"Malu Apa Bossku?" Najib Razak's Political Rhetoric on Facebook Post 2018 General Election

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Abstract

Social media have become one of the most important political tools in the modern world. In 2018, we witnessed the downfall of the Barisan Nasional (BN) government. After 61 years of governance, it fell to its long-term nemesis, Pakatan Harapan (PH). Though PH has been praised for mastering the online arts first, both political coalitions have actively utilised social media to disseminate political propaganda. Increased support of PH has been evident despite stringent control over traditional broadcast and printing press. After 2008, BN lost its political hegemony in the Malaysian parliament, eventually lost the majority seats and failed to form a government a decade later. This research focuses on the Facebook rhetoric of Najib Razak, former leader of BN, after his loss in the 14th Malaysian general election (GE14). While concentrating on the Semenyih by-election, the researchers also looked at the different propaganda techniques Najib Razak used throughout this period, based on the propaganda technique blueprint by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA). Content analysis of Najib Razak's Facebook updates from January 12, 2019, until March 1, 2019, revealed that the former prime minister had utilised five different dominant propaganda agendas against PH. It was also found that Najib Razak frequently used name-calling as a technique to create public discord against the new government.

***Keywords:** Najib Razak, Malaysia, social media, propaganda, political rhetoric*

"Malu Apa Bossku?" Retorik Politik Najib Razak di Facebook pada Pasca Pilihan Raya Umum 2018

Abstrak

Media sosial telah menjadi sebagai salah satu alat politik terpenting dalam dunia moden. Pada tahun 2018, kita menyaksikan kejatuhan kerajaan Barisan Nasional (BN) selepas 61 tahun memegang tampuk pemerintahan. BN tewas kepada musuh utamanya, Pakatan Harapan (PH). Walaupun PH dipuji kerana terlebih dahulu menguasai seni komunikasi dalam talian, kedua-dua gabungan parti politik berkenaan telah menggunakan media sosial secara aktif bagi menyebarkan propaganda politik masing-masing. Hal ini terbukti melalui peningkatan sokongan kepada PH walaupun media penyiaran tradisional dan mesin cetak telah dikawal ketat oleh kerajaan. Selepas tahun 2008, BN kehilangan hegemoni politik dalam Parlimen Malaysia, yang akhirnya kehilangan kerusi majoriti dan gagal membentuk kerajaan selepas satu dekad. Makalah ini memberi tumpuan kepada elemen retorik di laman Facebook milik Najib Razak, bekas pemimpin BN, setelah beliau tewas dalam Pilihan Raya Umum Malaysia yang ke-14 (PRU14). Di samping menumpukan kepada pilihan raya kecil Semenyih, para penyelidik juga melihat teknik-teknik propaganda yang digunakan oleh Najib Razak sepanjang tempoh tersebut berdasarkan teknik propaganda yang dirangka oleh Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA). Analisis kandungan ke atas hantaran di Facebook Najib Razak bagi tempoh 12 Januari 2019 hingga 1 Mac 2019 menunjukkan bahawa bekas perdana menteri berkenaan telah menggunakan lima agenda propaganda yang dominan dan berbeza terhadap PH. Najib Razak juga didapati sering menggunakan teknik propaganda 'ejekan' ('name-calling') bagi menimbulkan pertikaian dalam kalangan masyarakat terhadap pemerintah baharu.

Kata kunci: Najib Razak, Malaysia, Media Sosial, Propaganda, Retorik Politik

Introduction

In line with the development of communication technology, social media have played a significant role for political leaders in targeting mass audiences, particularly the voters (Sani, 2014a). Political leaders have opted for social media in expanding their political campaigns by reaching out for influence and support. Traditional media, such as television, radio and newspapers, are still relevant although their impact, compared to social media, has been reduced (Sani, 2014a; Jalli, 2016). Both the ruling party and the opposition use social media as their medium of communication although the opposition actively favours it as their primary platform as the ruling party controls the traditional media (Sani, 2014b).

Many politicians have opted for using social media as a medium of communication during the 21st century. Businesses, marketers, private sectors, the state and Federal governments, non-governmental organisations, political parties and leaders, and communities as well as individuals have diversified the way they communicate with others and have also shifted from the traditional mode of communication to social media. The advanced Internet infrastructure built in Malaysia that offers broader coverage and accessibility together with an attractive Internet data package from the telecommunications service providers has made social media handier and suitable. The social media have evolved from Friendster (2002) and Myspace (2003) to Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006) and Instagram (2010) (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Bruner, 2016).

Political parties and leaders use social media as a tool to promote as well as condemn rival parties and leaders, including character assassination (Sani, 2014b; Samoilenko, et.al, 2017; Sakke, Dollah, Hassan, Sarbi & Jafar, 2018). Social media are used all year round, however, the usage becomes more tense during election campaigns. Malaysia is no exception to using social media for political propaganda, especially during the 13th (GE13) and the 14th (GE14) general elections (Sani, 2014b). Although the Malaysian government employed propaganda through social media, the opposition used it more. This may have been because the issues being discussed were similar to the sentiments of the people. Common

problems, such as the high cost of living, the controversial tax system known as the Goods and Sales Tax (GST), government corruption and financial scandal in the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MBD) had attracted and influenced the voters (Ismail, 2018). Social media has been proven to affect the propaganda on the ruling party when Barisan National (National Front – BN) lost its two-third majority seats in Parliament during GE13 and eventually lost the election during GE14.

