

PERSPECTIVE

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Impact of GE 15 in Sarawak: Preliminary Observations and a Look Ahead

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Election banner at Bandar Kuching during the 15th General Election taken on 11 November 2022.
Photo: Lee Poh Onn, ISEAS – Yusof Institute.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 15th General Election (GE 15) on 19 November 2022 followed eleven months after the Sarawak state election (SSE), which took place on 18 December 2021. Concerns over the costs of living, education, endemicity of Covid-19, and employment were among the uppermost thoughts of Sarawakians when GE 15 was announced.
- What resulted from GE 15 was a hung parliament at the federal level. In a strange turn of events, BN, with its 30 seats became the kingmaker for Pakatan Harapan (PH). Sarawak also became crucial in providing 23 seats to the unity government.
- The Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) initially pledged its support to Perikatan Nasional (PN) but eventually joined Pakatan Harapan (PH), making Anwar Ibrahim the 10th Malaysian Prime Minister under the decree and suggestion of the Malaysian Agong. Currently, many benefits under the unity government are flowing to Sarawak following its relative increase in importance in federal politics.
- Sarawak is now allowed to use English along with Bahasa Malaysia as its official language. The unity government has also empowered both the Sabah and Sarawak state governments to directly manage federally-funded projects worth RM 50 million and below. The number of ministerial and deputy ministerial positions has also been raised.
- Sarawak Premier, Abang Johari, is now standing on much firmer ground, especially after the victories in SSE 2021 and this election.

INTRODUCTION

The 15th General Election (GE 15) on 19 November 2022, followed about one year after the Sarawak state election, which took place on 18 December 2021. Political fatigue was widely expected among voters in this election in Malaysia and in Sarawak. Politicking at the federal level in the past four years, including the Sheraton move that toppled the Pakatan government, had undermined political confidence in the country.¹ In Sarawak, when GE 15 was announced, concerns over the costs of living, education, endemicity of Covid-19, and employment were at the top of voters' minds.² An additional deterrent were the seasonal monsoon rains.³ These factors eventually dampened voter turnout in GE15 in Sarawak.

What resulted from GE15 was a hung parliament. PN won 73 seats, PH won 82, and BN won 30 out of the total of 221 seats.⁴ For a simple majority, a minimum of 112 seats was a prerequisite. PH just needed BN to work with it in order to form this simple majority, but PN needed both BN and Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) to fly past this simple majority.⁵ No single coalition had secured enough seats and in a strange turn of events, BN, with its 30 seats became the kingmaker for PH, which had won 82 seats. Sarawak then became crucial in providing additional stability with its 23 seats, and a building block towards the 148 seats needed for a two-thirds supermajority in the Malaysian Parliament.

This perspective will analyse the election outcome in Sarawak and, at the same time, also quickly retrace what immediately happened in Peninsular Malaysia after GE 15. It also provides some observations of the election results in Sarawak. How did GPS and its opposition parties perform? What are the implications of this victory? It then examines developments that took place immediately after GE 15, when no coalition was left with a majority in government. After that, the new dynamics under the unity government are examined.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS: GE 15 IN SARAWAK

The 2022 general election (GE15) in Sarawak was a pivotal one for Abang Johari. First, this was watched to see if it would replicate the solid showing of the Sarawak State Election in 2021 (SSE 2021). In SSE 2021, GPS won 76 out of the 82 contested state seats, the opposition Parti Sarawak Bersatu (PSB) won 4, while DAP Sarawak won two seats.⁶ There was an expectation that GPS would perform similarly well for GE15 by capturing around 25 of the 31 parliamentary seats. Second, Abang Johari has since 13 January 2017 held the office of Chief Minister of Sarawak – renamed Premier in March 2022.⁷ A reduction in the number of seats won in GE15 compared to the number of seats in GE 14 would mean that GPS was losing ground.⁸ GPS performed well, however, and secured 23 out of the 31 seats (Table 1 below). This was less than the expected 25 seats but a good indication that GPS had strengthened its electoral position compared to GE 14.

TABLE 1: GE 15 Outcome of GPS Component and Opposition Parties

Party	Political Party/Component	Seats Contested	Seats Won
Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS)	PBB (Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu)	14	14
	PDP (Progressive Democratic Party)	4	2
	PRS (Parti Rakyat Sarawak)	6	5
	SUPP (Sarawak United People's Party)	7	2
	GPS Total	31	23
Pakatan Harapan (PH)	DAP Sarawak (Democratic Action Party - Sarawak)	8	5
	PKR (Parti Keadilan Rakyat)	16	1
	PBM (Parti Bangsa Malaysia)	1	1
	PH Total	25	7
Perikatan Nasional (PN)	Bersatu (Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia)	3	1
	PN Total	3	1
Other Parties and Independents (PSB, PBK, PBDS, Independents)	PBS (Parti Sarawak Bersatu), PBK (Parti Bumi Kenyalang), Sedar, PBDS (Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak Baru) PBM (Parti Bangsa Malaysia) Independents	33	0
	Other Parties and Independents Total	33	0

Source and Notes: Compiled from Borneo Post Online, Sabah and Sarawak Results, <https://ge15.theborneopost.com/results/index.html>. The Star, GE 15, <https://election.thestar.com.my/sarawak.html>. Both accessed on 28 December 2022. See Appendices 1 to 9 for a detailed breakdown of seats contested by the various candidates.

