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Presidential Elections in Singapore 2017

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ABSTRACT

2017 had been considered a year of great political change in the history of Singapore. Singapore contested elections in 2017 in order to elect their next president. But it didn't go as planned or prepared, because the election was mainly contested and was reserved for minority Malay community, who haven't held the presidential office since the year of 1970. It was the 5th Presidential election held in Singapore and the Election Department declared Halima Yacob of Independent party as the only eligible president, who then emerged as winner in a single-horse race. There were three main candidates running for the presidential rights namely Salleh Merican, 67, a property company chief executive, Halima yacob, 63, former speaker of parliament and Farid Khan, 61, marine services firm Chairman (Yong c. , 2017) and the official dates for filing nominations was 13th September, 2017 while that for voting was 23rd September, 2017. What was a moment for celebration for Halima Yacob after being elected as the first woman president of the country has become a contentious situation throughout the country with various cases of debates going throughout country questioning her rights of claiming the president's throne, the religious perspective on this matter and the change that took place in the presidential elections. As a result, this study has been undertaken in order to know the political changes and behaviour of general public and impact of the presidential elections throughout the country, which to many of them is a political act of inequality. Depriving the Right to vote and announcing the leader without any fair contestation of elections has been amongst the matters of agitation and protest of public. Singapore has been one of the most efficient economies in modern times and the impact of such a change is worth notable on human lives.

Keywords: Political Change, Presidential Rights, Religious Perspective, Political Inequality, Efficient Economies.

1. INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The elections in Singapore were held on 13th September 2017 and this was conducted to elect the new president. This new president emerged victorious by default after other presidential hopefuls fell afoul of new rules. Singaporeans were intended to go to the surveys toward the finish of one week from now to vote in favour of another president, yet they'll never again have the shot, with just a single applicant meeting all requirements for the race. Following alterations to the Constitution of Singapore, the decision was the first to be saved for a specific racial gathering under a rest activated model. The 2017 race was saved for applicants from the minority Malay people group, who had not held the presidential office since 1970. The Elections Department pronounced Halimah Yacob to be the main qualified presidential hopeful on 11 September. Halimah was therefore pronounced president-elect on 13 September, and was initiated as the eighth President of Singapore the next day. She is the primary female President of Singapore.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

As a focus to our research towards the Singapore Presidential process, an effort has been remained to reach through the core problems faced during the political walkover and also some of the key areas that are vital to be discussed. Shutting out potential candidates from the Chinese majority and engaging in crude tokenism tainted Halima's entry into the Istana. The decision of making 2017 elections into a Malay-race only backfired and unleashed a social media flurry of racist remarks in the guise of political comment, injuring the very harmony that the government claimed it was trying to promote (George, the Singapore presidential selections, 2017). But this were the matters which was only mentioned as a cover up for certain important factors.

The presidential election in 2011 was Singapore's most hostly contested with 4 candidates running their way to the presidential claims. But the most important factor which questioned the eligibility of the elections was the changes that were made by the election commission in order for the candidate to run for the elections. They were amongst the most fascinating changes since the time presidential elections started in 1991 like (1) The reserving system for an ethnic community, if five terms have been passed without any president from that community along with that (2) raising the eligibility threshold for private-sector candidates to have headed companies with an average shareholder equity of \$500 million in the three most recent years of reporting.

Before, the threshold was \$100 million in paid-up capital. Accordingly, there were debates over the same issue and even a court challenge was mounted by Dr. Tan Cheng Bock on whether the reserved elections should kick in this year or in 2023. (Toh, 2017)

But then, another feeling amongst the people was that of “Meritocracy”, which was always being used as “an excuse to discriminate against Malays.” Editorials and newspaper were asking all sorts of questions to the government whether the discrimination of Malays in Singapore was the reason of this political changeover. Then there were situations or debates on who is Malay? And how could one determine whether he is of that race or not. As the right was reserved only for the Malays, all the candidates were to be assessed by a five-member committee panel to qualify under the criteria (Han, How Singapore elected a president without a vote, 2017) . So, then what do they know? That Halima Yacob who stood as a Malay candidate in previous five elections and Saleh Marican both had Indian fathers. Moreover, Farid Khan’s Identity Card lists his race as “Pakistani”.