The GE14 held on May 9, 2018, ended the 61-year rule of the BN government (known from 1957 to 1973 as Parti Perikatan - the Alliance Party). The opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH – The Alliance of Hope) together with Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan – Sabah Heritage Party), has successfully formed the new Malaysian government with a simple majority of 112 out of the 222 Parliamentary seats. The defeat of BN during GE14 was due mainly to the social media and the issues vigorously used against BN and its leaders, particularly former Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abd Razak (Najib Razak). BN's defeat in GE14 was contributed mainly to hate sentiments towards Najib Razak and his policies (Tiung, Idris & Idris, 2018). The opposition had used social media to spread propaganda creating negative sentiments and perceptions towards Najib Razak and his administration. The opposition criticised most government policies, including Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M – 1Malaysia People's Aid), a government program to ease Malaysians' financial burden by subsidising a qualified group with a cash payout (Tiung, et al., 2018; Sakke, et al., 2018).

Since Najib Razak has now become the opposition to the Malaysian government after the GE14, this research seeks to explore his political propaganda following his GE14 loss. We were particularly interested in studying his post-GE14 social media narrative. This research looked at Najib Razak's use of Facebook as the platform for his political propaganda, exploring his political rhetoric with specific analysis of issues frequently discussed in his political discourse. We looked at the propaganda tactics meant to influence his audiences, including his supporters, followers, sympathisers, undecided voters and the public in general to rebuild support and trust towards himself and his party, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO). A content analysis

of Najib Razak's posts on Facebook covering issues during the 2019 Semenyih by-election period will be carried out to support this argument. Scholars have widely discussed the use of social media as a medium of propaganda. Baharom (2019) in his study on the use of Twitter by Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential election in the United States concluded that social media had generated active communication between the US politicians and their followers. Trump, being a political novice in US politics and who represented the Republicans, had successfully defeated his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton. Trump's success in gaining the trust of the voters, has proven that social media do play an effective role in political propaganda. Although this all happened in the US, a study will be carried out to examine a former Malaysian government leader-turned-opposition's (in this case, Najib Razak) use of social media to regain public support in Malaysia. It is widely accepted in Malaysia that the social media had played an effective role in determining the outcome of GE12 while social media have been influential during GE13 (Gomez, 2014; Sani, 2014b). These alternative media contributed to the opposition party's success in gaining support of the voters. The success of the opposition's continuous use of social media during GE14 has successfully led them to become the government of Malaysia. The opposition had broader experience in conducting propaganda through social media than did the government (Sani, 2014b). Furthermore, while the opposition continued to attack the government on social media, the government was busy controlling the attack and neglected to put up a counterattack. There were many issues used by the opposition that the government failed to overcome each problem that was brought up.   A controversial topic or theme can easily attract others, and in the case of Najib Razak, such controversial issues became sensational ones. Therefore, it will be interesting to conduct research on the topics used by Najib Razak in attacking the PH government while at the same time neutralising the negative perceptions the public held towards him.

The demography of social media users in Malaysia mainly consisted of millennials and the younger generation (like gen-z). Studies carried out by Musa (2019), Murat (2019), and Ahmad (2017) posited that the majority of the millennial generation are politically aware and easily influenced by political messages on social media. In 2012, when Facebook was among

the most popular social media platforms, millennials used it to share more negative-oriented information than positive-oriented information (Wok, Idid, Misman & Rahim, 2012). During GE13, Facebook was also the most popular social medium used by Malaysian political parties (Sern & Zanuddin, 2014). High participation on social media political discourse led many scholars like Idid (2018) and Sani (2019), influenced the massive turnout of first-time voters during GE14. More than 12 million out of the 14.9 million eligible voters cast ballots ("EC revises voter turnout figures to 82.32%", 2018). Before GE14, the Election Commission of Malaysia had expected that around five million young and newly registered voters would participate in the election (Periasamy, 2018), which had significantly contributed to the outcome of GE14. Therefore, since Najib Razak is known to have supporters from the older generations who are loyal to UMNO (Nor, 2017), it is interesting to find the level of support he received from the young voters who participated actively in the social media.

The theme "#maluapabossku" (literally "why the shame, boss") that Najib Razak popularised in January 2019, (Yahaya, 2019) seems to have gained momentum and support from among the young generation. Therefore, we were interested to find out whether Najib Razak's political rhetoric on Facebook influenced his popularity and support in Malaysian politics. Najib Razak's image was severely damaged both pre-GE14 and post GE14 when he was charged with 25 court cases involving money laundering and abuse of power (Beech, Paddock & Stevenson, 2018; Omar, 2018; Khairulrijal, 2018). The Malaysian law enforcement authorities seized more than RM1 billion worth of cash and items belonging to Najib Razak and his family from their condominium in Kuala Lumpur (Kaur, 2018).

It has become widely accepted that social media have become a vital tool in political communication and supremacy. The study conducted by Bronstein, Aharony & Bar-Ilan (2018) on the politicians in Israel concluded that social networking has become popular as a political podium in that country. The study also found that politicians use social networking to engage with people emotionally instead of expanding their political ideas and plans. Politicians represent themselves as approachable "normal

people" by sharing their family lives and hobbies, creating a connection between the politicians and their audiences. While many similar studies on social media and politics have been carried out in Malaysia (Gomez, 2014; Gomez, 2018; Sani, 2014a; Sani, 2014b), we found these studies were focused on the role and impact of the social media. The study also found that Malaysian politicians used social media to create a negative perception of their opponents. At this time, we did not come across any research on Malaysian politicians using personalised and positive emotional content on Facebook to attract an audience, especially by a former government leader-turned-opposition.