The average turnout for SSE 2021 was 60.67 percent⁹ with 9 out of the 82 seats having a voter turnout of less than 50 percent. Historically, election turnouts in Sarawak have averaged 68 percent.¹⁰ In the recent GE 15, turnout in Sarawak was 61.7 percent;¹¹ lower than the turnout of 72 percent in GE 14 and the long-term average turnout of 68 percent. This was in spite of the 1.943 million registered voters in the state, understood to be around a 59 percent increase over GE 14.¹² In rural constituencies like Kapit, Baram and Limbang, the turnout was 49.9 percent, 50.8 percent and 47.9 percent respectively (Appendices 2 and 3).

The increase in the number of voters with automatic registration and the inclusion of youths 18 years and above did not manage to raise turnout rates in Sarawak. The survey done by Merdeka Study Centre before GE 15, which indicated that only about 40 percent of eligible youths would actually vote¹³ had proven correct.¹⁴ Generally it is understood that a low turnout would give an edge to GPS, with its established election machinery in getting/transporting voters to the voting centres even in rural areas.¹⁵

In Sarawak, 15 constituencies had three contesting candidates (three-cornered fights), five had four candidates, and one had five candidates (see Appendices 1 to 9). Out of the 31 seats, seven were marginal victories. From Appendices 1 to 9, it can be seen that multi-cornered fights did

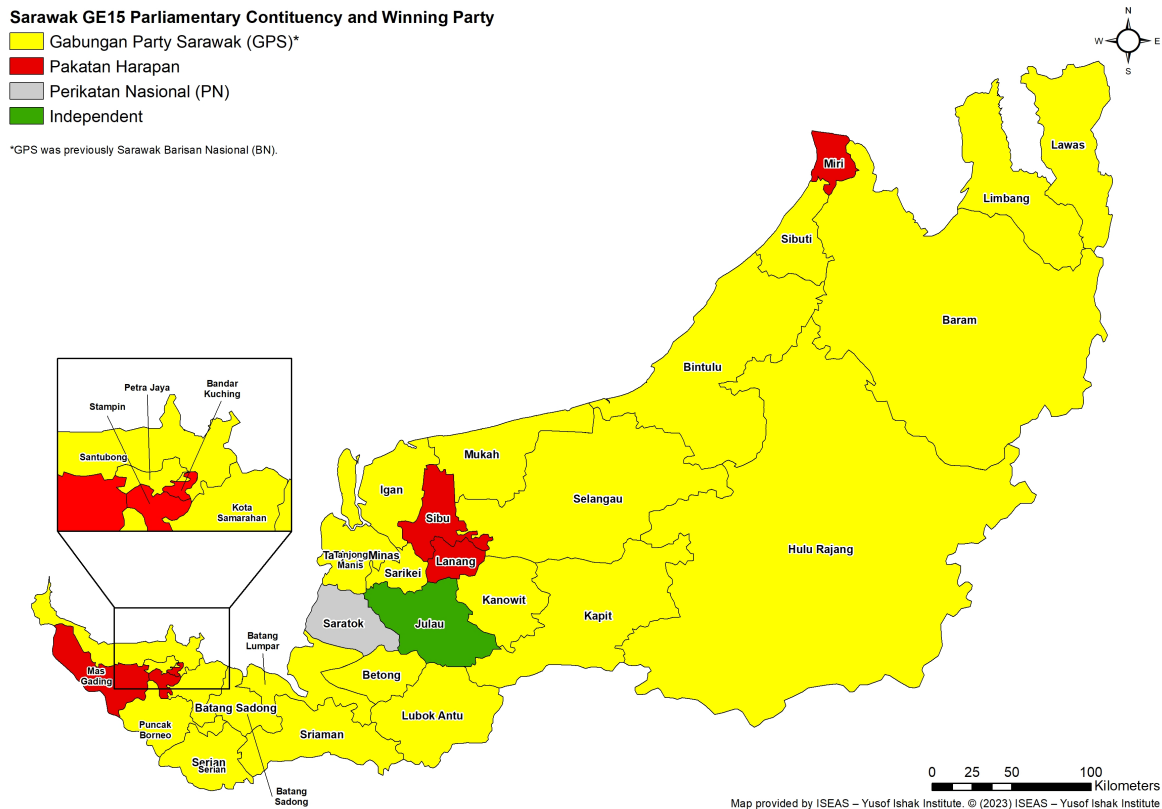
dilute the results in some constituencies, notably in Sri Aman (GPS), Kanowit (GPS), Sibul (DAP Sarawak), Miri (PKR), Lubok Antu (GPS) and Julau (PBM).

