



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND
DEMOCRATIZATION IN MALAYSIA***

KHOO YING HOOI

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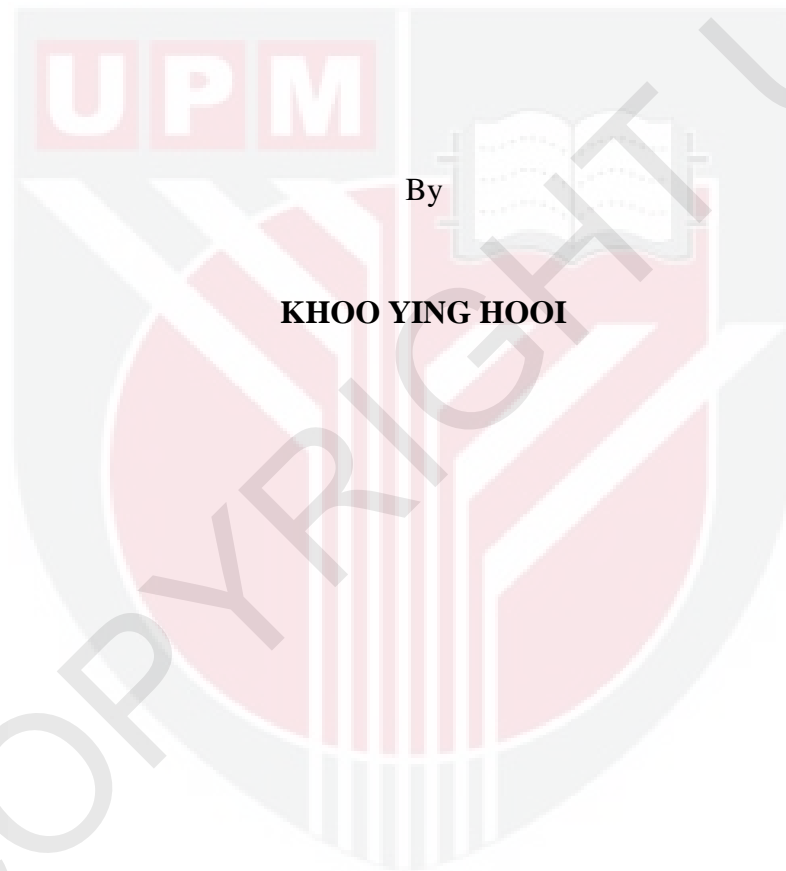
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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN MALAYSIA



By

KHOO YING HOOI

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2014

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN MALAYSIA

By

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October 2014

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The mixture model of democracy and authoritarian political system of Malaysia has long been said to hinder the social movements to expand their influence. However the wave of mass demonstrations in Malaysia with the emergence of an electoral reform movement, the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih) has attracted much political attention to the electoral politics in Malaysia, nationally and internationally. The emergence and the impact of social movements have been widely researched from a variety of perspectives especially in the Western world. However scholarship on social movements and protests in Malaysia remains limited. This thesis asserts that the area of social movements' impact tends to be ignored in the process of political change in Malaysia. Therefore the key task for this thesis is to examine whether the social movements could influence the development of democracy in Malaysia. To do so, this thesis assesses the relevance of the political opportunity framework for social movements by applying it to the Bersih movement. The qualitative approach was chosen because of the interest of this thesis in the depth of the phenomenon of political change and how the Bersih movement has impacted to Malaysia's political landscape. To achieve such purpose, this thesis applies the approaches of in-depth interviews, protest event analysis and participant observation. This thesis too considers the secondary sources. This thesis makes three key findings. First, the changing external opportunities provide political resources to Bersih movement that further on transform the political landscape in Malaysia. Second, the citizens' political participation has increased and social movement spillover takes place. Third, the power dynamics between the opposition political parties and Bersih has been found to be particularly important factor in shaping the sequence and the outcome of the process as a whole. This thesis sheds light on the relationship between the social movement activity and democratic openness in an electoral authoritarian regime. At the same time a good base for protest movement analyses in the country, which has become a norm.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PERGERAKAN SOSIAL DAN PENDEMOKRASIAN DI MALAYSIA

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Sistem politik Malaysia yang berunsurkan campuran demokrasi dan autokratik dikatakan menjadi halangan untuk perkembangan pergerakan sosial. Bagaimanapun gelombang demonstrasi dengan kemunculan Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil (Bersih) menarik perhatian komuniti tempatan dan antarabangsa terhadap politik pilihan raya di Malaysia. Penyelidikan kemunculan dan impak pergerakan sosial masih terhad di Malaysia walaupun penyelidikan sebegitu di Barat sudah lama wujud. Tesis ini menekankan bahawa penyelidikan terhadap impak pergerakan sosial diabaikan dalam kajian proses perubahan politik di Malaysia. Maka tujuan utama tesis ini adalah untuk mengkaji sama ada pergerakan sosial berkemampuan untuk mempengaruhi perkembangan demokrasi di Malaysia. Untuk mencapai tujuan ini, tesis ini menilai kerelevanan rangka peluang politik dengan menggunakan Bersih sebagai kajian. Tesis ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk mengkaji fenomena perubahan politik dan bagaimana Bersih boleh mempengaruhi lanskap politik Malaysia. Kaedah temuduga, analisis kejadian protes dan pemerhatian sebagai peserta digunakan untuk tujuan pengumpulan data. Selain itu, tesis ini turut menggunakan sumber sekunder. Tesis ini mempunyai tiga hasil kajian. Pertama, perubahan peluang luaran membekalkan sumber politik kepada Bersih yang membolehkan proses transformasi lanskap politik berlaku. Kedua, penyertaan rakyat dalam politik meningkat dan berlakunya limpahan pergerakan sosial. Ketiga, dinamik kuasa antara parti politik pembangkang dengan Bersih merupakan faktor utama dalam pembentukan proses ini. Tesis ini membantu dalam menerangkan hubungan antara aktiviti pergerakan sosial dan pembukaan demokrasi di dalam regim pilihan raya autokratik. Pada masa sama, tesis ini juga merupakan permulaan yang baik untuk analisis pergerakan protes di Malaysia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABU	Anything But UMNO
ACA	Anti-Corruption Agency
ANAK	National Felda Settlers' Children Association
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asia Nations
AU	African Union
BA	<i>Barisan Alternatif</i>
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i>
Bersih	The Coalition of Clean and Fair Elections
CIJ	Centre for Independent Journalism
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DBKL	Kuala Lumpur City Hall
DEMA	Malaysia Youths and Students Democracy Movement
EC	Election Commission
EIU	Economic Intelligence Unit
Felda	Federal Land Development Authority
Hindraf	Hindu Rights Action Force
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ILMU	<i>Ulama Muda UMNO</i>
IPCCM	Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission
ISA	Internal Security Act
JACER	Joint Action Committee for Electoral Reform
Jati	<i>Jalur Tiga</i>
KOMAS	<i>Pusat Komunikasi Masyarakat</i>