Therefore, this study will be filling that gap by finding out whether a former Malaysian government leader-turned-opposition has been able to use social media positively or negatively to influence his audiences. Many studies, such as Idid (2018), Gomez (2014), Sani (2014b) and Baharom (2019), have been carried out on the use of social media during the general election in Malaysia or abroad. These studies have proven that the social media have been effective for political parties and politicians during their national election campaigns. However, these studies did not mention whether social media are still influential during a by-election. Therefore, this study is meant to fill the gap by analysing the use of Facebook by Najib Razak during the 2019 Semenyih by-election.

Political Propaganda

Political propaganda refers to propaganda activities that are held for political purposes or interests. Politics and propaganda are closely interrelated. Without the right propaganda strategy, political parties or politicians will have difficulty influencing their supporters and voters. According to Lasswell (1927), propaganda refers to the management of the attitude of others through the manipulation of symbols. He posited that attitude means a "tendency to act" while symbols mean "gesture" (Lasswell, 1927). In other words, propaganda refers to the management of the tendency to act by a group of people who are dependent on the gestures displayed by the propagandist. The attitude may be in the form of gestures towards a person, a group, a policy or institutions. In politics, the gesture of a politician is essential to influence his targeted voters.

A gesture may come in many arrangements such as how a politician represents himself or herself to the public, the clothes that are worn, speech patterns, his or her body language, the manner of association with other things, what issues are best to highlight, how problems are tackled. In political propaganda, it is critical to use the persuasion approach on supporters and voters (Lasswell, 1927; Smith & Lasswell, 2015).

Lasswell (1927) stressed the critical elements in political propaganda, including such cultures as the use of language and words, as well as how the propagandists and the targeted audience differ. Other researchers agreed with Laswell's argument on how the function of propaganda has evolved due to technological changes including the physical medium of communication (Lasswell, 1927) which accelerated the connection between the ruler and the people such as the social media we have today. On examining the influence of political propaganda on voters, Ursprung (1994) concluded that rational voters are open to information disseminated by political interest groups. However, they will check the validity of the data before they make their political decisions. Voters' decisions will be based on opinions and information in which they have confidence (Ursprung, 1994). Voters feel that the evidence should be "well-founded" before a choice is made (Ursprung, 1994). Ursprung (1994) also mentioned that political propaganda involves semi-truth about political contexts; thus, it needs an intelligent selection of the semi-truths disseminated as propaganda.

Despite that, the degree of acceptance of information between uninformed and fully informed voters is equal, and only a certain degree of influence can be applied to them. Tiung, Idris and Idris (2018) in their study "Propaganda and Disinformation: Politics of Perception in Malaysia's 14th General Election (GE14)" pointed out that among other techniques, the opposition had used propaganda to win the election. The propagandist used immoral tactics, including fake news, to disgrace the BN (Tiung, Idris & Idris, 2018). Continuous propaganda by the opposition even before the election had further influenced the voters to a negative perception of the BN (Tiung, Idris & Idris, 2018). Tiung, Idris and Idris (2018) concluded that the BN failed to overcome these negative opinions, which cost the coalition party to lose the general election. During the

GE14, the opposition used fear and hate to discredit the BN and its leader Najib Razak. Among the issues used by the opposition were the misuse of funds of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and the increased cost of living due to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) (Tiung, Idris & Idris, 2018). Another propaganda development in Malaysia, as cited by Gomez (2014), the Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia spent at least RM103.9 million in 2013 on propaganda on the social media.

Propaganda Techniques in Media

Scholars use many terms to identify the propaganda techniques used in the media. Hashim (2013) for instance, recognised and used 10 propaganda techniques in his study of online news and propaganda. These 10 techniques are panic mongering, confusion, populism, saturation, bullying, scapegoating/othering, character assassination, rewriting history, conflating violence with power and opposition to violence with weakness, and invoking religion. Others, like Kadir (2013), Muluf (2014) and Zakaria (2015), used the seven propaganda techniques recognised by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) in their studies to identify propaganda. The seven IPA propaganda techniques are bandwagon, card stacking, glittering generalities, name-calling, plain folks, testimonial and transfer.

Bandwagon appeals to others to participate and support the propagandist. This technique is carried out by portraying the propagandist as receiving strong support from the people. It is meant to show that "everybody is doing it", "following the crowd" or "the winning side". The sentiment of commonality focuses on beliefs, race, religion and sex to attract others. The propagandist may hire a crowd or participate in one to personify the act. Furthermore, dramatic arts such as symbols, theme and music are used in the bandwagon technique (AAUM, 1938; Sproule, 2001; Baran & Davis, 2012). Card stacking occurs when the propagandist uses parts of the information (facts) to prove and strengthen his or her statements or arguments to win personal support, or support for his or her beliefs, policies and other matters. The propagandist lies by using over- or and underemphasise methods, censorship, alteration, false testimony

and omission of facts to confuse and divert the masses. Card stacking presents half-truths as truths and the unreal as real (AAUM, 1938). The glittering generalities technique is when the propagandist uses "virtue words", "good words", "sugar-coated words" or "words filled with praise" to strengthen the positiveness of his or her statements or arguments without offering supporting evidence. This technique is used to stir up and influence the emotions of the audience to accept and approve the propagandist's statements or arguments without examining the evidence. Politicians often use this technique to inspire their audiences (AAUM, 1938; Baran & Davis, 2012).