Out of the seven marginal seats¹⁶ in this election, three belonged to the PRS component of GPS (Sri Aman, Kanowit, and Lubok), two to DAP Sarawak (Stampin and Sibul), one to Parti Keadilan Rakyat (Miri), and one to PBM (Julau). PRS therefore represents the weakest component in GPS. The entry and victory of the PN candidate, Ali Biju in Saratok, is a worrying concern on one level, but this should be placed in context, in that he was a PKR candidate in GE 14 who switched sides to Bersatu in GE 15. The worry however is that he will continue to remain in Bersatu and allow the party to make further inroads into Sarawak.

Abang Johari has maintained the Sarawak parties' established stance that UMNO not be allowed to not enter the state. In that vein, Bersatu's decision to contest GE 15 in Sarawak also subverted the norm in Sarawakian politics. Not only would Peninsular race and religion politics be entering into the state through Bersatu, which is a breakaway component of UMNO, but these parties would also be contesting directly against GPS. For example, in this election, Ali Biju of Bersatu contested against Giendam Jonathan Tait of GPS. PAS was however visibly absent in Sarawak this time; Hamdan Sani from PAS who contested in GE 14, now contested under the PN banner in Batang Lupar in GE 15 (see Appendix 1). How this can translate into a less visible entry by PAS into Sarawak (through the PN backdoor) is a matter that should be tracked in future state and general elections.

On the surface, the opposition appears not to have lost too much ground; retaining eight seats in GE15 compared to twelve in GE 14 (see Figure 1 below).¹⁷ However, out of these eight seats, four are marginal. Chong Chien Jen (Stampin seat – DAP – indicated in red) only had a marginal victory against his SUPP opponent, Loh Khere Chiang. Oscar Ling (Sibul seat – DAP – indicated in red) also only had a marginal victory against Clarence Ting of SUPP. The Sarawak-based party PSB did not win any seats despite fielding Wong Soon Koh (in Sibul) and Baru Bian (in Lawas), strong candidates in PSB's fold. PSB has lost its earlier footing gained during the Sarawak state election a year earlier. Larry Sng (Julau seat – PBM – indicated in green) also only won marginally, his victory diluted in a four-cornered fight.

FIGURE 1: General Election and Winning Party in Sarawak



POLITICAL JOSTLING IN FEDERAL POLITICS AND A RELUCTANT GPS BRIDE

Abang Johari on 23 October 2022 stated that GPS would support the party that can form a strong federal government to ensure political stability and prosperity for Malaysia.¹⁸ Stability was important, Abang Johari pointed out, and a weak administration would only slow down progress and the implementation of projects. This was witnessed in developments which unfolded after the 2018 general election where there were three changes of governments within one parliamentary term. Abang Johari also stated that GPS would support any prime minister candidate who is fair to Sarawak, one who will understand and protect the state’s rights as enshrined in the Malaysia Agreement 1963. Sarawak was fortunate, he added, in that it does not follow the “culture of Malaya” (specifically Peninsular Malaysia’s culture of race and politics), and it will not allow Malayan culture to come into the state. Thus, Sarawak does not want UMNO and Bersatu to come into the state.¹⁹ The drama unfolded in the five days after polling day.

- 20 November 2022

One day after GE 15, Abang Johari announced that GPS had agreed to form a coalitional Federal Government with PN, BN, and Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS). GPS also agreed to support Muhyiddin Yassin as the 10th Prime Minister.²⁰ The establishment of this coalition government was of course premised on the Federal Constitution, the Sarawak State Constitution, and the sovereignty of laws as enshrined in the Malaysia Agreement 1963 and Inter-Government Committee (IGC) Report.²¹ PN, however, needed more than GPS to form a simple majority of 112, as opposed to PH which just needed 30 seats from any party. In retrospect, this announcement by GPS was made on the understanding that BN would also support the PN coalition.

On the same day (20 November), Zahid Hamidi came out to say that BN had not made a decision and had yet to hold any formal talks with GPS on forming a coalition. There had also been no negotiations with PN which could lead to “any understanding on forming a federal government with the coalition.”²²

- 21 November 2022

BN subsequently held separate meetings with PN and PH. PN did not agree in writing to conditions laid down by BN, including not identifying the unity government to the name of a particular party, the formation of the cabinet, the issue of Islam, Malays and Bumiputera, the royal institution, and the Malay language.²³ PN stated that they were ready to consider the points brought forward by BN while PH agreed to these conditions by BN in writing. PN also rejected the Agong’s suggestion to form a unity government with PH. Muhyiddin also claimed that he had the support of 10 MPs from BN to support his PN government, which Zahid likened to treason as the decision of these 10 MPs was not in line with the party’s stance.

The decision for BN to join the unity government headed by PH, was also in line with the Agong’s decree to form a unity government, and was also not unilaterally made by Zahid Hamidi, as UMNO Supreme Council had agreed to back Anwar as the Prime Minister.²⁴ In this instance, BN with its 30 seats, effectively became kingmaker in the formation of the Unity Government. Under these fluid circumstances, GPS then came out again to say that it would wait before deciding on who to partner to form a coalition government.²⁵ It was prudent for GPS to keep out of the political impasse in Malaysia as BN was still undecided on PN or PH as its coalition partner. GPS was still inclined to support Muhyiddin as the new Prime Minister.

