

## **Platforming Threatoric on TikTok: Racial-Religious Fear during Malaysia's 15th General Election**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines how TikTok shaped the production and circulation of threatoric, the affective and discursive staging of racial and religious threat, during Malaysia's 15th General Election (GE15). Drawing on Proximitation Theory (PT) and Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), it analyses 60 publicly accessible TikTok videos collected between 5 and 24 November 2022 that mobilise ethno-religious anxieties, frequently invoking the May 13, 1969 riots to frame political opposition as imminent existential danger. Moving beyond content-centred analysis, the paper approaches threatoric as a platformed genre organised through observable platform formats and techno-semiotic resources. The analysis identifies four recurring patterns: affective-sonic staging, epistemic claims to evidentiality, platformed polyvocal legitimation, and interactional and translational amplification that intensify spatial, temporal, and axiological proximitation in multimodal form. Synthesising these patterns, the paper specifies eight platform affordances through which ideological fear is rendered familiar, morally saturated, and presented as epistemically self-evident within the sampled dataset. It argues that GE15 TikTok content does not constitute an ideological rupture but a platformed rearticulation of enduring ethnonationalist anxieties under conditions of platformed politics.

**Keywords:** *TikTok; platformed politics; Proximitation Theory; threat discourse; multimodal discourse; political communication; Malaysia; elections*

### **Introduction**

During Malaysia's 15th General Election (GE15) in 2022, TikTok emerged as a prominent platform for electoral campaign communication, particularly in efforts to reach first-time voters enfranchised by the Undi18 (Vote18) constitutional reform enacted in 2019 (Ooi, 2022; see also Nur Hasliza, 27 November 2022). Undi18 lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 and introduced automatic voter registration, bringing previously unregistered citizens aged 18 and above onto the electoral roll by default (Chan, 21 January 2022). As a result, the electorate expanded by approximately 6.9 million new voters, of whom around 16% were aged 18-20, most fell within the 21-50 age range, and roughly 60% were Malays (*MalaysiaNow*, 4 October 2022). The enlarged electorate unfolded within Malaysia's long-standing multiethnic political order, where Malays/Bumiputera<sup>1</sup> constitute the demographic majority (69.9%), alongside Chinese (22.8%) and Indian (6.6%) minorities (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). Here, Malays are constitutionally defined as Muslim under Article 160, and Article 153 secures their special rights and privileges, shaping the terrain on which electoral mobilisation takes place. Despite these institutional and generational shifts, analysts widely characterised GE15 as among "the most ethnically polarised elections in recent history" (Welsh, 13 March 2023; see also Marzuki & Ibrahim, 4 April 2023). Political competition continued to be structured around

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<sup>1</sup> Literally 'sons of the soil', used in Malaysia to refer to primarily ethnic Malay and various indigenous peoples including those in Sabah and Sarawak.

ethno-racial and religious lines, reflecting a familiar repertoire in Malaysian electoral politics. As Siti Nurnadilla's (2020) study of mainstream editorials and columns during Malaysia's 13th General Election (GE13) shows, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) – the anchor party of the Barisan Nasional coalition that ruled the country uninterrupted since independence in 1957 – operated within a media environment structurally aligned with its governing interests. Within this space, anxieties over the preservation of Malay political primacy and constitutionally sanctioned privileges were normalised through fear-based discursive strategies. Malays were discursively positioned as rightful proprietors of the nation, while political change and non-Malay opposition were framed as threats to unity, stability, Malay/Bumiputera privileges, and Islam, thereby reinforcing UMNO/BN's political legitimacy. Such rhetoric carried into the subsequent general election in 2018 (GE14), taking on a more defensive and future-oriented register, as mainstream Malay-language editorials framed electoral change, through fallacious appeals to “our race, our religion and our progeny”, as an existential threat to Malay-Muslim continuity (Siti Nurnadilla, 2023). Although BN was voted out of power for the first time after ruling Malaysia for over six decades in this election, ethno-racial and religious anxieties remained salient in *Malaysia Baharu* (new Malaysia) under Pakatan Harapan's (PH) leadership.

The persistence of such ethno-racial and religious anxieties beyond the 2018 electoral turnover underscores their deeper historical and structural roots in Malaysia's political formation. British colonial governance from the late nineteenth century institutionalised ethnic economic stratification, confining Malays largely to subsistence agriculture and lower-tier administrative roles while recruiting Chinese and Indian migrants into tin mining, rubber plantations and urban commerce (Jomo, 1988). This racialised division of labour entrenched structural inequalities and produced enduring Malay concerns over economic marginalisation and political displacement (Roff, 1967). These concerns crystallised in 1946 with the proposed Malayan Union, which granted equal citizenship to non-Malays and curtailed the authority of the Malay Sultans, triggering mass opposition and marking a decisive shift in Malay nationalism from anti-colonial resistance to the defence of ethnic political dominance (Mauzy, 2006). UMNO emerged from this crisis, framing political mobilisation around *tanah Melayu* (Malay land) and *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) (Ariffin, 2015).

These historically grounded anxieties reached a critical point during the third general election in May 1969. Opposition gains by parties such as the Democratic Action Party (DAP)<sup>2</sup> and Gerakan were interpreted by many Malays as an existential threat, culminating in the May 13 riots (Goh, 1971; Raj, 2007; Kua, 2011). Opposition banners and slogans, including “Malays have fallen” and “Kuala Lumpur now belongs to the Chinese”, were widely perceived as deeply provocative and humiliating (Goh, 1971, p. 21). For many Malays, the election signified not merely political defeat but an erosion of collective identity and political control. Mahathir Mohamad (1971) captured these fears succinctly when he wrote:

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<sup>2</sup> A Chinese-dominated party, one of the key components of the current ruling PH coalition. It was officially established in March 1966, seven months following Singapore's separation from Malaysia (then Malaya) in August 1965. The party emerged from the remaining members of the People's Action Party (PAP) in Malaya, led by Devan Nair and Chen Man Hin. Its primary objective is to continue the 'Malaysian Malaysia' initiative that PAP had abandoned in 1965. DAP believes that the aspirations of many Malaysians across diverse ethnic backgrounds, for equal political, social, cultural, economic rights (Chew, 1980; see also <https://dapmalaysia.org/en/about-dap/>)

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They foresaw a Malaysia in which they, without economic strength and deprived of political superiority, would forever be under the thumb of the immigrant Chinese and Indians. They foresaw their position rapidly deteriorating, and the whole nation losing its basic Malay character (p. 14).

