-dominant political parties other than BN and PAS is less encouraging. This can be seen based on the results of the elections conducted in Terengganu. Although other parties were also involved in the elections in



Terengganu, the support given to the party was not as consistent as the support given to the BN and PAS parties. The results of the 2018 election saw BN suffer the most severe blow not only at the state level but also at the federal level. After a decline in state seats since the 1999 general election in Terengganu (except for the 2004 general election), BN finally fell out in the 14<sup>th</sup> general election when it only managed to win 10 state seats compared to PAS, which managed to increase its number of seats to 22 state seats.

The Malay community's support for PAS has been good and consistent since the 1999 general election. The previous PAS (1959 and 1999) never lasted more than one term in Terengganu. But the 15<sup>th</sup> general election result signaled early that PAS is seen as having a good chance of defending the state for the next term. This is based on PAS remarkable victory at the parliamentary level when it won all eight seats, while denying BN any victory. Based on the performance of the non-dominant political parties that contested no party remained consistent in the political competition in Terengganu. All non-dominant political parties remained only not less than one election including Parti Negara, Parti Melayu Semangat 46 and PKR. Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH) has not achieved any victory in any seats either at the state assembly or parliamentary level. Hence, the BN-PH political pact will be a new challenge to capture Terengganu and break the dominance of the existing dominant political parties, namely PAS and BN (Ilyas, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the election results in Terengganu, it is clear that the performance of non-dominant political parties other than PAS and BN has received less favourable response. However, the trend of involving political parties that made the interests of Islam and Malays as the main agenda was more well-received despite the inconsistent support. For example, PAS's performance with Parti Melayu Semangat 46 in 1990 was seen as better than the performance of other non-dominant political parties. In the election, the Malay Party of 46 managed to win 2 Dun seats and 1 parliamentary seat. Compared to PKR's collaboration with PAS, the party only managed to win one State Assembly seat and 1 seat at the parliamentary level. PKR continued to fail to gain support when PAS exited PH before the 14th general election. It is clear that more than 95 percent of the population of Terengganu is made up of Malays. Terengganu Malay voters is very obsessed with Islam. Every party that does not putting Islam and the

interests of the Malays as a main political agenda will received total rejection from the voters in Terengganu.

### **References**

Rashid Rahman, 1994. *The Conduct of Election in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing.

Alias Mohamed, 1984. *Kelantan Di Bawah PAS: Masalah Tanah Dan Rasuah*. Kuala Lumpur: Insular Publishing House Sdn.Bhd.

Che Hamdan, 2008. *Budaya Politik Dalam Pilihan raya Umum Ke-12: Kajian Kes Parlimen Dungun*. Shah Alam: UPENA *lidikan*. Malaysia: Macgraw-Hill Sdn. Bhd.

Ghazali Mayudin, 2014. *Demokrasi Dan Pilihan Raya Di Malaysia*. Dlm. Ghazali Mahayudin, Jamaie Hamil, Sity Daud dan Zaini Othman (pnyt). *Demokrasi Kepimpinan & Keselamatan Dalam Politik Malaysia*. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia: Bangi.

Hasrom Hassan, 1973. *Barisan Nasional: Selayang Pandang Tentang Konsep dan Perkembangannya: Jurnal Persatuan Sejarah Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*, hal. 89.

Ilyas Abdullah, 2023. *Kerjasama dengan PH sukarkan hajat BN tawan semula Terengganu*. Berita Harian.

Ismail Said, 1969. *Menegak Agama Membela Bangsa: Perjuangan PAS 1951- 1970*. Kuala Lumpur: Unit Buku Harakah.

Junaidi & Mazlan Ali, 2016. *Kebangkitan Pas Di Terengganu*. Dlm. Muhamad Takiyuddin & Sity Daud (pnyt). *Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-13: Kesenambungan Politik Baharu, Kekentalan Politik Lama*. Sintok: Penerbit Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Laporan Pilihan Raya Umum Malaysia 2013, Kuala Lumpur: SPR.

- Mazlan Ali, 2019. Masa Depan Politik Terengganu: Kemaraan PAS, Kebangkitan UMNO Dan Cabaran Pakatan Harapan. Dlm. *Kolokium Literasi Politik Melayu Terengganu*. Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), hal. 10-20.
- Mohd Dzaki Jusoh, 1976. *Sejarah Kerajaan PAS Terengganu 1959-1961*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Mohd Dzaki Jusoh, 1976. *Sejarah Kerajaan PAS Terengganu 1959-1961*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Riduan Mohammad Nor, 2015. *Tuan Guru Haji Abdul Hadi Awang: Murabbi, Ideologue, Pemimpin*. Kuala Lumpur: JUNDI Resources.
- Wan Abdul Rahman Latiff, 1986. *Pilihan Raya 1986: Satu Kajian Kes di Terengganu*. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia.
- Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, 2008. *Muzakkirah Sebuah Autobiografi Suku Abad Menerajui Kerajaan Terengganu*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn. Bhd.
- Wan Rohila Ganti, 2008. *Pilihan raya Umum ke-12: Suatu Kajian Kes Politik Luar Bandar*. Shah Alam: UPENA.