- 23 November 2022

On 23 November, GPS was advised by the Agong to consider forming a unity government to end this political crisis and break the deadlock, as PN had refused to join PH to form a unity government. Senior Vice-President of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) Fadillah Yusof who represented GPS for an audience with the King, then conveyed this message to GPS Chairman Abang Johari.²⁶

- 24 November 2022

On 24 November 2022, one day after the meeting Fadillah Yusof had with the Agong, GPS Chairman, Abang Johari, announced that GPS had accepted the Agong's advice on the formation of a unity government at the Federal Level, with Anwar as the 10th Prime Minister.²⁷ The open apology made personally during a visit by DAP Secretary-General Anthony Loke to the residence of Abang Johari on 24 November 2022 may have worked towards GPS softening its stance towards PH. Following Loke, DAP Chairman, Lim Guan Eng also offered his apology via Facebook.²⁸ Both apologies were accepted by GPS but DAP Sarawak nevertheless remains an opposition party in the state assembly.²⁹ Indeed the DAP element in PH was a strong deterrent for GPS to support the unity government under Anwar. It is also understood unofficially that GPS would only support the unity government if no Cabinet positions were given to MPs in DAP Sarawak.³⁰ The years of being in parties that opposed one another in Sarawak has made it very "complicated" for both parties to now be in coalition in the unity government. This will remain an important issue that needs to be closely followed in the months ahead.

Naturally, mixed feelings were expressed in Sarawak on the proposed move by Abang Johari to join PN. This came from both local social activists and politicians.³¹ Abang Johari's decision to support PN which only had 73 seats as opposed to PH which had 82 seats ran contrary to the principles of majoritarian democracy, according to Denis Hang Bilang. Reservations were also expressed by state assemblyperson and PSB secretary-general Baru Bian on the proposal by GPS to form a coalition with PN (and PAS). Sarawak has a multiracial and multi-religious society which has existed harmoniously and which has to be preserved.³² The ethnic composition of Sarawak is also distinct from West Malaysia as only 30 percent of the population are Muslim, while 44 percent are Christian.³³ Another social activist however felt that Abang Johari's decision to support PN was not an individual but a unanimous decision by the four component parties in GPS. GPS as a party wanted to support a strong and stable coalition government, which it felt only PN could deliver. Elsewhere, concerns were also expressed by several retired SUPP politicians on the proposed coalition government with PN (and PAS), as sentiments against PAS in Sarawak are very negative.³⁴ Moving into digital space, there were three online petitions launched on Change.Org to persuade GPS to reject PN and particularly PAS.³⁵ These three petitions accounted for more than 50,000 signatures.

Currently, a unity government is in place comprising Pakatan Harapan (82 seats), Barisan Nasional (30 seats), Gabungan Parti Sarawak (23 seats), Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (6 seats), Warisan (3 seats), Parti Bangsa Malaysia (1 seat), Social Democratic Harmony Party (2 seats), and an independent backer from the Kudat Constituency in Sabah (1 seat).

NEW DYNAMICS UNDER ANWAR'S UNITY GOVERNMENT

At the federal level, GPS is in the unity government with DAP Sarawak. At the state level, however, DAP Sarawak remains in the opposition. There is also no formal cooperation inked between GPS and DAP Sarawak under this unity government structure. However, it is understood that at the state assembly level, DAP Sarawak and PH would still take on the task

of monitoring affairs of the state.³⁶ How DAP Sarawak adopts a more conciliatory approach towards GPS at the parliamentary level but remain in the opposition at state assembly meetings will be an interested development to observe. Any untoward or unreasonable behaviour towards GPS at the state level may strain the support given by GPS to the unity government at the parliamentary level. From the stance of GPS, Fadillah Yusof³⁷ also took pains to remind Sarawakians that GPS is part of the unity government and is not part of the PH government.³⁸ He also said that GPS has the right to pull its support from the national unity government if state rights were challenged, though it recognises the current support given by Prime Minister Anwar in resolving outstanding issues in the Malaysia Agreement 1963. Anwar has also given the full mandate to Fadillah Yusof to sort out the outstanding claims under this agreement.³⁹ GPS also only supported this move because it was vital to have a strong and stable national administration, especially now with the appointment to many ministerial and deputy ministerial positions of Sarawakians and GPS in particular.

This time around, GPS managed to secure five ministerial and six deputy ministerial positions under the unity government, in addition to Fadillah Yusof being appointed a Deputy Prime Minister (see Table 2 below). GPS thus has two more positions than it had in Ismail Sabri's cabinet. Then, GPS only had four ministerial and five deputy ministerial positions. Under the Muhyiddin Yasin cabinet, the party's position was even weaker. GPS had only four ministerial and four deputy ministerial positions then.