The violence that followed culminated in a bloodbath, resulting in emergency rule, media censorship, and the introduction of the *Rukunegara* (National Principles), and consolidating a political logic that framed ethnonational loyalty as the basis of legitimate belonging (Andaya & Andaya, 2001; see also Raj, 2007, p. 323; Kua, 2011). Since then, May 13 has endured as a powerful political reference point, repeatedly invoked to cast ethnic harmony as fragile and contingent upon the preservation of Malay political dominance.

It is against this *longue durée* of racialised political threat, periodically reactivated across changing electoral and media environments, that GE15 must be situated. Building on my earlier analysis of GE15 TikTok videos (Siti Nurnadilla, 2025), which introduced *threatoric*, a blend of threat and rhetoric, as a mode of political communication organised around conditional reasoning that renders perceived dangers urgent and consequential, this paper shifts analytical focus from discursive patterning to the platform itself as it operated during the election campaign. By 2022, TikTok had experienced rapid uptake among younger cohorts in Malaysia, particularly Gen Z and young millennials. Of an estimated four million users nationwide, the majority were under 30, with 41% aged between 16 and 24 (Digital Business Lab, 26 July 2022). Drawing on mediated discourse research that understands mediation as generative (e.g. KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; KhosraviNik & Amer, 2020; Jones, 2020), I examine how algorithmic visibility, sound reuse, comment-reply scaffolding, and intertextual remixing shape the multimodal construction of racial and religious threat discourse within TikTok videos. Here, algorithmic visibility refers to the presence of platform-specific features within the clips (e.g. reused audio, screenshot-like evidentiary inserts, and comment-reply formats) that are taken up in the multimodal construction of threat. Accordingly, I ask how TikTok's platform affordances shape the multimodal construction and framing of racialised and religious political threat during Malaysia's GE15.

### **Platformed politics and the mediation of threat**

Against the backdrop of escalating racial and religious polarisation, short-form videos warning of impending ethnic conflict circulated widely on TikTok during GE15. Many of these videos invoked the spectre of the 13 May 1969 riots. Nuurrianti (2024) reveals that 264 of 373 GE15-related TikTok videos explicitly targeted ethnic groups, frequently mobilising hashtags such as #13Mei to tether contemporary anti-Chinese sentiment to historical violence. IMAN Research (2023) similarly identifies recurrent fears surrounding the DAP's perceived secularising agenda, liberalism framed as foreign intrusion, and Anwar Ibrahim's ambivalent symbolism, all of which were circulated through racialised and emotive messaging during the campaign. These invocations, as I argue earlier, are not merely warnings but manifestations of threat, condensing collective trauma into affectively charged performances that enact fear through multimodal cues, rendering danger immediate rather than deliberative (Siti Nurnadilla, 2025). By threat, I refer not to overt intimidation but to a rhetorical and discursive relation that links imagined actions or outcomes to projected harm, rendering urgency and compliance self-evident within electoral campaign communication. Threat discourse may operate implicitly through historical analogy and affective cues without explicit articulation of harm. At the level of mediation, TikTok functions as a techno-discursive infrastructure whose affordances shape

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how political threat is produced, circulated and experienced, an infrastructural dimension largely absent from existing GE15 scholarship, which has prioritised content typologies and thematic analysis (e.g. Nuurrianti, 2024; IMAN Research, 2023).

To move beyond content-centred accounts, I approach contemporary digital ecologies as constitutive terrains that shape how political discourse is produced, circulated and felt. I use the term platformed politics to refer to the entanglement of political meaning-making with the infrastructural, algorithmic and affective logics of digital platforms. While this concept builds on van Dijck, Poell and de Waal's (2018) critique of platform society, it departs from their institutional emphasis by foregrounding the microstructural dynamics through which platforms generate ideological intensity from below. It also diverges from Gillespie's (2010) influential analysis of "platform" as a discursive label – a metaphorical strategy through which digital intermediaries present themselves as open and egalitarian while obscuring power asymmetries. While Gillespie's intervention remains foundational, my concern lies less with how platforms describe themselves than with how they function as ideological infrastructures. More broadly, platforms such as TikTok, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) do not merely host political discourse but actively recalibrate its urgency, legibility, and moral resonance through visibility algorithms, interface grammars and affective rhythms (Highfield, 2016; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018).

Within digital platform environments, threat discourse is rarely articulated through sustained argumentation. Instead, it is condensed, looped and aestheticised through sonic cues, facial expressions, rhythmic editing, and genre-specific conventions. These techno-semiotic practices render threat felt before it is reasoned. Jones (2024) shows that TikTok's central affordance is the reuse of shared soundtracks, enabling users to appropriate others' verbal performances and re-present them through embodied enactment; participation is thus frequently organised around recognisable audio templates and their recontextualisation across videos. Georgakopoulou's (2021) notion of small stories is particularly instructive here, capturing how brief, patterned narrative acts formatted through platform affordances preconfigure stance, alignment, and affect. Such dynamics are observable in the present dataset in formats including reaction videos, stitched warnings, and comment replies, where meaning emerges through repetition, imitation, and affective resonance rather than extended explanation. These forms exemplify how narrative meaning on platforms is organised less through linear exposition than through recognisable, iterated participation in socio-technical formats. Here, digital platforms can thus be understood as infrastructures of affective modulation that generate what Papacharissi (2015, p. 311) terms "networked structures of feeling", shared atmospheres of experience that are sensed, lived, and often only partially articulated. Political publics thus coalesce less around deliberative rationality than around intensities such as fear, resentment, and outrage, curated and amplified through platform design. This tendency aligns with KhosraviNik's (2018) account of social media political communication as increasingly privileging affective relevance over deliberative reasoning.

To study threatic on TikTok, therefore, is to examine not only what is said but how it moves, feels and binds. Affective modulation takes on an explicitly ideological function, as platforms co-produce the urgency, moral salience, and epistemic authority of threat, shaping how threats are felt and recognised as politically meaningful. This perspective resonates with Zulli and Zulli's (2022) analysis of TikTok's imitation- and replication-centred design, which gives rise to "imitation publics" constituted through memetic practices. Mediation, in this account, cannot

be reduced to transmission but must be understood as structuration. As Livingstone (2009) and Hutchby (2001) argue, media environments shape not only the circulation of discourse but also its form and force. In line with Chouliaraki and Georgiou's (2020) account of platforms as dialectical spaces of ideological struggle, TikTok serves as an ideological assemblage through which threat is enacted as a distributed, platform-mediated and affectively scaffolded performance.