MACC	Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission
Mafrel	Malaysians for Free and Fair Elections
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCLM	Malaysian Civil Liberties Movement
MDP	Malaysian Democratic Party
Merap	Malaysian Electoral Roll Analysis Project
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MOV	My Overseas Vote
MTUC	Malaysian Trade Union Congress
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OSI	Open Society Institute
PAA	Peaceful Assembly Act
PACABA	Polling Agent/ Counting Agent/ Barung Agent
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia</i>
Pasok	United Pasok Nunukragang National Organization
PDRM	Royal Malaysian Police
Pemandu	Performance Management and Delivery Unit
Pembela	<i>Pertubuhan-pertubuhan Pembela Islam</i>
Pemantau	<i>Pemantau Pilihan Raya Rakyat</i>
Perkasa	<i>Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia</i>
PKN	<i>Parti Keadilan Nasional</i>
PKR	<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i>
POS	Political opportunity structure

PR	<i>Pakatan Rakyat</i>
PRM	<i>Parti Rakyat Malaysia</i>
PSC	Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform
PSM	<i>Parti Sosialis Malaysia</i>
REFSA	Research for Social Advancement
SAMM	<i>Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia</i>
SCC	Special Complaints Commission
SMM	<i>Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia</i>
SMO	Social movement organization
SNAP	Sarawak National Party
SOP	Standard Operation Procedure
Suaram	<i>Suara Rakyat Malaysia</i>
SUHAKAM	Human Rights Commission of Malaysia
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
WAMI	Writers Alliance for Media Independence
WDC	Women's Development Collective
WUNC	Worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991) brought the scholarly literature about the role of social movements and their relations with different political regimes to another level (Oliver, Cadena-Roa & Strawn, 2003). Koopmans (2002) argues that there is a growing cognizance that both social movements and political regimes change together or “co-evolve”. The growing importance of social movements signifies it is necessary to establish specific processes and mechanisms in order to capture the complex relations between movements and the state. The unexpected rise of movements calling for the opening of democratic space, coupled with the eruption of continuous protests across the world rejuvenated a great deal of research interest in the study of social movements. These developments are useful to gauge the value of competing social movement theories in order to explain such phenomenon that many expect a new wave of democratization. In Southeast Asia, some scholars (Oliver et al., 2003) however recognize that there have been insufficient sustained efforts to integrate regional distinctions and unique national contexts under the umbrella of social movement theories.

Democracy remains profoundly contested as Southeast Asia entered the 21st century. The approaches and practices affiliated with democracy extending beyond elections had also become even more crucial in many parts of the region (Hedman, 2010). Similarly in Malaysia, social movements emerged as an important part of its political landscape. New actors and interests combined with the new socio-economic realities exert pressure in forcing the ruling regime and its opponents to compete in alternative ways (Pepinsky, 2013). Pepinsky (2013) and Hedman (2010) however contend that despite the massive pressure for change in Malaysia, its limited form of parliamentary rule stays.

Malaysia’s political climate in its own peculiar context serves as an interesting arena for research in the areas of social movements. To understand how citizens react to times of political hardship is crucial to understand social movements. Since the outbreak of *Reformasi* movement in 1998, the term social movements and civil society gained momentum. The upsurge of *Reformasi* movement, founded to protest injustice that witnessed the removal of former Deputy Prime Minister and current Leader of Opposition Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the public administration is arguably to have brought about a shift in Malaysian political culture (Derichs, 2002). The growing phenomenon of mass rallies and protests emerged from the *Reformasi* is seen as a catalyst for promoting democratic values and processes within Malaysia’s wider society and polity. The subject of social movements have since then been closely linked to the rise and fall of hopes about the quality of Malaysian democracy.

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih), an electoral reform movement that started out in July 2005 initially as a Joint Action Committee for Electoral Reform (JACER) is notably the most sustained protest events in the Malaysian

history. In September 2006, a Joint Communiqué was produced in an Electoral Reform Workshop held in Kuala Lumpur. The Joint Communiqué lists out Bersih's long-term objectives and its immediate working goals. Subsequently Bersih was formally launched on 23 November 2006 with members comprised of political leaders from the opposition parties, civil society as well as the representatives from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Bersih is a unique phenomenon looking at how it transformed from an initiative solely aiming for electoral reform to today, a pro-democracy movement. An important aspect of Bersih is that it brings Malaysian socio-political activism to another level. The first rally that took place on 10 November 2007 witnessed the Malaysians grouped together in forming powerful civic organizations with cohesive interests and articulated demands with a surprising major turnout. The 12th General Election held on 8 March 2008, less than a year after the rally testified the opposition's success in denying the two-thirds majority¹ to the ruling coalition, National Front or *Barisan Nasional* (BN)². The results are likened to a "political tsunami" ("Political tsunami," 9 March 2008). Less than a month after the election, the People's Alliance or *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR)³ was formed. The "political tsunami" is a clear manifestation of the extent of frustration by the public with the party systems. That eventually sparked interest in civil society and social movements as a mean of social renewal. As such, Bersih is seen as a test to the strength of civil society and social movement.

