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No to sovereignty harakiri

THE relevance of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's exhortation to preserve the country's sovereignty is becoming more apparent as the intricacies and subtleties of a neo-colonialist agenda creep into the region.

Some countries are surrendering their economic power to an institution ruled by American interests and eventually, their sovereignty will be abrogated by external intrusions - all for the mighty dollar.

Developments in the World Trade Organization show a distressing tilt towards a few developed nations.

At the rate they impose their own rules on the global market, we are reminded that the sovereignty of some countries (like theirs) are not meant to become as "diffused" or "borderless" as that of the developing countries.

Financial liberalisation in this age of American capitalism - and imperialism - benefits its financial institutions more than the countries which it urged to open up.

It is an inversion of democracy when the thrust of economic policies in some countries is directed towards serving the interests of outsiders, not their people, since these governments must appease the false god of investor confidence.

Disconcerting, too, is the move by Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid to be guided by advisers from the Clinton administration, to be based in Jakarta, in resolving the political demands in Aceh province.

Allowing itself to be put under American tutelage is, at best, the first step towards national suicide. Whatever side of political spectrum one stands in, all agree that the fate of the country lies in the people's hands - not a super global cop who launched 44 missile attacks on Iraq within 48 hours and deems retaliation against terrorism is a virtue.

Paying homage to the US is a regressive move which will betray Indonesia's electorate and democratic process. From dominion to sovereign republic, we have seen how the Indonesian people are given to bravery and resilience - a point delivered in our secondary school's compulsory reading of Pramoedya's *Keluarga Gerila* - not fatalism or pathetic subservience to the men from Capitol Hill.

As repositories of the people's democratic trust, surely the Gus Dur-led government will not allow itself to be patronised by the Americans who are more interested in safeguarding their oil wells in resource-rich Aceh than the welfare of the Acehnese.

It is no accident of history that the US enjoys the sole superpower status. It is no accident that it swiftly moves in to Indonesia when it dithered so long during the Balkan bloodbath.

The seemingly innocent offer of help by the US Government is in keeping with its strategy, as advocated by Samuel Huntington in his days as part of Clinton's foreign policy advisory team, to ensure that Islam does not become a unifying force in Indonesia.

In adopting the relic practice of paying tribute to the US, Gus Dur leaves it free for his rivals to ask whether he has internalised democratic change. His action seems based on an ophthalmos perception instead of realpolitik.

There is a lesson for Malaysians. A failed state is when the legitimacy of its elected government is not exercised or usurped by outsiders.

Like a tornado sucking up dust, a failed state generates its own
destructive energy until it destroys all semblance of civilised life.
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