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Can Bersatu Go It Alone?

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Facebook Page of the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia at <https://www.facebook.com/pribumibersatuofficial/photos>. Accessed 3 March 2024.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is the aim of this article to assess Bersatu's chances of going it alone in the event that Perikatan Nasional (PN) implodes.
- Unlike its current coalition partner Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), Bersatu has yet to compete on its own and therefore does not have a track record to which it can refer.
- At the moment, Bersatu is dependent on PAS's grassroots machinery to mobilize its supporters, a privilege it will have to do without if it goes solo.
- The competition for Malay voters, who are Bersatu's natural constituency, will be stiff due to a crowded playing field comprising other Malay parties such as UMNO, PAS and Amanah.
- Bersatu's best chance lies in winning seats that used to be UMNO strongholds but are now under PN; many Malays voted for PN because of their disgust with UMNO, not because they are ideologically-committed PAS supporters.
- For this to happen, Bersatu must distinguish itself from UMNO by showing that it is a better guardian of Malay and Islamic interests, developing a strong and extensive grassroots network, and promoting a young crop of leaders within the party.

INTRODUCTION

In the 2022 general election, the Perikatan Nasional (PN), which comprised of Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), Bersatu and Gerakan, posted a strong showing by winning 74 seats nationwide, placing it in a prime position to form the government. The uneasy partnership formed between other coalitions, mainly Pakatan Harapan (PH) and Barisan Nasional (BN), eventually denied PN the opportunity.

However, PN did grow from strength to strength, sweeping 146 of 162 Malay-majority seats (90 percent) in the 2023 six state elections. Its stellar electoral performance came at great expense to UMNO, which saw many of its long-time supporters voting for PN. New and young Malay voters also flocked to PN in droves, mainly inspired by PN's effective messaging on TikTok. Simply put, the majority of Malay voters are presently with PN.

PAS came out as the biggest winner in the recent elections, now having 43 seats in parliament, with 31 seats being held by its partner, Bersatu. The seat haul has made PAS the largest party in parliament. In the 2023 state elections held in six states, 105 of the 146 seats (72 percent) won by PN went to PAS.

In other words, the balance of power within PN strongly tilts towards PAS. There is a strong perception that PAS is playing the role of a big brother in PN with Bersatu being its sidekick (Gerakan is negligible as the token non-Malay-Muslim representative in PN holding a single state seat).¹ The power imbalance has certainly emboldened PAS to become more assertive within PN, primarily by allocating most state government positions in PN-governed states to PAS state assemblypersons, much to the consternation of its partner, Bersatu (see Table 1).² The defection of several Bersatu MPs who have publicly expressed support for Anwar Ibrahim's government has further driven a wedge into the opening rift within PN.³

Though PN is in no danger of collapsing anytime soon, it does beg the question of what is the way forward for the coalition and its component parties? In the case of PAS, the party has contested on its own for much of its existence and as such its past electoral record as a solo contender is readily available for analysis. The same cannot be said for Bersatu. Since its founding in 2016, it has always competed as part of a coalition and never on its own. Before the infamous Sheraton Move in late February 2020, Bersatu was part of the PH coalition, and afterwards it joined the PN coalition. Not even a full year into being part of the PH government, Bersatu was already having serious discussions about leaving the coalition, which it did less than a year later.⁴ Should tensions within PN escalate beyond repair and Bersatu decides to leave PN to go it alone, what are its chances of being electorally competitive? The overarching aim of this article is to assess Bersatu's electoral prospect as a solo party should PN break up, a situation that remains in the realm of possibility.

Table 1: Composition of state exco in PN-governed states (share of total in brackets)

	State assembly seats			Executive council		
	PAS	Bersatu	Gerakan	PAS	Bersatu	Gerakan
Kelantan	43	0	0	10 (91%)	1 (9%)	
Terengganu	27	5	0	10 (91%)	1 (9%)	
Kedah	21	11	1	7 (64%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)
Perlis	9	5	0	5 (63%)	3 (37%)	

ASSESSING PAS'S ELECTORAL STRENGTH OUTSIDE ITS STRONGHOLDS

To have a clear idea of Bersatu's current electoral viability as a solo contender, we should first look at its dominant partner in PN, namely PAS. Historically PAS has not been successful when contesting on its own outside its north and northeast bastions. PAS's appeal to voters from other parts of peninsular Malaysia primarily comes from association with coalition partners.