The 2007 Bersih rally was said to have played a major role in bringing record gains for the PR in the 12th General Election, where it swept five state governments⁴ and won 82 parliamentary seats. Among the factors identified in contributing to this change of political culture are the poor regime performance, the formation of civil society and the increased role of alternative media. The 2008 general election gave birth to a much stronger and mature opposition electoral pact in the parliament, which sets as the turning point for the democratic development in the country (Moten, 2011).

With the mushrooming of social movements such as Bersih, Green Assembly or *Himpunan Hijau*⁵, social movements were acknowledged as indication of a potential new era of democratic participation and inclusion. In April 2010, the movement was re-named to Bersih 2.0 as a non-partisan movement and free from political influences. The movement has subsequently organized two major rallies on 9 July 2011 and 28 April 2012. Although BN has retained its power in the 13th General

¹ BN won its biggest victory ever in the 11th General Election in 2004. In the 12th General Election in 2008, BN lost two-thirds control of the house for the first time since 1969 with just 140 seats for a simple majority in the 222-member Parliament. This is the worst result for the BN.

² Founded on 1973. BN is a major political party in Malaysia since the independence. BN comprises of three main race-based political parties. They are United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC).

³ Founded on 1 April 2008 by three main component parties. They are Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party or *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS), Democratic Action Party or *Parti Tindakan Demokratik* (DAP) and People's Justice Party or *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR).

⁴ The five state governments were Selangor, Penang, Kelantan, Kedah and Perak (PR however lost Perak when three Perak legislators defected).

⁵ A Malaysian environmentalist movement protesting a proposed rare-earth refinery in Kuantan, to be set up by the Australian company Lynas.

Election⁶ held on 5 May 2013 with 133 parliamentary seats, however it received a major blow with a much slimmer majority and much lesser popular votes comparing with the PR. Political developments in the country have shown that social movements and citizens' political participation has become a pronounced element in Malaysian politics. This again reiterates the roles and impacts of social movements in the sphere of political process.

Although the mixture model of authoritarian and democratic nature of Malaysia (Ufen, 2008; Weiss, 2005; Case, 1993) provides a challenging environment for the development of social movements, the presence of values supportive of democracy is important to serve as one of the preconditions for democratization in the country. The resources of the aggrieved population allow the social movements to exploit the opportunities available to them. The increase frequencies of protests and rallies are one of the trends reflecting Malaysia's gradual transition to democracy maturation. The wave of protests was driven by the general discontent of public, failures of state policies and demands for greater representation. Another point not to be missed is the crucial role of social media. All of these factors when combined, serve as resources, without which, it would be difficult for the development of a social movements and further on to uphold a sustained effort.

Although the ruling government, BN has had to face systematic challenges, it has however able to repress the protestors and for the moment at least, withhold demands for major political changes. The constant demonstrations received high attention, but its long-term impact remains unpredictable. Malaysia provides a useful testing ground for the study on protests in the on-going process of democratization because protests are generally considered as "illegal". Article 10(1)(b) of the Federal Constitution lists out that, "all citizens have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms"; however the right to assemble is not absolute in the country. The Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (PAA)⁷ defines street protest as below and under the PAA, street protest is strictly prohibited,

An open air assembly which begins with a meeting at a specified place and consists of walking in a mass march or rally for the purpose of objecting to or advancing a particular cause or causes.

Therefore, the phenomenon of social movements is critical for the development of democracy in Malaysia. However there is no straightforward cause and effect between social movements and democratic outcomes. In explaining political transition processes, the democratization literature usually credit to the role of elite actors. The famous work of O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) characterize such transition process as a process of negotiation, at the same time a pact building between the key elite actors. Although this explanation is well accepted by many

⁶ In the 13th General Election, BN managed to win only 133 out of the 222 parliamentary seats. 7 seats lesser than the 140 it got in 2008. BN received 47% of the popular vote, but the PR despite of winning only 89 seats; it received more than 50% of the popular vote.

⁷ Four months after the Bersih 2.0 rally in 2011, the PAA was drafted. Strongly criticized by the opposition and civil society, the PAA regulates the public protests in Malaysia. Under the PAA, street protest is banned. It was tabled in the Parliament on 22 November 2011, passed by the lower house on 29 November, and approved by the Senate on 20 December.

scholars, however from time to time, debates increased. In refuting this, Levine (1988: 385) argues the other way and put emphasize on the role of the people, the citizens itself. He asserts that citizens should not be assumed as if they were not part of the political process or giving consent blindly to whatever outcome of the political transformation. In the traditional democratization literature, mass movements are seen as a rather passive element in the process that can be mobilized and demobilized by the elite. Based on such argument, this thesis challenges the traditional democratization literature's narrow focus on the political elite and conditions such as economic and class. Therefore it aims at combining such view with insights from the social movement literature derived from the political process model to explain the linkage between social movements and democratization.

