

Violence can be self-fulfilling prophecy

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In part one of this article, we looked at how the crisis of confidence in our electoral system sets off a chain of events that ends in a situation wherein the powerful will have many temptations to employ violence as a means to retain power.

Today, we start by examining how violence may be engineered.

My feeling is that plans are already in place to use extremely selective video footage from Bersih 3.0 in an attempt to incept into people's minds the notion that voting against BN will lead to violence on the streets.

Possibly both before and after the elections, with one hand the powers that be will release the Malaysian equivalent of the Nazi brownshirts - gangsters who specialise in intimidating political opponents (a group that has had much practice and warm up exercises in anti-government political ceramahs throughout Malaysia recently, targeting the likes of Nurul Izzah) - into the public, instigating mass violence, and brutal clashes with any street protesters challenging fraudulent electoral results.

With the other hand, they may thereafter send in the men with guns - the police and perhaps the military - to 'restore order', possibly paving the way for another Emergency declaration (after all, was that not the backdrop to the rise to power of our current PM's father?).

Should this come to pass, God forbid, blood may run in the streets, while fear runs rampant in society.

Given how our media is severely restricted and unquestionably biased, public opinion will be divided sharply over who is to blame.

Faced with the possibility of this nightmare, the question then becomes: what are citizens of conscience to do?

When I first started reflecting on this, the dilemma seemed very real.

On the one hand, one does not want to be the pawn of any political party - much less so if it will result in falling into a trap of violence set by the powers that be.

On the other, it is equally unjust to allow our very country to be stolen from underneath our noses.

A moral strategy

Far and away the best possible outcome still within reach is for the government to overhaul the

electoral system before the next general elections.

We're talking here about replacing the entire leadership of the Electoral Commission, appointing truly independent individuals to helm the commission, and postponing the elections until Bersih's recommendations can be implemented.

If we can ensure free and fair elections, the nation will be spared the terrible fate it may otherwise have to face.

Should we find ourselves with a clean system, then all parties must commit fully to accepting the results of the election, one way or another.

Of course, no one is holding their breath waiting for this to happen. Thus, we are compelled to examine other contingencies.

Should there be compelling evidence that the powers that be have stolen an election and refuse to yield power, then the streets must be considered as an option.

Nevertheless, there is more than one way to go down to the streets.

First and foremost, one must clearly articulate the goal of any street protest (lest we face the problems of direction and achievable goals faced, say, by the Occupy movement).

If Pakatan leaders demand that they be declared the winner of the elections, this will give any protest far too partisan a bent, even for my tastes.

In order to keep the battle focused and to dispel any single possibility of moral ambiguity, I posit that the right thing to demand for is for fresh elections to be held under new leadership of the Elections Commission.

The underlying point is this - the government must be elected cleanly in a democratic fashion. As citizens, we must accept any winner of an election, given the crucial condition that those elections are clean and fair.

Thus, it is not our duty to demand that any one party be installed into power; it is, however, our duty to our nation, our children and ourselves to demand that whichever government is elected is elected fairly.

If all involved take the position that fresh elections under a truly independent Elections Commission need to be held in light of proven electoral fraud, then I believe we will gain both the support of the majority, and an unassailable moral high ground.

These two factors are assets that, in my view, make or break a social movement.

Next we must consider method. How we choose to protest will determine the outcome of the movement.

Our goals should be to find ways to minimise the possibility of any acts of violence that are committed in the name of the movement (note that violence may nearly be inevitable, due to factors entirely outside our control - not least the likelihood that agent provocateurs will be employed).

In addition to traditional methods of protest, should we face the nightmares outlined above, we must also consider less traditional methods.

The sit-in concept of April 28 is a great starting point. What violence can someone commit while sitting down?

To go even further, we need to consider effective ways for people to participate who might otherwise not go down to the streets.

Chief among these that come to mind is a hartal - a general strike. Excepting emergency services and such, a widespread strike would prove a crippling blow.

No one can be arrested or beaten if he or she decides they have a cold or family emergency that prevents them from going to work.

Should this idea gain traction however - the impact to the nation and its signal as to the illegitimacy of the election cannot possibly be understated.

It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of viable methods, but I provide the above to give a directional idea.

There are various political solutions that could potentially provide some stability in the aftermath of a stolen election.

It is not viable to discuss them all in detail, but they generally pivot on (the somewhat unlikely event of) having sufficient parliamentarians of conscience and may involve the controversial notion of crossovers and such.

Facing down nightmares

In fact, I believe the choice of BN candidates in these elections will pivot largely on an unwavering loyalty to Najib personally - precisely to stave off any such coup situation.

This will be a defining moment for the rest of the BN component parties as well - and perhaps quite literally their very last opportunity in history to redeem what little is left of their honour.

It will be a time where we look deep into their hearts and souls, and see whether they are indeed irreparably ruled by corruption and greed, or whether some iota of decency and sense of duty to a conscientious democracy may yet redeem them.

The days we face ahead of us may be dark days indeed; it will test us all severely, in very many

ways - it will probably test those in politics most of all.

For when push comes to shove, the nation and the world will be watching all political actors closely - it is a time when we will differentiate the visionaries from the short sighted, and the statesmen from the politicians.

It will be a time when we too are tested - as citizens, and as human beings of conscience. A fire comes that will forge and define the type of nation we will endure or enjoy for generations to come. In this hour of reckoning, may we all have the strength, courage and fortitude to face this trial, and not be found wanting.

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