

Umno must return to the people

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On Politics

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Only Allah has the absolute right to determine who goes to heaven or hell (not Pas or its leaders)

WHEN I agreed first to be his political analyst (in 1962) and then his political secretary in 1963 I never suspected Tun Razak had signed me (as it were) on for the political lesson of a lifetime I was then 20

Now at 64 (in July) my self appointed mission is to inspire a new generation of Malaysians to get involved in public service and if I could make politics accessible (for the clever people) and fun (for everybody) more and more Malaysians would feel energised to participate

I must warn you though that tough battle awaits you Most of the incumbents want the management floor only for themselves or for those that they favour

The controversy over the use of the word Islam is over at least for the time being Some had wished the Malay Rulers

the parliamentary election From 1964 they have been held simultaneously

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra the president of Umno and Prime Minister stated that Umno's downfall in the two states was because Umno leaders were complacent and did not go down to kampung as they should have done

Umno was and is an essentially a kampung based party although it now has also many members and supporters who live in towns and cities

Pas held Terengganu only up to October 1961 It lost to Umno via defections engineered by Tun Razak and never regained it until the 1999 general election In Kelantan Pas maintained its rule continuously until 1978 when it lost partly through the machinations of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who ironically 11 years later (in 1990) also helped Pas to recapture it from Umno

It has ruled the state since then and it looks set for a long innings

Pas has renewed its belief

three months

Ours is a classical case of a plural society Even though everything is based on religion race language and still pretty much divided by economic role I do not believe an Islamic State as envisaged by Pas — scrupulously based on the Quran the sayings of Prophet Muhammad and

when it suits the party

Once it governs the party's Islamic name will be entrenched and all bodies or organisations and institutions using the word Islam will sprout like mushrooms To an extent it already does Parti Islam Insurance Islam hospital and hotel Islam

As for Umno it should not

and is punishable

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Umno must not make Pas name an excuse for its weakness It has fought Pas in all the elections that were ever held in this country since 1955 and beat it hand

conference had taken a harder line than it did whilst others thought otherwise

That anyone should have even thought there should be a ban on its use suggests a lack of intellectual depth Perhaps lacking a sense of political security is nearer to the truth

Whatever political stability and a tolerant multi religious society remain central to the ruling party's agenda What concerns me is how Umno (and the Government) can refashion its message regain the public's trust on various issues and position itself to become the majority party in the 11th Parliament

We are governed everywhere The arguments the politicians give to support their right to rule differ across a spectrum as broad as the languages and dialects in which the messages are expressed and passed on

Pas goal is to replace Umno and establish an Islamic state pronto Ultimately Malaysians will get the government they want or are conditioned to want the government they get

Pas polity (a set of behaviours) has a political culture (a set of Islamic beliefs)

Pas in a way is like a communist party it firmly believes in the domino theory That if one strategically placed state in a region goes Pas the others will follow quickly

In September 1959 Terengganu Umno fell to Pas followed by Kelantan (Umno won only two state seats and a single Parliament seat — a feat Pas repeated in 1999 Then state elections preceded

in the domino theory In its ceramah (mini campaign) the story goes like this We have a row of dominoes (states) We have knocked down the first one after 38 years (Terengganu) and the next one will be Pahang We have al

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ready caused the beginning of a disintegration in Umno which will have the most profound influences

It does occur to me not suddenly in fact that if it could happen to dominoes it could happen to states too Pas to many Malays is a party of do gooders It tells the Malays one thing and to the Chinese with whom it desperately wants to share its bed quite another

To the Malays don't go near Umno for Pas is holier than Umno To the Chinese We are not a tribal party like Umno We love the Chinese more than Umno does'

Pas seriously believes even the Chinese are gullible in politics Maybe there are some politically ambitious (and desperate) Chinese who want to stake their future with the Islamists

Still I don't believe in Pas historical inevitability as I did not in the inevitability of communism even after South Vietnam fell because its defeat was wholly predictable I wrote about it in the Op Fd Page of the *Liberal Houston Chronicle* in Spring 1962 when I was a guest reporter for

syariah law and jurisprudence — is feasible

The maintenance (and strengthening) of inter racial and inter religious harmony has always been every government's objective because it is the foundation on which all

other targets rest Racial politicking has of late exacerbated what seems already a febrile situation

Make no mistake conservative Pas supporters are not like the compassionate conservatives They want an Iran type Islamic state while enlightened Malays and other Malaysians want status quo retained preferably a secular state

Pas has been stridently and boldly plotting to establish an Islamic state and to its credit it said so openly in the kampung and to urban Malays

Pas thinks it can do so sooner than expected with the support of the DAP Keadilan and Parti Rakyat Pas considers these people as its prize Innocent supporters who have to its great surprise wittingly and unwittingly have come over offering their helping hand to oust the hated Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Muhamad

Pas is adept at confronting a changed and changing situation For Pas the Rulers conference's decision is both a reprieve as well as respite It will abide by the *fatwa* only

be too unhappy really The Umno led Government has let the misuse and exploitation of Islam go on far too long The Umno leadership was over confident that Pas would never reach its current level of acceptance and therefore decided despite repeated calls by its grassroots that the word be banned benignly to ignore it instead of nipping it in the bud

Pas even warned it would stage street demonstrations if it was forced to drop Islam from its name Pas I know would not have dared utter such a threat in the Seventies even in the Eighties

Umno's consolation is that Pas must now tread its political course scrupulously lest it be labelled punished and even the *fatwa* reviewed if it openly transgresses or infringes it

Though there is no restriction on the use of the word

Islam by any organisation indeed it is encouraged within the context of knowledge disciplines enhancement of the faith and compassion people misusing Islam to confuse Muslims or for deviant purposes are punishable under existing laws

More importantly a person is a Muslim upon meeting all the obligations and abiding by the five pillars of faith and Islam

No additional qualifications (like membership of Pas) are needed Therefore it is wrong (sinful) to believe that affiliation with and proclamation of support for a specific group (Pas) is a prerequisite to be deemed a Muslim Anyone who preaches or speaks of this is a deviant

somely most of the time Umno has never lost to Pas except in Kelantan and Terengganu It must show it respects and upholds the fatwa and democracy It can still win against Pas provided it relearns political and PR skills

While it seeks to better opportunities in the civil service the police the armed forces the schools and the universities for all Malaysians there is no other time which seems more propitious for Dr Mahathir to face squarely and quickly the internal ructions in Umno

What he does is bound to be controversial even heated but his political antennae must have warned him that the alternative (not to do anything drastic) is suicidal The Umno leadership and establishment are perceived no longer connected to the Malay grassroots

To Pas under Islam the end justifies the means It is perceived as a party which has strong Islamic convictions

Yet strong conviction is exactly what's needed in Umno The majority of Malaysians who voted Barisan Nasional during the last general election don't want an Islamic state They would prefer status quo good healthcare economic prosperity good schools freedom peace and stability transparency efficacy and trustworthiness among their governments

Umno must return to people politics pronto Umno is not an end it is a means to an end The end is a happier fairer and wealthier Malaysia for all