Name-calling is the opposite of glittering generalities. It uses negative remarks to saddle an opponent with a bad name or an immoral label. This method is used to create hate, fear and doubt among the audience to generate negative perceptions so a certain subject is perceived to be incompetent, have no integrity and cannot be trusted (AAUM, 1938). The objective of name-calling is to tarnish the image and reputation of the subject so that the audience will condemn and reject him or her. It can be applied directly or indirectly to the subject takes many forms, including attacks on individuals, groups, policies, practices and ideas (AAUM, 1938). It can also be just single words, sentences or images (pictures or cartoons) or contexts in which the message is meant to ridicule the targeted subject.

Plain folks is a technique that portrays the propagandist as an ordinary person, a regular guy or "just plain folks", contrary to the propagandist's actual status. This technique is used to develop confidence among the audience, so they perceive the propagandist as "one of us". During elections, politicians will show their devotion to the people by being with them and living like them. The plain folks' technique is used to win the hearts and minds of the people so the propagandist's ideas will be perceived as "of the people" (Baran & Davis, 2012). With the testimonial technique the propagandist uses an ideal person (usually someone respectable or a person known by others) to endorse and promote the propagandist's ideas. That person's testimonial does this quite well. This technique is considered proof or evidence to the audience thus strengthening the propagandist's ideas. Politicians used it to show that

they are worthy of the people's support and votes. Due to its value in influencing others to agree with the propagandist's ideas, the testimonial could also be used as part of the bandwagon technique (Baran & Davis, 2012; Martin, 2018).

Transfer is a technique whereby the propagandist associates himself or herself with other subjects or entities that wield authority and hold the respect of others so the targeted audience will accept the propagandist's ideas, policies, or programs. Symbols, as they stir emotions, are frequently used in the transfer technique which is used to portray authority as supporting and approving the propagandist's ideas, policies, programs or other matters and it is expected that the targeted audience will do the same (Baran & Davis, 2012).

Research Methods

This research aims to study Najib Razak's political rhetoric after GE-14, focusing on the Semenyih by-election by identifying the main issues raised by the former prime minister on his Facebook page. We also analysed the propaganda techniques Najib Razak used to influence supporters during that by-election period. We applied thematic analysis to Najib Razak's political rhetoric and used the IPA propaganda blueprint (as described in the previous section) to identify the propaganda techniques used by Najib Razak during the data collection period.

Thematic Analysis
Thematic analysis examines data to identify the themes (or patterns) within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It is a flexible method of identifying issues or patterns of a language because of its applicability within the range of a theoretical framework. It is not tied to nor need any specific theory of language or explanatory framework to work (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis is a useful analysis method for a data-driven analysis meant to understand the representation of phenomena (Clarke & Braun, 2013). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the two types of thematic analysis are top-down (deductive) – driven by research questions; and bottom-up (or induce/inductive) – driven by data. Top-down (deductive) thematic analysis means the researcher has to initially

determine the themes through research questions and create a coding. Thematic analysis is then performed on the data, using a coding sheet to identify the data that can be classified under a particular theme or category. With bottom-up (or induce / inductive) thematic analysis the researcher has to analyse the overall data to determine the themes and categories by formulating a code and finding similarity of patterns or themes in the data. This study uses the inductive thematic analysis to identify the themes (issues) used in propaganda from the 351 Najib Razak Facebook posts (data corpus). Based on the method, we identified five dominant themes and patterns that emerged from the data.

Findings

In conducting social media data collection (sampling data), we collected 415 posts on Najib Razak's Facebook page for the period of this study, from January 12, 2019 to March 1, 2019 (49 days). However, after data cleaning, only 351 posts were selected for analysis. The 64 Facebook posts omitted were related to the Cameron Highlands by-election that was held on January 26, 2019 and were irrelevant to this study. Within the 351 selected posts, Najib Razak included 256 posts with images, 57 with video clips and 38 posts with no supplementary data. Based on the thematic analysis of the 351 Najib Razak Facebook posts, we identified five dominant themes: "Criticise Pakatan Harapan (PH)", "Promote Najib Razak", "Endorse Barisan Nasional (BN)", "Condemn Democratic Action Party (DAP)" and "PH ruining Malaysia's Economy." The "Criticise Pakatan Harapan (PH)" was documented as the most frequently used theme. Among the five dominant themes, we identified 26 sub-themes, as illustrated in Table 1. "PH is a liar" recorded the highest posts of the sub-themes. The lists of themes and sub-themes are illustrated in Table 1. The "Criticise PH" contained nine sub-themes, "Promote Najib Razak" consisted of eight sub-themes, followed by "Endorse BN", "Condemn DAP" and "PH ruining Malaysia's Economy" with five, two and one sub-theme respectively. Among the 26 sub-themes, "PH is a liar" recorded the most posts (76), which comprised 20% of the total 351 posts.

*Table 1: Five Dominant Themes and Sub- themes of Issues Used in Najib
Razak's Facebook Posts*

Themes	"Criticise Pakatan Harapan"	"Promote Najib Razak"	"Endorse Barisan Nasional"	"Condemn Democratic Action Party"	"PH ruining Malaysia's Economy"
Sub-themes	•PH is a liar •PH does not care about Rakyat •PH abuse power •PH is selling the country •Others (5)	•Rakyat are supporting Najib Razak •Najib Razak is innocent •Najib Razak/ UMNO are attacked by the PH/ DAP •Najib Razak is concerned with Rakyat •Others (4)	•BN contri-butions to Rakyat •BN is better than the PH •Vote for BN •Others (2)	•DAP cannot be trusted •Others (2)	•The Malaysian economy is deteriorat-ing under the PH
No. of posts	143	120	36	35	17
Total posts	351				

The "Criticise PH" and "Promote Najib Razak" themes were used mostly by Najib Razak on Facebook with 143 posts and 120 posts respectively, followed by "Endorse BN" (36 posts), "Condemn DAP" (35 posts) and "PH ruining Malaysia's Economy" (17 posts). This finding showed that Najib Razak was aggressively attacking the PH government and at the same time extensively promoting himself to the public. Both themes were important as they constituted more than 70% of the total Facebook posts.