To explain how such threat discourse is constructed and intensified, I draw on two complementary frameworks, namely Proximation Theory (henceforth, PT) (Cap, 2006, 2017) and Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) (KhosraviNik, 2017, 2023). PT, building on Chilton's (2004, 2014) Deictic Space Theory, examines how threats are legitimised through the discursive narrowing of spatial, temporal, and axiological distance between "Us" and "Them". In Cap's (2017) Discourse Space model, external dangers are reconfigured as imminent, immediate and morally transgressive. In digital contexts, however, proximation extends beyond language as it is visualised, intensified, and affectively layered through platform-specific semiotic resources and algorithmic logics. As Esposito and KhosraviNik (2023) observe, "the digital tools through which we communicate still have a discursive function as they are commonly organised towards a certain discourse formation" (p. 15). Here, SM-CDS provides the analytical leverage to account for these dynamics by approaching social media as techno-discursive environments in which technological affordances shape discursive construction, circulation and reception.

## **Methodology**

This study draws on 60 publicly accessible TikTok videos related to Malaysia's fifteenth general election (GE15), collected between 5 and 24 November 2022. Videos were identified through repeated in-platform searches using election-related hashtags (e.g. #GE15, #PRU15), coalition identifiers, party acronyms, and the names of key political actors. The aim was not representativeness but to capture election-related discourse that appeared salient within the sampled TikTok stream during the collection period. Observable metadata (e.g. upload date, captions, hashtags, audio tracks, duration, engagement indicators, and profile cues) were recorded at capture, and videos were archived via manual downloads and screenshots to mitigate platform volatility. Most videos were in Malay, and translations prioritised pragmatic and rhetorical equivalence to preserve discursive force.

While this dataset was examined in Siti Nurnadilla (2025) in relation to the multimodal construction of racial and religious rhetoric of threat, the present study, shifts analytical concerns to platform affordances and the use of recognisable TikTok formats (e.g. hashtags, reused audio, and reply-to-comment videos) in the construction of threat narratives. Examples discussed were selected for their relevance to these concerns, rather than to replicate or extend the close textual analyses undertaken in the earlier study. In the analysis, these platform-specific features are treated as semiotic resources in the multimodal construction of threat within the videos. Specifically, this paper examines how TikTok's infrastructural features shape the amplification, affective intensity of threat narratives, and how alignment with these narratives is made interactionally relevant within the clips. I adopted an iterative, theory-driven approach consistent with SM-CDS, engaging the dataset in its entirety for pattern identification, while directing close multimodal analysis to emblematic instances used

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illustratively to explicate key mechanisms of threat construction. These instances were identified based on the following criteria:

- (1) the staging of imminent harm or loss
- (2) the mobilisation of historically sedimented reference points such as May 13 (1969) or *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy)
- (3) intensive use of TikTok affordances relevant to circulation and interaction, including sound reuse, stitching, hashtags, and comment-reply formats
- (4) prominence as recurring templates or recognisable genres within the dataset

Videos selected for close analysis were subjected to multimodal transcription and segmented into communicative phases, including an opening hook, warning or claim, moral framing, and call to action. PT was operationalised as a discursive strategy whereby distant or abstract threats were represented as increasingly close to the deictic centre of “Us”, legitimising urgency and pre-emptive stance-taking. The analysis traced how spatial proximity was constructed by portraying threats as encroaching upon, penetrating, or already internal to the in-group space; how temporal proximity was produced by framing harmful futures as imminent or inevitable through conditional constructions, historical analogy, and the compression of past, present, and future; and how axiological proximity was achieved through moral polarisation between “Us” and “Them”, in which value conflict was framed as existential and non-negotiable.

These processes were examined across linguistic, visual, and sonic resources, including textual framing, imagery, musical cues, and reused audio. Visual analysis attended to on-screen text and graphic overlays (e.g. inserted screenshots), backgrounded images, and embodied performance where speakers appeared on camera (e.g. gaze direction, facial expression, gesture), as well as compositional features such as framing and proximity. Sonic analysis drew on social-semiotic approaches to popular music (Machin, 2010; Machin & Richardson, 2012; Way, 2016), focusing on tempo, rhythm, modality, repetition, and dynamic intensity in intensifying spatial, temporal, and axiological proximation, with particular attention to shared audio templates. Finally, the analysis considered how TikTok’s techno-discursive features organise the interactional uptake of proximated threat constructions within the videos

All analysed material was publicly accessible at the time of collection. Given TikTok’s limited transparency and the difficulty of verifying authorship or sponsorship, creator identities were treated cautiously. Accounts were described in general terms based on publicly available profile information, and identifying details were minimised where necessary to reduce risks of amplification or unintended harm while maintaining analytic integrity.

## **Findings**

The findings that follow are organised around four recurring patterns in the platformed construction and circulation of threat.

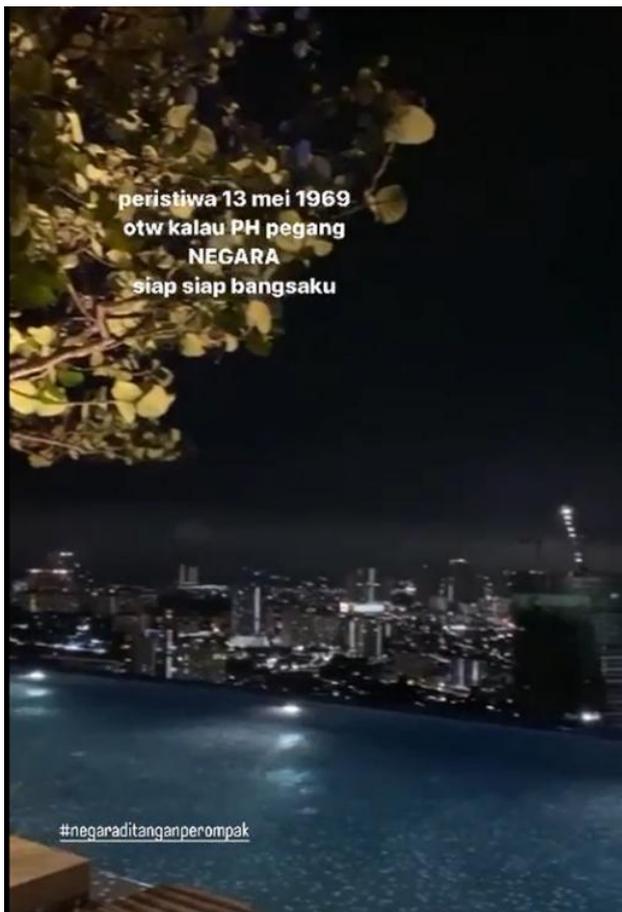
### **Affective-sonic staging**

The first pattern captures how threat is orchestrated through affective atmospheres and sonic-visual alignment, rather than through propositional or argumentative discourse. Here, danger is proximated not by explicit depiction but by mood construction, ambient tension, and rhythmic restraint, rendering threat experientially immediate. In Text 1, ideological menace is staged through an interplay of visual calm and sonic melancholy during the GE15 campaign,

