

**Whither Pakatan?
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ANALYSIS So what now for Pakatan Rakyat?

As for everyone else, it is a time of great opportunity for improvement.

Whether this opportunity is seized may not only be up to them, it may also be up to us, as I will elaborate in the third and last article in this series.

Institutionally, Pakatan is not a strong coalition. Those privy to the inside workings of the Pakatan secretariat in the lead-up to GE13 may have some first hand experience of this.

Many worked hard, and many did their best, but I am not sure the top leadership did their efforts and willingness justice.

Now is a good time to reverse that trend, and invest more resources, and more importantly, better leadership, into strengthening Pakatan as an actual institution, not a loose coalition.

Let us see what each component party faces, post-GE13.

Whither the Erdogans?

How tragic for so many of us to see the titans of moderation in PAS lose their seats: Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Mat Sabu, Husam Musa and Salahuddin Ayub, among others.

This may spark off a crisis in PAS, even as we speak, for PAS faces the realities ahead.

Having not made significant inroads into the rural areas, some hardliners in PAS may start to reconsider their prospects in Pakatan.

They may fear that the current trends will only relegate them to junior partner status.

I hope they realise, however, that they have a much higher chance of being a

senior partner in Pakatan (as in Selangor) than they ever will in BN.

azlanUmno and PAS share a core demographic base (rural Malaysia), one that is relatively alien to PKR and even more so to DAP.

Staying with Pakatan gives them hope of winning back that base one day, whereas Umno is unlikely to dilute their own power by sharing it with PAS.

PAS will also lose all hope of winning urban seats if they join BN.

Needless to say, the worst part of it is, if PAS were to move to BN, the already worsening racial climate in the country will just become worse.

For PAS, the core challenge will be finding an ideological 'product' that will appeal to rural Malaysia while steering clear of the bigotry of Umno.

It will be hard, but perhaps taking a more service oriented approach that emphasises building real grassroots bonds with the community may yield a better result than previous approaches.

Everything will pivot on PAS keeping the faith these next few days and weeks, and then after that, on PAS' next party

I hope they will not read too deeply into the electoral losses of their key leaders, and instead stay their extremely admirable course.

Grace and humility in victory?

What a sweep for DAP - undefeated in Penang and Selangor state assemblies, for starters, and winner of the most seats in Parliament.

Luckily, father and son Lim are not inclined to public haughtiness, and they seem to realise the potential minefield of their recent victories.

Perhaps there is not much to say regarding DAP save two short things.

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Firstly, follow the leadership's example of humility in victory. At present, it will gain us nothing if DAP wins every seats it contests everywhere, while the rest of the coalition lags behind. Indeed, that may only serve to fan racial flames.

Of course, perhaps this need not always be the case. Granted, it remains to be seen

whether DAP can shed its more negative connotations of Chinese chauvinism that go back decades.

Nevertheless, the second point is that all the evidence suggests that they must certainly try.

Their new Malay elected representatives are an excellent start, and a trend that begs vast expanding.

Imagine if DAP fielded more and more Malay candidates, while PAS fielded more non-Malay candidates? A new Malaysia indeed.

Reforming the reformers?

People like to say PKR is the weakest link. An MP once told me: "It is not the weakest link, it is the only link."

Anwar stated openly and in no uncertain terms that should GE 13 be lost, he will step down and make way for new blood.

If so, then an era of new possibilities for PKR will come to pass. Of course, while it can move in the direction of institutional strengthening and deepening its internal democracy, it can also move in the direction of Umno style feudalism.

PKR has long been shaped by personalities. Perhaps the time has come for it to be shaped by a combination of grassroot-led determination and leaders who are more statesmen and stateswomen than ambitious politicians - people who realise the importance of building something that will long outlive them.

This may yet be the most involved post-GE13 front, but as a member myself (last I checked) I think it would be wiser for me to leave my commentary at that for now.

In parting, the situation in PKR makes a good segue for the final part of these series of analyses: what ordinary Malaysians can do next.

Part 1: Of geography, race and a BN merger

Part 3: Post GE13, what can you and I do?

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