Themes

Theme 1: "Criticise Pakatan Harapan"
Under the theme of "Criticise Pakatan Harapan", Najib Razak regularly (76 out of 143 posts) used the sub-theme of "PH is a liar" to influence his audience. Najib Razak used 50% of the total posts under the "PH is liar" sub-theme to "Criticise PH". He often used the words 'tipu' (lie), "menipu" (lying), "penipu" (liar) and "u-turn" in reference to the PH. "Lie" was frequently associated with the PH's failure to fulfil their election manifestos during GE14 of abolishing highway tolls and easing the debt burden on students and graduates who took study loans from the National Higher Education Fund (Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi National – PTPTN). Najib Razak cleverly used these two issues to attract the attention of the public as both had a direct impact on the public. Najib Razak further strengthened his accusations that the PH were liars when he linked them with other PH controversial issues such as the authenticity of academic qualifications of the PH leaders, some of whom later confessed they failed to finish their tertiary studies while the others announced that they had never claimed to be graduates. Najib Razak also used a hashtag (#) to highlight the "liar" with such entries as "#dahlecunke". Besides that, Najib Razak associated the "PH is a liar" with himself as being the victim of the PH propaganda and slander such as,

> "Mereka telah menabur fitnah, perang persepsi… dan kaitkan segala yang tidak baik kepada saya dan BN" ("They slandered, conducted war on perception….and they related all the bad things to me and BN") (January 15, 2019, post no. 4, video clip)

The "PH does not care about Rakyat" (Rakyat means citizens in Malay. We will use Rakyat to describe Malaysian citizens throughout the rest of this paper) was the second sub-theme used by Najib Razak to criticise the PH. He used the comparison approach to strengthen his argument by stressing what the people had enjoyed under the BN government and the difficulties they were now facing under the PH government. Issues like unemployment, high cost of living, cancellation or reduction of assistance from the government were used. For example, the PH government had

reduced financial aid to the B40 group under the Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH), formerly known as Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M). Although the PH has led the Malaysian government for less than a year, the issue of their abuse of power was also included in Najib Razak's Facebook posts to criticise the PH government. Najib Razak highlighted the issues, particularly during the election campaign, by accusing the PH government of having used government facilities and programs to win votes. Najib Razak seemed to have used the same sentiments before GE14 in which the BN government was accused of selling the country, and the people were rejecting the BN. He used the same method against the PH government, as shown in the examples below.

> "Satu lagi aset kerajaan dijual kepada Singapura." ("Another asset sold to Singapore") (February 26, 2019, post no. 8)

> "Orang Asli juga ikrar untuk hukum PH kerana janji-janji yang dicapati"("The aboriginals also pledged to punish PH because of the broken promises")(February 26, 2019, post no. 8)

Theme 2: "Promote Najib Razak"
The second theme found as important as "Criticise PH" used by Najib Razak is "Promote Najib Razak". As illustrated in Table 1, a total of 120 posts (or 30%) were found to promote Najib Razak. During GE14, the Najib Razak's image was severely damaged which became one of the reasons the BN lost the government. The findings clearly show that Najib Razak was trying to reshape his political public image.

In rebuilding his image, Najib Razak had portrayed himself as still receiving support from Rakyat. This was presented through many video clips and images that showed Najib Razak being surrounded by supporters shaking hands and taking pictures with him. Najib Razak also described himself as innocent of all accusations made by his political enemy through supporting evidence based on a statement from the PH government. Despite that, Najib Razak presented himself as someone who is still concerned towards the Rakyat, the role he played when he was the prime minister. Furthermore, to portray himself as still having

influence and relevance in Malaysian politics, Najib Razak emphasised that the PH government was attacking him, which indicates that Najib Razak was still a threat to the PH government.

Theme 3: "Endorse Barisan Nasional"
The third theme found used in Najib Razak's Facebook posts is the "Endorse Barisan Nasional". Although Najib Razak holds no position in BN aside from being Pekan Member of Parliament, he had highlighted the role and importance of BN in Malaysian politics. He emphasised the "BN contribution to Rakyat" and "BN is better than the PH" in his Facebook posts. This approach is seen to have educated the Rakyat about the development by the BN government and the BN policies that had benefited the Rakyat. It portrayed both the strength of the BN and the weaknesses of the PH. Despite urging the Rakyat to support the BN, Najib Razak also clearly appealed to the Rakyat to vote for BN during the election campaign.

Theme 4: "Condemn Democratic Action Party"
The DAP has also been the focus of attention in Najib Razak's Facebook posts. Even though DAP is part of the PH, Najib Razak had focused on it with almost 10% of his postings directed at the DAP. In addition to the party, Najib Razak also emphasised two DAP leaders - Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng. The "DAP cannot be trusted" was the main sub-theme Najib Razak used to discredit the DAP. This theme is meant to create fear, particularly among the Malay who allegedly perceived DAP as racist and anti-Malay. Najib Razak posted the statement below:

> "Berhati-hati dengan pemimpin-pemimpin DAP" ("Be careful of leaders from DAP") (February 2019, post no.4)

Najib Razak used a strategy with the DAP similar to the one he used on the PH, which is to create doubt about the party. The accusation of "lies" has been used frequently, including as a justification of his own innocence. Najib Razak also attempted to portray the DAP as a party that is controlling the PH government as shown in his post below:

> "Kan saya dah kata. Ini kemahuan DAP." ("I told you this is what DAP wanted") (February 7, 2019, post no. 6)

Theme 5: "PH ruining Malaysia's Economy"

The last dominant theme used in Najib Razak's Facebook posts is the "PH ruining Malaysia's Economy". Within it, Najib Razak portrayed Malaysia's economy as being in bad shape after the PH took over the government. During GE14, the Najib Razak administration, too, was criticised on economic issues, particularly on the dropping of the Malaysian Ringgit currency.