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where everyday imagery is repurposed to carry latent political alarm. The video presents a nocturnal panorama of Kuala Lumpur's skyline, accompanied by the textual overlay: "Peristiwa 13 Mei 1969 otw kalau PH pegang NEGARA. Siap siap bangsaku". Visually, the *mise-en-scène*, that is, the arrangement of the visible elements within the frame, including setting, lighting, and spatial perspective, is one of urban stillness and distance. Likely filmed from a high-rise vantage point such as an infinity pool, the city appears tranquil, affluent, and suspended in temporal calm. There is no iconography of unrest or rupture. It is precisely this aesthetic neutrality that intensifies the affective charge. The stark contrast between visual serenity and discursive alarm produces a form of affective dissonance, whereby threat is not shown but felt. Rather than dramatising conflict through spectacle, the video performs a re-semiotisation of stability, transforming a familiar cityscape into a prefigurative scene of collapse. Danger is staged through contrast rather than confrontation, with the everyday rendered ominous through anticipatory framing. This strategy performs spatial proximation without visual antagonists. The city is not shown as being encroached upon; instead, it is sonically and discursively recoded as a site already compromised, a space of latent ethnic undoing. Stillness itself becomes suspect. Calm functions as an intensifier, re-signified as deceptive, while threat is positioned as immanent rather than emergent. Kuala Lumpur is thus displaced from its conventional symbolic role as a locus of security or national belonging and recast as a terrain of impending loss.

### Text 1



Translation: The May 13, 1969 incident is otw [on the way] if PH takes control of the country. Get ready, my people. #thecountryisinthehandsofrobbers

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The caption reinforces this logic through linguistic and temporal compression. The phrase “otw” (on the way), drawn from texting vernacular, collapses historical trauma into imminent certainty. Its casual tone intensifies the immediacy of the warning, framing catastrophe not as a distant risk but as an unfolding inevitability. This brevity aligns with TikTok’s fast-paced, youth-oriented visual culture, framing the threat as easily digestible and shareable. The message leaves little room for reflection as the crisis is presupposed, and inaction becomes a sign of disloyalty. Lexical cues such as “bangsaku” (my people) and the capitalised “NEGARA” (country) elevate the stakes from electoral choice to national survival. The hashtag #negaraditanganperompak (the country is in the hands of robbers) crystallises this reframing, recoding political opposition as criminal betrayal. As a circulation device, the hashtag functions as an indexing cue for searchability and aggregation within TikTok’s interface, supporting the repeatability and recognisability of the threat frame.

Among the multimodal resources mobilised, background music operates as a central affective technology, modulating threat not through semantic content alone but through timbre, tempo, modality, and dynamic restraint. In Text 1, the sonic strategy is one of low-intensity threat staging. *Pemergian*<sup>3</sup> by Yaph, characterised by sparse instrumentation, a slow tempo, and a minor-key melodic contour, establishes an affective register of subdued apprehension. The track’s limited dynamic range and restrained rhythmic motion produce a suspended, melancholic soundscape, sustaining tension without release. Its opening lyric, “Kondisi ruang, tidak seperti dulunya lapang” (the space is no longer as free as it once was), functions as a floating signifier of spatial, cultural, and existential contraction. Although non-political in origin, the track is repeatedly recontextualised across the corpus to index affective states of erosion and dispossession. Threat is thus sustained through mood rather than narrative, anchored in sonic atmosphere rather than discursive argument. This stands in contrast to videos that employ a more overtly mobilising sonic grammar. *Bangkit Pertahan*<sup>4</sup> by Soutul Amal, closely associated with Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)<sup>5</sup>, is frequently synchronised with footage of Perikatan Nasional (PN)<sup>6</sup> supporters waving party flags. Here, martial percussion, choral textures, and declarative rhythmic patterns shift the affective register from anxiety to obligation. The music’s forward-driving pulse and collective vocal layering enact deontic proximation, recoding threat as a call to moral action.

Similarly, cinematic compositions such as Archangel by Two Steps from Hell<sup>7</sup> deploy orchestral density, dramatic crescendos, and epic harmonic progressions to frame electoral politics as existential struggle. These tracks position viewers within emotionally saturated narratives of heroic confrontation and civilisational crisis. Some videos further intensify this affective scaffolding by incorporating sermon excerpts as disembodied voiceovers, stripped of their theological contexts and redeployed to lend spiritual authority to partisan messaging. What distinguishes Text 1, however, is its quiet menace. It neither

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<sup>3</sup> See full video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieSpe9gDAO0>

<sup>4</sup> See full video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bd34u4IpRSE>

<sup>5</sup> An Islamist political party in Malaysia that advocates for governance grounded in Islamic principles. Since 2020, PAS has been a core component of Perikatan Nasional (PN), a political coalition that positions itself in opposition to Pakatan Harapan (PH).

<sup>6</sup> A coalition that emerged in late February 2020 during the political crisis that brought down the PH government. PN’s rise to federal power occurred through parliamentary realignment, when several parties and MPs withdrew support from PH, enabling the formation of a new governing majority.

<sup>7</sup> See full video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ-QL15qjLg>

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commands nor incites. Instead, it orients the clip toward prolonged affective dwelling in a slow-burning sense of national decline, sustained through restrained dynamics, melancholic modality, and visual calm. This comparative spectrum demonstrates how TikTok enables multiple styles of affective proximation, ranging from melancholic fatalism to explicit ideological mobilisation, each orchestrated through distinct sonic strategies. These sonic practices reflect a broader logic of affective synchronisation afforded by TikTok's modular design. Features such as audio reuse allow creators to embed ideological messages within soundscapes that are already affectively primed, an affordance of affective intertextuality, enabling political content to piggyback on familiar emotional cues. In this ecology, background music does not merely accompany threat narratives; it actively structures affective perception, making felt senses of danger, duty, or loss more available across otherwise disparate texts.

### **Epistemic claims to evidentiality**

In contrast to the affective-sonic staging observed in Text 1, threat during GE15 is not always constructed through mood or compressed futurity. In other videos in the dataset, including Text 2, threat is instead produced through epistemic certainty and evidentiary appeal. This shift is not merely stylistic but marks a transformation in how threat is operationalised, as ambiguity gives way to assertion and viewers are positioned not merely to *feel*, but to *know*, and from that knowledge, to fear. This epistemic turn foregrounds authority, proof, and moral clarity, drawing on news headlines, textual overlays, or religious invocations to frame threat as self-evident and urgent. For instance, Texts 2.1 anchors its message in archival imagery of the May 13 riots, overlaid with narration linking DAP's 1969 electoral debut to a supposed campaign to abolish Article 153.