TABLE 2: Ministerial and Deputy Ministerial Cabinet Positions for GPS and its Component Parties

	Component Party/Constituency	Position
Fadillah Yusof	GPS – PBB – Petra Jaya	Deputy Prime Minister and also Minister of Plantation and Commodities
Alexander Nanta Linggi	GPS – PBB – Kapit	Minister of Works
Nancy Shukri	GPS – PBB – Santubong	Minister of Women, Family and Community Development
Tiong King Sing	GPS – PDP – Bintulu	Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture
Aaron Ago Dagang	GPS – PRS – Kanowit	Minister of National Unity
Wilson Ugak Kumbong	GPS – PRS – Hulu Rajang	Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department
Hanifah Hajar Taib	GPS – PBB – Mukah	Deputy Minister of Economy
Habibillah	GPS – PBB – Limbang	Deputy Minister of Transport
Lukanisman Awang Sauni	GPS – PBB – Sibuti	Deputy Minister of Health
Rubiah Wang	GPS – PBB – Kota Samarahan	Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development
Huang Tiong Sii	GPS – SUPP – Sarikei	Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change

Currently, under the unity government, many benefits are flowing to the state. Sarawak is now allowed to use English along with Bahasa Malaysia as its official language.⁴⁰ The unity

government has also empowered both the Sabah and Sarawak state governments to directly manage federally-funded projects worth RM 50 million and below. This would mean that around 70 percent of projects in Sarawak can be fully managed and decided over without referral to the federal government.⁴¹ Projects within this range would include schools, clinics, fire stations and other rural projects. The return of autonomy in education and health has already also been agreed to in principle with the details currently being worked out by the federal government.⁴² In 2023, Sarawak would also be receiving an increased annual special grant of RM 300 million (previously this only amounted to RM 16 million), and Sabah would be receiving RM 260 million as opposed to RM 26 million previously (Article 122D of the Federal Constitution). It was also reported that a clearer formula will be finalised to calculate the amount of these special grants.⁴³

CONCLUSION: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

Post GE 15, Sarawak's position in federal politics has been strengthened by the appointment of the unity government by Malaysia's Agong. Abang Johari is now standing on much firmer ground, especially after the victories in SSE 2021 and in this election. A present worry for GPS is PN's further entry into Sarawak. Sarawak has already been gaining visible benefits from the unity government, for example, larger funding and greater autonomy in managing projects below RM 50 million. It will be interesting to track what further benefits will come to the state and how federal-state dynamics will evolve to benefit the state and raise its investment potential for outside investors.

**Appendix 1: Muslim Bumiputera (Malay/Melanau) majority seats won by GPS
(Revised)**

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Santubong (Rural) (Three Cornered) 66.3%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 1%, Bumiputera Muslim: 81% , Chinese: 8%	GPS-PBB Nancy Shukri, new (84%)	43,739	PH- AMANA H Mohd Zain Peli IND Affendi Jeman	5,058 3,012	38,861
Petra Jaya (Urban) (Three Cornered) 63.8%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 12%, Bumiputera Muslim: 74% , Chinese: 13%	GPS-PBB Fadillah Yusof, incumbent (79%)	54,745	PH-PKR Sofian Julaihi SEDAR Othman Abdillah	13,382 1,350	41363
Kota Samarahan (Rural) 68.4%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 25%, Muslim Bumiputera : 62% , Chinese: 11%	GPS-PBB Rubiah Wang, incumbent (77%)	42,278	PH- AMANA H Abang Halil	12,833	29,445
Batang Sadong (Rural) 70.2%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 24%, Muslim Bumiputera : 70% , Chinese: 5%	GPS-PBB Rodiyah Sapiee, new (83%)	18,668	PH- AMANA H	3,775	14893
Batang Lupar (Rural) (Three Cornered) 65.3%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 30%, Muslim Bumiputera : 67% , Chinese: 3%	GPS-PBB Mohamad Shafizan Kepli, new (71%)	19,627	PN Hamdan Sani PH- AMANA H Wel@ Maxwel Rojis	5,164 2,768	14,460
Sri Aman (Rural) (Four Cornered) 64.7%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 10%, Muslim Bumiputera	GPS-PRS Doris Sophia Anak Brodi (44%)	14,131	PSB Wilson Entabang IND	10,092 5,673	4039

<i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	: 72% , Chinese: 17%			Masir Kujat PH-PKR Naga Libau @ Tay Wei Wei	2,021	
Igan (Rural) 61.1%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 35%, Muslim Bumiputera : 60% Chinese: 6%	GPS-PBB Ahmad Johnie Zawasi, incumbent (9 3%)	10,538	PH- AMANAH Hud Andri	1,162	9,376

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 2: GPS Parliamentary Seats - Non- Muslim Bumiputera (Dayak)

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Puncak Borneo (Previously known as Mambong) (Rural) (Three Cornered) 65.1%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 68% , Muslim Bumiputera: 5%, Chinese: 26%	GPS - PBB Willie Mongin (58%)	29,457	PH - PKR Diog Dios PSB Iana Akam	16,119 5,578	13,338
Serian (Rural) (Four Cornered) 62.2%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 81% , Muslim Bumiputera: 8%, Chinese: 10%	GPS-SUPP Richard Riot Jaem, incumbent (57%)	22,876	IND Alim Impira PH-DAP Learyy Jabul PSB Elsiy Tingang	6,179 5,289 5,630	16,697
Lubok Antu (Four Cornered) Marginal (Rural) 67.4% <i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 90% , Muslim Bumiputera: 2%, Chinese: 8%	GPS-PRS Roy Angau Gingkoi (34%)	6,644	PSB Johnichal Rayong Ngipa PN Jugah Muyang PH-PKR Langga Lias	6,544 5,360 746	100