Propaganda techniques

Najib Razak was found to have used more than one propaganda technique in some of his Facebook posts. There are 472 occurrences of propaganda technique in the 351 Facebook posts. A total of 245 of them contained a single technique, followed by 91 posts with two propaganda techniques, 14 had three and a final one had four. Based on the findings, Najib Razak used all seven propaganda techniques in his Facebook posts. As illustrated in Figure 1, name-calling was used most by Najib Razak, comprising nearly 45% of the total 472 posts. Five other propaganda techniques - transfer, plain folks, glittering generalities, card stacking, and bandwagon – were used equally, ranging from 44 to 61 posts. Testimonial propaganda was the least used, amounting to less than 1%.
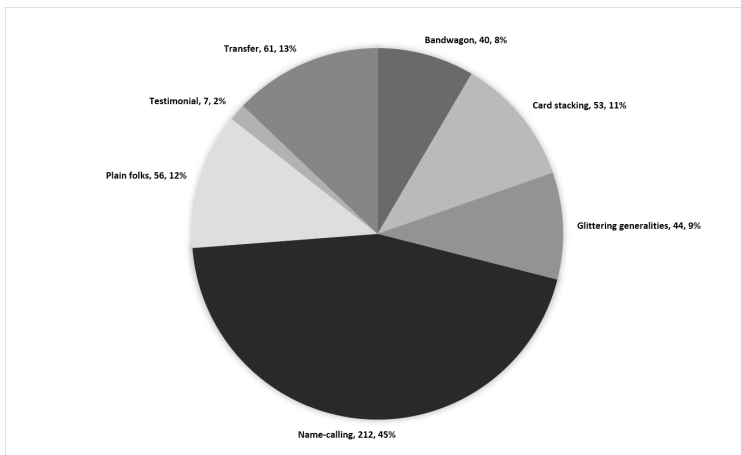
Figure 1. The Techniques of Propaganda in Najib Razak's Facebook Posts

Name-calling

Name-calling is the propaganda technique used most frequently by Najib Razak. He had two approaches to name-calling. The first literally labels the target and the second labels the target in a subtle context. Almost all the name-calling referred to the "lies" or "unfulfilled promises" made by the PH government and its political leaders, especially those from the DAP. Najib Razak frequently used the word Kewayangan when addressing Lim Guan Eng and MenHEN when addressing Lim Kit Siang, both leaders of the DAP.

Kewayangan is from the word wayang and in English means "movie". However, in the context of "kewayangan", it means "play drama". Najib Razak labelled Lim Guan Eng as kewayangan to portray to the public that Lim Guan Eng is insincere and a liar. Meanwhile, the word "MenHEN", an acronym for Menteri Hal Ehwal Najib, literally means, "Minister of Najib Affairs" and was addressed towards Lim Kit Siang. Najib Razak might feel that Lim Kit Siang has regularly made negative statements about him and so used MenHEN as a counterattack. The wide use of the name-calling technique clearly shows that Najib Razak is creating a negative perception of the PH government and the DAP. This approach is to instill prejudice in the audience so they will reject the PH and the DAP. Before GE14, Najib Razak himself was the target of name-calling by his political enemies, such as kleptokrasi (kleptocracy) and Mana 2.6 bilion? ("Where is the 2.6 billion?") – Both referring to the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal.

Transfer

Najib Razak used the transfer propaganda technique to justify his statements and arguments in both a positive and a negative manner. This technique was meant to promote the BN and himself to the audience as well as to criticise the PH government. Najib Razak used various level of groups and people, from a world leader such as the late King of Saudi Arabia, his political enemy, news reports and the Rakyat, to support his statement or argument. He mostly used statements from the PH government and government officials to strengthen his and BN's images while the statement from Rakyat was used to discredit the government. He used the transfer technique to portray himself as innocent of his

alleged wrongdoings. A classic example of Najib Razak indirectly stating his innocence when the authorities seized more than RM1 billion worth of cash and items belonging to Najib Razak and his family is given below.

> "Kerabat-kerabat raja di luar negara dan dalam negeri sering menghantar hadiah-hadiah berharga termasuk barang kemas kepada saya dan keluarga saya setiap kali kami melawat atau melalui lawatan pegawai tinggi mereka ke Malaysia" (Foreign or local royal families often send expensive gifts, including jewellery, to me and my family whenever we go for a visit or they would send them when their high officials visit Malaysia) (January 30, 2019, post no.2)

Plain folks

Najib Razak used the plain folks' technique to portray himself as living like ordinary people, although he is a wealthy, elite politician. His activities include visits to restaurants, markets, malls, and mosques, riding in taxis and the LRT, and mingling with Rakyat. This was done through video clips and images that showed Najib Razak surrounded by his supporters who were shaking hands with and taking pictures of him. Najib Razak who only represents the Pekan parliamentary seat, seems to be active outside his parliament area, moving around to meet people from one place to the other, especially during the by-election period. The theme #apamalubossku played by Najib Razak and his supporters has further popularised Najib Razak. This technique probably used to gain support and sympathy from the Rakyat while his corruption trial is going on. Although the supporters look genuine, Najib Razak's facial expression and body language indicate a little if not overly obvious discomfort on some of the situations.