**Text 2.1**

**Text 2.2**

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Translation (background):  
1969, DAP participated in the general election for the first time. During the election, DAP campaigned to abolish Article 153, the special rights of the Malays. DAP's victory parade in Kuala Lumpur ultimately led to the May 13, 1969, tragedy.



Translation (background):  
ABOLISH BUMIPUTERA. The elimination of the distinction between 'Bumiputera' and 'non-Bumiputera' and the implementation of ethnic equality. Excerpt from DAP's official website, Party Policy section:  
<http://dapmalaysia.org/parti/matlamat/party-polisi>

Here, the image is not illustrative but evidentiary. The riots are framed not as trauma to be mourned but as a predictive schema, a latent threat reactivated through political visibility. The passive construction “mencetuskan tragedi” (led to tragedy) avoids agentive attribution while preserving causal implication, enabling a logic of blame that is covert but potent. Here, proximation consistently operates through associative compression, collapsing the past into the present, not as historical context, but as imminent and reactivatable danger. In this framing, DAP's visibility is treated as volatility, and the archival footage functions as an intertextual warrant, legitimising current fears through a curated historical imaginary. This evidentiary logic is heightened by a fabricated screenshot displaying the phrase “**HAPUSKAN BUMIPUTERA**” (Abolish Bumiputera), falsely attributed to DAP's official platform (Text 2.2). Here, the pseudo-screenshot format consists of screenshot-like evidentiary displays digitally inserted into the video frame (e.g. images or text formatted to resemble DAP's official party website), using TikTok's in-app editing features such as imported image overlays and text-layer compositing. Visually rendered in bold typography, the phrase performs a typographic speech act as its form is its force. Combined with close-ups of Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, the image racialises the message, converting political discourse into ethnic antagonism. The pseudo-screenshot format leverages TikTok's in-app editing affordances to simulate documentary authority. The backgrounded visual layer in the video further frames the inserted screenshot as documentary evidence by situating it within a webpage-like or informational layout, reinforcing its appearance as an official source. The recurrence of similar screenshot-like evidentiary formats across posts within the sampled dataset can contribute to plausibility through familiarity.

Foregrounded in this discursive frame is the speaker, a young Malay Muslim woman dressed in modest Islamic attire. Her visual presentation connotes moral uprightness and religious

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credibility, but more crucially, her identity positions her as speaking across to a generational cohort of young Muslim Malays, who, like her, occupy the everyday social media space of TikTok. Yet her address is not a conversation (speaking with), nor even a persuasive appeal (speaking to), rather, it performs a didactic monologue (speaking at) as can be observed in the audio transcription in Text 2.3.

### Text 2.3

#### Audio:

*Siapa kata PAS tolak DAP Sebab PAS racist dengan orang Cina...? Hmm... pernah dengar tak pasal Malaysian Malaysia? DAP kata, Malaysian Malaysia ni maksudnya Malaysia adalah untuk semua rakyat Malaysia...bukan orang Melayu je. Sekali dengar macam gempak je kan... Kita anak muda memang rasa benda ni cool sangat—*

*—Sebab yelah kita pun memang kawan baik je dengan orang India, Orang Cina, daripada zaman sekolah lagi... MASALAHnya DAP ni bila dah dapat kuasa, mulalah besar kepala. Korang tahu tak, Malaysian Malaysia yang DAP perjuangkan ni, maksudnya bangsa majoriti dan orang asal iaitu Melayu Islam, takkan ada apa-apa kelebihan lagi ...Cam OK je kan? Macam hak sama rata... Tapi bila diaorang dah dapat kuasa.... Last-last kaum minoriti pulak yang pijak-pijak hak bangsa majoriti.*

#### Translation:

Who says PAS rejects DAP because PAS is racist toward the Chinese? Hmm... have you ever heard of Malaysian Malaysia? DAP claims that Malaysian Malaysia means Malaysia belongs to all Malaysians, not just Malays. At first, that sounds impressive, doesn't it? As young people, we think it's really cool—

—after all, we've always been good friends with Indians and Chinese since our school days. But the PROBLEM with DAP is that once they gain power, they become arrogant. Do you know what Malaysian Malaysia really means to DAP? It means that the majority race and the indigenous people—the Malay Muslims—will no longer have any advantages. Sounds fair, right? Like equal rights for all...

But once they take power... in the end, the minority will trample on the rights of the majority.

Her use of

“Tapi” (But) at the opening marks a turn from assumed consensus to ideological correction. Her modality shifts from hypothetical (“kalau”, if) to epistemically certain (“bila”, when), portraying political change as an unfolding inevitability. The rhetorical prompt “korang tahu tak?” (“Do you all know?”) presupposes shared knowledge and frames ignorance as complicity. The pronoun shift from inclusive “we/kita” to addressive “you/korang” reconfigures participation: “we” constructs an in-group footing of shared familiarity, while the use of the informal, colloquial second-person pronoun “korang” interpellates the viewer as a participant expected to recognise the implied threat. Shot in tight frame with declarative gestures and unbroken gaze, her delivery replicates the TikTok confession genre (intimate, direct, and morally saturated), enacting a form of pedagogical intimacy in which fear is framed as morally shared knowledge. The platform’s loopability and facial proximity further intensify this affective interpellation, collapsing interpretive distance and enacting a pedagogical form of fear that is presented as peer-driven, intimate, and incontestable.

### Platformed authority and polyvocal legitimation

Distinct from the epistemic-evidentiary construction of threat discussed above, a further discursive strategy facilitated by TikTok’s modular design involves the externalisation of threat via quotation. In this pattern, creators embed the voices of others – politicians, clerics, or commenters – rather than narrating their own position, thereby deflecting authorial responsibility while reinforcing ideological alignment. Features such as clip sequencing, audio layering, and on-screen text enable users to curate rather than narrate, staging ideological

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claims through the voices of others. In this configuration, politicians and religious figures for instance, are selectively quoted, their institutional authority repurposed to authenticate the threat. In this case, the creator assumes the role of editor, arranging fragments of speech into a cohesive ideological frame. These figures do not engage in dialogue but function as emblematic authorities, whose words are re/decontextualised to perform epistemic and moral closure. Consider the following examples:

Text 3.1



Text 3.3

Text 3.2





Audio: DR MAZA MUFTI PERLIS: *KECEWA DENGAN DAP SELEPAS DAPAT KUASA* (Text 3.1)

*“Saya juga antara orang yang tidak percaya bahawasanya DAP ni, jika sekiranya mendapat kedudukan, mereka mungkin akan menyebabkan keadaan umat Islam akan merasa tidak selesa dan umat Islam mungkin mengalami satu keadaan yang sukar”.*

