

Facing the threat of violence in GE 13

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By Nathaniel Tan

COMMENT Winter is coming. This 13th of May will not see a solemn observation of one of Malaysia's darkest moments - it will instead feature, shockingly, the finale of a two week long Umno carnival celebration of its anniversary.

"Nightmare" is the first word that comes to mind.

Over two parts, this article will analyse the following: the landscape going into the 13th general elections, how we can expect both Pakatan Rakyat and Umno linked interests to act in the coming weeks and months in light of this landscape, some increasingly likely scenarios for election day and its aftermath including the possibility of violence, and what we can do to prevent any disasters.

The background

Bersih 3.0 defines a large part of our current sociopolitical landscape.

Especially relevant to this discussion are the massive turnout of hundreds of thousands of people and the now available videos of "protester violence".

Beyond the events of the 28th of April, there is the rapid disintegration of public confidence in the integrity of our electoral system.

Put quite simply: barring significant electoral reforms, a very significant proportion of Malaysians will - and I will be generous enough this time to add 'rightly or wrongly' - doubt the integrity of the results of the next general elections if BN wins.

Taking advantage?

Before examining Umno, let's take a look at the other side of the fence.

This article is largely about worst case scenarios, so let's employ the same approach for Pakatan Rakyat.

To put it extremely crudely (with apologies), some might say that seeing the immense masses turn up on the streets for Bersih 3.0 would give some leaders a serious hard on.

Some might go so far as to think: "Hmm, if these many people are willing to go down to the streets because they believe elections will be unfair..."

Before long, some will start imagining the 'glory days' of Reformasi times. After all, if this many

protest the possibility of electoral fraud, how many will come out if they can be persuaded that an election was indeed stolen?

They may even ask - how many can I persuade to come out on the streets demanding that Pakatan be declared winners of the election?

(To be fair, I doubt those leading Pakatan would be so foolish as to pursue such an agenda. We merely examine for the sake of thoroughness these worst case scenarios.)

Besides the considerable number of party supporters, I think another sizeable chunk of Malaysian society will not be hard to persuade, especially - and this is a very, very real possibility - if the election was in actual fact, stolen.

Signalling an intention to cheat

Some ten days before Bersih 3.0, legislation was surreptitiously passed in the dead of night that actually makes it easier for the ruling party to cheat and steal an election.

This was perhaps one of the most under-discussed controversies we faced, and remains an alarming signal that the authorities are not fooling around with their intentions to cheat.

This was not a haphazard, to maybe be used "in case of emergency" type of thing. Some very bad people sat down, and put in extremely meticulous, careful thought about how an election can be stolen.

Of course, we now learn that the amendments have been repealed due to public pressure.

We note Minister Nazri Aziz's (*right*) statement that the government was just a "postman", and unaware of the content of the amendments they sent to be passed as law.

If this is our government's attitude towards the laws that define our nation, then they are quite frankly even more incompetent than I thought.

What sort of fool sends a bill to Parliament without knowing its contents?

Next they'll be carrying suitcases full of cash or worse through airports, saying "Oh, what's that in there? Goodness me, I had no idea, some guy just asked me to carry this through as a favour. Terribly sorry, old chap."

The men who plan the nightmare

Let's examine now the BN reaction to some of the scenarios above, especially if there is evidence of a stolen election, and attendant street protests.

Some will wonder whether Prime Minister Najib Razak is capable of the nightmare scenarios I will describe below.

In answer to this, we need only consider a profound, if simple, idea that Tolkien articulated: we do not control power, power controls us.

Should there be a change of government, many very prominent, very powerful, and very entrenched elements fear a loss not only of standing and wealth, but of livelihood and their very ability to walk the streets as free men.

Imagine someone having spent a lifetime robbing a country blind; or actually having blood on their hands from all the dirty deeds you have done.

I am thinking here of a whole bunch of formers: prime ministers, finance ministers, inspectors general of police, CEOs, the list goes on.

These are not men who give a rat's ass what Najib is willing or unwilling to do, or what he is strong enough or not strong enough to do. These are men who will effortlessly pull the strings of a prime minister that was weak to begin with, to ensure their own survival.

Observe some recent developments - firstly, former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad comments that BN needs a strong government to bring back the ISA, his favourite symbol of unchallengable, supposedly "Malay" power (a tool which, among many absurd things, is necessary to prevent the formation of a communist government with the return of Chin Peng. I must say this fear monger needs a better, more up to date, scriptwriter).

Secondly, in a move that is just as mind-bogglingly illogical, Najib appoints former inspector general of police Hanif Omar (*left*) to oversee the investigation into violent incidents on April 28th.

Once again, we have cops investigating their brother cops. The bullshit the government wants you to buy: "Conflict of interest? What conflict of interest?... No-lah, where got?..."

I can hardly imagine a clearer signalling that the old guard seeks to return to power than this recent tale of two tuns.

The men I imagine and their associates are not men who will willingly face any type of genuine justice. These are men who will protect themselves and their power, at any cost - any cost whatsoever.

Replacing the carrot with the stick

These are not men who balk at violence either. These are men to whom other men are but pawns.

They would steal an election without batting an eyelid; they would do far worse without batting much more.

No one knows what will happen, but let's say Pakatan leaders decide to react to an election with clear signs of fraudulence by taking to the streets, bringing as many of the rakyat with them as

they can.

What do you think will happen next?

I very much doubt the powers that be will capitulate. I think they will retaliate.

Warm ups have already begun. With the May 13th Umno celebrations this year, it is becoming increasingly clear that those around Najib are pushing a very simple message to him: For four years you tried the carrot. It didn't work. It's time for the stick.

Incidents such as described by Chang Lih Kang recently seem to increasingly be the norm - where the fires of racism and hatred are openly fanned by civil servants who are supposed to be neutral (a condition not entirely fulfilled by, say, the Election Commission chiefs).

The underlying message is as simple as it is crude: behave and yield to our dominion, or we will beat the daylights out of you.

TOMORROW: Facing Violence in GE 13 Part 2: Malaysia's own brownshirts

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