Card stacking

Najib Razak used the card stacking technique to present his argument and statements, an approach similar to the transfer technique. He presented himself as the former prime minister perceived to know the stated issues. Using others' statements and facts from sources such as newspapers, he reiterated his previous position, supposedly as supporting evidence to strengthen his new statement and argument. Najib Razak often claimed

his statements and arguments are based on facts. The two purposes behind the card stacking technique are to discredit the PH and to give credit to himself and the BN.

Glittering generalities
Najib Razak used the glittering generalities propaganda technique to praise his own and the BN's past contributions, to strengthen Najib Razak's statement that he is innocent as well as to criticize the PH such as,

> "Tok Nan tentu akan bangga bahawa Lebuhraya Pan-Borneo…"
> ("Tok Nan [the late Sarawak's chief minister] must be proud of the Pan-Borneo Highway..) (January 12, 2019, post no. 4)

Bandwagon
Najib Razak also used more than half of the bandwagon technique to indicate that the Rakyat are supporting him. This was done through videos of Najib Razak surrounded by supporters and, shaking hands and posing for pictures. The theme/slogan #maluapabossku was repeatedly mentioned (provoked) by Najib Razak's propagandist and echoed by his supporters in some of the video clips.

Testimonial
Testimonial was the propaganda technique used least by Najib Razak, amounting to less than 1% of the total Facebook posts. This technique was used to strengthen positive statements about Najib Razak or the BN and air negative statements about his political enemy.

Discussion

Our findings revealed five main themes meant to influence voters, as described in the previous section. Based on the analysis on the Najib Razak's 351 Facebook posts, the "Criticise PH" and "Promote Najib Razak" are the two dominant themes most frequently used by Najib Razak, contributing nearly 75% of the total Facebook posts. This indicates that the themes were equally important to Najib Razak in relation to his social media communication with the public. It can be concluded that he

used both negative and positive sentiments to influence his audience. While attempting to create feelings of hate or rejection towards the PH, he tried simultaneously to attract the audience to himself.

As mentioned earlier, before and during GE14, Najib Razak was the primary target of the opposition discrediting the BN government. Controversial issues such as 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) were heavily criticised and used against Najib Razak and the BN government. It seemed that Najib Razak, after becoming the opposition, had started using the same tactics against his opponents, the ruling PH government. He focused particularly on the unfulfilled election promises of the PH, thus branding the PH a liar. These findings confirmed that Malaysian politicians used social media to create negative perceptions about their opponents. Najib Razak used sub-themes, "PH is a liar" as the most too critical of the PH government. The sub-themes constituted 20% of the total overall posts, indicating that Najib Razak attempted to reduce the trust the Rakyat of the PH government. The PH's unfulfilled election promises, the high cost of living and unemployment, and other issues after the PH took over the government were used to influence the audience. These sentiments, shared by the public, might have triggered the vigorous audience participation and response. Najib Razak used the same issues to defend himself when he was criticised for provoking the PH government.

Najib Razak's tactics of sharing negative-oriented information over positive-oriented information are seen as targeting the Malaysian youths as his audience. As mentioned earlier, Malaysian youths prefer sharing negative-oriented information with others (Wok, Idid, Misman, & Rahim, 2012). Furthermore, realising that youths make up the highest number of social media users, Najib Razak focused on the younger generation as his audience. This tactic is similar to those of other politicians who targeted social media users and gathered many followers. Thus, it can be concluded that Najib Razak's Facebook posts might have been effectively circulated to a broad audience. At the same time, it was found that Najib Razak also focused on using Facebook to rebuild his reputation and image with the public. Almost 35 percent of his total posts were on the theme "Promote Najib Razak". In promoting himself, he mostly used sub-

themes -- "Rakyat are supporting Najib Razak" - even though his political image was compromised before and during GE14. Most political analysts believe that BN's defeat during the GE14 could primarily be attributed to issues and scandals related to Najib Razak. These negatives had also caused him to lose his dual posts as the president of his party, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and chairman of BN.

Najib Razak was found to have used video clips and images to influence his audience and rebuild his image. These video clips and pictures were mostly "Najib Razak surrounded by his supporters, shaking hands and taking pictures with him". This study found that Najib Razak's tactics are similar to those used by other politicians (Kaur, 2019). Although the scenario might occur naturally, the people with Najib Razak were probably already his supporters and loyal to him during and after the GE14. Furthermore, Najib Razak started to gain popularity when he used #maluapabossku (Why the shame, boss?) slogan in a poster showing him on a motorcycle, portraying him as an ordinary person. The PH criticised this new slogan as immoral because, at the time of this writing, Najib Razak was facing 25 criminal charges, which had somehow increased his popularity in the Malaysian political arena. In promoting himself to the audience, Najib Razak used three other sub-themes: "Najib Razak is innocent", "Najib Razak is attacked by the PH/DAP" and "Najib Razak is concerned with Rakyat." This approach, seen as a Najib Razak attempt to counter public perception of his criminal charges and other allegations against him. Najib Razak's claims that the PH/DAP was attacking him could be considered valid considering that the PH government was actively blaming and associating Najib Razak and the BN government with their failure to fulfil their election promises.