*Sebelum menang, kita semua sama, rakyat Malaysia, bila dah dapat kuasa, hina orang Islam, perlekehkan agama... So korang janganlah cepat tertipu dengan DAP ni. Ha... kenal tak suara siapa ni?*

(AUDIO MIRIP SUARA RAFIZI RAMLI DEDAH WAJAH SEBENAR DAP) (Text 3.2)

*“DAP ni hanya berminat untuk menunggang melayu je... Dia tak ikhlas... kalau dia cakap depan kita Melayu, dia cakap saja... belakang dia pisau dan lepas dia dah guna engkau, dia akan campak kau”.*

Audio: DR. MAZA, MUFTI OF PERLIS: *DISAPPOINTED WITH DAP AFTER THEY GAINED POWER* (Text 3.1)

*“I was also among those who did not believe that if DAP were to obtain a position of power, they might cause the Muslim community to feel uncomfortable, and the Muslim community might experience hardship.*

Before they won, we were all the same – Malaysians. But once they gained power, they insulted Muslims and belittled the religion. So, don’t be easily deceived by DAP. **Hey... do you recognize this voice?**

(AUDIO SIMILAR TO RAFIZI RAMLI EXPOSING THE REAL FACE OF DAP)

DAP is only interested in manipulating Malays. They are insincere. When they speak to us Malays, it’s all just words – **but behind our backs, they are like a knife. Once they’ve used you, they will discard you.**

*Tudiaaaa... Ramai je sedar rupanya, sikap pura-pura dan tikam belakang DAP ni.*

That's it... it turns out many people have already seen through DAP's deception and betrayal.

*Kalau nak tahu cerita sebenar aku cadang korang pergilah jumpa member-member Cina dekat Terengganu dan Kelantan... waktu tu, korang akan sedar yang DAP ni tak mewakili pun kaum Cina kat Malaysia ni... Ramai je orang Cina yang boleh terima dan hormat agama Islam sebagai agama kaum majoriti dekat Malaysia ni... **Haa dengar ni apa diorang kata:***

If you really want to know the truth, go meet your Chinese friends in Terengganu and Kelantan. You will see for yourself that DAP does not even represent the Chinese community in Malaysia. Many Chinese accept and respect Islam as the religion of the majority in Malaysia. **Now listen to what they say:**

**“ORANG CINA SOKONG PAS SEBAB DASAR PAS”** (Text 3.3)

*Kami sokong PAS ni sebab kami suka dengan dasar PAS. **Walaupun saya seorang Cina, tapi saya memang pilih PAS** sebab saya setuju dengan apa yang diorang buat. Kerajaan PAS sekarang dia aman dan tenteram dan senang untuk rakyat semua”.*

**“THE CHINESE SUPPORT PAS BECAUSE OF PAS'S PRINCIPLES** (Text 3.3)”

We support PAS because we like PAS's principles. **Even though I am Chinese, I still choose PAS** because I agree with what they are doing. The current PAS government is peaceful, harmonious, and good for everyone”.

Here, Dr. MAZA's cautious phrasing “ *mungkin akan menyebabkan keadaan umat Islam sukar*” (might cause hardship for Muslims) uses modal hedging not to weaken the claim but to simulate measured foresight. His clerical garb and composed delivery reframe the statement as religious counsel rather than political fearmongering (Text 3.1). This epistemic caution is soon displaced by a more emotionally charged metaphor attributed to Rafizi Ramli: “*belakang dia pisau*” (knife behind his back), which recasts DAP not simply as a political rival but as a duplicitous betrayer (Text 3.2). Spatial and moral proximation continuously converge here, DAP is no longer distant but dangerously proximate, positioned behind rather than opposite, violating both trust and collective space. Through this metaphor and tonal escalation, caution becomes moral urgency.

This pattern exemplifies platformed polyvocality, in which threat is not constructed by a singular speaker but emerges from the layered authority of religious and political figures, strategically clipped and sequenced. The viewer is positioned not for deliberation but for absorption, a posture enabled by TikTok's modular affordances, which allow creators to juxtapose voice clips, text overlays, and subtitled fragments with minimal authorial intrusion. The rhetorical effect is a composite epistemic stance where suspicion becomes sanctified and rejection of DAP is reframed as righteous vigilance. By staging quotations from figures like Dr. MAZA and Rafizi Ramli, the creator mobilises their institutional ethos while shielding their own ideological investment behind the aesthetic of recontextualised sharing. The resulting platformed interdiscursivity enables plausible deniability (“I'm just quoting”) even as it articulates a clear ideological position. The metaphor “*lepas dia dah guna engkau, dia akan campak kau*” (once he's used you, he'll discard you), attributed to Rafizi, intensifies the duplicity frame, activating sagittal spatial proximation. In this sense, DAP is no longer outside the group but behind it, violating the in-group boundary from within. The shift from epistemic possibility to deontic necessity reframes caution as obligation, converting the

potential for betrayal into an imperative to abandon. In addition, the use of the second-person pronoun “engkau/kau” positions the viewer as a potential victim of exploitation, personalising risk through direct address. This grammatical choice presupposes an out-group agent who exploits and discards, thereby reinforcing an implied in-group/out-group distinction without explicitly naming the antagonistic party.

The video deepens its threatic through a testimonial (Text 3.3): “Walaupun saya seorang Cina, tapi saya pilih PAS” (Even though I’m Chinese, I choose PAS). The concessive structure (“walaupun... tapi...” even though...but) foregrounds ethnic expectations only to defy them, casting Chinese support for PAS as exceptional and morally exemplary. This testimonial operates metonymically, where individual deviation is projected as collective insight: if *they* can reject DAP, *we* must do so more urgently. The testimonial functions as a cross-ethnic moral warrant, exploiting TikTok’s direct-address genre to simulate sincerity and frame collective realignment as warranted. The platform’s looped format and layered semiotics further consolidate the effect, producing an affective-veridical environment, one where viewers are not merely informed, but emotionally and ideologically positioned toward an anti-DAP stance. Ultimately, the video fuses religio-political proximation with testimonial affect, binding electoral preference to existential consequence. The sacralisation of political choice collapses deliberation into duty, positioning DAP as a dual threat to *aqidah* (faith) and *bangsa* (ethnic identity). Within TikTok’s techno-semiotic architecture, this convergence is not merely represented as it is looped, rehearsed, and moralised as a readily repeatable stance template.