Since the 1960s, some studies show that successive protest movements could challenge public policies. This is how it resulted to the approaches of political participation and socio-economic situations in most part of the advanced industrial democracies across the globe. In view of the importance of the subject, some scholars (Kitschelt, 1986) have responded to the need by conducting case studies of such movements. As an effort to fill the gap, this thesis explores and analyzes the process and dynamics of political reform in Malaysia with a specific focus on Bersih movement guided by the position that political constraints and opportunities distinctive to the national condition that it rooted are the keys in forming the social movements (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996: 3). It expands the conception of how a movement such as Bersih might affect the ruling regime. This thesis begins with reformulating the framework of political opportunity structure (POS) to examine and explore the political opportunities available for its development. As highlighted by Kitschelt (1986), the political environment or condition of a social movement exerts a strong impact on its political outcomes in principal. McAdam et al. (1996) also emphasize that any changes in the structure of political opportunities is highly potential to contribute to the fate of movements.

As pointed out by Derichs (2002), the ethnically heterogeneous composition of Malaysians signifies the Malaysian way for political change. She highlighted the power struggles of old and new political parties and movements as the direct reflection of the emerging sphere of civil society and social movements in Malaysia. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1988: 69) highlight that for movements that are political in nature, they mobilize citizens through the state to alter either the power relations or to make social change. In the case of Bersih movement, fraudulent election served as a catalyst that eventually leads to series of electoral protests.

This thesis seeks to explain the linkages between the social movements and the democratic development by examining the available opportunities surround the political system. It applies and explores political process model to the research of political protest and mobilization. Based on four dimensions of political opportunity identified by McAdam (1996): open and closed access to political system, the availability of allies, cleavages within and among elites, and state's capacity or propensity for repression; this thesis argues that these variables have pose potential impacts toward the political change and further on resulted to the democratic development in Malaysia. In order to know what kind of opportunities are decisive for protest mobilization, which eventually brings to the political change in the country, this thesis first looks into how demonstrations emerged and mobilized and

to identify what opportunities available. Next it will scrutinize the four dimensions of POS as mentioned above in attempt to explain the potential of the Bersih movement to democratization.

POS was originally developed to explain the social movements in democratic contexts. So for this reason, there is a need to rationalize the application of POS to the explanation of social movements in a semi-democratic regime of Malaysia. This argument is based on the assumption that political dissent is facilitated or constrained by aspects of the political environment, regardless of the type of regime in which it occurs. Therefore, Malaysia provides an interesting arena for studying political opportunities in its peculiar context. This thesis demonstrates that the movements in Malaysia after the *Reformasi* movement has been better able to defend itself against infringement from the state, with social protests becoming a common phenomenon. However, the pressure is still less able to accumulate enough political strength to compel the ruling government to adopt genuine social and political reforms.

Based on the four dimensions of POS that are structural, this thesis distinguishes structural political opportunity from cognitive political opportunity and explains the framing mechanism through which actors effect change in the political opportunity (Choe & Kim, 2012: 55). Cognitive political opportunity indicates the general public's belief in the possibility of changes in political institutions and policies and the subsequent political actions. This thesis demonstrates that the structural political opportunity began as a potential opportunity. Provided the availability of political space and the opportunity for movement leaders to mobilize the masses, which contribute to framing, it then enables Bersih movement to transform into cognitive political opportunity, which motivated the masses. This further expanded political opportunity as a whole and brought about significant changes in the political power structure that eventually led to the process of democratization.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

One of the key things in this thesis is to explore the process of political change. In order to do this, there is a need to know the extent of freedoms that could bring onto the process. Protests are now no longer an exclusive matter to the Malaysians, and at the same time, the frequencies of protests, be it small or big scales have noticeable increased. The empirical evidence of the outcomes of protests is however restricted, thus it is uncertain to what extent these protests could bring about the change. In view of this, it is therefore an open question and this thesis intends to enlighten on these issues. The case of Bersih movement is an interesting one as some argued, it is an attempt to topple the ruling government but the movement insists that it is apolitical and the movement solely aims on electoral reform. A common goal shared by most of the protest movements is to consolidate political attention to issues of interest and to have their demands met, subsequently to bring social and political change, specifically at the level of policy formulation. Similarly for Bersih movement, it has clearly lists out its demands on electoral reform.

Since the *Reformasi* movement, there has been on going heated debate on the relationship among these three entities: ruling government, opposition political parties and the civil society. In order to be able to influence public policy and legislation, social movements require state support in order to succeed (Jenkins &

Klandermans, 1995). However this is not the case in Malaysia. In the past, most social movements in Malaysia dealt with specific issues, for example women rights, refugee rights and land rights. With the influence of new media and the wave of globalization, the sense of awareness has increased. Political repression, lack of rooms for civil and political liberties, restriction on participative rights and corruption are among the reasons of why the Malaysians feel inspired by protest events in Arab world that commonly known as Arab Spring and in believing that they can force change. In Malaysia, the term “Malaysian Spring” was created to describe the rapid changing political norms.

This study is important to be carried out because after the *Reformasi* movement in 1998, there has been no other major movement that actually organizes mass rallies like how the Bersih organized. Having said that, this thesis considered Bersih movement as the best to describe the contemporary political landscape in Malaysia because its demands are democratic in nature. By exploring the Bersih movement, this thesis allowed a closer investigation into the relationship between the state and the non-state actor.

