

Why Malaysians should vote PSM

Thursday 19 April 2018, by [THAYAPARAN S](#) (Date first published: 14 April 2018).

(Writer's note: I am not, and have never been, a member of PSM. I do know a few political operatives from PSM as I do members of other opposition political parties and the establishment.)

COMMENT | First off, a shout-out to RK Anand for his impressive interview with PSM's S Arutchelvan. He really gets into the desiderata of PSM in this political landscape and his piece is the antidote to all the faux (as opposed to fake) news out there. Furthermore, thanks to P Gunasegaram, who I hope does not mind this homage to his lucid article on why Umno has to be benched.

This piece on '10 reasons why you should vote PSM' also applies to BN supporters - yes, they are out there - who think that BN under PM Najib Razak is not worth voting for and a reminder to the #undirosak crowd, to which I already made [this pitch](#).

If you are lucky enough to have a PSM candidate in your area and already know that you are going to vote opposition, then consider PSM your opposition candidate. Why?

Well, because you know that your vote is not going to go to Umno/BN but if you really want to save Malaysia, use this opportunity to create the foundation for an opposition which directly opposes the mainstream politics that has brought us to this point.

This election could be your first small step in truly saving Malaysia.

1. Voting PSM into the opposition is a reminder to the opposition that their job is not to become the next BN.

This, of course, is the fear of many rational-thinking opposition supporters.

Say, you are sick of dynastic power groups. Say you are sick of political hegemons squashing dissent in their organisations. Say you are sick of the way how mainstream politics is about race. Say you are sick that mainstream policy-making is about seeing what your political opponent does and then doing the opposite, without deeper considerations.

Say you want politicians who would remind the opposition should they come into power - or do not - that the Umno/BN way of doing things, is not the best idea if you want to really save Malaysia.

If you believe in all these things, vote PSM.

2. You reject the idea that religion always has to be the major issue in mainstream Malay politics.

Are you sick and tired of the way how mainstream politicians use Islam? Do you worry that the only avenue young people have to voice their dissent is through mainstream political parties who

understand the use of religion as a narcotising tool to silence dissent?

When you have one side claiming they want to turn this country into an Islamic state and the other side at times contemplating Malaysia as an Islamic state through the constitution, you know you are in trouble.

If you want young Muslims to have an avenue where religion is not part of the “struggle” or indeed a political party that does not use Islam to garner votes, vote PSM.

3. You are sick and tired of the opposition telling you to be pragmatic and that ultimately, they will work things out.

PSM does not have apocalyptic political fantasies. But for PSM, the political process is the Malaysian struggle. Struggle implies long work ahead. It is not contradictory when PSM operatives want to remain activists doing the hard work on the ground and not getting into “politics”. They understand what politicians do and they want to remain effective proponents for the causes they claim they want to represent.

This is exactly why people should vote for them. They want to do the hard work instead of thinking of politics as a profession.

4. You understand a two-party system only means something if there are ideological and foundational issues that separate the parties.

Read the [public comments](#) of academic James Chin - “In summary, if the defenders of the Malay establishment are forced to hand over power to someone from outside the Umno should it lose the upcoming election, there is no better person than Mahathir. For them, Mahathir simply represents an alternative Ketuanan Melayu leadership rather than real political reforms.”

5. You want candidates who actually care about their base instead of candidates who are linked by mutual hatred towards the Umno regime.

Here is what I said earlier - “Catchy political bromides are the currency and while a party like PSM goes about attempting to build consensus far away from the preoccupations of urban politics who mock in racial and religious terms the rural folk, mainstream opposition politics is dominated by issues far removed from the realities that would ultimately determine this upcoming election.”

6. You want your representative to actually have a system - manifesto - to aspire to, instead playing the racial game with an eye (always) towards the dominant community.

Read the public comments of social activist Kua Kia Soong [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

7. You want candidates who would actually advocate on behalf of marginalised peoples so you could live your privileged lifestyle without worrying (too much) about them.

I wish I was joking about this.

8. PSM will endure even if they do not get any seats in this election and would continue serving the people they choose to represent even if those people do not have the power to get them into office.

Say you do not vote for PSM. They will continue doing the work that they believe will save Malaysia. They will continue the work, even when they understand that the mainstream political process and

those who support it have no use for them.

They will endure, which is more than I can say for the opportunists and charlatans of the mainstream political elite who say things they know opposition supporters want to hear but will not give a damn about fulfilling their obligations because they know partisan politics trumps accountability.

9. You want politicians who speak truth to power and not only just want to convert power for themselves

Mainstream politics is about safe seats. Mainstream politics is about thinking that a seat is yours by virtue of commanding a voter base – which could turn on you at any moment. Mainstream politics is about accruing power within the political parties you are a part of. Forming schisms and cliques. Power jockeying and kissing up to power in your little pond.

This does not leave much time to do anything else but service your political careers. Are all mainstream political operatives like this? Maybe not. I can guarantee you that none of the PSM candidates is like that.

10. Because the opposition needs PSM.

I wrote this about the DAP, but the reality is that the opposition needs PSM. For far too long, the opposition has relied on personalities or wonky strategies to garner the votes of marginalised, disenfranchised, and yes, rural communities. What is needed is sustained grassroots-level activism and a change in direction from the Umno/BN template, which has been adopted by the opposition.

Read [here](#) – “If maintaining the status quo is the best we can hope for, then stacking the political deck for future political gambles would be advisable. Encouraging PSM to work the grassroots and providing the machinery that would enable them to galvanise the disenfranchised from all communities would be a better option than sticking to old formulas.”

And [read](#) PSM sole parliamentarian Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj’s appeal. You could contribute to the PSM cause [here](#).

Writing this article was difficult. There are candidates that PSM are going up against whom I know and I really wish they could have worked something out with Harapan. However, I believe that PSM is onto something, and although ideologically I have very little in common with PSM, they are indeed needed for the greater good of this country.

S Thayaparan

[Click here](#) to subscribe to our weekly newsletters in English and or French. You will receive one email every Monday containing links to all articles published in the last 7 days.

P.S.

Malaysiakini

<https://m.malaysiakini.com/columns/419777>