Being in a coalition with the Chinese-dominated DAP and the urban-based PKR helped to soften PAS's image in the eyes of non-Muslim and moderate Malay voters. After Pakatan Rakyat broke up in 2015, however, PAS turned away from the path of moderation and inclusivity to take a rigid ethnoreligious stance, which it still maintains today. Its current president, Hadi Awang, has since consolidated his control of the party, stamping out internal dissent and steering the party to the far-right.⁵

In the 2018 general election, PAS was technically part of a nominal coalition, Gagasan Sejahtera, but contested mainly on its own to win 18 seats in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah (it also managed to wrest Terengganu state government away from BN). Simply put, there is a limit to how much PAS can achieve as a solo competitor. In the 2022 general election, PAS surprised everyone by winning 43 parliamentary seats, more than doubling its gain in 2018. Many Malays who had not supported PAS in the past voted for PAS candidates competing under the PN logo; this propelled PAS to overachieve.

In the 2022 general election, PN campaigned using two logos: in the PAS strongholds of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah, it used PAS's logo during the two-week campaign and on the ballot paper; in other parts of peninsular Malaysia, PN used its own logo. Using PAS's logo in those three states makes sense since it is well recognized by voters due to the party's deep roots there.

Interestingly, many PAS candidates outside of these three states who competed under PN's logo, also won their seats, most interestingly in areas where PAS had not done well in the past such as Tangga Batu and Jasin in Melaka. Why did these PAS candidates perform well in constituencies traditionally not known to be friendly to PAS? Was it because voters were not aware that these PN candidates were from PAS due to them using PN's logo? Or did voters see PAS, by way of PN, as a more viable choice than UMNO? PAS, we must remember, has always benefitted electorally whenever there is a crisis within UMNO, such as during the 1999 general election (Anwar Ibrahim's sacking and imprisonment) and the 2018 general election (Najib

Razak's 1MDB financial scandal). Even so, PAS still struggled to expand beyond its north and northeast strongholds on its own. Only when it teamed up with DAP and PKR as part of the Pakatan Rakyat coalition (2008-2015) did PAS finally gain a foothold in states such as Selangor, Penang, and Perak. When it contested on its own in 2018, PAS went back to being a regional party despite winning a respectable number of seats.

One of PN's assets in GE15 was the deployment of PAS's formidable grassroots machinery, for which the party is well known. PAS provided the manpower that drove PN's campaign, from volunteers at *ceramah* venues, to its Unit Amal manning security and traffic, and to canvassers who knocked on every door and called every registered voter to vote. Bersatu being a young party was unable to match PAS's decades-long experience of grassroots work and therefore was completely dependent on PAS for support. This was evident in the GE15 and the six state elections; programmes by Bersatu candidates were observably handled mostly by PAS members. If PN implodes, Bersatu will no longer be able to lean on PAS's grassroots machinery. This is perhaps the biggest challenge that Bersatu faces if it opts to go it alone.

Being a much younger party, Bersatu is simply unable to match PAS's well-oiled political machinery, ideologically-committed members and deep-rootedness in society as a seven decade-old movement. Now that Bersatu is part of the opposition, it has become difficult for it to grow the war chest needed to mobilize its grassroots machinery. Adding insult to injury, its bank accounts have been frozen and seized by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) for investigative purposes.⁶ PAS winning seats beyond its usual strongholds in GE15 has further widened the gap between the two parties. Having 43 seats has made it the biggest party in parliament, emboldening the party to exert a more muscular role within the PN coalition.