### **Interactional and translational amplification**

TikTok’s interactional affordances, most notably the comment-reply feature, allow users to stage ideological messages through modular forms of dialogism. By embedding selected viewer comments into new videos, creators recast interpersonal prompts as discursive scaffolds for public threat narratives. This format enables a strategic blending of reaction and assertion, in which ideological positions are framed as responses rather than initiations, thereby naturalising them as common-sense reactions rather than partisan claims. This dynamic is exemplified in Text 4, which mobilises the comment-reply affordance to construct a racialised political threat.

By embedding the viewer’s comment directly into the video interface, the creator blurs the boundary between interpersonal interaction and public messaging, recontextualising an ostensibly casual remark as evidence of a broader ideological condition. The affordance enables a modular layering of voice, image, and text through which racial anxiety is not merely asserted but staged as socially validated, producing a sense of shared grievance anchored in user-generated interaction. Here, the comment “[M]alaysia [A]ntony [L]ok punya. 😊😊” (Malaysia belongs to Anthony Loke 😊😊) a taunting, triumphalist formulation implying ethnic and political takeover, is overlaid atop a clip of Anwar Ibrahim, then the opposition leader of Pakatan Harapan, stating: “MALAYSIA INI ORANG CINA PUNYA, ORANG INDIA PUNYA... JANGAN FIKIR MALAYSIA INI ORANG MELAYU PUNYA” (Malaysia belongs to the Chinese, to the Indians... do not think that Malaysia belongs to the Malays). While originally articulated as a gesture of inclusive nationhood, the speech is decontextualised and reframed as proof of ethnic displacement. This reframing is intensified through visual selection: Chinese and Indian audience members are shown standing, smiling, and applauding, gestures that are re-signified as expressions of triumph. Applause, typically a marker of civic participation, is thus recoded as a semiotic cue of dominance, transforming multicultural solidarity into existential threat.

#### Text 4



The ethnic visibility of the audience is not incidental but central to the clip’s racialised logic. Their clapping bodies are cast as agents of replacement, constructing a tableau of inversion in which Malays appear marginalised in their own country. The caption “Punahh!!!” (We are doomed!!!), together with its emojis, establishes a paralinguistic frame that escalates the stakes from electoral contest to civilisational collapse. Rather than advancing a reasoned argument, the video curates grievance through juxtaposition, collapsing user comment, curated footage, and reactive captioning into a seamless threat narrative. In this way, the comment-reply affordance operates as a mechanism of discursive amplification, enabling the modular construction of ethnic threat through affectively charged micro-interactions.

Where Text 4 demonstrates interactional amplification, Text 5 illustrates how racialised political threat is constructed through translational framing and visual-linguistic montage rather than direct argumentation. Here, reframing does not operate through outright mistranslation in a narrow semantic sense, but through selective and decontextualised subtitling that strips utterances of their pragmatic, tonal, and interactional context. The Malay subtitles remain linguistically plausible, yet are aligned with affectively charged captions, visuals, and sequencing that reorient how the speech is interpreted and felt. Translation thus functions less as a communicative bridge than as a discursive and affective framing device. The video features Hew Kuan Yew (“Superman Hew”) delivering a campaign speech in Cantonese, overlaid with manually added Malay subtitles and a prominent caption: “ini sebab kami tolak Pakatan Harapan” (this is why we reject Pakatan Harapan). In this framing, Hew himself becomes the

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justification for political rejection, not because of specific policy positions, but because of what he is made to signify: racial hostility, Islamic disrespect, and existential danger.

The subtitle text stages a highly charged narrative. Phrases such as “mereka yang ketuanan Melayu dan mereka beragama Islam... boleh mampus berpecah-belah” (those who want Malay supremacy and are Muslim... can go to hell in their division) and “tumbuk mereka sampai mampus” (punch them till they die) are presented without contextual explanation or prosodic cues, producing the impression of violent incitement. The sequence culminates in references to an “upacara pengebumian” (funeral ceremony) for Malay-led coalitions, positioning Hew not merely as a critic but as an existential adversary.

### Text 5



Crucially, viewers are denied access to the tonal and pragmatic context of the original Cantonese speech. The Malay subtitles operate autonomously, detached from the source speech act's nuance or intention. Violent phrases are literalised in subtitle form, while visual cues, such as Hew raising his fist, are re-signified as gestures of Chinese aggression against Malays. Even calls for opposition unity (“Kita kena bersatu... PKR, DAP, MUDA”) are reframed through selective subtitling and multimodal alignment, not as coalition-building but as mobilisation. This selective subtitling performs translational proximisation, collapsing linguistic distance while magnifying ideological suspicion.

Rather than enabling understanding, translation here functions as semantic compression and affective manipulation. For viewers unfamiliar with Cantonese, the Malay subtitles become the sole interpretive scaffold, guiding audiences toward a singular, alarmist reading aligned with the caption's directive rejection of Pakatan Harapan. The clip's rhetorical force lies in the

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orchestration of signs: a Chinese speaker using an unfamiliar language, subtitles invoking Islam and death, a raised fist, and a banner-style caption urging political rejection. Meaning is generated not through deliberation but through curated juxtaposition, transforming multilingual encounter into an experience of menace.

In Malaysia's multilingual society, linguistic diversity is normative, yet access remains uneven. While many Malaysians are bilingual in Malay and English, languages such as Cantonese, Tamil, and Mandarin often remain confined to specific ethnolinguistic communities. Text 5 exploits this asymmetry by presenting Cantonese as opaque and exclusionary, its unintelligibility underscored by affectively charged visual cues. Translation thus becomes a discursive filter rather than a communicative bridge, reactivating latent anxieties around ethnic hierarchy, mistrust, and political betrayal. What is translated is not merely speech but a racialised threat schema, where linguistic difference functions as a stand-in for danger. In this way, Text 5 demonstrates how translation operates as a discursive weapon, rendering speech legible for a specific audience while simultaneously recontextualising it as racial provocation. The clip reinforces the broader dataset's pattern of proximising fear through modular assemblage, in which language, image, and text do not simply represent reality but actively incite political affect.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This paper situates racial and religious threatic during Malaysia's GE15 within a longer trajectory of ethnonational mobilisation, while demonstrating how shifts in media infrastructure have transformed the conditions under which such threats acquire political force. The findings show that racial and religious threat was platformed through affective sonic staging, epistemic claims to evidentiality, polyvocal appeals to authority, and interactional and translational amplification, with each operating as a mutually reinforcing mechanism of proximisation. Across the dataset, threat was not simply asserted but affectively staged, intensified, and normalised through multimodal performance. Rather than relying on extended argumentation, videos compressed ideological meaning into visual tropes, emotive audio, and rhythmic editing, producing techno-semiotic environments in which affect was foregrounded through multimodal alignment rather than propositional logic. Although DAP and its allies were positioned as proximate sources of danger, the animating anxiety consistently concerned the perceived erosion of Malay-Muslim political primacy. This anxiety exceeded concern over policy change, manifesting instead as a perceived threat of ethnic displacement, moral inversion, and spiritual contamination. Spatially, threat was brought into intimate proximity through familiar sites such as streets, flags, and mosques; temporally, May 13 was mobilised less as historical memory than as anticipatory forecast; axiologically, support for Pakatan Harapan (PH) was reframed as a transgression against religion, race, and national coherence. Across this discursive terrain, the stakes were total: not which party governs, but whose identity and values endure.

