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## Preserve our independence

IT is a message with a national relevance. Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's exhortation to liberate the country from any veiled attempt at recolonisation is not only meant for the party's members but for all Malaysians, irrespective of their political belief.

The task to preserve the country's independence requires mental alertness and agility to the hidden dangers lurking beneath any Western-led initiative, be it a global economic agenda or Anglo-Saxon moral values cloaked as universal human rights. More important, it needs strong leadership by a statesman - never mind if he is unfairly labelled a recalcitrant, a menace or an enemy of free-market forces by irate and, perhaps, frustrated Western leaders and detractors.

Long before the pitfalls of financial liberalisation, globalisation and the global financial system came under the scrutiny of mainstream economists, Dr Mahathir has highlighted them such as the dangerous dominance of cross border capital flows in the global economy and the destabilising effects of currency speculation which undermine democracy, impoverish the people and destroy years of growth. His critique should not be dismissed because he is not a licensed economist and his heretic arguments are not clothed in academia's language.

As he elucidated, the collapse of our borders exposes us to the prospects of recolonisation. As long as Western powers wield their economic clout to impose their demands, the sovereignty of their countries is not intended to become as diffused as that of developing nations in a so-called borderless world. Herein lies the greater import of Dr Mahathir's call for a new financial architecture and deal for Asia - national security and prosperity cannot be defended by blindly embracing liberalisation. Foreign economic weapons should not be allowed to recolonise. But whither the country's sovereignty in the hands of a Trojan horse of the West, whose neo-colonialist agenda includes sabotaging the country's economy?

There is no place for Machiavellian politicians, willing to put the country in the bondage of colonial masters for the sake of enthronement. Nor is there room for any political adventurism, such as the purported conspiracy to oust Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. It is the tendency of people betrayed by an image they believe in, as did Anwar's supporters, to go into a hysterical search for causes. Often, the search degenerates into a hunt for scapegoats in which Dr Mahathir was maligned as a mendacious mentor. In these controversial times, Dr Mahathir, like Gulliver, seemed to be trapped in the land of Lilliputians where the wise giant was pinned down by morally bankrupt and self-seeking political midgets.

But only briefly. His explanation that Anwar was used by foreign elements is not without basis. It is interesting to note the response of Western powers to Anwar's dismissal. They describe it as the clash between Dr Mahathir's doctrine of anti-West and Anwar's idea of 'engagement with the West'. In typical Western fashion, Dr Mahathir is seen as a 'nationalist-Islamist-and-protectionist' and Anwar as 'a messiah of free marketism' and 'radical Islamist-turned-capitalist guru'.

With the element of vested foreign interests and puppets, it is not wrong to say that the country had been a testing ground for Samuel Huntington's thesis of a civilisational clash between Islam/Asia and the

West. For Anwar's revolt against Dr Mahathir - when there was no hint he would be ignored by Dr Mahathir as successor - assumes partially dimensions of a battle between, to borrow the phrases of Western powers, Anwar's 'free-market democracy' and Dr Mahathir's 'nationalist-Islamist pluralism'. Nor is it farfetched to say that never before has the rakyat's task to preserve the country's sovereignty been so urgent.

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