Bersatu has denied that there is friction between the party and PAS by reiterating that its secretary general, Hamzah Zainuddin, remains the opposition leader.⁷ This is a response to rumours that PAS wants its rising political star, Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar, the current Chief Minister of Terengganu and newly elected MP of Kemaman, to lead PN instead. For now, PAS has not aggressively lobbied for Ahmad Samsuri to replace Hamzah Zainuddin as the leader of PN, but if PAS makes such a move, it might lead to an irreparable rupture within PN. The possibility that PN will break up and its component parties will go their separate ways looms on the horizon. This is an eventuality that Bersatu needs to brace itself for.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Malaysia's post-independence history is replete with instances of Malay-Islamic splinter parties joining other coalitions or competing alone. PAS was established by ulama (religious scholars) in 1952, who broke with UMNO for the latter not being Islamic enough for them. Soon after, another split in UMNO took place in 1953 when its founder, Onn Jaafar, was unhappy with the party's increasingly racial orientation and left to form the multi-ethnic Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), which was supplanted a year later by Parti Negara.⁸

In 1987, intense leadership rivalry between Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Mahathir Mohamad led to the creation of Semangat 46, founded by the former and his supporters. Semangat 46 won 8 parliamentary seats in the 1990 general elections when it joined forces

with two politically disparate coalitions at the same time: Gagasan Rakyat with DAP and labour-based Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM); and Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah with PAS. The crown of its 1990 electoral achievement was winning the Kelantan state government with PAS. Semangat 46 soon became stridently Malay-centric as it competed with UMNO for Malay support, at the expense of severing its relationship with DAP and PRM. Semangat 46's support base was primarily limited to Kelantan, which led to uneasy and oftentimes tense power-sharing with the more dominant PAS. By 1996, Semangat 46 had lost steam and ultimately collapsed.⁹

Two decades later, in 2016, Bersatu was created by former UMNO leaders who did not agree with the direction the party was taking amid Najib Razak's 1MDB scandal. Bersatu realized early on that for it to have any chance of being electorally competitive it had to team up with the then-opposition PH, instead of running solo. The strategy was to engage UMNO in Malay-majority areas in a straight contest. Bersatu competed in 52 seats but only managed to win 13 of them, a subpar performance and a testament that UMNO was still a formidable force despite a discernible shift of Malay votes to PH.¹⁰

Amanah, which split from PAS in 2015 as PAS turned more hardline, has found mixed success competing as a component party of Pakatan Harapan. Amanah has not been able to siphon away PAS supporters and has negligible presence in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah. However, being part of PH has provided Amanah with the opportunity to compete and win in Malay-majority constituencies in other regions of peninsular Malaysia. Riding on the popularity of PH in 2018, Amanah managed to gain 11 parliamentary seats, which led to 10 cabinet positions in the PH government (2018-2020). In the 2022 general election, Amanah's share of parliamentary seats dropped to 8, despite contesting in more constituencies.

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS OF BERSATU GOING IT ALONE

Bersatu was founded, among others, by the former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, his son Mukhriz Mahathir and the former Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, all known stalwarts of Malay nationalism. All but one of Bersatu founding members were from UMNO, this being Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman, currently the MP of Muar and one of the founders of the party MUDA. As such, Bersatu is naturally competitive in areas where Malays comprise more than two-third majority, areas where UMNO had long been dominant.

Unfortunately for Bersatu, the political field in these Malay-majority areas are crowded with other parties. Bersatu's former PN partner PAS also contests in these areas. From the Unity Government side, Bersatu will have to face either UMNO, Amanah or to a lesser extent, PKR. In other words, the contests in GE16 will most likely be three-way cases if Bersatu decides to leave PN (see Table 2).

Similar three-way dynamics in Malay majority areas were evident in GE14 where Bersatu, which contested under PH logo, faced off with BN-UMNO and PAS. Bersatu benefitted from the defections of UMNO supporters disgusted by the 1MDB scandal, and the party went on to win 13 parliamentary seats albeit some of them by a slim margin, such as Sungai Besar in Selangor (714 votes), Kuala Pilah (200 votes), and Tanjung Piai (524 votes).

As Bersatu transitioned into an opposition party after GE15, the face of its leadership also changed (see Table 2). Hamzah Zainuddin, the party's secretary general and MP for Larut, became the PN leader in parliament, replacing Muhyiddin Yassin.¹¹ Home Minister during the 33-month PN government, Hamzah was formerly an UMNO MP who switched to Bersatu after the 2018 general election.¹² Alongside Hamzah in the Bersatu leadership line-up is Azmin Ali, his co-plotter in the Sheraton Move that brought down the then-PH government. Azmin, who was the former deputy president of PKR and Chief Minister of Selangor, was tasked to head PN's efforts to take over Selangor in the 2023 state elections. PN did surprisingly well in Selangor by gaining 22 of 56 seats with several surprise wins in urban seats such as Taman Medan, Gombak Setia and Azmin's own Hulu Kelang. PN's achievement in Selangor might inject Bersatu with optimism that it can be competitive in urban and semi-urban Malay-majority seats.