Betong (Rural) (Three Cornered) 65.3%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 55%, Muslim Bumiputera: 38%, Chinese: 7%	GPS-PBB Richard Rapu (62%)	16,479	PH-PKR Patrick Kamis @ HJ Kameng IND Hasbie Satar	5,177 5,057	11,302
Tanjong Manis (Rural) 58.9%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 69%, Muslim Bumiputera: 26%, Chinese: 5%	GPS-PBB Yusuf Abd Wahab (86 %)	16,474	PH- AMANA H Zainab Suhaili	2,566	13,908
Kanowit (Rural) (Five Cornered) 59.4% <i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 86%, Muslim Bumiputera: 2%, Chinese: 12%	GPS-PRS Ago Dagang, incumbent, (41%)	7,411	PH-PKR Joseph Nymabong IND Michael Anak Lias IND George Chen IND Elli Luhut	7,175 2,289 741 427	236
Mukah (Rural) 60%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 84%, Muslim Bumiputera: 7%, Chinese: 9%	GPS-PBB Hanifah Hajar Taib, incumbent (78%)	21,733	PH-PKR Abdul Jalil	6,047	15,686
Selangau (Rural) (Three Cornered) 64%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 94%, Muslim Bumiputera: 1%, Chinese: 3%	GPS-PRS Edwin Banta (55%)	16,078	PH-PKR Umpang Sabang IND Henry Joseph Usau	11,092 1,626	486
Kapit (Rural) (Three Cornered) 49.9%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 87%, Muslim Bumiputera: 3%, Chinese: 9%	GPS-PBB Alexander Nanta Linggi, incumbent (75%)	16,522	PH-PKR Pangkas Unggang PBDS Robert Saweng	4,120 1,357	12,402

Hulu Rajang (Rural) 54.8%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 95%, Muslim Bumiputera: 1%, Chinese: 2%	GPS-PRS Wilson Ugak Anak Kumbong, incumbent (66%)	15,456	PH-PKR Abun Sui Anyit	7,951	6,315
Bintulu (Semi Urban) (Three Cornered) 62.7%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 60%, Muslim Bumiputera: 11%, Chinese: 29%	GPS-PDP Tiong King Sing, incumbent (62%)	43,455	PH-DAP Chiew Chan Yew PN Duke Janteng	21,287 5,650	22,168
Baram (Rural) (Three Cornered) 50.8%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 86%, Muslim Bumiputera: 5%, Chinese: 8%	GPS-PDP Anyi Ngau, incumbent (66%)	18,399	PH-PKR Roland Egan IND Wilfred Entika	11,060 324	1,990
Sibuti (Three Cornered) (Rural) 58.7%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 54%, Muslim Bumiputera : 24%, Chinese: 22%	GPS-PBB Lukanisman Awang Sauni (65%)	22,150	PH-PKR Zulhaidah Suboh PBDS Zulhaidah Suboh	10,405 1,361	11,745
Limbang (Rural) 47.9%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 53%, Muslim Bumiputera : 28%, Chinese: 18%	GPS-PBB Hasbi Habibollah, incumbent (75%)	14,897	PH-PKR Racha Balang	4,899	7,187

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 3: GPS Parliamentary Seats – Mixed - Muslim Bumiputera/Non-Muslim Bumiputera

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Lawas (Three Cornered) (Rural) 55%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 49%, Muslim Bumiputera : 41%, Chinese: 10%	GPS-PBB Henry Sum Agong, incumbent (62%)	11,361	PSB Baru Bian PH-PKR Japar Suyut	5,684 1,163	5677

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 4: GPS Parliamentary Seats – Chinese

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Sarikei (Three Cornered) (Semi Urban) 67.3%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 32%, Muslim Bumiputera: 5%, Chinese: 63%	GPS SUPP Huang Tiong Sii (55%)	- 20,080	PH-DAP Roderick Wong Siew Lead	16,383	3,697

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition only available for 2018.

Appendix 5: Opposition PH – DAP Parliamentary Seats – Non-Muslim Bumiputera

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Mas Gading (Rural) (Three Cornered) 67.6%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 75%, Muslim Bumiputera: 5%, Chinese: 18%	PH-DAP Mordi Bimol (55%)	17,274	GPS-PDP Lidang Disen PBK Ryan Sim Min Leong	11,794 2,311	5,480

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 6: Opposition PH – DAP Parliamentary Seats – Chinese

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Bandar Kuching (Urban) (Three Cornered)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 6%, Muslim Bumiputera: 4%,	PH-DAP Kelvin Yii Lee Wuen, incumbent, (71%)	45,353	BN-SUPP Tay Tze Kok PSB	16,462 1,760	28,891