There has been Chinese domination in Singapore and its Prime Minister has always been a Chinese. Until 2015, where the country first saw more than one Malay Minister in the cabinet. So, the Idea to break the Chinese monopoly in the Singaporean Politics. The problems may be more than one, it may be the Chinese domination or Malay Discrimination, but it has raised various concerns throughout the country and has taken a religious makeover.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kirsten Han, September 12th, 2017

How Singapore elected a president without a vote

Singaporeans were supposed to go to the polls at the end of the next week to vote for a new president, but they will no longer have the opportunity, with only a single candidate qualifying for the race. Former Speaker of Parliament Halimah Yacob has emerged victorious by default, after other presidential hopefuls were unable to stand a chance due to unfair rules like the presidential seat was to be given to applicants from the minority Malay people group. She told reporters that she can only promise to do the best to serve the people of Singapore and that doesn’t change whether there is an election or not. What ought to be a snapshot of festivity that Halimah will be Singapore's first female president has demonstrated quarrelsome for a few reasons and shows up inconsistent with Singapore's notoriety for being a technocratic and proficient city state. While the workplace of president is generally a stately part in Singapore, he or she has energy to veto a portion of the administration's choices, for instance in monetary issues that touch on the nation's stores, or key arrangements in people in general administration.

Cherian George, September 15th, 2017

The Singapore presidential election: A monumental miscalculation

Cherian George contends that Singapore's multiracialism would have been exceptional off if the legislature had kept the presidential race open for Tan Cheng Bock to challenge, or deserted the chose administration totally and returned to the old arrangement of a stylized head of state. Halimah Yacob will make a great president. I've scarcely met her and we've just traded merriments. Be that as it may, what I am aware of her, I regard. Furthermore, what an effective image for correspondence. Singapore's first female president; the first from a Malay foundation since 1970; and a head scarfed Muslim head of state when Muslim minorities in such a significant number of nations confront undeserved doubt

Richard C. Paddock, September 12th, 2017

Singapore Has a New President, No Election Needed

Singapore will get another president on Wednesday, however she won't be chosen. Halimah Yacob, 63, a previous speaker of Parliament, will turn into the nation's first female president and the first in five decades to originate from the Malay ethnicity when she is confirmed on Wednesday. Be that as it may, what could have been a striking point of reference for Singapore's vote based system is rather being freely addressed as a fixed procedure, and her authenticity is as of now experiencing harsh criticism. While Singapore's Constitution does, truth be told, accommodate voters to choose their leader, the qualification prerequisites to remain for decision were drawn so barely that lone Ms. Halimah made the cut.

Charissa Yong, August 28th, 2017

Presidential Election 2017 Writ issued: Nomination Day on Sept 13, Polling on Sept 23

Singaporeans will vote in favour of their eighth President on Sept 23, if more than one individual meets all requirements to keep running for the position. The champ will be the second Malay president in Singapore's history, and the first to be picked in a presidential decision held for competitors of a particular group. Singaporeans will know whether they will get the chance to make their choice or if the race will be a walkover, on Nomination Day, which will be on Sept 13. The Presidential Elections Committee will screen every presidential cheerful and illuminate them of their choice by the day preceding, on Sept 12. In the event that there is just a single qualified hopeful, he or she will be pronounced the President on Nomination Day. The Elections Department (ELD) gave these points of interest in an announcement on Monday (Aug 28), declaring that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had issued the writ of race. Surveying Day will be pronounced an open occasion.

Ferus Bakar, 28th August 2017

Presidential Election: Three potential candidates look forward to contesting election

With the writ of decision issued on Monday (Aug 28), the three potential applicants said they anticipate the way toward challenging one month from now's Presidential Election. Businessperson Salleh Marican, who was the first to present his applications to the Elections Department last Wednesday, said he now excitedly anticipates the choice on whether he qualifies as a hopeful.

He says that he is certain of getting that green light. It has been an extraordinary adventure for his group and him when we settled on the choice to challenge. Additionally, he anticipates be qualified to challenge in the race. A challenge will be useful for Singapore." His sentiments were shared by Mr Farid Khan, chairman of marine sector company Bourbon Offshore Asia, who said: "We look forward to an open and fair competition ahead."

Valerie Koh, 8th November 2016 (Koh V. , 2016)

'Fundamental Necessity' that Presidency must be Multiracial

A fundamental necessity is what it is as Singapore is not a Country of any one race or ethnic group, it is a multi-cultural nation where everyone has equal rights and equal representation. The author has deeply exhibited the fact that with Chinese dominantly leading the nation so many years, is it a limitation for other ethnic groups of the country? As they are not given proper representation. Being surrounded by multi-cultural South-Asian countries and with a strong belief in offering equal opportunities to all cultures, it was necessary that the Presidency must be Multiracial. The country is not made up of only Chinese population but all other cultures like Malays and Indians. Although Chinese ethnic group forms the majority, the country stress on the need of providing president from multi-cultures and 2017 is an important platform.