Table 2: Bersatu and its competitors in the 2018 general election

PAS	40
BN-UMNO	46
BN-MIC	1
BN-MCA	4
Gerakan	1
DAP	1
Total seats contested	52
Total seats won	13

Malay voters might find Bersatu attractive in areas where BN-UMNO had always done well historically and had deep roots. These are not as ideologically committed as PAS voters and the main reason they support PN has been unhappiness with UMNO's corruption-charged president, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.¹³ They do not subscribe to PAS's rigid interpretation of Islam but nevertheless are strongly pro-Malay-Islam and will not go back to UMNO until the party undergoes a major overhaul, something that does not seem likely anytime soon.

Thus, the key to Bersatu's competitiveness as a solo contender hinges on its ability to attract the former UMNO supporters who had been shifting their allegiance to PN since GE15. As mentioned above, these voters are not ideologically bound to PN like dyed-in-wool PAS members who had gone through a rigorous indoctrination process. These former UMNO voters support a party they believe is the most dependable when it comes to safeguarding the interests of Malays and Islam, a position held by UMNO for the longest time. Now the vanguard role has gone to PN, due to its exclusive ethnoreligious focus, and that coalition is seen as a more reliable defender of Malay and Islamic interests in Malaysia. These voters are not likely to return to UMNO's fold for the simple fact that DAP is part of the Unity Government. The challenge for Bersatu now is how it is to bring these Malay voters into its fold.

It may be illuminative at this point to take a closer look at two long-held UMNO parliamentary seats which were snatched by PAS candidates contesting under PN in GE15 (see Table 3 and 4).

Table 3: Election results in Jasin (P139), Melaka (source: <https://undi.info/>)

	GE14	GE15
BN-UMNO	26,560	27,571
PH	26,341 (Amanah)	21,674
PAS / PN	8,860 (PAS)	27,893 (PN)
Number of voters	61,761	77,598
Voters' turnout	84 percent	81 percent

Table 4: Election results in Kuala Krau (P87), Pahang (source: <https://undi.info/>)

	Total votes in GE14	Total votes in GE15
BN-UMNO	18,058	21,481
PH	5,071 (Bersatu)	3,593
PAS / PN	15,182 (PAS)	22,505 (PN)
Number of voters	38,311	47,753
Voters' turnout	81 percent	79 percent

One common characteristic of these two seats is that UMNO managed to increase their total votes in GE15 despite losing, bucking the trend observed in other Malay-majority constituencies. UMNO candidates lost by a razor-thin margin: 322 votes for Jasin and 1,024 votes for Kuala Krau. These are the type of seats that might provide Bersatu with a fighting chance should it decide to contest alone. Kuala Krau, for instance, contains numerous Felda settlements, which for the longest time had been a vote bank for UMNO. Jasin too was a long-time UMNO-BN fortress until PAS-PN took over in 2022. There are at least 20 seats akin to Jasin such as Kepala Batas and Tasik Gelugor in Penang, Lumut in Perak, Rompin in Pahang, and Pagoh in Johor that can be amenable to Bersatu. Bersatu can be electorally viable if it can convince enough UMNO voters and non-PAS PN voters in these areas to come over to its side. There are many UMNO voters who are not happy with the party joining the Unity Government and their resistance was apparent during the six state elections last year when there was a low vote transferability from UMNO to the Unity Government.¹⁴ Bersatu can capitalize on the Unity Government's inability to attract support from UMNO supporters who prefer to sit on the fence or support PN.

What can Bersatu do to attract these Malay voters to the party? One way is for Bersatu to rebrand itself as a new much-improved UMNO – something the current UMNO has miserably failed to do.¹⁵ In the GE15 and the six state elections in 2023, Malay voters who felt that Malay and Islamic interests needed to be protected did not have any other choice besides PN, which ran an effective campaign to discredit UMNO and project itself as the only credible alternative.

