

**Chinese vote, US backing not enough to propel Pakatan to Putrajaya, says don
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By Amin Iskandar**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will not capture Putrajaya with only the support from the minority Chinese voters and international recognition from the United States, an analyst specialising in Malaysian politics said in the run-up to Malaysia's tightest electoral race.

According to Prof William Case, acting head of department for Asian and International Studies at the City University of Hong Kong, the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition will not fall to PR without the majority support from the Bumiputera voters even if the opposition pact wins strong support from the Chinese community.

He added that the BN will still win the 13th general election but with a reduced majority compared to Election 2008 due to more urban middle-class Malay voters swinging towards PR.

File photo of people lining up to cast their ballots in last year's Sarawak state elections. According to a professor with a Hong Kong university, the Chinese votes alone will not help PR to capture Putrajaya.

"Whatever the Chinese sentiment, at a figure of 26 per cent of the population their numbers are not big enough to defeat BN.

"Unless the Chinese consolidate with a majority of Bumiputera voters it will not happen.

"We must observe too the number of Chinese voters who returned to support Najib," he told The Malaysian Insider in a recent email interview, referring to the BN coalition led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Case feels that the US leans more towards a PR victory at the polls because of Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's image as a moderate Muslim the world superpower is able to deal with.

"Washington is certainly continuing its support to democracy.

"However, Washington is not so opposed to Najib as those who look down on Abdullah or are sceptical towards Mahathir," the academic said, referring to Najib's two predecessors, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad respectively.

Abdullah had taken over the leadership of BN from Dr Mahathir after the latter resigned as prime minister in October 2003, and led the 13-member coalition to its biggest win only to lose its customary two-thirds control of Parliament and four states in Election 2008.

"In fact, some may feel a little respect for Najib as a visionary manager in a difficult and imbalanced situation.

"Whatever Washington's views, it will only have a little impact to the votes in Malaysia," the professor said.

Case is not a foreign name in Malaysian politics and administration, having written much about the country and who is now making a study on the state of federalism here.

He has predicted that BN will still win the 13th general election but with a reduced majority compared to Election 2008.

"Umno will face the risk of losing two per cent of the votes from the middle-class urban Malays; MCA will receive the biggest loss; MIC will only get a slightly better result compared to 2008," he said.

He said that if BN falls, Umno leaders will have very diverse views on how to deal with the situation.

"Najib will accept the decision and continue to lead Umno and BN (if it still exists) as the opposition.

"Other hardline Umno leaders will create a disturbance until the authorities are forced to declare an emergency," he predicted.

According to Case, if PR loses in the next general election, and their leaders can convince the people their vote has been stolen through an unfair election, it was possible a major uprising could take place through street demonstrations like what happened in the Philippines in 1986 and recently in the Middle East.

"However, I do not predict there will be a split in the security forces as in the Philippines where high-level generals defected to enable a democratic transition to take place.

"At the most, change will be seen to be more like in Egypt, where the military allowed an opposition figure to occupy the highest executive level but maintain control on most of the government power," he said.

The next general election is seen to be the closest race for power, pitting the mammoth BN coalition against the fledgling PR pact.

In the last national polls, the opposition bloc won 81 out of 222 parliamentary seats and nabbed four key states in Selangor, Penang, Kedah and Perak; it lost the latter state after three state lawmakers declared themselves independents allied to BN.

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