Najib Razak's third dominant theme was "Endorse Barisan Nasional (BN)". Although he did not hold any position in UMNO at the national level or the BN, he seemed to have played beyond his role as the Pekan Member of Parliament when endorsing the BN. Two sub-themes were the BN's past contributions to Malaysia and the Rakyat, and that the BN is better than the PH. However, the researchers believe Najib Razak actively related himself to the BN was primarily "to kill two birds with one stone". First, by praising BN's past contribution when he was the

prime minister, he was indirectly promoting and praising himself to the audience. Secondly, he probably wanted the BN to be able to resist the PH, as a potential ruling coalition. It is impossible for Najib Razak to compete with the PH on an individual basis. Therefore, by claiming the BN is better than the PH, the sub-theme also   criticised the PH on the basis of a two-party system, one ruling and the other waiting to rule. This theme was also used to reposition Najib Razak within UMNO and the BN after he was forced to resign as president and chairman respectively after GE14. Moreover, he has played a significant and more prominent role in promoting the BN compared to other UMNO central leaders. Najib Razak was blamed for causing BN to lose the Sungai Kandis by-election in August, 2018. After keeping silent during the two by-elections in which the BN lost both seats, Najib Razak made a comeback during the Cameron Highlands by-election which witnessed BN retaining the seat, thereby seeming to make Najib Razak popular again. This situation probably indirectly served as an indicator that Najib Razak could still be relevant to his party.

After the GE14, Najib Razak continued to spread negative sentiments of DAP. Although the government was made up of a five-party coalition, namely, PKR, DAP, BERSATU, Amanah and Warisan, Najib Razak frequently used the DAP as his punching bag or main target in the PH. In his criticism of the PH and especially its leaders, Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, Najib Razak regularly associated DAP in his criticism of the PH. Under the "Criticise PH" theme, Najib Razak regularly used the same approach of creating fear of the DAP. However, some political analysts and politicians perceived Najib Razak as playing a racial card. The fifth dominant theme found to be used by Najib Razak, "PH ruining Malaysia's Economy", was actually the same one used by the opposition when Najib Razak was prime minister. Najib Razak attempted to describe the Malaysian economy as deteriorating under the PH government unlike what the people had experienced before. Although the Facebook posts under this theme were the least used, it has been identified as one of the five dominant themes used by Najib Razak besides the issues of the economy being used under other different dominant themes.

This study has shown that in his Facebook posts, Najib Razak had fully utilised all seven propaganda techniques identified by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis: bandwagon, card stacking, glittering generalities, name-calling, plain folks, testimonial and transfer. Name-calling was identified as the most dominant propaganda technique used, comprising 45 percent of the total 472 posts. Therefore, these findings have answered the second research objective of this study, which is to identify the techniques of propaganda used by Najib Razak in his Facebook posts in influencing voters and supporters during the Semenyih by-election period. These findings further indicate that Najib Razak propagated more offensive propaganda than defensive propaganda.

Najib Razak's strategy of having frequently used the name-calling technique, could be interpreted from multiple perspectives. First, the previous study had found that politicians often opted to use name-calling to embarrass their political enemies by reducing their public support. Based on the selected expressions Najib Razak used, it can be concluded that he intentionally wanted to ridicule his opponent. Name-calling expressions such as "kewayangan" (play drama) and "MenHEN" (an acronym for the Bahasa Malaysia language that means "Minister of Najib Affairs") were frequently used, labelling Lim Guan Eng and Lim Kit Siang respectively. Although the expressions did not seem rude, they may still influence others because such expressions also insinuate humour, ridicule and sarcasm. More importantly, the name-calling technique was mostly used to criticise the PH, which was the most dominant theme used by Najib Razak.

It was found that Najib Razak occasionally used some rather rough expressions which, from the researchers' perspective, does not truly represent Najib Razak. He is a political elite who had a good upbringing and has a good family background, and as such should not have used such expressions. Therefore, the researchers have come to strongly believe that Najib Razak's Facebook page was not personally managed by him but probably by a devoted team as is done in the US (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013). This argument is supported by posted expressions which were more relaxed, natural and inclusive. A few were rather lengthy, particularly on issues that required elaborate explanation or

justification. The researchers believe that Najib Razak is trying to present himself as an ordinary man the people can get close to. Besides that, he had used five other propaganda techniques which were transfer, plain folks, card stacking, glittering generalities and bandwagon, indicating that Najib Razak found it important to persuade the audience utilizing all possible angles.

In conclusion, Najib Razak, a former Malaysian government leader-turned-opposition had been proven to have used the social media to gain support, the same medium of communication that the ruling government used when they were the opposition. It is thus proven that social media have played a vital role in political communication, particularly from the opposition side. Using social media among the opposition seems to gain better influence than does that of the government. Najib Razak used popular social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to disseminate and propagate his ideas. He used social media such as Facebook for two primary objectives, to discredit the PH government and to promote Najib Razak. To achieve these two objectives, he employed both negative-oriented and positive-oriented information for his target audience, although the latter approach was found to be higher in terms of usage. This study has proven that political propaganda through social media does exist. Politicians, especially the opposition (on which this study was focused), have used common interests with the public as their primary subject of discussion, attracting their audience with selective topics. The researchers also conclude that social media can be utilised as agenda-setting as well as public agenda. Agenda-setting is applicable for social media when specific issues were overlooked or less critical to the public; here, social media are used to highlight the issues or problems at hand. In this study, Najib Razak used agenda-setting to portray himself as innocent of charges of government improprieties. This scenario, however, cannot be carried out through mainstream media. A public agenda is applicable for the social media when the propagandist picks up on issues that are widely discussed by the public on an offline or online channel and reposts it on the social media to attract the audience.

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