If PN breaks up, Bersatu can show that it is in a better position to safeguard Malay and Islamic interests than PAS. It can chart its own way of doing so without being burdened by elements of religious zealotry found in PN now. Bersatu does to a degree emulate BN's concept of "primus inter pares" (first among equals) when it comes to cooperation with other ethnic groups, which for decades had formed the bedrock of the BN-led government, and established a non-Malay wing that fielded candidates. Perhaps by actively courting non-Malay support,

particularly those not happy with the direction PH is heading in, Bersatu may gain a competitive edge over UMNO and PAS.

National surveys have also shown that Bersatu leader Muhyiddin Yassin still retains popular support especially among Malays, compared to other leading Malay figures such as Anwar Ibrahim, Zahid Hamidi and Ismail Sabri.¹⁶ This is primarily due to his decisive action during the onset of the COVID19 pandemic and the paternalistic image of *Abah* (father) he projected during the time of crisis. Bersatu can still bank on Muhyiddin's respectable approval rating to siphon support from UMNO and PN voters.

The biggest challenge for Bersatu remains its weak grassroots machinery, which will be exposed once it separates from PAS. As a relatively young party, Bersatu does not have time to set down roots at the communal level. It is also a party that is primarily driven in a top-down fashion, founded as it was by political elites. To become electorally viable, Bersatu must develop its own grassroots network of volunteers and party cadres to rival UMNO and PAS, especially if it aims to compete in rural and semi-rural areas. Even to be competitive in Malay-majority seats in urban areas such as Gombak Setia, Hulu Kelang and Taman Medan – seats won by Bersatu in the 2023 state election with significant help from PAS volunteers – requires Bersatu to run a well-oiled political machine that can cater to the needs of urban dwellers.¹⁷ Without political mobilization at the grassroots level, particularly in the Malay heartlands, Bersatu's chances of success at going it alone is slim to none. The failure of Amanah to make an impact in Kelantan despite splintering from PAS is a perfect case in point.

Finally, Bersatu needs to showcase a new crop of young and fresh leaders to inspire voters. Old leadership is what Malay voters associate with UMNO, and for Bersatu to supplant UMNO as the new vanguard for Malay and Islamic interests, it needs to groom and promote a leadership cohort that is professional, reform-minded, policy-oriented and unburdened by political baggage. One that comes to mind is the current state assemblyperson of Seberang Jaya in Penang, Izhar Shah Arif Shah, who won the seat formerly held by PKR in 2023 on his first try. Right now, the next line of leaders in Bersatu such as Azmin Ali and Ahmad Faizal Azumu (the former Chief Minister of Perak and Minister of Youth and Sports) are keeping a low profile as the opposition voice against the Unity Government. Azmin perhaps is the more controversial and polarizing of the two but his experience in managing Selangor, the richest state in the federation, can be an asset to Bersatu in moving forward.

Bersatu's current partner PAS has started to shift gradually to non-ulama leadership by giving more prominent roles to leaders with a professional background such as Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar and Syahir Sulaiman.¹⁸ It is high time that Bersatu follow suit.

ENDNOTES

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² Aizat Sharif, "ADUN BERSATU Kuala Perlis isytihar 'perang' kepimpinan MB," *Berita Harian*, 16 November 2023: <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/politik/2023/11/1177726/adun-bersatu-kuala->

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⁴ The main reason for Bersatu wanting to leave PH was the perception that the DAP had become too dominant and vocal within the government and that the PH government was not attuned to Malay insecurities stemming from UMNO’s loss in GE14. Wan Saiful Wan Jan, “Why Did Bersatu Leave Pakatan Harapan?” *Trends in Southeast Asia* Issue 10 (2020): <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/trends-in-southeast-asia/trends-in-southeast-asia-2020/why-did-bersatu-leave-pakatan-harapan-by-wan-saiful-wan-jan/> (accessed on 30 January 2024).