As implied, studying the process of political change within the Malaysian context is important to social scientists and in particular the political scientists. The challenge is that social movement like Bersih is a loosely bounded phenomenon that changes rapidly and evolves in a dynamic interaction with other elements in the area. Social movements are often described as disruptive in nature and that raises an important question of whether the social movements do more harm than good or the other way round. Subsequently, this leads to the core research problem in this thesis, the ability of Bersih movement to influence the political dynamics and to open up the democracy space in the country. The protest research study in Malaysia after 1998 and especially after the 12th General Election in 2008 and 13th General Election in 2013 is an important subject for further analysis. This thesis therefore attempts to move toward to this direction but it is by no means an analysis on all social movements in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Questions

The relationship between social movements and democratization is complicated. It is because beyond a movement’s feasibility to brace the spirit of democracy, democratization processes could be either more or less influenced by social movements. Social movements increasingly recognized as crucial players in advancing democracies, however interactions between the two are limited. To overcome this, both social movement and democratization studies are combined. Two factors could be contributed to such limitations. First, most of the scholarship on democratization centered on socioeconomic or elite. Second, most of the scholars (Porta & Rossi, 2013) concentrate their interests in democratic countries. These democratic countries provide more favorable conditions for mobilization. Therefore, the experience of Bersih movement provides a compelling basis to study how key stages in the democratization process are related to mass mobilization. This thesis illustrates that social movement actors play a crucial role in the course of political transition that have their own means and goals in influencing the democratization process. In view of this, this thesis attempts to shed light on the following research questions.

First, looking at the political climate in Malaysia, what are the underlying factors that trigger the emergence and formation of Bersih movement? How do a group of people come together around the common discontent take shape, exert influence and mobilize for social change? Second, in view of the important role of Bersih movement in the political discourse of the country, how has the Bersih movement influence the political process in Malaysia? This thesis seeks to answer that in a semi-democracy regime of Malaysia, does a relationship exist between levels of popular mobilization and state's level of democratic opening? Third, given that social movements are most often disruptive in nature. In such a case, has the responsive-repressive nature of Malaysia, if at all, been improved or worsen by Bersih movement? Rather more specifically, to what extent can popular protests such as Bersih are account for the country's democratic performance?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This thesis uses the political process theory, which it explains the social movements by focusing on the POS presented by the historical context in which they arise. Following from the problem statement and the research questions, this thesis has three objectives. First is to elucidate the genesis of the social movements in Malaysia in its roles as the players involve in the dynamic interactions among the major political actors in Malaysia.

Second, although there have been considerable amount of attention given to the subject of civil society and democratization since the *Reformasi* movement in 1998 and three major Bersih rallies in 2007, 2011 and 2012, however the long-term impacts of social movements such as Bersih have not been adequately answered. Therefore, this thesis aims to assess the impacts of Bersih movement and argues whether it poses potential costs to the existing political norms and structures. This thesis hence endeavors to work for reasoning about the causal dynamic between social movements and political change. Third, based on the data collection, this thesis analyzes and establishes on how has Bersih movement influenced the democratic development of Malaysia. It also addresses the interaction between protests and the political system.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study of social movements has undergone a remarkable development from a disorganized area of research into an established field of study. Yet, scholars (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1997; McAdam et al., 1988; Gurr, 1980) generally are of the view that the research on the impacts of social movements has considerably been neglected comparing with the scholarship on their emergences and formation. This thesis focuses on outcomes rather than success. Success refers to the achievement of the intended goals by the social movements. Concurring with the reason provides by Andrews (2001), goals set by a social movement change over the course of the movement. This too happened to Bersih movement, where it expands its demands when it transformed from an initiative by the opposition political parties to a “non-partisan” movement. Literatures on the impact or contribution of the social movements toward the political transformation in the country have been limited comparing with the studies on its emergence. This limitation does not only happen in Malaysia, but also around the globe. As suggested by Kolb (2007), there is a lack of

comprehensive explanation of the linkage between the social movements and political change. However, it is an area that should not be ignored because of the need to study the impacts of social movements due to its importance in evaluating movement success.

Bersih movement is arguably one of the largest and most politically active movements in Malaysia today. Exploring Bersih movement and understanding its emergence and effectiveness provides a clear insight into the present system of governance. By examining how Bersih movement took place as in where it started, who started it and how they overcame obstacles, that leads to the clue about the culture the movement started from, as well as the political will and position of the people who participate in the movements. Apart from that, understanding whether or not one event was a leading source of inspiration for a movement later on is important in understanding how and why a specific country has such political system of governance.

In addition, social movements can have a variety of different effects on the cultures they are part of. In some cases, it can lead to the transition of a dictatorship or military regime into a democratic government. The movements can also overthrow democratically elected leaders in order to promote a different system of government just like what happen in Egypt⁸ for example. Knowing the history of social organizing in the country can help greatly to shed light on the current political situation as well as the power of the people in the government. Understanding how Bersih movement affects the balance of social and political forces is crucial in being aware of how much the political systems have shifted and re-accommodated to the demands of different people.

The existing scholarship on social movement theory mainly concentrates in two main regions, Europe and America. The reason is being that these areas of the world share common political norms and structures, which in turn, affect the formation of its civil society (della Porta & Diani, 2006; Tarrow, 2011). In studying protest movements in Asia, a different understanding of history, politics, and society is needed. Although the scholarly work on dealing with different forms of civil action and political mobilization in the context of Asia is mounting up gradually, however the scholarly work on such is still lacking in the Southeast Asia. Kriesi (1993) puts up the argument that there is a new shift from the conventional politics to a new type of “social movement politics”. This new type of politics refers to the equal footing of political parties and interest group.

While civil society, associated with various social movements has proliferated over the past two decades in Malaysia, few literatures critically assess what these movements are and how they have fared so far especially on its political and policy outcomes to the political parties and the Malaysian politics as a whole. The study of Malaysian social movements so far is a much-neglected field of research in Malaysian studies and political science as a whole. Looking at the growing

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Mohamed Morsi was the first democratically elected president in Egypt. He was ousted on 4 July 2013.

importance of social movements, as actors of social and political change in Malaysia, there are plenty rooms for in-depth studies within this area in a non-Western context. Malaysia is a good context to test the theory due to its dynamic nature of politics and the continuity of the similar ruling regime since the independence in 1957.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Since the 1960s, most of the literatures on social movements focused in America and Europe regions, while the body of work in regions such as Asia and Africa has just gradually accelerated (Oliver et al., 2003). Social movements have been the missing link in the civil society literature that is now widespread and influential within the sphere of political thoughts. This neglect of social movements in thinking about civil society is not accidental, since the latter term has been seen as a precondition for its accommodation within democratic developmental discourse (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello & Yang, 2010: 288). In Malaysia, there is not enough attention being paid to the theoretical and empirical dilemmas between the civil society and social movements. Therefore one of the main limitations faced in this thesis is the local academic literature on the said subject.

