

Mahathir's irrationality?
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This column is probably my most severe criticism of Dr Mahathir Mohamad's logic system currently made apparent by some of his incoherent statements. The New Straits Times quoted him as saying with a headline that, "having too many parties will split the nation."

He was of course agreeing with the Registrar of Societies who had given a professional opinion on the matter. The registrar's logic was defensible from a public policy point of view, although yet debatable but probably meant to elicit comments.

As for Mahathir's (left) comments, I failed to see his logic. In the 1980s when Mahathir became prime minister, among the first and earliest books he instructed senior government servants to read was Kenichi Ohmae's *The Mind of a Strategist*. I was registrar at Intan and was advised by the director to read the book. In fact, the entire leadership of Intan also read the book.

Among the ideas promoted in this book is the skill of how to deconstruct reality into relevant base parts and then to reconstruct the same reality into new wholes but of different permutations or combinations. Therefore, I fail to understand why and how Mahathir's current logic system operates; it appears that he does not understand this model of the strategic thinking any more.

Many small parties or groups can conceivably always still form new governments (BN has 14 parties at last count) and therefore regardless of what they believe as their party positions on issues, they have to finally coalesce into two alternatives for governance, right? Even in Thailand this is already happening so evidently.

What is the new and shifting reality of the newer world order? At the ELLTA, the Leadership and Learning Conference I attended, one of the questions we discussed and debated was whether "theories are still universally valid?"

There were of course two distinct schools of thought and arguments about these alternative models. One, belonging to the school of objectivists, mostly of the physical science alma mater, argued the need for some kind of applied universality. The other were subjectivists and from the school of ethnicists who argued for local and contextual imperatives for all realities, including their Universalist theories.

Defying rational logical deduction

But, even that statement about reality was only relative or, an oxymoron at best, in terms of logic systems. It defies rational logical deduction.

Now, let us revisit the Mahathir hypothesis that, "too many parties will split the nation." First, there are two levels of units of analysis involved in any such discussion. One is the obvious but idealised level of reality we call the nation-state. The other is the reality of "numerous parties," as political and legally approved formal organisations.

Mahathir is saying that too many small splinter political groups of sub-optimising and will lead to the destruction of the nation-state ideal. True?

I think his logic system is erroneous. Why? The nation-state is always an ideal in one's mind or heart. Vision 2020 was the idealised picture that Mahathir himself painted about Malaysia "as a developed society in our own mould." Najib Tun Razak has called this same or similar dream or envisioned reality into the future, as 1Malaysia. That is now our brand of nation-state ideal.

Our very Distinguished Professor of UKM, AB Shamsul, will call this a pipe dream because he rather vehemently states, "we are only a state but not yet a nation."

So, Mahathir, whither are you really headed with this kind of logic system of yours? And the mainstream media blindly quotes you and repeats the mantra for the whole world to appreciate such 'illogical logic?' Good and able leaders must send younger nations in newer directions coherent with newer realities.

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi is now finding out that managing and leading a nation is more than those of a mere battalion. He must not have gone to strategy school.

But, who then is Mahathir's real audience? At the 1st NCOI, I publicly applauded Mahathir's first seven years of leadership in Malaysia as "those of a statesman." I was immediately and severely attacked and condemned by some NGO-types present; for they described his leadership as "the destroyer of the judicial system in Malaysia", and rightly so I think now.

But, was it not in the second half, after the Umno A and B split that the period of rot set in?

Are his statements today therefore consistent with his first period of leadership of the nation, or are they only reactions now, in the third generation period of leadership? And, that too merely to "protect and preserve the failed Malay Agenda, as defined by himself?"

But, why blame others for the failure? Mahathir had all the time and opportunity but he failed? Why then did you really fail, Mahathir? Is that not why also you cried over spilt milk with your, "perjuangan yang belum selesai" poem?

What then can we all learn about true, good and real paradigm leadership of Nelson Mandela (left), or Martin Luther King Jr, or Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Teresa ? Can you ever achieve their paradigm leadership status, Mahathir?

'Begin nation-state politics of statesmanship'

I honestly do not know, but I do think that you still can; but your role and posture must change radically. You should move beyond the politics of parties; you should begin to assume the role of a retired mentor-minister and begin the nation-state politics of statesmanship.

So dear Mahathir, please stop all your petty politicking and start becoming a statesman as you can and have the capacity for. Please get all the other equally qualified "famous Tuns" and start a Wise Person's Council which we can call our national treasury of knowledge or National TOK. And yes, include Tok Nik Aziz of Kelantan too and ex-minister Rafidah Aziz.

Some others too who should join that group sooner and retire from active politics. But please do include NH Chan; for he is not your eternal enemy but really someone who thinks differently from you and holds to different worldviews and values. Giving him space is also wisdom.

Finally, Mahathir, worldviews are never wrong but only always different. A worldview can be inconsistent but never wrong; they are the deeply held belief system of values, morals and ethics, reflected by attitudes and behaviours of individuals. We do not really know others until we get to understand and listen more comprehensively to the actors themselves; without relying on false reports and lies about others.

Therefore, to me, while you became prime minister and did many good things; my frank and greater admiration and respect is rather currently reserved for people like YB Lim Kit Siang (centre in picture) who transcends three generations of quality service to this nation. To me he is a true nationalist politician par excellence, much like the late Dr Tan Chee Khoo.

This column is also therefore dedicated to LKS for his 70th birthday. Happy Birthday Brother Kit and May the Good Lord richly bless you.

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