

The fiddlers on Anwar's roof
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The "pro Jewish" sentiments attributed to Anwar Ibrahim by the rabid right-wing state sponsored Malay press, "independent" non-governmental organisations and various personalities is further evidence that Umno, with the complicity of its non-Malay component parties, is determined to destroy the middle ground currently occupied by PAS and PKR.

Notice how the word "pro-Jewish", stripped of context and nuance, is bandied about conjuring up images of Anwar and by extension those who support him (read: non-Malays) as agents of a nebulous Jewish entity determined to undermine Malay solidarity and enthrall the 'ummah' (Muslim population).

Police reports are filed, inflammatory speeches are made about how this most vital of issues will be brought to the attention of members of parliament, who no doubt will be shocked - shocked that such forms of extremism are professed by a man the state has accused of being a sodomite.

NONEOf course, Anwar's "links" to biased Western politicians and media will be disseminated as further evidence that the opposition leader is in cahoots with well, everyone.

Note to Umno spin-doctors - trotting out Dr Chandra Muzaffar to assassinate Anwar's character and lend credibility to their arguments, may play well to the faithful but does nothing but remind right-thinking citizens that Anwar and Pakatan Rakyat should be more circumspect in their choices of future political allies.

However what is ignored in this narrative is the further Islamisation or more accurately Arabisation of the political and social landscape that Umno seems determinedly to pursue.

It is the greatest of ironies that Anwar was himself part of the state mechanism that facilitated this shift many years ago as an activist in the Islamic youth group Abim (although in those days Abim had a more antagonistic relationship with the powers-that-be) and then in his various cabinet roles.

The resurgent opposition leader has expressed remorse for his past acts as a reconciliatory move to his non-Malay supporters and to solidify his international reputation as a "moderate" Muslim leader.

The biggest threat he poses is his perceived ability to harness the disparate ideological forces that comprises Pakatan and occupy the middle ground that BN has supposedly occupied for decades, but in reality merely paid lip service to.

Long creep of Arabisation

The anti-Semitic rhetoric coming from agents of the state serves two purposes. The first, to demonise Anwar in the eyes of the Muslim population here and abroad, the latter which he is fairly popular with.

The second is an example of what I argued in 'Manufacturing of a fear culture', which is to estrange the Muslim population from the rest of their fellow citizens. Non-Malays politicians and journalists have to tread extremely carefully on this issue lest they be portrayed as anti-Islam.

Besides promulgating a culture of fear, the determined attempts of conflating complex humanitarian issues like the Palestinian Occupation with Islamic ones further alienates non-Muslim/non-Malay members of the public.

Their views of Islam already coloured by the numerous "Islamic" provocations on their own religions and

cultures and witnessing the level of anti-Semitism dominating the public discourse (which they are excluded from) from high-ranking officials merely reinforces these negative perceptions of both Islam and the Palestinian Occupation.

With the decades long creep of Arabisation into the Malaysian public and private spheres, anti-Semitism is already embedded in the system except now with the advances of communication technology, this unsavoury aspect of the regime's tacit support of these elements is well-documented.

Consider the hate speech of Muslim convert Ridhuan Tee Abdullah, a lecturer at the National Defence University, who has taken anti-Semitism to a new level by comparing his Chinese brothers and sisters to the most obscene stereotype of Jews, pleading special knowledge about their community since he was a 'kafir' (like them) before embracing Islam.

This is a so-called Muslim intellectual who teaches young Malay officers of their duties and responsibilities (amongst other things) to their country.

NONE Add the likes of the two Alis - Ibrahim and Hasan - and what you get is a willing audience of hate-mongers within the Malay community who probably don't understand that the rhetoric is merely for propagandistic purposes to maintain control and not an invitation for violence.

With the yearly influx of thousands of returning students from the madrasahs and universities in the Middle East, not to mention the indoctrination that happens in the hundreds of unregistered (read: unmonitored) religious schools in this country (sympathetic to the brand of Islam imported from the Middle East), what you get is a conflux of simmering Islamic fundamentalism who view the discourse wafting from Umno as examples of either a lack of Muslim solidarity (in the case of Anwar) or an invitation to express their religious convictions through violent means.

Whenever acts of extremism are perpetrated by members of a so-called moderate community, the soul-searching question often asked is "how did such an individual come to be in a society like ours". In our case, we only have to read the newspapers or be cognisant of the coddling of extremist views to understand how an individual like Nordin Mat Top came to exist.

The gentle reminder of Home Minister Hishammuddin Onn, of Nordin's execution, "a life is a life" and how the state could have "rehabilitated" him, is merely a reminder of the mendacity of Umno when it comes to its role in the creation of the environment that sustains the like of a mass murderer like Top.

Hamas or Fatah?

Coupled with the anti-Semitism is the astounding level of ignorance of the general Malay population especially amongst the university-educated ones on the nature and participants of the Palestinian Occupation.

All of them view the occupation as purely a Muslim problem, ignoring the thousand of Christians who have killed and died for the struggle.

Christian voices like the late George Habash are unknown to them. It is always, "Western liberal morality" that conspire to keep the Palestinians down, and by extension Islam, all the while forgetting passionate polemical voices like the slain Irish Catholic, Margaret Hassan, whose work in the Palestinian refugee camps reminds us of the humanitarian aspect of the conflict.

And let us not forget of the internal bickering between the Hamas and Fatah fractions that have seeped into the non-governmental organisations under the umbrella organisation which handles all the humanitarian aid involving the Palestinian Occupation here in Malaysia.

Local Muslim NGOs are left pondering who to support - Fatah or Hamas - all the while aid which is

supposed to elevate the horrible conditions the Palestinians are living under becomes the prize for the internal squabbling in the Palestinian Authority.

In a multi-racial/ethnic country like Malaysia, which prides itself on being on the moderate Muslim path, the middle ground means having a nuanced domestic and foreign policy opinion on the Palestinian conflict.

NONE What is not needed are the likes of Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin leading protests against that dreaded Devil America where he loudly proclaims that he and others would go fight for the Palestinians in Gaza. Would they send the newly-enhanced Rela members?

If the state continues its attacks on the middle ground using issues like these against Anwar and his Pakatan members, it will inadvertently let the genie out of the bottle with regards to Islamic extremism.

For some time now, they have managed to contain the extremist elements in the country; however the rhetoric from members of its own party or proxy groups (whose aim is not to radicalise the population but to maintain Umno hegemony) will make it harder for them to constrain these forces.

The non-Malay component parties of BN complicity in creating such a situation weather by their silence or cheerleading, is more damaging than their presence in white ang pow events.

Anwar and Pakatan should do their utmost in never relinquishing the middle-ground because this would have disastrous consequence for Malaysia. The shape of things to come will be determined by the integrity that Pakatan displays when dealing with emotionally-charged issues such as these.

So, they should tread cautiously but with the agenda of never leaving the field to the bigots and anti-Semites.

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