Also, as raised by Giugni, McAdam and Tilly (1998) in the study on social movement impacts, they identified that the main challenge is how to establish and determine the causal correlation between the choices of a sequences of events as the actions that derived by the movement. This difficulty was said to be due to the lack of systematic empirical analyses that explains under which movements could possibly produce certain effects. Part of it is also due to the on-going dynamic of the movement itself.

1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

At this stage in the research, several concepts need clarification. Consequently, working definitions are provided. In order to discuss the roles of Bersih movement in increasing room for civil society and for its linkage with the democratization process, there is a need to be clear about the definitions of these key concepts: social movement, different models of democracy and Malaysia's democracy.

1.7.1 Social Movement

The term social movements is relatively new comparing to the concept of civil society. It constitutes an important subset of civil society. Much scholarship on this subject shows that the term originated from the eruption of protest movements in the 1960s. Civil rights movement, student movement, women's movement and many other movements across the Europe and United States particularly have at that time triggered a great amount of interest in the research on social movements. These movements were based on the concepts of collective action and mass mobilization.

Since then, protest is seen to play a complementary role in the study of democratization as well as an important contributor to the most transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes. It is often being used by the less powerful to accomplish equality and justice-generating political ends (Oliver et. al., 2003). Although social movement theories are spreading across the borders, however the

area is still much contested (Broadbent & Brockman, 2011: 3).

Starting from the 1960s, social movement studies were funded upon Olson's (1965) "logic of collective action" and tried to explain why people participate in public protest even though "free riding" seems to be more rational for them. By using the notion of logics and rational in action, resource mobilization theory⁹ argues that protest depend on resources that can be mobilized in the form of material, ideal and personnel (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Scholars from different theoretical perspectives agree that social movements and protest basically come from social, political and economic grievances. But grievances alone do not necessarily result in collective action. Some of the other reasons are the institutional openness, ability and will for repression. The focus thereby is on formal political institutions and structures.

There are debates on the definition of a movement. Gamson and Meyer (1996: 283) articulate that movements are most often networks of smaller groups, because it consists of multiple actors and the nature is constantly changing. Meyer and Tarrow (1998) provide a comprehensive definition of movement. They define movement as,

Collective challenges to existing arrangements of power and distribution by people with common purposes and solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.

Although the argument is always prone to the area of sociology by emphasized on the role of contemporary social movements as social forces that uncovered within the sphere of civil society with the intention to change social values and personal behavior of the people (Scott, 1990), however, nowadays social movements are increasingly being involved in demand for policy changes to the state. On this matter, there are various levels of how the social movements actually make demands directly or indirectly to the states. Some of the key variables that contributed to the situation are type of movement, its guiding code of behavior and faiths, morals and characteristics the people involved in the movement as well as its supporters (Rootes, 1997: 71).

Social movements are also of crucial importance within the area of political science. It can be argued that some of the most important political changes in the 19th and 20th centuries such as the civil rights movements in the United States and the protests against authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s were prominent examples that brought about by the actions of social movements. Tilly (2004) traced the root of the social movements back in the 19th century, in two forms, national and social. According to Tilly, social movements provide the access for citizen's participation in local politics. Having said that, it means there is a collective action by the citizens whom are outside the circle of established institutions to pursue

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Resource mobilization theory is one of the prominent social movement theories. It is commonly used in the argument of whether a movement success or failure by looking at the resources available such as time, money, skills and so forth, and the ability to use them. The distinctive characteristic about this theory is that it focused on variables that are sociological rather than psychological. The influences from outside the sphere of social movements, such as support from various organizations or the government, were taken into account for the very first time.

a common aspiration and goals. Within political science, social movement participation is seen as one of the necessary elements within democratic political systems. Movements pursue challenges to the existing power relations and most of the time they employ disruptive tactics that publicly challenge the distribution and uses of power (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978).

In early literatures, the purpose of a social movement according to Abel (1937) is about how to achieve their objectives regardless of the means that the individuals choose to use in expressing their discontent. In related to this, the objectives of a movement must be a large-scale community interest, and not an objective that merely relevant to only a particular entity. A number of theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau¹⁰ and Alain Touraine also explain the emergence of social movements. They link the emergence of the social movements to structural transformations and political and cultural changes that happen in a significant long period. These changes then generated new sources of conflict and subsequently altered the process of constitution of collective identities. Offe (1985: 846) added that their emergence could also be seen as a reaction against the hardship and domination imposed in capitalist societies.

Scholarship on social movements provides plenty of definitions and approaches. Rucht (1996: 186) defines social movement in two separate components. First is in the form of network either in groups or organizations that aim to make social change through the channel of mobilization for protest actions. Second is on individual basis with no affiliation to any groups or organizations, but participate in the form of either protest activities or contribute resources. McAdam and Snow (1997) deem a social movement as,

A collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part.

As for Opp (2009: 36), he highlights that social movements are a group of people who shares a common goal. Social movements possess the element of “antagonist”, where social movements opt to achieve their goals by influencing the antagonist when they failed to reach their targets. Apart from that, members in a social movement are also required to be constantly active over a period of time. Although social movements are created under a specific political circumstance at a given time, opportunities available to the protestors determine the form of movement (McAdam et al., 1996: 11).

