

**Models for the Malaysian Spring**  
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**Dean Johns**

I doubt that the Arab Spring gets much coverage in the Malaysian mainstream media. But it certainly does on my favourite news sources, BBC World, Aljazeera and Australia's ABC.

And as I watch in admiration as the people of North Africa and the Middle East continue to fight and die for freedom from one kleptocratic regime after another, I keep wondering when Malaysians will finally rise up against their rotten Umno/BN regime.

Admittedly this question doesn't make much sense geographically or even racially. But considering the extent to which Umno/BN apes similarly corrupt and criminal autocracies in the Arab world, it seems entirely apposite.

Witness Umno/BN's hypocritical "defence" of Muslim values, its support of fabricated Islamist claims of Christian proselytising of the faithful, its hysterical antipathy to Israel, and the Arabian-nights architecture of its grandiose and gruesome capital, Putrajaya.

In fact the similarities are so obvious, and so ominous in light of the apparently unstoppable Arab Spring, that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has, with the help of his Israeli-owned PR consultants, Apco Worldwide, been at considerable pains to try and re-position himself as the leader of a "progressive" and "moderate" Muslim-majority nation.

So naturally I keep wondering not only when Umno/BN will suffer its very own Malaysian version of the Arab spring, as it surely will, but what Arab-spring model it is fated to follow.

Not the Tunisian one, I fancy. Though leading suspects in the Umno/BN regime routinely fly off to Mecca to seek forgiveness whenever their sins against Malaysia really start to stink to high heaven, I can't envisage the whole gang running away to sanctuary in Saudi Arabia like Tunisia's Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali regime did.

Members of Umno's partners in the BN coalition like the MCA and MIC would hardly feel at home in such a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism. And Umno's Muslims, along with their non-Muslim partners-in-crime, would doubtless sorely miss their favourite Malaysian foods.

Though on second thoughts, I assume that they would take enough of their ill-gotten billions with them to enable them to afford to import all the nasi lemak, teh tarik, durians and other delicacies that they could possibly wish for.

All the same, I don't expect the Umno/BN regime to follow in the footsteps of their erstwhile Tunisian colleagues, any more than I predict that they will succumb to the same fate as the Gaddafi gang in Libya.

Among the world's most compliant

The majority of the Malaysian people have shown themselves over the decades to be not only among the world's most compliant, as confirmed by a recent global survey, but also the most complacent if not outright cowed.

So, speaking of oxen, if deliberate desecration of a cow's head at a Hindu temple, or the plunder of public funds in such daylight robberies as the National Feedlot Corporation (NFC) and myriad other such scandals aren't sufficient to spark mass public protest, I find it pretty hard to imagine what it would take to trigger Libya-level demonstrations, let alone a popular armed insurrection.

And much the same goes for the Egypt model. As a Malaysian activist complained to me a couple of months ago in KL, most of his fellow anti-Umno/BN citizens imagine that they've covered themselves in glory by facing tear-gas and water-cannons for a single afternoon, and thus he couldn't picture them keeping up the pressure for weeks or even months, like the occupiers of Tahrir Square.

Or like those bravest of the brave, the people who have been demonstrating in Syria for almost a year now, and suffering and dying in unrelenting hails of bullets and barrages of shells.

Which brings me to my proposition that, notwithstanding the current comparative peace in Malaysian streets, cities and towns and the meekness of so many Malaysians, the Syrian model is the one that Umno/BN has selected in a desperate attempt to stave off or survive a home-grown version of the Arab Spring.

And the warning signs are there for all to see. To be sure, there are no troops or tanks in evidence yet, or any massive gatherings of citizens for them to target.

But there is already Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's threat of "crushed bodies and lost lives", Syria style, should the regime be forced into a last-ditch stand to "defend Putrajaya".

Adding substance to this chilling statement of intent, Najib's cousin and Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, has long been massively recruiting, arming and training the Umno/BN regime's rag-tag "volunteer force", Rela.

Already there have been numerous small-scale attacks by Umno/BN-sponsored mat rempits and other thugs on opposition meetings, ceremahs and rallies.

And the always Umno/BN-complicit police have shown little or no interest in preventing such attacks or arresting the perpetrators, even though most of them have been caught on camera.

Still small-time

Of course Umno/BN's outright assault on the opposition is still so small-time as to be virtually negligible compared with the Bashar al-Assad regime's all-out war on the Syrian people, but it's none the less real in threat and apparent intent.

Meanwhile, Umno/BN is waging precisely the same psy-war against its Malaysian opponents as al-Assad is against his Syrian opposition. Blaming anti-government unrest on any "foreign" influences in can dream-up, as in Malaysia's case the Israeli/Zionist/US conspiracy allegedly represented by Anwar Ibrahim, or Christians armed with "portable, solar-powered hand-held Bibles", or whatever else the paranoid imagination is capable of inventing.

And at the same time Umno/BN is also employing the al-Assad regime's other pet ploy of promising reform after reform and routinely failing to deliver.

For example last week, just as Syrians were being offered a fake referendum on a new constitution to the replace the perfectly good old one so systematically abused by the al-Assad regime, Umno/BN was begging voters in the next general election it rigs in its favour to restore it to the two-thirds majority it needs to change the Malaysian constitution that it has spent decades destroying.

And the final straw in the Malaysian version of this psychotic Syria-style psy-war has been Najib's pathetic "apology" for past Umno/BN "mistakes", followed by a plea for another term in office to put them right.

Najib is no more sorry for his and Umno/BN's "mistakes", or what the rest of us would call "crimes", than Bashar al-Assad is for those of his own doomed regime. And thus I fondly hope that more and more Malaysians will keep pressing for their own, non-violent version of the Arab spring, and prove as successful in their efforts as their blood-brothers and sisters in Syria inevitably and eventually will.

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