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⁷ Anne Muhammad, “Wan Saiful shoots down talk PAS gunning for opposition leader's post,” *Free Malaysia Today*, 4 December 2023: <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2023/12/04/wan-saiful-shoots-down-talk-pas-gunning-for-opposition-leaders-post/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

⁸ Parti Negara did not do well and won only one parliamentary seat in the 1959 general election; it faded into obscurity after Onn Jaafar’s death in 1962. For more info on Onn Jaafar’s split from UMNO, refer to Wan Saiful Wan Jan, “Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia in Johor: New Party, Big Responsibility,” *Trends in Southeast Asia*, Issue 2 (2018), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, pp. 8-10.

⁹ In the 1995 general election, Semangat 46’s seats were reduced to six, due to dwindling support from Malay voters. Semangat 46 disbanded in 1996 with Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah rejoining UMNO along with his supporters. However, there were many Semangat 46 activists, particularly in Kelantan, who preferred to remain in opposition and join PAS instead.

¹⁰ However, Bersatu’s group of MPs soon almost tripled when UMNO MPs defected to Bersatu, primarily driven by the need to access government resources for their constituencies. Wan Saiful Wan Jan, “Why Did Bersatu Leave Pakatan Harapan?” *Trends in Southeast Asia* Issue 10 (2020): <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/trends-in-southeast-asia/trends-in-southeast-asia-2020/why-did-bersatu-leave-pakatan-harapan-by-wan-saiful-wan-jan/> (accessed on 30 January 2024).

¹¹ Ben Tan, “Why is Hamzah Opposition Leader instead? Muhyiddin says wants ‘fresh face’ to lead in parliament,” *Malay Mail*, 20 November 2023: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/11/20/why-is-hamzah-opposition-leader-instead-muhyiddin-says-wants-fresh-face-to-lead-in-parliament/102984> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

¹² As Home Minister in the PN government, Hamzah became known for his strident nativism and he played a big role in stoking nationwide xenophobic sentiments against refugees and migrant workers during the COVID19 global pandemic “Immigration Raids on Migrant Workers During Lockdown 3.0,” *Amnesty International*, 3 June 2021: <https://www.amnesty.my/2021/06/04/immigration-raids-on-migrant-workers-during-lockdown-3-0/>; “Hamzah downplays deaths in immigration centres,” *Free Malaysia Today*, 28 June 2022:

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/06/28/hamzah-downplays-deaths-in-immigration-centres/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

¹³ What separates non-PAS supporters from PAS supporters is that the latter are known for their zealous commitment to the party. Members go through extensive party programmes such as *usrah* (study circles), *ceramah kelompok* (small group sermons), *rihlah* (outings), *tamrin* (leadership and cadre training), among others, to inculcate them with PAS’s values and incorporate them into PAS’s

Islamic movement (*harakah Islamiyah*). PAS members are also required to take a loyalty vow (*bai'ah*) that binds them to the party. Wan Rohila Ganti Wan Abdul Ghapar and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Pathways of Becoming Political Party Activists: The Experience of Malay-Muslim Grassroots Party Activists, *Intellectual Discourse*, 28:1 (2020), 5-33.

¹⁴ Harrih Hisham, "Lebih 50 peratus pengundi BN dijangka pindah ke PN - Kajian," *Sinar Harian*, 11 August 2023: <https://www.kosmo.com.my/2023/08/11/lebih-50-peratus-pengundi-bn-dijangka-pindah-ke-pn-kajian/> (accessed on 14 January 2024).

¹⁵ It may be hard now for Bersatu to campaign on a clean image after its leaders have been charged with corruption as well: "Jana Wibawa scandal time," *New Straits Times*, 9 March 2023: <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2023/03/887340/jana-wibawa-scandal-timeline> (accessed on 14 January 2024).

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¹⁷ Nora Mahpar, "Bersatu not riding on PAS' coattails, says Wan Saiful," *Free Malaysia Today*, 4 March 2023: <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2023/03/04/bersatu-not-riding-on-pas-coattails-says-wan-saiful/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

¹⁸ Azmil Tayeb, "How Far Will PAS Deviate from the Ulama Leadership Model, and Why Does It Matter?" *ISEAS Perspective*, 2023/88: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2023-88-how-far-will-pas-deviate-from-the-ulama-leadership-model-and-why-does-it-matter-by-azmil-tayeb/> (accessed on 14 January 2024).

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