From time to time as its role becoming more important, the use of the term has broadened and there are different interpretations of the term by different scholars all over the world. Most of the contemporary scholars such as Christopher Rootes,

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In 1985, Laclau and Mouffe articulated the idea of radical democracy in their famous book, “Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics”. In their argument, they highlighted there is a need for a strategy in order for the social movements to create social and political change. This strategy is intends to expand the liberal definition of democracy, based on freedom and equality, and to make difference inclusive.

Donatella della Porta, Mario Diani and Bert Klandermans agree that collective action is one of the main characteristics in the broad literatures on social movements. Diani and della Porta (2006) identified another three characteristic of social movements. They highlight the elements of informal interaction networks, shared belief and solidarity and the usage of protest. Wilson (1973), Jasper and Goodwin (2009) also emphasize the non-institutionalized or extra-institutional means used by the social movements to challenge the authority. Rootes (1997: 67) points out that social movements are political in character because they make demands upon the state. While Klandermans (2004) draws attention to the characteristic of sustainability, he emphasizes that, “Only by sustaining collective action does an actor turn a contentious episode into a social movement”.

The increasing awareness of the people about their rights, the growing numbers of NGOs and spillover effect to other movements are some of the momentous changes that have come out of the social movements. Their achievements have resulted in fundamental shifts in how democracies operate (Tarrow, 2011; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004). The influence of social movements could be examined through several prominent examples. As listed by Giugni (1998: 372), among the democracy movements are Eastern Europe in 1989, mass demonstrations in several countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

1.7.2 Different Models of Democracy

In simple term, democracy means the rule of the people, by the people and for the people. In an early literature, Lipset (1959) explains the model of democracy by using modernization theory that connected the opportunities for the emergence of a democratic regime with economic development. Modernization theory is prove to be accurate to some point to explain the survival of established democracies, however the theorists of modernization theory tends to look at the role of social movements from the perspective of mobilization, rather than a player in developing democracy. It views social movement as a risk more than an asset (Huntington, 1991).

Today, it is widely accepted that democracy is known as a structure of governance (Schmitter & Karl, 1991) where the citizens ideally should have direct linkage to the power and civic responsibility. Nevertheless, the reality is begged to differ on this. Schmitter and Karl (1991: 76) elaborate modern democracy as,

A system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of the elected representatives.

It means citizens get to practice their power indirectly through elected representatives. On another note, as highlighted by Dahl (1971), one of the key characteristics of democracy is the responsiveness of government to the demands of its citizens. Therefore, based on these definitions, it indicates that one of the crucial elements of democracy is that there should be continuous engagements between the citizens and the government.

Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1989) put forward three essential components in an ideal

democracy: substantial political competition, a high measurement of political participation and assurance of civil and political rights. Former Secretary General of United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1996) provides a simple way to understand what is democratization about. He describes democratization as a process that leads to three outcomes to the society: more open, more participatory and less authoritarian. It is widely agreed that the world has been going on a wave of democratization since the end of Cold War in 1989. Linz and Stepan (1996: 3) succinctly define democratization that there is a need for open contestation on who is to win the right to control the government, and one way to do this is through free competitive elections, in which the results of which determine who governs. These definitions show that citizen participation in political process is also an indication of democratization.

For decades, there has been a tension between narrow and broad concepts of democracy (Welzel, 2006). The narrow perspective sees universal suffrage as the core element of democracy. From this point of view, any regime holding free, fair, and regular elections is considered as a democracy. Adopting and sustaining democracy is relatively easy, from this perspective. It is suffice as long as the elite groups reach an agreement that “democracy is the only game in town” (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Whether the wider public desires democracy or not, does not matter much from this perspective because what matters is a regime agreement among elites.

In contrast with the narrow perspective, broad perspective views democracy as more than just a method to designate government leaders. Genuine democracy requires an encompassing set of civil and political freedoms that empower people to govern themselves. These freedoms go far beyond the right to vote in free elections. Civil and political freedoms establish “liberal democracy”, as opposed to mere “electoral democracy” (Dahl, 1971). In the liberal notion, democracy is a way of life inspired by a worldview that considers a life based on freedom, equality, and self-governance as the best way of organizing societies. A democratic way of life in this wider sense cannot take hold in a society unless most people hold supporting values. Consequently, advocates of this view consider the emergence and survival of democracy as depending on a set of fundamental social requisites, including a wide distribution of participatory resources and the dominance of an emancipative worldview.

During the eruption of democracy that took place from 1989 to 1992, which often known as the “Third Wave of Democratization” (Huntington, 1991), electoral democracy becomes the most “favorable” regime type throughout the world. It is clear that strategic elite agreements were a driving factor in this process. Such arrangement is further made possible with the advantage of an international environment, as at that time was the end of the Cold War. Thus, the incentive structure in favor of democratic regimes was reshaped (Welzel & Inglehart, 2008). Since the end of the Cold War in 1991, the nature of democratization has changed and the form of democratization through elections becomes the favorite model of transition by many countries (Lindberg, 2009). Of the 32 transitions to electoral democracy recorded by Freedom House from 1990-2007, only three were unrelated to elections.

The prevalence of nominal democracy¹¹ is dissociating from societal development, supporting the view that elite agreements are the major force in spreading democracy around the globe. However it is not the same with genuine effective democracy. A growing number of scholars (Diamond, 2002) called attention to the fact that most of the new democracies show serious deficiencies in adopting the rule of law and related governance practices that make democracy truly effective. A large literature is also developed to emphasize the inadequacy of purely electoral democracy and other similar forms of pseudo-democracy in which elites corrupt people's democratic freedoms. Accordingly, researchers have increasingly emphasized the importance of distinguishing ineffective from fully effective democracies.