58.4%	Chinese: 89%			Voon Lee Shan		
Stampin (Urban) (Three Cornered) 61.6% <i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 18%, Muslim Bumiputera: 16%, Chinese: 64%	PH-DAP Chong Chieng Jen (53%)	39,310	BN-SUPP Loh Khere Chiang PSB Lue Cheng Hing	32,152 2,291	7,158
Lanang (Rural) (Four Cornered) 61.8%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 27%, Muslim Bumiputera: 4%, Chinese: 69%	PH-DAP Alice Lau Kiong Yieng, incumbent (57%)	30,120	GPS - SUPP Wong Ching Yong PSB Priscilla Lau IND Wong Ting Kiong	18576 3,663 587	11,544
Sibu (Semi Rural) (Three Cornered) 63.7% <i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 25%, Muslim Bumiputera: 12%, Chinese: 63%	PH-DAP Oscar Ling Chai Yew (47%), incumbent	31,287	GPS - SUPP Clarence Ting Ing PSB Wong Soon Koh	23,527 11,128	7,760

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 7: Opposition PN Parliamentary Seats – Bumiputera Non-Muslim

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Saratok (Rural) (Three Cornered) 70.3%	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 57% , Muslim Bumiputera: 36%, Chinese: 6%	PN Ali Biju, incumbent (62%)	19,223	GPS – PDP Giendam Jonathan Tait PH-PKR Ibil Jaya	10,397 1,221	8,826

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 8: Opposition PH – PKR Parliamentary Seats – Chinese

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Miri (Semi Urban) 55.2% <i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera: 28%, Muslim Bumiputera: 16%, Chinese: 55%	PH-PKR Chiew Choon Man (51%)	39,549	GPS-SUPP Jeffrey Phang PSB Lawrence Lai	33,390 5,209	6,159

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

Appendix 9: Opposition Independent Seats – Bumiputera Non-Muslim

Constituency/ Turnout	Ethnic Composition	Party	Votes	Opponent(s)	Votes	Majority
Julau (Rural) (Four Cornered) 65.8% <i>Marginal</i> (54 percent and less)	Non-Muslim Bumiputera : 93%, Muslim Bumiputera: 1%, Chinese: 5%	PBM Larry Sng Wei Shien (41%)	9,159	BN-PRS Joseph Salang Gandum IND Elly Lawai Ngalai PSB Susan George	7,819 5,224 335	1,340

Source: Undi.Info, The Borneo Post, GE 15 Sarawak Results. Data on ethnic composition here using 2018 and earlier data.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Sheraton Move saw the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government after 22 months, to be replaced by Perikatan Nasional (PN) led by Bersatu and Muhyiddin Yasin. Facing criticism for betraying the people’s mandate of the 2018 general election and intense UMNO opposition to his leadership, Muhyiddin then resigned on August 2021. After that, Ismail Sabri was appointed as the next prime minister on 21 August 2021. Neither PH, PN nor Barisan Nasional (BN) had fully delivered on their promises during their terms in power. See “Five hot-button issues likely to feature during Malaysia’s GE15 campaigning”, CNA, 27 October 2022,

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/malaysia-election-ge15-issues-cost-living-corruption-3028216>. Accessed 22 Janury 2023.

² Fieldwork interviews from 8 to 13 November 2022.

³ “Low turnout expected due to political fatigue”, New Sarawak Tribune, 20 October 2022, <https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/low-turnout-expected-due-to-political-fatigue/>. Accessed 25 November 2022. Fieldwork interviews from 8 to 13 November 2022.

⁴ Perikatan Nasional is made up of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) and Parti Gerakan Malaysia; Pakatan Harapan comprises Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR),

Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) and Malaysia United Democratic Alliance (Muda), Barisan Nasional (BN) is made up of Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and BN allies.

⁵ The Parti Se-Islam Malaysia (PAS) factor in PN generated a lot of concern which worked against an alliance with PN.

⁶ GPS also secured the biggest chunk of the popular vote with 61.3 percent out of the ballots cast. (The popular vote was however slightly more at 62.19 percent in the 2016 Sarawak state election).

⁷ This office was known as Chief Minister of Sarawak before an amendment to the state constitution regarding the matter was successfully passed on 15 February 2022, renaming the post to “Premier” effective 1 March 2022.

⁸ In GE 14, GPS won 19 out of 31 seats.

⁹ “Sarawak election: 60.67 pct voter turnout – EC”, The Borneo Post Online, 19 December 2021, <https://www.theborneopost.com/2021/12/19/sarawak-election-60-67-pct-voter-turnout-ec/>. Accessed 20 December 2021.

¹⁰ “Sarawak polls feature many firsts, but no shocks anticipated”, The Straits Times, 5 December 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/sarawak-polls-features-many-firsts-but-no-shocks-anticipated>. Accessed 6 December 2021.

¹¹ Calculated from Appendices 1 to 9 of this paper.

¹² “Sarawak has 1.9 million voters, a 59pc increase from GE14”, The New Straits Times, 29 October 2022, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/10/844742/sarawak-has-19-million-voters-59pc-increase-ge14>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

¹³ “Five hot-button issues likely to feature during Malaysia’s GE15 campaigning”, CNA, 27 October 2022, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ According to the Election Commission’s data, there was an increase of 59.14 percent or 675,077 people on Sarawak’s electorate roll eligible to vote in GE 15 but there was decrease in turnout compared to past years.