The TikTok videos analysed here did not introduce new ideological content, but reworked enduring anxieties surrounding Malay political primacy, Islam, and communal survival through the logics of platformed politics. In comparison with newspaper-based mobilisation during GE13 and GE14 (Siti Nurnadilla, 2020; 2023), the GE15 TikTok videos indicate not ideological rupture but a transformation in how fear becomes politically compelling. Whereas mainstream print opinion operated within a media system embedded in state-centred power relations,

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privileging elite authorship and institutional authority, TikTok constitutes a platform-based regime of mediation that reconfigures the conditions of semiotic articulation rather than editorial alignment. Under these conditions, the persuasive force of threat derives less from institutional legitimacy than from multimodal immediacy, reorienting political engagement away from deliberation and towards interactional positioning.

These shifts invite a refinement of how proximation operates in digital contexts. While PT has foregrounded the discursive narrowing of spatial, temporal, and axiological distance as a means of legitimising threat (Cap, 2006, 2017), the GE15 case demonstrates that proximity can also be produced and sustained through platform affordances. Threat was reinforced not only through language but through repetition, embodiment, and ambient exposure enabled by platform affordances. Proximity thus emerged not as a discrete rhetorical manoeuvre but as a recurring multimodal configuration, maintained through recurrence across the dataset and multimodal affective cues. Platform formats consistently privileged affective intensity, replication, and interactional responsiveness, shaping which forms of political meaning are formatted for patterned repetition within the platform's participation norms. Racial and religious threat narratives recurred in recognisable platformed formats not because of their argumentative coherence, but because they were readily accommodated by formats oriented toward brevity, repetition, and multimodal staging, whereas more explanatory or context-rich political discourse is harder to express within these formats.

Within this environment, threat itself became event-like. TikTok's remixability and reactive interactional formats facilitate repeated restaging and reframing of threat narratives through reuse and recontextualization practices observable in the clips. As Jones (2023) shows in his analysis of lip-synching and voice appropriation on TikTok, the platform's central affordance lies in the reuse of shared soundtracks, through which users participate by re-embodiment others' voices. Political meaning and stance were enacted through repetition and embodied performance rather than propositional speech. Duets structured confrontation rather than dialogue, while sound overlays dramatised moral stakes rather than merely embellishing content. Over time, these practices stabilised a recognisable genre of threatic grounded in repetition, saturation, and affective escalation.

The intensified recurrence of racial and religious threatic during GE15 cannot be reduced to ideological persistence alone but must be understood in relation to the infrastructural and sensory conditions through which threat was rendered perceptible, repeatable, and affectively credible on TikTok. Sonic affect emerged as a central mechanism in this process, operating less by advancing explicit claims than by organising how danger was felt, anticipated, and normalised. This aligns with Way's (2016) demonstration that protest music articulates political feeling and oppositional stance through sound, image, and performance, frequently relying on abstraction and affective atmosphere rather than clearly specified political programmes. Here, the findings also demonstrate how background music functioned as an affective scaffold orienting viewers toward apprehension, obligation, or civilisational urgency without requiring propositional argument. This dynamic also resonates with Machin's (2010) account of rhythm and arrangement as resources for structuring experiential meaning, as well as with Machin and Richardson's (2012) argument that music communicates ideology by organising embodied participation rather than persuading through explicit reasoning. Across the dataset, sonic strategies ranging from melancholic restraint to martial propulsion sustained threat as an

experiential condition rather than an evidentiary claim, positioning sonic affect as a resource for multimodal threat construction.

Synthesising these patterns, the findings identify eight platform affordances, namely algorithmically mediated visibility (including hashtags, reuse markers, template conventions, loopability, pedagogical intimacy, affective intertextuality, remixability, generic recontextualisation, embodied proximity, and comment-reply interaction, through which ideological fear was rendered familiar, morally saturated, and made to appear epistemically self-evident. These affordances structured the conditions under which threat became culturally legible and affectively compelling, configuring TikTok as a mechanism of affective synchronisation in which political discourse operated less through deliberation than through the modulation of fear, suspicion, and allegiance. In this respect, the GE15 TikTok ecology may be understood in relation to what Papacharissi (2015) conceptualises as an affective public sustained through networked structures of feeling rather than rational-critical debate. These affordance-driven practices converged in the production of what Georgakopoulou (2021, pp. 1-3) terms small stories: brief, patterned narrative forms that enable stance-taking and moral positioning. In the GE15 dataset, such stories were constitutive rather than peripheral, with their modularity and intertextuality making them especially effective vehicles for proximising threat in ways that felt intimate, urgent, and morally incontestable. Meaning emerged through recursive semiotic processes in which affordances and recurring formats co-produce discourse (see also KhosraviNik & Amer, 2022). TikTok's design foregrounded imitation and replication as dominant modes of engagement, giving rise to what Zulli and Zulli (2022) describe as imitation publics formed through memetic practice rather than deliberative exchange. Authority was consequently dispersed across peer voices, religious figures, and testimonial formats, intensifying moral obligation while diffusing accountability in contrast to elite-centred authority structures.

In Malaysia's postcolonial context, where race, religion, and political power remain deeply intertwined, the persistence of threat narratives across election cycles has acquired renewed experiential force under platformed conditions. While the ideological substance of threat has remained remarkably stable, the shift from institutionally anchored media to platformed formats has transformed how such threats are felt, repeated, and sustained. In the TikTok-mediated GE15 environment, ethnonational anxieties became habitual through patterned affective alignment, becoming available as a recurrent resource in everyday political sense-making beyond formal moments of campaigning. This study demonstrates that platforms such as TikTok do not merely enable political threat but actively structure it as a communicative form. Under these conditions, affect functions as infrastructure, repetition as epistemology, and participation as ideological performance. Understanding digital politics therefore requires attention not only to *what* is said, but to *how* discourse circulates, how it is affectively registered, and what forms of political alignment it enables. In this sense, TikTok during GE15 did not simply mediate threat; it organised its circulation, aesthetics, and moral salience. The platform was not a neutral stage for political drama, but the script, the director, and the rhythm through which threat became common sense.

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