Thus far, the research on democratization in hybrid regimes is still disengaged from the study of electoral politics (Donno, 2013). This is even more apparent in the Asian region. In explaining such phenomenon, Reilly (2007: 2) argues that many of the institutional reforms to elections, parliaments and parties are carried out with the intention to achieve certain specified objectives. These resulted to an identifiable "Asian model" of democracy with almost similar characteristic, for instance the electoral politics, centrist political competition, and budding two-party systems.

1.7.3 Malaysia's Democracy

Scholars have variously characterized the mixture models of democracy and authoritarian political system of Malaysia in different terms. However all of these terms affirm a common standing that is the dominance of state over the society. Many scholarly researches indicate that Malaysia is more of a "quasi democracy" (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989: 349) since it practices Westminster democracy partially. Means (1996) characterizes the political system in Malaysia as "soft authoritarianism" or "semi-democracy" (Case, 1993). While Giersdorf and Croissant (2011) term it as "competitive authoritarianism". Jesudason (1995) on the other hand describes the political system in Malaysia as a "statist democracy" because the state inherited and still retaining the similar model of administration system from British. At the same time the role in economic performance has been used as the main argument of how the state has been able to insulate itself from civil society influences. It is undeniable that the heterogeneous nature of the population and the tendency for every political issue to be transformed into communalism is a significant feature in the socio-political context of Malaysia (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989: 351). Another scholar (Crouch, 1996) described Malaysia's political system as a "responsive-repressive regime". By nature, responsive regime refers to the level of state's responsiveness towards the demands from its citizens. Repressive regime deals with the manipulation of the state in its various ways in curbing the fundamental rights of the citizens.

These terms imply the hybrid character of the Malaysian regime, combining both democratic values and authoritarian feature (Mauzy, 2006). Hybrid regimes like Malaysia to some extent try to display some elements of democratic legitimacy, most commonly by holding regular periodic elections. In the mean time, it also places various types of "democratic deficits" under tight authoritarian rules, including

¹¹ Elite-driven democracy.

manipulation and repression, domination of certain parties in the political arena that leads to the limit of electoral competition, which further blur the line between the party and state. In this vision, hybrid regime poses as a frustrating challenge to the promotion of democratization in a state (Case, 2005: 215-216).

Table 1.1: Democracy index 2006-2012 on Malaysia¹²

¹³ Year	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Democracy Index	6.41	6.19	6.19	6.36	5.98

Source: Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU).

From a “hybrid regime” in 2006, the democracy index of Malaysia according to the EIU as shown in Table 1.1 has changed to “flawed democracy” since 2008. According to the definition of the EIU, “flawed democracy” indicates that despite problems such as the infringements on media freedom, Malaysia has free and fair elections while the basic civil liberties remain valued. The EIU emphasized three main weaknesses related to the quality of democracy practice in Malaysia. They are issues related to governance, low levels of political culture and political participation. For the purpose of this thesis, the state could be well described as an electoral authoritarian regime (Ufen, 2012). They are steady as long as the ruling coalition is capable to control the electoral process. However electoral authoritarian regime is inherently unsteady because voting also provides opposition the opportunities to challenge the regime. The key debate is that although elections could have been free but it does not guarantee its fairness to the opposition. In the context of Malaysia, this demonstrates how the ruling regime maintains its political dominance in order to reduce contestation.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The basis for this thesis is to explore how the variables of the POS impact towards the political change and further on resulted to the democracy development in Malaysia. For such purpose, this thesis is divided into nine chapters.

Chapter one consists of the background of the study, statement of the research problem, research questions, objectives, significance and limitations of the study as well as the definition of key concepts. Right after, in chapter two, this thesis then

¹²

The EIU’s democracy index is based on the ratings for 60 indicators. These indicators are grouped in five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture. Each category has its own rating on a 0 to 10 scale. The overall index of democracy is the average of the five category indexes. The index values are then place countries under one of the four types of regimes: 1. Full democracies (scores of 8-10), 2. Flawed democracies (scores of 6-7.9), 3. Hybrid regimes (scores of 4-5.9), 4. Authoritarian regimes (scores below 4).

¹³

According to Rhonda Taylor from the EIU team via email correspondence on 17 July 2013 about the absence of reports in 2007 and 2009, she explained that in the past, the report is published every two years. However since the EIU Democracy Index has gained so much popularity, the report has been made yearly since 2010.

examines the literatures on social movements, Malaysian politics and democratization as a whole. The focus of the review is on the general literatures on social movements in various areas from its emergence to the literatures on its outcomes and relationship with political parties. This is to develop a typology of political change. Chapter three includes the discussion on theoretical aspects, in this case, the POS, which is divided into its background, dimensions and limitations.

This thesis then in chapter four focuses on research methodology that explains the empirical evidence for Bersih movement. The chapter elaborates on several research methods that are used to collect data. Among the methods are interviews with key relevant actors, protest event analysis and participant-observation. Apart from that, data are also collected through analyzing social media, and analysis of secondary sources. Chapter five looks into the emergence and background of Bersih movement as well as Malaysian electoral politics, covering the electoral protests. These are crucial to serve as the background understanding of this subject.

Chapters six and seven are the key findings of this thesis, based on the research questions as formulated in chapter one. These chapters derive larger questions from the specific results gained from analyzing Bersih movement. Chapter six explores the opportunities available that favor the development of Bersih movement based on the four dimensions from the POS. Chapter seven represents the second and third key findings, which also serve as the indicator for measurement on the outcomes of Bersih movement. This thesis traces the way in which the Bersih movement sparked the political participation of the citizens and its symbiosis relationship with the opposition political parties.

Finally, in chapter eight, general and specific conclusions are drawn and presented. The final chapter provides a set of conclusions derived from linking the POS with empirical part of the thesis and tries to provide an outlook to further the linkage between social movement and democratic development in Malaysia.

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