

Malaysia's radical left "Manifesto for the 99%" goes beyond the government and the mainstream oppositions

Thursday 1 March 2018, by [SOONG Kua Kia](#) (Date first published: 4 January 2018).

COMMENT | The Manifesto provides a stark reminder to the nation of the range of reforms that matter most for a truly just and sustainable future - not whether the ruling BN or opposition Pakatan Harapan wins the next election.

Despite the sanctimonious reproaches by some against the spoilt votes campaign or #UndiRosak, Harapan leaders have consistently failed to tell the nation what reforms they propose that are so different from those of BN. Let us look at how both coalitions stack up in relation to the big issues facing the nation:

An end to racism and racial discrimination in Malaysia

Since independence, the ruling coalition has unabashedly used race-based political parties - Umno, MCA, MIC - to gain votes and popularity. Initially, Harapan could argue that they were above this primordial predilection, being made up of multi-ethnic parties.

Now they can't. Their new leader is from the race-pure Bersatu party. We presume Bersatu considers itself the "real" champion of the bumiputeras in contrast to Umno. Thus, by opportunistically embracing a supposed Malay vote catcher, Harapan have lost their reformist credibility or, as someone has put it recently, they have sold their soul to the devil.

As a result of this pragmatic arrangement, none of the political parties in either of the two coalitions have paid any attention to the elephant in the room, namely, the racially discriminatory New Economic Policy that was scheduled to end in 1990. Race-based policies have become the norm in this country even though they are the biggest impediment to national unity.

So now, BN and Harapan must tell us whether our "1Malaysia" will still be run on racial preference and discrimination after GE14. If not, when will such racial policies end?

The "manifesto for the 99 percent" calls for needs-based and not race-based policies. An Equality Act will make racially discriminatory policies a thing of the past and equality will become an intrinsic part of the Human Rights Commission. Are BN and Harapan committed to such a long-overdue reform?

It is time for BN and Harapan to take human rights seriously and respect all Malaysian citizens irrespective of ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender or sexuality so that we can march forward as a nation.

Wealth redistribution to the 99pct

Both BN and Harapan are competing to see which coalition can outdo the other in neo-liberal policies that offer investors attractive opportunities that they can't refuse. The big corporations and developers must be laughing all the way to the bank for they seem to have both coalitions in their pockets.

The new leader of Harapan is of course none other than the "father of neo-liberalism" himself - if that is any claim to fame - for he was the one who sold off our national assets to his crony capitalists from 1981 onwards. The leader of the opposition called it "piratisation".

Consequently, in the states under both BN and Harapan, deforestation by developers goes on uninhibited, while the building of highways, tunnels and land reclamation continue unabated without concern for the public commons and the marginalised people living there.

And while we see BN or Harapan shed crocodile tears over the rise in the cost of living, do we see these coalitions putting forward sound policies to redistribute wealth in this country? Do they propose progressive fiscal policies to tax the top one percent who own more wealth than the bottom 40 percent in our country?

The wealth of the richest 50 Malaysians (top 0.00017 percent) amounts to nearly RM300 billion when the total government revenue is only RM180 billion! Do either BN or Harapan put forward proposals to regulate financial transactions and to put an end to tax evasion?

A just, democratic and progressive alternative

Do BN and Harapan promise real democracy instead of these pious commitments to periodic general elections which do not change our lives substantively? When are we going to see term limits placed on office bearers and elected representatives?

There are some representatives who have been in Parliament since independence and still try to claim indispensability. Apparently, there are not enough capable young, female or minority leaders from marginalised communities in this country who can replace these dinosaurs in Parliament. So what is there in this electoral circus to attract the involvement of young Malaysians?

A just, democratic and progressive alternative calls for a living wage and rights for all workers; a reasonable pension at retirement; affordable and livable housing; free tertiary education (means-tested for the well-off); formal or informal elected local government; commitment to international human rights practices and covenants.

Do we hear a call for the leaders of either coalition to debate these big issues? It is time that they did!

It's also high time for BN and Harapan to tell us what we are voting for! It's time they tell us if they subscribe to our "manifesto for the 99 percent". If they do not, what are we voting for in GE14?

Harapan has destroyed the opposition coalition

Apart from the similarity in basic policies of BN and Harapan, many Malaysians who had hoped for and helped to build the opposition coalition since the eighties are disgusted at the way the opposition coalition has been callously destroyed since the so-called "Kajang Move". As a result, there is no one-to-one choice in the vote anymore but three-cornered and even multi-cornered fights in GE14.

The name-calling and general kurang ajar (disrespectful) attitude by Harapan leaders against other

opposition leaders are unwarranted and serve only to disappoint former Pakatan Rakyat supporters.

Thus, besides telling us what your reformist policies are, explain to us how you have allowed this disastrous situation for the opposition to arise in which our votes will be rendered effete in a three-cornered or multi-cornered fight. Harapan should not try to blame it all on PAS because they had already made clear their intentions in constituencies such as Sg Siput and Hulu Langat where PAS is not in the picture.

So how can you blame the disaffected voters for wanting to spoil their votes? Instead of chastising these disenchanted Malaysians as if they have not thought this through, why not debate these big issues in public?

With the release of this “manifesto for the 99 percent”, we call on voters to challenge the candidates to gauge their stand on these big issues so that we know which candidate to support in any constituency. Malaysians who want real change can then vote for candidates who endorse this manifesto.

Power to the people!

Kua Kia Soong

P.S.

Malaysiakini

<https://m.malaysiakini.com/news/409847>