¹⁵ Also, the opposition had often relied mostly on non-partisan voters who had the tendency to only turn up if they believed that their vote would make a difference or when they were sufficiently fired up by pressing federal issues. Such pressing issues were less prominent in this election.

¹⁶ Seats with 54 percent and less of total votes.

¹⁷ Bandar Kuching, Stampin, Mas Gading, Sibu, Julau, Lanang, Miri, and Saratok.

¹⁸ “Sarawak Premier: GPS supports strong, stable federal govt”, New Straits Times, 23 October 2022, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2022/10/843143/sarawak-premier-gps-supports-strong-stable-federal-govt>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

¹⁹ “GPS says would back any PM candidate who treats Sarawak fairly”, The Malay Mail, 12 November 2022, <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/11/12/gps-says-would-back-any-pm-candidate-who-treats-sarawak-fairly/39204>. Accessed 14 January 2023. This was also supported by Sim Kui Hian, see “GPS will not sell Sarawak off on elections night, says Dr Sim”, Dayak Daily, 9 November 2022, <https://dayakdaily.com/gps-will-not-sell-sarawak-off-on-election-night-says-dr-sim/>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

²⁰ “Abang Johari: GPS agrees to form govt with Perikatan, BN, GRS”, The Malay Mail, 20 November 2022, <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/11/20/abang-johari-gps-agrees-to-form-govt-with-perikatan-bn-grs/40891>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

²¹ Ibid. Sarawakian rights will continue to be protected (religious freedom and the practice of customs and cultures) the fight for autonomy in education and health will continue.

²² “Zahid: BN never agreed to form federal govt with GPS, PN”, New Straits Times, 20 November 2022, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2022/11/853099/zahid-bn-never-agreed-form-federal-govt-gps-pn>. Accessed 15 January 2022.

²³ “Zahid denies making unilateral decision for BN to join unity govt”, New Straits Times, 13 January 2023, <https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/groove/2023/01/869851/zahid-denies-making-unilateral-decision-bn-join-unity-govt>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “PDP’s Tiong says GPS waiting for BN to choose between Perikatan, Pakatan before deciding on partner”, The Malay Mail, 21 November 2022,

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²⁶ “Agong advises GPS to consider formation of unity government”, The Edge Markets, 23 November 2022, <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/king-asked-gps-consider-forming-unity-govt-says-fadillah-yusof>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

²⁷ “GPS accepts Agong’s decision on formation of unity government”, The Borneo Post Online, 24 November 2022, <https://www.theborneopost.com/2022/11/24/gps-accepts-agongs-decision-on-formation-of-unity-government/>. Accessed 8 January 2023.

²⁸ “Premier: DAP’s apology to S’wak proves GPS right all along”, The Borneo Post Online, 24 November 2022, <https://www.theborneopost.com/2022/11/24/premier-daps-apology-to-swak-proves-gps-right-all-along/>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “GPS leverage keeps Sarawak DAP out in the cold”, FMT, 10 December 2022,

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/12/10/gps-leverage-keeps-sarawak-dap-out-in-the-cold/>. Accessed 7 January 2023. James Chin is also cited in this article.

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³² “Reject alliance with Perikatan to preserve harmony in Sarawak, opposition party leader tells state MPs”, The Malay Mail, 21 November 2022,

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³³ Sarawak’s population comprised of 75.3 percent Bumiputera, 24 percent Chinese, and less than 1 percent Indian. The Bumiputera population is further divided into two large subcategories. 44 percent are Christian, comprised largely of Ibans and Bidayus, and only 30 percent of the whole population are Muslim, comprised of Malays and Melanaus.

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³⁵ “Online petitions launched to persuade GPS to reject PN, PAS”, The Borneo Post Online, 23

November 2022, <https://www.theborneopost.com/2022/11/23/online-petitions-launched-to-persuade-gps-to-reject-pn-pas/>. Accessed 14 January 2023.

³⁶ “Questions on GPS-PH partnership ahead of Sarawak polls”, 18 December 2022, Malaysia Now,

<https://www.malaysianow.com/news/2022/12/18/questions-on-gps-ph-partnership-ahead-of-sarawak-polls>. Accessed 7 January 2022, attributes this view to James Chin of the University of Tasmania.

³⁷ Fadillah is Deputy Prime Minister and also Minister of Plantation and Commodities of the present unity government. Fadillah Yusof is Member of Parliament (MP) for Petra Jaya in Sarawak. In the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), Abang Johari is the President of PBB while Fadillah Yusof is one of the Vice-Presidents. Generally, any views expressed by Fadillah Yusof at the federal level, would only be communicated after discussion with the other PBB seniors and Abang Johari. Like other past Chief Ministers, Abang Johari has never contested as a MP nor has he indicated interest to have a cabinet position at the federal level. He has always focussed his energy on protecting Sarawak’s rights, preserving its racial and religious harmony, and importantly charting its future development paths.

³⁸ “Fadillah: GPS part of unity govt, not PH”, 6 January 2023, The Borneo Post Online”,

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