Faris Mokhtar, 9th September 2016 (Mokhtar, TODAY, 2017)

Why Presidential Election should not be a Walkover

It has become sure that the presidential election of 2017 was not only reserved for Malays but was also reserved for Madam Halima Yakob. Being the speaker of parliament and a candidate representing Malays, it was sure that she would be the obvious winner of the elections but a walkover was not accepted. It is notably highlighted by the author that both the other candidates namely Saleh Marican and Farid Khan didn't met their criterion of qualifying for the post. But, should they have been disqualified or should they have been allowed to contest was the obvious question. Even in the previous, there were doubts about eligibility of Mr. Tan Jee Say, but he did contested and eventually won. Such disqualifications **could** affect the elections in future as we might not see industrialists as minority candidates for presidential elections. Another reason for avoiding walkover was to not let a single power dominate in the name of equal representation.

3. METHODS

The different methods of data collection that we have used for finding information on the elections which took place in Singapore in 2017 and how the choice between three presidential candidates were made.

Primary Data: The data has been gathered by conducting questionnaires, surveys and observations, collecting articles, etc. This has helped us understand why and how the different presidential candidates are being elected and preference is being given to the Malay minority group.

Secondary Data: The questions that we had asked were clear, focused and open-ended questions and they are qualitative in nature i.e. they do not involve any numerical data and focus on the quality of human interactions which has reduced the unfair and biased way of electing Singapore's President. The articles have been reviewed and it has been observed that there was no voting needed for electing the 2017 Presidential elections for Singapore and how there was a miscalculation in the elections as to how many applicants were to stand for elections and a majority of the people had already decided that Halimah Yacob was going to be the new president as per the amendments made in the constitution of Singapore.

4. RESULTS

After going through various analytical stages of our research methods following conclusions have been emerged. The Singaporean Elections has remained a breakthrough event in the political history of the country but certainly has caused a wave of tension and Political turmoil throughout the country:

- The reserved elections in 2017 where considered necessary in order to uplift the development of minority Malay community, their presentation as a part of culture of the country and to break the Chinese domination. Well the elections were certainly important as being a multi-cultural country Equal representation is an important right and reserving important responsibilities of country to a certain Ethnic Group would surely prove helpful.
- There were various questions raised about the accountability of elections and the candidates, concerned about the Ethnicity of various candidates and their qualifications about contesting in Elections. Noting that all the candidates had certain limitations with respect to qualification criteria, only Madam Halimah Yakob was allowed to contest.
- The Walkover was another fascinating incident which shocked the nation or perhaps filled them with the fury as to what is Government up to. The right to vote was one of the fundamental rights of the citizens, but whether to held elections or not was in the hand of Election Commission. After Halimah Yakob was declared the only eligible candidate and the President of the country, the Malay community was still not believing how they are a part of a culture if they cannot elect their own Leaders.

5. DISCUSSION

At a current question and answer session where she disclosed her ungrammatical trademark "Do Good Do Together", presidential confident Madam Halimah Yacob was asked on whether she would be frustrated if the up and coming presidential decision were to be a walkover. Madam Halimah's non-committal reaction: "Regardless of whether we have a walkover or a challenge is up to the Presidential Elections Committee to choose it since it is the PEC that needs to choose the qualification of the diverse candidates."

It is evident that of the three presidential hopefuls, Madam Halimah is the special case who naturally qualifies as an applicant by prudence of having been a Speaker of Parliament for a long time. Questions stay on whether the other two potential contenders – CEO of Second Chance Properties Mr Salleh Marican, 67, and administrator of Bourbon Offshore Asia Pacific Mr Farid Khan, 62 – will make the cut.

Campaigns for the presidential race on Sept 23 will vary from past ones, with new decides acquainted with guarantee that applicant's demonstration with propriety and nobility, with regards to the workplace of the president. Likewise, applicants need to make a statutory revelation that they comprehend the part of the president as spelt out in the Constitution. The new standards are intended to keep out doubtful guarantees and the harsh and tumble of legislative issues amid the battling procedure. The Elections Department (ELD) underlined this in an announcement, reminding hopefuls how they should battle. It included that the president ought to stay over the political shred, and it isn't his part to help or contradict the Government of the day or to propel his own plan or arrangements. The progressions were made to keep the aggressive, politicized crusades that denoted the 2011 presidential race. A few hopefuls had then made guarantees past the ambit of the administration, in their offer to win the workplace.

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